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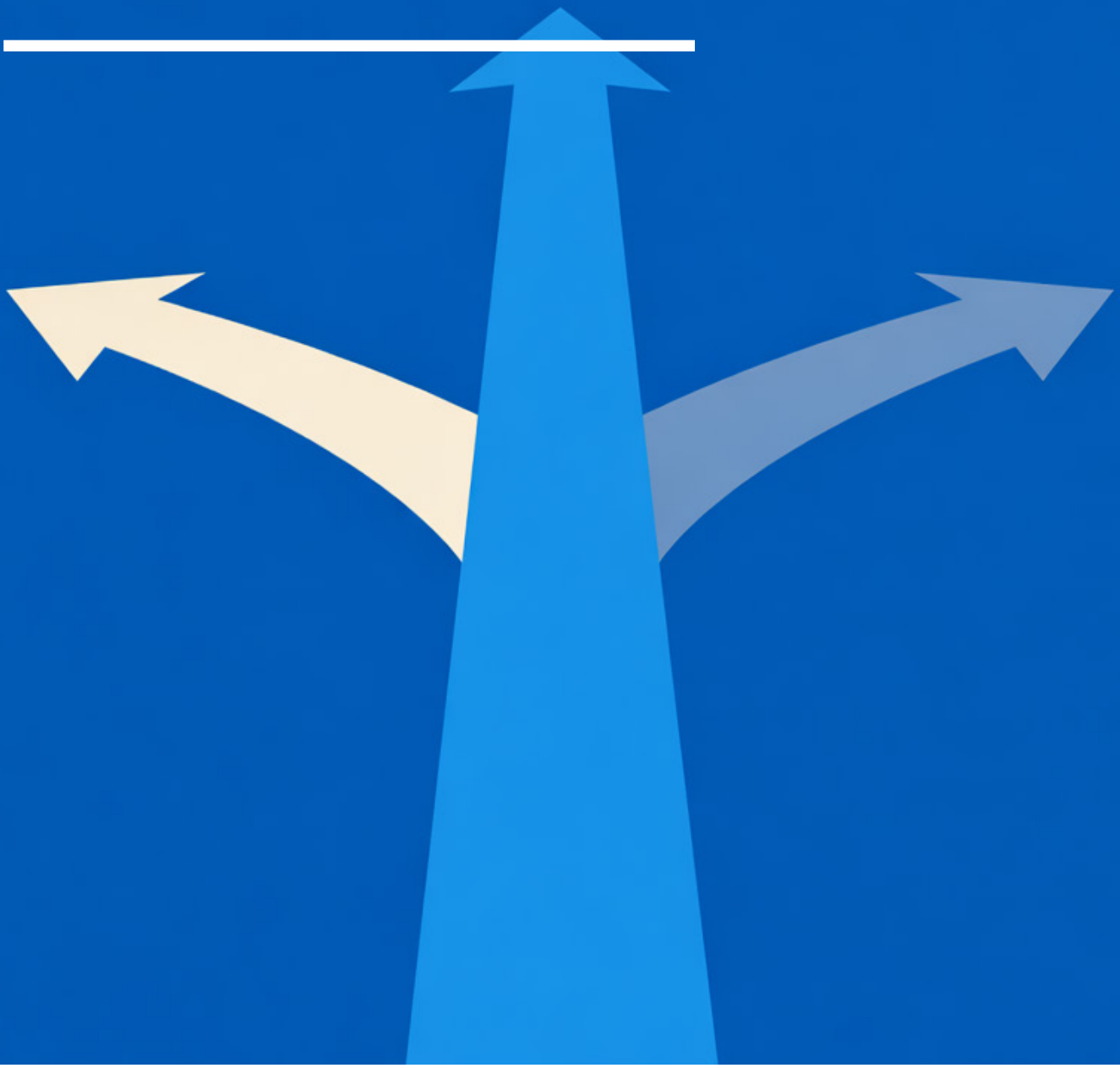
KOSOVO IN 2030

A foresight discussion paper on U.S. engagement, EU integration, NATO/KFOR, and the Kosovo–Serbia normalization dialogue



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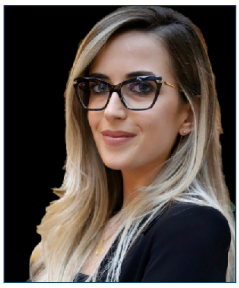

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As Kosovo moves into the latter part of the decade, its position is not as strong as it was just after independence. The previous expectations of ongoing U.S. support, unified NATO backing, EU growth, and a manageable relationship with Serbia are now uncertain. While these positive outcomes could still happen, they are no longer assured.

This paper argues that Kosovo's future by 2030 will depend more on how four main factors interact than on any single breakthrough. These are: the U.S. role in Europe and the Western Balkans, Kosovo's progress toward joining the EU, NATO's unity and KFOR's position, and the direction of talks with Serbia. While each factor is discussed separately, they are closely linked in practice. A shift in one often affects the others. For instance, if the U.S. steps back, NATO's credibility could suffer, EU influence might decline, and Serbia's stance could change. Progress in talks with Serbia could help Kosovo's EU chances and security. But if political deadlock continues at home, Kosovo may struggle to take advantage of positive changes abroad. The paper presents several possible futures and the choices that could make them more or less likely. It draws on the UNDP foresight manual's idea that the future is made up of different possible paths shaped by people, institutions, and outside events (UNDP, 2018). It also takes seriously the European Commission's 2025 advice that resilience should be proactive and forward-looking, not just reactive (European Commission, 2025a). In today's more challenging geopolitical environment, this is especially important for small and partially recognized states.

The baseline from which Kosovo is planning is mixed. On the positive side, the country has a clear Euro-Atlantic orientation, broad public support for European integration, a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU in force since 2016, visa liberalization since 1 January 2024, an approved Reform Agenda under the Growth Plan, and full alignment with the EU's common foreign and security policy in 2025. The economy has remained resilient, with real GDP growth of 4.4 per cent in 2024 and a World Bank projection of 3.8 per cent in both 2025 and 2026, even if growth is now expected to soften and political uncertainty could delay reforms and financing (World Bank, 2025a). On the security side, KFOR remains robust, with well over 4,500 troops following the reinforcement following the 2023 Banjska terrorist attack in the north, and NATO publicly reaffirming in March 2026 both its strong commitment to the Western Balkans and its support for the EU-led dialogue (NATO, 2026a; NATO, 2026b).

However, there are real challenges as well. Kosovo's application for EU membership, submitted in December 2022, is still waiting for action by the Council. Five EU countries do not recognize Kosovo. In 2025, progress on the EU agenda was slowed by political divisions and a deadlock after elections, and the Reform Agenda could not move forward because key financial agreements were not ratified (European Commission, 2025b). The dialogue with Serbia remains the main strategic obstacle. The EU's 2024 Kosovo Report again stressed that both sides must fulfill all obligations from the Agreement on the Path to Normalisation and its Implementation Annex (European Commission, 2024a). The issue is not a lack of frameworks, but a lack of political progress.

Interviews for this paper highlight these issues. Interviewee A says Kosovo's main challenge is regaining "institutional stability and a political environment capable of producing results," and warns that without internal stability, it is "extremely difficult to make progress externally" (Interviewee A, personal interview, 2026). Interviewee B sees both risks and opportunities: he suggests Kosovo should prepare for stressed international systems by building more bilateral and trilateral partnerships, but also notes that "unless you fix the elephant in the room," namely the dialogue with Serbia, progress elsewhere will be limited (Interviewee B, personal interview, 2026).

Based on these findings, the paper outlines four scenarios for Kosovo in 2030. In the first, "Locking in the West," all four key factors move in a positive direction: the U.S. stays engaged, NATO remains

united, the EU opens a real path to accession, and the dialogue with Serbia shifts toward real implementation and settlement. In the second, “Buying Time, Banking Hope,” stability holds and some progress is made, but Kosovo does not achieve a major breakthrough. In the third, “Drifting in the Grey Zone,” a lack of decisive action leads to stagnation - Kosovo stays aligned with the West but remains stuck or isolated. In the fourth, “Sliding into the Storm,” negative trends in all four areas combine, creating a much tougher regional environment with more crises and diplomatic obstacles.

The key message is that Kosovo cannot control global events, but it can reduce its own vulnerability to external shocks. Instead of just hoping for the best, Kosovo should focus on building a state that is prepared for different possible futures. This means strengthening institutions, making the dialogue with Serbia a top priority, working with both supportive and skeptical EU members, staying closely connected to the U.S. and NATO, and including foresight in government planning. The greatest risk for Kosovo may not be a sudden crisis, but a long period of stagnation where others decide its future.

2. INTRODUCTION

Strategic foresight is sometimes seen as something only big countries can afford. For Kosovo, it is essential. Small states in unstable regions that rely on outside support cannot assume things will stay the same. They need to plan for different scenarios, watch for early warning signs, and create options before problems arise.

That imperative is sharper today than it was even a few years ago. The European security order has been transformed by Russia's war against Ukraine. The Middle East has again become a source of instability with direct effects on transatlantic politics, energy markets and diplomatic bandwidth. The United States is increasingly debating burden-sharing, long-term force posture and the hierarchy of theatres in which it is willing to invest sustained political capital. In parallel, the European Union has rediscovered enlargement as a geopolitical instrument, but not on a uniform timetable and not with equal political energy for every aspirant. The Atlantic Council's Global Foresight 2025 survey captured this wider mood of systemic anxiety: 40 per cent of respondents expected another world war by 2035, while 48 per cent expected at least one actor to use nuclear weapons in the coming decade (Atlantic Council, 2025). Whether or not such outcomes materialize, the survey is revealing because it shows how deeply uncertainty has entered mainstream strategic thinking.

For Kosovo, uncertainty has concrete policy consequences. Security still depends in large part on NATO, and inside NATO, above all on sustained U.S. commitment. Progress still depends on a politically divided European Union regarding Kosovo's statehood. Economic convergence depends on access to European markets, predictable governance, and the ability to turn formal EU instruments into real domestic reform. And the country's international position remains filtered through the unresolved relationship with Serbia. The challenge lies not only in the difficulty of the dialogue itself, but in the fact that it directly or indirectly influences nearly every key external pathway the country seeks to advance.

At the same time, Kosovo is not without assets. It retains a strong pro-Western social consensus, a relatively clear foreign policy orientation, a history of rapid institutional adaptation under pressure, and a growing record of policy alignment with Euro-Atlantic partners. In 2025 the Commission again described Kosovo as remaining committed to its European path and fully aligned with the EU's common foreign and security policy (European Commission, 2025b). That matters. In a region where strategic hedging is common, Kosovo's alignment is unusually clear. Interviewee B makes a related point when he argues that on the major foreign policy questions – Serbia, Russia, China and the West – Kosovo still "speaks with a single voice" more than many assume (Interviewee B, personal interview, 2026). While that cohesion is not sufficient, it is strategically valuable.

The problem is that assets can be wasted when institutions stop converting them into results. The last two years have shown how quickly domestic fragmentation can weaken external credibility. The 2025 enlargement communication notes that Kosovo's reform pace decelerated after the February elections and that divisive politics and delays in forming key institutions became a real drag on the EU agenda (European Commission, 2025b). Interviewee A's formulation is even more direct: Kosovo is already in a second year of institutional stagnation, and without restoring a political environment capable of producing results, even favorable external developments will be hard to exploit (Interviewee A, personal interview, 2026). That is why this paper treats domestic functionality as an enabling condition running through all scenarios, even though it is not one of the four headline variables.

The paper therefore, does not ask only what Kosovo wants by 2030, it also asks under what external and internal combinations could Kosovo plausibly move closer to that objective, remain stuck, or face strategic deterioration? The answer matters because policy choices made now will carry different value across different futures. Some choices are scenario-specific. Others are useful

almost regardless of how the external environment evolves.

The analysis proceeds in three steps. First, it sets out the methodological frame and explains why scenario-building is especially suited to Kosovo's current strategic environment. Second, it analyses the four main drivers separately, devoting each chapter to the baseline, the main trends, the interaction with other variables, and the concrete developments that would move the variable in a positive or negative direction. Third, it builds four integrated scenarios for 2030, each with a distinct internal logic, political mood and external setting. These scenarios are not predictions. They are disciplined stories about plausible futures, designed to help decision-makers test assumptions and prioritize action.

The paper's core argument is straightforward. Kosovo's future by 2030 will not be decided by one diplomatic summit, one election, or one isolated crisis in the north. It will be shaped by how four drivers move together: U.S. presence in Europe and the Western Balkans; Kosovo's EU integration path; NATO cohesion and KFOR's posture; and the Kosovo–Serbia normalization dialogue. When these variables reinforce each other positively, Kosovo's room for agency widens quickly. When they all move in the wrong direction, risks accumulate just as quickly. The decisive task for policy is therefore to make positive reinforcement more likely and negative reinforcement harder.

The real benefit of foresight for Kosovo is not to create a perfect vision for 2030, but to encourage a more honest discussion in 2026 about how prepared the country is, what its priorities are, and what political choices need to be made.

3. METHODOLOGY

This paper uses scenario-building as a strategic planning tool, and that choice is intentional. Kosovo's external environment changes too quickly for simple forecasting or relying only on trends. Standard forecasts work best in stable systems, but Kosovo is a partially recognized state in a contested region, influenced by decisions in Washington, Brussels, NATO, and Belgrade, and affected by its own political instability. In this situation, scenario-building helps policymakers consider how different factors interact and how unexpected political changes might occur.

This approach follows the UNDP Foresight Manual, which describes foresight as a systematic and participatory process that explores several possible futures to guide decisions today (UNDP, 2018). The key idea from the manual is that we should think of the future in plural terms. This is important because much of Kosovo's strategic debate swings between automatic optimism and frustration-driven pessimism, which oversimplifies the situation. Instead of asking if Kosovo is simply "on track" or "blocked," it is more useful to ask what kind of path Kosovo is on, what might change it, and what skills or resources would matter in different possible futures.

This paper also takes ideas from an earlier regional scenario study in order to illustrate how things were forecasted eight years ago. For instance, the EUISS Chaillot Paper Balkan Futures treats scenarios as ongoing paths shaped by major trends and key changes, which helps separate stable conditions from factors that can shift quickly (Čeperković & Gaub, 2018). Both studies shape the structure of this paper, even though their timelines, variables, and goals are different.

The European Commission's 2025 Strategic Foresight Report adds another perspective. Its idea of "resilience 2.0" suggests that today's ongoing challenges require moving from mostly reacting to events to being more proactive and prepared (European Commission, 2025a). This is especially relevant for Kosovo, since much of its recent policy has focused on responding to crises – whether in the north, to EU pressure, Serbian actions, or changes in partner messages. Scenario planning is helpful because it encourages preparation instead of just reacting.

The analysis combines four sources of evidence.

First, it uses the draft foresight paper created for this project, which identified the four main variables and mapped out positive, neutral, and negative developments. This draft is still useful because it shows the internal analysis already done and preserves the original design of the project.

Second, it uses two long semi-structured expert interviews provided for this paper: one with Interviewee A and one with Interviewee B. These interviews are valuable because they go beyond commenting on current events and explain how the four variables interact. Interviewee A focuses on institutional stability, the importance of U.S. involvement, and the need to split the dialogue into two tracks, one with Kosovo Serbs and another with Serbia about interstate relations. Interviewee B emphasizes changing geopolitics, more bilateral relations, and the idea that Europe might need to fill some of the gap if the U.S. steps back, while Kosovo expands its partnerships (Interviewee A, personal interview, 2026; Interviewee B, personal interview, 2026).

Third, the paper relies on official documents and recent reports to set the baseline. These include the Commission's 2024 Kosovo Report, the 2025 enlargement communication, materials on the Growth Plan and Reform Agenda, NATO documents on KFOR and NATO-EU cooperation, and World Bank reports on growth, jobs, and reform risks (European Commission, 2024a; European Commission, 2024b; European Commission, 2025b; NATO, 2026a; NATO, 2026b; World Bank, 2025a; World Bank, 2025b). Since this paper is written in 2026, it prioritizes the most up-to-date official sources.

Fourth, the paper draws on broader foresight literature, such as the European Commission's Strategic Foresight Report 2025 and the Atlantic

Council's Global Foresight 2025. These are not used as direct evidence about Kosovo, but as context to show why planning for 2030 cannot rely on the idea that things will simply continue as before (Atlantic Council, 2025; European Commission, 2025a).

THE PAPER FOCUSES ON FOUR MAIN VARIABLES:

1. U.S. presence in Europe and the Western Balkans. This variable captures not only troop presence or high-level visits, but the broader willingness of Washington to invest political attention, security guarantees and diplomatic capital in the region.
2. Kosovo's EU integration path. This covers the practical movement of Kosovo inside the EU track: reform credibility, the treatment of the membership application, implementation of the Reform Agenda, and the broader politics of recognition and accession inside the Union.
3. NATO cohesion and KFOR's posture. This variable refers both to Alliance unity and to the operational credibility of KFOR, including whether Kosovo sees a path to deeper cooperation or remains in indefinite strategic dependence.
4. The Kosovo–Serbia normalization dialogue. This includes both the formal EU-led process and the broader political willingness of the parties to move from crisis management to implementation and eventually to a politically meaningful settlement.

These are not the only factors that influence Kosovo's future. Domestic political stability, the economy, rule of law, regional effects from Bosnia and Herzegovina or North Macedonia, and the actions of outside actors like Russia, Türkiye, and China are also important. However, the four selected drivers are the most relevant for policy because changes in them have broad effects across the system.

The paper works with one important assumption. Domestic functionality and cohesion on decision-making is treated as a cross-cutting enabling condition. This paper integrates domestic political stability into each chapter and scenario as the factor that determines whether Kosovo can exploit or mitigate external change. There are also some limits.

The four scenarios are meant to show how different combinations of changes in the main variables could play out, not to rank which outcomes are most or least likely. Each scenario answers three questions: what Kosovo looks like in 2030 under those conditions, how it got there between 2026 and 2030, and what that scenario would mean for Kosovo's security, diplomacy, and reform efforts.

4. KOSOVO'S OUTLOOK IN 2026

Kosovo's starting point for looking ahead to 2030 is not a story of total failure or complete success. Instead, it is a situation of partial progress with ongoing political challenges.

The formal EU relationship is deeper than it was a decade ago. The EU–Kosovo Stabilization and Association Agreement has been in force since April 2016. Kosovo submitted its application for EU membership in December 2022. Visa liberalization entered into force on 1 January 2024. In October 2024, the Commission approved Kosovo's Reform Agenda under the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, together with those of Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia (European Commission, 2024a; European Commission, 2024b). The Growth Plan matters because it is not simply another policy communication. It is designed to integrate the Western Balkans gradually into parts of the EU single market, deepen reforms, and support convergence through a €6 billion Reform and Growth Facility for 2024–2027 (European Commission, 2025c). On paper, this is the most geopolitically ambitious EU offer to the region in years.

But paper progress is not the same as political traction. The Commission's 2025 communication is unusually blunt about Kosovo's constraints. It notes that progress on the EU agenda was hampered by divisive domestic politics, that reforms decelerated after the February 2025 elections, and that ratification of the Facility and Loan Agreements remained pending because of political deadlock, limiting implementation of the Reform Agenda (European Commission, 2025b). This is important because Kosovo's problem is increasingly not only recognition. It is whether it can demonstrate the institutional seriousness that makes political investment in its European file worthwhile.

The economic baseline is stronger than the political one, but not by enough to offset strategic uncertainty. According to the World Bank, Kosovo's real GDP growth averaged 4.4 per cent in 2024 and was projected at 3.8 per cent in both 2025 and 2026 (World Bank, 2025a). The World Bank's autumn 2025 reporting nonetheless warned that formal employment growth remained modest, that government formation delays could slow implementation of structural reforms and access to external financing, and that youth unemployment remained high (World Bank, 2025a; World Bank, 2025b). This matters for foresight because weak labor-market absorption, continued emigration and governance delays all reduce Kosovo's ability to sustain long-horizon policy agendas.

The security baseline is more reassuring, at least superficially. NATO remains the indispensable security anchor. After the 2023 violence in the north, NATO reinforced KFOR by up to 1,000 troops – the largest reinforcement in a decade – pushing troop levels back to well over 4,500 (NATO, 2026a). NATO's own messaging in March 2026 left little ambiguity: the Alliance described the Western Balkans as strategically important, reaffirmed that KFOR continues to safeguard peace on the ground, and linked lasting regional stability to progress in the EU-led dialogue (NATO, 2026b). Yet even a strong KFOR presence can coexist with strategic unease. Policy debate in 2026 around a possible future reduction of U.S. troops in Kosovo shows how much confidence still rests on the American component of the mission rather than on abstract alliance language alone (CEPA, 2026).

The dialogue baseline is the least encouraging. The institutional frameworks are known: the Brussels process, the 2023 Agreement on the Path to Normalization, its Implementation Annex, and the continuing expectation from Brussels that both parties implement all existing obligations. What is missing is credible political momentum. Interviewee B's formulation is sharp: Kosovo may have entered a comfort zone in which it hopes to move forward without depending on the dialogue, but "unless you fix the elephant in the room" – above all, Serbia's obstruction of Kosovo's international subjectivity – sustained movement will remain difficult (Interviewee B, personal interview, 2026). Interviewee A's view is slightly different but points in the same direction: the dialogue has to

be reconceptualized, but the absence of internal stability and strategic coherence in Kosovo makes that reconceptualization difficult to carry through (Interviewee A, personal interview, 2026).

In person interviews for this report and public opinion polls, like the IRI 2025 poll, show that Kosovo still has strong public support for its European path. Unlike some countries in the region, Kosovo has not tried to balance between competing powers. This is an advantage, but only if it leads to disciplined government action. Otherwise, it risks becoming a missed opportunity.

Overall, Kosovo in 2026 is a country with a clear direction but not yet fully consolidated. It is secure but still dependent, aligned with the West but not fully integrated, economically resilient but facing structural limits, and active in diplomacy but still affected by its relationship with Serbia. These are the conditions in which the four main variables now operate.

5. DRIVERS OF THE KOSOVO 2030 POSSIBLE FUTURES

5.1 Driver one: U.S. presence in Europe and the Western Balkans

Why this driver matters

The United States has had the greatest impact on Kosovo's security and international standing. This remains true in 2026, though U.S. involvement is less predictable. The U.S. is important to Kosovo in several ways. It is the main political guarantor of Kosovo's place in the West, the key NATO ally central to KFOR's credibility, and has long provided diplomatic support for Kosovo's international status, from recognitions to membership bids and political protection during crises. Because both Brussels and Belgrade pay close attention to Washington, U.S. signals influence the wider strategic environment even without formal action.

The challenge is that continued U.S. involvement is no longer guaranteed. The main question is not if the U.S. will leave Europe, but whether the Western Balkans remain important enough for Washington to keep investing attention, resources, and influence. With global competition, the war in Ukraine, instability in the Middle East, and debates over NATO burden-sharing, the Western Balkans could become less of a priority and more of a secondary concern.

Interviewee A's interview puts the issue in systemic terms. In his reading, multilateral organizations, NATO, and U.S. power are deeply interconnected; if U.S. engagement declines, Kosovo's prospects suffer not only bilaterally but across all multilateral tracks that matter (Interviewee A, personal interview, 2026). Interviewee B makes a related argument in more geopolitical terms: Washington may not "leave" Kosovo so much as downgrade it, maintaining a symbolic presence while expecting Europe to assume greater responsibility for the region (Interviewee B, personal interview, 2026).

Both judgments matter because they suggest that the key policy question is not simply "Will the U.S. stay?" but "What kind of U.S. role is Kosovo preparing for?"

The current baseline

The existing U.S. role remains substantial. Kosovo is still a close American partner, politically aligned and willing to support U.S.-backed international initiatives. In March 2026, Kosovo approved deploying troops to a U.S.-backed international stabilization force for Gaza, framed in Prishtina as reciprocating the international security support Kosovo has received since 1999 (Reuters, 2026). The symbolic meaning of this step is more important than its operational scale. It shows Kosovo continues to see contributions as currency of political relevance in Washington.

On the security side, the American role inside KFOR remains especially important. Policy reporting in 2026 estimated that the U.S. contribution stood at roughly 600 troops and that the United States continued to lead Regional Command East from Camp Bondsteel, one of its largest military installations in Europe (CEPA, 2026). Whether or not those numbers change, the political meaning is clear: the American component of KFOR is still read regionally as the clearest sign that Washington has not mentally exited the Western Balkans.

However, the discussion about a possible U.S. troop reduction is important. Even if no cuts happen immediately, the debate gaining attention in 2026 shows expectations are changing. Kosovo can no longer assume U.S. military presence is safe from global priority shifts. It also cannot count on

Washington's support to compensate for weak performance at home.

What would push this variable in a positive direction?

A positive shift would not need major new U.S. commitments. Instead, it would mean steady and clear support: maintaining a strong military presence in KFOR, holding regular political and defense talks, backing Kosovo's involvement in international security efforts, and using diplomatic influence to keep Kosovo's EU and NATO issues active.

Three developments would be especially significant.

The first key development would be a clear U.S. decision to keep the Western Balkans as part of Europe's security system, not as a lesser priority. This would not require more troops but would mean treating KFOR and its political message as a valuable, cost-effective tool for stability.

The second important step would be more organized defense cooperation with Kosovo outside of formal NATO membership. Interviewee B doubts that NATO will offer Kosovo a major new path by 2030, but he sees potential in bilateral or small-group defense partnerships, such as closer work with the U.S., Croatia, Albania, or others on training and building capabilities (Interviewee B, personal interview, 2026). In short, stronger U.S. involvement may come through practical defense cooperation rather than big public statements.

The third would be for the U.S. to show renewed commitment to advancing the dialogue, which would also support Kosovo's progress toward Europe. This does not mean replacing the EU, but rather doing what Washington has done well in the past: making it clear that just talking without real action has consequences, and that causing crises will not be rewarded.

What would push it in a negative direction?

A negative shift could happen in different ways, not all dramatic. The worst case would be a clear cut in U.S. troops in Kosovo and less willingness to get involved in Kosovo's disputes. More likely is a subtler change: the U.S. stays involved but becomes less consistent, more focused on short-term interests, and more impatient, leaving Europe to handle the region unless things worsen.

This reduced U.S. involvement would still have serious effects. Serbia would see less deterrence. Some EU countries would feel less urgency to address Kosovo's issues. In Kosovo, people would feel less secure and leaders might react more defensively. It would not cause an immediate crisis but would limit Kosovo's political options.

Interviewee A's point is crucial here. If the U.S. reduces engagement in multilateral institutions and in NATO, Kosovo loses not just a bilateral ally but the actor that has historically helped translate its interests into institutional outcomes (Interviewee A, personal interview, 2026). That is why even partial disengagement matters more for Kosovo than for most states in the region.

How does this driver interact with the other three?

This factor has the biggest impact across all four areas.

Along the EU integration path, stronger U.S. engagement can expand room for maneuver by encouraging European partners to treat Kosovo less as a marginal file and more as part of the Union's geopolitical credibility in the Balkans. Weaker U.S. engagement has the opposite effect: it makes Kosovo more dependent on intra-EU politics alone, where recognition and enlargement politics remain uneven.

With NATO cohesion and KFOR, the link is direct. Alliance unity in the Western Balkans can withstand tactical disputes, but a visible weakening of U.S. commitment would alter the balance within the mission and in political discussions about Kosovo's longer-term place in the Alliance.

Through dialogue, U.S. engagement can play either a supportive or a catalytic role. The EU remains the formal lead, but the political atmosphere around the process changes significantly when Washington is visibly engaged. Conversely, a more distant U.S. role would reinforce a maintenance-mode dialogue:

enough engagement to prevent breakdown, not enough to force choices.

The strategic implication for Kosovo

Kosovo cannot control Washington's global priorities but can affect how Washington evaluates its usefulness and reliability. This requires three practical adjustments.

First, Kosovo should stop treating the U.S. relationship as politically self-executing. Even strong historical alignment must be maintained through regular strategic dialogue, the delivery of commitments, and disciplined crisis management.

Second, it should widen the portfolio of U.S.-Kosovo cooperation beyond symbolic affinity. Defense cooperation, cyber resilience, critical infrastructure protection, energy security, and contributions to multinational missions offer ways to operationalize the partnership rather than merely declare it.

Third, Kosovo should prepare for a scenario where the U.S. remains engaged but expects Europe to do more. This means using the U.S. relationship not as a substitute for EU diplomacy but as a bridge to it.

In short, a strong U.S. role alone will not solve all of Kosovo's challenges, but a much more strategically managed and diversified partnership can significantly enhance Kosovo's position in an increasingly uncertain geopolitical environment.

5.2 Driver two: progress in Kosovo's EU integration path

Why this driver matters

For Kosovo, the EU path is not one policy sector among others. It is the central organizing framework through which questions of recognition, reform, market access, funding, rule of law and regional normalization are filtered. That is why debates about Kosovo's European future often become confused. They are never only about membership in the narrow legal sense. They are also about whether the EU treats Kosovo as a file to be managed, a partner to be prepared, or a geopolitical test case; it is ready to move forward despite internal complications.

The positive developments of recent years should not be underestimated. Kosovo has had an SAA in force since 2016, gained visa-free travel in January 2024, and secured approval for its Reform Agenda under the Growth Plan in October 2024 (European Commission, 2024a; European Commission, 2024b). The Growth Plan is potentially transformative: it aims to progressively integrate the region into the EU single market, accelerate reforms, and channel support through a €6 billion Reform and Growth Facility for 2024–2027 (European Commission, 2025c). The Commission described the plan as capable of doubling the size of Western Balkan economies over the next decade if implemented effectively (European Commission, 2025c). For Kosovo, this matters because the material benefits of staged integration could help reduce the gap between a symbolic European perspective and everyday economic reality.

But these positive steps coexist with hard political blockage. Kosovo's membership application, submitted in December 2022, still awaits a Council request for the Commission Opinion. Five member states do not recognize Kosovo. Even among recognizers, enthusiasm for investing political capital in Kosovo is inconsistent. In short, Kosovo's EU path has advanced procedurally but not strategically.

The current baseline

The Commission's 2024 Kosovo Report presents a mixed picture. It confirms basic milestones: SAA in force since April 2016, application submitted in December 2022, and continuing commitment to

the European path (European Commission, 2024a). It explicitly links the EU trajectory to the dialogue by recalling that both parties must implement all obligations under the Agreement on the Path to Normalization and its annexes. The 2024 enlargement package adds that visa liberalization entered into force on 1 January 2024 and that the Commission remains available to prepare an Opinion on Kosovo's application as soon as the Council requests it (European Commission, 2024d). That last phrase matters: technically, the Commission is not the blockage. Politically, the blockage lies with member states.

By 2025, the EU message becomes more demanding. The communication on enlargement policy notes that Kosovo remained committed to its European path and fully aligned with the EU's common foreign and security policy, but progress was hampered by divisive domestic politics and post-election institutional deadlock (European Commission, 2025b). It also states that ratification of the Facility and Loan Agreements under the Growth Plan remained pending, limiting implementation of the Reform Agenda. This is critical for any 2030 scenario. If Kosovo cannot operationalize even the instruments already approved, it becomes harder to make arguments for deeper candidacy.

The interviews reinforce this diagnosis. Interviewee A argues that Kosovo faces a dual challenge: not only the five non-recognizers, but also a growing, subtle skepticism among some recognizers, which means that diplomacy towards the EU can no longer be understood only as a question of formal status alone (Interviewee A, personal interview, 2026). Interviewee B goes further in strategic terms. In his view, the best realistic scenario may not be quick full membership but a model closer to Norway or Switzerland: deeper access to the single market and a more practical form of staged integration ahead of formal accession (Interviewee B, personal interview, 2026). Whether one agrees with that specific model or not, the underlying point is sound: Kosovo should consider the EU path in layers, not just as a binary between membership and non-membership.

What would positive movement look like?

Positive movement on this driver could take several forms, not all of which require immediate candidate status for EU membership for Kosovo.

The first and most important would be movement on the membership application itself. If the Council requests the Commission Opinion and initiates a more formal track, the political signal would be enormous. It would not resolve recognition politics overnight but would change Kosovo's position from a procedural waiting room to a more structured accession logic. Interviewee A calls candidate status transformative: it would alter how Kosovo is perceived externally and internally, increase investor confidence, and potentially create a new diplomatic logic with non-recognizers who prefer not to remain outside an EU-led process indefinitely (Interviewee A, personal interview, 2026).

The second would be the effective implementation of the Reform Agenda. The Growth Plan was designed to deliver some benefits of enlargement before accession by tying reforms to funding and to phased access to parts of the single market (European Commission, 2025c). Kosovo should treat this not as an auxiliary technocratic business but as a strategic arena. For a country blocked from full membership in politics, staged integration is not a consolation prize. It is a way to create facts of convergence.

The third would be targeted diplomatic work inside the EU. This has two layers. One is outreach to the five non-recognizers. The other is rebuilding confidence among recognizers who have grown more skeptical due to Kosovo's handling of crises, domestic political fragmentation, or discomfort with its dialogue posture. Kosovo's problem is not that Europe has no mechanisms. It rarely moves on autopilot.

What would negative movement look like?

A negative trajectory would not necessarily begin with formal EU rejection. More likely, it would be strategic decoupling: Kosovo remains rhetorically attached to the European future, while real enlargement momentum in the Western Balkans shifts elsewhere, especially to Montenegro and Albania. This would create a layered regional hierarchy: frontrunners negotiating closure, second-tier states trying to begin or consolidate accession,

and Kosovo drifting into a category defined by political challenges stemming from non-recognition and self-inflicted institutional weakness.

The 2025 communication already hints at the risk. It states clearly that Kosovo needs to get back on track on its EU agenda through cross-party cooperation and much-needed reforms, especially in the rule of law and freedom of expression (European Commission, 2025b). That language matters because it shows that the EU's concern is not only geopolitical. It is also about whether Kosovo demonstrates the governance maturity required for a more demanding political investment.

A second negative possibility is that the EU path continues formally but loses motivational force in society and politics. This is the "maintenance mode" Interviewee A warns about: enough process to prevent rupture, not enough progress to change strategic incentives (Interviewee A, personal interview, 2026). In this setting, politicians invoke Europe while using slow progress to cover domestic underperformance. This matches the EUISS scenario "The Balkans in limbo," where nominal EU orientation coexists with weak implementation, populist diversion, and fragile security (Čeperković & Gaub, 2018).

How the EU driver interacts with the other three

With U.S. engagement, the relationship is mutually reinforcing but asymmetrical. Strong U.S. support can help create political room inside Europe, especially when Kosovo is seen as strategically valuable. But the EU path cannot be outsourced to Washington. Ultimately, decisive politics are intra-European for the EU track, and the security track do not move in lockstep; they shape each other. Progress on the EU side can improve the overall climate of stability and reform. Progress on the security side can reassure member states that Kosovo is a manageable candidate. Stagnation on either front makes stagnation on the other more likely.

With the dialogue, the link is structural. The EU repeatedly frames normalization not as a separate file but as part of the path to the EU for both parties (European Commission, 2024a; European Commission, 2025b). Kosovo may dislike the extent of that linkage, but it cannot wish it away. The issue is therefore how to engage it on terms that do not turn the EU path into a permanent hostage of Serbian obstruction.

What Kosovo should do with this driver

Kosovo's best strategic response is to stop treating EU integration as a waiting game and start treating it as a layered campaign.

FIRST, it should make implementation of the Reform Agenda politically visible and administratively disciplined. The credibility gained from delivering on existing instruments may be more important in the next two years than rhetorical calls for candidate status unsupported by performance.

SECOND, it should build differentiated EU diplomacy. The same talking points should not be used with Berlin, Paris, Rome, Madrid, Bratislava, and Athens. Each capital has a different mix of status politics, risk perception, and regional priorities.

THIRD, Kosovo should use the language of contribution, not only aspiration. The Commission's framing of the Growth Plan – convergence, market integration, digital transition, governance reform, stability – provides a vocabulary in which Kosovo can present itself not as a permanent exception but as a state trying to reduce Europe's Balkan risk.

FINALLY, Kosovo should avoid the belief that, because enlargement has returned as an EU geopolitical instrument, its own movement is guaranteed. Enlargement has become more political, not less. It helps states that show strategic usefulness and reform credibility and punishes those that assume alignment alone will carry them forward.

This is why the EU variable remains deeply open. Kosovo has more tools than a few years ago but not yet a clear escalator. Whether those tools become a ladder or a cul-de-sac depends on political choices in Prishtina as much as on divisions in Brussels.

5.3 Driver three: NATO cohesion and KFOR's posture

Why this driver matters

Kosovo's security architecture remains unfinished by design. It has domestic institutions, a developing security force, and growing bilateral defense links, but the final guarantor of a safe and secure environment remains NATO's KFOR mission. That makes Kosovo unusual. Its basic security is not simply a national capability question; it is an alliance credibility question.

This is why NATO cohesion matters at least as much as KFOR troop numbers. A mission can remain on the ground while its political meaning weakens. If the Alliance is divided, if key troop contributors downgrade their political commitment, or if the U.S. role shrinks visibly, local actors will read that shift long before any formal mandate changes. Deterrence is not only about capability. It is about perception.

The post-2023 environment underlines the point. NATO reinforced KFOR after the violence in the north by deploying up to 1,000 additional troops, the largest reinforcement in a decade, pushing troop levels to well over 4,500 (NATO, 2026a). NATO's Joint Force Command Naples reported a total KFOR strength of 4,767 personnel in early 2026. This is not a token presence. But KFOR's importance lies less in absolute numbers than in what its presence conveys: NATO remains willing to prevent a deterioration in security in Kosovo, and it still sees the mission as strategically valuable.

At the same time, KFOR is both a reassurance and a reminder. It reassures because it deters escalation. It reminds us that Kosovo has not yet reached the point where its security can be treated as fully normalized in Euro-Atlantic terms.

The current baseline

The formal NATO position is robust. NATO's Kosovo page in February 2026 reaffirmed that KFOR remains responsible for contributing to a safe and secure environment and freedom of movement for all communities in Kosovo (NATO, 2026a).

The March 2026 meeting between NATO Deputy Secretary General Radmila Sekerinska and EU Special Representative Peter Sørensen reinforced that message politically: NATO described the Western Balkans as strategically important, insisted that KFOR continues to safeguard peace on the ground, and stressed that the ultimate solution for lasting stability is political – namely, progress in the EU-led dialogue (NATO, 2026b).

This dual message is important. NATO is not positioning KFOR as a substitute for political settlement; it is positioning it as the security umbrella under which political settlement remains possible. That is healthy logic. The problem for Kosovo is that umbrellas can create complacency. Interviewee A captures the ambivalence neatly when he says KFOR acts both as a safeguard and a constraint: it stabilizes the environment, but because it is present, the urgency for stronger security and political reforms can also diminish (Interviewee A, personal interview, 2026).

Interviewee B is even more skeptical about formal NATO movement. He does not expect Kosovo to receive MAP by the end of the decade and argues that in a world where the U.S. is less interested in strengthening NATO, Kosovo's practical defense development may rely more on bilateral avenues than on a conventional Alliance integration pathway (Interviewee B, personal interview, 2026). That view may be slightly pessimistic but it has analytical force. Kosovo's challenge is not simply to seek membership rhetoric. It is to identify forms of NATO proximity that are politically plausible before membership becomes feasible.

What would positive movement look like?

Positive movement in this driver would have three layers.

THE FIRST LAYER is continued Alliance cohesion around KFOR. This is the minimum condition. It means no politically damaging drawdown by key

contributors, continued readiness to reinforce if needed, and a clear message that the mission is there to deter unilateral destabilization.

THE SECOND LAYER is more structured operational cooperation between NATO and Kosovo institutions. This could include expanded exercises, interoperability programmes, resilience planning, civil emergency coordination, cyber cooperation, and deeper military-to-military contacts. None of these requires immediate membership. All would help move Kosovo from passive security consumer to a more credible security partner.

THE THIRD LAYER, the most politically ambitious, would be a gradual opening toward NATO frameworks short of membership, such as deeper partnership mechanisms or a more explicit discussion of a pathway to membership. Interviewee A is right that serious movement here would likely require significant progress in the dialogue or a changed political consensus among member states (Interviewee A, personal interview, 2026). But even without a formal breakthrough, small institutional openings could matter greatly. In Kosovo's case, access to the process often matters a lot. A stronger NATO track would also have broader spillover effects. It would reassure investors, strengthen Kosovo's claim to being a reliable contributor to regional security, and indirectly reinforce the EU path by reducing the perception that Kosovo is a permanent security exception.

What would negative movement look like?

A negative movement in this driver could begin with any of three developments: weakening U.S. commitment to KFOR, sharper internal divisions among Allies over Kosovo-related questions, or a deterioration of the regional environment that stretches the mission politically without producing a clearer strategic direction.

The most dangerous version is not total withdrawal but political thinning-out: KFOR remains but with a weaker sense of shared purpose, more visible caution among some contributors, and a stronger impression that the mission contains crises rather than anchors a broader strategic horizon. This shift would not immediately produce instability but would change local behavior. Serbia and Kosovo Serb actors would test margins more often. Kosovo institutions would feel less secure and behave more assertively or defensively depending on the crisis. The EU-led dialogue would unfold under weaker deterrence assumptions. None of this is abstract.

The possibility of a U.S. troop reduction is less important because of the numbers and more because of its signaling effect. CEPA's 2026 reporting on the debate around a possible U.S. drawdown argued that the American presence functions as a core deterrent and that any reduction could embolden nationalist actors in the north and expand opportunities for Russian influence in the Balkans (CEPA, 2026). Even if treated as advocacy rather than official policy, the underlying concern is credible. There is also a slower-burning negative scenario. NATO stays committed, but Kosovo remains outside meaningful integration pathways while regional instability persists at a manageable but recurring level. Over time, that would leave Kosovo dependent without progress, exactly the kind of structurally incomplete security order that discourages long-term strategic planning.

Interaction with the other three drivers

With U.S. engagement, the relationship is immediate. U.S. commitment remains the backbone of NATO credibility in Kosovo, though key European contributors also matter greatly. If the U.S. role weakens, the mission's internal political balance changes.

With the EU path, NATO cohesion reinforces the broader image of Kosovo as a manageable and governable security space. It does not resolve recognition politics, but it does reduce the risk premium attached to Kosovo's European future.

With the dialogue, security credibility creates political space. Stable deterrence reduces the odds that crises in the north repeatedly overwhelm the negotiation track. Conversely, a weaker KFOR posture would make every dialogue dispute more combustible.

What Kosovo should do with this driver

Kosovo has less direct influence over NATO than over the EU track, but it is not powerless.

First, it should continue building a profile as a predictable security partner. This means disciplined civil-military communication, professional interaction with KFOR, and avoiding short-term domestic political gains that create strategic mistrust among Allies.

Second, it should pursue every practical form of NATO proximity available. The debate in Kosovo is often framed as membership or nothing, which is strategically unhelpful. Partnership, interoperability, resilience planning, exercises, and defense reform benchmarks matter.

Third, Kosovo should treat the security and dialogue files as connected. Interviewee A's point that achieving a more advanced NATO relationship requires a coordinated redefinition of the dialogue is difficult but accurate (Interviewee A, personal interview, 2026). Security integration does not sit outside the political dispute; it is partly conditioned by it.

Fourth, Kosovo should plan for a scenario in which formal NATO movement remains limited through 2030. If Interviewee B is correct that much capability development will occur through bilateral avenues rather than solely through NATO structures, Kosovo should prepare accordingly by expanding functional defense cooperation with close allies while keeping the Alliance link central (Interviewee B, personal interview, 2026).

The key insight is this: KFOR can preserve peace, but cannot, by itself, close Kosovo's strategic security gap. That gap narrows only if NATO remains cohesive, the U.S. stays committed, and Kosovo uses KFOR's stability to move toward deeper security integration rather than permanent dependence.

5.4 Driver four: the Kosovo–Serbia normalization dialogue

Why this driver matters

If the United States serves as the strongest external multiplier, the dialogue remains the key constraint. It is the issue Kosovo has most actively tried to isolate from its broader policy agenda, while Europe has consistently insisted on tying it to nearly every other area of progress. Both perspectives are understandable and partially valid. Kosovo is right to reject the idea that its statehood, governance, and reform efforts should be indefinitely stalled pending a shift in Serbia's position. At the same time, the European Union maintains that without meaningful progress on normalization, neither Kosovo's nor Serbia's European trajectory can genuinely advance.

This is why the dialogue remains the central strategic test for Kosovo by 2030. Not because a final agreement is imminent - it is not – but because the dialogue's direction - whether it stays in maintenance mode, moves toward structured implementation, or collapses into recurrent crisis - will shape the security climate, the EU file, the role of external actors, and Kosovo's internal politics.

Two points from the interviews are especially important. First, Interviewee A argues that over the past four or five years, Kosovo has created an opening to move away from the traditional dialogue framework by dismantling parallel structures and addressing issues of state functionality in the north more directly. This creates space for a two-track approach: one track with Kosovo Serbs focused on everyday life and integration, and another with Serbia focused on interstate relations in light of the new reality on the ground (Interviewee A, personal interview, 2026). Second, Interviewee B warns that without fixing the "elephant in the room" – above all, formalization that Serbia will not block Kosovo in international organizations – movement in other areas remains difficult (Interviewee B, personal

interview, 2026). These are not contradictory views. Together, they imply Kosovo needs both domestic-state consolidation and a clearer external settlement logic.

The current baseline

The baseline is one of formal continuity and strategic fatigue. The EU's 2024 Kosovo Report states that in the reporting period, the EU-facilitated dialogue continued and that both parties committed to fully implement all obligations stemming from the Agreement on the Path to Normalization and its Implementation Annex (European Commission, 2024a). The 2025 enlargement communication repeats the same expectation, adding that Kosovo is also expected to pursue long-term solutions to ensure access to basic public services for all communities (European Commission, 2025b). The official architecture is therefore stable. The question is whether it still generates enough incentive to move.

The evidence is sobering. The post-Banjska terrorist attack period reminded both Brussels and Prishtina that security deterioration in the north can quickly reset the political conversation around Kosovo. Yet it also generated a limited opening. Interviewee A argues Banjska terrorist attack created an unexpected opportunity by exposing the depth of the unresolved security problem and by linking questions such as the Association of Serb-majority Municipalities, recognition, and the status of the Serbian Orthodox Church more clearly to the broader political relationship (Interviewee A, personal interview, 2026). His conclusion is that nothing should be treated as fully resolved until everything is resolved – an argument for package logic rather than piecemeal concessions.

Interviewee B's reading is more pessimistic about prospects for a breakthrough. He sees little immediate prospect in the dialogue and suggests Kosovo may have grown used to moving without depending on it. Yet he also recognizes that Serbia's EU path remains conditioned by its trajectory with Kosovo, which means the dialogue still gives Prishtina leverage if used strategically (Interviewee B, personal interview, 2026). This is crucial. Kosovo often discusses the dialogue primarily as a source of obligations. It is also a source of leverage, but only if Kosovo connects it to broader EU politics and a coherent diplomatic strategy.

The structure of the problem

The dialogue is hard not only because the parties disagree on fundamental issues, mainly Serbia's refusal to recognize the right of Kosovo to exist as an independent state, but also on sequencing of implementation of normalization dialogue agreements, incentives, and the political meaning of implementation.

For Kosovo, the central fear is asymmetry: being pushed to implement politically costly commitments, especially around the Association, without credible change in Serbia's behavior on recognition, international organizations, or de facto normalization. This fear is rooted in experience.

For Serbia, the calculation is often that prolonging ambiguity preserves room for maneuver. A process stabilizing the ground enough to reassure the EU but not enough to settle the political dispute can be attractive to Belgrade if costs remain manageable.

For the EU, the problem is credibility. Brussels needs the process to deliver sufficient implementation to justify continued investment, but has struggled to align incentives and consequences to alter behavior. This is why the dialogue risks becoming what Interviewee A calls "maintenance mode": neither dead nor transformative.

What would positive movement look like?

A positive trajectory in this driver does not require immediate mutual recognition in the classic textbook sense. A more realistic positive trajectory would involve four linked developments.

The first is a shift from abstract recommitment to sequenced implementation with political backing. That means not simply restating obligations but tying movement on issues such as the Association, energy, documents, public services, and church/property arrangements to clearer reciprocal steps that visibly improve Kosovo's international position.

The second is the reframing Interviewee A proposes: more direct engagement with Kosovo

Serbs on governance, inclusion, and everyday problem-solving, so not every issue in the north is automatically re-externalized through Belgrade (Interviewee A, personal interview, 2026). This is politically difficult but strategically important. The more Kosovo demonstrates that normalization also has a domestic integration dimension, the less the dialogue is reduced to mere symbolic state-to-state antagonism.

The third is stronger EU-NATO-U.S. coordination around incentives and red lines. NATO's March 2026 messaging is useful here: it explicitly tied lasting stability to the EU-led dialogue while reaffirming KFOR's security role (NATO, 2026b). The dialogue works best when the security umbrella and political track reinforce each other.

The fourth is a clearer end-state logic. Interviewee B is right that unless Serbia stops obstructing Kosovo's international subjectivity, it is difficult to speak of meaningful forward movement (Interviewee B, personal interview, 2026). A positive scenario requires at minimum a functional equivalent of de facto recognition: Serbia may not use the word but would cease blocking Kosovo's participation in international and European structures.

What would negative movement look like?

A negative trajectory could take two forms.

The first is familiar stagnation. Talks continue, envoys travel, communiqués are issued, crises are de-escalated after the fact, but no issue of real political weight is resolved. In this scenario, the dialogue survives institutionally but loses strategic meaning. Kosovo remains trapped in a process that consumes diplomatic bandwidth without unlocking its EU or NATO tracks.

The second is outright deterioration. This would involve recurring security incidents in the north, sharper nationalist rhetoric, lower trust between international mediators and the parties, and a growing sense in the region that deterrence is thinner and political restraint weaker. Previous scenario-based analyses have long warned of this trajectory, describing how unresolved non-recognition, stalled EU processes, persistent blame-shifting, and repeated crises can gradually shift a prolonged stalemate from mere paralysis into a more unstable and potentially dangerous situation.

Interviewee A's warning about the interaction of recognition, ASM, and the status of the Serbian Orthodox Church is especially relevant in a negative scenario. If these files continue to be handled separately, each can become a veto point against the others. If treated only as tactical bargaining chips, external actors may push for externally imposed shortcuts that satisfy no one and settle nothing.

Interaction with the other three drivers

With U.S. engagement, the dialogue gains seriousness when Washington is attentive and loses leverage when it is not. The EU remains in the lead, but the wider strategic atmosphere changes with U.S. involvement.

With the EU path, the connection is structural and unavoidable. The EU presents the dialogue as part of the accession logic for both sides. Kosovo may prefer more decoupling, but complete decoupling is not currently on offer.

With NATO/KFOR, the link is two-way. Strong deterrence gives political space for dialogue. Lack of political progress makes security incidents more likely and increases the burden on KFOR.

What Kosovo should do with this driver

Kosovo needs a more strategic doctrine for the dialogue.

First, it should move away from viewing the process solely as public messaging or episodic crisis response. The dialogue should be handled as a long-term strategic approach, with clear internal coordination among the prime minister's office, the presidency, foreign policy institutions, security actors, and key parliamentary stakeholders.

Second, Kosovo should invest more seriously in the domestic leg of normalization. Interviewee A's two-track idea is persuasive because it recognizes that relations with Kosovo Serbs cannot be reduced

to whatever happens in Brussels (Interviewee A, personal interview, 2026). A stronger domestic governance approach in Serb-majority areas would not remove Belgrade's role but could reduce its monopoly over representation.

Third, Kosovo should insist on reciprocity in political effect, not merely symmetry in wording. The real benchmark of progress is whether steps taken in the dialogue expand Kosovo's sovereignty, security, and access to institutions. If they do not, the process becomes politically unsustainable at home.

Fourth, Kosovo should prepare for the possibility that no final agreement is reached before 2030. This should not produce fatalism but a more focused objective: improve Kosovo's position under non-settlement conditions while keeping open the possibility of a larger breakthrough.

The dialogue is therefore not simply a negotiation file. It is the strategic hinge on which the other three variables keep turning. That is why Kosovo cannot afford either illusion or neglect in dealing with it.

6. UNPACKING THE POSSIBLE SCENARIOS FOR KOSOVO BY 2030

The scenarios below are built by combining the four drivers rather than treating each in isolation. This matters because Kosovo is unlikely to experience a single-variable change that is purely positive or purely negative. More plausibly, the strategic environment will be shaped by reinforcement effects.

If U.S. engagement remains visible, NATO cohesion holds, and the EU invests politically in Kosovo's path, the dialogue becomes easier to move because incentives are clearer and deterrence stronger. If Washington downgrades the region, NATO cohesion weakens, the EU path slows, and the dialogue stays trapped in crisis management, each problem magnifies the other.

The four scenarios are therefore not simple labels from optimistic to pessimistic. They are integrated worlds.

- SCENARIO I – Locking in the West: very positive movement across all four drivers.
- SCENARIO II – Buying Time, Banking Hope: positive but incomplete movement; stability improves, but a breakthrough does not.
- SCENARIO III – Drifting in the Grey Zone: negative movement through prolonged stagnation and strategic underperformance.
- SCENARIO IV – Sliding into the Storm: very negative movement in which security, diplomacy and domestic politics deteriorate together.

The scenarios should be used in two ways. First, as stress tests: which current policies still make sense if the environment becomes less benign? Second, as indicator frameworks: what signs by 2027–2028 would tell Kosovo which future is becoming more likely? The most relevant signals are not abstract. They include whether the Council moves on the membership application; whether the Reform Agenda begins to generate real disbursements and reforms; whether KFOR remains politically solid; whether the U.S. commitment is reaffirmed or hedged; and whether the dialogue moves from recommitment to actual sequencing and reciprocal implementation.

TABLE 1 - Integrated scenario overview

Scenario	U.S. role	EU path	NATO/KFOR	Dialogue	Overall effect
Locking in the West	Sustained and visible, push for economic normalization with Serbia	Candidate status	Cohesive KFOR; deeper cooperation	Sequenced implementation; de facto normalization grows	Kosovo becomes harder to block and easier to integrate
Buying Time, Banking Hope	Selective continuity	Sectoral gains; political blockage persists	Stable but no major pathway	Managed but inconclusive	Stability without breakthrough
Drifting in the Grey Zone	Episodic and reactive	Patchy reform, stalled political life, no decisions	Stabilizes stalemate	Maintenance mode	Semi-integrated, semi-secure limbo hardens
Sliding into the Storm	Visible downgrading	Stalled and boxed in	Thinner deterrence, more political caution	Recurrent confrontation	Higher vulnerability across diplomacy and security

6.1 SCENARIO I – Locking in the Westz

Scenario in brief

By 2030, Kosovo may not yet be an EU or NATO member, but it is also not parked in the holding area. The United States has maintained a visible political and military role in the Western Balkans. NATO remains cohesive around KFOR and deepens practical cooperation with Kosovo. The EU finally moves Kosovo's membership application into a more formal track, while the Growth Plan starts producing tangible gains. The dialogue with Serbia does not end in classic mutual recognition, but it moves to a stage of sequenced implementation that delivers a functional equivalent of de facto normalization in several areas. Kosovo enters the next decade more secure, more investable and less internationally isolated.

The state of Kosovo in 2030

The most important change in this scenario is not symbolic. It is structural. Kosovo is no longer primarily discussed in Brussels and Washington as a crisis-management file. It is increasingly treated as a Western Balkan state with unresolved political issues but that has nonetheless become institutionally more predictable and strategically more embedded in the West.

On the U.S. side, Washington does not dramatically increase its footprint, but it rejects the idea of a drawdown that would signal retreat. The American role inside KFOR remains politically visible, defense cooperation expands, and Kosovo's contributions to multinational initiatives reinforce its image as a security contributor rather than a permanent recipient. Camp Bondsteel remains not only a base

but a signal.

On the EU side, the breakthrough is procedural but politically consequential: the Council requests the Commission's Opinion on Kosovo's application, or, failing that, agrees to a structured pre-candidacy track that goes beyond mere rhetoric. At the same time, Kosovo begins to deliver more convincingly on its Reform Agenda. Payments under the Growth Plan are starting to generate real momentum for reform in governance, digitalization, connectivity, and the business environment. The effect is cumulative. Kosovo is still not close to accession, but it is moving.

NATO/KFOR also changes in quality, even without an immediate membership logic. KFOR remains robust, but the conversation shifts toward what Kosovo can progressively assume rather than endless strategic guardianship. More exercises, more interoperability, more resilience planning, and deeper security-sector cooperation will gradually normalize the relationship.

In the dialogue, movement comes through sequencing rather than grand rhetoric. Serbia does not formally recognize Kosovo, but it gradually reduces obstruction in practical domains under stronger EU-U.S. pressure and in exchange for a politically defensible implementation sequence. Kosovo, in turn, engages more seriously with domestic integration issues affecting Kosovo Serbs, but only within a package that expands rather than narrows its sovereignty in practice.

The road to 2030

This scenario begins not with a miracle but with discipline in 2026–2027. Kosovo's political class, under pressure from institutional paralysis and external frustration, forms a minimum strategic consensus around three priorities: restoring institutional functionality, operationalizing the Reform Agenda, and reprofessionalizing the dialogue file.

That domestic shift coincides with a wider change in external posture. The United States, even while globally overstretched, concludes that preserving credibility in the Western Balkans is a low-cost investment in European stability. NATO maintains a firm KFOR profile and coordinates more closely with the EU on the political-security interface. In March 2026, NATO had already signaled that Allies were ready to increase support to the EU-led normalization effort (NATO, 2026b); in this scenario, political coordination becomes more operational.

Inside the EU, two things happen. First, enlargement politics remain geopolitically relevant because of the war in Ukraine and the Union's own concern with credibility in its neighborhood. Second, Kosovo avoids self-inflicted setbacks by delivering enough governance and rule-of-law credibility to make passivity harder to justify. The result is not a revolutionary change in recognition politics, but rather a more serious policy approach to Kosovo as a candidate-in-waiting rather than a permanent exception.

The dialogue benefits from this changed setting. Sørensen's mediation is backed by stronger NATO-EU-U.S. coordination and by a clearer message to Belgrade that blocking implementation will increasingly shape its own European costs. Kosovo does not abandon its red lines, but it starts using leverage more strategically rather than more loudly. A practical, staged settlement emerges around documents, public services, policing coordination, missing persons, and a tightly conditioned pathway for the Association linked to non-obstruction and international access.

What does this scenario mean

This is the best realistic scenario for Kosovo by 2030 because it does not require all maximalist goals to be achieved simultaneously. Kosovo is still not fully "settled" in the legal sense, but it is markedly less vulnerable to diplomatic blockage and security shocks. Investors see a clearer trajectory. The EU path becomes politically meaningful again. NATO ties deepen enough to reduce the sense of strategic limbo. Most importantly, Kosovo's foreign policy stops being defined primarily by what others are willing to block.

In this scenario, the biggest gain is a cumulative strategic density: more anchors, more options, fewer veto points.

6.2 SCENARIO II – Buying Time, Banking Hope

Scenario in brief

By 2030, Kosovo will remain broadly stable and firmly aligned with the West, but it has yet to convert that alignment into a strategic breakthrough. The United States stays engaged, though more selectively. NATO remains cohesive enough to sustain KFOR, but no major breakthrough emerges on Kosovo's path to formal integration. The EU relationship deepens in practical terms through the Growth Plan and selective sectoral integration, yet the membership application remains politically stalled. The dialogue with Serbia continues, producing limited technical progress and occasional de-escalation, but not a settlement. Kosovo is better positioned than in 2026, but it is still living on borrowed strategic time.

The state of Kosovo in 2030

This is the most comfortable of the uncomfortable futures. Kosovo is not in crisis. It is not sliding into acute instability. But it is also not fundamentally escaping structural dependency.

The U.S. role remains present, but less transformative than Kosovo would like. Washington keeps faith with KFOR and maintains high-level political contacts when needed, but the Balkans no longer receives the sustained diplomatic focus that drives movement across files. Kosovo continues to enjoy goodwill, but must work harder for traction.

The EU track improves materially, but not politically. Kosovo has implemented parts of its Reform Agenda and benefits from elements of the Growth Plan. Some economic integration with the EU single market advances; digital and payments integration improves; and technical cooperation grows. Yet the decisive political question – movement of the membership application – remains unresolved. The result is a strange duality: more Europe in practice, not enough Europe in status.

In security terms, KFOR remains the center of gravity. The mission stays credible and cohesive enough to deter large-scale escalation, especially after 2023 reinforced the lesson that the north can deteriorate quickly. Kosovo deepens practical cooperation with NATO, but still remains outside meaningful membership pathways. The relationship is functional rather than transformative.

The dialogue persists in exactly the way many diplomats would call "constructive", and many Kosovars would call "insufficient". It produces enough engagement to prevent breakdown, enough de-escalation to avoid isolation, and enough ambiguity to postpone the hard political choices. Serbia keeps one foot inside the process and one foot outside its spirit.

The road to 2030

This scenario emerges when no single driver collapses, but none moves decisively enough to unlock the others. Kosovo restores some institutional functionality after the 2025–2026 deadlock, but political polarization remains high. Reforms move, but inconsistently. External partners remain willing to help, but see no reason to make a major political leap.

Inside the EU, the Growth Plan becomes the main vehicle for engagement. Kosovo starts to receive more practical benefits and financing, which stabilizes the relationship and prevents a sense of total blockage. But the Union remains divided on how far it is willing to go on the candidacy logic, especially as the dialogue with Serbia produces no clear political settlement, and other enlargement files consume more energy.

The United States, for its part, does enough to keep deterrence credible but not enough to strategically reframe the region. Washington's global focus stays elsewhere. Kosovo is not abandoned; it is deprioritized relative to other priorities.

The dialogue reflects this wider setting. Brussels maintains the process. Crises in the north are managed. Some sectoral implementation occurs. But because neither side sees a decisive change in incentives, the process never leaves the logic of management. Interviewee A's "maintenance mode" becomes the defining feature of the file (Interviewee A, personal interview, 2026).

What does this scenario mean

Buying Time, Banking Hope is not a failure. For many international actors, it would look like success because peace holds and cooperation continues. But for Kosovo, it carries real strategic costs.

The first is cumulative delay. Kosovo loses more years without advancing its membership application to a clearer political track. That widens the gap with regional frontrunners and normalizes the idea that Kosovo belongs to a slower and more ambiguous lane of enlargement.

The second is psychological dependency. KFOR remains indispensable, which is stabilizing, but the absence of a deeper security pathway reinforces the sense that Kosovo is secure only because others continue to choose to secure it.

The third is political fatigue. A dialogue that persists without changing the strategic landscape risks exhausting both domestic legitimacy and diplomatic seriousness. Over time, that can produce either apathy or more volatile nationalist reactions.

This scenario is therefore stable but not strategic. Kosovo avoids the worst. It still does not reach the threshold at which the basic logic of its international position changes.

6.3 SCENARIO III – Drifting in the Grey Zone

Scenario in brief

By 2030, Kosovo will remain formally aligned with the West but substantively stuck between weak progress and recurring obstruction. U.S. engagement becomes more sporadic. NATO remains present, but KFOR is read increasingly as a stabilizer of stalemate rather than an anchor of strategic integration. The EU path loses momentum as domestic underperformance in Kosovo combines with member-state caution. The dialogue with Serbia survives institutionally but produces little beyond damage control. Kosovo is stable enough to avoid a breakdown, yet too constrained to move forward meaningfully.

The state of Kosovo in 2030

This scenario is more dangerous than it first appears because it replaces strategic ambition with strategic adaptation. Kosovo learns to live in limbo.

The U.S. relationship remains important, but no longer shapes outcomes the way it once did. American engagement is reactive: Washington steps in after serious incidents, but rarely defines the political direction of the file. Kosovo still cites the United States as its key partner, but the practical weight of that partnership is thinner.

The EU path looks increasingly asymmetric. Kosovo continues to align politically with the EU and implements some reforms, but the political return on that alignment is weak. The membership application remains dormant or effectively frozen. Reform Agenda implementation is patchy, partly because domestic politics remains too divisive, partly because the broader EU view of Kosovo is that it has not yet done enough to justify a harder political push. Kosovo becomes the classic case of a state doing some of the work of integration without receiving enough of the politics of integration.

KFOR remains on the ground and still matters greatly. But the mission's meaning changes. It becomes the infrastructure of a managed grey zone: strong enough to prevent severe escalation, not connected to a credible horizon of political settlement or strategic integration. Security does not collapse. It stagnates.

The dialogue follows the same pattern. Meetings continue. Envoys rotate. Some technical files move. But the central political dispute remains untouched. Kosovo tries to decouple its future from the dialogue; the EU keeps linking them; Serbia exploits the ambiguity. The result is not a resolution. It is accumulated frustration.

The road to 2030

This scenario arises when Kosovo fails to fully overcome its domestic governance challenges and when external partners conclude that incremental management is more realistic than strategic change.

The immediate trigger is not one spectacular failure. It is the absence of a decisive corrective. Institutional deadlock fades but leaves a residue of mistrust and low effectiveness. Governments continue to invoke Europe and the West, but cross-party consensus on core state priorities remains too weak to sustain long-horizon reforms. Implementation becomes selective and political attention drifts back to short-term competition.

In Brussels, Kosovo loses comparative attention. Enlargement remains alive, but political energy concentrates on dossiers that appear either more advanced or more urgent. Kosovo continues to receive support, but not a serious political upgrade. The country's own inability to show consistent reform delivery makes it easier for member states to justify caution.

The security environment remains tense but contained. KFOR can still deter major deterioration, yet repeated local crises in the north remind everyone that the underlying dispute remains unresolved. Kosovo's institutions gain some capabilities, but without a clearer NATO perspective, those gains do not translate into strategic confidence.

The dialogue becomes increasingly ritualized. Every incident generates calls for de-escalation; every period of quiet generates claims that the process is alive, but the basic geometry does not move. The "grey zone" is not simply geopolitical. It becomes institutional and psychological.

What does this scenario mean

For Kosovo, Drifting in the Grey Zone may be the most plausible danger precisely because it is not dramatic. It allows bad equilibrium to harden.

Economically, the country continues to grow, but at a level below what would be possible under a clearer European and security horizon. Political uncertainty and outward migration persist. The World Bank's warning that growth can be slowed by delays in government formation and reform implementation remains structurally relevant in this world (World Bank, 2025a).

Diplomatically, Kosovo becomes easier to praise than to advance. Partners continue to commend its alignment, but the gap between praise and political movement widens. That erodes trust in the utility of discipline.

Strategically, a generation of policymakers and citizens becomes accustomed to management without closure. That may be less explosive than an acute crisis, but it is corrosive. It weakens reform incentives, drains diplomatic energy and normalizes the idea that Kosovo can be indefinitely contained in a semi-integrated, semi-secure position.

The lesson of this scenario is harsh: not all negative futures announce themselves through collapse. Some arrive through repetition.

6.4 SCENARIO IV – Sliding into the Storm

Scenario in brief

By 2030, Kosovo faces the harshest combination of external downgrading and internal fragility. U.S. engagement in the Western Balkans becomes visibly thinner. NATO remains formally present, but Alliance cohesion over Kosovo is weakening, and KFOR's deterrent effect is increasingly tested.

The EU path stalls badly as domestic political fragmentation and unresolved status politics combine with wider enlargement fatigue. The dialogue with Serbia deteriorates into recurrent confrontation, intermittent suspension and externally imposed de-escalation. Kosovo is not abandoned, but it is far more exposed – diplomatically boxed in, security-dependent and

politically under pressure.

The state of Kosovo in 2030

In this scenario, the key feature is cumulative vulnerability. None of the four drivers alone explains the downturn. The danger comes from interaction.

The United States no longer sees the Balkans as a theatre deserving sustained political bandwidth. It maintains symbolic engagement, but its military footprint shrinks, and its diplomatic focus becomes episodic. Kosovo still has friends in Washington, but the relationship is no longer backed by the same operational confidence. Regional actors notice immediately.

Inside NATO, KFOR remains in place because the Alliance cannot afford a visible failure. But the mission operates in a more challenging political environment: U.S. leadership is thinner, some European contributors are more cautious, and every crisis in the north now tests not only local stability but also the mission's credibility. KFOR is still present; it is no longer enough to reassure.

The EU path is badly damaged. Kosovo's internal politics remain divisive, reform credibility weakens, and the membership application remains stuck. The Growth Plan loses transformative force because implementation is poor and because the wider political context is hostile. Kosovo continues to proclaim its European future, but in practice, the gap between aspiration and movement becomes glaring.

The dialogue with Serbia is the area where deterioration is most visible and increasingly becomes an arena for managing instability.

The road to 2030

This scenario begins when several smaller warnings are ignored.

Domestic political dysfunction in Kosovo is not repaired but weaponized. Institutional crisis produces not strategic correction but deeper polarization and weaker governance. External partners begin to doubt not Kosovo's orientation, but its capacity.

At the same time, Washington reprioritizes sharply. Even without a formal doctrine of withdrawal, the effect is evident: fewer resources, less attention, more pressure on Europeans to manage the region. Interviewee B's warning that the U.S. may leave a void for Europe to fill becomes reality – but Europe proves unable to fill it coherently (Interviewee B, personal interview, 2026).

This shift changes NATO politics around Kosovo. KFOR remains, but the mission becomes more reactive and politically cautious. Deterrence does not disappear; it becomes less convincing. Actors in the north and in Belgrade test limits more often through hybrid pressure, local mobilization and calibrated brinkmanship.

The EU, meanwhile, reacts as institutions often do under pressure: it narrows ambition. Kosovo's file remains alive, but not advancing. The country is still expected to implement reforms and de-escalate, but receives little in return that alters the underlying blockage. Enlargement energy moves elsewhere or weakens more broadly.

In this environment, the dialogue deteriorates. No side wants a full rupture because the costs are too high. But neither sees incentives for compromise. The process becomes more hostile, more public, more securitized. Every unresolved issue – the Association, church/property arrangements, governance in the north, recognition, international organizations – becomes easier to instrumentalize.

What does this scenario mean

The first effect is on Kosovo's security psychology. The sense that the West will always ultimately step in begins to erode. That does not mean immediate panic. It means more nervous and risk-prone decision-making.

The second effect is diplomatic. Kosovo finds itself increasingly alone in defending positions that once benefited from stronger, more coordinated Western backing. Serbia, by contrast, operates in a looser environment in which obstruction carries fewer costs and ambiguity retains value.

The third effect is domestic. Economic growth slows under the combined pressure of uncertainty, weaker investment sentiment and recurring instability. Emigration rises. Public frustration with

elites deepens. Political discourse radicalizes. In a context like this, even rational policy becomes harder to sustain.

This scenario thus remains a valuable cautionary frame, as it would involve developments such as the erosion of enlargement incentives, growing fatigue with the dialogue process, and the resurgence of nationalist narratives. In such a context, isolated incidents risk becoming routine features of the political landscape rather than exceptions. Importantly, this is not a projection of renewed conflict, but rather a situation in which the informal constraints and stabilizing mechanisms that have so far contained risks in Kosovo begin to visibly weaken.

The value of this scenario is that it forces a difficult recognition. Kosovo's strategic deterioration would not require a single dramatic betrayal by the West. It could emerge through a chain of smaller downgrades, combined with domestic failure to adapt in time.

7. IMPLICATIONS, EARLY WARNING INDICATORS AND CONCLUSION

The four scenarios point to one overarching conclusion: Kosovo's strategic future to 2030 will be shaped less by formal declarations of support than by whether external alignment is converted into institutional traction. Kosovo already has orientation. It needs conversion capacity.

Across all scenarios, five lessons stand out.

FIRST, domestic political functionality is the decisive enabler.

This paper treated institutional stability as a cross-cutting condition rather than as a separate driver, but the scenarios show why it is foundational. In every positive or even moderately positive future, Kosovo first regains the capacity to act as a state: to ratify agreements, implement reforms, maintain policy continuity and communicate strategically with partners. In every negative future, domestic deadlock amplifies external constraints. Interviewee A's warning should therefore be read as a central strategic proposition, not a passing political complaint: without a stable internal environment, external progress is severely limited (Interviewee A, personal interview, 2026).

SECOND, Kosovo should stop treating the four drivers as separate policy silos.

The U.S. file is not only about bilateral diplomacy. It affects NATO credibility and EU political calculations. The EU file is not only about legal accession steps. It shapes reform incentives, investor confidence, and leverage for dialogue. The security file is not only about KFOR troop numbers. It affects the political atmosphere around the dialogue. The dialogue is not only a negotiation process. It conditions almost everything else. A government that manages these tracks separately will underperform in every scenario.

THIRD, staged integration matters for Kosovo.

The best-case future does not require Kosovo to become an EU or NATO member by 2030. It requires Kosovo to become harder to exclude and easier to integrate in practice. The Growth Plan, the Reform Agenda, deeper participation in European and transatlantic security mechanisms, greater access to the single market, and more systematic defense cooperation all matter because they thicken Kosovo's Western embedment.

FOURTH, the biggest strategic danger is prolonged grey-zone normalization.

An acute crisis attracts attention and can trigger external intervention. Prolonged stagnation is more insidious. It normalizes delays, weakens the urgency of reform, and allows others to define Kosovo's ceiling. Scenario III, therefore, deserves as much policy attention as Scenario IV. States rarely slide into their worst futures in a straight line. They usually first settle into bad equilibria.

FIFTH, Kosovo needs a strategic doctrine of preparedness.

The European Commission's idea of "resilience 2.0" – a shift from reactive policy to proactive, anticipatory policy – is directly applicable to Kosovo (European Commission, 2025a). A country with Kosovo's exposure cannot afford a policy made only after the shock.

EARLY WARNING INDICATORS TO WATCH THROUGH 2027–2028

Kosovo's institutions should monitor a small number of concrete indicators that would signal which scenario is becoming more likely:

U.S. posture:

Any decision on KFOR troop reductions, especially by the United States; Frequency and level of strategic U.S.–Kosovo consultations; Whether Kosovo continues to be included in U.S.-backed security initiatives beyond symbolic gestures.

EU accession trajectory:

Whether the Council requests the Commission Opinion on Kosovo's application; Whether Kosovo ratifies and begins implementing the Facility and Loan Agreements tied to the Growth Plan; The pace and credibility of reform delivery in the rule of law, public administration and freedom of expression;

Whether member-state diplomacy shows movement among non-recognizers or, conversely, greater caution among recognizers.

NATO/KFOR:

The political messaging of major troop contributors, not just troop numbers; Expansion or stagnation in Kosovo's practical cooperation with NATO structures; The speed and firmness of NATO responses to incidents in the north.

Normalization Dialogue:

Whether Sebia signs and agrees to implement Agreement on the Path to Normalization; Whether issues affecting Kosovo Serbs are dealt in meaningful and inclusive way by the government.

8. PRIORITY POLICY DIRECTIONS

Based on the scenarios, Kosovo should prioritize the following actions.

1. Restore institutional functionality as a national security task. Institutional deadlock should no longer be treated as normal democratic friction. In Kosovo's case, it directly weakens external leverage. Cross-party agreements on minimum state functionality – budget passage, ratification of international agreements, continuity on EU reforms, and coherent representation in the normalization dialogue, should be pursued as strategic necessities.
2. Build an integrated strategic coordination mechanism around the four drivers. Kosovo should establish a small, permanent inter-institutional strategic cell linking the prime minister's office, the presidency, the foreign ministry, defense and security institutions, EU integration structures, and relevant parliamentary committees. Its purpose would be to align messaging, track indicators, and prepare contingency options rather than react ad hoc.
3. Treat the Growth Plan as a geopolitical instrument, not only a technical programme. Kosovo's Reform Agenda should be moved closer to the center of political decision-making. Delivery under the Facility is one of the few areas where Kosovo can generate visible progress even under current political constraints stemming from EU non-recognizers. Failure to implement it would strengthen every argument for EU caution.
4. Reframe the dialogue around strategic reciprocity and domestic integration. Kosovo should develop a clearer doctrine for what it wants the dialogue to produce by 2030 if full recognition remains out of reach. That doctrine should combine two tracks: deeper domestic engagent with Kosovo Serbs on governance and public services, and a harder insistence that external concessions generate corresponding gains in Kosovo's international and sovereign position.
5. Deepen practical security integration even without immediate membership prospects. Kosovo should expand bilateral defense cooperation, interoperability, resilience exercises, cyber cooperation, and civil preparedness. The aim should be to narrow the security gap even if formal NATO pathways remain politically blocked.
6. Re-service the U.S. relationship through relevance, not sentiment. Historical affinity remains important, but Kosovo should increasingly demonstrate operational relevance through defense cooperation, contributions to multinational missions, and disciplined strategic communication. The partnership will matter most in a world where Washington triages commitments.
7. Engage EU capitals. Kosovo needs a capital-by-capital approach inside the EU. The diplomatic strategy for Spain or Slovakia cannot be the same as for Germany, Italy, or France. Nor should Kosovo neglect skeptical recognizers. More surgical diplomacy is essential.
8. Institutionalize foresight. Scenario planning should not end with this paper. Kosovo's institutions should adopt an annual foresight review on the Western environment, combining political, economic, and security indicators. Preparedness improves when uncertainty is made discussable before it becomes destabilizing.

Kosovo's path to 2030 will not be decided by optimism or pessimism. It will be decided by whether the state acts as if uncertainty is now the normal condition of its strategic environment.

The encouraging truth is that Kosovo still has real agency. It has a pro-Western consensus, valuable international partnerships, a functioning – if strained – security umbrella, and access to

European instruments that previous governments did not have. The harder truth is that none of these advantages is self-activating. They need state capacity, strategic discipline and political seriousness.

The question for Kosovo, then, is not whether the next four years will be easy. They will not. The question is whether the country uses them to lock itself more deeply into the West, or whether it drifts long enough for others to define the limits of its future. That is the strategic choice at the heart of Kosovo 2030.

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Established in April 2008, the Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS) is a specialized, independent, and non-governmental organization. The primary goal of KCSS is to promote the democratization of the security sector in Kosovo and to improve research and advocacy work related to security, the rule of law, and regional and international cooperation in the field of security.

KCSS aims to enhance the effectiveness of the Security Sector Reform (SSR) by supporting SSR programs through its research, events, training, advocacy, and direct policy advice.

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