

RUSSIA AND THE KOSOVO CONFLICT: 1998-2008

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Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **RUSSIA AND THE KOSOVO CONFLICT: 1998–2008**

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This thesis aims to study Russian foreign policy towards Kosovo during the period between 1998 and 2008 in light of the school of thought that claims that Russia's foreign policy toward Kosovo resembles the Cold War confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union. This thesis argues that Russia's role in the Kosovo war and its aftermath is motivated by Russia's interest in being seen as a great power in international system rather than using Kosovo in order to confront the United States.

Besides an introduction and conclusion, the thesis consists of four main chapters. The second chapter presents historical background and discusses Russian foreign policy during the wars of secession in Yugoslavia. The third chapter focuses on Russian foreign policy and the 1998 – 1999 war in Kosovo, while the fourth chapter covers the Russian role in the post-conflict settlement in Kosovo. Finally, the fifth chapter deals with Russian foreign policy as it relates to the resolved Kosovo situation.

Keywords: Russia, Russia's Foreign Policy, Kosovo, Serbia, Yugoslavia

## ÖZ

### RUSYA KOSOVA ANLAŞMAZLIĞI: 1998–2008

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Yüksek Lisans, Avrasya Çalışmaları

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Bu tez, Kosova'ya yönelik Rusya dış politikasının soğuk savaş dönemi ABD-Sovyetler Birliği çatışmasını anımsattığı görüşüne sahip düşünce ekolünce ortaya konan iddialar ışığında, Kosova'ya yönelik 1998 – 2008 dönemi Rusya dış politikasını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu tez, Kosova Savaşı ve sonrasındaki süreçte Rusya'nın üstlendiği rolün ADB'ye karşı gelmekten çok Rusya'nın uluslararası sistemde büyük güç olarak görünme yoluyla elde edeceği çıkarla motive edildiğini kanıtlamaktadır.

Tez çalışması, giriş ve sonuç bölümlerine ek olarak dört ana bölümden oluşmaktadır. İkinci bölüm tarihsel zemin sunmakta ve Yugoslavya'nın dağılması sürecinde Rusya dış politikasını ele almaktadır. Üçüncü bölüm Rus dış politikası ve 1998-1999 Kosova savaşına odaklanırken dördüncü bölüm ise Rusya'nın Kosova anlaşmazlığı sonrası tasviye sürecindeki rolünü içermektedir. Son olarak, beşimci bölüm Kosova'nın nihai statüsüyle bağlantılı olarak Rusya dış politikasını ele almaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Rusya, Rus Dış Politikası, Kosova, Sırbistan, Yugoslavya.

To Rasema and Sulejman  
For their endless love and encouragement

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

During the Cold War, the Balkan region was under a balanced influence of both Eastern and Western powers, and no major conflict escalated within this period<sup>1</sup>. Due to the relative stability of the Balkan region, many politicians expected that a violent dissolution might have occurred in the Soviet Union but not in Yugoslavia. Later, the dissolution that occurred in the Soviet Union as the Cold War ended was peaceful, whereas Yugoslavia's resulted in violent wars. It was in the former Yugoslavia that newly established cooperation between former Cold War adversaries, the Soviet Union and the United States, and their allies was to be tested. The end of the Cold War opened a door to cooperation between the East and the West<sup>2</sup>, but the main goals of this cooperation as it concerns the Balkans, for those with a Russian point of view, are highly contested among scholars. In this respect, this thesis, entitled "Russia and the Kosovo Conflict: 1998 – 2008," will try to analyze Russian foreign policy as it relates to the Kosovo conflict. This thesis studies the foreign policy of Russia towards the Kosovo conflict from the escalation of the conflict in 1998 until the beginning of 2008. It first examines Russia's foreign policy toward the escalating wars of succession in the former Yugoslavia that began in 1990. It then continues with Russia's foreign policy during the war in Kosovo, Russia's role in the post-conflict settlement in Kosovo, and Russian foreign policy toward settlement of the status of Kosovo after the riots in March 2004.

#### 1.1 Scope and Objective

By way of historical background, the thesis first focuses on the influence of Russia's role in ending the wars of succession in the former Yugoslavia, including the Russian role

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<sup>1</sup> Ali Karaosmanoğlu, "Turkey Southeastern Europe and Russia," in *War and Change in the Balkans*, edited by Brad K. Blitz, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p.188.

<sup>2</sup> James Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, p.26.

during the Kosovo crisis. It continues with the Russian response to NATO's war in Kosovo, Russia's role in the post-conflict settlement in Kosovo, and her role in finding a final resolution of the Kosovo situation after 10 December 2007. Kosovo has been administered since 1999 by the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

Russia was quick to take the place of the Soviet Union in the international arena. This can be clearly seen in Russia's active involvement in conflict resolution in the former Yugoslavia. The Yugoslavian conflict presented itself as a good chance for Russia to show itself as a great power in the international arena by taking active part in conflict resolution in the area, which it historically considers as its sphere of influence. The answer to the question posed by the Russian *Pravda* newspaper, "How will we live when the USSR has disintegrated and Russia is left alone with itself?,"<sup>3</sup> was not to remain unanswered for long. Russia, aware of its new international status, did its best to engage in conflict resolution in the Balkans.

## 1.2 Literature Review

Since the beginning of the 1990s and the emergence of the wars of secession in the former Yugoslavia, a tremendous amount of literature has appeared on the great powers' influence in the region and the secret aims and achievements behind the international meddling in the Balkans crisis. This abundance of literature is especially true for the period after NATO's war in Kosovo ended in June 1999. Since the end of the Cold War, many scholars have tried to explain why Russia's foreign policy with regard to Kosovo diverged from the West's and what Russia hoped to gain by meddling in the Kosovo crisis. They have also tried to evaluate the Russian success in establishing itself as an important actor in settling the Kosovo conflict and its role in the post-conflict settlement.

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<sup>3</sup> Russia Alone with Itself, *Pravda*, 2 November 1991, reproduced in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, Vol.53 cited in Thomas Ambrosio, "The Geopolitics of Demographic Decay: HIV/AIDS and Russia's Great Power Status," Paper Presented at the International Studies Association Annual Conference (Honolulu, Hawaii), March 2005, p.3 <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/blogs/gems/politicshiv/ambrosio.pdf> (accessed on 2 April 2008).

Firstly, there is a group of scholars represented by Janusz Bugajski, S. Neil Macfarlane, and Jim Headley that formulate their argument about Russia's foreign policy by using the framework of a unilateral world order led by the United States. Those scholars see Russia and the Western powers as adversaries in the Balkan region, which Russia considers to be its "historic sphere of influence". Thus, those scholars see Russian involvement in the region as a sign of a new Cold War–like rivalry, where hard power is the main concern of the great powers.

Janusz Bugajski, in his book *Cold Peace: Russia's New Imperialism*,<sup>4</sup> argues that Putin's foreign policy aims at global redistribution of power to the advantage of Russia, which he sees as a main aim behind Russia's cooperation with the Western powers through international institutions. He adds also that this cooperation on Russia's side gives a false sense of security and permanent partnership while Russia tries to "rebuild the state as a global power."<sup>5</sup> According to Janusz Bugajski, Russia is exploiting the crisis that emerged in the former Yugoslavia in order to weaken NATO's projects and to help their Serbian brother. The chapter of the book dedicated to the Balkans, "Exploiting Crises: Adriatic Balkans,"<sup>6</sup> clearly expresses the writer's position. In this particular chapter, Bugajski admits that differences between responses to the Yugoslav crisis existed among Western powers, but he argues that it was Russia that took advantage of those differences to reassert itself in the region. He explains the Russian involvement in peacekeeping forces as Russia's way to maintain its "stature among Bosnian Serbs."<sup>7</sup>

S. Neil Macfarlane, in the article entitled "The 'R' in BRICs: Is Russia an Emerging Power?,"<sup>8</sup> explains two frameworks in which "emerging power" can evolve in the

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<sup>4</sup> Janusz Bugajski, *Cold Peace: Russia's New Imperialism*, Westport, Conn.: Praeger; Washington, DC. Published in cooperation with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.23.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.169.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.177.

<sup>8</sup> S. Neil Macfarlane, "The 'R' in BRICs: Is Russia an Emerging Power," *International Affairs*, Vol.82, No.1, 2006, p.41-57.

international system and proposes a third way for Russia as a power that is emerging. First, he states that there is a structuralist approach, which argues that the new coalition of powers who are not satisfied with the hegemon will emerge to balance it, and thus foreign policy is made by taking into consideration the balance of power. Second, there are liberal variants, which stress the nature of the unit as a determining factor for foreign relations. Therefore, foreign policy outcomes are products of both domestic and international calculations. And third, Macfarlane proposes a way in between the first and second way which maintains that states' foreign policies are influenced by regional or geopolitical calculations. He argues that Russia's foreign policy is determined by its interests in the areas it considers to be within its own sphere of influence. Thus, he argues that Russia is not trying to influence the broader international system but wants to pursue its "more limited objectives."<sup>9</sup> He sees Russia as a power that understands its weakness and is not trying to regain its international status and influence.

Jim Headley, in the article "Sarajevo, February 1994: the first Russia-NATO crisis of the post-Cold War era,"<sup>10</sup> argues that Russia's shift to a realist great power policy led to the first great power crisis in 1994, when NATO threatened to bomb Bosnian Serbs after a bomb fell on a marketplace in Sarajevo and killed many civilians. He points out that this crisis illustrates how Russia tried to combat NATO power, whereas NATO tried to demonstrate its power. He sees Russian and Western involvement in the crisis as a place where great powers try to show their influence. Thus, he sees both Russia's and NATO's involvement as a matter of hard power and great power rivalry.

Secondly, there are those scholars who see Russia's involvement in the Balkans as a way of rapprochement to the West in order for Russia to be able to better secure its national interests. Those scholars are represented by Allen C. Lynch, David P. Calleo, Mike Bowker, and Vladimir Baranovsky, and they argue in favor of a need for greater

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.42

<sup>10</sup> Jim Headley, "Sarajevo, February 1994: the first Russia NATO-Crisis of the post-Cold War era," *Review of International Studies*, Vol.29, No.2, 2003, p.209-227.

institutional cooperation between the great powers and are in favor of a plural world order.

Allen C. Lynch, in his article "The Realism of Russia's Foreign Policy,"<sup>11</sup> tries to disregard the view of Russia's foreign policy which states that Russian foreign policy is ineffective and incoherent, and he also tries to disregard Russian foreign policy as unilateralist and anti-Western. He argues that obvious proof for the coherent and effective foreign policy of Russia can be found in the structure of the international political system that emerged after the end of the Cold War. For his analysis, Allen Lynch focuses on four cases: civil war in Moldova; Russian diplomatic efforts during wars in the former Yugoslavia; Russia's stance toward NATO's expansion toward Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic; and Russia's stance toward NATO's war on Serbia. With regard to the latter, Allen Lynch stresses that NATO's war on Serbia was perceived by Russia as a threat to the international system, as it was the first time since the Cold War that NATO, led by the United States, acted without a mandate from the United Nations. This action was naturally perceived as a threat by Russia, since sometime in the future Russia could be a potential target as well. Although Russia was unsatisfied with NATO's war on Kosovo, it never seriously considered the possibility of entering into war against NATO and risking its long-term goal, which was achieving the status of a great power.

David P. Calleo, in his article entitled "Unipolar Illusions,"<sup>12</sup> argues that a unipolar world with the United States dominant is an illusion, since the United States is unable to cope with all the challenges it faces in different parts of the world. According to Calleo, it is not only an illusion that we live in a unipolar world, but it was also an illusion that we lived in a bipolar world during the Cold War, especially after the 1970s, due to the plural distribution of power and wealth in that period. David Calleo sees today's world order as a pluralistic one governed by a combination of power balancing, bargaining,

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<sup>11</sup> Allen C. Lynch, "The Realism of Russia's Foreign Policy," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.53, No.1, 2001, p. 7-31.

<sup>12</sup> David P. Calleo, "Unipolar Illusions," *Survival*, Vol.49, No.3, September 2007, p.5.

and mutual accommodation. What this world order necessitates are multilateral institutions which would provide satisfaction for the states' interests. He does not see international institutions as a place where states would show their altruism but sees them from the realist calculation of the possible advantage that this cooperation will bear. He called this world order a "global constitutionalism."

Mike Bowker, in his article "The Wars in Yugoslavia: Russia and the International Community,"<sup>13</sup> argues that during the war in Bosnia Russia saw an opportunity to reassert itself as an international power but in this attempt was acting in line with Western responses. He stresses that even though Russia was sympathetic to the Serbian cause, with whom it had historic connections, it was still reluctant to support Serbs unconditionally and had voted in favor of various sanctions on rump Yugoslavia. In his article, Bowker stresses that Russian foreign policy during the wars in the former Yugoslavia was not beyond criticism, but he also stresses that whatever Russia's foreign policy was, it was not acting unilaterally and in defiance of Western interests. He concludes with the argument that Russia's foreign policy in the Balkans was driven by *Realpolitik* rather than by morality. He adds that no Western country can be given credit for involvement in conflict resolution in Bosnia since in the end more than 300,000 people died and more than 2 million people were displaced during the war. According to Bowker, Russia, during the wars in the former Yugoslavia, showed that it was eager to cooperate with the Western powers in conflict resolution even when it faced its own domestic crises. This, according to Bowker, gives hope for future cooperation between Russia and the Western powers.

Vladimir Baranovsky, in the chapter titled "Russia: Reassessing National Interests,"<sup>14</sup> stated that developments in Kosovo in 1998 – 1999 influenced Russia's stance towards relations with the outside world more than any event since the end of the Cold War.

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<sup>13</sup> Mike Bowker, "The Wars in Yugoslavia: Russia and International Community," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.50, No.7, November 1998, p. 1245-1261.

<sup>14</sup> Vladimir Baranovsky, "Russia: Reassessing National Interests" in *Kosovo and the Challenge of Humanitarian Intervention: Selective Indignation, Collective Action, and International Citizenship*, edited by Albrecht Schnabel and Ramesh Thakur, Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2000, p.106.

Even though NATO's war in Kosovo raised the question of whether Russia should break all relations with NATO, this never happened since Russia knew that a political settlement of the Kosovo issue relied on interaction with NATO. Looking at relative and absolute gains, it was in Russia's interest to adapt to the already existent situation without breaking its ties with NATO completely. This came mainly from the fact that for Russia any possible status of Kosovo had universal implications. Since Russia is, according to Vladimir Baranovsky, a "status quo power," it is disturbed by the lack of efficiency of the international system and is trying to improve it by adapting itself to new realities.<sup>15</sup> He concludes the chapter by stating that the resolution of the Kosovo crisis in June 1999 had unexpectedly contributed to the rise of importance of Russia in the international arena.

Having briefly discussed the literature on the impacts of Russia's foreign policy toward resolution of the Kosovo crisis, the next part of this chapter will focus on the argument of the thesis.

### **1.3 Argument**

Unlike scholars who argue that the Kosovo crisis and the resolution of Kosovo's status sidelined Russia in the management of Balkan affairs, or those scholars who argue that Russia's foreign policy in Kosovo proved to be a great failure for Russia since relations with the West deteriorated due to the crisis in Kosovo, or those scholars who argue that the Russo-Western relationship in the Balkans was conflictual, this thesis argues that Russia was successful in establishing greater cooperation with the Western powers in managing and resolving conflicts in the Balkans and that the main aim behind cooperation in the conflict management was to secure Russia's international status. This thesis illustrates that overall Russia's foreign policy toward the Kosovo crisis shows the need to give Russia the place it longs for in the international arena, since greater international cooperation between the great powers in managing world affairs will bring a more stable international system.

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.107



The theoretical framework of the thesis is based on the neorealist assumption that states in the anarchical international system are in a constant state of competition with each other. But, unlike the traditional understanding that states compete only for hard power, this thesis will use as a framework the concept of the positional good developed by Fred Hirsch. In his book *Social Limits to Growth* (1976), he discussed, for the first time, the concept of positional goods. Positional goods are those goods that are scarce and can only be acquired by a few. The concept developed by Fred Hirsch<sup>16</sup> was discussed in the light of criticism of capitalism and is connected to how the capitalist market economy works.<sup>17</sup> John Nye concluded the problem of the positional goods by saying that "by ignoring the role of goods that are inherently limited or irreproducible in our measures of simple material inequality, we inevitably end up discussing the wrong issues. It is likely that as differences on important margins narrow, the most unequal efforts and expenditures will accrue to those margins that remain difficult to change."<sup>18</sup> The concept of positional goods can also be analyzed in relation to the states' behavior in the international system. This has been done by Thomas Ambrosio,<sup>19</sup> who has analyzed Russia's opposition to the war in Iraq.

Kenneth Waltz stated, "In international politics, overwhelming power repels and leads other states to balance it."<sup>20</sup> Christopher Layne went one step further with the neorealist assumption that a unipolar world will necessarily lead to a multipolar one when he stated that "the unipolar moment is just a geopolitical interlude that will give a way to

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<sup>16</sup> Fred Hirsch, *Social Limits to Growth*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976.

<sup>17</sup> Jack Bakunin, "The Failure of Individualism," *Christian Century*, 21 September 1977, p.813, <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=1179>.

<sup>18</sup> John V.C. Nye, "Irreducible Inequality," 1 April 2002, published on *The Library of Economics and Liberty* web page, <http://econlib.org/library/columns/Nyepositional.html> (accessed on 02.02.2008)

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Ambrosio, "The Russo-American Dispute Over the Invasion of Iraq: International Status and the Role of Positional Goods," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.57, No. 8, 1 December 2005, p.1189-1210.

<sup>20</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, "America as a Model for the World? A Foreign Policy Perspective," *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol.24, No.4, December 1991, p.669.

multipolarity between 2000 and 2010."<sup>21</sup> With power comes the prestige and status of a superpower, and in this respect the basic premises of realism can be taken as a framework for this thesis.

This thesis will also benefit from the structural realist understanding of international institutions. According to structural realists, states form and cooperate in international institutions because the institutions promote the interests of the particular member states. As long as states can promote their interest through international institutions, they will seek to be part of them. Cooperation, whose final aim is prolonging state interests, is how structural realists see international institutions.<sup>22</sup> Thus, institutions are not the form of world governance but are created by the consent of the individual states to obey the rules of the particular institution so that the institution can function.<sup>23</sup>

The neorealist argument contradicts that of liberal institutionalism's, whose basic premise is that cooperation in the anarchical world is possible due to our great economic interdependence. According to liberal institutionalism, international institutions play a big role in maintaining cooperation among the states.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, liberal institutionalism seems to have lost the battle in a neorealist – neoliberal debate that emerged after the publication of a John Mearsheimer article, entitled "The False Promise of International Institutions," where he basically argued that international institutions cannot cause peace in the world by affecting the behavior of individual states. This is not to say that the institutions do not provide the cooperation of individual states, since they admit that they do, but to the extent that they further individual powers' interests.<sup>25</sup> Since the liberal institutionalist argument does not provide a suitable framework for discussing Russian

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<sup>21</sup> Christopher Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Rise," *International Security*, Vol.17, No.4, Spring 1993, p.7.

<sup>22</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions," *International Security*, Vol.19, No.3, Winter 1994-1995, p.4.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9.

<sup>24</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, "The Realist Reply," *International Security*, Vol.20, No.1, Summer 1995, p.85.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p.86.

involvement in the resolution of the Kosovo crisis, a realist approach is used as a framework. The unsuitability of the international institutionalist theory, which was prominent during the Gorbachev era, is confirmed by Andrei P. Tsygankov, who stated that "international institutionalism is increasingly losing influence to a Russian variant of realism."<sup>26</sup>

In sum, this thesis argues that Russia's involvement in the resolution of the Kosovo conflict should be looked at from the perspective of Russia's desire to approach the superpower prestige of the United States, albeit without transforming the existing international system. In this respect, Russia was in favor of resolving Kosovo's status through international cooperation. And yet, while trying to acquire the prestige that can be considered as a positional good, Russia did not turn to the Cold War practice of confronting the West; instead, it tended to pursue a policy of cooperation. Taking into account that the United States, as the only superpower in the international arena, is faced with more and more international challenges that it is unable to combat alone, it is likely that Russia's prestige relative to the United States' will rise. In this respect, Russia's position in resolving the crisis in Kosovo has brought it more and more importance and made the Western powers take Russia's stance on Kosovo ever more seriously.

#### **1.4 Organization of the Chapters**

This thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter is an introductory one and addresses the scope, objective, and argument of the thesis.

The second chapter examines closely Russia's foreign policy toward Yugoslavia in the first half of the 1990s. The chapter traces the ways in which Russia dealt with the crisis that emerged with the dissolution of Yugoslavia. The first part of the chapter looks at the Soviet Union's response to Yugoslavia's dissolution. The second part focuses on Russia's foreign policy toward the former Yugoslavia until the beginning of 1994. The

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<sup>26</sup> Andrei P. Tsygankov, "From International Institutionalism to Revolutionary Expansionism: The Foreign Policy Discourse of Contemporary Russia," *Mershon International Studies Review*, Vol.41, No.2, November 1997, p.250-251.

third part analyzes Russia's foreign policy toward the former Yugoslavia starting from the beginning of 1994 until the end of the war in 1995.

The third chapter deals with the emergence of instabilities in Kosovo in 1998 and 1999. The first part of the chapter examines Russia's response to the emergence of unrest in Kosovo in 1998. The second part deals with the Russian response to the crisis and proposals made by Russia for conflict resolution in Kosovo. The focus in this part is on the Rambouillet Conference, proposals made during the conference, and Russia's stance toward the proposed settlement. The reasons that made Milošević refuse to sign the accords will also be evaluated. In the third part of the chapter, Russia's response to NATO's war in Kosovo will be examined. The final section of the chapter deals with Russia's role in ending the war.

The fourth chapter deals with the post-war settlement in Kosovo. First, the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and its implications are discussed. This section is followed by a discussion of the Russian seizure of Slatina Airport in Priština before the entrance of NATO ground troops into Kosovo. The third section deals with the constitutional framework for Kosovo and its implications. The last section deals with the change of the international environment after 11 September 2001 and the Russo-US rapprochement.

The fifth chapter focuses on the period that followed the March 2004 events. The first section discusses the implications of the March 2004 events and riots that followed. The second section deals with the international rearrangements for Kosovo that took place after the riots. It deals with the appointment of the former Finnish president Martii Ahtisaari as the United Nations Secretary-General's special envoy to Kosovo, whose task was to prepare a proposal for the resolution of the status of Kosovo. The section examines the main points of the Ahtisaari proposal and the reasons behind its failure to secure Russia's approval in the Security Council. Due to the failure to adopt the Ahtisaari plan, the last round of negotiations started in August 2007 with the Contact Group's appointment of a so-called "Troika" to coordinate negotiations between the

Kosovo Albanian and Serbian representatives. The Troika consisted of Russian, US, and EU representatives. Talks continued until 10 December 2007, when the "Troika" delivered its report to the UN Secretary-General. The last section of the chapter discusses the events that followed the end of negotiations and the Russian response to the unilateral proclamation of Kosovo's independence.

The sixth chapter is the final chapter of this work and will try to wrap up all the previously mentioned characteristics of Russian foreign policy toward the conflicts that emerged on the territory of the former Yugoslavia. It will argue that Russia's foreign policy during the years of Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin was driven by Russian national interest, which has aimed to regain international prestige in the existing international system.

## CHAPTER 2

### RUSSIA'S FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE WARS OF SECESSION IN YUGOSLAVIA

Russia's response to the Kosovo crisis was shaped by its response to the wars of secession in Yugoslavia, namely in Croatia and Bosnia between 1991 and 1995. For this reason, it is necessary to look at Russia's involvement in the Balkans during this period. This chapter will clearly show that Russia pursued a foreign policy that was more or less in line with that of the Western powers. This chapter will also show that Russia was not, as is usually thought, unconditionally supportive of Serbian interests. Russia had a need not to be excluded from the "common attempts to regulate the Bosnian problem."<sup>27</sup>

#### **2.1 The Soviet Union's Foreign Policy toward the Conflicts in Yugoslavia**

At the time the crisis erupted in Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union was on the verge of collapsing. Gorbachev's *perestroika* and *glasnost* policies did not produce the desired results and, in the end, became instruments that contributed to the demise of the Soviet regime. The New Thinking approach of Gorbachev and New World Order of George Bush were viewed as tools to be used for cooperation between the United States and Russia in the international arena. This cooperation worked well during the Kuwait crisis, and it was also extended to include the first stage of the Yugoslav crisis. Both Gorbachev and Bush took an anti-dissolution stance when the first signs of a crisis in Yugoslavia became obvious.

The Soviet Union's foreign policy course in support of the status quo was mainly due to the fact that Yugoslavia's breakup could have direct implications for the Soviet Union. To support the secession of various republics from Yugoslavia would entail

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<sup>27</sup> Andrei Kozyrev, Partnership is not Premature, It is Overdue, *Izvestiya*, 11 March 1994.

acknowledging the same rights and methods for the Soviet republics, which was not a goal of Gorbachev's *perestroika* and *glasnost* initiatives.

The Soviet Union's initial response to the emergence of conflict in Yugoslavia was in line with the United States' response, and that was against the recognition of independence for the Yugoslavian breakaway republics. Most European Union member states were also against recognizing the independence of the Yugoslav breakaway states of Slovenia and Croatia, except Germany, which recognized them unilaterally after they proclaimed their independence.

As the crises in Yugoslavia experienced interruptions and calms, Gorbachev seized the chance to take concrete steps to ensure the unity of Yugoslavia. On 6 July 1991, he sent a special envoy, Yulii Kivitsinsky, to Belgrade, Zagreb, and Ljubljana in an attempt to convince the democratically elected presidents of the respective republics to remain integral parts of Yugoslavia. On returning to Moscow, the mission reported to Gorbachev that the dissolution of Yugoslavia was unstoppable.<sup>28</sup>

When the talks conducted by Gorbachev's special envoy failed to bring about a positive result, the Soviet Union took another initiative to prevent Yugoslavia from falling apart. It helped formulate a joint statement, which was issued by the leaders of the Soviet Union and the United States, Michael Gorbachev and George Bush, on 31 July 1991 in Kiev. In the statement, both leaders spoke against unrest in Yugoslavia and also called for respect for the Helsinki Agreement.<sup>29</sup>

The Soviet Union was encouraged by the anti-dissolution stance of the United States, and this prompted Soviet leaders to take more concrete steps in their attempt to prevent the dissolution of Yugoslavia. On the evening of the August plot in 1991 in Moscow, Premier Pavlov's government issued a statement, which in essence was a hidden

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<sup>28</sup> Andrei Edemskii, "Russian Perspectives", in *International Perspectives on the Yugoslav Conflict*, edited by Alex Danchev and Thomas Halverson, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996, p.30

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p.30-31

warning to Germany, which was preparing to recognize Slovenia and Croatia as independent states. It warned "international factions against interference in Yugoslav internal affairs" and focused on the fact that there is an "unstable boundary between goodwill services and interference in internal affairs."<sup>30</sup> Later, during Yugoslavian Prime Minister Ante Marković's visit to Moscow, Gorbachev urged him to try to preserve the unity of Yugoslavia.<sup>31</sup>

In the fall of 1991, Gorbachev urged the international community to take a more active role in preventing the partition of Yugoslavia. Specifically, he urged the CSCE to take a more active stance in conflict resolution there. This led to a CSCE declaration, issued on 3 September 1992, which stated that "no territorial gains or changes within Yugoslavia, brought about by violence, are acceptable."<sup>32</sup>

In the fall of 1992, the Soviet Union declared it would cease further arms sales to Yugoslavia. This initiative was soon followed by the other great powers as well, when the United Nations Security Council unanimously approved Resolution 713 imposing an arms embargo on Yugoslavia as of 25 September 1992.

The last steps taken by Gorbachev, before the demise of the Soviet Union, to preserve the unity of Yugoslavia was during the visit of Franjo Tuđman and Slobodan Milošević to Moscow on 21 October 1991. Gorbachev hosted a meeting of the two leaders, hoping they would find a peaceful solution to the crisis in Yugoslavia. It seemed that Gorbachev succeeded, since at the end of the meeting a "Slavic Deal" was signed, but it was forgotten soon after the two leaders returned to Yugoslavia. According to some analysts, the unilateral move by Gorbachev may have served more as a message to his own people to stay together rather than as an attempt to keep Yugoslavia from unraveling. This assumption is not far from the truth since, during the short period when the Soviet Union

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>32</sup> UNSCR 713 also available on <http://www.sipri.org/contents/expcon/yugres713.html> (accessed on 5/11/2007)



tried to deal with the crisis in Yugoslavia, it could be noticed that it took measures which served its domestic interests – namely, keeping the Soviet Union together and making it more stable.

## **2.2 Post-Soviet Foreign Policy toward Former Yugoslavia during 1991 – 1993**

Immediately after the successful coup in Russia led by Boris Yeltsin that was followed by the dissolution of the Soviet Union, one of the main characteristics of the newly emerged Russian Federation's foreign policy became apparent. This was to cooperate with the West and follow its initiatives in conflict resolution in the Balkans. There were three main reasons for this. The first was that Yeltsin had no sympathy for Slobodan Milošević or his regime, which had supported Yeltsin's enemies during the August coup in Moscow. The second reason is that if Yeltsin were to support Milošević, he would be at variance with the national self-determinations that made him the first president of the Russian Federation. Thus, Russia was among the first to recognize the independence of Slovenia and Croatia; in fact, Russia did so two months before the United States. The third reason was that Yeltsin had neither time nor interest in actively finding a solution to the conflict in Yugoslavia, because Russia was facing the huge internal problems that came with its own economic "shock therapy." The immediate benefits of the transition to a market economy were not seen as quickly as expected by most Russians, and this caused great instability and problems throughout the Russian Federation.

While Yeltsin was coping with major economic and political changes at home, it is understandable why Russian foreign policy during the first year of independence under pro-liberal foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev tended to follow Western initiatives<sup>33</sup> in conflict resolutions.

Among the first Russian foreign policy initiatives regarding Yugoslavia, were Russian recognition of Slovenian independence, and that of Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina, in April and May 1992. Andrei Kozyrev signed an agreement with these newly

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<sup>33</sup> Janusz Bugajski, *op.cit.*, p.175.

independent states during his Balkan trip in mid 1992. Russia's recognition of the former Yugoslavian republics came as a shock to Belgrade, since it meant that Serbia could not count on unconditional support from Russia.

In the first week of May 1992, during a CSCE conference in Helsinki, Russia refused to join in the condemnation of Yugoslavia for its involvement in fighting in Croatia and Bosnia. It also refused to vote for the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the CSCE, instead proposing a principle called "empty chair," which was eventually adopted.<sup>34</sup> Yevgenii Gusarov, the diplomat who led the Russian delegation at the conference, wrote in an article published in the local Russian newspaper *Izvestia* that the Russian position was "not dictated by some pro-Serbian orientation or by any other urges to protect Belgrade," but rather it was driven by an understanding that expulsion of one country from the CSCE would not help conflict resolution. Russia hoped that distancing itself from other states that condemned Yugoslavia would enable it to more effectively influence the Milošević government in Belgrade.<sup>35</sup>

After the CSCE summit, a Russian delegation led by Andrei Kozyrev visited Yugoslavia and tried to negotiate a ceasefire in Sarajevo. The Russian delegation made it clear that Russian resistance to sanctions on Belgrade did not mean approval of Serbian policies in Bosnia. The immediate result of the Russian delegation was a temporary armistice called "Russian peace;" it was broken as soon as Kozyrev left the country. This finally obliged Russia to change its stance concerning the imposition of sanctions against Yugoslavia.

The interruption of peace negotiations with the Serbs was nothing new. When Gorbachev mediated a peace agreement in Moscow between Tuđman and Milošević, the two leaders broke it as soon as they left the country. This pattern continued and was the case for an armistice negotiated by Andrei Kozyrev in Belgrade in mid May 1992. Taking into account Russian outrage at the breaking of negotiated peace agreements, it

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<sup>34</sup> Branko Pribičević, "Relations with the Superpowers", in *Beyond Yugoslavia - Politics, Economics, and Culture in a Shattered Community* edited by: Sabrina P. Ramet, Ljubiša S. Adamović, Colorado: Westview Press, 1995, p.34.

<sup>35</sup> Celestine Bohlen, Russian Nationalists Protest Vote Against Serbia, *The New York Times*, 8 June 1992.

is understandable why on 30 May the Russian representative to the UN, Yulii Vorontsov, voted in favor of imposing economic sanctions on Belgrade. After the vote in the Security Council, the Russian delegation declared that Belgrade "brought upon itself the United Nations sanctions by failing to heed the demands of the international community."<sup>36</sup>

However, UN sanctions approved by Russia were not always welcomed in Russia itself. Many Russian foreign policy critiques have been written on the issue of Russia's betrayal of its historical friends. During a news conference on 5 June, a spokesman for the Russian foreign ministry, Sergei Yastrzhembsky, rebuffed charges that Russia's vote in favor of sanctions was against its interests. "We are attached to the tradition of friendly relations with all the Yugoslav republics," he said, adding that "a blind orientation" favoring only Serbs "cannot be the main criterion for a serious and responsible policy." "Real friends," he added, "should have honest relations, without any double standards. We are open and ready to support any initiative, no matter where it comes from, that aims at stopping fighting and at finding a political way out of the crisis."<sup>37</sup>

The Russian vote in favor of the Security Council resolution was criticized heavily in the Duma and by opposition parties as well. Russia's affirmative vote in favor of sanctions against Yugoslavia served as a legal<sup>38</sup> pretext for criticizing the government. This criticism was mainly a way for different factions in Russia to express their discontent with domestic policies. The general dissatisfaction with the Russian Federation's foreign policy toward Yugoslavian conflicts changed slightly on 26 June 1992 when the Supreme Soviet discussed the Yugoslav matter. The discussion ended with the adoption of a resolution on the Yugoslav matter that was later sent to the government as a set of recommendations on how to deal with the conflict in Yugoslavia. The head of a

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<sup>36</sup> Paul Lewis, UN votes 13-0 for Embargo on Trade with Yugoslavia; Air Travel and Oil Curbed, *The New York Times*, 31 May 1992.

<sup>37</sup> Celestine Bohlen, Russian Nationalists Protest Vote Against Serbia, *The New York Times*, 8 June 1992

<sup>38</sup> Andrei Edemskii, *op.cit.*, p.35.

parliamentary committee for international affairs, Yevgenii Ambartsumov, at the parliamentary session stated that Russia was "an independent state with its own national interests," implying that Russia should not follow the West if it was against its interests. The deputies in a resolution advised the government to "take a more balanced stance toward all parties involved in the conflict," and it also underlined that Russia should be against "armed intervention of any state or group of states in the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina under any pretext."<sup>39</sup> Since that time, Russian foreign policy has been more or less in line with the recommendations written in the memorandum on the Yugoslav matter.

In August 1992, Russian diplomacy was involved in various activities in the United Nations. Russian diplomats sponsored and cosponsored various Security Council resolutions at its special sessions.<sup>40</sup> Russian diplomats tried to prevent any military action against Serbs and to show Russia as an important actor trying to find a political solution to any crisis in Yugoslavia. Because of Russia's vital and active involvement in the United Nations, it was not only invited to take part in the London Conference, which had been organized as a European Community and United Nations enterprise in the last week of August 1992, but it was also considered as a major player there. The London Conference was set up to replace the European Community's conference on Yugoslavia, which had brought no solution to the crisis. Through the older conference, Europe had shown itself to be incapable of dealing with the crisis in its own backyard. During the London Conference, the great powers were unable to agree on a detailed plan to put an end to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, but instead they decided on some fragile steps that aimed at a temporary ceasefire. Banning all military flights over Bosnia and obliging Serbs to remove heavy artillery from Sarajevo were just two of the measures decided. Finally, the great powers agreed that the UN would supervise the removal of heavy artillery. But, as Noel Malcolm wrote in his book *Bosnia: A Short History*, the

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<sup>39</sup> See "Yugoslavia in flames," Moscow, 1992, pp.235 cited in Andrei Edemskii, *op.cit.*, p.36.

<sup>40</sup> Andrei Edemskii, *op.cit.*, p.36.

UN supervisors "were allowed to look over the artillery pieces above Sarajevo every day while they were being fired."<sup>41</sup>

United Nations Security Council Resolution 781, passed on 9 October, aimed at establishing no-fly zones in order to secure the safety of humanitarian flights to Bosnia. Resolution 781 aimed at securing the agreement decided by the London Conference; however, it lacked enforcement power. Thus, the resolution, which approved the deployment of UNPROFOR forces in Croatia and Bosnia, proved to be highly ineffective, and in some cases counterproductive. UNPROFOR soldiers were lightly armed and only authorized to use arms in self-defense. As a result, these soldiers were often taken as hostages by Serbian forces and used to blackmail the international community. Due to the presence of European UNPROFOR forces on the ground, military aerial intervention backed by the United States was blocked not only by Russia but also by Britain and France, who had the largest number of ground troops in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Russian foreign policy changed after the London Conference and tried for some new objectives: the former Yugoslavia's borders should remain as is, and in case the internal borders changed, the rights and special status of national minorities should be ensured. In addition, Russia insisted on the non-recognition of territorial gains by force, and it sought an end to ethnic cleansing. In addition, Andrei Kozyrev proposed strict international monitoring of the situation in the former Yugoslavia, and he did not rule out the possible use of punitive actions against those who violated those principles.<sup>42</sup> In accordance with Russia's objectives, in October and November 1992, Russia voted in favor of resolutions that approved investigations of violations of international humanitarian law, and it also voted to tighten the economic embargo on Serbia and Montenegro.

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<sup>41</sup> Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History*, London: Papermac 1994, pp.246.

<sup>42</sup> *ITAR-TASS*, 28 August 1992, series SE, p.7, cited in Andrei Edemskii, *op.cit.*, p.37.

While trying to achieve the above-stated objectives, Russian diplomats, during meetings with other great powers representatives involved in conflict resolution, used well-defined national policies in order to secure their objectives as defined after the London Conference. First, Russia strongly insisted that all sides of the conflict should bear responsibility for the conflict's final results and should therefore cooperate to find solutions. Second, Russian diplomats did their best to steer any decisions affecting the former Yugoslavia to the Security Council, where Russia had veto power.<sup>43</sup>

Another important aspect of Russian foreign policy at this time was an encouragement of democratic change in rump Yugoslavia. Moscow thought that the establishment of a democratic regime would bring the wars in the country to an end. This is the main reason that Russia gave all of its support to the pro-Western Milan Panić during the buildup to December 1992 elections in Yugoslavia. In addition, Yevgenii Ambartsumov made a speech to the European Parliament in October 1992, asking for European Union support for democratic changes in Yugoslavia. However, after the electoral defeat of Panić, Russia's foreign policy options for conflict resolution in former Yugoslavia became narrower.

Following Panić's defeat, Russia made a greater diplomatic effort to establish a position in the international community and to treat the Belgrade and Bosnian regimes as separate, independent actors. Slobodan Milošević made this task easy for them, since by the beginning of 1993 he had begun to distance himself from the Bosnian Serbs as he distanced himself from the Kraina Serbs in 1992. He did so mainly because Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadžić had started to attract the sympathies of more and more Serbs from both sides of the Drina River. The rise in prestige of Karadžić, combined with the fact that no support for the Bosnian Serbs would be possible without putting mainland Serbia in danger of large-scale wars, was more than enough to make Milošević back away from the Bosnian Serbs<sup>44</sup>. Another important factor in Milošević's decision is

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<sup>43</sup> Andrei Edemskii, *op.cit.*, p.37.

<sup>44</sup> Tim Judah, *The Serbs: History, Myth and the Destruction of Yugoslavia*, New Haven : Yale University Press, 2000, pp.298.

that he wanted to concentrate all power in his own hands. Hence, there could be no close cooperation between him and Karadžić. To save his power in Serbia, Milošević decided to distance himself from the Bosnian Serb leadership and opted for cooperation with the international community. Russia welcomed such a move, since it could now start to exploit its historic connections with Serbs to make itself an important and influential actor in the conflict resolution.

During the Geneva Conference of 10 January 1993, Russia was given an opportunity to show that the Belgrade regime and Bosnian Serbs should be treated differently among all the involved parties. Before the conference, Milošević publicly denied that his regime was supporting the Bosnian Serb leadership.<sup>45</sup> During the Geneva Conference, the first draft of the Vance-Owen peace plan was presented. The plan aimed at dividing Bosnia into ten ethnically clean cantons. Russia was one of the major supporters of the plan, and a great deal of effort was spent on adjusting the plan so that all parties would be ready to accept it.

The United States actively followed developments in the preparation of the Vance-Owen plan and even tried to find a solution on its own side, since pressure that something be done was growing among US public opinion. The United States Secretary of State Warren Christopher in his first trip to Europe tried to make the European powers and Russia sympathetic to the United States policy of "lift and strike," which basically consisted of lifting the arms embargo on Croatia and Bosnia, arming them, and then helping them, using air force, to expel Serbian forces from their land. But the proposal was rejected in all European capitals and also by Russia, since all those powers had UNPROFOR forces on the ground and did not want to risk the lives of their soldiers. Even though the "lift and strike" proposal was rejected, the aggressive stance of the United States and its willingness to raise the arms embargo imposed on Bosnia and Croatia remained. It is due to this stance of the United States that Russia's pressure for a diplomatic solution increased during international conferences on the former

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<sup>45</sup> David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey*, London: Indigo, 1996, p.103.

Yugoslavia.<sup>46</sup> To this aim, Russia adopted its own conflict resolution proposal and presented it in February 1993 in the United Nations Security Council. The main elements of Russia's eight-point plan for conflict resolution in the former Yugoslavia were presented by the Russian ambassador to United Nations, Yulii Vorontsov. Its most important points were: a new and tightly controlled embargo on Bosnia, sanctions against Croatia in the case of instability in the self-proclaimed Kraina Serb Republic, and finally, and most important, a strong commitment to the Vance-Owen plan and a Russian promise to deploy its troops in the peace implementation.<sup>47</sup>

On 9 March 1993, Boris Yeltsin stated that "Russia would not protect those who set themselves against the international community" and warned of a danger of "severe retaliation by the international community" against those who "stake their position by using force." This statement by the Russian president was further proof that Russia was interested in crisis regulation, which was in line with the already existent Vance-Owen plan. In the same statement Yeltsin proposed a second London Conference and declared the necessity to "dot the i's and cross the t's in the Bosnian drama."<sup>48</sup> According to Susan L. Woodward, the Russian delegation argued that deadlock over the Vance-Owen peace plan, which emerged in February 1992 and lasted until its demise, was the result of the lack of cooperation between the great powers with regard to conflict resolution in Bosnia.<sup>49</sup> In order to assure the other powers, and especially the United States, of the need for more cooperation between the great powers, Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev during his visit to Belgrade on 19 May said that the "Vance-Owen plan is not the end of the road, but a mechanism to reach peace," and he added, "I am encouraging the United

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<sup>46</sup> James Gow, *op.cit.*, p.196-197.

<sup>47</sup> Eight points were first published in *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 26 February 1993, cited in James Gow, p.198.

<sup>48</sup> *ITAR-TASS*, 10 March 1993, cited in Andrei Edemskii, *op.cit.*, p.40.

<sup>49</sup> Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War*, Washington, D.C. : Brookings Institution, 1995, p.308.



States not to lose the momentum created by the Vance-Owen plan being approved by everyone, including Mr. Milošević."<sup>50</sup>

However, as Russia was trying to secure great power support for the Vance-Owen plan, the Bosnian Serbs rejected it. Russia had not expected this, but it still was not prepared to give up on the plan completely, as it did not want to give the United States a chance to put forward a new plan that might include the use of force. Therefore, Russia quickly proposed another plan based on the Vance-Owen plan. The Russian proposal was called "progressive implementation" of the Vance-Owen plan and was based on step-by-step deployment of forces in Bosnia in the regions controlled by the Bosnian-Croat federation. In addition to this, the Russian proposal called for the establishment of "safety zones" in the regions, where eventually soldiers would be deployed. Russia was ready to deploy its own troops as well.<sup>51</sup> As soon as the plan was proposed, it was rejected by the United States.

Russia was not only involved in finding solutions for the war in Bosnia, but it was also actively involved in finding a permanent solution for the very fragile situation in Croatia. While negotiations on the Vance-Owen peace plan were still going on among the great powers, in the middle of May 1992, Russian representatives to the United Nations proposed to re-approach the talks between the Croats and the self-proclaimed Serb Republic of Kraina. This was a very important move, since it reminded the international community that, even though it was less brutal and disastrous, a conflict between Serbs and Croats was still going on. Russia was in favor of directing negotiations between the parties and finding a compromise solution to the conflict in Croatia. The decision of Russia to pay attention to the conflict in Croatia shows that Russia was very eager, maybe even more than the other powers involved in conflict resolution, to find a solution to all disputes in the former Yugoslavia as soon as possible and to provide mutual satisfaction to all involved parties.

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<sup>50</sup> Craig R. Whitney, "Russian Official Insists Serbia Still Backs Vance Owen Peace Plan," *The New York Times*, 19 May 1993.

<sup>51</sup> James Gow, *op.cit.*, p.198-199.

By the end of May 1992, as the United States rejected both the Vance-Owen plan and the Russian proposal for partial implementation of the same plan, Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev proposed a meeting in New York between the great powers involved in the conflict resolution to discuss the ever-growing crisis in Bosnia. The United States Secretary of State rejected the proposed meeting of foreign ministers of the great powers in New York but instead proposed a meeting in Washington on 22 May 1992.<sup>52</sup> The meeting, according to Susan Woodward, was used as a precedent for the United States' active involvement in the conflict resolution "in order to prevent Russian from getting out in front."<sup>53</sup> The foreign ministers in Washington agreed to sign a joint action plan that eventually became known as the Washington Declaration<sup>54</sup>. The declaration officially became an alternative to the Vance-Owen plan, since it became clear that the plan would be rejected by the United States by the time of the meeting. The joint action plan was described by Joyce P. Kaufman as an "other failure by the West to address the situation as well as assuring the rapid demise of the Vance-Owen peace plan as a way to end the conflict. The war in Bosnia was destined to continue."<sup>55</sup>

In his book *Balkan Odyssey*, Lord Owen wrote that "the State Department quite separately admitted that they had been nervous about the draft statement because it was a Russian initiative and they were suspicious of Russian motives."<sup>56</sup> This statement of a State Department employee – together with Warren Christopher's refusal to meet foreign leaders in New York, as originally proposed by Andrei Kozyrev, but to meet them in Washington – clearly shows that the United States was more concerned about

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<sup>52</sup> Joyce P. Kaufman, *NATO and the Former Yugoslavia; Crisis, Conflict, and the Atlantic Alliance*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002, p.102.

<sup>53</sup> Susan L. Woodward, *op.cit.*, p.309.

<sup>54</sup> <http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/ERC/briefing/dossec/1993/9305/930522dossec.html> announcement of *The Joint Action Program*, statement by Warren Christopher, 22 May 1993.

<sup>55</sup> Joyce P. Kaufman, *op.cit.*, p.103.

<sup>56</sup> David Owen, *op.cit.*, p.100.

the peace proposal's coming from Russia than in finding a solution to the wars in the former Yugoslavia.

The Vance-Owen peace plan was officially proclaimed dead in June 1993, and the conflict in Bosnia continued with ever greater brutality. The failure of the Vance-Owen plan to secure support from the United States was not the end of Russian efforts to find a solution for the conflict, but it was, as James Gow argues, a lost chance by the West to embrace Russia in common crisis management.<sup>57</sup> Russia continued to make efforts to find a solution to the crisis in the former Yugoslavia, and it continued to cooperate with the West in crisis management, but the way of cooperation was to be changed. On the other hand, the United States became actively involved in crisis management in the former Yugoslavia with the signing of the Washington Declaration. Its involvement was understood in Russia as more of a reaction to Russian international involvement in conflict resolution than a mere wish to resolve the conflict. The United States' involvement would not be well received by Russia, which until the end of 1993 had spent much diplomatic effort in dealing with the Yugoslav crisis.

Another Russian attempt to find a solution to the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina occurred on 4 June 1993, when Russia voted in favor of United Nations Security Council Resolution 836, authorizing the use of force in order to defend the safe areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The resolution authorized all member states to use force in order to support UNPROFOR ground forces. Russian consent for the adoption of this resolution is important, since it shows that Russia was ready to support any action that would help to end the conflict in Bosnia.

In conclusion, foreign policy initiatives, starting from the first days of the Russian Federation's independence, slowly and tentatively developed to eventually evolve as full-fledged policies of the Russian Federation toward resolution of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. The Russian foreign ministry was actively involved in conflict resolution in the former Yugoslavia, even though the foreign policy objectives of the

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<sup>57</sup> James Gow, *op.cit.*, p.259.

newly emerged Russia were not clearly defined, nor was its national interest. At the beginning of the Yugoslav conflict, Russia was a state trying to define its domestic policy objectives and at the same time trying to define its place in the international arena. Foreign policy objectives, developed during the first years of independence under Andrei Kozyrev, were not to be radically changed, but what was to change, starting from 1994, was the way that Russia's foreign policy objectives were to be achieved due to the redefinition of Russian national interest.

The change in the way the Russian foreign ministry started to pursue its foreign policy objectives in relation to the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia happened after the Russian parliament changed in the December 1993 election.<sup>58</sup> However, to argue that changes in the parliament obliged Russia to take more assertive foreign policy initiatives would be wrong. Conflicts in Yugoslavia erupted before Russian independence, and in the first years of Russian involvement in the conflict resolution, all foreign policy initiatives that Russia took in conflict resolution were tentative, driven by the will to cooperate with other powers in order to secure its place in the international arena. By the end of 1993, the Russian foreign ministry had started to distance itself from liberal institutionalism and moved toward liberal pragmatism. Thus, at the end of 1993, Russia took more pragmatic steps in conflict resolution in the former Yugoslavia.

### **2.3 Russian Foreign Policy toward Former Yugoslavia during 1994 – 1995**

President Yeltsin, after meeting George Bush on 3 January 1993, proclaimed that "we want to try to draw the line on the armistice in Serbia and in Yugoslavia in general," and he remarked, "We will be more active than before."<sup>59</sup> This statement by Boris Yeltsin early in 1993 can be used to describe the more independent Russian involvement in the conflict resolution in former Yugoslavia, even though real change in Russian foreign policy took place toward the end of the year.

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<sup>58</sup> J. Adams, "Legislature asserts its role in Russian Foreign Policy," *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol.2, No.4, 22 January 1993.

<sup>59</sup> *Diplomaticheskii vestnik*, nos.1-2, 1993, p.28, cited in Andrei Edemskii, *op.cit.*, p.41.

Russian foreign policy toward the Yugoslav conflict changed at the end of 1993,<sup>60</sup> and this came about as a consequence of two events.<sup>61</sup> The first is related to the changes in the parliament that occurred during the December 1993 elections. In the elections, ultranationalist Vladimir Zhirinovski and his Democratic Party won the majority of seats. This was an important development in Russian domestic politics, and it affected the foreign ministry. Before the parliamentary elections, Zhirinovski had criticized the Russian foreign minister, Andrei Kozyrev, on various occasions for not supporting his Orthodox Slav brothers in the Balkans. Zhirinovski's harsh rhetoric was a way of showing his dissatisfaction with Russia's status in the world. He wanted to make Russia as great as it was at the peak of its empire. By criticizing Andrei Kozyrev, he was actually criticizing the weak Russian state in the first years that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>62</sup>

The second significant event that had a vital role in changing Russian foreign policy was the inefficient economic transition. Russia had hoped that it would be supported by Western monetary institutions to a much greater extent. Insufficient Western support for the Russian transition left Russia alone to deal with its economic problems.<sup>63</sup>

Thus, change in the parliament and insufficient Western support for the Russian transition urged the government to follow a more pragmatic foreign policy and made

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<sup>60</sup> Andrei Kozyrev, "Lagging Partnership", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.73, No.3, May/June 1994. The reorientation in Russian foreign policy was becoming more and more obvious since the spring of 1993. In his article "Lagging Partnership" Andrei Kozyrev acknowledged that Russian foreign policy was ought to be more assertive and more independent. He also added that "the only policy with any chance of success is one that recognizes the equal rights and mutual benefit of partnership for, Russia and the West, as well as the status and significance of Russia as a world power."p.61

<sup>60</sup> See James Gow, *op. cit.*, p.201 and Jim Headley, *op.cit.*, p.290.

<sup>61</sup> See James Gow, *op.cit.*, p.201 and Jim Headley, "Sarajevo, February 1994: the first Russia NATO Crisis of the post-Cold War era," *Review of international studies*, Vol.29, No,2, 2003, p.290.

<sup>62</sup> See J.B.K. Lough, "Constraints on Russian Responses to the Yugoslav Crisis," Occasional Brief 22, *Conflict Studies Research Centre*, RMA Sandhurst, June 1993, cited in James Gow, *op.cit.*, p.189. Here is presented an idea that there was a greater need for Russia to oppose the West than to stand up for fellow Slavs.

<sup>63</sup> James Gow, *op.cit.*, p.191.

Russia more assertive about regaining great power status and pursuing its national interest.<sup>64</sup> Russian national interests, as Jim Headley put it, "did not necessarily coincide with the Western states; on the contrary, it was assumed that as a great power Russia would have to compete with other great powers to protect its perceived interests and assert its power."<sup>65</sup>

A chance for Russia to prove its great power status internationally showed up with the intensification of the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1994. The first serious crisis in Bosnia in 1994 occurred on 5 February when a bomb fell on Markale marketplace in Sarajevo killing 68 people and wounding over 200 more. The event was condemned by the Russian Foreign Ministry, which stated that "those guilty of this atrocity, whoever they are, must be severely punished." The ministry also called for an objective investigation so that the guilty party could be found.<sup>66</sup> In an article published in the newspaper *Izvestia* on 8 February, Andrei Kozyrev called for the international community not to be driven by emotions and to be careful, so that the events of 1914 would not be repeated.<sup>67</sup>

Because of Russian warnings to their Western partners not to jump to conclusions about who had thrown the bomb, UNPROFOR conducted an investigation, which included a Russian representative. The investigation concluded that both Bosnian and Serbian sides could have thrown the bomb. After the announcement of the UNPROFOR results, NATO issued an ultimatum on 9 February, stating that all sides should hand in their heavy artillery to UNPROFOR forces within ten days, or they would be targeted by

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<sup>64</sup> James Gow, *op.cit.*, p.185, "Moscow, ironically was evolving towards a more differentiated policy in which cooperation with the west was downgraded and subjected to considerations of Russia's influence and status." On page 186, Gow argues that by 1994 Russian foreign policy moved away from unhindered internationalism to renationalized foreign policy.

<sup>65</sup> Jim Headley, *op.cit.*, p.291.

<sup>66</sup> SWB, SU/1917 B8 9, February 1994.

<sup>67</sup> M.Iusin, Posle tragedii v Sarajevo NATO skloniaetsia k rashitel`nym deystviam protiv serbov, Moskva prizyvaet k sderzhanosti, *Izvestia*, 8 February 1994, cited in Andrei Edemski, *op.cit.*, p.38

NATO air strikes. The ultimatum marked the beginning of a more active, and also more independent, Russian involvement in conflict resolution in Bosnia.

Considering that Russia was unhappy with NATO's continued existence after the end of the Cold War, it is understandable why the Russian foreign ministry was highly critical of the NATO ultimatum. It was taken as an offence by Russia since they were not consulted by NATO nor by the United Nations Secretary-General, who appealed to NATO in the name of the UN for help. Even though, a year before, Russia had approved a resolution in the Security Council that explicitly gave NATO the right to secure and help the UNPROFOR forces on the ground if needed, Russia now fiercely opposed it. As Jim Headley maintains, this happened mainly because Russia was sidelined from the decision-making process. According to Headley, no other explanation is possible, since Russia had no reason to oppose any of the provisions in the NATO ultimatum, except the fact that it had been issued by NATO. Russia, two weeks before the bomb fell on the marketplace, was urging at international meetings the demilitarization of safe areas in Bosnia.<sup>68</sup> Thus, Russia's main concern was its marginalization in the international arena as well as the denial to it of great power status, which as was mentioned earlier were the most important objectives of Russian national interest.

Boris Yeltsin clearly showed what Russia's concern was in relation to the NATO ultimatum during British Prime Minister John Major's visit to Moscow on 15 February. Yeltsin told Major that Russia "will not allow this problem to be resolved without Russia's participation. We will work towards having this problem resolved at the negotiating table."<sup>69</sup> In addition to this comment on the conflict in Bosnia, Yeltsin clearly stated on Radio *Rossii* on 16 February that "certain people are trying to decide on Bosnian questions without Russia's participation. We will not allow this to happen."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Jim Headley, *op.cit.*, p.291.

<sup>69</sup> *Izvestia*, 16 February 1994 cited in Jim Headley, *op.cit.*

<sup>70</sup> *Radio rossii*(February 16 1994) in FBIS-SOI(17 February,1004), p.4.

Though it did not approve the ultimatum issued by NATO, Russia understood the seriousness of the situation. This is why it tried, by using mediation, to make the Serbs remove their heavy artillery and thus escape bombardment. Vitaly Churkin, Russian special envoy for the Balkans, was chosen as a mediator and sent to Sarajevo with a proposal from President Boris Yeltsin. Radovan Karadžić assured Churkin of the removal of the Serbian heavy artillery.<sup>71</sup> In order to watch the removal of the artillery and to assure Bosnian Serbs of their good intentions, Russian UNPROFOR soldiers were unilaterally moved from Kraina to Sarajevo.

Vitaly Churkin, Russia's mediator in Bosnia and Herzegovina, who had also been actively holding meetings with the Bosnian Serb leadership in Pale and Serbia's leaders in Belgrade, said on Russian television that he was certain that the danger of a NATO air strike had been averted. "One can say that any air strikes on Bosnian Serbian positions can be ruled out for the very simple reason that there will be no targets for such strikes."<sup>72</sup>

Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, on his visit to Athens on 18 February, said, "The Bosnian Serbs have agreed to withdraw all heavy artillery due to the appeals of President Yeltsin and promises of Russian peacekeeping troops in the area. We, therefore, expect our Western partners to encourage the other side to withdraw their weapons. It is time for them to act rather than talk about ultimatums."<sup>73</sup>

The Russian response to the NATO ultimatum in February 1994 was to be very similar to Russian responses to NATO bombings in Bosnia in the summer of 1995, just as it resembled Russian responses to NATO bombings in Kosovo in 1999.<sup>74</sup> Thus, the Russian response to NATO bombings in Kosovo was to be shaped during the war in Bosnia.

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<sup>71</sup> Jim Headley, *op.cit.*, p.219.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>73</sup> Celestine Bohlen, Russia's Balkan Card, *The New York Times*, 18 February 1994.

<sup>74</sup> Jim Headley, *op.cit.*, p.209.



After its successful mediation in Sarajevo, Russia hoped to demonstrate to the other powers that diplomacy could prevail over the use of force. But the Western powers were looking at the matter from quite a different perspective. They thought the Bosnian Serbs had turned in their heavy artillery because of the threat of the use of force. Whatever the real reason behind the Bosnian Serb compliance, it was not to last for long, since another crisis emerged in the safe area of Goražde. The crisis in Goražde occurred when the enclave there was subjected to constant Bosnian Serb attacks<sup>75</sup> and asked for NATO air protection. NATO again issued an ultimatum for Serbian forces to withdraw. When it was rejected, NATO conducted a first round of air strikes on 10 April.

The initial Russian response came from President Boris Yeltsin, who stated that strikes could mean "eternal war" in the Balkans.<sup>76</sup> But Yeltsin's words were directed more toward a domestic audience and intended to show Russian discontent for not being consulted yet again before strikes were threatened. In spite of the Russian outrage, Vitaly Churkin was again sent to Bosnia to try to convince the Bosnian Serbs to back off, but it was in vain. Churkin's mediation try was ignored. This brought additional humiliation to Russia, which claimed to be the only great power that could exert influence on the Serbs. Thus, due to the humiliation caused by Serbian indifference to Russia's attempted mediation in Goražde, Russia gave its consent for the second round of NATO air strikes in Goražde.<sup>77</sup> When the Bosnian Serbs heard of Russia's consent to these air strikes, they decided to concede to NATO's demands.<sup>78</sup>

An important development in the international handling of the Bosnian crisis took place in April 1994 when the Contact Group for Bosnia – composed of Russia, the United States, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom – was established. The main reason

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<sup>75</sup> Raymond Tanter and John Psarouthakis, *Balancing in the Balkans*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999, p.66.

<sup>76</sup> *Pravda*, 13 April 1994.

<sup>77</sup> Mike Bowker, *op.cit.*, p.1253.

<sup>78</sup> Roger Cohen, Conflict in the Balkans, UN says Serbian Leaders Agree to Accept a Cease Fire, *The New York Times*, 23 April 1994.

behind the establishment of the Contact Group lies in the need of the great powers to cooperate more effectively in conflict resolution in the former Yugoslavia<sup>79</sup>. Another reason for establishment of the Contact Group lies in the fact that the great powers did not want to jeopardize their mutual cooperation because of the different approaches they had to conflict resolution in the former Yugoslavia. By forming the Contact Group, the great powers wanted to smooth those differences between themselves. The Contact Group was to play an important role in the status settlement in Kosovo that will be discussed in the following chapters.

In May 1994, the Contact Group made its own peace proposal, which, like previous peace proposals, was based on an ethno-territorial division. According to this plan, Bosnian Serbs were assigned 49 percent of the Bosnian territory, while 51 percent was assigned to the Bosnian-Croat federation. What was special about this plan is that it could only be accepted or rejected as is, with no additional negotiations allowed. The plan was presented to the concerned parties in July 1994 and was immediately rejected by the Bosnian Serbs. As soon as this happened, Slobodan Milošević agreed to cut economic supplies to the Bosnian Serbs via the Drina River. This was a signal that the Milošević regime was willing to cooperate more with the international community. This move by Milošević persuaded the Russian foreign minister to describe him as the "leader of a peace party," and Russia proceeded to press for the lifting of economic sanctions against Belgrade in the Security Council.<sup>80</sup>

Nevertheless, the Crisis Group peace plan was rejected by the Bosnian Serbs, although it was not completely dismissed, as will be seen later in 1995 when a framework of the same Contact Group plan was adopted in the final settlement of the Bosnian conflict that was signed in Dayton.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Joyce P. Kaufman, *op.cit.*, p.111.

<sup>80</sup> Mike Bowker, *op.cit.*, p.1253.

<sup>81</sup> Joyce P. Kaufman, *op.cit.*, p.112.

During the NATO bombings of Bosnian Serb positions around Sarajevo in August 1994, Radovan Karadžić appealed to Russia, calling for "total war," but he received no response. The Russian daily newspaper *Izvestia* wrote about this situation that "one gets the impression that the Bosnian Serb leaders have utterly discredited themselves in the eyes of Russian foreign policy makers, and that henceforth the Kremlin intends to deal only with Slobodan Milošević."<sup>82</sup> Further proof for this Russian stance came during Andrei Kozyrev's visit to Belgrade, where he stated on 28 August, "Serbian President Slobodan Milošević was firm in his intentions" and repeated that Bosnian Serbs were "given all possible guarantees, both with regard to borders and the future state organization of the Bosnian Serb Republic". After the visit to Belgrade, Kozyrev tried to persuade members of the Contact Group that it was very important for the international community to give its full support to the Serbian President Slobodan Milošević.<sup>83</sup>

The situation in Bosnia deteriorated in May 1995 when 300 UNPROFOR soldiers, including 13 Russian soldiers, were kidnapped by Bosnian Serb forces as a response to NATO strikes around Sarajevo. This was a great humiliation for the UN and NATO and the main reason why the United States acted unilaterally in order to bring the conflict in Bosnia to an end. From 30 August, the NATO action "Deliberate Force" was launched. Two weeks after the beginning of the NATO action, Bosnian Serbs withdrew from Sarajevo and proclaimed that they were ready to negotiate. Russian demands for the end of NATO strikes were ignored by the United States. Russia condemned the NATO strikes by saying that "Bosnian Serbs were threatened by NATO genocide."<sup>84</sup>

A cease fire in Bosnia was signed on 5 October 1995, in the absence of a Russian representative, and was followed by the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords and their ratification in Paris on 15 December 1995.<sup>85</sup> One of the provisions of the Dayton Peace

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<sup>82</sup> *Izvestiya*, 9 August 1994, cited in Mike Bowker, *op.cit.*, p.1253.

<sup>83</sup> Milan Milosević, "The Eurasian Internationale, The Beginning of Spring," *Vreme News Digest Agency*, No 163, November 7, 1994.

<sup>84</sup> *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 14 September 1995, cited in Mike Bowker, *op.cit.*, p.1255.

<sup>85</sup> Mike Bowker, *op.cit.*, p.1254.

Accords was the deployment of around 55,000 soldiers under IFOR (Implementation Forces), of which 20,000 were to be American and 1,400 Russian. Even though Russia did not approve of the way the United States ended the war, it took an active part in IFOR in Bosnia. IFOR was under NATO command, but Russian forces, in order not to be under NATO command, signed a separate agreement with the United States so that their troops were under the United States' command. The military cooperation established in Bosnia was to set a precedent for future cooperation in Kosovo after NATO's war in Kosovo ended in June 1999.

To sum up, Russia's experience with the crises in Bosnia was to shape Russia's response to the crisis that emerged in Kosovo three years later. Much diplomatic effort had been spent by Russia in order to find a solution to the wars that emerged with the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Even though there had been much speculation about Russia's help to their "orthodox Serb brothers," that had not been the major characteristic of Russian involvement in crisis management in Croatia and Bosnia. At most crucial moments in the conflict management, Russia had supported Western initiatives and had presented its own proposals as well. Thus, it was clear from Russian involvement in the crisis management in Croatia and Bosnia that Russia wanted to preserve its influence in the Balkans on the one hand, and on the other hand it wanted its share of international prestige, which it sought as being the natural right of Russia as a great power.

Having discussed the Russian role in the conflict that emerged with the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the beginning of the 1990s, the next chapter will first deal with the conflict in Kosovo that emerged between Kosovo Albanians and Serbs and the international response to the crisis. Second, it will look at Russia's role during the Rambouillet negotiations and analyze Russia's response to NATO's war in Kosovo in March 1999. Finally, the next chapter will look closely at the significance of Russian mediation in ending NATO's war in Kosovo and the reasons behind the determination of Russia to help end the crisis.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RUSSIA'S FOREIGN POLICY AND THE WAR IN KOSOVO, 1998 – 1999**

By the end of 1998, Kosovo was becoming an international problem. It had been the first autonomous region in the former Yugoslavia to seek independence, even before Croatia, Slovenia, and the other republics. But none of the great powers could understand that Kosovo's needs might be more urgent than the problems of Croatia and Bosnia. Thus, they failed to address Kosovo's situation while addressing that of the other republics during the Dayton peace negotiations.

It was not until Albanian guerillas started to attack Serbian police forces in Kosovo and the Serbs decided to punish them that the problem became known all over the world. Finally, both the Western powers and Russia cooperated to put an end to the conflict that was growing in Kosovo in 1998. This chapter will look at Russia's role in resolving the Kosovo conflict. First, it will explore the Russian response to the Kosovo crisis and Russian diplomatic efforts to find a suitable solution to the crisis. Then Russia's role in the Rambouillet negotiations will be discussed, and Russia's stance toward NATO's war in Kosovo and the hidden meanings of NATO's war for Russia will be analyzed. Finally, Russia's role in ending the NATO bombardment and its international implications will be investigated.

#### **3.1 Russian Response to the Kosovo Crisis**

None of the great powers expected Kosovo to become as great a problem for the international community as it became, even though Kosovo was one of the largest problems in Tito's Yugoslavia. The Serbian government, which controlled Kosovo, never managed to make this province compatible with other parts of Serbia. The Kosovo province was administered by a Serbian minority, since Albanians living there were

considered to be inferior to Serbs and the Serbian authorities gave them no real chance of becoming incorporated into Serbia.

It is generally accepted in the literature on the dissolution of Yugoslavia that student demonstrations at Priština University in Kosovo in 1981 were the first signs of Yugoslavia's dissolution. The Kosovo Albanians' parallel government, led by self-proclaimed president Ibrahim Rugova, followed a path of passive resistance. Kosovo Albanians hoped that their aspirations would be considered during the negotiations in Dayton, but when this proved false, Albanian guerilla fighters started to withdraw their support for the Rugova government and decided to pursue "Kalashnikov diplomacy." The so called "Kalashnikov diplomacy" was the direct opposite to Rugova's peaceful diplomacy, which for many years had not brought Kosovo any closer to independence. Hence, the decision by Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) fighters to take up arms, figuring that violence would awaken the West and force the world to acknowledge Kosovo's problem, can be considered very successful.

When Kosovo guerilla fighters began launching attacks on Serbian armed forces and civilians at the end of September 1997, the International Crisis Group took notice. It issued an appeal for negotiations and established a working group, which was then sent to Yugoslavia for negotiations.<sup>86</sup>

The Kosovo Liberation Army emerged as a group of guerilla fighters who were very active in attacking Serbian forces starting from the beginning of 1998. As such, the KLA was primarily responsible for the unstable political situation in Kosovo. Understanding the nature of the KLA and its organization is of crucial importance for an understanding of later events in Kosovo. The KLA is a well-organized army, composed of independent guerilla fighters from various areas in Kosovo. The war led by Serbians against the KLA

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<sup>86</sup> Marie-Janine Calic, "Kosovo in the Twentieth Century: A historical Account" in *Kosovo and the Challenge of Humanitarian Intervention: Selective Indignation, Selective Action, and International Citizenship*, edited by Albrecht Schnabel and Ramesh Thakur, United Nations University Press, 2000, p.28.

was different from the previous wars in Croatia and Bosnia. This war was described by Tim Judah as Serbia's "very own Vietnam."<sup>87</sup>

KLA guerilla activities were condemned by the United States' special envoy to the region, Robert Gelbard, on 23 February 1998, who stated, "We condemn very strongly terrorist actions in Kosovo. The KLA is without any questions a terrorist group."<sup>88</sup> This declaration from a high-level US diplomat strongly fanned the fires of war instead of damping them down. In the end, it was considered a green light for future actions taken by Slobodan Milošević.

Many violations of civilians' rights were committed by the Serbian armed forces in Kosovo, prompting the United Nations Security Council to become alarmed over the instability in Kosovo.<sup>89</sup> The UNSC responded to the crisis by adopting UNSCR 1160 on 31 March 1998, which called for an arms embargo on Yugoslavia.<sup>90</sup> The Security Council also decided that Priština and Belgrade should have an agreement on the political status of Kosovo, as well as a Security Council–authorized Contact Group to facilitate dialogue between the parties involved. An important part of this decision taken by the Security Council was that it stressed that any resolution of the crisis in Kosovo should be in accordance with the UN Charter and OSCE standards.<sup>91</sup> As to the outcome of consultations between the Serbian and Kosovo governments with Contact Group guidance, the UNSCR was very specific in recommending "an enhanced status for Kosovo, which would include a substantially greater degree of autonomy and meaningful self-administration."<sup>92</sup> UNSCR 1160, adopted on 31 March, in accordance

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<sup>87</sup> Tim Judah, *Kosovo War and Revenge*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000, p.156.

<sup>88</sup> *Agence France Presse*, 23 February 1998, cited in Tim Judah, *op.cit.*, p.221.

<sup>89</sup> Marc Weller, "The Rambouillet Conference on Kosovo," *International affairs*, Vol.75, No.2, 1999, p.219.

<sup>90</sup> UNSCR 1160(1998), 31 March 1998.

<sup>91</sup> Marc Weller, *op.cit.*, p.219.

<sup>92</sup> UNSCR 1160(1998), 31 March 1998.

with Chapter VII of the UN Charter, did not authorize the threat of the use of force for the resolution of the status of Kosovo.

In June 1998, as the situation in Kosovo was getting worse, a group of Russians led by Nikolai Afanasyevsky, the Russian deputy foreign minister, were on an official visit to Kosovo. In the field they were shown a KLA trench.<sup>93</sup> This is important since the Russian representative was trying to urge the Serbian government to secure Russian support internationally. In the end, though, it seems that this visit did not help form an official Russian position toward the settlement of Kosovo's problems. Shortly after, Russia, as a member of the Contact Group, approved the beginning of active shuttle diplomacy between the conflicting parties and the international community, which was conducted by Christopher Hill, United States ambassador to Macedonia.

On 12 June 1998, NATO officials met in Brussels and gave directions to NATO chiefs to prepare plan for eventual military intervention. On the same day, the Contact Group foreign ministers held a meeting and recommended four procedures to be taken by Milošević: (1) proclaim an immediate ceasefire and remove Serbian forces from Kosovo; (2) allow and facilitate the free access of humanitarian aid; (3) allow internally displaced people to return; and (4) reopen the dialog recommendations between Serbs and the Kosovo Albanian leadership. These demands were presented to Milošević, who was to deliver his answer during his trip to Moscow to visit Russian president Boris Yeltsin four days later.<sup>94</sup>

On 16 June, President Milošević went to Moscow for his visit. Milošević agreed to most of the conditions laid down by the Contact Group. Russia, on its part, was concerned at NATO's increased activity and constant threats against the Serbs. Yeltsin asked Milošević to refrain from oppressive actions in Kosovo, and he also asked him to start negotiations with Kosovo President Ibrahim Rugova. An agreement was signed at the end of the meeting and was to be used as a mandate pretext for international observers in

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<sup>93</sup> Tim Judah, *op.cit.*, p.164.

<sup>94</sup> Joyce P. Kaufman, *op.cit.*, p.160.



Kosovo. An idea for a Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission (KDOM) was offered by Richard Holbrook, who carefully studied the Yeltsin-Milošević agreement. Thus, during Holbrook's visit to the Russian embassy in Belgrade, Russian approval for deployment of a KDOM was secured.<sup>95</sup> However, since observers could only note the growing violence in Kosovo, they were ineffective at stopping it. This led to the Yeltsin-Clinton joint statement on 2 September 1998, calling for an end to violence in Kosovo and a restart of negotiations.

On 23 September 1998, UNSCR 1199 was passed, requesting the end of violence by both Serbian and Kosovo Albanian sides. A day later on 23 September, NATO defense ministers met in Portugal and issued an Activation Warning, which meant a high stage of preparedness for military attack.

As soon as the NATO Activation Warning was issued, discussion on the legitimate use of force without a UN mandate began. What could be noticed afterwards was the separate approaches to this question by the great powers. Russia, France, and Italy strictly opposed air strikes without a UN mandate, and they were joined by Britain, which also had some doubts about the legitimacy of possible NATO actions. The great powers started to discuss the idea of taking the issue to the Security Council, but Russia proclaimed in advance that it would exercise its veto. Thus, the hope of finding a solution within the UN was not possible.<sup>96</sup>

On 1 October, Christopher Hill presented the draft of a proposal, resulting from his shuttle diplomacy, on future negotiations to determine Kosovo's status. Although Hill's draft was rejected as a basic background for negotiations, it was important in that it made no mention of Kosovo's legal status, and it proposed a kind of autonomy that would be subject to change within three years only under the condition that both sides agreed on it. Both sides rejected the agreement, and no interim settlement resulted, even

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<sup>95</sup> Tim Judah, *op.cit.*, p.177.

<sup>96</sup> Joyce P. Kaufman, *op.cit.*, p. 163.

after Hill presented a third proposed draft in December. This marked the end of shuttle diplomacy and put forward the Crisis Group as main negotiators.

On 8 October 1998, a meeting of great power foreign ministers was held in London to seek a solution to the Kosovo conflict. The question of the use of force and the need for a UN mandate were discussed. Igor Ivanov, the Russian Foreign Minister, clearly stated during this meeting that in case the issue was brought to the Security Council, Russia would veto it, and if the issue was not presented, Russia would denounce it anyway. The stance of Russia was not unexpected, but what was surprising was that Russia, even though a still powerful nuclear power with anti-aircraft systems that could harm NATO planes, had told the NATO ministers that it would do nothing if NATO bombed Serbia.<sup>97</sup>

Pressure on Milošević to stop Serbian forces attacking Kosovo civilians increased in October 1998 from both Western powers and Russia. Russia tried on its part to oblige Milošević to cooperate with OSCE in order to avoid NATO involvement. In that respect, the Russian high-level delegation that included Defense Minister Igor Sergeyev, Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, and First Deputy Minister of Foreign Intelligence Services Aleksei Sherbakov visited Belgrade in early October 1998.<sup>98</sup>

On 12 October 1998, Milošević struck a deal with Richard Holbrook, which consisted of reducing the Serbian military presence to the prewar level. United Nations Resolution 1203 of 24 October authorized the deployment of OSCE's Kosovo Verification Mission in Kosovo.<sup>99</sup> However, the resolution left some room for the use of force for the protection of Mission staff. This was the main reason for the Russian abstention during Security Council voting. Nevertheless, Russia did not veto the resolution, which means that despite the fact that there was an objective chance of the use of force, it gave its

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<sup>97</sup> Tim Judah, *op.cit.*, p.183.

<sup>98</sup> Dov Lynch, "Walking the Tight rope: The Kosovo Conflict and Russia in European Security, 1998-August 1999," *European Security*, Vol.8, No.4, 1999, p.64.

<sup>99</sup> UNSCR 1203, 24 October 1998, [www.un.org](http://www.un.org).

consent to all means needed for the resolution of the conflict in Kosovo. Thus, with the agreement finally brokered by Richard Holbrook, the Kosovo Verification Mission was deployed and Serbia escaped NATO bombings.

During this crisis, which brought NATO very close to war, the Russian Ministry of Defense was in favor of Russian withdrawal from the arms embargo on Yugoslavia, and it proposed that Russia should supply Yugoslavia with modern weapons. In addition, it proclaimed that, in case NATO bombed Serbia, "there could be something worse than a Cold War."<sup>100</sup> This statement shows nothing new about Russian foreign policy. This was not the first time that different ministries of the Russian Federation disagreed on foreign policy initiatives. But, in the end, the president's and the foreign ministry's decisions were the ones that mattered in the international arena.

Nevertheless, the October agreement was doomed to fail from the beginning of 1999, as the situation in Kosovo got worse by January. On 8 January 1999, Serbian atrocities conducted in the Kosovo village of Račak were known to most of world, as pictures of forty-four slaughtered Albanians was the top news on almost all important news channels around the world. Great powers representatives were quick to act.

The Western powers were eager for Russia to support their actions, since tensions already existed between Russia and NATO because of NATO enlargement. France, especially, was more than willing to use Russia's "power" over Milošević so that he would concede to NATO demands and prevent a possible NATO war, which France tried to avoid by all means.<sup>101</sup> Madeleine Albright, the United States Secretary of State, in response to the deteriorating situation in Kosovo, met with Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov on 26 January 1999. At the end of the meeting, both statesmen called on Serbs to implement the provisions of the October agreement, and they also proclaimed

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<sup>100</sup> "Segodnia" news program on NTV, 12 October 1998 cited in *Kosovo and the Challenge of Humanitarian Intervention: Selective Indignation, Collective Action, and International Citizenship*, edited by Albrecht Schnabell and Ramesh Thakur, United Nations University Press, 2000, p.115.

<sup>101</sup> Joyce P. Kaufman, *op.cit.*, p. 175.

their determination to work together to resolve the crisis.<sup>102</sup> The following day, the United States announced that its new strategy would involve not only diplomacy but also the threat of the use of force, which would help the work of the Contact Group.<sup>103</sup>

Even though Ivanov was not in favor of the use of force, he did in the joint statement call for a ceasefire and for a negotiated political settlement.<sup>104</sup> Tim Judah, in his book *Kosovo War and Revenge*, argues that Ivanov, even though unwillingly in the end, agreed that future diplomacy should be accompanied by the threat of the use of force.<sup>105</sup>

On 29 January 1999, Contact Group representatives met and jointly proclaimed that the situation in Kosovo was a threat to international peace and security. The Contact Group demanded that both parties accept the principles of the Contact Group as a basis for future negotiations and that they send representatives to Rambouillet so that negotiations could start on 6 February. The Contact Group ended its statement by proclaiming that both parties would be held responsible in case an agreement was not reached.<sup>106</sup> Decisions taken by the Contact Group were welcomed by the Security Council in the presidential statement.<sup>107</sup>

On the same day, newly appointed Secretary-General Kofi Annan met with the North Atlantic Council and stated that "bloody wars of the last decade have left us with no illusions about the difficulty of halting internal conflicts by reason or by force...nor have they left us with any illusions about the need to use force, when all other means have

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<sup>102</sup> Secretary of state Madeleine Albright and Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, *Joint Statement on Kosovo*, Moscow, 26 January 1999, can be found on <http://www.ohiolink.edu/etd/send-pdf.cgi?ucin1163531263> (accessed on 06.04.2008).

<sup>103</sup> *State Department press release*, "Albright looks forward to 29 January meeting in London," 27 January 1999, found on <http://www.docuanalysis.com/book1/Chapter15a.shtml> (accessed on 06.04.2008).

<sup>104</sup> Joyce P. Kaufman, *op.cit.*, p.175.

<sup>105</sup> Tim Judah, *op.cit.*, p. 195-196.

<sup>106</sup> *Chairman's conclusions of the ministerial meeting of the Contact Group*, London, 29 January 1999. can be obtained from: <http://aei.pitt.edu/677/02/occ16.html>

<sup>107</sup> *United Nations Security Council Presidential Statement*, 29 January 1999. can be obtained from: <http://www.unmikonline.org/scdocs.htm>

failed."<sup>108</sup> Behind this statement lies the fact that Kofi Annan was well aware that Russia would veto any attempt of the United Nations Security Council to allow an intervention in Kosovo and that his statement would be understood by NATO members as a green light from the most influential person in the United Nations for the use of force.<sup>109</sup>

Thus, even before the Rambouillet negotiations got under way, the international community was more united than disunited about the way the crisis in Kosovo should be resolved. The Western powers did not envisage independence for Kosovo, and this is clearly seen from all the statements and efforts at conflict resolution. Russia, for its part, was also eager to see the conflict resolved, and, except for explicitly giving its consent for air strikes, it cooperated with the other great powers. Nevertheless, the question of the use of force was not as well reached without Russia. As Tim Judah argues, Ivanov reassured Western diplomats about the possible Russian sale of arms to Serbia by saying that the only thing that Russia would do in the case of an air strike would be to harshly criticize it.<sup>110</sup>

The next section is dedicated to the Rambouillet negotiations between the Serbs, Kosovo Albanians, and Contact Group. It will explore what happened during those negotiations and Russia's role in them. This section will try to show that Russia used all the means at its disposal to influence the Serbs to accept the agreement, although in the end it failed to do so. It will also try to show that Russia cooperated with its Western counterparts during the Rambouillet negotiations.

### **3.2 Russian Role during the Rambouillet Negotiations**

Talks between the Serbian government and representatives of the Kosovo Albanians took place in the small French town of Rambouillet, 30 miles southwest of Paris. Parties

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<sup>108</sup> Quoted in Ivo H. Daalder and Michael E. O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly: NATO's War to Save Kosovo*, Washington D.C.:Brookings Institution Press 2000, p.75.

<sup>109</sup> Tim Judah, *op.cit.*, p.179.

<sup>110</sup> Tim Judah, *op.cit.*, p. 224-225.

present at Rambouillet were supposed to work upon a draft proposal developed by Wolfgang Petrisch and Christopher Hill, who were at the same time negotiators during the Rambouillet talks, together with Russian representative Boris Mayorski.

With regard to the Rambouillet Interim Agreement, scholarship is divided on whether negotiations in Rambouillet brought rapprochement or division in Western-Russian relations. Anti-war scholars argue that among other negative things that NATO's war in Kosovo brought was cooling relations with Russia. They argue that Russia was sidelined during the Rambouillet talks. On the other hand, there are scholars who argue just the opposite, saying that the Rambouillet talks were the perfect opportunity for Serbia to negotiate, and they say that Russia was in favor of the Rambouillet agreement. This section will evaluate the Russian role in the Rambouillet negotiations.

In the words of Henry Kissinger, "the Rambouillet text...was a provocation and an excuse to start a war."<sup>111</sup> Whether this was the case or not it will be discussed in the rest of this chapter, and various provisions of the Rambouillet Interim Agreement will be analyzed.

After the Račak massacre in Kosovo, where many Kosovo Albanian civilians were slaughtered by Serbian armed forces, the Contact Group met and set the date for negotiations between the parties in conflict, Serbs and Kosovo Albanians. The presence during the negotiations of both disputed parties was obligatory. The parties reluctantly came to Rambouillet Château to try to reach an agreement that was desired by all the great powers.

However, the Contact Group is seen by Marc Weller as a disunited body in its functioning and work, reflecting a broader change in the international order.<sup>112</sup> Weller, one of the international lawyers who were present at Rambouillet to help the Kosovo

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<sup>111</sup> Mike Scruggs, Creating Another Muslim Foothold in Europe, *Tribune Papers*, <http://www.ashevilletribune.com/asheville/8-17/MUSLIM-FOOTHOLD.htm> accessed on 05.04.2008

<sup>112</sup> Marc Weller, *op.cit.*, p.212.

Albanian delegation during the talks,<sup>113</sup> argues that in Contact Group behavior before and after the talks were signs of a challenge by some European powers, specifically France and Russia, to the United States' view of a unipolar world that it dominated. He says that "Russia more or less openly attempted to frustrate the very concept of the settlement, which might appear to have been imposed upon the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and which would be enforced by NATO." In the same context, he adds as well that "should that turn out to be impossible, Russia at least sought to preserve a controlling role for itself in the further administration of the crisis."<sup>114</sup> Thus, the disunity of the Contact Group was one of the failures of the Rambouillet talks according to Weller. He also finds a refusal of the Russian representative to witness the signing of the accords by a Kosovo Albanian representative as "startling."<sup>115</sup> However, what Alex Bellamy finds startling is the fact that Russia did not object at all until the end of the second week of negotiations at Rambouillet.<sup>116</sup>

Nevertheless, united or disunited, effective or not, the meeting scheduled by the Contact Group was held, and as soon as representatives of the disputed parties arrived at Rambouillet, they were given the basic principles, prepared by the Contact Group, upon which agreement would be built and upon which there would be no compromise whatsoever. In the initial draft, it is stated that Kosovo is and should stay under Serbian sovereignty. What can be concluded from this initial draft, which contained non-negotiable principles, is that all Contact Group members were united around the idea that Kosovo should stay within Serbia, but what was to be the focus of negotiations was the degree of autonomy Kosovo would get. Not even the United States objected to the idea of autonomy. This is why it is hard to understand critics who argue that the United

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<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p.236.

<sup>116</sup> Alex Bellamy, "Reconsidering Rambouillet," *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol.21, No.1, April 2001, p.40.

States wanted the war in Kosovo.<sup>117</sup> If the United States was searching for an excuse to start a war, then it is hard to imagine why it would not insist on putting a provision in the Rambouillet Interim Agreement that clearly defines the status of Kosovo. From the initial to the final drafts of the Rambouillet Interim Agreement, no mention of final status was made.<sup>118</sup>

Thus, moving away from the assumption that the Contact Group was disunited, but still not assuming that some differences did not exist between them, the rest of chapter on Russia's role in the negotiations at Rambouillet and in talks that followed in Paris will be examined mostly through actions of the Contact Group since for group decisions the consent of all parties was needed.

The Contact Group encountered difficulties from the very beginning of the Rambouillet talks. Following directions from Serbian president Slobodan Milošević, the Serbian delegation in Rambouillet did not take the negotiations seriously. During the first week of talks, the Kosovo Albanian delegation exchanged various pieces of correspondence with the troika responsible for conducting the conference. They put forward their proposals and were given feedback. On the other hand, the Serbian delegation did virtually nothing. In response to this, a representative of the Contact Group paid a special visit to Slobodan Milošević, after which the Serbian delegation started to engage more actively in negotiations.

The Russian representative at Rambouillet Château, Boris Mayorski, did everything he could to make the Serbs more cooperative and to make them understand the importance and significance of coming to terms with the Kosovo Albanians. The Russians supported all the provisions put forward by the Contact Group before negotiations started, just as they supported many later additions to the basic principles.

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<sup>117</sup> Eric Herring, "From Rambouillet to the Kosovo Accords: NATO's War Against Serbia and Its Aftermath," *The International Journal of Human Rights*, Vol.4, No.3, September 2000, p.227.

<sup>118</sup> *Rambouillet Interim Agreement*, [http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eur/ksvo\\_ambouillet\\_text.html](http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eur/ksvo_ambouillet_text.html).



The highly controversial Appendix B was added at the last moment, and it was supposed to be an additional provision that everyone should accept. The Russians were stunned by Appendix B, which basically gave NATO forces the right to have access to all Yugoslav territory, and it also exempted NATO soldiers from prosecution in Yugoslavia. This provision supposedly kept Serbia from signing the agreement. Serbian Foreign Minister Živojin Jovanović stated:

As the strategic interests of NATO were involved, they had made their plans before Rambouillet to attack Yugoslavia because Yugoslavia would not submit voluntarily to occupation. It was clear they would attack us... their strategy was conquering a nice piece of European territory.<sup>119</sup>

The Serbian delegation had been unwilling to cooperate from the very beginning of the talks, and even while negotiations were going on, the number of Serbian forces being deployed in Kosovo was rising rapidly.

Even though one would expect Russia to immediately oppose Appendix B, the Russian representative at Rambouillet tried to persuade the Serbian delegation to accept the international military presence in Kosovo by promising that Russian forces would be included in KFOR forces and that international forces would not be directed by the North Atlantic Council.<sup>120</sup> Russia did not oppose a peacekeeping force in which it was included, as long as this force was invited by the Serbian government.

However, Alex Bellamy argues that the lack of effective coercive diplomacy coming from the Contact Group was the decisive factor for the failure of the parties to reach an agreement at Rambouillet. On the other hand, Eric Herring<sup>121</sup> argues that the reason both sides refused to sign at Rambouillet was not the lack of a threat to use force or the lack

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<sup>119</sup> Alex Bellamy, *op.cit.*, p.34.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p.40.

<sup>121</sup> Eric Herring, *op.cit.*, p.228

of joint involvement from Contact Group members but a basic unwillingness by both parties involved in the conflict to reach an agreement.

Another reason why Russia did not want NATO to be the enforcement force of the settlement in Kosovo, according to Dov Lynch,<sup>122</sup> was the fact that Russia did not consider Kosovo to be a potential threat to international peace and security. Thus it felt that a threat to use force was not justified under Charter VII of the United Nations. However, as has been shown earlier, Russia through the Contact Group had indeed expressed its concerns for the situation in Kosovo and considered it a threat to international peace and security. It is just that, as was suggested by Dov Lynch, it did not want NATO to be the implementing force.<sup>123</sup>

However, it was not only Serbs who did not cooperate. The Kosovo Albanian delegation was also reluctant to sign the interim agreement as well, since the article stated that the interim situation was to end in three years, after which the destiny of Kosovo was supposed to be determined in a referendum, and it was not stated specifically that only the Kosovo population would take part in the referendum. It is argued that Madeleine Albright told the reporters of record that "we intentionally set the bar too high for the Serbs to comply. They need some bombing and that's what they are going to get."<sup>124</sup>

On 18 March 1999 in Paris, the Kosovo Albanians signed an interim agreement negotiated at Rambouillet, and the Russian official Mayorski refused to attend the signature ceremony. This stance of the Russian representative is commented upon by anti-war scholars as a sign of Russia's alienation from the attempt to find a permanent solution for the conflict, as well as a sign of the beginning of unilateral actions by the Western powers. However, according to Tim Judah, Russia's humiliation at being unable to do anything to stop NATO bombings was less than its humiliation at being unable to

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<sup>122</sup> Dov Lynch, *op.cit.*, p.64.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p.62-63.

<sup>124</sup> Seth Ackerman, "What Reporters Knew About Kosovo Talks – But Did Not Tell. Was Rambouillet Another Tonkin Gulf?," *FAIR Media Advisory*, 2 June 1999 [www.lbbs.org/fair\\_media\\_advisory.htm](http://www.lbbs.org/fair_media_advisory.htm).

make the Serbian government sign the agreement, which Russia tried to lead them to as its historical brother.<sup>125</sup>

### **3.3 NATO's War in Kosovo**

NATO air strikes started on 24 March 1999, after the Serbian government refused to sign the Rambouillet Interim Agreement. As was mentioned in the previous section of this chapter, the terms offered to the Serbian government were considered to be unfairly harsh for Serbia and its leader Slobodan Milošević. Generally the terms resembled those that were presented to the Serbian government by the Austro-Hungarian Empire after the Austrian archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated by the Bosnian Serb, Gavrilo Princip, in Sarajevo in 1914. During the Rambouillet talks in February 1999, just as when Austria issued its memorandum to Serbia in 1914,<sup>126</sup> the Serbs agreed to most of the points except the one that allowed the free entrance of foreign troops into their country. Due to the 1914 ultimatum World War I started. Similarly, in March 1999 NATO's first "humanitarian intervention", without explicit United Nations mandate, started.

NATO started its strikes against the Serbs, expecting they could not put up with the war for long. Western politicians, recalling the effective NATO bombardment that made the Serbs sign the Dayton Peace Accords in 1995, thought that this time too a few bombs would be enough to make Milošević surrender and sign the Rambouillet agreement.<sup>127</sup> Where the Dayton Peace Accords gave Milošević a chance to consolidate the Republika Srpska in the wake of the Bosnian-Croat offensive, the Rambouillet Interim Agreement would end Serbian minority rule in Kosovo and could lead to a possible Kosovo

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<sup>125</sup> Tim Judah, *op.cit.*, p.224.

<sup>126</sup> Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, Penguin Books, 2007, p.368.

<sup>127</sup> Eric Herring, *op.cit.*, p.22.

secession, which was not something Slobodan Milošević was willing to agree to without exhausting all other possible options.<sup>128</sup>

Nevertheless, those who thought that Milošević would capitulate after a few bombs were disappointed to see that NATO's bombings helped Serbian troops on the ground expel Kosovo Albanians to neighboring Albania and Macedonia. This made the humanitarian crisis in Kosovo worse than ever.<sup>129</sup>

Many scholars argued that NATO's war in Kosovo sidelined Russia from crisis management in Kosovo. Among those scholars is Tariq Ali, who in the book *Masters of the Universe? NATO's Balkan Crusade* argues that NATO's war in Kosovo completely excluded Russia from crisis management, not only during the war but also six months before it. The same thing is argued with regard to the Russian ability to influence the decisions of the Contact Group, of which Russia was a member, as well as of OSCE.<sup>130</sup> But as a previous section of this chapter shows, Russia was actively involved in all negotiations on the Kosovo crisis since the end of 1997 and was not sidelined by the United States in the negotiating process.

Russia responded harshly to NATO's Kosovo bombings. Primakov, whose airplane was just about to reach the American continent when he heard that the NATO bombings had begun, decided to cancel his meeting in the United States and return to Russia. Russia was uneasy with the fact that it has not been informed formally about the exact date of the NATO strikes. In this respect, Russian officials, as well as president Yeltsin himself, were constantly sending various warnings to NATO and the United States. Nevertheless, except for withdrawing the Russian mission at NATO and ceasing its participation in the Partnership for Peace Program, Russia continued to maintain good relations with all NATO governments. There were two reasons for this. The first is that Russia did not

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<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p.228.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233.

<sup>130</sup> Tariq Ali, "NATO's Balkan Crusade." in *Masters of Universe? NATO's Balkan Crusade*, edited by Tariq Ali, London: Verso, 2000, p.350.

want to jeopardize the financial aid it was receiving from the West, and the second was its fear of being isolated in the international arena.<sup>131</sup> President Boris Yeltsin confirmed this in his statement, "In spite of NATO's aggressive actions, we cannot break with the Western countries," and he continued, "We cannot lead ourselves into isolation because we are in Europe and no one will kick us out of Europe."<sup>132</sup>

In spite of the fact that Russia would not take any concrete steps to confront NATO, it did not hesitate to criticize it. Sergei Lavrov, Russian representative to the United Nations, issued a statement saying:

A dangerous precedent has been created regarding the policy of diktat and force, and the whole of the international rule of law has been threatened. We are basically talking about an attempt by NATO to enter the twenty-first century in the uniform of the world's policemen. Russia will never agree to that.<sup>133</sup>

Two days after the Lavrov speech, Russia prepared a draft UN resolution which requested an immediate end to NATO air strikes, but the proposed draft resolution was overwhelmingly rejected during voting. Nevertheless Russia did not cease its engagement with the West. During a press conference in Moscow a day after NATO bombs fell on Serbia, Ivanov stated that "we are not in favor of a breach of diplomatic relations with the West," which he called highly valuable, and he later on added that Russia "clearly realizes how important for the world as a whole are relations between Russia and the United States."<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Martin A, Smith, "A bumpy road to an unknown destination? NATO Russia relations 1991-2002," *European Security*, Vol.11, No.4 , December 2002, p. 68.

<sup>132</sup> Quoted in Dov Lynch, *op.cit.*, p.70.

<sup>133</sup> Security Council Provisional Record,3988<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 24 March 1999 cited in Marc Weller, *The Crisis in Kosovo 1989-1999: From the Dissolution of Yugoslavia to Rambouillet and the Outbreak of Hostilities*, Cambridge 1999, Vol.1, p.500.

<sup>134</sup> Cited in Ekaterina Stepanova, "Russia`s Policy on the Kosovo Crisis: The Limits of Cooperative Peacemaking", p.215 [http://cms.isn.ch/public/docs/doc\\_394\\_259\\_en.pdf](http://cms.isn.ch/public/docs/doc_394_259_en.pdf).

One other important fact is that, even though Russia was outraged by the NATO bombings, it was clear that Russia did not militarily support Serbia. Lack of Russian support came from Russia's determination not to jeopardize its relations with the West by favoring Serbia. Russia also recognized that cooperation with the West was better than conflict with it. And, of course, Russia relied heavily on Western financial support for its reforms. Strobe Talbott, a top United States official and expert on Russia in the Clinton administration, stated that "Russians were told that any help they might give to Milošević would have a devastating effect on US-Russian relations, and of course, the money came from them."<sup>135</sup>

Even though President Yeltsin had stirred some hope in Serbia of possible Russian help when he stated on Russian national television that Russia would respond to any NATO ground campaign, that hope was dashed soon after when he added that Russia was opposed to any supply of arms to Yugoslavia.<sup>136</sup> This statement encapsulates the Russian stance toward the NATO bombing. There was much opposition in Russia to the bombing, and Boris Yeltsin was under pressure from various sides to take concrete steps to stop it, which implied giving military help to Serbia. But Yeltsin knew his country's reality very well. Any possible military help would jeopardize Russia's relations with the West, and that was something that Russia neither wanted nor could afford. This view was confirmed in an editorial in *Izvestia* one day after the NATO bombing started: "A break with America, a break with NATO would be far more costly for us than for the West. So we have to grin and bear it. The more vigorously we shake our fists, the stupider we are going to look."<sup>137</sup>

However, Russia knew well that its influence and prestige in the international arena had seriously suffered after the unilateral NATO bombings, which is why it tried very hard to find a way to end the crisis. On 30 March 1999, a week after the NATO air strikes

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<sup>135</sup> Michael Ignatieff, "The Virtual Commander," *The New Yorker*, 2 August, 1999.

<sup>136</sup> Tim Judah, *op.cit.*, p.274.

<sup>137</sup> *Izvestia*, 25 March: CDPSP 51/12(1999), p.6.

began, Foreign Minister Primakov traveled to Belgrade in an attempt to find a solution to the war, but the attempt was rebuffed by NATO.<sup>138</sup>

Serbian politicians who opposed the rule of Slobodan Milošević understood that the lack of Russian support clearly reflected the reality of Russia's role during the war in Kosovo. Serbia's deputy prime minister, speaking on Serbian Studio B television on 26 April 1999, explained that Serbia's national interest lay in understanding and realizing the reality of their situation, namely that "Serbs are on their own." He continued by saying, "I do not believe that there is any sense in the heads of those who are invoking World War Three and lying to people that Russia would be involved in World War Three."<sup>139</sup>

On 14 April, President Boris Yeltsin appointed Viktor Chernomyrdin as special Russian envoy responsible for the management of the Kosovo crisis. It was well known that Chernomyrdin was a pragmatic diplomat, who was aware of Russia's dependence on the West and also aware of the need to stop the NATO bombings as soon as possible.<sup>140</sup> The appointment of a special envoy and his assumption of the very important position of mediating between NATO and Serbian President Slobodan Milošević brought Russia back to the international scene through the main gate. It revived relations with both the United States and NATO. The importance of Russian mediation in stopping the war in Kosovo will be examined in the next section of this chapter.

### **3.4 Russian Role in Ending the War**

The appointment and acceptance by all parties of Victor Chernomyrdin as international mediator in resolving the Kosovo crisis can be considered a great international victory of President Boris Yeltsin. Nevertheless, as some critics suggest, Chernomyrdin's

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<sup>138</sup> Jane Perlez, Clinton Seeking Moscow's Help in Kosovo Crisis, *The New York Times*, 7 April 1999.

<sup>139</sup> Tim Judah, *op.cit.*, p.264.

<sup>140</sup> Michael Wines, Yeltsin Chooses Former Premier as Envoy to Balkan War Talks, *The New York Times*, 15 April 1999.

assumption of the post of mediator did not mean that Russia served the role of "postman" for NATO; it simply meant that Russia sensed that it was the right time to start diplomatic efforts to end the crisis.<sup>141</sup> However, Russia was faced with many challenges when deciding to assume the role of mediator. According to Dov Lynch, Russia was put in a situation where it had to walk a "tightrope" in order to end up as a successful mediator. He points out three challenges facing Russia and Viktor Chernomyrdin as mediators. The first came from the fact that Russia was sidelined by NATO in its activities in Kosovo, as the decision to bomb Serbia had been taken outside the United Nations.<sup>142</sup> Thus, it was a great challenge to bring the issue back to the United Nations. The second challenge came from the dilemma about who had the legitimacy to negotiate a settlement from the Kosovo side. The Kosovo Liberation Army was considered to be a terrorist organization. Moreover, Milošević's actions in Kosovo had been previously denounced by Chernomyrdin as "ethnic cleansing." But since Russia supported the principle of state sovereignty, it needed also to support the Belgrade government. The third challenge came from an institutional dilemma. That is to say, Russia needed to find the right institution that had not already been sidelined and could be used as a framework for an agreement. The challenge was resolved when Russia opted for a G8 framework.<sup>143</sup>

However, it was not only Russia that wanted peace in the region and an end to the NATO strikes. The West, and especially the United States, was eager to stop them as well, since the strikes were not producing the desired results. More and more Kosovo Albanians were being expelled by Serbian forces, and a serious humanitarian crisis was growing ever greater. Also, targeted areas in Serbia were not being hit precisely, as

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<sup>141</sup> Tim Judah, *op.cit.*, p. 274.

<sup>142</sup> Ivo Daalder and Michael O'Hanlon, "Unlearning the lessons from Kosovo," *Foreign Policy*, No.116, Fall 1999, p.135. NATO's War in Kosovo is not seen by Daalder and O'Hanlon as illegitimate since in 1998 the Security Council identified the crisis in Kosovo as a threat to international peace and security. In addition, the authors mention that Russia, which threatened to block any resolution approving military action against Serbia, failed to provide the international community with any alternative to military action. The authors do not see the NATO intervention as a precedent which weakened the UN but, on the contrary, they argue that the NATO war strengthened the UN since it brought together Russia, the EU, and the US together to make the peace with Slobodan Milošević.

<sup>143</sup> Dov Lynch, *op.cit.*, p.71-72.



NATO planes were flying too high out of fear of Serbian anti-aircraft fire. In addition, the need to avoid civilian casualties did not seem to affect the Serbs as much as NATO and the Western Alliance had hoped for. Not being completely successful on the ground, combined with rising anxiety by the United States' European allies, made the Western powers almost desperate for Russian involvement.

Tim Judah argues that Yeltsin, like Milošević, was hoping that the alliance would split and that France would cause the split. However, the author observes, French President Jacques Chirac on a visit to Moscow supported NATO and, in the words of Strobe Talbott, "took a tougher stance than anyone else."<sup>144</sup> Still, the appointment of Victor Chernomyrdin came at the right time and was to be very useful for the Western alliance as well as for Russia.

After the appointment of Victor Chernomyrdin, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan thought that the United Nations had been sidelined from the Kosovo conflict for too long. During a Washington summit, he proposed the appointment of a United Nations special envoy for Kosovo, and Finnish President Martii Ahtisaari was chosen. The United States was represented by the fluent Russian speaker, Strobe Talbott.

Russia's first diplomatic success came at a meeting of G8 foreign ministers in Germany, during which the broad general principles of a future Kosovo settlement were defined. These general principles could be considered a major victory for Russia, since NATO modified some of its demands, which had previously been preconditions for stopping the bombardment. Russia succeeded in establishing the United Nations as the main international body that would be responsible for the interim administration of Kosovo, and it succeeded in making NATO accept the unconditional disarmament of the Kosovo Liberation Army. Thus, as Dov Lynch argues, Russia was quite successful in making NATO diminish, or in some cases abolish, its demands in favor of some Russian demands.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Tim Judah, *op.cit.*, p.274.

<sup>145</sup> Dov Lynch, *op.cit.*, p.75-75.

After this meeting, many additional meetings were held between Chernomyrdin, Ahtisaari, and Talbott. The last major meeting before the signing of a peace treaty was held on 3 June 1999 in Germany, where, even after 13 hours of talk, the three mediators could not define the final peace settlement. This was due to the Serbian demand that Serbian troops remain in Kosovo, which Russia had supported all along. However, even though it seemed that none of the parties was ready to give up on its demands, Chernomyrdin, after consulting President Yeltsin, decided to yield to NATO demands and agree to the total withdrawal of Serbian troops from Kosovo. There are some scholars who see the Chernomyrdin mediation and Russian cooperation with the West as the only real means for Russia to increase its prestige in the international arena and show its influence in the Balkans. They see Russian cooperation with the West as a kind of forced cooperation.<sup>146</sup>

The agreement between NATO and Slobodan Milošević was signed on 9 June 1999 in Kumanovo, Macedonia. Nevertheless, Russian cooperation with the West, which put an end to NATO's war in Kosovo, was not considered an international achievement by various interest groups in Russia. This was especially the case for the Russian military, which thought that the Russian involvement was an outright concession to, and blind following of, the West. On the other hand, Boris Yeltsin saw the result of Russian mediation as a victory for Russia. This has been internationally recognized, since had it not been for Russia, it is hard to see how the war would have stopped as early as it did.

Cooperation between Russia and the Western powers at the start of the NATO war in Kosovo was at its lowest point since the end of the Cold War. Nevertheless, Russia with Boris Yeltsin at its head, did not lose its willingness to engage the West and try to bring the war to an end. It should not be forgotten that NATO's war in Kosovo was not only alarming for Russia, but also for some other great powers, as NATO's involvement in Kosovo was not approved and enforced by the United Nations. Thus, its legitimacy was brought into question by many states' governments.

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<sup>146</sup> Oleg Levitin, "Inside Moscow's Kosovo Muddle," *Survival*, Vol. 42, No. 1, Spring 2000, p. 138.

Oleg Levitin<sup>147</sup> argues that debate over the Kosovo war should not focus on the Western alliance and its bad policies, but instead on what he terms the "Russian fiasco" in the Balkans. He argues that Moscow failed to become a genuine partner of the West, it did not do what it could to prevent the war in Kosovo, and it was indifferent to the sufferings of the Kosovo Albanians. His argument seems weak due to the generally accepted fact that the NATO bombing did little to alleviate the sufferings of the Kosovo Albanians. By rejecting involvement in the land war in Kosovo, NATO with its so-called aerial "humanitarian intervention" only contributed to the already existing humanitarian crisis. In addition, the argument that Russia failed to become a genuine partner of the West is unconvincing. As was shown earlier in this chapter, Russia played a vital role in stopping the war, and, as will be discussed in the following chapter, it managed to do so by getting the West to accept many terms that Russia insisted on.

Russia, during the war on Kosovo, was more successful in increasing its prestige in the world than it might seem at first sight. Russia had problems with NATO long before the Kosovo war. The war in Kosovo only made the problems more obvious. However, since Russia was clearly eager to take its share of world great power prestige and status, it was never tempted to put an end to its connections with NATO. This stance of Russia was clearly expressed by Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov in October 1999 months after the end of NATO war, when he stated, "like it or not, NATO is a reality in the international arena, primarily in Europe but all over the world also."<sup>148</sup> Four months later, the new foreign minister Yevgeniy Primakov made a similar statement about NATO. He said, "We have to talk as NATO is a real force and this should be taken into account."<sup>149</sup> Thus, the Russian government knew the nature of the international arena in which it had to operate if it wished to increase its international prestige.

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<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p.130

<sup>148</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 12 October 1999, CDPSP 51/41(1999), p.3

<sup>149</sup> E. MacAskill, NATO and Russia Re-establish Ties as Tensions Ease, *The Guardian*, 17 February 2000.

According to Martin A. Smith, the Russian position was best summed up in the Russian newspaper *Vremya MN*, which stated in a July 1999 editorial:

During the Balkan war, Russia made the most important choice in our country's recent history. We did not ally ourselves with NATO, but, thank God, we did not become its enemy either. Now, Russia and the West can become partners who may not have any reason to love each other, but have to work together if only because there is no getting away from each other.<sup>150</sup>

To sum up, Russia had managed to reassert itself in the international arena after Victor Chernomyrdin's successful mediation. It showed the world that Russia still had influence in the Balkans and was ready to use its influence to secure peace in the region. Thus, its prestige in the international arena increased.

The next chapter will examine the Russian role in the post-conflict settlement in Kosovo. It will look at the Russian impact on the provisions of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244, which ended NATO's war in Kosovo. It will also evaluate the importance of the seizure of Slatina airport in Priština by Russian KFOR soldiers from Bosnia before NATO ground troops entered Priština, the implication of this action on Russian relations with the Western powers, and the importance of the UN policy, "Standards before Status." Finally, this chapter will discuss the impacts of the 11 September events and how they brought Russia and the United States closer together.

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<sup>150</sup> Cited in Martin A. Smith, "A Bumpy Road to an Unknown Destination: NATO-Russia relations 1991-2002," *European Security*, Vol.11, No.4, p.71.

## CHAPTER 4

### RUSSIA'S ROLE IN THE POST-CONFLICT SETTLEMENT IN KOSOVO

The post-conflict settlement in Kosovo marked a decisive victory for Russia and increased its prestige in the international arena. This is obvious from the fact that it took almost a decade for Kosovo to become independent. Russia managed to secure a major role for the United Nations in the post-conflict settlement. However, the United Nations was unprepared for the de facto running of a territory, and it discovered that it was very hard to stabilize Kosovo, let alone reach a point where Kosovo's final status could be discussed. Due to the complex international presence in post-conflict Kosovo, Russia and its Western counterparts managed to delay resolution of Kosovo's status until the beginning of 2008. The major issues that existed between the end of the conflict in Kosovo and the unilateral proclamation of Kosovo independence will be discussed in the present chapter.

#### 4.1 Post-Conflict Agreements and Security Council Resolution 1244

The post-conflict agreements signed between Serbia and NATO, as well as Security Council Resolution 1244 that followed, could be considered a major Russian victory.<sup>151</sup> NATO had been made to give up several major demands that it had insisted on during the Rambouillet negotiations, during the war on Serbia, and during the mediation attempts by Viktor Chernomyrdin. The United Nations, which was to a great extent sidelined from the Kosovo crisis both before and during the war, was with Resolution

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<sup>151</sup> Dov Lynch, *op.cit.*, p.76.

1244 to make a full comeback in the international management of affairs, primarily due to Russia's insistence on United Nations involvement in the post-conflict settlement.<sup>152</sup>

The most important provision of Resolution 1244 for Serbia, as well as for Russia, was the confirmation of Serbian sovereignty over Kosovo. This provision was the same one that Serbia had requested during the Rambouillet talks. Moreover, Resolution 1244 empowered the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to exercise power in the Kosovo province, which was one of the most important goals of Russia in its attempts to resolve the Kosovo crisis. The United Nations was to assign a representative for the civilian peace-building in Kosovo, unlike the high representative in Bosnia, who is not with the United Nations. The United Nations was to establish institutions for a Kosovo protectorate and to gradually transfer the management of institutions to the people of Kosovo.<sup>153</sup> However, this was not an easy task for the United Nations. Without its explicit wish to de facto run a state, the United Nations was assigned this particular role during a G8 meeting, where the big powers discussed the ending of the Kosovo crisis. Even though unprepared, the United Nations was unwilling to repeat its previous administrative mistakes in Bosnia, where there had been too many chiefs.<sup>154</sup>

Kosovo was to have one United Nations Secretary-General High Representative, who was to control all civil affairs. The United Nations presence in Kosovo was founded on four main pillars, each with different tasks assigned and all designed to set Kosovo on a path to self-functioning autonomy from the start. The UNHCR represented pillar one and was responsible for humanitarian relief in Kosovo. Pillar two was civilian administration in full charge of the United Nations itself. OSCE occupied pillar three, with the task of helping institution-building in Kosovo and to report on human rights conditions. Finally, pillar four gave the European Union the task of helping with Kosovo's economic reconstruction. Thus, Russian insistence on the institutionalizing of

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<sup>152</sup> Albrecht Schnabel, "Political Cooperation in Retrospect: Contact Group, EU, OSCE, NATO, G8 and UN Working toward a Kosovo Settlement," in *Kosovo Lessons Learned for International Cooperative Security*, edited by Kurt R. Spiollmann and Joachim Krause, Peter Lang AG Bern, 2000, p.34.

<sup>153</sup> Adam Balcer, "Kosovo- the Question of Final Status", *CES Studies*, p.50.

<sup>154</sup> William G. O'Neill, *Kosovo Unfinished Peace*, Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc, 2002, p.37.

Kosovo's problems seems to have gained the upper hand in institutional arrangements for the post-conflict settlement in Kosovo. Moreover, taking into consideration the commonly known fact that Russia is in favor of state sovereignty over self-determination, the four pillars of the United Nations presence ensured that a complex institutional arrangement was present in Kosovo and made it unlikely that any mutual agreement on the final status of Kosovo could be mutually reached.

In addition to bringing the United Nation to Kosovo, Russia was able to ensure that Resolution 1244 would call for the demilitarization of the Kosovo Liberation Army and the return of a small number of Serbian personnel to Kosovo.<sup>155</sup> However, Resolution 1244 was never successfully implemented, as the KLA did not want to hand over their weapons to KFOR. With the slow establishment of local administrative institutions, armed KLA officers were able to set up as local warlords and present themselves as the local administrators. The inability of the United Nations to confiscate the KLA's arms and to establish effective local administration in the early period of its presence in Kosovo was to be one of the major problems for UNMIK in the later period. The inability of UNMIK to demilitarize the KLA made the building of a multi-ethnic society, which was one of the main aims of the international community in Kosovo, almost impossible. That was one of the main reasons why any attempt to bring the issue of Kosovo's status to the Security Council was impossible.

To see how Resolution 1244 demonstrates the success of Russian bargaining in the international arena, it is enough to compare some of the major provisions of the Rambouillet Interim Agreement and Security Council Resolution 1244.

Unlike the Rambouillet Interim Agreement, where it was exactly stated that within three years Kosovo's status should be resolved, in Resolution 1244 this particular timeframe was absent.<sup>156</sup> Moreover, the provisions regarding the final status of Kosovo province were less rigorous than the provisions of the Rambouillet Interim Agreement, and it left

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<sup>155</sup> Dov Lynch, *op.cit.*, p. 76-77.

<sup>156</sup> UNSCR 1244.

much free space for various other interpretations.<sup>157</sup> These flexible points were put in Resolution 1244 to serve as a major stumbling block in the final resolution of Kosovo's status and were a major source of disagreement between the great powers with regard to Kosovo. It is hard to believe that such an important document as a Security Council resolution could have neglected clarity by accident. Thus, the United Nations did not intentionally set a definite date for the reconsideration of Kosovo's status. This happened for two reasons. The first derived from Russia's meddling in the Kosovo crisis, and the second from Western indecision about what to do with Kosovo. Resolution 1244, as a matter of fact, shows that NATO as well as the Western alliance was not sure of its highly controversial victory.

Carsten Stahn<sup>158</sup> described the intent of the drafters of UN Security Council Resolution 1244 by saying that "the drafters of the resolution clearly refrained from recognizing Kosovo as an independent state." However, he continues, "they also abstained from making binding determinations with respect to Kosovo's definitive status."<sup>159</sup> Russia's insistence on a resolution that made Kosovo's status vague is not so surprising, but what is surprising is that the Western alliance led by the United States followed the Russian line by adopting Resolution 1244. What is more, systematic examination of the resolution shows it to be not a way to settle the Kosovo crisis and bring stability to the region, but a way to bring the region to a period of uncertainty, "the end of which cannot be foreseen."<sup>160</sup>

Russia emerged victorious from the Kosovo crisis, even though it did not have an auspicious prelude to the conflict resolution. In fact, there are some interest groups, both inside and outside of Russia, who do not consider Russia a victor in the conflict resolution in Kosovo.

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<sup>157</sup> Adam Balcer, *op.cit.*, p.50.

<sup>158</sup> Carsten Stahn, "Constitution Without a State? Kosovo Under United Nations Constitutional Framework for Self-Government," *Leiden Journal of International Law*, Vol. 14, No.3, 2001, p.538.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>160</sup> Nuray Bozbora, "The Endurance of the Uncertainty in Kosovo" published online on: <http://www.obiv.org.tr/2003/BALKANLAR/NBozbora.pdf> , p.192.



A small fraction of the Russian elite make up one important group who do not see Russia as a power whose victory was confirmed by Security Council resolution 1244. They do not even see Russia as an important factor in the conflict resolution in Kosovo. This element of the Russian elite was unsatisfied on two accounts. First, they did not approve of the appointment of Viktor Chernomyrdin by Boris Yeltsin as a Russian mediator. Second, they were unsatisfied with his mediation process and its conclusion, which produced Resolution 1244. This group maintained that Russia in its mediating efforts actually showed its weakness internationally by jumping on the bandwagon driven by the United States and the West in their attempts to stop NATO's war on Serbia. This element was highly critical of the mediation and saw it as even greater embarrassment that it was not immediately able to stop the war. Thus, this fraction of the Russian elite did not see Resolution 1244 and its particular provisions as a result of Russian involvement in conflict resolution in Kosovo, which it indeed was.

A second group who do not see a Russian victory in Resolution 1244 are those scholars who previously saw NATO's intervention as necessary and who had a pro-war stance. Zbigniew Brzezinski explains 1244 as a triumph for NATO. Even though he admits that the Security Council resolution, so crucial for the status of Kosovo, does not mention sovereignty, he stresses that autonomy, which is implied in many places in the resolution, predicts the future possible termination of Serbian sovereignty over its southern province.<sup>161</sup> Brzezinski does not see KFOR as a force where non-NATO countries, most importantly Russia, tend to be an important part, since, as he says, KFOR is only the United Nation's name for predominantly NATO forces.<sup>162</sup>

If pro-war scholars who argue that NATO won the Kosovo war had been completely right, then there would have been one more independent state in Europe not long after the war ended in 1999. However, since NATO was able to salvage its image and show

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<sup>161</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Get Serious About Kosovo" in *Kosovo: Contending Voices on Balkan Interventions* edited by William Joseph Buckley, Wm.B. Eardmans Publishing Co, 2000, p.326.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*,

itself as an undefeated power due to Russia, Kosovo's status was frozen for more than eight years after NATO's war. Thus, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 was more suited to Russia's international bargaining position with the West than would have been the case had NATO really won the war. Resolution 1244 established a path that Kosovo was to follow in the upcoming decade and set a basis for any possible change in Kosovo's status.

The next section of this chapter continues with an analysis of the significance of the seizure of Priština airport by Russian SFOR troops from Bosnia before NATO ground troops entered Kosovo on 11 June 1999.

#### **4.2 Seizure of Slatina Airport in Priština by Russian SFOR troops**

Following the adoption of Resolution 1244 on 10 June 1999, Russia was ready to act unilaterally in order to ensure that it not be sidelined from the subsequent KFOR presence in Kosovo as it was sidelined when NATO unilaterally waged war on Serbia.<sup>163</sup>

"By launching a policy of attaining absolute military superiority, Washington showed that it would not recognize Moscow, Beijing, or anyone else as an equal in terms of strategic status."<sup>164</sup> This stance of the United States toward Russia was contrary to what Russia had expected from the United States. Russia, in the post-conflict settlement drawn up in early June, did not get the suitable place it strove for in the settlement. And so it decided to take its own measures to secure its military presence in Kosovo. Early in the morning of 12 June, two hundred Russian SFOR forces stationed in Bosnia managed to enter Priština before NATO ground forces. The seizure of Slatina Airport in Priština by Russian troops is a highly disputed event among scholars for two main reasons.

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<sup>163</sup> Dov Lynch, "The Enemy As at the Gate: Russia after Beslan", *International Affairs*, Vol.81, No.1, 2005, p.144.

<sup>164</sup> Sergei Rogov, "Russia and the US are facing a choice," *Nezavisimiye Voennoye Obozreniy I*, 2002, <http://65.120.76.252/russia/johnson/6040.txt> (accessed on 06.04.2008).

The first relates to the fact that it was not the Russian foreign minister who coordinated the seizure of the airport in Priština. Thus, institutional confusion encouraged a number of studies about what this action signified with regard to domestic affairs in Russia.

The second reason is that NATO, even though much stronger than the 200 Russian KFOR soldiers, did not chose to forcefully expel the Russian forces from Priština airport but, on the contrary, decided to cooperate with Russia and give it, not exactly what it wanted, but still an important role in the post-conflict settlement in Kosovo.

The rest of this section will examine the reasons behind the seizure of Slatina Airport in Priština and will discuss the different points of view in connection with this significant event.

It is widely accepted that the seizure of the airport was Yeltsin's concession to the Russian military, which had been highly critical of his dealing with the Kosovo crisis and Russia's response to the crisis in general.<sup>165</sup> This is justified by the fact the Russian foreign minister was unfamiliar with the particular action.<sup>166</sup> This cannot be far from the truth, since it is widely accepted that the foreign ministry and other ministries did not cooperate to the extent they should have. This is the case especially when it comes to the Russian military. They had, from the beginning of the conflicts in the Balkans, supported the Serbs and were against NATO's unilateral bombings, since this undermined the Russian military. This was particularly clear during NATO's Kosovo war, which was NATO's first unilateral war in the post–Cold War period. Before the war was launched, General Anatoly Kvashnin, chief of staff of the Russian armed forces, held a meeting with top military officials to discuss Russia's response in case NATO decided to bomb Serbia.<sup>167</sup> But as NATO bombs fell, the military withheld its support of Boris Yeltsin, and the Russian stance toward the Kosovo war was determined by the

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<sup>165</sup> Robert H. Donaldson and Joseph L. Noguee, *The Foreign Policy of Russia: Changing Systems, Enduring Interests*, M.E. Sharpe Armonk, New York, 2002, p.264.

<sup>166</sup> Andrew Felkay, *Yeltsin's Russia and the West*, Preager Publishers, 200, p.206.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, p.199.

statement of Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov that Russia was not considering giving Serbia any military support whatsoever.<sup>168</sup>

Thus, it can be concluded that the Russian military was completely unsatisfied with their country's role in Kosovo and was searching for a way to show Russia's military strength to NATO, by whom they felt defeated and humiliated. This is why they were waiting for a chance to take some revenge on NATO, or at least to show the might of the Russian military.

The chance for the Russian military to act materialized when the Russian foreign minister was on his way to an official visit with his Western counterparts. The Russian military managed to persuade Boris Yeltsin that it was time for them to act and show that Russia had a great military capacity. Consequently, Russian forces from Bosnia were given the green light to seize Priština airport, which was to be used by British ground troops to establish a base for the landing of allied planes. The Russian force crossed the Bosnian border on 11 June and arrived at the airport early the following morning.<sup>169</sup>

That the Russian military was only thinking of Russia's power and international status and that the action was a response to its humiliation by NATO was confirmed by the chairman of the Duma's foreign affairs, who said in a statement, "Russia has lately shown indecision in crisis situations. Now the whole world has seen that we can act brilliantly when all seems lost."<sup>170</sup>

The 200 Russian SFOR forces that arrived in Priština without announcing their departure from Bosnia stunned NATO and its leadership. Russian troop numbers were insignificant compared to those of NATO. Nevertheless, NATO's leadership was

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<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, p.200.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, p.206.

<sup>170</sup> Gennadu Charodeev, There's Only One Person Who Could Have Given the Order: The President, *Izvestia*, 15 June, 1999, CDPSP 51, no.24, 1999, p.3.

confused as much as surprised by Russia's actions. This was compounded by the fact that a United States' delegation was at that time in Helsinki trying to work out the details of Russian participation in KFOR with a Russian minister.<sup>171</sup>

The first response to the Russian actions came from the NATO commander of Kosovo forces, General Wesley Clark, who on hearing the news responded by ordering General Michael Jackson, the British head of NATO ground troops stationed in Macedonia, to move his troops into Kosovo and confront the Russians. General Jackson's immediate response was that he was not going to start World War Three over Kosovo, and he disobeyed the order.<sup>172</sup>

Russia intended to send more troops to Kosovo but was shocked to discover that NATO had already contacted its East European allies Romania and Bulgaria, requesting them not to allow Russian planes to use their air space.

As the presence of Russian troops became known to Western leaders, NATO was urged to find a compromise solution. Russia asked for its own military sphere in Kosovo, where its troops would be in charge and where it could try to secure a Serbian position in Kosovo. However, the proposal was immediately rejected by NATO, as it would have probably led to a partition of Kosovo and would also have ensured an independent Russian presence in Kosovo.

Writing in *The Wall Street Journal* on 14 June 1999, three days before the crisis at Slatina airport was over, Zbigniew Brzezinski argued that Russian action was driven by the "Russian-Serbian collusion in establishing a separate zone for Russians."<sup>173</sup> In the article he stressed that Russia was unconditionally and sometimes secretly supporting Slobodan Milošević and concluded that Russia's position during the G8 meeting was duplicitous. Thus, in the middle of the Russian seizure of Slatina Airport, Brzezinski

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<sup>171</sup> Andrew Felkay, *op.cit.*, p.206.

<sup>172</sup> Tim Judah, *op.cit.*, p.284-285.

<sup>173</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *op.cit.*, p.326.

suggested that NATO should be determined to crush any resistance to its actions, since NATO is the "only effective security system and that the American-European connection remains central to Europe's stability."<sup>174</sup> Brzezinski excluded Russia from the great power club and did not see it as a power on which the European system depended.

Nevertheless, NATO and Russia found common ground on 17 June, when NATO proposed a joint Russian presence in Kosovo together with other KFOR forces. Russia accepted the terms and the crisis was over. With this deal NATO did not behave as Brzezinski had suggested but, on the contrary, chose to deal with Russia as a great power.

Notwithstanding the previously examined different explanations, for ordinary Russians, who were uninterested in the Russian diplomatic engagement in the Balkans, the seizure of Slatina airport by Russian troops represented "a moment to savor, a rare act of one-upmanship by a faded power against a military that once viewed them with fear and awe. But it was a chance to say vicariously what they increasingly feel: that they are fed up with the overbearing West in general and the United States in particular."<sup>175</sup>

In spite of the fact that the Russian soldiers' seizure of Slatina Airport was brief and full of contradictions, Boris Yeltsin saw the airport seizure as a victory for Russia. He confirmed this in a speech after the crisis was over, saying that this particular event should serve notice to the world that "Russia should be taken seriously." He also said that in order to combat the negative image that Russia had throughout Europe because of its supposed support for Serbia, "Russia was obliged to make a gesture, even if it did not have a serious military significance." He concluded his speech by saying that Russia showed what it could do in spite of NATO's military might.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, p.327.

<sup>175</sup> Michael Wines, Muscovites Savor a Caper After Being Down So Long, *The New York Times*, 16 June 1999.

<sup>176</sup> Boris Yeltsin, *Prezidentsky Marafon*, p. 292-293 cited in Andrew Felkay, *op.cit.*, p. 207.

### 4.3 Constitutional Arrangements for Kosovo since 2000

On the eve of the new millennium, a change of power took place in Russia and Vladimir Putin became the new Russian president. Putin was the most important person behind the second Chechen war, where Russia, like NATO in Kosovo, used heavy force to combat Chechen "terrorists." This is important from the perspective that it was obvious from the first years of Western intervention in Serbian affairs that Russia was not satisfied with the Western breach of the status quo in the Balkans.

Since the end of the NATO war in Kosovo and the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1244, Kosovo was under UNMIK's civil and KFOR's armed administration. Kosovo was no longer the top issue discussed among international leaders, and it was not even on top international agendas. Nevertheless, Kosovo became a very important matter for international institutions and their representatives present in Kosovo.

As was mentioned previously, UNMIK had unrestricted power in civil issues in Kosovo, yet it took UNMIK two years to hand any responsibility over to local Kosovo leaders. Not before mid 2001 did UNMIK provide Kosovo with a constitutional framework that was to establish a Kosovo government and parliament and to schedule the transfer of power to local authorities. However, one of the very significant facts about the Constitutional Framework adopted by UNMIK with regulation 2001/9 was that there was no direct reference to Serbian sovereignty over Kosovo, nor were there any provisions of the Helsinki Act.

Contrary to the Kosovo Albanians' understanding that the Constitutional Framework would lead to independence, the Constitutional Framework does not mention possible independence, and it refrains from even implying any independence.<sup>177</sup> The Framework did stress, however, that any future status of Kosovo should be determined by taking into consideration the 1244 resolution. The Constitutional Framework indicated that

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<sup>177</sup> Two leading Kosovo Albanian parties wanted to rename the Constitutional Framework as Interim Constitution, but this was immediately rejected by UNMIK. See Report of the Secretary General on UN Interim Administration in Kosovo, UN Doc.S/2001/565(7 June 2001), para.20.

there was a need for a referendum, but unlike the Rambouillet Interim Agreement, it failed to provide a specific date for it.<sup>178</sup>

Serbia refused to adopt the Constitutional Framework, leading UNMIK to adopt it unilaterally, justifying its action on the grounds that the Framework was only valid under the Interim Administration, which was the supreme authority in Kosovo according to Resolution 1244.<sup>179</sup>

Kosovo's foreign policy was one of the issues not covered in the Constitutional Framework. This is mainly because the international community headed by the United Nations wanted to make sure that any possible declaration of Kosovo's independence by the Kosovo parliament could be annulled by UNMIK. However, preserving its influence in foreign policy issues did not make UNMIK annul the unilateral proclamation of the independence of Kosovo in February 2008.

After the Constitutional Framework was adopted, it was obvious that Kosovo was still not progressing, and it seemed as if the international community had not succeeded on any of the key issues that they were responsible for in Kosovo. This led to the introduction of a "Standards before Status" policy, which was endorsed by the UN Representative in Kosovo, Michael Stainer. In order for Kosovo to become a functional society espousing all European values, Michael Stainer announced the Standards before Status policy on 24 April 2002 during a UN Security Council meeting.<sup>180</sup>

UNMIK's Standards before Status policy, which began to be implemented in 2002, was the last UNMIK attempt to find a role for itself in Kosovo, which had been stuck in status limbo since 1999. By 2002, UNMIK's role as an interim administrator had been

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<sup>178</sup> Adam Balcer, *op.cit.*, p.50.

<sup>179</sup> See the report of the Secretary-General *supra* note 49, para.5, which mentions that the Constitutional Framework is "unacceptable by the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia," [http://journals.cambridge.org/download.php?file=%2FLJL%2FLJL14\\_03%2FS0922156501000279a.pdf&code=f2d547b88c426279535dff80e4f96db5](http://journals.cambridge.org/download.php?file=%2FLJL%2FLJL14_03%2FS0922156501000279a.pdf&code=f2d547b88c426279535dff80e4f96db5)

<sup>180</sup> Iain Kind and Whit Mason, *Peace at any Price-How the World Failed Kosovo*, Hurst&Co., London, 2006, p.174.



highly criticized by both Kosovo Serbs and Albanians. UNMIK's administration and special representative were acting as a kind of dictator, which, considering the powers enjoyed by the Secretary-General's special representative, they indeed were. The term "interim administration" indirectly implies that something will be following later on, or it could be said to mean something in between. However, that "something" was as yet undefined in 2002. Thus, uncertainty about the final status of Kosovo was one of the main reasons for the adoption of the Standards before Status policy.

In the end, the Standards before Status policy failed. Even though putting stress on standards, not status, was good policy and it came at the right time, it could not bring the desired results for three reasons. The first lies in the fact that the status policy had no legal backing in Resolution 1244. Even if a particular standard were to be reached, the status could not follow, since a key to resolving Kosovo's final status was missing from the Security Council resolution. The second reason lies in the fact that the standards policy failed to consider that the international community was powerless to improve conditions in Kosovo from 1999 until 2002 because there was no common ground for negotiations between Kosovo Serbian and Albanian populations. Kosovo Serbs could not be convinced that their rights would be assured should they decide to return to their homes. On the other hand, Kosovo Albanians were satisfied with an implementation of a standards policy, mainly because they saw its implementation as an opportunity to resolve the status of Kosovo. In other words, the outcome they sought from a standards policy was the independence of Kosovo supported by the international community. The third reason behind the failure of a standards policy is that responsibility for securing its implementation was not entrusted to self-government in Kosovo and to local institutions of self-government, but to UNMIK.

With regard to Russia's presence in KFOR forces in Kosovo, Putin's pragmatism had an impact on the Russian stance toward Kosovo. This was not so apparent in Russia's institutional involvement in Kosovo, but it could be clearly seen in the Russian military presence in KFOR. Even though Russia took an active part in KFOR as the war ended in Kosovo, it steadily continued to decrease its military presence in Kosovo until it finally

pulled all its KFOR soldiers out in 2003. This was significant in that it clearly showed that Kosovo had no strategic importance to Russia. If Russia had been eager to help the Serbs in their bid to re-establish Serbian authority in Kosovo, then it would have maintained a military presence in Kosovo. Even without a military presence in the province, Russia continued to be actively engaged in events concerning the status of Kosovo.

#### **4.4 Russo-American Rapprochement after 9/11 and Its Impact on Russia's Kosovo Policies**

Not long after the seizure of Slatina Airport in Priština, Boris Yeltsin resigned as president and relinquished his position to Vladimir Putin. This change in leadership did not radically lead to a change of Russian foreign policy toward Kosovo. This section will briefly show how 11 September 2001 initially brought about close cooperation between Russia and the United States on the one hand and, on the other, how the United States' war in Iraq upset this close cooperation and helped bring about an ever greater Russian need to re-impose its influence in the world, which would have an impact in the Russian reaction to the events of 2004 in Kosovo.

Vladimir Putin secured his presidency by portraying himself as a nationalist who could restore Russia's prestige. He distanced himself from those who only wanted to satisfy the West.<sup>181</sup> Putin's main characteristic was pragmatism, yet he had no illusions about conditions within Russia. He was aware that Russia was far behind many Western countries in terms of development, and he was aware, too, that Russia would need time to begin to approach the development level of the Western countries.

A year after the inauguration of President Vladimir Putin, the World Trade Center and Pentagon were attacked on 11 September 2001. Putin was the first leader to offer help to United States President George Bush and give his support to the Bush administration's

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<sup>181</sup> Goldgeier, James M. "Prospects for U.S.-Russian Cooperation" in *Russia After the Fall* edited by Andrew C. Kuchins, Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace ; [distributor] Brookings Institution Press, 2002, p. 285.

war on terror.<sup>182</sup> This came from Putin's belief that international terrorism is not something that one state can combat nor something that is directed against one state. He saw the threat of terrorism as something that should make all great powers cooperate in order to secure victory against terrorists.<sup>183</sup>

However, the close cooperation of Russia with the United States in its war on terror ended when the United States invaded Iraq. Russia was against the war from the very beginning. The effect of the United States' war in Iraq is very well expressed in the words of Russian foreign policy analyst, Alexandr Tsipko, who stated:

The war in Iraq will have a significant effect on the psychological and political climate in Russia. ...The American-Iraqi conflict seems to have brought to light a public demand that we regain our great-power status.... The war in Iraq has boosted Putin's stature as a statesman who cares about the dignity of his country.<sup>184</sup>

The importance to Russia of its international status can be understood from the Russian stance on the war in Iraq. A closer look at what Russia gained and what Russia lost by opposing the war in Iraq also confirms that status, in the case of Iraq, prevailed over possible economic benefits for Russia.

Thomas Ambrosio, in a close examination of the costs and benefits of opposing the United States on the war in Iraq, concludes that it made no sense for Russia to oppose the war from the perspective of material benefits that Russia might possibly gain.<sup>185</sup> Among the most important reasons for this are Russia's inability to take an active part in the reconstruction of post-war Iraq, its inability to collect from Iraq in the foreseeable future some 10 billion dollars that Iraq owed Russia, and its inability to renew the

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<sup>182</sup> Angela Stent and Lilia Shevtsova, "America, Russia and Europe: Realignment?," *Survival*, Vol.40, No.4, 2002, p. 121.

<sup>183</sup> Vladimir Putin, *Time Magazine*, 1 January 2008, Putin – Person of the Year.

<sup>184</sup> Alexandr Tsipko, "Bush is boosting Putin's Rating," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 31 March 2003, p.2, reproduced in *Current Digest of Post-Soviet Press*, 51, 5, 30 April 2003.

<sup>185</sup> Thomas Ambrosio, *op.cit.*, p.1191.

agreements that it had with Iraq during the regime of Saddam Hussein.<sup>186</sup> Thus, immediately after the September 11 attacks, Russia thought that it could best secure its interests and status by supporting the United States. However, when the United States invaded Iraq without the explicit authorization of the Security Council, Russia felt that its national interests were threatened, as well as its position and prestige in the world. Furthermore, the invasion of Iraq by the United States and its allies reminded Russia of NATO's unilateral war in Kosovo.

To sum up, memories of the Kosovo war were still relatively fresh in Russia, and a quest for multipolarity and the issue of great power status were among the top issues discussed in Russia.<sup>187</sup> In this respect, the Iraq war signaled a change in Russian foreign policy, which is present today. In light of this change in Russia's understanding of the world order and how to secure its place there, the events that took place in Kosovo in March 2004 demanded, if not a complete change in Kosovo's status, then at least a modification of it. Russia sought to see this modification made in the United Nations, where its say is important and which was responsible as trustee for Kosovo partly due to Russia's role and influence in resolving the Kosovo crisis and ending NATO's bombing of the province.

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<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1201.

## CHAPTER 5

### RUSSIA'S FOREIGN POLICY AND THE FINAL SETTLEMENT OF KOSOVO'S STATUS

The events that occurred after violence broke out in Kosovo in March 2004 shook the international establishment in Kosovo to its core. They made the international community question the effectiveness of administering Kosovo and showed that the policy of "Standards before Status" adopted by the United Nations had borne no fruits. The international community's response was immediate. The Standards before Status policy was abolished and the West, led by the United States, started to talk about the need to find a permanent solution for Kosovo, which meant resolving its status. However, this was not to happen as smoothly as the West expected due to a strong Russian objection to Kosovo's possible independence.

In this respect, this chapter will discuss the appointment of Martii Ahtisaari as a United Nations Special Envoy to Kosovo, the reasons behind a failure of international community to agree to accept the Ahtisaari proposal, the appointment of a "Troika" and the negotiations that it led for a few months, and Russian policies toward resolution of the status of Kosovo after the end of talks on 10 December. Those issues showed that Russia was very serious about its intentions not to agree to the Western idea of granting Kosovo independence. This chapter argues that Russia managed to obstruct the granting of independence to Kosovo for four years after the March 2004 events, which shook the international administration in Kosovo.

#### **5.1 March 2004 Kosovo Riots**

This section specifically deals with the Russian response to the crisis, as well as its involvement in post-crisis international dealings with Kosovo.

Before March 2004, it seemed as if the "Standards before Status" policy of the international community was working well, even though it brought no visible results. But on 16 March 2004, some Kosovo Albanian schoolboys from the village of Čabar were playing around the Ibar River, which divides Albanian and Serbian parts of Kosovo, and three of them drowned. A boy who was with them later said in a live interview on Kosovo Television that he and his friends had jumped into the river to escape from dogs, and it was speculated that the dogs had been set on them by Serbs. The interview sparked a hostile mood in Kosovo Albanians, who had already gotten bored with promises of independence. The next day, thousands of Albanians faced a large crowd of Serbians across a bridge over the Ibar, and firing broke out. Widespread violence ensued. The March crisis resulted in 19 deaths, 900 injured, and more than 3,000 people displaced. It also shook the international community's confidence that it could transform Kosovo into a multi-ethnic, open, and tolerant society.<sup>188</sup> The international community was more than ever convinced that the situation in Kosovo could not be continued anymore.

Among the main reasons behind the unrest in Kosovo in March 2004 were ten factors according to a paper produced by OSCE's Office of Political Affairs. Those factors were: a general conviction that the international community, together with Belgrade, was blocking the independence of Kosovo; organized nationalism; unemployed youth; a bad economic situation; populist media; the ineffectiveness of UNMIK and its inability to punish war criminals; a perception of unconditional United States support; the inability of the provisional government to reach the general public; and a fear of coming again under Serbian control. From this OSCE report, it is obvious that in Kosovo almost nothing was functioning well.

The 2004 events just showed to the individual countries of the Contact Group that faking stability in the province in the face of UNMIK and KFOR's ineffectiveness on the

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<sup>188</sup> Frenklin de Vrieze, "Kosovo after the March 2004 Crisis", *Helsinki Monitor*, Vol.15, No.3, January, 2004, p. 158

ground was no longer possible. Each individual country of the Contact Group, which included Russia, asked the Kosovo Albanian leaders for an explanation of the violence that erupted in March 2004. Kosovo Albanian leaders used this opportunity to express their dissatisfaction with the status of Kosovo, which five years after the war still had not been resolved.

It is widely accepted that the structure of UNMIK and all the other organizations that formed the pillars of international administration in Kosovo, mainly OSCE, the European Commission, and NATO, were highly dysfunctional due to institutional competition. In addition to institutional weakness came the individual involvement of particular countries of the Contact Group, which undermined UNMIK's authority as well as its ability to resolve the crisis.

Six months after the March 2004 unrest, the Contact Group member states decided to abolish completely the Standards before Status policy and to begin implementing a new policy called "Standards Light." In this policy more than two-thirds of the previous demands put forward to Kosovo Albanians were abolished in favor of fulfillment of "most important" standards. As Iain King and Whit Mason noted, this move of the international community to lower its own norms in order to appease Kosovo Albanians once more showed that "the international community was bowing to bullies, reinforcing the Balkan view that violence works."<sup>189</sup>

The involvement of the Contact Group states, as well as more active involvement of the United Nations, initiated a new stage in the international community's involvement in Kosovo. Contact Group representatives met for the first time in Priština and decided to establish the Kosovo Advisory Group, which would include representatives of all communities, in order to improve security.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Iain King and Whit Mason, *op.cit.*, p.211.

<sup>190</sup> Frenklin de Vrieze, *op.cit.*, p.185.

The international community, in its attempt to reestablish international control of Kosovo and to re-emphasize the need for a multi-ethnic Kosovo, introduced the concept of decentralization. What was meant by decentralization was not coexistence and life together between Kosovo Serbs and Albanians, but rather a way to separate the two communities. Russia and Serbia were lobbying for endorsement of the idea of decentralization, and they eventually won out. Kosovo Serbs strongly supported the idea of decentralization, since it was predicted that they would be protected in enclaves. These were not the enclaves they had lived in before, but new places that had not been populated by Serbs before the eruption of violence in 1998. However, the decentralization process was not accomplished successfully, since Kosovo Albanians saw it as a way to bring Kosovo back under Serbian rule, and they obstructed the process.

In May 2005, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed Kai Eide as Special Envoy to Kosovo and asked him to review progress there and come up with a conclusion as to whether it was ready for status talks. Eide concluded his report by saying that "there will not be any good time for addressing Kosovo's status... Nevertheless, an overall assessment leads us to the conclusion that the time has come to commence this process."<sup>191</sup> Instead of holding a major conference like Dayton or Rambouillet, which proved not to be that fruitful in the end, Eide proposed a shuttle diplomacy led by a special envoy. The job of special envoy was to be entrusted to Martti Ahtisaari from Finland.

Russia through its activity in the Contact Group supported all the actions taken by it since they were in line with Russia's wider national interest. International rule in Kosovo was in a stalemate; the Western powers obviously did not want to grant immediate independence to Kosovo but were trying to find a way to pacify Kosovo without expending too much effort. Thus, there was no reason why the Russian representative in

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<sup>191</sup> Kai Eide, "A Comprehensive Review of the Situation in Kosovo", 7 October 2005, available at [www.reliefweb.int/library/documents/2005/unsc-ser-7oct.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/library/documents/2005/unsc-ser-7oct.pdf).



the Contact Group should oppose shuttle diplomacy since it implied a compromise solution for Kosovo.

When analyzing the conclusions of the Contact Group meeting held in December 2005, during which Contact Group ministers set a guiding principle for the settlement of Kosovo's status and which in reality meant to be a guiding framework in which UN special envoy Martii Ahtisaari was to operate, it can be seen that the principles were framed in such a way that a status solution would be impossible to reach. This is due to the fact that the Contact Group stressed that they wanted all the negotiating parties to reach mutual agreement, an impossible condition considering the realities on the ground. Thus, the Contact Group intentionally or unintentionally did not want Martii Ahtisaari to succeed in his attempt to find a reasonable proposal for the resolution of the status of Kosovo.

It can be argued that Russia had been more loyal to its interests in the resolution of Kosovo's status than the Western powers. Even though Russia had no vital interests in Kosovo, it wanted to defend the status quo in the international system and had been eager to defend it since the beginning of the Kosovo crisis. Thus, Russia had been strictly following its interests when acting through the Contact Group and its attempts at status resolution in Kosovo.

The next section will analyze Russian foreign policy toward Kosovo, starting from 2005, when a decision was taken on the impossibility of maintaining the status quo, until the beginning of 2008. The appointment of Martii Ahtisaari as UN special envoy and his proposed plan, with special consideration of Russia's approach to the plan, will be analyzed. This will be followed by an examination of the "Troika" that was authorized by the Contact Group to try to find a solution to the stalemate in Kosovo. Finally, the Russian position on Kosovo's final status resolution, after the end of talks on 10 December, will be discussed.

## 5.2 Ahtisaari Proposal and the Russian Response

The appointment of former Finnish president Martii Ahtisaari as a special envoy of the UN Secretary-General, whose task was to prepare a proposal for the resolution of Kosovo's status, showed a great change in the international community's stance toward Kosovo. For the first time, all members of the Contact Group agreed upon the fact that there was no chance of returning to the pre-1999 status.<sup>192</sup> This stance indirectly implied that there was no possibility of returning Kosovo to centralized Serbian rule. In addition to this important agreement of the Contact Group, there was also consensus on evaluation of the first years of the international administration of Kosovo. Thus, Contact Group ministers welcomed and encouraged the work of Martii Ahtisaari. They also proposed some conditions and a framework that they thought should be guidelines for preparation of a proposal defining the status of Kosovo.<sup>193</sup>

The framework for the Ahtisaari mission contained some important aspects affecting the resolution of Kosovo's status, even though in many respects it almost made it impossible for Kosovo to become an independent state. This is mainly a result of the first point agreed upon by the Contact Group, namely that the solution to Kosovo's status should not contradict international law.<sup>194</sup>

Due to the first condition before Martii Ahtisaari, Russia thought that it had secured its interests. Russia's interests were confirmed also by the Contact Group during the meeting held in January 2006 between all parties concerned with the stability of Kosovo and the rest of the region. After the meeting, the Contact Group ministers issued a joint statement saying that any future status of Kosovo must be determined within the framework of UN Security Council Resolution 1244, which ended the war in Kosovo.

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<sup>192</sup> Vodeći principi Kontakt Grupe za riješenje statusa Kosova (Ten Guiding Principles for Ahtisaari) [http://www.unosek.org/docref/2005-10-07\\_-\\_Contact\\_Group\\_-\\_Ten\\_Guiding\\_Principles\\_for\\_Ahtisaari\\_-\\_serbian.pdf](http://www.unosek.org/docref/2005-10-07_-_Contact_Group_-_Ten_Guiding_Principles_for_Ahtisaari_-_serbian.pdf)

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*,

Other points of the Contact Group's framework were related to a multicultural Kosovo, with equal political representation and with special emphasis on minority rights and the protection of Kosovo's cultural heritage. Considering the instructions given by the great powers through the Contact Group, Martii Ahtisaari had no easy task. He was expected to bring the Serbian government and Kosovo interim government to the same table and make them negotiate, which they had not done since 1999. Ahtisaari's task became even harder when the first round of direct talks failed to produce any result. Both governments were unwilling to come to any kind of an agreement.

The Serbian government, led by radical nationalist Prime Minister Vojislav Koštunica, did not want to end its grip on power as Milošević had due to the loss of Kosovo. Thus, it would be political suicide for Koštunica to reach an agreement with Kosovo's leaders. On the other hand, the Kosovo leaders, who were for the most part ex-KLA leaders and had been fighting for an independent Kosovo for a long time, were unwilling to talk about any agreement except for the complete independence of Kosovo from Serbia. Since no side was willing to make Ahtisaari's task easier, he found himself traveling between Belgrade and Priština to try to find a compromise solution. But, since no one wanted to compromise, eventually one side was destined to emerge as a winner and the other as a loser in any final proposal that Ahtisaari might draw up.

Martii Ahtisaari's proposal was not so much about agreeing on a final status for Kosovo as about the internal administration of Kosovo and how it might evolve in coming years. Still, the media, to start with, and then interested great powers could not resist simplifying the report and talking about Ahtisaari's proposed "supervised independence" for Kosovo.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> "UN Envoy Recommends Kosovo Independence", 26 March 2007

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/mar/26/balkans>

Colum Lynch, "UN Mediator Calls for Kosovo Independence", *Washington Post*, 21 March 2007,

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/20/AR2007032001795.html>

Martii Ahtisaari and his team of experts had spent 14 months discussing with representatives of Belgrade and Priština their positions for the future status of Kosovo. But at the end of those 14 months, Martii Ahtisaari stated:

I regret to say that at the end of the day there was no will from the parties to move away from their previously stated positions. I had hoped, and very much preferred, that this process would lead to a negotiated agreement. But it has left me with no doubt that the parties' respective positions on Kosovo's status do not contain any common ground to achieve such an agreement. No amount of additional agreement will change that. It is my firm conclusion that the potential for negotiations is exhausted.<sup>196</sup>

Ahtisaari in his report stressed that any delay of the status resolution was not in the interests of regional peace and stability. Thus, he proposed that the resolution of Kosovo's status be in accordance with his "supervised independence" recommendation.<sup>197</sup>

Russia was the only member of the Contact Group that did not support the proposal put forward by Martii Ahtisaari. This attitude of Russia came from its own concerns about troublesome territories, not only in the Russian Federation but also in post-Soviet areas. Russia saw Kosovo's possible independence as a dangerous precedent in international relations. If independence could be granted to one province considered an integral part of Serbia without Serbian consent, there would be no mechanism that could stop other breakaway regions from proclaiming independence.

Unlike the analysts, commentators, and many politicians in Serbia who saw Russia as a protector of Serbian interests in the world, Russia, by not embracing the Ahtisaari plan, was simply defending the status quo in international relations and, consequently, was

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<sup>196</sup> Press release by the United Nations Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Future Status Process for Kosovo(UNOSEK), 10 March 2007, [www.unosek.org](http://www.unosek.org)

<sup>197</sup> Full proposal by Martii Ahtisaari for the Kosovo Status. [http://www.unosek.org/docref/Comprehensive\\_proposal\\_-\\_Sveobuhvatan\\_predlog\\_-\\_serbian\\_final.pdf](http://www.unosek.org/docref/Comprehensive_proposal_-_Sveobuhvatan_predlog_-_serbian_final.pdf).

defending its interests as a great power.<sup>198</sup> That Russia's status and prestige in the international arena were rising was confirmed when Russia threatened to veto the Ahtisaari proposal should it be put to a vote in the Security Council, and the Western powers agreed not to bring it to a vote.

### **5.3 "Troika" Mandate by the International Crisis Group**

After Russia threatened to veto the Ahtisaari proposal for a resolution of Kosovo's status, Russia insisted that a "Troika" be established, consisting of the Russian representative Alexander Botsan-Kharchenko, the European Union representative Wolfgang Ischinger, and the United States representative Frank Wisner. The Troika was appointed to mediate a further 120 days of talks between Serbs and Kosovo Albanians in the hope of finding a compromise solution.

The appointment of the Troika, together with the reluctance of the Western powers led by the United States to put the Ahtisaari proposal to a Security Council vote, says a lot about the West's desire to take into consideration the Russian position on the Kosovo issue. This clearly showed a Western willingness to cooperate with Russia on the resolution of Kosovo's status, while also confirming the West's indecision when it came to settling the status of Kosovo in a quick, decisive, and effective way.

Critics of Western acceptance of the extended negotiations proposed by Russia say that the main reason behind the West's acceptance of a delay in the resolution of Kosovo's status was the fact that the West was never ready to resolve it in the first place. Thus, even though three months were allowed for the continuation of talks between the Serbian government and the Kosovo interim government, no one was expecting a

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<sup>198</sup> Interview with Dimitry Rogozin, the Russian ambassador to NATO, 4 March 2008, <http://www.kosovocompromise.com/cms/item/analysis/en.html?view=story&id=654&sectionId=2> (accessed on 06.04.2008).

miracle from the new round of negotiations, except maybe Serbia and to a lesser extent Russia.<sup>199</sup>

Serbia for its part was more or less aware that this was its last chance to come up with a reasonable offer to the Kosovo Albanians so as not to lose de facto possession of its southern province. Many constructive proposals emerged in direct negotiations with Serbian representatives. However, the eagerness to find a compromise solution, which was present in the Serbian government, was not echoed at all among the Kosovo Albanians and representatives of their interim government. Moreover, it was hard for the Kosovo government to stabilize the situation in Kosovo, pacify its people, and convince them to hold on for three more months. The general mood in Kosovo among the Albanian population was that there could be no compromise on Kosovo's status, which they envisaged as independent. Thus, the hands of Kosovo's political representatives were tied when it came to any compromise with Serbia.

There were three rounds of talks between representatives of Serbia and representatives of Kosovo's interim government. The first talks, which took place in New York on 28 September 2007, showed that the task of the Troika mediators was not going to be easy. Both parties present had the same approach to the issue as they had during the negotiations that were held in the presence of Martti Ahtisaari. However, to show that they were dedicated to finding a solution and working together, both parties at the end of the first meeting signed the so-called "New York Declaration," which was a promising first step for the next three months of negotiations.<sup>200</sup> One of the most important provisions of this declaration was the commitment of the negotiating parties to hold onto the Contact Group's basic principles and to Security Council Resolution 1244. This is an important factor behind the Serbian willingness to sign a declaration, since Resolution 1244 affirmed Serbian sovereignty over Kosovo.

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<sup>199</sup> Barry Wood, Kosovo Status Talks Near Half Way Point With Little Progress Reported, 3.10.2007 <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2007/10/mil-071003-voa10.htm>

<sup>200</sup> New York Declaration issued by the Contact Group, 28 September 2007, <http://www.kosovocompromise.com/cms/item/home/en.html>.

The second round of talks took place in Brussels on 14 October 2007. Even though the parties were given enough time to think of a compromise solution, they both came to Brussels with the same stances. Thus, after an unfruitful second meeting, all hopes were placed in a final meeting that was to take place on 20 November 2007. The Troika mediators were determined to use all possible tools to make the parties cooperate in this third round of talks. After the second meeting, the Troika mediators had developed a list of 14 points that both parties had agreed so far. These were used as a basis for trying to find a solution in the last meeting. The 14 Working Points, as they were called, were sent to both Belgrade and Priština and were rejected by both, although not completely. Even though in the 14 points no status was mentioned, both parties sent a reply that included status.

In the third and last round of negotiations, the Serbian government came up with a proposal of wide autonomy for Kosovo based on the so-called Hong Kong model, where Kosovo would be free to trade and have special relations with other countries but would legally be part of Serbia, which would represent it in foreign affairs. This proposal was immediately rejected by the Kosovo Albanian delegation without even considering it or demanding extra time to consider it.

The Serbian proposal was praised by the Russian representative for having shown Serbia's willingness to cooperate and move in a positive direction. The Russian representative called for an extension of negotiations, and he also warned Western governments not to send a wrong signal to Kosovo that it would be recognized even if the talks failed. In the end, however, the talks did fail, and no extra time was granted for more negotiations.

As was mentioned previously, Russia was not expecting too much from the negotiations, but since it had already won the decision not to put the Ahtisaari proposal to a Security Council vote, it was not worried too much about the outcome of negotiations. That Russia's threat was taken seriously by the Western powers was what mattered to Russia, along with the confidence that its position in international matters was acknowledged.

Even though there was no hope of reaching an agreement during negotiations between the two sides, everyone was expecting different thing to happen at the end of negotiations. Serbia supported by Russia demanded an extension of the negotiation process, since they felt that the Kosovo Albanian side had been unwilling to compromise. Russia blamed the United States and other European powers for blocking the talks and supporting the Kosovo Albanian bid for independence, which they felt made any kind of compromise solution impossible.

Nevertheless, the talks were not extended, nor was any kind of solution proposed by the international community for the resolution of Kosovo's status. The Western powers wanted the issue of Kosovo's status to be settled, but they did not know how to solve it. It seemed that the Western powers deliberately, by not talking of any further negotiations with the Serbs and by not proposing a status settlement, were giving a green light for the unilateral proclamation of independence by Kosovo Albanians. This is even truer if one takes into consideration how many times the United States government openly said that, in the case of a unilateral proclamation of independence by the Kosovo government, the United States would recognize it. Thus, feeling pretty sure that they had the support of the United States and a few European powers behind them, the Kosovo government was just waiting for the right time to proclaim its independence.

The only thing that was left to Russia was to proclaim the unilateral independence of Kosovo illegal and in that way try to defend the international order based on international law.

#### **5.4 Russia and Kosovo after 10 December 2007**

The 120 days of talks between the Serbian government and Kosovo Albanians led by the Troika ended on 10 December. The talks proved fruitless, as was mentioned in the previous chapter, since they failed to bring the respective parties any closer to finding a compromise solution to the status of Kosovo. When the UN Security Council convened on 19 December 2007, the situation among its members resembled the one in August



2007, when Russia threatened to veto the Ahtisaari proposal. The great powers stayed disunited, and no power gave a sign of changing its stance.

The final report on the negotiations was prepared by the Troika and sent to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on 7 December 2007. According to the copy of the record obtained by the Associated Press,<sup>201</sup> "neither party was willing to cede its position on the fundamental question of sovereignty." The mediators wrote, "Our sessions were long and often difficult, as we confronted a legacy of the mutual mistrust and sense of historical grievance about the conflicts of the 1990s." In the report, no sign of a mutually agreed solution for Kosovo's status could be seen, and the report implied that neither side would eventually be satisfied with whatever Kosovo's status might turn out to be.

Russia was clearly unsatisfied with the report, even though one of the three mediators was Russian. In this respect, as soon as the report was published, the Russian UN Ambassador, Vitaly Churkin, objected to its use of the word "failure" to describe the 120 days of negotiations. He said the talks had been "a very worthwhile exercise ... that produced some serious results." Churkin said Russia wanted a continuation of negotiations and would circulate a proposed statement to fellow Security Council members aimed at encouraging more talks.

The Russian-NATO summit that took place the same day the report was published was also used as an opportunity for Russia to repeat its stance on the resolution of Kosovo's status. During the summit on 7 December, the Russian foreign minister stressed again Russia's unchanging position on Kosovo and called for more talks, saying, "Russia will support only that solution which will be acceptable to both sides – Belgrade and Priština – and, of course, the UN Security Council as the highest body authorized to resolve this problem."<sup>202</sup> However, Condoleezza Rice decisively said, as a reply to the Russian

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<sup>201</sup> Edith M. Lederer, The UN Gets Report on Failed Kosovo Talks, *Associated Press*, 7 December 2007 [http://www.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2007/12/07/un\\_gets\\_report\\_on\\_failed\\_kosovo\\_talks/](http://www.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2007/12/07/un_gets_report_on_failed_kosovo_talks/) accessed on:06.05.2008.

<sup>202</sup> *Interfax*, 7 December 2007, [http://www.interfax.ru/e/B/politics/28.html?id\\_issue=11925934](http://www.interfax.ru/e/B/politics/28.html?id_issue=11925934).

foreign minister during the same conference, "I think that process is at an end."<sup>203</sup> The statements from both the Russian and United States side clearly showed that the stances of both governments toward the resolution of the status of Kosovo had not changed and were not likely to change in the near future. In fact, it could be concluded that opposite stands had taken root in both governments.

At the end of the Russia-NATO summit, the NATO minister commented on NATO-Russian relations. In his statement, he stressed that relations with Russia were at a "challenging phase," but he also added that talks between the two parties were to continue.

If there was one power that emerged with a changed opinion on Kosovo and a stronger international position, it was the European Union. After the appointment of the Troika in the summer of 2007, many European governments suspended their willingness to support the independence of Kosovo. The inability of European Union countries to reach a decision about Kosovo made many analysts speculate about Russia's secret aim of breaking European unity, and many analysts tended to blame Russia for this split in opinion among European powers. However, as negotiations moved on without any hope for progress, and especially after the 19 December UN Security Council meeting, a unified decision in favor of support for the independence of Kosovo was taken by the European Union. Russia and China were the only great powers in the Security Council left in support of Serbia's territorial integrity.

Even though at the end of negotiations a quick resolution of Kosovo's status was predicted, the question of Kosovo's final status had never been further from resolved. The United States and European Union had openly stated that further talks were of no use, even as they were openly warning Kosovo's interim government not to proclaim independence unilaterally, or at least not in the near future. It seemed that the Western

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<sup>203</sup> Paul Ames, NATO-Russia Clash on Kosovo, *Associated Press*, 7 December 2007 [http://www.philly.com/philly/wires/ap/news/world/20071207\\_ap\\_natorussiaclashonkosovo.html](http://www.philly.com/philly/wires/ap/news/world/20071207_ap_natorussiaclashonkosovo.html) (accessed on 03.04.2008).

powers had once more opted for the "wait and see" policy, which never gave positive results and had been fruitless so many times in the Balkans after the Cold War.

Mikhail Margelov, chairman of the international affairs committee of the Russian parliament, told a journalist in an interview published in *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* on 28 November 2007 that it was almost impossible for Russia to change its position on Kosovo. Russia, he continued, thinks that an independent Kosovo would set a dangerous precedent in the international system and would open a door for Russia to recognize Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transdniestria. He pointed out, too, that Russia favored collective international decisions rather than unilateral decisions. He concluded that the Russian-United States disagreement over Kosovo was deep but not something that the great powers could not work out.<sup>204</sup> Thus, the great powers were and still are disunited on the way in which the status of Kosovo should be resolved. However, Russia, as might be understood from Mikhail Margelov's statement, is open to cooperation as long as the other great powers are willing to cooperate. Cooperation, from the Russian perspective, means that Russia is ready to cooperate and reach an agreement with the Western powers only if cooperation is in its national interest. Russia has never been, and still is not, concerned about Serbian interests when it comes to resolution of Kosovo's status. It is only because its interests and those of Serbia coincide when it comes to the granting of independence to autonomous provinces that Russia happens to back the Serbian cause in the international arena.

The conditionality of Russian support at the end of the Troika-sponsored negotiations seems to be understood by Serbia's intellectual class, even though in many parts of Serbia Putin and Russia are publicly celebrated and regarded as representatives of Serbian interests in the international arena.

In January 2008, it was certain, after a few UN Security Council meetings, that a compromise solution to the resolution of Kosovo's status was impossible to reach.

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<sup>204</sup> Nadezhda Sorokina, "Future Status Russia's Role in decision on Kosovo's Independence: A Matter of Compromise," *Russia Beyond The Headlines*, 28 November 2007, [http://www.rbth.rg.ru/articles/Russia\\_and\\_Kosovo.html](http://www.rbth.rg.ru/articles/Russia_and_Kosovo.html).

Kosovo Albanians were only waiting until the outcome of Serbian presidential elections at the beginning of February before proclaiming their independence from Serbia. This was mainly because the presidential candidate of the Radical party, Mladen Nikolić, had the support of many Serbs and had a good chance of winning the elections by defeating the Democratic Party candidate, Boris Tadić. Mladen Nikolić, who promised Serbs that he would never lose Kosovo, implied that he would defend it by all necessary means, including force. That was what Kosovo Albanians and the Western powers were afraid of, another war in the Balkans. Thus, when the Serbs elected President Boris Tadić as their president, it was a clear sign for Kosovo Albanians to move forward and unilaterally proclaim independence.

On 16 February, the prime minister of Kosovo, Hasim Tachi, scheduled a meeting of parliament for 17 February, where a declaration of independence would be put up for a vote. Russia wasted no time responding to the Kosovo Albanian threat to proclaim independence and, ahead of the meeting on 17 February, issued a statement warning against a unilateral proclamation of independence. In the statement, Russia warned the West that in the case of recognition of Kosovo, Russia would change its position toward Georgia's two breakaway provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.<sup>205</sup> However, Russia did not explicitly mention that it would recognize those two provinces since it is not in Russia's interest to have an independent Abkhazia, South Ossetia, or Transdniestria. This is because the Russia is a status quo power which strongly opposes any changes in existing international order.

During a parliamentary session on Sunday, 17 February, the Kosovo government accepted a declaration of independence, and Kosovo unilaterally proclaimed its independence from Serbia. Russia, on its part, was quick to proclaim the declaration of independence illegal, as did Serbia. However, this did not stop Western governments from recognizing Kosovo as an independent state. As soon as the United States

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<sup>205</sup> Michael Evans and Tony Halpin, Russia Issues Warning Over Breakaway States, 16 February, *The Times Online*, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article3376887.ece>.

recognized an independent Kosovo on the following Tuesday, 19 February, other great powers followed.

Serbian anti-independence rhetoric was a more outspoken version of Russian anti-independence arguments. Aside from proclaiming the declaration illegal, Boris Tadić during an emergency meeting in the United Nations called for the great powers not to pity Serbia but to think about possible scenarios for their own countries, which are rarely without problems. He stressed that if the international community started recognizing breakaway provinces, sooner or later other sovereign countries might be faced with the same problem. Thus, he repeated the constantly stressed Russian argument about creating a dangerous precedent.<sup>206</sup>

In February 2008, Russia was preparing for presidential elections, and the independence of Kosovo was not a top issue there. However, Vladimir Putin's self-appointed successor, Dmitry Medvedev, visited Serbia a week before the Russian presidential elections to assure Serbia that it had Russian support on Kosovo and that this support would be extended after he was elected president of Russia.

It is certain that Russia will not in the near future recognize the independence of Kosovo and that it will try to block Kosovo's accession to any international institution in which it has the right of veto. Among those institutions, the most significant is the United Nations. It is hard to believe that Kosovo will soon become formally the 193<sup>rd</sup> independent state in the family of states. That this is the case was confirmed one day after Dmitry Medvedev was elected as president of Russia. In one of his first foreign policy announcements, he said, "We should pursue independent foreign policies, the ones we had in the past eight years, with the main goal of protecting our national interests on all fronts by all possible means, but of course sticking to legal rules."<sup>207</sup> He

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<sup>206</sup> *TANJUG (Serbian News Agency)*, 18 February 2007.

<sup>207</sup> Medvedev to Pursue Moscow's Policy on Kosovo, 3 Mart 2008  
[www.kosovocompromise.com/cms/item/latestnews/en.html?view=story&id=643&sectionId=1](http://www.kosovocompromise.com/cms/item/latestnews/en.html?view=story&id=643&sectionId=1).

added also that when Russia took over the presidency of the Security Council, it would keep Kosovo high on the 15-member agenda.<sup>208</sup>

Besides this statement of the newly elected president of Russia, the Russian ambassador to the United Nations, Vitaly Churkin, and the Russian ambassador in Serbia gave statements about the European Union's planned mission in Kosovo. In Belgrade, Aleksander Alekseev stated that "his country will do everything possible to make the totally wrong decision on the unilateral declaration of the independence of Kosovo and its recognition, annulled."<sup>209</sup> Following the well-known stance of Russia toward the EU's mission in Kosovo, which is supposed to replace to UN Mission in Kosovo, Vitaly Churkin stated, after consultations with Ban Ki-moon, that "The EU law and order mission to Kosovo is illegal since United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 is still in force."<sup>210</sup>

Unlike those who argue that Russia would "sell" the Serbs in return for some favor by the West, or those who suggest that Russia is using Kosovo as a "ball" in order to create a split among European Union countries, Russia is trying to make its position with regard to the other great power as strong as it can, and it is trying to achieve its aims by making the West take its opinion in managing the international system seriously. At the same time, it is important to note that Russia has not ceased cooperating with the Western powers, be it on issues regarding Kosovo or any other issue. This is mainly because it is in no one's interest to start a new war over Kosovo, including Serbia itself.<sup>211</sup>

To sum up, this chapter tried to show that Russia's stance toward the newly independent Kosovo has not changed from the time it was under UNMIK administration. However,

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<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>211</sup> Irina Kobrinskaya, Interview broadcasted on *Russia Today*, Moscow, 9 December, 2007, <http://www.russiatoday.ru/guests/detail/627>

Russia found itself in a very difficult position after the Kosovo government proclaimed its independence on 17 February 2008. On the one hand, Russia's influence in the Balkan region was brought into question, and, on the other hand, Russia's inability to stop international recognition of Kosovo showed its weak international influence. Nevertheless, Russia did not stop cooperating with the Western countries on various issues after many of those countries decided to recognize Kosovo. Russia continues to oppose recognition of Kosovo by the United Nations and continues to criticize the countries that recognized it, but it does not go beyond criticism.

Russia, in its search for the international prestige enjoyed by the United States, evaluates situations that emerge on a day-to-day basis all around the world. Unrest in Tibet and Nagorno-Karabakh in the past few months are just two of the most recent situations where Kosovo's example is taken as a norm in international relations concerning demands for independence. Due to the unrest that emerged after Kosovo's self-proclaimed independence, more and more independent countries without homogeneous populations have begun to wonder how wise it was to recognize Kosovo. Acknowledging Russia's important role in international affairs, many of these countries now look to her as a great power dedicated to preserving the existing world order.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

The end of the Cold War brought about a fundamental change in international relations. Where previously the world had possessed two superpowers, the United States emerged victorious from the Cold War to find itself the only remaining superpower. At the same time, Russia lost a great deal of its territory and found itself with an uncertain future and, most importantly, without its great power status. Russia, which emerged for the first time in its history as an independent nation state, had to find its place in the system it became part of. This was not easy for Russia, as its past represented a large burden. It also faced many uncertainties, including an economical transition that left it completely dependent on Western money and a transition to democratic government. In moving beyond its Communist past, it also suffered from an ideological vacuum. These monumental changes were destabilizing factors in Russia at the beginning of the 1990s. Nevertheless, there was one thing that Russia had no doubt about, and that was the place it felt it was entitled to in the system of nation states. From the very beginning, Russia aimed to assume the position it had always occupied among all the other great powers. From the beginning of the 1990s, Russia saw a chance to regain its status by cooperating with the West in the resolution of conflicts that took place in different parts of the world, especially the severe conflicts going on in the Balkans. While expending much effort to end the Balkan conflicts, Russia was acting in a way that best suited its interests.

This thesis has attempted to analyze Russia's foreign policy toward the Kosovo conflict in the decade after the emergence of unrest in Kosovo in 1998 by using, as a basis, a realist perspective on the institutional cooperation of the great powers. This realist theory, however, has not been applied to Russian involvement in Kosovo in the traditional sense of competition among states for hard power and security. Instead, it analyzes Russia's actions on the Kosovo question from the perspective of a positional



good, namely its prestige and status in the international political arena. As has been shown throughout this thesis, the great powers, in dealing with the Kosovo conflict, have at the same time been competing for positional goods in an anarchic world.

As was discussed in the first chapter, contrary to those who argue that Russia's relations with the West are conflictual or concerned with achieving balance between the great powers, the idea of competition for positional goods within a realist framework is most appropriate for an exploration of Russian involvement in the resolution of the Kosovo crisis. The introductory chapter provided the basis for understanding the nature of Russian involvement in the Balkans. Adopting a positional good – namely, the prestige and national interest of Russia – makes it understandable why Russia was and still is in favor of sustainability in the international order, and why it can be labeled as a protector of international law and order. International law, which is based on state sovereignty and territorial integrity, is what Russia actually stood for in the Balkan conflicts. Territorial integrity is in Russia's national self-interest, since not only in the post-Soviet space but also in Russia there are breakaway provinces. Remembering the saying, "Today Serbia, tomorrow Russia," the issue of Kosovo became part of Russian national concerns, even as it became a test of Russian power-standing internationally among the great powers.

Chapter Two was dedicated to Russian involvement in the resolution of the crises that erupted with the wars of secession in Yugoslavia from 1991 on. These wars are often described in the literature as the first cycle of Yugoslavia's disintegration, while the Kosovo war and the events that followed it are not infrequently depicted as the last problem left behind by the former Yugoslavia. Thus, Russian involvement in conflict resolution in Croatia and Bosnia for more than four years, in spite of internal instability brought about by many economic and political crises, clearly showed Russia's strong dedication to regaining its international reputation and a determination to defend its national interests. Under Michael Gorbachev, the Soviet Union wanted to keep Yugoslavia together. Boris Yeltsin, however, faced with the challenge of holding his own union together, had no interest in supporting Milošević in his forceful attempts to keep the Yugoslav republics together. Thus, Russia was one of the first countries to

recognize the independent states of Slovenia and Croatia. However, with the escalation of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina – and with the active, often contradictory, biased, and non-unified international response to the crisis – Russia rightfully decided to take an active part in conflict resolution and secure its own interests. It has been argued by many scholars who have tried to explain the Russian foreign policy in the years of Andrei Kozyrev that Russia was unconditionally following the West in conflict resolution in the former Yugoslavia. But as this chapter shows, it was the United States and its uneasiness at seeing Europe and Russia cooperate effectively that delayed the decision to stop the war until it had been under way for four years. Thus, Russia tried to increase its relative influence in world affairs through international cooperation, although it was not as successful as it wanted to be. The Dayton Peace Accords, which eventually ended the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, were signed without a Russian representative. Even though Russia was not present during the Dayton negotiations, Russian interests were secured if one takes into account what the Serbs, as a defeated power, got in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Bosnian Serbs were awarded 49 percent of the territory, which is by no accident called the Republic of Srpska. The name in itself has a symbolic meaning, since it is hard to believe that such a name could be granted to a part of a federation without Russian involvement in the conflict resolution. Thus, this chapter showed that Russia was not acting out of a desire to support Serbian interests in the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but was struggling to secure its great power prestige internationally. The chapter showed and analyzed many instances where Russia acted against Serbian interests and Bosnian Serb interests, and sometimes against both at the same time, if it saw the opportunity to increase its own importance internationally. Moreover, Russia openly used its so called "historical connections" with Serbs in order to present itself to the great powers as the only power capable of interacting with Serbia to find a way to stop the conflict.

Chapter Three dealt with the Kosovo crisis that emerged in 1998 and 1999. With the emergence of the crisis, the international community, in the form of the Contact Group for the Balkans, worked hard to try to find a solution to the crisis. Even though explicitly approved by Russia, the threat of the use of force by the Western powers, led by the

United States during the Rambouillet peace talks, proved not to be as effective as expected. The exposure of Western military might did not seem to affect the decisions of Milošević, who was counting on Russian help. On the contrary, the Western use of force even seemed to work for Milošević, since the ethnic cleansing of Kosovo Albanians became even more severe after the NATO bombing began. The NATO bombings, even though seen by some scholars as a great defeat for Russia, since it was unable to stop them, ushered in a Russian return to the center of the international political arena. This was mainly because Russia was a major player in saving NATO the embarrassment of bombing Serbia indefinitely and prolonging the suffering of Kosovo Albanians, which had lasted for more than two months. During the NATO war over Kosovo, Russia seemingly faced a great dilemma, since it badly needed Western financial help yet felt obliged to confront the West for conducting a war that violated international law. However, Russia managed to balance the extremes and to find a middle way. Russia used its "historical ally of the Serbs" card and mediated successfully to stop the war and make NATO and Serbia agree on peace terms. Russia did this skillfully, since it never compromised its national interests. In addition, it secured Serbian sovereignty over Kosovo under a United Nations mandate in Kosovo. Confirmation of the Russian victory came in the shape of UN Security Council Resolution 1244, which proved to be midway between Russian and United States interests in Kosovo.

Chapter Four dealt with events in Kosovo after the establishment of an international administration there. This chapter showed all the inconsistencies and shortcomings of UN Security Council Resolution 1244. Due to wide gaps in the resolution and various interpretations of it, it was hard for UN high representatives to start an effective administration of Kosovo. All representatives tended to read the resolution in its vaguest form so that any improvement of the deteriorating situation in Kosovo could not be achieved. The final status question was on the mind of everyone, be it the Kosovo Serbs, the Albanians, or the international administrators themselves. No one dared to say directly how the international administration would end. Russia hoped for wide autonomy, whereas other powers were in favor of independence, and so the status theme was a taboo topic in international crisis group discussions. This is why the "Standards

before Status" policy was invented, but it proved to be a great failure due to the events of March 2004, which brought great unrest to Kosovo. March 2004 showed that the international community was not doing the right thing for Kosovo and there was a need to re-open the status talks. Russia understood that something should be done but was in favor of a mutual agreement between Kosovo Albanians and Serbs. While supporting the breakaway provinces of South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Transdniestria, Russia did not favor granting them independence, since Russia internationally is in favor of territorial integrity. Russia advocated this same policy for Kosovo, mainly because of its reluctance to recognize breakaway provinces in the post-Soviet space.

Chapter Five dealt with international events that occurred after the prolonged talks on the definition of Kosovo's final status ended on 10 December 2007. After every means of negotiation had been exhausted, Russia was still calling for the international community and UN as the highest international body to sponsor more talks so that a compromise solution could be reached. Due to the unwillingness of Ban Ki-moon to re-open negotiations, all eyes turned toward Kosovo's newly elected prime minister, who promised independence for Kosovo at the beginning of 2008. Russia, in the meantime, was more engaged in stopping the United States from building an anti-missile defense system in the Czech Republic than in defending Serbian sovereignty in Kosovo. On various occasions, Russian officials warned the West not to recognize Kosovo, but they seemed content to leave it at that. As time passed more and more states recognized Kosovo and started to open their embassies in Kosovo's capital-Prština. This was what made Russia more assertive in its warnings about bad precedent that is created in Kosovo. Russia, as for now, is able to block Kosovo's recognition by the United Nations and can block Kosovo's membership in the same organization. However, the recent examples of the unrests in Tibet work to support the Russian argument about bad example that international community sends to breakaway regions all around the world.

In conclusion, Russia in its involvement in the conflict resolution in the Balkans aimed at securing its national interest. However, while longing for acquiring great power status

Russia was in no case longing for the transformation of the world order. What is more existing world order is an order in which Russia is trying to secure its position.

This, thesis tried to show that Russian involvement in the conflict resolution in the Balkans and especially in the resolution of Kosovo crisis form 1999 should be looked from the perspective of broader Russian national interest which emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Thus, Russia's national interest is driving force behind Russian involvements in the resolution of the Kosovo status not the Cold War practice to confront the West. Modern Russia understands its capabilities vis-à-vis other states and in order to improve its standing among the great powers Russia needs international system to stay as it is. Thus, any real possibility for Russia to approach to the international status and prestige of the United States is to make sure that international system does not change, and that is exactly what Russia tried to achieve by its involvement in Kosovo.

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