

# Kosovo: is the media wishing for war?

 [blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2007/12/12/kosovo-is-the-media-wishing-for-war/](http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2007/12/12/kosovo-is-the-media-wishing-for-war/)

2007-12-12

**Is the international media exaggerating the likelihood of war in Kosovo? Guest blogger Laura Kyrke-Smith fears correspondents may be replaying the events of 1999 instead of looking at what is happening on the ground right now. Here's her guest-blog:**

Recent media coverage of Kosovo rapidly reverted to the 1999 mentality of warring sides. Serbs versus Albanians. It is, we hear, a simple equation. Kosovo is at a crossroads: independence means Albanian victory and disaster for Serbs; anything but independence signifies Albanian defeat. Commentators have come down on one side or the other. And if their side doesn't win then the region will, apparently, slide back to war.

It is a familiar idiom, but it is neither accurate nor useful. This is not 1999, it is 2007, and in the past eight years there have been noble efforts towards reconciliation. Many Serbs are now willing to accept that it is no longer Serbia's place to determine Kosovo's future. Albanians have made compromises too, quelling their aspirations towards a fully independent Albanian state by accepting that "supervised independence" must initially suffice. Among both groups the consensus is that compromise is better than conflict.

It is this that the UK media has failed to acknowledge. The constant harping on about whether Serbs or Albanians are in the right is fundamentally antagonistic and ignorant of the changes that have occurred since 1999.

No one disputes that tensions within Kosovo remain high. But there are realistic alternatives to the doom and gloom predicted by the commentariat, and these alternatives don't require picking sides in a past conflict. Martti Ahtisaari, the UN envoy, has laid out a solution that embodies the principle of compromise. "Supervised independence" is a form of independence that is by no means an Albanian victory. Serbs have seats set aside in parliament, in Cabinet and in the courts. A decentralised state model gives Serb municipalities significant autonomy as well as protection. The aspiration is a multiethnic state, which moves beyond the former divisions of war.

The media must resist the temptation to dwell on the past, and alert us to the realistic future alternatives to war. Is it really the case that if the media presents a threat of war, rather than a set of other viable options, it will prompt the politicians to act more responsibly and more effectively? We often hear that the Kosovo situation drags on due to absence of political will and lack of institutional capacity. The media, I would argue, must also acknowledge its part in failing to move this one forward.

**Laura Kyrke-Smith.**

Misha Glenny has written about Kosovo [here](#): Glenny will be speaking at Polis in May.

- Copyright © 2014 London School of Economics and Political Science