
European Dimension of the Balkan Crisis

DAVOR RODIN

Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb

Summary

In this text the Balkan crisis caused by the collapse of the Yugoslav federation is analysed in the international context. The author inquires into the causes of the dissolution of Yugoslavia, which as well demonstrated the crisis of the European union (EU). The basis for both developments is the end of Cold war, although Yugoslavian disintegration also stems from additional internal factors which have been present from the very beginning of this state in 1918. The diagnosis is that the helplessness and discord among European countries vis-à-vis the Balkan war comes, paradoxically, from the excess of power in the EU, which is not adequately aggregated and subjected to a single command. The author concludes that the future outcome of the Balkan war will be ultimately determined by interests and mutual relations of the superpowers USA and Russia.

If we read the articles in the political magazines nowadays on Balkan crisis, an average reader can not but notice how one sided they are. However, it would not be justified to claim that the authors of those articles are not reputable experts in the international relations and international politics. Why is that so? It is quite obvious that the abstract politics of the leading superpowers such as the United States and Russia do not allow us to assess all the details of the situation on the ground. Any theoretician of war and peace can not find any relationship between such an abstract policy of power and the enormous human suffering taking place on the ground. This is the reason why they examine the situation neglecting the local conditions and the effects of historical continuity on the ground. In their analyses of political situation they apply the methodology of dealing with problems in completely abstract relations of powers, as if they are talking about physics rather than politics. Those experts tend to analyse the situation as if they were observing the ship engine which is not working, not showing the slightest interest in the development of ship-building industry from the sailing boats to nuclear-powered modern boats, nor do they pay any attention to the disposition of the passengers or the crew. The only thing that matters is to repair the machine, and all other aspects are of no importance at all. These experts behave very similarly to navigation instructors who continue lecturing in spite of the fact that the ship is already sinking. Of course, European experts on navigation write stories full of stoicism because they are convinced that the sinking ship called South Eastern Europe is full of luna-

tics, whereas another ship called European Union continues with its plain sailing.

These theoreticians of the enormous gap between the abstract politics of superpowers and the situation in the South Eastern Europe have not learned anything from Hannah Arendt, who, without any wish to mediate between these two extremes, knew how to define the term of "empty space" which lies between the abstract politics of power and the real situation on the ground. Commenting on the case of Vietnam, in her treatise *Politics and lie*, she defines the character of abstract power as follows: "How could such politics have been initiated in the first place, and how come it has been pursued until the bitter end? Leaving the reality and solving the problem was a desirable course of action, since neglecting the reality has always been inherent to such a policy and its objectives. (...) Moreover, how can we explain the fact that there was interest to achieve something so substantial as victory, since this has not been a war for gaining territory, not even the one lead in order to achieve economic prosperity. This war has not certainly been lead in order to help the ally or to fulfill a certain task, not even for the real power, but for the pure image of power."¹

Image or fiction of power is exactly the abstract, impersonal and emotionless quality of the policy of superpowers. The people on the ground are aware of it; they have undergone serious physical suffering which the theoreticians of the international relations are not capable of understanding. From the very beginning they have acted as those who are offering solution to the problem, and have been convinced that there is a possibility of solving such an existential problem as a mortal combat by passing various documents and maps. Political science research has reached such dimensions that we had rather quoted Al Capone than any of over-informed political scientists. "We could achieve much more by means of using kind words and a gun than by nice words only."

Therefore I would like to quote several opinions of renowned authors who have tried to solve the Balkan puzzle. A certain Misha Glenny wrote the following in *Foreign Affairs*²: "The growing catalogue of failures, however, did not deter the United States from stepping up its interest and diplomatic activity in the area. Vice president Gore became the chief sponsor of the Washington accords, signed in March 1994, which envisaged a federation of Bosnian Muslims and Croats and a confederation of this new Bosnian entity and Croatia. Following the Washington accords, the Croatian government agreed to lease part of the Adriatic island of Brač to the US military, which established an intelligence-gathering center there. The accords further increased the influence of Peter Galbraith, the US

¹ Hannah Arendt, *Lüge in der Politik*.

² Misha Glenny, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 3, May/June 1995, pp. 101-102.

ambassador to Zagreb, who became the key architect of a plan to reintegrate the rebel areas now controlled by separatist Croatian Serbs into Croatia proper. The plan would give the half million Croatian Serbs far more autonomy than they held before the war in exchange for the reintegration of the territories they now hold — roughly 27 percent of the country's area. Throughout 1994, many commentators considered Galbraith's statements on domestic Croatian politics as authoritative as those of President Franjo Tudman. Despite universal criticism, the White House clearly had no intention of running away from Balkan politics with its tail between its legs".

Stanley R. Sloan writes the following in the *International Affairs*: "The enlargement debate was at least temporarily displaced from top billing on the NATO agenda late in 1994 by the controversy over who was to blame for the Bosnia disaster. If NATO cannot deal with problems like Bosnia, some commentators observed, what is it good for? (...) The Bosnia crisis has once again emphasized that no organization of sovereign states can function any more effectively than the consensus among its members permits. If neither the United States nor European allies know what values of interests they are willing to defend, no bureaucratic arrangements will induce concerted action."³ One commentator writes the following in *Foreign Policy*. "What has gone wrong? I believe our concept of freedom has changed. In the Second World War, freedom was promoted as an idea that we were ready to fight and sacrifice for. And the idea as it was then conceived involved freedom not only in our country, but also in those where totalitarianism reigned. (...) But gradually that idea faded and another one emerged. This idea explicitly rejected the pursuit of freedom as a valid objective of foreign policy. This idea was 'realism', which maintained that states ought to pursue their own self-interest as determined by their geopolitical situation and accord moral or ethical considerations only a secondary role. Such considerations can be useful for propaganda purposes — for mobilizing public opinion at home or abroad — but you can get into a lot of trouble if you actually believe your own propaganda."⁴ Werner Weidenfeld wrote in *International Politik* the following: "Europe — superpower? At first it sounds paradoxical. Europe is proving to be tragically helpless, but the question of its leading role on the European continent is still topical. As far as the situation in the Balkan is concerned, European Union has proved to be its own caricature, whereas its attitude towards the Caucasus proves to be irrelevant in preventing the aggression that should have been condemned a long time ago."⁵

³ *International Affairs*, Vol. 71, No. 2, April 1995, p. 225-229.

⁴ *Foreign Policy*, Spring 1995, p. 71.

⁵ Werner Weidenfeld, "Europa — Weltmacht im Werden", in: *Internationale Politik*, No 5, 1995, p. 17.

All these and many other commentators on political documents and political processes are aware of one fact only — interests of their own *Realpolitik*. There is nothing bad about it from the point of view of developed political science, except for the fact that it is openly admitting that political processes are really something completely different and for such a theory absolutely enigmatic. The Balkan crisis cannot be solved either theoretically or politically — it will be solved either by war or by means of political agreement. This is actually the moral of the quoted articles, but obviously the authors are not trying to advertise this. They consider themselves an important factor of this process. They keep offering their analyses as suggestions for the possible course of action. Both the politicians and the generals should know how to cope with such suggestions — they simply have to be able to make a clear distinction between theoretical drafts and assessments of the political situation on one hand, and the real war and politics on the other hand. That difference can not be ignored — all it can do is offer different possibilities of leading war and politics, and emphasize different forms of peace.

Our objective is to find the real reasons for the helplessness Europe has shown regarding wars on the European continent as well as the real-life situation which the leading forces such as USA and Russia fail to see, or perhaps just do not want to see. If the facts are not in line with the semantics of power, so much the worse for the facts! Nevertheless, we have to assess Croatian situation in relation to this abstract power which is tempting us in order to establish whether her power can somehow help theirs. The fact that Croatia does not have any oil is not of any importance; if she has relevant power in the area, she will be respected from the superpowers and thus gain additional power. Here it would be appropriate to paraphrase Kennedy's favourite syntagm: "Do not ask yourself how much the Western powers can help Croatia, but ask yourself how much help Croatia can give to Western powers, and thereby she will gain their appreciation regarding her vital interests. Croatia has, *via facti*, learned this lesson — she speaks less and less about herself and more and more about the interests of her allies. This craftiness is by no means without foundation: pragmatic ordinance is being surpassed by pragmatic ordinance or it is being ignored with the incorrect belief that nowadays one can exist alone, without any allies. European Union has failed to act politically as *pouvoir constituant*, and United States and Russia witnessed this weakness. The maximum that has been achieved so far were several flights of German and Italian jet-planes in several military missions, but this was not a result of their own determination, but rather the pragmatic approach of the United States.

European helplessness in dealing with the Balkan crisis has been caused, as Hermann Heller put it⁶, by excess of the political power of

⁶ Carl Schmitt, *Politische Theologie*, Dunker und Humblot, Berlin, 1979, p. 11.

European Union which nobody controls neither politically nor organizationally. The political course of action European Union has pursued, has not been blocked by past experience or "spirit of history", as claimed in unison by both German and French politicians, in order to justify their hesitation. In short, European excess of power is not under direct command of a certain political organization or a common constitution, i.e. European political powers do not understand the semantics of the power they have. In short, European powers do not make good use of their own power, they fail to find ways to politically homogenize their willingness to act, which is, according to Carl Schmitt, original sin of the liberal democratic foreign policy. Such a policy has proved to be afraid of its own power. European Union has not failed in its policy towards the Balkan crisis because it is powerless, but because it has not used or does not want to use this huge political power it has. It seems that Europe is afraid of itself!

According to Carl Schmitt, the failure of present European Union to do something about the Balkan crisis could be compared to the failure of the League of Nations. The League of Nations was, like the present European Union, a very unsteady union of countries, based on the unreliable slogan: *pacta sunt servanda*.

The strict principles of liberal-democratic method of solving conflicts in a peaceful way prevent the direct military intervention in the dog-fight war. Many post World War II experiences from the crises that have already broken out in a number of countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, German Democratic Republic) are the reason why Europe is against direct military intervention. All the above mentioned crises were solved by means of applying secondary means. Even the end of the Cold war is claimed to have been a triumph of the application of secondary means/methods. Suddenly, however, those secondary means that have been praised so much, do not seem to work anymore. The reason why it is so lies in the fact that they are not under the united command of tacit political consensus of the European countries and the United States of America. It was taken for granted that the Cold war had been won. Immediately after that it became obvious that the political means applied to win the Cold war are not available any longer. Instead of consistent application of the secondary means to block the war totally and immediately, it was obvious that there was a lack of political unity to act, even to carry out the Maastricht agreements. According to most analysts, the European Union once again became a victim of its old antagonisms. Needless to say, we have to understand this sad attitude, because if we fail to understand it, every future European policy will be built on sand. It soon became obvious that the Yugoslav crisis is at the same time a crisis of the European political union. This fatal parallelism is based on historical facts, and the leading powers have to take this into consideration when dealing with the problems on the European continent. European political identity is completely different from the American and Rus-

sian. Yugoslavia, as well as Europe, was never organized as a democratic constitutional state. Political unity, as the basic prerequisite condition of the state sovereignty is something that both Yugoslavia and Europe lacked. In Europe this lack of unity was compensated by external threat from the Soviet Union and the external patronage of the United States. The very same lack of political and democratic unity was made up for in Yugoslavia not only by external factors, but also by various ideological substitutes of unity which were advocated and carried out by various subjects of dictatorship. Political power in Yugoslavia was not the will of the people nor the God's will, it was imposed from outside and expressed in the agreements reached by the leading world powers in Versailles and Yalta treaties, and from inside by totally blurred ideas of the common pre-historical origin of nations it consisted of. However, these foundations were not strong enough to guarantee the democratic stability of the state. Instead of democratic legitimacy of the governments, various subjects of dictatorship offered ideological substitutes. One of the first ideological substitutes of democratic legitimacy was the idea of the common Slavic origin of the peoples of Yugoslavia, and later predominance of the Serbs combined with the idea of Great Serbia. After the World War II, there was a period of dictatorship of proletariat internationalism, followed by the dictatorship of the proletariat as a transnational identity, and finally by self-management of the workers as a euphemistic substitute for civil society.⁷

In its final phase, Yugoslavia was a peculiar mixture of civil society without the independent middle class, and at the same time a political state without any democratic legitimacy of power. Simultaneously it was blurred by pluralism of national identities. Following Tito's death, foreign and home pressures subsided, but it was only then that all the desintegrative power of national identities became totally obvious and visible. Yugoslavia entered the process of democratization which comprised whole Eastern Europe without a crucial prerequisite for this process, i.e. without a homogenous political nation. Its destruction was thus inevitable.

The situation was rather complicated because of the three different processes which could not have been temporally synchronized, or channeled in a peaceful way. Firstly, the process of desintegration of the federation, secondly the decay of communism, and thirdly, the influence of the end of Cold war on the geo-political area of Yugoslavia. Since those three different political processes could not have been neither coordinated nor synchronized, the war broke out, marking the end of political stability supported by huge geo-political blocks abroad, and from within by military and police repression.

⁷ Zvonko Posavec, "Shvaćanje demokracije u razvitku Jugoslavije 1918-1980", *Politička misao*, No 4, 1992, p. 15

The end of the Cold war was only one of the reasons why this crisis was radicalized. The Cold war had its own logic and structure, and Yugoslavia had little impact on it. These structures enabled the control of the political, economic, cultural, technical, turistic, sport and other influences, and moreover, they managed to keep them at the desirable level through international treaties. It was the role of politicians to take care of the subtle game of dozing the permeability of this membrane between the East and the West. A special culture of imposing embargo on certain goods, information or people was introduced, and, of course, a culture of breaking these embargoes as well. That idyllic time which produced thousands of experts on the issues of the East and the West is long gone and forgotten. The emerging spirit of the Eastern civil society animated by the Western propaganda on human rights have reached the level of unexpected danger for both the parties concerned.

The West is facing the question whether to open the door to the Eastern market economy. If that door is to be open, the West will have to face the danger of millions of people of different cultures and different life styles. Both the West and the East are facing the question how to control those processes as well as the possible migration of the peoples from the East towards the West in search for jeans and Coca-Cola. The existing economic, political and military structures of the West which developed during the Cold war have to restructure urgently if they are to accept this new challenge. The question is whether those institutions are capable of introducing those changes or they will simply disintegrate and cease to exist. There is no doubt that the main Russia's objective is disintegration of the NATO and European Union, since this would be the expected and planned compensation for the Eastern block which had already disappeared. Does not it mean at the same time that the planned European Union, which many people had dreamed of, could be endangered? Disintegration of the former Eastern economic and political block was the cause why the Western treaties and alliances have been on the decline. Each country now lives under the heavy burden of its own historical experiences. The English and the French are again frightened of the Russian-German alliance, most of all in the Balkans. The lack of unity in defining European interests in the Balkan war as well as the attempts to draw in even the Russian army in the conflict speaks for itself about the huge confusion in the heads of those enthusiasts who conceive the end of the Cold war as a sacrosanct dogma. New structures have emerged from the rubble of the Cold war structures, and there is a question that still remains to be answered: Is liberal democracy, like capitalism, capable of intruding itself upon the world as the basic political structure of Europe and the rest of the world?⁸ Is capitalism capable of destroying the spiri-

⁸ At the symposium which was held in Zagreb in 1992, many theoreticians such as Buchheim, Jahn, Lübke, Weede, Kielmansegg and others expressed their doubts regarding possibility of applying liberal-democratic system worldwide. See *Politička misao*, No. 4, 1992.

tual and cultural tradition of the whole world, and of resulting in a liberal-democratic political system as its allegedly legitimate superstructure?

It is quite clear that the Cold war was a highly cultivated structure of relations between the East and the West. It disappeared because it could not find an acceptable solution for national identities that had been sacrificed to this idea. Still, this culture was capable of causing and pacifying a number of local wars in line with the interests of the leading powers as centers of the international aspirations to establish peace and security. The Balkan war is a typical syndrome of the crisis of structures of the Cold war and therefore there is a danger of its spreading rapidly and uncontrollably. This war simply does not fit into the old control mechanisms. Its geographic position, brutality, impossibility to foresee of its leaders make this war a real puzzle for the journalists and even for political scientists. The threat of this new reality was noticed quite late. Nevertheless, it disclosed all the complexity of the contemporary situation in the world.

The disintegration of Yugoslavia and the war which followed should not only concern the countries which have emerged after the disintegration of former Yugoslavia, but it is also a very dramatic beginning of the regression in whole Europe. Serbia was perfectly aware of this situation and, this is exactly what encouraged it to start the war. This war cannot be compared to any local war in the Cold war period. It is the first war after the end of the Cold war era, and in addition to this, the first real war in Europe after the World War II. This war forced the NATO forces to intervene in the area that is not in Western Europe. Moreover, it resulted in the first active participation of Germany and Italy in the war operations in Europe after the World War II. It also disclosed the weakness of the Western alliances and the American pragmatism in the period of false friendship between England, France and Germany. The war broke out in the situation when the control of great powers over Yugoslavia was weakening. It was this weakening of control and pressure that enabled the local political and national antagonisms to emerge. These local antagonisms were not taken into account, and this is why they took many people by surprise in the war operations which followed. The new established structures of political power following the end of the Cold war formed a procedural vacuum in the relations between the East and the West. Wars prove how the uncontrolled global relations of powers can easily turn into the cruelest violence. The failure of the East and West to prevent the outbreak of the war, or at least to stop it quickly once it has already broken out cannot be explained by either moral or historic arguments. This war broke out because of the procedural vacuum in the relations between the leading European powers which started after the end of the Cold war, and which unfortunately lasted too long. European Union tried to bridge that gap, but it only demonstrated utter ingenuity and proved how futile and old-fashioned European political establishment was. In short, after the end of the Cold war, there were no adequate political structures which could cope with the war in the new

circumstances. The leading political powers got lost in the complexity of the political events, and all they could do was admit that the Balkan crisis has all the qualities of "point of no return". In the dramatic search for new actions which would fulfill the political conditions, they allowed the war to continue for five years. Moreover, they did not want any party involved in the war to face either total defeat or victory, but they continued their search for the political ways of finding the peaceful solution to the conflict.

It would be totally wrong to claim that the war in former Yugoslavia broke out incidentally. The Balkan area had a special role in the structure of the Cold war, regardless of its internal historical and political antagonisms. After the end of the Cold war, Yugoslavia lost its special role in the sophisticated game the leading powers were playing. Suddenly Yugoslavia turned into none's land, and all the options were open. What followed could be considered a big game involving various scenarios about the country's future. It was in such a confusion that the disintegration of Yugoslavia started. The multinational country was not capable of solving the crisis by means of using democratic methods.

The Balkan war seemed a puzzle for many people, because they could not establish the internal and external reasons for the disintegration of Yugoslavia in this bloody war. The fact that the analysts tried to establish a causal relationship between the internal and the external factors that lead to this war did not make this puzzle any easier to solve. The end of the Cold war and the loss of the role Yugoslavia had in it are in a semantic, not causal relationship towards its internal disintegration, which had started long before the Cold war broke out. As a matter of fact, Yugoslavia started to disintegrate immediately after its formation in 1918. The country disintegrated as early as in 1939, and then finally in 1941 in completely different circumstances. Then the country emerged from the rubble again in 1945, in accordance with the wish of the leading powers and their treaties, and thus its final disintegration was just postponed to take place 45 years later. In the present process of disintegration of Yugoslavia, the West had taken a causal point of view rather than semantic and hermeneutic. The Western Europe was very naive in its belief that it could shut its mind off the game since it did not start it in the first place, and it seemed really puzzled by the fact it did not work. In the end the miracle had to happen — European Union had to intervene. The Germans reacted by turning to the supreme court to reconsider whether Germany could take part in the Balkan war offering logistic support. Nowadays they are already flying over Bosnia in their Tornados. The similar thing happened to the English, the French and the Italians — the Balkan war could not be isolated from the general European reality as some left-wing European parties had thought.

The first years of war in Croatia were extremely difficult. Reluctance of the European forces to intervene either politically or militarily in the

extremely complex situation lead to unbearable moralizing and futile discussions about the situation that could only be labelled as military and political. They were reluctant to act either politically or militarily, and this is why they opted for unbearable rhetorics which hardly managed to conceal their undecisiveness and incapacity to agree on political decisions. The situation was extremely complex. European Union was acting without a clear political will, while the American initiative to establish a new world order was rather a description of the existing chaos than the way out of that chaotic situation. Of course, the worst one can do in such a situation is to moralize, offer humanitarian, charity and religious support, rather than act politically and militarily. What was really needed was a surgical action, rather than praying. This is exactly what finally happened.

It is of utmost importance to mention some historical moments which lead to the outbreak of war, and to find reasons why this war is so serious that it could lead to global disaster. Yugoslavia was founded and internationally recognized by the winners in the World War I, England and France. The country that emerged on the rubble of the Ottoman Empire and Austro-Hungarian empire was a country without any cohesive centre from the very beginning, and therefore its disintegration started immediately after its formation. Yugoslavia was a country which was falling to pieces in a long historical process, and in the end it really disintegrated. This disintegration process is not only a part of our history, it is at the same time a part of history of England and France, and of course, the whole Europe. The first time Yugoslavia fell to pieces was in April 1941, when German troops entered the country. Slovenia was divided between Italy and Germany, whereas Croatia and Serbia were organized as separate quisling states. In 1945 Yugoslavia was reconstructed by the winners in the World War II. These countries were not only England and France, but also Russia and USA. The newly founded Yugoslavia continued to be a country without democratic legitimate government, and in addition to this, a country of clearly divided sovereignty. It was this divided sovereignty of Yugoslavia that made it so different from all the other East European countries.⁹ This has to be taken into account while considering in detail the present crisis. Its divided sovereignty was vaguely defined by the Western allies and the Soviet Union at the Yalta conference which took place from 4th to 12th February 1945.

In 1948, assisted by Yugoslav Russophiles and Stalinists, Stalin tried to attach Yugoslavia to the Eastern block. After a serious political crisis (which is nowadays too often neglected by politicians both in Croatia and in the Western world) and serious threats of a possible major war, it all ended in another long period of Cold war. This crisis stabilized the di-

⁹ Yugoslav self-management socialism was very different from the Russian real-Communism in the same way as Spanish fascism was different from German National-socialism.

vided sovereignty of the Yugoslav state. Since that period development of Yugoslavia was somewhat peculiar. Marshal Tito controlled Yugoslavia by applying three different tactics: firstly, by constantly changing legitimacy of his own power; secondly, by maneuvering skillfully between his two masters (the West and the East), and thirdly, by organizing Third world countries to relieve his own home policy in the conditions of divided sovereignty and lack of democratic legitimacy. In the anti-Communist rhetorics in Croatia the fact that Yugoslavia was essentially different from all the other countries of the Eastern Socialist block is too often neglected and forgotten. Of course, this is one of the issues that will have to be discussed once Croatia enters NATO and other Western organizations.

When a serious disintegration of the Eastern block started in 1989, the West wanted to take revenge on the Soviet Union for 1948, and to join Yugoslavia to the system of Western democracies. However, Yugoslavia was a rather peculiar case. Ten years after Tito's death, there were hardly any chances of keeping a unified state with democratic legitimate government. That year, 1989, marked the beginning of the crisis, since all the internal antagonisms became obvious. The Serbs, without reaching consensus with the other nations, started to submit all the federal institutions to its control. They did not object to the idea that Yugoslavia should join the Western democracies, provided it happened under their control and supervision. However, this proved to be unfeasible since the Serbs could not and did not want to democratize Yugoslavia in accordance with the Western standards, which was condition the West had set. The Serbs in Yugoslavia do not represent national, nor political nor democratic majority which would be capable of carrying out democratization of the country in accordance with the high Western standards. Slovenia and Croatia suggested a confederal organization of the state, but the Serbs immediately declared it anti-Serbian conspiracy and flatly refused to even consider that idea. Proud of its victory in the Cold war, the West was even willing to accept undemocratic Yugoslavia, even a fascist one, ruled by the Serbs, hoping that one day they could start its democratization by applying economic measures and pressures.

The fatal, final attempt to save Yugoslavia as a unified country happened during the foreign Secretary's Baker visit to Belgrade. Since then a regressive process leading towards the war started. The Serbs, supported by the Russians, explained Baker's words in their own way and plunged into the war, the aim of which was to control the whole area of Yugoslavia. If they had achieved it, their plan was to head for the Eastern or the Western influence. Their aim was to continue Tito's policy of vacillating between the East and the West in order to enjoy all the advantages of divided sovereignty and definitely strengthen the Serbian dominance in Yugoslavia and the Balkans. They were quite confident that nothing could happen to them in the blitz-krieg. However, they were wrong. By late 1990 all their plans were already out of date, inadequate

for leading any clever pragmatic policy. The internal political differences within that multinational country were so intensified that nothing could stop the disintegration, not even the war. This surprised all the Western allies, but not the Serbs. Their primitive propaganda was so convincing that in the end they started believing in it, overrating their power. After 70 years of their political dominance in Yugoslavia, the time came when Yugoslavia simply had to disintegrate. Croatia and Slovenia were by no means the same factors as Kosovo and Vojvodina. Fascist frightening of people by organizing massive meetings had totally contrary effects. Once they started to realize that they have missed opportunity to realize their plans, the war operations became even more radical, leading to unconceivable brutalities, genocide, ethnic cleansing, destruction of towns and cities — in short a total war broke out, unprecedented from the era of Hitler. The war in Slovenia was a sort of warning, absolutely controlled by the existing Yugoslav People's army, but the war in Croatia, especially in those areas which the Serbs had planned to occupy in case Yugoslavia disintegrated, turned out to be a full scale war where all the means were acceptable. What followed in Bosnia, intentional creation of chaos and racist destruction of the Muslims urged the world to partial reaction, which, unfortunately, became efficient as late as in summer 1995.

Russia was at first holding back, but, of course, not because of its weakness as the Western countries and Croatia believed. The Russians were convinced that Yugoslavia was a special case, very different from Bulgaria and German Democratic Republic, and therefore they patiently waited for negotiations. They allowed the West to demonstrate plurality of its interests and to show their internal lack of unity, only to blackmail them with this disunity in the negotiations which took place later. In Croatia Russian tactics was not discussed too much either; Croatia blamed the French and the English for their support to Serbia, i.e. Yugoslavia. After all, Yugoslavia was their great achievement from 1918. Nevertheless, the war was not taking the course the Serbs had expected, because Slovenia and Croatia resisted all the ideas about possibility of formation of new Yugoslavia. It was then that the West realized that Yugoslavia as a whole was lost. Moreover, Russia immediately showed its interest and ambition to get a part of the country. Keeping Yugoslavia a unified country was Serbian interest, as well as interest of the West, but not Russia's. Therefore Western countries soon decided to save what could be saved, and, under strong German pressure, they quickly recognized Slovenia and Croatia. No matter how complicated the events that followed might have seemed, they did follow a historical logic of forming national identities in the area. After Bosnia and Macedonia were recognized, the Russians had to throw up their cards. They clearly indicated which side they were supporting — Serbian. This is why the Balkan crisis, which many people wanted to label as a tribal civil war, turned into a serious European crisis. Later on, as a result of Europe's incompetence to deal with the difficult situation, it soon turned into a global crisis.

Everything that has been happening after this was finally realized, is part of a political and military process which wanted to apply the divided sovereignty of Yugoslavia agreed in Yalta on the ground. Of course, this division was not done according to geometric logic of the leading powers 50—50 %, but according to the situation on the ground determined by the will of national identities. It still remains to be seen how the five new Balkan countries will be orientated politically — it is still considered a quasi-open question, because in that case the Russians cannot complain that they have been tricked and outwitted. There is still a chance of the Russians losing Serbia, as well as the open possibility of their serious engagement in Bosnia. Under such circumstances the Serbs are fighting assisted by the Russians against the Western lack of unity in assessing the situation. They are objecting against the historical status quo of the former Yugoslav territories. The ultimate goal is formation of Great Serbia for the account of Bosnian and Croatian territory. In this final critical phase of the war, the West allows further destruction and even massive migrations of people in order to reconsider its own interests as well as the Russian readiness for further cooperation in this serious case of war.

At this existentially difficult moment when we are witnessing fragility of world peace, politically discredited Europe is facing real danger that the Russians might enter the internal borders of Central Europe and the Mediterranean, which seemed quite unfeasible just a short time ago. Under such circumstances, the world policy, lead by USA, decided to pragmatically simplify the complex situation by offering different options. There are four possibilities, and the USA is prepared to accept all the four options, depending on the further development of the situation on the ground: Firstly, the Russian-American agreement to preserve the territorial and political status quo of the former Yugoslav republics under their close supervision. Secondly, there is a possibility of establishing the Western military territorial status quo without any intervention from the Russian part. Thirdly, there is a possibility that the war might spread to the whole area of Balkans, and thus produce such threat to the world peace which is presently impossible to anticipate; and finally, there is a possibility of territorial division of Bosnia and Hercegovina into three national entities, which would be under close supervision or the long-standing protectorship of the United Nations or the leading powers. Of course, there are also different combinations of these possibilities. The World War is presently just one of the Yeltsin's rhetoric threats, but nevertheless, it speaks for itself about the current situation we are facing in the middle of Europe.

It is very risky to predict the development of wars and world politics, but one thing is quite sure: The war in the Balkans has reached a historical point which is marking an era very different from the situation during the World War II and the Cold war period which followed. This unexpected war that took many people by surprise marks the beginning of the uncertain future. There is no doubt that Europe has once again

shown that its role in world politics is second-rate. The die is cast! The beginning of the next millennium is certainly not going to be as idyllic as the European politicians and a large number of analysts had thought.

Translated by
Vesna Gruja-Tomić