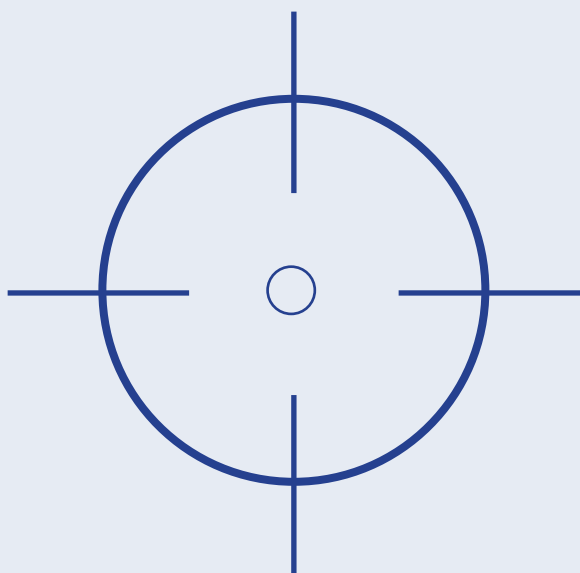




Institute for Democracy and Mediation

**ALBANIAN
PUBLIC
OPINION
PERCEPTIONS
ON**



**PERSONAL,
NATIONAL,
AND
REGIONAL
SECURITY**

OCTOBER 2013

Executive Summary

Survey (some of the main findings of which, together with their interpretations are presented below) was conducted in Albania, during October 2013. It was part of the Security Research Forum initiative¹ to conduct simultaneous surveys in Albania, Serbia and Kosovo, focused on security (seeing that as a personal safety, as well as the national and regional security). At least related to Albania, it is largely accepted that attempts to measure public perception in security issues have been very sparse in the past. In most of the cases they have been acquired as a “by-product” of surveys focused on other major issues such as Albania’s membership to NATO,² etc.

For a better management of the in-

1. Security Research Forum was initiated in October 2012. Supported by the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it brings together the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy (BCSP) the Kosovo Centre for Security Studies (KCSS) and the Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM) –Tirana.

2 Conducted by the Institute for Democracy and Mediation in 2007

terviews and easier interpretation of responses, questions for this survey have been clustered into four major groups: personal safety, perception towards the Albanian security institutions, perception related to external threats and finally, how the Albanian public opinion perceives cooperation in the area of security between Albania, Kosovo and Serbia.

Based on the interviewees’ responses related to the first group of questions, personal safety, a very individualistic approach comes out. A significant part of responders prefer to rely on their own means for their personal or their family safety. Family and their relatives/friends remain focal points of interest and trust for Albanians.

Related to the second group of questions (perception on security institutions) despite the relatively low level of trust, expressed by the responders directly through their responses or indirectly by the relatively high level of refusal to answer, it is again a relatively high per-

centage of those that chose to deal with threats by themselves, rather than asking for protection from the security institutions.

Concerning the third group of questions (external threats) the Albanians' perception looks objective. In general, they consider the possibility of any external, conventional threat against Albania as very low, while related to the Albania's neighbour states, the possibility of any threat originated from them is considered at the range of about 3%. In general, based on the Albanian's responses, the best way to protect the national integrity is through membership and participating in larger international organizations (namely NATO and EU).

Concerning cooperation with Kosovo and Serbia in collectively strengthening security, Albanians' perception is very positive. Most importantly, economic and

trade exchanges are considered as very effective means, in building trust and strengthening security between these countries, slightly better than the security institutions cooperation, while some "elite driven" ways such as "joint representations abroad" have remained at the low-end of the appreciation scale.

Based on the responses of the interviewees and a certain scale of consistency from one group of questions to the other, which contrasts with results of some surveys of the past, it might be concluded a new attitude of the Albanian citizens vis-à-vis these forms of public opinion measuring. Along with the progress of democratisation processes in Albania, the Albanian citizen feels that his opinion counts, which makes him better involved in expressing his views on different issues of high importance for the society.

Methodology

The methodology and questionnaire drafting process for this survey was led by the KCSS team, while the other partners also contributed significantly in finalizing it as well as in adjusting and adopting the final products to their specific cases and contexts.

In Albania, the research process was conducted by IDM research team involving 2 core researchers and 18 field researchers. A nationwide survey was chosen as the fittest research design to meet the objectives of the research project. It was conducted during October 2013 in all 36 districts across the country. A questionnaire with 79 questions³ was designed with primarily close-ended questions (only 4% of the questions were open-ended). The questionnaire was administered

through face-to-face interviews with randomly selected respondents.

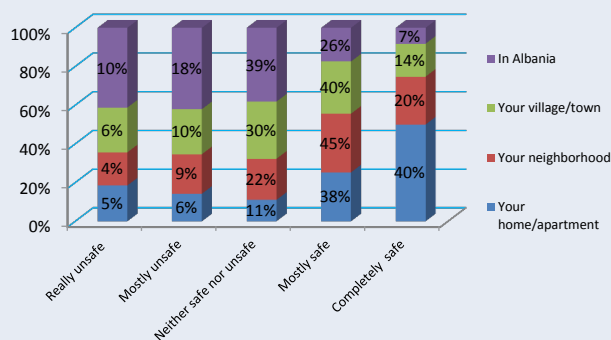
The total national sample of 1100 respondents was drawn to represent the Albanian population of 18 years and above based on the geographical and urban/rural clustering of the 2011 Albanian Census Report. Random sampling ensured equal chances for each 18+ resident of Albania to be included in the sample thus boosting the external validity of the research and allowing for generalization to the whole targeted population. The final sample population included a total of 52% men and 48% women equally distributed between rural and urban areas.

3. Some of the questions of this survey were further broken down in sub-questions, reaching in total more than 120 questions.

I. Albanian public perception on personal safety

The first group of questions was focused on **personal safety**. Measuring in this survey the public perception on their individual and local safety level, it comes out that in a gradual expansion of the area evaluated, from individual home, to neighbourhood, then the village/town and finally to the whole country, it is a gradual reduction of the perceived level of safety (Fig.1). So, while 65% of the Albanian responders feel mostly or completely safe at their homes against 13% really/mostly unsafe, these figures change in favour of “unsafe”, respectively with, 54% vs.16% in village/city dimension and 33% vs. 28% nationwide. In this context, it is interesting to see that there’s no significant difference between the security level at home and in the neighbourhood, which speaks for the fact, that despite the fast urban expansion and dynamic mix of population, which accompanied the socio-political developments of the last two decades, still the neighboring community remains reliable (to some extent) for the individual safety.

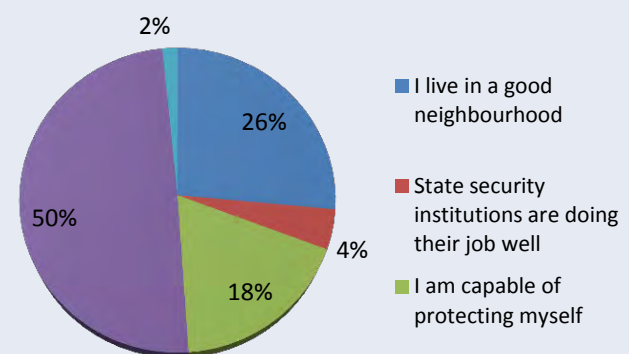
Figure 1: To what extent do you feel safe?



In our survey, it was considered of high importance the causes of perception of safety. So in their response to the question about the reasons for that (Fig.2), 50% of responders linked that with their obedience on law and order, while for 26% of the responders, it is conditioned by the

fact of living in a good neighborhood. It is interesting that 18% of responders rely on their capability to protect themselves. This relatively high % of people referring to self-reliance for their safety, speaks for the still low level of trust on state security institutions and an “individual centric” approach, which often than not, has caused an evident weakening of connections with community. Another interesting finding is the fact that only 4% of responders consider police as “doing the job well”. Despite the difficulty to conclude on the changing dynamics of this perception, because of the lack of surveys of this nature in the past, in itself, this figure speaks for low level of confidence that public has directly on the state police, which, on the other hand, indirectly, speaks for low confidence toward the state security role in general.

Figure 2: If you feel safe, what is the main reason for that?



Directly linked with the reasons of the public impression on the level of safety, the set of threats against physical security have an interesting composition in the Albanian public perception (Fig.3). Traffic accidents take the top of the list with 32% of responders. That is expectable given the high level of traffic accidents which have increased significantly in the last couple of years. Close to that source of safety concern, the Albanian public equally considers “Fight/violent incidents” and “Robbery”. For each of them opted 26% of responders. These results are clearly echoing a nationwide concern, expressed by many other interested ac-

tors, civil society, media, etc and supported by official statistics for a frightening increase in the level of each of these phenomena. On the other hand, “domestic violence”, with 12% of the responders, constitute another safety concern, which reflexes the new trend of declining, even dissolution of the family foundations/links. Conversely, “Inter-ethnic incidents” are considered a concern only for 1% of the responders, which underscores both the level of tolerance among the Albanian society and perception (supported by last census data) of a relatively high level of ethnic homogeneity of the Albanian population.

II. Public Perception on Albania’s Security Institutions

The second group of questions was focused on **security institutions**. Surprisingly, for the question “Which security institution contributes to your perception of safety”, 60% of the interviewees refused to give an answer (Fig.4). It needs further research to determine if it comes from a feeling of rejection or lack of knowledge. Nevertheless, it is very indicative of the fact that many state security institutions have kept a “low profile” in their role to provide for the public safety. So, the central government, the local government and the judiciary are considered as contributors to safety by 1% of the responders (per each). 37% of responders consider the police as the main safety provider, which more or less was expected due to its pure mission for that. Regardless of that, it should be recalled that just 4% of the same responders in previous questions believe that the police “is doing its job well”.

Figure 3: Which of the following poses the biggest safety concern in your community or village/town?

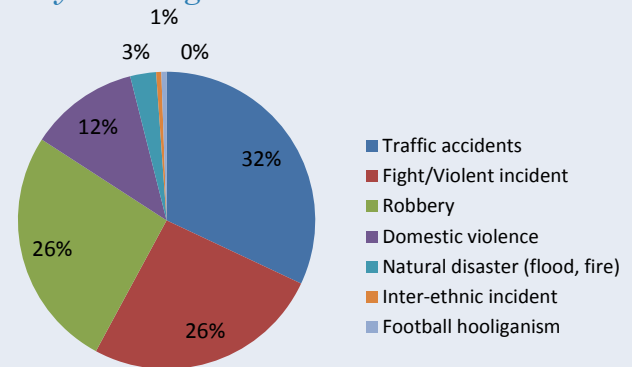
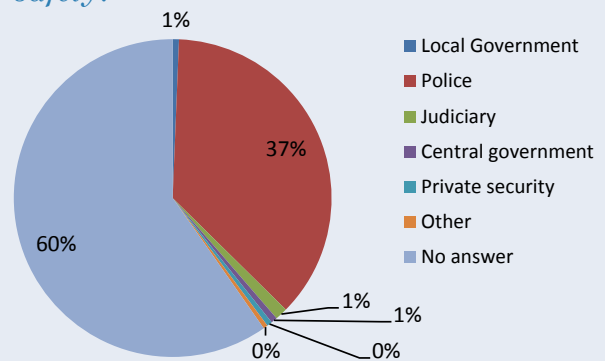


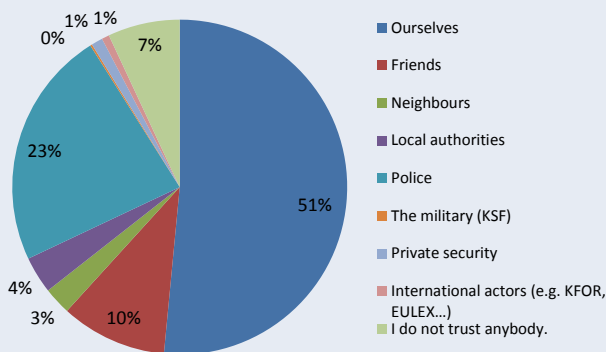
Figure 4: Which security institution most contributes to your perception of safety?



There is a clear correlation between findings related to the question “Who do you rely the most to protect you and your family safety?” and to the previously mentioned one about “...the main reasons of feeling safe”. In both of them the “ego centric” and “self-reliance” approaches are very evident. Thus, 51% of the responders rely on themselves to protect their or their family safety (Fig.5). If we add to that category, the ones (10%) relying on their friends and the others (7%) re-

lying on their neighbours, it results that more than 2/3 (or 68%) of the population don't consider state security institutions as real safety provider and count on their own or their intimate persons for their or their family safety. Another interesting findings related to this question is the fact that, while, as it was mentioned in the previous question, 37% of responders consider police as the main contributor to a general perception of safety, actually only 23% believe that police can provide for the safety of them or their families. In this context, the military, or other state or private actors are considered to have any role just by 1% or responders, while 3% do not trust anybody, which calls for further research on the role and contributions of these institutions in the context of personal security.

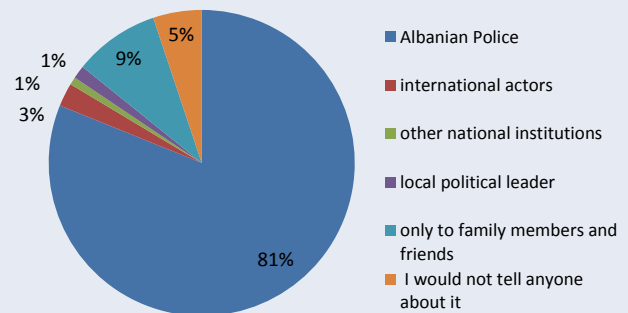
Figure 5: Who do you rely the most to protect the safety of you and your family? Choose only one.



Despite the above mentioned perceptions, when it comes to the question on "...where to report a crime or a violent incident", 81% of the responders would do that to the police (Fig.6). Positive as it looks at first, it leaves some space for discussion when projected against 9% of responders which would tell that to their family members and friends and 5% which don't prefer to tell that to anybody. Combined, 14% of interviewees don't like to report the acts of crime or violence, of which they could be a victim to, or a witness of, which is relatively high. It calls for further research and elaborations, given the low level of trust toward the se-

curity institutions (police in particular) and the relatively high level of self-judgment and revenge still dominant in many Albanians' reaction against any act of violence or misconduct addressed to them or their family. Quite in contrast, only 1% of the responders consider the local political leaders as proper institutions to report these acts of violence.

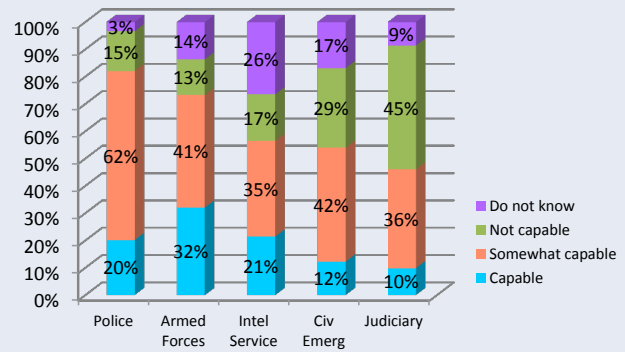
Figure 6: Who would you report a crime or violent incident to?



Another question was intended to measure public perception about the level of competence of some of the security institutions (namely Police, Armed Forces, Intelligence Service, Civil Emergency and Judiciary) in relation to their mission to protect the Albania's national security (Fig.7). From that perspective, the % of responders considering the security institutions in Albania as "capable" is relatively low, with the Armed Forces at the level of 37% and the police and intelligence service of roughly 20%, while the rest, civil emergency and judiciary, respectively of 12% and 10%. Almost symmetric opinion dispersion is found among responders considering them "not capable". While 45% of responders consider judiciary as "incapable", the level of incapability in public perception drops to 29% for civil emergency. Perception of "incapability" is 17% for the intelligence service and 15% for the police, and again a bit better for the armed forces with 13% incapability. Some conclusions could be drawn concerning the category of responders which don't know what to respond. The lack of knowledge is relatively high, 27% in relation to Intelligence

Service, which speaks for its partially unjustified level of opaqueness. The civil emergencies and the armed forces are less unknown, but still at relatively high level (respectively 17% and 14%) while the judiciary with 9% and police with 3% of responders, unknowledgeable to them, are (as it was expected) more exposed in public and drawing more attention on their own positions.

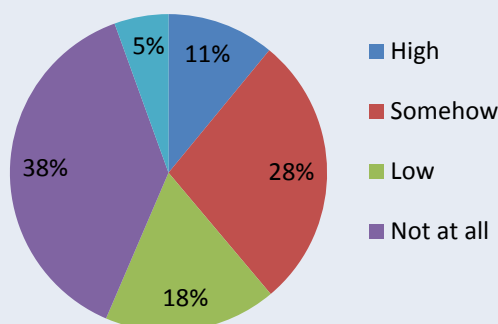
Figure 7: To what extent are following institutions capable of protecting Albania's national security?



III. Albanian Public Perception on External Threats

The third group of questions was focused on **external threats** to the Albanian national security. Based on this survey findings, the Albanian public perception related to the level of threat against Albania's national security results reasonable and very much in line with positive trends of security in Balkan region. Thus just 11% of responders consider the level of threat "high" (Fig.8). On the other hand, 56% of them don't see any threat at all, or consider that as "low". 28% of responders stand "in the middle", believing that these threats may "somehow" exist.

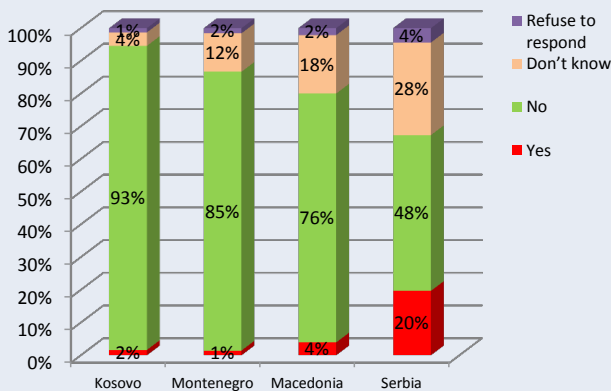
Figure 8: In your opinion, to what extent is the national security of Albania threatened?



Public perception regarding external threats to the Albania's national security, were further elaborated and linked with concrete neighbour countries. Related to the direct neighbour countries, namely Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro, just 2 to 4% of the Albanian responders belie they could pose a threat, while 93% don't consider Kosovo as a threat, compared to 85% and 76% related respectively to Montenegro and Macedonia (Fig.9). Interestingly, still 20% of the Albanian interviewees consider Serbia as a threat against Albania's security, regardless of the fact that, geographically, it is relatively distanced and doesn't share borders with Albania. This perception runs counter also with some drastic transformation in Serbia, in political and military areas as well as some positive changes in relations between Serbia and Kosovo, culminating with the agreement of respective prime ministers of 19 April 2013. More than the level of information, it could be explained with the difficulty and relatively long time it takes for some legacy of the past, concerning relations between Albanians and Serbians, to be

faded, let alone erased, from the memory of population.

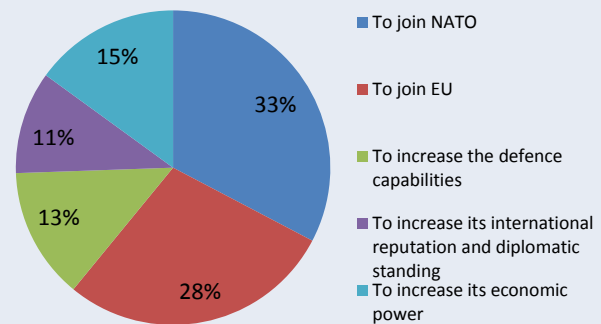
Figure 9: Perceived military threat from?



Along with a relatively objective opinion about the fact that traditional threats against Albania have receded, the Albanian public looks well positioned when it comes to the question of the “best way to protect the national security” (Fig.10). 61% or responders see that as part of larger family of nations, either through

NATO (33%) or EU (28%) believing that “collective defense” can better achieve this goal. Nevertheless, 13% or responders are for increasing Albanian defence capabilities. Referring to this question, it is interesting that 26% of responders don’t see the military option as a solution. Among them, 11% are for increasing international reputation and diplomatic standing, while 15% consider economic power as the best way to protect national integrity.

Figure 10: What is the best way to protect national security?



IV. Albanian Public Perception on Cooperation in the Area of Security

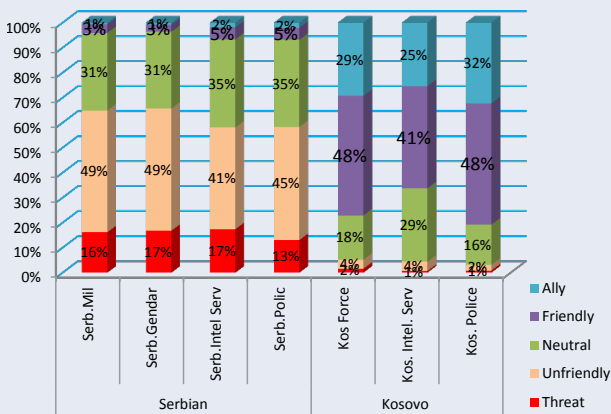
Another very important group of question in our survey was focused on **security cooperation** with Kosovo and Serbia. Related to the question on how the Albanian public perceives the military, police and intelligence service of these two countries, findings were very interesting (Fig.11). First of all, it is the expected contrast in the Albanians’ perception vis-à-vis Serbian and Kosovo security institutions. According to Serbia, what takes

the attention is the level of consistence of responses for any of the security institutions, which tells that the Albanian public opinion makes almost no difference in the way how they are perceived. As such, roughly 17% of the Albanian responders consider them as a threat, while about 49% of responders consider them unfriendly (41% for Intelligence Service). Between 30% and 35% remain neutral towards these institutions. On the other

hand, about 3% of responders consider them “friendly” while only about 1% consider them as “ally”.

In this context, our survey findings on Albanians’ perception vis-à-vis Kosovo security institutions are quite reversed. Thus only 1% of responders consider each of the above mentioned Kosovo institutions as a threat for Albania, and about 2% to 4% consider them as unfriendly. On the other hand, about 77% to 80% of the responders consider them as “friendly” or “ally”, with a slight dropping to 66% for the intelligence service. Again about 18% are neutral for police and military vs. 29% being neutral for the intelligence service.

Figure 11: Perception on security institutions of Serbia and Kosovo

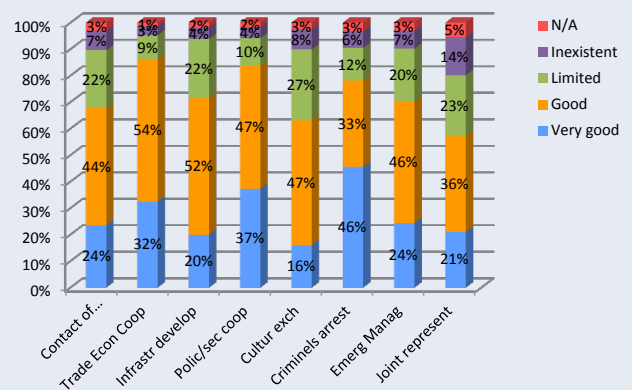


In this survey, it was of high importance to measure public perception on the areas that should contribute the most in relations and cooperation between Albania, Serbia and Kosovo. For the sake of a better process management, eight main areas (considered as the most influential in this aspect) were offered as options. They were: contacts among people; trade and economy, road network; police/security cooperation; cultural exchanges; dealing jointly against criminals; emergency management and lastly, jointly representation abroad.

Related to Serbia, it was interesting to find that the area of security is considered as one of the most influential in improving relations with Albania (Fig.12).

Thus, the categorization as “very good” or “good” way was given to cooperation among “police/security” and in “dealing jointly against criminals”, by respectively 84% and 79% of the Albanian responders. While other areas gained less appreciation, from 72% support for “road infrastructure”, to only 57% for the option “joint representation abroad”. Distinguished from other “non-security” areas, “economic and trade exchanges” took a high appreciation with 87%.

Figure 12: Areas for improving cooperation (Albania-Serbia)

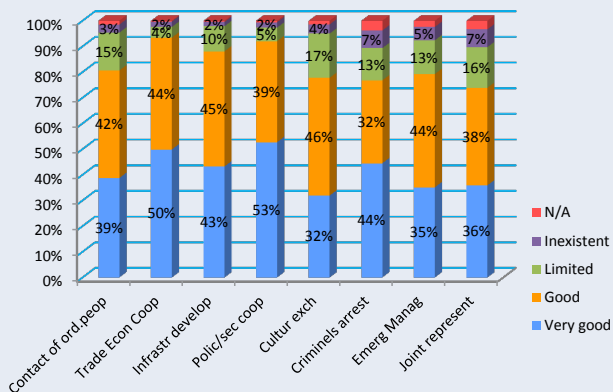


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In this context, related to Kosovo, the Albanian interviewees make almost the same order of ranking for the eight areas of cooperation and their effect in improving relations and cooperation, but the appreciation they express for any of them is much higher. Thus, “economic and trade exchanges” is considered as a “very good” or “good” way for improving relations by 94% of the responders. Security remains

ranked high with about 92%, while other areas were ranked behind, with “joint representation abroad” at the bottom, but again, much higher compared to Serbia, with 74%.

Figure 13: Areas for improving cooperation (Albania-Kosovo)

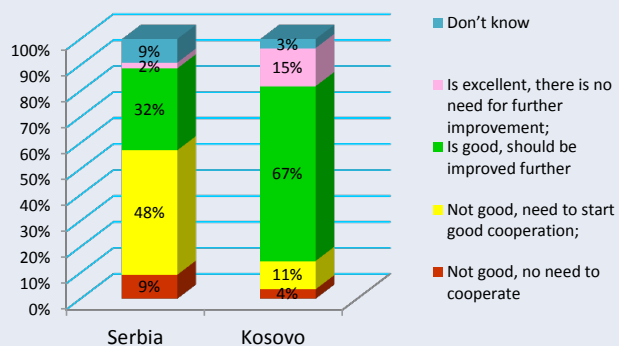


Related to Kosovo, the number of responders which consider these areas “in-existent” is about 1% for means of “security” and “economy”, while rises to about 5-7% for other means (cultural/emergency cooperation and joint representation abroad”). In relation to Serbia, this category of responders is slightly higher, with the last area, “joint representation abroad” significantly differentiating with 14% non-consideration.

A specific question was focused on the level of cooperation that Albania has already established separately with Serbia and Kosovo and the necessity to improve that (Fig.14). In that respect, 48% of the Albanian responders have the opinion that cooperation with Serbia “is not good and should start building”, while related to Kosovo, this category of responders is only 11%. On the other hand, the category of responders thinking that the cooperation “is good but need further improving” is 32% in relation with Serbia and 67% concerning Kosovo. This cooperation is considered “excellent, with no need for further improvement” by 15% of responders in relation to Kosovo, but only 2% of them have this opinion in relation to Serbia. Considering the fact that these three categories of responses, combined,

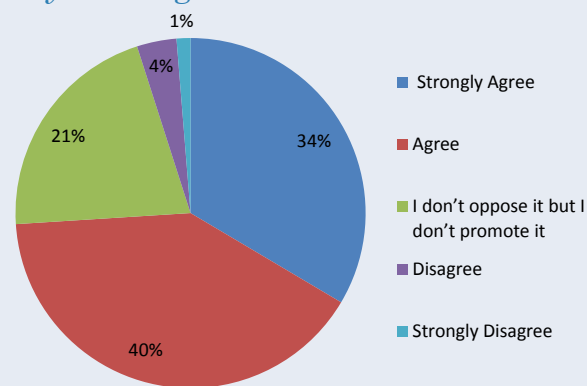
constitute a positive attitude in relation to this cooperation, it should be noted that in general, about 93% of responders share positive opinion towards cooperation with Kosovo, while towards Serbia, this category of responders drops to 82%. The category of responders thinking that this cooperation “is not good and we don’t need to cooperate” is relatively small, but still at the level of 4% in relation to Kosovo and more than double, with 9%, in relation to Serbia.

Figure 14: With which of the sentences do you agree related to security cooperation?



Albanian public opinion looks very positive for any way of regional cooperation in the area of security between Albania, Serbia and Kosovo. One of the questions to measure that opinion was in relation to “jointly participate in regional security training” (Fig.15).

Figure 15: Will Kosovo, Serbia and Albania jointly be part of the regional security trainings?



In that respect, about 74% of responders were positive, out of them, 34%

“strongly agree” while 40% “agree”. It was a category of 21% that “don’t oppose but don’t promote”. Opponents of that way of cooperation constituted just 4%.

In general, the survey conducted in Albania on the personal safety, national security and regional security cooperation vis-à-vis Serbia and Kosovo, due to the level of comprehensiveness and the large number of questions included, provided a tremendous amount of interesting information, for the Institute for Democracy and Mediation, Tirana, in particular, but also for the Regional Se-

curity Forum (Belgrade, Prishtina, Tirana) when it comes to project this survey findings against a regional context. It could serve as a very useful source of information and reference for other think tanks as well, in their researches in the area of security. In addition, these findings could help to support and even rectify some of the official positions (for the three above mentioned capitals) since they, not seldom, for political motives, in their declarations and acts, don’t know, or even disregard public opinions, even of their country.