



## Kosovo

Last update:	23 December 2010
Author:	
Population:	1,815,048 (July 2010 est.)
Prime minister:	Hashim Thaci
President:	Fatmir Sejdiu
Governemental type:	Republic, self-governing entity under UN administration
Ruling coalition:	Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) and Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK)
Last election:	Parliamentary 12 December 2010
Next election:	Presidential January 2013
Sister parties:	None



On 16 October 2010 the government collapsed after the LDK announced its decision to quit the ruling coalition. The LDK announced its decision one day after acting President Jakup Krasniqi called early elections for 13 February 2011. The LDK's relations with the PDK, had worsened since LDK leader Fatmir Sejdiu resigned his position as President on 27 September. Sejdiu resigned after a court ruling, which said the LDK leader could not be party leader and Head of State at the same time. On 2 November, Krasniqi announced the dissolution of the parliament after a majority of deputies voted in favour of a no-confidence motion against the government, including members of the PDK. Snap elections were called for 12 December.

### ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL SITUATION

#### The institutional setting

The parliamentary elections held in Kosovo in 2001 were the first elections since the forces of Slobodan Milosevic were driven from the province during NATO's bombing in 1999. Since then until February 2008, the status of Kosovo remained unclear and uncertain, and the province was governed by the United Nations, though officially being part of first Serbia and Montenegro and later Serbia. Kosovo was administered by United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) in cooperation with local Provisional Institutions of Self-Government established in 2002. Soren Jessen-Petersen was named Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and head of UNMIK on 16 June 2004.

UNMIK initially brought together four Pillars under UN leadership: Humanitarian Affairs under the responsibility of the UNHCR, Civil Administration of the UN, Democratisation and Institution-building of the OSCE, and Economic Reconstruction, Recovery and Development of the European Union (EU). With the emergency stage over, Pillar I (Humanitarian Affairs), led by the UNHCR, was phased out at the end of June 2000. In May 2001 a new Pillar I was created to be responsible for Police and Justice under the UN. This four-Pillar structure remains to date.

To establish and maintain security in Kosovo NATO-led international forces with a UN mandate were deployed (KFOR).

Four months after the first parliamentary elections in 2001 the prime minister and cabinet were appointed. This was seen as a major step forward to transfer authority from UNMIK to Kosovo's elected representatives. However, the UN retained the final say in most important legislative matters, and the new institutions were not allowed to declare independence.



With the declaration of independence on 17 February 2008, this situation has altered. UNMIK remains active in Kosovo until June 2008, mainly in the sphere of police and judiciary. From then, a new EU mission, dubbed EULEX, will take over.

#### November 2007 Assembly elections

On 17 November 2007, elections for the Kosovo Assembly took place. The Kosovo Assembly, which was constituted as part of UNMIK regulations the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, or PISG, consists of 120 seats, of which a maximum of 100 are distributed proportionally among all political parties. Twenty additional seats are reserved for non-Albanian communities, of whom the Serbs can claim 10. Kosovo is a single electoral district. Elections were won by the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) of former Kosovo Liberation Army commander Hashim Thaci.

#### Results 2007 Assembly elections:

Party	% of votes	Seats
Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK)	34.4	37
Democratic League of Kosovo (LDP)	22.6	25
Alliance for New Kosovo (AKR)	12.3	13
Democratic League of Dardania (LDD)	10.1	11
Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK)	9.6	10

The remaining 24 seats will be occupied by Kosovo's minorities.

Turnout: 40.1%

In a statement released one day after the elections, the Council of Europe Election Observation Mission in Kosovo noted that "the elections were generally in line with the Council of Europe's principles, as well as international and European standards for democratic elections." According to the observation mission, "the overwhelming majority of observers evaluated the voting process in positive terms, with only minor and isolated irregularities reported." Furthermore, the elections "took place in a peaceful atmosphere" and were "administered in an efficient manner, with a high degree of transparency."

However, a number of shortcomings should be mentioned. Most noticeably, it has been impossible to ensure the participation of all minorities in the electoral process, as the Serb community boycotted the elections. Following appeals not to participate made by the Belgrade authorities, Serbian political and religious leaders and the main Kosovo Serb political leaders who did not register to run in the elections, most Kosovo Serbs chose not to vote. Furthermore, Serb candidates who did wish to sign up for the elections were warned that "sanctions" might be taken against those who disobeyed the boycott by the Serbian authorities. This led to a situation in which no serious Serb candidates ran in the elections. An estimated maximum of 5% of the 40,000 Kosovo Serbs went to the ballots. The Serbian community has earlier boycotted the 2004 Assembly elections as well.

Furthermore, overall turnout was low at only 40.1%, and shows a continuously downward trend, which started in the 2001 elections. According to the Council of Europe Election Observation Mission this can be explained by "dissatisfaction among the population, due to the lack of improvements expected following the previous four elections. To a certain extent, this turnout reflects a particular loss of trust due to widespread discontentment with the prevailing socio-economic situation, which affects all communities living in Kosovo in their day-to-day life."



### The government coalition

Following a period of coalition negotiations, the new government of Kosovo was officially installed on 9 January 2008. Hashim Thaci, leader of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), the biggest party in the Kosovo Assembly since the elections, was elected the new prime minister by the assembly in a single round of voting. Fatmir Sejdu, leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), previously the biggest party and now coalition partner of the PDK, retained the post of president after three voting rounds in the assembly. In the new coalition, the PDK runs seven ministries, whereas the LDK runs five ministries. Three remaining ministries are run by representatives of ethnic minorities. The election of Hashim Thaci, former commander of the Kosovo Liberation Army and strong advocate of independence for the region, does not sit well with the Serbian minority. It should be noted, however, that all ethnic Albanian parties advocate independence of Kosovo. During his first speech as prime minister in the assembly, Thaci specifically sought to address the Kosovo Serbs. Speaking in Serbian, he said that "my government will have as one of its priorities the rule of law, with special attention for minority rights. We'll work for Kosovo to be a place where all citizens feel equal and secure."

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### Parliamentary elections 2010

On 12 December Kosovo held its first parliamentary elections since its unilateral declaration of independence of February 2008. The early elections were sparked by the collapse of the government in November. According to preliminary results of the Kosovo Central Election Commission (CEC) PM Thaci's PDK has won the elections, securing 34% of the vote. The CEC results showed that the country's second biggest party, the LDK, won 21.8%, Albin Kurti's Self-Determination Movement Vetevendosje secured 12.2%, the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo 10.8%, the New Kosovo Alliance 7.%, the Democratic League of Dardania 3.3% and Fryma e Re 2.2%. Among Serb parties the Independent Liberal Party (SLS) had the best result, securing 12.5% of the vote.

PM Thaci congratulated his supporters adding the "win" was a civic referendum on "the good governance of PDK" and its vision for the future. Referring to forming a coalition Thaci said: "We should avoid divisions, we should work together". Both the PDK and the LDK say they back the reforms needed for eventual EU and NATO integration of Kosovo. "Today Kosovo votes for a European future, for a European Kosovo, for integration into the EU and the UN [...]", Thaci said after voting. Fighting corruption and the unemployment rate of nearly 50% have been the main issues for voters during the election campaign.

The EU has welcomed the first elections ever held in Kosovo. The EU's High Representative Catherine Ashton and Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Fuele congratulated the Kosovar people and authorities for "the calm and orderly manner" in which the ballot was held. "The participation of the Kosovo people of all communities is very welcome. Now it is up to the competent authorities to certify the results and to deal with complaints and appeals in line with the relevant laws and regulations," Ashton and Fuele said in a joint statement. An extensive monitoring mission, including 5,000 civil society representatives, a delegation of EU parliamentarians and other international officials, was on the ground to study the vote.

Albin Kurti was the newcomer in the elections and a newcomer to Kosovo's politics. With his movement he advocates Kosovo's unification with Albania and opposes any talks with Serbia.

### Irregularities

There have been several reports of irregularities. Irregularities mainly consisted of multiple votes by the same person, family voting, exerting pressure on monitors and members of election commissions. The most flagrant irregularities are believed to have happened in the municipalities of Skenderaj/Srbica and Drenas/Gillogovac where the CEC reported a turnout of 94 and 86% respectively. Parties and NGO observers noticed that such a high turnout was not possible in any municipality since one-fifth of Kosovar voters registered on the electoral lists live outside the country. In a statement on 13 December MEPs wrote: "Serious allegations of fraud in two municipalities have been brought to the attention of the delegation. "The delegation encourages the political parties to follow proper legal procedures". The turnout in the rest of Kosovo was 45%. According to European observers the turnout was "alarmingly low".

### Serbian minority

Ahead of the election the government in Belgrade called on the 120,000-strong ethnic Serbian minority in Kosovo



to boycott the vote, protesting against Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence that Serbia does not recognise. Because of the expected Serb boycott the election commission had set up mobile polling stations in the north. Turnout in the majority Serb areas of the north was around 1%. Police confirmed several incidents and two Serbs being arrested. Turnout among Serbs living in enclaves in central Kosovo was higher than in previous elections.

#### Aftermath of the elections

The country's CEC ordered a re-run of the vote in several municipalities on 9 January 2011. In the meantime, Kosovo will have to operate without a parliament and with a caretaker government. Even if the re-runs are well organised, a new government will not be easy to form. At least three different political parties will be needed to form a coalition commanding a majority in the Kosovar Assembly. PM Thaci is trying to secure the support of one or two smaller political parties before the election re-run. But even if he succeeds, a new parliament and new institutions can only be created after the election results have been certified by the CEC.

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## LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

### International Court of Justice opinion on Kosovo

On 22 July 2010 the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the Hague officially gave its opinion on the legality of Kosovo's declaration of independence. The opinion was requested by the UN General Assembly on the initiative of Serbia. Both Serbia and Kosovo expected the Court to rule in their favour. In its reading the ICJ concluded that the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo on 17 February 2008 did not violate general international law. Furthermore, ICJ president Hisashi Owada said international law "contains no applicable prohibition" of Kosovo's declaration of independence. The UN General Assembly asked the Court to give its opinion on the question: "is the unilateral declaration of independence by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government of Kosovo in accordance with international law?"

Addressing the Court Owada firstly said that the question put in front of the Court is clear, giving the Court an opportunity to give a clear opinion and not discussing the right to self-determination or secession. After that Owada argued that the unilateral declaration of Kosovo should be seen in the light of the situation in Kosovo that has led to this declaration. The ruling says that "international law does not have an active provision that limits independence declarations, therefore Kosovo's declaration of independence is not in breach of international law." The judge also said that the UN Security Council Resolution 1244, which ended the war in Kosovo in 1999, and which Belgrade sees as a guarantee of Serbia's territorial integrity, contained no arguments to prevent the unilateral proclamation, as its purpose was to establish a temporary administration, without intent to decide on Kosovo's final status.

Officials from Belgrade and Pristina were in attendance, along with ambassadors from all the countries that participated in the public debate of the issue. Although the ICJ opinion is not binding for states, experts believe it would carry legal, political, and moral weight. Ten out of fourteen judges voted in favour of the ruling.

On 26 July, after more than 11 hours of debate, the Serbian Parliament adopted a resolution which calls on the Serbian government to continue its efforts to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country. On 28 July the Serbian Mission at the United Nations submitted a draft resolution on Kosovo to the UN General Assembly, which states among others that "unilateral secession is not an acceptable manner of solving territorial disputes". Diplomats from the countries that have recognised Kosovo are surprised by the content of the draft resolution, arguing that Serbia is heading for a confrontation with the EU in the UN General Assembly in September. Some EU member states (Slovakia, Austria and Italy) are in favour of speeding up Serbia's EU accession in the wake of Belgrade's loss at the ICJ.

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### Political crisis 2010

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announced its decision one day after acting President Jakup Krasniqi called early elections for 13 February 2011. The LDK's relations with the PDK, had worsened since LDK leader Fatmir Sejdiu resigned his position as President on 27 September. Sejdiu resigned after a court ruling, which said the LDK leader could not be party leader and Head of State at the same time. According to the Court this was not in line with the Constitution.

The political situation became more tensed after LDK's withdrawal from the coalition. Regarding his party's withdrawal Sejdiu said that this was "a response to ignoring the ideas of the LDK by the PDK". Hereafter, Thaci called the situation in Kosovo a "political and institutional challenge" which the state of Kosovo is facing for the first time in its political history. On 2 November, Krasniqi announced the dissolution of the parliament after a majority of deputies voted in favour of a no-confidence motion against the government, including members of the PDK. Snap elections were called for 12 December.

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## IMPORTANT POLITICAL ISSUES

### Kosovo independence

In an extraordinary parliamentary session in Pristina on 17 February 2008, Kosovo unilaterally declared its independence from Serbia. Kosovo's prime minister Hashim Thaci read the declaration of independence, which states that Kosovo is dedicated to "peace and stability" in the region, and is looking for a "good relationship" with its neighbours. The declaration furthermore states that Kosovo is created along the lines of the UN plan drawn up by special representative Martti Ahtisaari, and calls for Kosovo's supervised independence by an international presence. All 109 deputies present at the parliamentary session voted in favour with a show of hands. The remaining 11 deputies, including representatives from the ethnic Serb minority in Kosovo, were absent.

Serbia remains heavily opposed to Kosovo's independence. Serbian president Boris Tadic reacted with a statement, saying that Belgrade will react with all "peaceful, diplomatic, and legal" means to annul the declaration of independence. On 15 February, the Serbian government had already adopted a resolution calling any unilateral declaration of independence by Kosovo "invalid and illegal." Many Serbs reacted emotional to Pristina's declaration of independence, taking to the streets to protest and attacking embassies in Belgrade of countries that recognised Kosovo's independence and several other buildings in the capital and posts along the new border. Serbian ambassadors stationed in countries which recognized Kosovo were called back, and president Tadic has argued in the UN Security Council that the unilateral declaration of independence of the province is a breach of international law, calling upon the Council to declare Pristina's actions as invalid.

Kosovo's status had long been a sensitive issue. The Serbian government has always maintained that Kosovo should be kept within the Serbian state, while most Albanian Kosovars, who form a majority in the former Serbian province, wished to gain independence. From 1999, the international community controlled Kosovo, and its final status remained unclear. Ever since the end of the Kosovo Crisis in June 1999 the relation between Belgrade and Pristina remained tense. While in this crisis Albanians were victims of war crimes, after the peace settlements Roma and Serbians became the persecuted. An estimated 200,000 people were driven from Kosovo. Pristina, which counted a Serbian population of 20,000 before the war, housed a Serbian population of about 700 at the beginning of 2000. In March 2004 interethnic violence, leaving 20 dead, further harmed the relation between Serbia and Kosovo. At least 800 mainly Serbian homes and several Serbian religious buildings were destroyed or damaged. The relation between the Albanian majority and the Serb minority in Kosovo has not improved much. The Serb community in Kosovo, like the Serbian government, is strongly opposed to Kosovo's independence, and many Kosovo Serbs have claimed not to feel safe and to feel treated as second-class citizens in their homeland, a feeling they fear to worsen now that the province has seceded from Serbia. Similarly, Serbian prime minister Kostunica repeatedly stressed that an independent Kosovo is not acceptable, because "it would mean that violence, violations of human rights, ethnic cleansing, and cultural genocide pay".

On 24 October 2005, the UN Security Council endorsed the start of the negotiations on the future status of the province. The UN identified six key areas which need to be addressed: improved living conditions of Serbs and



better assistance for Serbs who want to return home, reform of local government, establishment of transparent and non-political security apparatus, strengthening of Kosovo's institutions, restructuring UNMIK, and maintaining a safe environment. In March 2007, UN envoy Martti Ahtisaari came with his final plan for the status of Kosovo within the region. Without mentioning the word "independence" in his final plan, Ahtisaari did support a form of independence for Kosovo. Kosovo would get its own flag and anthem, and would be able to become a member of international organisations like the UN and the EU.

Immediately after Ahtisaari had presented his plan, Serbia reacted by stating that the proposed status of Kosovo was "illegal" (Kostunica). The Serbian parliament rejected the plan by a large majority (255/270 seats). In a reaction parliamentarians condemned the plan as "illegally laying the foundations for the creations of an independent state on the territory of Serbia." UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, the EU Presidency and the US all accepted the proposal by Ahtisaari.

Consequently, the UN Security Council discussed the proposal. However, it has been unable to come up with any solution, as the members of the Security Council are themselves divided over the issue of Kosovo independence. The US has, over the past few years, consistently argued in favour of Kosovo's independence, and was the first state to formally recognise the new state on 18 February 2008. On the contrary, Russia and China, both also permanent members of the UN Security Council, are strongly against independence of Kosovo. Similarly, the Contact Group Troika that was installed on 31 July 2007 to mediate negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina was unsuccessful, with members of the troika themselves divided between those in favour (US, Germany) and those against (Russia) Kosovo's independence. In the end, the Troika failed to meet its deadline of 10 December 2007. As soon as this became clear, the different actors started speculating on what to do after this deadline. Prime minister Ceku of Kosovo stated that Kosovo would declare independence unilaterally if no agreement was reached. Serbia, in response, stated that it would by no chance recognise such a unilateral declaration of independence.

However, the looming declaration of independence was eventually uttered on 17 February 2008, after which negotiation seized. The Serbian government has vigorously protested the declaration of independence, maintaining that it is a breach of international law. Fierce protests against Kosovo's independence broke out both within Kosovo, by the Serbian minority, and in Serbia, where the American Embassy was put on fire after a government-supported protest turned violent. Kosovo Serbian civil servants have suspended their work, refusing to work under independent Kosovo demand. In a bid to support the Serbs, the parliament in Republika Srpska (RS), the Serbian entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), passed a law asserting RS's right to secede from BiH now that countries were willing to recognise Kosovo. Meanwhile, the international community remains divided over Kosovo's independence. Several countries were quick to recognise the new state, most noticeably the US, Albania, and a number of the bigger European member states such as France and Germany. Other countries, mainly those with restive notional minorities of their own, have declared that they will not recognize Kosovo as a new state. These countries include Russia, seen as Serbia's nationalists main ally, Spain, and a number of countries in the Balkan region. It seems, however, highly unlikely that Kosovo will rejoin Serbia.

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#### March 2004 Riots

In March 2004 interethnic violence, leaving 20 dead, further harmed the relation between Serbs and Kosovars. The outburst of violence became a point of reference for the vulnerability of the relations between the ethnic groups. At least 800 mainly Serbian homes and at least 17 Serbian religious buildings were destroyed or damaged. Two Ottoman-era mosques were badly damaged in Serbia.

The violence led to nationalist, sensationalist reporting in both Albanian and Serbian media, thereby further contributing to the tensions. According to a report of the OSCE the role of the media was crucial, concluding that "without the reckless and sensationalist reporting on 16 and 17 March, events could have taken a different turn. They might not have reached the intensity and level of brutality that was witnessed or even might not have taken place at all." Also it brought an occasion for Serbian Prime Minister Kostunica to use strong rhetoric and condemn the Kosovar "terrorism", and suggesting that Al-Qaeda might be operating in Kosovo. In the beginning of June 2004 another Serb was killed by two Kosovar Albanians.

Analysts point fingers at the international community for not resolving the status question for such a long time,



arguing that the constant delays in the talks did not only invite more unrest in Kosovo, but also increased nationalist sentiments in Serbia. The international community strongly condemned the violence and harshly criticized Kosovo's leadership for not making any progress to deal with it. The EU emphasised the importance of "standards before status", referring to the necessity of the return of displaced persons, the reconstruction of destroyed property, bringing criminals to justice, and the protection of all ethnic communities.

After Kosovo independence, the treatment of minorities was one of the issues that worried the international community. However, Pristina was quick to declare that it would be inclusive to all minorities.

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#### Serbs in Kosovo

About 8 percent of the population of Kosovo is Serbian. The Serb population of Kosovo is concentrated in the northern area. Serbs generally live in enclaves that are separated from the Albanian territories by roadblocks and/or bridges. Depending on the situation they are easy to pass or closed. From time to time especially the divided town of Mitrovica experiences tensions, causing temporarily closure of the bridge between the Southern Albanian dominated area and the Northern Serb dominated area. About 18 percent of the Kosovo Serbs live north of the river Ibar in North Mitrovica. The place has a strong symbolic meaning to Serbs, as it is the only Serbian urban centre in Kosovo with a university and hospital. The above described March 2004 riots took place in Mitrovica, and also more recently incidents near the bridge showed that relations between the ethnic groups remain vulnerable.

During the past years, the Serbs in Serbia as well as in Kosovo have harshly criticised the failure of UNMIK and KFOR to protect the Serb population in Kosovo. Especially the removal of control posts has been a reason for fear. Personal security and freedom are the dominant concerns for the Serbian community in Kosovo. Improving the situation of the Serbian communities was one of the main points on the agenda during the status negotiations, and remains an important topic that is held under close scrutiny by the international community.

After Kosovo declared independence, protest of Kosovo Serbs against this decision by the Kosovo Albanians largely took place in Mitrovica. Kosovo Serbs consider the declaration of independence by Pristina illegal, and a breach of international law. They have always been heavily opposed to Kosovo independence, and held that Kosovo should remain part of Serbia. On 19 February KFOR, the NATO-led peacekeeping mission in Kosovo, closed the border between Serbia and Kosovo for 24 hours after angry Kosovo Serbs had attacked and destroyed two border posts. Meanwhile, violent protests took place in the city of Mitrovica, which on 23 February resulted in a decision by the EU to temporarily withdraw its personnel from northern Kosovo.

Moreover, Serbia sees the Serb population centred in the northern part of Kosovo as an argument to lay claim on this part of the newly independent Kosovo's territory. On 25 February, Serbian prime minister Vojislav Kostunica said that Serbia will "do everything in its power" to remain in control over the northern region of Kosovo around the city of Mitrovica. According to Kostunica, "loyal citizens" in this area, where most of Kosovo's Serb population is concentrated, can still "trust on the government in Belgrade." At the same day, the EU, which is installing a mission in Kosovo (EULEX) which Serbia opposes, announced that it will currently not send any police and jurists to the area around Mitrovica. According to French general Yves de Kermabon, this will happen only in mid-June. EULEX is considered illegal by Serbia and the Serbs living in Kosovo. The EU asked UNMIK, which legitimacy is not questioned by the Serbs, to retain control over the area until tension has decreased.

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#### UN / EU authority

The United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) was established in 1999 to take up policy responsibilities in Kosovo. Although over the past years, progress had been made towards transferring responsibilities from the United Nations to local authorities, there are still some efforts to be made in order to establish representative and functioning institutes. Especially the formation of separate, mono-ethnic administrative institutions is seen as an obstacle for the creation of a multi-ethnic Kosovo. Also violence against minorities and attempts to discourage minority participation in public life are still reasons for concern.



Important areas such as budgetary, taxation and fiscal control have been handed over to local authorities, and on 20 December 2005 UNMIK formally established Interior and Justice ministries for the Kosovar government, turning over powers that had been in UN hands. However, UNMIK remained a very important presence in the area, especially with regard to policing and judiciary functions.

As Kosovo was about to declare independence, on 15 February the EU approved a mission to take over from UNMIK. The mission, dubbed EULEX, is 'tasked to stabilize the province after it proclaims independence from Serbia,' and includes ca. 1800 law enforcement officers from several European countries.

However, the deployment of EULEX immediately ran into trouble, as Serbia heavily opposes the mission, and views it illegal due to its implicit recognition of Kosovo independence. EULEX has sought a mandate from the UN, but has so far been unable to obtain this as this is blocked by UN Security Council member Russia, which supports Belgrade. Moreover, the decision to deploy a EU mission in Kosovo, combined with a EU proposal for closer cooperation to Serbia, led to the downfall of the Serbian government. However, EULEX is expected to take over UNMIK's duties after mid-June, and has asked UNMIK to continue protection of Kosovo's borders with Serbia until EULEX becomes fully operational.

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#### Kosovo and the EU

On 15 February 2008, two days prior to Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence from Serbia, the EU approved a judicial and police mission to Kosovo 'tasked to stabilize the province after it proclaims independence from Serbia'. The operation is planned to become fully operational by mid-June 2008.

Despite this implicit recognition of Kosovo's independence, the EU member states did not reach a unified position on the status of Kosovo. Although so far 17 member states, including bigger states such as Germany, France and the UK, were quick to recognize Kosovo's independence, a number of EU member states refuse to do so. These are mainly countries with restive minorities within their own borders, who are afraid that Kosovo might work as a precedent for other minorities concentrated in specific areas to declare independence as well.

However, the EU has been quick to establish contacts with 'independent' Kosovo, and has already announced that it will work together with the new country's government in order to establish close ties between Kosovo and the EU.

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#### Economy and employment

Kosovo has one of the highest rates of unemployment in South Eastern Europe. The average salary of those who are working is 200 Euros per month. The unemployment rate is approximately 50% (2005, CIA world factbook) and is generally higher among youth and women and on the countryside.

Kosovo is one of Europe's poorest regions, with more than half of its people living in poverty. Also there are a lot of people (more than 30% of the population) living just above the poverty line, which indicates that many could easily drop into severe poverty. Poverty is especially widespread in rural areas. Although the province possesses rich mineral resources, agriculture is the main economic activity.

The most vulnerable to poverty are elderly, children, disabled, Internally Displaced People as well as non-Serb and non-Albanian ethnic minorities, such as Roma, Gorani or Muslim Slavs. According to an UNDP Early Warning Report, the number of reported suicides in Kosovo has increased dramatically. The victims are mostly young and Albanian.

Kosovo's economic development depends for an important part on donor-financed external aid and transfers from the Kosovo diaspora. According to figures of the Ministry of Finance and Economy Kosovo households received more cash income from relatives abroad than they did from working in Kosovo. Observers see a problem because donor's are retreating. The euro and the Serbian dinar are both accepted currencies in Kosovo.

According to Kosovars, the main problem preventing real economic growth so far was the lack of a final status of Kosovo. The complexity of the political situation and the legal uncertainties are said to have withheld foreign



investors from putting money in the region. Another problem is the lack of public spending on infrastructure.

However, it remains to be seen whether foreign investors will wish to invest in the region now that it has declared independence.

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## MAIN POLITICAL PARTIES

### Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK)

The LDK was formed in 1989 by a group of intellectuals headed by Ibrahim Rugova and grew out to one of the main political parties of Kosovo. The immediate goal was to establish an independent Kosovo. The party won the 2001 and 2004 elections and has been in government ever since. In the 2007 elections, the party came in second after the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK). Currently, the party is member of the coalition government together with the PDK.

The leader of the party, Ibrahim Rugova was Kosovo's president from 2002 to 2006, until he died of lung cancer. Rugova embodied for the Kosovars the struggle for independence and was much respected internationally for his moderate position and peaceful methods of resistance. The parliament elected Fatmir Sejdiu, who had been on the presidency of the LDK since its foundation in 1991, as the new president. After his appointment he vowed to continue Rugova's push for independence.

In the 2002 municipal elections LDK lost votes partly as a result of a higher Serbian turnout. The party describes itself as being modern and democratic, uniting the tradition and future of the Albanians and paving the way towards independence for Kosovo. LDK has a liberal orientation favouring a free market economy. Other priorities are European integration, education (in one's native language), authentic development of culture, fair social policy, accessible healthcare, and guaranteeing minority rights.

In 1991 the party organised a referendum on self-determination of Kosovo in which more than 90% of the Kosovar Albanians voted for independence. The independence declaration was only accepted by Albania. Afterwards Rugova formed an underground government in Kosovo, which was not recognised by Serbia. A number of LDK members have been killed over the past years, which are suspected to be politically motivated assassinations. The LDK has contact with liberal parties and requested membership of the Liberal International.

Party leader: Fatmir Sejdiu  
Website: [www.ldk-kosova.org](http://www.ldk-kosova.org)

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### Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK)

The PDK was formed by prominent members of the Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK), among them the current party leader and prime minister of Kosovo, Hashim Taci and the current secretary general – former spokesperson of UCK – Jakup Krasniqi. The party stated it wants to adopt a social democratic ideology and contacts with social democratic foundations exist.

Like many parties in former communist countries PDK wrestles with the bad image of left wing parties. Also it is obvious the party has to come to grips with their image of being a party of guerrillas. Still, the legacy of the conflict plays an important role, as it is a common activity of the party leadership to visit families who lost members during the conflict.

Nowadays, the party is remarkable tolerant and accommodating towards local Serbs, offering them Serbian as an official language, special municipalities, special positions in institutions, right of veto for laws that deal with minority rights etc. However, they are not willing to compromise on the independency issue. The party leadership participates in the status negotiations.



Besides independence for Kosovo, top priorities in the view of the party leadership are the fight against youth unemployment and corruption.

PDK draws its support especially from poor rural, Albanian dominated areas that suffered extremely from violence during the war. For example in the Drenica Valley, in which also a lot of UCK fighters were living, PDK gained 80% of the votes in the last three elections.

In the 2001 elections PDK came in second with 25% of the votes and formed together with the LDK, Alliance for the Future of Kosovo and Motherland a governing coalition. Bajram Rexhepi, a member of PDK who is admired for his attempts to defuse tensions between ethnic Albanians and Serbs in the divided town of Mitrovica, was elected prime minister in the previous government. He is regarded as a moderate within the PDK.

Also in the 2004 elections the party succeeded in becoming the second biggest, however it did not take part in the governing coalition, instead choosing to be the biggest opposition party.

In the 2007 elections, the PDK became the biggest party in the Kosovo elections, winning 34.3% of the votes, and 37 out of 120 seats. Currently, the PDK is in a coalition government together with the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK). PDK leader Hashim Thaci is prime minister of Kosovo.

Party leader: Hashim Taci

Website: <http://www.pdk-kosova.org/>

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#### Alliance for a New Kosovo (AKR)

The Alliance for a New Kosovo (AKR) was founded in March 2007 by Bahgjet Pacoli, a successful businessman and owner of general contracting and engineering company Mabetex. Pacoli is also the main financier of the AKR, and it is said that he hopes to use the party as a vehicle to become the prime minister of a future independent Kosovo. The 2007 elections were the first in which the AKR competed, winning 12.3% of the votes, or 13 seats in the assembly. Although the party has a significant support base, its ideological platform is not completely clear yet.

Party leader: Bahgjet Pacoli

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#### Democratic League of Dardania (LDD)

The Democratic League of Dardania (LDD) was established in January 2007 by the former speaker of the Kosovo Assembly Nexhat Daci, after he had unsuccessfully tried to become the leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo. Initially, the LDD had seven seats in the assembly, as six parliamentarians from the Democratic League of Kosovo decided to follow Daci. During the 2007 elections, the LDD managed to win 10.1% of the votes, gaining the party 11 seats in the new assembly. The party has a liberal-oriented platform.

Party leader: Nexhat Daci

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#### Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK)

AAK is the fifth major Albanian party. Like the PDK, former Albanian militants who fought against the Belgrade regime lead this party. The leader of the party, Ramush Haradinaj, is a former UCK commander. Originally the AAK was founded for the 2000 municipal elections as a coalition of five nationalist parties. By 2001 two of the parties had withdrawn from the coalition. The parties that withdrew were the more conservative and nationalist members. For the 2002 municipal elections, the remaining parties registered as an independent party under the same name.

AAK has been in government from 2001 until 2007 and has delivered a prime-minister for the second governing period from 2004 on. Party leader Haradinaj took up this job, but handed it over to Kosumi as he was indicted for war crimes. In 2006 Kosumi resigned and LDK man and former guerilla commander Agim Ceku was nominated to



form a new government.

The AAK is now known as a more moderate, pro-European party in the centre of the political spectrum, which is in favour of ethnic co-operation. Economic priorities set by the party are the creation of new jobs, promotion of small and medium sized business, infrastructure, and privatisation. Support comes mainly from the Dukagjini region in southwest Kosovo. International and local political observers credit the party with solid organisation and clear, effective and largely democratic internal procedures. In addition, women and youth are well represented in the party, which fits the party's priority to promote youth and a bigger role for women in society.

Party leader: Ramush Haradinaj

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#### Coalition Returning (KP) / Serb List for Kosovo and Metohija (SLKM)

The KP was a coalition of more than twenty ethnic Serbian parties and nongovernmental organisations. It was a diverse coalition, which did not maintain the same parties during its existence. Their focus was on preventing further autonomy for Kosovo. In the 2004 elections, the coalition participated as the Serb List for Kosovo and Metohija. Not all Serbian parties take part in this coalition. The Kosovar branches of the Belgrade based Social Democratic Party do take part on the list.

The international community is very keen on the participation of Serbian parties in the election to make sure that Serbs in Kosovo are politically represented and their interests are given a voice. However, the Serbs have been boycotting both the last elections as well as the parliament ever since, though the leader of the List, Oliver Ivanovic indicated the Serbs are becoming more willing to take part in the Kosovar institutions. The coalition was strongly supported by Serbian Vice-Premier Nebojsa Covic, Belgrade's official representative in Kosovo – who resigned from his post when his party – the Social Democratic Party – left the government.

Leader: Oliver Ivanovic

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#### Motherland (VTN)

VTN is a coalition of three Bosniak / Gorani ethnic parties, which are the Party of Democratic Action (SDA), Democratic Reform Party of Muslims (DRSM) and the Gorani Citizens' Initiative. The coalition welcomes other minority parties to join. The coalition supports the idea of a multi-ethnic Kosovo where all citizens are equal and free of discrimination. They are mainly focusing on the guaranteeing rights (property, employment, education) for Bosniaks. VTN, has taken four seats in the parliament, including three seats that were set aside for Bosniak minorities, and is part of the current governing coalition.

Party leader: Numan Baliq