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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Thaci: Border correction does not mean division (RTK)**

The President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci has reiterated on Sunday that correction of borders does not mean division or exchange of territories. He insisted that he has to address the request of the Presevo Valley for unification with Kosovo as part of the dialogue process with Serbia. He admits distinction with the other political leaders not only in Kosovo but Albania as well. “Correction of borders is not invented by me, but many countries in the world used it to overcome hostilities, resolve problems and create long-term peace,” Thaci said. “For so many years of dialogue, Kosovo institutions were criticized for not discussing the issue of Presevo Valey at the dialogue with Serbia. Now, the same people request to close our eyes towards their legitimate request to join Kosovo. Therefore, our request is to return Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedje to Kosovo because Serbia has not managed to guarantee for them the rights Kosovo guarantees for Kosovo Serbs,” he said. Thaci denied that unification with Presevo Valley would mean giving away the north of Kosovo. He said that he has the support of Kosovo friends, including the U.S. on border correction. “There is a major misunderstanding here that has to be clarified. I have proposed correction of borders as a possible option to reach final peaceful agreement. Division and exchange of territories are unacceptable options for me.

**Veseli: Kosovo will join UN with its borders of independence (*Koha*)**

Kadri Veseli, Kosovo Assembly President and leader of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), writes in an opinion piece for the paper, that Kosovo is an independent and sovereign state and that its territorial integrity is inviolable. Veseli argues that Kosovo’s partition will under no circumstance be part of dialogue with Serbia. “Kosovo will take part in dialogue, so that the finale can produce an internationally binding agreement – which will bring Kosovo’s recognition, a seat in the United Nations and a faster path to Euro-Atlantic integration. This is our common agenda with the United States of America and the European Union. There will be no partitioning of Kosovo. This issue will not even be discussed. Kosovo’s partition is one of Serbia’s long-time objectives, but it ended once and for all in 1999. Kosovo has nothing to give. Kosovo is an independent and sovereign state and its territorial integrity is inviolable. Kosovo will join the UN, NATO and the EU with its borders of independence,” Veseli writes.

**Rohan: Kosovo has made its compromises, it shouldn’t go beyond Ahtisaari (*Koha*)**

Albert Rohan, Austrian diplomat and United Nations Deputy Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Future Status Process for Kosovo in 2005, says in a front-page interview to the paper that ideas for division or exchange of territories between Kosovo and Serbia are outdated and dangerous. Rohan said Kosovo already made its compromises by accepting the Ahtisaari Package based on which it declared its independence in 2008. “By accepting wide-ranging rights for the minorities, especially for the Serb community and the Serb Orthodox Church, as foreseen in the Ahtisaari Plan, as well as the decentralization of administrative competencies, Kosovo has already made its compromises … As a first step, Serbia should stop its hostile agitation vis-à-vis Kosovo, such as blocking freedom of movement and Kosovo’s membership of international organizations and its participation in regional forums. The final step should be Serbia’s recognition of Kosovo’s sovereignty,” he said. Rohan also said, “I have always opposed the idea of partition or exchange of territories. These are outdated concepts from previous centuries that should have no room in modern times. Moreover, given the ethnic mixture of the Balkans, this would open the Pandora’s Box with similar requests and destabilizing effects throughout the region”.

**“All against Thaci’s initiative of border changes” (*Zeri*)**

President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci’s recent statements regarding so-called border correction with Serbia have been opposed by major political parties, including his coalition partners, the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) and Social Democratic Initiative for Kosovo (NISMA), the paper reports. AAK leader and Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj said no one desires change of borders except one person – the President of Russia Vladimir Putin. “He [Putin] wishes to move borders to create precedent. It would be a mistake on our part to help Putin,” Haradinaj warned. At the same time, NISMA leader and Deputy Prime Minister Fatmir Limaj also opposed the idea of redrawing of borders saying such a scenario would be unacceptable. Opposition MP from the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), Besa Gaxherri, said President Thaci’s ideas are not only unacceptable but unlawful as well whereas MP from the ruling Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), Xhavit Haliti, said relations between Kosovo and Serbia need to be normalized on the principle of territorial inviolability. Vetevendosje MP Xhelal Svecla meanwhile warned of protests if Thaci continues to ‘damage’ Kosovo.

**Thaci until recently opposed every idea for border correction with Serbia (*Koha*)**

Kosovo President Hashim Thaci until recently didn’t even want to discuss ideas for border correction with Serbia, whereas now this issue is part of his every public statement, the paper reports on page three. But his idea lacks support even among partners of the ruling coalition. The paper recalls that during a press conference in April, President Thaci had said: “I have said this several times that the border correction is an option that includes many threats, we are all aware of them, so I don’t want to go into further details”. Thaci had also said that Kosovo has made all painful compromises by accepting Marti Ahtisaari’s Plan.

**Scott: Trump administration has not change stance on Kosovo (*RTK*)**

The U.S. Ambassador to Serbia, Kyle Scott, said he does not expect drastic change of the administration of the U.S. President Donald Trump on the position of the status of Kosovo. “America’s interests have not change from one president to another,” Scott said added that what the U.S. administration wants is peace and stability in the region, democracy, stronger economic relations, Eu integration. He added that U.S. believes that without normalization of relations and a long-term agreement between Belgrade and Pristina, there is no peace in the region.

**Djuric vows Serbia will ‘protect’ Trepca, Ujman and Valac (*Zeri*)**

Head of the Serbian Government’s Office for Kosovo, Marko Djuric, said Serbia will “protect” the Trepca mine, Ujman/Gazivoda hydroelectric plant, and the Valac electricity substation. “President of the Republic of Serbia, Aleksandar Vucic, has repeatedly stated there are clear red lines when it comes to Trepca and the energy sector in Kosovo,” Djuric said.

**KFOR rebuts reports of blocking access to Ujman/Gazivoda Lake (*Klan K*.)**

KFOR has refuted reports that its troops have blocked access to the Ujman/Gazivoda Lake hydroelectric plant. “KFOR is performing its normal duty under UNSCR 1244 mandate. There is no blockage of the Gazivoda dam, KFOR has not taken control over the dam and any hydroelectric power station. The situation is clam and under control. KFOR is here to protect all citizens in Kosovo,” KFOR said in a statement made of Twitter.

**KFOR troops at Gazivoda/Ujman lake (*RTK*)**

Belgrade is accusing Hashim Thaci for KFOR’s patrolling at Gazivoda Lake. Head of the Parliamentary Committee for Kosovo in Serbia, Milovan Drecun said Thaci is using presence of KFOR troops to make the agreement on energy part of the history. He added that recent warnings on tensions aim to scare Serb population. He further requested KFOR’s explanation for yesterday’s patrolling at Gazivoda vicinity. “We are entering the critical phase of Kosovo-Serbia solution and KFOR is not convincing when claiming that it is only commencing trainings. This training perhaps carried a message,” Drecun said.

Drecun said Serbia should take under consideration Washington’s position on solution of Kosovo issue.

**Kosovo – partition is not the point (*Transconflict.com/Koha Ditore*)**

The paper runs an opinion piece by David Kanin, professor of international relations at Johns Hopkins University and a former senior intelligence analyst for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), which was originally published on ***Transconflict.com***. Kanin opines: “there has been a fair amount of back and forth since press reporting started speculating about a partition or exchange of territories between Kosova and Serbia. While it appears the Serbian government is attempting to prepare the press, public, and Orthodox hierarchy for an endgame that would include some sort of land swap, noises from Pristina and Belgrade suggest bristling hostility by elements on both sides to such an arrangement. Presidents Vucic and Thaci clearly are the biggest proponents of such a deal, which means both that the idea is not going away any time soon and that if it does fail to come to fruition it will not be easy to get meaningful negotiations back on track (the EU-mediated Brussels/Berlin process is insignificant). Various versions of a land deal are being bruited about – the area north of Mitrovica to Serbia in exchange for a UN seat for Kosova, parts of the Presevo valley to Kosova in exchange for northern Mitrovica and Zubin Potok (with or without formal recognition by Serbia of the loss of the bulk of its former province), etc. A key element of every version of this conversation is speculation over whether the United States has decided to drop the commitment to Kosova’s independence and opposition to any further changes in Balkan borders that have been bedrock foundations of its rhetoric and policies during and after the series of partitions involved in the collapse of the former Yugoslavia. Full text available at: *http://www.transconflict.com/2018/08/partition-is-not-the-point-038/*

**EU assessment team to visit Kosovo in September (*Zeri*)**

The paper reports on the front page that a European Union delegation will visit Kosovo in September to assess progress in the field of judiciary and while the EU Office in Priststina said the mission will help to identify key priorities for Kosovo’s European integration and that this is also linked to visa liberalisation, Minister of European Integration Dhurata Hoxha denied the team having impact on the visa liberalisation process. Hoxha said the team will be visiting Kosovo as part of a larger Western Balkans tour to assess judiciary system and its capacity to implement court decisions on civil and commercial matters.

**Ymeri: We don’t have votes to bring down government (*Zeri*)**

Deputy leader of the Social Democratic Party (PDK), Visar Ymeri, that they are the only party that has actually collected signatures for a no-confidence motion against the current government of Kosovo and that neither of the other opposition parties, namely the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) and Vetevendosje, have done the same. “I think that in the numerical sense we have a very interesting situation in the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo where neither we as opposition of three parliamentary groups have 61 votes to bring down the government nor the government has 61 MPs to be safe in its position,” Ymeri said adding however that there are alternatives to this situation that the opposition is simply not making use of.

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