

THE GEOECONOMICS OF KOSOVO AND METOHİJA IN THE GEOPOLITICAL PATTERN OF THE UNITED STATES

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Having in mind the number of countries that have recognized the independently proclaimed state of Kosovo, contrary to the principles of international law that does not recognize self-determination and secession, as well as those countries that have not recognized it, it can be concluded that the area of Kosovo and Metohija, as an integral part of the territory of the Republic of Serbia, has no status of an internationally recognized country. On the other hand, taking into account the natural resources in the area of the Kosovo-Metohija basin, especially mineral wealth, Kosovo and Metohija with its geoeconomic potential has not accidentally found itself in the global geopolitical pattern defined by the US. By aggression on the FRY, that is, the RS, NATO forces led by the US brought the area of Kosovo and Metohija under control in the form of a protectorate of the already instrumentalized UN. Namely, in line with Joseph Nye's theory of "hard and soft power", the Kosovo-Metohija region, or the southern Serbian province, was placed under "hard occupation", i.e. the patronage of NATO forces called KFOR. The "elasticity" of international law that characterizes political relations among the existing powers and power centres on a global scale produces a high level of mutual competition for resources, security and economic prestige, increasing the potential for escalating conflicts. Therefore, in addition to the increasingly pronounced security and crisis aspects, it is necessary to look at the geoeconomic and geopolitical place, importance and role of Kosovo and Metohija, as one of the currently greatest NATO bases in Europe and as an imperialist reflection of the US and/or a perspective expression of the RS.

Key words: *geoeconomics, geopolitics, mineral resources, US, Republic of Serbia (RS), Kosovo and Metohija (KiM)*

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Introduction

The Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija (Kosovo/Kosmet or KiM) is located in the centre of the Balkan Peninsula and is officially an integral part of the Republic of Serbia. In a geographical sense, Kosovo is of special economic, cultural and political importance at regional and world level, and is currently under the protection of the United Nations (UN).¹ Kosovo and Metohija occupies 10,887 km² and is located between 41°50'58" and 43°51'42" north latitude and 20°01'30" and 21°48'02" east longitude. It borders Albania in the southwest, Macedonia in the southeast, Serbia in the east, north and northeast, and Montenegro in the west, and the population is about 1,739,825 (although this number is smaller now).²

After the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the First Balkan War, this historical Serbian territory was annexed to the Kingdom of Serbia. The borders were defined at the London Conference in 1913, and were finally confirmed by the revision at the Florence Conference on July 26, 1926, which made the territory of Kosovo and Metohija an inseparable part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in an international and legal sense and all subsequent state forms in which its international legal personality has been incorporated. Nevertheless, after the centuries of the Ottoman rule, a great percentage of both settled and Islamized domicile population remained in that area, and Austria-Hungary made sure that the problem was even greater for Serbia at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, establishing an artificial ahistorical Albanian nation that got its mother country in 1913 through a compromise between the great powers. Unlike historical nations that strive to live in sovereign states, defining their destiny, Albanians have always been primarily interested in geopolitical positioning, and throughout history they have constantly strived to submit themselves to hegemonies who would enable them to do so.³ In this regard, from a historical perspective, the aspirations of this nation will always be directed against all neighbours, which are exclusively Orthodox Serbs, Macedonians and Greeks.

After the end of the Cold War, the world became unipolar, and international law was redefined towards (non)interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states. In this way, the concept of "self-defence" began to include the so-called "democratically justified preventive peace missions" which, allegedly, by military intervention, "protect citizens" from massive violation of human rights, thus disrupting the natural relationship between territorial integrity and self-determination of states. The Albanian accusations against the "criminal Belgrade regime that allows the alleged

¹ With the adoption of Resolution 1244 (1999) in the UN Security Council, the issue of Kosovo was placed within the framework of public international law. However, this is how the occupation of Kosovo was actually carried out by the UN, which left the military command to KFOR forces, and the civilian command to UNMIK.

² Qazim Kukalaj, Avdullah Nishori, *Upravljanje prirodnim resursima u Jugoistočnoj Evropi: šume, zemljište i vode*, GIZ, Skoplje, 2017, p. 126.

³ Sanja Stošić, Milena Pešić, "Secesionistički diskurs Kosova i Katalonije: sličnosti i razlike", *Politička revija*, vol. 62, br. 4, Institut za političke studije, Beograd, 2019, p. 188.

violation of the Albanian human rights in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija”, and at the same time the interference of the US and EU in the “resolution of the Kosovo crisis”, accelerated the worsening of the Serbian-Albanian relations, enabling the political West to declare according to its methods the terrorist organization “freedom fighters”. A falsified report about the clashes between the Kosovo Liberation Army and the Serbian security forces was enough for NATO to bomb the FRY to the full 76 days in March 1999, under the pretext of stopping the persecution of Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija by the Serbian police and the Yugoslav Army.⁴

Namely, during the 1990s, the Albanian extremists completed many projects on the so-called independent Republic of Kosovo, reducing the Serbian population to only about 9%, forming a parallel system of provincial administration and education independent of Serbia and strengthening relations with Albania. At the end of 2002, standards were defined for evaluating the progress of the crisis in Kosovo in accordance with the so-called “standards before status” approach. However, guided by political interests from the Cold War period, as well as geopolitical goals related primarily to the supply of oil, as a necessary resource for the maintenance of the military and economic machinery, the US wholeheartedly supported the implementation of the so-called independent Kosovo project. Therefore, during the visit of the US President George W. Bush to Tirana in 2007, the independent Kosovo was explicitly promoted, and the following year Daniel Fried, stating that the role of the EULEX peacekeeping mission in Kosovo was not neutral, but already oriented towards the defence of the sovereignty of the so-called state of Kosovo, clearly confirmed the anti-Serb policy.⁵

The key fact is that the essence of the Kosovo problem is much more complex, that is, it does not refer exclusively to the problems of interethnic violence. This claim is best illustrated by the establishment of the NATO Camp Bondsteel, which, apparently, was planned even before the bombing. Therefore, it is clear that the bombing of RS was only a cover for the permanent establishment of the Atlantic Alliance at the intersection of corridors VIII and X, which actually turned KiM and Macedonia into the strategically important NATO points, i.e. the US lifeblood of Southeast Europe. In this sense, the importance that this area represents for the US administration is obvious, which, no matter how politically oriented, will never give up its hegemonic interests.⁶ This is confirmed by the fact that, not so long ago, NATO, in addition to Camp Bondsteel, also requested the establishment of a military naval base in Albania, as a new strategically important point of its geopolitical pattern. Therefore, the Albanian separatism, like any other separatism, requires careful

⁴ The military intervention in Kosovo and Metohija was carried out on the basis of the report of the OSCE and William Walker on the alleged crimes in the village of Račak. However, the UN has never passed a resolution on the intervention of NATO forces in Yugoslavia, during which, in addition to military targets, civilian targets were also bombed.

⁵ Alexis Troude, “The Geopolitical Aspects of the 1999 NATO Agression against Yugoslavia”, in: Nebojša Vuković (ed.), *David vs. Goliath: NATO war against Yugoslavia and its implications*, gen. quote, p. 132.

⁶ Ibid, p. 128.

consideration of external and internal factors that not only led to armed conflicts in the past, but also cause interethnic conflicts today, threatening the stability of the entire Balkans. Today, it is clear that the Kosovo crisis is a part of a strategically well-planned action in advance, presented as the “humanitarian destruction of Yugoslavia”, whose main leaders such as William Walker, Wesley Clark, Richard Holbrooke, Madeleine Albright, the Western media and the KLA, were primarily driven by geopolitical interests and looting of the southern Province.

Namely, the territory of Kosovo and Metohija includes the treasury of mineral wealth from which, during the second half of the 20th century, 15-20 million tons of mineral raw materials were exploited annually. Although the aspect related to mineral and raw material potential is the least represented in the discussion of the Kosovo issue, when a global conflict of geopolitical interests of the most powerful countries in the world is taken into account, it can be said that this is exactly the answer to the question of why Kosovo is being taken away from the Republic of Serbia. Analysing the mineral potential of Kosovo, we would like to point to the fact that modern world history has not recorded a single similar case of illegal occupation and such shameless looting of state as it happened to Serbia in Kosovo, under the UN auspices, when its state and private property was robbed and the unscrupulous appropriation of mineral resources, worth hundreds of billions of euros, was enabled.⁷

The mineral resources of KiM: the goal of the global geopolitical project of the new world order

Today, it is known for certain that Kosovo is one of the richest regions in Europe due to its mineral wealth. Owing to its geological structure, KiM is rich in great deposits of energy, metallic and non-metallic mineral resources and it is also the fact that the Kosovo-Metohija basin is very rich in coal. Otherwise, the topic of Kosovo “magical wealth” was raised for the first time ten years ago, when information about huge amounts of chromium (20% of the total amount of chromium at the world level is in KiM) was published. The lignite reserves in the Obilić area are estimated at more than ten billion dollars and make up the world fifth greatest reserve. Mines like “Trepča”, with its 7.5 million tons of ore reserves, are also abundant in lead, zinc and copper (20% of lead reserves compared to 0.9% at the world level).⁸ Moreover, in

⁷ *Espresso*, „Zbog ovoga je oteto Kosovo: CIA sama otkrila koliko vredi eksploatacija naše zemlje”, <https://www.espresso.co.rs/vesti/drustvo/277213/zbog-ovoga-je-oteto-kosovo-cia-sama-otkrila-koliko-vredi-eksploatacija-nase-zemlje>, 03/09/2021

⁸ The geological reserves of coal are between 12.5 and 13.5 to as much as 14 billion tons of coal, which is an impressive figure even at the world level. Since the 1950s, coal production was underground, but later two great surface mines were opened, where production was more extensive and reliable. In the second half of the 20th century, about 240 million tons of coal were produced, which is equivalent to about 45 million tons of oil. Nataša Jovanović, „Zašto je okupirano Kosovo i Metohija: Podzemni trezor – koren srpske vertikalne star hiljadu godina – Koreni”, *Koreni*, 09/11/2021

Kosovo, there are other non-ferrous and rare metals such as gold, nickel, bauxite and manganese, and according to the World Bank report from 2007, the value of the mineral and ore resources of the Kosovo-Metohija basin was estimated at 13 billion dollars. Therefore, it is quite understandable that such high concentration of valuable resources in such a small territory has aroused the greed of the great world powers.⁹

Immediately after the signing of the Kumanovo Agreement, the work of the "Trepča" combine was suspended, and the former special envoy to KiM Christopher Hill¹⁰ stated in an informal conversation that "underground" in the Serbian Province two times five hundred billion euros lies. Namely, the "Trepča" mine complex in the area of Kosovska Mitrovica, and also beyond it (south towards Priština and north towards Leposavić), is considered one of the greatest deposits of lead and zinc in Europe, which has been confirmed by all research in the past half century, both national and international one.

"Trepča" was founded in 1927 and mining of lead and zinc ore began in 1929-1930.¹¹ Until the sequestration of KiM from Serbia in 1999, "Trepča" functioned as a unique mining and smelting compound, when, under the pretext of environmental protection, metallurgy was suspended, while zinc metallurgy stopped due to allegedly endangering the safety of workers because the facility is located in the part of Kosovska Mitrovica south of the Ibar. After that, in 2000, there was an intrusion of peacekeepers into the headquarters of the "Trepča" combine in Zvečan, when the general manager at that time was arrested, and by the decision of UNMIK, a representative of a multinational arms trading company was appointed to his place.¹² Therefore, it is not difficult to conclude that the main target of the violent conquest of KiM is the huge mineral wealth and the "Trepča" combine, as the largest economic giant of its type not only in the Balkans, but also in Europe. Unfortunately, today "Trepča" is ethnically divided into the Serbian and Albanian part, more precisely into "Trepča North" and "Trepča South", which clearly shows how unsustainable the

⁹ Alexis Troude, „Le Kosovo au coeur de la question des Balkans”, [Kosovo at the heart of the Balkans issue], *Geostrategiques*, vol. 8, 2013, p. 213.

¹⁰ Once one of the authors of the Dayton Agreement, today the US ambassador to Serbia.

¹¹ The exploitation of "Trepča" dates back to the beginning of the 14th century, and lasted until the end of the 17th century. After that, between the two world wars, the British company "Trepča Mines Limited" opened a mine and built lead smelters in the area of "Trepča", and during the Second World War the management of "Trepča" was taken over by Germans, producing accumulators for German submarines. After the war, nationalization followed and the mining-metallurgical-chemical combine of lead and zinc "Trepča" was established, as one of the most important mining compounds in the Balkans, which produced about 70% of Yugoslav mineral raw materials at one point.

¹² Nataša Jovanović, „Zašto je okupirano Kosovo i Metohija: Podzemni trezor — koren srpske vertikalne star hiljadu godina - Koreni”, gen. quote. See: Pieter Troch, „Social dynamics and nationhood in employment politics in the Trepča mining complex in Socialist Kosovo (1960s)”, *Labor History*, Vol. 60, No. 3, 2019, pp. 217-219.

mentioned situation is, because property relations are not regulated. However, the upcoming absolute takeover of “Trepča” by the US military companies is much worse, which explains why “Trepča” is no longer Serbian or Albanian, but under “interim administration” or UNMIK occupation.

Finally, the Kosovo issue has a special dimension precisely due to the fact that in the “Trepča” mines, in addition to lead and zinc, there is also silver, bismuth, gold, cadmium, germanium, selenium, tellurium, indium, thallium, as well as other rare elements that are precious for the needs of the high-tech industry. During the last half century, almost half of the geological reserves of KIM has been extracted and processed, or more precisely: about 2.1 million tons of lead, 1.4 million tons of zinc, 2,600 tons of silver, 4,000 tons of bismuth, 9 tons of gold, 1,700 tons of cadmium. In accordance with this, for the past few years, great multinational companies such as Rio Tinto, Freeport, ThyssenKrupp, and some investment funds have been interested in “Trepča”, as well as the US military industry, which needs stable supplies of ferronickel that the north of Kosovo abundantly has. That is precisely why UNMIK “protects” both “Trepča North” and “Trepča South”, that is, watches over the interests of the US military industry.¹³

The natural reserves of lignite estimated at 14.7 billion tons¹⁴ are primarily used in thermal power stations.¹⁵ Since Kosovo is ranked high in terms of lignite reserves at the world level, in the long term, this fact is one of the key factors for the production of electricity in the country. Moreover, taking into account the exploitation price of 1.1 euros per GJ of energy, Kosovo’s coal has the most favourable price-quality ratio in the region.¹⁶ The Independent Commission for Mines and Minerals of the Occupied Territories, managed by UNMIK, in a report by Rainer Hengstmann from 2004, revealed that the World Bank estimated Kosovo’s mineral reserves at 13.5 billion euros, and the share of “Trepča” and the lead mines there is about three billion. However, the most important one is lignite, whose geological reserves amount to about 15 billion tons, while the balance reserves of lead and zinc are estimated at 51 million tons, which makes up 74.1% of the Serbian balance reserves. Nickel and cobalt reserves are estimated at 19.9 million tons, and bauxite

¹³ On the basis of the UNMIK regulations, ferronickel was privatized by NewCo Feronikl Complex L.L.C. in 2006, by the decision of the Kosovo Trust Agency, using a special “Spin-off” method. Nevertheless, since the beginning of production, during the 1980s and 1990s, 90% of ferronickel was exported to the European market. “Strategija za rudarstvo Republike Kosovo za period 2012–2025”, Ministarstvo ekonomskog razvoja, Priština, 2012, p. 25, 10.

¹⁴ See: Vladimir Simić, Rade Jelenković and Dragana Životić, „Mineral Resources of Serbia: Environmental, Societal and Economic Challenges”, in: Igor Janev (ed.), *Serbia: Current Issues and Challenges in the Areas of Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment*, Nova Science Publishers, New York, 2019.

¹⁵ Dije Rizvanolli., „Kosovo’s Potential for Renewable Energy Production: An Analysis”, University of Twente MEEM, 2019, p. 9, <https://essay.utwente.nl/79555/>, 10/11/2021

¹⁶ Lignite covers as much as 97% of electricity production from two thermal power stations, while the remaining 3% is obtained from hydroelectric power stations, and certainly represents the most important Kosovo resource.

reserves at 1.7 million tons, corresponding to the potential aluminum production of 425,000 tons, while magnesite reserves amount to 8 million tons.¹⁷

In one of its reports, the CIA pointed out that on the basis of the estimated reserves of coal, natural gas and metals, Kosovo is worth 500 billion dollars compared to the rest of Serbia with Vojvodina, whose value is estimated at around 200 billion. Furthermore, according to the US experts, there are coal reserves in Serbia for a maximum of 35-40 years, and in Kosovo even for the following 16 centuries, while the other estimate states that Serbia has enough coal for 60, and Kosovo for the following 200 years. According to the opinion of the same experts, the value of deposits of seven strategic ores, such as lead, zinc, silver, nickel, manganese, molybdenum and boron is estimated at 1,000 billion dollars.¹⁸ This has opened the door to the struggle for the exploitation of mineral resources, which various great world players have joined, such as the Envidity company led by the former NATO general Wesley Clark, then the financial magnate George Soros and the Albanian Minerals company, whose director is Sahit Muja, then Avrupa Minerals, i.e. the US global corporation for the exploration of mineral resources, as well as Lydian International or the former Rio Tinto, focused on the exploration of deposits in Orahovac, where so far 1.87 to eight grams of gold per ton of sample have been found. Namely, Clark's company has submitted a request for a licence to explore reserves that would enable it to produce synthetic oil from coal, with a production plan of 100,000 barrels of oil per day, while Soros and Muja, apart from coal, are also interested in the exploitation of metal mines. Moreover, companies from other countries, such as Germany, France, Britain and Turkey, are also interested in investing in deposits and exploitation of Kosovo's natural resources.¹⁹

Apparently, one of the main interests of international corporations in Kosovo is the search for rare metals, such as cadmium, indium, germanium, thallium and gallium, which are used in high-tech industry. Therefore, the Independent Commission for Mines and Minerals of Kosovo (ICMM) presented the first results related to mineral potential, based on an aerial geophysical survey that started in 2006, using a special aircraft that collected geophysical data throughout Kosovo, including magnetic fields, electromagnetics and gamma ray radiometry. The research was carried out by the joint Air Geoscientific Group of Finnish and British experts, with Nasser Peci, deputy director of ICMM, pointing out that Kosovo has an unexpectedly high level of potential in the field of rare metals and minerals exploitation.

The study for the "Assessment of research and geological reserves of coal in Kosovo", conducted by the Inkos Institute in 2007 has found out that the balance reserves of lignite amount to 10,892,888,000 tons, while the off-balance reserves include 1,319,000,000 tons, which makes a total of 12,442,461,000 tons of lignite.

¹⁷ *Espresso*, „Zbog ovoga je oteto Kosovo: CIA sama otkrila koliko vredi eksploatacija naše zemlje“, gen. quote.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

According to the Kosovo Investment and Enterprise Support Agency (KIESA), the most important coal basins are: the Kosovo Basin in the central part of the Republic of Kosovo; then the Dukadžin Basin, which covers the central part of the Dukadžin Basin; the Drenica Basin between the Kosovo Basin in the east and the Dukadžin Basin in the west. By the decision of the Government of Kosovo, during 2008, nine areas of special interest for coal exploitation were declared, and in 2009, two more areas were included, namely: 1) geological research area at the Karaqë location; 2) geological research area at the Vilahi-Zjanjë location; 3) geological research area at the Bushinc–Bolevc location; 4) geological research area at the Zhegovc location; 5) the area of the field investigated by geophysical and geochemical works at the Bresalc location; 6) geological research area at the Golesh location; 7) nickel research area at the Baks location; 8) iron-nickel research area at the Tërstenik location; 9) geological research area at the Debelde location; 10) geological research area at the Gumnishtë location; 11) geological research area at the Deva location.²⁰

According to the officials of the NACCO Industries department, i.e. a part of the US company North American Coal Corp, there is a plan to participate in the tender for the construction of a new thermal power station in Kosovo with a production capacity of 1000 MW. Michael Gregory, vice president of the NACCO Industries, has defined this plan as just another step in the direction of expanding corporate influence in the Balkans and Southeast Europe, as potential areas for investment, i.e. exploitation of natural resources. Specifically, Gregory has emphasized the company's interest in the Sibovc mine in the southwest of Kosmet, as well as the wish to enter into a consortium with some other company that would build a new thermal power station. This aspiration is understandable if you take into account that coal reserves in the Kosovo basin, especially the reserves in Sibovc, are of the highest quality in terms of heat value they can provide - 8,100 kJ/kg, as well as the most suitable in terms of mining possibilities in all of Europe. The exploration parameters for Sibovc are characterized by an average proportion of 1.0–1.2 m³ of tailings per ton of lignite. With an area of about 20 km² and geological reserves of lignite of 990 million tons including 830 that are suitable for mining, the Sibovc Southwest mine has the potential to provide the entire coal production required for all KEK blocks, as well as the Novo Kosovo thermal power station blocks with a capacity of 1,000 MW, in contrast to the originally planned construction of a new thermal power station of 2,100 MW, by 2030. After the specified period, Sibovc should supply only the blocks of TPS Novo Kosovo.²¹

The Kosovo authorities gave the right to exploit a third of the territory of Kosovo in search of coal ore to the Canadian company Envidity Energy Ltd, which is chaired by Wesley Clark, i.e. one of the leaders of the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999 and campaigns in the struggle for the declaration of Kosovo's independence. Although the

²⁰ Ministarstvo ekonomije, Departman energije i rudarstva, <https://me.rks-gov.net/sr/energija-i-rudarstva>, 09/09/21

²¹ *Nova srpska politička misao*, Kosovski ugalj kao ratni plen generala Klarka, Hronika (nspm.rs), 11/11/2021

Envidity company has to wait for the approval of the contract by the Kosovo parliament before the actual exploration, some experts consider this situation as the establishment of a monopoly over the exploration of rich coal reserves. Namely, the Envidity company submitted a request for the permission for exploration in the region a month after the adoption of amendments to the Kosovo Law on Mining in 2013, which enabled the granting of exploration rights without a tender.²² Although the Envidity company has turned a deaf ear to the accusations regarding the illegal acquisition of a monopoly, the Ministry of Finance of Kosovo has expressed its attitude that negotiations with the Canadian company can begin only after the Kosovo parliament approves the company's licences. Nevertheless, the former NATO commander and retired US General Wesley Clark has become a hero of Kosovo Albanians, who, in his honour, have named many streets in Peć, Prizren, Vučitrn and Uroševac, as well as a driving school in Kosovsko Polje, after him.²³ Therefore, it is clear that the US officials, from 1999 until today, have become fabulously rich by doing business in the territory of KiM. Therefore, neither Wesley Clark, nor the former US State Secretary Madeleine Albright and the former UNMIK Deputy Head John Coffey have left Kosovo after the war and the expiration of their mandates. Namely, instead of weapons, they have just changed the focus of interest, turning to equally lucrative business such as energy industry, mineral resources, infrastructure and insurance companies. By direct or indirect investment in these fields, they have earned billions of dollars together, while Serbia, whose property (land, business facilities, etc.) these foreign powerful leaders have traded in Kosovo, has lost tens of billions of euros.²⁴

Certainly, the most striking unscrupulous "business" is the one done by Wesley Clark, who through his Canadian company Envidity has achieved an absolute monopoly in the field of energy industry in Kosovo, despite the fact that in 2012 he submitted a request to the Kosovo Government for unlimited exploration of lignite reserves, as well as the production of synthetic fuel from coal (coal shale), and the company itself has not received an answer yet. The second largest US company ACM, which operates partly officially in Kosovo, and under Albright's auspices, initially wanted to buy Post and Telecommunications of Kosovo (PTK), i.e. the company that inherits the Serbian infrastructure "Telekom Srbija", but gave up under public pressure. However, Albright still found a way to make a profit through Kosovo, by entrusting her company's operations to the management of Ganup Thaci, a brother of the President

²² According to the energy strategy of the Ministry for Economic Development of Kosovo from 2013, in Kosovo, i.e. in Metohija, which Albanians also call Dukadžin, as well as in Drenica, there are about 12 billion tons of lignite. As the Kosovo Energy Corporation uses about 10-11 million tons per year, the mentioned reserves would ensure exploitation for the entire next millennium. Ibid.

²³ Aubrey Belford, "Kosovo: Company Linked to Wesley Clark Granted Coal Rights", (OCCRP), [https://www.occpr.org/en/daily/5639-kosovo-company-linked-to-wesley-clark-granted-coal-rights#:~:text=Kosovo%20has%20granted%20the%20rights,Network%20\(BIRN\)%20has%20found,09/09/2021](https://www.occpr.org/en/daily/5639-kosovo-company-linked-to-wesley-clark-granted-coal-rights#:~:text=Kosovo%20has%20granted%20the%20rights,Network%20(BIRN)%20has%20found,09/09/2021)

²⁴ Brankica Ristić, "Kako je srpsko Kosovo postalo američki ranč?", *Sputnik*, <https://rs.sputniknews.com/20150606/2358218.html>, 10/09/2021

of Kosovo Hashim Thaci at that time, who, through the patronage of the Turkish-US consortium, invests its capital in Kosovo's infrastructure, mainly in the construction of roads. Moreover, the former deputy head of UNMIK in Kosovo, John Coffey, is the head of this consortium, which also earns a lot of money from the sale of electricity. The consortium is also engaged in the construction of the highway from the border with Albania to Merdar, while through the Odeteljon company, whose main activity is trade in construction materials, Albright and Coffey also do business with Thaci's relatives.²⁵ In this way, this company supplies all companies that build roads or buildings, as well as settlements in Kosovo. The Building Ilirija company is engaged in the construction of residential complexes throughout Kosovo, whose partner is the US-Turkish company Bechtel ENKA, which is also associated with Madeleine Albright's company. The Geo Mineral company of Idris Tachi is engaged in mineral extraction, but it is also closely related to Wesley Clark's company, whose activity is also related to the export of scrap iron, mainly to Italy, which is one of the most profitable businesses in Kosovo. In addition to the above-mentioned, business has also been developed by the former US ambassador in Pristina, Christopher William Dell, who deals with the export of slag from "Trepča".²⁶

Conclusion

The Kosovo crisis is characterized not only by the diversity of an ethnic, national and geopolitical character, but also by a timeless dimension, whose roots date back to ancient times and the Ottoman Empire, through the Balkan wars and both world wars, then the status of KiM in socialist Yugoslavia until the recent aggression of NATO forces in FRY, the Albanian terrorism and the current negotiation processes. Namely, the Serbian mining has been a part of the Serbian national identity since medieval Serbia, as well as Serbia in the second half of the 20th century, and since these are the most prosperous periods of the Serbian history, the activity of the Serbian mining gave birth to the historical vertical of Serbia with roots that go back to the ancient past. Taking into account the cause and effect principle meaning that strong mining is behind a strong state, and vice versa, the mineral and raw material complex in KiM, which is presented in this paper, represents irrefutable support to the claim that Serbia has an indisputable historical right to this province, which, as such, is rightly perceived as the heart of the Republic of Serbia. This attitude is quite logical if one accepts the fact that the Serbian mining has made not only the material basis for the economic, military and political development of the state of Serbia, but also its cultural and spiritual elevation in the Middle Ages.²⁷

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Nataša Jovanović, „Zašto je okupirano Kosovo i Metohija: Podzemni trezor — koren srpske vertikalne star hiljadu godina - Koreni“, gen. quote.

Despite the declaration of the so-called independence of Kosovo in 2008 and the fact that some representatives of the Serbian intellectual "elite" and public figures believe that Kosovo has to face the inevitable reality of secession from Serbia, the official position of the RS does not go in such a direction. In fact, the majority of citizens hold the view that the project of independent Kosovo is in fact a shameless precedent of a self-proclaimed state that questions the legality of the secession of the territory of KiM from the sovereign RS and perceives Kosmet as the cradle of the Serbian culture and its holy land.

Namely, just before the dissolution of the SFRY, as much as 48% of funds were invested in the development of this Serbian province. According to the reports of foreign experts, the World Bank has estimated that the deposits of lignite and brown coal in KiM are sufficient to provide the production of electricity for an entire century, which coincides with the estimates of the experts at the Faculty of Mining and Geology in Belgrade, claiming that the mineral potential of KiM is enough for two thermal power stations and electricity production for a century, which, according to the estimate of the Serbian Ministry of Energy from 2009, is equivalent to a value of 100 billion euros. On the basis of these estimates, Elektroprivreda Srbije has made a plan for the revitalization of the thermal power station "Kosovo A", the construction of two new units on "Kosovo B" and the construction of "Kosovo C" by 2020, but due to the "frozen conflict" Serbia could not carry out this plan, and today is struggling to provide the basic existential needs of Serbs in Kosmet.²⁸

According to the data of "The Economist" magazine, by separating Kosmet, Serbia would lose 15 billion tons of coal, or as much as 75% of all its coal reserves, which is about 85 billion euros in the total estimated value of coal out of the total 220 billion of ore and mineral wealth of Kosmet, which logically implies a potential source of oil.²⁹ Therefore, the US military system in the Balkans primarily aims to evacuate the Western European bases, redirecting the US actions towards the Middle East and Russia, because at global level the Balkans represents an intermediate zone of interest that, when weakened at regional level, functions in the service of the US interests. In this regard, the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia was primarily aimed at enabling the Western powers to seize the energy corridors and underground resources of Southeastern Europe.³⁰ However, at the beginning of 2010, China, Russia and Turkey increasingly began to exert their geostrategic influence on the Balkans, and at the beginning of 2015, the Russian President Vladimir Putin

²⁸ *Espresso*, „Zbog ovoga je oteto Kosovo: CIA sama otkrila koliko vredi eksploatacija naše zemlje“, <https://www.espresso.co.rs/vesti/drustvo/277213/zbog-ovoga-je-oteto-kosovo-cia-sama-otkrila-koliko-vredi-eksploatacija-nase-zemlje>, 03/09/2021

²⁹ Borislav Borović, "Otimanje Trepče: Haradinaj i Soros ukrali Srbiji 500 milijardi evra", *SRBIN.info/espresso.rs*, MARCH 12, 2019, <https://fbreporter.org/2019/03/12/otimanje-trepce-haradinaj-i-soros-stole-serbia-500-billion-dollars/>, 09/09/2021

³⁰ Alexis Troude, „The Geopolitical Aspects of the 1999 NATO Agression against Yugoslavia“, in: Nebojša Vuković (ed.), *David vs. Goliath: NATO war against Yugoslavia and its implications*, gen. quote, pp. 133-134.

drastically changed the situation with his decision to change the route of South Stream. Namely, by redirecting the route through Turkey, Putin ended the procrastination of the Serbian-Bulgarian alliance, at the same time striking back at the European sanctions against Russia in 2014.³¹

Starting from the analysis of the mineral resources of KiM, the paper emphasizes the essential causes of the seizure of Kosovo from Serbia. In the general looting of the Serbian wealth in Kosmet, in which the imposing coal reserves are of particular importance, the same countries have been participating for decades, while only individuals have changed. Since both sovereignty and technological development of each country directly depend on mineral raw materials, as well as the fact that the degree of depletion of mineral resources of most European countries is very high, the essential conclusion is that it is inadmissible for Serbia to think about the division of KiM at any cost because that would mark it permanently and historically, without the possibility of correction. In this regard, the RS must not give up its territory and its wealth because such an act would give a basis for heavy accusations of future generations, bearing in mind what such an ill-advised decision would take away from their mother country and how such an act would affect their future.

Finally, it is quite clear that, due to very complex geopolitical goals and interests of the great powers and the position of Serbia in those circumstances, the Serbian society has to engage in the defence of national identity, with the awareness that today, more than ever, the entire Serbian society is on a historical crossroads between the preservation of sovereignty, tradition, state wealth and the political trend of the European integration.

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³¹ More than 40% of the European gas supplies comes from Asia and while Russia is turning to Asia, China is gaining more influence in the Balkans. See: Alexis Troude, “The Geopolitical Aspects of the 1999 NATO Aggression against Yugoslavia” *ibid.*, p. 135.

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Summary

Obviously, a lack of an adequate political framework to amortize social frustrations in the 1980s, has flourished at the expense of the general stability of Serbs in Kosovo, seriously threatened by the Albanian separatists. The processes of uneven and combined development have predominantly characterized the modern global world, and states are the ones that dominate political economy at national level, as well as geopolitical economy at international level.³² Therefore, through means of formal and informal imperialism, or the so-called soft power, powerful and developed states (primarily the US), multinational corporations, transnational banks and various international organizations tend to remain focused on decreasing the state role, while emphasizing the role of global political economy. Thus, taking into account the fact that the geoeconomic rivalries precede geopolitical patterns, and that behind the New World Order of the US as the world policeman are its energy and military-strategic interests, it is quite clear that the issue of Kosovo in the contemporary world actually arises from its geoeconomic environment, and can be rightfully classified as “resource war” due to its mining wealth, rich deposits of lignite and coal, lead, zinc and copper, as well as some amount of gold, nickel, bauxite and manganese.

As a declaratively neutral state and one of the few European countries out of NATO, Serbia is particularly burdened by the problem posed by the self-proclaimed independence of a part of its territory. Consequently, it is of vital importance to understand that geoeconomic processes include not only the origin, but also the distribution of the involved countries' interest spheres and that after that the specific elements and types of geoeconomic determinants of Kosovo and Metohija represent an arena of conflict of different world views in modern international relations. In this regard, not only geopolitics and geoeconomics are intimately linked, but the latter will increasingly override the former as one of the key realities of the new international order. Therefore, it is within this geostrategic framework that we have to analyse the reasons for the establishment of the US Camp Bondsteel in Kosovo, as its main base in the Balkans, hence wars, conflicts, crises and radical changes of social order, regardless of when and where they occur, have to be regarded as expressions of eagerness of powerful and dominant states to keep their leading positions and boost their economic development established by the US pattern of new world order (NWO).

As already explained, Kosovo is a mineral-rich country, with lignite heading the list of resources, thus, there has to be clear and permanent awareness of the geoeconomic importance of Kosovo and Metohija as a long-term priority and an inseparable part of the state of Serbia. Additionally, the Government of the Republic

³² Petar Kurecic, “Geoeconomic and Geopolitical Conflicts: Outcomes of the Geopolitical Economy in a Contemporary World, *World Review of Political Economy*”, Vol. 6, No. 4 Pluto Journals, 2015, p. 527.

of Serbia has to always bear in mind the integrative geoeconomic potential of Kosovo and Metohija as an inherent part of its territory and furthermore as existential and cultural heritage of the country. Likewise, the Serbian Government has to be capable of developing an integral strategy adequately directed to finding the proper solution for preventing future conflict proneness that may be originated by Kosovo's independence backers – primarily the United States and the EU mission. Unfortunately, in dealing with the Kosovo crisis, there is a real lack of possibilities of how to make the dream of perpetual security in the region become *de facto* reality. Rather, the answer for the time being is in a systematic plan – a set of short-term policy adjustments and a vision for well-defined medium-term and long-term priorities and objectives because the future of Kosovo solely depends on the imminent geopolitical strategies and goals of the main actors.

Key words: *geoeconomics, geopolitics, mineral resources, US, Republic of Serbia (RS), Kosovo and Metohija (KiM)*

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