

# THE BALKAN CHALLENGES OF THE NEW BUSH ADMINISTRATION

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Although the Bush team insisted, both during the election campaign and following their victory, that American military involvement in Southeast Europe was not in the national interests of America and that American troops would not be involved in "nation building", the situation on the ground has required a revision of this view. In order to ensure "the stability of the region and to keep a strong NATO" it is necessary to maintain American troops in Southeast Europe. The presence of NATO in the region represents "the most useful tool to assure American interest in Europe." A second factor which caused the Bush administration to rethink its pre-election position were the views of the European NATO allies who reminded America that "they came together to the Balkans and thus should leave the region together once the missions were to be accomplished." American policy towards the Balkans today is based on three main goals: to ensure a unified Bosnia-Herzegovina as envisioned in the Dayton accord of 1 995; to support a stable and democratic Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and not lend support to the independence movements of Montenegro and Kosovo; and to maintain an independent and united Macedonia, free of ethnic conflicts. In effect, this represents a continuation of the policies of the Clinton administration in this region following Dayton.*

## **Introduction**

During the 2000 Presidential campaign, foreign policy played a minor role in the decision of the American people to elect Al Gore or George W. Bush as the new American President. As the governor of Texas, George W. Bush, the GOP candidate, was perceived by the public opinion and the Washington's foreign policy establishment

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as an inexperienced politician in the field of international politics. This perception was so widespread that one journalist has even written that "Bush was held to have won the 'second televised' debate after successfully reciting the names of four large Middle Eastern Countries."<sup>i</sup>

In spite of that, some crucial foreign policy questions were raised during the 2000 campaign by the candidate Bush, in particular those concerning the policy towards China and Russia, the National Missile Defense, and the US acceptance of the Kyoto Protocol regarding the protection of the environment. According to James Traub, what seems to characterize the new Bush administration's foreign policy is "a worldly pragmatism but also a preoccupation with threat, a suspiciousness about negotiations, a willingness to go it alone."<sup>iii</sup> When dealing with its major foreign policy objectives - the development of the National Missile Defense (NMD), the rejection of the Kyoto Protocol, the relations with China - the Bush administration has pledged to seek the approval of the allies, but has also been willing to act unilaterally if a consensus proved to be unattainable. When he appeared before the Senate subcommittee on European Affairs at the time of his nomination as Secretary of State, Colin Powell vowed to treat China "as she merits", identifying her as a "competitor and a potential regional rival."<sup>iv</sup> The "spy-plane" incident demonstrated this new attitude towards China. During his statement before the Senate subcommittee, Powell also made a strong case for the National Missile Defense, saying that "no one thinking soundly, logically, would construct a strategic framework with offense only" and insisting on the fact that the 1972 ABM Treaty was no longer relevant in the post-cold war world.<sup>v</sup> So far, the administration has kept its word that it will act unilaterally when it comes to NMD and Kyoto Protocol, and has refused to take into consideration European criticism. At the Goteborg summit between the European Union and the US, as well as at the G-8 summit in Italy, President Bush was consistent with his previous statements and refused to modify his policy on these two issues, one (NMD) capital for US security, the other (rejection of the Kyoto Protocol), essential to keep the economy going, while many fear an imminent recession.<sup>vi</sup>

As far as the Balkans are concerned, the Bush team has argued during the campaign and after the elections that the American military presence in Southeastern Europe is not in the "national interest" of the United States and, in addition, that the American armed forces should not be involved there in "nation-building." This rhetoric reflected a degree of continuity between the two Bush administrations towards the region. This is not surprising considering the fact that the most prominent advisers of George W.

Bush in the field of foreign affairs have also been involved in the administration of George Bush senior.

This article identifies and analyzes the foreign policy objectives of the new Bush administration in Southeastern Europe and the challenges it will face in the years to come.<sup>vii</sup> We would argue that the initial intention of the Bush foreign policy team was to disengage the United States militarily from the region and let the Europeans assume the entire burden of its reconstruction. The Bush team was ready to provide to the European allies the intelligence and logistic support in Bosnia-Herzegovina (SFOR) and in Kosovo (KFOR). This political course, however, appeared to be unrealistic once candidate Bush became President. Since the Republicans have taken control of the White House, the United States has reiterated its commitment to the military missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, and it now faces a new one in the Republic of Macedonia. In addition, American diplomatic pressures have been essential in the Serbian government's decision to arrest Slobodan Milosevic and transfer him to the international tribunal in The Hague. In our view, the pro-active policy of the Clinton administration in the Balkans since 1995 has created contingencies on the ground which the Bush administration cannot alter without undermining the cohesion of the Atlantic Alliance. This, combined with the opposition of the European NATO allies to the departure of American troops from the Balkans, has compelled the Bush administration to continue the US engagement in the region. The European members of NATO reminded the new American administration that they came together in the Balkans and thus should leave the region together once the missions were to be accomplished. Traumatized by the Bosnian experience between 1992 and 1995, when British and French troops acted on the ground and Americans were in the air occasionally dropping humanitarian aid to the civilian population, the Europeans want to avoid such a future division of labor in NATO, one which almost tore the Alliance apart.

The new Bush administration has three main goals in the Western Balkans: first, it wants to maintain a unified Bosnia-Herzegovina in accordance with the Dayton Accords of 1995; second, it endorses a stable and democratic Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), meaning that it won't support the independence of Montenegro and Kosovo, two components of the FRY; third, it wishes to keep a sovereign and united Macedonia, free of ethnic conflicts. These goals are the same the Clinton administration had followed since the signing of the Dayton accords. It could be argued that the US policy in the Balkans is in essence bipartisan.

The central element in the Bush Balkan policy is a refusal to change the borders between newly created independent states. To attain these three objectives, the administration has no other choice but

to maintain a military presence in the region. Secretary of State Colin Powell understood this fact very quickly when he visited these states in February 2001. This policy is in sharp contrast with the proposals formulated by the former Secretary of State in the Nixon administration, Henry Kissinger, who argued that the stabilization of the Balkans can be achieved through changes of borders. In essence, Kissinger's proposal favors and rewards those who ethnically cleansed the territories they seized (in Europe, Lord Owen advocated the same ideas). In other words, Kissinger and Lord Owen are calling for a new Berlin Congress to pacify the Balkans, using Bismarck's methods.

### ***The Balkan Policy of George Bush, Senior***

To fill the most important foreign policy positions in his administration, George W. Bush has chosen the advisers who served in the administration of George Bush, Senior. These advisers -Condoleeza Rice, Richard Cheney, Colin Powell - had already argued back in 1990 -1991, when the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia became a reality, that the United States should not be dragged into the conflict. They pleaded that no US vital interests were at stake there. Moreover, many foreign policy officials in the first Bush administration firmly believed that the United States was not able to stop the violent dissolution of the country. The National Security adviser at the time, Brent Scowcroft, and the Deputy Secretary of State, Lawrence Eagleburger, two prominent government Balkan specialists, were convinced, as David Gompert puts it, "that no external power, not even the sole superpower, could prevent Yugoslavs from killing each other and destroying their country, much less impose a fair and lasting peaceful solution."<sup>VIII</sup> This thinking led to the decision to let the Europeans deal with the crisis in Yugoslavia. "It was time to make the Europeans step up to the plate and show that they could act as a unified power", noted former Secretary of State James Baker III in his memoirs. To attain this goal, in his opinion, "Yugoslavia was as good a first step as any."<sup>IX</sup>

Pursuing this policy of non-engagement, the first Bush administration, between 1991 and 1993, ruled out the possibility of a military intervention in former Yugoslavia. Even after Serbia, with the complicity of the JNA (Yugoslav People's Army), invaded Croatia in August 1 991, the United States refused to consider military intervention as a viable option to stop the crisis. Instead, the Bush government continued to express support for a "European Community (EC) plus CSCE" crisis-management mechanism, rather than a direct NATO or US involvement. The American government stood behind the efforts of the United Nations envoy, former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, and his European

Community counterpart, Lord Carrington, who were trying to stop the war in Croatia.

For this reason, the United States grew uneasy with Germany's pressure on the EC at the end of 1991 for the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia as independent states, a step that Vance and Carrington vigorously opposed. After Slovenia and Croatia were recognized in January 1992 by the EC, Washington's main objective in the region became to prevent the conflict from spreading to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Consequently, the United States pushed for the recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina, hoping that the Serbs would not oppose it. Unfortunately, the assumption of the Bush administration was wrong and, when the recognition came in April 1992 (the USA, at the same time, recognized Croatia, Slovenia, and Macedonia), Sarajevo was already under fire from the JNA and the Serb paramilitaries.

The Bosnian war soon turned into a nightmare for the United States and the international community. By June 1992, Sarajevo was besieged by Serbian forces and ethnic cleansing had begun throughout the republic. In August 1992, western media began publishing news about Serb-ruled concentration camps in northern Bosnia where the prisoners, essentially Muslims and Croats, were beaten and killed by the guards. The Bush administration, confronted to the failure of its policies to contain the conflict, never seriously entertained the notion that recourse to the US military in Bosnia would be necessary to stop the war. Even though Serbia was identified as the aggressor, the American government refused to go beyond the imposition of economic sanctions and the sending of humanitarian aid. Military engagement in Bosnia was seen as having no clear goals and viewed as a potential quagmire. In a now famous declaration, President Bush openly asserted this perception: "Before one soldier... is committed to battle 'in Bosnia'", he said, "I'm going to know how that person gets out of there. And we are not going to get bogged down in some guerrilla warfare. We lived through that once."<sup>x</sup> The reference to the Vietnam experience was clear. It was certainly the best way to explain to the American public why the United States should not be in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Colin Powell, the new Secretary of State in the second Bush administration, was in 1992 the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Powell's approach has been that the military should be used only when there is a clear identifiable goal, a specific national interest at stake, popular support, an exit strategy, and when a great number of troops and weapons can be deployed (as in the Gulf War). This was known as the "Powell Doctrine" and meant overwhelming use of force with no strings attached by the politicians (unlike in the Vietnam war).<sup>x1</sup> During the war in Bosnia, Powell was consistently opposed to the sending of American troops, and he even

questioned the eventuality of using air power to deter the Serbs.<sup>xii</sup> Other high-ranking officials in the new Bush administration are also veterans of the first Bush administration, notably Condoleezza Rice, the new National Security Adviser who held a position in the National Security Council as a Russia specialist, and Richard Cheney, now Vice-President, who was formerly Secretary of Defense.

That these high-ranking officials vowed to reverse the policy pursued by Bill Clinton in the former Yugoslavia after 1995 is not surprising. Clinton felt that there was no possibility for peace in the Balkans unless the United States stepped in and, after lengthy reflection, finally decided to send American soldiers to back the Dayton Accords signed in November 1995. The Clinton administration took a similar decision after the Rambouillet negotiations failed and NATO had to go to war in Kosovo. American troops were sent to Kosovo as a part of the KFOR mission, set up by NATO.

During the electoral campaign of 2000, Condoleezza Rice declared that American soldiers should not play the role of peace-keepers in the Balkans. In the January/February 2000 issue of the journal *Foreign Affairs*, Rice published an article that can be considered a foreign policy platform for the Bush team. In this article, she stated that a Bush administration, once in power, will oppose the sending of US soldiers in peacekeeping missions. She wrote: "The President must remember that the military is a special instrument. It is lethal, and it is meant to be. It is not a civilian police force. It is not a political referee. And it is certainly not designed to build a civilian society."<sup>xiii</sup> The concept of "nation-building" was rejected as an inappropriate mission for the US armed forces. That did not mean that the United States should do nothing to help rebuild countries destroyed by war or suffering humanitarian crises. But the role of the US, in Rice's view, should be limited, more often than not, "to lending financial, logistical, and intelligence support"<sup>xiv</sup> to peacekeeping missions led by regional actors, as in the case of the Australian-led mission in East Timor.

In the Balkans, this new division of labor between the United States and its European allies means that the Europeans should bear the military and civilian burden of the peacekeeping efforts. In October 2000, Ms. Rice began to talk about an eventual reduction of the American troops in Bosnia and Kosovo. Arguing that "we don't need to have the 82nd Airborne escorting kids to kindergarten", Ms. Rice reaffirmed the positions stated in her article in *Foreign Affairs*. Demanding a new division of responsibilities in NATO, she told the journalists that the "United States would not immediately withdraw from the Balkans but would inform NATO that its goal is to turn over the entire responsibility of stationing peacekeeping troops to its European allies."<sup>xv</sup> The United States, after the withdrawal, "would

continue to provide intelligence, help with communications, transport, and do other logistical work."<sup>xvi</sup> Colin Powell, Richard Cheney, and Donald Rumsfeld, the future Secretary of Defense, all seemed comfortable with this proposal, though they did not speak openly about it during the campaign. In fact, as some analysts observed, the recommendation of Condoleezza Rice was nothing more than the reiteration of the Powell doctrine of resolute engagement.<sup>xvii</sup>

The European allies, however, were alarmed by this Republican consensus. They maintained that the stabilization of Southeastern Europe was the new role of NATO in the post-cold war world, and that the Alliance would certainly break up if the Americans left the Balkans. Steven Erianger reported that a senior NATO-country official has said to him that "Dividing NATO into 'real soldiers' and 'escorts' who walked children to school is the first way to divide the alliance itself."<sup>xviii</sup> Lord Robertson, the NATO leader, also felt concerned about the news and sought reassurance that a new Republican administration would not "unilaterally pull out of what is a common mission in Bosnia and Kosovo."<sup>xix</sup> Patrice de Beer, the military and strategic affairs correspondent for the French daily *Le Monde*, commented on Rice's statement by saying that it did not take into consideration the fact that 80% of the peacekeeping effort in the Balkans is already assumed by the Europeans<sup>xx</sup>, while dismissing at the same time George W. Bush's "outdated" perception of the military and his "minimalist" vision of the Alliance.<sup>xxi</sup>

In the United States, the Bush proposal was also not well received. Not surprisingly, Al Gore rejected Rice's recommendation as dangerous for the unity of NATO. But criticism also came from former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who said that Rice's declarations could affect the politics of the region in the short-term, referring to the local elections which were to be held in Kosovo on October 28 and in Bosnia on November 11, 2000. The possibility of seeing the American troops pull out of the region, Ms. Albright said, could give support to the anti-democratic forces in these countries. "Is it the time to be saying we're not sure we're going to stay there?"<sup>xxii</sup>, she asked. Retired General Wesley Clark, who commanded the NATO campaign in Kosovo, said for his part that the United States cannot do less in the Balkans if they still want to influence the course of events there. "When allies are putting in more than 80 percent of the effort, there is not much room for an argument about burden-sharing. If we want to be part of this, we can't do much less",<sup>xxiii</sup> he declared in an interview.

The fears voiced by Madeleine Albright materialized. Weeks prior to the elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina, violent demonstrations erupted in Brčko, a district administered by the international community,

where some 2000 Serbian children demanded to be taught in separate schools from Muslim and Croat pupils. According to the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Bosnia, the demonstrations were fueled by "extreme nationalists" of the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS), the Party created by Radovan Karadžić, who is indicted for war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) based in The Hague.<sup>XXIV</sup> But the most important crisis came from the HDZ-BiH, the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Just before the elections, the HDZ-BiH called for a referendum on self-determination of the Bosnian Croats, a step viewed by many observers as an attempt to create a separate Croatian entity in Bosnia. The HDZ-BiH vigorously opposed the new electoral rules imposed by the OSCE for the November 11 elections, which threatened its dominant position among the Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The referendum was effectively held on November 11, 2000, the same day as the general elections, even though the High-Representative in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Wolfgang Petritsch, stressed that the referendum, organized by a single political party, would have no legal value whatsoever.<sup>XXV</sup> Petritsch's statements were echoed by those of Stipe Mesic, the President of Croatia, who refused to endorse the referendum, saying that "any attempt to go for a new structure in Bosnia would mean recognizing the results of ethnic cleansing" and emphasizing that his country was "absolutely against it."<sup>XXVI</sup> The Republican appeal for an American retreat from the Balkans was not the sole reason for these nationalist outbursts in Bosnia. It has nevertheless encouraged those political forces who are fighting for a "partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina and a change of the present borders.

### ***Balkan engagements to continue***

Richard Holbrooke, the key diplomat for the Balkans in the Clinton administration, was not too worried about Bush's proposal of disengagement. Recalling the electoral pledges of former Presidents - Carter, who claimed he would withdraw American troops from Korea; Reagan, who wanted to elevate to an official level the relations between Taiwan and the United States; even Clinton's electoral promises in 1992 that the United States would intervene in the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina - he declared in an interview for *Le Monde* that it would be impossible for a new Republican administration to retreat unilaterally from responsibilities assumed by the Clinton government towards the allies. "The reality", he said, "is that NATO is the most important alliance we've ever had and it seems impossible to me that a President can shirk from this commitment. The Europeans shouldn't be too concerned about it."<sup>XXVII</sup>



Holbrooke, of course, knew very well that the commitments contracted by the Clinton administration could not be ignored by the new Republican administration. Colin Powell inherited in the State Department a Balkan policy he opposed from the beginning. However, he realized after his first visit to NATO headquarters in Brussels (in February 2001) that a withdrawal from Southeastern Europe would create political conflicts in the Alliance that he was not ready to endorse.

During the Presidential campaign, Powell was more nuanced than Condoleezza Rice about the need to reduce the American contingent in Bosnia and Kosovo. On December 17, 2000, as the new Secretary of State-designate, General Powell gave a speech in Texas in which he seemed to back off from the policy outlined previously by Ms. Rice. He promised a policy "review" concerning the missions of the US armed forces, saying they were "stretched rather thin" by various engagements around the world. Powell also stated that there would be no unilateral or isolationist attitude in a new Bush administration.<sup>xxviii</sup> The pledge made by Colin Powell to study the problem and consult with the allies before taking any important decision on this matter reassured NATO countries.<sup>xxix</sup> When he visited the State Department a few days before taking office in January 2001, Powell reaffirmed his stance that the American troops would not be replaced by an international police force in the near future.<sup>xxx</sup> At the beginning of February, during a meeting with various Balkan leaders, Powell pledged once again that the United States would not "cut and run" from the region, sending this time a clear signal that American troops would continue their peacekeeping functions in the NATO-led forces in Bosnia and Kosovo.<sup>xxxi</sup>

The results of the elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina in November 2000, in which the nationalist parties again won a landslide victory, showed clearly that reconciliation between the constituent nations would not be attained in the near future<sup>xxxii</sup> and that the presence of the SFOR remains essential to country unity. Colin Powell realized that the pullout of the American troops at this moment would seriously jeopardize the reconstruction of Bosnia-Herzegovina, a project in which the United States has invested billions of dollars in the last decade.

Despite these arguments justifying the presence of American troops in the region, the new Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, continues to push for the reduction of the US contingent in Bosnia. Planning a complete reorganization of the US military, notably by emphasizing the need for preparedness for major wars, Rumsfeld remains dubious about peacekeeping missions. In an interview with the Washington Post in May 2001, he maintains that "the military job 'in Bosnia' was done three or four years ago" and still advocates the

withdrawal of the American troops, while denying his divergence from Colin Powell's views on that matter.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Rumsfeld's statements are once again feeding the anxieties of European allies. Confronting the potentially contradictory declarations of Powell and Rumsfeld, the President of NATO's parliamentary assembly, the Spaniard Rafael Estrella, has declared that this disagreement between the two men "doesn't contribute to having a clear vision of American policy toward Europe", adding that the possibility of a withdrawal, even if dismissed by the Secretary of State, is now "coming up again in a very strong manner."<sup>xxxiv</sup> Estrella also rejects completely Rumsfeld's position that the Bosnia operation is affecting the readiness of the US military, adding: "I don't think it's fair to say that using 3,000 troops for that mission is weakening or affecting the overall posture of the American military."<sup>xxxv</sup>

What emerges from this debate is another disagreement between the State Department and the Pentagon over the policy to follow in former Yugoslavia. Already during the Clinton presidency, the war in Bosnia had divided the Democrat administration. Anthony Lake, the National Security Adviser, Vice-President Al Gore, the United Nations Ambassador Madeleine Albright, as well as the special envoy to the region, Richard Holbrooke, all supported a decisive policy in Bosnia. However, Les Aspin, the then Secretary of Defense, and his successor, William Perry, were against the involvement of American troops in the Balkans and their position was supported by the Joint Chief of Staff.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Essentially, these oppositions were the result of different perceptions by the civilian and military officers about the mission in Bosnia. As Richard Holbrooke has written:

American military leaders were generally opposed to involvement in Bosnia. They feared that the mission would be "fuzzy" -imprecise, like the one in Somalia. (...) But the military regarded almost anything beyond self-protection and the carrying out of the military provisions of any peace agreement as constituting "mission creep" - that is, an undesirable broadening of their mission.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

The quarreling about Bosnia inside the Clinton administration continued even after the Dayton Accords, in January 1997, after the 1996 presidential elections, Madeleine Albright was appointed as the new Secretary of State and William Cohen, a Republican Senator from Maine, as the new Secretary of Defense. William Cohen was serving on the Senate Armed Services Committee when the Clinton administration decided to extend the mandate of the American troops in Bosnia at the end of 1996. The American troops were supposed to come home in December 1996, but the Clinton administration understood that a withdrawal at that moment would

jeopardize the reconstruction of Bosnia. As a result, a new deadline for the departure of the-US contingent was set for June 1998. Cohen was deeply disappointed by this decision and felt that the administration had been disingenuous with the Congress on this question. As the new Secretary of Defense, he pledged that the mission would effectively end in June 1 998, and that no other extension would be allowed.<sup>xxxviii</sup> However, President Clinton decided to follow the recommendations of Madeleine Albright, and the new deadline of June 1 998 was also abandoned. After that, President Clinton himself expressed doubts about the possibility of the United States leaving Bosnia before the end of his second mandate in January, 2001. The SFOR mission has since then been prolonged, without a new deadline.<sup>xxxix</sup>

These dissensions between the State Department and the Department of Defense were again visible in 1999, during the Kosovo war. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright favored once again decisive action by the US, meaning the use of the American military, to deter the Serbs in Kosovo and stabilize the region. Again, Richard Holbrooke and Al Gore gave their support to Madeleine Albright, who also received the backing of General Wesley Clark, the military head of NATO (SACEUR). For his part, Secretary of Defense William Cohen was much more cautious on the necessity for NATO to wage a war in Kosovo, as was Samuel Berger, the National Security Adviser.<sup>xl</sup> The military establishment in Washington called the Kosovo campaign "Madeleine's war" and constantly refused to allow extra resources to General Clark, who was in charge of the mission in Kosovo. In fact, Clark had to deal with fierce opposition coming from the Pentagon-. In late April 1 999, for example, Clark expressed his doubts in the New York Times about the air campaign, emphasizing that the bombardments alone may not be able to stop the Serbs' rampage. He received soon afterward a phone call from the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Hugh Shelton. "The Secretary of Defense asked me to give you some verbatim guidance", Shelton said to Clark, "so here it is: 'Get your f\_\_\_g face off the TV. No more briefings, period. That's it.'" Consequently, Clark did not brief the press between April 27 and June 12, the day of victory. Cohen was totally opposed to the deployment of ground troops in Kosovo, a possibility that Clark had evoked. During the NATO summit in Washington, on April 23, Cohen reminded Clark to say nothing about ground forces. "We have to make this air campaign work, or we'll both be writing our resumes", Cohen supposedly told Clark.<sup>xli</sup>

What is remarkable now is that Colin Powell, a retired General known for his opposition to the utilization of military power in the Balkans, is now pursuing the policy and honoring the commitments made by former Secretary of State Albright. In the Clinton

administration it was the President himself who was the referee among competing government bureaucracies (State Department, Department of Defense, Joint Chief of Staff, CIA). In 1995 (Bosnia) and in 1999 (Kosovo), President Clinton chose the policy advocated by the State Department against the view of the Department of Defense. In the Bush administration, it seems that Vice President Cheney will act as the referee between the heads of state agencies, due to President Bush's inexperience in international politics.

Despite internal divisions about Bosnia, the new Bush administration has put a great deal of effort in attaining its second objective; namely, the establishment of a united and democratic FRY. In February 2001, a few days after he assumed office, Colin Powell sent a very clear signal to Milo Djukanovic, the President of Montenegro, when he refused to meet with him in Washington. This decision was based, according to administration officials, "on a desire not to encourage the further changing of borders in the region."<sup>XLII</sup> The Secretary of State feared that encouraging Djukanovic to proceed with his plan to organize a referendum on the independence of Montenegro would trigger instability in the FRY by encouraging Albanians to push for the independence of Kosovo. It is worth remembering that, in February, Djukanovic was in the middle of his electoral campaign (the elections in Montenegro were scheduled for April 26). Djukanovic said many times that a referendum on independence would be held during the summer of 2001 if the results of the general elections were favorable to his party.<sup>XLIII</sup> The coalition for the independence of Montenegro led by Djukanovic won the elections. However, the narrow margin of victory made him postpone the referendum until the year 2002.<sup>XLIV</sup>

The State Department has put great pressure on the Serbian authorities for the arrest and transfer of Milosevic to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague. At the beginning of March 2001, William Montgomery, the American ambassador in FRY, urged the Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic and the Federal President Vojislav Kostunica to arrest Slobodan Milosevic. Unless the FRY begins to cooperate with The Hague tribunal, stated Montgomery, financial aid will not be forthcoming from the United States. The US Congress laid down specific conditions in the 2001 Foreign Operations Assistance Act, prohibiting the US government from providing aid to the FRY unless it could demonstrate progress in three areas: implementation of the Dayton Peace Accord; protection of minority rights; and compliance with the ICTY.<sup>XLV</sup> Serbian authorities fulfilled the American request and Milosevic was arrested on March 31. Colin Powell certified on April 2 that the FRY had been cooperating with the ICTY and ensured that there would be no interruption in US aid to the country. By arresting Milosevic, Serbian authorities have demonstrated their

willingness to respect the conditions set by the Foreign Operations Assistance Act, and the FRY has since received more than US \$100 million in financial aid by the United States and various European countries.<sup>XLVI</sup>

The Bush administration quickly asked that another step be taken by the Serbian government: the transfer of Milosevic to the ICTY in The Hague. The federal President Kostunica was advocating the trial of Milosevic in Serbia for crimes committed against the Serbian people. The Bush administration, while accepting this request, insisted nevertheless that Milosevic must be transferred to the Hague. During Kostunica's visit in Washington in May, President Bush himself reminded Kostunica that his country must create a legal framework for cooperation with the ICTY.<sup>XLVII</sup> The Serbian government, which desperately needed financial aid from the international community to proceed with its reform agenda, was afraid that the United States would refuse to attend the forthcoming donors' conference on June 29 unless Belgrade demonstrated its readiness to cooperate with the ICTY. On June 23, the Yugoslav government adopted an executive decree authorizing the extradition of Yugoslav citizens to the ICTY.<sup>XLVIII</sup> On June 28, Milosevic was transferred to the UN tribunal in the Hague by the Serbian government, apparently against the will of President Kostunica. Zoran Djindjic, the Prime Minister of Serbia, was in charge of the operation. American pressure was again essential in the Serbian government's decision to extradite Milosevic to the ICTY. In fact, as Claire Trean says, if Milosevic is today in a prison cell in The Hague, the Quai d'Orsay (the French Foreign Ministry) and the rest of Europe have nothing to do with it.<sup>XLIX</sup> Washington's commitment to the ICTY is surprising given the fact that the Bush administration is hostile to the existence of the International Criminal Court, which the US Senate has not yet ratified.<sup>L</sup>

In the last several weeks, relations between the FRY and the United States have improved. The US seems ready to accept the FRY as a partner in the region, something that was unimaginable a year ago. In February 2001, when Albanian rebels fomented attacks in the three-mile buffer zone along the Serbia-Kosovo border (essentially in the Presevo valley), the United States and NATO allowed Yugoslav troops to reoccupy the region.<sup>LI</sup> The restraint with which the Yugoslav Army took control of this territory is perceived positively by NATO. NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson, in a speech at the Wilton Park Conference in Dubrovnik, Croatia, in May 2001, confirmed that NATO will cede to the VJ (the Federal Army of the FRY) the final stretch of the Ground Safety Zone. Robertson stated that the "constructive attitude of the new FRY Government" on that matter will help to "broker a political arrangement between Belgrade and ethnic Albanians from the Presevo valley."<sup>LII</sup> It will not

be a surprise if in the next several months the FRY becomes a member of NATO's Partnership for peace program.

American-Croatian relations have also improved. The Bush administration will support Croatian membership in NATO if Croatia continues to cooperate with the ICTY. Croatia has also disengaged itself from Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Croatian government has refused to endorse the policies of the HDZ-BiH and it is also contemplating annulling the special relations Treaty signed in 1998 between Croatia and the Croat-Muslim Federation.<sup>LIII</sup> The Bush administration seems to appreciate this attitude. Lawrence Rossin, American ambassador in Croatia, was appointed by the Clinton administration at the end of its mandate and kept his position after the Bush administration assumed power.

Presently, the greatest challenge to United States policy in Southeastern Europe lies in Macedonia, where Albanian rebels are fighting for the partition of the Macedonian state. Since March 2001, the Republic of Macedonia is in a state of war, and the rebels have established their control over Albanian-dominated territories, especially around the city of Tetovo. The disorganized and weak Macedonian Army has not been able to stop the progress of the Albanian rebels. More importantly, the Albanian minority in Macedonia now seems to support the rebels who proclaimed themselves to be fighting for the recognition of Albanian rights in Macedonia.

The Macedonian conflict shows that the international community has not learned anything from its experience in former Yugoslavia. If the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo have proved something, it is that military conflicts need military not political solutions. After the failure of the EU and NATO diplomatic missions in Macedonia, it was obvious that NATO had to take a firm stance and stop the fighting. Wesley Clark bluntly expressed this fact to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations:

"Once again, as the international community attempts to resolve an emerging conflict 'in Macedonia' with limited diplomatic missions and exhortations to restraint, the lessons of recent history run square against the pressures of contemporary politics. NATO has resisted an additional military mission in the Balkans, but all the pleas and counsel of EU and NATO political leaders have not and cannot end the fighting there. And as the fighting continues, the familiar pattern of excessive use of force and needless harm to innocent civilians has reappeared, promising that the continuation of conflict will make any political solution increasingly difficult between increasingly alienated and hostile ethnic groups. '...' Now, as the democracy we fostered and upheld 'in Macedonia' rapidly disintegrates in ethnic fighting, the United States faces another critical juncture in its Balkan

journey; to take responsibility, with cooperation from the Allies, in preventing renewed conflict and preserving Macedonia's territorial integrity through a military and expanded diplomatic mission, or to continue to try to just scrape by, hoping against reality and the experience of the past ten years that the fighting will die out as a result of EU-led mediation, skillful Macedonian government diplomacy and military pressure exerted by Macedonian troops in their own country. I cite this as a United States decision, for surely it cannot be implemented successfully without US encouragement and participation, if not US leadership."<sup>LIV</sup>

But the United States and the European countries, for the time being, reject the possibility for NATO intervention in Macedonia.<sup>LV</sup>

The Bush administration's response to the strife in Macedonia again tests the credibility of NATO. Even Adam Garfinkle, an analyst hostile to US involvement in Bosnia and Kosovo, now argues that Macedonia was the first big foreign policy test for the Bush administration, and that it flunked. Garfinkle maintains that the Macedonian flare-up was first and foremost a "critical case of alliance management" for Washington, and that the refusal of the Bush administration to get involved in the crisis threatens the first interest of the United States: global primacy.<sup>LVI</sup> In the short-term, Bush's commitment to the region will be judged through his handling of the Macedonian conflict. And for now, Washington does not want to get involved in this new Balkan feud, despite the lessons of Bosnia and Kosovo.

## **Conclusion**

As we have shown in this article, the new government in Washington faces great challenges in the Balkans. To maintain the stability of the region and to keep a strong NATO, the most successful military alliance in history, will require the indefinite presence of US troops in Southeastern Europe. NATO remains the most useful tool to ensure American interests in Europe. Therefore, maintaining the cohesion of the Atlantic Alliance is of vital interest to the United States. The Bush administration has decided it will not yet withdraw unilaterally from Bosnia and Kosovo. The policy of continuing military presence advocated by Colin Powell is prevailing over the courses supported by the Department of Defense and its Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld. The Bush administration will perhaps barter with Europe: by agreeing to be a team player in the Balkans, it will ask in exchange for European support for the National Missile Defense. If this tradeoff materializes, the Balkan countries will be beneficiaries.

## Notes

- i I would like to thank Jean-Francois Morel, PhD student at the History Department of Laval University, who was my research assistant for this article. I would also like to thank Eric Marquis, of the Quebec Government's International Relations Department, for his insightful comments.
- ii James Traub, "W. 's World", *New York Times Magazine*, January 14, 2001, p. 28.
- iii *Ibid.*, p. 30.
- iv "Nomination of Colin L. Powell to Be Secretary of State", Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 107th Congress, January 17, 2001, Washington, Government Printing Office, 2001, p. 30; available at: <http://www.access.gpo.gov/congress/senate>.
- v *Ibid.*, p. 32.
- vi Mike Allen, "In Europe, Bush to Stand Ground, President Firm on Kyoto, Missile Defense", *Washington Post*, July 19, 2001.
- vii This article, is a follow-up of our previous works on US foreign policy in the Balkans: Reneo Lukic and Allen Lynch, "La paix americaine pour les Balkans", *Etudes Internationales*, vol. XXVII, no. 3 (September 1996), pp. 553-569; and Reneo Lukic, "American Foreign Policy in South East Europe", in Marin Sopta (ed.), *European Security in the 21st Century: Challenges of Southeast Europe*, Zagreb, Croatian Center of Strategic Studies, 1999, pp. 159-185.
- viii David C. Gompert, "The United States and Yugoslavia's War", in Richard H. Ullman (ed.), *The World and Yugoslavia's Wars*, New York, Council on Foreign Relations, 1996, p. 123. Gompert was between 1990 and 1993 the Special Assistant to the President for national security affairs.
- ix James A. Baker III, with Thomas M. DeFrank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, New York, G. R Putnam's Sons, 1995, p. 637.
- x Marc Danner, "America and the Bosnia Genocide", *New York Review of Books*, vol. XUV, no. 19 (December 4, 1997), p. 58.
- xi See his Op-Ed article "Why Generals Get Nervous", *New York Times*, October 8, 1992.
- xii Wayne Bert, *The Reluctant Superpower: The United States' Policy in Bosnia, 1991-1995*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1997, pp. 157-158; 206. See also the memoirs of Colin Powell (with Joseph E. Persico), *My American Journey*, New York, Random House, 1995, pp. 575-578 especially.
- xiii Condoleezza Rice, "Promoting the National Interest", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 79, no. 1 (January/February 2000), p. 53.
- xiv *Ibid.*
- xv Michael R. Gordon, "Bush Would Stop US Peacekeeping in Balkan Fights", *New York Times*, October 21, 2000.



- xvi Ibid.
- xvii Steven Erlanger, "Europeans Say Bush's Pledge to Pull Out of Balkans Could Split NATO", *New York Times*, October 25, 2000.
- xviii Ibid.
- xix Michael R. Gordon, "NATO Chief Says Bush Aide Reassured Him on Balkan Stance", *New York Times*, November 1, 2000.
- xx According to Amb. James Pardew, Senior Adviser on the Balkans at the Department of State, the United States has 7,571 troops in the KFOR in Kosovo (1 7.4 % of the total) and 3,872 troops in the SFOR in Bosnia (18.6 % of the total). This is a tiny number considering that 120,000 American soldiers are permanently deployed in Europe. See "The Crisis in Macedonia and US Engagement in the Balkans", Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 107th Congress, First Session, June 13, 2001, Washington, Government Printing Office, 2001, p. 14. Available at: <http://www.access.gpo.gov/congress/senate>.
- xxi Patrice de Beer, "Europe: la nouvelle doctrine Bush", *Le Monde*, October 25, 2000.
- xxii Steven A. Holmes, "Gore Assails Bush on Plan to Recall US Balkan Force", *New York Times*, October 22, 2000.
- xxiii Gordon, "Bush Would Stop...".
- xxiv Nermina Durmic-Kahrovic, "Serb Pupils Stoke Up Bosnian Tensions", Institute for War and Peace Reporting, *Balkan Crisis Report (BCR)*, no. 188, October 24, 2000, on <http://www.iwpr.net>.
- xxv Amra Kebo, "Bosnian Croat Separatism Threat", Institute for War and Peace Reporting, *BCR* no. 191, October 31, 2000, on <http://www.iwpr.net>.
- xxvi See Tony Gabric, "Zagreb Spurns Bosnian Croat Separatism", *BCR*, no. 197, November 21, 2000, on <http://www.iwpr.net>.
- xxvii Afsane Bassir Pour et Patrice de Beer, "Pas de desengagement des Etats-Unis en Europe, selon Richard Holbrooke", *Le Monde*, November 5-6, 2000.
- xxviii Jane Perlez, "News Analysis: A Dual Path in Diplomacy", *New York Times*, December 18, 2000.
- xxix Steven Erlanger, "A Higher Threshold for US Intervention Means Adjustments Abroad", *New York Times*, December 18, 2000.
- xxx Jane Perlez, "From his New Perch, Powell Scans the World", *New York Times*, January 3, 2001.
- xxxi Elaine Monaghan, "Powell Pledges Not to 'Cut and Run' from Balkans", *Reuters*, February 2, 2001; Jonathan Wright, "Powell Sees NATO in Balkans for Years", *Reuters*, February 4, 2001, on <http://dailynews.yahoo.com>.

- xxxii In both the Muslim-Croat Federation Parliament and the Republika Srpska (RS) Assembly, the nationalist parties have once again the greatest numbers of representatives. In the Federation Parliament (140 members), the SDA (Stranka Demokratske Akcije, the nationalist Muslim party) has won 38 seats, and the HDZ-BiH 25. The non-nationalist party SDP (Socijaldemokratska Partija) also has good results, with 37 seats. In the RS Assembly (83 members), the SDS (Srpska Demokratska Stranka), the party founded by Karadzic, has won by far the greatest number of seats: 31. The complete results of the elections are available on the internet site of the Bosnian Institute, "Bosnia-Herzegovina - General Elections 2000 - Certified Results", Bosnia Report, New Series no. 19/20 (October-December 2000), on <http://www.bosnia.org.uk>. See also Janez Kovac, "Election Splits Bosnian Politics", BCR, no. 1 96 (November 17, 2000), on <http://www.iwpr.net>.
- xxxiii Thomas E. Ricks, "Rumsfeld Calls Bosnia Mission Finished", International Herald Tribune, May 19-20, 2001.
- xxxiv Keith B. Richburg, "Rumsfeld Worries European on Bosnia", Washington Post, May 23, 2001. In a recent hearing before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, the retired Major General William L. Nash, who had been the United Nations Regional Administrator for Northern Kosovo in Mitrovica between March and November 2000, also expressed the necessity for a unified voice coming from the American government when dealing with the Balkans. In his opinion, this is essential to maintaining good relations with European allies. In his statement, he affirmed: "I think the next thing I would comment on is the necessity for consistency in US positions. You can talk about the consistency of the American voice speaking on the Balkans. I think our friends in Europe and in the region understand that you will not get one voice from the Congress of the United States, and that is perfectly understandable. They are less understanding of different voices coming from the executive branch, and I think that is one thing that we should be very mindful of." See "The Crisis in Macedonia and US Engagement in the Balkans", loc. cit., p. 47.
- xxxv Ibid.
- xxxvi See Bert, op. cit., pp. 197-198.
- xxxvii Richard Holbrooke, "Why Are We in Bosnia?", The New Yorker, May 18, 1998, p. 39.
- xxxviii Steven Erlanger, "How Bosnia Policy Set the Stage for the Albright-Cohen Conflict", New York Times, June 12, 1997.
- xxxix A good analysis of these events can be found in Martin Roy, Charles-Philippe David et Jean-Philippe Racicot, "Discours multilateraliste, leadership realiste: revolution de la conduite institutionnelle de securite sous Clinton", Etudes Internationales, vol. XXX, no. 2 (June 1999), pp. 242-247.
- xl For a view of the disputes in the Clinton administration during the Kosovo war, see Pierre Melandri, "Les Etats-Unis et le Kosovo: Les risques d'un

- leadership a bon marche", *Vingtieme Siecle, Revue d'histoire*, no. 67 (July-September 2000), pp. 7-10 notably.
- xli These events are recalled in Michael Ignatieff's "Chains of Command", *New York Review of Books*, vol. XLVIII, no. 12 (July 19, 2001), pp. 16-19.
- xlii Jane Perlez, "In Test of Troubled Waters, Powell Rebuffs Montenegrin", *New York Times*, February 2, 2001.
- xliii Steven Mufson, "Balkan Leaders Urge Powell to Retain US Role in Region", *Washington Post*, February 3, 2001.
- xliv Joseph R. Biden Jr., the Democrat Senator of Delaware and the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, is one of the few to oppose the United States' position towards Djukanovic. He declared that the propensity of the United States to adopt the European vision that a "vote on independence on Montenegro would be per se an absolute, total disaster" was too radical, adding: "I think we have become, as we Catholics say, more Catholic than the Pope on Montenegro." See "The Crisis in Macedonia and US Engagement in the Balkans", *loc. cit.*, p. 44.
- xlv Steven Erlanger, "US Makes Arrest of Milosevic a Condition of Aid to Belgrade", *New York Times*, March 10, 2001. See also "US Assistance To Serbia: Benchmarks For Certification", Hearing Before The Subcommittee On European Affairs Of The Committee On Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 107th Congress, March 15, 2001, Washington, Government Printing Office, 2001, pp. 1-2, available at: <http://www.access.gpo.gov/congress/senate>.
- xlvi During this process, Senator Biden was hoping for more than the arrest of Milošević. He argued that this action by the Belgrade authorities was not sufficient for the certification of US aid: "In the past few days," he said, "there have been news reports that Belgrade is hoping to win certification at the eleventh hour by arresting Milosevic. While I would be the first to cheer such a move, I would caution that we must not lose sight of our ultimate goal in this process. I do not want Mr. Milosevic to become this century's Al Capone—a ruthless murderer who, you'll recall, was convicted and incarcerated on the far lesser crime of tax evasion. I would have no objection to the Yugoslav Government's trying Mr. Milosevic for domestic crimes, but only if Belgrade clearly stipulated that his extradition to The Hague to face war crimes charges would follow." See "US Assistance To Serbia: Benchmarks For Certification", *loc. cit.*, p. 5.
- xlvii Mike Allen and Steven Mufson, "Bush Ties Aid to Action on Milosevic", *Washington Post*, May 10, 2001.
- xlviii Remy Ourdan, "Milosevic au Tribunal de La Haye?", *Le Monde*, June 25, 2001.
- xlix Claire Trean, "Les pressions americaines ont contraste avec la prudence des Europeens et de la France", *Le Monde*, June 29, 2001.
- I On December 31, 2000, President Bill Clinton signed the ICC Treaty. Clinton indicated that he would neither submit it for Senate approval nor

recommend that his successor do so while the treaty remains in its present form. The ICC treaty has been ratified by 30 states and will go into effect when the total reaches 60. Henry Kissinger has recently reaffirmed his opposition to the ICC by focusing on the case of Augusto Pinochet. His positions are shared by the Republican establishment. Henry Kissinger, "The Pifalls of Universal Jurisdiction", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 80, no. 4, (July/August 2001), pp. 86-96.

li Jane Perlez, "US and NATO Back Serbian Access to Kosovo Buffer Zone", *New York Times*, February 28, 2001.

lii "Nato and Europe", Presentation by NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson at the Wilton Park Conference "Key Steps for European Integration - Promoting Peace and Prosperity in Europe", Dubrovnik, Croatia, May 31, 2001.

liii *Vjesnik* (Zagreb), March 29, 2001, at <http://www.vjesnik.com/html>.

liv "The Crisis in Macedonia and US Engagement in the Balkans", loc. cit., pp. 30-31.

lv "Washington confirme que l'OTAN n'interviendra pas en Macedoine", *Le Monde*, March 20, 2001. See also the prepared statement of Ambassador James Pardew, in "The Crisis in Macedonia and US Engagement in the Balkans", loc. cit., pp. 9-14.

lvi Adam Garfinkle, "Bush's First Foreign Policy Test: It's not What You Think", *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, June 1, 2001, posted on the h-diplo mailing list June 26, 2001.