The German Policy and the Kosovo—Case Shadings and Hesitations (1989-1999)

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During these last decades, Germany has turned into the main superpower of European Union (EU), as its leader and one of the major superpowers in today's democratic world. German policy is still showing even more about itself that she deserves an important place in today's elite of the world. With its powerful interventions in many main issues that have disturbed and still continue to disturb the current politics of the world, it shows how important and available is its role in nowadays. However, this policy has been under shadow and her reluctance, especially in more delicate issue of Kosovo and during the Kosovo war (1989-1999). So, this topic will consist by highlighting the Germany and its policy in the international arena today, and especially for its role in the Balkan Peninsula, in this troubled region that could flare up at any moment, the problems encountered for themselves, which it carries in itself. Conflict in Kosovo has been one of the main pages, which completely changed the tumultuous era in the Balkans. It will make a detailed overview of the activities of German foreign policy in the final resolution of the Kosovo issue and will be discussed extensively for German's hesitations and its shadings on this extremely delicate issue. This paper will highlight the main determinant role of Germany on this issue once again.

Keywords: Germany, NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army), Contact Group for the Balkans (CGB), Kosovo Democratic League (KDL)

According to the European Union (EU)'s foreign policy, Kosovo is the most important region and the most essential issue. In the past, Kosovo and its problems have been the key discussions in numerous political meetings. Therefore, this question arises: Why Kosovo? The answer is very simple: Kosovo has been, is, and will be the key to solving many problems that the troubled region of Balkan carries. Kosovo has been a hot spot for centuries that can explode at any time, as it did in 1999. The Serbians have always considered Kosovo as "The Serbian Holly Land". This land is and has historically been predominantly inhabited by Kosovo Albanian population. The modern Kosovo crises begun in spring of 1989, when the Serbian Prime Minister Slobodan Milosevic stripped Kosovo autonomy which gained in 1974 under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito. For the other Yugoslav republics, this signal was taken as a strong warning by the Serbian that they do not dare to take decisions "on their own". This meant that they should not declare to one side independence. This strong Serbian signal was not only considered by the Western stationary, but also by the German Chancellor. The end of the "East-West" conflict was being marked by the revolutions in Hungary, Poland, and Romania. So the crisis of socialism of the Eastern countries was coming to an end on November 9, 1989, the Berlin Wall fell that "iron curtain" was dividing a continent into two camps.

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At the mean time in Kosovo, it began a fierce Serbia nation campaign in all areas of social life, economic, and political issues. Albanians were excluded and forced out of all aspects of social, economic, and public life, and it all took place under the eyes of all international opinion. The international community bypassed without noticing the situation, even when Albanians declared the “Declaration of Independence” on July 2, 1990, in Kosovo and on September 7, 1990, the “Kaçaniku Constitution”, which meant its independence, but the independence of a shadow state. Also, it was not taken seriously by the German Chancellor. Until recently, the German foreign policy has ignored this issue.

Until only recently, even though Germany had recognized the independence of Slovenia and Croatia in 1991, its policy had not had her own profile toward Kosovo. The reason is that this issue has always been an internal affair of Serbia. Her reasoning was related to non-intervention in the internal problems of the Serbian state. This enormously favored the aspirations of Serbia and in Kosovo. After the wars in Slovenia, Croatia initiated and undertaken by Milosevic and the Serbian militias, the international community under the UN (United Nations) conference on Yugoslavia tried to drive back to the forefront of Kosovo’s issue. Other political actors tried to ignore Kosovo’s issue. Even mediator Lord David Owen tried to introduce the conference Kosovo’s issue in the conference’s agenda in September 1992 in Geneva, but got a categorical “No” by Milosevic, with the argument that this was an internal issue of Serbia. Richard Holbrooke, who was chief U.S. negotiator, also experienced the same thing. He tried to drive out of the dust of forgetfulness of the topic of Kosovo, but he immediately realized that Milosevic was unwilling to compromise on this neuralgic issue.

Late on, the crisis and the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina begun, and all the Western chancelleries’ attentions were directed toward these events. So, the wars in rotting Former Republic of Yugoslavia, Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina took all attention from Western stationary. It seemed as if the Kosovo issue will be written in Greek calends, then left in forgetfulness. It seemed as if the Kosovo crisis will not ever find a final solution. In later years, the Kosovo crisis remained outside the Western agenda, because at first glance, it seemed as if the situation there was calm. However, Albanians “under wraps” had managed to organize a shadow state of parallel administrative structures, schools and universities had even organized secret elections. Ibrahim Rugova was elected as president and the KDL (Kosovo Democratic League), his party came from as the main force of these elections. It was understood in the international community, as between Albanians and Serbs there was a kind of serenity and that any problems will find solutions through a kind of a “peaceful” agreement. But all this was false, a deceptive tranquility.

When the thought and idea that Europe was not doing anything to the Albanian people was expanding, the Albanians got out their guns. This scene gave birth to a radical political group, the KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army). The establishment of the KLA came as a result of deep disappointment that Kosovo people experienced, seeing that the situation of Albanians in Kosovo even after the Dayton Agreement remained unchanged. This armed group tried to gain independence from Serbia, because only by the force of guns they could secure the right of self-determination. Because you only through a war, you can get freedom. This once again expressed the conviction that the West only takes into account those regions, where there was only chaos, violence, and war prevailed.

Another reason the German reluctance to intervene in resolving this issue, supposedly comes from the thesis of international law experts, that the German constitution strictly prohibits military intervention of the German “Bundeswehr” outside of Germany. In 1991, the former German foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher openly went against this thesis, by giving a start for a military intervention. But this problem was

resolved by a final decision of the Federal Constitutional Court, the Article 24 of the constitution, which did not allow the German Bundeswehr army to intervene in an international military intervention.

We can say that the main maxim of Helmut Kohl's government was a "traveler" in the European and the transatlantic train, taking less personal initiatives and actions. This means "Better with everyone, better with no one". This was the right decision, since the impact of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) in the international arena was too little. On the other hand, Germany had learned from its mistakes and shortcomings of its multilateral policy that did not achieve consensus on the issue of intervention in the former Yugoslavia. However, the reluctance of the German military interventions in the Balkans was enormous.

We have to admit that until recent years, it was always a "specific role" of Germany in international efforts for crisis management for establishing and maintaining peace. This role had come to an end. But actually, this was a necessary need, given current conditions, where many events happening at the same time. In April, May, and June 1999, Germany held the presidency of the EU, therefore, Germany's international weight had increased a lot.

This government gave the appropriate diplomatic impulses to overcome the crisis and prevent a political disaster of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), because amongst Western European chancelleries, there was not a unity for common military intervention.

On the other hand, the war between the KLA and Serbian forces continued with ferocity. The KLA was actually helped even more since from the previous year, 1997 in Albania, where the military depots were opened, where from thousands of Kalashnikovs, millions of bullets and grenades were stolen. This brought the Serb forces fighting on two fronts: (1) in the one against KLA; (2) in the extinction of the civilian population of Kosovo Albanians.

In the eyes of public opinion and German policy, these tragic moments were initially perceived spontaneously. But the participation of the German Government provides aid for the reconstruction of Yugoslavia under the Dayton Agreement regulated the issue of autonomy for Kosovo and the return of all Albanian displaced in their historical lands.

The German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel announced that the full integration of Yugoslavia into the international community and receiving financial aid will always depend on Belgrade's policy toward Kosovo.

But when it was observed that the situation on the ground could degraded, the German Bundestag took into consideration the situation in Kosovo, without asking Milosevic for human rights and national minorities respect in Yugoslavia. But Milosevic did not accept political conditioning (*Junktim*) in relating respect for human rights and aid for the reconstruction of Yugoslavia. This attempt by the German policy disappointed even more Kosovo Albanians.

The fierce fighting in 1997 forced the German Government to make Kosovo's issue as its top political priority. However, it did not follow "the policy of isolation" of international politics, as followed in the case of Croatia and Slovenia in recognition unilateral independence. But it followed a multilateral policy, always within the Balkans Contact Group (U.S., France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, and Russia), in the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (GASP/CFSP) of the EU and NATO. Helmut Kohl's government and its policy did not want to create the impression of "A lonely man who is running in a dead end empty street". This government changed its policy on four points:

(1) The German Government remained true to the position that Kosovo is an internal issue of Yugoslavia (Serbia) and that its autonomy can be adjusted only through bilateral talks and meetings;

(2) Chancellor Kohl, Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel, and Defense Volker Ruhe did not notice the humanitarian catastrophe in Kosovo, which came as a result of the nationalist Serbian military. And that thing turned out in the eyes of the Albanian public opinion. Seeing the events in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the credibility to international efforts for peace from NATO and the UN has dropped remarkably;

(3) From the beginning, German policy tried to avoid and prevent the isolation of Russia in the Contact Group. This is because according to Germany, a bigger conflict was going to go off in Russia, seeing full support of Serbia was finding in “Mother Russia”;

(4) The German Government tried to prevent the extraordinary influx of Albanian refugees to Germany and other countries of the EU.

But all these four goals were difficult to be maintained since the situation in Kosovo was degrading to the point that Serbia cannot avoid an air and ground military intervention. On September 24, 1997, the Contact Group for the Balkans (GKB) on its meeting in New York took seriously into account the Kosovo crisis and review meeting in Moscow on February 25, 1998, where the status-quo was decided that Serbia will not be allowed to make Kosovo’s final decision. But disagreements and contradictions between the GKB members themselves, deepened further. This happened because the fighting in Kosovo was intensified and Serbian units fighting KLA used the war as a shield to cover their plan to push out the ethnic Albanian population from their historical land.

U.S. was for putting drastic sanctions against Serbia, but Moscow declared that it will veto against these sanctioning measures. Differences between the U.S. and Russia aggravated even more. Germany and France tried to mediate and stress the need that the Security Council of the UN should deal with this issue. After several attempts, on March 9, 1998, it was decided to embargo Yugoslavia’s guns, in order to prohibit the importation of military equipment that will be used for killing the innocent civilian population. Other measures such as the freezing of financial loans to Yugoslavia, and stopping Serbian soldiers entering Western countries, were left for later, because Russia will not approve of them in any way. Noticing that the situation was not normalizing, but had even deteriorated further, the U.S. administration called for conducting military steps. Even the U.S. President Bill Clinton warned that military troops were going to be sent to Kosovo and that he would not allow Kosovo to become a second Bosnia. This was strongly repeated by the U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in the consultations of the NATO Council meeting on May 25, 1998.

At this meeting, the interest in a peaceful solution to the Kosovo crisis was emphasized, however, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs did not rule out the option of military intervention to ensure Kosovo’s borders with Albania and Macedonia. Numerous massacres that were taking place in different regions of Kosovo forced many different European politicians such as British Defence Minister Lord Robertson, Dutch Defence Minister Joris Voorhoeve to threaten that NATO could militarily intervene even without the mandate of the UN. Precisely, this UN mandate was the cause of all deadlock or core contradictions between the NATO members. Because it will be proved later that many members of the North Atlantic Alliance were against this sudden military intervention without permission from the Security Council. And these countries were Germany, Denmark, France, and Italy. These states were against military operations, because according to them, this will not bring an extraordinary aid for Kosovo and its population. On June 12, 1998, CGB (the Contact Group for the Balkans) in London submitted a statement to Serbia, with some points that should be resolved urgently:

- (1) Provide immediate end of violence;
- (2) Withdrawal of Serbian special police units;

- (3) Resumption of serious contacts with representatives of the Albanians;
- (4) Political reform, which would provide Kosovo with a “new status”, if necessary, with international assistance;
- (5) Free movement of international humanitarian organizations;
- (6) Free movement for war crimes investigators in Kosovo.

Faced with growing pressure from the international community Serbian President Milosevic, at a meeting, he had with Russian President Boris Yeltsin in Moscow said that he will not stick to these points, except for the withdrawal of military forces and police units from Kosovo. German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel declared that he had cast a positive step toward the peaceful resolution of Kosovo’s issue in an interview with the German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, by removing the option of a military intervention. Both Minister of Defense Kinkel and Volker Ruhe were expressed categorically against any military intervention against Serbia. German Chancellor Helmut Kohl always stated that a mandate from the Security Council of the UN to take military action was needed. Seeing the Western “policy set”, the Serbian Government was hoping for the Western countries to never achieve a consensus so that they would be able to achieve their goals in the annihilation of Kosovo Albanians from their land. But on the other hand, Germany seeing that the Serbian unwillingness to reach the points that were presented as well as the bloody offensive undertaken in the same time by police and army toward the people, it undertook a set of measures on August 24, 1998:

Blocking all Yugoslav bank accounts in Germany and limiting visas for Yugoslav personalities, etc. Then, in an interview with the prestigious German magazine *Der Spiegel* (August 16, 1998), the German Defence Minister Ruhe acknowledged that the NATO intervention in Yugoslavia was inevitable and that this can be done without a mandate from the Security Council so that the Serbian policy of ethnic cleansing would come to an end once and for all.

Resolution 1199 of the Security Council not only did include all the points mentioned above, and fully blamed Yugoslavia for the situation, it also defined the country as a threat to international peace and security. This resolution in Western, English, and American circles was translated by them as a starting point for the beginning of military intervention toward Yugoslavia. On September 30, 1998, the German Government authorized the use of more NATO’s “Tornado” aircrafts to attack against Serbian military radar installations. March 24, 1999, is a very important date and has a special significance for the foreign policy of the Federal Republic of Germany. On this day, Bundeswehr planes took part in a NATO intervention for the first time in the history of the FRG. The aim was to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe and mass expulsion of the Albanian population from their lands by Serbian paramilitary and police units. The participation of German military action in NATO against Serbia was obviously a natural move. Germany’s participation in the intervention against Yugoslavia in the operation “Allied Force” was considered by the U.S. and other Western partners as an example of its growing maturity and as a coherent political leap toward reality, toward a new foreign policy, to suit geopolitical situation.

But many skeptical Europeans, especially French and Italian, saw this German foreign policy as “militarizing” and that World War II ghosts were returning.

However, the role of Germany in this period was what it seemed. This was observed in the Rambouillet talks on February 6, 1999, where the German role was minimized a lot from the other members of GKB, UK, USA, and France. These talks were conducted at three levels:

(1) The first level which included basic negotiations between Albanian and Serbian representatives, with the presence of the U.S., Britain, and France;

(2) The second level was of a less important type. Those talks were of a consultative character. Germany, Italy, and the Austrian envoy Wolfgang Petritsch were included in this level;

(3) The third level was round tables with an informative and illuminating character. The Russian representative was included here.

The Rambouillet meeting did not bring a new spirit and a new era in the present situation. It was more of a peace dictated by the British and French, where for three years, the circumstances and relations in Kosovo would raise, to create conditions for a subsequent process in determining the status of Kosovo. The Rambouillet talks once again showed a great misbelief that the Western powers had, especially London and Paris, toward German foreign policy. This once again reflected the differences within the EU in the framework of the CFSP of the EU. The British and French policy undervalued many German diplomatic skills. The failure of the Rambouillet agreement was a victory for Milosevic, because in this way, he gained time to achieve his secret plan codenamed "Operation Horseshoe". All threats of the international community and NATO were called "soap bubble" or NATO as a "paper tiger" by him. Milosevic was not scared of Western diplomacy, he even went so far as to mock all the foreign ministers of the EU, among them, German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer to cynically state that he will resolve the Kosovo's issue "as he pleased". While the bombing was not giving the results expected by NATO and its allies, the Western diplomacy was failing in its attempts to "peacefully" resolve Kosovo's issue. Word circulated through the international circles, as if NATO had "lost" the war in Kosovo. French optimism and determination was falling, the same thing was happening on American and British side. But the situation proved otherwise. The time had come that German foreign policy said its word better and louder at an international level. A popular old expression says: "Act at the time and at the right moment". Germany, using the power of being chair of the EU and also the G8 (the group of eight, most industrialized countries of the world) undertook its own diplomatic political initiative. Germany undertook this to resolve once and for all this "Gordian knot", in order for the international community to emerge "victorious" in this issue. This nonsense situation which was prevalent in those times was used by German politics, where its Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer on April 14, 1999, presented a peace plan, which would allow a diplomatic solution to the problem. The novelty of this plan was the inclusion of the G8, which meant the inclusion of Russia as a party in the negotiation process for diplomatic solution. The purpose of Fischer's plan was preparing a resolution with the help of Russia in the Security Council to end the bombing. This will happen only by adhering to these points of the plan:

- (1) Completing withdrawal of all military, police, and paramilitary forces from Kosovo;
- (2) Banning all military actions and the handing over of all weapons from KLA's side;
- (3) Entry of international peace troops in Kosovo under NATO leadership;
- (4) The return of all the displaced and refugees to their homes;
- (5) Placing Kosovo under the administration of an interim administration until they find a final political solution;
- (6) The launch of an international aid program to reduce poverty and program to rebuild Kosovo.

This plan in general, seemed to be a solution to the Kosovo issue. Hopes derivate from this plan were too big. Expectations from the Kosovo side on this plan were initially vague points. It was also strongly associated with the response so far delayed the European powers. Distrust was very evident to the Kosovo side. However,

later, the situation took another political mainstream, what added to hopes that the issue will take the path of the final solution. But how was the situation within the country? The situation in Kosovo was on the way of degradation. Reprisals and mass killings in this period became bigger and bigger. It seemed as if this conflict will not ever have a happy ending. The Albanian population is emigrated at gunpoint from their ancestral lands. Massacres of Serbians and Serbian Paramilitary Units intensified so much that had reached at point that cup could not take more water and it was extremely unbearable. Serbian intransigence is causing its population terrible headache. Among this population were rising voices against it. They were showing signs of frustration, because the Serbian people could not endure another war on its back. In Serbia, people began to emerge in demonstrations against the regime of Slobodan Milosevic. Although the above plan was recommended to implement Milosevic himself, he continued to show stubbornness, stating that Kosovo is Serbia's internal matter and must be resolved under the laws and the Serbian Constitution. But this old view began to inflame the patience of Western powers. Because who had seen and experienced by himself, Kosovo's miserable conditions, has to accept the war as the only way of liberation, because Milosevic raised the apartheid system in the middle of Europe, and under the nose of the major Western powers.

The peace plan was presented to the European powers, the United States, and Canada. After being approached by all stakeholders, and when deemed appropriate, then the work on its implementation began. This plan was presented to the Russian. Russian President Boris Yeltsin did not want Russia's isolation in the international arena, which would be very dangerous for him. The implementation of the plan was fast progressing, to the point, which Milosevic said that Kosovo should remain part of Yugoslavia. But this plan was followed by a work plan by former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari and former Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, who began talks with all interested parties. They ended up with the "Ahtisaari" plan, which enable the declaration of independence of Kosovo.

Conclusions

In all regions and the Western stationary, this plan was called "a miracle" of German diplomacy. Because it avoided diplomatic rift within the EU, it brought together in a single body all Western European positions. Because this plan excluded land troops on the ground and the immediate cessation of bombing, the plan projected the idea of a Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, which would mean that states and local political forces in this region will be provided medium from long-term perspective to join the EU, primarily by strengthening cooperation between their economic and military issues and that these sites adhere to them conditionality policy. With this kind of policy, the German Presidency assured itself a main role internationally and in the EU. For the first time, Europeans showed serious partnership in joining the U.S. in this crisis. Germany became the opposite pole of this policy to the British and French, which in times of crisis make a unilateral policy as U.S. partners. Because this intervention plans exclude all ground troops, something that would be catastrophic human consequences for all sides in the war.

So the author wants to end this discussion with the former word of German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, who said: "I hope that this will be the last war in Europe".

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