

CLASSICAL THEORIES OF AIRPOWER AND THE NATO WAR AGAINST THE FR YUGOSLAVIA IN 1999¹

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Abstract: The first part of the paper describes and explains the classical theories of airpower which occurred during the period between the two world wars. The main hypothesis of the paper is that the NATO war against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia represented the actualization of the key assumptions of these theories and the predictions of their authors. The auxiliary hypotheses are contained in the view that NATO achieved its goals in the war primarily with a strategic bombing – destruction of infrastructure, electricity network and industrial potential. The FR Yugoslavia represented an ideal target for the conduct of the air warfare because due to its relative development, it was highly dependent on this infrastructure, networks and potentials, while on the other hand, it did not possess the capacity to defend itself from the NATO air strikes. One of the hypotheses of the paper is that the 1999 war has confirmed the convictions of the authors of the classical theories of airpower stating that the land forces are less relevant in modern armed conflicts involving technologically advanced nations. Finally, the paper also states that recourse to air warfare is only possible under certain (specific) conditions - complete isolation of the targeted country, its inadequate air defence system capacity, vulnerability to a significant degree of damage to its infrastructure.

Key words: air power, war, NATO, Yugoslavia, strategy.

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CLASSICAL THEORIES OF AIRPOWER

When it comes to the classical theories of airpower, we think first of the concepts of the use of aviation in war, which were elaborated between the two world wars, although deeper and more extensive reflections on this issue were published during the First World War. The most influential, most read and commonly quoted classical airpower theorists were Italian General Giulio Douhet (1869-1930), US Brigadier General William Mitchell (1879-1936) and American designer and theorist of Russian descent Alexander De Seversky (1894-1974). Although they intellectually matured under different circumstances, and their careers developed and ended differently, their views and predictions crystallized around a few almost identical key theses.

For Douhet, the development of military aviation and its use in armed conflicts represented a turning point in the preparation and conduct of an armed struggle. The wars of the earlier epoch, including to a greater extent the First World War, were wars that clearly distinguished the front line and the rear area. According to Douhet, "the battlefield was strictly defined; the armed forces were in a category distinct from civilians, who in their turn were more or less organized to fill the needs of a nation in the war" (Douhet, 1998, p. 9). Regarding the decision or outcome of the war, Douhet concludes "it was impossible to invade the enemy's territory without first breaking through his defensive lines", however, "now is possible to go far behind the fortified lines of defense without first breaking through them. It is air power which makes it possible" (Douhet, 1998, p. 9). Due to the use of airpower, warfare will not be limited to the ultimate range of artillery but will be directly felt hundreds of miles within the territory of the state-warring parties. The ultimate consequence of these tactical-operative circumstances will be, according to Douhet, that "there will be no distinction between soldiers and civilians" (Douhet, 1998, p. 10).

Instead of the direct (close) combat of one land-based army against the other, with the help of, of course, aviation, Douhet predicts (i.e., substantially proposes) the direct use of aviation, both against enemy aviation and its airports, and against a wide range of targets in the rear area. In his view, "aerial offensives will be directed against such targets as peacetime industrial and commercial establishments; important buildings, private and public; transport arteries and centers; and certain designated areas of the civilian population as well" (Douhet, 1998, p. 20). In addition, Douhet recommends as a norm of the future air strikes that "*the objective must be destroyed completely in one attack, making further attacks on the same target unnecessary*". It should be

emphasized that Douhet published this opinion in 1921, that is, many decades before such a request could be fulfilled through the use of precision ammunition of immense destructive power, which, after all, was excessively used in the NATO war against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999!

The precondition for such use of aviation is to acquire the command of the air. This notion according to Douhet denotes the ability to “cut an enemy’s army and navy from their bases of operations and nullify their chances of winning the war” (Douhet, 1998, p. 23). On the other hand, to be defeated in the air, according to Douhet means, “to be at the mercy of the enemy, with no chance at all of defending oneself, compelled to accept whatever terms he sees fit to dictate” (Douhet, 1998, p. 23). The task of acquiring the command of the air can be realized exclusively by aviation organized as an independent form of armed forces. In other words, since, according to Douhet, in the future, the outcome of the war will be decided in the air, the key task of one state will be to acquire the command of the air, which is only possible with, as Douhet emphasizes, an independent air force of adequate power (Douhet, 1998, p. 32). In his perception, the independent air force implies an “entity capable of fighting on the new battlefield, where neither army nor navy can take part” (Douhet, 1998, p. 33). In future wars, which involve massive strikes on the enemy’s rear area, Douhet devotes special attention to the radius of action of bombers, emphasizing that “a bombing plane’s radius of action should, therefore, be the greatest possible; for the longer its radius of action, the deeper its penetration into enemy territory” (Douhet, 1998, p. 38).

The second advocate of the doctrine of airpower, William Mitchell, also defended the thesis on the strategic use of aviation in the wars of the future. According to Mitchell, “war is an attempt of one nation to impress its will on another nation by force after all other means of arriving at an adjustment of a dispute have failed” (Mitchell, 1930, p. 253). In a war, according to his understanding, it is crucial to gain control of the vital centers of the other that it will be powerless to defend itself. What are the vital centers? Mitchell states that they consist of “cities where people live, areas where their food and supplies are produced and the transport lines that carry these supplies from place to place” (Mitchell, 1930, p. 253).

The introduction of aviation into warfare, in his opinion, completely changes the order of priorities and goals that war aims to achieve. He said, a “hostile main army in the field is the false object, and the real objectives are the vital centers. The old theory that victory meant destruction of the hostile main army is untenable” (Mitchell, 1930, p. 255).

Mitchell is justifiably considered in the United States as one of the founders of the US Air Force Concept, which envisioned and sketched the development and use of aviation to gain global domination. Mitchell himself said, "there is no place on the world's surface that aircraft cannot go. They can easily fly from America to Europe and back, with military loads, or from Asia to America and back" (Mitchell, 1930, p. 256).

The third advocate of the concept of airpower mentioned in this paper is Alexander de Seversky, who, unlike Douhet and Mitchell, survived the Second World War, as well as the wars that the United States led in Korea and Vietnam. He lived to see the sudden development of aeronautical technique, nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. His theses largely coincided with the views expressed by Douhet and Mitchell. After the Second World War, Seversky wrote the "new strategic truth was: that air power can weaken and neutralize armies to the point of impotence; that the conquest of the airspaces over enemy nation can by-pass and disarm its surface forces and impose surrender without a traditional showdown on the battlefields" (Seversky, 1950, p. 28). This Seversky's thesis was exceptionally important given the main thesis of this paper that the NATO war against the FR Yugoslavia was a demonstration and realization of the key premises of the classical theorists of airpower.

It is clear that Seversky, like Douhet and Mitchell, has defended the thesis of air strikes in the rear area (objects of strategic importance), while traditional land-based operations and battles are becoming increasingly irrelevant. Like these two thinkers, Seversky also considered the effects of air strikes on the urban and commercial centers of a potential enemy (after the Second World War, Seversky focused on the USSR as a potential enemy of the United States). One of the key theses of Seversky refers to the vulnerability of modern societies when stricken by airpower. Seversky says that "backward and primitive peoples can take to the woods and the caves and there survive a rain of air bombs" (Seversky, 1942, p. 9). On the other hand, modern industrial societies, like the US, are overly sensitive to massive and constant air strikes since "a few well-placed bombs blot out public utilities, cut off water supplies, bury a million city dwellers under debris of their skyscrapers, disrupt industrial life, and interrupt the flow of food and supplies" (Seversky, 1942, p. 10). This difference in the power of absorption of the effects of air strikes between a relatively primitive and technologically advanced society could at least partly explain why the United States and its allies, despite quality air strikes, were forced to engage ground troops and

occupy Afghanistan in 2001, while two years earlier against the FR Yugoslavia the airborne operations were enough.

At the end of the 1940s, Seversky formulated some of the key postulations about the use of airpower which have remained cutting-edge to this day. In his opinion, air power can be more human than the traditional surface forces. It does not seek to eradicate the population, but to disarm the foe by crippling his industrial setup, fuel, transportation, and other military vitals (Seversky, 1950, p. 183). A little later, Seversky, speaking of a possible war with the USSR, stated that the US goal "should be to compromise the enemy regime by exposing its inability to defend and supply the needs of its people" (Seversky, 1950, pp. 187-188).

In his deliberations of a possible war between the US and the USSR, Seversky foresaw several tactical-operational principles of the air warfare operations that would be ongoing during the NATO's 1999 aggression. According to him, airpower is a flexible weapon, significant for psychological as well as for military offensive. He recommended that the "whole pattern of destruction should be designed as far as possible, to isolate the government from its subjects [...]. We shall destroy the regime's radio broadcasting facilities [...]" (Seversky, 1950, pp. 192-193). Seversky was one of the first authors to anticipate the so-called surgical strikes with precisely defined targets of relatively small areas and volumes. The bombing of facilities of Radio-Television of Serbia, as well as some facilities used by the highest civilian and military leaders of the FR of Yugoslavia by the NATO aviation, represented the realization of the Seversky's anticipations. That the Seversky's views were ahead of his time could be perceived in the fact that the opinions almost identical to his were represented more than half a century later. Thus, in one, otherwise critically intoned text on the possibilities of airpower, it is said "air power offers an economy of violent effort through its ability to precisely target key assets. It can attack strategic targets directly without having to engage the main body of enemy forces, thereby focusing attacks on the enemy leadership" (McInnes, 2001, pp. 43-44.).

Some common principles of the classical theory of airpower can be derived from the published statements of the authors quoted:

- atmosphere is an environment in which the outcome of future wars will be decided, and therefore mastering it is of key importance;

- operations of a land-based army and navy will go to a position of secondary importance; traditional land and sea battles are becoming increasingly irrelevant for the unfolding of the war;
- war can be won by air strikes in the deep rear area of the enemy – engaging at its vital points – cities, industrial capacities, roads, electrical networks;
- air force should be a special (independent) type of armed force, and it should be used for strategic purposes – to contribute decisively to the outcome of the war.

THE NATO AIR WAR AGAINST THE FR YUGOSLAVIA - THE REALISED PREDICTIONS OF DOUHET, MITCHELL AND SEVERSKY

To begin with, we should briefly recall the fundamental features of the NATO aggression against Yugoslavia. The war launched by the Alliance against Yugoslavia, called Operation Allied Force, under the pretext of preventing a humanitarian catastrophe to which the Kosovo Albanians allegedly were exposed, lasted for 78 days. A total of 829 NATO aircraft were engaged, of which about 530 belonged to the USAF. Its basic characteristic were, considering the ambience in which operations were conducted, that it was purely an air war, without the use of land forces (excluding the fighting of Albanian insurgents with members of the Yugoslav Army on the borders of Yugoslavia and Albania in which the forces equivalent to one or two infantry brigades participated on both sides). Also, the extremely important feature was that one of the sides – NATO – ended this war without human losses. The opinions that the “air war over Serbia, in 1999, was revolutionary” (Haulman, 2015, p. 58) are frequent. If we were to observe the structure of the attacked targets, it could be said that in the first half of the war military objectives were predominant, while in the second half of the war, civilian targets of strategic importance were primarily destroyed. What was the cause of this? According to one opinion, “the very success of the Yugoslav armed forces in evading the NATO’s air strikes, in turn, led NATO to a choice of bombing targets that destroyed much of the material infrastructure of Serbia’s urban and industrial way of life” (Papasotiriou, 2002, p 51).

During 78 days, the NATO’s aircrews flew more than 38,000 sorties of which more than 10,000 were strike sorties. 421 fixed targets in 11 categories were attacked during the 78-day course of Operation Allied Force, of which

35 percent were believed to have been destroyed, another 10 percent sustained no damage and the remaining suffered varying degrees of damage from light to severe. The largest single fixed-target category entailed ground-force facilities (106 targets), followed by command and control facilities (88 targets) and lines of communication, mostly bridges (68 targets). Other target categories included POL-related facilities (30 targets), industry (17 targets), airfields (8 targets), border posts (18 targets) and electrical power facilities (19 targets) (Lambeth, 2001, p. 62). One, essentially well-industrialized and urbanized country, such as Serbia, suffered in particular from attacks on the electricity network. On May 2, 1999, the F-117s dropped CBU-94 munitions on five transformer yards of the electric power grid of Belgrade, cutting off electricity to 70 percent of Yugoslavia (Haulman, 2015, p. 62). And again, the “Yugoslav electrical grid was severely damaged over the course of three consecutive nights starting on May 24. Those attacks, directed against electrical power facilities and related targets in Belgrade, Novi Sad and Nis, the three largest cities in Serbia, shut off the power to 80 percent of Serbia, leaving millions without electricity or water service” (Lambeth, 2001, p. 42). In late May, “NATO expanded the targeting list once again, and began to take the war to targets affecting the Serb people. Factories, communication systems, and power grids were damaged or destroyed, putting Serbia under more duress than it had felt up to that point” (Hebert, 2009, p. 45). Considering everything, the air campaign had a devastating effect. According to one estimate, “roads, rail lines and bridges across Yugoslavia had been knocked out, halting the normal flow of the civilian economy” (Grant, 1999, p. 37).

It seems that the most precise summary assessment of the position of Serbia (FR Yugoslavia) during the NATO bombing was given by Barry R. Posen, stating that “Serbia was in an unusually poor position, by historical standards, to resist systematic bombing of its industrial base. As an economically developed society, the Serb people depend on the industrial economy and associated infrastructure to survive” (Posen, 2000, p. 73). And this economy and the associated infrastructure, as we saw, was systematically destroyed, just as it was suggested by the classical theories of the airpower.

In the western scholarly literature during the first years after the war, there was a debate about the factors that influenced the then leadership of Serbia (Yugoslavia) to accept NATO’s conditions for the end of the bombing, precisely at that time (early June) when it did so. Three hypotheses were in circulation – the absence of concrete support from the Russian Federation to

Yugoslavia, the threat of NATO land invasion and, finally, the effects of strategic bombing.

Andrew Stigler analyzed the debate, various arguments, as well as first-hand testimony of senior political and military officials. Stigler concluded by analyzing in detail the available data, facts from the field, as well as the opinions of other authors, that "Milošević did not pull his forces out of Kosovo because of a NATO threat to launch a ground war" (Stigler, 2002-2003, p. 153). According to him, "he seems to have been primarily concerned with three other factors: (1) the credible threat of continued and intensified bombing by the alliance, (2) the bombing's growing domestic repercussions, and (3) the public loss of Russia's support" (Stigler, 2002-2003, p. 153). The general Stigler's conclusion was, that "the war over Kosovo demonstrates that coercive air power alone can achieve major political goals" (Stigler, 2002-2003, p. 155). A study he was referring to was drawn up by Stephen T. Hosmer in front of RAND. Hosmer, also after a detailed examination of Operation Allied Force, said in the final part of the study that "air power made three crucial contributions to the conflict's successful outcome" (from NATO's standpoint, N.V. & B. DJ.). In the first place, "the NATO bombing created a political climate in Serbia conducive to concessions on Kosovo" (Hosmer, 2001, p. 123). This meant that NATO, with the insistent and more intense bombing, forced politicians and ordinary citizens, who initially opposed the NATO concessions, to accept whatever was needed just to stop the air campaign. In addition, according to this author, the air strikes have influenced President Milošević and his elite to "perceive the air attacks as (1) causing a magnitude of damage to Serbia's infrastructure, economy and political stability that, if allowed to continue, might eventually threaten their regime's survival, and (2) creating stress, hardships, and costs for members of their own ruling elites" (Hosmer, 2001, p. 124). Finally, "the perception that NATO's future air attacks would be unconstrained made a settlement seem imperative" (Hosmer, 2001, p. 124).

One of the key factors for such outcomes was, according to Hosmer, that the Yugoslav Army "had no defense against the NATO's aircraft and missile strikes on fixed targets and could impose little if any cost on their attackers" (Hosmer, 2001, p. 127). Posen completely correctly observed that the "Serb air defense has done what they could, but the network itself had taken a beating, losing perhaps as much as half of its ability to launch surface-to-air missiles with no ability to replace lost air defense equipment. Unlike the North Vietnamese, the Serbs did not have a charge account in the arsenals of the Soviet Union, and they had never produced top-of-the-line air defense

missile systems of fighter aircraft themselves" (Posen, 2000, p. 73). It should be emphasized that even after 78 days of intense bombing, the Yugoslav Army was operatively capable and able to provide solid resistance to the eventual land invasion of NATO. However, in the context of an overall destruction from the air (from which there was no defense), this fact was completely irrelevant at the beginning of June 1999.

A prominent Russian author and general Vladimir Slipchenko, writing a book about the wars of the sixth generation, noted that the NATO air campaign against the FR Yugoslavia represented a prototype of such a war, in which one warring side has destroyed the infrastructure and economy of another warring side with long-range precise weapons from a large distance, without the introduction of ground troops and violent crossing of the state border. Since there were no conventional military operations, neither fighting nor battles, there was no theater of operations. According to Slipchenko, the Yugoslav Army, based on the land forces, could not resist the opponent in such a war, and that was why instead of a theater of operations, there was only a theater of war dominated by only one side (Slipchenko, 2002, p. 97).

Western military officials and analysts were frustrated by the fact that, according to their criteria, the air war of NATO against the FR Yugoslavia lasted too long considering the huge asymmetry in the economic and technological strength and military capacities of the warring parties. From the angle of the classical theory of airpower, the explanation for the duration of this war can be found in its erroneous start. Instead of targeting smaller, moving aims of tactical importance, Douhet, Mitchell and Seversky would probably suggest to NATO campaign planners strikes on infrastructure from the very beginning of the operation. A similar opinion was advocated by retired British Air Marshal John Walker, who wrote after the end of the war that "militarily, the top priority target system in the case of Serbia should have been the electric power system. Not, it must be said, using graphite bombs that are little more than technocrat's ego-trip but by taking out the power station boilers. With no pressure, no generation. On the morning of 25 March, the Serbian state, from north to south and east to west, should have woken up to dark houses, cold breakfasts and a walk to work past stationary trams to machines lying silent in the workshops" (Walker, 1999, p. 17). An almost identical opinion was expressed by one of the NATO commanders in the war against the FR Yugoslavia, General Michael Short, who thought that with the bombing that from the beginning was focused on infrastructure, Operation Allied Force would last for three or four weeks (Hosmer, 2001, p 128). Nevertheless, it cannot be said with certainty whether

such a “robust” approach from the start of the operation would have caused its shorter duration.

As indicated previously, Seversky believed that airpower if properly used, can be more human than the traditional surface forces. For Seversky, “industrial potentials, not human beings, should be primary targets in the bombing. In the hands of civilized, technologically advanced countries, air power can be the most human of all military forces” (Seversky, 1950, p. 184). Large-scale destruction of infrastructure in Serbia during the NATO aggression was accompanied by relatively moderate human losses (about 1,000 soldiers and policemen, and about 2,000 civilians, of which 83 children), taking into account the amount of the murderous cargo that was thrown on the FR Yugoslavia. Such a proportion between the destruction of material goods and human casualties was achieved primarily through the use of high-precision ammunition. According to one opinion, “as a result of the American technical advances in the area of precision bombing during the 1990s, NATO was able on the whole to attain this fine balance in the damage that it inflicted upon Serbia. The advanced integrated military systems summarized by the C4+I formula (command, control, communications, computation and intelligence) permitted the United States to hit a large number of infrastructural and political targets in Serbia, while keeping civilian casualties to historically very low levels in relation to the firepower that was used” (Papasotiriou, 2002, p. 56). In this way, Seversky’s prediction of “humane” air warfare he formulated in the late 1940s, was realized several decades later.

It should be emphasized that NATO air force pilots during the air strike against the FR Yugoslavia committed several crimes that have largely “spoiled” the “humane” character of the war in terms of a relatively moderate number of victims. Bearing in mind the advanced military technology of the US and other countries in the Alliance, praised by many Western authors, it is quite difficult to consider as a mistake the missile attack on a passenger train crossing the railway bridge on April 12, 1999, or the bombing of the city of Nis with cluster bombs on May 7, 1999.

Another vision of the authors whose works belonged to the classic theory of airpower was realized during 1999. Douhet imagined a plane that would have a large action radius and an air attack that would suffice to destroy completely one target. Seversky also advocated, in the early years of the Cold War, the formation of a strong strategic air force based on the American continent, and to a lesser extent on the British Isles, capable of attacking the Soviet infrastructure, industry and other facilities. It seems that their

suggestions and visions would be completely fulfilled with the B-2 bomber, which was used for the first time in the NATO war against the FR Yugoslavia. The B-2 flew from Whiteman (USA) on 28- to 32-hour round-trip missions, delivering up to 16 global positioning systems (GPS)-guided GBU-31 joint direct-attack munitions (JDAMs) from 40,000 ft.⁴, usually through cloud cover, against enemy targets (Lambeth, 2001, p. 90). These bombers “were used against Serbia’s integrated air defense system, command and control sites, runways and airfields, communications facilities, factories, bridges and other elements of infrastructure” (Tirpak, 1999b, p. 24). The same author stated that a single B-2 destroyed two airfields on the same mission. Airplanes were refueled twice en route – once over the Atlantic, and again just before entering the battle space. What makes this type of plane even more remarkable was that, according to Tirpak, “each B-2 could-and, in some cases, did-attack 16 targets in 16 different locations per mission” (Tirpak, 1999b, p. 27).

In any case, the NATO air war against the FR Yugoslavia demonstrated the validity of several key theses of the authors whose works belonged to the classical theory of airpower. First of all, the aviation imposed itself as the dominant form of the armed forces, while the role of other types, especially the land forces became secondary. NATO enjoyed indisputable domination in the air, which was a basic prerequisite for the entire operation. The strategic use of airpower against a wide range of targets – roads, power grids, factories, media houses – has led to NATO’s desired goal. The Yugoslav Army, which in 78 days of the war lost less than 1% of its military manpower, in some earlier epochs, with such losses in the living force, would be the absolute victor in the conflict. In 1999, however, all the skill and courage of its formations could not reverse the outcome of the war against an incomparably superior air force. By applying various measures and procedures (masking, use of false targets, dispersion and mobility), the units of the Yugoslav Army have managed relatively well to protect themselves, but not hundreds of stationary civic targets on which depended the functioning of the entire country.

THE FR YUGOSLAVIA AS AN IDEAL TARGET

Why was the FR Yugoslavia an ideal target for air warfare? There are several reasons. For example, we can start with the size of the state itself.

⁴ About 12000 meters.

With 102,173 km², the FR Yugoslavia belonged to small countries. Namely, according to the teaching of the Yugoslav (Serbian) military geography, the states can be divided by size to large (over 1,000,000 km²), medium (between 200,000 and 1,000,000 km²) and small (less than 200,000 km²) (Marjanović, 1983, p. 63). The distance between the south and far north of the FR Yugoslavia was 484 km. A plane flying at a speed of one mAh (about 1200 km) travels this distance in less than 25 minutes (Pavlović, 1999, p. 22). The alongside distance on the line Bajina Basta – Zajecar 225 km length can be traveled in ten minutes! From such a relatively small space, the Alliance's airplanes easily flew away and quickly grounded in the territory of neighboring countries even when they were damaged. As observed in a domestic study on military geography, "the small dimensions of the battlefield negatively affects the dominance in the air, the air power support to the Armed Forces (KoV), Navy (RM) and Air Defence" (Pavlović, 1999, p. 66). The space of the FR of Yugoslavia was attacked almost from all directions, since all neighboring countries, aspirants for NATO membership, made available their airspace and infrastructure to the Alliance (Djordjević & Vuković, 2018, p. 25). US Defense Secretary William S. Cohen said that "NATO is encircling Yugoslavia and attacking from all directions" (Tirpak, 1999a, p. 25).

Such a small area, which was located in an operational-strategic encirclement, was defended by, in general opinion, an outdated and inadequate Yugoslav Air Force (RV) and Air Defence (PVO). With only one escadrille of modern MiG-29 (mostly not in good operational condition) and air defense systems, built around surface-to-air missiles SA-3 (S-125) and SA-6 (2K12 Kub), which were introduced for use some thirty years before the NATO attack on the FR Yugoslavia, it could not organize an adequate defense. Instead of causing the significant losses to the aviation of the attackers, the significant success was merely the "survival" of these systems on the ground in conditions of total domination in the air of the NATO forces. Given NATO's absolute supremacy in the air, the principle of the grouping of Air Defence Forces (because it is not possible to be equally strong everywhere) in defense of the most important objects and regions in political and strategic terms could not have been more efficiently applied.

The FR Yugoslavia, unlike some other examples of the confrontation of a small and large country, such as the war between North Vietnam and the United States, could not rely on the concrete support of some great power. North Vietnam was heavily supported by the People's Republic of China, the USSR and a number of other socialist countries supplying arms, food,

medicines, and providing expert and intelligence assistance. Thus, this country could cope for years with the US, South Vietnam and their allies. The FR Yugoslavia resisted 78 days exclusively with the support of its own resources and reserves. Moreover, unlike North Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s, the FR Yugoslavia did not enjoy political (diplomatic) support, whereas, in aggressor countries, there was no significant resistance to the air campaign (as was the case in the United States during the Vietnam War). Therefore, the ultimate solution (the Kumanovo Agreement) was accepted by the leadership of Serbia (FR Yugoslavia) in extremely unfavorable conditions, marked by blackmail and threats related to the extension of the destruction of the country.

Finally, the FR Yugoslavia as a relatively developed industrial country, with a significant percentage of the urban population, was extremely vulnerable to the NATO strategic air strikes. That was why the Alliance transferred the focus of the air strikes from the units on the ground to the infrastructure of Serbia. After all, the very creators of aggression confessed this. General Michael Short, for example, "commented that attacks on Serb forces in Kosovo did little to help achieve NATO's war aims. It was only when the emphasis was shifted to attacking strategic targets that the coercive pressure was successfully applied" (McInnes, 2001, p. 46). In connection with this, one Western author said that "the disturbing lesson of the air campaign may be that its most effective aspect involved hurting Serbia proper (including its population and government) rather than directly attacking Serb forces in Kosovo and protecting the Kosovars" (Roberts, 1999, p. 118). The opposite example was the US attack on Afghanistan in 2001, a country with a very poorly developed infrastructure, almost no industry and a rudimentary electricity network. The strategic air strikes on Afghanistan were excluded precisely because of its general underdevelopment, which in this case simultaneously meant its invulnerability.

Thus, the "pure" air war, with a successful outcome for the attacker, according to the principles suggested by Douhet, Mitchell and Seversky, is possible if the country-target of aggression is: 1) small in size, 2) has an outdated and inadequate Air Force or Air Defence, 3) does not receive material, military and political support of some great power, and 4) if due to economic and traffic development it is vulnerable to the strategic air strikes. From these settings, another far-reaching conclusion can be formulated. The classical theories of airpower have no universal validity – their validity is confirmed only in certain cases that are marked by a very specific network of circumstances. Unfortunately, in 1999, the FR of Yugoslavia was in exactly

such specific circumstances that enabled, among other things, the air war against it to be feasible and ultimately successful for the aggressor.

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