

One Decade after the Ohrid Framework Agreement:
**Lessons (to be) Learned from the
Macedonian Experience**

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Published by:

Dr. Heinz Bongartz, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Office Skopje

Dr. Marija Risteska, Center for Research and Policy Making

Communication and publishing: Riste Zmejkoski

Layout design: Stefan Nikolovski

Cover design: Goce Veleski

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Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and
Center for Research and Policy Making
Skopje 2011

CONTENTS

- 10 Preface
Marija Risteska and Zhidas Daskalovski
- 12 Introduction: Assessing the Ohrid Framework Agreement
Florian Bieber
- PART I**
Implementing the Ohrid Framework Agreement: Issues and Challenges
- 28 Civil Society's Contribution to Democratic Consolidation in Bosnia-Herzegovina after the Dayton Peace Accords and Republic of Macedonia after the Ohrid Framework Agreement
Franziska Blomberg
- 66 Macedonia in 2011 – on the way towards stabilization or before the new 'grand' agreement?
Přemysl Rosůlek
- 86 Municipal Decentralisation: Between the Integration and Accommodation of Ethnic Difference in the Republic of Macedonia
Aisling Lyon
- 116 Equitable Representation as a Condition for EU Accession – The Case of the Republic of Macedonia
Simonida Kacarska

PART II

Ethnicity and the Conflict in 2001

- 138 The Role of inter-ethnic conflicts on the integration of the Macedonian society
Martin Pecijareski
- 170 Post-conflict legacies and the Ohrid Framework Agreement: Discursive legitimization of political competition between Albanian parties in Macedonia
Dane Taleski
- 190 One Decade Living on the Margins: unfinished task of the peace-building process in Macedonia
Oliver Stanoeski
- 206 What lessons can be drawn from the negotiation process leading to the Ohrid Framework Agreement?
Marko Savković

PART III

Geopolitics and the Ohrid Framework Agreement

- 222 Bulgaria and Greece as Catalytic Factors for the European Future of the Western Balkans
Boyka Boneva
- 246 Ohrid Framework Agreement and its implications for the Balkan geopolitical status quo
Plamen Dimitrov
- 264 The Role of Organized Crime in the Eruption, Management and Resolution of the 2001 Conflict in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
Nikolaos Papakostas

Macedonia in 2011 – on the way towards stabilization or before the new ‘grand’ agreement?

Přemysl Rosůlek

ABSTRACT

Ten years after the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) was signed, almost all of its parts were implemented as numerous constitutional amendments and laws which have been approved by the parliament. Could the OFA implementations at 'formal level' be evaluated as a success? How has the post-conflict management influenced the society at an 'informal level'? I assume that the relations between Macedonians and Albanians remain complicated and unresolved in many respects regardless of some positive outcomes since the OFA policy started to be implemented. I argue that the implementation of the OFA, instead of reaching denationalization of the society, has provoked nationalism and despite the struggle for equal communities, ethnicity and unliberal tendencies are still principally present in the OFA. Furthermore, the majority of Macedonians perceived the OFA as a threat to their nation-building process conducted in the 90's, whereas the Albanian minority does not assume the OFA as a definitive solution for reconciliation but only as a first step on the way towards better conditions. The two theses formulated in the introductory section are testing whether the Macedonian majority still wishes to guard its superior position from the 90's and whether the Albanians are likely to formulate demands reaching far beyond the OFA treaty. I came to the conclusion that one decade after the OFA, the ethnic issues remain unresolved and some other originally non-ethnic issues could be easily turned into nationalistic ones. Despite the relative cooperation at governmental and institutional levels, there are highly disparate, competing and mutually distrustful public discourses.

List of abbreviations

DPA – Democratic Party of Albanians

DUI – Democratic Union for Integration

MOC - Macedonian Orthodox Church

NLA – National liberalization Army

OFA - Ohrid Framework Agreement

PDP – Party for Democratic Prosperity

RM – Republic of Macedonia

VMRO-DPMNE - Internal Revolutionar organization– Democratic party of Macedonian National Unity

I. Introduction

This year is marked by the 10th anniversary of the OFA which had been preceded by a six month *insurgency* in 2001 conducted by Albanian *guerrillas* from the National Liberalization Army (NLA) in the north-western part of Republic of Macedonia (RM). The *guerrillas* were not participating in the negotiations but there is no doubt that the NLA significantly influenced the content of the OFA and the future of the country. Macedonians conceived the OFA as an agreement dismantling “their” state. On the contrary, Albanians considered the OFA as a good starting point but not sufficient in its objectives. Paradoxically, during that time, Macedonians were concerned by its implementation. Nowadays, Macedonians wish the country would remain true to OFA principles.

Drawing from that rather gloomy perspective, I formulate the two main theses for this text below:

Firstly, Macedonians are still tempted to strengthen or maintain their superior position, as symbolically expressed in the 1991 preamble to the constitution, in which the country was established as a *National state of Macedonian people* and granting more rights to Albanians. It is perceived as a Macedonian *loss* and an Albanian *win*. Therefore I assume that in the RM during the 90’s the ethnic Macedonian majority had enjoyed superior position in the country and the Albanian minority had many reasons to complain about discrimination.

Secondly, in spite of the human rights of Albanians improving significantly after the OFA was signed in 2001 and almost fully implemented in the following decade or so, the majority of Albanians are still not satisfied and consider the OFA not as a final “grand” agreement with Macedonians but only as the first *gain* enabling them to formulate further demands at the expense of Macedonians.

The question is whether all these changes have not been conducted only *at formal level*. The key question for the success of the OFA is whether the transformation of RM one decade after the OFA has also been accompanied by mutual understanding and acceptance in public discourse and attitudes *at informal level*.

The analysis will be conducted in the period which preceded the conflict in 2001. The main focus will be aimed at constitution, religion, education and self-government. Furthermore, the OFA document will be analysed. The post-OFA period will also be more closely examined, focusing namely on the national symbols coming from the constitution (e. g. Macedonian people and MOC), cessation of hostilities in the country, education and the decentralization process which inflames nationalism.

Macedonia in the 1990's and Albanian demands

Unlike Croatia and Slovenia, Macedonian politicians did not hurry to claim the independent status during the year 1990 and in the first half of 1991. Macedonian politicians were very much aware of the weakness of their economy, tense relations with its neighbours and conflicting tendencies in relations between Macedonians and Albanians living in the country. Despite the parliamentary elections in 1990 which the nationalistic and anti-communist Internal Revolutionary organization–Democratic party of Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) won and aspired for independence, it came under pressure from the socialist president of RM, the government and a strong post-communist opposition in the parliament, who rather preferred negotiations with confederative Yugoslavia in the future. However, internal dynamism led to the secession of Slovenia and Croatia from Yugoslavia which encouraged the parliament of the RM to approve a resolution on sovereignty in June 1990 and to declare a referendum on the independent status of the country.¹ Almost all citizens participated in the referendum and voted for the independent status of the RM but ethnic Albanians living in the RM mostly boycotted the initiative, which was a serious threat to the legitimacy (double majority on an ethnic base was not required before the OFA implementation) of the RM to its very foundation. Macedonia declared its independence in November 1991. The parliament requested the international community for the diplomatic recognition of the country² and approved a new constitution which became an apple of discord between the Macedonian majority and the Albanian minority in the RM.

1 Reuter, Jens. 1993. „Policy and Economy in Macedonia.“ *Balkan Forum*, Vol. 1, No. 3, p. 160. Sell, Louis. 2000. „The Serb Flight from Sarajevo: Dayton's First Failure.“ *East European Politics and Society*, Vol. 14, No. 1, Winter, pp. 179-202.

2 Mirčev, Dimitar. 2001. „Engineering the foreign policy of a new independent State: the Case of Macedonia, 1990-6.“ In: Pettifer, James (eds), *The New Macedonian Question*. Palgrave, Hampshire - New York, p. 207.

I.1. Constitution

I assume that for the 1991 constitution of the RM, Will Kymlicka’s notion on the nation-building process in ECE countries is fully applicable: [is more] *”thick, coercive or exclusionary (...) it imposes greater burdens on minorities, and creates greater potential injustices“* (Kymlicka 2000: 200).

The Macedonian constitution combined civic and national principles on a symbolical level and also took the multiethnic character of the country into consideration. However, the dominant role of the Macedonian nation was stressed repeatedly in the constitution. For instance, the historical continuity of the Macedonian nation was emphasized in the preamble which also created a three-stage hierarchical model of the nations and nationalities. This reflected the dominant role of the ethnic majority in the country and stated that *“Macedonia is established as a national state of the Macedonian people, in which full equality as citizens and permanent co-existence with the [firstly] Macedonian people is provided for [secondly] Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Romanics and [thirdly] other nationalities living in the Republic of Macedonia.”*³

Albanians protested against being symbolically degraded to the same level as Turks,⁴ Aromanians and Romanies with arguments that they significantly outnumbered other ethnic minorities in the country in the 1991 census. Albanians demanded either a constitution defined on pure civic principles⁵ or – more frequently – to become a second constitutive nation in the RM which would have transformed the RM into a bi-national state.⁶

I.2. Religion

Religion was another controversial issue between Macedonians and Albanians in the RM. Although neither Macedonians nor Albanians are strongly religious

3 Uni Graz. Kompetenzzentrum Südosteuropa. <http://www.uni-graz.at/opv1www_ustav_makedonija_mak.pdf> [Accessed 15 August 2000].

4 According to the Socialist Constitutional order in Yugoslavia valid from 1974 were Albanians and Turks symbolically equal to Macedonians.

5 Poulton, Hugh. 2000. *Who are the Macedonians*. London: Hurst and co. Publishers, p. 187.

6 Vice-president of major Albanian political party Party for Democratic Prosperity Nevzat Hali-li wrote to president of the RM Kiro Gligorov suggesting Albanians to become constitutive nation in the RM and Albanian language the official language in the whole country. In: Lazarov, Risto. 1995. „The Albanians in Macedonia: Co-citizenship or...?“, *Balkan Forum*, 1995, Vol.3, No.2, p. 32.

people, religion plays an important role as a symbol of their self-identification. National reductionism of religion during the late Ottoman period has narrowed the role of the orthodox churches to mere identification with the nation and national interests which applied also to the Macedonian Orthodox Church (MOC).⁷

Albanians complained about the strong symbolical position of the Macedonian church and demanded the reformulation of the 19th article of the constitution on religion which directly refers only to the Macedonian church while the other religious communities are degraded to a lower level: *"The Macedonian Orthodox Church and other religious communities and groups are free to establish schools and other social and charitable institutions, by ways of a procedure regulated by law"*.

The MOC struggled to gain control over the education process and its occasional language of intolerance towards other religious groups or ethnic Albanians. This could barely lead to an improvement in interethnic relations.

The MOC strengthened its position in 1997 when the law on religion, which stipulated that only one religious community to one confession could exist in the country, was approved.⁸

1.3. Education

The Albanians – and other minorities – enjoyed extended rights in primary and secondary education in the RM since 1991. Tertiary education for minorities was a different story – it was either non-existent, or later somewhat reluctantly and incompletely implemented.

The Constitution of the RM from 1991 did not guarantee the rights of Albanians in the RM to university education in their native language as they had enjoyed previously in compliance with the constitution of SFRY from 1974 (Reka 2008: 57). After the RM was founded, Albanians in the country were stripped of the option of tertiary education in neighbouring Kosovo.

One of the main demands of Albanians was formulated regarding the rights to tertiary education in the Albanian language. Macedonian authorities

7 Poulton, Hugh, p. 187.

8 Willemsen, Heinz. 2006. „Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Persisting Structural Constraints to Democratic Consolidation.“ *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 86.

partly reflected Albanian demands when the Institute for Albanian language at the Pedagogical Faculty in Skopje was founded in 1997.⁹ Finally, teachers of Albanian language at primary and secondary schools could be properly educated at university level. The act of opening the institute was accompanied by protests from Macedonian intellectuals and students who demanded the (immediate) closure of the institute and resignation of the ministry of education. The Macedonian political party VMRO-DMPNE even submitted a complaint to the constitutional court.¹⁰ The recognition of the trilingual (English, Macedonian, Albanian) Southeastern European private university (SEEU) in June 2000 could not be compared to the rights which Macedonians enjoyed in state-sponsored schools. Probably the most controversial issue regarding tertiary education in the 90's was the long-lasting question on the recognition of Tetovo University. Albanian intellectuals founded the university in 1994¹¹ but it never received legal status from Macedonian authorities. Firstly, Macedonian authorities and the public perceived the Albanian university as a potential threat of the ghettoization of Albanians. Secondly, the school was diagnosed as not meeting the required criteria for academic staff at university level. Nevertheless, the would-be Albanian university opening session was accompanied with repression from Macedonian authorities which closed the institute and arrested its organizers for long-term sentences.¹² However, Albanians allegedly continued to operate the institute although the quality of teaching was arguable.¹³

1.4. Local self-government

The highly centralized character of the RM during the 1990's was another issue targetted (not only) by ethnic Albanians. Political institutions at the local level enjoyed almost no autonomous competencies and there was no connecting link on the regional level between the capital Skopje and the municipalities. A new law on local self-government in 1995¹⁴ strenghtened the role of the centre even

9 Parvanov, A. „Albanian Syndrome in the Republic of Macedonia“, p. 144. In: Bobev, Boby - Mancev, Krasto – Lyubov-Grigorova, Mincheva (eds.) 1992. National Problems in the Balkans: History and contemporary developments. Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Science and Institute for Balkan Studies.

10 Schmidt, Fabian. 1998. „Enemies Far and Near: Macedonia’s Fragile Stability“. Problems of Post-Communism, Vol. 45, No. 7 -8, p. 26.

11 Lazarov, Risto. p. 35.

12 Human Rights Watch World Report 1998, Macedonia. <<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/publisher,HRW,,MKD,3ae6a8a510,0.html>>. [Accessed 31 August 2011].

13 Schmidt, Fabian, p. 26.

14 Official Gazzette of the Republic of Macedonia, No. 52/1995. <<http://www.mls.gov.mk/English>>. [Accessed 31 August 2004].

more, which could newly seize control over the lower number of municipalities more effectively. The ministry for local government was not founded until the parliamentary elections in 1998. Even after that its competencies remained weak. Flying flags of minorities on municipal buildings alongside the Macedonian flag was limited to national holidays only. One of the most serious crises of the 90's erupted in Gostivar and Tetovo, where Albanians held the majority in municipalities after local elections in 1996. Local politicians raised the Albanian flag over the municipalities and rejected the decision of the constitutional court that the flags must be removed. A new law approved in 1997 stated that the Albanian flag could be raised simultaneously with the Macedonian flag on national holidays only.¹⁵ In the ensuing clashes between Albanians and security forces, several Albanians died and many were injured. Major Albanian organizers were jailed including the mayor of Gostivar.¹⁶ Most of the Albanian prisoners were released on amnesty after the 1998 parliamentary elections when the coalition between Macedonian (VMRO-DPMNE) and Albanian (Democratic Party of Albanians) nationalist parties was set up but interethnic relations did not relax much.

Albanians also complained of discrimination in many fields of public life, criticising that the percentage quota of Albanians in public administration did not correspond to their compositional share of the country's inhabitants. Since the country's independence, Macedonians relied heavily on "their" state, while Albanians depended on migration and small trade for employment (Reka 2008: 58).

Albanian critics further criticized the law on citizenship from 1992 which was very restrictive as citizenship could only be obtained by persons who inhabited the country for 15 years legally and uninterruptedly.¹⁷ Albanians demanded a revision of the law – decreasing the time for citizenship requirement from 15 to 5 years.¹⁸

Albanian reactive nationalism in the 90's, the consecutive conflict in 2001 and the OFA implementation put an end to the monopolized nation-building process in all of the above-mentioned fields. Numerous key laws were approved in accordance with the OFA standards. The same happened in the area of education and representation of minorities in the public sector.

15 Schmidt, Fabian, p. 27.

16 International Crisis Group (ICG), The Politics of Ethnicity and Conflict, 21 October 1997 <<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6a6db0.html>>. [Accessed 12 August 2011].

17 Koppa, Maria-Eleni. 2001. Ethnic Albanians in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Between Nationality and Citizenship, *Nationalism & Ethnic Politics*, 2001, Vol.7, No.4, p.44.

18 Human Rights Watch, Overview of Human Rights Developments, Macedonia, 1993.

2. After the conflict and the OFA implementation

2.1. OFA - between a semi liberal and an ethnic genealogical model

The very legitimacy of the OFA document is in question because it was fought out by guns. The Albanian political parties – namely the signatories to the OFA, Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA) and Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP) – agreed about the plan of the NLA armed groups and its speaker Ali Ahmeti. Political representatives of the Albanian parties consulted their further strategy and demands with Ahmeti. Demands of the NLA have overlapped to a certain extent with the demands of the DPA and PDP parties negotiating the OFA. An Albanian daily in the RM, Flaka, revealed the objectives of the NLA signed by Ali Ahmeti well before the OFA was on the table. Below the demands was the signature of Ali Ahmeti, the speaker of the NLA.

- 1) Territorial integrity of the RM must be preserved.
- 2) Right of all relevant political groups to political dialogue on the future of the country.
- 3) Right to state citizenship for all Albanians living in the RM.
- 4) Right of all forcibly expelled Albanians to return to their places of residence.
- 5) Organisation of a new census is to be mediated by an impartial international commission.
- 6) The following constitutional amendments should be approved by the parliament:
 - a) The RM as a Macedonian-Albanian bi-national state.
 - b) Albanian language as an official language alongside Macedonian.
 - c) Equal right for using national symbols.
 - d) Abolition of discrimination in the economic sector and public administration, in military and civic life, in the sphere of education, science, culture and politics, a rightful decision making process and the creation of fair electoral units for elections of deputies.
 - e) Release of political prisoners and citizens arrested for political reasons and enabling their return to social life.¹⁹

19 Flaka, 25.4.2001.

The OFA was in fact a mediated compromise painful to some extent for both Macedonians and Albanians. Macedonians did not lose everything. Mainly, the territorial integrity and unitary character of the country was preserved. And the Albanians did not achieve the formation of a bi-national state and the official status of the Albanian language throughout the country. But in another respect, the OFA contained most of the NLA demands.

The main goal of the OFA was mutual understanding among the different *communities* with prospects of at least some *de-nationalization* of RM towards shared citizenship.

The main delegitimizing factor of the OFA was that the treaty was not considered by both Macedonians and Albanians as a first step towards mutual understanding and cooperation, but solely as a *zero sum game* where one gains while the other loses.

In fact the OFA presents a mixture of national and *semi civic* concepts: Nations and nationalities (*narodnosti*) or nationalism were completely forgotten. The term "ethnic" had been abandoned by the OFA and if mentioned at all, the notion of "ethnic" is subordinated to either "community", "citizens", "multi-ethnicity" or "inter-ethnicity".²⁰

The term "ethnic" occurs in the OFA autonomously only twice (sic!) and both those notions are posted there solely in a negative sense:

1. "There are no territorial solutions to ethnic issues" (OFA 1.2.).
2. "Complete voluntary disarmament of the ethnic Albanian armed groups" (OFA 2.1.).
3. The terms "national" or "ethnic" were replaced mainly by the word "communities" and partly also by "the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia".

The only notion on the word "ethnic" in the OFA belongs to the Albanian rebels, while all the others were degraded to "communities", a term not properly reflecting the definition of social groups in the Central and Eastern European context.

20 e. g. respecting the ethnic identity, pretext of the OFA.

However, the ethics of the OFA reflect neither the political thought on pluralistic nor liberal practice in the West. Instead of being based on the multiple and variable identities or liberal characteristics,²¹ the OFA remains by its content and philosophy – though implicitly – based on the fixed identities understandable only in national or ethnic terms in its genealogical and illiberal form. The OFA is partly supportive of the civil society and *”the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia“* but mostly applies to *”promoting respect for the identity [one fixed identity] of communities“* (OFA 1.5.), *”guarantees the protection of ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity [one fixed identity] of all communities“*, promotes *”the language [one fixed language] of that community“* (OFA 6.6.) or even explicitly identifies the community with a sense of national belonging and reinforces it through suggesting the hierarchical model: *”Macedonians and Albanians within the Assembly, and five members from among the Turks, Vlachs, Romanies and two other communities“*.²²

2.2. Macedonian people and the church - symbols defended

The 1991 Macedonian constitution gave privilege to the Macedonian interpretation of history, positioning the Macedonian people and MOC on a symbolic level. This fact attracted heavy criticism from the side of the Albanians during the entire 90’s.

The OFA firstly ordained the reduction of the importance of the *”historical, cultural, spiritual and statehood heritage of the Macedonian people“* in the preamble, and also replaced the notion on *the national state of the Macedonian people with the other ethnic groups further categorized at a lower scale starting with Albanians* with a neutral reference *”The citizens of the Republic of Macedonia“*. As seen above in the text, the OFA rather confusingly suppresses nationality and ethnicity and replaces it by the term *communities*. Why has the OFA tabooed natural *”societal cultures“*, defined by Will Kymlicka as nations and ethnic groups, and replaced them with neutralizing suggestions?²³

21 e. g. the pluralist model of Giovanni Sartori.

22 OFA, art. 78.2 constitutional amendment.

23 OFA orders parliament to amend in article 48 of constitution the word nationalities for neutral communities which are in OFA defined as ethnic groups anyway: OFA ensures protection of *„the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of all communities“*. See OFA, section Constitutional Amendments, art. 48.

The Macedonian deputies broke the dogma of the invariance of the OFA by enforcing amendments in the OFA formula, which protects the privileged position of the Macedonian nation in the preamble of the constitution.²⁴ Similarly, the notion – though reformulated – privileging the MOC remained intact.²⁵

Macedonians managed to keep notions privileging in a symbolic way both the Macedonian people and MOC. Thus, this was the Macedonians' gain as well as the securing of a unitary state and hindering the development of a bi-national state or the federalization of the country. Macedonians won, Albanians gained just a little bit.

2.3. Cessation of Hostilities

In this regard, there are serious doubts that the OFA provision was not successfully implemented. The OFA orders "*complete voluntary disarmament of the ethnic Albanian armed groups and their complete voluntary disbandment*" (OFA 2.1.) and "*establishment of a general, unconditional and open-ended cease-fire, agreement on a political solution to the problems of this country*" (OFA 2.1.).

The end of armed conflict was marked by the NATO operation *Essential Harvest*, which actually meant the disarmament of Albanians. Almost 4000 weapons were collected, but Macedonians complained about NATO for having gathered only junk weapons. Despite Ali Ahmeti's claims that all guns were handed over and the NLA ceased to exist and that all of its former members returned to civil life,²⁶ a number of radical members of the former NLA were later responsible for organizing low-intensity incidents. Under the A.N.A. radical group in the north-western part of the country, the unarmed groups have demanded the "*unification of Albanian territories*".²⁷

24 Renewed formula: „The citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, the Macedonian people, as well as citizens living within its borders who are part of the Albanian people, the Turkish people, the Vlach people, the Serbian people, the Romany people, the Bosniak people and others.

25 As a result of struggle in parliament the short phrase „as well as“ was put between the Macedonian Orthodox Church and other four – instead of two suggested by the OFA - religious communities in Macedonia.

26 Fakti, 28.9.2001.

27 ANA opened fire on the convoy of outgoing Interior Minister Ljube Boskoski in 2002 and claimed responsibility for bomb explosion outside the Court of Original Jurisdiction in the town of Struga in 2003. ANA was responsible for some other incidents.

Meanwhile, the ministry of defence pointed out that over half a million weapons might still remain out of control illegally in society.²⁸ In spite of the amount of weapons successfully collected, serious reasons for worry remain as the weapons have been steadily imported to the country from Kosovo.

A few years ago, a "significant quantity" of weapons was discovered by the police in the village of Tanuševci where the conflict of 2001 was kindled.²⁹ Quite recently, a hiding place was uncovered. The security forces found "20 missiles, three mortars, three field guns, 81 kg of plastic explosives, and hundreds of grenades and mines"³⁰ near the village Blace close to Kosovo. NATO has expressed its concern following the recent discovery of a large cache of weapons in the RM near its border with Kosovo.

Even more worrisome is the fact that the major oppositional Albanian party DPA which – despite belonging to the signatories of the OFA 10 years ago – has, through its chairman Menduh Thaçi, threatened with a new war and separation from the RM because Albanian demands are being constantly overlooked by prime minister of the RM N. Gruevski and VMRO-DPMNE. Isn't such a threat sharply contradicting the very fundamental provision of the OFA? "*The use of violence in pursuit of political aims is rejected completely and unconditionally. Only peaceful political solutions can assure a stable and democratic future for Macedonia*" (OFA 1.1.). Nevertheless, the oppositional DPA proclaimed the OFA as a "dead document" repeatedly. Should Macedonians be concerned or has it only been another rhetorical nationalistic excursion of an Albanian political party in opposition?

2.4. Education

In its sixth pillar, the OFA guarantees the right for education in the mother language of every community at the primary and secondary levels, and states that affirmative action at universities in favour of communities in the country must be pursued. During the process of the implementation of the OFA, fierce disputes

28 Southeast European Times (SETIMES). 2002. „Macedonian parties prepare new bill on disarmament.“ 18 March. <http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/features/setimes/newsbriefs/2002/03/020318-GEORGI-003>; [Accessed 10 May 2011].

29 Macedonian Information Agency (MIA). 2008. 7 April.

30 Balkaninsight. 2011. „NATO: Weapons Cache in Macedonia “Worrying”“, 6 May. <<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/nato-weapons-cache-in-macedonia-worrying>>. [Accessed 15 May 2011].

occurred between Albanians and Macedonians over the legalization of the controversial university in Tetovo. Following the long-lasting debates, the parliament of the RM approved the establishment of the Albanian university in Tetovo in 2004.³¹ Further significant changes followed, e. g. parliament also approved a law on education on the primary level transferring more educational rights from the capital to the municipalities and handed also more rights to communities.³² However, after the conflict, the most influential Albanian political party in parliament, the Democratic union for integration (DUI), also raised a demand that schooltexts for education at primary and secondary levels should be rewritten in order to reflect the history of ethnic minorities more clearly.³³ Macedonian historian Orde Ivanovski was opposed to the suggestion, implying that such a steps would lead to factual separation.³⁴ In a following period, the negative process of ethnic segregation in schools started and nowadays is almost complete, Albanian and Macedonian students study together only in the towns where are very few Macedonian students (e. g. Kičevo).³⁵

2.5. Territorial solution to ethnic issues and the decentralization process

According to the OFA, the *"boundaries of municipalities will be revised within one year of the completion of a new census"* (3.2.). States in south-eastern Europe were organized in accordance with the centralized French model (Willemsen 2002: 761).

Prior to the OFA during the 90's, the municipalities in the RM had enjoyed only non-essential competencies.³⁶ Even very softly-formulated territorial suggestions claimed by Albanians were perceived in the RM as a first step towards further secessionism. The suspicions originated from the fact that there were numerous

31 Macedonian Parliament Approves Establishment of State Albanian Language University, Setimes, 21.1.2004. <http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/bs/features/setimes/newsbriefs/2004/01/040121-WMI-004>. [Accessed 15 August 2011].

32 Elena, Simonoska, New Law on Elementary Education, Oneworld, 15.9.2004. <<http://see.oneworld.net/article/view/94087/1>>. [Accessed 15 August 2011].

33 Dnevnik, 7.7.2004.

34 Makedonija Denes, 9.7.2004.

35 BalkanInsight. „School Segregation Sparks Macedonia Debate“, 10.2.2009. <<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/school-segregation-sparks-macedonia-debate>>. [Accessed 16 August 2011].

36 Dnevnik. 2003. 24 July; Macedonian Information Agency. 2003. 20 May.

examples of Albanians questioning the legitimacy of the state from the very beginning of its independence.³⁷

Insisting on boundaries of municipalities conditioned on an ethnically based census, the OFA avoids this citizens’ principle and reinforces nationalism on both sides. The census results initiated bargaining over the municipality borders alongside ethnic lines. Therefore, the decentralization process in accordance with the OFA was painful for both sides.

Unlike the smoothly-approved law on self-government,³⁸ the adoption of the Law on Territorial Organization of Municipalities was preceded by long lasting ethnic disputes. As the consequence of some emotional discussions, the number of municipalities was reduced from 123 to 84 in 2004 and municipal borders were redrawn so that the obligatory bilingualism in units where minorities overreach 20%³⁹ became effective for most Albanians living in the country.

On the other hand, Macedonians were most afraid in Lozovo, Rostuse, Centar Župa, Struga, Kičevo and mainly in the capital of Skopje, which officially became a bilingual city. Macedonians “lost” their unilingual Skopje and became minorities in several new municipalities. Nevertheless, the real winner was nationalism and ethnically defined interests. The ethnic cantonization process won over the civic principle in the decentralization process.

3. Public discourse or any Conclusion possible?

Most of the requirements of the OFA have been met. It should be said that the OFA did not solve the most important problems at all which are, in the eyes of Macedonian public and according to the Standard Eurobarometer research of economic situations, crime and unemployment.⁴⁰ The last provisions of the OFA are being implemented, as for example *“the principle of non-discrimination and equal*

37 Albanians overwhelmingly boycotted referendum on independent state prior to secession from Yugoslavia in 1991, further illegally organized contra-referendum initiative for territorial autonomy of northwestern Macedonia in the spring of 1992.

38 improving the right of self-government and ensuring the rights of communities inclusive referendum initiative.

39 Until the OFA, it was for nationalities not specified, as only „majority“ or „considerable number of inhabitants“.

40 MIA, 4.2.2008.

treatment of all under the law will be respected completely“, particularly in public administration (OFA 4.1.). Due to the efforts of public administration in recruiting minority candidates, representation of ethnic minorities in governmental bodies and public administration has approached 25% at the end of 2009. Ethnic Albanians are still being underrepresented particularly in the military and police forces where they are not reaching the demanded quota of 25%.⁴¹

Afraid of almost having lost the ground, Macedonians have been struggling to preserve their identity. But unlike in the 90's, their contemporary effort has been defensive in its content. Sometimes, Macedonians want to preserve national monopoly of the state spirit which it had in the 80's or 90's. Being afraid of unfavourable developments in ethnic composition, Macedonians introduced a system of state subsidiaries for families living in areas with a lower birth rate. Constitutional court annulled the subsidies as discriminatory to people living in areas with a higher natality rate.⁴²

On the contrary, the self-confidence of agile Albanian parties who are frequently overstepping the OFA ideology has been evident.

How seriously can we look upon a report of the CSIS (Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington) mentioning that wide ranging rights granted to the Albanian minority in Macedonia has created a trend towards a bi-national state? As already mentioned, Meduh Thaci from DPA questioned the foundation of the OFA having called it a "dead" agreement. He said that it was a "fatal mistake" that Albanians agreed to be just some 20% of a number in the OFA and not having gained the status of a state-building nation.⁴³

Several weeks before the parliamentary elections held in 2011, the Albanians stepped up their demands. In suggesting the formation of a bi-national country, the DPA created an alternative to the OFA instead.⁴⁴

41 Human rights report Macedonia. Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. 2009. <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/eur/136044.htm>>; [Accessed 5 May 2011].

42 Balkaninsight. 2011. „Macedonians Shrink as Ethnic Albanians Expand“. 14 February. <<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/white-plague-decimates-macedonians>>; [Accessed 18 May 2011].

43 SEE Security Monitor. The Centre for SouthEast European Studies (CSEES). 2010. „Macedonia: Albanians threaten with new war through Meduh Thaci“. 10 February. <http://www.csees.net/?page=news&news_id=73781&country_id=5>; [Accessed 17 May 2011].

44 Vecer, 10.2. 2010.

The results of a recently revealed poll has also proven the warning evidence that the tight majority of Albanians in Macedonia wish “Greater Albania“, a state covering the territory of Albania, Kosovo and north-western Macedonia to be established. The number of Albanians in Albania and particularly in Kosovo demanding the Greater Albania is even higher.⁴⁵

The bi-national principle has been formulated by Albanians in their campaign before the parliamentary elections in 2011. The Albanians from DPA proposed building greater cooperation with Macedonians in the government after the 2011 parliamentary elections by acquiring one of the three key political posts of the state – president, prime minister or speaker of parliament – to be reserved for Albanian politicians. This demand goes beyond the OFA and is in fact opening the bi-national principle.⁴⁶ The Albanians are demanding the Albanian language to be used on the whole territory of Macedonia, and require a “written agreement“ as a precondition for their participation in the government coalition.⁴⁷

Numerous Albanian political parties compete against one another, and, while being in opposition, attract the attention of voters by using a very nationalistic style. Due to the hatred between Albanian political parties it is also difficult to lead a governmental coalition with more than one Albanian political party as was enacted after the PDP became part of the coalition during the period from the year 2006 to 2008. After the 2006 elections were won by the DUI party, it was revealed that the strongest Albanian party should become part of the governmental coalition regardless of whether or not this provision was anchored in the OFA. In the last decade, the parliament was in fact often boycotted and paralyzed by Albanian – and also by Macedonian – oppositional parties and the key issues could not be neither passed through nor seriously discussed in the parliament.

More seriously, the issues which did not have ethnic connotations previously, became an apple of discord between Macedonians and Albanians. Preventing Macedonia from joining NATO and from launching the accession talks with

45 Kanal 5. 2010. 18 November.

46 Balkaninsight. 2011. „Macedonian Albanians Condition Gov’t Participation. Balkaninsight.“ 12 May. <<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonian-albanians-condition-government-participation>>. > [Accessed 18 May 2011].

47 Balkaninsight. 2011. „Macedonian Albanians Condition Gov’t Participation“. 12 May. <<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonian-albanians-condition-government-participation>>; [Accessed 21 May 2011]. Balkaninsight. 2011. „Macedonia: Ohrid Accord is ‘Only Alternative‘“ <<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-ohrid-accord-is-only-alternative>>; [Accessed 21 May 2011]>.

the EU, the name dispute with Greece has sharply worsened ethnic relations in Macedonia. According to Macedonians *"the name change might jeopardise its identity and dignity"*.⁴⁸

However, Albanian politicians lost patience with the long-lasting name dispute and Macedonian concern over its identity and dignity. Ali Ahmeti from DUI labelled the name issue as the main issue of 2010. The attitudes of both *communities* differ significantly as well: The change of name is welcomed by 78% of Albanians but only by 17% of Macedonians. According to another poll, even 94% of Albanians would change the country's name in return for NATO membership.⁴⁹

Finally, the first thesis formulated in the introduction is right. Macedonians have been struggling in defending their superior position in the country and the post-OFA period suggests a *zero sum game*.

A note to the second assumption: it is true that Albanians now require the same standards as the NLA in 2001 did. But it is not true that the majority of Albanians consider the OFA as a final agreement or the first step before increasing their demands to – let us say – founding the third Albanian state on the Balkans. Perhaps every new census could give us the real answer.

To sum up in a rather simplified way: Macedonians are having the attitude of *'we gave you so many rights, what more do you want'*, while Albanians believe that *'our rights have still not been accomplished, our patience is coming to an end'*.

Since the OFA, ethnic division became somewhat deeper, and even between the Macedonian and Albanian camps there are no signs looming ahead that hate prejudices and the politics of the *zero sum game* or – putting it more accurately – after the OFA *20% sum game* would soon be abandoned by either sides.

48 Balkaninsight. 2011. „No Breakthrough After Greece, Macedonia Name Talks“. 10 February. <<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/no-results-from-greece-macedonia-name-talks>>; [Accessed 21 May 2011].

49 Novinite. 2010. „Name Dispute Threatens to Partition Macedonia“, 28 September. <http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=120591>. Focus News. 2010. „Nearly 78% of Albanians, only 17% of Macedonians want change the name of the country“, 17 April 2010.

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Dailies:

Dnevnik, Flaka, Fakti, Vecer.

CIP - Каталогизација во публикација
Национална и универзитетска библиотека “Св. Климент Охридски”, Скопје

321.7(497.7)“2001”

ONE decade after the Ohrid framework agreement : lessons (to be)
learned from the macedonian experience / edited by Marija Risteska
and Zhidas Daskalovski. - Skopje : Center for research and policy
making, 2012. - 296 стр. : граф. прикази ; 21 см

Фусноти кон текстот. - Библиографија кон главите

ISBN 978-608-4586-23-4

а) Охридски рамковен договор - 2001-2011
COBISS.MK-ID 90158602



OFA 11

One Decade after the
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