



How to Advance Kosovo-NATO Relations?

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For Kosovo, membership in NATO is of vital interest and a shared objective across the political and civil society spectrum. This brief paper presents some ideas on how Kosovo can advance cooperation and integration with NATO. A precondition for any of these ideas to materialize is that Kosovo fosters its credibility as a rational and reliable partner to NATO. On July 17, 2025, KCSS organized a [roundtable discussion with experts and other institutional and civil society stakeholders to examine the issue of NATO-Kosovo relations](#) and the options available to Kosovo to advance partnership and cooperation with NATO, considering the political and legal context. This brief is based on the discussions at this roundtable and reflects some of the ideas that participants put forward. Accordingly, we extend our gratitude and acknowledgement to all participants and the panel of the roundtable for their contributions.

1 Utilize the Associated Membership in the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

In May 2024, Kosovo was granted the status of an associate member in the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA). Only one NATO member state voted against the decision, while 17 voted in favor and 14 abstained. The NATO PA is a political body composed of legislators from NATO member states and partner countries, with a consultative role in shaping the transatlantic security agenda. For Kosovo, this is not merely symbolic; it is effectively an entry point into NATO's political community. Being part of the NATO PA brings Kosovo closer to NATO decision-makers and

provides direct opportunities to engage with both member state representatives and NATO officials. Kosovo must prioritize this and use this opportunity. The Kosovo delegation should use this platform to propose resolutions that advocate for deeper Kosovo-NATO cooperation, including expanding access for Kosovo to NATO programs, enhancing interoperability with the Kosovo Security Force (KSF), and supporting the creation of structured dialogue formats. While resolutions adopted by the NATO PA are not binding, they require the NATO Secretary General to respond formally, thus providing a channel for Kosovo to influence

the agenda and policy discussions within the Alliance.

2 Propose the Creation of a NATO–Kosovo High-Level Political Dialogue.

A regular mechanism for political consultation between Kosovo and NATO is needed. It would greatly help in sending the right messages to Kosovar citizens that NATO wants Kosovo to be part of the community as a contributor to regional stability and security. Kosovo should work with its allies to propose the creation of a NATO–Kosovo high-level political dialogue. This format would consist of biannual meetings, one in Brussels and one in Prishtina, bringing together senior representatives from NATO and the Government of Kosovo. Such a dialogue would serve several purposes: it would institutionalize regular political consultations, provide a venue for discussions of regional security developments in the Western Balkans, help coordinate on issues of common concern, and offer a structured review of progress in bilateral cooperation. Moving from ad hoc technical exchanges to an institutionalized format would signal a maturation of the relationship and help frame Kosovo as a proactive contributor to Euro-Atlantic security. Given sensitivities within NATO regarding Kosovo’s status, a civil society organization or an academic institution could be considered as a host or co-organizer of these dialogues. This approach could help reduce political resistance among more hesitant NATO members while still achieving the same goal of strategic-level engagement.

3 Ask for the Accreditation of a NATO Centre of Excellence in Kosovo.

There are currently 30 NATO-accredited Centres of Excellence (COEs), which are nationally or multi-nationally funded institutions that support NATO's work by providing specialized expertise, training, and

innovation in key security areas, such as cyber, counterterrorism, and civil-military cooperation. While not part of NATO’s command structure, they enhance interoperability and knowledge sharing among NATO and partner countries and are regularly assessed to ensure they meet NATO standards. Examples of Centres of Excellence include the Cyber Defence COE (Estonia), the Counter-IED COE (Spain), the Civil-Military Cooperation COE (Netherlands), the Maritime Security COE (Turkey), and the Military Engineering COE (Germany). Kosovo could propose establishing a Centre of Excellence in an area where it has gained practical experience, such as women, peace and security, search and rescue, reintegration of foreign fighters, or post-conflict community resilience. Hosting a CoE would enable Kosovo to contribute to NATO’s broader mission, enhance its credibility, and establish networks within the Alliance.

4 Pursue Observer/Affiliation Status in Existing NATO Centres of Excellence.

Until Kosovo is in a position to host its own Centre of Excellence, it should seek observer or affiliated status in existing CoEs. Based on Kosovo’s security needs, priorities, and areas where it has developed or is seeking to build capacities/capabilities, the following NATO Centres of Excellence (COEs) would be particularly beneficial for Kosovo to gain access to. Priority should be given to the three COEs, including the **Cooperative Cyber Defence COE** (Estonia), which would help Kosovo build resilience against cyber threats, the **Energy Security COE** (Lithuania) would support efforts to protect critical infrastructure, and **Strategic Communications COE** (Latvia), which is essential in addressing disinformation and hybrid threats, which Kosovo is experiencing and is target of from Russia and Serbia. Other

potential COEs that could be beneficial for Kosovo include: the Counter-Improvised Explosive Devices (C-IED) (Spain), the Defence Against Terrorism COE (Turkey), the Civil-Military Cooperation COE (Netherlands), and the **Crisis Management and Disaster Response COE** (Bulgaria) to strengthen preparedness and interoperability in emergency response. Access to the **Military Medicine COE** (Hungary) would enhance medical capabilities within the Kosovo Security Force (KSF). These COEs offer practical expertise, training, and knowledge-sharing that are directly relevant to Kosovo's evolving security environment and its ambition to deepen cooperation with the Alliance.

5 Explore Options to Increase Kosovo's Access to NATO Partnership Tools through the PCM. The Partnership Cooperation Menu (PCM) is a catalogue of over 1,600 activities under NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) framework, covering areas such as education, training, doctrine development, and civil emergency planning. Although Kosovo is not a PfP member, it cooperates with NATO through a tailored IPCP. Kosovo should collaborate with its allies to expand access to PCM activities, enabling government officials, military officers, and civilian agencies to participate in NATO-organized courses, workshops, and exercises. This access would strengthen institutional knowledge and prepare Kosovo for future stages of integration. The Government of Kosovo should commission a study or a concept document to analyze the PCM options to determine which areas of cooperation would most benefit Kosovo but also would be seen as mutually beneficial to NATO as well.

6 Increase Participation in NATO Joint Exercises. Participation in NATO joint exercises offers an essential opportunity for practical interoperability, especially for the Kosovo Security Force (KSF). So far, Kosovo's involvement has been limited to a few bilateral and regional exercises. A roadmap should be developed to gradually increase Kosovo's role in NATO-led or NATO-partnered exercises, from observer roles to active participation in planning and deployment. This would allow the KSF to meet NATO standards and build trust with NATO allies and partners.

7 Protect and Strengthen the Military-to-Military Track. While political-level cooperation between the Government of Kosovo and NATO remains limited and complex, the military-to-military cooperation between NATO member states and the Kosovo Security Force (KSF) has remained relatively stable and productive, when considering the current context. This track focused on capacity building/development or joint exercises has shown it can be resilient and effective avenue for deepening cooperation. In some respects, it has outperformed expectations given the broader political constraints. Kosovo should work with its allies to ensure that this cooperation channel remains insulated from political fluctuations. The Government of Kosovo should resist the temptation to instrumentalize this cooperation for domestic political messaging or as a substitute for the broader political relationship with NATO. This track must remain professional, depoliticized, and insulated from daily political dynamics, particularly at a time when political dialogue is limited and relations with NATO are under strain. Preserving the integrity of this cooperation is critical to long-term trust-building with NATO and key strategic allies of Kosovo.

8 Maintain Responsible and Coordinated Public Communication on Security Matters.

Kosovo's political leadership should ensure that public statements related to perceived and actual security threats and tensions with Serbia are measured, evidence-based, and coordinated with NATO and Kosovo's key strategic allies. Repeated references to imminent attacks or large-scale threats, especially when not substantiated or formally communicated through official security channels, risk creating confusion and undermining Kosovo's credibility as a responsible and predictable partner. Such rhetoric can also place Kosovo in a sensitive position with NATO allies, potentially leading to increased scrutiny or hesitation at the political level of the Alliance. Given that NATO guarantees Kosovo's security through the KFOR mission, it is important that political messaging reflects this reality and avoids contributing to perceptions of instability. Responsible communication helps foster and increase trust, supports institutional cooperation, and helps ensure that Kosovo is seen as a rational and predictable actor within the Euro-Atlantic community. In this context, it would be vital for either the Office of the President of the Republic or the National Security Council to coordinate and assume the main responsibility for communication on strategic and security matters, especially when Serbia is involved. Either institution should take responsibility for coordinating press releases and statements from senior and mid-level officials in Kosovo regarding potential security threats.

9 Promote the Use of the "Silence Procedure" to Advance Technical Cooperation.

A structural challenge for Kosovo's cooperation with NATO remains the Alliance's consensus-based decision-making,

which allows any single Ally to block potential initiatives regardless of their scope or technical merit. This has proven difficult dimension to advance Kosovo-NATO relations and not only with NATO members that do not recognize Kosovo's independence but also, increasingly, with some NATO member states that have recognized Kosovo's independence but often show less openness, to say the least, to supporting deeper Kosovo-NATO engagement. To address these political sensitivities, as proposed by one of the participants at the KCSS roundtable on July 17, 2025, Kosovo should collaborate with supportive NATO member states and advocate for the expansion of the "silence procedure" for non-political, technical cooperation initiatives. [Under NATO's established practice, a proposal circulated under a silence procedure is considered approved if no member state breaks silence by a set deadline.](#)

This allows Allies to acquiesce without actively endorsing a proposal, offering a face-saving mechanism for reluctant members. Kosovo could work quietly with supportive Allies and NATO's International Staff to identify technical areas such as access to training programs, observer participation in Centres of Excellence, or inclusion in resilience-building initiatives where this procedure could be applied. The approach would help neutralize overt politicization while enabling incremental progress. Over time, it could create precedents for Kosovo's structured engagement, without requiring a formal shift in consensus rules or triggering high-level opposition.