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THE “SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP” BETWEEN RUSSIA AND SERBIA: LOOKING INTO THE
HISTORICAL BROTHERHOOD FROM THE DISSOLUTION OF THE USSR AND THE SFRY
TO NOWADAYS

THESIS SUPERVISOR

Professor Christine Vodovar

THESIS CO-SUPERVISOR

Professor Domenico Maria Bruni

CANDIDATE: Christopher Dancilovic

STUDENT NUMBER: 639002

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	4
INTRODUCTION	5
THEORY AND METHODS	7
LITERATURE USED	8
CHAPTER I: THEORY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND WORLD ORDER AND EXPLANATION OF THE “ <i>BRATSTVO</i> ”	11
1.1 MEARSHEIMER AND THE FIVE ASSUMPTIONS ON INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM	11
1.2 GREAT POWERS	13
1.3 REALISM AND FOREIGN POLICY OUTPUTS	16
1.4 MYTH OF SLAVIC BROTHERHOOD.....	18
1.5 RELATIONSHIP FROM WWII UNTIL THE END OF THE COLD WAR.....	24
CONCLUSION	28
CHAPTER II: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE NEW BORN RUSSIAN FEDERATION AND THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA IN THE NINETIES.....	30
2.1 DISSOLUTION OF USSR AND THE SFRY	31
2.2 BUILDING A NEW NATION, NATIONALISM AND ETHNO-NATIONALISM	34
2.3 RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY IN THE EARLY NINETIES	39
2.4 WAR IN THE BALKANS	42
2.5 RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS YUGOSLAVIA IN THE FIRST WAR IN THE BALKANS 1991-1995	45
CONCLUSION	62
CHAPTER III: RELATIONSHIP FROM THE WAR IN KOSOVO UNTIL 2019.....	63
3.1 THE WAR IN KOSOVO	63

3.2 MYTHS AND LESSONS FROM THE WAR IN KOSOVO.....	69
3.3 NEW MILLENNIUM RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PUTIN AND THE POST-MILOSEVIC YUGOSLAVIA.....	72
3.4 ECONOMIC AGREEMENTS AND RUSSIAN INVESTMENTS IN SERBIA.....	76
3.5 RELATIONSHIP IN 2019 AND FUTURE SCENARIOS.....	80
CONCLUSION	83
 FINAL CONCLUSION OF THE RESEARCH.....	 84
 BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	 88
 SUMMARY	 101

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
Cit.	Cited
CSCE	Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe
EU	European Union
FRY	Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDZ	Croatian Democratic Union (<i>Hrvatska Demokratska Zajedinica</i>)
IMF	International Monetary Fond
IR	International Relations
ISAC	The International and Security Affairs Centre Belgrade
JNA	Yugoslav People's Army (<i>Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija</i>)
KGB	Committee on State Security (<i>Komitet gosudarstvennoj Bezopasnosti</i>)
LUISS	Free University for Social Studies(<i>Libera Università Italiana Studi Sociali</i>)
MGIMO	Moscow State Institute of International Relations (<i>Moskovskiy Gosudarstvennyj Institut Mezhdunaronye Otnosheniy</i>)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation for Europe
P./ PP.	Page/ Pages
SFRY	Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
SPS	Socialist Party of Serbia (<i>Socijalisticka Partija Srbije</i>)
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
UNSC	United Nations Security Council.
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

INTRODUCTION

On January 17th 2019, the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, received red carpet treatment at his arrival in Belgrade as he was a Rock star. Tens of thousands of Serbs from all over the country gathered in the Balkan's capital and welcomed euphorically the Russian President.

In this particular moment of history, it is difficult to imagine another European country where such visit could provoke in the population a similar celebration towards the arrival of Putin. Even though Serbs are traditionally pro-Russians, and there is a long history of *Bratstvo* (Brotherhood) between Serbs and Russians, it is surprisingly the appeal of Putin in Serbia.

The starting point of the thesis is exactly this emblematic recent meeting; where once again the historical, and presumed special relationship, appears to be as stronger as has never been before. The aim of the work is to verify such Brotherhood, especially after the dissolution of the USSR and the SFRY and to estimate how much this *Bratstvo* has been impacting Russian Foreign policy and its role in the International arena.

The first chapter will provide the analytical, theoretical and historical tools and concept which will represent the base and the framework of the whole thesis. Firstly, it will be briefly introduced some theory of International Relations such as: offensive realism and structural realism by Kenneth Waltz and John J. Mearsheimer; the concept of Great Powers by Tatiana A. Shakleina, and the correlation between realism and foreign policy outputs, which will be useful in order to understand certain decisions and behavior of Russian foreign policy makers. In the last part of the first chapter it will be also explained the historical relationship and how it all started, without going to much in details, as it is not the goal of this thesis. Starting from the middle-age until the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia it will be described the "Myth" of Russia as "Elder sister" or "savior of Serbia, Serbs and the Orthodoxy".

The second chapter will be devoted to the analysis and comparison in the nineties of both countries. The reasons behind the opposites outcomes of the dissolution of their own socialists' systems, one pacific, one violent, as long as the war in the Balkans from both sides, will be analyzed. Through the reconstruction of Kozyrev's foreign policy and the consideration

of the domestic and international conditions, it will be analyzed the reasons behind the change in behavior of the first Post-Soviet years. It will be also presented the very different perceptions and ideas of nationalism in the two countries, especially in creating their two new nations and how Boris Yeltsin and Slobodan Milosevic had different views on the principle which needs to be take in consideration when referring to nationalism and ethno-nationalism.

It is impossible to talk about the 90s without taking into consideration the new World Order in which Russia was trying to take part. The question of NATO enlargement, of American unilateralism and the domestic political and economic crisis played a crucial role in the relationship between the two Slavic countries.

In the third and last chapter, it will be examined the relationship from the conflict in Kosovo and in the new millennium with the current Presidents, Putin and Vucic and the on-going trade agreements and the “strategic partnership”.

Throughout the work, the elements of cultural identities, nationalism, the importance of geopolitics and economic aspects will be covered and analyzed throughout different periods. The research of this work is devoted to capture and to verify the moments in which the *Bratstvo* managed to outplay external imposition and geopolitical games.

The expression “*Сербия и Россия Братья навсегда*” (“Serbia and Russia forever brothers”) has become a very popular slogan. Starting by the Orthodox Religion, the similar language and the common Cyrillic alphabet, the two “*Народы*” (peoples) shares some direct affinity which is hard to describe. One of the aims is to try to identify such affinities, by analyzing historical and cultural elements. Both countries, in different years have been put under economic sanctions from the international community. They managed to survive also by a closer cooperation in trade by signing some important commercial agreement.

In 2019, according to some experts, the EU’s candidacy of Serbia could be jeopardized by Russia. Thanks not only to investments in the Balkans but also to a political and cultural re-approach, Putin’s “soft power” in Serbia is something which is becoming more than just an idea. Moreover, President Vucic has more than once pointed out his denial on joining NATO, could the recent developments lead to a shift to the east and a renounce on joining the EU?

THEORY AND METHODS

The methodology of this work is to rely to literature review and applying International Relations theories in the context of the relationship between Russian and Serbs in relevant moments of recent history.

The use of Western, Russian and Serbian sources and literature was done with the aim of giving a more balanced view of the facts and to increase the validity of the research. Since the thesis does not want to be neither pro-Russia nor pro-Serbia, the only possible way to conduct an impartial research is by considering all parties' positions. The decision to adopt sources from different nations comes from the fact that Western media and Russian media sometimes release subjective statements and opinions, and unfortunately this happen as well with scholars and academic sources.

Especially from the United States there was a clear lack of information on the situation of the post-Soviet period, which led to an unrealistic estimation of the role of Russia and the United States in the international affairs, which was worsened by the lack of cooperation in the research. Moreover, in this period, the governments did not give the right attention to the studies of other foreign policies, and the absence of cooperation resulted in miscomprehension as well in the decision-making processes. Such as happened during the war in the Balkans.

It was decided to stick to literature analysis in order to better understand the dynamics and the relations in a context of the new World Order through the eyes of experts in international relations and using official declarations of the Politicians. All the work is based on analysis and comparison of International Relations theories, such as neorealism. In this thesis one of the main issues was to avoid any kinds of political judgments nor to evaluate the choices simply by describing them "good" or "bad".

The goal here is to describe and analyze the moments, by relying on historical official events, when Moscow and Belgrade seemed to maintain or not the relationship of Brotherhood. It is worth adding that founding Yugoslavian sources from the nineties it is a very complicated task. Moreover, some of the meetings and decisions are still classified information.

LITERATURE USED

The literature on which this thesis relies is composed by books on International Relations, on analytical papers of scientific journals, on official documents available online. A great part of the material utilized, comes from literature and sources used by MGIMO professors.

During the first year of the Master spent at MGIMO, the author had access to precious reading materials provided by Prof. Tatiana A. Shakleina in her course “Great Power and Regional Subsystem in World politics”, as well as some useful lectures where he had the chance to acknowledge from a different prospective the dynamics of the East-West relations after the end of the Cold War.

A further important teaching which enlightened this research was the course of “Contemporary Russian Foreign Policy and Strategy” lectured by prof. A. Khudaykulova. In her course it was studied the evolution of Russian foreign policy after the end of the Soviet Union, which was vital in conducting the analysis of the relations in the nineties not only between Russian and Serbian, but more generally to the relations East-West in the evolving World Order.

The use of primary sources includes official documents of Russia and Serbia, as well as UNSC resolutions, NATO resolutions and international treaties. A considerable amount of material was provided by the official sites of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs. Books on history were selected according to their validity and to authors fields of expertise.

As far as accessibility and availability of resources concerns, the problems are mainly related to the difficult full access to some databases, however the quality and quantity of the material gathered are to be considered more than suitable.

Another important aspect which should be mentioned, is that thanks to the LUISS library and MGIMO library, the author could gain access to a collection of precious academic articles. It should be as well added that, despite the good knowledge of the Russian language of the author, he does not completely master the language, therefore the percentage of sources written in Russian was limited to few selected sources.

The inclusion of Russian and Serbian articles and academic works provided to the research a more complete point of view, which would have not been possible only by relying on Western sources.

During the collection of sources and the selection of pertinent material, hundreds of materials were consulted, from journals, books, video, official statements and analytical papers. It will be here presented the main works which were used in each part of the Thesis.

In the first chapter, the one on the theory of International Relations and World Order it was employed the work "*Theory of International Politics*" by Kenneth Waltz, "*The rise and the Fall of Great Powers*" by Paul Kennedy, works of Barry Buzan, Sergey Makedenov, Tatiana Shackleina, J. David Singer and others prominent scholars. Whereas for the part on the Myth on the "Brotherhood" it was heavily based on the book by Veljko Vujacic "*Nationalism, Myth, and the State in Russian and Serbia: Antecedents of the Dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia*" as long as the analytical paper "*Serbia between East and West: Bratstvo, Balancing, and Business on Europe's Frontier*" written by Andrew Konitzer.

In the second chapter, the one about the nineties, the sections related to the identities were based on the writings of Veljko Vujacic, especially from the article "*Perceptions of the State in Russia and Serbia: The Role of Ideas in the Soviet and Yugoslav Collapse*", which provided a valid analysis and comparison between Serbia and Russia in forging the new nation. The Book by Pal Kalsto, Helge Blakkisrud "*The new Russian Nationalist, Imperialism, Ethnicity and authoritarianism, 2000-2015*", was an important reference as well.

As far as the Russian foreign policy in the post-Soviet policy concerns, this thesis relied on "*Russian Foreign Policy in Transition*" by Tatiana Shackleina and Andrei Melville. Books by Mark Webber, "*Russia and Europe: Conflict or Cooperation*" (especially Chapter 8 by Michael Andersen) and Christian Thorun, "*Explaining Change in Russian Foreign Policy: The Role of Ideas in Post-Soviet Russia's Conduct towards the West*", were a useful tool in order to analyze the domestic and international situation with respect to the war in Yugoslavia. A further important reference was Andrey P. Tsygankov, with his "*Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity*" which provided to the thesis the keys to comprehend the behavior of different foreign policy makers in the Post-Soviet period. It was included also in this chapter "*Monitoring Russian Serbia Relations Project*" from the third report of Serbian ISAC fond, in order to provide another point of view to this research.

In the third and last chapter, the one about the War in Kosovo and the relationship in the new Millennium, many sources come from official transcript of public speeches or meeting of Putin available on the official site of the Kremlin (<http://en.kremlin.ru/>). Articles such as “*Rossiya na rubuzhe tysyacheletij*” published on *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* and written by Vladimir V. Putin, provided an interesting retrospective of the new trend and approach Russia assumed in the new Millennium. An important and inspiring article written by David Mendeloff “*Pernicious History as a Cause of National Misperceptions: Russia and the 1999 Kosovo War*” has been utilized in the analysis of the Russian’ involvement during the conflict. In the section about the “Myths” on Kosovo and the lessons, some aspects come from the paper “*Russia, NATO and European security after Kosovo*”, written by Oksana Antonenko.

In the final part of the last chapter, in analyzing the economic relations, for data it was consulted, among other sources, the Observatory of Economic Complexity (<https://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/>). An important reference for the Russian influence on the region was the article “*Russia’s role in the Balkans- Cause for Concern?*” by David Clark and Dr. Andrew Foxall, as well as the policy brief “*Assessing Russia’s Economic Footprint in Serbia*” written by the Serbian based non-profit, non-governmental “Center for Democracy Foundation (FCD)”. The results of the Serbian ‘Foreign policy perception comes from the study “*Public Perception of Serbia’s Foreign Policy*”, by Milos Popovic and Sonja Stojadinovic of the independent think-tank “Belgrade Center for Security Policy (BCSP)”.

CHAPTER I

THEORY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND WORLD ORDER AND EXPLANATION OF THE “*BRATSTVO*”

Before starting the main research's topic of this thesis on the Brotherhood between the Russians and the Serbs, it will be here dealt the topic of the theory of International Relations and the Great Powers. It is important to provide some theoretical notions in the framework of IR studies to this thesis, because it will help in understanding the past behaviors and the reflections it has to the present situation.

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia founded itself in a new World Order in which was not anymore considered a Great Power. The war in Yugoslavia became one of the first “test” on the new status of the Russian Federation. It will be explained in the second chapter the exact dynamics of the participation in the international decision-making process of Moscow, and the struggle to gain international recognition of a “Great Power” during the Yeltsin administration.

1.1 Mearsheimer and the five assumptions on International system

The most proper theory used to deal with the Great Powers topic is considered to be Neorealism. Kenneth Waltz's studies and John Mearsheimer's are the most indicated in order to analyze the role of Russia in the new World Order. It must be however clarified that the intention here is not to go too much in detail in explaining the theory, but what it is important is to delineate the key points which are related to the Great Powers topic. In the third section of this chapter, it will be presented the correlation between the Realism and the foreign policy output.

It should be clarified that in this work, when it is referred on neo-realism it has to be related to the studies of Kenneth Waltz, while when it will be mentioned the realism approach it will be mainly associated with the classical Realism, whose most prominent scholars are Edward H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau.

Generally, the realism and neorealism are taken in consideration without making too many distinctions between each other when it comes to simplify the contrast and difference

from other major schools of IR, such as Liberalism or Constructivism, as it will be the case in this research.

The concept of anarchy is to be considered as the starting point of the neorealism ideas. According to neorealists the international arena is anarchical in regards to the distribution of capabilities among countries. The international structure is anarchic since it does not have a central authority, and it is instead characterized by different sovereign states which theoretically are equal. As Mearsheimer stated” *Great Powers are always searching for opportunities to gain power over their rivals, with hegemony as their final goal.*”¹

Another important element is the decentralization of structure in the neorealists’ World Order. The third crucial element is the behavior of actors (sovereign states) involved, their goal is selfish, they seek to protect their interests to the detriment of other states. This is because not only do they wish to ensure their own survival, but also because, according to offensive realism, their goal is to maximize their sphere of influence.

The second of the five assumptions of Mearsheimer of the international system (the first was that the international system is anarchical) is that Great Powers have some offensive capability; the third is that states can never know for sure about others intentions,² and they are therefore stuck in the “Security Dilemma”,³ where there is general mistrust which affects cooperation among states and as a result it generates a balance of power scenario where the great powers are not in a position to become hegemon.

Unfortunately, this is what has happened following the end of the Cold War, where the United States started acting unilaterally, without consulting international organizations nor other Great Powers.

This thesis in part deal with the war in Yugoslavia, where it was evident how Russia, despite claiming to be regarded as Great Power, was left out on several decisive actions, as in NATO bombings in Bosnia and later in Belgrade.

Moscow, given its “Slavic ties” with Belgrade, considered to have some sort of sphere of influence on the region, therefore Russia tried to cooperate with the Western democracies in order to become mediator in the crisis. However, due to several domestic and international

¹ J. J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, W.W. Norton & Co., New York, USA, 2011, p. 29.

² Ivi, p. 30.

³ See J.H. Herz, *Political Realism and Political Idealism*, 1951.

constraints, the new Russian Federation failed at its early stage to become a decisive actor in the international arena.

Going back to Mearsheimer assumptions, the fourth consists in the maintenance of their territorial integrity and its political autonomy, according to him, “*States can and do pursue other goals, but security is their most important objective*”⁴The last assumption is that Great Powers behave in a rational way. Their thinking is strategic, they consider the outcome of their actions in the long-term as well as in the immediate.

From the neorealist point of view, depending on the distribution of capabilities and the number of actors (which can be considered Great Powers) there can be three different outcomes in terms of geopolitical order. When there is only one Great Power, it is unipolar, as United States was trying to achieve after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, when there are two Great Powers is Bipolar, as it was the case during the Cold War era, and finally it can be Multipolar, when more than two Great Powers have nearly equal amounts of influence.

The main element which characterized states’ behavior, according to Mearsheimer is fear. This neorealist theory requires and deserves deeper analyses; however, it would not be compliant with the central question of this thesis. What is important in this situation is to understand that when it comes to explain the concept of Great Powers, neorealism is the most complete and accurate. It is here essential in this work to insert the evolving role of Russian Federation in the new World Order and the implications it has on the “Brotherhood” with Serbia.

1.2 Great Powers

In this section of the work it will be presented the definition of Great power and the “subsystem”. Neorealist theory analyses rely mainly on these two concepts in the international arena, in which Great Powers still own an important influence on the developments of regional areas of the world. In this work the regional area on which the “game” between Great Powers is applied is the Western Balkans, more specifically Serbia. Neorealists consider that this “game” determines the evolution of global affairs. In the nineties there were doubts in the

⁴ J. J. Mearsheimer, cit. p. 31.

Western scholars and politicians on the Great Power Status of Russia which Yeltsin was eager to demonstrate. Before jumping into the Neorealists concept of Great Power, it will be here presented a definition that includes all the main features, and those will be used as a reference throughout all the thesis.

One definition, which comprehend elements of hard and soft power, and to a greater extent material and non-material features, is the one of Tatiana Shakleina; according to the MGIMO Professor “we define a contemporary Great Power as a country that exhibits the following characteristic:

- 1) It possesses the traditional characteristics of a Great Power: territory, natural resources, population, intellectual resources, economic, military, technological potential, and high cultural and educational potential.
- 2) It is largely independent in conducting its domestic and foreign policy in order to safeguards its national interests.
- 3) It exerts visible influence on macro-regional and world politics and on the policies of other countries (world regulation policy).
- 4) It has a historic tradition of thinking and acting globally, a tradition and culture of exerting influence on world politics and acting as a dominant or very active and influential player.
- 5) It has the will to realize a great power strategy.”⁵

A further element which needed to be integrated in this scheme, is the international recognition. For instance, Hedley Bull, firmly believes that in order to be consider a Great Power, a state must be recognized by the others (Great Powers).

According to him, not only it is required the possession of material capabilities, such as economic or military, but also a Great Power have to be “*recognized by the others to have (...) certain special duties and rights. Great Powers, for instance, assert the right, and are accorded to the right, to play a part in determining issues which affect the pace and the security*

⁵ T. Shakleina, *A Russian Perspective on the Twenty-First Century*, in *Challenge and Change: Global Threats and the State in the Twenty-first Century International Politics*, edited by N. C. Noonan, V. Nadkarni, Palgrave, USA, 2016.

of the whole international system ”.⁶ In 1977, when Bull wrote “*The Anarchical Society*”, this definition applied perfectly for the United States and for the Soviet Union. Was the new-born Russian Federation still to be considered as a Great Power in the nineties? Shakleina’s definition summarized the nature of a Great Power. The latter is a state which exerts influence on the global politics (more than the others), focusing its efforts and resources, which could be material or non-material, on a specific region.

It is therefore evident the fundamental role that such states have in the contemporary world. One of the main difficulties is to measure the power of a country, many scholars struggled to find a scientific method which could identified this concept. For instance, Kenneth Waltz also underlined this aspect; according to the father of neorealists “*States have different combination of capabilities which are difficult to measure and compare, the more so since the weight to be assigned to different items changes with time (...) we need to rank them through capability (...) Historically despite the difficulties, one finds general agreement about who the great powers of a period are, with occasional case doubt about marginal cases.*”⁷

Given the difficulty of defining, Waltz suggests that only common sense can answer it. He also gives a definition of Great Power which assess more importance on material features, according to the American professor “*Their rank (of Great Powers) depends on how they score on all of the following items: size of population and territory, resources endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability and competences.*”⁸

However, the role, social or formal it may be, cannot give a precise criterion of Great Power. Realists such as Morgenthau questioned the reliability on that criteria, according to the German-born American political scientist, in 1915 “*The diplomatic rank of Great Powers of Portugal, Spain and Sweden was conceded only out of courtesy.*”⁹ This position is shared also with Martin Wight who believed that the formal role is conditioned by political reasons, as when at the end of World War II the Big Three coopted China and France, when the recognition contained elements of the conventional or the wishful.¹⁰ If we apply this theory (we have to keep in mind that this are all American and Western scholars) to Russia in the post-Soviet era,

⁶ H. Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, Palgrave MacMillan, USA, 1977, pp. 194-196.

⁷ K. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, USA, 1979, p. 131.

⁸ *Ivi.*

⁹ H. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, Knopf, USA, 1978, p. 348-9.

¹⁰ M. Wight, *Power Politics*, Penguin (for) Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1979, pp. 45-6

it is evident that it possessed some of the features, such as the size of the population and territory and military strengths; however, in the Yeltsin period the economic capability and the political stability were lacking. This resulted in an automatic and rapid decision of the international community (USA in the first place) of “*déclassement*” from as Status of Great Power to a “Normal and Regional” Power. This despite the fact that Russia managed to keep its seats at the UN Security Council and the involvement in other international organizations.

Yeltsin pursued in claiming to be recognized as Great Power by the others. During the war in the Balkans, which will be analyzed in the second chapter, after the assertiveness behavior of following the West, from 1993, Russian foreign policy makers assumed a more independent approach, insisting on their crucial role in the conflict given their “Brotherhood” and its influence on the region.

1.3 Realism and foreign policy outputs

As it will be explained in the second chapter, liberal ideas dominated the Russian Foreign Policy discourse and their understanding of international relations from 1992 to 1994. These optimistic view about the post-Soviet Union era was also confirmed by the statement of Russian Military doctrine of 1993: “*the world was going through a transition from the former global division and confrontation to a system of relations of global cooperation*”¹¹, and by the words of the foreign minister A. Kozyrev who assessed the international environment “favorable” by adding that there were “*neither potential enemies nor military threats to Russian interests*”¹². This thinking influenced also the foreign policy and therefore the role and status in the International affairs of Russia during Yeltsin years. Following the Realist assumptions states are:

- 1) the main actors on the International arena
- 2) unitary actors
- 3) are considered to be rational actors

¹¹ For the full document: https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2000_05/dc3ma00.

¹² A. Kozyrev, “*The Ministry of Foreign Affairs Proposes and Defends a Foreign Policy for Russia*”, *Rossiiskie vesti*, December 3rd 1992, p. 2.

4) international order is anarchical and it creates a permanent security vacuum.¹³

From these assumptions it can be derived that the ambition of the foreign policy of a state is primarily determined by the relative power's position it has.¹⁴ Therefore, according to this first hypotheses, external factor have a more direct impact on the foreign policy of a state rather than internal, however, it is still required to quantify the external constraints.

According to Peter Gourevitch "*However compelling external pressures may be, they are unlikely to be fully determining, save for the case of outright occupation. Some leeway of response to pressure is always possible, at least conceptually*".¹⁵ He criticized the weakness of this classification and that it is sometimes in-determined and he suggested that IR and domestic politics are so interrelated that they should be analyzed as whole; moreover, he believed that "*the international system is not only a consequence of domestic politics and structures but a cause of them*".¹⁶ This hypothesis applied to weak states which are facing formidable external constraints and the latter determined primarily the foreign policy of a state. According to Christian Thorun "*In cases where relatively weak states have to face a stark choice between cooperation and confrontation with the dominant power, they choose to cooperate.*"¹⁷

Therefore, the problem of this Realist approach comes when this constraints are not so formidable and a state could choose between different foreign policy options. Following the Waltz realism, a state would opt for balancing against power. However, this thesis was invalidated by the fact that Russia and Europe did not balance against the unilateralism of the US power in the nineties.¹⁸ Thorun believes that "*to overcome the problem of indeterminacy, we must specify state interests and ideas on strategy (...) scholars must ask how the foreign policy leadership defines the national interests of the country.*"¹⁹

¹³ R. O. Keohane, S. D. Krasner, "International Organization and the Study of World Politics" International Organization, vol. 52, no. 4 (Autumn 1998), p. 658.

¹⁴ C. Thorun, *Explaining Change in Russian Foreign Policy: The Role of Ideas in Post-Soviet Russia's Conduct towards the West*, Palgrave MacMillan, USA, 2009, p. 17.

¹⁵ P. Gourevitch, "*The Second Image Reversed: The International Sources of Domestic Politics*", International Organization, vol. 32, no.4 (Autumn 1978), p. 911.

¹⁶ *Ivi.*

¹⁷ C. Thorun, cit. p. 18.

¹⁸ See W. C. Wohlfort, "*The Stability of a Unipolar World*", Quarterly Journal: International Security, vol. 24. No. 1 (Summer 1999), p. 5-41.

¹⁹ *Ivi*, p. 21.

The scheme in the following page illustrates how a foreign policy output results from the interaction between a state and its international environment.

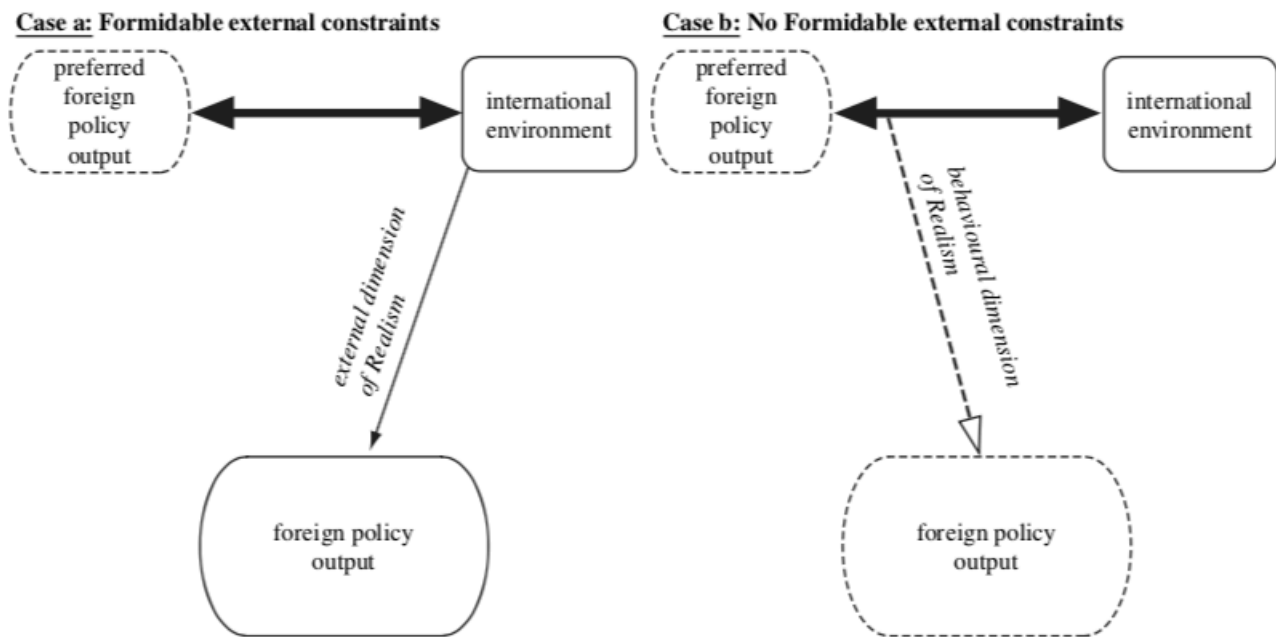


Figure 1: Realism and foreign policy outputs, from “*Explaining Change in Russian Foreign Policy: The Role of Ideas in Post-Soviet Russia’s Conduct towards the West*” by C. Thorun, p. 20.

The broken line of the boxes and of the arrow of the case (b) symbolize the indeterminate and inconclusive expectations for the country’s preferred foreign policy output. If this realist approach is applied to the Russian foreign policy of the nineties (as it will be explained in the second chapter) it could be used to explain some of the choices made by Kozyrev and Primakov, which were a combination between domestic tensions, international constraints and the desire to be recognized as a Great Power.

One of the main questions of this research is to explain how Russia, despite the increasingly fragile domestic situation, has been able to maintain the appearance of Great Power status internationally.

1.4 Myth of Slavic Brotherhood

After having introduced the theoretical framework of this work, it will be here explained the Myth of the Slavic Brotherhood from an historical perspective. As the very goal of this

thesis is to verify such *Bratstvo* throughout the years, it will be now presented from its appearance and how it managed to survive for centuries. A full and deep analysis of the Russian-Serbian relations before the nineties is not the scope of this thesis. In the attempt to reconstruct briefly this impossible task, it will be only mentioned the major features and the historical crucial moments relevant to the current debate about Russian-Serbian relations.

According to Veljko Vujacic: “*Founding myths are not frozen in time but are reinterpreted, reinforced (or weakened) and reconstituted in the light of new collective experiences (...) Only by engaging in comparison across time can elements of political-cultural continuity in each case be identified, while taking into account the way in which they were transformed by new collective experiences, political interests and ideologies.*”²⁰

It is therefore essential, in order to evaluate the Russian-Serbian Brotherhood through the years accurately, to keep in mind this approach. The presupposition of a continuous historical friendship between Russians and Serbians is a constant element in the East versus West narrative.²¹

The instinctive pan-Slavic traditional link between these two *Narodi* is important in this work in order to evaluate whether it has a direct impact on the foreign policies. Especially during the Balkan War in the nineties, if it affected or not Russian’ decision-making elites. The pan-Slavic argument refers to a special relation between Serbs and Russian based on cultural, linguistic, ethnic and religious elements. According to Van Evera “*The Myth of Slavic Brotherhood is largely a self-glorifying and other-denigrating interpretation of events, largely at odds with the general historical consensus.*”²²

There are different interpretations on whether this bond has been playing a decisive role in Moscow’s decision, and vice-versa on the Serbian desire to turn to the East rather than the West. From Belgrade’s point of view the positive attitude to Russia justifies the Serbian domestic discourse, for example in the words of Sinisa Atlagic:” *This conception has been dominant for the complex political cooperation between Russia and Serbia for the past three Centuries. Russian military, financial, political and educational support of the Orthodox*

²⁰ V. Vujacic *Nationalism, Myth, and the State in Russian and Serbia: Antecedents of the Dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia*, Cambridge University Press, USA, 2015, p. 7.

²¹ A. Konitzer, “*Serbia Between East and West: Bratstvo, Balancing, and Business on Europe’s Frontier*”, an NCEEER Working Paper, Stamford University, USA, 2010, p. 7.

²² S. W. Van Evera “*Hypotheses on Nationalism and War*”, *International Security* 18. 1994, pp. 5-39-

brothers in their battle for the liberation from the Ottoman's yoke in XVII and XIX centuries as well as the spiritual and cultural closeness of the two nations it remains the foundation for the present empathy towards Russians, and at the same time it constitutes the basis of the image of Moscow as the "elder Sister, defender a savior" of the Orthodox spirit and of the Serbs."²³

The question is whether "*basking in the old glory of Russian-Serbian relations*"²⁴ could be applied to recent years, despite admitting the great historical role of Russia in the Balkans and its particular importance for Serbia in the past.²⁵

However, this narrative mentioned above is much more complicated as it is presented and scholars and historical documents has not come to an unequivocal support neither for a persistent "Brotherhood" nor for the critical vision of a relationship marked by betrayal and fake promises of support.²⁶ In other words it emerged a division between "Russophiles" and "Russophobes".

One of the arguments against this alliance *a priori* lies in the difference of pan-Slavic concept which had a different focus, for Russians it was oriented against Germany, while Serbians were always involved with anti-Turkish sentiment; as a matter of fact, Russians and Serbians have been allies for less than two decades.²⁷

On the opposite side historically, Russia had three core interests in the Balkans and the South-East of Europe, firstly strategic, secondly cultural, and thirdly religious.²⁸ According to Tskygankov strategically speaking Russian diplomacy concerned the Balkans as essential for the security of its state and especially for the stability of their frontiers and in blocking the expansion of the other European Great Powers in this geo-strategical important region.

Russia in the XIX century intervened during the Serbian Revolution backing the Serbs and following the victory over Turkey it facilitated the Serbian independency with the Treaty

²³ S. Altlagic, "Towards the problem of Russia's image abroad: The example of Serbia". Philosophy Journal 8 (1). p. 115.

²⁴ S. Djukic, *Serbia's relations with Russia: an overview of the Post-Yugoslav (Post-Soviet) Era*. Included in *The Challenge of Serbia's foreign policy*, ed. J. Minic, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung & European Movement in Serbia, Belgrade, Serbia, 2015, pp. 32-33.

²⁵ Ivi.

²⁶ For a more detailed analysis of Russian-Serbian relations see; *The Serbs and Russian Pan-Slavism: 1875-1878*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, USA 1967 by D. McKenzie, and *Russia's Balkan Entanglements 1806-1914*. Cambridge University Press, New York, USA, 1991.

²⁷ Chapter 8 by M. Andersen, included in, *Russia and Europe: Conflict or Cooperation*, by M. Webber, MacMillan Press LTD, UK, 2000, p. 183.

²⁸ G. Castellan, *History of the Balkans: from Mohammed the Conqueror to Stalin*, Columbia University Press, East European Monographs, Boulder, New York, USA, 1992.

of Santo Stefano signed in 1878. Other treaties such as the Treaty of Berlin or the Treaty of Bucharest testified and certificated the triumph of the interest of Russian and an image of defender of Slavic-Orthodoxy and at the same time it led to a creation of stereotypes. XIX century was a century of insurrections and a progressive recognition of Belgrade autonomy; yet, despite the common political goals and the brotherhood sealed by language blood and religion, between Russia and Serbia it developed a fluctuating and ambivalent relationship.

For the skeptical of the special relationship any intervention pro-Serbs prior to the first World War was merely a response to the Great Power's interests in the region and the competition against the Hapsburgs or Ottomans rather than a romantic desire to assist their fellow Orthodox and Slavic people.²⁹

In 1913 during the second Balkan War between Serbia and Bulgaria Russia took the side of Belgrade. Nevertheless, Moscow started mobilizing against the Austro-Hungarian empire in the crisis of July 1914 and in fact Russia did side with Serbia against the ultimatum from Austria-Hungarian which triggered the first World War.³⁰

The Revolution of October 1917 ended the "cordial" relations and the proof lies in the fact that there was not even mutual recognition between the Kingdom of Serbs Croats and Slovenes (1918-1929) and lately Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1929-1941) and the USSR until 1941.³¹

Many scholars agree on the fact that Russia mostly provided assistance when this was beneficial for itself, for instance with territorial gains they justified it using the pretext of defending their fellows Slavs, testifying once again the strategical and utilitarianist nature of the "Brotherhood". Therefore many "cynical" scholars convey that Russia has repeatedly used Serbia as a pawn in the Great Powers' Balkan's game. The "special relations" are always caught between Serbia and the West and Russia and the West, and in this work, it will be studied when the romantic mutual loyalty outplayed the rational foreign policy strategy of both countries. It can be concluded that for Serbia the pattern of this *Bratstvo* has been consisting in an alternation between moments of closer ties in period of war and crisis and a turn towards West in the stable and pacific era.

²⁹ A. Konitzer, cit. p. 8.

³⁰ M. Andersen, cit. p. 183.

³¹ *Ivi.*

There is a dangerous outcome from the myth of “Slavic Brotherhood”; historical memory and analogical reasoning generates misperceptions. It happens that, by using inappropriate analogies to guide foreign policy-making, the latter produce conflict causing misperceptions.³² In order to avoid bad policies and misperceptions, decision-makers have to utilize better analogies or developed a deeper knowledge of history.³³

According to Shimko “*Mythologized and distorted notions of the past are a source of ideas, assumptions and images that can shape perceptions in ways that are subtle but no less important than concrete lessons of the past.*”³⁴ These lessons will be applied in chapter three of this thesis in analyzing the Russian response to the Kosovo crisis in the late nineties.

As far as the religious and cultural ties concerns, Russia succeeds in developing a strong link in the fate of the Balkan Christian- Orthodox Slavs from 1870. Slavic solidarity and the Orthodox Slavic reciprocity, are at the basis of the *Bratstvo*, and became one of the dominant driving forces which had an influence on the Russian policy in the Balkans.³⁵

This myth of Slavic Brotherhood started to circulate in the official circles in Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria and Russia and it had an influence on many intellectuals in those years.³⁶ A naïve believe that Moscow shall “always protect Serbians” often led to the unrealistic expectations and demands, which has caused frustrations and accusations of betrayal.³⁷ For the sake of the Pan-Slavic ideals of solidarity, brotherhood and reciprocity, Russia Empire tried to maintain good relationship between Slavic countries such as in the second Balkan wars between Serbia and Bulgaria when Russia became the creator of the Serbian-Bulgarian treaty; St. Petersburg, in this occasion adopted a Pan Slavonic policy, as it wanted to negotiate and find diplomatic agreement over territorial claims between Bulgarians and Serbians.³⁸

The Orthodox Church has been playing an influent role in the politics of both countries.

³² R. Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma”, World Politics 30, 1978, pp. 167-214-

³³ R. E. Neustadt, E. May, “Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision-Makers”. New York: Free Press, 1986.

³⁴ K. L. Shimko, “Metaphors and Foreign Policy Decision Making”, Political Psychology 15. 1994, pp. 655-71.

³⁵ V. B. Sotirovic, “Russia’s Balkan Politics: From the Politics of Pan-Slavic Reciprocity of the Tsarist Russia to the “Realpolitik” of Gazprom Russia”, Serbian Political Thought, vol. 51, n. 1. 2016, pp. 85-86.

³⁶ See N. Popov, *Srbija i Rusija of Kocine krajine do Sv. Andrejevske skupstine*. Svezka 1. Belgrade, Serbia, 1870.

³⁷ A. Timofeev, “Myths about Russia and Dynamics of the Development of Russian Foreign Policy Interests in the West Balkans” included in “The Third Report of the Monitoring Russia Serbia Relations Project”. ISAC Fund, Belgrade, Serbia, 2009. p. 53.

³⁸ V. B. Sotirovic, cit. p. 86.

Especially the Serbian Orthodox Church has often been considered a political organization first and secondarily a religious organization.³⁹ It is obviously not the only country where the politicization of religion is a reality, this phenomenon it is present in Russia, Israel, Iran, Spain only to mention few examples. For the purpose of this research the most emblematic example of the influence of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the foreign policy is the Kosovo question. For Serbs the founding myth of the nations is the same one of the Religion, this is because Orthodoxy, unlike Islam or Catholicism is not universal, it is linked to the nation. Therefore, the Battle of Kosovo Polje is consecrated as a religious event only by the Serbian Church while for the Russian Orthodox Church it is not even on the horizon.⁴⁰ There is general consensus on the fact that Orthodoxy is of huge social importance in both countries. Especially in the nineties there was a certain degree of euphoria on the Russian Orthodox Church as the “solving problem machine” of the society. Nevertheless, it has an enormous symbolic importance on the people, and unlike other institutions it is everlasting and unquestionable.⁴¹ In January 2019 His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and the Primate of the Serbian Orthodox Church, His Holiness Patriarch Iriney, met in Moscow.⁴² Patriarch Kirill said that *“While differing in certain things, such as geography, location and history, our Churches have very much in common; first and foremost, the host of martyrs. Our martyrs were always faithful to the Orthodoxy, they laid down their life for the Church and instructed us to be faithful to the church unity, to preserve the purity of Orthodoxy and to exert every effort to prevent winds from destroying the unity of the orthodox Church today.”*⁴³

This recent meeting testifies the deep connection between the two churches and the link between the Serbian and Russian people. The myth of Slavic Brotherhood is important in the context of this thesis as it provides the foundation of the debate in the post-Soviet era between the two ideological-political streams.

³⁹ S. P. Ramet, *The Politics of the Serbian Orthodox Church*” included in *Serbia: Politics and Society Under Milosevic and After*, edited by S. P. Ramet and V. Pavlakovic. University of Washington Press, USA, 2005. p. 256.

⁴⁰ *Ivi.*

⁴¹ M. Blagojevic, “*Russian/Soviet Cultural Influence in Serbia/ Yugoslavia (The Religious Pendulum)*” included in “*Serbian - Russian cooperation in the field of culture and religion*” Monitoring Russia Serbia Relations Project, Seventh Report. ISAC Fund, Belgrade, Serbia, 2010, p. 36.

⁴² Full Video of the meeting: http://www.spc.rs/eng/primates_serbian_and_russian_orthodox_churches_meet.

⁴³ “*Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church meets with his Holiness Patriarch Iriney of Serbia*” The Russian Orthodox Church Department for External Church Relations <https://mospat.ru/en/2019/01/29/news169660/>.

The General debate about the national interest over the crisis in the Balkans provoked a fraction in the Russian parliament. On one side (the conservative opposition) the stream which emphasized the importance of the historical, ethnical, religious with Serbians, on the other side, the one which was running the country (Yeltsin's Administration) stressed the importance of cooperating with the West and integrate Russia in the New World into a broader Euro-Atlantic space.

1.5 Relationship from WWII until the end of the Cold War

In this final section of the first chapter, it will be briefly mentioned the relationship in the Second World War and right after, with the famous "Tito-Stalin" split which influenced the "Slavic Brotherhood" in the Cold-War Era.

As it was mentioned above, between 1918 and 1941 there was not mutual diplomatic recognition. After the October Revolution of 1917, the new state started a form of foreign policy in the Balkans which was different and unrelated to the past. USSR in the first years of the WWII maintained its neutrality, even after the harsh invasion and destruction of Yugoslavia by Hitler's troupes. USSR in the Second World War backed the partisan's forces led by Tito (which is a Croat) and not the Serbian nationalists guided by Mihajlovic. However, the situation changed with the arrival of the Red Army in Belgrade which liberated Serbia from the Germans in 1944. Subsequently this intervention, Stalin installed a vassal regime which had to respond to the Kremlin; this state, which lasted until 1948, had its roots in previous agreements between Roosevelt, Churchill and the same Stalin.⁴⁴ Despite the control over Yugoslavia in this intra-time, it must be underlined that Serbia, and the Balkans in general, remained a relative low interest of Moscow's Foreign Policy.

On June 29th 1948 the first schism within the Communist bloc left the world astonished. The resolution accused Belgrade of "pursuing a policy unfriendly towards the Soviet Union and in both domestic and foreign affairs deviated from the Marxist-Leninist line and thereby placed Yugoslavia and its Communist leaders outside the family of fellow Communist parties,

⁴⁴ A. Timofeev, cit. p. 57.

outside the united Communist front, and consequently outside the Cominform.”⁴⁵It was a surprise move because Stalin counted on Yugoslavia as a trusted and reliable ally which served as a model for other democracies; moreover USSR seemed to have strong interests in keeping good relations with the Yugoslav Communists guided by Tito.⁴⁶

Another testimony of the friendship lies in the words of Josip Tito when in April 1945, following the signature on the Soviet-Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Assistance, declared: “*the peoples of Yugoslavia have convinced themselves over the past year that in the great USSR they have found the most honorable ally and the strongest protector who assists in our development in time of peace as in war.*”⁴⁷According to Vladimir Dedijer, Yugoslavia was pursuing a distinct path towards socialism which clashed irrevocably with the Soviet concept the hierarchical organization of the COMINFORM (Communist Information Bureau), where USSR was at the top of the socialist bloc.⁴⁸

The clash was ideological in the first place. Secondly Stalin firmly condemned the expansionist’ Yugoslav’s policy towards its neighbors, such as Albania and “*La questione di Trieste*”; the leader of the USSR was worried that it might antagonized the Soviet Union war’s allies and it became a constant point of contention.⁴⁹

However, according to many scholars the 1948 Tito-Stalin split was mostly a personal dispute between the two prominent leaders and the clash is in any case regarded as the greatest political failure of Stalin.

In the context of the research of this thesis the Cold War is important because under the guidance of Marshall Tito, Yugoslavia tried to pursue a balanced position, between the NATO and the Warsaw Pact and managed, thanks to his personality and capabilities to preserve its own idea of a socialist state. In May 1955 Nikita S. Khrushchev together with the Soviet premier Nikolai A. Bulganin flew to Belgrade to visit Marshall Tito. They agreed that each country was free to shape policy in accordance with their ideas and national conditions. The July Plenum of the CPSU CC had a significant impact on the progress of Soviet-Yugoslav

⁴⁵ Resolution published on the 29th of June 1948 on *Pravda*, inserted in *The Cominform: Minutes of the Three Conferences 1947/1948/1949*, by G. Procacci, Feltrinelli, Milano, Italy, 1994, pp. 610-621.

⁴⁶ J. Perovic, “*The Tito-Stalin split: a reassessment in light of new evidence*” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 9 (2): 32-63. 2007, p. 32.

⁴⁷ L. I. Gibianskii, *Sovetskii Soyuz I novaya Yugoslaviya*, 2011, p. 143.

⁴⁸ See Josip Broz Tito: *Prilozi za biografiju* by V. Dedijer, Kultura, Zagreb, 1953.

⁴⁹ See “*Tretskii vopros v kontse vtoroi mirovoi voony (1944-1945)*”, by L. Y. Gibianskii, *Slavyanovedenie* (Moscow) no. 3, 2001, pp. 3.26.

relations, Khrushchev at the Plenum stated that “*no effort should be spared by the Communist parties to act as irresistible pulling force for the healthy elements in the LCY and for the peoples of Yugoslavia.*”⁵⁰ The Tito-Khrushchev letter between June 22nd and September 27th 1954 represented the first contact since the Split.⁵¹ In the following year the final seal of the reconciliation between 1953 and 1957 is represented by the joint declaration in June 20 1956 signed in Moscow which stated that “The conditions of Socialist development are different in different countries” and invited to cooperate in “complete freedom of will and equality”.⁵² The Talks in Moscow however proved to be unsuccessful, this is even more obvious by the words of Tito who declared that “*The Soviets were not very happy with how the talks ended and with the Declaration.*”⁵³ Yugoslavia founded, together with India, Egypt, Indonesia and Ghana the Non-Aligned Movement, the first conference was held in Belgrade in 1961. Yugoslavia geopolitical situation during the Cold War is somehow similar to the Serbian one of the XIX centuries which managed to emancipate taking advantage from the rivalry between the Austro-Hungarian and Tsarist Empires.

Analogously, since the Split Belgrade were able to survive in the bipolar tension embedding in the competition between Moscow and Washington. Tito stayed until his death (in 1980) an orthodox communist, but if in 1956 supported the Soviet intervention in Hungary, he then condemned the Prague Spring and in 1979 at the Cuba Summit fought vividly in order to avoid any denaturing towards a “pro-Soviet” conduct of the Non-Aligned Movement.

One more important aspect which deserves attention in the framework of the “Brotherhood” is that both Orthodox Churches were repressed during the Cold-War era and it slowed down the religious bond between the two people. Yugoslavia was hostile to religion and it was allowed only in the private sphere. It represented an alternative to socialism as organized religion could be a base for opposition as they were somewhat of a more abstract political organization (not being a political party).⁵⁴ In Soviet Union Orthodox clergy and

⁵⁰ Plenum of the CPSU CC, July 4th- 12th 1955, transcript of the report by Khrushchev, July 9th 1955.

⁵¹ Full text of the correspondence included in “*New evidence from the Former Yugoslav Archives*” by S. Rajak, Cold War International History Project Bulletin, Issue 12/13 2008.:https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/CWIHPBulletin12-13_p5_0.pdf.

⁵² The full official text of the Declaration is available at AJ, ACKSKJ, 507/IX, 199/I-69.

⁵³ Transcript from Tito Reporting before the Federal Executive Council on his visits to USSR, France and Romania. Belgrade July 10th 1956. AJBT, KPR, I-2/7-1, 130-170.

⁵⁴ R. Radic, “*Crvke kao protivnici komunistickog sistema u Jugoslavije: slicnost I razlike*” included in *Disidentsvo u Suvremenoj Povijesti* by N. Kisic Kolanovic, Z. Radelic, K. Spehjak, Hrvatski Institut za Povijes, Zagreb, Croatia, 2010, p. 192.

active believers were considered anti-revolutionary and therefore they were persecuted and Churches and monasteries were confiscated by the government and either destroyed or converted to public use. Despite the unfriendly relation between Church and Soviet Government and the repressions, a large number of believers privately remained religious. In 1988 the situation changed, when the government supported the celebration of the millennial anniversary of the Baptism of Kievan Rus. Finally, in 1990 after 70 years of repression Metropolitan Alexy of Leningrad ascended the patriarchal throne, constituted the partial return of the Orthodox Church in Russia, and the religious relationship between Serbs and Russians could continue.

Another feature which is shared by the two nations is the honor and pride. These feelings which are deeply rooted in both societies have been influencing their foreign policy strategies and decisions. The conduct of the different rulers throughout the history of both *Narodi*, from Tsars to Kings, from Dictators to charismatic presidents, has been frequently marked by a great amount of “bold” and “heroic” moves, in the name of honor. This tendency of relying on the “Slavic Brotherhood” has been playing an influent role in the public opinion.

In the Cold War era, Soviet policies have been used to restrict and minimize the impact of Yugoslav policies towards other Eastern states, secondly Moscow eventually recognize that it could not change the “different path” chosen by Tito and that its influence was not that effective and it was limited. Starting from 1979 Yugoslavian economic situation start deteriorating. Internal factors such as increase of unemployment hyperinflation and the fall of dinar are among other reasons of this decline. The foreign debt was enormous, and despite this, USSR could not improve its relationship by implementing the trade with Yugoslavia and becoming the major partner nor were there any signs of a major realignment of USSR-YSFR trade.

<i>Percentage Change of Soviet Annual Trade with Yugoslavia</i>								
	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Exports	43.8	31.7	-6.0	-21.3	3.6	17.7	-8.1	-28.9
Imports	33.6	9.1	-7.7	-10.1	-20.3	1.7	-5.3	2.7

Figure 2: from” *The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in the 1980s: A Relationship in Flux*” p. 68.

The table in the previous page testifies how, despite increased activities between the two countries, the USSR have not stepped in and taken up the slack in Yugoslav trade.⁵⁵ The eighties could have been a decisive moment in the relationship, since USSR could have become a real economic and trade alternative of the West.

The influence is much more difficult to establish in the political sphere rather than in the economic terms and dependency. Soviet has been seeking political influence by means of economic involvement with Yugoslavia by using trade and coproduction agreements in those years but with scarce results. The Gorbachev's visit of March 1988 was the first by a Soviet general party since the Tito's death in 1980 and it was of a particular importance not only for Yugoslavia but it aimed also for other European states, such as Czechoslovakia, and in this way, Yugoslavia become a cornerstone of the new thinking in Foreign Policy by Gorbachev.⁵⁶

At the verge of the big social and political transformation which happened in Eastern Europe in the late eighties it seemed unclear the extent of the Yugoslavian dependency on the URSS. In 1990, before the beginning of the tumultuous nineties, in his article regarding the "special relationship" Chichok wrote that: *"What could be said is that the two leaderships recognized their limitation in relation to each other and acknowledged that the overall relationship was nowhere near as conflictual as in the past: nor is there much prospect for a renewal of the tension"*.⁵⁷

In the following chapter it will be analyzed how following the dissolutions of USSR and YSFR the *Bratstvo* was once again put under question.

Conclusion

To summarize the first chapter where it was given the theoretical, historical framework of analysis it could be said that: firstly, neo-realism is the most suitable theory for analyzing the Russian Foreign policy because the concept of anarchy which characterized the World Order and the distribution of capabilities among states could be applied to the situation of

⁵⁵ M. A. Cichock, *"The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in the 1980s: A Relationship in Flux"*, Political Science Quarterly, Vol. 105, No. 1 (Spring 1990), p. 68.

⁵⁶ *Ivi*, p. 72.

⁵⁷ *Ivi*, p. 74.

Russia in the nineties; its behavior could be explained by the desire to be internationally recognized.

Secondly, it was presented the main characteristics of Great Power, and why Russia is to be considered one of them, even though during the Yeltsin' administration due to internal and external constrains, Moscow adopted an ambiguous behavior between the Westernization and its own aspiration of re-become a Great Power in the post-Cold War World Order.

Thirdly, it was presented the concept which inspired this thesis, the so-called "Myth of Slavic Brotherhood". It was in the first place described what it means and the main characteristics which this two people share. and in a second moments it was analyzed the most important historical moments where this *Bratstvo* was more or less respected.

In conclusion, the three-hundred years relations between Russians and Serbians included patronage and cooperation, but also confrontation and disharmony. It could not be explained and is even more complicated to understand if it is seen in black and white stereotypes. It cannot be simplified between "tyrannical an evil Russian "and "Protector and Elder Sister". The only thing which can be said with certainty is that whenever in history decisions on the destiny of Serbians have been made, Russia has always attempt to be involved and to maintain a certain sphere of influence on the Region. Whether guided by strategic goals (aiming at protecting its own vital interests), or guided by the romantic vision of Slavic Brotherhood, Russia has been always keeping a special regard to their Orthodox Balkans fellows.

CHAPTER II

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE NEW BORN RUSSIAN FEDERATION AND THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA IN THE NINETIES

After introducing briefly in the first chapter some theory of IR and the main historical elements of the *Bratstvo* before the end of the Cold War, it is now time to focus on the central part of the work: how this special relationship managed to survive and transform after the dissolution of both the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, and if the so-called *Bratstvo* (Brotherhood) between Serbs and Russians has been always unconditionally existing.

As it has already been explained in the previous chapter, relationships during the Cold War era were complicated. Nevertheless, the spirit of brotherhood, especially among people, have not been vanishing, apparently. It is not something easy to explain in merely rational way. It has to be taken another step further in order to understand this bond. This section of the thesis will be focused on the tumultuous nineties.

In the last decade of the XX century, both *Narodi* have suddenly become independent. It is not the goal here to analyze and describe in detail the dissolution of the USSR and the SFRY, what it will be tried to achieve, is to catch the feelings and the ideas of the leaders and the population, and to understand the reasons behind some crucial decisions.

The aim of this work will be, on one side to explain under which difficult conditions the weak Russia had to, or was forced by external factors, to take decisions regarding the intervention in the Balkans, and on the other side, to show first the illusion, and then the frustration of what for many Serbs was perceived as a betrayal.

It is always important to keep in mind how history change quickly. Twenty years could appear as a short and irrelevant period in a centenary relationship. Despite all the events, as their mutual history has shown, they were always ready to re-negotiate, to shape, to adapt to new circumstances, in order to preserve their best interests.

In 1999, just few months before the election of president Vladimir Putin, right after NATO bombing on Yugoslavia who would have imagined, twenty years later, the very same man freshly elected being welcomed as a Rock star in Belgrade last January?⁵⁸

The answer to the questions will be answer in the final part of the work. Now it is required to go back thirty years; in November 1989, with the fall of the Berlin wall, when the Cold War era ended.

2.1 Dissolution of USSR and the SFRY

Before moving into an explanation and analysis on the two different motivation and different outcomes of the two dissolutions, it will be briefly explained the most important historical facts.

In a very short period of time between the end of the eighties and the beginning of the nineties in the Eastern bloc, a process of states dismemberment and new independent nations started. In 1991, the Soviet Union ended. Subsequently the coup attempts of August the power was suddenly in the hands of Boris Yeltsin, who was only elected one month before as the first president of the Russian Federation. Yeltsin and his circle, unprepared for this turn of events, didn't know what to do first.⁵⁹ Ministries of the new-born Russian Federation were also hesitating on what to do next; without a program to follow, and most dramatically, without much understanding of the current situation in the country, it seemed as Yeltsin in person did not know or did not want to know about the growing disorder all over the country.⁶⁰

The dissolution of the Soviet state was one of the biggest transformations of the twentieth century. It completely altered the world, provoking an end to half a century of communist-socialist domination in Eastern Europe, breaching the Cold War division of the planet and prompting new disorders which the new millennium is still dealing with.

The breakup of the Soviet Union is full of paradoxes that challenged the understanding of politics. It was a nuclear superpower which was globally involved in its long history (more

⁵⁸ <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/01/25/theres-one-country-in-europe-where-putin-is-a-rock-star-russia-serbia-vucic-belgrade-kosovo/>.

⁵⁹ R. Medvedev, *Post-Soviet Russia – A Journey Through the Yeltsin Era*. Columbia University Press, New York, USA, 2000, p. 10.

⁶⁰ *Ivi*.

than seventy years...); this very much controversial political communist system had survived two world conflicts, overpassed millions of deaths; nevertheless, it has been able to launch the first man into space, and was regarded by a great number of political and socialist scientists as a successful model of transition to modernity.⁶¹ Despite all these achievements and the survival of tragic events, in a very short time-period, that superpower disintegrated, largely under the long-lasting pressure of its ethnic problems. It was an unpredictable event for many, including various experts, as Prof. Jerry Hough⁶² recalled: *“The flow of events was so rapid and so unexpected that no one had time to step back and reflect upon what had transpired. Observers tended to retain their interpretations of events even after they had been proved incorrect and to combine them with interpretations of later events in contradictory ways.”*⁶³

Now the new Russian Federation and its president Boris Yeltsin needed to start from zero and to decide in which direction to point, in order to complete the process of democratization in the best and fastest way possible. There is much that can be criticized on the manner and on the rapid steps towards the dissolution in 1991, however, by great surprise, it all happened in a more or less pacific way.

The Republics, starting with Lithuania in 1990, and followed by all the other fifteen, declared independence. On the Christmas night of 1991, the red Soviet flag was replaced by the Russian tricolor at the Kremlin, marking the end of the Communist superpower which has been in life since 1922. Michail Gorbachev leaving Moscow and abandoning his position became the last communist leader of the Soviet Union. As it will be explained later, not all the choices which were made helped the young country in their first years to stabilize the situation.

As far as the dissolution of the Yugoslavia concerns, the process was different and much more violent. The first signs of the breaks, as we have seen in the previous chapter, showed up in 1986 when the Scientific Academy of Belgrade published a *Memorandum*. The message of this extremely nationalist text triggered a chain of polemics coming from all over the other republics (Even the president Stambolic strongly criticized it). Even though it is difficult to calculate the direct impact of any written document on a society, this very text was composed

⁶¹ M. R. Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State*, Cambridge University Press, UK, 2004, p. 1.

⁶² Jerry Fincher Hough, American political science professor at Duke University.

⁶³ M.R. Beissinger, cit. p. 2.

by the most prestigious national institution and therefore it was considered and regarded much more relevant in respect to any other individual and personal contribution.⁶⁴

The *Memorandum* gave the ground basis for the renaissance of the Serbian nationalism and the theory of the “*Velika Srbija*” (“The Great Serbia”). The purpose of the document was to eventually create a national Serbian state. The figure who better than anyone managed to catch the potential of this renewed nationalism, which remained buried during the Tito’s years, is Slobodan Milosevic. Emblematic is his speech in 1989 in Kosovo Polje, during the celebration of the 600 years of the heavy defeat against the Ottoman empire.⁶⁵ In front of a galvanized crowd, the leader prepared the population to fight for their peoples and their territories: “*Six centuries later, we are once again engaged in battles and we need to be prepared to fight other battles. This are not armed battles; however, the latter could not be excluded in the future... (...)*”.⁶⁶ The “martyrdom” of Serbs, was presented as a unifying theme, and during the eighties there were constant recalling of Serbian struggles in the past wars and the rehabilitation of Mihailovic, the great *Cetnik* leader.⁶⁷

In 1991 the war in the Balkans started, firstly and very briefly in Slovenia, followed by the first two deaths in the contested auto proclaimed region of Krajina. At Pakrac on Easter during a battle for the control over the postal office a Serbian Rebel, Rajko Vukadinovic and a Croatian police officers, Josip Jovic, became the first victims of the War in Croatia. The institutional crisis started on May 15th 1991, when the mandate as President of the YSR of Borisav Jovic ended. Although the Croatian first-minister Stipe Mesic was supposed to replace him, the Serbs vetoed it and left deliberately vacant the seat. Between 1991 and 1992, following the declarations of independence of Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia and finally with the declaration of March 3rd the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia ended.

Officially the breakup of the federation is to be dated on April 27th 1992, when only two republics, Serbia and Montenegro, stayed and reconstituted the “Federal Republic of

⁶⁴ M. Mladenov, *An Orpheus Syndrome? Serbian Foreign Policy After the Dissolution of Yugoslavia*, Ch. 7 from *The Foreign Policies of Post-Yugoslav States: From Yugoslavia to Europe* by S. Keil, B. Stahl, Palgrave MacMillan, USA, 2014.

⁶⁵ This battle has an incredible emotional value for the Serbians as it represents an example of great heroism.

⁶⁶ Speech of S. Milosevic of the 28th June 1989 at Kosovo Polje, available in Serbian on : <http://www.pecat.co.rs/2011/06/govor-slobodana-milosevica-na-gazimestanu-1989-godine/>

⁶⁷ V. Drapac, “*The end of Yugoslavia*”. *Contemporary European History*, 10 (2), 2001, p. 325.

Yugoslavia”(FRY). However, the union between the two “survived” republics was not recognized as the official heir state of the SFRY by the international community.

Milosevic, from the moment he won the Serbian General election of December 1990 as representative of the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), selectively used democratic procedures to take power, holding elections for parliament in 1992, 1992, 1993 and 1997; however, all were marred by serious irregularities.⁶⁸ He also exploited the strategic position of a party leader to select the institutional arenas where the struggle of leadership would play out and to guarantee majority support in these organs.⁶⁹

The virtually simultaneous dissolution of the two multinational communist states (actually three considering Czechoslovakia, which will not be analyzed in this work), has been deeply analyzed by numerous scholars.⁷⁰ There is general agreement on “*the striking contrast between the relatively peaceful disintegration of the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia’s “velvet divorce” on the one hand, and Yugoslavia’s bloody collapse, on the other.*”⁷¹ There were also institutional factors, according to Bunce three elements were crucial in order to explain the two different outcomes “*The degree of decentralization of the Federation; the political power versus the institutional resources of the dominant republic, and the relationship between the military and the party state.*”⁷²

2.2 Building a new nation, nationalism and ethno-nationalism

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia all the newly independent states had to embark on the road of national building (“who are we the people”), and state building, in other words: “*defining state boundaries which can be accepted by all major political players and creating new political institutions which can inspire the loyalty of the*

⁶⁸ S. Horowitz, *From Ethnic Conflict to Stillborn reform: The Former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia*, Texas A&M University Press, USA, 2005. Chapter 10, p. 187.

⁶⁹ N. Vladislavljjevic, *Serbia ‘s Antibureaucratic Revolution: Milosevic, the Fall of Communism and Nationalist Mobilization*, Palgrave MacMillan, USA, 2008, p. 73.

⁷⁰ For further information see Bunce 2002.

⁷¹ V. Vujacic, *Perception of the State in Russia and Serbia: The Role of Ideas in the Soviet and Yugoslav Collapse*. Post-Soviet Affairs Journal, 2004, p. 165.

⁷² V. Bunce, *Subversive Institutions: The Design and Destruction of Socialism and the State*. Cambridge University Press, 1999. Cambridge, UK, p. 103.

people.”⁷³One of the main aspects which was discussed and analyzed by the political communities and scholars is the identity of the new Russia not only from a “inner” point of view, but most importantly its identity in the new world order.

The perception of the state in Russia and Serbia is very different, the role of ideas also played an important role in the Yugoslav and Soviet dissolution. Just to enter in the dimension of the deep connection between the Serbs and their State the words of Slobodan Jovanovic are explanatory. The Prime Minister of the Royal Yugoslav government-in-exile in London during WWII, wrote: “*The Serbs created their state after a long and bloody struggle against foreign powers. Consequently, among them, the state idea was connected to the national idea, and became a synonym of national freedom. There are peoples among whom the state idea was equated with a dynasty tradition, or a political ideology, or a specific state-legal order, or even with a certain level of material existence. These people, living in happier circumstances than the Serbs, did not have to see in the state the highest guarantor of their national freedom, for the sake of which one must be ready to bear the greatest sacrifices at any moment.*”⁷⁴

To understand the link between the state and the population these words are useful, one can perceive how profound this connection is. All these centuries of battles, of blood, (we must not forget that Serbs have lost the highest percentage of their population in the last century) have created the idea that “one” has to be prepared to sacrificed his own life for the sake of national freedom. Among the Serbs this feeling is confirmed by the way they start fighting in the war of Yugoslavia in the last decade of the XX century.

In contrast, Russians do not have such strong link with the state. The reasons of this “lack of nationalism” are historical, cultural and ethnical. When it came to build the new nations, both countries tried to establish, or re-establish a nationalist sentiment.

In the Yugoslavian case it was much easier, as we have already mentioned, it is something intrinsic, something which has been rooted in the souls of Serbian peoples for centuries. For Russians, because of their “uniqueness” of ethnic and cultural historical heritage, the binding to a nationalism was not automatically available and rooted in the people, on the contrary, the first leader and his government struggled to find the right ideas and discourse in

⁷³ V. Tolz, *Forging the nation: National identity and nation building in post-communist Russia*, Europe-Asia Studies. 1998, p. 993.

⁷⁴ S. Jovanovic *Jedan prilog za proucavanje srpskog nacionalnog karaktera* (1964), *Jugoslavijapublik I Srbska Knjezevna zadruga* Belgrade, Yugoslavia, 1991, p. 575.

order to unite what was left of Russia and Russians after the dissolution of the USSR. At the same time among the confused and insecure people as well as in the political class, a crisis of identity on both the international arena and in the sphere of Russia's national interest occurred.⁷⁵

In one of the first articles of the professor Veljko Vujacic, he identified four differences in the historical legacies of both states and nation-building:

- 1) "the historical absence of Diaspora and the Russian's Imperial identity which blurred the differences among different ethnic groups throughout the vast empire.
- 2) the difference in the internal dynamic of state-society relations in the Serbian and Russian cases. The Russian negative identification, because of the Stalin era of totalitarian state, is contrasted by the positive manner in which Serbs identified with both Serbian and Yugoslav state; as a result, *"the national culture and the state that characterizes nation-states failed to develop in the Russian case"*.
- 3) The difference in the collective memories and the historical experiences of both population; as Vujacic explained, the Serbian's Victimization at the hands of others (such as foreign occupiers and proximate ethnic groups in WWII) is to be opposed to the "own-hand" experience of victimization by the autocratic and Stalinist states.
- 4) The last fundamental difference is the *"institutional arrangements of communist federalism"*, in other words the Russians were not given in the Soviet Union their own cultural and political institutions as were the Serbs in Yugoslavia; therefore, the Yeltsin and his democratic party, had to create "Russian" Institution from zero".⁷⁶

These four differences are the basis from where to start the analysis on the two new born states, and the different outcomes after the dissolution of both socialist systems. It also explained why for Russia was more difficult to find a "bind" with the state, because for years citizens felt the distance with the state (or the Empire).

Starting by the last point, here lays the main difference; in the Serbian case there was a concrete separation at institutional level between "Yugoslavia" and "Serbia", which provided to the Serbs an institutional foundation to their nationalism. For Russians politicians the task of creating a version of nationalism was much more complicated as they were lacking

⁷⁵ A. Melville T.A. Shakleina, *Russian Foreign Policy in Transition: Concepts and Realities*, CEU Press, USA, 2005, p. X.

⁷⁶ V. Vujacic, *Perception of the State in Russia and Serbia: The Role of Ideas in the Soviet and Yugoslav Collapse*, cit. pp. 166-168.

institutions which could provide them the proper tools for a nationalist mobilization, as it was the case for example for Milosevic.

Another crucial point is the different and complicated ethnic composition of Russia, which obviously is an element that helped not in the forging of a Russian nationalism throughout history. Nevertheless, at the moment of the dissolution of Soviet Union, ethnic Russians jumped from 50 % in the USSR, to 81 % in the new-born Russian Federation,⁷⁷ “helping” the ethno-nationalist cause. It was the perfect moment to become a nation-state.

It is worth introducing the important dichotomy between *Russkii* and *Rossiiskii*. In the history of Russia, especially in the imperialist period, both terms were used as a synonym and often interchangeably. The civic form *Rossiiskii* refers to all the citizens of Russia, without distinguished the religious or cultural aspects, while *Russkii* takes in consideration the ethnicity.⁷⁸

During the Yeltsin-era the term “*Rossiiskii narod*” was introduced, President Putin in a speech in 2014 used this term referring to “ethnic Russians” and not to the “multi-ethnic people of Russia”,⁷⁹ with the aim to reinforce his political discourse with ethno-nationalist elements in the annexation of Crimea. It was the first time that he was referring to Russian people as an ethnic entity, extending the sense to the political nation. It is not a simple matter of linguistic or phrasing, this shows a shift in national identity and to a greater extent to nationalism in Putin’s Russia, this recent change to a more ethno-nationalist position is in contrast with the “*Derzhavni*” statist position of the Yeltsin presidency. To confirm the lack of commitment to ideas and beliefs and the absence of political culture of Russians in the nineties, George Mirsky wrote in 1997: “after the dissolution of the USSR “*ethno-nationalism became the only political ideology and mass-inspiring idea*” (In the Russian Federation) and the country is witnessing an “*ideological vacuum*”.”⁸⁰ Going back to the analysis on the first years in the nineties, the terms “*rossiskii*” and “*rossiiane*” were presented as non-ethnic expressions for Russian and Russians, in order to encapsulate this non-ethnic national idea.⁸¹ Unlike Serbs, for Russians the “ties that bind” has not to derive from a myth of common descent or based on merely ethnicity.

⁷⁷ P. Kalsto. H. Blakkisrud. *The new Russian Nationalist, Imperialism, Ethnicity and authoritarianism, 2000-2015*. Edinburgh University Press. UK, 2016, p. 3.

⁷⁸ A. P. Tsygankov, *Russia’s Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity*. Rowman & Littlefield, UK, 2016, p. 82.

⁷⁹ Ivi, p. 18.

⁸⁰ G. I. Mirsky, *On ruins of empire: ethnicity and nationalism in the former Soviet Union*. Greenwood Press, USA, 1997, p. 157.

⁸¹ Ivi, p. 3.

Even though it is true that Russia has become more homogenous than ever after 1991, it has not transformed radically the nationalism, nor the country witnessed a successful revival of extreme right-wing movement, as it was easily predictable.

Tishkov in his article claimed: “*Russia is more culturally homogeneous than many other large and even small countries considered to be nation-states*”.⁸² Russia, as the pacific cohabitation throughout the history has proven, possess a strong connection among different groups despite being a multi-ethnic federation. One of the key elements that has been “used” as unification tool is the Russian language. It helps and provides the means and it facilitates the creation of a supra-ethnic national Russian identity, and at the same time it assures a pervasive social communication.⁸³

As we can see from the table below Russian-speaking diaspora in Ukraine and Kazakhstan was very big. This became a problem with the dissolution of the USSR when almost twenty-five million of people that think, write, speak in the language of Tolstoj and Dostoevskij, suddenly became a minority in the newly formed states. It is also worth noting that Croatian and Serbian (languages), a part from the difference of the Cyrillic alphabet, are almost the same. Whereas the differences between the Russian and Ukrainian languages are more evident.

TABLE 1. *Size of Serbian and Russian/Russian-Speaking Diasporas in the Key Republics of the Yugoslav and Soviet Federations (late 1980s)*

	Serbs			Russians			Russians and Russian Speakers	
	Croatia	Bosnia-Herzegovina	Yugoslavia	Ukraine	Kazakhstan	Soviet Union	Ukraine	Kazakhstan
Thousands	581	1,369	8,526	11,356	6,228	119,820	17,056	6,394
Percentage	12.2	31.4	36.2	22.1	37.8	51.4	33.0	38.7

Sources: Nikolai Rudensky, “Russian Minorities in the Newly Independent States,” in Roman Szporluk, ed., *National Identity and Ethnicity in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (Armonk, New York, and London: M. E. Sharpe, 1994), pp. 58–78, and Paul Kolstoe, *Russians in the Former Soviet Republics* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 10. The figures for Russians and Russian speakers are adjusted from these two sources. For the Yugoslav figures see Dennison Rusinow, “The Yugoslav Peoples,” in Peter F. Sugar, ed., *East European Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (Washington, D. C.: The American University Press, 1995), pp. 305–413.

Figure 3: Table from “*Nationalism, Myth, and the State in Russia and Serbia*” V. Vujacic.

⁸² V. A. Tishkov, “*What is Russia? Prospects for Nation-Building. Security Dialogue*”, 26(1), 41–54. 1995, p. 49.

⁸³ P. Kalsto, H. Blakkisrud, cit. p. 33.

Even though it is a fact that Russia became more homogeneous, with the dissolution of the USSR ethnic collisions have not been eliminated. There has been “no resolution” of ethnic problem, and as it unfortunately happened, many points of tensions have evolved in violent conflicts, (for instance in Chechnya) and from one day to another 25 million Russians within the newly independent countries became “new minorities”.⁸⁴

It was important to define and compare the two nationalist movements in the nineties before talking about the “*Bratstvo*” between Serbs and Russians. This was done with the purpose to provide the context and the profound ethnic and institutional transformation which the two “*Narodi*” had to go through before being able to define themselves. In order to obtain trust, one (state) needs to proof himself and to the world that it can be seen as a united nation, with a more or less stable system with whom you can establish, or re-established a relationship.

However, despite the social, political and territorial transformation, the *Bratstvo* between the people of Serbia and Russia was still considered strong.

2.3 Russian Foreign Policy in the early nineties

In the first months of 1992 more than 110 countries had granted diplomatic recognition to the Russian Federation, and by then the diplomacy of Russia had reached a stable place in the international arena. At that moment the world was eager to see how it planned to go further. The new government had to declare its foreign policies intentions, to formulate the most important principles and at the same time present and define the methods for their implementation.⁸⁵

The Russian state that had emerged from the dissolution of the Soviet Union did not see himself in a position of confronting the West, therefore it took steps to articulate a new policy that would address the new *status quo* under new circumstances. The policy shift started already in 1990, before the dissolution, when a legislation passed which established the sovereignty of Russia within the USSR. Thanks to this legislation it could gain priority over

⁸⁴ V. Tishkov, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and conflict in and After the Soviet Union: The Mind Aflame*, Sage publications, Inc. 1997, p. 53.

⁸⁵ V. Matveyev, “*The New Russian Diplomacy: The First Months*”. *International Relations*, 11(2), 1992, p. 79.

the Soviet laws and to greater extent it withheld a massive slice of the Soviet budget available for Russia.

Subsequently this event, and after Yeltsin election, the country started to develop a different foreign policy from that of the Soviet Union. On the international level, Russia was regarded as the legitimate successor state of the Soviet Union. One of the first tasks was to take responsibility for its treaty obligations and subsequently Russia took over the permanent seat on the UN Security Council from the USSR, which as it will be explained, it assured and is still assuring an essential political tool in the foreign policy agenda. Yeltsin and his administration had to settle and define a new international identity, this was perhaps taken for granted, but the recognition as the legal successor of the USSR was the biggest achievement of the Yeltsin’s presidency during the first 365 days.⁸⁶

The initial attempts in the creation of a brand new Russian foreign policy were hobbled by disputes among policy makers, mostly on grounds of ideological conflicts. The question which was characterizing this debate was whether Russia was still to be considered a superpower or not. Another important aspect was to understand which intentions had the West towards Moscow. The table below summarized the situation in the country and internationally after the dissolution of the USSR, and how the new governments reacted.

Table 1.4. Explaining Russia’s Foreign Policy after Communism

		Local Conditions			
		National-Democratic Revolution	Economic Depression; Political Instability	Economic Recovery; New Security Threats	Economic Decline; Remaining Security Threats
	Support	INTEGRATION WITH THE WEST			
Behavior of Europe/ West	NATO expansion Renewed support		BALANCING	PRAGMATIC COOPERATION	
	Regime change Engagement			ASSERTIVENESS	ALLIANCES FOR MODERNIZATION
	Expansion				CIVILIZATION

Figure. 4: A. Tsygankov, Russia ‘foreign policy, change and continuity in national identify (2016) p. 23.

⁸⁶ B. Lo, *Russian Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era: Reality Illusion and Mythmaking*, Palgrave Macmillan, USA, 2002, p. 13.

On one side numerous “romantic” policy makers were in favor of a pro-western foreign policy. They were the so-called “liberals’ internationalists” guided by the first Russian minister of foreign affair Andrei Kozyrev (in charge from 1990 until 1996), which is seen as an “Atlanticist” whose ambitions are turned to the West.

On the opposite side, the *Derzhavniki* (Nationalist and Ultranationalists), were a powerful force which was striving for national-imperial restoration or even for the return of the Communism. These forces criticized the Minister and its weakness in defending the Russian interests in the face of NATO and the United States. The debate continued throughout all the decade, before the arrival of President Putin, and especially when Kozyrev was replaced by Evgeny Primakov in 1996.

For the Liberal Internationalists Russia’s national interests needed to be parallel to those of the democratic world and to a larger extent ought to reflect its democratic aspirations. For instance, in 1992 Andrey Kozyrev described the new foreign policy as being derived and inspired from peaceful cooperation with other states and democratic principles. Moreover, according to the Minister of Foreign Affairs: *“Partnership with the West is the only solution; the Rejection of it would significate losing an historical opportunity to solve a twofold task: the creation of an open and democratic state and the transformation of the instable post-confrontational world into a secure and democratic one.”*⁸⁷

Kozyrev considered the last decade a struggle against the inhumanity of the communist regime, and the next logical step was the unification of Russia with the West. The primary goal was to assure cooperation with the international political, economic and security community in order to avoid alienation from the Democracies of the West. However, *“Russia’s search for a post-Soviet identity has been greatly complicated by the emergence of a new post-Cold War “World order”.*⁸⁸ The Kozyrev’s politics can be resumed in two separate periods:

- The first is determined by a search for a revival of Russian power, recovering all first year of existence of the country (1992).
- The second period, starting from 1993, is characterized by new national interests and the strong assertion of the Russia’s firm return on international scene.

⁸⁷ A. Melville, T.A. Shackleina, p.193, *Strategy for Partnership* (A. Kozyrev). Originally published in *Mezhduradnaya zhizn*, 1994, no.5, pp. 5-15.

⁸⁸ *Ivi.* p. 23.

The first big challenge of the *Bratstvo* between the new Russian Federation and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and one of the “tests” of Russia’s return on international scene, was the conflict in the Former Yugoslavia, which started in 1991.

2.4 War in the Balkans

Following the Milosevic concept and idea that “*Serbia is wherever there is a Serb*” the dissolution of Yugoslavia initiated. A phase of “*pre-war disinformation*” started,⁸⁹ where Slobodan Milosevic began the war firstly in people’s mind, and in a second moment in the battlefields with soldiers and tanks. It was created and amplified an antagonism, a hate which was not existing or which was recondite, a clash has been inciting with the purpose of justifying the plans of the realization of a “*Velika Srbija*” (Big Serbia). Paolo Rumiz, a journalist and expert on the Balkans resumed in his Book (Rumiz 2015) the steps which led to building the war in the minds of the Serbs:

1. The disintegration of the old Titoist myth.
2. The building of a new historical destiny.
3. The invocation of the Leader by the mass.
4. The awakening of aggressiveness trough fear.
5. The lightening of the outbreaks of conflict.
6. The tribalism theory.

Milosevic with the impressive propagandistic machine which he controlled entirely (communication, mass media, intellectual, scientists...) rewrote the history of Serbia, with frequently recalls of the glorious past, giving once again birth to ancient myths and old hates.

The “real” conflict started in the Krajina region, a land on the Croatian territory but with a majority of the population of Serbian ethnicity. On these arid mountains, marked by years of battles and interethnic massacres, which also represented the border between the Habsburg and the Ottoman empire, the hate began to fuel. Despite all this, until Yugoslavia and the Tito’s shields were present, all the Serbs from Croatia could live as part of a Majority in Knin and in

⁸⁹ P. Rumiz, *Maschere per un massacro*, Feltrinelli, Milano 2015, p. 70.

all the Krajina. The situation deteriorated in the summer of 1990 with the *Balvan Revolution*,⁹⁰ and in August in a Referendum non-authorized by Croats nor the international community, 99.97% of the voters were in favor of the Autonomy of Knin.⁹¹ This event triggered an escalation of episodes, which started by a political chaos and a furious reaction of the neo-elected president of the HDZ Franjo Tudjman. Following the fallout in 1990 of the League of Communist of Yugoslavia, Croatia and Slovenia took profit from the chaos and held free elections. The election at the *Sabor* (Croatian Parliament) of Tudjman transformed and renewed the national sentiment. On the spring of 1991 the conflict between Croats and Serbs started, the separatism movement hit also the region of Western Slavonia (as well as in the region of Krajina). The famous ambush of Borovo Selo on May 1st, where Croats soldiers substituted the old Yugoslav flag with the white and red checkerboard flag (*Sahovnica*); this provocative gesture spurred the first sparkle of violence.

It is now clear that the war was about to start. The Federal Army of Yugoslavia, the JNA, entered in the conflict on the Serb's side, holding the control of weapons and military barracks. The ethnic war is in action, history is repeating again, almost fifty years later the clash between *Ustasa and cetnici* for the control of villages and territories is at stage. From Dalmatia to Slavonia an unprecise number of massacres occurred from both sides.

The conflict later expanded also in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the images of the first refugees fleeing from burning villages started to be broadcasted all over the world provoking a reaction of disbelief and astonishment. Just few years after the end of the Cold War, in a moment of enthusiasm over the spread of democracy and liberalism, in the heart of Europe one of the most violent conflict took place. The international community of the new World Order, where new born Russian Federation was trying to get back as a credible actor, was shocked and could not react immediately as it was caught by surprise (even though as it was explained also in this work the signals of a potential turmoil were more evident as it was taught three decades ago). The first year of the conflict was marked by a sensational conquest of territory by the Serbs, thanks to the involvement of the JNA, and his arsenal which provide them a huge advantage. The disparities on heavy weapons between the Serbs and the other

⁹⁰ "logs revolution" chopped logs where put on the road which were controlled by Serbian civilians armed in a hurry with hunting rifles or weapons stolen from the National Croat Guard.

⁹¹ On February 26th 1991 in Knin, the auto-proclaimed Autonomous Serbs region of Krajina declared independence.

nationalities was a crucial factor. Slovenia fought only ten days against the Serbs, thanks to the swift intervention of the international community.⁹² The map below shows the situation and the gain of territory of the Serbs between 1992 and 1995:

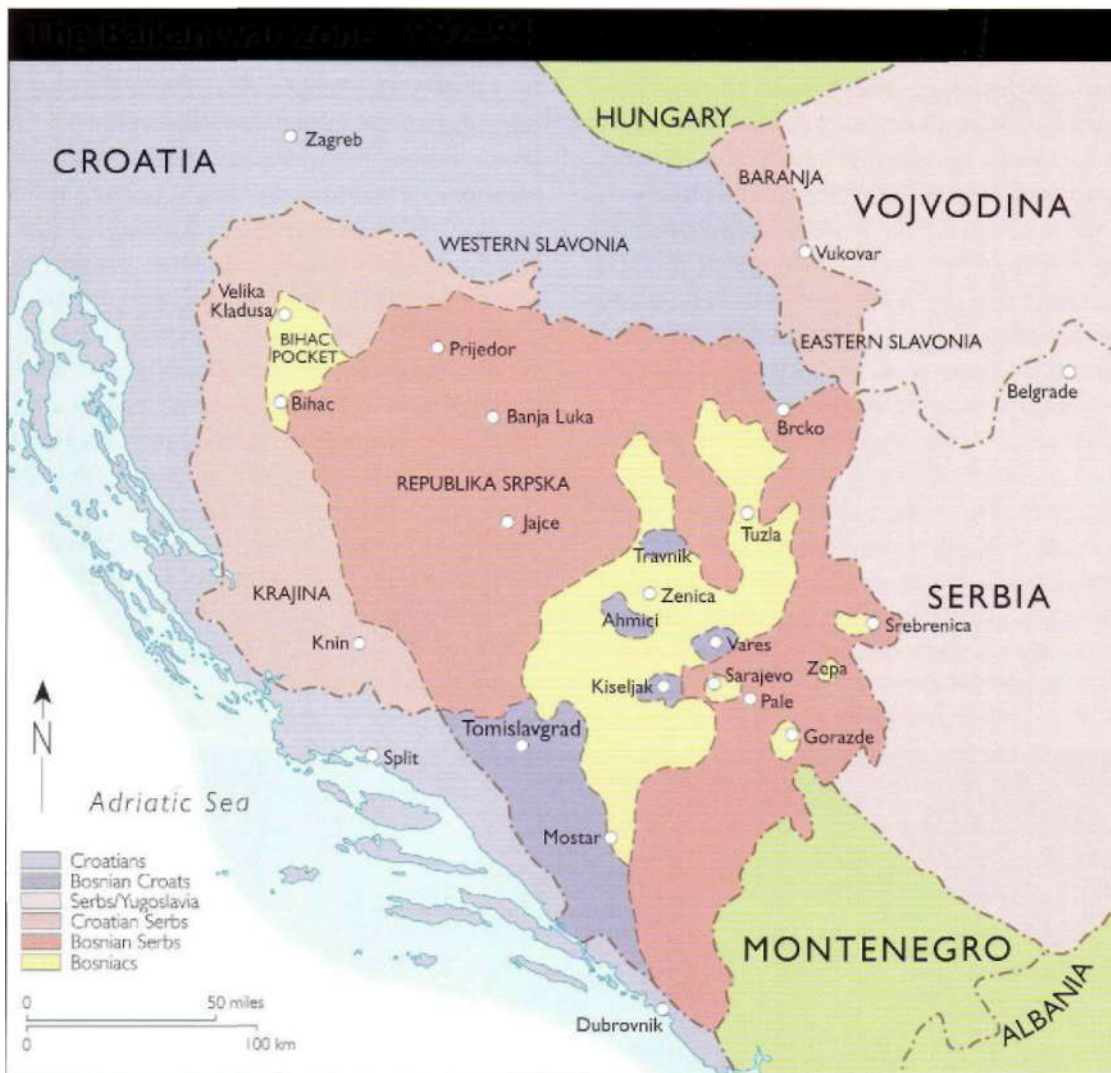


Figure 4: from “The Collapse of Yugoslavia 1991-1999” A. Finlain.

Croatia lost one third of the territory, Bosnia and Herzegovina was almost entirely in the hands either Croats or Serbs.

The war in the Former Yugoslavia, as it will be explained in the next section, was formative for the Russian foreign policy makers in early nineties. At the same time the international community and Europe, first as European Community and subsequently the Maastricht treaty,⁹³ which came into force in 1993, as EU, saw a chance with the crisis in the Balkans to assert itself in the new post-Cold War world order.⁹⁴

⁹² A. Finlain, *The Collapse of Yugoslavia 1991-99*, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2004, p. 22.

⁹³ Signed on February 7th 1992 by the 12 Members of European Community.

⁹⁴ A. Finlain, cit. p. 22.

Russia was therefore caught in an unpleasant situation regarding their fellow Slavs.

2.5 Russian foreign policy towards Yugoslavia in the first war in the Balkans 1991-1995

Following the end of the Cold War, the Balkans unexpectedly regained priority in the Moscow politics and the Russians effort to redefine its relations with the West and its national interest.⁹⁵ It is too often forgotten that, despite all the weapons coming from Moscow and their Slavic Brotherhood, Yugoslavia was not in the Warsaw Pact.⁹⁶ Therefore, for the Kremlin, it was not a simple task whether to follow the “heart” (The Slavic *Bratstvo*”) or the “head” (The USA, and the West). As Kozyrev stated “*The USA and the other democracies are just as much natural friends and potential allies of a democratic Russian Federation as they were the enemies of a totalitarian Soviet Union*”.⁹⁷

In the words of the minister of foreign affairs of 1994 it is clear that “*there is no alternative to partnership*”.⁹⁸ Russia needs to adhere to the norm of the international community, and this was one of the main Kozyrev’s arguments in rejecting the protection of Serbia because of the Brotherhood or given their religious ties. The risk was that by assuming a complete pro-Serb line it would result not only in an isolation of Russia internationally, but it would come with unwelcomed consequences domestically.⁹⁹

The first Russian minister of foreign affairs, in a romantic way, naively assumed that the new state would be included in the Western states’ community immediately.¹⁰⁰ In the early nineties there was a review on foreign policy priorities following the failure of the expectations of joining “with the” or “access to” the West, and the splits between the political elite became deeper.¹⁰¹

The question on whether the new Russia still considered to have a special sphere of influence in the Region or to a greater extent how would this conflict being used in relation to the West and why and how the involvement would be useful to Russia. As it was already mentioned, the impact of liberal ideas characterized most of the choices of Kozyrev’s policies,

⁹⁵ P. Simic, “Russia and the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia”. Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, 1(3), 2001, p. 95.

⁹⁶ *Ivi*, p. 68.

⁹⁷ A. Melville, T.A. Shackleina, p.193, *Strategy for Partnership* (A. Kozyrev). Originally published in *Mezhdunaradnaya zhizn*, 1994, no.5, pp. 5-15.

⁹⁸ *Ivi*.

⁹⁹ M. Andersen, cit. p. 185.

¹⁰⁰ A. Melville T.A. Shackleina, cit. p. X.

¹⁰¹ *Ivi*.

and this thinking influenced the close cooperation with the West in the first phase of the conflict (from 1992 to 1994). There have been many debates whether or not Russia was guided by a strategy or if it was ad hoc.¹⁰²

Christian Thorun showed in his work (Thorun 2009)¹⁰³ some examples of the cooperation with the West, which are:

1. Support for UN Security Council Resolution 757 on May 30th 1992.¹⁰⁴
2. Approval of the extension of the UNPROFOR¹⁰⁵ to Bosnia in September 1992 to deliver humanitarian aid.¹⁰⁶
3. Backing the no-fly zone for all military aircraft over Bosnia in October 1992.¹⁰⁷
4. Agreement on NATO controlling the no-fly zone as long as NATO and UN sanctioned the -key command procedure.¹⁰⁸
5. Following the EC in the recognition of the independence of Croatia and Slovenia in 1991.
6. Mandating sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

All the examples mentioned above were followed by vigorous domestic attacks on Russian President, and more loudly to Kozyrev, for betraying the Serbian “brothers” and following slavishly the “Western line”.¹⁰⁹ From a realist and material point of view the Balkan crises had not a direct impact on the security of Russia nor on its power position; there were not strategic or military alliances with the Republic of Yugoslavia, neither were the Serbs from Bosnia Russian’s allies, therefore it can be concluded that there was not a Russian obligation to aid and take sides in the conflicts.¹¹⁰

A further important aspect to take in consideration is the harsh economic situation of the nineties in Russia and its financial crises which should have discouraged such a “distant” and

¹⁰² V. Kremenjuk, ‘The Ideological Legacy in Russia’s Foreign Policy’, *International Affairs (Moscow)*, vol. 47, no. 3 (2001) 18–26, p. 21.

¹⁰³ C. Thorun, cit., p. 87.

¹⁰⁴ Full text of the 757 Resolution: <https://www.nato.int/ifor/un/u920530a.htm>.

¹⁰⁵ United Nations Protection Force.

¹⁰⁶ Full text of the 776 Resolution: <https://www.nato.int/ifor/un/u920914a.htm>.

¹⁰⁷ Full text of the 781 Resolution: <https://www.nato.int/ifor/un/u921009a.htm>.

¹⁰⁸ C. Thorun, cit., p. 87.

¹⁰⁹ M. Andersen, cit. p. 186.

¹¹⁰ C. Thorun, cit. p. 84.

costly military and political commitment. As Thorun explained in his book (Thorun 2009), in the conflict in the former Yugoslavia there were three potential indirect threats:

1. The escalation of the tensions could trigger an international intervention on human rights basis, which would legitimate the Western states' intervention in the CIS¹¹¹ (Russia's sphere of influence), which were also witnessing human rights issues. Thus, setting a dangerous precedent.¹¹²
2. The situation in Kosovo resembled the one in Chechnya; separatism and greater autonomy requests could have provoked a disintegration within Russia.¹¹³
3. Yeltsin and his administration should have had an interest in preventing NATO from interfering in a region of Russian sphere of influence; however, it must not be forgotten that Russia had no role within NATO.¹¹⁴

Giving these potential threats one can conclude that Russia, in a realist thinking, should have done everything they could in order to avoid and discourage a Western intervention. This was probably the reasoning that was done by the Serbs, especially by Slobodan Milosevic, who was convince to find an ally in Moscow, given the Slavic Brotherhood.

Serbia often expected help from “*Матушка Россия*” (mother Russia), or in other words, Belgrade was at least hoping that the Western-Russian confrontation will resume with the result that FRY will once again occupy the “comfortable” position in the middle of the two blocs.¹¹⁵ As a result it rose a growing disappointment towards Moscow by Serbian politicians.

This misperception about the persistent support and protectorate for Russia which was already introduced in the first chapter, is partially motivated by the “use of history”, where in moment of war Russia has been always stepping in. Society's wrong interpretation of its past may cause distorted perception of its own strategic interests and the intentions of others. However, as it was already explained in this work: “*Only by engaging in comparison across time can elements of political-cultural continuity in each case be identified, while taking into*

¹¹¹ Commonwealth of Independent States.

¹¹² C. Thorun, cit. p.85

¹¹³ *Ivi.*

¹¹⁴ B. Kazantsev, “Serious Concern over New NATO Strategy”, *International Affairs (Moscow)*, vol. 45. no.2 (1998) 23-8.

¹¹⁵ M. Jovanovic, “Two Russias: On the Two Dominant Discourses of Russia In the Serbian Public”, Article published inside the “Third Report of the Monitoring Russia Serbia Relations Project” ISAC Fund, Belgrade, Serbia, 2009, p. 50.

*account the way in which they were transformed by new collective experiences, political interests and ideologies”*¹¹⁶

History provides valuable lessons when it is understood in a correct way, and if the present somehow presents similar conditions.

It is worth mentioning that Serbian political leadership tried more than once to get in touch with marginal Russian politicians, in the hope that eventually they will run the country (even financing them), in order to change the foreign policy towards a pro-Serbian one.¹¹⁷

Again, realists would need to explain this fully cooperation attitude, either by showing that a total cooperation was a prudential power-maximizing strategy or provide real evidence which could prove the external constraints that “forced” Yeltsin’s administration to follow the Western lead.¹¹⁸ However, given the history it was quite shocking to see the extent of the cooperation with the West, in the early nineties.

The only key to understand this attitude is to focus on the liberal ideas which were influencing the foreign policy thinking, with great weight and concerns to the protection of human values, and the assumption that a close cooperation was “natural”, and not merely in their own interests. Another testimony is the declaration of President Yeltsin in April 1993: *“Russia will not protect those who set the themselves in opposition to the world community”*.¹¹⁹ Or in the words of the minister of foreign affairs in May 1992: *“The Serbs had brought upon on their own the sanctions by the United Nations by failing to pay attentions and to respect the requests of the international community.”*¹²⁰

These statements confirmed the almost complete “Atlantist Approach” of the Russian foreign policy and the consequent miscalculation of Milosevic and his “crew”, which were now feeling betrayed or at least abandoned by “*Матушка Россия*” (“Mother Russia”).

It was not that Russia forgot their Slavic Serbian brothers for no good reason. As it was already mentioned, besides their own identity-crises and all the transformations which needed some times to be assimilated (social, economic, political, etc.), the Russian Federation had

¹¹⁶ V. Vujacic, *ivi*, p. 7.

¹¹⁷ *Ivi*.

¹¹⁸ C, Thorun, cit. p. 88.

¹¹⁹ B. Yeltsin, *Itar-Tass*, April 27th 1993.

¹²⁰ Kozyrev, ‘A. Kozyrev Explains to Parliament Why Russia Joined the Sanctions’, published in: *Izvestiia*, 27 June 1992, p. 1’, *CDPSP*, vol. XLIV, no. 26 (1992) 24, p. 24.

other foreign policies priorities. As in the Foreign Policy concept of 1993,¹²¹ the most important tasks which required consistent and coordinated efforts are:

1. To eradicate armed conflicts.
2. To settle conflicts around the Russian Federation and preventing them to spilling over inside the state.
3. To ensure a strict observance of the so-called near abroad (protecting Russian-speakers and ethnic Russians).¹²²

Therefore, the maintenance of the territorial integrity and the unity of the State was perceived as primary in regards to the crisis in the former Yugoslavia. For instance, in the same document of the Foreign Policy concept of 1993 (Melville, Shakleina 2005) “Eastern Europe does not merely retain its significance for Russia as a historically predeterminate sphere of interest”.¹²³ Even more explicitly, the “Yugoslavian case” figured in the seventh (and last) position in eastern Europe priorities. The goals are: *“through interaction with the UN, CSCE, EU and other interested parties, we will continue taking an active part in the peacekeeping efforts in Yugoslavia based, while planning specific steps, on a realistic evaluation of the developments there; carry out practical measures conditioned by the establishment of diplomatic relations with Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia, and develop political, economic and other ties with these states; start preparing corresponding bilateral agreements, taking account of the development of the crisis settlement; maintain a permanent channel of contact with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia regarding ways to overcome the crisis”*.¹²⁴

This document summarized the Russian approach towards the crisis in the former Yugoslavia and at the same underlined once again the attitude of interaction and cooperation with the West and with the international institutions and Organization.

From Belgrade there was also the historical misperception (see chapter 1.4), and this is probably one of the elements of friction, that “Mother Russia” helps and had helped always in times of difficulty, especially during periods of wars. As we have seen in the first chapter, it may have occurred (for instance in 1914 when Russia supported Serbia against the ultimatum

¹²¹ Originally published in *Diplomaticheskii vestnik* (Diplomatic Review), 1993, no. 1-2, Special Issue, pp. 3-23.

¹²² A. Melville, T. A. Shakleina, cit. p. 27.

¹²³ A. Melville, T. A. Shakleina, cit. p. 45.

¹²⁴ A. Melville, T. A. Shakleina, cit. p. 47.

from Austria-Hungary in the event which started the First World War), but in reality, Moscow has been choosing strategically when to back Serbia (especially in the nineties). Since the beginning of their relationship Russia has been using their Slavic Brother from Belgrade as an assurance with the aim of protecting and increasing Russia's interest in the Balkans; and beneath the rhetorical of pan-Slavism, more concrete targets have been in play.¹²⁵ It is worth adding that in between the end of the eighties and the beginning of the nineties, the two Churches and numerous nationalist groups were establishing closer links.

One of the most controversial events occurred on March 12th 1991, when General Kadjevic and Colonel Obradovic (his Cabinet's Chief) flew to Moscow and secretly made arrangements with their Russian sympathizers (among them Dmitry Yazov former minister of the Soviet Union), asking for support and armaments delivering to the JNA, without informing Gorbachev.¹²⁶ While the last leader of the Soviet Union was still in charge (even though only "nominally") USSR keep advocating a policy of a federal Yugoslavia. For instance, by hosting a meeting at the Kremlin on October 15th 1991, where Michail Gorbachev acted as intermediary between the President of Croatia Franjo Tudjman and his Serbian counterpart Milosevic. The purpose of it was to block the escalation of the conflict and to the disgregation of the Yugoslav Federation. For Gorbachev and his minister of the Foreign Affairs Boris Pankin, this event was important not only to obtain a peace-agreement and put an end to the Balkan's civil war, but because it could have provided them a success in terms of image, which could have been spent in domestic politics, considering the delicate position of both Soviet Union and Gorbachev in autumn 1991. Only the last of the three points of the *Memorandum*¹²⁷ was somehow seen effective and different from the previous peace-meeting, where the two leaders demanded from the Soviet Union, the US and the European Community to provide services in organizing negotiations.¹²⁸ The meeting ended with the three heads of state holding their hands together in a spirit of Brotherhood and sympathy, and by a conjunct declaration of Slobodan Milosevic and Franjo Tudjman which stated that the Soviet Union is like a "second

¹²⁵ M. Andersen, cit., p. 185.

¹²⁶ L. Cohen, "Russia and the Balkans: Pan-Slavism, Partnership and Power", International Journal, Vol. 49, No. 4, 1994, pp. 817, 820.

¹²⁷ The first point stated that "is necessary to end all armed conflicts in Yugoslavia". Point two declared that the two Presidents must (within thirty days) start negotiating in order to settle all the disputes".

¹²⁸ Article of the 19th October on "Nezavisimaya Gazeta" <https://yeltsin.ru/day-by-day/1991/10/19/7020/>.

Superpower” and that it could have a greater influence on their affairs than the other European states.¹²⁹

However, during the following day (October 16th) the Parliament of Bosnia-Herzegovina voted in favor of their independency, demolishing the hopes and the enthusiasm subsequent the Kremlin’s Meeting. Within few months, the URSS and the chances of finding an agreement on the Yugoslav crisis were disgregated.

The end of the Soviet Union, and the departure from the Noble Peace Prize winner Michail Gorbachev, brought as well a wreck of many peaceful initiative (like the one mentioned above) not only in the former Yugoslavia but also in other “delicate” regions (as the Middle-East). Yeltsin initially continued its support to a federal Yugoslavia; nevertheless, he began to change his stand on Yugoslavia following the (failed) coup of summer 1991.¹³⁰

The lack of Russian policy in the language of the Slavic Brotherhood and solidarity throughout all the Yeltsin’s Administration is a clear fact of the change of attitude with respect to Gorbachev. In December 1992 the former Supreme Soviet started to criticize heavily the foreign policy of Yeltsin’s Administration in the former Yugoslavia; not only did it passed a resolution which requested sanction to be extended to all the parties involved in the conflict (asking to use its veto power in the UN Security Council) but it even began its personal shuttle diplomacy with the Serbs.¹³¹

Few days later, in this climate of increasingly attacks from nationalist politicians in the parliament, Kozyrev delivered in Stockholm at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe a shocking speech.¹³² In his warning, he outlined a dramatic scenario where the ultranationalist conservative would seize the control in the Moscow and start imposing their foreign policies program. During the first part of his speech he claimed that “*the Government of Serbia can count on their support*”, or that “*Russia will insist that the Former Soviet Republics will join a confederation or a new federation*” and it included admonitions on NATO spreading in the near abroad, and the request of removing sanctions against Yugoslavia. Of course, at the end he explained the real Russian policies and retracted this scenario by claiming

¹²⁹ *Ivi.*

¹³⁰ M. Andersen, cit. 185.

¹³¹ A. P. Tsygankov, cit. p. 79.

¹³² The speech by Kozyrev is fully reprinted in RFE/RL, Vol. 3, No. 18, 1994, p. 2. The Independent, December 15th 1992.

that it was a rhetorical warning. This speech had a tremendous impact in both foreign and domestic level.

Starting from 1993, Russia tried to develop an approach more independent.¹³³ Despite numerous internal political struggles in that year, Russian diplomacy succeeded in maintaining active positions in the Balkans and showed its capabilities to influence the processes that were developing on the Serbian sides, by establishing links with the parties and all the partners involved.¹³⁴

For example, Russia objected to initiative proposed by the USA to lift the arms embargo against Bosnian Muslim. Moreover, the Russian officials, joining other states and actors, blamed Croatia for the escalation of violence in the conflict demanding that sanctions would have been extended against it as well.¹³⁵ One of the main issues which Yeltsin was trying to explain to the West is that he was put under great pressure in the Russian Parliament over this conflict.

The policy outcome was an alternation of pro-Western decisions and more conservative positions (in order to please the opposition in parliament which was criticizing the operate of Yeltsin demanding his seat). Example of such ambivalent behavior was the fact of on one side promoting and supporting the international community in the Vance Owen Plan¹³⁶.

On the other side, in April 1993 the permanent representative to the UN Yuli Vorontsov¹³⁷ was abstaining on a vote in the Security Council which demanded tightening sanctions against the FRY, this abstention is due partially to Yeltsin initiative to please the opinion of the court nationalist on domestic policies, before the National Referendum.¹³⁸

From December 1992 and throughout most of 1993, Russia witnessed a constitutional crisis which was only resolved in Autumn with the intervention of military forces. The crisis started during the seventh congress of People's Deputies when the parliament refused to re-

¹³³ C. Thorun, cit. p.87.

¹³⁴ Z. Trapkov, "*The Yugoslav Crisis and Russian Policy: A Field for Cooperation or Confrontation?*" Rozenberg Publisher, 1994.

¹³⁵ *Ivi.*

¹³⁶ It was intended to create a federal state in Bosnia divided in 10 autonomous provinces subdivided by ethnics' groups (3 Serbs, 3 Muslims, 3 Croats, and Sarajevo). For the full text see:

<https://archive.org/details/BosniaHerzegovinaTheVanceOwenPeacePlanSupplementaryDocuments/page/n1>

¹³⁷ Last Soviet ambassador to UN (1990-91), and first Russian Permanent Representative (1991-94).

¹³⁸ M. Andersen, cit. p. 187.

elect Prime Minister Gaidar¹³⁹ and after some clashes and discussion Yeltsin and the parliament agreed on a truce and nominated Viktor Chernomyrdin.¹⁴⁰

The domestic turmoil continued and the parliament demanded the impeachment of Yeltsin, which he managed to survive (it was a close victory). Therefore, it was decided to hold a National referendum where it was asked confidence for Yeltsin and support in his socio-economic policies. The President managed to “pass” the Referendum and maintain the power thanks also to some agreement with ultranationalist on the Yugoslavian crises. Testimony of this convenient behavior was the fact that right after he survived the Referendum, Moscow returned to support sanctions against FRY, and in May it signed up to the Washington Declaration,¹⁴¹ which demanded a creation in Bosnia-Herzegovina of safe areas under the protectorate of UN.¹⁴²

The words of the American Senator Richard Lugar are very emblematic on the role and commitment of Russia in that moment: *“Considering the absence of US’s Leadership, of all the states, you have Russia doing the most active diplomacy.”*¹⁴³

The 1993 constitutional crises had a great impact on the Yugoslav foreign policy, considering that the ultranationalist, which continued to put great pressure on Yeltsin and they were gaining more and more support, were criticizing the “Atlanticist” policies. Following the political crises of December 1992, it became clear that the integration with the West was becoming an illusion, this resulted in the Zhirinovsky’s victory and the arrival of the extreme nationalist party, which provoked the start of a period of confrontation with the West.¹⁴⁴ The very same day in October when the tanks were attacking the White House in Moscow, Russia voted in favor for a resolution at the UN Security Council to extend the mandate in Croatia of the UNPROFOR. Just few days before, this document was discussed by the diplomats who were afraid that in case of a success of this resolution would have implicit references for others sanctions against Yugoslavia.

¹³⁹ He was the prime minister of Russia between June 15th 1992 to December 14th 1992. He is known for his controversial “shock therapy” which were partly the cause of the economic crises and hyperinflation in the nineties.

¹⁴⁰ Russian Prime Minister from 14th December 1992 to 23rd March 1998.

¹⁴¹ The “13-point Joint Action Plan”, Together with France, Spain, UK and USA.

¹⁴² M. Andersen, cit. p. 187.

¹⁴³ C. Thorun, p. 87.

¹⁴⁴ A. P. Tsygankov, cit. p. 80.

In 1994 the Russian approach to the conflict in Bosnia started to change, especially after February 5th, when in the market in the center of Sarajevo a shell exploded killing 68 civilians and injuring more than 200. The international community, Clinton in first place, was outraged and the response was an immediate NATO ultimatum to all forces (especially to the Bosnian Serbs) to remove all their troupes and to cede all their heavy weapons from a 20-kilometer radius distance from the capital or they would be hit by air strikes. Moscow's reaction was cold, in the sense that they wanted to investigate further on who committed the attack, and criticized the aggressive way in which the "West" threatened the Serbs. The result was that Russia did not support the initiative and voted against it. Moreover, Boris Yeltsin criticized NATO because it tried to solve the Bosnian issue without consulting Russia.

It cannot be said that in 1994 Yeltsin started to side Serbia, however it began to ask for a more balanced approach and to reconsider that all the responsibilities should not be granted to Serbs only. Another example was when, in revenge of an offensive of Serbs, NATO attacked with their air forces on the safe-area of Gorazde¹⁴⁵, which led Kozyrev to comment that "*these kinds of striking are counterproductive*".¹⁴⁶

At stake here was not only the peace-keeping efforts in the region, but the very Russia's international status and prestige. It was like Moscow was having no gain from this situation, on one side he pursued the spirit of cooperation while being "humiliated" by not being consulted on the Ultimatum issue. On the other side it was receiving severe critiques by the domestic opposition for its foreign policy's hybrid conduct.

Following this delicate situation, Yeltsin's Administration decided that it was time to pursue its own line of action and to score a victory on both international and domestic level. This shift could also be seen in considering the Russian public opinion which was asking to not give up on their orthodox brothers.

As Zhirinovsky in 1994 argued "*it is a fact of life that a huge part of Russian considered Serbs as the closest people to Russia in the Balkans, and therefore they must be protected.*"¹⁴⁷ This spirit of *Bratstvo* in the Russian population in such delicate historical moment is the very essence of this work. It is symptomatic on how, despite being pictured

¹⁴⁵ See the resolution which contain the 5 UN safe-areas at: <https://www.nato.int/ifor/un/u930604a.htm>.

¹⁴⁶ P. Zhuravlev, "Pozitsiia Rossiiasna", *Krasnaia zvezda*, February 19th 1994.

¹⁴⁷ P. Kubicek, Russian foreign policy and the West, *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 114, No. 4 (Winter, 1999-2000), pp. 547-568.

worldwide as the “bad guy” in the “Balkan garden” many Russian citizens were praying and begging it govern to act in their defense. The rise of nationalism and Soviet-communists nostalgic was a fact. However, it is often considered that the President took advantage of this “threat” with the international community by using it as a warning, in request of inclusion in the decision-making processes. In other words, Yeltsin was blackmailing the West.

The independent mission was considered “their finest hour” during the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Balkan’s official Russian envoy Vitaliy Churkin,¹⁴⁸ met with president Milosevic and Karadzic (leader of the Bosnian Serbs) proposing, in return of Serbs’ compliance with the ultimatum by NATO, that it would deploy 400 UNPROFOR Russian soldiers in the surroundings of Sarajevo and separate the Bosnian Muslim forces and the Serbs.¹⁴⁹ The proposal was accepted by all the parties, and the crisis was solved with the fulfillment of NATO’s ultimatum (heavy weapons were taken) in a peaceful way.

A further relevant outcome of the Yeltsin’s action was that within the Serbs it begins to circulate again optimism towards Moscow, and the hopes on a pro-Slavic attitude were growing.

Another great testimony of the effect which Russia still had on the Serbs, despite all the anti-Serbia’s resolution Moscow have been signing since the beginning of the conflict, are the words of Churkin: *“Russia managed to work out the deadlock successfully thanks to the very sentence “a request from Russia” which had a psychological effect on the Serbs. (...) Moreover, the fact that the letter was signed by Boris Yeltsin in person played as well a big role in their minds.”*¹⁵⁰

This event was perhaps the first moment of enthusiasm in the Russian Foreign Policy of the early nineties and it was celebrated home as victory over the West. Finally, the President could win some of the credibility domestically and internationally, he insisted on the fact that Russia is a great Country, and that it should be taken more in consideration in the decision-making process in the region. The “two-fold” mission of Moscow in Bosnia, is highlighted in the words of Churkin that while on the first place the aim of the initiative was to stop the

¹⁴⁸ He was among other duties the Deputy Foreign Minister and Special representative to the talk on Former Yugoslavia from 1992 to 1994.

¹⁴⁹ M. Andersen, cit. p. 189.

¹⁵⁰ C. Thorun, cit. p. 91.

escalation of the conflict “*The main goal was trying to prevent a Russian humiliation*”.¹⁵¹ To a greater extent this “finest moment” of Russian Foreign Policy, was done with the purpose of avoiding international exclusion, and to be regarded as a Great Power.

During 1994, the main Moscow’s line was to pursuing the defense of Serb interests while at the same time invite and persuade the West of the necessary distinction between Karadzic and Milosevic who was considered to be the “*peace party’s leader*”.¹⁵² Russia for instance showed once again their intention of cooperation in supporting the initiative of the division of Bosnia into the Croat-Muslim Federation and the Bosnian-Serb in July 1994.

However, as the crises started to worsened, it became more evident the lack of concrete efficiency of the UNPROFOR mandate and the long chain of decision-making which implied a coordination and the “double-key” procedure with NATO. The latter became more influent in the region and it started to act almost unilaterally. Following the American lead, the NATO members states, were taking more and more decisions without consulting the Russians. This led to a marginalization of the UN in *the first place*, and secondly of Moscow, as the it was the only international organization in which Russians had a direct and concrete influence. NATO in December 1994 issued a Final Communiqué¹⁵³, in which the Eastern States were praised for their improvements, opening the way to increasingly probable NATO’s enlargement.

On the very same day, a Resolution of the UN Security Council was vetoed by Russia, which requested a prolongation of the sanctions against¹⁵⁴ the Bosnian Serbs. Thus, in Belgrade and within the Moscow’s opposition this rhetoric against the NATO intervention by the President was only aggressive in the words and not as much in the deeds. Nevertheless, in the West, this increased Russian obstructionism, was interpreted as from this moment Yugoslavia had an ally in Moscow.

However, it became evident that Russia could and would not support militarily Milosevic nor Karadzic, and decided to take once and for all a firm action. This was probably the decisive turning point in the conflict, as a result the West started to lined-up with the other side. The Americans were arming (secretly) and giving full support to Croatia and Bosnia

¹⁵¹ M. Andersen, p. 189.

¹⁵² K. Eggert, ‘Moscow Comes to Bosnian Serbs’ Aid Yet Again, published in: *Izvestiia*, 3 August 1994, p. 3’, CDPSP, vol. XLVI, no. 31 (1994) 21, p. 21.

¹⁵³ Full text at: <https://www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c941201a.htm>.

¹⁵⁴ M. Andersen, cit. p. 191.

despite the arms embargo. Moreover, American soldiers, the CIA and the Military Professional Resource¹⁵⁵ were organizing in cooperation with the Croatian Army the attacks of the summer 1995 which would have put an end to the conflict (Croatian government hired the Military Professional Resource in accordance with the Pentagon).¹⁵⁶ All these events were taken without Moscow's knowledge or consensus. The United States "*have concluded that Franjo Tudjman may be a bastard, but he is their bastard.*"¹⁵⁷

1995 was the final year of the conflict, and it became the harshest test of how the relations West-Russia would evolve. In March Pavel Grachev, the minister of the defense, signed an agreement of support and a commitment of military cooperation at the moment when the arms embargo against Yugoslavia would be removed.¹⁵⁸

As Bosnian Serb attacked Gorazde, Bihac and others UN safe-areas, the response of the Kremlin was moderate compared to the Western 'reactions; Yeltsin motivated the NATO attacks as a "*response to the unwillingness to stop the actions in the safe areas.*"¹⁵⁹

Testimony of the more "reserved" approach of Kozyrev's policy is the abstention from the Resolution 998 UN Security Council vote in June for a creation of a Rapid Reaction Force which would help and protect the peacekeepers.¹⁶⁰ Russia decided to not give their vote because of the implication that it would have resulted in a "conjunct" Mission NATO-UNPROFOR.

The situation deteriorated in July 1995, when following the atrocity of Srebrenica and the actions in Bosnia, NATO heavily attacked the Bosnian with air-strikes. The reaction from Moscow was of condemnation towards the West's senseless attack and it pursued in the considering the possibility to resolve the conflict by political tools. Minister Grachev claimed that "*political methods of influencing the Bosnian Serbs are still far from exhausted.*"¹⁶¹

In May the first part of the operation ("Operation Flash") of the liberation of Croatia started in Slavonia, Croats recover a considerable part of the territory, while perpetuating atrocities in front of powerless UN peace-keepers. This operation was the prelude of the last

¹⁵⁵ American Agency, composed by former and retired high officer which sent a group of 15 experts in Croatia to democratize the army".

¹⁵⁶ J. Pirjevec, *h. 1991- 1999*, Einaudi, Italy, 2014, p. 444.

¹⁵⁷ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/the-show-that-europe-missed-1583138.html>.

¹⁵⁸ M. Andersen, cit., p. 192.

¹⁵⁹ Y. Schedrunova, "*NATO stanovitsia trer'ei voiuuschcei storonoj*", *Segodnia*, May 27th 1995.

¹⁶⁰ <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/998>

¹⁶¹ V. Abarinov, "*Kogda v posdrenikakh soglas'ia net*", *Segodnia*, July 25th 1995.

mission in August. Before Tudjman gave the final order, he consulted with Peter Galbraith in the beautiful Brijuni islands, the American ambassador reported to the President that Washington did not give not green nor red light but “an amber light tinted green”.¹⁶²

The Croats also warned the UN that the imminent action would be complete with the aim of restoring Constitution, laws and order.¹⁶³

“Operation Storm” became the conclusive act of the war in Croatia, On August 4th the Croatian army launched a heavy airstrike on Knin, and the following day governmental Croat troops entered in the city putting the Croat flag. Milosevic abandoned Knin and his fellow Bosnian Serb captained by Karadzic. Kozyrev accused America, and the West of complicity.¹⁶⁴

In another attempts to project their influence on the conflict and return to be seen as a Great Power, Yeltsin invited both presidents in Moscow to find a peaceful solution. However, Tudjman did not show up, and Milosevic was left alone at the meeting. The strategy chosen by the Kremlin was to cut down all the bridges with the Bosnian Serbs of Karadzic and to keep claiming that the Serbian leader was the only reliable actor in the peace settlements.

The final act of the end of the partnership was definitive following the massacres of the market in Sarajevo on August 28th NATO, without consulting Moscow, began a sensational air-strike (Operation Deliberate Force). Yeltsin’s Administration denounced this move, which confirmed once again the fact that the international community sided and backed up the Croats and the Bosnian against the Serbs. In September Russia requested the end of the operations and contested the legitimacy considering their disproportionate and extensive nature. Moscow believed that all the actions were not respecting the UNSC resolutions and the nature of the UNPROFOR.

In October 1995 it was signed the ceasefire, which led to the Dayton agreement in November. Yeltsin invited to a summit at the Kremlin the three presidents (Milosevic, Tudjman and Izetbegovic) before the Dayton’s agreement. Unfortunately, this meeting never happened as the Russian President had some healthy issue. The intention of this summit, rather than its political importance was symbolic.

¹⁶² J. Pirjevec, cit. p. 491.

¹⁶³ B. Maran, *Dalla Jugoslavia alle Repubbliche indipendenti*. Infinito Edizioni, Italy, 2016, pp. 997-998.

¹⁶⁴ “Kozyrev Asks UN Chief to Protect Civilians in Croatia”, Itar-Tass, August 9th 1995.

Despite all the latest disagreement and growing awareness that the project of “Russia’s “Westernization” was vanishing, the international community did include Moscow in the agreements and it was even nominated as co-chair of the Dayton’s conference, with Yeltsin signing the papers.

NATO and the Western world needed to make belief that Russia’s contribution was important because of the consequences it would have created in the domestic reforms of Yeltsin.¹⁶⁵ Thus, Russia cooperate and made compromises with NATO during and after Dayton’s days and the outcome was that the Russian soldiers in Bosnia-Herzegovina would be subordinated to an American general in charge of I-For¹⁶⁶ and not to NATO. The words of Javier Solana, the secretary general of NATO, are self-explanatory of the good conduct of Russia during Dayton’s agreement: “*Russia’s participation in I- For (and subsequently S-For¹⁶⁷) as a model of cooperation between NATO and Moscow*”.¹⁶⁸

To summarize the operate of Russia between 1994 and the Dayton’s agreement in November 1995 it could be said that the increasing independent Moscow’s behavior and the consequent distance in the means and procedure of the operation in Yugoslavia from the Western‘ line, was a symptom and a desire to be regarded as a Great Power, which is still able to project its influence on this region.

Yeltsin’ conviction that Russia needed and deserved to be included in the decision-making clashed with some of the unilaterally NATO and consequently Clinton’s air strikes and resolution. The result was a more pro-Serbian policy on one side because of the domestic pressure from the opposition (especially after the constitutional crisis in 1993) and on the other side with the intention to demonstrate that Russia is a Great Power.

In early 1996, following a long period of harsh criticism towards him and Russian foreign policies, not surprisingly President Boris Yeltsin announced the resignation of Andrei Kozyrev. He was replaced by Yevgeni Primakov, an orientalist who had been previously also chief of KGB espionage. He was in charge until the 11 September 1998, when Yeltsin appointed him as Prime Minister. With Primakov it began the second phase of the Russian Foreign Policy; he wanted to pursue a multi-vector policy, his policy took a Realist turn and a

¹⁶⁵ M. Andersen, p. 193.

¹⁶⁶ Implementation Force.

¹⁶⁷ Stabilisation Force.

¹⁶⁸ Y. Schedrunova, “*NATO stanovitsia trer’ei voiiusheci storonoj*”, Segodnia, 27 May 1995.

more Eurasian Focus. He insisted on the idea that Russia is both Europe and Asia, and that it needed to achieve more balanced relations with the West while maintaining strong link with China, Japan, India and the Islamic World.¹⁶⁹ In the table below it is summarized the different foreign policy thinking of the different schools of thought and their proponents.

Table 3.2. The Spectrum of Russia's Post-Soviet Foreign Policy Thinking

<i>Principal School of Thought</i>	<i>Vision of Russia and Its External Threats</i>	<i>Proponent</i>
WESTERNIZERS		
Liberals	Russia is a part of the West and should integrate with Western economic and political institutions; the main threats to Russia come from nondemocratic states	Andrei Kozyrev
Social Democrats	Russia is an independent part of international society; it has its own specific interests, but also shares some common interests with others; the main threats to Russia come from violation of basic human rights and disrespect for cultural pluralism	Mikhail Gorbachev
STATISTS	Russia is a sovereign state and a great power with its own specific interests in maintaining the stability of the international system; the main threats to Russia come from state-revisionists seeking to change the existing balance of power	Yevgeni Primakov
CIVILIZATIONISTS		
National Communists	Russia is an independent socialist civilization and a great power/superpower; its interests are incompatible with those of the West and include the restoration of a balance of power between socialism and capitalism and the spread of the influence of Russian civilization; the main threats come from the West and its imperialist intentions	Gennadi Zyuganov
Hard-line Eurasianists	Russia is a land-based geopolitical empire; its interests are mutually exclusive of those of sea-based powers and include the preservation and expansion of Russia's geopolitical sphere of influence; the main threats come from sea-based powers	Vladimir Zhirinovski

Figure 5: A. Tsygankov, Russia 'foreign policy, change and continuity in national identify (2016)

¹⁶⁹ A. P. Tskygankov, *Russia and the West from Alexander to Putin: honor in International Relations*, Cambridge University Press, UK, 2012, p. 173.

In order to return to a Great Power status in a multipolar world Primakov's policies aimed at balancing the unipolar ambitions of the United States by strengthening ties with the other states while pursuing the expansion of Russia's influence in the post-Soviet space (the near-abroad) and in countries more isolated in the world. His appointment was supported in Russian public opinion and the political elites. Primakov, with his policies based on the idea of the national's interests on historical, political and geopolitical grounds, was considered to be the right man to counterbalance the American unilateralism.

However, he realized that the NATO expansion was a reality and that the only way to deal with it was a pragmatic cooperation. Russian considered the expansions as a betrayal, in their eyes all the post-Soviet period was marked by cooperation and commitment to the West. Despite its designation was "Most-likely the least welcome in Washington",¹⁷⁰ and that according to Yeltsin's idea he needed to fight in defending the national interests, Primakov signed in 1997 the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and Russia.¹⁷¹ Yeltsin was satisfied with this agreement, which was seen as a "quasi-institutionalization with the NATO."¹⁷²

Russia believed that this Act would have given a sort of veto-power, unfortunately this was not the case, and the proof lies in the attack of 1999. Following the NATO's bombing in 1999 on Yugoslavia, which marked the end of this cooperation, it became clear how Russia had once again not been involved in the global decision-making process. Primakov (at that time Prime Minister) was so shocked by these attacks, that he gave order to the pilot of the airplane to return to Moscow and cancel the meeting in Washington with the IMF. The subsequent reaction of Moscow, which included the suspension of the Founding Act and a harsh criticism towards NATO's aggression, was welcomed in Belgrade with optimism, with the hope that Serbian might not be alone against the world.

In the following and last chapter, it will be presented the War in Kosovo and the international implications it had for Russia and Serbia until nowadays.

¹⁷⁰ *The need for a New Ostpolitik*, Financial Times, January 16th 1996.

¹⁷¹ Full text at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25470.htm?selectedLocale=en.

¹⁷² A. P. Tksygankov, cit. p. 174.

Conclusion

In this chapter it was analyzed firstly the dissolution of the USSR and the YSFR where it has been seen the reasons between the two different outcomes, one peaceful and the other violent.

In forging the two new nations, there was a key political-cultural difference on the perception of the Russian and Yugoslav states, which has deep historical roots. In this sense the different legacy and experiences of the states under communism played a crucial role in defining the new states. The Slavic Brotherhood was tested when the conflict in former Yugoslavia started. Post-Soviet Russia under President Yeltsin supported the Western' initiatives, and in the first years of the conflict (until 1993) took often positions that were diametrical opposed to Milosevic. The desire of the Kremlin to join the Western society and the liberal ideas which characterized the early nineties policy-makers, such as the first foreign minister Kozyrev, played a decisive role in what it was perceived in Belgrade as a "betrayal".

However, after the first phase of Moscow's assertiveness, where it mainly followed and supported policy of the USA and the EU in order to "gain access" to the Western Society in the new World Order, due to internal contestation and political crisis, Yeltsin took a more independent and pro-Serb foreign policy.

Domestic pressure was not the only factor behind this shift, Russia aspired to be treated as a Great Power and it claimed to be considered more in the decision-making processes in the Yugoslav Crisis. Especially when it became clear the increasing intensity of NATO's use of force in Bosnia. Russia criticized harshly the attacks, and start voting against resolutions in the UNSC which were targeting Serbs only. This pro-Serbian attitude was partially justified by the desire to "protect" their Orthodox brother; it is also true that Moscow feared to be excluded from the decision-making process on the international arena. Russia did participate in the Contact Group and in the Dayton Agreements, however, its involvement was formal and without any substantial impetus. Even though Yeltsin keep acting from 1993 pro-Serb and anti-Western, its government, Kozyrev in the first place, never really intended to break with the West and the International Community over the Yugoslav Crisis.

CHAPTER III

RELATIONSHIP FROM THE WAR IN KOSOVO UNTIL 2019

In the third and last chapter it will be presented how the War in Kosovo marked a turning point in the Russia-West relationship, which had consequences as well to the “Brotherhood”. It is not here the point to discuss deeply the War in Kosovo and the NATO’s bombing against Yugoslavia, the main goal is to present the key-moments when Moscow acted in defending the Serbs and to discuss the overall contribution and position of the Russians in this conflict which become a decisive crossroad in East-West relationship.

In the second part of the third chapter it will be explained how and why in recent years, especially after the question of the independency of Kosovo and numerous trade-agreements between the two countries, the relationship between Russia and Serbia could be considered more than friendly.

3.1 The War in Kosovo

Dayton agreement marked the end of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, however, the situation of Kosovo was not being dealt. The Kosovo Liberal Army (KLA) increasingly, considering the failing in receiving any international back-up, started to act on their own with the goal to reach an independency or at least greater autonomy. As it was already explained in the previous chapters Kosovo, despite being a small province with little agricultural and mineral wealth, contains a number of important religious sites that are very important to the Serbian national identity.¹⁷³

In 1998 the first signs and killings of the upcoming crisis were not taken too seriously from the International community. On March 1998 the Contact Group ¹⁷⁴ urged Milosevic to stop these attacks on the Kosovar Albanians and began to contact the Kosovar counterpart in order to find a peaceful solution.¹⁷⁵ Only few years after Srebrenica an indisputable case of

¹⁷³ B. Posen, “*The War for Kosovo*”, International security, Vol. 24, No. 4 (Spring 2000), p. 42.

¹⁷⁴ Russia, USA, UK, France, Germany and Italy.

¹⁷⁵ C. Thorun, cit. p. 95.

violent ethnic cleansing occurred again in the Balkans. This province of Serbia which has been referred as the “unfinished business” of the region became a turning-point in the relationship between Russia, Serbia and the West (NATO in the first place).

The international community, seeing the growing episodes of violence on both sides of the conflict began an exercise operation called “Determinate Falcon” on June 15th 1998. Once again Russia was not consulted and this further international humiliation was considered a direct violation of the Founding Act.¹⁷⁶

In reaction Milosevic was invited at the Kremlin where they both agreed on the necessity of preserving territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia while at the same time condemning attacks on civilians. This meeting gave a unique chance to Russian diplomacy to play an active role in the international diplomacy, moreover the talks are a proof of the still existing Slavic “Brotherhood”, which was an important move in terms of domestic politics. Before the meeting (which according to the Contact Group was potentially decisive) Russia had already dissented on the ban on new investments in YFR and on a freeze on Yugoslav state assets.

Russia points have been made clear: the first was to pursuit Milosevic to stop the killings of Kosovar Albanians, the second was to oppose the use of NATO forces without the approval of the UN Security Council (where Russia could have vetoed it). The Yugoslav President agreed to some of the demands made at the Kremlin’s meeting, and this led to a great celebration in Russia for the victory of the strategy of political negotiation supported by Yeltsin (and Primakov) over the aggressive scenario of a western NATO’s intervention. A further evidence of the Moscow’s pro-Serbian behavior was the opposition to the resolution 1199 at the UNSC,¹⁷⁷ which demanded a withdrawal of the armed forces and a dialogue with the Kosovar.

Once again Russia defended its orthodox little brother while at the same time provoking frustration among the West. However, in October, on this occasion Russians voted in favor on the Resolution 1203,¹⁷⁸ which demanded that Serbia immediately and fully comply with the agreements with the OSCE and NATO.

¹⁷⁶ *Ivi.*

¹⁷⁷ Full text at: <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/1199>.

¹⁷⁸ Full text at <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/1203>.

Moscow was pleased by the success of the Halbrook-Milosevic agreement in Belgrade (where the Kremlin sent a delegation), especially because it sought to “offset claims by NATO that the threat of imminent air strikes had secured Belgrade’s agreement”.¹⁷⁹

In September 1998, Igor Ivanov¹⁸⁰ was nominated Minister of Foreign Affairs as Yeltsin decided to appoint Primakov Prime Minister (after the Duma blocked the nomination of Viktor Chernomyrdin). With the new Foreign Affairs minister Russia pursued in the direction of Primakov’ multi-vector foreign policy and continue to seek for a peaceful and political resolution of the Kosovo conflict. It was encouraged the use of the OSCE as it was considered the most efficient organization to deal with the crisis.

Between the end of 1998 and the beginning of 1999 Moscow tried to persuade the Serbs to talk and co-ordinate its policies with OSCE. By doing that it would have avoided a step-in by the bellicose NATO, this was for instance the case of the Russian delegation to Belgrade in October at the Holbrooke-Milosevic agreement, or at Rambouillet. In both occasions Ivanov sought to impose its view in the negotiation processes, which was to maintain the Yugoslavia’s territorial integrity and to guarantee the fullest degree of Kosovo’s autonomy within FRY.¹⁸¹

On March 15th 1999 the Kosovar signed the Rambouillet accords,¹⁸² Milosevic refused this agreement and it resulted in a deadlock. It can be said that in this occasion the Russian delegation (captained by Churnikin) did not forced too vehemently Belgrade to accept the deal. It is not sure whether by insisting more Russians would have avoided the imminent air strikes, what could be said is that the Serbians were relying almost entirely on Russian power in the international arena in order to prevent an escalation, and this illusion provoked great frustration in Yugoslavia as they felt “betrayed” and “abandoned” when they watched their capital burning.

Similar to the previous involvement in this region of traditional concern, Moscow seek to consolidate its Great Power status by playing an active role in the resolution of the Kosovo crisis, but it actually lacked on resources to assert its role in this conflict and had limited interests.

¹⁷⁹ D. Lynch, *Walking the tightrope: The Kosovo conflict and Russia in European security*, 1998- August 1999. *European Security*, 8(4), 57-83.

¹⁸⁰ In office from September 30th to 1998 to February 24th 2004.

¹⁸¹ D. Lynch, cit. p. 65.

¹⁸² Full text at: https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/990123_RambouilletAccord.pdf.

On March 22nd 1999 Richard Holbrooke tried a last-minute summit with Milosevic in Belgrade but he failed to find a point of compromise and this prompted the order to start the bombing in accordance with the General Secretary of NATO Solana and the Alliance's members.

The bombing of Belgrade marked not only one of the saddest moments of the past century, it symbolized also a fracture in the relationship between Russia and Serbia and to a greater extent with NATO and the Western world. On evening of March 24th 1999, the operation Allied Force was launched and the bombing continued for eleven weeks in many Serbian cities. Russia (and China as well) harshly criticized this air campaign against Yugoslavia. They believed that NATO under the American leadership started these attacks ignoring the Russia's and China's objections and without the endorsement of the UNSC, claiming that it was an aggression on a sovereign state outside the area of NATO.¹⁸³ It became clear how this unilateral attack was a prelude to the reinforcement of the American policy of pursuing global supremacy, and consequently the risk of a military threat towards Russia as well (in addition to the NATO's enlargement).

The images of Belgrade on fire started to appear on every channel worldwide, and this widespread media coverage of the conflict had an important effect to the mass publics. Especially in Russia, where it brought the concern of the public about the American and NATO interventionism closer to the one of the Elite.¹⁸⁴

A survey conducted only few days after the start of the air strikes showed how the Russians condemned the NATO attacks which were launched without the consultation of the UNSC and they also felt directly threatened by NATO which was acting as "World's policeman". Moreover, considering the presence of interethnic tensions in Chechnya, which could be somehow considered similar to Kosovo's case, "almost 80 % of the participant of the survey believed that it was only a matter of time before NATO attacked us."¹⁸⁵

The Operation Allied Force, which was characterized by political divisions among alliance's members, only started to have an impact when they initiated bombing power

¹⁸³ Y. Sagakuchi, K. Mayama, "Significance of the War in Kosovo for China and Russia," NIDS Security Reports, No. 3 (March 2002), pp. 1- 23.

¹⁸⁴ W. Zimmerman, *The Russian People and Foreign Policy: Russian Elite and Mass Perspectives 1993-2000*. Princeton University Press. USA, 2002. pp. 196-7.

¹⁸⁵ J. Norris, *Collision Course: NATO, Russia and Kosovo*, Westport CO: Praeger Publishers, 2005, p. 198.

stations, bridges (34), 57% of Yugoslavia oil reserves and all of the oil refineries.¹⁸⁶ However, the decisive attack which brought the war to the Serbian population and placed pressure on the Milosevic regime was the bombing of the Serbian national Radio and Television on April 23rd 1999 which killed 16 employees. Ironically, on the same day NATO released an official statement where explained its position and its goals, it claimed that “Our military actions are directed not at the Serb people but at the policies of the regime in Belgrade, which has repeatedly rejected all efforts to solve the crisis peacefully.”¹⁸⁷

Russia since the beginning of the air-strikes publicly condemned NATO and sought to find a diplomatic solution. For instance, president Yeltsin promoted a diplomatic mission to Belgrade with Primakov, Ivanov and Sergeyev (minister of the Defense) among the others. The delegation negotiated a peace plan with the President of Yugoslavia, however it was rejected by the other Western countries. The Russian diplomatic efforts to solve the crisis was done with the purpose not only to help the Slavic Brothers but also to regain international recognition as an important player in European affairs.

Nevertheless, in 1999 Russia was economically and politically instable and weak, Yeltsin sought to preserve its cooperation with the West, especially considering the negotiations with the IMF, over the entrance to the WTO and the signing of a free trade agreement with the EU. In this framework could be seen the meeting in Oslo between the American Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Ivanov. Despite it failed to solve the differences on the composition and command of a future peacekeeping operation and to stop the NATO bombings, it provided a chance to re-discuss on converging points (such as the safe return of refugees and the entry of international humanitarian agencies or the withdrawal from Kosovo of Serb’s forces).¹⁸⁸

The involvement of Russia in this phase of the conflict is testified by a statement of April 1999 released by NATO: “Russia has a particular responsibility in the UN and an important role to play in search for a solution to the conflict in Kosovo. Such a solution must be based on the condition of the international community (...) President Milosevic’s offers to date do not meet this test. We want to work constructively with Russia, in the spirit of the

¹⁸⁶ A. Finlain, cit. p. 87.

¹⁸⁷ Full text of the statement at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_27441.htm?selectedLocale=en.

¹⁸⁸ M. O’Connor, “*NATO, Jets Patrol Skies Near Serbia in Show of Force*”, The New York Times, June 16th 1998.

Founding Act.”¹⁸⁹ As well as in the words of the German Chancellor Schröder that “*there could be no lasting peace without the Russians*” or in the statement of Robin Cook (British Foreign Secretary) which referred to Moscow as “*part of any solution to the Kosovo crisis.*”¹⁹⁰

From May 1999 Chernomyrdin started a period of shuttles mission to Belgrade where he discussed about peacekeeping and sequency of a withdrawal of Serbs with any cessation of NATO actions.¹⁹¹ Despite Moscow’s efforts, the Alliance remained firm on its position: it would stop the attacks only after Milosevic would have accepted the terms of a settlement. Russia was evidently unhappy with these conditions and keep criticizing the air strikes campaign as detrimental to peace diplomacy.¹⁹²

In June it was finally reached an agreement which ended the bombings. Russians along with Talbott and the Finnish President and EU representative Ahtisaari. played a key role in pressuring the President of Serbia to accept the NATO’s terms. The capitulation was not only the result of the bombing and the KLA territorial gains within Kosovo; it should be also recognized to Russia its important contribution in the final resolution. Chernomyrdin intimidated Milosevic that NATO was ready to start a ground invasion and that Russians were on board with that peace plan, which apparently allowed Milosevic no further scope for exploiting Russian niggling over issues of peacekeeping and sequencing.¹⁹³

The following week Yeltsin personally intervened and Russia agreed to the UNSC resolution 1244¹⁹⁴ which endorsed a fuller settlement including the document which was composed by Chernomyrdin, Talbott and Ahtisaari and the May-principles over Kosovo¹⁹⁵ of the group of eight.¹⁹⁶ The final moment of the 1999 Drama was a rash-move by Russian paratroops to seize the Pristina’s Airport before the arrival of NATO.¹⁹⁷

¹⁸⁹ Full text of the statement at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_27441.htm?selectedLocale=en.

¹⁹⁰ K. Yelovsky, K. Zhukovsky, “Yeltsin, Milosevic Confirm Need for Yugoslav Integrity”, Itar-tass, June 16th 1998.

¹⁹¹ M. Andersen, cit. p. 201.

¹⁹² P. Munch, “Warnung ohne Wirkung“, Süddeutsche Zeitung, September 24th 1998.

¹⁹³ <https://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1998/p980924e.htm>.

¹⁹⁴ Full text at: <https://peacemaker.un.org/kosovo-resolution1244>.

¹⁹⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/may/06/balkans12>.

¹⁹⁶ V. Sycheva, “Boris El’tsin pryzivaet Slobodan Miloshevicha smirit’ gordyniu”, Segodnia, 6 October 1998.

¹⁹⁷ For an overlook of the event see the interview to General Ivanov published in 2009 available at: <http://jarki.ru/wpress/2009/03/31/581/>.

3.2 Myths and lessons from the War in Kosovo

Why Russia's leadership did not put more pressure on Milosevic? From the realist perspective the biggest concerns should have been to avoid and prevent the NATO's intervention and the escalation of the conflict.¹⁹⁸ One explanation is that the leverage on Serbia was very limited and even a more constructive approach would not have prevented the military intervention, however, Kremlin's pressure might have forced an earlier capitulation of Slobodan Milosevic.¹⁹⁹

On the negative side Russia was not able to prevent NATO from using force against Russia, it failed to impose itself as an important military factor in the endgame of the crisis and this provoked great critics from Belgrade and from the domestic opposition in Moscow.

Kosovo was a worrying watershed, for the first time since the end of the Cold War Russia and NATO founded themselves on opposite sides of an armed conflict. Russia gave support to Yugoslavia only politically, a military involvement was avoided only through a combination of weak economic situation and military weakness along with the determination of Yeltsin to not being dragged into the conflict.²⁰⁰ Most of Russians politicians and analysts have concluded that NATO's action has transformed a local Balkan war into a new source of Russia-West tensions, with a worrying prospect of escalating beyond the region and potentially outside of Europe.²⁰¹

Nevertheless, the Kosovo crisis implied two threats to national security: the first is the growing instability along and within Russian borders while the second is that an intervention against Yugoslavia could set a precedent, serving a model for similar intervention in CIS, Central Asia and Chechnya.²⁰²

As it was already explained in the first chapter it is partially true that the Myth of the Slavic *Bratstvo* helped to influence the vivid Russians response to the Kosovo crisis. The three main elements, the assumption of a "special relationship", the romanticizing of the Serbs and

¹⁹⁸ C. Thorun, cit. p. 100.

¹⁹⁹ V. V. Putin, "*Ot pervogo litsa: razgovory c Vladimirom Putinyim*" (Moscow, Vagrius) 2000, p. 157.

²⁰⁰ O. Antonenko, "*Russia, NATO and European security after Kosovo*", *Survival*, 41:4, 1999, p. 124.

²⁰¹ A. Arbatov, "*NATO glavnyaya problema dlya evropeiskoi bezopasnosti*", *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 1 April 16th 1999.

²⁰² P. Simic, cit. p. 109.

the assertion that Russia behavior is benevolent in contrast to the belligerent Western, were reflected in the Moscow's perception over the Kosovo issue.²⁰³

During the crisis in Kosovo, Russian public and elites spoke frequently about the Slavic Brotherhood, given the fact that among Nationalists and Communists (the opposition has been always criticizing the anti-Serbs moves of Yeltsin) the support to Belgrade was always present, in 1999 even the most liberal commentators declared that "*Russians and Serbs are Brothers in blood and Orthodox belief*".²⁰⁴ The Russian poet Yevtushenko wrote in an article on the New York times in 1999 that: "*For many Russians, beyond the two peoples' similar languages and Orthodox religions, and beyond the many mixed marriages, true solidarity with the Serbian runs deep*".²⁰⁵

A further testimony of the closeness during this crisis is the Duma vote to include YFR in the Russia-Belarus Union. The concept of the betrayal in not defending the Brother was a constant in that period, for instance commentators wrote that "If we do not vote (to include Yugoslavia) we will betray them."²⁰⁶ There were many gestures of solidarity, such as the generous provision of humanitarian aid by the Russian government and un-officially the numerous Russian Volunteers who fought alongside Serbians.²⁰⁷

The romanticizing of the Serbs, also shaped Russian perception. For instance Russian's Elite generally minimized or ignored Western' claims of the atrocities Serbians were conducting; according to Timofeev: "*The ethnic tension in Kosovo started as a rather ordinary conflict*".²⁰⁸ The Foreign Minister also remarked that "*there cannot be any justification for this, repeatedly calling charges of Serb atrocities "myths" and "rumors" spread around to justify the NATO attacks.*"²⁰⁹ Russians frequently rationalized away Serb's behavior by demonizing the Kosovars or by focusing on the victimization (as we have already explained in the first two chapters) of the Serbs by the West.²¹⁰

²⁰³ D. Mendeloff, "*Pernicious History as a Cause of National Misperceptions: Russia and the 1999 Kosovo War*", Vol. 43(1), NISA 2008, p. 43.

²⁰⁴ A. Kokhlov, "*NATO Declares War on Milosevic, What is Russia to do?*" Novie Izvestiia, March 25th 1999, pp. 1-2.

²⁰⁵ Y. Yevtushenko, "*History Returns to the Scene of its Crime*", The New York Times, May 1st 1999.

²⁰⁶ D. Gornostaev, "*Gosduma-territoriia Yugoslavia*", Segodnia, 17 April 1999, pp. 1-2.

²⁰⁷ D. Mendeloff, *ivi*.

²⁰⁸ A. Timofeev, A. Slobodin, "*Ne tuda popali*", Vremia MN, 11 May 1999. p. 1.

²⁰⁹ I. S. Ivanov, "*Zapis stenogrammy sovместnoi press-konferentsii, posviashchennoi sobytiiam Iugoslavii*" transcript, March 25th 1999.

²¹⁰ D. Mendeloff, *cit.* p. 45.

The second element, the Russian Benevolence on behalf of their Slavic brothers, also shaped the image of this conflict and the Russians response was a projection of this myth, such as in the 1876-78 or in 1914 (see chapter 1.4 of this thesis). In the words of Ivanov, it can be found the image of a Russia who was morally above the West and the only defender of international law; he stated that: *“In protecting today the right to the sovereignty of Yugoslavia we are protecting the future of the world and of Europe against the new form of neo-colonialism, the NATO-colonialism”*.²¹¹

The third and last element is the belief that the West has been always the aggressor and they have only nefarious aims towards Russia and in the Balkans. For instance, President Yeltsin commented on the NATO's bombing as *“an unprecedented case in international practice since the Second World War”* or once again Medvedev wrote that: *“Many Russians consider that the destruction of Yugoslavia was (...) intended to break the will of Russia, to put a stop to the integration process of the Slav peoples”*.²¹² A popular slogan which circulated in the public opinion and in the Elite as well was *“Yugoslavia today, Russia tomorrow”*.

Among Russia's population many saw a parallel with the situation in Chechnya and were sure that *“the final goal of NATO was to establish a beachhead in the Balkans for future attack on Russia.”*²¹³

The best that can be said about the effects this war had on NATO-Russia relations is that it ended the era of Myths for the general public as well, not only for politicians; almost six years of *“partnership”* did not prevent NATO from risking everything for the sake of a military adventure in the Balkans.²¹⁴ The consequences were that after the bombing began, Russia suspended its participation from the Founding Act and its military from Brussels in addition to other diplomatic retaliations.

The lessons from this conflict, and the important repercussion it has until nowadays are that from this moment NATO and USA through its superiority in military power tried to establish a new World Order that does not recognize the UNSC and which act unilaterally interfering in sovereign 'states internal affairs'.²¹⁵

²¹¹ I. S. Ivanov, Statement by Foreign Minister at the State Duma Session, March 27th 1999. transcript available at: <http://www.fednews.ru>.

²¹² R. Medvedev, *“Why They Say Nyet”*, Washington Post, May 2nd 1999, p. B4.

²¹³ V. Lapskii, *“Igraet NATO, proigryvaiut vse”*, Rossiiskaia Gazeta, May 26th 1999.

²¹⁴ O. Antonenko, cit. p. 130.

²¹⁵ *Ivi*, p. 131.

According to Shakleina, “*There is no agreement among the Great Powers on many security issues and on international norms, such as sovereignty and the right to defend national sovereignty and state integrity, foreign interference in domestic affairs and interventions involving the use of military force, and issues of separatism and secession.*”²¹⁶

3.3 New Millennium relationship between Putin and the post-Milosevic Yugoslavia

The new Millennium brought major changes in both countries which had significant impact on their mutual relationship and with the US and Europe. On the night of December 31st 1999 Boris Yeltsin resigned, and in accordance to the Constitution Vladimir Putin became acting President. In March 2000 he won the presidential election, becoming the second President of the Russian Federation.

In 1999 in Yugoslavia, Milosevic was charged with war crimes related to the conflicts in the Balkans by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, and in the following year his regime collapsed when he lost the controversial presidential election on September 24th 2000 won by Vojislav Kostunica. The new government secured immediately to consolidate the power by winning a large parliamentary majority in December and replacing “friends” of the former President. The “end” of Milosevic came when the Yugoslav authorities arrested him in April 2001 and he was sent to The Hague for trial. The collapse of Milosevic brought a significantly pro-Western leadership which opened Yugoslavia to turn towards USA and Europe.

Vladimir Putin came in when Russia’s economic improvement and its greater centralization of power gave the impression that the country managed to exit the post-Soviet transition’s era. Only one day before Yeltsin resigned, Putin, at that time Prime Minister, wrote an article “*Russia at the turn of the new millennium*” which was published on *Nezavisimaya gazeta*. This article signaled an attempt to balance statist and liberal elements by drawing lessons from his predecessor and from the failures of the nineties. He continued in claiming that globalization brings both opportunities and menaces, it could be seen as signal that he tried

²¹⁶ T. A. Shakleina, “*A Russian Perspective on the Twenty-First Century Challenges*”, cit. 2016.

from the very beginning to distance himself from Primakov. In a frank admission, he pointed out that Russia should grow its GDP at 8 % for 15 years if it to reach level of middle-European state (such as Portugal), and this could be interpreted as the will to focus more on domestic and economic reform rather than geopolitical strategies.²¹⁷ In the open letter to voters of February 2000 ²¹⁸ he claimed that Russia's priority is: *"to pursue our foreign policy in keeping with our national interests. In fact, we have to recognize the primacy of internal goals over external ones. (...) if certain international projects (...) brings no benefit to our people, we shouldn't join those projects. If Russia is being urged to engage in global ventures which cost a lot of money while we have to borrow and are unable to pay wages to our people, we have to think twice before joining (...) There is not and there cannot be a Great Power where there are weakness and poverty."*²¹⁹

In the letter he argued that the Kosovo conflict and the financial crisis of 1998 had delegitimized the advocates of a balanced approach in respect to the West. It cannot be said that the critics on the Primakov's approach meant a return to liberal internationalism. However, his statist's thinking and the belief in the greatness of Russia is an undeniable aspect of his conduct, for instance: *"Here the state, its institution and structures have always played an important role for the life of the country and of its people. For Russians a strong state is not an anomaly (...) is the source and the guarantor of order, the initiator and the main dynamic force of any change"*.²²⁰

This was clearly an attempt to develop a pragmatic approach which allowed Moscow to overcome economic and diplomatic isolation without at the same time being forced to sacrifice the domestic stability. It must be mentioned here that at the verge of the Millennium in the Caucasus there has been an intensification of terrorist activities which led to the assertiveness of military and security agencies. The authority of Putin and the not necessarily related macroeconomic improvements gave to Russia an element of strength and boosted its self-confidence.

In the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation of 2000, the top priority was to "ensure the reliable security of the country, preserve and strengthen its sovereignty, its

²¹⁷ V. V. Putin, "Rossiya na rubuzhe tysyacheletij", *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, December 30th 1999.

²¹⁸ V. V. Putin, "Otkritoe pis'mo k rossijskim izbrateljam", *Kommersant*, February 25th 2000.

²¹⁹ Full text at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24144>.

²²⁰ V. V. Putin, "Rossiya na rubuzhe tysyacheletij", cit.

territorial integrity, and its strong and respected position in the world community, which is what best meets the interests of the Russian Federation as Great Power and an influential center in the modern world, and is essential to the growth of its political economic, intellectual and spiritual potential.”²²¹

Nonetheless this new and invigorated Russia with the young President, played few key-roles in the first lustrum of the XXI century in the Balkans. In the above quoted 2000 concept it is stated that “Russia will offer maximum assistance in reaching a settlement in the Balkans, which should be based on coordinated decisions by the world community. (...) it is important to preserve the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, and to oppose its disintegration, fraught as that would be with the threat of the emergence of a pan-Balkan conflict with unpredictable consequences.”²²²

Those are vague commitments and this had also repercussions on the “Brotherhood” with Serbians, as a matter of fact between 2000 and 2005 Belgrade, by starting to talk about an EU (slow) integration and a re-rapprochement to NATO, left little room for a deeper cooperation with Russia, as its focus was on improving Western relations.

The door for a comeback to the region of Russia opened only when the international community reached a deadlock over the future status of Kosovo. Actually, starting from the assassination of the Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic, in March 2003, in Serbia came a more national-conservative and pro-Russian government under Vojislav Kostunica. The latter, even though was still supporting integration with the EU, held a more pessimistic view of the USA and expressed more interest in pursuing other options, which included closer ties with Russia.²²³ Kostunica, President of the FRY between 2000 and 2003, and Prime Minister from 2004 until 2008, met with Putin six times during these eight years. The relationship between the two leaders could be summarized by the euphoric statement given by the normally calm and few-words leader that for Serbia the “*Support of Russian and Mr. Putin personally show for Serbia’s position on Kosovo is extremely important and has historical significance.*”²²⁴

²²¹ A. Melville, T. A. Shackleina, cit. pp. 88-89.

²²² *Ivi*, p. 100.

²²³ A. Konitzer, cit., p. 12.

²²⁴ The two Presidents met in 2007 at the St. Petersburg international economic forum:

<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/40442>.

In early 2006 the intense negotiations over the future of Kosovo started and the Serbs acknowledged once again that many EU states and the USA favored Pristina's independence; moreover, the further stagnation of the EU negotiations frozen in May 2006 following the response of Bruxelles to what was perceived as a Serbia's non-cooperation with the The Hague Tribunal.²²⁵ Russia took profit of this frictions and close its ties with their "Slavic Brothers" in order to re-gain influence on the historically region of interest and to strengthen its position in the international arena.²²⁶

In January 2006 during the meeting of the contact group for Kosovo in London, Putin passed on the offensive rhetoric. He criticized the American and British vision, shared also by France, Italy and German of a Kosovo "*as a unique case which could not set precedent*"; Putin called for the respect of the International laws which are meant to settle this kind of conflict; the thesis of the Kosovo's uniqueness it is only a confirmation of the auto-protection of those states who wish to overcome and be above the international law.²²⁷ On January 21st 2007 in the meeting with the German chancellor Angela Merkel in Sochi, Putin claimed that "*the problem in international relations today is that there is increasingly less respect for the basic principles of international law.(...) It is only natural that if we find a particular solution for Kosovo, this solution would become universally applied.(...) now the victors in the Cold War want to divide everything up anew.*"²²⁸ He however, end up by saying that "*We are ready to work together.*"²²⁹

The decisive break-up of the Russian-West relations in the new Millennium is the notorious speech of Vladimir Putin at the Munich Security Conference,²³⁰ where he criticized the unipolar model "*with unilateral and frequently illegitimate actions, which have not resolved any problems, causing new tensions and human tragedies (...) We have reached that decisive moment when we must seriously think about the architecture of global security.*"²³¹ He continued by stating, in line with the position taken by Russia towards the NATO's bombing in the nineties in the Balkans, that: "*The use of force can be only considered*

²²⁵ A. Konitzer, *ivi*.

²²⁶ D. Reljic, " *Rusija i Zapadni Balkan*", ISAC fond, Belgrade, 2009. p. 11.

²²⁷ *Ivi*.

²²⁸ Full text of the press conference in 2007 with Putin and Merkel Sochi available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24008>.

²²⁹ *Ivi*.

²³⁰ Full video of the speech given by Putin in 2007 at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hQ58Yv6kP44>.

²³¹ Full transcript at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034>.

legitimate if the decision is sanctioned by the UN. And we do not need to substitute NATO or the EU for the UN.”²³²

This speech marked the first episode of the ongoing fraction between Russia and the West, which reached its peak in 2014 with the Crimea annexation and the consequent Western sanctions against Moscow. Serbian leaders, and ultimately President Vucic, have been always against those sanctions and take a reserved position on the events in Ukraine.

Kosovo unilaterally declared independence on February 17th 2008, USA and many EU members immediately recognize it,²³³ while Russia still refuse it. As the former Russian Ambassador Konuzin pledged “*In defense of Kosovo, we’ll stand as fast as we did in Stalingrad.*”²³⁴ However, there were critics that Russian’ support over the Kosovo issue was not only in the spirit of *Bratstvo* or international law-based of sovereignty and territorial integrity. There were founded doubts on the risk that Moscow would use the “Kosovo precedent” in justifying the intervention in Georgia or in recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia.²³⁵ According to Dusan Reljic Russia defense of Kosovo in the UNSC is the most salient and tangible pillar of the Foreign Policy towards Serbia.

3.4 Economic agreements and Russian investments in Serbia

The other pillar of the Russian’ Foreign policy in Serbia is the growing economic influence in the region. Energy and economics, have an increasingly important role in the mutual relationship and Moscow has proven ability to transform energy into a diplomatic tool. Even though the project of the construction of the Southern Stream pipeline was interrupted,²³⁶ Serbia still imports the majority of Gas and Oil from Russia.²³⁷ On the 1 December Putin (partly due to Western sanctions) announced that Russia would be cancelling

²³² *Ivi.*

²³³ Today (May 2019) recognized by 116 countries.

²³⁴ A. Konuzin, “*U odbrani Kosova Stajecemo Cvrsto Kao pod Stalingradom*”, *Politika*, May 29th, 2009.

²³⁵ A. Konitzer, cit. p. 14.

²³⁶ South stream was an aborted project which meant to supply EU with 15% of its gas needs, via a pipeline under the Black Sea.

²³⁷ For a detailed analysis on bilateral trade see: https://atlas.media.mit.edu/it/visualize/tree_map/hs92/import/srb/rus/show/2017/.

the project.²³⁸ This colossal project was feared by EU leaders who believed that the Balkan peninsula would become dependent on oil from Russia. Serbia is considered an “easy target” for Russian soft power, and the influence is not simply in the energy sector but in sports, civil society organizations and media.²³⁹ The ambitious project was more a geopolitical than a commercial one, it was not economical viable and experienced long-delays, further regulations obstacles hampered the potential profitability of the South Stream and the lack of financial resources to complete it.²⁴⁰

All the region is highly dependent on Russian hydrocarbons, one of the biggest oil refineries are in Pancevo and Novi Sad. ²⁴¹Crude oil arrives via the Druzhba pipeline from Russia; Moscow is trying to take advantage, enhancing its favorable position and exercise political influence on the region.²⁴²

The 2013 Russian Concept of Foreign Policy stated that: “The Balkan region is of great strategic importance to Russia, including its role as a major transportation and infrastructure hub used for supplying gas and oil to European countries.”²⁴³ The biggest Russian company *Gazprom* owns and controls since 2008 the majority of the former state monopoly Oil company NIS (Petroleum Industry of Serbia) and since then numerous commercial and strategic partnership between Moscow and Belgrade were discussed. The company based in St. Petersburg, acquired the 51% for a fee which was not even half of the market valuation, analysts believed that Serbs accepted such a low offer (400 million euros) to reward the Russians for supporting Serbia over Kosovo in the UNSC.²⁴⁴ This share has grown since then, *Gazprom Neft* now possess 56.15% of NIS equity, while 29.87 % is owned by the Republic of Serbia.²⁴⁵

Even if an investment is never fully realized, Russian investments in energy sector conveys influence and helps build soft power. Russian companies play a large and growing

²³⁸ R. Sitidikov, “*Gazprom announces final nail in the South Stream Coffin*” Russia Today, 14 January 2015. Available at: <https://www.rt.com/business/222619-bulgaria-south-stream-gazprom/>.

²³⁹ J. Milic, “*The Russification of Serbia*”, New Eastern Europe, October 16th 2014.

²⁴⁰ P. Stronski A. Himes, “*Russia’s Game in the Balkans*”, Carnegie Paper, February 6th 2019.

²⁴¹ S. Ralchev, “*Energy in the Western Balkans: A Strategic Overview*”, Institute for Regional and International Studies, 2012, p. 3

²⁴² *Ivi.*

²⁴³ Full text available at: http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/122186.

²⁴⁴ <https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-serbia-russia-nis/minister-slams-russian-grab-for-serb-oil-monopoly-idUKL2852531920071228>.

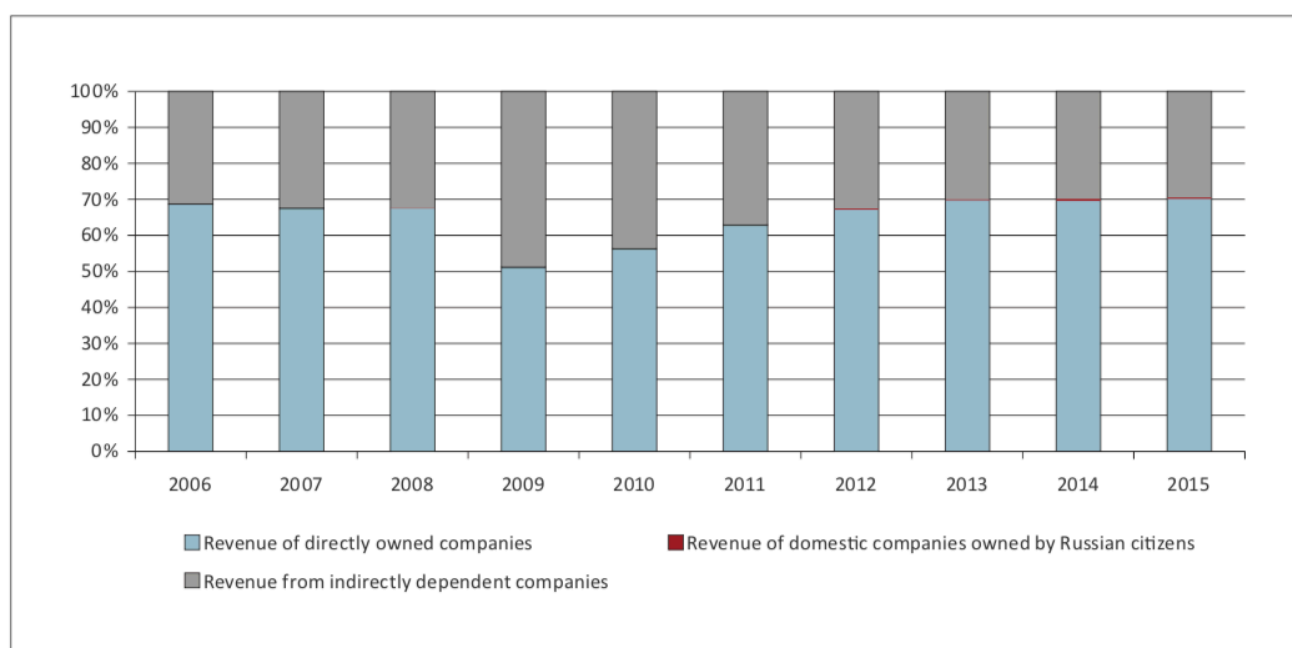
²⁴⁵ <https://www.nis.eu/en/about-us/company-information>.

role in Serbia's downstream energy markets as assets' owner, developers of new infrastructures and partners in joint ventures; the investments are designed to reduce competition and create local networks of financial interest with the aim to reinforce the dominant Russian position.²⁴⁶

In 2009 former Serbian president stated :*“Russia (...) thanks to the rise in the price of natural gas and oil, has renewed its foreign policy and economic potential and has been a great friend in supporting Serbia on the Kosovo issue (...) this along with our historical Bratstvo, has without any doubt placed us in especially close relations with Russia.”*²⁴⁷

Sberbank is also present in Serbia and in 2013 they announced plans for a special funding program for Serbians farmers.²⁴⁸ In 2008 an agreement between the two countries allocated 800 million Dollars in modernizing the railway infrastructures and this project is still ongoing. In Serbia almost 1000 companies are partially or entirely owned by Russians.

In the graph in the following page, it is represented the structure of the Russian-owned companies, in Serbia they control revenues of close to 5 Billion Euros , representing the 13 % of the total revenues generated by the local economy.²⁴⁹



Source: CSD calculations based on data from a commercial corporate database.

Figure 6: Structure of Russia's corporate Presence in Serbia.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁶ D. Clark, A. Foxall, "Russia's role in the Balkans- Cause for Concern?", Henry Jackson Society, June 2014, p. 7.

²⁴⁷ RTS, "cetiri stuba srpske spoljne politike", available at:

<http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/9/Srbija/123751/%C4%8Cetiri+stuba+srpske+spoljne+politike.html>.

²⁴⁸ https://www.b92.net/eng/news/business.php?yyyy=2013&mm=05&dd=15&nav_id=86182.

²⁴⁹ "Assessing Russia's Economic Footprint in Serbia", Policy Brief No. 72, Center for the Study of Democracy, January 2018.

²⁵⁰ Included in "Assessing Russia's Economic Footprint in Serbia", Policy Brief No. 72, Center for the Study of Democracy, January 2018.

Nevertheless, in addition to corporate investments, in order to enhance its presence in the Serbian economy, Moscow has used direct government-to-government loan scheme. Thanks to the numerous trade-agreements which have been signed in the last decade Russia's import from Serbia in the first quarter of 2018 has shown a 17% growth from 2017 , and in the first quarter of 2018 Russia's export to Serbia has risen by 24 % compared to the previous year; more generally in the first quarter of 2018 Serbia-Russia trade turnover has increased by 20 % in relation to the same period of the previous year.²⁵¹ Russia figured fourth in the top export in countries, behind Italy, Germany and Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a 5.9 % share for value of 995 Million dollars in 2017.²⁵²

The increase in exports towards the east may continue as the Serbian government formally agreed in 2019 to the negotiations with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). The final procedures for the EAEU to ratify a Free Trade Agreement with Serbia is due to be signed in October 2019.²⁵³ Serbian Foreign minister Ivica Dacic stated in January 2019 that: *“the signing of this agreement was only a matter of time since Serbia has free trade agreements with certain EAEU members but they differ in between. Now it is time to develop and sign an integrated agreement, (...) that is to perform certain unification of all these agreements”*.²⁵⁴ According to the Serbian minister of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications Rasin Ljajic: *“Serbia has a particular interest in expanding liberalization with the EAEU economies in the area of cotton, tobacco, cheese, sugar, poultry, wine and FIAT automobiles.”*²⁵⁵

For the moment Serbia is free to negotiate this Free Trade Agreement with Russia and EAUE, however, it must be considered that in respect to the aspiration of becoming a member of the EU this deal could not be legally accepted. In practice, by looking to all major international actors (China included) Serbia is working on strengthening bilateral and multilateral relations in the East and in the West.

²⁵¹ <http://www.rusexporter.com/news/detail/5509/>.

²⁵² <https://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/srb/>

²⁵³ <https://www.russia-briefing.com/news/serbia-singapore-poised-sign-free-trade-deal>.

²⁵⁴ <https://china-cee.eu/2019/03/28/serbia-external-relations-briefing-improving-eastern-dimension-of-serbian-foreign-policy-orientation/>.

²⁵⁵ *Ivi.*

Serbia's ability in balancing between the EU integration project and the growing economic influence of Russia could be summed up by the words of the Serbian sociologist Srećko Mihailović who claimed that: *"Serbia is a country whose heart is in the East and its pocket in the West (...) where emotions are concerned, Russia has the advantage, whereas reason is on the side of the Western countries."*²⁵⁶

3.5 Relationship in 2019 and future scenarios

One telling example of the love to Putin in Serbia is the decision of the residents of a remote mountain village named Adzince, to change the name to "Putinovo" which means "Putin's village".²⁵⁷

Today, in 2019, the "Slavic Brotherhood" seems as strong as never, and the January visit of President Putin testified it. In Serbia warm feelings and admiration for Russia and Putin run deep and seem to be growing. The Russian President ranked first in a survey conducted by the Serbian newspaper *Politika* in March 2019, with 58 % of the respondents voting for him as the most-trusted foreign politicians.²⁵⁸

Billboards on streets welcome Serbia's "dear friend" and his face was plastered on mugs, T-shirts and even underwear.²⁵⁹ During the tour, in order to highlight the cultural ties, Putin paid a visit to the brand-new restored Church of St. Sava, one of the largest Orthodox Church in the world, which was financed by Russian businessman.²⁶⁰

The visit was a celebration of the 180 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, and the main event was the visit on January 17th 2019. President Vučić welcomed Putin by saying that: *"Serbia and Russia are genuine friends, and I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for investing your energy, effort, work, love and respect in making the relations between our countries even better, even*

²⁵⁶ <https://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/news/survey-serbias-heart-is-in-the-east-pocket-in-the-west/>.

²⁵⁷ Full video available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=goLnjlgmI9A>.

²⁵⁸ M. Santora, N. MacFarquhar, Putin Gets Red Carpet Treatment in Serbia, a Fulcrum Once More, New York Times, January 17th 2019. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/17/world/europe/serbia-putin-russia-belgrade-vucic.html>.

²⁵⁹ *Ivi.*

²⁶⁰ *Ivi.*

stronger.”²⁶¹ He continued by enlisting all the agreements which existed between Russia and Serbia and which were signed and ratified during the meeting. During Putin’s visit 26 totally agreements were signed, such as energy, economy, technological development, education, military cooperation, etc.

In conclusion he mentioned briefly about what is still probably the breaking point with the EU: the Kosovo status. He thanked Putin *“for all your effort and support for Serbia’s independence, for the preservation of its territorial integrity, and other matters.”* In line with the positive atmosphere and mutual respect and cooperation during all the visit he finished by saying that: *“Although Serbia might not be a large country geographically you can always count on us”*.²⁶²

The response of Putin on the Kosovo’s status was that: *“we (Russia) are interested in a stable and secure situation in the Balkan. Russia’s position is well known. We are in favor of reaching a mutually acceptable agreement between Pristina and Belgrade on a settlement based on UNSC Resolution 1244”*²⁶³ (...) *Russia completely shares the concerns of the Serbian leadership and people.*”²⁶⁴

In the press conference held at the end of the talks, Putin, when asked about any form of Russian mediation for normalizing the situation in Kosovo answered that: *“Russia has always been actively involved in resolving these crises) as for direct intermediary (...) we know that the EU was an intermediary in resolving a number of issues, but unfortunately, few agreements are being fulfilled. (...) It is necessary to show more respect for international law and only in this case can we achieve any fair solutions”*²⁶⁵

It is important to underline the Russia’s support for the territorial integrity of Serbia, since it is a key issue in Serbian politics, which enforced the position of Vucic, and it created in the Serbian people renew positive perception of Moscow and its leader.

A further key factor on the renewed brotherhood is the opposition to NATO, Serbia and Russia since 2009 agreed on a “strategic partnership”. Serbia’s neutrality could be seen as a potentially dangerous aspect in the relations between Russia and the West. The countries

²⁶¹ Transcript of the meeting available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/59690>.

²⁶² *Ivi.*

²⁶³ Full text available at: https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/990610_SCR1244%281999%29.pdf.

²⁶⁴ Transcript of the meeting available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/59690>.

²⁶⁵ *Ivi.*

surrounding Serbia have succeeded in pushing the boundaries of what is West and what is East in order to be included in one of the two categories.²⁶⁶

Belgrade's position in the middle of the Balkan requires to maintain strict cooperation with both sides. Considering the reality of the international relations where even big countries cannot afford to rely exclusively on one partner, Serbia's strategy is multi-directed (it includes also a growing partnership with China) and it seek to balance between the West and the East. Belgrade would like to retain a position analogue to the one of Tito's non-aligned Yugoslavia, while at the same time create their own post-socialist identity. However, in the new World Order this is not an easy task.

In a survey conducted in March 2017 by the Belgrade Center for security policy, the majority views Russia as a political and military power, and the influence of Moscow (along with Berlin and Beijing) is regarded positive, while the influence of EU and USA is seen mostly negative.²⁶⁷ The majority is satisfied with the level of cooperation and remains opposed to NATO membership supporting the policy of neutrality. Regarding the EU membership, despite the majority is still in favor of it, Serbian's would give up on EU accession if the recognition of Kosovo were a requirement.²⁶⁸ This testified once again why Putin is so popular, and why in 2019 it cannot be said with certainty whether Serbia will join the EU in the short-term.

Although the bulk of the Serbian's imports investment and financial assistance come from the West and there are serious chances of joining the EU, Vucic is concerned about proceeding further without Putin's approval.

For Moscow, the Brotherhood and the strategic partnership with their Slavic Orthodox fellows is important in order to consolidate its Great Power status and its economic and cultural influence on a geopolitical strategic region. This "soft power", following John Nye's concept, means getting others to want the outcomes you want, co-opts people rather than coerces them; soft powers rests on the ability to shape others' preference and to attract.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁶ M. Zivkovic, *"Serbian Dreambook: National Imaginary in the Time of Milosevic"*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2011. p. 89.

²⁶⁷ M. Popovic, S. Stojanovic Gajic, *"Public Perception of Serbia's Foreign Policy"*, Belgrade Centre for Security Policy, 2017, available at: http://bezbednost.org/upload/document/public_perception_of_serbias_foreign_policy.pdf.

²⁶⁸ *Ivi*.

²⁶⁹ J. S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Public Affairs, USA, 2004, pp. 5-6.

It could be therefore assumed that the growing projection of Russian' "soft power" in Serbia, thanks to the tools enlisted previously in this chapter (investments, cultural ties, media, sport, etc.) will shape the future scenario and the "special relationship" between Moscow and Belgrade.

Conclusion

In this last chapter it was analyzed how the war in Kosovo and the consequent NATO bombing on Yugoslavia was a crucial crossroads which defined the relationship between Russia and the West (with NATO in the first place). Nevertheless, it also had repercussions on the "Slavic Brotherhood" because Moscow's failure in preventing the NATO intervention was perceived among many Serbs as a "betrayal".

It was explained, following the concept of misperception on the historical myth of Pan-Slavism presented in the first chapter of this thesis (1.4 "Myth of Slavic Brotherhood"), how emotions and misperceptions shaped the conflict on both sides.

The new Millennium brought major political changes in both Serbia and Russia. The arrival of Putin, and the recovery of the economy gave Russia self-confidence and from 2000 it started to behave as a Great Power acting more independently. The new President gave up definitely on the cooperation with the West which characterized the Foreign policies of the nineties.

In Yugoslavia, the end of Milosevic brought a more pro-Western government. For the first half of the last decade the relationship between Moscow and Belgrade suffered because of the decision of the Post-Milosevic government to begin to turn towards EU and the West rather than seek partnership with the Kremlin. However, the "frozen" period ended in 2005 when the question of Kosovo's status return to be an international deadlock. The decision of Moscow to refuse such independence marked a return of the "Special Relations."

In this chapter it was briefly mentioned probably the most effective tool, along with the "Cultural and Orthodox-Slavic ties", Russia has in the Balkans: the highly dependence on Russian' Oil and gas. Another key-aspect in recent years of the "Russian' soft power" is the increasing presence of Russian investments.

*“The response to violence and ethnic cleansing in the Balkans in the nineties pushed Russia and the West to unprecedented levels of cooperation, but also provoked mistrust and zero-sum thinking; almost a decade later, the mistrust has fueled Moscow’s antagonism toward Western policies in the Balkans while the pragmatic interaction and political accord have been all but forgotten”.*²⁷⁰ Those words, written in 2007 by Oksana Antonenko could easily be transferred to the 2019 international relation context. Unfortunately, the situation over the Kosovo’s independence is still a deadlock and a cause of friction with Bruxelles over possible EU integration of Serbia. However, the very same issue which is slowing down the process of joining the EU for Belgrade, represents the most salient and tangible pillar of the Russian’s foreign policy towards Serbia.

The Russian support of the territorial integrity of Serbia and the refusal to recognize Kosovo’s independency, created a renewed perception of Russia among Serbian’ citizens. This “love” towards Putin was witnessed during the January 2019 visit to Belgrade, where the Russian president received a lavish welcome with red carpet and was enthusiastically cheered by tens of thousands of Serbs on the street.

²⁷⁰ O. Antonenko, *“Russia and the Deadlock over Kosovo”*, Institute Francais des Relations Internationales (IFRI), 2007. p. 7.

FINAL CONCLUSION OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of this thesis was to analyze and verify the Slavic Brotherhood between Russia and Serbia, especially after the dissolution of the USSR and the SFRY. It was tried to estimate how much this “Special Relationship” has been impacting Russian Foreign Policy and its role in the international arena.

By conducting extensive analyses in the three chapters of this work, it was reached the conclusion that helped to answer the research questions. Based on the first chapter, which provided the analytical, theoretical and historical tools and concept, the following conclusion were drawn. Firstly, it was acknowledged that neo-realism is the most suitable theory which helps analyzing the Russian Foreign Policy. This is due to the fact that the neo-realist concept of anarchy in the World Order and the distribution of capabilities among different actors could be applied to Russian’ situation in the nineties. Its behavior could be explained by the desire to be internationally recognized.

Secondly, following Shackleina’s definition of Great Power it was concluded that, despite lacking some of the features, Yeltsin’s Russia was to be considered a Great Power. This research has demonstrated how by not including Moscow in the decision-making process, such as in the first war in the Balkans, the impact of intervention was ineffective.

Thirdly, it was introduced the historical Myth of Slavic Brotherhood by enlisting the moment when Moscow has acted as an “elder sister” or “Orthodox protector”. A further important result of this research is represented by the historical misperceptions. Historical memory and analogical reasoning are a dangerous outcome from this Myth and according to Vujacic (Vujacic 2015) “*only by engaging in comparison across time can elements of political-cultural continuity in each case be identified*”. Otherwise, as it has occurred for instance in the nineties, decision makers are prone to rely too heavily on distorted history. In this work it has been proven that, whether guided by strategic aims or by spirit of Slavic Brotherhood, Russia has been always trying to be involved in this region.

The second chapter of this thesis was devoted to the reconstruction of the tumultuous nineties. Both countries needed to rebuilt its nationality, to set up new governments and to start their (slow) process to democracy. By presenting an overview of the main steps following the

two dissolutions, one violent, one pacific, this research has tried to explain the motivation behind the different outcomes. For instance, by illustrating the key political-cultural difference on the perception of the Yugoslav and Russian states. It was concluded that Serbs have a deep connection marked by years of battles and blood with the state. In contrast Russians are not so connected with the state, due to historical, cultural and institutional reasons.

The War in the Balkans, as it was explained in the second chapter, became one of the first tests of the “Brotherhood” between the two new states. However, as this research has demonstrated, post-Soviet Russia under Yeltsin supported the Western’ initiatives, and in the first phase of the conflict took often position diametrical opposed from Belgrade. By using the framework of analysis provided in chapter one, it was explained how liberal ideas, and the “Westernization” of Kozyrev influenced many of the decisions. This assertiveness to the West provoked domestic protests by the opposition, and at the same time generated disillusion of the Slavic Brotherhood. In Belgrade it was perceived as a betrayal.

In analyzing the nineties, it was impossible to omit the economic and political instability which characterized the first decade of the new Russian Federation and had an influence on its Foreign Policy. Despite all the domestic constrains, Russia legitimately aspired to be recognized as Great Powers and claimed to be considered more in the decision-making over the War in the Balkans. The fracture with the West started with the increasing hostility of NATO towards the Serbians and it resulted in a more pro-Milosevic behavior with a series of UNSC resolutions’ rejection by Moscow. This rapprochement to Belgrade from 1993 was in part due to domestic pressure.

In the second chapter it was described how the Constitutional crisis of 1992-1993 in Russia influenced the ambivalent Yeltsin behavior towards it fellow orthodox. Despite the pro-Serbian approach from the second part of the conflict Yeltsin, and especially Kozyrev, never really intended to break with the international community (and the West) over the Crisis in the Balkans.

A further crucial crossroads which defined the relationship between the Russia and the West was the War in Kosovo. The first part of the last chapter of the thesis has been devoted to explain the myths on the Kosovo war and the repercussions that it had on the “Brotherhood”. In the research it was explained how emotions and misperceptions shaped the conflict. The NATO bombings of Belgrade without Russia’s consensus are a telling example on how NATO

and USA through their military superiority tried to establish a new World Order which does not recognize the UNSC and which act unilaterally.

In the last stage of this thesis it was presented the political changes which the new millennium brought. On one side, Putin's arrival coincided with the economic recovery which, along with his abilities, boosted Russian self-confidence. The new Foreign Policy Concept of 2000 had more ambitious goals and aimed at returning to act more independently. At the same time, 2000 marked the end of Milosevic which brought a government more interested in installing relationship with the West and it resulted in a "pause" period of the Brotherhood, especially considering the "failure" of not being able to prevent the NATO attacks in the spring of 1999.

This research has shown how the most tangible and powerful pillar of the Russian Foreign Policy towards Serbia, which is still valid today, is the question of Kosovo's status. In the last decade Russia has more than once stand up in the defense of the territorial integrity of Serbia. During the last visit of January 2019, Putin was welcomed gloriously. In this work it was presented some surveys which testified how the reputation of Russia and its leader among Serbian citizens is considered very high. Thanks to a brief presentation of the trade and economic agreements between Moscow and Belgrade it was described how Russia is trying to project its soft power not only through its cultural or Orthodox ties. The growing influence in the region of energy-dependency and Russian investments in Serbia has been presented in the final part of the work. It was concluded that Moscow has proven ability to transform energy into a diplomatic tool.

As a result of this research, whether the Brotherhood managed to outplay external and internal constraints, in the framework of the research' question of the thesis, it was acknowledged how despite troubled relations during the war of the nineties, the two *Narodi* (people) are still close.

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SUMMARY

On January 17th 2019, the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir V. Putin, received red carpet treatment at his arrival in Belgrade as he was a Rock star. In this particular moment of history, it is difficult to imagine another European country where such visit could provoke in the population a similar celebration towards the arrival of Putin. Even though Serbs are traditionally pro-Russia, and there is a long history of *Bratstvo* (Brotherhood) between the two people, it is surprisingly the appeal of Putin in Serbia. The starting point of the thesis is exactly this emblematic recent meeting where once again the historical, and presumed “Special Relationship”, appears to be as stronger as has never been before. The aim of the work is to verify such Brotherhood, especially after the dissolution of the USSR and the SFRY and to estimate how much this *Bratstvo* has been impacting Russian Foreign policy and its role in the International arena. Throughout the work, the elements of cultural identities, nationalism, the importance of geopolitics and economic aspects will be covered and analyzed throughout different periods. The research of this work is devoted to capture and to verify the moments in which the *Bratstvo* managed to outplay external imposition and geopolitical games. Starting by the Orthodox Religion, the similar language and the common Cyrillic alphabet, the two “*Народы*” (peoples) shares some direct affinity which seems to be hard to describe.

The work is divided in three chapters. The first will provide the analytical, theoretical and historical tools and concepts which will represent the basis and the framework of the whole thesis. The second chapter will be devoted to the analysis and comparison of both countries firstly, in the nineties and then in the new World Order in which Russia was trying to take part. In the third and last chapter, which will cover a period from the conflict in Kosovo to the new millennium, it will be examined the mutual relationship, highlighting the on-going trade agreements and “strategic partnership” supported by the current Presidents, Putin and Vucic.

Following the dissolution of the URSS, Russia has founded itself in a new World Order in which was not anymore considered a Great Power. The war in Yugoslavia could be considered one of the first “tests” on the new status of the Russian Federation. Consequently, it is essential in this work to insert the evolving role of Russian Federation in the new World Order and the implications it has on the “Brotherhood” with Serbia. The most proper theory

used to deal with the Great Powers topic is considered to be Neorealism. Kenneth Waltz's studies and John Mearsheimer's are the most indicated in order to analyze the role of Russia in the new World Order. According to realists, the international structure is anarchic since it does not have a central authority, and it is instead characterized by different sovereign states which theoretically are equal.

In the nineties there were doubts in the Western scholars and politicians on the Great Power Status of Russia which Yeltsin was eager to demonstrate. Shakleina's definition summarized the nature of a Great Power. The latter is a state which exerts influence on the global politics (more than the others), focusing its efforts and resources, which could be material or non-material, on a specific region. Another important element is the international recognition, Hedley Bull, firmly believes that in order to be considered a Great Power, a state must be recognized by the others (Great Powers). If we apply this theory to Russia in the post-Soviet era, it is evident that it has some of the features, such as the size of the population and territory and military strengths; however, in the Yeltsin period the economic capability and the political stability were lacking. This resulted in an automatic and rapid decision of the international community (USA in the first place) of "*déclassement*" from a status of Great Power to a "Normal and Regional" Power, despite the fact that Russia managed to keep its seats at the UN Security Council and the involvement in other international organizations.

The problem of this Realist approach comes when the domestic and external constraints are not so formidable and a state could choose between different foreign policy options. Following the Waltz realism, a state would opt for balancing against power. However, this thesis was invalidated by the fact that Russia and Western Europe did not balance against the unilateralism of the American power in the nineties. If this realist approach is applied to the Russian foreign policy of the nineties it could be used to explain some of the choices made by Kozyrev and Primakov, which were a combination between domestic tensions, international constraints and the desire to be recognized as a Great Power.

Moscow, given its "Slavic ties" with Belgrade, considered to have some sort of sphere of influence on the region, therefore Russia tried to cooperate with the Western democracies in order to become mediator in the crisis. However, due to several domestic and international constraints, the new Russian Federation failed at its early stage to become a decisive actor in the international arena.

One of the main questions of this research is to explain how Russia, despite the increasingly fragile domestic situation, has been able to maintain the appearance of Great Power status internationally.

It is important to analyze the Myth of the Slavic Brotherhood from an historical perspective. According to Vujacic: *“Founding myths are not frozen in time but are reinterpreted, reinforced (or weakened) and reconstituted in the light of new collective experiences (...) Only by engaging in comparison across time can elements of political-cultural continuity in each case be identified, while taking into account the way in which they were transformed by new collective experiences, political interests and ideologies.”*. The pan-Slavic argument refers to a special relation between Serbs and Russians based on cultural, linguistic, ethnic and religious elements. The question is whether *“basking in the old glory of Russian-Serbian relations”* could be applied to recent years.

Russia had three core interests in the Balkans and the South-East of Europe, firstly strategic, secondly cultural, and thirdly religious. According to Tskygankov, strategically speaking, Russian diplomacy concerned the Balkans as essential for the security of its state and especially for the stability of their frontiers and in blocking the expansion of the other European Great Powers in this geo-strategical important region. In XIX century, Russia intervened during the Serbian Revolution backing the Serbs and following the victory over Turkey it facilitated the Serbian independency with the Treaty of Santo Stefano signed in 1878. XIX century was a century of insurrections and a progressive recognition of Belgrade autonomy; yet, despite the common political goals and the brotherhood sealed by language blood and religion, Russia and Serbia developed a fluctuating and ambivalent relationship. In 1913 during the second Balkan War between Serbia and Bulgaria Russia took the side of Belgrade. Nevertheless, Moscow started mobilizing against the Austro-Hungarian empire in the crisis of July 1914. Many scholars agree on the fact that Russia mostly provided assistance when this was beneficial for itself. Therefore many “cynical” scholars convey that Russia has repeatedly used Serbia as a pawn in the Great Powers’ Balkan’s game.

There is a dangerous outcome from the myth of “Slavic Brotherhood” as historical memory and analogical reasoning generates misperceptions. In order to avoid bad policies and misperceptions, decision-makers have to utilize better analogies or to develop a deeper knowledge of history. It can be concluded that for Serbia the pattern of this *Bratstvo* has been

consisting in an alternation between moments of closer ties in period of war and crisis and a turn towards West in the stable and pacific era.

Between 1918 and 1941 there was not mutual diplomatic recognition. After the October Revolution of 1917, the new state started a form of foreign policy in the Balkans which was different and unrelated to the past. In the first years of the WWII, URSS maintained its neutrality, even after the harsh invasion and destruction of Yugoslavia by Hitler's troupes. USSR in World War II, USSR backed the partisan's forces led by Tito (which is a Croat) and not the Serbian nationalists guided by Mihajlovic. However, the situation changed with the arrival of the Red Army in Belgrade which liberated Serbia from the Germans in 1944. Stalin installed a vassal regime which had to respond to the Kremlin; this state, which lasted until 1948, had its roots in previous agreements between Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin. Despite the control over Yugoslavia in this intra-time, it must be underlined that Serbia, and the Balkans in general, remained a relative low interest of Moscow' Foreign Policy. The Tito-Stalin Split of 1948 within the Communist bloc left the world astonished. In the first place, the clash was ideological. Secondly, Stalin firmly condemned the expansionist' Yugoslav's policy towards its neighbors, such as Albania and "*La questione di Trieste*": the leader of the USSR was worried that it might antagonized the Soviet Union war's allies and it became a constant point of contention. In the context of the research of this thesis, the Cold War is important because under the guidance of Marshall Tito, Yugoslavia tried to pursue a balanced position, between the NATO and the Warsaw Pact and managed, thanks to his personality and capabilities to preserve its own idea of a socialist state, it managed to reach its goal. After Stalin's death, a reconciliation between Moscow and Belgrade took place and the Tito-Khrushchev correspondence between June 22nd and September 27th 1954 represented the first contact. Yugoslavia's geopolitical situation during the Cold War (in the non-Aligned movement) is somehow similar to the Serbian one of the XIX centuries which managed to emancipate taking advantage from the rivalry between the Austro-Hungarian and Tsarist Empires. Analogously, since the Split, Belgrade were able to survive in the bipolar tension embedding in the competition between Moscow and Washington.

As far as the religious and cultural ties concerns, Russia succeed in developing a strong link in the fate of the Balkan Christian-Orthodox Slavs from 1870. Slavic solidarity and the Orthodox Slavic reciprocity are at the basis of the *Bratstvo*, becoming one of the dominant

driving forces which had an influence on the Russian policy in the Balkans. The Orthodox Church has been playing an influent role in the politics of both countries: the Serbian Orthodox Church it has often been considered a political organization first and secondarily a religious organization. For Serbs, the founding myth of the nations is the same one of the Religion, this is because Orthodoxy, unlike Islam or Catholicism, is not universal, it is linked to the nation. Orthodoxy is of huge social importance in both countries. Nevertheless, it has an enormous symbolic importance on the people, and unlike other institutions it is everlasting and unquestionable. In January 2019 Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and the Primate of the Serbian Orthodox Church Patriarch Iriney, met in Moscow. Once again, the common history and values, and the host of martyrs were highlighted by Patriarch Kirill.

Another feature which is shared by the two nations is the honor and pride. These feelings, which are deeply rooted in both societies, have been influencing their foreign policy strategies and decisions. The conduct of the different rulers throughout the history, from Tsars to Kings, from Dictators to charismatic presidents, has been frequently marked by a great amount of “bold” and “heroic” moves, in the name of honor.

The Gorbachev’s visit of March 1988 was the first by a Soviet general party since Tito’s death in 1980 and it was of a particular importance not only for Yugoslavia but it aimed also for other eastern-European states, such as Czechoslovakia, and in this way, Yugoslavia become a cornerstone of the new thinking in Foreign Policy by Gorbachev.

In 1991 the Soviet Union ended and, subsequently the coup attempts of August, the power was suddenly in the hands of Yeltsin (who was only elected one month before as the first president of the Russian Federation). The dissolution of the Soviet State was one of the biggest transformations of the twentieth century. It completely altered the world, provoking an end to half a century of communist-socialist domination in Eastern Europe, breaching the Cold War division of the planet and prompting new disorders which the new Millennium is still dealing with. The new Russian Federation and its president Yeltsin needed to start from zero and to decide in which direction to point, in order to complete the process of democratization in the best and fastest way possible. There is much that can be criticized on the manner and on the rapid steps towards the dissolution in 1991, however, by great surprise, it all happened in a more or less pacific way.

As far as the dissolution of the Yugoslavia concerns, the process was different and much more violent. The first signs of the break showed up in 1986 when the Scientific Academy of Belgrade published a *Memorandum*. The document gave the ground basis for the renaissance of the Serbian nationalism and the theory of the “*Velika Srbija*” (“The Great Serbia”). The purpose of the document was to eventually create a national Serbian state. The figure who better than anyone managed to catch the potential of this renewed nationalism, which remained buried during the Tito’s years, is Slobodan Milosevic. Emblematic is his speech in 1989 in Kosovo Polje. The “martyrdom” of Serbs, was presented as a unifying theme, and during the eighties (and in the speech) there were constant recalling of Serbian struggles in the past wars and the rehabilitation of Mihailovic, the great *Cetnik* leader.

In 1991 the war in the Balkans started. From the moment Milosevic won the Serbian General election of December 1990 as representative of the SPS, he selectively used democratic procedures to take power, holding elections for parliament until 1997. However, all of them were marred by serious irregularities.

There is general agreement on “*the striking contrast between the relatively peaceful disintegration of the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia’s “velvet divorce” on the one hand, and Yugoslavia’s bloody collapse, on the other*”. There were also institutional factors, according to Bunce three elements were crucial in order to explain the two different outcomes “*The degree of decentralization of the Federation; the political power versus the institutional resources of the dominant republic, and the relationship between the military and the party state.*”

The perception of the state in Russia and Serbia is very different, the role of ideas also played an important role in the Yugoslav and Soviet dissolution. All these centuries of battles, of blood, (we must not forget that Serbs have lost the highest percentage of their population in the last century) have created the idea that “one” has to be prepared to sacrificed his own life for the sake of national freedom. In contrast, Russians do not have such strong link with the state. The reasons of this “lack of nationalism” are historical, cultural and ethnical. The first leader and his government struggled to find the right ideas and discourse in order to unite what was left of Russia and Russians after the dissolution of the USSR. At the same time, among the confused and insecure people as well as in the political class, a crisis of identity on both the international arena and in the sphere of Russia’s national interest occurred. The

fundamental difference is the “*institutional arrangements of communist federalism*”, which means that Russians were not given in the Soviet Union their own cultural and political institutions as were the Serbs in Yugoslavia. For Russians politicians the task of creating a version of nationalism was much more complicated as there was a lack of institutions which could provide them the proper tools for a nationalist mobilization. Even though it is true that Russia has become more homogenous than ever after 1991, it has not transformed radically the nationalism, nor the country witnessed a successful revival of extreme right-wing movement, as it was easily predictable. However, there has been “no resolution” of ethnic problem, and as it unfortunately happened, many points of tensions have evolved in violent conflicts, (for instance in Chechnya).

After Yeltsin’s election on the international level, Russia was regarded as the legitimate successor state of the Soviet Union. Russia took over the permanent seat on the UNSC from the USSR, which assured and is still assuring an essential political tool in the foreign policy agenda. The question which was characterizing this debate was whether Russia was still to be considered a superpower or not. The general debate about the national interest over the crisis in the Balkans provoked a fraction in the Russian parliament. On one side (the conservative opposition) the stream which emphasized the importance of the historical, ethnical, religious ties with Serbians. On the other side, Yeltsin’s Administration stressed the importance of cooperating with the West and integrate Russia in the New World into a broader Euro-Atlantic space. On one side numerous “romantic” policy makers were in favor of a pro-western foreign policy. They were the so-called “liberals’ internationalists” guided by A. Kozyrev which is seen as an “Atlanticist” whose ambitions are turned to the West. On the opposite side The *Derzhavniki* (Nationalist and Ultranationalists), were a powerful force which was striving for national-imperial restoration or even for the return of the Communism. These forces criticized the Minister and its weakness in defending the Russian interests in the face of NATO and the USA. The debate continued throughout all the decade, before the arrival of President Putin, and especially when Kozyrev was replaced by Evgeny Primakov in 1996. The primary goal was to assure cooperation with the international political, economic and security community in order to avoid alienation from the Democracies of the West. The Kozyrev’s politics can be resumed in two separate periods: the first is determined by a search for a revival of Russian power, recovering all first year of existence of the country (1992). The second period, starting

from 1993, is characterized by new national interests and the strong assertion of the Russia's firm return on international scene.

The first big challenge of the *Bratstvo* between the new Russian Federation and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and one of the "tests" of Russia's return on international scene, was the conflict in the Former Yugoslavia, which started in 1991, and was formative for the Russian foreign policy makers in early nineties.

At the same time the international community and Europe saw a chance with the crisis in the Balkans to assert itself in the new post-Cold War World Order. Russia was therefore caught in an unpleasant situation regarding their fellow Slavs. Following the end of the Cold War, the Balkans unexpectedly regained priority in the Moscow politics and the Russians effort to redefine its relations with the West and its national interest. In Kremlin, it was not a simple task whether to follow the "heart" (The Slavic *Bratstvo*) or the "head" (The USA, and the West). According to Kozyrev "*there is no alternative to partnership*" and Russia needs to adhere to the norm of the international community. The risk was that by assuming a complete pro-Serb line it would resulted not only in an isolation of Russia internationally, but it would come also with unwelcomed consequences domestically. Examples of cooperation with the West are: the support for UNSCR 757, approval of the extension of the UNPROFOR to Bosnia in September 1992, delivering humanitarian aid, backing the no-fly zone for all military aircraft over Bosnia in October 1992 and mandating sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

From a realist and material point of view the Balkan crises had not a direct impact on Russian security nor on its power position. There were not strategic or military alliances with the Republic of Yugoslavia, therefore it can be concluded that there was not a Russian obligation to aid and take sides in the conflicts. One more important aspect to take in consideration is the harsh economic situation of the nineties in Russia and its financial crises which should have discouraged such a "distant" and costly military and political commitment.

The conflict had three indirect threats: The escalation of the tensions could trigger an international intervention on human rights basis, which would legitimate the Western states' intervention in the CIS. The situation in Kosovo resembled the one in Chechnya; separatism and greater autonomy requests could have provoked a disintegration within Russia.

Serbia often expected help from “*Матушка Россия*” (mother Russia), or in other words, Belgrade was at least hoping that the Western-Russian confrontation will resume with the result that FRY will once again occupy the “comfortable” position in the middle of the two blocs. As a result, it rose a growing disappointment towards Moscow by Serbian politicians. This misperception about the persistent support and protectorate for Russia is partially motivated by the “use of history”, where in moment of war Russia has been always stepping in. Society’s wrong interpretation of its past may cause distorted perception of its own strategic interests and the intentions of others. Realists would need to explain this fully cooperation attitude, either by showing that a total cooperation was a prudential power-maximizing strategy or provide real evidence which could prove the external constraints that “forced” Yeltsin Administration to follow the Western lead. However, given the history it was quite shocking to see the extent of the cooperation with the West, in the early nineties. The only key to understand this attitude is to focus on the liberal ideas which were influencing the foreign policy thinking, with great weight and concerns to the protection of human values, and the assumption that a close cooperation was “natural”.

Starting from 1993, Russia tried to develop a more independent approach. Despite numerous internal political struggles in that year, Russian diplomacy succeeded in maintaining active positions in the Balkans. It showed its capabilities to influence the processes that were developing on the Serbian sides by establishing links with the parties and all the partners involved. Moreover, the Russian officials, blamed Croatia for the escalation of violence in the conflict demanding that sanctions would have been extended against it as well. One of the main issues which Yeltsin was trying to explain to the West is that he was put under great pressure in the Russian Parliament over this conflict. The policy outcome was an alternation of pro-Western decisions and more conservative positions (in order to please the opposition in parliament which was criticizing the operate of Yeltsin demanding his seat). The 1993 Russian constitutional crisis had a great impact on the Yugoslav foreign policy, considering that the ultranationalist, which continued to put great pressure on Yeltsin and they were gaining more and more support, were criticizing the “Atlanticist” policies. In 1994 the Russian approach to the conflict in Bosnia started to change, especially after the February 5th attack in the market of Sarajevo. The international community was outraged and the response was an immediate NATO ultimatum to all forces. Moscow’s reaction was cold, in the sense that they wanted to

investigate further on who committed the attack, and criticized the aggressive way in which the “West” threatened the Serbs. The result was that Russia did not support the initiative and voted against it. Moreover, Yeltsin criticized NATO because it tried to solve the Bosnian issue without consulting Russia. At stakes here, there was not only the peace-keeping efforts in the region, but the very Russia’s international status and prestige. It was like Moscow was having no gain from this situation, on one side he pursued the spirit of cooperation while being “humiliated” by not being consulted on the Ultimatum issue; on the other side it was receiving severe critiques by the domestic opposition for its foreign policy’s hybrid conduct. The shift could also be seen in considering the Russian public opinion which was asking to not give up on their orthodox brothers.

The independent mission was considered “their finest hour” during the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The “two-fold” mission of Moscow in Bosnia, is highlighted in the words of Churkin: *“while on the first place the aim of the initiative was to stop the escalation of the conflict, to a greater extent this “finest moment” of Russian Foreign Policy was done with the purpose of avoiding international exclusion, and to be regarded as a Great Power.”*

1995 was the final year of the conflict, and it became the harshest test of how the relations West-Russia would evolve. As Bosnian Serb attacked Gorazde and others UN safe-areas, the response of the Kremlin was moderate compared to the Western reactions. The situation deteriorated in July 1995, when following the atrocity of Srebrenica and the actions in Bosnia, NATO heavily attacked the Bosnian with air-strikes. The reaction from Moscow was of condemnation towards the West’s senseless attack and it pursued in considering the possibility to resolve the conflict by political tools. Operation Storm on August 4th became the conclusive act of the war in Croatia. The final moment of the end of the partnership was definitive following the massacres of the market in Sarajevo on August 28th. NATO, without consulting Moscow, began a sensational air-strike. In October 1995 it was signed the ceasefire which led to the Dayton agreement in November. NATO and the Western world needed to make belief that Russia’s contribution was important because of the consequences it would have created in the domestic reforms of Yeltsin. Thus, Russia cooperate and made compromises with NATO during and after Dayton’s days and the outcome was that the Russian soldiers in Bosnia-Herzegovina would be subordinated to an American general in charge of I-For and not to NATO.

in 1996, the second phase of the Russian Foreign Policy began with Primakov who wanted to pursue a multi-vector policy, taking a Realist turn and a more Eurasian Focus. He insisted on the idea that Russia is both Europe and Asia, and that it needed to achieve more balanced relations with the West while maintaining strong link with China, Japan, India and the Islamic World. He realized that the NATO expansion was a reality and that the only way to deal with it was a pragmatic cooperation. Russian considered the expansions as a betrayal, in their eyes all the post-Soviet period was marked by cooperation and commitment to the West. Primakov signed in 1997 the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security with NATO. Russia believed that this Act would have given a sort of veto-power, unfortunately this was not the case, and the proof lies in the attack of 1999. Following the NATO's bombing in 1999 on Yugoslavia, which marked the end of this cooperation, it became clear how Russia had once again not been involved in the global decision-making process.

Dayton agreement marked the end of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, however, the situation of Kosovo was not being dealt. The Kosovo Liberal Army increasingly, considering the failing in receiving any international back-up, started to act on their own with the goal to reach an independency or at least greater autonomy. Kosovo, despite being a small province with little agricultural and mineral wealth, contains a number of important religious sites that are very important to the national identity of Serbians. In 1998 the first signs and killings of the upcoming crisis were not taken too seriously from the International community. This province of Serbia which has been referred as the "unfinished business" of the region became a turning-point in the relationship between Russia, Serbia and the West (NATO *in the first place*). The international community, seeing the growing episodes of violence on both sides of the conflict began an exercise operation called "Determinate Falcon" on June 15th 1998. Once again Russia was not consulted and this further international humiliation was considered a direct violation of the Founding Act. In reaction, Milosevic was invited at the Kremlin where they both agreed on the necessity of preserving territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia while at the same time condemning attacks on civilians. A further evidence of the Moscow's pro-Serbian behavior was the opposition to the resolution 1199 at the UNSC, which demanded a withdrawal of the armed forces and a dialogue with the Kosovar.

With the new Foreign Affairs Minister Ivanov, Russia pursued in the direction of Primakov' multi-vector foreign policy and continue to seek for a peaceful and political resolution of the Kosovo conflict. It was encouraged the use of the OSCE as it was considered the most efficient organization to deal with the crisis. On March 15th 1999 the Kosovar signed the Rambouillet accords, Milosevic refused this agreement and it resulted in a deadlock. It can be said that in this occasion the Russian delegation (captained by Churnikin) did not forced too vehemently Belgrade to accept the deal. It is not sure whether by insisting more Russians would have avoided the imminent air strikes. Serbians were relying almost entirely on Russian power in the international arena in order to prevent an escalation, and this illusion provoked great frustration in Yugoslavia as they felt "betrayed" and "abandoned" when they watched their capital burning.

The bombing of Belgrade marked not only one of the saddest moments of the past century, it symbolized also a fracture in the relationship between Russia and Serbia and to a greater extent with NATO and the Western world. On the evening of March 24th 1999, the operation Allied Force was launched and the bombing continued for eleven weeks in many Serbian cities. Russia (and China as well) harshly criticized this air campaign against Yugoslavia. They believed that NATO under the American leadership started these attacks without the endorsement of the UNSC, claiming that it was an aggression on a sovereign state outside the area of NATO. Russia since the beginning of the air-strikes publicly condemned NATO and sought to find a diplomatic solution. For instance, president Yeltsin promoted a diplomatic mission to Belgrade with Primakov, Ivanov and Sergeyev. The Russian diplomatic efforts to solve the crisis was done with the purpose not only to help the Slavic Brothers but also to regain international recognition as an important player in European affairs.

Nevertheless, in 1999 Russia was economically and politically instable and weak. Yeltsin sought to preserve its cooperation with the West, especially considering the negotiations with the IMF, over the entrance to the WTO and the signing of a free trade agreement with the EU. The involvement of Russia in this phase of the conflict is testified by a statement of April 1999 released by NATO: "Russia has a particular responsibility in the UN and an important role to play in search for a solution to the conflict in Kosovo." In June it was finally reached an agreement which ended the bombings. The final moment of the 1999 Drama

was a rash-move by Russian paratroops to seize the Pristina's Airport before the arrival of NATO.

Why Russia's leadership did not put more pressure on Milosevic? One explanation is that the leverage on Serbia was very limited and even a more constructive approach would not have prevented the military intervention, however, Kremlin's pressure might have forced an earlier capitulation of Slobodan Milosevic. On the negative side Russia was not able to prevent NATO from using force against Russia, it failed to impose itself as an important military factor in the endgame of the crisis provoking great critics from Belgrade and from the domestic opposition in Moscow.

Kosovo was a worrying watershed, for the first time since the end of the Cold War Russia and NATO founded themselves on opposite sides of an armed conflict. Russia gave support to Yugoslavia only politically; a military involvement was avoided only through a combination of weak economic situation and military weakness along with the determination of Yeltsin to not being dragged into the conflict. Most of Russians politicians and analysts have concluded that NATO's action has transformed a local Balkan war into a new source of Russia-West tensions, with a worrying prospect of escalating beyond the region and potentially outside of Europe. The three main elements of the Russian Myths, the assumption of a "special relationship", the romanticizing of the Serbs and the assertion that Russia behavior is benevolent in contrast to the belligerent Western, were reflected in the Moscow's perception over the Kosovo issue. The new Millennium brought major changes in both countries which had significant impact on their mutual relationship and with the US and Europe. In March 2000 Putin won the presidential election, becoming the second President of the Russian Federation. In 1999 in Yugoslavia, Milosevic was charged with war crimes related to the conflicts in the Balkans by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, and in the following year his regime collapsed. The end of Milosevic brought a significantly pro-Western leadership which opened Yugoslavia to turn towards USA and Europe. Vladimir Putin came in when Russia's economic improvement and its greater centralization of power gave the impression that the country managed to exit the post-Soviet transition's era. The authority of Putin and the not necessarily related macroeconomic improvements gave to Russia an element of strength and boosted its self-confidence. 2000 Foreign Policy concept stated that "Russia will offer maximum assistance in reaching a settlement in the Balkans, which should be based on

coordinated decisions by the world community. it is important to preserve the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, and to oppose its disintegration, fraught as that would be with the threat of the emergence of a pan-Balkan conflict with unpredictable consequences.” Those are vague commitments and this had also repercussions on the “Brotherhood” with Serbians, as a matter of fact between 2000 and 2005 Belgrade, by starting to talk about an EU (slow) integration and a rapprochement to NATO, left little room for a deeper cooperation with Russia, as its focus was on improving Western relations. The door for a comeback to the region of Russia opened only when the international community reached a deadlock over the future status of Kosovo. In early 2006 the intense negotiations over the future of Kosovo started and the Serbs acknowledged once again that many EU states and the USA favored Pristina’s independence. Russia took profit of this frictions and close its ties with their “Slavic Brothers” in order to re-gain influence on the historically region of interest and to strengthen its position in the international arena.

The decisive break-up of the Russian-West relations in the new Millennium is the notorious speech of Vladimir Putin at the Munich Security Conference, where he criticized the unipolar model. This speech marked the first episode of the ongoing fracture between Russia and the West, which reached its peak in 2014 with the Crimea annexation and the consequent Western sanctions against Moscow. Serbian leaders have been always against those sanctions and take a reserved position on the events in Ukraine. Kosovo unilaterally declared independence on February 17th 2008, USA and many EU members immediately recognize it, while Russia still refuse it. There were founded doubts on the risk that Moscow would use the “Kosovo precedent” in justifying the intervention in Georgia or in recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The other pillar of the Russian’ Foreign policy in Serbia is the growing economic and energetic influence in the region. Moscow has proven ability to transform energy into a diplomatic tool. Even though the project of the construction of the Southern Stream pipeline was interrupted, Serbia still imports the majority of Gas and Oil from Russia. *Gazprom* owns and controls since 2008 the majority of the former state monopoly Oil company NIS. In Serbia almost 1000 companies are partially or entirely owned by Russians. Thanks to the numerous trade-agreements which have been signed in the last decade, Russia’s import from Serbia in the first quarter of 2018 has shown a 17% growth from 2017 , and in the first quarter of 2018

Russia's export to Serbia has risen by 24 %. The increase in exports towards the east may continue as the Serbian government formally agreed in 2019 to the negotiations with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

Serbia's ability in balancing between the EU integration project and the growing economic influence of Russia could be summed up by the words of the Serbian sociologist Mihailovic who claimed that: *"Serbia is a country whose heart is in the East and its pocket in the West (...) where emotions are concerned, Russia has the advantage, whereas reason is on the side of the Western countries."*

Today, in 2019, the "Slavic Brotherhood" seems as strong as never, and the January visit of President Putin testified it. In Serbia warm feeling and admiration for Russia and Putin run deep and seem to be growing. A further telling example of the love to Putin in Serbia is the decision of the residents of a remote mountain village named Adzince, to change the name to "Putinovo" which means "Putin's village. During the January visit 26 agreements were signed, such as energy, economy, technological development, education, military cooperation. It is important to underline the Russian support for the territorial integrity of Serbia on the Kosovo issue, since it is a key issue in Serbian politics, which enforced the position of Vucic, and it created in the Serbian people renew positive perception of Moscow and its leader. A further key factor on the renewed brotherhood is the opposition to NATO.

Belgrade's position in the middle of the Balkan requires to maintain strict cooperation with both sides. Serbia's strategy is multi-directed (it includes also a growing partnership with China) and it seek to balance between the West and the East. Belgrade would like to retain a position analogue to the one of Tito's non-aligned Yugoslavia, while at the same time create their own post-socialist identity. However, in the new World Order this is not an easy task.

Although the bulk of the Serbian' imports investment and financial assistance come from the West and there are serious chances of joining the EU, Vucic is concerned about proceeding further without Putin's approval. For Moscow, the Brotherhood and the strategic partnership with Belgrade is important in order to consolidate its Great Power status and its economic and cultural influence on a geopolitical strategic region. It could be therefore assumed that the growing projection of Russian' "soft power" in Serbia, thanks to the tools enlisted previously in this chapter (investments, cultural ties, media, sport, etc.) will shape the future scenario and the "special relationship" between Moscow and Belgrade.