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STUDY

**Images in Minds and Hearts:
Albanians and Serbs - About Each Other**

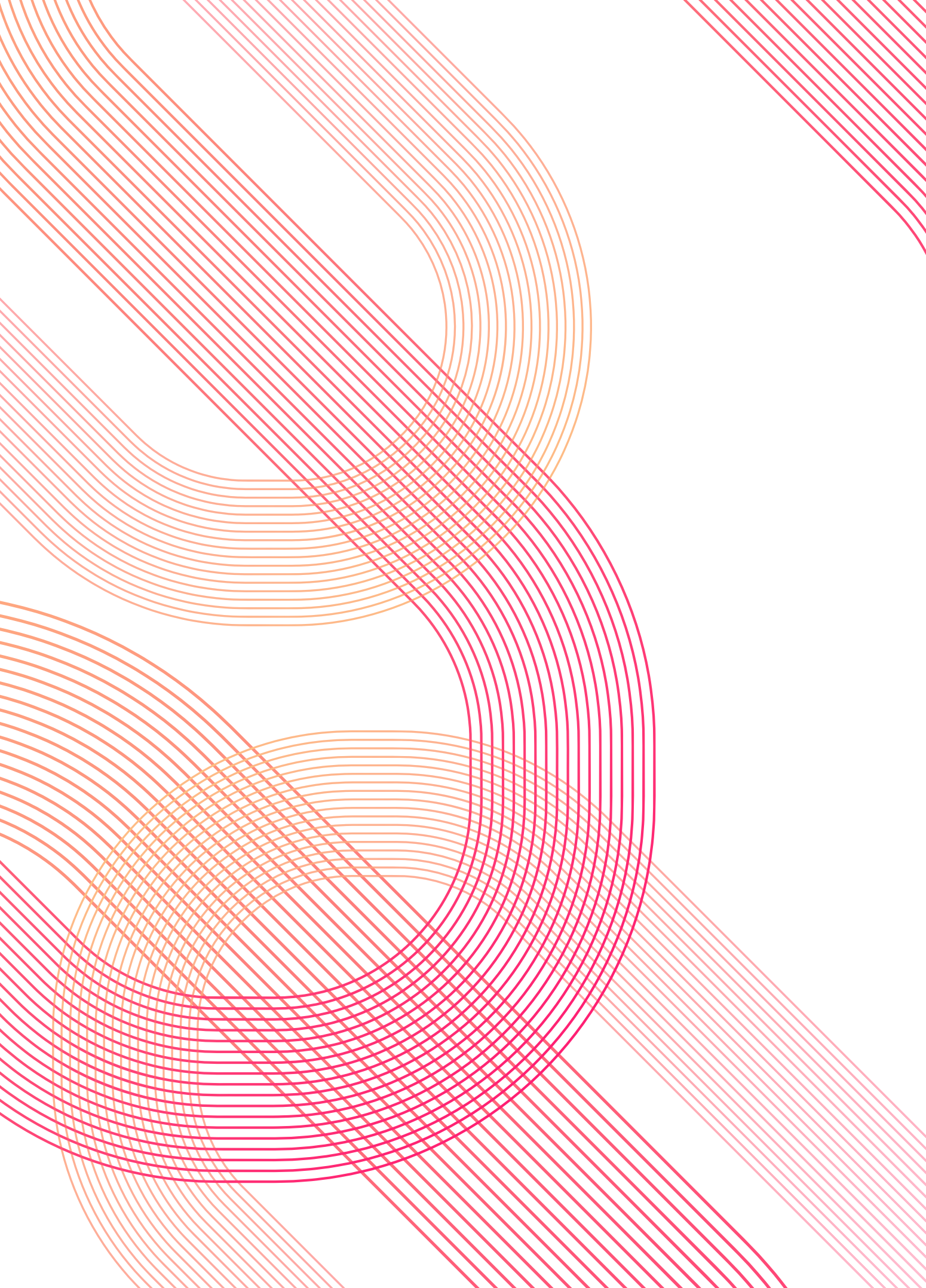


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ZORAN GAVRILOVIĆ • DUŠAN RADAKOVIĆ

STUDY

Images in Minds and Hearts: Albanians and Serbs - About Each Other



ABOUT THE PROJECT

The project *Serbian-Albanian Media Mirror*, implemented by organizations BIRODI and ACDC, is designed to improve media relations and mutual understanding between Albanians from southern Serbia and Serbs from northern Kosovo. The project focuses on the municipalities of Bujanovac, Preševo, and Medveđa in southern Serbia, as well as North Mitrovica, Zvečan, Zubin Potok, and Leposavić in northern Kosovo – regions where relations between these communities are often strained by political and media narratives.

Recent events, such as the conflict in Banjska and tensions surrounding political developments, have highlighted the need to analyze the perceptions and understanding between these two ethnic groups. The role of media and political narratives in shaping mutual attitudes has proven to be a crucial factor in both exacerbating and potentially improving relations. Therefore, through research and interactive activities, this project aims to identify dominant narratives and offer recommendations for their transformation.

As part of the project, surveys, focus groups, and media monitoring were conducted, providing insights into the “images in minds” – perceptions, attitudes, and stereotypes that shape daily life and mutual relations. The goal was not only to map current challenges but also to identify concrete solutions to improve communication and understanding between Serbs and Albanians. The project results will be presented in a comprehensive analysis with recommendations, which will be made available to the public and key stakeholders. Additionally, to contribute to the lasting improvement of relations, an annual award for promoting Serbian-Albanian relations will be established.

The following analysis will present in detail the results of the research conducted within the project. Particular emphasis is placed on the perceptions of participants from different ethnic and social groups, the impact of media narratives, and suggestions for improving inter-ethnic cooperation in the analyzed regions.

ZORAN GAVRILOVIĆ**PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY****Preševo valley sample**

The survey was conducted on a sample of 500 respondents, with 250 respondents from the municipalities of Bujanovac and Preševo, and a northern Kosovo subsample of 250 respondents from the municipalities of North Mitrovića, Zubin Potok, Zvečan, and Leposavić. Within the Preševo Valley subsample, 135 respondents were surveyed in the municipality of Preševo, and 115 respondents in Bujanovac. The selection of respondents was carried out in three steps.

In the first step, the sampling process included selecting local communities at the municipal level in Preševo and Bujanovac. These communities were categorized by size to ensure equal representation of both small and large local communities.

The selection of respondents in urban and rural areas was conducted by requiring interviewers to choose a central street and identify a starting address in the area being surveyed (e.g., the center of the local community, a major intersection, a central bus station, a community center, etc.). After determining the starting address, the interviewer would proceed along the left side of the street and select every seventh address (e.g., 1, then 8, then 15, and so on).

In cases where the selected address was an apartment building with multiple residential units (up to four floors), the interviewer was required to survey only one household or one respondent. In high-rise buildings with more than four floors, the interviewer could survey two households or respondents. For instance, if the first respondent was interviewed on the first floor, the next should be on the seventh floor, or if the first respondent was on the second floor, the next should be on the ninth floor. The principle of the “seventh step” was strictly followed. If the interviewer encountered an institutional building at a given address, they would move to the next residential building.

In rural areas, the selection of respondents followed a similar approach. In linear villages, the selection mirrored the urban method, with every seventh house being chosen. In scattered villages, such as those in mountainous regions, every fourth house was selected. If this was not feasible, alternative selection methods were applied based on the circumstances, such as every second house, or, in extreme cases, every house.

In the third and final step, which pertained to selecting respondents within a household, only individuals over the age of 18 were eligible to participate in the survey. Among eligible individuals, the person whose birthday was closest to the survey date was selected to respond.

Northern Kosovo sample

In Northern Kosovo, the survey was conducted on a sample of 250 respondents, evenly distributed across the municipalities of North Mitrovica, Zvečan, Zubin Potok, and Leposavić. The selection of respondents in this area was also carefully planned to ensure the representativeness of the sample, including citizens from different ethnic communities, such as Serbs and Bosniaks.

The methodology used for respondent selection relied on the identification of key urban and rural areas in each municipality, with an additional focus on achieving a balance between different social strata. Special attention was given to including respondents with higher levels of education to obtain data that reflect the attitudes and perceptions of informed individuals, which significantly contributes to the quality and validity of the analysis.

In addition to the survey, focus groups were organized in all four municipalities in Northern Kosovo. The participants in these focus groups were selected to include representatives of the local community, civil society organizations, students, entrepreneurs, and journalists. The goal of this approach was to gather diverse perspectives on interethnic relations and the everyday challenges faced by the residents of these areas.

This combination of quantitative and qualitative research provided a comprehensive insight into the social dynamics in Northern Kosovo while ensuring that the voices of all relevant stakeholders were heard.

Concept of Nation among Respondents

The first topic that the respondents encountered was the concept of nation. Specifically, they were given the opportunity to choose how they define a nation—whether as primarily a community of people who share the same citizenship or as a community of people who primarily belong to the same ethnicity, sharing a common religion, language, culture, and tradition.

The research findings, presented in Graph 1, indicate that an ethnic perception of the nation dominates among both Albanians and Serbs living in northern Kosovo and the Preševo Valley. The percentage of respondents in northern Kosovo who chose this option is 76.2%, while in the municipalities of Preševo and Bujanovac, it is 92.8%. The option defining the nation as a community of people who share the same citizenship was chosen by one in five respondents (19.9%) in northern Kosovo, compared to 6.4% of respondents in Preševo and Bujanovac.

Graph 1 Concept of nation among Serb respondents in northern Kosovo and Albanian respondents in Preševo and Bujanovac

	Northern Kosovo	Preševo and Bujanovac
Community sharing the same citizenship	19,9 %	6,4 %
Community belonging to one ethnicity (religion, language, culture, tradition)	76,2 %	92,8 %
Don't know / No opinion	3,9 %	0,8 %

These findings reflect the presence of mechanical solidarity among respondents, signifying an environment of pronounced ethnocollectivism in which Serbs in northern Kosovo and Albanians in the Preševo Valley live, on the periphery of ethnonational worlds centered in Belgrade, Pristina, and Tirana.

The fact that 92.8% of respondents from Preševo and Bujanovac perceive the nation ethnically does not provide a methodological basis for statistical analysis of results based on sociodemographic variables. Statistical analysis of sociodemographic data is justified only for the sample of respondents from northern Kosovo.

Considering the obtained results, according to the gender structure of respondents in northern Kosovo, we concluded that there is no statistically significant difference in terms of attitude¹ towards the concept of nation between women and men. In addition, if the obtained results are considered within the age structure of respondents from northern Kosovo, it can be concluded that there was a statistically significant difference² between generations.

1 Contingency coefficient (hereinafter CC) (0,587;0,105)

2 CC (0,278; 0,008)

Table 1.1 Attitude of respondents in northern Kosovo towards the concept of nation depending on the age of the respondents

	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+
Community sharing the same citizenship	15,1%	16,2%	10,8%	45,7%	17,6%
Community belonging to one ethnicity (religion, language, culture, tradition)	80,2%	81,1%	86,5%	54,3%	82,4%
Don't know / No opinion	4,7%	2,7%	2,7%	0%	0%

By cross-referencing the findings on the education of respondents in northern Kosovo and their attitude towards the nation (Table 1. 2), we conclude that there is no statistically significant difference in responses about the concept of nation in relation to the education of research participants³.

Table 1.2 Respondents' perception of nation in northern Kosovo by education level

	Elementary School	Vocational Secondary School	General High School	Higher School –	University	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	Doctoral Studies
Community sharing the same citizenship	50,0%	18,5%		4,0%	12,9%	30,7%	21,4%	22,2%
Community belonging to one ethnicity (religion, language, culture, tradition)	50,0%	79,6%	100,0%	96,0%	80,6%	66,7%	71,4%	77,8%
Don't know / No opinion		1,9%			6,5%	2,7%	7,1%	

By comparing responses from northern Kosovo participants regarding the definition of the nation in accordance with their ethnic self-perception, it was found that there is a statistically significant difference⁴. Specifically, this means there are moderate but statistically significant differences in how the nation is perceived depending on the respondents' ethnic (self)identification.

3 CC (0,29; 0,114)

4 (p=0.026)

Table 1.3 Attitude of respondents in northern Kosovo towards the concept of nation depending on ethnic identification

	Albanian	Serb	Bosniac	Gorani	Montene- grin	Yugoslav	Undeclared
Community sharing the same citizenship		17,9%	26,1%	100,0%	100,0%		50,0%
Community belonging to one ethnicity (religion, language, culture, tradition)	100,0%	79,2%	73,9%			50,0%	50,0%
Don't know / No opinion		2,8%				50,0%	

Comparison of findings by place of residence in the four municipalities in northern Kosovo revealed that there is no statistically significant difference regarding the dominant ethnonational perception of the nation⁵.

Table 1.4 Attitude of respondents in northern Kosovo towards the concept of nation depending on place of residence

	North Mi- trovica	Zvečan	Zubin potok	Leposavić
Community sharing the same citizenship	24,1%	11,1%	9,4%	19,4%
Community belonging to one ethnicity (religion, language, culture, tradition)	73,0%	84,4%	87,5%	80,6%
Don't know / No opinion	2,9%	4,4%	3,1%	

Finally, an analysis of the statistical relationship between the definition of the nation and the employment sector of respondents from the four northern Kosovo municipalities was conducted. Research findings presented in Table 1. 5 indicate a weak statistical dependence or correlation between these two variables.⁶

5 CC (0,169; 0,28)

6 CC (0,48; 0,000)

Table 1. 5 Attitude of respondents in northern Kosovo towards the concept of nation depending on the employment sector of the respondent

	Community sharing the same citizenship	Community belonging to one ethnicity (religion, language, culture, tradition)
Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry, Water Management		100,0%
Industry and Mining		100,0%
IT	12,5%	87,5%
Construction, Utility Services		100,0%
Craftsmanship	42,9%	57,1%
Transport and Communications	0%	0%
Trade, Hospitality, Tourism	25,0%	75,0%
Personal Services		100,0%
Finance		100,0%
Education, Culture, Healthcare, Social Protection	20,6%	76,5%
Police, Military, Security		100,0%
Government Bodies, Organizations, Political Parties etc.	26,9%	73,1%
Homemakers		100,0%
Unemployed	11,8%	88,2%
Retirees	23,1%	76,9%
Social Benefit Recipients		100,0%
Students		100,0%
Other	33,3%	58,7%
Worker		100,0%
No response	12,5%	87,5%

Social Identities

The next topic in our study examines the social identities of the respondents, focusing on how they prioritize their social identities and perceive themselves within the societies they inhabit.

Table 2 highlights that the two most prevalent identities — ethnicity and religious affiliation — are equally significant among Albanians from the Preševo Valley and Serbs living in northern Kosovo municipalities.

Interestingly, except for the ethnophyletic identity that combines belonging to both one's nation and religious community, no other identity scored less than 50%.

In addition to similar findings, survey also shows differences.

According to the data from Table 2 for respondents from northern Kosovo, the hierarchy of social identities is as follows: belonging to a state, region (northern Kosovo), profession, and city of residence.

In contrast to these findings, the findings from the sub-sample from the Preševo Valley, whose hierarchy of social identities, in addition to the ethnic and religious component as the dominant one, are: belonging to a profession/occupation, city, region (Preševo Valley) and finally the state.

Table 2 Attitude towards the significance of social identities depending on the place of residence of the respondents

	Northern Kosovo	Rank	Preševo Valley	Rank
Belonging to the state you live in		3	62,0	6
Belonging to a nation	77,9	1	84,3	2
Religious affiliation	77,9	1	89,9	1
Belonging to the region of residence	61,3	4	72,2	5
Belonging to the town of residence	55,8	6	76,7	4
Belonging to profession/occupation	56,4	5	77,2	3

The findings reveal the presence of “micro-worlds” in the two regions, each with its hierarchy of societal identities shaped by their respective social and political contexts. Both regions exhibit a foundation rooted in ethno-religious identity, which serves as a basis for all other identities.

This finding, along with the finding of pronounced ethnonationalism as a form of conceiving the nation, indicates a deep and long-lasting impact on relations between Serbs and Albanians, but above all an obstacle in the process of transition from a community to a society, or as sociologists would define it, from a community of mechanical solidarity to a society of organic solidarity.

The presented findings show that a larger part of the respondents at the ethno-regional level construct their ethno-spatial identity in opposition to the legal-political entity in which they exercise their rights and fulfill their obligations. Thus, those surveyed from northern Kosovo link their spatial identity to the state (Serbia), which they recognize as a legal-political entity, or rather the region and town in which they actually live. Professional identity is suppressed in this hierarchy in relation to other social identities.

On the other hand, respondents from the Preševo Valley have chosen profession/occupation as their most important identity, followed by city, region, and finally the state in which they live.

The findings from Table 2 show that, on the one hand, we have a finding that respondents from northern Kosovo have their own reality, which is linked to the state of Serbia as a (symbolic), or rather legal-political space, which in real life is transferred to the region and city as social spaces in which a kind of (self)isolation takes place. Almost the same process of (self)isolation was found through the research at the level of Bujanovac and Preševo, where respondents, with their answers, showed that their least identification is with the state (Serbia) in which they live, or rather that the identification with the profession, but also with the city and region as legal-political and symbolic enclaves, is significantly greater.

Table 2.1 shows age analyses of responses depending on the place of residence

Table 2.1 Attitude towards the importance of identity depending on the place of residence of the respondents

	Pripadnost		18-29	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+
Northern Kosovo	Country you live in	Important	50,00%	32,40%	32,40%	28,60%	47,10%
		Very Important	31,40%	45,90%	43,20%	62,90%	47,10%
			81,40%	78,30%	75,60%	91,50%	94,20%
Bujanovac and Preševo	Country you live in	Important	21,40%	1,90%	19,00%	11,80%	22,20%
		Very Important	45,50%	49,10%	40,50%	50,00%	55,60%
			66,90%	51,00%	59,50%	61,80%	77,80%
Northern Kosovo	Nation you belong to	Important	33,70%	17,60%	21,60%	34,30%	29,40%
		Very Important	47,70%	59,50%	51,40%	60,00%	70,60%
			81,40%	77,10%	73,00%	94,30%	100,00%
Bujanovac and Preševo	Nation you belong to	Important	19,60%	13,20%	26,80%	17,60%	11,10%
		Very Important	63,40%	67,90%	65,90%	67,60%	66,70%
			83,00%	81,10%	92,70%	85,20%	77,80%
Northern Kosovo	Religion	Important	45,30%	29,70%	32,40%	65,70%	35,30%
		Very Important	34,90%	45,90%	43,20%	25,70%	64,70%
			80,20%	75,60%	75,60%	91,40%	100,00%
Bujanovac and Preševo	Religion	Important	13,40%	5,80%	4,90%	20,60%	0,00%
		Very Important	73,20%	86,50%	92,70%	67,60%	88,90%
			86,60%	92,30%	97,60%	88,20%	88,90%
Northern Kosovo	Region	Important	44,20%	29,70%	27,00%	28,60%	41,20%
		Very Important	27,90%	31,10%	37,80%	14,30%	47,10%
			72,10%	60,80%	64,80%	42,90%	88,30%
Bujanovac and Preševo	Region	Important	30,40%	9,60%	34,10%	20,60%	22,20%
		Very Important	44,60%	46,20%	48,80%	52,90%	55,60%
			75,00%	55,80%	82,90%	73,50%	77,80%
Northern Kosovo	Town	Important	29,10%	24,30%	10,80%	11,40%	47,10%
		Very Important	31,40%	29,70%	40,50%	20,00%	41,20%
			60,50%	54,00%	51,30%	31,40%	88,30%
Bujanovac and Preševo	Town	Important	32,10%	20,80%	31,70%	23,50%	22,20%
		Very Important	47,30%	47,20%	51,20%	47,10%	66,70%
			79,40%	68,00%	82,90%	70,60%	88,90%
Northern Kosovo	Profession	Important	23,30%	20,30%	29,70%	25,70%	35,30%
		Very Important	32,60%	24,30%	29,70%	11,40%	47,10%
			55,90%	44,60%	59,40%	37,10%	82,40%
Bujanovac and Preševo	Profession	Important	36,00%	13,20%	30,00%	15,20%	0,00%
		Very Important	40,50%	66,00%	52,50%	54,50%	77,80%
			76,50%	79,20%	82,50%	69,70%	77,80%

Attitudes Toward Offensive Militarism

To investigate the militant component of Serbian-Albanian relations in border areas, the survey included a Militarism Scale. This was designed to measure the potential for (military) conflict by assessing respondents' willingness to support war as a means to rectify historical injustices done to the state and nation they belong to or as a method of uniting the majority of their nation into one state.

Table 3 reveals differences between Northern Kosovo and the Preševo Valley. Slightly more than one-fifth of respondents from the Preševo Valley are willing to support offensive militarism compared to respondents from Northern Kosovo in order to rectify injustices committed against the state in which they reside, as well as to address historical injustices against their own ethnic group. This support aims at uniting the majority of their ethnic group into a single state.

Table 3 Attitudes toward offensive militarism

	Northern Kosovo	Preševo and Bujanovac	+/-
If it is a way to rectify historical injustices done to your state	38,1	61,2	-23,1
If it is a way to rectify historical injustices done to your nation	37,0	57,6	-20,6
If it is a way to unite the majority of your nation into one state	35,9	58,8	-22,9

The segmentation of results based on sociodemographic data indicates that, for respondents living in Northern Kosovo and the Preševo Valley, there are no statistically significant differences in attitudes towards offensive militarism as a means of territorial revisionism. However, exceptions are observed among respondents from Northern Kosovo who have completed secondary vocational education, grammar school, or hold a master's degree. Additionally, differences are noted among respondents who reside in the four northern Kosovo municipalities and are employed in sectors such as industry and mining, construction, personal services, government institutions, and political parties.

Table 3.1 Attitudes toward offensive militarism depending on respondents' sociodemographic characteristics

		If it is a way to rectify historical injustices done to your state	If it is a way to rectify historical injustices done to your nation	If it is a way to unite the majority of your nation into one state
Bujanovac i Preševo				
Gender	Kruskal-Wallis	0,000	0,473	2,355
	Degree of Freedom	1	1	1
	Significance	0,998	0,492	0,125
Age	Kruskal-Wallis	3,413	5,508	7,943
	Degree of Freedom	4	4	4
	Significance	0,491	0,239	0,094
Education	Kruskal-Wallis	1,452	6,497	2,133
	Degree of Freedom	5	5	5
	Significance	0,919	0,261	0,830
Employment Sector	Kruskal-Wallis	27,836	23,255	24,545
	Degree of Freedom	24	24	24
	Significance	0,267	0,505	0,431
Northern Kosovo				
Gender	Kruskal-Wallis	0,428	0,730	0,475
	Degree of Freedom	1	1	1
	Significance	0,513	0,393	0,491
Age	Kruskal-Wallis	4,255	2,808	3,605
	Degree of Freedom	4	4	4
	Significance	0,373	0,590	0,462
Education	Kruskal-Wallis	12,278	9,011	14,615
	Degree of Freedom	7	7	7
	Significance	0,092	0,252	0,041
Employment Sector	Kruskal-Wallis	41,193	34,540	51,719
	Degree of Freedom	19	19	19
	Significance	0,002	0,016	0,000

The findings indicate that there is a majority consensus in northern Kosovo rejecting offensive militarism. However, there is a segment of citizens who consider offensive militarism justified. On the other hand, a larger proportion of respondents from the Preševo Valley supports offensive militarism

Mutual feelings between Serbs and Albanians

The next step in our research on inter-ethnic relations between Albanians and Serbs was to explore the emotions that each group holds towards the other. It is important to remember that emotions are part of attitudes, and as such, they influence the formation, reproduction, and change of attitudes. In other words, emotions are part of the attitude structure of both individuals and the social groups to which they belong, and the nation is certainly one of those social groups.

Therefore, in the questionnaire, we included a question that measured the attitudes of respondents towards the concepts of: Serbia, Kosovo, Albanians, and Serbs. Our goal was to determine the emotional side of the attitudes of Serbs and Albanians living in northern Kosovo and the Preševo Valley.

It was not difficult to predict, as shown by the data in Table 4, that there would be clear divisions when it comes to positive (respect, admiration, love) and negative (hatred, contempt, fear) emotions of respondents, in such a way that the majority of respondents living in the Preševo Valley have positive emotions towards Albanians and Kosovo and negative emotions towards Serbia and Serbs. Conversely, the majority of respondents living in northern Kosovo have positive emotions towards Serbia and Serbs, and negative emotions towards Kosovo and Albanians.

Table 4 Emotional reactions toward the concepts of Serbia, Kosovo, Albanians, and Serbs by place of residence

Place of Residence	What do you feel toward ?	Hatred	Fear	Contempt	Respect	Admiration	Love	Indifference	No opinion
Northern Kosovo	Kosovo	13,3	17,7	16,0	1,1	2,8	21,0	16,0	23,2
Preševo and Bujanovac		2,4	3,2	2,8	45,6	31,2	65,6	6,4	4,8
Northern Kosovo	Serbia	0,0	0,0	1,7	26,5	9,4	30,4	17,1	18,2
Preševo and Bujanovac		45,6	44,8	35,2	17,2	3,2	1,2	18,4	7,6
Northern Kosovo	Albanians	6,6	17,1	14,9	4,4	1,1	6,1	39,8	16,6
Preševo and Bujanovac		2,0	2,4	6,9	36,7	52,4	56,0	4,4	3,2
Northern Kosovo	Serbs	0,6	0,0	1,1	17,7	3,9	41,4	13,8	24,9
Preševo and Bujanovac			26,1	21,6	15,8	2,9	1,7	7,9	22,8

In addition to the emotional component, attitudes also have a conative (interest/motivational) and cognitive component, i.e., the citizens' access to information about the subject of the attitude.

The findings presented in Table 5 indicate varying levels of information about Albanians and Serbs. There are notable exceptions, such as respondents from northern Kosovo who are very poorly informed about events in the Preševo Valley (14.9%), and only slightly more than one-quarter of respondents (27.2%) from the Preševo Valley are informed about the situation in Serbia.

Table 5. Frequency of information-seeking (moderate and high) based on respondents' place of residence

	Northern Kosovo	Preševo and Bujanovac
How much do you inform yourself about Serbia?	82,3	27,2
How do you inform yourself about Kosovo?	80,1	67,6
How do you inform yourself about Northern Kosovo?	87,8	56,8
How do you inform yourself about Bujanovac and Preševo?	14,9	75,2
How do you inform yourself about the situation of your people?	80,1	60,4
How do you inform yourself about the circumstances of people who live next to you?	74,0	46,8

In addition to measuring the volume of information consumption (quantitative component), the research also assessed the topics respondents follow regarding Albanian-Serbian relations (qualitative component).

Respondents from Northern Kosovo reported that they most frequently seek information about politics and the political situation (14.2%). Following this, 13.9% of respondents focus on the actions of Kosovo institutions, particularly the conduct of the Kosovo Police towards Serbs, which some respondents described as terror—imposing fear on the Serbian community.

Multicultural cooperation is a topic of interest for 7.4% of the survey participants, the same percentage (7.4%) as those interested in events in Northern Kosovo. Only one in twenty respondents (5.4%) expressed interest in the Serbia-Kosovo negotiation and dialogue process. One in five respondents answered with “I don't know – no answer.”

In contrast to the Northern Kosovo sub-sample, respondents from the Preševo Valley primarily seek information on politics (38.8%), followed by the economy (18.8%) and societal conditions (12.4%). More than a quarter of respondents (27.2%) stated that they stay informed on all topics.

Findings from Table 6 indicate that research participants, whether from Northern Kosovo or the Preševo Valley, have a social contact network that spans Serbia and Kosovo, including Northern Kosovo and the Preševo Valley. Naturally, the intensity of social networking varies among participants.

Within these networks, familial and friendship ties are the most common, although business connections are also present.

Table 6 Social networking

Do you have?	Northern Kosovo	Preševo Valley
Relatives living in Serbia	91,7	81,2
Friends living in Serbia	94,5	78,4
Business partners/colleagues in Serbia	76,2	56,0
Relatives living in Kosovo	84,0	75,6
Friends living in Kosovo	84,0	81,6
Business partners/colleagues in Kosovo	73,5	57,2
Relatives living in Northern Kosovo	87,3	51,6
Friends living in Northern Kosovo	94,5	57,6
Business partners/colleagues in northern Kosovo	87,3	42,4
Relatives living in Bujanovac or Preševo	5,0	86,0
Friends living in Bujanovac or Preševo	18,2	79,6
Business partners/colleagues in Bujanovac or Preševo	9,4	67,2

Thus, almost every tenth respondent (9.4%) living in Northern Kosovo has a business partner in Bujanovac or Preševo, while nearly half of the respondents living in Bujanovac and Preševo have business contacts with people living in Northern Kosovo.

As part of the study, respondents were asked about the reasons for their visits to Serbia or Kosovo. The results indicate that personal reasons are the dominant motive for visits from respondents in Northern Kosovo and the Preševo Valley to Serbia or Kosovo. Friendship is the second most common reason, followed by professional and business-related motives. It is worth noting that every fifth respondent from Bujanovac and Preševo has never visited other parts of Serbia.

Table 6 Spatial-Social Mobility

Place of Residence	Reason for Visit	Personal	Friendship	Business Professional	Have Not Been
Northern Kosovo	To Serbia	70,7	19,9	2,2	7,2
Preševo Valley	To Serbia	56,4	14,4	8,4	20,8
Northern Kosovo	To Kosovo	60,2	16,6	12,7	10,5
Preševo Valley	To Kosovo	19,6	58,8	15,6	6,0

We now move to the analysis of results related to respondents' attitudes toward the institutional framework, specifically those institutions responsible for representing the interests of citizens at the level of parliamentary bodies and executive authorities in the area of minority rights.

Regarding respondents living in Northern Kosovo, the majority do not hold a specific opinion about the MPs representing the Albanian community in the Serbian Parliament, while one in four (24.3%) has a negative view of their performance. It is notable that 16% of respondents neither have a positive nor negative opinion regarding the work of MPs representing the Albanian community in the Serbian Parliament.

Nearly half of the respondents (46.4%) from Northern Kosovo hold a negative opinion of the representation in the Kosovo Assembly by MPs from the Serbian national community. Almost one-third (29.8%) of respondents from Northern Kosovo negatively rate the performance of relevant ministries in the Serbian Government responsible for minority rights. Dissatisfaction is higher regarding ministries in the Kosovo Government tasked with minority rights, as 55.8% of respondents gave a negative assessment of their work.

Survey participants also demonstrated significant dissatisfaction (more than 50%) with the Brussels and Ohrid Agreements.

Table 7 Attitudes toward the institutional framework among respondents living in Northern Kosovo

Are you familiar, and how do you assess them?	Not Familiar	Familiar and Assess Positively	Familiar and Assess Neither Positively Nor Negatively	Familiar and Assess Negatively	Familiar but Cannot Assess
MPs representing the Albanian community in the Serbian Parliament	28,7	9,4	16,0	24,3	21,5
MPs representing the Serbian community in the Kosovo Assembly	9,4	1,7	13,3	46,4	29,3
Ministers in the Serbian Government responsible for minority rights	19,9	2,8	19,3	29,8	28,2
Ministers in the Kosovo Government responsible for minority rights	7,2	2,2	16,6	55,8	18,2
Brussels Agreements	10,5	1,7	16,6	54,1	17,1
Ohrid Agreement	11,6	1,7	15,5	54,1	17,1

Perceptions of Institutional Mechanisms by Respondents from the Preševo Valley

The majority of respondents from the Preševo Valley, four out of ten, positively assess the actions of the members of parliament representing the Albanian national community in the National Assembly of Serbia. When it comes to the performance of Serbian representatives in the Kosovo Assembly, more than a quarter of respondents (28.8%) were unable to express or provide an opinion, while 31.2% rated their performance as neither positive nor negative.

Regarding the work of the relevant ministries within the Government of Serbia that deal with the rights of national communities, nearly a third of respondents (29.6%) expressed a neutral stance, neither positive nor negative, while 27.2% had no opinion on the matter. On the other hand, one-third of the respondents (33.6%) positively evaluate the work of ministries in the Government of Kosovo that handle minority rights.

When it comes to the Brussels and Ohrid agreements, only one in ten respondents, on average, views these agreements positively, while one in five respondents holds a negative opinion.

Table 8 Attitudes toward the institutional framework among respondents living in the Preševo Valley

Are you familiar with and how do you assess?	Not familiar	Familiar and evaluate positively	Familiar and evaluate neither positively nor negatively	Familiar and evaluate negatively	Familiar but cannot assess
MPs representing the Albanian community in the Serbian Parliament	4,8	40,8	18,4	9,6	26,4
MPs representing the Serbian community in the Kosovo Parliament	4,4	17,2	31,2	18,4	28,8
Ministers in the Serbian Government responsible for minority rights	5,6	16,0	29,6	21,6	27,2
Ministers in the Kosovo Government responsible for minority rights	4,8	33,6	23,6	8,8	29,2
Brussels Agreements	6,4	11,2	28,0	21,2	33,2
Ohrid Agreement	8,4	10,8	22,4	23,6	34,8

None of the analyzed components of the satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) balance, created specifically for this study, exceeded 50% satisfaction. This indicates a prevailing sense of dissatisfaction among citizens of Northern Kosovo and the Preševo Valley.

Respondents from Northern Kosovo expressed the highest level of satisfaction with opportunities for education in their native language (48.6%), followed by their material standard of living (36.5%), and overall educational opportunities. In contrast, respondents from the Preševo Valley reported the highest satisfaction with their ability to practice religious rights (43.2%), followed by their material living conditions (34%), and opportunities for education in their native language (31.2%).

Table 9 (Dis)satisfaction Balance

To what extent are you satisfied within your town of residence?	Northern Kosovo	Preševo Valley
Living standards of your family	36,5	34,0
Healthcare system	23,8	26,4
General educational opportunities	25,4	19,6
Education opportunities in your mother tongue	48,6	31,2
Exercise of rights within the judicial system	6,1	22,8
Preservation of your mother tongue	22,1	27,6
Preservation of cultural heritage	23,8	27,2
Opportunities to exercise your religious rights	23,8	43,2

A specific question was posed to assess interethnic relations between Albanians and Serbs in Northern Kosovo and the Preševo Valley.

Respondents from Northern Kosovo overwhelmingly provided a negative assessment of Albanian-Serb relations. In North Mitrovica and Zvečan, none of the respondents stated that relations between the two communities are good. In Zubin Potok and Leposavić, only 0.6% of respondents shared a positive view.

In contrast, respondents from the Preševo Valley displayed a significantly more positive perception of interethnic relations. More than half of the respondents (57.2%) in Bujanovac believe that Albanian-Serb relations are good, while in Preševo, this percentage stands at 44%.

Participants from both regions were also asked about their views on the future of Albanian-Serb relations. Among respondents from Northern Kosovo, 72.9% believe that the future of these relations in the region involves conflicts of varying intensity. In the Preševo Valley, a third of respondents (33.6%) share this view regarding the future of relations in Northern Kosovo, while an equal percentage (33.6%) could not provide an assessment.

On the other hand, more than half of respondents (54.1%) from Northern Kosovo could not assess the future of interethnic relations in the Preševo Valley. Meanwhile, 40.8% of respondents from the Preševo Valley believe that Albanians and Serbs in the region will continue to live side by side without conflict.

Table 10 Respondents' predictions about the future of Serb-Albanian relations

Respondents' place of residence	When it comes to Serb-Albanian relations, what is your assessment of their future direction?	Toward new conflicts of varying intensity	Toward living alongside each other without conflict	Toward cooperation and tolerance	Unable to assess
Northern Kosovo	Northern Kosovo	72,9	7,7	7,2	12,2
Preševo Valley	Northern Kosovo	33,6	26,0	6,8	33,6
Northern Kosovo	Bujanovac and Preševo	26,0	11,6	8,3	54,1
Preševo Valley	Bujanovac and Preševo	15,6	40,8	21,6	22,0

Problems and Solutions

Respondents were asked to identify the major issues burdening Serb-Albanian relations.

For respondents from Northern Kosovo, the primary issues are: politics (15.5%), takeover of Northern Kosovo, land seizure, and police repression (15.5%), actions by the Kosovo Government (9.4%) and Albin Kurti (6,6%). On the other hand, for respondents from the Preševo Valley, the main issues are: social problems (22.8%), legacy of war (10.4%), language (10.4%) and discrimination against Albanians (10%).

At the end of the survey, respondents shared their views on who contributes to problems and who could contribute to solutions in Serb-Albanian relations.

Respondents from Northern Kosovo see the main contributors to problems as: Kosovo Government (81.8%), the West (80.7%) and Ohrid Agreement (63%).

Respondents from the Preševo Valley identify the following as contributors to problems: Government of Serbia (46%), Members of Parliament representing the Serbian community in the Kosovo Assembly (45.6%) and Russia (41.2).

Table 11 Sources of Problems in Serb-Albanian Relations

	Northern Kosovo	Preševo Valley
The West	80,7	24,8
Russia	29,8	41,2
Government of Serbia	30,9	46,0
Government of Kosovo	81,8	30,0
MPs representing the Albanian community in Serbia's Parliament	44,8	33,6
MPs representing the Serbian community in Kosovo's Parliament	37,6	45,6
Ministers in Serbian Government responsible for minority rights	19,9	38,8
Ministers in Kosovo Government responsible for minority rights	53,6	29,2
Municipality of North Mitrovica	57,5	32,0
Municipality of Zubin potok	55,8	31,2
Municipality of Leposavić	55,8	30,0
Municipality of Zvečan	55,8	28,4
Municipality of Bujanovac	20,4	32,8
Municipality of Preševo	18,8	39,2
Municipality of Medveđa	10,5	38,4
Albanian National Council in Serbia	28,2	32,4
Serbian Chamber of Commerce	11,0	38,8
Kosovo Chamber of Commerce	40,3	34,4
Brussels Agreement	54,7	22,0
Ohrid Agreement	63,0	16,8
Media	54,7	26,8
Members of the Serbian community	9,4	27,6
Members of the Albanian community	44,8	16,0
No opinion	9,9	9,2

According to respondents from Northern Kosovo, the actors most actively improving Serb-Albanian relations are: members of the Serbian people (49.2%), Serbian Government (43.1%) and Serbian Chamber of Commerce (38.1%).

According to respondents from the Preševo Valley, the most significant contributors to improving relations are: the Government of Kosovo (53.2%), The Albanian National Council in Serbia (48.4%) and MPs representing the Albanian community in Serbia's Parliament (46%).

It is noteworthy that both groups of respondents view the chambers of commerce of Serbia and Kosovo as key contributors to fostering better relations between Serbs and Albanians.

Table 12 Who of the below mentioned is trying to improve relations between Serbs and Albanians

	Northern Kosovo	Preševo Valley
The West	1,1	33,2
Russia	21,5	37,2
Government of Serbia	43,1	34,8
Government of Kosovo	1,7	53,2
MPs representing the Albanian community in Serbia's Parliament	7,2	46,0
MPs representing the Serbian community in Kosovo's Parliament	13,3	33,6
Ministers in Serbian Government responsible for minority rights	24,3	35,6
Ministers in Kosovo Government responsible for minority rights	2,2	45,6
Municipality of North Mitrovica	8,8	31,2
Municipality of Zubin potok	8,8	24,8
Municipality of Leposavić	8,8	22,0
Municipality of Zvečan	8,8	26,8
Municipality of Bujanovac	8,8	51,2
Municipality of Preševo	8,8	45,2
Municipality of Medveđa	20,4	43,2
Albanian National Council in Serbia	13,3	48,4
Serbian Chamber of Commerce	38,1	33,6
Kosovo Chamber of Commerce	13,8	34,8
Brussels Agreement	9,4	31,2
Ohrid Agreement	4,4	34,8
Media	8,3	25,6
Members of the Serbian community	49,2	24,4
Members of the Albanian community	13,8	34,0
No opinion	35,4	13,2

FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Methodological Framework

Two focus groups were conducted in Bujanovac with representatives of the local community. The selection process was marked by a low willingness to participate in the discussions. During the sessions, participants exhibited a certain level of restraint. Responses were provided in written form, in the language of participants' choice, predominantly Albanian. Each focus group lasted 60 minutes.

Focus Group Report – Preševo Valley

Thematic Framework:

The focus groups explored three topics: history, present and future of interethnic relations between the Serbs and Albanians

- *Perspectives on the History of Serb-Albanian Relations*

According to the focus group participants, the history of Serb-Albanian relations can be divided into two main periods.

The first period - marked by coexistence i.e., cooperation during the fight against Ottoman rule. The second period - the post-independence period when Serbia aimed to reclaim Kosovo. Then comes a period of territorial struggle and hatred, or rather, conflict between Serbs and Albanians. A conflict arises over who is the indigenous people and who is the newcomer to Kosovo, i.e., whose territory Kosovo is. Throughout history, both nations play the roles of victim and hero, who conquers the other side.

According to focus group participants, excluding northern Montenegro, Serbs and Albanians did not have significant interactions throughout history.

Key events shaping the contemporary relations between Serbs and Albanians, as identified by participants, include:

- The 1974 Constitution granting Kosovo the status of a province within SFRY,
- The 1981 Kosovo protests,

- The revocation of Kosovo's autonomy,
- The Kosovo War and NATO intervention
- The declaration of Kosovo's independence

- *Perspectives on the Current State of Serb-Albanian Relations*

The current state of Serbian-Albanian relations is a product of the past, which has significantly influenced the construction of each group's image of the other. Participants noted that Serbian-Albanian relations exist on two levels.

The first is the personal level, characterized by individual-to-individual interactions such as friendships or business relationships. These personal connections often remain private and are not publicly promoted.

The second level is the collective level, shaped by historical narratives and stereotypes that foster mutual distrust. Collective perceptions tend to overshadow personal relationships, reinforcing positive self-images and negative views of the "other".

Albanians who participated in the focus groups perceive themselves as hardworking, moral individuals who keep their word, as reflected in their tradition of giving a "besa" (a solemn promise). They describe themselves as humane, tolerant (highlighting the coexistence of three religious denominations), and educated, particularly among the younger population.

Regarding the issues affecting Albanian-Serb relations, focus group participants emphasized a general lack of understanding between the two communities. They noted that while Serbs and Albanians live side by side, they do not truly know each other. This lack of familiarity is attributed to both the media and the educational system. Additionally, Albanians highlighted specific problems, including inadequate educational materials and the issue of individuals being removed from public citizenship registers in the municipalities of Medveđa, Preševo, and Bujanovac.

Some participants expressed awareness that unless the issue of relations between Kosovo and Serbia is resolved, progress in the status of Albanians in the Preševo Valley cannot be expected. They described the Preševo Valley as effectively neglected by Serbia, as if it is being prepared for a "swap" with northern Kosovo.

- *Perspective on the Future of Serb-Albanian Relations*

Regarding the future of Serbian-Albanian relations, several perspectives emerged among respondents. One viewpoint suggests that a territorial demarcation between Serbia and Kosovo should be established, after which both entities could become members of the European Union. This approach is seen as a way to create favorable conditions for various forms of cooperation between Serbs and Albanians living in Serbia, Kosovo, and Albania.

Another group of respondents believes that the improvement of Serbian-Albanian relations must be based on acknowledging the existing realities and focusing on building trust between the two communities. This perspective emphasizes the importance of reducing discrimination, fostering economic cooperation—citing the Serbian and Kosovo Chambers of

Commerce as examples—and enhancing cultural collaboration, particularly among youth. The key stakeholders identified as capable of driving progress in peace and stability are the governments of Serbia, Kosovo, and Albania.

Focus Groups in Northern Kosovo

Three focus groups were organized in Northern Kosovo with the aim of gathering insights into interethnic relations and the challenges faced by the Serbian, Bosniak, and other ethnic communities in the region. Each session lasted approximately 60 minutes and involved a total of 26 participants. The participants included community leaders, representatives of civil society organizations, journalists, students, entrepreneurs, and local government officials.

The discussions focused on the historical and current status of interethnic relations, personal experiences, stereotypes, and concrete recommendations for improving communication and trust among communities.

Topics and Key Findings:

1. Historical and current relations between Serbs and Albanians

- Participants highlighted a historical pattern of tense relations between Serbs and Albanians, which has worsened due to recent political developments. Many pointed to the establishment of the current government, led by Albin Kurti, as a turning point that has exacerbated tensions in Northern Kosovo.
- Family histories and past experiences continue to shape perceptions, with recent events further entrenching negative sentiments and distrust towards the Albanian community.

2. Distrust in Government and Institutions

- Distrust towards the Kosovo government was a recurring theme, particularly among Serbian and Bosniak community members. This distrust has been amplified by what participants described as targeted policies and actions in Northern Kosovo. Key issues include:
 - **Land expropriation in Zubin Potok and Leposavić**, which has reinforced perceptions that the government is threatening the livelihoods of local Serbs, fostering feelings of injustice and marginalization.
 - **Kosovo police conduct and detention conditions**: Many participants voiced serious concerns about police behavior, particularly regarding the arrests of Kosovo Serbs and the conditions in which they are held. Reports of detainee mistreatment, and in some cases, physical abuse, have heightened fears and eroded trust in law enforcement.

- **Police Inspectorate and international oversight:** Trust in the Kosovo Police Inspectorate and the international community has significantly declined, as participants believe these bodies have failed to respond adequately to reports of misconduct and abuses by the Kosovo police.
- **Sexual Harassment:** Reports of harassment, particularly sexual harassment of women by Albanian nationalists, present a significant problem that affects daily life and further deepens distrust.
- **Economic obstacles:** Measures such as the ban on Serbian goods, restrictions on the use of the Serbian dinar, closure of Serbian post offices, and the shutdown of Poštanska Štedionica bank are seen as deliberate attempts to economically isolate Northern Kosovo and disrupt daily life.

3. Impact of recent policy changes on local communities

- Participants expressed concerns over the closure of municipal offices operating under the Serbian system and the perceived expansion of predominantly Albanian institutions in Northern Kosovo. These changes are seen as efforts to diminish Serbia's presence in Kosovo and exert economic influence in the region.
- The establishment of new Albanian businesses, such as Misini and Hebs, was perceived by some participants as potential provocations aimed at the local Serbian and Bosniak communities.
- Concerns were raised about the opening of new Albanian enterprises intended to marginalize Serbian entrepreneurs, making it more challenging for Serbian and Bosniak businesses to sustain operations.

4. Stereotypes and perceptions

- Deep-rooted stereotypes continue to hinder interethnic relations. Participants acknowledged that these stereotypes stem from historical narratives (related to the Kosovo conflict) and recent negative interactions, maintaining an "us versus them" mentality.
- Many noted that political figures, media, and everyday conversations often reinforce these stereotypes and tensions.

5. Experiences and perceptions in everyday life

- Everyday interactions with the Albanian community have recently become more tense, with limited positive experiences that could help alleviate negative prejudices.
- The lack of constructive or peaceful interactions perpetuates a cycle of mutual distrust and segregation.
- Participants emphasized the need for reliable community-oriented information sources to counter misinformation and provide a more balanced narrative.

6. Suggestions for improving communication and information sharing

- Participants highlighted the need for safe, neutral platforms for interethnic dialogue to foster understanding and build trust. Suggested initiatives include:
 - Non-political community meetings
 - Social media campaigns aimed at breaking harmful stereotypes
 - Joint activities addressing shared interests across communities
- Increased governmental accountability and stronger international involvement were frequently cited, with calls for more oversight and interventions to address concerns in a balanced manner through dialogue.

Preliminary Observations:

- **Stereotypes and distrust** remain significant challenges, with participants emphasizing the need for initiatives that encourage dialogue and mutual understanding.
- **Historical narratives and recent events** strongly influence community attitudes, with participants pointing to long-standing issues and recent incidents as reinforcing factors.
- **Institutional distrust** is prevalent, particularly concerning the actions of the Kosovo police, the effectiveness of the Police Inspectorate, and the perceived inaction of the international community. Many participants expressed frustration over the lack of thorough investigations and resolutions to reported abuses and targeted actions.

MEDIA ANALYSIS

Over the past decade, the BIRODI has been monitoring media coverage of Kosovo in Serbian media, focusing on the portrayal of political figures and the Brussels Agreements. The analyses have revealed several interesting findings. One key insight is that, during this period, the Kosovo side was predominantly portrayed negatively in Serbian media, with narratives centered on separatism, terrorism, and criminal activities. However, with the initiation of negotiations in Brussels, media reporting from Serbia became more neutral—except in cases where politicians opposed the agreement.

At the same time, media in Northern Kosovo reported on the improvement of Serbian-Albanian relations, creating a perception of progress and providing relief to citizens who no longer perceived a clear division between “our” and “their” side in the narrative.

To improve the media landscape and communication between communities, the media analysis focused on the perception of non-majority communities. In a media environment dominated by high-level politics and official statements, ordinary citizens—both from majority and minority communities—have often been left out of the narrative.

The results of this media analysis will contribute to a better understanding of public attitudes, considering the significant role media reporting plays in shaping how citizens perceive their society and understand socio-political processes.

The media monitoring process included tracking the work and reporting of national television stations—one publicly funded and one private in each territory. For Serbia, RTS (public service) and for Kosovo, RTK2 (public service aimed at the Serbian community) were selected. Additionally, two regional-level local media outlets—KOSSEV portal (Kosovo) and Bujanovačke vesti portal (Serbia)—were monitored.

Special attention in Kosovo was given to RTK2, the public broadcaster in the Serbian language primarily aimed at the Serbian community, and its coverage of interethnic relations. On the Serbian side, the analysis focused on the coverage by Dnevnik 2 on RTS1, the national public service broadcaster accessible to all Serbian citizens, whose operation is regulated by special legislation and funded by public contributions from all Serbian citizens.

Monitoring Covered:

- Actors - Individuals or entities discussing selected topics
- Topics - Kosovo, relations between Serbs and Albanians, Brussels Agreements, national identities of Serbs and Albanians, Northern Kosovo, Preševo Valley (Bujanovac, Preševo, Medveđa)
- Narratives - Ways in which topics or actors are presented in reports
- Arguments - Reasoning used by journalists or represented actors
- Epithets - Epithets used as illustrations and arguments for the stated views
- Sources - Sources of information cited in the news (statements from citizens, officials, institutional announcements, etc.).

Media Monitoring – Media in the Republic of Serbia (RTS1 and the portal www.bujanovacke.co.rs)

The analysis of media reporting from Serbia included coverage from the central news program, Dnevnik 2, broadcast daily at 7:30 PM, as well as the local portal www.bujanovacke.co.rs). The analysis covered the period of September and October 2024..

The portal www.bujanovacke.co.rs, as a local outlet from southern Serbia, primarily focuses on issues of local significance and aims to inform about city-related topics in the Serbian language. Dnevnik 2, as the central news program, provides a daily overview of the most important national and international events.

Events And Thematic Areas

In the context of the analysis covering Serbian-Albanian relations, as well as issues of mutual cooperation, coexistence, and the improvement of relations, the following events have been highlighted:

- Protests of Albanians in Southern Serbia
- The position of the Albanian minority
- Local politics in the municipalities of Bujanovac and Preševo and their relationship with the executive power at the central level
- Foreign policy – meetings of officials of the Republic of Serbia, as well as political representatives of Albanians from Southern Serbia with representatives of other countries
- Closure of Serbian institutions in Kosovo
- Blockades of Serbian institutions in Northern Kosovo – The blockades of institutions that began on August 30, 2024, received the most coverage in the reporting on RTS's Dnevnik 2 news program. This topic was continuously and thoroughly reported on throughout September 2024.

Protests Of Albanians In Southern Serbia

One of the more prominent topics concerning the status of the Albanian minority was the protests by members of this community. During the observed period, the reporting on these protests was neutral in tone, outlining the goals and organizers. The first protest was held in Bujanovac on August 12, 2024, and was referenced in reports announcing and covering the second protest, which took the form of a protest march in Preševo on September 23. The portal www.bujanovacke.co.rs provided readers with details about the demands, which included: halting the “passivization” of residential addresses of Albanian citizens, recognition of university diplomas from Kosovo, textbooks in the Albanian language for high school students, increased representation of Albanians in state institutions and public enterprises. Additionally, the third protest was announced for November 3, 2024, with the same demands, which were identified as ongoing issues faced by this community.

Actors who dominate in presenting the protests as an activity aimed at highlighting dissatisfaction with the position of the Albanian national minority in Southern Serbia are the Albanian National Council, as well as its president Nevzad Lutfiu, Shaip Kamberi (Party for Democratic Action), Ardita Sinani and Ragmi Mustafa.

On behalf of the government representatives, a statement by Aleksandar Vučić was also conveyed: “They (those protesting) are doing so because Kurti’s forces failed to independently form a government, especially in Bujanovac, which is their main problem.” He emphasized that Serbia is a democratic country and has no issue with the expression of opinions.

The narrative surrounding the protests highlights claims of “discrimination by the Serbian state” and the participants’ intention to protest for “identity and dignity.”

Epithets used in the statements of representatives of Albanian community – oppression, discrimination, fight for identity.

The sources that dominate the reporting are the statements of the political representatives of the Albanian national minority in the south of Serbia⁷ and the President of Serbia⁸.

Protests by Albanians from Southern Serbia were not reported on Dnevnik 2 on RTS1 in the observed period.

Status Of The Albanian National Minority

This thematic area encompasses several issues identified as contributing factors to the unfavorable position of the Albanian national minority⁹. One of the key issues is the passive deregistration of residences, a process recognized as problematic due to a significant number of cases where members of the Albanian minority in the municipalities of Bujanovac, Preševo, and Medveđa have had their residence status revoked. Representatives, primarily from the National Council of Albanians, have raised concerns about this issue, emphasizing that it leads to the removal of individuals from the official residence records and subsequently decreases the official population count.

Another major concern is the reintroduction of mandatory military service, which, according to some, “causes great fear and will drive young Albanians to leave the country.” This issue has been highlighted by Ragmi Mustafa¹⁰ from the Party for Democratic Action, as well as Ardita Selmani, the Mayor of Preševo.

7 (New Albanian protest announced” – Bujanovačke)

[Zakazan novi protest Albanaca - Bujanovačke](#)

(Albanian protest in Preševo: banners on state institutions and demand for the return of the court – Bujanovačke)

[Protest Albanaca u Preševu, transparenti na državnim institucijama i zahtev da se vrati sud - Bujanovačke](#)

8 (Vučić: Albanians are not beaten or mistreated; Kurti’s forces are protesting over losing power in Bujanovac)

[Vučić: Albance niko ne tuče i ne maltretira, protestuju Kurtijeve snage zbog gubitka vlasti u Bujanovcu - Bujanovačke](#)

9 [Diplomate SAD u Bujanovcu i Preševu: Prava Albanaca u fokusu - Bujanovačke](#)

10 <https://bujanovacke.co.rs/2024/09/18/mustafi-albanci-zele-u-kbs-a-ne-u-vojsku-srbije/>

The lack of textbooks in the Albanian language is also considered a significant factor contributing to the emigration of young people. According to media monitoring, this issue is being addressed through the National Council of the Albanian National Minority, as well as financial donations from the Kosovo government budget¹¹. These donations are presented very positively in the media, being described as a “guarantee for the future of upcoming generations and for the preservation of the Albanian language and identity.” Ragmi Mustafa has expressed gratitude for these donations while pointing out that “unfortunately, Serbia still does not allow the use of textbooks in the Albanian language in the Preševo Valley for approximately 3,000 high school students under reformed curricula.”

The non-recognition of Kosovo diplomas is another major argument put forth by political representatives of the Albanian community when discussing the unfavorable position of Albanians, particularly young people. This issue is cited as a significant factor influencing their decision to leave Serbia.

A concrete example of what opposition parties—the Party for Democratic Action (PDD), Democratic Party, and the Movement for Democratic Progress—have described as discriminatory against the Albanian national minority is the adoption of a Conclusion on the condemnation of hate speech in the Bujanovac Municipal Assembly. Following the appearance of the graffiti reading “Death to Albanians” on the building of the local health center, the PDD proposed that the assembly formally condemn hate speech in Bujanovac. During the session, the party expressed great dissatisfaction with the final Conclusion, stating that it failed to explicitly mention the hate speech incident and the targeting of the Albanian national minority..

The dominant narrative in explaining the unfavorable position of Albanians revolves around the threat to their rights and institutional neglect. It is argued that institutions are not doing enough to ensure full rights, preserve identity, and promote equality for the Albanian community.

Additionally, these issues are frequently emphasized during meetings with representatives of other countries, where foreign officials are informed about the current situation and are either called upon to assist or thanked for any support provided.

Sources of information in media reporting primarily include statements from representatives of Albanian political parties and the National Council of the Albanian National Minority, as well as official statements released following formal meetings.

Local Politics In The Municipalities Of Bujanovac And Preševo And Relations With The Central Executive Government

The portal www.bujanovacke.co.rs, as a local media outlet, dedicated significant coverage to political events in the municipalities of Bujanovac and Preševo. Citizens were kept informed about developments regarding the formation of local governments in these municipalities in early September 2024. Reporting on appointments to positions in municipal bodies, such as public utility companies and pharmacies, was presented in a neutral tone.

11 [Kosovska Vlada odvojila 240.000 evra za albanske osnovce u tri opštine - Bujanovačke](#)

In Bujanovac, there was a shift in local government leadership. The previous administration, consisting of the Party for Democratic Action and the Democratic Party of Albanians, moved into the opposition. Arber Pajaziti from the Front for Change was elected as the new Mayor.

The most debated topics in the municipal sessions pertained to the municipal budget¹² and its allocation. In their media statements, opposition party representatives expressed dissatisfaction with the budget distribution¹³.

The prevailing narratives in opposition statements against the proposed budget focused on alleged discrimination against Albanians and the undermining of their interests.

The primary actors in media coverage of local politics included: Arber Pajaziti, current Mayor of Bujanovac, Opposition representatives: Enver Ramadani (PDD) and former Mayor Nagip Arifi from the Democratic Party. These individuals were portrayed neutrally through direct quotes of their statements.

The arguments put forward claimed that the budget allocation discriminates against Albanians, citing the cancellation of projects intended for Albanian-majority areas and reduced funding for farmers and entrepreneurs.

Epithets used in statements were “discriminating against Albanians”, “endangering the Albanian National Council (ANC)”, “Endangering Albanians”.

The sources included statements from representatives of ruling and opposition political parties and reports from municipal sessions.

In contrast to the claims made by Albanian politicians about insufficient efforts to improve the position of this minority, representatives of central-level institutions emphasize their goals of “building good relations and addressing the needs of local governments.”

During meetings with local government representatives, the Coordination Body for Southern Serbia emphasized its commitment to the overall development of the municipalities of Preševo, Bujanovac, and Medveđa, as well as the creation of an environment conducive to improving the quality of life for all residents¹⁴. Reporting also highlighted a joint event where scholarships funded by the body’s budget were awarded to new students.

The actors presented in media reports were Ardita Sinani¹⁵, Mayor of Preševo, Nenad Mitrović, Acting Director of the Coordination Body, Arber Pajaziti, Mayor of Bujanovac, Jelena Žarić Kovačević¹⁶, Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government.

¹² [Opozicija tvrdi da rebalans ugrožava Albance, traže povlačenje sa dnevnog reda - Bujanovačke](#)

¹³ [Skupština u utorak o smanjenju budžeta za 550 miliona - Bujanovačke](#)

¹⁴ [Mitrović i Sinani o razvoju Preševa: Tražimo načine za rešavanje problema - Bujanovačke](#)

¹⁵ [Dan posle protesta, Ardita Sinani ugodila Mitrovića - Bujanovačke](#)

¹⁶ [Ministarka za državnu upravu i lokalnu samoupravu sastala se sa predstavnicima Pčinjskog okruga - Bujanovačke](#)

The dominant narrative from Serbian politicians when discussing government support for the development of Bujanovac and Preševo emphasized joint action, development, and investment in improving the quality of life of citizens.

Sources of information were exclusively statements given by officials.

Epithets emphasized by institution representatives were “meeting citizens’ needs” and efforts directed toward fulfilling these needs.

Foreign Policy – Meetings Of Serbian Officials And Albanian Political Representatives From Southern Serbia With Representatives Of Other Countries

This thematic segment encompasses events related to foreign policy, particularly meetings between political representatives and officials or representatives of foreign countries. Both RTS Dnevnik 2 and the www.bujanovacke.rs portal share coverage of such events.

A dominant narrative in media reporting on these events is gratitude for support and cooperation. Both in RTS’s Dnevnik 2, where statements of gratitude from high-ranking officials of the Republic of Serbia to ambassadors or representatives of other countries are conveyed, and in reporting on meetings of political representatives of Albanians in southern Serbia on the portal www.bujanovacke.co.rs, statements of gratitude are prevalent. In the context of analyzing the mutual perception of the position of both the Albanian minority and the Serbian community in northern Kosovo, the differences relate to the community to which the actor belongs. In the analyzed period, representatives of Albanians had numerous meetings with ambassadors of Albania, Turkey, representatives of the Kosovo Government, and the US Embassy, and in all statements, gratitude is expressed for the support they are seeking or have received, which is aimed at strengthening the Albanian community, developing the economy, and preserving identity. On the other hand, in Dnevnik 2, high-ranking Serbian officials thank their foreign counterparts most often for “respecting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Serbia,” as well as for participating in KFOR forces during a period that is exceptionally difficult for the Serbian people in northern Kosovo (examples include meetings between Marko Đurić and the Finnish Ambassador to Serbia, Aleksandar Vulin and Sergei Shoigu and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of China at the BRICS Summit in Kazan, and Reports on Vučić’s UN meetings and Đurić’s address to the UN Security Council).

Epithets and phrases conveyed from officials’ statements include “great gratitude,” “contribution to improvement and development,” “support,” and “preservation of national identity.”

Specific examples of cooperation are illustrated in statements by the President of the Municipality of Preševo, Ardita Selmani, during a speech regarding an increase in the budget from the Kosovo government for 2025 allocated to the Fund for Albanians, which she calls a “great step for the Valley” and a “historic decision.”

For Serbian politicians, emphasizing international support is crucial, especially during what they describe as an “exceptionally difficult period for the Serbian people,” and in efforts to improve the currently “extremely difficult situation” of the Serbian people“.

Closure Of Serbian Institutions In Kosovo

The closure of Serbian institutions in northern Kosovo was the most covered topic in RTS Dnevnik 2 compared to other analyzed topics. Most of the primetime news broadcasts on RTS1 reported on these events and their consequences for the lives of Serbs. A significant number of newscasts included information about the closure of municipal offices, pension fund branches, social work centers, and highlighted the fact that employees cannot go to work and that citizens cannot exercise their rights or obtain necessary documents.

The narrative in reporting on these events focuses on two elements: the threat to the Serbian population in Northern Kosovo due to the denial of rights and the inappropriate behavior of Kosovo institutions. The insistence on the violation of the rights of Serbs dominated both in journalistic addresses and in statements by citizens and officials from Serbia.

Reporting on this topic was comprehensive and included a wide range of actors. In segments addressing the closure of Serbian institutions, the audience had the opportunity to hear the perspectives of citizens from Northern Kosovo, who were primarily affected by these decisions, as well as representatives of the Serbian government in Belgrade (the President of Serbia, representatives of local authorities from the four municipalities in Northern Kosovo, representatives of closed institutions, associations of citizens, and analysts). Official statements from Kosovo authorities and police were also conveyed. Significant airtime was given to Aleksandar Vučić, who in numerous statements condemned the actions of the Pristina authorities, and to Petar Petković, the Director of the Office for Kosovo and Metohija, and Marko Đurić, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Through conversations with representatives of other countries, they highlighted the negative consequences of these actions for citizens, the intentions of the Pristina authorities to discriminate against Serbs and make the situation more difficult for them. In news broadcasts, citizens had the opportunity to present their perspective on the situation and to highlight the problems they faced as a result of these measures. Officials from Belgrade, through announcements of packages of measures aimed at supporting citizens, demonstrated their determination to protect their rights, for example, by declaring “areas of special social protection” and providing support primarily for the unemployed and elderly. The authorities in Pristina, notably Albin Kurti as their representative, were presented in a negative light. Albin Kurti was viewed by Serbian politicians and local officials as the main culprit, or the person who made the decisions to close Serbian institutions with the intention of discriminating against the Serbian population.

The arguments used to illustrate the vulnerability of Serbs revolve around the inability of citizens to access necessary services and documents, which prevents them from exercising many rights, such as obtaining health insurance cards and receiving assistance from Social Work Centers. Additionally, citizens face significant time and financial costs when they must travel to Raška to attempt to resolve their issues. The behavior of the authorities in Priština, particularly that of Prime Minister Albin Kurti, is interpreted as pre-election maneuvering—drawing attention to himself and gaining political points through actions directed against Serbs.

The epithets accompanying the reporting strongly emphasized the polarization between the Serbian and Albanian sides. When referring to the citizens of northern Kosovo, they were

described as “victims of terror,” “endangered,” and “hundreds of employees unable to go to work.” However, there was also optimism expressed through statements that “the Serbian people will endure” despite the difficulties. On the other hand, statements from politicians included phrases such as “Pristina’s terror,” “an attack on us,” “Kurti intends to cleanse everything Serbian from Kosovo,” and “his elections are coming up; he has no successes, so he turns against the Serbs.”

Sources

“Prime Minister Miloš Vučević reiterates that Kurti intends to cleanse Kosovo and Metohija of Serbs.” – Dnevnik 2, 06.09.2024, 00:04:30

“The essence here is that for the past four years, and even earlier, there has been an enormous pressure on everything Serbian that remains functioning and living in Kosovo and Metohija. There is no doubt that this is a classic political process, an attack on the institutions of the Republic of Serbia. Of course, we have acted responsibly in the interest of our people. This is currently an attack on us, meaning that the issue is not about us as individuals, but about the ongoing daily pressure on the Serbian people, banning everything that is Serbian.” – Zoran Todić, President of the Provisional Municipal Authority of Leposavić, 06.09.2024, 00:03:15

“The Prime Minister expressed concern over the situation in Kosovo and Metohija and the terror that the Serbian people face daily due to the efforts of the Prime Minister of the provisional institutions, Albin Kurti, to ethnically cleanse the southern Serbian province.” – Report from the meeting with the Cuban ambassador, 24.09.2024, 00:13:25

Conclusion

The conclusion of the media analysis of RTS reporting within its Dnevnik program and the portal www.bujanovacke.co.rs is that Serbian-Albanian relations, as well as issues involving mutual cooperation, communication, and matters of importance to citizens, are predominantly framed within the context of Kosovo’s status, the progress and implementation of the Brussels Agreements, and current events in Northern Kosovo. These topics significantly contribute to escalating tensions, while the relationship between Serbs and Albanians in southern Serbia was not a subject of focus. Bujanovac and Preševo were mentioned in the central news program mainly in the context of economic and infrastructure-related topics.

The local media portal www.bujanovacke.co.rs provided a much broader scope of information regarding the lives of the Serbian and Albanian national communities in the Preševo Valley compared to RTS’s Dnevnik during the observed period.

By covering the activities of Albanian political representatives, primarily through the work of the National Council of Albanians and political parties representing the Albanian community, Bujanovačke allows Serbian-speaking readers to become more familiar with and better understand the perspective of the Albanian community.

The media marginalization of Albanians living in the Preševo Valley and the extensive coverage of statements by high-ranking state officials in Belgrade and Serbian representa-

tives in Kosovo institutions are two key characteristics of RTS's reporting during the analyzed period. In its reporting, RTS predominantly conveys the rhetoric of public officials, which does not contribute to the improvement of Serbian-Albanian relations. Furthermore, there is a consistent reluctance to present relevant documents related to the Brussels and Ohrid Agreements, as well as Kosovo legislation, which has been accepted by the Serbian community and their elected representatives at both the local and national levels. The conclusion of the media analysis is that relations between Serbs and Albanians, as well as issues involving mutual cooperation, communication, and matters of significance for citizens, are predominantly reported on by the public broadcaster in relation to Kosovo's status, the progress and implementation of the Brussels Agreements, and current events in Northern Kosovo. These topics significantly influence the intensification of tensions. Relations between Serbs and Albanians in southern Serbia, specifically Bujanovac and Preševo, were not a central topic. Instead, these regions were mentioned in the central news program in the context of economy and infrastructure. The local portal, due to its nature, provides a much broader scope of information about the socio-political life that includes both communities, offering an overview of activities of Albanian political representatives, mainly through the activities of the Albanian National Council and minority parties. This approach enables readers in the Serbian language to become familiar with and better understand the perspective of members of the Albanian community.

DUŠAN RADAKOVIĆ

ANALYSIS OF KOSOVO MEDIA REPORTING

This report deals with the content analysis of the media coverage of RTK, channel 2 and the Kossev portal on key events in Kosovo in the period from September 1, 2024. until 30.10. in 2024.

The analysis is focused on events such as:

- The closure of Serbian institutions, the Post Office, the Postal Savings Bank,
- Violent arrests of persons of Serbian nationality in North Mitrovica,
- Brussels dialogue as well
- An event from Banjska.

In order to give a broader picture, the project team expanded the time frame of the analysis and included other Kosovo media due to the importance and impact of some events.¹⁷

SECTION 1: Closure of Serbian institutions (municipalities, post office and Postal Savings Bank)

1. Closure of Poštanska Štedionica Bank Branches in Northern Kosovo

- **Participants:** Kosovo Police, Kosovo Tax Administration, Minister of Internal Affairs Xhelal Sveçla, local Serbian officials, and international representatives.
- **Topics:** Implementation of Kosovo's financial regulations, legitimacy of Serbian financial institutions operating without licenses, impact on the Serbian community in Northern Kosovo, and international reactions.
- **Discourses:** Kosovo authorities present the closure as a measure to uphold legal and financial sovereignty, emphasizing the need to regulate financial institutions to prevent illegal operations. Local Serbian officials and some international actors view these actions as unilateral and provocative, potentially damaging interethnic relations.
- **Arguments:** The government asserts that enforcing financial regulations is crucial for maintaining sovereignty and legal order. Critics argue that such measures should be implemented through prior dialogue to avoid disrupting the daily lives of the Serbian minority and escalating tensions.
- **Epithets:** Serbian officials have described these actions as "violent" and a direct threat to the survival of the Serbian community.
- **Narratives:** Media narratives highlight the disagreement between Kosovo's efforts to establish legal control and the Serbian community's perception of targeted actions against them, emphasizing the fragile state of interethnic relations.

17 In the monitoring, the media in Albanian Koha, Kallxo, Kosovo Online, Telegrafi are also included in order to see the wider picture of narratives that either encourage reconciliation or worsen existing tensions.

2. Closure of Serbian-Operated Post Offices in Northern Kosovo

- **Participants:** Kosovo Police, Regulatory Authority for Electronic and Postal Communications (ARKEP), local Serbian community leaders, and international observers.
- **Topics:** Legality of Serbian postal operations without Kosovo-issued licenses, enforcement of Kosovo's regulatory framework, international diplomatic responses, and effects on local Serbian communities.
- **Discourses:** Kosovo authorities argue that shutting down unlicensed operations is essential for regulatory compliance and sovereignty. Local Serbian leaders and some international bodies criticize the lack of coordination, viewing these actions as a violation of agreements and detrimental to interethnic trust.
- **Arguments:** The government maintains that regulatory enforcement ensures legal order and sovereignty. Opponents argue that sudden measures without dialogue disrupt the daily lives of Serbs and hinder reconciliation efforts.
- **Epithets:** Local Serbian leaders described the closure as aggressive and discriminatory, reflecting fears of cultural and political erasure.
- **Narratives:** Media narratives reflect the tension between Kosovo's state-building efforts and the Serbian community's sense of marginalization, with calls for restraint and dialogue to prevent further deterioration of relations.

3. Closure of Provisional Municipal Institutions in Northern Kosovo

- **Participants:** Kosovo government officials, Serbian institutional leaders, members of the local Serbian community, and international mediators.
- **Topics:** Closure of Serbian governance structures, integration of Northern Kosovo into Kosovo's administrative framework, resistance from the local Serbian population, and international diplomatic interventions.
- **Discourses:** The Kosovo government promotes the closures as steps toward consolidating administrative control and affirming sovereignty. Representatives from Serbia and the local community perceive these actions as undermining their autonomy and rights.
- **Arguments:** Proponents argue that closing "parallel" (non-integrated) institutions is essential for legal and political coherence. Critics contend that without adequate dialogue and protection of minority rights, such moves are counterproductive and fuel ethnic tensions.
- **Epithets:** Local Serbian leaders have described the closures as aggressive and discriminatory, reflecting deep-seated fears of cultural and political erasure.
- **Narratives:** The prevailing narrative portrays a conflict between Kosovo's efforts at centralization and the Serbian community's desire for self-governance, with media emphasizing the delicate balance needed to achieve lasting reconciliation.

Quantitative analysis:

- **Number of articles/reports:** A significant volume of articles covers these topics, with headlines reflecting major events such as closures and arrests.
- **Frequency of key terms/phrases:** Terms such as “cooperation,” “violence,” and “reconciliation” appear variably, often contextualized within discussions on ethnic relations and policy enforcement.
- **Representation:** Kosovo Serbs are frequently portrayed in contexts emphasizing victimization and/or resistance, while Kosovo Albanians are depicted in roles related to governance and law enforcement.

Quantitative analysis:

- **Thematic analysis:** The language used often reflects underlying tensions, with tones ranging from conciliatory to accusatory, depending on the media’s perspective and audience.
- **Narrative analysis:** Core messages reveal an ongoing struggle between state sovereignty and minority rights, with narratives shaping public perception and interethnic relations.

Narrative report

1. Closure of Poštanska Štedionica Bank Branches in Northern Kosovo

- **KoSsev Reporting:** KoSsev provided comprehensive coverage of the bank closures, highlighting the perspectives of local Serbian communities who viewed these actions as abrupt and detrimental to their daily lives. The portal published interviews with Serbian residents and community leaders who condemned the closures as part of a broader strategy to marginalize Serbs in Northern Kosovo. The articles conveyed claims of economic disruption and framed the closures as politically motivated¹⁸.
- **Kallxo Reporting:** The Kallxo portal reported on the Kosovo Police raid at the Poštanska Štedionica branch in Leposavić, where documents and equipment were confiscated under suspicions of illegal operations. The article stated that the bank was operating without the necessary licenses from Kosovo authorities¹⁹. Kallxo also relayed statements from the U.S. and German embassies, which called for dialogue and coordination in handling such actions.

18 <https://kossev.info/kosovo-news-operation-police-eulex-kfor/>
<https://kossev.info/en/kosovo-najnovije-vesti-online-uprava-za-trezor-filijala-postanske-sever-policija-poreska-zatvaranje-sveclja/>
<https://kossev.info/en/kosovo-vesti-kosovska-policija-upad-postanska-plombiranje-reakcije/>
<https://kossev.info/en/kosovo-vesti-banke-filijale-policija-zatvaranje/>
 19 <https://kallxo.com/lajm/policia-e-kosoves-bastis-banken-paralele-serbe-ne-leposaviq/>

2. Closure of Serbian-Operated Post Offices in Northern Kosovo

- KoSsev Reporting: KoSsev reported on the closure of Serbian-operated post offices, portraying it as a targeted action against the Serbian community²⁰. The portal featured opinions from local residents who perceived the measures as populist moves²¹. Criticism of the Kosovo authorities was also highlighted, with concerns raised about the lack of communication, and international community representatives expressing their view that the action was unilateral and harmful to reconciliation efforts²². On the other hand, KoSsev also provided coverage of the statements and arguments from relevant Kosovo institutions, including Kosovo's Minister of Internal Affairs and Kosovo Police officials in Northern Kosovo.
- Koha Ditore Reporting: Koha Ditore covered this issue as part of Kosovo's broader efforts to assert its sovereignty and regulate all institutions operating within its territory²³. The media outlet emphasized the legal framework supporting the closures and quoted officials and police authorities who called for the legalization of all services in accordance with Kosovo's laws²⁴.
- Kallxo Reporting: Kallxo focused on the political and security aspects of the closure of Serbian-operated post offices, highlighting the position of Kosovo authorities on maintaining sovereignty and compliance with Kosovo laws. The articles emphasized international reactions, particularly criticisms from the United States and Germany regarding the lack of coordination with international partners²⁵. Kallxo reported on calls from the international community for improved cooperation with stakeholders to avoid further tensions²⁶.

20 <https://kossev.info/kosovo-online-najnovije-vesti-iz-filijale-poste-srbije-u-s-mitrovici-iznet-inventar-milojevic-institucionalno-nasilje-uz-pomoc-kp/>
<https://kossev.info/all-9-facilities-used-by-serbian-post-in-northern-kosovo-closed-kosovo-online-najnovije-vesti/>

<https://kossev.info/v-d-direktora-poste-nastavljen-pritisak-na-srbe-posta-posluje-po-propisima/>

21 <https://kossev.info/marinkovic-o-zatvaranju-objekata-poste-srbije-na-severu-populisticki-potez-pristine-kosovo-online-najnovije-vesti/>

22 <https://kossev.info/ambasada-sad-prekinite-sve-jednostrane-akcije-kosovo-online-najnovije-vesti/>
<https://kossev.info/eu-o-plombiranju-objekata-poste-jednostran-potez-krsi-se-sporazum-pristina-da-preispita-odluku/>

<https://kossev.info/seljimi-poste-na-severu-zatvorene-zbog-buducih-izbora-rci-da-kurti-stiti-suverenitet-je-smesno-kosovo-online-najnovije-vesti/>

<https://kossev.info/zijade-zabrinuta-britanska-ambasada-razocarana-zbog-zatvaranja-posta-na-severu-kosovo-online-najnovije-vesti/>

23 <https://www.koha.net/en/lajmet-e-mbremjes-ktv/operonin-pa-licence-policia-mbyll-disa-objekte-ku-vepronte-posta-e-serbise>

24 <https://www.koha.net/en/arberi/mbyllen-nente-objekte-te-postes-se-serbise-ne-veri-u-ndaluan-dy-persona>

<https://www.koha.net/en/lajmet-e-mbremjes-ktv/operonin-pa-licence-policia-mbyll-disa-objekte-ku-vepronte-posta-e-serbise>

25 <https://kallxo.com/lajm/aksioni-policor-ne-veri-gjermania-i-bashkohet-shba-se-ne-zhgenjimin-me-autoritetet-e-kosoves/>

26 <https://kallxo.com/uncategorized/aksioni-i-policise-ne-veri-shqeteson-shba-ne-veprimet-e-pakoordinuara-pershkallezrojne-panevojshem-tensionet-rajonale/>

3. Closure of provisional “parallel” municipal institutions in Northern Kosovo

- **KoSsev** reported on the views of local leaders and employees of these institutions, who described the closure of Serbian institutions in Northern Kosovo as an attack on the autonomy and rights of the Serbian community²⁷. The articles frequently cited local Serbian leaders and Serbian government officials, who characterized these actions as discriminatory and destabilizing. The portal also covered calls for international community intervention and engagement, aimed at addressing the concerns of the Serbian community in the region. At the same time, KoSsev consistently reported official information and statements from relevant Kosovo institutions, primarily the Kosovo police and their officials in Northern Kosovo, thereby presenting the perspectives of all involved parties.
- **Kallxo reporting:** Kallxo’s reports focus on the political and institutional dimensions of the closure of parallel municipal institutions, emphasizing the Kosovo government’s stance on the need to enforce the law and establish legal order. Kallxo did not provide an in-depth analysis of the legal and political implications of the closures on interethnic relations. Instead, the outlet reported statements from Kosovo officials calling for compliance with the laws of the Republic of Kosovo, as well as police officials who alleged that document forgery was taking place within those offices²⁸.

27 <https://kossev.info/srpska-lista-najavila-gradjanski-otpor-medjunarodna-zajednica-podrzava-kurtija-u-etnickom-ciscenju-srba-kosovo-online-najnovije-vesti/>
<https://kossev.info/kp-zatvoreno-pet-nelegalnih-opstina-na-severu-kosovo-online-najnovije-vesti/>
<https://kossev.info/kosovska-policija-usla-u-preostale-preostale-opstinske-organe-r-srbije-kancelariju-za-kim-veseraj-kosovo-online-najnovije-vesti/>
<https://kossev.info/kosovo-online-najnovije-vesti-vucic-narod-na-kim-ce-svoja-primanja-dobijati-srpska-lista-na-sastanku-sa-kvintom-u-pristini/>
<https://kossev.info/kosovo-online-najnovije-vesti-aktivisti-i-nvo-pozvali-kfor-da-uspostavi-kontrolne-punktove-ispred-institucija-koje-pruzaju-usluge-srbima/>
<https://kossev.info/kosovo-online-najnovije-vesti-unmik-akcije-kp-uticu-na-socioekonomska-prava-zajednica-i-na-dobrobit-svih-pojedinaca/>
<https://kossev.info/celnici-zatvorenih-institucija-pozvani-na-razgovor-osumnjiceni-za-falsifikovanje-dokumentacije/>
<https://kossev.info/workers-rally-amid-continued-closures-of-serbian-institutions-in-northern-kosovo-koo-online-najnovije-vesti/>
<https://kossev.info/okupljanje-zaposlenih-u-srpskim-institucijama-ispred-po-k-mitrovica-pitaju-zasto-ne-mogu-na-radna-mesta-postavljena-zuta-traka-kp-o-falsifikovanim-dokumentima/>

28 <https://kallxo.com/lajm/policia-ne-aksion-dyshohet-se-ne-disa-lokacione-ne-mitrovicen-e-ve-riut-po-leshohen-dokumente-te-falsifikuara/>

Conclusion

Media coverage of the closure of institutions in Northern Kosovo reveals a divide between Serbian and Albanian-language reporting, with some media outlets incorporating perspectives from all sides.

Kosovo-based media such as Koha and Kallxo predominantly focus on narratives that emphasize legality, sovereignty, and the necessity of the rule of law. Their coverage frequently features statements from government ministers and police officials. In contrast, KoSSev highlights the perspectives and concerns of the Serbian community, which views the actions of Kosovo authorities as detrimental to interethnic relations, perceiving the closures as discriminatory and destabilizing. However, KoSSev also reports official information and statements from Kosovo institutions involved in the closures.

These polarized narratives illustrate the challenges of achieving balanced reporting and fostering mutual understanding. While Kosovo media emphasize state-building and institutional integrity, media outlets focused on non-majority communities prioritize the protection of minority rights, the continuity of services, and community identity.

This dichotomy risks deepening distrust and reinforcing existing divisions. To bridge these gaps, media outlets should strive for more nuanced reporting that acknowledges the legitimate concerns of all communities. Constructive dialogue, coupled with honest and transparent institutional practices, is essential for building trust and promoting reconciliation in Kosovo.

SECTION 2: Arrest of Aleksandar Arsenijević

This section examines the arrest of Aleksandar Arsenijević, a politician and leader of Serbian Democracy, and the corresponding media coverage. Arsenijević has been arrested multiple times, often alone, though there have been instances where he was detained alongside party colleagues. The key narratives focus on the legal and political implications, highlighting contrasting views presented by Kosovo's Albanian and Serbian-language media.

- **Actors:** Aleksandar Arsenijević, Kosovo Police, political figures from the Serbian community, civil society organizations, and members of the local community.
- **Topics:** The circumstances leading to the arrests, judicial proceedings, political implications, reactions from the Serbian community, and international observers.
- **Discourses:** Kosovo politicians and police officials justify the arrests on legal grounds, citing specific violations of the law. Arsenijević's supporters and some international actors question the motives, suggesting potential political persecution.
- **Epithets:** Arsenijević's supporters have labeled the arrests as "politically motivated" and indicators of systemic repression.
- **Narratives:** Media coverage often portrays the arrests as symbolic of broader issues related to minority rights and political freedoms in Kosovo, emphasizing the need for judicial transparency and adherence to human rights standards.
- **Narratives:** Media reports often portray the arrests as emblematic of broader issues concerning minority rights and political freedoms in Kosovo, emphasizing the need for judicial transparency and adherence to human rights standards.
- **KoSsev reporting:** KoSsev extensively covered the arrests, highlighting public protests that perceived the actions as part of a systematic targeting of Serbian figures in Kosovo²⁹. The portal published statements from Arsenijević's supporters, who claimed political motives behind the arrests³⁰. Reports also provided detailed coverage of the subsequent protests, emphasizing local dissatisfaction with law enforcement practices in Kosovo³¹. Additionally, KoSsev relayed official statements from the Kosovo police regarding the detentions, along with reactions from the international community.

29 <https://kossev.info/hapsenje-arsenijevica-i-veljkovica-sta-se-danas-dogodilo-na-trgu-brace-milic/>
<https://kossev.info/arsenijevic-nakon-hapsenja-danasnja-slika-gradjana-ohrabrenje-da-nas-tave-da-se-bore-kosovo-online-najnovije-vesti/>

<https://kossev.info/kosovo-online-news-confrontation-in-mitrovica-four-arrested-following-whistle-blowing-protest/>

30 <https://kossev.info/kosovo-online-najnovije-vesti-arsenijevic-ponovo-uhapsen-sada-na-osnovu-naloga-tuzioca-odredjeno-mu-48-casovno-zadrzavanje/>

31 <https://kossev.info/oslobodjeni-arsenijevic-i-veljkovic-zajedno-sa-gradjanima-koji-su-protestovali-prosetali-do-spomenika-knezu-lazaru-kosovo-online-najnovije-vesti/>
<https://kossev.info/hitan-protest-srba-ispred-policijske-stanice-u-s-mitrovici-zbog-hapsenja-arsenijevica-i-veljkovica-kosovo-online-najnovije-vesti/>
<https://kossev.info/kosovo-online-latest-news-leader-of-serbian-democracy-released-with-restraining-order-after-arrest-in-mitrovica/>

- **Zëri and Dukagjini reporting:** These media outlets featured statements from security expert Agim Musliu, who claimed that the two opposition politicians were allegedly linked to Serbia's intelligence agency (BIA). The arrests were portrayed as legitimate law enforcement actions³². Reports published by these outlets suggested that Arsenijević and his colleague Veljković were part of criminal structures aimed at undermining Kosovo's institutions³³. However, the articles lacked concrete evidence to substantiate these claims, raising concerns about potential unjust targeting of individuals.
- **Koha Ditore and Kallxo reporting:** Koha Ditore and Kallxo focused on the legal aspects of the case, presenting the police's stance that the arrests were part of efforts to combat illegal activities, including public order disturbances and obstruction of official duties. Their articles also covered a subsequent incident in which Aleksandar Arsenijević was re-arrested for protesting against Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti's visit to Northern Kosovo³⁴. The arrest sparked reactions due to concerns over violations of the right to peaceful expression; however, Arsenijević was soon released from custody. The reports from these outlets shed light on the ongoing tensions and disagreements regarding policies and the rights of the Serbian community in Kosovo³⁵.

32 <https://zeri.info/aktuale/546087/ekspertet-e-sigurise-deshtuan-perpjekjet-e-bia-s-per-te-provokuar-situaten-mbi-uren-e-ibrit/>

33 <https://www.dukagjini.com/musliu-shkruan-per-provokimet-e-dy-politikaneve-serbe-ne-veri-te-sponsorizuar-nga-bia/>

34 <https://www.koha.net/de/arberi/lirohet-aleksandar-arsenijeviqi>
<https://www.koha.net/en/arberi/lirohen-politikanet-serbe-qe-u-arrestuan-tek-ura-e-ibrit>
<https://kallxo.com/lajm/arrestohet-ne-mitrovic-te-veriut-politikani-serb-aleksandar-arsenijeviq/>
<https://kallxo.com/lajm/vendimi-i-gjykates-se-mitrovices-aleksandar-arsenijeviqit-i-ndalohet-ti-afrohet-deri-ne-40-metra-visar-syles/>
<https://kallxo.com/lajm/prokuroria-kerkon-caktimin-e-mases-se-ndalimit-per-arsenijeviqin-qe-mos-ti-afrohet-visar-syles/>
<https://kallxo.com/lajm/partia-demokracia-serbe-paralajmeron-proteste-para-stacionit-policor-ne-mitrovic-te-veriut/>

35 <https://kallxo.com/lajm/peci-arrestimi-i-arsenijeviqit-akt-i-turpshem-i-policise/>
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SECTION 3: Arrest of 4 Young Men in North Mitrovica

September 2024

- **Date and Time of Publication/Broadcast:**
 - September 9–15, 2024
 - The majority of reporting occurred on September 10–11, immediately following the incident.
- **Media Outlets:**
 - **Serbian language:** KoSsev, Kosovo Online, RTS.
 - **Albanian language:** RTK, Koha Ditore, Gazeta Express, Telegrafi.
- **Topics/Themes:**
 - **Serbian Media:** Focused on alleged police brutality, victimization of Kosovo Serbs, protests, and criticism of the Kosovo government.
 - **Albanian Media:** Defended police actions, emphasized the rule of law, and framed the incident as a matter of public security.
- **Descriptive Epithets:**
 - **Serbian Media:** “brutality,” “repression,” “state violence.”
 - **Albanian Media:** “resistance to arrest,” “public unrest,” “provocation.”
- **Quotes Illustrating Arguments or Narratives:**
 - **In Serbian:** “This is yet another example of Kurti’s repressive regime targeting the Serbian community.” (Srpska Lista via RTS)
 - **In Albanian:** “The police acted within their rights to protect public safety after being attacked.” (Kosovo Police via RTK)
- **Key Actors:**
 - **Serbian Media:** Victims and their families, Srpska Lista officials, President of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić.
 - **Albanian Media:** Kosovo police officials, government representatives, Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti.

Findings and Observations

1. Polarizirani narativi:

- Serbian media portrayed the event as a human rights issue, depicting the arrested youth as victims of police oppression.
- Albanian media focused on maintaining the image of law enforcement as professional and operating within legal boundaries.

2. Public Sentiment:

- Serbian media reported widespread public outrage, leading to protests and heightened interethnic tensions.
- Albanian media attempted to mitigate the reaction by emphasizing police professionalism and the legality of their actions.

Narrative Report:

KoSSev reporting :

The KoSSev portal provided detailed coverage of the arrests and subsequent events in North Mitrovica. According to their reports, four young men of Serbian nationality were detained by the Kosovo police following an alleged altercation with officers³⁶. The portal relayed information from Kosovo police officials regarding the incident. KoSSev highlighted claims from the families of the detainees, who accused the police of excessive use of force during the arrests³⁷. The portal also reported on the protests that erupted in front of the police station, where local residents demanded the release of the youths and criticized the actions of the Kosovo police³⁸.

RTK reporting:

Radio Television of Kosovo (RTK) framed the arrests as a law enforcement operation following an attack on police officers³⁹. RTK conveyed statements from the Kosovo police, asserting that the detainees resisted arrest and that only minimal force was used. The media outlet portrayed the incident as a routine public security matter, citing police officials who called for calm and adherence to the law.

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38 <https://kossev.info/kosovo-online-najnovije-vesti-sud-odredio-kucni-pritvor-uhapsenim-mladicima-gradjani-se-povukli-nakon-visesatnih-protesta/>

39 <https://www.rtklive.com/sq/news-single.php?ID=123456>

Reporting by Other Serbian-Language Media:

Serbian-language media largely focused on the narrative of police brutality and the victimization of the Serbian community in Kosovo. Outlets such as Kosovo Online⁴⁰ and RTS⁴¹ described the incident as part of a broader pattern of targeted actions against Kosovo Serbs. Officials from the Srpska Lista⁴² party were frequently quoted, condemning the arrests as politically motivated and accusing the Kosovo government of fostering an atmosphere of fear and repression. These media outlets extensively covered the protests, portraying them as a justified response to perceived injustice⁴³.

Reporting by Other Albanian-Language Media:

Albanian-language media focused on the reasons behind the arrests, citing police reports on the events. Outlets such as Telegrafi, Koha Ditore⁴⁴, and Gazeta Express reported that the young men had physically assaulted police officers and quoted statements from the Kosovo police spokesperson⁴⁵. These media outlets framed the incident as a matter of maintaining public order, dismissing allegations of police brutality as unfounded.

The incident in North Mitrovica highlighted the deep-rooted polarization in media reporting, with Serbian and Albanian media reflecting opposing narratives. However, some media outlets presented information and viewpoints from all sides. Serbian media emphasized the challenges faced by the Serbian community in Kosovo, while Albanian media defended the actions of Kosovo institutions as legitimate enforcement of public order.

The media coverage underscores the need for balanced reporting and measures aimed at building trust in interethnic relations.

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SECTION 4: Brussels Dialogue

Reporting from the Brussels Meeting, September 17, 2024

- **Date and time of publication/broadcast:**
 - Articles and reports were notably published between September 17 and 18, 2024
- **Media:**
 - **Serbian:** KoSSev, Kosovo Online, RTS.
 - **Albanian:** RTK, Koha Ditore, Telegrafi.
- **Topics/Topics:**
 - **Media in Serbian:** Emphasis on Pristina's refusal to cooperate in trilateral meetings, focusing on the issue of the Community of Serb Municipalities (CSM).
 - **Media in Albanian:** Highlighting Belgrade as an obstructive partner due to its conditional approach to the agenda
- **Epithet descriptions:**
 - **Media in Serbian** frequently used terms like "refusal," "lack of will," and "obstruction" to describe Pristina's behavior.
 - **Media in Albanian** used terms like "provocation," "condition," and "uncompromising stance" to describe Belgrade.
- **Quotations that illustrate arguments or narratives:**
 - **In Serbian:** Belgrade remains committed to dialogue, but Pristina must honor previous agreements." (RTS)
 - **In Albanian:** Pristina will not allow Serbia to dictate the terms of the meeting. (RTK)
- **Prominent actors:**
 - **Media in Serbian:** Petar Petković, Aleksandar Vučić.
 - **Media in Albanian:** Besnik Bislimi, Albin Kurti.
 - **Representation in the EU:** Miroslav Lajčak (portrayed neutrally in both).
- **Context:**
 - Both sides framed the non-holding of the trilateral meeting to align with their narratives of blame.
- **Narrative analysis:**
 - **Media in Serbian narrative:**
 - Pristina as the main obstacle in the dialogue.
 - The EU is called to pressure Pristina to respect the agreements (ZSO/ASM).
 - **Media in Albanian narrative:**
 - Belgrade's conditions as unacceptable provocations.
 - Kosovo as a principled actor supporting its sovereignty.

Narrative report

Media reports in Serbian and Albanian language about the meeting of the chief negotiators of Belgrade and Pristina held on September 17, 2024 in Brussels differed significantly.

KoSsev reporting:

The KoSsev portal closely followed the events related to the meeting. According to their reports, the main negotiators from Belgrade and Pristina confirmed their presence in Brussels on September 17, but the joint meeting was uncertain due to disagreements over the agenda.⁴⁶ KoSsev conveyed a statement from the EU's Special Envoy for Dialogue, Miroslav Lajčak, who expressed regret that the most urgent issues of the day were not resolved in a trilateral format, but announced the continuation of negotiations in the coming weeks⁴⁷. In addition, the portal reported on a meeting of negotiators with the NATO Assistant Secretary General for Operations and the opening of a bridge.

RTK reporting:

Radio Television of Kosovo (RTK) reported that the main negotiators from Belgrade and Pristina confirmed their presence in Brussels on September 17, but the joint meeting was uncertain due to disagreements over the agenda. RTK also conveyed a statement from Miroslav Lajčak, who expressed regret that the most urgent issues were not resolved in a trilateral format but announced further negotiations in the coming weeks⁴⁸.

Reporting by Koha Ditore:

Koha Ditore reported that the tripartite meeting in Brussels, scheduled for September 17, 2024, did not take place due to disagreements between Kosovo and Serbia over the conditions set by Pristina. The focus was on Pristina's demands for formalization of the basic agreement and conditioning Serbia regarding the demarcation of North Mitrovica as a precondition for opening the bridge, which caused controversy and prevented the meeting⁴⁹.

46 <https://kossev.info/kosovo-online-najnovije-vesti-rse-pregovaraci-beograda-i-pristine-dolaze-u-brisel-17-septembra-zajednicki-susret-neizvestan/>

47 <https://kossev.info/kosovo-online-najnovije-vesti-lajcak-zali-zbog-izostanka-trilateralnog-susreta-nastavak-pregovora-u-narednim-nedeljama/>
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Reporting by other media in the Serbian language (RTS and Kosovo Online):

Media in Serbian mostly relayed statements from Belgrade officials, emphasizing that the Pristina side refused the trilateral meeting and that Belgrade was ready for talks.⁵⁰ They also highlighted as a key issue Belgrade's insistence on the formation of the Community of Serbian Municipalities.

Telegrafi reporting:

Telegrafi reported the public on divided opinions of Pristina and Belgrade officials, who claimed that the other side sabotaged the meeting. Bislimi focused on the Ohrid Agreement and the telecommunications agreement while Petković insisted on forming the Community of municipalities with a Serbian majority and returning to the previous state regarding the closed institutions. They also relayed Pristina's demands necessary as a precondition for further progress in the dialogue⁵¹.

Media reports in Serbian and Albanian about the meeting of the main negotiators of Belgrade and Pristina in Brussels on September 17, 2024, significantly differed in interpreting the causes of the failure of the trilateral meeting. Media in Serbian mainly emphasized Belgrade's readiness for talks and accused Pristina of obstruction, while Media in Albanian highlighted Pristina's demands as key preconditions for continuing the dialogue. Additionally, certain media focused on specific topics such as the Ohrid Agreement, telecommunications, and the formation of the Community of Serbian Municipalities, while statements from European officials indicated a lack of agreement but also the continuation of negotiations in the future. The news about the opening of the bridge and the discussion with the NATO representative were only reported by some media, while most omitted that part.

50 <https://www.rts.rs/lat/vesti/politika/5530890/u-utorak-nova-runda-dijaloga-pristina-odbija-trilateral-ni-sastanak.html> ?

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SECTION 5: Banjska Case

An analysis of media reporting: the incident in Banjska and inter-ethnic relations

The incident in Banjska in September 2023, marked by armed conflict between ethnic Serbs and Kosovo police, became a significant point of contention in tensions between Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs. Media reporting on this event offers valuable insight into the frameworks of interethnic relations and the narratives shaping public discourse. Through both quantitative and qualitative analysis, this study examines how Kosovo and Serbian media portray the incident, revealing whether these portrayals promote reconciliation or deepen divisions.

In Kosovo media, the main actors are government officials, primarily Prime Minister Albin Kurti and Minister of Internal Affairs Xhelal Sveçla, depicted as defenders of Kosovo's sovereignty and rule of law. Their actions are framed as necessary to address security threats and strengthen Kosovo's institutional legitimacy. Statements from ministers, government officials, and institutions are regularly conveyed with analyses of the direction trials and actions preceding the event in Banjska (tenders, malpractices) will take. Judicial bodies, especially the Special Prosecutor's Office, are shown as crucial for achieving justice and accountability. International figures, such as representatives from the EU and NATO, are also often mentioned, highlighting their role as allies committed to Kosovo's stability and legal order.

Conversely, Serbian media focus on Serbian political figures, like Aleksandar Vučić, and local community leaders such as Milan Radoičić, who was directly involved in the incident in Banjska. These individuals, post-incident, are depicted in some media as "protectors" of Serbian heritage and "defenders" of the rights of the Serbian community in Kosovo. International actors, when mentioned, are often criticized as biased towards Serbia, which is included in a broader narrative of global conspiracies aimed at Serbian interests. The sharp contrast in the depiction of key actors highlights the different priorities of each media landscape: Kosovo media emphasize institutional strength and international partnerships, while Serbian outlets highlight ethnic solidarity and perceived resistance to oppression.

Central themes in media narratives further illustrate this division. Kosovo media extensively cover court proceedings, especially the indictment of 45 individuals connected to the incident in Banjska. These media present the event as a terrorist attack on Kosovo's sovereignty, emphasizing the need for accountability and international support. The narrative positions the incident not just as a local security threat but also as a challenge to global norms, demanding collective action in combating terrorism and maintaining justice.

In contrast, media in Serbian emphasize the struggles of Serbs, focusing on the challenges faced by the Serbian community in Kosovo. Media often explore issues with the judiciary, such as the delay of the preliminary hearing due to the non-delivery of the indictment within the legal deadline. They analyzed legal consequences and the possibility of a trial in absentia.

Kossev Portal reported on the Banjska case from several angles. The portal covered the court process for the accused in this case in Kosovo and how the procedure was initiated in Serbia, reporting on it with statements from the Higher Court in Belgrade. Moreover, the por-

tal published several interviews with citizens and residents of the village of Banjska, where this event occurred, as well as a couple of analyses and personal opinions exploring what really happened in Banjska in 2023. In these analyses, they examined both the Kosovo and Serbian versions of the events, as well as what preceded and what followed. They also covered statements from Kosovo and Serbian officials, where the narratives were opposed.

The discourses used by these two (or more) media ecosystems reflect their broader socio-political context. Kosovo media present this incident as an attack on justice and legality, portraying Kosovo as a sovereign state striving to maintain order and adhere to international law. They are characterized by conveying statements from officials and representing the functioning of the system. Conversely, media in the Serbian language use a discourse of searching for truth and preserving culture.

These different approaches extend to styles of argumentation. Kosovo media rely on legal principles, democratic values, and appeals to international norms. Reports often emphasize the importance of accountability and highlight the role of global support in strengthening Kosovo's stability. Some media in the Serbian language use emotional arguments, relying on injustices and the dysfunctionality of the system, while some media conveyed experiences and viewpoints from all sides regarding this event.

Language plays a key role in shaping public perception, with the use of epithets revealing contrasting accounts of the individuals involved. Kosovo media often refer to them as "terrorists", "militants" or "criminals", which reinforces the gravity of the incident and legitimizes the institutional response. Certain media, however, use terms such as "defenders", "heroes" (*Vreme*) in an ironic tone to the same individuals who are representing as fighters in the battle for Serbian rights. These linguistic choices deepen the polarization between these two narratives.

The overarching narratives presented by the media are equally varied. The Kosovo media portrays Kosovo as a country that strives for independence and integration in the international community. The incident in Banjska is framed as a direct challenge to this vision, which requires strong legal action and international support. Media in Serbian, on the other hand, portray the Serbian community in Kosovo as marginalized and under siege, portraying the conflict as a struggle for cultural survival against oppressive politics.

Analysis of key words revealed that Kosovo media gave priority to terms such as "justice," "terrorism," and "sovereignty," while Serbian media focused on "oppression" (*Informer*) and "resistance" (*Srbija Danas*). Representation was also polarized, with Kosovo Albanians portrayed positively in Kosovo media and negatively in Serbian media, while Serbian communities were portrayed in the opposite way.

The incident in Banjska and its portrayal in the media underscore entrenched divisions between Kosovo Albanians and Serbs as well as misunderstandings about what exactly happened (*NIN*). Kosovo media prioritize narratives of justice, legality, and sovereignty, while Serbian media emphasize victimization, heritage, and resistance. These polarized portrayals, though deeply rooted in historical and political context, risk prolonging tensions and obstructing efforts toward reconciliation, which has been exceptionally fragile in the last two years.

To encourage understanding and dialogue, balanced reporting that respects the complexity of interethnic relations is essential. Media can play a crucial role in promoting narratives that build bridges rather than reinforce barriers, paving the way for a more peaceful and cooperative future in the region.

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Conclusion:

Media coverage of the closure of institutions, the Brussels dialogue and the arrests in northern Kosovo reveal deep-rooted divisions between Serbian and Albanian narratives.

Kosovo media in Albanian such as Koha, RTK and Kallxo emphasize the importance of legality, sovereignty and the need for the rule of law.

Conversely, media in Serbian language transmit a narrative that emphasizes the dissatisfaction of the Serbian community, conveying statements from the field where actions by Kosovo authorities are characterized as discriminatory and harmful to interethnic relations, while Kossev also included information and statements from all actors, including relevant Kosovo institutions and international representatives.

These polarized narratives demonstrate the challenges in achieving balanced reporting and fostering mutual understanding. While Kosovo media emphasize state-building and institutional integrity, Serbian-focused media prioritize the protection of minority community rights and identity. This duality risks deepening mistrust and solidifying existing divisions.

To bridge these differences, media should strive for more nuanced reporting that recognizes the legitimate concerns of all communities. Constructive dialogue, along with fair and transparent institutional procedures, is crucial for building trust and promoting reconciliation in Kosovo.

Key Findings:

Polarization in Reporting:

- **Media in Serbian:** Focus on the victimization of Serbs, using terms like “repression” and “state violence”.
- **Media in Albanian:** Emphasis on Kosovo’s sovereignty, legality, and rule of law.

Narratives:

- **Media in Serbian:** Themes of victimization, cultural survival, and resistance to perceived repression.
- **Media in Albanian:** Themes of sovereignty, institutional strength, and combating crime.

Frequency of Key Themes:

- **Words like “cooperation” and “reconciliation”:** These words were often used in negative contexts.
- **Words like “violence” and “provocation”:** Dominated in both media groups, further sharpening the perception of conflict.

The polarized reporting reflects deeper socio-political divisions and requires balanced coverage to promote understanding. The events covered during this period, which occurred in northern Kosovo, including arrests, police actions, and political events, were the focus of media reporting, reflecting the complex dynamics between Kosovo Serbs and Albanians.

Due to the complexity of the topics, the analysis considered a longer period and used sources from multiple media outlets to adequately cover topics of significance to the residents of northern Kosovo.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the conducted public opinion polls and media analysis, we formulated Matrix of factors and solutions for improving relations between Serbs and Albanians (hereinafter referred to as the Matrix).

	Factors	Solutions	
COMMUNITY	Ethnonationalism	Constitutional patriotism	SOCIETY
	Ethno-phyletism	Acquired identities, identities, which are related to personal achievements	
	Offensive militarism	Cooperation and agreement at the international level	
	Emotional barriers	Emotional closeness	
	Networking on a personal level	Networking at the professional and business level	
	Media polarization and lack of information.	Media deliberation	
	Dissatisfaction with the institutional framework.	Institutions that are in the function of the real community	
	Dissatisfaction with the quality of life	Accomplished members of the community	
	Ethno-enclaves	Inclusive Forms of Ethnic Autonomy	
	STATE		

The attached Matrix outlines the factors influencing the current relationship between Albanians and Serbs in northern Kosovo and the Preševo Valley. It also presents a summary of the desired state, a transition from an (ethnic) community to a (civic) society capable of establishing a state based on the rule of law, institutional integrity, and a free public sphere. This envisioned transition represents a shift from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity, the fundamental frameworks that regulate social relations and identities at the community and societal levels.

To refine the Matrix, we will elaborate on each dimension and recall the research findings.

The first dimension of the Matrix concerns the nature of citizens' political identity, which lies between ethnonationalism and constitutional patriotism. Unlike ethnonationalism, rooted in ethnic identification, constitutional patriotism involves respect for the Constitution and its laws, as well as values and principles such as democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and equality before the law. The research has shown that both Serbs in northern Kosovo and Albanians in the Preševo Valley are dominated by ethnonationalism, which hinders the establishment of constitutional patriotism, the legitimizing framework for a state based on the rule of law, institutional integrity, and a free public sphere.

The second dimension of the Matrix, linked to the first, concerns citizens' social identities, which exist on a continuum between ascribed and acquired identities. Ascribed identities are acquired from family and community and their rejection is considered a betrayal. These often

involve ethnic and religious affiliations. In contrast, acquired identities are acquired through personal effort. The research indicates a dominance of ascribed, particularly ethnophiletic identities, that prioritize religious and/or ethnic identity over other identities related to region, city, and profession.

The third dimension of the Matrix relates to offensive militarism, or the willingness to support war as a means of changing borders and rectifying perceived injustices against “one’s own” people. In contrast to offensive militarism, the matrix also considers the possibility of interethnic and interstate cooperation based on membership in associations and adherence to international standards. The research has revealed a tendency, more pronounced among respondents from the Preševo Valley, to support offensive militarism.

The fourth dimension focuses on the emotional component of relations between Albanians and Serbs, situated on a continuum between emotional closeness and distance. The research indicates the existence of barriers, or emotional distance, between Serbs and Albanians in the Preševo Valley, Northern Kosovo, Kosovo, and Serbia.

The fifth dimension concerns the social networking between Albanians and Serbs. At one end of the spectrum is personal-level connections, while at the other end is networking based on professional or business ties. The research findings show that personal-level connections exist, but professional and business connections are almost non-existent.

The sixth dimension pertains to media communication, which exists on a spectrum between unprofessional media, characterized by propaganda that reinforces ethnic divisions and stereotypes, and media deliberation, wherein media outlets investigate, analyze, question, and moderate dialogue between the Albanian and Serbian sides. Content analysis has revealed a media divide in most outlets, indicating that media often serve as defenders of nations rather than adhering to journalistic principles.

The seventh dimension concerns the functioning of the institutional framework, which is tasked with representing and protecting the interests of members of national communities. The research indicates a low level of satisfaction with the functioning of the domicile institutional framework among Serbs in northern Kosovo and Albanians in the Preševo Valley.

The eighth dimension relates to perceptions of quality of life, specifically the ability of residents of northern Kosovo and the Preševo Valley to fulfill their rights as members of national communities. The research has shown that a majority of residents in both regions are dissatisfied with their quality of life and the realization of their rights as members of national communities.

The ninth dimension relates to the identification of members of national communities with an ethnic space where the community constitutes a majority, leading to ethnic isolation and closure, rather than a preference for inclusive forms of national community autonomy. The research has shown that respondents exhibit a preference for ethnic isolation.

The nine dimensions outlined in the Matrix provide an analytical tool for monitoring ethnic relations between Serbs and Albanians, as well as the broader social context in which these relations emerge and develop.

At the core of the monitoring instrument is a sociological approach focused on examining the transition from an ethnic community to a (civic) society, which requires a state based on the rule of law, institutional integrity, and a democratic public.

To understand the middle-range theoretical concept that helps us systematize the collected research findings, we can use the Analytical Matrix of Integrity of Democratic and Authoritarian Societies, which emerged from research on integrity. Its origin has the same theoretical foundation and is useful for understanding the logic of the nature of monitoring.

This is a division into a democratic society, which is by its nature an example of a society based on organic solidarity, and an authoritarian society based on mechanical solidarity. In addition to this division, there is a noticeable division according to the principle of autonomy and authoritarianism, then formality and procedure versus power and autocracy, as well as the subjective in terms of activism and individualization, and objectification in terms of passivity and subordination to the collective.

This matrix, like any other, is an ideal-typical example that does not include “gray” areas.

Table no 1 The Analytical Matrix of the Integrity of a Democratic and Authoritarian Society

	The Integrity of a Democratic Society	Integrity of an authoritarian society
A type of social organization	Associations of participation	A community of loyalty and leadership.
Type of solidarity	Interests	Emotions, tradition
Handle	Norma	Power
Regulatory framework	Institutions	Will
Decision-making	Deliberation at the public level.	A leader or a powerful minority.
Type of choice	Elective Elections	Acclamation elections
Who chooses	Citizen	Supporter
Who do they elect	Institutional representations of interests	Leaders and/or millenarian movements.
Communication	Free media	The Industry of Populism

Conclusions

- 1. Dominance of ethnonationalism:** Research indicates that both in Northern Kosovo and the Preševo Valley, ethnonationalism dominates, limiting the potential for developing shared values based on civic identity. This phenomenon strongly influences perceptions and interethnic relations.
- 2. Lack of trust in institutions:** Respondents in both regions express a significant level of distrust toward institutions, particularly those dealing with the rights of minority communities. This contributes to a sense of marginalization and deepens ethnic divisions.
- 3. Media polarization:** Media in both regions play a crucial role in perpetuating stereotypes and exacerbating tensions. Biased reporting on events often contributes to the creation of negative narratives.
- 4. Economic and social barriers:** Discrimination in employment, restricted access to resources, and inadequate education further hinder the establishment of mutual trust.
- 5. Community isolation:** Physical and symbolic isolation, through ethno-spaces, perpetuates mutual unfamiliarity and prevents the development of organic connections between communities.

Recommendations

1. **Promotion of intercultural dialogue:** Organize regular forums, workshops, and cultural events that involve members of both communities.
2. **Strengthening professional ties:** Initiatives that encourage joint business ventures and networking at the economic level can help break stereotypes.
3. **Media literacy and anti-stereotype campaigns:** Educational programs on the role of media in shaping opinions and campaigns promoting objective and inclusive reporting.

For Governments and Institutions

1. **Education system reform:** Integrate programs that foster intercultural understanding, especially in areas with pronounced ethnic tensions.
2. **Support for local institutions development:** Rebuild trust through transparency and by involving minority community members in institutional work.
3. **Economic integration:** Subsidy programs for joint businesses and infrastructural projects connecting northern Kosovo and southern Serbia.

For International Organizations

1. **Media and institutional monitoring:** a more active role for international actors in monitoring and reporting human rights violations and discrimination.
2. **Financial and technical support for reconciliation initiatives:** Support for projects aimed at reducing ethnic tensions through culture, sports, and education.

Long-Term Goals

1. **Establishment of an “Ethnic Bridge”:** Create sustainable partnerships among key regional actors to promote stability and development.
2. **Identity Transformation:** Shift from dominant ethnic identities to civic and professional identities as the foundation for future relationships.

CONTENTS

ABOUT THE PROJECT	5
PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY	6
Preševo valley sample.....	6
Northern Kosovo sample	7
Concept of Nation among Respondents	8
Social Identities	12
Attitudes Toward Offensive Militarism	15
Mutual feelings between Serbs and Albanians.....	17
Problems and Solutions.....	23
FOCUS GROUP REPORT	25
Methodological Framework.....	25
Focus Group Report – Preševo Valley.....	25
Focus Groups in Northern Kosovo	27
Preliminary Observations:.....	29
MEDIA ANALYSIS.....	30
Media Monitoring – Media in the Republic of Serbia (RTS1 and the portal www.bujanovacke.co.rs)	31
ANALYSIS OF KOSOVO MEDIA REPORTING	39
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	58
Conclusions.....	61
Recommendations	62