

9.b. The Progress of the ‘Ohrid Process’ in Macedonia

Petar Atanasov

Most of the analyses of the Macedonian conflict in 2001 begin or end with the conclusion that the Republic of Macedonia is not the same state after the inaction of the ‘Framework Agreement’²⁰⁰. Whether this is more objective or more subjective attitude is very hard to figure out, having in mind that Macedonia is still constitutionally a unitary state. Things changed, would be the shortest conclusion. Another point is that the emphasis in almost all of the analyses is on the questions what and how it happened (chronology of events and visual effects), not why it happened, with certain explanation of the ‘genuine’ ideology of the ‘rebels’. Maybe the reason for this is that there were many direct actors, and most of them did not give precise and objective statements and arguments concerning the propaganda war aimed to ‘earn’ support from the International Community.

What versus why happened?

Thus, one of the main methodologies for reviewing the ‘Ohrid Process’ is the usage of the analyses of the conflict management and the post-conflict management but not the analysis of ‘genuine’ factors that led to the conflict²⁰¹. This is important standpoint for our analysis. To show this avoidance, let me quote, for instance, the statement of the current President of the Republic of Macedonia, Branko Crvenkovski, on the question ‘what exactly happened in Macedonia in 2001?’: ‘We are still missing the integral answer on that question. Very often we hear very simplified judgments, which are false. Some claim that in 2001 we suffered aggression from the UN protectorate Kosovo. But this statement loses

²⁰⁰ Signed on 13 of August 2001 in Ohrid, by the leaders of the four main political parties in Republic of Macedonia (two Macedonian and two Albanian) and two special international envoys, one from EU and one from USA. Also known as the Ohrid Agreement.

²⁰¹ The most common label in domestic theorising for the Macedonian crisis is ‘the conflict’, even though other labels are also used: armed conflict, the war in 2001, ethnic conflict, etc.

the fact that in spite that many NLA members were trained and had logistical support from Kosovo, they are our citizens, Albanians from Macedonia. We also hear that in 2001 armed conflict happened for achieving human rights. If the rights we are talking about are those that became essence of the Framework Agreement, I do not see any of those as reason to take arms and take human lives. Serious and integral analysis for 2001 is still not made²⁰². This is political statement with the clear intention not to recommend digging up the old wounds but to look to the future. Especially in a society burdened with lots of old and new problems. Even some of the serious analysts confirm the thesis, that 'up to today, we have no definition of what exactly happened in 2001 – war, conflict, military crisis or something else? Some tidy military analysts will say that direct military actions lasted not more than four hours in total'²⁰³.

However, there are a few analyses that at least try to figure out the very roots of the conflict. Let us consider some of them. 'The deterioration of the situation in Macedonia in 2001 was provoked by more elements of which two are crucial: inefficient political ruling with elements of corruption on all levels of the society and the regional (direct) influence of the Kosovo militant nationalism. The selective analyses stress one of the two elements'²⁰⁴. Precisely, some of the analysis stresses the second element. 'Republic of Macedonia was confronted with real crisis that was imposed and has aim to disintegrate the state. Open aggression upon Macedonia started with the accumulation of arms in the part where the Albanian population live in western Macedonia, waiting for opportunity to start with actions for fulfilling of in advanced imagined goals'²⁰⁵. Another one, went further, stressing that 'the ethnic conflict in Macedonia is part of a long time planned territorial pretensions and aspirations, and

²⁰² Interview of the President of the Republic of Macedonia Branko Crvenkovski published on the 31 of December 2004, for the daily 'VREME'.

²⁰³ Article of Professor Biljana Vankovska from the University of Skopje in the daily 'Dnevnik', no. 2664, 22/23 of January 2005, <http://www.dnevnik.com.mk/>.

²⁰⁴ P. Atanasov, Multiculturalism as Theory, Policy and Practice (Skopje: Evro-Balkan Press 2003) 132.

²⁰⁵ T. Gocevski (ed.), Ethnic Coexistence in the Post-conflict Period (Skopje: Macedonian Center for Peace and Euro Atlantic Integration, Foundation Open Society Institute 2003) 115.

have the root from the still actual great state dreams, typical for the Balkans. It seems that the demands for bigger human and ethnic rights, with the basis similar as other minority cases in the world, is only a cover for other plans and demands'²⁰⁶. Yet, another, argue that 'if we look retrospectively of the development of the events in whole year, we may conclude that generally the crisis in Macedonia came as a result of the attacks by terrorist groups from Kosovo'²⁰⁷.

We may add that the general discourse in the conflict analyses, more often than not, includes: terrorists and criminals, ethnic cleansing, fight for territories and human rights struggle. Concerning the first mentioned element in this paragraph (inefficient political ruling), one of the analyses, from the Albanian point of view, stresses that 'the overall activities of then Albanian participants in the government (DPA²⁰⁸), especially in the part concerning the rights and needs of their fellows (Albanians) according to some circles of Macedonian Albanians and those abroad, was not on the needed level and in compliance with the general conditions in the country and the trends in this domain'²⁰⁹ – finding the reason for the conflict in the Albanian-Albanian sphere. This, together with the non-efficient 'Macedonian leaders', not just in 'relaxed' inter-ethnic relations and completely ethnicized politics (the latter is benefit from all the political governments since 1991), but also in bad results in other areas (economy, corruption, illegal trafficking of arms and drugs), made the state vulnerable for Kosovo 'influence', but, also, made possible other damages from the bad governance (for instance, inefficient state institutions). The excuses for all of these, unfortunately, one cannot search in

²⁰⁶ J. Talevski, M. Milenkovski, 'The northern border and the conflict in the Republic of Macedonia', Contemporary Macedonian Defence, III: 5 (2003), 55.

²⁰⁷ V. Buchkovski, 'Macedonia step ahead before exiting the crises', Contemporary Macedonian Defence, II: 4 (2001), 85. (Minister of Defence in the Great Coalition government in 2001)

²⁰⁸ Democratic Party of Albanians, led by Arben Xaferi, signed on the Framework Agreement. DPA was then in the coalition government with the VMRO-DPMNE – Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization-Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity, lead by Ljupcho Georgievski, then Prime Minister and also signer of the Framework Agreement.

²⁰⁹ Z. Nacev, 'The nature and the characteristics of the conflict in Republic of Macedonia manifested in 2001', Contemporary Macedonian Defence, III: 7 (2003), 23.

the catastrophic situation that Macedonia was confronted with for a decade (the issue of the name, the Greek embargo, the UN sanctions towards FRY, regional organized crime corridors), together with the establishment of weak and poor state. But these kinds of analyses are rare, at least in the domestic circles.

Why the roots of the conflict are so important? If you are sick, you need a proper diagnosis, then the cure. Here, we have the cure (the Ohrid Agreement) without the proper diagnosis, at least not publicly known one. Unfortunately, again, the wrong cure may cause death. Absurd, but it is true. In this way, with all of the constitutional changes in the society as a product of the conflict, occur risks for its internal (ethnic) disintegration, instead of national integration. With heavy emphasis on the 'ethnic communities that are not in majority' (one of the main introduced categories), it seems that the Framework Agreement, opposite of the official declarations, aims to deconstruct the Macedonian multiethnic fabric in simple ownership – Macedonia as a state that belongs to the Macedonians and the Albanians. This will certainly ruin the nation-building process (nation as a civic category) and centuries long multicultural practices. More importantly, with the promotion of the culture of violence in 2001 (usage of violent means), with the devastation of the sensitive ethnic balance and the intensification of the ethnic intolerance, it seems that the Macedonian society is definitely not more stable and prosperous. So, the paradox goes, analyzing the progress of the 'Ohrid Process' would not mean that we are analyzing the progress of the state. Macedonia needed reforms, badly. Exactly because it did little in many areas (as we have shown) it paid the price. The question 'who benefited more from the armed conflict', maybe would answer the crucial question in the whole case. And the answer is clear – just for the Albanians and their national interests, regionally. Despite with all the security risks it bears. All told, the Macedonian society would have become more democratic and prosperous *if* the changes occurred through the evolution pathways, not through the destructive violent means. And that is exactly against one of the principles of the Framework Agreement. But it is here and it is ours, and it is in the Constitution. No way back.

The Results and the Consequences

The Framework Agreement starts with five basic principles. The first and the fourth refers to the throwing away the usage of the violence for political purposes and securing constitutionally based rights that fulfils the basic needs of the citizens in accordance with international standards. The second, refers to non-existence of the territorial solutions for ethnic questions, the third, that the multiethnic character of the Macedonian society must be preserve in the public life, and the fifth, that the development of the local government will improve the respect for the *identity of the communities*²¹⁰. In the wider framework, these principles should have overcome the social inequalities of the different ethnic communities in the equitable representations in the institutions of the state, protect minorities from the Macedonian cultural dominance and raise the political power of the non-majority communities (on national and local level). The most of it is addressed for the Albanian demands for public recognition of their status as a community in the society²¹¹. But the Framework Agreement, according to some elements, is alike peace Agreement. Certainly, the Framework Agreement is a try to lower the further widening of latent ethnic conflict in the society and to preserve the multiethnic character of the state. In this paper we will try to shed light in just some of the aspects of what is achieved and whether there is a progress or not in the overall process.

The Ohrid Agreement came through violent acts and pressure, but also stopped the civil war and greater bloodshed. We can say that the International Community played a positive role especially with its firm handling of the process of conflict management. For instance, they stick to the inviolability of the borders and that they cannot be changed by violence. Also, that there is no military solution of the conflict because of the no easy way out of it. Consequently, that there are no ethnic territo-

²¹⁰ The term identity of the communities is category that is introduced in the Framework Agreement and the Constitution as a notion which is collective in its essence, and that represent different ethnic communities that are not in majority in the population.

²¹¹ P. Atanasov, 'Macedonia between nationalism(s) and multiculturalism: The Framework Agreement and its multicultural conjectures', Belgrade, Sociologija, XLV: 4 (2004), 303-16.

rial solutions of the conflict – which means not changing the political structure of the state. And, of course, the support of the state with the signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement, on 9th of April 2001, which was ratified by all members in the EU. Now it is easier for the Macedonian elites to concentrate on the Constitutional Amendments and fulfill the obligations that were signed in Ohrid. There were introduced 16 constitutional amendments, including the new Preamble. For the small country a heavy impact for the whole.

The Framework Agreement with its basic ideas speaks about: the cessation of the hostilities, the strengthening of the political status of Albanians, the resolving of the cultural and language issues of Albanians and (maybe the most important element in the whole process) the decentralization of the government. Besides the security problems the impression is that some issues prior to the conflict were ahead resolution, especially one connected with the cultural, language and educational problems. On that agenda Macedonia had no so bad records even in European context. But the representation of the Albanians in the state institutions was not sufficient, except in a high level positions (representing 25 per cent of the whole population²¹²). This might have produced feelings among Albanians that in order to make progress on this they need more political power. The ethno-political mobilization was achieved through two levels: first, through the political parties of Albanians in Macedonia and the internationally supported picture that Albanians are victims of the previous regimes (especially by western media). Macedonia did not escape this regional spider's web. In order to iron out some of the 'causes' for the conflict, the International Community pressed for the new model of decentralization, which is used to be purely internal affair. And in this area Macedonia had bad record. Some estimates were that over 95 per cent of the state resources were managed on central level. Maybe the Albanians wanted more (the strongest legal demand was towards federalization of the country), but the compromise was reached on the proper decentralization, which was already in the Government agenda for years,

²¹² According to the census in 2002 the ethnic proportions of the population is following: Macedonians 64,10 %, Albanians 25.17 %, and the rest of ten per cent consists of Turks, Romas, Serbs, Bosniaks, Vlachs and others.

but never enough time and space, not to say ‘will’, to start the process. So, the main line of the Ohrid process went on the track with cessation of hostilities and should be finished with the decentralization process. It was supposed that all of the changes would satisfy the Albanians and would ease the tensions produced by not doing enough on time.

It is interesting to see some data on the topics integral to the Ohrid process, in a direction what was acceptable by the Macedonians. We shall see some data from the poll in 2001²¹³. Similar to the propositions, prior to the signing of the Ohrid Agreement, this research asked how prepared are Macedonians to accept some changes. The results showed that Macedonians are not willing to accept any kind of change in the preamble of the Constitution (90 per cent), Albanians as constitutive people (98 per cent), bilingualism (97 per cent), federalization of the country (98 per cent) and state university in Albanian (90 per cent). Nevertheless, the rejection was lower concerning proportional participation in administration (not acceptable at all 68 per cent; partly acceptable 21 per cent), decentralization in the local government (not acceptable at all 58 per cent; partly acceptable 20 per cent) and a separate Albanian channel in the national television (not acceptable at all 55 per cent; partly acceptable 25 per cent). Overall, the relevant percentage of the Macedonians were ready to accept some changes in the fabric of society even prior to the conflict, but the political elites either were incapable to do it or did not have courage for it. This is especially concerning decentralization process and the proportional participation in administration. Now that counts as just another missed opportunity.

Achievements and ‘Successes’

Finally, let us turn to the very elements of the aforementioned levels of content of the Ohrid Agreement and their progress: the security questions, the political status of Albanians, the cultural and language issues of Albanians and the decentralization of the government. We will start in

²¹³ Research done by the Center for Ethnic and Security Issues which work under the auspices of Institute for Sociological Political and Legal Research from University of Skopje, in July 2001, on the random sample of 2000 Macedonian respondents.

brief with the implementation process and its political and security aspects. The results were satisfactory. The most significant result is the political transformation of the former NLA combatants – establishing of the political party Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) that won most of Albanian votes in the 2002 parliamentary elections. That caused a lot of frustrations for the Macedonians even three years after the conflict, especially of the fact that the DUI party entered the Government with the coalition ‘For Macedonia’²¹⁴. In a proper time the Government set up the control of the security vacuum zones. Most of it was achieved by the international monitoring and with the establishment of the multi-ethnic policing. Many Albanians entered the police force through the short and intensive trainings. Albanians on a fast track entered into the Army too. These processes may lack the qualitative dimension but as a quantitative one are achievements. After the signing of the Ohrid Agreement, two waves of disarmament occurred. One wave after the signing of the Agreement as a mission of NATO named ‘Essential Harvest’, and another one organized by the state in November 2003 by the name of ‘Amnesty for the Arms’. Both were with weak results and weak impact for the society (in the first case 3875 SALW, in the second 7571 pieces of SALW were collected). According to some estimates on the Macedonian territory there are still up to 100 thousands of illegal Small Arms and Light Weapons of which half are military weapons. There lies maybe one of the reasons for increasing the violent criminal acts on a big scale that took hundreds of victims (even more than the conflict itself). ‘Bad guys’, mostly Albanians, are still around, with their Kosovo comrades, as the case in Kondovo village (with a new municipality territorial division now part of Skopje) showed up. Groups that are under no political control (former NLA combatants are spread in all political parties of Albanians but some of them do not ‘fit’ anywhere). Generally, the security aspects of post-conflict management process we may qualify as a positive and, most significantly, the Framework Agreement did stop the civil war and the deterioration of the conflict. Another good sign of improvement is the data of the many published researches in 2003-4 that

²¹⁴ Together with the Social-Democratic Union of Macedonia and Liberal-Democratic Party.

shows more fear for unemployment and corrupted politicians' activities than the security threats.

The political re-balancing of the legal procedures and some state institutions participation went with medium success. This is due to a fact that these acts intermingle and sometimes lose their effectiveness with the other political processes that includes parliamentary procedures and political negotiations. Also, in theory, by definition, these double majority procedures are very slow, inefficient and frustrating. These parliamentary procedures in the Macedonian case include three-levels enactments. First, qualified majority – majority of the representatives claiming to belong to the communities not in the majority of the population, was introduced that concerns the enactments of laws in relation to the Courts member election. Then, the qualified majority for the laws that directly affect cultural issues, use of language, education, personal documentation, use of local municipality symbols, laws on local-government, municipality boundaries, local finance, etc. And, third, introducing higher threshold (two thirds of the Parliament seats and qualified majority of MPs that belong to the communities not in the majority of the population) for the constitutional amendments that concerns communities. With all of these significant changes are in power – changes, that may satisfy only the Albanians, regarding the needed threshold of 20 per cent in the whole population, for most of the newly established proportions. In this case, the smaller communities are prone to act only together with the Macedonians entities in election coalition and other side processes. The Albanians got the legal protection from the Macedonian majority governance. As we have seen, the experience so far shows that the political games very smoothly were transcended from the ethnic to the party oligarchy interests. Then, the questions about the ethnic misunderstandings are transformed in position-opposition disagreements (both multiethnic, as Macedonian heritage showed this decade, with some exclusive ethnic interests on Albanian side). Macedonia is a case in point where the multiethnic position and opposition bodies accuses each other (on ethnic basis platform) who is a bigger patriot and who is a bigger traitor for its own 'people'. And the people are the same poor Macedonians, Albanians, Turks, Roma and others, that suffered the incapability of the Macedonian political elites to create 'a decent place for living' – a phrase

most popular in the wider public, as an ideal state-of-affairs for Macedonian society.

The cultural issues were also part of the Framework Agreement, even though in many aspects Macedonia was ahead not only from its neighbors, but also even in a wider European context – not just with its politics of recognition, but with its educational practices and cultural space for the Albanian values and customs. Anyway, the Albanian language became an official language in use with its 20 per cent threshold. Albanian language now is in use in the Parliament too. The official personal documents now contain the data in the language that the citizens decide for. A new Law of Citizenship was enacted with lower obligation fulfillments. Also, a new census was conducted, which showed the already mentioned figures. New textbooks in history (other textbooks as well) were introduced with specific lessons for the communities not in majority. New private university was established that functions very well, the Southeast University of Tetovo – known as University of Shtul (with Macedonian students as well). All of this became true with stressful debates in the Parliament and public cacophony. These did not stop the process as in 2002 the Government proclaimed the implementation of the Ohrid Agreement obligations its first priority in the agenda.

The biggest controversy and problems produced the establishment of the third state University of Tetovo in Albanian (besides the state Universities of Skopje and Bitola). That was not an obligation from the Ohrid Agreement but the political elites did that for elimination of the problem of the Tetovo illegal University ‘that stayed for ten years and was misused by radical structures’, as official Government stressed. With these changes to the increased political power of the Albanians were added by cultural concessions. Elements of power sharing in the political sphere were enriched with the enhancement of the politics of difference. Whether this will bring more integration or disintegration in the society (emphasizing voluntary segregation, misuse of communities’ cultural badges, etc.) it is no clear at all.

The most important part of the Ohrid Agreement is the process of decentralization of the government. This relates to group of laws as the last

“core” obligation in compliance with the Framework Agreement, and, certainly it is the most difficult one. The events in 2004 showed very clearly this. In a row, the new Law on Local Self-Government was enacted in January 2002. The proposed devolution of power on the local level should give the communities (municipalities) a great share of privileges and responsibilities towards public services, urban and rural planning, protection of the environment, local economic development, culture, local finances, education, and social and health care. And, according to decision makers (Macedonian-Albanian ruling coalition²¹⁵), the last proposition about the municipality model for the multicultural paradigm, combined with the ‘massive devolution of central powers to local communities’ would be sufficient as a space for enjoying the multicultural democracy. At the end the Assembly has enacted the proposed Law on territorial boundaries in August 2004 but also the majority Macedonians held a referendum whether this was acceptable or should be abolished²¹⁶. The Referendum did not succeed and did not reach the Constitution thresholds²¹⁷.

The ‘pressure’ from the ruling parties and ‘advices’ from International Community helped, but the most important event for abstinence was the recognition by the USA of the constitutional name of the country – ‘Republic of Macedonia’. The way everything happened may drive the Macedonian society towards more distrust among Macedonians and Albanians. Additionally, the devolution of power may not improve the state-of-affairs. Moreover, the changes will certainly not improve economic standard of the people in a short period of time.

²¹⁵ Since 1991 up to date the Macedonian Governments always included Albanian political parties.

²¹⁶ The Law proposed 84 municipalities, instead of 1996 Law that have 123. The main ‘clashes’ were whether the cities of Struga and Kichevo will have a dominant Albanian population, due to a new Law, and whether the capital city of Skopje will become bilingual with adding to the city two Albanian populated municipalities Saraj and Kondovo (on the latter the 2002 coalition Government agreed on political basis).

²¹⁷ For the Referendum to be ‘successful’ (for the initiators) according to the Constitution about 850.000 voters should participated (as 50+1 of the whole population), and half of it should vote against (Albanians did not participate, even there were some opposition about the new Law of territorial division from the majority Albanian municipalities that should be abolished).

Different Perceptions of the ‘Results’

With the Framework Agreement, the Albanians definitely raised their political status in Macedonia and gained cultural concessions and legally protective mechanisms concerning usage of their language, issuing official documents, higher education in Albanian, etc. What happened to the Macedonians? They still have questions to the extent that the more discussions and negotiations are underway the more concessions they have to agree with, in relation to their constitutive nation role. It is frustrating to give up the monopoly of the national cultural matrix (and political power), resources as well, in order to meet the Albanians’ demands for equal public status of their language and equitable and fair representation in the state institutions. Every society, argues Parekh, has a historically inherited cultural structure, which informs its conduct of public life, and resists modifications beyond a certain point without losing its coherence and causing widespread disorientation, anxiety and even resistance²¹⁸. Macedonians still perceive Macedonia as their ‘natural’ state, and involuntarily make more ‘space(s)’ for the Albanians. Even the new Preamble of the amended Constitution starts with the words that ‘The citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, the Macedonian people, as well as citizens living within its borders who are part of the Albanian people, the Turkish people, the Vlach people, the Serbian people, the Romany people, the Bosniak people and others taking responsibility for the present and future of their fatherland...’. This declarative political statement does not solve the Macedonian multiethnic (or bi-ethnic) puzzle; it just emphasizes it²¹⁹. From today’s perspective of the consequences and different attitudes of ‘the results’ of the Ohrid Agreement we have quite interesting variety of opinions. We shall quote two polls that show current ‘state of mind’.

The first research argued about whether the Framework Agreement is a solution for re-establishing the peace. According to the results of the research it comes that the citizens do not think that the Framework

²¹⁸ B. Parekh, Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press 2000) 263.

²¹⁹ Atanasov, ‘Macedonia between nationalism(s) and multiculturalism...’ 306.

Agreement is the only solution for securing long-lasting peace and stability of the state. Thus, on the question 'do you think that the whole implementation of the Framework Agreement will secure peace and stability in the Republic of Macedonia', the following structure of answers were reached: from the overall number of respondents 650, 462 (71 per cent) from respondents answered negatively, and 188 (29 per cent) positively. It is noticeable that from all the Macedonian respondents 433, 402 (93 per cent) have attitude that the whole implementation of the Framework Agreement does not mean peace and prosperity for the state, and only 31 (7 per cent) think opposite. With big difference, Albanian respondents from the whole group 189, 150 of them (79 per cent) have attitude that the solution for the peace and stability in Macedonia they see in the fulfillment of the Framework Agreement, and only 39 of them (21 per cent) of the respondents are not optimists. *These data show that there is still resistance for the Framework Agreement, which is especially emphasized among the Macedonians and which is often labeled as damageable for the Macedonian state*²²⁰.

The second is more specific about the 'results' of the process. The answer of the greatest percentage (24 per cent) of respondents to the question as to which is the most positive impact of the Ohrid Agreement is that it has prevented war but nothing has been achieved and that it has increased the chances for NATO and EU membership (20 per cent), but also increased the chances for disintegration of the country (17 per cent) and has made ethnic affiliation dominant compared to other qualities (17 per cent). A minor percentage of respondents think that a more just attitude towards the minorities has been achieved (10 per cent). There are deviations in respect to the ethnic community affiliation. The dominating responses among the Macedonians are that war has been prevented and nothing else has been achieved (27 per cent), that the chances for disintegration of the state have been increased (21 per cent) and that the ethnicity has become essential compared to all other qualities (21 per cent). Among the Albanians, there dominate the responses that the chances for disintegration of the state have been increased (31 per cent), that a more just attitude toward the minorities has been achieved (22 per cent) and

²²⁰ Gocevski, Ethnic Coexistence in the... 120-1.

that war has been prevented and nothing else has been achieved (15 per cent). *The Macedonians and the Albanians put accent on different achievements of the Ohrid Agreement.*²²¹

Both cited researches show significant differences among different interest groups about the 'Ohrid Process' achievements. Then the question arises, how to please one interest (nationalist) group and not harm another. How to fulfill demands of one interest (ethnic) group and not challenge others. There are no easy answers. Also, more multiple tasks are ahead: in the economy – to increase living standards, to decrease the gray economic sector and to eradicate corruption and nepotism; in the politics – to increase political stability of the state, to decrease ethno-political tensions and to eradicate the issue of the name; in the security – to increase human security standards, to decrease possession of illegal small arms and light weapons and to eradicate organized crime activities. Most importantly, all of those are directly interconnected with the processes of NATO and EU integration of Macedonia, as questions of common interests for all the citizens. At least the road is paved, and on that road the 'Ohrid Process' is an important stage.

General Lessons

Also, some general lessons can be discerned. First, one of the most important aspect in the process of conflict management, as this paper showed in the Macedonian case, is to have, as soon as possible, an independent and objective analysis of the 'genuine' factors of the conflict, because that will heavily influence the conflict-resolution and the *post-conflict rehabilitation* processes. The time constraints and the propaganda aspects should not discourage the mediators, especially the international ones. Second, the political power re-balancing is a far more important category in proposed and demanded solutions than social and cultural issues. Albanians in Macedonia now have higher political status

²²¹ Research done by the Center for Ethnic and Security Issues which work under the auspices of Institute for Sociological Political and Legal Research from University of Skopje, in December 2004, on the national representative random sample of 1600 respondents.

as a community by which other questions can be tackled and resolved. In the Macedonian case the decentralization of the government is definitely the major challenge to fulfill. Third, introducing bigger constitutional changes might not mean bigger chances for national integration, but sometime precisely the opposite, a chance for internal disintegration. The balance and contents between the civic and the ethnic elements in the conflict solutions should be very carefully mixed, especially in the Balkan context. Fourth, if the state involved is not a serious partner, including the negotiators (whoever they are) and the internationals (without them nothing is possible), then little can be done overall. In that context, the state institutions, especially the political officials, are main indicators of the capacity for conflict management and post-conflict rehabilitation. And fifth, last but not least, whatever you do, one of the priorities should be the reconciliation in the public sphere, among the communities and ordinary people not just among political actors. The residual winners' and losers' attitudes will not be beneficial for the future state projects and the common political will of the citizens.