

## Kosovo: From International Province to State?

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In February 2007, the United Nations (UN) presented the Ahtisaari plan to define the legal status of Kosovo. Serbia considers it its province and believes that it is the plan's intention to make it independent. The Albanian Kosovars see it as an incomplete attempt to maintain the territory under Serbian rule. The European Union (EU) faces the serious challenge of taking a stance on the future of Kosovo: should it be a new state or a protectorate?

*Since 1999, Kosovo has been in a highly complex legal situation. Security Council Resolution 1244 established an international protectorate in Serbian territory under UN auspices, a status to be reviewed at an undetermined point in the future. The outbreak of violence in March 2004, which caused the destruction of many Serbian homes and orthodox places of worship, and brought about many deaths, coaxed the international community to search for a definitive solution to the problem. The Ahtisaari plan reflects the difficulty in reaching a negotiated compromise between the two antagonists. The plan delineates the necessary elements for the creation of an independent Belgrade state. Pristine agrees with the proposition but Belgrade rejects it. Europe and the United States favour a gradual process towards Kosovo's independence, while Russia will not accept a solution that contradicts Serbian wishes. Given this situation, it is highly likely that it will be in the hands of the UN Security Council to provide a definitive solution. The European Union substitution of the United Nations at the forefront of the international community in Kosovo should help its stabilisation; however, for this to happen, a firm and consensual resolution on Kosovo's status is imperative. The EU will have to convince Russia and Serbia to accept the core elements of the Ahtisaari plan. Upon it depends its credibility as a regional leader, as well as the future stability of its frontiers.*

The territory of Kosovo remains highly unstable despite international efforts since 1991.<sup>1</sup> UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari's plan, presented on 2 February 2007, does not seem able to bridge two seemingly irreconcilable positions. Belgrade offers the province ample autonomy. Pristine will only accept total independence.

UN Resolution 1244<sup>2</sup> establishing an international protectorate in Kosovo gave the Albanian Kosovar people the hope that independence would come soon. Initial optimism gave way to moderate pessimism throughout the years, soon turning into a generalised feeling of discontent and scepticism. The events of March 2004 expressed such deep unease and opened the eyes of the international community, hitherto incapable of understanding the frustration of the Albanian people. This resulted in hundreds of Serbian Kosovar homes burnt down and, consequently, thousands of displaced persons. International organisations on the field were struck by a reality that had not seemed so pressing before: it was necessary to advance towards a stable solution for Kosovo.

The United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) needed some time to react to the clear message sent out by the Albanian Kosovars and their institutions. Even the Provisional Institutions of Self Government (PISG) parliament chose to echo popular demands and did not condemn the violent ethnic attacks of 17-19 March 2004. UNMIK tried to step up and impose conditions on PISG before opening negotiations on the future status of Kosovo. Thus, a plan was drawn to implement

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<sup>1</sup> 'Serbia rejects UN's Kosovo Plan', *New York Times*, 14 February 2007.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

the 'Kosovo Standards',<sup>3</sup> a series of measures and norms to be taken and followed by Kosovar institutions as a pre-requisite to talks on status. The motto became 'Standards before status'.<sup>4</sup> A report approved by the Security Council in 2003 thereby acquired greater relevance.

The standards were in fact a stern warning to Kosovo's institutions; with the message that events like those of March 2004 would not be tolerated again. Independence would only be possible if the PISG acknowledged and applied the basic mechanisms of a democratic state and the rule of law, in which the protection of minorities is an inalienable principle. The PISG received this long and measure-filled document with great apprehension, which was yet more pronounced at the municipal level.<sup>5</sup>

Since then, the international community has provided technical assistance on the standards on numerous occasions. The most recent UNMIK report of the UN Secretary-General before the Security Council explicitly mentions the advancement with regards to fulfilment of standards, which has strengthened local institutions. On the other hand, it warns that a political agreement on the status of Kosovo will be a very difficult task. To this end the standards are of paramount importance.<sup>6</sup> Until now, every Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) in the province has emphasised the need of integrating the Serbian Kosovars in the current government structure of Kosovo.<sup>7</sup>

Kosovo is part of the Stabilisation and Association Process, which is the EU's political strategy tool for the Balkans. The European Partnership Plan<sup>8</sup> comprehends reforms that Kosovo has to undergo in order to re-approach the European Union, and includes precisely the aforementioned standards. In this manner, two vital interdependent processes for Kosovo converge in one document: possible European integration and fulfilment of standards.

### From Standards to Status

Based on Kai Eide's report<sup>9</sup> – UN Secretary-General's Special envoy to Kosovo, in charge of assessing the feasibility of initiating status negotiations<sup>10</sup> – the Security Council decided to give continuity to the process.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, on 10 November 2005, the UN Secretary-General appointed Martti Ahtisaari as his Special Envoy for the future status of Kosovo process.

Martti Ahtisaari accepted the difficult task of trying to reconcile the governments of Pristine and Belgrade, which have repeatedly expressed the inexistence of common grounds on the territorial question. Negotiations began in February 2006, in Vienna, with an apprehensive atmosphere.<sup>12</sup> During that year, different delegations

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<sup>3</sup> Kosovo Standards Implementation Plan (KSIP) includes eight basic elements that must be guaranteed by Kosovar institutions, prioritising them in such a fashion that the fundamental one is 'sustainable multi-ethnicity', <http://www.unmikonline.org/standards/index.html>.

<sup>4</sup> 'Standards before status' became a reference for the international community as well as for the local population after the March 2004 events.

<sup>5</sup> At present, Kosovo is divided into 30 municipalities, with similar attributions to town councils. These are responsible for bridging the gap between citizens and their fundamental rights. They are of crucial significance with respect to the present Plan for Kosovo, where Serbian municipalities will have full administrative autonomy.

<sup>6</sup> Security Council, S/2006/96, p.24.

<sup>7</sup> Security Council, S/2006/96, p.28.

<sup>8</sup> August 2006, <http://www.unmikonline.org/eu/epap.html>.

<sup>9</sup> See Press Release UN Secretary-General, SG/A/927.

<sup>10</sup> Security Council, S/2005/635, Annex 'A comprehensive review of the situation in Kosovo' (so-called Eide's report).

<sup>11</sup> Statement by the President of the Security Council, S/PRST/2005/51.

<sup>12</sup> UNOSEK/Pr 2.

discussed key issues such as decentralisation and protection of minorities to no avail – Belgrade insisted on autonomy and Pristina on independence. In order to avoid a collapse in negotiations, the international community decided that Martti Ahtisaari should formulate a proposal for the legal status of Kosovo. Originally intended for the end of 2006, presentation of the proposal was postponed until after the Serbian elections of 21 January 2007, convoked by Serbian President Boris Tadic.

Serbian politicians have always taken advantage of Kosovo for their own nationalistic purposes. Proof of this is that there is hardly any disagreement among the many political parties, all concurring that it is unacceptable to grant independence to a fragment of Serbia's territory. Such political vision inspired the preamble of the new Serbian constitution, approved in a national referendum in November 2006 that excluded Albanian Kosovars resident in Kosovo but not Serbian Kosovars.<sup>13</sup> The recent constitution considers Kosovo an 'inalienable part of Serbia'. However, it was approved with a meagre 51 percent of votes, which reflects scarce Serbian enthusiasm about the issue.<sup>14</sup>

Likewise, it is worth noting that while the Kosovo question was present in the political campaigns preceding this year's parliamentary elections, it did not figure amongst Serbian voters' priorities. Most political parties emphasised economic and social issues, as well as the possible European integration of Serbia. That the radical nationalists of the Serbian Radical Party (SRS) – led by war criminal Vojislav Seselj, presently at The Hague awaiting trial – were the most voted, with 28.7 percent of the ballot, implies little more than the fact that they will occupy 81 of the 250 seats that make up Parliament. Finally, moderate opinions, represented by Kostunica's Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) and Tadic's Democratic Party (DS), are the ones that make up 112 of the 125 seats necessary to form government.<sup>15</sup> In sum, the political outlook of the last elections has been reproduced; there is a similar share of votes between radicals and moderates, with the only difference that this time round Kostunica received less votes than Tadic, who will, predictably, become president.<sup>16</sup>

Fear is the SRS radical nationalists' main weapon. However, they do not seem capable of impeding the current process of reforms<sup>17</sup> – a widely shared opinion.<sup>18</sup> The future government of Serbia will be determined over the next two weeks, and everything indicates that Kosovo will remain a pending task in its agenda. What is more, it could be a distortional element between Kostunica's and Tadic's parties in their coalition building to form government. The former made stark declarations about the Ahtisaari plan before it was made public, threatening a 'hardline response' to Western powers if they granted independence to Kosovo.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> According to Belgrade diplomatic sources, Pristina would probably have boycotted the referendum had it included Albanian Kosovars.

<sup>14</sup> D. Cosic, 'Kosovo's Status Potential Flashpoint in Balkans', *World Politics Watch*, 7 November 2006. Legal sources in Serbia have pointed out that this is the 13<sup>th</sup> constitution in the 200 years of the Serbian state, which implies an average constitution lifespan of 16 years.

<sup>15</sup> E. Gordy, 'Serbia's elections: less of the same', 23 January 2007, [www.opendemocracy.net](http://www.opendemocracy.net).

<sup>16</sup> Author's conversation with European diplomatic sources in Belgrade.

<sup>17</sup> E. Gordy, 2007, op. cit.

<sup>18</sup> UNOSCEK/Pr 2.

<sup>19</sup> 'U.S slams Serb Leader's hard line on Kosovo', *New York Times*, 1 February 2007.

## The Ahtisaari plan, or the new creation of states

Ahtisaari finally presented his plan on 2 February 2007.<sup>20</sup> The title itself, *Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement*,<sup>21</sup> reflects the difficulty in reaching a clear solution to the status issue, a point that appears to not have had significant advances despite Ahtisaari's mediating efforts.<sup>22</sup> The creation and destruction of states is an integral part of history. In this sense, the Balkans are a core element of the complex state architecture that comprehends the European construction. And Kosovo, precisely, constitutes the last piece in this framework.

The NATO intervention on Serbian territory, in the spring of 1999, provided the basis for Resolution 1244, which made it possible for the international community to administer Kosovo jointly with the PISG. Any future structure will, necessarily, be based on this resolution. The legitimacy of creating states through armed intervention, even if considered of a 'humanitarian' nature, is questioned by a branch of international law. Ahtisaari, therefore, has avoided terms like 'state' or 'sovereignty', which could prove to be too controversial on a tension-filled and antagonistic negotiations table.

However, it is stated that Kosovo will be a 'multi-ethnic society, democratically governed under the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms that will promote the peaceful and prosperous existence of all its citizens'.<sup>23</sup> Self-government presupposes sovereignty, yet not completely. But when coupled with other competences that are more explicit symbols of territorial sovereignty,<sup>24</sup> it leaves no room for doubt that the proposal contains the necessary elements for the creation of a state.<sup>25</sup> Among these are a constitution and the possibility of integrating international organisations or signing international treaties.

The proposal has received a favourable reception at Pristine<sup>26</sup> and, predictably, a negative one at Belgrade, where it was rejected by the Serbian parliament.<sup>27</sup> Kostunica himself refused to receive Special Envoy Ahtisaari in Belgrade. This is, without a doubt, a slow start for Ahtisaari, the United States and others who intend to present the final dossier before the Security Council in March.<sup>28</sup> The US has openly declared its support for Ahtisaari's proposal and expressed that it wishes to see its implementation. It is open to reforms to the proposal, but will not accept backward steps in the process<sup>29</sup> – Washington has supported independence from the very beginning.

What will be the next steps once the proposal is announced? Serbia's rejection of the plan makes a compromise highly unlikely, as Ahtisaari himself has recognised.<sup>30</sup> On 10 March, the Vienna meetings that had started at the end of February were

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<sup>20</sup> Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, <http://kosovo.birn.eu.com/en/1/1/2205/>.

<sup>21</sup> Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement, Executive Summary, <http://www.unmikonline.org/>.

<sup>22</sup> In a press conference on 2 February 2007, Ahtisaari himself expressed that he was 'not terribly optimistic (...) on the status issue', <http://www.unmikonline.org/>.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. [author's translation].

<sup>24</sup> Amongst other things, the proposal provides for the creation of a legal system and sustainable economic development. For more information see footnote (20) above.

<sup>25</sup> Craig S. Smith, 'Serbs reject plan that clears way for Kosovo Independence', *International Herald Tribune*, 2 February 2007.

<sup>26</sup> General Secretariat of the Council, EU Team, Pristine, February 2007. The resignation of the Minister of Interior after police intervention in the demonstrations of 10 February 2007 killed two Albanian Kosovars is representative of Pristine's unwillingness to shake the spirits of the international community.

<sup>27</sup> 'Serbia Resoundingly Dumps UN Proposal', *Der Spiegel*, 15 February 2007.

<sup>28</sup> International Crisis Group, 'Kosovo Status: Difficult months ahead', Crisis Group Europe Briefing, 45, 20 December 2006.

<sup>29</sup> Press Availability with US Ambassador in Pristine, *Frank Wisner*, 5 February 2007.

<sup>30</sup> International Crisis Group, 2006, op. cit.

closed after delegations from both countries stated radical differences and could not reach an agreement.<sup>31</sup> Numerous scenarios are possible at this conjecture. The proposal could move to the Security Council without a previous agreement between Pristine and Belgrade, which would put Russia, the United States and the European Union in a difficult situation. The Russian Foreign Minister has expressed his recognition of what was agreed by the great power Contact Group – France, Britain, Italy, Germany, United States and Russia itself – which has welcomed the proposal.<sup>32</sup> However, Lavrov is against the idea of imposing the status issue on Serbia through a Security Council resolution. A less likely scenario would be a delay in Ahtisaari's calendar, which could result in new Serbian elections being celebrated in May. This could cause unease in Kosovo, even though its leaders are convinced that Serbian rejection to the plan is not a determinant factor of their final status.<sup>33</sup> However, it is important to note that there are radical elements in Kosovo that favour immediate independence and are not favourable to concessions to the Serbian Kosovars. These groups were capable of convoking a demonstration on 10 February<sup>34</sup> that ended in the deaths of two Albanian Kosovars in the conflict with police forces that ensued. If the final status is not reached, it will be necessary to consider the mobilisation capacity of such groups.<sup>35</sup>

In principle, the EU has an adequate framework to deal with questions like the status of Kosovo – the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). However, the latter has not been of much use recently. On the one hand, the Contact Group is the forum where different views on the Balkans are being discussed. On the other hand, it is the bilateral contacts among European states, or those under the auspices of the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, that are giving shape and form to the decision-making process. At the moment, the European states seem to support the Ahtisaari plan, albeit with reticence from countries like Spain, Italy, Romania or Hungary.<sup>36</sup>

The European Union would be very pleased if the word 'independence' figured in the next Security Council resolution. This would relieve it from the burden of having to recognise Kosovo's independence itself. Moreover, in this manner its future commitment in the region could develop in a clear legal and political framework. Russia has expressed its rejection to any solution that does not please Belgrade on repeated occasions, and has asked for more time in international fora.<sup>37</sup> Kosovo is not a fundamental interest of Russia: it is just another piece to manoeuvre on the international board.

The most important factor in bringing Pristine and Belgrade closer is the EU's ability to attract the Serbian government towards it.<sup>38</sup> The re-opening of the Stabilisation and Association Process<sup>39</sup> with Serbia will be one of its main trumps – it will, nevertheless, require solving the thorny issue of turning in war criminals Mladic and Karadzic.<sup>40</sup> This was agreed in Brussels at the most recent Council of European

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<sup>31</sup> 'Fracasa en Viena la negociación abierta entre Serbia y Kosovo', *El País*, 11 March 2007.

<sup>32</sup> 'Interview with the Russian Foreign Minister Serguey Lavrov', *Der Spiegel*, 7 February 2007.

<sup>33</sup> International Crisis Group, 2006, op. cit.

<sup>34</sup> Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), 'Protest against UN Plan turns bloody in Pristine', 12 February 2007.

<sup>35</sup> These groups are known as *Vetevendosje*, that is, self-determination; <http://www.vetevendosje.org/>.

<sup>36</sup> From the author's conversations with European diplomats responsible for the Kosovo dossier, February 2007.

<sup>37</sup> 'Secret UN Kosovo Plan surfaces ahead of schedule', *New York Times*, 31 January 2007.

<sup>38</sup> Richard Gowan, 'Does the EU still want the Balkans?', March-April 2007, <http://www.peoplepowerprocess.com/>.

<sup>39</sup> 'Kosovo, on the road to independence', *The Economist*, 1 February 2007.

<sup>40</sup> This is the mechanism used by the EU to prepare the grounds for would-be members. Negotiations with respect to this agreement were interrupted in 2006 due to Serbia's refusal to cooperate with the

Ministers on 12 February,<sup>41</sup> which reaffirmed the European Commission's willingness to resume negotiations on the condition that Serbia makes a firm commitment to cooperate with the International Court for the Former Republic of Yugoslavia. However, it is uncertain whether Serbia will feel that this is enough compensation for the loss of territory; where many Serbian still live and which has a rich cultural and historical patrimony, especially orthodox monasteries. No Serbian politician wishes to have the loss of Kosovo in his/her curriculum. The proposal comprehends ample autonomy for Serbian municipalities under the concept of 'decentralisation'. This does not seem enough to please the Serbian Kosovars, whose authorities were not present at the plan's presentation.<sup>42</sup>

### **The European Union: No-one's heir, Queen without a throne**

According to the Ahtisaari plan, the United Nations will soon withdraw its field presence from Kosovo, and will be replaced by the European Union. In this manner, a universal international organisation cedes control to a regional one, which aspires to be a coherent agent in foreign policy. However, this will not be a succession in every sense of the word, since the EU will inherit a different panorama from the present one. On the one hand, the current legal framework – read, Resolution 1244 – is to be replaced by a new Security Council resolution still to be negotiated. Even if the new resolution does not openly declare Kosovo's independence, the consequent annulment of Resolution 1244 will allow the US and the EU to recognise Kosovo as a sovereign state.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, there will not be a handing over of power competences from the UN to the EU. The European Union will act in Kosovo in the following two ways: first, through an International Civilian Representative (ICR) who,<sup>44</sup> along with a team of approximately 100 experts, will be in charge of the implementation of the final agreement on the status issue. Second, through a new mission under the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) umbrella, with a clear function of consolidating the rule of law. This mission will comprehend approximately 100 judges and 1,000 police officers on the field. The administrative tasks hitherto exercised by the UN are to be handed to the Kosovar government.<sup>45</sup>

The EU is already experimenting difficulties in implementing the above on the field. Establishing European presence in Kosovo under the ESDP framework and promoting, to that end, cooperation among EU states, will be a significant challenge for the German presidency.<sup>46</sup> Civilian crisis administration is a relatively new instrument in the EU toolbox, which had its debut in Bosnia and has since then extended to nine different places around the world. Thus, it still lacks an adequate framework to confront the challenges it is facing. Its becoming a useful tool, capable of stabilising conflict and post-conflict regions, will depend heavily on member states' willingness and efforts.<sup>47</sup>

Another variable that may influence the outcome is the type of mandate that will be proposed in the upcoming resolution, which should grant the EU enough strength

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International Court for Former Republic of Yugoslavia by not turning in war criminals Mladic and Karadzic, presumably on Serbian territory.

<sup>41</sup> Council of the European Union, Press Release 2780th Council Meeting, General Affairs and External Relations, 12 February 2007.

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.unmikonline.org>.

<sup>43</sup> International Crisis Group, 2006, op. cit. (citing French diplomatic sources).

<sup>44</sup> According to Ahtisaari's proposal.

<sup>45</sup> Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), interview: 'EU Mission to "coach" Kosovo into Europe'.

<sup>46</sup> 'Nulle part, enquête sur les Etats non reconnus', *Le Courrier International*, 846, 18-24 January 2007.

<sup>47</sup> European Security and Defence Policy,

[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3\\_fo/showPage.asp?id=261&lang=EN&mode=g](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3_fo/showPage.asp?id=261&lang=EN&mode=g).

and authority – or, in the worst case, the very opposite – to carry out this challenging task. Kosovo is not like a common developing country scenario. The Albanian Kosovar population feels that they have waited ‘too long’ for independence, according to local sources.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, Kosovo’s provisional institutions have grown accustomed to international presence, developing dynamics of dependence. The European Union will have to overcome its relative lack of direct experience in managing great field operations and the local administration’s pernicious habits derived from the aforementioned dynamic.

Written agreements often leave much room for interpretation, which is commonly undertaken on *ad hoc* bases when in direct contact with realities on the field. The Ahtisaari plan comprehends all the necessary mechanisms to create a state in a legally unstable territory plagued with concomitant legal unsafety. But there are still many unanswered questions and evident risks in its practical application. The fundamental one is the actual capacity to guarantee peaceful coexistence between Serbs and Albanians under one government in Kosovo. The Serbian minority still has not accepted international intervention and lives in two conflicting realities in a schizophrenic manner, partly due to a lack of choice. Serbian Kosovars live in isolated ghettos with scarce or no contact with Albanians. Incidents representative of a patent Albanian rejection of Serbs in Kosovo are still common.

Will this state modality be a *de facto* opportunity for the incipient Kosovar institutions to really integrate the Serbian population into government? Will international presence be sufficient to guarantee safety to the frightful Serbian community in Kosovo? According to the current Head of the Preparation Team of the International Civilian Mission, the final agreement on the status of Kosovo will also apply to the Serbian population.<sup>49</sup> The decentralisation provision will allow a better flow in relations between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo – for now parallel realities are fact.

In the present situation, where Serbia opposes the Ahtisaari plan and Russia is contrary to any solution that displeases the former, the EU must be able to apply its Common Foreign and Security Policy. Member states must formulate a clear strategy that yields Serbia’s acceptance of the plan. The CFSP High Representative must act as the right arm of member states in the difficult task of winning Russia’s support and providing Belgrade with satisfactory compensation for the loss of territory. If Kosovo is to be a state, it is mandatory that the European Union employ the necessary means for that to happen. Non-preventive, patch-type policies will not work in an unstable region.

Armed conflicts leave indelible scars. Not only is a society’s vital harmony destroyed but homes, roads and industries, which generate something much harder to repair: the memory of suffering. The European Union, much like any other human institution, cannot erase memories, but it has a significant hand it can play: firmly to carry out the mandate conferred by the international community, holding a stern belief in the principle of human rights for all the peoples in Kosovo and forcefully challenging those who wish to boycott it. The European Union must not take shield behind the existence of sovereign authorities in Kosovo, but must take this opportunity to exercise leadership in the final re-drawing of the Balkan map and mend past mistakes.

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<sup>48</sup> As observed by the author, twice resident in Kosovo: first, in 1999, after the NATO intervention and, second, in 2004, as Human Rights Assistant to the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe) mission.

<sup>49</sup> See footnote (40).

## **Chronology of the conflict**

1990

- Milosevic suppresses the autonomous regime in Kosovo. Albanian Kosovars are discriminated and unemployment amongst them reaches 80 percent. Ibrahim Rugova founds the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK).

1991-92

- LDK organises a referendum. Ninety-eight percent of Albanian Kosovar voters approve independence. Ibrahim Rugova is appointed president but Yugoslavia does not recognise the results.

1996-98

- The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) is formed. It is a guerrilla organisation that fights for the independence of Kosovo.
- KLA actions intensify and Serbia begins to retaliate. Inspirer of the KLA, the Ashari family, including many children, is massacred. International response: Kosovo ceases to be considered solely an internal Yugoslavian affair.
- Kosovo Verification Mission Agreement signed on 12 October 1998, which deploys to the field OSCE international monitoring.
- Fighting continues between the KLA and Serbian forces.

1999

- In March, the United States, Britain and Albanian Kosovars sign the Rambouillet agreements. Serbia and Russia reject the agreements and negotiations fail.
- OSCE inspectors are withdrawn after the failure of Rambouillet.
- On 24 March, NATO resumes air strikes.
- From 24 March to 11 June: NATO air strikes. Serbian repression has a profound effect on Albanian Kosovars – by April more than 80,000 (almost the entire population) had fled their homes.
- Western powers consider this massive internal displacement to be the result of a Serbian ethnic cleansing campaign against Albanians Kosovars.
- On 12 June, with Milosevic's consent, the KFOR, a NATO multinational force, enters the province.
- Civilian victims in Kosovo amount to approximately 10,000. To this day there exist un-investigated mass graves.
- The refugee crisis is swiftly resolved. By November most have returned.
- On the other hand, with the arrival of international troops, 25,000 Serbs flee Kosovo. More than 1,000 Serbs and gypsies are murdered immediately after 12 June.
- The Kosovar economy and infrastructure are decimated. There are water and energy shortages in most of the territory.
- On 10 June: Resolution 1244 and establishment of UNMIK.

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