

The Fifth Report of the

Monitoring Russia Serbia Relations Project

Monitoring Russia – Serbia Relations

Fifth Report

Introduction

On the eve of the visit of the Russian Federation President Dmitry Anatolyevich Medvedev to the Republic of Serbia, at the invitation of the President of the Republic of Serbia Boris Tadic, the ISAC Fund is issuing this Fifth Report within the *Monitoring Russia-Serbia Relations Project*. The visit of President Medvedev accelerated, in a way, the publication of this Report, with the purpose of its contribution to more active and fruitful discussions about Russia-Serbia relations in contemporary Serbia.

Each aspect of politics, including the Serbia's foreign policy, should be the object of analysis and review both by broad public and experts. The analysis and review are needed particularly in the case of relations with one of the Serbia's foreign policy "pillars" – Russia. The Fifth Report tends to provide insight in the overall relations between Russia and Serbia in this moment. Unlike other ISAC Fund's reports prepared within this Project, it does not deal with contemporary Russia and its position and role in the world, but it focuses exactly on Russia-Serbia relations.

All three authors agree that it is necessary to develop good quality relations with Russia. They partly disagree in their assessments to which extent those relations could be developed, but all three of them agree that, by their nature, the relations between Russia and Serbia are exclusively bilateral and that, if the European integrations are the Serbia's foreign policy priority, it is neither needed nor possible to raise the level of Russia-Serbia relations' quality above the level of those practical bilateral relations, having in mind the priorities of Serbia's European integrations.

The visit of President Medvedev to Serbia on the 20th October 2009, on the date which bears certain symbolism both in Russia and in Serbia is an important event for Serbia. First of all, it happens rarely that the chief of such a big state visits Belgrade. Besides, the marking of an important event from the World War II, the day when the Red Army troops forced out of Belgrade the German Nazi forces, is a significant event in history. The marking of this event is also very important for the present Russian authorities, nowadays when the role of Red Army in the World War II, whose tradition Russia makes its own legacy, is being minimized, trivialized or completely denied. The day of the liberation of Belgrade from the Nazi occupants does not provoke such negative connotations in Serbia as some similar days in other Eastern European capitals do, and it is indeed the way Serbia should talk with contemporary Russia and develop good and high quality bilateral relations. However, the following questions are raised: what should those relations consist of and what is the future perspective of Russia-Serbia relations?

The authors of the Fifth Report, Prof. Miroslav Jovanović, Ph. D. and Žarko Petrović are offering their answers to these questions. The Fifth Report also contains a personal view of Dragan Vuksic related to the role of Russia concerning the issue of Kosovo, before 1999, during and after NATO air-strikes and a critical review of the Russian role in that process.

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Medvedev in Belgrade: two aspects of the announced visit

Miroslav Jovanović*

At the beginning of August the news "leaked" in the Serbian media and later on it was confirmed that the President of the Russian Federation Dmitry Antolyievich Medvedev was coming to an official visit to Belgrade at the invitation of the President of Serbia, Boris Tadic. After a brief uncertainty, the date of visit was announced - 20th of October, the 65th anniversary of the liberation in the World War II.

The announcement of President Medvedev's visit, undoubtedly an important event for the Serbian politics and diplomacy, has already provoked numerous reactions.

Bearing in mind the importance of the planned visit, foreign policy activities of Serbia and a switch in Russia-Serbia relations in the last two years, the arranged President Medvedev's visit raises a series of important issues related to actual policy, foreign-political orientation of Serbia and current Serbia-Russia relations. In that respect, we can think about two aspects of the upcoming meeting of the Russian and Serbian Presidents in Belgrade. The first aspect is related to the symbolic nature of the date of visit -the day of liberation of Belgrade in the World War II, 20th of October. And the second aspect, which draws a lot of public attention, wondering and curiosity - when considering contemporary foreign-political activities of Serbia - is the announcement of further deepening of the strategic partnership between the two countries.

News, Announced Discussion Topics and First Reactions

A symbolic date was chosen for the visit of President Medvedev - 20th of October, the date of the liberation of Belgrade in the World War II. The use of symbolism in politics and diplomacy is not a rare phenomenon. However, the symbolism in this case is rather emphasized. It is also indicative that the first information about President Tadic being the one who expressed the initiative, when the Russian President phoned him, to "mark together the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Belgrade", came from the Russian and not from the Serbian side that had sent an invitation. On that occasion, the Serbian side announced the information one day later than the Russian side, without giving any invitation details, not even a detail on "celebrating jointly the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Belgrade" and only generally confirmed the Russian information on sending an invitation.¹ The symbolic importance of the 20th of October and several historical facts about the liberation of Belgrade in 1944 were reported by almost all Russian media, along with President Medvedev's statement that "the glorious event has a dignified place in a series of unforgettable dates of the great Victory". Contrary to that, the Serbian media did not emphasize this Medvedev's statement too much, and at the same time it remained unclear how and in what words President Tadic had invited President Medvedev to come to the visit exactly on the 20th of October.

A certain difference, not particularly expressed though, but still visible, in understanding and emphasizing the symbolism of the 20th of October between the two sides, Russian and Serbian, could be recognized in the media, but they could also be clearly identified in the views of diplomats

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¹ Compare the official Kremlin's statement, Состоялся телефонный разговор Дмитрия Медведева с Президентом Сербии Борисом Тадичем, Кремль.ру, 5 августа 2009 года (<http://news.kremlin.ru/news/5115>); and the Russian electronic media, for example „Россия и Сербия вместе отметят 65-ю годовщину освобождения Белграда“, News.ru, August 5, 2009 (<http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=307721>); На юбилее освобождения Белграда главы РФ и Сербии будут работать, БалтИнфо.ру August 5, 2009 (<http://www.baltinfo.ru/news/Na-yubilee-osvobozhdeniya-Belgrada-glavy-RF-i-Serbii-budut-rabotat-98286>); Россия и Сербия вместе отметят 65-ю годовщину освобождения Белграда, Регионс.ру August 5, 2009 (<http://www.regions.ru/news/politics/2231268/>) and many others from the Serbian side, such as "Medvedev is coming to Belgrade.", 6th of August 2009; Source: B92, Tanjug (http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2009&mm=08&dd=06&nav_category=11&nav_id=375064&version=print); "Medvedev is coming to Belgrade", IP Novine Borba - Online edition, 06/08/2009. (<http://www.borba.rs/content/view/8076/123/>);

referring to this event. Thus, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, Vuk Jeremic pointed out that "the friendship between Serbia and Russia has been lasting for centuries. Due to the historical circumstances, this is going to be the first time that the President of Russia is coming to visit Serbia and that very fact gives it a historical importance" and he added that the visit "is going to have a particular significance, since it overlaps with the celebration of the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Belgrade, the date that symbolizes the unity of our two peoples in the victorious battle against the fascism"². At the same time, the Russian Ambassador in Belgrade Aleksandar Konuzin, pointing out that the "visit was going to have a deep symbolic significance", emphasized that the President of Russia was going to stay in Belgrade on the day when the forces of USSR and Yugoslavia had liberated the Capital of Serbia from fascism" and added that the "visit would be in the context of the 65th anniversary of the victory of Soviet Union in the Great Homeland War and the 65th anniversary of the victory over fascism in the world"³. Hence, the Russian Ambassador has especially emphasized the elements of the "liberation of Serbia from fascism" and the context of the 65th anniversary of the victory of Soviet Union in the Great Homeland War and the 65th anniversary of the victory over fascism in the world". During that time, Minister Jeremic underlined "a long-lasting friendship" and the "date symbolizing the unity of our two people in the victorious battle". Although minor, these differences are completely substantial. Even more so because exactly the symbolism of *Victory in the Great Homeland War* and *Liberation of Europe from Fascism* has had an extremely important place in the foreign-political rhetoric of the official Moscow for the last couple of years.

Anyhow, the celebration of 20th of October is only one aspect – certainly not the most important one – of the imminent meeting between Presidents Tadic and Medvedev. In addition to the celebration of Belgrade liberation day, a series of important issues to be discussed by the two Presidents has been announced. The majority of them are related to economic issues – cooperation in the field of energy and Russian financial aid to Serbia. However, they will also discuss a number of important political issues, coordination of foreign political activities, and "all issues of multilateral Russia-Serbia cooperation and determination of benchmark for the purpose of further strengthening of strategic partnership"⁴.

Such announcement, along with the chosen date of the visit, in particular as viewed within the context of intensive foreign-political activities of both Serbia and Russia that have been evident in the last few months, highlights two aspects of the upcoming visit of President Medvedev. One is the political symbolism of the chosen date for visit and the other is the issue of strategic partnership that has been emerging gradually, related to Serbia-Russia relations in the last two years, as a key issue for defining the character of current and future mutual relationships.

Symbolism of the date and foreign policy

The rhetorical emphasizing of the importance of the World War II and Victory of USSR in the war against fascism is particularly evident in the communication of Russian diplomacy and top-level Russian officials with the transatlantic integrations states, i. e. USA and European states, especially those EU members that became independent after the dissolution of USSR, i. e. former East/Communist Block states (1945-1991). However, the symbolic importance of the World War II is noticeably absent, which can be understood to a certain extent, when it comes to Russian contacts with the leaders of Asian and African states. It could be clearly identified on one hand in the rhetoric of Prime Minister Putin when he visited Poland on the occasion of celebrating the 70th anniversary of the beginning of the World War II and on the other hand, in the President

² Compare: We are finding out - Medvedev on 20th of October in Serbia, Press Online 06/08/2009 (<http://www.pressonline.rs/page/stories/sr.html?id=75311§ionId=37&view=story>); Jeremic: Historical visit of Medvedev, Emportal, 6th of August 2009, Source: Beta (<http://www.emportal.rs/vesti/srbija/95872.html>); Jeremic and Konuzin: Medvedev's visit to Serbia will be a historical one (www.rtv.rs/sr/vesti/politika/politika/2009.../vest_144994.jsp), and others.

³ Compare: Jeremic and Konuzin: Medvedev's visit to Serbia will be a historical one (www.rtv.rs/sr/vesti/politika/politika/2009.../vest_144994.jsp): "Russia attributes a great significance to the upcoming Medvedev's visit to Belgrade" (VIDEO), Emportal, 06. August 2009, (<http://www.emportal.rs/vesti/srbija/95863.html>);

⁴ На юбилее освобождения Белграда главы РФ и Сербии будут работать, БалтИнфо.ру, 5 August 2009. (<http://www.baltinfo.ru/news/Na-yubilee-osvobozhdeniya-Belgrada-glavy-RF-i-Serbii-budut-rabotat-98286>)

Medvedev's public speeches during his visits to African countries (Egypt, Angola, Nigeria), on the occasion of his visit to Mongolia and on the occasion of reception of the Indian President in Moscow.

On the other hand, both western states and EU members, use in their political rhetoric the symbolism of the World War II – though in a completely opposite manner. Perhaps, the most evident and illustrative example is the OSCE Declaration, issued at the session in Vilnius, Lithuania – which makes completely equal and condemns the two “main totalitarian regimes of the 20th century”, Nazism and Stalinism⁵. The Russian public understood it immediately, of course, as passing the blame to USSR for the break out of the World War II⁶.

These two poles are evidently very far away from each other and undoubtedly irreconcilable. That situation occurred as a direct result of the two clearly noticeable processes.

(1) As soon as in 1990-ies, since the defeat of USSR/Russia in the Cold War, among the ideologically oriented experts, politicians and in the public of a series of European states – in the West Europe, and in particular in the former Warsaw Pact members and newly established states after the dissolution of USSR, Baltic states, Ukraine, etc – requests have begun to emerge for identifying the two most important totalitarian regimes of the 20th century, Nazism and Stalinism (A. Bullock, Viktor Suvorov, *The Black Book of Communism*, etc). They have been a continuation of the tendency of one part of German (and extremely right-wing in general, Denis Irving, etc) historiography, to pass the blame for the breakout of the World War II from Nazi Germany to Stalin and USSR. At the same time, in new ideological and political reality of the Cold War termination, defeat and dissolution of USSR, that change should have minimized the importance of USSR (a new loser) in the victory of allies in the World War II. Therefore, the importance of the World War II as a whole was reduced. It was partly done with the purpose of relativizing the defeat, condemnation and odium towards Germany (one of indisputable winners in the Cold War), but also in order to relativize the importance of the bipolar system of international relations established after the war and embodied in OUN.

That tendency overflowed, almost parallel, from the sphere of expert discussions led by historians, political scientists, sociologists, etc. into the public discourse and political rhetoric. It is particularly emphasized in the Eastern European countries that are flooded by mass production of revisionist papers about the history of the World War II. In that process, to put it as simple as possible, in public discourse the yesterday's “traitors” became overnight “heroes” of the fight for independence, against occupation, against corruption, against “totalitarian Stalinist evil”, while former “heroes” turned into “occupants”, “traitors”, “extended hand of Moscow”, “criminals”, etc. In that process there has been no major difference or consideration about nuances when “heroes” and “traitors” changed places in the historical memory and public discourse. Therefore, in the majority of cases, the newly proclaimed “heroes”, “fighters against occupants”, etc. were the persons who fought for, or who were directly in the service of other totalitarian system which had been condemned until that time – Nazism. That wave of revisionism, mainly in East Europe, leaned partly on one part of results of western historiographies, which, during the Cold War, wrote uncritically about Soviet and Russian history in general, for the needs of ideology.

In the political sphere, that wave of revisionism should have been (and was) used, to a great extent, for creating the basis of self-identification of new state identity of newly established East European countries and those that previously belonged to *soc-lager* (1945-1991). The previously dominant thesis about the “liberation of East Europe from the Red Army and USSR was replaced with the thesis on the “occupation of East Europe”...

The pressure of revisionism in the political sphere became particularly emphasized when the majority of former Warsaw Pact members and former Soviet Republics (from the European part

⁵ Vilnius Declaration of the Parliamentary Assembly and Resolutions adopted at the Eighteenth Annual Session, Vilnius, 2009, 29 June to 3 July (http://www.oscepa.org/images/stories/documents/activities/1.Annual%20Session/2009_Vilnius/Final_Vilnius_Declaration_ENG.pdf)

⁶ Compare for example: ОБСЕ и перезагрузка Истории: СССР обвинили в начале Второй мировой: Сделана очередная решительная попытка приравнять Советский Союз к фашистской Германии, Свободная пресса, 4 июля 2009 года (<http://svpressa.ru/world/article/10974/?go=popul>); and a series of similar reactions.

of USSR) joined EU. They started a coordinated action to issue a political declaration at the supranational level that would condemn Stalinism declaratively. Individually, the majority of parliaments or governments of these countries had already issued such declarations that accused communist authorities, rehabilitated Nazi collaborators from the World War II, members of anti-communist and Nazi military formations during the war were not only rehabilitated, but they were also granted state pensions.

Thus, the entire set of issues related to the World War II (guilt for breakout of the war, issues of genocide and indirectly holocaust, which was thus additionally complicated to the extent that it required special resolutions – but it is a completely different topic, but also the world establishment agreed by the “Great Three” at the conferences in Teheran and Yalta) – was transformed into a series of simplified political symbols, suitable for political manipulation, media abuse, etc.

(2) Russia, as declarative, essential political, state and legal successor of USSR, at the time of President Boris Jelcin (1991-2000), had rather ambivalent attitude toward the processes of the revision of past in general and political condemnation of Stalinism. Stalinism, as a totalitarian regime (which caused mainly the suffering of the population of Russia) – was severely condemned. Both within the expert circles and in public, a series of crucially important issues, which characterized the totalitarian essence of Stalinism, were brought to light. The basic foundations for self-identification of “new Russia” in the era of Jelcin were looked for (and found) primarily in the monarchic past, before the year 1917. It was reflected, first of all, in new state symbols, system of holidays and changed position of the Russian Orthodox Church in the society. However, a part of USSR’s legacy could not be (and nobody wanted it to be) suppressed: technological achievements (conquering the cosmos), cultural and artistic contribution, and even the victims that USSR suffered and the contribution that USSR gave to the victory over Nazism during the World War II.

Along with the change of government in Russia in 2000 and appointment of Vladimir Putin for President, the entire attitude towards history and political symbolism of past began to change gradually. It became evident that it was not possible to erase 80 years of own history and find a sufficient number of antipodes to the “heroes” from the past times, which would be used for the new self-identification of the Russian society. (In that process, a great role was played by the emphasized social and economic crisis of the liberal model developed during the era of Jelcin, which threatened with further disintegration of the country, as well as extremely passive and in many of its elements contradictory foreign political orientation of Jelcin’s administration).

At the symbolic level, the change was evident through the change of certain state symbols, but much more through the renewed social and political marking of some traditions from the Soviet era. And exactly here the political symbolism of the World War II and USSR’s contribution to the victory over fascism assumed an extremely important place. It became rather obvious on the occasion of grandiose celebration of the 60th anniversary of the termination of the World War II, which was held in Moscow in 2005 and was attended by almost all world leaders and leading statesmen, headed by the US President George Bush and the French President Jacques Chirac. After that celebration, Russia evidently intensified its rhetoric of historical symbolism related to the World War II in its diplomatic and political presentations. It was particularly noticeable on the basis of increasingly emphasized activities that led towards rejection, negation and condemnation of the Soviet engagement in East Europe (1944/45-1991), whose purpose was the issuance of political declaration on the condemnation of Stalinism, and that were followed by individual activities (by issuing relevant declarations or legal solutions in the parliaments of certain countries, eliminating monuments from the World War II, especially in Baltic countries, etc). In that context, the marking of the World War II tradition assumed a strong symbolic character in political rhetoric and activities of Russia itself, but also a series of former East European states and consequently EU.

And now the celebration of the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Belgrade in the World War II has been included in that long list of jubilees related to the tradition of the World War II and celebration of USSR’s contribution to the victory over Nazism, which Russia has been marking continuously since 2005 and emphasizing more intensely through media. The celebration, as

announced officially in Moscow, but only confirmed by the official Belgrade without further details, was initiated by President Tadic, i. e. the Serbian authorities. That fact, viewed from the tradition-marking aspect, the use of historical symbolism in political rhetoric and the general trend of revising the attitude towards the World War II in expert and public debates, brings actual Serbian leadership in a rather specific and complex position.

Namely, Serbia is one of those East European countries, which after the dissolution of communist regime performed a deep revision of attitude towards the World War II traditions. The discourse of “celebrating” the history was shifted from the communist to the civil resistance movement (Ravna Gora movements/Chetniks), which was defeated in the Civil War conducted within the World War II. It was particularly emphasized after the year 2000 when the traditions in which the communists were included in some way or which were marked by communist symbolism (even regardless of their universal significance), referring to almost 50 years of modern Serbian history, were systematically ignored or suppressed from public and political discourse. (This was done to such extent as to cause some major political errors, such as the one from 2005 when only Serbian representatives did not attend a big celebration in Moscow).

The inversion of “heroes” and “traitors” was done and all actions of communists, communist resistance movement and in that context all actions of the Red Army units that liberated some parts of the country (and that certainly liberated Belgrade on October 20th, 1944) in the cooperation with the Yugoslav People’s Liberation Movement led by Josip Broz and Yugoslav Communist Party – were transferred into a negative discourse. The yesterday’s “bad guys”, “traitors”, “occupants’ servants”, etc. were somehow rehabilitated over time. An entire series of streets in Belgrade and other places in Serbia named after the Soviet Generals who led the operations – Zhdanov, Tolbukhin and others – were given new/old names, and the Soviet commanders were squeezed out of memory. And October 20th itself was not only abolished as Belgrade holiday, but a significant part of public and even a great number of experts proclaimed it to be the day occupation...

The attitude towards October 20th was suddenly changed in 2008 when President Tadic visited the Cemetery of the Liberators in Belgrade thus officially marking that date. It remained unclear to the public whether a sudden change occurred upon self-initiative, thinking about historical legacy (which could not be concluded from expert and public debates), or under influence of political and economic convergence with Russia, related to the support concerning Kosovo and later on, the signing of oil-gas arrangement with Gasprom.

And finally, the marking of the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Belgrade on October 20th – originally celebrated as the liberation day, and then condemned as “the day of occupation” – and the arrival of President Medvedev almost concur with the crescendo of work of the State Commission involved in finding out the remains of General Dragoljub Mihailović, the leader of Chetnik, Ravna Gora tradition of the World War II (in which a series of high-ranking state officials and officials of the ruling Democratic Party of Boris Tadic are included). At the same time, one of the Russian announcements emphasized that Presidents Medvedev and Tadic would mark together the day when “Belgrade had been liberated in a joint military operation conducted by the armed forces of USSR, People’s Liberation Army and partisan squads of Yugoslavia and Army of Bulgaria against German-Fascist and Croatian forces, and also against Serbian Chetniks”⁷. The situation is at least extremely contradictory and complex. Seen from that aspect, it seems that the symbolical conception of the entire event is rather incoherent. Or is it just a simple political calculation?

The same question can be asked when it comes to another aspect of President Medvedev’s planned visit – the one related to “strategic partnership”.

⁷ „Россия и Сербия вместе отметят 65-ю годовщину освобождения Белграда“, News. ru, August 5, 2009 (<http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=307721>)

“Strategic Partnership”

The formulation “strategic partnership” entered into political rhetoric of Serbian and Russian authorities some two years ago and it was related to the Russian diplomatic support to Serbia in connection with the Kosovo’s self-proclamation of independence. Later on, it was extended after signing the oil-gas agreement. (It is true that some Russian energy analysts pointed out at that time that it was the “strategic partnership” between Serbia and Gasprom⁸, rather than Serbia and Russia, which is a rather interesting thesis).

The term and particularly its use are in the zone of so-called “useful vagueness”, especially as regards its use in the Serbian diplomatic vocabulary in the last two years. The Serbian side has not made an effort to define more precisely what exactly implies “strategic partnership” at all, both in the relations with Russia and even China⁹. However, the use of this notion in Russian diplomacy and politics implies much smaller space for “useful vagueness”.

The Russian politics and diplomacy use the term “strategic partnership” in two ways. Firstly, they use it to express a declarative resolution of the two sides to undertake certain joint projects, most often when they talk about “strategic partnership” in the area of energy, as it was the case during the negotiations of President Medvedev with the authorities of Angola and Nigeria in June¹⁰, as well as on the occasion of the announced possibility of “strategic partnership” with Ukraine, with NATO and even with Poland. The second use of the term is much more concrete and involves the signing of various types of documents – agreements, declarations and other documents on strategic partnership (such as the Agreement on Partnership and Cooperation between RF and EU from 1994, which entered into force in 1997¹¹, Declaration on Relations with China from 1996, which involves the “development of equal and confidential partnership relation”¹², or more recent Treaty on Strategic Partnership between RF and the Arab Republic of Egypt from June 23, 2009¹³ or Declaration on Development of Strategic Partnership between Russia and Mongolia, signed on August 25, 2009.¹⁴

However, the following question has always remained open and utterly vague during these two years: which one of these two discourses in understanding the notion of “strategic partnership” is accentuated by the Serbian and Russian diplomacies during mutual negotiations? Is the consecutive use of this term in mutual communication going to result in the signing of a particular document, with a number of provisions binding for both parties?

And last but not least is the following question: to which extent is this consecutive referral to “strategic partnership” with Russia compatible with the “first priority of Serbian politics – Serbian EU membership?”¹⁵. Some less patient analysts formulate this question even as a remark saying that “Serbian foreign policy is schizophrenic”¹⁶. However, if we consider the use of terms a bit more soberly, it becomes clear that the term “strategic partnership”, almost like the formulation about

⁸ Денис Кириллов, БАЛКАНСКИЙ УЗЕЛ: Сербия становится стратегическим партнером «Газпрома» в Юго-Западной Европе, Журнал «Газпром», 2009 год, № 1-2 (<http://south-stream.info/fileadmin/pixs/publikacii/1-2.2009.pdf>)

⁹ Tadic: China – a strategic partner, Emportal, August 18, 2009, Source: Fonet (<http://www.emportal.rs/vesti/srbija/96650.html>)

¹⁰ Брифинг официального представителя МИД России А.А.Нестеренко, 2 июля 2009 года (http://www.poland.mid.ru/inf_09_60.html); такође и: Артур Блинов, Стратегическое сафари Дмитрия Медведева, Независимая Газета, 24.06.2009 (http://www.ng.ru/politics/2009-06-24/2_safari.html);

¹¹ Соглашение о партнерстве и сотрудничестве учреждающее партнерство между Российской Федерацией, с одной стороны, и Европейскими сообществами и их государствами-членами, с другой стороны. (подписанное 24 июня 1994 года на острове Корфу (вступило в силу 1 декабря 1997 года)) (Russian version: http://www.delrus.ec.europa.eu/ru/p_330.htm; English version: [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:21997A1128\(01\):EN:HTML](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:21997A1128(01):EN:HTML))

¹² Совместная китайско-российская декларация (1996 г.) (<http://russian.china.org.cn/russian/273010.htm>)

¹³ Документы, подписанные в ходе официального визита в Арабскую Республику Египет, (http://news.kremlin.ru/ref_notes/53); Договор о стратегическом партнёрстве между Российской Федерацией и Арабской Республикой Египет (<http://archive.kremlin.ru/text/docs/2009/06/218351.shtml>)

¹⁴ Российско-монгольские переговоры (<http://news.kremlin.ru/news/5277>)

¹⁵ Tadic: “EU accession is our main goal”, August 30, 2009 (<http://www.predsednik.yu/mwc/default.asp?c=304000&g=20090830102524&lng=cir&hs1=0>)

¹⁶ Serbian foreign policy is not schizophrenic, Blic Online, August 29, 2009 (<http://www.blic.rs/politika.php?id=108328>)

“accession of Serbia into EU as its first priority” – is still used more or less declaratively in public speeches and political practice.

Clearly, these two tracks of Serbian foreign policy do not have to exclude each other. And generally speaking, the Serbian foreign policy concerning the relations with EU and Russia based on the “either...or...” position would really be detrimental, considering several factors¹⁷. However, even if we disregard that, if in the foreseeable future some more concrete steps are done towards the determination of strategic partnership and their transformation into a concrete document – *declaration, treaty, agreement, etc.* – its content would inevitably set certain borders and benchmarks for diplomatic activities, particularly if certain clauses are related to the concretization of military-technical cooperation (which is the case with the Treaty concluded with Egypt) or establishment of joint company for the exploitation of uranium (a part of the Protocol with Mongolia).

The matter of “strategic partnership”, not only with Russia, but also with China, with the first foreign-policy priority still being the accession to EU – again opens the second circle of questions related to vision, assumed position of Serbia after EU accession, etc. In that respect, the public can very often hear assurances that Serbia is going to be “a friend of Russia (or China) in EU”, that it is going to represent a political and above all economic “bridge of cooperation between EU and Russia (China)”. Such attitudes, although characterized by an ambition that is being converted into megalomania about some “four pillars” of Serbian foreign policies, can be used only in the internal politics. They do not have any stronghold in realpolitik of either EU or Russia (and China, obviously). Firstly, all EU member states are obliged to comply with the “umbrella policy” of EU itself and it is very difficult, almost impossible that Serbia, as an assumed future member of the Union, could obtain at least a little bit more independent position in foreign policy (especially because both Poland and Baltic states aspire to get that role of a “leader” in determining general directions of EU policy towards Russia, but without any major success). Secondly, as the Russian diplomats have repeatedly and openly emphasized, Russia does not need any intermediary in its contacts with EU and it develops its relations in direct contacts with Brussels and each individual member state. As regards China, bearing in mind its economic potentials and growing importance in the foreseeable future, it is difficult to understand why China would need any special “intermediaries” in its contact with the world.

I am afraid that it is yet another late echo of numerous myths and stereotypes in the Yugoslav (Serbian) diplomacy and its numerous “successes” during the Cold War (in that context we can also understand a sudden shift of Serbian diplomacy towards the Non-Aligned Movement, an organization that has not had either any real content of work or significance for a long time now – an organization that excluded Yugoslavia, one of the three founders of the movement, from its membership at the beginning of 1990-ies). The realpolitik of the beginning of 21st century is far away, even too far away from the Cold War era standards and thinking. It has been developed on different foundations. The task of the Serbian diplomacy should be to recognize these foundations and to fit into them.

¹⁷ M. Jovanovic, Two Russias: About Two Dominant Russian Discourses in the Serbian Public, ISAC Fund: MONITORING RUSSIA-SERBIA RELATIONS: III Report (http://www.isac-fund.org/download/Pracenje_rusko-srpskih_odnosa-3.pdf)

Russian – Serbian Strategic Partnership: Scope and Content

Žarko Petrović*

Introduction

Since 2007 Serbia has had intensive relationships with one of its three¹ or four² foreign policy pillars – The Russian Federation. The most visible aspect of bilateral relations, in addition to the construction of the South Stream gas pipeline and overall cooperation in the energy sphere, is the common view on the issue of status of the autonomous province of Kosovo and Metohija. This issue has instigated other issues related to the international law and international relations. For example, since the August 2008 crisis in Georgia, Serbia has never joined the European Union in its position at the meetings of the OSCE Permanent Council.³ Likewise, Serbia voted against the UN General Assembly Resolution recognizing the right of return by refugees (internally displaced persons) to Abkhazia.⁴ Besides, Serbia has expressed “sympathies”⁵ or “understanding”⁶ for the Russian President Medvedov’s initiative to conclude a new European Security Treaty. These harmonized positions indicate that there is a clear coordination, understanding and even strategy of joint positions at the international level between the authorities of the Republic of Serbia and The Russian Federation, both regarding the issue of Kosovo and other international issues.⁷ This intensive political cooperation should certainly be viewed in the context of Serbian integration into its “first pillar” – the European Union. For example, in 2008 Progress Report⁸, the European Union clearly stated that in the implementation of the oil-gas arrangement with Russia, Serbia had to ensure that the obligations of the Energy Community Treaty are respected, which constitutes a part of Serbia’s European integration process.⁹ This is a clear signal that Europe expects Serbia to behave in accordance with the rules of the “club” Serbia wants to join, i. e. that Europe is not against the cooperation with Russia as long as that cooperation is within European rules.

The general conclusion is that this “Russian pillar” of Serbian foreign policy has become increasingly stronger. Although its strength cannot still be compared with that of the pillar called the

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¹ The European Union, the United States of America and Russian Federation constitute “three pillars” of Serbian foreign policy. These three pillars, although previously mentioned in the presentations of Serbian officials, were last time clearly formulated in President Tadic’s address to the Serbian ambassadors in January 2009. Mr. Tadic: “EU – the most important goal” – January 12, 2009

http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2009&mm=01&dd=12&nav_category=11&version=print

² On the occasion of Mr. Tadic’s visit to China, he spoke about China being one of the pillars of Serbian foreign policy. The interview of the President of the Republic of Serbia Boris Tadic in Politika daily, Tadic: China – Serbian Strategic Partner, available at: <http://www.politika.rs/rubrike/Politika/Tadic-Kina-strateshki-partner-Srbije.lt.html>

³ EU has the common position about the issues related to the August 2008 conflict between Georgia and Russia and the EU presiding state expresses that attitude at the meetings of the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna. The neighbouring countries Montenegro and Macedonia regularly join the EU position.

⁴ Resolution of the General Assembly UN GA/10708, 15 May 2008, available at: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs//2008/ga10708.doc.htm>

⁵ The interview of V. I. Vornokov, Russian Permanent Representative to OSCE, Rosiyskaya gazeta, 20 August 2008 http://www.mid.ru/Brp_4.nsf/arh/62547841B1A28DDCC32574AB0055AC1B?OpenDocument

⁶ The stenographic record of statements and answers to the questions asked by media representatives given by the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs S. V. Lavrov at the joint press conference about the outcome of negotiations with the Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs V. Jeremic, Moscow, February 20, 2009. (Стенограмма выступления и ответов на вопросы СМИ Министра иностранных дел России С.В.Лаврова на совместной пресс-конференции по итогам переговоров с Министром иностранных дел Сербии В.Еремичем, Москва, 20 февраля 2009 года) http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/B38351266782BAE6C32575670037ABC8

⁷ Video press conference of the Ministers Lavrov and Jeremic where Minister Jeremic spoke about this strategy http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/clndr?OpenView&query=21.2.2009&Lang=%D0%D3%D1%D1%CA%C8%C9

⁸ Brussels, November 5, 2008, SEC(2008) 2698 final, available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/press_corner/key-documents/reports_nov_2008/serbia_progress_report_en.pdf

⁹ The Treaty was signed on October 25, 2005 in Athens, ratified by the competent authority of the Republic of Serbia on July 19, 2006 and came into effect on July 1, 2006 – *Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, No. 62/2006 dated 19/07/2006.

European Union, since, according to the data of the Republic Statistical Agency of Serbia more than one half of the total foreign trade in goods goes to EU¹⁰, it has become stronger and more important. Namely, since 2004 the value of trade exchange with Russia has been constantly increasing. The majority of Serbian import originates from Russia, in the value of almost one billion US dollars per year, consisting mainly of energy resources. On the other hand Serbia exports to Russia mainly medicaments, half-products and some food.¹¹

In this review we are going to analyze the issues related to Russian support to Serbia in connection with the Kosovo status issue and the feedback that Russia expects from Serbia at the political and economic agenda.

The review is not dealing with the economic issues separately, but they will be touched upon for the purpose of emphasizing their significance within the political relationships. The fundamental thesis of the review is that the political cooperation or “strategic partnership” between Russia and Serbia is unfavourable for Serbia in its present form, because it does not sufficiently take into account priorities of the Serbian European integrations. In addition, the Serbian policy towards Russia, set up in this way, above all due to the Russian support to the status of Kosovo, must take into consideration the fact that the Russian support does not have a decisive impact on its solution. Also, the fact that Russia assumed a different stance towards the Georgian provinces than towards the Kosovo issue, casts a shadow over the Russian policy of supporting the principle of territorial integrity and sovereignty of Serbia. Consequently, we can say that the EU integration should have the central place within Serbian foreign policy priorities, while the cooperation with Russia is a bilateral issue that should not jeopardize the EU integration at any time. The proper measure of cooperation between Serbia and Russia is “practical – bilateral cooperation”¹², which should not put at risk the European perspective of Serbia. However, this review does not have an intention to suggest that Russia has a plan for impeding European integration of Serbia or to suggest that any of the analyzed Russian actions is illegitimate from the aspect of Russian interests – as seen by the Russian leaders themselves. On the contrary, the review is striving to show that the responsibility lies on the Serbian leadership to accept Russian initiatives, which reflect Russian interests, only if they are not damaging European integrations of Serbia.

Qualitative Improvement in Russia-Serbia Relationships at the Beginning of 2009

It is often emphasized that the qualitative improvement in the bilateral relationships between the two countries occurred on January 25, 2008 when the Agreement in Moscow between the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Government of the Russian Federation on cooperation in the field of oil and gas industry was signed. However, the Serbian party ratified this Agreement only on September 10, 2008 by the Law that came into effect eight days later. This Agreement started its existence only after President Tadic’s visit to Moscow in December 2008.

The strategic partnership in the energy sphere, which had been announced in January 2008, following the signing of the Agreement, returned to be a “practical bilateral cooperation” in July of the same year, when Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic visited Moscow.¹³ Perhaps this could be explained by the Russian questions about the failure of the Serbian side to ratify the Oil-Gas Agreement from January 2008. The meeting between President Tadic and Minister Sergey Lavrov in New York, in the wake of the meeting of the UN General Assembly in September 2008, and Russian active support in passing the resolution of this body calling for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice about the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo, did improve this cooperation. On the occasion of President Tadic’s December visit to Moscow, both Presidents of Russia and Serbia before their meeting publicly mentioned “strategic relationships” between Serbia and Russia.¹⁴ After this visit, it became obvious that the Serbian authorities have

¹⁰ Republic Statistical Agency, data available at: <http://webzs.stat.gov.rs/axd/index1.php?SifraVesti=356&Link=>

¹¹ Ibid <http://webzs.stat.gov.rs/axd/spoljna/index1.php>

¹² Interview of the official representative of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Andrey Nesterenko related to the upcoming visit of the Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs V. Jeremic, July 16, 2008, available in Russian at: http://www.mid.ru/Brp_4.nsf/arh/6319B2237D5B4F40C325748800295D18?OpenDocument

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ The beginning of meeting with the President of Serbia Tadic, on December 24, 2008, available in Russian at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2008/12/210958.shtml>

serious intentions regarding the oil-gas arrangement and that they are determined not to agree to the change of Kosovo status. Hence, this visit cleared a path towards strategic relationships between the two countries, but only after having determined clearly both of these issues and having defined them in the relationships between the two countries.

When the Minister of Foreign Affairs Vuk Jeremic visited Russia on February 20, 2009, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov, at the press conference after the meeting, described the state of relationships between the two countries as mutual *interest in building strategic partnership*. Before Jeremic's visit to Moscow, on February 19, 2009, the official representative of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Andrey Nesterenko had said that the working visit was in line with the agreement on extending intensive Russian-Serbian contacts at the high political level with the aim of developing projects of bilateral cooperation, as well as the agreement on *coordinating approaches and diplomatic efforts related to international problems*.¹⁵ According to Nesterenko, they are *directed towards building a strategic partnership*. The Russian support to the Serbian policy over the Kosovo status issue and the strategy of joint stance at the international level also means joint positions on other issues at the international level. For example, during Minister Jeremic's visit to Moscow on February 20, 2009, Minister Lavrov expressed his gratitude to his Serbian counterpart for the *interested approach of Serbia towards the Russian initiative on signing a new European Security Treaty*.¹⁶ During their conversation at the informal Ministerial Council in Corfu, the bilateral readiness of Russia and Serbia to cooperate closely in their efforts related to crucial international issues, including the issue of Kosovo, was confirmed.¹⁷

However, before Minister Jeremic's spring visit, Russian officials, even when they were talking about the strategic partnership between Russia and Serbia, spoke about the strategic partnership in the energy sphere (although they did use several different terms to describe that). Therefore, the question is what turned the *strategic partnership in the fuel/energy sphere*¹⁸ into the *strategic partnership* between Russia and Serbia? The statements of Russian officials during this working visit of Serbian Minister did not contain any more the previous clarification "*strategic partnership in the sphere of energy*", which had been determining the state of relationships between Serbia and Russia up to that point. That clarification was used also during the conversation between Lavrov and Jeremic at the Ministerial Council in Helsinki¹⁹ and in the previous contacts between Russian and Serbian officials.²⁰ Finally, the visit of President Medvedev to Serbia, announced for October 20, 2009 as a first-rate political event, is also directed towards *determining benchmarks for further strengthening of strategic partnership*.²¹

In 2009, the relationship between Russia and Serbia intensified and has been elevated to the level not seen for decades. There are contacts and cooperation in economy and politico-military sphere. By signing the Agreement on constructing the Serbian part of the *South Stream* gas pipeline and selling Serbian Oil Industry (NIS), as well as by planning the construction and modernization of the underground gas storage *Banatski dvor*, with all estimates that this is a political arrangement, this cooperation has been formed in such a way as to reflect not only Serbian interests related to Kosovo, but also many Russian interests. At the same time, other examples also support this assessment. The list of products that are exempted from customs

¹⁵ The interview of the official representative of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Andrey Nesterenko related to the upcoming visit of Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs V. Jeremic, February 19, 2009 – available in Russian at: http://www.mid.ru/Brp_4.nsf/arh/342FA6A377E5EA48C3257562004EDC0A?OpenDocument

¹⁶ The stenographic record of statements and answers to the questions asked by media representatives given by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at the joint press conference with Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs Vuk Jeremic, available in Russian at: http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/B38351266782BAE6C32575670037ABC8

¹⁷ Details about the conversation between Ministers Lavrov and Jeremic on Corfu, June 29, 2009 available in Russian at: http://www.mid.ru/Brp_4.nsf/arh/4E76296504640C9AC32575E4004E07F9?OpenDocument

¹⁸ Russian President Vladimir Putin, on the occasion of signing Oil-Gas Agreement on January 25, 2008, available in Russian at: http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2008/01/25/2006_type63377type63380_158116.shtml

¹⁹ The interview between Lavrov and Jeremic in Helsinki, available in Russian at: http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/B1C55C0EC386A565C32575150068BCC6

²⁰ Lavrov – Tadic, September 25, 2008 in New York at the meeting of UN General Assembly, details about the meeting between Ministers Lavrov and Tadic, available in Russian at:

http://www.mid.ru/Brp_4.nsf/arh/7CE4EDBF6A43E661C32574CF002059C3?OpenDocument ()

²¹ A phone conversation between Presidents Medvedev and Tadic, available in Russian at:

http://www.kremlin.ru/sdocs/news.shtml?day=5&month=08&year=2009&Submit.x=3&Submit.y=6&value_from=&value_to=&date=&stype=&dayRequired=no&day_enable=true#

duties or with reduced customs duties specified in the Treaty on Free Trade has been expanded.²² It is expected that, in addition to the Moscow Bank, some other major Russian banks will come to Serbia, such as Gazprom bank. This will facilitate the expansion of Russian business in Serbia. Serbia requested a loan from Russia in the amount of one billion US dollars, which is being considered, but it is believed that it will be granted.²³ Besides, after many years of delay, the overhaul of the hydroelectric power plant Djerdap I should start and it should be performed by the Russian company *Siloviye Mahsini*. Since April 2009 the Russian engineers have been removing the bombs from the period of NATO bombing.²⁴ Also, the repair of weapons and military equipment of the Army of Serbia, mainly of Russian origin, is underway.

The conclusion emerges that before the end of 2008 and ratification of the Oil-Gas Agreement the Russians had not spoken about the strategic partnership in the same way as they began to speak after the ratification. Also, a series of previously mentioned changes occurred only after Serbia and Russia had established the foundations of their strategic partnership, which could not be only trade, investments and cooperation related to the status of Kosovo, because these are primarily Serbian interests. It was necessary to build in the strategic partnership Russian interests as well. Russia clearly stated that it is the cooperation related to oil/gas, under the terms and conditions that were finally agreed upon, and cooperation at the international level.²⁵ From that point on we can speak indeed about the strategic partnership.

Hence, presently we can separate three determiners of strategic partnership between Russia and Serbia: (1) Russian support to Serbian policy related to the status of Kosovo; (2) coordination of positions of the two countries regarding other international issues; (3) Unimpeded implementation of strategic economic projects such as the *South Stream* Project and the entire oil-gas arrangement between Russia and Serbia.

Kosovo Status Issue: the Russian Position

From the beginning of talks related to the status of Kosovo, Russia's standpoint was that the solution must be reached with the consent of both parties "without artificial deadlines".²⁶ The proclamation of independence followed when it became clear that Russia was not going to yield and that the independence of Kosovo would not be verified by the UN Security Council. The Kremlin has always pointed out its support to the Serbian policy of defending the principle of territorial integrity and sovereignty. However, it has often been interpreted in Serbia as supporting and defending Serbia, which has never been the intention of Russian officials. The Russian position about the Kosovo's status issue was precise: Russia was defending the principle of territorial integrity and sovereignty, and not Serbia as a state. Defending this principle, Russia has been supporting the current Serbian policy related to the status of Kosovo, but it has not been defending Serbia. It would be difficult to imagine a situation in which Russia would provide any political or military assistance if Serbia tried to defend its territorial integrity in Kosovo using military

²² Ratified – *Official Gazette of FRY* – International Treaties, No. 1/2001. Pursuant Article 4, Paragraph 2 of the Agreement between the Federal Government of the Republic of Yugoslavia and the Government of Russian Federation, which provides that the signatory parties shall adjust the exceptions from the regime prescribed by Article 1 of this Agreement, that shall be applied on the basis of bilateral protocols signed by the signatory parties in accordance with their national legislations, at the seventh meeting of the Working Group for Improving Trade and Economic Cooperation and Enhancing Trade Mechanism between the Republic of Serbia and Russian Federation, the Protocol of Exceptions on Free Trade Regime was signed in Belgrade on April 3, 2009, but it is not clear whether it is subject to new ratification or it will be applied directly on the basis of signatures of the Working Group members.

²³ The Russian Ambassador in Serbia Aleksandar Konuzin,

http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2009&mm=08&dd=06&nav_category=11&nav_id=375064

²⁴ According to the data of the Russian Ministry for Emergency Situations, in the period from April 6 – August 12, the specialists from the High Risk Rescue Operation Centre within this Ministry searched 539,413m² of the territory and they plan to search the additional 418,000 m². They found 177 explosive devices. Available in Russian at: http://www.mchs.gov.ru/porta1_news/detail.php?ID=22992

²⁵ As soon as during his visit to Belgrade on October 9, 2007, Aleksey Miler, the Head of Gazprom said that "our entire business cooperation is a part of one complex project i. e. we consider our participation in the privatization of NIS to be a part of strategic cooperation with Serbia", *Vreme*, October 18, 2007.

²⁶ Russia opposes artificial deadlines for Kosovo settlement, *Ria Novosti* 17:2521/06/2007: <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20070621/67606516.html>

force or applying more intensive political measures (for example, economic sanctions against Kosovo).

As soon as in 2003 Russia withdrew its troops from Kosovo, with the explanation that further presence of Russian soldiers would only be used as justification for the developments considered by Russia to be wrong.²⁷ This stance practically released Russia from liability to be included in the issues related to the status of Kosovo and life of minorities, and released Russia from the costs of that operation. Russia withdrew to the level of discussion about the principles in the international bodies, bilateral and multilateral fora. This move had been done even before the policy related to the options of future status of Kosovo had been formulated and before the framework for the independence of Kosovo that followed after the outrage on March 17, 2004 was established. Namely, at that time the previous approach *standards before status* was transformed into a slogan rather than a policy.²⁸

However, Russia kept its Chancery in Pristina and active cooperation with UNMIK, along with several policemen who worked in the corpus of UNMIK police. Russia was also included in the consultations related to the final status of Kosovo. Nevertheless, its standpoint that the parties have to reach an agreement without deadlines was not supported by the states of transatlantic community, primarily by Washington. Since the beginning of establishment of Kosovo independence, Russia has given certain diplomatic support to Serbia, which has been increasing over time and which resulted in postponing the proclamation of independence for a short period of time. The Russian position has all the time been interpreted as the necessity of respecting the international law, Helsinki Final Act 1975, and principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Until August 2008 Russia covertly, and since then openly, had a completely different approach towards Georgian provinces Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Following the military intervention that took place 8–12 August and the defeat of Georgian forces that entered South Ossetia, as well as their expulsion from the Kodori Gorge in Abkhazia, on August 26, 2008 Russia recognized the independence of these two Georgian provinces. In doing that, Russia emphasized that Georgia had committed a crime with its treacherous assault on Tskhinvali²⁹ thus itself annulling its territorial integrity.³⁰ In addition, Georgia (unlike Serbia) attacked South Ossetia while the negotiations under international auspices were ongoing. The Russian argument for the recognition of these two Provinces is that it is the method of providing security in these “Republics”. Furthermore, many Russian arguments in the favour of independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, *mutatis mutandis*, are the arguments provided by the transatlantic community in the case of Kosovo, which is a kind of Russian response to ignoring in relation to Kosovo. Faced with the accusations of being inconsistent in its interpretation and application of international law, since in the case of Kosovo Russia took a completely opposite stance, Russia explained that it was *true* that the cases of Kosovo and Abkhazia and South Ossetia could not be compared because Serbia had not attacked Kosovo the way Georgia attacked South Ossetia, and therefore the case of South Ossetia was *sui generis*, and it was not equal to the case of Kosovo.³¹ The words of President Medvedev are the following:

*Our colleagues told me more than once that the case of Kosovo is unique, as lawyers say casus sui generis. OK, if that case is unique, than this case [of Georgia] is also unique.*³²

²⁷ Press statements and answers to questions related to the outcome of the meeting with the Prime Minister of Serbia Vojislav Kostunica. The text is available in Russian at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2004/06/65300.shtml>

²⁸ Kai Eide's Report – Comprehensive Review of the Situation in Kosovo. Available at: <http://www.ico-kos.org/?id=6>

²⁹ Speech of Ambassador for Special Assignments within the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs D.E. Tarabin at the first working session of the Annual Security Conference OSCE, on June 23, 2009. “OSCE approaches and work in the field of early warning, conflict prevention and management, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation”, Vienna, June 23, 2009 - available in Russian at:

http://www.mid.ru/Brp_4.nsf/arh/CE6A9D086155121CC32575E00055A9EA?OpenDocument

³⁰ See also the Announcement of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs dated August 25, 2009, available in Russian at: http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/4107A0E2642142ABC325761D0022E2AA

³¹ Sergey Lavrov, Face to face with USA: Between non-confrontation and convergence, Journal Profile, No. 38, October 2008, available in Russian at:

http://www.mid.ru/Brp_4.nsf/arh/B3C8684DEA14B242C32574E1002FD07B?OpenDocument

³² Medvedev defends the solution of two Republics (Медведев отстаивает решение о двух республиках), http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/russian/russia/newsid_7583000/7583005.stm

Two different cases or two standards for the same case: Kosovo and Georgian Provinces Abkhazia and South Ossetia

The Russian leadership has all along been comparing the cases of Kosovo and renegade Georgian provinces. According to Russia, the issue of Kosovo status and unilateral declaration of independence recognized by the majority of transatlantic community members was a *precedent*, which is also valid for Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Many post-Soviet states, such as Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldavia, Central Asian states, do not even consider recognizing Kosovo, but neither do they consider recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Such stance is opposite to the efforts of transatlantic community invested in proving that the case of Kosovo is *sui generis*, unique and that it cannot be applied to other conflicts.³³ Precisely that attitude of treating Kosovo as *sui generis* case and ignoring the Russian position towards Kosovo in the last ten years motivated Russia to create a new *sui generis* case - Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The refusal of Russia to recognize Kosovo as well as its diplomatic and political support to Serbia, along with its diplomatic, political and economic support to Georgian provinces whose majority population, like Kosovo Albanians, requested independence from Georgia after the armed conflict, raise an issue of consistency of The Russian policy in relation to ethnic conflicts. If one compares the images from these two cases, the result is mixed. In spite of a series of similarities between them and Kosovo, referred to by Russia, there is a series of differences, referred to by the Western countries. Finally, little essence remains, except that real interests prevailed over principles and law.

However, it is necessary to compare both the interests of transatlantic community to recognize the independency of Kosovo as well as the interests of Russia to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Only then are we going to have a complete outlook at developments and outcomes of these events that marked the beginning of 21st century.

According to the data of the International Crisis Group some eight thousand people died in the 1992–1993 war in Abkhazia.³⁴ It ended in 1994 with the Moscow Agreement, which established the separation line between the conflicted parties and the political format for negotiations. In 1994, the negotiations began under the auspices of the United Nations and lasted until May 2009 when they ended in a total failure and when the UN Peacekeeping Mission in Abkhazia, Georgia ended with its withdrawal. Although the format for negotiations still exists through the so-called “Geneva Process” among Georgia, Russia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, dealing with the security and return of the displaced, the United Nations do not have the field mission any more. Since the very beginning, Russia had deployed its peace contingent in the so-called zone of conflict between Abkhazia and Georgia, which was under the peace operations mandate of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) supported by the United Nations. Until 2007 Abkhazia was completely integrated into the Russian economic system and totally dependent of Russia. Russia began to grant its passports to the inhabitants of Abkhazia and almost all inhabitants of non-Georgian ethnic background obtained those passports by 2007. Two months after the Kosovo’s declaration of independence on March 2, 2008 Russia officially withdrew from the sanctions imposed in 1996 on Abkhazia by CIS and established formal relationships between Russia and *de facto* authorities of Abkhazia (and South Ossetia)³⁵. At the same time, it should be mentioned that Abkhazia continuously enjoyed the support of informal Russian circles, but also the formal ones such as the political and economic support of the Moscow City, with its long-term Mayor Yuri Luzhkov. For example Russia was almost always paying pensions to the inhabitants of Abkhazia. The consequence of these facts was that Georgia, but also some other transatlantic community states, since 2004 have not considered Russia to be a fair mediator, but the party to the conflict.

³³ See Bruno Coppieters, The Recognition of Kosovo: Exceptional but not Unique, Readings in European Security, Centre for European Policy Studies, International Institute for Security Studies, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces & Geneva Centre for Security Policy 2009.

³⁴ Report “Abkhazia Today” available at <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4377&l=1>

³⁵ Press release of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

http://www.in.mid.ru/Brp_4.nsf/arh/79C58F476CAEC4E8C32574040058934C?OpenDocument

According to the data of the International Crisis Group the conflicts in Abkhazia resulted in 239,000 displaced Abkhaz inhabitants, predominantly Georgians who used to constitute an ethnic majority in that Autonomous Province before the conflict, i. e. the total of 46% of all Abkhaz population. *De facto* Abkhaz authorities in 1999 allowed the limited return of Georgians in Gali Region, at the border with Georgia (some 45-50 thousand people), but they kept their position that the majority of Georgians could not be allowed to return *because the 1992 war disaster would be repeated*³⁶. The recognition of Abkhazia happened despite the fact that more than a half of the population had been expelled from Abkhazia (46% of Georgians and an additional small percentage of people belonging to other ethnic groups who escaped at the very beginning of the conflict).

The events in South Ossetia did not essentially differ from the events in Abkhazia. The 1991 – 1992 conflict did result, though, in fewer victims – some 1,000 persons were killed. The 1993 International Framework for Negotiations was under the auspices of the Organization for European Security and Cooperation. Within the framework of the so-called Joint Control Commission, a body consisting of the representatives of The Russian Federation, Georgia, South Ossetia authorities and North Ossetia authorities, no essential progress resulted from negotiations during the entire “frozenness” of this conflict. The Russian Federation had its troops deployed also in this territory, under the mandate of ICS as well.

When Georgia failed in all its attempts to change the negotiating format which was dominated by Russia and that had no perspective for achieving results in the favour of its territorial integrity³⁷, President Saakashvili decided in favour of a military action. The action ended in failure, and that raised numerous questions related to the conduct in war by all participants and in particular by the troops that belonged to the unofficial authorities of South Ossetia. The conflict ended with the mediation of French President Sarkozy who negotiated the principles of cease-fire and the beginning of a new negotiation process. Russia and Georgia have never signed identical versions of these principles, but in the field they had a practical effect of stopping the conflict and Russian advance within Georgia. Until October 10, 2008 Russian forces withdrew from almost all parts of Georgia outside of South Ossetia. The entire Georgian population was also in this case exiled from South Ossetia and their property was mainly destroyed.³⁸

Regardless of whether the cases of Kosovo, Abkhazia and South Ossetia are going to be considered precedents or not, the fact is that these cases have both many similarities and huge differences. In both conflicts until August 2008 Russia supported the principle of Georgian territorial integrity and voted for each UN Security Council resolution and each OSCE Permanent Council’s solution that were confirming that integrity. In practice, Russia supported the inhabitants of these two Georgian regions by granting the citizenship of The Russian Federation, which annulled all needs of this people to be a part of Georgia or to go to Tbilisi. Russia was giving them also practical support in the form of money, trade, open and half-open borders, etc. Russia used to justify this double track with humanitarian reasons and need to help the population of these regions who found themselves in an unsupportable situation due to the stubborn policy of Tbilisi.

Both of these two conflicts in Georgia should be viewed in the context of Russian need to keep its influence in the territory of South Caucasus. The Georgian striving towards NATO with the potential accession to NATO would leave Russian military forces in Armenia isolated. Besides, the alternative corridors for the transportation of energy resources – oil and gas from the Sub-Caspian region and Central Asia would become open and free of any Russian influence. After the conflict in 2008 and unanimous support to Georgia, given in more or less firm form, by the states of transatlantic community, Georgia made it clear that it was going to withdraw from CIS, which would have terminate the mandate of Russian forces in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Russia decided to recognize its independence partly because, of the mentioned realpolitik arguments, and partly

³⁶ Interview of *de facto* President of Abkhazia Sergey Bagapsh - available in Russian at: <http://www.apsny.ru/apsnynews/apsnynews.php?mode=more&more=13626>

³⁷ Since the first half of 2007 Georgia has advocated for the change of negotiation format according to the principle 2+2+2, OSCE and EU + Russia and Georgia + authorities of South Ossetia and parallel Provisional Administration of South Ossetia loyal to the Government of Tbilisi.

³⁸ Detailed information about the events can be found at the Internet sites of Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/en/europecentral-asia/georgia>, and Amnesty International <http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/georgia>

because Russia needed to keep the presence of its armed forces in those territories and consequently its influence in these regions. Ever since, Russian soldiers have stayed in these two regions on the basis of agreement that Russia concluded with Georgia after its recognition. Therefore, Russian interests have evidently prevailed over the principles of preservation and protection of the territorial integrity of each country.

After the recognition of independence of Kosovo – an autonomous province of the sovereign country, Russia took a stance that the notion of state sovereignty and territorial integrity has now become completely relative. A doubt emerged that the weakening of sovereignty principle could have adverse effect on the territorial integrity of Russia itself, taking into account its problems in North Caucasus.³⁹ For that reason, from Russian perception of international relations the only option was the demonstration of force. This is, among other things, one of the main reasons why Russia opposes so strongly the enlargement of NATO, which is not seen directly as a military threat, but as something that largely narrows political options, including the option of force, in the case of instable North Caucasian Republics – Chechnya, Ingushetia, Dagestan as well as other Republics. These North Caucasus Republics have violent elements, and even terrorists, who advocate for the independence of these Republics from Russia. The presence of NATO on the unstable parts of the Russian border is something quite different from the presence of NATO on the Baltic borders that are stable from the Russian point of view.

The Russian response to the recognition of Kosovo's independence, mindful and consistent until August 2008, when Russia had strong principled position based on the international law and practice, became relative with the changed policy of the Kremlin. Its *moral high ground* was shattered and this consequently affected its capability of influencing and convincing anyone about the need to respect the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty of Serbia in relation to the Kosovo case. Even the closest Russian partners, Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, which include some of the closest The Russian allies, such as Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan and Armenia, did not follow Russia and did not recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia. One year after the August events, the independence of those provinces was not officially recognized by any state except Nicaragua, although with uncertain internal consequences for that country.

Impact and Consequences

Despite the announcement from Washington that it wants to “reset” the relationships with Russia and in spite of freezing the prospects for NATO membership for Georgia and Ukraine, the issues of Kosovo, South Ossetia and Abkhazia remain where they are without any perspective for change. In fact, following the principles of realpolitik and intervening in Georgia, Russia drew some “red lines”, prevented the integration of Georgia and Ukraine into NATO and put into question the possibility for alternative routes of supplying energy resources through Georgia. In doing so, it seems that Russia has been following its previously defined doctrine of privileged interests.⁴⁰

On the other hand, the recognition of Kosovo's independence was supported by a significant number of states, although not by the majority of the UN member states. Nevertheless, many countries in whose integration processes Serbia would like to enter, opted to support the separation of Kosovo. The interest of these states in the recognition of Kosovo, even in spite of the USA's obvious desire to develop the best possible relationships with the demographically youngest nation in Europe – Albanians, still lies primarily in the stability of this part of Europe and the need for integrating this part of Europe into the European Union, which is in line with the aspirations of the majority of Serbian citizens.⁴¹ Therefore, the reasons of transatlantic community

³⁹ For the information about the situation and conflict in North Caucasus see: <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/139142>, also, *Gregory Shvedov*, Caucasus – Confrontation or Cooperation, First Report within the Project of Monitoring Russia – Serbia Relations, <http://www.isac-fund.org/publishing.php#analysis>

⁴⁰ In the interview given to the First Channel on August 31, 2008 President Medvedev said that Russia had regions of privileged interest as well as other states with which Russia had had traditionally friendly and special relations. Those regions do not necessarily border Russia. Available in Russian at: http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2008/08/31/1917_type63374type63379_205991.shtml

⁴¹ Report of International Crisis Group, Breaking the Kosovo Stalemate: Europe's Responsibility Europe Report N°185 21 August 2007

and Russia to act in connection with the issues related to the status of Kosovo and Georgian provinces Abkhazia and South Ossetia are essentially different. While the Russian reasons for the recognition of Georgian provinces imply Russian interests, the reasons of transatlantic community are based on striving towards common interests – true, with many contradictions.

It can be concluded that Russian policy related to Kosovo has at least two sides of the same coin. One side is a political and diplomatic support to Serbia, traditionally in good relationships with Russia, the country where Russia, and particularly the Russian people are so popular, as a result of traditional and very often mythical ideas about friendship, Pan-Slavism and Orthodoxy. Hence, Russia gets the opportunity to successfully defend its business and political interests in South East Europe, particularly in Serbia, after the whole decade of democratic changes in Serbia.⁴² At the same time, if we analyze a range of relationships between Russia and transatlantic community, we shall identify a series of problems and misunderstandings, with the issue of Kosovo and Georgian provinces being only one of them, positioned rather low at the scale of importance. Both Russian and transatlantic community officials are aware that the issues of disarmament, on Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, energy security and the regulation of Iran and North Korea nuclear programmes, as well as the stabilization of Afghanistan, which all require the cooperation of Russia, are far more important than the issue of these territories.

Therefore, it is possible to talk about Russian “support” to Serbia, but not about “Russia’s defence of Serbia”. That support, although existing, is conditional and relative. It is conditional because Russia advocates for a legal solution to territorial and ethnic conflicts in the Euro-Atlantic territory, except in case when the vital Russian interests are seriously jeopardized, when, as Kremlin showed in Georgia, it is possible to diverge from these principles following the example of transatlantic community in relation to Kosovo. This Russian approach is far from the present Serbia’s position “not to recognize Kosovo ever”. Russia sends a message that the independence of Kosovo from Serbia is possible under appropriate conditions, for example, such as the ones legally defined in a new European Security Treaty, which Russia advocates for.⁴³ Hence, the insisting of Russia to solve the Kosovo’s status issue by reaching a mutual agreement is only its temporary diplomatic stance, until the moment when these legal conditions are agreed upon, with or without Serbian consent. The Russian support is also *relative* because with its *mirror action* in Georgia, Russia admitted that even without legally binding and defined principles, if certain adequate conditions are met, such as the attack of central authorities the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity can be made relative and even annulled, and the right of Abkhaz and Ossetian people to self-determination can be prioritized. Namely, immediately after signing a recognition decree, President Medvedev said that Russia respected all the principles of Final Helsinki Act, whereas 3rd and 4th principles imply territorial integrity of states and 8th principle refers to equal rights and self-determination of peoples.⁴⁴

Tbilisi made its choice during the night of August 8, 2008. Saakashvili opted for genocide to accomplish his political objectives. (...) The peoples of South Ossetia and Abkhazia have several times spoken out at referendums in favor of independence for their republics. (...)

A decision needs to be taken based on the situation on the ground. Considering the freely expressed will of the Ossetian and Abkhaz peoples and being guided by the provisions of the UN Charter, the 1970 Declaration on the Principles of International Law Governing Friendly Relations Between States, the CSCE Helsinki Final Act of 1975 and other fundamental international instruments, I signed Decrees on the recognition by the Russian Federation of South Ossetia's and Abkhazia's independence. (...) it represents the only possibility to save human lives.⁴⁵

<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5018&CFID=13514066&CFTOKEN=32288909>

⁴² See Pavel Kandelj, «Балканизация» Европы vs «европеизация» Балкан, 15-06-2008, "Россия в глобальной политике". № 3, Май - Июнь 2008, П.Е. Кандель – к. и. н., ведущий научный сотрудник Института Европы РАН.

⁴³ See President Medvedev’s second principle at the conference of world politics in Evian, France.

http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2008/10/08/2159_type82912type82914_207457.shtml

⁴⁴ Available at: <http://www.osce.org/search/?displayMode=3&lsi=1&q=helsinki+final+act&GO=GO>

⁴⁵ Statement by President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev, August 26, 2008, available at:

http://eng.kremlin.ru/speeches/2008/08/26/1543_type82912_205752.shtml

Besides, the official Russian policy claimed that the recognition of independence was the only possible way for providing hard security of these Republics, implicitly giving one more argument in the favour of recognition of independence of certain territories in the world.⁴⁶

Hence, using *mutatis mutandis* the same arguments as the members of transatlantic community in relation to the status of Kosovo, President Medvedev gave a reciprocal answer to the recognition of independence of the Serbian province. A recent statement of the Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin leads to even more obvious conclusion:

*The international legal subjectivity of Abkhazia and South Ossetia begins from the moment of their recognition by at least one of the actors of international relations (...) and therefore, the recognition of Russia is sufficient (...) from the moral-ethical point of view, the comparison between Kosovo, Kosovo precedent, and Abkhazia and South Ossetia is completely founded. There are no essential differences. In both cases there are ethnic conflicts and in both cases the violation of law occurred.*⁴⁷

It is clear that following its realpolitik interests Russia recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Russia did it by using the same arguments as the states of transatlantic community. However, in doing so, Russia relativized the principles referred to until that in relation to Kosovo. In addition, Russia continued relativizing both the international laws and the principles of Final Helsinki Act, which makes any further discussion related to Kosovo less consistent. And finally, by proposing the conclusion of new European Security Treaty and by including into that proposal the second principle of uniform solution to ethnic conflicts, Russia sent a message that the past should be left behind, the status quo should be kept and the future rules should be defined.

Russian Initiative for Concluding a New European Security Treaty

The Initiative for concluding a new European Security Treaty was launched by President Medvedev in Berlin, on June 5, 2008, and then on the World Policy Conference held in Evian on October 8, 2008. On that occasion, he presented the basic principles of the new Treaty.⁴⁸ Originally vague idea assumed its form in October when Medvedev accepted, after the consultations with the French President Sarkozy, to discuss this initiative within the OSCE. Regardless of the principles, “baskets” and the OSCE history,⁴⁹ Russia claims that it is necessary to change the guarantees of so-called **hard security** since this is what failed in August 2008.

On the OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation, held in Vienna on February 18, 2009, Russian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Aleksandar Grushko pointed out the significance of adopting a legally binding document that would be prepared by the member states and organizations such as NATO, EU and OSCE, but also Collective Security Treaty Organization (English: CSTO, Russian: ОДКБ) and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). This Treaty would, according to Grushko, tackle only “hard” security issues and would not deal with the “human dimension of security” (free election and human rights) or economic and environmental issues, thus excluding other two OSCE “baskets”. In this way Russia formulated its priorities at the international level.

In this initiative Medvedev included also the need for harmonizing the principles for regulating ethnic and territorial conflicts in the Euro-Atlantic region (the second principle from the speech of D. A. Medvedev at the World Policy Conference in Evian, October 8, 2008).⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Press release of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs from August 25, 2009 available in Russian at: http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/4107A0E2642142ABC325761D0022E2AA

⁴⁷ ITAR Tass, the meeting between the Russian Prime Minister Putin and President of South Ossetia Kokoiti, <http://www.itar-tass.com/level2.html?NewsID=14271740&PageNum=0>, also <http://news.mail.ru/politics/2853710> See also the RTS news, <http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/9/Srbija/116721/Putin+o+Kosovu+i+Abhaziji.html>

⁴⁸ Medvedev's speech at the World Policy Conference in Evian, France http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2008/10/08/2159_type82912type82914_207457.shtml

⁴⁹ The three OSCE “baskets” are: the first is a politico-military dimension of security, the second is an economic and environmental dimension of security and the third one is a human dimension of security.

⁵⁰ Firstly: affirm the basic principles of security in the Euro-Atlantic area, observing of international law, sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the states as well as respecting all other principles deriving from the Statute of the UN; secondly: guarantee for uniform interpretation and observance of the principle, clearly defined in the

At the Ministerial Council in December 2008, during the informal lunch, Minister Lavrov presented the need for a new European Security Treaty and reiterated the principles pointed out by President Medvedev in Evian. On the eve of the Informal Ministerial Summit on the Greek island Corfu, he spoke at the annual OSCE conference in Vienna: Overview of Challenges in the Field of Security on June 23, 2009.⁵¹ Speaking about the atmosphere that requires changes of hard security system, Lavrov said that after the end of the *cold war*, the reason for divided Euro-Atlantic territory also ceased to exist; in his opinion this territory was created by gradually tearing off the parts of the former Warsaw Pact and approaching to Russian borders. Speaking about the principles that should be included in the new Treaty, Lavrov repeated the principles emphasized by President Medvedev in Evian, but he also broadened some of them. To the first principle that involved, *inter alia*, conscientious fulfilment of international obligations respecting the "political independence of states", Lavrov added non-intervention in internal affairs of the states. Thus, Lavrov pointed out dissatisfaction with the EU initiative for establishing "Eastern Partnership"⁵², or spreading of EU influence, according to Russia, to the Russian neighbouring countries and the states which Russia considers to be in its region of privileged interests. In addition, Lavrov also mentioned the necessity of respecting the right of every state to remain neutral, which may also refer to Serbia and its proclaimed military neutrality.⁵³ And finally, Lavrov pointed out the fourth principle according to which none of the military alliances can have an exclusive right to maintain peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic region – a clear reference to NATO. Like his Deputy Grushko in Vienna, Lavrov emphasized the need for the uniform approach in solving conflicts, indirectly comparing Kosovo with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. At the end of his speech, Lavrov made it clear. If this vision of security cooperation in the Euro-Atlantic region is not achieved, we shall face a threatening "perspective of full re-nationalization or privatization of military-political security with all unwanted consequences deriving thereof". This point of view clearly reflects Russian position as well as long-term perspectives of the OSCE and consequently a Russian vision of security in the Euro-Atlantic region, which is, politically speaking, closely connected with the OSCE process.

OSCE Greek Chairmanship accepted to convene an informal Ministerial Council, the first of its kind, on the Greek island Corfu, on June 27-28, 2009. This event, which gathered the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of almost all OSCE member states, provided Russia with the opportunity to further elaborate its initiative. The reactions from this meeting were abstained. If we take into consideration that The Final Helsinki Act was drafted several years after Brezhnev's initiative and numerous meetings, different forums and formats, it is not surprising that for the time being the situation is still unclear. The Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs Dora Bakoyannis said in her opening remarks that the participants should yet agree about the "goal, content and framework of dialogue",

Treaty, of inadmissibility of using force or threatening to use force in the international relations; provide a single approach to the prevention and peaceful conflict settlement in the Euro-Atlantic region, that take into account the different sides' positions and strictly respect peacekeeping mechanisms; thirdly: equal security explained with three "No's" no ensuring one's own security at the expense of others. No allowing acts (by military alliances or coalitions) that undermine the unity of the common security space. And finally, no development of military alliances that would threaten the security of other parties to the Treaty Besides, according to President Medvedev, it is necessary to focus on military-political issues today, given that nowadays the so-called hard security issues play a key role and taking into consideration that exactly in that field there is presently a lack of control mechanisms; fourthly: no state or international organization can have exclusive rights to maintaining peace and stability in Europe; fifthly establish basic arms control parameters and reasonable limits on military construction. Also needed are new cooperation procedures and mechanisms in areas such as WMD proliferation, terrorism and drug trafficking. Besides, it would be necessary to evaluate to which extent the previously established structures have been adequate. President Medvedev underlined that he did not suggest at all destroying or weakening what had been previously built, but more harmonized work based on uniform rules.

http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2008/10/08/2159_type82912type82914_207457.shtml

⁵¹ The full text of the speech in Russian language: challenges for hard security in the Euro-Atlantic territory: the OSCE role in creating reliable and efficient security system. (вызовы жесткой безопасности в евро-атлантике роль обсе в создании устойчивой и эффективной системы безопасности)

http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/adad9c34ee795d2bc32575de003decd1

⁵² Russia's Lavrov Lashes EU Over New 'Eastern Partnership' 22 March 2009, <http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/1237635122.1/>

⁵³ Paragraph 6 of the Resolution of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia on the Protection of Sovereignty, Territorial Integrity and Constitutional Order of the Republic of Serbia, (Rezolucija Narodne skupštine Republike Srbije o zaštiti suvereniteta, teritorijalnog integriteta i ustavnog poretka Republike Srbije (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia - "Sl. glasnik RS", br. 125/2007);

which evidently means that this process is still in its initial phase.⁵⁴ The expert comments agree that this initiative is directed primarily at stopping the enlargement of NATO and strengthening the role of Russia in the European security matters.⁵⁵

Serbia and Russian Initiative

As soon as in August 2008, in the interview for *Rossijskaja gazeta* (only two and a half months after the first mentioning of this initiative), the acting Russian representative in OSCE Vladimir Voronkov, said that Serbia, together with the members of Collective Security Treaty Organization (Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) *showed sympathies towards the initiative*.⁵⁶ This Treaty was also mentioned on the occasion of Minister Jeremic's visit to Moscow, when Lavrov expressed his gratitude for indeed in that moment only *interested* approach of Serbia to that initiative.⁵⁷

This initiative has dual importance for Serbia. First of all, the security issues addressed by this initiative are important for Serbia, as a member of international community and a state with the EU membership perspective. In the present situation, however, President Medvedev's *second principle* of the initiative is the one which has extraordinary importance for Serbia. It says:

Treaty should guarantee the inadmissibility of the use of force or [and] the threat of its use in international relations should be clearly affirmed. It is fundamental for the Treaty to guarantee uniform interpretation and implementation of those principles. The treaty could also cement a unified approach to the prevention and peaceful settlement of conflicts in the Euro-Atlantic space. The emphasis should be on negotiated settlements that take into account the different sides' positions and strictly respect peacekeeping mechanisms;

The sympathies of Serbia for this Treaty and seemingly copied Serbian position on Kosovo issue in President Medvedev's principle number two could be easily understood as a support for Serbia in its striving to solve the final status of Kosovo through negotiations. However, this initiative must be seen in the context of other – similar Russian actions in the international sphere.

Russia does not emphasize the cases of Kosovo, Abkhazia and South Ossetia at the international level, but the matter of principles emerging from the efforts to solve each of these cases. Dealing with these issues at the level of principle, Russia points out the inconsistency of the transatlantic community which applies one type of standards in the case of Kosovo and completely different one in the case of Georgian provinces. However, although Russia reiterates its support to the principled position of Serbia, the issue of Kosovo, for example, did not find its place in Medvedev's speech after the meeting with US President Barack Obama, while the latter very clearly expressed the US support for the territorial integrity of Georgia.⁵⁸ Russia repeated many times that the issue of Georgian provinces was solved. Therefore, we can conclude that the second principle of the initiative for concluding a new European Security Treaty is more an attempt to find a way of treating other territorial conflicts, Transdniestria and Nagorno-Karabakh (but not Chechnya), in the post-Soviet area, than the attempt to turn back the clock and reopen the issue of status of Kosovo and Georgian provinces on the basis of these principles.

Serbian foreign policy does not have a great number of available options related to this initiative. As a candidate for EU membership, Serbia will not have the possibility to choose, at its own discretion, which EU requests in the field of Foreign and Security Policy it is going to accept

⁵⁴ Sunday 28th June 2009 - Plenary Session_Minister Bakoyannis Opening Remarks, http://www.osce.org/cio/item_1_38493.html

⁵⁵ See for example Michael Emerson, *The Struggle for a Civilised Wider European Order, Elements for European Security Strategy*, CEPS Working Document No. 307/October 2008, available at http://shop.ceps.eu/BookDetail.php?item_id=1752

⁵⁶ Permanent Representative of Russia in OSCE, V. I. Voronkov, *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 20 августа 2008 года http://www.mid.ru/Brp_4.nsf/arh/62547841B1A28DDCC32574AB0055AC1B?OpenDocument

⁵⁷ About the working visit of the Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs Jeremic to Russia available in Russian at: http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/CACB23E641F8901CC325756300440DA7

⁵⁸ Joint press conference with the President of USA Barack Obama about the outcome of Russian-American negotiations on July 6, 2009 available in Russian at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/transcripts/4733>

and about which it is going to have its own view. The candidate states are expected to follow the Union in the mentioned field. Even if EU does not have a single policy related to this initiative, it is unrealistic to expect too much difference in the standpoints. The progress of Serbia towards EU membership, as shown in the case of Dutch refusal to ratify the Stability and Association Agreement, depends on all EU member states, including those that expressed the most radical views towards this initiative. Therefore, Serbia should act very cautiously on this front.

The proposal for the new European Security Treaty is still debatable and its future is uncertain. Nevertheless, it is clear that it reflects a great part of the present dispute between Russia and transatlantic community, primarily related to the enlargement of NATO. Although the West is in principle disposed to meet certain Russian requests, the issue arises to which extent. If this proposal puts Serbia in the situation to support actively such Russian proposals and initiatives for the strategic partnership with Russia, it can affect adversely the European perspective of Serbia. The support to such initiatives does not have to create a problem for Serbia if this initiative does not become a problem in the relationships between Russia and the EU. However, if the EU countries have a common stance, which is different from or opposite to Russian, as it often happens within the OSCE, Serbia does not have any space for independent and neutral position.

Finally, there is a question as to whether Russia launched this initiative because the security in the European continent is really at risk or to stop the expansion of NATO and US influence in the East Europe and to obtain some sort of recognition, even tacitly, from the European partners that Russia had *privileged interests* in the *near abroad*. Russia did not include in the proposed principles of a new European Security Treaty the issue of solving frozen ethnic conflicts because it really encounters problems with them, but in order to legalize its recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and prevent possible unwanted actions of the transatlantic community in other frozen conflicts in Transdnistria (between the official authorities in Moldavia and Russian-Ukrainian minority) and in Nagorno-Karabakh (between Azerbaijan and Armenia). Therefore, this initiative does not have much prospects of bringing anything new in connection with the issue of Kosovo status.

Serbia has to view its support to Russian diplomatic initiatives, including the most famous one about the conclusion of a new European Security Treaty, in the context of priority of its European integrations. In that context, Serbia does not have the freedom of action, which Russia in principle expects from Serbia, in the same way it expects from the member states of Russia – NATO Council to act within that Council in the capacity of states and not in the capacity of the NATO members. In that context, the strategic partnership with Russia that includes Serbian support to such initiatives is unlikely to succeed if Serbia maintains that the accession to the European Union is its top priority.

Unhindered Implementation of Strategic Economic Projects

The Russian side was rather surprised with the delays in ratification of oil-gas arrangement in 2008. Since in December 2008 there were no more doubts about whether Serbia was going to fulfil its obligations from the bilateral Treaty from January 25, 2008, this part of the agreement was considered fulfilled.⁵⁹

The frictions between Russia and Serbia related to many economic agreements are not a novelty. The Lukoil's purchase of Beopetrol in 2000 was not without problems either.⁶⁰ In addition, the overhaul of Djerdap I, which is the part of Russian clearing debt to Serbia from the Soviet Union period, has been overdue for several years, both due to Serbian and Russian faults, with the hope that it will finally begin in 2009.⁶¹ The problems of Russian companies and investors related to business operations in Serbia have recently been mentioned by the ambassador Konuzin

⁵⁹ Oil-Gas Agreement – signed documents, <http://www.srbija.gov.rs./vesti/specijal.php?id=100983>

⁶⁰ Serbian Energy Sector – Situation and Russian-Serbian Energy Relations Today
Zorana Mihajlović Milanović, Ph. D. – First report within the Project “Monitoring Russia-Serbia Relationships”, page 39.
<http://www.isac-fund.org/lat/publishing.php#analize>

⁶¹ B92 Overhaul of Hydroelectric Power Plant Djerdap has been late for eight years, August 14, 2008.
http://www.b92.net/info/komentari.php?nav_id=313438

himself, though in the constructive manner.⁶² It would be wrong to accuse only one party for all these problems. There has been some ill-faith actions on the Serbian side, but there have been also as many hasty moves on the part of Russia that does not act with due diligence when buying Serbian companies, does not perform legal and financial evaluation of standing and business activities of the company in the way it is done by the western companies.⁶³

The question emerges how the economic problems between the two countries should be solved. This particularly refers to the huge infrastructural project deals, such as the South Stream. From the economic point of view, the commissioning of the South Stream gas pipeline, with the planned 63 billion m³ of gas, out of which at least 20 billion m³ should be transported through Serbia. In economic terms, this pipeline would bring a great economic advantage to Serbia. The Russian side always points out the importance and development of oil-gas arrangements. In other words, the entire Russian state supports this complete arrangement and Serbian side should allow for any problems in its implementation. However, the emerging issues, beginning with legal problems that may occur regarding the expropriation of land, labour disputes and generally, all matters that are not connected with the Serbian government, but with third parties that would participate in the project of building South Stream, are not negligible. They could emerge along with other economic and environmental issues. By signing the Memorandum On Construction Of The South Stream Gas Pipeline in Sochi⁶⁴, The Russian Federation clearly set deadlines for commissioning South Stream – end of 2015. Therefore, the delays caused by the problems in Serbia are unacceptable. Serbia is expected to solve all issues in the internal system in the way that does not jeopardize the progress of this project in any way. For example, Article 9 of the Memorandum of Understanding signed between Gazprom eksport doo and Srbijagas implies to *get the exemption to the rule of having 100% regulated access of third parties to the capacities of Banatski dvor, and also obtained all other necessary permits in order to provide Gazprom eksport with unhindered right to use all capacities*. It is clear that Serbian party should obtain all these permits. Srbijagas also guarantees that there is nothing that could obstruct, render difficult or complicate the possibility of implementation of Banatski dvor project.

There are also problems related to EU rules that should be observed by Serbia, more precisely the provisions of the Energy Community Treaty.⁶⁵ This Treaty clearly implies transparent relations, market unification, development of competition and enhancement of environmental protection. The Serbia Progress Report clearly indicated that Europe does observe carefully the agreements signed by Serbia; the European Commission pointed out that Serbia had to ensure that the Oil-Gas Agreement was in accordance with Energy Community Treaty.⁶⁶ Although many EU countries participate in the South Stream project, the situation, power and political influence of a country that is already an EU member and Serbia that is not yet a membership candidate are incomparable. However, Russia has made it clear that the unhindered implementation of strategic infrastructural projects is a part of strategic partnership between Russia and Serbia. Therefore, it is up to Serbia to find a way how to do it, but the project has to be implemented and gas must flow in the South Stream, naturally if it is constructed, which is still an uncertain fact.

Conclusions

*The crucial problem of Russia is its increasing isolation.*⁶⁷

⁶² Konuzin: A great progress in cooperation, available at:

http://www.b92.net/biz/vesti/srbija.php?yyyy=2009&mm=08&dd=05&nav_id=374922

⁶³ The author's conversation with one of the Russian officers in the Serbian company bought by the Russian partner.

⁶⁴ Signed in the Russian city Sochi on May 15, 2009 between Gazprom and the partner of Italian company ENI, Srbijagas, the Greek company DESFA Corporation and the Bulgarian company Bulgarian Energy Holding. See Vladimir Socor, Jamestown Foundation, Eurasia Daily Monitor, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=35043](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=35043)

⁶⁵ Energy Community Treaty was signed in Athens on October 25, 2005. It entered into force on June 1, 2006. Serbia ratified it on July 19, 2006. This is the first binding document in the field of energetics signed between the countries of South East Europe and EU.

⁶⁶ Brussels, 05/11/2008, SEC(2008) 2698 final, available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/press_corner/key-documents/reports_nov_2008/serbia_progress_report_en.pdf

⁶⁷ Dmitri Trenin, the Russian edition of magazine *Foreign Policy* <http://www.globalaffairs.ru/articles/0/9044.html>

The strategic partnership between The Russian Federation and the Republic of Serbia has three determinants: Russian support to Serbian policy related to the status of Kosovo; coordination of standpoints of the two countries in relation to other international issues; unhindered implementation of strategic economic projects, such as *South Stream* and entire oil-gas arrangement between Russia and Serbia, and also other projects that are ongoing or that can be agreed upon.

The integration of Serbia into EU is enjoys huge support of its citizens.⁶⁸ Therefore, it should have a central place in Serbian foreign policy. The cooperation with Russia is a bilateral issue that should not get in the way of the integration. The right measure of cooperation between Serbia and Russia is a practical – bilateral cooperation in matters which cannot harm the European perspective of Serbia. Those matters do not include the Russian support to Serbian policy related to the status of Kosovo or the Serbian support to Russian diplomatic initiatives, such as the initiative for concluding the European Security Treaty, because both of these issues can be detrimental for Serbia's EU integrations.

In Moscow on February 20, 2009, Minister Jeremic announced another big strategic infrastructural project.⁶⁹ It is still unclear what Minister Jeremic had in mind. The expert public speculates that he referred to the sale of Electricity Company – Elektroprivreda Srbije (EPS) and/or the construction of metro in Belgrade. The content of the announced visit of President Medvedev is important for Serbia. The Ministries and departments that are arranging the visit have already been informed and given practical instructions.⁷⁰ The President is not coming to Serbia only to mark October 20, 1944, the day when the Red Army, together with the partisan units, forced out the Nazi occupants from Belgrade, but that visit is going to have a very tangible content. Taking into consideration that in Russia the President is responsible for foreign policy, it is important for Medvedev to add to the symbolic celebration of a famous date from the history of Red Army, another, tangible momentum to Russia-Serbia relations, thus gaining an additional, foreign policy points for himself in the Russian internal policy.⁷¹

In preparing the visit to Serbia, as well as in developing cooperation, even if it is a strategic partnership with Russia, it is necessary to keep in mind the Russian view of this strategic partnership. The Russian Ambassador Konuzin, in his speech at the Roundtable of ISAC Fund in Belgrade already on April 21, 2009 pointed out that for Russia, Serbia, as a strategic partner, had a “relative character” and “according to the opinion of many Serbs, Russia was a Serbian strategic partner, although the significance of Russia as a strategic partner was not the same for all of them”.⁷² In other words, Russia is much more important to Serbia than vice versa and it is necessary, first of all, that Serbs understand the meaning of strategic partnership with Russia. It would be difficult to disagree with this view of Ambassador Konuzin. The citizens of Serbia and Serbian elite need to understand the meaning and the price of strategic partnership with Russia. Choosing Russia as a strategic partner is a legitimate political choice, but only if it is based on the informed census in the Serbian society.

Consequently, the strategic partnership with Russia, as it stands now, is not advantageous for the position of Serbia in a long run because it can harm its European integrations. However, in the implementation of joint projects, i. e. in the development of practical – bilateral cooperation, Serbia can develop mutually beneficial relations, if constantly bears in mind the priorities of its European integrations. In such case, the economic cooperation based on transparent legal rules, both internal Serbian and European, can contribute both to the benefit of Serbia and to the development of good quality and sustainable relations between Serbia and Russia.

⁶⁸ On the referendum 79 percent of voters would support the EU membership, June 18, 2009
<http://www.seio.sr.gov.yu/code/navigate.asp?Id=104>

⁶⁹ Video press conferences of the Ministers Lavrov and Jeremic
http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/cIndr?OpenView&query=21.2.2009&Lang=%D0%D3%D1%D1%CA%C8%C9

⁷⁰ A phone conversation between Dmitri Medvedev and Serbian President Boris Tadic
http://www.kremlin.ru/sdocs/news.shtml?day=5&month=08&year=2009&Submit.x=3&Submit.y=6&value_from=&value_to=&date=&stype=&dayRequired=no&day_enable=true#

⁷¹ Mihail Vinogradov, Russian Authorities: the Decision-Making System and the Social Context, the Third Report of the *Monitoring Russia-Serbia Relations* Project, page 15 available at: <http://www.isac-fund.org/publishing.php#analysis>

⁷² See about the unique Russian policy towards the Balkans or about the phases of this policy since 1992 at <http://www.isac-fund.org/video/007.html>

Recommendations

1. The Russian support related to the status of Kosovo does not have a decisive influence on solving that issue, both due to the realistic position of Russia in the international relations and its policy related to the Georgian provinces Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Therefore, the importance of Russian support related to this issue should be reduced in Serbian internal policy, thus preventing the creation of image that the Russian support plays more important role in the solution of this issue. This support should not be taken into consideration when making bilateral economic and other arrangements at the national level between Russia and Serbia.

2. Serbia cannot act freely in the field of foreign and security policy in the international relations, if it is aspiring towards EU integration. Therefore, the support of Serbia to the policy or initiatives such as the initiative for concluding a new European Security Treaty should not be offered in isolation, diverging from the majority of EU countries, because such policy could easily lead Serbia into the conflict with the common EU foreign and security policy.

3. Regardless of the importance of strategic economic projects, such as the construction of South Stream, Serbia has to take care about its legal and political obligations, and in particular the obligations highlighted by the European Commission – the obligation to observe the provisions of the European Security Treaty! The policies and interstate treaties contravening these provisions can in perspective, regardless of the participation of other countries that are already EU members, bring Serbia in the position to choose between energy security that would be provided by Russia and EU integrations. The policy aimed at providing energy security for Serbia cannot be led in isolation, independently from other policies and political priorities, such as the priority of EU integrations.

Serbia – Russia Military Political Relations in the Process of Solving Kosovo Issue and in the Future

*Dragan Vuksic**

Serbia – Russia Military Political Relations in the Process of Solving Kosovo Issue

Considering the previous long-term negative experience, it was logical, and for Serbia also of existential importance, to reconsider the military-political relations and cooperation with Russia related to Kosovo and establish their realistic foundations. Kosovo was the most difficult political challenge of the former Yugoslavia, in particular Serbia. During and after Tito, the uprisings in Kosovo used to be solved by force, using police and army. At the beginning of Yugoslav crisis, it was repeatedly pointed out that the dissolution of Yugoslavia had begun and that it would end with Kosovo. Milan Kucan, the President of Slovenia, said that “Slovenia was being defended in Kosovo”. The authors of Z-4 Plan, which provided a wide-ranging autonomy for the Serbs in Croatia, considered that the Albanians in Serbia should also have such autonomy.¹ Wasn't it the reason for the rejection of Z-4 Plan? During the preparations for Dayton talks, USA suggested to Milošević to discuss also Kosovo, at least preliminary, as the last segment of Yugoslav crisis, but he did not even consider it. During the Dayton talks, the Americans tried more than once to get Milošević's consent to discuss also Kosovo. Since he rejected that possibility, USA enclosed to the Dayton Agreement its unilateral statement about the necessity of solving the issue of Kosovo. On the basis of Dayton Agreement, the talks about the Sub-Regional Arms Control were completed.² Russia was well acquainted with everything and actively participated in the process.

However, Russia had not dealt seriously with the Kosovo issue until the failure of Rambouillet talks. Russia was not able to confront the USA's dominant influence within the Contact Group and during the talks, which had been clear in advance and which no person thinking objectively should criticize. However, Russia did not even influence Milošević to understand that Kosovo would most certainly be lost if, with his policy of refusal and defiance, he allowed the solution to the problem by military force. Evidently, Russia was not obliged to do so, but it could be expected from a fraternal, Slavic and Orthodox country as it presented itself. And after Rambouillet, the influence of politics and Contact Group in deciding about the destiny of Kosovo had been decreasing, while the military factor in the form of NATO took the lead.

Nevertheless, although it is still uncertain whether the official Russian politics could have done more, it is certain that the military structures, secret services and their branches were sending unrealistic assessments, encouraging and pushing Milošević into an armed conflict. Exactly at that time, during and after the failure in Rambouillet, the above-mentioned diplomatic and other representatives repeatedly warned us to take care of ourselves because Russia was not able to help us. On the contrary, as the situation grew graver, Milošević's brutal abuse of Russia and Russian assistance was increasing. He would usually say to his collocutor, whom he seemingly listened to, but in fact he looked down on with contempt and cynicism, that he was right, but “there are certain things that he was not and could not be aware of”. There was no further discussion.

The performance of Russia, at the time when we were losing and lost Kosovo and now when it is trying to “raise it from the dead”, deserves special attention. When we were losing Kosovo, at

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¹ The Plan Z-4 was designed by the Ambassadors of USA, Russia, France and Great Britain in Zagreb.

² The quantity of offensive armaments in five categories (tanks, artillery, armoured personnel carrier, fighter airplanes and attack helicopters) was limited and reduced significantly in FRY, BH and Croatia. It seemed that the problems in the territory of former Yugoslavia were not going to be solved by force any more.

least four policies were led in Moscow. The policy of Jelcin depended on his mental and physical state. However, Jelcin said on time that Russia would not enter into a conflict with NATO, because its security in Kosovo was not threatened. The second policy was led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Crucified between Jelcin, Duma, Ministry of Defence and others, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was abstained, but they warned us clearly enough to accept the reality and to avoid the conflict with the West and NATO. The third policy was led by the Ministry of Defence, more precisely certain generals, who were threatening NATO in "a good mood" and promising assistance, although they were more aware than the others that it was not going to happen. The most influential policy was the one led by the "others": intelligence and security services, their exponents and intermediaries as well as some official representatives in Moscow and Belgrade.

It is hard to say whether we are ever going to find out at least a part of the truth about their "intrigue". Without that knowledge, we are not able to explain the lies and deceptions for which Serbia and its citizens paid the bloody price. Here are three examples. Before the beginning of air-strikes the Air Force and Air Defence estimated that we were going to knock down 80 NATO aircraft. NATO would not be able to bear such loss and would stop the bombing. D. Ojdanic, Chief of the General Staff of the Yugoslav Army, in his interview on TV Politika on April 28, 1999 said that by then we had knocked down 46 NATO airplanes. Everything is clear if we know that by the end of air-strikes only two airplanes were knocked down. Who and why "served" to Milošević the deceit that NATO was going to enter Kosovo with land forces and due to casualties they would have to cease the aggression?³

At the meeting of the Yugoslav Army General Staff collegium held in January 1999, it was also clearly said that Russia was not going to war for us. General Aleksandar Dimitrijević, Head of Security Directorate, said: "They are wondering how Russia has changed its attitude. According to our data, on the occasion of Albright's visit to Moscow, in the conversations with Primakov, the Russian debt in the amount of 380 billion US dollars was reprogrammed for the following twenty years. I guess we are all smart enough to understand what it means for Russia..." It should be pointed out that this was said by the Head of Security Service and not the Intelligence Service.⁴

The Minister of Foreign Affairs Živadin Jovanović said the following in his conversation with Ambassador B. Jovanović about the conduct of Russia before and during the Kumanovo talks: "But Russia is writing yet another dark page of its history by such attitude towards Serbian interests. It is a very dark, obscure and black page. They have forgotten that practically two and a half month...our people have been killed by the enemy. And Russia has been cooperating in the justification of that murder through such Resolution. Boro, we are in trouble."⁵ Živadin Jovanović, who says for himself that he strayed into diplomacy, for the nature of his work must have been aware of the truth and the real situation, but he remained silent.

Russia damaged itself, and Serbia even more, when it designed a "big scam" with Milošević and the Army. Without NATO's knowledge, the Russians transferred one part of their SFOR contingent from BH to Kosovo and occupied the airport *Slatina* near Pristina. NATO was surprised and stunned. The NATO commander, General Wesley Clark ordered to the KFOR commander, General Michael Jackson to drive them out, which he refused, fortunately. The relations with Russia in preparing that, not very successful operation and the world in which Milošević lived are illustrated by his anger at the Minister of Defence, Marshal Igor Dimitrievich Sergejev, for not having made a decision yet: "Shame on him, shame on him", and then: "And we are going to say what the Russian are, shame on them, they are embarrassing themselves on a daily basis"⁶. Milošević got angry with the Russians even because they were requesting permission for flying over Hungary and Bulgaria, for the purpose of bringing fresh airdrop forces from Russia. "Why

³ Since before the air-strikes I was a military attaché in the FR Germany and the Netherlands, I was told on several occasions that there was not going to be any land operation. Before my return, after the severance of diplomatic relations, I obtained it in writing. I still keep that piece of paper. The German General confirmed to me, as a Consul General in Frankfurt, that the buildings of the Ministry of Defence and Army Headquarters were rocketed immediately after Ojdanic's lies. He said: "Not even a spokesperson is allowed to lie that much, let alone the Chief of the General Staff."

⁴ Military Secret, I volume, page 11, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, Belgrade 2004.

⁵ Idem, page 73.

⁶ Idem, page 84 and 92.

aren't they flying, what do they care whether they are given the permission or not? The Bulgarians are supposed to shoot them?"⁷

In the eyes of the West and NATO one again we turned out to be frauds, only this time in a duet. The Russians were not able to deploy their forces because they had been prevented by the Albanians. The relations with KFOR had been tensed. They also had casualties, and the only Duma thing could do was to conclude "that the cost of presence significantly exceeds the political interest" and to withdraw. The immediate military presence of Russia in the Balkans ceased and its military influence became marginal and limited to military-technical relations concerning the repair and maintenance of Russian military equipment and armament.

Russia did not know which policy to lead even after the Kosovo tragedy to which it contributed. Upon having returned from Moscow, the Chief of Intelligence Directorate of the Yugoslav Army General Staff, said at the collegium meeting of the Yugoslav Army and the Ministry of Interior, in April 2000: "I was received by the Chief of General Staff and other high-ranking military leaders; we have their absolute support, they support our regime, Army, police. All of them there know that Vuk (Drasković – author's remark) is a drug addict, that he is lot of other things..."⁸. It is obvious that the Intelligence Directorate was not dealing with the affairs and tasks it was supposed to deal with and that the defence of regime was its primary assignment. However, the Intelligence Directorate would not have been able to act that way if the Russian military leadership had taken care not to interfere into Serbian internal political relations in a very dramatic moment.

The Russian Minister of Defence I. Sergeyev visited Belgrade and Kosovo on the head of a numerous delegation on December 23rd and 24th, 1999. S. Milošević received the delegation pompously; a glamorous dinner was served and all the members of delegation were awarded the highest honours. Marshal Sergeyev severely condemned KFOR, and he got a large publicity in the regime media. The German General Klaus Reinhardt, KFOR Commander, expected to have a "hot conversation" with the Russians the following day. However, as soon as he said that he was satisfied with the performance of Russian contingent, Lieutenant-General Gennady Shpak, Commander of Airdrop Forces, embraced him. On the departure, Marshal Sergeyev thanked KFOR and said that he would not withdraw the Russian contingent. General Reinhardt wrote down: "Marshal Sergeyev's cordial comments, after the yesterday's thunder in Belgrade, speak for themselves."⁹

Marshal Sergeyev surprised the public a great deal also in June 2000. In Brussels, on the occasion of visiting the NATO Headquarters, he said that "There is no alternative for Slobodan Milošević at the Serbian political stage". Was it the position of official Moscow? Even if it was, the Minister of Defence was not supposed to say that, under any circumstances, neither in Moscow, let alone in the NATO Headquarters, with whom Russia had established the relations a long time ago, both bilaterally and through the Partnership for Peace.

It is also hard to understand why the Russians received the then Chief of the General Staff of Yugoslav Army Nebojsa Pavković, in April 2001, who had been kept in that position by Vojislav Kostunica, contrary to everybody's expectations. Only those well acquainted with the situation knew that Pavković did not have an adequate treatment in Moscow. It was important to him to be received by the Russians and to announce it.

The contradiction in the Russia-Serbia relations concerning Kosovo emerged also through the understanding of alliance and political interest. According to some people, since the beginning Russia has been and still is our ally. At the same time, the opponents (non-allies) are USA, EU and NATO. If the "alliance means the relationship between the two or among more states based on the treaty that defines their mutual permanent or time-limited obligations", Serbia is not in any relation of alliance with Russia, unless the Milošević's alliance with Russia and Belarus related to the establishment of confederation is reincarnated. At the same time, exactly USA, EU and NATO are our allies on the basis of membership in the NATO programme Partnership for Peace. Having in mind that the political interest involves "certain attitude towards someone or something with the aim of achieving own interest or gain", the author wrote: "If the interest of Russia is to defend

⁷ Idem, page 98.

⁸ Idem, page 180.

⁹ General Klaus Reinhardt, "KFOR - Streitkräfte für Frieden", p. 291, Frankfurt am Main, second edition, February 2002.

international law, it is fine, but if it does not succeed in defending Kosovo, it will be only to our detriment. It will become clear that we were not allies, and that our political interests were different. If the goal of Russia is to, if Kosovo becomes independent, request the recognition of independence of Ossetia, Abkhazia and Pridnjestrovlje, in that case it was a brutal political Machiavellism and abuse of "Kosovo sufferance" with the aim of achieving own interests."¹⁰

Today it is clear that it was exactly what happened. I repeat, we cannot reproach Russia for using Kosovo in order to solve the problems of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. As a matter of fact, President V. Putin was clearly warning the West that they would be responsible for what was going to happen as a consequence of their policy concerning Kosovo. However, we do have to refer to Russia an ethical objection. Russia has abused a small Serbia – fraternal, Slavic and Orthodox. After that, Russia has been appearing less frequently in relation to Kosovo. But there is no love and altruism in politics. There are only interests.

It is evident that it would have been better if Russia had not supported and protected us – the way it used to do until the fall of Milošević. Nevertheless, things have not changed significantly even after that. The individuals, who were active at that time, are still influential today; only they are on higher academic and scientific positions. They mention the past only incidentally, focusing on the "defence of Kosovo".

Leonid Ivashov, the former Lieutenant-General and Chief of Directorate for International Military Cooperation, presently the President of Russian Academy for Geopolitical Issues, has even sharper rhetoric today. According to him, the "NATO-fascists" are to be blamed for all of it, for a long-lasting Yugoslav drama and Kosovo. *Since no country can conquer NATO-fascists alone, it is a high time for gathering of those who don't want to be run over by the boot from Washington. The former Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrey Koziyrev "betrayed" Serbs and Russia, Viktor Chernomyrdin "sold himself out" to Americans. Serbs are facing a persistent and long battle until Europe recognizes that it has entered into its own historical and geopolitical trap because it has been dull, fearful and apathetic. The brothers Serbs should preserve their spirit, pride and hope because Russia has already been strengthening, Belarus stands on guard, the Bulgarians are beginning to see clearly and it seems that USA will be stopped after all. The Catholics have once again helped in seizing the Orthodox centre in Constantinople. Losing Kosovo is for Serbs equal to taking their hearts out because for them, it means taking away the centre of their Orthodox-Slavic spirit.*¹¹

Konstantin Nikiforov, the Director of Balkan Studies Institute of the Russian Academy of Science, believes that there will be more wars in the Balkans for the land of ancestors and that the West, which is now giving the Albanians the country as a gift, must be aware of that, and adds: "Bearing in mind that the present Serbian leadership said that they did not want to go to the war for Kosovo, only hot heads can think that Russia should go to the war for the preservation of Serbian territory."¹²

Jelena Guskova, the Director of Contemporary Balkan Crisis Studies Centre of the Russian Academy of Science says: "If the Serbian leadership wants to win the battle for Kosovo, it has to be united again, because as long as the Serbian leaders were united, the Americans did not succeed in creating an independent Kosovo without resistance". Guskova also considers that the Kosovo battle is ongoing and that Russia will not yield. She also establishes that the Serbian leadership has already stated that they did not want to fight in the war. She also regrets the frictions among Serbs and the lack of solidarity among Slavs, which is the result of a good "work" of powerful persons in the world and our lenience. Serbs could be scattered worldwide like Jews. Serbs are the only people in the world that stood up against violence and lawlessness and the attempt of ruling from one centre. Serbia has been defending the borders of Orthodoxy and Slavism for 17 years, providing the opportunity to a slow bear, which is Russia, to become aware of its role, tasks and capabilities."¹³

¹⁰ The author wrote several articles in the newspaper Danas about the role of Russia in "defending" Kosovo.

¹¹ Interview for *Vecernje novosti*, 24 February 2008

¹² Interview for *Vecernje novosti*, 20 February 2008

¹³ Interview for *Vecernje novosti*, 8 April 2008

It is obvious that the views of the leading people in Russian Academy of Science have nothing in common with science and *do not* contribute to good reputation of that institution, of Russia and particularly of Serbia. It is a primitive cheap politics and the reflection of personal frustrations. The particularly dangerous remark is that the Serbian leadership has given up the war for Kosovo in advance. The question emerges: in whose name do the mentioned gentlemen/ladies and scientists speak?

A few words of common sense and encouragement came from Moscow as well. Minister Sergey Lavrov supported the signing of Agreement of Stabilization and Accession of Serbia to EU; he pointed out that Serbia should not be treated as a battle field between Russia and the West and highlighted the importance of strategic partnership between Russia and EU, based of equality and respect of interests.

It would be good if the Russian policy and attitude towards Serbia could become more realistic and sober and if such policy could be implemented and announced by the competent department and minister. That would narrow the space for the actions of groups and individuals, both in Belgrade and in Moscow, who prefer the relations between the two counties based on Orthodoxy, Slavism and fraternity (hopefully not of arms).¹⁴

Conclusion and future of military-political relations between Serbia and Russia

If we exclude the indirect connection of Kosovo with the moment and mode in which Russia solved the issue of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia has not benefited from being engaged in the Yugoslav crisis, particularly not on the Serbian side. On the contrary, it used its forces and resources, and it lost the battle for military presence and influence in the Balkans, even in Serbia itself. As regards Serbia, it should not have negative consequences neither to internal situation and relations nor to its relations with the neighbouring countries, USA, EU and NATO.

It is important for the both countries that the line of military-political confrontation of USA and NATO and Russia was moved to the East, that is - to the Russian borders as a result of the accession of former Warsaw Treaty members to NATO. Russia not only has the least military-political presence ever in the region, but it is also physically separated from Serbia by the states that are NATO members. As a consequence of those and other civilizational changes, the role and importance of a military factor have been essentially decreased in general, in particular in Europe and the Balkans, in the internal and international relations. The military forces in some countries have been substantially reduced, and their importance has become secondary.

The consequences for Serbia are permanent. Due to the engagement of Russia, as an unequal partner, Serbia was an object in the contradictory relations of big powers. Its political and military leadership was abusing Russia, which also influenced the internal relations in Serbia in respect to supporting radical and anti-European oriented parties and forces. Owing to the Russian support, particularly its direct military engagement and "defence" of Kosovo, today we are farther not only from the NATO membership, but also from the EU, and even from objectively lost Kosovo. Russia has not participated in or influenced in any way the actual reform of army and defence-security system in Serbia.

The military-political relations between Russia and Serbia are not a dominant factor any more in the overall relations between the two countries. On the contrary, they are objectively secondary in relation to the fields of politics and economy - especially energy, and probably some other areas in the future. It is good and it should be in the interest of both Serbia and Russia.

Therefore, it is not realistic to expect that in the following period, as regards Serbia, there will be a real need for the strengthening of military-political relations with Russia. I do not see the reasons for which the military relations with Serbia could have a special importance for Russia in the foreseeable future, without being detrimental for Serbia and its Euro-Atlantic integrations.

The first problem that should be solved in the overall relations between Russia and Serbia, and which also could have a special importance for military relations, is whether the equal

¹⁴ *Danas*, 20 May 2008

relations and objective interests of the two countries will have primacy, whereas Slavism, Orthodoxy and "fraternal relations" based on them would contribute to even closer and more successful cooperation and relations or the starting point will be the "fraternity based on Slavism and Orthodoxy" according to which the interests would be determined and on which the relations between the two countries would depend.

Since Serbia, like all other countries in the region, is still prevalently equipped with Russian technique, the military-technical cooperation is currently realistic and mutually beneficial for the purpose of delivery of spare parts, repair and maintenance of the equipment. It is confirmed by the example of repair of airplanes and helicopters.