

THE CAUSES OF THE NATO AGGRESSION ON THE FR YUGOSLAVIA

*Dušan PROROKOVIĆ, Ph.D.*¹

*Branko KRGA, Ph.D.*²

Abstract: Despite the often quoted allegations that the intervention was provoked by the bloodshed and ethnic cleansing of thousands of Albanians driving them into exile in neighboring countries, and the potential of this situation to destabilize the region, the authors of this article tried to analyze the geopolitical and foreign policy indicators to identify the real causes of the NATO aggression on the FR Yugoslavia. The work consists of four parts. The first part is devoted to the development of the Kosovo crisis and the possibility of its solution during 1998-1999. The second part describes the facts that have preceded the decision of the NATO Council to intervene. The reasons for the decision to bomb Yugoslavia are analyzed in the third section. The fourth part is dedicated to the final considerations. In this article, the authors come to the conclusion that NATO had seven reasons to start a campaign in the spring 1999: first, to save its own credibility and celebrate fifty years of its existence; second, to accelerate the overthrow of Milosevic from power and put the entire post-Yugoslav space under the umbrella of NATO; third, the geopolitical reasons - to oust Russian influence; fourth, to bypass the UN and minimize the role of this international organization in world politics; fifth, to correct the mistakes made after the Second World War; sixth, the interests of the American military-industrial complex; and seventh - to improve the image of the United States in the Islamic world.

Keywords: NATO, Kosovo crisis, Yugoslavia, Serbia, USA, UN, geopolitics.

¹ Research Fellow, Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade, Serbia, E-mail: dusan@diplomacy.bg.ac.rs

² Professor, Faculty for Diplomacy and Security, Belgrade, Serbia, E-mail: branko.krگا@fdb.edu.rs.

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LONG DURATION AND ESCALATION OF THE KOSOVO CRISIS

The history of deterioration of inter-ethnic relations in Kosovo is extensive and complex. After the Second World War, this area was politically the least stable and in a security sense the most problematic environment in Yugoslavia. That is why the actions of the Yugoslav armed forces have been enforced on two occasions. First, in the period 1945-1948 when aimed at the neutralization and the liquidation of the remaining Ballist (fascist) paramilitary formations (curiosity is that they were often conducted together with the armed forces of communist Albania) and the second time in the period 1954-1956 when the Secret Police (UDBA) executed the action of seizing weapons from the Kosovo Albanians because of the frequent robberies, blood retaliation and disruption of the public order, which have overwhelmingly violated the security situation in Kosovo (Bogdanović, 1990). All this time, the Kosovo Albanians remained dissatisfied with their status in the Yugoslav federation. In a series of reports of local Communist party bodies, we find the formulation that "the masses in Kosovo are interested in the problem of Kosovo and that the reaction was saying how the Macedonians and Montenegrins are now free and the Shqiptars (Šiptar) are not" (Pavlović & Marković, 2006, p. 216).³ With this, local Albanian leaders were pointing out the fact that after the Second World War, Macedonia and Montenegro received the status of federal republics within federally constituent Yugoslavia, while they did not, nor there was readiness from any side to offer them such a status. Historian Đoko Slijepčević concluded that from 1968 "reality and illusions met and confronted in Kosovo; reality as it was created there and illusions of those who believed that national contradictions and pretension were if not extinguished than at least diminished in communist idea; reality in Kosovo shows that as this area gets more independence, the "Greater Albania" (or greater-Arbanas) idea is getting more embedded with communists of Albanian nationality" (Slijepčević, 1983, p. 359).

³ *Šiptar*, one of the names in the Serbian language for the Albanians. Coming from the Albanian word *Shqiptar*. Next to Šiptar, other names such as Arbanas or Aranut, can be found in official documents until the 1950s, all of which are coming from the Turkish language. In the Turkish language, Albania is called *Arnautistan*.

Mass demonstrations of the Kosovo Albanians with a clear political connotation were organized on three occasions in communist Yugoslavia. The first time in 1968, the second time in 1981 and the third time in 1989. On all three occasions, the request was to grant Kosovo the status of the 7th Yugoslav Republic. Demonstration in 1981 ended with the introduction of an emergency state and left grave consequences for the country's stability, creating preconditions for future conflicts (Kola, 2003, p. 333). To some extent, the escalation of the conflict at the end of the 1980s was just the continuation of the process from 1981.

The immediate causes were the changes made to the Serbian Constitution defining the position of the provinces in a new way and restoring to Belgrade the constitutional powers that were transferred to the provinces in 1974. It is important to underline that Yugoslavia's communist leadership was not capable of solving inter-ethnic tensions in Kosovo after 1981 and therefore they were often hidden or minimized. On the other hand, the Kosovo Albanians even though they represented the province of Serbia usually spoke against Serbia in the federation bodies, together with Croatian and Slovenian representatives. This produced a sort of an institutional blockade, and Serbia's political position within Yugoslavia seemed unbearable.

Demonstrations in 1989 were repressed by the Serbian and Yugoslav police forces, but the ethnic Albanians illegally declared "The Republic of Kosovo". From that moment on, the Kosovo Albanians boycotted all Serbian institutions, not participating in elections and censuses. Parallel to the official authorities of the Republic of Serbia, the Kosovo Albanians have organized their own (illegal) structures of government and education. With international mediation, representatives of the Republic of Serbia and the Kosovo Albanians in 1996 agreed on the return of Albanian students from improvised schools to the state schools. However, for one full year, the agreement remained unapplied, causing massive protests by Albanian students in 1997 that soon turned into riots. The scene was set for a new major crisis, which was soon to escalate. Parallel with student protests started the formation of paramilitary forces of the Kosovo Albanians, so-called the KLA. Formally, on February 28th, 1998, the KLA declared the beginning of an armed struggle for the independence of Kosovo, although its units have been active since the end of 1996 (Guskova, 2001, p. 660). It was interesting that one of the CIA reports stated that in 1996-1997 the KLA continued to be a relatively small formation, but it was projected that, due to its actions and lack of

compromise, it had a potential to mobilize tens of thousands of supporters in a perspective of only two years (Koktsidis & Dam, 2008, pp. 166-167). At the beginning of summer 1998, the KLA had around 25,000 members and it managed to control about 40% of the territory, mostly villages and smaller cities in Kosovo and Metohija, while bigger settlements that had police squads were held in a blockade. This way the government in Belgrade was put in such a position that it had to include the KLA in any future negotiations since they have become the respectable political factor.

In early March 1998, the Serbian police forces in the village of Drenica organized an operation against a group led by the (self-proclaimed) leader of the KLA Adem Jashari. During the operation, Jashari was eliminated, as well as 81 inhabitants of Drenica. This event served to internationalize the Kosovo crisis, and since then NATO began continually to put pressure on Belgrade (Barabanov et al., 2012, p. 115). Using channels within the UN Security Council, the United States was trying to get other members of the Security Council to approve the use of military force to intervene against the FR Yugoslavia. Resolution 1199, inviting the parties to end the conflict, was adopted on September 23rd, 1998. However, Russia and China were resolutely against the use of force, so, therefore, it was impossible to organize an intervention under the umbrella of the UN (Guskova, 2001, pp. 661- 665).

Having in mind the duration of the Kosovo-Metohija crisis, it would not have been unexpected if the Albanians started to be more active at the beginning of the 1990s when conflicts started from Slovenia, through Croatia to Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, that did not occur. This showed that there were elements of planned actions in the Yugoslav crisis management – when conflicts in one part of Yugoslavia would stop, they would escalate in another part.

FAILED RAMBOUILLET TALKS AND FORMAL REASONS FOR THE BEGINNING OF NATO BOMBING

Planning of NATO military operation against the FR Yugoslavia began in June 1998. By the autumn of the same year, two basic alternatives of the attack were developed. The first one envisaged a synchronized attack on the entire Yugoslav territory, divided into three zones - Kosovo, part of Central Serbia south of 44 parallels and a section north of 44 parallels. The second alternative meant starting with intense attacks on the Yugoslav army and the Serbian police in Kosovo and then gradually

expanding the zone of combat activities towards the north. The second option was selected (Lambeth, 2001, p. 11). The so-called "Račak massacre" served as a trigger for a new round of pressure that would ultimately lead to the commencement of military actions.⁴ Since the US could not legalize in the SC its decision to attack the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from January 1999 they fully took over the diplomatic initiative and managed the entire crisis. In this context, the Contact Group organized a Rambouillet conference in early February, where the Serbs and Albanians discussed resolving the Kosovo crisis (Hosmer, 2003, pp. 13-15). The negotiations ended with no results, and the United States and the United Kingdom on February 18th presented a plan to resolve the Kosovo crisis. The Plan anticipated full political autonomy for Kosovo (i.e. the Kosovo Albanians), guaranteed by NATO forces after the withdrawal of the Yugoslav army from Kosovo, and with a provision that after three years a referendum on the legal status to check the "will of the people" would be organized (Lambeth, 2001, p. 8).

⁴The head of the Kosovo Verification Mission, "William Walker, independently, without accompanying the representatives of the state organs of the FR of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia on January 16, 1999, together with a group of foreign journalists, entered the village of Račak in Kosovo, on the periphery of the day before the fighting between members of the KLA and the Serbian police. There were 40 bodies of killed Albanians in the ditch in civilian clothes, different ages, which were immediately confirmed by the local people that they were shot by members of the MUP of Serbia. The same day, representatives of the FR of Yugoslavia denied that there was any crime, and in order to investigate what happened, the EU decided to urgently send a group of Finnish pathologists to Kosovo to perform autopsy findings and reconstruct with great precision what had actually happened. Four years later, more precisely in 2003, Dr. Helena Ranta, the head of the pathologist team sent by the EU, said that according to their findings at the time, there could be no crime. A joint investigation by Finnish, Belarusian and Serbian pathologists confirmed that traces of burst particles were found on the hands of 39 people, which meant that they also shot, that not all of them had the appearance of death in the same time period and that they were killed by firing guns from far away. But it was too late. Most likely, in agreement with William Walker, members of the KLA picked up their members who died in clashes with the Serbian forces in various parts of Kosovo and Metohija in the past days, brought their corpses to Račak on January 15, and then on the following day invited journalists. Photos from Račak and William Walker's statements quickly went around the world. With them, NATO has opened another round of campaigns in the media of the member states to convince public opinion about the necessity of bombing and in that it succeeded." (Proroković, 2011, pp. 245-246)

The Rambouillet talks presented the last and, as it would turn out, the best opportunity to reach a compromise. The positions of both negotiating sides were weak. On the one side, during the summer and fall of 1998, the KLA experienced the series of defeats and was not able to hold the positions it had. On the other side, the Serbian government was aware that the threat of bombing was real. The US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, said at the beginning of negotiations "if the Albanians do not sign (the final document) and Serbs do so, we (USA) will revoke their financial assistance. If the opposite happens, we will bomb Yugoslavia." It turned out that only two things were disputable for the Yugoslav side in this whole proposal to resolve the Kosovo crisis. The first concerned the status referendum after three years because that would basically mean the acceptance of Kosovo secession; the second was the virtually uncontrolled military presence of NATO forces in the entire area of the FRY (Simić, 2000).

The two paragraphs above, however, are partially contradicted by the historical evidence. In particular, the statement of the co-chairmen Robin Cook and Hubert Védrine on 23rd of February 1999 that the negotiations "have led to a consensus on substantial autonomy for Kosovo, including on mechanisms for free and fair elections to democratic institutions, for the governance of Kosovo, for the protection of human rights and the rights of members of national communities; and for the establishment of a fair judicial system". They went on saying that "a political framework is now in place" leaving the further work of finalizing "the implementation Chapters of the Agreement, including the modalities of the invited international civilian and military presence in Kosovo" (Office of the High Representative and EU Special Representative, 1999). In the end, on 18 March 1999, the Albanian, American and British delegations signed what became known as the *Rambouillet Accords* while the Serbian and Russian delegations refused. The accords called for NATO administration of Kosovo as an autonomous province within Yugoslavia; a force of 30,000 NATO troops to maintain order in Kosovo; an unhindered rite of passage for NATO troops on the Yugoslav territory, including Kosovo; and immunity for NATO and its agents to Yugoslav law (US State Department, 1999). In the commentary released to the press, former United States Secretary of State Henry Kissinger declared that: "The Rambouillet text, which called on Serbia to admit NATO troops throughout Yugoslavia, was a provocation, an excuse to start bombing. It was a terrible diplomatic document that should never have been presented in that form" (Bancroft,

2009). Christopher Clark supported this view, asserting that the terms of the 1914 Austro-Hungarian ultimatum to Serbia appear lenient compared to the NATO demands (Clark, 2012, pp. 456-457). A former head on the State Department's Yugoslavia desk, George Kenney, reported in May 1999 that a senior State Department official had briefed journalists off the record that "[we] deliberately set the bar higher than the Serbs could accept" (Kenney, 1999).

As expected, the Albanian negotiators accepted this proposal as a whole, while the Yugoslav delegation "accepted the political part" of the proposal on March 23rd, but did not agree with the entry of the NATO forces into the territory of Kosovo or the proposal of holding a referendum after three years, which was used by the US and Great Britain to declare failure of the whole process (Barabanov et al., 2012, p. 116).

On the next day, the NATO aggression against the FRY started. Officially NATO declared this military action to be a humanitarian intervention with the explanation that the aim was to prevent the ethnical cleansing and ensure regional security (Yoshihara, 2006, pp. 67-68). In any case, these objectives would have been more easily achieved by signing the peace treaty and the long-term agreement with Serbia. Obviously, NATO structures were not interested in reaching the agreement, i.e. unacceptable conditions were set up for the Serbian side. What were the real reasons for this NATO position?

POWER RATIO BETWEEN NATO AND YUGOSLAV ARMY

Power ratio between NATO forces and the Yugoslav army in 1999 was absolutely disproportional. NATO members together had 518 times bigger GDP, 860 times bigger military budget and almost 6 times bigger GDP per capita than Yugoslavia (Smiljanić, 2009, p. 67). Also, looking at this conflict from the angle of the equipment and technologically sophisticated weapons that NATO and the FRY army had at their disposal the difference was more than obvious.

As an illustrative example, it can be specified that, according to the statement of the US Department of Defense, on 6th May 1999, 639 US aircraft were engaged in military operations, with another 277 aircraft of other NATO members, which was a total of 916. Fifteen days later, it was announced that this number was increased and that the US was using 712, and other Allies 281 planes, which in total was 993 aircraft. On the

other side, the FRY army had at disposal 240 fighter planes out of which only 14 were modern planes (MiG-29s), none of which could efficiently oppose NATO aviation (Lambeth, 2001). In addition, the NATO navy forces participated in the attack on the FRY with three air carriers (USA, Great Britain and France), three nuclear submarines (two USA and one Great Britain), two cruisers (USA), nine destroyers (three USA) and ten frigates (US Department of Defence, 1999). Even though the NATO bombing lasted for 78 days, it was clear from the beginning that the armed forces of the FRY could oppose NATO only in a limited way and that after the armed conflict there would be attempts of enforcing political solutions. The military and political leadership of the FRY was aware of this. That was the reason for a desire to avoid the armed conflict.

However, the conflict was not avoided. Looking how negotiations in Rambouillet were conducted, it can be concluded that the conflict has not been avoided more because of the US desire to lead the Kosovo crisis into a new phase than because of the inflexibility of the Yugoslav side. That is why the authors of this paper ask the question: What are the real reasons for the NATO aggression on the FRY?

SEVEN REAL REASONS FOR THE NATO AGGRESSION

Having in mind the arguments mentioned above regarding how the Kosovo crisis in 1999 did not have to end with the NATO war against Serbia, as well as the explanations that confirm the statement that NATO wanted to end this crisis with the escalation of armed conflict, it is necessary to also think about what are the real reasons of this act. Military actions are a kind of radical acts in international relations and aggression taken in a way it was done in 1999 is a precedent that must be analyzed from more angles. Of course, there are more possible reasons why NATO decided to act in such a radical way, and in this paper we will analyze seven most important: (1) NATO credibility just before its 50th anniversary; (2) overthrowing the regime of President Milosevic and putting the FRY under NATO control; (3) neutralizing influence of Russia in the area of the FRY, especially in the area of Serbia; (4) minimizing the role of the UN in world affairs and demonstration of the USA dominant influence; (5) correcting the Second World War mistakes; (6) the interests of American military-industrial complex; and (7) geopolitical aspects of the NATO aggression on the FRY.

- 1) NATO wants to save its own credibility and celebrate fifty years of its existence;

NATO has closely followed the development of the Kosovo crisis, and a series of data suggests that certain NATO members have actively assisted the armament of the KLA (Jovanović, 2006). However, in the final document from the July 1997 NATO Summit in Madrid, the Kosovo issue is not mentioned at all (NATO, 1997). The rapid increase of interest came in the spring of 1998, and the Kosovo issue became one of the most important issues for NATO. At the most important formal meeting in 1998, at the Ministerial Meeting in Brussels, the Kosovo crisis was not only mentioned in the Final document, but a special statement was issued regarding it (NATO, 1998). As it was already stated, in June 1998 NATO started planning a military operation against the FRY. NATO's interest can be linked to preparations for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the military alliance, which included writing a new Strategic Concept for the Alliance. In this document, adopted at the Washington Summit 1999, greater attention is devoted to the security environment and therefore political stability, not only of member states but also of the world political system as a whole. The violation of the declared political principles concerning the protection of human rights and liberties becomes a threat to NATO. This can be detected in the conclusion of the Strategic Concept, where it is said: "The Strategic Concept reaffirms the enduring purpose of the Alliance and sets out its fundamental security tasks. It enables a transformed NATO to contribute to the evolving security environment, supporting security and stability with the strength of its shared commitment to democracy and the peaceful resolution of disputes" (NATO, 1999). The transformation of NATO that was formally to be shaped at the 50th anniversary of the Alliance concerned the advocacy of democratic traditions, human rights and freedoms as key elements of the security environment, and thus the NATO had to defend those values wherever they were endangered. The Czech president Vaclav Klaus ecstatically shouted, "The war in Kosovo is the first war in history that is not taken for territory, but for values". NATO used aggression on the FRY as a means to preserve its credibility and to promote itself on its 50th anniversary as a protector of defined political values in the entire world.

- 2) Acceleration of the overthrow of Milošević and putting the entire post-Yugoslav area under the NATO umbrella;

Ever since the meeting of NATO defense ministers in October 1993 in the German town of Travemunde, when the idea of forming the

Partnership for Peace was launched, it was clear that expansion to the East was still one of the goals of the Alliance (Borawski, 1995, pp. 233-246). NATO's interest in the post-Yugoslav space should also be viewed from this context. The civil war in Yugoslavia was causing destabilization of the entire Balkans and a series of daily political problems in Croatia, B&H, the FYR Macedonia and Kosovo and Metohija, and therefore was slowing NATO's efforts in achieving the strategic goal. Slobodan Milošević was marked as the main cause of this slowdown by the Western countries (Bildt, 1999). That is why the overthrowing of Milošević became a strategic goal for NATO. After the experience of Dayton peace talks that have made the political position of Milošević in the FRY stronger and legitimized him in international relations, NATO did not want to repeat the same mistake. They did not want to allow him to present itself as a "peacemaker". Looking from the NATO's perspective the surest way to remove Milošević was to cause the war and military defeat the FRY.

3) The geopolitical reasons – to oust Russian influence;

The geographic position and "the Balkan history has given Kosovo and Metohija the heritage of an extremely valuable and geographically predisposed central geopolitical position". And "the Balkans is one of the regions that in the historic continuity manifests its (trans) continental strategic importance and constant geopolitical magnetism for mainstream actors in the hierarchy of great forces" (Stepić, 2006, p. 238). "For forty years the Iron curtain was the main border in Europe. That border is moved several hundred kilometers to the East. Now that is the border that separates Western Christianity from the Muslims and the Orthodox" (Hantington, 2000, p. 29). The future position of Kosovo largely depends on the imminent geopolitical strategies and goals of the main actors. "The victory of the global thalassocratic geopolitical concept over the telurocratic one, the disintegration of the Soviet interest sphere and its (supra) state and suppression of Russia into the depths of the Eurasian land" leading to the "destruction of the Balkan bipolar balance" contributed to its current status and position. Three major actors in international politics had an interest in this kind of development in the early 1990s. "The curtain of the German interest sphere quickly came down on the meridian direction from the Baltic to the Adriatic" making the Albanian issue one of the foreign policy priorities of the official Berlin. "Pan-Islamic and pan-Turkish ambitions have found their Balkan hold points for their European penetrations and global geopolitical ambitions in the demographically explosive and spatially expansive enclaves of the

previously Islamized Balkan population." And for the US "the theoretical fundament of the new geopolitical formula for the functioning of the world is found in the (neo)Eurasianism" (Stepić, 2006, pp. 262 - 280), causing for the Kosovo issue to be more interesting than before. "The way the great powers reacted to each other had significant consequences to the drama of the world politics" (Kegli, Vitkof, 2004, p. 162) and the acts of that drama almost always took place on the Balkans as an "Eastern border of the Western civilization" (Huntington, 2000, p. 177). The geopolitical causes of the NATO aggression on the FRY are obvious and absolutely in line with the proclaimed theories of Alfred Mahan, Halford Mackinder, Nicholas Spykman and Saul Cohen. It is of great importance for NATO to totally control the Rimland in order to be able to put a continuous pressure to the Heartland. The Balkan Peninsula is an important link in this process, and therefore it is important to govern over that area.

- 4) Bypassing the UN and minimizing the role of this international organization in world politics;

In the NATO documents adopted during 1998 as well as in the Strategic Concept, it is explicitly said that NATO was "committed to multilateralism" and "cooperation with other international organizations" among which the UN (NATO, 1998). But when trying to get the agreement of the UN SC for the start of the military operation against the FRY, the USA, Great Britain and France were faced with a vast obstacle. Russia and China openly disagreed with this suggestion and threaten to put a veto (Proroković & Lađevac, 2018, pp. 172-183). Because of this, NATO saw the UN SC as part of the problem and not part of the solution. Thanks to this development of circumstances the opinion of "usefulness of unilateral actions" has prevailed in Washington, with an idea that the UN should be bypassed when no consent can be obtained. Ian Bancroft said "NATO's intervention over Kosovo in 1999 was an important precursor to the invasion of Iraq four years later" (Bancroft, 2009). Bypassing the UN became a precedent, which was then extensively misused at the beginning of the 21st century. NATO was set as surrogacy for the UN, the key actor in the shaping world politics and creating regional security dynamics around the world.

- 5) Correction of the mistakes made after the Second World War;

In a letter of the vice president of PACE, German deputy Willy Wimmer to Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, in May 2000, it is explicitly

said: "The war against the FR Yugoslavia was led in order to correct the wrong decision of General Eisenhower from the era of World War II. Therefore, for strategic reasons, the US soldiers must be stationed there in order to compensate for what was missed in 1945" (Proroković, 2018, pp. 575-576).

Wimmer was participating at the conference that was organized by the State Department and IRI in Bratislava, attended by foreign ministers of the European states and representatives of international organizations. The above-mentioned opinion was represented and justified by US officials in relation to the Kosovo crisis. Of course, it can be discussed why General Eisenhower did not deploy troops in Yugoslavia, and whether that was his fault or a deal he made with Stalin. But that does not contravene the thesis of insisting on the deployment of the US military forces to the post-Yugoslavian area in the post-cold period. Shortly after NATO troops entered, "the US Army has strengthened its presence in Kosovo in 1999 by building the military base Bondsteel. Although it is hard to get the official data regarding this military base, according to the media information published in several countries, it is the biggest and best equipped American military base outside the USA territory since the Vietnam War. Built after the international military forces entered Kosovo and Metohija in the Southeast part of Kosovo, in the period July-October 1999, next to the airports, this base has artillery, tank and helicopter bases, infrastructure facilities that can receive from 5,500 to 7,000 soldiers and it has its own sources of electricity, enough for the city of 25,000 inhabitants. According to this data it can be concluded that even in 1999, the US military troops had the intention to stay in Kosovo for a long period, and solutions that were taken later for Kosovo gave them a status as nowhere else in the world, including the territories of NATO members" (Proroković, 2011, pp. 336-337).

6) Interests of the American military-industrial complex;

It is often said that the interest of the military-industrial complex is one of the frequent causes of American wars. The expression military-industrial complex means "a set of industries, faculties, research centers, laboratories and lobbyist groups that represent the military industry and military technologies. It is an industry that strongly influences the US foreign policy and plays a major role in the global wars. From the invasion of the designated state, sponsored by military companies, through illegal exploitation of natural resources, making profit for companies from the energy sector and to the restoration of the attacked states through the

participation of US construction firms, the close circle of the industry of war is made that damages both, US and foreign taxpayers" (Ristić, 2016). According to *The BBC's study of the costs of the Kosovo conflict, "78 Days: An Audit of War"*, the cost of the war in 1999 was over 30 billion pounds (BBC, 1999). In any case, the motivation of the military-industry complex was huge and this aspect should not be overlooked regarding the decision to start the aggression. Also during these operations, NATO used new or enhanced weapons, like graffiti bombs, ammunition with depleted uranium, cluster bombs (BL755) and new models of multi-tube rockets (installed in Albania). It was an opportunity to test new systems, but also to demonstrate and advertise to prospective buyers (Rogers, 1999).

7) Geopolitical aspects of the NATO aggression on the FR Yugoslavia (Improving the image of the United States in the Islamic world);

There is no doubt that the NATO aggression on the FR Yugoslavia was motivated by the geopolitical interests of the main countries of the Alliance. It has always been in the interest of powerful forces or force to control as much space as possible, or at least to prevent their rival to achieve the same ambition.

When it comes to the NATO attack on the FRY in 1999, two geopolitical aspects can be perceived: *traditional* and *newer*.

Traditional aspects are primarily related to the geopolitical treatment of this area.

When it comes to the geopolitical treatment of our area, one should be reminded of the classics of Geopolitics, primarily the British geographer Halford Mackinder and the American political scientist Nicholas Spykman. Both of them have talked about the importance of Heartland, that is, the mainland masses of Eurasia for world dominance. Mackinder wrote that in the fight for the world dominance between thalassocracies (sea powers) and telurocracies (land powers) the victory would go to the side which was able "to control the so-called World Island - the land area between Eurasia and Africa, with central, pivotal area or the heart of the world (Heartland) being in the central part of Eurasian massive" (Kilibarda, 2008, p. 37). This position Mackinder put in an interesting formula: "Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; Who rules the World-Island commands the world" (Kilibarda, 2008, p. 37). The American geopolitician Nickolas Spykman also looked for the model of world dominance. In that sense, he emphasized that it was important for

the USA that no other force had power in Europe or the Far East, or that these forces unite. Unlike Mackinder, he felt that the decisive importance for world dominance has a fringe part of Eurasia (Rimland). "He included in this Rimland Western Europe (looking from the wider perspective the FRY was part of it), Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, India and Korea... paraphrasing Mackinder he has offered the new formula for the world dominance: "Who rules the Rimland rules Eurasia; Who rules Eurasia has the destiny of the world in its hands" (Kilibarda, 2008, p. 40).

Later Cohen, Kissinger, Brzezinski, Fukuyama, Huntington, Bremer, all worked on these ideas – common interest for all of them was to search for the model of how to achieve the world dominance and how the US can hold the status of a hegemon or a leader in this process.

If we have in mind the above-mentioned opinions on the importance of Heartland for the control of the world processes and the role of Rimland, i.e. the role of a significant part of Europe in this project, it is clear that the US interest in the area of the FR Yugoslavia is significantly motivated by this idea.

Also, one of the traditional geopolitical aspects is the aspiration to disable stronger Russian influence in the Balkans and to have NATO mechanisms to control Europe. It should be emphasized in this context, that the aim of NATO alliance when it was formed was, as its first secretary-general Hastings Ismay said – to keep America in Europe, the USSR (i.e. The Russian Federation) out from Europe and Germany in the defined borders.

New geopolitical aspects can be seen, above all, in the interest to prevent the Islamic factor to go against American interests.

The use of the Islamic factor in accordance with the interests of the USA has a global character and therefore can be seen in the Balkans as well. The importance of Islam comes from its spread as well as from a fear that other geopolitical factor (above all Russia and China) could use it against the USA. This was well explained by Zbigniew Brzezinski in his books "Second Chance: Three Presidents and the Crisis of American Superpower" and "America and the World: Conversations on the Future of American Foreign Policy". Starting from these ideas, some US representatives claimed that the aim of their support to Islam in Bosnia and Herzegovina and to Kosovo and Metohija was to improve the American image in the Islamic world.

In addition, newer geopolitical aspects of the NATO aggression on the FR Yugoslavia are: creating conditions for the long-lasting American military presence in the Balkans (the Bondsteel base); control of the pipeline and other energy lines; creating better conditions for following and influencing the crises in the Middle East, North Africa and Ukraine; direct influence on the reception of new members in NATO as well as influencing new migration flows.

From all the above-mentioned it can be seen that the USA geopolitical interest could have had a significant influence on the decision to start the aggression on the FRY instead of dealing with a problem using civilized political means.

CONCLUSION

Despite the often quoted allegations that the intervention was provoked by the bloodshed and ethnic cleansing of thousands of Albanians driving them into exile in neighboring countries, and the potential of this situation to destabilize the region, the authors of this article tried to analyze the geopolitical and foreign policy indicators to identify the real causes of the NATO aggression on the FR Yugoslavia. In this article, the authors come to the conclusion that NATO had seven reasons to start a campaign in the spring 1999: first, to save its own credibility and celebrate fifty years of its existence; second, to accelerate the overthrow of Milosevic from power and put the entire post-Yugoslav space under the umbrella of NATO; third, the geopolitical reasons - to oust Russian influence; fourth, to bypass the UN and minimize the role of this international organization in world politics; fifth, to correct the mistakes made after the Second World War; sixth, the interests of the American military-industrial complex; and seventh - to improve the image of the United States in the Islamic world.

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