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## Between Ideological Nostalgia and Utopia: History Proves That Paradise Lost Was Never Like That

Sadri RAMABAJA<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*The period between the two world wars brought the dissolution of the empires – Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman. The creation of nation-states followed, along with economic and political transformations, along with the deepening of the ideological course, which would bring Bolshevik communism to Russia, and fascism to Europe. The collapse of Yugoslavia can be considered a warning for a new world order. Meanwhile, the collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War had put an end to the utopia of real socialism of the Russian model. See for this the fall of Yugoslavia was not simply a local event. It foreshadowed the transition of society to a new order, where wars, ethnic cleansing, and tensions between states and ethnic groups would continue to be an important part of global politics. This essay addresses precisely these challenges that continue to accompany the former Yugoslavia three decades after its collapse.*

**Keywords:** Ideological Nostalgia, Socialist Utopia, Paradise Lost, Serbian Genocide, Modern Fascism.

### Introduction

In a good part of Serbian-Russian political thought, but no less in Western European thought, the phrase that Germany's recognition of the independence of Slovenia and Croatia was the cause, or rather the real reason for the bloody wars in the former Yugoslavia and the Serbian genocide in Bosnia and Kosova, continues to dominate.

This template has also been somewhat carried over into the justification of Russian aggression against Ukraine.

The former position of the West towards Serbia in the process of the dissolution of Yugoslavia had given Serbia the support to apply expansionist policies to the detriment of the former entities that made up the Yugoslav Federation. That positioning can also be considered a factor that caused three wars and two genocides in the last decade of the 20th century in the heart of Europe.

The Serbian genocide in Bosnia was rightly described by prominent scholars as a shame for Western civilization. And this shame will be repeated in Kosova, although NATO's intervention in Kosova was more hasty, probably even in the face of the genocide in Bosnia.

The creation of Yugoslavia with the decisions of the Versailles Conference was based on the geopolitical interests of the European trio: France, Germany and Italy. Its dissolution is also based on the return of geopolitics and the confrontation of the interests of its peoples for self-

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<sup>1</sup> Public University “Kadri Zeka”, Gjilan, Republic of Kosova, Email address: [sramabaja@gmail.com](mailto:sramabaja@gmail.com)



determination and the interests of the three powers in question, adding this time also the Russian interests that are more pronounced.

### **Ideological Nostalgia**

When we talk about ideological nostalgia, we often mean a return to a past period, when certain ideologies and systems were still considered the "solution" to certain social and political issues. This is closely related to utopia, which is often presented as a perfect society that would be achieved through the implementation of a certain ideology.

In the case of Serbia, after the period of Yugoslavia and its dissolution, there is a noticeable movement of nostalgia for what was once a Marxist-Leninist ideology led by Tito, as well as for a period of peace and unity among the nations of Yugoslavia. Despite the economic and social challenges that existed at that time, many citizens in Serbia and in some other countries of the former Yugoslavia see in that period a "stability" that now seems lost. There has also been a return to "imperial ideologies" that have had a major impact on Serbian culture and politics, for example, nostalgia for the "Serbian Empire" of the past, which has influenced the way national and state identities are treated.

In contemporary Serbian politics, elements of the application of imperial ideas can be seen, especially in the context of defending a very strong national identity, often associated with important Serbian historical figures, and aspirations to restore great regional influence. This can be seen in Serbia's efforts to maintain an independent policy, especially in its relations with other Balkan states and with great powers such as Russia and China. Also, the use of historical symbols and narratives of past greatness in foreign and domestic policy is a way to mobilize national sentiments and achieve political goals.

If we think about the efforts to create a "lost paradise", this can be linked to the desire to restore a more stable and secure period, where the state is strong and the national identity is intact. However, this has the same dangers that often occur with utopias, where the attempt to restore the past can create new tensions and conflicts, as happened in the 1990s in the former Yugoslavia.

It seems that the real reason for the application of expansionist policies, both in the case of the former Yugoslavia, by Serbia, and in the case of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, must be sought in the treatment that was given to Yugoslavia, as well as the Soviet Union during the Cold War and with emphasis after its end, since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

In both Russia and Serbia, imperial ideas that are incompatible with the liberal order have survived. The liberal order, as is known, is based on the integrity of sovereign states. Projects like the "Russian World" and its sister "Serbian World" did not and do not agree with limited sovereignty, respectively with the application of the "Brezhnev Doctrine", which Putin was openly claiming to restore. Therefore, with the restoration of state sovereignty, the countries of Eastern and Southeastern Europe sought protective shelter, security guarantees, from NATO.

This model was also followed by the former Yugoslav republics that managed to free themselves from Belgrade's tutelage during the bloody wars in the former Yugoslavia. Kosova is also seeking this, as the latest victim of this domino effect, which was only ended with the intervention of NATO [March 24, 1999-June 10, 1999]. In these completely new circumstances on the geostrategic plane, the West faced a dilemma: either to respect the interests of Russia and Serbia, or the desire for the security of the sovereign states that had emerged from the tutelage

The unconditional return to the bed of ideological nostalgia as well as the temptation after the winds of liberal utopianism, where the land of milk and honey is promised, no matter how humane they may seem at first glance, never gives the right result.

## **2. The Versailles Conference and the Geopolitical Background to the Creation of Yugoslavia**

The creation of Yugoslavia at the Versailles Conference was part of a much broader process of border redrawing and state formation after World War I, in the context of the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman Empire. This geopolitical background is essential for understanding how and why a new state like Yugoslavia was formed and how it was influenced by the interests of the great powers of the time.

### **The Context of World War I and Its Consequences**

The First World War ended in 1918, leaving behind a devastated landscape in Europe and strongly influencing geopolitical changes and the creation of new states. After the war, the two empires of the time – the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman Empire – disintegrated, leaving large power vacuums and prompting demands for the formation of new states by the nations that had been under the rule of these empires.

During this period, one of the most contentious issues was national identity and ethnic borders. The nations of the Balkans, including the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, had aspirations to create independent states and to liberate territories from the rule of foreign empires.

In this context of the flourishing of nationalism and chauvinism, the Albanians would suffer greatly. The territories inhabited by Albanians, which within the framework of the Ottoman Empire were organized into four Vilayets: the Vilayet of Kosova, centered in Skopje, included the area of the present-day Republic of Kosova, the Sandzak [as a whole] which is today divided between Montenegro and Serbia, and a good part of North Macedonia; Vilayet of Manastir, centered in Manastir [today Bitola]; Vilayet of Jnaina, centered in Jnaina [a city in Greece today], which included present-day southern Albania, Chameria [occupied in 1913 by Greece]; and Vilayet of Shkodra, centered in Shkodra, which included northern Albania.

Of the four administrative and political centers, Albania, after the declaration of independence, on November 28, 1912, with the decisions of the London Conference [1913], would have only three centers and less than half of the territories inhabited by Albanians; the rest would be divided among its neighbors, the largest part of the “cake” would be given to Serbia.

### **The Creation of Yugoslavia: The Versailles Conference and the Small Nations Factor**

In this context, the idea of Yugoslavia (from the Latin “jug” meaning “south” or “southern” and the Slavic root, i.e. Slavic belonging) emerged as a project for the unification of the South Slavic peoples. This idea had long been promoted by intellectuals and political leaders of the South Slavs, including Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, who sought a common state to protect themselves from the pressures of the great powers and to preserve national integrity.

After the defeat of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and its dissolution in 1918, the Allied powers of World War I (especially Britain, France and Italy) held the Versailles Conference to settle the territorial and political-economic issues that had arisen from the war.

At this conference, one of the most important decisions was the creation of a new state, known as the South Slavic Nations, which was formed by the union of Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, and several other ethnic groups of the Balkans. This was a move to create a large united state to address the national aspirations of the South Slavic peoples, but also to manage the ethnic tensions and the various ambitions of the different groups in the region. In 1918, after the end of World War I, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, later known as Yugoslavia, was proclaimed. This was done with the help and support of the Allied powers, primarily Russia, France, and Great Britain, who were seeking a new stability in the Balkans and a way to manage the influence and dominance of their larger neighbors, especially Italy and Austria-Hungary.

### **Geopolitical Background and Great Power Strategy**

The Versailles Conference, in addition to the creation of new states, had a geopolitical goal: to stop the spread of communism and maintain a balance of power in Europe. The creation of a new South Slavic state was also an attempt to provide a secure buffer in the Balkans against the influence of the Ottoman Empire and the potential influence of states such as Germany and Italy, which sought to expand their influence in the region, aiming for the warm waters of the Mediterranean Sea.

In this context, Serbia, with the support of the aforementioned troika, took the leading role in the new state of Yugoslavia. As a state with a stronger military and diplomatic tradition, it saw the creation of Yugoslavia as an opportunity to maintain its influence and help stabilize the region.

Italy was also an important factor in this process, seeking to secure territories in the Balkans. In a way, the Versailles Conference sought to exploit the division and dissolution of the great empires to create a more balanced Europe, but one that was still fragile due to the interests of different powers.

The creation of Yugoslavia at the Versailles Conference was a result of the need to stabilize the Balkans after World War I, including the interests of great powers such as France, Britain

and Italy. However, this new state was built on a foundation of ethnic and political complexity, which would show great tensions throughout the 20th century and, ultimately, would disintegrate in the 1990s due to ethnic and political conflicts.

During the process of the creation of Yugoslavia at the Versailles Conference, but also throughout its entire existence, for the first time, the confrontation of the geostrategic interests of the two groups of peoples: the Slavs, who aimed at Persia as a market, and the Adriatic as a route, and the Italian-Germans, who once aimed at the same thing and the same route, the very process of the liberation of Kosova and its independence, and with this the factorization of the Albanian nation, as time is proving, will contribute to taking the place of the worldview on the maximization of power in support of the perfection of internal resources and technological advances, which would invalidate the geopolitical worldviews on the hated control of foreign territories and strategic points.

This fact, however, has not been able to exclude the gradual return of geopolitics.

### **The Disintegration of the Versailles Creature – A Warning of the New World Order**

The disintegration of Yugoslavia can be considered a warning of the New World Order, as this event had a major impact on international dynamics and reflected some of the trends and changes

that would shape the geopolitical reality of the post-Cold War and the period that followed.

### **The Disintegration of Great States and Nationalism**

The disintegration of Yugoslavia is an example of the process of the disintegration of great states and the renewed emphasis on nationalism and ethnicity as key factors in international politics. This phenomenon emerged in a pronounced way after the Cold War and coincided with a period when many states, which had been part of empires or great states, sought to secede and create independent states, often based on national and ethnic identity. This has happened in the Balkans, but has also been seen in several other regions of the world.

The breakup of Yugoslavia, following the declaration of independence of republics such as Slovenia and Croatia, and the wars that followed, showed a dangerous tendency for territorial changes and ethnic conflicts, which would be an important element of the global conflicts of the coming decades. This is linked to the rise of extremist nationalisms and ethnic cleansing, which ended with the Serbian genocide in Bosnia and Kosova, but which, as crucial elements of the war for expansion, would be used as a defining model in many parts of the world during the post-Cold War period.

### **The Fall of the Communist System and the Transition to Capitalism**

In a broader context, the dissolution of Yugoslavia occurred during the period when the communist system of Yugoslavia was collapsing and other former communist countries were undergoing profound transformations towards free market economies and integration into global capitalism. The collapse of Yugoslavia followed the collapse of the Soviet Union and the post-Cold War period, where the old communist order was being replaced by a new global order, focused on global capitalism, free trade and globalization.

This transition from a communist system to a capitalist and open-market world has had major consequences for the development of new states, which were often unformed and faced economic and political challenges after breaking away from the communist system. This process of change has emphasized that the post-Cold War period was not a period of peace, but a period of uncertainty and attempts to form a new international order.

### **Lack of Clear International Responses and The Response of the Great Powers**

The collapse of Yugoslavia also highlighted the uncertainty and failure of the responses of the international powers. The international community, including the Western powers, was slow and often ambiguous in its response to the internal conflicts and the dissolution of Yugoslavia. This reflected a lack of a strong and stable international structure that could provide a reliable guide to resolving crises and avoiding wars, leaving the region to experience violence, ethnic cleansing on a genocidal scale, and insecurity for a long period.

This led to a new international reality, in which the great powers could neither prevent the dissolution nor offer a quick solution to stop the violence. This failure can be seen as a harbinger of a more diffuse world order, in which the great actors no longer had the absolute influence and authority that they had during the Cold War and its aftermath.

## **Obituary of Yugoslavia**

### **The War in Slovenia and the Domino Effect**

The War in Slovenia lasted from 27 June 1991 to 7 July 1991 and is often referred to as the Slovenian War of Independence. It was one of the first conflicts to erupt after the breakup of Yugoslavia, and was concerned with Slovenia's attempt to secede from Yugoslavia and declare its independence.

The declaration of independence of Slovenia took place on 25 June 1991, when the Parliament of Slovenia adopted an act declaring the independent state. This step followed a period of heightened tension between the Slovenian authorities and the Yugoslav federal government, which was increasingly taking on the characteristics of a government conceived of as a strange amalgam of modern fascism and Russian socialist utopia, which sought to preserve the unity of Yugoslavia and refused to allow any of its republics to declare independence.

After the declaration of independence, the Yugoslav authorities (under the leadership of the Yugoslav People's Army, which was in control of Belgrade) responded with a military operation to halt the secession, using military force to regain control of Slovenia. The ensuing war was a fierce clash between Yugoslav and Slovenian military forces, but it was relatively short and ended in a ceasefire.

At the end of July 1991, after international intervention and attempts to reach an agreement, Serbia and Croatia accepted the reality of Slovenia's independence, and the Yugoslav government recognized it as an independent state. On 15 January 1992, Slovenia was recognized by the International Community (UN), thus consolidating its independence.

The Slovenian war for independence was very short and, nevertheless, violent, leaving behind few dead and many wounded, despite the fact that it did not reach the proportions of a large-scale war. The conflict marked an important moment in the process of the dissolution of Yugoslavia, which later led to the dissolution of the other states of the former Yugoslavia.

### **Croatia – the grave of the Versailles Yugoslavia**

Before the war in Slovenia had ended, the Croatian-Serbian one had broken out. The cause was the same.

The war in Croatia (1991-1995) is undoubtedly one of the most painful and destructive events of the period of the dissolution of Yugoslavia. This war became the grave of the Versailles creature; it was a moment that sealed the end of a historical period and definitively determined the separation of the region from the former Yugoslav system.

The war in Croatia began on June 25, 1991, when Croatia declared independence from Yugoslavia, following the model of Slovenia. The declaration of independence came after a long period of international and internal tensions, as well as after the ethnic and political divisions that were taking place in Yugoslavia. After declaring independence, Croatia faced strong opposition from the Yugoslav authorities and from the Serbian population in Croatia, which sought to remain part of Yugoslavia.

In July 1991, the conflict erupted into open war. The Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), which was under the control of Belgrade and was composed mainly of Serbs, intervened in the name of protecting the interests of the Serbian population in Croatia and to preserve the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia. The conflict quickly escalated into a fierce war, in which Serbian forces

and JNA [JNA] soldiers engaged in combat against Croatian forces and paramilitary formations.

The war in Croatia was a multifaceted conflict, characterized by civil wars, interventions by the Yugoslav army, and attempts by Croatian forces to defend and re-establish control over occupied territories, especially in areas where the Serb population was in the majority. During the war, many violent events occurred, such as ethnic cleansing, massacres, and the destruction of cities.

In late 1991, the internationalization of the war began, and the international community attempted to intervene to stop the further escalation of violence. One of the key moments in this period was the Brijuni Agreement in 1991, an agreement that provided for a temporary ceasefire and the creation of a "safe zone" to prevent further destruction.

However, the war did not end immediately and escalated further, extending into 1992.

### **Ethnicity and the War**

The war in Croatia had a deep ethnic and nationalist dimension, with clashes between Serbs and Croats being prominent. During this period, many Serbs living in Croatia (including in territories where the majority were Croats) formed armed gangs, which were supported by Belgrade, making the war much more complicated and bloody.

One of the most painful aspects of the war was ethnic cleansing and war crimes, with both sides (Serbs and Croats) accused of destroying villages, killing civilians and other atrocities. One of the most tragic moments was the Vukovar Massacre, a city completely destroyed by Serbian forces, where many citizens [Croats and Serbs] fell victim to Serbian expansionist policies and aggressive Serbian nationalism. This city is a symbol of the Croatian tragedy and an example of the atrocities committed during the war.

### **International Assistance and the Aftermath of the War**

During the war, the international community and international organizations, including the United Nations, were unable to intervene and stop the violence effectively. Sanctions and international pressure on Belgrade were not enough to prevent the continuation of the war.

At the end of the war, with the help of mediation by the United States and EU countries, Croatia declared victory and managed to preserve its territory. The war ended in 1995 with the Dayton Agreement for Bosnia, which declared the end of the war, but its consequences remained deep and painful for many years.

### **Aftermath and the destruction of Yugoslavia**

The war in Croatia is of particular importance because it is one of the key points that marked the destruction of Yugoslavia. It was a war that was not simply about territory, but about the struggle for national identity, autonomy, and a bloodbath for a new geopolitical reality for the Balkans. The declaration of independence of Croatia and the ensuing war showed that Yugoslavia could no longer remain united, and that the various ethnic and national states were seeking to build their own futures without the influence of a central government like that of Belgrade.

Croatia, as well as the other states that declared independence, faced the consequences of the war, including the destruction of infrastructure, refugees, and a deep ethnic division that would have consequences for many years. The conflict also left a deep mark on the international and internal relations of the Balkans, and required a long period of reconciliation and a path to stabilization.

## **End of the war in Croatia**

The war in Croatia lasted until 1995, when a decisive turning point finally occurred. At that time, Croatian soldiers carried out major military operations such as Operation Storm in August 1995, an offensive that led to the recapture of Serb-held territory, including the city of Knin. This operation marked the end of Serbian control over most of Croatia and the Independent State of Croatia. After this, Croatian authorities declared victory and full control over the territory of Croatia.

The war ended in 1995, when both sides, after the intervention of international forces and a series of mediated agreements, agreed to a ceasefire and signed the Dayton Agreement (between Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia), which finalized the division and dissolution of Yugoslavia. The Dayton Accords were signed in December 1995 and marked the end of the war in Bosnia, but also influenced the end of the war in Croatia.

The war left many dead, displaced and devastated many towns and villages in Croatia. After the war, many Serbs fled Croatian territory and moved to Serbia, leaving behind a large ethnically cleansed estate. Croatia was recognized by most international states and became a member of the United Nations in May 1992, while international peacekeeping forces were tasked with monitoring the agreements and security in the region.

## **The Bosnian War - A Shameful Chapter of Western Civilization**

The Bosnian War (1992-1995) is one of the darkest and most painful chapters of modern European history and an event that has cast a shadow on the conscience of the international community. After the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the declaration of Bosnian independence, the bloody war between ethnic Bosniak citizens and Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats, fueled by extreme nationalism and territorial ambitions, caused a humanitarian catastrophe and an extraordinary ethnic and religious crisis.

## **Background to the War and the Disintegration of Yugoslavia**

Bosnia was one of the most complex republics of Yugoslavia, with an ethnically mixed population, including Bosniaks (whom Tito, for purely political purposes, designated as Muslims), Serbs and Croats. After Bosnia declared independence in 1992, following a referendum in which the majority of the Bosniak population voted for independence, Serbia and Bosnian Serb forces refused to accept this decision and a fierce war erupted.

Slobodan Milošević and Bosnian Serb leaders, such as Radovan Karadžić, had ambitions to create a "Greater Serbia" and saw Bosnia as a territory that should be part of this idea, including the ethnic cleansing of the Bosniak and Croat populations. Attempts to divide Bosnia along ethnic and religious lines led to massacres, ethnic cleansing – and the systematic destruction of the civilian population that culminated in genocide.

## **Massacres and War Crimes**

The Bosnian War was a period of horrific war crimes, including massacres, violence against women, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia, was besieged for more than 1,000 days by Serb forces, making it one of the longest and most severe sieges in history. During this period, the violence against civilians was unspeakable, with widespread shelling and the wanton killing of innocent people.

One of the most notorious and tragic events of the war was the Srebrenica Massacre (1995), in



which Bosnian Serb forces, under the leadership of commander Ratko Mladić, killed an estimated 8,000 Bosniak Muslim men and boys, in what has been called "genocide." This was an act of unspeakable brutality and is known as one of the most horrific war crimes in Europe since World War II.

In addition to Srebrenica, other massacres, deportations, and destruction of civilian property occurred in many towns and villages across Bosnia, forcing hundreds of thousands of people to become refugees.

### **The International Community's Response and Western Indecision**

At the beginning of the war, the international community was deeply divided and unable to intervene effectively to prevent the violence. The United Nations (UN) Security Council established safe areas, such as Srebrenica, that were supposed to be protected by international peacekeepers, but they were unable to protect civilians from Serbian forces. After a period of uncertainty and inaction, international intervention was belated and too late to prevent the tragedy that would follow.

NATO eventually intervened with an air campaign against Serbian forces, which forced Milošević and Karadžić to accept a peace agreement. The war ended with the signing of the Dayton Agreement in December 1995, which created a Bosnia divided into two entities: a Republika Srpska and a Croat-Bosniak Federation. This agreement, however, left behind a divided and traumatized country, where ethnicity and politics remain strongly intertwined.

### **A Chapter of Shame for the West?**

The Bosnian War can be considered a chapter of shame for the international and Western community for several important reasons:

**Failure to Prevent the Tragedy:** The international community, including the US, the EU and the UN, was too slow and uncertain to intervene effectively to prevent the violence.

When war crimes began to become clear, concrete action was taken too late. The uncertainty and divisions among Western powers led to a lack of effective action and delays in reaction, which enabled Serbian forces to commit unspeakable horrific crimes.

**Lack of swift and decisive action:** NATO intervention came too late, after thousands of people had been killed and displaced, and many cities had been destroyed. All this delay has contributed to a deep lack of trust in Western powers, which in many cases were unable to protect civilians and ensure the safety of those seeking refuge from the violence.

**Failure to recognize the full dimensions of the situation:** Western powers and the UN often failed to understand how deep the ethnic and religious tensions and the extent of extremist nationalism fueled the war were. They were often focused on diplomacy, while Serbian forces were on the path to completing ethnic cleansing and trying to create a Bosnia that was alienated from other nationalities.

The war in Bosnia has left a huge humanitarian toll and has served as a severe punishment for the failure of the international community to protect the innocent and prevent an unprecedented ethnic and violent crisis. The consequences of the war remain present today, with difficult reconciliations and a divided Bosnia, where inter-ethnic and inter-ethnic tensions are still present. The Bosnian chapter is undoubtedly a shame for Western civilization, which has proven

its inability to prevent war crimes and protect peace in Europe, a century after World War II.

### **The Republic of Kosova – a product of the KLA war, the Serbian genocide and the return of geopolitics**

The Kosova War (1998–1999), often called the "Kosova War", was a bloody conflict and a significant turning point in Serbian expansion in the Balkans and the breakup of Yugoslavia. This war marked the end of Serbia's efforts to maintain control over the territories of the former Yugoslavia, especially over Kosova, a region of great historical, cultural and ethnic importance for Serbs. The Kosova War was also an event that helped create a new international order and also represented a significant turning point in international relations, especially with the intervention of NATO in the region.

#### **Background to the War**

Kosova is the backbone and epicenter of the uprisings for the creation of modern Albania. The League of Prizren [1878] marks the culmination of the Albanian ethnic group's efforts to liberate itself from the Ottoman Empire and create a modern Albanian state based on the principle of ethnic expansion. [...]

Kosova was occupied by Serbia in the autumn of 1912, after a series of anti-Ottoman uprisings that would culminate in the declaration of independence in Vlora on 28 November 1912.

With the decisions of the 1913 London Ambassadors' Conference, Kosova would be annexed to Serbia. Thus began the long Serbian night and the treatment of Kosova as a typical colony.

After the dissolution of Yugoslavia and other wars in the Balkans (such as in Bosnia and Croatia), Kosova remained under Serbian control for a period, but political movements that were articulating demands for independence continued to grow.

The position of the political forces within Kosova, especially after the Prekaz massacre [March 1998], is very reminiscent of that of the traditional liberals and European social democracy on the eve of Hitler's rise to power, especially the situation created after the assassination of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht.

In 1998, the situation escalated with Serbia's violent response to the Kosova Liberation Army (KLA) war, which was demanding Kosova's independence. In response, the Serbs used the war tactic of ethnic cleansing against the Albanian population of Kosova, which included killings, deportations, and the destruction of villages. Civilian casualties were high, and more than 800,000 Kosova Albanians were forced to flee their homes and relocate to other countries, including Albania and Macedonia.

#### **Massacres and War Crimes: Silent Genocide**

In Kosova alone, within the period of March 1998, when a massacre was carried out against an entire family in Prekaz, in which 54 members were killed and massacred, and until June 9, 1999, when Serbia was about to sign the capitulation in Kumanovo<sup>1</sup>, a total of ... massacres were carried out. Scholar Skëlzen

Gashi has done voluminous work to prove each of them.

Let us remember that it was precisely Kumanovo, its resistance front, that Serbia would break after three days of fierce fighting in October 1912, which would pave the way for the occupation

of Kosova. History also produces coincidences of this nature. It was in Kumanovo that Serbia would sign its capitulation and that of Kosova, with that agreement the curtain of Freedom would open, which would be crowned with the declaration of independence on February 17, 2008.

But, let's go back to the Horseshoe Plan. What accompanied that monstrous Serbian project, which had to do with the disappearance of Albanians?

This was not the first undertaking that would go down in history with the notion of ETHNIC CLEANSING. In fact, this was the third Serbian genocide against Albanians. The first was the one that the Serbian General Staff had applied in January and February of 1878 against the province of Toplica up to Vraç and Kuršumli [which included 8 towns and 998 villages inhabited by an Albanian majority, which are today part of southern Serbia]; the second time, when Serbia would carry out the second genocide against Albanians, was the year of the occupation of Kosova [1912/13].

These crimes were repeated immediately after the First World War, in 1918/19, during the period between the two world wars, and at the end of the Second World War [1944-1945]. The same pattern of violence continued during 1946-66, and was repeated during the last decade of the twentieth century [1989-99]. [Gashi, 2024, p. 9] Meanwhile, in the spring of 1999, the massacres took on the dimensions of genocide.

The map of massacres carried out by Serbian soldiers in Kosova in the period 1998-1999 includes the entire territory of Kosova. In the book in question, researcher Gashi provides detailed data on a total of 83 massacres committed throughout Kosova, mainly against the civilian population. [Gashi, 2024, p.40-43]

On April 9, 1999, German Defense Minister Rudolf Scharping unveiled to the public the Serbian Plan for the expulsion of Albanians. According to this plan, the operation named "Horseshoe" was evidence that the expulsion of Albanians from Kosova was not a consequence of "revenge due to NATO bombing", but the result of a political project compiled in detail. [MAHMUTI, 2020, p.211]

Miroslav Filipović, a journalist for the Belgrade newspaper "Danas", a correspondent for "Agence France-Presse" and an analyst for the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, who was labeled and convicted as a Western spy, claims about the Horseshoe plan:

"The existence of the 'Horseshoe' plan has been mentioned several times and has been quickly denied by the authorities. My knowledge of this plan dates back to the mid-1970s," Filipović declares. "A group of Serbian communists began to worry about what would happen to the Serbs when Tito died. How to preserve Yugoslavia and communism in this country and how to save it from the Albanian invasion. Then the conceptual project 'Horseshoe' was compiled, a plan that consisted of as many small horseshoes as there are Albanian villages.

This plan envisaged that armed people would be placed around each village in the shape of a horseshoe, with an 'opening' from Albania, and that the locals would be given a deadline of several dozen minutes to leave their homes with the most necessary things. Then the village would be burned, while the property would be looted and destroyed.

In the 'open' part of the 'Horseshoe', people would be taken away from their documents and excess money and their selection would be carried out. Thus, several hundred thousand people would be moved from Yugoslavia to Albania. The destruction of homes and the monstrous crimes that would accompany it plan, would discourage even the most determined to return.

Even in the event that we were forced to return a part of the Albanian population, we would return only those whom we wanted.

Milosevic accepted this ideological solution and during his rule, this ‘Horseshoe’ was transformed into an operational plan for the implementation of which, if not a major war, then at least a local conflict was needed.

The general test was implemented in the early 90s, in the settlements on the right bank of the Drina River, when the Bosniak inhabitants were forced to relocate and part of the territory was ethnically cleansed.” [Filipović, Ogledi, No. 263]

This plan was implemented precisely in Kosova. Only within the period when NATO was striking Serbian military targets, over 800,000 people were forced to leave Kosova.

But unlike in 1878 and 1912/13, in 1999, Europe and the Western World did not remain silent. The reactions of the leaders of the states that participated in NATO attacks against the Milošević regime were in the same spirit. [Mahmuti, 2020, p. 213] Thus, the German Foreign Minister, Joschka Fischer, came out with a public stance that what was happening in Kosova had nothing to do with “refugee issues. We are dealing with the expulsion of an entire people”, he declared. [Paquez, 2003, p.41]

Meanwhile, French President Jacques Chirac, in his television messages to the public, emphasized that “this is a monstrous operation of ethnic cleansing planned and led with the highest cynicism and with the greatest atrocities of the Serbian regime (...) There is no doubt about the responsibility of this regime (...) These atrocities (...) are a shame for Europe and for the world. The actions undertaken by Milošević will not triumph. Barbarism cannot have the last word. Justice will prevail and the criminals will be held accountable!” [Paquez, 2003, p.42]

### **International Intervention**

During this period, the international reaction intensified. The United Nations and the European Union called for a political settlement, but Serbia and its leader Slobodan Milošević refused to accept any concessions that would allow for autonomy for Kosova or international assistance to stop the violence. This stance by Belgrade caused great tension and concern in the international community, especially after the massacres that were taking place on the ground.

In 1999, after the failure of diplomacy and attempts to find a peaceful solution, NATO intervened militarily with an air bombing campaign against Serbia, which began on 24 March 1999. This was a direct NATO intervention, which did not have the approval of the United Nations Security Council, although it was based on Article 7 of the United Nations Charter, which argues that it was necessary to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe and to avoid the escalation of violence and the disappearance of a people.

### **Aftermath of the War and the End of Serbian Expansion**

The NATO bombing campaign (known as Operation Allied Force) ended the war in Kosova. After 78 days of bombing, Serbia was forced to accept a ceasefire agreement, and Kosova came under UN administration, establishing itself as an international protectorate.

This was the end of Serbian expansion in the Balkans, as Serbia lost control of Kosova, a territory that was a key part of Milošević's Greater Serbia project. This was a significant loss for Serbia, as Kosova for many Serbs had irreplaceable historical and cultural significance, as well as an important strategic position. For this reason, the loss of Kosova marked the end of the Serbian

ideology of expansionism and strong nationalism that had guided some of the policies and wars in the Balkans during the last decades of the 20th century.

### **Kosova's Independence and Consequences for Serbia**

In 2008, Kosova declared independence from Serbia, which was strongly opposed by Belgrade and several other countries (such as Russia and China). However, many other countries, including the United States and most European Union countries, recognized Kosova's independence, making this an important step towards consolidating Kosova's independence and international recognition.

For Serbia, the loss of Kosova has had major consequences. Not only has it shattered the idea of a Greater Serbia, but it has also added new challenges to the country's political and economic stability. Serbia has had difficulty accepting Kosova's independence, seeing it as a significant loss of territory and influence in the region, and has maintained a tough stance against Kosova in the international arena.

### **The Resurgence of Bourgeois Society**

The resurgence of bourgeois society as a new concept of modern societies can be analyzed through several main dimensions, including economic, political, cultural and technological developments. This concept is closely related to the transformations that have occurred in modern societies, especially after the Industrial Revolution and the impact of globalization.

#### **Economic Development and the Bourgeois Class**

Capitalism and the Free Market: Bourgeois society rose to power with the development of capitalism and the free market. This class, composed mainly of businessmen, intellectuals and professionals, became an economic force that contributed to the development of modern economies.

Privatization and private initiative: The revival of bourgeois society is accompanied by an increased pace of privatization and private initiative, creating an environment where individuals and businesses have more freedom to invest and develop projects.

#### **Political Development and Democratization**

Democracy and civil rights: Bourgeois society has been a driving force for the democratization of modern societies. This class has fought for civil rights, freedom of expression, and political participation, contributing to the formation of modern democratic states.

Rule of law and clear rules: The revival of bourgeois society has brought with it a demand for a rule of law, where rules are clear and enforceable for all, providing a stable environment for economic and social development.

#### **Bourgeois Culture and Values**

Individualism and personal advancement: Bourgeois culture values individualism and personal advancement. This has influenced the way people see their own role in society, fostering a culture of competition and continuous improvement.

Education and higher culture: Bourgeois society has been a great patron of education and higher culture. This has led to an increase in the level of education and a wider spread of ideas and innovation.

## Technology and Globalization

Digital revolution: The development of technology and the digital revolution have helped revive bourgeois society. Technology has made it possible for individuals and businesses to operate on a global scale, creating new economic and social opportunities.

Globalization and interdependence: Globalization has brought about greater interdependence between countries and cultures, allowing the values and practices of bourgeois society to spread and be influenced by global trends.

## Challenges and Criticisms

Economic inequality: One of the main challenges of modern bourgeois society is economic inequality. While some benefit from globalization and technology, others are left behind, creating social tensions.

Consumerism and environmental degradation: Critics argue that bourgeois culture promotes consumerism and can contribute to environmental degradation. This has led to a growing awareness of the need for more sustainable practices.

## Conclusions

1. Ideological nostalgia conceived as part of state political propaganda, which would serve for mass mobilization on the eve of the expected great changes, in the case of Serbia meant a return to a past period, when the ideology and political system was a mix between the feudal concept of the typical Slavic Zadruga of the feudal order and the self-governing Socialism that was cultivated in Titoist Yugoslavia. Its application was closely linked to the utopia of social democracy, which was often presented in Western Europe in the bosom of the left as a perfect society.

2. The disintegration of Yugoslavia was one of many events that revealed the reality of an undefined and uncertain international order. In this period, some states began to create new coalitions, organize trade agreements and seek recognition of independence and international support. Consequently, this process of disintegration and state formation, accompanied by conflicts and clashes of international interests, showed that a new world order, which was being created after the Cold War, was fraught with new geopolitical challenges from the very beginning.

The war in Croatia was a crucial moment for the dissolution of Yugoslavia and has served as a symbol of Yugoslavia's grave. This war, as well as the wars in Bosnia and Kosova, ended a historical period of a large and centralized state, leading to the creation of new independent states in the Balkans. The consequences of the war are still present today in the relations and political developments of the region, with ethnic differences and historical tensions continuing to be major challenges to the peace and stability of the region.

3. The Kosova War, and the NATO intervention, was an end to Serbian expansionism in the Balkans and an event that marked the end of a period of uncertainty and violence in the region. This conflict has had a profound impact, not only for Serbia, but also for Kosova, which gained a new status and began a long path towards independence and international integration, as a major compromise in the face of the right to self-determination and unification with Albania.

The consequences of the war are still visible in international relations, as Serbia continues to

oppose Kosova's independence, while Kosova struggles to gain full recognition from the international community.

4. The revival of bourgeois society as a new concept of modern societies [Rödder, NZZ, 2025] is a complex process that includes economic, political, cultural and technological developments. While this has brought great progress and new opportunities, it also presents challenges and criticisms that need to be addressed to ensure sustainable and just development for all members of society.

The West must insist on further establishing the liberal order between states, which essentially means preserving self-determination as a political concept and sovereignty, especially now that we are on the verge of creating the New Order, a new multipolar world that is emerging with the actors: the USA, China, with Russia, India and the EU as powers in their own right.

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