

New government in Kosovo: Mission Impossible?

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The process of early national elections in Kosovo passed without serious incidents and by the Central Election Commission (CEC) was considered as one of the most successful elections despite a large number of complains in social media from the diaspora voters that they could not be registered to vote. Preliminary results announced by the CEC shows that the Kosovar electorate is shifting from more traditional voting for Democratic Party of Kosovo seen as inheritance of the former guerrilla of the Kosovo Liberation Army and the Democratic League of Kosovo seen as inheritance of the Peaceful movement of late president of Kosovo, Ibrahim Rugova. The gaining movement of Self-determination has mainly won this electorate by left wing rhetoric of reviewing the privatisation and re-distributing wealth to a more equalitarian manner and somewhat populist claims that Kosovo cannot survive on its own feet economically, so joining Albania is a long term goal. The left wing rhetoric and nationalistic discourse of debates combined with larger group of young supporters with anti-EU sentiments gained them support to increase to the biggest party in Kosovo despite not coming first in the elections. PDK allied with Nisma (a PDK fraction seceded in 2014) and AAK that is led by a former regional commander of KLA to gain around 34% of votes. The controversy is that PDK (and coalition partners) despite losing a dozen of seats at the National Assembly, won the right to first attempt to create the government. For this, Haradinaj as nominee for the post of Prime Minister from the coalition will need 2/3 of the votes of 120 seat parliament that includes 20 reserved seats for the ethnic minorities. He will be given a three round trial at the national assembly for voting his suggested cabinet where first two attempts need 2/3 of those present in the room and if these attempts fail, he will need the simple 61 votes on the third round. A government created with 50% plus one vote is considered generally a weak government keeping in mind that challenges that next government will face require 2/3 of votes to pass issues of major concern such as Agreement on the Border Demarcation with the Republic of Montenegro, creation of the Municipal Association in the northern part of Kosovo, dealing the Special Court that was created to investigate on the issues of war crimes in post-war Kosovo and on top of that, the economy and the corruption as major challenges.

Options for creating the Government

Based on the experience of Kosovar political parties and the divisions in the political scene in Kosovo, voting of the cabinet and the government will not be an easy job. Under heavy international influence and deep cleavages among fractions in Kosovo, no political party is willingly joining forces with another. As PDK and the coalition voted the last government out (dominated by LDK), it is unlikely that the latter will join the same coalition again to be betrayed. Haradinaj as nominee for the prime minister from the “war wing” coalition will have difficult times to convince Vetevendosje as well because the opposition party had the biggest increase in the elections and has a very strong negotiating position. Haradinaj will not give up his position and Vetvendosje will not create a government not to be able and work on their programme.

Should Haradinaj succeed to create a government with his coalition, minorities and a dozen of other MPs, then Vetevendosje remains in opposition along with LDK to increase even further until the next parliamentary crisis where one of the major issues comes to the parliament such as creation of Kosovo Army which is one of the top priorities for Haradinaj.

Second option is that if Haradinaj fails to gather 50% +1 vote for his cabinet, the President of Kosovo is forced to seek another option and mandate someone else to create the government. Vetevendosje already started negotiating with the LDK and others to prepare for this option. In this case, PDK and satellite parties go in the opposition and Vetevendosje creates a government with LDK and minorities which will create a semi-weak government which will have basic votes but still no majority to do necessary constitutional changes such as creation of Kosovo Army.

However this executive cabinet is voted in, it will surely be one of the most challenged government facing major issues to resolve. In other words, it is a career killer government.

Five issues for the new Prime Minister

The future Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo, except the internal pressure to build a coalition that will have to satisfy three or four political entities with positions and power, will also have to create a climate of meeting international conditions for Kosovo that are already known publicly. In the following mandate, the Kosovo PM will have at least five major problems that will have to be over and over again. Demarcation, Association, Special Court, Economy and Combating Corruption are problems that require immediate solutions as well as most times require the majority of 2/3 in the National Assembly.

1. **The demarcation of border with Montenegro:** this pending issue has to be resolved sooner or later as it has been said clearly by the EU senior officials that this is a condition for Kosovo being granted visa liberalisation. Besides this, Kosovo has to learn to behave responsibly with its neighbours and fulfil its parts of the deal which was agreed upon and ratified by the Parliament of Montenegro. With Kosovo neighbour joining NATO, now it is only Kosovo that benefits from signing off this agreement. Kosovo team that worked with Montenegro experts was not prepared and had no consensus over the decisions but that is Kosovo's fault and the future prime minister of Kosovo has to deal with this problem of not only internal but regional and international scale. The opposition together with parts of government structures did not support the demarcation ratification in the Kosovo National Assembly and built a discourse that Kosovo is losing its territory. The PM needs to be reminded that Kosovo has been recognised by Montenegro despite political pressure from ethnic composition of Montenegro as well as the political context in relation to Serbia.
1. **The Municipality Association:** It's another challenge that future PM will have to face. The Serb minority living in the northern part of Kosovo, a part that is not entirely controlled by the Government of Kosovo, did not give up its request for a

municipal association that allows them to self-govern for many local issues. As the attention of both international community and region is brought more and more to the fact of minority rights and dialogue with Serbia, Kosovo has agreed to create this entity which is fully in compliance with both Kosovo Constitution and the international legal instruments that are part of the constitution in Kosovo. In addition to this, the association is also derived from the Ahtisaari Package from which the document was also proclaimed Kosovo's Independence. This association guarantees Serb Community rights less than or beyond the legal instruments included in the constitutional system of Kosovo. A model that is not discussed in the media (with or without purpose) is the model of the Association of Knin Municipalities in the Republic of Croatia.

2. **Special Court:** It's considered to be one of the hotspots that could destabilize the Kosovo because of its nature focusing on one side of conflict and because former KLA leaders are expected to be indicted in this court. This situation may dictate further political developments in the country including violent reaction from opposition which ever party will remain in opposition heaving in mind that the voting for creation of this court was only possible due to large international pressure. However, Kosovo must implement the decision to create the Special Court for War Crimes Investigation during 1998-1999. This would permanently lead to uncertainties if crimes were committed during this period and to pave the way for Kosovo towards European Integration.
3. **Economy:** The future PM should create a suitable climate for investors from abroad in order to found new job openings and secure market protection from abroad and consequently rejecting Serbia's initiative to create a common market from which Kosovo does not benefit. The 4% of economic increase in Kosovo in last couple of years has been welcome but this is a development that is hardly seen among the population that numbers around 40% unemployment. The agriculture and livestock farming sector should also be supported and strengthened, in which case domestic producers will benefit, knowing that Kosovo is a major importer of agricultural and food products. Employment generating remains one of the biggest challenges in Kosovo and for anyone becoming a prime minister will remain a high priority and hot topic.
4. **Corruption:** The last but not least, the fight against corruption and organized crime, which has been highlighted in all the Progress Reports of the European Commission. The 2016 recommendations of the progress report, which do not represent Kosovo well in the judiciary's impact, the fight against corruption, the fight against organized crime, the freedom of expression, the political influence on high-ranking titles in public institutions, should also be fully implemented. The global Transparency International organization in the corruption perception index of 2016 Kosovo has ranked 95th place with 36 points. Compared to the other region countries, Kosovo is the main source of corruption in this index followed by Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. The future executive should work to improve the rule of law sector, depoliticize prosecution and

enable budgetary constraints to create effective functioning of the courts. Currently, the litigation for civil as well as criminal cases can take years, protection of witnesses is very weak and corruption cases in judiciary are very often.

To fulfil all these tasks and perform as a PM, one needs to bring real results for the Kosovar society keeping the international community satisfied and keeping the nationalistic rhetoric high to keep the popular support up. It sounds like an impossible mission destined to kill careers of young and ambitious political leaders of one of the poorest countries in Europe.

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