



The Costs of Kosovo's Political Polarisation on Foreign Policy

Every domestic political crisis carries an external cost — and Kosovo's institutional paralysis is quietly weakening its case abroad.



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Kosovo's political polarisation is becoming a foreign policy liability. After months of electoral blockade, the country remains without a fully functioning government. Failed parliamentary sessions have been unable to break this political blockage, leaving institutions unable to move forward. While much of the public debate has focused on the domestic consequences of this impasse, foreign policy costs have received less attention, despite geopolitical uncertainties. This political polarisation is not simply undermining domestic governance, it also is a diplomatic liability, as Kosovo's strategic future relies on international partnerships, weakening Kosovo's credibility abroad.

Political polarisation is often treated as an inevitable feature of democratic politics, yet its costs go well beyond domestic governance. For Kosovo, every domestic political crisis has an external dimension, as its international position

continues to depend on the support of its allies.

Effective institutions and political stability are not merely a domestic concern, they are also a source of international credibility. Stability, reliability and capability of implementing commitments are essential compounds to build on allyship. Allies are more willing to invest political capital in countries they perceive as stable. Prolonged institutional paralysis raises questions about how Kosovo expects to persuade partners that it is ready for greater international responsibility while struggling to constitute its own institutions. This is significant because Kosovo's foreign policy cannot afford to stay paralysed. Unlike most European states, Kosovo's diplomacy continues to seek broader international recognition and integration with the European Union and NATO. An unformed government can maintain a day to day administration, but it cannot provide the political strategy that Kosovo's foreign policy demands.

"Polarisation brings instability. This can make Kosovo seen as a weak state, unable to overpass a political crisis."

Kosovo's political polarisation and divisions can also have external consequences. While political competition is a feature of any democracy, this prolonged institutional dysfunction shapes how the country is perceived abroad. Abroad, this has consequences. Serbia has consistently sought to portray Kosovo as an unstable and incomplete state. When Kosovo's political institutions remain unable to function effectively for months, such narratives become easier to sustain. Every sign of political instability allows to reinforce the argument against Kosovo's further international integration.

That counts for the European Union as well. The EU evaluates candidate countries not only on legislative reforms, but also on political reliability and institutional resilience. Democratic disagreements are expected, institutional paralysis is not. The EU's process of enlargement depends on trust that future

members can govern effectively, implement long-term commitments and maintain political stability. The polarisation and division of Kosovo's politics risks sending the opposite message. At a critical geopolitical moment when European security is being challenged by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, EU enlargement has regained strategic importance and Kosovo should demonstrate political maturity rather than institutional fragility. Kosovo needs strong institutions that are prepared to face any foreign policy obstacle and continue the process of Kosovo's integration within the international system.

Politicians in Kosovo frequently speak of the country's European features, as most parties are not separated by major ideological differences, especially regarding EU and NATO integration, which they all support. Those aspirations remain achievable but they cannot be realised through diplomacy alone. Foreign policy is not conducted only in Brussels or Washington DC, but is shaped everyday in Prishtina. If Kosovo wants to strengthen its allyships and move closer to the EU and NATO it must first demonstrate that its democratic institutions can function adequately and effectively.



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Eva Gjakova is an International Relations student at King's College London with a particular interest in foreign policy and global security. She was elected President of the Albanian society at King's College and currently serves as Speaker Relations Director for the Foreign Policy society, where she organises and moderates events with diplomats and experts for the university. Alongside her studies, Eva is an intern for the Atlantic Council UK where she contributes research on Euro-Atlantic relations and EU integration.

Published with the support of



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