

# Helsinki bulletin



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

NO.136 // AUGUST 2017



EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE

## CUTTING THE KOSOVO KNOT OPENS UP PROSPECTS TO THE REGION

The dynamics unusual in the season marked the region of the Western Balkans these months. It was triggered off, as it seems, at the foreign policy arena: by newly elected President Alexander Vučić's visit to Washington and his meetings with US Vice-president Michael Pence, the third round of the Berlin process in Trieste, the regional Summit meeting in Dubrovnik, the Adriatic Charter adopted in Podgorica in the presence of the above-mentioned high American official, Michael Pence, etc. All this indicates that the Western community, after almost two-year "stall," wants to reactivate its presence and role in the region wherein other powers, Russia and

Turkey in the first place, have been active in the meantime.

The said dynamics, however, laid bare all the characteristics of regional states and societies, their unfinished transitions, unsolved bilateral relations dating back from the recent past, the lack of democratic traditions, their fragile potentials for reforms and modernization, authoritarian tendencies of their leading politicians, and their deep-rooted ambitions and aspirations for territories of "others." Hence, their contradictory and controversial moves followed all foreign policy encouragements meant to relax regional

relations and assist the countries moving towards proclaimed Euro-(Atlantic) course.

This mostly refers to Serbia that always (and with good reason) associates political instability in the region – from Macedonia to Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro. While opening “internal dialogue” about Kosovo, supposed, according to most observers, to speed up normalization with Prishtina, Belgrade is intensifying a campaign against Kosovo’s admission to Interpol and UNESCO. What may be one of the reasons for tensing the relations with Skopje is that Macedonia – at least according to the media – will vote for Kosovo’s admission to UNESCO. However, Serbia’s officials and especially the media close to them have not yet reconciled themselves to the change of the regime in Macedonia. While newly elected social-democrat Premier Zoran Zaev is trying to consolidate the situation in his country after years-long political-security crisis, Belgrade is accusing him of planning incidents allegedly meant to discredit Serbia as a well-wishing neighbor.

The latest joint initiative by Serbia’s President Vučić and Bosnian entity’s RS president Dodik is only one in a row of motions that destabilizes relations with Bosnia-Herzegovina the same as with other countries in the region, from Croatia to Montenegro. Messages by American Vice-president Pence were not music to the ears of Belgrade officials and the media close to them; not only his messages about “Montenegro as a leader of regional stability but also, and even more, addressed to Moscow and its attempts to “redraw borders in the region.”

In late July Serbia’s political and social scene was agitated by President Vučić’s invitation for opening up “internal dialogue about Kosovo.” The topic itself shook Serbia’s tree though planned to be opened in September and though the initiative brimmed with many dilemmas and missing links. First the format of

the dialogue was an unknown (with opposition parties, in the parliament, at public debates, etc.), alike its purpose, duration, whether or not it would be an overture to constitutional amendment (the Constitution’s preamble lays down Kosovo as a part of Serbia), etc. Some take that its (the initiative’s) biggest deficiency is that the President himself had not articulated his stance while buying time until others publicized theirs.

It remained unclear, therefore, whether President Vučić planned to cut the Kosovo knot by accepting the realities in this form or the other – acknowledging Kosovo’s independence without a formal recognition; or, whether this was all about an attempt to place, once again, the topic of Kosovo’s partition at the negotiating table. His plan to maintain the status quo – the frozen conflict – when the outcome of the “internal dialogue” shows that citizens of Serbia would not give up their “sacred territory” is not to be excluded. Finally and probably most importantly: has the President assessed that the time has come to openly tie the Kosovo question with Republika Srpska /RS/, in other words to have Serbia acknowledge the independence of its former province and get, in turn, an independent Bosnian entity, free to join the motherland.

If he truly wants to settle Serbian-Albanian relationship in a way not characteristic to Serbia in the past 100 years, that would be a breakthrough in pouring water on ethnic passions in the region. Besides, according to him, such relationship would establish a new balance in the region – not along the East-West line (Serbs-Croats) but along the North-South course, between two biggest nations in the Balkans, the Serbs and Albanians.<sup>1</sup>

---

1 „If we establish an axis for peace and stability along the North-South line in the Western Balkans, between two biggest nations, the Serbs and Albanians, we shall solve 80 percent of all our political problems for the next 80 years,” he said in an interview, Politika, August 10, 2017.

## A DIALOGUE BEFORE THE DIALOGUE

Vučić launched the initiative for “the internal dialogue on Kosovo” on July 24, in the article he penned for the “Blic” daily. The phrase most frequently quoted from his lengthy text is actually Pythian in its double-meaning: “The time has come that we, as the people, stop burying our heads in the sand like an ostrich and start behaving realistically – not to allow ourselves to surrender and give up to some others what belongs to us but also not to sit on our hands waiting for someone to give us back what we had lost long ago.<sup>2</sup> He also pleaded to “finding an answer together,” the answer that would be “lasting, exclude a conflict as an option and benefit all of us in this region.”<sup>3</sup> There is also an intriguing half-sentence: “We have never gained so much in wars as much we lost in peacetime”<sup>4</sup> that associates the well-known stance by Dobrica Ćosić – “We have lost in peacetime what we had gained in wars” the one often quoted in the propaganda on the eve of the 1990s wars.

Although the lengthy article lacks concrete answers and solutions, the invitation to a dialogue was mostly understood as “preparation of the terrain” for recognition of Kosovo’s independence. This particularly refers to right-wing parties and movements. “There is a dialogue no longer, what remains it Lazar’s curse,” said leader of the Serbian Radical Party /SRS/ Vojislav Šešelj.<sup>5</sup> Instead of a dialogue, according to him, Serbia should ask for Russia’s involvement (“our protectoral power”), cut short accession negotiations with EU and request UN to place again the Kosovo issue at its agenda.<sup>6</sup> The new leader

of the Democratic Party of Serbia /DSS/, Miloš Jovanović, said that his party would respond to the invitation only “should the debate be about a strategy for the safeguard of Kosovo within Serbia.”<sup>7</sup> The leader of the Serbian Movement “Dveri” claimed that Vučić and Dačić’s regime had already recognized Kosovo’s independence, while the former now “prepares the terrain... for involving other parts of the Serbian society into his treason.”<sup>8</sup> The ex-leader of the DSS and presently an MP, Sanda Rašković,<sup>9</sup> called for freezing the Brussels dialogue, while her colleague in the parliament and editor-in-chief of the New Serbian Political Thought magazine, Đorđe Vukadinović, argued that freezing of the dialogue was the least “bad” solution and “the best alternative.”<sup>10</sup> Patriarch Irinej was among the first to have his say, appealing to Serbian statesmen never to “agree with appropriation of Kosovo and Metohija, since what is taken by force is restored but what is given away is lost forever...”<sup>11</sup>

If Vučić only wanted to test the Serbia opposition with his invitation so as to demonstrate how unready it was for speaking up about “the most delicate Serbian problem,” he was perfectly right. The other side of Serbia’s political spectrum criticized him for his tendency toward monologues instead of dialogues, intolerance to others’ opinions and choking every public debate – all of which is fundamentally true but actually a bad alibi for saying nothing about prospects for the settlement of the Kosovo

2 Blic, July 24, 2017.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Politika, July 26, 2017.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Danas, July 26, 2017.

9 Blic, August 8, 2017.

10 Politika, August 8, 2017. Đorđe Vukadinović quotes the case of Cyprus shaken with a crisis for almost half a century, where two sides (Greek and Turkish) are stanch in their positions but have not slaughtered one another or get ruined in the meantime.

11 Politika, July 30, 2017. In his pathetic statement the Patriarch neglected, say, the case of Crimea given as a gift to Ukraine by Churschov (1954) and then „restored“ to Russia by Putin.

issue.<sup>12</sup> A shaky alibi is also the argument that Kosovo is not the only problem the country is coping with (as it has been internationalized anyway and its resolution would the least depend on Serbia) and that there are many, probably more important problems to solve such as economy, unemployment, poverty of the bulk of the society, etc.<sup>13</sup>

It should be noted, however, that the regime and especially the media close to the President behave quite the opposite to the proclaimed wish for “a dialogue on a specific topic.” For instance, when President of the Social Democratic Party /SDS/ Boris Tadić said that Kosovo should be given a chair in UN, tabloids close to Vučić promptly accused him of high treason.<sup>14</sup> The same fate befell the leader of the Movement of Free Citizens /SPG/, Saša Janković, who said that Kosovo’s membership of Interpol would benefit Serbia.<sup>15</sup>

And still, can this all justify the opposition’s restraint? The spokesman of the Liberal Democratic Party /LDP/ Jovan Najdanov asks, “Is there a minimal feeling of responsibility in a behavior as such?” adding, “Will the staunchest civic core produce a new right-wing?”<sup>16</sup>

LPD practically stands all alone at Serbia’s political arena when it comes to making brave breakthroughs. This was evident this time too. The party has already prepared a platform for the upcoming dialogue. Connecting the Kosovo status (which cannot result from “a simple

12 „In the spirit of his regime’s psychology, he is all alone in the political sky, the one and only who works round the clock and bravely solves everything. There is no one else beside him,” wrote DS MP Nataša Vučković; *Danas*, August 9, 2017.

13 Dragoljub Mićunović in an interview; *Vreme*, August 3, 2017.

14 Later on Boris Tadić bluntly distanced himself from his statement; *Politika*, August 4, 2017.

15 *Danas*, July 28, 2017.

16 *Danas*, August 10, 2017.

compromise”) with Serbia’s (and Kosovo’s) accession to EU and NATO, the platform advocates “gradual correction of bilateral relations and creation of new circumstances.”<sup>17</sup>

Leader of the Serbian Renewal Movement /SPO/ Vuk Drašković is even more outspoken. Reminding of earlier regimes’ wrong moves – from rejection of the Z-4 plan for Croatia to turning down UN peace mediator Martti Ahtisaari’s proposal for Kosovo – he argues that “Serbia’s sovereignty over Kosovo exists just in the constitutional preamble.”<sup>18</sup> What he argues for instead is “recognition” of Kosovo’s reality and continuation of the Brussels dialogue on the basis of Ahtisaari’s plan that would end with an agreement on comprehensive normalization of “our relations with them.”<sup>19</sup>

Some outstanding liberal commentators welcomed Vučić’s invitation to “internal dialogue.” Columnist for the “*Danas*” daily Aleksej Kišjuhas calls his article “good, literate, well-argued, reflexive and realistic about the Kosovo problem.”<sup>20</sup>

## THE ALBANIANS’ RESPONSE

While Vučić’s initiative provoked a political earthquake in Serbia, it was barely touched on in Kosovo. This mostly refers to Kosovo politicians. On the other hand, Albanian Premier Edi Rama

17 *Danas*, August 3, 2017.

18 „As a slave to this norm (the preamble) beyond any reality, the state is just suffering huge losses – political, developmental, democratic, demographic and material,” wrote Vuk Drašković; *Blic*, August 7, 2017.

19 *Ibid*.

20 *Danas*, August, 12-13, 2017; „Long road has been travelled from the slogan about Kosovo as Serbia’s heart to Kosovo as Serbia’s problem, and it is good that Vučić crossed this Rubicon and called it its full name. He should be supported at this course and given facts about causes and consequences, guilt and responsibility for this problem.”



responded promptly, calling it “breaking news.” According to him, bilateral efforts in the dialogue would relax relations between the two countries and benefit “children of our two nations and responsibility for a peaceful future of well-being.”<sup>21</sup> “The internal dialogue,” he said “could be organized in Kosovo and Albania as well.”<sup>22</sup>

Some Kosovo intellectuals such as Azem Vllasi, former politician and now a lawyer, and Agon Bajrami, editor-in-chief of the “Koha Ditore” daily also responded to the initiative. According to Vllasi, Vučić made the first step towards renunciation of the delusion about Kosovo being a part of Serbia.<sup>23</sup> Referring to Serbia’s mostly mainstream belief that future negotiations should satisfy both Serbian and Albanian interests, Agon Bajrami argues that it is too late for an arrangement as such and that Serbia should reconcile with having lost Kosovo for good. However, this means not, as he put it, that “Kosovo Serbs have lost it too, given that today’s Kosovo is their independent state as well.”<sup>24</sup> Belgrade journalist Dejan Anastasijević observes that Veton Suroi has best analyzed Vučić’s initiative from the angle of Kosovo. Presenting a genesis of Serbian-Albanian relations, Suroi reminds that this is for the third time in the past twenty-odd years that someone from Belgrade made an attempt at normalization of Serbian-Albanian relationship. According to him, Vučić’s invitation to a dialogue should find an echo among Kosovo’s political elite but on the basis of its own negotiating platform. This platform, he says, should structure three problems Kosovo has with Serbia: the past (consequences of the occupation and war), the present time (constant undermining of Kosovo’s functioning as a state and its international recognition) and the future (Euro-Atlantic integrations). Without these three elements, argues Suroi, Kosovo and Serbia would be condemned to

21 Politika, July 26, 2017.

22 TVN1, newscaster of August 14, 2017.

23 Danas, July 29-30, 2017.

24 Danas, July 27, 2017.

“another five years of unproductive debates on car plates and other trivia.”<sup>25</sup>

## PARTITION IS (NOT) AN OPTION

Only a couple of days after Vučić’s article-invitation to a dialogue, First Vice-premier and Foreign Minister Ivica Dačić (leader of the Socialist Party of Serbia /SPS/) penned an article for the same paper.<sup>26</sup> In his view, the only lasting and sustainable solution to the problems lies in drawing a final border between the Serbs and Albanians. This was neither for the first time that he spoke about it nor was it his original idea. It was advocated back in 1960s by writer Dobrica Ćosić and, from the 1990s onwards by many Serbia’s politicians including Zoran Đinđić, Boris Tadić, Nebojša Čović, historian Dušan Bataković, etc.

Though probably Dačić himself is well aware that partition is an option (no longer), he came public with a concrete, 5-point plan on division: the territory north of the Ibar River should be integrated into Serbia; Serbian churches and monasteries should get the status of the Mt. Athos monasteries; the Serbs living south of the Ibar River should form an association of Serbian communities; and, Belgrade should be given something “in cash” (financial compensation for appropriated lands).<sup>27</sup> “That is an idea for a compromise between historical and ethnic right,” wrote Dačić.<sup>28</sup>

Leader of the Radicals Vojislav Šešelj is against the partition plan. “We, the Serbs, cannot divide something that belongs to us,” he says.<sup>29</sup> Director of the Forum for Ethic Relations Dušan Janjić calls Dačić’s ideas dangerous and irresponsible

25 Vreme, August 3, 2017.

26 Blic, July 29, 2017.

27 Informer, August 15, 2017.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

as they “seriously undermine the President’s policy.”<sup>30</sup> Therefore, Janjić suggests to Vučić to distance himself from Dačić “without delay” and to Premier Ana Brnabić to depose him.<sup>31</sup>

Not a single Kosovo politician would say yes to the talks on partition, given that, as Kosovo Foreign Minister Enver Hodjai put it, “Kosovo borders are internationally recognized” and the ideas coming from Belgrade are “dangerous and unacceptable.”<sup>32</sup> Some Serbian politicians from Kosovo share this view. Leader of the Independent Liberal Party and MP Slobodan Petrović calls the very idea “insane” not only because twice more Kosovo Serbs live south of the Ibar River than in the north and major cultural and religious edifices are also in the south, but mostly because “any redrawing of Kosovo borders leads to a conflict.”<sup>33</sup>

“The internal dialogue” on Kosovo has found its place in regular reports to UNSC. Among other things, Dačić told the SC forum that Serbia was not big enough to be afraid of but has been among UN founding fathers, and reminded of its merits in two world wars due to which, as he put it, “we shall always be committed to the respect of territorial integrity.”<sup>34</sup>

## KOSOVO OR REPUBLIKA SRPSKA (OR BOTH)

Considering that Kosovo’s partition is actually a mission impossible – as more than 100 countries have already recognized Kosovo within its present borders – revival of the issue is probably just a smoke screen for something else.

30 Kurir, August 15, 2015.

31 Danas, August 1, 2015.

32 Informer, August 15, 2017.

33 Danas, August 9, 2017.

34 <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/387070/Dacic-u-Savetu-bezbednosti-Srbi-na-Kosovu-i-Metohiji-su-zrtve-genocida-a-ne-Albanci>.

Mainstream stance on Kosovo by Serbia’s political and intellectual elite, but the general public as well, is that it would not be fair if the Albanians get everything and the Serbs nothing. If it cannot have four municipalities in the north with Serb majority population, Serbia could probably be compensated with Republika Srpska / RS/, the smallest Bosnian entity.

President of RS Milorad Dodik often speaks of (and works on) independence for RS. Belgrade is cautious about mentioning it openly. Officially, it supports Bosnia-Herzegovina and its integrity on the grounds of the Dayton Accords.

However, columnist and historian Dragomir Anđelković, close to the present regime, joint in the public discussion on the President’s invitation. Eager to formulate a platform Serbia should propose to the international community “with a view to peaceful resolution of the disputes in our national-statehood territory,” he says, “The minimum could accept should be multilayered.” “A solution to Kosovo and Metohija Serbia should propose or accept, under the condition it is defined and agreed with Banjaluka, could be workable only if and when an analogue solution is bestowed to RS.”<sup>35</sup>

A joint declaration on “the survival of the Serbian nation” announced on the occasion of marking the anniversary of the “Storm” operation on August 5 in Novi Sad fits into the same context. As RS President Dodik explained to the “Večernje Novosti” daily a day later,<sup>36</sup> he and Vučić are “writing together a plan for the protection of all the Serbs.” Their goal, as he put it, is to compose a document that could “stand the times to come, and remain the property of Serbian generations to come, wherever they are, as their compass for national and political action.”

35 Danas, August 4, 2017.

36 Večernje Novosti, August 7, 2017.

Having associated some earlier documents such as the infamous Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences, the still unwritten declaration disturbed the region. Although the President's secretary general and former justice minister, Nikola Selaković, claims that it is not motivated by "Greater Serbia nationalism" as some are suggesting but by the necessity to "safeguard the language and culture" of the Serbs outside Serbia, the region remains suspicious due to (Dodik's) the wording about the "compass." "This is an appeal for revenge and another attempt at neighborly territories," said Banjaluka sociologist of culture Srđan Šušnica.<sup>37</sup>

No doubt that the problem is that the disputable document is supposed to be adopted by two parliaments – Serbia's and the only of an entity in a neighboring state. And the problem is also that it connects the status of Kosovo with the status of that entity: involvement of the later in the dialogue on Kosovo "unpacks" the entire region, said President of the Bosniak Democratic Community and Serbian MP Muammar Zukorlić.<sup>38</sup> Srđan Šušnica also takes this connection "politically unrealistic and impossible by international law" and calls it "a dangerous relict of occupational, clerical-nationalistic ideas and policies of official Belgrade in the early 1990s that resulted in destruction of Bosnia, genocide and regression of the state of Serbia."<sup>39</sup>

37 Danas, August 9, 2017.

38 Ibid. "RS should not be discussed in Serbia without Sarajevo. If RS is placed on the agenda, not only Sarajevo should be involved but Sandzak as well," said Zukorlić.

39 Ibid.

## WHO IS AFTER REDRAWING OF BORDERS?

And so, Vučić's invitation to an "internal dialogue" allegedly just on Kosovo, preceded (once again) (re) drawing of borders. Dačić's vociferous and persistent calls of the partition scenario, especially with RS in the game, testify that all those arguing that not only theoreticians of international relations, self-proclaimed experts and a lonely politician or two consider re-composition of the Balkans are right. Appearing as a guest at the Adriatic Charter meeting in Podgorica American Vice-president Michael Pence said that "Russia continues to draw new borders by force."<sup>40</sup>

Response came to Pence from several addresses in Belgrade. The first one from Foreign Minister Dačić who said that "speaking of drawing borders, that's exactly what the West did in the case of Serbia."<sup>41</sup> The former foreign minister, Vladislav Jovanović, argued, "It is an undisputable fact that US and Western countries have not only designed new borders but also erased the existing ones."<sup>42</sup> Simeon Pobulić of the Forum for International Relations also agrees that American claims about Russia drawing borders are untrue. Russia's drawing new borders in the Balkans is disputable indeed, he says, given that such scenario is workable only "by the use of armed forces and in no other way whatsoever."<sup>43</sup>

Geostrategic competition over the Balkans is ideal to tabloids to start brewing a variety of scenarios: from an Albanian attack at Kosovo North (allegedly, on August 25) to under-the-counter deal between the Russian and Americans – actually Putin and Trump – who have drawn a new Kosovo map.<sup>44</sup>

40 Politika, August 6, 2017.

41 Ibid.

42 Politika, August 5, 2017.

43 Ibid.

44 Srpski telegraf, August 16, 2017.

Vučić again, more and more frequently, complains of the pressures from the East and the West he is exposed to. “We are under great pressure from the big powers...It is no longer possible to go anywhere in the West and not to be asked about the Russians, and have the Russians not blame you for not having done something they see as their interest, while the West is against it,” he told the TV Pink.<sup>45</sup>

Russian plans for the Balkans – largely supported in Serbia – are not to be disregarded. Russian philosopher Alexander Dugin, one of Putin’s closest advisers, has been advocating an Eastern Orthodox alliance. According to him, “a new geostrategic order” in the Balkans should be established through encouragement of North-South integrative processes. To him, the entire territory of the Balkans is a complex configurative project for a pan-Slav federation in the South, made of Serbia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Montenegro and Republika Srpska. The Serbs in that “creation,” says Dugin, stand for Euro-Asian impulse and are the pillars of the heartland. As for Macedonia, it would be granted a special status in order to eliminate a stumbling block between all the three Orthodox states in the Balkans.<sup>46</sup> Vučić is obviously under great pressure given that Dugin has told him that soon a compromise would not be possible and he would have to make an existential choice.<sup>47</sup>

45 Politika, August 10, 2017.

46 <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/san-ultradesnicara-i-rusije-balkanski-pravoslavni-savez>

47 <https://www.srbijadanas.com/vesti/info/putinov-glavni-ideolog-aleksandar-dugin-porucuje-srbima-rusija-cesacuvati-srpsko-kosovo-2017-07-09>

## MACEDONIA ONCE AGAIN A TARGET

Serbia is still focused on the gradual and (still) uncertain lessening of political tensions in Macedonia following the election of social-democrat Zoran Zaev as the Premier. Though initial sparks between Zaev and Serbia’s official have been stifled, Belgrade seems to continue obstructing the neighboring state to consolidate its domestic affairs. Probably one of the reasons why it is so is that the Western community has realized how important Macedonia was in the context of the region. It (the Americans in the first place) has not only intervened in favor of a parliamentary majority and election of the Premier but also seems to work harder and harder for Macedonia’s membership of NATO as soon as possible.<sup>48</sup>

On August 1, partially state-owned “Večernje Novosti” daily ran a sensational story about Macedonian plot against Serbia’s Premier. The story says that Zaev had prepared an attack by Albanian heavily armed special forces masked in Serbian police uniforms; allegedly, they would break through the border zone between the two countries and provoke a bilateral incident. This was not the only plan intercepted by Serbian intelligence services; another one, Serbian intelligence had also seen through, included mass arrests of Serbia spies in Macedonia.

Official Belgrade kept its counsel about the story and ensuing speculations. It was commented on only by Saša Janković’s Movement of Free Citizens (PSG). It released that apart from discrediting a legitimate premier of a neighborly

48 U tom smislu intenzivirana su nastojanja da se sa Grčkom reši spor oko imena zemlja, a prema nekim tumačenjima, zbog značaja Makedonije u kontekstu regionalne stabilnosti možda se Makedonija pridruži NATO pod imenom sa kojim sedi u Ujedinjenim nacijama.



country all this creates an atmosphere of distrust between the two peoples.<sup>49</sup>

To all appearances, official Belgrade has not yet reconciled itself to the change of regime in Skopje. Tabloids but also the media aspiring at professionalism are still favoring former Premier Gruevski (of nationalistic VMRO-DPMNE party) and his activity as the opposition. For instance, Belgrade media have described in detail Gruevski's arguments against the agreement on friendship and cooperation signed between Macedonia and Bulgaria, and his opposing the draft law on the use of language in the parliament. The draft provides that the Albanian

language shall be official in all areas with over 20-percent of Albanian population.

The pressure on Skopje (if not a part of joint project with Moscow) is meant to prevent Macedonia from voting in Kosovo's admission (to UNESCO and Interpol). Withdrawal of all diplomats from the Embassy in Skopje indicates that Belgrade must be preparing some new strategy for Macedonia, especially since Zaev's plan for "cleaning up" everything related to the change of regime could be barely music to the ears of Serbia.

---

49 Danas, 2. avgust 2017.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

President Vučić's invitation for an "internal dialogue on Kosovo" is an unavoidable phase in the process of Serbia's giving up the warring policy by other means. The question is, however, what is it that the President plans – does he want to share the responsibility for major decision or just maneuvering to buy the time for making these decisions. The latest tensions with Macedonia testify that only at eleventh hour does Serbia abandon the legacy of bad relations with its neighbors. Normalization with Kosovo, therefore, would send a good signal to the entire region.

The "debate" brought about not a single relevant suggestion. Old options were more or less recycled, mostly focusing on partition. Since the President has not come public with his stance, Foreign Minister Dačić's proposal for a borderline between the Serbs and Albanians should not be ignored. To all appearances, his proposal has found the biggest echo. The right-wing advocates a frozen conflict, obviously expecting the problem to be solved by a foreign intervention – Russian in the first place.

The opposition once again manifested its political immaturity when it comes to solution to national problems, to Serbia's future course in the first place. Its strategy for Vučić's ouster on "the sale of Kosovo" is unrealistic, given that majority of citizens are fully aware that Kosovo is a lost battle. Without a good alternative program the opposition will continue scraping an existence on mutual accusations for treason. The problem of Kosovo cannot be solved without the biggest party (SNS) whose ratings are still more than 50 percent. The opposition's refusal to cooperate with SNS on the issue is, therefore, hypocritical.

Unless he plays on his present popularity and makes a decision leading toward normalization with Kosovo, Vučić will be losing the support he now has for the European option and be growingly exposed to Russia's influence. In such case the initiative will be in the hand of foreign factors, which is far from being in Serbia's national interest.