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FINISHING THE UNFINISHED REVOLUTION: THE RETURN OF YUGOSLAVIA TO EUROPE

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While the fall of Milosevic on 5 October 2000 was a turning point for the Yugoslav people, it also has far reaching implications for regional developments in the Balkans. Milosevic was not the only dictator who was toppled, but what this event portends for the structure and functioning of the international system is even more important.

Tito's Yugoslavia was a unique state in terms of its foreign policy (it was the only socialist country in Eastern Europe that was outside the Soviet orbit and was also a founder of the Non-Aligned Movement), its treatment of nationalities and minorities and the way Yugoslav leaders understood and implemented socialism (self-management, developed by Edvard Kardelj). With Milosevic's Yugoslavia all of these characteristics turned upside down and, the once respected and prestigious country of the Cold War years and the most likely EU candidate among the East European countries, became the pariah state of the 1990s.

The collapse of the socialist regimes in East European countries in 1989 had an inevitable effect on Yugoslavia. The establishment of new political parties and free elections in these republics in 1990 were the first of a kind. However, the political wave that swept Eastern Europe affected Yugoslavia in a genuinely different way due to its highly complex ethnic structure and historical background. With Slovenia's declaration of independence in 1990 and Croatia's in 1991, the dismemberment of Yugoslavia started and this process was completed with the secession of Macedonia and Bosnia from the federation. While newly established parties won elections in the other republics, only in Montenegro and Serbia did the former communists continued in their positions - uninterrupted until 1997 in Montenegro and 2000 in Serbia. So, it is argued in this article that the 5 October fall of Milosevic marks the end of socialism in Serbia and completes a process started in Eastern Europe ten years before.

A EUROPEAN ROGUE STATE

Belgrade dominated the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia - declared in April 1992 and composed of Serbia and its junior partner Montenegro - until elections in 1997 brought Milo Djukanovic to power in Montenegro. Djukanovic was a former Milosevic ally but he broke ties with the Serbian leader and put his republic on a secessionist course. Throughout the 1990s, Yugoslavia's foreign and domestic policies were against the mainstream of other former socialist countries in Eastern Europe. Ironically, while the priority of other East European countries was to integrate into Western institutions, mainly NATO and the EU, Yugoslavia became the only country to declare war on

NATO and it was the only East European country excluded from EU funding, while embargoes shattered its economy.

The US, as the sole superpower in the post-Cold War period, set out to create a world order with no rivals, challenges or resisting states. President Bill Clinton's National Security Advisor, Anthony Lake, stated that the backlash states, like Cuba, Libya, Iraq, Iran and North Korea, assaulted the basic values of the new era. What is even more important is that the US assumes the responsibility to neutralise, contain, isolate and eventually transform these backlash states.¹ Though Lake's list did not include Milosevic's Yugoslavia, it became a de facto backlash or rogue state. The Serbs were isolated, demonised and made the target of economic sanctions and, twice, along with other declared rogue states like Iraq and Libya in the 1990s, US-led military action.

Milosevic's Yugoslavia challenged the main tenets of the New World Order, which was based on the building of democratic institutions and respect for human rights (including a free media and free and fair elections), economic liberalisation and privatisation, the weakening of the nation-state through enhancing local government and withdrawal of the state from the economy, and a foreign policy which would not be in contradiction with the basic needs of a workable regional and international order.

As noted before, the nationalities model developed by the communist leaders was tolerant and decentralised and, compared with the Milosevic regime's practices in the last decade, was much more respectful of nationalities. Tito's formula of keeping Serbia weak to maintain a strong Yugoslavia was reversed under Milosevic and the autonomous status of Kosovo and Vojvodina was abolished in 1989. This was Belgrade's first step in redressing the perceived historical injustice. The heavy repression that followed, especially in Kosovo, turned the region into one of the worst areas for human rights violations. Forcing Albanians to quit their jobs, beatings and police interrogations became the order of the day.

Milosevic controlled the media through the nation-wide state television - STV (which was the target of NATO planes in 1999 and demonstrators in October 2000) - and newspapers. Moreover, the deepening of the country's isolation after the outbreak of violence in Kosovo at the beginning of 1998 gave Milosevic another pretext to exercise stricter control not only over the media but also over the universities.²

Yugoslavia was not only politically but also economically different from the former socialist countries. First, resisting economic transition, the Yugoslav economy sheltered from the liberal wave. Due to the imposition of economic sanctions, foreign trade became illegal within Yugoslavia; such trade was carried out by the 'sanctions busting businessmen' with close links to the leadership.³ Second, most of the economy was composed of state enterprises that Milosevic and managers loyal to him controlled. These people made an inner circle of around 60 people. This situation created a mafia-type economy, manipulated by the leadership for political purposes (for instance, transferring money from the banks to buy off the salaried voters before the elections). However, what was more important was sealing off the Yugoslav economy from the world, making Yugoslavia a black hole in Europe. This criminalisation of the economy affected the neighbouring countries, creating a breeding ground for organised crime in the region.

Milosevic committed two basic mistakes in the area of foreign policy. First, he overestimated Russian influence in international politics. The US did not want to see Russia play the tune in the

Balkans. Although Moscow was allowed a place in the Contact Group created for the Bosnian war, its role was limited to reconciliation efforts and diplomatic initiatives. Leaning towards Russia to achieve national aims in the Balkans proved fatal for the Serbs, as the bombing of the Serbian positions in Bosnia 1995 and Yugoslavia in 1999 shows.

Second, Milosevic could not make use of the credibility he gained after the signing of the Dayton Agreement. Washington granted him an important role in upholding stability in Bosnia and Kosovo. But, in three years, with the use of excessive force in Kosovo from March 1998, he lost credibility not only in the eyes of the US but also the European allies. In fact, US President George Bush warned him in 1992 as did the Clinton administration later not to use force there, a warning he ignored during the Kosovo crisis.

The exacerbation of the Kosovo problem (excessive use of force, mass killings, burning down of houses and the ethnic cleansing of the Kosovar Albanians) and failure to find a diplomatic solution (the unrealistic US propositions such as the deployment and free movement of NATO troops within Yugoslavia in the Rambouillet talks) led to the bombing of the country in March 1999.⁴ This US-led military action seemed to have three basic aims. First, the Balkans were a testing ground for the US in the 1990s,⁵ and the US proved its military supremacy in 1995 and again in 1999. Second, the US was trying to develop and codify a new law of humanitarian intervention that could be used when necessary in future cases. Third, anticipating that the bombing of the country would deepen the Serbian people's anger and discontent with the Milosevic regime, the US expected the Serbs to oust Milosevic. However, the initial impact of the heavy bombardment of the country (not only the military targets but also the main roads, bridges, factories and even the state television company under the military concept of 'collateral damage') directed the Serbs anger against the US and NATO, at least in the short term.

On the same day the UN Security Council ended the military action with Resolution 1244, a new ambitious project, a Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe adopted on 10 June 1999, to complete the integration of the Balkans into Europe by increasing trade, investment, facilitating transportation and customs and building democracy, good governance and human rights.⁶ It became clear that as long as the Milosevic regime remained in power it was impossible to implement the Stability Pact effectively. So, he had to go, if not by bombs, then by elections or any other means.

ELECTIONS: A FOREIGN POLICY TOOL?

Although Yugoslavia incurred enormous material and psychological damage during the bombing,⁷ it did not achieve one critical aim - the removal of Milosevic from power. At that juncture, the EU also took a leading political role in co-operation with the US to oust Milosevic. It was, in fact, the first diplomatic undertaking of European foreign policy under Javier Solana, the EU's high representative for foreign and security affairs, and provided an opportunity to show effective leadership.⁸

The idea was simple, and politically and financially posed almost no risk. It was clear that two basic factors enabled Milosevic to win the elections (besides rigging them). First, controlling economic sources and the media, and having a well-organised party apparatus had always given Milosevic the upper hand against the opposition. Second, the opposition, except for a short-lived *zajedno* experience in 1996, were divided and its leaders lost credibility due to bickering between them.⁹

The first steps were to galvanise political discontent, unite the opposition and find a reliable candidate. The US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, and the German Foreign Minister,

Joschka Fischer, held meetings with the opposition and picked Vojislav Kostunica as the opposition leader. Kostunica was a perfect candidate. He was an untarnished, uncorrupted, low profile leader of the Democratic Party of Serbia and a constitutional lawyer. Having both an anti-Milosevic and anti-US/NATO rhetoric with an image of a true nationalist, he perfectly fit the role he assumed. Without his nationalist credentials, he would have been much more vulnerable to his critics, mainly the government, which indiscriminately denounced the opposition as the collaborator of NATO occupiers. Although Kostunica was the leader of the opposition, Zoran Djindjic, the leader of the Democratic Party, was the more critical figure and backbone of the opposition. Thus, the setting was prepared for the establishment of a united opposition front of 18 parties - the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS).

Both Europe and the US delicately tailored a democracy building programme in Yugoslavia. Washington used Budapest as a base for running and funding the anti-Milosevic campaign and had one of its former diplomats, William Montgomery, as campaign head. The operation was described as the "Yugoslav embassy in exile".¹⁰ The US-based National Endowment for Democracy played a special role. The US channelled around \$77 million to opposition groups for the election campaign with computers, fax machines and other office materials.¹¹ Germany, too, supported the opposition through its Freidrich Ebert foundation and channelled financial aid to the anti-Milosevic groups. Cities governed by opposition mayors were twinned with German cities and they were provided with much needed oil and financial assistance to strengthen their image and respectability. The most important of these opposition groups were the OTPOR (Resistance), a student movement spread throughout Yugoslavia and with 40,000 members, and Group-17, a network of academics who were mostly liberal-minded economists. Opposing the NATO bombing, OTPOR had credibility while the G-17 group was behind Kostunica's economic programme.

To ensure DOS's electoral victory, Albright and Fischer urged Montenegro to take part in the elections and offered further economic aid. However, Montenegro's pro-Western leader, Milo Djukanovic, refused the offer saying that taking part would have given legitimacy to the Milosevic regime.

The EU also gave a clear message to the Serbian people that it would lift sanctions against Belgrade if the opposition emerged victorious in the elections.

Milosevic, on his part, forged ahead with an aggressive campaign in the state-run media. A government-led clampdown against the country's biggest independent radio and television stations tightened the range of information offered to Serb citizens. This was followed by ceremonial trials of Western leaders for the 1999 NATO assault on Yugoslavia. The state media depicted scenes of the repair of a bridge and government officials' opening new hospitals.

Nevertheless, these measures failed to bring victory to Milosevic, despite reports of some irregularities in his favour. Initially, the government-controlled Federal Election Commission announced that Kostunica had won 48 percent of the votes while Milosevic got 40 percent.¹² This result would have required a second round. But, the DOS announced that it had received 53 percent of the votes while Milosevic had won only 38 percent.¹³ Resisting the loss of the presidency and desperately seeking to buy time, Milosevic intended to go to a second round, which Kostunica rejected outright, saying that it would be an insult to the voters. Meanwhile, Western governments rushed to recognise Kostunica as soon as the first results were announced.

Milosevic's determination to seize power despite his electoral defeat brought the country to the brink of social and political chaos again since the opposition called for a general strike. Belgrade witnessed mass protests for the third time in a decade and these quickly spread to other major cities. The opposition called for a general strike and in many places, including the giant Kolubara coal field (where the miners compare themselves with the legendary Gdansk workers in Poland), work stopped, students walked out of schools and taxi drivers blocked traffic.

Unexpectedly, the protestors stormed the parliament building on 5 October, which invoked analogies with the Bastille and Ceausescu's Romania. From the start, the Western media portrayed the event as a bloodless democratic revolution and a real sign of 'people power',¹⁴ and this was probably the first 'revolution' spearheaded by a constitutional lawyer.

However, as the dust settled, the truth behind the popular revolution came to light. It became clear that the event was not a spontaneous popular revolution but a carefully planned and organised action. The town of Cacak, whose mayor, Velimir Ilic, led around 10,000 people with bulldozers, cars and trucks to Belgrade, played a key role in the storming of parliament. A core team composed of veterans and former policemen were trained as an advanced guard to seize the parliament and television station. The Special Police, which was created to protect Milosevic in such crisis, remained mostly silent, while the army only watched the long convoy from Cacak to Belgrade (some 100 kilometres). The security forces' resistance in parliament was very weak and seemed to be a face-saving effort. Evidence shows that the campaign was pre-arranged in co-ordination with the security forces in Belgrade and this made the capture of the critical buildings such as the parliament and television station bloodless.¹⁵ A couple of days later, appearing in Belgrade and contrary to fears and expectations that he could fight back with his special units, Milosevic conceded that he lost the elections.

The change of the regime was achieved, to some extent, smoothly without any deep political and social turmoil, within a short span of time and maybe most importantly, almost peacefully. This brings to mind the alleged scenario for a possible deal between Milosevic and Kostunica, backed by the Western powers. In an article in the New York Times, it was asserted that the Clinton administration was exploring an exit strategy for Milosevic in contact with its European allies and Russia under which the Yugoslav leader would be allowed to leave office with guarantees for his safety and his savings.¹⁶ However, the US continued its pressures on the new leadership and made the aid contingent on the new regime's co-operation in apprehending people indicted on charges of war crimes, including Milosevic.

If there was an arrangement, it may have been reached between Kostunica and Milosevic. It is remarkable that Milosevic did not make any move to resist or fight back with his loyal, well-equipped Special Police. It was also interesting that Kostunica made it clear that he was not considering delivering Milosevic to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in The Hague. The new leader did not change the top officials of his predecessor, including the army commander, General Nebojsa Pavkovic, and the chief of the secret service, Radomir Markovic, both of whom were loyal to Milosevic. His reluctance in these replacements eventually brought him into conflict with his powerful ally in the DOS, Djindjic.¹⁷

The peaceful transfer of power was the first serious problem the new leader faced since the former president's people still run not only the security forces but also all the state companies and other institutions.

Whether through a pre-arranged palace coup or an authentic people's revolution, the elections finished what the bombers had begun a year and half before and the backlash regime in Yugoslavia was transformed. Milosevic, who is regarded as communist turned nationalist, was replaced with a true, sincere anticommunist, a rational and pro-European leader. In the words of Vuk Draskovic, one of the opposition leaders who went into self-exile in Montenegro after a suspicious car accident, the event marked "the end of Serbia as a country of organised crime."¹⁸

It should be pointed out that, despite his demagoguery, Milosevic represented the idea of Serbian unification for most, if not all, the Serbs inside and outside Serbia. Many Serbs suddenly found themselves in a minority, mainly in Croatia and Bosnia, and in small numbers in Montenegro and Macedonia - all former republics turned into national states except Montenegro. The story of the Serbian people in the 1990s was one of attempting to restore their lost position and their leader, Milosevic, became the most vibrant symbol of this nationalist tide among the Serbs. Therefore, his fall also represents the abandonment of the Serbian national project (i.e., the unification of all Serbs and of sacred Serbian lands like Kosovo and Krajina) by force. Milosevic had already lost the support of the radical-nationalist sections of Serbian society, including the Orthodox Church and nationalist intellectuals. It is noteworthy that among the advanced guard that stormed parliament there were veterans of the Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo wars.¹⁹ Besides the interference of the Western powers in organising and strengthening the opposition, Milosevic also lost public support, not because he waged wars (in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo), but because he lost them.

A NEW ERA IN YUGOSLAVIA: BACK IN EUROPE AGAIN

The new president confronted many difficult obstacles both in domestic issues and foreign policy. Domestically, solidifying democratic institutions and the rule of law in the Yugoslav federation was the most urgent task the new government faced. To restructure the highly politicised Yugoslav economy, to dissolve the network of illegal and criminal activities and to clean up the corrupt legal system represented the biggest challenges for Kostunica. As Milosevic is still living in Belgrade and his former appointees still hold critical positions in bureaucracy, there is a danger of the manipulation of these institutions. For instance, the power shortages, increase in food prices and prison uprisings after the elections are attributed to elements loyal to Milosevic.²⁰

The second challenge is to maintain the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, which has practically lost control over Montenegro and Kosovo. It was not surprising hearing Kostunica that his most pressing priorities would be the rapid restoration of Kosovo to Serbian sovereignty and the reintegration of Montenegro.²¹ In this regard, he seems to follow Milosevic's line and well-known tactic of using Kosovo to prove his nationalism and to increase his popularity. Indeed, the status of Montenegro and Kosovo poses a dilemma for Kostunica since any move on these issues affects his position inside and outside Yugoslavia. If he tends towards finding a compromise with the West on Kosovo, he risks losing his public base; but any bold move would bring pressures from the West whose support is desperately needed for the restructuring of the already collapsed economy.

Milosevic's fall was not celebrated in Sarajevo, Pristina and Podgorica, each for similar but not identical reasons. Bosniaks and Croats definitely despised Kostunica because he stood by Radovan Karadzic, the Bosnian Serb leader indicted for war crimes during the war in Bosnia. After he came to power, he extended his controversial trip to Trebinje in Republica Srpska (where he participated in the ceremonial reburial of a Serbian poet) to cover Sarajevo only after strong Western pressure, raising suspicions about the new leader. The Bosniak leadership regards him as a die-hard

nationalist and an opponent of the Dayton Peace Agreement and they see no difference between the new leader and his predecessor.

The change of regime in Belgrade has made little difference to the Albanians in Kosovo. They also share the Bosniaks' view that Kostunica is no less nationalistic than Milosevic, especially on the Kosovo problem. But, what is more important, is the international reception the new Yugoslav leader received. With Yugoslavia's return to Europe, the international community is most likely to rule out independence for Kosovo. Living under a ruthless dictator, though hard to endure, paradoxically brought international sympathy and support for the Albanians. However, in a pro-European, liberal and democratic Yugoslavia it is far more difficult for the Albanians to achieve their independence. Besides, with its crime-ridden social and economic environment,²² its hopes of independence might dim in the face of a democratic and respected Serbia,²³ and they may be forced to enter dialogue with Belgrade. There are signs that the US and EU are seeking ways of reshaping the Yugoslav federation. As keeping the Albanians under Serbia's control is impossible, they may try to make Kosovo a third republic. The electoral success of Ibrahim Rugova's moderate Democratic League of Kosovo against the hard-line Hashim Thaci (the former KLA leader) at the end of October 2000, raised hopes for a possible solution.

The prompt end of Yugoslavia's isolation and the lifting of the international embargoes brought Yugoslavia back into the international system. Ignoring the calls from Sarajevo and Kosovo for a probationary period, the EU was quick to lift the economic sanctions imposed on Yugoslavia and offered \$2 billion on 8 October. Kostunica was invited to the EU summit meeting in Biarritz where he said that the EU had opened the doors for Yugoslavia and Yugoslavia's Europeanness was endorsed. Washington, on the other hand, lifted the ban on US flights to Yugoslavia and the embargo on oil as a gesture of goodwill. The Yugoslav Foreign Minister, Goran Svilanovic, held talks with US Secretary of State Albright in Washington in January 2001, for what is a strikingly fast rapprochement considering that the US led the war against Belgrade in 1999. The problem of Yugoslavia's membership of the United Nations was solved rapidly. Kostunica urged international corporations and financial institutions to invest in the country. Yugoslavia was at last admitted into the Stability Pact on 27 October and the EU released \$175 million in emergency food, medicine and energy assistance.²⁴

Thus, Yugoslavia was swiftly back in the European mainstream. The 24 December 2000 elections brought another victory for the DOS, which gained 65 percent of the votes while the Socialist Party of Serbia received only 18 percent. The strongman of the DOS coalition, Djindjic, became the Prime Minister. This election also meant the end of the last socialist parliament in Europe.

CONCLUSION

The Yugoslav experience in the post-Cold War period has shown that resisting and defying many basic tenets and values of the New World Order is very difficult. First, unlike other rogue states, Yugoslavia was inside Europe, which made it intolerable for the West. Second, despite its autocratic character, it has relatively well educated urbanised classes with access to the Internet and international media. For instance, while the Saddam Hussein regime could portray the 1991 Gulf War as a victory, it was not possible for the Milosevic government to conceal regional and domestic developments from the people. Third, due to geographical location and the political connections that made it a semi-open and penetrable society, the Western powers could dictate the outcome of events through the medium of other social and political forces in the country. Thus, it became clear that

only totally closed dictatorships with total control over their societies could stay in power. Fourth, Yugoslavia was ethnically and politically too heterogeneous to defy the Western powers. Fifth, Milosevic was an unsuccessful leader who could not hide his defeats. Under his regime, the Serbs suffered economically and politically without achieving the ultimate aim, the unification of the Serbs and Serbian lands.

For the Western world, this event represents the first successful transformation of an undeclared backlash state in the post-Cold War period. Thus, the smooth replacement of Milosevic and the coming to power of Kostunica-Djindjic has marked the completion of a puzzle in Europe and finished the unfinished revolutions started in Eastern Europe in 1989.

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