KCSS
Kosovar Centre for Security Studies

KOSOVA RESILIENCE INDEX

VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN KOSOVA: WHAT COMMUNITY
RESILIENCE CAN TEACH US?

The original version of this report is written in Albanian language

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AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Skënder Perteshi graduated in International Relations and Diplomacy at the University College "Universum". Perteshi works as a researcher for KCSS and leads the KCSS program for opposing and preventing violent extremism. He is the author and co-author of many security-related research reports, such as: Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism; Integrity in the Security Sector in Kosova; Building sustainable communities in Kosova; Perteshi has also worked as a collaborator and senior consultant on security-related topics for international and local organizations such as: Finnish Church Relief Foundation - Helsinki, RUSI Institute, International Organization for Migration (IOM), OSCE, MOONSHOT London and other organizations.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EU	The European Union
BIK	Islamic Community of Kosova
KSB	Kosovar Security Barometer
KTC	Kosova Tariqat Community
KSF	Kosovo Security Force
KFOR	Kosovo Force
NATO	North Atlantic Alliance
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
UN	United Nations
KP	Kosovo Police
KCSS	Kosovar Center for Security Studies
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
SRA	Social Resilience Assessment
SPVELT	Strategy for the Prevention of Violent Extremism Leading to Terrorism

INTRODUCTION

Since 2011, Kosova has faced major challenges in preventing and combating violent extremism and radicalization. Hundreds of Kosova citizens joined the conflict as a result of the spread of violent extremism and radicalization and and foreign wars in Syria and Iraq. Institutional efforts were mainly focused on preventing and combating violent extremism, in particular focusing on preventing individuals from joining foreign wars as well as prosecuting those who recruited our citizens to join foreign conflicts.

At that time there was no thought on the role of resilience in preventing violent extremism and radicalization. Resilience is a new and unexploredd issue around in term of its effect in preventing violent extremism. Through this research we have assessed the resilience of the community against violent extremism and radicalization and identified the drivers that increase the resilience of the community to various forms of extremism and radicalization

To measure the community resilience towards extremism and radicalization, three indicators have been treated, namely: identity and social cohesion, connection with the country, and trust in state institutions and religious harmony between communities in the country. By evaluating these indicators, we have identified the strong points of community resilience in Kosova, which should be worked on in order to create communities which are resilient against violence and radicalization.

This research finds that there is a good social cohesion within communities that have different religious beliefs and belong to different ethnicities. The communities in Kosova trust each other and there is a very good cooperation within the communities. Yet there is a lack of cooperation and interaction between the community and state institutions at central and local level in Kosova.

Citizens have low level of trust in both the municipal level and institutionally at the central level in Kosova. This is a concern since the lack of interaction between the community and state institutions creates a greater window for increased insecurity in the country, and a conducive environment for the spread of violence and radicalization.

Religious harmony remains one of the main values with which the Kosovar society is identified, thus helping the country to prevent the spread of radical religious elements internally. While there is excellent harmony between communities belonging to different religions, the challenge remains the clash of different sects or groups within the Muslim community of the country, especially within the Islamic Community of Kosova (BIK). Such clashes have antagonized the country's practicing Muslim community and created parallel religious bodies in the country.

The national identity or the expression of national feeling remains very strong in Kosova and the community feels very proud with the determination of its national identity. The challenge remains the creation of space to freely express religious feelings or political orientation. Respondents stated that there is not enough freedom in the country to freely express their political orientation, identity or religious feeling. Such a situation is concerning due to the fact that the lack of freedom to express political orientation or religious sentiment creates an environment conducive to discrimination and stigma of communities vulnerable to extremism or radicalism in the country.

Kosova faces great challenges which have hindered the development of the country and the increase of the quality of citizens' life which have resulted in increased insecurity among the Kosovar society for a better life in Kosova. The lack of insecurity among citizens has influenced the Kosovar society to look for alternatives for a better life by migrating to Western European countries. Challenges such as corruption, organized crime, poor education and health systems, lack of rule of law and poor governance have created an environment of hopelessness for better life in the country and have increased the level of the community's vulnerability to extremism and radicalism in the country.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To compile this report, KCSS has implemented a number of techniques for collecting qualitative and quantitative data.

Findings of the Kosova Security Barometer[1] carried out in October 2019 around the communities' resilience level have been essential for the preparation of this report. A survey was conducted with 1200 respondents in all municipalities, including both urban and rural settlements. Citizens were asked about their views on issues related to security, trust in state institutions, social cohesion and identity, their relationship with Kosova and cooperation with the community and state institutions. Issues related to ethnic, racial and religious harmony have also been part of this assessment.

Focus Groups have contributed greatly to data collection. Five focus groups were organized with community representatives from the regions of Prishtina, Prizren, Peja, Ferizaj, Gjilan and Mitrovica. Participants in the focus group were of different ages, different educational profiles and there was an equal gender representation among them. Among the participants there were representatives of state institutions, NGOs, representatives of religious communities, civic activists, the education sector, business and other community representatives.

In order to prepare this report, a large number of international reports have been analysed which have addressed resilience in the prevention of extremism and radicalism in addition to reports of academic institutes and universities that have addressed this phenomenon. It was impossible to consult local reports on resilience due to the lack of literature and analysis related to resilience, violent extremism and radicalism in Kosova.

Over 15 local and central level representatives were interviewed, including representatives of local institutions, local leaders, religious communities in Kosova, civil society activists and other community representatives.

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[1] **Kosova Security Barometer (KSB)** is a special KCSS program which was established in September 2012. This program aims to implement quantitative research methods in KCSS. Unlike other programs that are mainly related to the sector or area they cover; KSB is the only KCSS program that is based entirely on the unique methodology it implements. In the 2019 edition, the level of resilience of Kosova communities to violence, radicalism and extremism was measured.

This report has measured the level of community resilience to various forms of violent extremism and radicalism, with a greater focus on violent Islamist extremism which has grown significantly in the last 10 years, that has affected the community in Kosova resulting in a large number of citizens travelling to conflicts in Syria and Iraq. Below I will explain the reasons why the three indicators for assessing resilience to violent extremism and radicalism have been chosen.

WHY ARE THESE INDICATORS SELECTED FOR STUDY?

For many years, the Kosovar Center for Security Studies (KCSS) has analyzed and identified some of the most important causes of the spread of violent extremism and radicalism in Kosova. KCSS research shows that state capture, corruption, lack of religion freedom have created a conducive environment for the spread of violent extremism and radicalization in Kosova.[2] Other main causes for the spread of violent extremism at the individual and community level in Kosova were sense of belonging, alienation, re-Islamization, identity vacuum, family background and family ties to radicalized individuals.[3] All these reasons for the spread of violent extremism and radicalisation in Kosova are indicators that have also been addressed in this report in relation to their role and the raising of community resilience against violent extremism.

The data analyzed in the report aims to provide answers about the citizens' position and perception on the causes of the spread of violent extremism in the country. Furthermore, this report will provide a better overview of the community's strengths, which make the community immune to violence and violent extremism in the country.

This report does not eliminate the drivers such as education, employment and the difficult economic and social situation as the cause of the spread of violent extremism and radicalism in the country, but does not place them as key factors in the spread of extremism and radicalisation. Moreover, given the very definition of social resilience, non-economic factors

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2   Shpend Kursani "Report inquiring into the causes and consequences of Kosova citizens' involvement as foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq" KCSS 2015.

3   Kosova Report "Violent Extremism in Western Balkans" Extremism Research Forum 2018 https://www.britishcouncil.ba/sites/default/files/erf_report_western_balkans_2018.pdf

are considered central to the conditions of social resilience in relation to the extension of negative ideologies such as those manifested in radical or extreme forms.[4]

In fact, in terms of education, the data shows that if we compare the level of education of the entire population of Kosova and those who have traveled to foreign wars in Syria and Iraq, there is no big difference. According to the data, individuals who have traveled to Syria and Iraq appear a level higher in secondary education vis-a-vis the general population data in the country.[5] As shown in the graph below, on average, the secondary level of education is about 10 percent higher among foreign fighters than the Kosova average.[6] So, the level of education of foreign fighters and their comparison with the Kosova average show there is no link between the education level and its impact on the spread of violent extremism in the country. Consequently, the highest level of education would not be considered as an essential factor of social resilience, especially in the context of Kosova.

In fact, the issue is not about the educational qualifications but the quality of education as a whole, including the quality of information that our young people obtain during the education process in Kosova. Our education system does not provide space for the development of critical thinking as a factor of resilience, or better judgment of the information students receive, in schools, through social media, or books which may be essential in combating all forms of extremism and prejudice as well as strengthening resilience.

On the other hand, the financial situations of foreign fighters who have participate in Syria and Iraq wars may affect the spread of violent extremism, but are not seen as the main driver.[7] If we compare the income of foreign fighters from Kosova with the level of income for the country's population, there are no major differences. The level of income for this category and their level of employment do not explain the spread of radicalism or violent extremism because among foreign fighters we have individuals coming from all stratas of the society whether they are rich, poor or have average means. However, the low level of employment and investments in communities vulnerable to radicalism and violent extremism can create a fertile environment for the spread of extremism and radicalism at the community level.

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4   RAN- Center for Excellence 2016 https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/issue_paper_root-causes_jan2016_en.pdf

5   Kosova Report "Violent Extremism in Western Balkans" Extremism Research Forum 2018 https://www.britishcouncil.ba/sites/default/files/erf_report_western_balkans_2018.pdf

6   Ibid.

7   Skender Perteshi "Beyond Causes: New Risks of Violent Extremism in Kosova" KCSS, Prishtina 2018

SOCIAL RESILIENCE: WHAT DO WE KNOW AND WHY IS IT NECESSARY?

Social resilience is one of the most recently mentioned concepts in the context of contemporary public policy.[8] So far there is no consensus in researching and academic circles on the definition of resilience. In fact, the disputes over the deconstruction of this concept reflect on not only the substantive aspect but also the fact that in languages other than English there is no word which can translate the concept literally. According to Oxford Dictionary, social resilience "is the ability of people or things to recover quickly after an [bad] event."[9] In academic terms, resilience has been studied a lot. Among others the researcher from Syracuse University Patricia Longstaff defines it as "society's ability to assimilate or cope with anxiety, sudden changes, and at the same time maintaining its basic functions such as identity and structure."[10] Researcher Ami Carpetner has a similar definition of resilience, claiming it is "the ability of social systems to assimilate any surprises or social concerns while maintaining its basic functions, identity and structure."[11]

Another researcher Lauren Van Metre has provided an even more broader definition of community resilience. According to her, "resilience is the ability of the community, state or region to adapt to new processes and norms, as well as strategies for developing their lives in new social relationships in response to any violent shock or aggression, in order to prevent them and to overcome violence."[12] These include the current state of the community in phenomena such as social cohesion and identity vacuum, security and trust in the state, as well as religious coexistence[13], which are addressed by this research in the case of Kosova.

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8   The Albanian language does not have a term that corresponds directly to the term "resilience". However, the most approximate definition would be social resistance or renewal, but the research team has decided to preserve ad literam the concept 'resilience' interchangeably in some cases with social renewal/resistance depending on adaptation.

9   https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/resilience

10 Longstaff, PH, Armstrong, NJ, Perrin, K. Parker, W. M. & Hidek, MA (2010). Building resilient communities: A preliminary framework for assessment. *Homeland Security Affairs*, *6*(3).

11 Carpenter, A.C. (2014). Resilience: Conceptual Foundations. In *Community Resilience to Sectarian Violence in Baghdad* (pp. 63-80). Springer New York

12 Lauren van Metre https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW121-Peacebuilding-and-Resilience-How-Society-Responds-to-Violence.pdf

13 Ibid.

The UN Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon in the UN Action Plan for the Prevention of Violent Extremism in 2016, does not define social resilience at all and according to him this issue is open, leaving it to the countries to decide on its meaning or contextualization.[14] However, the concept as such continues to emerge in strategic and doctrinal documents of various countries, including those of the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO).

On the other hand, the concept is not foreseen in the Kosova legislation or the national strategy for the Prevention of Violent Extremism Leading to Terrorism. In fact, in its introduction, this strategy mentions "sustainability" as part of the strategy goal, which is to prevent and combat violent extremism. However, the strategy does not address resilience as a separate issue, and it remains unclear whether sustainability is intended in the sense of social resilience or another one. The SPVELT Strategy states that "Events that occurred during the recent years in Kosovo, Europe, Middle East and beyond made it clear the need of Republic of Kosovo to develop a strategy which shall coordinate measures to strengthen the stability of the state and society against threats posed by violent radicalism and extremism. ".[15] Within the strategy there is no definition that explains this phenomenon in the context of Kosova or activities to address the resistance of the individual or community to the violent extremism and terrorism.[16].

In its research, KCSS has addressed the issues of social resilience in the Kosova context, focusing on the social capacity to oppose violent extremism and radicalisation. According to KCSS research, social resilience involves community awareness of the problems that threaten them as well as their joint actions towards combating this phenomenon. It also includes the community's attitude to such a phenomenon and its reaction after the occurrence of violent extremism activities, or events that are perceived to lead towards its occurrence.[17]

Its opposite is the "vulnerability" that reflects community reluctance or lack of mobilization to intervene or actively engage in addressing violent extremism. This may be due to a lack of necessary mobilization mechanisms, lack of incentives to work together at community

14 UN Secretary General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (2016)
15 National Strategy for the Prevention of Violent Extremism Leading to Terrorism 2015 http://www.kryeministri-ks.net/repository/docs/STRATEGJIA_parandalim_-_SHQIP.pdf
16 Ibid.
17

level, or due to tensions between stakeholders that prevent addressing challenges in a comprehensive manner.[18]

In other words, social resilience also means strengthening the strong points of the community that create social immunity to violence or conflict such as: trust in community and the state authorities, interfaith and interethnic harmony, gender and racial tolerance, social cohesion, identity vacuum and creation of equal opportunities for all.[19]

Social resilience must be grasped at three levels: individual, group, and national. In this report, we have further assessed the first two levels that strengthen the community (group) or the individual against violent extremism and radicalism in Kosova. Some of the causes that jeopardize the individual or the community in Kosova have also been analyzed.

The report assesses that Kosova as a state, and Kosova Albanians as the vast majority ethnicity, are resistant (resilient) to ideologies related to violent extremism and radicalism. This is due to the context of Kosova, its good social cohesion, its history, and the organic way of practicing religion. Despite the fact that there is a good basis for social resilience, Kosova still does not offer a free and tolerant environment for free expression of ***political or religious orientation*** of individuals or communities, due to prejudice or stigma caused by the society.

HOW IS SOCIAL RESILIENCE ASSESSED?

The Social Resilience Assessment (SRA) will be evaluated based on the following three indicators: a.) **social identity and cohesion b.) traditional religious tolerance, and c.) trust in state institutions and connection to Kosova.** These indicators are considered consistent with the needs and context of Kosova. Other accompanying indicators that were assessed in this report are related to issues of good governance, democracy strengthening, respect for human rights, sustainable development and the rule of law. All of these are considered comprehensive key indicators in the fight against and prevention of violent political, ethnic or religious extremism.

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18 Ibid.

19 Garentina Kraja and Rudine Jakupi "Explaining the Difference: Vulnerability and Sustainability to Violent Extremism in Kosova" KCSS, Prishtina 2018

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Creating sustainable communities and achieving social resilience depends on many factors. The three indicators we have selected for the study are not necessarily the only ones we should be focusing on. However, these have been rated among the most important ones based on research into the causes of the spread of violent extremism in Kosova and beyond. We are aware that many other indicators play a role in creating a climate of social resilience to the point that radicalizing and extremizing potential would be minimized if not fully eliminated. The indicators we have selected for this study are based on the results of research and reports that have addressed issues of extremism and radicalism in Kosova and beyond. Based on their results we have identified the main causes that may influence the individual or community to become part of violence or violent extremism without being restricted to the religious, ethnic or political one.

1. SOCIAL COHESION AND IDENTITY

Social cohesion and identity include the approach of the individual and the community towards a member of another ethnicity, political orientation or religion. Good social cohesion includes a sense of identity and belonging to the community in which one lives; the equality of the individual in education, employment and justice; the sense of belonging to the family and community where he-she lives; and a connection to their country, among other things. Social cohesion and identity are the key resilient drivers that have helped Kosova fight violent extremism and they may contribute to the prevention of similar phenomena in the country in the future. Strong ethnic and identity affiliation is undoubtedly key element of resilience, especially if it is challenged by ideological attacks from abroad, which are camouflaged with an identity garment that does not align with the traditional one in Kosova. Assessments made through this report show a high level of harmony and tolerance that the citizens and the communities of Kosova have towards individuals belonging to other faiths, ethnicities or races. Our data show that the citizens of Kosova have achieved a high degree of maturity and are resilient to unknown phenomena such as different forms of violent extremism. However, a solid percentage of the country's citizens still remain reserved to *accepting or cohabiting with individuals of different political, religious or ethnic orientations.*

The data show that influences from community, family background and ties and circle of friends, were some of the main factors in the spread of violent extremism and radicalism in the past.[20] Precisely by considering these data, we have tried to assess the role the community and the family play in building communities resilient to violence and conflict in Kosova. [21]

20   Shpend Kursani "Extremism Research Forum- Western Balkans" Kosova report, 2018 https://Kosova.
     britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/erf_report_Kosova_2018.pdf

21   Skender Perteshi "Beyond Causes: New Risks of Violent Extremism in Kosova" KCSS, Prishtina 2018

1.1 SENSE OF COMMUNITY

KCSS has measured the public opinion in Kosova regarding social cohesion and the identity issue. Citizens have been asked how important they feel and to what extent they identify with the community in which they live. Based on the citizens' opinion, 52% of the respondents stated that they feel important to the community and feel part of it, while 25% of the respondents stated that they feel themselves as important to their community to a certain extent.[22] The rest, namely 16% of respondents, did not answer this question, while 6% of other respondents indicated that they do not feel as being part of the community, and that the community does not represent them and their interests. [23]

Legend:
- I don't know/ I have no opinion
- Important for the community
- Somewhat important for the community
- Unimportant for the community

6%   16%   23%   52%
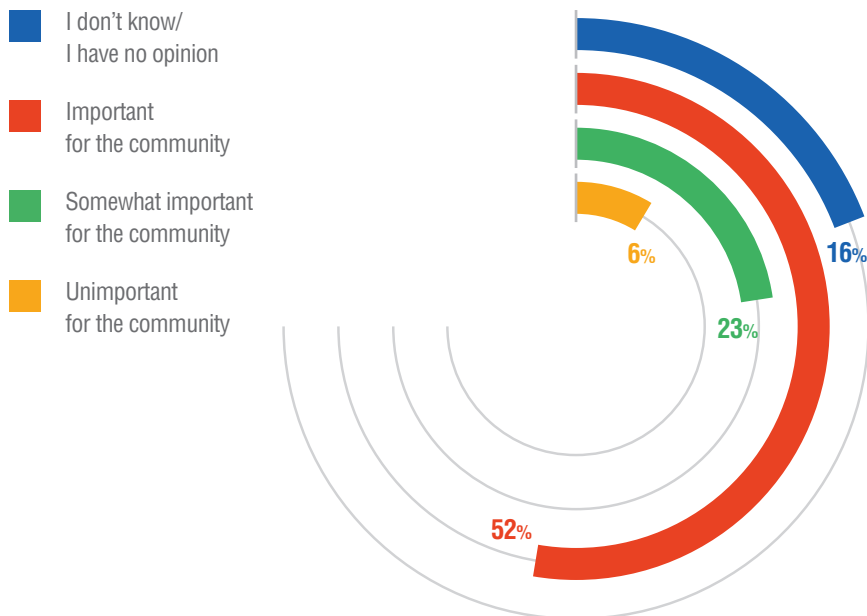
Figure 1-How important do you feel in the community you live in

It is very important that individuals living within the community feel part of it and that they or their families are not discriminated against. When asked whether they identify themselves with the community in which they live, about 88% of respondents indicated that they do

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22 Kosova Security Barometer 2019

23 Ibid.

identify fully with the community in which they live, while 8% of respondents indicated that they identify with the community in which they belong to a certain degree. A small minority, or about 3%, said they do not see themselves as part of the community in which they live and do not feel close to the values of their community. According to them, they feel forgotten, marginalized and stigmatized by the community.[24] This shows that there is a sense of social cohesion regarding identity which can hardly be substantially challenged by external factors, and it makes the community resilient against all forms of radicalism and violent extremism.
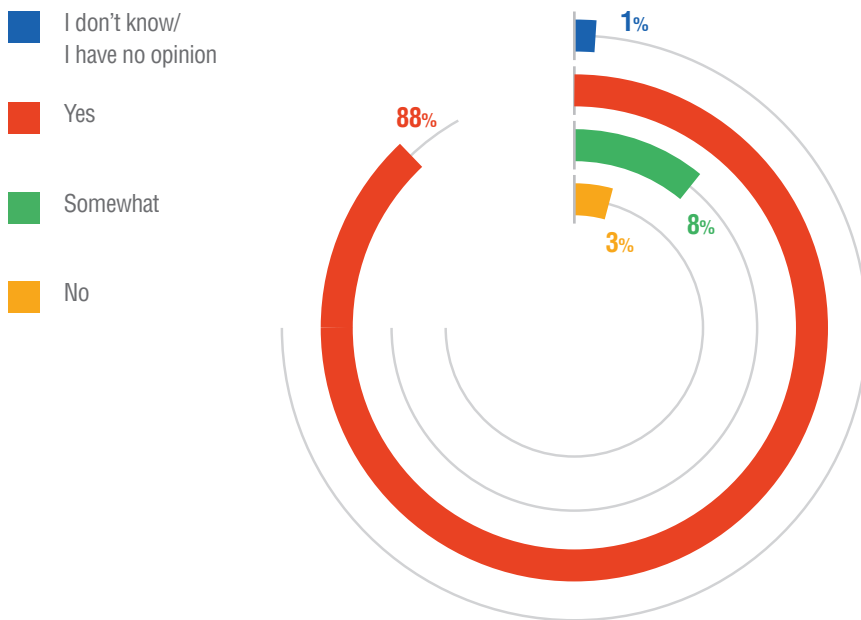

Figure 2- The degree of discrimination of the individual or family by the community

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24   Kosova Security Barometer 2019.

1.2 STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION

Stigma and discrimination are among the key factors leading to the radicalization of the individual or community. In the past, we have encountered frequent cases where the community has been discriminatory and isolated families and individuals because of the way religion was practiced.

Asked if they agree that they or their families have been discriminated by the community in the last 18 months, about 88% of the respondents said they or their family have never felt discriminated against by the community and are closely linked to the community. The rest, or 12% of respondents, said they felt partially discriminated against by the community.[25] The number of respondents who stated that they are discriminated by the community is worrying (12%). Although the reasons for this feeling are not given and perhaps this percentage, although small, is fluid, it can be estimated that such a category may be a desirable target of ideological influences from outside, which in reality are part of radical and extremist, religious or ethnic formations.
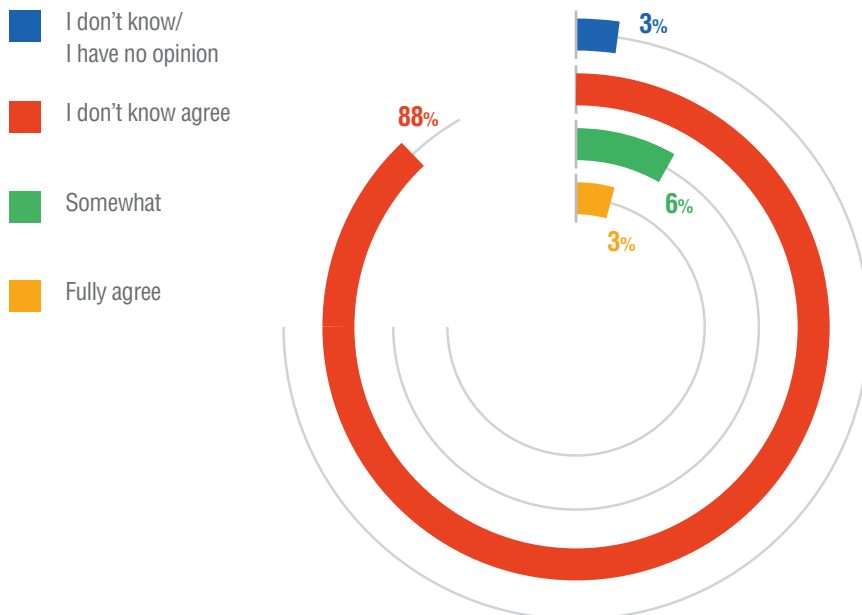

Figure 3-The degree of the individual or family discrimination by the community

25   Data collected from the focus group in Mitrovica. Mitrovica, February 2019.

On the other hand, while individuals have a very strong connection to their community, they have other views regarding the discrimination of their community by state institutions at the central and local levels. Citizens express their concerns about the state authorities' presence in the community, especially with public investment.[26] According to the respondents, the Kosovo Government and members of the Kosovo Assembly visit the community only during the elections or when they have a reason for political gains, but not to learn about the concerns faced by the community or to find ways to address them. The lack of cooperation and communication of political elites with vulnerable communities in Kosova expands the recruitment potential for extremist organizations or various individuals, thus increasing their influence in the community. Organizations that have the primary goal of introducing radical religious or ethnic elements into the community, as has happened immediately after the 1999 war in Kosova, should not be excluded.[27]

As a contextual reminder, after the war in Kosova, various humanitarian organizations originating from the Persian Gulf countries have been very active in spreading elements of Islamist extremism in the community. They have done this by exploiting the high level of poverty at the community level as well as the lack of presence of the state authorities in these communities. Such elements are still observed in municipalities and regions where minorities live, such as the North of Kosova, and some municipalities of Kosova inhabited by the Goran, Rome, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.[28] All of these ideological and political influences from abroad have been to the detriment of a very consolidated social and identity cohesion in Kosova, trying to disrupt ethnic and religious tolerance in the country.

Asked: **Do you think that you and your community are discriminated or forgotten by the Government of Kosova?**, the majority of respondents, namely 56% of them said that the Government of Kosova is hardly ever present in their community and that their community has very little interaction with the Government. About 30% of the respondents claimed that the Government of Kosova is present to some extent in the community they belong to. The rest (11%) of respondents stated that they are satisfied with the work of the Government and that it was present in their community. [29]

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26   Data collected from Focus Groups in Prishtina and Prizren. September 2019, and November 2019.

27   Ibid.

28   Observation by researchers at the Kosova Center for Security Studies and data from Kosova law enforcement institutions.
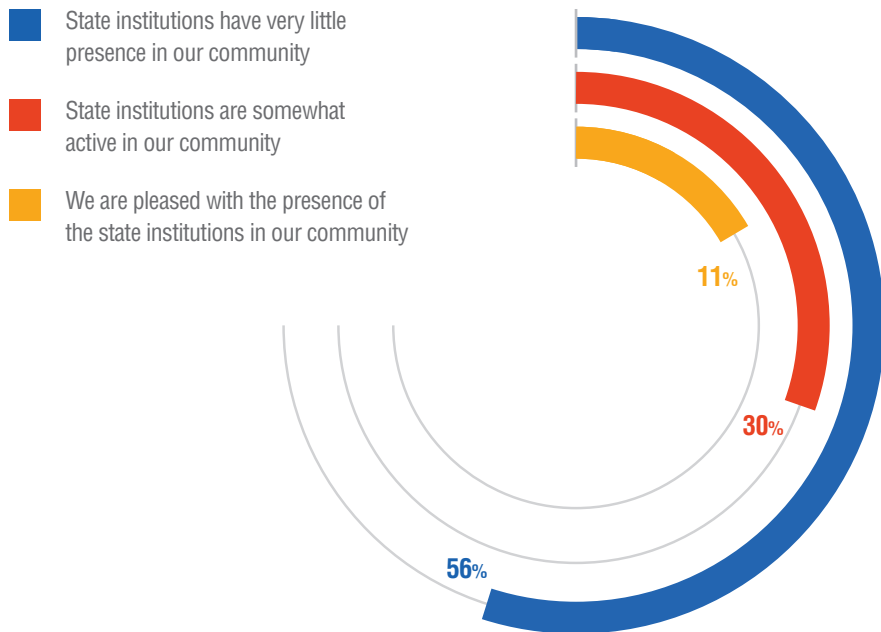
29   Kosova Security Barometer 2019

- ■ State institutions have very little presence in our community
- ■ State institutions are somewhat active in our community
- ■ We are pleased with the presence of the state institutions in our community

11%

30%

56%

Figure 4- The degree of cooperation between the community and state institutions

This shows that the less interaction and intercommunication with citizens, the more potential there is for the spread of extreme external ideologies at the community level.

KCSS has also asked the question: Do you think that you and your community are discriminated or forgotten by local institutions? According to the respondents, compared to the central level institutions, the local level ones are more present in the community. Of the total respondents surveyed, 47% indicated that local institutions are less present in the community, and that the community feels forgotten by local institutions. Another 33%[30] of the respondents said that local institutions are at some extent present in their community, while about 18% said they are satisfied with the presence and work of the local institutions in the community.

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30 Ibid.

47%

33%

2%

18%

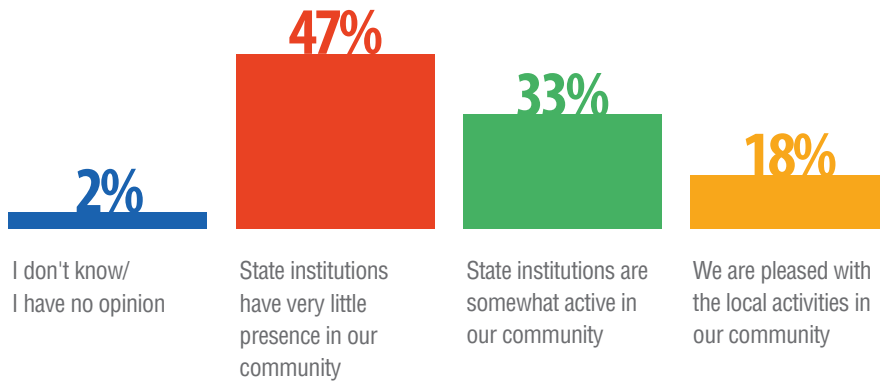| I don't know/ I have no opinion | State institutions have very little presence in our community | State institutions are somewhat active in our community | We are pleased with the local activities in our community |

Figure 5-The degree of discrimination against the community by state institutions

The data show that individuals are very much connected to the community and that no major elements of stigma are observed at the community level. The lack of cooperation and interaction between state institutions and the community is worrying. The lack cooperation between municipal level and citizens, makes the community more vulnerable to violent extremism and radicalisation, as the lack of cooperation of institutions with the community is exploited by various organizations or individuals that aim to spread radical religious or ethnic elements.

1.3   THE POWER OF THE FAMILY AS AN INSTRUMENT OF SOCIAL RESILIENCE

The family has a great influence on the creation of communities which are rezilient against violence and extremism in Kosova. The problem between generations within family members and their differences on topics such as religion, state-building and sexual orientation remain quite prominent, which is a phenomenon present in every post-transitional society.[31]

The role of the family in the process of radicalization or the spread of violent extremism is also examined by the research conducted by KCSS (2016 and 2018) and the British Council (2018) which analysed the family ties of over 90 Kosova citizens participating in the wars in Syria and Iraq. Of the more than 90 selected individuals who travelled to Syria/Iraq, the research found that most of them had family ties or were known to each other. A large number of these 90

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31   KCSS "Causes of Involvement of Kosova Citizens in Foreign Wars in an Unauthorized Way" Prishtina, April 2015

cases were siblings or relatives.[32] This shows that if there are radical elements within the family, they can very easily be passed on to other family members depending on the influential level of the first recruit. On the other hand, the family has been very important in contributing to the prevention of violent extremism, especially since 2012.[33] It has been proven that the family was and remains the main pillar in preventing violent extremism and in creating communities resilient to this phenomenon.

Clashes between family members or domestic violence were present in families affected by violent extremism and radicalism in Kosova. Of the 250 fighters who have traveled to Syria/Iraq over 40% have been charged with various criminal offenses including domestic violence. In most cases when one or more family members have expressed different ideas about Islam or ways to practicing it, which are considered as early signs of radicalisation, they were attacked by their parent or other family members[34] due to the way they practiced the religion. This approach has led to their isolation and has even facilitated the process of their radicalization.[35] In these cases the family has not served as a protection mechanism for its radicalized member, but rather as a kind of perhaps unaware 'facilitator' of the process of their radicalization contributing to their stigma and isolation.[36]

Such family reactions, although not well communicated, were indicative of an ethnic and social identity cohesion in Kosovar families opposing radical and extreme elements that were not previously present in the country. Yet, in the absence of adequate knowledge to deal with the family member who has shown early signs of radicalism, and with the pressure exerted on the latter, their radicalism and extremism has further increased, although the intent was quite the opposite.

In other words, the family, the religious and national feelings are very important in the development of an individual's personality in Kosova. In the KSB 2019 survey respondents were asked which of their identities such as family, nationality, religion, profession or political affili-

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32 British Council report on https://Kosova.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/erf_report_Kosova_2018.pdf

33 Skender Perteshi "Beyond Causes: New Risks of Violent Extremism in Kosova" KCSS, Prishtina 2018

34 Family ND interview of a foreign fighter who has traveled to Syria. December 16, 2019

35 Data calculated from the database of state law enforcement institutions, and databases prepared by the Kosova Center for Security Studies.

36 Skender Perteshi "Beyond Causes: New Risks of Violent Extremism in Kosova" KCSS, Prishtina 2018

ation had the most impact on their personal formation. [37] A total of 60% of the respondents stated that the family has influenced their personal formation the most. The national, political or religious affiliation have played an almost similar role in their personal development. According to the respondents, the family has played and still plays the main role in their personal formation and development and should they have any concerns, the family remains the main authority for addressing them.
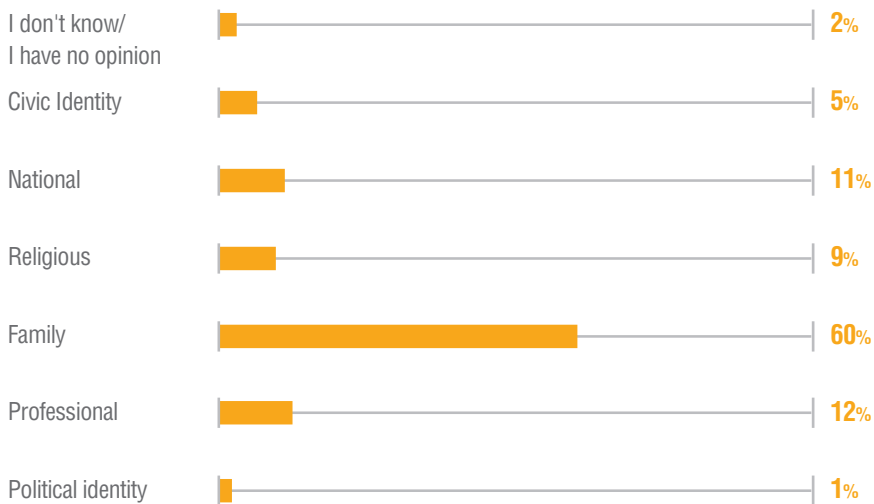
Identity	Percentage
I don't know/ I have no opinion	2%
Civic Identity	5%
National	11%
Religious	9%
Family	60%
Professional	12%
Political identity	1%

Figure 6-Which of the identities has most influenced the development of your personality

Despite the above-mentioned challenges, the citizens of Kosova still see the family as the main system where they can express their concerns and expect support to resolve them.

Asked if they have any grievances or concerns, where do they seek help: 73% of respondents said that the family is the main system where they seek support for their problems and concerns. Following the family, 18% of respondents stated that state institutions were the main address where they sought solutions to their concerns, while the remaining 9% of them think that friends or religious institutions are the address where they can seek support for any concern they might have.[38]

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37 Ibid.

38 Kosova Security Barometer 2019

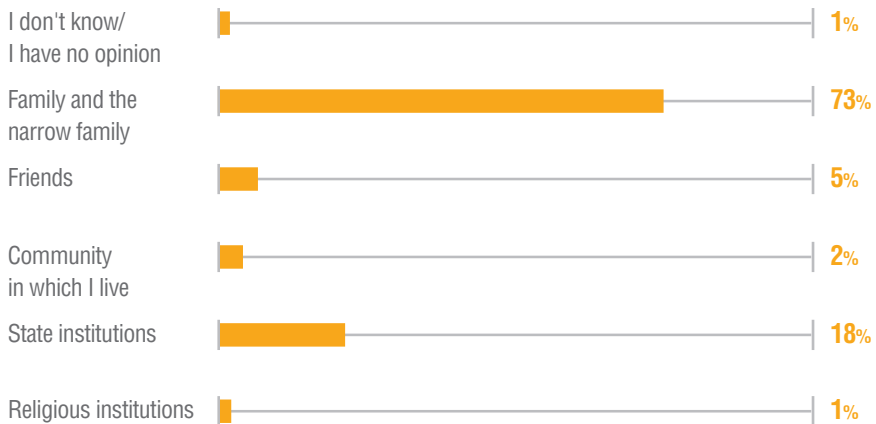|	
I don't know/ I have no opinion	1%
Family and the narrow family	73%
Friends	5%
Community in which I live	2%
State institutions	18%
Religious institutions	1%

Figure 7- In case you have any security concerns, where do you seek support?

This shows that in the absence of a consolidated state the family continues to reign as an important instrument of social resilience in cases when ethnic and social identity is challenged by various ideological manifestations from outside.

The family still remains the main mechanism in which individuals believe in and see as an opportunity to address their concerns. Differences between generations on topics such as religion and how it is practiced, equal gender opportunities, sexual orientation, or other topics have often been a source of conflict within the family. There is still a lack of tolerance within family members when it comes to family members starting to practice their religion more strictly. Lack of knowledge about how to deal with family members who are in the early stages of radicalization is a weak point within the Kosova community and families, making individuals more vulnerable to the recruitment into violent extremism and radicalism.

1.4 TOLERANCE OF OTHER ETHNICITIES

A very important element of social cohesion which helps to create resilient communities against violent extremism, is the harmony between individuals belonging to different ethnicities, religions, race or political affiliation. This is especially true in the case of Kosova and the Balkan region, because in the past we have faced major interethnic conflicts, as a result of which it is estimated that between 100 thousand and 150 thousand civilians have been killed throughout the region. Our region is still facing the consequences of those conflicts, beginning with the one in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia in 1992, continuing with the one in Kosova until 1999, and ending with the conflict in Northern Macedonia in 2001.

The continuation of the political and historical disputes between Kosova and Serbia continues to feed the narrative of hatred and interethnic intolerance which is keeping the memories of the interethnic conflict alive in the lives of the citizens in both countries. Asked "Are you willing to accept an individual belonging to another ethnicity into your community" most citizens, namely 64% of them, indicated that they are ready to accept and live with an individual belonging to another ethnicity in Kosova. Another 10% of respondents indicated that they are willing to accept individuals who belong to another ethnicity to some extent. A significan t number of respondents were reserved about whether or not to accept individuals belonging to another ethnicity. About 25% of respondents said they would not accept living with an individual belonging to another ethnicity. A ratio of 25% of those refusing to work and live with individuals belonging to other ethnicities is very worrying and serves as a source of interethnic clashes in Kosova and might serve as a source of instability in the country and the region.[39]

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39 Kosova Security Barometer 2019

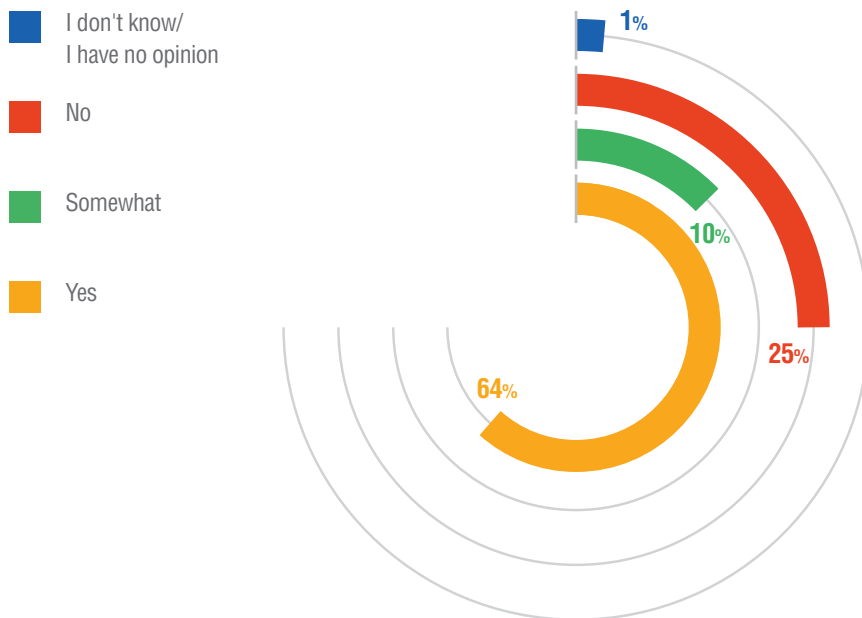|	
▮ (blue)	I don't know/ I have no opinion
▮ (red)	No
▮ (green)	Somewhat
▮ (yellow)	Yes

1%
25%
10%
64%

Figure 8- The degree of tolerance towards other ethnicities

Intolerance of other ethnicities is a potential for violent clashes between different ethnic groups living in Kosova. Impatience towards communities belonging to other ethnicities increases the nationalist extremism, which can be a source for the spread of ethnic-based violent extremism. Excessive nationalism can turn into violent extremism which affects the spread of other forms of extremism including the religious one.

1.5   TOLERANCE TO OTHER RACES

High tolerance towards an individual belonging to the other race is an indication that a society is open and resilient to violent extremism and radicalism. There are many examples in the world when due to race various conflicts have occurred, resulting in millions being killed. Living with individuals or communities belonging to other races still remains a little-known issue in Kosova, as our country is not an attractive country for individuals of different nationalities and races to migrate in search for a better life.

Despite the narrow opportunity for Kosovars to coexist with individuals belonging to other races, the community in Kosova has proven to be moderately open to accepting individuals of other races. Asked if they were willing to accept in their community individuals belonging to other races, over 60% of respondents indicated that they were willing to accept them in their community, while 30% of respondents were against their acceptance. The rest, or 8% of the respondents, were reserved to answer this question.[40]
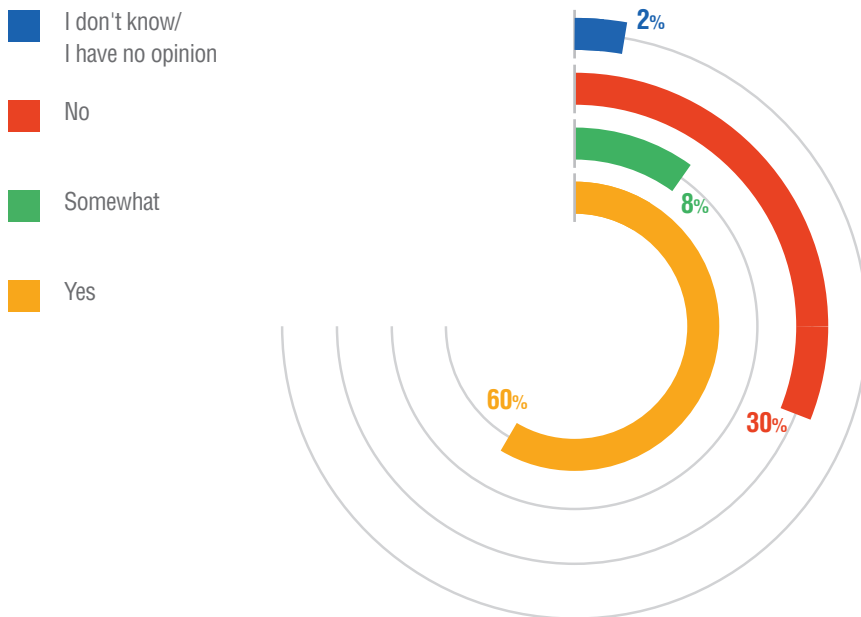

Figure 9- The degree of tolerance towards the individual other race

This is an indication that a respectable percentage of the population is not yet ready to be tolerant and to coexist with people of other races, alluding here to those coming from non-European countries. The data are not a good indicator of how the community in Kosova would react if they had the opportunity to coexist with individuals of other races in their community.

40   Kosova Security Barometer 2019.

1.6 RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

Like racial tolerance, religious tolerance is very important in preventing and combating violent extremism and radicalism in the country. Coexistence of religions contributes to reducing the potential for violence within communities belonging to different religious beliefs or particular sects within them. In recent years, we have witnessed major conflicts in the Middle East and Africa as a result of religious intolerance, which have affected even Kosova. As a result of the conflicts over so-called religious causes in Syria and Iraq, about 100 Kosova citizens have lost their lives fighting alongside various paramilitary organizations.[41]

I don't know/ I have no opinion
No
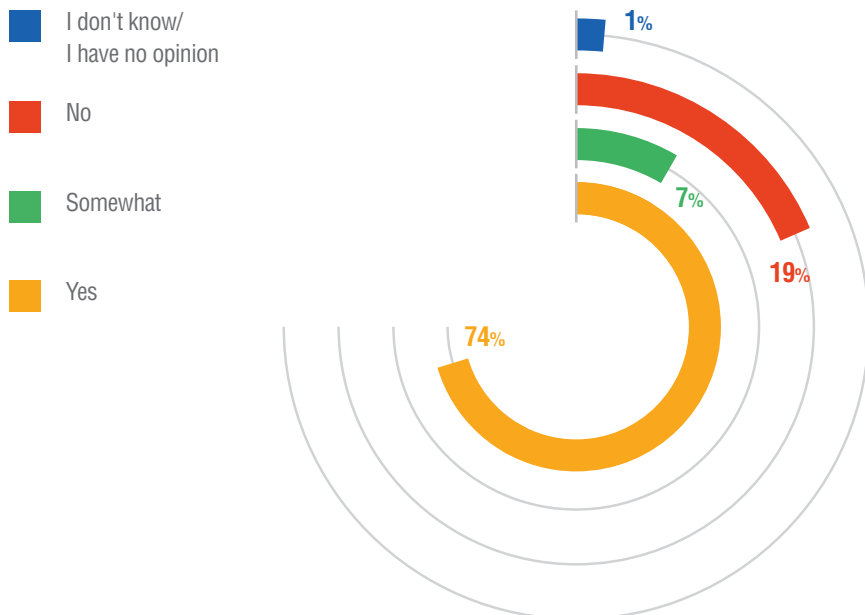**Somewhat**
Yes

1%
7%
19%
74%

Figure 10-The degree of tolerance towards a community or an individual belonging to other religion

41 Official data of law enforcement institutions in Kosova and data collected in the databases of the Kosova Center for Security Studies.

Kosova is known for coexistence between communities of different religious beliefs who have lived and worked in these lands. The KSB 2019 data speak of a great religious coexistence in Kosova. Asked if they are willing to accept in their community an individual belonging to a different faith, 73% of respondents said they are fully prepared to accept them in their community, while 19% of respondents stated that they would not accept any individual or community belonging to another faith. The rest, or about 8% of them, said that to some extent they are re ady to accept in their community individuals belo nging to another faith. [42]

Despite the high percentage of respondents who expressed their willingness to accept individuals belonging to another religion, the percentage of those who refused to accept individuals belonging to other religions in their community remains concerning. The total of 19% of those who refuse to cooperate or accept an individual belonging to a different faith creates a large or potential gap for religious violence and intolerance in the country. Many religious clerics from all religions in Kosova have contributed to this situation. It is worth noting that the Islamic Community of Kosova (BIK) has been clumsy in promoting intra-religious diversity and the tolerance of other religions. Furthermore, the Serbian Orthodox Church has continued to be a promoter of Serbian extremist nationalism, while the narration of some of its leaders has sometimes included political motives of hatred to the detriment of other peoples, especially the Albanian majority. In social networks one can still encounter messages from religious clerics who promote religious, racial, national and gender hatred and contribute to not accepting others who believe differently.

In general, the Kosova society remains tolerant of individuals or communities belonging to other races, ethnicities or religions. Most respondents stated that they are willing to coexist with communities and individuals of different ethnicities and religions. A solid percentage (nearly 20%) of respondents stated that they would not coexist with individuals belonging to other races, ethnicities or religions. This percentage can serve as a potential source of conflict between communities in Kosova. Such an approach could affect the minority community belonging to another religion being more vulnerable to violence, extremism or radicalism. BIK, the Orthodox Church and other actors in the country should start promoting the interethnic and inter-religious coexistence in Kosova, in order to create communities resilient to violence and radicalization.

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42   Kosova Security Barometer 2019

1.7   IDENTITY AND RESILIENCE

Identity crisis, alienation, inequality and a sense of belonging have been among the main factors that have influenced 5000 thousand individuals from European Union countries and beyond to join terrorist organizations in Syria and Iraq.[43]

A free environment must be created enabling communities to be resilient against violence and radicalisation in which citizens can freely express their religious, national and political affiliations or feelings. Stigma against the expression of one's religious, political or religious identity creates a space for self-isolation, injustice and alienation which makes individuals and communities more vulnerable to extremism and radicalization. Freedom of expression of religious or political affiliation helps create resilient communities in the country. [44]

National identity continues to be strongly emphasized among Kosova Albanians. When asked which part of their identity they feel most proud of sharing with their community, 55% of respondents stated that they feel very proud to share their national identity, followed by 18% who feel proud of their religious identity and 16% of those who feel proud to share their civic identity with their community. This is a factor of social resilience because the predominance of ethnic and national affiliation is an antidote to ideological influences from outside which become manifest in forms of modifying or changing the organic identity.

43   Oliver Roy "Globalized Islam- The search for a new Ummah" Columbia University Press 2006

44   Data from focus groups in Prishtina (November 2019), Mitrovica (September 2019) and Prizren (
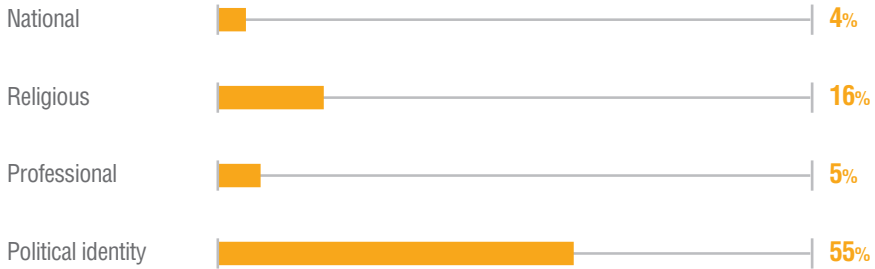
National	**4**%
Religious	**16**%
Professional	**5**%
Political identity	**55**%

Figure 11- Which part of your identity do you feel most proud of in your community

Earlier in the survey, respondents had the opportunity to state which of their defining characteristics they feel most proud to share with their community. In this part of the report they are given the opportunity to express which of their defining characteristics or affiliations are they the least free to share with their community.
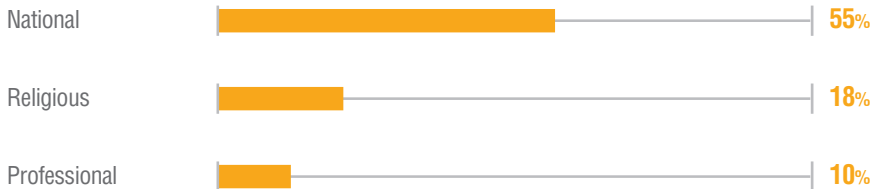
National	**55**%
Religious	**18**%
Professional	**10**%

Figure 12 -Which of your identities or defining characteristics do you hesitate to share with your community?

A large percentage of respondents were hesitant to respond in this question. Out of those who have respond, 55% of respondents said that they would be the least free to share their political affiliation or orientation with their community. According to them, the free expression of political affiliation or conviction in Kosova can be a great risk for your workplace   or even a reason to be less accepted by the community. Following the political affiliation, respondents were less free to express their religious identity or feelings with their community. A total of 16% of respondents indicated that the environment in Kosova do not provide sufficient freedom and tolerance to practice religion even though these are guaranteed by the Constitution. According to these respondents, if you are a more conservative religious practitioner in Kosova, you could easily be discriminated or stigmatized by your community and in the work place.[45]

According to conservative Muslim practitioners in Kosova, "when they understand that we are more conservative practitioners of Islam, it is much more difficult for us to be employed, whether in the public or private sector." Moreover, "it is more difficult to employ women in the public and private sector if they practice religion."[46] Communities in Kosova as well as state institutions should be more open to creating a safe and free environment where all citizens, regardless of their faith or how they practice it, are treated equally.

The national aspect remains the determinant identity of Kosova Albanians, as well as the community in which they live. The citizens of Kosova feel extremely proud of their national identity. While individuals have felt free to express their national identity with their community, the data show that a significant percentage are not free to share their political affiliation or religious beliefs with their community. The environment in Kosova has not yet managed to create free space to freely express religious identity or political affiliation. The lack of freedom to express political and religious affiliation in Kosova is one of the weak and vulnerable points in the country, which can potentially lead to the spread of violence and radicalism in Kosova.

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45   BKS2019

46   Data from the Focus Group in Prishtina, September 2019.

2. TRUST IN THE STATE AUTHORITIES AND CONNECTION WITH KOSOVA

2.1 CONFIDENCE IN THE STATE AUTHORITIES AND MIGRATION

The trust of Kosova citizens vis-a-vis the services provided by state institutions is very low. For years, citizens have expressed their dissatisfaction with Kosova's institutions due to the widespread corruption and organized crime in state institutions. According to respondents, state institutions work more to benefit and serve the interests of specific groups than for the general public.[47] Weak state institutions, state capture and the loss of hope for a better life have created an suitable environment for the spread of radical elements and violent extremism in the country.

The role of the Kosova Government and other state institutions is essential in preventing violence and conflict in Kosova's communities and creating an environment where citizens can feel safe and equal in the country. Such an environment has not been established for more than two decades now, and thus following the declaration of Kosova's independence (February 17, 2008) over 450,000 Kosova citizens have left the country for European Union countries.[48] The only sector that enjoys great support and trust from the citizens of Kosova is the security sector, namely the Kosova Security Force (KSF) and the Kosova Police (KP).[49]

The surveys conducted by UNDP in 2018, 2019 and 2020 on the trust of citizens in the Government of Kosova show major changes. The years 2018 and 2019 show that the citizens had a very low trust in the Government of Kosova led by Ramush Haradinaj. In 2018, the trust in the Government was only 30 percent, while in 2019 there was a decrease in the trust to 17 percent of citizens trusting the Government. The year 2020 was the year in which there was a great increase in citizens' trust towards the Government of Kosova. In the survey conducted

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47   Data collected by Focus Groups held in Prishtina (September 2019), Mitrovica (October 2019) and Prizren (September 2019).

48   Ibid.

49   Kosova Security Barometer 2019

by UNDP in April 2020, citizens expressed their opinion regarding the trust in the Kosova Government and the Assembly. A total of 60.70%[50] respondents showed that they have full trust and are satisfied with the work of the Government led by Mr. Kurti. Such a high degree of perceived credibility and trust in the Government of Kosova brings hope for a better cooperation between the citizens and the Government of Kosova which would help raise the community's resilience to various forms of extremism.
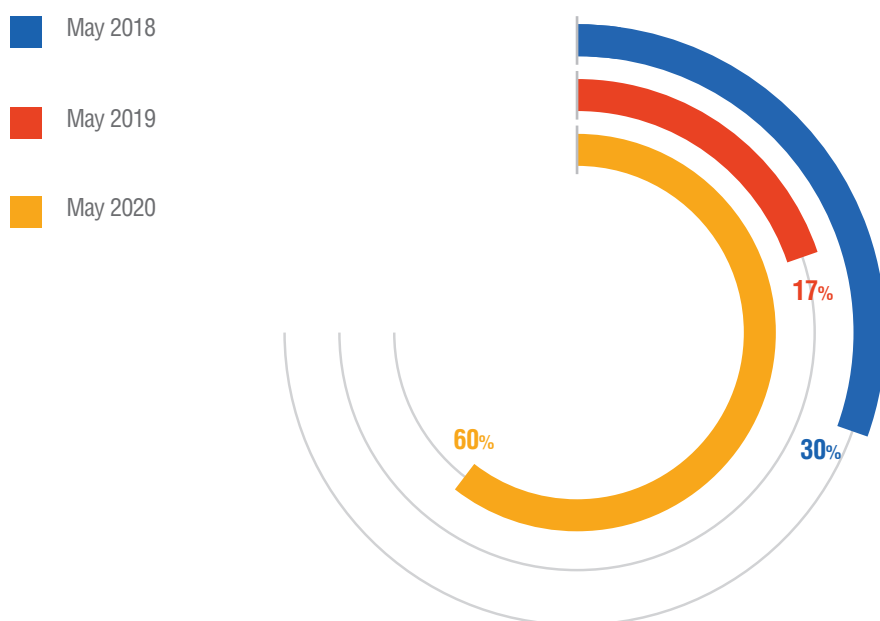

May 2018

May 2019

May 2020

17%

60%

30%

Figure 13- Citizens' trust in the Government of Kosova

Up until this point, the citizens of Kosova did not trust the Government and other state institutions at all because they were seen as a source of corruption, and there was little hope that these institutions could improve the lives of citizens. This great trust of the citizens in the Government decreased abruptly when in March 2020 the Government of Kosova was overthrown after the successful motion of non-confidence initiated by the LDK party, and voted by the parties which have governed Kosova for more than 20 years.

The state capture, corruption and organized crime spread in the country's institutions for nearly two decades have resulted in low trust of citizens in the justice and governing institutions of the country. Every year important international organizations which support Kosova in its development report about the spread of corruption in the public sector. The European Commission in its 2019 report estimates that Kosova is still in the early stages of fighting the organized crime and corruption in the public sector. This report assesses the country's justice institutions as being incapable of fighting crime and corruption. According to them, corruption is very widespread in the public sector.[51] This report also highlights the fact that the influence of politics on the process of recruiting civilian staff in the public sector is worrying [52] as no fair and transparent process of recruiting civilian staff in the public sector is ever guaranteed.

The report of Transparency International report also ranks Kosova very low for not being effective in its fight against corruption, assessing it as a country that has made little progress in the fight against corruption. Of the 180 countries in which the level of corruption is compared Kosova ranks 93rd, with 37 points in this index, in the same group with countries such as Northern Macedonia, Albania, Gambia and Mongolia in terms of results in fighting corruption in the public sector. [53]

Citizens have been dissatisfied with the work and services of state institutions such as the Government, the Assembly, the municipalities and the justice sector. Very few citizens trust the state institutions and state disappointment with the work of the institutions. According to the respondents, the state of Kosova is captured by politics and other interest groups that do not work for the common good. Countries that face challenges such as state capture, weak state institutions, and low public trust in state institutions are suitable for the spread of extremist and radical ideologies by various other states or organizations. The great dissatisfaction of the citizens resulting from the misgovernment in the country constitute a great potential for violence and will be used by various groups to spread radical elements.

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51 European Commission Report on Kosova 2019. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-Kosova-report.pdf

52 Ibid.

53 Transparency International Index https://www.transparency.org/files/content/pages/2018_CPI_Executive_Summary.pdf

2.1 MIGRATION AND RESILIENCE

Asked if they and their families feel safe with their life and future in Kosova, 37% of respondents said that they and their family feel insecure about planning their lives in Kosova, while the rest or 34% of respondents said they felt confident in planning their lives for themselves and their families in this country. 28% of respondents said that they feel moderately confident in planning their life in Kosova and that for a foreseeable future they do not think about leaving Kosova.[54] Because of insecure life in Kosova, the country has faced very large migration which has reduced the population by over 15% in the last decade due to poor education system, small employment opportunities and state capture . According to Eurostat data for 2018, Kosova's population is declining **by 15.4%** within a decade as a cause of migration mainly of the young population. [55] Lack of trust in the state and a sense of insecurity about life in Kosova made the population more vulnerable to various forms of radicalism and extremism.
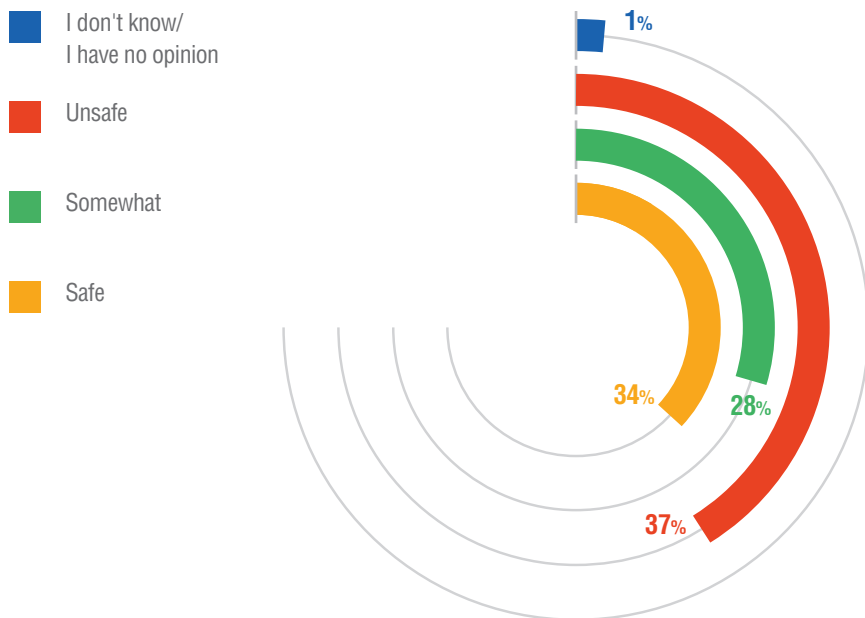

I don't know/
I have no opinion

Unsafe

Somewhat

Safe

1%

34%

28%

37%

Figure 14-How safe do you feel to live in Kosova

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54 Ibid.

55 The Guardian "Europe's south and east worry more about emigration than immigration- Poll" 2019 https: // www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/01/europe-south-and-east-worry-more-about-emigration-than-immigration-poll? CMP = Share_iOSApp_Other

Population change 2007 to 2018, %

+26.4%
Luxembourg has seen the highest increase in population

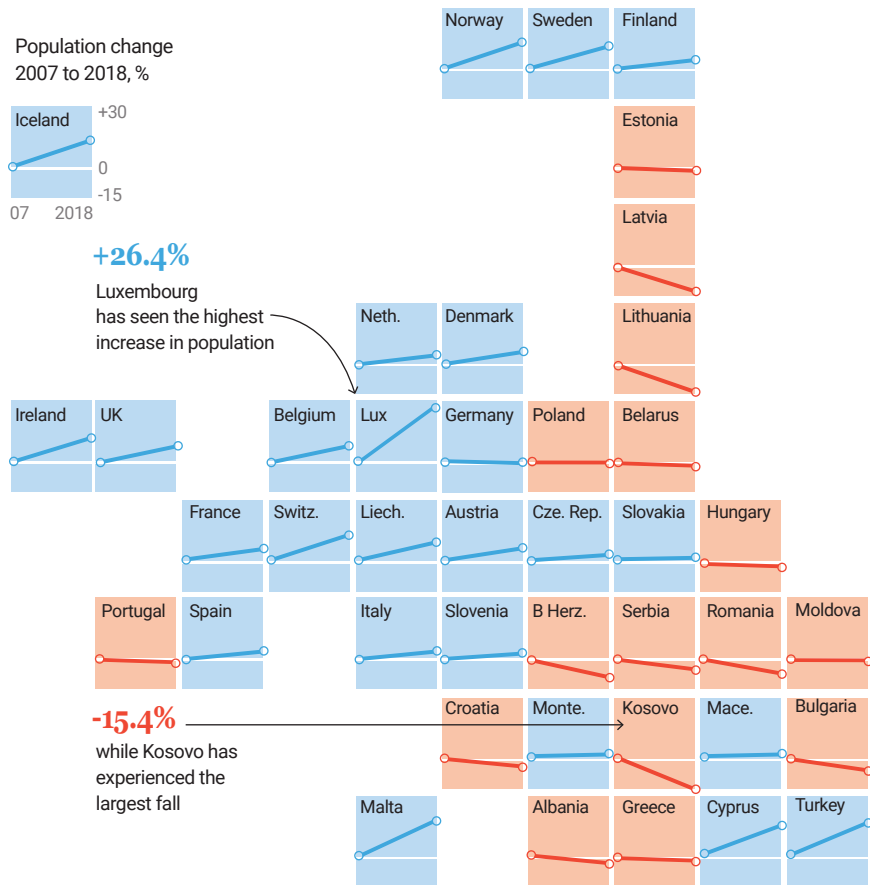**-15.4%**
while Kosovo has experienced the largest fall

Figure 15- EUROSTAT data on the migration rate of the population of Kosova in the last decade.

Source- Guardian graphic. Source Eurostat

The disappointment of the community with state institutions and Kosova makes communities vulnerable to extremism and radicalism. The community's resilience against violence and radicalism is closely linked to the ties that citizens have with where they live and their trust in the country's governing institutions. In its absence, citizens are looking for alternatives that enable them to live a better life and achieve their life goals. The desire for a new alternative and a better life, as well as lack of security and trust in the state of Kosova, make the community vulnerable to extremism and radicalism.

3. RELIGIOUS COEXISTENCE IN KOSOVA

3.1 RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS AND COEXISTENCE BETWEEN RELIGIONS

Based on the Constitution of the Republic of Kosova, our country is a secular and neutral state in religious matters.[56] The Republic of Kosova also ensures the preservation and protection of its cultural and religious heritage.[57] Based on the Constitution, Kosova secures and protects religious monuments within its territory. It also ensures that religions are free to independently regulate their internal organization, activities, and rites.[58]

According to the Constitution, "The Republic of Kosova will promote the preservation of the religious and cultural heritage of all communities, as an integral part of Kosova's heritage. The Republic of Kosova will have a special task to ensure the effective protection of the entirety of the sites and monuments of cultural and religious importance for the communities."[59]

Kosova's legislation, including the Constitution of Kosova, ensures that every individual can practice religious rights and freedoms to the extent that the constitutional and security order in Kosova is not endangered.[60] Furthermore, religious rights and freedom of practitioners in Kosova are also guaranteed by international human rights legislation, these being documents to which the Constitution of the Republic of Kosova is subordinated.[61]

According to the Government's census in Kosova, there are about 1.9 million inhabitants in the country. Based on this data, about 94% of the registered residents are Muslims, 2.2% Catholics, and 4% Orthodox Serbs.[62] The boycott of registration by the Serbs resulted in much lower calculation of the Serb community members in Kosova. Population census has been

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56 Constitution of the Republic of Kosova. Article 8

57 Article 9.

58 Ibid. article 39.

59 Ibid. article, 58

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid;

62 Kosova Statistical Agency "Population, Households and Housing Registration in Kosova 2011"

criticized by representatives of religious communities in Kosova, especially the Association of Kosova Tariqats and the Protestant Church. According to them, the census is not accurate in terms of religious affiliation (practitioner and non-practitioner). Religious communities such as the Protestant community and others think they have more members who are not reflected in the census process.[63]

3.2 TRUST IN RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Religious coexistence in Kosova is one of the largest and most unique values in Kosova, which has helped the country create a healthy and resilient community to religion-based violence and radicalism. There are no religious clashes between communities of different faiths in Kosova. Even when such cases are reported, they are related mainly to damage of property of religious communities or theft within religious buildings. These cases have been sporadic and have not been able to harm religious harmony in Kosova.

In 2018, 86 minor incidents of religious nature were reported to the Kosova Police. Most of the cases were related to property damage or thefts within religious sites. Of these, 59 cases belonged to the Islamic Community of Kosova (BIK), 23 to the Serbian Orthodox Church, and four to the Catholic Church in Kosova.[64]

Religion and its practice in every faith in Kosova is closely linked to Kosova's history, culture, religious and national tradition. These elements have been the deciding factors for Kosova to be among the few countries in the world where communities of different religions can live in complete peace and harmony.

There was an attempt to break the religious harmony in Kosova after the end of the 1999 conflict. At that time a suitable environment was created for various humanitarian organizations which, under the guise of aid provided to the poor of the country, invested in spreading radical elements of the Islam in Kosova as an exchange for their humanitarian help.[65] Most notable was the presence of religious organizations and foundations from the Middle East

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63 Interview with the leader of the Kosova Tariqat Community, Prishtina, March 2020

64 KOSOVA 2018 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

65 KCSS "Causes of Involvement of Kosova Citizens in Foreign Wars in an Unauthorized Way" Prishtina, April 2015

that invested heavily in spreading the religion in Kosova, educating the country's imams, and rebuilding mosques destroyed during the war.[66]

However, among the humanitarian organizations there were also those that, under the guise of the humanitarian situation and need in Kosova, worked to radicalize the population by spreading radical elements of the Islamic religion within the country's population which were foreign to the context of Kosova's culture and its tradition up to that time. [67] Moreover, the "return to religion" of Kosova's young religious practitioners, as claimed by some, has turned religion for a very small part of Kosova's community into a way of life and has removed the tradition of religious practice that these families have cultivated it in the past.[68]

Despite efforts to spread radical religious elements in Kosova, it did not succeed to an extent of having a major impact on the Islamic community in Kosova or damaging the religious coexistence in the country. Communities still remain religiously tolerant and open to other faiths, thanks to the long tradition of religious practice held by Kosova citizens. For the most part, Muslim believers in the country have closely linked religious practice to the national, cultural, and traditional element of Kosova. Such an embodiment between the religious and the national elements has made the Kosovar society very stable and protected from the radical religious elements.[69]

As much as we have full tolerance between religions in Kosova, clashes have been observed within religions, and especially within BIK. As a result of the problems still unknown to the public, two groups have been created within BIK and have been fighting each other for a long time.[70]

These internal clashes within BIK in Kosova have in many cases affected the practicing Muslims who have clashed among themselves over which imam should serve in a designated mosque. Such cases have been mentioned in Gjilan, Suhareka, Viti, Kaçanik, Peja, Dragash, Ferizaj, Mitrovica, and many other localities in Kosova, In those location the religious community is divided into two groups and religious rituals are performed separately in their

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66   Krasniqi Gezim 2015.

67   (Blumi 2005, 2)

68   Interview with a senior leader of the Islamic Community of Kosova. Prishtina, November 2019.

69   Diaspora and violent extremism in Kosova. KCSS 2020

70   Ibid.

mosques.[71] Such clashes have weakened the trust of the Muslim community in the Islamic Community of Kosova and have divided the Islamic practicing community in the country. [72]

Major clashes are also taking place between BIK and the Kosova Tariqat Community. The Kosova Tariqat Community does not want to be under the umbrella of BIK and has declared itself an independent religious community. These two religious communities clash mainly over the so-called "ideological problems" for which neither side has offered any serious arguments.[73]

Kosova is known for a good religious coexistence between different communities. Most religious practitioners in Kosova, especially the Muslim ones, have preserved the tradition of practicing Islam, which is embodied in the country's cultural, historical and national element. This approach has made Kosovar society more resilient to violent extremism. While there is great tolerance between religions in Kosova, clashes within religious sects in Kosova remain a challenge, especially within the Islamic Community of Kosova due to various interest groups within the BIK, as well as their agendas. The Kosova Tariqat Community also has major clashes with BIK.

Clashes between BIK and sects within it increase the potential for the spread of extremism and radicalism in the country, either by creating religious groups or parallel religious institutions in Kosova, which perform religious rituals outside the rules and practices created by BIK. This increases the potential for the spread of extremism and radicalism in the name of the misuse of religion, as has happened following the declaration of independence.

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71   KCSS "Causes of Involvement of Kosova Citizens in Foreign Wars in an Unauthorized Way" Prishtina, April 2015

72   Ibid.

73   Interview with a senior official of the Islamic Community of Kosova. Prishtina, December 2019 and interview with the representative of the Kosova Tariqat Community March 2020.

RECOMMENDATIONS

a)   Kosovo need to work on raising the awareness among the families and the communities when we encounter among them individuals showing early signs of radicalization. They should not be subjected to violence or pressure. Families and community members need to be equipped with the right knowledge of how to react when they encounter individuals who show early signs of radicalism and violent extremism in their family members or relatives. Designing a manual for the community and families on how to react towards individuals who show early signs of radicalization is necessary and it would help prevent the early prevention of violent extremism and radicalism as well as strengthen community resilience to violent extremism and radicalism;

b)   There is a very low level of trust between the community and state institutions at the central and local level which creates a suitable space for the involvement of various actors with dubious radical elements within the community. State institutions (central and local level) should increase their cooperation and communication with the community, in order to be closer to them and address the concerns of citizens. This approach affects the increase of community security and prevents the inclusion of radical external elements within the community;

c)   *History, local culture, tradition and national identity have accompanied the practice of religion in Kosova, which has made Albanians among the rare peoples in the world who have full inter-religious harmony. This approach needs to be further strengthened, preventing the tendencies of individuals and organizations with dubious radical elements to weaken social cohesion in Kosova through the introduction of radical religious elements. Religious, state and community institutions should contribute for this aim.*

d)   *The community in Kosova does not provide enough free space for the expression of political or religious beliefs in Kosova. A solid percentage of respondents (nearly 20%) indicated that they did not feel free to express their political affiliation or religious beliefs to the rest of the community. More local initiatives should be supported and promoted which enable community-level divergence in order to create a safer and freer environment for the expression of political affiliation and religious beliefs. Support for community-based*

non-governmental organizations should be increased in order to combat radical and conservative elements within the society;

e) There is a very good religious harmony in Kosova. Problems of a religious nature are minimal, and they do not affect the character of the good religious coexistence in Kosova. Clashes have been reported within religious communities in Kosova, especially within the practicing Muslim community in Kosova. Clashes within the BIK have led to the division of Muslim practitioners in the country. The BIK must find a way to counter the imams who do not follow BIK rules, reflect unity by focusing on the proper organization of religious life in Kosova, and prevent any radical elements in the country. Divisions and clashes within the Muslim community in Kosova. The clashes within religious communities in Kosova which may increase the potential for radicalism in the community, and make the community more vulnerable to various forms of religious extremism;

f) Development of critical thinking as a driver of resilience. Lack of development of critical thinking has been assessed as a driver of spreading of various forms of violent extremism and radicalism. Supporting initiatives that strengthen the development of critical thinking among the youth attending pre-university and university education is essential in creating a resilient society which is resistant to all forms of violent extremism and radicalism. The Ministry of Education and Science together with the local level should prioritize the development of critical thinking among the children. A strategy based on detailed activities for the development of critical thinking in children should be developed.

g) Strengthening local mechanism as a factor of resilience - Strengthening local mechanisms is one of the best ways to strengthen resilience at the community level. The local municipalities should build a concrete minimum 3-year local action plan to prevent all forms of violent extremism and radicalism. This document should serve as a basis for all local security mechanisms such as: KKSB, EVSP, local leaders, local NGOs, police, and other institutions which will run concrete activities to prevent the spread of all forms of extremism and radicalism in the local level;

h) Low trust in state institutions and the state capture are among the main causes for the spread of violent extremism and radicalism in the country. This has made citizens un-

sure of their lives in Kosova and has made them seek alternatives for a better life. Kosovo institutions must work to create equal opportunities for employment, education, justice, health and other services in order to restore citizens' trust in state institutions, which help create a resilient community to various forms of radicalism and violent extremism;

i)   Culture as a driver of resilience. In addition to the municipality of Prishtina (the capital), in other municipalities there is a lack of cultural activities for young people. The Ministry of Culture, in cooperation with the local mechanisms for culture and youth, should start organizing cultural activities at the local level for the youth of these municipalities. An increase of organization of cultural activities for young people would promote ethnic, religious and racial diversity among youth. This would affect the development of critical thinking of youth as a very important factor of resilience among young people;

j)   Promoting voluntary work - community work at the community level - is very vaguely developed among young people in the country. Promoting volunteer work and stimulating young people to participate in volunteer work and activities increases their cooperation with the community, and the sense of belonging among young people. This makes young people more involved in important community issues, and creates a chain of cooperation between local institutions, the community and young people, which is one of the best forms of strengthening community resilience and preventing all forms of radicalism and extremism;