



# KOSOVO

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December 17, 2007

## We're right to be worried about Kosovo

Editorial, Cyprus Mail

[http://www.cyprus-mail.com/news/main.php?id=36583&cat\\_id=1](http://www.cyprus-mail.com/news/main.php?id=36583&cat_id=1)

EVEN without Russian goading, it is hardly surprising that Cyprus should be extremely nervous at current developments over the status of Kosovo, to the point where Cyprus looks likely to block a common EU position recognising any declaration of independence.

Such a declaration is expected within weeks, after the expiry of a final deadline for talks aimed at securing agreement on the future of Kosovo between Serbia and the ethnic Albanian leaders of its breakaway province.

All along, the United States and the European Union have encouraged the Kosovo Albanians in their demand for independence, indicating that it would secure international recognition irrespective of Serbia's consent. Belgrade, meanwhile, has received equally consistent support from Russia, ensuring the UN Security Council at least would never ratify independence for Kosovo.

Cyprus has made it clear it will back Belgrade all the way on the issue within the EU. Some may look back to Cyprus' traditional solidarity with Serbia, or point to Nicosia's desire to please Moscow out of spite against the 'Anglo-Americans'. But the fact is that the precedent set by international recognition of a unilateral declaration of independence in Kosovo could potentially have catastrophic implications for Cyprus.

While NATO may claim UN backing for its initial military intervention in Kosovo to protect the Albanian population there, to redraw the map as a result of that intervention is an entirely different matter. To partition a sovereign member of the United Nations without its consent would be a flagrant violation of the UN charter, rewriting the rules of international diplomacy.

Indeed, Cyprus is not the only European country to be reticent. Spain, with its own regional separatist movements, is worried about the implications of the move, while Moscow's support for Belgrade is not just a throwback to the Cold War but an acknowledgment of the precedent it could set for separatists within its own country.

For Cyprus, the dangers are obvious: international law – for decades the basic platform for the country's political struggle – is replaced by the ruthless interests of power politics.



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If Kosovo is recognised by the United States and others, why not the 'TRNC' and to hell with the legal niceties! Serbia is weak, recovering from more than a decade as an international pariah. What are the dangers that Cyprus too may soon be seen as an unreliable partner to be sacrificed on the altar of expediency, especially if the Greek Cypriots are perceived to be the obstacle to a solution?

Recognition of the north may soon no longer be the taboo for the international community that it has been until now. The government may at last be waking up to that reality. It is worried, and with reason.