



# KOSOVO

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### Putin's "14 Points"

By Pyotr Iskenderov, Strategic Culture Foundation

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Slowly but steadily Russia keeps on pressing the West over the Kosovo issue. The results of the October 22, 2007 round of negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina were the final nail hammered in the lid of the coffin of the commemorable "Ahtisaari plan". A new document with its 14 points was tabled before the middlemen and direct participants of the negotiations. Not a word is there in it about Kosovo's independence.

Finland's ex-president Martti Ahtissari was preparing for 18 months before climbing the international rostrum last February to voice his plan of granting the Serbian province of Kosovo "supervised independence" regardless of the will of Serbs. The supervision he spoke about was to be effected by NATO, a military and political bloc that bombed Yugoslavia in 1999 and the EU that had for months blocked the negotiations on deepening cooperation with Serbia, rather than Belgrade, or even the United Nations.

After Russia – for the first time in 15 years – stated at the UN Security Council in July that it was resolutely opposed to Western attempts to remake the Balkans map along its blueprints, politicians in Washington and Brussels took a break, of which Ban Kee Moon, UN General Secretary took advantage, presenting in August a mandate for the arranging new talks to the "group of three" middlemen, represented by Russia, the USA and the EU.

Neither Washington nor Brussels were trying to disguise their commitment to the ideas of Ahtissari. The US and EU negotiators continued to emphasise their intention to begin playing along the lines of a surveillance scenario in the event of a failure of negotiations. However, the two rounds of negotiations held by Serbs and the Albanian leaders of the province of Kosovo showed that such attempts were doomed to failure. Apart from that the idea of independent Kosovo has torn the EU apart, which for the organisation that has neither its Constitution, nor comprehensible policies in the area of security and defence, is really tantamount to death.

As a result the appearance of "14 Items" immediately – and perceptibly – terrified Albanian separatists. Skender Huseni, one of the members of the Pristina delegation stated that Albanians would continue demanding independence for Kosovo. "We wish to be independent and have a seat at the United Nations," – he said.

However, it can be stated that by far, regardless of the self-confident rhetoric of the Albanian extremists and unequivocal threats of the militants to Serbs and peace-keepers, the international middlemen have crossed a significant border. Giving up discussion of the idea of Kosovo's independence, they now concentrated on the



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distribution of power of Belgrade and Pristina. Issues to be handled jointly include the repatriation of displaced persons, investigation of the fates of missing people, protection of ethnic minorities, protection of cultural heritage objects, solving economic issues (including free movement of workforce, commodities, capital and services as well as work on ensuring joint economic growth and strategy of development based on regional economic initiatives), problems of power industry, trade, infrastructure, transport and communications, the banking sector and tax policies, bringing their standards to those of the European Union, environment protection, fight against organised crime, especially against terrorism, slave driving, sales of weapons and drug trafficking. Item 10 stresses that Belgrade and Pristina will establish “joint working bodies for carrying out activities of shared interest in the above fields.”

As for status attributes, Item 12 has it that Kosovo “will exert complete control over its finances (taxation, public revenues, etc.)”, whereas Item 11 reads: “with the exception of its international obligations as a subject of international law, Belgrade would not interfere in Pristina’s relations with international financial institutions.”

This is the general outline of this document. Unlike the “Ahtisaari plan” its promise to the Albanian separatists in Kosovo is not of a state independence, but exclusively of financial independence to a degree that would not “run counter to the internationally recognised Belgrade’s rights.” As for Items 4 and 5, which the Albanians wished to grab hold of, they only state that Kosovo “will not return to the state it was in before 1999” and “Belgrade will not control Kosovo.” This statement can in no way be regarded as supportive of the idea of independence, because even though in Slobodan Milosevic’s time Kosovo was regarded as an autonomy within the statehood of Serbia, it actually was under stringent military and police control of Belgrade, and at present Serbia itself is not willing a remake of such a scenario.

Certainly, “14 Points” is so far just a basis for the continuation of negotiations. The Serbian side is not completely satisfied with this document, either. In particular, it has no mention of Resolution 1244 of June 10, 1999, a basic guarantee of Serbia’s state sovereignty and territorial integrity. But the new trend is evident. Owing to Russia’s adamant principal position, of which people in the Balkans – to make a clean breast of it - were beginning to forget, the comprehensive Great Albania scenario prepared by the West began to creak at the seams. At the same time president Vladimir Putin got a chance of going down into history as an architect of the New Balkans and a new world order, the way his U.S. colleague Woodrow Wilson did some 90 year ago. Wilson’s “14 Points” in 1918 opened a new period in European history. Putin’s “14 Points” (given the Russian diplomacy continues to be adamant at the final stage of Kosovo talks) can play an even more important role in the early 21st century, namely, laying down the foundation stone in the emerging union of the states and peoples that oppose the U.S. hegemony and the political and spiritual impotence of the European Union.