

Main Stories 3 August 2018

* **Thaci rejects partition of Kosovo but not ‘border correction’ (*media*)**
* **Thaci proposes ‘correction’ of borders with Serbia (*VOA*)**
* **“Thaci threatens legal-constitutional unity” (*Koha*)**
* **Haziri: Unification with Presevo Valley or unrests in Balkans (*Zeri/T7*)**
* **Serwer: Land swap, bad idea whose time should not come (*dailies*)**
* **U.S. on Association/Community: Time to be creative and flexible (*Koha*)**
* **Hoxhaj: Those who burned Turkish flag must be brought to justice (*Kallxo*)**
* **Kosovo Police orders its employees to suspend summer holiday plans (*Kallxo*)**
* **PSD: Assembly should not go on break at this crucial time (*dailies*)**
* **UK: Kosovo important, but focus should be on more pressing matters (*Epoka*)**

**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Thaci rejects partition of Kosovo but not ‘border correction’ (*media*)**

President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaci, spoke to reporters today after visiting Kosovo’s Chamber of Commerce and denied the possibility of Kosovo’s partition as part of the agreement with Serbia but did not rule out possible ‘border correction’ between the two. He said he considered the demand of Presevo Valley representatives to join Kosovo to be a ‘feasible’ option.  He said that if the two sides reach agreement, no one, not even EU, NATO or US, would object it.  Thaci noted that he did not know when the next round of dialogue with President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vucic, will take place but that he expects ‘increase of dynamics’ by the end of August or early September. Meanwhile, online media are reporting that Thaci has called yet another press conference today. This is the umpteenth time Thaci has addressed reporters in the last two weeks and dialogue with Serbia has been central topic of his briefings.

**Thaci proposes ‘correction’ of borders with Serbia (*VOA*)**

In an interview with ***Voice of America***, President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci said that Kosovo’s border with Serbia needs to be ‘corrected’. “It means that in the process of our future dialogue with Belgrade, we will work together with the international community to define the Kosovo-Serbia border,” he said. “I want to emphasize that Kosovo will not be divided; I want to forcefully stress it: Belgrade cannot bring to the table the division of Kosovo, a thing that they have asked for in the past. “In the context of border correction, I met with the representatives of [Serbia’s] Presevo Valley, who want to have the right to join Kosovo,” he added. “I will officially present their request at the next round of talks with Belgrade.”

**“Thaci threatens legal-constitutional unity” (*Koha*)**

The paper reports on its front page that Kosovo President, Hashim Thaci, continues to promote the idea of exchange of territories, arguing that neither the European Union nor the United States of America would reject the unification of Presevo Valley with Kosovo if an agreement between Pristina and Belgrade is reached. The paper however notes that such statements are in opposition with the Constitution of Kosovo, namely article 1.3 which says that “the Republic of Kosovo has no territorial claims toward another country or part of another country and will not seek unification with another country or a part of another country”. The paper also quotes Enver Hasani, professor of law at Pristina University and former President of the Constitutional Court of Kosovo, as saying that the President of a parliamentary republic cannot undertake actions that threaten the legal-constitutional order of the country.

**Haziri: Unification with Presevo Valley or unrests in Balkans (*Zeri/T7*)**

Deputy leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo and Mayor of Gjilan/Gnjilane, Lutfi Haziri, is quoted as having said in a yet-to-be-aired interview with ***T7*** TV channel that if Presevo Valley does not join Kosovo, unrests in the Balkans will be unavoidable. He however explained that he did not discuss his views with his party or the president of Kosovo.

**Serwer: Land swap, bad idea whose time should not come (*dailies*)**

US Balkans analyst, Daniel Serwer, said in his blog that President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci has hinted at the possibility of territorial exchange with Serbia but notes that such a deal would have to be preceded by mutual diplomatic recognition as “only sovereign states can exchange territory”. “Thaci’s remarks are the first clear confirmation from the Albanian side of the equation. It would not be happening without US and European concurrence. Brussels and Washington have apparently decided that integrating the northern Serb municipalities with the rest of Kosovo is just too difficult, so they have dropped their previous firm opposition,” Serwer writes. He warns however that the so-called border correction is a bad idea noting several reasons including the fact that majority of Kosovo Serbs and monasteries are not in the north of Kosovo, the exchange would increase support for Albanians in Kosovo who favour union with Albania, as would for the Serbs in the Republika Srpska who would want to “follow suit.” “I am still hoping agreement on this bad idea will prove difficult to achieve,” Serwer underlined.

**U.S. on Association/Community: Time to be creative and flexible (*Koha*)**

The United States of America are calling for creativity and flexibility when it comes to the role and the competencies of the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities (ACSMM), the paper reports on page three. Two days prior to the deadline for the statute of the Association/Community, the U.S. Embassy has expressed support to the management team that is finalizing the statute. The embassy said in a written reply to the paper: “The United States strongly support the EU-brokered dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. The EU certainly has all the details on the process, but it seems that all have worked hard to implement the agreement on the Association of Serb-majority municipalities, especially with regards to the process of drafting the statute as we are nearing August 4 … Kosovo Serbs, who are part of the management team and who are responsible for preparing the first draft of the statute – have worked hard in the last four months. The next step according to the Brussels agreement is for the implementation committees of both sides to find the time to meet in Brussels to discuss the draft statute. We hope that all stakeholders will allow for processes to develop responsibly and in time as foreseen by the agreement”. Asked if the Association/Community should have bigger competencies and responsibilities, the U.S. Embassy said, “The role of the ACSMM in the process, or how the ACSMM will look like, is something that should be decided by the parties – now is the time to be flexible and creative – the United States are ready to listen and assist the parties in finding a mutual agreement”.

**Hoxhaj: Those who burned Turkish flag must be brought to justice (*Kallxo*)**

Kosovo’s Deputy Prime Minister Enver Hoxhaj condemned the burning of the Turkish flag by some individuals on Thursday saying that it is an unacceptable act. Hoxhaj wrote on a Facebook post: “the despicable videos that appeared today of some individuals burning the flag of Kosovo’s friendly country, Turkey, are absolutely unacceptable and condemnable. Those responsible for this act and who want to cause divisions among the people of Kosovo, must be brought to justice as quickly as possible … Kosovo and Turkey have excellent inter-state relations and Kosovo is grateful for Turkey’s continuous support”. The news website reports that the Kosovo Government too condemned the burning of the Turkish flag. Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj said on Thursday that the government calls on law enforcement authorities to undertake all actions against those that don’t respect Kosovo’s state institutions and who try to ruin the harmony and coexistence between communities in Kosovo.

**Kosovo Police orders its employees to suspend summer holiday plans (*Kallxo*)**

***Kallxo*** reports that Kosovo Police has ordered its uniformed staff to suspend all their summer holiday plans citing operational duties. In a letter to the staff, director of department for operations, Rashit Qalaj, said the decision is valid until further notice. Kosovo Police said the their operational activity in carrying out official tasks needs to be more efficient but did not elaborate further.

**PSD: Assembly should not go on break at this crucial time (*dailies*)**

In a press conference yesterday, leaders of the Social Democratic Party (PSD) said it was a bad idea for the Kosovo Assembly to go on summer recess at this time when talk of partition of Kosovo is gaining ground. Shpend Ahmeti, leader of the party, said the Assembly should have first passed a resolution on dialogue with Serbia before announcing summer recess. Ahmeti spoke of the need for compromise and drafting a joint platform which would clearly define Kosovo’s red lines. At the same time, deputy leader Visar Ymeri said Kosovo is in a very dangerous situation with the Assembly being ignored by both the prime minister and president. He said dialogue with Serbia cannot continue without Assembly’s approval.

**UK: Kosovo important, but focus should be on more pressing matters (*Epoka*)**

The United Kingdom’s Embassy in Belgrade told Belgrade news agency ***FoNet*** that the country’s position during its presidency of the UN Security Council is to focus on issues that threaten international peace and security. This does not mean to say however that Kosovo is not important, added the Embassy. “Kosovo is a very important regional European issue but the intensity of the problem is not the same as 15 years ago, therefore there is no need for frequent meetings,” said the UK’s Embassy in Belgrade.

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