



Great Game in the Balkans: the US, Europe, Russia and Kosovo

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Abstract

Although many Western governments expected that the presentation in March 2007 to the Security Council of the plan prepared by former Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari would lead to a rapid resolution of the final status of Kosovo, controversy has instead erupted. Despite the formal endorsement by the United States, NATO and the European Union, Russia has indicated that it will not support any plan for Kosovar independence that is not agreed to by both Serbia and the Albanian-Kosovar leadership. Fearing the consequences of a Russian veto in the Security Council of any resolution containing the Ahtisaari proposals, the Western Powers have proposed a delay in the formal consideration of this issue to allow more time for negotiations. It is not clear if that will be sufficient to overcome the current divide. This Technical Memorandum discusses the reason for the recent divergence of policies between Russia and the Western Powers over the future status of Kosovo. It examines the roots of the dispute and the difficulties that Moscow's opposition is creating for European governments.

Résumé

De nombreux gouvernements occidentaux s'attendaient à ce que le plan, présenté en mars 2007, par l'ancien président de la Finlande, M. Martti Ahtisaari, se traduise par un règlement rapide de la question du statut final du Kosovo. À la place, il en est résulté une controverse. C'est ainsi que, malgré l'appui officiel des États-Unis, de l'OTAN et de l'Union européenne, la Russie a fait connaître son intention de s'opposer à tout plan d'indépendance qui ne recueillera pas l'adhésion à la fois des dirigeants serbes et kosovars de souche albanaise. Craignant les conséquences d'un veto russe au Conseil de sécurité, si celui-ci est saisi d'une résolution contenant les propositions de M. Ahtisaari, les puissances occidentales ont proposé de reporter l'examen officiel de cette question, de façon à permettre la poursuite des négociations. Nul ne sait si cela suffira à aplanir les divergences actuelles. La présente note tente d'expliquer la raison des divergences récentes entre la Russie et les puissances occidentales sur le futur statut du Kosovo. Il porte sur les causes profondes du différend et met en lumière les difficultés auxquelles sont confrontés les gouvernements européens par suite de l'opposition de Moscou.

Executive Summary

In Spring 1999, NATO went to war to put an end to human rights violations within Kosovo and the larger threat ethnic conflict in that province posed to regional stability. Since then, the international community has held a form of trusteeship over the province while at the same time the Security Council resolution (SC Res. 1244) acknowledges Belgrade's continued sovereignty. Given that Kosovo's population is largely ethnic-Albanian (90 percent), and there is nearly unanimous support within that community for Kosovo's independence, the NATO occupation has always been viewed by the local inhabitants and the Western Powers as temporary. Until late-2005, however, the international community purposefully avoided addressing the issue of the province's final status. The opposition of Russia to the NATO-led campaign had never really dissipated, and there was a desire on the part of Western governments to avoid any further divisions within the international community.

The viability of that approach nonetheless rested on its acceptance by all the participants in the search for a final settlement for Kosovo – and Albanian-Kosovars always dissented. The March 2004 riots by Albanians in Kosovo were viewed as a warning of what might happen if a settlement was long delayed. Consequently, Western governments came to the conclusion that the province's final status needed to be decided quickly or face the prospect of another ethnic-Albanian insurgency. Fearful of an outbreak of ethnic unrest by the majority Albanian population, and aware that the agreement of Serbia for any settlement that denied its own sovereignty was improbable, the US and its European partners have now urged the imposition of a political settlement (i.e., the Ahtisaari Plan) that would include a form of “managed independence” (i.e., sovereignty, but extensive involvement of the international community). But, as happened in 1999, differences between the Western Powers and Russia have quickly resurfaced. Efforts by Washington and other supporters of an imposed settlement to minimise the significance of Russian opposition have not been entirely successful and, as a consequence, the US-backed timetable for a rapid resolution to the Kosovo question has been de-railed.

The Ahtisaari Plan

Former Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari delivered his report to the Security Council in late-March 2007, after 16 rounds of largely fruitless negotiations between representatives from Belgrade and Pristina. While his final report never made any specific reference to independence or sovereignty for Kosovo, it nonetheless called for the province to have “its own distinct flag, seal and anthem”, the “right to negotiate and conclude international agreements, including the right to seek membership in international organisations”, as well as a president, legislature, and civil service. Moreover, at the conclusion of a 120-day transition period, the Ahtisaari Plan called for the transfer of all legislative and executive authority, currently vested in the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), to the new authorities of Kosovo. A NATO-led military mission would continue to provide security within the province (attesting to the continuing ethnic tensions and periodic outbreaks of violence) and a mission by the European Union (EU), under the auspices of the European Security and Defence Policy

(ESDP), would deploy 1,300 to 1,500 personnel for up to two years to “monitor, mentor and advise on all areas related to the rule of law.”

The reactions to the Ahtisaari Plan varied. While NATO allies endorsed it, arguing that delay risked fostering instability throughout the Balkan region, Serbia rejected the plan. The Serbian president stated that his country would never accept Kosovo’s independence, and there was talk among leading political figures that Belgrade should break relations with any state that recognised Kosovo. Such views reflect the deep-seated belief of the majority of Serbs that the province should remain part of Serbia. For its part, the US publicly endorsed the Ahtisaari Plan. Speaking before a congressional committee in mid-April, Under-Secretary of State Nicholas Burns noted “supervised independence for Kosovo is now the only way forward.” As a result, he argued, the international community has no other option to recognising the province’s independence, and to do so as quickly as possible.

Russian Opposition

As it did when it rejected the NATO-led war in 1999, Moscow has framed its opposition to the Ahtisaari Plan as a defence of international legal norms: granting independence would represent a violation of Serbia’s sovereignty and would pose a direct threat to the principle of respect for the territorial integrity of states. The second argument that Russia has made in opposing the Ahtisaari Plan is that, far from being unique as some Western leaders have argued, many countries are confronted by secessionist demands similar to those arising from Kosovo’s troubled past. Granting independence to Kosovo could, therefore, legitimise other secessionist movements, including several in the land area of the former Soviet Union. Moscow rejects the argument made by a number of senior political figures in Western governments that granting independence to Kosovo would not be a precedent.

Moscow’s refusal to compromise on Kosovo must also be set against a backdrop of recent foreign policy challenges to the US and its European allies. It appears that Russia is trying to advance a national agenda – which has both domestic and international dimensions -- by taking advantage of a putative adversary’s vulnerabilities, in this case the profound dislike of current US policies in Europe and the political weakness of the Bush Administration. Such a strategy involves using delaying tactics in order for the natural destabilizing dynamics of Kosovar society to challenge Western, particularly US, claims that the province is ready for independence. Fomented by an Albanian leadership that is frustrated by what it views as a tardy diplomatic process, a new upsurge of widespread rioting would put paid to the Ahtisaari Plan’s timetable for a handover of political authority. Civil unrest would also make even the recognition of a unilateral declaration of independence difficult, most likely impossible, for the US and its allies. Frustrating Washington’s timetable is a cost-free but potentially very effective tactic to discredit US policy in Kosovo and, at the same time, create an opportunity to advance other interests, not exclusively tied to the region within which Kosovo resides.

Pressures on Europe

Washington’s response has been to dismiss Russian concerns, but that approach harbours serious problems. US interests in a resolution of the Kosovo dispute are not the same as those of Europe. Alongside a commitment to the principle of self-determination, the US views an independent Kosovo as a Muslim state in Europe, and therefore a symbol of “US-Muslim

partnership”. For the US, therefore, Kosovo is a component of its most important concern, namely the ongoing war on terror. For Europe, the Kosovo question remains at its root an ethnic dispute that threatens regional stability. While both the US and its European partners can agree that Kosovo should have its independence recognised – although fault-lines run through the European “consensus” – the trans-Atlantic accord is rather shallow.

The international frictions with Moscow generated by the current approach to resolving the Kosovo question represent a significant problem for European policy-makers on different levels. First, it threatens a further deterioration of the relationship being constructed between the EU and Russia, an outcome that most (but not all) European governments are at pains to avoid. Granting independence to Kosovo despite the absence of a UN mandate also risks seriously damaging Europe’s long-term relations with Serbia. Alongside alienating the Serbian leadership, the EU’s endorsement of the Ahtisaari Plan has inadvertently created new opportunities for Russian-Serbian relations. Moscow has sought to take advantage of Serbia’s frustrations with the West to expand its influence in a region where, since the downfall of the USSR, it had largely been excluded.

More important still, the current approach of supporting independence for Kosovo in the face of Russian opposition necessarily means confronting the prospect of a Russian veto in the Security Council. While ignoring Russia was obviously not an unsolvable problem in 1999, the prospect of moving the Kosovo agenda forward against Moscow’s expressed wishes in today’s political environment is more troubling. Although a public consensus exists among EU leaders, serious strains are nonetheless present – arising from governments that are concerned that imposing Kosovo’s independence could act as a catalyst for secessionist agendas in their own countries. Moreover, there is a widely-held belief that the EU mission as envisaged by the Ahtisaari Plan cannot proceed without a UN mandate.

If Moscow is only seeking some form of *compensation*, European leaders have so far failed to find a mechanism that would allow Russia to back down from the position it has assumed on the future of Kosovo. It seems quite likely, however, that “saving face” is not really what Russia wants as *compensation* for its stalwart defence of Belgrade’s sovereignty. But the price to change its policy is possibly too high for European leaders and Washington to bear – at the moment.

Conclusion

From the point of being ignored in 1999, Russia has skilfully maneuvered itself into the central position of determining Kosovo’s future. It has done so by playing upon the longstanding weaknesses of the West’s position on the issue. As with most diplomatic efforts, however, it has been accompanied by some political costs. The question is whether Moscow is prepared to accept those costs – and so far it appears that it is willing to do so – in order to advance its larger foreign policy interests. Both the US and its European partners are openly frustrated with the position that Russia has taken, but beyond recognising a unilateral declaration of independence that the European leaders understand would create both political and legal difficulties at home and in future relations with Kosovo, the US has not yet proposed any new solutions. Washington is not, after all, facing the same sorts of pressures that its European partners must confront and is itself strongly committed to its own policy objective, component as it is of the larger and more serious war on terror.

At its 19 June meeting of foreign ministers, the 27 EU states adopted a different tack: to postpone the final decision in the hope that EU-sponsored negotiations might yield a different outcome than those conducted by Ahtisaari. However, moving the negotiations to Brussels will not overcome the basic incompatibilities of the two principals – Belgrade and Pristina. The terms of a negotiated agreement that would embrace the Albanian-Kosovar goal of independence and, at the same time, respect Serbia's territorial integrity are hard to conceive. Beyond the essential incompatibility of the two sides's aims, the attitude toward any resumption of talks is equally inconsistent: the Albanian-Kosovars have declared the Ahtisaari Plan to be non-negotiable, while Belgrade is calling for no time limit on any negotiations.

It is unclear, therefore, in what directions future negotiations between the US, the EU and Russia over Kosovo will now move. A unilateral declaration of independence by Pristina recognised only by the US would seriously undermine the legitimacy of a new Kosovar state and the mechanisms envisaged by the Ahtisaari Plan to see it through its birth pangs. And, yet, it is equally clear that the Bush Administration is bent upon seeing the future status of that disputed province resolved before it leaves office. If Russia is looking for some way to be compensated both for the humiliation it believes it suffered as a result of the NATO-led war in 1999 and for its opposition today to the Ahtisaari Plan, then resolution of this issue will likely come as a result of progress in other arenas. To date, however, the hope that such progress in other areas of dispute will occur is not at all evident, and most commentators expect that relations with Russia will become more, rather than less, difficult in the run-up to the Russian parliamentary election in December 2007 and the presidential vote in March 2008. What is more likely in the near-term is that the international community, namely the US and its European partners, will continue to urge patience upon the Albanian-Kosovars in order to prevent a deterioration of the security situation in the province while continuing to reassure them of their support for the goal of independence.

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Sommaire

Au printemps 1999, l'OTAN est intervenue pour mettre fin aux violations des droits humains au Kosovo. Il s'agissait aussi pour l'OTAN de contrer la menace plus générale que ce conflit ethnique faisait peser sur la stabilité régionale. Depuis, la communauté internationale exerce une forme de tutelle sur cette province. Dans le même temps, la résolution 1244 du Conseil de sécurité des Nations Unies a reconnu à Belgrade le droit d'exercer sa souveraineté sur le Kosovo. Toutefois, comme la province compte surtout des Kosovars de souche albanaise (90 % de la population), et que l'indépendance fait presque l'unanimité au sein de cette communauté, la présence de l'OTAN a toujours été considérée comme temporaire, à la fois par les habitants de l'endroit et par les puissances occidentales. Or, jusqu'à la fin de l'année 2005, la communauté internationale a évité, à dessein, de soulever la question du statut final de la province. Pour sa part, la Russie n'a jamais vraiment cessé de s'opposer à la campagne menée sous l'égide de l'OTAN. De plus, les gouvernements occidentaux souhaitaient éviter de créer d'autres tensions au sein de la communauté internationale.

Le bon fonctionnement de cette stratégie dépendait cependant de l'adhésion de toutes les parties intéressées à la solution proposée en vue d'un règlement sur le statut final du Kosovo. Or, les Kosovars de souche albanaise se sont toujours opposés à ces efforts. Les émeutes déclenchées par des Albaniens du Kosovo en mars 2004 ont été interprétées comme le présage de ce qui pourrait arriver si l'on tardait à trouver une solution. En conséquence, des gouvernements occidentaux ont conclu à la nécessité de décider rapidement du statut final de la province, faute de quoi une nouvelle insurrection des Kosovars de souche albanaise risquait de se produire. Par crainte d'un soulèvement de la majorité albanaise, et conscients qu'il était peu probable que la Serbie accepte une solution ne prévoyant pas sa souveraineté, les États-Unis et leurs partenaires européens ont dès lors insisté pour que l'on impose un règlement politique (c.-à-d. le Plan Ahtisaari). Il était entendu qu'une telle solution devait prévoir une forme d'« indépendance encadrée » (c.-à-d. souveraineté de la province, mais participation importante de la communauté internationale). Toutefois, les divergences qui avaient opposé les puissances occidentales à la Russie en 1999 ont vite refait surface. Or, les efforts de Washington et d'autres partisans d'un règlement imposé pour réduire le plus possible l'incidence de l'opposition russe n'ont pas produit tous les effets souhaités. Par conséquent, le calendrier préconisé par les États-Unis en vue d'un règlement rapide de la question kosovare a déraillé.

Le Plan Ahtisaari

C'est à la fin de mars 2007, que l'ancien président de la Finlande, M. Martti Ahtisaari, a présenté son rapport au Conseil de sécurité. Les représentants de Belgrade et de Pristina avaient alors participé à 16 cycles de négociations largement infructueux. Si ce document ne fait jamais référence spécifiquement à l'indépendance ni à la souveraineté du Kosovo, il prévoit cependant que la province se dote « de son propre drapeau, d'un sceau et d'un hymne national ». S'y ajoute « le droit de négocier et de conclure des ententes internationales, y compris le droit d'adhérer à des organisations internationales ». Il est aussi question de créer les fonctions de président, une assemblée législative et une fonction publique. Qui plus est, au

terme de la période de transition fixée à 120 jours, le Plan Ahtisaari prévoit le transfert de tous les pouvoirs législatifs et exécutifs – confiés actuellement à la mission des Nations Unies au Kosovo (MINUK) – aux nouvelles autorités du Kosovo. Il est entendu qu'une mission militaire placée sous commandement de l'OTAN continuerait à assurer la sécurité, du fait de la persistance des tensions ethniques et des poussées de violence. De plus, entre 1 300 et 1 500 hommes seraient déployés dans le cadre d'une mission de l'Union européenne (UE), plus précisément au titre de la Politique européenne de sécurité et de défense (PESD). Cette mission, d'une durée maximale de deux ans, serait chargée « de surveiller, d'encadrer et de conseiller les parties pour tous les domaines liés à la primauté du droit ».

Le Plan Ahtisaari a suscité des réactions diverses. Si les alliés de l'OTAN y souscrivent, au motif que tout retard risque de déstabiliser l'ensemble des Balkans, en revanche la Serbie s'y oppose. Le président serbe a déclaré que son pays n'accepterait jamais l'indépendance du Kosovo. Il a aussi fait savoir que des hauts responsables politiques proposaient que Belgrade rompent ses relations avec tout pays qui reconnaîtra le Kosovo. C'est là l'expression d'une conviction bien enracinée dans la communauté serbe, à savoir que le Kosovo doit continuer de faire partie de la Serbie. Pour leur part, les États-Unis ont annoncé publiquement leur soutien au Plan Ahtisaari. Dans une intervention devant les membres d'un comité du Congrès, le sous-secrétaire d'État des États-Unis, M. Nicholas Burns, a souligné qu'une « indépendance encadrée pour le Kosovo constitue désormais la seule solution possible ». Il a aussi affirmé que la communauté internationale n'avait d'autre choix que de reconnaître l'indépendance de la province, et cela, dans les meilleurs délais.

Opposition russe

Comme pour son opposition à l'intervention militaire sous l'égide de l'OTAN, en 1999, Moscou invoque la nécessité de protéger les normes juridiques internationales pour s'opposer au Plan Ahtisaari. Selon la partie russe, l'indépendance du Kosovo portera atteinte à la souveraineté de la Serbie et risque d'avoir une incidence directe sur un grand principe, à savoir le respect de l'intégrité territoriale des États. La Russie maintient également que la situation du Kosovo n'a rien d'unique, contrairement à ce qu'affirment les dirigeants occidentaux, car de nombreux pays sont confrontés à des pressions sécessionnistes semblables à celles suscitées par le passé troublé de cette région. En conséquence, l'indépendance du Kosovo aura pour effet de donner une impulsion à d'autres mouvements sécessionnistes, dont plusieurs se trouvent sur le territoire de l'ex-Union soviétique. Moscou réfute l'argument, présenté par un certain nombre de hauts responsables politiques occidentaux, selon lequel le fait d'accorder l'indépendance au Kosovo ne créera pas de précédent.

Il convient aussi de rappeler que l'opposition de Moscou à tout compromis s'inscrit dans le contexte plus général des enjeux de politique étrangère récents qui l'ont opposé aux États-Unis et à leurs alliés européens. Il apparaît évident que la Russie tente de promouvoir ses intérêts nationaux – qui comportent cependant des dimensions à la fois nationale et internationale – en tirant parti des points faibles de son adversaire potentiel. Dans ce cas-ci, il s'agit du profond mécontentement suscité actuellement par les politiques américaines en Europe. À cela s'ajoute la précarité politique du gouvernement Bush. La stratégie russe consiste à utiliser des mesures dilatoires pour donner le temps aux dynamiques

déstabilisatrices inhérentes à la société kosovare de donner tort à la partie occidentale, notamment aux États-Unis, qui estiment que la province est prête à accéder à l'indépendance. Il est évident que de nouvelles émeutes généralisées, orchestrées par des dirigeants albanais frustrés par la lenteur apparente des efforts diplomatiques, auront raison du Plan Ahtisaari, c'est-à-dire du transfert éventuel des pouvoirs politiques. Dans l'éventualité de troubles civils, il sera également difficile, voire impossible, pour les États-Unis et leurs alliés de reconnaître une déclaration d'indépendance unilatérale du Kosovo. La stratégie visant à faire obstacle au projet de Washington est un moyen peu coûteux, mais potentiellement très efficace, pour discréditer la politique américaine au Kosovo. Dans le même temps, il s'agit aussi d'un bon moyen pour promouvoir d'autres intérêts, qui ne sont pas liés exclusivement à la région dont fait partie le Kosovo.

Pressions sur l'Europe

Or, cette façon de faire se révèle très problématique. Les intérêts des États-Unis et de l'Europe divergent en ce qui concerne le règlement du différend sur le Kosovo. Outre leur adhésion aux principes de l'auto-détermination, les États-Unis estiment qu'un Kosovo indépendant constituera un État musulman au cœur de l'Europe. Ce sera donc l'illustration du « partenariat possible entre les États-Unis et le monde musulman ». Pour les États-Unis, le Kosovo fait aussi partie d'un enjeu plus important encore, à savoir la poursuite de la guerre contre le terrorisme. En revanche, pour l'Europe, cette question demeure, pour l'essentiel, un conflit ethnique qui menace la stabilité régionale. Certes, les parties américaines et européennes peuvent s'entendre sur la nécessité de reconnaître l'indépendance du Kosovo – même si le « consensus » européen demeure fragile –, mais cette convergence de vues transatlantique demeure fragile.

Pour les décideurs européens, les tensions entre la communauté internationale et Moscou en ce qui concerne l'orientation actuelle face à la question kosovare, constituent un problème important, et ce, à plus d'un titre. Premièrement, cela risque de détériorer encore plus les relations en train de se tisser entre l'UE et la Russie. Or, la plupart des gouvernements européens (mais pas tous) souhaitent à tout prix éviter une telle détérioration. Le fait d'accorder son indépendance au Kosovo, sans mandat des Nations Unies, risque également d'être extrêmement préjudiciable aux relations de l'Europe avec la Serbie sur le long terme. Outre l'aliénation des dirigeants serbes, le soutien de l'UE au Plan Ahtisaari a, par inadvertance, ouvert de nouvelles possibilités pour les relations russo-serbes. Moscou tente en effet d'exploiter à son avantage le mécontentement de la Serbie à l'égard de l'Occident. Il veut ainsi renforcer son influence dans une région dont la Russie se trouve largement exclue depuis l'effondrement de l'ex-Union soviétique.

Mais surtout, le soutien actuel à l'indépendance du Kosovo, malgré l'opposition russe, comporte nécessairement le risque d'un veto au Conseil de sécurité. Si, en 1999, il était envisageable de passer outre à l'opposition russe, en revanche cela s'avère désormais plus problématique dans le contexte politique actuel. En effet, publiquement, les dirigeants européens semblent s'entendre sur l'indépendance du Kosovo, par contre force est d'admettre l'existence de graves tensions. En effet, certains gouvernements européens craignent que l'indépendance kosovare ait un effet d'entraînement sur les visées sécessionnistes dans d'autres pays. Qui plus est, il est généralement admis que la mission de l'UE, telle

qu'envisagée dans le Plan Ahtisaari, ne saurait se concrétiser sans un mandat des Nations Unies.

Il est possible que Moscou ne souhaite obtenir qu'une forme de « compensation ». Qu'à cela ne tienne, les dirigeants européens n'ont pas encore trouvé de mécanisme susceptible d'amener la Russie à revoir sa position sur l'avenir du Kosovo. Il est fort probable cependant que, étant donné sa défense acharnée de la souveraineté de Belgrade, la Russie cherche bien plus qu'à « sauver la face ». Quoi qu'il en soit, à l'heure actuelle, il est probable que les dirigeants européens et Washington ne soient pas encore prêts à payer le prix qu'il faut pour amener la Russie à changer sa position.

Conclusion

Mise à l'écart en 1999, la Russie joue désormais un rôle décisif dans l'avenir du Kosovo. Pour cela, elle a exploité les faiblesses habituelles de la position occidentale sur cette question. Toutefois, comme pour la plupart des efforts diplomatiques, il y a un prix politique à payer pour cela. La question est de savoir si Moscou est prêt à le payer – et, jusqu'ici, il semble que oui – au profit d'intérêts de politique étrangère de portée plus générale. Les États-Unis et leurs partenaires européens expriment ouvertement leur mécontentement face à la position russe. Toutefois, les États-Unis n'ont pas encore proposé de nouvelles solutions, mis à part la reconnaissance d'une déclaration d'indépendance unilatérale qui, aux yeux des dirigeants européens, est susceptible d'entraîner des difficultés politiques et juridiques aussi bien sur le territoire européen que dans les relations ultérieures avec le Kosovo. Après tout, Washington n'est pas confronté aux mêmes enjeux que ses partenaires européens. De plus, la partie américaine est fermement déterminée à poursuivre l'un de ses grands objectifs stratégiques, à savoir la guerre contre le terrorisme, considérée comme plus importante.

Lors de la rencontre des ministres des Affaires étrangères du 19 juin 2007, les 27 pays de l'UE ont adopté une autre orientation : remettre à plus tard la décision sur le statut final, dans l'espoir que les négociations sous l'égide de l'UE aboutiront à une autre solution que celle issue des négociations dirigées par M. Ahtisaari. Toutefois, le fait de déplacer les négociations à Bruxelles ne suffira pas à aplanir les divergences fondamentales entre les deux principaux intéressés, c'est-à-dire Belgrade et Pristina. Il est difficile d'arrêter les modalités d'un accord négocié conforme au souhait des Kosovars de souche albanaise d'accéder à l'indépendance et, dans le même temps, qui respecte l'intégrité territoriale de la Serbie. Outre ces divergences fondamentales, il convient de souligner le désaccord en ce qui concerne la poursuite des pourparlers : les Kosovars de souche albanaise considèrent le Plan Ahtisaari comme non négociable, tandis que Belgrade demande que les négociations ne soient assorties d'aucune échéance.

Par conséquent, nul ne peut dire avec certitude, dans quel sens évolueront les négociations entre les États-Unis, l'UE et la Russie. Il est entendu qu'une déclaration d'indépendance unilatérale de Pristina, reconnue seulement par les États-Unis, serait fortement préjudiciable à la légitimité du nouvel État kosovar. Cela porterait également préjudice aux mécanismes envisagés par le Plan Ahtisaari pour aider à la genèse du nouvel État. De la même manière, il est évident que le gouvernement Bush souhaite un règlement sur le statut futur de cette province, dont on se dispute le contrôle, avant la fin de son mandat. Par ailleurs, il est possible que la Russie souhaite une certaine compensation pour l'humiliation subie à la suite de l'intervention militaire de l'OTAN en 1999, et en raison de son opposition actuelle au Plan Ahtisaari. Dans ces conditions, il est probable que le règlement du différend dépende des

progrès réalisés dans ces deux domaines. À ce jour, de tels progrès ne paraissent pas du tout évidents. De plus, la plupart des analystes s'attendent à ce que les relations avec la Russie deviennent encore plus difficiles à l'approche des élections parlementaires russes de décembre 2007 et du scrutin présidentiel de mars 2008. Sur le court terme, il est cependant probable que la communauté internationale, en l'occurrence les États-Unis et leurs partenaires européens, continuent à exhorter les Kosovars de souche albanaise à la patience, pour éviter une détérioration de la situation sécuritaire dans la province. Dans le même élan, ils continueront à les rassurer au sujet du soutien américain à l'indépendance du Kosovo.

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Issue

The solution to the Kosovo problem that led to war in 1999 continues to elude the international community. Until late-2005, the international community avoided addressing the issue of the province's final status. In the absence of a negotiated settlement, the US and its European partners have now urged the imposition of a political settlement that would include a form of "managed independence". Russia views this as unacceptable, although this opposition must be examined in a context defined by the recent deterioration of the West's relations with Moscow.

The "Kosovo question" is of concern to the Government of Canada and the Department of National Defence through the country's membership in NATO. Involvement in the 1999 war and the initial deployment of approximately 1,400 troops with the postwar NATO mission (KFOR – Kosovo Protection Force) was a declaration that, alongside Alliance solidarity, stability in the Balkans is viewed as a strategic interest. Although Canada does not currently have troops deployed with KFOR, that mission continues to be responsible for security there and to ensure that the ethnic tensions do not threaten broader regional stability. The proposed political settlement for Kosovo envisages NATO establishing what is termed an "International Military Presence". If created, the mission will be of indefinite duration and Canadian officials will undoubtedly be involved in some way in its planning and execution.

Study Approach

This Technical Memorandum is the second contribution to a larger study being undertaken by the author that, when completed, will comprise four individual reports that look at the future of Kosovo (i.e., "the Kosovo question"). The first report, TM-2006-15 "Kosovo and the Final Status Negotiations" was published in March 2006. It reviewed the postwar situation on the ground in that troubled province, the lack of progress on democratic development, rule of law and human rights. That report also examined the evolution of the international community's policy toward a political settlement in the years prior to the convening of final status negotiations last year. Roughly speaking, that first report covered the years 1999 to 2006. This Technical Memorandum picks up the story in light of the final status talks chaired by Martti Ahtisaari in 2006 and, more recently, the controversy surrounding the package of proposals that he presented to the UN Security Council in March 2007. It reviews the proposed final settlement and, by examining Russian opposition to the Ahtisaari Plan, critically analyses the Great Power interactions over Kosovo (i.e., "the Great Game"). The third report, likely to be completed in early- to mid-2008, will analyse the dimensions of whatever political settlement eventually emerges for the Kosovo question and the possible consequences of that settlement for regional stability. Finally, a fourth report in late-2008 will review the conclusions of the three earlier publications for any lessons that might be derived for future consideration of intervention in ethnic disputes.

The Kosovo Question

In Spring 1999, NATO went to war to put an end to human rights violations within Kosovo and the larger threat ethnic conflict in that province posed to regional stability in the southern Balkans. Although the war was successfully concluded in a matter of weeks, a solution to the problem that led to its outbreak continues to elude the international community eight years later. The NATO-led military campaign led to the expulsion of all Yugoslav security forces and political authorities from Kosovo. Since then, the international community has held a form of trusteeship over the province while at the same time the Security Council resolution (SC Res. 1244) acknowledges Belgrade's continued sovereignty. Given that the population of Kosovo is largely ethnic-Albanian (nearly 90 percent), and there is almost unanimous support within that community for Kosovo's independent statehood, the NATO occupation has always been viewed by the local inhabitants and the Western Powers as temporary. And, indeed, SC Res. 1244 calls for a final political settlement. Until late-2005, however, the international community purposefully avoided addressing the issue of the province's final status. The reason for this reticence is easy enough to comprehend, for it was guided by what might be characterised as a "let sleeping dogs lie" strategy. The opposition of Russia to the NATO-led campaign had never really dissipated, and there was a palpable desire on the part of Western governments to avoid any further divisions within the international community. This was especially so given that Russia was widely perceived in Washington and elsewhere after 9/11 as a valuable, if not essential, ally in the war on terror.

The viability of that approach nonetheless rested on its acceptance by all the participants in the search for a final settlement for Kosovo – and one key constituency has always dissented. For Albanian-Kosovars, time passing without a settlement seemed terribly unfair. Perhaps more significant, it was viewed by that community as reinforcing Belgrade's claim to continued sovereignty, a condition that they have most emphatically rejected. The March 2004 riots, planned and orchestrated by the Albanian nationalist leadership in Kosovo, were viewed much as a "shot across the bow" by many Western governments. With the full backing of the US, those governments came to the conclusion that a settlement needed to be devised, and quickly, or else the international missions that had liberated Kosovo in 1999 would soon be themselves perceived as components of an illegitimate occupation and would likely become the target of another ethnic-Albanian insurgency. The high sounding phrases that had accompanied the NATO campaign in early-1999 and that had justified the war to its opponents would have sounded increasingly hollow in the face of such an uprising. Fearful of an outbreak of ethnic unrest by the majority Albanian population, and aware that the agreement of Serbia for any settlement that denied its sovereignty was improbable, the US and its European partners have now urged the imposition of a political settlement that would include a form of "managed independence" (i.e., sovereignty, but extensive involvement of the international community). But, as happened in 1999, differences between the Western Powers and Russia have quickly resurfaced. Efforts by Washington and other supporters of an imposed settlement to minimise the significance of Russian opposition have not been entirely successful and, as a consequence, the US-backed timetable for a rapid resolution to the Kosovo question has been de-railed.

Bush in Albania after Putin in Germany

Long hidden in the shadows cast by the arcane details of the UN-sponsored negotiating process, the differences between Washington and Moscow became plainly evident in June 2007. Yet, oddly enough, the seriousness of those differences was not readily apparent, even to the leaders most directly involved. As a result, for some observers, it must have seemed as if little had actually changed. US support for independence was reiterated during a recent well-publicised visit to Albania that followed his attendance at the G-8 Summit in Germany. There, US president George W. Bush spoke publicly about Kosovo. “At some point, sooner rather than later, you’ve got to say, ‘Enough is enough – Kosovo is independent.’” The crowds responded ecstatically. Neither the message he delivered nor the reaction to his words was at all surprising. In recent months, administration officials have repeatedly indicated that the president wants a speedy clarification of that region’s final political status, arguing that the frustration level of Albanians, particularly among Albanian-Kosovars, was building as a result of uncertainty over Kosovo’s future. Advocates of independence, such as the US president, argue that further diplomacy and negotiations are unnecessary and serve only to threaten to ignite a renewed outbreak of violence there. “The question is whether or not there is going to be endless dialogue on a subject that we have made up our mind about.” Bush emphasised in Tirana, “We believe Kosovo ought to be independent.”¹

Perhaps, just as important, that belief is not supported by Russia. The Chair’s Summary following the conclusion of the Heiligendamm Summit reflected this divide, noting only that while among the G-8 members “there continue to be different views on substance and the way forward, we will remain engaged on the issue.”² So why such an anodyne declaration? During that gathering, President Vladimir Putin made it very clear to the other G-8 leaders that he would not support independence for Kosovo if Serbia did not also agree. There seems to be little room for compromise, given the latter’s opposition to any revision of its borders. This position means, and the Russian president is undoubtedly aware that it means, that in all likelihood a continuation of the status quo is the best that would come from further diplomacy. That outcome is, however, incompatible with the policy so forcefully announced by Bush in Albania. Russia’s refusal to subordinate its policy on Kosovo to the ideal of an international consensus apparently came as somewhat of a surprise. As a result, Putin’s position has been presented as yet more evidence of the growing discord in Moscow’s relations with the West. The *Financial Times* (London) noted that tensions between Russia and the West were made manifest as “Putin hardened his stance on the future of Kosovo”. Less constrained than before by his imminent departure from office, British prime minister Tony Blair stated that people were now becoming “worried and fretful about what is happening in Russia today and Russia’s external policies.”³

It is undoubtedly true that the West’s relations with Russia have deteriorated during the last few months. Concerns expressed by Western leaders about political developments in that country, alongside earlier clashes with Moscow over Iran, Ukraine, Georgia, and the ongoing disputes surrounding the deployment of a US missile shield in Europe and the CFE Treaty, have led to an increase in frictions and inflammatory rhetoric. However, the charge that these tensions have been exacerbated as a consequence of “hardening” Russian policy over Kosovo is exaggerated. If anything, Moscow’s public statements and policy on the issue have remained remarkably consistent since the aftermath of the 1999 NATO-led war. What is more likely is that many Western governments are only now realising that Russia is far more

committed to its position* than had been earlier believed.⁴ “I got the impression,” Putin noted in St. Petersburg after the Heiligendamm Summit had concluded, “that finally our arguments are being treated seriously by our G-8 colleagues.”⁵

That is, however, only half of the story for the differences over Kosovo are more than just a singular instance of post-Cold War confrontation. The problem that the Western Powers are currently confronting over Kosovo is that Moscow’s longstanding position on the issue is logically coherent and at the same time seems now to have been incorporated into a larger, and more challenging, strategy. For Russia, its policy on Kosovo has proven to be an effective means of challenging Western policy and objectives in the Balkans. By being so, it has moved Moscow to the centre of European diplomatic affairs, a status it has not enjoyed since the last years of the Soviet era. Given the fundamental incompatibility between Western and Russian motivations over Kosovo, resolution of the current dispute might prove very difficult indeed.

Kosovo: Final Status before Standards†

Resolving the question of Kosovo’s final status was not formally discussed in the immediate aftermath of the NATO-led war with Serb in early-1999. Indeed, until 2006, there was little appetite within the Contact Group (i.e., US, UK, France, Italy, Germany and Russia) to take on this thorny issue, particularly as addressing it meant having to confront a clash between two basic principles underlying the European order: the national self-determination of the Albanian-Kosovars versus the territorial integrity of Serbia. The current limbo-like status of Kosovo is based on UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (10 June 1999) that was adopted shortly after the cessation of hostilities between Belgrade and the NATO-led coalition. In the key passage concerning the province’s future political complexion, the resolution authorised the Secretary-General to create “an international civil presence (...) in order to provide an interim administration for Kosovo under which the people of Kosovo can enjoy substantial autonomy within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.” The civil administration was to function as a “transitional administration” while assisting the province to develop “provisional democratic self-governing institutions to ensure conditions for a peaceful and normal life for all inhabitants of Kosovo.” The policy pursued by the international community was known as *standards before status*, meaning that Kosovo had to achieve a measurable level of political development, including functioning democratic institutions, enshrine the idea of rule-of-law, and the protection of minority rights, before its final status was determined.

By mid-2005, however, when a senior Norwegian diplomat, Kai Eide, submitted the second of two commissioned reports on the situation in Kosovo to the UN Security Council, it was clear that extremely limited progress had been made in advancing the standards envisioned within SC Res. 1244. Eide noted that there was no commitment to these principles by the Albanian-Kosovar leadership who adhered instead to an agenda informed by both nationalism

* This author was told by several German officials that Russian policy on Kosovo was just diplomatic posturing, and that Putin would eventually concede the Western position. (Private interviews, Berlin, October 2006.)

† For an overview of the international community’s response to the Kosovo problem see this author’s “Kosovo and the Final Status Negotiations” TM 2006-15, Directorate of Strategic Analysis/Centre for Operational Research and Analysis, Defence R&D Canada, Ottawa, March 2006. This section borrows the discussion of the Eide Report from that paper.

and corruption.[‡] His report concluded that there was no reason to assume that any further progress could be accomplished on advancing rights and standards before talks on final status were commenced. He noted that the civil unrest that erupted in March 2004, when Albanian-Kosovars rioted, could be repeated, and that the international community would have even less control of the situation if negotiations over status were not seriously addressed.

As a result of Eide's conclusions, and prodded forward by Washington, the strategy of *standards before status* was abandoned. In its place, the new approach was to be *standards and status*. Former Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari was appointed as a special envoy with a mandate to facilitate an agreement between Belgrade and the Albanian-Kosovar leadership by the end of 2006. Bowing yet again to a timetable determined by the Albanian nationalist agenda and the widely held view in Washington that Serbia had lost Kosovo as a result of its behaviour preceding and during the 1999 war, Ahtisaari was purportedly enjoined to ensure that "any deal must reflect what the majority wants."⁶

He delivered his report, the *Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Peace Settlement*[§], to the Security Council in late-March, after 16 rounds of largely fruitless negotiations between representatives from Belgrade and Pristina. Ahtisaari's conclusions mirrored what he had been asked to do. The report is an effort to frame a settlement based on liberal-democratic principles and an open market economy, with mechanisms for respect of human rights and minority communities. While it never makes any specific reference to independence or sovereignty for Kosovo, it nonetheless calls for the province to have "its own distinct national symbols, including flag, seal and anthem"⁷, the "right to negotiate and conclude international agreements, including the right to seek membership in international organisations"⁸, as well as a president, legislature, and civil service. Moreover, at the conclusion of a 120-day transition period, the Ahtisaari Plan calls for the transfer of all legislative and executive authority, currently vested in the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), to the new authorities of Kosovo.⁹ A NATO-led military mission would continue to provide security within the province (attesting to the continuing ethnic tensions and periodic outbreaks of violence).¹⁰ An EU mission, under the auspices of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), would deploy a large number of personnel for up to two years to "monitor, mentor and advise in the area of the rule of law, generally, while retaining certain powers, in particular, with respect to the judiciary, police, customs, and correctional services."¹¹

While the details of the Ahtisaari Plan were never really in doubt, the reactions to it were varied. One US-based commentator, lamenting that Washington and the Albanian-Kosovars have always refused to countenance any partition of the territory, argued that "the likely plan

[‡] Allegations concerning corruption and criminality within the Albanian-Kosovar leadership have circulated for some years now, and have been the subject of a variety of publications. See for example; "Unconfirmed Reports Link Kosovo Liberation Army to Drug Trade" *Stratfor*, 26 March 1999; Mark Almond. "What the KLA really is" *The Spectator*, 6 April 1999 and "Dealing with the devils: Who runs the KLA", *The Spectator*, 6 April 1999; Neil Barnett. "The criminal threat to stability in the Balkans, *Jane's Intelligence Review*, April 2002, pp. 30-32; V. Groginsky. "Kosovo: The Current Criminal State, and How it Developed" *Defence and Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy*, November 2006, pp. 9-13; Gerald R. Copley. "Kosovo and Regional Crime" *Defence and Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy*, February 2007, pp. 8-9; and, Renate Flottau and Walter Mayr. "How High is the Price for Peace?" *Der Spiegel*, 5 February 2007.

[§] Hereafter referred to as the Ahtisaari Plan.

gives too little to Albanians and takes too much from Serbs.”¹² But such nuanced opinion has largely been absent in the larger and more formal international discussions. More than a month before the plan had been formally presented to the Security Council, NATO allies strongly endorsed it, arguing that delay risked fostering instability throughout the Balkan region.¹³ The Serbian reaction was predictably hardline. During a television broadcast the day the Plan was announced, President Boris Tadic emphatically declared that “I told Ahtisaari that Serbia and I, as its president, will never accept Kosovo’s independence.”¹⁴ The then foreign minister, Vuk Draskovic, stated that Ahtisaari had “overstepped the mandate given to him by the UN secretary-general”, and Premier Vojislav Kostunica’s conservative party issued a document declaring that Serbia should sever relations with any government that recognises Kosovo’s independence.¹⁵ Such views reflect the deep-seated belief of the majority of Serbs (85 percent) – two-thirds strongly – that Kosovo should remain part of Serbia.¹⁶

Even before the recent Bush visit to Tirana, therefore, the US publicly endorsed the Ahtisaari Plan. Unlike the former Finnish president, American officials were very explicit in their comments that independence was the consequence of its acceptance. Speaking before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs in mid-April, Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns noted “supervised independence for Kosovo is now the only way forward.” Adding that over 90 percent of the local population are ethnic-Albanians, who refuse to be ruled by Belgrade, he rejected as not credible any form of autonomy for Kosovo within the Serbian state. “Until there is clarity, Kosovo’s undefined status will be a source of increasing tension and instability.” As a result, he argued, the international community has no other option to recognising the province’s independence, and to do so as quickly as possible.¹⁷

Russia and Kosovo

The Russian reaction after the details of the Ahtisaari Plan were first made public was very critical. That much was expected, and attention focused instead on how far Russia would go in expressing that opposition. The Russian ambassador to the UN, Vitaliy Churkin, avoided press inquiries as to whether or not Moscow was prepared to use its veto in the Security Council when the Plan was presented. Obviously, the Russians were not about to give away their game plan. Nevertheless, Churkin rejected the US argument that his country was simply stalling on the issue, and argued, on the contrary, that haste by the international community in resolving the Kosovo question was inadvisable:

We are asking that the overall negotiations continue. This is the most important issue before the Security Council this year. It may well be the most important issue this decade, with an enormous potential and international implications.¹⁸

Foreshadowing what Putin did weeks later at the G-8 Summit in Germany, Churkin called for a renewed effort to find a negotiated settlement. However he went further than that, and stated that “the issue has been complicated by those who provided false signals based on false promises in a situation in which they should not have done it and based on Security Council Resolution 1244.” Having taken dead aim at the US-backed policy of standards and status, the Russian ambassador noted that his government would ask that a comprehensive analysis of the implementation of SC Res. 1244 be made by the Security Council. Familiar with the contents of the two Eide Reports, Churkin was obviously hoping to underscore how little progress has actually been made in Kosovo.

Russia's public position on Kosovo's final status has been based on two arguments. First, Russia has consistently rejected the arguments advanced by Washington in support of Kosovo's independence. As it did when it rejected the NATO-led war in 1999, Moscow has framed its opposition to the current plan for Kosovo's independence as a defence of international legal norms. Putin has stated that without Belgrade's explicit approval, granting independence would represent a violation of Serbia's sovereignty and would pose a direct threat to the principle of respect for the territorial integrity of states. Imposing a border change on Serbia is, Russian policy is arguing, inconsistent with a generally accepted principle of international law and violates European agreements, such as the Helsinki Final Act (1975) and the Charter of Paris (1990). "People are trying to convince us this problem can be resolved without getting agreements from...Serbia." Putin told a news conference at the G-8 Summit, adding that "[w]e believe this is wrong and does not correspond to moral or legal norms." And just as the US has nailed its flag to the cause of Kosovar statehood, Russia has repeatedly assured Serbia that it will oppose any move by the international community to grant independence to that province. In a February 2007 statement made during a visit to Munich, Putin emphasised that "[o]ur position is that we will adhere to this principle: If we see that one of the parties is clearly unsatisfied with the proposed solutions, we will not support such a decision."¹⁹ More recently, during a heated discussion of foreign ministers preceding the G-8 Summit, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov echoed his leader's view, arguing that "[t]he fate of Kosovo, the fate of Serbia on the whole should be decided through their direct talks rather than in New York, Potsdam or in any other formats."²⁰

The second argument that Russia has made in opposing the Ahtisaari Plan is that, far from being unique as many Western leaders have argued, many countries are confronted by secessionist demands similar to those arising from Kosovo's troubled past. Granting independence to Kosovo could, therefore, legitimise other secessionist movements, including several in the land area of the former Soviet Union. Moscow rejects the argument made by a number of senior political figures in Western governments that granting independence to Kosovo would not be a precedent. At the Heiligendamm Summit, Putin was emphatic in drawing a comparison with some other longstanding secessionist provinces that have sought statehood:

No one can name for us a single difference between Kosovo and separatist conflicts such as in Georgia, Moldova and Azerbaijan. So the ruling [on Kosovo] should be universal. If we come to the conclusion that the principle of a nation's right to self-determination is more important than territorial integrity then we will have to stick to that principle all over the world."²¹

Interestingly, in the three cases he cited, the Western Powers oppose the secession of ethnic regions – South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Trans-Dniestr and Nagorno-Karabakh, respectively – fearing that it would threaten further the stability of the Caucasus. According to media reports, the Russian charge that the West was engaged in selective reasoning was also applied to another, even more contentious issue. During the gathering of G-8 foreign ministers prior to the Summit itself, Lavrov is reported to have asked his counterparts why they were in such a hurry to grant independence to Kosovo, but had failed to do likewise for the Palestinian people.²²

Moscow's defence of principles might appeal to legalists and a broader international audience beyond Europe, but the refusal to compromise on Kosovo must nonetheless be set against a backdrop of recent Russian foreign policy challenges to the US and its European allies. Together, they would seem to point to a desire by Putin to undo the European order that emerged in the wake of the USSR's collapse and what he believes is the "greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century."²³ It is beyond the scope of this paper to assess whether Russian officials, including the president, sincerely believe that their country's security has declined during the past 17 years. It is enough to know that like other statesmen in history, Putin is trying to advance a national agenda – which has both domestic and international dimensions -- by taking advantage of a putative adversary's vulnerabilities, in this case the profound dislike of current US policies in Europe and the political weakness of the Bush Administration. This strategy necessarily heightens tensions in the hope, one can assume, that Washington's European allies will pressure the US to offer concessions on any Kosovo settlement to avoid damaging relations with Moscow.^{**}

What, therefore, is the general purpose of the Russian policy on Kosovo? Where does it seem to fit into the overall goals underlying Russian foreign policy? In a recent column in the widely-read daily, *Die Welt*, noted German historian Michael Stürmer argued that Putin (and, most likely, the Russian foreign policy elite²⁴) has not forgotten that the NATO-led war against Serbia in 1999 was waged despite the lack of UN sanction. Indeed, the approval of the UN was never sought because it was assumed that Russia would never support such an action. Due to its own weakness at the time, there was nothing that Moscow could do to hinder NATO's decision. Now, like all traditional Great Powers that have suffered a significant defeat and that have recovered some of their strength and confidence, Russia wants *compensation*.²⁵ In more modern parlance, *compensation* is the diplomacy of linkage in which Russia's opposition to Kosovo's independence could be traded for concessions elsewhere. Stürmer's assessment might well be correct for, unlike the 1914 analogy that many commentators tend to cite, Russia's commitment to Serbia in recent years has largely been rhetorical. In fact, until quite recently, Moscow avoided confrontation with the West over the issue of Kosovo and was careful not to inflate Belgrade's expectations about its support.^{††} Moreover, the withdrawal of Russian military forces from both Bosnia and Kosovo in 2003, only four years after the war, purportedly followed an analysis by the Defence Ministry, later leaked, that Russia no longer had any strategic interests in the Balkans.²⁶ It seems likely, therefore, that Kosovo is simply a diplomatic device to advance more important interests and, as one writer observed, "for Putin [it] is only a playing card in high-stakes poker with the USA."²⁷

That poker game would seem to involve using delaying tactics in order for the natural destabilizing dynamics of Kosovar society to challenge Western, particularly US, claims that

^{**} Such tactics have been used before during the Cold War era, though sometimes without success. One recalls, for example, the challenge to the West's policy of détente by the Soviet deployment of the SS-20 intermediate-range missiles that threatened the viability of the NATO strategic doctrine. In that instance, Western resolve and the costs of a new arms race led the Soviets to a negotiated settlement.

^{††} In early-2007, former Serbian foreign minister Vuk Draskovic warned his countrymen against relying exclusively on Russia using its veto in the Security Council to preserve Serbian territorial integrity. "It is one thing to say, "we will not support the solution", and it is quite another to say "we will oppose it." See "Serbian Minister Says Russia Never Promised Veto" *RFE/RL Newsline*, 12 March 2007.

the province is ready for independence. As the second Eide Report indicated, an upsurge of local unrest, similar to what happened in 2004 when Albanian-Kosovars rioted, will likely accompany any further delay. Moscow would seem to be banking on the West's assessment that, as Theo Sommer entitled his recent article on Kosovo, "[t]he people have no more patience."²⁸ Fomented by an Albanian leadership that is frustrated by what it views as a tardy diplomatic process, a new upsurge of widespread rioting would put paid to the Ahtisaari Plan's timetable for a handover of political authority. Civil unrest would also make even the recognition of a unilateral declaration of independence difficult, most likely impossible, for the US and its allies. If these assumptions are correct, frustrating Washington's timetable is a cost-free but potentially very effective tactic to discredit US policy in Kosovo and create an opportunity to advance other interests, not exclusively tied to the region within which Kosovo resides. As one commentator aptly noted, "[a]n outbreak of violence on the Field of Blackbirds^{††} is now the core of the Russian Kosovo policy."²⁹

For its part, Washington has tended to be very dismissive of the Russian position on Kosovo, even before the recent worsening of relations. This may well have been due to a belief that, in the end, Moscow's opposition would not translate into a veto in the Security Council. But it is clear that for some it was also a reflection of a deeper ideological view that sees Russian policy as retrograde. Moscow's is viewed as seeking to ensnare Serbia through its policy on Kosovo. Supporting Belgrade on Kosovo and thereby freezing a conflict there, so this logic goes, means creating a barrier to Serbia's integration with Europe. Senator Joseph Biden, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, wrote that "[a] Russian effort to delay a deal on Kosovo would be in keeping with the Kremlin's habit of fostering weak, subservient governments in formerly communist states." He added^{§§} that "Moscow has apparently reached the conclusion that impoverished, unstable regimes are easier targets for manipulation than prosperous independent countries."³⁰

Some administration officials, while less inflammatory, have been just as firm in regarding Russian opposition as anything more than a "speed bump" in the disposition of the Kosovo problem. While acknowledging that Moscow's experts on the region "are very good indeed", Assistant Secretary of State Dan Fried noted that "[i]n our view, in the American view, it's important to move ahead."³¹ Nicholas Burns was equally unyielding, if more frank. In his statement before the Congressional committee, he recalled a conversation with a Russian Deputy Foreign Minister in which he noted that "it has been the US and Europe which have made, by far, the greatest commitment of troops, money and political involvement in Kosovo for eight years." He stated that it was US and European forces that would have to deal with any disturbances that would arise if independence were deferred by the Security Council. Burns concluded by warning opponents of US policy that "any attempt to block Kosovo's independence will not succeed as Kosovo's independence is now, we believe, inevitable."³² Russia can be opposed to what the US is planning to do but it does not really matter, for Washington wants to see the Ahtisaari Plan implemented.

^{††} The "Field of Blackbirds" is the name of the battlefield in Kosovo where, on 28 June 1389, the medieval Serbian kingdom was defeated and destroyed by the Ottoman Empire.

^{§§} Due to his support for Kosovo's independence, Biden might be accused of confusing an outcome with a cause. Yet it is certainly true that weaker countries do tend to be opportunistic and, as is argued below, Russia has sought to capitalise on the apparent incoherence of Western policy on Kosovo.

European Reactions

Burn's assessment of Russia's limited policy reach is undoubtedly accurate, but such conclusions are nonetheless rather narrow. US interests in a resolution of the Kosovo dispute are not the same as those of Europe. Alongside a commitment to the principle of self-determination, the US views an independent Kosovo as a second Muslim state in Europe, and therefore a symbol of "US-Muslim partnership". For the US, therefore, Kosovo is a component of its most important concern, namely the ongoing war on terror. For Europe, that has never shared the US sense of extreme vulnerability that animates Washington's perspective on the "war on terror", the Kosovo question remains at its root the resolution of an ethnic dispute with necessary border changes. While both the US and its European partners can agree that Kosovo should have its independence recognised – although fault-lines run through the European "consensus" – the trans-Atlantic accord is rather shallow.

Beyond the search for a solution to a potentially explosive ethnic conflict for which NATO actually went to war, Kosovo is now, however, assuming a much larger importance. It represents a significant problem for European policy-makers on different levels. First, it threatens a further deterioration of the relationship being constructed between the EU and Russia. Alongside more general concerns about the impact of the Kosovo dispute on the growing commercial relationship between Russia and the EU, many EU member-states are increasingly dependent on Russian energy exports. In some cases, such as the Baltic states, Slovakia and Hungary, the dependence is nearly total. Russian willingness to "punish" countries with which it has political disagreements (e.g., the blockade of Polish meat, the energy embargo on Ukraine, and the cyber attacks on Estonia) has already led to a significant downturn in relations with Moscow. The EU-Russia Summit in Samara (18 May 2007) reinforced this trend when Putin and German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, whose country holds the EU's rotating presidency, engaged in a 45-minute long verbal duel at the closing press conference. One German reporter wrote that the hostile exchange, coming on top of everything else, "had withered chances for talks starting anytime soon over the EU's new strategic partnership agreement with Moscow."³³ These frictions have not only damaged relations (and, obviously, reflect underlying tensions) but have also accentuated differences within the EU itself over the most effective approach to relations with Moscow. Taken together, they seriously challenge the EU (and German-sponsored) policy of "harmonisation through integration" and reinforces the more hardline views of some member-states' governments. Some governments, such as Estonia's, that feel themselves most directly threatened by Russia over other issues, have therefore argued even more strenuously that the EU must stand united on the future of Kosovo or risk undermining their security.³⁴

Granting independence to Kosovo despite the absence of a UN mandate also risks seriously damaging Europe's long-term relations with Serbia. In mid-June, negotiations with Brussels on a possible Stabilisation and Association Agreement were resumed with Belgrade. This agreement would be, both parties assume, a prelude to eventual Serbian accession to the Union itself. Originally suspended in May 2006 as a result of Serbia's refusal to track down and arrest indicted war criminals, the negotiations were only restarted after both a new government was inaugurated in Belgrade and a new level of cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia had been attained. More likely, negotiations were also recommenced in an effort to provide *compensation* for Belgrade's acceptance of the Ahtisaari Plan. If so, EU strategists misread the current political

environment in Serbia. Given recent events, Serbia's leaders are openly challenging the utility of such talks. Premier Kostunica has stated that a good opportunity for the EU to demonstrate that it regards Belgrade as a partner would be to respect "the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia", and is strongly urging Brussels to declare that Kosovo is a part of the Serbian state.³⁵

Alongside alienating the Serbian leadership, the EU's endorsement of the Ahtisaari Plan has inadvertently created new opportunities for Russian-Serbian relations. That is of concern in Brussels. Moscow has sought to take advantage of Serbia's frustrations with the West to expand its influence in a region where, since the downfall of the USSR, it had largely been excluded by its own weakness and the attractiveness of membership in NATO and, especially, the European Union. Russian self-confidence and US advocacy of the Albanian-Kosovar agenda have significantly altered the attractiveness of those organisations in Belgrade. As in the years before 1914, Serbia, despite its new Western-oriented elite, has found no other Power willing to support it, save Russia. As a result, the notion of an "historical and natural alliance" between Serbia and Russia, however mythic, has yet again entered the discourse surrounding the two countries' relations, creating with it the expectation of a closer partnership. Moscow has taken advantage of this, and economic and political relations with Serbia have rapidly been improving. In late-2006, the Russian gas consortium, GazProm and the Serbian government signed a pipeline agreement linking Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece, Aeroflot recently announced that it plans to create a strategic partnership with Serbia's JAT Airways, and Russian banks are reportedly interested in investing in Belgrade.³⁶ Although improbable, should the Serbian government follow through on its threat to sever relations with any country that recognises Kosovo's independence, the Moscow-Belgrade connection will only grow stronger. In that case, the EU's plans for the peaceful integration of the Western Balkans would obviously be impaired.

Perhaps of more immediate political importance, the current approach to resolving the Kosovo problem poses a significant challenge to the EU's ideological commitment to multilateralism. This is not the first time that a Western response to events in Kosovo has done this. In 1999, the US led its NATO allies into a conflict with Serbia. Believing that it could not obtain a UN Security Council mandate due to Russian and Chinese opposition, the operation was authorised solely by the North Atlantic Council (NAC). While this was described by some critics of the NATO action as "unilateralism", the pressing circumstances of the Kosovo crisis overcame hesitations among Western governments to intervene without UN sanction.³⁷

The current situation over Kosovo is very different. There is no pressure on governments from media images of ethnic cleansing or fears of a region-wide war driving policy as was the case in 1999. Consequently, there is only a limited concern at this point that instability and conflict in Kosovo could spread into neighbouring lands. More informed observers, including NATO and EU leaders, do obviously fear the outbreak of unrest in Kosovo should the nationalist aspiration for independence not be granted. "A delay would really exhaust the patience of people in Kosovo," Austrian chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer recently stated, adding that "then there is the danger that everything would then explode."³⁸ The prominent German journalist, Theo Sommer, went even further by arguing that delay by the international community threatened to unleash an "Albanian intifada", creating the image of seeming unending civil unrest and bloodshed.³⁹ Fears of a breakdown of order are not unfounded, for there has

always been an undercurrent of violence in the Albanian-Kosovar cooperation with the international missions (i.e., UNMIK and KFOR) in the province. Given that the 1999 conflict is viewed by Albanian-Kosovars as a war of liberation, a tardy recognition of independence is almost certainly perceived by many there as the province being held hostage unjustly to the political games of others.⁴⁰ Even supposed moderates within the Albanian-Kosovar community, such as Agim Ceku, the premier of Kosovo, have argued that the frustration level of his people is growing and threatens the credibility of the international community.⁴¹ As a result, most EU leaders have publicly endorsed the US-backed plan of granting rapid independence to Kosovo and the 18 June 2007 meeting of the 27 foreign ministers urged that a Security Council resolution to that effect be adopted “in a timely fashion”.⁴²

Nevertheless, supporting independence for Kosovo in the face of Russian opposition necessarily means confronting the prospect of a Russian veto in the Security Council. This impediment to the rapid implementation of the Ahtisaari Plan has both angered and frustrated European officials. Olli Rehn, the EU Commissioner for Enlargement has argued that it is Europe, not Russia or the US, that would pay the price for the “chaos and instability in the Balkans” that would ensue from a failure to grant Kosovo independence. Accusing Moscow of contemplating unilateralism in its threat to veto a proposed Security Council resolution – “the ultimate unilateral act” – he called upon it to “respect responsible multilateralism” and support the Ahtisaari proposals.⁴³ Russian officials, who would most likely dispute the notion of responsible multilateralism, did not respond directly to Rehn’s statement.

While ignoring Russia was obviously not an unsolvable problem in 1999, the prospect of moving the Kosovo agenda forward against Moscow’s expressed wishes in today’s political environment is more troubling. European leaders are, therefore, concerned that any move toward Kosovo’s independence proceed according to agreed rules and with as much international support as possible. Given Moscow’s opposition, agreement beyond NATO’s membership has now become very difficult, but even within the Alliance and within the EU consensus is rather tenuous. Russian concerns about establishing a precedent have failed to resonate with some governments, namely the major European Powers. However, the Ahtisaari Plan’s solution strikes too close to home for other countries. Consequently, the public endorsement of the Plan – “a move in the right direction” according to former French foreign minister Philippe Douste-Blazy⁴⁴ – has been accompanied by an equally public voicing of serious reservations by a number of European governments, including Spain, Slovakia, Romania, Greece, and Cyprus.^{***} Despite efforts to obscure the differences, sometimes they do make very public appearances. During an early-April 2007 meeting of foreign ministers in Germany, observers at a press conference were treated to the curious spectacle of just such a disagreement among member-states. Moments before German Foreign Minister Steinmeier declared that the EU had a common position and that it was time to move Kosovo to the Security Council, his Slovakian counterpart, Jan Kubis, stated that there was no agreement among EU members on the issue.⁴⁵

*** Although a member of the Contact Group and a supporter of the Ahtisaari Plan, Italy, too, noted its concerns about the contours of a future settlement. In early-2007, Foreign Minister Massimo D’Alema stated that his country was “for a solution that will be accepted by both sides, that will end further conflicts by making sure neither side is humiliated.” (See “NATO expresses support for Ahtisaari plan on Kosovo” *International Herald Tribune*, 26 January 2007.) Without deviating from its support of the Ahtisaari Plan, D’Alema called for new talks between Belgrade and Pristina during a 8 June visit to Belgrade.

Moscow might see an advantage in the secession of certain disputed regions in neighbouring states, particularly in the Caucasus, but some EU members are fearful that secessionist struggles in their own countries might gain a new impetus by Kosovo's independence. Slovakia, for example, has voiced its concern that the special status being given to Albanian nationalists in Kosovo might well exacerbate relations with its own large Magyar minority.⁴⁶ In responding to Turkish support for the Ahtisaari Plan, a leading independent daily in Greece noted that the example of Kosovo might be used by Ankara to advance the claim to independence of Northern Cyprus, a statelet that only Turkey recognises.⁴⁷ And the Greek foreign minister during a mid-June visit to Belgrade emphasised that Athens much preferred a negotiated settlement, as opposed to one that threatened to destabilise the region.⁴⁸ For others, such concerns are categorically rejected. "Kosovo is a special case," Austrian chancellor Gusenbauer stated, drawing a distinction with other secessionist claims, "because it is a responsibility of the international community of states."⁴⁹ Yet, for those governments that have expressed concerns, there is a key failing of the logic of such assertions for it rests on the belief that those who would lead or are leading secessionist movements will agree to that interpretation.^{†††} There is no evidence that that is the case, and some evidence already available that the opposite is more likely. In Spain, for example, a spokesman for the Basque Nationalist Party was quoted in the media that the plan for Kosovo was a "very good precedent, and someday we could aspire to something similar."⁵⁰

It is important to note, therefore, that the public images of EU unity are not an expression of a deeply-felt consensus. In most cases, national reservations about the Ahtisaari Plan have so far been subordinated to the maintenance of a unified EU position. One of the most vocal critics of the idea of Kosovar independence has been Spanish Foreign Minister Alberto Navarro, who early on voiced his concern about the "fragmentation of countries in Europe":

We are worried that the European map is changing every year. Just a few months ago Montenegro popped up on our maps and now we're talking about an imposed independence for Kosovo without a proper legal basis.⁵¹

More recently, he clarified his country's position, adding that "Spain will however not break the unity of the EU."⁵² For the Europeans, then, there are two nightmare scenarios that could unfold. The first is the breakdown of the current consensus. That might happen if the dispute with Russia (and possibly other states in the UN General Assembly if it should be raised there) turns out to be very protracted, and individual EU member-states fear the impact on their own national interests of a long drawn out confrontation with Moscow. Indeed, as the controversy surrounding the future status of Kosovo grows and takes longer to resolve than was originally envisaged by Washington and its principal backers in Europe, the current unified position is almost certainly going to become more tenuous. But there is no guarantee that it will snap. A breakdown of the European consensus would obviously undermine Washington's policy in the Balkans – Europe's backyard – and have a negative impact on trans-Atlantic relations. And European policy-makers know very well that the collapse of the

^{†††} Consideration of independence for Kosovo is also generating demands for a further revision of Serbian borders to reflect the ambitions of ethnic minorities. One ethnic-Albanian guerrilla leader in Serbia's Presevo valley who fought Serb forces in 2000 and 2001 has called for unification of the Presevo valley area to a newly independent Kosovo. See "Presevo Ex-Guerrilla Demands it Join Kosovo" *Javno.org* [www.javno.com/pr.php?id+50822&1+en], 7 June 2007.

consensus on Kosovo would also present Moscow with an opportunity to exploit divisions in the Union over other contentious issues.

More serious, though, is the second scenario that would see the Albanian-Kosovar leadership unilaterally declaring independence out of frustration with the international community. In order to avoid such a development, the EU Special Envoy, Stefan Lehne, has warned the Albanian leadership in Pristina to do no such thing. While Washington has indicated that it would recognise a unilateral declaration of independence, the EU fears that its fragile unity on the issue would crumble.⁵³ It is impossible to know whether the Albanians, viewing the NATO military operations in 1999 as a war of independence, will be so restrained when it comes to declaring that that goal has been achieved. However, without a UN mandate, political approval of, and the legal basis for, the ESDP mission required by the Ahtisaari Plan will likely be jeopardised. “We do not know when, or whether there will be the right conditions for having a European mission take over for UNMIK,” Steinmeier recently observed.⁵⁴ European officials, however, have a clearer understanding of the situation. “We believe,” Hans-Gert Pöttering, the German president of the European Parliament stated, “that we need a [Security Council] resolution.”⁵⁵

If Moscow is only seeking some form of *compensation*, European leaders have so far failed to find a mechanism that would allow Russia a means of saving face while backing down from the position it has assumed on the future of Kosovo. It seems quite likely, however, that “saving face” is not really what Russia wants as *compensation* for its stalwart defence of Belgrade’s sovereignty. But the price to change its policy is possibly too high for European leaders and Washington to bear – at the moment. Confronted by Putin’s intransigence at the Heiligendamm Summit, French President Nicholas Sarkozy proposed that the implementation of the Ahtisaari Plan be delayed for six months, during which Belgrade and Pristina could attempt to find a negotiated resolution to their differences. If no such resolution were found, Kosovo would be granted immediate independence under international supervision.⁵⁶ It is not clear if this proposal had been prepared in advance, but it is difficult to see how it was ever expected to appeal to Moscow, or to create even the most remote possibility of a negotiated settlement. Like the Rambouillet Accords in early 1999, the intent of Sarkozy’s “compromise” seemed to have been designed less to resolve differences and more to isolate Serbia without any form of *compensation* for Russia. Four days after the summit had concluded (on 12 June), five members of the Contact Group (all but Russia) convened in Paris.⁵⁷ Shortly after, media reports indicated that a draft Security Council resolution that resembled the Sarkozy proposal had been agreed to during the Paris meeting had been presented to Russia.⁵⁸ The Russian reaction was to protest its exclusion from the meeting as “unacceptable, and to reject the draft resolution.”⁵⁹

Conclusion

From the point of being ignored in 1999, Russia has skilfully maneuvered itself into the central position of determining Kosovo’s future. It has done so by playing upon the longstanding weaknesses of the West’s position on the issue. As with most diplomatic efforts, however, it has been accompanied by some political costs. The question is whether Moscow is prepared to accept those costs – and so far it appears that is willing to do so – in order to advance its larger foreign policy interests. Both the US and its European partners are openly frustrated with the position that Russia has taken. “Russia continues to reject every solution that Serbia does not approve,” Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried told a Senate

committee on 22 June, adding that “We believe that such a stance is destabilising and inconsiderate.”⁶⁰ But beyond recognising a unilateral declaration of independence that the European leaders understand would create both political and legal difficulties in future relations with Kosovo, the US has not yet proposed any new solutions. Washington is not, after all, facing the same sorts of pressures that its European partners must confront and is itself strongly committed to its own policy objective, component as it is of the larger and more serious war on terror.

At its 19 June meeting of foreign ministers, the 27 EU states adopted a different tack: to postpone the final decision in the hope that EU-sponsored negotiations might yield a different outcome than those conducted by Ahtisaari. “The Kosovo issue is not a Russian problem, and it is not a American problem.” Slovenian foreign minister Dmitrij Rupel stated, “It is a European problem, therefore we should stand up to our responsibilities.” Nevertheless, moving the negotiations to the halls of a European Commission building in Brussels will not overcome the basic incompatibilities of the two principals – Belgrade and Pristina. So it is difficult to see the EU’s position as anything more than an effort to buy time in the *hope* that some new development might arise to solve the problem that it now confronts. The terms of a negotiated agreement that will embrace the Albanian-Kosovar goal of independence and, at the same time, respect Serbia’s territorial integrity are hard to conceive. Modern understandings of sovereignty and independence do not admit very many qualifications. Without resorting to some sort of formula based on the complicated political thinking of the medieval and early modern eras, the two positions cannot be reconciled.^{†††} Nevertheless, beyond the essential incompatibility of the two sides’s aims, the attitude toward any resumption of talks is equally inconsistent: the Albanian-Kosovars have declared the Ahtisaari Plan to be non-negotiable, while Belgrade is calling for no time limit on any negotiations.⁶¹

Taken together, these are not the ingredients for success in pursuing a diplomatic solution to the impasse the US, the EU and Russia find themselves in. But the situation is not just due to the behaviour of the regional actors. It also flows directly from the inability in 1999 to reconcile the differences between NATO and Russia creating a vulnerability that Moscow has adeptly (so far) exploited: and also because of a refusal by the Western Powers to acknowledge that their intervention in 1999, far from being politically neutral, radically transformed the political landscape in Kosovo by significantly advancing the nationalist agenda of the Albanian-Kosovars. SC Res. 1244’s respect for Yugoslavia’s sovereignty over Kosovo simply papered over a chasm between NATO’s declared objectives during the war and the transformed political environment on the ground in that war-torn province. The *status quo ante bellum* was no longer possible after Yugoslav military and police forces withdrew, NATO forces moved in, and Albanian-Kosovars undertook their own ethnic-cleansing campaign believing, probably correctly, that they had won a war of liberation.

^{†††} One such example might be the relationship between the Republic of Ragusa (the Croatian city of Dubrovnik) and the Ottoman Empire. In the 15th century, Ragusa signed a treaty with the Ottoman sultan by which it became a tributary state of his Empire. In return for a yearly tribute of gold, Ragusa was independent in most other respects. It was permitted to send and receive ambassadors and conduct its own foreign trade and relations, including entering into treaties and other agreements. While such a clever arrangement might be acceptable to Serbia (and a means of overcoming Russian opposition), it is unlikely that it would be welcomed by the Albanian-Kosovar leadership.

It is unclear in what directions future negotiations between the US, the EU and Russia over Kosovo will now move. A unilateral declaration of independence recognised only by the US would seriously undermine the legitimacy of a new Kosovar state and the mechanisms envisaged by the Ahtisaari Plan to see it through its birth pangs. And, yet, it is equally clear that the Bush Administration is bent upon seeing the future status of that disputed province resolved before it leaves office and it will be difficult for Washington to back away from its public support for Kosovar independence. If, as has been suggested in this paper, Russia is looking for some way to be compensated both for the humiliation it believes it suffered as a result of the NATO-led war in 1999 and its opposition today to the Ahtisaari Plan, then resolution of this issue will almost certainly come as a result of progress in other arenas. To date, however, the hope that such progress in other areas of dispute will occur is not at all evident, and most commentators expect that relations with Russia will become more, rather than less, difficult in the run-up to the Russian parliamentary election in December 2007 and the presidential vote in March 2008. What is more likely in the near-term is that the international community, namely the US and its European partners, will continue to urge patience upon the Albanian-Kosovars in order to prevent a deterioration of the security situation in the province while continuing to reassure them of their support for the goal of independence.

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Although many Western governments expected that the presentation in March 2007 to the Security Council of the plan prepared by former Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari would lead to a rapid resolution of the final status of Kosovo, controversy has instead erupted. Despite the formal endorsement by the United States, NATO and the European Union, Russia has indicated that it will not support any plan for Kosovar independence that is not agreed to by both Serbia and the Albanian-Kosovar leadership. Fearing the consequences of a Russian veto in the Security Council of any resolution containing the Ahtisaari proposals, the Western Powers have proposed a delay in the formal consideration of this issue to allow more time for negotiations. It is not clear if that will be sufficient to overcome the current divide. This Technical Memorandum discusses the reason for the recent divergence of policies between Russia and the Western Powers over the future status of Kosovo. It examines the roots of the dispute and the difficulties that Moscow's opposition is creating for European governments.

De nombreux gouvernements occidentaux s'attendaient à ce que le plan, présenté en mars 2007, par l'ancien président de la Finlande, M. Martti Ahtisaari, se traduise par un règlement rapide de la question du statut final du Kosovo. À la place, il en est résulté une controverse. C'est ainsi que, malgré l'appui officiel des États-Unis, de l'OTAN et de l'Union européenne, la Russie a fait connaître son intention de s'opposer à tout plan d'indépendance qui ne recueillera pas l'adhésion à la fois des dirigeants serbes et kosovars de souche albanaise. Craignant les conséquences d'un veto russe au Conseil de sécurité, si celui-ci est saisi d'une résolution contenant les propositions de M. Ahtisaari, les puissances occidentales ont proposé de reporter l'examen officiel de cette question, de façon à permettre la poursuite des négociations. Nul ne sait si cela suffira à aplanir les divergences actuelles. La présente note tente d'expliquer la raison des divergences récentes entre la Russie et les puissances occidentales sur le futur statut du Kosovo. Il porte sur les causes profondes du différend et met en lumière les difficultés auxquelles sont confrontés les gouvernements européens par suite de l'opposition de Moscou.

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Ahtisaari, Martti
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Ethnic Conflict - Kosovo
Ethnic Conflict – Conflict Resolution - Kosovo
European Union – European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP)
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Great Powers – Relations – Post-Cold War
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