



The Beginnings of the Cold War and NATO's Approach to the Balkans

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Received: 05 May 2022 / Accepted: 17 May 2023 / Published: 20 May 2023
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Doi: 10.56345/ijrdv10n1s101

Abstract

The end of the Second World War, in addition to leaving great economic consequences and a great loss of life, also created a deep division between the Allies. This division will later create problems of different natures in the global aspect. Regardless of the influences, countries tended to side with one of two strong ideo-political blocs though Yugoslavia was also challenged in these dimensions. Its politics initially tended to be closer to the Soviet Union, but soon there would be a split aimed at political independence i.e. outside the influence of the Soviet Union. Undoubtedly, these circumstances also create security risk for Yugoslavia itself, which did not have the strength and readiness to face a military force like the Soviet Union. Yugoslav politics chose a different path, a "silent" cooperation with Western democracies, especially with NATO. In this context, NATO will also have special approach to the policies of Yugoslavia so that it would continue to be as far as possible from any influence of the Soviet Union.

Keywords: Politics, Yugoslavia, Soviet Union, NATO, Cold War

1. Introduction

After the end of the Second World War, the first division between the allied states against fascism appeared as the ambitions of some states for influence all over the world openly expressed their geopolitical move. This clash would be of an ideological nature, respectively capitalism vs communism, i.e. the West led by the USA and the Soviet Union on the other side.

Such a clash would reflect not only in the political and economic aspect, but also in the military aspect. As a consequence of the increasing influence of the Soviet Union in some countries, as well as its ideological imposition on those countries, the dose of insecurity, threat and distrust towards the Soviet Union increased in the Western countries.

One of the world collision zones would be the Balkans.

Taken in general, these political movements would lead to the final division such as the iron curtain, which refers to the political split, as well as the ideological inspiration that the Soviet Union tried to spread to some countries and this move brought to the formation of NATO in 1949 from the Western countries led by USA a protection measure. As a reflection six years later Soviet Union and some Central and Eastern Europe countries formed the Treaty of Warsaw.

This also represents the first phase of the Cold War, which will then be characterized by the rapid development of the nuclear arsenal for domination using tools such as embargoes, various propaganda, and even space races. Though the world was divided into two blocs, one led by the USA with liberal democratic orientation and the other by the Soviet Union with communist ideology. The Balkans, due to its geopolitical and geostrategic position will be the subject of clashes by the two camps as both claimed that they have the right to spread the influence.

It is understandable that in this area live different nationalities with different cultural background and apparently they were contradictory in many points. At this time, special emphasis would be given to the Yugoslav issue, which at the time of the conflict will withdraw and break relations with the Soviet Union. Likewise, the Albanian issue will be on the agenda of the opposing camps.

In such circumstances efforts are made to keep the influence of communist ideology as far away from this area as possible by offering food aid, especially in Yugoslavia, which they thought was more threatened both economically due to the drought, as well as militarily due to the ratio its relationship with the Soviet Union.

2. Nato and the Warsaw Pact

It is a fact that after the Second World War, even though a structure, such as it was in the world aspect, survived, we can say that the rest, when it comes to the system, remains unchanged. Four post-World War II trends are particularly important: the distribution of force, the proliferation of issues, the proliferation of actors, and regional diversity.¹ From 1945 to 1949, concern appeared in the countries of Western Europe and North America as a result of political developments in the post-war world, characterized by the spread of force. There were many dilemmas, the end of World War II and the generally acrimonious start of the Cold War with a hostile ideological and strategic opponent, most Americans initially felt protected by the monopoly of the atomic bomb², and Western Europe by American policy. It was the Truman doctrine that opened a new path for Europe, offering aid to Greece and Turkey. It was not about charity aid, nor about purely economic issues, but about military aid, which was given in the form of combat equipment, accompanied by military experts, and this military aid had a deep political meaning.³

The imposition of non-democratic regimes, the declarations coming from the Soviet leadership, endangered peace and security in the world. In the period between 1947 and 1949, a series of political and dramatic events came into focus. These included direct threats to the sovereignty of Norway, Greece, Turkey and other Western European countries, the June 1948 coup in Czechoslovakia and the illegal blockade of Berlin, which began in April of that year.⁴ A further step to deal with the situation and the created circumstances was the Treaty of Brussels, which was signed in March 1948, proves the determination of the five Western European countries - Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, the United Kingdom - to create a system of defense of common and to strengthen the ties between them in such a way that would enable them to face ideological, political and military threats to their security.⁵

After that, there will be talks that will finally materialize in the creation of the organization that will also be a model of how the states are protected. These talks will continue with the United States and Canada in the creation of the North Atlantic Alliance, based on guarantees of security and joint commitment between Europe and North America. Denmark, Iceland, Italy and Portugal were invited to join the Brussels Treaty and participate in the process. These negotiations culminated in the creation of the Washington Treaty in April 1949. The treaty had 12 countries as founding members.⁶ As it turns out, the North Atlantic Alliance was created on the basis of the treaty between the member states, without forgetting the debate within the states themselves and their parliamentary determinations. At all times, they rely on their right and on the stipulations that emerge from the Charter of the United Nations. It had a clear purpose, the protection of the freedom and security of all its members, by means of political and military means, with the principle of common commitment and mutual cooperation between sovereign states, in support of common security.⁷

The reaction of the USSR was also immediate, which stood up forcefully against the created pact. In protest, the Soviets submitted a memorandum of protest, which contained five points: The Atlantic Pact is completely aggressive and

1 Glenn P. Hastedt, *Politika e jashtme Amerikane, e shkuara, e sotmja, e nesërmja*, përkth. Tonin Beci, AHS, Tiranë, 2015, fq. 5.

2 Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Zgjedhja, dominimi global apo udhëheqje globale*, përkth. Adnan Kika, Zenith, Prishtinë, 2006, fq. 21.

3 Jean – Baptiste Duroselle, *Andre Kaspi, Historia e Marrëdhënieve Ndërkombëtare, Vëllimi II, Nga viti 1945 deri në ditët e sotme*, përkth. Liliana Papa, Lira, Tiranë, 2011, fq. 75.

4 Manul i NATO -s, botuar nga Dega e Diplomacisë Publike e NATO -s, Bruksel, 2006, fq. 17.

5 Manul i NATO -s, botuar nga Dega e Diplomacisë Publike e NATO -s, Bruksel, 2006, fq. 17.

6 Manul i NATO -s, botuar nga Dega e Diplomacisë Publike e NATO -s, Bruksel, 2006, fq. 17.

7 Manul i NATO -s, botuar nga Dega e Diplomacisë Publike e NATO -s, Bruksel, 2006, fq. 18.

directed against the USSR; The Pact openly contradicts the Charter of the United Nations; The pact conflicts with the 1942 Treaty of Aid and Friendship signed between Great Britain and Russia; It also contradicts the Franco-Soviet aid and friendship treaty of 1944; It contradicts all agreements and treaties signed between the USSR, the United States and Great Britain at Yalta, Potsdam and elsewhere.⁸ Starting from these, the socialist states of Eastern Europe (with the exception of Yugoslavia), at their meeting in Warsaw (May 11-14, 1955) approved the Agreement on friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance, with which a political structure was created - military, which was supposed to serve as a counterweight to NATO, and which essentially made the division of Europe into two antagonistic groups a reality.⁹ The dividing lines will pass through the Balkans. A Yugoslavia that in terms of the total number of its ethnic composition was dominated by the Slavic element, with a number of Albanians who differed from the majority of Slavs in terms of culture, language, nationality and past, had a policy that removed it from the Soviet Union. Surprisingly, Albania remains among the countries that joined the Warsaw Pact, perhaps due to the very fact that the text of the agreement resembled that of NATO. This means that the Warsaw Pact was not against the emerging principles from the UN Charter. It is worth emphasizing the principles derived from the agreement of this pact: the prohibition of threats of force or the use of force, the peaceful resolution of international conflicts, cooperation in ensuring international peace and security, and taking measures for the general reduction of armaments, for the prohibition of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction.¹⁰

3. Political Maneuvers West – East and the Beginning of the Cold War

With the end of the Second World War, a division was made between the states participating in it. Some countries emerged as winners and some as losers. In this regard, the USSR emerged as a great force that consequently had the successes during the war, as well as its political and strategic-military influence after the war. The weakness came in economic terms, in the labor force that the Soviet Union had lost a large number of men, as well as the infrastructure of the state. Stalin, the leader who managed to take control of decisions and become a leader in the field of internal and external policy of the USSR, began with his movements for internal consolidation and external influence. He will say that the character of the Second World War was specific and that this war differed from all previous wars, because, "the one who conquers the country, he also establishes his own social system. Each places his own system where his army reaches. Maybe it can't be..."¹¹

In other words, according to Stalin, the starting point of political influence starts precisely from the places where the Soviet army had stepped. Starting from this idea, the USSR created a real zone of influence in Eastern Europe, which, in the spring of 1948, extended to East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria and Romania.¹² As it turns out, the first phase of the Cold War has begun. Two large blocs of states, one led by the United States and the other by the Soviet Union, will face each other in a series of crises aimed at guaranteeing their security by all means, except for a direct confrontation of the two great powers. Almost all the lectures of both camps are ideological.¹³

In this direction, there were two factors that influenced, the first has to do with the treaties of a political nature signed (which also date during the war), and the factor of regimes that were devoted to Moscow, with the establishment of communist regimes. He started the political maneuvers with the support of the big communist parties in Italy and France, without forgetting the state of Israel that could serve as a kind of communist center in the Near East [...] referring to the tradition of Pan-Slavism, which was present especially in the years of the Second World War, Soviet policy had already managed to establish alliance relations with the Czechoslovak Government-in-exile of Benes (1943), to then create the pro-Soviet Polish Provisional Government, meanwhile, supporting Communist Party of Yugoslavia (PKJ) and Tito, the elimination of corruption in Yugoslavia was helped.¹⁴ The signed treaties were aimed at helping against any

8 Jean – Baptiste Duroselle, Andre Kaspi, Historia e Marrëdhënieve Ndërkombëtare, Vëllimi II, Nga viti 1945 deri në ditët e sotme, përkth. Liliانا Papa, Lira, Tiranë, 2011, fq. 111.

9 Zejnullah Gruda, E drejta ndërkombëtare publike, Universiteti i Prishtinës, Prishtinë, 2003, fq. 353.

10 Zeynullah Gruda, E drejta ndërkombëtare publike, Universiteti i Prishtinës, Prishtinë, 2003, fq. 353.

11 Radovan Vukadinoviç, Marrëdhëniet ndërkombëtare nga Lufta e Ftohtë deri te rendi global, përkth, Sabri Mehmeti, Kolegji Universitar Victory, Prishtinë, 2007, fq. 97.

12 Jean – Baptiste Duroselle, Andre Kaspi, Historia e Marrëdhënieve Ndërkombëtare, Vëllimi II, Nga viti 1945 deri në ditët e sotme, përkth. Liliانا Papa, Lira, Tiranë, 2011, fq. 124

13 J.M Roberts, O.A Westad, Historia e Botës 3, Epoka e revolucioneve, përkth, Krenar Hajdëri, Fan Noli, Tiranë, 2017, fq. 352.

14 Radovan Vukadinoviç, Marrëdhëniet ndërkombëtare nga Lufta e Ftohtë deri te rendi global, përkth, Sabri Mehmeti, Kolegji Universitar

possible German aggression, as well as the satellite states of Germany, and had the issue of defense as well as non-participation with any other coalition, as well as economic and political character. However, Soviet influence was based much more on the establishment of unified regimes under the name "people's democracy" than on treaties. These democracies are called a system of government based on the dictatorship of the proletariat.¹⁵ From what was said, it appears that the USSR had the mastery role, where the various developments, with an economic, military and political character, ended with the ambition and the possibility of coordinating all the activities of the states according to the directives of the USSR.

On the other hand, the countries of the West were the ones who tried to stop any possible spread of the communist ideology at all costs. The emphasis falls on the Balkans, as an area of geopolitical and geostrategic importance, because it can be said that the confrontation of the Cold War started in the Balkans. In order not to allow the communists to gain control of Athens, in May 1944, British troops landed there (according to the agreement on the division of the spheres of influence, signed by Churchill and Stalin, before the Yalta agreement) at the end of 1945, after a month of fighting, the British managed to disarm the "Greek Democratic Army". We can say that the first confrontations of what was later called the "Cold War" started first in Greece and three years before Berlin was blocked by the Soviets.¹⁶

4. Unconvincing Policies and NATO

The Balkan issue was raised as a problematic area where battles for reflections, for the rise or fall of ideologies, can take place. As an example, we take Yugoslavia and its leader Tito, where during the war he organized against fascism without questioning the establishment of the state, its organization, and the consolidation of the military forces. In fact, this phenomenon made him distinct from other Eastern European leaders. He was raised during the war as the leader of the partisans and for that he enjoyed respect and popularity, unlike the leaders of other countries who were established by Moscow. So he was a faithful student of Marx and Lenin; but he did not accept complete submission to Stalinist Russia.¹⁷ He led a policy that was also engaged with the neighboring Balkan states, especially with Albania, which was strongly engaged, where Yugoslav military, political and economic advisers were the main ones who determined the most important steps of the new Albanian government.¹⁸ The steps they took were to create a Balkan Federation that was not well received by Stalin, for fear of strengthening Tito's position. Stalin's fear lay in the fact that very soon other countries could join the Balkan Federation, which would weaken Moscow's influence in this area. As a response to Tito's dynamic movements and his attempt at expansion in the Balkans, Soviet policy would increase the infiltration of its cadres into Yugoslavia. Although the Red Army was not present in Yugoslavia, Soviet policy through the network of various military, intelligence and economic advisers tried to penetrate the Yugoslav system...¹⁹

Such confrontation was unbearable, because Soviet agents were located in all the leading segments of Yugoslavia, and this posed a serious problem for political developments. The first steps Tito had to take was to purge the institutions of the Soviet agents who were stationed inside the Yugoslav institutions. In this direction, disagreements will also arise, which in April 1948 will materialize with the removal of two ministers who were loyal to Moscow, being accused of "anti-communism".²⁰ Of course, the step taken by Tito will not be well received by Stalin. Criticisms against the Yugoslav leadership began, with serious accusations against the foreign approach, internal politics, as well as economic development. Various measures were taken, both in economic terms with blockades, as well as in terms of security, inciting numerous incidents. Tito's "disaster" posed two main problems:

- Would the Russians be able to put their stubborn satellite on track?
- In the opposite case, would Yugoslavia, which would be separated, be able to stand alone, or would it be

Victory, Prishtinë, 2007, fq. 97 - 98.

15 Jean – Baptiste Duroselle, Andre Kaspi, Historia e Marrëdhënieve Ndërkombëtare, Vëllimi II, Nga viti 1945 deri në ditët e sotme, përkth. Liliana Papa, Lira, Tiranë, 2011, fq. 126.

16 Yves Lacoste, Gjeopolitika e Mesdheut, përkth. Perikli Jorgoni, Liliana Papa, Lira, Tiranë, 2011, fq. 396.

17 Jean – Baptiste Duroselle, Andre Kaspi, Historia e Marrëdhënieve Ndërkombëtare, Vëllimi II, Nga viti 1945 deri në ditët e sotme, përkth. Liliana Papa, Lira, Tiranë, 2011, fq. 128.

18 Radovan Vukadinoviç, Marrëdhëniet ndërkombëtare nga Lufta e Ftohtë deri te rendi global, përkth, Sabri Mehmeti, Kolegji Universitar Victory, Prishtinë, 2007, fq. 111

19 Radovan Vukadinoviç, Marrëdhëniet ndërkombëtare nga Lufta e Ftohtë deri te rendi global, përkth, Sabri Mehmeti, Kolegji Universitar Victory, Prishtinë, 2007, fq. 111 - 112

20 Jean – Baptiste Duroselle, Andre Kaspi, Historia e Marrëdhënieve Ndërkombëtare, Vëllimi II, Nga viti 1945 deri në ditët e sotme, përkth. Liliana Papa, Lira, Tiranë, 2011, fq. 129.

forced to approach the West?²¹

At the crossroads found, Yugoslavia seemed to rely on its own forces, on the powerful state police, while in foreign policy, the breakdown of agreements and treaties on which the Soviet bloc stood (Hungary, Czechoslovakia, the breakdown of relations with the Greek communists, Albania). Stalin retaliated by expelling Yugoslavia from the Cominform.²² Regarding the reality created in the relations within the Soviet bloc, especially towards Yugoslavia, the reactions of various Western countries, especially the military organization, NATO, began. At the time NATO began its activity, Stalin paid attention to Europe in another direction. He turned to the work of punishing the renegade Yugoslav communists, who in 1948 had ignored him and now presented the first crack in the monolithic unity of the newly formed Soviet bloc,²³ where Tito had grafted himself onto the national question.²⁴ On the part of Yugoslavia, there were immediate reactions, initially agreements were signed with the USA for compensation of American capitals, as well as with Great Britain for commercial issues. The reaction of the Westerners was quite cautious, even in spite of the incidents near the Yugoslav border. How focused the Western countries, especially NATO, were on the Yugoslav issue is clear from the declassified NATO coffin documents.

In the minutes on the exchange of views on Yugoslavia between the Council of Deputies held on January 22, 1951, agreement was reached on many issues related to the created situation, we mention only the last two points:

...Marshall Tito's government is currently under effective control of the domestic political situation. However, this control may be prejudiced by the deterioration of the economic situation or the rapid reorientation of Yugoslavia's foreign policies towards Western countries. It is most desirable that the Western Powers give economic aid to the Government of Yugoslavia as much as they can. In order not to put the Yugoslav Government in an uncomfortable situation, it would be better for the Western Powers to wait for specific requests for economic assistance from Q to Tito's government rather than take overt initiative in providing such assistance.²⁵

Likewise, in the military aspect, it was decided to help:

... In certain circumstances it is necessary to take quick decisions even if it would not be in the interest of the NATO powers to make the whole available to the Yugoslav Government: raw materials, equipment and supplies, and this could result in delay in completing their rearmament plans, provided that the overall NATO force protection plan, especially in that immediate geographic area, is not jeopardized.²⁶

The measures that had to be taken are a consequence of the war mentality of the Soviet Union, because the danger was evident, and presented a danger to peace in Yugoslavia and beyond. This was due to the fact that in 1950 the Soviet Union was preparing an invasion of Yugoslavia in which the countries that would later form the Warsaw Pact would also participate. The goal was not to break up Yugoslavia, but to replace the central government and those of the republics

Since any attack on Yugoslavia carries the high degree of danger, it could even trigger a war of global proportions, an attack on Yugoslavia by Soviet Allied forces with Soviet logistical support²⁷(USSR covertly neutral) will be an attempt to localize fighting in Yugoslavia. An attack on Yugoslavia by Soviet forces with or without satellite forces (USSR Allies, Communist) would probably cause a global war. Any open international fighting in Yugoslavia must be recognized as a major threat of global war. All NATO members carefully followed the Soviet-Yugoslav frictions and each of them reported on the situation, of course, to create an opinion as objective as possible about the situation on the ground.²⁸ Since the situation required even more attention, from the very fact that in these circumstances, other countries that had also established the communist regime, such as China, are emerging.

5. Conclusion

Even though the anti-Nazi Allies fought side by side to defeat Germany, Japan and Italy, the first cracks between the Allies were seen during the war and were constantly accompanied by suspicion of each other.

21 Jean – Baptiste Duroselle, Andre Kaspi, Historia e Marrëdhënive Ndërkombëtare, Vëllimi II, Nga viti 1945 deri në ditët e sotme, përkth. Liliana Papa, Lira, Tiranë, 2011, fq. 130.

22 Henry Kissinger, Diplomacia, Shtëpia Botuese e Lidhjes së Shkrimatrëve, Tiranë, 1999, fq. 552.

23 Gabriel Partos, Bota që erdhi prej të ftohtit, përkth. Stavri Pone, Çabej, Tiranë, 1995, fq. 33.

24 Henry Kissinger, Diplomacia, Shtëpia Botuese e Lidhjes së Shkrimatrëve, Tiranë, 1999, fq. 553.

25 Document D - D (51)29 OR.ENG. 14th February, 1951.

26 Document D - D (51)29 OR.ENG. 14th February, 1951.

27 Gabriel Partos, Bota që erdhi prej të ftohtit, përkth. Stavri Pone, Çabej, Tiranë, 1995, fq. 34.

28 Document I.P.T, 54, 6, August 1951

The Tehran Conference in November 1943 and the Yalta Conference in February 1945 were largely conducted in the spirit of a debate to divide spheres of interest around the world, rather than actually bringing peace and establishing the principle of Self-Determination by Roosevelt and Churchill in Newfoundland in August 1941.

If we consider the Potsdam Conference as the decisive moment of the collision and the practical division of interest zones all over the world, starting with Germany itself, then this would be the moment of the beginning of the Cold War. The culmination of the final clashes was the year 1947, which raised the alarm for a new and quite serious crisis in the world. The establishment of the imaginary Iron Curtain in the middle of Europe and the beginning of preparations in the military field by both sides, will raise political and military tensions by putting both the Soviet Union and the USA and the countries under influence on alert.

The former Yugoslavia in this ambiguous political situation made an important geopolitical shift by abandoning the Soviet Union under the rationale that it will develop an independent path of self-governing socialism, while according to declassified documents from the NATO archive it had secretly flirted with the NATO bloc. Being in an important geostrategic position, Yugoslavia needed NATO more than any other country as it was narrowing its space in South-Eastern Europe and leading its way to the Adriatic.

The most important of the declassified NATO documents is the fact that Yugoslavia had received a strong guarantee that for any interference from the Soviet Union, it would have NATO on its side and that it would protect it at all costs.

From this period, Yugoslavia would be de jure a socialist state, but de facto it would be an important shadow ally of the West. This action brought to Yugoslavia a powerful perspective in political, military and diplomatic terms. However, Yugoslavia was never comfortable all the time, remaining very sensitive to the developments in the region and as a result, it remained untouched by those clashes.

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