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The NATO's World Order, the Balkans and the Russian National Interest

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Abstract

This paper investigates the Russian foreign politics at the region of the Balkan Peninsula after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the time of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) World Order in relation to the Pan-Slavic ideals of intra-Slavic solidarity, reciprocity and brotherhood. The particular stress is put on relations between pro-Western and pro-Orthodox approaches of the Russian national interests among the Russian domestic political scene and their attitudes towards the Balkans. The research results are based on critical analyzes of the scientific literature and prime historical sources available for the author at the moment on the topic of the paper which is composed by five parts. A very short ideological background of the Pan-Slavic idea is presented in the first introductory part of the paper. The second part deals with historical background of the Pan-Slavism and Russia followed by Russia's foreign policy goals. The third part deals with the internal Russia's debates on national policy after the Cold War between the pro-western and pro-traditional forces. Russia's relations with the West at the time of the post-Cold War NATO's World Order in regard to the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia followed by the civil wars are the topic of the fourth section of this paper. Finally, the research gives six conclusions on the chosen topic of investigation of the paper in its fifth section.

Keywords - NATO, World Order, Russia, foreign policy, Balkans, South-East Europe, South-East Slavs, Pan-Slavism, international relations, global politics, Pax Americana

1. Introduction

Dalmatian and especially Ragusian (Dubrovnik) humanists in the 16thcentury accepted the old domestic thought that all Slavs originated in the Balkans and that the South Slavs are autochthonous inhabitants of the peninsula. More precisely, the entire Slavic population had their own forefathers in the ancient Balkan Illyrians, Macedonians and Tracians. Principally, the ancient Illyrians were considered as the real ancestors of the South, Eastern and Western Slavs. Consequently, according to this belief and tradition, the Eastern and Western Slavic tribes emigrated from the Balkans and settled themselves on the wide territory of Europe from the Elbe river in the west to the Volga river in the east.[1]

However, the South Slavs remained in the Balkans – the peninsula that was considered as the motherland of all Slavonic peoples (*Историја народа Југославије*, pp. 224−227.). Subsequently, all famous historical actors originated in the Balkans were appropriated as members of the Slavdom: Alexander the Great of Macedonia, Aristotle, St. Jerome (Hieronimus), Diocletian, Constantin the Great, SS. Cyril and Methodius, etc.

A development of the 19thcentury ideological concept of Pan-Slavism, historically was established by the Slavic writers originated in the Venetian province of Dalmatia and the Hungarian province of Croatia at the time of the late Renaissance and early Baroque (i. e., from the end of the 15thcentury to the end of the 17thcentury).

The literary works of that time by many of Dalmatia's and Croatia's Slavic writers had very strong and deep political connotation as they were dealing with the ethnolinguistic aspect of the Pan-Slavic unity, solidarity, kinship and reciprocity for the very political aim to liberate all South Slavs from the foreign rule (the Venetian, Habsburg and Ottoman) with the help of only two free Slavic states at that time in Europe: Poland and Russia.

[1]About the western borders of Slavic extension in the early Middle Ages, see [Engel, 1979, p. 36].

Nevertheless, their writings established an ideological framework for making both the Pan-Slavic common national identity and a program of the united single national state of the South Slavs in the Balkans. This "ethnolinguistic" framework of the Pan-Slavic, and especially the South Slavic, national identity became in the 19th and the 20th century the cornerstone of the ideology of Pan-Slavism and a foreign policy of the Russian Empire.

In one sentence, the main aspect of the ideology of Pan-Slavism that was developed in the literature and historical writings in Dalmatia and Croatia from 1477 to 1683 was based on the old domestic thought, tradition and certain European historical sources from the Middle Ages that all Slavs originated in the Balkans and that the South Slavs are autochthonous inhabitants of the Balkan Peninsula.

2. The Pan-Slavism and Russia

The Balkan Peninsula together with the region of the South-East Europe historically have been one of the most important focal points of the Russian foreign policy, cultural influences and attempts to spread ideology of the Orthodox solidarity and the Slavic reciprocity. These ideas are common to almost all trends of the Russian public life in the past and today.

After Russia lost the Great Crimean War of 1853–1856she intensified its cultural influence in the region of the South-East Europe for the purposes of beating the Habsburg (the Roman-Catholic) rivalry and to spread an idea of the Pan-Slavism in this part of Europe. However, the Great Crimean War was in essence the British war with Russia (Figes, 2010; Lambert, 2011; Small, 2014). After this war it became obvious for Russia that the West European great powers are her enemies, especially the United Kingdom. It will take even 50 years for Russia to sign a military-political agreement with the United Kingdom (in 1907) only after a final sharing the spheres of influence in Persia (Hans-Erich, 1985, p. 134).

The political and economic rivalry between Russia, on the one hand, and the Habsburg Monarchy (Austria-Hungary from 1867) and the German Empire (from 1871), on the other, over the dominance in this region was strongly affected in Russia by the growth of the Pan-Slavic sentiment, based on the common Slavic origin, mutual Paleoslavonic language, and above all it was grounded on emotional sentiment to liberate those South Slavs who were under the Ottoman rule (Jelavich, 1991)[2]. Historically, Russia had three pivotal interests in both regions the Balkans and the South-East Europe: 1) strategic, 2) cultural, and 3) religious (Castellan, 1992). It is important to stress a fact that Russia, together with the West European states, participated in the process of modernization of the eastern Balkan nations and states (Black, 1974).[3]

From a strategic point of view, the Russian diplomacy concerned the Balkans and the South-East Europe as essential for the Russian state security and above all for the stability of the Russian state frontiers.[4]The Russian intention was to obtain a favorable frontier in Bessarabia (today an independent Republic of Moldova) and to have control over the Bosporus and the Dardanelles, which became very important to the Russian commercial and economic development and geopolitical projects; in particular for the shipment of surplus grain from today Ukraine or known also as a *Little Russia* (Прыжов, 1869; Соловьев, 1947)[5]to the world markets.

The Bosporus and the Dardanelles became a part of Russia's "security zone" in both economic and political terms. The Russian main concern was to safeguard free passage through the Bosporus Straits to the Mediterranean Sea (Jelavich, 1973). Simultaneously, Russia intended to block the expansion of the other European great powers, particularly of Austria-Hungary and Germany, into the region.[6]

Taking religious and cultural aspects of the Russian interests in the Balkans and the South-East Europe, largely due to the Russian Pan-Slavic agitation, Russia succeeded to develop from 1870 a strong interest in the fate of the Balkan Slavs and the South-East European Orthodox Christians. The Pan-Slavism, based on the myth of the Slavic solidarity and primarily on the Orthodox Slavic reciprocity, which created strong ethnic, religious and cultural sentiments among the Slavic Orthodox population (but not among the Roman Catholic Slavs), became at the end of the 19th century one of the dominant driving forces behind the Russian policy in the Balkans and the South-East Europe. The myth of the Slavic solidarity and brotherhood exerted a considerable influence on many intellectuals and found support in official circles in Russia, Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgaria.[7]

3. The Post-Cold War Russia between the "Westernizers" and the Patriots"

With the official end of the Cold War (1949−1989), the Balkans, especially the question of the destiny of the former Yugoslavia,

[2] About the Pan-Slavism, see in (Kohn, 1960).
[3] About the Russian history, see in (Riasanovsky, 2006).
[4] About Russia's foreign policy interests, see in (Tsygankov, 2013; Gvosdev, 2014).
[5] About Ukraine-Russian identity relations, see in (Plokhy, 2008; Plokhy, 2010).
[6] About the spiritual and geopolitical rivalry in the Balkans by the great European powers, see in (Поповић, 1940; Narochnitskaya, 1998).
[7] For instance, about Russia's influence in Serbia from the end of the 18th century to the mid-19th century, see in (Попов, 1870).

reemerged as one of the major concerns in Russia.[8] However, in fact, for the NATO and its leading member state - the USA, the Cold War is still on agenda of the global arena as after 1991 the NATO's expansion and politics is directed primarily against Russia (Thompson, 1998) but China as well. Nevertheless, a fact that the NATO was not dissolved after the end of the Soviet Union (regardless on all official explanations why) is the crucial argument for our opinion that the Cold War is still reality in the world politics and the international relations.

It has to be noticed that the USSR was simply dissolved by one man-decision – the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, who, concerning this matter, made a crucial deal in October 1986 with the US administration at two-days bilateral meeting with the US President Ronald Reagan in Reykjavik in Iceland (Wilson, 2014; Adelman, 2014). It is a matter of fact that the USSR was the only empire in the world history which became simply dissolved by its own government as the rest of the world empires were destroyed either from the outside after the lost wars or from the inside after the bloody civil wars or revolutions.[9]

In my personal opinion, there were three main hypothetical reasons (not backed by now by any official document or source) for Gorbachev's decision to simply dissolve the Soviet Union:

1. Personal bribing of Gorbachev by the western governments (the USA and the EC).

2. Gorbachev's wish, as the first and the only ethnic Russian ruler of the USSR to prevent a further economic exploitation of the Russian federal unit by the rest of the Soviet republics that was a common practice since the very beginning of the USSR after the Bolshevik (an anti-Russian) Revolution and the Civil War of 1917−1921.

3. Gorbachev's determination to transform Russian Federation, which will firstly get rid of the rest of the Soviet tapeworm republics, into economically prosperous and well-to-do country by selling its own Siberia's natural resources (gas and oil) to the West according to the global market prices.

In order not to spoil very good business relations with the West the Russian foreign policy during the last 23 years, up to the 2014 Ukrainian crisis, was totally soft and even subservient to the West to whose mercy Moscow left the rest of the world including and the ex-Soviet republics with about 40 million of the ethnic Russian population outside the motherland. For the matter of comparison, Belgrade in 1991 also left all other Yugoslav republics to leave the federation free of charge, at least for the second Gorbachev's reason to dissolve the USSR, but with one crucial difference in comparison with the Russian case in the same year: the ethnic Serbs outside Serbia were not left at mercy, at least not as free of charge, to the governments of the newly (an anti-Serb) proclaimed independent states emerged on the wreck of (an anti-Serb and dominated by Croatia and Slovenia) ex-Yugoslavia.[10]That was the main sin by Serbia in the 1990s and for that reason she was and still is sternly fined by the West.[11]

Russia's policy and attitude towards the South Slavs in the Balkans after the dissolution of the USSR is a part of a larger debate over Russia's "national interest" and even over the Russian new identity (Laruelle, 2012). Since 1991, when its independence was formalized and internationally recognized, Russia has been searching for both her national identity and foreign policy.

The intellectual circles in Russia have debated very much over the content of the Russian national self-identity for centuries. On the one hand, there were/are those who believe that the Russian culture is a part of the European culture and as such the Russian culture can accept some crucial (West) European values in its development, especially from the time of the emperor Peter the Great (1672−1725).[12]This group, we could call them as the "Westernizers", have never negated the existence of Russia's specific characteristics as an Eurasian country, but have always believed that staying within the framework of the "Russian spectrum" is equivalent to the national suicide (a "fear of isolation" effect). On the other hand, there are those who have tried to preserve all traditional Russian forms of living and organizing, including both political and cultural features of the Russian civilization, not denying at the same time that Russia is a European country too. This, we can name them as the "patriotic" group, or the "Patriots", of the Slavic orientation, partly nationalistically oriented, have believed and still believe that the (West) European civilizational and cultural values can never be adjusted to the Russian national character and that it is not necessary at all for the Russian national interest (a "fear of self-destruction" effect).

A confrontation of these two groups characterizes both the Russian history and the present-day political and cultural development. Very similar situation is, for instance, in Serbia today as the society is sharply divided into the so-called "First" ("patriotic") and the "Second" ("western") Serbia supporters.

At the moment, the basic elements of the Russian national identity and state policy are:

1. The preservation of Russia's territorial unity.

2. The protection of Russia's interior integrity and its external (state) borders.

3. The strengthening of Russia's statehood particularly against the post-Cold War NATO's *Drang nach Osten* policy and possible partitioning of the territory of Russia after the WWIII (Nazemroaya, 2014).

[8]About history of the Cold War, see in (Lewis, 2005; Zubok, 2007).
[9]About the end of the USSR, see in (Plokhy, 2014).
[10] About different opinions on the nature of Yugoslavia, see in (Allcock, 2000; Sabrina, 2006).
[11]About the wars of Yugoslavia's succession in the 1990s, see in (Trifunovska, 1994; Woodwards, 1995; Ullman, 1996; Oven, 1996; Marković, 1996; Guskova, 2003; Sotirović, 2013a).
[12]About Peter the Great and his reforms in Russia, see in (Hughes, 2000; Cracraft, 2003).

It means that the post-Soviet Russia (the *Gazprom Republic* of the "Power of Siberia") rejected, at least for some time, the most significant element in her foreign policy that has historically been from the time of the emperor Ivan the Terrible (1530−1584) the (universal) imperial code – constant expansion of its territory or, at least, the position of a power that cannot be overlooked in the settlement of strategic global matters.[13]Therefore, after the Cold War Russia accepted the US' global role of the new world Third Rome.[14] For the matter of illustration, the US had 900 military bases in 2014 in 153 countries around the world.

From historical point of view, it can be said that the US' imperialism started in 1812 when the US' administration proclaimed the war to Great Britain in order to annex the British colony of Canada (Parks, 1986, pp. 182−202). However, the protagonists of a "Hegemonic stability theory" argue that "a dominant military and economic power is necessary to ensure the stability and prosperity in a liberal world economy. The two key examples of such liberal hegemons are the UK during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and the USA since 1945" (Heywood, 2011, p. 229).

At the present stage of Russia's history, characterized by very harmonious (symphonic) economic and political relations with the West, at least up to the 2014 Ukrainian crisis, especially with Germany, Russia in fact became a political colony of the West which is seen in Moscow eyes only as a good source for making money. The results of such kind of Russia-West relations are Russian tourists all over the world, an impressive Russian state gold reserves (500 billion €), buying real estate properties all over the Mediterranean littoral by the Russians, huge Russian financial investments in Europe and finally, Russian authorization of the NATO's and the EU's aggressive foreign policy that is mostly visible exactly at the Balkans.

Russia's foreign policy is surely a part of her national and cultural identity as for any other state in history. From 1991 up to at least 2014, Moscow accepted the western academic and political propaganda as a sort of the "new facts" that:

1. Russia is reportedly no longer a global super or even military power, although its considerable military potential is undeniable and very visible.

2. Russia allegedly has no economic power, although it has by very fact an enormous economic potentials.

3. Russia, as a consequence, cannot have any significant political influence which could affect the new international relations established after 1989/1991, i.e. the NWO (the NATO's World Order), or better to say – the *Pax Americana*.[15]

It made Russia a western well paid client state as in essence no strategic questions can be solved without Russian permission, however for certain sum of money or other way of compensation. For instance, the Kosovo status was solved in 2008 between Russia and the NATO/EU on exactly this way as Russia *de facto* agreed to Kosovo self-proclaimed independence (as the US's client territory or colony) for in turn the western also *de facto* agreement to the South Ossetian and Abkhazian self-proclaimed independence as in fact the Russian client territories or colonies.[16]

Russia as a country is unpredictable when it is isolated, and its unpredictability can be dangerous for the surrounding regions as well as for the global international relations. This thesis has had its confirmation in the events concerning the conflicts in both former Yugoslavias (the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – the SFRY and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – the FRY), and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (the FYROM). The cultural, religious and historic ties with the Orthodox Slavs who live in the Balkans (together with the western money) determine the Russian attitude and politics towards the political challenges in the Southeast Europe during the last decades especially what concerns the Orthodox Slavs in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo-Metohija and Macedonia (i.e., the Serbs, Montenegrins and Macedonians).[17]

In Russia emerged after Gorbachev's dissolution of the Soviet Union two ideological-political streams in the general debate in the Russian society about the national interest. The first emphasizes the importance of Russia's long-standing ethnic, cultural and religious ties with the Balkan peoples, especially with the Serbs, Montenegrins, Bulgarians and Macedonians.[18]The second stresses the importance of the good ties with the West and integration of Russia into a broader Euro-Atlantic framework.

Since Russia formally has lost all the attributes of a super power after the dissolution of the Soviet Union (probably up to 2014), her political elite has in the early 1990s become oriented towards closer association with the institutional structures of the West – in accordance with her officially general drift towards liberal-democratic reform (in fact towards the tycoonization[19] of the whole society and politics, like in all East European transitional countries). Till 1995 Russia had become a member of almost

[13] About the idea of the Holy Russia as a Third Rome, see in (Johnson, 2004).

[14] About the US' post-Cold War imperialism and global hegemony, see in (Kiernan, 2005; Baron, 2014).

[15]About the *Pax Americana*, see in (Dorrien, 2004; Clarke, 2008; Parchami, 2009; Roncallo, 2014). On the remaking of the World Order, see (Huntington, 2002; Kissinger, 2014). On the post-Cold War US-Russia's relations up to the 2014 Ukrainian crisis, see in (Stent, 2014).

[16] About the "Kosovo precedent" and the ethnopolitical conflicts in the Caucasus, see in (Weller, 2009; Tsurtsumia, 2010; Hehir, 2010; Francis, 2011; Souleimanov, 2013; Sotirović, 2013b).

[17]About Russia's foreign policy, see in (Donaldson, 2014). About Russia and her closest neighbours, see in (Szajkowski, 1994; Hungtington, 2011, pp. 151−155). About Russia and the Balkans after 1991, see in (Ekinci, 2013).

[18]About the Montenegrin ethnic origin and identity, see in (Glomazić, 1988; Lazarević, 2014). On the problem who are the Macedonians and the "Macedonian Question", see in (Martis, 1984; Poulton, 2000; Pettifer, 2001; Damianopoulos, 2012).

[19] After 1991, a tycoonization of the politics and economies in the ex-Soviet and the Warsaw Pact countries means that the society became mainly depended on several extremely rich and powerful persons or/and families who control a biggest scope of national finance and economy and therefore politics too. They became rich as have been ectremely privilaged during the process of privatization of the former socializm-state's companies.

all structures of the NATO, even of the "Partnership for Peace Programme" what is telling the best about the real aims of the Gazprom Russia's foreign policy up to 2014 when Russia finally decided to defend her own national interest, at least at the doorstep (i.e., in the Eastern Ukraine)of her own home. In May 1997 Russia signed the "NATO's−Russia Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security", what meant de facto that she accepted the NATO as the core of the Euro-Atlantic system of security.

For the matter of comparison with the USA, in October 1962, at the height of the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union came to the brink of a real nuclear war over the placement of the USSR's missiles in the island of Cuba – a courtyard (not even a doorstep) of the USA. It was the closest moment the World ever came to unleashing the WWIII (Kennedy, 1999; Munton, 2006; Dobbs, 2008; Pardoe, 2013). In the other words, during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 Kennedy's administration was ready to invade the independent state of Cuba (with already the US' military base on the island) and even to go to the WWIII against the USSR if necessary as Washington understood Cuba as a courtyard of the USA.

Whether or not the ruling structures in Russia had expected a more important role for their country in its relations with the new partners, since 1995 there has been certain stagnation in the relations with the West, accompanied by the insistence on the national interests of Russia. In practice, this was manifested in the attempts to strengthen the connections with the Commonwealth of the Independent States (the CIS) with which Russia had more stable and secure relations. However, the state of relations within the CIS, accompanied with a very difficult economic and politically unstable situation in some of the countries in the region, prevented any organizational or other progress in this direction. Still, the CIS has remained the primary strategic focus for Russia, especially when it comes to the insolent expansion of the NATO towards these countries (the NATO's *Drang nach Osten*).

4. Russia, the West and ex-Yugoslavia

An economic and political situation in Russia, the changes, the rate and the content of her fitting into the existing international relations influenced Russia's attitude towards the wars on the territories of the former SFRY. Since the beginning of the disintegration of the SFRY, Russia has taken very diplomatic position that these conflicts are the Yugoslav domestic affairs and consequently should be settled peacefully, without the use of force, with the United Nations (the UN) or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (the OSCE) as the mediator organizations. Russia kept this official position throughout all wars in Yugoslavia, till the end of the military conflict in Kosovo-Metohija in June 1999, but even and during the NATO's military occupation of Kosovo-Metohija followed by the expulsion of majority of the ethnic Serbs and all other non-Albanian ethnicities by the Albanians from the region from 1999 up today (*March Pogrom...*, 2004; Чупић, 2006).[20]

In a view of Russia's position in Europe and the world (especially in relation to the USA), characterized by her need and wish to become at least a respectable partner to the most developed countries, Russia was until 2014 blindly following the decisions of her "partners" from the West, especially at the time of the "western clown of Boris Yeltsin"[21]in the global politics. For instance, Russia recognized Croatia and Slovenia in February 1992 as independent states, in May 1992 she did the same with the FYROM and in August of the same year with Bosnia-Herzegovina. Although Russia was formally on the side of Serbia and the Serbs during the time of the dissolution of ex-Yugoslavia in the 1990s, mainly because of deep historic, cultural and political linkages with the Serbs, Moscow actually accepted the decisions of its western partners and followed their obviously anti-Serb Balkan policy (Guskova, 1996). Such attitude was the result of her orientation towards the policy of getting closer to the European economic, political and security institutions, but above all to the European market. For Russia, the Balkans is still just a part of her European (economic) strategy, but not the main task of her European (political) policy.

This is quite similar with the case of the NATO's military aggression on the FRY in 1999 for the real reason to occupy and separate Kosovo-Metohija from Serbia for the final sake of creation of a Greater Albania (Hadjimichalis, 2000).[22] Formally, Russia remained resolute in her demand that the conflict in Kosovo-Metohija had to be resolved in the Security Council of the UN or in the OSCE, but in fact nothing did to really help the Serbs in their fight against the Albanian nationalism and the US' imperialism – exactly what Washington and Brussels wanted and needed from Moscow at that time. From the very fact, when several western countries decided to intervene against the FRY in March 1999, Russia did nothing concrete to change that decision, although Moscow nominally disagreed because there was no formal decision in the Security Council of the UN and she was against the use of force in regional ethnopolitical conflicts in general. In fact, the Russian pro-western tycoon authorities did not wish to get directly involved in the conflict in Kosovo-Metohija in order to keep very prosperous economic relations with the West. Formally, during the NATO's military aggression on the FRY (much more on Serbia than on Montenegro) Russia tried to sustain contacts with Serbia. These attempts met with the approval of a part of the public, which, along with the nationally oriented intellectual and political elite, was pushing Russia into a conflict with the West, with the USA in particular, for the

[20]About the "Kosovo Question", see in (Grujić, 2014).
[21]About Boris Yeltsin and Russia in his time, see in (Colton, 2008; Curtis, 2014).
[22]About the NATO's military intervention in 1999 against Serbia and Montenegro, see in (Gibbs, 2009; Phillips, 2012).

matter to defend the Orthodox Slavs in the Balkans as historically Russia was a natural and even recognized protector of them during the time of the existence of the Ottoman Empire.

For the matter of fact, the Russian protection of the Balkan and the South-East European Orthodox population started with the Treaty of Küçük Kajnarca of July 21st, 1774 with the Ottoman Empire when Russia got the right to establish within the Ottoman Empire her own diplomatic consulates in Iaşi and Bucharest, and to make representations on behalf of the Orthodox Moldavia and Walachia (today parts of Romania) in Istanbul (Magocsi, 2002, p. 72). The Russian Empire by this treaty even becamea protector of all Balkan Christian nations especially the Orthodox (Поповић, 1940; Радојевић, 2014, p. 114).

During the Kosovo Crisis and War of 1998−1999 the relations between Russia and the USA became the worst since the end of the Cold War period, but in essence nothing was changed after the war in relations between Russia and the West.[23]

Nevertheless, the Russian participation with the NATO in international contingent of the "peace-keeping" forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina (the IFORS/SFOR) and Kosovo-Metohija (the KFOR, international peace-keeping forces under direct NATO's leadership and part of the NATO) shows that (Gazprom) Russia became highly opportunistic and even smarmy to the West as she consciously accepted to participate in these NATO's military missions only for the reason to internationally legalize the new NATO's World Order that is obviously on the first place *de facto* anti-Russian.[24]It is very unconvincing explanation by the Russian "Westernizers" that this decision to participate in the NATO's "peace-keeping missions" in the Balkans in the 1990s was for Moscow only possibility to "prove" that Russia is still not out from the arena of international politics of the great (western) powers and to have some influence in the region. However, it is known that this participation (till 2003)[25] was under the full-scale dictate of the NATO what is clearly visible from at least three facts:

1. Russia did not get its own sectors of protection and command either in Bosnia-Herzegovina or Kosovo-Metohija nevertheless Russia required them. The territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina was divided into three sectors of protection: the Canadian, the US, and the French, while Kosovo-Metohija into five: the British, Italian, French, German and US. However, it was no single Russian one.

2. A brigade of the Russian peace-keepers has been based in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the US' sector, the Multinational Division North, since January 1996, numbering only some 1,200 airborne troops. The Russian zone of responsibility was running between the predominantly "Croat and Muslim Federation" of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the predominantly "Serb Republic". However, about 30 US' soldiers were permanently stationed at the Russian brigade's headquarters in Ugljevik (the North-Eastern Bosnia-Herzegovina) while the Russian peace-keeping troops were in fact under the US's supervision and command. In this respect, can you imagine the US' military brigade under the Russian supervision and command in Afghanistan or Iraq? We have also to notice that in 1877 Russia entered the war against the Ottoman Empire because of Bosnia-Herzegovina (the so-called "Great Eastern Crisis") and even the First World War in 1914 after "Sarajevo Assassination" and Austria-Hungary's ultimatum to the Kingdom of Serbia (Радојевић& Димић, 2014, pp. 113−114).[26] However, it was an imperial Romanovs' Russia (not at all in much better position to the western great powers as today Russia is), but not the Gazprom one.

3. The Russian peace-keeping contingent in Kosovo-Metohija of some 3,150 soldiers (out from total 45,000 international NATO's troops in Kosovo-Metohija) was deployed in three sectors: in the US-led Multinational Brigade East, in the French-led Multinational Brigade North, and in the German-led Multinational Brigade South.[27] In June 1999, when the NATO's troops occupied Kosovo-Metohija, the NATO's headquarters in Brussels decisively rejected the Russian demand that Russia should have her own sector of protection in Kosovo-Metohija. We also have not to forget that the Russian troops (came from Bosnia-Herzegovina) occupied the Prishtina airport in June 1999 before the NATO's troops from the south reached the administrative centre of Kosovo-Metohija. That was at the moment a greatest victory of Russia over the West from the time of dissolution of the Soviet Union. However, very soon the same Russian troops left the Prishtina airport under the western pressure what shows at the best a real self-wanted position of (Gazprom) Russia in the NATO's World Order after the end of the Cold War (1949−1989). Consequently, Moscow in 2001 left Afghanistan in full mercy of the US' occupation – the land which was only three decades ago (in 1979) understood by Kremlin as exclusively its own sphere of dominance without any western interference.[28]

Obviously, only limited and formal Russian participation in the so-called "peace-keeping forces" in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo-Metohija, that is in fact just international legalization of the NATO's occupation of these lands, is very welcomed by the NATO's headquarters as it gives NATO a legitimacy of "human rights protection" in the Balkans. Following its orientation towards the "well-to-do Russian home", combined with her new national security concept of protecting Russia's state borders,

[23]About this issue, see more in (Headley, 2008).
[24]About the globalization of the NATO pact, see in (Kitchen, 2010; Nazemroaya, 2012).
[25] After the final withrowal of all military forces from Kosovo-Metohija in 2003, Russia opened in Prishtina a Representative Office (Hofbauer, 2009, 151)
[26] About discussion on the origins of the WWI, see in (Бјелајац, 2014).
[27] On the NATO-Russia peacekeeping cooperation in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo-Metohija, see more in (NATO and Russia).
[28]About the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan, 1979−1989, see in (Grau, 2002; Fremont-Barnes, 2012; Riedel, 2014). On the US' military involvement in Afghanistan from 2001 onwards, see in (Gall, 2014).

but without crossing them in international relations, Russia is trying to achieve the optimum of such kind of politics – to play a role of a formally respectable power on the international scene which will take its part in the most significant strategic changes in the world done by the NATO's and the US' administrations followed by their crucial European client – the European Union (the EU) for the sake of keeping perfect economic relations with the West. However, the 2014 Ukrainian crisis clearly shows that for the West any kind of Russia's defense of her own national interest around the globe, including and on the doorstep of her own home, is simply seen as a form of a new Russian imperialism (Mankoff, 2011; Herpen, 2014; Lucas, 2014).

Russia's attitude towards the "Serb Republic" in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and the FYROM was up to 2014 regarded in the contexts of her attempts to put into practice her common westernization policy with the ultimate goal to integrate Russia into the western political scope and system.[29]Having in mind this, it was quite predictable before the 2014 Ukrainian crisis that Russian forces will took in a recent future participation in the NATO's peace keeping forces in the FYROM (MACFOR), Vojvodina (VOJDFOR) or Sanjak (SANDFOR) under the same conditions as it was in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo-Metohija.

For the matter of better clarification, Serbia's northern region of Vojvodina, populated by the Serb majority and non-Serb minority (predominantly the Hungarian one) and her south-west region of Sanjak (in Serbian language Raška), populated by mixed Orthodox Serbian and Muslim Bosniak population (ethnolinguistic Serbs of Shtokavian language who became voluntary converted into Islam during the Ottoman rule) (Вуковић, 1911; Костић, 1955),[30] are scheduled by the West (the USA, the NATO, the EU) as the next regions of separation at the Balkans where the western peace-keeping troops are going to be located if Russia would surrender to the West in the case of Ukraine. Thus, such Russian role in the Balkan affairs fits to the ideas of the main Russian proponents of the so-called "Atlantic's School" (for instance, a former Russia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrey Kozyrev), which tends to play down the idea of Russia as the protector of the (Orthodox) Slavs in the South-East Europe.

However, on the other hand, the Russian "Westernizers" emphasize the crucial importance of co-operating with the West for the Russian economic and cultural development in the future. Subsequently, they explicitly reject a policy based on the ethnic, religious and cultural ties with the Balkan Orthodox Slavs, particularly with the Serbs. Absolutely the same situation is and with the Serbian "Westernizers" (the "Second Serbia") who are rejecting any ties with Kosovo-Metohija for the sake of Serbia's (i.e., remains of Serbia) "prosperity" in the (western) future. It was quite visible either during the process of dissolution (or better to say – destruction) of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s or after that up today.[31]

The myths of a fundamental Slavic brotherhood and the pan-Slavic solidarity, based on common Slavic origin and language, and especially with the Orthodox South Slavs, based on shared culture and the same religion is by now put aside as an ancient history by Moscow. It was visible, at least, twice in relations to the Serbs: 1) when the Parliament of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia proclaimed a state unity with Russia in 1999 during the NATO's aggression, and 2) when Kosovo-Metohija's Serbs (around 90,000) required Russia's citizenship in 2011. However, Moscow in both cases simply was deaf, regardless on the fact that it would be a perfect opportunity and formal excuse for Russia to do really something for the Serbs and to stop a NATO's military machinery at the Balkans.

Nevertheless, some of influential Russia's political leaders and representatives are still ardent to the ideology of the Pan-Slavic common ethnolinguistic origin, cultural reciprocity, solidarity and brotherhood – at least formally. For instance, during a visit to Serbia in January 1994 Vladimir Zhirinovsky warned the West that any attack on Serbia or Bosnian-Herzegovinian Serbs would be considered by the Russians as an attack on Russia herself.[32] However, when it happened in reality in 1995 and 1999 Russia did simply nothing to protect Krayina and Bosnian-Herzegovinian Serbs (in 1995) and Serbia (in 1999). It is interesting that on the same occasion he called for a union of all Slavic nations from "Knin to Vladivostok". Zhirinovsky was at that time also the main advocator of a radical revision of the territorial map of Europe, especially in the South-East Europe. In the other words, in his conception of reshaping the political map of Europe, the new (Russian) order in the South-East Europe has to be based on the (by now utopian) "Slavic pyramid" as:

1. Bosnia-Herzegovina would be divided between a Greater Serbia and a Greater Croatia.
2. A Greater Bulgaria would be created with its capital in Sofia.
3. Greece would be given parts of European Turkey.
4. Hungary would get back Transylvania from Romania.

It is quite predictable that the idea of the Pan-Slavic solidarity, reciprocity and brotherhood will be put on agenda of the Russian national interest if the Russian "Patriots" and the "Pan-Slavic nationalists" gained political power in Russia (maybe after the next revolution?). In this case, the concept of reshaping the South-East Europe on the model of some kind of the "Slavic pyramid" will surely play a significant role in the Russian foreign policy.

Nevertheless, there would be a very little chance for the Roman Catholic Slavs to accept such political program as their

[29] About this issue, see more in (Mendeloff, 2008; Kanet, 2010; Leichtova, 2014).

[30] About the Bosniaks, as a matter of comparison, see in (Donia & Fine, 1994; Pinson, 1996).

[31] About the problems and challenges of the Balkan security and Russia in the 1990s, see in (Shoup, 1990; Гуськова, 1992−1993; Larrabee, 1994; Бодсон, 1996;Gow, 1997)).

[32] A same kind of just declarative support to Serbia was expressed by a President of the *Gazprom* Republic of Russia – Vladimir Putin in Belgrade on October 14th, 2014.

suprime political solidarity is with the other Roman Catholics but not with the Slavs as the Yugoslav historical experience shows. In the other words, Vatican will never agree that the Roman Catholics are going to be governed by the Orthodox Christians (Екмечић, 2010, p. 516).

5. Conclusions

At the end we will express several basic conclusions in relations to the topic of contemporary Russian relations with the Balkans, or better to say, to the debate of the main issue of the present-day Russian foreign policy – between the West and herself.

The post-Soviet Russia was at least until 2014 Ukrainian crisis politically very deeply involved in the western system of international relations and cultural values that was basically giving to Moscow a status of the western client partner on the international scene of the NATO's World Order. A full victory of the Russian "Westernizers" up to 2014 allow them to further westernize Russia according to the pattern of the Emperor Peter the Great with the price of Russia's inferiority and even servility in the international relations. For that reason, the West already succeeded (at least up to 2014) to encircle Russia with three rings of Russia's enemies: the NATO at the West, the Muslim Central Asian states at the South and China at the South-East. The West was buying Russia's inferiority at the international scene by keeping perfect economic relations with Moscow that was allowing Russia, especially Russia's tycoons, to become enormously reach. These harmonious West-Russia political-economic relations are going to be broken in the future only under two circumstances: I. If the Russian "Patriots" with take political power in Kremlin (after the military putsch or new revolution?), or II. If the West will introduce any kind of serious economic sanctions against Russia (i.e. to restrict importing Russian gas and oil or to limit business operations of the Russian oil and gas companies outside Russia).Up to now, the South-East Europe is left to the western hands by Moscow and the region is already incorporated into the NATO's World Order as a part of the western (the NATO & the EU) post-Cold War concept of the Central and East Europe as a buffer zone against Russia.[33]Russia in this region has only and exclusively economic-financial interest (the "Southern Stream", investments, buying the real estate properties, selling her own products, etc.). The region was becoming more and more under the Russian direct financial control. As one of the best examples is Montenegro with 40% of the Russian investment out of total foreign one. The only political and national losers at the Balkans, as the outcome of such West-Russia post-Soviet relations, are the Serbs who as a nation have been expelled from Croatia and lost their Republic of Serbian Krayina, lost 20% of their ethno-historical land in Bosnia-Herzegovina, lost Kosovo-Metohija and will lose Vojvodina and Sanjak in the near future if Russia will lose a current battle for Ukraine (or the *Little Russia*). In this case, the state territory of Serbia, according to the western designers from the very end of the Cold War era, would be reduced to the borders of the so-called *Bismarck's Serbia* after the Congress of Berlin in 1878 up to the Balkan Wars of 1912−1913.[34]The U.S. and E.U. administrations are openly today supporting Ukraine to battle local rebels in Donbass region who are on the other side supported by Moscow. Ukraine became in fact a test-territory of continuation of the post-Cold War NATO's World Order. However, Russia decisively is going forward to change this order even if the price for it is an open clash with the West. On December 26th, 2014 Moscow adopted a new national security doctrine according to which the NATO is proclaimed as a chief threat for Russia's security. On the other hand, the main hope of Washington in current struggle with Russia is to destroy financial stability of the biggest country in the world and therefore to inspire successful Color Revolution against Putin's regime.[35] Nevertheless, it is obvious that a future of the Balkans and its re-mapping very much depend on results of the new Cold War (or even a real war) between the West and Russia (and China on Russia's side).

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[33]About the post-Cold War western supremacy in the global politics and international relations, see in (Mayer, 2014; Pijl, 2014). About a typical example of the western (the US') colony in the region, Kosovo-Metohija as a part of the *Pax Americana*, see in (Hofbauer, 2009). On the relations between the NATO and the European Union, see in (Simon, 2013). About the history of a greater concept of the East Europe between the Germans and the Russians, see in (Bideleux & Jeffries, 1999; Janos, 2000).

[34] At the Congress of Berlin (from June 13th to July 13th, 1878), Bismarck's main political goal was to maintain a balance of power in Europe which would block creation of any anti-German bloc. His assessment was based on the *realpolitik* politics of hard practical interests. Serbia's official representative to the Congress, Jovan Ristić, became "brought down to earth during the second week of the Congress" (Misha, 1999, p. 149).

[35] The U.S. aim is "...to destroy Russian economy by lowering oil prices, and accordingly gas prices as the main budget source of export revenue in Russia and the main sources of replenishment of Russian gold reserves" (Kalinichenko, 2014).

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