

Kosovo After the 2025 Parliamentary Elections – Back to political uncertainty

Executive Summary:

- Kosovo has a history of unstable parliamentary politics before the 2021 elections. After a relatively calm 4-year period it is now set to return to instability in lieu of a stable majority.
- Electoral campaigns were marked by a focus on the Dialogue with Serbia, the economy and on energy issues. Both the campaign period and the elections were held in a regular manner and were praised by international observers. However, observers have pointed out interference from former US envoy Richard Grenell and the Serbian state.
- Albin Kurti's party Vetëvendosje (LVV) has come first by a wide margin with more than 40% of votes, but it lost its absolute majority. Therefore, it won the election but lost the self-proclaimed referendum.
- Both the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) and the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) have substantially increased their share of votes compared to the last elections, and a united opposition could form a government if LVV fails to. However, Nisma has signaled readiness to collaborate with LVV while LDK has already signaled its willingness to remain in opposition.
- This election marks the end of the boycott of Kosovo's parliament by Srpska Lista (SL). Furthermore, the hitherto political monopoly of SL on the Serbian community in the country has been broken by the entry of one MP from another Serb party, Za slobodu, pravdu i opstanak (ZSPO), to the assembly.
- The following weeks are likely to see maneuvers by both sides in a bid to form a government. There are three possible scenarios: 1) Kurti's LVV will form a government (Kurti 3) with new smaller allies, 2) a government formed by a united opposition, 3) a "Grand coalition" between LVV and either PDK or LDK.
- Proportional representative democracies require many compromises to function, something which Kosovar politicians are yet to master. Based on the election results and the ensuing coalition options, the country is set to experience a turbulent period.

Besar Gërgi

Group for Legal and
Political Studies

Besar Gërgi is a research fellow at the Group for Legal and Political Studies. His area of interest include European integration, foreign policy and international relations in general. As a research fellow at GLPS he has published articles on the European integration of the Western Balkans region, the dialogue process between Kosovo and Serbia and foreign influences in the region. He has previously worked for the Office of the Prime Minister and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora of Kosovo. His education includes a Master in European Studies from KU Leuven and a bachelor degree in Public Policy and Economics from RIT Kosovo campus.

Contact:

[besar.gergi@
legalpoliticalstudies.org](mailto:besar.gergi@legalpoliticalstudies.org)

Introduction and Context

The electoral politics of post-liberation Kosovo can best be described in one word: instability. Between 2001, when the first parliamentary elections were held, and 2021, the Kosovar electorate went to parliamentary elections eight times – on average, once every two-and-a-half years.¹ None of the governments finished their full 4-year mandate as foreseen by the constitution in lieu of stable majorities. Even when the governments barely survived motions of no confidence, they did not possess stable majorities in the parliament to pass laws. Although this frequency of elections is not unprecedented in the West, it has frequently raised eyebrows amongst both politicians and investors and in this way negatively affected economic growth. At one point in 2014, the country did not have a functional government for a full 184 days, a record surpassed since only by Belgium's infamously fragmented politics.²

Nonetheless, the 2021 election marked a decisive turn away from this political indecisiveness. In an unprecedented victory in its scale, Albin Kurti's Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE! (LVV) in coalition with several smaller parties gained 50.3% of the electorate and acquired a mandate to form the new government (Kurti 2).^{3,4} Ever since, despite some defections, the Kurti 2 government enjoyed a comfortable margin in the assembly.

However, that does not mean that everything went favorably for the Kurti 2 government – it was confronted with both external and internal pressures and challenges. Shortly after taking office in March 2021, a global disruption in supply chains as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a high inflation rate that rocked the Kosovar economy which already had one of the lowest purchasing power in Europe.⁵ With Kurti barely a year in office, Russia started the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 that exacer-

bated economic problems but also rekindled security concerns in the Western Balkans. In the international arena, while the grossly belated visa liberalization finally materialized during the Kurti 2 government, Kosovo failed to attain membership in the Council of Europe and candidate status for EU membership. The difficult normalization process with Serbia still hangs as a Damocles' sword over any international aspiration of Kosovo. Although a landslide agreement was achieved in Ohrid in 2023 on this issue, implementation has lagged far behind and any type of normal relationship with Serbia seems more impossible than ever, especially considering more recent events in Northern Kosovo such as the crisis surrounding boycotted local election, the Banjska attack, as well as the closure of Serbian-run institutions throughout the country.

Electoral Campaign and Topics of Discussion

The electoral campaign started in a conspicuously less enthusiastic manner compared to the previous elections. This may be attributed to a broader trend of the normalization of the political life in Kosovo, but also a loss of interest among the population compared to the 2021 elections. The 2025 election was marked by a campaign of the ruling party that was labeled self-sabotage by some observers.⁶ LVV prepared a belated manifesto that may be considered a ragtag group of half-baked promises. The boycotting of several media outlets by the government added to the worries about the state of democracy in the country.⁷ To top it all, Kurti's unconventional speeches with deepening voice and gaffes raised eyebrows.⁸

1 Zëri (August 2019). Gjashtë kryeministral e Kosovës, asnjëri nuk e përfundoi mandatin (Six Prime Ministers of Kosovo, none of them finished their mandate). Accessed 10.02.2025. <https://zeri.info/aktuale/282488/gjashte-kryeministral-e-kosoves-asnjeri-nuk-e-perfundoi-mandatin/>

2 *Telegrafi* (2014). Këto janë ngjarjet kryesore politike të Kosovës në vitin 2014 (These are the main political developments of 2014 in Kosovo). Accessed 08.02.2025. <https://telegafi.com/keto-jane-ngjarjet-kryesore-politike-te-kosoves-ne-vitin-2014/>

3 *Radio Free Europe* (2021). Votohet Qeveria Kurti 2 (Kurti 2 Government is voted). Accessed 07.02.2025. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/konstituimi-kuvendi-i-kosoves-/31162451.html>

4 The preceding Kurti 1 government in 2020 managed to survive only 50 days. It was voted out of office in a motion of no confidence with the heavy pressure of the then US presidential envoy Richard Grenell. See: *Radio Free Europe* (2020). Kosovo's Kurti Accuses U.S. Envoy Of 'Direct Involvement' In Collapse Of His Government. Accessed 21.02.2025. <https://www.rferl.org/a/kurti-accuses-us-envoy-of-direct-involvement-in-his-government-collapse/30566615.html>

5 *IMF* (2025). GDP per capita, current prices. Accessed 11.02.2025. <https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDPDPC@WE0/UVK/EURO/EU>

6 *Klan Kosovo* (2025). Sejdiu: Kurti nuk do me fitu në këto zgjedhje (Sejdiu: Kurti does not want to win these elections). Accessed 02.02.2025. <https://klankosova.tv/sejdiu-kurti-nuk-do-me-fitu-ne-keto-zgjedhje-po-flet-me-paramendim-per-ti-humbur-votat-video/>

7 *Radio Free Europe* (2025). Paralajmërimi për bojkot të disa mediave nga LVV-ja shihet si sulm ndaj gazetarëve (LVV's warning to boycott some media outlets is seen as an attack on journalists.) Accessed 19.02.2025. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/bojkoti-levizja-vetevendosje-agk-/33269876.html>

8 *Xhemajl, R.* (2025). Diçka seriozisht nuk është në rregull këtu (Something is seriously wrong here!). Accessed 02.02.2025. https://x.com/xhemajl_rexha/status/1881079337769918787

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Party Name/Acronym	English translation	Abbreviation original
Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!	Self-Determination Movement	LVV
Partia Demokratike e Kosovës	Democratic Party of Kosovo	PDK
Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës	Democratic League of Kosovo	LDK
Aleanca për Ardhmërinë e Kosovës & Nisma Social Demokrate	Alliance for the Future of Kosovo & Social Democratic Initiative	AAK & Nisma
Srpska Lista	Serbian List	LS
Za slobodu, pravdu i opstanak	For Freedom, Justice and Survival	ZSPO

The following issues received the most attention in the manifestos and rallies of the parties:

Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue: since the Russian invasion of Ukraine started, stabilizing the European geopolitical sphere has been one of the top priorities on both sides of the Atlantic. This international momentum resulted in the Ohrid Agreement between Kosovo and Serbia (2023) which was supposed to result in Serbia de facto recognizing Kosovo's independence and the latter establishing the now (in)famous Association of the Serbian Majority Municipalities (ASMM). Since then, normalization and the eradication of the Serbian state structures and rule of law in the northern part of the country has been the most contested issue.

The ruling LVV has built a public image as a tough negotiator in Brussels and an enforcer of the rule of law in Northern Kosovo. Going into the elections this was one of the most repeated points on their agenda. Defending cardinal national interests and the indefinite delay of the ASMM (against international pressure) was the unofficial position of LVV in this electoral campaign. On the other hand, the opposition parties criticized Kurti for the international condemnation that his government's actions have drawn and accused the government of isolating Kosovo internationally. From the opposition, LDK promised to review the draft statute of the ASMM, while AAK promised to send the draft to the Constitu-

tional Court. PDK, on the other hand, has only implicitly signaled readiness to adhere to the Ohrid Accords' obligations for the Kosovar state.⁹

Kosovo's difficult relationship with Serbia has also affected its ties with the Western partners. In general, the intransigent tone adopted in Prishtina vis-à-vis Belgrade was not appreciated. The police actions in the north of the country have alienated allies to the point where the then US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken condemned the Kosovar government.¹⁰ On the other hand, the European Union has introduced "reversible measures" against Kosovo that have cost the country millions.¹¹ Most recently, former US representative Richard Grenell broke diplomatic protocols by almost calling the Kosovar voters to vote against Kurti's party.¹² Hence, LVV's hardball negotiation tactics with Serbia have drawn international criticism, while at the same time they garnered genuine popularity amongst a good part of the electorate.

Economy: As the second poorest country in Europe, only ahead of war-torn Ukraine,¹³ one of the main issues of the campaign was the economic development of Kosovo. Although the unemployment rate has recently fallen to 10.9%, it still remains high compared to developed countries.¹⁴ The ruling party could boast an average 6% of economic growth during its mandate, a budget increased by 50%, a more robust social policy,

9 Radio Free Europe (2025). Asociacioni, dialogu... kush çka do të bëjë? (Association, Dialogue... Who will do what?). Accessed 03.02.2025. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/kandidatet-per-kryeminister-temat-kryesore-/33274374.html>

10 Reuters (2023). Top US diplomat condemns Kosovo after clashes in majority-Serb town. Accessed 24.02.2025. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/top-us-diplomat-condemns-kosovo-after-clashes-majority-serb-town-2023-05-26/>

11 Gergi, B. (2024). The One Year Anniversary of EU Measures against Kosovo June 14, 2024. Group for Legal and Political Studies. Accessed 24.02.2025. <https://legalpoliticalstudies.org/the-one-year-anniversary-of-eu-measures-against-kosova/>

12 Bejdo, R. (2025). Grenell hits Kurti: Unreliable partner, internationals don't like him. A2 CNN. Accessed 24.02.2025. <https://a2news.com/english/rajoni-bota/kosova/politike/grenell-godet-kurtin-partner-jo-i-besueshem-nderkomb-i1139497>

13 IMF (2025).

14 Hodo, G. (2024). Kosovo's unemployment falls to 10.9% in 2023. SeeNews. Accessed 24.02.2025. <https://seenews.com/news/kosovos-unemployment-falls-to-10-9-percent-in-2023-1261088>

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and an increase in foreign direct investment.¹⁵ However, opposition parties pointed out that after a post-pandemic boom, economic growth has returned to a modest 3–4% rate, public investment has declined sharply, and the country has witnessed a record high inflation.¹⁶

LVV promised to continue its economic policies of fairer redistribution supplemented with a larger economic activity. The opposition LDK promised in a detailed plan of economic policies to increase wages in the public sector, to promote privatization of state-owned assets, and to provide EUR 1.5 billion in investments to achieve a 5% increase in economic growth, and a budget of EUR 5 billion.¹⁷ Increase in public sector wages was also promised by PDK, alongside tax reductions and investments in public infrastructure.¹⁸ Interestingly, all leftist, rightist, and centrist parties promised an expansion of social spending.

Energy: for years the energy sector was overlooked by preceding Kosovar governments. Despite having one of the largest coal reserves in Europe, the country has for years relied on outdated power plants and expensive imports to fuel its energetic needs. Recently, the energetic crisis exacerbated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the subsequent shortages and price increases internationally have resulted in power outages across the country that have caused uproar amongst the population and imposed itself as an immediate problem. The government's refusal to build a new natural gas-powered plant has proven to be controversial, especially given that it was proposed by the US government.¹⁹

LVV's government's Energy Strategy 2022–2031 distanced itself from coal-produced energy in favor of utilizing renewable energy resources (RES), with an ambitious target of 1,600 MW of RES capacity by 2031 and it has stuck by it in the campaign too.²⁰ LDK's program foresaw the building of a gas plant with a generation capacity of 500 MW combined with the central heating of homes with gas. PDK promised to build a new

1,000 MW of energy generation, without specifying the type of sources to be used, but also favoring RES.²¹ AAK on the other hand has promised a liberal policy of licenses for new hydro plants.²²

Main Figures: Personalities vs. Policies

Although these were some of the most important issues for the Kosovar electorate, unquestionably the leaders' personalities also play a large role in elections. By far the most consequential of all the figures running for office stands **Albin Kurti**. A student leader and a political prisoner of the Milošević regime turned into a politician, Kurti swept the 2021 elections in an unprecedented landslide. Riding a popular wave by promising a ruthless anti-corruption fight and economic development, he has since taken a tough stance in the normalization process with Serbia and has not hesitated to confront even his Western allies to this end. However, his term was rocked by a record-breaking cost-of-living crisis and international pressure over the issues deriving from the Dialogue. By his own definition, these elections served as a referendum on Kurti's sovereigntist agenda.²³

PDK's candidate for prime minister is **Bedri Hamza**. The current mayor of South Mitrovica, former minister of finance, and former governor of the Central Bank, Hamza was presented as an experienced technocrat to contrast Kurti's relatively young and inexperienced government. Decapitated by the on-going trial against its historic leaders, PDK had reluctantly elected Memli Krasniqi as a placeholder in the office of party chair. However, the party's leadership has chosen Hamza over Krasniqi to run for the premiership which is a rare occurrence in Kosovo's politics where personal egos often matter more than party policies. PDK had secured the second place in the 2021 election (with 17% percent of votes) and its main goal this time was to defend its place and increase its voter base.

15 *Klan Kosovo* (2025). Kurti krekoset për rritje ekonomike (Kurti boasts economic growth). Accessed 03.02.2025.

<https://klankosova.tv/kurti-krekoset-per-rritje-ekonomike-ky-vit-do-te-hyje-ne-historine-ekonomike-te-kosoves/>

16 *Albinfo* (2023). Opozita kritikon Qeverinë e Kosovës për buxhetin 2024, nuk shohin rritje (The Opposition criticizes the government of Kosovo on the budget of 2024, they don't see growth.) Accessed 07.02.2025.

<https://www.albinfo.ch/opozita-kritikon-qeverine-e-kosoves-per-buxhetin-2024-nuk-shohin-rritje/>

17 *LDK* (2024). PROGRAMI POLITIK I LIDHJES DEMOKRATIKE TË KOSOVËS (The Manifesto of LDK). Accessed 01.02.2025.

https://lidhjademokratike.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Rruga-e-Re_Programi_Web.pdf

18 *PDK* (2025). Programi Zgjedhor 2025 (The Manifesto 2025). Accessed 01.02.2025. <https://bedrihamza.info/programizgjedhor>

19 *Hysenaj, Sh.* (2021). Kosovo mund të përfundojë e vetmja në rajon pa qasje në gaz (Kosovo may end up as the only country in the region without access to natural gas). Accessed 05.02.2025. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/kosova-qasja-ne-gaz-natyror-/31501870.html>

20 *Ministry of Economy* (2022). Energy Strategy of the Republic of Kosovo. Accessed 01.02.2025.

<https://me.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Energy-Strategy-of-the-Republic-of-Kosovo-2022-2031-1-1.pdf>

21 *PDK* (2025).

22 *Kastrati, D.* (2025). Premtimet e AAK-së për energji (AAK's electoral promises on Energy). Kallxo. Accessed 04.02.2025.

<https://kallxo.com/lajm/premtimet-e-aak-se-per-energji-bujqesi-dhe-ambient/>

23 *Xhema, Sh.* (2025). Kurti nga Deçani: Më 9 shkurt ka referendum (On 9th of February there is a referendum). Accessed 30.01.2025. Kallxo.

<https://kallxo.com/lajm/kurti-nga-decani-me-9-shkurt-ka-referendum-me-te-cilin-vleresohet-puna-jone/>

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After the humiliating defeat of 2021 (with only 12% of votes), LDK elected a new leader and went through a deep reform and public relations campaign. **Lumir Abdixhiku** replaced former-communist-turned-conservative Isa Mustafa and since has purged the party of some of the old guard deemed by many as a net liability to the party. The electorate seems to appreciate these changes as LDK won the largest share of municipalities in the succeeding local elections of 2021.²⁴ As a British-educated professor of economics and with a new team of young and vibrant politicians, Abdixhiku aimed to undo the damage of 2021 elections and if not outright win, at least overtake PDK as the second strongest party. The newfound party discipline is evidenced also by the fact that LDK was the only party to have entered this election cycle with a well-elaborated manifesto.

AAK's eternal candidate for this and any other election is **Ramush Haradinaj**. As a former commander of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and one-time prime minister from 2017–2020, Haradinaj is the longest-serving political figure of all candidates. With a consistent support base in the western region of Dukagjini, AAK has managed to impose itself into national politics and even play a pivotal role in the 2017 election when Haradinaj was elected prime minister. However, lacking new figures and energies, AAK has failed to appeal to a larger voter base and has resorted to building a pre-election coalition with the Social Democratic Initiative (Nisma) for the current election to pass the electoral threshold of 5%.

The Serbian List (SL) has done what many thought unimaginable and changed its leadership after the fiasco of the Banjska terrorist attack which was organized by its then vice-president Milan Radoičić. Its new leader, **Zlatan Elek**, is a well-respected doctor in the North Mitrovica hospital.²⁵ His appointment was meant to appeal to the dissatisfied Serb voters who were disillusioned with the former representatives considered by many as out of touch with the daily struggles of the people. Since its formation, SL had continuously managed to secure all 10 seats reserved for the Serb minority in Kosovo's parliament, often winning a surreal 90% of votes. However, this time around the dissatisfaction of the electorate resulted in a number of Kosovar Serb parties running for office, including Nenad Rašić's *Za Slobodu Pravdu i Opstanak* (ZSPO) which has won one mandate, in this way enriching the political choices of this community.

In this context, Kurti and Haradinaj emerged as the longest-running politicians. By contrast, this was Hamza's and Abdixhiku's first time running for premier-ship after both of them having served as ministers. Among the Serb community, Elek also ran in the elections for the first time. In a similar tone to the last election, this election served as a referendum for Kurti's sovereigntist agenda. With modest results in the economic field and on justice reforms, Kurti's strongest electoral cards were the rule of law in the north and an uncompromising stance in the Dialogue. That, however, has come at a price of alienating Kosovo's Western allies.

Kosovo's Sophisticated Parliamentary Mathematics

Kosovo's parliament has 120 seats and a simple majority of 61 votes is enough to form a government. However, 20 seats are allocated for the non-majority communities with 10 seats dedicated to Serbs and 10 to other communities. Combined with that, a constitutional prerequisite of a super-majority for changing essential laws (majority of the total votes plus majority of non-majority communities MPs), effectively makes coalitions unavoidable. Albanian parties run for 100 seats but seek a majority amongst 120 MPs and also need the votes of minorities – Serbs more specifically – to change any vital law. This system was designed this way on purpose to foster interethnic cooperation in governance. Consequently, MPs from non-majority communities have been part of the ruling coalitions since the first elections. This meant that traditionally an Albanian party seeking government needed to secure 41 seats as the other 20 MPs from the non-majority communities usually went along with the winner.

Nonetheless, Kurti shattered the convention on this principle as well. Given his intransigent position towards Serbia and the near monopoly of political power imposed on Kosovar Serbs by Belgrade, Srpska Lista has not only not joined Kurti's coalition, it has also refused any sort of cooperation, even going as far as boycotting the work of parliament. While this has gained popularity for LVV, it has also resulted in a higher threshold of 51 seats required to form a government with non-Serb minority MPs. Therefore, the real question of this election was not whether LVV will win, but rather if it will win fewer than 51 seats, which would force a coalition with

24 *Botasot* (2021). LDK fiton më së shumti komuna (LDK wins the most municipalities). Accessed 29.01.2025.

<https://www.botasot.info/aktuale-lajme/778354/ldk-fiton-me-se-shumti-komuna-ja-sa-vota-ka-me-shume-se-vv-e-pdk/>

25 *Jeremic*, H. (2023). Hirurg koji se prihvatio politike: Ko je Zlatan Elek, novi predsednik Srpske liste? (A surgeon who took up politics: Who is Zlatan Elek, the new president of the Serbian List). Accessed 19.02.2025.

<https://www.danas.rs/vesti/drustvo/ko-je-zlatan-elek-biografija-hirurg-koji-se-prihvatio-politike-novi-predsednik-srpske-liste/>

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another major Albanian party, hence a recreation of Kurti 1, or acquire 51+ seats that would allow a configuration similar to Kurti 2 with an absolute majority.

The Organization of Elections and the Counting Procedure

The voter turnout in the 2025 election was decidedly lower than in 2021: Only 40.4% of the voters showed up to the polls compared to the last time's record high of 48%.²⁶ In absolute numbers, roughly 800,000 people chose to exercise their right to vote this time around, compared to 903,000 in the previous cycle. On the other hand, the diaspora's turnout witnessed an increase from 57,065 to 86,064 because of the new electoral law that allowed voting in Kosovo's embassies abroad for the first time since independence.²⁷ The decrease in the participation rate indicates dissatisfaction with the governing party on the one hand, and distrust in the alternatives that the opposition provides on the other hand.

Nonetheless, the whole campaign process and elections themselves were held in an orderly manner.²⁸ The only lamentable aspect about the elections was the very slow pace of the counting of the votes, which took a few hours in the previous elections and is still ongoing at the time of writing this article (end of February 2025). A cyber-attack on the webpage of the Central Election Committee further compromised the credibility of the results presented.²⁹

Nonetheless, Kosovo remains one of the few countries in the region where media is not controlled by the government, the opposition has a fair chance to run and win the elections, every side accepts the results as legitimate, and no violence or demonstrations has followed the publication of results. Despite its flaws, the state of democracy in the country is therefore overall healthy and this points to a general acceptance of liberal democratic principles amongst both policy makers and the population.

Discussion of Results – No Clear Winner, No Clear Loser

This election cycle has produced probably one of the most puzzling results in the electoral history of the country. On the one hand, the closest party to being a winner is LVV. This anti-establishment movement has gone head-to-head with the international community, the political scene, the business and media elite, and virtually any other power structure in the country and yet has emerged victorious, gathering 40.9% of the votes, which places it far ahead of other competitors. Yet, paradoxically, the closest there is to a loser of this election is also LVV for by Kurti's own definition, it has lost the self-proclaimed popular referendum. Therefore, it has experienced a decrease in voter share compared to 2021, when it gained 50.3% of the total votes, translating into 58 mandates. In this election, LVV is expected to receive at least 47 seats (down from 58 in 2021), which may increase after the diaspora votes have been counted. Composing roughly a tenth of the voting body, the diaspora communities have in the last election cycle voted for LVV with a margin reaching 80%.³⁰ However, Kurti's party is unlikely to acquire more than 49 seats after every single vote has been counted.

Usually, the momentum for anti-establishment movements, such as LVV, is built in the opposition when they can provide a scathing critique of the government and its policies – something which LVV has done well in the past. Yet, very few of these movements actually survive a mandate in government, when they are forced to find and implement solutions for hitherto critiques. By confronting almost anyone with any sort of experience in governance, they are left out to govern with inexperienced people who cannot deliver services to citizens effectively, hence, disappointing the electorate. A very good example of this phenomenon is the Five Star Movement's momentous rise and fall in Italian politics.³¹ The movement underwent a continued increase in supporter base while in opposition but fell sharply after a mandate in government. Based on this principle, it was expected that LVV would lose some electoral support it attained in 2021 and has reasons to be both happy but also disappointed with the current results.

26 Central Election Committee (2025). Results. Accessed 10.02.2025. <https://rezultatet.kqz-ks.org/>

27 Radio Free Europe (2025). Si ka votuar diaspora në të kaluarën? (How has the diaspora voted in the past). Accessed 19.02.2025. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/si-ka-votuar-diaspora-ne-te-kaluaren/33311044.html>

28 AP (2025). EU observers hail Kosovo's peaceful election but criticize the polarization of political debate. Accessed 15.02.2025. <https://apnews.com/article/kosovo-parliamentary-election-serbia-eu-observers-4484282189c2e52a6f97658d194e4880>

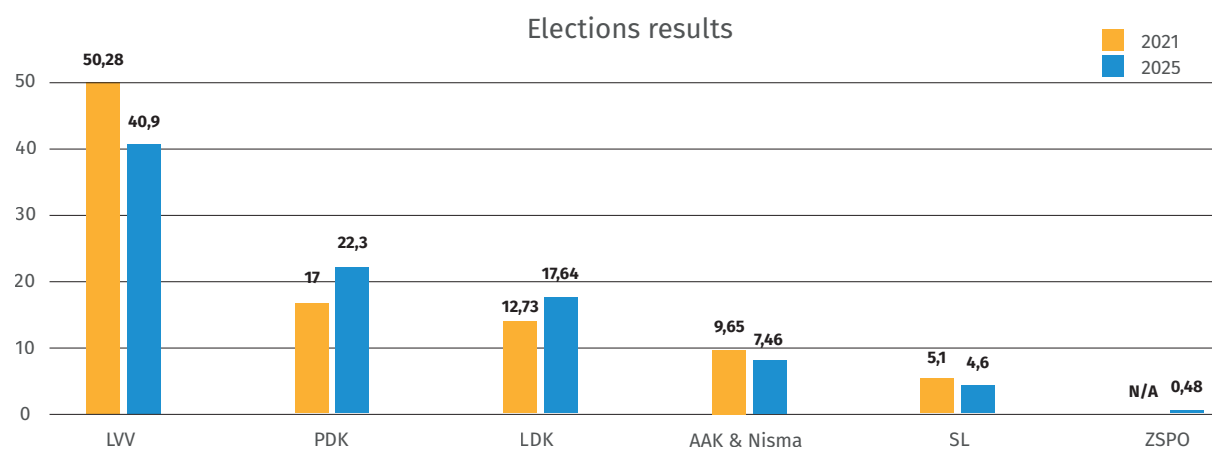
29 Cubolli, K. (2025). Çka e gjeti KQZ-në? (What happened to CEC?) Radio Free Europe. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/cka-gjeti-kqz/33313444.html>

30 Radio Free Europe (2025).

31 Bull, M. (2022). Whatever happened to the Italian Five Star Movement? European Consortium for Political Research. Accessed 03.02.2025. <https://theloop.ecpr.eu/whatever-happened-to-the-italian-five-star-movement/>

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Figure 1: Electoral results of the parliamentary parties in 2021 and 2025



Source: Central Election Committee (See footnote 26).

As to the other parties, PDK has managed to defend its second place by gaining roughly 22% of the votes. Compared to the 2021 elections, it has increased its share by around 5 percentage points. This can be interpreted as a solid victory for Bedri Hamza as not only has he defended the party's traditional strongholds in the Drenica region, but he has managed to expand his votes by a third primarily into rural areas disappointed by LVV. By denying Kurti a chance to unilaterally form a government, Hamza at the head of opposition emerges as one of the biggest winners of these elections. Although the following weeks have many mysteries, one fact that is known for sure is that Kurti does not have the dominance in the assembly that he used to have. However, PDK is still stuck in the second position and LVV has almost twice as many mandates. Hence, while the PDK has reasons to celebrate, it should not get comfortable with the modest success.

However, PDK was not the only party to significantly expand its votes. Abdixhiku's LDK has also increased its share of the electorate by around 5 percentage points, achieving 17.7% of the votes compared to 2021's worst result of 12.7%. Hence, at first glance, Abdixhiku's painful reforms on the party paid off since it has experienced, proportionally, the largest increase in votes of all parties. However, LDK has underperformed expectations as exit polls showed it in a virtual tie with PDK. Although the party has managed to recover votes in some urban areas such as Prishtina, it has failed to reach out to other important cities such as Prizren, where it gathered only a tenth of the vote.³² In other former strongholds

such as Istog, Kurti's disillusioned voters have resorted to not participating in elections instead of returning to LDK, resulting in one of the lowest participation rates in the whole country.³³ Therefore, Abdixhiku also emerges as a juxtaposition of both a winner and a loser and will now have to convince his party members for their continued support for his platform.

Another surprise of this election cycle came from the AAK & Nisma coalition. In 2021 the two parties ran separately resulting in the former winning 7.1% of the votes and the latter 2.5%, which left Nisma outside of parliament. The expectations from this election were that a coalition of similar-minded parties, combined with the decrease of LVV would increase the share, potentially winning a tenth of the electorate. However, the coalition managed to earn only about 7.5% of the votes, meaning that in all likelihood AAK alone could not have even passed the threshold of 5% to enter parliament. This makes for the worst result in the history of AAK, putting its future as a sustainable political party in question. However, Haradinaj has not hesitated to declare victory as part of the opposition and has called for the creation of a new government.³⁴

February 9, 2025 was also a bad night for Serbian List's Zlatan Elek. Compared to the last election's result of 5.1% of votes, this time around SL managed to gather 4.6% of the total votes, a substantial decrease. Civil society in Serbian-speaking zones had for long warned that SL had lost credibility after the Banjska terrorist attack and the massive resignation campaign and this

³² Central Election Committee (2025).

³³ Central Election Committee (2025).

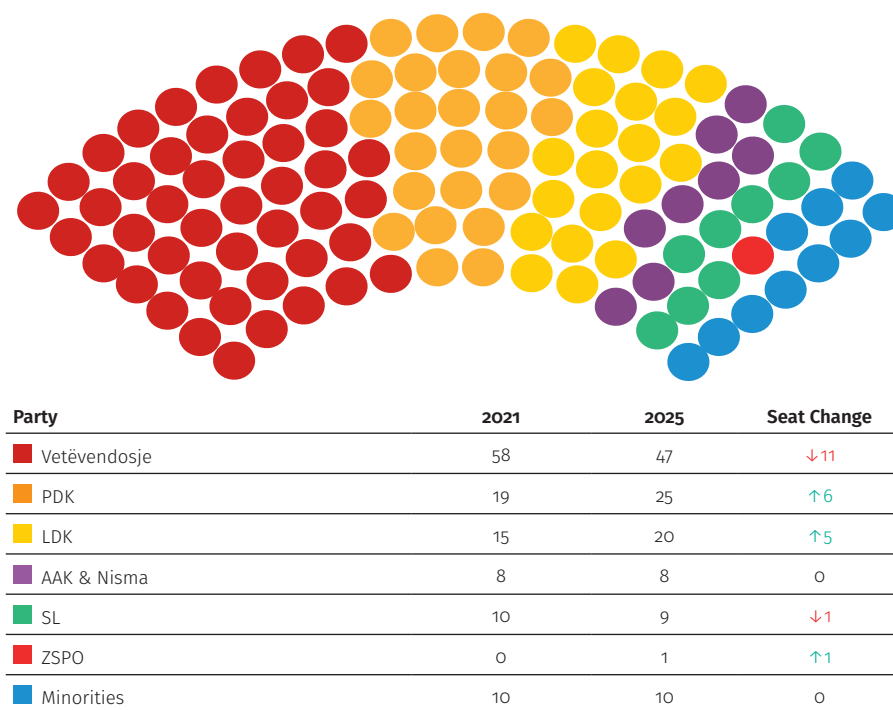
³⁴ Jakupi, I. (2025). Haradinaj: We are certain that we will have double-digit results. Telegraf. Accessed 10.02.2025. <https://www.telegraf.com/en/Haradinaj%2C-we-are-sure-that-we-will-have-double-digit-results%2C-we-expect-an-opposition-government/>

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result proved them right.³⁵ Regardless, Belgrade’s backing and potential coercion were enough to secure 9 out of 10 reserved seats for the Serb community. The other seat was secured by Nenad Rašić, who acted as Minister for Communities and Return in the Kurti 2 government, in what may be considered a victory for political plural-

ity amongst the Serb community. Additionally, the vocal activist Aleksandar Arsenijević’s Srpska Demokratija gathered more than 3,075 votes (equalling 0.37%), thereby falling short a few votes to gain a mandate in the assembly.

Figure 2: Number of parliamentary seats won by each party



Source: Koha³⁶; (for the 2025 election numbers of seats as of 21.02.2025 as the election process is still ongoing)

Coalitions and the Art of the Possible

As discussed above, the key question of this election cycle was whether LVV would attain 51 mandates in parliament or not. As the counting process has testified so far, LVV has not reached that goal, let alone the self-appointed 500,000 votes objective. Nonetheless, it has come very close and the following weeks will be decisive in determining the outlook of the next government. After the certification of the results – which are likely to take a considerable time – the president will appoint Albin Kurti to form a new government. Below are some of the most probable scenarios for the new government formation.

First scenario: Kurti 3 with modifications

LVV has secured at least 47 mandates (based on current counting results) and in coalition with 10 non-Serb minority MPs and Nenad Rašić’s one vote, the party may secure up to 58 votes for a Kurti 3 government (or even a few more). This scenario means that LVV may potentially be only 3 votes shy of a 61 seat majority. Such scenarios usually favor the incumbent government which might incentivize single defections from the opposition MPs. A precedent for this exists from Vjosa Osmani’s election as president when the ruling coalition could only gather 79 votes out of the 80 needed. In a last-minute surprise, PDK’s MP Adelina Grainca switched her allegiance to LVV and therefore enabled the election of the new president.³⁷ Kurti is therefore likely to try to cajole a potential fraction of three MPs from the oppo-

35 Halili, D. (2025). Electoral competition among Serb parties. Kosovo 2.0. Accessed 19.02.2025. <https://kosovotwopointzero.com/en/electoral-competition-among-serb-parties/>

36 Koha (2025). Sa deputetë i takojnë VV-së (How many MPs will VV get?). <https://www.koha.net/arberi/sa-deputete-i-takojne-vv-se-bazuar-ne-dy-versione-te-dnv-s>

37 Fana, V. (2021). Deputetja e PDK-së kalon në VV (PDK MP switches to LVV). Kallxo. Accessed 30.01.2025. <https://kallxo.com/lajm/deputetja-e-pdk-se-kalon-ne-vv-merr-pjese-ne-votimin-per-presidente/>

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sition to try to form a government. Most recently, Nisma's leader Fatmir Limaj, commanding the loyalty of three MPs, has signaled readiness to negotiate with Kurti, making such a scenario all the more likely.³⁸ While this would no doubt be a difficult goal to achieve, it is not entirely implausible.

However, this scenario would result in a very weak government that barely possesses a majority and would result in a return to more volatile and less stable parliamentary politics. Additionally, roughly a year from now the sitting president's mandate ends and two thirds of the assembly need to participate in the voting procedure to reelect Osmani or elect a new president. Although this coalition scenario enables a simple majority, it does not meet the requirement for an 80 MPs participation in the voting session for the new mandate of the president, commencing in April 2026.³⁹ A failure to renew Osmani's mandate or elect a new president would result in the dissolution of parliament and new parliamentary elections, consequently making for a short-lived government.

Second scenario: The opposition forms a new government

An alternative scenario would arise from the failure of LVV to form a government. In that case, the constitution sanctions that the second strongest party – in this case, PDK – wins the mandate to form a government. In theory, the united opposition has 53 seats and in a coalition with 10 non-majority MPs could form a government. But while the first scenario would result in an unstable majority, this second scenario with three major parties forced into a coalition would result in a ticking time bomb. To avoid dissolution, the coalition could potentially reinforce its numbers with the MPs from Srpska Lista, which would bring their numbers to potentially 73, but would prove very unpopular with the electorate. However, such an outcome seems implausible for the moment as LDK's president Abdixhiku has ruled out participation in any government, arguing that the people have not voted for change of government.⁴⁰

Not only would this scenario entail an unstable majority, but it also does not answer the 'presidential question'. A coalition of three major parties is set to produce

many internal frictions that would make functional governance rather difficult. In the unlikely scenario that such a coalition could outlive a year in office, LVV's 47 seats in the parliament would ensure that either a candidate of their choosing is elected president or the assembly is dissolved. Needless to say, LVV would probably make sure to propose an unacceptable candidate for the majority. Hence, such a scenario would result in a shaky government that is all but unlikely to outlive its first year in office.

Third scenario: Grand coalition between LVV and either PDK or LDK

Another potential, although even less likely, scenario is a coalition of LVV with either PDK or LDK. While very unlikely considering the post-election declarations of all party leaders, this option would nonetheless result in the most stable majority. An additional benefit would be that in combination of non-majority MPs such a coalition would have the numbers for the president's election. However, such a coalition would have many internal contradictions and frictions and could result in a less efficient government. Additionally, both PDK and LDK have ruled out a coalition with the ruling LVV and announced they would rather go to renewed elections than partake in governance with Kurti who on his end would do anything possible to avoid the inconvenience of compromising with a coalition partner.

At this point it is important to consider that the counting process is still on-going and the final results are likely to differ from the current estimates. Currently LVV possesses 47 seats in the assembly while the opposition has 53 seats. More specifically more than 80,000 votes from the diaspora have not been counted. When they are eventually taken into the equation as well, experts estimate that LVV's mandates may credibly reach 49 which would mean the opposition would be reduced to 51.⁴¹ Traditionally, the diaspora communities have supported LVV in larger proportions and in the last elections this party has gained more than 80% of their votes.⁴² A similar outcome this time would make the first scenario more plausible and an opposition-led government (scenario 2) even more unlikely. However, yet another option that remains is organizing a re-run of the elections which would mean that for the most of the year

38 *Nacionale* (2025). Limaj "jep sinjal" interesant, kur pyetet për koalicion me VV-në: Me AAK-në jemi dy parti të ndara (Limaj „gives an interesting signal" when asked about a coalition with VV: We are two separate parties with AAK). Accessed 21.02.2025. <https://nacionale.com/politike/limaj-jep-sinjal-interesant-kur-pyetet-per-koalicion-me-vv-ne-me-aak-ne-jemi-dy-parti-te-ndara>.

39 The Kosovar Constitution requires that out of 120 MPs, at least 80 participate in the session to elect a president. This does not necessarily mean 80 votes in favor, but simply participation to create a quorum.

40 *Euronews* (2025). LDK do të qëndrojë në opozitë, thotë Abdixhiku (Abdixhiku says LDK will stay in Opposition.) Accessed 13.02.2025. <https://euronews.al/ldk-do-te-qendroje-ne-opozite-thote-abdixhiku/>

41 *Dukagjini* (2025). Sa deputetë i takojnë VV-së, bazuar në dy versione të DnV-së (How many MPs belong to VV, based on two versions of the DnV). Accessed 19.02.2025. <https://www.dukagjini.com/sa-deputete-i-takojne-vv-se-bazuar-ne-dy-versione-te-dnv-se/>

42 *Radio Free Europe* (2025).

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the country would be governed by a care-taker government, similarly to 2014.

Based on these considerations, it seems that Kosovo is likely to experience a period of marked unstable electoral politics. Whichever combination may arise from the different electoral calculations, it is likely to result in a shaky majority and ineffective and/or short-lived government. Proportional representative democracies often require many negotiations which usually result in concessions. Those take time – Austria held elections in September and is yet to have a functional government as of the writing of this article.⁴³ French president Emmanuel Macron once remarked on the impossibility of a German-style democracy since France lacked the constitutional patriotism which values compromise and instead has nationalist patriotism which views compromise as weakness.⁴⁴ That observation may very well apply to Kosovo as well. Until the political elite of the country learns to set egos aside and learn the values of dialogue, Kosovar democracy is set for a period of unpredictability.

Conclusion and Outlook

Kosovar national politics have gone through many tribulations since its inception in the postwar period and have come a long way. Today, Kosovo is one of the few countries in the Western Balkans where elections are held in an orderly manner, votes are counted without controversy and both position and opposition parties accept the outcome unquestioningly. This marks a huge progress in the country's democratic development compared to as late as the last decade. For reference, the 2010 elections were marred by the then-US ambassador Christopher Dell's characterization of them as "industrial-scale electoral fraud."⁴⁵

Nonetheless, considering the electoral campaign, the impression is that the progress is not sufficient to join the group of Western-style liberal democracies. On the one hand, the ruling LVV has organized a weak campaign marked by many gaffes by Kurti with a collection of half-baked rag-tag promises contrabanded as a political manifesto. On the other hand, the self-proclaimed liberal PDK and conservative LDK promised an expansion of the public sector. Hence, on the ideological front, the current political landscape is neither mature nor represents the diversity of the political thought of Kosovar citizens.

The order of the day for the new government is a particularly difficult one. To begin with, the country's citizens have one of the poorest living standards in Europe. Despite many attempts, past governments have failed to modernize the economy and increase exports which would in turn soften the trade deficit. In lieu of economic opportunities, many people have chosen migration as a sustainable solution which has decreased the population of the country. Any incoming government should conduct policies aimed at first and foremost robust economic development.

In addition to that, since 2011 the leadership has been embroiled in seemingly endless talks with Serbia. The process culminated in 2023 in the Ohrid Accords that set the price of de facto recognition at the establishment of the ASMM. However, not much has been done since and any incoming government will face pressure to implement the agreement and establish the now-infamous Association. Taking any step in that direction, especially without any corresponding stride from the Serbian government, tarnishes the internal standing of any politician. However, refusing it altogether is also infeasible since it would result in international isolation, which a country with the size and position of Kosovo might not be able to endure for long. Any future government is set between a bad and a worse option.

Finally, the Kosovar people's biggest aspiration is to join the EU and NATO to guarantee a safe and prosperous future. The prime minister submitted an application for membership in the EU at the end of 2022 but has not received an answer yet. Particularly problematic are the five non-recognizers (four in NATO) and Hungary, which have so far blocked the Euroatlantic aspirations of the country. In the context since the invasion of Ukraine, security has become a priority again. The people of Kosovo have spoken and they have made their voice clear. It is now up to the political establishment to show maturity and create a government which can address the pressing issues on the agenda.

43 Körömi, C. (2025). Austria's political crisis deepens as far right pulls plug on coalition talks. Politico. Accessed 14.02.2025. <https://www.politico.eu/article/austria-coalition-talks-collapse-far-right-herbert-kickl-freedom-party-fpo-peoples-party-ovp/>

44 Caulcutt, C. (2022). The end of Macronism. Politico. Accessed 14.02.2025. <https://www.politico.eu/article/the-end-of-macronism/>

45 Demi, A. (2016). The end of big decisions. Prishtina Insight. Accessed 14.02.2025. <https://prishtinainsight.com/end-big-decisions/>