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U.S. POLICY TOWARD THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

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misunderstanding, anomie, and ultimately, failure as successive administrations tried to figure out what American policy toward the Balkans should be. As we try to clear away the underbrush of this period, four distinct periods in U.S. policy toward Yugoslavia can be discerned. Hopefully, understanding those periods will help point the way to a more creative, positive, and successful U.S. policy toward the former Yugoslavia.

Sisyphus[3]

Unengaged Engagement

The first period, which lasted approximately from the end of 1990 to mid-1994, can be described as a period of "unengaged engagement." During this period, both the H. W. Bush and Clinton administrations essentially remained aloof, content to shout from a distance and admonish the countries of Western Europe to do more to resolve the Yugoslav issue. Although the Bush administration "had studiously avoided any major initiative in the former Yugoslavia"[4]

In less than a year, for Washington, the necessity of Yugoslav unity ceased to exist and Milosevic was beginning to move away from someone the U.S. could work with, even rely on, ultimately to "brutal dictator" and, a decade later, to indicted war criminal. As it left office, the H. W. Bush administration not only ceded resolution of the broader foreign policy conundrum to the new Clinton administration, it left U.S. Balkan policy in difficult straits. Indeed, the Clinton administration inherited a framework that, among other things, left the future of an ineffective UNPROFOR up in the air and which included the feckless policy of "Deny Flight in place," as well as an unresolved question of whether the whole mess should be left with the Europeans after all.

Despite candidate Clinton's strong denunciation of the Bush administration's Balkan policy, President Clinton did not follow up with a strong, clear, well-honed policy of his own. Indeed, from its inauguration early in 1992 until mid-1994, the Clinton administration demonstrated as much "weakness" and even more vacillation on the Balkans than had its predecessor. For more than two years the Clinton administration stumbled along with a series of well-documented missteps that did nothing to help end the war in the former Yugoslavia. In fact, the Clinton administration followed policies that helped ensure that the wars of Yugoslav succession continued. Most important, it endorsed the Bush-initiated policy of recognizing the

represented a considerably more serious threat to re-igniting hostilities than did the Bosnian Serbs. Ironically, by this time, Milosevic had become for the Clinton administration the "indispensable devil." He was, in the administration's eyes, the author of so much of the mayhem in Bosnia, yet they also saw him—erroneously so—as the only leader in the area who could "deliver" the Bosnian Serbs. The administration's constant pandering to Milosevic during the early 1990s actually bolstered his hand in the region.

Third, the Clinton administration pushed reconciliation between the Muslims and

at political and social engineering. It provided a constitution for a country that had never existed before as a state in any modern sense of the term. It was a "state" that, for no explicable reason, followed the contours of the old Yugoslav republic and which was comprised of two entities and

that this optimistic scenario was driven by a concern that events in the Balkans not be allowed to disrupt the President's reelection prospects in 1996. In what became the worst kept secret in Washington, virtually no one believed that U.S. troops would be withdrawn at the end of that first year. After the election, the Clinton administration announced that the troops would come home by late 1997 or early 1998.

When this too did not happen, the administration removed "arbitrary" time limits, arguing that we would withdraw from Bosnia only when certain "benchmarks" had been attained—primarily the establishment of the institutions and procedures laid out in the Dayton Accords. In short, the U.S. would be able to withdraw once the Clinton administration determined that Bosnia was "substantially" on its way to becoming that stable, multi-ethnic, democratic country that danced so hopefully in the imaginations of administration officials. The importance of the decision to move from time-based to goal-based measures for troop withdrawal was little appreciated at the time by the upper reaches of the Clinton administration, but it firmly set in place the inertial nature of the U.S. commitment because the goals became non-specific and elusive—the perfect inertial formula. When the occupation of Kosovo began in mid 1999, the administration had learned its lesson—no time limits were announced.

Disengagement

The Clinton administration left office early in 2000 on the back of inertial engagement. The "benchmarks" had long since been forgotten and the W. Bush administration came to office much less enamored of the Balkans than its predecessor had been. Thus, we enter the fourth and current phase, "disengagement." Even before September 11, 2001, the new Bush administration had not formulated a clear, coherent Balkan policy, and since then even less so, being pulled away mightily by the war on terrorism.

In a sense, we have come full cycle from a decade ago—being prepared to hand the issue off to the Europeans. In April 2002, Secretary of State Powell endorsed EU foreign and security chief Javier Solana's role in brokering a settlement—at least for now—of the issue of Serb-Montenegrin unity, something Washington would never have allowed the Europeans to do just a few short years ago.[10] Moreover, for the first time, neither the High Representatives in Bosnia nor Kosovo have American deputies—it is entirely a European show. At about the same time, the U.N. Security Council "unanimously adopted a resolution" establishing the European Union Police Mission (EUPM) for Bosnia and by endorsing its full operability by the start of January 2003, thereby relieving other international actors—including the U.S.—of police responsibility there. Perhaps even more important, the simple fact that the U.N. found it necessary to perpetuate an international police presence fully seven years after implementation of the Dayton Accords is significant evidence that previous efforts to establish a competent, multi-ethnic, indigenous Bosnian national police force have failed.[11] Then, in May 2002, the European Union granted Yugoslavia $160 million in credits before the U.S. released its heavily conditioned $115 million. Although the European action was done much to the chagrin of several U.S. policy makers and diplomats who are unhappy with the level of Yugoslav cooperation with the War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague, it signaled European acceptance of a more assertive role in the Balkans.

Finally, although troop levels in Bosnia and Kosovo are dropping for both the U.S. and Europe, the decline is especially precipitous for the U.S.[12] By the end of 2002, American troops will comprise no more than 15 percent of the total, whereas U.S. troops constituted fully a third of the international force when the Dayton Accords were implemented in late 1995, early 1996. Certainly, the absence of sustained violence explains some of the overall decline in forces, but the disproportionate reduction in U.S. troop levels is a clear indication that Washington's attention is elsewhere. The slogan "in together, out together," has less salience now than at any time during the past decade. We continue to cling to the words, but they are little more than a meaningless bumper sticker, a relic from another era—just the way we hold to other outdated rhetorical boilerplate.

What then has been the legacy of U.S. engagement over the past decade? By some estimates, since the Dayton Accords were launched, the U.S. has spent well in excess of $60 billion and has tied up important military and diplomatic resources. And, for all the money and attention we have been unable to get past what might be described as the basic "threshold" projects to the more difficult social, political, and economic problems. To be sure, the former warring parties no longer are fighting each other and the absence of sustained violence has allowed some refugees to return and a lot of buildings to be built. But, this is the easy part, what we might reasonably expect when the violence stops. Unfortunately, this is about all the Western powers can point to. And, as important as peace, moderate returns, and construction projects are, they are neither sufficient nor irreversible and it is no longer acceptable for Western officials to rest on their tarnished laurels and continue to point to these issues as great hallmarks of success. Virtually every other measure that has been an integral part of Western—especially U.S.—policy has gone largely unrealized. The departure and arrival speeches and occasional op-eds by High Representatives for both Bosnia and Kosovo are all strikingly similar. They are confined to glittering generalities and mention "remarkable progress," but point to the fact that there is still "much to do." At the same time, they caution that Western officials are not "miracle workers," but do not hesitate smugly to cover their own tenures with glory.[13] In truth, little of real importance has changed in Bosnia since the end of 1995 and in Kosovo since mid-1999; by some measures, conditions have gotten worse. Both places have settled into a depressing routine that Western policy makers cannot or will not end; they bear sad testament to "benchmarks" unmet and forgotten.

Nearly seven years after the war and the imposition of the Dayton Accords, Bosnia is still comprised essentially of three ethnically cleansed regions. Central government institutions remain weak and ineffective. Separate Serb, Croat, and Muslim militaries remain in place. The economy is in shambles. Indeed, there is almost no integrated "Bosnian economy" and what economy does exist is dominated overwhelmingly by international largesse, corruption, and crime. In what there is of a legitimate economy, official unemployment is about 40 percent and knowledgeable observers say it is even higher in the Republika Srpksa. It is only the "gray" and "black" economies that save Bosnia from complete economic collapse. Moreover, despite an upturn in refugee returns since 2000, not nearly enough refugees and internally displaced persons have gone home—especially to the so called "minority areas"—and most never will. Sadly, the Bosnian "brain drain" has more than offset the gains made in refugee return over the past two years.

Western-ordered and -run elections have been a disappointment because, despite claims to the contrary, they have provided no significant undermining of the power of the nationalist parties. Hopeful arguments that the elections held in November 2000 in Bosnia did indeed provide a breakthrough for non-nationalist parties is mostly wishful thinking. Rather, the outcome of those elections reinforced the durability of the nationalist parties and the ethnically cleansed character of the "country."[14] Efforts by substantial elements of the Bosnian Croat community to "withdraw" from Bosnia in March 2001 bear grim testimony to the failure of the Bosnian experiment. Even in the Muslim community, where the SDA lost some support, Muslim parties and nationalist leaders remain dominant. Moreover, a recent poll conducted by the National Democratic Institute suggests that ethnic separation remains firmly entrenched in Bosnia, a fact that could have important repercussions for elections in the fall of 2002.[15] More significantly, Bosnia's elections have not helped resolve the fundamental issues that face the "country": ethnic separation, political and social institutionalization, and the horrendous economy.

In response to this lack of "progress," a draconian overlord—the "international community's" High Representative—disenfranchises political parties, politicians, and public officials at will—all in the name of democracy—while still having to impose "progress" by "imperial fiat" on even the most mundane issues. Bosnian Muslim politician Haris Silajdzic lamented in mid-2000 that, after five years, Dayton's "vital civilian provisions remain unimplemented." And, about the same time, *The Economist* noted that despite a few flickers of hope, the best we can say is that there is "a sort of stagnant stability" in Bosnia, and even with

As the period of decisive engagement gained momentum, the NATO issue took on a greater sense of urgency. First, the battle with the U.N. over the "dual key" had to be won, but once that had been accomplished, the Alliance was free to draw blood, and draw blood it did—demonstrating to the world that it was "viable, capable," and above all, "current" for the security challenges of the post-Cold War world. Unfortunately, the Clinton administration's obsession with "proving NATO" foreclosed—and trumped—opportunities for negotiation, diplomacy, and creativity in the Balkans. This manifested itself especially in the imperative to bomb the Serbs in Bosnia in 1994-95, as well as the virtually unbridled determination in Washington to bomb the rump Yugoslavia in 1999. Ironically, NATO's military action in the Balkans, which was intended to demonstrate NATO's relevancy, has helped to widen the technology gap, and more importantly, the philosophical gap, between the U.S. and Europe and, thereby, further undermine NATO.

Second, as the "New World Order" faded in favor of "enlargement and engagement" the Clinton administration breathed new life into two residual, yet powerful, forces that have become boilerplate for the foreign policy part of our contemporary civic religion. The first of these is a reemphasis of Wilson's post-World War I moralism, so strong that it outstripped Wilson himself. If the Cold War was dominated by a sense of Morgenthau-like realism, it faded rapidly as the decisive phase of Balkan engagement began. The second force is a rebirth of American imperialism—not exactly the way it was practiced in the late 19th century of course, but still carrying with it the same sense of arrogance, superiority, bullying, and use of deadly force.

This contemporary marriage of moralism and imperialism rests on a foundation of cultural and ethical superiority that masks itself as "American leadership." This breeds intolerance of others, especially their faults, and hypocritically dismisses our own faults as irrelevant, nonexistent, or somehow "different." The new moralism rests on the assumption that the movement of social and political history must equate to "progress" (not simply change), while the new imperialism dictates that the U.S., and only the U.S., is the agent of that change. Consequently, each year it was in power, the Clinton administration produced a *National Security Strategy* in which every corner of the world, no matter how remote, was of "interest" to the U.S. In practice, as well as in theory, the Clinton administration promoted a "hegemonic" view of power that gave us the "right" to intervene whenever and wherever we wanted—for the good of mankind, of course, and as long as no American blood was spilled. Marked by a high degree of triumphalism, moral arrogance, and smugness, policy became inflexible, often arbitrary, issues were black and white, there was no gray area, no middle ground, and little room for compromise.

As with any religion, theological mantra justifies action. Questions of international policy are not just issues of difference between and among countries and societies; they become issues of right and wrong, of good versus evil. Leaders we disagree with are Hitler or Stalin reincarnated, states we do not like are rogues or pariahs,[24] and opponents are aggressors. By contrast, our motives are always pure, our actions always just. We are, therefore, the "indispensable nation," the "natural leaders of the world," "the shining city on the hill," the "organizing principal" of the world order, the country "whose leadership is essential to peace and prosperity and which exercises leadership for the greater good."[25] This language, used repeatedly by Clinton administration spokesmen, is strikingly similar to language used to justify

pacifism: democracies share a form of government that prevents war between them."[27] Schwarz and Kiron demonstrate quite convincingly that this was—and is—a false, naïve and dangerous assumption. As the logic goes, establish political parties—from the top down if necessary—hold elections, set up banks, shut down old, failing (socialist) enterprises, and the "democratic peace" is sure to follow in fairly short order. Mountains of research show us that democratic institutions—even more so, civil societies and market economies—are the products of specific forces and conditions. They need time, an educated middle class, expertise, and money and wealth. Most important, the intricacies of Western liberal democracy and market economies cannot be forced where they have never existed before. Note what Robert Dahl concludes from his research:

> "I have suggested yet again that certain underlying or background conditions…are favorable to the stability of democracy and where these conditions are weakly present or entirely absent democracy is unlikely to exist, or if it does, its existence is likely to be precarious….Essential conditions for democracy: 1. Control of military and police by elected officials. 2. Democratic beliefs and political culture. 3. No strong foreign control hostile to democracy. Favorable conditions for democracy: 4. A modern market economy and society. 5. Weak subcultural pluralism."[28]

Moreover, a specific, unique, historical context is necessary and has to be respected. There is no handbook of instructions that the U.S. can fax to the leaders of the countries of the former Yugoslavia on how to establish democratic, civil, market-oriented societies. After all, it took the West hundreds of years to get where we expect the former Yugoslavia to be in a very short time. As much as ssaa k sn a very

are telling them that they "may not develop the way we did, and that they may not take as long as we did."[30]

These are lessons the Clinton administration—and some Europeans—never learned. With the inception of the Dayton Accords, a Western-authored, multi-headed "democratic" system was laid over Bosnia, its entities, and ethnicities. Elections have been held regularly in Bosnia—and now in Kosovo—to try to justify the imposition of this top-down system. These elections often have much more to do with "feeding our own self-righteousness"[31] than they do with fostering the development of political and civil institutions and procedures on the ground. In essence, elections in Bosnia and Kosovo are held to provide self-validation and self-justification for the international officials who run them. As such, holding elections in the Balkans is in and of itself a measure of success. Holding frequent elections, *ipso facto*, is the mark of "democratic progress." What swirls around them is virtually irrelevant. If democratic and free market institutions are going to take root in the Balkans they will do so because people there share "an affinity of material interests …(and)…ideological views,"[32] not because they have yet another imperial power sitting on them. In other words, it is imperative that: "…authority is exercised on the grounds of some readily identifiable shared affinity. The identity of the political community derives from shared kinship, similar religious beliefs, or highly personalistic ties of mutual aid and submission."[33]

Finally, there has been a failure of leadership. Balkan policy in the Clinton administration was set by a small group of highly influential, but intellectually weak, historically

from the ethereal, in the context of complicated, real life situations, is hardly the point. What is important for those who "lead" is that the call to leadership is self-gratifying, self-sustaining, and uncomplicated. In fact, for them there is no reason to deal with the nasty, complex, practical realities of a dangerous, jumbled world. The overweening display of power—what the late Senator J. William Fulbright years ago called the "Arrogance of Power"—is enough.

The exercise of this kind of American "leadership" has had devastating consequences for the former Yugoslavia. It is the kind of leadership that insisted not only that Bosnia had to become a state, but that it had to be a state in the modern Western sense of the term—ultimately, one with a centralized bureaucracy, a unified political system, Western-styled political parties and traditional Western sovereignty, complete with what Stephen Krasner identifies as domestic, interdependent, international legal, and Westphalian sovereignties.[35] None of this fits Balkan historical development very well. For example, Bosnia is at best a forced, artificial state, that satisfies the arrogance of American leadership more neatly than it does reality in the area or the context of its history. It is also the kind of "leadership" that, as noted above, was unwilling to confront the Serbs over Kosovo with creative diplomacy, but rather with a predisposed determination for armed conflict. The Clinton team never believed that the bombing would last more than a few days (neither did Milosevic), but when it dragged on, the administration's self-defined credibility became more important than a creative, equitable resolution of the issue.

Buridan's Ass[36]

What then are our choices? There are, I think, three basic options, but only two real choices.

We can simply walk away and disengage precipitously. This might have been an option if we had not been responsible for helping to create so many of the problems the former Yugoslavia now faces. As was true with the Ottomans, the Austrians, and every other great power that has "sat on" in the Balkans, we have left—and continue to leave—our own significant imprint. The history of our engagement in the region has so fundamentally helped shape the reality of life there that we have an obligation to repair some of the damage brought about by past mistakes. If this is so, we have two realistic choices and we should not linger in making up our minds.

First, as we reduce our profile in the Balkans, we can continue supporting the policies that have defined Western engagement since the mid-1990s. For Bosnia, this would mean trying to continue to "integrate" three ethnic communities that have shown over and over again that they do not want to live together in the same sovereign political entity. In other words, they do not share a genuine "affinity of mutual interests" or "ideological views." For Kosovo, this would mean continuing to officially acknowledge a Kosovo remaining within the rump Yugoslavia,

meaningless elections, bickering in the new Kosovo "parliament," the presence of authoritarian international overlords, constant crime, the need for more international largesse, and possibly, unending military occupation. Maintaining the present approach also means continuing to deal with Bosnia and Kosovo as though they were unconnected to each other and the problems of the larger region of Southeastern Europe. This in turn, probably means that borders in several places throughout the area will not hold and that stability really will become an issue over time.

"truth commission" formula favored by Yugoslav President Kostunica would work better, thereby allowing the societies of the Balkans to take "ownership" of their own legal and human rights issues. By the same token, we should "allow" local development to proceed at its own pace, while providing "democratic examples," economic aid, and organizational support as needed and wanted.

Such a conference and implementation of its findings would be time consuming, painful, and there would be setbacks. In fact, it could be so painful that only the still worse alternative of continuing to pursue the current failed policies can justify it. But, the chances of success have been enhanced by the new governments in Croatia and Serbia and would be enhanced further by a change of direction in Washington. Such a conference might start by focusing on the following interrelated major questions:

The Serb Issue

The conference participants would have to agree that there is nothing "wrong" with most Serbs wanting to live together in a single state. Such an impulse is consistent with the histories of the U.S. and the European states that have hypocritically condemned the idea of a "greater" Serbia during the past decade.[37] Once the conference participants agreed to the principle, they would have to sort through the difficult issue of where and how the borders of a more inclusive Serbia would be drawn.

Three contentious issues would dominate this part of the conference proceedings. First, how much, if any, of the Republika Srpska (RS) would be included within a larger Serbia—if the people of the RS want that to happen (perhaps through a referendum?). Most likely, all of the

The Albanian and Macedonian Issues

One of the most difficult and potentially explosive issues the conference would have to consider

If the new administration adapts, it will not be able to rely on the way we did things in the past or default to the security of comfortable institutions and policies that have outlived their usefulness. Adaptation really does depend on ending the inertia. To get there, this Bush administration first of all has to break the institutional and policy complexity that dominates current thinking. It has to cut that "Gordian knot" that is comprised of the U.S. the E.U., various European capitals, the U.N., NATO, and a whole host of other institutions that are more concerned with their own vested self-interests and organizational survival than they are with the still gut-wrenching issues in the Balkans.

Then, the administration has to jettison the limited-horizon, incremental, "reduce-the-pain" prescriptions that rely on *ad hoc*, disjointed, "quick fix" policies that ultimately do not work. We also need a fresh start with the Europeans, one that moves away from the teacher-student relationship, away from the "we bomb them, you fix them up" mentality, to a genuine diplomatic partnership for constructive engagement in the Balkans. Only then, the Balkans can become fundamentally the European enterprise it should be.

ENDNOTES

[1] This essay focuses primarily on Bosnia and Kosovo because they are the areas where U.S. military power and policy have been most directly applied and tested, although other Balkan examples are used as necessary.

[2] The Tito regime actually discussed the possibility of joining NATO in the mid-1950s and again in 1979, at the time the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. At the same time, Yugoslav strategic doctrine traditionally was directed at NATO more so than the Soviet Union. This dichotomy helped Tito play both sides.

[3] Sysiphus, the crafty King of Corinth, was infamous for his trickery. He was punished in Hades by repeatedly having to role a huge boulder up a steep hill, only to have it roll down again as soon as he reached the top.

[4] Misha Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 222.

[5] Certainly, the Clinton administration—and the Dayton Accords—recognized that Croatia and Serbia had equities in Bosnia. But those equities were always subservient to the fact that Bosnia had to be its own "sovereign" state.

[6] "Train and Equip," which was a follow-on to the abandoned "lift and strike" policy, became operational early in 1996.

[7] According to a recent Croatian survey (14 June 2002) by the Institute of War and Peace, the Serbs dropped from about 12 percent of the population before the war to about 4 percent today.

[8] Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War* (New York: Random House, 1998), 62-63.

[9] Ibid., 73.

[10] U.S. State Department press briefing, http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2002/8777.htm, (14 March 2002).

[11] United States Mission to the European Union, http://www.useu.be/Categories/GlobalAffairs/Mara0502UNERBosniaPoliceMission, (5 March 2002).

[12] http://www.nato.int, (12 May 2002).

[13] See editorials by Paddy Ashdown, *The New York Times* (2 July 2001) and Wolfgang Petritsch, *The Washington Post* (2 July 2002); Farewell Address to the Citizens of Bosnia Herzegovina by the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, http://www.ohr.int/ohr-dept/pressso/presssp/default.asp?content_id=8341, (23 May 2002); Farewell Press Conference by the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, http://www.ohr.int/ohr-dept/presso/preeb/default.asp?content_id=8381, (24 May 2002).

[14] There are three interrelated problems in describing these elections as a major defeat for the "nationalists" and a breakthrough for the "moderates." First, most "moderates" are closer on the majority of issues to "nationalists" of

[17] "Balkan Report" *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, http://www.rferl.org/balkan-report/2002/04/17-260402.html, (26 April 2002).

[18]

[36] Jean Buridan, the 14th century philosopher, logician, and scientist, who posits the allegory of an ass (that actually turns out to be a dog) that is placed equidistant between two bowls of food. They are both so attractive that the ass/dog cannot chose, so he starves to death in indecision.

[37] For example, see the address by Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbot to the Aspen Institute, Aspen CO (August 24, 1999).

[38] Benn Steil and Susan Woodward, "A European 'New Deal' for the Balkans," *Foreign Affairs*, 78(6),