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Political Parties in the Republic of Macedonia

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Main Political Parties in the Republic of Macedonia

The position and role the Republic of Macedonia has played presents an interesting example of simultaneous coping with numerous issues that arose from the situation that the country was put, starting from 1990. A multi-party system was created that is growing and ripening gradually, corresponding to the existing social heterogeneity and cleavages. In that sense, some ethnic groups have expressed the need to accomplish their interest in the frames of a special political party that defends and advocates their specific needs. This element is of particular importance now, during the latest conflict, where legitimate political parties belonging to ethnic minorities should always prevail instead of violent demands coming from an armed guerilla.

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

In order to picture the present party arena in the country, follows a table where are put all the larger parties in Macedonia:

Political Parties

Name of the Political Party	Ethnic Affiliation
Social-Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM)	Macedonian
VMRO-DPMNE	Macedonian

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)	Macedonian
Liberal Party (LP)	Macedonian
Democratic Alternative (DA)	Macedonian
Socialistic Party (SP)	Macedonian
Democratic Union	Macedonian
VMRO-VMRO	Macedonian
New Democracy (not registered yet)	Macedonian
MAAK Conservative	Macedonian
Democratic Progressive Party of the Romas in Macedonia	Roma
Republican Party for National Unity	Albanian
Party for Democratic Movement of the Egyptians in Macedonia	Egyptian
Party for Democratic Action- the Real Way	Muslim
Party for Complete Emancipation of Romas in Macedonia	Roma
National Democratic Party (NDP- not registered yet)	Albanian
Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP)	Albanian
Democratic Party of the Turks (DPT)	Turkish
Union of Romas in Macedonia	Roma
Party for Democratic Action in Macedonia (PDA)	Muslim (Bosnian)
Democratic Party of the Serbs in Macedonia (DPS)	Serbian
Democratic Party of the Albanians (DPA-not registerd yet, officially the name of this party is PDPA-NDP)	Albanian
Democratic Alliance of the Albanians	Albanian

In reality the parties which have achieved parliamentary representation are fewer than the list mentioned above. Confirmation of the vivid party scene is of course the huge number of MP transfers that occurred in the frames of the present parliamentary composition. In this was directly aiding the legal provision present in the Law for Parliamentary Elections, which does not allow the possibility of mandate cessation, not even when the MP who leaves the party was chosen from a PR list.

Especially after local elections took place, and when the then ruling coalition fell apart, there were new re-groupings of MPs, in order to secure parliamentary majority, to form a new party coalition. Of course, this has already changed the starting party picture

in the Parliament. Complicated and confusing transfers are as follows: Three of the LDP MPs joined the Liberal Party. Other three MPs from PDP, two are claiming that are independent (and then joined the recently formed National Democratic Party of the Albanians) and one is representing the Albanian Democratic Alliance-Liberal Party. Six MPs from VMRO-DPMNE formed a new party VMRO-VMRO. Amdi Bajram and DA (7 MPs shifted into VMRO-DPMNE and other four formed a new parliamentary group and a party New Democracy). During the conflict, one of the DPA MPs (Hisni Sakiri) publicly resigned and joined the terrorists. On the other hand an SDSM MP is also leaving the Parliament, due to its future duty as Ambassador in NATO. It is not sure whether by-elections are going to take place, because early parliamentary elections are negotiated among all parties in Macedonia.

The National Democratic party, as a new political party of the Albanians is lead by Kastriot Hadziredza. He used to be a former vice-president of PDP, but at present he also is an MP. Part of this party's platform are the requests of: federalization of the country, decentralization of power, use of the Albanian flag and language in the state institutions and in education, recognition of the Albanians as constitutive people, making the Tetovo university as a state university. The leader of this party explains the reason for forming this party as a result of constant dissatisfaction of the so far achieved results by the other Albanian parties. One of the main positions of this party shall be the reopening of the issue of referendum of 1992 in order to form the Ilirida (part of the Macedonia which is supposed to get into the map of greater Albania). According to his parliamentary discussions and attitude media are characterizing him as a person with marxist-leninist ideological influence, deriving from the past ideological influence of the Republic of Albania. It is expected that due to the requests put in the platform, this party shall have difficulties in registring itself in the Macedonian court.

November 1998	February 2001
VMRO-DPMNE-49 MPs	VMRO-DPMNE-46
	VMRO-VMRO-6
DA -13	DA-2
	New Democracy-3
SDSM- 27	SDSM-26

LDP-4	LDP-1
	LP-3
PDPA-NDP 11	PDPA-NDP 10
PDP-14	PDP-10
	NDPA-3
	Democratic Alliance of the Albanians-1
Socialist Party-1	Socialist Party-1
Union of the Roma-1	Union of the Roma-1
	Independent 5 (for now)
	MPs resigned (from PDPA-NDP and SDSM)-2
Total: 120	Total: 120

The results of the last parliamentary elections (1998) showed that the winning coalition (**VMRO-DPMNE and DA**) could form the government by itself. Following the tradition of the previous governments, however, it was decided to be included in the government a political party from the Albanian political block- in this case **DPA**. This confirmed the thesis that successful solution and integration of the various social segments' interests depend on their proportional representation in the state institutions. This starting combination of coalition partners that brought together two radical ethnic options and a third, civic one, as a bridge between the two, could have functioned as a model for improved political life.

Certainly, it is complicated to identify the motives of getting into such a coalition, or to evaluate the effects of what has been achieved, especially because this government combination was of a relatively short duration. Success or failure of the results could not be easily connected with the composition of this Government, reason being that the determining factor of forming this coalition was more or less out of necessity (with no clear program profile, based on the pragmatic motivation and only for the sake of participating in the Government). On the basis of its functioning by now, it is more than obvious that one cannot speak about traditional coalition, where the participants work together in accomplishing certain goals that are for their mutual interest or perceived on a common ground.

From autumn 1998 till November 2000 there were three government reconstructions. The first occurred in the spring of 1999, the second in December 1999

and the third in July 2000. All three reshuffles were done with the same coalition partners. In the meantime there was a vote of confidence, initiated but unsuccessfully by the opposition SDSM. Separately, there were several interpellations of certain ministers, like: the Minister of Education (VMRO-DPMNE), the Minister of Defense (VMRO-DPMNE), the Minister of Interiors (DA), the President of the Parliament (DA) and the Public Prosecutor.

In July 2000 the Government enacted a special law (Law for Organization and Work of the Organs of the State Administration¹), where the number of Ministries decreased from 21 to 14. The organization and authorization of the administrative organs is structured in the following way²: at first through 14 Ministries, then follow 1 Commission, 4 Agencies and 3 administrative organizations. By an intervention from the PDP party in the frames of several Ministries were incorporated several more bodies, which were supposed to reflect the specific ethnic, economic and cultural character of the inhabitants. Some examples would be: the Bureau for Education Development in the Minority Languages (formed in the frames of the Ministry of Education); Bureau for Economically Underdeveloped Regions (in the auspices of the Ministry of Local Self-government) and a Bureau for Affirmation and Promotion of the Minority Culture in the Republic of Macedonia (in the frames of the Ministry of Culture).

After this, followed the second government reshuffle, where 14 ministerial positions were divided among coalition partners in the proportion 7:4:3. VMRO-DPMNE got the Ministries of Defense, Interiors, Finance, Culture, Health, Transport and Communications and Agriculture; the Democratic Alternative got the Ministry of Exteriors, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Science and Education and Ministry of Environment; DPA got the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and Local Self-government. Also there were two Ministers appointed without portefeuille, belonging to the Democratic Alternative and to DPA. The Prime Minister is permanently the leader of VMRO-DPMNE. After the reconstruction in December 2000 the place of the President of the Parliament was given to the Liberal party.

¹ Official Journal of the Republic of Macedonia N.58, July 21, 2000

² Law for Organization and Work of the Organs of the State Administration, Official Journal of the Republic of Macedonia N.58, July 21, 2000

Still, followed a fourth reshuffle, which took place in December 2000, where coalition partners were not the same anymore. DA left the ruling coalition (in December 2000), in which place entered the Liberal Party and the Union of the Roma of Macedonia, thus joining DPA and VMRO-DPMNE. During formation of the December 2000 government, the position parties offered it to PDP a place in the coalition. After negotiations took place, the PDP political leader refused joining, because there was no government agreement about the status of Tetovo university.

Normative basis of party formation in the Republic of Macedonia

The basic text of the **Constitution** refers to the civic concept of defining of the state. For that reason only the Preamble addresses the national dimension of the state, stating: "... 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, Romas and other nationalities who live in the Republic of Macedonia...", and intent on: "the establishment of the Republic of Macedonia as a sovereign, independent, civic and democratic state; .. to guarantee the protection of human rights, citizen's freedoms and ethnic equality; ..to secure peace and common home for the Macedonian people with all nationalities living in the Republic of Macedonia;..".

The Constitution, having a civic concept, by way of special provisions pertaining to national minorities, creates the framework for their effective equality based on the protection of their ethnic, cultural and religious identity.

The free expression of ethnic identity is the fundamental value of the constitutional order of the Republic of Macedonia (Article 8, subparagraph 2). The possibility of expressing one's ethnic identity in the census is traditional, while since the 1994 Census (in accordance with the Census Act) the Census forms for minorities are printed bilingual (in the Macedonian language and in the languages of national minorities) (Appendix 2).

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

As normative basis for free party formation and citizen's activities in the frames of parties which promote interests of a certain ethnic group that lives on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia serve the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia from 1991 and the Law for Political Parties from 1994³. More concretely, the establishment of political parties derives from article 20 par.2 and 3 that states:

"Citizens may freely establish associations of citizens and political parties, join them or resign from them.

The programs and activities of citizen's associations and political parties may not be directed at the violent destruction of the Constitutional order of the republic or at encouragement or incitement to military aggression or stirring up ethnic, racial or religious hatred or intolerance."

According to the Law for Political Parties citizens may freely found political parties. Registration is made at the District Court I in Skopje. At least 500 adult citizens of the Republic of Macedonia (Article 7) may form a political party for taking part into the government and accomplish and protect their interests (Article 3). Exception to this rule is in cases when the party program, statute or activities are directed towards " violent destruction of the Constitutional order of the republic or at encouragement or incitement to military aggression or stirring up ethnic, racial or religious hatred or intolerance". In that case the party shall not be registered, or if the party is already registered, but is acting contrary to this article, an action is being initiated for prohibition of work of that party (Article 23), with which it is automatically deleted from the court's register. According to this, it is automatically concluded that this Law does not contain prohibitive clauses for formation and registering of parties based upon certain interests of ethnic, religious and other minorities in the Republic of Macedonia. The mere fact that founding of these parties is not explicitly forbidden or in some way limited, gives full freedom to different ethnic groups to form parties in case they would like to protect and promote the rights or ideas of their group.

Acknowledging the existence of different and sometimes opposed interests in Macedonian society and therefore allowing them to be established as political parties, make the Republic of Macedonia a state which can be listed in the group of modern democracies. We should not forget that coping with conflicts is not direct or automatic or

³ Official Journal of the Republic of Macedonia, Number 41, 1994

one-sided, but it is mediated through the defined goals of organized elites. In time, institutions may change insignificantly, while change in elite behavior may vary and even go to extremes. Still institutions in some way determine the context of mutual relations among representative elites in which they mobilize their supporters.

For units of local self-government where there is a considerable number of persons belonging to national minorities, the Constitution provides guarantees by which the language and the alphabet of the minorities are in official use in addition to the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet (Article 7). The use of national minorities languages has been regulated in detail in the Law on Local Self- Government.

In accordance with the Constitution, the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia establishes a Council for Inter- Ethnic Relations to be composed of the following: the President of the Assembly and two members representing Macedonians, Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Roma, respectively and two members representing other national minorities. Unfortunately in practice this body did not achieve to impose itself in solving current interethnic issues. In fact, this body did not convene, not even once. Similar commission on Inter- Ethnic Relations, in accordance with the Law on Local Self- Government, could be established within Council of the unit of the local self-government. (Article 25)

The Criminal Procedure Act and the Civil Procedure Act guarantees parties and other participants in the proceedings the right to use their language in the proceedings, being also provided free services of an interpreter.

The Law on identity Card provides that the names of persons belonging to national minorities are written in the document bilingual: in the official Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet, as well as in the language and the alphabet of the person belonging to the national minority. The same standard is provided in the Law on Registers of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

Minority Political Party Program Positions

Thematically, in general lines programs are structured in the following way: Governmental structure; Rule of law; Economy; Social policy, health issues, communal

policy; Education and culture; Interethnic relations; External policy; Family; Environment protection

1. Governmental structure

In relation to the question of the holder of sovereignty of the Republic of Macedonia in programs are differentiated two standpoints. Firstly the role of the citizen as a source of sovereignty and holder of power is present in most parties' programs (10). Of course that this program determinant gets a different quality when compared with the idea that the citizen is the holder of sovereignty but viewed through the prism of belonging to a certain collective group. This idea is present only in the programs of political parties of the Albanian block, a distinction that makes them substantially different from other minority parties. It is disputable how much these two concepts differ among themselves in quality especially if we look upon the pragmatic and practical realization of political activities of these parties.

All parties (except PDP-A and DPA) support the idea of free and direct elections, with proportional representation of political forces in power. Half of the parties enhance the support for parliamentary system and democracy, while parties that had a different concept of the state sovereignty also have different ideas about the structure of the Assembly. RPNE, DPA and PDP-A would like the Assembly to have two houses. Special accent on the pure proportional electoral model is found in PDP-A and DPS. Parties of the Albanian political block and PDA the Real Way prefer the consensual democratic model, that is the consensus as a way of decision building within the country. In these frames in relation to the dimension and issues which would be a matter for consensus decisions there are different program ideas, but it is common that a certain accent has been given to consensus decision-making for questions concerning interethnic and interconfessional relations. Four parties are categorical in incapacitating majority decision making (RPNE, DPT, DPA, SDA). In the domain of structuring the state power four parties (RPNE, SRM, DPA and DPS) especially enhance the wish for decentralization of power.

2. Rule of Law

2.1. The individual as a basic subject

Rule of law is an unavoidable topic in every party program. This dimension is overlapping with the previously mentioned citizen's rights and freedoms from one side and the rule of law as a guarantee for their implementation on the other

2.2. System

The dimension of further and more detailed elaboration of the rule of law meets various approaches in different parties. Freedom of information on mother tongue and accessibility to media by all ethnic groups is a cornerstone for all analyzed parties. Independence of the judiciary, equality in front of the law, prevention of any kind of discrimination by building concrete normative mechanisms is mentioned by six political parties. In relation with the previous is the idea of securing legal protection and security, which is found in three programs. It is interesting that in relation to the rule of law issues there are no significant differences among parties. They are all in favor of these basic principles needed to build a contemporary state. Differences are found when in question is the institutional regulation of certain ethnic groups. That is the case of the Albanian parties (NDP, DPA and PDP-A) which explicitly insist on the use of the Albanian language as official, while DSA party thinks that official use of different languages is acceptable in areas of the country where lives ethnically diverse population. Following this logical line, is present the wish for free use of their own national flag and symbols

3. Economy

The spectrum concerning economy is quite various and complex. Although there is in general terms a high level of agreement among parties that free market and movement of capital and labor are the main orientation of their programs, still there is a certain discrepancy in relation of some program priorities.

4. Social, health and communal policy

Social issues due to their complexity incorporate more sub-topics proceeded in this analysis through party statements on questions referring to the living conditions of individuals, social groups and society as a whole. Especially while tremendous economic restructuring takes place and the economic growth decreases, unemployment is

mentioned as the largest problem (8) for most political parties regardless of their ethnic affiliation⁴. Solving of this problem is equally important for all the citizens of the country. In this sense reform of social policy is a necessity (6), and as one of its goals it is mentioned securing social safety and help for the unemployed, pensioners and handicapped (5) and for improvement and equality in use of the health care (6). Other aspects in relation to this topic are modestly mentioned. There are some exclusions in questions relating to the position of women. In their programs parties from the Albanian block especially focus their attention on: freedom of unlimited births, special care for women who have many children, shorter accrued time for women and differentiated working hours for employed women.

The problem of urbanization of living space and the insufficiently developed infrastructure are the reason why part of the party programs (6) have explicit goals in solving problems of this area. Revision of part of the already urbanized locations in which previously existed religious buildings announce the parties PDA- the Real Way, DPT and DSA.

5. Education

Education is perceived as an integral part of the efforts to maintain their own identity, by being one of the central topics in the party programs. Almost all parties are unanimous in the statement that nourishing cultural and religious traditions and values is their primary goal (12). Regardless to which ethnic group they refer to, parties address the need of their encompassment especially in the primary education on their mother tongue. The explicit need to follow further education on mother tongue (in higher and university level) is met among the parties of the Albanian block. In context of this topic are mentioned efforts for education reforms and opportunities for private initiative in this domain. In the way of conceiving part of these requests are noted certain inconsistencies and contradictions in the frames of some programs. For example RPNE on one hand would prefer modernization of the educational process, but on the other poses demands

⁴ This is a problem which is more than acute, and touches the entire population. Confirmation of this are the poll results on the question: "Which are the three largest problems our country is facing?". The polled replied that mostly worrying is the unemployment (47% general average), bad economy (16%) and social problems (10,14%).

for rigorous sanctions for behavior of pupils in the educational process, as well as more rigorous censorship on culture, in order to "prevent trash and pornography". The essence is based on religious principles which implies different relations in this sphere. In correlation with this follows the request for compulsory (PDA- the Real Way and DSA), that is optional (RPNE and NDP) religious instruction. Deserves comment the idea of "cultural federalism" accented in the PDP-A program, but pretty vaguely described- "Cultural pluralism, cultural federalism should have system support. In this function and because of achieving cultural paternalism and aggressiveness of subculture, should be formed special institutions for cultivating values, cultural standards" (Program of PDP-A/1994, pp.3) Although this request is very undefined and its interpretation is very problematic, it is clear that this idea is pulled out of the ideological concept of values present in part of the Albanian minority parties on the idea of the Republic of Macedonia as a state of two constitutive nations. This party goal is explicitly noted in the DPA program in the form of parallel educational system. Education is a sphere in which regarding the politicization of its role succeeded to simmer as a source of potential conflict. In its frames are reflected direct political party interests. Interventions and suggestions according to existing party programs are brought down to the wish of having changes concerning the religious dimension (of course in the part the educational process was not burdened with this kind of instructions and it used to be an individual right of the person whether he or she wishes to follow religious instruction in special schools) or in requests for education in mother tongue which is the case with one party. Problems in this domain are much wider and more encompassing but unfortunately political party programs do not encroach more seriously in this direction.

6. Interethnic relations

Most of the programs put accent on the interethnic tolerance and dialogue, and in case of arguments and conflicts only the PDP party is precise, that in their solving, respect of the European civilization values is necessary. Although in these programs the tolerance and the dialogue are wide accepted matrix of co-operation between the ethnic groups in Macedonia, it is not explained or elaborated. Even though the Democratic Alliance of the Albanians decelerate themselves as an open party prepared to co-operate

“with all citizens, with no difference of their nationality and religion” however, it gives a big advantage to the parties which are with a majority of Albanian members.

7. International relations

Different political parties show different wish for collaboration with particular countries, reminding a "fountain of wishes". Namely, some would like closer collaboration with India (PDDEM and PCER), others with Turkey (DPT) or with Albania and Kosovo (and the Islamic world)- DSA, with Yugoslavia (DPS). Accent to the European integration processes show several parties (PCER, NDP, PDP) but it is present the wish for cultural collaboration and free communication in the Balkans (PDP, PDP-A, DSA, DPA). Especially, parties from the Albanian block show increased interest and care about the diaspora (NDP, DPT, PDP-A). Ideas about demilitarization of Macedonia is present in the program of PDA- The Real Way, while NDP demands depolitization (??- this is not adequately explained in the program) of the army. Integrating the country into the NATO system is a programmatic approach of DSA.

8. Family

Family as a basic social unit in the frames of society has got plenty of attention through putting light to some of its segments. Questions concerning the emancipation of women and care for the young generation have got the largest frequency. Still, emancipation is viewed as a dimension through which to the woman would be practically secured and facilitated the residing at home and with the family, and not the other way around- to induce her real independence and emancipation, in coordinance with communication with the outside world. The traditional template of man-wife relations is not even touched and unfortunately here is missing the program goal and methods of achieving wider and better education for the female child (PDP-A). necessity for complete emancipation of the woman (without mentioning what would that be more concretely) is met into the NDP and DPA party program. The treatment of this issue is naturally resulting out of the religious and ethnic specificities of these ethnic groups and therefore at least the necessity of women's emancipation is present especially among the parties from the Albanian block. General characteristic for all the analyzed parties is that

they are neglecting the role of women into politics, a fact that can be practically proven considering that rarely these parties ever had women for potential candidates. Basic assumption is that at present even if parties would think of candidating women, voter's body would not give the adequate support.

9. Environment protection

This dimension is present as a topic in ten (10) of the analyzed parties, but only declaratively.

Speaking about the general attitude of investigated minority political parties towards the state mechanism and political system leads us to the general conclusion that it depends on the party in question. With exception to the parties of the Albanian political block, others show higher level of integration and acceptance of the institutions of the political system. Within the block itself DPA has shown the lowest level of acceptance of country's legal institutions, which sounds strange, since this is the party in government now. It is believed that radicalization of the goals and attitude of this party is a result of the unfavorable political circumstances in the neighborhood. Some Albanian political parties directly or indirectly imply such political solutions that are contrary to the fundamental principles of international law and in particular contrary to the sovereign equality, territorial integrity and political independence of State. That's why means of party activism and moving into the gray area of not complete incorporation into the legal system, brings also destabilizing elements in practical social and political life into the country. Other parties show larger level of integration into the system and accepting the "political game principles" that exist among Macedonian parties (although it would be pretty unfair to say that the exclusive factor of voting behavior is the ethnic one, for reasons that in "Macedonian" parties one can also find people belonging to other ethnic groups, especially among parties of the left-center).

In party program analysis are noted differences in their length (volume) and in the degree of elaboration of their program principles. General estimation is that in these programs the goals are presented on a very declarative and superficial level, and unfortunately are missing more concrete and operationalized aims. Largest part of these

programs deal with issues touching concretely the ethnic group in question and the way of its integration into the society. Obvious exemption are the parties of the Albanian block, which according to the postulates they contain about different ways of perceiving essential system segments, lead to the conclusion that ideologically dominates the process of disintegration, rather than integration into the Macedonian society.

The Political Situation in the Last Couple of Months

In the beginning of February, the situation in the border Macedonian village of Tanusevci has become dramatic. This kind of statement was given also by foreign media ("Observer") which were saying that there are at least three training camps in the tampon zone at the other side of the border. There many young recruits were trained, whose action's aim was to create greater Albania. According to intelligence information, is congrimed the forming of a new group, which is is not having the UCK name anymore, but it bears the name of ONA (National Liberation Army). Through terrorist actions, these extremists are trying to impose and promote temselves as equal partners in the political dialogue. This dialogue was supposed to take place among legitimate political parties of the Macedonian and Albanian block, but of course leaving out armed terrorists. These events were the reason why the President of the Republic gave a statement that noone should be suspicious about our firm deciseveness to preserve the sovereignty of the country, as well as peace and stability. He said that for that purpose keeps regular meetings with the Prime Minister and the President of the Parliament, together with the Ministers of Defence and Interiors. He gave an appeal for support by all parties, regardless if they belong to the position or opposition, for full support of this political direction.

This year has been significantly unfortunate for the ruling coalition. The state was shaken by a series of scandals like: tabbing of the most prominent opposition leaders, journalists and even the President of the Republic; clash between the Minister of Defense and the Minister of Interiors (both from VMRO-DPMNE); corruption scandals of the Minister of Defense and the Minister of Economy; absence of timely intervention of the Minister of Interiors against Albanian terrorist provocation, etc. These events, as one was

following the other, took away the rating and the confidence of the government. Relations between VMRO-DPMNE and DPA were in crisis and culminated with the second large military clash of the Macedonian army with the Albanian terrorists in the Kumanovo region. Even a DPA MP from Lipkovo (local self-government unit in the Kumanovo area) joined the terrorists. Facing the severe danger and the impossibility to pertain as a government of only two major parties, the Prime Minister started official negotiations with the leader of the largest Macedonian opposition party (SDSM) Mr. Branko Crvenkovski. In the meantime Mr. Crvenkovski got the approval to negotiate from the DPA leader Mr. Djaferi and from the other Macedonian opposition parties. The most difficult negotiations between VMRO and SDSM were about the personal changes in the ministries of interiors and defense. SDSM didn't have the slightest trust of the two VMRO ministers, so finally it was decided that defense shall be taken by SDSM and interiors shall be kept by VMRO, but the other lower positions are to be taken by SDSM supporters. As far as the other Albanian party (PDP) is concerned, one has to say that this party took the role of the "more radical one" putting forward very high conditions in order to join the future "wide" coalition. That is why this party was hesitating up until the last moment of voting in the Parliament, but being subdued under enormous pressure by the foreign factors and diplomats PDP had to accept and join the wide coalition. This coalition in fact is the fifth one after the parliamentary 1998 elections and its composition is as follows: the Prime Minister remains the same (VMRO-DPMNE) and this party kept the ministries of interiors, finance, agriculture, education, culture and transport. SDSM has got the ministries of defense, exteriors, and one minister without portefeuille. The opposition partners of SDSM got the Ministry of health (LDP) and the Ministry of Environment (VMRO-VMRO). DPA has kept the ministries of labor and social policy, economy and one minister without portefeuille. PDP has got the ministries of justice, local self-government and one minister without portefeuille. The Liberal Party as a previous coalition partner to the position, kept one minister without portefeuille. Other than this, the two major Macedonian and the two major Albanian parties nominated four government vice-presidents. Lower positions in all the ministries were divided in a similar way.

Here should be mentioned that this wide coalition was created by the strong support but also pressure issued by the international factors and the foreign diplomatic representatives in Macedonia. The idea was to avoid the danger of spreading the war in the country, and especially among Albanians and Macedonians. This government is promoted as a "government of political unity" which is not meant to last for a long time, but only to fulfill a couple of conditions which will enable further viability of the Macedonian state: stabilizing the security in the country, promoting the interethnic dialogue about various issues; preparation of the early elections in January 2002 and postponing (for October 2001) and further better organization of the regular state census.

Public Opinion

According to a public opinion poll conducted by the Institute for Democracy⁵, after the recent conflicts in Tetovo, Macedonia is closer to peace than to interethnic war (conflicts in the Kumanovo region followed after this). "We are closer to peace" (the question was "Is Macedonia closer to peace or to war?") replied 48% of the polled, while 40% believed that the country is closer to war. This average coincides within the two polled ethnic groups (Macedonian and Albanians).

Considering the idea of change of the Constitution (as one of the demands of the Albanian parties), 1/4 of the polled think that the eventual change of the Constitution under pressure will realistically improve the position of Albanians in Macedonia. On the contrary, do not agree 67% of the polled. In regards to ethnic affiliation, in the Albanian group are preferring the first option 68% of the polled, while among Macedonians the negative reply is present in 79% of the cases. In regards to party affiliation, only 13% of SDSM sympathizers and 18% of VMRO-DPMNE sympathizers think that is possible improvement of the position of Albanians through constitutional changes. In comparison to this, the two major Albanian parties almost give identical averages (DPA 74% and PDP 77%) pro constitutional changes.

⁵ Utrinski Vesnik, April 17, 2001

During the summer of the year 2000 another poll was conducted⁶, where according to the answers the most important problem of the country is the unemployment (38%) and then followed the weak economy (17%), social care and health (11%). Interethnic problems were obviously not in the top priority, since only 7% of the population mentioned them as primary problem. In that sense, the problem about preservation of state stability also had only 6% of the answers.

Regarding the direction in which the society is progressing (since this is also indirect estimation of the work of the current government), replies are mainly focused in three alternatives: almost in the right direction (29%), almost in the wrong direction (29%) and in the maximum wrong direction (29%). Those who thought that society is moving to the maximum right direction were fewer (7%).

According to the latest poll done by the Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research (May 2001), on the question whether the polled still today think that they have voted for the right party on the 1998 elections, replies were the following: Yes-59%, No-27%, I didn't vote-10%, I don't remember-7% and does not want to reply-1%. These results show that more than every fourth citizen of the country regretted its given vote in 1998.

The idea of forming a wide coalition was in general supported by over one half of all the respondents. Still, only including SDSM and PDP in the government wide coalition was a preference of 24% of the polled. 36% supported the forming of the wide coalition, but by including all opposition parties. Negative response on this issue was given by 20% of the population, while other 20% couldn't form an opinion.

Regarding the question whether the Macedonian Constitution should be changed, it is interesting to observe separately the opinion of the two ethnic groups: 80% of the Macedonians are against any change of the Constitution, while 80% of the Albanians want the Constitutional changes right now.

Party support at this moment of time in Macedonia is definitely volatile, if one would compare with the election results of 1998. At the question "If tomorrow would be

⁶ By the Center for Ethnic Relations-Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research, for the purposes of the International Republican Institute

elections in the country, which party would you vote?", the distribution of answers is the following:

1. SDSM 28%
2. VMRO-DPMNE 10%
3. VMRO-VMRO 3%
4. Liberal-Democratic Party 2%
5. Socialist Party 1%
6. PDP 3%
7. DPA 9,5%
8. NDP 2%
9. Shall not vote 14%
10. Undecided 24%
11. Other 3%

On the other hand, if one looks at the support of each party within the ethnic group of supporters, the results are the following:

Party	Macedonians	Albanians
SDSM	36%	4%
VMRO-DPMNE	12%	3%
VMRO-VMRO	3,5%	0%
LDP	2%	0%
SP	1,5%	0,5%
PDP	0%	11%
DPA	0%	39%
NDP	0%	7%
Shall not vote	14,5%	10,5%
Undecided	25,5%	23%
Other parties	3,6%	1%

The questionnaire was also having a list of politicians, for which the respondents were asked to give grades from 1 to 5, where 1 is the lowest and 5 is the highest grade. Results are as follows:

Name of the politician:	Average:
1. Kiro Gligorov	3,6
2. Risto Penov (mayor of Skopje)	3,1
3. Boris Trajkovski (President of the Republic)	3
4. Branko Crvenkovski (SDSM leader)	2,7
5. Srdjan Kerim (former Minister of Exteriors)	2,7
6. Petar Goshev (LDP)	2,3
7. Pavle Trajanov (Democratic Alliance)	2,3
8. Ljubco Georgievski (Prime Minister)	2
9. Arben Djaferi (DPA leader)	2
10. Boris Stojmenov (VMRO-VMRO leader)	2
11. Rufi Osmani (former DPA MP)	1,9
12. Vasil Tupurkovski (DA leader)	1,9
13. Stojan Andov (LP, president of the Parliament)	1,8
14. Djevdet Nasufi (DPA)	1,7
15. Naser Ziberi (PDP)	1,6
16. Imer Imeri (PDP leader)	1,6
17. Dosta Dimovska (former Minister of Interiors)	1,6
18. Ljuben Paunovski (former Minister of Defense)	1,4

Follows the Macedonian politicians' rating, according to the given grades of the Macedonian group of polled persons.

Name of the politician:	Average
1. Kiro Gligorov	4
2. Risto Penov (mayor of Skopje)	3,6

3. Boris Trajkovski (President of the Republic)	3,4
4. Branko Crvenkovski (SDSM leader)	3
5. Srdjan Kerim (former Minister of Exteriors)	3
6. Petar Goshev (LDP)	2,7
7. Pavle Trajanov (Democratic Alliance)	2,7
8. Ljubco Georgievski (Prime Minister)	2,2
9. Boris Stojmenov (VMRO-VMRO leader)	2
10. Vasil Tupurkovski (DA leader)	2
11. Stojan Andov (LP, president of the Parliament)	2
12. Dosta Dimovska (former Minister of Interiors)	1,7
13. Ljuben Paunovski (former Minister of Defense)	1,5

Follows the Albanian polititians' rating, according to the given grades of the Albanian group of polled persons.

Name of polititian:	Average:
1. Arben Djaferi (DPA leader)	4
2. Rufi Osmani (former DPA MP)	4
3. Djevdet Nasufi (DPA)	3,3
4. Imer Imeri	3
5. Naser Ziberi (PDP)	2,8

It is interesting what grades have Macedonians given to Albanian polititians and vice versa:

Name of polititian:	Average:
1. Arben Djaferi (DPA leader)	1,3
2. Rufi Osmani (former DPA MP)	1
3. Djevdet Nasufi (DPA)	1
4. Imer Imeri	1
5. Naser Ziberi (PDP)	1,1

Name of polititian:	Average:
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1. Kiro Gligorov	1,5
2. Risto Penov (mayor of Skopje)	1,6
3. Boris Trajkovski (President of the Republic)	1,8
4. Branko Crvenkovski (SDSM leader)	1,2
5. Srdjan Kerim (former Minister of Exteriors)	1,8
6. Petar Goshev (LDP)	1,2
7. Pavle Trajanov (Democratic Alliance)	1,3
8. Ljubco Georgievski (Prime Minister)	1,7
9. Boris Stojmenov (VMRO-VMRO leader)	1,1
10. Vasil Tupurkovski (DA leader)	1,5
11. Stojan Andov (LP, president of the Parliament)	1,2
12. Dosta Dimovska (former Minister of Interiors)	1,3
13. Ljuben Paunovski (former Minister of Defense)	1,2