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- In the absence of agreement we continue to believe that the Ahtisaari plan is the best available option.
- The reason we must resolve this question is so that all the Western Balkans countries can join the EU and NATO.

**Media background**

5. UK media are re-focusing on Kosovo. Commentators (eg Simon Tisdall and Peter Preston in the Guardian) have argued that the issue has been left to drift. News reports have focused mainly on the prospects for a return to armed conflict in the region (NATO's judgement is that a return to the conflicts of the 1990s is unlikely) and the possible negative knock-on effects of Kosovan independence eg secession of Republika Srpska in Bosnia. Recent elections in Kosovo returned former Kosovo Liberation Army political leader Hashim Thaci as the strongest player. While he is no more pro-independence than other K-Albanian politicians, his former role has encouraged speculation on conflict in media less well versed in the context.
6. The Final Status Process is the leading issue in Kosovar and Serbian media and is always high on the newslist across the region, where rumour and intentional misinterpretation carry as much weight as fact.
7. International press (IHT, wires) report on it regularly. In the UK it is mainly a broadsheet/political magazine concern – tabloids and broadcasters would become seriously interested only if there was a move to independence/war/further UK troops were deployed. There is now a definite sense (encouraged by us) across UK and European media that the Kosovo issue is a key test for the EU – Europe needs to show leadership on this issue.

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