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Policy Brief

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Kosovo's NATO future
How to Square the Circle?

This policy brief examines how ties between Kosovo and NATO can be strengthened. The fact that Serbia and four NATO member states do not recognise Kosovo's independence, has hampered further integration into international organisations. The authors delineate possible political and military steps that Kosovo could take in the short and medium term, in order to prepare itself as a credible future partner. The Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue is the ultimate challenge for Kosovo in the long term and until a deal is reached, NATO integration is unlikely. Pristina has to be aware of the military-political equation, where every major military change could have political repercussions. Nonetheless, Kosovo can already commit to necessary reforms of its democratic system. Kosovo should also try to create ways of strengthening ties to the Alliance under the current circumstances, by for instance explicitly asking to establish a political dialogue. Vice versa, NATO could consider deepening cooperation within the 'enhanced cooperation framework'. Through this interaction, the Alliance could aid Kosovo in reforming its political system, which would create a smoother path for Kosovo's future integration aspirations.

Introduction

Of all the Western Balkan countries, Kosovo is the last one to develop and implement its independent foreign security and defence policy. Since the country's independence in 2008, NATO integration has been one of the main governmental priorities. To date, Kosovo remains the only country in the region that does not have some form of contractual relationship with the Alliance (see Figure 1).[1] Rapprochements, such as the application for the Partnership for Peace programme[2] in 2012, have so far been in vain. Believing it would be a game changer, the Kosovo Parliament voted in December 2018 to transform its security forces, the Kosovo Security Force (KSF), into a national army. The transformation has been on the political agenda multiple times, as Pristina conceives this to be the final step for Kosovo to complete its security institutions.

1 A contractual relationship refers to a signed agreement between two or more parties. Albania, Montenegro and Macedonia are NATO members, whereas Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are part of NATO's Partnership for Peace programme.

2 A programme that focuses on establishing a consolidated network of institutional relationships between non-member states and NATO.

Figure 1 The Western Balkans and NATO relations

While this decision was supported by the United States (US), NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg expressed his concern and called the decision "ill-timed".[3] The problem at the heart of it all revolves around one central issue: the fact that after Kosovo declared its independence, Serbia and four NATO members did not recognise it.[4] This enduring dispute is hampering Kosovo's further integration into NATO, or into other international forums for that matter. A lack of normalisation with Serbia and the issue of non-recognisers have thrown up political as well as legal barriers to Kosovo's relationship with the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) as well as with NATO itself, including its prospects for future membership.

The question arises whether an alternative to the current Kosovo-NATO relationship is feasible under these circumstances.

This policy brief analyses the various obstacles and opportunities for Kosovo to strengthen its ties to NATO.[5] The following sections provide a brief history of NATO in Kosovo, including the role of KFOR, and the transformation of the KSF into a national army.[6] The subsequent part delineates possible political and military steps that Kosovo could take in the short and medium term, in order to prepare itself as a credible future partner. Then, the authors analyse some ways in which NATO and Kosovo can strengthen ties under the current circumstances. Finally, the policy brief ends with conclusions and recommendations.[7]

3 NATO, *Statement by the NATO Secretary General on the adoption of the laws on the transition of the Kosovo Security Force*, 14 December 2018.

4 Besides Serbia, five NATO (and EU) members Greece, Slovakia, Romania and Spain and non-NATO EU member Cyprus belong to the so-called non-recognisers of Kosovo.

5 The research methodology is based on a mix of literature desk research and interviews conducted with experts, including researchers and (former) policy makers in the Netherlands, Kosovo, the EU and NATO. Most of the interviews were held according to the Chatham House Rule, in which case the relevant footnotes will only broadly refer to the interviews.

6 See Annex 1. for a timeline of the most important events in the history of Kosovo in relation to NATO.

7 The authors are grateful to Jochem Vriesema for his valuable contributions to the research.

KFOR: The main guarantor of regional stability

The Kosovo-NATO relationship began on 24 March 1999 with the launching of NATO Operation Allied Force, an eleven-week aerial campaign against the Federal Republic (FR) of Yugoslavia to halt the humanitarian catastrophe that was unfolding in Kosovo. The end of the war paved the way for UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1244 which authorised an international civil and military presence in FR Yugoslavia, the establishment of the United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the deployment of KFOR.[8] KFOR's original objectives were to deter renewed hostilities, establish a secure environment and ensure public safety and order, demilitarise the Kosovo Liberation Army[9], support the international humanitarian effort and coordinate with the international civil presence. In 2008, Kosovo unilaterally declared its independence, which aggravated political tensions in the region, predominantly with Serbia. Kosovo's declaration of independence represents a pivotal moment in the relationship between Kosovo and NATO. The Alliance had to adjust to the new reality and initiated several measures accordingly: it started to gradually transfer duties such as border controls to Kosovo's new security institutions. Moreover, NATO initiated capacity-building activities with the newly founded Kosovo Security Force (KSF). As the security environment improved, in 2009 the North Atlantic Council (NAC) decided to redefine KFOR's presence as a 'deterrent presence'.[10] Today, KFOR continues to maintain a safe and secure environment in Kosovo[11] and freedom of movement for all, as stated in its original mandate.[12]

The regional security relationship between Kosovo and Serbia still relies on a NATO presence. This argument is reinforced by the continuing distrust of the Kosovo Serb population towards the KSF and Serbia's refusal to recognise the KSF.[13] Kosovo Serbs worry that the presence of the KSF in the Serb populated areas can instil fear and insecurity.[14] Currently, KFOR is perceived as the most important security mechanism in Kosovo, because it is accepted by all parties. Kosovo Albanians view KFOR as the liberator of the country whereas the Kosovo Serbs and Serbia itself view the force as their main security guarantor that provides protection to the Serb community and acts

8 Resolution 1244 demanded an immediate end of violence and repression; demanded the withdrawal of Yugoslav military, police and paramilitary forces; encouraged all member states and international organisations to contribute economic reconstruction; encouraged the safe return of refugees and internally displaced persons; demanded full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia; demanded the demilitarisation of the Kosovo Liberation Army and other armed groups; decided on an international civil and military presence under the UN.
OCHA Reliefweb, *The development of Kosovo institutions and the transition of authority from UNMIK to local self-government – Serbia*, 31 January 2003.

9 The ethnic Albanian separatist militant group that aimed for Kosovo's independence from Serbia.

10 From 2010, KFOR started to gradually reduce its force levels and adjust its concept of operations. 'Deterrence presence' is "a concept of operations whose main effort is based around small, regionally dispersed "liaison monitoring teams" (LMTs) tasked to monitor the social, political and economic situation in the municipality that they are responsible". J. DeRosa, *Strategic Defense Review of the Republic of Kosovo*, GAP Policy Paper, 2013, p. 16.

11 Besides the security component, KFOR contributes, amongst other things, with community-based activities including raising awareness against gender-based violence, improving inter-ethnic relations, helping disabled people, and assisting the Kosovo Police. More recently, during the COVID-19 pandemic, KFOR has donated protection equipment to aid local needs.

12 KFOR's mission is to:
- contribute to a safe and secure environment;
- support and coordinate the international humanitarian effort and civil presence;
- support the development of a stable, democratic, multi-ethnic and peaceful Kosovo;
- support the development of the Kosovo Security Force.

Allied Joint Force Command Napels, *KFOR mission*.

13 Anika Snel, 'KFOR's Continual Footprint', *Militaire Spectator*, 27 May 2015.

14 Die Morina, 'Thaci Vows to Ease Serb Fears About Kosovo Army', *Balkan Insight*, 01 November 2017.

as a safeguard of the Serbian-Orthodox cultural and religious sites in Kosovo.[15] As a result, any downgrading changes to the KFOR mandate have the potential to disrupt the fragile balance of peace between Kosovo and Serbia. Thus, unless Kosovo and Serbia come to terms, it is vital to the stability of the region that KFOR remains active as is currently the case.[16] However, for Kosovo, the relationship with KFOR, and thus with NATO, seems to be a paradoxical one.[17] On the one hand, KFOR enforces closer cooperation between Kosovo and NATO, while on the other hand the very presence of KFOR limits further steps in that relationship. Since NATO is already present in Kosovo through KFOR, there is little incentive for the Alliance to formalise relations as long as UNSCR 1244 remains intact and the Kosovo-Serbia dispute remains an issue.

KSF transformation into a national army

In December 2018, the government of Kosovo pushed forward with the creation of its national armed forces. NATO had made clear that it would only support the plan if it would be carried out through constitutional amendments, because in that way a double majority of the members of Parliament (MPs) would have to consent. The European Union (EU) shared NATO's view stating that "the mandate of the KSF should only be changed through an inclusive and gradual process in accordance with Kosovo Constitution", which was agreed upon by the parties involved in the Ahtisaari Plan, formally the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement (CSP).[18] This would have been hard to accomplish since the required majority would also include two-thirds of non-Albanian members, including the Serb MPs. Therefore, regardless of the criticism to be expected from both Serbia and international organisations, the government of Kosovo proceeded with its plan b: enacting new legislation to create a national army (which would still be called the KSF) and the Ministry of Defence. This led to changes to the mission, mandate and powers of the KSF, including territorial defence.[19] The decision infuriated relations with Serbia and was criticised by the international community for being detrimental to the EU-sponsored Serbia-Kosovo Dialogue to better relations between the countries.[20] Even though the US hailed the decision as 'historic'[21], Jens Stoltenberg stated that "with the change of mandate, the North Atlantic Council will now have to re-examine the level of NATO's engagement with the Kosovo Security Force".[22] Discussions amongst Allies to this effect are however still ongoing and no further actions have been taken.[23] Despite NATO's political reaction, KFOR has been continuing to support the KSF through capacity-building, education and training coordination, making it the longest-lasting mission in the history of the Alliance.[24] The most recent demonstration

15 Information from interviews.

16 Đorđević, Vladimir, 'KFOR at 20: Expectations vs. Reality', *NATO at 70: Outline of the Alliance today and tomorrow*, Special Edition of Panorama of Global Security Environment 2019, Strategic Policy Institute, p. 46.

17 Information from interviews.

18 European External Action Service, *Statement by the Spokesperson on the Kosovo Security Force*, 14 December 2018.

19 *On Kosovo Security Force*, Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo, No. 1, 04 January 2019.

20 For the purpose of normalising relations between Kosovo and Serbia and paving the way for EU membership for both countries, the EU launched a dialogue process in 2011. To date, Kosovo and Serbia have concluded a total of 33 agreements in Brussels. However, a considerable part thereof are only partially implemented or not even implemented at all. Both parties have opposing views on the definitive outcome of the dialogue and are still miles away from reaching a final settlement. European Parliament Think Tank, *Serbia-Kosovo Relations: Confrontation or Normalisation?*, 12 February 2019.

21 Fatos Bytyci, 'Kosovo approves new army despite Serb opposition, NATO criticism', *Reuters*, 14 December 2018.

22 NATO, *Statement by the NATO Secretary General on the adoption of the laws on the transition of the Kosovo Security Force*, 14 December 2018.

23 Interview with Piers Cazalet, NATO Deputy Spokesperson, 16 October 2020.

24 The mission does not have a set end-date, since it is conditions based.

of this trend is represented by the 2020 iteration of the NATO exercise called Silver Sabre, which featured a prominent role performed by the KSF in both the planning and execution phases.[25]

NATO has now been present in Kosovo for over 20 years. Through the widely held support of KFOR, the added military value is clear and crystallized. The political dimension, which includes formalising the relationship with NATO, has however proven to be a challenging one for Kosovo. The key obstacle is NATO's neutrality approach towards Pristina, since four of its members have not recognised Kosovo's independence. This hurdle is too substantial, because it blocks any possibilities of NATO integration, and must be overcome in due time.

The Political-Military Equation

It is clear that a successful outcome of the EU-facilitated Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue will lessen the political and legal barriers for NATO integration. The question then arises if other steps can be taken in order to prepare for this essential moment. Can Kosovo work towards becoming a credible potential partner or member, by already fulfilling NATO criteria?[26] The Serbia-Kosovo issue is the ultimate political challenge in the long term, but what other opportunities might lie in between?

Even though the political dimension significantly outweighs the military one, and it remains the question whether NATO members would even agree to the participation of the KSF in anything more than an exercise, it is nonetheless interesting to see where Kosovo stands in strict military-technical terms. One of the NATO criteria is namely that a country seeking membership would have to demonstrate "the ability and willingness to make a military contribution to NATO operations".[27] In line with the plans to transform the KSF into a regular army, progressive increases of the defence budget that are proposed showcase Kosovo's commitment to seriously invest in its defence sector (see Table 1).

Table 1 Kosovo defence budget[28]

2018	€52.3 million
2019	€58.7 million
2020	€69.3 million
2021	€69.7 million *planned*
2022	€74.4 million *planned*

Even so, significant military capabilities and capacities are still lacking. With the new mandate, the KSF aims to double its troop strength from 2,500 active military personnel and 800 reservists to 5,000 and 3,000 respectively.[29] In absolute terms, this is not of much value to NATO, the world's largest military alliance. Smaller countries can however use their particular features in relation to their geographic location, regional knowledge and specialised skills to benefit the Alliance.[30] Based on the experience of the KSF in supporting the rescue efforts in Albania after the earthquake in 2019, Kosovo can further develop its 'niche' capabilities in special search and rescue missions capable of participating in international NATO and UN deployments.[31] Since the KSF is trained

25 NATO, *Silver Sabre – KFOR Exercise on Emergency Response Restarts*, 10 October 2020.

26 Countries seeking NATO membership would have to be able to demonstrate that they have fulfilled the following requirements:
- a functioning democratic political system based on a market economy;
- the fair treatment of minority populations;
- a commitment to the peaceful resolution of conflicts;
- the ability and willingness to make a military contribution to NATO operations; and
- a commitment to democratic civil-military relations and institutional structures.

NATO, *Enlargement*, 5 May 2020.

27 Ibid.

28 Information from an Interview with Anton Quni, the Kosovo Minister of Defence, and *Law On The Budget Appropriations Of The Republic Of Kosovo For Year 2020*, Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo, March 2020.

29 *On Kosovo Security Force*, Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo, No. 1, 4 January 2019, page 9.

30 Brandon Burden, *NATO's Small States: Albania as a Case Study*, Naval Postgraduate School, December 2016.

31 Information from interviews.

by KFOR, there should not be significant interoperability issues. Kosovo should however keep in mind that the process to strengthen its military capacities will probably leave several NATO Allies deeply uncomfortable, since it deviates from the CSP proposal.

While there are still several opportunities for Kosovo to grow and contribute to the Alliance in strict military-technical terms, the political reality is and will remain the main stumbling block. It is at this point where the current political-military equation, upheld by UNSCR 1244, reaches its tipping point. Every major military change that is carried out in Kosovo is watched with an eagle eye across the border. The willingness to come to a peaceful resolution of a 'conflict', or the Dialogue, should be Kosovo's first priority if it sincerely wants to make efforts to prepare for future NATO integration. Stepping away from the military opportunities: what can Kosovo aim for politically in the short to medium term?

NATO membership requirements include a commitment to a functioning democratic political system and institutional structures. It is in this realm where Kosovo can demonstrate (a willingness to) progress, without risking jeopardising the prospects of the Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue. The lack of progress between NATO and Kosovo is not only due to the Alliance, but also because of the inability of Kosovo's institutions to make headway. So far, there has only been one official request by the government of Kosovo in 2016 to strengthen ties to the Alliance: the introduction of 'enhanced interaction'.[32] During the deliberation of the NATO members on its response to the request, Spain was said to be the most vocal in its opposition to Kosovo. In 2017, the Alliance replied with a letter which encompassed less than the Kosovo government had hoped for. Instead of enhanced interaction through the NATO Brussels headquarters, it would be managed through KFOR and the NATO Advisory and Liaison Team (NALT) in Pristina.[33] The new level of cooperation led to enhanced communication, increased visits by senior NATO officials and the participation of KSF officials in NATO training programmes.[34] Moreover, while it would not grant Kosovo access to the programmes leading up to a NATO partnership or membership, the new agreement would allow Kosovo to apply for grants for (research) projects through the Public Diplomacy Division and the NATO Science for Peace and Security Programme, as well as benefit from the Building Integrity Programme. Whereas this was a good start to both more Kosovo-NATO interaction and much needed reforms of Kosovo's democratic institutional structures, proof of a continuation of such activities is hard to find. Therefore, for Pristina the 'enhanced interaction' framework merely constituted a tick of the political box, but it did not actually change much in bringing Kosovo closer to the Alliance. In order to do that, Kosovo should undertake a proactive approach to deepen the cooperation possibilities within this framework.

There are three political-institutional aspects which Kosovo should work on. First, Pristina needs to reform its democratic system by, amongst other things, respecting the rule of law in order to meet NATO's political standards. The NATO-Ukraine relationship demonstrates that the Alliance demands progress on vital democratic issues, such as combating corruption and judicial independence. In order to aid Ukraine in implementing NATO principles and standards, the Alliance uses the Annual National Programme (ANP) as a tool to support the transition. Through the ANP, NATO Allies encourage Ukraine to push for serious reforms in order to strengthen democracy, the rule of law, human rights and a free market economy, as well as transforming its defence and security

32 NATO, *Interview with Mr. John Manza, the NATO Deputy Assistant SG for Operation*, 2017.

33 Vukašin Živković, 'NATO perspective of Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina', *European Western Balkans*, 8 February 2019.

34 Research Institute of Development and European Affairs (RIDEA), *The eventual membership of Kosovo to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO): procedures and prospects*, November 2019.

sector.[35] Pristina does not have to wait for such a formal process in cooperation with NATO, but can also use Ukraine as an example and work on critical democratic reform issues itself. It is key that the Kosovo institutions commit themselves to pursuing comprehensive reforms aimed at boosting good governance and the rule of law, for the benefit of all communities.

Second, a well-functioning bureaucratic system is essential for Kosovo to participate in international organisations. At present, the country lacks a proper qualified diplomatic corps and experts to expand its staff and facilitate discussions. The Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue drains most of Kosovo's energy on foreign affairs and the aim to intensify relations with NATO seems to be put on the back burner. The same efforts that are put into the development of the KSF would not be wasted on other institutions such as the Ministry of Interior.[36] Pristina could create a NATO Working Group to get policymakers to start working on their aim to intensify relations with the Alliance and its member states. Only then can more appropriate interaction with NATO be initiated. In turn, this would also contribute to Kosovo's security sector.

Kosovo could furthermore demonstrate its willingness to improve relations with its Serb minority, by offering Kosovo Serb personnel the opportunity to serve in the higher ranks in the KSF, as happened with the police force. In the long term, this could change the attitude of the Kosovo Serb population towards the KSF and build more trust and respect within the force. At the same time, the KSF must continue working closely with NATO and welcoming their professional assistance and training in conformity with the Alliance's standards. This would send an important message to especially Serbia that Kosovo's security force is based on multiethnicity and professionalism, which could create incentives for more engagement, as well as to dispel claims that the KSF is a threat to Serb community in Kosovo and the region's stability. If this approach would extend to KSF activities, there also lie chances to contribute to regional security. One such example includes the Balkan Medical Task Force, a cooperation format between Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia, to enhance medical military cooperation in the region.[37] Especially right now, during the COVID-19 pandemic, this would be a practical suggestion for Kosovo to offer to contribute in some way.

The Bumpy Road to NATO

While Kosovo has multiple military and political-institutional opportunities to prepare itself for a future formal relationship with NATO, the question remains to what extent creative ways of strengthening ties to the Alliance can be found under the current circumstances. First and foremost, it is fundamental that Kosovo demonstrates its political willingness to enhance interaction with NATO. Even if it is not realistic in the short term, the Kosovo government could explicitly ask to establish a political dialogue. It would probably not immediately lead to a partnership programme, but at least Kosovo's intentions would be out in the open and some form of political interaction could take place. Right now, there is a missing link between the NATO headquarters and Pristina. Kosovo can try to establish diplomatic relations by allowing its embassy in Belgium to reach out to NATO headquarters as well as enhancing its political relationships with NATO member countries which do recognise Kosovo. Countries such as the US, Turkey, Albania and Croatia have already tried to break the ice in the Kosovo-NATO relationship.[38] By proactively seeking contact with Kosovo-friendly nations, including also the United Kingdom, Germany and France, Kosovo can attempt to strengthen its ties to NATO

35 NATO, *Topic: Relations with Ukraine*, 11 November 2020.
36 Information from interviews.
37 Balkan Medical Task Force, *Balkan Medical Task Force History*, 2016.
38 Information from interviews.

members bilaterally, which in turn could influence the non-recognisers in the longer term.

For NATO itself, engagement with Kosovo through KFOR is still crucial to guarantee regional stability. As long as Kosovo makes military adjustments, such as enhancing its capabilities, this will still be subject to criticism as was the case with the introduction of new laws to create a national army. In the meantime, as a bridge towards partnership programmes and the possible future accession process, NATO could consider deepening cooperation through the 'enhanced interaction framework' from their side as well. Through this interaction, the Alliance could aid Kosovo in reforming its political system and institutions.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The complex geopolitical reality in which the young state of Kosovo was born is full of challenges that have been holding it back from participating in international organisations, such as NATO. The Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue is the ultimate challenge for Kosovo in the long term and until a deal is reached, NATO integration is unlikely. Pristina has to be aware of the military-political equation, where every major military change could have political repercussions. Nonetheless this policy brief provides three sets of guidelines on how to square the circle:

1. In the meantime, Kosovo can work towards becoming a credible potential NATO partner or member, by already fulfilling necessary requirements. These include:
   a. Committing to necessary reforms of its democratic system, including strengthening its rule of law and fighting corruption. By following the example of the ANP process between NATO and Ukraine, Kosovo can assess which reforms are needed in order to meet NATO principles and standards.
   b. Investing in its diplomatic corps and establishing a NATO Working Group. Besides a commitment to good governance and the rule of law, it is key that the Kosovo institutions pursue a well-functioning bureaucratic system, since that is essential to participate in international organisations;
   c. Offering to make higher ranks in the KSF available for personnel of Kosovo Serb ethnicity. If this attitude would extend to KSF activities, there also lie chances to contribute to regional security, including the Balkan Medical Task Force;
   d. Investing in 'niche' capabilities to aid international NATO missions, such as in the area of search and rescue missions;
   e. Maintaining closer cooperation with KFOR through training programmes and assistance and demonstrating its commitment to contribute by offering KSF troops to serve in international peacekeeping operations. Regardless of this, Kosovo should be aware of NATO members' diverging positions concerning the expansion of military capabilities.
2. Kosovo should try to create ways of strengthening ties to the Alliance under the current circumstances. To demonstrate its political willingness to enhance interaction with NATO, Pristina could explicitly ask to establish a political dialogue. This can be done by:
   a. Allowing the Kosovo embassy in Belgium to reach out to NATO headquarters;
   b. Enhancing political relationships with NATO member countries that recognise Kosovo.
3. NATO could consider deepening cooperation within the 'enhanced cooperation framework', including the Building Integrity programme. Through this interaction, the Alliance could aid Kosovo in reforming its political system, institutions and rule of law as well as countering corruption. This would create a smoother path for Kosovo's future integration aspirations.

Annex 1 Timeline of Kosovo-NATO relations

1999 **NATO Intervention:** NATO launches its air campaign against FR Yugoslavia. The war ends with the Kumanovo Treaty and the Yugoslav forces agreeing to withdraw. The United Nations Security Council adopts Resolution 1244 authorising the presence of the NATO-led international peacekeeping force known as the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and establishes the United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK).

2004 **Kosovo March Riots:** Kosovo Albanians led an onslaught against minority Serb, Roma and Ashkali communities, which is remembered as the largest ethnic violent incident since the end of the war. KFOR was criticised for its failure to protect. These protests were also anti-UNMIK, because people were increasingly concerned about the lack of Kosovo's final status.

2007 **Marti Ahtisaari Plan:** The Ahtisaari Plan, or CSP, proposes supervised independence for Kosovo, which is immediately welcomed by Kosovo Albanians and rejected by Serbia.

2008 **Kosovo's Declaration of Independence:** Kosovo declares independence and adopts its Constitution.

2010 **International Court of Justice Decision on Kosovo's declaration of independence:** Declaration of independence is not in violation of either general principles of international law—which do not prohibit unilateral declarations of independence—nor of specific international law—in particular Resolution 1244—which does not define the final status process for Kosovo.

2011 **EU-facilitated dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia:** The start of a technical dialogue by the EU to normalise relations.

2012 **Kosovo supervised independence ends:** A 25-nation group (comprised of 23 EU member states, the US and Turkey) which has been monitoring Kosovo's first few years of independence officially ends its role.

2013 **Brussels Agreement:** Kosovo and Serbia negotiate and conclude the "First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalisation of Relations," although not signed by either party.

2015 **Stabilisation and Association Agreement:** Kosovo signs its first contractual agreement with the EU.

2018 **Kosovo army:** Kosovo assembly passes three laws to transform its security forces into a national army.

2020 **Kosovo-Serbia Economic Normalisation Deal:** Kosovo and Serbia sign a pair of documents agreeing to normalise their economic ties and join the "Mini-Schengen" regional initiative. The documents are signed at the White House in the presence of the US President, Donald Trump.

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