

Committee: GA4: Special Political & Decolonization

Agenda Item: Reaffirming the International Position on Kosovo's
Sovereignty and the Political Future of the Serbian Minority in the North

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Introduction

The international debate on Kosovo's sovereignty and the political destiny of the Serbian minority living in the north is one of the most enduring and sensitive issues to have faced the Balkans. From the breakup of Yugoslavia and the Kosovo War of 1998-1999, the final status of Kosovo has continued to shape regional stability, ethnic relations, and the strategic interests of major global actors. Following Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008, over one hundred member states of the United Nations have recognized Kosovo as a state, although Serbia, backed by a number of influential powers, has refused to acknowledge such independence as legitimate. That divide has been a diplomatic problem with implications far beyond this region, including European Union integration, NATO presence, and politics in the Western Balkans.

The tensions are most visible in northern Kosovo, where Serb-majority municipalities like Mitrovica North, Zvečan, Leposavić, and Zubin Potok maintain strong political, cultural, and economic ties with Belgrade. But of course, there are several administrative structures competing in claims of authority, and disputes over energy supply and border crossings have time and again harmed efforts to establish functional governance. Crises such as clashes between local Serbs and Kosovo Police over controversies on identity documents, vehicle registration plates, and municipal elections show how unresolved legal and political issues continue to cause instability. These incidents draw the attention of the European Union, NATO's KFOR mission, and regional actors time and again, all in an effort to prevent escalation while seeking a mutual solution.

In this view, reaffirming the international position on Kosovo's sovereignty requires not only the study of recognition and territorial legitimacy, but also an assessment of the rights, representation, and long-term political expectations of the Serbian minority. The issue is linked to various themes, such as ethnic identity, constitutional legality, decentralization, and international law. The EU-facilitated Brussels Dialogue and subsequent agreements tried to overcome these issues, particularly with the proposed Association/Community of Serb-Majority Municipalities (ASM), but to this date, the actual implementation remains partial and contested. It is important to note that these dynamics are crucial for determining how Kosovo can exercise authority without undermining minority protection and how Serbia can protect the rights of its constituency in the north without meddling with regional security protocols.

In that respect, the report will first introduce delegates to the definition of the key terms of this topic; of course, these will be must-know terms since they will be constantly referred to throughout this report. It will then look at the positions and interests of the major stakeholders of Kosovo, Serbia, the European Union, NATO, and the UN relevant bodies, pointing out areas of divergence. Following a description of the major actors involved, delegates can learn more about the issue with the general overview section. Of course, the most data regarding the issue will be presented in that section, and it will examine the roots of this problem. The final section of the report will then outline potential policy options and long-term institutional arrangements aimed at tension reduction, minority right consideration, and a viable settlement. This way, the report hopes to give the delegate an easy-to-understand view of the situation, thus enabling them to join in the debate and draft constructive and balanced solutions.

Definition of Key Terms

UNSC Resolution 1244 (1999)

The UN Security Council resolution that ended the Kosovo War. It placed Kosovo under UN administration (UNMIK) and affirmed Yugoslavia/Serbia's territorial integrity — creating the legal ambiguity still debated today. Frequently cited by Serbia to question Kosovo's sovereignty.

KFOR (Kosovo Force)

A NATO-led peacekeeping mission deployed in 1999 to maintain security and stability in Kosovo. KFOR plays an essential role in preventing escalation, especially in the north, and operates independently of Kosovo's police forces.

UNMIK (United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo)

The temporary UN governance mission established after the 1999 conflict. Though its authority has diminished, UNMIK still plays a role in diplomacy, rule of law, and facilitating dialogue.

Ahtisaari Plan (2007)

The proposal for Kosovo's "supervised independence," forming the foundation of Kosovo's constitution and minority protection system. Serbia rejected it, but Kosovo adopted it.

Brussels Agreement (2013)

The core EU-mediated political agreement meant to normalize relations between Serbia and Kosovo. It integrates Serb-majority areas into Kosovo's system and is the basis for the ASM.

Major Actors Involved

Republic of Kosovo

Kosovo is a partially recognized state that declared independence from Serbia in 2008 and is recognized by more than 100 UN member states. Its main goal is the consolidation of full sovereignty, control over all its territory, including the Serb-majority north, and eventual membership in the European Union, NATO, and the United Nations. The institutions of Kosovo are based on the Ahtisaari Plan, with a focus on minority protections and decentralization, but they face difficulties in integrating the northern municipalities that remain politically aligned with Belgrade. Kosovo cooperates closely with the EU, the United States, and NATO's KFOR mission but remains in tense, unresolved relations with Serbia, which still claims Kosovo as part of its sovereign territory.

Republic of Serbia

Serbia is a sovereign state recognized by the UN and refuses to acknowledge Kosovo's independence, claiming it as its southern province under the constitutional name "Kosovo and Metohija." The main goals of Serbia are the prevention of further international recognition of Kosovo, protection of rights and political autonomy of the Serbian minority in northern Kosovo, and the creation of ASM as a binding legal body. Serbia has strong diplomatic relations with Russia and China (both of which support its position) and is at the same time involved in EU-mediated negotiations as a part of its EU accession process, which mandates the normalization of relations with Kosovo.

European Union (EU)

The EU is the lead facilitator of the Kosovo–Serbia Dialogue, acting through the European External Action Service and the EU Special Representative for the Belgrade–Pristina Dialogue. It seeks to stabilize the Western Balkans, avoid conflict, and move both parties toward legally binding arrangements that can prefigure ultimate EU membership. The European Union also fields EULEX, a large rule-of-law mission, and provides substantial financial and institutional support to both Kosovo and Serbia. While the EU acts "status-neutral" with respect to Kosovo, the different policies of member states recognition of Kosovo make the EU engagement diplomatically complex.

NATO/KFOR (Kosovo Force)

NATO helms KFOR, the international peacekeeping mission deployed in 1999 under UNSC Resolution 1244 to maintain security, deter violence, and ensure free movement within Kosovo. KFOR's presence is particularly crucial in the Serb-majority north, where tensions frequently boil over into protests or blockades. KFOR is militarily neutral vis-à-vis the sovereignty dispute but works in close cooperation with Kosovo's institutions, EULEX, and local communities to prevent conflict. All major security incidents-such as barricade removals, license-plate tensions, or the Banjska attack-have required KFOR intervention, making it the primary guarantor of stability in the region.

United Nations (UN) / UNMIK

The United Nations maintains a presence in Kosovo through UNMIK, established under UNSC Resolution 1244. While its authority has been reduced over time, UNMIK retains some symbolic and diplomatic functions, particularly in the area of community mediation and the provision of a status-neutral platform for dialogue. The UN itself is also divided on the question of Kosovo's status, with several Security Council members-most notably Russia and China-not recognizing Kosovo. This stands in the way of Kosovo's UN membership and continues to make Resolution 1244 a relevant factor in both the legal and political framing of the issue.

General Overview of the Issue

The matter of Kosovo's independence and the political future of the Serbian minority living in the north can be traced back to the breakup of Yugoslavia and the Kosovo War of 1998-1999. After the conflict, Kosovo came under the United Nations administration through UNSC

Resolution 1244, which confirmed Serbia's territorial integrity while also paving the way for Kosovo to govern its internal affairs independently.

Kosovo declared independence in 2008 and was officially recognised by more than half of UN member states, whereas Serbia, which was being supported by Russia and China, refused to recognise that independence. Tensions are mainly focused on the Serb majority parts of northern Kosovo. Many citizens there still feel a strong allegiance to Serbia and continue receiving services from various Serbian institutions. This creates parallel systems and leads to repeated disputes over identity documents, licence plates, local elections and border crossings. International actors such as the EU, NATO's KFOR (the Kosovo Force) and UNMIK play a significant role in preventing tension escalation and encouraging dialogue between the two sides. One of the most sensitive political issues is the establishment of the Serb-Majority

Municipalities, which Serbia strongly supports and Kosovo approaches with a strong scepticism. At the same time, socio-economic issues further complicate matters. The northern municipalities have limited economic opportunities and depend severely on the financial support of Serbia, while also showing low levels of trust in the central institutions of Kosovo. Under these conditions, integration becomes challenging and political tensions can easily escalate. As a result, the region remains fragile, and progress will require both sides to stay strictly loyal to their agreements, whilst implementing them without hesitation, build trust and ensure that Kosovo's sovereignty and minority rights can co-exist stably.

Timeline of Important Events

Date:	Event:
10 June 1999	Kosovo placed under UN administration; KFOR authorized.
17 February 2008	Kosovo declares independence from Serbia.
22 July 2010	ICJ rules Kosovo's declaration of independence did not violate international law.
19 April 2013	Serbia and Kosovo sign major EU-mediated deal on normalization.
25 August 2015	Both parties agree on creating the Association/Community of Serb-Majority Municipalities.
September 2021	Protests and barricades erupt over Kosovo's plate regulations
18 March 2023	Kosovo and Serbia accept the EU's new normalization framework.
24 September 2023	Armed Serbian group clashes with Kosovo Police in the north.

Related Documents

<https://peacemaker.un.org/en/node/9378>

<https://api.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/141/16012.pdf?utm>

<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8740-2013-INIT/en/pdf>

<https://kim.gov.rs/doc/pregovaracki-proces/Aneks%20sa%20Ohrida-eng%20verzija.pdf?>

Past Solution Attempts

Over the past two decades, multiple political, economic, and security-related efforts have been made to resolve the Kosovo–Serbia dispute. The Brussels Agreement (2013) tried to normalize relations by integrating Serb-majority municipalities into Kosovo’s legal framework and establishing the Association/Community of Serb-Majority Municipalities (ASM), while technical agreements addressed border management, energy, and civil registries. NATO’s KFOR mission and the EU’s EULEX provided security and rule-of-law support, preventing escalation during crises such as license plate disputes and barricades in the north. Economic incentives like EU accession prospects and dialogue processes aimed to encourage compromise. Despite these actions, persistent political resistance, partial implementation of agreements, constitutional disputes over the ASM, and multiple security incidents—including the Banjska attack—have prevented a effective solution. Lessons from these attempts shows us the need for enforceable mechanisms and minority protections.

Possible Solutions

The comprehensive approaches within the multiple dimensions of the Kosovo–Serbia dispute are encouraged. Politically, solutions may focus on ensuring the implementation of the agreements like the Brussels Agreement and the ASM and reconciling Kosovo’s constitutional framework with minority rights and local autonomy. Security-related proposals that may be put forward can discuss the development of critical cooperation between the Kosovo Police, KFOR, and the local communities in terms of preventing clashes, while demilitarizing parallel structures in northern municipalities. Delegates could delve into measures for motivating economic development in Serb-majority areas, encouraging participation in state institutions, and reducing reliance on cross-border subsidies. Resolution strategies should challenge the balance among recognition, dialogue, and international guarantees, taking into consideration positions to be outlined by Serbia, Kosovo, the EU, the United States, and Russia. In developing such a resolution strategy, the delegates should account for the mechanism to ensure compliance, such as international monitoring or phased implementation plans, and survey the role of trust-building initiatives, cultural cooperation, and minority protection laws. By addressing governance, security, economic development, and international engagement simultaneously, resolutions can provide sustainable, long-term solutions rather than short-term fixes.

Useful Links

<https://www.britannica.com/event/Kosovo-conflict>

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/the-kosovo-war-causes-timeline-nato-involved.html>

<https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/library/world/europe/032499chron-kosovo.html>

<https://balkaninsight.com/2023/02/01/a-serb-association-in-kosovo-would-threaten-integration-and-peace/>

<https://kfos.org/storage/app/uploads/public/5f2/00e/bd3/5f200ebd39816640406402.pdf>

<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2024/04/kosovo-briefing-5.php>

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“Kosovo Conflict: Research Starters: EBSCO Research.” *EBSCO*, www.ebsco.com/research-starters/history/kosovo-conflict. Accessed 16 Nov. 2025.

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