

**ADDRESS BY ACADEMICIAN PROF. FERID MUHIĆ
ON THE OCCASION OF THE BOOK LAUNCH EVENT
„ALIJA IZETBEGOVIĆ IN THE FOREIGN POLICY OF BOSNIA AND
HERZEGOVINA 1990-2003“ BY FIKRET MUSLIMOVIĆ
SARAJEVO, OCTOBER 26, 2023**

Distinguished Guests, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At public occasions, I prefer direct oral presentation. However, considering that, as the respected Organizers kindly informed me, the presentations at this book promotion event will be translated, reading the text is realistically a better option because it makes the work of the translation team easier.

Let me start by sharing one question with you: Why promotion? What quality makes every promotion necessary or, if you will - indispensable!?

The answer clearly lies in the fact that the common goal of every promotion is to briefly summarize the innovative values of the promoted work. I titled my Preface to this work: "Encyclopedia of visionary politics of Alija Izetbegović". In this promotion, my goal is to define the difference between the character, uniqueness and individuality of Alija Izetbegović's state policy in relation to the character of action that in contemporary jargon is designated as "state policy", with special reference to his concept of the foreign policy of Bosnia and Herzegovina. That difference is implicitly present in Fikret Muslimović's book, but for many reasons, an explicit analytical elaboration of that difference is more than necessary. In this context, the topic of my presentation at this promotion could be entitled "Perennial character of Alija Izetbegović's state politics".

As far as I could determine, this is the 15th book of the impressive body of work of Fikret Muslimović, Major General of the BiH Army, who, thanks to his intellectual capacities and uncompromising respect for the highest standards of scientific and research work, long ago promoted this author as one of the most productive and objective political analysts in the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

Fikret Muslimović devoted a significant part of his impressive book to the systematic analysis of the works and to the elucidation of the personality of Alija Izetbegović, an unequivocally key figure in the recent political history of Europe and the Balkans, especially Bosnia and Herzegovina, during the turbulent and neuralgic years of the last decade of the 20th century. Previously, the author published two of the most systematic and, I dare say, the most honest analyzes of Alija Izetbegović's fundamental philosophical positions as a statesman ("Alija Izetbegović: the Thinker and Statesman ", with Professor Dr. Selmo Cikotić, 2016), and as a man ("The Prison Years of Alija Izetbegović - Contributions to His Biography", with Professor Mustafa Spahić, 2021) In this second work, the authors meticulously shed light on the personality and strength of character of Alija Izetbegović, and his high moral principles during the years spent in prison.

The voluminous monograph "Alija Izetbegović in the Foreign Policy of Bosnia and Herzegovina 1990-2023" formally completes the trilogy, while essentially assembling all aspects and fragments of Alija Izetbegović's spiritual and political activity into a whole. When writing this book, Fikret Muslimović was confronted with even greater difficulties than those he encountered while writing the first two books of this capital trilogy, due to the very nature of the field of foreign policy itself, which is equally difficult to distinguish from other spheres of social life, as it is problematic to perceive it exclusively from that specific perspective, bearing in mind the chronic absence of systematically organized documentary material specifically related to the role of Alija Izetbegović in foreign policy.

It should be said that the result fully justified all his efforts and rewarded his painstaking work because he sovereignly, argumentatively and integrally evoked the specific, or rather - unique character of the statesman Alija Izetbegović. In short, these books confirmed that Alija Izetbegović is more than a *rara avis* - a rare bird in a motley flock of contemporary political leaders and statesmen! In the recent history of world politics, he is truly a unique example of a leader whose political beliefs are based on, derived and deduced from the premises of his own philosophical worldview and a highly developed understanding of the character and dynamics of social relations. To make this very clear: Alija Izetbegović is not exceptional because he was the only of all the statesmen of this era who, in conceptualizing his strategic political goals, referred to and relied on his own philosophical views, but rather because no other statesman had and still doesn't have any philosophy of his or her own!

Such a statesman has long been absent either in the region or in the world, regardless of the size and population of the country they headed, either among the deceased or among the living. Whether it is Milošević and Tuđman, Vučić, Orban, Milanović, Plenković, or Macron, Biden, Trump, Putin, Netanyahu... not a single political leader of the recent era simply has any philosophical platform of his own that would serve as the basis for his actions. Instead, each of them operates from the unpredictable and fundamentally amoral perspective of the so-called "realpolitik". I say the so-called - because no matter how realistic it is, that type of action is not actually *politics*, because politics, *expressis verbis*, is action for the welfare of the community, like *bios politicos* is the etymological equivalent of community life, and not the sphere of realization of personal interests of politicians.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In this context, the conclusion emerges that realpolitik, defined as "the art of the possible", is an assassination of the original concept of politics, a grotesque caricature mocking the very idea of politics. This freakish concept, from which all ethical considerations and ideals were previously amputated, subordinates its actions exclusively to the principle of assessing the realistic achievement of the goals and ambitions of individual leaders and political structures, whoever and whatever they may be. The question that realpolitik asks itself is the same question that every criminal or thief asks themselves: "If it is profitable for me, how can I kill, rob, steal with impunity?" The question that you ask yourself as a politician in the original sense of the term is: "Is what I intend to do morally permissible and will it bring some common good?" From the perspective of realpolitik, aggression against any country in the world for the purpose of achieving one's own goals is not a moral question, nor is it the question of hundreds of thousands

of civilian victims and a humanitarian disaster in vast areas, it is not even a question of the justification of violation of international legal provisions, nor of potential responsibility! For realpolitik, it is a purely technical question of the realistic realization of the intention to effectively carry out aggression, which automatically excludes realpolitik from the sphere of politics, because no action that does not raise the question of moral (in)admissibility and (in)justice belongs into the sphere of politics, but into the sphere of potentially incriminated and criminal activity.

In the events from 1990 to 2003, Alija Izetbegović was the only leader who led politics, because he considered all his political decisions through the prism of moral responsibility and humanitarian values. All the others practiced "realpolitik", that is, they were engaged in the realization of their own morally impermissible or openly criminal goals. The amnesty of state terror and the promotion of arbitrary actions of aggression against sovereign states and their promotion into acts of political action was carried out by abusing the concept of politics by the leaders of the most powerful states, who could allow themselves to pursue their own ambitions and interests with impunity by all means, regardless of whether they were morally justified and legally allowed, they declare it to be "realpolitik" and thereby justify it.

The theory of "limited sovereignty" and the doctrine of "preemptive attack" belong to the same group of drastic acts of violence against the fundamental concepts of classic international law. The justification is found in a quasi-scientific theory of a supposed "struggle for survival", in which there is no room for moral limits to restrain the strongest and most reckless. I can do it, you can't! - is the principle of such "realpolitik".

In this context, it becomes clear that during his lifetime, Alija Izetbegović was undoubtedly the only true political leader, i.e. the only statesman who made his decisions based on the philosophy of morality and justice and not on the unscrupulous realization of immediate pragmatic and lucrative goals. We will add to this: And it has remained so to this day! Therefore, this philosophical foundation of Alija Izetbegović's policy and the moral dimension of all his political decisions should be maximally emphasized and affirmed, as a unique example in the recent political history of the world.

The domain of foreign policy, as the central theme of this book, opened up a wide area for Fikret Muslimović to confirm this thesis. He shows that all the positions and decisions of Alija Izetbegović as a statesman were uncompromisingly and consistently derived from the principles of the humanist vision of the equality of all people, peoples and cultures, without concessions to opportunism, political pragmatism, lump-sum and provisional solutions or contingent and temporal relativization of any of these principles. And now it is time for a key question: If Alija Izetbegović was practically the only statesman who derived his political beliefs from philosophical and moral premises, does that mean that his politics are anachronistic and that Alija Izetbegović himself is a kind of political relic, an anachronistic curiosity who could not or did not know how to fit into the current world of realpolitik?

Before answering this question, it should be recalled that the fact of the absence of moral values in one place or in one era does not derogate the concept of moral values itself. Likewise, the fact that the vast majority of contemporary statesmen act exclusively from an amoral pragmatic

perspective does not derogate the status of the statesman who bases his activity on the traditional concept of politics as moral action in order to achieve the "greater good" for his own people and for all the people of the world. It is exactly as such, that the politics of Alija Izetbegović is not anachronistic, but a timeless, always and everywhere topical paradigm of politics - perennial politics! A politics of consistent respect for transtemporal moral provisions and for the eternal values of humanism.

On this occasion, it is enough to quote from Fikret Muslimović's book two characteristic statements of Alija Izetbegović, given in the most critical moments in which realpolitik would absolutely recommend unconditional acceptance of the ultimatum of the Owen-Stoltenberg plan. Alija Izetbegović actually rejected this plan, although by accepting it in the circles of the great powers and the international community, he would have definitely strengthened his position as President. He refused, convinced that whole Bosnia and Herzegovina should be saved, in the most difficult but morally and civilizationally only way – the political way, by:..." in this free territory under the control of the Bosnian government and the Army, a space should be created where laws will rule, where civilization will be saved, where democracy will prevail and where the fundamental law shall be observed - that no one in this territory will be persecuted because of religion, nation or any political belief."

That the unwavering respect for the highest moral principles and justice was at the same time, the *spiritus movens* of the statesman Alija Izetbegović and the only motive for his actions, is confirmed by the statement given in an interview with a journalist:

"I don't know if I always made the best moves, but I always worked to the best of my *knowledge and conscience* and I was always ready to listen to the advice of others. I was never guided by fear or *any personal interest*."

Do you remember when was the last time you heard the word "conscience" from the mouth of any political leader of our time!?

This insight obliged Fikret Muslimović, in the first part of his book entitled "Considerations about the World and International Relations in the Works of Alija Izetbegović before he assumed the role of Statesman in 1990", to first consider in detail the principles of his philosophy of peace, equality and mutual respect of all peoples and states, regardless of their ideological differences, because that is the only way to understand the basis of all his decisions, the smallest and the greatest, which he made as President of the state, based on the philosophy of respect for fundamental humanistic values and moral norms. That is why the author first cites and analyzes in detail the authentic views of Alija Izetbegović in which he advocates for peace and security in the light of the current ideological conflicts in the world, in the very context of the relation between Alija Izetbegović's political philosophy and political practice.

The principled basis of Alija Izetbegović's later political practice in his philosophical convictions can also be seen in the solutions he proposed for concrete problems at this stage already, including his vision of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which he would insist on until the end of his life. Fikret Muslimović convincingly illustrates this philosophical foundation when he reconstructs the source of the vision of Bosnia and Herzegovina as an area of tolerance and mutual respect for its peoples and religions.

The consistency of Alija Izetbegović's views expressed before he came to the position of the President of the State and the consistency in their affirmation during the entire period in which he held this position, is effectively illustrated by the analysis of several of the most significant and nerve-wracking problems of the modern world, summarized in the topics: "Ideological Conflicts, the Arms Race and its Consequences"; "Consideration of the International Position of Muslim Nations and States"; "Crisis in the Middle East". In the context of these topics, it should be pointed out that practically all of Izetbegović's diagnoses and analyses made at that time are still valid and topical for understanding the contemporary world situation. His assessments of the reasons for chronic violence in the Middle East and the possibility of a lasting reconciliation are still key factors in understanding the dynamics of events and the current situation in the region of Gaza and Palestine.

The second part of this capital study, titled " Alija Izetbegović: the Statesman and the Leader of the Foreign Policy of Bosnia and Herzegovina", begins with the identification and review of the direction and content of the foreign policy, in which the author Fikret Muslimović precisely locates the basic guidelines of Izetbegović's statesmanship vision through the synthesis of his fundamental philosophical beliefs and concrete political decisions and activities. The organic connection of these two aspects is emphasized through the analysis of the continuity of the foreign policy of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the foreign policy of the Party of Democratic Action, based on consistent respect for the principles of foreign policy, previously marked in his philosophy of peace and mutual respect among all peoples and countries in the world.

The author also underlines the fact that the statesman Alija Izetbegović, from the beginning to the end of the aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina, consistently and uncompromisingly emphasized that: "...universal values contained in the foundations of Bosnia and Herzegovina's statehood, its two basic commitments" are - (a) "the irrevocable goal is a democratic Bosnia and Herzegovina within its internationally recognized borders and with national, religious and political rights for all its citizens", and that the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina (b) "have an inalienable right to self-defense", so he "persistently demanded that the arms embargo, imposed on the defense forces Bosnia and Herzegovina, be lifted".

The same principles were consistently promoted through his advocacy for the good relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina with neighboring Croatia; with neighboring Serbia and Montenegro; with Muslim countries; with Western countries, and through his visionary advocacy for the integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina into the European Union and the preservation of its national identity.

Izetbegović's analysis of the behavior of the Russian Federation towards Bosnia and Herzegovina is more than instructive, in which he lucidly anticipated its expansionist policy towards the Balkan region, emphasized through its support for the Republic of Serbia and its aggression on Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as for smaller Bosnian entity - the RS.

The pursuit of establishing peace as an essential way of functioning world politics and the regulation of the relations of all the countries of the world, which had its deepest source in the philosophy of Alija Izetbegović, represents the central theme of the third and final part of

Muslimović's book. Under the title "The Leading Role of President Alija Izetbegović in the Plans for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina", the author follows the details of the little-known – I dare say freely, lucid, heroic and above all - President Alija Izetbegović's principled fight against all plans to force the patriotic forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina to comply with the demands for capitulation before the aggressor. The details of this long-lasting struggle are systematically exposed through a meticulous analysis of the negotiations based on the Cutileiro Plan, the Vance-Owen Plan, from the fall of 1992 to the middle of 1993, while illuminating Izetbegović's wise decisions that contributed to the rejection of the Owen-Stoltenberg Plan from the middle of 1993 to February 1994, as well as the Peace Talks in Dayton, with extremely significant interventions and influence of Alija Izetbegović in the process of implementing the Dayton Agreement, especially when it comes to the status of Brčko.

Dear attendees, ladies and gentlemen,

If the multifold values of this precious book could be summed up in one sentence, we would say that the book by General Fikret Muslimović, "Alija Izetbegović in the Foreign Policy of Bosnia and Herzegovina 1990-2003", with its over 1300 quotations, listed exclusively from primary sources, and issues presented on more than 600 pages, rounds off the aforementioned trilogy and elevates it to the rank of a scientifically flawless encyclopedia, elucidating all important aspects of the key role the statesman Alija Izetbegović played in the victorious struggle of Bosniaks and all patriotic forces for the sovereign and independent state of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As such, this study by General Fikret Muslimović is a key contribution to historical truth and an indispensable reference in all future scientific research into the perennial character of Alija Izetbegović's political activities and an authentic understanding of his role in preserving sovereign Bosnia and Herzegovina as a democratic state for all its citizens.