

*Aspects of the New World Order in Southeast Europe*Original paper
327(73:4-12)“199”**U.S. Policy in the Southeast Europe**

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Following the disintegration of the socialist system in Europe and the end of the bloc-based relations, American politics has changed the course of its operation. In present-day circumstances, southeast Europe is becoming increasingly prominent in American foreign-policy projections, particularly during Clinton's administration. Clinton has defined a clear-cut policy towards Europe's southeast due to its vicinity to certain neuralgic points of American engagement (Near East, the Caspian region, the Gulf, eastern Mediterranean). In this way American politics has proved its leading global role. At the time of scarcity of foreign-policy events, Clinton's team has thus been served on a platter a major foreign-policy arena, in which its engagement – which has all the symptoms of a long-lasting one – has not proved too costly.

American Policy in the Southeast Europe

The falling apart of the socialist system in Europe has significantly changed the framework and the directions of American global strategy. Instead of confronting the great adversary – the Soviet Union, which resulted in strong ideological, political, economical and military components – American politics found itself in a new position, without the direct, global rival, but with new areas of conflict, particularly in Europe. Instead of the confrontation in the centre of Europe, on the borders of two German states, and instead of two military blocks confronting each other, the new significant challenges to American policy have shifted to peripheral parts of Europe.

Within this constellation the Balkan area should be viewed, or correctly referred to, as the region of South East Europe¹. Within the past relation of strategic competition

¹ The latest political events in South East Europe are increasingly accenting the question of belonging to this region. It is significant that Slovenia, Croatia, Romania and even Albania are trying to distance themselves from the Balkan syntagm. Therefore, instead of the Balkans, the softer term South East Europe is lately used, which also calls for its political determination. According to traditional political division, the South East Europe consists of: Greece, Albania, Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania, as well as the five states that have emerged in the territory of the former Yugoslavia (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, SR Yugoslavia and Macedonia).

between the two super-powers and their blocks, this area had a significantly lower importance. Greece and Turkey were members of the NATO, and by that fact have drawn the attention of a part of the Soviet forces to themselves. Besides, on the Turkish territory a possibility to use the military bases in the vicinity of the Soviet borders also existed. Yugoslavia was a non-aligned country, and thus created a sort of a grey zone between the NATO and the Warsaw Pact (Bulgaria, Romania), while Albania, when it left the Warsaw Pact in 1961, extended this non-block territory.

When the Cold War, and inter-block relations ended, the US became more and more involved in this area. New disagreements over Cyprus have increased the Greek – Turkish tension, the change of regimes in Romania and Bulgaria called for American political directions as well, and the overthrowing of the regime in Albania were opening new perspectives to American policy in the entrance to the Adriatic sea. But the most important factor that influenced the stronger American engagement, even the military involvement in the area of South East Europe, was connected with the crisis in the territories of the former Yugoslavia.

American Policy and the Crisis on the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia

By strengthening the policy of détente, and by a gradual opening of the East, the Yugoslav position as a non-aligned country began to significantly lose importance. In these new circumstances, it became clear to Washington that the danger of a possible Soviet military intervention exists no longer, and at the same time the failures of Yugoslav policy became openly analysed and criticised, especially in regards to human rights (Kosovo)², but due to American focus on significant international developments (The Gulf, disintegration of Soviet Union, unification of Germany), the developments in Yugoslavia received secondary attention.

Unlike some other situations, when American policy was fed with misleading signals from the field, the diplomatic reports from Belgrade, as well as the analysis prepared by the CIA, clearly foresaw the disintegration of Yugoslavia and future conflicts. But, through the support of the federal government led by Prime Minister Ante Mark-

Ecobescu, N.: "Avoiding Marginalization of the Balkans", Romanian Journal of International Affairs, No. 1-2, 1996, pp. 50-2

The other division of the countries of this area has stemmed from the security arrangements, and the researchers from the European Strategic Group of the EU include in the area the following countries: Bulgaria, Romania, Albania and the four states of the former Yugoslavia: Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, FYR Macedonia and Serbia with Montenegro.

Lenzi, G., Martin, L., eds, The European Security Space, Paris 1996, pp. 23-4.

² Schifter, R.: "Human Rights in Yugoslavia: Statement before the Foreign Relations Committee, 21 Feb. 1991" U.S. Department of State Dispatch, 4 May 1991, pp. 152-3

ović, at the time when this government had almost no political authority American policy was advocating the unity of the state that practically no longer existed.³

After the outbreak of the armed conflict in Slovenia, (June 1991), in Washington it was still believed that this was a local conflict that Europeans will be capable of solving themselves. President Bush clearly stated, in an interview, that Yugoslavia did not represent American strategic interest⁴, and only after the Intermediate Mission of the EU had failed, did the US diplomacy come into the light.

But, in the meantime, the conflict had already started. And although the plans for the military intervention, within the framework of the US SACEUR, were in place, at the time of the Yugo-Army attack on Dubrovnik, President did not approve this action.⁵ His military advisors were strongly against an American military involvement in the conflict. In this fraction that was firmly against the American military involvement in the conflict an important role was played by National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft and Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger. Scowcroft was serving as American military Attaché in Belgrade, and Eagleburger was US Ambassador, therefore their assessments had a special weight in Washington. According to them, the conflict was about deep and complex ethnic problems that will take time to resolve, so US should not get involved. Besides, in an election year, Bush's administration was convinced that the American military engagement in the former Yugoslavia would be extremely counter-productive and that it would turn the public opinion against President Bush.

American military officials were also against military involvement. Failures in some previous military actions, as well as the unpopularity of land troops warfare, were used as the principal arguments against the intervention. What they were demanding from President Bush was the need for a clear definition of political and military goals, in order to achieve a decisive victory, with a possibility for withdrawal. According to some assessments, General Collin Powell was the main advocate for such an approach, and his authority was sufficient to block the efforts by those calling for a decisive action and suppression of the Serb an aggression.⁶

At the end of his term, President Bush did show some interest in the crisis, which was eventually roused. Probably fearing that it might spread to the neighbouring Kosovo, and thus involve additional actors, Bush sent a letter to President Milošević, warning him that the US will not tolerate further violations of human rights of Albanians in Kosovo. By this, a possibility of American military action, in case of spreading the conflict to Kosovo, was announced.

³ See: R. Lukich and A. Lynch, *Europe from the Balkans to the Urals: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union*, Oxford 1966, pp. 307-20.

⁴ "Bush sieht in der Bewaltung der Krise in Jugoslawien zunachts eine Aufgabe der Europaer" *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, July 10, 1991.

⁵ Quote: F.S.Larrabee, *Us Policy in the Balkans...*, p. 281.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 282.

During the election campaign, President Clinton strongly criticised Bush's inactivity, stating that it only contributed to the deepening of the crisis⁷. But, in spite of that, some time had to pass before the course was changed. The process of decision making and its definition – from the assessment that it is only a local conflict with humanitarian consequences – to the full acceptance of the thesis that, after all, this is a serious conflict, in which certain American interests can be found, was affected by several domestic and international factors.

On the domestic, American scene, Clinton made it clear that the issues connected with the development of American society, such as economy and health insurance system, will have priority. The foreign policy was to be put aside on the whole, and along with that the possibility for a direct involvement in the territories of the former Yugoslavia. Only after the conflict had spread, after huge sufferings of civilian population, and of course, the constant reports from the field, did Clinton's administration begin contemplating the possible ways of its engagement.

- Retirement of Joint Chief of Staff, General Powell, has somewhat weakened the opposition to the idea of military intervention, although the fear of a lengthy engagement in the crisis with no solutions visible, remained.

- In the centre of the political decision making the new administration was also divided. The State Department, led by Warren Christopher, was for continuing the policy of careful monitoring and analysis of the crisis and searching for possible diplomatic solutions. On the other hand, the new National Security Advisor, Anthony Lake, and the US Ambassador to the UN, Madelaine Albright, were advocating radical policy, in which the American diplomatic action would be clearly backed by military support⁸.

From the perspective of international actors, the crisis in the former Yugoslavia, also in Clinton's time, was assuming some new contours that were pointing to some new threats, and at the same time, the possibilities for American action were opening.

- American establishment became increasingly concerned over the possibility that the conflict would spread to the South Balkans and could draw in a number of states, which could then trigger off new Greek-Turkish tensions.

- Criticism coming from the Muslim countries which claimed that Western, and especially American policy is very quick when it comes to reacting to the Muslim world, but that it intentionally does not wish to prevent the extermination of Muslims in the Balkans, were also taken as an illustration of the consequences that such a position could have on the American relations with Muslims.

- Strengthening of Russian positions in Serbia, followed by a stronger insistence of Russian communist and nationalistic forces on the solution which cannot be achieved without Russia, were also noticed in the White House, where the fear that American engagement would endanger President Yeltsin's positions, as the principal point of the new American-Russian relations, was constantly present.

⁷ Quote: R. Lukich and A. Lynch, *Europe from the Balkans to the Urals...*, pp. 320-1.

⁸ Quote: F.S. Larrabee, *U.S. Policy in the Balkans...*, p. 283.

- Faced with the crisis of all international institutions that took an active part in the conflict, American policy was forced to get involved regardless of the extent on which this was used to prove European inability to solve its problems, or due to the fear that the conflict could spread before a solution was found.⁹

Viewing the developments in the former Yugoslavia as a European problem, Clinton's administration started from a different evaluation of the new relations within Europe, and the position that the new, unified Europe has. All the announcements of political and military linkages within the European Union have been received sceptically by Bush's administration, and in part even as an attempt at unnecessary competition that could endanger the existence of the NATO. On the other hand, Clinton, from the beginning of his term, took a different position, believing that a new identity of the EU members, as well as their capability for joint political and military action, could help in solving many post-Cold War crises. The intervention in Bosnia and Herzegovina was an excellent opportunity to test this capability for joint action, and also to confirm American stand that the US will not act on their own in practice.

By tying the action with his allies, Clinton has managed to achieve several goals. First, he demonstrated that his administration will not act, nor bear the price of the operation unilaterally. Positioning the Bosnian intervention as a joint one, in which the US and its allies participate on equal basis, the possibilities for shaping a new NATO profile, as an allied executive instrument where the allies decide jointly with the US, were opened. At the same time, along with numerous discussions and preparations for the action, the time needed for preparing the public opinion in favour of American activation in Balkans was gained. The whole process took place between the statements on the one hand that American interests were in question, and on the other, the arguments that this is a long-lasting ethnic conflict that even America would not be able to solve.

Political officials at the White House slowly became convinced that the whole structure of the new world order was jeopardized by the inactivity of the main actors, and that such behaviour in one region could soon lead to a dangerous repetition in another. Even the threat of the conflict spreading to a wider area was not sufficient to speed up this decision and initiate the joint action.

Only after the Congress had announced that it would lift the arms embargo did the White House begin more radical preparations for a military action. Namely, it became apparent that such a decision would not be well accepted by American allies, who viewed the new armament as an opportunity for a further escalation of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This could have had a serious negative impact on the announced new relations between the US and the European Union. Having in mind the future possible enlargement of the NATO, and repeated general questioning of the value of the NATO as the organisation unable to act in a European conflict, Clinton's administration opted for action which led to Dayton and finally to peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In summer 1995, when the path that led to Dayton was opened, Clinton undertook action in order to:

⁹ R. Vukadinović, *In Search of Security for the New Balkans*, Vienna 1994, p. 11.

- reaffirm the strength, credibility and American leadership in the NATO, and save the NATO,
- strengthen his presidential campaign,
- convince the Congress and the Pentagon that American troops can safely go to Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁰

By this the American leadership in the NATO was demonstrated, which also resulted in the conclusion that there are no solutions in the new world order without America. The European allies have all taken up their roles in the post-Dayton process, but America remained the leading power in the Balkans; in Clinton's view America should continue to command, while Europeans are expected to do more¹¹.

The American policy brought about this gradual pass into action in the territories of the former Yugoslavia through an array of diplomatic, political and military means. First, it was demonstrated through the mediation between the Croats and the Muslims, insisting on an alliance of these two nations against the Bosnian Serbs, in the Washington Agreement of 1994. Jointly with other members of the Contact Group, the American policy was searching for the solution in Croatia as well, in the areas occupied by Croatian Serbs, but when the proposal of the Contact Group was rejected, the operation led by the Croatian police and military forces opened the way to Dayton and the arrival of Americans in Bosnia. By the significant presence of its military personnel in UN forces in Macedonia, the American policy has clearly confirmed its readiness to prevent the conflict to spread and to preserve Macedonia. Being present at all three levels of the conflict, Clinton's administration has, from the beginning, demonstrated its intention to remain present in the South East Europe, which can, of course, give rise to various opinions. They relate to the role that the US has in the new world order, to the structure of relations that are being developed between the US and Europe, and to the attempts aimed at finding the new leading role for the US. But, along with these, the development of new American strategic views that throw a new light on the area of the former Yugoslavia, must not be forgotten either.

Clinton's Strategic Engagement

Simultaneously with the engagement in the territories of the former Yugoslavia, a strong American activity in other countries of this area was initiated. Assessing the geo-strategic position of Albania, its connection with Kosovo and Macedonia, as well as eventual dangers that might arise from the idea of creating a "Greater Albania", American policy has accepted Berisha's government, giving its full support to his authoritarian regime, until the moment when it became clear that Berisha was not the one who can move Albania towards modern era. Although reluctantly, the support was given to the new socialist government led by Fatos Nano who is aware of the need for good rela-

¹⁰ S. Woodward in: M.J. Čalić, N.Gnessotto, J.Sharp and S.Woodward, *The Issues Raised by Bosnia and the Transatlantic Debate*, Paris 1998, p. 44.

¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 45.

tions with the US and for American presence. Such a situation enables American policy to monitor the crisis in Kosovo from the Albanian side, and to directly influence Albanian government.

During the first days after the fall of Ceausescu's regime in Romania, the US strengthened its presence in Romania. Primarily the US was interested in creating new political relations in which the heritage of the past could be quickly erased. Although not overly thrilled with President Iliescu, he was accepted as a leader with whom Romania could begin the transition processes. But only after Constantinescu, and the non-socialist forces, had won the elections, was American engagement in Romania stepped up. American initiatives aimed at supporting the new government and strengthening the close relations, range from economic cooperation, to the announcements that Romania could be included in the second phase of the NATO enlargement.

In Bulgaria, the socialist rule, after the fall of Zhivkovlev's regime, considerably slowed the development of a better cooperation with the US. Although the dichotomy of power between the pro-Western President Zhelev and the ruling socialists was clearly felt, the closer relations with America had to wait until the BSP was defeated at elections by the non-socialist forces.

As all three ex-socialist countries in question expressed their readiness to participate in the Partnership for Peace, this was one of the first opportunities for a closer American engagement. By monitoring the situation within the armed forces and suggesting the creation of the new relations between the civil and the military powers, a new model of military and political relations has been created. Although the situation in each of these countries differs, it is still apparent that the Partnership for Peace represented an efficient instrument for drawing these countries closer to the West, especially to the US. As these were military structures in question, which were in these countries relatively well organised parts of the state government, it was obvious that the American approach to them was of crucial importance. Due to the view that the military structures are representatives of national desires, it is through them that the influence on political transformations and the speed of joining the West is being attempted.

It is much easier to achieve these goals nowadays, when the three countries are publicly declaring their wish to join the NATO. They see in NATO a chance for easing down the tensions, for closer ties with other Western structures (the EU especially), and for promoting the relations in which the NATO membership would open possibilities for a better life.

In the post-Cold War period, American engagement regarding its allies, Turkey and Greece, is faced with some new circumstances. First, the significance of American allies in times when there is no longer Soviet, or Russian, threat has changed. The issue of human rights in Turkey, as well as the question of Kurds are, to a large extent, the central issues that American criticism is aimed at, and the strengthening of the Muslim oriented political forces has not met with Washington's approval, either. The situation is additionally burdened by the Greek-Turkish relations, especially concerning Cyprus. All this has resulted in the situation in which, relatively, there is not much left from the former American-Turkish strategic partnership. It has also led to a significant decrease

in American military and economical support to Turkey,¹² while on the other hand, Turkey is announcing its reluctance regarding the use of American military bases on the Turkish territory in case of a crisis in the Middle East or the Gulf.

Since Turkey has an important geographical position, bridging two continents, it is impossible to imagine any dramatic breaches in American-Turkish relations. But the present problem does point to the fact that the two countries have different views on the issue of security and that in these new circumstances identical positions on some problems cannot be automatically taken for granted.

As the strongest Balkan country, and at the same time the only EU member from this area, Greece would have all pre-conditions to become the centre of the Balkan stability. But its policy regarding Macedonia has to a large extent exhausted Greek policy and created a number of unnecessary difficulties, not only in the Balkans, but at the European level as well. This has led to the situation in which the American policy had to become a mediator for Macedonia, and partly Albania. At the end of the Papandreu era, Greek policy had an opportunity for its stronger exposure in the Balkans, both by becoming Europe's representative in the area, and by promoting the Balkan interests in the EU. And although Greece has considerably improved its efforts in this direction, the traditional dispute with Turkey,¹³ which has come close to an outburst of hostilities on several occasions, remains an open sore, along with the open dispute over the islets in the Aegean Sea and Cyprus, there is also the danger of the spreading of the crisis in the South Balkans with the possibility of two NATO members being on opposite sides. The American policy has exactly that in mind, and never misses the opportunity to warn both Greece and Turkey that they are expected to calm down on the situation the Balkans. This should also make it easier for the US activities in this area, where the only two NATO members from the Balkans should be the principal forces implementing the policy of alliance.

By its constant diplomatic initiatives, aimed at solving the issue of border in the Aegean Sea, as well as the Turkish acceptance of the existing border, American diplomacy is also engaged in an attempt to solve the problem of Cyprus. As the issues in question are a part of the complex Greek-Turkish relations, a success that could encourage American policy has not been achieved yet.¹⁴ It is highly possible that in this new, post Cold War environment, when a high level of deconcentration of power is present, both countries believe that even the positions of powerful leaders from Washington are not

¹² On problems existing in bilateral relations see: I.O.Lesser, *Bridge or Barrier: Turkey and the West After the Cold War*, RAND 1992, p. 34.

¹³ The new security situation, according to one opinion in Greece, is especially burdened by constant antagonism with Turkey. "Military and demographically strong neighbour, which is neither democratic, nor connected with European institutions, is viewed with some distrust in Greece". The same opinion sees Turkey as the greatest beneficiary of the falling-apart of communist systems in the Balkans, since it provides opportunities for creating new alliances.

Y. Valinakis, *Greece's Security in the Post Cold War Era*, Ebenhausen 1994, p. 53.

¹⁴ A possible instalment of Russian missiles in the Greek part of Cyprus has opened a new crisis in Turkish-Greek relations and enabled a whole new set of scenarios on the possible conflict between the two countries.

binding. Only in the moments of increased tensions between the two countries, may the US be considered an authority that can help calm down the situation.

Along with these bilateral contacts, aimed at demonstrating American interest in the areas of South East Europe, the US policy has also expressed its interest in making efforts that could support gathering together of these countries. Having in mind the criticisms that were directed at the EU concept of Regional Approach, American policy decided to wait until a critical evaluation of this European project had been completed, and then launched its South Europe Cooperation Initiative, overriding the weaker points of the European concept.

In the political sense, the SECI demonstrated some essentially new elements of American policy:

- after three years of hesitation, gradual entering into the region and building of bilateral links, the SECI was meant to be a proof of American decision to be present in South East Europe,
- this was to create the pre-conditions for the realisation of peace and security: from Bosnia and Herzegovina to Greek-Turkish relations,
- the necessity and the strength of American leadership was yet again demonstrated to Europeans,
- it was believed that with the eventual development of cooperation among the countries of South East Europe, the Muslim influence in the area would be weakened, and some Russian activities curbed.¹⁵

With quite differing views on the SECI, it was apparent from the beginning that the project would have a mixed reception and that there will be a number of countries not satisfied with this attempt of gathering together in South East Europe, instead of approaching the West, namely the EU.¹⁶ A huge area from Slovenia to Moldavia, in American opinion, should have been stabilised through a stronger cooperation among these 12 countries. These conditions should finally result in a possibility for increased participation of private sector investments in the area. After Dayton, and American entrance into Bosnia and Herzegovina, along with many initiatives aimed at solving the political and ethnic questions, the SECI was designed to become a pragmatic form of joint activity. As numerous economic and ecological problems are present in all the countries of this region, it was proposed, by the American side, to take a mutual approach to these problems, within the region of South East Europe. Of course, in a wider sense, it also expressed the expectations that the capability for solving mutual, regional economic and ecological problems would lead towards peace and stability.

¹⁵ R. Vukadinović, "South East Europe: Instabilities and Connecting Strategies", *Politička Misao*, Vol. 34, No. 3. 1997. pp. 18-20.

¹⁶ See for example: J.Vranytzany-Dobrinović, "The EU, the SECI and Croatia", *Croatian International Relations Review*, Vol. III, No.6/1997.

V. Mileta, "Miti balkanskega trga" *Teorija i praksa*, Vol. 35, No. 3. 1998

And while the mechanism of SECI was slowly warming up, and at the same time opinions about its value are being formed, President Clinton has, in February 1998, announced his Action Plan for South East Europe. The Plan should increase the dynamics of American cooperation with those countries of South East Europe in which the democratisation process has considerably moved forward. The goals of this Plan, as presented by President Clinton, should be as follows:

- consolidation of reforms,
- development of regional cooperation,
- assistance in integration in European and Transatlantic institutions,
- strengthening the peace and stability around the Dayton countries.¹⁷

Achievement of these goals is being announced as a clear American desire to deepen the bilateral political, economic, military and civil forms of cooperation with the countries of this region. The US will act upon this in order to strengthen the regional cooperation, and finally, together with the EU members, to pave the way to the paths for merging of these countries into the architecture of European and Transatlantic institutions.

In concretising the activities that would follow, President Clinton announced that the intergovernmental work groups (which already exist in Bulgaria, Macedonia, Slovenia and Romania) would be developing specific programs of cooperation, supported by various agencies from Washington. Counselling with American allies and partners would also be sought in order to widen the possibilities for cooperation.

Positively assessing the experience of Bilateral Work Groups for Military issues, it was also announced that similar groups would be formed for analysing the possibilities for economic cooperation. Their purpose will be to constantly research conditions for the development of economic relations, business, investments and all other forms of cooperation.

By announcing the Action Plan, President Clinton has confirmed that his administration is determined to keep its presence in the South East Europe, and that along with the political and military means, other forms of activities that would on the regional level open doors for closer tie with the US, are being sought. At the same time, it is being expected that such regional cooperation, initiated by the American policy, will be attractive enough for all of the countries of the region, regardless of the tradition of their mutual relations, past or present disputes, or conflicts. By promising the integration with European and Transatlantic institutions, a clear message is being sent to the countries of the region that the road towards Europe lies in the development of regional cooperation, and that the US and its allies will be supporting such tendencies and rewarding their actors.

¹⁷ Daily Washington File, February 10, 1998.

American Interests in Southern Europe

The enlargement of the NATO will in the first phase considerably stabilise relations in Central Europe, and that region will become a part of Western security community. Viewed in a wider, global context, it can be said that the zone of instability will be positioned in the direction of the South, namely the Balkans, the Mediterranean and Caspian seas. In these territories there will be new challenges, conflicts and instabilities, which American policy, if it desires to be the leading force within the new world order, cannot oversee.¹⁸ From the initial passive monitoring of the war in the territories of the former Yugoslavia, to the present direct military engagement in the Balkans, and an active search for the options for cooperation in South East Europe, Clinton's administration has come a long way. During that time, the administration realised the fact that the instabilities in this region may to a large extent threaten the security of Central Europe, or that the Greek-Turkish tensions may weaken the cohesion of the NATO, as the leading European institution.

Concerning the American role in the new relations, and in spite of a growing European cooperation, South East Europe remains an area where American policy will, seemingly, move in faster and faster.

In a global strategic analysis of the area, there are several important elements that must be considered, each affecting the new American engagement, which has led some Washington analysts to assess as the most coherent part of President Clinton's foreign policy programme.

- South East of Europe is a strategic link to important Southern destinations that are of great importance (Caspian region), to potential points of crisis (The Gulf), and to the complex and unstable area of the Mediterranean.
- The area of South East Europe contains present, as well as some potential, centres of conflict (Kosovo, Macedonia) which could have a considerable impact on the complete architecture of security that is being created on the European scale.
- In South East Europe, although minimal, the Russian strategic and political interest which is not always compatible with the American one, can be detected.
- For all those who think along the lines of "the Clash of Civilisations", this region is an area ideal for the expansion of Islam, or new religion-based tensions.

All this is calling for American presence, ranging from the military, which has already been demonstrated, to attempts at developing the strategies for economic connections, and activities that could result in higher engagement of American or European capital, thus drawing South East Europe closer to Europe.¹⁹ If the stabilisation of the

¹⁸ On assessments of value of this area and new instabilities, see: Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard*, New York 1997, pp. 123-50.

¹⁹ One of the leading American analysts of the Balkans is constantly arguing for the development of closer economic and regional cooperation among the Balkan states. He is correctly pointing out that due to the absence of a steady economic growth and development, many of the democratization-type reforms started will not succeed, which could lead these countries towards new instabilities and new ethnic conflicts.

situation represents American interests, then the American activity, especially in the field of economy, and in cooperation with the EU, is essential in order to jointly determine the goals that are to be achieved in this region, as well as certain demands that the countries of the area should meet.

In spite of the differences that exist among the group of countries in this region, and in spite of their value for American policy, it is obvious that the principal goals of American foreign policy may be listed as following: creation of democratic political systems, open market economy, multiparty political system, and respect for human and minority rights. Within this focus, American policy may be viewed in its concrete action, leaving ample space for each particular country to be treated according to the progress it has made in the direction of the implementation of these American priorities.

Although it is said that *Slovenia* is already on its way to Europe, there are some other American views as well, saying that in spite of such closeness *Slovenia* could play an important role in connecting and bringing closer these countries to Europe.²⁰ Therefore it is considered that *Slovenian* development might be used as an incentive to the other countries in South East Europe. Convinced that it would be useful in getting closer to European processes, American policy wishes to see *Slovenia* in SECI.

Croatia, that had a much more difficult road in achieving its independence has, along with American assistance and support, often received criticism, mostly regarding the issues like reconciliation, return of displaced persons, implementation of Dayton and democratisation.²¹ Fulfilment of these demands should lead *Croatia* to Partnership for Peace, and eventually to its membership in the NATO. Having in mind the geostrategic position of *Croatia*, and American desire to be active in South East Europe, it is apparent that American policy needs *Croatia*. With *Croatian* infrastructure and communications to *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, and if it fulfils American demands, *Croatia* may become an important pillar for supporting the stability in the areas of the former *Yugoslavia* on the whole. Unstable *Yugoslavia*, filled with crisis points, may have a counter-balance in a stable *Croatia*, and American policy as an important partner. In case the situation in *Yugoslavia* becomes stable some day, American policy will insist on the intensification of the cooperation between these two countries, since it is thought that through the regional cooperation the regional security can be achieved. The close NATO ties could only help this process.

Clinton's administration has made *Bosnia and Herzegovina* its important foreign policy goal, and if the Dayton Accord survives, American involvement in the region

S. Larrabee, "The Balkans", Strategic Appraisal 1996, ed. Z.Khalilzad, Santa Monica, RAND 1996, p. 115.

²⁰ By accenting the fact that *Slovenia* is situated on the crossroads between Central and South East Europe, the *Slovenian* interest in peace and stability in the Balkans is being illustrated. This could have significant security and economic effects for *Slovenia*.

A. Grizold, "Varnost i sodelovanje v Jugovzhodni Evropi", Teorija in praksa, Vol. 35. No. 3. 1998, pp. 483-4.

²¹ W.T. Montgomery, "Croatia's Roadmap to Partnership for Peace", Croatian International Relations Review, Vol. IV, No. 11, 1998, pp. 88-90.

would become even deeper. Dilemmas about the divided Bosnia and Herzegovina, or an integral state, have apparently been overcome in Washington at the moment. Bosnia and Herzegovina should remain an integral state, composed of two entities and three nations, even if it means a stronger, and more permanent American and international involvement. If the political preconditions for the functioning of such a state have been met, then American policy, together with the EU, will have to considerably increase their activities in the economic field and help this country to overcome the consequences of the war. At the same time, along with the strict control of the behaviour of the neighbouring states – Croatia and Yugoslavia – American policy will probably, and at the right moment, attempt to strengthen the pressure aimed at the establishment of a free-trade zone,²² thus enabling easier economic connecting, which should lead to the emergence of a new structure of security relations.

Barely after it had stopped pressuring *Yugoslavia* regarding the war in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the crisis on Kosovo is calling for a new American engagement in Yugoslavia. On the one hand, there is a desire of the Albanian population to secede from Yugoslavia, and the dangers connected with possible violent changes of borders, which would probably result in a chain reaction in the whole Balkans. Milošević's brutal use of force has led the Albanians to the situation in which some forms of autonomy, or even a republic within Yugoslavia, are hardly acceptable. At the same time, Albania's aspirations calling for the unification of all Albanians living in Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo and Montenegro, may be seen by the US and Europeans as heralding new instabilities in the area. Tremors would be immediately felt in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where neither Croatian nor Serbian people would want to live in an integral Bosnia and Herzegovina, and soon demands for secessions and new drawing of borders would be brought up. Having all that in mind, American policy is still considering Milošević as a partner in the field, and he should be calming down the situation in Kosovo and open the way for negotiations. Combining sanctions with an occasional announcement of the possibility to lift them, American policy is using stick and carrot tactics to make Milošević cooperative, hoping that the current problems (Kosovo, Sandjak, Vojvodina and Montenegro) could weaken his regime, and that in such circumstances some opposition that could take over the leadership in the future would emerge. But, this desire for the development of a democratic Yugoslavia will probably seem a very distant goal for some time.

Macedonia was accepted by American policy almost from the very beginning of its creation. Due to American support and assistance, Macedonia has managed to resist some challenges in relations with its neighbours, and in most sensitive times the UN (with the leading American role) has created a sort of a buffer zone, thus excluding Macedonia from the detrimental developments in Yugoslavia. The geo-strategic position of Macedonia, as well as the still unsolved relations with its neighbours (even the issue of the official name of the state) along with the danger of the Kosovo crisis spilling over to Macedonia, are sufficient reasons for increased caution, and constant American pres-

²² F.S. Larrabee, "US Policy in the Balkans: From Containment to Strategic Reengagement", in the: "Crises in the Balkans...", quote from p. 292.

ence.²³ Also, in case of any changes in the status of Kosovo, it would be difficult to prevent the Albanians in Macedonia (22% or 35% of population) from connecting with the new, greater Albanian state, and, of course, this could not be achieved in a peaceful manner. Therefore, by supporting the survival of Macedonia, American policy will be, at the same time, maintaining peace and stability in the whole region.

In *Albania*, American policy has taken a strong stance, and close relations with the Albanian army have been created through the Partnership for Peace. At the same time, American policy is carefully monitoring Albanian activities in the Kosovo direction, not supporting radical Albanians demands for changing the borders, or the creation of a "greater Albania". Reducing its humanitarian activities, and constantly calling for a political solution of the crisis, American policy is trying to motivate Albanians from Kosovo to accept negotiations, believing that a form of broad autonomy, that would grant self-rule to Albanians, but keep them within the present Yugoslav borders, is still possible. Such ideas are accepted by Fatos Nano, but not by Mr. Berisha, who sees some chance for himself in the new elections only by means of the intensification of the crisis. It is apparent that American policy, with its presence and its strength, will be able to control the Kosovo crisis, if it decides to do so. Therefore, any solution will be to a large extent influenced by the US: whether it will be a wide autonomy, or maybe some new Dayton. In the present situation, any such solution will be supported by the official Albanian policy as well.

Bulgaria and Romania, with their new, non-socialist governments, both have a strong interest for cooperation with America. They are intensively using the Partnership for Peace as a starting phase for their eventual fast admittance NATO, and accessing the EU gives them additional credibility in their steps towards Europe. Developing the cooperation with the US, both countries have accepted the American assessment of the events in South East Europe, and are supporting all the measures that could contribute to a peaceful solution of the disputes and to the stability of the region. Along with their active support to SECI and the acceptance of Clinton's Plan for South East Europe, both countries are advocating regional cooperation as well, consider it useful and needed, aware that such position is at the same time the best reference for their accession to the EU. Therefore, American policy will have no problems with these two countries, and they will support any American goal in this area in the future as well, knowing that the American reward, in the form of accession to European and Transatlantic integration is waiting for them. And this is what both countries are interested on. It can, therefore, be expected that it will be through these two countries that American policy will attempt to build the relations of the regional, Balkan cooperation. This has a special significance considering the fact that there are no problems, nor tensions, existing between these two countries. A positive competition in the speed by which the European integrations are being accessed may be used as a stimulating factor that Washington will most certainly appreciate.

Traditional American allies, and NATO members; *Greece and Turkey*, will continue to be extremely important actors, but American policy will have to additionally work

²³ See: S. Clement, Conflict Prevention in the Balkans: Case Studies of Kosovo and FYR Macedonia, Paris 1997.

with them. Greek policy, at this moment, much more realistic of the two, is on the way of solving its relations with the neighbouring countries (Macedonia and Albania), and given its membership in the NATO, may be an important factor in the Balkans. Traditional Greek activities regarding the Balkan cooperation will not be abandoned in these new conditions. Although these activities at the time of open conflicts (Kosovo) do lack some importance, they are constantly promoting the idea of cooperation, which is not far from American and European ideas on the need for the cooperation in South East Europe. Americans will therefore support such tendencies, convinced that no initiatives that would be contrary to American policy could arise from them. Besides that, Greece's good relations with Milošević may be significant in calming down his policy, and for implementing pressure in favour of Dayton II. Open problems in Greek relations with Turkey will continue to be a significant obstacle in a positive development in bilateral relations among the two southern NATO members. In the long run, it may be presumed that Greece will attempt to block the Turkish approach to Europe, which is contrary to American interest. But, viewing it in the context of general political and economic relations, as well as the Greek membership in the EU, American policy will continue to be a very important factor that Greece will not be able to ignore. Although nowadays it does not have the power needed for solving the existing problems between Turkey and Greece, American leadership is still unquestionable, and many of the ties connecting the two countries guarantee future cooperative activities. Additionally, the similarity of their positions regarding the developments in South East Europe may only strengthen these relations, established long time ago.

Current American relations with Turkey, on the other hand, are significantly more complex. In the post Cold War relations, Turkish policy has more room for manoeuvring, and influenced by domestic political forces it is not turning only toward the West, but is developing its options in the East and South as well. A country that used to tie up 24 Soviet divisions in the past, and that was offering its territory to American military bases, today is viewed differently both by Europe and America. The threats of the strengthening of Muslim forces, the Kurdism question and some human rights issues have all put some negative aspects up front. But in spite of these facts, Turkish strategic importance remains big, even in the conditions of the new world order being created. This especially refers to American policy which is forced to connect almost all of its central political issues in the Euro-Asian area with Turkish policy. The activities of the NATO, the Balkans, the Aegean Sea, the Sanctions against Iraq, Russian relations with the former Asian republics, Middle East peace and transit corridors for oil and gas form Central Asia – all these issues are, in one way or another, connected with Turkey. The growing Turkish ambitions regarding Central Asia are challenging some interests of Russia and Iran, and sometimes of America as well, confirming even more the need for maintaining the relations of alliance.

It is, therefore, apparent that, in spite of the complexity of these relations, and in spite of some oscillations in them, American policy simply cannot afford not to work on good relations with Turkey. American policy has for a long time now been suggesting to its allies to accept Turkey into the EU,²⁴ and is aware that the SECI may be used as a

²⁴ F.S. Larrabee, "U.S. and European policy toward Turkey and the Caspian Basin, Allies Divided: Transatlantic Policies for the Greater Middle East", R.D. Blackwell and M. Sturmer, The MITI press 1997., pp. 166-9.

way to incorporate Turkey in the regional cooperation in South East Europe. Turkey is also very important in calming down the situation in the Balkans, where it can play a role of an American ally in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Sandjak, and Macedonia, thus assisting the American plan for stabilisation and peace. Having all that in mind, it is not difficult to conclude that American policy will continue its efforts to maintain good relations with Turkey, to help resolve its disputes with Greece, and, at the same time, to carefully monitor internal Turkish developments, and protect the fruits of their cooperation so far. A more free, and more extensive Turkish engagement, especially in Central Asia, will be coordinated with American interests, along with the continuing effort to maintain the role of NATO as a principal link between Turkey and the US and the West.

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American engagement in South East Europe, today, has all of its clearly stated diplomatic, political, military and economic instruments firmly set forth, with the intention to stay present in this area. Although these instruments are of different strength, volume and dynamics in different cases, they are transparent, and compared with the activities of the EU, for example, much stronger. This should, among other things, lead to the statement that it is a result of a wish for permanent activity in the area, which was not only directed towards ending the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but a part of the plan to enter, and remain in the areas of South East Europe.

Through such activities, Clinton's policy has succeeded in:

- Firmly positioning the US in this very important region of South East Europe, which has a long lasting value, especially considering the vicinity and the connections with neuralgic spots of American foreign relations activities (Middle East, the Caspian Basin, The Gulf, East Mediterranean),
- Along with designing a new profile for Central Europe – by NATO enlargement and the creation of new security zones further to the East, and by calming down the situation in South East Europe – American policy has clearly presented itself as the leading power that can successfully operate on European soil, and by that, only reaffirm its leading role within the new model of the world order.
- In its, not overly rich, foreign policy, entering the area of South East Europe is perceived as the biggest success of Clinton's administration.
- And if viewed pragmatically, the whole operation was not too expensive, which is of significant importance for American public opinion, and unlike in some other American military operations, there were no human casualties.
- Clinton's administration will, most certainly, continue its engagement in this part of the world, and this will probably be continued by the next American President, if elected among the Democrats. But since a variety of American interests are involved in these matters, and already viewed as long-lasting and inter-connected, it may be concluded that American policy has firmly established itself in South East Europe and that it will stay here, regardless of the future tenant in the White House.

Translated by the author