



# Political Deadlock in Kosovo: Will New Elections Break It?



Adea Gafuri and Nicholas Aylott





## Summary

In the parliamentary election in Kosovo in February 2025, the ruling Self-Determination Movement, LVV, lost votes and its de facto parliamentary majority. More than nine months later, no alternative coalition had been constructed. A new election has now been called, which will take place just before new year.

Parties with roots in the conflict over independence in the late 1990s had previously appeared to be receding, but they recovered ground in the first 2025 election. In contrast to politics elsewhere in Europe, parties in Kosovo are not primarily divided by ideology. Yet that might not help the construction of a parliamentary majority, even after the coming election. Personal rivalries and animosities obstruct compromise.

The deadlock of 2025 also highlights the dilemma that faces the EU in the Western Balkans. How can the Union advance democratic reforms and the transposition of EU law while avoiding an increased risk of conflict with neighboring Serbia?



**Adea Gafuri**

Adea Gafuri is a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at The Europe Programme at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs.



**Nicholas Aylott**

Nicholas Aylott is head of the Europe Programme at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs.





## Introduction

Politics in Kosovo is deadlocked. As we explain below, it is not ideological differences between parties, but rather personal rivalries and animosities, that impede the democratic process.

Back in February 2025, Kosovars voted in a parliamentary election. The Self-Determination Movement (Vetëvendosje), or LVV (sometimes LV), secured first place, as it had in the previous election, in 2021. It subsequently governed on the basis of a majority that it formed with parliamentarians from ethnic-minority parties. In 2025, LVV aimed for an improved score, which would have avoided the need to form a coalition with rival parties. It campaigned with the slogan “*Cep më cep*”, which translates along the lines of “Across every corner” or from “From end to end”, implying that the party would seek votes from across the country. In the election, however, LVV suffered major losses compared to its previous score (see Figure 1). By contrast, both of its main rivals made significant electoral gains.

By late autumn, there was still no new government in Kosovo. Long negotiations about government formation are not unusual in Europe, particularly in countries like Belgium and the Netherlands. In this case, however, such was the inter-party deadlock that, for months, the Assembly of Kosovo

could not even be constituted, due to parliamentarians’ inability to elect a speaker. At the 58th attempt, Dimal Basha from LVV was finally chosen, albeit controversially.

It took another month to elect all the required deputy speakers, which further delayed the process.<sup>1</sup> This meant that the Assembly was finally inaugurated. Yet no one expected a new government to be formed easily, and so it proved. The opposition’s hostility to LVV was not enough to form the basis of an alternative majority. A new election has been announced for 28 December. It remains unclear whether it will change parties’ willingness to co-operate and form a lasting coalition, or whether the political deadlock will simply continue.

Key factors behind the ongoing deadlock include the absence of programmatic party platforms, longstanding personal animosities and the Serb List’s alignment with Belgrade, which we discuss further below. All this have contributed to the parties’ inability to co-operate.

## Background: the political system

Kosovo has a parliamentary system of government. Parliamentarians are elected for a four-year term through open-list proportional representation. Each elector can vote for a party and for ten individual

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<sup>1</sup> *Balkan Insight* (2025b, October 10). Kosovo’s Parliament Ends Deadlock, But Solution Is Swiftly Disputed.  
[https://balkaninsight.com/2025/10/10/kosovos-](https://balkaninsight.com/2025/10/10/kosovos-parliament-ends-deadlock-but-solution-is-swiftly-disputed/)

[parliament-ends-deadlock-but-solution-is-swiftly-disputed/](https://balkaninsight.com/2025/10/10/kosovos-parliament-ends-deadlock-but-solution-is-swiftly-disputed/)



candidates on the party list. Seats are allocated to parties using the D'Hondt method. Of the 120 seats in the Assembly, 20 are reserved for ethnic minorities, including ten for Serbs. Since 2007, a 5 per cent electoral threshold has been applied to the 100 generally contested seats. Parties have at times made pre-electoral alliances.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to reserved seats in the Assembly, Kosovo's constitution makes further provision for the representation of ethnic minorities. Of five deputy speakers, two must come from among minorities' representatives, including one from the Serbs. Moreover, the government, when it is formed, must include at least two ministers from minorities. Again, one represents Serbs and one represents another minority. According to its "positive" parliamentary rules, the Assembly elects the government with a minimum of 61 votes.

Following the war of independence in 1999, the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) and the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) were the strongest parties. They competed fiercely. Political tensions even spilled over into political assassinations.

The Democratic League is known for organising the historical non-violent resistance to Serbian rule and for proclaiming Kosovo's autonomy in 1989, on the brink of Yugoslavia's breakup. It emerged from pacifist movements, although some of its members have ties to the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA, also known by its initials in

Albanian, UÇK). The leaders of the Democratic Party, by contrast, had direct ties to the KLA, which conducted military resistance in 1997–1999. The Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK), a conservative-nationalist party led by a former commander of the KLA, also emerged in the immediate post-war period. It receives fewer votes than the Democratic Party and the Democratic League, but it has been present in the political landscape since 2001.

In sum, the Democratic Party, the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo and a smaller party that emerged later, the Social Democratic Initiative (Nisma), are considered "war-wing" parties. They have strong connections to the KLA and include members who held high-level military positions during the 1999 war. The Democratic League is not a war-wing party. Over time, however, all these parties became similarly centre-right in ideological orientation. They also entrenched their power in the legislature, the state administration and the judiciary. During their years in office, corruption was rampant and unemployment among the highest in Europe.

LVV was launched in 2010. The party emphasised its opposition to corruption and criticised the agreements in Paris in 2010 and Brussels in 2013 that gave privileges to the Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo in exchange for steps towards the normalisation of Kosovo's relations with Serbia. LVV claimed that these agreements harmed Kosovo's interests. The party developed a centre-left ideology, a populist

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<sup>2</sup> Mustafa, A. (2025). Kosovo's 2025 election: Party system "decartelisation", uncertainties with government formation, and uneasiness with Trump.

*Contemporary Southeastern Europe*, 12(1), 39-50.  
<https://doi.org/10.25364/02.12:2025.1.4>



discourse and a nationalist profile. During its time in power, LVV appears to have had some success in curbing corruption at the highest levels.

The Serb List (LS), which, as the name suggests, represents Serbs, has participated in every election apart from those in 2007 and 2010. The List has close ties to the Serbian Progressive Party, the party of the Serbian president.<sup>3</sup> This is one of the main reasons that, the List is not considered to be a potential coalition partner by any of the other parties.

Figure 1 shows the parties' ideological positioning on a left-right scale, according to experts in the Chapel Hill Survey from 2019. There are no stark differences between the parties. Like parties elsewhere in the Western Balkans, those in Kosovo lack the sort of clear-cut programmatic agendas on policy areas – such as healthcare, education, welfare and state intervention in the economy – that are typical in West European party systems. The experts place most of the parties around the political centre, with LVV furthest to the left and the Serb List furthest to the right.

There are additional measures of ideological positions in the Chapel Hill data, including “GAL-TAN”, which measures political parties'

stances on social and cultural values, such as abortion, same-sex marriage and divorce. Parties that are placed near the GAL pole are considered postmaterialist and libertarian, while those near the TAN pole are typically considered traditional or authoritarian. Figure 1 shows that in terms of sociocultural issues, political parties in Kosovo are, once again, generally around the centre.

Still, there are some ideological differences. LVV is centre-left on economic issues and centre-right on socio-cultural issues. The Serb List is on the centre-right on economic issues and further to the right on socio-cultural issues, mainly due to its nationalist agenda. The Democratic League, the Democratic Party and the New Kosovo Alliance (AKR) are centre-right on both economic and socio-cultural issues. The Social Democratic Initiative, the Kosovo Democratic Turkish Party (KDTP) and the Vakrat Coalition are centre-left on economic issues but lean more to the right on socio-cultural issues.

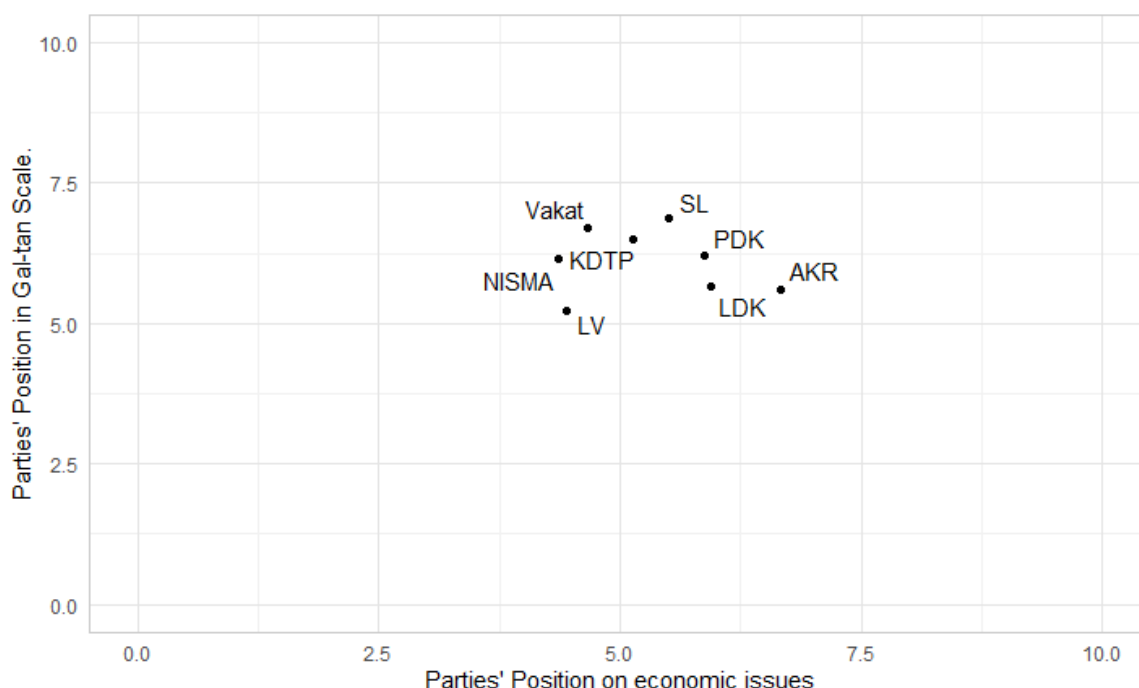
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<sup>3</sup> *Balkan Insight* (2024, September 24).  
<https://balkaninsight.com/2024/09/24/a-year-after->

[banjska-attack-kosovo-indictment-chronicles-serb-land-grab-plot/](https://balkaninsight.com/2024/09/24/a-year-after-banjska-attack-kosovo-indictment-chronicles-serb-land-grab-plot/)



**Figure 1:** Political Parties' ideological stances on GAL-TAN and economic issues



*Note:* Experts' evaluation of the position of each party in 2019 based on its overall ideological stance. The GAL-TAN score, on the y axis, ranges from 0 (Libertarian/Postmaterialist) to 10 (Traditional/Authoritarian), with 5 representing the centre. The ideological stance on economic issues, on the x axis, is measured as 0 = extreme left, 5 = centre, 10 = extreme right. Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) is not included in the CHES survey. Party names as listed: Self-Determination Movement (LV), Democratic Party (PDK), Democratic League (LDK), Serb List (LS), Social Democratic Initiative (NISMA), New Kosovo Alliance (AKR), Vakut Coalition (Bosnian Minority), Kosovo Democratic Turkish Party (KDTP). Source: Bakker (2020).

## The February 2025 election: campaign and results

Before the election of February 2025, party programmes remained notably thin. Manifestos were published only a few days before the vote and were generally vague, containing only broad aims and goals without, for instance, specific timelines for implementation.

In recent years, LVV has dominated the Kosovar party landscape (see Table 1). Its leader, Albin Kurti, first became prime minister in 2020. Ahead of the 2021 election, an incumbent parliamentarian, Vjosa

Osmani, who had resigned from the Democratic League, founded the political party "Guxo" and took it into electoral coalition with LVV. She went on to win 300,788 preference votes, more than any other candidate. Soon after, the Assembly chose her as Kosovo's president.

In the February 2025 election, as Table 1 shows, the parties that managed to pass the electoral threshold were LVV; the Democratic Party; the Democratic League; the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, which ran alongside the Social Democratic Initiative; and the Serb List.



As we saw, LVV lost support in 2025, while the share of the vote secured by the Democratic League and the Democratic Party picked up compared to 2021. One reason for this might be President Osmani. Her personal popularity probably attracted voters to LVV,

with which her party was allied in 2021. However, in 2025, due to her presidential duties, she was absent from the campaign.

**Table 1:** Election results

Party	Europarty	2025		2021	
		Vote %	Seats	Vote %	Seats
Self-Determination Movement (LVV)	PES	42.3	48	50.3	58
Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK)	ALDE	21.0	24	17.0	19
Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK)	EPP	18.1	20	12.7	15
Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK)*	-	7.1	8	7.1	8
Serb List (LS)	-	4.3	9	5.1	10

*Note: Only parties and/or electoral coalitions that passed the threshold are included. \* In electoral coalition with the Social Democratic Initiative (Nisma). Other parties have also participated in electoral coalitions, so some vote shares reflect those won collectively with alliance partners. Vote shares do not sum to 100 percent because only parties that passed the electoral threshold are shown. Seats do not sum to 120 because the remaining seats are designated for minorities. Data on party affiliations with European Parliament parties is from Radio Europa e Lire (2024). Europarty affiliation: ALDE = Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; EPP = European People's Party. PES = Party of European Socialists. Source: Central Election Committee of Kosovo (2025).*

In addition, a new, religiously conservative party, Coalition for the Family, did not cross the electoral threshold, but received 3.2 per cent of the vote. This too might have eaten into LVV's support.

Rhetorically, at least, all the main parties except the Serb List agreed on key foreign policy priorities, such as strengthening Kosovo's international co-operation, advancing diplomatic efforts on Euro-Atlantic integration and enhancing ties with Albania. Domestically, the most discussed topics,

aside from corruption, were rising electricity prices, the high cost of living and – rather more than in previous campaigns – family values.

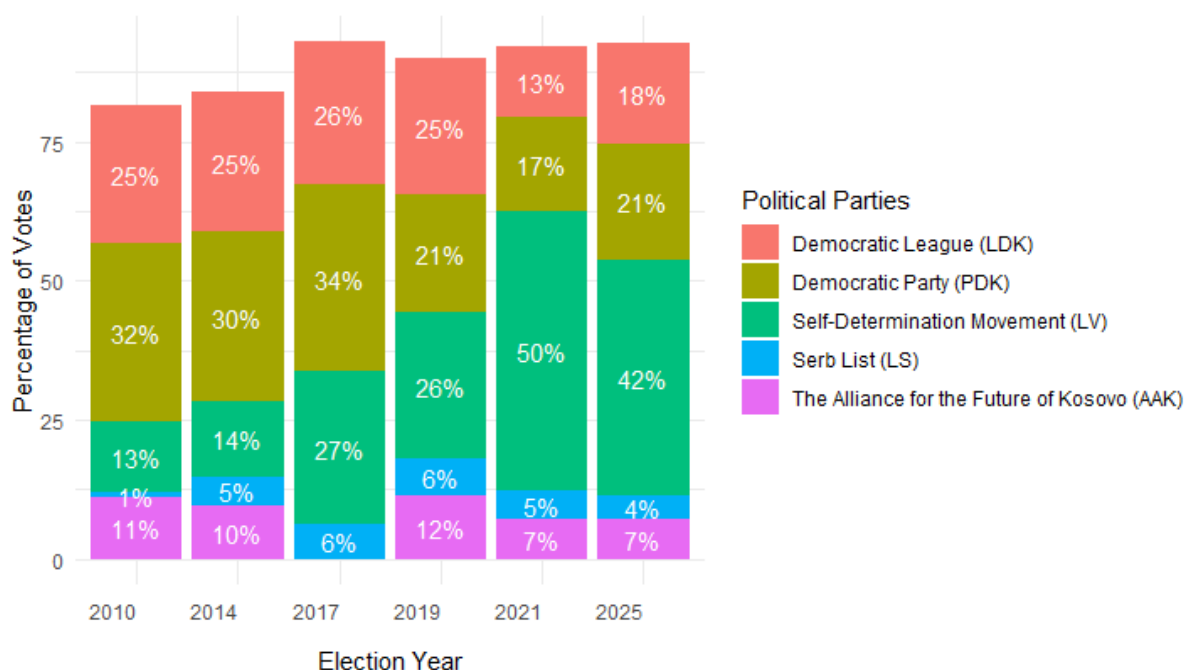
Several shortcomings and controversies were alleged in the conduct of the 2025 election. Kurti accused Serbia of interfering by pressuring Serbs in Kosovo to vote for specific candidates from the Serb List.<sup>4</sup> The List has ties to the Serbian Progressive Party, the party of the Serbian

<sup>4</sup> *Prishtina Insight* (2025, March 25). Kosovo's PM accuses Serbia of interfering in parliamentary elections. [https://prishtinainsight.com/kosovos-pm-](https://prishtinainsight.com/kosovos-pm-accuses-serbia-of-interfering-in-parliamentary-elections/)

[accuses-serbia-of-interfering-in-parliamentary-elections/](https://prishtinainsight.com/kosovos-pm-accuses-serbia-of-interfering-in-parliamentary-elections/)



**Figure 2:** Percentage of votes for each party in Kosovo in the 2010–2025 election cycles



*Note: The numbers are rounded to the nearest decimal. Note that, in some elections, some parties were in alliances, so their scores for some years do not represent the alliance scores. In 2017, AAK and PDK were in alliance, which is why AAK's results for 2017 do not appear. The percentages are for the parties that passed the electoral threshold only. Data from the Central Election Commission of Kosovo.*

president. Milan Radoičić, a former president of the Serb List and a current member of the party, has been linked to a violent incident in September 2023 in the village of Banjska, northern Kosovo. It resulted in the death of a Kosovar police officer.<sup>5</sup>

Another accusation was more controversial. After the election, LVV insisted that votes cast from abroad for the Democratic League, over 19,000 of them, should be cancelled and the election partially re-run, due to alleged

manipulation. According to LVV, some of the successful Democratic League candidates received more votes from the diaspora than from people in Kosovo. However, the Election Complaints and Appeals Panel (PZAP) rejected these allegations, citing a lack of evidence.<sup>6</sup> Of course, the delay in finalising the outcome further complicated the post-election period.

By late March, the counting of votes and the certification of results were still ongoing. The

<sup>5</sup> Bami, X (2024). A year after Banjska attack, Kosovo indictment chronicles Serb 'land grab plot'. *Balkan Insight*, September 24. <https://balkaninsight.com/2024/09/24/a-year-after-banjska-attack-kosovo-indictment-chronicles-serb-land-grab-plot/>

<sup>6</sup> KOHA (2025, March 21). Tri ankesat që PZAP-ja i vlerësoi të pabazuara dërgohen në Supreme. <https://www.koha.net/lajmet-e-mbremjes-ktv/tri-ankesat-qe-pzap-ja-i-vleresoi-te-pabazuara-dergohen-ne-supreme>





process had become contested, especially by LVV. It remained unclear whether the party was dragging its feet for strategic reasons or whether vote manipulation was as problematic as it claimed.

## Post-election deadlock

The Assembly's first task following an election is to choose the speaker and deputy speakers (article 67 of the constitution). Like an incoming government, the speaker and deputies must each receive a majority of the votes of all parliamentarians.<sup>7</sup> After the speaker is elected, the president formally nominates a candidate for prime minister, normally from the party or coalition that won the most seats.

In 2025, the election of the speaker and deputy speakers was the immediate reason for the deadlock, as the parliament failed to secure the required 61 votes from deputies. Kurti sought in various ways to find sufficient votes for his preferred candidates. For instance, he proposed that a special parliamentary committee be formed, which would then hold a secret ballot on the issue. Other parties refused to participate. The Constitutional Court's interventions did not always do much to clarify the legal situation. In late August, at the 58th attempt, the Assembly succeeded in choosing a speaker.

<sup>7</sup> Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, K-09042008 (Gazeta Zyrtare e Republikës së Kosovës Apr. 9, 2008) (Kosovo).

<sup>8</sup> *Telegrafi* (2025, August 26). Dimal Basha u zgjodh kryeparlamentar por s'pati konstituim, krejt detajet e seancës së Kuvendit. <https://telegrafi.com/dimal-basha-u-zgjodh-kryeparlamentar-por-spati-konstituim-krejt-detajet-e-seances-se-kuvendit/>

Dimal Basha from LVV was elected, along with three deputy speakers (one each from LVV, the Democratic Party and the Democratic League). A Bosniak was chosen as the deputy speaker from a non-Serb minority. However, the Assembly failed yet again to elect a deputy speaker from the Serb minority.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, Basha was a contentious choice. He faced criticism for co-authoring a controversial paper, which claims that the KLA was funded by drug-traffickers and co-operated with Albanian criminals.<sup>9</sup> Basha denied these claims, asserting that he did not write the paragraphs in question. This did not quieten the controversy.

None of the candidates for deputy speaker nominated by the Serb List could win majority support in the Assembly. On 10 October, however, Nenad Rašić was finally chosen, with 71 votes.<sup>10</sup> In the face of protests from the Serb List (and doubts expressed by some non-ethnic-minority parties), Basha declared that the constitution requires a Serb deputy speaker, but not necessarily one from that minority's biggest party. Rašić's party – For Freedom, Justice and Survival (SPO) – is viewed as more independent from Belgrade and more willing to engage with Kosovo's political institutions.

<sup>9</sup> Arsovska, J., & Basha, D. (2012). Globalizing the Western Balkans. *Études caribéennes*, (22), 62-84.

<sup>10</sup> *Balkan Insight* (2025b, October 10). Kosovo's Parliament Ends Deadlock, But Solution Is Swiftly Disputed. <https://balkaninsight.com/2025/10/10/kosovos-parliament-ends-deadlock-but-solution-is-swiftly-disputed/>



Despite these breakthroughs, there seemed little sign that a government could be formed. On 26 October, LVV performatively proposed one, which comprised ministers from its own ranks. Predictably, it secured only 56 votes, short of the majority required.<sup>11</sup>

Kurti, who has positioned himself as an anti-corruption politician and accused all other major parties of engaging in corruption, has proven that this is not an effective strategy for gaining coalition partners. At the same time, other larger parties, including the Democratic League, Democratic Party and Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, have focused primarily on being 'anti-Kurti', without presenting a coherent alternative.

What explains the deadlock? To repeat one of the inferences from the Chapel Hill Data, there are no strong programmatic differences among the parties. The intensity of their disagreements, which makes passing legislation very difficult, is due rather to their leaders' personalities and ties to clientelist networks. Prior to the election, LVV accused other parties of being corrupt and seeking state capture. Kurti used derogatory language against some of his opponents. Again, this did not enhance the prospects of compromise between parties after the vote.

In essence, the blockage was more about politics than procedure. New elections increasingly appeared to be the only way out

of the deadlock. After the Assembly again declined to invest its confidence in a proposed prime minister, President Osmani exercised her constitutional obligation to dissolve the Assembly and call new elections. The election might give LVV the chance to recover its parliamentary majority – or convince the party that a majority has slipped beyond its grasp.

## Outlook

By some measures, Kosovo is the most advanced democracy in its region. It scored 67 on the V-Dem Electoral Index in 2023 (on a scale from 0, least democratic, to 100, most democratic), which is the highest score ever received by any of the six Western Balkan countries. It has also improved its scores in indices of corruption. Nevertheless, corruption remains the most pressing issue in the region, including in Kosovo.<sup>12</sup>

What became particularly apparent during 2025 was the deep polarisation among the parties. Unlike in many Western democracies, personal rivalries and animosities among politicians in Kosovo take precedence over ideological agendas. This undermines the effective functioning of the government and the democratic process.

When it comes to its institutions, Kosovo has seen some positive developments, but several key challenges remain. Judicial

<sup>11</sup> *Balkan Insight* (2025c, October 27). Kurti's Failure to Form Government Leaves Kosovo in Limbo.

<https://balkaninsight.com/2025/10/27/kurtis-failure-to-form-government-leaves-kosovo-in-limbo/>

<sup>12</sup> Coppedge, M., Gerring, J., Knutsen, C. H., Lindberg, S. I., Teorell, J., Altman, D., et al. 2024. "V-Dem

[Country-Year/Country-Date] Dataset v14." *Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project*.

<https://doi.org/10.23696/mcwt-fr58>; Transparency International. (2024). *Corruption Perceptions Index Dataset*. <https://www.transparency.org/en/what-we-do>



reform has progressed slowly. Even before the post-election stalemate in 2025, fraught relations between government and opposition parties had impeded the passage of legislation. Moreover, while women's participation in politics has improved, with women leading more than half of the parliamentary committees in the previous parliament, they remain underrepresented in senior-level government positions at both the local and national levels.<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile, Kosovo faces significant external challenges, primarily related to Serbia. As noted above, the Serb List in Kosovo has direct links to the current Serbian government, led by President Aleksandar Vučić. In his early career, Vučić served as minister of information under Slobodan Milošević, who was indicted for war crimes against Kosovar Albanians. Vučić is strongly opposed to Kosovo's sovereignty and actively campaigns for its derecognition.<sup>14</sup> The Serb List has continued to be obstructive, by, for instance, boycotting municipal elections in Serb areas in 2023.<sup>15</sup>

Serbia's blocking of Kosovo's accession to international organisations, notably the UN, NATO and the Council of Europe, leaves Kosovo in a vulnerable position. The European Union's ambivalent approach often seems to prioritise regional stability over democracy and good governance in

Kosovo. The EU has often fielded criticism for its willingness to tolerate "stabilitocracy".

Indeed, the situation presents the EU with an acute dilemma. On one hand, the EU is keen to promote the sort of democratic norms and institutions that have been requirements for aspiring member states since the early 1990s. It would thus follow that Kosovo's progress in this regard, particularly when compared with the often more faltering reforms by its Western Balkan neighbours, should be rewarded with a faster track to EU membership. Indeed, Kurti has, on occasion, reached agreement with the Serbian authorities on practical issues, such as the mutual recognition of car licence plates.<sup>16</sup>

Yet the moral or ideological objective of promoting democracy is clearly in conflict with the EU's geopolitical objectives. Western powers are well aware of Serbia's scope to facilitate the influence of Russia, China and other adversaries in the region. Both the EU and the US have thus been wary of pressing the Serbian government in relation to Kosovo. Furthermore, the EU has been keen to maintain American engagement in the region. Successive US administrations have been less than enamoured of Kurti's government. The upshot was that, by late 2025, Kosovo was the only remaining "potential candidate" for EU membership in the Western Balkans,

<sup>13</sup> European Commission. (2023, September 6). Key findings of the 2023 Report on Kosovo. [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/QANDA\\_23\\_56147](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/QANDA_23_56147)

<sup>14</sup> *Balkan Insight* (2023, January 5). <https://balkaninsight.com/2023/01/05/serbian-president-claims-nine-more-kosovo-recognition-withdrawals/>

<sup>15</sup> Reuters. (2023, April 23). Serbs in north Kosovo boycott local elections. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/serbsnorth-kosovo-boycott-local-elections-2023-04-23/>

<sup>16</sup> Euronews. (2024, January 1). Kosovo number plates to be recognised in Serbia. Euronews. <https://www.euronews.com/2024/01/01/kosovo-number-plates-to-be-recognised-in-serbia>



while all the other countries in the region had been awarded candidate status.<sup>17</sup>

There is, then, some truth in the accusation that the EU prefers to preserve stability in the region than to promote democracy. Kosovo offers a particularly clear example of the EU's difficulties in balancing its priorities. The EU and its member states will have to consider whether, in Kosovo, this balance of priorities

remains correctly calibrated. Given the paralysis in the country's politics, however, pressure on the EU to treat Kosovo's membership application more favourably may have been draining away. It remains to be seen whether the second election of 2025 breaks the political deadlock – and thus expedites Kosovo's steps towards EU membership.

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<sup>17</sup> European Commission. (2025, November 4). 2025 Enlargement package shows progress towards EU membership for key enlargement partners. Retrieved December 4 2025, from

[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_25\\_2584](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_2584).





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