

CROATIA'S STATE INDEPENDENCE: BETWEEN PRINCIPLE AND *REALPOLITIK*

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The relationship between “*realpolitik*” and “principle” in the context of Croatia gaining its national independence (after Yugoslavia’s disintegration) is examined at two fundamental levels. The first pertains to the exceptionally complex problem of the character of international relations and the conduct of the international community with regard to the geopolitical fragmentation of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. The second level peripherally touches upon the predisposition of Croatian intellectual and political elites to recognize and understand the qualitatively equally complex implications of the process of gaining state independence. This work has been conceived as a historical and political science study.

Key words: collapse of Yugoslavia, Croatia’s state independence, United States, Germany, human rights, *realpolitik*

Introduction:

In early 1993, political scientist Radovan Vukadinović stressed that the most important criteria for Croatia’s independence were closely tied to the recognition of current global processes and an understanding of the system of values and functioning of liberal democracies. While fully accounting for the circumstances of an imposed war and occupation, Vukadinović linked Croatia’s emergence in the international community as an independent state with three basic criteria: democratization, the rule of law and development of a free market.¹ However, Vukadinović’s political overview of the process of gaining independence emphasized social concepts, but not the active mecha-

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¹ Radovan Vukadinović, “Vanjska politika Republike Hrvatske”, *Politička misao* 30 (1993), no. 3: 124-125.

nisms and political practices of international relations.² Historical reality is, as Vukadinović (an expert in international relations, and the international role of the United States of America in particular) certainly knew, much more complex.

The time when Croatia gained its independence at the onset of the 1990s was marked by exceptionally complex and turbulent events: the collapse of the multinational Yugoslav state, the imposed war and occupation and the imperative of economic and social transformation, at which time the Pandora's box of the controversial historical heritage had been opened (the fifty-year influence of both the pro-Ustasha movement and communism). Just these ideological factors, which proved to be the source of numerous controversies in and of themselves, were sufficient to portray the state independence project as "an attempt to build a ship in a stormy sea". However, these inherent factors underlying "internal" problems should be joined by the complex set of circumstances in the international community.

Just as Yugoslavia was disintegrating, under the influence of globalization and a culmination of the awareness of the advantages of European unity, Western Europe began to integrate, initiating a new chapter in European and world history. Both events proceeded in the shadow of the momentous collapse of communism and the dissolution of the bipolar global order.³ The world's leading political entities and the protagonists in the Yugoslav state's disintegration were equally confronted with the interplay of these two historical levels in their approaches to the "Yugoslav crisis". An additional factor reflected in the unfolding Yugoslav crisis was tied to qualitatively new phenomena in the globalization process. During the 1990s, the development of communication technologies signified a new step in the global integration of economic relations, imposing the need for a redefinition of "national interests" and the role of international associations. A no less important change emerged in the sphere of media globalization: the role of the (global) public in world

² Under the new circumstances, many intellectuals – Marxists virtually the day before – embraced the values of the West (democracy, human rights, free markets) as a substitute ideological canon. Even so, for experts such as Radovan Vukadinović it would be pretentious to claim that their appreciation of Western principles as the reference values for political interpretation was a simply act of ideological conversion. Besides the undoubted ideological shift from previous communist "mantras" (sanctity of the image and works of Josip Broz Tito, "brotherhood and unity", the ongoing revolution...) which constituted the trend of democratic "enlightenment" among the Croatian intelligentsia in this period, Vukadinović's orientation equally reflected the close monitoring of and adaptation to social processes both in Croatia and on the international scene. In this context, it is interesting to note that the transition intelligentsia's move toward the same thing – liberal democracy, the market economy and rule of law" was also observed by Timothy Garton Ash in his comparative chronicle of events in 1989; see his *Mi građani: Revolucije 1989., Svjedočanstva iz Varšave, Budimpešte, Berlina i Praga* (Zagreb: Novi liber, 1993), p. 134.

³ On this see the current observations of Dušan Bilandžić, "Civilization-Historical Problems of the Ex-'Communist' Countries", Ivan Supek and Paolo Budinich, (eds.), *Encyclopedia Moderna* 36, Year XII, (1991): 5-9.

events became an important component of “the diplomatic-political process”.⁴ This was certainly reflected in various aspects of perceptions of the collapse of Yugoslavia, which included Croatia gaining its state independence.⁵ The transformation of the media which proceeded in the 1990s (networked global television, emergence of the Internet) was closely tied to the appearance of a sort of “acceleration of history”. The factors of a dynamic and fast-paced succession of events pushed phenomenon of “long duration” to the background. From the perspective of the media/political paradigm of focusing on “the day’s news” – in the early 1990s focused on the achievement of the ground-breaking victory of liberal democracy – few took time to consider complicated centuries-long processes such as the national aspirations of small nations.

The optimism which overwhelmed the West at the end of the 1980s gave way to increasing concern in the early 1990s over the emergence of a series of “retrograde” phenomena in post-communist societies, above all the reaffirmation of the nationalism suppressed by the ideology of class-based universalism. Only rare politicians invested serious efforts in examining the consequences of “the end of communist/Marxist rule under the symbol of the hammer and sickle”. Atavistic nationalism had appeared where many had least expected it, in Yugoslavia. As noted by Alois Mock, the Austrian foreign minister when the Yugoslav crisis broke out, the national problems – “resolved only superficially, or suppressed” under communism – appeared in Yugoslavia, at a time when “the word ‘national’ in its previous sense was disappearing from the political vocabulary” in the countries of the developed West.⁶ The “aversion” to “nationalist aspirations”, which in their territorial (and state-building) pretensions in the first half of the twentieth century were often rooted in the conviction that “war was the natural order in the life of a nation”,⁷ was supplemented with an

⁴ It is intriguing that the appearance of new communication technologies and their impact on politics in his time was also registered by Stjepan Radić: “The telegram, and even more so the telephone, are changing political relations among nations even more than trains are overturning their economic circumstances... The telegram has thoroughly overturned all previous diplomacy”. Stjepan Radić, *Savremena Evropa ili karakteristika evropskih država i naroda* (Zagreb: Pan Liber, 2005), p. 207.

⁵ The formation of value judgements in the foreign media generally proved to be an important albeit not decisive factor in the international recognition of Croatian independence. On this see Albert Bing, “Domovinski rat i inozemni mediji”, *Hrvatska revija* IX (2009), no. 3.

⁶ Alois Mock, *Dossier Balkan i Hrvatska* (Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada/Hrvatski institut za povijest, 1998), p. 12-14. Mock reinterpreted “the publisher of the respected daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Johann Georg Reißmüller”, who described this tendency by observing that “a politician – no matter where in the world – who opens some national issue or defends some national interest, will immediately be proclaimed a ‘nationalist’ (...)” whereby “the gradation between the national and nationalist has been abolished”, *Ibid.*, 14.

⁷ On this see Fritz Fisher, *Savez elita – O kontinuitetu struktura moći u Njemačkoj 1871-1945*. (Belgrade: Nolit, 1985), p. 145. It was believed that “a majority of nationalist controversies and political practices which appeared at the end of the twentieth century echoed those of the nineteenth century”.

almost religious attitude toward the doctrine of human rights and universal values exalted by liberal democracy.⁸

Nevertheless, for the ongoing Yugoslav crisis, the most important “retrograde” historical phenomenon was the renewed retreat of the United States – the sole remaining global superpower – to a stance of (neo)isolationism (while maintaining the role of global arbiter and “policeman” in regions seen as an American interest, such as the Persian Gulf). The only consequence of this turnabout, which more spontaneous than deliberate, was something of a “relaxation” and eschewing of “control” over international circumstances. It became apparent that the collateral effect of the ‘slumber’ of “world politics” – the submersion of the United States into a doctrinaire vacuum after the collapse of bipolarity – was not simply a momentary lapse of imagination. From today’s perspective of global economic and political crisis, the international community’s attitude toward the collapse of Yugoslavia may be seen as one of the first steps in the deepening of the contemporary civilizational rift between attempts to align complex global relations and particular national interests. The question of the integrity and above all the loss of confidence in individual states and institutions which legitimized universal values (the system of values) as the components of cohesion between individual international associations (e.g. NATO) and the postulates of the international community’s institutions (the UN and human rights) were not, however, without a role. In this context, a historical theme relevant to the collapse of Yugoslavia (and Croatia’s state independence) which imposed itself was the question of the relationship between *principle* and *realpolitik*.

A Review of the Political Context of the Relationship Between Principle and *Realpolitik*

The expectations that nations of – particularly Central and Eastern – Europe traditionally had from the “advanced West” during attempted opposition to totalitarian regimes in the twentieth century were generally tied to idealized and credulous visions of the freedom-loving principles in Western democra-

⁸ Influential classical liberal theorists, such as Elie Kedourie, Friedrich Hayek and Karl Popper, among many others in the period following the Second World War, moved toward the view that “nationalism [was] simply based on senseless passions and irrationality, as opposed to the ideology of liberalism, which is grounded in reason. In other words, nationalism was rejected as irrational tribalism”, Andrew Vincent, “Moć i praznina – Nacionalistička ideologija u 20. stoljeću”, in: Michael Freeden, ed., *Političke ideologije-Novi prikaz* (Zagreb: Algoritam, 2006), pp. 201-202. Even though such assessments were formulated under the influence of the historical examples of fascism, national socialism and authoritarian nationalism in general, it was believed that the experience of nationalism in the twentieth century was partially configured in the nineteenth century, and the “most nationalist controversies and political practices which appeared at the end of the twentieth century were simply an echo of those of the nineteenth century”. *Ibid.*, 189, 202.

cies. However, the role of these principles in political decision-making mechanisms are particularly distorted. For example, Mock testifies to this within the context of Yugoslavia's disintegration. During the promotion of his book on that topic, Mock – as recounted by witnesses – expressed shame and, “with tears in his eyes, told the story of the UN human rights conference in Vienna in 1993”, at which “the West abstained from voting on the resolution which condemned the violation of human rights in the Bosnian war”.⁹ Mock actually testified to an entire series of episodes tied to the “Yugoslav wars” characterized by a confrontation between empty rhetoric and “the consistent preference of the West to keep its distance from the conflicts in which their direct interests were not threatened”.¹⁰ This historical matrix of perceptions of the relationship between “principle” and “*realpolitik*” – recognizable in many events in more recent European history from Munich in 1936 to Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 – is one of the relevant observations that accompanied the disintegration of the Yugoslav state.¹¹ The horror over the fate of Bosnia in 1993 directly followed on the heels of the international public's horror over the bloodshed in Croatia only a year or so earlier.

Nonetheless, the realities of international relations reflect a considerably more complex picture. This may particularly be noticed in historical situations in which demands appear for the dismantling of the existing geopolitical architecture, which are generally accompanied by wars and major social change (the case of Yugoslavia). The simplified impressions of freedom-loving nations who wish to be freed even of the discipline of Western democracies that turn their attention from any drama at a crucial moment overlook the fact that Machiavellianism and the revolutionary reign of terror are just as much a part of the European civilizational heritage as the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen.¹² History has also shown on countless occasions that the freedom of some were often achieved through the suffering of others, which certainly gives rise to many dilemmas, particularly to those observing “from

⁹ “Mock i Bosna: stid i suze”, *Der Standard APA*, 25 Apr. 1997. According to MVP-OI-DI-110/97, 25 Apr. 1997 (Bulletin of the Croatian Foreign Ministry).

¹⁰ Sabrina P. Ramet, “Jugoslavenska kriza i Zapad: Izbjegavanje ‘Vijetnama’ i upadanje u ‘Abesiniju’”, 37.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² An interesting example of hesitation surrounding the character and extent of radical social change is present in Marx's earlier works (“The German Ideology”), in which individual sections – “where revolution becomes the model which is extolled” – are stricken; in the deleted text Marx “drew an apocalyptic picture of the communist revolution” in which he evoked “judgment day, that day when all would culminate, the day whose dawn would redden the skies of cities in flames and when there would be echoes ... in the midst of these ‘heavenly harmonies’ of the Marseillaise and Carmagnole, accompanied by the powerful and random thunder of artillery, while the guillotine would set the rhythm.” Based on Jean Elleinstein, *Marx – život i djelo* (Zagreb: Globus, 1986), p. 64.

the sidelines”.¹³ The “rivalry”, just like the “intermingling”, between these two “antipodes” – universal principles of freedom and parochial interests (nations or social classes) – is one of the primary drivers of contemporary European and world history. The search for effective mechanisms to curtail this clash and strike a balance in international relations is a subject that has quite often been differently evaluated, particularly given the various “interest” perspectives of individual national histories. For many small nations, such as Croatia – burdened by an eternally unfree and traumatic past – the concepts and laws underlying this search are scarcely discernable, because they demand consideration of very diverse viewpoints and the perspective of a broader historical context.¹⁴

Until the end of the First World War (by which time contemporary nations had been formed), small nations were not consulted in the course of vital geopolitical decision-making. The creation of modern nations and nation states in the nineteenth century was accompanied by new doctrines for international relations. The greatest impact on European political history in the latter half of the nineteenth century was exerted by the balance of power politics of Germany’s “Iron Chancellor”, Otto von Bismarck of Prussia, whose realistic postulates for international politics crushed the moral constraints of post-Napoleonic Europe. Bismarck’s *realpolitik* was founded on “the notion that relations among states are determined by raw power and that the mighty

¹³ An additional question that burdens the relationship between principles and political pragmatism is the divergence between the views of a distant observer (an analyst who views events from a post festum perspective) and participants in these events. As opposed to an analyst, a statesman is forced to judge and make decisions in real time, and his decisions have significant consequences to the fate of the individuals and communities to which they pertain. On these problems, see Helmut Plesner, *Granice zajednice – Kritika društvenog radikalizma* (Sremski Karlovci/Novi Sad: Izdavačka knjižarnica Zorana Stojanovića, 2004), p. 123.

¹⁴ One may speak of the beginnings of contemplation of the *realpolitik*/principle dichotomy in Croatia in the broader context of the preoccupations of public personalities in the nineteenth century. Ante Starčević dealt with this problem in his own unique way (primarily from the standpoint of articulating Croatian national interests); however, his “state-right scholarship”, with which he wanted to promote Croatian national and state sovereignty, resulted in a broad range of diverse – often even diametrically opposed – interpretations of his thought (Mile Starčević, Kerubin Šegvić, Jovan Skerlić, Josip Horvat, Vaso Bogdanov, Mirjana Gross, Tomislav Ladan...). The first “qualified” Croatian political scientist, Stjepan Radić, was much more specific. In his study entitled ‘Modern Europe, or the Characteristics of European States and Nations’, written in 1905, Radić synthesized Croatian national aspirations with the theoretical and historical knowledge he acquired over many years of careful study of the development of European politics and culture. While examining the specificities of European nations and phenomena within this context such as “nationalism”, “patriotism”, and “militarism” (as manifestations of particular interests), Radić also dedicated his attention to questions of the universal “principles” vital to the development of European political culture; noting that “clear and consistent ideas or principles become (...) and remain the primary factor in European international law itself”, he – in line with his ebullient and optimistic character – concluded that “there are no respectable people and nations without principles”. From Stjepan Radić, *Savremena Evropa ili karakteristika evropskih država i naroda* (Zagreb: Pan Liber, 2005), p. 125.

will prevail".¹⁵ Building on the French concept of *raison d'état* and Metternich's "Concert of Europe" and the "Holy Alliance" of the first half of the nineteenth century,¹⁶ *realpolitik* was not simply an expression of predatory and narrow interest-based politics, but rather a coherent foreign policy which aimed at a balance of power and international stability. During the time of Bismarck and his contemporaries, the basis for international policy was a rational assessment of the power relations of responsible statesmen, whose prudence was rooted in the harmonization of desires and possibilities.¹⁷ Bismarck's well-known maxim that "politics is the art of the possible" underscored the importance of accurate assessments of power in international relations as opposed to the search for often unreliable allies (as shown, for example, by the Balkan Wars) and the reference to pseudo-moralistic platitudes used to legitimate force. However, more than politicians before and particularly after his time, Bismarck was aware that force without legitimacy provoked constant contests to measure power, while legitimacy without force resulted in a mere posturing.¹⁸

A new meaning was given to the relationship between the principle and *realpolitik* in the twentieth century by the new world power, the United States. At a time of increasingly frequent crisis situations between the European great powers that would result in the outbreak of the First World War, two American paradigms crystallized that would mark the entire twentieth century and beyond to the present. US President Theodore Roosevelt, otherwise a Nobel

¹⁵ Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacija* (Zagreb: Golden marketing, 2000), p. 90.

¹⁶ *Raison d'état* is a foreign policy concept advocated and implemented by Armand Jean du Plessis, Cardinal de Richelieu, the first minister of French King Louis XIII. This doctrine is based in the fact that "the welfare of the state justifies whatever means employed may further it", and "the national interest supplanted the medieval notion of universal morality". Although a Catholic clergyman, Richelieu placed French national interests above religious ends (which by means of Catholic universalism justified the universal reign of the Holy Roman Empire, in Richelieu's time headed by Habsburg Emperor Ferdinand II). The aim of *raison d'état* is the struggle for political predominance or establishment of a balance that secures stability in the international order. As noted by Henry Kissinger, *raison d'état* set "the fundamental principles for the conduct of nations, but did not provide any answer to the challenges of the world order". Ibid., 49, 50, 56. On Metternich's concept of international politics, see also pp. 67-80. See also Henry A. Kissinger, *Obnovljeni svijet - Metternich, Castlereagh i problemi mira 1812-1822* (Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Matice hrvatske, 1976).

¹⁷ Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacija*, 105.

¹⁸ Power was the means to achieve an objective, and not an end to achieved unlimited power, according to Bismarck's art of self-restraint, which was an essential attribute of the prudent statesman. Thus, threats of war did not necessarily lead to war but rather to political compromise, while the result would be a balance of power that fosters international stability. This "self-restrained" statesmanlike nuance was missing from Bismarck's successors. In the early twentieth century, the threat of using force as the sole criteria for resolving disputes would drive the European powers to an arms race and confrontational politics, even though there was no particular reason for this. The resulting loss of control in maintaining the balance of power and the avoidance or limitation of conflict led to two World Wars which brought the entire world to the brink of cataclysm. Ibid., 66.

Peace Prize laureate, rejected disarmament, just then emerging as an international topic, and he unhesitatingly disavowed the efficacy of international law. The essence of his opinion on the features of international law was something of an Americanization of Bismarck's *realpolitik* philosophy for which moral consensus was only justified as an aspect of power.¹⁹ Considering the relationship between altruistic moralist initiatives and the reality of increasingly likely confrontations between the great powers, Roosevelt concluded that "what a nation could not protect by its own power could not be safeguarded by the international community" and that "a milk-and-water righteousness unbacked by force is to the full as wicked as and even more mischievous than force divorced from righteousness".²⁰

This manifestation of American self-awareness continued with an unexpected shift in the promotion of American might rooted in a diametrically opposed concept. After bringing the United States in to the World War, Woodrow Wilson became the most important arbiter of the Entente's wartime aims and imposed the view that "universal law and not a balance [of power], national trustworthiness and not accentuation" should become the foundation of the international order²¹ More accurately, Wilson proposed the defence of the international order with the help of the moral consensus of peace-loving nations, whereby he introduced a new concept to international relations: collective security (initially embodied in the League of Nations). Rejecting "the measures of national selfishness which once steered national alliances", Wilson demanded that (these measures) "give way to a new order of things that will pose only these questions: 'Is it good?', 'Is it just?', 'Is it in mankind's interest?'"²² This "crusading" move to promote universal moral criteria after the American entry in the European war closed the book on a century of European world dominance and "opened a new era in European civilization".²³

The entire twentieth century was characterized by both antagonism between and intermingling of Roosevelt's realistic and Wilson's idealistic doctrines in American foreign policy, while the influence of the latter American president's ideas would become a guiding light for small nations. The World Wars introduced a catastrophic dimension to the notion of the balance of power (these events initiated in Europe prompted Zbigniew Brzezinski to describe the twentieth century as the "era of European civil war").²⁴ In the 1930s, the ideologies of communism and particularly national socialism – whose "policy objectives (...) were irrational and unlimited" – solidified the view that the main substance of *realpolitik* was a compromise with ethical principles

¹⁹ Ibid., 114.

²⁰ Ibid., 33.

²¹ Ibid., 37.

²² Ibid., 43.

²³ A. J. P. Taylor, *From Sarajevo to Potsdam* (London: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1966), p. 42.

²⁴ According to Krsto Cviić, *Pogled izvana* (Zagreb: Nakladni zavod znanje, 1994), p. 32.

(the “ideological end” justifies the “objectionable means”).²⁵ During the latter half of the twentieth century, marked by the crumbling of colonial empires and the Cold War, the ideas of political and national emancipation became the motive for a more just reorganization of the world. Thus, the idea of national self-determination, which was adopted by Franjo Tuđman as a major tenet of his politics at the end of the 1980s (in its Leninist variant), became the principle in which small nations recognized an opportunity to gain state independence, which was (often uncritically) equated with freedom. The apportionment of power and responsibilities for global affairs between large and small nations, enshrined in the United Nations, was based on the idea that acceptance of shared values – universal moral precepts – would downplay the difference between nations and eliminate the causes of conflicts. This philosophy of international relations would become the foundation of the collective security system which remains in place to this day.²⁶ However, at a time when there was an expectation of “Yugoslavia’s integration into the new spirit of a transformed world”, as stated by one of the chroniclers of that country’s last days, “the burden of the Serbian national platform” proved to be the source of discord which “threatened the integrity of the country and undermined its international status”; the Yugoslav question “ever more seriously also became a question of European security and stability...”²⁷

The International Community and Internationalization (Escalation) of the Yugoslav Crisis

Regardless of the conduct and motives of individual Yugoslav nations in the process of that country’s disintegration, the genesis of the Yugoslav crisis clearly underlined the reticence of the most important exponents of global policy to confront these challenges, which jeopardized the international community’s very foundations. This generated a *realpolitik*-inspired detachment

²⁵ Eric Hobsbawm, *Doba ekstrema* (Zagreb: Zagrebačka naklada, 2009), pp. 138-139. On the influence of ideology in communism (as the older source of totalitarianism) Hobsbawm, himself a communist, observed: “The idea that the socialist state should force every citizen to think the same, let alone endow its leaders collectively with something like papal infallibility (that any person should exercise this function was unthinkable), would not have crossed the mind of any leading socialist before 1917”. Ibid., 331.

²⁶ The dilemmas which ensued from the new system of relations (which in line with the self-determination of nations considers the disintegration of multinational states either a legitimate act or contests them) still constitute an open chapter of European and world history. For a current debate on this topic, see, for example, Zoltan Bagdy “**Protecting Minorities in the Former Yugoslavia: Kosovo and Vojvodina**”, 1 March 2008; in this article, Bagdy criticizes the views on national self-determination put forth by political scientist and journalist, “The Consequences of Kosovo”, *The Washington Post*, 19 February. See http://www.americanhungarianfederation.org/news_LTE_KosovoSelfDeterminatin.htm Accessed online, 27 July 2011.

²⁷ Hido Bišćević, *Strategija kaosa* (Zagreb: CIP, 1989), pp. 184-185.

from the values incorporated in the institutions of the international community and the emergence of a “negative” opportunism aimed at the unprincipled concealment (transfer) of blame for the failure to adhere these principles.²⁸ This tendency brought into question the very purpose of the international community's security mechanisms. The Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in 1989 and the Paris conference of all European nations, the United States and Canada on 19 November 1990 set the political framework within which social consolidation based on a more accurate determination of the new role of nation states was supposed to proceed. The specification of ownership and entrepreneurial relations, human and minority rights and a series of complex procedural matters clearly laid down the guidelines for establishing the supranational framework that would overcome national particularism while simultaneously reifying the particular interests of smaller units such as regions. All of these guidelines stood in stark contrast to the simultaneously deteriorating political events in Yugoslavia, as well as the changes in international relations reflecting in the “new” status of principle and *realpolitik*.

At a time characterized by affirmation of a supranational interest framework and regional entities like the European Community, as well as expansion of global multiculturalism, the question of national emancipation that appeared in the post-communist world was not met with sympathy in the countries of the advanced West. Fear of geopolitical fragmentation of the Eastern Bloc after the collapse of bipolarity and the general erosion of communism were important factors in perceiving the character of newly-awakened nationalisms. As picturesquely noted by Sabrina Petra Ramet, “the paranoia of nationalism” appeared everywhere in south-east Europe after 1987; it manifested itself “in Dedijer’s wild-eyed howling about the Vatican-Comintern conspiracy against the Serbs; in Csurka’s frantic warnings about the capitalist-Jewish-Masonic conspiracy against the Hungarians; in the occasional sermons of Zhirinovskiy on the need of all Slavs to unite in self-defence; in the frequent articles on Germany as the “Fourth Reich” published in Milošević’s press in the late 1980s and early 1990s ...”²⁹

Briefly, the general phenomenon of “nationalist cacophony” was seen in the West (indicated in Mock’s aforementioned observations) as a factor of destabilization that could threaten to Balkanize the entire world. These changed international circumstances resulted in changes in the political priorities of

²⁸ “Positive” opportunism is an aspect of *realpolitik* (“politics as the art of the possible”) which brings together opposing political options that share no values, but still finds compromise solutions despite their differences. “Negative” opportunism implies the undercutting of the principles upon which a given community is based and the loss of integrity.

²⁹ Sabrina Petra Ramet, *Postkomunistička Europa i tradicija prirodno prava* (Zagreb: Alinea, 2004), p. 58.

the most important global protagonists. The “New World Order”, much touted by the elder President George Bush in 1991, was no longer concerned with a formerly important American ally, Yugoslavia.³⁰ The proclamation of the freedom-loving principles whereby the United States furthered its international interests during the Cold War were replaced by a new messages that complied with changes in foreign policy priorities. This phenomenon was observed in 1991 by Croatian-American scholar Mate Meštrović, elaborating the dual nature of US foreign policy (in relation to the Yugoslav context of the time):

“This is the contradictory American self-image: the confrontation between egoism and idealism. As the leading superpower, the US aspires to global domination, which it often exercises with a measure of restraint, but is sometimes prepared to affirm itself in a ruthless war, as recently in the Persian Gulf. At the same time, the US is deemed the ‘land of the free and the home of the brave’, the beacon of global democracy and the capitalist economic system whose ‘manifest destiny’ is to promote the interests of democracy and capitalism throughout the world. The conflict between the United States as a superpower which implements the *realpolitik* of its own strategic, military and economic interests (even though there are disputes in the US over what these interests actually are) and America as the standard-bearer of freedom, democracy and human rights, incorporated in the policies which Washington conducted with regard to Yugoslavia, creates constant tensions and contradictions. The State Department strenuously advocated the preservation of the unity and territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, which it believes are an ‘interest’ of the US, while simultaneously demanding that democracy and human rights be observed, that the rule of law and market economies be established”³¹

According to some interpretations, such conduct was not a result of the West’s “betrayal” and hypocrisy, but rather a structural shortcoming in the edifice of Western civilization: the fall of communism and the efforts to restore pluralism in Eastern Europe proceeded at a time when,

“under the influence of Reagan, Thatcher, Kohl and other governments, the West – and especially the US – was rapidly moving from democracy to plutocracy, essentially changing the Western model of ‘pluralism’. Viewed in this light, the transition from single-party socialism to plutocratic capitalism did not promise the achievement of the liberal project, but rather the certainty of another betrayal (where communism would have

³⁰ After the end of bipolarity, “communism and the division of the world in to blocs, the two strongholds of Tito’s project and the entire idea of Yugoslavia”, became a historical relic to the US and the West; here no attention was accorded to that fact that these “external frameworks” were also in “the service of internal policy”. From Tvrtko Jakovina, *Treća strana Hladnog rata* (Zagreb: Fraktura, 2011), p. 13 (from the foreword by Hido Bišćević).

³¹ Mate Meštrović, “Zapad u šoku”, *Danas*, 9 July 1991.

been the 'first') – truly this betrayal was even more painful, because the Western plutocrats continue to cite old truisms, even though they no longer adhered to these themselves".³²

Even though reports from US intelligence agencies clearly forewarned the collapse of Yugoslavia and possible dire consequences (including destabilization of the international community),³³ the US policy-makers were not particularly impressed. The efforts Yugoslav statesmen (Ante Marković, Stjepan Mesić, Franjo Tuđman, Borislav Jović, Aleksandar Prlja and others) to draw American attention in 1990 yielded no results (besides vague support for Prime Minister Ante Marković). When it became apparent that events in Croatia and Yugoslavia had spun out of control in the spring of 1991 (Plitvice, Borovo Selo...), American restraint reached an extreme. In June 1991, US Secretary of State James Baker responded to the declarations of independence by Slovenia and Croatia with the Pythian statement that the US upheld the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Yugoslavia, but "will not support the use of force in the preservation of Yugoslavia"; the message that the US, "insofar as it is forced to choose between unity and democracy, will always choose democracy" did not mean much, since there was nothing to indicate the criteria for "democratic standards", and even less to indicate which steps the US would possibly take as effective measures to support or sanction those who accept or ignore "democracy".³⁴ Baker's stance did, however, complement the statement made by the NATO supreme commander, John Galvin, who simply stated that "Yugoslavia does not lie within NATO's defensive sphere and therefore NATO will not intervene in a war there".³⁵

This stance by the Americans confirmed the observations made by individuals such as Meštrović. In the approach of the US, which thinks of itself as a "pillar of democracy", to the case of Yugoslavia, the democratic principles and human rights which legitimize its "democratic nature" were relegated to a demagogic veneer behind which no real thought was given to citing "national interests" and using them to justify the disavowal of universal principles. The actual phenomenon of the "Wilsonian paradigm" was subjected to numerous analyses. Thus, one Croatian-American scholar with an anti-liberal outlook, Tomislav Sunić, in an article with the intriguing title "Woodrow Wilson is at war in Croatia" (1992), "revealed" Wilsonianism as a doctrine which proved disastrous for small nations like the Croats: "Woodrow Wilson's program for

³² Sabrina Petra Ramet, *Postkomunistička Europa i tradicija prirodnoga prava* (Zagreb: Alinea, 2004), p. 26.

³³ Tvrtko Jakovina, "Tajni izvještaji CIA-e o Hrvatskoj", "Bit će krvavog nasilja i etničkih preseljenja", *Globus*, 15 Dec. 2006.

³⁴ Warren Zimmermann, *Yugoslavia: 1989-1996*, Conference Report U.S. and Russian Policy-making with Respect to the Use of Force, Published by RAND 1996, p. 7.

³⁵ Based on Sabrina Petra Ramet, "Yugoslav Crisis and the West: Avoiding 'Vietnam' and Blundering into 'Abesinia'", *East European Politics and Societies* 8 (1994), no. 1:189-219.

the self-determination of the European nations could not function from the very start. First, because the principle of national self-determination could not be stopped with the Poles, Czechs and Serbs, rather it had to include the Sudetan Germans, the Hungarians and the Croats. In his desire to create a new European order by creating hybrid centralist-Jacobin states such as Yugoslavia, Wilson's global democracy paradoxically led to the worst sort of nationalism. And Croatia is still paying the price for Wilson and Yalta.³⁶ More important than Sunić's analysis are his observations which testify to the drastic waning Croatian enthusiasm for democratic values and the consequent growth of the post-(neo)communist phenomenon of global conspiracy (as a substitute for the previous collusion between "external and internal adversaries"):

"What disappointment ensued when the Croatian appeals for recognition of Croatia, conveyed to the Americans, were met with indifference! Who could have thought that the country which for two centuries had stood at the defence of democracy to the last breath would uphold the idea of Yugoslavia and in the process ignore the new geopolitical reality in the Balkans. The disappointment was all the greater because the new geopolitical reality did not emerge due to a foreign invasion of Yugoslavia, but rather due to domestic democratic elections. A considerable number of Croats today rationalize the Serbian aggression against Croatia by claiming that America intentionally betrayed Croatia, that the dark forces of the Trilateral Commission, the Freemasons, and various 'Serbian and Jewish lobbies' wanted to prevent Croatia's independence at all costs."³⁷

The pragmatic American "abandonment" of Wilsonianism, which maintained for a century that "the security of America is the security of all mankind"/"America is the sole idealist nation in the world"³⁸ – was less shocking to actual Americans (who live the ambivalence of American values)³⁹ than to the denizens of the post-communist states which idealized the 'free world' and America during the Cold War. In this context, the relevant historical motif associated with the disintegration of Yugoslavia may be observed via the conduct of "American leaders" who "failed to see that they cannot preach democratic values and betray them at the same time, without destroying the very idea of democracy itself"⁴⁰ Historian Ivo Banac caustically summarized U.S. policy at the beginning of the 1990s in the territory of the then already former Yugoslavia:

³⁶ Tomislav Sunić, "Woodrow Wilson ratuje u Hrvatskoj", *Nova Matica*, no. 1, 1992, p. 16.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Based on Peter Scowen, "Crna knjiga Amerike", *Izvori* (2003): 220-221.

³⁹ On this, see, e.g. Richard Hanley, ed., *South Park i filozofija* (Zagreb: Jesenski i Turk, 2008).

⁴⁰ Ibid., 221.

“The United States actually has no specific Yugoslav policy. It goes without saying that the superficial nature and cynicism of US policy, obsessed with Yugoslavia as an integral state, ignoring the centrifugal force of national movements and post-communism in general, revering the golden calf of ‘stability’ with Ante Marković playing the role of Bush’s beloved Gorbachev, and relying on the ‘Yugo-expertise’ of certain key officials in the Bush administration, have contributed to expansion of the conflict, legitimization of the unconstitutional pretensions of the YPA, marginalization of anti-imperialist forces in Serbia and Montenegro, and the bloodshed and aggression in Croatia. This is the bottom line of Bush’s opportunistic policy. If opportunism, in the positive sense, means adaptation to newly-emerging conditions, then the Bush administration has fallen short even in its principles. The fact that these virtual dwarves are now administering foreign policy in what is now the world’s sole superpower is actually unbelievable.”⁴¹

But the consequence was not just an erosion of credibility. After the outbreak of war in Croatia and increasing public discontent, American prevarication was replaced with “proactive criticism”. However, the very harshness of this criticism proved counterproductive, for rather than clarity, it demonstrated how shallow and disoriented American policy was, and this was duly and astutely registered by the media.⁴² The empty moralistic homilies scarcely concealed the underlying hypocrisy, leaving the impression of a failed attempt to compensate for the lack of post-Cold War vision. One of the signs of this American disorientation was the *a priori* negative response to any question of geopolitical change (the failure to distinguish between the motives of liberation-oriented and autocratic state-building).⁴³ When, in early August 1991, US President George Bush (the elder) delivered a speech to the Ukrainian parliament (Ukraine was, otherwise, one of the first countries to recognize Croatia’s independence), he compensated the absence of a principled American position on the Yugoslav crisis by blaming it on atavistic Balkan nationalistic passions: “Americans will not support those who seek independence in order to replace a far-off tyranny with a local despotism. They will not aid those who promote a suicidal nationalism based on ethnic hatred... We can see in Yugoslavia how

⁴¹ Ivo Banac, “Američki patuljci spašavaju Jugoslaviju!,” *Globus*, 6 Mar. 1992.

⁴² Anthony Lewis, “Where Is the Outrage,” *The New York Times*, 4 Nov. 1991; “American abdication in Europe” (Editorial, *The New York Times*, January 11, 1992); Strobe Talbot, “Fiddling While Dubrovnik Burns,” *Time*, 25 Nov. 1991; Patrick Buchanan, “A new indifferent order, U.S. taking a back seat,” *Washington Times*, 25 Sept. 1991, etc.

⁴³ Peter Scowen noticed that “hypocrisy is the most corrosive substance in the world: it can eat through the patina of national ideals faster than rust can pass through an old Buick. When the United States betray freedom in Nicaragua, Chile, Guatemala, Iran or in countless other developing countries ruled by brutal despots who exploit anti-communism and anti-terrorism as shiny bait to secure American support or arms, this corrodes the very concept of the American style as a superior way of life.” Peter Scowen, *Crna knjiga Amerike*, p. 221.

the proud name of nationalism can splinter a country into a bloody civil war”.⁴⁴ This interpretation, simplified to the point of banality, was deepened by observations that directly referenced the question of tying national interprets (reduced to chauvinistic nationalism) and state-building aspirations. As later noted by Mark Almond, it became apparent that “George Bush will be seen as a last defender of the status quo... trying to be a rock of stability in a changing world... In the history books alongside the Monroe and Truman doctrines. Bush preached a clear faith: states should neither be destroyed, nor created”.⁴⁵ Although politicians – even when they hold posts as important as the presidency of the most influential country in the world – are not expected to deal with complex questions of political philosophy like the self-determination of nations (i.e., ‘the Janus-like nature of self-determination’) and state formation, today’s historical hindsight confirms that the line between principles and their demagogic rationalization can indeed be fine. The unfolding Yugoslav crisis showed that a relatively unjust outcome (which was expected under the *realpolitik* scenario after the victory of the unmatched superiority of the Yugoslav People’s Army and Milošević) was not an alternative to an even bloodier war, but rather its guarantor.

After “James Baker’s half-hearted efforts in Belgrade”, the US “made it clear it regarded consider Yugoslavia as Europe’s problem”.⁴⁶ This European resignation by the US appeared at a time of triumphal validation of European unity; the twelve members of the European Community announced the formation of the European Union, directly aimed at establishing a common market (the largest in the world) and the planned development of institutions to conduct a common foreign policy and create joint security mechanisms. The hand-over of the problem to Europe occurred at the moment when the Yugoslav crisis grew into the first armed conflict on European soil since World War II. Despite this, Europe, full of enthusiasm, took up the challenge; moreover, this occasion “presented the historic challenge that Europe needed to prove its singleness of purpose. In a phrase that would haunt him, Jacques Poos, Luxembourg’s Foreign Minister, declared: ‘The age of Europe has dawned’”.⁴⁷ While Italian Foreign Minister Gianni De Michelis said of the more active engagement by the Europeans that the EC “would be briefing the Americans on its activities, but not consulting them”, Poos was even more unequivocal: “If one problem could be solved by the Europeans, it is the Yugoslav problem. This is a European country and it is not up to the Americans. It is not up to anyone else”.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ President Bush in a speech to Ukrainian Parliament, 8/1/1991, according to Paula Franklin Lytle, “US Policy toward the Demise of Yugoslavia”, *East European Politics and Societies* (Fall 1992): 310-311.

⁴⁵ Mark Almond, *Europe’s Backyard War* (London: Mandarin Paperback, 1994), p. 37.

⁴⁶ Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Smrt Jugoslavije* (Opatija: Otokar Keršovani, 1996), p. 154.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Interview with Gianni de Michelis in *Borba*, 17 May 1991; Jacques Poos, then the president

Just how ready was Europe to lock horns with the Yugoslav problems? The outbreak of armed conflict in Yugoslavia in the spring of 1991 led to the assessment “in European capitals, Paris most of all (...) that its disintegration would not only influence, and perhaps even threaten, this ‘colourful country’, but also European stability”; despite this, the European “twelve” demonstrated no commitment to aligning the Yugoslav political realities with the principles they advocated in promoting European unity. Croatian journalist Mirko Galić picturesquely recounted the attitude of EC representatives on the escalation of the Yugoslav crisis:

“Nothing in history can be proven before it happens; because of this the ‘twelve’ want to influence the outcome of the crisis in Yugoslavia with their unconcealed and repeatedly emphasized priority: a ‘unified’ and ‘democratic’ Yugoslavia. A cynic would say that Mitterrand, Kohl, Major, Andreotti and other statesmen of the ‘great Europe’ ate Yugoslavia for dinner. Since the regular portion of the summit was prolonged, because Saddam Hussein was too much of a mouthful to be masticated in only two hours of debate, Yugoslavia received its five minutes under the crystal chandeliers of Senningen Castle, between the artichokes and veal cutlets. While heading off to dinner, Jacques Delors [then president of the European Commission] caused some consternation when he said the Yugoslav ‘meal’ was only on the menu of the foreign ministers. After the heads of state (and prime ministers) had dessert and boarded their planes, Luxembourg Prime Minister Jacques Santer corrected Delors: Yugoslavia was ‘served’ at the main table. So much so that it can be said that the European Community sent the ‘federal government’ in Belgrade a ‘clear signal’ that it can count on associate membership only ‘if it preserves its unity and territorial integrity’. The position on Yugoslavia did not, therefore, change, rather it was reinforced and raised to the highest level of the top officials in the twelve European states. Everything that the ‘Troika’ told Jović, Marković and Lončar was reiterated at the summit in Luxembourg – that borders had been set in Europe, that borders are a ‘very sensitive political matter’ and that ‘there is no good reason for a new discussion of borders’; Yugoslavia may count on Europe only if it is ‘unified’ and ‘democratic’. ‘I think the message has been understood’, the Luxembourg minister said”.⁴⁹

Several days later, Delors used entirely different words to describe the European engagement in solving the Yugoslav crisis: “I see the Yugoslav tragedy as evidence that Europe does not exist as a foreign policy subject”.⁵⁰ This

of the EU Council of Ministers in a statement to Independent Television Network, 27 June 1991 (quoted in Marc Almond, *Europe's Backyard War*, p. 32).

⁴⁹ Mirko Galić, *Pet minuta za Jugoslaviju*, 15 Apr. 1991.

⁵⁰ Interview with Jacques Delors, *Le Monde*, 1 July 1994. From: Ljubomir Čučić, ed., *Hrvatska i Europa-Europski identitet i perspektive europske integracije – prilog raspravi* (Zagreb: Europski pokret Hrvatske, 1997), p. 13.

damning assessment indicates several historically relevant motifs. Observations made by German diplomat Geert-Hinrich Ahrens indicate the extent to which Europe's options were actually limited: "Conflict management in the internal problems of a third country was, at the end of the eighties, beyond the horizon of experience for the EC member-countries. During the Cold War, political, let alone military, interference by the EC in such a sensitive East-West field of competition as Yugoslavia was unthinkable. Existing instruments – political contacts and economic assistance – were not suited for a crisis of such dimensions. Modern international concepts such as pre-conflict peace building, preventive deployment of foreign military forces, or a 'responsibility to protect,' had not yet been developed, and could not yet be the basis of the international intervention in Yugoslavia."⁵¹ In addition, "Yugoslavia was not the highest international priority. The impending disintegration of the Soviet Union, the first Iraq war, and developments in the EC and the newly reunited Germany commanded more attention than the signs on the wall in Yugoslavia. For all these reasons, it was not surprising that that originally the international community, including a majority of the EC member-states, did not wish to engage themselves in the Yugoslav quagmire. Some, ignoring predictions, preferred an ostrich policy, hoping that the crisis would go away by itself, and, in general, the political will to frame an effective policy was absent."⁵²

However, the reasons for the failure of Europe (and the international community) to reign in the war may also be considered from the standpoint of principle. The idea of integration of European countries was rooted not only in interest-based links, but also a common *system of values*, which was largely becoming a component of global cohesion;⁵³ one of the central premises of European unity was articulated in numerous documents, which underscore human rights and fundamental freedoms as common values.⁵⁴ However, while Europe and the international community were setting down the postulates for human rights – as, among other things, the foundations "of peace and security which crucially contribute to the prevention of conflict" – conflicts and violations of human rights were escalating in Yugoslavia.⁵⁵ The absence of

⁵¹ Geert-Hinrich Ahrens, *Diplomacy on the Edge-Containment of the Ethnic Conflict and the Minorities Working Group of the Conferences on Yugoslavia* (Washington, DC/Baltimore, MD: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), p. 487.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 486.

⁵³ Thus Jürgen Habermas noticed that "Christianity and capitalism, the natural sciences and technology, Roman law and the Napoleonic Code, the bourgeois/urban lifestyle, democracy and human rights and secularization of the state and society expanded to other continents", and that these "achievements no longer signify [solely European] features". Jürgen Habermas, *Eseji o Europi*, Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 2008, 126.

⁵⁴ On this see Thomas Buergenthal, *Međunarodna ljudska prava* (Zagreb/Budapest: Hrvatski Helsinški odbor za ljudska prava and Constitutional and Legislative Policy Institute, 1997), pp. 154-155.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 155.

effective mechanisms to meet such challenges in a complex entity – composed of a multitude of nations – such as the EC, reflected symptoms similar to those of the United States. The American motto *E pluribus unum* ('Out of many, one'), like the European "Unity in Diversity" proved that principles were primarily historical guideposts rather than universal values. Confronted with the violation of the fundamental values of European unity in their own backyard, the Europeans, like the Americans, began to slide toward rationalizations and demagoguery.

The analogy between the establishment of European unity and preservation of Yugoslav unity (which was advocated by both the EC and the US) certainly contributed to the dogma on the necessity of preserving the Yugoslav state regardless of the character of its internal relations (coarse human rights violations). At a time when Western Europe was celebrating the vision of Milan Kundera, who saw the 'Old Continent' as a community fundamentally characterized by "maximum diversity in minimum space", the until-then proponents of such a concept in Yugoslavia, such as the Yugoslav ambassador to the European Community, Mihailo Crnobrnja, revealed that Yugoslavia was "a country of condensed diversity" ("It is very difficult to find another country that has so much variety on such a relatively small territory").⁵⁶ The "Yugoslav paradigm" ("Balkan Babel") imposed itself as the topical civilizational issue, equally relevant to the concept of European integration and to global multiculturalism: is diversity a comparative advantage or an undesirable fixed trait? Is it possible to align differences, and how, or are they necessarily a destabilizing factor (at least when speaking of national interests)? While Crnobrnja pointed out that "the Yugoslav drama tells the story of national awakening and the victory of aggressive nationalism", Western Europeans, above all the proverbially restrained – in such situations – British, began to "sober up" after the great victory of liberal democracy and capitalism over the communist East.⁵⁷

The fall of the *Berlin Wall* also meant the fall of the *Iron Curtain* and the end of the *Cold War* (which immediately aroused Britain's concerns).⁵⁸ This event was not only a physical act but also a symbolic demolition of the barrier to reintegration of the German nation; East Germany united with the Federal Republic of Germany, the prime driver of European unity. The German formula, which was a synthesis of rejecting authoritarian communism and affirmation of the national unification of a single nation (re)integrated into "Europe", not only prompted questions of an economic nature (the costs of absorbing East Germany) but also, as noted by Paul Johnson, an important matter of principle: "...if the Prussians and Saxons could be a part of the EC

⁵⁶ Mihailo Crnobrnja, *The Yugoslav drama* (Montreal & Kingston, London, Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), p. 15.

⁵⁷ See, for example "The end of the Honeymoon", *The Daily Telegraph*, 25 Mar. 1991.

⁵⁸ On this see Timothy Garton Ash, *History of the Present - Essays, Sketches and Dispatches from Europe in the 1990s* (Harmondsworth Middlesex: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1999).

with full rights, how could admission then be denied to other historical European ethnic communities: the Poles, Hungarians, Czechs and Slovaks, and even the Slovenes and Croats, if they wiggle out of Belgrade's grasp?"⁵⁹ In 1990, the European Community confronted the question of redefining European unity. How to align the motive for the united Europe project rooted in shared values with the *realpolitik* motives of integration costs and overcoming the democratic deficit in the culture of post-communist states? The question was linked to the "the Community's overall long-term strategy".⁶⁰ And while until mid-1991 the emergence of democracy in Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary yielded change which seemed "fundamental and lasting", in the until then most advanced communist state, Yugoslavia, "the stage was set for either civil war or disintegration of the state".⁶¹

The EC and Croatian Independence

"The international community's reaction to the civil war", as formulated by Alois Mock, "was initially characterized by a mixture of opportunism, ignorance, wrong-headed assessments and aimlessness. (...) [I]t seemed that many Western politicians would have preferred to deal with the old Yugoslavia, with a single, albeit left/fascist, Marxist party – but nonetheless one government – and not, suddenly, several states, with several governments and even more parties".⁶² Such tendencies of *realpolitik*-motivated adaptation to the path of less resistance as "politics as the art of the possible" marked 1991 as a whole. The key moves by the international community, led by the EC, generally constituted unsuccessful attempts to keep pace with the outbreak of war, which after the brief Slovenian episode, moved with full ferocity to Croatia. The Brijuni Declaration (July 1991) which arranged for a ceasefire that was not observed (and placed a three-month moratorium on the independence of Croatia and Slovenia), the initiation of the International Conference on Yugoslavia (September 1991) and the drafting of the so-called Vance Plan (December 1991), on which basis UN peacekeeping forces would be deployed in the territory of the former Yugoslavia, proved to be half-hearted and belated solutions.⁶³ Based on simple adaptation to events and an opportunistic attitude toward matters

⁵⁹ Paul Johnson, *Moderna vremena* (Zagreb: Golden marketing – Tehnička knjiga, 2007), p. 792.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 191.

⁶² Alois Mock, p. 14.

⁶³ For a chronology of key events in 1991, see Gorazd Nikić, ed., *Croatia Between Aggression and Peace* (Zagreb: AGM, 1994). One of the peace mediators, Lord David Owen, a physician by profession, would write that to rein in the Yugoslav crisis (like an advancing disease), timely action was key: "... the more serious the symptoms, the greater need for early treatment". David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey* (New York: Hartcourt Brace and Company, 1995), pp. 122, 342.

of principle, these moves demonstrated in equal part a desire to settle the conflicts in Yugoslavia and a tendency to bypass effective solutions. For the Croats, as observed by Patrick Buchanan, "the road to hell" in 1991 was truly "paved with good intentions".

Political equidistance under conditions of escalation of the conflict necessarily led to continuation of the international community's deceptive concealment of its own inefficacy and, paradoxically, the undercutting of vaunted principles. The Croatian enthusiasm for Europe after the announcement of democratic change and then the disappointment which followed the West's indifference were lucidly illustrated by Stanko Lasić, a writer and member of the Croatian Council of the European Movement: "The Croatian people went into the war with enormous confidence in Europe and in the rules of democracy. It saw Europe as a natural ally and thus believed that Europe would use the case of Croatia to show how it defended the right of peoples to self-determination, how it rushed to the aid of those attacked, how it condemned aggressors, how it analyzed the historical situation, how it sympathized with suffering".⁶⁴ Instead of policy which complied its own principles, Lasić highlighted the hypocrisy in the statements of European leaders. He therefore noted the statement made by European Commission President Jacques Delors, who "standing on his pedestal of authority and with false modesty, created this amalgam: 'History is tragic, destructive forces in it always await in ambush, and Croatia and Serbia are responsible, each in its own way'. (...) 'At the beginning of the crisis, I received, one by one, each of the presidents of the Yugoslav republics, and told them: Your independence? I agree. The right to self-determination? I agree. But, in line with the Helsinki Charter, are you prepared to respect the rights of your minorities, to refrain from changing borders by force, to democratize your administrations? The only response I heard was drivel'". (*Le Figaro*, Paris, June 19, 1992).⁶⁵ Lasić ironically, and caustically, commented on Delors' observations: "A masterful amalgam. Everything is mixed together, nobody is guilty, all in the same basket. Instead of saying which president wanted to change borders by force, which president would not democratize his administration, who (in principle) does not respect minority rights, Jacques Delors behaved like an arrogant bureaucrat who knows that these presidents whom he 'summoned' and 'received one by one' could do nothing to him, so he twisted the facts as he pleased just to remove any blame from Europe".⁶⁶

Similar resignation was expressed by former Croatian governmental minister Božo Udovičić in his notes from November 1991. As opposed to Lasić, who concentrated on matters of principle, Udovičić, like many other

⁶⁴ Stanko Lasić, *Three Essays on Europe* (Zagreb: The Croatian Council of the European Movement, 1992), p. 40.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

Croatian officials (including a goodly number of diplomats), dealt with revealing “*realpolitik*” in his considerations:

“The Western powers, with some reserve by Germany, went so far as to endorse recognition of the de facto situation. Only a day after the rump Yugoslav Presidency demanded the deployment of United Nations forces, French President Mitterrand brought up the need to resolve Croatia’s ‘administrative borders’, which served as an impetus for further Serbian conquests. This position was also taken by Lord Carrington, not so much in his statements as in his actions. He met with Franjo Tuđman perfunctorily, but he was always ‘thick as thieves’ and ‘cooking’ something with Milošević and Kadijević. This behaviour by Mitterrand and Carrington showed that the Western powers were guided by the principles of actual power relations. This is why Croatia had to solve its problems mostly on its own in the view of critics of official Croatian policy, to the best of its knowledge and capability, because for international players the actual state of affairs was more important than the principles they verbally proclaimed. Had the Croatian leadership been aware of this from the very onset of the aggression, the situation would probably have been more favourable at that moment. In a letter, German Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher, Croatia’s great friend, attempted to warn Van den Broek, as the president of the European Community’s Council of Ministers, of Lord Carrington’s ‘dirty’ game, and expressed dissatisfaction (disagreement) with Carrington’s latest ideas which, Genscher claimed, did not comply with the European Community’s positions. For by all accounts, Lord Carrington had promised the Serbs a referendum at which they would decide whether or not to remain in Croatia”.⁶⁷

Soon it became apparent that Serbia was also exhibiting an equal measure of dissatisfaction with the policies of Great Britain and France, and the international community as a whole. After consenting to an international conference and arbitration initiated by “friendly” France, Serbia was unpleasantly surprised by its outcome (ultimately, the acceptance of Yugoslavia’s disintegration and the recognition of the former Yugoslav republics as independent states). This was expressed by the Serbian foreign minister of the time, Vladislav Jovanović:

“As for our other allies, such as France, about which there was this legend that it has been our permanent friend since the First World War – although it’s well known that it charged us for all of the artillery and arms it delivered in that war – that was our second disappointment. When, at the beginning of the 1990s, Francois Mitterrand summoned Slobodan Milošević for an urgent meeting, we believed in their help, but he was obviously deceived, because the concept of the International Conference on Yugoslavia in 1991 was portrayed as an offer of the European Community’s good

⁶⁷ Božo Udovičić, *Statisti u demokraciji-Čitanka za buduću povijest* (Zagreb: Jesenski i Turk, 1999), p. 242.

services to settle differences between quarrelling brothers. This, however, was a subterfuge, because only a few weeks later, Yugoslavia was broken apart, and its republics had been granted independence, even though Mitterrand did not do this on his own behalf, but rather on behalf of the twelve European countries.”⁶⁸

One of the lasting consequences of the international community's inconsistent conduct toward all parties in Yugoslavia's collapse was the general loss of confidence in international policy and the corresponding institutions. The culmination of this process can be tied to the appearance of general displeasure among the peoples from the territory of the former Yugoslavia with the most important product of international policy, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). However, a direct consequence of European Machiavellianism in the early 1990s was associated with the realization that the international community did not stand behind its principles. Confronted with the Machiavellian “acrobatics” of European high politics, politicians from the now already former Yugoslavia also discovered *realpolitik*. Disenchantment with “foreign friends” and a loss of trust in international institutions certainly served as a major catalyst that moved Yugoslav politicians to find solutions to their disputes in bilateral manoeuvring. The “unprincipled” negotiations between Tuđman, Milošević, Izetbegović and others may also be viewed in this light. For the West, however, the appearance of “Balkan Machiavellianism” was a welcome excuse which, in the form of dire pronouncements about blood-thirsty Balkan peoples, concealed their own inefficacy.

The intensification of warfare in Croatia also heightened the international public's attention. Despite the obvious aggression on the part of Serbia and the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), media descriptions of the character of the war in Croatia varied over the autumn of 1991 depending on individual events and the affinities of individual journalists. For international observers, a key difference between the approaches of Tuđman and Milošević to the nation was epitomized by their political rhetoric. Since the very beginning of his “nationalistic” career, Milošević demonstrated a talent for political flexibility and mimicry (concealing his true objectives).⁶⁹ At the height of Serbian/Yugoslav army attacks on targets in Croatia, Milošević announced that “during these changes the equality of the Yugoslav peoples must be respected”. At the same time, in line with the popular – in the West – view of Serbia as the Balkan ‘Piedmont’ and the unanimous calls to preserve multinational Yugoslavia, he announced that “We Serbs will save this country!”⁷⁰ On the other hand, the

⁶⁸ Vesna Duka, Tanja Šikanić, “Intervju s Vladislavom Jovanovićem: Povampirivanje prošlosti nije u interesu naroda”, *Nezavisne novine*, 10 Jan. 2009.

⁶⁹ Just how good Milošević was at this was later acknowledged by Lawrence Eagleburger, the US Secretary of State in 1991: “All of my assessments of him were wrong”. “Ja sam najveća naivčina na svijetu: Milošević me potpuno zaludio”, *Globus*, 15 Dec. 2006.

⁷⁰ Interview with Milošević by Ingrid Badurina, “Milošević: ‘Mi Srbi ćemo spasiti ovu zemlju’”,

Croatian president's statements often bewildered or even appalled journalists and diplomats who found it difficult to comprehend his historical lectures and particularly his notions of state-building. Something that became immediately notable was that in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Tuđman sought for the Croats what he denied the Serbs in Croatia.⁷¹ Thus, for example, US Ambassador Thomas Pickering told Prime Minister Franjo Gregurić “that the United States government has authorized me to convey dismay over Tuđman's idea (...) on the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a permanent and just solution.”⁷² The heritage of the Independent State of Croatia (the World War II Quisling state) together with Greater Serbian propaganda also took its toll, particularly among journalists not particularly fond of Croatia, and Croatia's state-building aspirations were brought into question.⁷³ Even though, as observed by Sabrina P. Ramet, “one cannot say that ethnarchy and the concept of nation states are atavisms”, the very idea of a state-building nation (in the case of Serbia the ‘Piedmont’ of Yugoslavia; in the case of Croatia the tradition of the statehood right in an “ethnic and historical” territory) was perceived in the West as “antidemocratic and anti-liberal”, subject to the belief that “it must be avoided as a condition for any aspiration to move in the direction of a liberal democratic state”.⁷⁴

Despite the international community's general aversion to the “ethnic confrontations” in Yugoslavia, as the conflicts were characterized by Francois Mitterrand, it was becoming increasingly apparent “which side in the conflict” was conducting ethnic cleansing, as pointed out by French historian Paul Garde – citing the Belgrade newspaper *Borba* of 6 December 1991 (carried in *Le Monde*) – “Serbian reservists recruited into the federal army were sometimes disgusted with the role they had to play, and which consisted of paving the way for the insurgents who were perpetrating atrocities: (...) ‘When we liberate some Croatian village, the units of Martić (the ‘internal affairs minister’ and chief of the Krajina insurgents), Chetniks and other territorial troops come after us and loot, rape and slaughter. (...) We can no longer take moral responsibility for the atrocities in which we did not participate and which we

Borba, 13 July 1991, reprinted in *La Stampa* (Turin).

⁷¹ Tuđman's advisor and later diplomat Mario Nobilo said of this: “Unfortunately, on most interlocutors he left the impression of a provincial politician, hopelessly submerged in historicism, unyielding in the defence of his views, with no sense of humour and an authoritarian style. But they never saw him as weak, rather simply as a personality ill-suited to the post-modern time in which he lived”. Mario Nobilo, *Hrvatski feniks-Diplomatski procesi iza zatvorenih vrata 1990.-1997.* (Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Globus, 2000), p. 109.

⁷² Mario Nobilo, p. 157.

⁷³ See, for example, Robert D. Kaplan, “Croatianism: The latest Balkan ugliness”, *The New Republic*, 25 Nov. 1991. See also Mario Nobilo, 197.

⁷⁴ Sabrina P. Ramet, *Čija demokracija?...*, p. 80.

attempted to prevent”⁷⁵ The siege of Vukovar and Dubrovnik, which prompted many prominent Croatian and international personalities to speak out in their defence,⁷⁶ and the continued depictions of human suffering prompted changes in public opinion.⁷⁷ Some of the world's most influential journalists began to publicly express their disapproval, equally revolted by events in Croatia and Yugoslavia and the attitude of the international community. Thus, *The New York Times* lead editorialist Anthony Lewis stated: “Among the epochal international events of 1991, there was one unambiguous disaster. What happened in Yugoslavia has been a tragedy for its people and a monumental political failure for the United States and the European Community”.⁷⁸ The senseless aggression was reflected in public opinion, reinforcing the Croatian position in the otherwise divided Europe; “with European public opinion increasingly sympathetic to Croatian self-determination”, the Croatian government became increasingly optimistic that the internationalization of the Yugoslav crisis would also result in the international recognition of Croatia's statehood.⁷⁹ However, despite engendering a more realistic picture of the nature of the conflict in Yugoslavia, pushed forward by a group of Croatian and French intellectuals,⁸⁰ hesitancy concerning Croatia's independence continued to preoccupy international peace mediators, especially those from official French and British circles.

A shift in the international community's position to the ongoing Yugoslav crisis came with an initiative by a group of states that decided to halt the erosion

⁷⁵ Paul Garde, *Život i smrt Jugoslavije* (Zagreb: Ceres, 1996), p. 318.

⁷⁶ The involvement of respected Croatian intellectuals had great importance in the promotion of Croatian objectives and particularly in fostering an understanding of the nature of the Croatian-Serbian conflict. The role of Dubrovnik (“an ancient city which for a thousand years has preserved its freedom though surrounded by powerful forces”) as one of the world centres for the promotion of the anti-war Pugwash Group was underlined by Ivan Supek together with the members of the Croatian Pugwash Group in the journal *Encyclopedia moderna*. In their appeal (July 9, 1991) addressed to their “Dear Pugwash Friends,” they condemned the “neo-Stalinist regime of Serbia” and warned that the “the new association of free Europe cannot be created by insisting on preservation of political entities created in the past for various reasons, entities which did not fulfil the expectations and interests of their people”. “Dear Pugwash Friends”, (Ivan Supek and Paolo Budinich, eds.), *Encyclopedia Moderna* 36, Year XII, (1991): 44-45. The same journal also contained older reports on the organization of a Pugwash symposium in Dubrovnik on “Science and Ethics” (1975) and “The Dubrovnik-Philadelphia Statement” (1976) which “also incorporates material from a report entitled Humanistic Morality”. See *Ibid.*, pp. 157-160, 181-186. The appeal from roughly one hundred Nobel laureates calling for an end to the aggression against Croatia was published in *The New York Times*, 14 Jan. 1992.

⁷⁷ Strobe Talbot, “Fiddling While Dubrovnik Burns”, *Time*, November 25 1991.

⁷⁸ Anthony Lewis, “The Killing Goes On”, *The New York Times*, December 20, 1991. See also Anthony Lewis, “Where Is the Outrage”, *The New York Times*, November 4, 1991.

⁷⁹ Lenard J. Cohen, *Broken Bonds-The Disintegration of Yugoslavia* (Westview Press, Bolder-San Francisco-Oxford, 1993), p. 232.

⁸⁰ Mirko Grmek, Marc Gjidara, Neven Šimac, *Etničko čišćenje - Povijesni dokumenti o jednoj srpskoj ideologiji* (Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Globus, 1993).

of the European Community's integrity. Even though an important role in this shift was played by Austria, the Vatican and individual transition countries (such as Lithuania, Ukraine and Czechoslovakia),⁸¹ the most important role was played by Germany. The causes of this German turnaround can be seen in the realistic assessment that the Croats would manage to resist the aggression mounted by Serbia, Montenegro and the JNA, and acknowledgement of the fact that through the prism of integrity Germany would impose itself as an international leader that would (at least in Europe) fill in the vacuum created after the American 'pullout'. However, even though Germany did indeed play a major role in Croatia's international recognition, it did not support the collapse of the Yugoslav state *a priori*. As noted by Geert Ahrens, "initially, Bonn had tried, like the United States, to 'combine support for unity and territorial integrity with the request for respect for democracy', but then gave preference to democracy and self-determination of the republics over unity of the SFRJ".⁸² The same conclusion was reached by historian and political scientist Michael Libal, who was head of the South-east Europe Department in the German Foreign Ministry from 1991 to 1995, where he dealt with the Yugoslav crisis. "Until June 1991, German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher was neither overly concerned nor preoccupied with the crisis in Yugoslavia", and "the primary reason being the good, if not excellent, relations between Bonn and Belgrade, which Genscher in particular had been cultivating since the early 1970s".⁸³ Genscher continued on the foundations laid by the German chancellor of the time, Willy Brandt, with whom he shared a sensitivity to national issues in Yugoslavia.⁸⁴ However, after it became apparent, as formulated by "one of the leading foreign policy experts from the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the vice-president of his party's parliamentary group, Norbert Gansel", that this was "a serious political crisis, which is bringing Yugoslavia to the brink of civil war", a major change of course was made.⁸⁵ Gansel put forth a direct demand to the European Community for the development of a new approach and emphasized "that the EC should forsake the stereotypical emphasis on the unity of Yugoslavia and acknowledge that the idea of a 'democratic, unified Yugoslavia' has actually been, since the beginning, a fiction".⁸⁶ This initiative resulted in ratification of a resolution in the Bundestag on 19 June 1991 following a motion endorsed by the Christian Democrats, the Free Democrats, the Social Democrats and the Greens.

⁸¹ On Croatia's international recognition, see Mario Nobile, 127-207.

⁸² Hans-Dietrich Genscher, *Erinnerungen* (Berlin: Siedler, 1995), p. 935. Based on Geert-Hinrich Ahrens, p. 41.

⁸³ Michael Libal, *Njemačka politika i jugoslavenska kriza 1991.-1992.* (Zagreb: Golden marketing-Tehnička knjiga, 2004), p. 16; in 1995 and 1996, Libal was a fellow at Harvard University's Center for International Affairs.

⁸⁴ Willy Brandt, *Begegnungen und Einsichten 1960-1975* (Munich/Zürich, 1978), pp. 575., 628.

⁸⁵ Michael Libal, p. 18.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

The fundamental idea underlying the resolution was the democratic principle of self-determination as an alternative to the opportunism of *realpolitik*, particularly as exhibited by the US, which was following the path of least resistance by blindly upholding the Yugoslav option despite clear indications of its transformation into some kind of Greater Serbia. As noted by Libal, “given the absence of accord on the existing foundation of the state, an agreement had to be reached on a new foundation: democracy, pluralism and the rule of law throughout Yugoslavia had to guarantee the exercise of the right to self-determination. (...) The EC must actively assist the Yugoslavs in finding mutually acceptable bonds between the republics, and thus reward a Yugoslavia restored on these lines with EC membership. Any use of force had to be opposed.”⁸⁷

In early July 1991, at the onset of the aggression against Croatia waged by Serbia and the JNA, Genscher, while condemning the intervention of the Yugoslav military leadership, emphasized that the framework for the renewal of dialogue in Yugoslavia should be the “European constitution” – the Paris Charter of 1990. Genscher underscored the “fundamental principles of this Constitution” as “the right to autonomous decision-making, human rights, minority rights, and democracy” and stressed that these principles exclude “the rule of one over others”. In early December of that same year, in the dramatic period after the fall of Vukovar and the siege of Dubrovnik, the German foreign minister concluded that “Yugoslavia no longer exists” and further stressed: “Yugoslavia was not destroyed by the caprice of those nations that want their independence, nor by the conduct of the outside world, but by the war of the Yugoslav People’s Army against Croatia and the dreams of foreign political powers of a Greater Serbia and the suppression of minority rights in Kosovo”. Announcing Germany’s recognition of Croatia and Slovenia prior to Christmas, Genscher stated: “We Germans want peace and friendship with all Yugoslav peoples”; here he stressed that Germany “in the future will stand on the side of human rights, minority rights and the right to self-determination, and will oppose aggression and oppression.”⁸⁸ Chancellor Helmut Kohl was similarly unambiguous. Conveying support “to the democratically elected governments in Slovenia and Croatia and their efforts to gain freedom and independence”, Kohl did not neglect to note Germany’s openness to all peoples who respect principled values: “For we Germans, this is a matter of the fate of people, their future in peace, freedom and democracy – and nothing else.”⁸⁹ Despite the euphoria which ensued in Croatia when Germany’s support resulted in the international recognition of Croatian and Slovenian independence by the European ‘twelve’ (even a song was written entitled ‘*Danke Deutschland*’),⁹⁰ German politicians avoided any excessive expressions of affinity – not without

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁸⁸ Hans-Dietrich Genscher, *Komentari* (Zagreb: Otvoreno sveučilište, 1996), pp. 40, 50, 51.

⁸⁹ Based on Mario Nobilo, p. 166.

⁹⁰ Laura Silber & Allan Little, p. 195.

reason as it transpired.⁹¹ Thus, Genscher personally responded to the publication of Stjepan Mesić's political memoirs which bore the original title "How We Brought Down Yugoslavia": Genscher discretely pointed out that "Europe would not find this title the most acceptable", and Mesić changed it to "How Yugoslavia Collapsed".⁹²

In Serbia, German support for Croatia and Slovenia was seen as an imperial expansion of the "Fourth Reich" in which Germany had the backing of the United States.⁹³ More serious analyses showed that the character of this new constellation of relations in the international community in which the United States and Germany were assessed as states that "switched" their previous positions. A month after the international recognition of Croatia and Slovenia on 15 January 1992, American expert Patrick Glynn (from the American Enterprise Institute) pointed out, like many other analysts,⁹⁴ that "in the end the Yugoslav crisis did more than create two new states: it marked the re-emergence of Germany as a great power". According to Glynn, "It was an ironic reversal of roles. Throughout the 1980s, when the United States pursued tough tactics against communist leaders, based on a commitment to democratic principles, West Germany steered a neutral middle path between East and West based on *realpolitik*. Now the Germans were acting from principle against a dictator [Slobodan Milošević] while the United States cultivated *realpolitik*. (...) It was ... a measure of the declining power of the United States".⁹⁵ Glynn concluded his analysis with a historical assessment of Germany's 'American' message to the US: "One of the great lessons of the 1980s was that those countries fared best in the global power struggle that stood firmly for their principles. In the 1990s, returning to Kissingerian ideas of stability, the United States eschewed such a course. The result was not merely a botched opportunity amid an unnecessary loss of lives, but an absolute loss of international power for the United States".⁹⁶

⁹¹ On this Mario Nobile noted: "Croatian politics, from the euphoric phase of '*Danke Deutschland*' to disappointment and the public lynching of Klaus Kinkel in the pro-regime press – passed through an entire cycle of relations with Germany, which ran hot and cold. Zagreb made a mistake at the onset by constantly referring to its powerful patron. This spurred malicious historical analogies, damaged Germany's international reputation and limited its ability to help us (...) Bonn, for its part, based on its own principles and image, was often compelled to criticize Zagreb in its own name and on Europe's behalf, which did not please official political circles in Croatia". Mario Nobile, p. 168.

⁹² "Intervju Stjepan Mesić: Vrijeme je da se raspusti HOS", *Nova Matica* (1992), no. 7: 7.

⁹³ Veljko Kadijević, *Moje viđenje raspada* (Belgrade: Politika izdavačka delatnost, 1993), pp. 6-7.

⁹⁴ John Tagliabue, "The New Germans: 'Dwarfs' No More", *The New York Times*, December 15, 1991

⁹⁵ Patrick Glynn, "Yugoblunder", *The New Republic*, 24 Feb. 1992.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

Parallel to the German initiative, which was wholeheartedly assisted by the Vatican and Austria,⁹⁷ Croatian aspirations for independence were also legitimated at the peace conference in The Hague. The commission established under the auspices of this international conference on Yugoslavia (the so-called Badinter Commission) – “an offshoot of the highest international factors, an emanation of the European Union (then the European Community) and the UN” – meant the reaffirmation of the rule of law as opposed to horse trading based on *realpolitik* (which aroused the ire of the Serbs).⁹⁸ Even though the idea to establish international arbitration was “launched by France (in which the idea of independence for Croatia and Slovenia was not highly regarded) at the end of summer and early autumn 1991”, it became apparent that the question of separating politics from jurisprudence (a concept unclear to Serbian Foreign Minister Jovanović) was nonetheless a significant civilizational achievement. The actual arbitrage procedure validated general values through the application of international law to the former Yugoslavia.⁹⁹ The commission's verdict was “a binding legal opinion for the EU, the UN, for all republics of the former Yugoslavia, even though some of them did not observe it”. The disproportion in activities on the part of engaged international community diplomats led by Lord Carrington at the International Conference on Yugoslavia and representatives of “the interested Republics of Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia” revealed, as stated by Neven Šimac, “a very serious problem: a lack of political dynamics among those with a vital interest in the judgement on the death of Yugoslavia”. According to Šimac, “small and weak states need to adhere to law and justice, while the countries attacked in wars have not sufficiently employed this vital and potent weapon. They allowed themselves to be drawn exclusively to confrontations in the military, political and diplomatic theatres, and thus be ‘extradited’ to the callous international diplomatic arena in which, as young emerging states, they initially had no prospects of any significant victories”.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ It is interesting to note that at Versailles in 1918, the Vatican defended the preservation of the Habsburg Monarchy, while in 1990 it stood with Germany and Austria as the most prominent lobbyist for Croatian and Slovenian independence and an advocate of the right of nations to self-determination.

⁹⁸ The Badinter Commission operated from the end of November 1991 to mid-August 1993. It released binding arbitrage opinions on the application of international law in the case of the former Yugoslavia, and also dealt with the legal implications of referenda, decisions and voting by the public in these countries. During its work it released a total of fifteen opinions, one interlocutory decision, and one preliminary opinion.

⁹⁹ Klara Kovačević, “Smrt Jugoslavije, uzroci, posljedice, pouke – Intervju s Nevenom Šimcem”, *Matica - časopis hrvatske matice iseljenika* (1996), no. 6: 12.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

***Realpolitik* and the Recognition of Croatian Statehood**

With ten years of hindsight, Norman Cigar, an American professor of military history at the Marine Corps University in Quantico (Virginia) and the author of one of the most thorough-going books on the disintegration of Yugoslavia, spoke about the circumstances surrounding the international recognition of Croatia's independence.¹⁰¹ When the European Community member states, and many others, recognized the independence of the Republic of Croatia on 15 January 1992, this "diplomatic recognition was, among other things, also an expression of acceptance of the military status quo which existed at the time in Croatia". He went on to say that "in January 1992 it was obvious that in the military sense Croatia had survived and in control of most of its territory. The international community would have found it difficult, for example, to restore the status of a year before".¹⁰² In other words, the international community had conceded the "situation in the field", without a "superfluous" re-examination of the "justification" (or "lack thereof") for Croatia's policies. Only six months earlier – in the summer of 1991 – "the international community predicted an entirely different outcome in Croatia. For it expected a rapid victory by the Yugoslav army and Croatia's defeat".¹⁰³

Cigar assessed the change in the international community's position as an act of "realistic" adaptation to unfolding events (which could have been radically different) rather than in a consistent policy of upholding the principles and values enshrined in international charters and instruments which regulated the key points of international relations. Between principle and *realpolitik*, *realpolitik* carried the day. The paradox of Croatian independence was reflected in the international community's turn to *realpolitik* in acknowledging the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the establishment of a military balance between Croatia and Slovenia and the JNA and Serbian paramilitaries at the end of 1991, in the same way that under the auspices of the UN, it imposed an unselective arms embargo on the entire territory of Yugoslavia at the height of the escalating conflict, thereby practically openly siding with Serbia and the JNA in the expectation of a rapid defeat of the "secessionists". The question of the orientation of individual protagonists in the Yugoslav drama vis-à-vis democracy, human rights and market economics were vital aspects of legitimacy, but still ancillary factors. Moreover, all means were used to rationalize and superficially interpret the outcome as a historical inevitability, wherein the dubious reputation of the Balkans was not without a role.

To a certain degree, Cigar's assessments correspond to Franjo Tuđman's observations on the role of the correlation of principle and *realpolitik* in

¹⁰¹ Intervju Bojana Klime s Normanom Cigarom, "Pogrešne procjene, pogrešna politika", VOA, cited in *Vjesnik*, 16 Jan. 2002.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

Croatia's relations with the international community. In a speech delivered in 1994, Tuđman said: "The arduous experience of the Croatian nation throughout its history, and particularly the most recent years of restoration of Croatian statehood, have taught us that not one of the lofty principles contained in the Charter of the United Nations and in international law is either automatically actionable and even less guaranteed if a nation does not possess the resolve to exercise it; if a nation is not prepared to endure heavy sacrifices in achieving its own right to life and freedom; if its strength and its decisions cannot align its national interests with the vital interests of the international community".¹⁰⁴ During the period of his political ascendancy at the turn of the 1980s into the 1990s, Tuđman formulated his policies on the basis of compromises to align Croatian interests with international requirements, which was exceptionally important to the internationalization of the Yugoslav crisis.¹⁰⁵ The principle of self-determination of nations to which he referred was an integral component of his political reasoning. However, regardless of the references to *principle* and *rights* – wherein he sometimes created the impression of a "fervent revolutionary" – Tuđman was not a captive to the realm of ideas, but rather a realist – an unyielding statesman, who adapted principles to his political views without any notable qualms.¹⁰⁶

One consequence of his, basically ideological, focus on achieving objectives (wherein ideas such as self-determination or democratic principles were primarily a means to an end) was that he cast aside any illusions on the principled conduct of the international community:

"Regardless of the inalienable right of the Croatian nation – which is one of the oldest European nations – to self-determination and the restoration of its own state, regardless of the patently barbaric aggression aimed at territorial conquest, genocidal expulsions of peoples and destruction of the most valuable cultural monuments of the Croatian nation, such as Vukovar and Dubrovnik, the Croats were never granted the right to self-determination. They never would have secured the right to their own state, to freedom and independence, had they not been prepared to endure heavy losses in human lives and treasure to achieve these objectives, had they not demonstrated a powerful will to statehood which they resolutely imposed as a member of the international community, simultaneously manifesting a willingness to be a constructive factor in the creation of a new global order in place of the old, unsustainable and failed system".¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ "Tuđmanove pobjedničke bitke za Hrvatsku", at: http://www.camo.ch/tudjmanove_bitke.htm.

¹⁰⁵ On this see Lenard J. Cohen, *Broken Bonds-The Disintegration of Yugoslavia* (Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press, 1993), p. 232.

¹⁰⁶ On this see Albert Bing, "Franjo Tuđman i samoodređenje naroda."

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

Die staatliche Verselbständigung Kroatiens: zwischen Prinzipien und Realpolitik

Zusammenfassung

Das Verhältnis zwischen "Realpolitik" und "Prinzipien" wird im Kontext der staatlichen Verselbständigung Kroatiens, beziehungsweise des Zerfalls Jugoslawiens, auf zwei Ebenen betrachtet. Die erste Ebene bezieht sich auf die außerordentlich komplexe Problematik des Charakters internationaler Beziehungen und auf das Verhältnis der internationalen Gemeinschaft zur geopolitischen Fragmentierung Jugoslawiens zu Beginn der 90-er Jahre des 20. Jahrhunderts. Auf der zweiten Ebene behandelt man die Frage der Prädispositionen der kroatischen intellektuellen und politischen Elite, um qualitativ ebenso komplexe Implikationen des Prozesses der staatlichen Verselbständigung zu erkennen und zu verstehen. Diese Arbeit wurde als eine historisch-politologische Studie konzipiert.