

The OSCE Kosovo Verification mission (KVM) was established in October 1998, in order to verify the compliance with the UN Security Council Resolutions relevant to the Kosovo conflict. The breakdown of the peace process in March 1999, led to the withdrawal of the mission and painted it as a failure. It is surprising, how many authors speak about a failure of the KVM, while giving no reasonable argumentation. This study will try to show, that this negative assessment is largely a product of misinterpretation of the KVM's mandate and misunderstanding of the very purpose of verification (observation) missions. It was not the task of the KVM to prevent the ceasefire violations, neither to provide a peaceful solution to the conflict. It was to verify (observe) the compliance with the UN Security Council Resolutions. Verification (observation) missions do not seek any concrete achievements (mission goals; as e.g. peacekeeping or peace enforcement missions), their "goal" is their performance. They are to report the compliance with the agreements, but however, the development of the situation is not supposed to be in their hands. Therefore, it is inappropriate to speak about successes or failures of these missions, but rather about effectiveness of their performance. Escalation of violence was a primary strategic goal of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in order to undermine the ongoing peace process and achieve international military intervention, which they saw as the only way to independence. The unarmed KVM could do little or nothing to stop or prevent it. Wrong timing, insufficient staffing and deteriorating security conditions together with complete absence of enforcement measures were to large extent preventing the verifiers to perform its duties. Though, the mission had achieved considerable achievements mainly in keeping the ceasefire through brokering numerous small-scale disputes and thus acquiring necessary time for the peace process.