

VLADIMIR ĐORĐEVIĆ

US Foreign Policy in the Western Balkans from 1993 to 2009



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VLADIMIR ĐORĐEVIĆ



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Brno, December 2015

Vladimir Đorđević

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. NATURE OF THE RESEARCH ISSUE

“We of today shall be judged in the future by the manner in which we meet the unprecedented responsibilities that rest upon us... in making certain that the opportunities for future peace and stability shall not be lost.”

*US Secretary of State Hull remarks to a joint session of Congress,
18 November 1943¹*

US Secretary Cordell Hull made this remark before the Congress of the United States in the middle of the Second World War when the US efforts to defeat Nazi Germany were central in the Allied victory. However, the Secretary of State in his address could have easily referred to the Western Balkans² after 1989, since, with political, economic, and social changes that swept over Europe in the fall of Communism, the Western Balkans was thrown into disorder. This disorder is chiefly understood as vested in the dissolution of the joint Yugoslav state (Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, or SFRJ in official languages of the country) that disintegrated in the beginning of the 1990s. Following overall changes in the international arena and largely caught in various domestic inter-elite struggles, crisis in the Socialist Yugoslavia was unfortunately not contained by the already weakened Communist Party leadership of the country (Jović 2009: 2–5). Nationalist discourse, seen as an antipode to an already crumbling Yugoslav ideology, or the Yugoslav ‘third way,’ became largely supported and reproduced by republican elites, most notably in Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia, and the Yugoslav federation composed of six republics and two autonomous provinces ceased to exist after parochial interests eventually came to rule the day³ (Jović 2009: 11).

¹ Quoted in Group of authors (2002).

² This term has been introduced by the European Union to refer to all the republics of the former Socialist Yugoslavia (SFRY) except Slovenia and plus Albania and Kosovo. See European Union (2008).

³ Also see the edition on Yugoslavia by Ingraio and Emmert (eds., 2013).

Wars of Yugoslav succession followed and, except 1996 as the only relatively peaceful year upon the cessation of conflicts in both Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, lasted the whole decade. Early 1997 introduced instability in the then Serbian province of Kosovo and Metohija, and the conflict decade ended in NATO military operation *Allied Force* against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia⁴ in 1999. The Yugoslav drama finally ended that year after which Kosovo, formerly a province of Serbia with an Albanian majority, became an international protectorate and, following years of unsuccessful negotiation, finally an independent state in early 2008.

For that matter, as far as the international intervention in the Western Balkans is concerned, it has to be pointed out that the US efforts and role in the crisis and the intervention in the Western Balkans have been thoroughly analyzed and opinions have remained rather divided. Regardless of these divisions, it is the opinion of the author of this volume that the US role was crucial in stopping the conflict in the former Socialist Yugoslavia and stabilizing the whole region of the Western Balkans. However, it is also important to note that the author of this volume is fully aware of the problems and issues in the US policy in the region and that this volume will also shed light, in respect to scope of its research interest of course, upon some of these matters. In addition, this volume has not been written with a specific intention of advocating any of the highly polarized academic attitudes on US foreign policy in the said region, but rather as an attempt at merely a comparative analysis.

Therefore, the author's opinion is that the US interest and policy in the region went from a very limited role and a rather reserved attitude in the late years of the George W. H. Bush Presidency, which also coincided with the beginning of the Yugoslav wars, to a full-fledged commitment to resolve the Yugoslav problem during the Clinton Presidency. This does not, however, mean that this Administration truly managed to find the right course for settling the problem at hand immediately upon entering office in 1993, but actually that the US

⁴ Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) was one of the states created after the collapse of the Socialist Yugoslav state and it existed from 1992 to 2003 when it was renamed Serbia and Montenegro. FRY was comprised of two republics, Serbia and Montenegro, and the latter republic proclaimed independence in June 2006.

involvement gradually became more significant only to be crowned by the Dayton Peace Agreement in late 1995.

For all criticism that Clinton expressed during 1992 presidential campaign towards his predecessor in the White House, his policy was initially very cautious and limited to “lift and strike” strategy (Mitchell 2005: 151). However, with the worsening of the situation on the ground in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), especially with an increasing number of massacres within the ethnic cleansing policy of the warring parties, predominantly the Bosnian Serb Army, and, internationally speaking, the failure of European diplomatic initiatives, the Administration’s attitude gradually developed towards a coercive diplomacy that was backed by the military strikes against Bosnian Serb positions in BiH in 1995. In a very similar fashion, the NATO campaign against the FRY in 1999 followed this track and instituted in 1999 what is today in international relations (IR) known as the Clinton Doctrine (Klare 1999). President Clinton himself explained it by saying: “Where our values and our interests are at stake, and where we can make a difference, we must be prepared to do so” (Clinton, William J. “Remarks by the President on Foreign Policy.” Grand Hyatt Hotel, San Francisco. 26 Feb 1999).

Very much similar to Clinton’s criticism of George H. W. Bush’s policy in the region at hand, Clinton’s Administration was also heavily criticized by his successor for an excessive engagement in the Western Balkans (and elsewhere in similar state-building projects). The team of George W. Bush during the presidential campaign of 2000 advocated a major cut in international peacekeeping operations, one of them being the Western Balkans (Gordon 2000). It is precisely due to its different foreign policy goals that G. W. Bush the presidential candidate with his team had wanted to put increasingly less emphasis on the Western Balkans and its importance in relation to global US interests.

However, several problems in the region managed to attract the attention of the Administration almost immediately upon entering the office: armed insurrection of Albanians in Southern Serbia from mid-1999 to mid-2001, armed insurrection of Albanians in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 2001, ethnic violence in Kosovo that in 2004 threatened to destabilize the region yet again, peaking internal divisions in BiH after 2000, tense Serbo-Montenegrin

relations in light of the Montenegrin quest for and consequent independence in mid-2006, and, last but not least, the unresolved status of Kosovo till early 2008. Despite these issues and the US interest in resolving them, it is crucial to note that the US military disengagement from the region happened gradually as the number of military personnel eventually decreased. This decrease did not, for that matter, automatically mean that Washington was altogether abandoning the region, but just that its commitments to the region were to be shared with the EU partners (Karon 2001). The Administration, especially during its second term, of G. W. Bush became a steadfast advocate of what Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns said when testifying before Congress “finish the work” policy (Bugajski (ed.) 2010: 29). This policy was largely understood as finishing the stabilization process in the region and finally directing the Western Balkans towards future membership in the EU and NATO.

Therefore, while it is fair to assume that the US commitments in the region *changed* over time in terms of the *form* of the American involvement, it is, on the other hand, important to note that Washington’s line remained *essentially unchanged* when it came to its *ultimate plan* for the Western Balkans (i.e. in terms of the US goals and interests). In that respect, regardless of size and form, the US presence for years represented a must in the Western Balkans and thus remained in effect unchanged from the Clinton to the G. W. Bush Administration. In that’s respect, this volume is dedicated to proving that both Administrations in question had the same, or very similar, line of goals and interests (role) in the region at hand, but undoubtedly went in different directions in terms of means/ways of achieving their respective goals.

In respect to the above said, this volume is aimed at presenting an analysis and then comparison of the two consecutive US Administrations in the period between 1993 and 2009, the one of William J. Clinton and the other of George W. Bush, and their foreign policy goals and interests in the region. More than that, the volume is aimed at proving that the understanding of the region and the US role in it with both Administrations remained primarily the same. Hence, the case argued here is that both of these Administrations comprehended the region in a very similar fashion and therefore had *same* or *very similar* foreign policy goals and interests, although, and this is an is-

sue *not* dealt with in this volume, these two Administrations arguably resorted to *different* means of achieving their respective aims. In that respect, this volume will address, using methods of Content Analysis (CA) and then Discourse Analysis (DA) of selected primary sources, the aforementioned issue of the goals and interests of both Administrations in the region and will, in addition, provide insight into how comparable, and hence similar, these actually were. Last but not least, the volume will also provide insight into the matter of foreign policy understanding of the region by both Administrations, and is aimed at proving that the dominant meanings/images concerning the understanding of the Western Balkans and the American role in it were the same with both Administrations. This, last but not least, means that one can speak about continuity in the foreign policy discourse(s) here analyzed.

For that matter, as far as comprehending the region and the American foreign policy role in it are concerned, it is important to note that this volume will prove that those main/dominant views/meanings/images largely developed during the Clinton's Administration withstood tests of time and were largely repeated and recreated by the following Administration in the White House. In addition, both understanding of the region and the US regional foreign policy goals proclaimed by this Administration remained unchanged with the latter Administration as well. Hence, it needs to be pointed out that, although the G. W. Bush's Administration spent much less time in dealing with the Western Balkans in respect to its overall foreign policy attitudes,⁵ it nevertheless continued to (re)produce that same discourse on the Western Balkans that was characterized by references to various instabilities of the past, these being political, economic, or social, the overall volatility of the region, and, last but not least, the need for the US (international community) to be and remain engaged, in a number of different capacities, in the region. Therefore, the G. W. Bush Administration chiefly understood its role in the region in the same way as the previous Administration did. In that regard, both discourses were in chiefly all dominant points identical, or largely very similar, and it can be claimed that both Administrations understood the region as essentially explosive and in immediate need of (immediate)

⁵ On this and related issues refer to Moens (2004).

stabilization: firstly, with the Clinton Administration, in terms of containing the conflict, and then, with the both Administrations, transforming the region democratically so as to join the Euro-Atlantic community in the future.

On the other hand, as far as the US goals and interests are concerned, it may be claimed that both Administrations shared the goal of stabilizing the region and then 'remaking' it thorough the democratic transformation process. The Clinton Administration primarily engaged in resolving the conflicts in the region, largely in order to stop their spread and put an end to many of the then urgent regional problems, which was supposed to be a prelude for the democratization of the region. On the other hand, the G. W. Bush Administration also laid heavy emphasis on the stabilization of the region through the democratization process and Euro-Atlantic integration, and its discourse in this regard was substantial. Thus, both Administrations actually aimed at one and the same goal, and therefore continued to support democratic transition of the region that was supposed to address the following issues:

1. *Instituting rule of law and democratic political systems in all states of the region was (is) a must.* As pointed out in a CRS report on future of the Balkans and implications for US foreign policy when domestic politics was one among issues discussed, the domestic political environment "in the Balkan countries has improved since the end of the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s. All the countries in the region have held largely free and fair elections, although some problems with elections still need to be addressed. Civil society groups and independent media express a wide variety of views, but sometimes face pressure from government authorities. The countries in the region have redrawn their constitutions along more democratic lines, but some constitutional provisions in Serbia and other countries are still less than ideal. Serious problems remain. The legitimacy of democratic institutions is challenged by the weakness of government structures. The countries of the region lack effective, depoliticized public administration. The police and judicial systems in many countries are weak and often politicized. Government corruption is a serious problem in all of the countries of the region. Organized crime is a powerful

force in the region and is often allied with key politicians, police, and intelligence agency officials. Albania, Macedonia, and other countries of the region have had problems in developing a stable, democratic political culture. This has resulted in excessively sharp tension between political parties that has at times hindered effective governance. Relatedly, ethnic tension remains a serious problem in many countries of the region, particularly in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Macedonia” (Woehrel 2009: 2–3).

2. *Pursuing agenda of market-oriented economic reform*, largely due to the fact that all economies in the region “face the burden of a Communist legacy as well as well as resistance to economic transparency by many local leaders. Some of the region’s economic problems are closely related to its political problems. Weak and corrupt state structures have been an obstacle to rationalizing tax and customs systems to provide adequate revenue for social programs and other government functions. The absence of the rule of law has hampered foreign investment in some countries due to concern over the sanctity of contracts. In Bosnia, the lack of a strong central government and the division of the country into two semi-autonomous “entities” has hindered the development of a single market. Substantial progress has been made in economic reforms in many countries since the 1990s. Fiscal and monetary austerity, with the assistance of international financial institutions, permitted many countries to avoid hyperinflation and stabilize their currencies. The countries of the region embarked on the privatization of their industries. However, the process remains incomplete and there have been concerns within these countries and among foreign investors about corruption and a lack of transparency in some deals. High unemployment and poverty are serious problems in all of the countries of the region” (Woehrel 2009: 3–4).
3. *Building the self-sustainable region and directing it towards the Euro-Atlantic integrations*. In that respect, as it has been highlighted by the Department of State, “US policy toward the Balkans is focused on helping the states of the region cement peace and build stability and prosperity by deepening cooperation and advancing their integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions, including NATO and the EU. The Balkans region has made tremendous

progress, moving from war to peace, from disintegration to cooperative development, and implementing democratic, economic and defense-related reforms on the path to a Euro-Atlantic future. The United States remains committed to an integrated, free and peaceful Europe” (quoted from the US State Department website⁶). In other words, as the CRS report stated: “The main goal of the United States and the international community in the Balkans is to stabilize the region in a way that does not require direct intervention by NATO-led forces and international civilian officials, and puts it on a path toward integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions” (Woehrel 2009: 4).

Last of all, as this chapter has argued, this research project is aimed at analyzing the foreign policy discourse(s) of the Administrations in questions, and, in that respect, proving that not only that the both Administrations had the same foreign policy role in the region in terms of goals and interests, but, moreover, that they actually understood the region in one and the same way, i.e. that those dominant meanings/images were essentially the same. In that respect, it is important to note this volume is not only dedicated to exploration of the two Administrations in questions from, in terms of analysis of their respective foreign policy discourses, but, on the other hand, is also directed towards comparison of these two discourses in order to prove continuity in the US foreign policy goals and interests, i.e. continuity in those dominant meanings/images transmitted in the discourse(s), in the region from one Administration to the other. Finally, the points presented here need to be taken into consideration when discussing contributions of this respective project, chiefly the analysis of the G. W. Bush Administration’s record in the Western Balkans that has not so far been sufficiently researched.

⁶ See US State Department at: <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rt/balkans/>

1.2. STRUCTURE OF THE VOLUME

This volume is divided into **six sections** and thus organized in the following way:

1. **An introductory part** to the volume is comprised of the following chapters that are ordered as follows:
 1. This first chapter discusses the nature of the research issue, where both aims and goals of this respective research are also presented;
 2. The second chapter is aimed at presenting the structure of the volume; and,
 3. The third chapter is directed at discussing past research and, in general terms, contribution of this volume to the field.
2. **Theoretical Assumptions** is the second section consisting of the following chapters:
 1. The first chapter is intended to argue Social Constructivism in the field of International Relations;
 2. The second chapter aims at discussing impact of language on social science, both in general terms and in more particular aspects in relation to this project;
 3. The third chapter discusses aims of the research done here;
 4. The fourth chapter is dedicated to development and presentation of research questions, and,
 5. The last chapter in the second part is defining data used in this project.
3. The third section, entitled **Methodological Assumptions**, is divided in the following manner:
 1. The first chapter defines Discourse and Discourse Analysis (DA);
 2. The second chapter presents arguments about various approaches to Discourse Analysis (DA);
 3. The third one is dedicated to defining and explaining Political Discourse Analysis (PDA);
 4. The fourth one introduces Discourse Analysis (DA) in this project;
 5. The fifth chapter defines Content Analysis (CA) as a pre-analytical tool used before Discourse Analysis (DA);
 6. The sixth chapter provides details the use of Content Analysis (CA) as a tool in this project, and, last but not least,

7. The last chapter in this section of the volume details both contributions and limitations of this respective research.
4. The fourth section of the research, entitled **Analytical Findings**, consists of the following chapters:
 1. The first chapter has results of the Content Analysis presented;
 2. The second chapter is dedicated to the discursive investigation of the Clinton Administration and has *three sub-sections* dedicated to specifics of the discourse at hand; and,
 3. The third chapter is, very much like the previous one, aimed at the discursive investigation of the G. W. Bush Administration, and has *two sub-sections*.
5. The fifth part of the research is analytically the **Concluding** one and contains concise remarks in respect to the previously presented analysis.
6. The last part of this project contains **Bibliography** and has *two sub-sections* with both primary and secondary sources used in this project.

1.3. PAST RESEARCH AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIELD

At this point it will be useful to turn towards research up to present time as to, on the one hand, analyze which topics have already been addressed in this respective field and, on the other, to locate this respective research in the field and explain its scientific contribution in this respect.

When discussing research up to present on the Western Balkans, it has to be pointed out that a very extensive scholarship on the topic at hand is available. Therefore, counting with the fact that this volume is concerned with the two successive US Administrations in the period between 1993 and 2009, it would be useful to introduce simple chronological division in the extensive scholarship at hand according to the periods when these two successive Administrations were in power.

Therefore, the 1990s, when the Clinton Administration was in the White House, was characterized by increasing instability in the region at hand. This instability, as previously stated, was mostly vested in the wars of Yugoslav succession that kept the region for the whole decade