



# KOSOVO

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November 3, 2008

### **Kosovo again in peril?**

By Samuel Hoskinson, Washington Times

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2008/nov/02/kosovo-again-in-peril/>

When Kosovo won its independence from Serbia after some nine years of United Nations tutoring, there was confidence that the Kosovars would be able to govern themselves effectively. So far this is not happening, as a handful of political "dons" battle each other for power and the government struggles to stand up new institutions and gain wider international recognition.

The first national election brought to power a coalition led by former freedom fighter Hashim Thaci and saw the rise of other new political leaders at the expense of the followers of Ibrahim Rugova, the deceased leader of the independence movement.

It should have ushered in a period of blossoming national pride, economic progress and international acceptance. Instead the poverty-stricken economy remains stagnant, recognition by the international community is stalled and the political elites seem more interested in game playing than in the future of their country. Slowly the people are losing confidence in their government and in democracy itself.

All politics is personal in Kosovo with political parties being little more than vehicles to promote the narrow personal interests of their leaders. The result is a self-defeating Hobbesian political war of "all against all." There are no George Washingtons or Thomas Jeffersons in the new Kosovo state. There are only self-absorbed power addicts endlessly maneuvering for positions of personal leverage and influence who too often are manipulated by foreign interests and governments.

Take the case of Veton Surroi, the well-educated and cosmopolitan son of a former Yugoslav diplomat who played an important role in the drawn-out negotiations that led to Kosovo's independence. Many thought Mr. Surroi would be the new government's foreign minister. It was not to be and probably should never be.

When Mr. Surroi's party did poorly in the election he impulsively announced his "withdrawal" from political life and abandoned the party he had founded. This only reinforced the impression that Mr. Surroi is not a serious person, more of a dilettante than a man dedicated to the future of his country. It is said that Mr. Surroi at best is a poor loser who is not tough enough for Kosovo's rough and tumble political world, much less for dealing effectively with the international community.

For now, Mr. Surroi sits comfortably on the sidelines second-guessing the government in his newspaper financially supported by foreign interests and through his elite Foreign Policy Club.



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More worrisome are open questions about the sources of Mr. Surroi's considerable wealth and relationships with certain foreign interests. How much control and influence does Mr. Surroi's financial benefactor, the political activist and multibillionaire George Soros, have over him?

And why is the shadowy Bilderberg Group of old foreign policy lions from the United States and Europe apparently assisting him with access to their network and trying to prepare him for bigger things?

Complicating matters further, what is the explanation for the \$40 million Mr. Surroi claimed as his personal wealth in the 2004 assembly election that two years later he said plummeted to \$3 million? Is this why the U.S. Embassy has made no secret that it does not like Mr. Surroi and has at times worked against him?

In Kosovo there are too many stories about aspiring leaders like Veton Surroi who talk big but act small. This does not augur well for the long-suffering people of Kosovo.

*Samuel Hoskinson is a former president of the Alliance for a New Kosovo, an American group that actively promoted independence for Kosovo.*