



## ORIGINAL PAPER

# The role of US in the Security of Kosovo

**Alfred Marleku** \*

**Bejtush Gashi** \*\*

**Valon Krasniqi** \*\*\*

### Abstract

The aim of this research paper is to analyze the role that United States had on Kosovo's international security. More specifically, the study is focused on three U.S. presidential administrations, from 1989 to 2009. In order to accomplish this study, a discourse analysis is used as the methodological approach. The used sources are mainly secondary, but the primary sources are also considered. Structurally the research paper is divided in four main parts. The first part deals with the attitude of President George H.W. Bush administration *vis-a-vis* Kosovo international security that culminated with so called: "Christmas warning". In the second part is analyzed the Clinton Administration which is characterized by "humanitarian intervention" as a doctrine and foreign policy. Whereas, the third part reflects the role of George W. Bush Administration in the process of Kosovo's declaration of independence. The fourth part, and the last one, deals with the analysis of Kosovo public opinion perception regarding the United States of America as a state.

**Keywords:** *USA, Kosovo, security, international intervention, NATO*

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\* Lecturer, PhD, UBT College, Faculty of Political Science, Prishtina, Kosovo, Phone: +37744135538, Email: [alfredmarleku@gmail.com](mailto:alfredmarleku@gmail.com)

\*\* Associated Professor, PhD, Kosovo Academy for Public Safety, Faculty of Public Safety, Vushtrri, Kosovo, Phone: +377 44 345 891, E-mail: [bejtush.gashi@rks-gov.net](mailto:bejtush.gashi@rks-gov.net)

\*\*\* Lecturer, PhD, UBT College, Faculty of Political Science, Prishtina, Kosovo, Phone: 00389 75 332 666, EMail: [valonkrasniqi6@gmail.com](mailto:valonkrasniqi6@gmail.com)

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### **Introduction**

The role and importance of the United States of America for social, political and economic life of Kosovo was and remained vital. There are many authors and researchers who support the idea that if USA would not be active and persistent in Kosovo's political crisis, the intervention of NATO in Kosovo would not have happened, and moreover, Kosovo would not be independent at all, as it is since February 2008.

The aim of this research paper is to analyze the impact of USA in political and security life in Kosovo. The study will cover George H.W. Bush (1989-1993), Bill Clinton (1993-2001) and George W. Bush (2001-2009) presidencies and doctrinal approaches, the effects of whose are also reflected in security policies towards Kosovo. Within this period of time in Kosovo took place many political changes starting from the Peaceful Resistance, organization of parallel system, the armed resistance by Kosovo Liberation Army, NATO intervention, International Administration (UNMIK) and *Kosovo declaration of independence*. In all these moments, and many others which are not mentioned here, the role and importance of the US has been cardinal.

The methodological framework of the research paper is built based in a historical narrative premise, but with strong dose of political analysis. The used data were obtained from various secondary sources such as books, journals, analysis and reports. However, in addition to this, primary sources are also used such as respective speeches of policymakers. This modality is part of discourse analysis, as a qualitative methodological approach, which except texts analyze the context of events as well.

### **From H.W. Bush to W. Bush**

It was the end of 80's and the beginning of 90's when great political changes in international scene started to occur. For many authors these developments are considered as apocalyptic changes which impacted, *inter alia*, the entire constellations of politics security of international system which caused a profound effect in recalibration of the international system. In this context, except the end of Cold War, the ideological division which lasted since the end of Second World War until 1989 between the East, represented by USSR, and the West, represented by USA, was terminated. Inspired by these monumental events, some authors proclaimed the end of history (Fukuyama, 1989), and some others the beginning of the clash between civilizations (Huntington, 1997).

The political, economic and ideological collapse of communism, as a political system, in late 80's, ended the bipolar period with the absolute victory of USA. These developments undoubtedly had an impact on the countries of Eastern and South Eastern Europe which were under the direct influence of the USSR. In addition to this, such changes had multiple influenced in many sectors that affected – directly and indirectly – all countries of the globe. After the end of bipolar era, USA came out stronger than ever before in political, economic and ideological aspects. Ideological triumph was very important, because the rivalry and competition during the Cold War was above all ideological based. Therefore, bipolar system was replaced by unipolar system. This post-ideological environment created a new political and ideological gap. As a result, it was very productive for a new ideas. Therefore, it was President George H.W. Bush who in his famous speech held in September 11, 1990 in a joint session of both houses of US Congress, publicly proclaimed the “New World Order” doctrine (Bose and Perotti, 2002). There are two main paradigms of the US approach, supported also by European countries, which are used as theoretical and doctrinal platform on the basis of which was the recalibration of European and security policy after the Cold War made. Firstly, it was the

American concept based on the idea of a Europe that has to be “Whole and Free”, presented by the US President George H.W. Bush during his speech held in Mainz, Germany in May 1989 (U.S. Diplomatic Mission to Germany, 2016). Whereas, the second approach of US was based on the idea of a peaceful, undivided and democratic Europe, articulated by next US President Bill Clinton. In one of his speeches Clinton stated that, when Europe is in peace, our security will be much stronger and sustainable. Clinton further continues that foundation of common security in western countries is and will remain NATO. He stressed also that with the fall of the “Iron Curtain” and the end of the Cold War, for the first time Europe has a good opportunity to build a peaceful, undivided and democratic continent (United States Information Agency, 2016).

This political and security attention was not focused only toward the European states, but also towards the Balkans as part of Europe, whose stability was important to implement the American foreign and security doctrines. For of this reason, according to Croat scholar and diplomat, Dario Malnar, the US policy towards Kosovo, and the entire process that lead to its independence, were in compliance with US national interests and some very complex global and regional changes in international relations (Malnar, 2013). Challenged with these global and regional circumstances, it should be made clear that US policy towards Kosovo has not been linear, but has evolved in approach as well as the in using tools for finding a solution, including the administrations of three US presidents: George H.W. Bush, to William (Bill) Clinton and continuing to George W. Bush.

#### **George H.W. Bush Administration: “Christmas Warning”**

During the Bush Administration Kosovo began to receive the attention of US politics and diplomacy and to be treated as a specific problem. One of initial goals after the Cold War was to establish the new world order, which in concrete terms for East Europe meant to get support in the process of transition immediately after *the exit* of direct influence of USSR. With this support the US President Administration intended to influence in these countries and not to fall into a political and economic spiral of instability. This could cause the dissolution of these countries and, consequently, becoming potential source of violence, conflict and insecurity. In this regard, processes taking place in the USSR and the possibility that this *political creature* had to break up was the main focus. However, taking into account the vacuum that was created by the collapse of the bipolar system, there were many challenges that American administration had to face at the same time. One of them was the recalibration of relations of the Western allies in the new security architecture and thinking for the role and importance of UN in this new international system (Malnar, 2013).

Facing these challenges, primary intention of USA in such a situation was to maintain the *status quo*, being interested that the dissolution of the USSR not to have a domino effect in other countries, especially in Yugoslavia. In that time, Bush Administration, concerning political situation in Yugoslavia, insisted in two fundamental requirements: the first one related with the democratization of the region, and the second one was concerned with the protection of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Yugoslavia (Department of State: Office of the Historian, 2016). If these two requirements are analyzed deeper it can be seen that they are antagonistic and self-exclusive to each other (Malnar, 2013). The region could not be democratize without dismantle of Yugoslavia. The case was “either-or” and not to “even-even”.

Wars that occurred on the territory of former Yugoslavia, starting from Slovenia, Croatia Bosnia and Kosovo, urged the UN to be involved in the region. However, at that

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time the UN has shown emphatic weakness and disability, without being able to have a concrete plan to stop the conflict. Furthermore, EU was characterized by a lack of cohesion as well. These organizations were not enough unique in their ideas and political positions. It is considered that the particular interests of the member states on both these international organizations prevailed compared with the overall interests. Incidents and other developments which were taking place in the former Yugoslavia received no special attention of the US administration. In these circumstances, the US involvement in the process was not consistent. It is characterized by a sporadic and inefficient approach. In that period Kosovo drew a special attention to the Bush Administration, being considered as a potential crisis place. This was argued by various authors. Furthermore there was a concern for a spread of potential conflict in Southeast Europe with the possibilities to involve US allies like Greece and Turkey (Malnar, 2013).

Considering all these difficulties which derived as a result of new world order and because of political and diplomatically impotence of the UN to act in compliance with a new order, specifically in the security field, President Bush (senior), almost by the end of his mandate undertook new actions in order to prevent a war in Balkans by warning the Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic and threatening him with a military intervention if he and his government would encourage any conflict in Kosovo. This move of President Bush is known as “Christmas Warning”, because it happened in 1992, between Christmas and the New Year. This was an important and progressive step of US towards conflict in former Yugoslavia. Also, this can be considered the first moment when an American president speaks directly for Kosovo, considering it as a milestone of US political and security interests. Various authors share the view that the US with this political maneuver in Kosovo case introduces a direct military threat. This variable remained constant and unchanged variable of US politics and diplomacy until 1990 when US, together with its NATO allies, ordered to commence air strikes against Serbia. After an NATO air campaign lasting seventy-seven days, Serbia was forced to withdraw its presence from Kosovo.

It is a general assumption that the Administration H.W. primary purpose had to be to preserve the stability in the region by supporting the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia. Kosovo was not a particular interest for his Administration. US administration interest about Kosovo began to increase by the end of his mandate, when Kosovo started to be seen as part of the security and political interests of the United States. In that period, Kosovo was part of general interest of US as a part of European Security (Malnar, 2013).

### **Clinton Administration: “humanitarian intervention”**

President George H. W. Bush failed to win a second presidential term and thus enabling Bill Clinton to be his follower. During the Clinton administration, in his second mandate, the war in Kosovo (1999) occurred. Hence, in that time period it can be identified the biggest commitment in history that US had vis-à-vis the region of Balkans and more specifically toward Kosovo as regard to the political, economic and military (security) engagement. Immediately after the President Clinton settled in the office, he faced many challenges. Most of them came as a result of the end of Cold War and the effects that this process produced everywhere in the world but particularly in Europe. He immediately became involved in the determination of Atlantic cooperation aimed at reconfiguring of relations with European countries. The aim of these changes and developments were to maintain US leading position in the security of Europe. President Clinton’s strategy was

based on a vision where Europe is going to be a peaceful place, leaving aside divisions and being united. A place where, according to him, will be dominated by the democracy as a political system and as a value also (Malnar, 2013).

With the aim of changing the course and accomplishing the idea of overall inclusion, President Clinton developed an inclusive strategy with a number of measures to be undertaken with the aim of strengthening the potential of European countries – which at that time not all of them were democratic – and the transformation of the NATO role with the aim of properly dealing with the challenges that the late XX and the beginning of XXI century will bring forward. As regard to the NATO, the basic idea was based on the expansion of this organization for security from an alliance which aimed to protect the territory of their member states by being based in the principle “one for all, and all for one” (Reka, Bashota, & Sela, 2016), to an organization that would guarantee the security of Europe as a whole, inclusion of Russia and the establishment of peace and stability in the Balkans (Malnar, 2013). Same as the previous administration of President H.W. Bush who had his doctrine – a theoretical platform on which they build concrete policy actions – the Clinton’s Administration developed its own doctrine. This strategy was based on the idea of “enlargement and engagement”. This is known also as a “Clinton Doctrine”. The idea of this doctrine was the enlargement of NATO with new members and the engagement of these members in the EU security policies (The White House, 1995).

The conflict in the former Yugoslavia would have had a more tragic ending without the commitment of the United States. Therefore, the achievement of peace in the region required a direct political and military engagement of the US. During the NATO air strikes in former Yugoslavia against Serbian military forces in 1999, the US was the biggest financial contributor with 68.4% of the total budget. The difference between the US as a main financial contributor and the second contributor, in this case France with 7.6%, was drastic. From this point to view, it is made clear that the commitment and determination of the US to this operation to function properly and to be successfully completed.

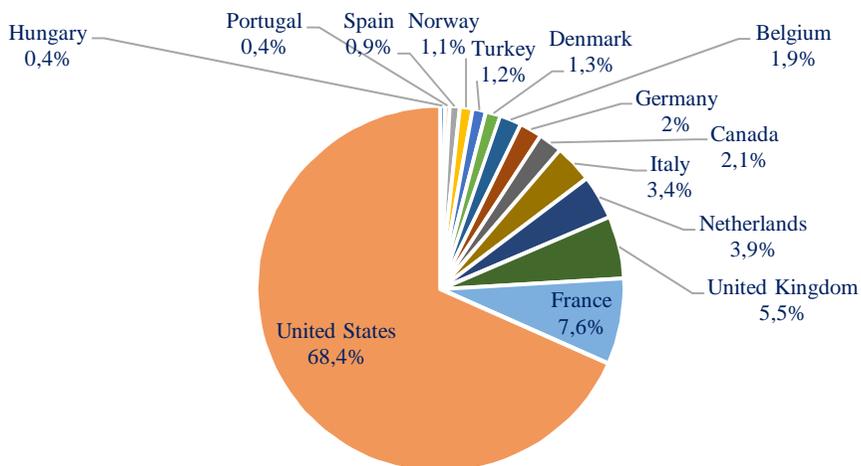


Figure 1: The Expenditure distribution according to states during the NATO air strikes Operation (Coleman, 2007)

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Serbian massacres against civilian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina were the main encouragement for the US Administration to change the tactical approach. Srebrenica massacre was the culmination of it. The US clearly understood that European countries are incapable and impotent to end the war in Bosnia. This urged the US commitment to engage directly which as a result had the end of war in B&H with the agreement reached in Dayton. However, it should be noted that even after Dayton, Kosovo remained an unresolved issue. Kosovo was considered as “ticking bomb” which was known that would blast, but nobody knew exactly the time when. Being challenged with this new situation, the Kosovo Albanian political elite started to be critical and skeptical at the same time with the pacifist concept led by Ibrahim Rugova and its party. It should be emphasized that Kosovo remained out of the agenda even after the Conference for Yugoslavia – which was led by Lord Carrington – and the process of recognition of new states which derived from the dissolution of Yugoslavia (Clark, 2000).

Being faced with this situation, critics of peaceful movement in Kosovo have changed the strategy in order to achieve their political aims. The new strategy was led by Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). The main method used by KLA during 1998-1999 was guerrilla war. This encouraged the use of disproportionate violence by Serb military forces against ethnic Albanian civilians thus committing many massacres in complete contradiction with the international law. Therefore, such actions of Serbian forces urged the international community, led by USA, for the military intervention of NATO in Kosovo.

The US involvement in the Kosovo conflict opened many debates among the American public opinion by addressing the legitimate question whether the US engagement in an armed conflict in the Balkans was in line with the vital interests of the United States. Nevertheless, considering the continually failures of the US and other Western partners that – through diplomatic means – to stop violence and repression in Kosovo in 1998, the reputation and political credibility of NATO and USA has been decreased significantly. For Clinton Administration this was perceived as a serious and important issue. Despite the fact that Kosovo conflict did not harm directly the US interest, Clinton administration considered that their inability to end this conflict would damage US interests because it was against US political and security doctrine to maintain a democratic and peaceful Europe (Malnar, 2013). After the US used all diplomatic tools of foreign policy and taking into account the inability of European countries to have a common approach in order to resolve international conflicts, the USA took the NATO leadership to lead the military intervention against the forces of the former Yugoslavia (Lambeth, 2001). Such intervention without UN approval had caused an unprecedented confusion as regard to the legal viewpoint of the international law.

The victory of NATO against the military and police forces of Serbia was a clear message of US for the importance of peace and stability in Europe. In Kosovo case, NATO indicated its ability to be united and adapted to a new challenges after the collapse of the Communist Bloc. NATO’s action against Serbia in International Relations (IR) is known as “humanitarian intervention” (Schnabel & Thakur, 2001). The effect of military action was the promotion of humanitarian intervention as a moral principle in IR, by putting within a context of the state sovereignty principle, which is sanctioned by international law and the United Nations Charter. Many scholars argue that international relations in the XXI century, especially after the war in Kosovo, have evolved in that direction that except “state sovereignty”, at present time we are living in a period of “sovereignty of the

individual” (Reka, 2010). Thus, special attention is paid to the individual as an actor of international relations (Jones, 2016).

The involvement of US military in the Kosovo War produced many consequences in the subsequent events. One of them was the downfall from power of the creator of wars in the former Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milosevic. This made possible the beginning of democratization of Serbia. Therefore, Kosovo was freed from Serbia and welcomed an international administration known as United Nation Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). Thus, the US was not far from their stated objectives: stabilizing the region and democratizing the whole Europe (The White House, 1995).

**George W. Bush Administration: “enough is enough - Kosovo is independent”**

After the NATO airstrikes against the Serbian forces, in Kosovo was established International civil presence based in 1244 UN Security Council resolution. This was a completely new situation and incomparably in favor for Kosovo. However, despite UNMIK’s and many other international organizations solid work they did in Kosovo (in the reconstruction and consolidation of institutions), the situation was unclear and the final status was not defined. The 2004 riots showed clearly an immediate need to resolve the final status. This was the momentum that required again a direct involvement of the US. Therefore, during the second term of President George W. Bush, the US considered the need to be committed again in the Kosovo case in order to complete the cycle which already started at the beginning of the 1990. Despite the engagement of US against international terrorism and international operations in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2005, they pledged to eventually define the final status of Kosovo. The Independence was regarded as the most natural solution for Kosovo and was rated as the most logical outcome of the whole process. Many scholars thought that US commitment to give the final solution for Kosovo had to do with spreading the message to the rest of the world that the US supports the creation of a state even though the population of the country is composed by 90% of Islam religion. During that time the US reputation was unsatisfactory worldwide. Therefore, making Kosovo a success story, where rule of law, economic development and democracy predominate, US wanted to testify that the religious composition of the country has little significance, comparing with embrace of democratic values (Malnar, 2013, pp. 341-342).

Despite the unilateral approach in dealing with foreign policy that characterized the Bush Jr. presidency, US did not want to solve unilaterally the Kosovo status issue. Because of this, they considered important that the process of independence declaration to be legal and legitimate in order to have a support of the international community and by initiating direct talks between Belgrade and Pristine. Therefore the US had encouraged and facilitated the process of multilateral negotiations with the active participation of the Contact Group. Taking into account the strengthening of Russia’s position and its interests in the region and the aim of Russia to accomplish its interests through Serbia, the negotiations between Pristine and Belgrade, in one way, became negotiations between the US and Russia. Russia with a more ambitious and aggressive leader (Putin), was not the same as Yeltsin’s Russia in 1999 (Reka, 2010).

However, Kosovo’s independence was not opposed only by Russia. There were solid resistance from some of the EU countries as well. Due to the fact that Pristine and Belgrade stance towards the independence remained diametrically antagonist, the resistance became much more persistent. This meant that there would not be a consensus

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agreement that could be supported by the UN Security Council in order to give the required legality and legitimacy to the process. In these circumstances, the US had to prove its crucial role in international processes considering Kosovo as its political investment and also as a success story too. Therefore, the US acted with impressive persistence and the process was finalized through a unilateral declaration of independence by the Kosovo Assembly. As a result, Kosovo declared its independence on 17 February 2008 unilaterally without the UN Security Council approval. Kosovo was recognized by US immediately and, on the other hand, did a massive lobbying to the other countries to do the same. The main argument that the US underlined when recognized Kosovo was that Kosovo is *sui generis* case and as such is not replicable in other countries or regions, as a result, it cannot be used as a precedent in international relations as well as in international law (U.S. Department of State, 2016).

The main principle based on which the Bush administration had supported Kosovo was, what is known as, the right of peoples for self-determination, which is based on the UN Charter. This approach was in compliance with the policy of US President Woodrow Wilson who is the founder of the modern right for self-determination (Lipušček, 2008). However, it is naive to think that this was the only and exclusive motivation of the US. It can be concluded that the action has been motivated by other arguments, which would fall under the orbit of their national interest in one or another mode. Among the factors of President Bush real-politics, who relied on the geopolitical principle was: permanent affirmation of the US role in European security. According to scholars, another argument, was the message that the US wanted to give the world in general and Islamic countries in particular by supporting the creation of a state in Europe with 90% of its population is Muslim. Another goal was the weakening the Russian influence in Eastern Europe. Kosovo independence has strengthened the US position in that part of Europe. Through Kosovo, US can spread its influence in the region like in Serbia, Bulgaria Macedonia, and Greece, which is considered as relevant region potentially to be used by Russia for energetic cooperation (Malnar, 2013).

In this line of thinking, the scholar of international relations, Blerim Reka, identifies a regional factorization of Albanians – here are included Kosovo and Albania. According to him Albania is becoming the main crossroads for transit of gas to Europe. Along with the Republic of Kosovo both of them remain US strategic allies in the fight against ISIS. These developments are gradually dividing the Western Balkans, more precisely countries in the Adriatic Balkans (Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro & Macedonia) and countries in Danube Balkans (Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina). The first group of countries are considered as pro-American and second group pro-Russian (Reka, 2014). Taking into account all the arguments listed above it can be concluded that Kosovo is a state that was created due to the US political and military engagement which is in a compliance with US interests. Kosovo is a result of the US commitment that begins in the mid of 80's, culminated in 1999 with military intervention and was finalized in 2008 with the recognition of Kosovo by the US.

### **Unconditional friendship of Kosovo as a national interest *vis-a-vis* the US**

Kosovo's relations with the US goes beyond those of a friendship based on national interest. Since the beginning of Yugoslavian crises, Kosovo leaders have seen US as the only country that can support their political goal to become independent. Therefore, regardless the fact that Kosovo political leaders have been part of the pacifist approach, or part of the war approach, all of them had only one variable towards the United States:

its unconditional friendship. The same mood also prevailed among the people of Kosovo. In a study conducted by the American company that deals with polls and surveys since 1935, established by George Gallup, Kosovo is first in the region and in the world with 85% of respondents which support the US and its leadership. (Gallup, 2016).

The US was not the only country that played a fundamental role in politics and security of Kosovo. Many other European countries were also vital, such as Germany, France, Italy, Turkey etc. However, affection for the United States remained dominant and unalterable. In a study conducted by the Kosovo Centre for Security Studies in 2015, US was considered as the friendliest country. The research was conducted with the participation of over 1.000 respondents in order to measure the perceptions of friend/enemy countries toward Kosovo.

The survey identified a wide support for the United States by respondents. More than 90% of respondents consider that the US and Germany are friendly countries (70.7% of them considered them as very friendly, while 20.7% has considered them as a friendly states). Same as the USA, Germany is considered friendly towards Kosovo by 91.9% of respondents. Positive perception towards these countries goes beyond bilateral relations, in this way, the USA and Germany are perceived as key partners and allies in the process of Kosovo Euro-Atlantic integration (Kosovo Center for Security Studies, 2016).

There are several reasons for this attitude of Kosovo people towards these two countries. Since the late 80's and early 90's the US is politically and militarily committed to resolve the issue of Kosovo. US had a key role during the NATO air strikes against the Serbian military forces in 1999. Further, the US was the leading country that supported the establishment of new institutions in Kosovo and, what is more important, thanks to their support Kosovo declared independence from Serbia. Since 1999 until 2011, US supported Kosovo with around 1.6 billion dollar which were dedicated for: reconstruction, capacity building and humanitarian assistance as well. US constantly are supporting the private sector and good governance in Kosovo, where special attention is paid to minority issues (Global Security, 2016).

While respondents consider the US as the main global ally, in the case of Germany, the trends show that Kosovo citizens perceive Germany as their main ally in Europe. According to the "Report on Human Development in Kosovo 2014", 32.80% of the Diaspora from Kosovo are located in Germany, followed by Switzerland with 24.80% and Italy with 7.6%. According to the same report, 30.4% from Kosovo Diaspora lives and works in the US (Report on Human Development in Kosovo 2014: Migration as a Force for Development , 2014). In addition, it is also important to note that Germany represents also the first place from where Kosovo Diaspora send remittances. Thus, remittances from Germany composed 34% of total remittances received in Kosovo, from Switzerland about 21%, Italy and Austria over 9% and 6%, from US over 4% (Central Bank of Republic of Kosovo , 2013).

### **Conclusion**

The US was one of the main factors that played an irreplaceable role for the security in Kosovo since 90's, during the war, NATO air strikes in 1999, until the declaration of independence in February 2008. It can be concluded that the US direct interest for the situation in Kosovo began during the presidency of the President George H.W. Bush. At the beginning of his term he was not focused on the developments in Yugoslavia, by the end of his term he was engaged more in promoting his political

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doctrine known as “New World Order”. It was the end of his mandate when he through the “Christmas warning” set Kosovo case finally on the agenda of the US foreign policy.

The Clinton administration had the biggest impact in the international security of Kosovo. During the Clinton administration, the NATO military intervention in Kosovo, known as “humanitarian intervention” occurred. This was an important moment in terms for the security in Kosovo. Responsible and guarantor of Kosovo security was the world greatest superpower which operated through the greatest military alliance in the world – NATO. In addition, after the war the US had the main role in Kosovo. The focus was on consolidation the public institutions, promoting democratic values and establishing the rule of law.

After the riots of 2004 the US was convinced that without resolving the issue of Kosovo final status, it is impossible for the region to have peace and stability. The US engagement in Kosovo grew significantly, despite commitments and priorities that they had fighting against global terrorism. The US leadership persistence enabled Kosovo to declare its independence in 2008. In addition, the US was one of the first countries to recognize the state of Kosovo, stating that this is a *sui generis* case in international theory and practice and as such should be treated. To this day, the presence of the US not only in Kosovo but the entire Balkans remains very important factor and actor for the stability of whole region.

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#### Article Info

*Received:* February 15 2017

*Accepted:* March 20 2017

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