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# Macedonia: End of the Beginning or Beginning of the End?

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"In this part of the world it is difficult to find the true path between reason and emotion, myth and reality. This is the burden of the Balkans, which prevents us from becoming truly European." -- Kiro Gligorov  
First President of the Republic of Macedonia

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Following the horrific events of 11 September 2001, the security dilemma of the former Yugoslavia virtually vanished before the eyes of many policymakers. Understandably, the United States and Europe felt compelled to divert resources away from the region and into their mutual struggle against global terrorism. Yet for more than a decade, the Balkans presented the West with one of its greatest strategic and policy challenges. The prosecution and aftermath of four violent conflicts there--including the first military intervention by NATO--consumed billions of dollars and involved exhaustive diplomatic and regional initiatives.

The Balkans no longer constitute a primary foreign policy challenge; this does not mean, however, that the international community can afford to look in all directions other than Southeast Europe. The region itself is in a period of difficult, painful transition, and stands the chance of rapidly succumbing to transnational criminal influences and becoming a "black hole" of terrorism such as happened in Afghanistan, which became not a sponsor of terrorism but rather a terrorist-sponsored state. Even as halting progress toward representative government and institution-building takes place in Croatia, Serbia, and Kosovo, internal corruption, black-market activities, and illegal arms shipments threaten the stability of the region. When \$25 can buy anyone a real, not a counterfeit, passport, the area has increasingly become attractive to those who easily escape the notice of already overstretched internal security forces. Nowhere has this security dilemma entered a more crucial period than in Macedonia.

To be sure, the first year of the 21st century was not kind to Macedonia. Although admitted as an "associate member" of the European Union in April 2001--with the mutually proclaimed expectation of eventual EU membership--and a member of the so-called "Vilnius Nine" seeking membership in the next enlargement round of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Macedonia (as well as Albania) was widely regarded as having little to absolutely no chance of securing NATO membership during the Prague summit of 2002.[1] Yet among this group of nine ex-communist states seeking NATO membership (widely seen as less restrictive than EU criteria for membership), such alliance and institutional membership was believed to be absolutely critical for both long-term security and to attract direct foreign investment in struggling economies.

Within Macedonia itself, an ethnic Albanian insurgency under the rubric of the National Liberation Army (NLA) came perilously close to paralyzing the nation in a state of political and civil gridlock; equally, the leaders of NATO, the European Union, and the United States seemed unclear about what--if any--course of action was best to take regarding the fate of this tiny ex-republic of the former Yugoslavia.[2] Ultimately, even the ethnic governing coalition within Macedonia, formed in May 2001 and proclaimed a "national unity government," appeared incapable of agreement on central, critical issues. One informed observer caustically remarked, only days after the unity government's formation, that "this government has nothing to do with genuine democracy . . . [and] is too weak and fragile to undertake any serious reform in the country." [3] By the end of 2001, the coalition government had disintegrated and the nation drifted, once again, toward dissolution.

In this article, we argue that Macedonia's future is essential to the European security architecture. Whether or not

Macedonia survives will largely be dependent on "external" forces and actors. Clearly, the root solutions for all Southeast Europe will prove problematic, and at times seem overwhelming, but should not prove ultimately impossible. Macedonia may represent the greatest challenge as well as the last best hope for the Balkans.

The answer to whether the future Europe will be characterized as one of constant security dilemmas or a place of integrating security identities may well lie with the fate of Macedonia. This article highlights significant historical markers that have defined the region, outlines some of the differences and grievances that have plagued Macedonia throughout its tenuous post-1991 existence, and offers pathways that might prove useful in outlining possible solutions to the political and civil nightmare that took hold of Macedonia in 2001.

## **The Weight of Too Much History**

In the Balkans, a common aphorism suggests that the region "has so much history, it doesn't need a future." [4] Nowhere in this region is the weight of history more profound than in Macedonia, where the load of the past leans into every human effort made toward building the present. Indeed, Macedonia and its surrounding area are so rich in history that it seems criminal to summarize in a few pages. And, despite the claim by some that Macedonia is simply a "Tito-ist creation" of post-1944 Yugoslavia, the nation itself has a long, illustrious--and weighted--history.

### *Time of the Ottomans*

After the fall of Byzantium (in 1453), the next great--and most enduring--regional influence was that of the Ottoman Empire. [5] The empire itself reached its peak during the middle of the 16th century, and covered the Balkan peninsula, Romania, a significant part of Hungary, all of the Aegean Islands, Cyprus, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Syria, Arabia, Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, Georgia, and Crimea. [6] The Slavs in Macedonia were ruled by their fellow Slavs, who in turn were subject to Turkish governors. Political rights were reserved for the Turks, but, ironically, "religious toleration made possible the self perpetuation of national consciousness." [7] Alice Ackerman describes Ottoman rule similarly: "However repressive and exploitive, Turkish rule was also a time of peaceful coexistence. Turks, Slavs, Albanians, Greeks, Vlachs, Jews, and Roma often lived together in multiethnic communities." [8]

As the Ottoman Empire declined during the late 19th century, Macedonia became an inevitable pawn in European balance-of-power politics. After the Russo-Turkish War of 1878, Macedonia became part of Bulgaria as a means to counter Austria-Hungary. Four months later at the Congress of Berlin, Macedonia was ceded back to the Ottomans. To counter Turkish rule, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization--known most commonly as IMRO, or VMRO--emerged in 1893. [9]

### *The Krusevo Republic*

In August 1903, a Macedonian uprising resulted in the attempted establishment of the fabled Krusevo Republic. Although the "republic" lasted only two months and ended in defeat, its significance is recounted in Macedonia's present constitution. That 30,000 rebels held off a formidable Turkish force of 300,000 and established a democratic commune of the Krusevo Republic was in itself an ultimate act of defiance against the Ottoman Empire. [10]

Although this republic survived only a short while, its government notably expressed tolerance for its Vlach, Bulgarian, Macedonian, and Albanian population. Its manifesto is unwritten and therefore not widely known. [11]

### *Two World Wars, Two Balkan Wars, a Great Disaster, and a Civil War*

The First Balkan War (1912-1913) resulted in Macedonia's and Albania's "liberation." The Second Balkan War in 1913, however, ended in Macedonia's division: one-tenth to Bulgaria (Pirin Macedonia), one-half to Greece (Aegean Macedonia), and two-fifths to Serbia (Vardar Macedonia). [12] World War I resulted in another Macedonian division, but by the end of World War II--and with Josip Broz Tito's direct action--Macedonia became a recognized republic, with a distinct ethnic identity and recognized Slavic language, within the Yugoslav federation. [13]

After World War I, Vardar Macedonia and Kosovo became part of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, but the Albanians were not recognized as a separate nation. Macedonia was known as South Serbia and Kosovo as Old

Serbia. The Serbs suppressed the Albanians, which in turn fostered Albanian armed resistance in the 1920s and raised national awareness among Albanians.[14]

In contrast to the emerging Macedonian nation, a "greater" Albanian nationalism was among the last to develop among the Balkan peoples. In 1878, the Prizin League was established to protect Albanian lands, and it would later challenge Ottoman rule. Albanian guerrilla units emerged in 1906, and in 1908 Albanian leaders adopted the Latin alphabet for the Albanian language. In 1910 the Albanians revolted against the Ottomans in Pristina, and the revolt spread to Kosovo; in 1912 Albanians took over Skopje. The Treaty of Bucharest in 1913 established the Albanian state; however, almost half the Albanian population lived outside its borders.[15]

After Tito's break from the Cominform and Stalin in 1948, relations between the Albanian state and Yugoslavia rapidly worsened, making life for Yugoslav Albanians often unbearable. Yugoslavia closed down Albanian schools and discriminated against ethnic Albanians politically, economically, and socially. Albanians began identifying themselves as Turks simply to escape this discrimination.[16] As a counterbalance to this growing unrest, Marshal Tito emphasized a strong "Macedonian" identity in the Macedonian republic as a way to contain Albanians within Serbia and Macedonia.[17]

### *The National Liberation Army*

The National Liberation Army (NLA), which came to prominence in March 2001, claimed itself a self-appointed protector of Macedonia's ethnic Albanians. Many of its commanders were veterans of the Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës--more commonly known as the UÇK or the Kosovo Liberation Army. Most prominent among these was Ali Ahmeti, the current leader of the NLA. In 1993, Ahmeti and Emrush Xhemajli gained the approval of the Nationalist Movement of Kosova to create the KLA.[18] By 1997, Ahmeti was living in Tirana, and actively organized groups to infiltrate and attack police in Kosovo.[19]

Some observers believe that the NLA actions grew out of ethnic Albanian extremists who were frustrated when elections in Kosovo produced a moderate local government under the leadership of Ibrahim Rugova. Until the spring of 2001, the confrontations between Macedonian government forces and the NLA took place only in Tetovo (with a 90-percent ethnic Albanian population) and other border towns in the northwest that were largely ethnic Albanian. By April 2001, however, with the active control of Kumanovo, in the northeast, the tide of events clearly had taken a turn for the worse. By June 2001, rebel forces had seized Aracinovo, six miles from the capital of Skopje and within rocket-firing range. The precarious "national unity government"--a coalition of four political parties that included two ethnic Albanian identities--weakened considerably in credibility when the leaders of the two Albanian parties, Arben Xhaferi and Imer Imeri, signed a joint declaration of support with NLA leader Ahmeti in Pristina on 22 May.[20] At the time the declaration was signed, Boris Trajkovski, president of the Macedonian republic, and NATO Secretary-General Robertson openly referred to the NLA as "criminal," "thugs," and "terrorists" in various public statements.

The need for external, active EU and NATO intervention within Macedonia became obvious. Admittedly, as events worsened by the summer of 2001, both the EU and NATO attempted more proactive approaches. On 5 July 2001, NATO mediated a cease-fire between Albanian insurgents and Macedonian government forces; whether such mediation would lead to permanent resolution or prolong ambiguous outcomes, however, remained uncertain. By September 2001, the NATO-led small arms collection program named Operation Essential Harvest was begun as a four-week-long follow-on confidence building measure to a general framework agreement signed by rival factions at Lake Ohrid on 13 August. (Frequent Slav media reports in Macedonia asserted that the 3,300 weapons "harvested" in the NATO operation amounted to less than three percent of suspected ethnic Albanian weapons--estimated between 110,000 and 700,000.) After the completion of Essential Harvest, a German observer force was stationed in the region. All was clearly not well in Macedonia.

### **Birth of a Nation**

Strained relations between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians have existed since the birth of the Macedonian state.[21] Albanians boycotted the referendum on Macedonia's independence and the 1991 census, claiming the latest census would not portray their true percentage of the population. By 1993, however, the ethnic Albanian Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP) declared that Albanian autonomy was not on its agenda. Instead, the PDP wanted state

and constitutional recognition of the Albanian nation.[22]

Unfortunately, the criteria for Macedonian citizenship was ambiguous from the start, and the original constitution only reinforced this ambiguity. It referred to constitutional nationalism, which confers a special status for the dominant nation within the state versus the democratic principle that confers sovereignty on all citizens of the state.[23] The constitution stated as a premise:

Taking as starting points the historical, cultural, spiritual, and statehood heritage of the Macedonian people and their struggle over centuries for national and social freedom . . . and particularly the traditions of statehood and legality of the Krusevo Republic . . . as well as the historical fact that Macedonia is established as a national state of the Macedonian people, in which full equality as citizens and permanent co-existence with the Macedonian people is provided for Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Romanics, and other nationalities living in the Republic of Macedonia, and intent on the establishment of the Republic of Macedonia as a sovereign and independent state, as well as a civil and democratic one . . . .[24]

Given the historical context of ethnic relations in Macedonia, one must differentiate between Kosovar Albanians and Macedonian Albanians. From its start, Macedonia, unlike Serbia under the reign of Milosevic, had always intended an inclusive regime. In Macedonia, Albanians were included in state politics; in Kosovo, Albanians in the 1990s set up parallel--and illegal in the eyes of the Yugoslav government--"shadow" institutions.[25] Albanian political parties in Macedonia have been instrumental government coalition partners.

### *Creating Community*

Macedonia's political leadership had been a significant factor for Macedonia's relative ethnic harmony. In 1995, President Kiro Gligorov talked about the citizens of his nation in this manner: "We are all Macedonians. We are all citizens of this country, and Albanians have a long-term interest to integrate themselves in this country. This does not mean that they should lose their national, cultural, and linguistic characteristics." Furthermore, he stated:

In the ethnically-mixed Balkans, it is impossible to create compact national states in which only members of one nation can live. This is an absurdity which can hardly be realized in Europe. . . . Perhaps one nation can win a victory here and there, but then this would only lead to revanchism on the part of the others, and thus, there would never be an end [to warfare].[26]

One way to defuse the problem of conflicting nationalities is to create a new nationality or identity. Indeed, the idea of creating a European identity in Macedonia has influenced Macedonia's desire for membership in European institutions.[27] The idea of a federalized Europe resonates with citizens of Macedonia; citizens were accustomed to a federalized system under the former Yugoslavia, and they might view their inclusion in the European family as a way to bolster their status and way of life.[28] In truth, some ethnic Albanians do feel Macedonian. Nusret Jakupi, a military officer in the Macedonian army said: "I, as an Albanian, feel I am in my country. I haven't come from another country. I am living in the same place where my grandfather, my great grandfather, and generations before have lived." [29] According to Sami Ibrahim, an ethnic Albanian leader:

I think we have been lucky to establish this country without any conflict at all. And the contributions of [the ethnic] Albanians were a huge part because we know that we can talk to each other. The dialogue is going on in Macedonia. That is our priority. We respect each other, but the promises that are given are not realized. It was always said that things would be realized step by step, but unfortunately there's still not a real democracy here. But we have continued to preserve the peace. If we have not learned the lessons from Bosnia-Herzegovina, then we are illiterate.[30]

To be blunt, most ethnic Albanians in Macedonia simply want stability and opportunity, and they have no desire for a Greater Albania. In effect, the sense of an Albanian "nation" which crosses over territorial borders does not necessarily demand the creation of a separate Albanian "state." Generally, ethnic Albanians want their language officially sanctioned, more decentralization, constitutional amendments guaranteeing equality, a change in the preamble of the constitution, an internationally monitored census, and an Albanian-language university.

## The Economic Geography of Macedonia

Because this case focuses on the central identity and legitimacy of the Macedonian state, it seems crucial to recognize that neither language and religious differences nor the resolution of ethnic Albanian vs. ethnic Macedonian relations will prove sufficient to understanding the insecurity of the region. Far more significant tensions exist. Specifically, it is the success or failure of Macedonia's "economic geography" that will ultimately determine the fate of its physical geography. It thus adds to the tragedy of Macedonia to emphasize that although the methods are clearly abhorrent, the central criticisms of the NLA--as well as the claims of the ethnic Albanian political leadership--are essentially correct.

With some justification, Albanians regularly complain that they are the victims of systematic discrimination in Macedonia, receiving the worst healthcare and education and having the least chance for employment in the public sector. Yet as Albanian leader Arben Xhaferi would have it, any potential future success will be compelled by the inevitable allure of the West. "Spiritually," he claims, ethnic Albanians "are with the East, but their self-interest lies in the West." [31] But inequality between ethnic identities describes only part of the problem. Macedonia suffers from--and has always suffered from--severe economic inequities in the Balkans. The poorest of the former Yugoslav republics, Macedonia was born "economically challenged."



**Macedonia and the Surrounding Region**

Macedonia's precarious existence ever since its declaration of independence in 1991 has largely been based on conditions--political, ethnic, social, economic--that extend from outside its borders as much as internal dynamics within the nation. And, while Macedonia is seemingly well understood as a precarious example of potential Balkan instability, the tiniest nation in Southeast Europe is also a poorly understood success. Opposing political identities, economic inequities, and regional conflict would seem to have preordained doom long ago for the tiny nation-state. Yet, remarkably, Macedonia has been able to balance extraordinary contradictions. [32]

Further compounding such pressures, the regional demographic shifts that occurred during 1999 must also be considered as part of the economic geography of the region. Macedonia allowed 12,000 NATO troops to deploy along the Kosovo border without, initially, having any guarantees of Macedonia's internal security had the nation been brought into a wider conflict. Although Macedonia was widely criticized in the international community for not providing more support to the hundreds of thousands of Kosovar Albanians that fled across the border from Yugoslavia, few recognized that Macedonia was simply incapable of handling such a flow of human traffic. [33]

The 1990s radically altered the economic geography of the Balkans, shifting economic processes to focus on new markets and new partnerships. The region's legacy of a turbulent past, its marginal position at the "periphery" of

Europe, and the lack of any economically dominant country willing to act as a driving force for the region simply assured continued underdevelopment.[34] Unlike Slovenia or Croatia (former Yugoslav republics that had some forms of economic infrastructure and liberalization tendencies in place at the time of their respective beginnings as independent states), Macedonia possessed geographically-driven economic challenges from the beginning. A nation whose largest export traditionally was fermented tobacco, Macedonia will continue to face daunting internal and external challenges. In retrospect, it ought to seem miraculous that the tragedy of 2001 did not arrive sooner.

### **Democracy, Legitimacy, and Stability**

While many within the diaspora Albanian community in particular would object to our assertion, we consider the NLA (and its follow-on, the ONA) to be a transnational, terrorist organization born from the grievances of the Albanian community within Macedonia and from the "successful" Albanian experience in Kosovo that led to the liberation of the province from the control of Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic. The uncomfortable "lesson" of the Kosovo experience led the NLA and its supporters to believe that abuse of human rights in the Balkans would eventually cause the West to intervene. One of the obvious falsehoods of the NLA experience in Macedonia, nonetheless, is that it remains impossible to establish a lasting civil society at the point of a gun. At best, the legitimate Albanian grievances within Macedonia would be offset by the use of NLA violence to secure its political and civil agenda.

Unlike the 1995 post-Dayton Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia, and unlike Kosovo after the 1999 intervention, Macedonia, despite all its challenges and contradictions, has not yet divided its population. Macedonia is the last genuinely multi-ethnic state in the Balkans; it is unique in Southeast Europe in that it still comprises an ethnically heterogeneous society of Slavs and Albanians. For some, this suggests the impossibility of its continued existence. Cynics, often with no Balkan experience or knowledge, can be quite brutal in their ideas and so-called resolutions. John Mearsheimer and Stephen Van Evera, for example, have suggested:

If the Slavs refuse to share more equally with the Albanians, violence is inevitable. To forestall this, NATO should consider calling for a plebiscite to determine whether the Albanians want to remain in Macedonia. If not, Macedonia should also be partitioned. This is feasible because the Albanians of Macedonia are concentrated in western Macedonia, next to Kosovo and Albania.[35]

Such a "solution" is flawed by internal contradictions. Why NATO should violate its own standard of avowed post-conflict neutrality and take on the role of mandating plebiscites, normally the role of institutions such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), is unclear. Why Albanians of western Macedonia, Kosovo, and Albania itself should be aligned with (read, "partitioned") into a community that would represent the poorest ethnic community in Europe, and yet be separated--physically, psychologically, economically--from the very ethnic communities and trading blocs they would depend on (such as the "Slavs" of Macedonia) and still be somehow expected to remain viable is doubtful. Why Mearsheimer and Van Evera cannot recognize that the partition they advocate is yet another barbaric form of ethnic cleansing, and more than just an "ugly formula for ending wars," truly seems astounding.

Macedonia is the last ethnically heterogeneous society that remains from the former Yugoslavia. While some seasoned Balkan observers, notably Timothy Garton Ash, have argued that the true lesson of post-Yugoslavia is that ethnically homogeneous societies--such as Slovenia--tend toward stability rather than disintegration, any number of philosophers and social scientists have argued the exact opposite. A nation, as Thomas Franck has noted, largely comprises a people, while a state consists of its citizenry and bounded territory.[36] Only rarely does a nation of one people find itself within the exclusive territory of a defined boundary in a "pure" nation-state.

### **Cooperation or Conflict: The End Is in Sight**

Macedonia, since its independence, has come perilously close to internal collapse on more than one occasion. Geographical isolation, obvious lack of technological sophistication as well as lack of access to technology, and evident and continuing political instability--severely aggravated by the Kosovo crisis of 1999--have failed to encourage foreign investment over the long run. That said, such investment and the successful implementation of economic reforms are the only means to secure stability or insure Macedonia's long-term success.

Yet if one were to take a retrospective look at the Balkans in general over the last decade of the 20th century, it might indeed seem miraculous that Macedonia had not suffered a fate similar to that of its neighbors. The future for Macedonia seems laced with promise as much as peril.

Predictions in the Balkans, even more so than elsewhere, are a foolish enterprise. But given the argument presented here, we offer the following observations as plausible future directions:

. *Macedonia will always be defined by "the other."* Distasteful as it seems, Macedonia owes perhaps a debt of gratitude to Slobodan Milosevic. If not for his ruthless machinations and maneuverings, Macedonia might not have had the impetus and the compassion to seek independence in 1991. If not for the clumsy maneuverings and often unprincipled actions of the former Serbian leader, the amount of international support for Macedonia's independence and continued success would have been even less than it was. Macedonia will likely continue to be defined by its relations with the other states that surround it. Whether we speak of Kosovo or Serbia at large, Greece, Bulgaria, or Albania, it remains that Macedonia, a land-locked country, must gracefully maneuver a path through difficult waters.

. *Macedonia's dependence on "the kindness of strangers."* According to Bodo Hambach, coordinator of the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe, regional support for Macedonia will override the conflict of 2001. His view is that the NLA "terrorists" are politically isolated "as never before, from the government of Albania, from the official Kosovo Albanians, and from the political parties of the Albanians in Macedonia." When asked in an interview, "Who is supposed to keep in check these UÇK [NLA] fighters from Kosovo?" Hambach replied:

Whoever holds power in Kosovo. And that is KFOR [NATO's peace-enforcement force in Kosovo]. It has the obligation under international law to ensure that no threat to a neighboring country comes from this territory. KFOR has to draw a line in the sand. . . . Not all violence shown on TV means war. We are dealing with armed confrontations, but these are not crossing the threshold of war. I consider it a controllable conflict. This includes clear opposition terrorism. . . . These terrorists now notice how isolated they are. They now want to present themselves as freedom fighters and portray the terrorist actions as a popular uprising in Macedonia. . . . Since Milosevic's departure, there has been no head of state in the region who considers military aggression to be a means of policy.[37]

Interstate cooperation has also occurred between Serbia and Macedonia. Both countries have agreed that the best way to manage the ethnic Albanian extremists is with restraint. Macedonian President Boris Trajkovski and Yugoslav President Vojislav Kostunica signed treaties that delineate the border between their countries. Furthermore, Kostunica rejected the idea of a "Greater Serbia" and declared that political accommodation would produce a future stable and decentralized Yugoslav state.[38]

. *The need to establish milestones for determining economic progress and promoting achievements.* The sad truth, of course, is that it took war in Kosovo before renewed assistance would be offered in any significant amount to Macedonia. As with Bosnia, the tragedy of a neighbor's agony provided another form of salvation both for the Macedonian people and for its continued existence as a state. Until 1999, again unlike Bosnia, the presence of UN forces in the area paled in comparison to the wide latitude of authority and responsiveness that NATO and SFOR (NATO's Stabilization Force) exercised in post-Dayton Bosnia. The Balkan Stability Pact--known more formally as the Stability Pact for Southeast Europe--signed by Macedonia in June 1999, provided the opportunity for both economic and significant material assistance to this struggling nation. The pact thus offers a measure of hope, however small, for the future republic of Macedonia.

A separate and serious issue concerns the smuggling between the Macedonian and Kosovo border. Unemployment is at 32 percent, and many unemployed Slavic Macedonians are not enamored with ethnic Albanians (including the NLA) who attain wealth through illegal activities, largely smuggling. The good news is that Macedonia has been able to curb inflation, obtain \$250 million in Greek investment, attain a budget surplus, and foster job-creating investments. The continued path toward economic prosperity may help defuse potential ethnic tensions.[39]



. *The necessity to create an effective public relations program, a long-term vision, and a definitive strategy.*

Macedonia continues to be "defined by the other" player in the political dynamic. Perhaps just as crucial as working to improve ethnic Slavic and Albanian relations and opportunities and for establishing a sound economic base, Macedonia must portray a sustainable political identity to the expanding and transforming Europe. If Macedonia has a serious intention to eventually become part of the European Union--and it should be clear that this is a long-term goal--then an effective and clear communication of the nation's intent to be included, rather than continually excluded, must be part of the long-term vision. The signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement and an Interim Agreement between Macedonia and the European Union on 9 April 2001--in the midst of NLA attacks in western and northeastern Macedonia--is a promising first step.[40] The economic benefits of increased EU integration may best improve the collective lot for the Macedonian population, which, according to polls, worries most about its economic plight.[41] If the nation makes real economic progress, then future coalition governments may regain support.

. *Resist accommodation based on ethnic differences.* While partition seems the easiest solution, it would prove to not be a solution at all. Macedonian President Trajkovski is sincere in declaring, "We cannot redraw borders and boundaries, making smaller units of even purer ethnic states. We cannot survive as a region if ethnicity becomes the sole defining justification of statehood." [42] Division would only forestall deeper root causes that would surface once again in the future. This is perhaps the lesson we have yet to learn from the effective partitioning of Bosnia-Herzegovina into arguably three entities (Bosniak, Croat, and Serb) and in creating the protectorate status of Kosovo within Yugoslavia.

. *Promote Europeanization.* If Europe has learned anything in the post-Cold War environment, surely one lesson is that European economic integration actually fueled disintegration in Southeast Europe:

Outsiders push Balkan integration . . . but such efforts are doomed to fail in the face of local insecurity and political resistance. The Balkans need the leverage that can be achieved only by satisfying the region's single common aspiration: "Europeanization." . . . In practice, Europeanization means extending the cross-border monetary, trade, and investment arrangements that already operate within the EU across Europe's southeastern periphery. . . . What the region is not achieving politically on an intraregional basis can therefore be achieved within a few years under the aegis of Europeanization. This "New Deal" should apply to all states in the region--Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey, and Yugoslavia--with no state's existing EU affiliations jeopardized or set back through participation. . . . Early staged entry into liberal European economic regimes will encourage private-sector development, reduce the state's economic role, underpin the rule of law, and increase the benefits of forswearing violent conflict over resources and national boundaries.[43]

The desire to join Europe can be a regional unifying factor. One need only look at how the attraction of EU membership has furthered compliance with expected standards of civil society, including the rights of ethnic minorities, in the Baltics and in Central and Southeast Europe. And one need not look much beyond how the incentive for nearer-term NATO and EU membership for Bulgaria and Romania, and even far-distant-future possibilities for Macedonia and Albania, provided cohesion and unity in the extraordinary intervention against Yugoslavia in 1999, even at great economic, social, and civil distress and expense within these nations.

### **The End of the Beginning?**

Macedonia's situation mirrors Great Britain's uncertain destiny when Winston Churchill declared in his nation's darkest hour, "We are not at the end, or the beginning of the end, but perhaps at the end of the beginning." Macedonia's fate, at this moment, hangs in the balance.

What are the strategic implications for American and European policies? First, policymakers must realize that the ambiguity of professed neutrality between contending parties cannot be maintained indefinitely. Second, there is a pressing need to link Macedonian identity with other European identities and organizations. Membership in NATO, for example, now appears to be a cultural marker of inclusion and economic attractiveness as much as a security guarantee. Since EU membership criteria are so difficult to fulfill, NATO membership is the next best thing--a "Good

Housekeeping seal of approval" that assures security guarantees and makes a region more attractive for outside investment. Finally, policymakers should acknowledge openly, while a window of opportunity still exists, the necessary commitment it will take to assist in Southeast Europe. Civil societies--both creating them and sustaining them--require difficult choices and focused effort.

There is a pressing need to be specific and blunt about the fate of Macedonia. If the international community (admitting that the term itself is worthy of lengthy separate debate) supports the legitimacy of Macedonia as a state, then there is a direct responsibility to more firmly anchor that state's future. Whether one subscribes to a pragmatic Realpolitik or supports a more optimistic agenda of increasingly linked European security and integration, one stubborn truth remains: Macedonia cannot achieve success on its own. If the major players who will most affect the outcomes in the Balkan region (Russia, the EU, NATO, and the United States) cannot find some means of mutual accommodation and agreed-to strategy, then the entire future Europe security architecture will be in peril. This accommodation must rest on valid and enduring principles as well as on the willingness of sustained commitment. This commitment must extend far beyond the low-scale intervention of Operation Essential Harvest that took place in September 2001.

While pessimistic assessments suggest that in 2001 we witnessed the end of the first decade of a new Thirty Years War, the true choice--for those who honestly believe in the notions of democracy, civil society, economic integration, and common security--is clear. Out of the immense complexities and new realities that "Western" intervention has engendered by direct intervention in the Balkans, we can be sure of only one thing: The fate of Macedonia is up in the air. Institutions, alliances, and other actors can help to effect a positive outcome. Whether Macedonians will eventually enter the fold of Europe, or simply continue to be viewed as though some irredeemable mutant, cannot be answered by the Macedonians themselves.

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## NOTES

1. The seven other Vilnius Nine members include Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.
2. For simplicity, the acronym "NLA" or the term "National Liberation Army" is used consistently in this work to represent rebel Albanian forces inside Macedonia. The NLA adapted the "UÇK" designation from the Kosovo Liberation Army (Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës) and retitled its organization Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare. Thus, "UÇK" and "NLA" are synonymous. Following the Ohrid Framework Agreement of 13 August 2001 and the subsequent NATO-led arms-collection program in September called Operation Essential Harvest, a new organization proclaiming itself the "ANA" (Albanian National Army) continued aggressive insurgent/terrorist activities.
3. Interview with Dr. Biljana Vankovska by Helen Tseresole, in the daily *Avghi* (Dawn), Athens, Greece, 9 May 2001. A copy of the interview was sent to the authors via e-mail from Dr. Vankovska in May 2001.
4. It seems worth noting, nonetheless, that in terms of historical geography, even the term "Balkans" is itself an imaginary destination. German geographer August Zeune mistakenly named the Balkan peninsula (*Balkan Halbinsel*) at the beginning of the 19th century to avoid the culturally sensitive euphemisms of "the European part of Turkey" or "Turkey in Europe." Zeune mistakenly suggested that the northern borders of the region were the Balkan mountains in Bulgaria, and although Zeune's geographical boundaries were drawn too narrowly, it remains true that for much of its history since the time of Roman frontier (*limes*) the Balkans was the fault-line of empires, religions, and civilizations where people clashed in their various roles as guardians of the "imaginary" border. "Balkans," from the Turkish, literally means "mountains." According to Zeune, "In the north this Balkan Peninsula is divided from the rest of Europe by the long mountain chain of the Balkans, or the former Albanus, Scardus, Hæmus, which, to the northwest joins the Alps in the small Istrian peninsula, and to the east fades away into the Black Sea in two branches." *Goes: Versuch einer Wissenschaftlichen Erdbeschreibung* (Berlin: 1811), p. 11, quoted in Predrag Simic, "Do the Balkans Exist?" *The Southern Balkans: Perspectives from the Region*, ed. Dimitris Triantaphyllou, *Chaillot Papers*, 46 (Paris: European Institute for Security Studies, 2001), 20.
5. Even before the Ottoman Empire, Macedonia has historical roots. On the shores of Lake Ohrid, for example, where today Albanians and Slavs are at odds, stand the ruins of a Bulgarian/Macedonian medieval fortress which fell in 1014

A.D. After a series of successes against the Byzantine empire, Macedonian czar Samuil's forces met defeat in on the slopes of the Belasica mountains at Vodca: "the place where the eyes were taken out." According to legend, Byzantine emperor Basil II, known more commonly as "Basil, the Bulgar Slayer," blinded all but every tenth man of Samuil's 14,000 soldiers. The sighted foot soldiers thus led their defeated comrades back to Samuil's palace in Ohrid. According to legend, Czar Samuil, horrified by what he saw, fell dead immediately upon witnessing the return of his defeated army.

6. Stoyan Pribichevich, *Macedonia: Its People and History*(University Park: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1982), p. 95.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

8. Alice Ackerman, *Making Peace Prevail: Preventing Violent Conflict in Macedonia* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1999), p. 54.

9. Goce Delchev, one of the 1893 founders of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (Vatreshna Makedonska Revolutsionna Organizatsiya) is a symbol of liberation from Ottoman Turks for both Bulgaria and Macedonia. Dimitrija Cupovski, in a 1913 article, described the 35 years between the Congress of Berlin and the Balkan Wars as "one bloody page of continuous struggle of the Macedonian people for their liberation." Between 1898 and 1903 there were 400 Macedonian-Turkish confrontations. Multiple European press reports confirmed the terror and violence conducted by the Turks on Macedonians during the 19th century. Rebecca West in *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* declared that the subsequent reprisal activities of IMRO in the region were the most effective "terrorism" in Europe.

10. John Shea, *Macedonia and Greece: The Struggle to Define a New Balkan Nation* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1997), pp. 169, 171.

11. Keith Brown, interview at the Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University, 4 April 2001.

12. This geographic division is, admittedly, a contentious claim. In the interest of space and time, the above divisions reflect only the facts of physical geography of the region known throughout history as "Macedonia." The authors allow that the present Republic of Macedonia comprises only a portion of what the Macedonian kingdom of Philip and Alexander represents. Further, the northwest and sections of the western region of the Republic of Macedonia, an area that is predominantly ethnic Albanian, themselves lie outside what is commonly considered the boundaries of ancient Macedonia. Further, as an example of how boundaries in Southeast Europe have become a geographical palimpsest, the villages of Debar, Kicevo, and Tetovo in Macedonia were part of the Kosovo "frontier" from 1913 to 1944 yet today comprise the western boundaries of Macedonia. A number of Albanian insurgents thus view the region as irredenta that does not belong to Macedonia, even as some of the most important cultural sites (such as the monastery of Sveti Jovan Bigorski) are situated here.

13. Ackerman, p. 55.

14. Further complicating the blurred distinctions of cultural, historic, and ethnic geographies, the "Great Disaster" of 1922 in Asia Minor--in which Mustafa Kemal's forces permanently pushed the Greek population out of Anatolia and burned Smyrna to the ground--led to the exchange of populations between Greece, Bulgaria, and Turkey in 1923. Thus, most of the Greek refugees from Asia Minor replaced the Slavic and Turkish elements in Greek Macedonia (an area that Slavic Macedonians commonly refer to as "Aegean Macedonia"). Much of the once predominant--and Slavic--population of Greek Macedonia moved north to present-day Macedonia and Bulgaria. Kemal (who in 1934 assumed the name of "Atatürk") laid the foundation for the modern Turkish state with his brilliant campaign of 1921-1922; his actions affected the dynamics of Macedonia as well. For a description of post-World War I Macedonia as Old and South Serbia and the raising of Albanian national awareness, see Aydin Babuna, "The Albanians of Kosovo and Macedonia: Ethnic Identity Superceding Religion," *Nationalities Papers*, 28 (March 2000), 68-69.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

16. Ibid., p. 69.

17. Erich Frankland, "Struggling With Collective Security and Recognition in Europe: The Case of Macedonia," *European Security*, 4 (Summer 1995), 366.

18. "Kosova" (pronounced "ko-SO-va") is the Albanian pronunciation of the area Serbs refer to as Kosovo-Metohija. "Kosovo" itself derives from the genitive form of the Serbian word for "crow"--referring to the defeat of Serbian medieval knights by Ottoman forces at "Kosovo Polje" (the "Field of the Black Birds") in 1389.

19. Jeffrey Smith, "Birth of New Rebel Army: Macedonian Guerilla Group Forming in Kosovo Poses Threat of Expanded Conflict in Balkans," *The Washington Post*, 30 March 2001, p. A1, internet, <http://infoweb5.newsbank.com>, accessed 1 May 2001.

20. Notably, the document admitted that there are no military solutions to the problems in Macedonia and that any solution should be based on the "domestic political process intermediated by [sic] USA and EU." The document also focuses on three demands: rehabilitation and complete reintegration into society of NLA members, reconstruction of villages and family economies destroyed during the 2001 conflict, and allowing those citizens fulfilling their military (conscript) obligation to serve in their birth municipalities.

21. Although their usage is problematic, the terms "ethnic Macedonians," "Slavs," and "Macedonians" are used interchangeably in the literature. This usage and understanding are indicative of the ill ease that exists in terms of ethnic identity within Macedonia, and we note that these terms will remain markers of difference as long as the synecdoche of "Macedonian" prevails over the sense that both Albanians and Slavs might reasonably associate with this identity.

22. Babuna, pp. 80-81. To be accurate, we should acknowledge that the PDP represents both ethnic Albanian and Turkish constituencies.

23. Loring M. Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict: Ethnic Nationalism in a Transnational World* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1995), pp. 142-43. Admittedly, the Ohrid Framework Agreement addressed this perceived inequity and the Macedonian parliament voted on 16 November 2001 to adopt 15 equal rights amendments to the constitution.

24. Macedonian Constitution, internet, [http://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/law/mk00000\\_.html](http://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/law/mk00000_.html), accessed 18 April 2001.

25. According to the disputed 1994 census, Macedonia's population is just over two million people, with 66.6 percent ethnic Macedonians, 22.7 percent ethnic Albanian, 4 percent Turkish, 2.2 percent Roma, 2.1 percent Serb, and 2.4 percent other minorities. Ethnic Albanians of Macedonia, however, insist that they constitute 40-50 percent of the population. CIA, "Macedonia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of," *World Fact Book 2000*, internet, <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/mk.html>, accessed 2 April 2001. On parallel institutions as a differentiating factor and the Albanian population estimate, see Babuna, pp. 81-82.

26. Ackerman, p. 66.

27. Ibid., pp. 66-67.

28. Brown interview.

29. Ackerman, p. 67.

30. Ibid., p. 94.

31. Alessandra Stanley, "In Macedonia: Balkan Rarity: A Peaceful Mixture of Ethnic Groups, All Looking to the West," *The New York Times*, 29 March 1999, p. A10.

32. Once the compromise name, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), was approved by the UN, the

country was finally able to join the International Monetary Fund and attain observer status in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). However, Macedonia suffered both from Greece's embargo and from the UN blockade imposed on Serbia (Macedonia's main trading partner). Six weeks into the Greek blockade, the economic "cost" for Macedonia was \$80 million per month, an estimated 85 percent of its total export income. By 1994, the anti-Yugoslav blockade cost Macedonia \$3 billion. Accounting for the pressures of the 1999 Kosovo crisis, some estimates suggest that Macedonia's lost economic benefits since independence are as high as \$8 billion.

33. Prime Minister Ljubco Georgievski compared the 1999 refugee crisis to the equivalent of 20,000,000 Mexicans crossing the Texas border every day. Georgievski managed to survive the storm, however temporarily. One central goal of his government's policy, nonetheless, seems to have little chance of a reality in the near term: Macedonia's acceptance into NATO membership.

34. Simic, p. 24.

35. John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen Van Evera, "Redraw the Map, Stop the Killing," *The New York Times*, 19 April 1999.

36. Thomas M. Franck, "Tribe, Nation, World: Self-Identification in the Evolving International System," *Ethics and International Affairs*, 11 (1997), 155.

37. *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, "Macedonia: Stability Pact Coordinator on Prospects for Peace," 19 March 2001, internet, <http://infoweb5.newsbank.com>, accessed 1 May 2001.

38. "Macedonia: Passing Clouds?" *The Economist*, 3-9 March 2001, p. 48. Leonard J. Cohen, "Post-Milosevic Serbia," *Current History*, 100 (March 2001), 100.

39. "Macedonia: Passing Clouds?" p. 49.

40. Admittedly, the road to EU membership is a long one. The pact confers the status of potential EU candidacy to Macedonia, with a transition period of ten years toward full EU membership. For Macedonia, the Stabilization Association Agreement is concrete EU recognition of the nation's political and economic progress, especially in the areas of regional cooperation and respect of fundamental rights. "The EU and Southeastern Europe: On the Road to Europe: First Stabilisation and Association Agreement, Signed on 9 April 2001 with Former Republic of Yugoslavia," Europa, internet, [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/see/news/memo01\\_127.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/see/news/memo01_127.htm), accessed 25 April 2001. For a review of the applicant process, see "A Survey of EU Enlargement: Europe's Magnetic Attraction," *Economist*, 19-25 May 2001, pp. 3-4.

41. For polling data, see US Department of State, Office of Research, Opinion Analysis, "Public Says Ailing FYROM Economy Needs Trade and Investment for Growth," 4 May 2000, and "Opposition Pulls Ahead in FYROM," 21 April 2000.

42. Carl Bildt, "A Second Chance in the Balkans," *Foreign Affairs*, 80 (January/February 2001), 154.

43. Susan Woodward and Benn Steil. "A European 'New Deal' for the Balkans," *Foreign Affairs*, 78 (November-December 1999), 97-98.

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