

Prishtina Insight

Still here:
Serbia's postal
system endures in
Kosovo.

PAGE 4

Pushback:
Women take stand
against street
harassment.

PAGE 7

ISA'S RISE



**HOW THIS GUY BECAME
KOSOVO'S PRIME MINISTER.
PAGE 8.**

Page Two

A TUMULTUOUS 2014

2014



Highway from Dell

An investigation by BIRN in April revealed that former US Ambassador Christopher Dell took a job in Africa with Bechtel, the construction giant he lobbied for while serving as Washington's envoy to Prishtina. During his tenure, a consortium of Bechtel and Enka won a contract to build the highway to Albania.



Constitutional court: Above the law?

Kosovo's highest court got tangled up in the messy aftermath of the June 8 elections with eyebrow-raising decisions. An August decision, in particular, gave PDK the power to indefinitely stall the formation of a new government. The court also refused to hear a challenge to the extension of the mandates of its three international court judges by President Atifete Jahjaga.



Serbs on the rise, but the north is still stuck

Serbs in northern Kosovo were integrated into the power structures in Kosovo thanks to the 2013 Brussels agreement. Belgrade-backed MPs now sit in Parliament, but the north itself remains in a state of flux.

2015

from the editor

Isa Mustafa deserves a chance

Isa Mustafa did not leave a good legacy as Mayor of Prishtina. Illegal construction went unchecked while the administration of the municipality was a mess; it even had a problem with under-spending. Meanwhile, the mayor's arrogance and lack of charisma did not ingratiate him with people.

But, in his first days as Prime Minister, Mustafa is setting a promising tone, by saying that the 25 percent pay raise promised to public sector workers by his predecessor, Hashim Thaci, will not go ahead.

Public-sector pay increased dramatically under Thaci, something he touted during the election campaign. The benefits may have been obvious

to government employees and their families, but the country generally is not better off as a result. As the International Monetary Fund warned on multiple occasions, growth of public wages and other benefits has made private businesses less competitive. They have to pay money they do not have to hire good people, or settle for workers who are not as good. The pay raises have also put pressure on the country's budget.

In an interview with Reuters,

Mustafa suggested he would cut taxes for businesses and offer them incentives for creating jobs, while borrowing more from abroad. Those ideas are not revolutionary but seem to reflect the common sense you'd expect from a free-market economist.

The worry, however, is how Mustafa will approach privatisation. The Prishtina bus system, privatized during his time as mayor, offers a cautionary tale of how not to conduct them, especially when a key public service is involved. Mustafa suggested that firms that create jobs might get state property as a reward. That isn't necessarily a bad idea, but it also seems ripe for abuse.

If Mustafa is sincere about getting the economy going, he will need to take corruption more seriously than he did as leader of the LDK and previously as mayor of Prishtina. Kosovo and Albania rank at the bottom regionally of Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index. Whether it is real or perceived, corruption is discouraging foreign companies and Kosovars themselves from investing.

There are not many reasons to feel excited about Mustafa. But, Kosovo needs a government, and Mustafa leads the one it has right now. In offering glimmers of hope that the country may get a dose of sound economic policy, he should be given a chance.



Nate Tabak
Editor-in-Chief



Elections: Resistance, crisis and status quo

The June 8 elections produced very similar results from 2010, with PDK on top, followed by LDK and Vetevendosje. Initially a united opposition front seemed poised to keep PDK from getting a third mandate. Ultimately, though, it wasn't meant to be.



Holy warriors and the fight against them

Kosovars have joined the thousands of foreign fighters in Iraq and Syria. Authorities began cracking down in earnest in 2014 amid growing international condemnation of the atrocities of Islamic State.



EULEX in Crisis

Downsizing and a watered-down mandate were a mere sideshow to the allegations by prosecutor Maria Bamieh in October that EULEX officials ignored her reports of possible corruption inside the mission.



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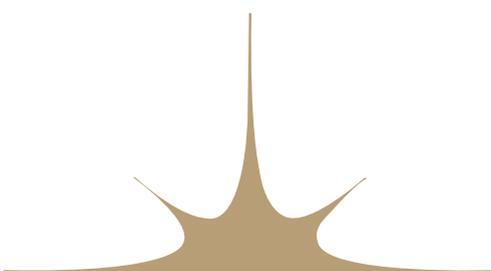
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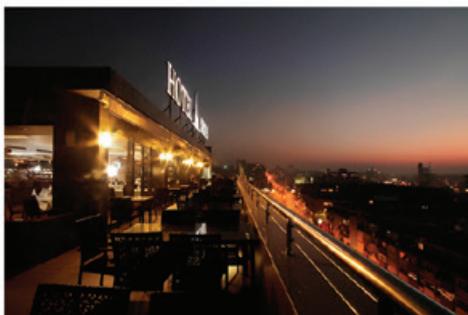
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Delivery problems

Because of its disputed status, Kosovo faces problems receiving mail and packages from abroad. Mail intended for Kosovo frequently goes to Belgrade, which returns items instead of forwarding them. This makes it difficult for people in Kosovo to order things online. Some Kosovars get around this by adding a “via Albania” to their address, which routes the mail through Tirana, which in turn forwards it to Kosovo.

EU urged to Widen EULEX probe

By Petrit Çollaku

Human Rights Watch has called on the EU’s foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, to give more powers to the expert tasked with probing the corruption allegations, made by an EU prosecutor, which caused a scandal in Kosovo in October.

In the letter which was made public on Monday, Human Rights Watch’s EU director Lotte Leicht said that legal expert Jean Paul Jacque’s brief should be wider in order to ensure that the allegations are addressed “fairly and firmly” to maintain the credibility of the EULEX rule-of-law mission.

“We are concerned... that Mr. Jacque’s role appears limited to over-seeing EULEX’s internal investigation rather than conducting an independent investigation into the allegations,” Leicht wrote to Mogherini.

“That investigation should not be limited to the corruption allegations raised by the former EULEX prosecutor but should include all credible allegations of corruption implicating the mis-

sion and its current and former staff,” she added.

The allegations were made by EULEX prosecutor Maria Bamieh, who claimed that her colleague, judge Francesco Florit, took a bribe in order to release a defendant in a murder case. Florit strongly denied the allegations.

Bamieh has since been suspended. She also claims that EULEX initially failed to investigate her suspicions about Florit, and instead targeted her for being a whistleblower.

Last month Mogherini appointed Jacque, a senior legal adviser to the EU, to conduct a four-month review of the situation.

Leicht said in her letter to Mogherini that Jacque’s investigation should also look at complaints by Vehbi Kajtazi, a journalist from Kosovo newspaper Koha Ditore who reported on the graft claims, that EULEX pressurised him to hand over his source material.

The EU mission has denied that the mission asked for any of Kajtazi’s documents.



Serbia’s post endures in Kosovo

By Zana Cimili

When Antigona Bajrami, a translator in Prishtina, wanted to send a birthday present - a book - to a friend in Belgrade recently, she could not simply go to her nearest post office and dispatch it from there. She had to drive 20 minutes to Gracanica, the largest ethnic Serbian town near Prishtina.

“I used to live in Nis [in Serbia], where I was born. We used to send postcards to places in Serbia or Kosovo all the time, as well as all over Yugoslavia,” Bajrami recalled while driving to Gracanica. “Now I need to travel to another city to send stuff.”

Since Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008, there has been no formal cooperation between the postal systems of Kosovo and Serbia. As a result, it is almost impossible to send even a postcard to Serbia from regular Kosovo post office.

Inside the Posta Srbije (Post of Serbia) office in Gracanica, Bajrami handed over the book to the

woman at the counter, explaining in Serbian where it needed to go, before filling out a form containing her address as its known in the Serbian system, with the zip code “38 000 Prishtina, APKM.” APKM stands for “Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija,” Kosovo’s official name in Serbia.

Gracanica is the hub for Posta Srbija’s operations in Kosovo, which has 28 individual post offices and employees 240 staff.

“We get all the post that comes from Serbia, even stuff meant for officials and institutions in Prishtina,” Randjel Nojkic, the head of Posta Srbija in Kosovo, said. “I make sure my employees send through the important mail meant for Kosovo officials, especially if there’s a contact number on the package,” he added.

Nojkic acknowledged that the situation was peculiar. “The reality is that the two postal systems work here side by side... it’s just that the cooperation needs to be ironed out,” he said. The Serbian postal service is just one in a line of institutions that still function

Post of Serbia in Kosovo

28

post offices

240

employees

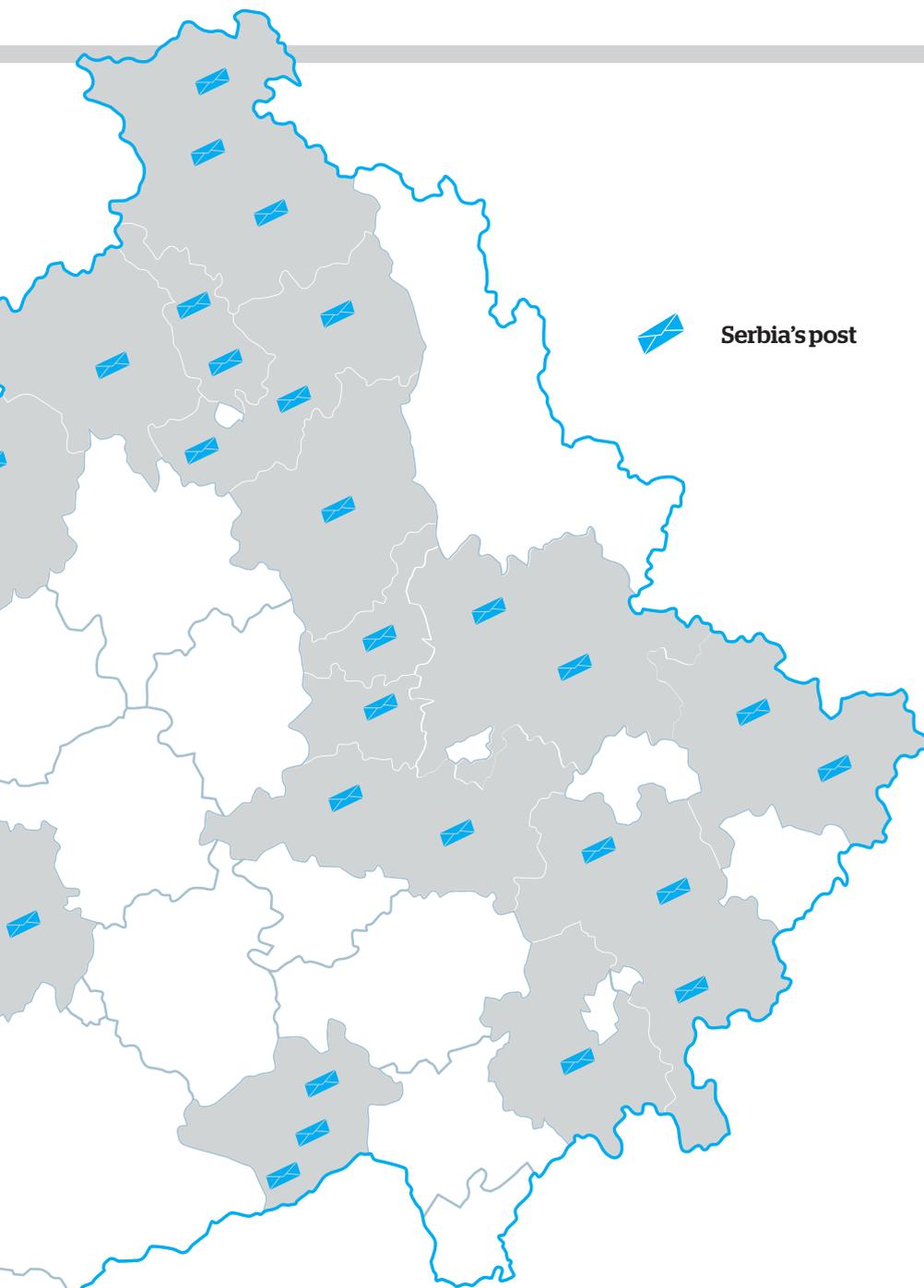
20,000

items delivered from Serbia each year

7,000-8,000

items sent out from Kosovo

Briefly



under the direct patronage of the Serbian state in Kosovo. These include schools and the Serbian state telecom.

The Kosovo government frowns on these institutions, which Belgrade has, in fact, begun to dismantle as part of the EU-led April 2013 agreement with Prishtina on the normalization of their relations.

The Brussels agreement tackled the highest profile issues such as the integration of Serbian police into the Kosovo police force and the establishment of party autonomous Serbian municipalities operating under Kosovo's overall auspices in the north of Kosovo.

But, key issues have yet to be tackled as Belgrade and Prishtina continue to engage in talks.

Edita Tahiri, Kosovo's chief negotiator in the talks, said the issue of the postal system has featured in some discussions. "We have spoken about this topic but a final

agreement has not been reached regarding the post specifically," she said.

"What we expect to happen is for illegal structures to be closed and for them to be integrated in the Kosovo system," she added. In the meantime, ordinary people like Bajrami will continue to have to take extra steps to get ordinary business between Kosovo and Serbia transacted.

"I hope stuff like this gets cleared up soon. Otherwise we're just making life harder for each other," she concluded.

This story was written as part of BIG DEAL, a civic oversight project examining the implementation of agreements between Kosovo and Serbia. The project is being implemented by BIRN Kosovo, Internews Kosova and Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability - CRTA, with support from the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

Serbia's post



Prison time in passports case. A former contractor for the Austrian firm OeSD was found guilty and sentenced to 12 years in prison Thursday for embezzling 1.4 million euro intended as payments for the production of Kosovo passports. Also convicted was Fisnik Blakaj, who received an 11-year sentence. The two were ordered to repay the money to OeSD.

Prosecutors say that Velija forged an authorization from OeSD to redirect payments from Kosovo's ministry of Internal Affairs to her company, EU Consulting. Velija was arrested in 2012, and had claimed the money was used to bribe officials at the ministry and the Austrian embassy at the direction of OeSD. The company denied these claims, and prosecutors never alleged that any bribery occurred, either.



Kosovo wins right to compete in olympics. Athletes from Kosovo will be allowed to compete in the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio after Kosovo won full membership of the International Olympic Committee. Athletes from Kosovo are celebrating the IOC decision to grant Kosovo full membership, which means they will be fielding their own national team for the Brazil Olympics.



EU names new tribunal chief prosecutor. US lawyer David Schwendiman will be the chief prosecutor of the new special war crimes court that is expected to prosecute senior Kosovo Liberation Army figures, PI has learned. Schwendiman, whose last job was investigating fraud and corruption in Afghanistan, will succeed Clint Williamson as the chief prosecutor of the European Union's Special Investigative Task Force on Kosovo this week, EU sources say.

A small step to reclaim Kosovo's streets

Take Back the Night campaign takes on the harassment women endure every day.

By Hana Marku

Jeta Rexha, a 19-year-old student at the University of Prishtina, has had some bad experiences walking around Prishtina as a woman. She recalls one evening while she was waiting for a bus when she was cat-called five times by men driving past in their cars and slowing down to stare and talk to her.

When asked what they said to her, Rexha answers that she ignored them. "I'm so used to these comments that I don't remember them anymore," she says, adding that her experience is routine for young women in the city.

"Before you go out, you make a plan: go here, don't go there, act like this, cover up more and no one will bother you. If they do, keep a cell phone handy and you're prepared," Rexha advises.

Although there are no official statistics on street harassment of women, ask any woman in Kosovo and you'll hear stories about unwanted sexual comments, being followed down the street (and sometimes into their apartment buildings), and unwanted physical contact, like touching and grabbing. It is also a common complaint voiced in meetings held by the Kosovo Women's Network across the country during the last two years.

"The effect of sexual harassment in public spaces can have a huge effect on the lives of women and girls," Donjeta Morina, project coordinator at the Kosovo Women's Network, said.

"First, girls are harassed on the street from a young age. They're socialized with the idea that this is normal, that they have to endure those comments, walk past and put their heads down," she added.

In late November, the organization (full disclosure: I'm a member) decided it was time to do something about it, by organizing a Take Back the Night campaign.

The campaign consisted of

a week-long series of Facebook status posts, such as "Respect is sexy", "It isn't a compliment, it's harassment", and "You don't have to teach your daughter not to go out at night. Educate your son better." Each status is followed by the hashtag #takebackthenight, or the Albanian translation, #NataEshteE-Jona.

The social media campaign culminated in an evening march in Prishtina, in the style of Take Back the Night protests held in various countries from the 1970s onwards.

After the online campaign that created a buzz that rarely follows gender equality campaigns in Kosovo, roughly 150 people joined the campaign's concluding march in Prishtina. Protesters bore signs with such statements as, "What if your sister gets harassed? Is she 'asking' for it?" and illustrations of women in different sorts of dress ("still not 'asking' for it"). A number of men were present, holding signs at the front of the march.

Online debate about street harassment during the campaign became heated, and the backlash was sometimes harsh. Critics described the online campaign as silly and ineffective, and as a poor excuse for real activism. Many Facebook users said the way women dressed invites harassment, and that a woman's state of undress determined the amount of harassment she encountered and deserved.

Oda Haliti, 29, one of the campaign's initiators and supporters, said the claim that a woman's clothing determines the level of street harassment she experiences is baseless.

"The reasons why sexual harassment occurs are always along the lines of, 'Girls dress provocatively, they're undressed and so deserve to be violated.' We often hear these things, unfortunately," she said.

"The harasser is not judged, but



Supporters of the Take Back the Night campaign take to the streets of Prishtina. PHOTOS/ DONJETA BERISHA

the girl who is being 'provocative' with her choice of clothing. This isn't true, since girls are harassed and violated even in the most ordinary clothing," Haliti added.

Haliti was part of the team that created a video to accompany the campaign, which was screened and posted online during the closing march. The video shows a young woman dressed in jeans and a jacket, walking through the streets of Prishtina for an entire day. Over the course of eight hours, she gets harassed and followed over 50 times.

Rron Gjinovci, a 25-year-old activist, says the Take Back the Night video made him realize the extent to which women face sustained harassment in public.

He said the overall effect of the campaign was limited to the capital.

"I think the campaign initiated this debate, but only in Prishtina. This is a very good start," he said.

"Our society needs this debate and it needs to be a very stern debate. I really hope young girls have begun to understand this problem better," he added. "At least they shouldn't think that what happens to them on the street every day is normal, because it isn't."

Critics of the campaign maintain that it did not go far enough. Bardhyl Fejzullahu, a 33-year-old programmer, said the problem of street harassment could not be

dealt with through hashtags and Facebook statuses.

"I thought some of the statuses were stupid, like 'Don't tell your daughter not to leave the house at night, teach your son better.' Who are you addressing this to? Who is supposed to educate him? The online campaign fell flat," Fejzullahu said.

"The organizers of the campaign should have broadened their approach and put together a program to be used at schools - invite teachers to work with you, or approach the Ministry of Education to see what can be done about this in schools and kindergartens, the places where children get their first education on why it isn't right to harass others," he added.

However, Morina, of the Kosovo Women's Network, said their work on street harassment is far from over. "Women and girls still need a space to talk about this problem, and we've seen how tired they are of feeling afraid and endangered night and day," she said.

"The hashtag campaign brought about real change, because a major problem that takes place every day has been normalized and is never talked about," she suggested. "If you ask me, the fact that people have started talking about street harassment to this extent is a very big change," she concluded.

Hana Marku is a member of the Kosovo Women's Network.



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Cover

The unlikely rise of Isa Mustafa

The new Prime Minister has taken a winding path from his time as a Communist youth leader to the top office in government, where his free-market vision for Kosovo will now be tested.

By Una Hajdari

After six months of political crisis, Isa Mustafa and Hashim Thaci emerged from the offices of President Atifete Jahjaga three weeks ago, announcing that they had agreed to form a government with Mustafa as Prime Minister.

Kosovo breathed a collective sigh of relief that the crisis was over at last, while international leaders

welcomed the deal.

But there was little enthusiasm that the curmudgeonly former Mayor of Prishtina would be running the next government.

Even in his own party, the Democratic League of Kosovo, LDK, the news did not go down that well. Fliers soon appeared on LDK offices across the country, depicting the 63-year-old as a fox chasing an armchair dangling



Change of the guard? Despite getting the Prime Minister's post, Isa Mustafa, is still eclipsed in raw political power by his predecessor, Hashim Thaci, now his deputy. VISAR KRJEZIU/AP VIA BETA

from a fishing rod.

A deal with the PDK amounted to a betrayal in the eyes of many LDK supporters, some of whom still resented Mustafa's rise to the top of the party.

Mustafa had abandoned the opposition coalition he had formed with three other parties after the June elections. For six months, the coalition, dubbed VLAN, prevented Hashim Thaci and the

Democratic Party of Kosovo, PDK, from forming a new government. However, the parties failed to form one of their own, partly because of a ruling from the Constitutional Court and partly because of discord among the party leaders.

For Mustafa, going into bed with Thaci's PDK offered greater rewards. In the VLAN coalition, he had agreed to become only the speaker of parliament, while



Ramush Haradinaj was to have become the Prime Minister.

Mustafa himself expressed little emotion following his election to the top post in government. In a statement on Facebook, he said only that the deal was made “bearing in mind the situation the country faces”.

He displayed a similar lack of emotion four years ago, when he was elected head of the LDK. “Only

Isa Mustafa has expressed no emotion,” the daily Express noted at the time.

Charm is not one of Mustafa’s attributes. “A sense of humour is not his best quality, but I think that is because he is very serious and firm,” Ilmi Uka, a resident of Prapashtice, the village outside Prishtina where Mustafa was born, said.

Whatever Mustafa lacks in charm, he has made up for in terms

of endurance and political guile, in a career that began in the early 1980s as a rising star in the Communist Party in Yugoslavia, which has now taken him to the Prime Minister’s office in Kosovo.

Communist youth

Muhamet Mustafa, an economics professor at the Riinvest Institute and a longtime friend of Mustafa’s, remembers the Prime

Minister from way back in the 1970s, when he was a rising star in the then ruling League of Communists of Yugoslavia.

“We worked together in the League of Young Socialists of Kosovo. Mustafa joined us while he was an assistant professor at the Faculty of Economics in the University of Prishtina, where he had been named the best student,” Muhamet Mustafa - no relation to the

Cover

Isa Mustafa through the years

1951

Born in Prapashtice, a village on the outskirts of Prishtina.

1970s

Becomes active in the League of Young Socialists of Kosovo

1974

Graduates from faculty of Economics at the University of Prishtina.

1984

Becomes head of the Executive Council of the Municipality of Prishtina, a position he holds for four years.

1985

Receives a master's degree in organizational sciences from the University of Belgrade.

1989

Appointed as Secretary for Development, Science and Information in the government of Kosovo after the Serbian province is stripped of its autonomy.

1990

Flees Kosovo after Serbian authorities issue warrant for his arrest amid pushback against changes to Kosovo's status.

1990-9

Serves as Minister of Finance and Economics for Kosovo's government in exile.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

Prime Minister - recalled.

Isa Mustafa was part of the leadership of the youth organization and worked to increase student participation, according to Muhamet Mustafa.

Later, Isa Mustafa was elected to represent the Kosovo party's youth wing at Yugoslav level. "We wanted someone who could compete with the members from the other republics on an equal level," Muhamet Mustafa said. He represented the youth of Kosovo at the splendid funeral of Yugoslavia's President-for-life, Josip Broz Tito, a great honour for the time.

In 1984, he became head of the Executive Council of the Municipality of Prishtina, a position he held for four years. As Yugoslavia started falling apart, members of the League of Communists of Kosovo started coming under in-

creased pressure to show loyalty to Serbia. Many were expelled from the party for failing to do so, and accused of anti-state activities.

Controversial years

Mustafa managed to stay on in the party. His opponents condemn the position he took in December 1989, when he became Secretary for Development, Science and Information in the Kosovo provincial government under Jusuf Zejnulahu.

This was considered controversial because it happened after Serbia, under Slobodan Milosevic, stripped Kosovo of the extensive autonomy it had enjoyed under the 1974 constitution. Mustafa and other Albanians who continued to serve in the government were called Serbian stooges who were working against the interests of

their own community.

Muhamet Mustafa sees it differently. "Albanian politicians at the time were under extreme pressure from Serbia, especially from chauvinist circles", and it was good that some "stayed in politics to try to salvage what remained," he said.

Mustafa and his colleagues tried to uphold the remaining rights of the Kosovo assembly. In July 1990, the assembly notably refused to accept fresh changes to the Yugoslav constitution. In response, the Serbian government declared extraordinary measures and issued an arrest warrant for Mustafa who fled into exile.

He split his time abroad between Germany, Switzerland, Slovenia, Albania and Croatia. During the 1990s, his economic expertise came into play when

CONTINUES ON PAGE 13



Mustafa, at an LDK meeting in 2012, has never been known for his charm. PHOTO/ATDHE MULLA

he became Minister of Economics and Finance in the exiled government of Kosovo set up by Ibrahim Rugova under Bujar Bukoshi.

In interviews he gave at the time, Mustafa said he thought the government in exile would last only a couple of months rather than nine years. In the mean time, he set up the system that financed the parallel Bukoshi government, based on a tax that was collected from Albanians in Kosovo and abroad. The tax money financed its activities until NATO's air war with Serbia toppled Serbian rule in Kosovo for good in 1999. Mustafa's opponents, however, say it is suspicious that he never published the accounts of the fund, which reportedly amounted to around 100 million German Marks.

Road to top of party

After the war in Kosovo ended,

Mustafa returned home, quit politics and took up a professorship at the University of Prishtina, teaching economics.

In 2006, however, an old friend, Fatmir Sejdiu, asked for help. Sejdiu had recently been elected President of Kosovo and needed an economic advisor. According to Sejdiu, Mustafa was not then interested in politics, and he agreed "only to do an old friend a favour."

At the time, Mustafa was not a member of Sejdiu's LDK. But, Sejdiu says he valued Mustafa's experience as an economist and the role he had taken in the exiled government. Sejdiu soon promoted Mustafa. "After being my advisor for a year, I nominated him as Mayor of Prishtina," Sejdiu recalled.

Mustafa won the race, beating the PDK candidate, Fatmir Limaj. He went on to serve as Mayor of



Former President Fatmir Sejdiu appointed Mustafa to be his economic advisor in 2006, only to see his friend wrestle control of the LDK four years later. PHOTO/ATDHE MULLA

Cover

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

Prishtina for two mandates, until the current Mayor, Shpend Ahmeti, of Vetevendosje, beat him in a runoff in November 2013.

Under Mustafa, Prishtina saw noticeable improvements to its infrastructure, with better streets and more traffic lights. He spearheaded the refurbishment of Mother Teresa Boulevard. But there was also out-of-control illegal construction. There are claims that up to 20,000 unpermitted buildings went up during his mayoralty. Problems occurred also with nepotism in the municipal administration.

At the same time, the Mayor raised his profile inside the LDK, which was struggling for direction after its founder, Rugova, died of cancer in 2006. As a fellow intellectual and as a veteran of the nonviolent struggle against Serbia, Sejdiu emerged as a natural successor to Rugova.

However, in 2007, the LDK suffered a humiliating defeat in the national elections, losing 16 seats in parliament, where it had been the biggest party, and being eclipsed by Thaci's PDK. The two parties would later form a coalition government but they were strange bedfellows - the LDK being the party of the urban intelligentsia, while the PDK was started by KLA veterans, largely from rural Kosovo.

The coalition started off on a good note, with Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008, but it remained fragile.

In 2010, the Constitutional Court ruled that Sejdiu could not be President of Kosovo and head a party at the same time. He resigned as President, a post with limited powers, with an eye on the Prime Minister's office, occupied by Thaci. Shortly after, the LDK withdrew from the coalition and the government fell.

Meanwhile, Sejdiu faced challenges for the party leadership. He did not expect one to come from his friend, Mustafa, however. "I had a private meeting with him and asked him directly: 'Are you planning on running for party head?' He swore he would never do that and would never run against me," Sejdiu said.

But, "He took the first chance he had to rally people against me

and divide the LDK membership," Sejdiu added.

In November 2010, after the government fell, the LDK overwhelmingly elected Mustafa as its new leader. "I invite you all who are part of LDK to stand up for it, build it up, work and move together, in order to get the electorate to return to the LDK family," Mustafa told supporters.

Mustafa's tenure as LDK leader has not resulted in a dramatic revival in the party's fortunes, however. In the 2011 elections, it won two more seats in parliament, gaining another four in the latest polls in June.

In 2013, Mustafa suffered a humiliating defeat in Prishtina, when he lost the race for mayor in a city that had been an LDK bastion. He had reportedly said he could win the election with his hands in his pockets.

Coalition crumbles

After the June 8 elections, it seemed that the PDK, despite winning the most votes, would be frozen out of government. The LDK, along with the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, AAK, Levizja Vetevendosje and the PDK splinter party, Nisma, representing a majority in parliament, banded together against the PDK.

A coalition agreement foresaw Ramush Haradinaj becoming Prime Minister, although his party was only the third largest in the bloc. Haradinaj had previously served as premier for 100 days before surrendering to The Hague to face charges of war crimes for which he was eventually acquitted. Mustafa settled for the speaker of parliament, reflecting the fact that although the LDK was the biggest party in the bloc, he himself was not seen as prime ministerial material.

But the deal was spoiled by the Constitutional Court, which annulled Mustafa's election as speaker and ruled that only that PDK, as the party that won the most votes in the previous election, had the right to nominate the speaker.

Even then, the LDK held firm against the PDK, with MP Ismet Beqiri declaring that the party would "never form a government with



the PDK". As the months dragged on, the opposition bloc failed to agree on revising its coalition agreement, however. Mustafa reportedly insisted on becoming the new prime minister under the new circumstances, to which Haradinaj did not agree.

As international pressure mounted on Kosovo to form a new government, the PDK and LDK got back together, after Thaci agreed to become Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, leaving Mustafa to run the government.

Free-market vision

With the exception of Vetevendosje, Kosovo's major political parties do not articulate clear political or economic philosophies. Their campaigns revolve on practical promises - to create more jobs and join the EU, for example. However, when Mustafa addressed parliament for this first time as prime minister, he laid out a vision that was decidedly ideological and anchored to free-market principles.

"We will establish a free and open market. Employment and the increase of social welfare will be based on private initiative, and



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

1999-2006

Returns to Kosovo; receives Ph.d in economics from University of Prishtina, where he also becomes a professor.

2006

Appointed as economic advisor to President Fatmir Sejdiu.

2007

Tapped by Sejdiu to run for mayor of Prishtina; wins election

2009

Re-elected in landslide.

2010

Elected president of LDK, defeating his friend Sejdiu.

2013

Suffers humiliating defeat, losing the mayor's office to Shpend Ahmeti in a run-off.

2014

Becomes prime minister of Kosovo after LDK enters into coalition with PDK following a six-month political stalemate.

At his inaugural address to parliament on Dec. 9, Mustafa said free-market economics will get Kosovo on track. PHOTO/BETA

a competitive market will ensure economic prosperity," Mustafa told MPs. He also scrapped a pledge to hike wages, which was part of the first package of laws slated to pass through parliament as part of the 2015 budget, violating Thaci's campaign promise to "increase wages in the public sector by 100 per cent". Mustafa has since said that wages should only rise in line with economic growth.

To boost the private sector, Mustafa has said he will slash taxes on small and medium-sized businesses and shift the weight of VAT

from that collected on the border to internal VAT revenue.

"The government will work hard at generating steady economic growth, which will ensure macroeconomic, fiscal and social stability," with the goal of "minimizing the trade deficit," Mustafa said.

Agron Demi, who heads the Gap Institute, says while Mustafa is an economist, he is entering uncharted territory. "It is hard to measure his ability as an economist during his time as mayor because the municipalities do not have many competences in this

area," he noted.

Whether he will enjoy much support for his vision is also far unclear. Seven LDK MPs did not vote for him as Prime Minister - something he scolded them about during his first address. There is also the matter of the PDK. While Thaci is officially taking a back seat to Mustafa as Deputy Prime Minister, the PDK still has seven more MPs in parliament than the LDK, casting doubt over how much real power the new Prime Minister will have.

Nektar Zogjani contributed to this story.

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The five best places to eat in 2015

By Nate Tabak



It was an interesting year for eating in Prishtina. Closures included Fresco, Komiteti, the Ninety One and Paddy O'Brien's - perhaps victims of EULEX downsizing. But a crop of newer restaurants are doing strong. They're eateries that attract a larger swath of Prishtina, beyond expats and the wealthy. These places are serving good food in relaxing settings, without waiters in bowties. They're also evolving by updating menus from time to time, and they seem destined to get even better in the New Year.

Mezzeria:

This newcomer to the Kafete Vogla area did something remarkable: it revamped its menu. It continues to have stalwarts like the Kosovar tapas plate - with cheese, soujouk, pershute and olives, among others, with some unconventional things like the sliders (small burgers). While small plates are the stars, the mains are delicious too, including great steak. It has a brasserie vibe, managing to be elegant but not stuffy. (Mezzeria: Fehmi Agani street 52/2. Open Monday-Saturday. Contact them at 045-663-665 or online at facebook.com/mezzeria.

Sabaja Drs Beer House:

The restaurant offshoot of the Sabaja Craft brewery could probably get away with serving micro-waved qevapa thanks to the delicious locally made ales on tap and in bottles. But Sabaja is also taking American-style pub fare seriously. It serves the best burgers (actual ones, not pleskavica) in town and isn't afraid of using bacon. Sabaja, too, recently revamped their menu with a stronger emphasis on bar food. This includes sliders (I don't know who had them first, but you can never have too many slider

options). Sabaja's sliders are extra awesome because the buns are made from spent beer grain. (Sabaja Drs Beer House: East side of the stadium, next to Red Cross. Open daily, 8am to midnight. www.facebook.com/Sabajadrsbeerhouse, 049 582 000)



BabaGhanoush:

This hole-in-wall continues to stand out for being the only vegetarian restaurant in the country. Falafel and dips anchor the menu, but the owners make refreshing tweaks from time to time, including the addition of "bean star," which has a refreshing mix of beans, dips and greens served with pita chips. The vibe is hip but subdued - a la Brooklyn or Kreuzberg in Berlin, and makes a great place for just having drinks. (BabaGhanoush: Follow the small road to the left of Metro Cafe (across from the Grand Hotel) and take your first right. Monday-Saturday, 4pm-late. 049 886 214.)

Sharra Pub:

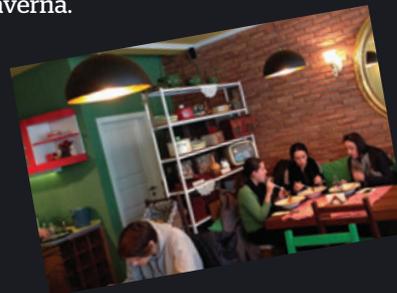
Good pizza, good beer ... together. Who would have guessed? This pizza pub is geared toward millennials, who appreciate good interesting food that's affordable even with a few adult beverages. A specially built oven cranks out some of the best pies, with a mind-boggling array of toppings. Sharra also does creative specials for lunch, when the place gets packed. (50 Fehmi Agani, Street, At Kafete Vogla (the small cafes), in Qafa, Prishtina

Tel: 049 896 698)



The MIQT empire:

After Paddy O'Brien's closed this year, the people behind the MIQT Taverna and MIQT Bar stepped in and did a public service by making it their own. They took away much of the kitsch, turning into a homey pub that accessible to wider range of clientele. Gastronomically, the MIQTs (Taverna and Pub) aren't especially revolutionary. But their comfort food, playful atmosphere and good crowds make them something special. (MIQT Pub: Tringe Smajli, ex Paddy O'Brien's, between Swiss Diamond and Agim Ramadani, open daily, 8am-midnight, www.facebook.com/MiqtPub 049 6771 11; MIQT Taverna, Off Mother Teresa Boulevard, next to Foto Nesha. Open Monday-Saturday, 045 999 957 or visit facebook.com/miqt.taverna.



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Why Kosovars got what they voted for

Shortly after being elected president of the United States in 2009, Barack Obama met with Eric Cantor, one of the Republican leaders in the House of Representatives, to discuss policy ideas and ways to stop the economy from further ruin. In a posturing gesture that reinforced his astounding victory, and his conviction that he had the upper hand politically, he famously told Cantor: "Elections have consequences and I won."

It was a crucial moment for the country in the middle of the greatest economic crisis in more than 70 years. But Obama's comment was timeless in that it addressed the heart of democracy and the choices that people make when they vote. Elections may indeed have major consequences with sweeping historical outcomes, as when Nelson Mandela was elected President of South Africa, or when

more often than not, produce paradoxical results, political gridlock, paralysis, apathy, or more of the same.

That is what is happening in Kosovo. The frustration and outright hostility of the public over the election and the formation of government under Isa Mustafa this month is nothing more than validation of an election. Six months ago, Kosovars cast their votes and got what more or less what was expected: a fragmented political landscape with political forces that then coalesced to form coalitions. The country was paralyzed for months, but behind-the-door party haggling and political horse-trading is not unique to Kosovo; they are hallmarks of many multi-party parliamentary systems.

It comes as an interesting development, nonetheless, to see how Kosovars vent their frustration over the latest political deal between Mustafa's Democratic League of Kosovo, LDK, and Hashim Thaci's Democratic party of Kosovo, PDK, which led to the formation of a government after six months of paralysis.

Somehow, this widespread dependency suggests that the democratic process is broken and that voters are being cheated in this deal. The basic fact remains that the new government is a direct result of the majority vote. Seen from this viewpoint, the political parties that won the largest share of the popular vote in the last election are forming a government and by definition that is political legitimacy, reconfirming the vote of a majority.

Voters are legitimately frustrated with certain political figures re-assigned or re-elected into the new government - Thaci down a notch to serve as Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, among others - and with their previous failures and widespread corruption. There is nothing wrong with

expressing disgust with a group of politicians who keep failing the country and plundering the public purse for private gain. But the outcry over the current political arrangement in government is misdirected and does not solve anything. Some of those elected may be corrupt and are probably the wrong choice for the country, but these politicians have won the elections. They have won the majority of the vote and have agreed to come together and form a government.

Those who reject the formation of this government either had the wrong expectations over the last six months or they confuse their own political differences with a democratic process that didn't go to their liking. You don't have to support the current political parties in power in order to accept their political legitimacy. Accepting defeat with grace is a sign of democratic maturity.

Instead, the political frustration should encourage an active political movement, away from the levers of power, which connects with voters at a basic level, explaining to them the fundamentals of why they should not re-elect politicians who have done so much damage to the country. Only by working with voters and winning their trust over matters that are important to them can sweeping changes occur.

For now, however, Kosovars have a government legitimized by their own vote. For better or worse, voters will deal with the consequences of their own vote. It is up to the opposition to take this opportunity to start educating the voters and get them to pay attention next time to better alternatives. This is democracy at work with all its imperfections and pitfalls. The sooner Kosovars get used to it, the sooner they will find alternative methods of electing governments with more public support.

MIKRA
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Obama be-
the first black
dent of the US.
er instances,
elections bring

to power political forces that may not necessarily be good for the country. Voters sometimes make perplexing choices when they empower the same people over and over again, despite widespread evidence of political corruption, voter intimidation, shadowy business deals, and nepotism.

Regardless of the end result, at the heart of it, free elections are supposed to validate the judgment of voters. Democracy is rooted in the belief that majorities have the right and the wisdom to hand political control to a number of individuals at any given time. That's the theory, at least. The operational definition of elections today is to shuffle the levers of control from one political force to another with minimal scrutiny and little change. What the public gets comes in the form of consequences, whatever they may be - consequences that,

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