

## Contents

Introduction 9

### SPECIAL CONTRIBUTION

*LIU Zuokui*

A LETTER FROM BEIJING:  
HOW CHINA HAS EXPERIENCED THE 1999  
BOMBING OF FR YUGOSLAVIA 13

### CHAPTER I

#### THE NATO AGGRESSION FROM THE PRISM OF INTERNATIONAL LAW

*Boris KRIVOKAPIĆ*

THE NATO BOMBING OF YUGOSLAVIA (1999)  
20 YEARS LATER - THE PROBLEMS OF LEGALITY,  
LEGITIMACY AND CONSEQUENCES 19

*Hans KÖCHLER*

THE NATO WAR OF 1999 AND THE IMPOTENCE  
OF INTERNATIONAL LAW 57

*Duško DIMITRIJEVIĆ*

THE CASE CONCERNING LEGALITY OF USE OF FORCE  
BEFORE THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE  
- 20 YEARS AFTER THE NATO INTERVENTION  
IN YUGOSLAVIA 72

*Vladan JONČIĆ, Miloš JONČIĆ*

SIGNIFICANT VIOLATIONS OF THE RULES  
OF THE INTERNATIONAL LAW OF ARMED CONFLICT  
IN AGGRESSION ON THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC  
OF YUGOSLAVIA 1999 97

**CHAPTER II**  
**THE WAR AGAINST THE FRY IN THE REGIONAL**  
**GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT**

*Alexis TROUDE*

THE GEOPOLITICAL ASPECTS OF THE 1999  
 NATO AGGRESSION AGAINST YUGOSLAVIA 123

*Dušan PROROKOVIĆ, Branko KRGA*

THE CAUSES OF THE NATO AGGRESSION  
 ON THE FR YUGOSLAVIA 137

*Slobodan JANKOVIĆ*

NATO ROAD TO SERBIA: WHY 1999? 155

*Danuta GIBAS-KRZAK*

NATO INTERVENTION IN THE LIGHT  
 OF THE SERBIAN-ALBANIAN WAR OVER KOSOVO 177

*Birgül DEMIRTAŞ*

ANALYSING THE DEBATES AT THE TURKISH PARLIAMENT  
 DURING THE KOSOVO CONFLICT (1998-1999):  
 IMPACT OF GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY AND IDENTITY 190

**CHAPTER III**  
**THE NATO AGGRESSION AND INTERNATIONAL**  
**RELATIONS - A WIDER FRAMEWORK**  
**FOR UNDERSTANDING OF THE 1999 WAR**

*Leonid DOBROKHOTOV*

FINDING ITSELF: AMERICA, RUSSIA, SERBIA  
 IN A CHANGING WORLD 207

*Beatriz BISSIO*

THE 1999 NATO BOMBING CAMPAIGN  
 AND THE 21ST CENTURY STRATEGIC ALLIANCE  
 BETWEEN CHINA AND RUSSIA 225

*Vladimir N. CVETKOVIĆ*

THE BANALITY OF POWER AND THE IDEOLOGY  
OF UNIVERSALISM (REASONS FOR, EFFECTS OF  
AND LESSONS DRAWN FROM NATO ASSAULT  
ON SERBIA IN 1999) 237

*Ramachandra BYRAPPA*

UNPEGGING THE THIRD SPHERE OF THE WORLD ORDER:  
INDIA AND YUGOSLAVIA IN THE 1990S 251

*Aleksandar JAZIĆ*

NEW BALANCE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS:  
DEVELOPMENT OF BRICS ALLIANCE 264

*Aleksandar Saša GAJIĆ*

CONSEQUENCES OF NATO'S KOSOVO WAR  
ON RUSSIA'S POLICY 277

*Darina GRIGOROVA*

THE POST-YUGOSLAV BALKANS  
IN THE IDEOLOGICAL WAR BETWEEN RUSSIA AND NATO 292

#### CHAPTER IV

### MODUS OPERANDI OF THE USA AND NATO BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE AGGRESSION

*Gordon N. BARDOS*

FROM BELGRADE TO BENGHAZI: WASHINGTON'S  
DESCENT INTO PERPETUAL GLOBAL WAR, 1999-2019 307

*Miroslav GLIŠIĆ, Dejan STOJKOVIĆ, Ivona LAĐEVAC*

NATO CRISIS MANAGEMENT CONCEPT:  
TWENTY YEARS AFTER THE BOMBING  
OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA 327

*Nenad PERIĆ*

MEDIA WAR: "ARTILLERY SUPPORT"  
FOR NATO AGGRESSION ON THE FRY 1999 350

*Veljko* **BLAGOJEVIĆ**  
 PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATION  
 IN LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT  
 - CASE STUDY KOSOVO AND METOHIJA 365

*Nebojša* **VUKOVIĆ**, *Branislav* **ĐORĐEVIĆ**  
 CLASSICAL THEORIES OF AIRPOWER AND THE NATO WAR  
 AGAINST THE FR YUGOSLAVIA IN 1999 385

**CHAPTER V**  
**THE FUTURE OF NATO AND THE BALANCE**  
**OF DESTRUCTION OF THE 1999 WAR**

*Richard* **SAKWA**  
 NATO: ESSENTIAL OR OBSOLETE? 403

*Valeriu* **MOSNEAGA**, *Tatiana* **TURCO**, *Gheorghe* **MOSNEAGA**  
 THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA AND NATO:  
 THE SPECIFICITY OF RELATIONS IN THE CONTEXT  
 OF MOLDOVAN NEUTRALITY 417

*Bojan* **DIMITRIJEVIĆ**, *Milenko* **DŽELETOVIĆ**  
 ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL AND HEALTH EFFECTS  
 OF THE 1999 NATO BOMBING - SURVEY 440

*Valentina* **VUKOVIĆ**, *Željko* **BUDIMIR**  
 ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE OF SERBIA:  
 VICTIM OF NATO ATTACK 460

## INTRODUCTION

The NATO aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999 is one of the most tragic episodes in the modern history of the Serbian people. In military terms, this conflict was almost absurd: the largest military coalition in history attacked a small and isolated country with a genuine threat to destroy it utterly. From the political and cultural point of view, this conflict brought to Serbia besides terrible destruction and numerous victims, a profound disappointment because the war was initiated by its former allies from the two great world wars.

During the 20th century, in the First Balkan War and the First and Second World War, Serbia mainly fought against far superior enemies (the Ottoman Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Imperial Germany and later Nazi Germany) but always with a strong motive of freedom in the foreground. Serbia emerged as a winner and part of the winning alliances from all these conflicts. In so far, the military attack of the nineteen NATO member states on Serbia, i.e., the former FR Yugoslavia (the remaining federation of Serbia and Montenegro after the dissolution of the "Great Yugoslavia"), conducted by an alliance of some major allies from the previous wars (France, United Kingdom, USA), represented an enormous civilizational shock to the Serbian people. It was hard to comprehend and accept the ideological, political and "humanitarian" reasons declared by the Western allies as justification for their warfare. From this perspective, it can be stated that the fallen members of the Yugoslav Army and the Ministry of the Interior of Serbia demonstrated heroism and courage equal to those of their ancestors who fought in the previous wars for freedom and honor of the homeland. On the occasion of two decades of this, for many reasons, a unique war in military history, the Faculty of Security Studies of the University of Belgrade and the Institute of International Politics and Economics from Belgrade decided to publish the international thematic collection of scientific papers.

Besides the authors from Serbia, we included into this project the authors from countries from four continents – Europe, Asia, North

America, and South America. The review team consists of distinguished scientists from China, the United States, Brazil, and Poland.

This collection of papers is divided into five thematic units. In the first unit, prominent scientists in the field of international public law perceive the NATO's aggression on the FRY from a legal point of view, problematizing the Alliance's military action from the point of legality and legitimacy. Unambiguous and argumentative facts have backed up the conclusion that the NATO war against the FRY did not have a foothold in international law and that its conduct violated several of its key norms. Simultaneously, it is indicated that the current world order, which relies, albeit formally, on the United Nations Organization, is not functioning for the benefit of smaller and weaker subjects of international relations at all, but unfortunately, the great and powerful forces act according to their own will, finding justifications in human principles and the defense of human rights.

The second unit consists of works which examine the NATO aggression in the regional and continental geopolitical context and analyze the crucial political-geographical, geoeconomic and geostrategic factors which led to the war in 1999. In their works, the authors demonstrate how the interests of big and small actors in the Balkans have crossed, how it has reflected on the intensification of the ethnic crisis in Kosovo and Metohija, and finally - how and why the military action against the FR Yugoslavia took place. Moreover, these works also point to the long-term harmful effects caused by the NATO aggression, not only regarding the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Serbia but also in the context of the interethnic and geopolitical relations on the Balkan Peninsula.

In the third unit of this collection of papers, the 1999 war in the FR Yugoslavia is analyzed in an even wider context - from the angle of global relations and world politics. The authors, whose works are represented in this thematic unit, suggest the 1999 aggression on the FRY occurred during a specific period of international relations when only one power (USA) dominated the planetary political scene. It was a unipolar order, which manifested precisely during the transition from the 20th to the 21st century, through a series of US military interventions in the world (FRY, Afghanistan, Iraq, etc.). The papers point to a significant change in power relations in the world, as well as the cooperation of other great powers (China, Russia, etc.) to create more balanced political circumstances in the world and prevent the recurrence of the situation from 1999.

The fourth unit contains works focusing on certain aspects of the modus operandi of NATO and the US armed forces as the leading force within the Alliance. Among other facts, the works display the operational concept of NATO crisis management. Next, they demonstrate the fact that the doctrine of the low-intensity conflict was partially used during the preparation and the aggression itself. Moreover, the works emphasize that the media preparation for the aggression has been carried out through manipulation of the world public opinion. The key importance of the strategic use of US aviation and aviation of other NATO countries during the aggression is also highlighted. Readers will be able to learn many details about the preparation and implementation of the aggression on the FRY in 1999, which have not been widely known or present in scientific works so far.

The fifth unit of the collection of papers relates to the questions of NATO's purpose in this century, its role and goals in changed geopolitical circumstances in the world. Subsequently, it deals with NATO's relations with countries which are not its members. Finally, at the very end of the proceedings, the damage caused by the 1999 aggression to the FR Yugoslavia is presented. The said damage (here we are not referring to the lost lives, which represent an irrecoverable loss) is not only economical (financial) but also ecological and cultural, even civilizational - thus, in overall, a multidimensional one. We thought it was instructive and convenient to conclude the collection with the works that contain the exact data and calculations of damage, and images of the destroyed country.

In closing, from the published works, we can draw some summarised and general conclusions. The 1999 aggression on the FRY did not have legitimacy or legality. The aggression was conditioned *inter alia* by specific geopolitical circumstances in the Balkans, as well as the egoistic interests of the great powers, above all the United States. The war against the FR Yugoslavia or Serbia occurred in a period when the unipolar order was at its pinnacle and the United States, as its leader, did not have an equal rival on the international scene. Finally, it is certain that a similar aggression today would be much more difficult to perform. NATO members, above all the United States, have prepared war operations carefully and have taken a number of measures to provide and support them logistically, informatively and with intelligence data. The damage inflicted on the FRY is enormous, but the future of the Alliance (its further development, functioning and engagement) is not entirely certain.

We hope the works published in this international thematic collection of papers will help researchers around the world to understand the tragic events of 1999 more qualitatively and comprehensively, as well as the role of Serbia and all other actors. That was the principal purpose of publishing this collection of papers.

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