

## Parliamentary Elections in Kosovo 2025 – 2026 – Back to Square One after Three Rounds of Voting?

### Executive Summary

- Kosovo held three parliamentary elections in sixteen months, including two snap elections, yet emerged with a broadly unchanged political arithmetic. The June 2026 vote largely reproduced the balance of February 2025, confirming that repeated elections failed to resolve the underlying institutional deadlock.
- The costs of this cycle were substantial. Approximately €25 million were spent across three election rounds. Institutional paralysis delayed reforms, disrupted international commitments, and placed €100 million in EU Growth Plan funding at risk, whereas €40 million have already been lost.
- The crisis unfolded in two phases. After February 2025, Kosovo faced a prolonged deadlock over Assembly formation and government formation. The December 2025 elections briefly restored governing capacity, but a renewed impasse over the presidency triggered a third election within six months.
- Campaigns were increasingly shaped by blame allocation rather than policy competition. Political discourse became more personalised, particularly around tensions between Albin Kurti and Vjosa Osmani, alongside rising polarisation and the spread of AI-enabled disinformation. Policy issues such as the economy, EU integration, and relations with Serbia remained present but were largely refracted through partisan conflict.
- Prime Minister Albin Kurti's party Lëvizja Vetëvendosje (LVV) remained the largest political force but lost support, while opposition gains were limited. The most significant shift was declining participation, with turnout falling from 47.7% in December 2025 to 37.0% in June 2026, indicating voter disengagement rather than electoral realignment.
- Both elections were broadly assessed as credible, though observers noted polarisation, counting concerns, disinformation, and the absence of a full EU Election Observation Mission in June 2026.
- Coalition formation remains constrained by the unresolved questions over the presidency. Any durable arrangement must integrate the presidency, government, and parliamentary leadership as a single institutional package.
- Four scenarios remain open, including Vetëvendosje-led coalitions, opposition-led government, or renewed elections in autumn 2026. Each carries significant constraints, with a fourth election likely to deepen institutional and fiscal costs without resolving the impasse.
- The central lesson is that elections cannot substitute for political compromise within Kosovo's coalition-based constitutional system.

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## Introduction

Kosovo held three parliamentary elections within sixteen months. Two of these were snap elections that were triggered by the refusal of political parties to deliver the compromises needed to form institutions in the country's multi-party system. Ultimately, the result of the June 2026 elections reproduced the political arithmetic of February 2025 elections that the process started with. After 16 months of political uncertainty, Kosovo's parties are thus somewhat back to square one. Still, the actual result of this turmoil was nearly two years of institutional paralysis, negligible change in the distribution of political power, and approximately 180,000 fewer citizens willing to cast their ballot in the last elections.<sup>1</sup>

The price extends beyond the political. Administratively, the organisation of the elections is estimated to have had a combined cost of 25 million euros for the public budget.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the institutional paralysis delayed the EU reforms. On 30 June 2026, the grace period expired for thirteen EU Growth Plan reform steps. Seven were completed on time; six, mostly justice-reform laws requiring Assembly approval, were not, resulting in an estimated loss of 40 million euros, with a further 100 million at risk by year-end in case parliament fails to achieve a political agreement on the presidency.<sup>3</sup> In many ways, 2025 was a lost year, and on current evidence, 2026 risks the same verdict.

Although all parties are celebrating after the June 2026 elections, they produced only modest winners and losers. Vetëvendosje fell from 51.10% to 47.13%, a loss of nearly four percentage points and four seats compared to December 2025, though it remained comfortably ahead of its February 2025 result. The opposition's gains were mixed rather than uniform: the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) gained 3.45 points and three seats, the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) gained 1.24 points and one seat, while the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) lost 0.75 points but held its 22 seats compared to the December 2025 result. Combined, opposition seat gains exactly offset

Vetëvendosje's losses, enough to reshape the parliamentary balance marginally, but not enough to produce a breakthrough.

The numbers make the question unavoidable: what were these elections for? The political landscape after June 2026 is not meaningfully different from February 2025. The parties are in the same positions, facing the same arithmetic, and will need to reach the same compromises they refused to reach before.

The question the coming months will answer is whether the fear of a fourth election and the concrete cost of continued deadlock is finally sufficient to produce what political goodwill has so far failed to deliver. This paper examines how that damage accumulated, what kind of political campaigns and programmes parties offered, what the results mean, and what the path forward requires.

## The First Stage of the Crisis: The February 2025 Elections and their Aftermath

Kosovo entered an unprecedented cycle of political instability following the parliamentary elections of 9 February 2025. Although Vetëvendosje emerged as the largest political force with 47.13%<sup>4</sup> of the vote and 53 seats, it fell short of renewing its absolute majority in parliament and was therefore unable to form a government independently. The ensuing deadlock exposed deeper structural tensions within Kosovo's increasingly polarised political landscape, where political actors proved unable to build the cross-party compromises required by the constitutional system.<sup>5</sup>

Vetëvendosje's reluctance to pursue power-sharing arrangements reflected both its political identity and its recent governing experience. Having capitalised on a narrative of systemic opposition to the established parties, whom Kurti had repeatedly accused of presiding over "twenty wasted years", the party had little incentive to enter into a formal coalition with the forces it had defined itself against. This dynamic was compounded by four years of governing with a

1 Central Election Commission of Kosovo (KQZ), Official Results, December 2025 and June 2026.

2 KOHA.net, 'The cost of electoral processes in 2025 could reach 28 million euros' (22 November 2025). <https://Vetevendosje.koha.net/en/arberi/kostoja-e-proceseve-zgjedhore-me-2025-mund-te-arrije-ne-28-milione-euro>; IFIMES / Eurasia Review, 'Kosovo Heads Into Third Election In 18 Months' (4 June 2026). <https://Vetevendosje.eurasiareview.com/04062026-kosovo-heads-into-third-election-in-18-months-amid-deepening-institutional-crisis-analysis/>

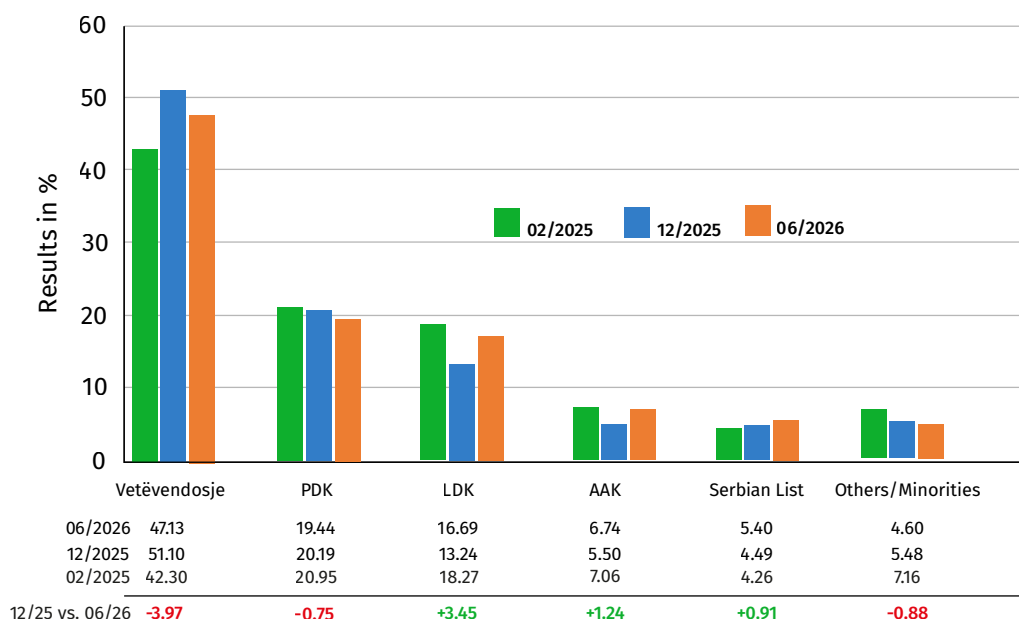
3 Kallxo.com, (2026, July 1) Zulfaj: Mbi 40 milionë euro nga Plani i Rritjes llogariten të humbura. <https://kallxo.com/lajm/zulfaj-mbi-40-milione-euro-nga-plani-i-rritjes-llogariten-te-humbura/>

4 Central Election Commission of Kosovo (KQZ), Official Results, Parliamentary Elections, 9 February 2025, <https://kqz-ks.org/zgjedhjet-e-pergjithshme/zgjedhjet-per-kuvend-te-kosoves-2025/>

5 Balkan Insight. (2025, May 23). Kosovo's unending crisis is damaging its democratic credentials. <https://balkaninsight.com/2025/05/23/kosovos-unending-crisis-is-damaging-its-democratic-credentials/bi/>

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Figure 1: Election Results by Electoral Formation in Comparison 2025 – 2026



Source: Kosovo Central Electoral Commission (2026): Kosovo Assembly Elections  
<https://kqz-ks.org/rezultatet/zgjedhjet-per-kuvend-te-kosoves/>

comfortable parliamentary majority, during which Vetëvendosje had simultaneously held the presidency, the prime ministership, and the speakership of the assembly. The prospect of conceding any of those positions as part of a coalition arrangement was politically untenable for a party whose identity rested on refusing compromise.

The first phase of the crisis centred on the constitution of the Assembly. Under Kosovo's constitutional framework, the election of the Speaker is a prerequisite for subsequent government formation, and it assigns this position to the winning party. Vetëvendosje nominated former Justice Minister Albulena Haxhiu, but opposition parties consistently refused to support her candidacy, citing her confrontational political style and her close identification with Kurti's governing approach. Between April and August 2025, the assembly therefore convened dozens of times without reaching an agreement. Haxhiu's candidacy was rejected more than fifty times, creating one of the longest parliamentary deadlocks in Kosovo's post-independence history. The Constitutional Court was petitioned multiple times for procedural clarification, but its rulings failed to break the impasse.

The deadlock was eventually resolved on 26 August 2025, when Vetëvendosje put forward Dimal Basha as an alternative candidate. Unlike Haxhiu, Basha secured 73 votes, drawn from PDK and AAK, while LDK withheld its support. PDK's leader openly stated the party would never have backed him under normal circumstances but did so to break the deadlock.<sup>6</sup> The vote ended almost six months of institutional paralysis.<sup>7</sup> The manner of Basha's election, however, laid bare the challenge ahead: if unblocking even the Speakership required PDK and AAK deputies to break ranks for a candidate they held in open contempt, the prospect of securing the same 61-vote threshold for a governing coalition, one requiring a substantive, durable agreement rather than a one-off procedural vote, was considerably more remote.<sup>8</sup> The constitution of the Assembly did not resolve the broader political crisis. Subsequent attempts by Kurti to form a minority government, thus to govern without a formal coalition, relying on opposition votes, failed to secure the required parliamentary support, as did an alternative attempt centred on Glauk Konjufca as prime minister.<sup>9</sup> The opposition's principal response was parliamentary obstruction rather than a substantive counter-proposal. An initiative by LDK leader Lumir Abdixhiku

6 Zëri.info. (2025, August 27). *Dimal Basha u zgjodh kryeparlamentar, por s'pati konstituim*. <https://Vetevendosje.zeri.info/aktuale/589799/>

7 Radio Evropa e Lirë. (2025, August 26). *Deputetët dhe konstituimi i Kuvendit* [Parliamentary reporting on constitutive session]. <https://Vetevendosje.evropaelire.org/a/deputetet-kuvendi-konstituimi-takimi/33513210.html>

8 Kallxo. (2025, November 2025). *Sinjalet për zgjedhje të parakohshme: Dështim i Kurtit për ta bërë qeverinë apo bashkëfajësi politike*. <https://kallxo.com/lajm/sinjalet-per-zgjedhje-te-parakohshme-deshtim-i-kurit-per-ta-bere-qeverine-apo-bashkefajesi-politike/>

9 Reuters. (2025, November 5). *Kosovo president proposes new prime minister to try end impasse*. <https://Vetevendosje.reuters.com/world/kosovo-president-proposes-new-prime-minister-try-end-impasse-2025-11-05/>

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to establish a technical or transitional government as a short-term solution to the impasse was rejected by most parties and dismissed as constitutionally redundant.<sup>10</sup> The prolonged standoff entrenched a pattern in which Vetëvendosje remained unwilling to make substantial concessions on power-sharing while opposition parties relied on procedural blockade as their primary political instrument, with neither side bearing sufficient cost to change course.

With no government formed and no budget approved, Kosovo entered the autumn of 2025 in a state of institutional suspension. Several international agreements, including those linked to EU Growth Plan funding and World Bank programmes, remained unratified. Ultimately, snap elections were called for 28 December 2025.<sup>11</sup>

### The Second Stage: December 2025 Elections Between Electoral Breakthrough and Renewed Institutional Deadlock

The snap elections of 28 December 2025 were shaped both by constitutional necessity and political actors' strategic calculations. Throughout the preceding months, Vetëvendosje had successfully reframed the institutional deadlock as evidence of opposition

obstruction rather than its own lack of political will to build coalitions, a narrative that resonated with a significant portion of the electorate and thus put them into a hopeful position. Furthermore, by scheduling the vote with the help of President Vjosa Osmani for late December<sup>12</sup>, Vetëvendosje maximised participation from the Kosovo diaspora, a constituency that had historically supported Vetëvendosje by wide margins. The party tried to increase this support even further by continuing to distribute targeted social transfers in the weeks before the vote, including pension increases, expanded child allowances, a new thirteenth public-sector salary, and a minimum wage rise to €425, a pure transactionalist act done on the claim of the leftist nature of Vetëvendosje.<sup>13</sup> All these factors combined brought a decisive result. Vetëvendosje secured 51.10% of the vote and 57 of 120 parliamentary seats. The opposition recorded the following results: PDK 20.19% (22 seats), LDK 13.24% (15 seats), and AAK 5.50% (6 seats), the latter securing just enough votes to pass the electoral threshold.<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, the December result generated cautious optimism. Albulena Haxhiu was elected Speaker on 11 February 2026, and Kurti secured parliamentary approval for a Kurti II cabinet shortly thereafter.<sup>15</sup> Among the parliament's first acts was the ratification

Table 1: Competing Parties in the 2026 Elections and Results

| Party Acronym | Party Name (Original)            | English translation               | Lead Candidate   | % of votes | Number of Seats | Seat Change | European Party Family |
|---------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|------------|-----------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| LVV/VV        | Lëvizja Vetëvendosje!            | Self-Determination Movement       | Albin Kurti      | 47.13      | 53              | -4          | S&D                   |
| PDK           | Partia Demokratike e Kosovës     | Democratic Party of Kosovo        | Bedri Hamza      | 19.44      | 22              | 0           | ALDE                  |
| LDK           | Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës     | Democratic League of Kosovo       | Lumir Abdixhiku  | 16.69      | 18              | 3           | EPP                   |
| AAK           | Aleanca për Ardhmërinë e Kosovës | Alliance for the Future of Kosovo | Ramush Haradinaj | 6.74       | 7               | 1           | n/a                   |
| SL            | Srpska Lista                     | Serbian List                      | Zlatan Elek      | 5.4        | 9               | 0           | n/a                   |
| –             | Minority Parties & Others        | Others/Minorities                 | –                | 4.6        | 11              | 0           |                       |

Source: Author's compilation based on Kosovo Central Electoral Commission (2026): Kosovo Assembly Elections <https://kqz-ks.org/rezultatet/zgjedhjet-per-kuvend-te-kosoves/>

10 Koha.net. (2025, June 12). *Abdixhiku prezanton planin 15-pikësh për qeveri kalimtare: Zgjat deri në zgjedhjen e presidentit*. <https://Vetevendosje.koha.net/en/arberi/abdixhiku-prezanton-planin-15-pikesh-per-qeveri-kalimtare-zgjat-deri-ne-zgjedhjen-e-presidentit>

11 Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. (2025, October 26). *Kosovo turmoil: Lawmakers reject Kurti government*. <https://Vetevendosje.rferl.org/a/kosovo-turmoil-lawmakers-reject-kurti-government/33570845.html>

12 Telegrafi. (2026, March 13). *Osmani tha se ia ka dhënë 28 dhjetorin për zgjedhje, vjen reagimi i Kurtit*. <https://telegrafi.com/osmani-tha-se-ia-ka-dhene-28-dhjetorin-per-zgjedhje-vjen-reagimi-i-kurtit/>

13 Halili, M. (2025, October 31). *Kurti: Nga nëntori rriten pensionet dhe shtesat për fëmijë*. Kallxo.com. <https://kallxo.com/lajm/kurti-nga-nen-tori-rriten-pensionet-dhe-shtesat-per-femije/>; Isufi, A. (2025, December 9). *Pak para fushatës, Kurti rikujton vendimin se nga janari paga minimale bëhet 425 euro*. Kallxo.com. <https://kallxo.com/lajm/pak-para-fushates-kurti-rikujton-vendimin-se-nga-janari-paga-minimale-behet-425-euro/>

14 Central Election Commission of Kosovo. (2026). *Kandidatet e zgjedhur parlamentarë (14-f)* [PDF]. [https://kqz-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Kandidatet\\_e\\_zgjedhur\\_parlamentare-14-f.pdf](https://kqz-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Kandidatet_e_zgjedhur_parlamentare-14-f.pdf)

15 Deutsche Welle. (2026, February 11). *Në Kosovë formohet qeveria e re me kryeministër Albin Kurti*. <https://Vetevendosje.dw.com/sq/n%C3%AB-kosov%C3%AB-formohet-qeveria-e-re-me-kryeminist%C3%ABr-albin-kurti/a-75921791>

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of international financial agreements stalled throughout the political crisis, including those linked to the EU Reform and Growth Facility<sup>16</sup> and World Bank programmes, unlocking an initial pre-financing tranche of 61.8 million euros under the EU Growth Plan. After nearly a year of institutional paralysis, a period of stable governance appeared within reach.<sup>17</sup>

However, the optimism proved short-lived. The question of the presidency had, in fact, loomed over coalition negotiations immediately after the February 2025 elections. Still, the awareness that any government formed would face the presidential quorum requirement and resulting from this potential snap elections within little more than a year did not function as an incentive towards compromise. In Kosovo's deeply polarised political climate, years of campaigning had cast rival parties as the source of the country's dysfunction. Thus, entering into a coalition with them would have required an abrupt reversal that all party leaders had spent years making politically costly for themselves. Rather than pushing parties toward cooperation, the prospect of a short-lived government – as the failure to elect a president would trigger new parliamentary elections – reinforced their reluctance to climb out of the trenches they had dug. Adding to this, Kosovo held local elections in November 2025, with parties campaigning against the same rivals locally. The rivalry needed to mobilise voters at the municipal level further undercut any parallel effort at national-level cooperation.<sup>18</sup> The December 2025 elections brought that deadline closer still as the presidential mandate was set to expire in April 2026, with the constitutional requirement to elect a successor by March.<sup>19</sup> The constitutional framework for presidential elections requires a two-thirds majority, at least 80 of 120 votes, in the first two rounds of voting. It then

drops to 61 in a third-round runoff between the top two candidates. However, the third round nevertheless requires a quorum of 80 members of parliament to be present in the final election round, thus giving the opposition a de facto veto option. This created the urgency for wider political agreement around the issue of the president.<sup>20</sup>

The fallout around the presidency then unfolded as a process of continued estrangement among former political partners. The expectation had been that the Kurti-Osmani partnership would continue, but this did not materialise.<sup>21</sup> Foreign policy became the fault line: Kosovo's Council of Europe membership bid collapsed after Foreign Minister Donika Gërvalla-Schwarz sent a letter to the Parliamentary Assembly committing Kosovo to a draft statute on the Association of Serb-majority municipalities without coordinating with the presidency. Glauk Konjufca, then Speaker of the Assembly, attributed the lack of coordination to Osmani being abroad, but reporting showed she was in Kosovo at the time.<sup>22</sup> Osmani and Gërvalla, for their part, largely stopped coordinating with each other afterwards, leaving Kosovo's foreign policy split between three uncoordinated tracks: the Presidency, the Prime Minister's office, and the Foreign Ministry. This was most visible during a September 2025 visit to the US, when all three travelled separately, each pursuing a distinct agenda.<sup>23</sup> Osmani, meanwhile, secured a series of unilateral diplomatic wins: new recognition from South Sudan and Syria, as well as Kosovo's founding membership in Trump's Board of Peace, signed in Davos in January 2026. She repeatedly presented the government with *faits accomplis* rather than coordinated achievements.<sup>24</sup> The breakdown of the partnership produced a whirlwind of institutional crisis. While Vetëvendosje held enough seats to

16 Kallxo.com. (2026). *Qeveria miraton buxhetin 2026 dhe marrëveshjet ndërkombëtare*.

<https://kallxo.com/lajm/qeveria-miraton-buxhetin-2026-dhe-marreveshjet-nderkombetare/>

17 Kucharski, M. (2026, February 18). *New government in Kosovo: The end of the political crisis*. OSW Centre for Eastern Studies. <https://Vetevendosje.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2026-02-18/new-government-kosovo-end-political-crisis>

18 Radio Evropa e Lirë. (2025, November 9). *Rezultatet e balotazhit: LDK fiton 5 komuna, VETËVENDOSJE dhe AAK nga 4, PDK 3*. <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/qytetaret-kosova-kosoves-balotazh-kryetar/33585282/lblolbi429515.html>

19 Osservatorio Balcani Caucaso Transeuropa. (2026, March 9). *Kosovo: non c'è un nuovo presidente, possibili nuove elezioni*. [https://Vetevendosje.balcanicaucaso.org/cp\\_article/kosovo-non-ce-un-nuovo-presidente-possibili-nuove-elezioni/](https://Vetevendosje.balcanicaucaso.org/cp_article/kosovo-non-ce-un-nuovo-presidente-possibili-nuove-elezioni/)

20 Deutsche Welle. (2026, June 6). *Kosovo faces third legislative election in just over a year*. <https://Vetevendosje.dw.com/en/kosovo-faces-third-legislative-election-in-just-over-a-year/a-76362056>

21 Koha.net. (2026, March 6). *“Përplasje” Kurti-Osmani nëpërmjet këshilltarëve*. <https://Vetevendosje.koha.net/arberi/perplasje-kurti-osmani-nepermjet-keshilltareve>

22 Telegrafi. (2024, May 30). *Letra drejtuar KiE-së që përplasi Qeverinë dhe Presidencën, çfarë tha Konjufca e cka Osmani*. <https://telegrafi.com/letra-drejtuar-kie-se-qe-perplasi-qeverine-dhe-presidence-cfare-tha-konjufca-e-cka-osmani/>

23 Xhambazi, V., & Isufaj, F. (2025, November 13). *Assessing the Presidency of Vjosa Osmani: Between Diplomatic Triumphs and Political Controversies*. Sbunker. <https://sbunker.org/en/analize/vleresimi-i-presidences-se-vjosa-osmanit-mes-triumfeve-diplomatike-dhe-polemikave-politike/>

24 Emini, D. (2026, February 28). *Krizë pas krize: sagës së votimit të presidentit po i afrohet fundi*. Sbunker.

<https://sbunker.org/en/opinion/krize-pas-krize-sages-se-votimit-te-presidentit-po-i-afrohet-fundi/>; Balkan Insight. (2026, January 28). *Kosovo's 'Board of Peace' Moment: Desperation Posing as Strategy?* <https://balkaninsight.com/2026/01/28/kosovos-board-of-peace-moment-desperation-posing-as-strategy/bi/>

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nominate more than one presidential candidate, 30 MP signatures being sufficient for a formal nomination, it refrained from endorsing Osmani outright. Instead, Vetëvendosje invited her to compete alongside other potential candidates. This approach enabled Vetëvendosje to avoid formally rejecting the incumbent while signalling that Vetëvendosje would no longer grant her re-election. For Osmani, however, competing as one candidate among several was politically unacceptable, as it would have diminished the authority and legitimacy associated with the office of a sitting president.

The opposition, for its part, lacked the 30 signatures required for any single party to nominate a candidate independently. Although the opposition could theoretically have coordinated around a joint nominee, doing so would have required a level of political cooperation that had been largely absent throughout the institutional crisis. Rather than legitimising a presidential process without a broader agreement on power-sharing, opposition parties insisted that the presidency should be negotiated as part of a comprehensive coalition package, leaving them effectively outside the nomination process.

Rather than treating the presidency as an institution requiring broad political agreement, Kurti relied on his strengthened parliamentary position following the December 2025 elections to constitute the Assembly and swiftly form the government, while postponing negotiations over the presidency. This approach appeared to rest on the assumption that, faced with constitutional deadlines and mounting domestic and international pressure, the opposition would ultimately cooperate in electing a president without being offered a share of executive power. The opposition, however, regarded the presidency as its principal bargaining instrument and insisted that it could not be separated from a broader agreement on government formation and the distribution of institutional power. Kurti's subsequent invitation to the opposition to propose candidates within a single weekend was therefore widely perceived as an ultimatum rather than a genuine attempt to achieve a compromise, rein-

forcing the deadlock instead of resolving it. Rather than pursuing a consensual candidate capable of securing broader parliamentary support, Kurti nominated Foreign Minister Glauk Konjufca, a figure from within his own inner circle, and Fatmire Mullhaxha Kollçaku, a member of the assembly from Vetëvendosje, both of whom opposition parties rejected as a continuation of unilateral institutional control.<sup>25</sup>

The standoff continued a situation of mutual blockade that then could no longer be resolved. Vetëvendosje put forward at the last-minute Feride Rushiti and Hatixhe Hoxha as candidates, both from civil society and academia. Still, no sustained inter-party negotiations preceded these nominations, reflecting the deep breakdown of political trust. The opposition rejected both candidates, arguing that the presidency could not be resolved independently of a comprehensive agreement on coalition formation and the distribution of institutional power. On 5 March 2026, the Assembly failed to reach the required quorum, with only 66 MPs present following an opposition boycott. President Vjosa Osmani then dissolved the assembly the following day.<sup>26</sup> Still, the Constitutional Court suspended the dissolution decree and granted the assembly a further 34 days, until 28 April, to elect a president.<sup>27</sup> The opposition boycotted that session as well. The Assembly was dissolved on 28 April 2026, and snap elections were called for 7 June.<sup>28</sup>

The repeated cycles of elections and institutional blockage carried significant and measurable governance costs. Throughout much of the period, Kosovo operated with caretaker institutions and limited legislative capacity, delaying policy implementation, complicating budget planning, and stalling progress on strategic priorities. The 111 reform steps committed under the EU Growth Plan, the country's broader European integration obligations, and the EU-facilitated dialogue with Serbia continued sporadically and only at the technical level. International partners repeatedly stressed the urgency of institutional stability. The EU Delegation to Kosovo stated plainly that "in many ways, 2025 was a lost year" and warned that Kosovo

25 Koha.net. (2026, March 5). *Fatmir Kollçaku, kandidatja e dytë për presidente*. <https://Vetevendosje.koha.net/en/arberi/fatmir-kollcaku-kandidatja-e-dyte-per-presidente>

26 Reuters. (2026, March 6). *Kosovo president dissolves parliament, calls snap election after failed presidential vote*. <https://Vetevendosje.reuters.com/world/kosovo-president-dissolves-parliament-calls-snap-election-after-failed-2026-03-06/>

27 Koha.net. (2026, March 9). *Kushtetuesja vendos masë të përkohshme në lidhje me dekretin e Osmanit për shpërndarjen e Kuvendit*. <https://Vetevendosje.koha.net/en/arberi/kushtetuesja-vendos-mase-te-perkohshme-ne-lidhje-me-dekretin-e-osmanit-per-shperndarjen-e-kuvendit>

28 Deutsche Welle. (2026, June 2026). *Kosovo zgjedhjet e reja më 7 qershor*. <https://Vetevendosje.dw.com/sq/kosov%C3%AB-zgjedhjet-e-reja-m%C3%AB-7-qershor/a-77006513>

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could not afford a further period of stagnation.<sup>29</sup> Just like the period between February and December 2025, the period between December 2025 and June 2026 was dominated by procedural disputes and mutual attribution of responsibility for the crisis. The June 2026 elections were thus held in a context where voters were asked once again to resolve a deadlock at the ballot box that political elites had been unable or unwilling to overcome through compromise.

## The Third Stage: Elections With Only Losers?

The December 2025 and June 2026 elections produced notably different political outcomes despite relatively limited changes in the overall balance of power between parties. While the June election was widely interpreted as a setback for the governing Vetëvendosje, the results also demonstrated the continued absence of a strong opposition alternative capable of fundamentally altering Kosovo's political landscape.<sup>30</sup>

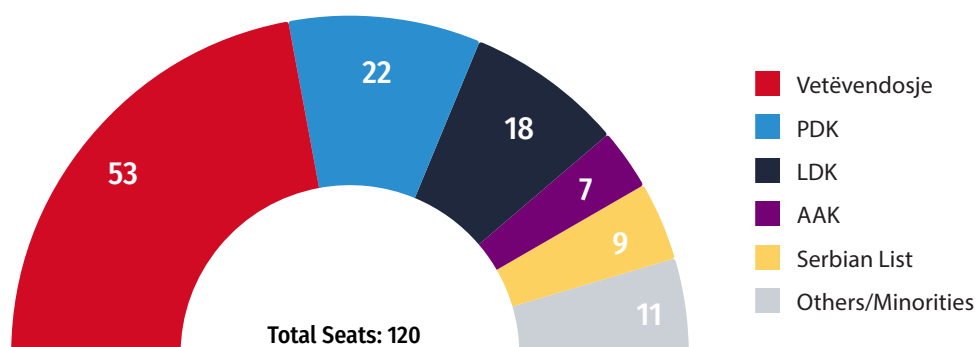
In June 2026, Vetëvendosje remained the largest political party but its support fell to 47.13%. The result contrasted sharply with expectations set during the campaign, during which Kurti publicly argued that the party could expand its support further. Instead, Vetëvendosje lost nearly four percentage points compared to December 2025. For Vetëvendosje, the election represented a warning rather than a collapse. The party remained substantially stronger than any individual competitor and retained its position as the dominant actor in Kosovo's political system. At the same time, the result demonstrated the limits of electoral mobilisation as a strategy for resolving political

deadlock. Despite seeking a stronger mandate, the party emerged with fewer votes, fewer seats, and a weaker negotiating position than six months earlier.

At first glance, these results suggest a substantial strengthening of the opposition. However, a closer examination reveals a more nuanced picture. PDK's vote share slightly declined, from 20.19% to 19.44%, a loss of 0.75 points. LDK recorded the most significant improvement, rising from 13.2% to 17.6%, while AAK increased from 5.5 to 7.2%. Although all major opposition parties improved their performance, their combined gains explain only part of Vetëvendosje's decline, suggesting that a portion of the lost support either shifted to smaller political actors or was absorbed through changes in turnout and voter mobilisation patterns.<sup>31</sup> Overall, none of the opposition parties achieved a breakthrough sufficient to claim a clear political mandate or establish themselves as a credible governing alternative.

The most significant change between the two elections was turnout. Participation declined from 47.68% in December to 37.02% in June. This suggests that a considerable proportion of former Vetëvendosje supporters did not transfer their votes to opposition parties but instead chose not to participate. Consequently, the June result should be interpreted not only as a decline in support for the governing party but also as an indication of growing voter disengagement and fatigue following repeated elections and prolonged institutional uncertainty.

Figure 2: Distribution of Seats by Electoral Formation (June 2026 Elections)



Source: Kosovo Central Electoral Commission (2026): Kosovo Assembly Elections June 2026 <https://kqz-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/2.-Ndarja-e-uleseve-ne-Kuvend-dhe-kandidatet-e-zgjedhur-7Jun2026.pdf>

- 29 The Brussels Times. (2026, April 16). *Kosovo faces ambitious deadlines in exchange for €61.8m EU funding boost*. <https://Vetevendosje.brusselstimes.com/2081694/kosovo-faces-ambitious-deadlines-in-exchange-for-e61-8m-eu-funding-boost>; New Union Post. (2025, October 21). *Kosovo recognition candidate stuck*. <https://newunionpost.eu/2025/10/21/kosovo-recognition-candidate-stuck/>
- 30 Emini, D. (2026, January 15). *Snap election in Kosovo: The one when Vetëvendosje takes it all*. Balkan Insight / BiEPAG Blog. <https://Vetevendosje.biepag.eu/blog/snap-election-in-kosovo-the-one-when-vetevendosje-takes-it-all>
- 31 Central Election Commission of Kosovo. (2026). *Parliamentary elections 2026 – official results*. <https://resultsparliamentary2026.kqz-ks.org/mcc>

### Assessment of the Electoral Process in the Three Elections

All three elections were generally assessed as competitive and procedurally credible. Domestic and international observers did not identify irregularities on a scale that would affect the overall outcome of either election. However, observers highlighted several recurring concerns, including political polarisation, increasingly personalised campaigning, pressure on public discourse, and the growing role of online disinformation.<sup>32</sup>

The December 2025 election generated particular scrutiny due to allegations of vote manipulation during the counting process and the subsequent criminal investigations. While these cases did not affect the overall result, they raised concerns regarding the integrity of preferential voting and the effectiveness of oversight mechanisms. An important concern were irregularities during the counting process. Investigations launched by the prosecution and law enforcement authorities focused on alleged manipulation of candidate votes from all parties in several municipalities, including Prizren, where irregularities identified during recount procedures led to criminal investigations and arrests. Concerns were also raised regarding the continued political participation of candidates associated with disputed counting processes, contributing to broader debates on accountability and electoral integrity.<sup>33</sup>

The June 2026 election took place under different circumstances than the preceding ones. This time, the European Union deployed no full election observation mission. Although Kosovo authorities stated that an invitation had been extended, the absence of an EU mission reduced the level of international electoral scrutiny and became part of the broader political debate surrounding the election.<sup>34</sup> Still, no major post-election protests were recorded following either vote, although tensions between political parties remained high throughout both campaigns.<sup>35</sup>

Diaspora voters continued to play an important role in Kosovo's elections, particularly for Vetëvendosje, which has traditionally performed strongly among voters residing abroad. Consequently, diaspora participation featured prominently in both campaigns and remained a subject of political debate. The past two election cycles witnessed a tension between diaspora voters and citizens residing in Kosovo, calling for electoral reform which would regulate reserved seats for the diaspora, making it impossible to be a determining factor in the overall election results.

Minority voting patterns remained largely consistent with previous elections. Srpska Lista strengthened its position within the Serb electorate, increasing its support between December and June, while other minority parties maintained relatively stable levels of representation.

### Campaigning Through Crisis

The electoral campaigns preceding both the December 2025 and June 2026 elections reflect a deeper transformation in Kosovo's political system. While previous electoral cycles were characterised by high mobilisation and relatively clear competition between policy alternatives, the most recent campaigns unfolded in an environment increasingly defined by polarisation, personalisation, and voter fatigue. Rather than structured debates over governance models and policies, electoral competition became dominated by narratives of blame for the prolonged institutional crisis, with both government and opposition seeking to shift responsibility for repeated failures to form stable institutions.<sup>36</sup>

This dynamic marked a clear departure from programmatic politics. Campaign discourse was largely reduced to mutual accusations over institutional deadlock and competing claims of obstruction, while substantive policy platforms played a secondary role.

32 European Union Election Observation Mission Kosovo. (2025, February). *EU EOM Kosovo 2025: Preliminary statement*. European External Action Service. [https://vetevendosje.eods.eu/library/EU%20EOM%20Kosovo%202025\\_Preliminary%20Statement\\_ENG.pdf](https://vetevendosje.eods.eu/library/EU%20EOM%20Kosovo%202025_Preliminary%20Statement_ENG.pdf); Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. (2026, April 27). *Observation of the early elections to the Assembly of Kosovo (28 December 2025): Report* (Doc. 16146 rev). <https://pace.coe.int/en/files/34177/html>

33 Cimili, Z. (2026, January 23). *Kosovo authorities arrest over 100 people over alleged ballot manipulation in December vote*. Associated Press. <https://apnews.com/article/kosovo-election-arrests-fraud-6f2f7e4bf147c4e24bb15757655e64ab>

34 President of the Republic of Kosovo. (2026, June 2). *The President's Office wishes to clarify that the invitation to the European Union for international observation of the June 7 elections has not been ignored*. <https://president-ksgov.net/en/the-presidents-office-wishes-to-clarify-that-the-invitation-to-the-european-union-for-international-observation-of-the-june-7-elections-has-not-been-ignored/>

35 Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. (2026, June 9). *PACE observers hail smooth early elections in Kosovo, urge political compromise and swift election of the President*. <https://pace.coe.int/en/news/10334/pace-observers-hail-smooth-early-elections-in-kosovo-urge-political-compromise-and-swift-election-of-the-president>

36 Paçarizi, G. (2026, June 11). *Elections 2026: Notes from the third election in 16 months*. Kosovo 2.0. <https://kosovotwopointzero.com/en/elections-2026-final3>

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Even when policy commitments were articulated, they were frequently subordinated to political positioning. In this context, Vetëvendosje leader Albin Kurti set an ambitious electoral target of up to 60% in the June elections, framing continued electoral consolidation as both feasible and necessary in order to govern without constraints from opposition forces.<sup>37</sup> This emphasis on electoral dominance further reinforced the logic of majoritarian competition rather than coalition-based governance.

Personalisation of politics intensified this trend. The return of Vjosa Osmani to active party alignment within the LDK contributed to a campaign increasingly structured around interpersonal and institutional ruptures rather than policy disagreement. In particular, the breakdown of the Kurti–Osmani relationship and disputes surrounding the presidency became central reference points in public debate, replacing substantive discussion on government priorities. Electoral competition increasingly revolved around political figures and rival leadership styles, reinforcing a political environment in which institutional questions were interpreted through personal and partisan lenses.

This personalisation unfolded alongside escalating tensions between major political actors, particularly Vetëvendosje and PDK. The campaign period was marked by heightened confrontational rhetoric and isolated incidents that reinforced an adversarial political climate, including a physical altercation in Skenderaj between acting Deputy Finance Minister and Vetëvendosje candidate Hysni Mehani and PDK mayor Sami Lushtaku.<sup>38</sup> The subsequent deployment of special police units further intensified perceptions of an increasingly polarised and securitised campaign environment, illustrating how political competition had extended beyond parliamentary contestation into broader institutional and territorial symbolism.

At the same time, the campaign was increasingly shaped by the growing role of disinformation and digitally mediated political communication. The electoral

period saw a marked rise in misinformation, including fabricated opinion polling, manipulated visual content, and false statements attributed to political actors. Of particular significance was the expansion of AI-generated content used to simulate political messages, alter the public perception of events, or fabricate apparent endorsements. While disinformation had been present in earlier electoral cycles, its scale and sophistication in 2025–2026 represented a qualitative shift, with social media platforms serving as the primary channels for dissemination and amplification.<sup>39</sup>

Socio-economic issues remained structurally important to voters, particularly concerns over inflation, wages, pensions, employment, and public investment. However, these issues were only partially translated into substantive debates.<sup>40</sup> Instead, economic policy became highly politicised. In the weeks preceding the June elections, the caretaker government introduced a package of one-off financial transfers of approximately €100,00 for pensioners, students, children, and selected categories of employees, framed as an anti-inflation measure. Additional discussions on a potential thirteenth salary for public sector workers further reinforced perceptions that fiscal measures were being deployed in an electoral context.<sup>41</sup> While the government defended these interventions as social protection tools, opposition parties characterised them as short-term incentives lacking structural economic rationale.

The campaigns were also shaped by competing narratives over Kosovo's European integration trajectory. Implementation of the European Union's Growth Plan for the Western Balkans became politically contested, with Kurti framing delays in parliamentary ratification of related measures as evidence of opposition obstruction that risked slowing Kosovo's access to significant EU funding.<sup>42</sup> Opposition parties rejected this interpretation, attributing delays instead to institutional instability and procedural breakdowns, while warning against the politicisation of EU integration

37 Koha.net. (2026, May 9). *Kurti synon 60% në zgjedhje: Me punë, sinqeritet dhe përkushtim është e mundur.*

<https://Vetevendosje.koha.net/arberi/kurti-synon-60percent-ne-zgjedhje-me-pune-sinqeritet-dhe-perkushtim-eshte-e-mundur>

38 Koha.net. (2026, May 14). *Mehani thotë se është sulmuar nga Sami Lushtaku.* <https://Vetevendosje.koha.net/arberi/mehani-thote-se-eshte-sulmuar-nga-sami-lushtaku>

39 Sbunker. (2026, May 20). *Inteligjenca artificiale, "armë" e re e dezinformimit në Kosovë.* <https://sbunker.org/disinfo/inteligjenca-artificiale-arme-e-re-e-dezinformimit-ne-kosove/>; Europa e Lirë / Radio Free Europe. (2026, January 10). *Inteligjenca artificiale dhe manipulimi në rrjetet sociale.* <https://Vetevendosje.evropaelire.org/a/inteligjenca-artificiale-manipulimi-rrjetet-sociale/33770236.html>

40 Telegrafi. (2026, June 6). *DnV: Fushata ishte e qetë, por me pabarazi në garë dhe retorikë polarizuese.* <https://telegrafi.com/dnv-fushate-ishte-e-qete-por-me-pabarazi-ne-gare-dhe-retorike-polarizuese/>

41 Kallxo.com. (2026, May 25). *Kurti: Janë ekzekutuar shtesat për lehonat me vlerën e rritur.*

<https://kallxo.com/lajm/kurti-jane-ekzekutuar-shtesat-per-lehonat-me-vleren-e-rritur/>

42 Koha.net. (2026, May 14). *Kurti: Opozita po bllokoi reformat, po rrezikon miliona euro nga BE-ja.*

<https://Vetevendosje.koha.net/de/index.php/arberi/kurti-opozita-po-bllokon-reformat-po-rrezikon-miliona-euro-nga-be-ja>

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commitments. As a result, the topic of European integration increasingly functioned as an extension of domestic political competition rather than a consensual strategic objective.

Diaspora voters played a particularly prominent role in both campaigns, reflecting their established importance in Kosovo's electoral landscape and their strong historical support for Vetëvendosje. This salience was further reinforced by government measures aimed at facilitating participation, including a programme allocating approximately €2 million in subsidies to airlines operating flights to Kosovo. Under the scheme, airlines received per-passenger financial incentives intended to increase flight availability and reduce ticket prices for members of the diaspora travelling home to vote. Although officially presented as a measure to improve connectivity and reduce travel costs, opposition parties criticised the programme as an indirect effort to maximise diaspora turnout in favour of the governing party.<sup>43</sup>

Foreign policy and relations with Serbia remained a persistent backdrop to the campaigns but were largely filtered through leadership-centred narratives. The government highlighted its consolidation of state authority in northern Kosovo as evidence of effective governance and sovereignty enforcement, while opposition parties accused Kurti of straining relations with key international partners, particularly the European Union and the United States. Vjosa Osmani's positioning as a more explicitly pro-Western and pro-American figure further personalised this dimension of foreign policy debate, reinforcing the broader trend toward leadership-centric electoral competition.

Ultimately, the most striking feature of both campaigns was the widening gap between political messaging and public expectations. After two parliamentary elections within sixteen months, a growing share of the electorate expressed frustration with a political class unable to translate electoral outcomes into stable governance. Parties struggled to justify why they expected repeated elections to produce different results from previous cycles, while public debate increasingly shifted toward scepticism over the capacity of elections alone to resolve the institutional crisis.

This sentiment was reflected most clearly in patterns of voter participation. Rather than producing signifi-

cant electoral realignment between parties, the June 2026 election was marked by rising abstention and disengagement. For many voters, the campaign did not represent a contest over competing political visions, but rather a referendum on political fatigue and institutional dysfunction. In this sense, electoral participation itself became an indicator of declining confidence in Kosovo's capacity to resolve its deadlock through conventional democratic mechanisms.

### All Options on the Table: Coalition Formation and the Presidency as the Decisive Constraint

The June 2026 elections altered the parliamentary arithmetic but did not resolve the structural dilemma that produced the December 2025 deadlock. The post-2025 experience confirmed that government formation and presidential succession cannot be treated as sequential or separate processes. Any durable governing arrangement must address the presidency, the government, and parliamentary leadership as a single institutional package.

This sequencing problem is now the central constraint in coalition negotiations. Attempts to form a government without simultaneously resolving the presidency have already resulted in institutional paralysis and repeated elections. The starting point for post-June negotiations is therefore not a parliamentary majority alone, but a comprehensive settlement that links the presidency, government, and the parliament. The following scenarios outline the principal coalition pathways available to Kosovo's political actors, and the structural constraints that shape each of them.

#### Scenario One: Vetëvendosje / PDK — Numerical Stability, Political Incompatibility

A "grand" coalition between Vetëvendosje and PDK would command a combined 75 seats and, with the support of non-Serb minority MPs, would comfortably exceed the 80-MP threshold required for the presidential election. On paper, it is arithmetically the most stable option available. In practice, however, it remains constrained by one of the deepest political rivalries in Kosovo's contemporary politics. The roots of this rivalry lie not only in ideological differences, but also in a decade of political competition between the two parties. The relationship deteriorated significantly during the collapse of Kurti's first government in 2020, when his ousting from power resulted from a convergence of interests among Kosovo's established

43 Koha.net. (2026, May 28). *Aviokompanitë përfitojnë 3 deri në 6 euro për secilin mërgimtar që e sjellin në Kosovë.*  
<https://Vetevendosje.koha.net/en/arberi/aviokompanite-perfitojne-3-deri-ne-6-eur-per-secilin-mergimtar-qe-e-sjellin-ne-kosove>

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political actors, reinforced by pressure from the first Trump administration involved in the Kosovo–Serbia dialogue. Hashim Thaçi, then president and one of PDK's founding figures, became a central figure barricaded against Kurti as the prime minister.<sup>44</sup> For Vetëvendosje and much of its electorate, the events of 2020 reinforced the perception of PDK as the principal representative of the political order against which the party had originally emerged. Since then, political competition between Vetëvendosje and PDK has evolved into a defining feature of Kosovo's party system. Electoral campaigns have frequently been framed around this divide, with both parties deriving part of their political identity from opposition to the other. Cooperation has thus become politically costly, particularly for party leaderships that have spent years mobilising supporters through adversarial narratives.

The tensions surrounding the Kosovo Specialist Chambers and the broader debate over the legacy of the Kosovo Liberation Army have added another layer of disagreement, but they are better understood as reinforcing an already difficult relationship rather than creating it. The principal obstacle remains the lack of political trust between two parties that have largely defined themselves in opposition to one another.<sup>45</sup>

A further complication is internal to PDK itself. The party contains different centres of influence and strategic preferences, making it more difficult to identify a unified negotiating position and guarantee long-term cohesion behind any coalition agreement.

In sum, a Vetëvendosje–PDK coalition would require the greatest political adjustment from both sides and a willingness to overcome a rivalry that has shaped Kosovo's politics for much of the past decade, making it thereby rather unlikely.

#### Scenario Two: Vetëvendosje / LDK – Conditional Feasibility with Presidential Bargaining

A coalition between Vetëvendosje and LDK would produce approximately 71 seats, sufficient for government formation with minority support and potentially approaching the presidential threshold. It is politically

more feasible than cooperation with PDK, but it is complicated, above all, by the role of Vjosa Osmani.<sup>46</sup>

Osmani's return to active party politics, leading the LDK list and running for the role of the president, has made her not merely a factor in coalition negotiations but their central variable. Any Vetëvendosje–LDK arrangement must address her political future explicitly: whether she is a candidate for another presidential term, whether such a candidacy could attract cross-party support, and whether Vetëvendosje is prepared to accept an outcome on the presidency that it does not control. These are not secondary questions to be resolved after government formation – they are the precondition for it. Vetëvendosje enters these negotiations having lost four parliamentary seats in an attempt originally aiming at winning more. Its capacity to defer or unilaterally determine the outcome of the presidency question has diminished accordingly. A durable Vetëvendosje–LDK agreement would require a more explicit and binding institutional settlement than any arrangement the parties have previously accepted. Attempts to form a governing coalition following the meeting between the leaderships of Vetëvendosje and the LDK were subsequently put on hold due to strong opposition from LDK delegates to such a partnership. At the same time, efforts to initiate the dismissal of LDK leader Lumir Abdixhiku triggered significant internal turmoil within the party, leaving its leadership unable to effectively negotiate the formation of a governing coalition.<sup>47</sup>

#### Scenario Three: PDK / LDK / AAK — Anti-Vetëvendosje Coalition with Fragile Governability

A coalition between PDK, LDK, and AAK could be arithmetically conceivable but would be politically fragile. The three parties are united less by a shared governing vision rather than by their opposition to Vetëvendosje, a foundation that may be sufficient for forming a government, but far less so for sustaining one. Even then, such a coalition would struggle to secure a stable parliamentary majority without additional support.

Reliance on Srpska Lista is not a politically viable option. The party remains closely associated with the

44 Sopi, A. (2020, 22 December). *Historia e rrëzimit të qeverive në Kosovë*. Kallxo.com. <https://kallxo.com/gjate/analize/historia-e-rrëzimit-te-qeverive-ne-kosove/>

45 Radio Free Europe, "Hague War Crimes Trial Casts Shadow Over Kosovo's 18th Birthday Celebrations" (17 February 2026): PDK voiced dissatisfaction with the government's handling of the case and organised a protest in Pristina on 17 February 2026. <https://vetevendosje.rferl.org/a/kosovo-hague-war-crimes-thaci-/33679807.html>

46 Gazeta Express. (2026, June 7). Vjosa Osmani: VV-ja s'ka asnjë arsye që ta refuzojë emrin tim për presidente. <https://vetevendosje.gazetaexpress.com/vjosa-osmani-vvja-ska-asnje-arsye-qe-ta-refuzoje-emrin-tim-per-presidente/>

47 Elshani, N. (2026, July 15). Abdixhiku: Kuvendi i jashtëzakonshëm i LDK-së do të mbahet, nuk i iki asnjë vote. Telegraf. <https://telegraf.com/abdixhiku-kuvendi-i-jashtezakonshem-i-ldk-se-do-te-mbahet-nuk-i-iki-asnje-vote/>

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September 2023 armed attack in Banjska, organised by its former vice-president Milan Radoičić, which resulted in the death of a Kosovo Police officer. Radoičić subsequently admitted personal responsibility and was indicted in absentia by Kosovo authorities on charges including terrorism and attacks against the constitutional order. The European Parliament has characterised the incident as a terrorist attack.<sup>48</sup> Any government dependent on Srpska Lista would face political and international constraints that no Albanian-majority party could realistically sustain.<sup>49</sup>

Without Srpska Lista, a broad opposition coalition would enter office without a comfortable governing majority and with significant internal tensions from the outset. More importantly, such an arrangement risks reproducing the political dynamics of 2020, when the first Kurti government was brought down by a coalition of virtually all other major parties. While constitutionally legitimate, that episode ultimately strengthened rather than weakened Vetëvendosje by reinforcing its central political narrative: that an entrenched political establishment was willing to unite against it regardless of electoral outcomes. The result was not the marginalisation of Kurti, but his landslide victory in the subsequent election.

A similar coalition today could therefore find itself confronting the same dilemma: It may succeed in excluding Vetëvendosje from government, but in doing so it could once again validate the very political message that has sustained Kurti's dominance. For opposition parties that are still struggling to recover from the political consequences of 2020, this would represent a familiar and potentially costly mistake.

#### Scenario Four: Renewed Elections — Institutional Stagnation with Escalating Costs

If negotiations fail across all three scenarios, a fourth election in autumn 2026 cannot be excluded. All parties consistently describe this as the outcome they wish to avoid. However, the record of the past sixteen months suggests that what parties say they wish to avoid and what their behaviour produces are not always the same thing.

A fourth electoral cycle would take place under conditions considerably more damaging than the third: with turnout already at a historic low, the loss of an estimated €40 million in EU Growth Plan funds as the 30 June deadline passed, the prospect of a further €100 million at risk by year-end, and a political class whose credibility with the electorate has been diminished by each successive repetition of the same crisis.<sup>6</sup> For Vetëvendosje, another election from a reduced base carries a genuine risk of further erosion. For opposition parties, three cycles have not produced a governing majority, and there is no evident reason why a fourth would. Renewed elections do not offer a viable pathway to government formation for any major actor. They represent the shared cost of continued failure to compromise.

#### Strategic Implications

The absence of a stable governing arrangement carries implications that extend beyond domestic institutional functioning, particularly given Kosovo's external constraints and limited economic resilience.

Geopolitically, Kosovo remains an incomplete international subject, with its status continuing to depend on sustained external engagement and recognition processes. This makes domestic institutional stability particularly sensitive in the current broader transatlantic context, characterised by evolving EU–US alignment dynamics and increased geopolitical uncertainty in the Western Balkans. Prolonged institutional deadlock risks weakening Kosovo's ability to maintain consistent external positioning at a time when regional stability remains externally conditioned.

In relation to the EU, Kosovo's accession process remains formally anchored in the Stabilisation and Association framework, while its EU candidate perspective remains asymmetrical compared to other Western Balkan states that have advanced further in accession negotiations. Although initiatives such as the EU Growth Plan offer a medium-term incentive framework, disbursement is conditional on institutional functionality and implementation capacity. Continued political instability therefore carries direct financial consequences, including the potential loss of

48 European Western Balkans. (2023, October 19). *EP adopts resolution on Banjska, calls for measures against Serbian government if its involvement is proven*. European Western Balkans. <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2023/10/19/ep-adopts-resolution-on-banjska-calls-for-measures-against-serbian-government-if-its-involvement-is-proven/>

49 Balkan Insight, "A Year After Banjska Attack, Kosovo Indictment Chronicles Serb Land Grab Plot" (24 September 2024). <https://balkaninsight.com/2024/09/24/a-year-after-banjska-attack-kosovo-indictment-chronicles-serb-land-grab-plot/bi/>; Western Balkans Center, "Banjska Attack Verdict Raises Questions on Future of Serbia-Kosovo Dialogue." (2026) <https://westernbalkanscenter.org/article/pristinas-banjska-attack-verdict-raises-questions-on-future-of-serbia-kosovo-normalization-dialogue>

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allocated funds and reduced credibility in meeting reform benchmarks.

Economic constraints further reinforce the costs of prolonged political uncertainty. Kosovo continues to face structural challenges including low investment levels, a limited fiscal space, and high dependence on external remittances and donor support. In this context, sustained government paralysis reduces investor confidence and delays policy implementation in key sectors. Unlike larger regional states, Kosovo has limited capacity to absorb prolonged periods without functioning institutions without resulting in immediate macroeconomic and administrative effects.

The absence of functioning institutions therefore has disproportionate effects on governance continuity, reform implementation, and external engagement.

**Conclusion: Kosovo Cannot Vote Its Way Out of This Crisis**

Three elections in sixteen months have produced a clear lesson that extends beyond the immediate political crisis: Kosovo's democratic challenge is no longer whether elections can be held, but whether elections can produce effective governance. The 2025–2026 electoral cycle demonstrated both the resilience and the limitations of Kosovo's democracy. Procedurally, the system passed an important test. Elections were conducted in an orderly manner, results were counted and accepted, and no political actor sought to circumvent the constitutional framework. In a region where these achievements cannot be taken for granted, they represent genuine democratic progress.

Yet Kosovo failed the more consequential test of democratic effectiveness. The question posed at the outset of this paper "What were these elections for?" has a straightforward answer: they were not called to serve the electorate but emerged from a political class that repeatedly chose the uncertainty of another election over the difficulty of compromise. The result was sixteen months of institutional paralysis, approximately €25 million in electoral expenditure, declining voter engagement, and a June 2026 outcome that reproduced, in essential respects, the parliamentary arithmetic of February 2025.

The first lesson of this electoral cycle is that electoral dominance has limits. Vetëvendosje's trajectory from 50.3% in 2021 to 47.13% in June 2026 illustrates that electoral success cannot substitute for institutional compromise. A strong mandate may provide political

authority, but it does not eliminate the constitutional realities of coalition-building in a fragmented parliamentary system. Repeated elections did not resolve the political crisis; they reproduced it at a higher cost.

The second lesson is that fragmentation is structural, not temporary. The period of dominant-party government was the exception rather than the rule. Kosovo's constitutional framework was designed around coalition politics, yet political culture has continued to treat coalition-building as a concession rather than a governing obligation. The challenge is therefore not simply winning elections, but adapting political expectations to the realities of a pluralist system.

The third lesson is that legitimacy requires governance, not only elections. Kosovo's citizens continue to accept electoral outcomes, but confidence that elections produce functioning governments has weakened. This distinction is critical. Democratic fatigue does not emerge because citizens reject elections; it emerges when elections repeatedly fail to deliver institutional results. Restoring confidence will require more than another electoral victory — it will require evidence that democratic competition can produce effective government.

The consequences of this political paralysis extend far beyond government formation. The next administration inherits unresolved economic, European integration, and security challenges. Kosovo remains among Europe's poorest economies, with youth unemployment contributing to continued emigration and demographic decline. The Brussels and Ohrid Agreement framework remains unimplemented, leaving any incoming government between the domestic political costs of advancing the Association of Serbian Majority Municipalities and the international costs of continued non-compliance. These difficult choices have been deferred rather than resolved by successive governments.

The same pattern applies to Kosovo's European trajectory. The expiry of the EU Growth Plan grace period on 30 June 2026 resulted in the loss of an estimated €40 million, with further funds at risk if implementation remains stalled. Kosovo's path towards EU integration remains slower than that of regional peers, while NATO membership continues to face obstacles due to non-recognition by five member states. Addressing these challenges requires precisely the institutional stability that repeated electoral cycles have failed to produce.

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The June 2026 elections therefore produced a paradoxical outcome: they weakened the assumption that political dominance alone could deliver governance, but they did not create a clear alternative. All major parties enter the post-election period weaker than they would wish, facing an electorate that appears increasingly disengaged rather than politically realigned. This shared vulnerability may provide the only available foundation for the compromise that three elections failed to produce.

Kosovo cannot vote its way out of this crisis. The electorate has delivered its message repeatedly and at a measurable cost. The question is no longer who won the election, but whether Kosovo's political class is finally prepared to govern.