

# Helsinki bulletin



HELSINKI COMMITTEE  
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN SERBIA  
address: Kneza Miloša 4,  
Belgrade, Serbia  
tel/fax. +381-11-3349-170; 3349-167;  
e-mail: office@helsinki.org.rs  
http://www.helsinki.org.rs

NO.143 // SEPTEMBER 2018



A. Vučić i H. Tači

Foto: FoNet/AP

## PARTITION OF KOSOVO UNDERMINES MULTIETHNIC CONCEPT

For 20 years now, the Kosovo question has been mirroring all the dilemmas and uncertainties that challenge the 21st century. With NATO intervention (1999) and the ensuing Agreement of Kumanovo the Western community actually set the course of Kosovo's independence. The Ahtisaari Plan and Belgrade-Pristina dialogue are parts of the package preparing Kosovo (and other countries in the region) for the membership of the EU and NATO. Moving at a snail's pace the process itself faces strong resistance of the region itself, mostly when it comes to "new

values" to be acknowledged such as the rule of law, human rights, tolerance, pluralism and the like. In the meantime, new trends have begun undermining these very values that make the groundworks of the liberal system and its principles.

As it turned out, Kosovo's and Serbia's negotiators have found some other channels – outside the Brussels Dialogue meant to be crowned with a normalization agreement – in centers of international power through which to discuss

under-the-table modes for a final, comprehensive, political agreement. This opened the door to new proposals for regional partitioning, which is a recipe for geopolitical instability, as Carl Bildt put it in an article published in the Washington Post. Quite discretely, Serbian and Albanian leaders are examining the possibility of reconciliation through territorial exchanges. The very idea – reconciliation through territorial exchanges – that has been circulating in Belgrade for years, attracted the attention of leading Albanian circles not long ago.<sup>1</sup>

In the past couple of months all the promoters of this idea, from US ex-Ambassador in Belgrade Manter's East-West Institute (New York),<sup>2</sup> Alex Soros Jr.<sup>3</sup> and Wolfgang Petrich to Ivan Vejvoda,<sup>4</sup> Jelena Milic<sup>5</sup> of CEAS and many others showed their face. "Correction of borders" is frequently mentioned as a solution to the problem. However, no one has articulated an actual scenario so far.

Austria, supportive of President Vučić's "endeavor" to solve the Kosovo question for some time now, placed the issue of "territorial exchanges" between Serbia and Kosovo at the agenda to the Albach Forum. Advocate for partitioning Wolfgang Petrich, former Austrian Ambassador

- 1 <https://www.blic.rs/vesti/svet/karl-bilt-ja-sam-protiv-podele-kosova-evo-i-zasto/5060es8>.
- 2 Time for Action in the Western Balkans, <https://www.eastwest.ngo/sites/default/files/Time-for-Action-in-the-Western-Balkans.pdf>.
- 3 <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/18/opinion/northern-macedonia-rename-greece.html>.
- 4 Ivan Vejvoda: "Territorial exchange with Kosovo is not to be excluded," Novi Magazin, November 21, 2017. "I would say the two countries could make it even now regardless of what other states say about it. But such agreement has to be made under the auspices of the international community and the UN, EU, US, Russia and permanent members of the UNSC."
- 5 Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies (CEAS) at [https://www.ceas-serbia.org/images/2018/CEAS\\_Studija\\_-Prica\\_sa\\_Zapadne\\_Strane.pdf](https://www.ceas-serbia.org/images/2018/CEAS_Studija_-Prica_sa_Zapadne_Strane.pdf).

to Serbia and UN High Representative in Bosnia-Herzegovina was among participants. For some time now, he has been open about the two presidents discussing territorial exchanges against the backdrop of a new situation in Brussels in 2018. He reminds of the only remaining historical conflict in the region, the one between the Serbs and Albanians, saying that he sees a new chance now – probably the last one in many years to come. "I am fully aware of potential flaws of 'an administrative correction' of borders if not realized carefully and in full cooperation with the UN, EU and OSCE," he says. "In the light of the upcoming referendum in Macedonia and a possibly soon decision to be made in Belgrade-Pristina dialogue, I suggest preparation of a binding document that would put an end to all future border disputes, including the issue of Bosnia. As we know, there still are some lesser disputes between Yugoslavia's successor states that have to be settled<sup>6</sup>...Should it take place (decision) it would be about lesser cosmetic changes that would affect few villages around Bujanovac and Kosovska Mitrovica. It would not change the ethnic structure of any state and, therefore, not produce any side effect. This is all about a 'new realism' of the Balkans."<sup>7</sup>

Statement by John Bolton, President Trump's national security adviser, opened the floodgates to speculations of all sorts. Namely, Bolton said that the US would not get involved in the debate about territorial exchanges between Serbia and Kosovo, and that Washington did not rule out the possibility of territorial corrections. There as some new signals that the two governments might want to negotiate it quite silently, he emphasized, adding that if the two sides could reach an agreement about it, the American policy would be not to rule out territorial

- 6 <https://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/volfgang-petric-za-blic-ja-sam-za-podelu-kosova-evo-i-zasto/flygmvs> // [www.danas.rs/politika/volfgang-petric-podrzavam-organizovanje-dejtona-dva/](http://www.danas.rs/politika/volfgang-petric-podrzavam-organizovanje-dejtona-dva/).

corrections. “Indeed, it’s not on us to decide this.”<sup>8</sup>

A statement by US Ambassador in Pristina Greg Delawie not excluding the possibility of Kosovo’s partitioning explicitly was also much speculated about. Though he tweeted soon that fake news should be ignored, to some his statement remained a proof that “something’s cooking.”<sup>9</sup>

Neither was Ron Johnson, the republican senator and chairman of the Foreign Policy Committee, precise about it during his visit to Belgrade. He said he believed presidents of Kosovo and Serbia had meant it indeed when referring to a way towards a solution. The US would not be imposing anything on anyone, a solution should be a product of dialogue, he said, adding he believed that people were concerned – and their concern was quite legitimate in the light of a domino effect, but “we shall leave a solution on Serbia’s and Kosovo’s leaderships, then consider their solution and have a say about it, and our possible concerns about it.”<sup>10</sup>

## VUČIĆ AND THACHI: FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED

The hints about the US turning more flexible about cutting the Kosovo knot made presidents Vučić and Thaci refer to a future agreement almost as one: over the past months both have been announcing a final stage of their dialogue, an extremely burdensome one, as they put it, saying that an agreement with “the other side” was almost impossible, calls for “painful

8 <http://rs.n1info.com/a414403/Vesti/Bolton-SAD-ne-iskljucuju-teritorijalne-korekcije-izmedju-Srbije-i-Kosova.html>.

9 <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/va%C5%A1ington-i-podela-kosova/29405225.html>.

10 <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/intervju-ron-dzonson/29482298.html>.

compromises,” but there still was the option of demarcation agreeable to both sides.

It turned out, however, that the two sides interpreted “border corrections” quite differently: among other things, due to opposition both of them faced in their countries. It also turned out that corrections – in public discourse at least – also implied territorial exchange: Kosovo North for the Preshevo Valley.<sup>11</sup>

For the first time Vučić went public with the idea about “demarcation between the Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo North,” which Belgrade has actually always advocated. “Owning a territory, one knows not who treats it in what way and to whom it belongs is always a source of potential conflict... Getting the most of what is possible and losing the least of what we have to, that’s what we are struggling for – against all odds – when it comes to Kosovo and Metohija,” he said.<sup>12</sup>

This is for sure neither his nor his predecessor Boris Tadić’s personal view but a part of the state strategy the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences (SANU) and writer Dobrica Ćosić formulated long ago.<sup>13</sup> Iвица Dačić, the foreign minister, kept

11 <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/Kosovo-podela-granice-medjunarodna-zajednica/29422044.hotmail>. Time 1.

12 <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/va%C5%A1ington-i-podela-kosova/29405225.html>.

13 Dobrica Ćosić’s interview with Večernje Novosti, March 20, 2008. “In brief, I have always seen a compromise of historical and ethnic rights as the settlement of the centuries’ long antagonism between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija. Such compromise implies the right of Albanians in territories where they are in majority right to unification with their mother country Albania. Territorial division of Kosovo and Metohija, and a demarcation line between Serbs and Albanians has to be implemented with no ambition for ethnically pure territories and include reciprocal and guaranteed forms of national and civil rights for minorities. Kosovo in Serbia – biologically waning and in demographic depression – would turn Serbia into a

saying that partition was the best solution and that the proposal for demarcation mirrored the will for reaching a compromise for Kosovo and should not be interpreted as weakness.<sup>14</sup>

In an article in the *Pečat* magazine Defense Minister Vulin explains what it is Belgrade implies by demark action and why it is an ideal solution. Belgrade takes that when Macedonia joins NATO all Albanians, except for those in two municipalities in Central Serbia, will be living in one and only political and security area they will have a predominant and overt influence on, and that's how a Greater Albania will be actually established, he says. In his view, that's the strategy of big powers; and that's why Belgrade "talks and disputes" with Tirana rather than with Pristina; Belgrade would continue financing the Serbs who remain outside a demarcation line, as well as holy places there, and would be insisting on the respect for national and political rights of those Serbs; in other words, Belgrade would maintain its influence on local Serbs and on Kosovo's political life as well, while Albanians will be left without any means for influencing Serbia's policy or life.<sup>15</sup>

German Chancellor Angela Merkel's opposition to this idea poses a huge problem to President

---

federation of two permanently antagonized nations in two decades. It would be hard to live in such a society with slowed down progress...Serbian monasteries of the Middle Age – the Pec Patriarchy, Decani, Bogorodica Ljeviska, archangelic complex, Devic and Gracanica with Kosovo Polje complex – with restituted lands and woods nationalized in 1945 – should be given self-governing status by the Athos model for Eastern Orthodox monasteries in Greece. That would be a just and lasting solution that could become a groundwork of the entire Albanian-Serbian cooperation in economy, communications and all forms of inter-ethnic cooperation."

14 <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/srbija-nemacka-rusija-eu/29426309.html>.

15 *Pečat*, September 7, 2018, pp.1- 11.

Vučić because – as he like to say – “special relationship” he has established with her. Her stance is nothing new, he says, claiming he will go on with his struggle to “do something and get something for Serbs and Serbia. “Germany has already ‘demarcated’ us when it recognized Kosovo’s sovereignty and indivisibility.”<sup>16</sup>

For his part, Kosovo President Thachi was faced with gross opposition of almost all major political actors in Kosovo. His ideas caused confusion, even fear among his compatriots, as he had proposed nothing touchable. Figures from ruling parties and the opposition alike called his initiative for “correction of borders” dangerous as it could annul “Kosovo’s independence and incite new conflicts.” Albin Kurti, the leader of the “Self-determination” movement, said it was all an attempt at “sacrificing Kosovo for Serbia’s integration into Europe and saving Thachi from the Special Court.”<sup>17</sup>

The meeting between Vučić and Thachi scheduled for September 7 in Brussels did not take place although the two had been invited by Federica Moggerini. The meeting was not held since, judging by everything, Thachi has changed his mind in the meantime, so did not want to meet with his counterpart. As for the latter, a day later he set himself for Kosovo – Kosovska Mitrovica to put it precisely - where he was supposed to deliver his personally announced “historical speech.” But, instead of any history-making speech, he told the assembled Kosovo Serbs that no solution was in sight. He had come, as he put it, to tell them the truth about a difficult situation. He reminded them that Milošević had been a great Serbian leader whose intentions were surely the best but the outcomes much worse. “Not because he did not want it, but because his wishes were unrealistic,

---

16 <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/409287/Vucic-Bas-ih-briga-hocemo-li-da-imamo-Kopaonik-i-Gazivode-u-Srbiji>

17 <https://kossev.info/al-jazeera-svekosovski-front-protiv-hasima-tacija/>

and we had also underestimated interests of other peoples. And that's why we had to pay dear for everything. We have not turned bigger. Or, to put it more precisely, we have not turned bigger in a way some had imagined we could. Today, without a drop of blood spilt, anyone's blood, we have... When you lose a war, you have to pay for it. To pay dear. And we, Serbs, pretend now as if nothing happened. We pretend we are not left on our own, and with our own stupidities and under the pressure from the West, we have also participated in proving that the conflict in Kosovo was our own responsibility." He had come, he said, to tell them that someone, sometime in the future, would have to reach a compromise with Albanians. "So, a solution in not in sight, but I pray God it would be found in the next ten or twenty years at least."<sup>18</sup>

Marko Jakšić, one of former Serbian leaders in Kosovo (presently, the member of the Presidency of the opposition movement "Motherland") addressed an open letter to Vučić following his speech. He said that speech sounded like a requiem for Serbs in Kosovo... Brimming with depression and pessimism, (you) told nothing to Serbs about the state they would live in, as (you) either did not want to or dared not."<sup>19</sup>

## REACTIONS IN KOSOVO AND SERBIA

The partition scenario met with criticism in Serbia proper. Commentator Boško Jakšić takes that partition brings not stability in the long run; he reminded of the Foreign Minister's proposal for

18 <https://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/vucicu-kosovskoj-mitrovici-dosao-sam-da-kazem-istinu-o-nasoj-teskoj-poziciji-video/snlx35>.

19 <https://kossev.info/marko-jaksic-vucicu-istorijski-govor-vice-licio-na-opelo-za-srbe-na-kosovu-ideja-nacija-i-sloboda-nemaju-cenu/>.

Kosovo's partition launched a year ago, which was actually Vučić's trial balloon that made it possible for him to say now that was the solution he likes the best.<sup>20</sup>

Serbia's former Ambassador in Washington, university professor Ivan Vujačić believes not the partition idea is on the negotiating table at all. He takes there are too many public speculations about it, as well as about America changing its attitude towards the issue. He reminds that the EU is in charge of negotiations, while America matters due to its influence on the Albanian side, and that Europeans said long ago that any territorial change was out of question.<sup>21</sup>

According to Vladimir Gligorov of the International Economic Institute in Vienna, a possible territorial bargain (with Kosovo) will weaken Serbia, politically and in any other way. If the present American administration, he concludes, supports demarcation, this will mean it is after undermining Serbia. "Any exchange of territories cannot but weaken Serbia's position in the Balkans, let alone in Europe and the world."<sup>22</sup>

Demarcation along ethnic lines is not only the question of "protecting" Serbs, especially those in the North, but also an issue with drastic repercussions, says commentator Skelzen Malici from Pristina. There are some dilemmas about it, at least among some Western politicians who take that ethnically-based demarcation was a more pragmatic and lasting solution given that Serbia has insisted on it permanently, ever since the 1990s and the time of Dobrica Ćosić's advocacy; and now the idea won its advocates even in Kosovo, including the main negotiator, the President. When some Western diplomats claim "we shall accept whatever the two sides agree

20 <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/srbija-nemacka-rusija-eu/29426309.html>.

21 <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/va%C5%A1ington-i-podela-kosova/29405225.html>.

22 Novi Magazin, September 6, 2018.

on” they sound as if they actually allow this possibility as well.<sup>23</sup>

Some 50-odd civil society organizations from Serbia and Kosovo addressed an open letter to EU High Representative Federica Mogherini inviting her to clearly stand up against partition of Kosovo or territorial exchanges between Serbia and Kosovo by ethnic principle. “This principle has incited bloody conflicts in the region several times,” quotes the letter. More and more frequent hints about possible remodeling of borders are putting across a dangerous message – to citizens of Kosovo and Serbia, and the entire region alike – that having the threatening principle of ethnic ownership over territories legitimized is a realistic option. Ethnically based partition would trigger off a chain reaction in other Balkan states too, result in a number of demands for territorial changes in the Balkans and open the door to new conflicts,” they argued.<sup>24</sup>

The Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC) warned against any demarcation many times. The SPC Holy Synod declared, “Recognition of illegally proclaimed independence of Kosovo, permanently being imposed on Serbia, would threaten the very survival of our Church and people in the long run, and lead towards having Serbian holy places proclaimed as Kosovo’s or Albanian cultural monuments. That would equal ‘killing’ the memory of the Serbian people...Serbia cannot build prosperity on disintegration of what stands for the cornerstone of its integrity, its history and statehood. Safeguard of Kosovo and Metohija as an integral part of Serbia by all international standards, and in accordance with Serbia’s Constitution and UN Res. 1244, does not imply confrontation with the world but just confirms the stance that a stable and longstanding solution cannot be found without respect for

23 <https://www.danas.rs/politika/vucic-i-taci-glavni-protagonisti-etnickog-razgranicenja/>

24 [http://www.helsinki.org.rs/serbian/aktuelnosti\\_t320.html](http://www.helsinki.org.rs/serbian/aktuelnosti_t320.html).

fundamental rights and freedoms of a nation, its identity, spirituality and culture.”<sup>25</sup>

## REACTIONS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

A number of international experts in the Balkans had their say against the proposal for “correction of borders.” What disturbed those observers were not so much American officials who favor the idea but the absence of any clear position of the US and the sense that Trump’s administration was withdrawing from the region. European officials were much concerned about possible destabilization of the Western Balkans should the “demarcation” or “correction” option be recognized. This is only logical bearing in mind that EU’s major member-states, including the Great Britain, are against any change of borders in the Balkans.

According to Daniel Serwer, professor at the John Hopkins University and connoisseur in the Balkans and American policy alike, the only thing Americans have managed was – to be listened to; and in the Balkans this was interpreted as support. He has not spotted any support for the actual idea about partition of Kosovo, he argues, and believes that American would say ‘no’ in the end. Besides, without German support the idea about corrections, exchanges or whatever it is called simply cannot be realized. “So great is Germany’s importance in the Balkans.”<sup>26</sup>

Bodo Weber of the Democratization Policy Council in Berlin warns that territorial exchanges are out of question as Berlin is against them. “German position is firm and, indeed, the story about partition makes no sense – there

25 <http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/drustvo/aktuelno.290.html:726592-Crkva-protiv-podele-Kosova>.

26 <http://rs.n1info.com/a411921/Vesti/Danijel-Server-o-podeli-Kosova.html>.

will be no partition. Germany builds the entire Belgrade-Pristina dialogue on the prospects for Serbia's membership of the EU, which cannot be without Germany. Therefore, the whole idea was foolish from the very start, and stays foolish."<sup>27</sup>

Commenting on border corrections, Florian Biber, professor from Graz, says, "I am afraid that Vučić and all those who advocate partition strongly like Dačić and Vulin, have only territory in mind. "If we have some territory, we are winners, if we have not, we are losers and care nothing about Serbs outside that territory.' And, of course, this puts across a bad and very dangerous message to Serbs on the other side of that border."<sup>28</sup>

The Great Britain takes correction of borders between Kosovo and Serbia destabilizing, while Germany still holds them risky. "We take the appeals for correction of national borders potentially destabilizing," quotes British release, adding that Britain will continue supporting the dialogue with mediation of the EU, for the purpose of a comprehensive and viable settlement in the benefit of both countries.<sup>29</sup>

Angela Merkel was the strongest in her opposition to partition. "Borders and territorial integrity all countries in the Western Balkans are set and untouchable. This has to be repeated over and over again as there are some tendencies for discussing borders, and that is impermissible."<sup>30</sup>

German officials have reiterated that partition of Kosovo could lead towards destabilizing effects in the region and beyond it, which was why Germany was definitely against any partition.

27 <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/srbija-nemacka-rusija-eu/29426309.html>.

28 <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/va%C5%A1ington-i-podela-kosova/29405225.html>.

29 <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/kosovo-podele-granice-medjunarodna-zajednica/29422044.html>.

30 [https://standard.rs/2018/08/14/merkelino-najn-podeli-kosova-sta-sad/?ns\\_abc=latin](https://standard.rs/2018/08/14/merkelino-najn-podeli-kosova-sta-sad/?ns_abc=latin).

German Minister for Europe Michael Roth told the media in Kosovo that his government took that Kosovo and Serbia should reach an agreement under the auspices of the EU, but also added that Germany definitely opposed any change of borders between Kosovo and Serbia, as something like that was very risky.<sup>31</sup>

Carl Bildt, Swedish ex-premier and high representative for Bosnia-Herzegovina, opposes any change of the existing borders. Partition is like playing with fire, a threat to the entire region, he says. In his view, new partitioning proposals are recipe for "geopolitical instability," opening of "Pandora's boxes" and risks for peace and future of Bosnia, Macedonia, etc.<sup>32</sup>

## RUSSIA'S POSITION

At this point Russia is repeating the Soviet policy after 1948 by promoting further disintegrations in the Balkans and supporting Serbian nationalists in Serbia proper and on the ex-Yugoslav territories. "Russia's only strength lies in Serbia and conflicts. Its strong interest is to be present here, while its influence cannot be exercised either in economy or culture as it is in bad economic situation. This is why it lives and shall be living on conflicts over here. Russia can force its way in the Balkans only by inciting tensions; with tensions gone, its influence would be null," says Zoran Dragišić, MP from the ruling SNS and professor at the Faculty of Security.<sup>33</sup> The same is the purpose of Russia's support to nationalistic movements in Greece, Bulgaria and even Turkey.<sup>34</sup>

31 <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/kosovo-podele-granice-medjunarodna-zajednica/29422044.html>.

32 <https://www.blic.rs/vesti/svet/karl-bilt-ja-sam-protiv-podele-kosova-evo-i-zasto/5060es8>.

33 <https://pescanik.net/ruske-intervencije-kontrarevolucionarna-sila/>.

34 <https://pescanik.net/ruske-intervencije-kontrarevolucionarna-sila/>.

Russia is fully aware that the Western Balkans aspires to Euro-Atlantic integrations. It is in its interest to slow down or stall such orientation in Serbia, Bosnia, Macedonia and Montenegro. Complicating the process makes it glad. This is why it supports status quo – tensions maintained and turbulences in fragile states of the Western Balkans, and Serbia's aspirations in Kosovo and Bosnia. All in all, Russia's actually destructive and disruptive role boils down either to undermining or disturbing Euro-integration processes.

The issue of Kosovo status, i.e. Russia's support to Serbia trying to prevent Kosovo's full-fledged international legitimacy is one of levers of its influence on Serbia. And this is exactly what Moscow has been trying to keep to itself. In this context, Russia challenges seriously Kosovo's statehood; it has been undermining Kosovo's full integration into the international community, democratic development and stabilization.

Commenting on the proposal for Kosovo's partition, Spokeswoman for the Russian Foreign Ministry Maria Zaharova said, "This is something Serbia's citizens should have their say."<sup>35</sup> Presently, Russia is more interested in the situation in Macedonia and its preparations for a referendum.

## DOUBTS ABOUT CORRECTION OF BORDERS

Yet, it seems that the idea about "correction of borders" stands little chance despite the fact that thanks to influential lobbyists (mostly in the US) it has earned legitimacy over the past months. Belgrade has been trying for two years now to find international allies for this scenario – demarcation between Serbs and Albanians. It turned out as well that Belgrade has never

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/srbija-nemacka-rusija-eu/29426309.html>

considered any other option – except for Ćosić's idea for drawing a definite border between the two peoples. The summer "show" in Kosovska Mitrovica was at least in the service of buying time. Support from major international players – such as the US – is still uncertain. Vučić is well aware of that regardless of John Bolton's vague statement. This is why the road towards an agreement with Albanians will be long and thorny (contrary to Brussels' expectations), as he put it in his address to the nation upon return from Brussels (September 7). Belgrade also counts on the possibility that Trump and Putin made same arrangements in Helsinki. However, Trump is in no position for any serious consideration of the Balkans considering the elections for the Senate this fall. America's priority is China; probably this is why it needs to damp down some neuralgic points – such as Kosovo or Syria – together with Russians.

Belgrade has not given up its project for unification of all Serbian lands. This is evident in its systematic campaigning against Montenegro and Bosnia, most of all. The wording by Nikola Malović, Serbian writer from Boka Kotorska, is most interesting in this context. "A view on a sea is not only symbolic to a state. A view on a sea is a question of national pride," he says. His phrase clearly mirrors the centuries-long longing for having an access to a sea – "a country without a sea is worthless."<sup>36</sup>

Demarcation between Serbia and Kosovo would produce bad effects even beyond the Balkans. President of Republika Srpska Milorad Dodik is just waiting for an opportunity to face the international community with a *fait accompli*. Montenegro is also a permanent target: Herceg Novi and Boka Kotorska could declare "independent autonomous areas" in no time. Belgrade was barely happy with Greece-Macedonia agreement:

<sup>36</sup> Nikola Malović, *Nedeljnik*, August 30, 2018.

Macedonia's membership of NATO would put an end to its partition.

In brief, an agreement on demarcation would invalidate everything done for pacification and consolidation of the Balkans over the past thirty years. Regardless of ongoing crises, it is hard to believe that the West would give up the Balkans just like that, primarily because of security concerns. Kosovo has been on its priority list for long (which is why the Western community intervened in 1999) and giving it up would trigger off conflicts on a larger scale.

What matters now when many players are measuring swords in the Balkans is placing the entire region under one umbrella because this opens up avenues towards its progress. Divided into spheres of interest the Balkans would be a source of permanent tensions and instability. Besides, the "one umbrella" scenario is a chance

for the countries in the region to opt, slowly but surely, for a value system that guarantees the rule of law, pluralism, tolerance, security and human rights.

An agreement on redefinition of borders between Serbia and Kosovo would cause tectonic turmoil throughout the region, new conflicts, hardship, tragedies and another wave of refugees that would sweep up at least two million people who would mostly seek safe haven in EU member-states, especially Germany and Austria. This is why anyone standing for an agreement as such would have to take responsibility for all consequences.

Besides, realization of a plan as such would create a paradigm that would legalize all frozen conflicts and occupation of Crimea too, and could trigger off many other pretensions not only in the Balkans but also all over Europe.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The initiative for partition of Kosovo is yet another attempt by local leaders to have the international community – the EU above all – faced with a fait accompli. Unfortunately, they have found international allies of whom many have been meddling in the region for years.

Once again have local players demonstrated their unscrupulousness and lack of personal integrity; hence, it's hard to imagine them turning into modern politicians. Their adventure exposed their readiness to sacrifice larger interests – guarantees for regional peace and stability – for interests of their own. They demonstrated their poor knowledge of the international context, amateurism and immorality.

The international community – the EU and Germany above all – should be more resolute when it comes to implementation of the set principles and standards, and any change of borders it has already recognized. Resolution of the Kosovo question should be seen against a larger regional backdrop and in the light of possible consequences of having the Brussels dialogue cut short.