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Extra time needed over Kosovo

By Aleksandar Mitic, European Voice

The December 10 deadline on Kosovo passed without a negotiated solution, but with an expected extra time in the UN Security Council which might well be the last chance to avoid another European disaster in the Balkans.

No one will refute that the latest effort by the Contact Group Troika was more balanced, intense and proactive than the failed process led by former UN envoy Martti Ahtisaari.

Yet, once again, the status process led to no agreement between Belgrade and Pristina.

Was it ever given a chance?

The Troika process was derailed, trapped, wrapped, tortured and, finally, fatally blown by those who saw it from the start as an unnecessary nuisance, a forced 120-day extra-time which result had to end with a predetermined victor.

When the idea of setting up the Troika came up in June, following the failure to adopt a UN Security Council resolution based on Ahtisaari's "supervised independence", the proclaimed goal was to give a new chance for the parties to negotiate and find a compromise solution.

But the proclaimed objective never came to life.

Only three days before the first round of direct talks, in New York on September 28, the U.S. Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice put it bluntly in a widely published interview: "How we get there, I think, is what's still to be determined. But there's going to be an independent Kosovo. We're dedicated to that."

Encouraged, the Pristina team came to New York with a proposal which did not have anything to do with status, but with post-status, a relationship between two "independent states".

Ensuring "constructive disagreement" and "soft landing" of Belgrade – making sure that Serbia would not seek to actively obstruct Ahtisaari's plan on Kosovo's independence -- became the objective.

The UN Security Council resolution 1244 called for the solving of the Kosovo status.



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Instead, we had 18 months of the Ahtisaari process, which was about making sure how the Kosovo Albanians would treat the Kosovo Serbs in an “independent Kosovo”.

Then, we had four months of the Troika process which – as some in Washington and Brussels imagined it – was about making sure how Serbia would treat an “independent Kosovo”.

That the “independent Kosovo” status had been never been negotiated about, let alone agreed, was of no matter to those who see the goal of the entire process – since November 2005 – not as finding a creative solution for the Kosovo status, but as finding a creative solution for the imposition of Kosovo’s independence.

While these tactics might be successful in short term, the strategy of imposing Kosovo’s independence through “tricks and treats” is likely to fail at the end: it will not lead to a stable and united Kosovo, to an “unhappy but consenting” Serbia, to the secure and good-neighbourly Balkans, to an unhindered European path for the region.

Time is not yet up. Who will put the lights on?

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