

The river Ibar springs in Montenegro near Rozaje, and then flows in a west-east direction to Kosovska Mitrovica. From there, the Ibar receives its right tributary, the river Sitnica, and changes its course in a south-north direction to the confluence with the West Morava near Kraljevo. The disintegration of the former SFRY thus made the once domicile river international, and its basin has become a cross-border basin that carries specific challenges in international relations. What is crucial for this topic is that the Ibar is the only significant river that affects Kosovo, but after significant use of both industrial and other pollution, the river from Kosovo flows into the municipality of Raska. In relation to Kosovo, in terms of control of the Ibar River and Lake Gazivoda, Serbia holds a “higher ground” in the literal and figurative sense.

Although in some parts the agreement on “economic normalization” signed recently in Washington in the presence of US President Donald Trump is useful or harmful for the parties in the negotiations, this agreement is in all respects fully in line with US short-term or long-term interests in the region. What is new and what surprised many is the fact that Lake Gazivoda was presented as a topic for the first time. Washington’s insistence on this topic is a completely logical move, and in the case of Lake Gazivoda, the main reason for being part of the agreement are long-term American financial interests. This also suggests that the dialogue is nearing completion.

The construction of an artificial earth dam in the village of Gazivoda in the municipality of Zubin Potok in Kosovo began with a World Bank loan in the 1970s. The Gazivoda reservoir is at the highest water level with a volume of about 390 million cubic meters of water and covers an area of about 11 square kilometers in Kosovo and central Serbia. Since 1976, when the reservoir was formed, the Ibar has been flowing into Lake Gazivoda in Ribarice (Tutin municipality). Gazivoda Dam and about 75% of the total water surface is located in the municipality of Zubin Potok in Kosovo, while about 25% of the total area is located in the municipalities of Novi Pazar and Tutin. The total area that collects surface waters that fill the Gazivoda reservoir is 1,090 square kilometers, of which less than 200 square kilometers (18.3%) are located in Kosovo, almost exclusively on the territory of the municipality of Zubin Potok. A few kilometers downstream from the Gazivoda dam, there is the Pridvorica dam, which regulates the discharge of water into the Ibar riverbed and calms water oscillations caused by the operation regime of the hydroelectric power plant turbines. This installation is also a conduit from where water is delivered to central Kosovo all the way to Pristina through the Ibar-Lepenac canal, which is about 49 km long. The canal transports an average of 3.5 cubic meters per second or 110 million cubic meters per year. Canal water is used for drinking, industry, energy and agriculture in the central, most densely populated

area and with the highest concentration of economic activities.

In the last 20 years after the arrival of international forces and administration in Kosovo, the water management system around Lake Gazivoda has functioned as an oligopolistic system where JP Ibar, as a Serb-run company, produces energy, supplies water and maintains facilities, and the Pristina company Ibar-Lepenac distributes water to consumers. Although they are not mutually recognized and there is no official communication between them, water is delivered unhindered in the required quantities, and energy production is synchronized with the system in Kosovo. At the same time, the company Ibar-Lepenac is the only party that earns money, and JP IBAR operates exclusively with the support of Serbia.

Source: novaekonomija.rs