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Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair

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Lame Duck Tours

By ALEXANDER COCKBURN

Few Americans study the travel brochures with more zeal than two-term presidents who face impeachment (Nixon and Clinton) or popular loathing (Johnson and Bush Jr) or displeasing suggestions in the press that they are senile and should be removed from office (Eisenhower and Reagan).

It was the lust to travel that prompted Bush Sr, in his presidential jaunt around Asia in January 1992, to mix too many shots of sake with his Ambien and throw up into the lap of the Japanese prime minister, Kiichi Miyazawa. Now his son is taking to the road, recently on a lightning jaunt to Latin America to wag the flag.

Washington holds zero appeal for our current president. Scooter Libby has now been convicted. The hoped-for "light at the end of the tunnel" in Iraq is not yet visible, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the Pentagon have threatened mutiny if Bush insists in attacking Iran. His poll ratings are in the basement. So it was time to call up Lame Duck Tours and accept the bargain offer of a 7-day special to Latin America, meals and hotels included with a trip to Mayan ruins on Tuesday.

Guevara would have been proud of W. On Bush's inept watch the subcontinent has swerved left. It's not all his fault. The U.S. model – free trade pacts, neoliberal onslaughts on public ownership and rule by the International Monetary Fund – simply ran out of any credibility by the end of the Nineties. It's far too late in the day for Bush to rush and try to cement some kind of anti-Chavez consortium.

In fact, it's all too late, period. All that lame ducks can do is waddle round the backyard.CP

Suez 1956, Iran 2007?

By HARRY CLARK

In the fall of 1956, Britain, France and Israel attacked Egypt, in "the best-documented war plot in modern history", which the conspirators put in writing and signed at a meeting at Sèvres near Paris on October 22-24. Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, the military Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan, and their fellow militarists viewed Egypt's Gamel Abdel Nasser as a new Saladin or an Arab Ataturk, a mortal threat to Israel, who had to be destroyed. That June Ben-Gurion had forced the resignation of his main opponent within the government, Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett, who viewed war as the last rather than first resort, while denying Sharett a debate in the cabinet and in their Mapai party on the broad choices represented by their respective policies.

The government of France was as obsessed with Nasser as Israel's, blaming him for Algerian resistance to French rule, an illusion which Israel cultivated. French arms sales to Israel had arisen from liaison between their defense ministries, bypassing both foreign ministries. Franco-Israeli talks were held near Paris in June, resulting in an arms deal and initial military collaboration against Nasser. These gave Israel an arms supply and a political partnership, laying the basis for participation in the eventual tripartite campaign.

That spring Britain had evacuated its troops from its Suez Canal military zone and turned its extensive bases over to Egypt, in accordance with a treaty negotiated with U.S. mediation. Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal in July, to secure financing for the Aswan Dam, which the U.S.A. and Britain had canceled in disapproval of Nasser's non-aligned foreign policy. Nasser's nationalization was perfectly legal, as the Foreign Office informed Prime Minister Anthony Eden,

but it struck much British opinion as a betrayal, coming after the British withdrawal. Eden, who had negotiated the bases agreement, was particularly incensed. Britain obtained its oil supplies exclusively from the Persian Gulf and was the leading shipper of oil through the Canal.

Immediately following the nationalization on July 26, Eden assigned a small ministerial committee to formulate policy, mainly "a timetable for military operations against Egypt".

The pretext idea, as a path for British participation, occurred independently to the French, who held ministerial-level meetings with Israel in Paris in late September. As the French defense minister explained to his guests, "Israel should make the first move, to provide them with a pretext for 'intervention'...As for a pretext, which is a major issue for starting an operation, Israel's position is far more convenient."

Ben-Gurion wanted the minimum interval between the pretext move and the Anglo-French attack, to reduce Israel's risks from Egyptian air attack on Israel's cities, as well as political exposure. Dayan proposed an IDF paratroop drop in the Mitla Pass, thirty miles from the southern end of the Canal, to be joined by an armored force advancing through central Sinai, as the pretext. This would be followed by an Anglo-French ultimatum to Egypt to evacuate its forces from the Canal Zone, and aerial bombardment of Egypt's airfields when it rejected the ultimatum. Israel would operate in the Sinai Peninsula and the Strait of Tiran, between the Gulf of Aqaba and the Red Sea, leaving the rest to the Anglo-French force. Lloyd defined "the aim of any allied military operations as 'the conquest of the Canal Zone and the destruction of Nasser.'"

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The duties of each partner, including Britain's agreement not to intervene between Jordan and Israel, but excluding a separate French agreement to assist Israel with air defense, were set down in the Sèvres Protocol. Ben-Gurion's copy alone was preserved, in the archive of his papers at his kibbutz, and was released in 1996, its fortieth anniversary.

As the Suez Crisis developed after the nationalization, the U.S. opposed Anglo-French military action against Egypt, for reasons of Cold War strategy. The U.S.A. had tried to recruit Egypt to the western camp in the Cold War, after the Free Officers' Movement overthrew the monarchy in 1952, and feared alienating the Arabs and giving the USSR and the left an opening. President Dwight D. Eisenhower and his Secretary of State John Foster Dulles had pursued U.N. diplomacy in order to forestall military action. They had some intelligence of the military buildup, but expected the crisis to blow over; they were misled by an Israeli feint toward Jordan, where Israel's perennial border wars had flared, and did not anticipate the collusion with Britain and France. Eisenhower was furious when he learned on October 29

of Israel's attack. After an Anglo-French veto in the U.N. Security Council, the U.S. appealed to the General Assembly for a resolution for cease-fire and unconditional withdrawal. The French were still game, but the British collapsed under the pressure, including Soviet nuclear threats, which led to U.S. countermoves and fear of world war.

The Anglo-French invasion stopped with troops on the ground but short of controlling the Canal; in the meantime Israel conquered the entire Sinai Peninsula. Nasser blocked the Canal, and the Arabs withheld oil shipments. Eisenhower refused to supply Europe with oil as called for in contingency plans, and blocked an International Monetary Fund loan to Britain, leading to a run on the pound. France and Britain agreed to withdraw unconditionally, and were gone by December, with the Canal in Egyptian hands and Nasser firmly in power, having "snatched a most spectacular political victory out of the jaws of military defeat".

On November 7, Ben-Gurion, "drunk with victory", proclaimed in a speech to the Knesset that "Yotvat [Tiran] will once more become part of the Third Kingdom of Israel!" and that Israel "did not infringe on Egyptian territory ... Our operations were restricted to the Sinai Peninsula alone". During the meeting at Sèvres, which finalized the war plot, Ben-Gurion had told the French prime minister "about the discovery of oil in southern and western Sinai, and that it would be good to tear this peninsula from Egypt because it did not belong to her; rather it was the English who stole it from the Turks when they believed that Egypt was in their pocket". That night in New York, the U.N. General Assembly voted 65 to 1 for Israel to withdraw immediately from Egyptian territory. The following day, after a sharp warning from Eisenhower, Ben-Gurion disavowed any designs on Egypt and stated Israel's intent to withdraw "upon conclusion of satisfactory arrangements with the United Nations" which was sending an international force.

For now, Israel's promise to withdraw had achieved its purpose. It ameliorated the immediate crisis and borrowed time

for Israel to explain its view in the United States in order to gain the sympathy of public opinion.

Israel withdrew in stages to the border of Mandate Palestine by January 13, 1957, as the U.N. passed another resolution requiring unconditional withdrawal. Israel retained control of the Gaza Strip, to prevent further raids by Palestinian guerrillas, which Nasser had authorized in response to Israel's own aggression against Gaza. Israel also retained Sharm el-Sheik in southeast Sinai, and the islands in the Strait of Tiran, where Egypt forbade passage of Israeli flagships to Eilat, though most cargoes were allowed on non-Israeli vessels. Dulles supported Israel on the Strait, despite the fact that Strait waters lay within the territory of Egyptian and Saudi islands. On Gaza, Dulles supported Egypt's rights there from the 1949 Armistice Agreements, which could not be abrogated. Dulles insisted the U.S.A. would not make bilateral agreements with Israel, which must seek redress at the U.N. The General Assembly passed further resolutions calling for Israel's withdrawal; sanctions on Israel were discussed by the U.S. and the U.N.

Ben-Gurion stood firm, and Israel cued its U.S. apparatus. A crescendo of sympathy boomed in the media; 75 congressmen wrote a letter to Dulles; 42 signed a telegram to him; 8 senators co-sponsored a resolution. Even the Republican Senate minority leader opposed sanctions, as did the ranking Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which delayed consideration of the Eisenhower Doctrine, the administration's response to the collapse of British and French authority after the Suez crisis.

The Suez Canal would remain obstructed and Western Europe in economic distress until Israel withdrew, which would require sanctions, but "Congressional and public sympathy for Israel" precluded that, and held the Eisenhower Doctrine as a hostage. "Dulles, with presidential approval, decided to break the deadlock by partially conceding to Israel's demands for guarantees outside the context of the United Nations".

Dulles presented Israel's Ambassador,

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Abba Eban, with an aide-mémoire explaining the U.S. view that the Strait of Tiran was international waters and U.S. willingness to uphold that view. On Gaza, Dulles acknowledged Israel's concerns, but upheld Egyptian rights under the 1949 Armistice Agreements, which neither the U.S.A. or U.N. could abrogate. Ben-Gurion replied that the aide-mémoire did not mention passage of Israeli flagships, and did not prohibit Egyptians from returning to Gaza, where Ben-Gurion insisted on Israeli-U.N. administration. An angry Dulles complained to Eisenhower that further guarantees "would almost surely jeopardize the entire Western influence in the Middle East" where "countries would feel that United States policy toward the area was in the last analysis controlled by Jewish influence in the United States".

Against overwhelming congressional opposition, Eisenhower authorized U.S. support of a U.N. resolution urging an end to both government and private assistance to Israel. To U.N. Ambassador Lodge, Dulles "worried about a unanimous vote in both houses for a resolution against sanctions"; he complained that "we're going to be in very serious trouble and indeed may lose our authority to impose sanctions", and about the "terrific control the Jews have over the news media and the barrage which the Jews have built up on Congressmen". Eban submitted a modified aide-mémoire, which mentioned a U.N. regime in Gaza and strengthened the language on the Strait of Tiran. "Dulles did something that a few days ago he vowed he would not do: negotiate a bilateral agreement with Israel".

Eisenhower and Dulles held a White House meeting with 26 congressional leaders to stress the dire consequences of Israel's failure to withdraw unconditionally, and discuss the aide-mémoire addressing Israel's concerns, which had been made public. This led only to the delegation affirming its opposition to sanctions on Israel. Eisenhower wrote in his diary later that day: "As I reflected on the pettiness of much of the discussion this morning, I found it somewhat dismaying that partisan considerations could enter so much into life or death, peace or war decisions". Dulles had given up on sanctions, and feared Ben-Gurion's government, under attack from the right, might fall before a withdrawal agreement could be reached. His policy entangled with Israel, its diplomats, and their U.S. supporters, he com-

plained to his old friend Roswell Barnes of the National Council of Churches:

"I am very much concerned over the fact that the Jewish influence here is completely dominating the scene and making it almost impossible to get Congress to do anything they don't approve of. The Israeli Embassy is practically dictating to the Congress through influential Jewish people in this country. The non-Jewish elements of the community have got to make themselves more felt or else there will be a disaster here. It was impossible to hold the line because we got no support from the Protestant elements of the country. All we got is a battering from the

Dulles: "It was impossible to hold the line because we got no support from the Protestant elements of the country. All we got is a battering from the Jews."

Jews."

The day of the congressional meeting, Eisenhower cabled Ben-Gurion warning him of a possible U.S. vote at the U.N. for sanctions on aid to Israel. That evening, in a televised address he again called for unconditional withdrawal and warned of sanctions. The administration tried to recruit prominent U.S. Jews to its position, including a friend of Dulles. "To Dulles' astonishment, these assimilated U.S. Jews strongly objected to Eisenhower's speech of the previous night threatening sanctions."

In an operatic finale, Israel accepted a loophole acknowledging Egyptian rights in Gaza, secured French and U.S. backing for its position on the Strait of Tiran, outside the U.N., and agreed to withdraw, yet tried to exclude Egypt from Gaza, and almost reneged on the agreement. On March 7, 1957, the last Israeli troops left Gaza, replaced by the U.N. force, with Egypt's permission, according to the 1949 Armistice Agreements. On March 11, Egyptian civil administration, but not military forces, returned to Gaza. On March 12,

the last Israeli forces left Sharm el-Sheik; on April 24, a U.S. flag tanker laden with crude oil docked at Eilat. Israel enjoyed free passage through the Strait of Tiran, and several years of tranquility on its borders – which Sharett's diplomacy might have achieved if given a chance.

In the view of the military and diplomatic departments of the United States government, Zionism and the state of Israel were a strategic liability in the 1940s and 1950s. Yet the nascent Zionist Lobby overwhelmed their views and secured support for the establishment of the Jewish state, and then obtained indispensable loans and grants from U.S. public funds. Israel then waged border wars, rejected peace terms, and attacked Egypt, in collusion with Britain and France, and, in defiance of the U.S., Israel strengthened the war parties in Britain and France and provided the indispensable pretext for their attack on Egypt. It withdrew from Sinai only after a four-month delay, after holding the entire world hostage to its conditions, which the U.S. partly secured for it. Israel's influence in U.S. politics, and its radicalization of the crises of 1948 and 1956, were portents of its influence today in the U.S. war in Iraq and plans for war on Iran.

The U.S. Israel Lobby's success, even in a time of strategic liability for its client, attests to its quasi-sovereign influence on foreign policy. The moral antipode to this power is not the orthodoxy, which attributes it to U.S. strategic interest, but anti-Zionism, as once upheld by left internationalism, in which Jews were prominent, and classical Reform Judaism, once the dominant Jewish creed. These views emphatically rejected Zionism as a reactionary ideology, rejected modern Jewish nationality, and affirmed the Jewish place as a minority in liberal or revolutionary society. Anti-Zionism today need not mean, immediately, a democratic, secular state in Palestine, but the moral and intellectual framework, which rejects Zionist claims on Jewish identity and gentile conscience, and asserts liberal and revolutionary values against the genocide of radical nationalism.

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Full citations and sources can be found online, with additional historical context at <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~hfc/mideast/stratliab.pdf>. CP

Zoo or Bloodbath or Both?

The West's Plan for Kosovo

BY DIANA JOHNSTONE

After nearly eight years of uneasy occupation of the province of Kosovo that NATO wrested from Serbian control by 78 days of bombing in 1999, the “international community” (a term of art for governments that follow the lead of the United States) is eager to shift responsibility for the intractable situation to someone else. The way out could be a false solution that may provoke either Serbs or Albanians, or both, to react in ways that can be blamed for the impending disaster.

The “special envoy of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the future status process for Kosovo,” former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, recently unveiled his proposal for the future of the disputed province. This Kosovo Status Settlement is clearly designed primarily to stroke the collective ego of the “international community” in its self-assigned role as humanitarian nation builder.

Kosovo, the plan announces, “shall be a multiethnic society, governing itself democratically and with full respect for the rule of law, the highest level of internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, and which promotes the peaceful and prosperous existence of all its inhabitants.”

Kosovo “shall be...” Not is. Because that description is about the exact opposite of what Kosovo is now: a poverty-stricken cauldron of discontent characterized by violent ethnic hatred, a political system manipulated by armed clans, a corrupt judicial system, and terrified minorities (notably Serbs and Roma) deprived of the most basic freedoms, such as being able to venture out of their besieged homes in order to shop, go to school, or work their fields. Add broken down public services, an economy totally dependent on foreign aid and criminal trafficking, and high unemployment affecting a young population easily aroused to violence. And how is the miraculous transformation to be achieved?

Albanian separatists seem to be convinced that all that is needed is to grant Kosovo total independence. But that is not exactly what Ahtisaari is proposing.

Without pronouncing the word, he is letting the Albanians conclude that his proposal leads to independence. According to his Status Settlement, Kosovo is to have the trappings of independence – things to play with like “its own distinct flag, seal and anthem” (but they must reflect the “multiethnic” nature of the place). It can join the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. But the substance of independence is very much in doubt.

According to the Settlement plan, Kosovo will remain under strict international supervision. Control will be exercised by an international bureaucracy run by the European Union and a military presence led by NATO, in three parts:

The main human problem in Kosovo today is psychological: the terrible hatred between communities stirred and aggravated by one-sided foreign intervention.

1. An “International Civilian Representative, double-hatted as the EU Special Representative,” appointed by an “International Steering Group comprising key international stakeholders”, will have the power to “ensure successful implementation of the Settlement,” to “annul decisions or laws adopted by Kosovo authorities and sanction or remove public officials whose actions are determined by the internal civilian representative to be inconsistent with the letter or spirit of the Settlement.” So much for political “independence”.

2. “A European Security and Defence Policy Mission will monitor, mentor and advise on all areas related to the rule of law.”

3. A “NATO-led international military presence will provide a safe and secure environment throughout Kosovo” until Kosovo’s institutions are able to do so – which could conceivably be in many years, or 24 hours, depending on how the “key stakeholders” choose to interpret events.

Government by international bureau-

cracy seems to be a trend in the New World Order. Since the Dayton Accords that ended the Bosnia war in late 1995, Bosnia-Herzegovina has been ruled by a similar combination: a complicated set of local authorities under the strict supervision of a “High Representative” (contemporary version of Proconsul or Viceroy) who can, and does, annul laws adopted by the local democratic institutions or dismiss democratically chosen officials who fail to toe the line. The declared purpose of this benevolent dictatorship is to foster “multiculturalism,” but the result is that nationalist antagonism between Muslims, Serbs and Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina is as strong as ever, if not stronger. This eleven-year-old failure is supposedly to serve as model for the Kosovo success story.

But the trend is deeper and broader than the administration of the European Union’s new protectorates. It applies to the European Union itself. The complex

double-tiered ruling structure of the Balkan colonies is essentially the same as that of the European Union, with its member states progressively giving up their democratic decision-making power to the EU Commission, only very marginally controlled by a European Parliament with none of the powers or popular legitimacy of traditional national parliaments.

Even more striking, the settlement spells out in advance a whole range of policies and measures for Kosovo, just as the EU draft constitution, rejected by voters in France and the Netherlands in referendums held in 2005, spells out in advance not only structures but policies. Basic economic policies are left to the market or its institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank and the EU Commission. Deprived of its economic policy-making, the role of the state centers on defending human rights, especially treatment of minorities. This focus on minority identities actually serves to distract populations from issues that could produce a majority concerned with redistribution of wealth. Such a majority, forgetting identity is-

sues, could demand policies putting social welfare ahead of the demands of finance capital.

The main human problem in Kosovo today is psychological: the terrible hatred between communities stirred and aggravated by one-sided foreign intervention. This outside support by Great Powers encourages Albanian nationalists to seek more and more: more concessions, more territory, more indulgence toward their mistreatment of non-Albanians who, according to the official NATO narrative, pretty much deserve what they get. At the same time, it leaves Serbs to nurse a sense of bitter grievance at their unjust humiliation.

Instead of a punitive approach manipulated by NATO powers, what was needed to bring lasting peace to the Balkans was some sort of Truth Commission that would investigate events, motives, grievances and misdeeds on all sides in an effort to bring about reconciliation. However, reconciliation can only be based on a sense of common humanity, which is destroyed by constant identification of “guilty” and “victim” ethnic groups.

But an unbiased investigation of the whole Kosovo drama would risk revealing the fatally negative role of foreign powers: the United States, Germany and NATO.

The basic attitude of the decision makers of the international community is that they alone are qualified to make decisions. This attitude is perfectly illustrated by a gaming exercise conducted by and for U.S. officials in late 2001 and early 2002 intended as preparation for final negotiations on Kosovo’s status. The government-financed gaming exercises were conducted at American University in Washington, D.C. The conclusions were drawn in a report by two main operators of U.S. Balkan policy, former State Department officials James Hooper and Paul Williams.

Their remarkable conclusions: “When left to their own devices, the ‘Albanian’ and ‘Serbian’ delegations were ready to engage in division and reallocation of territory, exchanging land in northern Kosovo for land in southern Serbia and ignoring the consequences for Macedonia and Bosnia. If redistributing territory to promote ethnic homogeneity is to be avoided, the international community, led by the United States, will have to prevent it.”

Leaving aside the reliability of such simulations, what is truly remarkable here is the arrogance of U.S. officials, their absolute certainty that they have the right and the capacity to judge what is best for the peoples directly concerned, who must not be allowed to work out a possible solution by themselves.

This has been U.S. policy all along. It is generally forgotten, because largely ignored at the time, that in 1998 Belgrade attempted to start negotiations with Kosovo Albanians. Kosovo Albanian leaders rejected talks in favor of the implicit promise of NATO intervention on their behalf if the situation deteriorated. Then to save diplomatic appearances before launching NATO’s assault, the U.S.A. stage-managed last-minute “negotiations” in Rambouillet chateau in France during which Serbian and Kosovo Albanian delegations were kept apart, as both were presented with “take it or leave it” proposals drafted by U.S. diplomats. These proposals were crafted to obtain Albanian acceptance and Serbian rejection, in order to justify bombing with the claim that “the Serbs refuse to negotiate” – which was not true. Official Serbian compromise proposals were simply ignored.

In September 2004, Dobrica Cosic, Serbia’s greatest living writer, renewed his 1994 proposal “for the coexistence of the Albanian and the Serbian People” in an eight-page document sent to all interested governments. It includes a detailed reflection on the background of the Kosovo conflict and its context. While naturally and inevitably speaking from a Serbian viewpoint, Cosic takes Albanian views into account and observes a certain symmetry in their national ideologies.

The “national ideologies of the Albanian and Serbian peoples,” he writes, include anachronistic political perceptions based on their past misfortunes: lengthy national subordinations and crushing defeats. The products of these ideologies – “greater Albania” on the one hand and “the Serbian sacred land” of Kosovo on the other – are myths that “cannot serve as a basis for a reasonable and just resolution of contemporary national and state problems of the Albanian and Serbian people, determined by complete interdependence of the peoples in the Balkans, Europe and the world in modern civilization.”

Cosic observes that radical changes in the ethnic composition of Kosovo, to the advantage of the Albanians, have

compelled Serbia to review its policy, implying a compromise between Serbia’s historical rights to the province and the Albanians’ demographic rights. Keeping Kosovo within the Serbian state “would be a demographic, economic and political burden too heavy for Serbia, and hampering its normal development.”

While the same U.S. representatives who have exacerbated ethnic hatred between Serbs and Albanians now insist that they must live together in a “multiethnic Kosovo” with unalterable borders, Cosic acknowledges that “ethnic Albanians do not want to live together with the Serbs” in Kosovo and “Serbs cannot live under Albanians; Serbs and Albanians can live freely only next to each other.” He, therefore, argues that a territorial division worked out between the parties themselves could provide the basis for a genuine settlement allowing future generations to free themselves from this centuries-old conflict. Contrary to the U.S.-approved Ahtisaari Settlement, which prohibits Kosovo from uniting with neighboring Albania, Cosic sees such unification as a possible outcome of an overall settlement.

Whether or not Serbs and Albanians could work out a “peace of the brave,” in mutual respect, along the lines suggested by Cosic, has been reduced to an academ-

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ic question by U.S. meddling. Some ten years ago, a few people in Europe were ready to try that peaceful method. Danielle Mitterrand, the wife of the French president, sponsored round-table talks in Paris between respected Albanian and Serb intellectuals. Such initiatives never enjoyed the support of the United States, which preferred to promote Albanian gangsters and Serbian flatterers – both eager for the favors of the Empire.

The United States has done everything to preclude an accord based on mutual respect. The inevitable result is mutual hatred.

The province is known as a hub of drug trafficking, transit for prostitutes bought and sold from desperately poor Eastern European areas, and various other forms of illegal trade. The local police and courts are described as corrupt and indulgent toward the criminal activities of their Albanian brothers. In the midst of this mess, the United States operates the huge, self-contained strategic military base.

Although the Ahtisaari plan does not mention independence for Kosovo, the concerned parties seem to get the point that this prospect has met with the approval of Agim Ceku who, as a senior officer in the Croatian army, commanded troops

which ethnically cleansed Serbs from the Krajina region of Croatia, before taking command of Kosovo rebels and rising to his current post of provisional prime minister of Kosovo. Kossovian independence has been rejected by the Serbian government, which states its readiness to grant full autonomy to Kosovo but not to give up part of Serbia's historic territory. The Russians have said they will not give U.N. Security Council approval to a plan Serbia rejects. Independence for Kosovo is also opposed by European Union member states Spain, Slovakia, Rumania, Greece and Cyprus.

After the death of the Kosovo Albanian leader Ibrahim Rugova, who was denounced in his time for being willing to negotiate with Milosevic, Kosovo has fallen into the hands of militia and clan leaders accused of war crimes. Serbia, on the other hand, is run by what are often described as "pro-Western democrats." This makes no difference to the U.S. tilt toward the Albanians. After all, there is nothing to fear from "pro-Western democrats," whereas the Albanian nationalists could run amok, as they did in March 2004, if they don't get what they consider was promised them by NATO's war.

Kosovo Albanian leaders have long

announced that they intend to declare independence, regardless of the U.N. Security Council. According to Fred Abrahams of Human Rights Watch, "If the U.N. Security Council fails to approve the plan, then Washington could turn to Plan B: unilateral recognition by the United States, the United Kingdom, and then other states."

This could lead to armed conflict if an independent Albanian nationalist Kosovo government undertook to extend its rule to Serbian enclaves, especially the solidly Serb northern part of the province whose inhabitants will surely wish to remain part of Serbia. Even Serbs who might want to forget about Kosovo cannot easily abandon their compatriots besieged in Kosovo. The United States will of course blame the Serbs for whatever goes wrong. And meanwhile NATO has made contingency plans to evacuate the remaining Serbs in Kosovo – all to avoid partition, which is ruled out by the doctrine of imposed multiculturalism.

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