



THE ALBANIAN QUESTION IN MACEDONIA:
**Implications of the Kosovo Conflict for Inter-Ethnic
Relations in Macedonia**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the one former Yugoslav republic which has managed to keep itself out of the wars of Yugoslav dissolution, Macedonia has often appeared to outsiders as a beacon of hope in the Balkans. However, inter-ethnic relations in the young state -- in particular those between ethnic Albanians, who make up at least 23 percent of the population, and ethnic Macedonians -- are poor. Moreover, as fighting between ethnic Albanian separatists and the Serbian police and military escalates in the neighbouring, southern Serbian province of Kosovo, relations between communities within Macedonia are deteriorating alarmingly. As a result, Macedonia and its entire population, irrespective of their ethnic origins, stand to be among the greatest long-term losers of the Kosovo conflict. Moreover, in the event of fighting and large numbers of refugees spilling over from Kosovo -- an entirely plausible eventuality unless the killing is halted -- Macedonia is poorly prepared and the country's very existence may be imperilled.

Ethnic Albanians overwhelmingly support their kin in Kosovo. Ethnic Macedonians tend to draw parallels between Kosovo Albanian demands for independence and ethnic Albanian politics in Macedonia, believing that Albanian demands for increased rights in Macedonia undermine the ethnic Macedonian identity and by extension the Macedonian nation and the Macedonian State. They therefore increasingly identify with the Serbian side. Ethnic Macedonians tend also to view Albanians as a minority that, while entitled to certain rights under the constitution -- a constitution which declares Macedonian the sole official language, and the Macedonian Orthodox Church the official creed -- should not be granted greater rights than those accorded to other minorities.

Relations between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians have long been problematic. During the 1980s, Macedonia's then communist authorities supported and then aped Serbia's crackdown on ethnic Albanians. Since the advent of democracy, repression has eased, and the government has slowly increased opportunities for ethnic Albanians. Ethnic Albanians now have their own political parties, regularly participate in elections, fill one-sixth of the seats in parliament and hold five government ministries. However, they are greatly under-represented in most fields, including local government, law enforcement and the military. And they complain that they are subject to chronic discrimination in everyday life.

Tension between ethnic Albanians and ethnic Macedonians manifests itself in education, in particular in the struggle for an Albanian-language university, the media and in national symbols. An ethnic Albanian mayor has been sentenced to seven years and other ethnic Albanian politicians for shorter periods for illegally flying an Albanian flag; ethnic Albanian demonstrators have been killed in clashes with Macedonian police; and the legal registration of what would probably be the strongest ethnic Albanian political party, created by the merger of two existing parties, has been rejected because the application does not meet constitutional requirements such as listing the party name in Cyrillic.

Parliamentary elections scheduled for late autumn risk being the occasion for a further radicalisation of politics as voters divide along ethnic lines. In June 1998 parliament adopted a new electoral system combining majority and proportional systems. Under the new electoral system, 85 parliamentary seats will be selected on a constituency basis and the remaining 35 on the basis of proportional representation. Ethnic Albanian parties fear that constituency boundaries will be drawn to weaken the ethnic Albanian vote.

A 750-strong UN force of Nordic and US troops patrols Macedonia's border with Kosovo and acts as a trip-wire against Serbian incursions. The mandate was due to expire on 31 August 1998 but has been extended and the United States is expected to increase the size of its contingent. The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is also present in Macedonia with dozens of observers, but has a weak mandate. At the same time, NATO is considering both a military deployment in Macedonia and direct military intervention in Kosovo.

Macedonia itself can do little to influence the outcome of events in Kosovo. However, the country's ability to overcome both the domestic and external threats to its survival depends on finding a minimum of common ground so that ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians can co-exist. This will require, on the one hand, that representatives of the ethnic Macedonian majority address the legitimate grievances of the ethnic Albanian minority, and, on the other, that ethnic Albanian leaders participate and engage constructively in Macedonia's political life. It will also require concerted international support and coaxing. With this in mind, ICG has a series of proposals, including the following:

- Any NATO military action requiring overt Macedonian co-operation is likely to inflame tensions between Macedonia's two largest ethnic communities. If, therefore, NATO does decide to intervene militarily in Kosovo, intervention should not be launched from within Macedonia.
- Since Macedonia is dependent on foreign aid, the international community has some leverage in Macedonia. Western countries and the multilateral agencies should continue to offer crucial economic assistance to Macedonia. However, in return they should insist upon greater commitment from the authorities to fostering better relations between the country's ethnic communities.
- The creation of a political framework which encourages rather than discourages the inclusion of all ethnic groups would be a powerful incentive for political parties to become more than ethnic voting blocs. This requires electoral reform. Research should therefore be conducted to develop electoral laws so that elected officials are accountable to the entire electorate and not exclusively to their own communities.

Skopje-Sarajevo, 11 August 1998

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I. INTRODUCTION

As the one former Yugoslav republic which has managed to keep itself out of the wars of Yugoslav dissolution, Macedonia has often appeared to outsiders as a beacon of hope in the Balkans. Despite difficulties, Macedonia has held together as a country since the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia. However, almost everything about the country, from its borders, to its language, history and flag, even its name and ethnic composition, is controversial. Hence persistent fears about its long-term viability. The latest and most dangerous threat to the stability and security of Macedonia is the escalating ethnic fighting in the neighbouring Serbian province of Kosovo. Given the presence of a large ethnic Albanian minority in Macedonia and strained relations between that community and the ethnic Macedonian majority, the possibility of a spill-over is very real.

This report examines the impact of the Kosovo crisis on Macedonia. It discusses the domestic context of inter-ethnic relations in Macedonia and assesses the influence of events in Kosovo on the aspirations and strategies of ethnic Albanians in Macedonia, and it analyses the increase in inter-ethnic tensions in Macedonia as a result of the conflict in Kosovo. It looks at existing security arrangements in the country and the possible ramifications of additional foreign military deployment in Macedonia. The report also considers how the international community might take account of the fragile situation in Macedonia when framing its response to the crisis in Kosovo, and makes recommendations about appropriate international action to alleviate tension in Macedonia and contribute towards longer-term stability. Appendices at the end list key constitutional provisions and include a who's who of Macedonian politics and media.

II. ETHNIC TENSIONS IN MACEDONIA

The crisis in Kosovo is exacerbating already tense relations in Macedonia between the country's ethnic Macedonian majority and the substantial ethnic Albanian minority. Relations between the two groups have long been problematic. During the 1980s, a period of rising tension and increasingly repressive Serbian government measures in Kosovo, the Macedonian communist authorities too undertook repressive policies towards the ethnic Albanian population in Macedonia. Any displays of Albanian nationalism met with repression: the use of the Albanian language in education was curtailed, and numerous ethnic Albanian teachers who resisted the new curriculum were sacked; the ministry of the interior continued to enforce the policy of denying the right to give certain names, considered nationalist, to ethnic Albanian babies until 1992; and traditional walls surrounding Albanian homes (used for protection against intruders, to keep women out of sight and to dry tobacco leaves) were destroyed.

Since the end of communist rule, such repression has eased, and the government has slowly increased opportunities for ethnic Albanians. The Albanians have their own political parties, regularly participate in elections, fill one-sixth of the seats in parliament and hold five government ministries. However, they are greatly under-represented in most fields, including local government, law enforcement and the military. Ethnic Albanians, for example, are estimated to account for no more than three percent of all police officers and five percent of all government positions. Their repeated failure to achieve political and social equality through Macedonia's political institutions reinforces feelings of frustration, feeding nationalism.

Macedonia's ethnic Albanians complain that they are subject to chronic discrimination in everyday life. For example, they charge the predominately ethnic Macedonian police force with brutal and coercive methods towards Albanians. International investigators have supported their claims of excessive force, coerced confessions and detainment without trials. In a 1997 report, the Helsinki Committee on Human Rights declared that the public prosecutor was inclined to sanction reported irregularities in police procedures. The New York-based organisation, Human Rights Watch, accused the Macedonian government of ignoring a pattern of police brutality that threatens social stability in Macedonia. The organisation's report, released on 7 April 1998, reported repeated use of excessive force in controlling demonstrations, discrimination in the treatment of ethnic minorities and restrictions on some aspects of free expression.¹

A. Constitutional Status

The simmering antagonism between the country's ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians came to the surface during the period of the formation of an independent Macedonian state. The ethnic Albanians largely boycotted the 1991

¹ *Police Violence in Macedonia*, Human Rights Watch, 7 April 1998.

referendum on Macedonia's independence from the former Yugoslavia and the adoption of a new constitution. Ethnic Albanian members of the parliament refused to participate unless the country's Albanian community was recognised as a constituent people of the republic, equal in status to the ethnic Macedonians. In particular, ethnic Albanian leaders objected to the wording of the constitution's preamble. This states that: "Macedonia is constituted as the national state of the Macedonian people, in which the integral civil equality and enduring coexistence of the Macedonian people with Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, and Roma and other nationalities inhabiting the Republic of Macedonia are protected..."² Ethnic Albanians interpreted this clause as implying a lower constitutional status for non-ethnic Macedonian citizens, and argued that the international community had an obligation to support efforts to amend the constitution.

Under the constitution, non-ethnic Macedonian citizens of Macedonia are accorded the status of a "nationality", and are accorded all civil rights. The designation "nationality" is inherited from former Yugoslav times, when there was a distinction between the six constituent "nations" of Yugoslavia (including the ethnic Macedonians) and the other "nationalities" (including the ethnic Albanians), who effectively had the status of national minorities. On the one hand, the constitution provides for a pluralistic, multi-ethnic state, but on the other hand, it leaves unsettled the explosive issue of the Albanian-Macedonian relations. The constitution specifies generous minority rights, but Article 7 declares Macedonian as the sole official language, and according to Article 19 the Macedonian Orthodox Church is the official creed. The Albanians, who are mostly Muslim, say that this places them at the margins of society. In addition, Article 48 guarantees the right to primary and secondary education in recognised minority languages, but makes no such provisions for higher education.

When ethnic Albanian demands in 1991 for the status of a constituent nation were rebuffed, their leaders organised an unofficial referendum on territorial autonomy on 11 January 1992. According to the then leading Albanian political party, the Party of Democratic Prosperity (PDP),³ more than 90 percent of ethnic Albanians who were eligible to vote took part and three-quarters supported autonomy.⁴ Ethnic Albanian leaders then requested that the UN, the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE)⁵ and the Council of Europe withhold recognition of the young state until it had complied with Albanian demands.

The Macedonian government declared the referendum illegal and, when questioned about it, a government spokesman reacted harshly, declaring that: "The unilateral acts of minorities, which do not take into account the opinion of the majority, lead to violence."⁶ Although no violence occurred, the referendum issue continues to colour all political discussions regarding ethnic Albanian aspirations

² Preamble to the Macedonian constitution, adopted by the assembly on 17 November 1991. (see appendix)

³ Throughout this paper, the acronyms for Albanian and Macedonian political parties are those under which the parties are registered. Thus, the Party for Democratic Prosperity is referred to as PDP, although in the Albanian language its acronym is PPD.

⁴ *Nova Makedonija*, 19 January 1992; *Vjesnik*, 17 January 1992.

⁵ The precursor of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

⁶ Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), 13 January 1992, p. 58.

and the extent of their loyalty to the state. The simultaneous ethnic Albanian requests for autonomy and for acknowledgement of their status as a constituent nation during the country's quest for statehood seems to have strengthened the resolve among the ethnic Macedonian community to refuse any constitutional concessions to the ethnic Albanians.

B. Demographic Disputes

The 1991 census showed the country's population of 2.03 million to be 64 percent ethnic Macedonian (1.31 million), 21 percent ethnic Albanian (427,000), and 10 percent Roma, Serb, Turkish and other ethnic groups. Ethnic Albanians widely boycotted this census, objecting to what they alleged were misleading ethnic options listed on the survey form. Instead, ethnic Albanian leaders conducted their own census and determined that there were 800,000 ethnic Albanians living in Macedonia, who constituted 40 percent of the population.

In order to answer the highly political question of just what proportion of the country's population is made up of ethnic minorities, a new census was held in June 1994. This census was conducted with financial and technical assistance from the EU. The results revealed Macedonia's population to be 1,936,877, of which ethnic Macedonians comprised 67 percent,⁷ and ethnic Albanians 23 percent, the largest ethnic minority among the Turks, Serbs, Roma, and Vlachs.

Leaders of Macedonia's ethnic Albanians and other ethnic minorities declared the results illegitimate. Ethnic Albanian leaders complained that the census was not properly prepared and that census forms were not offered in the Albanian language. They also charged that the statistical bureau did not employ ethnic Albanian experts and that no ethnic Albanians were present when the data was processed. Another controversial point regarding the census concerned the status of permanently settled ethnic Albanian refugees from Kosovo, who were not counted. The citizenship law adopted in October 1992 stipulates a fifteen-year residency requirement prior to the granting of citizenship, which effectively denies citizenship to many ethnic Albanians from Kosovo and Albania.

Regardless of the exact number of ethnic Albanians in the country, this issue affects all political discussions and most disagreements between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians. It affects debates over the number of minority language schools, the number of hours of minority language television and radio programming, employment in the state sector, the use of national symbols, and many other issues.

C. An Albanian-Language University

A key ethnic Albanian aim is that the Albanian language and alphabet be used in all national institutions, in education and in culture. There is no officially recognised Albanian-language university in Macedonia and relatively little

⁷ *Nova Makedonija*, 4 December 1994.

Albanian-language instruction in the national university in Skopje. Further, Macedonia's ethnic Albanians lost the opportunity to study in their native tongue at Pristina University, in Kosovo, when instruction in the Albanian language was stopped there in 1991. Another common complaint from Macedonia's ethnic Albanians is that there is an insufficient number of language schools at the primary and secondary levels. Education is seen as a key means of achieving social and economic parity with the ethnic Macedonian majority.

In late 1994 the Albanian community formed a private university in Tetovo, a majority ethnic Albanian town in western Macedonia.⁸ The government declared the university unconstitutional and police raided the premises in December 1994. Despite government warnings, the university re-opened two months later. Two days later, the police again raided the university. They destroyed parts of the building, confiscated equipment, and arrested several administrators, including the president of the university, Fadil Sulejmani. One Albanian died in the clashes between ethnic Albanians and Macedonian police. The university re-opened the following month and continues to have an uneasy but quiet relationship with the authorities.

The more radical ethnic Albanian party in Macedonia, the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA), has drawn analogies between the University of Tetovo and the Albanians' parallel education system in Kosovo. The DPA president, Arben Xhaferi, often compares his strategy with that of the Democratic League of Kosovo, believing that ethnic Albanians in Macedonia must employ the same tactics that have been used in Kosovo and that they will only achieve their goals by looking beyond the confines of the state system. He has explained that: "If there is insufficient space in the democratic system then one must consider the 'undemocratic space' that is available."⁹

The dispute over the university in Tetovo has come to symbolise the gulf between the ethnic Macedonian majority and the Albanian minority. Recognition and accreditation for the Albanian-language university is a minimum condition required of the government if ethnic Albanian participation in the country's political life is to continue. It has become the litmus test for the government's commitment to inter-ethnic co-operation. Meanwhile, ethnic Macedonians widely see in the issue further evidence of the separatist aspirations of the country's ethnic Albanians.

The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), which has been conducting the fight against Serbian forces in Kosovo, has, in a letter to the editor of the largest Albanian-language newspaper, *Flaka e Vellazerimit*, threatened to kill Sulejmani, whom they accused of collaborating with the Macedonian "regime". The threat coincided with behind-the-scenes negotiations between the Macedonian president, Kiro Gligorov, and the Albanians in Tetovo. In June 1998 he sent two representatives from his cabinet to visit the university in a "tolerant atmosphere to neither recognise nor to

⁸ The funding for the university came mostly from remittances from the large migrant Albanian communities in Germany, Switzerland, and the United States. Funding for political activities in Macedonia has, however, tapered off as contributions to Kosovo have risen. (In the early 1990s, the Albanian Diaspora also funded the ethnic Albanian political parties in Macedonia).

⁹ ICG interview with Arben Xhaferi, Tetovo, 10 April 1998.

reject the legitimacy” of the rogue institute.¹⁰ The death threat also came during a campaign to purge PDP-leaning instructors from the university and replace them with supporters of the more radical DPA. The purging of these “moderate” instructors was in defiance of Sulejmani’s directives.

D. Ethnic Politics

The common, stated goal among the ethnic Albanian parties is to obtain more rights for Macedonia's ethnic Albanians. The party platforms of the PDP and the DPA outline their aspirations: to amend the constitution, to give ethnic Albanians equal status with the ethnic Macedonian majority; to allow for the use of the Albanian language and alphabet in official business; to institute educational instruction in Albanian at all levels; to end discrimination in employment; to ensure the equal representation of ethnic Albanians in public sectors such as the police, the judiciary, the military and the civil service, proportionate to their representation in the population at large; and to devolve greater autonomy to local government, enabling municipalities to manage their own affairs.¹¹

The parties are, however, divided over the means of raising the status of Macedonia's ethnic Albanians. The largest ethnic Albanian party, the PDP, split into two factions at the February 1994 national party congress, one representing the old guard and the other a more radical branch, who left to form the Party of Democratic Prosperity for Albanians (PDPA). In July 1997 the PDPA and the People's Democratic Party (NDP), which had previously been in coalition with the PDP, joined together in the DPA. Ethnic Albanian radicals charge that participation in the government is akin to being traitors to the Albanian cause. The PDP, under the leadership of Abdurahman Aliti, has been part of the government coalition since 1992 and holds five ministerial posts. To more radical ethnic Albanians, the government's failure to deliver more on their demands demonstrates a lack of will to grant them equal status.

Ethnic Albanian parliamentary deputies have frequently boycotted parliamentary votes, in the apparent belief that this strategy asserts the Albanian position as a powerful, distinct constituency and undermines the legitimacy of the legislation concerned.¹² The continued participation of ethnic Albanian representatives in the country's political life is thus precarious. It is, however, vital if discourse between ethnic Macedonian and ethnic Albanian sides is to be maintained within the sphere of constitutional politics, and if a still more serious confrontation, outside the constitutional framework, is to be avoided.

Aliti argues that his party's participation in government keeps out of power the more nationalist Macedonian parties, such as the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation-Democratic Party of Macedonian National Unity

¹⁰ “Academic Party Coup”, *Forum*, 5-18 June 1998, p. 12.

¹¹ Partia Demokratike Shqiptare: Dokumente Kongresi (documents of the DPA Congress), June 1997, pp. 10-12; and Platforma e PPD – se zgjedhjet lokale 1996 (PDP party platform), 1996 pp. 3-4.

¹² ICG interview with Abdurahman Aliti, Tetovo, 10 April 1998.

(VMRO-DPMNE).¹³ An additional motivation, however, is probably that participation in the government offers PDP leaders the opportunity to distribute patronage in the form of public sector jobs. Aliti has warned of grave consequences if the government fails to act to satisfy ethnic Albanian demands, and to improve the situation of the ethnic Albanian community. The failure to make concessions and satisfy at least some ethnic Albanian demands serves to undermine the more moderate stance of the PDP, playing into the hands of the DPA radicals, who are increasingly inclined to end the limited participation and co-operation in the Macedonian political system that currently exists.

The growing popularity of the DPA, as evidenced by the strong showing of its predecessor, the PDPA, in the 1996 local elections, poses a threat to the government's record of maintaining ethnic Albanian participation in the country's political life. In response to this perceived threat, the legal registration of the DPA has been held up in the court system. The application of the PDPA and the NDP to the Appellate Court of Skopje to create the DPA was rejected. The court objected that the new party's statutes violated the constitution, and so blocked the merger. Despite a ruling by the Constitutional Court that the new party's mandate does not "incite violent usurpation of the Constitutional Order nor favour military intervention by a foreign force", the lower court has refused to proceed with the registration of the DPA, claiming that the submitted application does not meet constitutional requirements such as the listing the party name in the Cyrillic script.

The DPA has been divided as to whether to participate in parliamentary elections due later this year. If it did, then given the increasing radicalisation of much of the ethnic Albanian population, to which the Kosovo crisis has contributed, it would be likely to do better than the PDP. The PDP has been distancing itself from the government, in an effort to strengthen its position. Given that ethnic Macedonian and ethnic Albanian nationalism are mutually reinforcing elements, there is a risk that the run-up to the election will bring an even more marked polarisation along ethnic lines. Indeed, the PDP and DPA are also in talks to present a joint ethnic Albanian platform in the forthcoming poll.¹⁴ Meanwhile, the main governing ethnic Macedonian party, the Social Democratic Alliance of Macedonia (SDSM) has already started to harden its position towards the ethnic Albanian community in an effort better to confront the challenge presented by the strengthening VMRO.

The electoral outcome is unclear, but the possibility of radicals emerging stronger on both sides is real (assuming the DPA's participation). The SDSM might be able to retain its hold on power through a continuing coalition involving the PDP. However, this is far from certain. In order to form a government of its own VMRO would, if it wished to avoid governing with the SDSM, have to strike a deal with an ethnic Albanian party. In some places VMRO and the DPA have co-operated at the local level, but there have been no official contacts at the national level. Given the extent of Macedonian-Albanian polarisation, this might seem like a unlikely combination.

¹³ ICG interview with Abdurahman Aliti, Tetovo, 10 April 1998.

¹⁴ Reuters, 7 August 1998.

E. Public Protests

There is also a risk of inter-ethnic violence flaring on the streets. In July 1997, Macedonian special police forces entered the city of Gostivar, in western Macedonia, forcibly to remove an Albanian flag flying over the city hall. The ethnic Albanian mayor, Rufi Osmani, was defying a court ruling that stipulated that the Albanian flag could fly only on holidays and only alongside the Macedonian flag. Ethnic Albanian demonstrators gathered to prevent the police from entering the town hall, and the state security officers responded with brutal force. Private television stations showed the violent confrontations between the police and ethnic Albanians, in which three people were killed and more than 200 injured.

Osmani was arrested and sentenced to 13 years and 8 months (later reduced to 7 years) in prison. The mayor of Tetovo and two city councillors were also arrested and sentenced to two-and-a-half years. The government's excessively harsh response to the DPA's flaunting of the Albanian flag drew condemnation from human rights observers. The uninhibited use of government force put the PDP on an even more precarious footing. Under pressure from the PDP, the government set up a parliamentary investigative commission, which concluded that the police used excessive force but refused to reprimand individual officers because it was not within their mandate.

The Constitutional Court refused to overturn the sentences, and Osmani began serving his sentence on 10 April 1998. In response, an estimated 5,000 protesters demonstrated in Skopje on 28 April 1998. The crowd of predominately young males waved protest signs that read "Free Osmani", "Away with Traitors" and "Leave Your Chairs," in reference to the comfortable leather chairs that the PDP cabinet ministers occupy. The DPA staged rallies in the western cities of Debar, Gostivar, and Tetovo and in other parts of the country. The protesters were initially met by police dressed in riot gear, backed up by busloads of additional forces and arms. In the absence of violence, subsequent protests attracted considerably less security and a notable decrease in tension.

The seven DPA members of parliament "withdrew" from their duties in sympathy with Osmani, and nine mayors and more than 70 city councillors affiliated with the DPA have resigned. The remaining ethnic Albanians in government, including five cabinet ministers, are under increasing pressure from their constituents to secure the freedom of Osmani and the other ethnic Albanian politicians. Xhaferi said that his party's withdrawal from the state system was a sign of deep-rooted discontent over the complete negation of democratic procedures under the Macedonian judicial system.¹⁵ The DPA, in tacit co-operation with the PDP, has initiated a campaign to gather 150,000 signatures demanding the release of the ethnic Albanian politicians.

Many fear that the July 1997 events in Gostivar and Tetovo may be the harbinger of a breakdown in social relations between Macedonia's ethnic Macedonians and Albanians. The protests have represented an outlet for Albanian frustration, and have increased nervousness among ethnic Macedonians. Newspapers have

¹⁵ ICG interviews with Albanian party leaders, Tetovo, 10 April 1998.

contained frank stories about ethnic Macedonians wishing to move out of mixed neighbourhoods to more ethnically-pure ones.¹⁶ Ethnic Albanians and ethnic Macedonians are already tending to mix and socialise less; for example, restaurants with mixed clientele are already less evident. Fewer ethnic Albanians attend local football matches in Skopje since the sports chants have included refrains such as "kill the Albanians".

For the most part, the Macedonian-language press has been rather muted in its reporting of the ethnic Albanian protest marches. Privately, a few journalists have expressed reservations about drawing attention to the Osmani case, for fear of bestowing upon him the "status of Mandela". Other ethnic Macedonians, particularly the more nationalist political parties, have been less reticent in their criticism, and have accused the SDSM-led coalition of encouraging the ethnic Albanians and of capitulating to their demands in order to prop up a weak coalition.

F. Albanian-Language Media

Many ethnic Albanian demands concerning greater access to media in their native language are being met. The key demand is that the number of programme hours in Albanian on national radio and television should be proportionate to the population -- hence they believe that they are entitled to more than one-third of air-time. Currently, the national television station, MTV, allocates three hours daily (and an additional two hours on Wednesdays) of Albanian language programming, and the national radio station allocates six hours daily.

The main Albanian-language newspaper, *Flaka e Vellazerimit*, is heavily subsidised by the state. The editorial slant of the newspaper mirrors that of PDP policy. In April 1998 a new Albanian-language newspaper, *Fakti*, appeared, and *Flaka* has since seen its readership drop considerably. *Fakti* was launched to present a "balanced and uncensored view," according to its original editor, Ilir Ajdini.¹⁷ It is on the whole less pro-government and more independent. It does not lean towards either the PDP or the DPA, but tends to be critical of both parties. The paper received \$12,000 in start-up funding from the Soros Open Society foundation and additional support comes from private donations. The paper has a circulation of 10,000 and limited distribution. It is generally sold-out by noon and difficult to find. It does not have any capacity to issue subscriptions or home deliveries, whereas *Flaka* can be delivered by post. The newspaper gained a wide readership with a comprehensive series of articles detailing the origins and platform of the KLA.

MTV is the most influential television channel. It is strongly supportive of the governing coalition, but nevertheless reaches a large audience, being the only Albanian-language station with the technical capability of broadcasting nationally. A number of private stations also broadcast in the Albanian language. The broadcasts are limited to Skopje and cities in western Macedonia. The level of

¹⁶ Advertisements in *Nova Makedonija*, 15 April - 15 May 1998.

¹⁷ ICG interview with Ilir Ajdini, Skopje, 9 June 1998.

professionalism is mixed but they serve the purpose of broadcasting Albanian cultural events, songs and local news.

However, the independent television stations are closely regulated by the government, and the two largest independent stations have both faced being closed down. TV Tosca had a devoted audience from 18:30-20:30, when it re-broadcast news from Albania. Heeding threats of having its license revoked, the station ceased transmitting Albanian news and has since kept a low profile. ERA-TV, based in Skopje, broadcasts a generally pro-PDP angle but was at times harsh in its depiction of Macedonian officials. Since its enforced closure in 1995, nearly all programmes have begun with film clips of President Gligorov, before proceeding to Albanian-related news. Thus far, the station continues to broadcast.

In May 1998 the government issued new public concessions or frequency bands to television and radio stations. All Albanian-language stations that were affiliated with or sympathetic towards the DPA, including TV-Koha in Tetovo and TV-2 in Gostivar, lost their licenses. The Minister of Transportation and Communications, Abdulmenaf Bexheti, a member of the PDP central council, played a key role in the process. VMRO challenged the legality of public concessions awarded to ethnic language networks, claiming that this was not in keeping with the status of Macedonian as the official language. The Constitutional Court ruled that licenses issued to the networks did not violate the constitution.¹⁸

G. Elections

The parliamentary elections scheduled for October or November risk being the occasion for a further radicalisation and polarisation of politics. The 1996 local elections confirmed the increasing radicalisation of the population. Voters cast their ballots principally on the basis of ethnicity, with party platforms representing only a second consideration, as people choose a more or less extreme ethnically-based party. The ethnic segregation of the political parties is absolute, and no party attracts voters from ethnic groups other than its own.

A new election law will not discourage the pattern of voting along ethnic lines. In June 1998 parliament adopted a new, mixed electoral system combining majority and proportional systems. Under the new electoral system, 85 parliamentary seats will be selected on a majority basis, and the remaining 35 will be elected on the basis of proportional representation. The Albanian parties had hoped that all 120 seats would be allotted through proportional representation, which would have enabled them to gain more parliamentary seats, as the votes of Albanians living in majority ethnic Macedonian areas would have counted towards the election of ethnic Albanian candidates.

The Albanian parties objected to the composition of the election commissions and complained that insufficient funding was provided for voter education. Given the parties' low confidence in the impartiality of the election commissions, they preferred to have electoral disputes settled by the courts rather than by the

¹⁸ *Nova Makedonija*, 21 May 1998.

commissions. In addition, many party leaders worry that their constituents are unfamiliar with the new electoral system. On the positive side, the previously-guarded voter registration list has been made public for the first time, which should help to dispel the fears of the ethnic Albanian parties that Albanian voters are deliberately deleted from the lists.

Another major objection to the proposed electoral system relates to the size of the electoral districts. Due to the introduction of the mixed system, the current 120 parliamentary districts will need to be redrawn. The 85 new constituencies will contain a larger number of voters. According to the draft law, these districts will have a maximum 10 percent variance in population. Albanians fear that constituency boundaries will be drawn so that districts predominately inhabited by ethnic Albanians will contain more voters than those primarily inhabited by ethnic Macedonians. This form of gerrymandering would mean that it would take more ethnic Albanians than ethnic Macedonians to elect one parliamentary deputy. So far the Ministry of Justice has only released a draft map of the proposed 85 electoral units, without indicating the size of the constituencies, but the map appears to confirm ethnic Albanian fears.

III. KOSOVO IMPACT

With inter-ethnic relations in Macedonia already tense, the crisis in Kosovo has added another element threatening Macedonia's own stability. The upsurge in violence since March 1998, as Serbia's security forces have cracked down on the ethnic Albanian fighters of the KLA, has displaced an estimated 200,000 Albanians. It has heightened concerns that the effects of the conflict may reach beyond Serbia's borders, putting at risk regional stability and threatening Macedonia's already fragile ethnic balance. In responding to the Kosovo crisis, a key international concern has to be to contain the conflict and prevent it from spilling over into neighbouring countries.

In response to the violence in Kosovo, NATO on 15 June 1998 conducted military exercises over Albanian and Macedonian airspace. This conspicuous display of NATO air power was intended to send a message to Serbian forces to end their indiscriminate use of force against ethnic Albanian civilians. Western countries hoped that the threat of NATO intervention and its proven ability quickly to mobilise forces into the area would deter the Yugoslav president, Slobodan Milosevic, from instituting a new wave of ethnic cleansing. Moves to stop Serbian violence in Kosovo may, however, merely raise the expectations of Kosovo Albanians of full independence.

Ethnic Albanians in Macedonia feel a strong, emotional tie to Kosovo, and events there have a big impact on the Albanian community in Macedonia. Before 1991, the border was open, and there was a great deal of movement between the ethnic Albanian communities. Many have a large number of relatives residing in Kosovo. According to Kim Mehmeti, director of the Centre for Inter-Ethnic Co-operation: "Albanians in Macedonia may feel an ethnic tie to Albania, but the big emotional tie is to Kosovo. Kosovo is the cultural and intellectual foundation for us. The writers, the journalists, the educators all came from Kosovo; anything of value is from there. We need to defend Kosovo. Should the first person being killed for protecting my sister be an American?"¹⁹

A. Refugee Influx

Among the potential direct consequences of the Kosovo crisis on Macedonia is the risk that the fighting will provoke a flood of ethnic Albanian refugees across the border, upsetting the already delicate ethnic balance in Macedonia, and further inflaming relations between ethnic Albanian and ethnic Macedonians. In early February, President Gligorov proposed that in the event of an evacuation from Kosovo, a corridor between Macedonia and Albania should be opened to enable a controlled transit of up to 400,000 refugees through Macedonia.²⁰ However, the ruling SDSM and the ethnic Macedonian opposition parties stated their preference for sealed borders. The more nationalist parties feared that such a plan would

¹⁹ ICG interview in Skopje, 11 June 1998.

²⁰ A-1 Television news broadcast in Skopje, 1 February 1998.

result in the refugees remaining in Macedonia, as no third country would accept them. Despite support for the idea from Albanian officials in Tirana, Mendu Thaci, vice president of the DPA, called the plan a "fascist idea", accusing Gligorov of trying to create panic and of aiding the Serbian campaign of ethnic cleansing.²¹

Since then, discussions regarding contingency plans for potential refugees have appeared somewhat confused. On 7 June 1998, *Vecher* newspaper reported that the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had developed a plan in consultation with the Macedonian government to accommodate up to 20,000 refugees. The existence of the UNHCR refugee plan was confirmed in a press interview by the spokesman of the UN Preventive Deployment (UNPREDEP) force in Macedonia, Mark McEnvoy, but was denied by the government spokesman, Zoran Ivanov, who said that the government had no such plans. The president of the parliament, Tito Petkovski, also stated that Macedonia had no plans to accommodate potential refugees.²² President Gligorov then reversed his earlier position and said that Macedonia had no intention of accepting refugees, but added cryptically that the country would "fulfil its humanitarian role".²³ The foreign minister, Blagoj Handzhiski, however, stated that Macedonia had indeed developed a plan for coping with possible refugees. Aleksander Sholjakovski, writing in *Denes* magazine, described the government officials as "Refugees from Reality".²⁴ On 17 June 1998 Ivanov said that the government had organised plans for refugee camps but would not comment on the number of refugees that Macedonia was prepared to accommodate.²⁵

The government's lack of candour has been widely interpreted in two ways: either the government's refusal clearly to define the potential refugee problem stems from its fear of being perceived as overly sympathetic to ethnic Albanians in an election year;²⁶ or the government is purposefully neglecting the refugee problem in order to create a crisis situation. Given the sensitivity of the demographic issue in Macedonia, an influx of refugees would have a seriously destabilising effect. The more extreme ethnic Macedonian parties, such as the Socialist Party (SP) and VMRO would play on Macedonian fears of becoming a minority in "their" country. Opinion polls show that the ruling coalition is already in a very weak position. It is therefore in the SDSM's interest not to appear "soft" on Albanians. There have also been some suggestions that a potential crisis over the refugee issue might be exploited in order to postpone this autumn's parliamentary elections.

Another aspect of the refugee controversy relates to the disputed presence of refugees from Kosovo already in the country. The government spokesman, Ivanov has acknowledged that there may be Kosovo residents in Macedonia, but has described them as "guests". Others are sceptical and believe it is illusory to say that there are no refugees from Kosovo in Macedonia.²⁷ Apart from expressing fears regarding the impact of a refugee influx on the demographic balance, many

²¹ *Vecher*, 4 June 1998.

²² A-1 Television news broadcast in Skopje, 7 June 1998.

²³ *Vecher*, 8 June 1998; *Nova Makedonija*, 8 June 1998.

²⁴ *Denes*, 11 June 1998.

²⁵ *Dnevnik*, 17 June 1998.

²⁶ *Dnevnik*, 17 and 18 June 1998.

²⁷ Atanas Kirovski, writing in *Denes*, 11 June 1998.

ethnic Macedonians worry that if Macedonia appears too ready to accept Kosovo refugees, it will be interpreted as an implicit criticism of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia). There is widespread reluctance to interfere in the "internal affairs" of Yugoslavia, and VMRO has expressed concern that Macedonia is dangerously close to jeopardising its neutral position as regards Yugoslavia, and will suffer lasting animosity from its more powerful neighbour.

B. Security Threat

The Kosovo conflict risks spilling over into Macedonia in other ways. Indeed, there have been persistent rumours of KLA activities in Macedonia for many months. The only publicised instance of direct KLA activity in Macedonia before August 1998, however, was the alleged death threat against the president of Tetovo University. There have been a series of car bombs outside police stations in Gostivar, Tetovo, Skopje, Kumanovo and Prilep; the Macedonian-language media initially connected two of the bombs to the KLA, but the police have denied any connections and the KLA has not claimed responsibility. On 5 August 1998 Macedonia's defence ministry spokesman told the Reuters news agency that the Macedonian army had been involved in regular clashes with armed groups trying to smuggle weapons into Macedonia for the past three months.²⁸ Earlier, the government had repeatedly denied that there have been any KLA activities in Kosovo.

One KLA member who was interviewed by a foreign journalist, as reported in *Dnevnik*, claimed that KLA cells are flourishing in the country.²⁹ ICG sources in the ethnic Albanian community in Macedonia say that KLA activities are centred on fund-raising for refugees in Albania and recruitment of fighters with previous military experience. There have also been reports of Serbian incursions across the border into Macedonia, according to which Serbian police have reportedly entered ethnic Albanian villages in Macedonia to warn villagers about supporting the KLA. In many areas, Serbian police are stationed as little as 200 meters from border villages, which is facilitated by the absence of a clear, agreed border between the two countries (Macedonian and the FRY have been unable to agree on more than a small portion of the border).

Macedonia's borders are especially vulnerable. When the country peacefully extracted itself from the former Yugoslavia, the withdrawal of the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) from Macedonia in March 1992 left Macedonia, in military terms, the weakest of all the Balkan states, in no position either to threaten any of its neighbours or to defend itself. The country has fewer than 20,000 soldiers, about 120,000 reservists, no air force, no navy and only a handful of recently purchased armoured vehicles and heavy weapons.³⁰

The fighting in Kosovo has brought an increased flow of weapons into the country, which the Macedonian security forces are ill-equipped to stem. Some of the

²⁸ Reuters, 5 August 1998.

²⁹ *Dnevnik*, July 9 1998.

³⁰ *Nova Makedonija*, 18 May 1998; *Večer*, 22 May 1998; and *Večer*, 11 June 1998.

estimated 700,000 to 800,000 small arms and light weapons that were looted from military warehouses during 1997's civil unrest in Albania are finding their way to Kosovo through Albania and Macedonia. If recent Serbian offensives are successful in closing the border between Albania and Serbia, much of the smuggling of weapons and ethnic Albanian fighters may well shift to the border between Macedonia and Serbia. Illegal arms movements across the border are already occurring, according to the local press. Last year, Macedonian army and police forces seized 3,000 automatic weapons from ethnic Albanians who tried to enter the country illegally.³¹ However, it is unclear as to whether the final destination of such weapons is Macedonia or Kosovo.

C. International Response

1. The UN Preventive Deployment

Western fears of the war in the northern Balkans spreading to Macedonia prompted the UN to dispatch peace-keeping troops to the area, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 795 of December 1992. Since then the mandate has been extended semi-annually. The UNPREDEP force comprises 750 soldiers from four Nordic countries and the United States, and its deployment represented the UN's first attempt at a preventive deployment. The troops patrol the border and act as a trip-wire against Serbian incursions. Their numbers have thus far been small, and their ability to deter military incursions, to stop arms smuggling or to cope with an influx of refugees is limited. However, their most important contribution has been to demonstrate Western, and especially US, commitment to the country's stability.

The UNPREDEP mandate was due to expire on 31 August 1998, but the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, has requested an extension because of continued security threats to Macedonia. The extended military mission will have little change in mandate,³² although Russia has expressed an interest in contributing troops. Since mid-April 1998, the foreign ministers of Denmark, France, Norway, and Sweden have all visited Macedonia and pledged their support for UNPREDEP. The peace-keeping mission will continue to monitor border security and arms trafficking.

The United States is expected to increase the number of its troops serving with UNPREDEP. UNPREDEP's troops have been ordered to be more active in engaging smugglers and others making clandestine border crossings. This will, however, do little to deter Serbian military activities, and may in fact help Milosevic by stopping the flow of arms and guerrillas across the border.

³¹ *Dnevnik*, 30 April 1998.

³² UN Security Council Resolution 1160. On 3 June 1998, the Secretary General requested that the Security Council extend the UNPREDEP mandate.

2. NATO Intervention

The possibility of stationing troops in Macedonia under the auspices of NATO has also been considered, and in recent weeks NATO has sent military experts to Macedonia to explore various military options to respond to the Serbian military actions in Kosovo. Three options for direct military involvement are being considered that would affect Macedonia:

- A preventive deployment of peace-keeping troops or monitors along Yugoslavia's borders with Albania and Macedonia. Estimates have emerged of 20,000 troops that would be needed to patrol the Albanian and Macedonian borders with Yugoslavia. NATO's ability to patrol the border between Macedonia and Serbia may, however, be complicated by the absence of a clear demarcation line between the two countries.³³
- Air strikes against Serbian targets such as air bases and command centres to prevent Serbian forces from carrying out further attacks in Kosovo.
- The deployment of NATO ground troops inside Kosovo.

All three options presume Macedonian co-operation, including the use of Macedonian airspace or the stationing of troops inside the country. In September 1998, NATO plans to open a base at Krovolac, a former Yugoslav Air Force headquarters, near the Serbian border, which will mark NATO's formal involvement in preventive peacekeeping in Macedonia.

Until recently, many Macedonian politicians had advocated the replacement of UNPREDEP with a NATO-led force. This had a number of attractions:

- NATO was seen as a more effective military organisation, which could offer better guarantees of Macedonia's security, particularly as a NATO deployment would eliminate the leading role of the UN Security Council;
- It was hoped that the deployment of a NATO force would expedite Macedonia's own eventual NATO membership; and
- the involvement of NATO would bring closer relations with the United States.

However, the escalation of fighting in Kosovo, and talk of possible NATO intervention there has made the Macedonian authorities more circumspect about a NATO deployment in Macedonia, as the government is against any notion of NATO forces using Macedonia as a base for operations in Kosovo. The government has portrayed the 15 June 1998 NATO air exercises as a

³³ The stalled negotiations, which have been ongoing for more than two years, were described as an indication of Yugoslavia's refusal to acknowledge the sovereignty of Macedonia in editorials in *Večer*, 22 May 1998; and *Dnevnik*, 6 June 1998.

demonstration of the western commitment to the safety and security of Macedonia, as a step towards Macedonia's integration into NATO and the European Union.

However, official statements have assiduously avoided any mention of Serbian culpability in the Kosovo conflict or any reference to ethnic cleansing. The Prime Minister, Branko Crvenkovski, has stated adamantly that Macedonian territory will not be used to launch military strikes against any neighbouring country.³⁴ Many ethnic Macedonians suspect that NATO intervention in Kosovo would be a step towards the creation of an independent Kosovo. They fear that this would serve as a precedent for Macedonia and encourage Macedonia's ethnic Albanians in their demands for autonomy and eventually independence.

Despite the PDP's participation in the coalition government, most ethnic Macedonians suspect the ethnic Albanians of seeking to establish the conditions for secession. President Gligorov in an August 1997 interview said that all ethnic Albanian political parties in Macedonia want to secede, adding that, as a first step on the road to succession, "They want to rewrite the constitution and establish a special status for western Macedonia."³⁵ The leaders of the more moderate PDP, deny any intention to secede, but this has been the stated long-term goal of other Albanian leaders, such as Mendu Thaci, the DPA vice-president.

The prospect of a breakaway by Kosovo from Yugoslavia is thus regarded as setting a threatening precedent for Macedonia; hence the unwillingness of ethnic Macedonian leaders to countenance anything that might lead to Kosovo's secession. In a radio interview on 12 June 1998, the foreign minister, Blagoj Handzhiski, assured Macedonians (and Serbia) that Macedonian territory would not be used for mounting any military action against a third country or neighbouring state.³⁶

The DPA president, Arben Xhaferi, and Mevlan Tahiri of the PDP countered ethnic Macedonian arguments against NATO involvement in Kosovo by saying that if Macedonia refuses to assist a NATO intervention in Kosovo, it would mean that Macedonia was of no geostrategic importance to NATO.³⁷ Macedonia's Albanians have organised large public rallies in support of NATO intervention. On 10 June 1998, more than 20,000³⁸ ethnic Albanians gathered in the central square of Skopje. The protesters waved Albanian, American and EU flags and called for a NATO deployment in Kosovo, believing that NATO troops should be deployed inside Kosovo rather than along the Albanian and Macedonian borders. The rally was organised jointly by the PDP and the DPA, and was attended by party leaders. The protests were co-ordinated to coincide with rallies in Pristina and Tirana.

³⁴ *Dnevnik*, 13-14 June 1998, p. 2.

³⁵ Interview with the Belgrade weekly, *Ekonomska Politika*, 25 August 1997.

³⁶ Interview on Macedonia Radio (MR), Skopje, 14 June 1998.

³⁷ *Flaka e Vellazerimit*, 13 June 1998.

³⁸ *Flaka e Vellazerimit*, (11 June 1998), put the number at 100,000, while *Nova Makedonija*, (11 June 1998) estimated the crowd to be in "the tens of thousands". The OSCE, UNPREDEP and ICG estimate the number of protesters at between 20,000 and 25,000.

The Macedonian press has been united in its condemnation of the protests. Pro-government commentators such as Mirka Velinovska suggest that ethnic Albanians are “teasing NATO into intervention”.³⁹ She contends that ethnic Albanians have successfully manipulated the NATO countries into supporting the Albanian separatists of Kosovo, and that this would be a step towards the goal of forming a united Albanian state, including Kosovo and parts of Macedonia. Velinovska is not alone in her view. The more hard-line ethnic Macedonian political parties such as VMRO and the Movement for All-Macedonian Action (MAAK) have expressed the same fears. In an unsigned letter to *Dnevnik* on 12 June 1998, a VMRO supporter wrote that the ethnic Albanian rally was part of the ethnic Albanian effort to change the borders of Kosovo and Macedonia. The VMRO supporter also demanded that the government reprimand the Albanian officials who were present at the public protests for veering from government policy and neglecting to use the Macedonian language.⁴⁰ In another press interview, the president of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Petar Goshev, suggested that parliament should formally punish the ethnic Albanian government officials who participated in the demonstrations.⁴¹

The ethnic Albanian protests have thus served to radicalise the nationalist positions of many ethnic Macedonian political parties. As the situation in Kosovo deteriorates further, it both unites the politically-divided ethnic Albanian community, and increases the mutual suspicion between ethnic Macedonians and Albanians. Ethnic Albanians, for their part, suspect that the SDSM would accept Serbian assistance in the event of a civil breakdown in Macedonia. As Kosovo erupts in violence and inter-ethnic relations are further polarised in Macedonia, the identification of Macedonia's ethnic Albanians with the plight of their ethnic kin in Kosovo is mirrored by an identification of interests between the ethnic Macedonians and the Serbs. It is, however, unlikely that any ethnic Albanian organisation or party in Macedonia has an adequate infrastructure to provide the KLA with substantial assistance. One ethnic Albanian party member explained that: “The police have us so closely observed that we could not help the KLA even if we wanted to help them.”

3. OSCE Monitoring

In addition to the UN peace-keepers, there are dozens of monitors from the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the European Union and numerous non-governmental organisations. The OSCE “spill-over monitoring mission” was created to prevent the spread of war in former Yugoslavia to the south. Since 1996 the organisation has focused especially on inter-ethnic relations and human rights issues. Efforts to promote civil society and ethnic Macedonian-Albanian relations have to date been disappointing and have revealed little will seriously to work towards such a goal. Privately, Macedonian officials and party leaders⁴² express impatience with foreign monitoring organisations’ on-going

³⁹ “Dance to Tease NATO into Intervention”, Mirka Velinovska, *Puls*, 11 June 1998, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁰ *Dnevnik*, 12 June 1998.

⁴¹ *Dnevnik*, 14 June 1998.

⁴² ICG interviews with party leaders from the SDSM, LDP, VMRO-DPMNE, PDP and DPA in Skopje and Tetovo, 10-25 April 1998.

discussions regarding such issues as human rights, inter-ethnic relations and the development of civil society. Macedonian leaders welcome the international commitment to Macedonian security, but they vehemently object to political oversight.

The OSCE is handicapped by the nature of its mandate, which the government has at times threatened not to renew. The organisation is thus limited in its ability to adopt a critical stance. For example, its response to the recent Human Rights Watch report which was critical of its lack of comment on human rights abuses in Macedonia was highly defensive. Many outside observers argue, however, that the presence of the international organisations has at least had a cooling, moderating influence on the worst nationalist tendencies in the country.

D. Kosovo Conflict Costs

On 9 June 1998 the United States joined the European Union in imposing economic sanctions against the Yugoslavia. These sanctions freeze Yugoslav assets abroad, ban new foreign investment in the country, ban arms shipments and sales of any equipment that could be used to repress civilians, and limit travel visas for Yugoslav officials. The effects of these sanctions upon the Macedonian economy are yet to be calculated. The previous UN-imposed sanctions against Yugoslavia had a devastating effect on the Macedonian economy. Although figures vary, official estimates suggest that the trade embargo against Yugoslavia may have cost Macedonia \$1.3bn in 1992 alone and more than \$3bn in total lost trade. The former Yugoslavia accounted for more than 60 percent of Macedonia's pre-war trade.⁴³

Several elected officials are believed to have profited handsomely during the period of economic sanctions against the FRY, which offered great opportunities for sanctions-breaking activities in the grey economy. Moreover, it is widely suspected in Skopje that certain businesses, restaurants and shops are used for Serbian money laundering. A recent UN study estimated the size of the grey economy at around 40 percent of GDP, and some Macedonian estimates put it at 40-60 percent. The conflict in Kosovo offers renewed opportunities for corruption and activities in the grey economy.

Macedonia's stagnant economy, which up until 1997 had failed to experience a return to significant growth, will probably suffer further due to events in Kosovo. The continuing perception of political risk is likely to discourage many international investors; legitimate trade with the FRY will be hit; while the increased opportunities for grey economy activities will have a negative effect on prospects for the long-term development of a healthy market economy. The country will continue to depend on assistance from multilateral organisations such as the World Bank and the IMF, which may enable the authorities to maintain macro-economic stability. However, economic restructuring and the onset of a

⁴³ *Stabilisation Efforts in the Republic of Macedonia*, RFE /RL Research Report, Vol. 2, no. 3, 15 January 1993 by Mihail Petkovski, Goce Petreski, and Trajko Slaveski. In addition, Macedonian investors lost an estimated \$1bn in hard currency in frozen accounts in former Yugoslav banks, according to *Euromoney*, November 1992.

sustainable recovery are likely to be negatively affected by the instability in the region.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

International and Macedonian concerns that fighting in Kosovo may spread across the border to Macedonia are not misplaced. The spill-over, however, must be viewed from a political as well as a military perspective. Ethnic Albanians in Macedonia have until now played a minor role in the Kosovo conflict. Their support of the Kosovo guerrillas has been mainly moral, political and economic, although this could change. There is a real danger that unabated violence in Kosovo could stir up ethnic conflict between the country's restive Albanian minority and the country's ethnic Macedonian majority, which tends to identify closely with Serbia over the Albanian question.

Ethnic Macedonians commonly draw parallels between Kosovo Albanian demands for greater autonomy and ethnic Albanian political activity in Macedonia, believing that Albanian demands for increased rights in Macedonia undermine the ethnic Macedonian identity and by extension the Macedonian nation and the Macedonian state. Ethnic Macedonians for the most part view Albanians as a minority that, while entitled to full rights under the constitution, should not be granted any greater rights than those accorded to other minorities.

Macedonia has since independence been troubled by a precarious ethno-political balance, which is highly vulnerable to external pressures, especially as a result of events in Kosovo. Macedonia itself can do little to influence the outcome of events in Kosovo. The country's ability to overcome both the domestic and external threats to its survival depends on finding a minimum of common ground on the basis of which the ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians of Macedonia can agree to co-exist. This will require, on the one hand, the representatives of the ethnic Macedonian majority to address the legitimate grievances of the ethnic Albanian minority, and, on the other, on the willingness of the ethnic Albanian parties to participate and engage constructively in Macedonia's political life. It will also require concerted international support and coaxing. With this in mind, ICG recommends the following:

- The violence in Kosovo poses a significant threat to the security and stability of Macedonia. If diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict fail,⁴⁴ and the NATO alliance resorts to military intervention, this intervention should not be launched from within Macedonian territory. Ethnic Macedonian leaders have been unequivocal in their opposition to NATO military actions against Serbia, while the country's ethnic Albanians want to see direct NATO intervention in Kosovo. Any NATO military action involving overt Macedonian co-operation would inflame tensions between Macedonia's two largest ethnic communities, and could potentially destabilise the government. It would result in a dangerous rise in the demands of ethnic Albanian and Serbian minorities living in Macedonia. The government would most certainly lose the support of the

⁴⁴ Interestingly, the lead international negotiator on the ground in Kosovo is the US ambassador to Macedonia, Christopher Hill.

Socialist Party and find itself in an extremely weak position going into the autumn elections.

- The deployment of NATO troops along the Albanian and Macedonian borders with Yugoslavia is not advisable: it would not only do little to halt Serbian military actions in Kosovo, but might, in fact, aid the Serbs by preventing the flow of illegal arms from reaching the KLA in Kosovo. Instead, the monitoring of the borders should continue to be conducted by the current UN peacekeeping troops. The UNPREDEP troops are a familiar and accepted presence in Macedonia; the government and all opposition parties have approved the extension of the UNPREDEP mandate. Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and the United States should increase the numbers of their troops to expand their border patrols.
- Western countries and the multilateral agencies should continue to offer crucial economic assistance to Macedonia. However, in return they should insist upon greater commitment from the authorities to fostering better relations between the country's ethnic communities. Lately, the government has showed signs of softening its position regarding the legal status of the private Albanian university in Tetovo. Owing to Macedonia's dependence on international aid, the international community has some leverage. It should use this to encourage the Macedonian authorities to satisfy some ethnic Albanian demands, notably on higher education and on the registration of ethnic Albanian political parties, and improve the human rights situation.
- Ethnic Albanian leaders should, in turn, be encouraged to make public a list of candidates for potential administrative and faculty positions in Tetovo University. The Macedonian government and ethnic Macedonians in general need to be reassured that the university will not serve as a hotbed of Albanian radicalism and a training ground for separatists.
- Ethnic Albanian political parties in Macedonia need to be persuaded to maintain their participation in Macedonia's political life. Their withdrawal from even the minimum of democratic discourse would represent a huge blow to the prospects for Macedonia's survival, with dangerous consequences for regional stability.
- Macedonian political parties have benefited greatly from increased contact with international political organisations, such as the Group of the European Liberal, Democrat and Reform Party and the conservative European People's Party in the European Parliament, and from individual party contacts. These exchanges have led to more sophisticated campaigning techniques, a greater understanding of new electoral systems, and an increased appreciation of Western models of democracy. Unfortunately, none of the ethnic Albanian parties have to date benefited from these types of exchanges. Thus far, international contacts have been limited to Albania and Kosovo. European political parties and associations, especially those with diverse ethnic and multi-lingual memberships should, initiate contacts with the Albanian political parties in Macedonia. Such contacts should be used to encourage ethnic Albanian leaders to play a constructive role in Macedonian political life.

- The recently adopted election laws and pending legislation for the creation of new electoral districts need to be analysed. Ethnic Albanian political parties have raised many objections to the new laws related to the electoral system, which they believe will be used to subvert the strength of ethnic Albanian voters. In past elections, voters consistently cast their ballots based on ethnicity. The new electoral system appears unlikely to discourage the pattern of voting along ethnic lines. The creation of a healthy political framework, which encourages rather than discourages the inclusion of all ethnic groups would be a powerful incentive for the political parties to become more than ethnic voting blocs. This requires further electoral reform. Research should therefore also be conducted to design electoral laws in such a way as to make elected officials accountable to the entire electorate and not exclusively to their own communities.

Skopje-Sarajevo, 11 August 1998

V. APPENDICES

I. Constitutional Provisions

The National Assembly adopted the Macedonian Constitution on 17 November 1991.

Preamble:

Proceeding from the historical, cultural, spiritual and governmental legacy of the Macedonian people and its age-old struggle for national and social ...As well as the historical fact that Macedonia is constituted as the national state of the Macedonian people, in which the integral civil equality and enduring coexistence of the Macedonian people with Albanians, Turks, Wallachians, and Gypsies and other nationalities inhabiting the Republic of Macedonia are protected, and with a view to:

- Constituting the Republic of Macedonia as a sovereign and independent, civil and democratic state;
- Establishing and developing the rule of law, as the fundamental system of government;
- Guaranteeing human rights, civil freedoms, and national equality;
- Ensuring the peace and coexistence of the Macedonian people with other nationalities inhabiting the Republic of Macedonia; and
- Ensuring social justice, economic well being, and the advancement of individual and community life.

Article 5:

The state symbols of the Republic of Macedonia are its seal, its flag, and its anthem.

Article 7:

The Macedonian language, written in the Cyrillic alphabet, is the official language of the Republic of Macedonia.

In addition to the Macedonian language and the Cyrillic alphabet, in local self-governing entities in which the majority of inhabitants are members of ethnic groups, the language and the alphabet of the individual ethnic groups also have official status, in accordance with the law.

In addition to the Macedonian language and the Cyrillic alphabet, in local self-governing entities inhabited by a significant number of members of ethnic groups, the language and the alphabet of the ethnic groups are also official under the conditions and means approved by law.

Article 19:

The Macedonian Orthodox Church and the other religious communities and religious groups are separate from the state and are equal before the law.

The Macedonian Orthodox Church and the other religious communities and religious groups are free to found religious schools and other social and philanthropic establishments in accordance with the law.

Article 45:

Citizens have the right, under the conditions approved by the law, to found private educational institutions on all educational levels except at the primary level.

Article 48:

Members of ethnic groups have the right to express their ethnicity freely and to promote and develop their identity and special ethnic character.

The Republic guarantees the protection of the ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious identity of ethnic groups.

Members of ethnic groups have the right to found cultural and artistic institutions and scientific and other associations in order to express, promote, and develop their identities.

Members of ethnic groups have the right to be taught in their own language in the primary and secondary educational systems, by the means approved by law. The Macedonian language will also be taught in schools in which training is provided in the language of the ethnic group.

II. Who's Who

Political Parties and Politicians:

ADS-LP (Lidhja Demokratike e Shqiptareve - LDSH) - Democratic Union of Albanians - Liberal Party

- Xhemil Idrizi (president)
- Hisin Ramadani (vice president) Member of Parliament

DA (Demokratska Alternativa) - Democratic Alternative

- Vasil Tupurkovski (president)
- Savo Klimovski (senior party member) President of University Senate

DPA (Partia Demokratike Shqiptare - PDSH) – Democratic Party of Albanians

- Arben Xhaferi (president)
- Mendu Thaci (vice president)
- Iljaz Halimi (vice president)
- Bedredin Ibrahimimi (secretary general)

LDP (Liberalno Demokratska Partia) – Liberal Democratic Party

- Petav Goshev (president)
- Stojan Andov (president of executive council) Member of Parliament
- Risto Ivanov (vice president) former Minister of Economics
- Angelka Peeva Mladenovska (vice president) Member of Skopje City Council
- Risto Panev (executive council) Mayor of Skopje
- Zoran Sapuric (vice president) Member of Parliament

MAAK (Partia Za Se Makedonska Akcia) - Movement for All-Macedonian Action

- Ante Popovski (president)
- Gane Todorovski (founder)

NDP (Partia Demokratike Popullore PDP) – People's Democratic Party

- Ilijaz Halimi (president)
- Bedredin Ibrahimimi (vice president)

PDP – (Partia Per Prosperitet Demokratik) - Party of Democratic Prosperity

- Abdurahman Aliti (president), Member of Parliament
- Naser Ziberi (secretary general) Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Labour, Trade and Social Welfare
- Ismet Ramadani (co-ordinator of PDP parliamentary group) Member of Parliament

- Mevlan Tahiri (member of the central council) Member of Parliament, member of the delegation to the European Parliament
- Abulmenaf Bexheti, (member of the central council) Minister of Transportation and Communications.
- Xhemail Hajdari, (vice president) Minister without Portfolio
- Xheladin Murati, (member of the central council) Member of Parliament, Vice President of Parliament
- Aslan Selmani, (member of the central council) Minister of Science
- Iljar Sabriu, (member of the central council) Former Minister of Labor Policy, Deputy General Manager of Macedonia Airport
- Abdulmenaf Neziri, (no senior position) Minister of Development

PDPA (Partia per Prosperitet Demokratik e Shqiptareve - PDPSH) - Party of Democratic Prosperity for Albanians

- Arben Xhaferi (president)
- Mendu Thaci (vice president)
- Aladdin Demiri (vice president) Mayor of Tetovo
- Rufi Osmani (secretary) former Mayor of Gostivar, began serving seven-year jail sentence in April 1998 for inciting racial violence and contempt of court

SDSM (Socialisticki Demokratski Sojuz na Makedonia) - Social Democratic Alliance of Macedonia

- Branko Crvenkovski (president) Elected as Prime Minister in 1994.
- Ljubomir Popovski (secretary general, internal policy)
- Dr. Blagoj Handzhiski, (vice president) Minister of Foreign Affairs
- Tito Petkovski, (executive council member) President of the Parliament
- Aleksander Histovski, (vice president) Member of Parliament
- Dr. Lazar Kitanovski, Minister of Defence

SP (Socialisticka Partia) – Socialist Party

- Ljubisav Ivanov “Zingo” (president) Member of Parliament
- Dr. Zlatka Popovska (central committee) Deputy Prime Minister

VMRO-DPMNE (Vnatesna Makedonska Revolucionerna Organizacia - Demokratska Partia Za Makedonsko Nacionarno Edinstvo) - The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation-Democratic Party for Macedonian Unity

- Ljupco Georgievski (president)
- Dosta Dimovska (vice president)
- Nikola Klusev (president of the council of “intellectuals”) formerly the first Prime Minister of the government in "Democratic Macedonia" 1990
- Boris Trajkovski (advisor for foreign affairs)

Journalists and Political Commentators:

(* Indicates that broadcasts or published text is in the Albanian language)

Pande Komemishevski, (general director, *Nova Makedonija*)

Erol Rizov, (editor, *Nova Makedonija*)

Stojan Nasev, (editor-in-chief, *Vecer*)

Branko Gerovski, (editor-in-chief, *Dnevnik*)

Abuladi Zylfiqari, (editor-in-chief, *Flaka e Vellazerimit*)*

Drita Karahasan, (editor-in-chief, *Birlik*)

Emin Azemi (owner and general-manager, *Fakti*)*

Saso Ordanovski, (editor, *Forum*)

Dragan Pavlovic-Latas, (editor, *Profile*)

Tomislav Ivanovski, (editor, *Puls*)

Milan Banov, (editor, *Denes*)

Slobodan Trajkovski, (general manager, MTV)

Nijazi Muhamedi (deputy general manager, MTV)

Gordana Stosic, (general manager, A1)

Goran Ivanov, (general manager, Sitel)

Agron Sabani, (general manager, ERA)*

Gazmend Ajdini, (reporter, ERA)*

Nagib Tosca, (director, TV Tosca)*

Adil Neziri, (director, TV-Globus)*

Artan Skenderi, (director, Art)*

Georgi Varoslija, (director, Macedonia Radio)

Goran Gavrilov (director, Kanal 77)

Nafi Chegrani, (director, Voice of Chegran)*

