




Weekly Briefing

**Serbia external relations briefing:
Dissonant voices in the month of painful anniversary
IIPE**

China-CEE Institute

Kiadó: Kína-KKE Intézet Nonprofit Kft.
Szerkesztésért felelős személy: Chen Xin
Kiadásért felelős személy: Huang Ping

 1052 Budapest Petőfi Sándor utca 11.

 +36 1 5858 690

 office@china-cee.eu

 china-cee.eu

Dissonant voices in the month of painful anniversary

Abstract

Since March 1999 this month, which the most people north of the Equator resemble to the beginning of spring, in Serbian citizens provokes upsetting sentiments on 79 days of bombing campaign that was implemented by NATO air forces. This event keeps crucial position in foreign policy activity of the Republic of Serbia, since the bombing campaign was initiated by, in the first line USA, NATO countries in order to stop human rights violation in Serbian south province, Kosovo and Metohija. Final outcome of the NATO intervention just proves what Serbia and other international law and United Nations system prone countries claimed for all these years, international law was violated and criminal activities were taken in order to help Kosovo and Metohija Albanians to create its own state on the Serbian territory.

Focus of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but also of all entities in Serbian society that are dealing in the area of international law and/or international relations, during March 2019 put its efforts to present to the widest audience that 1999 illegal use of force by NATO was not only contrary to the international law but that it also create dangerous precedent in global terms.

That illegal activity not restrained by UN mechanisms of “collective security,” resulted in a reversal of political order in the Province of Kosovo and Metohija. Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999) served as a kind of “legalization,” *post festum*, of the “régime change” brought about by aggressive war. And not only that the intervention of NATO had a destabilizing impact on international order, but it effectively undermined the United Nations Organization in the exercise of its mandate of collective security. Even more, targeting Embassy of People’s Republic of China in Belgrade was just one act more of preforming a power of only remaining superpower and, by the same power led, military alliance.

Of the then 19 NATO member states, only three did not participate in the bombing: Greece, Iceland and Luxembourg, of which only Greece had its own air force and Serbian people would never forget this.

It is senseless to discuss any more if the NATO intervention was illegal or not. No one can deny that it was illegal by all means as the international legal system was neglected. The

main goal that NATO proclaimed, protection of human rights has never been achieved. Basic rights of Serbs and other non-Albanians that live in Kosovo and Metohija are not guaranteed, neither the right to life nor to the freedom of movement. That is why Republic of Serbia, supported by Russian Federation and People's Republic of China, constantly insists that Security Council should maintain on its Agenda regular discussions about the situation in the field and reports submitted by Serbian officials. Regular reporting from the field had significant impact since thirteen countries withdrew recognition of Kosovo and it is very likely that this trend will continue.

Considering all these facts, one might get into conclusion that at least at this topic Serbian society reached consensus and that there is no disagreement in this area. But, on the contrary, during the first half of March ten Serbian non-governmental organizations presented to the public initiative for a new foreign policy of the Republic of Serbia.

As they explained, they were triggered by "the deep divisions in Serbian society, as well as the lack of consensus as regards to foreign policy and the international position of Serbia". In that regard, they are offering to Government and the opposition a proposal, "The New Foreign Policy Initiative" in order "to achieve as wider consent as possible about the quick solution for this process". In general, their proposal has four points: normalization of Belgrade–Pristina relations, speeding up of the European integration process, cooperation with neighboring countries and relations with NATO.

They particularly emphasized that they expect of representatives of the Government and the opposition to reach the widest possible consensus on the most expedient finalization of the process of normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina. According to them, without the conclusion of this process there is no possibility whatsoever for a successful democratic and economic development of Serbia and its positioning in the Western Balkans. They warned that any absence of a comprehensive normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina will further isolate the country, bringing it in an extremely unfavorable position.

When comes to the EU accession of Serbia, which is a second point, notwithstanding the EU's internal problems and the upcoming elections for the European Parliament, there still remain necessity to speed up this process, which has been trapped by the lack of a comprehensive legally binding agreement between Belgrade and Pristina and the non-implementation of internal reforms.

Point three indicates the need for establishment of a full cooperation between Serbia and its neighbors established on the basis of equality and mutual respect. It is important to insist on

immutability of state borders, as well as on final definition of the Serbian border with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Montenegro.

The most disputable is the last, fourth point. It states that “intensifying full cooperation and partnership with NATO is of a vital interest for Serbia and its citizens.” It goes further claiming that: “It is therefore necessary to stop anti-NATO media campaigns since the cooperation between Serbia and NATO has been advancing every year.” And as conclusion, authors of this initiative said that “having in mind the experience of other Western Balkan countries, it is obvious that none of them succeeded in achieving its national strategic interests without the full cooperation and partnership with NATO.”

Majority of Serbian public was astonished with this initiative not only due its content but more with its timing.

During 1999 it was very difficult to fight with deceitful and dirty media campaign that was carried on against Serbia. But now, in 2019 we are witnessing that the most of so called evidences launched before and during were fake and made up in order to make greater confusion, to put blame on Serbian people for convicting the worse crimes ever and, eventually, to seize the part of Serbian territory. This change is a result of diplomatic battle that Serbia led in the Organization of the United Nations supported by Russian Federation and People’s Republic of China as permanent members of the Security Council.

From the other hand, these efforts were and still are supported by the academic community worldwide.

Among commemorative events that were organized this March in order to mark this distressful anniversary of two decades from the start of NATO aggression, on March 23rd in Belgrade was held the international conference that gather distinguished scholars from fourteen countries. Their speeches may be summarized as undivided support to Serbian diplomatic battle in order to assemble all states that are interested in restoring international legal system, restoring main principles of the international law such as the prohibition of the threat of force and the use of force; prohibition of aggression; ban of interference in the internal affairs of states and compulsory peaceful resolution of all international disputes.

A few of them spoke specifically about NATO and repeated that NATO aviation carried out 18,168 combat flights, of which 70 percent, or 12,854 fighter jets, were carried out by the US Air Force.

On the targets in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, NATO used about 415,000 missiles with about 22,000 tons of killer cargo. By prohibited cluster bombs, NATO operated at 1,072 locations with about 350,000 missiles.

Special ammunition was also inflicted on ammunition with also prohibited depleted uranium. Uranium ammunition with an estimated total weight of about 13,000 tons is estimated to have been fired.

During the bombing, 55 soldiers, 169 police officers and 2,500 civilians were killed, of which 89 were children.

When comes to the material loss, 19 hospitals, 18 kindergartens, 78 primary and secondary schools and faculties, 64 monasteries and churches, 15 monuments, 44 electric substations, 20 power lines, three refineries, 14 airports, etc. were damaged. Also, 38 bridges, 28 radio and television signal transmitters and seven TV centers were completely destroyed.

Even shallow look of that data implies that NATO did a lot of harm to Serbia and Serbs and even if there are certain points in foreign policy that requires consensus of government and opposition this is not the one. This point shouldn't be a topic, not now not ever.

At the end, it might be interesting to know that New Foreign Policy Initiative came from NGO's that are either temporarily or regularly financed by western countries i.e. NATO member states.

Also, the conference mentioned above was attended by ambassadors of thirty countries, including China and Russia. Although invited, NATO states Ambassadors didn't come.

Conclusion

During the March 2019, twenty years of NATO intervention was marked. As each year, citizens of Serbia remember period of 78 days when NATO bombs were dropping off the sky. But, surprisingly or not, different opinions emerged advising change in foreign policy orientation.