



KOSOVO

COMPROMISE 2007

Your daily-updated analyses, charts and solution plug-ins for the Kosovo crisis.

October 22, 2008

A partial UN victory for Serbia

By Tony Barber, Financial Times

<http://blogs.ft.com/brusselsblog/2008/10/a-partial-un-victory-for-serbia/>

What do Albania, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru and Palau have in common with the United States? They were the only countries that supported the US when the United Nations General Assembly voted this month on a Serbian-drafted resolution to seek an opinion from the International Court of Justice on the legality of Kosovo's declaration of independence in February.

Even though the court's ruling will have no legal force, Serbia interpreted the UN vote as a diplomatic triumph. Seventy-seven countries, including Serbia itself, backed the resolution. Not one of Washington's Nato allies supported the US. Seventy-four countries abstained.

The vote was not an unqualified success for Serbia, however. Serbia won support from heavyweights such as Brazil, China, India, Mexico, Russia and South Africa, but it found itself in disagreement with most members of the European Union - the very institution it hopes to join one day.

Even so, the vote was a pretty poor advertisement for European unity. Most of the European Union's 27 member-states abstained, but five supported Serbia. They were Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Slovakia and Spain. Each fears that Kosovo's independence will reinforce separatist or autonomist tendencies in their own countries: Turkish Cypriots in Cyprus, ethnic Hungarians in Romania and Slovakia, Basques in Spain. For these five countries, the integrity of the national territory is self-evidently a superior principle to a united EU foreign policy.

Interestingly, Bosnia-Herzegovina was absent from the UN vote and so did not even manage to cast an abstention. But no one knows better than EU officials on the ground in Bosnia that the handling of the Kosovo issue has made the Bosnian Serbs more difficult to deal with than ever.

Immediately after the UN vote, Macedonia and Montenegro dealt a blow to Serbia by recognising Kosovo's independence. This prompted thousands of pro-Serbian demonstrators to take to the streets of Podgorica, the Montenegrin capital. Police fired tear gas. The consequences of recognition of Kosovo will be with the Balkans, and the EU, for many years to come.