

# THE PARTITION OF KOSOVO AND METOHİJA: REALITY OR DELUSION?\*

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*Достављен:* 25. 02. 2022.

*Језик рада:* Енглески

*Кориговано:* 19. 03. и 26. 04. 2022.

*Тип рада:* Прегледни рад

*Прихваћен:* 16. 06. 2022.

*DOI број:* 10.5937/vojdelo2202055P

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The paper presents the development of the idea of the partition (demarcation) of Kosovo and Metohija, which has been discussed since the second half of the 1960s, as well as the relationship between three stakeholders - the Serbian, Albanian and international community. It turns out that this partition, although viewed from a theoretical point of view as a legitimate proposal, is difficult to achieve or unfeasible for several reasons. The hypothesis that is confirmed in the paper is the following: the partition of Kosovo and Metohija was not a realistic option because there was no agreement of international actors to implement it. In addition to confirming this hypothesis, the objective of the research is to explain that the Serbian party has never concretized the official proposal on partition, which has resulted in the fact that the Serbian public has given relatively low support to such an outcome, and the Albanian public has perceived that partition is not the solution. This setting is extremely unfavourable for further discussion on partition or demarcation. The research has been conducted relying on the realistic school of international relations and political processes and using the methods of comparison, content analysis and synthesis.

*Key words: Kosovo and Metohija, partition, demarcation, Serbs, Albanians, international community*

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\* The paper is a part of scientific and research engagement on the project "Serbia in modern international relations: strategic directions of development and strengthening of the position of Serbia in international integration processes – foreign policy, economic, legal and security aspects" (No. OI179029) funded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.

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## The idea of dividing Kosovo and Metohija in the Serbian public

“The Serbian-Albanian conflict over Kosovo and Metohija burdened the Kingdom of Yugoslavia since its establishment and the Federal Yugoslavia throughout its existence. The conflict over Kosovo has burdened most of the world in recent years. The Yugoslav state implemented six solutions, very different, conservative and liberal. None of them passed the history exam.”<sup>1</sup> From the point of view of events after 1999, this conclusion seems logical. It also seems logical to think about looking for an alternative solution consisting of partition or demarcation. The idea of dividing the territory of Kosovo and Metohija (hereinafter KiM) appears in the studies on the future of communist Yugoslavia in the late 1960s. Dobrica Ćosić noted in his diary on December 23, 1968: “In the current development trends, there is no other outcome and solution than demarcation, giving self-determination to Shiptars, recomposing the Yugoslav space and establishing homogeneous nation states in the Balkans, because, after all, in this “Tito’s state”, the possibility of establishing an internationalist, democratic, modern community of people and nations has finally been lost and destroyed.”<sup>2</sup> Ćosić will remain the main proponent of this concept; he will repeat many more times that partition is inevitable. He wrote this thesis on April 26, 1981, after new violent demonstrations by Albanians: “The objective political conditions in Kosovo and Metohija after 1966 enabled the complete Albanisation of the Province of Kosovo and encouraged the Albanian separatism. /.../ If we are not ready to liberate Kosovo again, and we are not ready, it should be shared with Albania. Take the Serbian regions and monasteries, and leave to the Albanians what is Albanian. Otherwise, we will wage a permanent war with Albanians, which we cannot win. In such wars, those who fight for their freedom always win, even when they are smaller and weaker.”<sup>3</sup> Over the years, he will try to make key decision-makers interested in this solution. Borisav Jović, the member of the Presidency of SFR Yugoslavia at that time and (no less important) President of the Socialist Party of Serbia, wrote that on September 11, 1990, he met with Ćosić, who presented to him the ideas about the demarcation with Albanians and Croats.<sup>4</sup> A few months before that, Ćosić again gloomily stated: “Serbs have to separate themselves from Albanians as soon as possible because the issue of human rights will never be resolved, if this issue is not resolved by Albanians.”<sup>5</sup>

The idea was reactualized after the political changes in 2000, so at one point the Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić and the head of the Coordination Centre for Kosovo and Metohija Nebojša Čović became particularly interested in it. The general public could

<sup>1</sup> Miloš Đorđević, “Pomirenje prava Srbije i prava etničkih Albanaca na Kosovu”, *Baština*, No. 12, 2001, p. 221.

<sup>2</sup> Dobrica Ćosić, *Kosovo 1966–2013*, Vukotić Media, Beograd, 2013, p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40

<sup>4</sup> More in: Borisav Jović, *Poslednji dani SFRJ*, Politika, Beograd, 1995.

<sup>5</sup> Dobrica Ćosić, *Kosovo 1966–2013*, gen. quote, p. 81.

get informed about this a couple of years later, after the publication of the notes by Ćosić. In December 2002, during his talks with Zoran Đinđić, and before concluding "Let's get rid of Kosovo, Zoran!", the Serbian writer and first president of FR Yugoslavia emphasizes: "Kosovo has to be resolved vigorously and no longer deceived by UN Security Council Resolution 1244./.../ We talked for a long time about my concept of the territorial demarcation with Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija, about the strategy and tactics of such an idea, in accordance with the concept and obstacles we would encounter. We were not naive optimists, but we were both convinced that this was the only way to a reasonable solution."<sup>6</sup> In his letter to Nebojša Čović, in August 2003, enclosing the document "The theses on the final solution of the Kosovo crisis and the new state strategy", he points out: "The Serbian state policy played tango on Resolution 1244 and rhetorically repeated allegiance to that Resolution without the strength to provide any positive outcome of that Resolution. /.../ Our policy is inert and without ideas, basically traditionally national, not to mention nationalistic. If we do not express a well thought out initiative to resolve the final status of Kosovo and Metohija as soon as possible, it will be decided at the centre of the world power next year, and we will find ourselves in the state of a complete action. And that will only be the loss of the Serbian national rights to Kosovo and Metohija."<sup>7</sup> He also adds: "Serbia cannot be constituted as a normal legal and democratic state until the Kosovo issue is permanently resolved and the main interests in Kosovo are protected. The unresolved status of Kosovo severely frustrates Serbs, creates a deep rift in the society and objectively politically slows down the Serbian accession to the European Union."<sup>8</sup>

However, it can be noticed that during all these attempts, "the father of the idea" of dividing Kosovo and Metohija does not move beyond principles, he does not propose any concrete plan. Certainly, it can be said that it was not his obligation to concretize the idea because the role of intellectuals in a society is often reflected in the fact that at the level of principles some topics are addressed and solutions proposed. However, it is a bit surprising that an individual with such an authority and influence, who (the truth is short - only a year) was the head of the state, did not use the moment and dealt with the issue more ambitiously.

The first and so far the best explained concretization of the demarcation plan comes from Branislav Krstić, who talks about it in the early 1990s, and which will later be written in the monograph "Kosovo between historical and ethnic law".<sup>9</sup> He will present a part of the explanations in 2000 in the book "Kosovo before the court of history".<sup>10</sup> Namely, in 1992, "Krstić proposed that an (Albanian) area with a special status ('area of peace protection', following the example of the famous Vance-Owen plan) be established in Kosovo, in the part of the territory where Serbia can establish

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<sup>6</sup> Dobrica Ćosić, *U tuđem veku, Službeni glasnik*, Beograd, 2011, p. 328.

<sup>7</sup> Dobrica Ćosić, *Kosovo 1966–2013*, gen. quote, p. 256.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 258

<sup>9</sup> Branislav Krstić, *Kosovo između istorijskog i etničkog prava*, Kuća Vid, Beograd, 1994.

<sup>10</sup> Branislav Krstić, *Kosovo pred sudom istorije*, Izdanje autora, Beograd, 2000.

control, and that the Serbian and Montenegrin historical parts be integrated into mother country.<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, Krstić managed to explain the proposal formulated in two options to the Prime Minister of the Federal Government Milan Panić, whose “adviser warned him of the possible negative reaction of the Serbian government”, and to the President of FR Yugoslavia Dobrica Ćosić, who remarked that “in both options too many Albanians stay in Serbia.”<sup>12</sup> Krstić supports the thesis that the reconciliation of two rights - the Serbian historical and the Albanian ethnic - is “a permanent and just solution”<sup>13</sup>. On the one hand, he starts from the assumption that the Albanian ethnic rights cannot be resolved by simply expanding the territory in which they live and occupying the Serbian historical areas, while, on the other hand, he warns that those territories that were disputed even during the establishment of the border of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (the areas of Kosovo and Metohija in which over 90 percent of the Albanian population lived even then) cannot be considered the Serbian historical areas<sup>14</sup>. He considers this concept from several points of view, including road connectivity, urbanization, possibilities for using health and educational institutions, development perspective. Krstić insists that instead of discussing the territory in which the rights of an ethnic community should be exercised, the focus should shift to discussing different rights that will be exercised in some territory. Although it seems to be a simple change of word order in a sentence, the difference is huge.

As tensions grew during the 1990s, some new proposals were considered. In 1998, Dušan Bataković presented the plan for cantonization, which the delegation of the Serbian Orthodox Church submitted to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs for consideration in February 1999. “This plan proposed that the cities be under the mixed Albanian-Serbian administration, and that cantons include mainly agrarian areas with the Serbian majority in addition to the Serbian monasteries with properties they had before the 1941 war, i.e. until the final expropriation after World War II. The borders of municipalities would be changed so as to provide the possibility for the establishment of smaller municipalities that group places and villages with the predominantly Serbian population. Five cantons were proposed: 1) The Ibar Kolašin, within the borders of the current municipalities of Leposavić, Zubin Potok and Zvečan, where Serbs have the majority of inhabitants; 2) the area between Kosovo Polje and Lipljan with rows of the Serbian villages: Čaglavica, Gračanica, Laplje Selo, etc.; 3) the area between the current municipalities of Kosovska Kamenica, Kosovska Vitina and Gnjilane; 4) Sirinić with its seat in Štrpce, and according to prior agreement it would be accompanied by Sredačka Župa, as well as the areas of Opolje and Gora, inhabited mainly by the Slavic population of

<sup>11</sup> Milan Milošević, „Pomirenje Srba i Albanaca”, *Vreme*, No. 542, May 24, 2001, <https://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=1519773>, 20/10/2021.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 20/10/2021

<sup>13</sup> Branislav Krstić, *Kosovo pred sudom istorije*, gen.quote, p. 26.

<sup>14</sup> Branislav Krstić, *Kosovo između istorijskog i etničkog prava*, gen.quote, pp. 199–227.

the Muslim religion; 5) the Serbian rural areas from Peć to Istok and Klina, where there are rows of the Serbian villages and large estates of the Dečani Monastery and the Patriarchate of Peć. In a similar way, the property of other Serbian monasteries (Gračanica, Devič, Gorioč, Sveti Arhangeli, Zočište, Banjska, Draganac, Sokolica, etc...) would be included in all other cantons, which would be previously returned."<sup>15</sup> The idea by Bataković remained in the shadow of the events of that time because in the autumn of 1998, NATO was already "preparing the ground" for bombing of FR Yugoslavia, so it was most likely not even seriously considered.

Whether under the influence of Dobrica Ćosić and Branislav Krstić or in political extortion, partition is being discussed again after the entry of international military and civilian forces into Kosovo and Metohija. "On May 18, 2001, the Serbian Deputy Prime Minister Nebojša Čović proposed that two entities be established in Kosovo – the Serbian and Albanian, in order to reconcile the historical right of Serbs and the ethnic right of Albanians. The Serbian entity would be under the protection of the Yugoslav army and police, while the Albanian one would have the highest degree of autonomy and would remain under the protection of international forces."<sup>16</sup> However, the Contact Group, which includes representatives of the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Russia, agrees that a solution to the future status has to be sought in accordance with "three NOs": no return to the old solution, there is no partition and there is no unification of Kosovo and Metohija with some other state.<sup>17</sup> This makes it clear to all participants in the process, and above all, to official Belgrade, that there will be no entities or cantons. Despite the fact that it will soon be clear that the Western countries and Russia look at the "final solution" differently, they reached an agreement on the unacceptability of the concept of partition then.

Regardless of the position of international actors, a decade after the unilateral decision of the Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija to declare "independence", the concept of demarcation "returns" to the "door wide" in August 2018, when the President of the Republic of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić announced: "I certainly support and that is the policy I represent – the demarcation with Albanians".<sup>18</sup> Ivica Dačić, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, during the opening of the conference with the symbolic name "The world in turmoil and the future of Europe and the Balkans" says "that the official proposal of Serbia when it comes to resolving the issue of Kosovo in dialogue is demarcation."<sup>19</sup> However, once again, there is no concretization or accompanying detailed explanations, so it remains unknown

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<sup>15</sup> Milan Milošević, „Pomirenje Srba i Albanaca”, gen.quote., 21/10/2021.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 21/10/2021.

<sup>17</sup> Dušan Proroković, *Kosovo: međuetnički i politički odnosi*, Geopolitika, Beograd, 2011, pp. 229–240.

<sup>18</sup> Branka Trivić, Amra Zejneli Loxha, „I Srbija i Kosovo podeljeni oko razgraničenja”, *Radio Slobodna Evropa*, February 22, 2019, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/kosovo-srbija-podele-razgranicenje/29784840.html>, 23/10/2021.

<sup>19</sup> Zoran Glavonjić, Amra Zejneli Loxha, „Razgraničenje zvanični predlog Srbije za Kosovo”, *Radio Slobodna Evropa*, February 19, 2019, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/da%C4%8Di%C4%87-razgrani%C4%8Denje-sa-kosovom-zvani%C4%8Dni-predlog-srbije/29778573.html>, 23/10/2021.

whether demarcation means partition or delimitation, because the President of Provisional Self-Government in Priština, Hashim Thaçi, insisted on delimitation that would be done with the agreement on “border correction”, and it would mean “the unification of the Preševo Valley with Kosovo.”<sup>20</sup> Loudly announced as an alternative solution, but at the same time unexplained, demarcation remains vague for the Serbian public. This is also shown by the results of the public opinion poll from 2020, since “the majority of the Serbian citizens (54%) would not support the demarcation of Serbia and Kosovo in a possible referendum, 29% would support such an idea, which is 10% less than in 2019, while 6% would not participate in such a referendum.”<sup>21</sup> Partly due to the public reaction (general public was influenced by the reaction of the expert public in Serbia during many debates with government officials on further resolution of the Kosovo issue when the thesis on delimitation was largely disavowed), and also due to the attitude of international actors, demarcation has less been discussed since 2020.

## The lack of the political environment and the opposition of international actors to the idea of partition

Despite the fact that partition has been talked about for more than half a century, this idea, with the exception of the short period from 2018 to 2020, has not become the “mainstream” in the discussions on Kosovo and Metohija. The question is why? The answer is simple: because the “costs” of implementation exceeded the “profits”. Sometimes this calculation was more related to internal politics, and sometimes to the international environment. However, because of that, there was either no political environment in which this idea would be concretized and presented as a real plan, or international actors blocked all thoughts in that direction.

When it comes to the political environment, it means a set of circumstances that affect decision-making within the political system. These circumstances can be influenced by individuals and institutions, events or processes, but there are often occasions when they are influenced by a great number of factors that are impossible to predict in advance. That is why the idea of Dobrica Ćosić was ignored or rejected during the communist Yugoslavia. Why was there no readiness of the League of Communists to consider it? Undoubtedly, such an approach would indicate that the foundations on which communist Yugoslavia was established were unsound. This would mean that the thesis of brotherhood and unity of nations and nationalities was no longer functional. Even a decade after the collapse of single-party system and the disappearance of the great Yugoslav state, as it can be seen from the previously quoted address by Ćosić to the head of the Coordination Centre for Kosovo and Metohija, the concept of national is used very carefully, and the concept of nationalist in a pejorative context. The system

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<sup>20</sup> Zoran Glavonjić, Amra Zejneli Loxha, „Razgraničenje zvanični predlog Srbije za Kosovo”, gen.quote, 23/10/2021.

<sup>21</sup> „CESID: razgraničenje Srbije i Kosova? (anketa)”, *Mondo*, 22.07.2020, <https://mondo.rs/Info/Srbija/a1352470/Kosovo-Srbija-razgranicenje-gradjani-anketa.html>, 24/10/2021.

was based on the dogma that national issues were resolved by federalization, and nationalism was a threat that had to be fought by all means, hence hiding behind the phrases about self-government and democracy. In order to provide more self-government and democracy, the 1974 constitutional solutions vested the Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija with rights that no other national minority in the world had. However, even that proved to be insufficient, because in 1981, new demonstrations broke out demanding that the Socialist Autonomous Province of Kosovo turns into a socialist republic. The option of dividing the territory with neighbouring Albania was still out of the question. The Yugoslav authorities were horrified by the (evil) deeds of Enver Hoxha and his way of managing the state apparatus because it was not a representative model of a socialist society. A concession to Albania, perpetuated by the voluntary renunciation of a part of the territory, would destroy SFR Yugoslavia from within, and also undermine its position at international level.

This outcome, viewed from today's perspective, did not suit international actors, both the United States and the Soviet Union. On the one hand, the United States used SFR Yugoslavia as a testing ground in the implementation of the doctrine of overthrowing and undermining communist regimes in Bulgaria and Romania. In the early 1970s, they needed Yugoslavia as a unique and prosperous system. Such an attitude changed ten years later, when it became obvious that the "Soviet superstate" was coming to an end, and geopolitical ambitions became different, which is why long-term strategic goals were redefined. The dissolution of the Soviet Union along the internal republican borders, with the incitement of various nationalisms, had to leave consequences in the Socialist Federal Yugoslavia, and even in the Czechoslovak FR, which were established according to an identical model. Within the same borders, only the nationally homogeneous states of the Eastern Bloc - Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, Albania and Romania "survived" this change to a greater or lesser extent, although interethnic tensions were detected in Romania, as well, along with armed conflicts with members of the Hungarian minority, threatening to escalate into wider confrontation.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, in the 1970s, the Soviet leadership refused to play the card of nationalism, bearing in mind that it could induce similar tendencies, both in the USSR itself and in the Eastern European area that they sovereignly controlled - both militarily and politically.

Even more noticeable is the non-existence of the political environment at home and the opposition of international actors in foreign policy plan to "play the card" of partition during the disintegration of SFR Yugoslavia. It is known that dissolution takes place on the basis of the so-called "Badinter principle": internal republican borders are declared interstate and internationally recognized. How would the message be interpreted if, for example, Slobodan Milošević accepted the concept of partition? In addition to all the accusations and pressures which he was exposed to, this would also be put in a broader context and presented as a desire to violate the territorial integrity of the neighbouring newly established states, contrary to the

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<sup>22</sup> More in: Ildikó Lipcsey, Sabin Gherman, Adrian Severin, *Romania and Transylvania in the 20th Century*, Corvinus Pub., Budapest, 2006.

decisions of the Badinter Committee. During the negotiations in Geneva in 1993, when a solution was sought for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the international mediators Cyrus Vance and David Owen asked the President of FR Yugoslavia that Serbia “does not open the issue of Kosovo in the following ten years”.<sup>23</sup>

Regardless of the fact that such a process took place later, it seems that it was inevitable, because, when viewed from today's perspective - the question is how the Serbian positions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia could be defended in the early 1990s with the simultaneous partition of Kosovo and Metohija. Moreover, the question arises who the territory would be divided with, since the transition in Albania was not peaceful. The destabilization of this country in the post-communist era escalated in 1997 with the outbreak of a short civil war after the collapse of pyramidal saving schemes, the blockade of state institutions and the collapse of a part of the security apparatus. About 1,600 people were killed in clashes that were difficult to calm down<sup>24</sup>. The conflict began in January, and ended in July following an international operation (Operation Alba) led by the UN in compliance with Resolution 1101 (1997)<sup>25</sup>. The destabilization spilled over from Albania to Kosovo and Metohija and contributed to the unfavourable development of the situation already in 1998. That is why Branimir Stakić cautiously introduces the concept of *demarcation*, instead of the more frequently used concept of *partition* until then. Demarcation does not mean that the issue of the territorial integrity of Serbia has been arisen, but that the Albanians will get extended autonomy on the part of the territory that they mostly inhabit. For the political leadership in Belgrade, demarcation was not yet an option after the ethnic cleansing of the Serbian population in Croatia, since that action was also considered within Badinter's framework. That is why negotiations began with representatives of the Albanian community, with the mediation of the US diplomacy (Christopher Hill, as a mediator in the dialogue, was in Belgrade during 1998) and the organization St. Eugene. If the negotiations had continued, perhaps demarcation would have been on the agenda at some point, or the cantonization proposed by Dušan Bataković, which cannot be excluded. However, the arrival of Richard Holbrooke at Kosovo and Metohija automatically meant the suspension of the negotiations in the previous format and according to the existing agenda. The United States, as a key external factor of regional security, was no longer interested in a peaceful settlement of the dispute, and became involved in imposing a solution by accelerating the armed conflict. The epilogue was the US direction of the Albanian politicians to a unilateral decision, in February 2008.

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<sup>23</sup> Enver Robelli, “Ndarja e Kosovës: Qosiqi e mendoj, Gjingjiri e propozoi dhe Thaçi e negocioi – tinëz!”, *Koha*, 29.04.2014, <https://archive.koha.net/index.php?category=&id=26&o=110,27/10/2021>.

<sup>24</sup> More in: *Fred Abrahams*, *Modern Albania: From Dictatorship to Democracy in Europe*, NYU Press, New York, 2015.

<sup>25</sup> „Resolution 1101 (1997)”, The United Nations Security Council, 28 March 1997, pp. 1–2. Units from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey and Spain took part in the operation.



Therefore, the appeals by Dobrica Ćosić seem a bit naive. When he writes about demarcation, he suggests: "Our position in such solving should equally use national and international arguments. At the end of autumn, an international conference should be proposed, consisting of the Security Council, the United States, the European Union, Serbia and Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia, Greece, the Serbs and Albanians from Kosovo and the Serbian Orthodox Church as the historical heir to the Christian spiritual heritage. Organize a new Dayton, a new Geneva, a new Athens, but with more participants and with respect for both positive and negative experiences of the Dayton Agreement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. There are autonomies and state and political self-governments in Europe, whose positive experiences can be implemented in Kosovo. Kosovo is not a political square; all that is necessary to resolve the Kosovo issue is the political will of the European Union and the United States and the abandonment of the current undemocratic, costly and defeated policy."<sup>26</sup> Instead of a more detailed answer, Nebojša Čović offers a comment on the document "The improvement of the contribution of the European Union in Kosovo", where point 4 says: "The project absolutely excludes the role of Serbia in achieving 'a multiethnic society'. The project does not even mention Serbia; there are only talks between 'Priština and Belgrade' on energy, communications and telecommunications. This can be discussed with both Tirana and Skopje."<sup>27</sup> Zoran Đinđić reacted similarly: "The day before yesterday, I told the German newspaper *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*: Democracy in Serbia can no longer be proven by betraying state and national interests. /.../ Blackmail after blackmail."<sup>28</sup>

Not only did the United States and the most important Western European countries offer anything to Serbia (both bilaterally and by relying on the EU mechanisms), but Belgrade was exposed to terrible threats and blackmail to agree to the projected solution. Threats and blackmail continued after 2008. For the collective West, the only option was "acceptance of reality", i.e. for the Republic of Serbia to recognize the secession of the Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija and establish relations with their unilaterally declared "state". In that period, there was no room to include the topic of demarcation on the agenda of the talks, so Nebojša Čović soon gave up the proposal on the entities, while Vojislav Koštunica, even earlier, estimated that such a proposal was doomed, and firmly insisted on respecting Resolution 1244 (1999).

The demarcation thesis, as described, becomes a part of the negotiations on the future of Kosovo and Metohija in 2018, with the visible interest of the Donald Trump's Administration to discuss it. However, that interest neither contributed to the harmonization of positions with the EU partners, nor it led to the change of the US position. As you can guess, the idea of demarcation originated this time from Belgrade, as well, so the President and the head of diplomacy first declare it as "their policies", and then the official position. It is not known what they mean by that, since

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<sup>26</sup> Dobrica Ćosić, *Kosovo 1966–2013*, gen.quote, pp. 259–260.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, p. 266.

<sup>28</sup> Dobrića Ćosić, *U tuđem veku*, gen.quote, p. 327.

there is no single document of any institution of executive or legislative power of the Republic of Serbia, which explains the concept of demarcation, let alone a report that would describe in principle what Serbia is looking for and how it views the demarcation process. Secret diplomacy, which throughout history has in many cases proved to be a great enemy of peace, and behind-the-scenes arrangements that bypassed institutions, have left the public - both narrower expert and wider one interested in political processes (and for this process regarding Kosovo and Metohija the level of interest of the Serbian public is very high) to guess what is happening. To a great extent, that discredited the process. However, as far as the public is concerned, it was mostly discredited by the offered solutions.

Namely, it became first known from the French media (*Ouest France*) that the "Serbian-Albanian demarcation" was prepared in November 2018, by making "the coordinated exchange - a Serbian enclave in northern Kosovo for the Albanian zone in southern Serbia."<sup>29</sup> Then, the German press (*Frankfurter Rundschau*) writes about the existence of a plan for "the partition of Kosovo" during February 2019, which was allegedly agreed between the United States, France and Russia.<sup>30</sup> A few days later, the Albanian media (*Bota Sot*) presented a complex proposal for a demarcation plan.<sup>31</sup> The details of this plan are illustrated on the map no. 1.

In short, instead of the "simple exchange" of the territory (which is closer to Taçi's explanation of delimitation than the thesis of partition), some new elements appear. Once again "reunited" Kosovska Mitrovica (the southern - Albanian and northern - Serbian part would find themselves together in the same territorial unit) would thus gain the status of a "free city" in a period that would last from 35 to 99 years. The city would be managed by the three-member Presidency (an Albanian, a Serb and the third member would be delegated by the UN Security Council), and the legislative body would have 55 deputies including 25 Albanians and Serbs and 5 foreigners. The city would issue its ID cards and passports, while security would be guaranteed by NATO. A similar solution would be implemented for "the special district" of Bujanovac, only personal documents would be issued "with the EU symbols, but citizens can also have passports of Serbia and Kosovo, as well." The Patriarchate of Peć and the Visoki Dečani Monastery would receive an extraterritorial status, and the Church of the Mother of God Ljeviška in Prizren and the Gračanica Monastery would receive a special status "in the territory of Kosovo". When it comes to resource management, the Trepča Mines would be organized as the US-French-Russian-Chinese capital consortium, for a period of 99 years, and the income would be divided in the following way: 50% to the budget of Kosovo, 35% to the budget

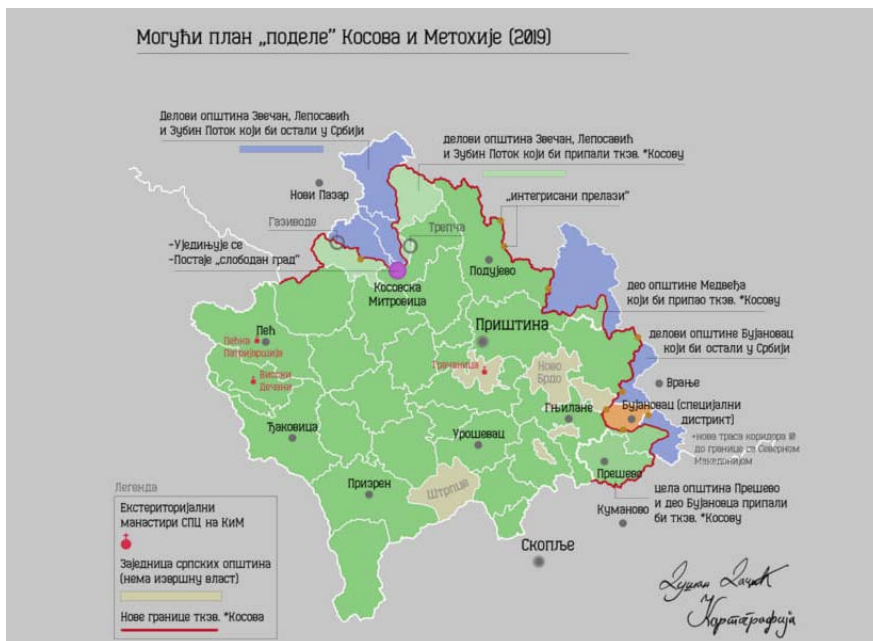
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<sup>29</sup> Jean – Arnault Derens, Laurent Geslin, „Kosovo et Serbie prêts à redessiner leurs frontières”, *Ouest France*, 29.11.2018, <https://www.ouest-france.fr/monde/kosovo-et-serbie-prets-redessiner-leurs-frontieres-6097488>, 28/10/2021.

<sup>30</sup> Adelheid Wöfl, „Grenzwertige Debatte um den Kosovo”, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 19.02.2019, <https://www.fr.de/politik/grenzwertige-debatte-kosovo-11781055.html>, 29/10/2021.

<sup>31</sup> „Draft-marrëveshja me 22 pika/ Ndarja e kufijve, Serbia merr Ujmanin, Mitrovica me statusin 'Free City', (Detajet)”, *Bota Sot*, 23.02.2019, <https://dosja.al/draft-marreveshja-me-22-pika-ndarja-e-kufijve-serbia-merr-ujmanin-mitrovica-me-statusin-free-city-detajet/>, 30/10/2021.

of Serbia, and 15% to the free city of Kosovska Mitrovica. In this format a solution for the hydropower plant Gazivode is being considered, and the “Marshall Plan” with a deadline of 2030 would be developed (for Serbia - 3.5 billion euros, and for Kosovo - 1.2 billion).<sup>32</sup>



Map 1 – The proposal of demarcation in 2019<sup>33</sup>

However, it is crucial that the “mutual recognition” takes place. Namely, the so-called “Republic of Kosovo” would fully legalize and legitimize its position in international relations, since Serbia would recognize the secession from 2008 and the causes of the secession including the “NATO humanitarian intervention” from 1999, which would no longer be called aggression. Here we come again to international actors. The public speculated that Germany was against the change of borders, which was presented as the reason for the failure of the demarcation.<sup>34</sup> However, it is not clear how the demarcation advocates would defend the proposal that was presented (at least through the media and for the purpose of studying the public pulse). For the

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 30/10/2021.

<sup>33</sup> The author of the map is Dušan Dačić. There is the written consent of the author to publish the map in this paper.

<sup>34</sup> Andrew Gray, „ Angela Merkel: No Balkan border changes”, *Politico*, 13.08.2018, <https://www.politico.eu/article/angela-merkel-no-balkan-border-changes-kosovo-serbia-vucic-thaci/>, 31/10/2021.

Western part of the international community, demarcation can only be a solution if it leads to mutual recognition. Even in that case, the presented plan shows, the demarcation covers not only the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, but also central Serbia, with the establishment of “special solutions” that would further internationalize the whole issue (and experiences from Bosnia and Herzegovina show that by internationalization through special solutions problems were not solved, but postponed, while in the meantime the influence of various international representatives at internal level increased to such an extent that, viewed from a purely theoretical aspect, it became an open question how much it is a sovereign country today and how much an international protectorate). It is suspected in Belgrade that something could be gained through the actualization of the concept of partition.

Furthermore, from the subsequent reactions of Russia, it becomes evident that official Moscow is not behind the offered proposal. The Russian position is firmly related to Resolution 1244 (1999), which is mentioned as the basis for seeking a final solution, even at a time when absolutely no Serbian official in Belgrade mentions it. The non-Western part of the international community has a different approach to the Kosovo issue (except Russia, which has historical and geopolitical reasons for its participation in the Balkan politics); there is a greater problem with the attitude towards the secession and territorial integrity of the UN member state, than the very Serbian-Albanian dispute. Hence, they do not look favourably on flirting with the exchange of territory, partition, demarcation.

## The Albanian view of partition and demarcation

Contrary to some Serbian intellectuals and politicians, who considered the partition of Kosovo and Metohija as a solution, so they “pushed” such an idea into the public, that attitude is not noticed among the Albanian ones. The partition is simply not acceptable, and criticism during the period from 2018 to 2020 due to a very hint of demarcation became more frequent.<sup>35</sup> The name Dobrica Ćosić has been mentioned in a negative context since the end of the 1960s, and attitudes about the Albanian repression against Serbs are emphasized more than his idea of partition. That is why Ćosić’s opinion is presented as a part of the continuity of the aggressive Serbian policy that lasts from Ilija Garašanin, whose alleged goal was to displace the Albanian population from the centuries-old hearths.<sup>36</sup> “The unwillingness of the Serbian state to accept responsibility for the crimes committed in Croatia, Bosnia, and especially in Kosovo, is in fact the

<sup>35</sup> Fadil Maloku, „Plani për ndarje të Kosovës është e ditur që nuk 'banon' në Amerikë, por në Ballkan”, *Koha Ditore*, 23.03.2020, <https://www.koha.net/arberi/215059/maloku-plani-per-ndarje-te-kosoves-eshte-e-ditur-qe-nuk-banon-ne-amerike-por-ne-ballkan/>, 03/11/2021.

<sup>36</sup> See for example: Rexhep Qosja, *Shpërngulja e shqiptarëve sipas programeve kombëtare serbe: Që nga Naçertanija e Ilija Garashaninit (1844) deri te ndarja e Kosovës sipas Dobrica Qosiqit (2004)*, Toena, Tiranë, 2005.

product of the Serbian national intellectual elite. Accordingly, the proposals of the academic Dobrica Ćosić, who demands the partition of the northern part of Kosovo and its accession to the Republic of Serbia, are in such a spirit, not offering that such a solution should be implemented to the Albanians in the Preševo Valley, Bosniaks in Novi Pazar or Hungarians in Vojvodina."<sup>37</sup>

There were sharp reactions to Ćović's thinking about the two entities (2001), so Alush Gashi warns that it "aims to destabilize the situation in the already troubled region", and the view of Adem Demaçi is similar: "If the international community hesitates and deviates from the main principle of giving the Kosovo Albanians the right to decide on their destiny, this will be an introduction to new bloodshed in which the international community will also participate, which would be a new crime for both Albanians and Serbs."<sup>38</sup>

The operationalization of this topic through secret negotiations in which Donald Trump's associates are taking part, and also Hashim Thaçi and the Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama is viewed as an unpleasant danger. Therefore, the decisions of the authorities in Tirana are closely monitored, and Ilir Deda states at an important moment that the appointment of Gent Cakaj as the head of the Albanian diplomacy indicated that there would be no partition, and that "President Ilir Meta dealt that plan quite a blow" by such a move.<sup>39</sup> Of course, that is how Edi Rama was hit, as well. Rama justified himself, in the autumn of 2021, when it already became clear that the demarcation was "no longer in play" that everything was written and said on that topic was a "knightly legend". "If there was a plan, it would have gone through parliaments, referendums."<sup>40</sup>

One of the few among the Albanian intellectuals who considered demarcation as a solution is (self-proclaimed "a father of the nation"!) the writer Rexhep Qosja: "The Serbian issue can be solved by seceding a part of Kosovo and merging the Preševo Valley with Kosovo. In my vision, Albania and Kosovo will unite. How the problem of northern Kosovo and the Preševo Valley will be solved depends on us, our perseverance and our wisdom. However, we will unite. This is not only for our good, but for the good of the entire Balkans."<sup>41</sup> It turned out that he was reprimanded for that and he faced a barrage of criticism. In his review of this topic, Agim Hyseni emphasizes that "Kosovo is one and indivisible" and recalls the words of Fehmi Agani from 1994: "Until Serbia finds

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<sup>37</sup> Memli Sh. Krasniqi, „Porpozimet e akademikut Dobrica Qosiq mbi zgjidhjen përfundimtare të çështjes së Kosovës“, *Gjurmime Albanologjike - Seria e shkencave historike*, 48, 2018, p. 217.

<sup>38</sup> Milan Milošević, „Pomirenje Srba i Albanaca“, gen.quote, 21/10/2021.

<sup>39</sup> Ilir Deda, „Meta me një goditje që ende s'u dha për planin e ndarjes së Kosovës“, *Koha Ditore*, 10.01.2019, <https://www.koha.net/arberi/138934/deda-meta-me-nje-goditje-qe-ende-su-dha-per-planin-e-ndarjes-se-kosoves/>, 03/11/2021.

<sup>40</sup> Edi Rama, „Plani për ndarjen e Kosovës: Legjenda kreshnikësh“, *Kosova Press*, 25.09.2021, <https://kosovapress.com/plani-per-ndarjen-e-kosoves-rama-legjenda-kreshnikesh/>, 05/11/2021.

<sup>41</sup> Enver Bytyçi, „Rexhep Qosja rikthehet te opsioni i Dobrica Qosiq për Kosovën?!“, *RTV Presheva*, 23.01.2017, <https://www.rtvpresheva.com/rexhep-qosja-rikthehet-te-opsioni-i-dobrica-qosiq-per-kosoven/>, 05/11/2021; Diana Bunjaku, „Rexhep Qosja - Qosiqi, që kërkon ndarjen e Kosovës“, *Bota Sot*, 03.02.2017, <https://www.botasot.info/politika-lajme/649729/rexhep-qosja-qosiqi-qe-kerkon-ndarjen-e-kosoves/>, 06/11/2021.

support in some Albanian stratum, its goals regarding Kosovo will fail and today we can rightly say that Serbia lost the war in Kosovo."<sup>42</sup> The opinion that national goals can be achieved by a unique approach, which excludes "jumps" like Čosja's or behind-the-scenes negotiations that Hashim Thaçi and Edi Rama were inclined to, survives (correctly!) in the majority of the Albanian political public. By agreeing to a debate on partition irreparable damage has already been caused with an uncertain and debatable outcome in the future. Albanians would not easily accept it even in a situation when it would be imposed, due to a possible agreement between the US and Russia, making Washington to agree to recognize the Crimean referendum, and Moscow to accept the so-called "Republic of Kosovo" in a "shortened format", which was mentioned in public debates as a possibility.<sup>43</sup>

On the other hand, Čosja views the demarcation quite differently than it seemed in Belgrade. He also proposes an "exchange of territories" (the northern part of Kosovo for "the Preševo Valley"), followed by the unification of Albania and the "Republic of Kosovo". Here, the topic of demarcation also "merges" with an approach that is much more widespread among Albanians. Instead of the concept of "partition", the terms ethnic Albania (*Shqipëria etnike*) and natural Albania (*Shqipëria natyrale*) are more frequently used<sup>44</sup>. The term Greater Albania (*Shqipëria e Madhe*) is avoided, and there is advice that it is more suitable to use the other mentioned term. Lulezim Blaka explains: "Greater Albania: This is fascist terminology, used during the Italian occupation of 1939-1943. The territory of 'Greater Albania' includes today's Albania, partly the territory of today's Kosovo (excluding the municipalities of Mitrovica, Gnjilane and Kačanik) and some Albanian municipalities in today's FYROM. If this terminology is used, then we give up almost half of the territory of Albania. Ethnic Albania: This is the terminology most often used after 1992 and covers all territories inhabited by Albanians. If this terminology is used, then we give up all Albanian territories, whose population was expelled or assimilated, and those territories were then colonized by Greeks and Slavs."<sup>45</sup> Everything is Albanian, from Prijepolje in Polimlje to Preveza in Epirus („territori prej Prijepoles e deri në Prevezë")!<sup>46</sup>

In recent years, the introduction of the concept of the Real Albania (*Shqipëria e Vërtetë*) into public discourse has been noticeable, using, as its basis, the research of Ahmet Gashit from the 1930s and 1940s (map no. 2).

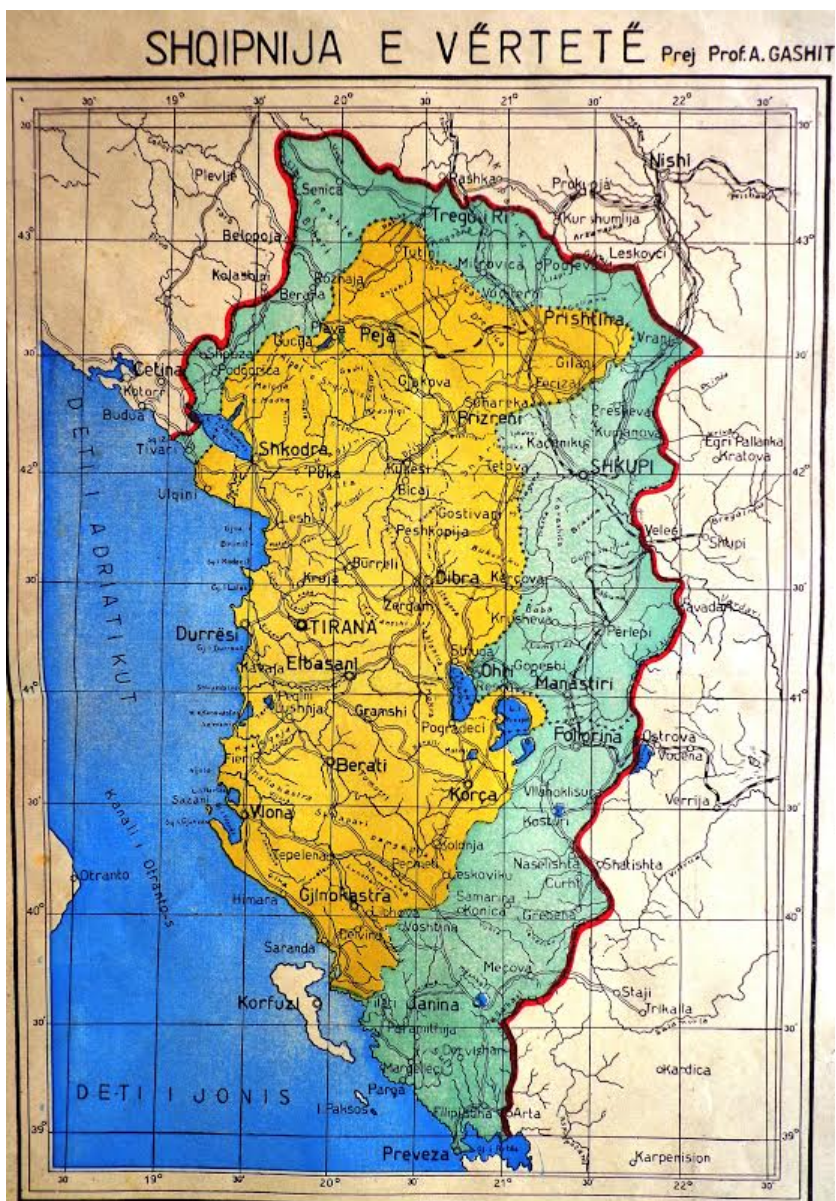
<sup>42</sup> Agim Hyseni, „Fehmi Agani për çështjen e ndarjes: Kosova është një dhe e pandashme", 10.12.2018, <https://agimhyseni.com/2018/12/10/fehmi-agani-per-ndarjen-e-kosoves-kosova-eshte-nje-dhe-e-pandashme/>, 08/11/2021.

<sup>43</sup> Rexhep Maloku, „Nëse Amerika e Rusia janë marrë vesh me nda Kosovën ...", *Koha Ditore*, 15.12.2019, <https://www.koha.net/arberi/199140/nese-amerika-e-rusia-jane-marre-vesh-me-nda-kosoven/>, 06/11/2021.

<sup>44</sup> Veli Haklaj, „Vendi gjeografik i Shqipërisë Etnike", *Gazeta Mapo*, 14.03.2019, <https://gazetamapo.al/vendi-gjeografik-i-shqiperise-etnike/>, 09/11/2021.

<sup>45</sup> Lulezim Blaka, „Shqipëria e Madhe dhe Shqipëria Etnike, këto 2 terminologji të gabuara", 10.03.2017, <https://medium.com/@lulezimblaka/shqip%C3%ABria-e-madhe-dhe-shqip%C3%ABria-etnike-k%C3%ABto-2-terminologji-t%C3%AB-gabuara-7092954d223a>, 11/11/2021.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 11/11/2021.



Map 2 – “Real Albania” (Shqipnija e Vërtetë) by Ahmet Gashi from 1941<sup>47</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Veli Haklaj, „Kufijtë e Shqipërisë etnike dhe grabitja e tokave shqiptare”, *Gazeta Mapo*, 23.03.2019, <https://gazetamapo.al/kufijte-e-shqiperise-etnike-dhe-grabitja-e-tokave-shqiptare/>, 09/11/2021.

Due to all the abovementioned, it is questionable whether and to what extent the idea of peaceful partition could be conducted, how much it is possible to do it in the present and what effects it would have in the future!? The idea of partition is not anticipated by the Albanian public as fair and honest, so its legitimacy is questionable. The proposals for partition, made by the Serbian party, have always been updated with phrases about “final solution”, “permanent demarcation”, “historical agreement”, “peace and stability”. If for the Albanian public, that is, the convincing majority in its intellectual and political circles, such an idea is disputable, then one cannot speak of finality, lasting, historical, peaceful and stable.

## *Conclusion*

Although both national and international officials have mostly avoided the topic of the partition of Kosovo and Metohija into the Serbian and Albanian part, it has been discussed in public since the 1960s, mainly owing to Dobrica Ćosić. By nominating the concept of “demarcation” as the “final solution”, during the negotiations between Belgrade and Priština from 2018, the thinking about partition was reaffirmed. At one point, the highest officials of the Republic of Serbia announced that this idea represented an official position. However, there are four problems in this approach.

Firstly, this concept has never been concretized at the official level. The proposals of Branislav Krstić and Dušan Bataković were probably considered, but not adopted as a part of the state strategy. Secondly, there was no preparation of the public for such an outcome or that work was sloppily done at the moment when the proposal, at least in principle, was declared official. Hence, the “shallow support” was relative, which is why the legitimacy of the idea was questioned. Thirdly, there are no serious indications that the Albanian party is interested in such an outcome. The attitude of politicians, their readiness to discuss this topic is not well accepted by the Albanian public, thus such a course of action is disputed. Even if a consensus was reached in the negotiations and some kind of agreement was signed with such content, it would remain open how long-term it would be and what consequences there would be in the future. The indications that demarcation can be considered are conditioned in such a way that it would actually represent essential delimitation, exchange of smaller territories, with the accompanying request to continue the process of enlarging the Albanian ethno space in ethnic Albania, natural Albania or real Albania. Fourthly, there is no agreement of international factors to carry out something like that. Also, when certain proposals were finally considered and “leaked to the public”, they were in line with what the Albanian party was asking for and largely respected the Albanian interests, while for the Serbian party it could only be a “fig leaf” that the signatories of such a solution would use to justify that “not everything is lost” and that “Serbs have also gained something”. In the current format of negotiations, and in accordance with the position of the key Western countries responsible for the current situation in Kosovo and Metohija, the implementation of the concept of demarcation cannot have positive effects for Serbia, viewed from a short or long-term perspective whatsoever.



From the point of view of partition theory, it is a legitimate position. However, in order to achieve it, it is necessary to fulfill many preconditions. First of all, such an approach has to respect the interests of both parties. Then, it is necessary to provide adequate public support or at least the intellectual elite of both Serbs and Albanians. Finally, the guaranteeing parties to such an agreement have to be the most important actors of international relations. On the one hand, these are certainly the United States, Great Britain, France and Germany, the countries that are not only involved in seeking peaceful solutions to the "Yugoslav crisis" from the very beginning, but also countries that at certain moments directed and induced that crisis. On the other hand, for historical reasons, faced with many violations of the signed agreements and ridiculous interpretations of what was agreed by the Western part of the international community, Serbia has no reason to believe them. Therefore, in order to accomplish a long-term and sustainable solution, non-Western actors have to be included in the process, primarily Russia, which has also been engaged in seeking peaceful solutions to the Yugoslav crisis from the very beginning, as well as China as the permanent member of the UN Security Council and the increasingly important actor of regional security in the Balkans. The question also remains whether the borders can be changed and the demarcation between Serbs and Albanians can be done, without leaving consequences for other parts of the post-Yugoslav territories? Bearing in mind that (geo) political processes in the Balkans take place according to the principle of "communicating vessels", it is very likely that the demarcation in Kosovo and Metohija would cause many consequences.

A new phase of the problematization of the Kosovo issue begins in 2008, when, with the support of the collective West, the Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija violated Badinter principles that were the basis for all decisions on the territorial organization of the post-Yugoslav territories since 1992. If Badinter principles no longer apply to Serbia, then they cannot apply to other Yugoslav republics. The partition of Kosovo and Metohija in such circumstances would necessarily lead to a new territorial reconfiguration of the post-Yugoslav space. This is another reason why international actors are reluctant to agree to consider this idea, regardless of the fact that it is periodically indicated, through the media, that it could be a solution in the future.

The path to the partition of Kosovo and Metohija, even if international actors would accept such a concept as a solution, is full of uncertainty and ambiguity. This idea is difficult to carry out without consequences. If partition is to be considered as a solution, long and thorough preparation is needed, taking into account all its aspects including the new territorial reconfiguration of the post-Yugoslav space, implications for regional relations, security and stability.

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## Summary

Although the topic of dividing Kosovo and Metohija into the Serbian and Albanian part was mostly avoided by officials, both national and international, it has been discussed in public since the 1960s, mostly owing to Dobrica Ćosić. By choosing the concept of “demarcation” as “the final solution” during the negotiations between Belgrade and Priština from 2018, the thinking about partition has been reaffirmed. At one point, the highest officials of the Republic of Serbia have announced that the idea represents an official position. However, there are four problems with this approach.

Firstly, this concept has never been concretized at the official level. The proposals by Branislav Krstić and Dušan Bataković were probably considered, but not adopted as a part of the Serbian state strategy.

Secondly, there was no preparation of the public for such an outcome or that work was sloppily done at the moment when the proposal, at least in principle, was declared official. Hence, the “shallow support” was relative, which is why the legitimacy of the idea was questioned.

Thirdly, there are no serious indications that the Albanian party is interested in such an outcome. The attitude of politicians, their readiness to discuss this topic is not well accepted by the Albanian public, thus such a course of action is disputed. Even if a consensus was reached in the negotiations and some kind of agreement was signed with such content, it would remain open how long-term it would be and what consequences there would be in the future. The indications that demarcation can be considered are conditioned in such a way that it would actually represent essential delimitation, exchange of territories, with the accompanying request to continue the process of enlarging the Albanian ethno space.

Fourthly, there is no agreement of international factors to carry out something like that. Also, when certain proposals were finally considered and “leaked to the public”, they were in line with what the Albanian party was asking for and largely respected the Albanian interests.

In the current format of negotiations, and in accordance with the position of the key Western countries responsible for the current situation in Kosovo and Metohija, the implementation of the concept of demarcation cannot have positive effects for Serbia, viewed from a short or long-term perspective whatsoever. The path to the partition of Kosovo and Metohija, just when such a concept would be accepted by international actors as a solution, is full of uncertainty and ambiguity. It is difficult to report such an idea without many consequences after its execution. If partition is to be considered as a solution, long and thorough preparation is necessary, taking into account all its aspects including the new territorial reconfiguration of the post-Yugoslav space, the implications for regional relations, security and stability.

*Key words: Kosovo and Metohija, partition, demarcation, Serbs, Albanians, international community*

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