



# KOSOVO

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### Another fine mess in Kosovo

By Tony Barber, Financial Times

<http://blogs.ft.com/brusselsblog/2008/05/another-fine-mess-in-kosovo/>

For weeks it has been an uncomfortable secret in Brussels that the European Union's law and order mission in Kosovo is stuck in a political, diplomatic and legal morass. This initiative, announced with great fanfare last December, was supposed to show the EU at its best, shouldering responsibilities in a conflict-torn part of Europe where it did not exactly cover itself with glory in the 1990s.

Instead, officials now acknowledge that there is absolutely no chance that the EU will deploy its full complement of 1,900 policemen, judges, prosecutors and other administrators by mid-June, as originally planned. Why not? Because the authority to transfer police powers from the United Nations operation that is already in place in Kosovo to the new EU mission rests with the UN Security Council, where Russia has a veto.

Russia is no mood to help out the EU because it fundamentally disagrees with the decision of a majority of the EU's 27 states to recognise Kosovo's secession from Serbia in February. And the Kremlin has made it very plain to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon that it expects him not to do the EU any favours on this score.

It looks highly unlikely there will be a quick solution to this problem. As a result, a de facto partition is taking hold between ethnic Serb-dominated northern Kosovo and the rest of the province, where ethnic Albanians are in an overwhelming majority. The EU's nascent law and order mission has practically no influence over northern Kosovo, and there is little reason to think Serbia or Russia will let it develop any.

Perhaps the only glimmer of hope in all this was the May 11 Serbian election victory of the pro-EU political forces associated with President Boris Tadic. At present, however, it is unclear if Serbia's next government will be formed by these forces or by a militant nationalist-socialist coalition. In any case, even Serbia's pro-EU forces refuse to accept Kosovo's secession. You can safely add Kosovo to your list of long-term troublespots on the EU's periphery.