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**VOTING TRENDS AND ELECTORAL
BEHAVIOR IN KOSOVO
2000 - 2004**

Prishtina, May 2006



**VOTING TRENDS AND ELECTORAL
BEHAVIOR IN KOSOVO
2000 - 2004**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. GENERAL TRENDS	5
A) Voting body / Getting Bigger	5
B) Turn-out Trends / Steady Decline	5
C) Municipal variations	9
D) Albanian and Serb Turn-out Trends	10
3. SPECIFIC TRENDS	11
A) Learning of Democracy	11
4. QUALITY OF REPRESENTATION	13
A) Party Performance	14
B) Performance of Other Albanian Political Entities	16
C) Geographic Distribution of Votes	17
D) Local parties	18
5. IS LEGITIMACY ERODING?	20
A) Legitimacy of Political Parties and Electoral Behavior	20
B) We know better than the voters, they say	21
C) Punishing Incumbents	22
D) Local position is losing, local opposition is winning	23
E) Not all opposition is winning	24
F) So, Local Politics Matters	24
G) Non voters are the biggest party now	26
H) The Lack of Alternatives	27
I) Voters are not only after the big leaders, but after successful local politics as well	27
6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	29
Recommendations:	31
Annex I: Results by municipalities	33

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One of the main features of democracy is to have free and fair elections as well as ensure that the trust of the voters is faithfully represented in the institutions elected to govern them. Kosovar politicians and foreign diplomats spend a lot of their time speaking about democracy. This paper suggests that the establishment of a fully functional democratic system in Kosovo leaves plenty to desire. This recognition runs against the official position of many elected officials and representatives of the international administration. We suggest that the problem is acute and could not be satisfactorily solved without improvement in the overall lines of responsibility and accountability. This would require that UNMIK and PISG structures recognize the shortcomings of the political system in general, and of the electoral system in particular, and put these on high priority en par with stability and status.

This paper looks back at the four elections that Kosovo has had from 2000 until 2004, and assesses their effects on the political culture today. The paper concurs with most other stakeholders that the elections were free and fair. However, it stops short of concluding that the citizens' trust has been faithfully represented in electing national and local representatives (with the notable exception of the set-aside seats). Whereas elected representatives have proportionally been elected, their accountability to those who have elected them remains limited at best.

The electoral system that Kosovo has had so far, List-PR (closed lists, proportional representation) has served its purpose in the first term. It allowed political parties to consolidate in the immediate phase after the war, but it was the wrong choice to make for the second term.

As we found in 2004 while lobbying to change the electoral system as part of a civil society movement, "Reforma 2004", most NGOs, high officials of all the main parties (one former and the then primeminister in office, the President of the Assembly), as well as most international officials in their private capacities objected the current system. This system by definition helps party leaders put their parties firmly under their control. This occurs especially in societies with no established democracy and as such presents an obstacle to its further consolidation. Unfortunately, independent politicians are still considered a nuisance not only to party leaders, but also to those international administrators who think that status and security can be solved without democracy. As a result, this system has discouraged the development of proper democracy at the expense of some more narrow and immediate interests.

This paper shows that the current electoral system has negative effects. As a result, we argue that if we are to expect democracy, then, it is essential to change the electoral system. The Kosovar society needs responsible leaders at all levels, democratically run parties, faithful representation of diverse interests, MPs who bring legitimacy to the insti-

tutions as well as stable and responsive governments. Proper dialogue in the institutions replaces destructive “dialogue” on the streets.

As commented by several international observers, some international officials privately qualify Kosovars as immature. However, making decisions and collecting signatures over dinner as it happened over the decision to talk to Belgrade is no replacement for that. The fact that the dialogue with Belgrade did not start after “the dinner” is one such indicator.

The aim of this paper is to analyze several electoral trends, such as turn-out, party performance, results by municipality, or ethnicity. The hope embraced in international administration that democracy could be established by administrative fiat is erroneous. Quite on the contrary, as shown by the findings presented here citizens who have long been expecting democracy, and see the present reality being portrayed with rosy colors, have already started to show signs of fatigue and frustration with democracy. The creation of such a distance between the citizens and their representatives, as well as of the government further exacerbates the already widespread views of corruption and patronage.

The primary argument is that due to the electoral system and to the strategies of the international community, as well as party leaderships, the political elite is losing much of its popular support. This is manifested in many forms, such as rapid decrease in turn-out, loss of votes by the parties in municipal government, significant fall of the share of the electorate by the major three parties, all features that are evidence of a dangerous legitimacy vacuum in the society that may be tempted to be exploited in times of crisis many of which Kosovo awaits in the future. Whereas the political parties may not see an immediate interest to have this system changed, for it presents serious challenges to their internal management, the paper concludes that this would enable more dynamic parties to reach out to new voters. Such a political culture would enable more active parties to get rewarded more with votes for their outreach.

Finally, the paper recommends that the electoral system is changed and any such discussions for change should be guided by principles of accountability, fairness, minority inclusion, political integration, representation, voter participation, effective governance, and above all, legitimacy. Changing the electoral system, both at the local and at the national level, is not going to solve all of the problems above, but it will certainly be a significant step to saving the concept of democracy for the Kosovars. Although we have no illusions that the electoral system will address most of the ills of the political system, a number of changes would certainly work to the benefit of the citizens.

We recommend that municipal elections are conducted in a system of open lists, proportional results, adequate gender and minority representation, no districting, and directly elected mayors through a preferential system.

1. INTRODUCTION

The right to vote in Kosovo can be exercised freely, though fully representative and truly accountable institutions are still missing

For decades Kosovars have aspired opportunities to freely exercise their political rights. Their struggles against a discriminatory regime throughout the 1990's were filled with efforts and rhetoric in support of the right to elect and be elected. This long and multi-faceted struggle aimed, among the others, the establishment of representative and accountable institutions. In pursuit of those goals, the struggle of 1990s also included underground voting, albeit with little more than a symbolic effect due to the omni-present apartheid-like regime.

The present electoral system goes to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) from the Central Election Commission as a Draft Regulation. After being returned from the Legal Office in New York, the SRSG promulgates it. The Central Election Commission is "responsible for the conduct of elections in Kosovo". The CEC is appointed by the SRSG, but its work is said to be "technical and professional" (OMiK). The current electoral system takes Kosova as one electoral district for the Assembly Election with seats allocated on a proportional basis. The Sainte-Lague formula is used to calculate the translation of votes into seats. The size of the Assembly is 120 seats with 20 seats being reserved for non-Albanian communities. "These include ten for the Serb community, four for the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, three for the Bosniak community, two for the Turkish community, and one for the Gorani community. These seats will be added to any other seats that these communities may win out of the remaining 100 seats, for which all voters will vote (OMiK "Summary..." 4). The candidates' list is closed, meaning that a voter votes for a political party and not for an individual candidate. Also, the system provides for a gender requirement where women must make up one third of the candidates' list. There is no threshold for representation in the Assembly for any political entities. In the last parliamentary elections in 2001, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, which ran the elections, set up approximately 1700 polling stations, 550 polling centers and an average of 750 voters were slotted for each station in 2001. (Taken from "Reforming Electoral System of Kosova" published in 2004 by KIPRED).

Years latter, the right to vote in Kosovo can be exercised freely, though fully representative and truly accountable institutions are still missing. There are structural and other shortcomings eroding voter confidence, accountability lines and trust in public institutions. Consequently, the legitimacy gap is widening as this paper attempts to illustrate.

Currently there are serious deficiencies in the relation between voters and their representatives. Citizens can-

not name an elected representative who speaks on their behalf; hence there is no constituency connection between elected officials and voters. As a result, vertical accountability lines are entirely absent. The major link that exist – political parties – seems to be misreading the citizens' mood and elements of this link are granting insufficient attention to what citizens want and expect. As a result, overall turn-out is decreasing, as is the overall accumulation of votes by major parties which points to serious dissatisfaction.

Voters are increasingly left with a growing sense of powerlessness to the detriment of qualitative participation. They cannot hold individual representatives accountable for their actions and they cannot clearly assign responsibilities for performance of governing bodies. As significant parts of the voting body feel disenfranchised, legitimacy foundations upon which institutions and political parties lie, continue to degenerate. A small portion of voters at the local level is reacting by sanctioning municipal incumbent parties. Many more, however, are feeling increasingly alienated from decision-making processes and thus they are encouraged to use “alternative” means for making their voices heard – they are abstaining from the main form of political participation, and often the only available, casting their ballot.

In light of the above, this paper tries to portray the newly acquired rights for Kosovars to vote and to outline voting trends from first free elections in 2000 until the last elections held in 2004. Understandably, a very short history of elections is a serious handicap for identifying voting trends as they deserve. However, a few modest trends and lessons displayed here are worth being taken into account, particularly the plummeting citizens' participation and a widening legitimacy gap. Ideally, such a study should be coupled with a public survey that would probe these questions from the point of view of various citizen groups. Another limitation is that this series of four elections masks two local and two national elections. Aware of the different nature of these elections, we have only analyzed comparable results that showed continuous trends.

1. GENERAL TRENDS

A) Voting body / Getting Bigger

One of the most dramatic trends from the elections of 2000 to 2004 is the size of the voting body. In the elections of 2000 there were 913,179 registered voters. The body of potentially eligible voters was much higher, but a very high number of voters from the diaspora and minority citizens had not been registered, a drawback corrected in subsequent years. Therefore, overall growth of the electorate since first elections until the last in 2004 is considerable in both relative and absolute terms. In only four years the number of registered voters has increased for as much as half of its initial size. Such a high increase cannot be attributed to birth rate alone.

Table 1: Growth of electoral body (per year)

	increase per year
2000-2001	36.9%
2001-2002	5.6%
2002-2004	3.4%

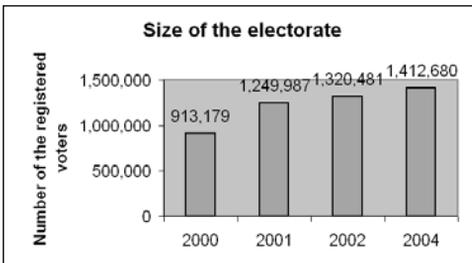


Figure 1: Overall increases in the size of the electorate

The sharpest increase in the number of registered voters took place between the elections of 2000, 2001 and 2002. This increase is peculiar due to the registration of the Kosovar Serbs and the diaspora who returned to register within two to three years after the war of 1999.

Serbs were very disciplined in boycotting the first local elections. It was only after the first elections that the rate of their registration picked up, which continue well afterwards, only to have most Serbs registered before the third elections in 2002.

The diaspora also managed to register in about the same time frame as the Serbs did, between 2000 and 2002. They could choose to vote either in Kosovo or as absentee voters although there are indicators that only a small portion of the diaspora voted.

B) Turn-out Trends / Steady Decline

The turn-out fell from 79% in 2000 to 49.5% in 2004.

One of the central worries that this paper points out is the decreasing turn-out. First elections were marked by an outstanding enthusiasm and a participation of 79%. Very long queues were a common sight in polling stations across Kosovo. Such a high participation partly occurred due to the post-war euphoria and the enthusiasm with the long-awaited elections in liberated Kosovo. Further, taking part in

the elections was considered a civic-patriotic duty. Retrospectively speaking, such a water-mark seems too high reference with which to compare subsequent elections.

Table 2: Turn-out

Year	Number	Percentage
2000	721,260	79.0%
2001	803,796	64.3%
2002	711,005	53.8%
2004	699,519	49.5%

Whereas here is no need to judge turn-out by first elections, this does not mean that there is no reason to worry for the continuous decrease of turn-out subsequently. Although it is natural to have decreased somewhat, the sharp decline observed is certainly exceptional.

The turn-out of 2000 was partially boosted by the fact that the Serbs had not registered. Any judgment whether a turn-out is high or low has to take into account the potential boycott of any community.

Their non-participation in latter elections (while registered) explains a part of the decreasing trend. Several international officials have made this argument as a way to downgrade the implications of a lower turn-out. However, only a small portion of the 30% decrease can be explained by the non-participation of the Serbs. Similarly, the low participation of the diaspora has a negligible explanatory power of this trend. Nor can this trend be attributed to a putative global crisis of democracy, for Kosovo has not even started to function as a democracy.

It is also safe to assume that if the circumstances which have brought to this declines remain present for the next year, the turn-out in the local elections in 2006 will be the lowest ever

Although decrease in turn-out from 2003 to 2004 is very low this by no means is a sufficient reason for satisfaction. First, the tendency of declining turn-out has not stopped yet, not to mention a possible reversal of this negative trend. Second, national elections by default are considered “first order” elections and as such they trigger higher turn-

out in comparison with elections of other levels. Therefore, it is safe to assume that if elections of 2004 were not of a national (Kosovo-wide) level, we would have witnessed a deeper decline in turn-out than the relatively moderate drop off that we had. It is also safe to assume that if the circumstances which have brought to this declines remain present for the next year, the turn-out in the local elections in 2006 will be the lowest ever.

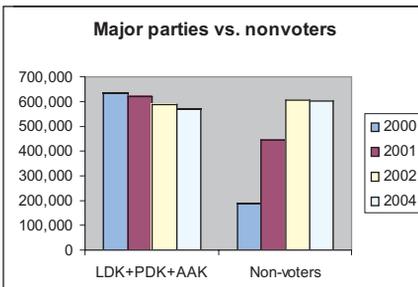


Figure 2: Major parties outpaced by nonvoters (including registered but low participating Diaspora and Serbs)

Magnitude of absenteeism is made even more illustrative when paying attention to absolute numbers. In 2004 as much as 602,690 voters did not take part in elections, which is a higher number than the collected number of votes won by three main parties together (570,480 votes).

The fact that many have decided not to cast the ballot despite a better organization and shorter queues can be attributed to: lower trust to institutions, limited transfer of competences, and no direct accountability (especially after the first local elections were conducted with open lists and all subsequent ones with closed lists). Growing distance between citizens and institutions due to dissatisfactory performance, requires attention and it has to be tackled sooner rather than later.

It may already be a truism that in the electoral system of proportional representation with closed party lists, political parties are the key instrument towards a sound representation. The central level of the parties decide on the names to be placed on the list and which party members get placed high and which ones do not get a chance at all. The parties are also the key vehicle in setting and improving discipline and accountability of their elected representatives. This would not be such a major problem if the triangle between citizens-parties-elected representative would function well. Further, such a relationship is further strengthening party-representative relationship at the expense of the relationship of the voter with the party and representatives.

If major parties are unable to mobilize most of the voters and at the same time smaller parties and initiatives cannot gather sufficient trust to compete with main parties, legitimacy of the whole political elite is in a critical state

If major parties are unable to mobilize most of the voters and at the same time smaller parties and initiatives cannot gather sufficient trust to compete with main parties, legitimacy of the whole political elite is in a critical state. This fact is becoming more visible from one election to another and it has already taken drastic proportions, falling below 50%.

Lack of correspondence between citizens' demands and what parties have to offer is resulting in decreasing turn-out. Staying home instead of voting is becoming more rational for most Kosovars.

Another worrisome trend is what was stated by the latest Human Development Report (2004), which found that an average Kosovar engages in negative participation (e.g. public protests) four times more than in constructive participation (e.g. member of a union, NGO, etc.).

One problem with plummeting turn-out is the way that this seems to be affecting parties. Even with moderate data available, it is safe to conclude that this high drop in turnout is affecting the electorate at large and parties across Kosovo. Judging from stat-

ed positions of political parties, none of them feels that its base has eroded more than that of other parties. Parties generally do not seem ready to try to expand their electoral base by reaching out to new voters. Mostly, parties seem smug in their gradually eroding position, only because the same trend haunts all parties, albeit at differing

Table 3: Performance of major political entities and nonvoters

Year		LDK	PDK	AAK	Others	Nonvoters
2000	Number of voters	398,872	187,821	53,074	47,565	191,919
	As % of total valid ballots	58%	27.30%	7.70%	6.90%	21%
2001	Number of voters	359,851	202,622	61,688	164,142	446,191
	As % of total valid ballots	43.70%	25%	7.60%	12.80%	35.10%
2002	Number of voters	320,918	207,012	61,824	109,645	609,476
	As % of total valid ballots	45.90%	29.60%	8.80%	15.70%	46.20%
2004	Number of voters	313,437	199,112	57,931	119,196	602,69
	As % of total valid ballots	45.10%	28.80%	8.40%	17.10%	46.40%

degrees. There is neither substantial evidence indicating that a party believes that it would considerably benefit from a prospective higher turn out, neither that low turn-out in any case so far has affected it more than other competing parties. An attitude that every party has a “fair share” of voter abstentions implies

worrisome consequences. Namely, feeling safe from higher loss of voters in comparison to other parties gives no strong incentive to any of them to aggressively work in mobilizing voters beyond their cleavages.

The fact that parties focus on keeping the core voters may as well be one of the reasons why so many voters feel so militantly about their party. Nonvoters on the other hand remain out of the sphere of interest with parties focused primarily on their core base. Instead of supporting an electoral system that would create a substantial mass of swing voters that would induce parties to moderate their stances, Kosovars are increasingly falling in two opposite categories, militants and apathetic nonvoters. Parties view most voters as already decided for the long-term and feel smug that no new entity will be able to grab the growing body of non-voters (who already number more than the three parties altogether). When the fourth largest party now, ORA, decided to enter the political struggle in 2004, it worried many long standing politicians, but few cite ORA as a credible threat at the moment.

This relaxation seems even more problematic when noting that trends are unlikely to change

An average Kosovar engages in negative participation (e.g. public protests) four times more than in constructive participation (e.g. member of a union, NGO, etc.), according to HDR 2004

by itself. It is hazardous to rely on better turn-out and elimination of the legitimacy gap by simply leaving things to their natural flow and to generational change. Not knowing fully what potential constituencies they can attract, parties too often rely on new voters to make-up for their loss, demonstrated by their excessive reliance and use of rhetoric on youth. In turn, they make little attempt to reach out across the narrow body of their well mobilized electorate. This is self-deluding as youth usually votes with less discipline than others. Further, no studies or polls so far have argued about any particular trends about youth voting, and it is likely that those few youngsters who do vote will spread their votes to existing parties more or less proportionally.

Negative trends so far cannot be attributed to generational differences and thus reversal of these negative trends cannot be left to wait new generations of voters who in the decades to come may outvote the rest. In three elections after 2000 most of the new voters were those initially not included in voter lists' rather than those who in the meantime reached voting age. Hence, a growing non-voting constituency that we witnessed

Instead of creating moderating swing voters, the electoral system is centrifuging Kosovars into two main political categories: party militants and apathetic nonvoters

so far is not attributable to generational replacements or age distinctions. The electoral body will not increase with the rate that it has done so far, and as a corollary to that, a growing "voting body" will have a very small effect on the distribution of votes, and even this small effect will more or less proportionally apply to all parties.

In conclusion, during four years of the period under review turn-out has plummeted drastically. This decline cannot be explained solely either with initial high threshold, generational differences with first time voters or similar single factors. Rather a combination of growing lack of interest and resignation with all political parties and the quality of representation is leaving nonvoting and negative forms of participation as the sole alternative to social change.

C) Municipal variations

At the local level there are interesting trends from region to region. Some municipalities defy the decreasing turn-out by consistently keeping very high discipline. In 2000, municipalities with highest turn-out were Rahovec/Orahovac with 90%, Novo Brdo/Novobërdë also with 90% and Štrpce/Shtërpçë with 87%. As it is known both

Trends point to a serious loss of trust in the Kosovar political parties that must be tackled urgently

Novo Brdo/Novobërdë and Štrpce/Shtërpçë are municipalities with ethnically mixed population, but since Serbs boycotted elections in 2000 these percentages included Albanian voters only. Municipalities with lowest turn-out in 2000 were Viti/Vitina with 69% of

voters, Kamenica and Kaçanik, each with 75%.

In 2001, the highest turn-out was in Novo Brdo/Novobërdë (75.5%; also the highest in 2002 with 81%), Štrpce/Shtërpçë (75.2%, in 2002 with 69%), which were both among three top municipalities in 2000, and Glllogovc with 73.1%. At the same time, the lowest turn-out is recorded in municipalities in which majority of voters are Serbs: Zvečan/Zveçan (18.6%), Zubin Potok (29.8%, interestingly in 2002 with 70%) and Leposavič/Leposaviq (45.2%).

In 2004 the highest ranking municipalities in turn-out were in three Albanian majority municipalities, Glllogovc (65.8%), Shtime (65.8%) and Deçan (59.8%), whereas the lowest turn-out was in Serb majority municipalities in Zubin Potok (8.2%), Zvečan/Zveçan (1.9%) and Leposavič/Leposaviq (0.8%).

D) Albanian and Serb Turn-out Trends

Serbs in general were more reluctant to take part in the elections, for the fear of legitimizing (a) the general processes in Kosovo and (b) the local Albanian rule in their respective municipalities. It is especially worrying to note that their turn-out also decreased over time from 67% to 52% in local elections, and from 47% to 9% in central elections. Whereas these statistics only measure the turn-out in Serb-majority municipalities and not of Serbs per se, they are somewhat inaccurate, but they do show a distinct trend which is not noticed in any other municipalities. It is obvious from these numbers and from overall observations of politics that Serbs have boycotted national elections at far higher numbers than local elections. Even a 52% overall turn-out enabled Serbs to get the majority in municipalities where they form the majority in the local elections.

In spite of this unenthusiastic attitude towards elections it is worth noting that the Kosovar Serb constituency seems to have realized the negative consequences of boycott that it has incurred, judging from post-electoral statements of the main local Serb leaders. It shows a bitter recognition for the lack of legitimate alternatives to elections in pursuit of their goals. By the same token it indicates a possible long-term change within this marginally integrated community with respect to institutions and a likely abandonment of rejected integration.

3. SPECIFIC TRENDS

A) Learning of Democracy

The fact that four elections have been held from 2000 until 2004 has had a significant effect on the voters, parties, and organizers of elections, with positive results that can increasingly be observed. Already after first elections, the number of invalid ballots was brought below 2% and it has been kept at this tolerable level ever since. In four years of electoral history, improvements in performance have been fast for both, those organizing elections (OSCE and CEC) as well as for voters.

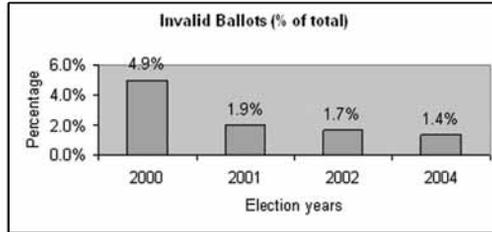


Figure 3: Invalid ballots (2000-2004)

Table 4: Invalid ballots (in top/ bottom five municipalities)

	2000	2004
1 st (Zvečan)	10.7%	55.8%
2 nd (Obiliq)	10.4%	8.7%
3 rd (Malishevë)	7.1%	3.4%
4 th (Dragash)	6.8%	2.4%
5 th (F. Kosovë)	6.6%	2.3%
26 th (Gjilan)	3.7%	1.0%
27 th (Leposavić)	3.5%	0.9%
28 th (Deçan)	3.0%	0.8%
29 th (Istog)	2.7%	0.7%
30 th (Z. Potok)	2.5%	0.4%

In 2000 as much as 4.9% of cast ballots were invalid, only to drop to 1.9% in 2001 and subsequently to 1.4% in 2004. This is an acceptable level of invalid ballots, particularly for a developing democracy, and is an indicator that now Kosovo has an electoral body sufficiently educated to participate in more complicated systems. As comparative data show many more advanced democracies have higher levels of invalid ballots (e.g. Slovenia in 2000 had 3.3%, Romania in 2000 had 6.2%, Poland in 2001 had 4.0% etc.) which may be sufficiently acceptable as a trade-off for selecting an electoral system that brings about better representation and accountability. Continuation of voter education will help further reduce the level of invalid ballots or at least to preserve it at this acceptable level.

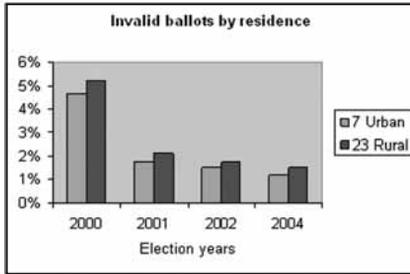


Figure 4: Invalid ballots for urban and rural municipalities

ties had decreased significantly in the fourth elections in 2004. The fall is especially dramatic precisely in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, which became the municipality with the lowest rate of invalid ballots in 2004. This may have been the case due to the fact that Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje had its lowest turn-out, which might have affected a low number of invalid ballots, assuming that very disciplined, relatively educated voters exercised their right.

Whereas there are some differences in invalid ballots from urban and rural municipalities, these differences remain fairly low. The decrease of invalid ballots over time is as significant throughout Kosovo as it is in the seven more urban municipalities.

In the year 2000 Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje had the highest number of invalid ballots (10.7%), only to be closely followed by Štrpce/Shtërpçë (10.4%). In elections of the same year, municipalities with lowest invalid ballots were Istog (2.5%) and Novo Brdo/Novobërda (2.7%). It is interesting to note that besides a single outlier (Zvečan/Zvečan with 55.8% invalid ballots), all municipali-

The low level of invalid ballots is an indicator that Kosovo's electoral body is sufficiently educated to participate in more complicated systems

4. QUALITY OF REPRESENTATION

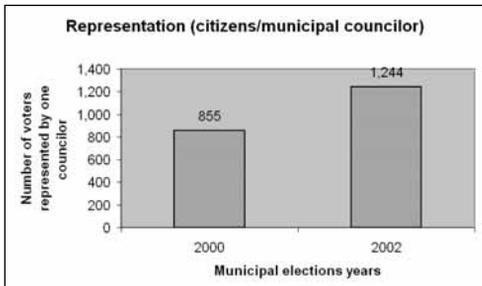


Figure 5: Representation measured by citizens represented by one municipal councilor

One of the indicators of the level of democracy in a country is the level of representation of its citizens, measured by the number of citizens represented by one elected official.

Extreme discrepancies were evidenced when conducting several comparisons. In the two local elections the municipality with the worst ratio was Prishtina, where one MP

represented 2,165 voters, whereas in Zvečan/Zveçan only 2 voters had all the attention of a representative (local elections in 2000). This is an extremely unfair ratio and a flagrant aberration of the one person – one vote principle, which was only latter insignificantly softened. In the second local elections, the figures showed Prishtina with 3,044 voters represented by one representative whereas the best-ratio was taken up by Novo Brdo/Novobërda which had one representative for 163 voters.

On the other hand, with regard to representation at the central politics, Prishtina can be looked as the most favorably represented municipality. Out of 120 MPs half of them are either from Prishtina or have moved there in recent years. Since the party is the main chain between the voters and the representatives, this is usually not viewed as a problem. Instead of commuting between their constituencies, capitol and their party, most of MPs go back and forth only between party headquarters and Assembly. Since in that relation an identifiable constituency is entirely absent we end up with most of elected MPs who are from Prishtina or who move there after they are elected but with no particular accountability to anybody.

Although currently wide disparity (as the one between Prishtina and Novobërdë) is not a particular source of grievance, it is not beyond reason to see growing dissatisfaction from some other voting groups with a poor ratio of representation. This might become particularly troublesome when noting that disparities look harshest when looked at through ethnic lens. Serb-dominated municipalities had an average of 466 voters in 2002 per MP, whereas Albanian-dominated municipalities had 1,441 voters per MP. Such discrepancies fuel overall disillusionment of the majority of Kosovar voters with the current representational system and provide them with one more incentive against participating in elections. It is all types of minorities within large municipalities that uli-

mately end up underrepresented. It is essential that future elections legislation in Kosovo addresses this issue.

A) Party Performance

There are a number of important trends worth noticing when it comes to party performance. As can be seen from Figure 9, the LDK has experienced a fall in the absolute size of its supporters with each consecutive election. Between the local elections of

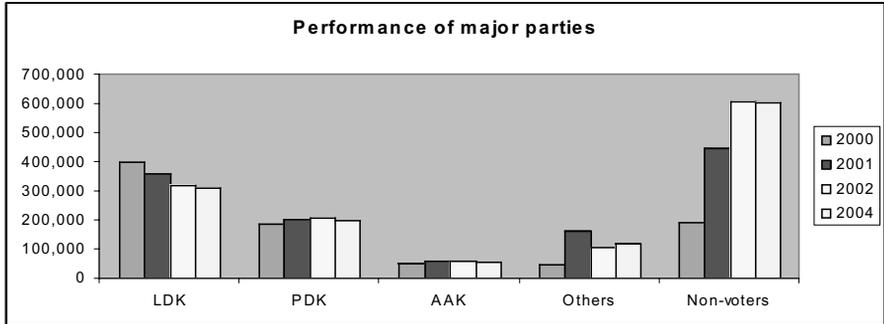


Figure 6: Performance of major political entities and nonvoters

2000 and the parliamentary elections of 2004, the LDK has experienced a drop of over 85 thousand voters. Expressed in percentage change this means that the LDK electoral body in 2004 was 21.4% smaller than that in 2000. However, after the steep falls between the election of 2000 and 2001 (54,700 votes) and that between 2001 and 2002 (23,500 votes), the rate of at which support for the LDK was falling has slowed down. In the elections of 2004, the LDK lost only some 7,481 votes from the 2002 elections.

The other two major parties, the PDK and the AAK, faced smaller changes in the absolute size of their electorate. Overall, between the elections of 2000 and 2004, the PDK gained 11,300 votes (6%). The electorate of AAK increased by around 4,900 voters in 2004, which meant a rise of 9.2%, from their 2000 electoral body. However, it is interesting to note that AAK and PDK noticed a significant drop for the first time in 2004, which in proportional terms is higher than that of LDK.

These shifts in the absolute numbers of voters for the three main parties are reflected in the share of the electorate captured by each of the parties. The LDK's share of the total valid ballots cast decreased rapidly in 2001, falling to 43.7% from the 58% it held in the elections of 2000. It has remained relatively

The dominance of Prishtina promotes leaders loyal to particular cliques in the center to the detriment of legitimacy of and trust in the political system

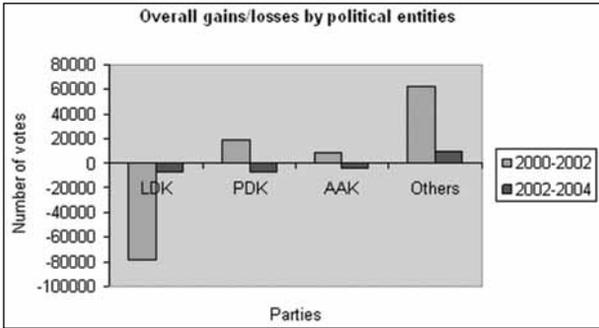


Figure 7: Overall gains/losses by political entities

steady since then, hovering at around 45%-46% in 2002 and 2004.

The absolute increase in the number of voters voting for the PDK has resulted in only a 1.5% increase in the share of the total valid ballots between the elections of 2000 and 2004. In fact,

there was a 2.3% fall for PDK in 2001, but this improved in the following election of 2002 to over 29% of the total valid ballots – the highest share the PDK has had to date.

A striking trend that can be observed from the figures above is the substantial number of nonvoters. In the elections of 2000, the three major parties made up some 70% of the total electorate, which was a good standing in relation to non-voters who made up only 20% of the electorate. However, the relations changed quite substantially in the following elections of 2001, when the share of the electorate commanded by the main parties fell to 50%, while the proportion of nonvoters increased to nearly 37%. By the elections of 2002, nonvoters managed to overtake – if only marginally – the number of voters supporting the three main parties (Fig 8). This trend abated in 2004, but it was still sufficient to have nonvoters exceed the three main parties.

The rise of nonvoters since the first local elections in 2000 may partly be explained by the subsequent registration of Serb voters and of the Albanian diaspora. The Serbian community cannot account for the total number of nonvoters for the simple fact that it cannot account for 254,000 nonvoters that in 2001

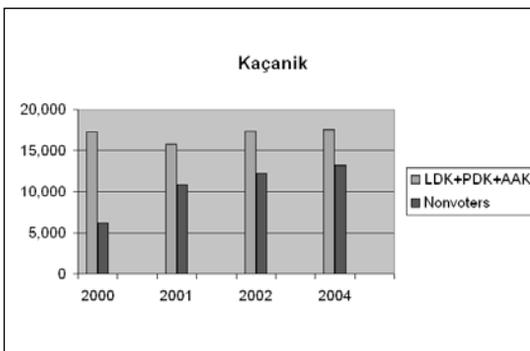


Figure 8: The rise of nonvoters in Kaçanik

were added to the existing 192,000 nonvoters of 2000. Indeed, the marginal impact of the Serb electorate on the increase of non-voters is corroborated by the graph on Kaçanik, which as an example of municipalities with very few minorities, has also exhibited similar trends for nonvoters. Hence, the increase of nonvoters as a per-

centage of the total electorate must be accounted primarily to factors related to dissatisfaction.

B) Performance of Other Albanian Political Entities

If major parties are losing their grip on Kosovo, one could only hope that new entities are filling the void. Unfortunately for those who would wish to see the pluralism in Kosovo enhanced, there are no significant positive trends.

On the whole, smaller parties scored better in local elections, with the poorest performance in 2001 elections. In contrast with first elections, in 2004 the conglomerate of smaller parties gained 10.98% of votes, an increase that occurred due to the advent of a new civic initiative/political party ORA, which managed to garner 6.2% of the votes. Albanian Demo-Christian Party (PSHDK) ranked second with 1.8% of votes. In relation to other political parties of relatively the same magnitude PSHDK stands stronger in Gjakovë, where in 2004 it won 13.5% of the votes. In the same year PSHDK also managed to increase its constituency in Klina with 9.6% of the votes.

An interesting example of non-consistent pattern in vote-sharing is drawn from PREK. In elections of 2002 PREK won 2.8% of the votes, which ranked it on top of the list outside three main Kosovo-wide parties. However, the same party in 2004 won only 0.1% of the votes.

Several parties stand distinct in the group of smaller parties. LKÇK, LPK and a number of other parties are generally regarded with an unhelpful attitude towards the current system of governance and the future status option that they advocate. They stand for Union with Albania, unlike other political parties.

These parties won 0.18% of votes in 2000. This is the lowest amount of votes collected by these parties when compared with other elections held so far. In 2001 performance of these parties taken together slightly increased to 2%, the highest percentage of votes that the group of parties in question managed to win. In the same year best performance was recorded for LKÇK, which got 1.1% of the Kosovo-wide votes. LKÇK scored best in Suharekë/Therandë (3.6%), Ferizaj (1.7%) and Rahovec/Orahovac (1.6%). In the last elections (2004) LKÇK did not participate at all. Overall, the representation of parties with this profile has consolidated at around 1.3%.

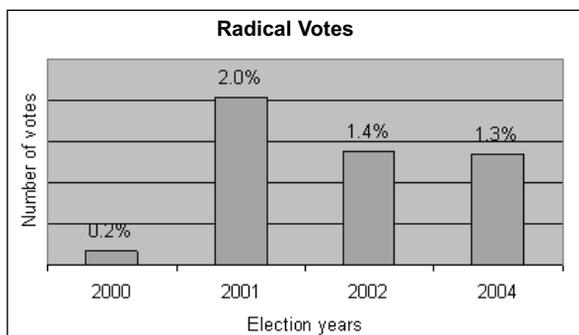


Figure 9: Votes of parties that advocate union with Albania

C) Geographic Distribution of Votes

At the Kosovo-wide scale there are barely any distinctive voting patterns in rural areas in comparison with urban ones, although some minor cleavages can be observed. However, in most municipalities it is possible to observe a distinct regional trend of the distribution of votes, concentrated by clusters of villages. Whereas the two main parties in Malishevë are evenly split at the municipality level, there are few areas where elections trends follow municipality wide trends. Most voting centers reported trends where one party controls at least 60% of the votes. As research shows, most voting in Malishevë occurs depending on membership with the Kastrati or Krasniqi families who have long-standing rivalries in this region. The dominance of PDK in the town is obvious, with 62% of the votes, ahead of LDK with 27% which has compensated by its strength in most rural parts of this municipality.

Another model of voter behavior is best illustrated by the case of Klinë, where voters follow a different set of geographically determined allegiances. In areas neighboring Drenica, PDK is strongest, hovering at around 50% of the votes, significantly more than at the municipality-wide levels. Similarly, the AAK ranked better in areas bordering the municipality of Peja/Peç, in the voting centers of Grabanicë and Drenoc, above 20%, more than twice of its Klinë-wide average. By the same token, PSHDK got 38% in Zllakuqan, 24% in Budisalle, and 13% in the town of Klinë, compared to 1.8% at the Kosovo-wide level.

Votes determined by individual allegiances, lines of division stemming from the war, family ties, urban/rural prejudices are not healthy and must be overcome

The third model is that of Prishtina, where urban/rural differences carry a lot of weight. Unlike in other municipalities, in this instance LDK is relatively solid throughout rural areas of the municipality with 61% of votes. In urban areas LDK holds 51% of votes. Stronger support in rural areas exists also in the case of PDK. It has won 21% of votes outside the city and 18% inside the city, a trend also valid for AAK. Relative weakness of three main parties in urban areas of Prishtina results from the emergence of ORA. The latter ran its campaign distinctly targeting the urban constituency. As a result, it got between 13%-25% in the city, 6% in a recent suburb such as Kodra e Trimave or Hajvali, between 4%-5% in neighboring villages such as Besi or Shkabaj, only to fall below 1% in distant areas of the municipality such as Sharban or Marevc.

The municipality of Kaçanik combines two trends, both the war legacy and how various allegiances stemming from the war translate into current voting trends. Also, in Kaçanik it is interesting how these cleavages very much coincide with parochial views of “old citizens of Kaçanik” versus the newcomers from rural areas. Whereas the

town of Kaçanik voted in majority for LDK, 49% as opposed to 36% for PDK, the latter was mostly in the majority in the rural areas.

Such a geographic distribution of votes, determined by individual allegiances, lines of division stemming from the war, family ties, urban/rural prejudices are not healthy and must be overcome. Instead of manipulating these lines of division, parties should make an attempt to overcome them. It should also be noted that usually areas with such characteristics have also strong party branches which may often be a corollary of the relationships delineated above. Overcoming these relationships is not only important for the parties, but essential if Kosovo is to overcome its present divisions and turn into a more cosmopolitan society, although similar trends still persist to various degrees present in many Western European democracies.

D) Local parties

There are few local parties, geographically specific, operating in different municipalities. Among those, the Democratic Union of Gjakovë (UDGJ) is the most recognizable local party, primarily focused within the boundaries of Gjakovë. In spite of its limitation to the municipality of Gjakovë, UDGJ also ran in the Kosovo-wide elections of 2004 and even gained symbolic number of votes in almost all municipalities. In the local elections of 2002 UDGJ won 2.3% of votes in Prizren, while in its center (Gjakovë) it received 7% which was enough for three seats in the Municipal Assembly.

There are two local parties from other community parties, Gora Citizens' Initiative (GIG) and Prizren-Dragas Initiative (PDI). Whereas GIG ran in elections of 2000, 2002 and 2004, PDI participated only in elections of 2004. Since both of these parties are made of representatives of the Gorani community and target Gorani constituency their territorial presence is entirely dependent of Goranis' parties and are concentrated mostly in Dragash/Dragaš and in Prizren. In the first local elections of 2000, GIG, received 11.94% of votes in Dragash/Dragaš winning two seats in the Municipal Assembly. The same party in Prizren got 2.80% and 0.32% in Mitrovica. In elections of 2002, GIG has got 11.94% of votes in Dragash/Dragaš municipality and again won two seats in Municipal Assembly. In elections of 2004, GIG won 14% of votes in Dragash/Dragaš, 3.84% of votes in Prizren and some few votes in some other municipalities. The PDI participated in elections of 2004 but its success was very weak, receiving only 1.8% of votes in Prizren.

It is impossible to draw any trends on the Serb votes due to the frequent boycotts of elections, firstly in 2000 when they even boycotted registering for elections, to partial

participation in subsequent elections. The highest participation was noted in the local elections in 2002 when elected representatives of the Serbian community assumed control of five municipalities of Kosovo.

It is interesting to note that the political party scene among the Serbs is much more plural than among Albanians. Whereas Albanian local parties have never scored more than 1% of the total share of votes, their Serbian counterparts have scored markedly better within the Serb camp. Similarly, civic initiatives and independent candidates have scored better.

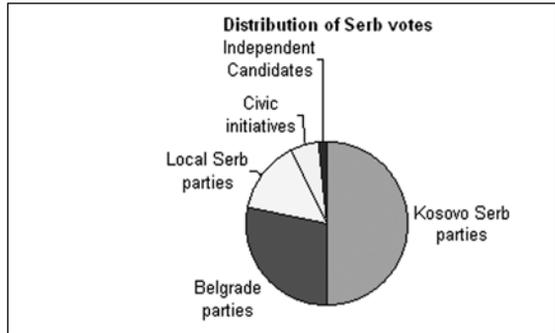


Figure 10: Distribution of Serb votes among types of political entities

5. IS LEGITIMACY ERODING?

A) Legitimacy of Political Parties and Electoral Behavior

Kosovo's embryonic democracy with its current electoral design relies on closed-list party representation. It is party leaderships that have the final say on who gets a blank ticket to the parliament and which party activists are left outside. Questions related to accountability, disciplining and rewarding of individual representatives are thus a sole

Table 5: The Main Opposition is Winning

	LDK	PDK	AAK
Deçan	.926	-275	3,122
Gjakovë	-9,442	-236	2,007
Đrenas	-438	-1,274	211
Gjilan	-2,890	1,769	-33
Kacanik	841	-659	-56
F. Kosovë	-138	757	-681
Klinë	-1,867	114	648
Mitrovicë	-5,269	2,778	767
Lipjan	-795	1,966	-269
Obiliq	-344	459	-1,426
Rahovec	-5,108	1,500	-1,854
Pejë	-7,985	330	5,741
Podujevë	-3,470	906	-1,135
Prishtinë	-11,967	-2,888	-1,014
Prizren	-12,058	2,541	815
Suharekë	-4,077	2,105	-425
Ferizaj	-2,395	1,571	837
Viti	-1,420	496	257
Vushtrri	-2,114	875	-4
Malishevë	-1,383	2,391	150
Legend:	Position	Major opposition	Opposition
	-5,269	2,105	388

discretion of the very top party leaderships. More than that, all these and other related potential actions are sometimes even a burden that party leaders might not be able or willing to exercise adequately vis-à-vis their would-be elected officials. Instead, party leaderships were frequently trapped in balancing the sharing of spoils between various internal factions. Amidst such an environment there are allegations of various party members blackmailing their leadership in order to get themselves higher on the electoral list.

Further, elected representatives perceive few compelling reasons to be thankful to voters for getting elected. They certainly feel as they owe more towards respective party heads. Understandably, representatives, as any rational beings, know best what their interests are and they are driven by a desire to be elected and reelected. But as long as voters do not appear on their power matrix, their representatives can hardly know what is best for those they ought to represent. Their election and reelection, while affected by the overall number that a party wins, is entirely unaffected by how many votes does a particular candidate bring to the party.

It goes without saying that the aforementioned electoral arrangements go to the detriment of citizens and their confidence in democratic institutions. Usually, citizens

express their preferences based on an aggregate judgment about party leaders, local representatives and a number of different factors important to them. They judge about past performances and future expectations. They also expect to have some influence over their representatives. Citizens' influence does not imply a full control over what representatives do and say, but at least a mere sense of wider opportunities to choose from as well as to punish those that stray away from public interest. In our case, absence of any personal relations between MPs and voters goes against citizens' minimal expectations. Left without a voice in determining who could be their best representatives, voters are rejecting what they are offered, after they find themselves unable to threaten those candidates that betray public trust. Constituencies are growing apathetic and trust in democratic institutions is getting slimmer. Presence of a number of extra-constitutional bodies (UNMIK) entirely outside the sphere of influence of voters' choice, only adds up to the sense of powerlessness and to the legitimacy deficit.

This view would not be so discouraging if political parties – currently the sole link between representative bodies and voters – would be less negligent about electoral abstention. Unfortunately, within parties so far there are no efforts taken to seriously address this issue. In fact, indifference within parties in relation to low turn-out is clearly signaled in a number of post-electoral statements of major leaders.

B) We know better than the voters, they say

Various local and international leaders, including party heads, justified closed lists with the argument that parties know better than the people who the worthiest candidates are. Likewise, the SRSG (Harri Holkeri) paradoxically refused open lists arguing that they favor popular personalities. In fact, the current system empowers only the top leadership of every party, whereas a different system would actually serve the purpose of the elections, to empower those that care most to approach the citizens. Both of the arguments made by defendants of List-PR justify closed lists make the assumption that the Kosovar voters are not voting rationally and that they are not able to make intelligent and responsible choices for themselves. This implies that elections should be a mere façade whereas decision-making shall remain controlled through a handful of party leaders, not the voters. A reasoning like that is not only a slap on the face of the process of democratization, but is also untrue. As this paper shows, Kosovar voters have switched loyalties when dissatisfied with their leaders. This seems to be the case at the local level – where voters have ample evidence to judge performance of local politicians and to cast their ballot accordingly. Yet, setting decision-making process completely outside their realm of influence through current electoral solutions makes them dissatisfied with the whole political process and the entire political elite. It makes

voters despondent with unfair and undemocratic rules of the game and with politicians beyond their influence. Unless this is tackled, there will be more room for informal leaders and for negative forms of expressing dissatisfaction.

The decline of legitimacy was heralded earlier by several reports as well as claims by the civil society. Noticing limited abilities to lead, for the past year, a broad base of civil society members had demanded an electoral system with open lists in multiple multi-member electoral districts. The aim of this proposal was to empower grass-root leaders as well as create more space for those influential individuals who can mobilize the masses but are not part of official political structures. Some of these leaders may be viewed as radical, but it is a principle of post-war stabilization that all politicians air their grievances in the Assembly rather than vent their anger on the streets. Between practical interests of daily politicking on one side and legitimacy of institutions on the other the latter should prevail.

Justifying closed lists makes the assumption that the Kosovar voters are not able to make responsible choices for themselves

C) Punishing Incumbents

A careful look at voter trends shows that voters are far more intelligent than politicians or UNMIK heads take them to be. Parties that controlled various municipal governments between local elections in 2000 and 2002 lost over 80,000 votes in total. This points out to a general dissatisfaction with all ruling parties at local level as well as a growing connection of voters with local issues. Voters are intelligently and consciously reacting in proportion with perceived relevance that institutions have to their concerns and interests. One might add that their reaction is probably also in a correlation with the amount of first-hand information about performance of representatives. Declining to give again votes to government and an increase of votes to the opposition is a sign that the voters have been very dissatisfied with the way their municipality was governed during this period. Altering their vote to the second biggest party indicates not only a mere sanctioning of incumbents for unsatisfactory outcomes, but also a belief that better governance is still possible. That hope, when looked in light of growing abstention and blank votes, seems gradually but steadily diminishing.

Instead of begrudgingly voting for the opposition, most dissatisfied voters have decided not to vote at all

Overall, parties in government at the local level between local elections of 2000 and 2002 lost 82,144 votes throughout Kosovo, whereas opposition parties gained 30,049 votes. This leaves between 50,000 and 110,000 “undecided” camp, which means that

most voters, instead of begrudgingly voting for the opposition, have just decided not to vote at all. Whereas the second-largest national party (PDK) gained votes in municipalities where it was in the opposition, it lost votes in municipalities where it controlled power. Hence, the trend of dissatisfaction is valid for all parties in local position, rather than just for the LDK. Altogether, these trends point to a serious loss of trust in the Kosovar political parties.

Table 6: Gains and losses based on position vis-a-vis municipal government

Performance by position-opposition	Position	%	Primary Opposition	%	Secondary Opposition	%
Combined	-81,884	-11.9%	34,217	4.3%	-2,990	-0.4%
LDK	-78,800	-19.8%	554	0.14%	n/a	n/a
PDK	-3,084	-1.64%	22,793	12.14%	-845	-0.45%
AAK	n/a	n/a	10,870	5.36%	-2,145	-1.06%

More than anything, perception of voters that they lack tools to influence and to sanction representatives needs to be remedied. Citizens deserve a say when selecting individual representatives and empowering them with a mandate. Better channels of direct accountability need to be provided for a more accurate reading of voters' mood and to properly translate the same into parliamentary agenda. Managing the selection of candidates solely on the preferences of party leader prevents a responsive relation between voters and representatives. At the same time this will hopefully improve informational asymmetry about candidates which currently works against citizens.

D) Local position is losing, local opposition is winning

Between local elections in 2000 and 2002, the local government in most Kosovar municipalities lost votes whereas the local opposition gained, regardless which party controlled power

As stated above, between local elections in 2000 and 2002, the government in most Kosovar municipalities lost votes whereas the opposition gained, regardless which party controlled power.

In table 5, the numbers in bold in white boxes denote the score of the party that controlled the government, whereas the scores in the shaded area denote the parties that were largely in the opposition. For example, the largest party in Kosovo, LDK, has lost ground in every single municipality where it had the mandate between those two years (See municipalities of Prishtina, Gjilan/Gnjilane, Vushtrri, Suharekë, Podujevë, etc), losing on average 3,210 votes per municipality. The same trend, though to a lesser degree, haunts PDK, which lost ground in three out of four municipalities where it had a majority (Drenas, Skenderaj and Kaçanik).

A plausible explanation why voters are deflecting from the position is that they do not

see their interests being voiced by the parties. Instead of viewing their voters as the main source of power, parties have rather chosen an immediate priority of controlling the executive appointments at all levels. The arguments presented here demonstrate that voters are taking notice of such a short-term focus and are voting in fewer numbers for the parties in position in their respective municipalities.

E) Not all opposition is winning

Whereas the opposition is winning, it is not all the opposition. Rather, only the main opposition party is winning, whereas the second largest opposition party is losing votes along the position. For example,

LDK has lost in Gjakovë, but the votes have not gone to PDK as the main opposition party Kosovo-wide, but rather to the AAK, the major local opposition party. The same trend is valid for all neighboring municipalities in the whole of Dukagjini Valley, where AAK leadership was active during the armed resistance in late 1990s (Gjakovë, Deçan, Klinë, Pejë/Peć) and this is the only area where it saw significant growth). By the same token, PDK has increased its ranks all over Kosovo, outside of the Dukagjini plain, where it was in the opposition (Gjilan/Gnjilane, F.Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, Mitrovicë, Lipjan/Lipljan, Obiliq/Obilić, Rahovec/Orahovac, Podujevë, Prishtinë, Prizren, Suharekë, Ferizaj, Viti, Vushtrri, Malishevë). While available data remains scarce for drawing some final explanation, one can see this as a combined sanctioning of position when dissatisfied with its performance.

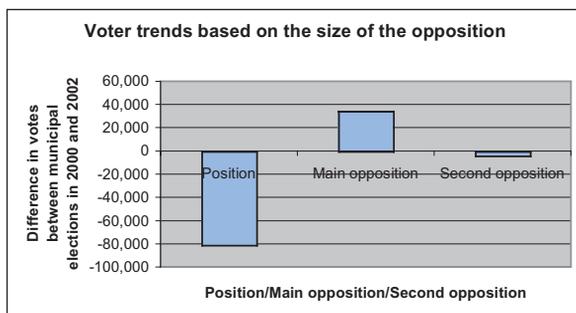


Figure 11: Voter trends based on the size of the opposition

F) So, Local Politics Matters

Looking at trends such as the one in Prizren above, or Mitrovicë, or Rahovec/Orahovac reveals one more trend. Not only that voters are voting increasingly for the local opposition in municipal elections, but this thinking is increasingly determining their voting trends for the central level. It is interesting to observe that the national elections are following the trend determined by local dynamics. The national elections (the second and the fourth columns) have stuck to the trends set by local elections in 2000 and 2002. It can be inferred that a number of citizens have cast their national vote based on their perception of party performance at the local level. A pos-

sible explanation for this trend is information asymmetry between central and local level. While contacts with representatives at the capitol are insignificant outside the realm of electoral campaign, in the case of municipal representatives that is not the case. The mere vicinity of local bodies provides better chances for an informed judgment. Consequently, gaps of information for party's performance at the center are

The local thinking is increasingly determining voter trends for the central level

filled gradually by information available at the local level.

The general thinking in Kosovo is that the municipal politics does not carry much weight. There are plenty of cases how Prishtina has influenced and harmed local politics (for an extensive discussion about the local government in Kosovo, see "Local Government Reform in Kosovo" published by KIPRED in 2004). They have usually pre-determined the coalition partner whenever it applied and has often given the decisive swing when various cliques within the parties competed for power. As our research shows, the calculations of the center over which clique to support were usually based on calculations over the control of the most lucrative departments or based on national policies of the party.

For example, the Klina-branch of LDK after the war had a working coalition with the PDK, but after the intervention from the center, was compelled to ally with the Albanian Demo-Christian Party (PSHDK) of Kosovo in forming the local government. Our field research shows numerous examples where potential coalition parties conditioned their partnership with particular departments such as that of Reconstruction for example.

Poor intra-party channels of communication and insufficient democratic decision-making have caused sparks within all major parties. In Ferizaj the attempt of the out-going mayor turned Deputy Prime Minister to tap his successor did not succeed. In

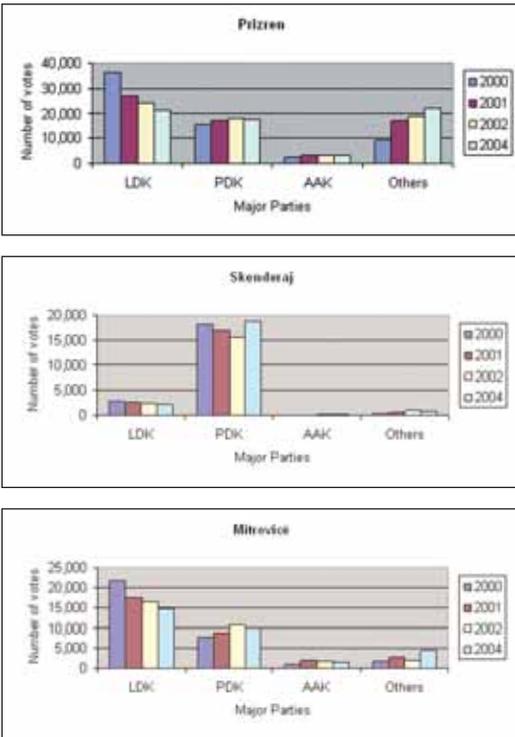


Figure 12: Electoral trend in selected sample municipalities

fact, a candidate from the same party (LDK) emerged and managed to get the necessary support for the seat of the mayor in spite of strong pressure and direct interference from the center. Similarly, in one of its strongholds (Drenas) central leadership of the PDK had to swallow its open dissatisfaction and to tolerate newly elected leadership of its municipal branch. Similarly, in the Podujevë branch there was serious dissatisfaction within one of the parties where 14 sub-branches out of a total of 18, demanded to assemble the Branch Assembly, however, due to the preferences of the dominating clique at the center, this did not occur. These criteria for forming coalitions could not go unnoticed in a small place like Kosovo and has led to more dissatisfaction and to a serious loss of votes for the party as a result.

Local politics is deciding political allegiances, but this may not be because Kosovars have started to decide based on practical policy issues, but perhaps that this is the closest image of the party that the voters see. Local party branches are closer to the citizen who has more scrutiny of mismanagement. Fading decisiveness of a party leader as a factor and informational imbalance between central and local level is pushing local politics at the forefront of voters' attention

The local thinking is increasingly determining voter trends for the central level

The question still remains why more votes have not deflected to other parties? Main reasons for this seem to be: (a) lack of serious alternatives, and (b) the perception of party loyalties as turf wars with somewhat entrenched positions by those already in power, and by those who care more to see their own kin in power than to obtain some long-term benefits for themselves.

G) Nonvoters are the biggest party now

The fact that most disgruntled voters are withdrawing into the "undecided camp" and can constitute an election-winning body of swaying votes is shown by comparing the votes of all parties with the number of citizens who are choosing not to cast their vote at all. Whereas the non-voters had approximately the same number of votes as the second-largest party in 2000, in 2002 it holds a potential body of voters larger than twice the major party. With a chronic absence of alternative legal means, prospects of Kosovars' positive participation in the public decision-making get extremely bleak. They basically end up disfranchised and alienated from the system. Citizens' inclination to abstain from voting rather than change their earlier voting preference is a clear statement of distrust in the system. No system can afford to ignore statements of that nature.

H) The Lack of Alternatives

In respect to the second biggest party one may get the impression that it has fared better. The fact that PDK's downturn may be milder or that their gain overall is higher than that of LDK can be explained by the fact that PDK has been in the opposition in more municipalities than LDK.

The fact that PDK followed a milder trend does not seem to be that they are more preferred based on their actions. The data point to the fact that this may be a result of them being associated as the main opposition at the Kosovo-wide level, which matters to some voters for whom national politics is more important than the local politics. The fact that PDK lost in municipalities it controlled proves that being viewed as the Kosovo-wide opposition is not sufficient in areas where they controlled the power. Although PDK often postured as an opposition party, until the 2004 elections it was part of the government, which may prove the fact why more votes did not flock to them.

Smaller parties whose success fell short of their expected outcome complained that the Kosovar electorate was too rigid and that the voters were used to voting for the top leader and did not heed the real offers made by the other parties

Indications of having incumbent local parties sanctioned show that local politics not only matters, but is also a determinant factor in swaying votes of Kosovo elections after 2000. However, the drawback is that due to the lack of alternatives, the stick that the voters have at their disposal in order to punish the leaders is too small. At the same time voters' rigidity also makes it less likely for sizeable swings in favor of smaller parties, yet it makes it most likely to abstain from voting at all.

Even more worrisome, the fact that PDK is losing in its home turf, is an indicator that its voters are dissatisfied with them. This is a sign that where PDK gained votes, it was votes disgruntled from others, which is probably similarly with former PDK votes who decided to switch to LDK, AAK or not to vote at all. If this trend continues, voters in all municipalities are awaiting a serious disillusionment.

I) Voters are not only after the big leaders, but after successful local politics as well

Often, analysts who wish to see more dynamic voters who respond more rapidly to the performance of the parties, hence, in the long term to make the parties more accountable, complain that the voters usually vote for the top leaders. Smaller parties whose success fell short of their expected outcome also complained that the Kosovar elec-

torate was too rigid and that the voters were used to voting for the top leader and that the real offers made by the other parties were unable to reach the voters as a result. This may have been true after the war when the voters reward the two major movements associated with the resistance of the 90s or with the war. Another plausible explanation is that the alternative offer was not persuasive enough, or that it was not made by the right persons. The fact that the power of the top leaders is falling is obvious today, not only indicated by the numbers above, but also by the inability of the leaders to curb the recent violence, by increased dissatisfaction as expressed by the civil society, as well as by a trend of low turn-out of protesters when called by the mainstream leaders. These trends point to a rapidly decreasing legitimacy of the political leaders.

There is tremendous pressure on the parties to respond to the international community rather than its voters and their greater vulnerability to the former. This has led to a flirting relationship with the international administration where they increasingly more are pressured to respond less to domestic demands and more to specific policies designed to pacify the region. The parties will have to decide between these two schizophrenic trends and as the public dissatisfaction is growing, we could likely see

either fallout from the standards path, or increased frustration by the voters who may decide to punish the mainstream leaders. This may be good in the long-term if the everyday performance of the parties improves and that their image in front of the public improves. This can only happen if there are fewer rumors about corruption and if the demands by various groups are met. As a top Balkan analyst once said, the international community expects that after a flirting relationship with the voters (elections), the local politicians are married to the international community. The international community should insist that true democracy occurs in Kosovo, and not encourage the leadership to primarily deliver to the international community in the short-term and forget those who put them in power in the first place.

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6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Elections represent the primary form of citizens' political participation. In consolidated democracies alternatives for citizen participation go far beyond the periodic opportunities to cast a vote. In new and emerging democracies, like Kosovo, the array of such alternatives is very narrow. Lack of serious options to constructively channel citizens' preferences into decision-making process compels for a higher attention towards the fundamental form of political action. A widespread electoral participation is essential as the basic and one of the most important changes to a participatory decision-making in Kosovo.

Overall, this paper does not aim to fully explain reasons behind decaying turn-out or to set a final interpretation of all current trends in electoral behavior. However, it points out that a dangerous legitimacy vacuum has been created. Non-responsive representation and the lack of personal connectivity between citizens and their representatives is nourishing political disinterest. It is further inhibiting a healthy exchange of information between citizens and parties, in addition to creating a serious obstacle for voter mobilization. Perceived inappropriate party governance – otherwise a key factor in relations between voters and representatives - is contributing to decreasing legitimacy among the public, as it is seen when juxtaposing numbers of voters with those of non-voters.

Making cosmetic changes, without tackling the crux of political interaction in Kosovo will send the worst message to those who have long been expecting a different democracy from the one they see today

As observed from voting trends local issues are gaining in importance. At the local level, two very important patterns of voting behavior are discerned. First, a considerable, and growing, number of voters are sanctioning incumbent government with a slow shift of their votes toward the largest municipal opposition. This a positive trend indicating that decisions are made based on voters' expectations and performance of elected representatives.

Second, even elections at the national level are following this trend mainly due to the importance that the voters are attaching to the local level. Due to the distance of citizens from the central government, the image of the whole PISG is reduced to the local government. As a result, the citizens are increasingly making their choice about national elections based on their local perceptions.

The largest portion of voters is demonstrating its protest and powerlessness against all parties by not turning out to vote while at the same time it remains deprived of other feasible forms of legitimate political participation. Unfortunately, any of the trends above are proving too slow to significantly influence the actions of major parties.

If distrust is growing along with a perception of powerlessness, corruption, incompetence, Kosovo's democracy is not headed in the right direction. Despite very important issues that Kosovo faces in its near future, democracy must certainly be one of them. After all, it is officially one of the key standards. However, making cosmetic changes, without tackling the crux of political interaction in Kosovo will send the worst message to those who have long been expecting a different democracy from the one they see today.

Recommendations:

1. Change the electoral system. The electoral system at both the central and at the local level needs to change. Whereas the electoral system for the national assembly was debated extensively last year, it is essential to add a number of recommendations about the procedures for electing local representatives and the President of Kosovo.

2. Public debates. Besides the electoral system suggested last year by Reforma 2004, it is important to have public discussions whether Kosovo needs to have its President directly elected.

3. Guiding principles. The principles that should guide any thoughts on new legislation are:

- Better accountability
- Fairness to all political parties
- Effective minority participation
- Effective political integration
- Effective representation of constituents
- Effective voter participation
- Effective government, parliament and political parties
- Above all, restore legitimacy

4. Debating municipal elections. Similar discussions should take place about local elections. Citizens at large should debate the merits and disadvantages of having directly elected mayor, whether opening the lists for municipal councilors is needed. Discussions at various levels should also include debating mechanisms for adequate gender and minority representation.

5. We recommend that the future legislation on municipal elections:

- **Open lists**, where councillors are elected directly by the citizens with universal and equal suffrage.

- **Proportional representation.** Due to the post-conflict and unconsolidated practice of political competition, any disproportionality may be widely understood as deceitful, and likely lead to turmoil. Hence, direct accountability of the open lists must be combined with a strictly proportional system for the local elections in 2006.

- **Gender and minority representation.** At the same time, such as system must ensure adequate gender and minority representation. However, these must be

strictly based on performance instead of set-aside or other types of non-competitive formulas.

- **Directly elected mayors.** For purposes of higher political and executive accountability, we recommend to have directly elected mayors, preferably with a preferential system, where voters rank their choice with (1) and (2). Such a system is conducive to moderation as it makes leaders reach out to a variety of groupings, as well as avoids the costly second round.

Such a constellation of electoral features is likely to bring about:

- **Improved trust.** Improve relations and accountability between elected representatives and the voters.

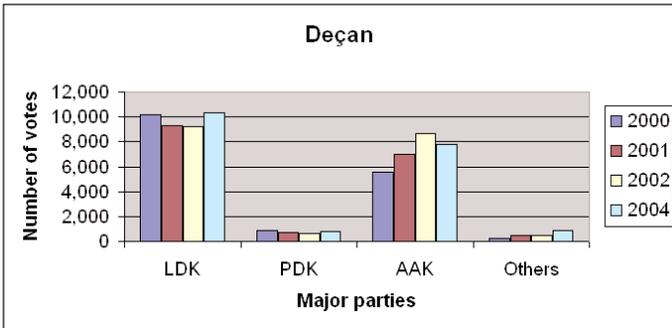
- **Intra-party transparency and democracy.** Until the proposed changes in the electoral system take place, it is essential to improve the transparency of candidate selection within political parties. Reduce uncompetitive, arbitrary and shadowy nomination-processes and selection of candidates.

- **Allow real local leaders to emerge.** Real local leaders are, in general, stifled. The emergence of true local leadership will inevitably question some of the central policies, and in the first sight will weaken the central leadership. However, it will provide an incentive for the center to modify their leadership and allow for more input from localities, ultimately creating (a) the image of more responsive parties, (b) will serve as an incentive for informal leaders to enter the mainstream politics, (d) allow the parties to develop more vigorous internal debates about their vision, and (e) this openness will bring about more voters based on ideological posturing rather than from the regions or families traditionally loyal. Such division of voters will make the inter-party competition healthier and less likely to escalate into violence.

Annex I: Results by municipalities*

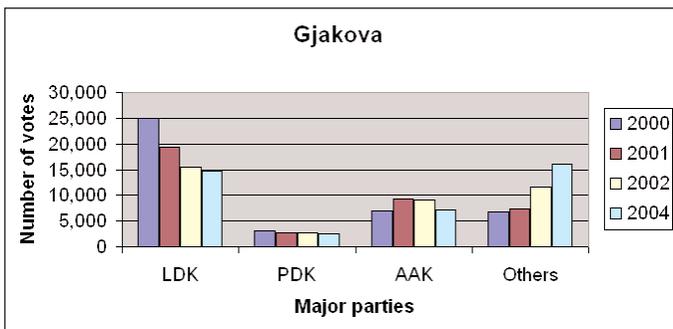
Deçan

Deçan	2000		2001		2002		2004	
LDK	10,136	60%	9,266	53%	9,210	49%	10,312	52%
PDK	891	5%	679	4%	606	3%	797	4%
AAK	5,552	33%	6,982	40%	8,674	46%	7,782	39%
Others	201	1%	488	3%	445	2%	855	4%
Non-voters	4,378	20%	6,956	34%	12,550	40%	13,553	41%



Gjakova

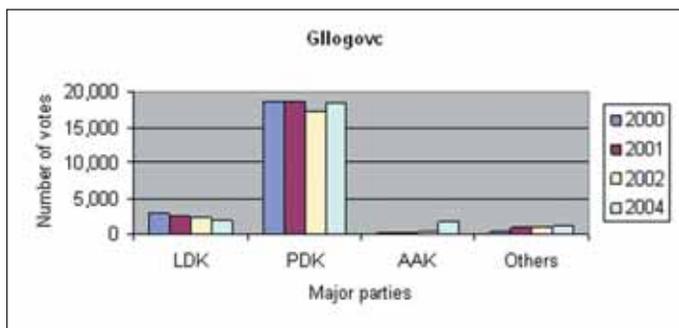
Gjakova	2000		2001		2002		2004	
LDK	24,928	60%	19,321	50%	15,540	40%	14,665	36%
PDK	3,010	7%	2,636	7%	2,772	7%	2,420	6%
AAK	7,031	17%	9,338	24%	9,038	23%	7,175	18%
Others	6,817	16%	7,425	19%	11,532	30%	16,128	40%
Non-voters	11,442	21%	22,120	36%	33,273	46%	33,753	45%



*Percentages of LDK, PDK, AAK, others are based on the total numbers of valid ballots. Non-voters are as percentage of total ballot cast.

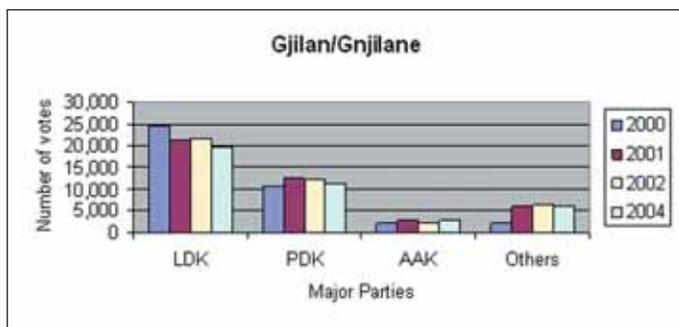
Glogovc

Glogovc	2000		2001		2002		2004	
LDK	2,856	13%	2,457	11%	2,418	11%	2,026	9%
PDK	18,567	84%	18,618	84%	17,313	82%	16,486	79%
AAK	120	1%	200	1%	331	2%	1,676	7%
Others	434	2%	892	4%	1,000	5%	1,225	5%
Non-voters	4,017	15%	8,291	27%	12,593	37%	12,334	34%



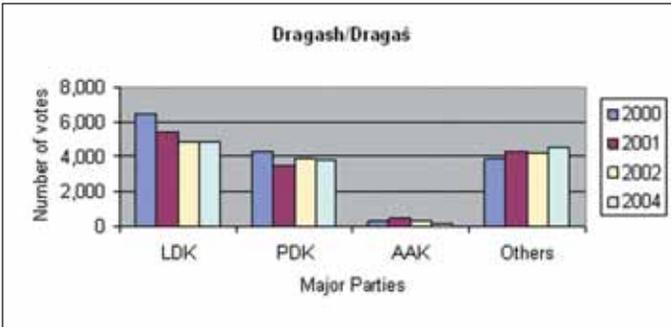
Gjilan/Gnjilane

Gjilan/Gnjilane	2000		2001		2002		2004	
LDK	24,479	63%	21,512	50%	21,589	51%	19,927	50%
PDK	10,398	27%	12,374	29%	12,167	29%	11,122	28%
AAK	2,159	6%	2,938	7%	2,126	5%	2,781	7%
Others	2,086	5%	6,000	14%	6,290	15%	5,953	15%
Non-voters	10,827	21%	21,820	33%	38,266	46%	37,329	48%



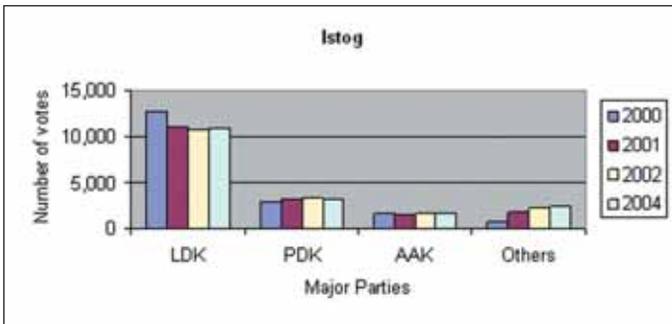
Dragash / Dragas

Dragash/Dragas	2000		2001		2002		2004	
LDK	6,509	43%	5,469	40%	4,884	37%	4,911	36%
PDK	4,324	29%	3,467	25%	3,866	29%	3,760	28%
AAK	303	2%	518	4%	338	3%	192	1%
Others	3,848	26%	4,323	31%	4,260	32%	4,546	34%
Non-voters	4,356	22%	10,123	42%	15,327	52%	16,591	55%



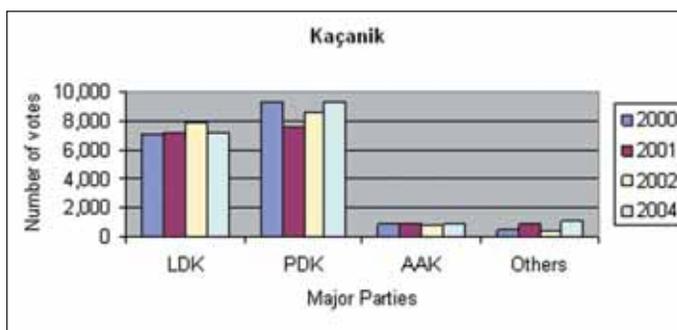
Istog

Istog	2000		2001		2002		2004	
LDK	12,721	70%	11,041	63%	10,755	59%	10,892	60%
PDK	2,931	16%	3,176	18%	3,289	18%	3,210	18%
AAK	1,630	9%	1,454	8%	1,740	10%	1,670	9%
Others	772	4%	1,800	10%	2,309	13%	2,394	13%
Non-voters	4,365	19%	8,683	33%	16,906	48%	13,370	42%



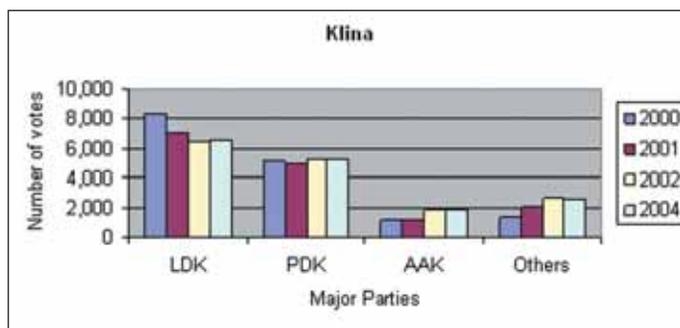
Kaçanik

Kaçanik	2000		2001		2002		2004	
LDK	7,069	40%	7,201	43%	7,910	44%	7,205	39%
PDK	9,302	52%	7,632	46%	8,643	49%	9,329	50%
AAK	900	5%	903	5%	844	5%	918	5%
Others	469	3%	911	5%	410	2%	1,134	6%
Non-voters	6,212	25%	10,672	39%	12,306	41%	13,169	41%



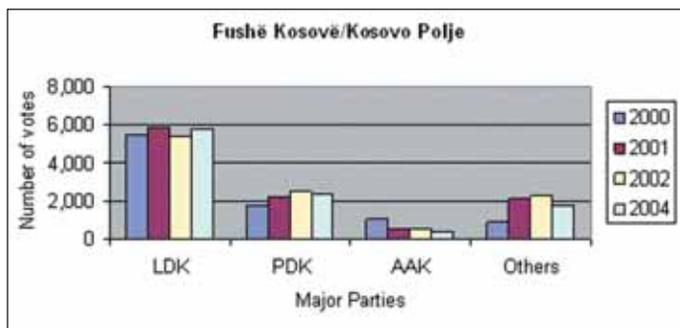
Klina

Klina	2000		2001		2002		2004	
LDK	8,334	52%	7,071	47%	6,467	40%	6,554	40%
PDK	5,112	32%	4,869	32%	5,226	32%	5,292	33%
AAK	1,186	7%	1,207	8%	1,834	11%	1,833	11%
Others	1,385	9%	2,034	13%	2,658	16%	2,560	16%
Non-voters	3,966	19%	9,174	37%	15,525	49%	12,438	43%



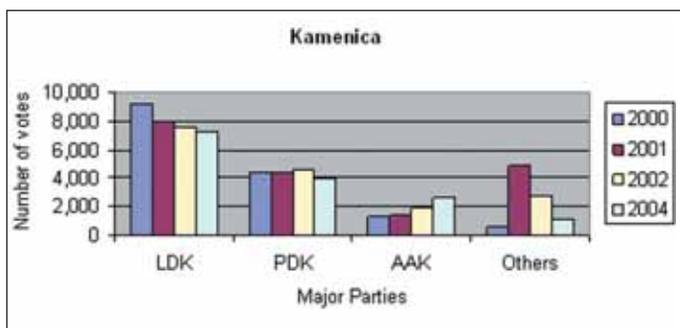
Fushë Kosovë / Kosovo Polje

Fushë Kosovë/K.Polje	2000		2001		2002		2004	
LDK	5,513	60%	5,890	55%	5,375	51%	5,797	56%
PDK	1,724	19%	2,210	20%	2,481	23%	2,343	23%
AAK	1,077	12%	558	5%	505	5%	409	4%
Others	866	10%	2,139	20%	2,276	21%	1,753	17%
Non-voters	2,235	18%	5,531	33%	13,405	56%	9,905	48%



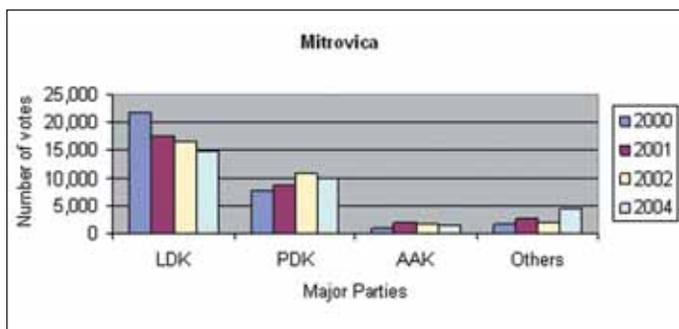
Kamenica

Kamenica	2000		2001		2002		2004	
LDK	9,190	60%	8,023	43%	7,575	45%	7,288	48%
PDK	4,305	28%	4,295	23%	4,584	27%	3,970	26%
AAK	1,286	8%	1,410	8%	1,881	11%	2,667	18%
Others	582	4%	4,814	26%	2,704	16%	1,133	8%
Non-voters	5,428	25%	10,897	37%	21,070	55%	20,368	57%



Mitrovica

Mitrovica	2000		2001		2002		2004	
LDK	21,785	67%	17,529	56%	16,516	53%	14,828	48%
PDK	7,784	24%	8,714	28%	10,562	34%	9,882	32%
AAK	996	3%	1,961	6%	1,763	6%	1,459	5%
Others	1,797	6%	2,828	9%	2,044	7%	4,478	15%
Non-voters	11,128	25%	24,795	44%	33,863	52%	36,517	54%

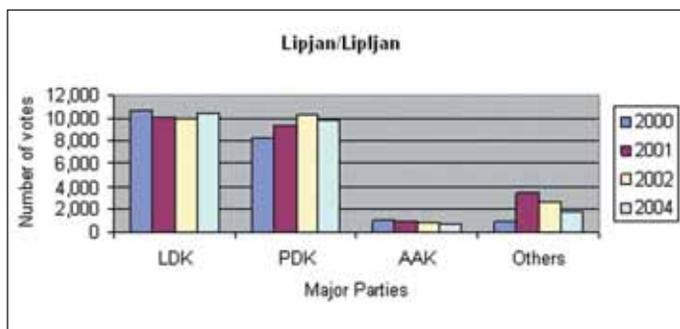


Leposavić/Leposaviq

Leposavić/Leposaviq	2001		2002		2004	
LDK	22	0.5%			21	19%
PDK	20	0.4%			3	3%
AAK	3	0.1%			17	15%
Others	4,857	99.0%	3,968	100%	70	63%
Non-voters	6,157	55.0%	9,553	70%	13,996	99%

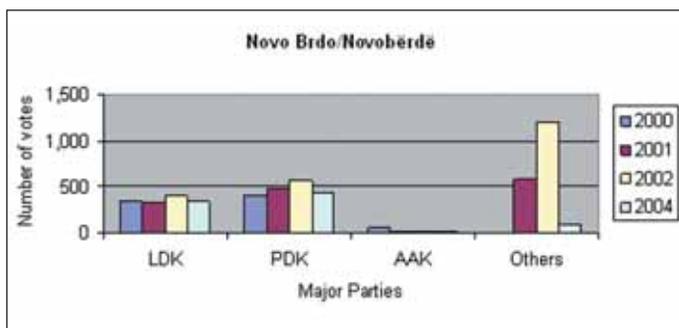
Lipjan/Lipljan

Lipjan/Lipljan	2000		2001		2002		2004	
LDK	10,718	51%	10,021	42%	9,923	42%	10,414	46%
PDK	8,317	39%	9,418	39%	10,283	44%	9,789	43%
AAK	1,109	5%	950	4%	840	4%	673	3%
Others	959	5%	3,492	15%	2,585	11%	1,837	8%
Non-voters	6,861	24%	13,482	36%	19,759	45%	20,357	47%



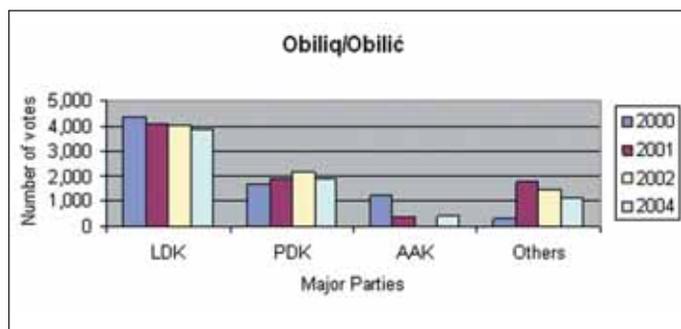
Novo Brdo/Novobërdë

Novo Brdo/Novobërdë	2000		2001		2002		2004	
LDK	336	42%	327	24%	407	19%	338	38%
PDK	400	50%	469	34%	567	26%	437	49%
AAK	66	8%	13	1%	19	1%	17	2%
Others	0	0%	581	42%	1,197	55%	93	11%
Non-voters	94	10%	462	24%	533	19%	1,558	63%



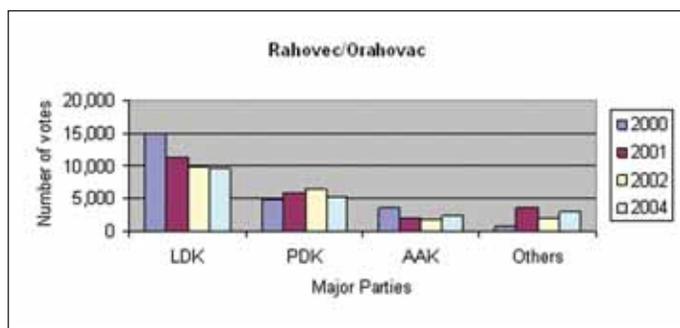
Obiliq/Obilić

Obiliq	2000		2001		2002		2004	
LDK	4,370	57%	4,091	50%	4,026	53%	3,877	53%
PDK	1,691	22%	1,859	23%	2,150	28%	1,809	26%
AAK	1,246	16%	373	5%	0	0%	416	6%
Others	297	4%	1,798	22%	1,453	19%	1,110	15%
Non-voters	1,706	18%	4,310	34%	9,795	56%	7,833	50%



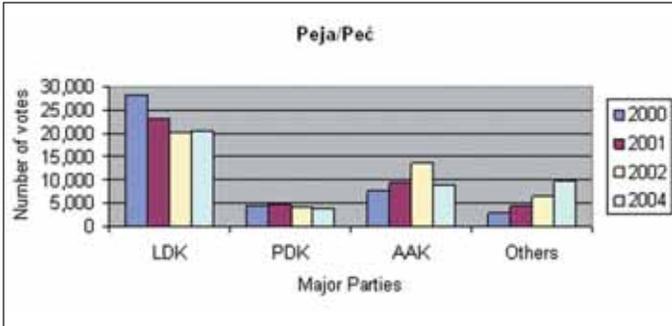
Rahovec/Orahovac

Rahovec/Orahovac	2000		2001		2002		2004	
LDK	14,884	61%	11,249	50%	9,776	49%	9,554	47%
PDK	4,908	20%	5,839	26%	6,408	32%	5,260	26%
AAK	3,680	15%	1,929	9%	1,826	9%	2,451	12%
Others	796	3%	3,654	16%	2,023	10%	2,961	15%
Non-voters	2,771	10%	11,505	33%	18,948	48%	19,211	48%



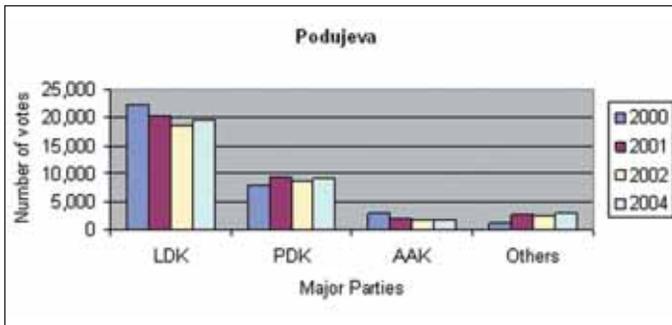
Peja/Peć

Peja/Peć	2000		2001		2002		2004	
LDK	28,352	65%	23,091	55%	20,367	46%	20,488	48%
PDK	4,475	10%	4,602	11%	4,143	9%	3,806	9%
AAK	7,729	18%	9,538	23%	13,470	30%	8,742	20%
Others	2,976	7%	4,394	11%	6,449	15%	9,706	23%
Non-voters	9,458	17%	18,645	31%	33,833	43%	30,075	41%



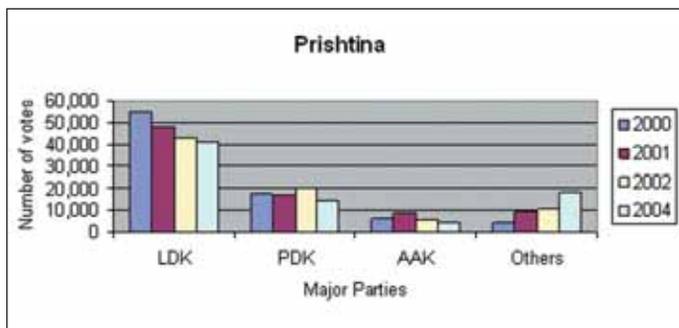
Podujeva

Podujeva	2000		2001		2002		2004	
LDK	22,193	65%	20,247	60%	18,723	59%	19,537	56%
PDK	7,779	23%	9,200	27%	8,685	28%	9,019	27%
AAK	2,823	8%	1,870	6%	1,688	5%	1,822	5%
Others	1,265	4%	2,658	8%	2,463	8%	2,952	9%
Non-voters	11,107	24%	18,972	35%	27,676	46%	28,659	46%



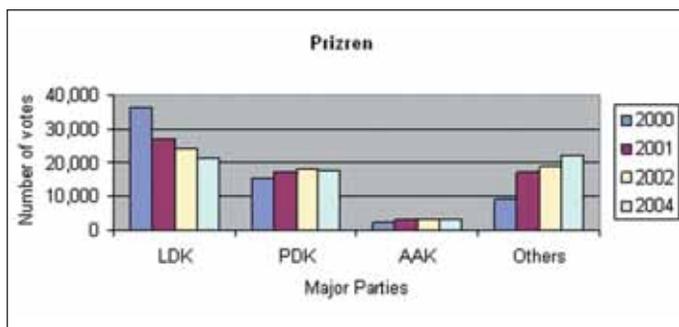
Pristina

Pristina	2000		2001		2002		2004	
LDK	55,237	66%	48,274	58%	43,270	54%	40,959	53%
PDK	17,449	21%	17,068	20%	19,835	25%	14,485	19%
AAK	6,491	8%	8,589	10%	5,477	7%	4,463	6%
Others	4,683	6%	9,486	11%	10,868	14%	18,040	23%
Non-voters	24,037	22%	40,418	32%	74,803	48%	60,835	44%



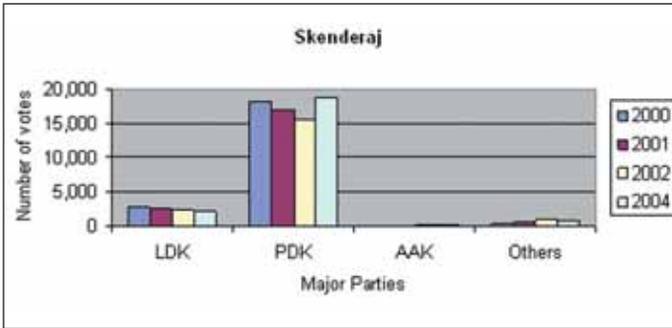
Prizren

Prizren	2000		2001		2002		2004	
LDK	38,198	57%	27,215	42%	24,138	38%	21,591	34%
PDK	15,406	24%	16,901	26%	17,947	28%	17,232	27%
AAK	2,314	4%	3,038	5%	3,129	5%	3,053	5%
Others	9,333	15%	17,097	27%	18,662	29%	22,159	35%
Non-voters	18,306	21%	34,464	34%	52,399	45%	50,760	44%



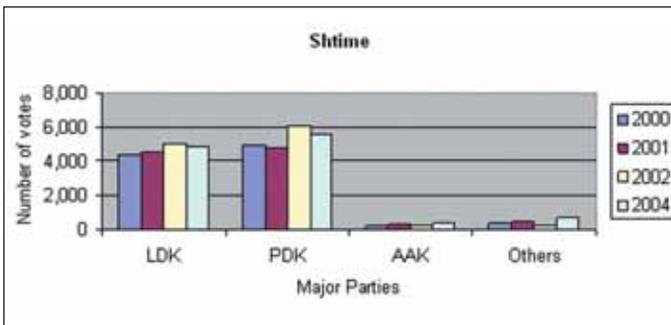
Skenderaj

Skenderaj	2000		2001		2002		2004	
LDK	2,895	13%	2,669	13%	2,352	12%	2,279	10%
PDK	18,108	84%	17,049	83%	15,601	82%	18,762	85%
AAK	99	1%	72	0%	194	1%	171	1%
Others	447	2%	646	3%	965	5%	877	4%
Non-voters	5,205	19%	11,550	36%	17,490	47%	16,871	43%



Shtime

Shtime	2000		2001		2002		2004	
LDK	4,439	44%	4,528	45%	5,007	43%	4,898	42%
PDK	4,958	49%	4,786	48%	6,108	53%	5,587	48%
AAK	273	3%	289	3%	253	2%	375	3%
Others	382	4%	465	5%	214	2%	759	7%
Non-voters	3,059	22%	3,787	27%	5,655	32%	6,105	34%

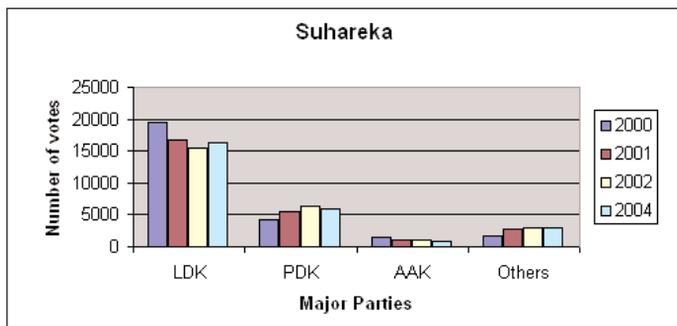


Štrpce/Shtërpçë

Štrpce/Shtërpçë	2000		2001		2002		2004	
LDK	632	44%	668	11%	758	11%	699	39%
PDK	775	54%	749	12%	981	14%	826	46%
AAK	37	3%	20	0%	0	0%	84	5%
Others	0	0%	4,717	77%	5,198	75%	194	11%
Non-voters	243	13%	2,073	25%	3,136	31%	8,373	82%

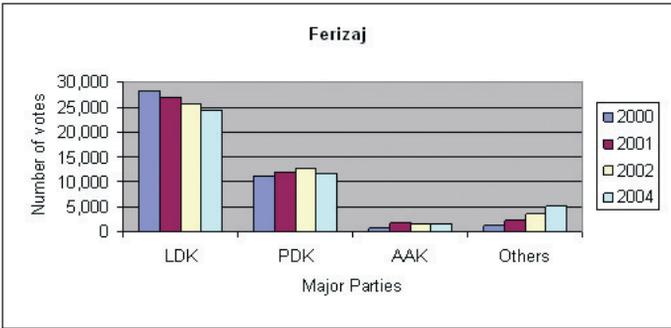
Suhareka

Suhareka	2000		2001		2002		2004	
LDK	19,475	72%	16,754	64%	15,398	60%	16,329	63%
PDK	4,187	16%	5,576	21%	6,272	24%	5,903	23%
AAK	1,453	5%	1,003	4%	1,028	4%	952	4%
Others	1,772	7%	2,717	10%	3,041	12%	2,898	11%
Non-voters	4,574	14%	13,433	34%	19,522	43%	19,644	43%



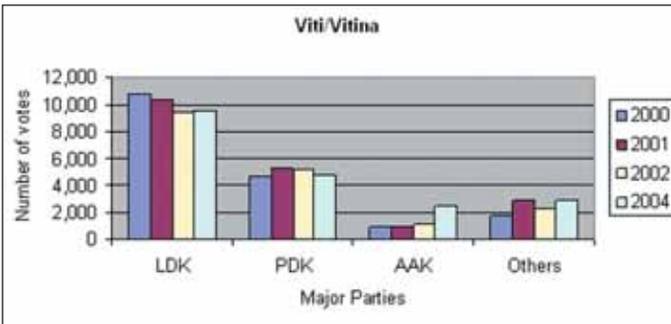
Ferizaj

Ferizaj	2000		2001		2002		2004	
LDK	28,141	68%	26,846	63%	25,746	59%	24,418	57%
PDK	11,077	27%	11,727	27%	12,648	29%	11,456	27%
AAK	821	2%	1,763	4%	1,658	4%	1,472	3%
Others	1,405	3%	2,376	6%	3,491	8%	5,208	12%
Non-voters	14,137	24%	20,340	32%	32,204	42%	31,123	42%



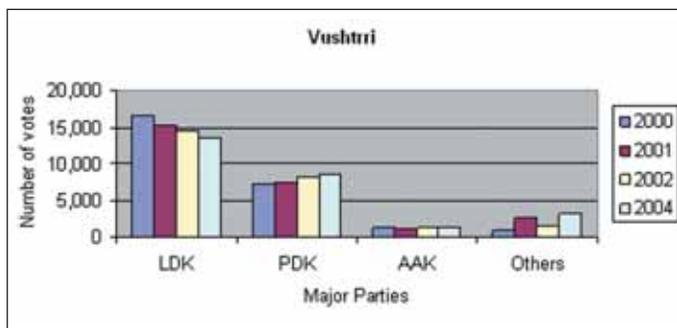
Viti/Vitina

Viti	2000		2001		2002		2004	
LDK	10,814	60%	10,398	54%	9,394	52%	9,508	48%
PDK	4,831	26%	5,252	27%	5,127	28%	4,667	24%
AAK	912	5%	913	5%	1,169	6%	2,452	13%
Others	1,752	10%	2,847	15%	2,301	13%	2,890	15%
Non-voters	8,645	31%	11,623	37%	19,822	52%	18,068	48%



Vushtri

Vushtri	2000		2001		2002		2004	
LDK	18,852	64%	15,230	58%	14,538	57%	13,878	51%
PDK	7,154	27%	7,357	28%	8,029	32%	8,453	32%
AAK	1,366	5%	1,153	4%	1,362	5%	1,301	5%
Others	870	3%	2,563	10%	1,523	6%	3,289	12%
Non-voters	8,727	24%	15,990	37%	23,391	47%	23,530	46%



Zubin Potok

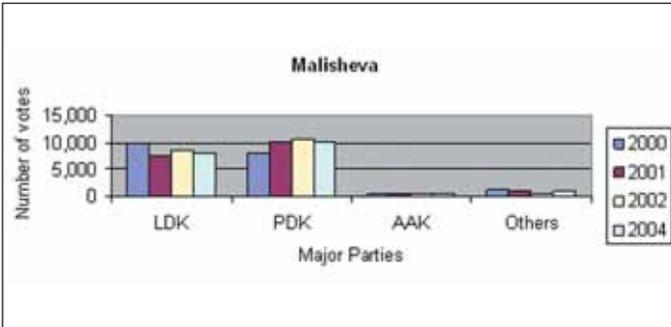
Zubin Potok	2001		2002		2004	
LDK	207	15.0%	221	5%	205	41%
PDK	164	12.0%	160	4%	212	43%
AAK	87	5.0%	72	2%	63	13%
Others	916	68.0%	3,626	89%	18	4%
Non-voters	3,265	70.0%	1,728	30%	5,627	92%

Zvečan/Zveçan

Zvečan	2001		2002		2004	
LDK	1	0.0%	0	0%	43	50%
PDK	0	0.0%	0	0%	16	19%
AAK	1	0.0%	0	0%	12	14%
Others	1,151	100.0%	3,088	100%	15	17%
Non-voters	26	81.0%	4,087	56%	6,955	98%

Malisheva

Malisheva	2000		2001		2002		2004	
LDK	10,018	50%	7,745	40%	8,635	42%	8,106	41%
PDK	8,168	41%	10,137	52%	10,559	52%	10,201	51%
AAK	415	2%	574	3%	565	3%	626	3%
Others	1,341	7%	1,125	6%	604	3%	979	5%
Non-voters	3,746	15%	9,955	33%	12,058	37%	13,783	40%



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The Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development aims to support and promote democratic values in Kosovo through training and independent policy research.

The training pillar is focused on the development of political parties through the Internet Academy for Democracy, which was developed in cooperation with the Olof Palme International Center.

The research pillar focuses on producing independent policy analysis on issues such as good governance, administration, political party development, security, regional cooperation, political economy, and local government.

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