

The Kosova resolution at European Parliament

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Eleven months after the proclamation of Kosova independence, the European Parliament discuss a resolution based on the report of rapporteur for Kosova Joost Jagendijk.

After the proclamation of Kosova independence, the institutions of Kosova have continued with the approval of the laws emerging from Ahtisaari proposal. Although this difficult process of post-independence has been accompanied by debates and criticism from within Kosova and by internationals as well, the supervised independence has been carefully analyzed by the EU's rapporteur. On the verge of the first anniversary of the independence recognize by 54 states, after a harsh struggle by Belgrade and many contestations and the negligence of Kosova institutions for lobbying for the internationalization of the youngest state in Europe. What is this resolution about, what are it's three most important parts and what is happening with the first one which is a reference to the Ahtisaari proposal which seems to have been brought back to light by the European Parliament?

Alsar: Mr. Jagendijk, a resolution will be voted by the European Parliament next week and there are three important parts. The first one is the terms. Let's say that the European Parliament revived the Ahtisaari plan which was forgotten this last time. What is the reason?

Joost Jagendijk: I think that the large majority in the parliament still thinks that the Ahtisaari proposal as it was implemented in the Kosova institutions, in Kosova laws, is still the best basis for Kosova's supervised independence. So we are very happy that the Kosovars still are implementing the Ahtisaari proposal so I think we as Europeans who asked the Kosova government to do so should also be clear for us the basis for what's happening now and for what should happen in the future in Kosova is the Ahtisaari proposal. Having said that we know that it's a sensitive issue in the UN, in Serbia especially of course, so we are not going to hit Serbia or Russia each time by mentioning the name of Ahtisaari but it's clear. When you read the report, the report is based on the full implementation of the Ahtisaari proposal and I am very happy that there is a big majority in parliament in favor.

Alsar: But the Ahtisaari plan was also the basis for sending the EULEX mission. For example, firstly, after something else happened in the UN, how do you see the role of mainly the Council of EU but also of the commission in forgetting or hiding the Ahtisaari plan and moving forward with other points?

Joost Jagendijk: Of course, as you know, in the parliament we can decide by majority. As I said there is a clear majority in favor of sticking to the Ahtisaari principles. The council and in the commission, they have to deal with countries or commissioners that are not so very happy with the Kosova independence and with the Ahtisaari proposals. So there one sees that it's not mentioned, it's not referred to, but in fact the content of the proposals of both the commission and the council also reflect the Ahtisaari proposals but they don't want to provoke the Serbs, or the Russians or whoever, or the Spaniards or the Romanians too much, so I think all in all and it might be difficult for people in the region to see really what is behind. I think that even if the parliament uses a clearer language than the commission and the council, I think all in all, when you look at what's happening on the ground, I think all the three institutions in a way base their actions, through EULEX, on the Ahtisaari proposal. So, although they don't refer to it, they don't mention it, in fact it's happening. We can be a little clearer as politicians and we can vote with the majority. So I think when you look at what's happening on the ground, you will see very little difference between what the council, the commission and the parliament are doing.

Alsar: In your report there is a reference also on how Serbia interprets the six-points plan and I want to ask you isn't clear for the European parliament what the six-points plan is, or isn't clear for Serbia, because they say that the six-points plan is Kosova in Serbia and they interpret it their way.

Joost Lagendijk: I think when one looks at the UN report, the report that the Secretary General of the UN, Mr. Ban Ki-moon drafted and presented to the UN Security Council in December, I have to admit that when I first read it I was not very happy with it because it seemed as if Kosova was in fact partitioned between Kosovars and EULEX Europeans in the south and Kosova Serbs plus UN's UNMIK in the north. When you really go to the details and you read again and I talked with the European diplomats when the text was drafted and one sees that in the end my interpretation, the European interpretation is that what EULEX is supposed to do was always what they intended to do: in the whole of Kosova, no partition, no UNMIK and EULEX working on the same issues but only EULEX and you see that what's happening know is that in fact the European interpretation of this quite ambiguous text from the UN is being implemented. We know, everybody knows that Belgrade has a slightly different interpretation of the same text and I think it's a matter of time when these two interpretations will clash, when Serbia will not agree, I guess, with the European interpretation. What the European Parliament is doing in my resolution, is saying to the rest of EU please go ahead with our interpretation of what is decided by the UN; EULEX deployment throughout Kosova on all issues and I think one day Serbia will probably protest against this interpretation but what can we do? We have our own interpretation, we are implementing that on the ground and I think that is also what the Kosovars' majority want.

Alsat: Speaking about the ground and in fact what is happening is that EULEX is not yet fully deployed in the north of Kosova and what is happening is that maybe you have to pass through new negotiations between Serbia and Prishtina. EULEX has to report to UN for example, how will EU resolve that?

Joost Lagendijk: It's clear that, yes, EULEX will report to the UN but the line of command, let's say who orders EULEX what to do or what not to do, that comes from Brussels, not New York. So the bosses of the operation of EULEX are in Brussels, is Mr. Solana it's the council. Secondly, you are right, EULEX hasn't fully deployed in the north but all the movements and all the statements of EULEX, de Kermabon, the chief of EULEX on the ground make it clear they are deploying more and more; customs on the border with Serbia, police in one line of command to EULEX so UNMIK is out of the game there and finally the judiciary, the courthouse in Mitrovica is still a little bit a combination of UNMIK and EULEX but it goes more and more in the direction of EULEX. So really there are more and more people on the ground but they are facing problems, they are facing difficulties, this is true, and I think what we expect as parliament is that EULEX really is strong, deploying and implementing its mandate and it's not afraid from some resistance on the Kosova Serbs because I think we Europeans should show this is what we want, this is what was agreed and we should do it and not back off now. So I'm quite hopeful it will happen but I'm also sure there will be more and more problems the further EULEX will develop and deploy in the north the more Kosova Serbs and Belgrade will start to protest.

Alsat: Speaking about the difficulties in Kosova and especially about the economic difficulties there is the second part of the report to the parliament which you prepared on EU funds and investing in Kosova and you insist and call on EU and European Commission to invest in the minorities and in reconciling people?

Joost Lagendijk: Not only but also. I think on the Donators Conference there was a lot of money that the Kosova's government could have when it's invested in the proper way. So I would be strongly in favor of a lot of investments in infrastructure, in creating jobs, in the energy sector which still faces a lot of problems but we should not forget that, I think, the main reason why Kosova Serbs are hesitant whether they want to keep on living in the enclaves for instance, is not so much the violence against them because that has gone down but the fact whether they or their children will have a job there, can live there, can pay for their own issues. Therefore we stress that also in the enclaves and other Serbian majority areas, the government should invest and should show that the money they get from the states, from the EU, should be invested and be to the benefit of all the inhabitants of Kosova. That is in fact our claim so not only but also.

Alsat: Is that, I'm sorry to put it that way, it's a little bit not easy to do because Kosova has a lot of difficulties. For example in the report you ask for the Roma, Ashkali, Turkish Serbian minority to be invested to find jobs but there are no jobs for Albanians of Kosova as well. They is so little money, so what to do first and this will take time.

Joost Lagendijk: It will take time. I mean nobody here has the illusion that in one or two years all the problems will be

solved, for instance with the unemployment. You are right, there are big problems and unemployment problems for the majority Kosovars as well. So what we would like to see is a sort of distribution of these funds, of the money that comes from the EU in an equal way so most of it will go to the Kosovars because there are more Kosova Albanians than there are Kosova Serbs but also some money should be reserved for the minorities. It's a big thing what we are asking the Kosova government so nobody expects miracles, also not we in the parliament but it's clear if one reads the report it says for investments to all communities not only to Albanians, do it in a transparent way so that we can check, so that the Kosova parliament can check. For instance is an example in the report. When you go and privatize, for instance the energy sector or the airport, do it and fight corruption because there's such a strong feeling still inside Kosova but also inside EU that corruption still play quite a big role. So it's quite a difficult task for the Kosovar authorities. The Europeans are there to help but in the end it's the government who should see to it that the money is spent in a proper way.

Alsar: There is also a third part in your report with the address and call to the Kosova government on transparency, privatization and also you spoke about energy, lignite and climate concerns. We also saw the report of the European Commission which was very critical about corruption, nepotism and missing of administration. In Kosova you state everything is missing, if we can say. So how do you see things for the moment going and what is your call to the Kosova government?

Joost Lagendijk: The call to the government, and I told Thaci and other ministers as well, is that on one hand there is understanding in Europe for the fact that they have to build things up from scratch and there is little experience in the government so nobody expects miracles of them. But when they spend money, when they build new things they should do it, I would say, in the European way which would mean transparently and without corruption. Now I think what we can do is check, look how European money is spent, talk to the Kosovars, help them, help build competent civil service in the ministries which is also one of the things in the report so I think that everybody who knows Kosova, who has been involved knows that there is no quick fix in one or two years. I think we Europeans will be there to help, to assist, to pay in many cases for maybe the next ten years so it's a long-term project we are all embarking on and step by step it should be done in a proper way so that the ones who are against Kosova independence also in the EU can't blame the Kosovar authorities for nepotism or corruption. So that's why it is so important to work on the perception how the people in Europe perceive what is happening in Kosova and again nobody expects miracles but everybody expects the Kosovar authorities to do it in an as honest way as possible. That is my basic call on the Kosovar authorities.

Alsar: Mr. Lagendijk there is a part of some political parties in the European parliament which had a lot of amendments. They wanted to take off Ahtisaari plan, they wanted to put other amendments. That was voted, it's gone but there are other amendments coming from next week, from the big debate. What are they proposing and what will happen with it?

Joost Lagendijk: I think as far as I can see now only a few amendments have been tabled by our communist friends, from the communist group in the parliament and in fact what they're asking for is the partition between the north and south of Kosova. There's only a tiny minority in the parliament who's in favor of that. They now have tabled their amendments and I'm sure they will be voted down by the big majority.

Alsar: Another thing is that in this parliament the Serbians did everything to change this report but Kosova was missing a little bit. Do you have an appeal also on the Kosova diplomacy or do they have good friends and don't need to come to the European Parliament?

Joost Lagendijk: No, they should be coming. As you know there's a new Kosova diplomatic post being established here. I spoke to them, I'm sure they spoke to the other colleagues. I think you're right, there has been quite a lot of strong Serbian lobbying but despite of that I think what you can see in the vote and you can and will see next week in the parliament plenary debate, there is quite a large support for the supervised independence. So it won't be easy for anybody, even if you have a good lobby, to change that basic position of the European Parliament. It has always been my position. I'm happy with such a strong majority but I would welcome all Kosovar diplomats to lobby for the interest of their country and also at the same time listen to what our concerns are.

They're not about independence issue but they are about the issues we discussed, about the economy, the employment, the corruption so it should be a two way street, but they're all welcome.

Alsat: Speaking about that after the vote next week in the parliament, you are going to Prishtina. This is the second report you are doing for Kosova and let's say it's a very positive one for the Kosovar side. What do you expect from the Kosova authorities. You will go there to give yourself the message that you are sending to the council and EU. But what do you from them?

Joost Lagendijk: I expect quite a warm welcome I guess the Kosovar authorities are quite happy with the report, although there is quite a strong criticism on how they do things as well. So I will first meet with Thaci and some of the ministers to explain are worries and advise. Secondly we will speak with the Europeans there, EULEX, Mr. Feith but also UNMIK and the second part of our trip will be dedicated to really looking on the ground, in the north, with the customs, with the police, with the courthouse; how things are developing, what kind of EULEX offices are there, how are they doing, do they face a lot of resistance there. So it will be talking and I hope the Kosovar authorities listening to us and responding and secondly watching with my own eyes how EULEX is deploying in the north because that is still a concern. It's going quite okay for the moment but we have to see it with our own eyes as well.

Alsat: The last question Mr. Lagendijk. As we know in the European Parliament it's the majority voting so it's easy when we know that 22 countries have recognized Kosova of 27 of the EU but how do you see the future. How do you see the recognition process? Do you have signals? I don't ask you to tell me things that you don't know but are there some signals from the countries of the EU, because we know that the recognition process is the most important one.

Joost Lagendijk: For the moment, to be honest, I don't have any signals coming from the countries that haven't recognized yet whether they will not or do so soon. I think you will first see more recognition from outside of the EU and as you know there is a lot of speculation already for some time about countries from the Arab or the Islamic world. I know Turkey, a country that I know very well, is working quite hard to get those recognitions so I think that you will first see more recognition from outside and then I think gradually you will see those European countries, the EU member states that are not particularly happy in accepting the reality on the ground which means an independent Kosova. I think it might take quite a while for the last EU member states to recognize but I think in time the number will go up, especially I think also from the Islamic world.