

The Territory and the Respect for Borders, as a Condition for the Peace and Stability in the Balkans

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States cannot be considered as such, if lacking these two elements: their population and their territory. The territory of a state consists of what is called the opportunity for development, advancement, and well-being of its citizens. But territories cannot be considered occupied or not, unless people live in them. Thus, people, not territories, are the object and subject of conquests and rulers, of governance and self-governance. All Balkan conflicts are caused by disputes over territories. They are often referred to as ethnic or religious conflicts, but, in fact, they were and they still remain conflicts over territories. These conflicts neither were nor appeared as civil wars for social or religious reasons, but they were ethnic wars. Therefore, the establishment and continuation of the peace process depends both on mutual respect of the Balkan states for their territorial integrity, as well as on respect for minorities. The current discussion on the modification of the Kosovo borders, as well as the tendency that Serbia gains territories from Kosovo in exchange for resolving the Albanian-Serbian conflict, is a precedent for a new chain of conflicts in the Balkans. The reasons why there can be no such solution to the conflict between Kosovo and Serbia are numerous. But the main one is that all states would gain the right to change borders in favor of creating ethnically purified societies. Any change of borders in Europe, but also elsewhere sets a precedent for further changes. The aim of this paper is to lay the argument why the modification of borders between Kosovo and Serbia has no ground in the international law and, to make clear the danger that such modification produces for the peace, stability, and security in the Balkans and beyond.

Keywords: Kosovo, territory, Balkans, Serbia

Notions and Principles

In the present system of modern states, the borders are real, conventional, and abstract at the same time. The cultural borders determine the coexistence in diversity. The territorial, maritime, and water borders compound the real borders and remain such. At the same time, the relationship to them determines the consensual and peaceful coexistence. The borders in peace and trust amid different states become more and more conventional, but still, they remain borders that demark the territorial belongingness of each state. Nevertheless, the borders and the concise and clear-cut identification of them is a preventive measure for conflicts or wars. Violence, war, and terror knows no border, on the contrary, it recognizes only war fronts.¹

Issues of the states' territories are issues which have to do with their respective sovereignty and territorial integrity. For this reason, the League of Nations in 1921 and the United Nations in 1945 in their core document

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¹ Vegl. Zeit online: <http://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2014-12/islamischer-staat-terror-orient>.

have defined state territory as the basic element of state sovereignty. There are two basic elements of the creation, construction, functioning, and strengthening of states: The exercise of state sovereignty over the territory and the care for the inhabitants living in that territory. No states can be considered as such if lacking these two elements. The scholars of the doctrines of international law specify that the state exercises its sovereignty by “acts of government of persons, affairs and law in a certain territory...” (Fischer & Koeck, 1994, p. 95).

With the birth of nationalism in south-east European countries, there emerged tendencies to create ethnically purified states, ignoring the demographic reality formed through the centuries as a result of influxes, migration, and other forms of peoples’ movement. These movements were a crucial factor for the mixing of races, nations, cultures, even religions. The south-eastern Europe, being an area of clashing of empires, suffered several demographic and structural changes. But when nationalisms were born, together emerged also the idea of expanding territories, which was conceived as a means of regional supremacy, based on the historical right and on that of “caring for minorities”! In particular, this role was aimed by Serbia with its *Nachertania* platform, as well as by Greece through the Great Idea (*Megaliidea*). The historian Georges Castellan (1991) wrote that “*Megali* The Greek idea, Serbian *Nachertania* and Bulgarian Macedonianism, opposed each other, degenerating even into armed conflicts” (p. 14).

According to the Serbian platform, within the borders of the future Serbian state would be included Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, a part of Croatia, also Kosovo and Northern Albania, ensuring the exit of Serbia to the Adriatic Sea. According to the Greek platform, Greece intended to extend its borders to the south of Albania and Bulgaria, to Cyprus and to European and Asian Turkey as far as to Izmir. In the light of their nationalist platform, Greece and Serbia also characterized religion as the main criterion of national identity, even though they had other ethnic minorities within their territory, whose existence they sought to deny (Castellan, 1991). Meanwhile, Macedonia was included in the platform of the Bulgarian national state. This platform is also related to the current Bulgarian request for northern Macedonia. They require the Macedonian language and identity to be identified with the Bulgarian one; that is why Bulgaria is blocking this country to integrate into the EU.

The Albanians, in turn, built the concept of the nation-state within the borders of the four vilayets of the Ottoman Empire, which were mainly located in the Albanian historical territories and were inhabited by Albanians (Vilayet of Shkodra, Kosovo, Bitola, and Ioannina); also they defined the Albanian language as the national identification element. But the population was mixed in these claimed territories. A considerable minority of the Serb and Macedonian population also lived in the Kosovo Vilayet having Skopje as its capital. In that of Manastir, there lived another Macedonian population and that of Ioannina a relatively large number of Greeks.²

These historical developments did not allow the creation of pure ethnic states, since their mixed composition of population. According to the German historian Holm Sundhaussen (2011), structural changes in the region have occurred due to voluntary or forced migration, but also due to the migration in order to seek a stable employment.

Because of these reasons, current borders should be more and more conventional and simply express their respective state sovereignty in a certain geographical area. Meanwhile cultural boundaries, religious ones, also

² Newspaper Albania, April 1st, 1920, p. 3.

boundaries in trade, investment, movement of people and goods, and cultural cooperation take on an increasingly abstract meaning. For the sake of truth, this did not happen, mainly because of extreme nationalisms which built not only real land borders, but also imaginary cultural, religious, and ethnic borders among the peoples of the Western Balkans. Instead of cooperation, integration, and peaceful coexistence, the path chosen was often that of the violent confrontation and conflict.

The wars and conflicts during the last decade of the last century, after the break-up of former Yugoslavian Federation serve as a testimony to the devastation brought about by extreme nationalism due to feeling of hatred and revenge between different ethnicities and religions in the region. The conflicts in question should have brought a serious reflection on the fact that the states and countries of the region should coexist with each other, as well as with other national and linguistic minorities. If the ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity are seen as priorities for the coexistence, then the peace, stability, and security of the region will be more sustainable. On the contrary, if this diversity is considered as an opportunity and a chance to remedy and modify the state borders in the region, then the conflicts and wars between the states and countries of the region of Southeast Europe will become recurrent as flow chain.

Today, the world has become interdependent and complicated. It has become very difficult to find any ethnically pure country. All the conflicts to date in Europe have occurred because of the will to expand territory and borders, using the excuse of the protection of minorities in the territories of neighboring states. It is worth mentioning here the ethnic conflict and the Belgrade project of creating Greater Serbia which sparked World War I with the assassination of the Austro-Hungarian prince, Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sofia, on June 28th, 1914, because Belgrade's policies aimed at including Bosnia within the Serbian territory (Wuerthle, 1975).

World War II also broke out in the Czech Republic, Poland, France, and Belgium, because Hitler announced the return of the German minorities living in these countries, according to the principle of the creation of Greater Germany. But National Socialism in its radical form willingly destroyed non-German races instead of realizing Greater Germany (Fischer, 2020). With the Greater Serbia logo, Slobodan Milosevic started the war in the former Yugoslavia against Bosnian Muslims, Kosovo Albanians, and Croats. On the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo Polje, on June 28th, 1989, he declared that "From today, Serbia starts to become great or will not exist at all!" (Sundhaussen, 2000, p. 83). Another example comes with the wars and annexations in Georgia and Ukraine, initiated and took action by Vladimir Putin under the motto: "Russia has the right to intervene by violating the borders and territories of other states to protect the Russians living there", acting the same as Milosevic and Hitler.³

Differently, ethnic problems and conflicts in the region of southeast Europe can only be solved in terms of the development and exercise of governance under the model of liberal democracy. But, even today, unfortunately, the diplomatic and political conflict of some Balkan capitals, especially Belgrade, remains in the focus of expanding the territory through borders' alteration. The so-called solution of the Albanian-Serbian conflict is stuck to the idea and project of the division of Kosovo. The outstanding expert on Balkan issues, Patrick Moore, declared on March 29th, 2008, in the waves of the "Free Europe" Radio that "Serbia's interest of Kosovo is not regarding the churches and monasteries, but the rich territories of northern Kosovo".⁴

³ Henry Kissinger për Kinën, Putinin, Ukrainën dhe Gkermaninë—Intervistë. Bota.al, datë 22.08.2015. (*Henry Kissinger about China, Putin, Ukraine and Germany—Interview. "Bota.al"; date 22.08.2015).

⁴ See <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/1049807.html>.

The scenery for the division of Kosovo territory was proposed by Dobrica Qosiq, the former chairman of the Science and Arts Academy of Serbia, at the beginning of the 90s' of the last century. This option was not accepted by the president of the time, Slobodan Milošević. According to him, Serbia would be greater only if included not only Kosovo and Montenegro, but also Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia as well, within its territory. It seemed that the Great Serbian appetite would be repaid with a harsh reaction of the international factor, and that is what happened next.



Figure 1. Today Map of the of the Balkans States Borders.

In 1992, the Badinter Commission met in London to discuss the formation of new states emerging from the former Yugoslavia. The commission was attended by the presidents of the Constitutional Courts of France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Belgium. It was chaired by the president of the French Constitutional Court, Robert

Badinter; the Commission was named after him. The Commission decided that all states leaving the Yugoslav federation should be recognized within the borders of the former republics in this federation and paved the way for the recognition of states, such as Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina with their republican borders. Kosovo at that time was not treated as a country that should establish its own independent state. But Kosovo, too, was a constituent part of the Yugoslav Federation and as such it had this right, the preservation of the borders it inherited from the former Yugoslavia, if it were to one day secede from Serbia (Pellet, 1992).

Although Kosovo was not mentioned in the decisions of that Commission, it still remained in the focus of international attention. The successive events brought about the deterioration of the situation, and as a consequence, there emerged some powerful national movements of Albanians. Initially, since around December 1989 until end of 1977, Kosovo built up its parallel institutions, chaired by Dr. Ibrahim Rugova, who was widely known as a pacifist leader, but having a strong and consistent character in his objectives and aims. These two parallel institutions included the Parliament, the Presidency, the Government and the education and health system in a parallel way for Albanians. By accepting these institutions, Kosovo demonstrated to the civilized world that it refused to accept the apartheid regime of Milosevic and of being capable to be governed independently from Serbia. Ibragim Rugova's motto and constant requirement was an independent Kosovo, initially with the help of an international protectorate under North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) supervision and open with Serbia and Albania! "There was one issue that Ibrahim Rugova stood firm: He was uncompromising to the end regarding Kosovo's independence".⁵

Milosevic's stubbornness and Serb violence in Kosovo led to the creation of the Liberation Army of Kosovo and afterward also the Rambouillet Conference in February-March 1999. Following the failure of this conference, NATO began bombing the military, police and strategic targets of the former Yugoslavia on March 24th of that same year, respectively to Serbia (Clarc, 2003).

Military and paramilitary operations, as well as police ones of Belgrade against Albanians in Kosovo, their acts of physical obliteration and mass dislocation caused Kosovo to suffer the calamitous consequences of violence and crimes against humanity, which were also proved at the International Criminal Tribunal of Hague for the former Yugoslavia crimes. The data show that about 13,000 Albanians were obliterated, the vast majority of whom were children, women, the elderly, and vulnerable people. More than 2,000 bodies were found so far in mass graves in Serbia, and about 1,600 are still missing. Meanwhile, according to international reports, about 20,000 Albanian women and girls were raped by Serbian police, soldiers, and paramilitary forces.⁶ After a long silence, 278 females and two males of Albanian nationality, victims of sexual abuse, accepted to testimony regarding the horrible acts of the Serbian police, military and paramilitary forces in Kosovo.⁷ The economic damage in Kosovo caused by the burning and looting of Serbia is estimated at billions of US dollars. Of the 200,000 homes and other facilities, 120,000 were burned and completely or partially destroyed by Serbia's police, military or paramilitary forces. The sacred, religious, and historical buildings of the Albanians were also burned and destroyed, as the case of the complex of the Albanian League of Prizren, a

⁵ Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, January 23rd, 2006.

⁶ Gazzette Frankfurter Rundschau 8 Juni 1999.

⁷ Deutsche Welle, 05.12.2018. "Schätzungen zufolge haben Tausende von Menschen während des Kosovo-Kriegs (1998/1999) sexuelle Gewalt erlitten".

large number of mosques and libraries, dating from year 1600, such as that of Gjakova.⁸ Rolf Paash, the correspondent of the German newspaper *Frankfurter Rundschau*, wrote that: “Peç is the name of the city that Albanians call it ‘Peja’. Today Peç or Peja ... does not exist anymore. Its center is surrounded by burnt coals. Now it resembled to Hiroshima!”⁹

Based on the established former instance of violence and crimes against humanity that Serbia committed against two million Albanians in Kosovo, the Contact Group for the Balkans proposed the draft Resolution 1244 and the Security Council adopted it on 10 June 1999. According to this resolution, Kosovo was placed under the UN protectorate. Meanwhile, the Atlantic Alliance was responsible for its security, while the administration of the elections and the functioning of democracy would be overseen by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The Security Council decided, pursuant to this resolution, to remove all Serbian police and military troops from Kosovo, which meant the eradication of Serbia’s sovereignty in this country. Although the Kosovo status, pursuant to Resolution 1244, would be settled through the dialogue with Serbia, Former Finnish Nobel Peace Prize laureate Martti Ahtisaari was charged with leading the talks. The discussions started in Vienna, Austria in 2005. With the start of these talks, the parties in the negotiations were informed regarding the issue to be excluded, as the partition of Kosovo, or the unification of Kosovo with Albania. Meanwhile, it was demanded that the status of Milosevic’s rule never to be restored again in Kosovo. According to this formula, Kosovo was allowed a status similar to the autonomy of 1974, when it was a constituent part of the former Yugoslavia, until its independence.

As long as Ahtisaari led the negotiating team of the two countries, the parties were not allowed to discuss the option of dividing Kosovo. But during the additional talks (July-December 2007), the German diplomat, Wolfgang Ischinger, tried to bring the topic of Kosovo’s division back to the table, which was not accepted by the parties to the talks and by powerful international actors (Bytyçi, 2008). There were at the time two political currents in Belgrade. One of them, the Conservatives represented by former Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica, demanded that Kosovo’s independence not to be recognized and that a solution be found, through which it would return Kosovo as part of Serbian sovereignty. While the other political current, led by supporters of former Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic, accepted a solution to the conflict between the two countries to come through the exchange of territories and the modification of borders.

Serbian Project Regarding the Division of Kosovo and the Attempts of Several Internal and External Factors of This Project

Following the declaration of independence, the former President Boris Tadic was seduced by Djindjic’s idea and called for additional talks between Kosovo and Serbia under UN auspices, which were later chaired and monitored by the European Commission. While, in 2010, Tadic required from Brussels that the conflict between Kosovo and Serbia to be resolved through direct talks between Tirana and Belgrade.¹⁰ This automatically implied the dissolution of Kosovo’s independence and its partition between Albania and Serbia. The former Albanian Prime Minister of the time, Sali Berisha, responded negatively to Mr. Tadic request, noting that Albania has no problem to resolve with Serbia, on the contrary, the conflict lies between Pristina and Belgrade and that he should resolve between them.

⁸ Frankfurter Rundschau, 29 Juli 1999.

⁹ Frankfurter Rundschau, 3 August 1999.

¹⁰ Ekspertize e autorit (E.B), Tiranë 2010 (* Author’s expertise [E.B.], Tirana 2010).



Figure 2. Project for the division of Kosovo, published by an NGO in Belgrade. The red lighted parts are proposed to be exchanged amid Kosovo and Serbia.

Meanwhile the public opinion in Serbia was against any other solution, but the expansion of the sovereignty of Serbia in Kosovo. According to polls, 71% of Serbian citizens supported the idea that “Kosovo should return to be an integral part of Serbia; and 70% of these were ready to pay the price of the lack of integration in EU for Kosovo” (Gallup Balkan Monitor, 2010).

In September 2010, the General Assembly of UN approved a resolution, by which required the restart of “technical” talks among Kosovo and Serbia, although Kosovo’s independence was already proclaimed and recognized by the majority of the member states of NATO (Today, Kosovo is recognized by 115 states, like USA, Germany, Great Britain, France, Japan, Canada, Italy, Turkey, and other powerful states). According to the resolution, it was foreseen that EU led the process of dialogue among the parties so the talks started on 8-9 March, 28 March and 15 April of 2011. These talks dragged on for many years. However, 36 agreements were signed, many of which were not implemented (Bytyçi, 2020). With the changes in the governance of Albania in 2013, the Prime Minister Edi Rama showed to be willing to talk to Belgrade, bypassing the political will of Kosovo institutions and leaders. The Serbian government welcomed the act of the Albanian chief executive and the process deviated when the Albanian Prime Minister Rama and the Serbian President Vucic agreed to

collaborate for the resolution of the conflict between Serbia and Kosovo through the partition of the latter, by modification of the actual borders.

Sonja Biserko, being chief of Helsinki Committee in Belgrade, declared in 2018 in *Vreme* magazine of Belgrade that:

Sonja Biserko drejtore e Komitetit të Helsinkit në Beograd, i thoshte në vitin 2018 revistës së Beogradit *Vreme* se “Although the partition initiative has recently surfaced, it has been ‘boiled’ for at least two years so far. In fact, Belgrade has always been looking for a partner in Tirana and has finally found it: it is the Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama. The talks (about the division) began two years ago when Rama was in Nis, but those days were discovered by Washington and London”.¹¹

The division of Kosovo would give Belgrade the northern part of it, where there are large natural resources and reserves of gold, zinc, iron, lignite, and other minerals, which amount to billions of US dollars.¹²

In exchange for the partition of Kosovo, Serbia would agree to the remaining part of Kosovo to reunite with Albania.

In evaluation of these acts, the President of the Kosovo Academy of Sciences and Arts, Professor Mehmet Kraja, wrote in December 2020 that “*The Prime Minister of Albania* (Edi Rama—author’s note) did two things better than anyone else: He helped Serbia to strengthen the plan of Cubrilović and Qosiq for the partition of Kosovo also lately...”.¹³

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden, Carl Bild, also wrote in the *Washington Post* about Mr. Rama’s engagement in the initiative for the partition of Kosovo. “*In a meeting with him, Rama was open to the idea of Vucic*” (of the partition of Kosovo—Author’s note), Bild writes for the American newspaper.¹⁴ Meanwhile *Tageszeitung* wrote that Rama belongs to the group that works on the territory exchange between Kosovo and Serbia.¹⁵

Kosovo President Hashim Thaci, although after having a period of rejection, also joined the Rama-Vucic duo in efforts to alter the borders between the two countries in conflict. He initially spoke of a “painful solution” for both sides and then clearly and decisively articulated that he would work for what he called the “correction of borders” between Kosovo and Serbia.¹⁶

¹¹ See <http://www.gazetadita.al/sonja-biserko-vucic-filloi-bisedimet-me-ramen-per-ndarjen-e-kosoves-para-dy-vitesh-ne-nish>.

¹² Kosovo was historically a mining area for former Yugoslavia. The Trepça industrial complex in Mitrovica “was the largest mining operation in the former Yugoslavia”. During the time of Yugoslavia, it owned 50% of Yugoslavia nickel reserves, 36% of lignite, 48% of lead and zinc reserves, 47% of magnesium reserves and 32.4% of kaolinite reserves. During this period, mining was the engine of Kosovo’s growth. However, the sector faced a decline since the 1990s. Data from 1931 to 1998 show that the total production from the Trepça industrial complex during this period, was: Lead: 2,066,000 tons; Zinc: 1,371,000 tons; Silver: 2,569 tons; Bismuth: 4,115 tons; Cadmium (1968–1987) 1,655 tons. “Archived copy”. Archived from the original on March 11th, 2014. Retrieved in February 4th, 2018.

¹³ Analysis: Albania and Kosovo have touched the academic bottom—Mehmet Kraja—two things Edi Rama served well to Serbia, <http://www.panorama.com.al/analiza-shqiperia-dhe-kosova-kane-prekur-fundit-akademik-mehmet-kraja-dy-gjera-i-beri-mire-edirama-per-serbine/>.

¹⁴ Actual news—Shocking—Carl Bild spies on Rama by telling he agreed on the division of Kosovo, <https://direct.botasot.info/aktuale-lajme/933632/shokuese-carl-bild-dekonspiron-ramen-ishte-dakord-me-ndarjen-e-kosoves/>.

¹⁵ Albanien Regierungschef gehört auch zu denen, die neben den Gebietstausch-Verfechtern Vucic und Thaci von Merkel und Macron zum Abendessen im Kanzleramt am 29. April eingeladen sind, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/ethnische-trennungslinien-merkel-will-gebietstausch-zwischen-serbien-und-kosovo-verhindern/24238050.html>.

¹⁶ *Gazette “Zëri”*, date 22 August 2018, the guardian USA position has changed France is in favour of Kosovo division, <http://zeri.info/aktuale/212951/the-guardian-pozicioni-i-shba-ve-ka-ndryshuar-franca-eshte-pro-ndarjes-se-kosoves/>.

Thaçi's clear show clearly articulated for the inner and international opinion happened during the meeting of the Western Balkan countries in Alpbach, Austria in August 2018, where he clearly uttered in the presence of the Serbian President, Prime Minister of Slovenia, and President of Austria his devotion for the alteration of borders among the two Balkan countries. On this occasion, Radio Free Europe broadcast that "The Presidents of Kosovo and Serbia, Hashim Thaçi and Aleksandar Vucic have spoken together for the first time that changing the borders is the most realistic option for reaching an agreement between the two countries".¹⁷

According to this radio station, Mr. Thaçi required the help of the EU and USA for the realization of this idea. Meanwhile, Vucic discussed about the difficulties that this common initiative amid him and the President of Kosovo would face...¹⁸.

Numerous political actors in Europe and the United States were also sensitized after the Alpbach meeting in Austria. Within the EU offices, there were voices for and against this option. According to newspaper, *The Guardian*, in August 2018, France would be ready to accept the partition of Kosovo, while the US was considering the possibilities to accept or not this option. To convince the US, Serbia's foreign minister also discussed with President Trump's Advisor, Mr. Kouchner.¹⁹ On the other side, Macron finally joined German initiative of Chancellor Merkel to put an end to this adventure. Germany and several other European countries considered this axiom to be a great danger to regional and European peace and stability. Therefore, Merkel and Macron convened in Berlin on April 29th, 2019 a summit of the Western Balkan countries, where they categorically rejected initiatives leading to the modification of borders in the region.²⁰

On international basis, both groups had their support even from the US, although one was for and the other against the exchange of territories. The pro-partition group was backed by President Trump's National Security Adviser John Bolton, as well as US Ambassador in Germany, Richard Grenell. They made stronger connections and seduced even more the protagonists of the division in the region, respectively the president of Serbia and that of Kosovo, as well as the prime minister of Albania, so that they could continue the efforts to realize the project of the modification of the borders. Bolton later said that it was not his idea to exchange territories between Kosovo and Serbia and that this idea was presented to him by the leaders of both countries.²¹ Meanwhile, this option was not supported by the State Secretary, Mike Pompeo, while the chief of the Foreign Commission of the American Congress, Eliot Angel, was against this solution of the conflict between Kosovo and Serbia.

The modification of borders and the exchange of territories between Kosovo and Serbia created the alliance of a strong collaboration amid the three protagonists of this initiative, respectively, Edi Rama, Aleksander Vucic, and Hashim Thaçi. This alliance was viewed with skepticism and suspicion by other countries in the region. The president of Northern Macedonia, Pendarovski, declared of being against the idea

¹⁷ See <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/forumi-evropian-ne-alpbach-/29453018.html> (* Radio Free Europe: Alpbach forum).

¹⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁹ Artikulli i ribotuar në gazetën kosovare "Zëri" (Article republished in the Kosovo newspaper "Zëri"), on August 22nd, <http://zeri.info/aktuale/212951/the-guardian-pozicioni-i-shba-ve-ka-ndryshuar-franca-eshte-pro-ndarjes-se-kosoves/> (* Position of USA changes, France approves Kosovo partition).

²⁰ Serbiens Präsident Aleksandar Vucic und Kosovos Staatschef Hashim Thaci befürworten einen solchen Gebietstausch zwischen ihren Ländern, ährend Merkel strikt dagegen ist, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/ethnische-trennungslinien-merkel-will-gebietstausch-zwischen-serbien-und-kosovo-verhindern/24238050.html>.

²¹ Breaking declaration of John Bolton on the division of Kosovo, <https://telegraf.al/sociale/deklarata-bombe-e-xhon-bolton-per-ndarjen-e-kosoves/>.

of changing the borders. Also, the Prime Minister and President of Montenegro, Djukanovic, as well as the Bosniak and Croat leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Djukanovic, in a letter to the author of this article, declared he supported the dialogue between the countries of the region, but not the dialogue on changing borders.²²

The leaders of the countries in the region visited Berlin and Paris and expressed their insecurity that moderating the borders between Kosovo and Serbia would cause a chain reaction in the region. Only Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik supported the option of changing the borders in Kosovo in the hope that his Republika Srpska would secede from the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina and join Serbia. Whereas in Northern Macedonia there was a fear that if 30-35 thousand Serbs in the north of Kosovo gain the right to secede to join Serbia, then the same will be demanded by about 600,000 Albanians and also Bulgarians or Serbs in this country. The spokeswoman for the presidency of Northern Macedonia, Biljana Radeva, stated that:

The President Pendarovski believes that solutions that could lead to the correction of borders and the exchange of land and people could have an adverse impact on the region and detrimental effect on comprehensive efforts in the post-conflict recovery of the region and in building stable multi-ethnic societies.²³

The President of USA, Donald Trump, appointed on October 4th, 2019 the Ambassador Grenell, on charge of mediating the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia.²⁴

Diplomat Grenell's approach was active, unusual and fast. He encountered a tense internal situation in Kosovo at the time when Ramush Haradinaj's government imposed a 100 percent tax on Serbian and Bosnian goods coming to Kosovo. Under these circumstances, Belgrade had interrupted the dialogue. Grenell stepped up pressure on Haradinaj to lift the tax in question. Haradinaj's objections to this led the country to early parliamentary elections. The election was won by the Vetëvendosje opposition and the government was formed by its leader, Albin Kurti, who abolished the tax on Serbian goods but imposed what he called "reciprocity measures" with Serbia.²⁵

The Belgrade government stated that it was also against this decision of the Kurti government and refused to participate in the talks for the time long this measure would be in force. Ambassador Grenell put pressure on Prime Minister Kurti to lift these measures, but to no avail. Meanwhile, Grenell found support from the President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaçi, as well as from Mr. Kurti's government partner, Isa Mustafa, as the leader of Democratic League. Through these political actors and factors, he managed to realize the project of government overthrow after 52 days on Albin Kurti's charge; and thus, enabled the creation of a political majority between the Democratic League of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj's AAK, Nisma and the Srpska List, representing minorities in Kosovo. Abdullah Hoti from the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) was elected Prime Minister. But the Constitutional Court of Kosovo through its decision of December 21st, 2020 declared the voting of this government as unconstitutional. Meanwhile, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European

²² Letter from the President of Montenegro, Milo Ukukanovi., addressed to Enver Bytyçi on 22 April 2020.

²³ The President of Northern Macedonia on the touch of the borders as dangerous that harms everything achieved so far, <https://www.foldrejt.com/presidenti-i-maqedonise-se-veriut-per-express-prekja-e-kufijve-e-rrezikshme-demton-gjithcka-qe-eshte-arritur/>.

²⁴ On October 4th, 2019, Donald Trump appointed Richard Grenell as Special Presidential Envoy for Serbia and Kosovo Peace Negotiations. Bayer, Lili. "Trump names Ric Grenell his special envoy for Serbia and Kosovo—POLITICO". Politico.eu. Retrieved March 1, 2020.

²⁵ See <https://www.dw.com/sq/kosova-heq-tarif%C3%ABn-100-ndaj-serbis%C3%AB-vendos-masa-reciprociteti-tregtar/a-52980002>.

Parliament in December 2020 declared that Ambassador Grenell “conspired through media pressure to overthrow the government of Mr. Kurti”.²⁶ A new situation was created after the overthrow of the government of Albin Kurti and the constitution of the government of Mr. Hoti. Ambassador Grenell made attempts to call a meeting on June 7th 2020 in the White House, which failed to be realized, because the Public Attorney of the Special Court of Kosovo based in The Hague announced the indictment for war crimes addressed to the President of the Republic of Kosovo, Hashim Thaçi, who led the Pristina delegation to the White House.

Grenell then hosted another meeting on September 3rd and 4th, 2020, where were present apart from the Serbian President, Vucic, and Kosovo Prime Minister Hoti, but also attended the National Security Adviser. Robert C. O’Brien. On the second day of the meeting, September 4th, President Trump also attended. Agreements on the normalization of economic relations between the two countries were signed in the oval chamber of President Trump (Kelly & Chalfant, 2020; Ballhaus & Pancevski, 2020).

Each agreement was signed targeting the acceptance of some conditions for the regional and economic cooperation, as well as improvement of the relations of Kosovo and Serbia with Israel. Kosovo would be recognized by Tel Aviv and it would set up its embassy in Jerusalem. Serbia would also move its embassy to Jerusalem. It was seen that some elements of this agreement had pure electoral intentions in favour of President Trump. But this meeting was not viewed with optimism by the representatives of the European Union. The European Union warned Serbia and Kosovo, especially regarding the part of the agreement on the transfer of embassies to Jerusalem.²⁷

German deputy Peter Beyer said that Trump administration’s strategy has jeopardized transatlantic interests in Balkan policy issues. The countries of the Western Balkans became battlefields of various political actors for certain interests. While the European Union did not manage to keep these countries around itself with convincing arguments

The Precedent of Borders’ Modification Between Kosovo and Serbia

Opponents of Kosovo’s independence use “precedent-setting” as an argument against it, in case a region declares its independence without the consent of Serbia’s central government. But the International Court of Justice in The Hague considered its declaration of independence in its decision of July 22nd, 2010 as legally international and not a dangerous precedent. Countries that have recognized it, argue that

Kosovo’s independence came as a result of violence and crimes against humanity, which the state and the government of Serbia have committed against about two million Albanians in this country. Because of this reason, they have recognized Kosovo as an independent country. So far 115 countries of the world recognize its independence, few of which have withdrawn it.²⁸

The government of Serbia used the same “argument” for the non-recognition of Kosovo, i.e., “setting a precedent”, for almost 13 years by, so did also five member states of the European Union; namely Spain, Greece, Romania, Slovakia, and Cyprus. However, countries that do not recognize Kosovo because of the “precedent”, preach its partition and modification of the borders of the youngest state in Europe. According to

²⁶ Study of European Parliament—false news overthrew the government of Albin Kurti, <https://kohajone.com/studimi-i-parlamentit-evropian-lajmet-e-rreme-rrezuan-qeverine-e-albin-kurtit/>.

²⁷ See <https://www.derstandard.de/story/2000121349449/kooperation-der-eu-und-der-usa-in-suedosteuropa-ist-zerstoert>.

²⁸ See https://de.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Internationale_Anerkennung_des_Kosovo#:~:text=Insgesamt%20hatten%20seit%20der%20Unabh%C3%A4ngigkeitserkl%C3%A4rung,der%20Organisation%20f%C3%BCr%20Islamische%20Zusammenarbeit.

them, independence creates problems in the region and in the world, while the change of the borders does not create such problems.

Indeed, changing the borders between Kosovo and Serbia would set a dangerous precedent for peace, stability and security in the region of Southeast Europe and beyond. The modification of borders and the exchange of territories would result at the same time in the exchange of peoples, attempting to create “pure” ethnic states. Europe had a previous experience like this, when in 1923 the Treaty on the Exchange of Populations between Greece and Turkey was signed in Lausanne, Switzerland, in the name of the “peaceful resolution of the conflict between the two countries”! (Hirschon, 2004, p. 7). Since that day, the Foreign Affairs British Minister, George N. Curzon, considered Lausanne Treaty as a bad and ugly resolution that the world will suffer from it in the upcoming 100 years (Naimark, 2001).

It is worth to mention that Kosovo’s borders are not fluid and unknown. Also, Kosovo was not a borderless region before independence. The three legislative chambers of the Yugoslav Federation, the Yugoslav parliament, the Serbian parliament, and the Kosovo parliament, in the 1974 constitution clearly and precisely defined the country’s border line. Katstra and every other official institution adhered to this border line. As such, the borders of Kosovo were a constitutive element of the former Yugoslav Federation, just like the borders of other former republics that emerged from the dissolution of this federation. Kosovo itself was also a constituent part of the former Yugoslavia (Pischler, 2006). The option of partitioning Kosovo was categorically rejected in Martti Ahtisaari’s document, on the basis of which other most powerful countries in the world have sponsored the creation and state-building of Kosovo. Kosovo’s constitution prohibits modifications to the Ahtisaari package. This scenario was also rejected by the Contact Group (US, UK, Germany, Russia, and Italy) in 2005.²⁹ Accordingly, this constitution in its Article 2, Point 2, defines that: “Kosovo’s borders are inviolable and its territory is indivisible”. If an agreement were reached between the President of Serbia and the President of Kosovo on the change of borders, the vast majority of Albanian politicians in Kosovo would not vote for the constitutional changes necessary for the implementation of this agreement. During the discussion and debate on the exchange of territories, except for the Prime Minister of Albania, all the chief politicians of Kosovo and Albania strongly and uncompromisingly opposed this option. If such an agreement requires a wide-ranging and comprehensive consensus, this is precisely what cannot be reached. The vast majority of Albanians and Albanian politicians consider the exchange of territories as an unfair concession to Serbia and a dangerous act for the fortune of the state of Kosovo.

The International Court of Justice in the Hague, on July 22nd, 2010, decided in favor of recognizing Kosovo’s independence within its current borders and legitimizing citizenship based on international law and UN Security Council Resolution 1244 of June 10th, 1999. This implies that the borderline alteration is considered illegitimate and unjust from the international law perspective, and as such it sets a dangerous precedent.

The change of borders and the partition of Kosovo sternly damage its political, economic, strategic, and vital interests, but also the interests of the USA, NATO, and the European Union in the region. This is because it has already been accepted that such a change of borders will lead to the destabilization of the region. A destabilized Balkans is the premise of a destabilization of the European Union. Meanwhile, the weakening and disintegration of the European Union is the strategic goal of the Kremlin policy and the populist extremist

²⁹ Vergl. Dokumente unter Unitets Nations Office of the specials Evoye for Kosovo. Documents of Reference. <http://www.unosek.org/unosek/en/docref.html> (Zugriff am 13.4 2011).

forces of Europe, on both right and left sides. This is also the reason why these forces have a close cooperation with each other and are funded by Moscow.³⁰

The three political representatives of the European Union in the Bosnian conflict and crisis during the 1990s, namely Carl Bildt, Paddy Ashdown and Christian Schwarz-Schilling, addressed a letter to Mrs. Frederica Mogherini on August 29th, 2028, warning her that the exchange of territories in the Balkans (Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina) incites conflicts over territories in other regions. They emphasize that until present, the protection of minorities has been at the core of the European policy, not the moderation of borders in order to create pure ethnic states. Meanwhile, the three diplomatic and political authorities of Europe asked the European Union “not to support corrupt leaders” in the region!³¹ They stress the fact that peace does not emerge from borderline changes but from constructive relationship among ethnic groups.

The project of territory alienation of Kosovo and its division was drafted in Belgrade and it was supported by Moscow. With its partition, Russia and Serbia are counting on the dissolution of the state of Kosovo. To them, it means that the remaining part of Kosovo after its partition, to be adhered to Albania. Belgrade is ready to admit this option, because with the fusion of the remaining Kosovo with Albania, Serbia legitimizes the creation of a Bosnian Serb federation. Russia, on its account, has a special interest in this event, because it would secure the construction of a small but provocative military base for Europe in the Adriatic Sea through Republika Srpska. According to the Dayton Agreement, Republika Srpska in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina owns a narrow territory with access to the Adriatic Sea. This would be a severe blow to European and American interests in the region, as well as to the Balkan and European peace, security, and stability.

The effects of changing Kosovo’s borders also extend to Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, and Greece. These countries have multiple ethnic conflicts and problems with their neighbors. The partition of Kosovo would be used by Moscow as a formula for the model of the partition of Ukraine, Moldova, Lithuania, Latvia, and would legitimize its annexation of Crimea. Eventually a chain of ethnic conflicts will occur.³² Thus, the division of Kosovo becomes a precedent, which goes opposite the logical stream to its independence, that of the break-up of the former Yugoslavia and Serbia’s violence against Albanians.

Albanians do not need to be part of these projects. They are already positioned as trustworthy and uncontested allies of USA, NATO, and EU, and as a consequence there is no interest to be new precedents as future causes of conflicts in the region. Peace, security, and inner and outer stability of the region compound a national interest for Albanians in Albania, Kosovo and in the whole Balkan region.

The partition of Kosovo is the political will of oligarchs, corrupt and incriminated politicians, who cooperate better with each other in circumstances of instability in the region and beyond. That is why several groups were activated nowadays, which had close ties with the Milosevic regime during the last conflict of the previous century. The modification of borders and the division of Kosovo aims to expand the market of oligarchs and strengthen authoritarian leaders in Albania, Kosovo, and Serbia, even in Russia. The bargain between them is simply a bargain of interests for laundering and investing money in these countries

³⁰ “Le Pen und die russischen Millionen”, Sueddeutsche Zeitung, 23 Februar 2017.

³¹ Wir haben wenig Zweifel daran, dass dies bestehende Abkommen wie in Mazedonien destabilisiert und die Einheit von Staaten wie Bosnien untergräbt. Es ermutigt diejenigen, die auch anderswo einen Austausch von Territorien, wie etwa in der Ukraine, sehen wollen, was wahrscheinlich zum Exodus von Minderheiten aus ihren bestehenden Gemeinschaften führt, <https://www.derstandard.de/story/2000086306904/nachhaltiger-frieden-kann-nicht-entstehen-wenn-wir-grenzen-ziehen>.

³² See <https://www.derstandard.de/story/2000086313689/eindringliche-ärrnung-vor-einer-teilung-des-kosovo>.

reciprocally. It is in Belgrade's own style the financial and material attraction of politicians of Albania and other countries.

The partition of northern Kosovo would cause a wave of violence against Serbs in the country's internal enclave, as Albanians would consider Serbs as a danger for the country's freedom, independence, and sovereignty. Under such circumstances, instead of trust, distrust will arise. Instead of harmony, disharmony will be cultivated. Instead of peace balance, it will be restored the conflict situation of the end of the 20th century. Therefore, the leaders of Serbian politics who live in the interior part of the territory of Kosovo expressed their view against the project for the partition. Former member of the Srpska List in the Kosovo Assembly, Rada Trajkovic, openly declared the attitude against this plan, emphasizing that the partition of Kosovo is the project of Vucic, Thaci and Edi Rama; and also blaming these three political leaders of the demands for this project.³³

Options for Resolving the Conflict Between Kosovo and Serbia

Dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia on resolving common issues and guarantees for the future, is often treated as a matter of not defining Kosovo's status. This approach is constantly growing under circumstances when Serbian leaders, are already seen as "rehabilitated" politicians, the same ones who at the end of the twentieth century waged four wars in the Balkans! Some Albanian leaders in Pristina and Tirana, such as the former President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaçi, mostly contributed to their rehabilitation, due to the pressure that was put on them by appearing before the Special Court in The Hague. One of them is also the Prime Minister of Albania, Edi Rama, who shows to have close ties with the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vucic. So, the connection and affiliation of these three autocratic and corrupt leaders in the region brought the situation where Kosovo faced the loss of its territories. Surely, some European and American political actors also played a special role in this approach, to be mentioned here the former High Representative for Security and Foreign Policy in the EU, Frederica Mogherini, and the former National Security Advisor to President Trump, John Bolton.

Consequently, according to experts there are different ideas about this unfinished conflict. Solveig Richter, from Germany, believes that numerous obstacles were created in Kosovo's path after the declaration of its independence; also, internal and external developments did not favor the rapid coronation of the recognition of Kosovo by UN member states.³⁴ According to him, Pristina remained in a waiting position, while Belgrade improved its public image as a result of a foreign policy characterized by action (Halbach, Richter, & Schaller, 2011).

In Serbia's active stances against Kosovo and its independence, Serbian leaders had the support of their parliament in Belgrade. Although former President Boris Tadic was considered moderate and pro-European, the parliament made it impossible for him to accept the "loss of Kosovo", through a special resolution on July 26th, 2010, by taking 192 votes in favor and only 26 against, and so the parliament forced him to "to protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia, including Kosovo within its map".³⁵ It is no coincidence that this resolution was adopted only a few days after the announcement of the decision of the International Court of Justice in The Hague, recognizing Kosovo's independence and statehood. After this marathon of pressures and

³³ Trajkovic discovers the plan of Thaci and Vucic for the division of Kosovo, <https://gazetablic.com/trajkovic-zbulon-planin-e-thacit-dhe-vuciqit-per-ndarjen-e-kosoves/>.

³⁴ "Zur Zukunft des Kosovo—Politische Entwicklungen und Szenarien". In: Kosovo—Sonderfall mit Präzedenzwirkung. Berlin: Mai (2011).

³⁵ Thomas Fuster: "Durchhalteparolen in Serbien. Das Parlament stärkt der Regierung in der Kosovo-Politik den Rücken", in NZZ, 28.07.2010.

developments, the idea of continuing talks between Kosovo and Serbia aiming to achieve a peaceful solution to the conflict between the two countries was born. After almost ten years of additional post-independence talks and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) post decision, the achievement still seems far away. The more we are distant in time, the less pressure is put on it to accept the apology for the apartheid, crimes and atrocities of the Serbian army, police, and paramilitaries in Kosovo over the years 1990 and especially in the years 1998-1999.

Under these circumstances, the scenarios of reaching a solution must be analyzed, having as a key issue the non-negotiable condition for maintaining peace, stability and sovereignty in the Balkans, southeast Europe and even throughout the European continent. All the same, the NATO intervention on March 24th, 1999 had as its main goal the prevention of a humanitarian catastrophe, as well as the prevention of the spread of conflict in the region (Bytyçi, 2015). The first and best scenario, which will guarantee peace and stability, harmony and regional and European integration, is related to the request for Serbia to recognize the Republic of Kosovo without conditions. This request will disturb the Balkan balance. As a difficult issue, Serbia's recognition of Kosovo requires political will and broad compromise. Aleksandar Vuçi in the Parliament of Serbia secured more than two-thirds of the seats in the June 2020 elections. This result gives him the opportunity to realize the constitutional changes necessary for the recognition of Kosovo and its independence. In this election, he won 188 seats in the 250-member parliament. While his ruling coalition has 43 other deputies, which means that he has over 92 percent of the parliament.³⁶ But it seems that Vucic, as a leader of the authoritarian model, has no political will to use this opportunity to bring innovation to the region troubled by wars and conflicts. With the recognition of Kosovo, he could put an end to the Albanian-Serbian conflict. On December 19, 2020, he publicly stated that "Until next presidential elections in Serbia to be held in 2022, the no recognition of Kosovo will happen. Then it is the people who will decide", he said.³⁷ Therefore, other possible scenarios remain to be considered, at least until the spring of 2022, when the presidential elections in Serbia will be held. The second scenario, which was promoted several times by Berlin officials, is related to reaching an agreement between Kosovo and Serbia as the German model of the 1970s with two countries, but without direct recognition. It is about the model produced by Willy Brandt's agreement with Honeker for the indirect recognition of East Germany by the Federal Republic of Germany.

Such an agreement provides, according to experts, for Serbia to allow Kosovo's accession to the UN and other international organizations. It also enables Kosovo's integration into the European Union and its other structures. Meanwhile, Kosovo ought to respect a high autonomy for Serbs living in this country, especially for Orthodox churches and monasteries. Kosovo should also accept that the issue of border demarcation with Serbia to be considered at a later period. This scenario resembles the status of relations between the UK and Ireland (Batt, 2010). But the Serbian side in Belgrade did not accept even this alternative of resolving the conflict between the two countries, as it attempted to realize the project of the maximum demand for the change of borders and the partition of Kosovo. Instead, Serbia proposed that the solution be that of the Hong Kong model, that is, that Serbia may restore its state sovereignty in Kosovo.³⁸

³⁶

See

<https://www.aa.com.tr/sq/ballkani/shpallen-rezultatet-zyrtare-t%C3%AB-zgjedhjeve-parlamentare-n%C3%AB-serbi-shqiptar%C3%ABt-fitojn%C3%AB-3-deputet%C3%AB/1901132>.

³⁷ Vucic is firm, until I am the president, Serbia will not recognize Kosovo, <https://euronews.al/al/kosove/2020/12/19/vucic-i-prere-derisa-te-jem-une-president-serbia-nuk-do-ta-njohe-kosoven>.

³⁸ Djelić: Serbien fuer kreativen Loesungen mit Kosovo. EurActiv, 10.03.2011.

The third scenario relates to the South Tyrol model in Italy. The former President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Wolfgang Grossruck, in January 2020 brought a new proposal regarding the resolution of the conflict between Kosovo and Serbia. According to him, the Tyrol model, where it is applied the autonomy of German-speakers in Italy in South Tyrol, can serve as a solution for the autonomy of Serbs in Kosovo. Afterwards, the Serbian-Albanian reconciliation for Kosovo should be realized. The South Tyrol model, reached by a special agreement between Austria and Italy in 1972, gives to about 400,000 German speakers full cultural rights, also the right to practice bilingualism (Italian and German) in municipalities, and other competencies of exercising of self-government based on the Council of Europe Charter of Local Self-Government. Mr. Grossruck (2020) put forward the idea that such autonomy for Serbs in Kosovo could lead to a resolution of the conflict with Serbia. Unfortunately, such a scenario has never been raised in discussions. The Belgrade government insists on creating a model of autonomy in Kosovo with full legislative and executive powers in the north of the country, where live around 30-35 thousand Serbs, compounding the majority of the population, as well as in Serb-majority municipalities within the territory of Kosovo. A model like this one, proposed by Belgrade, creates conditions and opportunities to de-functionalize the exercise of the sovereignty of the state of Kosovo, as well as constitutional laws in the territories and municipalities where Serbs rule. As a consequence, Kosovo would move towards the dysfunctionalization of the government and the real and clear functions of its state institutions.

If we exclude the partition of Kosovo and the modification of borders, as a project that destabilizes the region and beyond, then as a fourth and last scenario remains the position and strengthening of the status quo. In the context of the stalemate of talks between the parties, it seems that the status quo will be the temporary medium-term approach, as both sides oppose the solutions offered. The declaration of the President of Serbia that until April 2022 there will be no recognition of Kosovo was a warning of remaining in the status quo.³⁹

Also, the statement of the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Abdullah Hoti, according to which “either we move forwards to talks to sign the recognition of the citizenship of both countries, or we do not talk about other topics”, proves that the Kosovar side prefers the status quo.⁴⁰

Under these conditions, it remains the task of the international community, namely the United States of America and the European Union, to increase cooperation and harmonize their positions regarding the approach of the talks and the resolution of the conflict between Kosovo and Serbia. If Washington and Brussels, respectively Berlin and Paris, as well as London on its behalf, cooperate and build a common position and policy, it is very likely that sooner a solution will be achieved. Neither the Kosovar side, nor the Serbian side can reject a settlement project with persistent demands of the US and the European Union, respectively Germany, France, and Great Britain. Meanwhile, in order to conclude the process, Washington and the EU need to put strong pressure on Russia and China, so that these two countries do not use their veto in the case of signing an agreement on Kosovo’s accession to the UN and other international organizations.

Conclusion

Kosovo was not compound as a state through a unilateral manner. Its independence came as a result of

³⁹ Vucic is firm: Until I will be president, Serbia will not recognize Kosovo, <https://euronews.al/al/kosove/2020/12/19/vucic-i-prere-derisa-te-jem-une-president-serbia-nuk-do-ta-njohe-kosoven>.

⁴⁰ (Hoti në Zëri i Amerikës: Nuk ka marrëveshje me Serbinë pa njohje të ndërsjelltë) Hoti in VOA: There is no agreement with Serbia without mutual recognition, <https://www.zeriamerikes.com/a/kosovo-serbia/5705933.html>.

“Ahtisaari” document, former president of Finland chaired the discussions for several years on Kosovo status, based on Resolution 1244 of the Security Council of June 10th, 1999.

In conclusion, he proposed that Kosovo should obtain independence by international monitoring and determined the constitutional conditions of Kosovo. This document was presented and approved by the Security Council of UN.

The independent Kosovo is recognized by 117 states worldwide, amid which 22 of these are EU member states and 24 NATO member states. Kosovo is also recognized by three Security Council member states (USA, Great Britain and France) also by Germany and three other G7 member states, Italy, Japan and Canada.

According to the Ahtisaari document and also according to international law experts, Kosovo gained independence from Serbia because the state of Serbia committed crimes against humanity, such crimes against the population of Kosovo, for the simple reason that this population belonged to a non-Serb ethnic group, it belonged to the Albanians. Meanwhile, Kosovo's independence was also a consequence of the dissolution of the Yugoslav Federation, where Kosovo was its federal unit.

Kosovo is now member of several international organizations, such as the World Bank, the IMF, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the World and European Football Federation, the Olympic Committee, the World Customs Organization and the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA). But Kosovo is not yet a member of the UN, UNESCO, INTERPOL, the WTO, the WHO, the OSCE and the Council of Europe. The Russian veto in the Security Council has become an obstacle to its membership, a veto that in this case is used for Moscow's geopolitical purposes. Efforts to change the borders in the Balkans are also part of Russia's strategy of impacting and maintaining influence in the region.

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