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MAIN FINDINGS

- A greater proportion of the residents of Serbia feel safe than do the residents of Kosovo and Albania – at all four levels that were examined, while the residents of Albania generally feel the least safe.
- In all three communities, respondents’ trust in state institutions is generally low, and citizens mostly rely on themselves when it comes to their personal safety. The perception of safety as being dependent on a person’s immediate environment is more prominent among Kosovo residents, while residents of Serbia and Albania predominantly see security as mediated by social and legal norms.
- Respondents from Kosovo have more trust in state institutions than do respondents from Albania and Serbia, and this mild optimism can be explained by the fact that Kosovo’s security institutions are “young” and therefore less compromised. The proportion of Serbian residents who distrust the police is strikingly higher than in Kosovo. Every second respondent from Serbia distrusts the work of the police, in comparison to every fifth Kosovo resident (54% to 22%).
- In all three communities the three greatest local security problems are traffic accidents, robberies and violent incidents/fights. However, these problems are ranked differently in Serbia, Kosovo and Albania.

ON THE PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

This paper presents comparatively citizens’ views of their personal safety and security at the local level, as surveyed in Albania, Kosovo and Serbia in October 2013, as part of the joint initiative ‘Security Research Forum Belgrade–Pristina-Tirana’, run by the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy (BCSP), the Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS) and the Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM) from Tirana. The survey was conducted using the same questionnaire in all three communities, taking a representative sample of citizens. In Serbia, 1200 citizens were interviewed, including a sub-sample of 200 citizens in Southern Serbia [the municipalities of Preševo, Bujanovac and Medvedja]. The survey in Kosovo encompassed 1119 respondents, including 100 ethnic Serbs residing in North Kosovo. In Albania, 1100 citizens were interviewed. The analysis is complemented by data from 2014 and 2015 in order to show the trends in citizens’ perceptions of personal safety and local security.

1. PERCEPTIONS OF PERSONAL SAFETY

Citizens’ perceptions of personal safety were examined at four distinct levels: safety in the house/flat in which they live, neighbourhood safety, safety in their town/borough and finally safety in the country in which they live.

1.1. Personal safety

For the residents of all three communities, the sense of personal safety decreases from the innermost to the broadest environment. Thus, the greatest proportion of citizens feel completely safe or mostly safe in their own home – 84% of respondents in Serbia and 78% in Kosovo and Albania. More than two thirds of respondents also feel safe in the neighbourhood where they live – 81% of Serbian residents, 77% of Kosovo residents and 65% of residents of Albania. When it comes to safety in the city/borough in which they live, the feeling of safety slightly decreases, with 74% of respondents from Serbia, 68% in Kosovo and 54% in Albania saying they felt safe in their city/borough.
1.2. Safety in the country where respondents live

Perceptions of safety significantly change when we move to the broadest environment - the state. In Serbia, somewhat over half (59%) of respondents feel safe (mostly safe or completely safe) in their country, while in Kosovo and Albania only one third of respondents (36% and 33% respectively) felt safe in the country where they live. However, it should be noted that in both Kosovo and Albania a greater proportion of respondents responded that they felt ‘neither safe nor unsafe’ than did those in Serbia.

According to a survey conducted by the BCSP in 2015 in Novi Pazar, Serbia, 44% of women and 21% of men do not always feel safe in their neighbourhood or their town. The 2013 survey examined the feeling of personal safety among various national minorities in Serbia and showed that around 29% of citizens belonging to the Bosniak minority, which is concentrated in Novi Pazar area, felt unsafe or sometimes unsafe in their immediate environment [neighbourhood, town]. On average, the perceptions of personal safety of the residents of Novi Pazar remained similar between 2013 and 2015. However, both surveys indicated the important fact that women generally feel less safe in the places where they live than do men. Moreover, focus groups conducted in October 2015 by the BCSP in Vranje, Serbia show that young women have significantly different perceptions of security threats at the local level than young men, and that the feeling of personal safety is lower among women.

The proportion of respondents who feel mostly unsafe or totally unsafe increases from the most immediate to the broadest environment. Nevertheless, it should be noted that in all three communities, even at the state level, this number is smaller than the number of respondents who feel safe.

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1.3. Reasons for Feeling [Un]safe

In connection with their perception of their own safety at various levels, respondents who said they felt safe were asked for the main reason for their sense of safety. The answers provided to this question indicated significant differences between respondents from Serbia, Kosovo and Albania. For example, twice as many residents of Kosovo feel safe because they live ‘in a good neighbourhood’ than do residents of Serbia and Albania [49% in Kosovo, 22% in Serbia and 25% in Albania]. On the other hand, about half of residents of Serbia and Albania [55% in Serbia and 46% in Albania] said they felt safe because they ‘live normally and respect law and order’, whereas in Kosovo only one third of respondents gave this reason as crucial for their sense of safety. This finding points to the fact that the perception of safety as dependent on a person’s immediate environment is more prominent among Kosovo residents, while residents of Serbia and Albania predominantly see security as mediated by social and legal norms. It is impor-
According to a survey conducted by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the Center for Free Elections and Democracy (CeSID) in Serbia in 2014, 39% of respondents trust the police, while 54% do not. Although a significantly higher percentage of respondents said they had trust in the police in 2014 than did so in 2013, this cannot be taken as an indicator of increased trust in law enforcement, since the question was framed differently, in the sense that it was focused solely on the police, while the question in the 2013 survey was broader. Besides, the fact that more than half of citizens do not trust the police indicates that there is still much space for improving the work of the Serbian Police.

A survey conducted by the IDM in Albania in 2014 shows that trust in the police increased slightly between 2013 (37%) and 2014 (41%), while Albanian citizens’ trust in NATO and the Albanian Armed Forces, which along with the EU are the most trusted institutions in Albania, to note that in all three communities by far the smallest proportion of respondents said that they felt safe because the state security institutions were doing their job well – 5% in Serbia and 4% in Kosovo and Albania. This finding clearly indicates citizens’ dissatisfaction with the functioning of state institutions.

Chart 4: Who do you trust to protect your safety?

2. TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS

When asked who they rely on most to protect their own safety and the safety of their families, most residents of all three communities responded that they relied on themselves – 55% of respondents in Serbia, 43% in Kosovo and 52% in Albania. Further, the answers provided to this question show that only respondents from Kosovo have trust in the police in a significant proportion – more than a third of residents of Kosovo rely on the Kosovo Police to protect their safety (37%). Every fourth resident of Albania and every fifth resident of Serbia trusts the police when it comes to their own safety and the safety of their families. This finding indicates that the Serbian Police has the worst image among citizens.

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nian society, slightly decreased. This might be an indicator that personal security improved while perceptions of national security somewhat deteriorated.

Finally, the Kosovo Police lost part of respondents’ trust between 2013 and 2014. While in 2013 almost half of respondents said that they trusted the police, in 2014 this had dropped to 44%. On the other hand, the proportion of Kosovo residents who distrust the police remained the same [22%]. Although the proportion of residents of Serbia who trust the police is not significantly different [44% in Kosovo in 2014 compared to 39% in Serbia], the proportion of Serbian citizens who distrust the police is strikingly higher than in Kosovo [54% to 22%], which indicates that the Kosovo police generally enjoys greater trust.

However, the situation is different in the four North Kosovo municipalities with a Serbian majority. In September 2013, when residents of North Kosovo were asked to grade the work of the police from 1 to 4, only 20% of respondents awarded the Kosovo Police the two higher grades [3 and 4]. According to a June 2015 public opinion survey covering North Kosovo, 18% of respondents opted for the police as the institution which they trust most when it comes to their personal security.

Although the process of integrating Serbian police officers from North Kosovo into the Kosovo Police took place between September 2013 and June 2015, trust in the police among North Kosovo’s population remained generally low. According to the June 2015 survey, the institution in which citizens have the greatest trust is Civil Protection (CP), a parallel Serbian structure operating in North Kosovo, on which 54% of respondents rely for the provision of security. However, the Serbian and Kosovo governments agreed in March 2015 to dismantle the CP and integrate its members into Kosovo’s institutions. It remains to be seen how this will affect how Serbs from Kosovo’s northern municipalities perceive security.

On the other hand, according to the 2013 survey, respondents from the three municipalities in Southern Serbia in which the Albanian minority is concentrated (Preševo, Bujanovac and Medvedja) had significantly greater trust in the police that the Serbian average. One third of residents (33%) of these three municipalities relied on the police to protect their personal safety, a significantly higher proportion than the figure for the whole territory of Serbia (19%). Also, respondents from Southern Serbia trust the police more than any other institution. This could be an indicator of good performance by the multiethnic police in the Southern Serbia municipalities where the Albanian minority is concentrated.

6 Supra note 4 and 5.
7 North Mitrovica, Zvečan, Zubin Potok and Leposavić.
11 Supra note 9.
2.1. Institutions and Perceptions of Safety

Respondents to the 2013 survey were also asked to name the security institution which contributes most to their perception of safety. This question was open-ended, meaning that respondents were able to write down their own answer. The majority of residents of Serbia (54%) and Albania (60%) said that no institution contributes to their perception of safety. This confirms general distrust in institutions and citizens’ reliance on themselves when it comes to personal safety. Slightly over one third of respondents from Serbia and Albania (39% in Serbia and 37% in Albania) named the police as the dominant institution in shaping their perception of safety. All other institutions in Serbia and Albania were on the edge of the margin of error or below it, indicating that citizens generally do not see other state institutions as responsible for protecting their personal security. In Kosovo, public opinion on this issue is somewhat different. Almost one half of respondents cited the police as the institution that has the most influence on their sense of security (47%), while 13% indicated KFOR and 7% the Kosovo Security Forces (KSF). Only 16% of respondents from Kosovo said that no institution affects their perception of safety, around one third of the proportion of respondents with this attitude in Serbia and Albania. The answers provided to this and the previous question suggest that the Kosovo Police enjoys greater trust from citizens than do the Serbian and Albanian police forces, and also that the Kosovo Police has a greater impact on public opinion and citizens’ perceptions of security.

When asked to whom they would report crime or a violent incident, respondents from all three communities gave very similar answers. A large majority of respondents in Serbia, Kosovo and Albania (over 80%) would report crime or violence to the police. However, the proportion who would not report crime and violence to anyone, or who would report it only to their family members and friends, is not negligible, particularly in Serbia and Albania (14% of respondents in both communities), while in Kosovo this proportion is lower, at 7%. In all three communities, the main reason provided for not reporting crime or violence is distrust in institutions (51% of respondents from Albania opted for this reason, 33% in Kosovo and 30% in Serbia), while in second place is fear of reprisals from the perpetrators. Citizens’ answers to this question

Chart 5: Which security institution contributes most to your perception of safety?
once more confirmed the general distrust in security institutions in all three communities.

3. SECURITY PROBLEMS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Respondents from all three communities indicated that the three greatest security problems at the local level are traffic accidents, robberies and violent incidents/fights. However, these problems are ranked differently in Serbia, Kosovo and Albania. For the residents of Kosovo and Albania, the greatest threat to safety at the local level is traffic accidents (40% of respondents from Kosovo and 32% from Albania opted for this answer), while in Serbia this problem ranked third (23% of respondents).

It is striking that in 2013 only one third as many respondents from Kosovo (9%) believed that the greatest security problem was violent incidents than did those in Serbia (27%) and Albania (26%). Furthermore, only the residents of Serbia perceive hooliganism as a significant problem (9% of respondents from Serbia, 2% from Kosovo and 0% from Albania), while the residents of Albania see domestic violence as a more serious security problem than do the residents of Serbia and Kosovo (12% in Albania, 4% in Serbia and 3% in Kosovo). This finding could be explained by how the media treats certain issues, and how frequently they are covered. For instance, football hooliganism is a more frequent topic in the Serbian media and public discourse than in the other two countries.

In Serbia, perceptions of major local threats did not significantly alter in 2014. Robberies, violent incidents and traffic accidents still figure as the main threats, with one problem added to the top threats – corruption.\(^\text{13}\) This finding might be a consequence of better and more extensive reporting on corruption by CSOs and the independent media and the greater general visibility of this issue. In Kosovo, a survey conducted by the KCSS in 2014 did not seek to identify threats to local security and personal safety as a specific category of threat. However, a question about threats to Kosovo’s national security pointed to a number of human security threats. For instance, unemployment and the bad economic situation was identified as the greatest threat (24% of respondents), corruption was in third place with 12%, while 10% of respondents said that crime, theft, drugs etc. were the greatest threat.\(^\text{14}\) One more threat which deserves attention, identified by 9.7% of Kosovo residents, is extremism/radicalism.

Chart 6: Greatest threats to safety at the local level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Serbia</th>
<th>Kosovo</th>
<th>Albania</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robberies</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brawls/violent incidents</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic accidents</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The topic of religious radicalisation has been in the spotlight in Kosovo in recent years, due to a large number of Kosovo residents who have been involved as foreign fighters in


\(^\text{14}\) Supra note 5, p. 16.
CONCLUSIONS

This short comparative analysis of the results of public opinion surveys in Serbia, Kosovo and Albania indicates a relatively strong feeling of personal safety among respondents from all three communities. However, respondents do not see that state institutions contribute to this situation, and they are mostly dissatisfied with the performance of security institutions. Human security concerns are similar in all three communities, but their different ranking shows the different priorities of the three communities. Another important finding is that the Serbian community living in North Kosovo has different security perceptions from the rest of Kosovo’s population.

Syria and Iraq, as well as the growing global fear of Islamic State.

An interesting finding from the 2013 survey is that a very small number of respondents in all three communities [2% in Serbia, 3% in Kosovo and 0% in Albania] pointed to inter-ethnic incidents as the greatest security problem at the local level. This might imply a decrease in inter-ethnic tensions, but also might indicate that the topic of inter-ethnic hatred and nationalism has not been properly addressed or given enough space in public discourse. However, the latest public opinion research covering North Kosovo suggests that perceptions of inter-ethnic violence are drastically different in the four Kosovo municipalities with the Serbian majority. By far the greatest proportion of respondents (44%) said that inter-ethnic confrontations were the greatest security threat. In the four municipalities in North Kosovo, organised crime is perceived as the second greatest threat [26%], unemployment is third [25%], while traffic accidents are in fourth place with only 4% of respondents opting for this as the greatest threat. Such survey results are not surprising – North Kosovo has been the focal point for Serbian nationalist aspirations which have kept ethnic hatred very much alive, while Kosovo’s institutions have so far failed to adequately integrate the Serbian minority. The second problem – organised crime – has also been frequently discussed in relation to North Kosovo, thus giving it prominence in the perceptions of the local population.

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15 Kosovo has 125 foreign fighters for every 1 million citizens, making it the highest ranking country among the 22 European countries surveyed in Kursani, S. [2015] Report inquiring into the causes and consequences of Kosovo citizens’ involvement as foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq. Pristina: KCSS. Available at: http://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/Report_inquiring_into_the_causes_and_consequences_of_Kosovo_citizens_involvement_as_foreignfighters_in_Syria_and_Iraq_307708.pdf
16 Supra note 9, p.30.
REFERENCES


ABOUT ORGANISATIONS

BELGRADE CENTRE FOR SECURITY POLICY
(BCSP)
Serbia

The Belgrade Centre for Security Policy (BCSP) is an independent think tank founded in 1997 to publicly advocate national and human security based on democracy and respect for human rights. The BCSP works towards consolidation of security sector reform (SSR) and security integration of Western Balkan states into the Euro-Atlantic community by creating an inclusive and knowledge-based security policy environment. It achieves these goals through research, public advocacy, education, bringing together relevant stakeholders and creation of networking opportunities.

KOSOVO CENTRE FOR SECURITY STUDIES
(KCSS)
Kosovo

The Kosovar Center for Security Studies (KCSS) is a non-governmental and non-profit think tank established in 2008 with the main aim of developing research studies in the security sector. KCSS conducts research and organizes conferences and seminars in the related fields of security policy, rule of law, justice, and monitoring of the security sector. KCSS activities contribute to strengthening the principles of democratic oversight of security institutions in the Republic of Kosovo.

THE INSTITUTE FOR DEMOCRACY AND MEDIATION
(IDM)
Albania

IDM is an independent non-governmental organization founded in November 1999 in Tirana, Albania. It works to strengthen the Albanian civil society, to monitor, analyze, and facilitate the Euro-Atlantic integration processes of the country and to help consolidate the good governance and inclusive policymaking. IDM carries on its objectives through expertise, innovative policy research, analysis, and assessment-based policy options.

ABOUT PROJECT

The Security Research Forum is a joint project of three independent think tanks from Belgrade (BCSP), Pristina (KCSS) and Tirana (IDM) specialized in research of security issues. The Security Research Forum is meant to foster balanced debate among think-tank community, academia, public policy and media in order to provide research-based alternative solutions to ongoing challenges of cooperation among Serbia, Kosovo and Albania.

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