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THE ROLE OF THE OHRID FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT AND THE PEACE PROCESS IN MACEDONIA

1. Why Is the Macedonian Case Important?

The Macedonian case of conflict mitigation could and should be indeed taken as a paradigmatic and very didactic one. One could easily learn a lot on how *not* to carry out conflict prevention, and even more - on how *not to rush* into claiming a fantastic success story in post-conflict reconstruction. In spite of the general optimism and praise on the alleged success story, it's a high time to summon courage and to put it as analytically as candidly that there is not yet any room for creating another fairytale on peace and flourishing multiethnic democracy in Macedonia. Particularly the last four years witnessed much more 'political correctness' in praising the 'miracle' of the Framework Agreement (FA) than cool-headed and honest analysis and reality-check of its practical implementation. Thus with so much hypocrisy and wishful thinking it seems impossible to really differentiate what is simulation from what is true, and even less to draw lessons learned for the sake of the Macedonia's future, the region and maybe other similar cases elsewhere.

So far Macedonia and its people did not get any palpable benefit from all those tributes and proclaimed admiration coming from the so-called international community. On the contrary, the credit was always taken by those who had contributed to the conflict escalation and even conflict mismanagement - i.e. both domestic and international political elites! In the context of the Macedonian case one can talk about the so-called 'banality of the ethnic conflict' or to paraphrase Mary Kaldor - in its haste to fix the problem the international community fell in the trap of the local conflict parties and rushed to embrace the thesis of ancient ethnic hatred between the ethnic groups and even impossibility for them to live together. Thus, the simplest solution was to 'separate' the 'hostile' ethnic groups, to impose political power-sharing and territorial arrangements that would guarantee a sort of a negative peace (based on ethnicitization of politics and ghettoisation of the citizens of different ethnic backgrounds). The simplest solution is not always the best solution, but it fulfils the criteria of a quick fix, at least, on a short-run. To be frank, it is exactly what

the so-called international community is ready and willing to do and what the local elites are able and interested to achieve in order to govern the country as long as possible. As for long-term results, there is still a lot of uncertainty but one can already make a preliminary remark: the road to hell is indeed paved with good intentions! Or to put it more mildly, the post-Ohrid Macedonia is already on a track very different from the one that was envisaged by the 'founding fathers' of the Framework Agreement. One could even say that 'founding fathers' did not have a clear idea when drafting the document full of compromises, controversies and double-speak. Today there is almost nothing left from the idea of the 'civic approach' declared in the document; multiethnicity has been sacrificed and replaced by bi-nationality, while the power-sharing arrangement makes democracy a pipedream.

Macedonia seems to be doomed to be a success story no matter how imperfect it was/is. Prior to the 2001 armed conflict it had been known as an 'oasis of peace', mostly because everybody needed at least one peaceful actor and alleged success in the regional nightmare, especially since the Bosnian war's horrors became widely broadcasted. The very fact that there was no overt violence and hostility was highly praised - only because this 'achievement' was so self-evident in comparison to all other cases in the region. And again, in 2001 there was no time to 'cry over the spilled milk' or to analyze why the so much praised conflict prevention failed. Instead the focus swiftly moved on other priorities: containment of the violence, imposition of a 'solution' and affirmation of a renewed Macedonian 'success story' - this time in terms of post-conflict peace-building. Here one should certainly refer to the international community not because it is to be blamed for everything but mostly because it was obvious that the nascent state and immature elites could not possibly manage the extremely difficult situation due to the lack of internal democratic legitimacy and state capability.

2. The Path from "Oasis of Peace" to "Powder Keg:" Background Information on Macedonia (1991–2001)

Macedonia had been the last miracle on the territory of former Yugoslavia. A well-known peace researcher (Haakan Wiberg) has noted that there were three miracles during the decade of conflict in former Yugoslavia. The first miracle was the delayed outbreak of violent conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Despite the bad prognoses, the explosive ethnic mix, the spillover effect from conflicts in Slovenia and Croatia, and the inappropriate intervention (or better, non-intervention) of the international community, Bosnia did not slide into war until spring 1992. The second miracle was the peaceful resistance led by Ibrahim Rugova in Kosovo. Despite all the preconditions that forewarned of an outbreak of hostilities (i.e., the repressive Milosevic regime and arms culture of the Albanians), Rugova managed to maintain a course of peaceful resistance against the Milosevic regime and suppress hawks in his own ranks. The international community's flirtation with Milosevic over the signing and implementation of the Dayton Agreement, together with the growth of KLA, unavoidably brought an end to the phase of hostile coexistence in Kosovo. Armed conflict soon escalated, while the intervention of NATO fit all too well into the overall spiral of violence.

The third miracle was the Macedonian "oasis of peace" that incorporated a multiethnic model of coexistence and the UN's unique preventive deployment mission. For ten years, Macedonia was perceived as a successful case of conflict (violence) prevention in the midst of a region characterized by ethnic cleansing, massacres, refugees, destruction, etc. However, Macedonia finally collapsed under the pressure of accumulated and unresolved regional conflicts, without ever having a real chance to turn toward its own society and transform its inherent internal conflict potential. The roots of the problem had always been within the country, but the international community failed to recognize the fact that Macedonia had always been part of one of the conflict triangles on the territory of former Yugoslavia. The illusion of peace was thus grounded in a misconception that the impact of regional problems could have been prevented from spilling across the new Macedonian state's borders.

The sad truth about the Macedonian conflict lies neither in its occurrence (after ten years of peace) nor in its death toll (which, stated somewhat cynically, was suspiciously low). Pitiably, neither the Macedonian citizens nor the international community understood that the conflict escalation was a consequence of unfinished conflicts that had begun long ago and far away in Slovenia. Unfortunately, the most common and politically influential analyses of former Yugoslavia have advocated the simplification and vivisection of problems into small pieces ('salami tactics'), thereby obscuring the complexity of a picture that had never been black and white. It was always easier to identify good and evil, progressive and regressive/repressive forces and majority and minority groups. Rather than confronting the roots of conflicts, analyses tended to focus on the actors in various conflict scenarios.

Having avoided being drawn into the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia, yet at the same time in the direct vicinity of the region torn apart by ethnic conflict, Macedonia received no special international attention in the first months and years of Yugoslavia's breakdown. Whatever international attention Macedonia received appears to have resulted from two factors: (1) the horrific situation in Bosnia and the consequent CNN effect and (2) the vociferous Greek ethno-nationalist reaction to the appearance of a new state whose name was viewed as an undeniable part of Greek national history. The first factor enabled President Gligorov's call for the preventive deployment of international forces to be heard. Thus, the image of an "oasis of peace" was created for the benefit of both domestic and international audiences. Local elites could claim *de facto* international recognition, while internationals provided a face-saving mission to compensate for all its missed opportunities and mistakes in Croatia and Bosnia. The UNPREDEP mission became a paradigmatic case of preventive peacekeeping and a source of great pride for the internationals (let alone numberless scholarly works, PhD theses, political careers, etc.).

However, the reality was a bit different. Macedonia had been far from an 'oasis of peace', although the historical "powder keg" had been seemingly defused (or, rather, it could explode due to other than the well-known historical reasons). An almost endless list of problems has accompanied Macedonia's state-building efforts since 1991. These included, to mention just a few, an extremely weak economic base, almost non-existent state and democratic traditions, an underdeveloped political culture as well as an immature culture of peace (or, rather, a dominant gun culture), and a turbulent and not always friendly neighborhood. The strong impact of ethno-nationalist violent conflicts in the region played an important role in determining the conflict prevention efforts in Macedonia. These paid overwhelming attention to the country's ethnic mix, which was frequently referred to as an "explosive Macedonian salad." In sum, for a period of ten years, Macedonia witnessed and hosted an array of

international organizations whose projects focused on conflict prevention and resolution, inter-ethnic dialogue and tolerance, etc., yet these projects paid far more attention to the classic cliché of inter-ethnic relations and largely neglected more fundamental conflict.

It is possible to identify two ways in which the international community made catastrophes regarding Macedonia: first, by doing something - where Macedonia became collateral damage (sanctions against Yugoslavia hit hardly the collapsing economy of the young state, or the attack on Yugoslavia in 1999 creating great losses of market plus refugee influx with strong impact on the internal societal plight); and second, by explicitly trying to doctor Macedonia (UNPREDEP, Framework Agreement, the storm against the referendum in 2004, etc.). In either case, it may be accused of incompetence (having no idea about what the actual effects of its 'medicine' would be), indifference (not caring about the consequences as long as some more important regional goals was to be achieved) and insincerity (knowing well what would be the consequences but pretending not to and proclaiming beliefs opposite to the knowledge).

As long as the illusion of peacefulness and being the "good guys" lasted it had a double effect on the society's behavior. On one hand, it had truly inspiring and encouraging influence on societal actors, both in the political sphere and in civil society. The society tried to live up to the image bestowed upon it by the international community. On the other hand, it seems that peacefulness was taken for granted: there was little awareness that negative peace does not signify genuine peace and still contains an explosive potential that can be activated under certain circumstances. In sum, neither local nor international efforts tackled the roots of conflict, which was embedded in the economic and social sphere. Actually, Macedonia showed all signs of a weak state early on. There was lack of societal cohesion and consensus over what organising principles should determine the contest for state power and how that power should be executed. The state had low capacity to provide for all citizens, and there was a significant democratic deficit in the state institutions. Part of the society interpreted the lack of capacity as a failure of political will to deliver better conditions for all citizens. Since 1991 Macedonia has been highly vulnerable to external economic and political influences and turbulence - some of which originated in the regional context. And finally, there was low degree of popular legitimacy accorded to the holders of the state power: some parts of the society saw the state as an expression of "Macedonian-ness" while others were disappointed in highly corrupted elites (of same ethnic kin). In sum, the social injustice and inequalities were easily translated into ethnic terms, partly because that was the easiest way to politically mobilize the insecure citizens. And to make things worse, there was not a single case of a workable multiethnic model in the wider region. On the contrary, ethnic cleansing and segregation shaped the new political entities and the state-building process was engraved with blood. Also it became clear that the international community was eventually accepting the situation on the ground as fait accompli and even blessing it through a process of constitutional and electoral engineering. In sum, the patterns were not only present in the region but also they were effective. Thus anybody who intended to alter the situation in Macedonia could easily assume the outcome and the tactics of the international mediators.

The absence of an "implicit contract" between the society and the state made impossible any efficient realisation of internal sovereignty. The state was concerned about its sovereignty, while the society was overwrought with identity problems. Thus, they moved on different and opposing trajectories. In course of time, and

especially after the 1999 NATO intervention, the Macedonian state lost the capacity to command loyalties and to operate on its whole territory. In regard to monopoly of legitimate use of force, numerous incidents indicated the phenomenon of growing para-military forces and mafia gangs. The violent conflict was predestined by the internal and regional developments, and in early 2001 the state was forced to use force (quite amateurishly), which introduced the *circulus vitiosus* of the state strength-dilemma.

Actually, throughout a decade-long period there was a gross misperception was that Macedonia needed conflict *prevention*. Conflict as such had already existed; what was necessary were efforts to develop early warning mechanisms and to prevent the outbreak of violence. When violence occurred in early 2001, it appeared that not many were truly surprised. Advocates of the conflict prevention claimed they had always known that Macedonia could explode – thus their efforts, while not fully successful, had been justified. Others, who had never believed in the "oasis of peace", gained undeniable proof that the country was doomed to ethnic conflict. However, the missing link was the lack of analysis of non-ethnic sources of conflict. In other words, very few posed the question of whether the Macedonian conflict was primarily ethnically determined, or better disregarded the mutual impact on human insecurity on societal insecurity and the state-building process.

3. Towards a New "Miracle": The 2001 Crisis in Macedonia

Interpretations of the outbreak of violent conflict in Macedonia, like those of the ten-year period of peace, reflect similar elements of "virtual reality." Analysts' interpretations of the developments in early 2001 vary greatly. Was it a "fake war" whose background was a secret agreement to divide the country, including its spoils? Did the crisis arise from criminal activity involving both Albanian and Macedonian groups? Did Albanians employ violence to incite a dialogue over the final political status of Kosovo? Was this an instance of "controlled chaos" to speed up the process of federalization in Macedonia? Was the violence generated by problems related to issues of human and/or minority rights? These different questions arise from views that are not mutually exclusive and they also draw attention to highly divergent explanations of Macedonia's security condition and future.

It is peculiar that four years after the conflict neither the international nor the domestic experts have a clear definition on 2001 events. Throughout the six months of hostilities, the position of the international community 'evolved' dramatically: what at the beginning were "a small group of extremists" and "thugs and terrorists" (in the words of NATO Secretary General) in matters of time became "human right fighters", while Ahmeti was praised as a "reliable partner" (in the words of then NATO Ambassador to Macedonia). Even today the international sources and/or institutions operate with qualifications such as: ethnic conflict, "at brink of a civil war", rebellion motivated by quest for greater human rights of ethnic Albanians, etc.

When it comes to the domestic qualifications of 2001, there are also vast of claims. For instance, the main ideologue of then Albanian National Liberation Army (today's PM, Fazli Veliu) in his recently published book speaks about "struggle for

territories"[1], while Arben Xhaferi and DPA leadership have announced their forthcoming "White Book on 2001" in which they promise to explain that NLA's main goal was taking the positions of power by 'military coup d'etat' (in regard to then DPA's position in the ruling coalition). On the ethnic Macedonian side, there are also a few versions on what really happened, ranging from an external aggression from Kosovo, anti-state terrorism of NLA, faked war, etc.

From the constitutional and legal point of view, Macedonia lived in peace in 2001 - i.e. there was neither state of war nor state of emergency, despite the obvious fact that the military and police forces were mobilized and used against practically unidentified enemy. Another peculiarity was forming of the so-called Government of National Unity under the pressure of the EU. Those were one of the two major impositions by the international community, which hoped for a political rather than a military solution of the crisis. Also the 'carrot' was given in a form of a Stabilization and Association Agreement for Macedonia.

An objective analysis might point out several characteristics of the Macedonian 'little war' and its aftermath, which together make the conflict unique. With the exception of the "Ten Days War" in Slovenia, the violent conflict in Macedonia was the shortest and most bloodless one on the territory of former Yugoslavia. Officially, it began in late February 2001 with sporadic shootings and clashes around the remote and almost unknown village of Tanusevci on the Macedonia-Kosovo border. The Ohrid Framework Agreement, signed on 13 August 2001, was meant to mark the end of armed conflict six months later. According to some military analysts, the time of effective, direct and all-out combat between the two armed structures was unbelievably short - less than 4 hours in six months period!?

Despite outcries over casualties, massacres, mass graves, tortures, and kidnapping, it is a simple fact that the total number of casualties (200 on both sides in the official records) hardly reflects a bloody civil war. Actually, the authorities have never come with an exact list of deaths (both among civilians and security structures). The figure of around 100 deaths on the Albanian side has never been confirmed, despite the assumptions that the figure was much higher. Former NLA has remained mystery until nowadays, equally when it comes to its size, military strength and structure, armament, the origin of its fighters. In any case, the fight of 2001 created a myth and glory on the side of ethnic Albanians, which is still evidenced by growing number of monuments and memorials, songs and other artistic expressions, let alone the rhetoric which can be still heard during the parliamentary debates. Opposite, the ethnic Macedonians (and the representatives of the other ethnic groups that fought the side of the state security structures) feel humiliated and defeated in a 'war of self-defence that they were not allowed winning'.

Analyses of the possible causes of conflict in Macedonia reveal even more paradoxes. In February 2001, public opinion polls indicated a high level of satisfaction among ethnic Albanians with regard to inter-ethnic relations as well as with other aspects of their lives. Ethnic Macedonians tended to perceive the situation differently; yet in general they did not consider inter-ethnic relations as one of the biggest problems facing the country. Rather, ethnic Macedonians were focused on the earth-shaking political scandals (phone-tapping affair) and the rift within the

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[1] Paradoxically, the book's public promotion coincided by an official statement of Javier Solana's spokesperson who said that Albanians were fighting for greater human rights. Such a collision amused the Macedonian public a lot: it looked as if the representative of the international community knew better what was all about then one of the main organizers of the military crisis.

governing coalition. In general citizens were (and are still) more concerned with unemployment, crime, corruption, and poverty.

Four years later, however, many details about the main military 'offensives' seem to indicate a fake war.[2] According to many previous testimonies, including the report of the International Crisis Group (ICG), the March offensive by Macedonian forces in the Tetovo region was agreed upon by telephone. Specifically, DPA leadership asked rebels to retreat from their positions on the Sara Mountain and thus to provide a sense of 'victory' for frustrated state security forces and the completely delegitimised Macedonian governing party (VMRO).

In sum, the Macedonian public still does not know who the real actors of the crisis were, nor do they know which actors or groups used the crisis for political and/or lucrative gains. If so many important details about the causes, actors and actions in 2001 are still murky it is logical to ask how one can be sure that there was a truthful diagnosis, prognosis and therapy of the Macedonian conflict?

4. The Context and Characteristics of the Framework Agreement

The provisions of the official Framework Agreement had been drafted on several occasions throughout the spring/summer 2001, discussed by numerous local and international actors, some of who with official mandates, others with not so clear mandates and capacities (Frowick, for instance). As for the communications between the local actors also many details remain in the sphere of speculations. For example, while allegedly refusing any contacts with the NLA leadership according to some speculations the top Macedonian leaders (such as, today's President Crvenkovski) had already met Ali Ahmeti during the conflict.

Whatever is the truth (which will be made known many years from now) it is undeniable that the final negotiations in Ohrid represented much of a final act of the theatre performance rather than a substantial part of the peace settlement. The expert input was also questionable, especially in two main aspects: 1) the unclear relationship between the domestic and foreign experts, and 2) the level of influence of

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[2] This thesis is difficult to explicitly prove (as it is the case with many other faked operations on the territory of former Yugoslavia, such as the small 'Operetta War' in Slovenia agreed between Kucan and Milosevic, and the 'Operation Storm' in Croatia that had been agreed between Tudjman and Milosevic). The author conducted a series of interviews and informal talks with representatives from the diplomatic court in Macedonia, members of the police and army units, domestic and foreign journalists, NGO activists, etc. The diplomats testify their astonishment with the lack of readiness and paralysis of the state security sector to handle the crisis in its very early and not so serious stage, as if somebody wanted it to escalate further and to spread within the country. During the March offensive in Tetovo, the journalists were allowed to report from the spot only when the scene was prepared so that the Minister of Interior Boskovski could appear in full shine of the 'victory'. The informal speculations indicated, however, that the retreat of the Albanian forces had been arranged from the DPA office. The deal included a safe retreat of the UCK troops with the armament, while the Macedonian side got an opportunity to prove to the public its serious efforts to protect the country. The Macedonian public still does not know what really happened, but now and then there are testimonies (including the one given by Ali Ahmeti) that raise suspicions about the 'reality of the war'. The thesis of faked war (as opposite to the VMRO thesis of inter-ethnic conflict combined with external aggression of Macedonia from Kosovo) was the leit motif of all independent media and part of the electoral campaign of SDSM in 2001.

the expert advice and constitutional knowledge on the roughly political process based on compromises, pressures and unprincipled bargains. In sum, as a Macedonian proverb puts it - with too many midwives, the child is likely to be born with deformities.

There are several questionable aspects in the Ohrid Agreement that have significant ramifications for Macedonia's prospects. First, the international community (particularly the EU, NATO and the US) claims that the Agreement it brokered put an end to the conflict and averted a possible civil war. Yet no conflict can be possibly brought to an end by a written document. Conflict *per se* is a process, or, better yet, a cycle. One can never say with full precision when it begins and when it ends. Conflict resolution seems to be a concept that reflects the wishful thinking of international actors. Macedonia, like all countries in the region, called (and still calls) for conflict transformation, and in that respect the Ohrid Agreement delivered a significant step in instigating violence reduction, which is not the same as violence elimination. Furthermore, it is an exaggeration to call a fake war a civil war.

Even more puzzling is the list of signatories to the Agreement. The document was signed by the leaders of the four major political parties, yet none of these parties had ever claimed to be in conflict with each other or took any responsibility for the incited violence. Certainly, "shadow" actors, such as NLA (National Liberation Army) leader Ali Ahmeti (who was given a voice by the Xhaferi's DPA) and facilitators from the international community, also had a say in the negotiations. Interestingly, most of the direct negotiators tried one way or another to find a way out of the commitments made in the agreement, while those most committed to its implementation are the then "shadow" participants (today's party of Ahmeti, Democratic Union for Integration). In any case, the way Ohrid negotiations were perceived in the general public indicates its major shortcomings: first, it was far from being inclusive - i.e. not all affected parties were given representation and voice; second, it was highly secretive and suspiciously non-transparent (even on the day of its signing, the time and place were kept secret from the general public until the last second); third, it was not a negotiation process launched by the parties in the conflict but mostly imposed by the so-called 'third parties' (EU and USA); fourth, the 'facilitators' were not perceived as neutral and non-biased due to their long and substantial involvement in all major developments in the region (and particularly in Kosovo), and finally - the domestic leaders suffered catastrophic lack of legitimacy among their own constituencies. Referring to this last point, one could say that rather weak and non-democratic leaders who contributed the most to the conflict explosion were given international support to decide upon the destiny and the future of the ordinary citizens who had never really been involved in direct inter-ethnic armed hostilities.

One of the essential specifics of the Macedonian conflict is in the fact that the citizens were not overtly involved in the clashes, which were limited to armed forces on both sides. The surprisingly low level of inter-communal violence in ethnically mixed localities such as Gostivar, Kumanovo, Skopje, or Struga, indicates that the majority citizens were not very enthusiastic about fighting for national or ethnic causes. In fact, there was an unexpectedly high level of desertion among the Macedonian security forces, including special units and reservists. Recruited reservists were drawn mainly from rural parts of the country and lower socio-economical groups. Tragically enough, some of the soldiers who were killed had never been employed. On the Albanian side, there were also indications that the NLA had engaged in the forced mobilization of fighters. Families were forced to choose

between giving a son or a large amount of money as compensation. The ordinary people were mostly victims and 'collateral damages' of major actors, who claimed to fight exactly on behalf and for the sake of these villagers and poor people. Gradually, each ethnic group identified its own 'heroes', 'defenders', 'martyrs' - some of whom later became their beloved political leaders and representatives in the parliament, although many of them came directly from the emigration and diaspora, or even from the neighbouring Kosovo.

The second misinterpretation is that the Ohrid Agreement was followed by the disarmament and disbanding of NLA guerrillas. According to NATO representatives, nobody really expected the NATO-led mission 'Essential Harvest' to disarm KLA fighters completely; it was largely a symbolic gesture and confidence-building measure. The so-called disarmament was the collection of weapons given up voluntarily. Actually, neither NATO nor the KLA command had full oversight or command over the process. On the contrary, the collection of only 3,000 weapons, some of which had purely of museum value, served to strengthen various "conspiracy theories" among Macedonians. The rapid appearance of the new Albanian National Army (ANA) was viewed as the farcical outcome of a "harvest" that merely helped the National Liberation Army (NLA) to redress and rename itself. Intelligence sources from Brussels have subsequently confirmed the existence of the so-called Army of the Republic of Ilirida (ARI).

There was no clear evidence on the amount of arms circulating freely among ethnic Macedonians. Some analysts rightly stress the fact that ethnic Macedonians have never been disarmed, especially in light of newly formed paramilitary forces and racketeer groups. More recent sources indicate that the Macedonian society is, and always has been heavily armed. Unfortunately, the charade of war helped make nowadays daily incidents appear minor and insignificant.

The third false perception of the Ohrid Agreement concerns the newly initiated "political process." Such rhetoric undermines ten years of political development. In the shrewd words of the Albanian political leader Abdurahman Aliti, in the Party for Democratic Progress (PDP), if the war was conducted to create a new Albanian political party, then the war was unnecessary because Ali Ahmeti could have established his political party without war. In a recent interview Arben Xhaferi argued that 2001 events did not speed up Albanians' rights - or in other words, the armed conflict slowed down the then ongoing process of transformation of the Macedonian state.

The problem is that political process calls for patience, hard work, and risk-taking and 'war heroes', on the contrary, have found shortcuts to glory and public support. Political reforms in any normal society call for reasonable and patient reformists, which is exactly what Macedonia lacks. People with neither credentials nor political virtues could become heroes and martyrs overnight, but despite pushing the political process forward, it appears unlikely that their final goal is a democratic society. Politics is about achieving a civil culture through the institutionalization and regulation of social conflict by peaceful means. In Macedonia, politicians become "freedom fighters" and "defenders of the nation." Political reforms and good governance involve not only legal and institutional changes but also reasoned political leadership and strong civil society.

Alain Le Roy commented that the implementation of the Ohrid Agreement is proof of the "maturity of Macedonian political parties." These words echoed those of the Javier Solana, who had praised the four leaders of the political parties in June 2001. In Solana's opinion Macedonian citizens should have been "proud and trustful

of their leaders who were going to find a way out of the crisis". As the ICG Report indicated, it was a public secret that the governing coalition had pushed Macedonia into war due to Mafia interests.[3] The Macedonian crisis was a consequence of the failure and immaturity of political parties who endangered the entire society.

The Ohrid Agreement did not meet two other criteria for a successful peace settlement, particularly in long run. First, it did not meet the criterion of inclusiveness. The process, under the heavy hand of international "facilitators," did not bring together all major actors. It succeeded in assembling the most visible actors, who were mainly flirting with their support for the armed resistance, yet there was a pronounced lack of support from their constituencies. The heavy international presence later provided an alibi for all participants who wanted disclaim their support of the Agreement's provisions. This alibi was one of the most frequently employed political arguments in the 2002 pre-election campaign. Georgievski railed against the international conspiracy against the small and powerless Macedonian nation, while Xhaferi's deputy, Menduh Taqi questioned the Agreement by stating that it was not the final word of Albanians' demands. The implementation of a peace settlement depends primarily on the support it finds among local stakeholders. The secrecy surrounding the Ohrid negotiations provided an
excuse to politicians when their constituencies questioned their accountability.

In conflict mitigation, like in medicine, therapy should be prescribed based on a well-grounded diagnosis. Thus the crucial question in Macedonia is if the remedy fits the illness that caused the disruption. As stated above, inter-ethnic relations had already been strained as a result of both old and relatively new (post-1991) problems. It is true that Macedonian society was insufficiently inclusive in social and economic terms. Citizens of Albanian origin did not enjoy a fair share in the state administration and other social services and were thus frustrated by a sense of marginalization. The distribution of jobs, power, and resources was understandably viewed as ethnically motivated. These factors breed resentment and the potential for direct violence as a response to structural violence (violence embedded in an unjust state system). However, ethnic Macedonians themselves were also highly dissatisfied with "their" governing elites. Ultimately, it appears that impoverished and maltreated citizens, regardless of ethnic affiliation, had solid grounds for social unrest. The distrust between the ethnic groups provided room for ethnic manipulation and an ethnic response to social injustice. Living in separate worlds, Macedonians and Albanians are still unable to see that the real causes of their misfortunes have very little to do with their ethnic differences.

5. The Reality-Check: The Ohrid Peace Process Four Years Later

In the course of four years, the Ohrid Framework Agreement has become Macedonia's best achievement in fifteen years of transitions as far as it concerns the international and domestic officials. It almost overshadowed the 'oasis of peace'

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[3] International Crisis Group, *Macedonia's Public Secret: How Corruption Drugs Country Down*, 14 August, 2002 accessed at:
www.crisisweb.org/projects/showreport.cfm?reportid=739

tribute (probably, because it proved to be unsuccessful). Nowadays Macedonia is mostly praised as a new 'miracle' thanks to this document that allegedly miraculously averted civil war. It is still the most frequently mentioned argument in any domestic or international propaganda campaign. However, instead of rushing into another miracle what the country's citizens really need is an honest reality-check. In what sense post-Ohrid Macedonia is better than in the 'oasis of peace'? Are the roots of violence and conflict potential eliminated or eased? Does power-sharing system as effective and/or democratic as its 'good-fathers' expected? Does Macedonia fulfill the requirements for a successful consensus democracy, according to the famous Lijphart theoretical prescription? What is the share of success/responsibility of the internationals and what of locals? Who are the real stakeholders? Who gains what and how? Now when everybody agrees that the Ohrid Agreement is (almost) brought to a completion, what is next? Is there any meaningful development that would open the process of over arching the 'frame' defined in a unprincipled way in 2001? Too many question, but very few would like to really go into a deeper analysis. Especially, at such a critical point for the region as 2006 undoubtedly is...

It is believed that the Framework Agreement's worth lies in addressing some of the justifiable grievances of the Albanian population in Macedonia. However, its adoption and subsequent direct influence on the constitution-making process delivered another very important message. As many Albanian intellectuals and politicians have argued, it has once again been proved (like in Kosovo) that violence can be worthwhile as a means for political change. In other words, in order to obtain results, violence along with death and destruction appeared to have been justified. Following the 2001 crisis, Macedonia has become a region in which violence has been legitimised.

Let's for a moment have a look on post-Ohrid Macedonia from the perspective of Galtung's theory of violence. Indeed the direct, physical violence has been mostly ended, at least when it comes to military hostilities and actions. But the reality-check shows a country in which military violence has gone through a mutation - and is nowadays mostly present in a form of criminal activities, lawlessness in certain parts of the state territory, parading of various para-military groups, such as the one that occupied Kondovo village, or racketeers under the disguise of private security firms, proliferation of illegal small arms and light weapons (estimated quantity reaches over 200,000 pieces in free circulations), or even dramatically increased level od domestic violence. The aspect of the structural violence (the one embedded in the unjust societal and political institutions) deserves more attention so it will be elaborated a bit later in the text. As for the so-called culture of violence, it is not a new phenomenon - yet it represents one of the most alarming ingredients of the everyday societal context. These involve not only patterns of thought but also everyday public and private rhetoric that promotes or justifies war and violence. Both Macedonians and Albanians demonstrate impotence in dealing with their common traumas and fears. Instead each group gets together around one's own version of 2001 war heroism and/or treachery. The story is not equally perceived. For instance, ethnic Albanians in Macedonia believe that the "violence was necessary and brought them only good", thus least they can do for their heroes is to memorize them, build them appropriate monuments and create poems - let alone to vote for them in the elections. On the other hand, ethnic Macedonians suffer a trauma of defeat, but also of a treachery of their own politicians who not failed to protect the country from the military attacks but even accepted the 'terrorists' as coalition partners in the government. Unfortunately, the international community as well as the local authorities refuses to see that the post-Ohrid

Macedonia's foundations include culture of violence, which becomes a heritage for the future generations. The official version of dealing with the conflict past (truth) is imposed amnesia (in addition to the legal amnesty). The official propaganda on the "magnificent success of the Ohrid Agreement" resembles the post-WWII paradigm of "Brotherhood and Unity". If one is to draw any analogy between them, it should be consisted in the following fact: when the 'official truth' and the narrative (oral, family) history collide there is a high degree of likelihood that the conflict legacy and culture of violence will be transferred from one generation to another, each of them adding new elements of myth - no matter if it will be glory or trauma. The result is as it is: the seed of conflict will stay with the new generations for a very long time.

From a four year perspective, and particularly bearing in mind the horrors of other ex-YU conflicts, there is a wide-spread belief about the achievements of the Ohrid peace process:

- Cessation of direct violence is something that very few would depreciate, not because the developments prior to signing the Agreement had been particularly dramatic but more because the 'controlled chaos' that was in place in 2001 could have turned into uncontrolled bloody outcome had there been more civilian casualties and inter-communal violence;

- The Agreement addressed some legitimate grievances of ethnic Albanians in Macedonia although most of them had already been constitutionalized yet not fully implemented (minority rights, especially language and educational rights), or some were on a good way to be achieved in due time (equitable representation). In other words, the same progress could have been achieved without violence but would have called for more time, patience and dialogue;

- The post-conflict re-composition of the political system brought to life a completely different form of a political arrangement that made the Albanian population in general feel as a stakeholder in the state-building process. Consequently, the frustrations and pressures arising from the ethno-political mobilization have begun lessening;

- Ethnic leaderships of the two major societal groups reconciled to such a degree that former combatants re-dressed from military into civilian (political) elites, ready to follow the rules of the game. More than ever before, the ethnic Macedonian elites have become aware that their ruling position depends on being in good terms with their ethnic counterparts on the Albanian side. Finally, both ethnic leaderships hold no illusions about how profitable and favorable is to please the international community. Thus, the ethnic policy and implementation of the Ohrid Agreement have become focal points of the government policy, thus overshadowing any other reform in the country. This proved very wise tactics: in lack of capacity to transform economic or social system or to eliminate organized crime and corruption, both elites find it so convenient to swear in their loyalty to the ethnic policy and power-sharing arrangements no matter how deepening and roaring is the ongoing socio-economic crisis.

- Stabilization of interethnic relations is an obvious outcome - yet far from building bridges between deeply separated and distrustful segments of the society. In post-Ohrid Macedonia nobody (with exception to a handful NGOs) really pursues any substantial action towards confidence building, multiethnicity or substantial co-existence. Indeed even the lower degree of incidents between members of different ethnic groups is far more result of their physical separation and keeping the distance in everyday life than a

product of any meaningful togetherness and societal mingling. Illusions of living truly together, knowing each other and getting into common activities have been absent except in the wishful thinking and commissioned foreign 'expert reports';

- Finally, Macedonia deserved the EU candidate status (only) thank to the implementation of the Framework Agreement and the government's blind abiding to all suggestions and demands from Brussels and Washington, very often against the will of its own people, local expert advice or even Macedonia's national interests (for instance, joining the war in Iraq or signing the bilateral agreement with USA on ICC jurisdiction). Cynical observers wonder what would have happened with the Macedonia's EU candidate status if there had not happened 2001 violent conflict?

6. *Shortcomings of the Peace Process in Macedonia*

As already pointed out the post-Ohrid Macedonia has dramatically changed since 2001. The rather negative peace of the previous decade has been replaced with a new myth of another negative peace. What in the first decade looked like a not-quite-successful democratisation has been replaced with the political rules of a semi-protectorate and pure ethnic bargaining between elites, whose legitimacy has been coming mostly from abroad. The crucial paradigm of "peace *and* democracy" in Macedonia reads "peace *or* democracy". A political landscape of relative peace is heavily affected by a bargaining ethno-political process that can often hardly be called democratic. Despite the availability of a different rhetoric that emphasizes human rights and freedoms, the Ohrid Agreement and the Constitution have institutionalised and even entrenched ethnic differences. These changes are contrary both to the Macedonian experience of the 1990s and to the premises of a liberal (constitutional) democracy.

Here we come to the need to re-evaluate the aspect of structural violence prior to 2001 and in its aftermath. The 1991 Constitution, which was highly praised by the international community, at least formally lied the foundation for liberal democracy, freedom and equality of the citizens, guarantees for non-discrimination and protection of the fundamental human rights and freedoms. Not surprisingly, a weak state could not deliver to its citizens - thus it was unjust towards all of them. Given the highly unfavourable regional constellations but also due to the international community's failure to spare Macedonia from the imposed economic sanctions (against FR Yugoslavia as well as the ones imposed by Greece), the governance was inefficient, got corrupted and unaccountable, while the poverty was growing in the most evident form of a structural violence (as Gandhi rightly pointed out years ago). The political economy of the Macedonian conflict helped the violent outcome: the "Other" was identified as the principal guilt-bearer for one's social disadvantaged and impoverished position. The process of ethno-political mobilization and securitization made, for instance, ethnic Albanian villagers strongly believe that one of their main needs and insecurities derived from the fact that there was no university level education on Albanian language, ignoring the fact that they suffered because of lack of medical care, good infrastructure or even means to support growing in number families. In a way, the outcome of the 2001 conflict 'proved' that the injustices of the

Macedonian political system were embedded in the 1991 Constitution - the Constitution became *casus belli*!

The Framework Agreement practically provided for a new constitutional reform that was supposed to 'eliminate' the generic deformations of the previous system. Even after the constitutional reform of November 2001 (that was carried out under a very strong pressure of the international community) the Framework Agreement still remains a 'Holy Bible' in the Macedonian political and legal environment: it still overshadows the constitutional and legal norms because not only domestic actors, but also the international community keeps talking about "the implementation of the Framework Agreement" instead of implementation of the Constitution and the rule of law. The FA is not a legal but a political act; it has never been ratified by the Macedonian Parliament - thus it is not a part of the legal system neither it can have a greater political or legal power that the Constitution itself. Thus, insisting on the FA even four years after the termination of the 2001 conflict is a clear indication for undermined rule of law principle - i.e. a principle without which there can be no word of democracy and European integration.

The 'peace accord' born out of a violent conflict and imposed by the international community, failed to address the real causes of conflict, and also failed to identify peaceful structures and actors able to ensure the sustainable and peaceful development of Macedonia. The new political arrangement (power-sharing system) does not have anything to do with the basic human needs of the citizens; on the contrary it is well-known as a system that in order to be effective and not destructive should be supported by substantial financial means. In other words, this kind of 'democracy' can work but it is far too expensive for societies that cope with a high degree of poverty, unemployment and systemic corruption. Furthermore, the 'power-sharing' in Macedonia refers to ethnic (political) elites, who grossly contributed to the conflict escalation at first place and who are still principal actors in the consociational game where there is no place for participative democracy, citizens and their impact on policy-making. Macedonia is being defined as a state of communities rather than a state of its citizens. If this model is seen as vital for survival of the country, then it is fair to admit that this country can prevail only on a not quite democratic ground.

The FA is reality proved to be an awkward attempt to impose alleged 'civic approach' mixed with power-sharing elements. In reality, the parliamentary process of law-making has been downplayed in a significant manner: even the parliamentarians themselves don't pay much attention to so-called 'Ohrid laws' - which, in their mind, are to be adopted as quickly as possible because "it is a requirement arising from the FA and the international community". The quality of those laws is low and their implementation often very questionable. From a point of view of its rationality and democratic form and content, the most dubious was the Law on the Territorial Organization of 2004, which caused controversial interpretations in the country and abroad. The draft law was made in an exhausting and secretive process of bargaining over territorial boundaries of the municipalities between the leaders of the ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians within the governing coalition. The feudalistic manner of bargaining over ethnic boundaries had nothing to do with the rationality of the process of decentralization or even less with the local-self government as a form of citizens' participation in exercising power in their local communities. There was no 'early warning' on the part of the international community, who was obviously ready to applaud to whatever solution that the ethnic elites may agree upon. When the expert and intellectual community raised its voice against such a humiliation of the public's opinion and the citizens' interests the international community 'woke up';

only to start 'warning' (or better, threatening) the leaders of the citizens' referendum movement on their alleged responsibility for a violence renewal. It was a crucial point at which it became clear that Macedonia was supposed to have democracy, but their citizens were not allowed to use constitutional and legal means. Furthermore, all European envoys turned their blind eyes to the clear violation of the European Convention on Local Self-Government and even to the rather loose and 'creative' interpretation of the very FA's provisions. In sum, after the unsuccessful referendum (during which the citizens were openly named nationalists or even threatened not to vote), the Law was adopted and Macedonian territorial map became a gerrymandered ethnically divided country in which citizens' interests on a local level were sacrificed for the sake of the local governing ethnic elites.

Democratic procedures and institutions in Macedonia have become a collateral damage because the leading motto is "better peace than democracy". Whenever things turn wrong in the implementation of a certain action related to the "Ohrid peace process" the governing elites warn citizens to accept whatever solution they propose - otherwise the citizens will have to go through another conflict ordeal. Unfortunately, the international community has also switched the cups: it is so pragmatic to be ready to deal with corrupted ethnic elites rather than to take risk and give the citizens more political power and space to express their dissatisfaction with the way thing go in their country. The success of the FA's implementation serves as an alibi for all other failures and incapacities of the ruling elites. One should wonder if the international community is aware that this is a risky game: the elites they support are obviously corrupted; they have not only heavily ethnicized but also politicized the state institutions; the formula for "equitable representation of the communities" serves as an alibi for partization of the state administration with people whose only credentials are in their party belonging. Thus even more qualified and experienced Albanians are discriminated by their own ethnic kin of opposite party affiliation. State administration is still growing due to the "Ohrid key" - yet, without becoming more effective and rational. For the sake of 'peace' many forget that Macedonia is still a weak state that can hardly employ more people because of the ethnic demands without suffering economically but also socially - social injustice is being translated into an ethnic injustice, and vice versa. Circulus vitiosus could be broken only on a basis of a solid economic progress and social justice for all and everybody.

As Mary Kaldor rightly argues about international intervention in the Bosnian war, one can also assert that, in the Macedonian case, internationals rushed to accept a presumption widely supported by local hard-line nationalists involved in the conflict. Namely, they defined the conflict in ethnic terms, thus searching for a solution that would not only respect ethnic differences but also institutionalize them. Furthermore, the same mistake was repeated of identifying two conflicting parties (Macedonians versus Albanians). The others (i.e. members of the other ethnic groups that comprise 10 percent of the population) are totally marginalized if not totally discriminated, while Macedonia is growing into a bi-national state and society. The "third party," i.e., the international community, imposed the "peace solution," i.e., it "stole" the conflict. Even worse, the international community was not perceived as an unbiased mediator by the negotiating parties but rather as an allied or interfering party, respectively. The so-called solution is in essence a compromise, which is proudly emphasized by the international community. However, anyone familiar with conflict mitigation would argue that this is a formula for unfinished conflict, i.e., a recipe for renewed violence.

Until now the Ohrid Agreement proved to be a far too flexible compromise agreement that have gone through many 'creative' interpretations and readings. Careful observes have no doubts that it is only a transitional solution. In its rush to fix the problem (which was partly exaggerated and partly fabricated), the international community reached towards a 'magic wand' and imposed Lijphart model of democracy disregarding the lack of basic premises necessary for its meaningful functioning. Macedonia is a would-be bi-national state, which comes as a self-propelled prophecy - there is no third segment that would create a kind of a necessary balance in the divided society. Therefore, the political decision-making process resembles more blackmail and unprincipled trade-off than a consensual and meaningful process of reaching agreements over the most important issues in the country. There are overlapping rather than cross-cutting cleavages in the society (ethnic differences in society are reinforced by linguistic, religious and socio-economic differences). The political elites do not possess the necessary political culture of dialogue and negotiations. Furthermore, they find the consociational arrangement ideal for keeping them on power: the policy-making process has become non-transparent; it's hard to identify the bearers of responsibility for any action or decision; elections have lost their meaning for the citizens are doomed to get unprincipled and ideologically perverse coalitions who can hardly be kept accountable for their deeds; the power remains highly concentrated in the party top-brass, which enables cronyism, corruption and centralism within the political parties; the political parties cease to be a mediator between the citizens and the power, but turn into a main mechanism for articulation of group (ethnic, communal) and even more self-interests; etc.

The so much praised FA has a number of shortcomings: it never put much emphasis on societal peace-building; it did not bother to eliminate the roots of the conflict (non-ethnic seeds of structural injustice and violence) but promoted the belief that a political re-arrangement would automatically eliminate the 'ethnic conflict' in Macedonia; a comprehensive DDR (disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants) should have been carried out instead of partial measures and unprincipled compromises; the post-conflict peace-building fails to focus on reconciliation and facing the truth; the ones who actively took part in the violence have been amnestied and are seen as guarantors of peace and main peace-makers - while, quite absurdly, the versions of the alleged 'ethnic conflict' and 'civil war' make innocent citizens main guilt-bearers for the developments in 2001!! As the country makes the moves towards EU integration, it becomes unpatriotic, even nationalistic to speak about the paradoxes.

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7. The Framework Agreement:
The Best Macedonian Product for Export?

The Framework Agreement is definitely not a genuine Macedonian product. It was imposed as a solution (it's not sure if it is really a remedy for the Macedonian society's illnesses) by the international mediators. The reality-check shows that its practical implementation differs a lot from the original (or at least, declared) intentions of its creators. The actors who are mostly responsible for its implementation use very 'creative' forms of reading, which is enabled by the very weak system of law enforcement.

The FA implementation may be relatively well-implemented but what is more important is that the citizens can hardly measure its 'success' in their everyday lives. So much efforts, time and money have been invested in 'ethnic issues' that everything else have been marginalized and suffered to a degree that living standard is legging behind the one in 2000, for instance.

As in the time of 'oasis of peace' the international community badly needs success even if the citizens and reality tell something different. As for domestic politicians the FA is all they can be proud of and that can legitimize them at home and abroad. However, it is ridiculous to try to 'export' a model that grew out of a very 'weird' conflict, in a specific national setting - and that is workable only in the political rhetoric and wishful thinking of the politicians (who are paid to be professional optimists, by the way). The FA is being already seriously altered in many aspects, and it is up to the Macedonian citizens to eliminate the points that create serious democratic deficit and promote ethnic ghettoes if they really want to join Europe. Exporting such an imperfect product would not be useful for any potential recipient.

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