POINT ONE: Kosovo Parliamentary Election 2017 – results from the perspective of Northern Kosovo Serbs

About the research:

Point One – Elections 2017 research on results of extraordinary elections in Kosovo 2017 aimed to offer analytical and statistical indication on expectation of northern Kosovo Serb community on priorities and positions that should be assumed by its elected representatives with regard to the interests of Serbian community in Kosovo.
Additionally, the research reviews the familiarity of northern Kosovo Serb with central level political dynamics and democratic bearing of the election process itself in the light of extensive report on illicit conducts of parties/lists running for the MP seats.

Research method: Face-to-face survey research (F2F)
Survey: 16 questions lasting approximately 5min
Research Period: June 12th – 15th 2017
Research location: Northern Kosovo, municipalities of North Mitrovica, Zvecan, Zubin Potok and Leposavic
Sample size: 200 respondents
Sample type: Stratified random sampling

Structure and questions used in this study were developed by AKTIV Program Office.
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Data collection and analyzes: Milica Radovanovic and Milos Timotijevic, CIVIC ENERGY CENTER
Executive summary

Political crisis in Kosovo caused by dysfunctional internal relations between parties constituting ruling coalition in Kosovo resulted with extraordinary election set for Jun 2017. The elections process took place midst indolence in dialogue process between Pristina and Belgrade and standstill in Kosovo EU-integration progress caused by dysfunctional relations within ruling collation and among the other reasons inability to assure majority for demarcation proposal between Montenegro and Kosovo. Kosovo Serbs were presented in 6 different lists/parties, unlike on the previous parliamentarian elections when sole runner for minority reserved seats was Srpska Lista i.e. citizens list, supporters of the Belgrade based parties gathered within sole entity. Exactly this synthetic composition of Srpska Lista and compelled unity, caused tangible internal strives, partition of several distinguished individuals, paving the way for more pluralistic representation of Kosovo Serbs at 2017 elections.

Principal conclusion of the election process and this study is raising interests of northern Kosovo Serb community for political processes within Kosovo constitutional framework. Not only that official and statistical data from this study testify unprecedented turnout in Kosovo elections, but the results of this study indicate raising familiarity with Kosovo political dynamics, key political options/leaders and their programs.

Second tendency, noted and recorded through this study, is related to the significantly low support of northern Kosovo community to coalition-based cooperation with leading Kosovo Albanian political options. This is contributed to overall distrusts and hostile ethnic relations dynamics in Kosovo but also to confrontational rhetoric nourished during the election campaigning. The 2017. parliamentary elections attested that main political options of Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians still tend to indulge the strong national sentiments in campaigning. While the leadership of the parties may observed this choice as a fruitful marketing, the consequences of such discourse for ethnic relations in Kosovo are grave. Ethnic bigotries exploited within intermittent stream of elections in Kosovo and Serbia leave very short period of time to instigate genuine ethnic cooperation initiatives. Thus, it is not risky to say that electoral disturbances in Serbia and Kosovo are fueling the persistent ethnic intolerance and that political elites in Pristina and Belgrade have not exhausted the political capital from mutual confrontation.

Finally, the electoral process itself in northern Kosovo have been deemed as incongruous, presented with irregularities at the pooling stations (according to the interviewees of this study) and various forms of pressures toward the voters in pre-election period. Predominant form of interaction regarded as pressure by interviewees was coercing to vote in a first place. Despite the greater pluralisms in entities running for seats reserved for non-majority communities, dominant perception was that the option with support of official Belgrade, is non-matched choice and lesser risks compare to emerging political parties of Kosovo Serbs. Thus, an incentive to practices voting right (practice that reportedly occurred) was assume to produce the predictable results (i.e vote for Belgrade backed option). This is also the root of mismatched interpretations of pre-election misconducts, while one interpretation regards such actions as legitimate voting encouragement campaign, the other regards these actions as illicit pressure.
Results:
The dominant impression of 2017 extraordinary parliamentary election is increased participation and interests of northern Kosovo Serb community for political processes originating in Kosovo constitutional framework. While earlier Kosovo elections, at various levels, have been presented with strong and active abstinence pressure, it seems that political developments between Kosovo and Serbia in last three years, demised strong opposition to participation of northern Kosovo Serb community in political processes at Kosovo level. Noticeable increase in election turnout (Diagram 1), and growing awareness on elections results (Diagram 2), both speak in favor of this tendency.

1. Have you voted at Kosovo's extraordinary parliamentary elections on June 11, 2017?

![Pie chart showing 55% Yes and 45% No]

2. Which political party/coalition has won the highest number of votes in Kosovo's parliamentary elections?

![Bar chart showing PDK-AK-NISMA with 59.50%, LDK-AKR with 0.50%, Vetevendosje with 1.50%, Serb List with 8%, and I don't know with 30.50%]

The question; Have you voted at Kosovo extraordinary parliamentarian elections in Jun 2017? (Diagram 1) was also validation question for the results of the study since reference i.e. comparable date are precisely determined by official reports from the Central Election Committee. The results of the study indicate 45% turnout, and correspond (within error margin) with preliminary data from Central Election committee that assess the turnout in four northern Kosovo municipalities combined at closely 43%.
About the election process

The perception of community on fairness and regularity of the election process is highly negative. Total 53.3% of the interviewees who casted the ballot at June parliamentarian elections, responded positively on question: Have you noticed the irregularity at polling stations? (Diagram number 3), while nearly one in five interviewees responded positively to question whether they have been subjected to various forms of pressure to take part in election process (Diagram No. 4).

3. Have you noticed the irregularity at polling stations?

![Bar chart showing 53.3% Yes and 46.7% No]

4. Have you been subjected to some form of pressure to take part in election process?

![Pie chart showing 19.10% Yes and 80.90% No]
Although qualified answers on these questions require substantial acquaintance with election process and its rules, extremely high number of responders indicating the violations and misconducts at polling station, undermines the community trusts in election process. Determinative majority of responders (54.5%) have stated that parties/lists running for the minority reserved seats have not had equal treatment in pre-election campaign (diagram No. 5). In an interview with A.R. (26), an civil observer at polling station in Zubin Potok, T.D observer in North Mitrovica, reported behaviors and conducts border-lining the procedural offences (suggestion who to vote for by local leaders at polling stations, questions is it allowed to take a picture of ballot etc.).

5. In your opinion, did all the political parties that represent the Serbian community have the same treatment in the pre-election campaign?

![Bar chart]

**Expectations**

The set of questions exploring the expectations of northern Kosovo community in post-election period reveals tangible pessimism on effects of election results on Kosovo Serb community, and reservations toward ability of leading Serb option, Srpska Lista to assure the attainment and fulfillment of prevailing interests of Kosovo Serbs. There were no objective means to determine whether this pessimism is rooted in belief that Srpska Lista is not capacitated to deliver the results or that antagonism between communities is so deep that no political options can change disregard to Kosovo Serbs.

Expectations of Kosovo Serbs that Srpska Lista will be able to negotiate certain concessions in return for support in formation of new Kosovo government are very low. Only 18% of responders believe Sprska Lista will be determinative factor in formation of new government. (Diagram 6). In correlative analysis, the almost 40% of interviewees believe new Kosovo government will be determined exclusively between leading Kosovo Albanian parties/coalitions, while 10% expect the deadlock in post-election negotiation over formation of new government and consequently new elections. (Diagram 7). Majority of responders (53.8%), however, withhold from any prediction.
The pessimism on effects of election results toward the future relations between ethnic communities in Kosovo is overwhelming. Only 2.6% of interviewees responded that election results will improve the relations between Kosovo Serbs and Albanians, while 97.4% of responses deemed negative or no affirmative effects (Diagram 8), with corresponding results on the question of effects of election results.
on relations of governments in Belgrade and Pristina. (Diagram 9). In a follow-up interview, Miodrag Milicevic, Executive Director of AKTIV, explained that such defeatisms over future of Kosovo Serb community in Kosovo stems from persistent aggressive discourse of Pristina Government towards population in northern Kosovo. Significant portion of pessimism was generated with the first results of elections, which indicated that coalition of PDK-AAK-NISMA won the highest percentage of votes. The coalition candidate for Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj is observed as disreputable and Kosovo Serb-hostile political leader wanted by Serbia on war crime charges. According to Mr Milicevic, recent media spotlight on Haradinaj’s detention in France on the ground of Serbia arrest warrant and escalation of inflammatory rhetoric that followed whole case, antagonized Kosovo Serbs towards the so-called “war coalition” i.e coalition PDK-AAK-NISMA led by former KLA commanders. Indeed based on first results, northern Kosovo Serbs do see Ramush Haradinaj as most probable new Kosovo Prime Minister (Diagram 10). The same correlation was observed on forecast on influence of election results on dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, where only just above 20% of interviewees considers continuation of dialogue likely in 2017. (Diagram 11).

8. How will the results of Kosovo's parliamentary elections affect the relations between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive, it will improve relations</th>
<th>Negatively, it will make new tensions</th>
<th>It will make no change</th>
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<td>2.60%</td>
<td>43.30%</td>
<td>54.10%</td>
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9. How will the results of Kosovo's parliamentary elections affect the relations between Belgrade and Pristina?

- It will improve relations between BG and PR: 35.80%
- It will worsen relations between BG and PR: 63.20%
- It will make no change: 1%

10. In your opinion, who will be the next Prime Minister of Kosovo?

- Ramus Haradinaj: 39.40%
- Abdullah Hoti: 3.20%
- Albin Kurti: 9.60%
- I don't know: 47.90%
Prevailing answers on the open question “What would you consider as priorities objectives of representatives of Serbian community in Kosovo parliament?” were indistinctive and widely formulated: “Improving of overall position of Kosovo Serb” and “improvement of security and safety for Kosovo Serb community”. Specific issues expected to be priorities for Kosovo Serb political leaders, identified by responders are returning process, formation of Association of Serbian Municipalities in Kosovo and creation of jobs.

In conclusion, increased participation of northern Kosovo Serbs in elections process in Kosovo appears not to be result of increased inter-community trusts and cooperation, but rather consequence of alleviated pressure and ever further, open support of official Belgrade to participation of Serbian community in Kosovo. The sense of “greater good” exploited within discourse over the elections (Belgrade-Mitrovica) also contributed to increased turnout but the side effects of such approach, that is further antagonisms of communities, are “due for payment”.

Apathy and pessimism overwhelm the northern Kosovo communities in expectation of formation new Kosovo government and treatment of Kosovo Serb community in next 4 years. On the ground of pre-elections discourse, the belief on northern Kosovo Serbs that their interests in process of normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo will be addressed, is poor. In general, in spite of the advancement of cooperation at political level, community relations in Kosovo still pose a serious challenge for new Kosovo government, international community and elected Serbian leaders.