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PUBLIC OPINION AND THE MILITARY

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Security Sector Reform and the Media

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The public of Serbia and Montenegro supports the participation of the Serbian and Montenegrin Armed Forces (SMAF) in the international peace missions; it is convinced the Army should take part in the combat against organised crime and it also believes the Army does not interfere with political processes in the country, which could hardly be said for the military secret services. Almost one third of the population is ready to face the doubts that the SMAF members (the members of its predecessors – the Army of Yugoslavia and Yugoslav People's Army) might have committed war crimes during the wars in the former Yugoslavia. The public estimates that the priorities in the military reforms are reduction of the armed forces, modernisation of the weapons and military equipment and improvement of the economic position of the army. These are only several results, listed briefly and taken from the report recently published by the Centre for Civil-Military Relations in Belgrade (CCMR), chosen for the beginning to illustrate the latest public perceptions on the military issues, measured in the survey which was carried out in the period between May and July 2003, as the first phase of the research “The Serbian and Montenegrin Public on Military Reforms”¹.

This research mainly focused on the views of Serbian citizens (without Kosovo and Metohija) and Montenegrin citizens on numerous aspects and dimensions in reforming the SMAF². The results are analysed and presented within three main groups, trying to answer three general questions: **how well-informed and how interested the citizens are on the reform of the Army, what the citizens think about the reforms of the Army and what they expect of these reforms.**

One of the motives for this research was the fact that the Serbian and Montenegrin Army (as well as its predecessor – the Army of Yugoslavia) has been repeatedly taking very high place on the list of the institutions citizens claimed to have most confidence in. This result, obtained in numerous surveys in the last decade, naturally provoked the researchers to find out more about the sources, reasons and other aspects of such a great trust of the citizens in the Army (“the highest point of confidence in the Army was reached by October 2000, the point which was almost reached again in April 2002 - 81%” – Hadžić, 2003 : 9). Let us remind here that the

¹ Research on the territory of Serbia, without Kosovo, was conducted in the period from June 5-11, 2003. The field work was conducted by the Centre for Political Research and Public Opinion, Institute for Social Sciences in Belgrade and its network personally interviewed 1495 citizens older than 18 years of age. Field research in Montenegro was conducted in the period between June 25 and July 1, 2003 when a total of 1,049 citizens older than 18 were interviewed in 17 municipalities. More about the general data in Glišić, Jasmina, Miroslav Hadžić, Milorad Timotić and Jovanka Matić. 2003. “The Public of Serbia and Montenegro on the Military Reform”, Belgrade: Goragraf

² The second part of this project, dealing with the status of reforms of the Army in the main media in Serbia and Montenegro, will not be presented in this paper.

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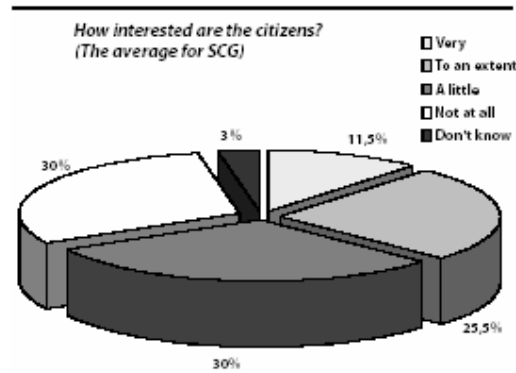
situation in Europe was to some extent similar in this regard in the autumn 2000, when “more than seven Europeans out of ten (71 %) say to be rather confident in the military”, with the lowest confidence in Spain (65%) and the highest in Finland (91 %)” (Eurobarometer, 2000 : 2). However, there is no need to explain further the difference in the social context in Europe and in Serbia and Montenegro. Namely, the trust was huge even in Serbia under Milošević’s regime, the citizens “overlooked the notorious fact that the army was also exposed to the destructive effects of the consequences of the war (self) destruction of its society and state”, they “did not want to or could not face the fact that the Army and its leading generals were one of the key instruments of Milošević’s omnipotence” and they did not take into consideration that “this army, under different names in the last 10 years, was defeated in four internal wars” (Hadžić, 2003 : 10). In 2003, citizens still claim they have great confidence in the Army – the possible reasons, according to the results of the CCMR survey, are to be discussed later.

The issue of trust was only one among numerous topics explored through the analyses of public opinion in Serbia and Montenegro. In the country facing radical reform of the Army, it was important to find out what expectations the citizens have in regard to this matter. Checking the public’s position on Serbia and Montenegro’s security integration, tracing the opinion on SCG’s possible membership in the Partnership for Peace Programme and NATO and investigating citizens’ interest in democratic civil control of the armed forces were, naturally, accompanied by examination of the public reactions to “hot questions” as mentioned in the first paragraph of this text.

HOW WELL-INFORMED AND HOW INTERESTED ARE THE CITIZENS

Searching for the answer to the question – how “hot”, in general, the military issues really are for Serbian and Montenegrin public, we faced the controversial fact: there are few citizens who said they were “very interested” in articles and broadcasts on military and defence issues – only 12% in Serbia (11% in Montenegro). On the other side, even two and a half times more – 30.4% in Serbia and 29.7% in Montenegro – said they “*were not interested at all*”. In other words, every eighth citizen of SCG finds these topics extremely interesting – compared to the fact that every third person finds these subjects to be completely uninteresting. However, let us take a closer look at the answers to the question of citizens’ interest. Almost one-third of the respondents say they are “*a little interested*” in these problems and there is, also, a high percent of those who stated they were “*interested to an extent*” – 29.7% in Serbia and 29.8% in Montenegro. Therefore, the majority of the public in the country (66% of the citizens) show some interest – “a little”, “to an extent” and “great” one.

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On the other side, almost the same number of citizens said they were “*poorly*” or “*very poorly*” informed on military and defence activities (67.5% in Serbia and 71.1% in Montenegro). The most drastic answer (“*very poorly*” informed) was circled by one third of the respondents. There are very few “*experts*” in these issues – only 2.4% in Serbia and 2.7% in Montenegro say they are “*very well*” informed, while 22% questioned in Serbia and 19% in Montenegro consider themselves “*well*”- informed.

In refer to the information sources, designated as the main “*suppliers*” of information, answers in Serbia are, to some extent, different from those obtained in Montenegro. *Television* took the first place in Serbia, as the most important source of information for 28.4% citizens, while in the other state member only 11.2% chose this answer. In Montenegro, the largest number of the respondents said that the most important source of information was “*personal experience from the army*” – 26%, whereas 23% citizens in Serbia claim the same. Many also rely on information they get from “*acquaintances who are now in the army or recently left the army*” – 22.9% in Serbia and 26.3% in Montenegro. Near the bottom of the list, we find *daily papers* – where 11% of the respondents in Serbia consider them the most important source and 15.6% polled in Montenegro. Only a small number of citizens think that radio programmes are crucial for getting information on military issues (2%, 2.1%)³. The most modest percent – 0.2% of the Serbian citizens and 0.1% Montenegrin residents get information through the *Internet* and *foreign media*. Data that follows show that these themes, obviously, are very specific and that the picture mediated by media is not what the citizens look for first. Media, here, have lost the battle with direct experience: if we put together those who get information mostly through newspapers and radio and TV programmes, on one side, and those who learned most about military matters through their own experience or through an acquaintance, on the other one, the percent ratio in

³ When in the parenthesis, the percents are always given for Serbia first and then for Montenegro

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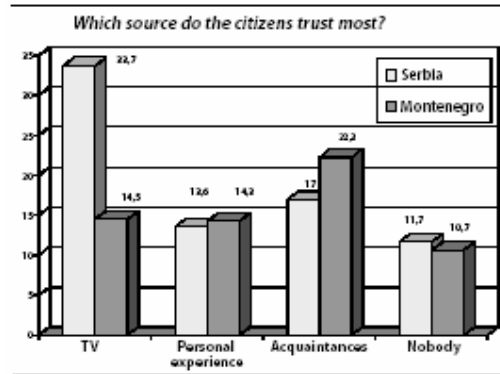
Serbia is 41.4% to 45.9%. In Montenegro, the result is of even more contrast – 28.9% to 52.3%. In regard to this issue, it is worthwhile mentioning that a certain number of respondents could not decide at all which source of information to designate as “most important” – in Serbia 11.7% and in Montenegro even 17.5%.

In regard to the question of confidence in the information sources, the responses we received were, at first glance, contradictory to data just presented suggesting that less people claim to believe in their own “*personal experience*” (13.6% of the respondents in Serbia and 14.3% in Montenegro) and very few more trust their own acquaintances now serving in the Army or those who had recently left it (17% in Serbia and 22.3% in Montenegro). This paradox can be easily understood if we keep in mind that the respondents could choose only one information source as the one they had confidence in the most. Therefore, a list of 55 information sources was compiled and the “votes” were dispersed on many newspapers, radio and TV stations. Amongst them, the first place in Serbia was taken by *TV Beograd (RTS)* with 23.7% followers. In Montenegro, the “magic box” did not succeed in gaining credibility over personal experience or information received by acquaintances, so *TV Podgorica*, *TV CG*, gained 11.9% of votes. In Serbia, *B 92* took second place, with 4.3% of the respondents’ trust, while the third place was taken by *TV BK* with 2.8%. However, even so small, “TV percents” are unreachable for newspapers. We will mention only the three highly ranked daily newspapers in Serbia – *Večernje Novosti* with 2.7%, *Blic* with 2% and *Politika* with 1.7%. Concerning this question, the last points on the list are interesting: the fact should not be disregarded that as much as 11.7% of the respondents in Serbia and 10.7% in Montenegro – answered “*not one*” to the question “list the source that you trust the most”. Those who circled “*I don’t know*” also deserve attention – 14.4% in Serbia and 16.9% in Montenegro. The answer “*I don’t know*” can, of course, also be interpreted as “I can’t decide because I trust many”, but it also most probably means that the respondents do not trust any information source⁴.

⁴ “Therefore, the majority of citizens generally takes a sceptic view toward media and have no confidence in any of the media in particular but they make different choices and combinations”. Yet, they are not so careful when it comes to the validity of “their own opinion which helps them collect the information within ‘a real picture’.” (transl. J.G.), (Pavičević, Djordje, 2003 : 85, in Golubović, Z. et al. “Politics and Everyday Life”)

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The number of “don’t knows” in this survey would be, perhaps, alarming for the researchers concerning the quality of the questionnaire if it was not for the specific topic examined. As it will be discussed later, the issues of military and defence were rarely clearly perceived or understood by public opinion, in Serbia and Montenegro or in Europe. However, concerning the next question, the number of respondents who answered, “*I don’t know*” is, in one word, alarming. Even 38.5% of the citizens of Serbia, i.e. 38% of the citizens in Montenegro answered that they “didn’t know” if the media give - enough, little or too much attention to the army and defence! The next question put them in an even greater dilemma – 46.1% of the population in Serbia and 45.9% in Montenegro “do not know” the answer to the question whether the media inform of the army and defence – objectively, with too much praise or too negatively. When we come to these questions, “a black hole” in the public opinion on these issues can be fully seen. On the one hand, this is the price of distrust in media, which was directly illustrated by the presented data, and on the other hand – this deals with a theme that our respondents admit they are “poorly” or “very poorly” informed on, and what they do know, they basically did not learn through the media. The fact the media could do a great deal to help here can be seen by the data that the least number of respondents believe that the media give “*too much*” attention to these issues – only 2.2% in Serbia and 1.9% in Montenegro. Therefore, there is no risk of exaggeration in reading/watching material on these issues, at least – not for the time being. Contrary to this, on the average, every third citizen in Serbia and Montenegro believes that too little attention is given to the army and defence, although every fourth citizen rated the reporting as objective. In regard to not being objective, data in the member states of the union “crossed” in a very interesting way: in Serbia more think that the media praises the army – 16.5% in comparison to 7.5% in Montenegro, while in Montenegro more people think that journalists write too negatively – 20.4% in Montenegro in comparison with 7.1% in Serbia.

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Citizens are most interested in the regular activities of the army – 28.2% of the respondents in Serbia and 22.6% in Montenegro would like to be informed about the *everyday life of soldiers, their training, drills, education, etc...* The next group of themes that they consider to be interesting include *reducing and reorganising the army, its professionalisation, modernisation, shortening the duration of military service, the possibility of civil service, etc...* These issues attract the attention of 23% of the Serbian citizens and 26.2% of the Montenegrin citizens. With a smaller percent of “votes”, but in a still prestigious third place on the list of themes that media, in the opinion of the citizens, should give most attention to is: the *democratic and civil control over the army* (9.5%, 11.9%). The “third sector” can be at least partially satisfied that of public interest are themes such as *military budget spending* (4.3% of the respondents in Serbia and 4.2% in Montenegro believe this issue deserves the greatest media attention), *protection of human rights in the army* (2.2%, 2.4%), cases of *crime and corruption* in the army (3% in Serbia and 2% in Montenegro), *role of the JNA and Yugoslav Army in the wars in the 90’s, the Hague trials of former members of the army* (3.6%, 6.8%). Amongst the listed themes, which in the political and media field are pushed by a number of non-governmental organizations including the Centre for Civil-Military Relations, there are issues that every fourth resident of Serbia and Montenegro considers to be a first rate media attraction.

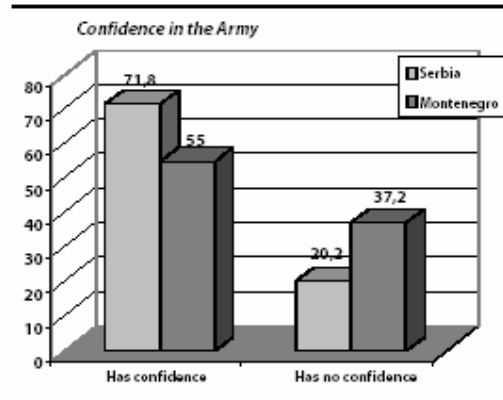
What can be done so that media reporting on military and defence issues is better? Again, some respondents admit that they “do not know”. However, an overwhelming majority (72.5%, 73.9%) believe that the situation would be significantly better *if journalists were specialized on these themes*, and a significant number of respondents support greater *openness of the army and Defence Ministry towards journalists* (64.2%, 66.1%). According to the majority, the Supreme Defence Council should inform the public at least twice a year on the situation in the army and defence (72.8%, 71.2%).

CITIZENS ON THE SITUATION IN THE ARMY

The survey “The Serbian and Montenegrin Public on Military Reforms” threw better light on the issue of great confidence the public still has in the Serbian and Montenegrin Army. The results confirmed its level – in Serbia 71.8% trust it, while in Montenegro 55% of the respondents – the difference for which one of the initial explanations has been offered through the different attitudes “of the Serbian and Montenegrin political elite, media and public towards the Army during the ‘finish’ of the crisis of the old regime (1997-2000)” (Hadžić, 2003 : 42). Namely, in this period, the Montenegrin government had used the threatening position of the Army and military leaders against the articulated desires for an independent state in this part of Yugoslavia so the public odium towards the Army had been “artificially” created. (As aforementioned, this has

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obviously been detected by the part of Montenegrin public, now claiming media criticize the Army too much.)



The public opinion is still divergent on the question of sources of trust in the Army. There is no “one”, “main” reason. The maximum of votes has been given to the explanation that the “*army is the main guarantee for peace and security*” (21.5%, 18.7%), while the strong connection of the Army with the people was the second reason by importance (17.9%, 15%)⁵. Further explanation can also be found in the respondents’ evaluation that in comparison with the society (in the state with the worldwide “bad reputation” concerning this problem) the range of corruption and crime in the Army is significantly less (42.8%, 40.4%). However, it must be also noted that information about possible corruption and crime in the Army is not accessible to the public, which also claims to be poorly informed on the Army in general. The additional, indirect conclusion about the reasons for great confidence can be as well reached through the view shared by more than half of the respondents that in the Army, human rights are respected (54.2%, 59.0%).

Although majority always catches the attention of researchers, the important minority of one third of the respondents from Montenegro (37.2%) and one fifth from Serbia (20.2%) who do not have confidence in the Army has not been neglected here. When choosing the reasons for their suspicions, citizens again decided on a range of options, so the highest percentage judged they couldn’t believe the institution which kept high officers from Milošević’s time (13.8%, 16.2%).

The citizens in general trust more the Army as a whole than the institutions and organs that command and control it. The General Staff of the Army has to some extent better rating by a few

⁵ “This is the institution which is the symbol of the state, it gives a certain amount of safety. The Army of Yugoslavia is not a professional army, it is people’s army, each of us has somebody who is serving at the moment, whom one identifies with this army”, explained Ljiljana Bačević, from the Institute of Social Studies in Belgrade in an interview given to “Mostovi”, Year 4 Number 18, 1. 5.2002. (transl. J.G.)

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percents in both member states (51.1%, 59,1%) than the Supreme Defence Council (47.2%, 56.2%). On the other hand, the control question provided different data: one half of the respondents think that the General Staff of the Army “*still wants to preserve the power and privileges of its members*” (41.9%, 39.7%). (Controversial attitudes as this one certainly deserve special attention of the researchers.) The Defence Ministry gained the confidence of 47.4% of the respondents in Serbia and 56.1% in Montenegro. It is surprising that the military security service enjoys almost the same trust (45,5%, 50,5%) and mistrust (21.0%, 26.7%) of the respondents. There was a noticeable increase only in the number of those who did not know how to estimate this or were undecided (33.5%, 22.8%).

The important difference is found between the confidence in the command-controlling organs, which is greater in Montenegro, compared with the trust in the Army (opposite result found in Serbia). “One of the reasons for this comes from the fact that, for example, the VSO (Supreme Defence Council, J.G.) now convenes and decides in full composition, and Montenegro has two representatives in it, or that the Defence Minister “is interfering in his own job for the first time” and he offensively promotes the Army reforms in public. In favour of this is probably the visibly reduced presence of the Army and its leaders in the public, especially the political one” (Hadžić, 2003 : 47).

One of the results, estimated as rather important, refers to the attitude of Serbian and Montenegrin public toward the issue of war crimes. Contrary to the familiar idea, widely spread locally and abroad, suggesting that the citizens are not prepared to face the suspicions on war crimes, possibly committed by the members of the SMAF (its predecessors – the Army of Yugoslavia and Yugoslav People's Army), data shows that only 26% of those in Serbia and 25.8% in Montenegro negate that the members of “*our army committed war crimes in the wars in Croatia, BiH, and Kosovo and Metohija*”. Furthermore, almost four of ten citizens (37.2%, 38.8%) think that members of the Army committed crimes. Nearly the same number of them (36.8%, 35.4%) did not know or did not want to give their opinion on that fact.

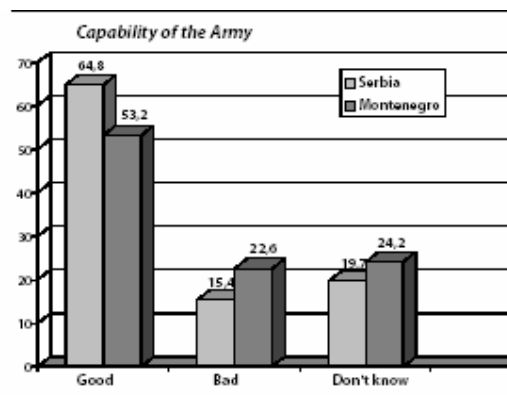
The survey “The Serbian and Montenegrin Public on Military Reforms” offers intriguing picture of the attitudes shared by the citizens toward the situation in the Army. Close to half the respondents positively evaluated the work of key people who command and lead the Army. Defence Minister Boris Tadić has the best score of 49.4% of the positive attitudes in a joint sample (in Serbia 51.7%, and in Montenegro 47.1%). Chief of the SMAF General Staff General Branko Krga is on the second place, with an average of 48% of positive scores (47.4%, 48.6%), while in third place was the President of SCG Svetozar Marović with an average of 45.15% (40.2%, 50.1%). The share of negative scores for all three is around the tenth to the fifteenth mark on the scale. On the other side, only one third of the respondents said they believed that

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the majority of officers supports accelerated Army reform (27.1%, 37.7%). It is not that citizens openly doubt it – very few do (14.3%, 14.3%), but around half of them simply could not estimate this (58.6%, 47.9%).

Serbian and Montenegrin public believes to have more room for giving opinion on the standard of the Army members. They are obviously aware that it has become significantly worse so one half (51.1%, 50%) think that the soldiers live and work under poor conditions, and close to one third of them (27.8%, 26.3%) oppose this. Fewer respondents think that the living standard of the officers is not satisfactory (42.7%, 43.2%), while only one fifth of them (22.7%, 28.6%) hold an opposite view. Evaluating how well equipped and armed the Army is, two thirds share the conviction that conditions are not so good referring to this (60.7%, 61.9%) while only one seventh (15.0%, 14.8%) still believes that the SMAF is well equipped and well armed. A little over a fifth (24.4%, 23.4%) refrained from giving their opinion.

Surprising is the fact that, in spite of these views, significant majority in Serbia and Montenegro (64.8%, 53.2%) thinks that the Army is capable of completing its assignments. Fewer respondents do not agree with this (15.4%, 22.6%) and the others (19.7%, 24.2%) withheld from giving their opinion. It can be assumed that “the majority is projecting their wishes into this positive attitude or gave an estimate by inertia, but it still needs to be found out how it is possible to expect that the Army, where soldiers and officers live in very poor conditions, and which is ill-equipped and ill-armed, can successfully carry out its assignments” (Hadžić, 2003 : 50)



The quick and easy conclusion on the relation between the Army and politics could be that the Army has been withdrawing from the political scene. About one half of the respondents (44.0%, 52.2%) think that the Army today is less involved in politics in comparison to Milošević's time. When they compare political activity of the Army today with the period of Vojislav Koštunica,

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fewer citizens think it has been reduced (35.1%, 44.6%). Only very few think this activity is growing today (under 10%). However, in spite of the first impression, it is worth noticing that there is an important number of those who think that military secret services have significant influence on political events in SCG (40.8%, 45.1%). Nearly the same number (46.7%, 41.1%) could not estimate this or refrained from making estimation.

A set of questions in this survey was aimed to investigate the opinion on different aspects of respecting human rights in the Army. Beside already mentioned findings, let us here only present few more results. When asked whether the rights of “*all believers*” in the Army are respected, around one third gave positive response (33,2%, 37,4%). The number of those who think these rights are not respected is around one fifth (18.4%, 22.0%), whereas the percent of people who refrain from the answer is about two fifths (48.4%, 40.5%). The number of those who were reserved remains high (39.5%, 43.7%) when come to the question on whether (illegal and hidden) introducing priests into military units contributes to strengthening the combat morale of the military units. About one fourth of the questioned (24.2%, 23.6%) agreed with this statement, whereas more than one third (36.2%, 32.8%) had an opposite opinion. Majority of the public share a liberal attitude towards conscientious objectors. More than half of them from Serbia (54.6%) and more than two thirds from Montenegro (66.7%) support the right of the conscript to, for personal reasons, serve his military service without arms, while one fifth of the respondents (21.4%, 17.3%) opposed it. In this case, the number of those who did not want to or could not decide also decreased (23.9%, 16.0%).

EXPECTATIONS OF THE CITIZENS FROM REFORM OF THE ARMY

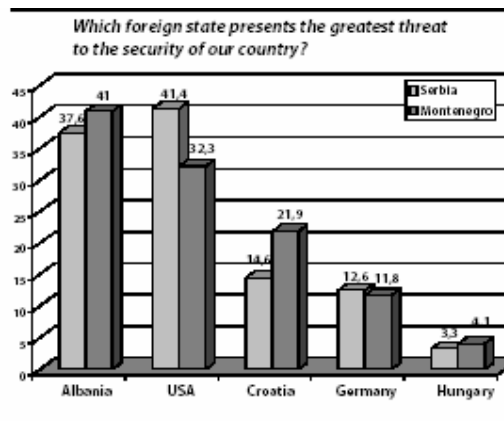
Exploring the expectations the citizens have from reform of the Army, the first group of questions was directed to measure the public opinion on security threats. As most important threats to the security in the world, respondents find: *conflicts over natural resources* (20.9%, 24.5%), *general conflict between the Christian and Muslim world* (16.2%, 17.7%) and *conflict between rich and poor countries* (19%, 16.3%). Choosing among the possible answers in rank 2, citizens decided that the threats are: *uncontrolled spread of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons* (20.1%, 18.3%), again, *conflicts over natural resources* (17.9%, 20.2%) and *international terrorism and organized crime* (17.6%, 18.7%). Let us remind here that according to the latest results, public opinion in the candidate countries (CC-13) believes (89%) that among the first priorities of the European Union is the fight against unemployment, poverty (87%), terrorism (86%) and organised crime (83%) (Eurobarometer, 2003).

Citizens of Serbia and Montenegro estimate that the greatest dangers to the security of our country in rank 1 are: *conflicts in nationally mixed environments* (42.2%, 35.9%), *economic and*

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social conflicts and tensions (14.1%, 16.9%) and *renewing wars on the territory of the former Yugoslavia* (9.8%, 14.6%). The second threat of importance is: *organized crime (smuggling arms, people, drugs, »washing« money)* (25.7%, 19.2%), again, *economic and social conflicts and tensions* (19.3%, 15.2%) and once again *conflicts in nationally mixed environments* (14.8%, 16.1%).

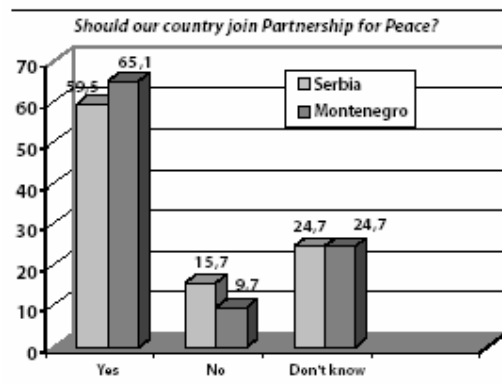
When asked to estimate which foreign state presents the greatest threat to the security of our country, respondents selected: Albania (37.6%, 31.0%), USA (31.4%, 32.3%), Croatia (14.6%, 21.9%) and Germany (12.6%, 11.8%). "The estimated threats to our security from Albania are undoubtedly conditioned by the earlier role of Albania in initiating or approving the protests of Kosovar Albanians against the Serbian government. Attitudes towards the US are undoubtedly predominately conditioned by the intervention against Slobodan Milošević's regime in 1999. The public, of course, cannot balance this fact in relation to very good relations and cooperation with the US earlier" (Timotić, 2003 : 70).



Rather small percentage of offered answers was accepted when respondents had to choose our greatest friends in the world. Only 16.6% of the respondents from Serbia and 4.8% from Montenegro think that it is Greece, 11.9% from Serbia and 14.0% from Montenegro that it is Russia, 2.9% from Serbia and 2.0% from Montenegro think that it is France. The US got only 1.2% votes from Serbia and 5.9% from Montenegro. Still, the majority of the public think that we should *turn to the Western world and become members of the European Union* (32.1%, 31.6%) since this would most contribute to the security of our country. The idea that we should *maintain our independent position and rely on our own defence force* had fewer supporters (19.7% 15.6%). Next on the list of the ways to improve our security are: *developing cooperation with neighbouring countries* (13.0%, 14.0%), and *joining the Partnership for Peace* (9.3%, 11.2%).

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The issue of personal security is so intriguing that it could/should certainly be explored additionally. The survey shows that in Serbia and Montenegro this mostly depends on *the capability of the state leadership* (40.8%, 43.6%), a *strong army* (11.8%, 14.9%) and *independent judiciary* (11.0%, 10.9%). External factors do not seem to be very important, since *joining strong military alliances* - as a guarantee of the security of the country, did not gain much public support (5.3%, 8%). However, although it is not found to be particularly important for personal security, the public is in favour of security integration of the country. Most people (59.5%, 65.1%) agree that *our country should become a member of Partnership for Peace* while small percentage (15.7%, 9.7%) was against this option. The additional confirmation was received on the statement that joining Partnership for Peace would be of *more use than harm* to our country gave the following results: *agree* (54.4%, 59.8%); *do not agree* (17.5%, 16.2%). Somewhat different answers were given to the question on *confidence in Partnership for Peace as an institution: has confidence* (27.9%, 54.3%), *does not have confidence* (46.1%, 26.4%). It seems that, “despite the rational position of joining Partnership for Peace, a certain psychological reservation persists towards this western program as something that shouldn’t be given such confidence” (Timotić, 2003 : 76).



While the public was rather convergent in both state members on previous issues, the significant difference noticed at the question of confidence in PfP can also be seen when it comes to the point of possible membership in NATO. Some 28.0% of the respondents from Serbia and 36.9% from Montenegro agree that *our country should become a member of NATO* while 49.2% of the respondents from Serbia and 39.7% from Montenegro do not agree with this statement. Among the possible explanations is, certainly, the idea that “the NATO intervention in 1999, which was

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much more intense in Serbia than in Montenegro, caused animosity and reservation of the public opinion in Serbia in relation to all western institutions and organisations” (Timotić, 2003 : 77). This can be supported by the expressed confidence in NATO: *have confidence* (11.5%, 28.7%), *do not have confidence* (74.9%, 55.3%). The public becomes “united” again on the question *should our country drop charges brought against NATO for the aggression in 1999* - 59% of the respondents in Serbia and 47.7% in Montenegro gave negative answer. The same answer was given persistently even if withdrawing charges were the condition for entry into western alliances (“negative” - 42.3%, 35.9%) or if Croatia and BiH withdrew their charges against FRY for aggression and genocide in that case (“negative” - 45.6%, 38.4%).

Very important set of questions aims to explore public opinion on the directions of reform of the Army. “Basically, the public quite realistically observes the priority tasks in reforming the army: this is reducing the number of members, modernisation of arms and equipment and improvement of the economic position of the army. Establishing democratic civil control over the army and limiting the power of secret military services is also one of the priorities, but ranked below those previously mentioned” (Timotić, 2003 : 83).

In referring to the question: *how to further develop our army*, less than one-fifth of the respondents (18.9%, 14.5%) said *the army should be maintained at the present number of members and modernized according to the possibilities of society*. Small percent believed *that the army should be abolished* (3.2%, 7.8%) and the greatest number of respondents by far (55.0%, 51.4%) believed that *the number of army members should be reduced and modernised according to the possibilities of the society*. The idea of creating *separate armies of Serbia and Montenegro under a joint command* did not get much support (4.7%, 7.6%).

Do we need “*the assistance of foreign experts is necessary in reforming the army*”? The public in Serbia does not think so – 49.7% disagree with this possibility, while 28.7% would accept it. In Montenegro, majority of the public is in favour of this idea – 42.4% but rather large number of the Montenegrin is against it, as well – 37.8%.

The list of key priorities in reforming the army, according to the most of the respondents is as follows: in rank 1, *shortening military service and reducing the number of army members* is on the first place (33.6%, 36.7%), the second was taken by *professionalisation of the army* (22.5%, 20.0%) while *modernisation of arms and equipment* is on the third place (14.7%, 11.7%). In regard to the same question, in rank 2, the list includes: *modernisation of arms and equipment* (25.4%, 23.6%), *professionalisation of the army* (18.4%, 19.2%) and *improvement of the economic position of the army* (17.2%, 14.8%). In rank 3, the distribution was as follows:

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improvement of the economic position of the army (18.1%, 16.2%), *modernisation of arms and equipment* (15.6%, 12.4%) and under this rank as a third priority assignment is *establishing democratic civil control over the army and limiting the power of secret military services* (6.1%, 6.3%). Almost a fourth of the respondents thinks it is necessary to *keep general military duty* (24.6%, 21.9%) but most respondents (31.8%, 35.1%) would *keep general military duty* and, at the same time, *engage the professional (paid) army only for special duties*. It is worth noticing that rather high percent of citizens (33.4%, 30.2%) decided it is necessary to *terminate the general military duty and introduce a completely professional (paid) army*. However, 58.6% respondents in Serbia and 53.9% of the respondents in Montenegro totally or mostly agree that *our country is not economically strong enough to finance a professional army*.

Closing this presentation⁶ with the final series of answers, we come to the very core of the importance which the survey “The Serbian and Montenegrin Public on Military Reforms” might have. Such a survey, naturally, faces numerous challenges: starting from the question on whether a Serbian and Montenegrin public opinion exists at all (particularly a democratic one, having in mind different democratic deficits in the country). Although the same issue can also be discussed in Europe, where the existence of a European public opinion can be questioned for somewhat different reasons. Furthermore, provoking doubts can also be raised on how competent and how qualified the public in Serbia and Montenegro really is, particularly when military and defence issues are taken into consideration. However, the prognostic value of public opinion surveys being proven, we feel free to stress the importance of this phenomenon “between ignorance and science” particularly in domain of security and defence policy. In this sphere, “public opinion is a strategic variable of the highest importance” since “without its support, substantial progresses are unlikely to be made” (Eurobarometer, 2000 : 1). This is also one of the reasons why the results obtained from every round of research during the CCMR project will not be only regularly presented to the public and media but also distributed to all key political decision makers, as well as interested scientific and teaching institutions in Serbia and Montenegro. (The reports will as well be accessible on the Centre’s website: www.ccmr-bg.org).

It seems convenient here to remember the words Mr Lluís Maria de Puig said in his introductory address at the colloquy, organised by the WEU Assembly and EuroDéfense and held at the French Senate on 5 November 2001 under the title “Building Defence Europe with the support of

⁶ This paper is restricted to analysing only global results and does not take into consideration the correlation of the answers and age, education and other significant independent variables.

public opinion”: “It cannot be said that defence needs are always clearly perceived or understood by public opinion, and it is true that defence is one of the most sensitive and difficult subjects for the public to understand”. In Serbia and Montenegro, it is obviously necessary for the parliament(s), policy makers and media to help the citizens be informed, properly understand and create opinions, based on free and open communication and circulation of ideas. The role of media here simply cannot be overstressed.

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