

FYROM: The Ochrid Agreement and Its Aftermath

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RÉSUMÉ

Dans cet article est examinée la crise politique traversée par la FYROM (ancienne République yougoslave de Macédoine) après la rébellion albanaise que ce pays a subie. La mise en oeuvre des accords d'Ochride signés après la fin de cette rébellion, et qui prévoient une plus grande participation des Albanais à la vie publique, n'a pas été très facile. Les résultats des élections de septembre 2002 ont compliqué encore davantage une situation politique instable, que la Grèce pour des raisons évidentes suit avec un intérêt particulier.

ABSTRACT

In the following article, the author examines the political crisis within the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) after the Albanian rebellion. The implementation of the Ochrid Agreement signed subsequently foresees greater ethnic Albanian participation in the country's civil service and public life. This is easier said than done, though. The results of the September 2002 elections have further complicated an already unstable political situation which Greece is watching with special interest.

The optimistic prognostications of various leaders of the governing coalition VMRO-DPMNE (Interior Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation-Democratic Party for National Union) that the international community would be able to prevent a transfer of the Kosovo crisis to the FYROM finally proved unfounded.¹

The facilities that the FYROM brought to NATO's operation against Yugoslavia, the refugee as well as humanitarian aid that the FYROM offered to those fleeing Kosovar during the NATO bombardments did not prevent Albanians from trying to reach their objectives. The Albanian problem has existed mainly in the former Yugoslav Macedonia since the mid-war period, when the Albanian people, together with the Bulgarian organization VMRO, were

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struggling against the Serbs. During WWII, the western regions of Yugoslav Macedonia with the greater part of Kosovo had been integrated into the Greater Albania, which was an Italian protectorate. The Bulgarian government of Filov tried to revise the Ribbentrop-Ciano Agreement of April 1941, asking for the extension of the Bulgarian zone to the Albanian regions, but without real success. The majority of the Albanian population, though, considering that they had been freed from Serbian occupation with Italian and German assistance, joined mainly Albanian nationalistic organizations not the Yugoslav resistance movement. Albanians took part in a campaign to 'Albanize' the population of the occupied regions. Thus, the population of Slavic origin of the western regions of Yugoslav Macedonia, who basically identified themselves as Bulgarians, became victims of violent Albanization. In an appeal to the Bulgarian government, representatives of the Bulgarian cultural associations of the towns of Tetovo, Gostivar and Struga called upon the latter to intervene with the German authorities in order to protect the people of Bulgarian origin. A wave of migration to the Bulgarian zone followed. However, after the capitulation of Italy in September 1943, Bulgarian authorities started the extradition of Albanians from the town of Skopje as a reprisal. Although Germany permitted the occupation of the western albanophone regions of Yugoslav Macedonia by the Bulgarian army, the political leadership of Bulgaria was resentful; judging that allowing the Bulgarian army in would provoke a real war between Bulgarians and Albanians. The Bulgarian army thus occupied only certain zones of the Prespa-Ochrid regions, east of Kicevo and north of Kacanik, violating partly the borderline as defined by the Italian Bulgarian agreement of March 30, 1943. In order to protect the Bulgarian population, a system of 'self-defense' was created a form of police constituted by citizens armed with German weapons. In Slavic villages, people of Slavic origin were appointed as community presidents; Albanians, secretaries. The opposite was applied in mixed villages with an Albanian majority. That was an effort by the Germans to maintain the fragile balance between those of Slavic and those of Albanian origin. As the prospect of Bulgarian integration was becoming increasingly remote, by 1944 the Slavs in the western part of Yugoslav Macedonia began to

participate in the Yugoslavian resistance movement, thus provoking the creation of a Slavomacedonian identity.

After 1945, ethnic Albanians in the Federal Socialist Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia had been recognized as a minority and had obtained educational rights, but without being inserted into the government structure. The troubles in Kosovo in October 1968 and April 1981 had a direct impact on Albanians of Yugoslavian Macedonia who were aiming, along with the Kosovars, to found a Federal Albanian Republic within Yugoslavia. After Yugoslavia's dissolution, all the Albanian political parties of the FYROM and Kosovo put forward a common objective: independence for Kosovo and autonomy for the western regions of FYROM.

The main demand of all Albanian components of the FYROM was a change of the constitution and recognition of Albanians as an ethnic group equal at the constitutional level. In order to achieve this goal, Albanians did not limit their actions to political means only, e.g., the activities of the two Albanian political parties, the Democratic Party and Democratic Party of Welfare. Instead, encouraged by the developments in Kosovo, they applied Kosovar's tactics and resorted to an armed guerilla. The so-called Ethnic Liberation Army of Kosovo was founded in Skopje as a branch of the Liberation Army (UCK Ushtria Clirimtare Kobetare), having as a political representative Ali Ahmeti. The pretext for the beginning of its activities had been the agreement signed in February 2001 between Skopje and Yugoslavia for the establishment of the borderline between the two countries. Albanians considered unacceptable their exclusion from this decision that also affected regions of Kosovo. They interpreted the political movement of FYROM as evidence that for the FYROM, Kosovo was still part of Yugoslavia. After Milosevic had been overthrown, Albanians feared that the international community would not give priority to Kosovo any more and would focus on the reconstruction and democratization of Yugoslavia. Already at the Interbalkan Conference held in Zagreb, November 2000, there was no special attention paid to Kosovo. Albanians were anxious about the upcoming return of the Yugoslavian army in the neutral zone of Kosovo. Thus the armed conflict in Kosovo was designed or used to

attract international attention to the problem. All the declarations from Albanian politicians and the demonstrations held by Albanians in the FYROM and Tetovo had one common claim: Independence for Kosovo and the creation of a federal FYROM.

The armed conflict began in March 2002 with the occupation of the village of Tamsevci. It soon moved to the surroundings of Tetovo and into the town itself. For security reasons, Slavomacedonian inhabitants of Tetovo and the western regions had sought refuge in Kosovo. Tetovo was controlled *de facto* by Albanian rebels. With their demonstrations at the centre of Skopje and the symbolic occupation of Parliament, Slavomacedonians claimed that a forceful response needed to be given to the Albanians. As a reprisal for Tetovo, paramilitary nationalistic organizations from the FYROM burned Albanian businesses at Monastiri in May. This forced Albanian inhabitants to abandon the town. The troubles had taken on not only an ethnic but also a religious character with the burning of churches and mosques. The gap between the two sides had been broadened. Albanians threatened to transfer the war into the town of Skopje itself, occupying in March 2001, the village of Aracinovo, which the Albanians had held hostage until the end of June.

With the armed conflict in FYROM, a series of questions were put forward:

Had the crisis been provoked by foreign centres for political reasons?

Why did the Skopje government not confront more forcefully the Albanian rebels?

What had the Albanians achieved through armed confrontation and to what extent had the survival of the FYROM become problematic for the future?

In his report on the position taken by his government toward the Albanians in the spring of 2001, prime minister Ljubco Georgievski revealed that the government had been informed on time by Yugoslav leaders about the imminent launching of the UCK's activities in his

country, but attention was not paid to these warnings. The hope was for NATO's deterrence power. He tried to find a way of facing the crisis only when it had already started. A very long debate followed on whether or not they should use only the police force or the army. There were also disputes in the government as to whether the country should be declared in a state of war. However, it was mainly the hypocrisy of the international community that permitted the Albanians to present themselves as victorious. Everything, according to Georgievski, was planned in advance so that NATO forces would be established in FYROM.

There can be no doubt that Albanians successfully undertook a psychological war against Slavomacedonians who had been taken by surprise. Having Kosovo as a base for providing fresh supplies and ammunition, and as place of refuge, Albanian rebels managed to launch a successful guerrilla attack against Skopje's police forces, also attacking army units. For domestic and foreign policy reasons, the country was not declared in a state of war. Albanians constituted forty percent of the FYROM armed forces and in the case of war, there was a danger of them enrolling in the UCK. In this case, also the party of Arben Xhaferi would leave the government coalition. More important, NATO prevented the government of Skopje from declaring the country in a state of war, aiming evidently to have the crisis under control. The incapacity or indifference of the KFOR in preventing the passage of Albanian rebels from Kosovo to the FYROM and the rejection of President Trajkovski's proposal for the creation of a neutral zone between Kosovo and FYROM strengthened the positions of the Albanian rebels. Nevertheless, greater effect on the public opinion of Skopje was produced by revelations of direct American involvement in the arming and protecting of the Albanian rebels. Their arms and training had been provided by an American company, Military Professional Resources Inc., which cooperates closely with the Pentagon, and in 1995, had provided weapons and training to the Croats for the reoccupation of Kraina. At the head of the company was a retired American officer, Richard Griffith, a close collaborator of Agim Ceku. (Their connection went back to the Croatian war, when Ceku took part in the war against the Serbs.)

Griffith had undertaken to supply arms to the Skopje army, thus taking advantage of his relationship with the General Jovan Andreevski. This relationship went back to the time when the latter was doing his army training in America. It has been shown that Griffith was playing a double role. All the information that Andreevski gave to him about army operations in Skopje was transmitted by Griffith to the Albanian rebels.

It is no coincidence that after what may be the unique and 'imposing' victory of FYROM forces at Aracinovo, where in June 2001, Albanian rebels were literally encircled and ready to surrender, American forces fled Kosovo, freed Albanians and took them along with their weapons to the Kosovo border. Among the 400 Albanian rebels were 17 American instructors.² Also worth noting is the fact that these rebels had an arsenal of American origin. A public revelation of American involvement would have exposed the Americans irreversibly.

The American involvement became more evident in the provision of arms to Skopje's army in order to face Albanian rebels. Skopje turned primarily toward Russia and the Ukraine. Skopje's pilots began being trained in the Ukraine, which provided Skopje with four SU-25 aircraft and four MI-24 helicopters. Military aid began to come from Yugoslavia in the summer after the signature of the Belgrade-Skopje agreement. But NATO vetoed the provision of aid from the Ukraine. Secretary-General of NATO Robertson, visiting Kiev, called upon the Ukraine to stop providing arms to Skopje. Undoubtedly NATO did not want the Albanian rebels to be completely defeated, but wanted to see a controlled balance of the armed confrontation in order to find a political solution.

The FYROM went through its greatest political crisis since 1944 during this period. Of course, the Albanian problem had always existed. While Yugoslavia remained united, however, the problem was faced on a federal level and Skopje was sure to get Belgrade's help. Now with the abolition of Serbian sovereignty in Kosovo and Belgrade's more limited possibilities for political flexibility on external policy after Milosevic's overthrow, the situation had certainly changed.

Because of the May 2001 crisis, a government of “Ethnic Unity” was formed in order to face the situation in a collective way. In the Slavomacedonian circles, a psychotic fear of war, heavy anti-NATO climate and an overall impasse prevailed. The frequent visits to Skopje by Solana and Robertson did not help reach any solution to this crisis. As a permanent solution to the Albanian problem, the President of the Academy of Skopje, Efremov, proposed the exchange of land and population with Albania. In other words, the western albanophone regions of FYROM would be integrated to Albania; Albanians from the town of Skopje and Koumanovo would be transferred to the clearly albanophone regions and, in exchange, the slavophone regions of Albanian near Prespa, as well as the town of Pogradec, would be integrated to the FYROM. Almost at the same time, Nova Macedonija published a map with the message that the Macedonian and Albanian problems must be solved together with the transfer of the Bulgarian part of Macedonia and western Greek Macedonia to the FYROM. Efremov’s proposal and the publication of *Nova Macedonija* provoked confusion and resulted in the resignation of the National Academy’s President and dismissal of *Nova Macedonija’s* editor-in-chief. It also demonstrated that border change in the Balkan region may have a chain effect. This last point was also reflected in Kissinger’s and Owen’s proposal for a new conference in Berlin with the participation of the Balkan states in order to redefine the borders in the Balkans on the following basis: partition of Bosnia, partition of Kosovo, partition of FYROM between Bulgaria and Albania, integration of North Transylvania to Hungary, independence of Montenegro and Serbian access to the Adriatic.

The political crisis in the FYROM generated special anxiety in Greece and Bulgaria. Greece characterized the crisis as a result of the international community’s incapacity to fulfill its obligations in Kosovo. Greece criticized NATO because in the name of human rights’ protection, the organization did not diagnose the underlying objectives of Albanians and ignored the links of Albanian rebels with the international mafia. The Greek businessmen who had invested in the FYROM were particularly nervous fearing for the future of their businesses as Greece has been the FYROM’s main financial partner.

Athens actually prepared to receive refugees in case war spread. Prime Minister Simitis stressed the need for the FYROM's territorial integrity and the need to not change the borders in the Balkans but he made it understood that Greece would not remain indifferent in the case of the FYROM's breaking up. The leader of the *Politiki Anixi* party and minister of external affairs in the Mitsotakis government from 1990-92, Antonis Samaras, known for his tough position on the name FYROM, took advantage of this occasion to support the policy of 1990-92 and justify himself. According to Samaras, Greece's policy of not showing haste on the matter of Skopje's name was correct because the state might have been dismantled anyway.

Meanwhile, Bulgaria was observing with tremendous anxiety all that was happening in the FYROM. In fact the Bulgarian press was providing full coverage of the events. According to the military doctrine of Bulgaria, special Bulgarian forces should be sent in case of armed conflict between Slavomacedonians and Albanians. The peak of the crisis in the FYROM in May coincided with the beginning of the election campaign period in Bulgaria. The upcoming elections were gaining special importance as the rapid advance of the King Simeon II movement was changing the political scene of Bulgaria. Georgievski's government did not officially seek help from Bulgaria but did not refuse the Bulgarian offer to send tanks and arms. Nevertheless, it did not want to send Bulgarian troops for reasons easy to understand. The presence of a Bulgarian army would probably contribute to the revival of WWII memories, while among the Slavomacedonian circles of the Social Democratic Federation, there also existed the doubt as to whether or not the Bulgarian army would finally declare war against the Albanian rebels or strengthen its positions in the eastern part of the FYROM, thus contributing to the partition.

Of course, the position of the Kostov government was difficult. Bulgaria wished to strengthen Skopje but also maintain channels of communication open with the Albanians because of Corridor no. 8. For this reason, the shipping of arms and ammunition had been accompanied with the request that these not be used against Albanians. Bulgaria had moved its armies to the border with the

FYROM. Officially it was announced that this was done for security in case a wave of refugees swelled toward Bulgaria or Slavomacedonian paramilitary organizations penetrated Bulgaria. But NATO not only prevented Bulgarian armed involvement but also called upon Sofia to stop providing aid to Skopje. It should be mentioned that Bulgaria, in order not to disappoint NATO, as it wanted to become a member, refused to permit Ukrainian helicopters and planes *en route* to Skopje in its airspace. The Ukrainian aircraft flew over Romania and Yugoslavia instead. Furthermore, Bulgaria was examining two possibilities in relation with Skopje:

- 1- the manifestation of a strong anti-NATO climate in Skopje which would finally be turned against Bulgaria
- 2- the penetration of Russian volunteers in Skopje where, as in the case of Tchetchenia, they would undertake the ethnic cleansing of Albanians. Bulgaria did not manage in this instance, to fulfill its historic role as protector power of the FYROM.

The question most often asked was why the international community had shown tolerance toward Albania despite the revelations of Albanian rebel connections with drug traffickers and the presence of the Mujahadin in UCK ranks. Although a fully documented answer to that question can not yet be given, especially for the case of Skopje, there is information showing that America, which sought stability basically, but only after having secured the prerequisites for the region's control in its favour and until then had tolerated a controlled instability, tried to obtain a solution to the Albanian problem of the FRYOM favourable to the Albanians mainly because of the construction of Corridor no. 8. In this corridor, a part from the steady Italian interest in linking the Adriatic to the Black Sea, the oil company AMBO (Albanian-Macedonian-Bulgarian Oil Pipeline) under American control, also has a special interest in reducing the American dependency on OPEC countries. In sum, energy seemed to upgrade the position of Albanians in the Balkans. As usual, and in previous cases of ethnic conflicts in the Balkans, the crisis goes towards a solution through international mediation. In July 2001, Leotard was appointed mediator representing the European Union and Pardew as representative of the USA in order to negotiate

a political agreement between Albanians and Slavomacedonians. At the same time, it was announced that NATO would send a force of 3,000 men after the signing of an agreement for UCK's disarmament. The great obstacle in reaching an agreement, however, was the steady claim by Albanians for change in the constitution, especially its preamble. Albanians wanted it to recognize them as an equal ethnic group and they rejected the bill for changing the constitution, which provided modifications that abolished any discrimination in the hiring process in the civil service, guaranteed ethnic pluralism in the courts, strengthened the local governments and requested that the ethnic symbol of Albanians of FYROM be different from the Albanian flag. The dialogue that began between the Albanian and Slavomacedonian parties continued at Ochrid with the active participation of mediators. The change in the preamble of the Constitution for the recognition of Albanians as equals and the modification of Article 19 for the equality of the Orthodox Church of Skopje with the Islamic Union constituted the main obstacles.

After NATO's declarations that it would not be involved, should armed confrontation recur, and under the threat of Albanians that they would proclaim the Republic of Illirida in case of non-attainment of an agreement, the Ochrid Agreement was finally signed on August 13, 2002, by president Trajkovski, prime minister Georgievski, the leader of the Social Democratic Union, Cervenkovski, the leader of the Democratic Party of Albanians Arben Xhaferi and the leader of the Albanian Democratic Party of Welfare Ymer Ymeri, as well as Leotard and Pardew. The agreement includes ten basic points:

The use of force to reach political objectives is rejected and only political means are permitted.

The unitary and multiethnic character of the state is maintained.

The Albanian rebels are to be disarmed.

A series of laws decentralizing the state and strengthening the powers of local government, education and the participation of Albanians in the state structure.

The enumerated list includes:

The preamble of the constitution considering only Slavomacedonians as people of the state is abolished and the Albanian language is permitted in Parliament; the Albanian language becomes the second official language in communities with an Albanian population of more than 20%; the State gives subsidies for the teaching of Albanian in these communities; proportional representation of Albanians to the Constitutional Court according to their percentage in the population; the nomination of Albanians as directors of police stations in regions where minorities are more numerous; more power to the local governments; the conference of donating countries will finance the reconstruction of the damages caused by the armed conflict; equality of the Orthodox and Catholic Churches with the Islamic Union.

The agreement in question constituted a framework. It needed to be ratified first by the Parliament and after the relative regulations concerning the language and local government would be submitted to a vote. Nevertheless, the main problems for ratification were the preamble of the Constitution and Article 19 on the equality of churches, and religious organizations. The Slavomacedonian side could accept the formula “citizens of Macedonia” without making specific reference to the term “Macedonian people”. On the other hand, Albanians did not want to be characterized as a minority. In addition, the Orthodox Church of Skopje reacted to the equation with the Catholic Church and the Islamic Union. The ratification of the agreement was put on the table in relation with the disarmament of Albanian rebels. Also on this point, disagreements arose between NATO and Georgievski. NATO was estimating the number of all kinds of weapons that the Albanians possessed some 3,300 pieces; the Slavomacedonian side was estimating their number at 80,000 to 85,000.

The legislative elections and a census of the population had been planned for after ratification and adoption of the laws. Unfortunately, after the terrorist attack of September 11, it was difficult to ratify it. The Slavomacedonian side tried to prove that the Albanian rebels were

linked with Islamist fundamentalists and thus denounce them as terrorists. A video was projected showing the withdrawal of Albanian rebels from Aracinovo and the presence of Mujahadin in their ranks. But it has been confirmed that NATO was aware of the existence of Mujahadin, a fact that only enforces the opinion that the Skopje crisis was planned in advance. Consequently these revelations had no real significance for the FYROM peace-making process. At the end of August, under NATO surveillance, the UCK disarmament began. As in the case of Kosovo, in this case contemporary arms were not turned in. However, the impact of the events of September 11 led to the dissolution of the UCK by October. The Slavomacedonian side characterized this self-dissolution as a tactic because of the revelations of relations that Albanians had with the Mujahadin. In Skopje, a German NATO force was established for the protection of the OSCE observers (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe). It would supervise the application of this agreement. Moreover, the threats from donating countries that there would not be any financial aid without the ratification of this agreement did not leave much choice to the Slavomacedonian side.

After prolonged discussion over the preamble of the constitution, the final text read as follows:

The citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, the Macedonian people, and the citizens who live within its borders and are composed in part of Albanian people, Serbian, Vlachiko and Bosnian people”.... In order to prevent the equation of the terms Macedonian and Albanian people, the formula preferred was “part of” with the immediate recognition of all the other ethnic groups as part of the people who form the population. Evidently Skopje’s objective was to interpret the term part of Albanian people, as recognition of a minority. Nevertheless, nothing modifies the spirit of the agreement, which basically increases the political role of Albanian and their equality with Slavomacedonians. In the imposition of this formula, President Trajkovski had been obliged to grant a generous amnesty to the Albanian rebels. No modification of the Ochrid Agreement for the equality of the Orthodox and Catholic Church had been made and Article 19 of the Constitution proclaimed that the “Macedonian

Orthodox Church, the Islamic Religious Union, the Catholic Church, the Evangelical-Methodist Church, the Jewish Union and other religious unions and religious groups are separate from the state and equal before the law.” These constitutional modifications were adopted on November 16, 2001, and thus the Ochrid Agreement was ratified by the Parliament.

Considering that political stability after this ratification agreement had been secured in the country, the Social Democratic Union withdrew from the government. There were, of course, other reasons for its withdrawal. The Parliament had to vote on the laws for the extension of the Albanians’ rights. As the Social Democratic Union wanted to dissociate itself from any responsibility for these historic decisions, it sought to obtain political advantages at the expense of the VMRO-DPNE. Thus was formed a new government, with the participation of the New Democratic, the Liberal Party, the VMRO-VMRO and the two Albanian parties, which under no circumstances wanted to withdraw from the government in view of the adoption of the new laws.

Prime minister Georgievski attributed the crisis that the country had undergone to foreign centres and not simply to the Albanians of the FYROM. Even in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attack and in light of the revelations of the prior relationship of the USA with Osama Bin Laden, Georgievski did not hesitate to declare directly to Pardew that the USA encouraged terrorism.

In a report published in December 2001, the non-governmental organization, International Crisis Group, which does not know the Balkan reality, attributed the crisis to Greece’s, Bulgaria’s and Yugoslavia’s policies towards the FYROM. The pending problems in the relations of these countries with the FYROM, e.g., recognition of the Macedonian nation and of the autocephalous nature of the Orthodox Church of Skopje, and problem of the name of FYROM, encouraged Albanian extremists, according to the International Crisis Group, to start the armed conflict. However, this charge remains unfounded.

The Ochrid Agreement not only protects Albanians' human rights, but recognizes Albanians *de facto* as an equal nation. During the first half of 2002, laws were enacted for the local administration, giving Albanians judiciary and executive power as well as their say in matters of education and health. Language equality also was legislated. A law granted a very generous amnesty to former Albanian rebels in exchange for the approval of financial aid from the Conference of donating countries to Skopje for the reconstruction of material damage caused by the armed conflict soon followed. In parliament, Albanian will be used verbally while all acts of parliament will be published in Slavomacedonian only. The proposal for separate issue of passports for Slavomacedonians and Albanians in their respective languages was, however, rejected.

Obviously the Agreement aims to integrate Albanians into the structures of the state. Yet Albanians see it as a starting point for the creation of a federal state in the FYROM. The political representative of the UCK, Ali Ahmeti, after the 'self-dissolution' of his armed organization, decided to get involved in politics and unify the Albanian political parties by founding a Co-ordinating Committee. This effort failed as Ahmeti presented the Achrida Agreement as his own achievement, denouncing the two other Albanian parties for obstruction. Ahmeti then founded his own party, the 'Union for Integral Democracy'. Included in its program was the creation of a multi-ethnic Macedonia, decentralization, a fight against corruption and organized crime. The new party is essentially a rival to that of Xhaferi.

Between these two parties, a race began for the recruitment of former Albanian rebels. Xhaferi, as well as Ahmeti, who moved from Tetovo to Skopje, adopted extremist positions in order to increase their political influence. Ahmeti sought to establish August 13 as a national holiday in order to commemorate the liberation of Skopje from the Turks after the common struggles of Albanians and Slavomacedonians. It was during the great Albanian revolt of 1912 against the Neo-Turk policy that the Albanians entered Skopje. Common struggles at that time between Albanians and the Bulgarian organization VMRO did not exist. Evidently Ahmeti aims to link the Achrida Agreement to the events of 1912. Another one of his claims

is that the Skopje state emblem should include some Albanian elements. Xhaferi declared that the Albanian objective is no longer the Achrida Agreement but rather the profound transformation of Macedonia according to the European model.

There can be no doubt that the gap between Slavomacedonians and Albanians has broadened. The Kosovoization of the western parts of the FYROM is completed and Albanians do not want integration, but partition over the long term. According to the latest data, the new reality in Kosovo and the FYROM has led to an increase in the number of Albanians who want a Greater Albania. It is revealing in this sense that the Albanian parts of Skopje refused to sign a common declaration drafted by the Slavomacedonian parties in which the latter condemned the decision of the Kosovo Parliament related to the dispute of the border line between Kosovo and the FYROM. The probable change of borders in the Balkans is not a taboo issue any longer for American circles. In June 2002, Steven Mayer, former assistant director of the Balkan section of the CIA, stressed the need to outline new borders in the region in order to create more homogeneous states and thus regional stability. He essentially was repeating the earlier proposals made by Owen and Kissinger. As it is well known, the American policy is changing according to the new data, given that it is not based on principles. Nevertheless, establishing new borders will upset the balance completely and create new problems. The policy of the European Union is oriented not towards the creation of new countries but the so-called creation of peripheral zones, or peripheralization; prevention of Montenegro's independence, and integration of Kosovo as a third component of the Serbian-Montenegrin Union. Nevertheless, economic recovery is essential to the maintenance of stability in the Balkan states. What the Balkans need is a new Marshall plan. For instance, the plans of Skopje and Bulgaria for a Skopje-Sofia railway and a pipeline transporting electricity at a high voltage (440 kw) as well as a new road network within the Corridor no. 8 have constantly been postponed because of a lack of funds.

Greece, a Balkan nation with a European identity, has understood the importance of peripheral growth and co-operation. In addition to

its investments, Greece has elaborated its own program for the reconstruction of the Balkans. The start of the Thessaloniki-Skopje pipeline operations with the prospect of an extension to Kosovo and Southern Serbia constitutes the biggest investment in the Balkans during the past few years. For reasons easy to understand, Greece's first priority is stability in the FYROM. Thus, notwithstanding the results of the September 15, 2002 elections in the FYROM, Greece has remained a strategic partner. The intermediate agreement of September 1995 will be extended and President Trajovski has struck a committee to examine the solution for the problem of the name Macedonia. According to some sources, the name being discussed currently is Gorna Macedonia-Upper Macedonia.

In the elections of last September 15, the coalition, for "Macedonia Together", which is composed by the Social Democratic and Liberal-Democratic Party of the Vlachs, the Democratic party of Bosnians, gained 60 seats (out of a total of 120 thus the numerical majority in the parliament). Although it can form the government with the Albanian party of Democratic Welfare (2 seats) and the Ethno-Democratic Party (1 seat), under pressure from NATO, it started negotiations with the party of Ahmeti which had gained 16 seats and had become the main party of the Albanian voters. The leader of the Social Democratic Union, Branko Evenkovski, had rejected cooperation before the election but was finally forced to change his mind as the American position is that he can not ignore the will of the majority of Albanians. Nevertheless, Ahmeti asks about important ministries, e.g., the Ministry of Defense or of the Interior. This is something that has made negotiations difficult thus far. There is in fact some doubt as to whether the new government formation will be viable.

Greece in no way wishes to win the struggle for the name Macedonia with the dissolution of the FYROM. In spite of the disagreement over the Macedonian problem, there is no doubt that the FYROM has created a Slavomacedonian identity which now is undergoing a self-searching stage, especially in terms of the definition of borders and connections with Bulgaria. During the period in which the BMRO-DMRNO governed the country (1998-2002), there has been a relative relaxation of the prejudices of the past regarding

‘Bulgarism’. For instance, the songs of the Miladinovi Brothers have been published or played, and Bulgarians have developed some reconciliatory position towards the Macedonian Patriotic Organization of America. In a similar vein, the decision of the first “Committee for the Macedonian Language” of November 27, 1944 has been published as well as the reactions of Blaze Koneski, who clearly gave a political dimension to the choice of alphabet. Meanwhile, discussions have taken place as to the extent to which the Macedonian nation is actually a technical creation. Interestingly, the prime minister changed his name from Ljupco to Ljubco. But no real revival of philo-bulgarism has been observed as perhaps one could expect from Sofia, despite the cultural attack of Bulgaria (circulation of Bulgarian newspapers in Skopje, attribution of Bulgarian citizenship and passports to citizens of the FYROM, attribution of scholarships and grants for studies in Bulgaria, etc).

Evidently Bulgaria expects that because of the Albanian factor the FYROM will turn to Bulgaria and gradually Slavomacedonianism will disappear. No one can tell, however, what the ethnic choice of the Slavic population of the FYROM would be if the state were dissolved. One must not ignore Serbia, which in the case of the loss of Kosovo will not remain indifferent to the FYROM, as the insistence of the Serbian Church on recognizing the Orthodox Church on recognizing the Orthodox Church of the FYROM as autonomous not autocephalous plus last year’s military agreement between Skopje and Belgrade clearly indicate. There is no doubt that for the FYROM, the axis Athens-Belgrade is functioning in a stabilizing way. The basic precondition is that Kosovo does not become independent *de jure* but rather is integrated in the Union of Serbia-Montenegro. Albanians, who constitute a specific phenomenon in the Balkans for historic reasons, must adapt to the international criteria of multiculturalism and tolerance thus surpassing the stage of the racial-patriarchal structure. It is unacceptable that Albania be interested in the fate of individuals of its own ethnicity in neighbouring countries while refusing in its own census to take into consideration the language and ethnicity and the religion of the minorities inside the country. It is understandable, however, that Albanians insisted on the recognition of the Islamic Union as equal to the Orthodox Church of the FYROM.

If the future of the Balkans belongs to the European Union, then Europe owes it to itself and future members to draft a concrete policy for the Balkan region. The EU should also undertake a more important role in the economic reconstruction of the area as modernization and economic stability undoubtedly contribute to the decrease of ethnic conflict.

NOTES

1. This article is based on the following press sources:
Monitor (Bulgarian newspaper)
Dnevnik-Utrinski Vesnik, Nova Makedonia (Skopjian newspapers)
Start (Skopjian magazine, published by the Social Democratic Union)
2. Reported by *New York Times*, September 13, 2002

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