



KOSOVO

COMPROMISE 2007

Your daily-updated analyses, charts and solution plug-ins for the Kosovo crisis.

August 13, 2008

Russia Eats The Kosovo Cake

By Tim Marshall, Sky News

http://news.sky.com/skynews/Home/World-News/Tim-Marshall-Russia-Eats-The-Kosovo-Cake/Article/200808215076194?lpos=World%2BNews_0&lid=ARTICLE_15076194_Tim%2BMarshall%253A%2BRussia%2BEats%2BThe%2BKosovo%2BCake

In a far away country a small region is attempting to break away.

The far away country ends up sending in its army to ensure that only the state can operate armed groups, and to restore what are without question its legally recognised borders.

But a great power decides that the force used by the far away country is unacceptable. It begins to bomb the country, not just in the breakaway region but in its capital and other major urban areas.

The great power forces the far away country out of part of its own territory, allowing the separatists a victory they could not have otherwise achieved.

This could be a description of the last week's fighting in Georgia but it is also what happened in 1999 in Serbia.

The KLA attempted to wrest Kosovo from Serbia and Serbia sent in the army. Without bothering with a UN resolution Nato bombed them out and advanced through Kosovo up to what is now called 'Serbia proper'.

At the time Russia complained bitterly that a sovereign nation's borders were being violated by the 'international community' or by what the Serbs called the 'Nato fascist aggressor'.

Moscow called on the Nato powers to halt the bombing which killed several thousand Serb civilians and which targeted among other things a television station.

Without doubt the Serb forces were committing atrocities but Nato descended into farcical claims of 100,000 Kosovan men being killed and of football stadiums full of prisoners. It was rubbish.

This spring the US and most of the EU nations recognised Kosovan independence and thus legitimised the changing of a sovereign state's borders through violence - their own.



KOSOVO

COMPROMISE 2007

Your daily-updated analyses, charts and solution plug-ins for the Kosovo crisis.

This is not to defend Russia's actions in Georgia but it does show how the Americans, British and others want things both ways - and it also shows how the recognition of Kosovo has destroyed the hallowed concept that you don't change borders through force.

The Russians noticed that the West was prepared to conveniently forget the basic tenet of the Treaty of Westphalia 1648.

There may yet be another similarity between Georgia and Serbia. A year after the Kosovo defeat the Serbs overthrew President Milosevic for many reasons, among them his ham-fisted way of dealing with the Kosovo civil war.

He was what I call a democratic dictator - meaning he rigged the game but was voted in via the ballot box.

The president of Georgia is a democratic leader voted in, but Georgians may now ask themselves if they think that post Kosovo, President Saakashvili had really thought through the consequences of sending the army to South Ossetia.

Every foreign policy expert I know would have guaranteed a violent Russian response. Now that it seems Georgian forces will never be allowed back in, will the 'international community' accept its independence, or absorption into Russia?

If not, why was the Kosovo situation so different?

The response is often, 'because of the behaviour of the Serb forces'. Put that forward in international law as a justification for changing borders and you would be laughed out of court.

The recognition of Kosovo was a foolhardy, poorly thought through policy which may reverberate violently all over the world for decades.