

POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Aneta Jovevska & Nataša Gaber-Damjanovska (Skopje)

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Contact: Dr. Nataša Gaber-Damjanovska
E-Mail: ngaber@isppi.ukim.edu.mk

Foreword

Intense processes of social and political democratization are taking place in Central and Eastern European countries. They are part of the inevitable movement toward a new, more global, pluralistic society. Although pluralism refers primarily to multiparty processes, it encompasses influences and represents other social categories — class, ethnicity, religion, etc. — which do not always have direct political representation. At the same time, history and cultural traditions influence social and political relations. Multiparty systems have been widely accepted by emerging democracies, bringing about quick, even sudden transformations in political structure, institutions and cultural practices. Interests and viewpoints that were suppressed previously, unable to find articulation in the former systems, have already emerged.

The position and role the Republic of Macedonia presents an interesting example of simultaneous coping with numerous issues that arose from the situation in which the country was put, starting from 1990. A multi-party system was created that is growing and ripening gradually, corresponding to the existing social heterogeneity and cleavages (some ethnic groups have expressed the need to accomplish their interest in the frames of a special political party that defends and advocates their specific needs). Still, nationalism in the form that emerged and existed in other republics of former Yugoslavia did not occur to such an extent in the Macedonian case. More precisely, the political solution of the matter has been found quickly. This is due to many factors that are very hard to describe or explain by non-residents of the country, and the general political climate was often misjudged.

Recently, »new« forms of advocating interests and political representation have been created mostly along existing cleavage lines. Ethnic cleavage represents one of the deepest cleavages in the Macedonian society. The gap along this cleavage broadens even more, especially when other distinctive characteristics are accumulated, like: religion, languages belonging to completely different language groups, different habits and cultures, standard of living, relation between urban and rural population. Minority political parties are viewed as the most adequate way of expressing the specific representation of interests in a wider context. The basic motive for the creation of such parties would be the immense difficulty for a larger party to satisfy such a variety of interests present in society (although minority parties seem to be efficient only at the »first level« of protecting and defending their most immediate group's interests).

A Glimpse to the Past

An essential characteristic of the political culture in Macedonia is the historic deficit of democratic tradition and the enhanced cultural heterogeneity. Long periods of political and cultural subordination of the autocratic rulers throughout history have resulted into reserved or resenting behavior towards every factor that exercises »power«. The substitution of this »lack of contact« is found through the identification with the wider family, the local community and the ethnic group. Cultural diversity in the country is perceived through the use of different languages and religions. Here we should add the syndrome of socialist political system legacy, where decisions were left to be the then *avant-garde*. That's how power was monopolized producing resignation and apathy, a situation incompatible with the citizen's individualism, and the need of future transformation of the country.

At present, bearing in mind the current differences in the Republic of Macedonia, the central role in the political system has to be played by the concept of pluralism. The presence of pluralism (and not only in political life) in the last years has been fostered in order to create a compensatory reaction to the previous monism, but also as a means for finding solutions for today's religious, cultural and ethnic intolerance and potential conflicts. There is an enhanced necessity of plural political structures adjusted to today's features, achieving the right balance for major political forces.

Normative Basis of Party Formation in the Republic of Macedonia

1 Official Journal of the Republic of Macedonia 41 (1994).

2 Law on local self-government, Law on Local Finance, Law on Municipal Boundaries, laws pertaining to police located in the municipalities, laws on the civil service and public administration, Law on Electoral Districts, Laws pertinent to the use of languages, Law on the Public Attorney and any other laws related to this matter.

3 Through these rules, it is provided for persons belonging to other ethnic groups (over 20% of the population) to address the plenary Parliament session in their mother tongue, as well as in the Parliament committees.

The Macedonian 1991 Constitution defines the civic concepts of the state and addresses the national dimension in the preamble:

Macedonia is established as the national state of the Macedonian people, in which full equality as citizens and permanent co-existence with the Macedonian people is provided for Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Roma and other nationalities who live in the Republic of Macedonia.

It goes on to state the intention to establish the Republic

as a sovereign, independent, civic and democratic state; [...] to guarantee the protection of human rights, citizens' freedoms and ethnic equality; [...] to secure peace and a common home for the Macedonian people and all nationalities living in the Republic of Macedonia.

This Constitution, through special provisions pertaining to national minorities, creates a framework for effective equality based on the protection of ethnic, cultural and religious identity. The free expression of ethnic identity is a fundamental value of the constitutional order of the Republic of Macedonia (Article 8, Subparagraph 2).

The Constitution guarantees persons belonging to national minorities the right to establish cultural, scientific and other types of institutions and associations, as well as the right to primary and secondary education in their own language (Article 48).

The 1991 Constitution and the Law on Political Parties of 1994 serve as the legislative basis for the formation of parties, which promote the interests of certain ethnic groups.¹ More precisely, the establishment of political parties derives from Article 20, paragraphs 2 and 3, stating:

Citizens may freely establish citizens' associations and political parties, join them or resign from them. The programs and activities of citizen's associations and political parties may not be aimed at the violent destruction of the constitutional order of the Republic and may not encourage or incite military aggression or ethnic, racial or religious hatred or intolerance.

According to the Law on Political Parties, any 500 adult citizens of the Republic of Macedonia (Article 7) may form a political party by registering at *District Court I* in Skopje. Exception to this rule is in cases when the party program, statute or activities are directed towards »violent destruction of the Constitutional order of the republic or at encouragement or incitement to military aggression or stirring up ethnic, racial or religious hatred or intolerance«. In that case, the party shall not be registered, or if the party is already registered, but is acting contrary to this article, action is being initiated for prohibition of work of that party (Article 23), with which it is automatically deleted from the court's register. According to this, it is automatically concluded that this Law does not contain prohibitive clauses for formation and registering of parties based upon certain interests of ethnic, religious and other minorities in the Republic of Macedonia. The mere fact that founding of these parties is not explicitly forbidden or in some way limited, gives full freedom to different ethnic groups to form parties in case they would like to protect and promote the rights or ideas of their group.

While actions and attitudes of individuals and elites may change, even becoming radical, institutions determine the context of mutual relations. In this way, acknowledging the existence of different and sometimes opposing interests in Macedonian society, and allowing them to form political parties, is what makes the Republic a modern democracy. Tumultuous events that took place in Macedonia in 2001 resulted in the signing of a political agreement in August of the same year in Ohrid. This agreement was in fact imposed by the circumstances of that momentum and the international community, in the effort to prevent any further worsening of the conflict and to improve the political system environment for the Albanian ethnic group especially. All the principles adopted and signed by the four major political parties in the country and the special representatives of EU and USA were incorporated and adopted as amendments to the new Constitution of Macedonia voted in 2001. Further, they were applied in various laws² referring to different domains of life and in the parliamentary rules of procedure.³ Due to the significance of this document and its implication of further minority⁴ rights in the country, the basic principles are as follows:

4 In fact, the word »minority« is nowhere to be found in the text of the document, since it was replaced with the words »community« and »Macedonian citizens«.

- Macedonia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and the unitary character of the State are inviolable and must be preserved. There are no territorial solutions to ethnic issues.
- The multi-ethnic character of Macedonia's society must be preserved and reflected in public life.
- The development of local self-government is essential for encouraging the participation of citizens in democratic life, and for promoting respect for the identity of communities.

The Social Basis of Political Parties

At the beginning of the 1990s the country was facing an exaggerated pluralisation, which was eminent to all post-communist countries as a process. Parties did not emerge from the interests of some layers of society, but of its particular parts. Namely, from the time of the pre-vious political system was inherited a society composed of several different »societies«: a traditional society, the society created at the time of socialism and liberal (civic) society. Out of the traditional part of the entire society emerged socio-cultural parties:

1. National and nationalistic parties (VMRO-DPMNE, MAAK, People's Party)
2. Ethnic political parties (PDP, NDP, PCER, Democratic Union of the Turks, League of the Yugoslavs)
3. Religious political parties (Demochristian Political Party, Democratic Action — Islamic Way)
4. Rural (agrarian) political parties (Democratic Alliance - Peasants' Party, Workers' - Agrarian Party)

Out of the part of society that nourished the socialist values during the previous system are emerged: SDSM (then named as SKM-PDP, the then reformed Communist Party of Macedonia); the Socialist Party; the Social-Democratic Party; the Workers' Party; the Union of Pensioners of Bitola. The liberal domain created: the League for Democracy; Union of Reformed Forces (later became the Liberal Party), Liberal Democratic Party etc. Most parties still do not perform their essential duties (selection, aggregation and interests' expressing) in a contemporary way. Internal party democracy often does not function and the emergence of small parties derives from the dissatisfied party activists coming from major parties. On the other hand, four parties can be regarded as more important, two coming from the Macedonian block (VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM) and two from the Albanian one (DPA and DUI). The following table shows a general overview over the major parties in Macedonia from 1990 to 2004.

Effective political parties in the Republic of Macedonia in the period 1990-2004⁵

5 Parties marked with an asterisk (*) existed in the mentioned time interval (parties which were registered or took part in elections); parties marked with (!) have merged into another party.

Name of the Party	1990	1994	1998	2002
Social-Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM)		*	*	*
Socialist Party	*	*	*	*
VMRO-DPMNE (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization - Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity)	*	*	*	*
Democratic Party		* (!)		
Liberal Party		* (!)		*
Liberal-Democratic Party			*	*
Worker's Party	*	*	*	
Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP)	*	*	*	*
Democratic Union for Integration				*
Citizen's Liberal Party		*	*	
Party for Democratic Prosperity of the Albanians (PDP-A)		* (!)		
VMRO DP		* (!)		
Union of Communists of Macedonia	*	*	*	*
Democratic Party of the Turks (DPT)	*	*	*	*
Democratic Party of the Serbs		*	*	*
PDA - The Real Way		*	*	
People's Democratic Party (NDP)	*	* (!)		
Democratic Party of Macedonia		*	* (!)	
Democratic Union of Macedonia				*
Social-Democratic Party of Macedonia	*	*	*	*
VMRO — Macedonian National Unity		* (!)		

Name of the Party	1990	1994	1998	2002
Party for Complete Emancipation of Romas (PCER)	*	*	*	*
SDA Civic Union		*		
SDA of Macedonia	*	*	*	*
Democratic Progressive Party of the Romas			*	*
MAAK Conservative			*	*
Democratic Party of the Albanians (DPA)			*	*
League for Democracy	* (!)			
Party of the Yugoslavs	*			
Union of Reformed Forces	* (!)			
SKM-PDP	* (!)			
Young Progressive Democratic Party	* (!)			
Democratic Alternative (DA)			*	*
Albanian Democratic Union - Liberal Party		*	*	
Macedonian National Front		*	*	
Republican Party for National Unity			*	
Party for Democratic Movement of the Egyptians	*	*	*	*
Union of Romas in Macedonia			*	*
Party for Democratic Action of Macedonia	*	*	*	
MAAK Fatherland			* (!)	
Democratic Union of the Agrarians	*			
Republican Party of Macedonia		*		

Since the first parliamentary elections in 1990 until today some of these parties (especially the larger ones from the ethnic Albanian political block) are not only represented in the Parliament, but are continuously defining government policy. Some parties, are representing smaller ethnic minorities (like Turkish, Roma, Bosniac, Serbian, Vlach).

← 6 Parties marked with (*) won at least one seat in the 1994 parliamentary elections; parties marked with (!) won at least one seat in the 1998 parliamentary elections.

7 After the elections in 2002 this party more often declares itself as a *civic* one, indicating that its ambition is to create branch offices in Eastern Macedonia, and having as members ethnic Macedonians as well.

*Ethnic and Religious Political Parties*⁶

Name of the Political Party	Ethnic/Religious Affiliation
Democratic Progressive Party of Roma in Macedonia	Roma
Republican Party for National Unity (RPNE)	Albanian
Party for Democratic Movement of Egyptians in Macedonia (PDDEM)	Egyptian
Party for Democratic Action - the Real Way*	Muslim
Party for Complete Emancipation of Romas in Macedonia (PCER)*†	Roma
National Democratic Party (NDP)*†	Albanian
Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP-A)*†	Albanian
Turkish Democratic Party (DPT)*	Turkish
Union of Romas in Macedonia (SRM)	Roma
Party for Democratic Action in Macedonia (PDA)	Muslim (Bosniak)
Democratic Party of Serbs in Macedonia (DPS)	Serbian
Democratic Union of Albanians (SDA)	Albanian
Democratic Party of Albanians (officially called PDPA-NDP, known as DPA)*†	Albanian
Democratic Alliance of Albanians (DSA)	Albanian
Democratic Union for Integration	Albanian ⁷

As a result of the political organizing of various ethnic groups in the country, the Macedonian Assembly has achieved some representation, as one can see from the table below.

Ethnic Origin of Members of the National Assembly:

Year	Total	Macedonian	Albanian	Turkish	Roma	Vlach	Serb	Other
1990	120	93	23	-	2	-	-	2
1994	120	98	19	1	1	-	1	-
1998	120	94	25	-	1	-	-	1
2002	120	98	26	1	1	2	1	-

The first competitive elections (in 1990), as defined by the 1990 Election Law, were unable to create a unified parliament and a stable majority government. National, social, ideological, religious and linguistic differences were, in fact, enhanced. Due to the absence of a structural prerequisite for a one-party government, a non-party, so-called »government of experts« was based on various party platforms. After a vote of no confidence a year and a half later,

8 Social Democratic Party of Macedonia.

9 This includes the period after the second multiparty national elections from 1994 to 1998 as well.

10 VMRO-DPMNE and the Democratic Alternative are parties belonging to the Macedonian (or non-Albanian) political block.

11 The Democratic Alternative got out of the coalition in 2000.

12 Liberal Democratic Party.

13 Democratic Union for Integration, an ethnic Albanian party that derived from the former, now demilitarized UCK.

14 The Social Democratic party created an almost *catch-all* preelectoral coalition with all parties belonging to the other, minor ethnic groups, like the Vlachs, Roma, Serbs, Bosniacs and Turks.

15 This study was performed by the Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research.

16 Certainly this program determinant gets a different quality when compared with the idea that the citizen is the holder of sovereignty but viewed through the prism of belonging to a certain collective group.

a coalition government replaced this one. Due to the circumstances, SDSM⁸ and its partners formed a coalition with PDP, an ethnic Albanian party. This coalition retained control until 1998.⁹

The same happened after the 1998 elections, when the new coalition (VMRO-DPMNE and DA),¹⁰ which had already gained parliamentary majority, established a coalition with the more extreme ethnic Albanian party DPA. This coalition brought together two radical ethnic options and a third, civic one, as a bridge between the two. Still, this combination proved not to be a workable one¹¹ since its practical functioning showed a lot of controversies, ending up into an armed conflict in 2001.

After the Framework Agreement was signed and new elections took place in 2002, presently there is another ethnically mixed coalition, this time consisting of SDSM, LDP¹² and smaller ethnic groups from one side and DUI¹³ from the other. It would be misleading to claim that the voters follow ethnic lines completely. Indeed, »Macedonian« parties, especially those of the left-center, represent other ethnicities as well. A relevant example would be the preelectoral coalitions made in the 2002 elections.¹⁴

According to a research conducted in 2001,¹⁵ except for the Albanian parties, minority parties tend to show a desire for integration and the acceptance of the political system. Among Albanian parties, DPA shows the least acceptance of the country's legal institutions (this is in a way absurd, as DPA was part of the 1998-2002 government). Some Albanian parties directly or indirectly express a lack of support for the territorial integrity of the state,¹⁶ moving into a gray area at the limit of legality, which could be a destabilizing influence. That was a game often played according to the political needs of the moment.

Parliamentary Dynamics

Social and political turmoil heavily affects parties through all the last decade. Interesting example of party dynamics is the momentum of breach of the party coalition formed in 1998 (VMRO-DPMNE and the Democratic Alternative), which occurred in 2000. The table below shows the high party fragmentation achieved immediately after local elections took place.

Change in the structure of the Parliament from 1998 to 2001

Political Party	November 1998	February 2001
VMRO-DPMNE	49 MPs	46
VMRO-VMRO		6
DA	13	2
New Democracy		3
SDSM	27	26
LDP	4	1
LP		3
PDPA-NDP	11	10
PDP	14	10
NDPA		3
Democratic Alliance of Albanians		1
Socialist Party	1	1
Union of Roma	1	1
Independent		5
MP resignations (from PDPA-NDP and SDSM)		2
Total:	120	120

Contrary to the previous situation, the 2002 elections showed a different Assembly balance of forces. One of the duties taken by the Ohrid Agreement was the creation of a new election model and law. Namely, the whole country was divided into six large electoral districts, where each one of them is determined to produce 20 parliamentary seats (total 120) by use of closed party lists, the D'Hondt formula of seats distribution and by having no threshold as a votes minimum condition within each district. After the elections took place the Assembly got the following party composition:

17 Represented by the SDSM party in coalition with LDP and numerous other coalition partners.

	»For Macedonia«	VMRO-DPMNE&LP	DUI	DPA	NDP	PDP	Socialist Party of Macedonia
Cons.1	13	4	2	1			
Cons.2	11	4	2	1	1	1	
Cons.3	11	8					1
Cons.4	11	9					
Cons.5	10	7	2	1			
Cons.6	4	1	10	4		1	
Total	60	33	16	7	1	2	1

The results obtained were showing a large support for the coalition *For Macedonia Together*,¹⁷ yet lacking one seat to win absolute majority in the Parliament, and the power of complete independence and maneuvering that comes along with it. But as the already traditional cul-ture in Macedonia imposes, in the future coalition government was a place for a party coming from the ethnic Albanian political block. Evidently, the largest support in this block of parties got Ali Ahmeti's DUI, a fact that implied the necessity of having a coalition with this party, although at that time the Macedonian public opinion saw Mr. Ahmeti as the main culprit for the 2001 conflict. So far, practice has shown that relative stability of the Assembly work and government coalition functioning is established.

Presidential Elections Results

The tragic death of President Trajkovski imposed, according to the Constitutional provisions, the need for early presidential elections in spring 2004. There were many controversies and polemics regarding the names of potential candidates, but finally the list was concluded with four competing persons from SDSM, VMRO-DPMNE, DUI and DPA. The Central Electoral Committee announced that out of the total number of voters registered (1.695.103), (or 55,27%) or 934.640 voted in the first round. As summarized, the results were the following: Branko Crvenkovski (SDSM) 385.300 votes, Saško Kedev (VMRO-DPMNE) 309.131 votes, Gzim Ostreni (DUI) 134.048 and Zidi Dhelili (DPA) 78.269 votes. Crvenkovski won in the larger cities, while Kedev won in the rural regions and in smaller towns. On the other hand, the voters' support for Ostreni prevailed in all regions inhabited by ethnic Albanians, excluding only Tetovo where the sup-port was divided.

The most general characteristic of the 2004 presidential elections is the large portion of voters who restrained from voting, what was later used by various political forces to call on a second round election boycott. The main problem in organizing the second round of elections was the constitutional provision that requires minimum of 50% + 1 voters turnout for the president election to be legitimate. This precondition opened a new type of campaigning between the two rounds, lead on one hand by the official representatives of the two major parties whose candidates won the first round (Crvenkovski and Kedev) and their internal party oppositions jointly with the center and other opposition parties, on the other hand. Although VMRO-DPMNE as a party had a second round running candidate, still, his election performance was damaged by the joining of forces of Ljube Boškovski and Ljubčo Georgievski who were openly agitating among the voters faithful to the party to restrain from voting. The party was practically divided between the participating and non-participating voters in the second round, since some party activists thought that the active participation will be practically legitimizing Crvenkovski's election.

The political climate and the obvious hesitation of voters initiated a nationwide campaign sponsored by foreign agencies and embassies, domestic NGOs and individuals, to motivate the citizens to vote. Finally, this campaign proved to be fruitful, since the second round showed a turnout of 53.39%. The results showed an increase of voters' turnout in regions predo-minantly inhabited by Macedonians at the expense of having lower, but still present turnout in areas inhabited mostly by ethnic Albanians. What is interesting is that most of the ethnic Albanian votes were in favor of Branko Crvenkovski. Looking at the total of votes won per candidate Crvenkovski had a clear victory, since the difference of votes between the two candidates was about 220,000. In total, Crvenkovski got 548,583 votes and Kedev 326,951.¹⁸ The following table shows the comparative performance of the two candidates per city.

¹⁸ These results are from the second round of voting, published on April 30, 2004 in the daily *Utrinski Vesnik*.

City	Votes for Crvenkovski	Votes for Kedev	Voted in total
Kisela Voda (Skopje)	43,735	28,695	75,180
Chair (Skopje)	38,899	16,885	58,079

City	Votes for Crvenkovski	Votes for Kedev	Voted in total
Gazi Baba (Skopje)	19,187	16,211	36,675
Centar (Skopje)	30,541	10,195	42,581
Karposh (Skopje)	25,709	10,622	38,206
Bitola	25,127	21,534	48,271
Veles	23,901	21,160	46,385
Tetovo	32,265	7,923	47,868
Strumica	27,826	27,748	56,448
Struga	16,489	5,487	22,777
Prilep	26,089	23,969	51,312
Ohrid	19,445	4,805	25,243
Kumanovo	37,308	13,495	52,899
Kočani	13,650	11,887	26,335
Kičevo	11,089	7,449	19,194
Kavadarci	12,282	10,328	23,064
Gostivar	33,031	6,354	40,698
Štip	14,735	13,271	28,840
Delčevo	7,754	1,925	10,275
Gevgelija	12,556	9,938	28,841
Negotino	7,401	5,910	13,580
Resen	6,034	3,349	18,198

Party Turbulences

Other than determining who the next Macedonian president will be, these election results provoked important shifts and changes within the two parties. Branko Crvenkovski, who was identified as the most powerful figure in SDSM, is practically leaving a vacancy both in the party and in the Government. The Prime Minister's position was taken by the up to then Minister of Interiors Hari Kostov, who had his new government voted at the beginning of June. Balances of appointing party people from the parties in coalition in various positions was kept intact. As for the SDSM party leadership position, from where it is believed that the real political influence is realized, candidates are the few persons from the younger generation that have been positioned around Crvenkovski before he became President of the Republic. The official election of the new party leader is due to happen at the next party congress in November this year.

The national elections 2002 indirectly provoked the resignation of Ljubčo Georgievski as the VMRO-DPMNE leader, and the election of the younger Nikola Gruevski. Mrs. Dosta Dimovska and Mr. Marijan Gjørčev, two prominent figures in the »older« VMRO-DPMNE structures, have sought in creating an official »fraction« in the auspices of the party, but their request was refused. Branches of the party have had personal changes due to the new leader's initiative, which created a certain pool of party persons who were dissatisfied with their position and political influence. At the same time, Mrs. Dimovska founded DEAM (Movement for Euro-Atlantic Macedonia) intending to start it in a form of a non-governmental movement and after gaining strength, to transform it into a political force.

It was obvious that presidential election results have been used again by the VMRO-DPMNE former political leadership to openly criticize and attack Nikola Gruevski for the defeat. Looking at the election results alone, one could estimate that although Kedev represented a new figure in the Macedonian politics, he still managed to win a significant portion of the citizens' support, which deserved credit. Instead, he and his narrowest collaborators have been subdued to open critics for not leading the party properly, including the presidential elections, the previous selection of a presidential candidate etc. However, the fact is that Mr. Kedev would have had a somewhat better performance, had he not been undermined locally by a couple of prominent persons from the old party top structure (Ljube Boškovski and Ljubčo Georgievski), which were confusing their faithful party voters with contradictory messages whether to vote or to abstain.

The party Executive Committee and the parliamentary VMRO-DPMNE group denied obedience to Mr. Gruevski, arguing that he aims to impose his personal conflict and opinion to them as well, although they do not agree with it. Some local party committees appeared with a initiative to call on an early party congress in order to change the leader, while others sought continuation of the Executive Committee in which is to be created a

common party position on the key party and political issues. On the other hand, the Central party Committee at its meeting gave support to the current leader, to widen up the number of members of the Executive Committee, (this number increase is a statutory right of the leader). Mr. Georgievski gave his definite resignation from honorable president of VMRO-DPMNE because he was convinced that the party is leading mistaken policy whose main creator was Mr. Gruevski. General sense of real motivation, which was not visible during the disturbed party relations, lead to the opinion that Mr. Georgievski by this attitude was trying to regain domination over the party structure and to return to the leading position. The internal party conflict further continues, without showing signs of foreseeable result.

The presidential elections' results provoked shifts in the DPA as well. The vice-president Menduh Thachi although he accused DUI for large election irregularities, due to a weak election party performance (especially in the outskirts of Skopje and Kumanovo), pushed for resignations of a significant group of DPA prominent members, as well as some leaders of local branches. Although PDP was in a coalition with DUI during the presidential elections, after their termination and due to the dissatisfaction of the new distribution of government positions, decided to join the opposition in the future.

Perspectives After the Framework Agreement

The framework for articulating political interests through political representation already exists in Macedonia. In spite of the 2001 events, there is a history of mutual understanding and tolerance in Macedonia. This experience helps the state to endure crises. Conflicts can be avoided by channeling political energy into a growing democracy. Coalition partners continue to choose dialogue as the best way to overcome difficulties. Processes of negotiation can serve to integrate various groups into a diverse society. The creation of an institutional framework through which these interest groups may express their needs is a constructive step in this direction, and this is finally guaranteed by the implementation of the Ohrid Agreement.

Upcoming local government reforms are expected to further enable various groups to directly express their interests at the lowest level possible. However, it is expected from various ethnic groups to show increased loyalty to the Macedonian state, its values, institutions, and symbols. In particular, the use of symbols (state flag, coat of arms etc) is extremely abused for political purposes.¹⁹

Naturally, institutional preconditions may not be the only guarantee of success and stability. Political leaders must be able to secure support for compromise. Although there is some lack of transparency in the decision-making process due to the attitudes of the political elite, the outcome can be viable because the leadership has broad public support. This type of collective involvement is characteristic of Macedonia. Here, the actual maturity will play the decisive role in behavior of political elites and their readiness for mutual cooperation. In the future, responsibility rests on their shoulders.

Also, a stable civil society can soften cultural heterogeneity. It can allow citizens to overcome cultural differences, to replace collectivism with individualism. It can lead citizens to cease seeking national enemies and approach problems peacefully, with tolerance. Emotional identification with the nation can be replaced by a constitutional and a rational loyalty to an open state system. The old idea of the nation-state must be replaced by an open, inclusive alternative. Luckily, Macedonia is showing a positive trend towards this direction.

Framework Agreement Implementation

The fact is that due to insufficient information offered to the citizens regarding the Framework Agreement (henceforth FA) process and its limits, very often it is an object of manipulation and mobilization on ethnic basis on both sides. There is almost no issue which has not been problematized, politicized or does not seek additional explanations, finally ending up to the international community representatives for mediation or »interpretation«.²⁰

After two years of signing the Framework Agreement the opinions of the political parties differ a lot, regarding its durability, its encompassness, and its possibility to function in practice. PDP has shown dissatisfaction of the implementation speed. It is said that there is a tendency to be imposed new rules and interpretations of the FA content and even underestimations, redefining and putting some elements under question, which show that some are not ready to accept reality. VMRO-DPMNE thinks that the FA is being realized to a great extent, but security conditions for normal state functioning has not been met yet,

19 Symbology must not be too closely connected with one constituent nation. Although Macedonia is ostensibly a multi-ethnic state, Albanians do not identify with the state and its symbols. Albanian political parties often demand changes on such grounds. Albanians tend to identify with the symbols of the Albanian state (its flag is used in marriages, etc.), which angers and alienates Macedonians.

20 And a paradox appears here: Part of the political parties signatories of the FA, recognizing the use of force as a way to achieve political goals, threat again by force due to its alleged slow implementation or non-implementation.

since the state sovereignty is not yet fully accomplished on the complete territory. This party is cautious about the further two steps that need to be made: decentralization and public administration reforms. DPA thinks that what is asked for in the FA and the new Constitution are not respected. This party is not satisfied with the degree of encompassness of ethnic Albanians into the state administration nor with the security situation. SDSM states that there are no changes in the position towards the FA and that it is aimed at its implementation. This party stresses that regardless the different positions, none should forget that the FA is a compromise that prevented Macedonia to enter into a war. No matter how imperfect some solutions might seem, still, it stopped the largest crisis Macedonia had in its recent history.

For DUI the FA has no alternative and every other deviation means a waste of time and energy which is needed for establishing peace and stability. In general, DPA expressed satisfaction with the so far application of the FA. The planned 23% of just representation of ethnic Albanians in the administration have been already achieved in the third row of employees.

EU and NATO Membership – Is It Too Hard to be Achieved?

One of the permanent priorities of the foreign policy for Macedonia is to achieve the EU and NATO membership, on which all parties in Macedonia agree. The current government has put these two goals into its agenda, ambitiously pursuing them. Realistically seen, the country still needs time and many efforts to comply with the standards required for such membership in order to achieve the desired policy outcome. On the other hand, the country and its inhabitants are in a great need for a further motivation boost and advancement towards a clear vision for the future. Citizens of Macedonia need a common goal which would serve as a turning point towards a new wave of positive change.

Public Opinion on Political Elites Behavior

In June 2003, the NGO *Project for Common Vision* came in public with its research results. The data show that about 68% of the Macedonians and 78% of the Albanians believe that trust may be returned after the 2001 conflict. About 78% think that the conflict had a political and not an ethnic background. As 51% of the poll stated, the politicians are to blame for the 2001 conflict. According to Macedonians, »the conflict was caused by politicians who benefit for personal interests, or because of their incapability through systematic practice of irritating have prepared all conditions for a fabricated armed conflict«. Opposed to this, 29% think that they are to blame for the conflict. A third group of 16% thinks that the conflict came as a historic circumstance, meaning that the roots of the conflict should be sought in a certain historic necessity, inevitable to occur. Regarding the current situation in the state, as well as a shopping list of priorities, citizens think that first and most important is the country's economic stabilization and then follow the decentralization process, the struggle against corruption and nepotism, interethnic relations, and the implementation of the Framework Agreement.

Political Parties and Civic Organizations

According to a poll conducted by the *Institute for Sustainable Communities* (supported by USAID) in 2001, on the question whether members of the polled civic organizations are members of political parties, the answers showed that about half of the civic organizations had no party affiliated membership. Another 1/4 of the organizations had members coming from various parties, while the rest of the polled had very few party activists among them or were practically ignorant on the matter, thinking that party affiliation is a private thing, not linked to the organization's activities.²¹ Practically, according to the answers, political involvement of NGO individuals is relatively out of the political mainstreams.

When asked »Can you think of other NGOs that you would estimate that are more closely linked to a political party?«, 62% of the polled civic organizations replied negatively. However, 31% of them were able to mention very concrete examples of party linkage to a particular NGO. There is an estimation that about 60% of the NGOs are subdued to some kind of influence which is often connected with the efforts to gain some money. The influence in this area is mostly done indirectly, since civic organizations serve a certain purpose in shaping attitudes and policies towards a certain issue. Some NGOs think that there are some orga-

21 It is interesting that NGO activists in fact show a tendency of not willing to know the party affiliation or sympathies of a particular person to a party. This is also seen in the answers: »That is a member's private business«; »Parties should keep away from this area«; »Every-one is free to be a political party member«; »In our work, party membership cards are put away«; »We don't want to know who is a member and who isn't«; »That is an individual feeling and orientation« etc.

nizations, which take state money for projects because are linked with the parties on power, depending on the moment.

When the NGO activities are questioned and whether the organization suffered direct pressures or hostilities coming from a particular party, the predominant part of NGOs replied negatively (82%). Still, there is a certain number of organizations that had bad personal experience. In this sense were given the following examples: suspending budget, lobbying for projects submitted by other organizations that are party affiliated, parallel NGO structures were established in order to perform hidden political tasks, local politicians sometimes abuse the collaboration with NGOs (praise themselves for the achievements made by the NGO) or politicians deny the progress made in the period before they gained power.

Most of civic organizations (85%) did not have problems while performing a project activity or collaborating with the local or central government because of party reasons. Still, there are some that experienced barriers of this kind. Examples are: project refusal, lack of communication, obstruction in other fields of activities, indirectly avoiding collaboration, hidden in the expression »no problem«.

