

## **Some issues about Kosovo's conflict transformations 1990-2020**

The article presents the prehistory of the Kosovo conflict, and the economic, political, linguistic, social, and territorial problems in Kosovo.

At the same time, the main paradigms of a possible settlement of the Kosovo conflict in international relations until 2020 are considered and specified. The issues of recognition of Kosovo's independence were also analyzed. The purpose of the study is to present the interests of other countries, foreign policy relations, and ways and prospects for the further development of the Kosovo conflict. Resolutions adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the UN Security Council on Conflicts were also considered. Kosovo's foreign policy with Serbia is presented. The events presented in the article chronologically cover the period from the end of the twentieth century to 2020.

The purpose of the article is to present possible scenarios for the outcome of the Kosovo conflict. The article presents both Albanian and Serbian proposed models.

In pursuit of the goal, we have set the following tasks: to highlight the social, political, linguistic, and territorial challenges that Kosovo is currently facing, to analyze the consequences and functions of the Kosovo geostrategy, the dynamics of the conflict, and the ethnic composition.

**Key words:** conflicts, Yugoslavia, ethnic cleansing, Kosovo war, Serbia, Albania, NATO, superpower race.

**Prehistory of the conflict**

In any conflict, the basis of the conflict is ethnic or religious differences, which gives rise to violence under the guise of intolerance. And separatist institutions are formed to coordinate violence or paramilitary activities in general. The development of historical events in Albania on the Balkan Peninsula led to a difficult socio-economic and political situation, which in turn led to the emergence of a «hotbed of conflicts". Let's separate these main problems.

1. The Kosovo problem
2. The status of Albanians in the Balkan countries
3. Albania's claims to other countries regarding the borders and status of ethnic Albanians.
4. The problem of ethnic minorities in Albania.

Within the framework of the Kosovo conflict, the Albanian-Serbian and Kosovo-Serbian conflicts are considered. This conflict is viewed not only from the point of view of the interests of Albania, Kosovo, and Serbia but also from the point of view of the political, economic, and military interests of the superpowers.

In addition to the warring parties, Serbia and Kosovo, NATO had a great interest and participation in the war in Kosovo. If we look at the issue from the point of view of the geopolitics of NATO and Moscow, we will see that NATO and Moscow are trying to use many of the economic, political, and military problems of the Western Balkans to their advantage.

A weak economy does not allow the countries of this region to expand into the European Union (hereinafter referred to as the EU). At the same time, this region has become an arena of competition between Russia and the West. On the one hand, Western countries are doing everything within the framework of the EU and NATO to involve these countries in the Western bloc. The EU, for example, calls on the Balkan countries to join NATO under various pretexts, including to ensure security. NATO membership, although not considered a prerequisite for EU membership, is encouraged as part of Brussels policy. The role of the United States is also important here, which is doing everything to increase the number of countries joining the alliance. The US also supports the accession of the

countries of the Western Balkans to the EU. On the other hand, Russia spares no effort to prevent this region from joining NATO. Given this conflict between Moscow and NATO, the EU's position on the Western Balkans is to provide support to the countries of this region to improve their economic situation.

It should be noted that a distinctive feature of the Kosovo conflict is that the most systematic destruction of religious heritage (mainly Orthodox Serbs) took place not during the war, but after the 1999 war. In this sense, it has become political revenge, and not a means of ethnic cleansing, as was the case in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Kosovo was a subject of Yugoslavia and its second autonomous region, which enjoyed autonomy within the federation. Located on the territory of historical Serbia, the region consists of a predominantly Albanian population. According to the 1991 census, 94% of the population of Kosovo declared themselves Albanians, 5.3% Serbs, and 0.7% representatives of other peoples (Bosniaks, Turks, Romanians, Egyptians)<sup>1</sup>.

Ethnic tensions between Kosovo Albanians and Serbs dominated public life in the 1980s after the death of Josip Broz Tito. The roots of the ethnic conflict in Kosovo go deep into history. The Albanians consider themselves the heirs of the Illyrians who lived in the Balkans in Kosovo before the arrival of the Serbs, and the Serbs imagine Kosovo as Serbian Jerusalem, their holy land<sup>2</sup>. Both Albanians and Serbs consider Kosovo their historical homeland or lands. However, Kosovo attracted international attention only after the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords in 1995<sup>3</sup>. Before this, international attention was riveted to the ongoing war in Bosnia and

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<sup>1</sup>**Tonka Kostadinova**, "A Three Piece Puzzle": the Relationship between Culture, International Relations and Globalization,

<http://culturaldiplomacy.org/culturaldiplomacynews/participant-papers/academy/Tonka-Kostadinova-Cultural-diplomacy-in-war-affected-societies.pdf>(13.06.2022) 18.10.2022

<sup>2</sup> **Agon Demjaha** Inter-ethnic relations in Kosovo, p.183.

<sup>3</sup> Dayton Peace Agreement,  
<https://www.osce.org/bih/126173> (13.06.2022)

Herzegovina, while same Serbia considered the Kosovo issue exclusively its internal affair and almost did not allow foreign interference.

In the 1990s, after the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, Serbia responded to separatist pressure with the brutal repression of the Albanian population of Kosovo, which ended only with NATO's military intervention in 1999<sup>1</sup>. Belgrade's last attempt to save Kosovo by expelling the Albanians (who already numbered 1.5 million) was made in 1998. In October of the same year, the OSCE described Slobodan Milosevic's policies as "one of the most serious crimes against humanity in post-World War II Europe"<sup>2</sup>. Before that (in March and September 1998, respectively), the UN Security Council adopted two resolutions, the first of which (N 1160) sharply condemned the situation with the protection of human rights in Kosovo, the second (N 1199) demanded the immediate cessation of all military and paramilitary operations in the province. On March 24, 1999, the NATO bombing began.

By an act dated February 17, 2008, Kosovo's parliament unilaterally proclaimed Kosovo's independence status<sup>3</sup>. At a meeting of the UN Security Council on February 15, 2008, five of the 15 members of the Security Council (the United States and the European Union) spoke out in support of Kosovo's independence.

In June 2010 Sarajevo hosted an international conference on the future of the Western Balkans. On the agenda were issues of European integration of the countries of the region - Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Albania. In the EU, assurances were given regarding the positive prospects for the entry of these countries into the Union. The point of view was also confirmed that the stability of the region is connected with the process of its Euro-Atlantic integration. However,

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<sup>1</sup> **Yevgeny Ryabinin**, External influence factors in the Kosovo ethnoseparatist conflict, 2014, p.194.

<sup>2</sup> **Yuri Mkrumyants**, **Battle for Kosovo**, <http://national-idea.am/articles.php?id=27> (13.06.2022)

<sup>3</sup> **Rinor Rexhepi** **Vigan Sahiti** **Kosovo-Serbia Negotiations** ,[kosovo-serbia-negotiations.pdf](http://kosovo-serbia-negotiations.pdf) (02.12.2022)

Kosovo is not on this list yet. On the other hand, a condition has been set for Serbia to regulate relations with Kosovo and accept its independent existence, after which it will be possible to talk about Serbia's membership in the EU<sup>1</sup>.

On September 10, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on the Kosovo issue. The resolution calls on the authorities of Belgrade and Pristina to start negotiations mediated by the EU. There is not even a hint of the right to unilaterally declare Kosovo's independence. In addition, the decision of the International Court of Justice, which is qualified as consistent with international legal norms, was taken into account.

It is possible that the Kosovo issue of several resolutions adopted by international organizations continues to remain unresolved. Solving internal problems is a priority for Kosovo. There are many unresolved problems in today's Kosovo realities in the internal life of the country: the state language, social, political, economic, and territorial issues.

#### **The problem of official language.**

The two official languages of Kosovo are Albanian and Serbian. In 2006, Albanian and Serbian became official languages. The Albanian language spoken in Kosovo belongs to the Ghegi dialect, known as "Kosovar". Literary Albanian is used in written communication and the media. Serbo-Croatian, also known as Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian, is spoken by Serbs, Bosnians, Croats, and Montenegrins. However, most Bosnian-Croat-Serbian speakers prefer to speak their language based on their ethnicity and consider it distinct from other languages despite mutual intelligibility. Gypsies speak Serbian or Romanian, while Ashkali and Egyptians speak Albanian. Turkish is spoken by both Turks and some Albanians<sup>2</sup>.

For everyone who lives in Kosovo, the use of their mother tongue, Albanian or Serbian, is essential. Slavisa Mladenovic, Commissioner of the Language Government, stated this in her speech. "The right to a language

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<sup>1</sup> Suren Saryan, on the Kosovo issue, [http://www.noravank.am/arm/articles/detail.php?ELEMENT\\_ID=5041](http://www.noravank.am/arm/articles/detail.php?ELEMENT_ID=5041) (12.06.2022)

<sup>2</sup>Languages spoken in Kosovo, <https://www.beinkosovo.com/languages-spoken-in-kosovo/> (12.06.2022)

also affects work, education, health care, and other areas"<sup>1</sup>: The two official languages used in the country, Albanian and Serbian, cause serious conflicts between ethnic Albanians and Serbs.

The law on the use of languages, adopted in Kosovo in 2006, states that both Albanian and Serbian are considered official languages, therefore the state, political institutions, the judiciary, public enterprises, the media, the press are obliged to ensure the equal use of the two languages. "It is very important that there are translations not only from Albanian to Serbian, because both are official languages", Mladenovic said. "Very few people in Kosovo have well-edited social pages in Serbian", Mladenovic added. Although, as an example, he cited the office of the President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaçi, which appears almost simultaneously in both Albanian and Serbian. Mladenovic mentioned with concern another problem that exists in Kosovo as well; an acute shortage of professional translators from Albanian to Serbian<sup>2</sup>.

#### **The question of relations between Albanians and Serbs.**

Years have passed since what happened in the past, but these two people still have not been able to overcome their enmity. Parents who survived the war pass on their hatred of each other to their children, with the result that the dislike is passed on from generation to generation.

The current contentious issues in Kosovo are related to territorial issues. Both Albanian and Serbian authorities offer their solutions. One possible solution to the territorial problem is the division of Kosovo, which is not encouraged by Albania, Macedonia, and Montenegro.

The next option is that the international community will offer Kosovo a status, according to which the Kosovars, that is, the Albanians, who make up over 90% of Kosovo's population, will have the characteristics of an independent state: a constitution, their government, security forces, a national flag, an anthem, as well as the right to membership in international

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<sup>1</sup> **Slavisa Mladenovic**, Languages: The Kosovo problem nobody talks about, <https://balkaninsight.com/2018/05/04/languages-the-kosovo-problem-nobody-talks-about-04-26-2018/> (12.06.2022)

<sup>2</sup> See also in the same place

structures. That is, Kosovo gains independence within the borders of Serbia, but does not have any vertical relations with Belgrade. On the other hand, Kosovo cannot join Albania, that is, the concept of a "Great Albania" is removed from the agenda<sup>1</sup>.

Serbian officials have come up with a solution to the problem. Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić invited the Serbs and Albanians to start a dialogue. According to Vučić, it is pointless to wait until someone returns to Kosovo to Serbia. Vučić's proposal was presented more systematically by Serbian Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic. According to him, the Serbian community, Orthodox monasteries, and churches should receive special status in Kosovo. In an interview with Serbian Happy TV, Dacic said that Serbia would continue its Kosovo denial campaign until the parties come to a joint agreement. Dacic also added that Serbia would temporarily end the opt-out policy on the condition that Kosovo stopped applying for membership in international organizations<sup>2</sup>.

Minister of Trade, Tourism, and Telecommunications Rasim Ljajic proposed to normalize relations with the Kosovo Albanians. Before solving territorial problems, first of all, it is necessary to clarify the issue of borders. Borders were different in different periods of history. Before the military clashes, the following division of the border was discussed: Kosovo should be part of Serbia, and Metohija should be part of Albania. However, this version has lost its relevance, and about 250 thousand Kosovo Serbs and Montenegrins left Kosovo. Milorad Dodik, the Serbian president of Bosnia and Herzegovina, proposed to the Kosovo Albanians that the northern regions of Kosovo be transferred to Belgrade's control.

The next proposed option is the secession of Kosovo and Metohija, which was never encouraged. Even the former President of Yugoslavia, I. B.

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<sup>1</sup>Tatul Hakobyan, **Kosovo and Karabakh**,  
<https://hetq.am/hy/article/5860> (07.06.2022)

<sup>2</sup>Bledar Qalliu, Foreign Minister Dacic: Serbia Wont Stop Kosovo Derecognition Campaign until Deal is Reached,  
<https://exit.al/en/2020/03/11/foreign-minister-dacic-serbia-wont-stop-kosovo-derecognition-campaign-until-deal-is-reached/>  
(08.06.2022)

Tito, spoke out against such a solution to the problem. The Serbian Orthodox Church also opposed the partition.

Back in 2015, Vucic, with the intervention of the EU, agreed with his Albanian counterpart Is. Mustafa to grant autonomy to the Kosovo Serbs. According to this agreement, the Serbian community of Kosovo must have its president, prime minister, national assembly, flag, coat of arms, and powers in the areas of the economy, education, and health. Northern Kosovo would not recognize the authority of Belgrade and Pristina. Vučić intended to implement the "Bosnian scenario" in northern Kosovo<sup>1</sup>. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, local Serbs have their autonomy, their president, government, and diplomatic relations with Serbia, having previously agreed on internal political steps with Sarajevo. However, this proposal by Vučić was never implemented by the Kosovo authorities.

#### **Description of the conflict at the current stage**

Despite all these proposals, relations between Kosovo and Serbia remain tense. The Kosovo-Serbian conflict, which often develops into a trilateral Kosovo-Serbian-Albanian conflict, has long gone beyond this trilateral framework and has become a subject of global discussion. And it is precisely here that the interests of the US and Russia, the EU and Russia collide, and, conversely, the interests of Albania, Kosovo and the US coincide.

The political course of the Kosovo authorities is completely directed towards the US and NATO. Former Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramos Haradinaj stated that *"Joining NATO is Kosovo's state and civil goal. We belong to a group of democratic countries whose goal is to strengthen peace, security and stability". Serbia is closely following all developments in Kosovo. Serbia has recently been focusing on parliamentary elections in Kosovo.*

Parliamentary elections in Kosovo deepened the division in the region. The West believes that the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina will be restored after the elections.

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<sup>1</sup> **Gjeraqina Tuhina**, Kosovo and Serbia Resume EU-Backed Talks, <https://balkaninsight.com/2015/02/09/kosovo-and-serbia-resume-eu-backed-talks/> (08.04.2022)



Relations between Serbia and Kosovo escalate at every opportunity. Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic noted that the Serbian-Kosovo conflict could continue for a very long time.

Kosovo's ethnic Albanian majority declared independence in 2008, but under the Serbian constitution, Kosovo continues to be considered an integral part of Serbia. Serbia continues to provide financial assistance to Kosovo Serbs.

In 2013, Serbia and Kosovo agreed to resolve their outstanding issues through the mediation of the EU<sup>1</sup>. However, there has been no progress since then. Neither side has taken serious steps towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

For years, talking about Kosovo's independence was taboo in Serbia because the vast majority of Serbs consider Kosovo to be the cradle of the nation and the Orthodox faith.

#### **Proposed conflict resolution models**

a) Kosovo should be part of Serbia, and Metohija should be part of Albania,

b) Let Kosovo Serbs to have autonomy. The Kosovo Serb community must have its own president, prime minister, national assembly, flag, coat of arms and powers in the areas of economy, education and health.

c) Serbia must give up Kosovo completely.

The options mentioned above were proposed by the Kosovo and Serbian authorities. The first two options were unanimously rejected by the Kosovo authorities. And the proposed third option was the subject of serious clashes and discussions in Belgrade. Speaking about the Kosovo problem, Serbian President Al. Vučić always says that compromises must be made. After several similar statements, Al.Vučić's reputation in Serbia became unstable, he had political enemies. However, Vučić, soberly assessing the situation, realizing that Serbia has no leverage in Kosovo, stated in his speech on May 28, 2019: *We have two options for resolving relations with Kosovo: negotiate*

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<sup>1</sup> Kurylev K. P., Shablovsky V. S. Kosovo Conflict (1999–2020): Current state and ways to resolve it, Moscow, 2020, p.124.

*or continue the cold conflict*>>. Vučić noted with deep sorrow: "I prefer to stop cheating. There is no "visible" Serbian government in Kosovo other than schools and hospitals<sup>1</sup>.

At a special meeting dedicated to Kosovo, A. Vučić said in parliament: "We must realize our defeat, we have lost territory". In his speech, he also added: "Serbia must admit that it has lost control of Kosovo". Serbian President Vučić said in his speech that Belgrade should make compromises and find ways of reconciliation with Pristina.

This statement by A. Vučić suggests that Serbia has de facto accepted the independence of Kosovo.

From the words of Vučić, it can be assumed that Serbia thereby recognized the de facto independence of Kosovo.

### **Summary**

Studying the Kosovo-Serbian conflict, the foreign policy pursued by both countries, we can conclude that, perhaps, the models of conflict resolution proposed by Serbia, which we presented in the article, the Kosovo government continues to reject.

Serbia no longer has power in Kosovo, Serbian President A. Vučić has come to terms with the fact that Kosovo has been lost. Until an agreement is reached between Belgrade and Pristina, the Kosovo issue will not find a final solution, and Serbia has no real resources to return it. The de facto Serbian government is increasingly resigned to the loss of Kosovo. The power in Kosovo belongs to the Albanians. At the same time, we do not rule out that in the event of the accumulation of socio-political tension, hostilities may resume in the event of the accumulation of extremist and nationalist views, as a result of which the Albanian dream, "Great Albania", can be created. The creation of a "Greater Albania" will end the conflict as the Serbian authorities realize their defeat in resolving the conflict. Perhaps the

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<sup>1</sup>Ivan Sekularac, Aleksandr Vasovic, Accept reality, Serbia does not control Kosovo: Vucic,

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-serbia-kosovo/accept-reality-serbia-does-not-control-kosovo-vucic-idUSKCN1SXIU2> (10.06.2022)

settlement of the conflict is not such a simple process and goes beyond the narrow framework of Kosovo-Serbian relations.

The settlement of the Kosovo conflict has gone beyond the Kosovo-Serbian framework, turning into a race of superpowers seeking to settle in the Balkans, adapting the Kosovo conflict to their own interests. In fact, the EU and NATO have assumed responsibility for ensuring stability in the Balkans.

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