



Kosovar Voices: Division, Coexistence, Democracy

Focus Groups and In-depth Interviews

Conducted for:

National Democratic Institute for International Affairs

www.ndi.org

Global Strategy Group, Inc.



**NATIONAL
DEMOCRATIC
INSTITUTE**

FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Methodology



Focus Group Methodology

April 17th- April 22, 2000

Eight Focus Groups:

April 17: Pristina.

- ❖ Albanian Men and Women.

April 19: Novi Selo (rural village near Pec).

- ❖ Albanian Men and Women.

April 21: Prizren.

- ❖ Albanian Men and Women.

April 22: Kosovo Polje.

- ❖ Serbian Men and Women.

- ❖ All research respondents assured of anonymity.

Designed and Supervised by Global Strategy Group www.globalstrategygroup.com

Recruited, Hosted and Moderated in Albanian and Serbian by Prism Research

In-depth Interview Methodology

April 15- April 23, 2000

22 In-Depth Interviews

- Pristina, Kosovo Polje, Pec, Prizren, Gjakovica, Mitrovica, and Gracanica

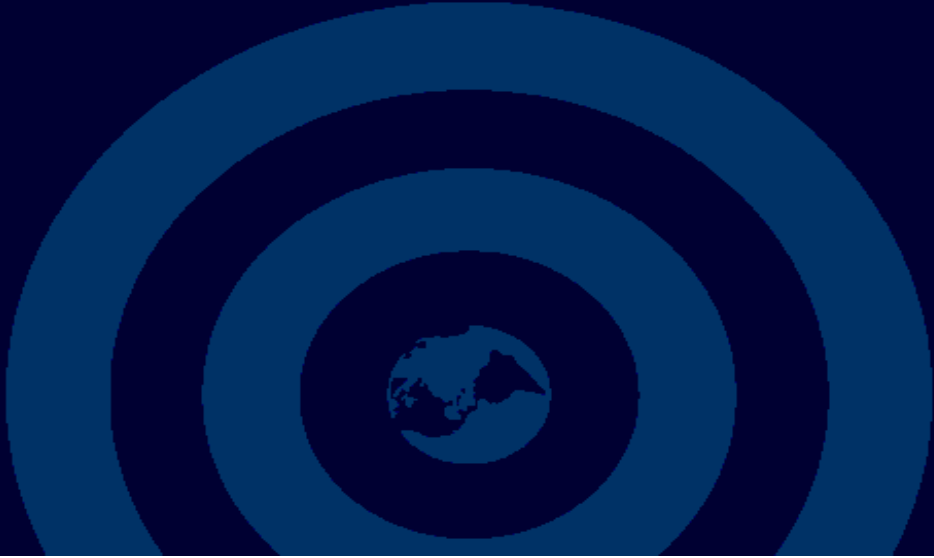
Respondents Included:

- Civic Leaders and Politicians
- Albanians, Serbs, Roma, Bosniak, and Egyptians
- Religious Leaders
- Business Leaders
- Public Health Officials
- Youth Activists
- Journalists
- Teachers

Conducted by Global Strategy Group, Inc.

Recruited by NDI, Assisted by OTI/USAID

General Mood



Kosovar Albanians' Mood Ranges From Upbeat to Relieved

- ❖ All agree that the situation has improved since the end of the war last summer.
- ❖ Most find progress to be slower than expected.
- ❖ The United Nations is seen as too bureaucratic.
- ❖ Most Albanians are deeply grateful toward the United States.

Serb Kosovars Are Very Gloomy

- ❖ Serbs like how it used to be
- ❖ They express deep bitterness toward the United States
- ❖ However, many see the US as potentially safeguarding their interests, despite their mistrust
- ❖ They believe that the area should – and will – be part of Serbia
- ❖ But many show signs of resignation to the current status
- ❖ Men seem more combative and nationalistic
- ❖ Women appear more resigned and fatalistic
- ❖ Many are disillusioned with Milosevic, and feel abandoned

Serb Kosovars' Chief Concern: Security

Serbs also worry about:

- ❖ Freedom of movement
- ❖ Political status
- ❖ Lack of economic opportunity
- ❖ Return of Serbs who have left

“Kosovo is the cradle of Serbia. Kosovo belongs to the Serbs and it will not change. America and these other countries did this.”

-- Serb woman, Kosovo Polje

Albanian Kosovars' Chief Concerns: Security and Economics

- ❖ Lack of jobs, and industry is a common worry
- ❖ Education is a critical priority
- ❖ Desire for increased investment by foreign countries
- ❖ Political aspirations are important, but rank below safety and income
- ❖ Locating missing and jailed Albanians

Economic Prospects Are a Long-term Threat

- ❖ Urban opinion leaders worry about the prospects of a “brain drain,” when Kosovo’s brightest youth begin to appraise their prospects under current conditions.

“And there is no real construction, development, so what they are going to do? I talk with many young people, they ask, ‘Where can I get some scholarship to go abroad?’... if I talk with ten young people during the day, from eight of them, I have this question. So that indicates that very soon we are going to have massive young Kosovars that will leave Kosovo.”

-Women’s Activist

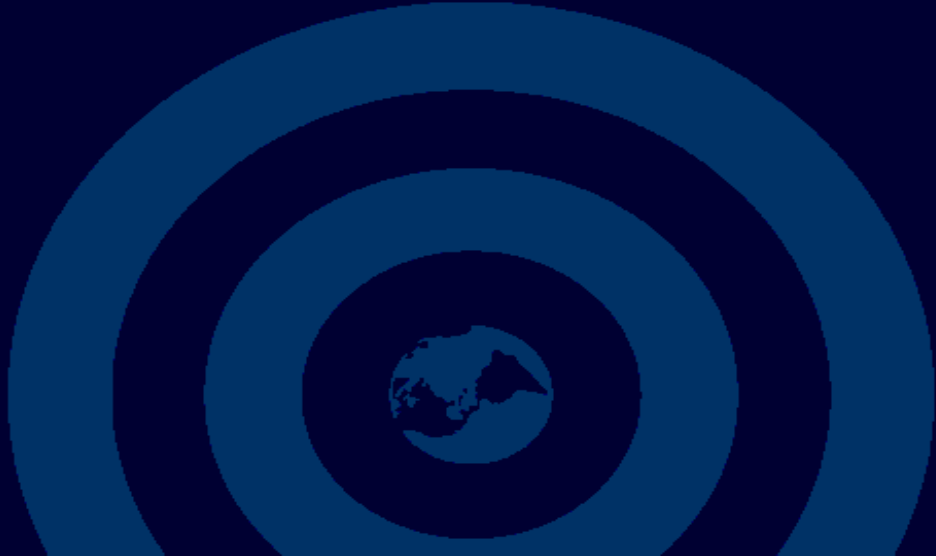
Lawlessness Causes Underlying Anxiety

- ❖ Lack of indigenous lawful authority worries Kosovar Albanians.
- ❖ UNMIK policing and KFOR security is considered ineffective – police don't speak language, can't investigate crimes.
- ❖ Internally displaced Albanian villagers are seen by urban Kosovars as disruptive.
- ❖ Urban Kosovars feel threatened by villagers who have come to the cities. They report these villagers believe they fought and suffered most during the war, and deserve elevated status.

“There should be some constraint put on people. There should be laws to restrict behaviors of certain kinds... for example, to outlaw the weapons carrying at night. We go at night at a café or party and some guy, just all of a sudden, just starts shooting in the air...they just spoil everything. And then you don't feel very much like going out.”

-College Student, Pec

Multiethnic Coexistence



Albanian Kosovars Show Reluctant Willingness to Live With Serbs

- ❖ They endorse equal rights for all groups
- ❖ But underlying attitudes are not very accepting
- ❖ They say they will accept the return of Serbs who have left
- ❖ But those who have committed crimes must be excluded and punished
- ❖ Many Albanians mistrust minorities such as Roma and Bosniaks
- ❖ They feel many in these groups cooperated with the Serbs
- ❖ But say they can live with those who are innocent, and give them equal rights

Albanian Attitudes Are Often Not Very Conciliatory

- ❖ *“Personally, I wouldn't like [Serbs] to stay, they have their own country.”*
 - *Pristina woman*
- ❖ *“They deserve [violence]. Especially the Romas. Because while we were fleeing, they just went into our houses and our shops and they looted places... Since those that have really come in and engaged in crimes have already left, actually, we should vent our anger on the remaining. Unfortunately, we cannot catch the ones that were — the perpetrators.”*
 - *Pec college student*

Albanians' Expectations of Multiethnicity Are Uncertain

- ❖ Many leaders expect multiethnic coexistence will eventually be possible
- ❖ But healing of wounds must come first
- ❖ But this will take time, and many believe the Albanian population is too traumatized for that any time soon
- ❖ Some – especially young – are dubious
- ❖ Many expect Serbs to continue to live in Kosovo, but segregated, in enclaves

Two Views of Multiethnic Kosovo

“I personally believe indeed that it is necessary and it is possible... We are a republic of all ethnicities. And you must have some special step to satisfy the needs of all ethnic collectivities. It means for Serbs, some radio. Education process. And language, news media... [it] must be a society of equal citizens. Of course, the dominant language..., culture and dominant ethnicity will be Albanians because they are more than 95%. But it doesn't mean that other ethnic groups will be in a dangerous position... In this moment, the difficulties for Serbs, Turks and others are the result of dirty war of Serbian forces here. It is not the future of us. I am convinced of what I am saying.”

-Former Communist Leader

“I don't see that Kosovo is going to be able to be a multiethnic society. It was not a multiethnic society before. It is not a multiethnic society in the future either.”

-Youth Activist

Albanians Believe Virtually All Serbs Approved of Crimes

- ❖ Albanians believe Serb “national character” includes innate desire to dominate other nations.

“If we see an Albanian massacring a Serb, we would all react, all of us, immediately... If we have Serbs, let’s take the situation vice versa, they would applaud from the balconies, even those that are not taking part in the massacre itself... We have seen this generation after generation, through the centuries. I’ve seen that myself.”

-Albanian municipal leader.

Albanians Believe Serbs Want to Be More Than Equal

“It’s their home. Everybody has a right to live where they want to live. It’s fundamental human right. Why not?... But they should come and live under equal conditions, not like they used to come. Because, for years, Serbs invaded Kosovo... ‘come and live in Kosovo,’ and you know what they do? Come and take your apartment. They can’t do that anymore.”

-Women’s activist

Likewise, Serbs Say They Are Willing to Live With Albanians

- ❖ But only the ones who are not criminals
- ❖ And only as long as they accept that Kosovo is part of Serbia

“If I were an Albanian I would worry a lot. They must know that this is the Serb land and that our army will return sooner or later, and that we will have bloodbaths here when that happens.”

-- Serb woman, Kosovo Polje

Outlook For Participation In Civil Society Institutions



Albanian Kosovars Are Unclear on the Civil Society Concept

- ❖ Most Albanian Kosovars say they would participate in community organizations geared toward solving local problems, without waiting for government to act
- ❖ Some interviewees give specific examples of one-time efforts such as neighborhood clean-up efforts
- ❖ Fewer are able to illustrate with ongoing projects
- ❖ Many opinion leaders believe there will be little civil society activism as long as economic pressures are so severe

Some See Signs That These Institutions Could Be Developed

- ❖ Albanian Kosovar society has developed such institutions before
- ❖ Albanians undertook solving their own problems during the years of neglect under the Yugoslav government
- ❖ The extensive structure of the “parallel school system” is one such example
- ❖ However, current conditions are different, and there is no guarantee that civil society will develop without significant outside assistance and encouragement
- ❖ Serb Kosovars appear too demoralized about current conditions to contemplate an enthusiastic approach to building a civil society

Communications



Kosovars Have Many Information Sources

- ❖ Kosovars have access to many sources of information – print, television, and radio.
- ❖ But Albanians say that to truly find out what's going on, it's necessary to review multiple news sources and piece the real story together.
- ❖ The most widely respected newspaper for Albanians is *Koha Ditore*.
- ❖ Many Kosovars – Albanians and Serbs – rely on international media, particularly German broadcasting, the BBC, and VOA.
- ❖ Serbs watch Serbian TV, but they mistrust it, and seem to rely even more on international media.
- ❖ Communications in regions outside Pristina are considered problematic; particularly in Prizren, there are not enough outlets.

Attitudes Toward Political Parties And Leaders



Party Loyalty Is Weak Among Albanians

- ❖ Kosovar Albanians express little passion or strong attachment to the current parties
- ❖ None of the leading parties or political figures arouse strong loyalties
- ❖ Kosovar citizens and leaders feel parties offer no detailed programs (beyond independence), and little sets them apart
- ❖ Citizens praise long-time leaders for their contributions towards independence and freedom from Serb domination
- ❖ Many activists fault leading politicians as too passive
- ❖ However, the public defends its leaders against this criticism

Military Leadership No Guarantee of Political Success

- ❖ Leading KLA-based politicians are credited by Albanians as good fighters
- ❖ But appreciation for their military contributions do not yet transfer into the political arena
- ❖ Kosovars believe these military leaders have yet to prove themselves politically
- ❖ Many Albanian Kosovar opinion leaders seek a “third way” – beyond current leading politicians

Serbs Look to Nationalistic Rather Than Moderate Leaders

- ❖ Nationalistic sentiments are popular among Kosovar Serbs
- ❖ Some Serbs look to Milosevic and Belgrade for leadership, but others seem embittered at having been abandoned by the Serbian regime
- ❖ Moderate Serb church leaders are caught in middle
- ❖ Most Serbs do not accept political leadership from leading moderates
- ❖ They feel church leaders should concentrate on religious affairs
- ❖ Albanians, who have little trust for any Serb leaders, make some exception for well known moderates who made efforts to protect Albanians during the war

International Community Appreciated, but Complaints Persist

- ❖ The U.S. is popular, and many Albanian opinion leaders take pains to express thanks
- ❖ They request continued or increased assistance
- ❖ The UN is appreciated, but seen as much too slow (and frustrating to deal with)
- ❖ The UN is seen as an ineffective police force
- ❖ Kouchner holds some personal popularity, but this seems grudging and qualified. He's viewed as doing the best he can in a difficult job

Elections And Political Future



Albanian Kosovars Implicitly Expect Independence

- ❖ Independence is widely supported
- ❖ But ordinary citizens seem patient
- ❖ A minority expect a loose regional association or alliance – perhaps even with Yugoslavia

The International Community Is Expected to Determine Future

- ❖ Albanians believe Kosovo's future should be decided by the people who live there.
- ❖ But many accept that their future will be determined by the international community.
- ❖ Many even consider this desirable.

Local Elections Are Viewed Positively

- ❖ Albanian leaders and the general public see the elections as a positive development.
- ❖ Most Albanians say they will participate.
- ❖ Many Albanian community and political leaders criticize the plan to hold municipal, not Kosovo-wide elections.
- ❖ But some Albanian leaders (not a majority) believe Kosovo isn't ready for "national" elections, and see municipal elections as a useful next step.
- ❖ Kosovar Serbs express resistance to the election and do not expect to vote.

Lack of Information and Democratic Experience May Be an Obstacle

- ❖ Albanians express confusion about the election mechanics, and opinion leaders worry whether the logistics will be smooth.
- ❖ Some opinion leaders worry that Kosovars' lack of experience with true elections may diminish participation.

“Kosovo has never, ever in its history had democratic elections – and people, I think, are not aware that their vote is really going to have some sort of consequence.”

-Youth activist and entrepreneur.

Elections Expected to Legitimize Local Leaders

- ❖ Albanian Kosovar opinion leaders believe that those now functioning as local leaders will benefit by being legitimized.
- ❖ The public will have clearer expectations from those who are chosen.
- ❖ Many current local leaders expect to run in these elections.
- ❖ They believe they can do their jobs more effectively with the formal authority that elections will confer.

Citizens Dispute Expectations for a Battle Between Parties

- ❖ Some Albanian opinion leaders (especially in Pristina) believe these local elections will be a “proxy contest” among the Kosovo-wide parties.
- ❖ But other leaders, and nearly all ordinary Kosovar Albanians, say votes will be based on local factors and individual candidates.
- ❖ Most Albanians say candidates’ affiliations with Kosovo-wide parties will not influence their votes.

NDI FOCUS GROUPS IN KOSOVO SHOW OPTIMISM FROM ALBANIANS; DIFFICULTY FOR SERBS; POSITIVE EXPECTATIONS FOR LOCAL ELECTIONS

Washington, June 27, 2000 - The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) released findings from eight focus groups and 22 one-on-one interviews conducted this spring in Kosovo, among Albanians, Serbs, and other ethnic groups.(1) The focus groups explored attitudes toward multiethnic coexistence, political parties and leaders, participation in civil society institutions, and the upcoming local elections.

General Mood

The mood of Serbs and Albanians differs drastically. Albanians are upbeat and relieved, despite economic and political difficulties. Kosovar Serbs are gloomy. All Albanians agree that the situation has improved since the war ended, but most find progress to be slower than expected. The U.N. is seen as slow and bureaucratic, but Albanians are deeply grateful toward the United States.

Kosovar Albanians' chief concerns expressed are security and economics, and education is a critical priority. They see an urgent need for increased investment by foreign countries and worry about a "brain drain" of Kosovo's brightest youth. Lack of lawful authority worries Albanians and Serbs; UNMIK policing and KFOR security are considered to be problematic due to lack of language skills and knowledge of local conditions. Internally displaced Albanian villagers, who have flooded cities like Pristina, Pec, and Prizren, are seen by urban Kosovars as disruptive and threatening.

While nearly all Serbs claim that Kosovo should remain part of Serbia, many appear resigned to the current status. Disillusioned with Milosevic, many Serbs feel abandoned. Their main priorities are security, freedom of movement, their political status, lack of economic opportunity, and the return of Serbs who have left.

Multiethnic Coexistence

Prospects for multiethnic coexistence are murky. Kosovar Albanians show a reluctant willingness to live with Serbs, but their underlying attitudes are not very accepting. Albanians claim they will accept the return of Serbs who have left, if those who have committed crimes are excluded and punished. But Albanians believe virtually all Serbs approved of those crimes, and that the Serb "national character" includes an innate desire to dominate other nations. Many Albanians tend to mistrust other minorities such as Roma and Bosniaks, feeling that these groups cooperated with the Serbs.

Albanian leaders expect multiethnic coexistence will eventually be possible, and some yearn for it passionately. But they caution that healing of wounds must come first - and many believe the Albanian population is too traumatized for healing yet. Many expect Serbs to continue to live in Kosovo, but in segregated enclaves. Likewise, Serbs say they are willing to live with Albanians - but only the ones who are not criminals, and only as long as they accept that Kosovo is part of Serbia.

Civil Society, Political Leadership and Elections

Kosovars are not readily familiar with civic institutions, though many

say they would participate in organizations geared toward solving local problems. Opinion leaders believe there will be little civil society development as long as economic pressures are severe. But others note that Kosovar Albanian society had developed such institutions before, solving their own problems during the years of neglect under the Milosevic regime. Kosovar Serbs appear too demoralized about current conditions to even contemplate an approach to building a civil society.

Kosovar Albanians have no strong attachment to the current parties and no political figures arouse strong loyalties. They feel the parties offer no detailed programs, and little sets them apart. Citizens praise long-time leaders for their contributions towards freedom from Serb domination, and while many activists fault leading politicians for not doing more to shape Kosovar politics, the public defends its leaders against this criticism. Regarding KLA-based politicians, the public's appreciation of military leadership does not yet transfer into the political arena. Many Albanian Kosovar opinion leaders seek a "third way" - beyond both the established leadership and politicians with a military base.

Some Kosovar Serbs look to Milosevic and Belgrade for leadership, but others seem embittered at having been abandoned by the Belgrade regime. Most Serbs do not accept political leadership from leading moderates, and feel church leaders should concentrate on religious affairs, not politics.

Kosovar Albanians strongly support independence, but seem patient. Albanians believe Kosovo's future should be decided by the people who live there, but many accept that their future will be determined by the international community, and even consider this desirable.

Albanian leaders and the general public see the elections as a positive development. Most Albanians say they will participate. Many Albanian community and political leaders criticize the plan to hold municipal, not Kosovo-wide elections. But some Albanian leaders (though not a majority) believe Kosovo isn't ready for "national" elections, and see municipal elections as a useful next step in learning democracy. Kosovar Serbs are resisting the election, see no gain in participating, and do not expect to vote.

Albanian Kosovar opinion leaders believe that those now functioning as local leaders will benefit by being legitimized after they are elected, because the public will have clearer expectations of them. Many current local leaders expect to run in these elections, and believe they can do their jobs more effectively when they have formal authority.

(1) The research was conducted from April 15-23 in Pristina, Pec, Prizren, Kosovo Polje, Mitrovica, Gracanica, and Dakovica. The focus groups and interviews were designed and supervised by Peter Feld of Global Strategy Group, a New York-based public opinion research firm. Local implementation of the focus groups was led by Prism Research of Sarajevo. Albanians, Serbs, Roma, Bosniaks, and Egyptians, politicians, religious leaders, business leaders, activists, and journalists were interviewed.

For more information on NDI's activities in Kosovo, please contact:

*Program Assistant Holly Fletcher (202) 797-4990
hollyf@ndi.org*

Copyright © 2000 National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI). All rights reserved. Portions of this work may be reproduced and/or translated for non-commercial purposes provided that NDI is acknowledged as the source of the material and is sent copies of any translation.