



ATLANTIC MEMO # 4

Kosovo: Avoid US Unilateralism, Encourage EU Leadership

Members of the Atlantic Community are mostly optimistic about the future of Kosovo and conflict resolution in the Western Balkans. The EU has a key role in this region and policy is in the right track, but, of course, big challenges still lie ahead.

The end of 2006 was initially seen by the EU and the US as the date for concluding Kosovo negotiations, but this date passed without resolution. In 2007 the EU was mired by internal disagreements on the status of Kosovo, with a number of EU states fearing that Kosovo's independence could set a precedent for separatist claims by their own minorities.

But the Ahtisaari plan, at one stage shelved in the hope of finding something better, is once again on the agenda. And with the EU reunited and in full support of the Ahtisaari plan, Atlantic Community members are mostly optimistic about Kosovo's future, and envisage the EU in a leading role in the Western Balkans.

These are the four main policy recommendations from the authors and commenters on Atlantic Community:

1. The US should not push forward unilaterally for Kosovo's independence.

Most participants in the debate showed concern that the US would push strongly for Kosovo's independence. [Nikolas Gvosdev](#) mentions that the US may even "cherry-pick" the EU for support and thus split European policy. [Elizabeth Pond](#) sees a key difference in European and US policy; Europe is far more concerned about creating long term resentment in Serbia and preventing a "Versailles Syndrome." Part of the solution has been the initialing of Serbia's Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA).

2. The EU has to take a leading role.

[Marco Overhaus](#) argues that the EU needs to be the leading security actor in the Western Balkans, an opinion widely voiced on Atlantic Community. Furthermore, [Gvosdev](#) points out that the US is completely dependent on the EU for taking responsibility for any transition in Kosovo. "If we want to keep the momentum and make our commitment to integration a reality," writes [Alexandros Mallias](#), "we need to be more ambitious."

3. The EU must hold the middle ground between the US and Russia.

Most contributors support the EU's dedication to the Ahtisaari plan. [Pond](#) argues that the EU's careful ethos is sensible - it has created a momentum towards supervised independence for Kosovo, whilst maintaining a strong transatlantic relationship and steady relations with Russia. But not everyone sees the EU in this light; Jeppe Plenge Trautner described it as another "US cooks and Europe does the dishes" situation.

4. Serbia should be lured to a European future.

Most authors agree with [Pond](#) over the importance of giving Serbia the option of EU membership and rejecting its nationalist past. The gap between today's \$32,000 per capita GDP in ex-Yugoslav Slovenia as an EU member and defiant Serbia's \$3,200 per capita is glaringly obvious. But the initialing of an SAA has been the first step towards giving Serbia an EU future, she notes. Furthermore, Brussels has earmarked higher levels of aid for Serbia once the SAA is signed. Peter Männer claims this gives the EU an entirely new level of influence over Serbia.

Atlantic Memos showcase the best ideas and arguments from debates in the Policy Workshop on atlantic-community.org. All policy recommendations in this document were made by registered members of the Atlantic Community.

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