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Ukraine and the shadow of NATO

Thanks to NATO's action it became clear that the right without the sword yields to the sword without the right.



The North Atlantic Treaty Organization ([NATO](#)), founded in 1949, knocks on [Ukraine's doorstep](#). And that further complicates the analysis of the ongoing war. It is an international war that began long before February of this year and in which much more is at stake than the control of eastern Ukraine.

A military treaty

Let's start by saying that NATO is a military treaty, a war agreement between powerful states born in the framework of the Cold War and against an enemy that no longer exists: the Soviet Union.

According to its own documents, NATO "promotes democratic values and allows members to consult and cooperate on defense and security issues to solve problems, build trust and, in the long term, avoid conflicts." Despite the fact that the promotion of "democratic values" is alleged, because it was not precisely respect for human rights that NATO's immense operation in the former Yugoslavia was immensely



The photos accompanying this article correspond to the consequences of the NATO attack on Belgrade in 1999, in the context of the war in the former Yugoslavia.

And militarily, NATO in its own words "has a commitment to the peaceful resolution of disputes. When diplomatic efforts fail, the military force undertakes crisis management operations. These operations are carried out under the collective defense clause of NATO's

founding treaty (Article 5 of the Washington Treaty) or by mandate of the United Nations, alone or in cooperation with other countries and international bodies."

This last statement is even more dangerous, because it flatly contradicts [the UN Charter](#) on the use of force, because it was not a collective defense that brought it to Yugoslavia. What they call "crisis management" is not at all different from what Putin calls an occupation a "[special military operation](#)."

In response to the creation of NATO, the Soviet bloc created the Warsaw Pact, another military alliance to counterbalance NATO, in 1955. This Pact was dissolved on July 1, 1991, while NATO not only remained, but went from 15 members at the time to 30 in 2012.

There is another, smaller organization: the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), founded in May 1992, among six post-Soviet states: Russia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, alleging the fight against terrorism and organized crime.

Azerbaijan and Georgia also signed the treaty to become part of the CSTO, but later withdrew, as did Uzbekistan. Its armed body is the Collective Rapid Reaction Force, deployed in January 2022, on the occasion of the protests in Kazakhstan

NATO, looking to the east

When the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was dissolved, part of the agreement was the non-enlargement of NATO to the east, it should not even be dismantled but limited to the countries that were already members, so as not to represent a threat (real or perceived) to the ex-Soviet countries.

Part of the solution would be to fulfill the 1991 commitment as follows: "In the framework of the negotiations in the Two Plus Four format, we made it clear that we would not expand NATO beyond the Elbe. Therefore, we cannot offer Poland and the other [Eastern European countries] to be members of NATO," said Jürgen Chrobog, representative of the Federal Republic of Germany, "although the magazine states that the diplomat apparently confused the Elbe with the Oder River." But NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia in the spring of 1999 changed the Russian perspective and they began to see NATO as a threat.

NATO not only remained, but, contrary to promise, has established itself as a mechanism of absorption of Eastern European countries, looking to Ukraine and Georgia, both

countries in tensions with Russia. It is worth clarifying that the European Union, beyond the euro and its own bureaucratic institutions, does not have a single political voice, much less a military arm independent of the United States. They have always said that, if the great powers have nuclear weapons, they act as a deterrent to avoid a war without winners. The same (with variations) could be applied in the analysis of the development of military pacts. But when it is clearly seen that a military pact grows to become a monopoly of force that threatens its neighbors, then the deterrent balance, on which stability is based, is lost.

NATO's defensive character was completely diluted when it entered without a UN mandate and without self-defence in the war that disarmed the former Yugoslavia. That was a violation of the UN Charter.

The numbers vary by source, but several thousand were killed (at least 1,200) in the 78 consecutive days of bombing. Over Yugoslavia (then composed of Serbia and Montenegro) fell more than 9 thousand tons of bombs, some with depleted uranium.

NATO claimed, as Russia does now, to be there in the face of ethnic cleansing against the population of Kosovo and for that a whole narrative was created tending to make the world believe that there was already a genocide underway.

NATO used the notion of "humanitarian interference" to get into Kosovo, although that is a figure that has no hold on international law. Similarly, the prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia, Carla del Ponte, did not even open an investigation into the alleged NATO crimes in Yugoslavia. That is, that court studied the crimes of Serbia, but not the crimes against Serbia.

NATO's damage was not only to military targets, which were mainly achieved in the first 3 days, but affected power plants, factories, aqueducts and media; they even bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. The operation was attended mainly by armies from Germany, Spain, the United States, France, Italy and the United Kingdom.



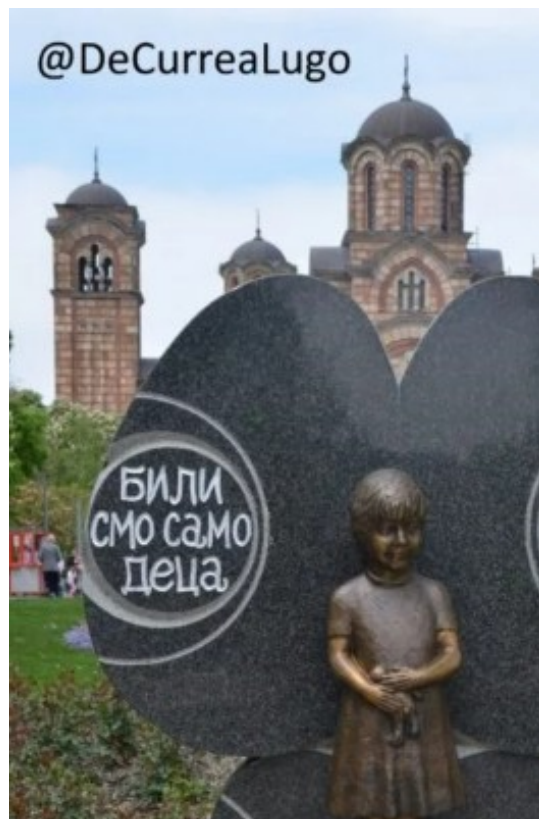
That war was not intended to defend the Albanians in Kosovo, but to impose a form of government and economic policies. It was an imperial move by the United States and its allies. Finally, Kosovo was recognized as a state, in a hasty manner thanks to the imposition of the powers, while cases such as Palestine and Western Sahara are still waiting.

On the streets of Belgrade

On the streets of Belgrade people remember. In fact, the ruins of the Ministry of Defense that was attacked by NATO remain, as well as the building of the Belgrade Telecommunications Center. They remain destroyed to remember what happened here.

There are also a couple of symbolic tombs of two bodies that have not appeared and a large tombstone where the names of the dead people are with a sign in Serbian that asks "Why?".

Very close to St. Mark's Church is a statue of a girl who was killed in NATO bombing. Next to it is a sign in Serbian and English that says "We were just children"; this is all the time reminded of the war crimes committed by NATO. It must be clear to us that what NATO can do against the civilian population is not a hypothesis, for Serbs and those who remember history it is an absolute reality.



Serbia has not forgotten that NATO aggression, so it refuses to be part of that military alliance, an organization that more than watching over the European security agenda (of course, not to mention that Russia is part of Europe) is an international extension of the Department of Defense of the United States.

Although the Serbian government has expressed its respect for international law, it maintains its strong ties with Russia, which includes the supply of hydrocarbons, as well as sharing the Orthodox religion and the Slavic entity. That is why many consider Serbia to be Russia's piece in the Balkans.

It is curious that Serbia's far right supports Putin, using the "denazification" argument. The Serbs support Putin, moreover, because the killing of civilians by NATO is still present. That is also why the Serbian government has not joined the sanctions against Russia. While the extreme right of other European countries supports Zelenskiy, which again shows that it is naïve to try to see ideological blocs where there are none.

That growth of NATO is one of the arguments in this war in Ukraine, as well as an ethnic cleansing in the east of the country. On the risk to Russia's security, the Cuban case of 1962 is cited, when the United States and the then Soviet Union were about to collide due to the deployment of missiles in Cuba, a little more than 1,800 kilometers from Washington.



In the case of a nuclear deployment on Ukrainian territory, the distance would be shorter. In fact, from Kiev to Moscow there are a little more than 730 kilometers. But that argument has its nuances: Riga, the capital of Latvia that is already part of NATO, is only 918 kilometers from Moscow. And from the border, Moscow is about 620 kilometers, closer than from Kiev to Moscow. But it is clear that a military tension does not depend only on the use of nuclear weapons.

Russia had already stated for many years what the expansion of NATO meant for its security. Therefore, although for some the issue of NATO sounds like an excuse, both its growth in member countries and the suspicion of Russia have gone hand in hand for many years, which cannot be ignored.



The truth is that in the former Yugoslavia NATO claimed to defend human rights to violate human rights, claimed a defense against a non-existent attack to justify an occupation, alleged genocide to devastate a country at the point of tons of bombs. Thanks to NATO's action it became clear that the right without the sword yields to the sword without the right.

[Victor de Currea-Lugo](#) for La Pluma, May 10, 2022

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