

Twenty-two Years Since the Launch of the NATO Aggression on Serbia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

Unipolarity can't be reincarnated

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The Belgrade Forum for a World of Equals, the Club of Generals and Admirals of Serbia and a number of other independent, non-partisan, non-profit organizations have been continuously marking March 24th 1999, the date of the beginning of NATO military aggression since the year 2000 to date, organizing commemorative ceremonies, domestic and international conferences, laying wreaths at the memorials dedicated to the victims of aggression, publishing books, releasing statements, and reminding friends and partners in the country and abroad to also take part in these activities. This makes a distinct part of the overall commemorative activities of the Serbian society and, as of lately, of the state institutions of Serbia as well. This year's activities had to be in line with the measures effected due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The first and the foremost reason is the sense of moral duty towards human victims, military, police and civilian ones alike, because all of them are innocent victims fallen on the soil of their own country from the foreign aggressor's weapons. The aggression itself took between 3,500 – 4,000 human lives, of whom more than 1,100 were military and police personnel, whereas the rest comprised civilians, women and children, workers, the public TV-broadcaster's employees, passengers in trains and busses, displaced people on the move. The numbers of those who died after the armed aggression, firstly from among some 10,000 wounded, then of those who perished from the scattered cluster bombs, and of those who succumbed to consequences of the use of missiles filled with depleted uranium and of the poisoning by noxious gasses generated upon the bombing of refineries and chemical plants, are yet to be determined. We remember them all today and pay our deepest homage. We are confident that today's youth and all future generations will also remember those victims, aware of this remembrance being the moral duty of entire nation, a precondition for preserving dignity and peaceful future.

The second reason is to defend the truth, to leave no room for forgeries, lies and trickeries aimed, then and now, to diminish the aggressor's responsibility by inculcating the victim. This is why we have to clarify that the NATO war was neither an intervention, nor an aerial campaign, nor a “small Kosovo war”, not even a mere bombing, but instead an illegal

aggression committed without a United Nations Security Council's approval, blatant violation of the UN Charter, the OSCE Final Act, the fundamental principles of international law and, most notably, violation of the NATO Founding Act of 1949 and respective national constitutions of the latter's member states. This was the first war on European soil since World War II, waged against an independent and sovereign state which neither attacked nor otherwise threatened either NATO or any of its individual member states.

Thus, NATO inflicted a heavy blow to the legacies of World War II and of the agreements reached in Tehran, Yalta, Potsdam and Helsinki. Its aggression on Serbia (the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) in 1999 undermined the basic principles of international relations and the security system, for which tens of millions of people were killed. March 24th, 1999 has entered history as a turning point in the world relation symbolizing the peak of uni-polar domination, the beginning of its downfall and emerging multi-polar world order. Not once, we heard that by launching attack on Yugoslavia NATO and its leading power wanted to preserve its international credibility. What came as the result was just the opposite.

The aggressor wanted the war by all means, not any peaceful and sustainable solution for Kosovo and Metohija, the least to protect human rights or avoidance of "humanitarian catastrophe". It wanted a war to justify NATO's existence in the post-Cold War era and enormous budget appropriations for armaments, that is, the huge profits for military-industrial complex. NATO wanted a war to demonstrate in practice implementation of the doctrine of expansion to the East, to Russian borders and also to create a precedent for the globalization of armed interventionism devoid of observance of international law and the role of the UN Security Council.

It was cover-up for deployment of American troops in the Balkan Peninsula and mushrooming of a chain of the new USA military bases from Bond Steel in the province of Kosovo and Metohija to a dozen of other bases from Black to Baltic Seas. Europe sank deep conceding to participate in a war on itself. The fact that Europe still fails to put focus on itself, its own interests and identity, while pressuring Serbia to accept forcible theft of a part of her state territory (Kosovo and Metohija) and agree to the Dayton Agreement's revision and the creation of a unitary Bosnia and Herzegovina, only testifies to a worrying syndrome of the past now threatening its independence, unity, and development.

Thirdly, because we do not assent to defeatism and propensity of some media from the so-called non-governmental sector and some public figures who interpret NATO aggression in a way that reduces the aggressor's responsibility, while suggesting that Serbia, in the name of a purported realism and for the sake of a "better future", should shelve the topic of aggression and 'relieve herself' of Kosovo and Metohija as of a burden choking her progress. However, NATO's responsibility for aggression and alliance with the terrorist and separatist KLA cannot be reduced in any way, the least of all could it be transferred onto Serbia. This would be shameful for Serbia and the Serbian people, and very detrimental for Europe and the future of global relations. The future of Europe's identity, autonomy, security and cooperation is highly dependent on reexamining 1999 aggression on Yugoslavia, accepting it was historic mistake. Otherwise it will continue to seriously hinder its own interests.

Although devoted to Europe, Serbia cannot pay the price of re-establishing perturbed unity of the EU and NATO and/or of pursuing geopolitical goals of their key members, by means of renouncing Kosovo and Metohija, her state, cultural, and spiritual foundation. I am confident that Serbia will remain committed to a peaceful, just, and sustainable solution in line with

the basic principles of peace, security and cooperation, while observing her Constitution and UN Security Council Resolution 1244. By far largest share of humanity has come to understanding that there are no humanitarian wars or wars to protect population. "Colored revolutions" and cruising missiles do not help 'export' democracy and human rights but rather serve interests of domination of liberal multinational corporate capital. In contrast to whatever the policy of force and the self-proclaimed 'exceptionality' may presume, history cannot be halted, nor uni-polarity reincarnated.

Fourthly, we are deeply concerned over the unending escalation of global relations, the arms race, the absence of dialogue among the leading powers and the deepening of mistrust among the key stakeholders in European and global relations. Public denominating of nuclear powers and permanent UN Security Council members as adversaries, plans to create 'democratic coalitions' aimed at confrontation with 'authoritarian systems', mass-scale military exercises deployed from the Atlantic and Baltic to the Indo-Pacific to 'contain' the 'malign influences' – signal a serious deterioration of global relations and risk unpredictable consequences. All this does not concern the great powers only, although is mostly dependent on them, but also reflects adversely on the position and development of all countries in the world, including also the position of Serbia and other small and medium size countries. As peace is indivisible, so are the dangers to peace and security. Hence we call on the dialogue on the highest level of permanent members of UN Security Council, urgent relaxation tensions, halt of deepening mistrust, respect for equality and partnership in resolving main urgent international challenges and problems, such as Covid 19 pandemic, deepening global economic and social gaps, climate warming, arms race and many of actual or potential conflicts.

Fifthly, because we do not want to witness a repeat of the anguish, victims, and devastation suffered by our nation during and after NATO's 1999 aggression ever, anywhere in the world. The tragic destiny of children in Belgrade, Varvarin, Korisha, Kosovska Mitrovica, Murino, must not be repeated.

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