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RUSSIAN INFLUENCE IN THE KOSOVO WAR : Analysis of the theories and events behind its Foreign Policy

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INTRODUCTION

In the last two centuries, since the beginning of the XIX century, Russian Foreign policies and relationships have been mostly characterized by its precise interest in relation to the Balkan area. The Russian Federation in the interval from 1991 and 1995, began to support the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, until the official recognition of the former Republics of Yugoslavia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia.¹

The aim of this Thesis is to analyse the historical and social framework which influenced Russian foreign policy towards Kosovo war.

The thesis examines Russian Involvement, analysing the reasons behind Russian Position in the question, in relationship to the causes at the basis of Russian decision to oppose to NATO's "Allied Forces" operation in Serbia, Russian complicated relationship with The North Atlantic Alliance, the ambiguity of Russian foreign policy in this context, and Russian political and economical situation in that specific period.

Starting from an Historical chronology of the most important events which took place and determined the flow of the Kosovan war throughout the 90s, Russian foreign policy will be analysed taking into consideration and examining all the aspects before mentioned.

The relationship between Russia and NATO will represent a crucial point of this elaborate, and its analysis will identify some crucial aspects that will help composing the final outlook on Russian choices. Taking into consideration the common ground among Russia, Serbia and Montenegro, based on the common Orthodox culture and faith, and the consequences of this cultural affiliation on the beliefs of the Russian population, then Russia's actions, need to be analysed under the out-turns the Balkan crisis would have represented concerning its relations with the Western Countries, in particular the United States. Consequently, even though Russian Federation's Role in the Dayton Accords November 1995 peace resolution among Tudman, Izebegović and Milošević cannot be considered as fundamental, its involvement in the Kosovo crisis is worth of being discussed ².

1, 2: Jozé Pirjevec, "Le Guerre Jugoslave", chapter 8, p 514-529

CHAPTER I

A GENERAL OUTLOOK OF THE KOSOVO WAR

I.I: The Chronological Events

The Kosovan situation came to light in the late 1990's, when Serbian President Slobodan Milošević tried to suppress the independence campaign of the ethnic Albanian majority. In fact even though the Serbian population was indeed the minority, only making up about the 10% of the population of the region, its cultural and historical relevance elevated them to entail a fundamental importance in the province, and to grow in them the strong belief that their culture was incompatible and unconnectable with ethnic Albanians from Kosovo, which were rather seen as a threat to Serbian culture, national identity, and last but not least, religion ³ (*Figure 1*).

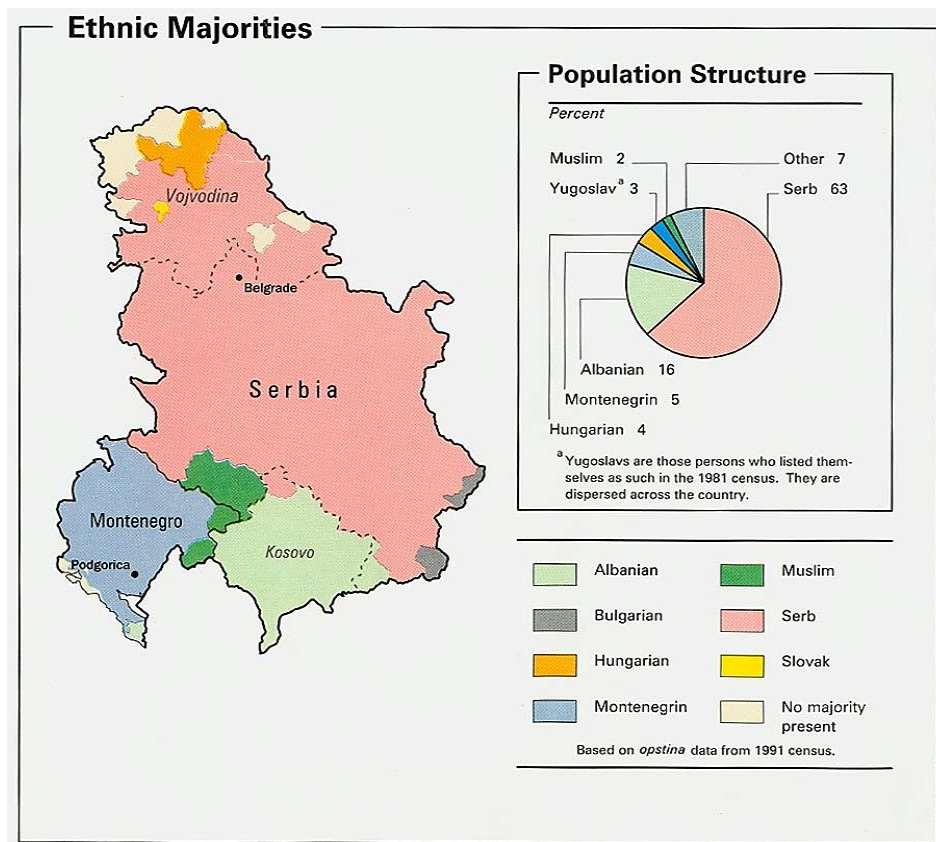


Figure 1: Ethnic Majorities in the Region

3: Joze Pirjevec, "Le Guerre Jugoslave", chapter 7, p 470-477

Although Kosovo did not recognize to have an official religion, the majority of ethnic Albanians were Muslims, whereas the Serbian population was loyal to The Serbian Orthodox Church.

Kosovo, from a geographical point of view, can be located in the southwest of the Balkan Peninsula, as a Serbian province inside the borders of former Yugoslavia. Even though, as already mentioned, its inhabitants are ethnic Albanians, the territory was subjected to Serbian vindications for many decades ⁴ (Figure 2).

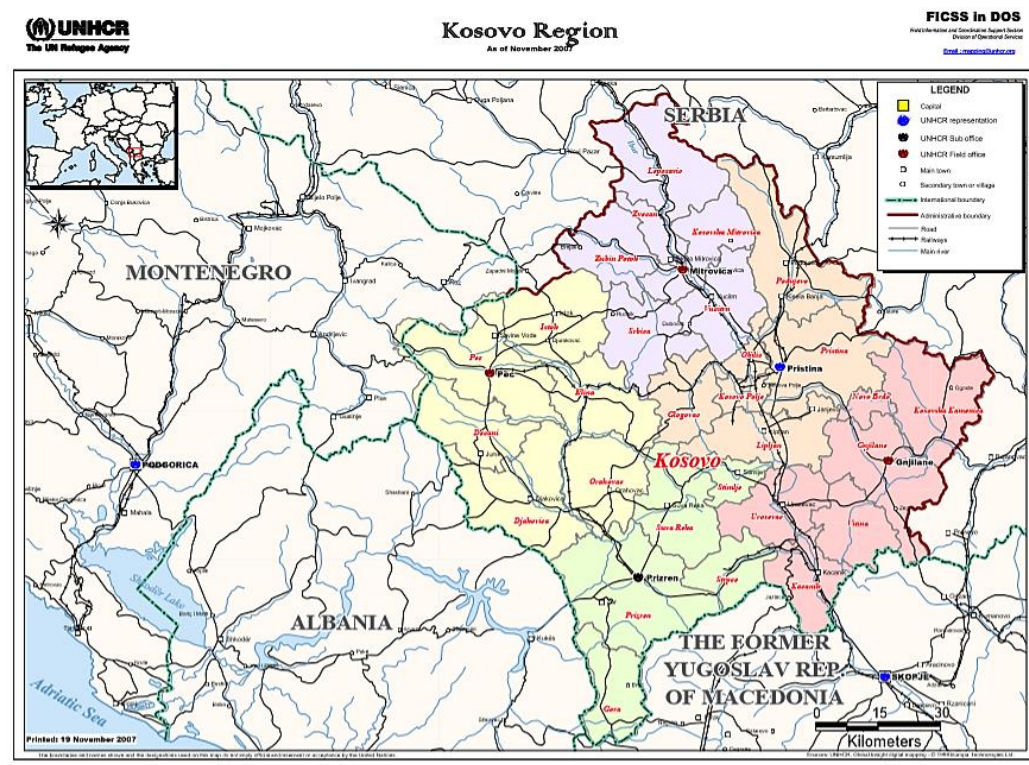


Figure 2: Kosovo geographic location

In fact, even though until 1989, Kosovo used to enjoy a considerably relevant level of autonomy from Serbia, after the election of Slobodan Milošević, the situation critically changed. The territory was subjected to a direct control from Belgrade since the beginning of 1990. This brought a number which can be quantified as at least 400.000 ethnic Albanians to escape from the territory, concerned by the escalating dissipation of their socio-economic status, and the threat of oppression.⁵ (Figure 3).

4: Joze Pirjevec, "Le Guerre Yugoslave", chapter 7, p 470-477

5: Enciclopedia britannica, "Kosovo conflict 1998-1999", Historical Overview "NATO's role in relation to the conflict in Kosovo, NATO official statement" 15 July 1999.



Figure 3: Ethnic Albanians refugees

Although the 1974 Yugoslav constitution defined Kosovo's status as to be an autonomous Serbian province, allowing it to self-government, pressure for independence began to rumble after Jozip Broz Tito, The Yugoslav president, died in May 4th 1980. In the late 1980s, Milošević, the future Serbian president, was still number two of the Serbian Communist Party, but he began to grow resentment towards the influence of Kosovo within the Yugoslav federation, rallying a group of Kosovo Serbs to protest against alleged harassment by the majoritarian community of ethnic Albanians. It was 1989 when Milošević began to remove Kosovan rights of autonomy. As a consequence, the academic Ibrahim Rugova, leader of the ethnic Albanians in the Serbian province of Kosovo, started a non-violent policy of protest against the abrogation of their constitutional autonomy. In July 1990 Ethnic Albanian legislators in the province declared Kosovo independent from Serbia, Belgrade decided to dissolve the Kosovan government, and in July 1992 Ibrahim Rugova, was elected president of the self-proclaimed republic of Kosovo. In the period from 1993 to 1997 the tension continued to escalate ⁶.

6: Enciclopedia britannica, "Kosovo conflict 1998-1999"

In August 1995, Belgrade ex Mayor Bogdan Bogdanovic, affirmed that Serbians “*not only lost the war, but also lost their soul, their honour, their everything.*”⁷

In mid-1990s, precisely in 1996, the ethnic Albanian rebel movement, the separatist Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), which had been created by a group of intellectuals in 1989, in defence of the interest of the Kosovo Albanian population, stepped up its attacks on Serb targets, which led to Serbian forces launching a brutal repression.⁸

Milošević became president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) in 1997, and by the summer of 1998, Albanians were mounting mass protests against Serbian rule which led to an essential armed revolt in the region of Drenica, and Serbian police and army forces were sent there in order to suppress the Kosovo Liberation Army. In September 1997, foreign affairs ministers Klaus Kinkel and Hubert Vedrine, from Germany and France, decided to send Milošević a letter with the promise to increase commercial relationships between Serbia and the European union in exchange for his willingness to take in consideration a peaceful solution to the crisis.⁹

I.II: The Beginning of the War

In September 1998, Resolution 1199 was adopted by the UN Security Council, in which “*all acts of violence by any party, as well as terrorism in pursuit of political goals*” were being officially condemned, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) gave Milošević an ultimatum to stop the violence towards ethnic Albanians, threatening air strikes.¹⁰

In October 1998, resolution 1203 was issued by the Security Council demanding for “*immediate ceasefire and the establishing of an observer mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).*”¹¹

Regardless of the resolutions, the situation kept on rising in intensity throughout 1999, bringing to the occurrence of countless collisions.

The OSCE observers and the diplomatic attempts failed to achieve any result.

7: Erik Yesson, “*The Balkans, NATO and European Security after the Kosovo War*”p1-22

8, 9: Radeljic: “*Russia’s Involvement in the Kosovo Case: Defending Serbian Interests or Securing its Own Influence in Europe?*”p4

10,11: Ivo H. Daalder and Michael E. O’Hanlon, *Winning Ugly: “NATO’s War to Save Kosovo”, The Brookings Institution, 2000. P40*

In March 1998, The Contact Group composed by France, The United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, The United States and Russia, established in 1994 with the original purpose of dealing with the Bosnia and Herzegovina war, decided to reunite in London, and formulated a 10 point action plan condemning the violent and unacceptable behaviour of the Serbian police entities, inviting them to withdraw their special forces from the province in ten days, but, at the same time, also condemning the KLA in order to reconcile and include also the Russian, Italian and French ideologies which wanted to respect their sensitivity towards Serbian population. In March 1998, Resolution 1160 of the UN Security Council, declared that *“the principles for a solution of the Kosovo problem should be based on the territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.”*¹²

In January 1999, Serbian Military Forces killed nearly forty ethnic Albanians in Račak, a village in central Kosovo. Milosevic decided to answer the foreign concerns on the horrific humanitarian accusations towards Serbia, publicly propagating that Albanians themselves were inflicting those crimes in order to damage Serbian reputation. According to Milošević ethnic Albanians were killing themselves and burning their own houses only in order to publicly discredit Serbian reputation in the international system¹³. The 28th of January 1999 German Foreign Minister, Joschka Fischer, expressed his opinion by affirming *“I am not a friend of using force, but sometimes it is a necessary means of last resort. If people are being massacred, you cannot mutter about having no mandate. You must act.”* According to him, in the Kosovo situation, using force might have represented a turning point, and the dramatic humanitarian situation would have justified the lack of a formal recognition of the intervention¹⁴. On the 29th January, The Contact Group demanded for an international solution to the conflict and diplomatic negotiations began in Rambouillet, France, in February 1999, lasting a month. The Rambouillet agreement, drafted by NATO, represented an attempted peace agreement between The Kosovan delegation and The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which the latter refused to sign¹⁵.

12: United Nations, “UN Security Council resolution 1160,” 31 March 1998 (S/RES/1160),

13: Robert Bideleux and Ian Jeffries, *“The Balkans: A Post-Communist History”*, p 1-40, Tim Judah, *“Kosovo: War and Revenge”*, Yale University Press, 2002.

14,15: Radeljic: *“Russia’s Involvement in the Kosovo Case: Defending Serbian Interests or Securing its Own Influence in Europe?”* p 5-7, Peter van Ham and Sergei Medvedev, *Mapping European Security after Kosovo* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p 93., Tom Gallagher, *“The Balkans in the New Millennium: In the Shadow of War and Peace”*, Routledge, 2005. p 49, Marc Weller, *“Contested Statehood: Kosovo’s Struggle for Independence”* chapter 8.

On March 24th 1999, the diplomatic peace attempt proposed by the Rambouillet Accords backed up by the Albanian, American and British delegations failed and NATO began the operation “Allied Forces” with the launch of air strikes, lasting 78 days, exactly 11 weeks, during which the attack also expanded to Belgrade, where many Serbian infrastructures were seriously damaged ¹⁶ (*Figure 4*).



Figure 4: Serbian infrastructure after the air strikes in 1999.

In response to the attack, hundreds of thousands of Kosovo Albanian ethnic refugees, quantifiable in almost one million, were forcedly expelled into neighbouring countries, such as Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania, as the result of an ethnic cleansing campaign ¹⁷ (*Figure 5*).



Figure 5: Ethnic Albanian refugees in Macedonia

16,17: Jozse Pirjevec, “Le Guerre Jugoslave”, chapter 7

According to a document published by the International Committee of the Red Cross, the fight between the KLA and the Serbian military forces resulted in almost 3,400 missing people and more than 13,000 people killed, of which the majority was composed by the ethnic Albanians. The international war crimes tribunal in The Hague indicted Milošević for six specific charges of crimes against humanity, qualifying him as the first still serving head of state to be accused of this crime.¹⁸

I.III: The end of the War

Russian representatives in the Contact Group, were “*opposed to any use of force against the Serbs, fearing repercussions at home among Nationalists politicians.*”¹⁹ The informal coalition, diplomatically asked for a truce, demanding for the exit of Serbian military forces from Kosovo, for the readmission of ethnic Albanian refugees and for the acceptance of international monitoring in the region. It was only on the 10th of June 1999 when Milošević decided to accept the proposal for peace mediated by the Russian and Finnish representatives, removing Serbian troops from Kosovo and accepting the return of the almost one million ethnic Albanian refugees expelled. The UN peacekeeping forces were arranged into a Kosovo Peace Implementation Force (KFOR) and displaced in the province, with the aim of convincing the separatist Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) to disarm. As a result, Kosovo came under UN administration, the UN interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

The UNMIK began to exercise full judicial, executive and legislative power in the territory after the end of the Military intervention, and the acceptance of the 1244 Resolution of the UN Security Council, which stated that the “*establishment of an interim administration for Kosovo as a part of the international civil presence under which the people of Kosovo can enjoy substantial autonomy within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, to be decided by the Security Council of the United Nations. The interim administration was to provide transitional administration while establishing and overseeing the development of provisional democratic self-governing institutions to ensure conditions for a peaceful and normal life for all inhabitants in Kosovo*”²⁰

18: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Yugoslavia, “Provisional Assessment of Civilian Casualties and Destruction in the Territory of the FRY from 24 March to 8 June 1999” (8 June 1999), p 24-26.

19: Radeljic: “Russia’s Involvement in the Kosovo Case: Defending Serbian Interests or Securing its Own Influence in Europe?” p5

20: United Nations, “UN Security Council resolution 1244,” 10 June 1999

*“NATO’s insistence on a marginal Russian military presence” in the words of James Hughes, “undoubtedly contributed to the ethnic cleansing of Serbs from Kosovo, as a stronger Russian contingent would have been more productive than NATO forces in defending Serb areas.”*²¹

Slobodan Milošević with its populist-socialist ideologies, succeeded in its “anti-bureaucratic” revolutionary aims, in transforming the former League of Communists of Serbia (LCS) into its own Socialist Party of Serbia, and in being elected president of the FRY in 1997, but in the end, surrendered under the Hague tribunal²². After the collapse of Milošević, Vojislav Kostunica, leader of the Democratic Party of Serbia’s nationalist-conservatists, in vest of the new Serbian president, continued to publicly recognize its considerable cherishing towards Russian approach, while at the same time acknowledging the fundamental importance of beginning an integrative process in the European Union. At the end of October 2000, Kostunica visited Moscow, affirming that *“Russian presence must be felt in all the intersecting strategic geopolitical influences in the Balkans”*, in order to achieve a better balance between the forces of Russia, The European Union and The United States of America.²³

In order to sort out once for all Kosovo final status, at the end of 2005, the Finnish representative Martti Ahtisaari, in vest of special envoy of the UN, guided the Vienna conference, which aim was to involve the Contact Group members to achieve an unfolding of Resolution 1244.

During the Vienna conference, the Russian representatives once again decided to clarify Russia’s position, by declaring that any solution resulting to be against Serbian interests, would have never been accepted by the Russian Federation.

“A priority objective is to provide for practical application of standards with a view to ensuring respect for fundamental rights and freedoms of all ethnic groups in the region. We insist that the settlement process should evolve in strict compliance with Security Council resolution 1244. We consider it necessary that negotiations on the future status of Kosovo be preceded by a decision of the UN Security Council based on the results of the Council’s review of the progress in the application of the standards. It is a matter of principal importance to assume that the decision on Kosovo will be of a universal character. It will set a precedent. Any speculation

21: Hughes, *“Russia and the Secession of Kosovo,”* p.1005.

22: Enciclopedia Britannica *“Slobodan Milošević, PRESIDENT OF YUGOSLAVIA,”* John B. Allcock

23: Smith, *“Russian Policy during the Kosovo Conflict”* p.148,

about the uniqueness of the Kosovo case is just an attempt to circumvent international legal rules, which distracts from reality. What is worse is that attempts of that kind generate distrust of the international community as it created an impression of double standards being applied to the settlement of crises in various regions worldwide and of rules being enforced arbitrarily, depending on each individual case.”, stated the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russian Federation during the conference.²⁴

The independence from the Serbian Republic was proclaimed by the Kosovo Albanian leadership in February 2008. As predicted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the European Council, in the session Developments as Regards the Future Status of Kosovo: *“It is still in question whether the EU will manage to speak with one single voice in the case of Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI); while some member states are prepared to recognize a UDI, including key countries such as the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Italy, a few others continue to express their hesitation at the prospect. The risk that, in the end, the decision on whether to recognize and independent Kosovo might be left individually to EU member states is not to be excluded”*.²⁵

The Independent Republic of Kosovo, was not recognized by the European Union countries represented by Spain, Slovakia, Cyprus, Romania and Greece.

Affirming that the Unilateral Independence Declaration *“violated the sovereignty of the Republic of Serbia, The Charter of the United Nations, UNSCR 1244, the principles of the Helsinki Final Act, Kosovo’s Constitutional Framework and the high-level Contact Group accords.”*, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs clearly stated Russia’s decision not to recognize The Independent Republic of Kosovo.²⁶

24: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russian Federation, *“Position of Russia at the 61st United Nations General Assembly,”* September 2006.

25: Council of Europe, *Documents Working Papers: 2008 Ordinary Session (First Part), 21–25 January 2008, Vol. 2*

26: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, *“Statement by Russia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Kosovo,”* 17 February 2008

CHAPTER II

RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY THROUGHOUT THE

KOSOVO CRISIS

II.I: Historical chronological framework of Russian involvement in the war

In order to analyse the real purposes behind Russian Foreign policy actions during the Kosovo war, it is fundamental to start from a chronological framework of events concerning Russia and the Balkans in the 90s.

In 1992, Russian Representatives were sent to the official ceremony which proclaimed the new Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, composed by Montenegro and Serbia, with the aim of strengthening “*the traditional links of friendship and cooperation with the Yugoslav peoples to restore peace to their land and to guarantee their freedom and independence*” in the words of Iulii Vorontsov, Russian representative to the UN.²⁷

In May 27th 1997, The Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security was signed in Paris, reaffirming the basis for a cooperative relationship between the Russian Federation and NATO.

In June 1998, Serbian President Milošević, flew to the Kremlin, asking for support from Russia, but the reply to his request was that Russia would have not signed any document concerning Kosovo not containing the desires of both Serbian and Kosovan factions.²⁸

In August 1998, Yeltsin affirmed that “*Russia will not allow itself to be drawn in the conflict*”.²⁹

In September 1998, Russia approved the Security Council Resolution 1199, which demanded for “*a cease-fire and the withdrawal of Yugoslav security forces from the province, as well as access to Kosovo for nongovernmental and humanitarian organizations*.”³⁰

27: Daniel Bethlehem and Marc Weller (eds), “*The Yugoslav Crisis in International Law*”, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

28: Fehim Rexhepi, “*Echoes of the Milosevic-Yeltsin Meeting*,” AIM Priština, 18 June 1998,

29: Anna-Sophie Maass “*EU-Russia Relations, 1999-2015: From Courtship to Confrontation*”

30: Philip Spassov, “*NATO, Russia and European Security: Lessons Learned from Conflicts in Kosovo and Libya Authors*” p28

In January 1999, after the tragedy of Račak, Russia decided to condemn the massacre but to keep on backing up Serbia, demanding the international community, and in particular the Contact Group, to find a negotiation able to take in consideration and respect the interests of both sides.³¹

In March 1999, Russian representatives refused to sign the Rambouillet Accords, considering the agreement to be too favourable towards the Albanian ethnic population, and stating that every military attack towards Serbia would have been considered as a personal attack³². The condition according to which NATO would have exercised control and supervision over the Kosovan area was unacceptable for the Russian representatives. In April 1999, after the beginning of the NATO operation named “Allied Forces” at the end of March, Russia accused NATO states of violating the UN charter, on the basis of NATO’s decision to proceed without the formal authorization from the UN Security Council. As a response, the Russian chief military representative was recalled from NATO’s European military headquarters and representatives from NATO were expelled from Moscow. The attempts of cooperation with NATO seemed to be put to an end, together with the firing of the two officers which were in charge of the communications between the Russian SFOR in Bosnia, and NATO³³.

On the 10th of June 1999, Chernomyrdin, the Russian representative, was sent to Belgrade together with Martti Ahtisaari, the Finnish president in charge as EU envoy, in order to deliver Milosevic the ultimatum³⁴. The 12th June 1999, The Russian troops were the first to occupy the Kosovan territory and Pristina’s Airport.³⁵

In March 2000, the newly elected Russian president Vladimir Putin, signed the Foreign Policy concept of the Russian Federation document, in which was clearly stated that Russian willingness was to ensure “*an all-out assistance to the attainment of a just settlement of the situation in the Balkans, one based on the coordinated decisions of the world community.*”³⁶ Following Vladimir Putin’s decision to visit the Russian peacekeeping forces in Pristina, after stopping in Belgrade to demonstrate Russian concern towards Serbian territorial integrity, in 2003, Putin decided to remove from Kosovo Russian troops, stating that “*The presence of Russian military contingent, which does not decide anything and cannot influence anything, was pointless.*”³⁷

In 2008, Russia did not recognize the Independent Republic of Kosovo.

31,32: Philip Spassov, “NATO, Russia and European Security: Lessons Learned from Conflicts in Kosovo and Libya Authors” p 28- 32

33: Colonel General Leontiy P. Shevtsov “ Russian-NATO military cooperation in Bosnia: A basis for the future?! p 17-21

34,35: Erik Yesson, “The Balkans, NATO and European Security after the Kosovo War” p 30

36: Russian Federation, “The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation,” 28 June 2000

37: Radeljic: “Russia’s Involvement in the Kosovo Case: Defending Serbian Interests or Securing its Own Influence in Europe?” p10

II.II: Russian Historical, Social and Ideological background

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, Russian Federation in its renewed identity, was facing preoccupations towards its political solidification and its economic instability, together with its global and regional profile, which undeniably influenced its foreign policy choices.

Russia was aware that the incoming world dynamics displaying the European Union as an increasing international power, and the United States as the hegemonic political, economic, and military power of the international system, would have brought to a necessity to strengthen its external relationships.

Taking into consideration NATO's expansionistic threat in relationship with the decadence of Russian power, the consequences of this international asset were particularly meaningful for The Russian Federation, bearing in mind that the former Soviet influenced states belonging to Eastern and Central Europe were now available to be put under the control of the West. This represents one of the crucial elements which will lead to better understand Russian interest in the Balkanic situation.

*“Strengthen the traditional links of friendship and cooperation with the Yugoslav peoples, to restore peace to their land and to guarantee their freedom and independence”*³⁸, in the words of Yuliy Vorontsov, the Russian UN representative, represented the reason why Russian representatives decided to attend the 1992 ceremony of proclamation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, FRY, composed by Serbia and Montenegro.

After the 1995 Dayton Agreement, which ended the Bosnia and Herzegovina war, Russia's position on the Kosovo question, was that the issue needed to be treated as a Serbian internal issue, without in any case challenging Serbian sovereignty.

In order to correctly analyse the basis on which Russian dissention towards the western position relied, there are many historical and social aspects which needs to be explored.

“History and geography are the key factors that continue to drive Russia's blinkered worldview of multiple existential threats—both real and perceived. It is a worldview that is impressed upon both its domestic populations in nearly every venue since kindergarten, as well as ethnic Russian populations in neighbouring countries.” Affirmed Peter Zwack.³⁹

38: Daniel Bethlehem and Marc Weller (eds), *“The Yugoslav Crisis in International Law”*, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

39: Peter Zwack, *“Russia's Contradictory Relationship with the West”*, Prism, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2016, Institute for National Strategic Security, National Defense University.

Some Western thinkers believe that Russia's aim was to protect its status of great power relying on "residual imperialism" in international conflicts, whereas sees it more as the result of an ideological and cultural Slavic connection with the Serbian population. Another interpretation might be a Russian strive to satisfy its own national patriotic opposition factions, or a need to maintain the territorial ideological integrity threatened by the Chechnyan situation.

All of the before mentioned theories and assumptions necessitate a deeper ideological, social and historical analysis in order to fully understand the roots upon which Russian Foreign Policy decisions relied.

Many of the foreign policy moves made by Russia in the late 20th century have always been linked to its imperialist ideological aims, which do not take much in consideration the image damage that Russia had endured since the decadence of the Soviet, and the consequent economic instability. What Russia actually aimed to become was an independent power, whose goal was to find its centred place in the multipolarity.

The Russian response to the Kosovan crisis surely reflects a deep misperception of NATO's intentions and interests, but also of Russia's strategic interests. Choosing to support Serbian interest in fact, could have signified for Russia the international isolation, further damage to its already fragile situation, not only toward other countries, but more importantly toward the International Financial Institutions which represented in that period the only possibility for Russia to escape from its difficult economic situation.⁴⁰

Russian antagonism towards NATO's actions, in certain foreign policy decisions, resulted to prevail on Russia's own concrete need to protect its own real and material needs.

Focusing on territorial integrity, Russia decided at the beginning of the conflict to put at risk its own necessity to strengthen its relationship with the International Financial Institutions. Russian response to the Kosovo war, when in dissention with the west, needs to be interpreted as a reaction, a counterblast against many failed market reforms through the years, and mostly against NATO expansionism.

Russian perception of their relationship to the Balkans and of its own historical role, can be understood only if considering as a fundamental sociological element the need to analyse Russian popular textbooks and beliefs.

⁴⁰ Christian Torun, "Explaining Change in Russian Foreign Policy: The Role of Ideas in Post-Soviet Russia's Conduct towards the West" p 1-20

The “Myth of Slavic Brotherhood”, resides on the historical Russian belief of “*the existence of a profound ‘special relationship’ between Russia and Orthodox Balkan Slavs*”, the “*romanticization of the Orthodox Slavs*” and the belief that “*Russia has been the benevolent, selfless saviour and historical protector of the Slavs*”, in opposite with the “*bellicose, duplicitous, self-serving and predatory motives of the Western powers.*”⁴¹ Van Evera in 1994 analysed that what actually resides in the “Myth of Slavic Brotherhood” is an attempt to self-glorifying Russia while at the same time discrediting the other international actors. So the Myth, as propagated in Russia, did not take into consideration what the real Russian target and interests were in helping the Balkans throughout the years.

Russian imperialistic aspirations were always behind every move, even if never resulted in anything concrete. Even though Russian population had always perceived Russia as the heroic saviour of the Orthodox Populations, the Slavic population in the Balkans had always felt insecure and doubtful towards Russia’s actual intentions.

The archaic conception of the Slavic common ground as the justification, results to be a rude simplification, because Russian relationship with Serbia throughout history has actually been quite complicated. Even though a common ground based on a cultural and religious point of view cannot be denied, there have been many historical periods during which a feeling of distrust and estrangement characterized the tedious relationship between the two countries.⁴²

Belgrade obtained its most remarkable achievements only thanks to the help of Russia in 1978, while trying to deal with its nation state building issues, and in 1945 after WWII, but anyway after having selfishly satisfied its own needs, Belgrade always decided to pursue its own aim to place itself as a regional centric power in the Balkans, in contrast with Russian interests which target was to rule the region.⁴³

The necessity of the Balkans to try to integrate in the international economy framework began a process of detachment, that Russia attempted to slow down using a pan Slavic ideology used as a tool of political manipulation. Moreover, Russia seems to have taken in consideration the aspect of territorial integrity only in the case of Serbia, but not in the Ukraine case in 2014, annexing Crimea while at the same time ignoring and supporting the disintegration of the country.⁴⁴

41,42: Alex Pravda, “The Politics of Foreign Policy,” in *Developments in Russian and Post-Soviet Politics*. p 1-25

43,44: Enciclopedia Britannica, “Kosovo conflict 1998-1999”

However, taking into consideration the unlikely risk of a NATO invasion of Russia, the irrational sympathetic back up towards Milosevic results, if considering the “Myth of Slavic Brotherhood” vision, as a Russian misperception and justification, in the expression of an anti-western, anti-NATO feeling which belonged to Russian population, instead of a real interest towards Serbian situation.

II.III: Russia and NATO relationship background

The key issue which allows to shed light on the real reason behind Russian behaviour towards the Kosovan conflict, is the relationship between Russia and NATO.

Russia's Foreign Policy in the European conflicts after the Cold War, can be analysed only if understood through the lens of Russian complicated relationship with The North Atlantic alliance.

The short temporal lapse between the annexation of three new NATO members, and NATO intervention in the Balkans, fed Russian fear of the threat represented by NATO's expansionistic interests (*Figure 6*).



Figure 6: NATO's enlargement

The North Atlantic alliance had the ability and possibility to rapidly deploy in every world area, even the furthest. NATO's unclarity towards its geographical choices on where to deploy its forces, together with its incomparable readiness in every situation, in whatever part of the world, represented the core of Russian fearful beliefs, which the cooperative attempt represented by "Partnership for peace" had failed to mitigate.

To quote Ivanov's statement *"In protecting today the right of Yugoslavia to sovereignty, we are protecting the future of the world and of Europe against the latest form of neo-colonialism, the so-called NATO-colonialism"*.⁴⁵

In the post Cold War European conflicts, Russian popular opinion still perceived NATO as a threat which target was and remained Russia, and NATO eastward expansion as an attempt to destroy Russia's possibility to renovate its powerful role in the international framework. Russian belief that NATO had interest towards the states of the Warsaw pact increased the antagonism. This can be assumed to be the main reason at the basis of Russian interest towards the Balkanic situation.

The Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security which was signed on May 27th 1997 in Paris, aimed at posing the basis for a cooperative relation between the Russian Federation and NATO, but did not reveal itself as an efficient tool. The idea behind the creation of the Founding Act, was actually to prevent situations like the Kosovo war, but the cooperative utopia demonstrated to become very fragile in the case of a conflict of interests between the two factions.⁴⁶

The main issue related to the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security, was that it was not able to reassure Russia concerning NATO's expansionistic threat. Political and popular disappointment actually found its roots in this insecurity. The Kosovo situation contributed to aliment Russian Elites' anti-NATO beliefs, which consequently considerably influenced Russian Foreign Policy.⁴⁷

NATO's choice to begin the air strikes even though there was no formal authorization coming from the UN Security Council, in order to avoid the possibility of a veto from Russia, was interpreted by the Russian Federation as a disrespectful and threatening behaviour.

This decision actually demonstrated that even in a controversial situation, the legitimacy of NATO as leading peace institution in the International System could not be undermined.⁴⁸

45: Petar Žarković, *"Yugoslavia and the USSR 1945 - 1980: The History of a Cold War Relationship"* p 1-20

46: Goldgeier and McFaul, *"Power and Purpose"*, p 248

47: Oksana Antonenko, *"Russia, NATO and European Security after Kosovo,"* p 124-44.

48: Van Ham and Medvedev, *"Mapping European Security after Kosovo"*, p 98

According to some scholars, the main reason behind Russian opposition towards NATO military operation in Kosovo resides in the perception of NATO's intervention as a direct attempt to sneak near the Russian borders in a period of economic and reputational instability for the country and at the same time strengthen NATO's influence in the Balkanic regions.

Taking into consideration the conception which perceives NATO's security policy as a tool in the hands of the United States to maintain its world supremacy, it can also be assumed that each operation could have also been targeted as a way to progressively limiting Russia's strategic position in the Balkans, by establishing NATO's military supremacy and carry on with its expansionistic plan.

The "Allied Forces" operation against Serbia, represented for NATO the first ever humanitarian war in its history. NATO's necessity after the cold war was to delineate its role and its main purpose in the international community.

*"Many in the United States and Europe were stunned in turn at the extreme nature of Russia's reaction, since NATO's goal, as defined by NATO, was to stop genocide."*⁴⁹

Russian perspective continued to perceive the Kosovo operation as a projection of the American imperialism, which only aim resided in establishing its strategic presence in the region, assessing the tension between Russia and the USA as the highest level to be seen since the Hungarian and Czechoslovakian crisis during the Cold War period.

NATO's humanitarian purposes were not taken into consideration as valid justifications, giving space, thanks to misperception, only to paranoid theories, which spread the feeling of being surrounded by NATO, perceived as Russian enemy, always ready to strike a shoot against Russia.

"Washington decided on this open provocation as regards Russia. Russia's position was absolutely crystal clear. Now it will be child's play to finish off Russia, it will be enough to find a flaw in Moscow's irritated behaviour and, based on this, restore and inflame anti-Russians moods." wrote the Liberal Nezavisimaia Gazeta.⁵⁰

49: James M. Goldgeier and Michael McFaul, "Power and Purpose: U.S. Policy Toward Russia after the Cold War" p 247.

50: David Mendeloff, "Pernicious History' as a Cause of National Misperceptions: Russia and the 1999 Kosovo War." p 31

NATO's belligerence in Yugoslavia was perceived as a direct threat by the Russian population. The humanitarian reason of Serbia's atrocities towards ethnic Albanians was regarded at like a simple pretext for NATO to continue its expansionistic aims through the Balkans, getting closer to Russia.

"Many Russians believe that the destruction of Serbia was intended to break Russia's will, to put a stop to the integration process of Slav peoples" witnessed Medvedev."⁵¹

The assumption of the Myth of Slavic Brotherhood if analysed through the lens of Russian foreign policy towards the Kosovan war, sheds light on how much a misperception of history can lead to a distortion of the real strategic interests of the country itself.

Russian assumption that the West would have never used military intervention for a humanitarian cause, but only for their own interests, enubilated its own perspective.

Because of the involvement of the regional interests both of Russia and The United States, the Kosovo crises can be considered as much more than a mere peacekeeping mission.

51: David Mendeloff, "Pernicious History' as a Cause of National Misperceptions: Russia and the 1999 Kosovo War." p 36

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY AND ITS AMBIGUITY THROUGHOUT THE CONFLICT

III.I: Russian Foreign policy at the end of the war

“Russia’s diplomacy during the war was as fruitless as were its efforts to prevent NATO’s assault.” Wrote Donaldson, Noguee and Nadkarni.⁵²

After NATO’s decision to proceed without the formal authorization from the UN Security Council, Russia decided to accuse NATO states of violating the UN charter. This move, assuming that, Russian diplomacy was based on a principle of self interest, can be interpreted as instrumental, with the aim of undermining NATO’s diplomatic reputation in the UN council.

After Resolution 1160, in March 1998, the Russian Duma decided to demand for a peaceful ending of the Kosovo situation, emphasizing that *“Russian politicians have been very vocal in their support for the Serbs in Kosovo territory”*⁵³, while at the same time explaining their preoccupation towards the fact that the menace represented by the air strikes was still pending over their heads.

Even though Boris Yeltsin, The president of the Russian federation before the advent of Vladimir Putin in 1999, initially stated that *“Russia will not allow itself to be drawn in the conflict”*, throughout the conflict he ended up contradicting this statement and demonstrating his rhetorical inconsistency by intervening in the dynamics many times⁵⁴.

Opinion polls in Russia revealed that 94% of people were against NATO’s belligerence. Moderate and reformers such as the Russian representative Chernomyrdyn, and Gaidar, believed that the situation would have brought the Russian population towards an anti-western feeling, towards communists and radical nationalists. There was instability due to the lack of popular approval towards Russian political system.⁵⁵

52: Donaldson, Noguee and Nadkarni, *“Foreign policy of Russia”* p 250

53: Branislav Radeljc, *“Kosovo and Serbia: Contested Options and Shared Consequences”*, chapter 2

54: Erik Yesson, *“The Balkans, NATO and European Security after the Kosovo War”* p 20-48

55: Erik Yesson, *“The Balkans, NATO and European Security after the Kosovo War”* p20-48

Part of the public opinion, and of the Liberals anyway, even if respecting the Nationalistic position of staying loyal to the Slavic brothers, and understanding the need to protect the interests of their own country, did not consider the humanitarian purpose of the intervention as a wrong justification.

In fact “*after independent TV channels, showed pictures of the suffering of Kosovo Albanian refugees, strong feelings began to subside*”.⁵⁶

President Boris Yeltsin decided to strongly oppose and condemn any kind of belligerent operation towards the Serbian population, given the threat of a repercussion from Nationalist politicians. This detachment convinced NATO that the intervention was more needed than ever.

As soon as the air campaign started, Russian chief military representative was recalled from NATO’s European military headquarters. Representatives from NATO were expelled from Moscow, and the attempts of cooperation with NATO seemed to be put to an end, together with the firing of the two officers which were in charge of the communications between the Russian SFOR in Bosnia, and NATO.⁵⁷

In order to demonstrate its public protest against the intervention, Russia decided to not accept the formal invite to NATO’s 50th anniversary summit, which happened to be in Washington. After the summit, Russia decided anyway to participate to other international conferences, as for example the G8 meeting of foreign ministers, which took place in Cologne in June.⁵⁸

As Gabriel Gorodetsky highlighted, the Kosovan crisis shed light on “*both the aspirations and the constraints of Russian foreign policy*”, on one side confirming “*the continued significance attached by Moscow to traditional interests, and particularly the predominance of the concept of spheres of influence*”, whereas from another point of view exposing “*the limits of Russia’s capability for executing a more dynamic, resolute and independent policy*.”⁵⁹

The first cooperative step towards NATO can be seen in the moment in which Chernomyrdin, Russian representative, and former Prime Minister, was sent to Belgrade together with Martti Ahtisaari, the Finnish president in charge as EU envoy.

56: Tom Gallagher, “*The Balkans in the New Millennium: In the Shadow of War and Peace*”

57,58: Radeljic: “*Russia’s Involvement in the Kosovo Case: Defending Serbian Interests or Securing its Own Influence in Europe?*” p14,6

59: Gabriel Gorodetsky, “*Introduction,*” in *Russia between East and West: Russian Foreign Policy on the Threshold of the Twenty-first Century*” p 1-50

Igor Ivanov, Foreign affairs Minister of the Russian Federation, expressed its opinion on the 1244 resolution, affirming that *“This sort of document hardly ever satisfies those who take part in the negotiations. The important point is that this document should allow us to achieve the objectives that we had, which is to stop the war in the Balkans”*⁶⁰.

President Boris Yeltsin was facing perpetuals backlashes from Nationalists politicians, which were accusing him of *“kowtowing to the west rather than coming to the aid of Serbs, with whom Russians share the Orthodox religion and a Slavic heritage.”*⁶¹

Why did Russia decide to allow his representative to bring an ultimatum which contained what NATO asked for, after accusing NATO of withdrawing the principles of the UN council?

Because Yeltsin realized, despite the opposition from a major part of the Duma, that he had no possibility to oblige NATO to stop its military intervention, so the President decided that for Russia’s sake, the only left thing to do was to help ending the war, even if that meant to compromise with NATO, at least without any public declaration against Milosevic.

It is probable that another reason for beginning to cooperate with NATO, was the fragility of Russian economy. If taking into consideration the period that goes from 1990 to 1998, Russian gross domestic product (GDP), decreased by 50%⁶² ([Figure 7](#)).



[Figure 7: Russian GDP since 1989](#)

60: Ivanov’s statements during “Press Conference: Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright and G 8 Foreign Ministers, Following their Meeting, Cologne, Germany,” 8 June 1999

61: Carol J. Williams, “Balkans: The Mediators Differ in their Approach Following Serbs’ Rejection of Last-Chance Peace Deal,” Los Angeles Times, 30 July 1994.

62: Radeljic: “Russia’s Involvement in the Kosovo Case: Defending Serbian Interests or Securing its Own Influence in Europe?” p11

The decrease of Russian economic power also led to a decrease in its military power, because the economic crisis decreased the budget dedicated to military spending. (*Figure 8*).



Figure 8: Soviet and Russian military expenditures 1988-2016

Without an outstanding military and economic power, the risk was to surrender about ever being able to come back as an influent and strong power in the international asset.

Recognizing that even though threatening in terms of closeness to its borders, NATO's military action did not directly posed a threat to Russia, the need for an instrumental move became stronger. The International Monetary Fund and many other Western Financial Institutions, were offering Russia incentives for cooperation concerning Security Policy. Paradoxically, one of the main reasons behind Milošević ultimate decision to surrender, was Russian contribution in delivering the ultimatum, because of the threat that an allowance from Russia to a hypothetical UN Security Council resolution would have constituted.

III.II: Critical Analysis

What if Russian dissention was only a Facade?

Even if, taking into consideration all the before mentioned aspects, which were aimed at explaining Russian dissention towards NATO's military action, the difficult situation in which Russia versed in that particular historical period, if better analysed, poses some doubts on the table.

After the dissolvment of the USSR in 1991, Russia's political power decreased, as fast as the economic crisis was growing darker and darker. Russian necessity to substitute the disappeared USSR with its new asset in the International framework led to an attempt of cooperation between Russia and NATO with a program called "Partnership for Peace", already mentioned in the previous chapters (*Figure 9*).

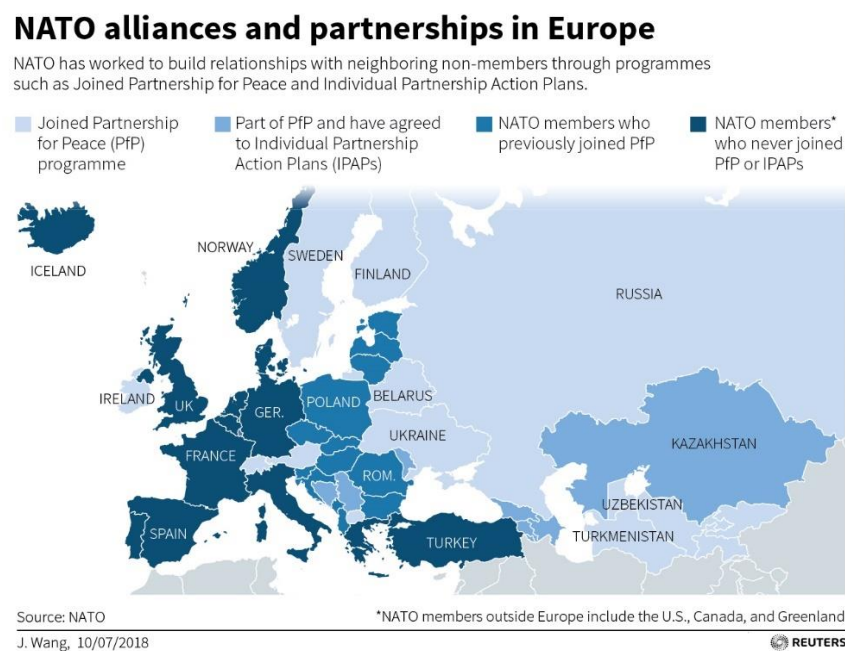


Figure 9: NATO's Partnership for Peace

At the same time, the G7 enlarged to include Russia, with a formula of seven plus one. This difficult international contest, in which Russia was in need of an economic aid from the west, may have considerably influenced Russian foreign policy, in choosing between its Slavic Brotherhood popular ideology, and its own political-economic needs.⁶³

63: Erik Yesson, "The Balkans, NATO and European Security after the Kosovo War" p1-30

Moscow began to aspire to a bigger role in the international dynamics, after participating to the Dayton peace conference as a secondary role country.

The Contact Group remained the only platform for Russia to explain its own point of view, trying to defend the Serbian position while at the same time protecting itself from the risk of ruining its, then more necessary than ever, relationships with the Western countries.

During the Rambouillet conference in February 1999, Moscow's position did not result to be as clear as it had been expected to be. In fact its position was defined as "ambiguous", even though, in the end, Russian representative Majorski refused to sign considering the document as too in favour of the ethnic Albanians, and of NATO, not taking into consideration Serbian interests.

But, was it really possible to avoid and overcome Russia, even considering its decreasing international power, in such an important decision?

The answer may not be as simple as it is believed to be. Russia needed to publicly condemn any belligerent action taken by NATO, because of the population anti-NATO strong ideology.

When the air strikes begin to fall on Belgrade, being the popular opinion irated because of the violence towards its "Slavic brothers" from Serbia, Russian formal actions had to publicly condemn the military attack, accusing NATO of illicitity in the context of the Security Council. Russian chief military representative was recalled from NATO's European military headquarters. Representatives from NATO were expelled from Moscow, and the attempts of cooperation with NATO were put to an end, together with the firing of the two officers which were in charge of the communications between the Russian SFOR in Bosnia, and NATO.⁶⁴

But, did Yeltsin really considered it to be more important than the real economic necessities of the country, and so, of the consequent necessity to maintain a certain relationship with the West?

Russia's official public reactive actions demonstrated to respect the will of Russian population. But in the end Yeltsin chose to cooperate and accept resolution 1244 of the Security Council, in which even though the sovereignty and integrity of the Yugoslavian Federal Republic YFR was guaranteed, Kosovan administration was put under the civil international administration and the military protection of the KFOR, composed by forces belonging to NATO, Russia and other countries⁶⁵.

64: Colonel General Leontiy P. Shevtsov " Russian-NATO military cooperation in Bosnia: A basis for the future?!" p 17-21

65: Resolution 1244 (1999), Adopted by the Security Council at its 4011th meeting, on 10 June 1999

This ultimatum was also brought to Milošević by Chernomyrdin, the Russian representative, together with the Finnish EU envoy Attisaari.⁶⁶

Even if Russian ambiguity and incoherence towards the conflict is already perfectly noticeable, there are still some events to be added to the analysis.

After the cooperative turning, sealed by the delivery of the ultimatum by the Russian representative, Russia however decided to order its troops, already displaced in Bosnia, to be the first to enter Kosovo and occupy Pristina's airport, with the consequence of consistently annoying NATO.⁶⁷

Russian decision to occupy Pristina airport the 12th of June, after Milošević's surrender the 10th of the same month, can be linked to its feeling of being marginalized after the decision to compromise with NATO, expressing its concerns about its own position in the international community, and the fear of Nationalists repercussion in its homeland, taking into consideration the allowance of NATO's supervision on the Serbian and Kosovan territories, and believing that the displacement of the troops could have benefit to Russian international reputation.⁶⁸

III.III: Fundamental events join the analysis

There are anyway some never mentioned aspects and historical events, which could completely transform our vision towards Russian behaviour in the Kosovo war.

Russian reaction to the air strikes, consisting in all the events listed throughout the previous chapters, is of public domain. The concrete fact that the air strikes began, giving as a justification the humanitarian purpose of the mission, without any formal voting of the Security Council in which Russia did not have any opportunity to oppose its veto, represents an undeniable truth.

But, what actually happened between the Rambouillet conference, and the beginning of NATO's "Allied Forces" Operation?

At the beginning of October 1998, precisely the 8th, inside the Vip Lounge of the London Airport, Foreign Ministers from United States, France, Great Britain, Germany and Russia, secretly reunited to discuss the possibility and legitimacy of a hypothetical NATO intervention, without an explicit approval in the UN context.

66: Resolution 1244 (1999), Adopted by the Security Council at its 4011th meeting, on 10 June 1999

67: James M. Goldgeier and Michael McFaul, "Power and Purpose: U.S. Policy Toward Russia after the Cold War" p 247.

68: James M. Goldgeier and Michael McFaul, "Power and Purpose: U.S. Policy Toward Russia after the Cold War" p 247.

Igor Ivanov, the Russian Minister, clearly stated that in case of a formal voting in the Security Council, Russia would have opposed its veto, but that without the situation of a formal voting, Russia would have only made “a big brawl”, which meant that Moscow only wanted to preserve its pro-Serbian facade.⁶⁹

The 27th of January of the same year, Madeline Albright, the state secretary of The United States, and US permanent member at the UN, flew to Moscow in order to meet Ivanov at the Bol'soj.

During the show, Albright asked Ivanov, without pretending his explicit approval on the air strikes, to implicitly accept the intervention, in case Milošević would not have accepted any other diplomatic attempt. In this way, Russia would have been able to publicly condemn the military intervention of NATO, without actually opposing it.⁷⁰

Ivanov aware of Russia's necessity to maintain a good relationship with the United States in order to have access to the fundamental incentives coming from the international monetary fund, did not refuse the proposal.⁷¹

These aspects are fundamental to finally explain the conjunction, the union, of all the aspects and theories before mentioned in the previous chapters.

69,70: O.Levitin, “inside Moscow's Kosovo Muddle” cit. p.130-135

71: O.Levitin, “inside Moscow's Kosovo Muddle” cit. p.134, T.G.Carpenter “Nato's empty victory”.

CONCLUSION

After having elaborated, a complete analysis of Russian Foreign Policy throughout the Kosovo war, comprehending the historical context, the geographical aspects, Russian Social and Ideological context in relation to both The North Atlantic Alliance and The Balkans, and the less Known events which helped understanding all the before mentioned aspects, it is now possible to draw some conclusions.

Russia needed to maintain a peaceful relationship with the West, mostly because of the incentives, but at the same time needed to remain loyal to the beliefs of its population, and avoid an internal crisis.

The Russian population feared NATO and its expansionary policy, and felt the urge to help their Slavic Brothers, as their history lessons taught them throughout all their life.

Russia according to the “Myth of the Slavic Brotherhood” vision, had always represented the benefactor of the Balkans, the Balkans’ saviour, influencing the popular conception and misperception of the situation.

Russia had to save Serbia from the military intervention, and save itself from the menace that NATO represented. President Boris Yeltsin and Foreign Minister Ivanov on the other side, were conscious that the only way for Russia to stay afloat, was to maintain in balance its relationship with the West, and in particular with the United States, in order to receive the monetary incentives that were fundamental to recover from the economic crisis which developed since the end of the USSR.

The only way to avoid both the economic disaster, and an internal popular spread of excessive anti-Western feeling, was to publicly condemn NATO’s intervention, while at the same time “secretly” allowing it to happen.

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ABSTRACT

La politica estera della Federazione Russa, a partire dall'inizio del XIX secolo, è stata particolarmente caratterizzata dal suo preciso interesse nei confronti della regione Balcanica.

La Russia, nell'intervallo che va dal 1991 al 1995, si adoperò nel dimostrare il proprio supporto nei confronti dell'integrità territoriale della Jugoslavia, fino al riconoscimento ufficiale delle repubbliche rappresentate da Croazia, Slovenia, Bosnia Erzegovina e Macedonia.

Lo scopo di questo elaborato, consiste nell'analizzare le variabili circostanziali che influenzarono la politica estera della Federazione Russa relativamente alla guerra in Kosovo.

La tesi si pone l'obiettivo di esaminare, all'interno dei tre capitoli, l'influenza Russa nella questione kosovara analizzando, in particolar modo, le ragioni alla base della sua politica estera, in relazione alla decisione di opporsi all'operazione "Allied Forces" promossa dalla NATO, ed al rapporto controverso che ha da sempre contraddistinto Russia e NATO.

Partendo da una ricostruzione storica e cronologica dei più importanti eventi riconducibili alla guerra kosovara, la politica estera della Federazione Russa viene analizzata prendendo in considerazione sia il contesto storico e sociale alla base delle proprie decisioni, in relazione per l'appunto al rapporto con la NATO, sia l'ambiguità che caratterizzò determinati eventi concernenti il coinvolgimento della Russia nella questione.

La relazione tra Russia e NATO costituisce, come già anticipato, un collegamento cruciale all'interno dell'elaborato, la quale analisi contribuisce in modo determinante alla delineazione di una cornice in grado di rappresentare concretamente i retroscena alla base delle scelte russe.

Tenendo conto del collegamento culturale tra Russia, Serbia e Montenegro, basato sulla condivisione della religione Ortodossa e della cultura slava, e la conseguente influenza sull'ideologia predominante nella popolazione Russa, la politica estera della Federazione Russa non può non essere interpretata in relazione alle conseguenze che la

situazione balcanica avrebbe potuto rappresentare in rapporto al proprio legame con i paesi occidentali, in particolare con gli Stati Uniti.

Sebbene il ruolo della Federazione Russa negli accordi di pace di Dayton, nel Novembre del 1995, non risultò essere cruciale, il coinvolgimento della stessa nella questione kosovara vale invece la pena di essere analizzato.

La situazione kosovara venne alla luce nel contesto internazionale alla fine degli anni 90, quando il presidente serbo Slobodan Milošević, provò a sopprimere con la forza la campagna d'indipendenza portata avanti dalla popolazione albanese kosovara.

Nonostante la popolazione serba rappresentasse solamente il 10% della regione, la rilevanza storica e culturale della Serbia predominava all'interno della provincia, a tal punto da accrescere nell'opinione pubblica serba la convinzione che la loro cultura andasse preservata dalle influenze degli Albanesi Kosovari, i quali venivano percepiti come una minaccia all'identità nazionale e prima fra tutte, alla religione serba.

Sebbene infatti il Kosovo non professasse una religione ufficiale, la maggioranza degli Albanesi Kosovari appartenevano alla religione Musulmana, a differenza della popolazione serba, leale da sempre alla propria Chiesa Ortodossa Serba.

Benchè il livello di autonomia del Kosovo, si fosse mantenuto sufficientemente intatto fino al 1989, in seguito all'elezione di Milošević nel 1992 come presidente Serbo, ma ancor prima dalla sua entrata in politica all'interno del Partito Comunista Serbo, la situazione cambiò drasticamente.

Nel 1989 infatti, Milošević iniziò a rimuovere i diritti di autonomia Kosovari, fino a sottoporre il territorio ad un controllo diretto da parte di Belgrado a partire dal 1990, spingendo un numero quantificabile in 400.000 Albanesi Kosovari ad espatriare, preoccupati dalla progressiva degradazione del proprio status socio-economico e dalla minaccia imminente di una totale oppressione Serba.

Tra il 1990 ed il 1998, la tensione crebbe ulteriormente, e massacri come quello di Račak a discapito della popolazione albanese, misero in luce i risvolti di una vera e propria emergenza umanitaria.

In seguito al fallimento di molteplici tentativi diplomatici portati avanti dalla NATO e dal Gruppo di Contatto, composto da Italia, Francia, Gran Bretagna, Germania, Stati Uniti d'America e Russia ed originariamente creato nel 1994 per fronteggiare la guerra

in Bosnia Erzegovina, nel Febbraio del 1999, iniziarono le negoziazioni diplomatiche di Rambouillet, che rappresentarono l'ultimo tentativo diplomatico prima dell'intervento militare della NATO.

Nel Marzo del 1999, il tentativo diplomatico di Rambouillet si rivelò fallimentare. I rappresentanti della Federazione Jugoslava rifiutarono di firmare l'accordo, spalleggiati dai rappresentanti della Federazione Russa, i quali ritenevano l'accordo troppo a favore della popolazione albanese, dichiarando che qualsiasi attacco militare rivolto alla Serbia sarebbe stato considerato al pari di un attacco personale alla Russia.

Il 24 Marzo del 1999, conseguentemente al fallimento dell'accordo di Rambouillet, la NATO diede il via all'operazione militare "Allied Forces" predisponendo bombardamenti aerei, i quali durarono 78 giorni e danneggiarono gravemente molte infrastrutture Serbe.

Nell'Aprile del 1999, la Federazione Russa accusò pubblicamente la NATO di aver iniziato l'operazione militare "Allied Forces" senza aver rispettato la procedura di votazione formale all'interno del Consiglio di Sicurezza UN, non solo violando la carta delle Nazioni Unite, ma anche togliendo alla Russia la possibilità di utilizzare il proprio potere di veto.

Conseguentemente a ciò, i rappresentanti NATO presenti a Mosca vennero espulsi dal paese, il rappresentante militare Russo ritirato dal centro operativo militare della NATO e la cooperazione tra NATO e Russia sembrò essersi conclusa.

Nonostante ciò, inaspettatamente, la proposta di pace accettata da Milosevic il 10 Giugno del 1999, in cui si impegnava a rimuovere le truppe Serbe dal territorio Kosovo, venne mediata e consegnata non solo dal rappresentante finlandese Attisaari, ma anche dal rappresentante Russo nella persona di Chernomyrdin.

Il tribunale internazionale per i crimini di guerra nel The Hague, accusò e condannò Milošević per sei specifici capi di imputazione, per crimini contro l'umanità, facendo di lui il primo capo di stato ancora in carica ad essere accusato di questo crimine.

L'indipendenza dalla Serbia venne proclamata dai leader Kosovari nel Febbraio del 2008, e non venne riconosciuta da Spagna, Cipro, Romania e Grecia per quanto riguarda i paesi dell'Unione Europea.

Il Ministro degli Affari Esteri della Federazione Russa dichiarò pubblicamente la propria decisione di non riconoscere l'indipendenza del Kosovo.

Questo breve cappello introduttivo, costituisce una base storica fondamentale allo scopo di introdurre un'analisi dettagliata della politica estera Russa in relazione alla guerra kosovara.

In seguito agli accordi di Dayton nel 1995, che conclusero la guerra in Bosnia Erzegovina, per la quale venne originariamente creato il Gruppo di Contatto, la posizione della Russia riguardo alla questione kosovara era rappresentata dalla convinzione che la situazione dovesse essere affrontata come un problema interno serbo, e che la sovranità serba non dovesse in alcun modo essere messa in discussione.

Il presidente russo Boris Yeltsin, dichiarò nel 1998 che la Russia non si sarebbe in alcun modo intromessa nella questione. Dichiarazione che risultò poi, alla luce dei fatti, consistentemente incoerente, visto il successivo sostanziale coinvolgimento della Federazione Russa in molteplici tappe della guerra.

Per analizzare correttamente le basi sulle quali si costruì il dissenso Russo nei confronti delle decisioni prese dall'occidente, è necessario inserire nel quadro il contesto storico e sociale Russo in quel determinato periodo storico.

La percezione popolare Russa, riguardo al proprio rapporto con i Balcani ed in relazione al proprio ruolo storico nell'area, può essere compresa a pieno solamente prendendo in considerazione i libri di storia popolare e le credenze del popolo, come ad esempio il "Mito della Fratellanza Slava", il quale risultò sfociare nell'espressione popolare di un sentimento anti NATO, e non in un vero e proprio interesse nei confronti della Serbia.

Come già introdotto precedentemente, la reale chiave di lettura che permette di comprendere a fondo le dinamiche alla base della politica estera Russa nei confronti della guerra in Kosovo, è rappresentata dalla controversa relazione tra la federazione Russia e la NATO, partendo dal presupposto che la politica estera Russa in seguito alla guerra fredda può essere analizzata efficientemente solo attraverso la lente della propria relazione con l'alleanza.

Infatti, nel periodo successivo alla guerra fredda, l'opinione popolare Russa continuò a percepire la NATO come una minaccia incombente, sentimento alimentato dalle aspirazioni espansionistiche della stessa. La convinzione che la NATO avesse un interesse nei confronti degli stati appartenenti al patto di Varsavia, contribuì ad accrescere l'antagonismo già palpabile.

Nonostante i vari tentativi di collaborazione tra la NATO e la Federazione Russa, rappresentati dal programma "Partnership for Peace" e dal "Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security", niente riuscì a tranquillizzare la popolazione Russa riguardo alle mire espansionistiche della NATO.

La situazione kosovara, finì per alimentare lo scetticismo delle classi elitarie russe nei confronti della NATO, influenzando non indifferentemente la Politica estera della Federazione.

L'intervento della NATO in Kosovo venne percepito come una proiezione dell'imperialismo americano, il cui unico scopo era quello di rafforzare la propria presenza strategica nella regione, assestando la tensione tra gli Stati Uniti e la Federazione Russa al livello più alto mai percepito dalla fine della crisi ungherese e cecoslovacca durante il periodo della guerra fredda.

La decisione della NATO di avviare l'operazione "Allied Forces", senza aver ricevuto un'autorizzazione formale dal Consiglio di Sicurezza, nel quale la Russia avrebbe potuto esprimere il proprio dissenso utilizzando il potere di veto, venne percepita dalla popolazione Russa come un comportamento minaccioso che manifestava una profonda mancanza di rispetto. Sondaggi popolari in Russia rivelarono che il 94% della popolazione era profondamente contraria all'intervento militare da parte della NATO.

Esponenti della politica moderata e riformista nelle figure di Chernomyrdyn e Gaidar, erano convinti del fatto che la situazione potesse spingere la popolazione Russa verso un sentimento ancora più scettico nei confronti dell'occidente, e conseguentemente verso la fazione comunista e nazionalista radicale. Imperversò una grande instabilità dovuta alla mancanza di approvazione popolare nei confronti del sistema politico Russo.

La giustificazione umanitaria che venne dunque attribuita all'operazione "Allied Forces" in Kosovo, venne percepita come un mero pretesto della NATO, il quale reale

obiettivo era allargare la propria politica espansionistica all'interno dei Balcani, e l'intervento risuonò come un attacco diretto e personale alla Russia.

Il punto di svolta nella politica estera Russa corrisponde al momento in cui non solo la delegazione Russa decise di approvare la risoluzione 1244 del Giugno del 1999, ma mandò addirittura un proprio rappresentante, nella figura di Chernomyrdin, a consegnare l'ultimatum a Belgrado, insieme al rappresentante finlandese Attisaari, in veste di inviato dell'Unione Europea.

Quali furono le Ragioni alla base di questa apparente inversione di marcia?

Il presidente Boris Yeltsin, comprese che nonostante l'opinione pubblica e la maggior parte della Duma fossero contrarie a questa decisione, non c'era più alcuna possibilità per la Russia di persuadere la NATO ad interrompere l'operazione militare. L'unica mossa rimasta da intraprendere dunque, per il bene della Federazione Russa, era aiutare a terminare la guerra, riservandosi però quanto meno il diritto di non fare alcuna dichiarazione pubblica che andasse contro la Serbia.

Questa decisione, può essere compresa solo in relazione alla difficile situazione che la Federazione Russa stava sperimentando in quel determinato periodo storico.

La motivazione che risiede alla base dell'ambiguità che caratterizzò le scelte della Federazione Russa, sarebbe la fragilità economica del paese, scaturita dalla fine dell'USSR nel 1991.

Prendendo in considerazione il periodo che va dal 1990 al 1998, il Prodotto Interno Lordo, PIL, della Federazione Russa, diminuì del 50%. Conseguentemente alla perdita del potere economico, la Russia sperimentò anche un calo del proprio potente arsenale militare, non avendo più a disposizione il budget necessario a coprire le ingenti spese militari.

Considerando dunque, tutti gli elementi sopra elencati, la politica estera Russa subì davvero un improvviso cambio di rotta, o la necessità di mantenere saldi i rapporti con l'occidente per ricevere incentivi finanziari prese "segretamente" il sopravvento durante lo svolgimento della guerra?

Cosa accadde davvero tra la conferenza di Rambouillet e l'inizio dell'operazione "Allied Forces"?

All'inizio dell'Ottobre 1998, all'interno della Vip lounge dell'aeroporto di Londra, i Ministri degli Affari Esteri appartenenti a Stati Uniti, Francia, Gran Bretagna, Germania e Russia, si riunirono segretamente per discutere la possibilità e legittimità di un'ipotetica operazione militare della NATO.

Igor Ivanov, il Ministro Russo, dichiarò apertamente che nel caso di una votazione formale del Consiglio di Sicurezza, la Federazione Russa si sarebbe trovata costretta ad apporre il proprio potere di veto, per motivi di stabilità politica interna, ma che in assenza di una tale votazione, avrebbe solamente fatto "un grosso strepito", a dimostrazione del fatto che il reale interesse della Russia fosse solo quello di mantenere pubblicamente la propria facciata a favore della Serbia, per evitare dissapori politici all'interno del paese.

Il 27 Gennaio dello stesso anno, Madeline Albright, segretario di stato degli Stati Uniti, volò a Mosca, per incontrare il Ministro Ivanov alla Bol'soj. Durante la visione dello spettacolo teatrale, Albright chiese a Ivanov, senza pretendere un'esplicita approvazione dell'operazione militare da parte del Ministro, la sua eventuale disponibilità ad accettare implicitamente l'intervento bellico, in assenza di una votazione formale, nel caso in cui Miloševic non si fosse arreso davanti a nessun altro intervento diplomatico. In questo modo la Russia avrebbe avuto la possibilità di condannare pubblicamente l'operazione della NATO, senza però realmente opporsi ad essa.

Il Ministro Ivanov, consapevole per l'appunto, della necessità che la Federazione Russa aveva di mantenere stabili i propri rapporti con gli Stati Uniti, in modo tale da continuare a ricevere gli incentivi finanziari fondamentali a sopperire alla crisi economica sopra menzionata, decise di accettare la proposta sottobanco.

Avendo dunque, sviluppato nel corso dell'elaborato, un'analisi completa e dettagliata della Politica Estera Russa durante la guerra kosovara, prendendo in considerazione sia il contesto storico, sia il contesto sociale e culturale, in relazione al rapporto della Federazione con NATO e Balcani, ed avendo aggiunto al quadro eventi meno noti ai più, ma fondamentali allo scopo di comprendere i reali retroscena, è ora possibile trarre delle conclusioni a riguardo.

Nonostante la Federazione Russa avesse la necessità di mantenere pacifica la propria relazione con l'occidente ed in particolare con gli Stati Uniti, doveva allo stesso tempo assicurarsi di rimanere leale all'opinione popolare ed evitare una crisi politica interna.

La popolazione Russa temeva dunque la NATO e le sue politiche espansionistiche, ed allo stesso tempo sentiva l'obbligo morale di aiutare i propri fratelli slavi, esattamente come le lezioni di storia avevano insegnato loro fin da piccoli.

La percezione popolare, infatti, secondo il "Mito della Fratellanza Slava", rappresentava la Russia come la storica benefattrice dei Balcani, la salvatrice dei Balcani. La Federazione, secondo l'opinione pubblica, doveva salvare la Serbia dall'intervento militare, ed allo stesso tempo salvare la madre patria stessa dalla minaccia che la NATO rappresentava.

Il presidente Boris Yeltsin, ed il Ministro Ivanov dall'altro canto, erano consapevoli del fatto che l'unico modo che avrebbe permesso alla Russia di rimanere a galla, era mantenere ben saldi i rapporti con l'occidente, in modo tale da riuscire a sanare a poco a poco la propria crisi economica grazie agli incentivi ricevuti dai Fondi Monetari Internazionali.

L'unico modo per evitare sia un ulteriore crollo economico, sia un'insurrezione popolare interna, risiedeva nel condannare pubblicamente l'operato della NATO, mentre allo stesso tempo "segretamente" permettere che accadesse.