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[Review of the book *Power and Force – Serbia and Military Factor in International Politics*, by V. Blagojević]

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Book Review

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Review

The phenomena in human history, which have at the same time, as attractive, as destructive power, are rare. Without any doubts, power and force have an incredible potential for creation and destruction. It remains for many scientists to observe changes in power relations very carefully, almost surgically precisely, in order to better understand the past, present and future. With his decades-long engagement in the defense system and its educational and research institutions, Colonel dr Veljko Blagojević has been contributing not only to strategic thinking, but also to better operationalization of state interests. Continuing his research on the army and international relations, Colonel Blagojević recently published the book *Force and Power – Serbia and the Military Factor in International Politics*, published by Institute for Strategic Research in Belgrade..

Taking into account the broad and very demanding field of research, the author divided the book into 17 dynamic units. After the preface and introductory (and essentially theoretical considerations), there are two main currents in the work that chronologically intertwine and complement each other, covering a very long period of general and national history (from the Peace of Westphalia and the emergence of the modern Serbian state).

Starting with introductory considerations with a lucid quote from Blaise Pascal that “justice without force is powerless, force without justice is violence. We must combine force and justice”, the author drew the readers' attention to the main goals of his own research: “1) Description of the evolution of military power in the international context; 2) consideration of its significance in contemporary international politics; 3) defining the basic guidelines for development and implementation in the foreseeable future”.

Leaving no space for criticism of the lack of a theoretical framework, Blagojević gave definitions of strength, power and strategy, relying on leading, often conflicting, political and military authorities in the research field (Georg Schwarzenberger, Max Weber, Joseph Nye, Hans Morgenthau, John Mearsheimer, Ole Rudolf Holsti, Vladislav Kulski, Kenneth Waltz, Helmuth

von Moltke, Liddell Hart, Andre Beaufre, Gregory Foster, Williamson Murray, Mark Grimsley, Vasily Sokolovsky, and others). The organization of modern states from the early modern period, the technological strengthening and popularization of armies, the industrial and traffic revolution, as well as the emergence of geopolitics, were important factors that had contributed to the complexity of strategic analysis. Without any doubt, power is the central point of international relations, and its military component will undoubtedly be and remain an integral part, thanks to which states will pursue their offensive and defensive goals, but also deter the opponent from hostile intentions.

The history of Serbia and the Serbian people is difficult to understand without the army. A cultivated consciousness of the importance of the military vocation contributed to the establishment of a strong army of a small country that managed to become a factor within the regional framework (despite much stronger and larger empires). Despite the comparative advantages, weaknesses, that affected the negative outcome of the realization of certain strategic goals, were noticed. Author believes that insufficient quality of military equipment, as well as the unacceptably low level of education and training of the Serbian officer corps in the middle of the 19th century had its impact on many Serbian defeats. Only since the reforms of the King of Milan strong innovative impulses could be perceived, because of which the Serbian army was able to achieve much more fruitful results during the Balkans and in the First World War.

Making it easier for readers to follow the complex international relations from the First World War until these days, Veljko Blagojević also described numerous key strategic conceptions of the great powers. The special experience of militarized Germany showed that the transition from offensive to positional warfare in the First, and the complex use of various demographic (German national minority in Central Europe), economic, technological and military factors (blitzkrieg concept) in World War II, did not contribute to Berlin's victory. The importance of proper coordination of resources and manpower in context is very important in deciding the

outcome of a winner. Assessing the performance of the allies, Blagojević concluded that the United States and the United Kingdom had saved a significant part of their people and material resources by postponing the opening of the second front. The Cold War world, however, was defined by the position of two centers – Moscow and Washington. Nuclear weapons have made it possible to refrain from large-scale war, but it has also contributed to the intensification of so-called low-intensity conflicts. Comparing the Soviet and American models of assistance in third-party conflicts, the author noted the deep continuity of American tactics of multi-layered support (moral, political, financial, armed and protective), which is noticeable today with several modifications. In a special chapter titled *Pax Americana*, Blagojević presented the basic theoretical, military and economic settings of the new system in a very striking and well-argued way. There were two approaches which have been considered in Washington after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the study advocated the thesis that the United States had decided to rely on a realistic paradigm that implied consistent monitoring of national interests. In the last volumes, the perspectives of multipolar development of international relations were presented. Globalization has stimulated other large countries to move towards stronger integration and the creation of networks of interdependence. The decline of American power has opened space for many other rivals. Also, there are several scenarios for the world that may be realized in the coming period (Chinese domination, new bipolarity between the West and the BRICS, a concert of several great powers (USA, EU, China, Russia, Japan India) and regionalization with several strong centers). In the new reorganization, the tactics of sounding the terrain carried out by the great powers have a significant role and the author writes about it in detail in the last volumes of the work.

While the wars of 1912–1918 were the result of good planning, the efficiency of Serbian trained officers and commitment to the state, the Yugoslav experience brought about numerous changes that did not contribute to the qualitative strengthening of the armed forces. The abandonment of the concept

of maneuvers and the adoption of French defense doctrines that had no foundation proved to be insufficient for the country's survival. In addition, the existence of opposing military cliques (as well as political interference) resulted in the degradation of command staff. With the April War and the country's entry into World War II, many conflicts became very intense and bloody. As the author concludes, in the mutual struggle, the NOVJ, under the command of Josip Broz, showed greater discipline and communication skills with the allies, through which it gained the favor of the leading countries. Relying primarily on the formative experience of the Second Yugoslavia (until the emergence of the Non-Aligned Bloc), the author showed how instable and complex the position of Tito's regime was in relation to the two centers of power. The inclusion of Yugoslavia in the strategic directions (primarily the Lombardy-Pannonian, Adriatic-Pannonian and Albanian-Bulgarian) of the opposing parties on the planned European battlefield contributed to the importance of the South Slavic state. Due to that position, the imperative goal of the superpowers was to "keep Tito afloat". However, the contradictions of the federal structure and the marginalization of the Serbian factor, in the author's opinion, weakened Belgrade's forces. During the break-up of Yugoslavia, the former Serbian leadership did not pay attention to gaining the support of world centers by fitting into the new ideological patterns of the Western world.

Extremely critical of the Serbian experience after the breakup of Yugoslavia, Veljko Blagojević pointed out that it is necessary to better think about Serbian defense policy and to continuously and systematically develop military potentials which have been largely neglected. Considering the concepts of neutrality and neutrality, the author resolves one misconception that exists in the Serbian scientific and media sphere. Serbia's self-proclaimed neutrality in 2007 has the character of neutralism, but not neutrality, for the reason that it has not been internationally verified. Comparing the experiences of neutrality and neutralism of other European countries (primarily Switzerland, Sweden, Finland, Ukraine, Moldova, but also Belgium and the Netherlands

before reaching NATO membership), the study indicates both the advantages and disadvantages of this model. The concept of total defense applied by Switzerland, Sweden and Finland, with the international participation of neutral countries in international peacekeeping missions, is a combination that represents an expression of deep commitment to their own security in the sense of realpolitik.

Undoubtedly, this book represents an important contribution to understanding the position of the military factor in international relations. By its actions, the army creates politics, but it is also an integral part of it. The main advantage of the monograph *Power and Force. Serbia and the military factor in international politics* is that they are presented in the most concise, and at the same time the most transparent and receptive way. Future readers will receive an overview in which both continuities and discontinuities are clearly visible, and the author's analyzes and evaluations can not only inform them, but also teach them about the correctness of numerous strategic decisions which have been made in past.