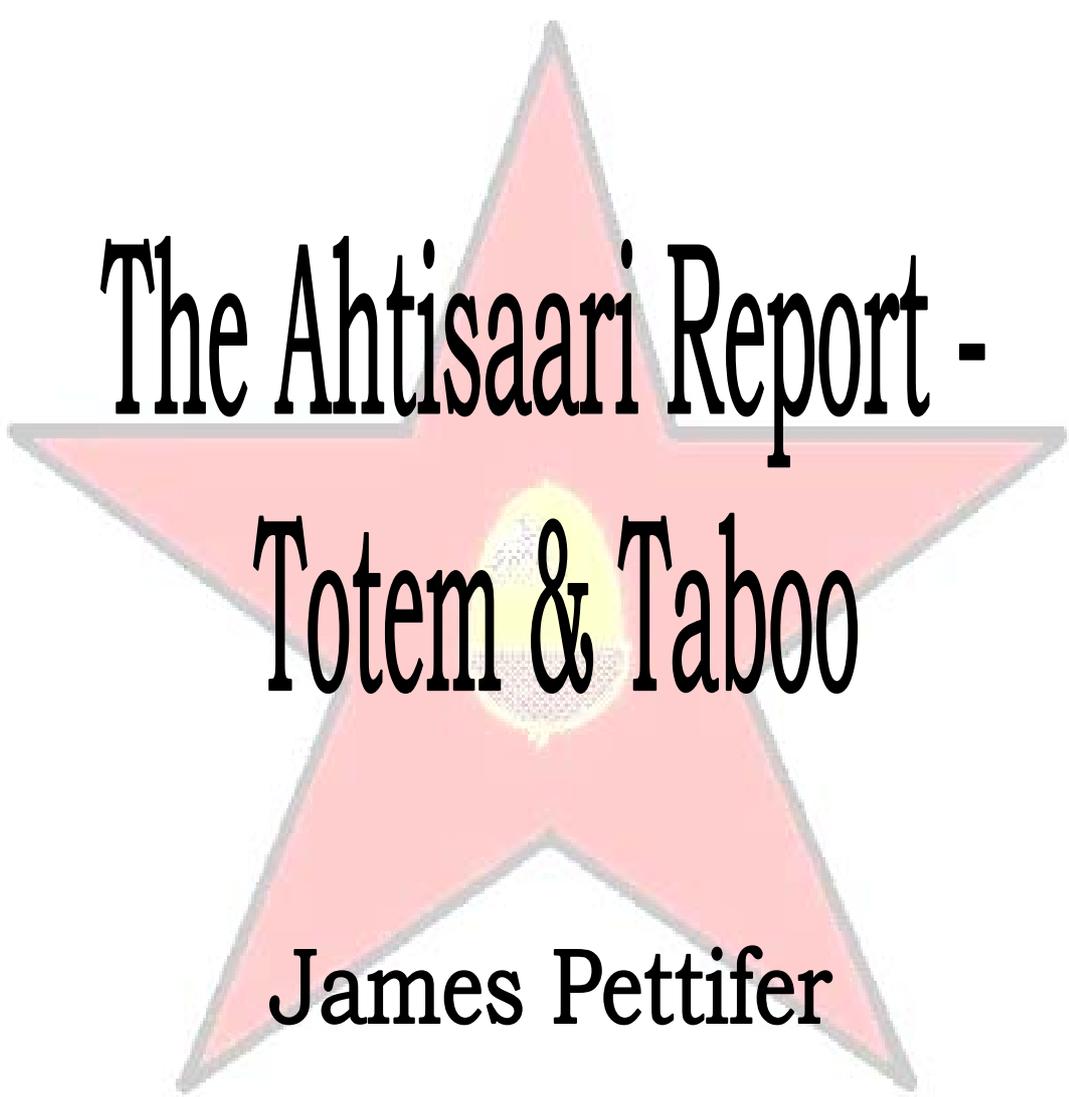


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**The Ahtisaari Report -
Totem & Taboo**

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The Ahtisaari Report – Totem & Taboo

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Key Points

- * The Ahtisaari Report is an important milestone which opens up new perspectives.
- * But it contains difficult ambiguities, which may mean that it does not contribute to regional stability as much as its authors hoped.
- * On some issues, i.e. heritage, citizenship, opening a road to possible partition, it contains major concessions to traditional Serbian nationalism.
- * Events on the ground are already moving fast and it will need vigorous and united action by the international community if a regional crisis is to be avoided.

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Introduction

The international community has been committed to a resolution of the problem of the status of Kosovo for the last three years, following the violence in March 2004 and the subsequent Eide report on progress on the 'Standards before Status' policy. After talks between Belgrade and Prishtina began in 2005, a resolution of the issue had been expected in autumn 2006, with the delivery of a status report by veteran Finnish diplomat Martti Ahtisaari, the United Nations envoy. This report was delayed as a result of the onset of elections in Serbia, where it was felt that an offer of Kosovo independence by the United Nations might bring a victory for the ultra-nationalist Radical party.

The risks inherent in this policy were pointed out by the International Crisis Group and others at the time.¹ The policy in essence rested on the viewpoint that an agreed solution of the Kosovo problem between Belgrade and Prishtina might be possible, with 'moderates' around pro-European President Tadic able to influence policy in the desired direction. In reality, Kosovo policy has changed little in Serbia in the last three years, with little daylight between the positions of the Kostunica group and the Radical party, and Tadic himself frequently refusing to countenance the possibility of independence. There has also been little underlying change in voting patterns in Serbia since the overthrow of the Milosevic regime in autumn 2000. The danger of this approach was that the delay on the deal would be seen on the Albanian side as yet another concession by the International Community (IC) to the government in Serbia, and lead to the strengthening of radical and oppositional activity in the majority Kosovo Albanian community at the political level, coupled with a risk of street disorder and violence. The Ahtisaari report was meant to quell these fears, and provide a framework for a political solution. It attempts to do so by the provision of totemic 'sovereignty' for the Albanians, while maintaining the taboo of full independence with full sovereignty and a seat for the new state in the United Nations. But as in the world of academic anthropological discourse, as Levi Strauss showed, the structure of taboo is linked to fear, in this case, fear of a genuinely independent Kosovo.

The Report

The document published on 2 February 2007 sets out a vision of supervised self-rule for Kosovo, without the word 'independence' being used anywhere in it. The long negotiations over the last eighteen months have resulted in proposals for a number of semi-self-governing municipalities, some of which are based on centres of Serbian heritage tradition, particularly the monasteries and historic churches, but also on current settlement patterns.² When the talks started, on the Albanian side there were reservations about what was involved, but in an atmosphere where there was widespread trust in the intentions of the international community about

the end outcome - independence. The Albanians were in a poor moral position to object to the heritage protection plans in view of the widespread damage and destruction of Serbian Orthodox monuments in the March 2004 violence, and there was a feeling that given the general philosophical commitment of the US government to the independence principle, this outcome was inevitable.³

A danger signal appeared, though, from the Albanian point of view, in summer 2006, when in addition to the expected plans for the Serb-dominated region north of the Ibar river in Mitrovica, a more or less linked chain of Serb municipalities were recognized, including ex-mining centres such as Novo Brdo, that would lead to a more or less contiguous region of Serb self-rule in south east Kosovo. These communities will be financed in many areas of life directly from Belgrade, and this, if implemented, will give Serbia a continuing role in the internal affairs of Kosovo.

At the same time, there was a reevaluation of the role of the special international representative after the status settlement, and it is clear that that office will have considerably more reserve powers over the new Kosovo administration than was originally envisaged. Thus, in the arcane language of the Kosovo status discussion with the 'devil in the detail' factor always prominent, it appears that rather than the broad brush concept of independence of the 2004-2006 period, there is a reversion to the concept of 'conditional independence' which was current in discussions in 1999-2003. In some Kosovo Albanian eyes, this is but a short step to a return to the 'autonomy within Serbia' position of Belgrade governments, and represents a major reversal of policy.

Textual Issues

The language and presentation of the report do little to dispel these ethnic Albanian majority fears, with the exception of the sections on the capacity of the transition state to join the international financial community organizations and write treaties. Apart from the major issue of the absence of the word 'independence', there are verbal formulations that indicate a view of institutional development within Kosovo very reminiscent of the Bosnian failure, with its privileged position for the Serbs in 'Republika Serbska', with the added advantage for the Serbs of the financial policy lever referred to above.

The international community laid down in the post-1999 environment that Kosovo was to become a multicultural society. In designated areas, Serbian culture, language and ethnic values will be allowed to develop under special rules that are not generally consistent with European Union minorities law for multicultural societies and set up de facto enclaves for a particular group.⁴ A key question of the entire period since 1990 has been whether the Serbs are prepared to live as normal minorities within societies dominated by other majorities, or whether they expect special status if they do so. In Bosnia they received a special status in 'Republika Serbska', and it appears that the same process is at work in the Kosova talks.

There is no statement at all in the 'constitutional' paragraphs of any notion of popular sovereignty, and no mention of the legal sovereignty - current or future - of the Kosovo Parliament.⁵ The role of this body is envisaged, in Article 14, in the transition period, as only to approve legislation which is passed down to it by the international authority and UNMIK, the current UN government. It will be difficult or impossible for the Kosovo parliament to exert any effective authority at all, as Para 14.2.1 of the report provides that 'UNMIK Regulations promulgated by the SRSG [Special Representative of the Secretary General] pursuant to UNSCR 1244...

shall continue to apply, unless otherwise provided for in this Settlement, until their validity expires, or until they are revoked or replaced by legislation regulating the same subject matter in accordance with the provisions of this settlement’.

This is perhaps the key paragraph in the document, and means in practice that the whole panoply of the immediate post-crisis period 1999-2000 administrative regulations will continue as Kosovo’s de facto law for an indeterminate period, and that the new international representative will have reserve powers as draconian, if not more so, than the equivalent post in Bosnia. On the key issue of the drafting group for the new constitution, the parliament has little or no role, and the work will be done by a working group centred on the president. The president (Annex 1, Article 4), will also have the power to return legislation the parliament has passed. It would appear, from preliminary data that is emerging, that a constitution is envisaged which will give very extensive powers to the president, with few ‘checks and balances’, or constitutional constraints.

In the security field, there will be no local control at all, or human rights protection, over the extensive IC-controlled intelligence, phone tapping and ‘secret state’ elements of the UNMIK/KFOR security apparatus. The proposals for the development of the Kosovo Protection Force are ambiguous, no doubt deliberately so, but prescribe a process of IC-supervised reorganization that could lead to major ejections of existing personnel from the force on political grounds. The authors of the report do not appear to realize, to judge from the wording used, that the current Kosovo Protection Corps membership has been extensively vetted in the last four years, has been trained by NATO-country advisers and an attached (usually British) senior officer, and was recruited at least partly on the basis of responsible political criteria and non-involvement in possible war crimes. Another taboo, in this context, is the absence of the word ‘army’ from the document, or any future perspective derived from it, and it is hard to see how the position of NATO liaison leadership of the force is to be fully integrated with the principle of control by elected civilian institutions.

In this sense, therefore, the Report is not so much an opening to a new democracy in Kosovo as an institutionalization of the existing international community framework for ‘supervised government’, with extremely coercive reserve powers held by the international organizations, little or no vision of building a modern European parliamentary democracy, and the continuation of a dependent and ineffective political elite with little real responsibility for their own country.⁶

In the language used over some key heritage issues, there is a marked process of elision and rewriting of recent history from a Serb nationalist viewpoint, so that, for instance, in Annex 4, Article 6, ‘Return of Archaeological and Ethnological Exhibits’, the looting of Prishtina Museum by retreating Serbian army units in June 1999 is described as ‘objects which were taken on loan from the museums of Kosovo for temporary exhibitions in Belgrade’. The same verbal formulation could have been used to explain, in polite terms, the theft of the Jewish cultural heritage in the Weimar Republic by the Nazis.

There are other provisions in the Report where the authors ignore the likely effects of the provisions on the ground. For instance, in the Annex ‘Constitutional Provisions’ the position of the 5-7% Serb minority will be augmented by provision 1.6, which sets out the right for ‘all citizens of the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia habitually residing in Kosovo on January 1 1998 and their direct descendants to obtain Kosovo citizenship regardless of their current residence and

of any other citizenship they may hold'. This will mean that the gerrymandering of the Milosevic period in Kosovo can return under democratic legitimisation, as the very numerous members of the Milosevic-period police, army, security and repressive apparatus who were undoubtedly resident in Kosovo then but left in 1999 will now be able to claim citizenship rights. These may be as many as 50,000 people, and could more than double the size of the Kosovo Serb voting body in many places, with a certain knock on effect of increasing ethnic tension. It would also bring a sharp swing of the Kosovo Serb community towards the nationalist far right. It is, of course, unclear, how many of these people would exercise the new citizenship rights.

Local and International Reactions

In Serbia, the whole report has been rejected, predictably, except by the small Liberal party. Martti Ahtisaari was summoned to London for a personal discussion with British Prime Minister Tony Blair to explain the absence of the concept of independence from the document. In Kosovo, the Report was presented in a carefully orchestrated way, but the 'spin' operations immediately ran into difficulties, with disagreement over whether Mr Ahtisaari should hold a press conference in Prishtina to present the document. There seems to have been considerable French pressure on UNMIK to downplay ethnic Albanian expectations. To his credit, Mr Ahtisaari decided to overrule some of these advisers, and 'face the music', as he put it. The Press event on 2 February was dominated by the first two questions, from an ethnic Albanian journalist of the moderate 'Koha Ditore' newspaper, asking whether Ahtisaari intended to reward Serbian ethnic cleansing by his work, and by a Belgrade journalist asking whether he intended to set up the division of Kosovo.

These representative questions indicate the great distance between the 'street' perceptions of the Report, and the carefully orchestrated responses of 'establishment' politicians on the Albanian side such as Hashim Thaci, the PDK leader, and Fatmir Sejdiu, the president, and his entourage. They also indicate continuities with successive UN Special Representatives' difficulties with the UN legal department in New York, with its strong European influences, where on many occasions after 1999 initiatives the SRSG wished to take have been blocked or delayed. Given these popular perceptions, even Prime Minister Agim Ceku felt impelled to point out the weaknesses of the Report, particularly after a meeting with leaders of the Kosovo Protection Force.

The Vetevendosje movement of radical students and young people called a mass demonstration in central Prishtina on 10th February, which led to violent clashes with the riot police, the deaths of two demonstrators, and the subsequent resignation of the Interior Minister and then the British police Commissioner, Mr Steven Curtis. The leader of the movement is Arben Kurti, a veteran 1990s student movement activist who spent time in gaol in Serbia at that time. In the post-1999 period he has worked closely with Adem Demaci, the elderly but still highly respected icon of Kosovo nationalism who served 28 years in gaol under communism.⁷

The main current priority of the international community in Prishtina is to try to reestablish the political authority of the 'respectable' leaders such as Thaci and Ceku, which has suffered serious setbacks under the pressure of events. Ceku made a strongly worded personal attack on Kurti soon after he was arrested and imprisoned. He has now rescinded this and has stated he wishes to meet Kurti for

political discussions on his release from prison.⁸ Thaci was forced to address angry meeting of the Pristina University students association in order to try to calm down feelings.

As a result of these events, and street-level impatience with the delays, the radical forces in Kosovo Albanian politics, the Levizja Kombetare per Clirimin e Kosoves, (the National League for the Liberation of Kosovo, LKCK) and the older Levizja Popullore e Kosoves (the Kosovo Peoples Movement, LPK, founded in 1982) have been propelled back into the centre of Kosovo Albanian political discourse after having a fairly marginal existence in recent years.⁹ The departure in the last week of February of Alliance party leader Ramush Haradinaj to stand trial at The Hague is likely to increase their practical influence, as Haradinaj was one of the few leaders to combine ex-LPK membership and wartime Kosovo Liberation Army credentials with a general adherence to international community policy positions.

Immediate Issues

It seems highly unlikely that the new talks between the Prishtina National Unity negotiating team and the Belgrade government which began on 21st February will produce much. Both sides have entrenched positions, and thanks to recent IC ineptitude and the violence in Prishtina on 10 February, the initiative is starting to pass to more radical forces on both sides. Serbian nationalists can hope that Russia will place a United Nations Security Council veto on independence, and even if that does not materialize, the influence of Russia in the region, as elsewhere in eastern Europe, will become of more effective assistance to them.¹⁰

On the Albanian side, the summer 2006 split in the Kosovo Democratic League led for so long by Dr Ibrahim Rugova has led to the emergence of a viable political party for ex-leader Nevzat Daci, and recent opinion polls¹¹ indicate neck and neck support at around 30% for the LDK and Thaci's PDK. In many ways, the Ahtisaari report is an exercise in nostalgia for a Rugova-type president who would be easy for the international community to control, a feeble parliament, and a large and controlling bureaucracy, in fact, in many ways a nostalgia for the pre-1999 period of the late Titoist structures, before they were commanded by Milosevic. The development of the political parties in the last five years has all the time moved away from the pre-war period, and those with roots in the Titoist world, principally the LDK, have lost most support. The evolution and split in the LDK in the period since Rugova's death a year ago illustrates that the ground has moved under the feet of many international perceptions.

Partition - the Ghost in the Machine?

Although the subject of partition is another of the taboo terms in the Report, the economic opportunities for subsidy and other levers seem unlikely to hinder the possibility of community separation, particularly in the North Mitrovica, Leposavic Zubin Potok and Zvecan opstinas north of the Ibar. Unlike political options that might be of future interest to the Albanians, such as linking up with Albania, the Report does not specifically and explicitly rule out partition or cantonisation as a future option, and in Article 1, General Principles, the Report has no comment on the current borders of Kosovo, but only prohibits union with neighbouring states. Given that partition has been a regular policy option in the Serbian community

discourse for many years, and as recently as 2000 there was widespread violence in the Preshevo valley in southeast Serbia, this seems a serious omission.

A Paramilitary Threat?

There has been further violence in Prishtina, with a large explosion on 19th February which destroyed UNMIK vehicles. There are very large quantities of small arms in both communities, and UNMIK attempts in the past to collect them have been failures, with a 2004 amnesty only bringing in about 130 weapons over the whole of Kosovo. Although there are very small groups dedicated to paramilitarism in both communities, they will remain politically marginal on the Albanian side while there is some hope of political progress.¹² On the Serbian side, the main paramilitary role is to prevent 'outsiders' from having a presence in their communities, and elements of the 'bridgwatcher' system of community 'protection' in North Mitrovica seem to have been revived in recent months.

NATO has currently about 17,000 personnel in Kosovo, which in a security crisis could be reinforced, but it would be a highly unwelcome prospect, given resource pressures on NATO infantry from many other theatres. The difficulties with police responses to the 10th February demonstration would tend to belie claims that improved riot control training for the police would reduce the internal security input expected from NATO.

The problem of the Ahtisaari Report from the NATO viewpoint is that it offends many sections of the majority community, particularly key stability factor groups such as the Kosovo Protection Corps, and so some random incident of inter-ethnic tension/violence could rapidly spread, and it is doubtful how far many young Albanians would be restrained by the IC-linked PDK, AAK and LDK leadership from attacking their Serbian neighbours and vice versa. Some rural Serb communities have already been reported as having been told to leave Kosovo before independence,¹³ and it is difficult to imagine any kind of multiethnic society surviving in the Serb areas north of the Ibar River very long after the status decision. In some villages a large proportion of Serb-owned houses are said to be up for sale.¹⁴ Serbian refugee returns have more or less stopped in the last months.

Some International Factors of Relevance

Underlying the policy uncertainties implied by the Report are numerous crosscurrents in other international polities, which may have important effects on short-term events. These are listed below, in no particular order of priority

a) Kosovo and the US Diaspora.

The US based Albanian diaspora is a large and well-organized group, made up of about 500,000 people. Traditionally, the great majority has voted Republican, as white aspirant small business people who often live on the urban margin of majority black districts where the Democratic Party is the main political force. The Bush administration has a strong motive, with US presidential elections approaching, to have an independence decision made, as otherwise it is likely that many of the US Albanian diaspora will vote for Hillary Clinton, if she becomes the Democrats' candidate. Hillary Clinton has a long record of open support for Albanian aspirations. In the key swing state of Ohio, the ethnic Serb vote is believed to have gone more Republican in the last contest, and to have been a factor in the 2004

Bush victory in that state but in the mid-term elections recently seems to have largely returned to more traditional pro-Democrat voting allegiances.

b) The imminent departure of Tony Blair as UK Prime Minister is likely to strengthen Serbian intransigence, as many Serbs believe strongly that future UK governments, particularly any future Conservative government, would be sympathetic to them. This view is supported by a number of key Cameron policy adviser appointments, particularly that of Dame Pauline Neville Jones.

c) Islamic states, particularly Saudi Arabia with its substantial commitment to Kosovo reconstruction and large aid operation, are likely to be concerned about aspects of the Report, particularly the provision in Annex 1 (1.4) which states that 'Kosovo shall have no official religion', while at the same time the Report gives the Serbian Orthodox Church property and other rights which in most European societies would be seen as consistent with the position of an official religion. There is a Sunni majority of perhaps 65% of the population in Kosovo, with another 15% or so in other Muslim sects, although all statistics in this area need to be treated with considerable caution. There is no provision for a mechanism for reparations claims by a new Kosovo state or the Kosovo Islamic authorities for the extensive destruction of Ottoman and Islamic libraries caused by the Serbian security forces in 1999.

d) The Report is in many ways a political gift for Russian President Putin. It opens up almost every possible political option for Russia, at low cost, from inaction, to minor obstruction, to outright veto in the UN Security Council. It is possible that sections may have been drafted in the apparently provocative (in Albanian eyes) way that they are in order for Mr Ahtisaari to try to cut a deal with the Russians over the head of Belgrade, as he did with Chernomyrdin in 1999 to end the Kosovo war. If this backward-looking perspective is held in the UN - and it is not clear that it is - a change of Russian position towards an independent Kosovo would be a blessing for the international community, given the very many negative factors in the situation referred to above, and Putin, if so inclined, could no doubt exact a high price for it.

By contrast, if the report had envisaged a clear and outright recognition of full independence, and a clear determination for success, the opportunity for Putin to set the agenda for the probable looming confrontation over Kosovo would not exist. The central question in most European Foreign Ministries is likely to be the probability of this happening. The plethora of options the Report provides for Russian activity is likely to mean that Russia will not show its hand until the last possible minute in any diplomatic crisis.

Macedonian Influences

The Skopje government has been watching events closely and Prime Minister Gruevski has been giving positive signs for some months over the looming issue of Kosovo independence. The progress of reform based on the 2001 post-war Ochrid Accords has lately been slow, but community relations are much as usual and there is no reason to fear a renewal of Albanian paramilitary activity or inter-communal conflict as a result of the Report. However, after the publication of the Report, with its strong 'tilt' towards the Serbs, and surprising lacunae on border issues, the Macedonian Prime Minister reiterated his government's concerns over unsolved border issues between Kosovo and Macedonia, presumably to keep open a pressure

point for Skopje in the future diplomacy. Russia has made a number of investments recently in Macedonia, and may seek to further influence Skopje policy as a result.

The European Union

The Union now appears to be openly committed to the philosophy of independence but within it there are the usual divisions between countries like Greece, Slovakia, and Hungary which accept the current rhetoric in diplomacy but most of whose actions reinforce Serbia; countries with limited commitment to an independent Kosovo but who recognize it is now unavoidable and therefore wish to set up IC control mechanisms as embodied in the Report. The most important of these are usually Italy, Spain and France. The third group is genuinely in favour of independence at a serious level, such as Slovenia, the United Kingdom, Austria and Germany, and outside the EU, Switzerland.

These divisions will probably mean that the EU can play a constructive role as long as general progress towards a settlement is maintained but is likely to be impotent in a real crisis.

Albanian Influences

The Report was welcomed at a diplomatic level in Albania, but as it appeared in the final stages of a strongly fought local election campaign, did not initially receive much publicity. The violence of 10 February was, however, extensively reported, and caused much comment in the media, particularly television. A Kosovo crisis would be very unwelcome to the Berisha government, with its roots in the northern part of the country, and the government is likely to toe any US policy line that is put forward, after the bruising effects of the Gazprom debacle (see note 10), and US displeasure over the cancellation of the contract with General Electric for a new thermal power station at Vlora on the Adriatic coast.

Energy issues are important in Tirana at the moment, with national dependence on hydroelectric electricity generation made problematic by low recent rainfall and rising temperatures in the winter reducing mountain snow. The Balkan energy grid is not providing sufficient power to prevent major outages.

On the political issues, French influence is currently substantial in Tirana, with the Tirana government having the largest proportion of Francophone ministers in any East European government except Romania, and there will be conflicting influences on policy makers.

Some Policy Issues

The developments in Kosovo in the last few weeks have not followed the pattern intended by the international community. As so often in twentieth century history, particularly during the second, communist Yugoslavia, the power of events in the Kosovo street to change the political agenda has been evident. This was the case with the student demonstrations of 1981, the student and miners' actions in 1988-1989 centred on the Trepca mines, the Prishtina marches of February-March 1989 against the Milosevic regime, and the 2004 riots. There is no sign that awareness of this factor entered the calculations in the Vienna negotiations or the thinking of the

Bush administration in Washington. As a result, a dynamic has been set up that makes an agreed, negotiated deal almost impossible to envisage.

The IC now has to consider how an imposed solution can be engineered, and perhaps more important - for it would be possible simply to declare that the Ahtisaari recommendations were what was going to happen, come what may - how to make a deal stick. The limitations and subtext of the Report referred to above do not provide a very promising starting point.

Some necessary initiatives are clear - i.e. to try to strengthen the mainstream political leadership on the Albanian side, to try to prevent Serbian population movement, and to try to make the last stages of the UNMIK administration more functional and responsive to the popular mood.

The question of the relationship between the SRSG and the UN HQ in New York needs to be brought out into the open and the Kosovo policymaking process in the UN needs to be made more transparent. It has long been suspected on the Albanian side in Kosovo that there was important influence on top UN policymakers from a network of unelected and unaccountable ex-officials, some British, who were involved in the Bosnian crisis. The problems of Kosovo are quite different from those of Bosnia and need independent analysis and thought.

A number of measures could be considered to build popular confidence in the transition process, which is currently at a low ebb. A referendum held under IC supervision with an independence question would provide an outlet for political energy that otherwise might go in destructive directions. The Vienna negotiations need to be rapidly terminated, and selected countries could initiate a process of rapid recognition of Kosovo. It is sometimes forgotten, in the context of a future UN resolution, that the UN recognises existing realities, it does not authorise them on many occasions. It is not necessary for a new UN resolution to be passed before this starts to take place. Above all, the IC needs to abandon the fiction that much has changed in Belgrade over national issues since autumn 2000, and recognise the continuities in Serbia rather than addressing the country in an atmosphere of wishful thinking.

Endnotes

¹ See ICG Report “Kosovo’s Status: Difficult Months Ahead”, December 2006, and “Kosovo Status: Delay is Risky”, November 2006.

² I.e. the monasteries at Decani, Gracnica and elsewhere.

³ For a study of the heritage losses, see ‘Kosovo-Christian Orthodox Heritage and Contemporary Catastrophe’. Ed A. Lidov ‘Indrik’, Moscow, 2007’

⁴ I.e. in the section ‘General Principles’ of the report, it states that ‘the exercise of public authority in Kosovo shall be based upon the equality of all citizens’, something that the provisions for Serbian municipalities often would in practice contradict.

⁵ Compare, for instance, with the clear rejection of the past in a comparable ‘popular empowerment’ constitution document in the Balkans, the post-junta Greek 1975 Constitution.

⁶ A Prishtina based diplomat summed this up neatly, as quoted in The London Guardian newspaper (P.23) on February 20th, stating ‘The Serbs got everything they asked for, but will still reject it in its entirety’.

⁷ In an important newspaper interview (Epoka e Re, Prishtina, 17 February 07), Demaci explained his involvement in the movement as an initiative against what he sees as the undemocratic control by external interests over the party leaders such as Haradinaj, Surroi and Thaci.

⁸ Kurti is currently imprisoned for 30 days while an international investigator analyses the rioting. It is perhaps significant that UNMIK police did not dare to arrest Adem Demaci.

⁹ For the LKCK's views on the Report, see 'Clirimi', Prishtina, Nr 217, January 2007. The League sees the document as 'mysterious', and having various hidden agendas. While some of these fears are no more than conspiracy theories, others may have more substance, particularly in the lack of any mechanism to prevent de facto partition in some areas, and the absence of a clear and irrevocable commitment to current borders. It is an indicator of the decline in respect, particularly among the young, for leaders such as Ceku and Thaci that these views are finding a wider audience. The danger with their currency is that those disillusioned by PDK and AAK leadership 'collaboration' will turn towards paramilitary and underground organizations in the absence of credible nationalist leadership.

¹⁰An interesting indicator of the growing regional influence of Russia in ostensibly unfavourable political environments can be seen in the near-deal between Albania and Gazprom, in defiance of the US-led AMC consortium to build an east-west pipeline across the Balkans. Intense pressure from the US Embassy on Berisha in Tirana reversed the initial pro-Gazprom decision.

¹¹ OSCE Kosovo Information, 20 February 2007.

¹² For paramilitary background, see 'The Albanian Question' by James Pettifer and Miranda Vickers, I.B.Tauris, London and New York, 2006.

¹³ James Pettifer interview with ex-UNMIK senior official, 12 February, 2007.

¹⁴ See 'The Guardian', February 20th 2007.

Want to Know More ...?

See:

James Pettifer, "Kosova Negotiations – Background and Perspectives" *Conflict Studies Research Centre*, Balkans Series, 06/08, February 2006.

Amadeo Watkins, "Moving Kosovo Forward: Reality V Fiction", *Conflict Studies Research Centre*, Balkans Series, 06/55, November 2006.

James Pettifer, "Kosova Express", *C Hurst*, London 2004.

Tim Judah, "Kosovo - War and Revenge", London and Yale 2000.

James Pettifer & Miranda Vickers, "The Albanian Question", *I B Tauris*, London & New York, 2006.

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