

Hidden Behind Fake Names

Serbia will de facto enter NATO in a way resembling the proverbial “boiling frog”: gradually, unnoticeably. And NATO will enter Serbia secretly, as has been the hitherto case.

Groucho Marx once made a joke saying that it was good thing people have five fingers, because if they had four or six, the glove industry would collapse. Those five fingers must be why people hold the number five in such high regard and consider every anniversary evenly divisible by five – a jubilee. Jubilees, as a rule, are marked in a manner more ceremonious, serious and pompous than non-jubilees.

For some reason, however, we have witnessed the fact that the 16th anniversary of the NATO bombing of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia a few days ago has been marked in a way more ceremonious, serious and pompous than the 15th in March 2014. As a reminder, this year’s ceremony commenced on March 24th, at 19:58 pm, the exact anniversary of the beginning of the attacks, and on this occasion Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić told that Serbia would never forget the bombing and the lives lost, but that it is her obligation and duty to the victims to fight for a better future. He stressed that Serbia has learned a lesson and that she would continue her struggle for the citizens’ normal and dignified life. The ceremony was attended by Serbian Government Ministers, Army representatives, Mayor of Belgrade Siniša Mali, and the place of honor, next to Aleksandar Vučić himself, was occupied by President of Republika Srpska Milorad Dodik.

Twelve months ago, even though the anniversary was, as we said, a jubilee, March 24th was marked by a series of smaller public events. Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić placed a wreath at the monument honoring the victims in Varvarin, while the then Prime Minister Ivica Dačić laid a wreath at Straževica. Wreaths were also placed by Nebojša Rodić, Ljubiša Diković, Aleksandar Vulin and Miloš Vučević, but there was no central commemorative ceremony.

What is the reason behind such “increase in seriousness” pertaining to the remembrance of the onset of the NATO campaign against FR Yugoslavia? Why is the 16th anniversary publically more visible than the 15th? Does this imply some kind of u-turn in the Government of Serbia’s policies? Does it mean that Serbia is distancing itself from the West, the European Union and NATO, that today her resolve concerning the progress towards Euro-Atlantic integrations is weaker than it was one year ago? Can the presence of Milorad Dodik be viewed as a signal confirming this?

Like in the Dušan Kovačević play “Balkan Spy”, everything is contrary to what seems to be. The objective of marking the anniversary of the bombing in a fashion as loud as possible is to conceal the fact that NATO and Serbia are closer than ever before, that – as it was stated in a “Politika” headline a few days ago – Serbia has not entered NATO but NATO did enter Serbia. It was already publically announced that the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) had been harmonized and adopted. The shouts against NATO’s past sins undermine the possibility of a rational debate on the subject of Serbia and NATO today.

In addition, perhaps the best example of conducting a policy of publically loudly and aggressively agitating against NATO, while essentially being in line with it, is the very policy of Milorad Dodik. It is too often forgotten that Dodik initially came to power with the logistic aid provided by the then peacekeeping forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The acronym was actually SFOR but it was read as NATO. In addition to that, Ana Trišić-Babić, Deputy Foreign Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina who has for years been the highest-ranked Republika Srpska official in the foreign politics of BiH, as well as member of Dodik's Alliance of Independent Social Democrats, is a strong and assertive advocate of Bosnia and Herzegovina's accession to NATO. She has spoken about this a lot and frequently, the latest case being a statement made only three weeks ago when she explicitly said: "BiH should become a NATO member, not only for the fact that this would guarantee us internal stability or because we need a 'security umbrella', but also because BiH, by adjusting to standards and values promoted by NATO, would become a modern country, one in which democracy, rule of law and observance of human rights represent a constant category".

There is this snappy detail in action movies when a small group of fighters confront a large one and when their only hope is for the enemy to believe that there are more of them. So they yell, make noise, act arrogantly, shoot uncontrollably, in order to frighten the enemy. It seems as though today's policy of making unpopular decisions bears some similarities to this, so the moves not supported by the public are made at the exact time when those making them are loudest in their chants that they would do nothing of the kind. A recent statement by Minister Vujović about the fact that the Government published news about the increase of electricity prices immediately prior to this decision's entry into force because it did not want to "burden the citizens" is unusually frank and, in fact, a paradigm of such policy.

In that regard, as is the case with the "normalization of relations with Prishtina", Serbia will de facto enter NATO in a way resembling the proverbial "boiling frog": gradually, unnoticeably. And NATO will enter Serbia secretly, as has been the hitherto case, hidden behind fake names. Therefore an important role in the Individual Partnership Action Plan will be given to issues of gender equality and strengthening of multicultural dialogue, for it is easiest and sweetest to accuse every man who says that it is not all that human and noble to bomb weddings in Afghanistan, murder children in the Middle East, destroy Libyan waterworks for the civilians whose wellbeing is cause for crocodile tears to die of thirst, of being a misogynist pig, a male chauvinist and a chauvinist in general. If, on the other hand, a woman should voice her opinion on this issue, the course of action will resemble the "Katarina Đorđević¹ example".

¹ The author refers to a journalist who, with two of her articles, had caused negative reactions by primarily feminist circles in Serbia. One [text](#) dealt with reasons of birthrate decline in Serbia, in which she very tendentiously explains this occurrence with a higher percentage of educated (young) women, as well as their distinct hedonism. It was followed by a [response of a group of female intellectuals](#) who have explicitly explained the socio-political and economic context of life in Serbia and in the region, urging the author to be objective, while also reproaching her for a level of racism as in her text she cites (statistical) data which allegedly indicate that the minorities in Serbia are more active in order to increase their birthrate, whereas Serb women are prone to hedonism and higher education, neglecting their highest calling, namely of becoming a mother. (translator's note)

And when the time comes for NATO to go official and naïve persons wonder how come we did not know about this before, there will be some minister who will say that the Government did not want to “burden the citizens.”

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BETWEEN EXTREMES

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