



Albanian perceptions *on* NATO integration





INSTITUTE FOR DEMOCRACY AND MEDIATION

ALBANIAN PERCEPTIONS ON NATO INTEGRATION

Survey carried out by IDM team on March – May 2007

Tirana, June 2007



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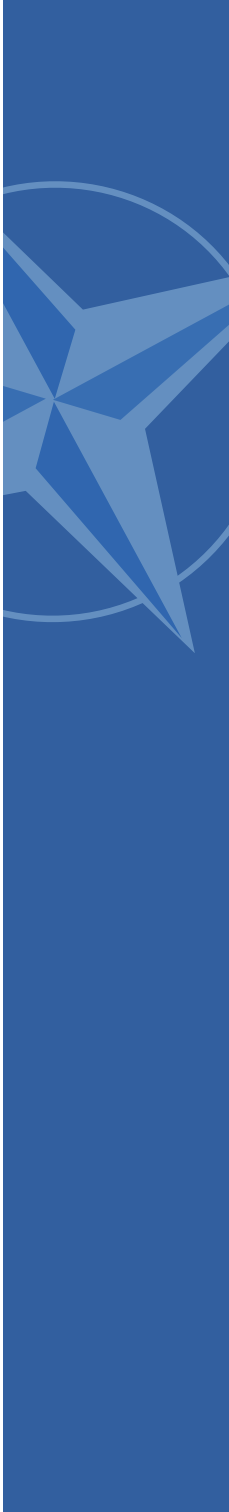
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I. Introduction

In the early 1990s Albania was the first among the ex-socialist countries to apply for NATO membership. Since then the Albanian political and intellectual elites have continuously pledged their commitment to perform the necessary reforms to acquire the membership. Albania has been part of the Partnership for Peace program and now it is among the partner countries of NATO.

Making significant progress in democratization and market economy reforms, as well as in the reforms of security sector, it becomes more and more evident to the Albanian society that to be a NATO member implies responsibilities and contribution, and not only to be a beneficiary of collective security. Moreover the integration process has entered a new decisive phase, which demands the involvement of many state and civil society actors, as well as the participation of the public. But, while the determination of the political actors to join NATO seems to be firm, little is known about the perceptions of the public to NATO integration, its level of knowledge about NATO and the responsibilities of the Albania as a member-to-be. The last opinion survey conducted on NATO integration was conducted in mid-1990s.

For this reason the Institute for Democracy and Mediation in the period March-May 2007 conducted a public opinion survey on perceptions of Albanians on NATO integration process. The opinion survey was supported by the NATO Public Diplomacy Division in Brussels. Our aim was to map out and to assess the Albanian public's perceptions on NATO, within the general perceptions on security, acquaintance with NATO, role of state institutions towards Euro-Atlantic integration, regional security, as well as the involvement of the Albanian Armed Forces (AF) in operations outside state territory. Consequently, all these issues were reflected in the drafting of the questionnaire and the ordering of the questions. In the following pages are presented the sample characteristics, methodology, the findings of the survey and their interpretation.

Our findings through this survey are a snap shot of the perceptions of Albanians on security and NATO integration in a particular moment and socio-political situation of the country. Nevertheless, being aware of the inherent limitations of this approach, our findings are being published at a crucial time for the efforts of Albania to join the North Atlantic Alliance. As such we believe that the survey results will serve to policy makers, civil society actors, academicians, analysts, journalists, but also to international community, not only for gaining an understanding of the public opinions about different aspects of national security, the degree of knowledge on Alliance and Euro-Atlantic integration processes, but also for paving the way for adequate and coordinated strategies between state and other non-state actors to enhance the security of the country and to achieve greater result during the process of NATO integration.

II. Methodology

The survey was conducted in March-May 2007 in 10 cities of Albania. It consisted of a nationally representative sample of 1200 citizens over 18 year old, which provides for a sampling error of 2-3%. A group of 5 experienced interviewers in Tirana and one for each of the remaining cities conducted the in-person interviews in the field. The interviewers were previously trained and given clear instructions on the clusters to be interviewed.

Each of 6 the categories has more than 100 individuals and is distributed throughout the geographical area covered by the survey, with the exception of **central public administration**, which is concentrated in Tirana. In this case, respondents were distributed in all ministries, where the number of respondents for each of them is in proportion to the overall number of its employees (see Table 3). Within each ministry the questionnaires are distributed according to the hierarchy of positions, from the low levels of public administration up to the director of department.

Also in the municipalities the number of respondents of the category of **local public administration** is in proportion to the overall number of employees. The category of **business** includes small, medium and big businesses. The small and medium sized businesses comprise of the respondents in this category. The category **academia** is distributed to academic personnel and students in public and private universities in several cities, as well as teachers of high school. In category of **NGOs** the sample includes directors and managerial staff of non-governmental organizations.

The category of citizens includes 400 respondents. Half of the interviews with this category were conducted randomly in the streets, whereas the remaining in randomly selected households which were chosen according to a clearly defined selection mechanism.

The questionnaire is composed of 32 questions in total. All of them, except one, are close-ended questions that require from the respondent to choose one or more than one answer. Only in one question the respondent is required to give three statements. The questionnaire is organized in three parts. The first collects demographic data from the respondents, namely sex, age, education and profession. The second parts concerns with perceptions on security, and the last one includes questions having to do with NATO and NATO integration of Albania.

III. Sample description

The opinion survey was conducted in 10 main urban centers of Albania: Tirana, Durrës, Elbasan, Korçë, Vlorë, Berat, Gjirokastër, Shkodër, Kukës dhe Peshkopi. The sample was composed of 1200 respondents, distributed in this geographical area according to the density of population while bearing in mind the population of each of the six surveyed categories. See Table 1.

As it is shown in Table 2 (see below), the sample has achieved a nearly equal representation of gender, with the percentage of female respondents being slightly higher (2.4%) than that of males. According to the level of education, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the respondents hold a university degree (61%) or a post-graduate degree (14%), while the rest have high school degree (20.4%) or compulsory 8-year education (4.1%). We expected to find variations according to education in answers to questions that implied a certain level of knowledge about NATO and specific issues on the NATO integration process.

The overwhelming representation of respondents with university or higher degree was determined by the fact that the sample was concentrated on specific categories of citizens whose professional engagement requires a higher level of education. These categories are central government public administration, local government administration, employees of non-governmental organizations, university professors included in the category of academia and business. The sample is organized around these categories because they are the most engaged in governance and public affairs and although issues of security and NATO integration may

Table 1: Respondents according to geographical areas (Cities only)

City	%
Berat	5.8
Durrës	9.9
Elbasan	10.2
Gjirokastër	2.9
Korçë	7.3
Kukës	2.8
Peshkopi	3.9
Shkodër	6.0
Tirana	44.4
Vlorë	6.8
Total	100

Table 2: Categories and characteristics of the sample (%)

Sur- veyed cate- gories	Central gover. public administration	16.9 %
	Local government administration	12.2 %
	Business	16.7 %
	NGOs	10.9 %
	Academia	10.0 %
	Citizens	33.3 %
Age	18 – 25 years	18.4 %
	26- 35 years	29.2 %
	36 – 50 years	34.8 %
	51 – 65 years	14.8 %
	Over 65 years	2.8 %
Educa- tion	Primary education	4.1 %
	High school	20.4 %
	University	61.4 %
	Post-graduate	14.1 %
Gender	Male	48.8 %
	Female	51.2 %



not be directly connected with their position and work, their work either is connected with the achievement of standards for NATO integration, or is affected by the integration process. This is the case with the public administration, at both central and local levels, but also with categories such as NGO representatives, academia and business. The sample of central public administration is composed of civil servants up to middle level of directors of departments, working at the Government (Prime-Ministry and all 14 ministries). The sample of local government administration is composed of officials of municipalities, excluding the mayors themselves, but including their political staff and aides. The respondents included in the category of NGO representatives, academia and business come from all geographical areas covered by the survey.

Besides these categories, 33.3% of respondents were interviewed at random in different quarters at each city, in order to obtain data from other categories of citizens, with which to compare and check those of deliberate ones. This group of respondents is simply referred to as “Citizens”.

Most respondents (64%) fall into the age range from 26 to 50, which are the most active cohorts at the various professions included in deliberate categories, with the exception of the academia, where most students fall into the range 18-25.

IV. Key findings

The survey identified a **NATO-friendly Albanian audience** which is quite optimistic about the process of NATO integration in the country. Yet, high levels of “DON’T KNOW” answers and other inconsistencies particularly with regard to factors influencing security matters or consequences deriving from the NATO integration process lead to the conclusion that respondents often offer their support to “what’s necessary” for membership without giving too much thought to technicalities of the process.

The surveyed people often loose themselves in the “DON’T KNOW” answers when asked specific questions which require a certain level of awareness and acquaintance with the process of NATO integration. While with regard to certain issues respondents with a higher educational background appear to be more aware of NATO membership consequences or preconditions, this conclusion does not always prove to be valid.

Respondents are at odds when asked about the existence of threats to Albania’s national security. Namely, while 46.2% of them think that there are no threats to the national security, 31.8% do believe in the existence of various threats.

Nevertheless, most of respondents agree that NATO integration process is not about military standards only. The majority of the surveyed people believe that the criteria Albania must meet in order to join NATO involve democratic and human rights standards, economic and welfare standards in addition to military standards. These data reinforce the conclusion that **respondents do not perceive NATO membership as a strictly “military business” and neither as a process for which the responsible political actors change every time there is an alteration in the ruling political elite**. Rather, it is a process that should involve the efforts of all political factors in order to ensure sound development and high standards with regard to socio-economic progress, democratization and the rule of law. Furthermore, while most of them have previously made it clear that **NATO membership implies above all “security and stability”** (almost 50% of respondents; see above), a vast majority of respondents believe that NATO membership will accelerate the EU integration path of the country.

Respondents perceive **internal factors - corruption, economic stagnation, organized crime - as the most important threats to national security**, rather than external ones (international terrorism or military attack from the neighboring countries). The least probable risks that may jeopardize national security according to the respondents appear to be “religious conflicts” and eventual “military attack by the neighboring countries”.



Generally there exists a **positive opinion amongst the surveyed people regarding the Armed Forces (AF-s)**. More than half of respondents declare either that Albanian AF-s “function well and are well-organized” or that AF-s “function well despite some shortcomings”. Furthermore, Albanians’ do not see the Armed Forces as the main culpable body to be blamed in case the country fails to receive an invitation to join NATO. Neither are they keen to point the finger exclusively at the ruling political elite (Government). The majority of respondents believe that “Failure of the political class to construct and sustain a democratic system” would be the main cause if Albania does not get the invitation for joining NATO.

The survey shows that Albanian public at large has a **positive opinion about NATO**. Namely 88.8% of them have either a positive or very positive opinion about NATO as an organization. Respondents’ expectations from Albania’s membership in NATO stand relatively high - a vast majority of respondents believe that NATO membership guarantees national security and that the attainment of this goal will accelerate also our bid to EU membership.

A vast majority of respondents (89.4%) declare their support to Albania’s membership in NATO. Most supportive category of respondents about Albania’s membership to NATO appear to be the civil society – NGOs with almost 97% while least support comes from the Business category – 83% of respondents who would vote FOR in a referendum. Yet, their opinions are quite disagreeing when asked whether Albania needs collective military defense (which at present may best be provided by NATO). Collective military defense is perceived as a need for the country by 41% of respondents while 36.9% do not share the same view.

V. Survey findings

V.1. Perceptions on security and defense matters

Respondents are at odds when asked about the existence of threats to Albania's national security. Namely, while 46.2% of them think that there are no threats to the national security, 31.8% do believe in the existence of various threats. Another 22.1% on the other hand have no answer to this question. Respondents are further asked to evaluate on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 6 (very strongly) several internal and external factors which may put at risk the national security. As shown in the figure below, the least probable risks that may jeopardize national security according to the respondents appear to be "religious conflicts" and eventual "military attack by the neighboring countries" with 1.74 and 1.97 points respectively. It is interesting to note that these factors have the lowest standard deviation which means that most of respondents agree on the given evaluation. See Figure 1.

Interestingly, the top four most perilous factors that according to the respondents may pose a threat to national security are those which are perceived by the public opinion (and largely debated by the political actors) as the most important concerns the country is faced with – corruption (4.69), poverty and economic stagnation (4.04), failure of democratic reforms (3.91) and organized crime (3.64). Accordingly, respondents perceive internal factors (corruption, economic stagnation, organized crime) as the most important threats to national security, rather than external ones (international terrorism or military attack from the neighboring countries). Furthermore, the figure above shows that a

Figure 1 – Threats to national security

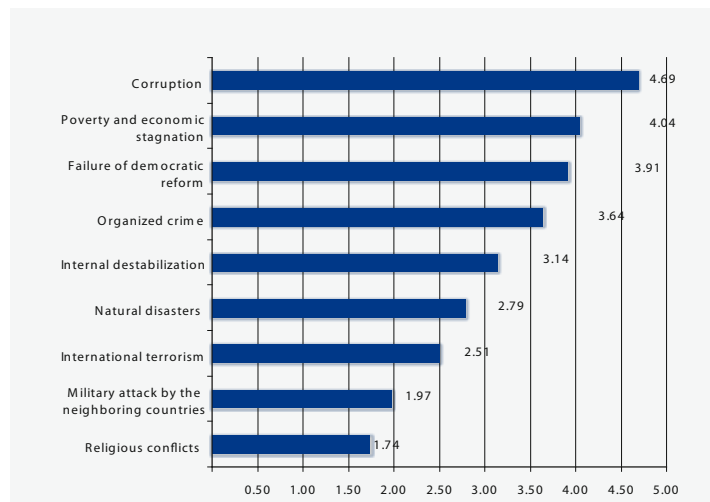


Table 1 - What is your opinion on the present situation of the Albanian AF-s?

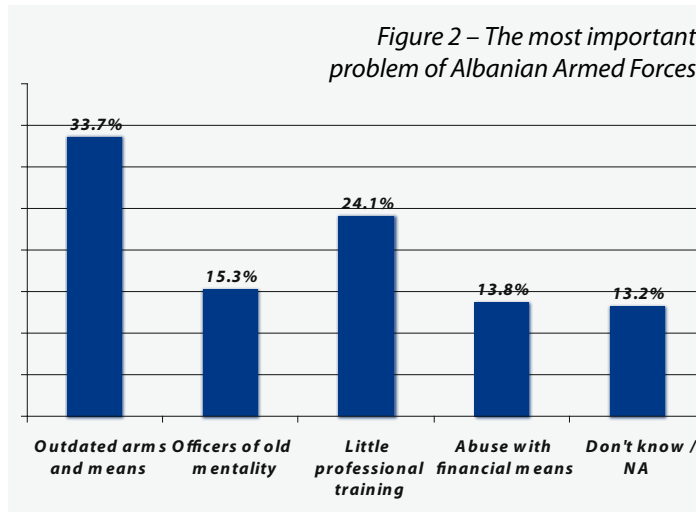
AF-s function well and are well-organized	9.3%
AF-s have certain shortcomings, but in general functions well	44.7%
Do not function well	27.4%
Don't know / NA	18.7 %

religious conflict is quite unlikely to appear as an important factor jeopardizing national security.

The survey also tried to identify respondents' opinions and familiarity with the current situation of Albanian Armed Forces. Generally there exists a positive opinion amongst the surveyed people regarding the Armed Forces (AF-s). More than half of respondents declare either that Albanian AF-s "function well and are well-organized" (9.3%) or that AF-s "function well despite some shortcomings" (44.7%). See Table 1.

However, according to the majority of respondents the most important problem that AF-s are faced with has to do with the "outdated arms and means" (33.7%) while 24.1% of them believe that "professional training" constitutes the major problem. Only 13.8% of the surveyed people believe that "abuse with financial means" is the most important problem. See Figure 2.

Figure 2 – The most important problem of Albanian Armed Forces



Respondents' opinions are not so divided when asked about the measures that may increase efficiency in Albanian AF-s. Namely, most of them agree on two measures: "Smaller number of officers and soldiers, but trained with contemporary techniques" (48%); and "Modern armament" (29.8%).

The survey further asked respondents to express their preferences regarding potential alliances best serving to Albania's interests and also their expectations from specific partner countries in case of threats to the security and public order. The majority of them (42.6%) expect from the United States to help Albania in case of security threat and destabilization of public order in the country while least expectations respondents demonstrate about Greece (2.4 %). See Figure 3.

Question: In case of security threat and destabilization of public order in Albania which country would you expect most likely to intervene to help?

At this point however, these data may not be interpreted as implying that Albanians prefer US rather than European countries as their partners. This fact is confirmed by the subsequent data. Namely, the figure below (Figure 4) shows that most of respondents (52%) find equally important Albania's alliances with EU or US.

Question: In order to protect the vital interests of Albania, what do you think is the most important alliance?

The subsequent part of the analysis focuses on respondents' perceptions on and support to the process of NATO integration.

V.2. Perceptions on the process of NATO integration

The survey shows that Albanian public at large has a positive opinion about NATO. Namely 88.8% of them have either a positive (48.1%) or very positive (40.7%) opinion about NATO as an organization while only 1.7% hold a negative or very negative stand.

While a vast majority of respondents (83.8%) believe that NATO membership guarantees national security, their opinions are quite disagreeing when asked whether Albania needs collective military defense (which at present may best be provided by NATO). Collective military defense is perceived as a need for the country by 41% of them while 36.9% do not share the same view. On the

Figure 3 – Respondents' expectations from partner countries

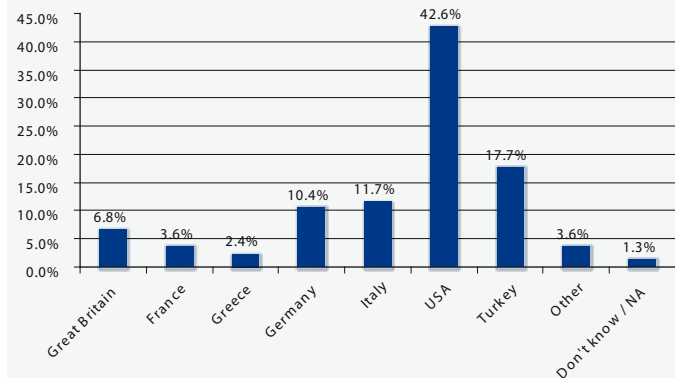
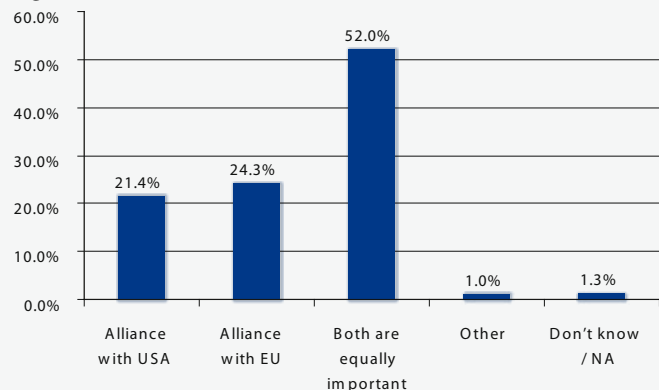
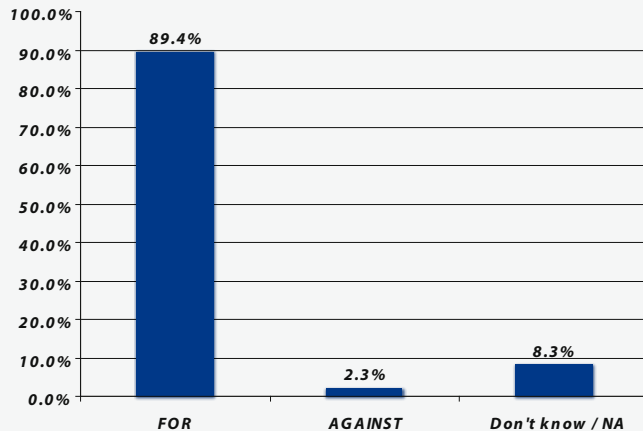


Figure 4 – Albania's alliances with EU and US



Albanian perceptions on NATO integration

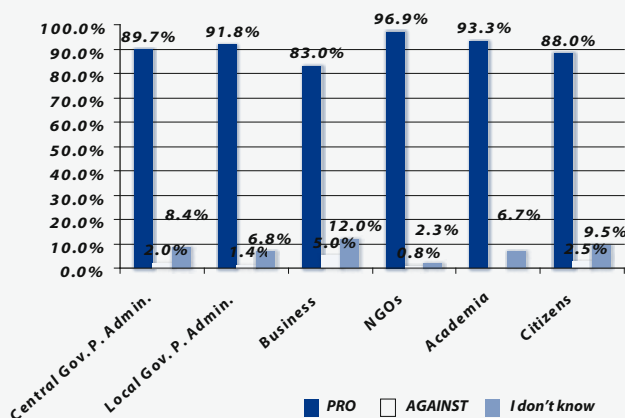
Figure 5 – Support to Albania's NATO membership



other hand there is a relatively considerable number of respondents (22.1%) who do not have an answer to this issue.

Interestingly, almost $\frac{1}{3}$ of the surveyed people think that NATO membership is simply political propaganda, contrary to 49.2% of respondents who believe in the opposite and 17.1% who do not have an answer. This trend is portrayed also throughout the surveyed categories within which the percentage of respondents who see this goal as a propaganda of the daily political debate vary from 27.5% in the "Academia" and rises to almost 39% of respondents of (surprisingly) the "Central level public administration". Yet, these data reveal respondents' attitude towards the way NATO membership as a goal is treated by the political elite in the country and has nothing to do neither with NATO as an organization (88.8% of them have a positive opinion about NATO) nor with the support to NATO membership.¹ Namely, a vast majority of respondents (89.4%) declare their support to Albania's membership in NATO. See Figure 5.

Figure 6 – Support to Albania's NATO membership within categories



Question: If tomorrow would be held a referendum about Albania's membership to NATO, how would you vote?

Most supportive category of respondents about Albania's membership to NATO appear to be the civil society – NGOs with almost 97% while least support comes from the Business category – 83% of respondents who would vote FOR in a referendum. See Figure 6.

¹ In fact, such conclusion is reinforced by other data which are given below.

Almost 50% of respondents link NATO membership with security and stability when asked “what does NATO membership imply” for them. Also, a considerable number of the surveyed people believe that NATO membership may have an impact on the overall development and wellbeing. See Figure 7.

From a broader perspective, 85.2% of respondents believe that Albania’s entry into NATO will positively influence the country’s position in the international arena, as opposed to barely 0.7% declaring the opposite and 7.8% of respondents who see no impact.

In order to better understand respondents’ opinions and perceptions about the NATO integration process as well as the support they offer to Albania’s membership in this organization one should also explore the level of their familiarity and awareness about the requirements and the consequences such process brings about. 54.2% of respondents would accept NATO troops and personnel to be stationed for extended periods of time in military basis in Albanian territory while 26.3% say that would not agree with that. Nevertheless, when asked whether they would agree that NATO intervene and restore public order in case of a threat to Albania, a vast majority of respondents (84.4%) say YES and only 6.2% oppose to that (9.4% have no answer).

An AF budget amounting to a 2% of GDP level constitutes an important obligation that Albania has assumed in its NATO integration process. Nevertheless, it seems that this requirement is not quite clear for a considerable number of respondents. Namely 38.7% of them do not have an answer to the question: “Would you accept a level of 2% of the GDP for the Armed Forces’ budget for the integration of the country to NATO?” The percentage of respondents who are in favor of the “2% level” differs from that figure with only 0.4%. See Table 2.

Figure 7 - What does NATO membership imply

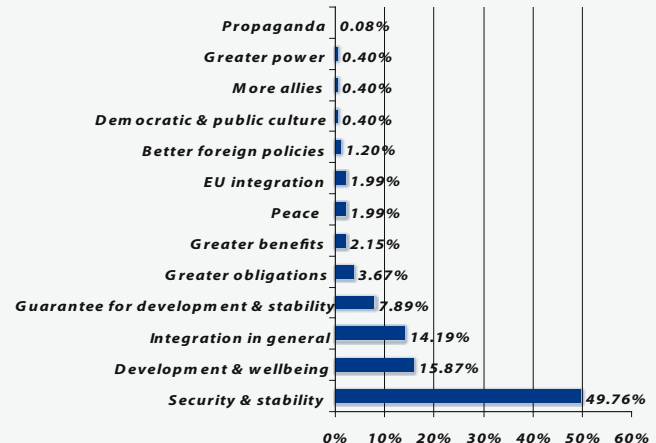
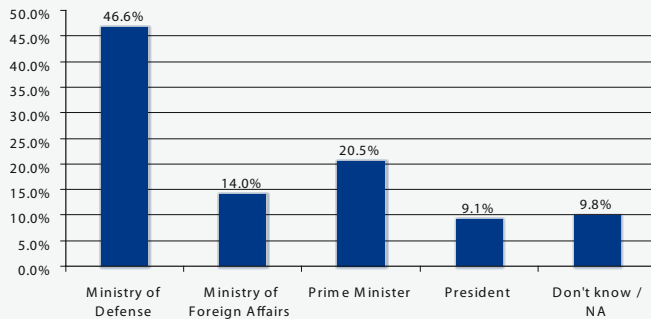


Table 2 – Respondents support to the requirement of “2% of GDP level for AF budget” for NATO membership

YES	38.3 %
NO	23 %
Don't know / No answer	38.7 %

Albanian perceptions on NATO integration

Figure 8 – Main institution responsible for the progress of NATO integration process



While most of respondents agree that NATO integration process is not about military standards only, most of them perceive the Ministry of Defense as the main institution which is responsible for ensuring the progress towards membership. See Figure 8.

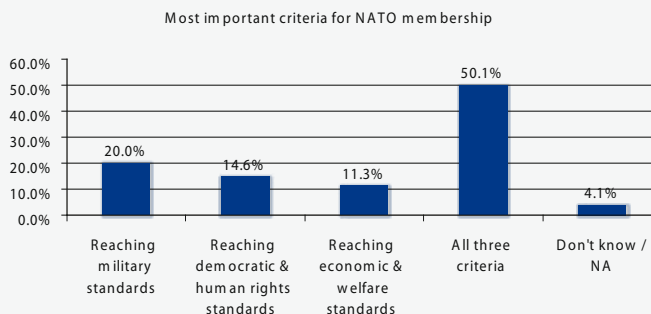
Question: In your opinion, which institution is most responsible for ensuring the progress towards NATO integration?

However, as previously mentioned, respondents do not link NATO membership exclusively with military standards and progress. On the contrary, the majority of the surveyed people believe that the criteria Albania must meet in order to join NATO involve democratic and human rights standards, economic and welfare standards in addition to military standards. See Figure 9.

From a regional perspective, most of respondents also believe that regional cooperation in Southeast Europe remains an important condition that countries in the region must fulfill in order to join NATO. Namely almost 62% of the surveyed people think so while for 12% of them regional cooperation is not a condition.

Fully in line with these trends, Albanians' do not see the Armed Forces as the main culpable body to be blamed in case the country fails to receive an invitation to join NATO. Neither are they keen to point the finger exclusively at the ruling political elite (Government). The majority of respondents believe that "Failure of the political class to construct and sustain a democratic system" would be the main cause if Albania does not get the invitation for joining NATO. See Table 3.

Figure 9 – Most important criteria for Albania's NATO membership



Question: In case Albania does not get the invitation for joining NATO, what would you think would be the main cause?

Respondents from all categories (and also educational backgrounds) show the same tendency as the general sample – i.e. they believe that the political class in general (position and opposition) should be hold responsible if the country does not get the invitation for joining NATO. Yet, contrary to the general perception (general sample), in the case of the categories of Citizens and the Central public administration the Armed Forces and not the Government (as in the general sample) are rated in the second place as the institution which should “be blamed” in case Albania fails to get NATO membership invitation. See Figure 10.

These data confirm that respondents do not perceive NATO membership as a strictly “military business” and neither as a process for which the responsible political actors change every time there is an alteration in the ruling political elite. Rather, it is a process that should involve the efforts of all political factors in order to ensure sound development and high standards with regard to socio-economic progress, democratization and the rule of law.

Respondents are generally positive when asked about future military operations outside Albanian territory. Nevertheless, their support differs with approximately 20% less for collective military operations outside the territory of NATO (as compared to support for a NATO member), assuming that NATO membership is achieved. The graph below reveals respondents’

Table 3 – Main reason for failing to get an invitation to join NATO

Failure of the <i>political class</i> to build and sustain a democratic system	39.4 %
Failure of the <i>government</i> in power to realize the necessary reforms	24.0 %
Failure of the <i>Armed Forces</i> to comply with the NATO standards	20.6 %
Weak <i>economic</i> performance of the country	6.7 %
Other	2.7 %
Don't know / NA	6.7 %

Figure 10 – “Main reason for failing to get an invitation to join NATO” across categories

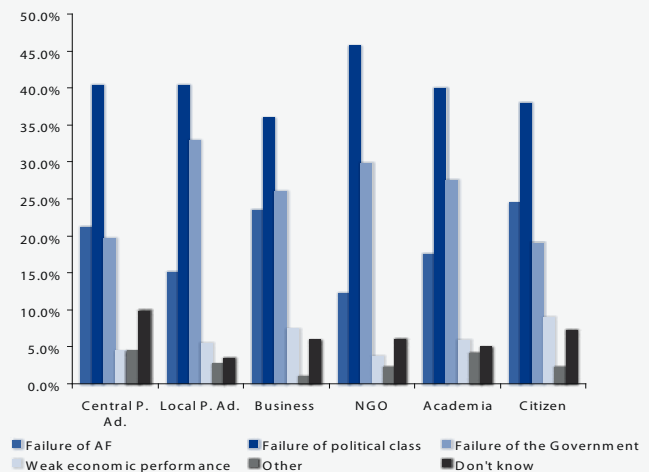
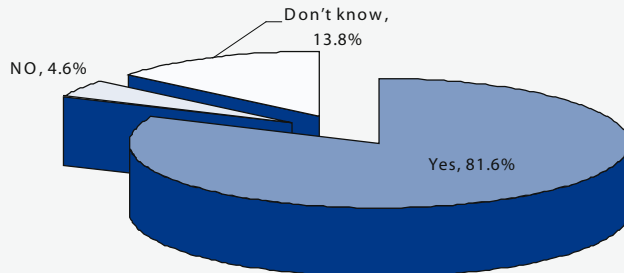


Figure 11 – Support for military assistance to NATO members



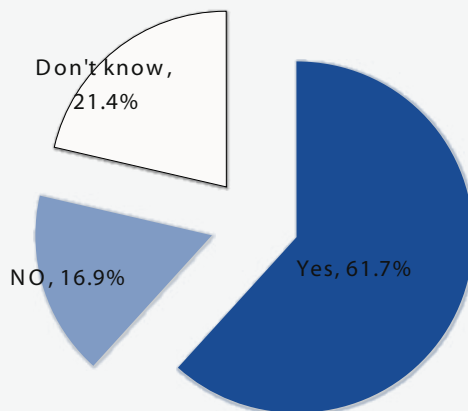
support to military assistance to other NATO member states in case they are attacked. See Figure 11.

Question: If Albania were a NATO member, do you think that it should offer military assistance to other member states in case they are attacked?

However, such support falls to 61.7% when asked about collective military operations outside the territory of NATO, assuming that Albania is a NATO member. Also, the number of opponents in this case rises almost 17% and so does the number of respondents who don't have a firm stand in this case (21.4%). See Figure 12.

Question: If Albania were a NATO member, do you think that it should take part in collective military operations outside the territory of NATO?

Figure 12 – Support for collective military operations outside the territory of NATO



Interestingly, but not necessarily contingent on, it is approximately the same percentage of respondents (as those supporting military operations outside NATO countries) who believe that Albania's present participation in the international military operations is either within (48.3%) or much under the real capabilities of the country (11.3%). Namely, when asked to assess Albania's participation in these operations in BiH, Afghanistan and Iraq, only 26% of them think that these operations have exceeded the real capabilities of the country. See Figure 13.

The data within the surveyed categories confirm more or less the same trend as the general sample, i.e. more than half of respondents within each category believe that Albania's present participation in the international military operations is either within or much under the real capabilities of the country.

The data presented above in several occasions create the impression of a NATO-friendly Albanian audience. Such perception is reaffirmed also in the subsequent question which asks respondents about their preferences for Albanian troops participating in collective operation in a conflict somewhere in the world. As the figure below shows, the majority of respondents would prefer Albanian troops to participate in a NATO led military operation (49.3%). See Figure 14.

Question: At the present situation, if Albanian troops were to participate in collective operation in a conflict somewhere in the world, what would you like most?

Finally, the survey tried to identify the link between NATO and EU integration processes, as perceived by the respondents. While most of them have previously made it clear that NATO membership implies above all “security and stability” (almost 50% of respondents; see above), a vast majority of respondents believe that NATO membership will accelerate the EU integration path of the country. See Figure 15.

Question: Do you think that NATO membership will accelerate Albania’s EU integration process?

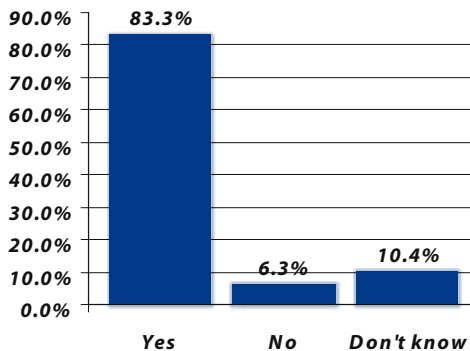


Figure 13 - Albania's participation in the international military operations in BiH, Afghanistan and Iraq

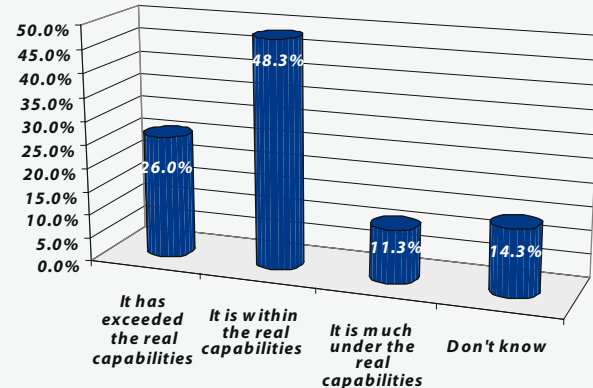
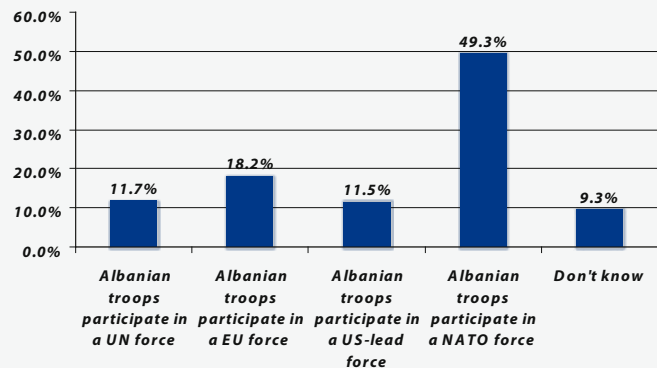


Figure 14 – Albanian AF's participation in collective military operations



V.3. Survey assumptions and tendencies

In order to best design the survey instrument and to meet the objectives of this initiative IDM experts carried out some preparatory research which helped us to establish also some assumptions. The survey data reveal quite interesting findings about respondents' perceptions on NATO integration, the country's progress in this process, as well as their acquaintance with and support to this process.

The survey analysis shows that there exist no "clashes" between different age generations, i.e. respondents' views and perceptions preserve the same tendencies even within different age groups. Furthermore, respondents from all the categories seem to be quite optimistic regarding specific conditions that Albania must meet in order to become a NATO member – i.e. they would support "what's necessary" for Albania to become a NATO member, which on the other hand contests the assumption that high level of respondents' awareness about the obligations may bring to less optimism for NATO membership.

Nevertheless, it seems that respondents are indifferent about specific technicalities of the process of NATO integration. As previously argued, while almost 90% of respondents would support NATO membership, only 41% of them believe that Albania needs collective military defense. The same tendency is present not only across all categories (public administration, business, academia etc.) but also within various groups of respondents belonging to different educational background (high school; university degree; postgraduate studies). This may lead to the conclusion that NATO integration is not necessarily linked to perceptions on

Figure 16 – Does Albania need collective military defense? (Respondents according to educational background)

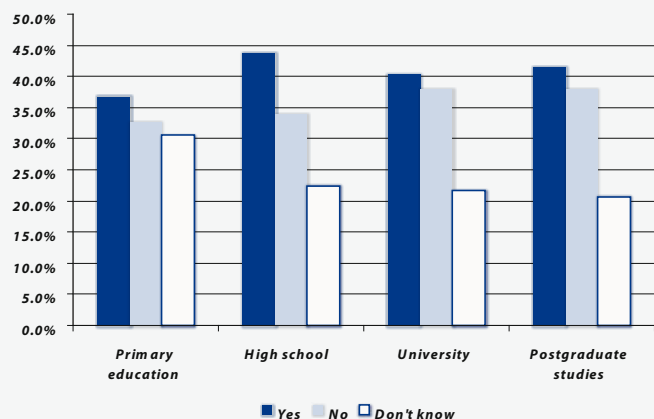
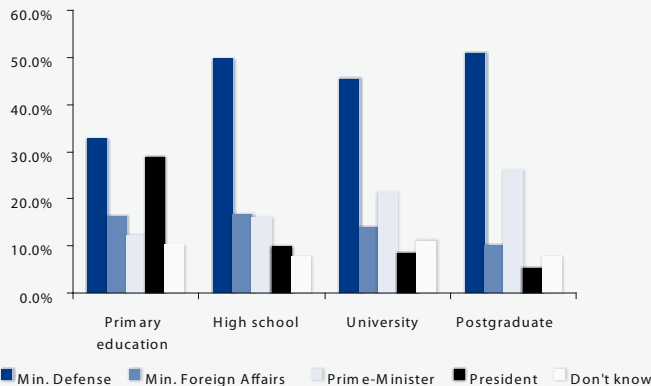


Figure 17 – Main institution responsible for the progress of NATO integration process (Respondents according to educational background)



security threats, but rather with the desire to join the “club” of developed western democracies.

The figure below reveals more or less the same dispersion of answers across various groups of educational background as the general sample. Furthermore, the data below shows that respondents’ educational background is not a determining factor, i.e. respondents demonstrate the same lack of acquaintance regardless of their education. See Figure 16

The survey analysis shows that there is a low level of awareness amongst respondents about the NATO integration process. *While with regard to certain issues respondents with a higher educational background appear to be more aware of NATO membership consequences or preconditions, this conclusion does not always prove to be valid.* Namely, regardless of their educational background, most of respondents agree that most important criteria for NATO membership includes not only the military standards but also sound economic performance and democratic & human rights standards. Further, regardless of their educational background, most of respondents (wrongly) believe that the Ministry of Defense is the main institution responsible for ensuring progress of the NATO integration process. However, in this case, respondents with higher educational background show higher percentage of correct answers. See Figure 17.

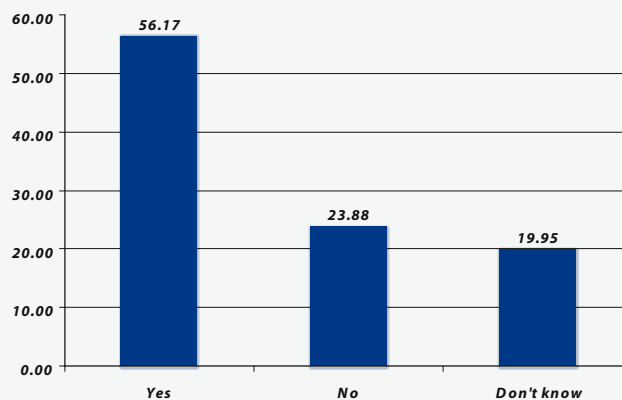
The previously described *trend of less-unaware respondents with higher education as compared to those with primary or high school degree* is confirmed also by the subsequent fact. When asked whether they agree with the requirement of “2% of GDP level for AF budget” for the sake of NATO membership, the highest rate of “DON’T KNOW” answers is identified amongst respon-

dents with lower level of education. This on the other hand does not imply that respondents with higher education are more informed about the NATO integration process, because generally respondents appear to be indifferent to technicalities of this process.

The survey shows that *respondents often loose themselves in the "DON'T KNOW" answers when asked specific questions which require a certain level of awareness and acquaintance with the process of NATO integration*. However, an in-depth analysis of their answers reveals quite interesting tendencies amongst respondents. Referring to the data presented above on respondents' perception on whether Albania needs a collective military defense, the survey showed that almost 37% of them believe we don't need collective defense while 22% do not know. Only 41% of respondents answer positively to this question which is certainly not enough when compared to approximately 89% who would support NATO membership (bearing in mind NATO as a collective defense "tool"). Furthermore, only $\frac{1}{3}$ of the surveyed people believe that Albania's national security is jeopardized by various threats while $\frac{2}{3}$ of them either see no threats to national security or simply provide a "don't know" answer. It is interesting to note that the $\frac{1}{3}$ of respondents who believe that national security is jeopardized by various threats demonstrate a higher percentage of YES answers to the question on whether Albania needs a collective military defense. Almost 56% of them believe so which is by 15 percentage points higher than the average percentage of the general sample (41%). See Figure 18.

Also, respondents who believe that regional cooperation is a condition for the regional countries to enter

Figure18 – The need for collective defense according to respondents who think the national security is threatened



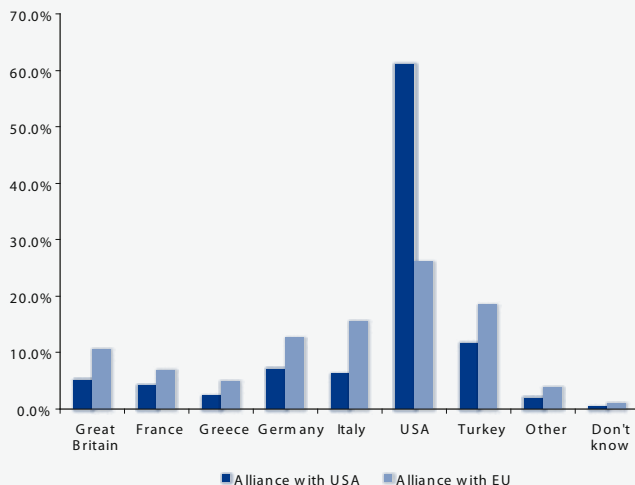


NATO tend to perceive as less probable (as threatening to national security) a military attack from neighboring countries. Namely the average evaluation of this factor as a threat to national security from this group of respondents is lower (1.9) than the average score offered by respondents who don't think that regional cooperation is a condition for NATO membership (2.08).¹

The cross-question analysis between respondents' perception on the alliances that best serve to Albania's vital interests with their expectations from various partner countries (in case of threat to security and public order) reveals another interesting detail. The figure below shows that respondents who perceive the alliance with USA as the most important one for Albania's vital interests, demonstrate quite a high percentage of answers with high expectations from this country (USA) to help in case of a threat to national security and the public order in the country. On the other hand, respondents who see the alliance with EU as the best one for our vital interests, have the tendency to be more "prudent" in their expectations, i.e. though they also have higher expectations mostly from the US (to help in case of a threat to security / public order) the differences between "expectations from US" vis a vis other countries are smaller than in the previous case. See Figure 19.

As previously described, almost 89% of respondents have either a positive or very positive opinion about NATO as an organization which is approximately the same percentage of respondents who would support Albania's membership to NATO. The analysis shows that this percentage (positive + very positive opinion) falls to 55.1% in the case of respondents who would either

Figure19 – Expectations from various countries in case of a threat according to respondents in support of Alliance with EU vs. Alliance with US



¹ Bearing in mind that 1 – not threatening at all, and 6 – very strongly.

vote against or who don't know whether they would support NATO membership. Yet, this finding should be considered with some reservations due to the small share of respondents who would vote against membership or who don't know how they would vote (round 10.6% of the general sample).

The differences between the opinions of supporters to NATO membership vis a vis respondents voting AGAINST membership plus respondents who DON'T KNOW how they would vote are evident also with regard to various issues such as the financial obligations to meet the membership criteria. Namely, as shown in the figure below, the highest percentage of respondents who would not accept a level of GDP 2% for the budget of Armed Forces belongs to those who are against NATO membership. Supporters of Albania's NATO membership on the other hand have the highest percentage of respondents who would accept such level of the AF's budget (2% of the GDP) while undecided voters for NATO membership are also undecided when asked about the 2% of GDP level of budget for AF. Yet, the abovementioned restriction in the interpretation of the data should be particularly considered in this case as the surveyed population of "AGAINST MEMBERSHIP" is only 2.3%, i.e. less than 30 respondents. See figure 20.

Figure 20– Acceptance of AF's budget of GDP 2% according to "vote on NATO membership (FOR, AGAINST, DON't KNOW)"

