

Macedonia

Extreme Challenges for the “Model” of Multiculturalism

*Macedonia, long considered the model of a multicultural society and conflict prevention, has been in crisis since the spring of 2001. After outbreaks of violence in March 2001 in Tetovo and along the Macedonian/Kosovo border, the country has plunged into political and social crisis. Mistrust between Macedonians and Albanians has never been higher. The general public's cynicism about politics has skyrocketed. As all political parties struggle with difficult issues such as possibly changing the constitution or adopting an official second language, individual politicians are trying desperately to gain strength from clinging to their ethnically defined power bases. Despite the turmoil among political elites and shooting in the hills, the majority of citizens – Albanians and Macedonian (1) – still prefer nonviolent coexistence. Unfortunately, most fear speaking up. Consequently, whether this unspoken desire can prevent the country from collapsing remains to be seen. By Sally Broughton and Eran Fraenkel**

Despite attempts by various rebel groups and even treaties declaring it an autonomous entity under the Ottomans, Macedonia was not given political recognition until 1944 when it was made a constituent republic of Yugoslavia. Macedonia as a republic of Yugoslavia had the same borders as it has now. It was as a constituent republic of Yugoslavia that the Macedonian identity was recognized. Literary standards were set for the Macedonian language, grammar books were published and education was allowed in Macedonian as well as other languages of the republic such as Albanian, Turkish and Serbian.

Macedonia was the only republic to leave Yugoslavia without bloodshed. The Yugoslav National Army withdrew from Macedonia in 1991 taking with it all military equipment in the republic.

Since 1991, Macedonia has been a parliamentary democracy, in which Macedonians and Albanians share power. Macedonia was considered a model of effective conflict prevention and pluralism in the midst of ethnic conflict because members of all ethnic groups in Macedonia continued to participate in government and state institutions. There was no significant violence among the country's ethnic groups. Albanians and other minorities not only participated side by side in parliament, but also in the educational system, the military and other state institutions.

Despite an apparently functioning pluralistic society and government, Macedonia has faced conflicts that arised from the question whether the republic should be defined as a unitary or bi-national state, with its respective accompanying institutions. Unlike other ex-Yugoslav states (Serbia particularly), Macedonia did not inherit a political conflict with its Albanian population. Again, unlike Croatia or Serbia, Macedonia has been attempting to accommodate its Yugoslav legacy, essentially by retaining the previous structures that guarantee its minorities' political, social, and cultural rights. But whereas in the former socialist federation of Yugoslavia competing nationalities were restrained by socialist ideology, in independent Macedonia this is not the case. Albanians and Macedonians have been struggling with conflicting sentiments about their civic versus ethnic identities. Albanians accuse Macedonians of imposing a unitary Macedonian ethno-political character on the state. Macedonians, in turn, equate most Albanian demands for self-determination with irredentism. Smaller minorities such as Turks and Roma accuse the Macedonians and Albanians of ignoring their needs. Although all ethnic communities continue to participate in the

government and political discourse, each community fundamentally suspects the intentions of the other.

Macedonia has weathered several crises: the attempted assassination of president Gligorov (1995); the operation since 1997 of a paralegal Albanian university outside Tetovo; the violent removal by police of Albanian flags from Tetovo and Gostivar city halls (1997). Until February 2001, Macedonia's greatest crisis was the influx of 360,000 Kosovar refugees (March-June 1999). The Kosovo War compelled Macedonia's citizens to ask whether they primarily identified with their "ethnic community" regardless of political borders, or with their country including its ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity. Since the violent events within Macedonia's borders, which began in February 2001, this question has become even more important. Conflicting political, economic, and social answers to this question continue to challenge conflict prevention efforts in Macedonia.

At issue is whether Macedonia is a nation state with an ethnic Macedonian majority and minorities enjoying protected rights; or whether it is a multi-cultural, civic state. Language rights (native-language education, or the right to use Albanian in parliament); decentralization of government and empowerment of municipal administration; proportional parliamentary representation vs. majority rule; accusations of cronyism, bribery, and black marketeering; all these issues are rooted in a basic mistrust between Macedonia's constituent communities and the assumption that any concession would be taken as a pretext for ulterior political or territorial ambitions.

When comparing life in independent Macedonia with life in former Yugoslavia, most Macedonians see a "golden cage." They have a state, but one poorer than the former Yugoslavia. Macedonia issues passports, but Macedonians face visa restrictions when trying to travel abroad. Despite positive World Bank and IMF assessments of the government's monetary policies, Macedonians feel they become more and more impoverished. Just as in other former communist countries, Macedonia suffered from a collapse of the former state industries. Macedonia's economic development was further hampered by a Greek blockade that lasted more than two years and also suffered from the international embargo against its number one trading partner, Serbia. While the majority of the population lost purchasing power during the past ten years, Macedonia has seen the rise of a new elite that derived its wealth from smuggling (breaking the Greek embargo or busting the sanctions against FRY) as well as from corrupt privatization of state-owned property.

To some extent, Macedonia's political and social conflicts have been shaped by these economic conditions. Since 1994, unemployment has hovered officially around the 30% mark, but unofficially it is closer to 50%. During the Kosovo war, unemployment rose to 70%. An unfavorable tax environment, underdeveloped regional trade, unreliable banking institutions, far-reaching corruption, and questionable privatization have discouraged major foreign investments. Officially a free-market economy, Macedonia still needs to eliminate nepotism and corruption, which would open the way to entering the world market. Promises made by the current coalition government about economic recovery and massive foreign credit or investments, as well as promises of western aid following the Kosovo War have not materialized. There is little reason to believe they will.

These economic factors aggravate tensions between the mainly urban Macedonian and largely rural Albanian communities. Macedonians, having worked mostly in "socially owned" and now privatized or defunct enterprises have borne the brunt of Macedonia's economic downturn. Albanian villagers also suffered. The agricultural sector is far from thriving, primarily due to loss of markets and harsh visa regimes limiting the number of seasonal

workers finding temporary employment abroad. Nonetheless, Macedonians are convinced that Albanians have flourished at their expense. They believe that the money made by Albanians is used to support illicit activities ranging from arms smuggling to high-level bribery. Albanians, on their part, criticize the government's inattention to rural needs, including under-investment in rural infrastructure, poor rural health care, etc. They present the neglect as ethnically based discrimination. Consequently, even legitimate requests by either community have become highly politicized. For example, Macedonians look at rural Albanian land tenure and family size and accuse Albanians of a demographic war, meant to out-populate and expel them from western Macedonia. Conversely, Albanians interpret the recent electoral law reshuffling electoral districts as manipulation intended to disenfranchise them in districts where they used to be the majority.

Macedonia, in short, is a country in "transition" but unsure of where exactly it is going. Macedonia faces pressure from both the international community and domestic armed groups urging the country to complete the transition very quickly. Despite establishing institutions of a participatory and representative democracy, Macedonian citizens are still locked in bitter domestic disputes over political legitimacy and national identity. These disputes are becoming even more complicated by continual infighting among political elites, who repeatedly use nationalist causes to divert attention from their personal incompetence and to hide their refusal to consider realistic political solutions that do not enhance their own political careers. These dynamics have convinced the general population that many of Macedonia's politicians would prefer war than to relinquish their grip on power. Should this happen, the majority of people in Macedonia, who clearly had opted to avoid bloodshed, may have little choice.

Conflict Dynamics

Seen from a wider perspective, the crisis in Macedonia is more than other disputes in the region, a direct heritage of the collapse of Yugoslavia. Based on the Soviet nationalities model, in the former Yugoslavia Macedonia was a republic and Macedonians were part of a constituent nation. Kosovo was not a republic, and Albanians were only tacitly recognized as a nation, despite the fact that they were twice as numerous as the Macedonians.

After independence Macedonia continued this model of Macedonians being the constituent nation while most others, including Albanians, were considered a minority. (2) Albanians, however, categorically reject this majority/minority paradigm and its implicit power relations. Albanians have demanded co-equal status with Macedonians, including the institutionalization of all Albanian cultural and political features. In other words, they want a bi-national state. On the regional level, however, ethnic Macedonians are a minority surrounded in part by an Albanian majority and, on the other side of the border, by Greeks, Bulgarians and Serbs whose governments each in their own way negate the existence of the Macedonians as a nation.

Greece continues to object to the use of Macedonia in the name of the country and, after imposing a trade embargo for more than two years, was able to convince Macedonia to change its flag. Bulgaria until recently officially claimed that Macedonian is merely a dialect of Bulgarian. The two countries signed an agreement in early 1999, but the Macedonian public dismissed it, arguing the document did not sufficiently affirm the Macedonian language. Serbia and some other Orthodox Christian countries still refuse to recognize the Macedonian Orthodox Church. Though Albania recognized Macedonia very quickly, the future of Kosovo is still undetermined. With the final status of their Albanian neighbors in

Kosovo up in the air, Macedonians still fear developments there could result in Albanian expansionism.

Macedonians are at best reluctant, or at worst terrified to negotiate with Albanians inside Macedonia, believing that their existence and identity are at stake. Even if Albanian claims of loyalty to Macedonia are sincere, Macedonians fear the Albanian birthrate might result in Albanians becoming the majority community.

The mutual mistrust was stirred up during the Kosovo War (1999). Kosovo's internal problems have challenged Macedonia since 1991. During the war in 1999, many Macedonians feared that Kosovo's independence would encourage irredentism among Macedonia's Albanians because of historical connections between Albanians in both countries and Albanian dissatisfaction with conditions in Macedonia. Similar irredentism accusations were expressed against Albania. But Kosovo was perceived as being the major threat to Macedonia's integrity. When Kosovo refugees began crossing into Macedonia in July 1998, before the waves of March-June 1999, Macedonians feared a permanent demographic shift. Not only could Macedonia be drawn into a war with Yugoslavia against its will, but this war also increases the number of Albanians in Macedonia. Just as the socio-political collapse in Albania (1997) highlighted differences between Macedonia and Albania, the Kosovo War underscored differences between Kosovar and Macedonian Albanians. Ties with Kosovo notwithstanding, the war illustrated that Macedonian and Yugoslav internal political and social dynamics differ fundamentally. Macedonia's Albanian political leaders took a firm stand during the war to protect Macedonia's interests, keeping Albanian emotions under control despite recurrent provocations.

Following the war, Albanians also rallied behind the primary Macedonian party (VMRO) to secure the election of its presidential candidate, Boris Trajkovski. Macedonian politicians have therefore accrued political "debts" that the Albanians have been collecting since.

Although central Albanian demands (e.g., recognizing Albanian as a second official language) have not been met, the governing coalition has opted for compromises that, ironically, have escalated intra-ethnic tensions. For example, Macedonia accepted the establishment of a private university offering education in Albanian, Macedonian and English as an alternative to the unrecognized "University of Tetovo." This, and the tentative permission to use Albanian in parliament, for instance, has created intra-ethnic tension. Albanian opposition leaders blame the governing Albanian party (DPA) for selling out Albanian national interests by renegeing on the recognition of Tetovo University. Macedonians blame the VMRO for abandoning their national interests by making any concessions to Albanians.

Dissatisfaction of Macedonia's Albanians with their political leadership intersected with the fallout from the 1999 Kosovo war when armed Albanians calling themselves the National Liberation Army (UÇK in Albanian) launched an insurgency in Macedonia in February 2001. Starting along Macedonia's border with Kosovo, the violence spread to villages near Tetovo, Kumanovo, and eventually Skopje. The Macedonian parties in the government initially claimed the UÇK came from Kosovo and aimed to create a Greater Albania/Kosovo. Though they have recanted this to some extent they still believe the UÇK to be driven by Albanian expansionism. Macedonian Albanians point to domestic grievances as the war's cause and deny any connection to Kosovo.

Unable or unwilling to respond decisively militarily, and under immense international pressure to respond "proportionately," Macedonia's parliamentary parties formed a "Grand Coalition." For two months, this coalition attempted to reach domestic political consensus on

issues usurped by the UÇK, such as re-writing the constitution to remove references to any individual people/nation. Failure to reach a consensus, however, has created an upsurge of both spontaneous and suspiciously organized violence by ethnic Macedonians, who maintain the government and international community have colluded against them. Such popular perceptions are supported by continuous quarrels in which each party leader, irrespective of his or her ethnicity, assumes the role of national savior and accuses his rivals of bad faith if not treason. Policy has been replaced by posturing. Remedies previously considered to be beneficial (early parliamentary elections or intervention by NATO), now are seen as nearly pointless or as outside meddling with ulterior motives.

These conflicts within the government and the escalating rhetoric of ultimatums and threats have eroded whatever trust emerged between Macedonians and Albanians following the Kosovo war. The average person does not consider citizenship vs. national identity, or individual vs. group rights to be the basic issues at stake. Rather, politicians, media figures, and even intellectuals are now framing the dispute as an interethnic conflict, leaving people increasingly fearful that war may be the only alternative to impending political and social anarchy.

On August 13 a peace agreement was signed in Macedonia and NATO's 30-day deployment to disarm ethnic Albanian rebels looks imminent. However intense fighting leading up to the peace deal, and the conditions set by the Macedonian government and the ethnic Albanian rebels to stick to it, mean the period following the agreement is as potentially volatile as that preceding it. There is little trust or even expectation of peace by either Macedonians or ethnic Albanians and a heavy burden will fall on the international community.

Official Conflict Management

The first international intervention in Macedonia was *UNPREDEP* (originally called UNPROFOR) a United Nations peacekeeping force, which was relocated to Macedonia from Croatia in 1992. The mandate of UNPREDEP was to monitor Macedonia's borders with Yugoslavia and Albania, strengthen the security of the country and report on any potential threats to stability in Macedonia. UNPREDEP was perceived as a stabilizing force by most people in Macedonia and was considered to have an impact not only on the security of Macedonia vis-à-vis its neighbors, but also on the internal situation. Despite the fact that many viewed it as the UN's most successful peace keeping mission, UNPREDEP's mandate ended in 1999 and was not extended, due to a veto from China in the UN Security Council.

During its intervention in Macedonia the UN worked very closely with the *OSCE Spillover mission to Skopje*, whose role also included monitoring and reporting. Gradually the OSCE began to take a more active role. Max van der Stoep visited Macedonia more than fifty times between 1993 and 2001 as the *OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities* to work to defuse tensions on specific issues. He promoted inter-ethnic dialogue and cooperation. Van der Stoep paid particular attention to issues concerning the disputed national census, minority language education, the employment of Albanians in public service, minority access to the media and the use of minority flags. He recommended having the census take place under international supervision. Van der Stoep was also eager to ease tensions regarding the University of Tetovo and strongly supported the adoption of a new law on higher education that opened the way to establishing the South East European University. On 11 February 2001, construction work officially began to build this university after more than a year of negotiations. The university will be a private university, financed by international donors that will offer education in Albanian as well as Macedonian, in addition to a variety of other European languages. The university is intended to address the problem of higher education in

Albanian language in Macedonia. This issue has been at the top of political debate since the early 1990's when the new borders and subsequent closing of the university in Pristina severely restricted the opportunities for Albanians to study in the Albanian language. Albanian language sections were added to the pedagogical faculty at the university in Skopje, but this did not meet the demand for higher education in Albanian language. In 1997 several professors opened a private university in Tetovo in Albanian language, but the Macedonian government never recognized this institution. The South East European University was scheduled to open its doors in October 2001. There was still opposition to it among some Albanians who feel it should be sponsored by the state and among some Macedonian who feel it should not exist at all. It remained to be seen whether or not the university would really ease the extreme tension that exists around the issue of higher education.

After the outbreak of violence in Macedonia in 2001, the EU, NATO and other Euro-Atlantic institutions redoubled their efforts to maintain stability in Macedonia. During and immediately after the crisis in Tetovo, Javier Solana, George Robertson, Chris Patten and other heads of European and Euro-Atlantic institutions repeatedly visited Skopje. These efforts continued as fighting spread to Kumanovo and villages around Skopje. The European Union appointed Francis Leotard as its special representative, while the US appointed James Pardew as special envoy for the republic. Their message is that the Macedonian government merits support, but they also demand the pressing interethnic issues to be resolved. Both Leotard and Pardew support President Trajkovski's efforts to promote political dialogue, but insist that negotiations can occur only among legitimately elected political representatives. This would exclude the UÇK. Diplomatic efforts were going into the direction of adopting a peace plan that NATO would help to implement.

NATO has sent mixed signals regarding its willingness to become engaged in Macedonia. Initially, NATO cracked down on illegal movement across the border and on suspected UÇK members in Kosovo. NATO's involvement peaked in June 2001 with the evacuation of UÇK insurgents and their weapons from the village of Arachinovo to Nikushtek, both near Skopje. This action, which was the result of negotiations between the Macedonian government and the UÇK under the auspices of the EU, resulted in a mass demonstration in Skopje by Macedonians, who demanded the resignation of President Trajkovski. NATO has since committed itself to the deployment of 3,000 troops in Macedonia to disarm the UÇK, provided the government has reached a political solution to the crisis.

Macedonia's internal conflicts are directly influenced by external developments, both regional and within individual neighboring states. The international community considers integration into regional and European institutions the only sustainable basis for Macedonian and regional stability in the long term.

Perhaps the most touted instrument for this process is *the Stability Pact (SP) for South Eastern Europe*. The SP's intentions are to create sustainable peace, prosperity, and stability for South Eastern Europe through economic and socio-political development of all countries in the region. The SP was set up to coordinate all bilateral and multilateral development initiatives through its three working tables: Democracy and Human Rights, Economic Development and Security. Though the SP's impact in these three areas is still uncertain, people in the region concur that it has created a new atmosphere of regional cooperation. The SP serves as a framework through which countries in South East Europe can reach the status of a candidate member of the EU.

Regional integration has been boosted through an initiative launched by the Stability Pact called the *South East Europe Cooperation Process (SEECP)*. This SEECP includes all

Yugoslav successor states (except Slovenia), as well as Albania, Romania, Bulgaria, and Greece. The SEECP has facilitated several meetings of heads of state. It also arranged multi-lateral and bi-lateral meetings on the ministerial level. At the latest SEECP meeting of heads of state, Macedonia signed the long-awaited border agreement with Yugoslavia and a higher education agreement with Albania. SEECP's most powerful moment occurred in March 2001, when Albania used its presidency to call on all member states to condemn the violent action by Albanian groups in Macedonia. Such regional solidarity, in light of ethnic ties, bodes well not only for Macedonia but for the region as a whole.

Macedonia also made a big step towards integration into Europe when it signed the *Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union* on 8 April 2001. This agreement codifies Macedonia's desire to be part of the EU and outlines what reforms it should implement in order to get closer to EU-membership. The Stabilization and Association Agreement also obligates the EU countries to assist Macedonia in these reforms and work towards stability in the region. The agreement may serve as a useful instrument for necessary reforms on interethnic issues that may arise from the intra-governmental negotiations.

Multi-Track Diplomacy

Civil society is a contentious concept in post-communist states, including Macedonia. Unfortunately, westerners routinely fail to recognize the discrepancies between civil society "ideals" and Balkan socio-economic realities. Again, Macedonia is no exception. The fundamental obstacle is society's ability to afford the time and resources that Western-style civil society requires. Coming from debates whether NGOs create civil society or civil society creates NGOs, one salient point prevails: civil society creates conditions allowing NGOs to emerge and function; reciprocally, NGOs reinforce the vitality of civil society. In Macedonia neither condition yet prevails.

The social and financial preconditions for a vital non-governmental sector are alien in Macedonia. Self-help traditionally is mostly embedded in family structures. Many NGOs are Yugoslav vestiges; meaning they are "of" but not "for" citizens. Additionally, the average Macedonian is too preoccupied with survival to have time and energy available for voluntary work in an NGO. A 23% tax on philanthropic contributions, intended to prevent money laundering through non-profit organisations, doesn't help NGOs either. Frequent examples of questionable financial management contribute to general public skepticism about the integrity of NGOs and thus their importance in developing Macedonia's civil society.

The overall NGO environment is hazy, since no tradition exists of civic activism outside governmental control. NGOs' role in society is therefore ambiguous. The media are apathetic toward NGOs and NGOs are equally disinterested in educating the media. Rarely do NGOs and the media cooperate on issues of broad public concern. Generally politicians tend to be dismissive of NGOs. Likewise, NGOs do not try to communicate constructively with politicians.

To jump-start democratization, international donors have allocated money to seed NGOs, ostensibly stimulating civil society. To Macedonians, however, the NGO sector represents employment opportunities for individuals having or a chance to acquire skills. Rather than promoting cohesion around common causes—including conflict prevention—NGOs seem to have become competitors, struggling for funds in order to keep their members employed. As a result, Macedonia has hundreds of NGOs—ecology associations, women's groups, groups for the advancement of particular minorities, and many others—but few effective ones.

Furthermore, unlike international organizations, whose staff tends to be ethnically mixed, most local organizations are mono-ethnic.

Macedonia's local and international NGO community assists in preventing conflict in two ways. Some NGOs specifically focus on interethnic relations and try to reduce tension among different ethnic groups in Macedonia. Others focus on development, advocacy, ecology or other areas, and indirectly improve interethnic relations by promoting inclusion and equal participation of different ethnic groups in their work.

The *Nansen Dialogue Center (NDC)* in Skopje, which functions essentially as a local NGO although it is part of a regional network, is a multi-ethnic organization that facilitates dialogue projects and conflict analysis and resolution training for young people and children. CIVIL, another multi-ethnic group in Skopje, promotes human rights and peaceful coexistence, conducts community dialogue sessions and debates, and runs media campaigns for peace. In Gostivar, an ethnically mixed city, the Interethnic Programme Gostivar (IPG) works specifically on interethnic cooperative projects. IPG attempts to counter the separatist trend in the NGO community by devising activities between organizations such as women's groups or sports clubs, which tend to be mono-ethnic. Multikultura and the Youth Information Center, both in Tetovo, work on building tolerance and awareness of interethnic issues among high school students of different ethnic backgrounds.

The *Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (MCIC)* is considered the most stable and well-established local NGO in Macedonia. MCIC bridges the gap between NGOs that specifically focus on interethnic relations and those that positively influence interethnic relations while working towards other goals. MCIC's mainly focuses on development, such as support for rural infrastructure and capacity building. MCIC is also engaged in direct humanitarian aid to refugees or others in need. MCIC's even-handed and inclusive approach fosters interethnic cooperation as a by-product. In addition MCIC designed a public-service campaign using the slogan "Celo e koga ima se" (literally, [something is] complete when it has [consists of] everything). This campaign intends directly to encourage tolerance and support for a multi-cultural society.

Although most women's organizations are mono-ethnic and many have a tendency to be highly politicized, one group, *ANTIKO*, a network of women from across the country, stands out from the rest. ANTIKO's mission is to empower women, especially young women, through seminars on economic integration, health issues, fighting prejudice, and other issues relevant to women in Macedonian society. ANTIKO's leadership represents Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Bosniak and Roma women and tries to reach women of all the communities. Its work contributes to increased understanding and unity among women of different ethnic backgrounds.

The *Center for Civic Initiative (CCI)* in Prilep was founded to promote democracy and citizen involvement in creating positive social change. CCI's project ranges from educating children in children's rights, to providing educational services for refugees, and creating resource centers and training programs for other NGOs. CCI's project participants are ethnically mixed, resulting in cooperation among individuals from different ethnicities. CCI also works regionally. One of its most significant partners is the Albanian Center for Human Rights in Tirana.

During and after the outbreak of violence in February 2001 more than one hundred NGOs signed various appeals for peaceful resolution and non-violence. Nonetheless, the NGO community did not launch a movement, nor did it display unity or undertake significant action

for a peaceful solution. Some organizations did react individually to the crisis. NDC and CIVIL began a series of dialogue sessions with citizens of Tetovo, whereas IPG produced a video spot for broadcast on local television that encourages building a positive future. Most organizations either remained silent or became further politicized. With a few exceptions, local NGOs in Macedonia have yet to become a major factor in conflict prevention.

Though historically Macedonia has hosted relatively few international NGOs (INGOs), this situation has changed since the Kosovo war and refugee crisis in 1999. Most international organizations focus directly on humanitarian assistance, economic development, or democracy building. Generally, INGOs both employ and serve members of different ethnic groups. Whether they are training local government officials, supporting micro-enterprise development, or building local NGO capacity, INGOs indirectly facilitate contact and cooperation among Macedonia's different communities.

Only a few INGOs work directly on conflict prevention and interethnic relations. *Search for Common Ground in Macedonia (SCGM)*, which aims to improve interethnic cooperation, communication, and understanding, is the best-known organization. SCGM works closely with the Ethnic Conflict Resolution Project at the University of St. Kiril and Methodius on a variety of projects in the Macedonian education system. Educational programs teach skills for multi-cultural awareness and cooperation or for conflict resolution. SCGM also has a long history of implementing cooperative media projects in print and broadcast media including collaborative projects among media outlets throughout the region. SCGM produces *Nashe Maalo*, the award-winning children's television series, which focuses on multi-cultural literacy, tolerance building and skills for conflict resolution.

In cooperation with several local NGOs, UNICEF is implementing a project called *Babylon* that brings children from different ethnic backgrounds together for educational and social activities. These common activities are intended to decrease children's prejudices and mutual fear while encouraging their communication and friendship. The Dutch chapter of the peace organization *Pax Christi* also works with local organization, particularly NDC, CIVIL and ANTIKO. *Pax Christi* provides support and training to local organizations and organized a Peace Concert. It also set up a bi-lingual radio station with their local partners.

Local and international NGOs that seem to have most impact on interethnic relations in Macedonia, are those employing a multi-ethnic staff, and, by doing so, are inclusive and non-discriminatory in implementing their activities. In Macedonia, where most NGOs are politicized, mono-ethnic, and many would even say corrupt, local and international organizations have an imperative to demonstrate both by their structure and programs that NGOs can function positively in a multi-ethnic environment.

Prospects

The outbreak of violence in Tetovo in March 2001 brought swarms of international journalists and analysts expecting the Third Balkan War. Even though the violence has abated, most experts predict a bleak future for Macedonia. Graham Fuller, writing in the *Los Angeles Times* (22.03.2001), argues that the Albanian minorities in Macedonia, Serbia, and Montenegro are intrinsically unstable, and that Albanian and Macedonian ethnic and religious differences will eventually cause these ethnic groups to separate. This view, that we consider to be fatalistic and over-simplistic, is surprisingly popular among western analysts. Many, like Paul Gastris in *Slate* (02.04.2002) and Simon Jenkins in *The Times* (21.03.2001) blame NATO for permitting violence to become an effective and even rewarded model in the Balkans. Gastris predicts that the recurrence of violence and a strong reaction from the

Macedonian Government will compel Macedonia's Albanian population to take up arms. Many who predict that war in Macedonia is inevitable are also convinced that NATO will have no choice but to deploy forces to stop the violence, thereby creating another Kosovo-like protectorate.

Local analysts are not much more optimistic. Saso Ordanovski in Forum (30.03-12.04,2001) primarily blames crime in the region and in the government for the crisis, which has been portrayed as an interethnic crisis. He predicts some kind of "half solution" among government officials so that corruption and criminality can continue to increase the rift between Macedonians and Albanians and between the population and its governing institutions. According to him, this rift will widen until some spark— elections or another violent incident—ignites a full-scale violent conflict. Kim Mehmeti writing for the Institute for War & Peace Reporting (21.03 2001) suggests that Macedonia has a chance to avoid large scale violence if its leadership commits itself to a real dialogue on interethnic issues; the alternative is a violent split of the country.

Recommendations

Many ideas for changes are floating about the political discourse in Macedonia. Most western analysts have joined the general call for greater EU, US and NATO intervention. For some, this takes the form of a NATO-lead military intervention. For others, including Balkans expert Tim Judah, the answer is, "continued political pressure, the use of our economic clout both to create jobs and encourage all sorts of regional cooperation, from free trade areas to local visa-less travel." Political pressure, according to most analysts, means pushing the Macedonian government to come up with a peace plan that includes changes to the Constitution (eliminating references to ethnicity), and further integration of Albanians into state structures.

The International Crisis Group, in report 113, recommends pressuring Greece to accept the constitutional name of the Republic of Macedonia, and to put pressure on the international community to design a final status plan for Kosovo. It also calls for sending "a strong and explicit message that Albanian extremists will not be allowed to split the country along ethnic lines."

Analyzing the 13 August 2001 agreement, ICG argues that NATO cannot limit its mission to 30 days. It must be prepared to do more than collect arms that are voluntarily given to it. It must seal the border with Kosovo and should provide the security assurance required to see the 13 August agreement through to parliamentary ratification and implementation. And it must be prepared to use all necessary force to make that assurance real.

Mirjana Najcevska of the Institute for Social, Political and Juridical Research, in her article "Now it is time to work" (Multiethnic Forum April 2001), recommends a combination of both intense legal and judicial reform and a "gradual affirmation of a civic identity in all aspects of public life while allowing room also for ethnic identification." Ms. Najcevska maintains that legal reform must reflect the general will of the people and that in the process democratic process must be upheld.

Saso Klekovski, executive director of the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation, also believes that systemic reforms are necessary to build peace in Macedonia. He writes, "while our ethnic problems are seen through the media in terms of gun battles in the mountains between the State military units and the extremists, we urgently need to look beyond these

pictures to uncover the social injustice and poverty that sparked this conflict.” He adds that in order to achieve social justice Macedonia must have a sound economic base.

It is not enough to build trust between the Macedonian and Albanian people in Macedonia. Confidence must be generated in the country’s governing institutions and the politicians who occupy them. The population needs to see reduced corruption and criminal behavior, and elevated professionalism, and increased communication with the public. A strategic, visionary process must deal with the current dissonance between civic and ethnic identity. Macedonia needs to go back to the drawing board and decide through an inclusive and constructive process what kind of country its people want.

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www.mia.com.mk (Macedonian Information Agency)

www.ok.mk (Articles and Local Analysis)

www.mango.org.mk (Information on NGO activities and commentary on situation in Macedonia)

www.crisisweb.org (International reports and analysis)

www.delsol.net/~trufax/news/top_balkan_news.html (News on Macedonia from around the world)

www.iwpr.net (Institute for War & Peace Reporting)

Resource Contacts

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Bekim Ymeri - Local Government Reform Project, Skopje. Email: Bekim_ymeri@dai.com

Victoria Ayer - National Democratic Institute, Skopje. Email: ndi@mol.com.mk

Frosina Georgievska - Swiss agency for Development and Cooperation, Skopje. Email: frosina.georgievska@sdc.net

Saso Ordanovski - Forum, Skopje. Email: forum@unet.com.mk / info@forum.com.mk

Blerim Koljali - Center for Refugees and Forced Migration Studies, ISPPi, Skopje. Email: isppi@isppi.edu.mk

Organisations

CIVIL

Vasil Dglavinov 16

DTT Paloma Bijanca 3rd floor, nr. 13

91000 Skopje

Fax / Tel.: + 389 2 220 522

Email: civil_macedonia@yahoo.com

Center for Multicultural Understanding and Cooperation

91000 Skopje

Macedonia

Tel/Fax: +389 02 130 407

MIC-Tetovo

Youth Information Center Tetovo

JNA 14

Tetovo

Tel.: + 389 44 350 280

Fax: + 389 44 331 423

Email: mic_sreten@yahoo.com

www.mkinter.net/mic

Multikultura

JNA bb (The municipal building)

Tetovo

Republic of Macedonia

Tel./Fax: + 389 44 335 448

multikultura@hotmail.com

Pax Christi

M.H. Jasmin 16 -1/49

Skopje

Tel.: + 389 70 274759
paxmak@netscape.net

Data on the following organisations can be found in the Directory section:

Center for Balkans Co-operation
Center for Civic Initiative
Ethnic Conflict Resolution Project
Inter-Ethnic Program Gostivar
International Centre for Preventive Activities and Conflict Resolution
Macedonian Center for International Co-operation
Nansen Dialogue Center Skopje
Roma Centre of Skopje
Search for Common Ground in Macedonia

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Notes

1) In this paper "Macedonians" refers to those people who are ethnic Macedonians. Albanians refers to ethnic Albanians living in Macedonia and not citizens of Albania unless otherwise identified. Other terms such as "citizens of Macedonia" or "people in Macedonia" will be used to refer to all people living in Macedonia regardless of ethnic background.

2) The Yugoslav taxonomy had 3 levels: nation/*narod* (Macedonians and others who had republics named for them); nationality/*narodnost*, who had political entities or states outside the borders of Yugoslavia (Albanians, Turks, Hungarians, etc.); and ethnic community/*zaednica*, who had no political representation anywhere (Roma, Jews, etc.)