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Macedonia's Post-Yugoslav Reality

Corruption, Wire-Tapping, and Stolen Elections

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How successful or unsuccessful has Macedonia been since its declaration of independence in 1991? The question sounds simple enough. At first glance, one is inclined to say that it has been unusually *unsuccessful*, even by Balkan standards. The country has been blocked by Greece in its quest to join the European Union (EU) and NATO, was forced – again by Greece – to change its flag and modify its constitution to renounce territorial aspirations it never nurtured, and was admitted to the United Nations only under the humiliating name Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – a designation which suggests to Macedonians that their state is a kind of pariah. Then there is the fact that 30.4 per cent of its people were living below the poverty line in 2011 (see the Introduction to this volume). Again, as noted in the Introduction, Macedonia's ranking on press freedom in 2015 was the lowest among the seven Yugoslav successor states. And finally, there is the extent of corruption through which the ruling party has maintained itself in power since 2006 (detailed below in the subsection Allegations of Abuse of Power and in the section Political Transformation II below).

[1] Except where otherwise noted, all internet sources cited herein were accessed during the period 4–7 November 2014.

On the other hand, Macedonia was *successful* in staying out of the War of Yugoslav Succession (1991–95) as well as the 1999 War for Kosovo, avoided being carved up between Greece and Serbia in 1992,[2] and has been relatively successful in boosting revenue from tourism, earning 110 million euros from that sector in 2013.[3] In addition, in 2001, an Albanian insurgency was successfully resolved with the signing of the Ohrid Peace Accords (discussed below).

In March 2004, the Republic of Macedonia applied for membership in the European Union. The European Commission reviewed the country's application and delivered a favorable opinion in November 2005 and, the following month, Macedonia was granted candidate status. In order to gain membership in the EU, Macedonia will have to meet certain criteria laid down by the European Council at its meeting in Copenhagen, Denmark, in June 1993. Known as the Copenhagen Criteria, these criteria are reasonably clear in specifying that:

Begin Extract

Membership requires:

[2] See Radio Belgrade Network (19 January 1992), trans. in Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), *Daily Report* (Eastern Europe), 21 January 1992, p. 58; and *Time* (12 October 1992), reprinted in MAK-NEWS (9 October 1992). For further discussion, see Sabrina P. Ramet, "The Macedonian Enigma," in Sabrina P. Ramet and Ljubiša S. Adamovich (eds.), *Beyond Yugoslavia: Politics, economics, and culture in a shattered community* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995), pp. 219–220.

[3] *Turkish Weekly* (31 July 2014), at www.turkishweekly.net/print.asp?type=1&id=169717. See also Biljana Petrevska, "Tourism in Macedonia – Before and After the Crisis," Conference Proceedings, International Conference *Faces of the Crisis* (Skopje, 2012), pp. 63–70.

- that the candidate country has achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities;
- the existence of a functioning market economy, as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union;
- the ability to take on the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.[4]

End Extract

In its 2005 opinion, the European Commission judged that Macedonia had "stable democratic institutions which function properly, respecting the limits of their competences and co-operating with each other," although the Commission noted that "the local elections in 2005 displayed a series of serious irregularities." The Commission further assessed that "[t]he rule of law is being gradually consolidated. Considerable efforts at reforming the police have been made since the crisis in 2001. However, steps remain to be taken to secure the rule of law all over the territory. This includes pursuing the reform of the police." But even at that time, the Commission pointed to "institutional weaknesses" in the economy, "shortcomings in the judiciary," and deficiencies in the labor and financial market, which were blamed for impeding "the reduction of particularly high unemployment."[5] Given Macedonia's aspiration to join the EU, its relative success in its post-Yugoslav path must be judged against the foregoing Copenhagen Criteria.

[4] EUR-Lex – Access to European Law, at http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:52005DC0562, p. 2 of 5.
[5] Ibid., p. 3 of 5.

Political Transformation I: 1989–2014

Macedonia's post-socialist political transformation began in 1989, when the country's socialist constitution was amended to permit multiparty elections. These were duly held in November–December 1990 and saw Ljubčo Georgievski's Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization—Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity – hereafter, IMRO – capture the largest bloc of seats in the unicameral Assembly. At first, IMRO tried to form a coalition government with the second-place Party for Democratic Reform (the former communists, soon to rename themselves the Social Democratic Party). But the would-be coalition partners found that their differences were unbridgeable. IMRO withdrew from negotiations and the Social Democrats now formed a coalition with the Liberal Party, the Socialist Party, and two Albanian parties. Nikola Kljusev took office as prime minister, to be succeeded in that office in summer 1992 by Branko Crvenkovski (a Social Democrat), who remained prime minister until November 1998. Kiro Gligorov, head of the Social Democratic Party, who had held various offices in the Socialist Federated Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) but who had retired from politics in 1978, was elected president.

Work on a new constitution began as early as May 1991, even before the breakup of socialist Yugoslavia. Perhaps the most important controversy connected with the drafting of the constitution had to do with whether to characterize Macedonia as a "citizens' state," meaning that all citizens would enjoy equal rights, or as a "national state," which would privilege the Macedonians over other nationality groups living in the country. With Macedonians constituting a majority of 64.6 per cent but Albanians comprising a sizeable minority with 21.0 per cent of the population (according to the

1991 census),[6] alongside smaller numbers of members of other nationalities, including Turks, Roma, Serbs, and Albanophone "Egyptians," this was a delicate matter which would have implications for every citizen in the country. The constitution's drafters ultimately settled on a compromise formula, in which the preamble defined the country as a national state, while the text of the constitution elaborated various rights and duties corresponding to the concept of a citizens' state.[7]

The First Decade of Independence. In September 1991, a referendum was held, in which 95 per cent of those taking part – or 72 per cent of the electorate as a whole – voted for independence.[8] The following month, Macedonia declared its independence from the defunct SFRY, three-and-a-half months after Slovenia and Croatia had done so. The new constitution was adopted on 17 November 1991. Macedonia was able to stay out of the War of Yugoslav Succession (1991–95) but the war nonetheless had negative economic repercussions for the newly independent country.

The new republic immediately confronted a strange challenge from Greece, which declared that the country had no right to call itself Macedonia and demanded other concessions as well. The Greek government applied pressure on Macedonia both directly (through an economic embargo) and indirectly, through the offices of the European Community, which, in December 1991, set three conditions for the country to meet before diplomatic recognition would be extended: "the passage of constitutional

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[6] *Broj i struktura na neselenieto vo Republika Makedonija po opštini i nacionalna pripadnost* (Skopje: Republički zavod za statistiku, 1991), p. 6.

[7] Loring Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict: Ethnic Transformation in a Transnational World* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 144–145.

[8] Biljana Vankovska, "Constitutional Engineering and Institution-Building in the Republic of Macedonia (1991–2011)," in Sabrina P. Ramet, Ola Listhaug, and Albert Simkus (eds.), *Civic and Uncivic Values in Macedonia: Value Transformation, Education and Media* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 91.

amendments guaranteeing respect for existing borders; an explicit declaration that Macedonia harbored no territorial pretensions against its neighbors; and a promise not to interfere in Greece's internal affairs."[9] The Macedonian Assembly duly approved these measures in January 1992, but with Greece still insisting that it held the copyright to the name "Macedonia," West European recognition was delayed until December 1993, the Republic of Macedonia having been admitted to the United Nations on 8 April 1993 under the name "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia." The Greeks had imposed an economic embargo on landlocked Macedonia the previous year, resulting in shortages of food, oil, and medicine, but lifted the embargo in 1993, as bilateral talks between the two countries got underway. However, in October 1993, Andreas Papandreou, a former professor of economics at the University of California, Berkeley, among other universities, returned to the prime minister's office, after a gap of four years, and terminated the talks with Macedonia. Later, after the United States announced that it would recognize the Republic of Macedonia,[10] the Greek government reimposed its trade embargo, only this time making it even tougher than before. Greece has also continued to block Macedonian efforts to gain admittance into the European Union (EU) and NATO; this has had consequences for the country's politics, inducing an assertive nationalist reaction manifested, inter alia, in a dramatic makeover of Skopje, including the erection of a 40-ton, 11-meter high statue of an equestrian Alexander the Great.

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[9] Sabrina P. Ramet, *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the Fall of Milošević,* 4th edn. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2002), p. 185.

[10] ET-1 Television Network (Athens), 9 February 1994, trans. in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report* (Eastern Europe), 10 February 1994, p. 38; and *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, Vol. 5, No. 8 (21 February 1994), p. 92.

Although there are nine "major" political parties (those usually able to elect representatives to the Assembly) alongside eleven "minor" parties, each of the country's four presidents to date has been a member of one or the other of the two dominant political parties: Kiro Gligorov (Social Democrat) served as president from 1991 to 1999; Boris Trajkovski (IMRO) was president from 1999 until his death in a plane crash in February 2004; Branko Crvenkovski (Social Democrat) held the office from 2004 to 2009; and Gjorge Ivanov (IMRO) has served as president of Macedonia since 2009. As shown in Box 11.1, aside from two non-partisan officeholders who, between the two of them, occupied the office of prime minister for a total of twelve months, each of the country's prime ministers has likewise been recruited from one or the other of these two dominant political parties. Nonetheless, because of the necessity of building coalition governments and with an eye to building trust among the country's Albanians, the coalitions have typically included an Albanian political party (though not always the same one). Thus, for example, during Branko Crvenkovski's first coalition government, four Albanians were appointed to ministerial posts. Fresh elections in 1994 returned Crvenkovski to the prime minister's office and, as before, four of the ministers in his government were Albanians (members of the Party for Democratic Prosperity, PDP). The Crvenkovski government remained committed to building inter-ethnic trust, appointing Albanians to the Constitutional Court and to the Supreme Court, naming Albanians to serve as ambassadors in Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland, and promoting the first Albanian to the rank of general in the army in 1995.[11]

[11] Duncan M. Perry, "The Republic of Macedonia: Finding Its Way," in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (eds.), *Politics, Power, and the Struggle for Democracy in South-East Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 236–237.

Begin Box 11.1

Box 11.1 Prime ministers of the Republic of Macedonia since 1991

Nikola Kljusev (non-partisan), 27 January 1991–17 August 1992

Branko Crvenkovski (Social Democrat), 17 August 1992 – 30 November 1998

Ljubčo Georgievski (IMRO–DPMNU), 30 November 1998–15 September 2002

Branko Crvenkovski (Social Democrat), 1 November 2002–12 May 2004

Radmila Šekerinska, acting PM (Social Democrat), 12 May 2004 – 2 June 2004

Hari Kostov (non-partisan), 2 June 2004–18 November 2004

Radmila Šekerinska, acting PM (Social Democrat),18 November 2004–17 December 2004

Vlado Bučkovski (Social Democrat), 17 December 2004 – 27 August 2006

Nikola Gruevski (IMRO–DPMNU), 27 August 2006–18 January 2016

Emil Dimitriev, interim PM (IMRO–DPMNU), 18 January 2016-???

End Box 11.1

The policy of including Albanians in positions of responsibility may well have been encouraged by the legacy of the SFRY's policy of "brotherhood and unity," which had involved ethnic quotas. Looking beyond that issue, Macedonian authorities were, in general, slow to replace the legislation inherited from the socialist era. Indeed, socialist practices were maintained even as new laws were passed to regulate the courts. The legal situation was thus fluid and, in this context of fluidity, there were allegations that high government officials were involved in corrupt practices and cooperating with

organized crime, as well as allegations of electoral fraud in connection with elections held in 1994 and 2000.[12] Corruption and crime will be discussed below, in the section devoted to these topics, as well as in the section Political Transformation II.

Meanwhile, parliamentary elections held in 1998 brought IMRO's Georgievski into the prime minister's office, at the head of a three-party coalition which included the Democratic Alternative (headed by Vasil Tupurkovski) and the Democratic Party of Albanians (headed at the time by Arben Xhaferi). Indeed, as of 2001, the 120-member national parliament included twenty-five Albanians, while the fifteen-member cabinet included five ministers and two deputy ministers of Albanian nationality. Albanians were also making strides in municipal government and, albeit slowly, in public administration. In addition, agreement had been reached to allow the founding of an officially recognized university in Tetovo, with Albanian as the language of instruction. Perhaps most impressive was the fact that three of the Army's seven four-star generals were Albanians, as of early 2001.[13]

The 2001 Insurrection and the Ohrid Framework Agreement. Given this incremental progress in the advancement of Albanian representation in positions of authority, the Macedonian government was caught by surprise when a series of skirmishes along the border with Kosovo in February 2001 swelled into a full-scale insurrection by March. Albanian rebels seized control of a number of villages around Tetovo and, as the conflict escalated, the Macedonian Army began shelling Albanian towns. More than 10,000 Macedonian Albanians took flight, seeking refuge in Kosovo.

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[12] Sabrina P. Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias: State-Building and Legitimation, 1918–2005* (Washington D.C. and Bloomington, Ind.: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Indiana University Press, 2006), pp. 570–571.

[13] Ibid., citing *The Washington Post* (4 April 2001), p. A16.

By the first part of June, the Albanian rebels had taken control of the Skopje suburb of Aračinovo. However, before the end of the month, with some indirect help from NATO, the Macedonian Army succeeded in pushing the insurgents out of Aračinovo.[14]

At this point, negotiations were initiated, even as the insurrection continued. By mid-August, there were roughly 100 casualties. Then, on 13 August 2001, representatives of the government met with insurgents and signed an agreement in Ohrid. Among other things, the agreement sanctioned recognition of Albanian as a second official language at the national level, alongside Macedonian, and also provided that any language spoken by at least 20 per cent of inhabitants in any locality would have an equal status with Macedonian and Albanian as an official language; as a result of this provision, Turkish, Serbian, and Romany became official languages in some municipalities.[15] The Agreement also included promises to extend state support to a second university in Tetovo, which Albanians had set up on their own initiative, and to recruit a thousand Albanians into the police. The government also extended an amnesty to all the insurgents.[16] For their part, the Albanians who had taken part in the insurrection surrendered an estimated 3,300 firearms and announced an end to their insurrection. In spite of this, there continued to be some incidents involving gunfire in 2002 and 2003, with major clashes between the National Liberation Army (as the insurgents had designated their fighting force) and the Macedonian Army in September 2003. Nonetheless, although some Macedonians claimed that the Ohrid Framework

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[14] *Ibid.,* p. 580.

[15] Armend Reka, "The Ohrid Agreement: The Travails of Inter-Ethnic Relations in Macedonia," in *Human Rights Review,* Vol. 9, No. 1 (March 2008), p. 59.

[16] The full text of the Ohrid Agreement is reprinted in Wolf Oschlies, *Makedonien 2001–2004. Kriegstagebuch aus einem friedlichen Land* (Berlin: Xenomos, 2004), pp. 117–134. See also Dejan Marolov, "Understanding the Ohrid Framework Agreement," in Ramet, Listhaug, and Simkus (eds.), *Civic and Uncivic Values in Macedonia,* pp. 134–154.

Agreement had conceded too much to the Albanians, while some Albanians asserted the contrary, that the agreement had not satisfied all of their demands, tempers gradually cooled after 2003. Ali Ahmeti, who had led the NLA, won a seat in the Macedonian Assembly in September 2002 and joined the ruling coalition. He emphasized that the point of the insurrection had never been to promote the secession of territories inhabited by Albanians, but rather to press for full equality for the country's Albanian minority.[17]

As Marina Caparini has noted, "[t]he 2001 crisis revealed confusion regarding the legal authority of key governmental actors over security institutions."[18] The resultant reform of the security sector included the transfer of responsibility for border control from the army to the police, efforts to improve the efficiency of the police, an initiative to restructure the armed forces to bring them in line with NATO standards, and the development of a limited counter-insurgency capability.[19]

Macedonian Politics and Elections, 2003–2014. On 22 March 2004, the Macedonian government submitted an application to be admitted to the European Union. The following year, the European Commission offered an appraisal of the country's democratic progress, acknowledging that Macedonia had made "considerable efforts" to bring its legislation in line with the EU's *acquis communitaure*, judged that

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[17] Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias,* p. 581.

[18] Marina Caparini, "Security Sector Reform in the Western Balkans," *SIPRI Yearbook* (Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2004), at www.sipri.org/yearbook/2004/files/SIPRIYB0408.pdf, p. 271.

[19] Aleksandar Cekov, "Police Reforms in Macedonia on the Path to EU Integration," in *Analytical,* Issue 4 (2009), pp. 49–50; and Caparini, "Security Sector Reform," p. 36.

"the rule of law is being gradually consolidated," and assessed that the country was already a "functioning democracy."[20]

Begin Box 11.2

Box 11.2 The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization–Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity

The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization–Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity – named after a revolutionary national liberation movement active in the late nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century – was founded in August 1990, with Ljubčo Georgievki as its chairman. After Nikola Gruevski was elected chairman of the party in 2003, initially with a pro-reform orientation, Georgievski left the party and, on 4 July 2004, set up his own splinter party, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization—People's Party. Vesna Janevska was elected as chairman of this new party. When the dispute with Greece escalated during 2007–2008, Gruevski reverted to the nationalist stance associated with the party when Georgievski had headed it.

End Box 11.2

[20] Extracts from the European Commission report, as quoted in Zachary T. Irwin, "Macedonia since 1989," in Sabrina P. Ramet (ed.), *Central and Southeast European Politics since 1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 345.

Until 2006, the Social Democrats had headed the governing coalition for ten of the fifteen years since independence. But in August 2006, IMRO – now under the chairmanship of thirty-six-year-old Nikola Gruevski (see Box 11.2) – won the parliamentary elections and Gruevski put together a coalition government with Xhaferi's Democratic Party of Albanians. After fresh elections in 2008, in which IMRO once again emerged in first place, capturing more than half of the seats in the Assembly, Gruevski dropped the DPA and established a new coalition with Ali Ahmeti's Democratic Union for Independence (DUI). During the polling in 2008, there were violent incidents as well as claims of fraud in certain Albanian localities. In addition, OSCE's Election Observation Mission reported "credible allegations of pressure on civil servants to support the ruling coalition," alongside "instance of misuse of administrative resources."[21] Yet another election was held on 5 June 2011 and this returned the IMRO-DUI coalition to power.

In the wake of the June 2011 elections, the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the OSCE issued a rather critical report. Although it assessed that the voting process had been "good or very good in 97 per cent of polling stations visited," and noted problems with the secrecy of the ballot at only 10 per cent of polling stations,[22] more extensive problems were noted during the election campaign. In particular, OSCE's Election Observation Mission reported that

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[21] As quoted in *Macedonia: Ten Years after the Conflict,* International Crisis Group, Europe Report No. 212 (11 August 2011), at www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/europe/balkans/macedonia/212%20Macedonia%20–%20Ten%20Years%20after%20the%20Conflict.pdf, pp. 4–5.

[22] *The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Early Parliamentary Elections, 5 June 2011* (Warsaw: OSCE, 6 October 2011), at www.osce.org/odihr/elections/83666?download=true, p. 18.

> During the campaign, there were instances of an insufficient separation between state and party structures, contrary to the commitment of paragraph 5.4 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Documents …
>
> The OSCE/ODIHR EoM received a number of allegations [of] threats that citizens would lose their pensions or social services if they did or did not support certain parties or candidates. The overwhelming majority of these allegations concerned actions by state officials and activists of the principal governing party …
>
> There were [also] instances when the Minister of Internal Affairs, who was also a leading VMRO-DPMNE [i.e. IMRO] candidate, used the authority of her office for campaign purposes, leading to a conflict of interest between her duties as head of the MofA and her activities as a candidate.[23]

In April 2014, elections were held for both the presidency and the Assembly. Gjorge Ivanov (IMRO), who had defeated the Social Democratic candidate, Ljubomir Frčkovski, in 2009 by a margin of 63.14 per cent to 36.86 per cent in the second round of voting, now faced a new challenger from the Social Democrats, Stevo Pendarovski. The latter fared better than Frčkovski, reportedly garnering 41.14 per cent of the vote in the second round. But the official tally of the second round of voting on 27 April 2014 recorded 55.28 per cent of the votes for Ivanov, thus returning him to the president's office. The official results of the parliamentary election also recorded a victory for IMRO, which returned to power, once again in coalition with the DUI.

[23] Ibid., p. 10.

The main issues in the 2014 election were the economy, youth unemployment, admission to the EU and NATO, resolution of the dispute with Greece over the name of the country, and continuing inter-ethnic distrust. With the media generally dependent on government advertising for their revenue, the OSCE Election Observation Mission reported that, with the exception of Telma and Vesti 24, media outlets tended to display "significant bias in favor of the governing parties both in terms of quantity and tone of coverage."[24] (See below for further discussion of the media.)

Repeating the formula it had used in reference to the 2011 elections, the OSCE judged that the election itself was "good or very good on 96 per cent of observations, and transparent in 97 per cent of observations."[25] Nonetheless, there continued to be instances of group voting, as there had been in previous elections, and there were allegations of voter intimidation at many polling stations. There were additional problems with the elections, which would be revealed only in 2015. As for the outcome of the election to the Assembly, IMRO won 42.1 per cent of the vote, gaining sixty-one seats in the 123-seat Assembly, followed by the Social Democrats, who won 24.9 per cent of the vote, thereby gaining thirty-four seats; Ahmeti's DUI won nineteen seats, the DPA seven seats, and GROM and the NDR one seat each.[26]

Political developments since 2014 are described later in this chapter.

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[24] *The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Presidential and Early Parliamentary Elections, 13 and 27 April 2014* (Warsaw: OSCE, 15 July 2014), at www.osce.org/odihr/elections/fyrom/121306?download=true, p. 18.

[25] Ibid., p. 23.

[26] *Die Presse* (Vienna), 28 April 2014, at http://diepresse.com/home/politik/aussenpolitik/1599210/print.do.

Economic Transformation

The process of privatization of the economy got underway in 1989, when Macedonia was still part of the SFRY. In 1990, the last Yugoslav federal government adopted a Law on Social Capital, which provided for the transfer of socially owned enterprises into private hands through the sale of shares to enterprise employees at large discounts and favorable payment schemes. After some modification of the original estimates, 1,216 enterprises were scheduled for privatization. Of this number, 113 were classified as large enterprises, 273 as medium-sized, and the rest as small. Between 1990 and 1991, roughly 240 mainly large and medium-sized enterprises were converted into joint-stock companies along the aforementioned lines.[27] Excluded from privatization were "mostly enterprises in infrastructure, social activities, public services, forestry, and other natural resources," as well as cultural and historical monuments.[28]

However, the process of privatization was delayed when, on 19 August 1991, the Macedonian government declared that it would no longer follow the guidelines of the federal law (even though the country had not yet declared its independence). It was to take almost two years to pass a new law on privatization (in June 1993). This delay had very negative effects on the economy because, finding themselves in legal limbo, enterprise managers postponed all discussion of organizational, technological, and other restructuring and – worse yet – in anticipation that they might be in a position to acquire ownership rights in these enterprises, avoided any investments which would have increased the value of their respective enterprises and, thus, of the cost of

[27] Trajko Slaveski, "Privatization in the Republic of Macedonia: Five Years After," in *Eastern European Economics*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (January-February 1997), pp. 32–33.
[28] Bobek Šuklev, "Privatization in the Republic of Macedonia," in *Eastern European Economics*, Vol. 34, No. 6 (November-December 1996), p. 7; see also p. 8.

acquiring ownership.[29] In the event, although various privatization schemes were entertained, the method preferred by both management and the privatization agency was the transfer of ownership to management teams within the enterprises. Not coincidentally, half of the members of the executive board of the privatization agency were managers of enterprises scheduled for privatization.[30] Some shares were made available to ordinary workers, but, according to reports in the Macedonian press, there were "many abuses [involving] the involuntary transfer of shares from workers to managers for a nominal price, or even free, under threats, open or tacit, of firing those who opposed the 'offer one cannot refuse.'"[31] Potential investors abroad were disinclined to enter the Macedonian market under these conditions. In one case, multinational tobacco companies withdrew from negotiations to acquire stakes in Macedonia's tobacco industry when it became clear that enterprise insiders had vested interests which they were determined to defend.[32]

Privatization resulted in a downsizing of enterprises, with the result that the number of people registered as unemployed swelled from 166,873 in 1991 to 361,322 in 2000.[33] Poverty also increased, with 20 per cent of the population registered below the poverty line by 1997. That same year, the GDP was reported to stand at just 80 per cent of its 1991 level.[34] At the same time, various "new entrepreneurs, corrupt

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[29] Slaveski, "Privatization in the Republic of Macedonia," pp. 33–34.

[30] Ibid., p. 42.

[31] Ibid., p. 43.

[32] Ibid., p. 41.

[33] Violeta Čačeva, "Criminal Activity During the Period of Transition in Macedonia," in *South-East Europe Review for Labour and Social Affairs*, Issue 1 (2002), p. 28.

[34] Sandra Hutton, Vilma Kolpeja, Blagica Novkovska, Suzana Sakiqi, and Valentina Stoevska, "Albania and Macedonia: transitions and poverty," in Sandra Hutton and Gerry Redmond (eds.), *Poverty in Transition Economies* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 126, 135.

politicians and other officials, and politically protected smugglers exploiting channels through Greece and Bulgaria, amassed spectacular fortunes."[35] Macedonia's economic difficulties in the 1990s were due not only to problems associated with privatization, but also to the termination of subsidies from Belgrade (which socialist Macedonia had received due to its status as an underdeveloped republic), as well as to the loss of the domestic Yugoslav market and the impact of the aforementioned Greek embargoes.

Nor have things gotten much better since 1997. As a result of the Albanian insurgency in 2001, the economy shrank by 4.5 per cent, and it took about three years for the economy to regain its footing.[36] In the years 1991–2012, unemployment in Macedonia averaged 33.2 per cent, recording a low of 30.5 per cent in 2001 and a high of 37.3 per cent in 2005; among youth, the average rate of unemployment for this period was 58.79 per cent, with a low of 52.4 per cent in 1995 and a high of 71.9 per cent in 1998.[37] Unemployment stood at 28 per cent in 2014 (see Table 1.2).

In the second half of 2014, the authorities offered some respite to the indigent, by successfully persuading some companies to cancel the debts of their poorest customers. This involved overdue bills for heating, water, electricity, and television services as well as overdue bank loans, and benefited roughly 40,000 families. In order

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[35] "Macedonia: Poverty and Wealth," in *Encyclopedia of the Nations,* at www.nationsencyclopedia.com/economics/Europe/Macedonia-POVERTY-AND-WEALTH.html. See also "Who Are the Richest Macedonians on the List of 'Forbes'?," *Mactel.com.au* (18 September 2014), at www.mactel.com.au/index.php?page=news&news=55825&lang=en.

[36] Mehmet Odekon (ed.), *Encyclopedia of World Poverty* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2006), p. 662.

[37] World Bank figure, as reported in "Macedonia Economic Indicators," *TheGlobalEconomy.com* (4 November 2014), at www.theglobaleconomy.com/Macedonia/unemployment_rate/ and www.theglobaleconomy.com/Macedonia/Youth_unemployment/.

to bring about this result, the government extended tax breaks to companies which agreed to the scheme.[38]

Unemployment is lowest among Macedonians, highest among members of the small Turkish minority; the unemployment rate among the country's Albanians is also higher than that among Macedonians.[39] One factor which should be mentioned in this connection is that the level of educational attainment "is highest in ethnic Macedonian municipalities, followed by mixed ethnic, Albanian, and Turkish [municipalities]," in that order.[40]

Corruption

In the Introduction to this volume, I defined corruption as the *conscious deviation from established standards or rules, intended to benefit one or more parties.* The corruption associated with the privatization process was discussed in the previous section, while corrupt practices in the media will be scrutinized in the next section. Corruption in Macedonia has been a problem in a number of other sectors, including in: the appointment and removal of public servants generally; tobacco smuggling in collusion with the incumbents in government institutions;[41] bribery and vote-buying;[42] the

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[38] *Balkan Insight* (14 October 2014), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-dubs-debt-write-off-campaign-a-success (accessed on 22 December 2014).

[39] Harley Johansen, "Ethnic Dimensions of Regional Development in Macedonia: A Research Report," in *Eurasian Geography and Economics,* Vol. 45, No. 7 (2004), p. 541.

[40] Ibid.

[41] *Macedonia's Public Secret: How Corruption Drags the Country Down* (Skopje and Brussels: International Crisis Group, Balkans Report No. 133, 14 August 2002), at www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/europe/Macedonia%2015.pdf, p. 22.

[42] *Corruption in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Bribery as experienced by the population* (Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2011), at

instrumentalization of the judiciary by the dominant political party against its rivals; and public procurement. I shall focus on the last two sectors mentioned above, before turning to the revelations in 2015 concerning the ruling party's abuse of power, electoral fraud and manipulation, and wiretapping.

Corruption of the Judicial System. Freedom House records a decline in judicial independence and professionalism in the years 2005–2014.[43] But the picture is not all bad. A Council of Europe report released in September 2012 concluded that there had been improvements in the preceding years in the efficiency of Macedonia's judicial system, as well as positive developments in terms of structural changes. It was also noted that Macedonia had a relatively high number of judges relative to the size of its population. On the other hand, the level of political pressure on the courts during 2012 was considered a serious matter.[44] For instance, there were "credible claims" during 2012 "that the government interfered in high-profile cases involving abuse of office or misuse of official position to coerce government officials and party members or to intimidate key opposition leaders."[45] Specifically, the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor in the US Department of State claimed that the IMRO government was interfering in cases involving leading figures in the Social Democratic Party, including Vasil Tupurkovski, the former deputy prime minister, who had received a three-year

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www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/corruption/Corruption_report_fYR_Macedonia_FINAL_web.pdf.

[43] Ljubica Grozdanovska Dimishkovska, "Macedonia," in Freedom House, *Nations in Transit 2014,* at freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2014/macedonia.

[44] As cited in Ljubica Grozdanovska Dimishkovska, "Macedonia," in Freedom House, *Nations in Transit 2013,* at freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/NIT13MacedoniaFinal.pdf.

[45] United States Department of State – Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012 – Macedonia,* at www.state.gov/documents/organization/204523.pdf, p. 16.

prison sentence in 2009 for corruption. However, before he could be imprisoned, the Skopje Appellate Court overturned his conviction in February 2012. The prosecution appealed the acquittal the following month and, by year's end, the same Appellate Court reversed its previous decision and returned the case for retrial.[46] Another leading Social Democrat, Vlado Bučkovski, who had served as prime minister from December 2004 to August 2006 and previously as minister of defense, was stripped of his parliamentary immunity in August 2007 by deputies belonging to the parties of the center-right ruling coalition. He was subsequently arrested on charges of complicity in an arms deal in which Macedonia paid 2.5 million euros (roughly US $3.1 million) to purchase quantities of spare parts for T-55 tanks, which were "not necessary," during the Albanian insurgency of 2001. He was found guilty in December 2008, but his conviction was overturned by the Skopje Appellate Court the following year. Finally, in September 2014, the court reversed his decision and sentenced the former defense minister to two years in prison.[47] The Bureau of Democracy cited rule-of-law analysts who asserted that the Tupurkovski and Bučkovski cases should be understood as "politically motivated prosecution."[48] In the meantime, the Social Democratic Party accused Prime Minister Gruevski of abuse of office in exerting pressure on the media, and of tax evasion. These

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[46] Ibid., p. 17; and United States Department of State – Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 – Macedonia* (hereafter, *Macedonia Country Report 2013*), at www.state.gov/documents/organization/220516.pdf, p. 16.

[47] *Ibid.*; and *Independent Balkan News Agency* (3 September 2014), at www.balkaneu.com/prime-minister-buckovski-receives-year-jail-.sentence/.

[48] *Macedonia Country Report 2013,* p. 16.

charges were made public just four days before the second round of the April 2014 parliamentary/presidential elections. Gruevski dismissed the charges.[49]

Public Procurement. Favoritism and a lack of transparency have continued to constitute challenges to the rule of law in Macedonia. Roughly 25 per cent of public procurement contracts have been finalized with only one company participating in the bidding.[50] Moreover, although e-auctions are required by law, officials organized such auctions in only 62 per cent of monitored procurements. "Tenders were often annulled, and in the first quarter of 2013, contracts worth about €11 million were signed without prior calls for bids."[51]

"Skopje 2014" has been the focus of persistent controversy since it was launched in 2008. The city's makeover has included the erection of the aforementioned statue of an equestrian warrior, generally understood to be Alexander the Great, the placement of eight bronze candelabras with seraphims atop the capital's Stone Bridge, the commissioning of four seventeenth-century-style galleons to float in the Vardar River, and the construction of a new government headquarters which looks strikingly like the American White House. Critics have objected to the sheer proliferation of newly erected statues and monuments in downtown Skopje as well as to the construction of neo-Grecian and neo-baroque edifices, but above all to the cost of the project. Originally estimated to cost some 80 million euros, officials at the Ministry of Culture admitted in April 2013 that the project had already cost 207 million euros. While NGOs suggested that the real cost might be more than twice that amount, many suspected that fraud and

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[49] *Die Presse* (23 April 2014), at http://diepresse.com/home/politik/aussenpolitik/1597384/print.do.

[50] Dimishkovska, "Macedonia," in *Nations in Transit 2014,* p. 8.

[51] *Ibid.*

kickbacks accounted for some of the cost.[52] Residents of Skopje have also joined the chorus of critics of the makeover project.[53]

Allegations of Abuse of Power. In January 2015, Zoran Zaev, leader of the opposition Social Democrats, reiterated that his party had obtained evidence of illegal wiretapping and other criminal wrongdoing on the part of the IMRO regime. Indeed, Zaev had been threatening for months to publish the incriminating material, allegedly in hopes of pressuring Gruevski to hold fair elections.[54] The regime responded by accusing Zaev and three other Social Democrats of plotting a coup, taking the three others (but not Zaev) into custody, and confiscating Zaev's passport.[55]

Refusing to be intimidated, Zaev began releasing a series of tape-recordings and transcripts, showing the regime involved in the theft of election materials, registering deceased citizens to vote, vote buying, voter intimidation, and cutting off the electricity to high-rise apartments where elderly people were living in order to prevent them from voting, affecting the 2011 and 2014 parliamentary elections, as well as the local

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[52] Ibid.

[53] *Balkan Insight* (31 October 2014), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/battle-for-skopje-facades-takes-off (accessed 2 November 2014).

[54] *EurAktiv* (2 February 2015; updated 9 February 2015), at www.euractiv.com/sections/enlargement/macedonia-opposition-chief-accused-staging-coup-detat-311718 (last accessed on 15 March 2015).

[55] *Deutsche Welle* (31 January 2015), at www.dw.de/macedonian-opposition-leader-accused-of-plot-to-topple-government/a-18227943 (accessed 19 February 2015); and *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (3 February 2015), at www.nzz.ch/international/europa/ausreiseverbot-fuer-den-oppositionsfuehrer-1.18474295 (accessed 12 March 2015).

elections in 2013.[56] The ruling party also misused the police and administrative apparatus to maintain its hold on power.[57]

The Media

As of 2012, Macedonia was home to twelve newspapers, eight weekly magazines, seventy-six television stations, and more than 160 radio stations, competing as well with numerous internet media.[58] Given the small size of the Macedonian market (see Box 11.3) and the central importance of advertising in sustaining the main media, it is understandable that the media are heavily dependent on political and business groups which purchase advertisements and commercials. Where private media outlets are concerned, the government is by far the largest source of advertising revenue, devoting between 0.4 per cent and 1.5 per cent of its annual budget to advertising.[59] By steering advertising to pro-government media and withholding it from media critical of the government, the ruling party, whichever has been in power, has been able to exert

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[56] *Balkan Insight* (10 March 2015), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-awaits-more-evidence-of-election-trickery (accessed 12 March 2015); and *New York Times* (10 March 2015), at www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/03/10/world/europe/ap-eu-macedonia-politics.html?_r=0 (accessed 15 March 2015).

[57] *Balkan Insight* (6 March 2015), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-tapes-reveal-blatant-election-trickery (accessed on 3 December 2015); and *New Europe* (10 March 2015), at http://neurope.eu/article/macedonian-opposition-claims-recorded-phone-calls-show-government-manipulated-3-elections/ (accessed on 30 January 2016).

[58] Dimishkovska, "Macedonia," in *Nations in Transit 2013,* p. 383.

[59] Mike Harris, "Macedonia: media freedom sliding backwards," in *Index on Censorship* (1 December 2011), at www.indexoncensorship.org/2011/12/macedonia-media-freedom-sliding-backwards/, p. 1 of 2.

powerful influence on media content. Macedonia Television is almost entirely dependent on the Assembly for its budget.

Begin Box 11.3

Box 11.3 Basic facts about Macedonia

Area: 25,713 sq. km.

Population (July 2015): 2,096,015

Capital city: Skopje, with a population in 2011 of 499,000

Ethnic groups (2002 census): Macedonian 64.2%, Albanian 25.2%, Turkish 3.9%, Roma 2.7%, Serb 1.8%, other 2.2%

Percentage of the population speaking Macedonian as their principal language: 66.5% (25.1% speak Albanian as their principal language)

Membership in religious organizations (2002 census): Macedonian Orthodox 64.8%, Islamic 33.3%, other Christian 0.4%, other and unspecified 1.5%

Literacy: 98.7%

GDP per capita (2015): US $14,000

Labor force (2014): agriculture 18.3%, industry 29.1%, services 52.6%

End Box 11.3

This is, however, not the only problem which has impacted the media. Subtle pressures, short of manipulation through advertising proceeds, have also proven effective, inducing journalists to practice a form of self-censorship in which caution figures prominently. As a result, respect for basic professional standards has been weak

in most media.[60] Those media that buck the tide and dare to offer reportage critical of the government, such as A1 television station, have been punished. Indeed, in 2010, Velija Ramkovski, the owner of A1 and its affiliated newspapers – *Shpic*, *Vreme*, and *Koha e re* – which had been critical of the IMRO–led government, was arrested and charged with money laundering, criminal conspiracy, and tax evasion. In 2011, A1 television was stripped of its broadcasting license and, the following year, Ramkovski and nineteen of his associates were convicted of the charges brought against them. Ramkovski received a thirteen-year prison sentence, while his associates were sentenced to serve prison terms ranging from two to seven years.[61] Whatever the truth of the charges, Biljana Petkovska, director of the independent Macedonia Media Institute, suggested that "the actions undertaken towards these media, for which the verdicts were given, are selective and the [government] institutions do not use the same methods in applying the laws towards all media."[62] Nor is the case of A1 television unique: in 2013, Tomislav Kezarovski, a journalist for *Nova Makedonija* and erstwhile editor of the magazine *Reporter 92*, was found guilty of having revealed the identity of a

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[60] *Southeast European Times* (22 September 2011), at www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/features/setimes/features/2011/09/22/feature-02.

[61] *Southeast European Times* (29 December 2010), at www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/features/setimes/features/2010/12/29/feature-03, p. 1 of 2; *Reporters Without Borders* (17 August 2011), at http://en.rsf.org/macedonia-disastrous-summer-for-macedonian-17-08-2011,40797.html, p. 1 of 3; and *Southeast European Times* (21 March 2012), at www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/features/setimes/features/2012/03/21/feature-03, p. 1 of 2.

[62] As quoted in Lutovska, "Media Mogul's Sentence," p. 1 of 2.

witness in a murder case, and sentenced to five-and-a-half years in prison.[63] The OSCE immediately protested the verdict.

A decade earlier, during the waning days of the first IMRO–led government, then Interior Minister Ljube Boskovski had threatened to arrest editors who were allegedly "spreading Western scenarios in order to destroy the government of [Prime Minister] Ljubčo Georgievski."[64] The threat was issued during the run-up to the parliamentary elections of 2002 and was rather transparently intended to steer the media in a direction more favorable to IMRO, which was to lose that election.[65] In a survey of Macedonia's mediascape, Vesna Šopar concluded "that everything is subordinated to politics, that everything and everyone is living 'from or for' politics, and that all values are defined by the dominance of actual politics. In this process, willingly or not, the media de facto are active players and the citizens are their most generous consumers."[66]

During the first six years of independence, no new legislation regarding the media was passed. This resulted in considerable chaos, marked inter alia by the fact that broadcast frequencies were being allocated in the absence of any new regulations. Finally, in 1997, three laws were enacted: the Law on Broadcasting Activity, the Law on Telecommunications, and the Law on the Establishment of the Public Enterprise,

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[63] *Balkan Insight* (21 October 2013), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-jails-journalist-tomislav-kezarovski, p. 1 of 2.

[64] As quoted in *Southeast European Times* (9 September 2002), at www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/tr/document/setimes/features/2002/09/020909-SVETLA-001, p. 1 of 2.

[65] See "Threats against Journalists a Few Days Before Election," in *Reporters Without Borders* (9 September 2002), at http://en.rsf.org/macedonia-threats-against-journalists-a-few-09-09-2002,03731.html, p. 1 of 1.

[66] Vesna Šopar, "The Media and Values in Macedonia between Regulation, Privatization, Concentration, Commercializatin, and Pluralization," in Ramet, Listhaug, and Simkus (eds.), *Civic and Uncivic Values in Macedonia,* p. 226.

Macedonian Radio-Television. The Law on Broadcasting was replaced with a new law in 2002, which in turn was replaced by yet another broadcasting law in 2005, which was subsequently amended seven times by September 2013.[67] As Katerina Spasovska and Iso Rusi have pointed out, the only reason for this high frequency of changes to the law was for the government to fine-tune its influence over the media.[68]

The founding of privately owned print media was made possible by the passage of a law on public information by the moribund SFRY in December 1990. The first privately owned media were established already the following year. It emerged that there were tendencies toward the creation of media monopolies involving both print and broadcast media, and in December 1999 a law regulating the limitation of competition was passed.[69] That same year, the subsidy which had hitherto been allocated to the formerly state-owned *Nova Makedonija* newspaper and certain pro-government private media was redivided, with *Nova Makedonija* now receiving half of the budget line, with the rest divided among other print media, including the independent daily newspapers *Dnevnik*, *Makedonija Denes*, and *Fakti.* In February 2003, a new privately owned newspaper, *Vreme*, was launched with a circulation of 40,000, which rose to between 80,000 and 100,000 by the following year. By contrast, *Nova Makedonija* and *Večer* – both publications of the "Nova Makedonija" publishing house – managed circulations between 5,000 and 7,000 at that time.[70]

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[67] Ibid., p. 220; and Katerina Spasovska and Iso Rusi, "From 'Chaos' to 'Order': The transition of the media in Macedonia from 1989 to 2013," in *Southeastern Europe*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (2015), pp. 44–46.

[68] Spasovska and Rusi, "From 'Chaos' to 'Order,'" pp. 48–51.

[69] Snežana Trpevska, "Macedonia," in Brankica Petković (ed.), *Media Ownership and Its Impact on Media Independence and Pluralism* (Ljubljana: Peace Institute, 2004), pp. 286, 289.

[70] Ibid., pp. 290, 297.

Regulations concerning the media remained controversial and, in December 2013, the 123-seat Assembly adopted two new laws: a Law on the Media and an Audiovisual Media Services Law. Social Democratic deputies left the chamber in protest during the vote, which was carried by IMRO and its allies. However, the following month, with journalists continuing to protest the new legislation, the ruling coalition accepted several amendments proposed by the journalists' union. Among the amendments were a provision that the union could appoint a representative to sit on the new supervisory Media Agency, and a stipulation that any future ban on specific media content should be in accord with standards set by the European Court of Human Rights.[71] With the government controlling the allocation of a tangible chunk of advertising revenue, media outlets critical of the government have found themselves strapped for funds. In 2011, three daily newspapers – *Shpic*, *Vreme*, and the Albanian-language *Koha e Re* – ceased publication due to evaporating advertising revenue and rising debts. In 2015, the World Press Freedom Index ranked Macedonia lowest among Balkan states for press freedom; among the 180 countries ranked, Macedonia was recorded in 117th place.[72]

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[71] *Balkan Insight* (26 December 2013), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonian-journalists-shun-minister-over-media-law; and "Macedonian Media Law Changes Cautiously Welcomed," in *Balkan Insight* (24 January 2014), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonian-journalists-cautious-about-media-law-change.

[72] *Balkan Insight* (12 February 2015), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-with-worst-press-freedom-in-the-balkans (accessed on 29 April 2015).

Intolerance and Interethnic Relations

In spite of nearly half a century of communism, Macedonia remains, in some ways, a traditional society. Relative to other European countries, citizens of Macedonia are roughly as "traditional" (which is to say, patriarchal) in their views of the proper view of women as citizens in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro, more patriarchal than citizens of Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia, but less so than citizens of Kosovo.[73] Survey research reported by Hasan Jashari and Albert Simkus revealed that gender role traditionalism was greater among Macedonia's Albanians than among the country's Macedonians, with the largest gap among those between the ages of twenty-one and thirty. They also found that Albanians tended to be more homophobic and less sympathetic to divorce or abortion than Macedonians. Given the well-known correlation of religiosity with patriarchal and homophobic views, it is not surprising that their research also found that Macedonia's Albanians are more religious than the country's Macedonians.[74] The same study found a very similar pattern with regard to ethnic intolerance, with Albanians less supportive of ethnically mixed marriages and more doubtful about the possibility of trust between members of different ethnic-national groups.[75]

Interethnic relations between Macedonians and Albanians improved after the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement in 2001, but the IMRO–led government,

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[73] Kristen Ringdal, Albert Simkus, and Ola Listhaug, "Macedonian Civic Values within a European Perspective," in Ramet, Listhaug, and Simkus (eds.), *Civic and Uncivic Values in Macedonia,* p. 38.

[74] Hasan Jashari and Albert Simkus, "Differences in Values within Macedonia's Macedonian-Albanian Comparisons," in Ramet, Listhaug, and Simkus (eds.), *Civic and Uncivic Values in Macedonia,* pp. 49–58.

[75] *Ibid.,* pp. 48–50.

which came to power in 2006, rekindled interethnic tensions by adopting a program which cast the Macedonians, but not the Albanians or members of the country's other ethnicities, as the bearers and inheritors of the Macedonian national tradition. The architectural makeover of Skopje, which aroused protests also among local Macedonians, proved to be particularly provocative to local Albanians. An International Crisis Group report in 2011 noted that

> inter-ethnic tensions sometimes still do turn violent. Most notably on 13 February 2011, at least 100 ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians clashed at the medieval Skopje fortress (Kala), over the building of a museum-church meant to host historical artefacts from the archaeological excavation. Hate speech was exchanged at the site and in the blogosphere, where some Facebook pages called for ethnic cleansing. When the Macedonian Academy for Arts and Sciences (MANU) published the first national encyclopedia in September 2009, protests erupted over its provocative content, including the derogative term "Šiptari" to describe Macedonian Albanian[s].[76]

Given that the country's Macedonians are, for the most part, members of the Macedonian Orthodox Church (although some are Methodists or Jews or Eastern-Rite Catholics) and that Macedonia's Albanians are overwhelmingly Muslims, inter-ethnic intolerance inevitably has an inter-confessional dimension.

In fact, inter-ethnic tensions have repeatedly been fueled by controversies and disputes about the construction of religious facilities. The country boasted 1,952 churches and 580 mosques as of October 2014, with at least fifty churches and ten

[76] *Macedonia: Ten Years after the Conflict,* pp. 14–15.

mosques under construction or renovation. This corresponds to one religious facility for every 831 residents, compared with the European average of one for every 10,000–12,000 inhabitants.[77] Although the heads of the Orthodox Church and the Islamic Community look toward erecting still more religious structures, 74.2 per cent of Orthodox Christians think that there are enough churches in Macedonia, with 20.4 per cent believing that there are too many. Among Muslims surveyed, 44.6 per cent are of the opinion that there are enough mosques, while 43.1 per cent think that there are already too many mosques in the country.[78]

With such a large number of religious facilities, some stand empty. In the municipality of Aerodrom, the central area is home to eight Orthodox churches; since local demand has been satisfied by the Church of St. Elijah, the other seven churches are permanently locked.[79] But the IMRO–led government has been interested in church construction not for religious reasons, but for reasons of nationalism. In 2009, that government proposed to construct a 30-meter-high church covered in white limestone on Macedonia Square in downtown Skopje. In March of that year, local architecture students protested that construction in that location, one of the busiest pedestrian areas in the city, would result in serious congestion. Local religious-minded persons rejected the arguments of the architecture students and violence broke out between the two groups. Prime Minister Gruevski intervened in the controversy, siding with the religious group and accusing the architecture students of being inspired by the opposition Social

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[77] *Balkan Insight* (1 October 2014), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/cross-and-crescent-divide-up-macedonia, p. 1 of 4.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

Democratic Party. After this, the church came to be known as "Gruevski's church."[80] The Islamic Community entered the fray by demanding permission to construct a mosque on the same square – a prospect which would likely only have magnified the problem of congestion. As construction of the church got underway – albeit a short distance from the square – rumors circulated that the newly elected Social Democratic mayor of Skopje, Andrej Zernovski, planned to order the demolition and removal of the not-yet-completed church. Several hundred government supporters surrounded the mayor's office, breaking windows and shouting in protest. The mayor denied having entertained any such plans.[81]

The Islamic Community of Macedonia has been especially rankled by the project to build a museum-church in the style of a medieval church on the premises of Skopje's old fortress. Izet Mexhiti (DUI), the mayor of the Skopje municipality of Cair, criticized the project, insisting that Albanians had also contributed to the cultural traditions of Macedonia.[82] Christian cultural hegemony has also been asserted in other ways. For example, in 2001, during the first IMRO government (under Ljubčo Georgievski), a 66-meter-high cross was erected amid controversy on the top of Mount Vodno, overlooking Skopje. In spite of the objections of local Muslims, the second IMRO government approved the erection of a second giant cross (33 meters high) in the Skopje area in 2014. Local Albanian Muslims objected that the cross was an anti-Albanian and anti-Muslim symbol. But Todor Petrov, head of the World Macedonian Congress, the NGO

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[80] *Balkan Insight* (14 May 2012), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/construction-of-controversial-skopje-church-begins, p. 1 of 1.

[81] *Balkan Insight* (10 June 2013), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/violence-over-a-church-continues-in-macedonian-capital, p. 1 of 2.

[82] *Balkan Insight* (2 February 2011), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonian-ethnic-relations-put-to-the-test, p. 1 of 1.

backing the project, replied that insofar as some Albanians were Christians, the cross belonged as much to Albanian national culture as to Macedonian national culture.[83] He did not explain, however, how Albanian *Muslims* might accept the cross as part of their traditions.

Homophobia and Gender Inequality

Ironically, the single notable issue on which the heads of the Orthodox and Islamic faiths – nominally champions of love, charity, and brotherhood – could agree has been on a proposal to amend the Constitution to define marriage as the union of a man and a woman. In 2010, the heads of the Macedonian Orthodox Church and the Islamic Community of Macedonia joined the heads of the local Eastern-Rite Catholic, Methodist, and Jewish communities in giving their formal backing to a proposed amendment to that effect. Archbishop Stefan, head of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, urged that "[n]o one should be afraid of traditional and correct views regarding marriage."[84] Four years later, after consolidating their majority in the Assembly, IMRO deputies approved the constitutional ban on same-sex unions, thereby initiating the process of amending the Constitution. Macedonian President Ivanov commented: "Our system discriminates against no one. Homosexuals stigmatise themselves and think they are in an underprivileged position."[85] The amendment, defining marriage as a union between a

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[83] *Balkan Insight* (26 June 2014), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-s-giant-cross-not-a-provocation-initiator-says, p. 1 of 4.

[84] As quoted in *Balkan Insight* (31 December 2010), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonian-clerics-attempt-curbing-same-sex-marriages, p. 1 of 1.

[85] As quoted in "Macedonia: Parliament Approves Constitutional Same-Sex Marriage Ban," *Pink News* (16 July 2014), at www.pinknews.co.uk/2014/07/16/macedonia-

man and a woman, was passed by Macedonian legislators in January 2015 by a vote of seventy-two to four. At the same time, lawmakers refused to amend anti-discrimination legislation to prohibit discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, leaving not only gays and lesbians, but also transsexuals, unprotected under the law.

In June 2013, a group of young thugs virtually destroyed the LGBT center in Skopje; two years later, the police had still not apprehended the culprits.[86] The building had been targeted previously, on 24 October 2012, when the center first opened its doors, and was attacked once again exactly two years later, when twenty hooded ruffians went on a rampage to break up the center's celebration of its second anniversary.[87] However, rather than seeking to teach youngsters what is wrong with hate and violence, Skopje's Sts. Cyril and Methodius University established an Institute for Family Studies in 2014, in order to promote traditional "family values."[88] These developments only seemed to confirm the low rating which Macedonia had received in 2012 from the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, ILGA Europe, when it was ranked the worst offender against gay rights among Balkan

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parliament-approves-constitutional-same-sex-marriage-ban/, p. 1 of 1. For further discussion of the situation of gays and lesbians in Macedonia, see Slavcho Dimitrov, "The Triumphant Distribution of the Heteronormative Sensible: The Case of Sexual Minorities in Transitional Macedonia, 1991–2012," in Christine M. Hassenstab and Sabrina P. Ramet (eds.), *Gender (In)equality and Gender Politics in Southeastern Europe: A question of justice* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

[86] *Balkan Insight* (26 June 2015), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/skopje-pride-week-takes-protest-tones (accessed on 27 June 2015).

[87] *Balkan Insight* (24 October 2014), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-hooligans-crash-lgbt-celebration (accessed on 22 December 2014).

[88] *Balkan Insight* (3 June 2014), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-defines-divorce-homosexuality-as-deviation (accessed on 10 June 2014).

states. Indeed, Macedonia was the only country in Southeastern Europe to be categorized in the "red zone of worst offenders, among 13 other states."[89]

Where gender inequality is concerned, by contrast, there has been some progress, even if it has been slow in coming. Specifically, after receiving candidate status for EU membership in 2005, the Macedonian legislature adopted a Law on Labor Relations the following year, mandating equal treatment for women and men in hiring, work conditions, and wages. Four years later, the legislature passed further laws to protect women against discrimination.[90] Taking stock of Macedonia's legislative progress since independence, an EU policy brief (issued in 2013) reported that "the Republic of Macedonia has made significant progress in the field of gender equality … In the last six years the country has achieved evident progress in the field of gender equality, but it is still lagging behind the EU's targets."[91] Macedonia was also commended in 2014 for having the highest percentage of women MPs among post-socialist countries in the Balkans.[92]

But that's not the whole picture. To begin with, in spite of laws dictating equal treatment, women have been systematically paid less than men in Macedonia, earning

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[89] *Balkan Insight* (16 February 2012), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-placed-in-the-red-zone-for-lgbt-rights (accessed on 28 January 2016).

[90] Mileva Gjurovska, "Gender Equality in the Republic of Macedonia: Between Tradition and Gender Mainstreaming Policies," in Hassenstab and Ramet (eds.), *Gender (In)equality and Gender Politics,* p. 141.

[91] Ana Mickovska Raleva and Tamara Dimitrijevska, "Gender Equality in EU: How Does Macedonia Compare?," Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, *EU Policy Briefs,* No. 5 (March 2013), pp. 1, 2, at www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_33830-1522-1-30.pdf?130318153058 [accessed on 27 January 2016].

[92] *Balkan Insight* (11 March 2014), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-leads-balkans-in-women-mps (accessed on 24 April 2014).

an average of 78 per cent of what men earn. Then there is the continued prevalence of domestic violence, with 39.4 per cent of Macedonian women reporting in 2012 that they had experienced some form of domestic violence in the previous twelve months.[93] Mention should also be made of a new rulebook for abortions, issued by the Health Ministry in 2014, which requires that women seeking abortion must first attend "counseling" sessions, during which they are pressured to carry their fetuses to term.[94] Finally, where patriarchal values are concerned, Macedonia ranks among the lower half of European countries rated in the 2008 European Values Study,[95] with patriarchal values being more deeply entrenched in small towns and villages than in Skopje and other large cities.[96]

Political Transformation II: April 2014–January 2017

According to official results of the April 2014 parliamentary elections, the incumbent conservative party, IMRO, headed by incumbent prime minister, Nikola Gruevski,

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[93] See Milka Kazandziska, Marija Risteska, and Verena Schmidt, *The Gender Gap in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* (International Labour Organization, 2012), at www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/–europe/–ro-geneva/–sro-budapest/documents/publication/wcms_180637.pdf (accessed on 27 January 2016); and "Violence Against Women in Macedonia," *Stop Violence Against Women: A project of the Advocates for Human Rights,* at www.stopvaw.org/macedonia (accessed on 28 January 2016).

[94] *Balkan Insight* (10 December 2014), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-abortion-rulebook-emotionaly-blackmails-women (accessed on 22 December 2014).

[95] Kristen Ringdal, "Gender Roles in Southeastern Europe," in Hassenstab and Ramet (eds.), *Gender (In)equality and Gender Politics,* p. 325.

[96] Albert Simkus, "Differences in Attitudes towards Gender Roles within and between the Countries of the Western Balkans," in Hassenstab and Ramet (eds.), *Gender (In)equality and Gender Politics,* pp. 347–351.

attracted 43 per cent of the vote – well ahead of the second-place Social Democrats, who reportedly polled just 25.3 per cent.[97] The incumbent president, Gjorge Ivanov, also of the IMRO–DPMNU, was returned to the president's office for a second five-year term. On the basis of the official results of the parliamentary contest, Gruevski's party laid claim to sixty-one of the 123 seats and formed a coalition government with the DUI, the Socialist Party of Macedonia, and the Turkish party. Outraged by the ruling party's electoral theft, thirty-three opposition MPs submitted formal resignations to the speaker of the parliament the following month as a token of protest. Nonetheless, with two-thirds of the seats still filled, the Macedonian parliament still had a quorum and continued to function.

In February 2015, Zoran Zaev, leader of the opposition Social Democrats, held a press conference at which he revealed transcripts of phone conversations between Gruevski, secret police chief Saso Mijalkov, Minister of Police Gordana Jankuloska, and other high-ranking figures in the government. Zaev played excerpts from the tapes and claimed that the tapes and transcripts proved that leading politicians in the opposition, NGO activists, journalists, university professors, religious leaders, and judges had all had their phones tapped, on orders from Gruevski and Mijalkov.[98] The ruling IMRO9–DPMNU dismissed the charges, and characterized Zaev as "a puppet of foreign services."[99] By the end of February 2015, Zaev had released a fifth batch of wiretapped

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[97] *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (28 April 2014), at www.nzz.ch/konservative-gewinnen-wahlen-in-mazedonien-1.18291879 (accessed on 11 October 2014).

[98] *Balkan Insight* (9 February 2015), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/eavesdropping-bombshell-explodes-in-macedonia (accessed on 21 February 2015).

[99] As quoted in *Balkan Insight* (10 February 2015), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/foreigners-blamed-for-macedonia-wire-tapping-scandal (accessed on 21 February 2015).

conversations, with further releases and revelations during March. Among other things, the conversations implicated the regime in eavesdropping on the telephone conversations of more than 20,000 persons, including more than 100 journalists, interfering in the work of the judiciary, and even discussing the bulldozing of a political opponent's house, with the idea of replacing it with a public park.[100] The covertly recorded tapes which were released on 2 March 2015 were particularly embarrassing for the regime, in that they included a voice identified as that of Finance Minister Zoran Stavreski accusing the regime of financial mismanagement and complaining that he could not find funds sufficient "to cover the most basic expenses in the budget for wages and running costs," while 5 per cent of the budget was being allocated to cultural projects, such as the remodeling of Skopje.[101] By 5 March, the scandal and attendant crisis had become so serious that the European Union was offering to arbitrate. But after Johannes Hahn, the EU Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement, called on Macedonian authorities to investigate opposition claims, the government shot back by lodging criminal charges against Zaev and three of his associates, alleging that they had been gathering intelligence to compromise the government in "an attempt to threaten the constitutional order," adding that this was tantamount to an attempt at an

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[100] *Balkan Insight* (3 March 2015), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/fin-min-covert-tapes-falsely-portray-macedonian-economy; *Balkan Insight* (25 February 2015), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/opposition-journalists-tapped-en-masse-in-macedonia; *Balkan Insight* (15 February 2015), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/opposition-macedonia-govt-appointed-judges-influenced-verdicts; and *Balkan Insight* (27 February 2015), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/gruevski-had-opponent-s-building-flattened-opposition (all four articles accessed on 15 March 2015).

[101] *Balkan Insight* (2 March 2015), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/conversations-reveal-irrational-government-spending-opposition (accessed on 15 March 2015).

"undemocratic seizure of power."[102] As if in reply, Stevo Pendarovski, the Social Democratic candidate for the presidency in 2014, and four other opposition politicians filed lawsuits against the government, alleging that they had been victims of illegal wiretapping. While the EU offered to arbitrate the escalating dispute, Zaev continued to release more tapes and more transcripts, calling on the government to resign.[103] In May 2015, in a disclosure which was particularly embarrassing to the government, Zaev released wiretapped conversations showing that the ruling party had been awarding profitable contracts to firms ready to pay kick-backs.[104]

By this point, with violent clashes on the streets of Kumanovo,[105] the secret police chief and two other ministers stepped down, even as some 10,000 people took to the streets of Skopje to demand that Gruevski and his cabinet resign.[106] Negotiations got underway between the government and the opposition, with the EU enlargement commissioner serving as mediator; by mid-July 2015, the two sides had agreed on an interim government and on the appointment of an independent committee to

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[102] Interior Ministry spokesperson Ivo Kotevski, as quoted in *Deutsche Welle* (31 January 2015), at www.dw.com/en/macedonian-opposition-leader-accused-of-plot-to-topple-government/a-18227943 (accessed on 19 February 2015).

[103] *Balkan Insight* (5 March 2015), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/brussels-macedonia-needs-and-will-get-eu-help (accessed on 5 March 2015); and *Balkan Insight* (10 March 2015), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-awaits-more-evidence-of-election-trickery (accessed on 12 March 2015).

[104] *Balkan Insight* (14 May 2015), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-tapes-riling-party-collected-racket (accessed on 14 May 2015).

[105] *tagesschau* (10 May 2015), at www.tagesschau.de/ausland/mazedonien-105.html (accessed on 17 June 2015).

[106] *Die Welt* (Berlin), 13 May 2015, at www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article140874448/Geheimdienstchef-und-Innenministerin-treten-zurueck.html; and *Die Welt* (18 May 2015), at www.welt.de/print/welt_kompakt/print_politik/article141045017/Mazedonien-Zehntausende-protestieren.html (both accessed on 28 June 2015).

investigate the allegations of electoral fraud, government involvement in corruption, and illegal wiretapping. After a delay, the parliament approved a reshuffle of the cabinet, in which the Social Democrats would be allowed to appoint three deputy ministers.[107] Then, in January 2016, Gruevski announced that he would step down as prime minister and call early elections for April. But even as this went forward, the Office of the Special Prosecution, tasked with investigating wrong-doing on the part of the ruling party, complained that it was facing "serious financial and administrative obstacles to its work," with its funding delayed for more than twenty days. In this and other ways, the authorities were said to be sabotaging the work of the special prosecutor.[108]

Even as Macedonians went through this deep political crisis, hundreds of thousands of Syrian, Afghan, Mali, Kosovar, and other refugees and migrants walked across their country over a period of months. Already in August 2015, Macedonian authorities declared a state of emergency because of the seemingly endless stream of refugees and migrants, most of them hoping to reach Germany.[109] In November, Macedonian authorities began erecting a barbed wire fence along the border with Greece, in hopes of slowing the flow of migrants[110] – but they kept coming, many of them crawling under the fence. For five months, Macedonians took no effective action,

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[107] *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* (11 November 2015), at www.rferl.org/content/macedonia-new-government-reshuffle-gruevski-zaev/27358611.html (accessed on 15 November 2015).

[108] *Balkan Insight* (25 January 2016), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/pressure-mounts-on-macedonia-s-special-prosecution-01-25-2016 (accessed on 26 January 2016).

[109] *tagesschau* (20 August 2015), at www.tagesschau.de/mazedonien-fluechtlinge-101.html (accessed on 30 January 2016).

[110] *tagesschau* (28 November 2015), at www.tagesschau.de/ausland/grenzzaun-mazedonien-101.html (accessed on 30 January 2016).

then tried to limit the flow to refugees from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and finally, on 27 January 2016, sealed its southern border, leaving 2,600 persons stranded on the Greek side of the border,[111] only to reopen the border the next day.[112]

Meanwhile, with the opposition demanding more time to prepare and under pressure from the European Union and the United States, the government postponed the parliamentary elections which had been scheduled for 24 April until 5 June. But, amid allegations that the electoral roll included the names of dead persons as well as completely fictional persons, the leading opposition parties announced that they would not offer candidates for the 5 June elections.[113] After a delay, the parliament announced, on 18 May 2016, that the elections would be postponed once more – to the end of August.[114] Shortly thereafter, responding to public pressure, President Ivanov retracted his pardons of fifty-six persons; among those he had pardoned were Nikola Gruevski, who had stepped down as prime minister earlier in the year, and former transport minister Mile Janakieski.[115]

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[111] ABC News (27 January 2016), at http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-german-cabinet-oks-crackdown-alien-criminals-36542133 (accessed on 30 January 2016).

[112] *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Munich), 28 January 2016, at www.sueddeutsche.de/news/politik/migration-mazedonien-oeffnet-wieder-grenzuebergang-zu-griechenland-dpa.urn-newsml-dpa-com-20090101-160128-99-286078 (accessed on 1 February 2016).

[113] *Balkan Insight* (12 April 2016), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-electoral-roll-clean-up-doubted-04-11-2016 (accessed on 4 August 2016).

[114] *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (18 May 2016), at www.nzz.ch/international/europa/krise-in-mazedonien-berlin-uebernimmt-krisenmanagement-ld.83266 (accessed on 4 August 2016); and *Handelsblatt* (18 May 2016), at www.handelsblatt.com/politik/international/mazedonien-parlament-sagt-wahlen-ab-chaos-droht/13613000.html (accessed on 5 August 2016).

[115] *Balkan Insight* (27 May 2016), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonian-president-partially-withdraws-pardoning-05-27-2016 (accessed on 8 June 2016); and

Macedonia's Electoral Commission continued its work checking the electoral rolls. But, as the *Sächsische Zeitung* reported on 4 August 2016, according to official statistics, Macedonia had at the time 1.8 million registered voters in a total population of 2.1 million persons. The Dresden newspaper expressed doubts that only 300,000 residents of Macedonia were younger than eighteen years of age (the age required for voting rights).[116] In this context, and bearing in mind the accusations of corruption and vote-fixing, the postponements of the elections, Ivanov's attempt to pardon various politicians, mostly members of his own party, IMRO, and the bad economic situation, it was not surprising that a nationwide opinion poll about this time showed that the proportion of respondents who characterized Macedonia as "peaceful and stable" had plummeted from 19 per cent in January 2016 to just 5 per cent five months later. Some 58 per cent told pollsters that they felt that Macedonia was going in the wrong direction.[117]

Parliamentary elections were finally held on 11 December 2016. The Macedonian State Election Commission announced that the conservative IMRO had won 38.06 per cent of the vote again 36.69 per cent of the vote going to the Social Democrats; the remaining votes were divided among Macedonia's four Albanian parties. Both IMRO

Balkan Insight (10 June 2016), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonian-special-prosecution-suspects-former-pm-gruevski-06-10-2016 (accessed on 18 June 2016); and *Balkan Insight* (20 July 2016), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-parties-renew-crisis-deal-07-20-2016 (accessed on 4 August 2016).

[116] *Sächsische Zeitung* (Dresden), 4 August 2016, at www.sz-online.de/nachrichten/wahlfaelschungen-gehoeren-auf-dem-balkan-zum-guten-ton-3459573.html (accessed on 5 August 2016).

[117] The poll was conducted by the International Republican Institute. See *Balkan Insight* (10 June 2016), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/survey-macedonia-crisis-escalates-06-09-2016 (accessed on 27 June 2016).

and the Socialist Democrats claimed victory, with the latter, backed by the Albanian party, Besa, also alleging voting irregularities at 16 polling stations.[118] With this, IMRO was awarded 51 seats in the 120-seat parliament, while the Social Democrats were awarded 49 seats. Realizing that they were in the position to be king-makers and thus to dictate terms, three of the four political parties representing Macedonia's Albanian community met to coordinate strategy, drawing up a resolution specifying their demands as the price for participation in any coalition. These demands included: an amendment to the constitution to define both Macedonian and Albanian as official languages throughout the republic; "the adoption of a resolution in parliament condemning the genocide against Albanians in Macedonia during the 1912-1956 period"; establishment of a new ministry to promote social equality among all of the country's citizens; and a serious program to promote economic development in Albanian-inhabited regions of the country.[119]

On 9 January 2017, President Ivanov invited former prime minister Gruevski,, as head of IMRO, to form a new government. With 51 IMRO deputies elected to the parliament, Gruevski needed to make a coalition involving at least ten more deputies; this made his former coalition partner, the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), which had won ten seats, the ideal partner. Of the other Albanian parties, the Besa

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[118] *Deutsche Welle* (12 December 2016), at http://www.dw.com/en/ruling-conservatives-win-narrowly-in-macedonian-elections/a-36730629 (accessed on 14 January 2017); *tageschau* (12 December 2016), at http://www.tagesschau.de/ausland/wahl-parlament-mazedonien-101.html (accessed on 13 January 2017); and *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* (14 December 2016), at http://www.rferl.org/a/macedonian-opposition-social-democrats-challenge-conservative-vmro-election-win-gruevski-zaev/28175085.html (accessed on 14 January 2017).

[119] *Balkan Insight* (30 December 2016), at http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/tirana-gathers-leaders-of-albanian-macedonian-parties-12-30-2016, and *Balkan Insight* (8 January 2017), at http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/albanianians-parties-in-macedonia-seven-conditions-for-the-new-government-01-07-2017 --both accessed on 13 January 2017.

Movement won five seats, the Alliance for Albanians three seats, and the Democratic Party of Albanians two seats. The latter three parties all ruled out entering into a coaltion with Gruevski's party. With the former prime minister thus needing the DUI's support in order to form a government, Ali Ahmeti, leader of the DUI, was in a position to play "hard ball". Speaking on 11 January 2017, Ahmeti insisted that the price of his party entering into a coalition with IMRO was that Gruevski accept the demands prepared by the three Albanian parties. Alternatively, Ahmeti suggested, he was prepared to enter into negotiations with the Social Democrats or join a "government of experts" or stand aside, forcing new elections to be called.[120] On 19 January, the Office of the Special Prosecutor – in a politically telling move – dropped all charges pending against Social Democratic leader Zaev, who had already been calling on the Albanians to reject a coalition with Gruevski and form a coalition with his own Social Democratic Party.[121] As negotiations between Gruevski and Ahmeti dragged on, it seemed at one point that the two sides were close to an agreement on the terms for a new coalition.[122] When Gruevski failed to meet the deadline to reach a coalition agreement (30 January), most observers expected President Ivanov to give Zaev a chance to form a

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[120] *Balkan Insight* (11 January 2017), at http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonian-main-albanian-party-mulls-coalition-with-gruevski-01-11-2017 (accessed on 13 January 2017); and *Večer* (Skopje), 14 January 2017, at http://vecer.mk/makedonija/moeto-jazhe-e-evropsko (accessed on 14 January 2017).

[121] *Balkan Insight* (19 January 2017), at http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-drops-coup-charges-against-opposition-leader-01-19-2017 (accessed on 19 January 2017); and *Blic* (Belgrade), 23 December 2016, at http://www.blic.rs/vesti/svet/zaev-sdsm-zove-albanske-partije-u-koaliciju-albanci-pripremili-spisak-zahteva/52kzqvr (accessed on 21 January 2017).

[122] *Večer* (29 January 2017), at http://vecer.mk/makedonija/ahmeti-bara-kloalicija-so-vmro-dpmne and *Večer* (29 January 2017), at http://vesti.mk/read/news/11845345/4134102/dui-blisku-do-odluka-da-koalicira-so-vmro-dpmne -- both accessed on 29 January 2017, See also *Balkan Insight* (26 January 2017), at http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-s-dui-party-sends-conflicting-tones-about-new-govt--01-26-2017 (accessed on 26 January 2017).

government.[123] Zaev appealed to President Ivanov to grant him a mandate, and expressed confidence that he could secure a working majority in the parliament.[124] Opposing that outcome, Aleksandar Klimovski, a professor of constitutional law in Skopje, urged Ivanov to desist from such a move – which would mean calling for fresh elections.[125]

Conclusion

Throughout post-communist Central and Southeastern Europe one finds the following tendencies, in varying degrees ranging from slight to severe: the emergence of two dominant parties (or even just one) within the framework of a multi-party system; corrupt privatization, in which a nouveau riche class emerges, alongside growing numbers of poor and unemployed; an increase in both organized and petty crime;[126] the growth of political influence in the media; and persistent problems of corruption and intolerance, dwarfing anything found in communist times. In all of these respects, Macedonia is no exception, although its performance in some of these areas clearly places the country among the poorer performers both within the Central and Southeast European region as a whole and among the Yugoslav successor states more specifically. But in the case of Macedonia, the combination of the loss of the Yugoslav market together with its federal subsidies, the economic impact of the War of Yugoslav

[123] *Die Zeit* (30 January 2017), at http://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2017-01/mazedonien-nikolai-gruevski-konservative-sozialdemokraten-albanische-minderheitenpartei (accessed on 30 January 2017).
[124] *Blic* (30 January 2017), at http://www.blic.rs/vesti/svet/makedonska-kriza-zaev-uveren-da-moze-da-obezbedi-parlamentarnu-vecinu/ymfyf35 (accessed on 31 January 2017).
[125] *Kurir* (Skopje), at http://vesti.mk/read/news/11857009/4138627/klimovski-ivanov-ne-mozhe-da-go-dodeli-mandatot-na-drug-osven-na-koalicijata-shto-dobila-najmnogu-glasovi (accessed on 30 January 2017).
[126] See Čačeva, "Criminal Activity during the Period," pp. 27–37.

Succession, the Greek economic embargoes, Greece's blockage of Macedonia's admission to both the EU and NATO, and the sheer venality of IMRO has placed Macedonia in an especially difficult position.

This is not to excuse those public figures who have engaged in corrupt practices, fanned the flames of homophobic intolerance, supported Orthodox Christian hegemonism, put pressure on the mass media to support their policies, or blackmailed state functionaries to vote "correctly." But while members of both dominant parties – the Social Democratic Party and the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization–Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity – may be found culpable on several counts, the record suggests that the latter party, IMRO, especially in its post-2006 incarnation, has been more deeply involved in corruption than the Social Democrats had been during their terms in power and more involved in manipulating the media. Moreover, homophobia and Orthodox Christian hegemonism are part and parcel of IMRO's concept of Macedonian national culture, while those negative features are largely foreign to the Social Democratic Party.

The symbiosis between the political and business elites – a feature also of other countries both in the post-communist region and elsewhere – is also characteristic of Macedonia's post-Yugoslav reality. At this stage, it is not possible, thus, to claim that Macedonia is building democracy. Where the Copenhagen Criteria demanded that Macedonia, as a candidate for EU membership, achieve "stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities," we find instead elections marred by the manipulation of voters and voting "irregularities," high levels of corruption, disregard for the sensitivities of Muslims and other non-Christians, and absolute contempt on the part of IMRO as well as of the

leading religious organizations for the rights of sexual minorities. Moreover, whether Macedonia may be considered to have achieved "a functioning market economy" is open to question, given the pervasiveness of corruption and continued high levels of unemployment and poverty. Not surprisingly, some Macedonians have decided to leave their homeland behind. Between January 2010 and "the end of 2013, 58,713 citizens of Macedonia obtained permission to stay in or become citizens of EU countries."[127] Officials expressed concern that the loss of educated Macedonians amounted to a brain drain.

What Macedonia has built in the years since 1991 is a corrupt, partly authoritarian oligarchical system, in which a program of nationalist-inspired "antiquization"[128] was designed in part in hopes of distracting the public from thinking about Macedonia's more pressing challenges. *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* claimed, in April 2014, that Nikola Gruevski had turned the country into an "authoritarian semi-democracy." But, as has been emphasized throughout this chapter, the roots of Macedonia's present political and economic syndrome must be traced back to 1991 – some might even suggest tracing it back to communist times. What is clear is that, in conditions of widespread corruption, institutions of government are weak and are converted into instruments of the dominant political party and its associated business elite.[129] Under the circumstances, Macedonia's prospects for building a liberal democracy in the foreseeable future do not look bright.

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[127] *Balkan Insight* (1 February 2016), at www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/eurostat-data-reveal-exodus-of-macedonians-01-29-2016 (accessed on 1 February 2016])

[128] See Anastas Vangeli, "Nation-Building Ancient Macedonian Style: The Origins and the Effects of the So-Called Antiquization in Macedonia," in *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (January 2011), esp. pp. 14–15 and 25–26.

[129] *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (23 April 2014), at www.nzz.ch/aktuel/startseite/der-kleine-diktator-1.18288391, p. 1 of 5.