

# **Role and impact of NATO in various conflicts in former Yugoslavia.**

**Prepared by Mr.Saimir Osmani. (PhDc).**

## Introduction

Europe, immediately after the fall of Berlin's wall, an event which caused the fall of Cold War Wall, began a new world sequence. First of all, not only rehabilitation of East Germany because of the union with its west was a necessary thing, but also the fall of all totalitarian and dictatorial regimes in East Europe, which were living in a homicidal order for their economy and their social life.

Very soon, in 90's the wave of changes affected even this isolated part of continent and they all witnessed the collapse of these regimes in Romania, Soviet Union, Albania etc. But this did not show that all the problems had come to an end or the pluralist-democratic order gave a final solution. On the contrary, this would cause various economic, social and politic challenges in Balkan. And there was no way that in Balkan, which was a battle field during 20<sup>th</sup> century, would not appear old ethnic and frontier problems that in a certain way were in the dreams under ideological umbrella of communism.

Conflicts would be more problematic in the so-called Federation of former Yugoslavia, a made up state federation where life was exerted in different religious, ethnic, cultural and lingual dimensions. Balkan crisis which is defined as the crisis of former Yugoslavia would be the beginning of international impact in this end of century in region.

But with the conflicts conducted by Slobodan Milosevic, it was unavoidable the military intervention of NATO. Former Yugoslavia would constitute the most important phase and one of first challenges of the North Atlantic Alliance in Europe.

In this theme, I want to treat the way that this crisis began, went on with the conflict in Bosnia, in Kosovo, and which was the alliance role with its intervention in these delicate conflicts. How could they settle peace in these territories and locate their military forces for their defense and stabilization? Also, part of this crisis is even Macedonia<sup>1</sup>, as a country that has difficulties concerning cohabitation among different ethnicities. Macedonia still has conflicts with Greece for its name issue. Which was NATO commitment for these delicate points in Macedonia?

And the last part explains clearly today's role of NATO in the stabilization of Balkan Region, problems and responsibilities with which these states should confront because of the further enlargement of Alliance.

### **I. End of Yugoslavia and Conflict in Bosnia.**

Yugoslavia represented a state Federation in Balkan Region, in which various ethnicities were part of it, under the guard of absolute leader, Tito. Referring Constitution of 1974<sup>2</sup>, six states (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Macedonia) and two autonomous districts (Kosovo and Vojvodina) in Republic of Serbia were part of this federation. After the death of Tito, Slobodan Milosevic comes in power, and immediately after 1980 we would see the first conflicts and disputes that began in Kosovo. In 1981, in Kosovo where mostly lived Albanian people, began anti-Serbian demonstrates, which were intensified more and more in the following years. It was seen that Milosevic preferred to govern with an iron hand, so that in the end of 80's, took off the autonomy status of Kosovo and Vojvodina and took control of Montenegro. Shortly, he won great power, as he had the power of veto over any decision that

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<sup>1</sup> . Turkey recognizes it with its constitutional name, Republic of Macedonia.

<sup>2</sup> . John Stoessinger. Why nations go to war. Tirana. AHS. pg,132.

made federal government of Yugoslavia<sup>3</sup>. The other republics did not like this excessive strengthening and their discontent for him grew continuously.

Slovenia was the initiator of the dissolution process of Yugoslavia in 1990. It claimed pluralism and democracy in all Republic of Yugoslavia. Even though they faced with a hard opposition, they left Federation and together with Milan Kucani declared pluralist elections in the independent Slovenia. The separation process of Croatia was more complicated because of the large Serbian minority that lived there. Serbians conducted a referendum for autonomy, but Franjo Tudjman<sup>4</sup> declared it as illegitimate. Violent clashes among Serbians and Croatians broke out in Knin, a small town in the center of Kranj, where genocide began, under the guard of Ratko Mladic. After Knini, Serbians tried to purge a large part of Croatian population in Vukovar. In the end of 1991, Croatia under the lead of Tudjman resisted the Serbian aggression and won independence. But the fifth Serbian army controlled 1/3 of the country. Also, based on the truce that was succeeded by "Cyrus Vance", Security Council of United Nations authorized the defense power of United Nations (UNPROFOR).

**Conflict in Bosnia.** After declaration of independence in Slovenia and Croatia, Bosnia became a more insecure region because of multi-ethnic minorities. Almost half of the population was Muslim, and as a matter of fact, it was considered as different from Serbians. In fact, Bosnians were Serbians and Croatians, who, during ottoman rule, became Muslims. In these circumstances, continuance under Yugoslavian rule was intolerable. And in 1992, President of that time E.Izetbegovic dared to seek sovereignty recognition by European Council.

At the beginning of April in 1992, European Council recognized Bosnia as a sovereign country<sup>5</sup>. United States of America did the same thing, but no one guaranteed anything. Decision for the beginning of war was very near. Under the lead of Radovan Karadzic, Bosnian Serbians surrounded the city of Sarajevo and declared a new country called Serbian Republic of Bosnia<sup>6</sup>. The siege of Sarajevo was the most slandered event in Bosnia war. But the genocide and cleansing policy of Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic cannot

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<sup>3</sup> . same book.

<sup>4</sup> . President of Croatia in 1990'.

<sup>5</sup> . Paskal Milo.*European Union* .Tirana .Albapaper. 2002. pg, 243.

<sup>6</sup> . Stoessinger, the same book. pg, 138.

be described. They threw out of their houses two million people. They had killed 100 thousands Bosnians. And other tortures had become common in Bosnia<sup>7</sup>. Practically, Bosnia had become a place where life looked like a cemetery and future was a pending space. In this conflict were engaged not only United Nations, but also European Council, European Union and OSCE. In 1993-1994, member of European Union initiated various policies for negotiations and compromise between parties. But all these policies had failed.

Attacks were constant. At that moment they wanted Srebrenica, which would be one of the unique acts of genocide in global history. In April 1993, by United Nations High Commission for Refugees, Mladic, the loyal tool of Milosevic, delivered an ultimatum to expatriate 30 thousands Muslims of Srebrenica. Unfortunately, the high commissioner of UNHCR accepted under Serbian threats. Srebrenica surrendered. International countries were convinced that they should go beyond their pacific and smooth attitudes after massacre and after Serbians captured 400 polices and monitors of United Nations.

Europe was powerless to solve this conflict in Bosnia Herzegovina and left the free way for USA and the other international actors in Balkan. In 1994-1995, Serbian and Milosevic positions took a negative turn, because another important international actor was engaged, North Atlantic Alliance.

### **III. Challenges of a multi-dimensional Macedonia.**

Macedonia case is one of the most complicated problems of Balkan crisis. Balkan crisis that began with the separation of Slovenia, Croatia and culminated with the conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo, would end with violent conflicts in Macedonia. With a various ethnic composition, Slavic-Macedonian, Albanian, Greek and Turkish, Macedonia decided to seek a new position in international area. It required disunion from Yugoslavia in summer 1991. They conducted a referendum, which declared independence and

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<sup>7</sup>. *same book.*

creation of a confederation and ethnicities would have autonomy<sup>8</sup>. Disputes with Bulgaria and Greece began in 1992, when European Community did not recognize Macedonia as an autonomous country. Behind those disputes were Greek claims, according to which denomination “Republic of Macedonia” represents a Hellenic symbol, and even a hidden desire for its neighbor territories<sup>9</sup>. Also, they would have debates for their national flag, which was considered a Macedonian dynasty symbol. In 1993, by resolution 817, Macedonia became a member of United Nations with the name Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia.

(FYROM). Relations between Macedonia and Greece became worse when Greece set economic sanctions to Skopje. But in September 1995, they made an agreement, by which Greece recognized the new state with the name known by United Nations. Conflicts among Slavic-Macedonian and Albanian communities have been a constant problem. Albanian community comprise more than 30% of the Macedonian population, therefore they require more political autonomy and preservation of their identity.

Their contradictions and conflicts became worse after the independence referendum, which Albanians boycotted because they did not have rights in the foundation of the new state, also the right to learn Albanian language. In 1994, leader of PDP Arber Xhaferri supported the idea of establishing parallel institutions to official ones. Also, there were great problems with state security and frontier protection. Therefore, United Nations located UNPROFOR in Macedonia and a year later settled a monitoring mission (UNPREDEP<sup>10</sup>) United Nations Preventive Deployment.

This mission has had an important role in conflicts and revolts prevention among two ethnicities. Kosovo crisis and NATO engagement was not a pleased moment for Slavic-Macedonians. And as we all know, Skopje had to take care for more than 200 thousands refugees. Secretary of NATO had the authority to coordinate the help of NATO<sup>11</sup> in former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia. But relations between two ethnicities were still problematic, and intensified in the course of time.

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<sup>8</sup>. Alban Daci. *Macedonian Issue*. Albanian Media. 25/02/2010. pg3.

<sup>9</sup>. same book.

<sup>10</sup>. same book. pg, 5.

<sup>11</sup>. Doracak.Nato. pg, 132.

Source of conflict would be the aggression of some of the Kosovo Army guerrillas in 2001, in Tanusha and Totowa. Macedonians considered the Kosovar aggression as the source of conflict. But Albanian government considered the accumulated discontent during the decade of Macedonian state<sup>12</sup> as the source of conflict.

Tirana, represented by foreign minister Paskal Milo, considered dialogue as a manner of solution. While former President Berisha required NATO engagement to solve the conflict.

Macedonian conflicts proved the solidarity of Balkan countries, where all the neighbor states offered troupes and arms for Macedonia and supported Prime Minister Georgevski. Foreign minister of Albania, Paskal Milo meets his Macedonian homologue Svilanovic for the first time during Macedonian conflict in Vienne. In this meeting was declared a pacific solution of the conflict. Also, they greeted the truce in Presheva Valley<sup>13</sup>, and they reset diplomatic relations among Albania and Yugoslavia. Summit of Zagreb that was held in 2001 played an active role for the collaboration of NATO and USA in solving the Macedonian crisis, which ended with Ohrid agreement signing in 13 august 2001<sup>14</sup>, among representatives of the Macedonian and Albanian political parties.

That was an agreement for the realization of constitutional amendments, and decentralization of local power. It guaranteed all the rights of freedom equal to Macedonians for Albanian population and all other minorities. Also, it made steps ahead for a stabilization period in Region, leaving a free way for EU and NATO accession for these countries.

#### **IV. North Atlantic alliance and its role in the Stabilization of the Region.**

Role of alliance during Balkan crisis reconfirmed its importance in a global level. SFOR, the stabilization force in Bosnia contributed for the creation of a secure environment and the prevention of enmities. Also, SFOR engaged in the consolidation of institutions and helped civil organizations. SFOR mission lasted only 18 months. SFOR engaged in election thrift and cooperated with UNHCR for the

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<sup>12</sup>. Remzi Lani. *A few things from the box of Balkan Pandora*. AIM. Tirana. 22/03/2001.pg, 2.

<sup>13</sup>. Remzi Lani .same book.

<sup>14</sup>. Paskla Milo. same book. pg, 295.

repatriation of refugees. Under SFOR monitoring, it was accomplished the reduction of Ethnicity Armed Forces.

Alliance played an important role in arms' collection, called "Harvest Operation". Also, in Kosovo, KFOR engaged to set a secure environment. Elections were held and took place some political parties. Also, KFOR engaged in institutional consolidation<sup>15</sup>.

KFOR helped OSCE monitoring mission in Kosovo for the ascertainment on systematic crimes and murders. They helped refugees to come back in their dwelling places and enhance security level in the country. Actually, the number of KFOR troupes is reduced in 14 thousands troupes and it's expected to be reduced more in the future.

NATO intervention in Kosovo was crucial because it set the path for the realization of the dream to establishing an independent state, which concluded in 17 February 2008. Quickly, when war ended and NATO settled its missions in Kosovo, region would endeavor for the alliance accession. In 1999, in Washington Summit was ratified NATO Accession Plan. This Plan included Albania, Bulgaria, Rumania, Slovenia and Macedonia. In 2002, in Prague Summit, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Rumania became members of North Atlantic Alliance. These new members' accession would set the path to a crucial process for Balkan, Adriatic Charter. Countries as Albania, Croatia and Macedonia, that were in NATO Accession Plan, made an important phase in spring 2003. They signed Adriatic Charter. While, Serbia and Montenegro Union were prepared to access the individual PfP programme<sup>16</sup>.

Adriatic Charter underlined a full engagement of these countries for the collaboration on reforms, region stabilization, and security and emphasized their achievements in Euro-Atlantic Integration path. In April 2009, in Bucharest Summit, Croatia obtain the accession invitation. A year later, in 4 April 2009, Albania became member of North Atlantic Alliance. This was one of the most important moments for Albanian state history, after the declaration of independence in 1912.

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<sup>15</sup>. Deutche Welle.Bekim Shehu, same book. pg, 3.

<sup>16</sup>. Majlinda Bashkurti. pg, 3.



Macedonia did not obtain the invitation because of the conflict with Greece related to official name issue and did not fully observed Ohrid agreement of relation preservation among its ethnicities.

When Albania and Croatia became members of North Atlantic Alliance, they would be involved more and more in peace keeping and stabilization in region. Their security will be increased when they obtained NATO accession. Also, Albanian military forces gave an important contribution during Afghanistan war. Italian Senator Sergio de Gregorio, while visiting Tirana, stated: “actually, the major challenges of Balkan are internal problems and corruption fighting, fight against organized crimes and arms’ traffic”<sup>17</sup>. There are problems related to economic stabilization of the region. Countries that want to be members and those, which already are members of NATO, have to guarantee an economic stabilization. Of course, governments of region countries have the major responsibility and they have to be more responsible.

### **Conclusions**

- Balkan crisis would be intensified, not only as a result of positive and political developments in East communist Europe, but also as a result of Serb repression and Slobodan Milosevic policies on federation regions composed of an ethnic conglomerate.

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<sup>17</sup>. Deutsche Welle. *Sergio de Gregorio, Governments should be responsible. Interviewed by Ani Ruci, Tirana, 02/03/2010. pg, 2*

- Another crucial phase in this crisis was the desire of United States to consolidate their position in Balkan and Europe, considering the attitude of European diplomacy in Bosnia and Kosovo conflicts.
- This was seen when they supported air raid of NATO in two countries, to challenge the absolute power of Milosevic, to end the massacres and crimes against humanity. After that Milosevic was sent in Court of Hague, to take over the responsibilities for these crimes. In 2003, he was found dead in his cell.
- NATO defended Bosnia Herzegovina and Kosovo. When war ended, alliance located there its peace keeping missions, SFOR and KFOR. Also, NATO played an important role in Macedonian conflict in 2001. And with its intervention was signed an agreement among parties, which is known as Ohrid Agreement.
- NATO showed that it was interested in her presence in region, thus, consolidating more and more its positions after Cold War. Also, it played an important role and set the path for the enlargement of alliance with new members such as, Croatia, Albania, and Macedonia is still in process.

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