



Research Article

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The Kumanovo agreement: Establishing the conditions for Kosovo's governance

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Abstract

The research paper examines the pivotal role of the "Kumanovo Military-Technical Agreement" in shaping Kosovo's post-conflict governance framework. Signed on June 9, 1999, the agreement ended hostilities, facilitated the withdrawal of Serbian forces, and laid the foundation for Kosovo's transformation into an international protectorate under United Nations oversight. It established a secure environment for reconstruction, peacebuilding, and the transition to self-governance.

The agreement's significance stems from its provisions for military withdrawal, the establishment of NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR), and the creation of Air and Ground Safety Zones to ensure regional stability. It also outlined the necessity of international civilian and military involvement to oversee Kosovo's political evolution, as institutionalized in UN Security Council Resolution 1244. This resolution authorized NATO's military mission and established the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to manage the transition to democratic self-rule.

The paper employs a historical-critical methodology, integrating comparative and interpretative analyses of the agreement's text, associated resolutions, and their practical implementation. It evaluates the agreement's effectiveness in facilitating peace and governance while addressing challenges such as delays in UNMIK's deployment and coordination with local authorities.

Despite these obstacles, the "Kumanovo Agreement" and UN Security Council Resolution 1244 provided a robust framework for stabilizing Kosovo. They enabled infrastructure rebuilding, established security, and laid the groundwork for democratic self-governance. This analysis underscores the agreement's enduring impact on Kosovo's journey toward political consolidation and self-determination.

Keywords: Kosovo, war, Kumanovo Military-Technical Agreement, Post-conflict governance, Peacebuilding, KFOR.

1. Introduction

The conclusion of hostilities in Kosovo and the cessation of NATO's bombing marked the end of the conflict between the parties and the surrender of Serbia, formalized

by the signing of the “Kumanovo Agreement.” This agreement, formally known as the “Kumanovo Military-Technical Agreement,” outlined the withdrawal of Serbian military and police forces from Kosovo, the deployment of international military forces, and the establishment of a framework for international civilian involvement. Furthermore, it laid the foundation for the creation of an international protectorate in Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244.

The “Kumanovo Military-Technical Agreement,” signed on June 9, 1999, between the International Security Force (KFOR) and the Governments of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia, reaffirmed the document proposed by President Martti Ahtisaari and approved by Slobodan Milošević on June 3, 1999. This agreement marked the unconditional acceptance of the conditions set by the international community for halting NATO’s bombing campaign and establishing an international civilian and security presence in Kosovo, under the oversight of the United Nations.

The agreement paved the way for the adoption of Resolution 1244 by the UN Security Council on June 10, 1999, which authorized the deployment of the International Security Assistance Force (KFOR) in Kosovo. The resolution granted KFOR a mandate to operate throughout Kosovo, taking the necessary actions to ensure a secure environment for all citizens. This resolution represented a pivotal moment in the stabilization and reconstruction of Kosovo under international supervision.

The international community’s reflection on the “Kumanovo Military-Technical Agreement” aimed to bring an end to the conflict and ensure a clear capitulation from Serbia and Yugoslavia. The agreement called for the unconditional withdrawal of all military, police, and paramilitary forces from Kosovo, with the goal of establishing long-term peace and halting hostilities. It also authorized the presence and actions of KFOR, the international security force, granting it the authority to take necessary military measures, including the use of force, to ensure the full implementation of the agreement and protect its mission. KFOR’s responsibility included creating a secure environment for international civilian entities, organizations, and non-governmental actors. Moreover, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Serbia were required to cease any hostile or provocative activities related to their withdrawal. The KFOR Commander was empowered to remove special forces and weapons and to halt any activities that could threaten the KFOR mission. These measures were designed to ensure compliance with the Agreement’s provisions and the establishment of lasting stability in Kosovo (Krieger, 2001).

The agreement established Air and Ground Safety Zones around Kosovo to ensure its implementation and maintain security in the region. The Air Safety Zone covered a 25-kilometer area in the airspace of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) outside Kosovo’s borders, while the Ground Safety Zone was a 5-kilometer strip in the land territory of the FRY outside Kosovo. These zones were created to provide a controlled environment and prevent any threats to regional stability, acting as a buffer between Kosovo and the rest of the FRY. Their purpose was to monitor and limit military activities that could undermine compliance with the agreement and international

peace efforts.

The Kumanovo Agreement sanctioned the withdrawal of Serbian and Yugoslav military and paramilitary forces from Kosovo, creating the basis for peace and security in the region. However, its content provided for the theoretical possibility of the return of FRY and Serbian personnel to Kosovo, through a subsequent separate agreement, as stipulated in paragraph 6 of the document. In practical terms, the political circumstances and the situation in Kosovo made such a return impossible, as any such action would have destabilized security and reignited the war.

Article I of the agreement established the primary framework for ensuring peace and stability in Kosovo following the 1999 conflict, laying the groundwork for a significant international presence in the administration and security of the region. Through this article, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and the Republic of Serbia committed to respecting international mechanisms and enabling their implementation on the ground. The provisions outlined in this article, initially proposed by President Ahtisaari and approved by Serbian authorities on June 3, 1999, provided for the establishment of the Kosovo Force (KFOR) as the principal international security presence. KFOR was authorized to implement comprehensive measures, including the use of force when necessary, to ensure the agreement's enforcement and protect international civilian operations in the region. A crucial element of the article was the prohibition of Serbian and Yugoslav forces entering or remaining in Kosovo and the designated security areas (Air and Ground Security Zones) without the KFOR Commander's approval. This measure aimed to create a secure environment, prevent further tensions, and set the stage for the partial reintegration of some Serbian forces, which would be addressed in subsequent agreements.

Article II outlines the phased cessation of hostilities and the gradual withdrawal of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's (FRY) forces from Kosovo, establishing a framework for the transition to stability under international supervision. This article emphasizes the dual objectives of ensuring the immediate cessation of hostile actions and facilitating the orderly withdrawal of military and air defense forces. Upon the agreement's entry into force, FRY forces were mandated to halt all hostile and provocative actions, including prohibiting demonstrations or activities that could jeopardize peace. This immediate cessation set the stage for a structured withdrawal process. Ground forces were required to gradually vacate Kosovo in a manner that allowed for the synchronized deployment of NATO-led KFOR (Kosovo Force). Specific timelines—ranging from 1 to 11 days following the agreement—regulated withdrawals from designated areas, ensuring compliance and preventing security vacuums. These forces were tasked with clearing minefields and other obstacles, safeguarding infrastructure, and facilitating KFOR's operations. The withdrawal of air and missile defense systems followed a similar structured approach, with strict prohibitions on FRY aircraft operating within Kosovo's airspace or nearby areas without prior approval from KFOR. Air defense systems, including radar and missile installations, were to be withdrawn beyond the designated Air Security Zone (ASZ). KFOR was granted control of Kosovo's airspace, with violations subject to military

enforcement. Long-term, the delegation of airspace control to civilian authorities was envisioned as part of broader stabilization efforts.

Article III established a clear framework for transparent communication and data exchange from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) to ensure compliance with the agreement and facilitate the creation of a secure environment in Kosovo under international supervision. This article required prompt notification of the agreement and compliance orders to FRY forces, ensuring a stable chain of command and reinforcing commitment to the outlined terms. Within two days of the agreement's entry into force (EIF + 2), the government authorities of the FRY and the Republic of Serbia were obligated to provide detailed information to the international security force (KFOR). This included accurate records of military threats, such as detailed descriptions and locations of mines, unexploded ordnance, and other obstacles within Kosovo, to ensure the safety of personnel and support safe movement. Additionally, the authorities were required to share information on the status and activities of FRY forces in Kosovo and the designated Ground Safety Zone (GSZ) and Air Safety Zone (ASZ), as requested by the KFOR Commander.

Article IV provided for the creation of a Joint Commission to oversee the implementation of the agreement regarding the deployment of the International Security Force (KFOR) in Kosovo, under the guidance of the KFOR Commander. This Commission was tasked with ensuring the fulfillment of the agreement's terms, playing a key role in coordinating and monitoring the stabilization and security process in the region.

The Kumanovo Agreement also included two supplementary documents: Annex (a), which provided a map outlining the phased withdrawal of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's forces, including routes, assembly areas, and exit points; and Annex (b), which defined the operational framework for the International Security Force (KFOR) in Kosovo. This annex outlined that KFOR would operate without interference to establish and maintain a secure environment for all citizens of Kosovo. The KFOR Commander was granted full authority, including the use of military force, to protect KFOR personnel and the international civilian presence, as well as to take the necessary measures to fulfill the responsibilities set forth in the military-technical agreement and the peace-making process. KFOR was also exempt from liability for any damage caused during the execution of its tasks, and the parties agreed to a status of forces agreement. KFOR's rights included monitoring and ensuring compliance with the agreement, responding to violations, and using military force when necessary. KFOR was empowered to take measures to ensure the withdrawal of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's forces or ensure compliance after the return of personnel. Additionally, KFOR had the authority to liaise with local Kosovo authorities and the civil and military authorities of Serbia, as well as to inspect any facility or activity related to military or police operations. The KFOR Commander also had the power to order the removal, withdrawal, or relocation of forces and weapons and to prohibit any activity that could pose a threat. Non-compliance with these orders would result in military action by KFOR, including the use of force, to ensure adherence to the agreement.

The agreement reflected the international community's intent to prevent further conflict by ensuring a systematic and effective transition from Yugoslav military control to international administration. The inclusion of verification mechanisms, cooperation mandates, and KFOR's preventive authority highlighted the commitment to sustaining peace and rebuilding trust in the region. This phased approach not only ensured immediate stability but also set a precedent for post-conflict management within a robust international framework.

2. UN Security Council Resolution 1244 on Kosovo

Another key international document was UN Security Council Resolution 1244, adopted on 10 June 1999 at its 4011-th meeting. This resolution institutionalized the international presence in Kosovo by establishing the NATO-led military mission, KFOR, to ensure security, and UNMIK, to oversee the interim civil and political administration. The liberation of Kosovo from the *Milošević* regime marked a significant shift in the international approach. The post-war situation, compounded by acts of ethnic cleansing and genocide, made it impossible to justify any continued role for *Milošević* or the return of Serbian military forces and institutions to Kosovo. These developments required a reconfiguration of the Rambouillet Agreement, adjusting it to the new reality following international intervention. The revised approach focused on securing a lasting peace and safeguarding the integrity of Kosovo's population, rather than engaging in discussions about its final status under *Milošević's* regime. International involvement in Kosovo, as endorsed by Security Council Resolution 1244, resulted in the establishment of an international protectorate led by the United Nations and the OSCE. This approach aimed to create an interim administration and political framework to achieve the objectives outlined in the resolution. The protectorate's primary goal was to ensure stability, build democratic institutions, and prepare Kosovo for an inclusive political process that would uphold peace, security, and human rights. Through this mandate, the United Nations and the OSCE were tasked with managing the administration and fostering the conditions necessary for a peaceful transition to self-governance.¹

UN Security Council Resolution 1244 laid the foundation for an interim international administration in Kosovo, authorizing a significant international security presence with NATO playing a central role. The primary objective of the resolution was to establish a secure environment for all of Kosovo's population, creating the conditions for democratic self-governance and sustainable development. The resolution incorporated the Ahtisaari-Chernomyrdin Text and the G8 Foreign Ministers' Declaration, reinforcing the international framework for conflict resolution and post-conflict governance. A key principle outlined by the Contact Group, included as an annex to the resolution, was the implementation of a political process aimed at

¹ United Nations Security Council. (1999, June 10). Resolution 1244 (1999) (S/RES/1244). pp. 1–8. Retrieved November 1, 2023, from https://unmik.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/old_dnn/Re-s1244ENG.pdf.

establishing an interim political settlement that would grant Kosovo substantial self-governance, in line with the Rambouillet Agreement. Additionally, the resolution called for the demilitarization of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA).

With the authorization of the UN Secretary-General, an international civilian presence was established to oversee Kosovo's substantial autonomy within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), without explicitly determining its final status. This approach left room for a future resolution, including the potential for independence.² The resolution was crafted within a complex international context, requiring consensus among global powers, including Russia and China, which, while abstaining from the vote, allowed its adoption and implementation. Given the sensitive nature of the situation, Serbia, despite its military capitulation, was not compelled to accept Kosovo's independence at that time, adhering to the terms of the Rambouillet Agreement, which provided for a period of transitional self-government within the FRY. In practice, Kosovo operated as a de facto political, administrative, and military entity independent from the FRY, yet under the international sovereignty of the UN. This protectorate's responsibilities included stabilizing the situation on the ground, facilitating the return of refugees, rebuilding infrastructure, and establishing mechanisms for sustainable development. The resolution's approach reflected the need for an interim solution that minimized international tensions, while creating a foundation for addressing Kosovo's final status at a more opportune political and diplomatic moment.

3. Building co-governance institutions in Kosovo

The primary role of the international protectorate was to govern Kosovo, ensuring political and military stability, security, and fostering opportunities for economic and social development, until local political structures could be developed to assume self-governance. Subsequently, under the terms of Resolution 1244, Kosovo would be included in the process of determining its final status.

The challenge of establishing the international protectorate, creating self-governing institutions, and ensuring political cohesion within Kosovo remained a central issue throughout the nine years of UNMIK's operation. Initially, the United Nations mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) focused on creating a stable environment, administering civilian affairs, distributing humanitarian aid, and rebuilding infrastructure. However, various challenges on the ground hindered the development of local governance structures and the consolidation of political authority at the central level.

The Provisional Government of Kosovo, established on 2 April 1999 under Prime Minister *Hashim Thaçi* during the second week of NATO bombing, used the post-war period to plan and establish functional local authorities. After the war, this

² United Nations Secretary-General. (1999, June 12). Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 10 of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999) (Security Council Doc. S/1999/672). Retrieved January 1, 2023, from <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Kos%20S%201999%20672.pdf>.

government rapidly consolidated political power both locally and centrally, setting up administrations in 27 municipalities, with the exception of two Serb-majority municipalities in northern Kosovo. These structures, created by the provisional government, played a crucial role in the process that UNMIK, which began extending its authority in 1999, had to consider when establishing provisional governance in Kosovo. The interaction and coordination between these two administrative levels were vital for effective governance and political stability during the post-war period (International Crisis Group, 1999). In daily life, the focus in Kosovo shifted to rebuilding the lives of people who had been devastated by the Kosovo War, alongside both material and spiritual reconstruction. The primary emphasis was on the return of displaced populations, rebuilding homes, ensuring general collective security, and addressing the basic needs for drinking water and electricity—challenges that persisted in the post-war context.

The situation on the ground, especially at the local government level, had evolved significantly beyond UNMIK's initial expectations regarding the establishment of political authority in municipalities. In reality, the Ministry of Local Administration of the Interim Government of Kosovo had already put in place a well-established structure, with mayors appointed in all municipalities across Kosovo. These structures were not only operational but had gained legitimacy and widespread support from the local population, effectively assuming practical responsibilities on the ground and fostering a credible local political system (International Crisis Group, 1999).

This development was primarily influenced by delays in the deployment of UNMIK administrators to the respective municipalities. The international administration struggled with a lack of clear operational guidelines, insufficient personnel and resources, and an absence of a well-defined strategy for integrating existing local structures into the framework of the emerging protectorate. This situation persisted until local elections were held in Kosovo, leading to the establishment of democratically elected local government institutions. The transition underscored the importance of harmonizing existing local structures with the international administration to ensure a successful shift towards sustainable self-government (International Crisis Group, 1999).

UNMIK's mandate for political responsibilities in Kosovo, both at the central and local levels, was defined by Resolution 1244. This resolution outlined the primary governance tasks and drew on elements of the Rambouillet Agreement in Article VIII, which referenced local governance, despite the fact that the agreement was not implemented due to Serbian opposition. Resolution 1244 emphasized the necessity of a transitional administration to facilitate the creation of democratic self-government institutions, ensuring normal and peaceful conditions for all residents of Kosovo. In paragraph 11, the resolution outlined several key responsibilities for the international civilian presence, including:

- *Supporting the establishment of substantial autonomy and self-government in Kosovo until a final settlement is reached, fully considering Annex 2 and the Rambouillet Agreements (S/1999/648);*
- *Carrying out essential civil administrative functions where and as long as necessary;*

- *Organizing and overseeing the development of provisional institutions for democratic and autonomous self-government until a political settlement is achieved, including the holding of elections;*
- *Transferring administrative responsibilities to these institutions once established, while overseeing and supporting the consolidation of Kosovo's local provisional institutions and other peace-building activities;*
- *Facilitating a political process to determine Kosovo's future status, taking into account the Rambouillet Agreements (S/1999/648);*
- *Overseeing the transfer of authority from provisional institutions to those established by a political settlement at the final stage;*
- *Supporting the reconstruction of key infrastructure and economic development;*
- *Providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, in cooperation with international humanitarian organizations;*
- *Maintaining law and order, including the establishment of local police forces, and in the interim, deploying international police personnel to serve in Kosovo.*"³

At the central level, UNMIK's mandate did not impose an absolute responsibility for establishing a robust local administration, except where it was deemed necessary. This approach allowed for flexible interactions tailored to the political realities on the ground. While the Rambouillet Agreement was referenced, its provisions on self-government were not practically implemented by the international administration. Instead, UNMIK's mandate prioritized the outcomes achieved at the local level over the strict application of an administrative framework. The primary goal was to ensure a democratic administration that balanced international oversight with the development of sustainable local institutions that were acceptable to the local population. A special report by the UN Secretary-General,⁴ prepared shortly after the resolution, outlined the specific role of civil administration, including the structure of the civil service, economic and budgetary matters, and its involvement in supporting reconstruction and providing basic public services such as healthcare, municipal services, education, telecommunications, and transportation (Krieger, 2001).

The international community, with the OSCE and UNMIK overseeing the electoral process, decided that the first step towards building a democratic system in Kosovo would be to hold local elections, following a bottom-up approach to institution-building. This decision reflected the goal of creating a democratic structure gradually, with general elections postponed until the following year. The first democratic local elections, held in the autumn of 2000, were internationally organized and supervised, with around 25 political parties participating. Three parties—LDK led by President *Ibrahim Rugova*, PDK led by *Hashim Thaçi*, and AAK led by *Ramush Haradinaj*—dominated the race, securing significant percentages of votes across all

³ United Nations Security Council. (1999, June 10). Resolution 1244 (1999) (S/RES/1244). pp. 1–8. Retrieved November 1, 2023, from https://unmik.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/old_dnn/Res1244ENG.pdf.

⁴ United Nations Secretary-General. (1999, June 12). Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 10 of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999) (Security Council Doc. S/1999/672). Retrieved January 1, 2023, from <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Kos%20S%201999%20672.pdf>.

30 municipalities in Kosovo. The LDK, in particular, obtained around 45% of the vote, demonstrating the persistence of its pre-war political structure. Over the next few years, four elections were held in Kosovo: local elections in 2000 and 2002, and central elections in 2001 and 2004 (OSCE, 2017). These elections reflected the complex challenges of the post-war period, including material reconstruction, political consolidation, the containment of violence, and the establishment of effective governance throughout Kosovo. These political processes played a crucial role in stabilizing a war-torn society and establishing a foundation for sustainable democratic governance.

4. Conclusion

The “Kumanovo Agreement”, signed in 1999, represents a crucial turning point in Kosovo’s post-conflict political and security landscape. This agreement effectively terminated the military conflict and initiated the withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosovo, setting the stage for international intervention under the auspices of the United Nations. Its impact extended beyond the cessation of hostilities, as it laid the groundwork for the establishment of an international protectorate in Kosovo, embodied by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244. This resolution formalized the deployment of KFOR and the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), whose mandates collectively ensured a secure environment for the reconstruction of political and institutional frameworks.

From a methodological perspective, the implementation of the Kumanovo Agreement can be understood as a complex interplay between military, diplomatic, and political strategies, shaped by the broader geopolitical context of the post-Cold War era. The agreement’s primary function was not only to halt the war but also to provide a structured transition from a conflict zone to a post-conflict society under international governance. The phased withdrawal of Serbian forces, combined with the establishment of security zones and the deployment of KFOR, underscores the international community’s commitment to maintaining regional stability and ensuring the security of Kosovo’s population during the transition period.

UN Security Council Resolution 1244 reinforced Kosovo’s status as an internationally administered entity, with a robust framework aimed at safeguarding peace, ensuring the protection of human rights, and facilitating the development of local self-governance. This resolution granted UNMIK broad executive, legislative, and judicial powers, enabling it to oversee the establishment of administrative structures and the protection of minority rights. The gradual and careful transfer of authority from UNMIK to local institutions marked the beginning of Kosovo’s path toward self-governance and self-determination, though this process was fraught with challenges. The integration of Kosovo’s ethnic Albanian majority and Serbian minority communities into the nascent governance structures was particularly problematic, reflecting the complex ethnic and political realities within the region.

The role of KFOR, in addition to providing security, also facilitated the stabilization of infrastructure, offering essential support in the restoration of critical services and

economic functions, all of which were crucial for the long-term rebuilding of Kosovo's institutional and societal fabric. However, the presence of KFOR did not eliminate the tension between Kosovo's various ethnic groups, nor did it fully address the underlying political issues between Kosovo and Serbia, issues that would continue to shape Kosovo's political trajectory in the years following the agreement.

The Kumanovo Agreement and the subsequent deployment of UNMIK and KFOR set in motion a process of rebuilding and governance characterized by a dual system of international oversight and local governance. This approach aimed to strike a balance between maintaining security and political stability while also fostering democratic governance and self-determination. However, despite the broader international support, the agreement did not resolve all of Kosovo's challenges, particularly in terms of political status, fully integrating local governance structures, addressing the issue of returnees, and promoting inter-ethnic reconciliation.

In conclusion, the Kumanovo Agreement remains a foundational document in the reconstruction of Kosovo's political and administrative landscape. It facilitated the transition from a post-conflict environment to a nascent state, setting in motion a complex process of governance and institutional development. While the full realization of Kosovo's self-governance has encountered numerous obstacles, the agreement remains a key turning point, whose effects continue to reverberate in the region's political and social development. Its legacy is one of international cooperation, yet it also highlights the challenges inherent in post-conflict state-building, where the balance between international intervention and local sovereignty remains a contentious issue.

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