

# **BAROMETER**

Current Events and Political Parties  
Development in the  
Republic of Macedonia

**Issue N.18**  
**June 2008**

Dr. Natasha Gaber-Damjanovska  
Dr. Aneta Jovevska  
Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research - Skopje

**In cooperation with the  
Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Office Skopje**



## **C O N T E N T S**

- 1. GOVERNMENT/OPPOSITION RELATIONS**
  - 1.1. New Government Voted**
  - 1.2. Assembly Speedily Introduced Many Laws**
  - 1.3. Law on Use of Languages Voted**
  - 1.4. New Assembly Book of Rules Voted**
  - 1.5. Other Laws Passed in the July Euphoria**
  - 1.6. Repercussions of the Summer Voting Euphoria**
  - 1.7. Gruevski-Crvenkovski Relations**
- 2. EARLY ELECTIONS**
  - 2.1. Deciding on Early Elections**
  - 2.2. Pre-Election Considerations**
  - 2.3. Pre-Election Coalitions for the June 1<sup>st</sup> Elections**
  - 2.4. Composing Election Party Lists and Other Initiating Activities**
  - 2.5. Election Campaign Issues**
  - 2.6. Election Code of Conduct Signed**
  - 2.7. Turbulent Campaigning Period**
  - 2.8. Violence During the Campaign Period**
  - 2.9. Election Results**
  - 2.10. Violence on Election Day**
  - 2.11. Reasons for Fierce Albanian Parties' Rivalries**
  - 2.12. Election Rerun Performed Quietly**
  - 2.13. Final ODIHR Elections Estimation**
- 3. POLICIES/EVENTS**
  - 3.1. "Name" Dispute Negotiations Intensified**
  - 3.2. Veto Signals Becoming Obvious**
  - 3.3. Bucharest Summit Events**
  - 3.4. Macedonia Under the USA Protective Shield**
  - 3.5. Summer Developments on the "Name" Dispute**
  - 3.6. Dilemmas After the Bucharest Summit**
  - 3.7. The Aegean Issue Set on the Table**
  - 3.8. The Issue of NATO Membership – Further Developments**
  - 3.9. Barroso Declared Himself Incompetent for the Aegeans**
- 4. REFORM PROCESSES**
  - 4.1. EU National Council Established**
  - 4.2. EU Benchmarks set for Macedonia in January**
  - 4.3. EU Sets Additional Benchmarks for Macedonia**
  - 4.4. Macedonia Receives Roadmap on Visa Liberalization With EU**
- 5. ECONOMY**
  - 5.1. Economic Trends**
- 6. HEADLINES**
  - 6.1. Criminal Groups Convicted**
  - 6.2. Dilemmas Regarding the Constitutional Court**
  - 6.3. Constitutional Court Position on the Law on Religious Instruction**
  - 6.4. Kosovo Declared Independence**

- 6.5. EU Presidency taken over by France**
- 6.6. Ohrid Summit of Central European Countries**
- 6.7. Ljube Boskovski Freed**
- 6.8. Historical Triads Shall Deal With the VMRO-DPMNE Unfaithful Followers**
- 6.9. The Strumica Opposition Mayor Arrested**
- 6.10. Islamic Religious Community Turbulences**
- 7. PARTY DEVELOPMENTS**
  - 7.1. Radmila Sekerinska Steps Down After Election Defeat**
  - 7.2. DPA and PDP Merging Together**
  - 7.3. Liberal Party Congress**
- 8. PUBLIC OPINION POLLS**
- 9. FUTURE POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENTS**

## **1. GOVERNMENT/OPPOSITION RELATIONS**

### **1.1 New Government Voted**

After the elections, VMRO-DPMNE leader Nikola Gruevski had negotiations with both ethnic Albanian parties, intending to create a joint coalition government. Still, both parties were not willing to share the same coalition government together. Talks lasted for several weeks, ending with final agreement between DUI and VMRO-DPMNE. Both parties have agreed to press on with EU integration and to leave questions of ethnic relations for later, stating that “the parties agreed not to open additional questions with an ethnic theme”. All the current disagreements about the law on the use of the Albanian flag and on the police law will be put on hold as well. DUI accepted VMRO-DPMNE’s program “Rebirth in 100 steps” and agreed to back its stances on the “name” dispute with Greece which has stalled the country’s NATO accession and has threatened to block the country’s EU bid as well. It remains unclear whether VMRO had accepted DUI’s demand for the quick recognition of Kosovo, but agreed to continue talks on a law for the use of languages. Also, DUI agreed to postpone the integration of the city of Kichevo with its local villages for four years, an act originally scheduled for March 2009 (see previous Barometers). Both parties also agreed on expedited demarcation of the border with Kosovo in accordance with UN envoy Martti Ahtisaari’s plan. According to the pact, DUI will have five ministers, one deputy prime minister and three deputy ministers. Together, the new parliamentary majority will now consist of 82 legislators in the 120 seat parliament.

“All the agreements were not possible with DPA because of its smaller number of MPs”-stated VMRO-DPMNE. “The Prime Minister has the legitimate right to make a coalition with the party he chooses...we do not feel defeated. We are going to operate as the constructive opposition” DPA secretary Imer Aliu said.

By the end of July, the new government was voted by the Assembly obtaining 77 votes “for” (out of the total of 120 MPs). Opposition parties did not attend the Assembly session, so practically only the position voted, making it without any polemics or discussions. Most of the ministers elected were already on the same positions in the previous government. Other than the VMRO-DPMNE ministers, who were in the cabinet previously, three more names are added and new are the names of the DUI ministers that took the positions of the previous coalition partners - DPA and NSDP. Prime Minister Gruevski stated that this government is a mix of the youth and the experience, but above all to the people who possess exclusive values and which are determined to work honestly, in a transparent and responsible manner. In total, the new government team has 21 Minister. From DUI come Musa Xhaferi as the Minister of Local Self-government, Bujar Osmani as the Minister of Health, Fatmir Besimi as the Minister of Economy, Xhelal Bajrami as the Minister for Labor and Social Policy and Nedzati Jakupi as the Minister of Environment and Spatial Planning. The VMRO-DPMNE Ministers are: Zoran Konjanovski for the Ministry of Defense, Antonio Miloshoski for the Ministry of Exteriors, Gordana Jankulovska for the Ministry of Interiors, Mihajlo Manevski for the

Ministry of Justice, Trajko Slaveski for the Ministry of Finance, Aco Spasenovski for the Ministry of Agriculture, Mile Janakievski for the Ministry for Transport and Communications, Elizabeta Kancevska-Milevska as the Minister of Culture, Pero Stojanovski as the Minister of Education, and Ivo Ivanovski for the new Ministry of Informatics. Ministers without portefeuille are: Zoran Stavrevski responsible for the economic issues, Ivica Bocevski responsible for the EU integration process, Abdulakim Ademi responsible for the application of the Framework Agreement, Vele Samak responsible for foreign investments, Nezdet Mustafa responsible for advancement of the rights of the ethnic communities and Hadi Neziri.

The new Government founded two new state agencies, the one is the Agency for Tourism Promotion and Support and the other is the Agency for Accomplishing the Rights of Communities. So far the budget rebalance did not fund sufficiently these two agencies. Previously, the Government founded two other agencies: National Agency for European Education Programs and Mobility and Agency for Financial Support in Agriculture and Rural Development.

At his expose, Prime Minister Gruevski set up the future government priorities, which were similar to the previously set ones: increase of economic growth and competition, increase the employment rate and the standard of living, integration in NATO and EU, resolving the name issue upon the principle of non-endangering the national identity, continuation of the struggle against crime and corruption, rule of law, maintaining good and stable interethnic relations, further implementation of the Framework Agreement and investments in education. On matters of external policies he gave priority to five issues: NATO membership, obtaining a date for start of negotiations with EU, visa abolishment for the Macedonian citizens, overcoming the name issue and strengthening of the diplomacy. He stressed that "The Republic of Macedonia will continue negotiations with Greece for finding a solution for the imposed dispute and in this process shall not accept ideas and suggestions that will harm the Macedonian ethnic identity, the Macedonian nation and the Macedonian language. We shall not allow any solution and any compromise to be accepted by the Macedonian institutions without previously the citizens to show their will on a referendum". Regarding the EU integration process, he declared focused on obtaining a date for start of negotiations, by accomplishing the eight benchmarks as set by EU. Ambition is to achieve at least 6% economic growth annually and decrease the unemployment rate; increase of domestic and foreign investments based on improved business climate, agriculture development, better perspective for the young and better security for the pensioners and the elderly.

Opposition boycotted the Assembly session in which the new government was elected. One of the arguments was the passing of the assembly book of rules without presence and consensus seeking with the opposition. The highest party organ met in Strumica (intending to show support for the arrested Strumica mayor) and brought the boycott decision. "VMRO-DPMNE broke the Assembly book of Rules and produces at a great speed laws proposed by a technical government. VMRO does not have democratic capacity to handle politically different opinions"- it is said. As example was pointed out the breached principle of consensus for introducing the Assembly Book of Rules, as the

version adopted SDSM claims is not the one that was agreed during the leadership meetings. DPA also confirmed that shall not attend the session, stating that it will come to the Assembly when on the agenda will be issues important for the Albanians. On the other hand, DUI as the new coalition partner did not support unanimously the Book of Rules. Xhevat Ademi voted against, while Teuta Arifi heavily criticized the manner in which the Book of Rules was passed, accusing VMRO-DPMNE for “smuggling” it. Her argument was that VMRO-DPMNE by doing so wants to humiliate DUI before the election of new government, intending to show them that their place is at the government’s tale, as “Gruevski may find DUI expandable as well”. VMRO-DPMNE stated that the new Book of Rules is a result of a several years’ work of foreign and domestic experts and that it is one of the criteria for obtaining a date for EU negotiations. It is strengthened the role of the Assembly commissions in passing the laws, while one of the vice-presidents is to be from the opposition.

Some analysts say that this government combination, containing yesterday’s “fierce enemies” may not last long. Others think that exactly because it is evidently a “marriage of interests” rather than a “marriage of love”, it may achieve longevity and offer results. In the first VMRO-DPMNE and DPA government, ethnic Albanians though that their votes are considered trivial, due to the fact that it was DUI who got the majority votes support in that ethnic community, but was not taken into government. Now, with this new government combination Gruevski may achieve greater interethnic harmony, and what’s more, he already has in hand both the Badenter majority and the 2/3 Assembly majority, allowing him to pass numerous laws and even change the Constitution. Regardless if many of the opened issues between the Albanians and the Macedonians seem insurmountable, in fact if one demonstrates will and sincerity problems may be easily solved. Gruevski and Ahmeti have the opportunity to realize serious projects and provide the necessary internal political stability and cohesion in the country.

Others comment that DUI wanted to get into government so badly, that accepted instead of vice-president for political system, the “ridiculous” vice-president for the Framework Agreement realization. As this party claims that 90% of the Framework Agreement content has been realized, now it is expected that the remaining 10% shall be magnified by adding more requests and the party shall entangle itself in the “ethnic obsession”.

Opinions are that in this new government composition the position of DUI is rather weak, which is due to the fact that DUI wanted to be part of the government at any cost, without conditionings, while on the other side we have a very strong VMRO-DPMNE. Others say that “coalition between DUI and VMRO-DPMNE as much as it looks strange, it shows that there is bigger interest and that they are ready to make a lot of difficult compromises from both sides, only to be sustainable and to be able to function further. Anyway, the new coalition was called “a beginning of a beautiful friendship”. It is interesting how in 23 months’ time the two Albanian parties managed to dramatically change their positions, while the common denominator of their happiness or unhappiness remained the same. DUI and DPA are criticizing each other as “traitors” when one enters the government and makes compromises.

## 1.2. Assembly Speedily Introduced Many Laws

Before the opposition boycotted the Assembly, were passed the state Budget changes referring to education and to lessening the consequences of the energy chock. These changes were aiming to help the severed workers, the pensioners, the health domain and part of the money were intended for buying embassies in London and Moscow. The opposition complained that the procedures prescribed for introducing these changes have not been respected. SDSM MP Igor Ivanovski stated that Macedonia cannot withhold such a budget of 2 billions and 350 million Euros, anticipating that by the end of the year Macedonia shall have inflation higher than planned and people will be poorer.

Another Budget rebalance allowed 25 million euros for the Security Service of the Ministry of Interiors instead of the previous 400.000, intended to be purchased new modern surveillance apparatuses. It is believed that this shift is the result of the advice of the Romanian anti-corruptionist Monica Makovey, for introducing measures which are dangerously entering into the private sphere, allowing the state to massively listen to private talks. The idea already got the nickname “Big Ear”, and officials fear about the possibility of uncontrolled surveillance. “Big Ear” can enter into the cabinets of the President, the Prime Minister, the President of the Assembly and the MPs if there is suspicion for abuse of their position. This is anticipated in the draft law for Communications Surveillance for which discussion is closed and most probably shall be voted after the summer holidays. The Law for budget rebalance has not been introduced according to the Law on Budgets. For that, LDP opposition MP Andrej Zernovski stated that “this is typical rape of democracy, because when the Budget is brought, it is necessary to pass at least 10 days for MPs to have sufficient time to fundamentally see its content; this budget rebalance, to everybody’s surprise, was kept in the Assembly only 2-3 days”.

Opposition made other procedural complaints for the former Minister of Health Imer Selmani who both acted as “technical minister” and as an MP by submitting the draft amendments on the Law on Health Protection on one side and voting for them as an MP on the other. Experts warned that by doing so, he broke the principles of division of powers and the non-compatibility of the positions of MP and Minister in one.

By an unseen tempo and easiness within 14 working days in July, VMRO-DPMNE and DUI parliamentary majority broke all the records by voting 94 laws and up to the end of the month the technical government submitted 40 more. Opposition estimated the situation as incredible – “this did not happen not even in the most dramatic situations in the parliament”- they say. Argument is that this voting machine is not a guarantee for good quality legislation and is directly in collision with all laws and rules for functioning in a normal parliament. All the laws that have been passed are not legitimate, because none of them was passed through the Assembly Commissions (which are not formed yet after the elections, although they ought to), which means that there is a breach of the Assembly’s Book of Rules.

In principle, according to the Assembly Book of Rules, if a law is not put in an urgent procedure, all laws are passing three compulsory phases. If the law is proposed by the Government at first the text is looked at by the Legal Assembly Committee, which needs to confirm that the law possesses all prerequisites for its passing. When positive opinion is obtained by this Committee, the draft law is directed to the assembly committee which is in charge for the specific area in which the draft belongs. Then, if there are no suggestions, the draft is forwarded to the President of the Assembly, who puts it on a plenary agenda. By this, starts the second phase of introducing the law, while the third consists of discussions, submitting amendments, looking at the draft-amendments and finally voting of the law. Another problem is that a “technical” government is not authorized to suggest laws. Also, are introduced laws which there is no estimation how much will they cost (like for example opening a new Ministry of Informatics), although that is a systemic obligation.

The opposition often quotes the Prime Minister’s comment during the election campaign “opposition may go whenever it wants, only not in the Assembly”. On a tribune out of the Parliament, under the title “Democracy, Dictatorship or Democratorship”, opposition parties stated that they are not boycotting the whole work of the Assembly but only their plenary sessions, because they would not like to be a decoration in an Assembly composition that “smuggles laws”. Most of the participants criticized the new Book of Rules, stating that they will not be present at the Assembly until they do not obtain firm guarantees that it will be amended. On the other hand, international community representatives called the opposition to return to the Assembly, in the legitimate institutions, but in vain.

### **1.3. Law on Use of Languages Voted**

All of a sudden and without announcement was brought in front of the Assembly the Law on the Use of Languages, which was expressly voted. According the new Law, the language that is spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the country, other than in the Assembly, shall be used in communication of the citizens with the ministries, with the ombudsman, in the judicial and administrative procedures, in executing sanctions, through the election process and the referendum, in issuing personal documents, for personal data, application of police authorizations and in other areas. The up to now request by the Albanian parties, other than in discussions, the right to use their language will be applied during the chairing of the Assembly’s Commissions, and at the same time Assembly materials shall be bilingual. This will mean much more expenses for the state, additional employments will be needed. There will be need for new employments in the police as well, because the official person should address the citizen in his/her mother tongue. During arrest, the arrested person has to be addressed and informed in its mother tongue why he/she is arrested.

DPA leader Menduh Tachi fiercely criticized the law, stated that this is the largest treason of the Albanian interests in Macedonia. He suggested Ahmeti to go and see how in Kosovo has arranged the use of the Serbian language. Instead, - he said - Albanian language shall be used at the same level as in Japan, China or Singapore. According to



him, there is nothing regarding the promises that the Albanian language shall be used in the government, that Albanians shall be able to defend themselves at court by the use of their language<sup>1</sup>, and to use it in the Police and the Army. Answering these accusations, Ali Ahmeti replied that “All that has been achieved in the Law for the use of the Albanian language is in the spirit of the Framework Agreement and has constitutional basis”.

#### **1.4. New Assembly Book of Rules Voted**

The Assembly Book of Rules, which was the point of vigorous discussion and against which, in the intention to block its introducing DUI in the past submitted 2500 amendments, was voted speedily in July as well. Adopting the Book of Rules was one of the preconditions for the Republic of Macedonia to obtain negotiating date. For it voted DUI MPs as well, even though in the text remained for ethnic Albanian MPs to use their language in the Assembly sessions but not when presiding (leading sessions) in the Assembly Committees. DPA accused that by the new Book of Rules the government proved that has no intention to solve issues important for the Albanians and by doing so they wasted the chance to make them come back to the assembly. They claimed that Albanian national interests have been sold in 15 minutes. “We remind DUI that when they were in opposition just for the Book of Rules they submitted 2.500 amendments, and even that draft was better than today’s one.” DPA remained on the six demands of the “March Agreement” with VMRO-DPMNE in which Albanian language was to be used at all levels in the Assembly. DUI MPs although not very glad with that solution, voted “for”, hoping that they may still use their mother tongue in the Committees work, and that some things can be further regulated by the adoption of a new Law.

Mrs. Teuta Arifi, one of the DUI prominent MPs criticized heavily the manner in which the Book of Rules was passed, without the expected consultations and agreements by the opposition parties. “I think that this was a hasty act of the majority and I think that it is time to say that the tempo of bringing laws should be slowed down. This is even more important having in mind the fact that the Assembly functions without opposition, while the Book of Rules is a document which in fact arranges the relations in an institution which is of utmost importance as for the majority same as for the opposition”. Ethnic Albanian journalists, commenting further the process added that they “hoped that DUI shall not be a decoration in Gruevski’s government as DPA was”.

By the new Book of Rules, it is anticipated one of the Assembly Vice-Presidents to be from the opposition, which solution institutionally enables bigger and more active opposition inclusion in the assembly activities’ planning. Also, in details and precisely is worked out the part which refers to raising a procedure for responsibility of the President of the Republic. When a Government confidence vote is in question, the initial idea is to be elaborated by only one MP within 30 minutes. An MP may speak during the reading phase many times, each lasting 15 minutes, while the MP group coordinator has 20 minutes. On plenary sessions, an MP has the right to ask for discussion only once for a

---

<sup>1</sup> Here it is worth mentioning that the legal system allows the use of translator in a process where the accused is in need due to non-mastering sufficiently the Macedonian language.

particular law and discuss at most 10 minutes, while parliamentary group coordinators are allowed 15 minutes. The President of the Assembly stated that the role of the Assembly Committees shall be strengthened which will enable better quality work, through allowing the public and experts to participate in their sessions while discussing a particular draft law.

SDSM refused to comment the content, as according to them, the Book should have been brought by consensus of the position and the opposition. Still, opposition MPs complained that “this is classical rape of democracy”..“Gruevski proves that he does not want to see Macedonia in EU”, and that “MPs are limited in their right to speak not only in 10 minutes, but the actual possibility for discussion is taken away”.

### **1.5. Other Laws Passed in the July Euphoria**

The Law on use of the Macedonian Language was voted 10 years ago, but was not adequately respected. For that reason, the Assembly voted its Amendments in which penalties are augmented for publicizing a non-proofread text, determined signs are to be solely in Cyrillic script (unless the title is branded), etc. Reasons for amending the law was to raise the awareness for the significance of the linguistic culture in Macedonia and to keep the regulations for the public use of the Macedonian language.

Urgently were passed the changes in the Expropriation law as well. Those construction projects, stations, ducts or pipes for transport of natural gas or electrical energy may be expropriated by remuneration in 8 days instead of the so far 15 days' term. The Minister of Finance Trajko Slaveski supported the change due to the accompanied changes in the Law on Energetics. Slaveski pointed out that “the Constitutional Court abolished the possibility the transfer of natural gas or electricity to be a monopoly and now there are opportunities more enterprises to occupy themselves with the same activity. “Because now there is a possibility the transport of natural gas and electricity to be endangered, after there will be agreements between various operators, a possibility is introduced to expropriate the system with remuneration”-he said.

After 7 months of camping protests across the Assembly by the severed workers, finally the Law for arranging their demands has been voted. By that law, about 6000 severed workers will receive 5000 denars (90 Euros approximately) per month, up to their retirement or reemployment. The President of the Republic Branko Crvenkovski stated that he shall sign the Decree for this law, thus putting it in force.

Regarding the changes in the Labor Law, the Union of Trade-unions of Macedonia thinks that worker's rights have been diminished. UTU is against the manner in which the Assembly at his session voted the amendments of this law, without consulting with the relevant partners: “this is a classic knockout of the social partnership in Macedonia which particular structures want to ruin it. UTU will make everything it can to put under question the changes in the Labor law” - said the UTU port-parole. Among other things, complaints are that in the future: the Health and Pension fund shall not have the obligation to issue photocopies of the employed insurance documents; when signing an

agreement for temporary employment the maximum term was prolonged from four to five years; while firing the employed for “business reasons” the employee does not have the legal obligation to offer to the employed employment under changed circumstances that would demand his re-qualification; after the employer fires a person may immediately (the next day) hire another at his place; the night shift now comes again indefinite (a worker may permanently work on a night shift); the maximum number of holiday per year from 26 was lessened down to 20, without defining the maximum number of days and the average; etc. The UTU due to the manner of introducing the law and the content of the amendments called upon President Crvenkovski not to sign the Decree for the passed amendments, requesting urgent session of the Economic-Social council and announcing complaints to the European Commission.

The government’s explanation was that by introducing these changes shall be improved the business climate in the country. UTU reacted that introduced changes damage the workers and diminish existing rights: “It is proved that best economies in the world are those where workers have high degree of social protection”- they added. UTU are extremely dissatisfied because not all participants in the social dialogue were activated, noting that a serious government should not allow itself to suggest laws abruptly. UTU suggested to the Government diminish the working week to 35 hours, which will allow increase of new employments (estimated about 37.000). The World Trade Union has been notified about the amendments and replied in writing that shall follow closely the situation. WTU suggested activating the social dialogue, which will contribute to the country’s Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

Non-governmental organizations reacted on the newly introduced law on Lobbying, in which they believe that it is limited the freedom of expression, thus demanding its withdrawal. They hope that the President Crvenkovski will use its constitutional right and not sign the Decree for the law. With this law is anticipated that persons who would like to lobby should be issued a license by the state for that purpose. Such a license however may be obtained by persons who have adequate education regarding the area he/she would like to lobby about. By this solution, non-governmental organizations see in that limitation of freedom of speech, seen as one of the fundamental human rights.

## **1.6. Repercussions of the Summer Voting Euphoria**

Most Macedonian politologists think that instead of dedicating itself in bringing reform laws necessary for the country’s EU integration, parliamentary majority brings extremely right-wing, conservative laws that have nothing to do eight reforms. Using the strong Assembly majority and the opposition absence, the government without debate, without amendments, and without committee’s discussion adopted tenths of laws as well as the assembly’s book of rules. As particularly “right” and populist experts estimated the Law for sell of Alcohol (which is close to prohibition), introducing religious instruction in elementary schools, campaign for having a third child, “patriotic” fiscal accounts (in which is to be seen which good is domestically produced and which not), etc.

Opposition announced that a motion shall be forwarded in front of the Constitutional Court, as opinion is that they have been brought illegitimately and it is not known whether they have passed the government procedure. While passing the laws there was no discussion whatsoever, so the Speaker merely read the titles of the laws and proclaimed them as adopted. This position behavior opposition estimated it as audacity and arrogance. The position justified this conduct by arguing that all these laws that are now passed are those which have been blocked for one year by SDSM, and that was why they had no intention to allow again blockades in the Assembly.

Regarding the numerous laws passed through the Assembly, and some of them passed even twice, (after the Assembly speaker concluded that the legal time frame for the President of the Republic to sign the Decrees has passed and put the same laws twice on the Assembly procedure and were voted) sources from the President's cabinet say that he will have various approaches regarding which law is in question. On the five laws that were passed twice he will declare them illegally passed and shall ask to be put again on the Assembly's agenda, with the exception of the Law on Languages, for which he signed the Decree. This procedure dispute raised many contradictory expert opinions whether there is a 7 days term in which the President must act and sign or not the Decree, as in the past there were laws that were not signed in that period of time by the previous presidents of the Republic. Other thought that the possibility of laws not being signed has to be issued in writing, as the President of the Republic should notify the President of the assembly about his intention not to sign the Decrees and elaborate the reasons of his decision. Finally, the President of the Assembly and the President of the Republic sat together and managed to find a common agreement. According to that, Mr.Crvenkovski will sign once again the Decrees for 50 laws, while Mr.Veljanovski will process on the next Assembly session the five laws for which the President of the Republic refuses to sign the decrees. They also agreed in the future, the President of the Republic to reply in writing within 7 days what are his intentions with the laws that are forwarded to him by the Assembly.

### **1.7. Gruevski-Crvenkovski Relations**

For a longer period of time, there were speculations regarding Gruevski's idea, as he holds comfortable Assembly majority to pass Constitutional change regarding the manner in which the President of the Republic is elected. Namely, rumors had it that in the future, the Assembly will be the body electing the President and not as present, citizens on all-national elections by use of the two-round majoritarian election model. In his interview in July, the Macedonian President Branko Crvenkovski announced that he would not run at the next presidential election. He stressed that his decision is final, noting that one of the reasons for this decision is his disagreement with the Government policy on a number of crucial issues. The President stated that he does not want to be an accessory to a policy that would provoke serious and long-term consequences in the future.

President Branko Crvenkovski called upon DPA and SDSM to return to the Assembly, promising in return to give abolition to the arrested Strumica mayor Zoran Zaev and his staff, and not to sign the Decrees of part of the laws that in spite of being opposed by the

opposition, have been passed speedily in July by the Assembly. “With such a faulty Assembly and with such a partial democracy we shall not obtain a date for negotiations with EU. I feel moral responsibility to make an effort for this problem to be solved. To SDSM leadership I would like to say that by boycott are not won political battles”. He also stated that if SDSM MPs return to the Assembly, he shall not sign the decrees for the Law on Lobbying, Law for Energy, Labor Law, Law for the Advocatory and for Expropriation. “I would like to send back the Book of Rules as well, but for that I do not have legal and constitutional authorizations”- he added. He said that his impression is that the government is satisfied that got rid of the opposition as if it wants this situation to become permanent. However, by offering abolition to Zaev, many think that Crvenkovski has practically damaged his image, as he would not be suitable for a future party leader for that. Zaev was one of the most serious candidates to stand on the party’s lead.

Crvenkovski’s decision not to compete made many people wonder about the direction new political calculations shall go to. Some say that he prepares the terrain to come back as the SDSM leader he was, having in mind that he is quite young (45 years old) to go to a political pension. Polls show that if one takes under consideration the opposition political figures, he is the one he holds the most support. Even if one anticipated the future presidential election it would be of utmost importance who in fact will be Crvenkovski’s opponent in that case. It must be an experienced politician, with stable rating and authority. Ljube Boskovski would probably not be the one, having in mind that he cannot count on the ethnic Albanian votes, which leaves him to fight for over 60% of the Macedonian electorate in order to be successful. Still, he represents the part of the VMRO party that joined DPMNE after dismantlement of the VMRO-People’s Party, which can influence possible party leading positions and functions. It also remains to be seen how Crvenkovski shall influence the ruined SDSM, and with which cadres. This party also has its division of “old” and “young”, and opinion is that selection so far was rather unsuccessful, as there is not a sufficient number of young people with contemporary views in the leading positions. Still, Crvenkovski may change his mind about the candidacy as he did in 2004.

For the abolition move, some position coalition partners like Pavle Trajanov the leader of the Democratic Alliance called for the President’s impeachment. Still, Gruevski at the beginning of August stated that firstly, he has no intention in initiating an impeachment for the President due to his latest moves regarding Zaev and the non-signing the decree of the passed laws and second, that he gives up the idea of changing the manner in which the President of the Republic is elected. This statement was approved as reasonable by the expert community, while DUI seemed surprised with the position shift. Gruevski once more publicly challenged Crvenkovski to compete in elections and to face his own political acts.

## **2. EARLY ELECTIONS**

### **2.1. Deciding on Early Elections**

Early elections on June 1<sup>st</sup> come as a result of combination of various factors: the long spoken VMRO-DPMNE plan to call on early elections and reconfirm and strengthen even more the party support in terms of MP seats; the disillusionment from the Bucharest summit coupled with the inability to secure an invitation to join NATO following objections by Greece regarding the country's constitutional name; the long period of government-opposition communication problems that has slowed down Macedonia's advancement towards membership in the EU; the insupportable rivalries between the two ethnic Albanian parties; etc. All that, urged the opposition ethnic Albanian party Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) to put forward a motion for early elections. VMRO-DPMNE supported the motion, as well as DPA. SDSM (Social-Democratic Alliance of Macedonia) and the other parties opposed the decision, arguing that new elections would delay further action on solving the name dispute with Greece and gaining NATO membership.

Two years after the 2006 elections, it was clear that the crisis (which culminated with endangering the strategic goals and perspectives of the state, after the veto for NATO membership and further complication of the name issue with Greece) dramatically changed the constellation of political forces on the Macedonian scene. Although even previously, there were rumors that the leading VMRO-DPMNE party is seriously thinking to initiate early elections (mostly due to its own internal party calculations) the publicly initiating idea was issued by the DUI leadership. At the same time, previous coalition turbulences caused by the DPA leader Menduh Tachi, contributed to a political crisis that led Prime Minister Gruevski to call early elections. Menduh Tachi has often threatened to walk out of the coalition, while in March this year conditioned his further government partnership with a series of requests<sup>2</sup> which served as his justification to briefly block the government-coalition activities in April. The evident wish of the two major ethnic Albanian parties to measure their votes' support, coupled with VMRO-DPMNE's ambition to score even more than the 2006 elections, and to secure a stronger mandate amid an upsurge of anti-Greek sentiment, lead to the final decision of calling for early elections.

Under the justification of Prime Minister Gruevski that opposition parties had been blocking his reform plans, on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 70 out of 120 Macedonian MPs voted for Assembly dissolution, while 50 opposition deputies boycotted the vote. Followed a subsequent decision of the President of the Parliament to schedule general elections on June 1<sup>st</sup>. Regular elections had not been scheduled until 2010, so this initiative comes two years earlier than planned.

At an interview, LP leader Stojan Andov stated: "Nobody, at least the majority of people in Macedonia, did not understand why there early elections are held for. I still believe that more than 60% of the citizens do not approve these early elections and think that behind it hides something secretive, on which was not given answer by the initiators, neither by their supporters. DUI did not explain the exact motives, neither VMRO-DPMNE why it accepts such an initiative...some think that it is a set up business, in

---

<sup>2</sup> Called the "March agreement" as opposed to the "May agreement" previously concluded between VMRO-DPMNE and DUI

order to undermine the solution of the name issue while Bush is still strongly present. But I don't think this is the basic intention. Citizens understand that the politics of delay leads nowhere and that we have spent in vain 18 years without finding a solution. For 17 years Macedonia too long held cordial relations with the Miloshevic's regime; second is that it was late in arranging interethnic relations, so still the Framework Agreement needs to be completely applied (what is the May and the March agreement should be accomplished only what is in compliance with the Framework Agreement) and thirdly, we did not create a continuity in realization of our external policy.

Last parliamentary elections held in July 2006 were characterized by international observers as largely free and fair, although pre-election violence and procedural errors did occur. Due to that, seen as a continuation of the efforts for the country being able to run free and fair elections, the potential conduct of the competing parties and the functioning of the system in these elections as well, became one of the preconditions for Macedonia's advancement toward the EU.

Following the Assembly decision, the EU Special Representative and the OSCE and UN Ambassadors stated: "We call on parties to ensure free, fair and peaceful elections, thereby demonstrating their commitment to Euro-Atlantic values. The conduct of the electoral campaign and the elections will present an opportunity for this country to fully demonstrate the maturity of its democratic institutions. All political parties have a shared responsibility for ensuring that elections are conducted international standards. No party should be permitted to jeopardize the country's future through electoral misconduct, fraud, intimidation or violence." The US Embassy also stated that "the decision on early elections is up to the Macedonian leaders and we do not take any positions when it comes to internal affairs".

## **2.2. Pre-Election Considerations**

Needles to say that the negative public sentiment which followed the Bucharest events was expected to build a lot upon the wings of nationalism and populism as a much expected reaction. In addition, according to political analysts, three are the factors that will determine the election outcome: what kind of pre-election coalitions shall be formed, with what platforms voters shall be mobilized and what will be the turnout percent on election day. Big dilemma was whether these elections shall strengthen the positions of VMRO-DPMNE and DUI in the Assembly in terms of seats or not. SDSM had the opportunity to make wide coalitions as well, including a potential to draw on the undecided voters. Still, it was unknown the extent of the opposition being able to motivate and make voters come to the polls, especially large parts of the disillusioned, impoverished and disappointed citizens. If closer results were to be achieved by the two blocks, there were even opinions that election results may offer good grounds of forming a wide coalition instead of having the so far government coalition staying in power.

However, there was no doubt that VMRO-DPMNE and DUI started the campaign by having better positions than in 2006, contrary to their rivals. As known, in the last elections a coalition between VMRO-DPMNE and DUI was avoided, due to what there

were blockades in the political dialogue and in the Assembly's functioning. It was publicly known through explicit statements of Prime Minister Gruevski, that VMRO-DPMNE still supported their current coalition partner DPA, viewing them as the most probable future partner in government. This position was backed by promises for additional employments in the state administration of ethnic Albanians, as well as opening a clinical center in Tetovo.

On the other hand, one could not have underestimated the number of parties including the wider public (even including VMRO-DPMNE supporters) that opposed the idea for early elections, in a time when it was expected some progress on the "name issue" with Greece and obtaining a NATO invitation and a date for negotiations initiation with the EU (as the two crucial external policy issues for the country), as well as taking a position on the Kosovo issue and achieving the reform preconditions for the EU date.

Out of this election outcome depends the further trend of Macedonia's approach to EU and NATO. In this sense, one should have in mind the large percent of consensus among ethnic Albanian voters who are unanimous in the idea of getting in NATO as soon as possible. This position is not in compliance with the complicated situation which emerged prior to the early elections and the tough stance by which Gruevski positioned himself in the name issue with Greece, clearly stating that he will not accept just any kind of compromise for the name without organizing a referendum.

The most substantial question after these elections in fact is whether the new Government and Assembly shall be capable of solving the latent political crisis that started immediately after the 2006 elections. In spite of the complaints of Prime Minister Gruevski that decision making was blocked and inefficient, in fact that situation derived from his political non-flexibility and his decision to make coalition with the ethnic Albanian party (DPA) that had lesser MP seats than DUI. Thus, it is obvious that DUI shall decide on the next parliamentary majority in the case of getting not so big of a difference in seats of VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM. Low turnout will cast a shadow on the legitimacy of the elected Assembly. Most of the campaign is going around the NATO membership failure and the "name issue". At the same time it would be very difficult to have both ethnic Albanian parties in one government, due to their mutual intolerance.

### **2.3. Pre-Election Coalitions for the June 1<sup>st</sup> Elections**

VMRO-DPMNE (or Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity) composed a pre-electoral center-right election coalition with 18 smaller parties, including the Socialist Party of Macedonia with its leader Ljubisav Ivanov-Zingo, Democratic Alliance lead by Pavle Trajanov, Democratic Renewal of Macedonia lead by Liljana Popovska, Party of Justice, the parties of smaller ethnic groups: democratic party of the Serbs, democratic party of the Turks, union of the Roma from Macedonia, Party of the Vlachs, Party for Integration of the Roma etc. VMRO-DPMNE's leader and current Prime Minister Gruevski's VMRO-DPMNE described the coalition as "patriotic and European", and named it "For a Better



Macedonia”. Campaign was to be held under the slogan “Macedonia Knows! The Revival Continues”.

It is anticipated that the smaller ethnic groups’ parties are joining VMRO-DPMNE due to the already concluded agreement that Election Codex will be amended and they will obtain additional 12 reserved seats in the Assembly for the smaller ethnic communities that they represent (for more details see previous Barometers). Through this solution, the party hoped to bypass the necessity of having DUI into the future coalition government. Instead, it is evidently planned to obtain the Badenter double-majority rule for introducing the most important systemic laws through a coalition with DPA and the smaller ethnic groups’ parties<sup>3</sup>. After all, one of VMRO-DPMNE’s arguments for calling for elections is that they have not been able to move forward with all the reforms needed, due to the block opposition parties were making to all government drafts-bills put forward into the Assembly’s procedure.

On the other hand, the opposition created another block of parties lead by SDSM (Social-Democratic Alliance of Macedonia) and its leader Radmila Sekerinska, containing the New Social Democratic Party (NSDP) lead by Tito Petkovski, the Liberal Democratic Party lead by Jovan Manasievski<sup>4</sup>, the Liberal Party of Macedonia lead by Stojan Andov, New Alternative lead by Gjorgji Orovcanec, Party of Pensioners, Green Party and Democratic Union of the Vlachs. It was agreed the campaign to be lead under the name “A Sun for European Macedonia”, promising voters rapid EU and NATO accession and attacking the government on its economic performance over the last year.

Although it seemed that VMRO-DPMNE has a better coalition potential than SDSM, apparently the concept SDSM has offered, attracted the center parties more than VMRO-DPMNE did. Old coalitions this time suppressed old animosities. One of these examples is the rapprochement to SDSM by Stojan Andov, the leader of the Liberal Party that left the coalition with SDSM in 1996. During the 2002 elections, Andov made a coalition with VMRO-DPMNE, with which party remained in coalition until these early elections. Same goes with NSDP, the party lead by Tito Petkovski. Although he had many explicit differences with the policy led by VMRO-DPMNE in the last two years he remained in the ruling coalition. Decisive breach of the cooperation were the disagreements on the Bucharest Summit and the events after that. Regarding the coalition decision, the party had differences of opinion among its membership, but the leading cadres were agitating among its supporters claiming that this coalition is currently the most suitable option than competing individually. However, some prominent party members, like the former Minister of Defense Lazar Elenovski, the ex-vice prime minister Zivko Jankulovski and the former MP Vele Mitanovski announced that they will compete independently, having their own party lists.

---

<sup>3</sup> Both VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM in the past could have formed a government without a major Albanian coalition partner. However, the established political custom in independent Macedonia holds that an Albanian party makes part of the governing coalition.

<sup>4</sup> As known, SDSM and LDP after the electoral defeat in 2006, have been subdued to leadership change, resulting for SDSM having Radmila Sekerinska as the leader, and LDP having Jovan Manasievski. For more details see previous Barometers.

Part of the “smaller” players, in the effort to manage entrance in the Assembly, are negotiating for a joint list, but estimations are that this group will not manage to have a notable political significance. In this group is mentioned the Party of the Free Democrats with its leader – the former President of the Assembly Ljupco Jordanovski, VMRO-People’s Party and the former member of the Socialist Party Zoran Vitanov.

On the other hand DUI decided to compete individually, while DPA lead a three-party coalition including PDP.

However, it is clear that the main election game will be lead by the two big blocks that will oppose each other, having as main aspect the concept of the country’s return to EU and NATO tracks. The first block represented the name of the country as basic benchmark of the country’s identity, manipulating the patriotic feelings of the citizens, and not showing flexibility in the effort of removing the obstacle that prevented the country’s entry into NATO. The other block noted that EU and NATO membership shall continue to be unachievable without having previous compromise agreement with Greece, so if that is not arranged, a plan should be put in place that will allow the country to survive out of the Euro-Atlantic integration embrace. The gap between these two blocks is to be filled by an ethnic Albanian party. Ethnic Albanian voters however, are seen to have a much more foreseeable comportment when the name issue is at stake, considering it something that the Macedonians have to decide on. Still, it is uncertain whether after elections this issue shall be soled promptly, in a moment when many parameters are worsening, like the problems with border demarcation with Kosovo and introducing the condition of solving the name issue in the European parliament report.

#### **2.4. Composing Election Party Lists and Other Initiating Activities**

As both big party blocks included numerous coalition partners, it is considered quite an “art” for bigger parties to accommodate their partners within the fixed party lists under which they would jointly compete in the six election districts. Needless to say that this process is always quite cumbersome, as it often may be proved to be a “mathematical estimation of support” for parties that prove to be quite disobedient at a later phase of their mandate. On the other hand support is always conditioned by offering the partners a winning position in the list, coupled with future promises of obtaining important posts in the state administration for prominent party members. Still, both VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM negotiated significant concessions to their coalition partners.

It is clear that the largest battle will be in the Skopje constituency, in which the future mandatarly will emerge, as leaders of the opposing lists are Gruevski and Sekerinska. In the Kumanovo district n.2 will compete the current Minister of Finance Trajko Slaveski and the LDP leader Jovan Manasievski; In the Stip district n.3 Vlatko Gjorcev and Tito Petkovski, in Strumica district N.4 the vice-prime minister Zoran Stavreski and the SDSM Strumica mayor Zoran Zaev; in district N.5 the Minister of Exteriors Antonio Miloshoski and the MP Jani Makraduli, while in District 6 will compete the Minister of

Interiors Gordana Jankulovska, Igor Ivanovski (SDSM), Menduh Tachi (DPA) and Ali Ahmeti (DPA).

Real curiosity were the election lists promoted by the Social-Democratic Party of Macedonia lead by Branko Janevski, who was trying to manipulate or trick potential voters of the Social-Democratic Union of Macedonia. SDPM being a practically unknown, insignificant “phantom” party, which does not even have a proper campaign or prominent leaders nor voters support, it produced lists of candidates who had very similar names to the SDSM carriers of party lists in the same election districts. Thus, it shows up only when necessary to confuse voters, in the case of 2006 and 2008 elections, the SDSM voters. For example, in the Election District 1 is competing the SDSM leader Radmila Sekerinska, while SDPM in the same district puts as the list leader an publicly unknown women bearing the name Rada Sekerova; in District 2 the SDSM coalition list is lead by the LDP leader Jovan Manasievski, while SDPM list leader is Jovan Manchevski, etc. Same goes with all the remaining districts.

The election model in the Republic of Macedonia is proportional, by use of the D’Hondt formula to fill 120 seats in the Assembly. In total, 20 political actors shall fight for winning voter’s confidence on June 1<sup>st</sup>, submitting 84 election candidates’ lists for the 6 regional election constituencies. Out of them the largest number is submitted for constituency N.1 or the Skopje constituency. Compared to the 2006 elections, the number of lists submitted is for 1/3 smaller, which shows a trend of party enlargement. These seats are elected from 6 election districts, each one producing 20 MP seats. The structure of the election bodies is the following: State Election Commission, 84 Municipal Election Commissions, and 2976 Electoral Boards.

## **2.5. Election Campaign Issues**

All parties declare that EU and NATO membership is amongst their highest priorities. Still, campaign is also addressing citizen’s concerns about the economic prospects of the country. Regional security is another issue of importance following next-door’s Kosovo independence declaration in February.

SDSM was drawing on the government-opposition paralysis and rising inflation to make the case that it can govern more effectively than VMRO-DPMNE does. Opposition leader Radmila Sekerinska holds Nikola Gruevski responsible for the DPA boycott of government in March, which resulted from a failure to compromise on the use of the Albanian language in the Assembly by committee chairs and the pension status of former ethnic Albanian combatants in the 2001 conflict. She also promised voters, if in office, a quick resolution to the “name” dispute with Greece to enable the country to join NATO now, and to obtain a start negotiation date from Brussels for official EU accession talks within six months. The “Sun” block stood up for liberal economic policies, a generally pragmatic approach and co-operation with the international community. One of the coalition partners, the LDP leader Jovan Manasievski promoted lessening of the huge state budget, real decrease of the taxes and contributions, creating a space for development of the small enterprises, achieving de-regulation wherever possible, defense

of the secular (non-religious) character of the country opposed to what the current government is doing, widening the areas of personal freedom, protection of privacy as opposed to the all-present state, fighting against discrimination in every area, etc. “Sun” candidates signed written statements in which they confirm that have not cooperated with the state secret security service.

On the other hand the VMRO-DPMNE coalition “For a Better Macedonia” offered an upgraded and extended version of the 2006 election program “Revival in 100 steps”, including speedy economic development of Macedonia and enabling the country to achieve Euro-Atlantic integration. The leader Nikola Gruevski stated that the program included dedication, responsibility, elaborated work, loyalty towards the state, people and their future, patriotism, vision and will for progress. He supported increase of economic growth and competition on lasting basis; continuation of the fight against crime and corruption, maintenance of good inter-ethnic relations and coexistence based on principle of mutual tolerance and respect, and investment in education which will contribute to creation of strong state. Coalition’s platform emphasizes reduced corporate tax burdens to stimulate sluggish economic growth and attract foreign investment. This party blamed also SDSM for the slow progress in passing reform legislation. Evidently, the campaign used substantially the “name” issue, while Gruevski was accusing SDSM to have agreed to name the country FYROM,- as the official name under which Macedonia was admitted to the UN and the beginning of the nineties. Gruevski promised voters to subject any alternation of the country’s constitutional name to referendum following a diplomatic agreement with Athens.

DPA campaigned on its ability to deliver government resources to Albanian communities during its time in government; on fulfilling its promises to bring foreign investment and reform to the health system. Its campaign slogan, “Jungatjeta”, is a traditional greeting invoking longevity. On the other hand, DUI is campaigned with the slogan “You are victorious with us” on its stated ability to resolve the use of Albanian language in state institutions, on achieving full implementation of the 2001 Ohrid Agreement by offering greater rights to the ethnic Albanians and on gaining Macedonia’s diplomatic recognition of Kosovo. Especially worrisome were the bully statements of DPA leader Menduh Taci during the campaign period, when he announced that elections shall be a “butcher shop”.

## **2.6. Election Code of Conduct Signed**

In anticipation of June 1<sup>st</sup> parliamentary elections, on May 8, Macedonia’s political party leaders have come together to sign an Election Code of Conduct, in a public ceremony in the National Assembly, which was later distributed through the printed media. Under the motto “We Can and We Must: Fair Elections 2008”, 36 parties signed on to the code in a May 8 ceremony with the goal of a free and fair election process. In partnership with Citizen’s association “MOST” and the Macedonian Women’s Lobby, NDI assisted in adapting the code from the previous 2006 elections, for the early parliamentary elections this year.

## **2.7. Turbulent Campaigning Period**

Although campaign officially should have started on May 11, one of the characteristics of the 2008 election campaign was the constant pre-election media presence of the Government, which although in resignation, was advertising itself through numerous promotion campaigns, undoubtedly influencing voters. Analysts commented that by acting so, the Government got deeply into campaigning using the positions it has, and by that derogates the Constitution and the laws. Although it is hard to draw a distinction line between what is allowed in this pre-election period and what is not, impression is that many of these activities are not acceptable having in mind the campaigning time-frame. The behavior opened a public debate of whether campaigns of this kind should be limited in a certain time-frame and whether it is a serious breach of the anticorruption law. What's more, the whole period from the 2006 elections until the proclaiming of early elections the Government was in a continuous advertising campaign as if "tomorrow" elections are to be held. By festively issuing public calls for 100 scholarships, making announcements that are starting to be built apartments for young couples, festive placing foundations stones on various construction sites, public calls for new employments in the administration, etc, the Government was constantly building its PR. Simply, the government advertised all its activities which in fact are part of its constitutionally set duties. Special critiques were directed for the use of budget money for the promotions. Followed by the same manner of behavior, SDSM also had similar activities (like media promoted party birthdays for example) but on a much lesser scale.

Simultaneously, in order to show that the current government is dedicated to the struggle against crime and corruption, spectacular arrests took place during the campaign – arrested were: the mayor of the Skopje municipality Aerodrom (who is a VMRO-DPMNE cadre), the former general manager of the Bitola Thermo electrical plant Pande Lazarevski (an opposition cadre), a DUI cadre (Talat Xhaferi) who in the former government was a secretary of the Defense Ministry, numerous toll workers and their superiors in the operation "Snake Eye" in suspicion that they stole from the money they collected, etc.

The reasoning is that when the Assembly is dismissed, Government becomes "technical", meaning that it has no more the mandate to apply its program, so in fact its full capacity activities in this period are against the constitution. On the other hand there are opinions that there is no breach of the law. The Election Codex does not make a clear distinction what in this case would be a breach of the law. Although campaign lasts for 20 days, other activities may be interpreted as an election campaign in the "wider sense". In that sense parties may promote their ideas and programs, but may not put ads or billboards, issue paid political programs, slogans, employ people, initiate tenders or investments etc. According to this opinion, the up to now promotion of the political positions through press conferences and public tribunes is allowed, as it is considered "regular".

## **2.8. Violence During the Campaign Period**

Similar as in 2006, the 2008 campaign has been marked by several violent clashes, mainly in the Western part of the country. The Citizen's Association MOST, which is the

leading nonpartisan election observation group, and other observers have reported instances of voter intimidation, shootings and vandalism targeting party headquarters, homes and shops of rival party officials, explosions, as well as the illegal use of municipal facilities, official vehicles and human resources, including use of children for campaign purposes. Most of the incidents have involved arch-rivals for the ethnic Albanian vote, the Democratic Party of the Albanians, which has been part of the governing coalition, and the Democratic Union for Integration. Gruevski has held individual conversations with the leaders of the two main ethnic Albanian parties to ask them to intervene to stem the violence.

DUI had alleged that the police were involved in violent attacks on its officers and its leader, Ali Ahmeti. He also claimed that an attempt on his life was made when gunshots were fired at his vehicle during a campaign visit to a village near Tetovo. The DUI spokesperson said that the police were linked to DPA, stating that the police had lent automatic rifles and police badges to the DPA. The Macedonian government rejected the allegations, describing the statement as “out of his mind”, threatening to take court action against the party for defamation. After the shootings, the police arrested two persons under suspicion to be involved in the incident.

Commenting the campaign events, the President of New Alternative Gjorgi Orovcanec estimated that the Macedonian people on these elections were exposed to ruthlessly expensive media campaign financed by unknown sources, abuse of state institutions and public media during the campaign. Thus, he asked the government how free, democratic and safe were these elections? For him, the report on these elections “looks more like a war document from 2001 full with information for dead and wounded”. He called on the Prime Minister to say “whether now we are closer to NATO and EU then before the dissolving of Assembly and whether Macedonia has fulfilled the ninth criterion that we imposed on ourselves”.

In a joint statement on May 16, EU Ambassador Erwan Fouere and US Ambassador Jillian Milovanovich expressed concerns over the violence and warned that it could jeopardize Macedonia’s Euro-Atlantic aspirations. The spokesperson for the European Enlargement Commissioner- Krisztina Nagy, said that Mr.Olli Rehn emphasized the need for the violent incidents to be investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice. It was added that the EC expected the Macedonian government to enforce law and order throughout the country and to ensure that political parties conducted peaceful campaigns. This was only natural considering that Macedonia was a candidate for EU membership- she said. NATO has urged all parties to stop the violence as well.

## **2.9. Election Results**

As data show, the VMRO-DPMNE coalition “For A Better Macedonia” won a decisive landslide victory over the Social Democrats and got more than 50% of the Assembly seats. Hundreds of Gruevski’s supporters spilled onto the main square in Skopje to celebrate, waving party flags and chanting his name. “Macedonia has got the power to go

ahead. The country has the energy for progress, to join NATO and EU”- he said in his victory speech.

SDSM leader Radmila Sekerinska congratulated Gruevski on his victory, but criticized the conduct of the election. “The price that we have paid today is too high because there was a loss of human life, violations, and shootings. I hope the winning coalition will consider that and will understand that this behavior was unacceptable”..“These were the worst organized elections and the winners are taking now the huge responsibility for Macedonia” - she said.

*Turnout comparison*

	<b>Elections 2006</b>	<b>Elections 2008</b>
<b>Total number of voters</b>	1.741.449	1.779.116 or 37.667 more than in 2006
<b>Turnout</b>	55,98%	57,06%

*Party support comparison with the 2006 elections*

<b>Party</b>	<b>Elections 2006</b>	<b>Elections 2008</b>
<b>VMRO-DPMNE (coalition)</b>	304.572	481.501
<b>SDSM (coalition)</b>	218.463	233.284
<b>DUI</b>	113.522 (with PDP)	126.522
<b>DPA</b>	70.261	81.557 (with PDP)
<b>NSDP</b>	56.624	(with SDSM coalition)
<b>DOM</b>	17.364	(with VMRO coalition)
<b>PEI</b>	11.067	14.474

*Votes by election districts (presented are only parties that have obtained mandates)*

<b>Election District</b>	<b>VMRO-DPMNE coalition</b>	<b>SDSM coalition</b>	<b>DUI</b>	<b>DPA</b>	<b>PDP</b>	<b>PEI</b>
<b>ED 1</b>	86.127	41.792	19.025	17.276		
<b>ED 2</b>	75.772	27.252	25.140	12.250		
<b>ED 3</b>	112.155	51.418	2.710			
<b>ED 4</b>	106.660	61.981				2.335
<b>ED 5</b>	77.366	39.109	15.361	9.888		7.669
<b>ED 6</b>	21.139	10.426	47.704	61.155	8.847	

*Number of MP seats won per party or coalition:*

<b>Party</b>	<b>Total number of votes (initial total results from SEC)</b>	<b>Seats won</b>
<b>“For A Better Macedonia” VMRO-DPMNE coalition</b>	481.501 or 47,43%	63
<b>“Sun” Coalition for Europe</b>	233.284 or 22,98%	27

<b>(SDSM and coalition partners)</b>		
<b>Democratic Union for Integration (DUI)</b>	126.522 or 12,46%	18
<b>Democratic Party of the Albanians (DPA)</b>	81.557 or 8,03%	11
<b>Party for European Future (PEI)</b>	14.474 or 1,43%	1

Analysts were surprised from the extent of the VMRO-DPMNE performance<sup>5</sup>. Analysts interpret Gruevski's success with the opposed coalition which was worn out, not being prepared to react adequately to his populist concept and not having fresh ideas. Opinions are that his success was to offer "promises to everybody according what they want"..but also due to his hard position on the name issue and the going hand in hand with the after-Bucharest disappointment of the Macedonian citizens. He is described as "well-packed technocrat in a costume of a populist politician" having weak managerial skills regarding interethnic relations in the country and weak performance on foreign relations. At the same time, this victory is seen as a big burden for him that might bring him bitterness, as the appetites of his coalition partners are big: on the table comes the issue of the Kosovo recognition and the name issue with Greece, there is a need to arrange relations with the future Albanian partner who shall seek bilingualism and accomplishment of the May agreement, ect. What remains to be analyzed is the future role and necessary consolidation of SDSM which is still pending, thus leaving the country with no solid opposition. If one looks at the results obtained, compared to the 2006 elections, the "Sun" coalition managed to pull additional 15.000 votes.

## 2.10. Violence on Election Day

Macedonia's aspirations to join the EU and NATO suffered a heavy blow on June 1<sup>st</sup> when violence erupted between rival Albanian groups, and accusations of election fraud included broken or missing ballot boxes and stolen voting materials. One person was shot dead, nine people were wounded and thirteen people were arrested after the clashes. The two rival ethnic Albanian parties have been at loggerheads since 2006, when the DUI won the most Albanian votes in parliamentary elections but was left out of a coalition government in favor of the DPA. These elections had been seen as a test of Macedonia's democratic credentials as it seeks to join the EU and to overcome the recent rebuff in its attempt to join NATO. Instead, the score was a negative one.

Initially, the State Election Commission suspended voting in at least 17 polling stations because of irregularities, planned a revote at polling stations where intimidation, violence and ballot rigging took place. The government spokesperson stated that irregularities have occurred in only 1% of the 2900 polling stations, but independent election monitors contended that the abuses nevertheless undermined the vote's credibility. Finally, the

---

<sup>5</sup> It is estimated that about 40.000 votes are given to his coalition by the smaller ethnic parties.



State Election Commission has annulled around 170.000 votes from the first round because of wrongdoings, accounting almost 9% of the total electoral body.

*Examples of annulled voting in the polling stations as published on June 03, 2008*

Election number	District	Municipality	Number of polling station	Number of voters
1		Saraj	2431	1029
1		Saraj	2441	754
1		Saraj	2442	624
1		Saraj	2447	975
1		Saraj	2460	1035
1		Saraj	2461	891
2		Chucer-Sandevo	2475	427
2		Aracinovo	8 polling stations	8117
2		Kumanovo	1000	1138
2		Kumanovo	1033	902
6		Debar	540	474
6		Debar	541	813
6		Zelino	2095	902
6		Zelino	2108	1275
6		Brvenica	2036	1197
6		Gostivar	503	721
6		Gostivar	507	1101
6		Gostivar	508	1324

Denis McShane a former Great Britain Minister, said that “This vote is a tragedy for supporters of Macedonia’s EU and Trans-Atlantic future”...”nobody can form a government on the basis of an election in which police have stuffed ballot boxes and thugs are attacking polling stations”. On the other hand, the police said that the violence was the result of tensions between rival ethnic Albanian political parties, DUI and DPA<sup>6</sup>.

ODIHR’s chief observer Robert Berry very directly called upon authorities to punish people responsible for the June 1<sup>st</sup> irregularities and to remove from senior police positions people who had been involved in the electoral violence and fraud. Mr. Berry even went as far as directly indicating persons who should be punished, including according to him, the Deputy Interior Minister, Refet Elmazi, and the police commander in Tetovo, Faik Dervishi as some of the prime suspects. DUI blamed DPA and the police for “provocations, violence and psychological terror” and demanded a repeat vote in the troubled areas. Ali Ahmeti said that he would not recognize election results in seven municipalities, including Tetovo, because of violence.

---

<sup>6</sup> The parties are competing for the support of the Albanian ethnic population, which constitutes about 25% of the country’s 2 million population.

Domestic analysts said that ..“these are the worst elections in the Macedonian history as an independent state, and the West is partly to blame because it has not been tough enough in the past and has turned a blind eye to violence in past elections”. General sentiment was that the country did not need this situation, as now Macedonia is missing the chance to prove its capacity as stable democracy.

Slovenian EU Presidency called on Macedonian authorities to conduct a thorough investigation into incidents that occurred during parliamentary elections. EU Presidency insisted that all reported incidents will be duly investigated and action taken accordingly.

In these elections, senior EU officials say, local politicians have not cracked down enough. The head of the EU office in Macedonia Erwan Fouere said that “We are deeply concerned by the many..corroborated reports of not only acts of intimidation, but also blatant violence, shooting, injuries to innocent people”, estimating that “Macedonia can organize peaceful elections, but apparently it did not have political will on June 1<sup>st</sup>”. “We thought the penny had dropped” said Mr.Fouere, meaning that Western thought that Macedonia understood exactly what it needed to do. “What I regret is that the party leaders have not been strong enough in their condemnation of acts of violence. They should be condemning all these acts and not just those of their opponents”. He stated that senior Western diplomats had been visiting the affected areas to calm tensions, and that such visits may have had an effect, because reports of violence had abated.

Analysts estimate that in previous elections, it was the nationalists who used violence to undermine the country’s reform process. At present times however, there is a generation of politicians in both opposed parties who knew that this was their last chance to win at the polls. This time parties were not simply trying to win, but also to be in a position to make payoffs to supporters, in terms of jobs and business contracts. Most of Macedonia’s leaders knew that the country’s prospects of gaining EU membership could be hurt, but obviously it had been hard to restrain supporters from misbehaving in the election.

“Violence and attempts to manipulate the campaign sadly cast a shadow over otherwise well-implemented elections” OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Vice President Pia Christmas-Moller said, adding that “violence in ethnic Albanian areas is an unacceptable breach of peace and people’s democratic rights”. OSCE monitoring mission found what it called “organized attempts to violently disrupt the electoral process in parts of the ethnic Albanian areas”. It also cited what it said were “numerous serious irregularities” including intimidation, stuffing of ballot boxes and tampering with the results.

Upset for the whole negative atmosphere and the emergence of violence, Prime Minister Gruevski confirmed commitment to hold a re-run in all the polling stations where there was violence and disorder, stressing that it is imperative that these re-runs are held in line with international standards. His decision was welcomed by the EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn: “I underline that holding free and fair elections is an essential part of the political criteria of the EU accession process”-he said. Also, the EU Presidency pledged its support for the initiative of Prime Minister Gruevski and other

political leaders to rerun elections in selected areas. "Implementation of these initiatives will contribute to guaranteeing the legitimacy of these elections"-was said.

Followed arrests, in which was detained the 50 members strong armed group of Agim Krasniqi<sup>7</sup> into a village north of Skopje, which intended to cause election incidents. When arrested, the group had illegal possession of weapons, bombs, granates and drugs.

EU is disappointed of the Macedonian elections and insists for the sake of fixing the country's image and for the legitimacy of voting, to be repeated in particular parts of the country. Kristina Galach, the spokesperson of Javier Solana stated that "we should seek responsibility from the leaders and representatives of these communities to explain why they act so violently". Javier Solana repeated the same conclusions, adding his regret that there were many irregularities during the campaign like intimidation and media abuse. He also supported Mr.Gruevski's and other leader's statements that they shall support repeated voting in areas that were targets of the irregularities. "Voters should have the last word and all efforts should be made to secure election results legitimacy"-he added.

The German European Parliament member Doris Pack, stated that although in most parts of the country elections were free and fair, "the fact that there were incidents and one dead person shows that the country is still immature and that its people still did not understand that political disputes or interethnic hardships cannot be solved by the use of weapons. It should be said to the Albanians that simply they contribute for Macedonia not to advance and that the problem is that rival Albanian parties with their behavior make live harder for all of the country."

At the end of their visit, representatives of the post-election mission of the Assembly of the Council of Europe, announced that there might be a suggestion in the report for returning the monitoring mission in the country. Opening such a mission would mean that in the country are identified lack of democracy, rule of law and human rights. Mission representatives said that this is not a desired option, but also there is a suggestion that Macedonia should show greater level of democracy, wish for amending the Electoral Codex and improve the situation in the media. The mission intended to send a delegation to Macedonia, which main goal shall be to initiate an intra-Albanian dialogue. One of the priorities shall be the incidents, who most often makes them, which are the locations and how to avoid such incidents to happen in the future. The message from Strasbourg was that what happened in elections in Macedonia is a shame for the whole of Europe and that is why efforts have been made for this situation to be overcome.

What's more, an earlier draft statement by EU leaders said the EU was "looking forward" to the opening of talks with Macedonia on possible future membership by the end of the year. But an edited copy later in June endorsed at an EU summit now merely acknowledges that "further steps" by Macedonia are still possible in 2008 in its drive to join EU. In spite of everything, the EU Presidency remains optimistic: "Further steps in the EU integration process are possible later this year by fulfilling the necessary

---

<sup>7</sup> In 2004 he was claiming the government and ethnic Albanian leaders had broken promises to provide former rebels with an amnesty and jobs.

conditions and implementing without delay the priorities identified within the accession partnership”.

### **2.11. Reasons for Fierce Albanian Parties’ Rivalries**

Even if DUI, with its Marxist-Leninist roots, presents itself as a social democratic party and the DPA as a conservative one, in fact ideological programs play virtually no role in the bitter struggle between the two factions. “They are just two different job agencies” explains Bujar Luma, director of a local cultural center, “which both pursue the same aim: namely, to form part of the government”. For whoever has political power disposes of financial resources and can dispense government jobs. On the other hand, whoever has nothing to give loses support among the population. In an economy based on patronage where even positions in the toll stations on the highways are assigned according to party membership, to find oneself on the right side is of downright existential importance.

Meanwhile, more and more observers see even the 2001 armed Albanian rebellion as having been less a matter of an honorable struggle for greater rights within Macedonia and more a matter of a struggle for power and influence within the Albanian minority itself. It is true that the ethnic Albanians did obtain more rights as a consequence of the rebellion. But, above all, the guerillas of rebel leader Ali Ahmeti obtained a share of political power, with their newly founded DUI, replacing DPA as junior partner in the governing coalition after the 2002 elections.

The sinecures were then redistributed in strict proportion to the percentage represented by respective ethnic groups in the population as a whole. The constellation of power within the Albanian community changed again following the 2006 parliamentary elections. DUI was again able to win the majority of votes among ethnic Albanians. But as the winner of the elections, Gruevski chose instead the smaller DPA as coalition partner. DUI which regards itself as the true representative of Albanian interest, responded with threats of violence, demonstrations, and temporary boycott of the parliament.

Which of the two Albanian parties will participate in the future governing coalition is the decisive question this time around. Gruevski has hinted that he would like to have the DPA as a partner again. “That would be a serious provocation” stated Musa Xafherri (DUI), who was deputy prime minister of Macedonia until 2006, and who anticipates the “chaos” into which Macedonia “could slide” if Gruevski opts for DPA again.

### **2.12. Election Rerun Performed Quietly**

There was a sigh of relief in Macedonia, as the rerun in mainly ethnic Albanian electorates which was held under heavy security arrangements, went quietly. Revote was conducted at 187 polling stations in the first, second and sixth election units. The State Electoral Commission has confirmed Prime Minister Gruevski centre-right coalition as winner, as well as a huge victory for DUI (18 seats) and defeat of DPA (11 seats). This made a huge difference compared to June 1<sup>st</sup> when both parties won 13 seats<sup>8</sup>.

---

<sup>8</sup> The re-run involved around 10% of the population.

The international factor thought that despite obvious improvements over the June 1<sup>st</sup> round, elections are still imperfect. Four polling stations were yet to see another revote on June 29<sup>th</sup> because of continuing irregularities. The OSCE mission said June 15<sup>th</sup> “gave voters in areas affected by serious irregularities on June 1<sup>st</sup> “the opportunity to express their will in a secure and generally calmer environment”. However “cases of tensions and intimidation remained evident”..“notably, many of those responsible for previously committed election related offences and violence remain to be held accountable”. MOST observers noted a considerable number of cases of family voting and voting without proper documents, mostly in the sixth election unit”.

The US Embassy in Macedonia also weighed in. “We commend law enforcement authorities for their effective and professional conduct, and for their readiness to enforce the law, regarding acts of violence and intimidation near polling stations”-said the Ambassador.

The DUI spokesperson Ermira Mehmeti said that finally their estimation is that the Albanian people in Macedonia on today’s revote showed big degree of democracy, because the number of incidents have significantly decreased from those of June 1<sup>st</sup>. But, in spite of the positive flow of revote, according to her in all three election districts there were irregularities, for which are to be blamed DPA party activists. “In the Lipkovo village Lodja are missing 400 ballots. In Zerovjane was registered multiple voting by one person, while in Trebosh DPA activists were stuffing ballot boxes, while the police only silently observed”- she said.

### **2.13. Final ODIHR Elections Estimation**

The international monitoring mission composed of ODIHR (Office for democratic institutions and human rights in OSCE auspices) and representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe concluded that early parliamentary elections in Macedonia did not fulfill key international standards for free and fair elections. According to the monitors, authorities did not succeed to prevent violence and intimidation in the areas inhabited by ethnic Albanians, claiming that ” it is unacceptable breach of peace and democratic right of people”, but also due to the limited and selective application of the laws (although procedurally speaking, elections have been lead correctly).

Estimations about correctly lead voting procedures differ significantly when in question other parts of the country, where voting has been correct. Report says that “efforts to violently disturb the election process in parts of areas where predominantly live ethnic Albanians made it impossible for voters to freely express their will”...”efforts to manipulate with the campaign and violence unfortunately threw a shadow over otherwise well conducted elections which gave voters a real choice among numerous political forces”. It is further said that “Police seemed incapable to prevent continuous political attacks during the election process in the areas inhabited by ethnic Albanian inhabitants, and activities taken as a reaction to the incidents were limited”. Main report novelty was

that for the first time international monitors pointed their finger directly to the two ethnic Albanian parties as the main culpable for election violence and irregularities. The representative of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, stated that the two major ethnic Albanian parties acted “irresponsibly, violently and destructively” and added that “they should learn to accept defeat in a fair political fight, and not to endanger democratic principles and the country’s stability”. “We were witnesses of the destruction of the cause for European and Trans-Atlantic integration of the country”-it was said.

The ODIHR chief Robert Barry commented that “we think that some of the incidents that took place during the campaign in political parties’ offices were not adequately investigated and solved”. It was also said that only channels A1 and Channel 5 gave a balanced coverage of the campaign, while MTV (the national television) and “Sitel” were openly in favor of the party on power. “Alsat M” covered mainly the activities of the ethnic Albanian parties with a bit of DUI favoring. It was added that final estimation of Macedonian elections shall depend of whether authorities shall fundamentally investigate all violence incidents and which legal measures shall be taken.

### **3. POLICIES/EVENTS**

#### **3.1. “Name” Dispute Negotiations Intensified**

Prior to the April NATO Summit in Bucharest, efforts for resolving the name dispute have intensified, in seeking a possibility to close the matter. In February, Matthew Niemitz gave his new proposition to the parties involved. As he stated “the suggestion is complicated and seeks compromise, it does not maintain 100% the positions of either side because if that is so there will be no rapprochement..there should be consideration about both sides’ dignity, also there are difficult elements for both sides, but some will be acceptable..that is a suggestion that will lead to a solution”. He also said that this is not his last “take it or leave it” suggestion, as his mandate does not have time limits, while NATO enlargement has no connection to his mandate.

Macedonia got a suggestion containing 5 alternatives for how the name “Macedonia” would be used in international communications and with Greece, as a compromise for overcoming the differences: Independent Republic of Macedonia, Democratic Republic of Macedonia, Constitutional Republic of Macedonia, New Republic of Macedonia and Upper Republic of Macedonia. It is known that Athens until that period insisted on a composite name for all uses, while Macedonia requested the “double formula” according to which the name Republic of Macedonia shall be used as such by all the states that have recognized the country by its constitutional name, while the agreed name will be used in international organizations and/or as replacement of the so far FYROM reference. Greek media emphasize that Greece would prefer “New Macedonia”, while in Macedonia, the media are putting emphasis on “Democratic Republic of Macedonia”. As the Niemitz suggestion contained an array of issues which were broadening the field of negotiations tackling the national sentiment of the Macedonians request important concessions, the Macedonian public estimated the suggestion as the “catastrophic”.

For the first time there are clauses in which the use of the double formula lead to practical use of in fact only one formula and according to which cut deeply into the Macedonian Constitution and national identity. It is requested the agreed name for the international organizations and with Greece shall be put in the passports, and shall be suggested for use by the 120 states that recognized the country under its constitutional name. According the Niemitz proposal, it turns out that Macedonia shall use its constitutional name only in the citizen's ID cards. If that is opted, interpretations are that this will open doors for change of the name written in the Macedonian Constitution. Diplomatic sources state that "entering NATO is an imperative for our country, but on the other hand, we find ourselves in front of big danger to be stepped upon our national identity, a thing we cannot allow to happen". It is said that there are a couple of traps in the proposition package, which acceptance will mean denying the Macedonian identity and nation.

The state highest authorities met at President's Crvekovski's office and had a lengthy discussion on the matter. After wide consultations with all the political players and other factors stated that "The Macedonian position has been brought to accord, all political factors stand behind it and shall be communicated to Mr.Niemitz in the following meeting. Macedonia continues to be party of this process." First reactions are that the suggestion for putting the international name in the passports and in the communication with countries that have recognized Macedonia under its constitutional name crosses the red line of concessions to which the Macedonian side may eventually agree. Regarding the preferred names, Macedonia put its preference on "Independent Republic of Macedonia" and "Democratic Republic of Macedonia".

Prime Minister Gruevski again initiated the idea of organizing referendum on the position regarding the name. He stated that "it is a name for which can give opinion solely all Macedonian citizens". He rejected the accusations by the SDSM leader Radmila Sekerinska that initiates a referendum because he has no courage to bring a decision and carry the responsibility. "When I speak about a referendum, above all I think of a situation when a good name is to be suggested. I think that regardless how good is something, still, for the name there should be a referendum. I want to prevent some irresponsible politicians who intend to pass the name change through the assembly. Therefore I tell them that that should not pass that easily". Experts vary a lot in their opinions. Some think that an issue of as high importance must be passed through a referendum, while others believe that referendum shall prolong the time-frame for bringing a firm decision on the matter. Still, polls suggest that the vast majority of the country would reject a name change.

In March 2008, President Branko Crvenkovski in an exclusive interview for Southeast European Times, stated that NATO membership for Albania, Croatia and Macedonia will contribute greatly to further stability in the Western Balkans. He stated that the name dispute between Macedonia and Greece is a bilateral one which in no way belongs to the membership criteria, and in principle should not be an obstacle for NATO integration. Unfortunately, Greece as a full Alliance member, threatens to use veto, trying to impose its individual interest over the Alliance's interest in exchange for and at the expense of regional stability.

Before the summit, Greek media came out with the information that USA is changing its position towards the name Macedonia and that they prepare a suggestion for solving the dispute through a composite name for the country. This was denied by the port-parole of the European bureau of the State Department, stating that “USA shall support any kind of compromise which will be agreed by both sides”. Still, fact is that the name dispute enhanced the international pressure over Macedonia, demanding for the country to show increased flexibility and cooperation. Shortly before the NATO Summit, in a final attempt to quickly close the matter, Matthew Niemitz suggested the name “Republic of Macedonia (Skopje)” which was accepted by the Macedonian side, but refused from the Greek side. As this last minute offer did not achieve settling the dispute, showed Athens obvious intention to put a veto.

### **3.2. Veto Signals Becoming Obvious**

The Minister of Exteriors Mrs. Dora Bakogianni in Washington before the meeting with the USA State Secretary Condoleezza Reis, directed a threat towards Macedonia, announcing blockade of the acceptance of the country in NATO if agreement was not to be found until the Bucharest Summit. In her speech at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, Mrs. Bakogianni announced that from the eventual agreement on the name issue shall depend both NATO and EU membership of Macedonia. She stated that for Greece is acceptable the use of the geographic term Macedonia by the Republic of Macedonia, but there should be a distinction made between the two terms. In this sense, Greece is interested for a composite name that will include the geographic term Macedonia. She implied that Macedonia should respect the principle of good neighborly relations, as there is a need for mutual trust. She stated that 50% of geographic Macedonia belongs to Greece, 2,5 million of Greeks consider themselves as Macedonians, adding that “The Greeks consider that their identity has been attacked by the nationalistic and anachrone politics of Skopje, which tries to steal and monopolize our identity, using the 19<sup>th</sup> century vocabulary”..“Greece does not view FYROM as an enemy, but as a country that is trying to build its European future in a region which is historically full of problems”. On the question why Greece does not recognize the Macedonian minority in the country for which is a constant subject of critiques, she stated that in Greece exists only Muslim minority, which enjoys all the rights and that religious and any other freedom is fully accessible, while the US State Department is not always right.

In line with the Greek Government policy was the PASOK opposition leader Giorgos Papandreou, who after consultations with Prime Minister Karamanlis, stated: “As USA decided to issue invitations to FYROM, Albania and Croatia, the Government has no other choice but to issue a veto in Bucharest”, adding that “now it is not time for criticism, but for strengthening of the Greek voice in the crucial talks on the name dispute”. Estimating that Greece for has been brought injustice, as the country faces pressure due to the “name” issue, he confirmed that PASOK remains on a stance for a compromise name with a geographic determinant for general use, without exceptions. “We must say “no” to all forms of a double name, and of course “no” to any attempt for



“back door” accession of the neighboring country in NATO without resolution to the name issue”.

### **3.3. Bucharest Summit Events**

The uncertainty regarding the non-achievement of agreement for the name issue with Greece changed the political rhetoric prior to Bucharest meeting. USA was mentioning more often that the decision who will be invited for NATO membership is not yet brought. This reserved position was viewed in the statements of the Croatian Minister of Defense Branko Vukelich as well. Still, the USA defense minister Robert Gates gave a message to the Macedonian Minister of Defense Lazar Elenovski that “in the defense part the country fulfils the criteria completely, even more than that”. The State Department port-parole Shawn McCormack stressed that “NATO is an organization in which decisions are brought with consensus, which means that we shall have to reach a consensus for each individual issue for every candidate country”.

Bob Simmons, the Deputy-assistant of the NATO General Secretary for cooperation, not wishing to comment on the name dispute, stated that “in the preliminary plan of action for membership Macedonia was acting very well, fulfilled all membership criteria, gives a solid contribution in the Alliance operations, which means that it is about a political decision, our position is for us not to get involved in that. The name issue is bilateral, between you and Greece”..”my impression is, like in Washington and in Brussels, that Macedonia completely qualifies to obtain invitation in Bucharest and we expect that to happen”.

In his interview for BBC Erhard Busek, the previous coordinator for the Stability pact and one of the advisors of Prime Minister Gruevski, stated that the Greek veto would have consequences for Athens. “It will not improve the situation within Greece and her position in the region, it shall be the only country that blocks the enlargement and further regional cooperation both in the military and Euro-integration sense. This is an issue of the politicians and their populist approach- in reality we have more serious issues than the name problem”-he added.

As Financial Times reads, citing a senior European diplomat “Macedonia needs NATO membership for its stability, it deserves it, and has done all of the things they should, although not always very quickly or efficiently”,-“they do not go around making stupid threatening noises about their neighbors. But they are the people probably most disturbed by the Kosovo story, which potentially divides their society.” The Wall Street Journal states that “This absurd dispute on who has the right to the name of Alexander’s homeland represents a threat to the region’s stability, which has already been disrupted with events after Kosovo’s independence declaration. Obviously, Greeks do not know better, and therefore George Bush and other leaders must find a creative solution.”

As the public was slowly prepared for the possibility of getting a veto, the political leaders were reserved, stating that a potential non-obtaining an invitation is a “hypothetical situation, so now the best thing to do is wait and see”. Prime Minister

Gruevski stated that “people should know this and should be ready for veto. When we speak unofficially, they tell us that the name dispute is the problem”. The Prime Minister, the President and the Minister of Exteriors stated similar things: that Macedonia deserves to be invited, that the name shall not be a bargaining topic and that Macedonia’s invitation is of regional significance”. Minister Miloshoski in his interview for the French “Le Monde” stated: “Before putting a veto to our NATO membership, Greek authorities should reconsider well: what is of bigger importance, strategic interests of the Alliance or torturing with irrational problems, which can harm all allies”. President Crvenkovski stated that “Greek position does not rely on solidarity on the other Alliance members, but on the sole fact that as NATO and EU member has the right to veto, which is not their strongest, but the only argument. Macedonia is not isolated in the given situation, but we face a situation in which Greece wants to abuse its NATO membership in solving a bilateral problem”.

Before his departure in Bucharest, Gruevski stated that Republic of Macedonia expects a NATO membership invitation at the Alliance Summit, despite the fact that there is no positive signal by Greece following its threat to use the veto. “We have come to a situation when 26 NATO member-states gladly say that the country is ready, having met all standards, obligations and reform, to become a part of the Alliance”-he said.

In Brussels, the Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakogianni arrived encircled with many journalists. At the meeting and later in front of the journalists she repeated Greece cannot support an invitation for membership of its northern neighbor due to the unsolved name dispute, pointing out that “Our neighbor does not allow us to have positive attitude as we have for Albania and Croatia”..concerned for “the unyielding position and actions with irredentist and nationalistic logic”. She called upon Macedonian authorities to take “steps as Greek government already has taken with responsibility, political courage and political risk”.

Before veto was finally issued, in order to justify its position, Greece distributed a material showing Prime Minister Gruevski putting flowers at the grave of Goce Delcev (a Macedonian national hero) above which was attached a map of Greater Macedonia; also, complaints were directed for renaming the Skopje Airport from “Petrovec” to “Alexander the Great” and for the extensive use of the Star of Vergina on flags in manifestations often sponsored by state institutions.

The chief of the Bulgarian diplomacy Ivajlo Kalfin stated that Greece has a right in this moment to seek solution regarding the name. “the stakes for Macedonia are high and compromise must be seeked”. He stressed that good neighborly relations is an important principle and it is not good for NATO members to have bad relations. Bulgaria also warned that while choosing an eventual new name it should be taken under consideration not to be hurt the Bulgarian feelings.

The largest summit in the 59-year long history of the North-Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) begun on April 2<sup>nd</sup>. At the summit, the Macedonian delegation was headed by President Branko Crvenkovski and Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, also comprised by

Vice Premier Zoran Stavreski, Foreign Minister Antonio Miloshoski, Defense Minister Lazar Elenovski, Interior Minister Gordana Jankulovska, Health Minister Imer Selmani, Chief of Macedonian Army staff Miroslav Stojanovski and Ambassador Nikola Dimitrov. According to sources from the Macedonian delegation, the country's chances to obtain an invitation for NATO membership at the Bucharest summit have reduced after the announcement of the Greek government that Athens does not accept the accession of the northern neighbor under the FYROM reference or the latest name proposed by mediator Matthew Niemitz "Republic of Macedonia (Skopje)".

One day prior to the Summit beginning, the US Department of State Spokesman Tom Casey stated that "USA believe that NATO membership decisions cannot be delayed due to Macedonia's name issue".. "decisions that are taken on NATO membership ought to be based on whether the countries meet the qualifications and criteria that NATO has established for them". He expressed hope that intensive consultations between Greece and Macedonia would resume in the coming days in finding a solution, so that there would not be any extraneous reasons that might affect Macedonia's candidacy for membership. Greek TV station "Mega" cites sources saying that USA would propose Macedonia to join NATO under interim reference "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". Greece does not agree with such a proposal, stated the TV station.

The Greek paper "Eleftheros Tipos" said that "Washington is ready to present a "bypass plan" to the Greek veto, the main argument being that the name is a bilateral issue and not part of the Alliance membership conditions. USA will refer to the Athens-Skopje 1995 Interim Agreement in which the country is allowed membership in international organizations under the reference FYROM". The newspaper states that the Greek side is ready for all possibilities, even or a new proposal submitted at the last moment, most probably "Republic of New Macedonia" which Athens requested in behind-the-scenes talks.

The EU Slovenian Presidency called on Greece to demonstrate flexibility in the name dispute with Macedonia. Macedonia has been rather flexible lately. "The ball is in the field of Greece now", said Mr. Rupel at a session of the European Parliament Foreign Policy Committee. "Macedonia must not remain an isolated and abandoned island on the south of the Balkans, outside of NATO's security umbrella, and therefore should become Alliance member-state" Albanian Prime Minister Sali Berisha told BBC's program "Hard Talk". NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer urged: "do something good in the remaining 5 hours".. "It's not an issue that involves NATO and the Alliance cannot be blamed for it. "I cannot influence directly, I can do it only indirectly, however time is running out"- he said.

"USA strongly support the accession of the three countries to NATO and their citizens deserve the security provided by the Alliance", stated in his historic decision for the NATO enlargement with three new countries- Albania, Croatia and Macedonia emphasized US President George Bush in his address at the Trans-Atlantic Forum, in Bucharest. Unnamed NATO sources claimed that USA insist that Macedonia obtains an invitation together with other two Adriatic Group members, unlike other member-states,

which are “indifferent” on the issue. It is said that two draft-versions of the membership invitations have been prepared – one reading “NATO allies salute the invitations extended to Albania and Croatia...” and the other referring to all three countries.

The largest number of heads of diplomacy confirmed that for the sake of region’s stability and prosperity, they would like to send invitations for Albania, Croatia and Macedonia, but underlined that they would like a solution to the problem prior to the summit. However, Greece repeated that without solution on the dispute, veto is unavoidable. USA State secretary Condoleezza Reis stated that “we on Macedonia look as a potential member if fulfills all criteria, adding that will more good will the problem can be solved. NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer stated that veto is not what he desires, but decisions are brought by consensus, which in NATO is a sacred principle. The only open support for Macedonia came from Slovenia, Turkey, Italy and The Netherlands. According to the Head of the Dutch diplomacy, the name cannot be an element according to which shall be rated a candidate-country.

In spite of all the efforts, Greece has realized the threat it was repeating for some months now and put a veto for issuing an invitation for Macedonia to join NATO. In Point n.20 of the Bucharest NATO Declaration is stated among other things “..we agree that the invitation to FYROM shall be extended immediately after obtaining mutual agreement with Greece on the name. We encourage negotiations to proceed without further delay and we expect them to terminate as soon as possible”. As this wording was stated by NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer in the press room, Macedonian journalists stood up and left. Being notified sooner, same did the Macedonian delegation from the Summit.

The Macedonian public was shocked and embittered by not obtaining the invitation. Citizens of Macedonia were often making a parallel with the again-unfavorable Bucharest summit a century ago when Macedonia the region was divided among the then Balkan states, thus generating the still dragged on issue of the Macedonian minority in the surrounding countries, as a result of the non-compliance by those states of the minority rights they were bound to secure within their borders. The general sentiment was that “injustice is still done to Macedonians, same as one century ago” in the same geographic place.

Gruevski’s, Crvekovski’s and others’ statements were colored with disappointment, stating that the Macedonian nation shall further endure, although enemies do not wish that, and that international politics has not been fair to Macedonia. Gruevski stated “..we made everything we could to prevent the Greek attempt to do what it intended and announced in Athens. Anyone that thinks that by this move shall force Macedonia to accept something against her will, I think that it is in a big deceivance...Macedonia shall continue to endure and to develop further dynamically, together with our allies”. Crvenkovski stated that “..now it should be used the whole statehood capacity of Macedonia...some directions in the state strategy should be redefined according to the hew reality, but without reallocation of the strategic goals”.

Still, some domestic analysts have commented that they “have the impression that our leaders freed themselves pretty easily from the responsibility”. Regardless of the initial appeals for unity, opposition already made estimations how much weighs Gruevski’s responsibility in this case, how much he influenced the issue with the “provocations from the resurrection of the ancient past”, why for example Germany didn’t stand firmer on our side in Bucharest and whether early elections are the real solution of the problem.

### **3.4. Macedonia Under the USA Protective Shield**

In the aftermath of the Bucharest Summit, President Branko Crvenkovski in an attempt to build a joint political position and approach for a way out of the new situation the country was facing met with all main party leaders.

At the same time, USA in a wish to demonstrate that it remained a strategic partner to Macedonia promised to guarantee the country’s safety until a solution of the name issue is to be found, as a pass-ticket to NATO. For that purpose, US announced signing of bilateral military-technical agreement, which was signed between Foreign Minister Antonio Miloshoski and US Secretary of state Condoleezza Rice in Washington on May 7<sup>th</sup>. The Declaration on strategic partnership and cooperation contained elements for upgrading and deepening the bilateral cooperation. The first element refers to strengthening the cooperation regarding trade and economy, the second to increasing cooperation within the security sector, whereas the third one focuses on finding more concrete ways for approximation and more intensive contacts between Macedonian and US societies.

The US Deputy assistant Secretary in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, Rosemary DiCarlo stated that her country will provide assistance in finding a compromise solution to the name issue, which represents an obstacle to the country’s Euro-Atlantic integrations.

### **3.5. Summer Developments on the “Name” Dispute**

In April, UN special envoy Matthew Niemitz stated that he will not put forward a fresh proposal during his visits to Skopje and Athens, unless common ground is reached. However, despite the Washington pressure the issue to be closed, the pre-election period in Macedonia left no bigger chances for optimism, i.e. no solution to the name issue was to be found in due time.

Unfortunately, the “name” dispute between Greece and Macedonia has negatively influenced mutual relations. During the long weekend holiday around May 1<sup>st</sup>, Macedonians massively avoided to go to Greece, but also Greek authorities did not allow entry to Macedonian tourists, demanding travelers to show that they possess 3000 Euros per person. Other problems were created when previously approved charter flights from the Macedonian MAT company were not allowed by the Greek flight control to fly over the Greek air space, due to the company’s title; there were obstacles for the lamb meat from Macedonia to be exported in Greece as it did every year; there were speculations of

possible imposing measures for complicating the goods exchange like the past economic embargo of Greece towards Macedonia; etc. Also, in spite of the issued invitation for President Crvenkovski by the Greek President Karolos Papoulias on a UNESCO summit in Athens, the Greek authorities notified the Macedonian side that they do not agree for him to travel with the Government plane in Greece, due to the “Republic of Macedonia” sign on it. Offended, President Crvenkovski refused the suggestion.

On the other side, immediately after the veto, in the Internet and in the public in Macedonia circulated calls for encouraging boycott of the Greek products and suggestions not to go to Greece for the summer holiday, where many people were traditionally going. Still, one should not forget that: 5,56% of the Macedonian workforce works in Greek owned enterprises; half of all the largest investments in the country are Greek; in the past Greece did not have investments in the value of 300 million Euros in the country and profit returns amounting a billion, etc. It is interesting to note that Greek investments are not currently protected by a bilateral agreement for stimulation and protection of the investments between the two states. Macedonia and Greece have composed such a document in which technical details are agreed long time ago, but it waits for a long time in the drawers of the Greek parliament to be ratified. From 1990 until today there are standing 20 bilateral memorandums and agreements between Macedonia and Greece. Among them are the two most important ones: agreement for stimulation and protection of investments and the agreement for avoiding the double taxation. The last one has been signed in 1998 and since then it has not been ratified. The only agreement that had been ratified by the Greek parliament is the Stabilization and Association Agreement, by which document the economic exchange is conducted.

At the end of July US ambassador Jillian Milovanovich stated that there are suggestions by the mediator Niemitz which should be looked at by Macedonia and to take advantage of the chance an agreement to be reached before the NATO summit in December. She estimated that Macedonia should follow its interests and to move towards reaching an agreement in the next few months to come. “Niemitz has suggestions that Macedonia should look at, and which shall protect Macedonian interests, upon which may be negotiated with Greece, and we hope that it will be accomplished in order the problem to be solved. I think that this is a golden chance for Macedonia”- she said.

EU MP and rapporteur Eric Meijer<sup>9</sup> stated that Macedonia should not hope for EU negotiations for this year, while in the meantime the country should accept a composite name which would contain the name “Macedonia”. He expressed fear that until January 1<sup>st</sup> 2009 France will not encourage further EU enlargement, even including Croatia which is much more advanced in the negotiating process. He thought that a composite name which will contain the word “Macedonia” is a suggestion for which the Macedonian government should talk about with the Greeks. “I don’t know whether your public will accept this compromise, but not to do it would mean not entering in the EU, because the Greeks may block it if they want to”. He thinks that the Greek government in November

---

<sup>9</sup> As rapporteur, Mr. Mayer participates in writing the annual report of the advancement of Macedonia, which should be forwarded to the EU Commission until September. Based on the report, the Commission is to decide when and whether the country shall obtain a date for negotiations with EU.

has made a progress by saying for the first time “yes, they are Macedonia as well, but not the only Macedonia...that is why Northern, Vardar, and Upper Macedonia are names acceptable for Greece, but not solely Macedonia”. He suggested that the Macedonian identity and language are internal issues in which is not allowed interference of other states: “Greece may only influence the conditions under which your country can enter the EU, but cannot influence on your identity and how your tongue will be called”.

Some analysts believe that it is not that bad that Macedonia did not make a speedy and clumsy arrangement regarding the name prior to the Bucharest Summit. The Macedonian negotiator Nikola Dimitrov has notified the negotiator Matthew Niemitz that Macedonia refuses to negotiate under the Greek dictate, and that a solution will be found if arguments of both sides are taken under consideration. At the same time Prime Minister Gruevski completely opened the “Aegean Issue” which is in fact by Macedonians is considered the substance of the dispute with Greece. As the commentaries say: “Greece may argue whether it is pretentious our calling on Ancient Macedonia, may have right to laugh with out adventures with the Hunza people, but for the Aegean Issue have not a single argument, so here all diplomatic efforts should be directed”.

Niemitz has set 14 and 15<sup>th</sup> of August a new round of talks regarding the name issue with both countries’ negotiators, although these meetings by both sides are not seen as a hope for reaching any kind of solution. On this, preceded the statement of Foreign Minister Dora Bakogianni who said that Greece will negotiate strictly regarding the name and the width of its use, and nothing more. Same was confirmed by Mr. Niemitz. Impression is that somehow there is a possibility of setting the agreement on one of the five variants of the name “Northern Macedonia”. Still, Prime Minister Gruevski has the tendency of burdening the agenda further, by trying to solve the problem of the recognition of the Macedonian Orthodox Church in the package. More results are awaited on the September round of talks.

### **3.6. Dilemmas After the Bucharest Summit**

In the aftermath of the Bucharest summit, analysts were commenting the new unfavorable situation Macedonia was in and her weakened position in the “name” dispute negotiations. Some thought that the Macedonian delegation should not have left “all in Athens hands”, when flying for Bucharest, as it was obvious that they will return with a defeat. “When one state policy is leaning on the will of another state that has diametrically opposite interests, the epilogue cannot be different”...”the course of the country is changed due to fake patriotism behind which is hidden the fear not to be lost the political positions and the strive to stay in good relations with the voters at any cost”- they say, characterizing the final effect as a historical omission. On one hand, President Crvenkovski who is at the end of his mandate had no courage to pull more clear moves towards solving the problem, while Prime Minister Gruevski from the moment he came on power calculates on early elections, to maintain the high rating he has was more important to him than any deal for the country.

Analysts believe that Macedonian leadership should have considered that fact that even the strongest warrant for the NATO membership- George W Bush is terminating his mandate in the White House, so regardless the tendency USA not to change its foreign policy after the change of leadership, in this case it played a role<sup>10</sup>. Thus, promises obtained, should have been better analyzed, especially because Greece was warning for six months that veto shall be issued if no solution for the problem is to be found in the meantime.

At that moment, estimations were that Macedonia's international capacities are drastically worsened. NATO invitation was supposed to be a stabilizing factor, but now it turned to be a destabilizing factor instead, primarily for the domestic political scene. This political momentum was used to be initiated early elections, for the period of which there would be a weak legitimacy of the Macedonian government for conducting negotiations, as Gruevski will lead them only formally, not substantially. On the other hand, Greece entered in a new round of negotiations with significantly improved positions and strengthened superiority, while Macedonia got confirmed and verified knowledge that without agreement with Greece there is no NATO and EU membership. Also, it should not be underestimated the position taken in Bucharest by Bulgaria, solidarizing itself with the Greek position, opening the possibility for a new pressure upon Macedonia, this time from East. Other tensions may arise North, due to the Kosovo expectations for Macedonia to recognize its independence and thus worsen its relations with Serbia.

There were five general consequences of the negative Bucharest effect: greater Greek pressure for solving the issue, as the veto is a big risk from the Greek side as well, fearing from diplomatic isolation and in order not to be found twice in the position to use the veto; political (government) crisis, as it was very probable that calculations on the durability of the ruling coalition shall start; endangered EU perspective deriving from the missed chance for NATO; fear of destabilization due to betrayed high expectations from ethnic Albanians, in combination with the tensions from the North. Thus, a lot of options opened, like recomposing of parliamentary majority, technical governments, catch-all governments etc, which reinforced the idea of having early elections as an exit door from the political crisis.

What's more, after the failure to obtain invitation for NATO membership in Bucharest, it is obvious that there is a growing gap between Prime Minister Gruevski and president Crvenkovski regarding the "name" issue. Now, Crvenkovski openly expresses the need for compromise with Greece in order to successfully continue the processes of Euro-Atlantic integration of the country, while Gruevski still has the same attitude - no name change whatsoever. It is believed that for now Gruevski successfully "floats" on the waves of the populist support which will end the moment when citizens will understand that the country is drowning in isolation and poverty. As remaining opportunity was seen the month of June, for the last USA support for the issue, and after which the American administration is getting in election period as well.

---

<sup>10</sup> In fact, the main concern at that meeting was the introducing of Ukraine and Georgia in the NATO action plan, an effort which again was not fruitful as well.



Ambassador Nikola Dimitrov, the special envoy from the Macedonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the negotiations on the name with Greece, on a TV program on Channel 5 gave statements regarding the process of negotiations that took place prior to the Bucharest Summit. He stated that if Macedonia wants better perspectives for the country it should be engaged in a substantial solving of the dispute. "We need a platform higher than the party interests in order the name dispute to be overcome".. "if the contrary happens, political actors in the state should offer to thee citizens real alternative, a future without NATO and EU, if something like that really exists". By this statement, Dimitrov "signed his death penalty" but also it is considered that he fired a destructive torpedo towards the manipulations and disinformation regarding the "firm attitude" for the name change for which the Macedonian public was bombarded for a longer period of time, in order for the Prime Minister to maintain his high popularity and to obtain an alibi for the failure in achieving NATO membership status. Since then, Ambassador Dimitrov is considered as a persona non grata in the Prime-Minister's cabinet. At present Macedonia has two special envoys: Ambassador Dimitrov and the Government envoy and party Secretary Martin Protoger.

Prominent Macedonian historians estimated that the idea of Athens for dismantling the Macedonian state as an expression of the identity and culture of the Macedonian people is consistent. They believe that Greece calculates with the fact that in Macedonia live other ethnic communities that have nothing in common with the Macedonian name and expect to have internal clashes between ethnic groups especially with the Albanians. Thus, it is anticipated that Greece hopes for secession in Macedonia.

### **3.7. The Aegean Issue Set on the Table**

In July, the Macedonian Prime Minister Gruevski sent a letter to his Greek counterpart Kostas Karamanlis in which seeks solution of the so called "Aegean issue", but also recognition of the Macedonian minority in Greece. In the letter he says that ethnic Macedonians who during the civil war "as refugees" fled from Greece are "permanently discriminated" because they cannot obtain back their property, they have difficulties in entering Greece and do not have the right to obtain double citizenship. Gruevski expects Karamanlis to take measures to "correct this historic injustice". Also, he asked his colleague to help him in recognition of the Macedonian minority in Greece and to enable its members to enjoy minority rights according to international standards.

Regarding the letter Prime Minister Gruevski directed to the Greek Prime Minister Karamanlis, Greece stated that shall not discuss issues that considers them irrelevant in the name differences negotiations. "Greece would not like to defocus negotiations in any way". Greek authorities considered the letter as open provocation and extreme nationalism unseen so far in the name negotiations. Some Macedonian analysts commented the letter as classic demagoguery. Still, others say that "Greece should more often be put on the international institutions agenda as a country that does not fulfill the elementary obligations from the European agreement and the gains from EU". "There should be written concretely and clearly to the Council of Europe and to EU where Greece is member by use of arguments a warning for the democracy deficit in Greece".

Macedonia media mentioned again that ten years have passed after the European Court for Human Rights in Strasbourg ruled out that Greece breaks the European Convention for Human Rights because refuses to register the House of Macedonian culture in Florina. However, that decision has been ignored, and the political party “Rainbow” says that it wonders why the Greek state further denies the existence of the Macedonian minority.

As reaction to the letter sent to Karamanlis by Gruevski, the State Department stated that Macedonian refugees from the Greek Civil War and the Macedonian minority are issues between Greece and Macedonia. Official Washington by this position distanced itself from the letter from Prime Minister Gruevski to his Greek counterpart.

At the Fourth world meeting of the former child-refugees from the civil war in Greece, on the occasion of 60 years of their exodus from Greece, participants requested calling upon the international human rights documents, and called upon Greece to abolish the discriminatory laws by which their rights were taken. “According to the Greek constitution, the right for citizenship and the right for private property are unquestionable. We do not ask anything more than the respect of such proclaimed rights”-it was said.

The Macedonian government promised assistance to the requests of these people. It is anticipated that Greek courts will be the first instance to which all the thousands cases of the Macedonians who are demanding the return of their properties in Greece should start. Legal experts have advised the Associations of the Macedonians that they should pass all the instances of the Greek courts and then in turn comes the Strasbourg court. The Macedonian government intends to engage a USA lawyer who already has experience with similar cases. His task will be to represent all those who own property in Greece but do not have the relevant documents that will prove the factual situation. If complaints in Greece shall not be fruitful, there will be a collective appeal for the return of the property. For this process to go forward, the Assembly shall bring a Resolution for protection of the rights of the expelled Macedonians, by which will be officially confirmed that the government stands behind them.

On the same matter, Prime Minister Gruevski sent letters with similar content to European Commission’s president Jose Manuel Barroso, to all leaders of NATO countries, to the EU, to the OSCE Secretary General, to the NATO Secretary General, to the Council of Europe General Secretary and to the leaders of the G8 group.

At a public opinion poll lead in Albania, by the paper agency “Balkanweb” in July, out of 1012 polled persons, 803 or 79,3% showed support for the Macedonian government for recognition of Macedonian minority in Greece, while the remaining 20% were against.

### **3.8. The Issue of NATO Membership – Further Developments**

After the Summit, Macedonia was visited by Jaap de Hoop Scheffer who stated that his personal ambition is to see Macedonia in NATO. “I’m optimistic and looking back is of no use. I want to look ahead and I hope everyone else wants the same in order solution to

the name issue to be found, - he emphasized. He said he understood why the Bucharest NATO Summit was such a disappointment for Macedonia. He also added that Macedonia has an opportunity as of now till July 9 to find a name solution, to catch up with the other two countries in the Adriatic group. Commenting on the Balkans future, he said that he called the region “unfinished business”. He cannot sufficiently firmly point out how important is for all nations in the region to follow the Euro-Atlantic integration, in which should be stimulated by EU and NATO. Then Europe will be complete and free. The region 12-13 years ago was known by its violence risks and war. Moving towards euro Atlantic integration is the only way.”

At first, it was considered that Macedonia may arrive to join Albania and Croatia in their NATO joining process if there was decision for the “name” issue with Greece prior to July 9<sup>th</sup>. Unfortunately, as things were evolving an agreement has not been reached and Macedonia missed the date. As things stand now, it is not sure whether there will be a decision this year at all. It remains to be seen what will bring the next round of meeting initiated by Matthew Niemitz in August 15<sup>th</sup> this year for the appointed mediators.

Based on the recommendations by NATO given to Macedonia in May this year, about what should be the further Army reforms, the Ministry of Defense prepares a defense draft-plan for defense development for the period 2009-2018 which is due to be completed in September. After its adoption by the government, shall be forwarded to the Assembly. In this development projection are to be finished all Army reforms for full completion of NATO standards. Macedonia has also adopted the recommendations of the Alliance by which it binds itself to enable one medium infantry battalion (600 soldiers) while up to 2014 a medium infantry group (from 1.200 to 1.400 soldiers), as well as enabling a mobile hospital on level 2.

### **3.9. Barroso Declared Himself Incompetent for the Aegeans**

The European Commission seriously reviews the letter of the Macedonian Prime Minister Gruevski in which he requests from Commission’s president Jose Manuel Barroso to mediate about the issue of Macedonians in Greece. “The Government of the Republic of Macedonia appeals, within your competencies, to personally engage for Greece’s strict obeying of the obligations stemming from international instruments regarding human rights, with special emphasis on free expression of ethnic identity and all rights stemming from that. Our expectation is Greece, as a member of the EU and NATO, to start dialogue which will lead to meeting the recommendations of the European Commission” was stated in the letter to Mr.Barroso.

After certain delay, Mr. Barroso replied to Mr. Gruevski’s letter, in which stated that he has no competencies about minority rights in the member-countries. “EU in not competent to treat the issue of identity and minority rights, their nationality and return of their property in the EU member-countries. That depends of the member-country in question in the light of the constitution and tradition of their international obligation”- was the answer. Mr. Barroso suggested that the Greek constitution and the obligations of the country towards international law are the only chance for Macedonians to accomplish

their rights. Macedonian experts think that EU cannot easily proclaim itself as incompetent to discuss for issues connected with minority rights, as its legal system anticipates protection of minority rights and issues linked to property. A problem however may be the fact that Greece has signed, but not ratified the Convention for minorities' protection. At the same time, experts suggest for Macedonian authorities to address themselves in OSCE, Council of Europe and the Helsinki Committee.

As a reaction, Gruevski stated that "we shall continue in internationalization of our efforts for obtaining support wherever we can". Greece viewed this letter as "irredentist step", while the Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakogianni stated that "Gruevski may write to whoever he wants, but anyway EU and all their partners are completely and in details acquainted with the Greek positions". It was reconfirmed the intention of Athens to negotiate with Macedonia for nothing else other than the name of Macedonia. Pavlos Voskopulos, the representative of the civic organization "Rainbow" from Greece which advocates the rights of the Macedonian minority there, stated that letters should be sent, but the real place for debate regarding the Macedonian minority in Greece is the Council of Europe. "In reports from commissions of international institutions as ECRI of the Council of Europe, and other non-governmental organizations all these years is clearly mentioned the Macedonian minority in Greece and sharp critiques have been directed against Greece for its undemocratic behavior towards the minority"-he said.

## **4. REFORM PROCESS**

### **4.1. EU National Council Established**

At the beginning of the year the country made efforts to mobilize political forces in obtaining negotiation date with the EU and start negotiations for the visa regime liberalization. For that purpose, was established a National Council for European Integration of Macedonia, which introduced a workplan for 2008. This body is consisted by political parties' representatives, prime minister's and president's representatives, the Chamber of Commerce, the Macedonian Academy of Science, the Journalists' Association, religious communities, civic organizations, etc, as its basic task determined the offering of advice, directions and suggestions for functioning of the state institutions for easier and speedier EU integration of the country. As President of this body was determined the opposition leader Radmila Sekerinska, who stated "one of the suggestions that the Council has accepted is for us to remove the fog of what are the Assembly's duties in this respect; the Council's suggestion is for these laws to have a special procedure, a special unit that will look at all the laws".

### **4.2. EU Benchmarks set for Macedonia in January**

On January 18<sup>th</sup> the EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn, announced that he was planning to issue a list of benchmarks for Macedonia. At his speech at the European Parliament Plenary Session, stated that following the granting of candidate status in 2005, there was a reform slowdown. However, he estimated that the Commission's rather critical Progress Report of 2007 has been followed by corrective actions. Important

reforms have been adopted since then, in particular to strengthen the judiciary, reform the police and improve inter-ethnic relations. Therefore he supported the recommendation that the European Commission should develop a set of benchmarks for the opening of accession negotiations in 2008. "There is nothing new or unachievable in them",- he said adding that "This year may be historical for Macedonia's EU integration processes. I believe that the country is capable to complete crucial reforms and meet criteria for launching the membership negotiations with the EU". The eight benchmarks derive from the key priorities of the new Accession Partnership. A recommendation to start accession negotiations will depend upon progress which the country has made in meeting them. Prime Minister Gruevski briefed Mr. Rehn on Macedonia's progress hoping that in addition Macedonian citizens may enjoy free visa regime starting from 2009.

The set conditions in which Macedonia needs to make progress include: commitments undertaken under the Stabilization and Association Agreement, enhancing constructive political dialogue between the position and opposition, accomplishing an effective enforcement of the new Police Law, achieving political independence of the public administration and improving business climate, more efficient functioning of the Parliament and administration. Other criteria include the speeding up of property registration, strengthening of judiciary's independence, sustainable implementation of anti-corruption legislation and creating conditions for the employment of the young. Macedonia has formally been an EU candidate for membership since December 2005. In 2007 Macedonia missed the opportunity to get a starting date for EU talks, following criticism from Brussels for its constant inter-party quarrels that had stalled the crucial reform process.

Mr.Rehn also stressed the need for political stability as an essence of success, so he called upon all political forces in the country to concentrate their energies in the reform agenda in order to take advantage of the opportunities of this year. He stated that the budget for the country from the IPA program is quite considerable and amounts to 244 million Euros for the period 2008-10.

### **4.3. EU Sets Additional Benchmarks for Macedonia**

In order Macedonia to mark 2008 as historic and to obtain date for start of EU membership negotiations, despite implementing the eight key benchmarks where reinforced reforms are needed, due to violence and irregularities that occurred during the early elections, EU set a ninth criterion: it must hold the forthcoming parliamentary election in a peaceful and democratic atmosphere. When asked whether Macedonia in the course of that short period after the elections had capacity to meet the required criteria, EU Ambassador Erwan Fouere emphasized the country had the capacity, but it also entailed political will. "At the end of the day, the responsibility remains amongst the political leaders" -he added.

In June 13<sup>th</sup>, after elections took place, the Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel met with Macedonian counterpart Antonio Miloshoski. Rupel emphasized Slovenia knew it would be hard for Macedonia to obtain EU accession talks date during the Slovenian

EU presidency. However, he said that it would be considered a success to obtain the accession talks date during the French presidency by the year-end. Commenting on the election irregularities, Mr. Miloshoski stated that the government is ready to meet all required conditions for correction of irregularities caused by a small group of individuals, so that it showed that Macedonia has democratic capacity, thus confirming the country's image as EU candidate". On June 15<sup>th</sup> followed the peaceful election rerun.

By the end of June, EU conditioned the progress of the Republic of Macedonia by solving the name dispute with Greece. European parliament by great majority 601 vote "for" and 52 "against"<sup>11</sup> adopted the Resolution of the advancement of Macedonia towards the European Union, written according to the report of the Dutch MR, Eric Meijer<sup>12</sup>. In the Resolution it is clearly asked from the European Council in the next summit to estimate the advancement of the country, and if it is possible, to determine a date for start of negotiations. In the resolution prevails the opinion that many things have been changed in Macedonia and that it puts efforts on the issues that has been criticized for. The Report welcomed the progress made by the Macedonian authorities in implementing the 2001 Ohrid Framework Agreement, which addresses inter-ethnic relations in the country, but deplored "continuing discrimination against the Roma community"; welcomed Macedonia's "constructive position" on Kosovo's status, and called for steps to address the issue of the Macedonian-Kosovo border in line with former UN special envoy Martti Ahtisaari's proposal; authorities were urged to comply with EU requests on "countering the resurgence of "hate speech", particularly in the media, against neighboring states". This would otherwise have been good news, but while the report was prepared, the "name" dispute was imposed through amendments.

The Amendment n.13 in question which was softened along the way making Greece not so enthusiastic, states that "solution of the name is in continuation of negotiations". "The name issue should not represent an obstacle to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's membership of international organizations, as provided for in the Interim Accord of 1995, which is still in force" reads the report. On the consistently contentious issue of the country's bilateral name-dispute with Greece, the report welcomes the increased bilateral cooperation, as well as people-to-people contacts between Macedonia and Greece. That meant that the name officially is not an obstacle, neither a new, tenth precondition for advancement of Macedonia on its way to EU, but de facto in a way it became a precondition. This was confirmed by Mr. Dohl, president of the most numerous parliamentary group- the people's parties group. "For the name dispute it is necessary a solution to be found between the two countries. It cannot be proceeded without an agreement. Now it is necessary a solution to be found as soon as possible".

For formulating the new criterion Brussels used the Bucharest formula, by announcing a possible date but having an ultimative condition without which is not possible further Eurointegration advancement of the country. The ministry meeting in Luxembourg had a

---

<sup>11</sup> The Greens out of principle were against entering such an element in the report and that is why they voted against it (and not against Macedonia, on the contrary).

<sup>12</sup> he report should have been initially adopted on April 10, but it was postponed due to the pressure by Greece's MEPs.

conclusion in which leaders state that “future steps of Macedonia in its progress towards EU are possible at the end of this year if are realized the conditions of the European Council from 2005 criteria from Copenhagen and key priorities of the Accession partnership of February 2008.” Then it is added that in this context the European Council takes under consideration the conclusions of the ministerial meeting of June 16<sup>th</sup> this year: “maintaining good neighborly relations including agreed and mutually accepted solution for the name remain substantial”. By this act, Macedonia got a double ramp for EU integration. The Slovenian Minister Janez Jansha admitted that the condition requested from Macedonia is not a standard one for the EU, in fact it does not fall into the domain in which it can have competencies to interfere and judge.

Experts however, positively estimate the EU Parliament report for the progress Macedonia has made in 2007. For them, there is nothing disputable in the resolution that has been passed and in the amendment which says that are encouraged Greece and Macedonia to find a compromise solution regarding the name issue. They confirm that the report is a good basis for the European commission as soon as possible to set for Macedonia a date for initiation of the negotiations for EU membership. Other experts say that there will be no opposing positions regarding the setting of a date for negotiations initiation, on basis of the positive report that was obtained by the EU Parliament. According to them, it is expected that Greece will put pressure later, when negotiations will actually start and when agreements will have to be ratified by the EU Council and in the parliaments of the member states, including Greece. Opinion is that Athens could not block the set of negotiation date, but may delay and completely stop the membership verification.

The wording of the above mentioned Amendment n.13, is considered very moderate and diplomatically formulated. However, as a final outcome, the “name problem” is mentioned in almost all reports, and that is nothing that may be characterized as surprising. The change of the amendment text in which the two sides are invited to find a solution for the name, is a result of the solidarity among all European countries and avoiding to create enemies. Experts agree that the Macedonian top political institutions must seriously engage to find a solution for the name, which is seen in the EU report as a well-intentioned suggestion. It was also underlined that the name dispute must not be an obstacle for the process of accession of Macedonia to the EU.

According to French Ambassador Bernard Valero, his country, which takes over EU Presidency from Slovenia on July 1<sup>st</sup>, will resume its support to Macedonia on the road towards the Union. “Macedonian partners are expected to resume with the dynamics of reforms. Besides the eight tasks given by Brussels, Macedonia has the ninth task of holding free, fair and democratic elections in line with European standards, so that the country is eligible for an EU accession talks date”.

#### **4.4. Macedonia Receives Roadmap on Visa Liberalization With EU**

Director General of the European Commission’s Enlargement Directorate General Michael Leigh in May handed over the Roadmap on visa liberalization with the EU for

Macedonian citizens to Foreign Minister Antonio Miloshoski. The document enumerates conditions for revoking the visa regime towards Macedonia, which are focused on the sphere of document security, integrated border management, fight against corruption and organized crime and monitoring of human rights. This Roadmap in practice gave clear indications to the candidate country's authorities on the measures that need to be taken in order to grant visa free travel to all its citizens in the near future.

The Roadmap follows a balanced approach setting benchmarks which are realistic and achievable in the near future. It sets clear requirements for the reforms to be implemented in key areas such as security of documents, border management, fight against illegal migration, fight against organized crime and corruption and also the area of fundamental rights. Key elements of the blocks include: improvement of document security and in particular the introduction of biometrics in travel documents, better management of migratory risks, efficient law enforcement cooperation including cooperation with Europol and enhanced measures to fight against organized crime and corruption. The process will be closely monitored by the Commission assisted by Member States' experts. There will be a special report by the end of the year on whether Macedonia has met the conditions based on which, after the procedure in the European Parliament, the EU Council shall decide upon liberalization of the visa regime. The decision is to be brought by EU member countries with qualified majority.

It is expected that Macedonia will insist the recommendation for full revocation of visas to be included in the report. Macedonian authorities believe that progress has been made in all four spheres indicated. The country introduced the most modern kind of passports in line with all international standards, integrated system for border security and quality border control, also applying adequate asylum and migration policies in accordance with EU standards, while the installation of IT system is underway. The Foreign Ministry also works on completing the national informative visa system that will obtain information on visa issuance and whereabouts of Macedonian citizens.

Since January 1 2008, Macedonian citizens enjoy the benefits of a visa facilitation agreement with the EU. This agreement provides simplified conditions for visas, including a visa free waiver for a broad range of categories of citizens including students, sportsmen, cultural workers, journalists, people visiting family members living in the EU, people in need of medical treatment, economic operators etc. However, after six months of its application, there are complaints from Macedonian citizens that procedures at times are even more complicated than before and not as beneficiary as it was stated.

## **5. ECONOMY**

### **5.1. Economic Trends**

The Macedonian trade deficit is raised dramatically, as in four months reached the sum of 902 million UDS. Main reasons are the growing prices of oil and electricity, in relation to domestic competitiveness. Inflation in May was 9,5%, which followed after two months of double-digit inflation. This was considered an alarming trend that needs reaction.



As the 2005 MDG Report on Macedonia states, in spite of maintaining high level price stability since 1955 and a low budget deficit, the most important concern of the country is the slow GDP growth rates (also compared with the other countries in the region) and the enormously high level of official unemployment<sup>13</sup>. Human poverty index shows that on average, 55% of the population is suffering from various forms of human poverty. Poverty level in Macedonia is more related to high unemployment than to low income. Households with the highest risk-profiles are multi-member households, households whose members have a low level of education and households of elderly people.

Proof that this negative trend is still maintained are data publicized by the State Statistical Bureau regarding the situation at the end of 2007. According to them, the percent of poverty in Macedonia is 29,4%, which is more and less the same percent measured in 2005 and 2006. In addition, citizens are facing higher prices on food and other consumable goods, gasoline and central heating<sup>14</sup>. In the given percent of the poor, about 27% fall into the category “couples with children”, 33% in the category “other households with children”, while the least percent are the “households without children” (26%). The number of unemployed persons at the end of 2007 was 357.166, while by the end of April this year, according to data from the Employment Service Agency unemployed were 354.174 persons. Thus, unemployment was decreased only for 1,4%, while employment has been increased for 3,5%. That means that the dynamics of the new employments is taking a better pace. During 2007 the number of new employments was 191.472.

IMF Chief of Mission Mark Griffiths in July visited Macedonia in order to get acquainted with the new program of the Macedonian government. Talks are also at stake for the application of the current stand-by arrangement, due to terminate in August. Up till now Macedonia pulled only one installment of 15 million USD, after which the arrangement continued without further credit obligations. Some of the agreed elements have not been realized, like limiting the unnecessary expenses which undermine the inflator pressure over Macedonian citizens. By not pulling the other installments it is seen that the government has started to diminish the IMF influence in the country. Experts advise that the IMF presence is necessary in the country, as a supervisor and corrector in spending money.

Macedonia shall obtain 100 million Euros from the World Bank for infrastructure projects (roads). The loan is to be repaid in 10 years, by 5 year grace period and interest lower than the referent 0,06%. This is at the same time the largest investment financing in the country. As it is said by the WB, by having roads reconstruction citizen's life shall be improved. It is planned to be reconstructed 11 regional roads, selected according to the suggestions from the Hydraplan study, financed by EAR. Other than this money, Macedonia is in a good direction in obtaining 50 million Euros from EBRD.

---

<sup>13</sup> Especially worrisome are the groups of unemployed who are of long or very long term unemployed

<sup>14</sup> Data are quoted from the daily newspaper “Utrinski Vesnik”, 24 July 2008, as cited from information taken from the State Statistical Bureau

There are four foreign companies which submitted their documents on the government's public call for concession and reconstruction of the two airports in the country, in Skopje and in Ohrid, and building a new cargo airport in Shtip.

Mr. Zoran Stavrevski, the Government Vice-President in charge for economic issues in his interview for the journal "Economist" stated that the government's policy in agriculture is with clear vision and results oriented. The goals are to increase the income of agricultural producers, to increase competition and placement of the Macedonian agricultural goods and to improve working conditions in the villages. This shall be achieved by earmarking 45 million Euros of subventions this year, which is a sum tenfold bigger than before, which will grow progressively up to 130 million Euros in 2012. In terms of energy supply, Stavrevski said that in the last 20 months the state has given concessions for 20 hydra power plants, while the tender for the two big ones – Chebren and Galishte for which bids have been offered by two excellent companies from Austria and Germany shall be about 700 million Euros. There is also a tender on selection of a strategic partner in building a gas thermo plant, as well as for the hydro power plant Boshkov Most. All three hydra power plants are expected to start the construction phase this year. Mr. Stavrevski expects that by finishing and starting all these capacities Macedonia shall be in no need to import electrical power in the future.

## **6. HEADLINES**

### **6.1. Criminal Groups Convicted**

In July, a Macedonian court sentenced 17 ethnic Albanians for terrorism. This was the group arrested last November in the Brodec village and was charged with 'terrorism, attacks on police, hostile activities and illegal possession of arms'. Four members of the group, one from Albania and 3 from Kosovo were sentenced in absentia to 15 years in jail, one person got 12 years and others, who are from Macedonia got 10 years each. At the beginning, police thought it was an extremist criminal group, but after discovering a significant quantity of weapons, the prosecutors pressed charges for terrorism.

### **6.2. Dilemmas Regarding the Constitutional Court**

Due to the Constitutional Court decision by which the Law on the use of Flags was banned as unconstitutional<sup>15</sup>, ethnic Albanian political parties questioned the role and the

---

<sup>15</sup> Due to initiated procedure of reviewing the compliance of the Law on the Use of Flags The Law was introduced in 2005 (see previous Barometers) with the Constitution, the Constitutional court brought a decision to abolish four articles of the Law, interpreting that the flag expresses the state sovereignty. Parts of the abolished provisions 4, 5, 6 and 8 anticipated right for use of the flag only for persons belonging to ethnic communities which is majority in that municipality, then permanent raise of the flag in front of the municipality building and in front of the buildings where municipality organs and services are, or infrastructural object, while receiving official representatives domestic or foreign etc. The Court was lead by the constitutional provision of the Constitutional Amendment 8 from which is perceived that it is not anticipated the right of use of symbols of persons belonging to communities according to their percent in the population of the municipality, but that right is given to all persons belonging to ethnic communities regardless their percent in the local population.

position of the Court, demanding constitutional amendments that would transform this body. In the intention to remove its authorities, ethnic Albanian parties gave a couple of suggestions, like introducing the Badenter double majority decision-making principle in the decision-making process in the Constitutional court as well, and as a second option was issued the Court not to be able to decide on laws which are brought by the same majority in the Assembly. Third alternative is the Court to be replaced by Senate, which will be composed by the principle of the Assembly's ethnic committee: to have 20 senators, out of which 8 would be suggested by the Macedonian and 8 by the Albanian community and 4 others by the remaining ethnic communities. Also, they conditioned the completion of the Court<sup>16</sup> with bringing a decision in compliance with the above mentioned demands, which were introduced as a new negotiating position in the Albanian political parties.

President Branko Crvenkovski stated that this idea is unacceptable as the Badenter majority is applied only in cases where laws and decision are brought by political decision-making process, as in the Assembly and the municipality councils. He also estimated that this issue is impossible to be achieved as well, because in the sphere of the judiciary it may be decided only based on laws and the Constitution, and not on basis of a double majority principle.

The Court's President Trendafil Ivanovski stated that there is no room for introducing the Badenter principle in the work of the Constitutional Court, as in that way would be abandoned the principle of the rule of law and this institutions work will be blocked, making the Court hostage to the wish of certain structures of some political parties. "The Constitutional Court brings its decisions based on arguments, laws and the Constitution and due to that the Badenter principle has no place in the Court's work, because it is characteristic to the organs where political decisions are brought"- he said. Eminent law professor Todor Dzunov stated that "evidently the Constitutional Court is an obstacle to someone, as it represents a strong corrective of the executive and legislative power when bringing illegal or unconstitutional laws and regulations'. He also added that by introducing the Badenter principle in the court's decision-making process a precedent will be created, making it an example which does not exist anywhere in the comparative law: "the vote of each judge is of the same value, there should be no dictate of the minority over the majority"- he said.

DUI was dissatisfied with the President's reaction on this matter, characterizing him as unconstructive. The party organized debate initiating a project suggestion for regulating the work of the constitutional court, discussing the suggestions for amending the Law on the use of flags and the suggestions for amending the Law on Police (for their content, see previous Barometers). Musa Xhaferi stated that introducing the Badenter decision-making rule in the Constitutional court does not endanger the unitary character of the

---

<sup>16</sup> At that moment were sitting only 6 judges, out of 9, meaning that there were three vacancies, one of which is pre-determined to be nominated by the ethnic Albanian parties, - in fact by the representatives of the Assembly Committee for Election and Nomination, because of which non-functioning the process was blocked; the two other names constitutionally are to be suggested by President of the Republic are already determined, but need to be passed through the Assembly.

state, as “that is a mechanism that defends the communities which are a minority compared to the Macedonian community”.

Thus, the “guardian of the constitutionality and the legality” as the Constitutional Court is called, is exposed to critical observation as never before, but also is subdued to efforts for redefining its position. The profile of the initiators varies, as well as the motives of the various suggestions that come lately. Some legal experts support the ideas of widening up the authority of the court, like for military missions abroad, international treaties etc, including the possibility of having a new institution- constitutional complaint.

In July, one of the three vacancies in the Constitutional court was filled through the Assembly Committee for Election and Appointments. The Assembly elected Ismail Darlishta, a former DUI Minister of Justice. The remaining two vacancies for which President Crvenkovski has the constitutional right to suggest, according to his letter to the government, shall remain, until the moment when on regular session will appear the opposition. The argument is that he wishes that for those positions to be elected, there should be full legitimacy obtained, including the opposition.

### **6.3. Constitutional Court Position on the Law on Religious Instruction**

Against the amendments of the law on education, brought in February 2007 (see previous Barometers), in May 2007 were issued two complaints to the constitutional court by the Liberal-Democratic Party and by a citizen. The Government, being aware that the amendments have obvious inconsistencies and disharmonies with the constitutional provisions, in February sent a letter to the Court demanding to postpone the case for some time, emphasizing that a new law for elementary education is under preparation. Still, constitutional judges organized a preparatory session to discuss the matter, in order to help them decide how to act regarding the provisions under question. The court obtained opinions by the amendments’ bearers and in December 2007 was organized a discussion concluding that there is need for additional clarifications on the matter. Judges thought that there is need to be heard opinions from the expert and scientific public in order to make the decision legally argued. The key issue is whether the state imposes religious instruction on the pupils and intrudes into the freedom of religious practicing or offers opportunity on scientific basis for pupils to make a choice of contents regarding religion.

### **6.4. Kosovo Declared Independence**

The Declaration of Kosovo independence caused enthusiastic reactions among ethnic Albanians living in Macedonia. Hundreds of people gathered in the Skopje Skender-Beg square to celebrate the event. DUI mayors called citizens for celebration, while DPA invited their supporters to celebrate at home and avoid public manifestations and use of guns. DUI leadership called through the media the Macedonian public authorities to recognize Kosovo as independent and sovereign country.

Foreign Minister Miloshoski in February has stated on the matter that the Government will not hurry, awaiting for the EU position: “We are not worried for the day of independence declaration, but from the day after. The more EU will help Macedonia the bigger will be our capacity to help the others in the region.”

In March 2008, President Branko Crvenkovski in an exclusive interview for Southeast European Times, stated that the declaration of Kosovo’s independence undoubtedly poses some risks. In his opinion, the key issue is in the way things move in the northern part of Kosovo, where the majority of the Serbian population lives. “If an effective presence of international structures and the new Kosovo authorities is not established in that part we could likely bear witness to a so called “soft division” of Kosovo, which could be a constant generator of instability within Kosovo itself as well as an encouragement for new ethnic distinctions in the region. Macedonia has not defined its final relations to Kosovo’s independence yet. The country is still holding to the position that as a candidate for EU and NATO membership will be followed the common policy of these structures on the issue. However, the final decision and the timing will be made mostly on assessments for protection of the country’s national and state interest”- he said.

The NSDP leader Tito Petkovski warned that Macedonia should not worsen its relations with Serbia, nor with Kosovo. The government spokesperson stated that the government carefully and seriously follows the developments and that while bringing decisions, shall be conducted by its citizens interests and the national and state interests of Macedonia. Until today, the issue remains in status-quo. As possible reason for tactics by the Macedonian side, is pointed the still unmarked frontier with Kosovo, which is one of the 12 points of the Martti Ahtisaari plan (Agreement) from February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2001.

However, border demarcation started in July by positioning of the tripartite point between Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania in the location Sherupa, 2100 meters high on Shara Mountain. Positioning of border stones was done far from the public eye and it is not said whether there are changes of the border line. It is expected that demarcation will be speedily performed during the summer months. At the beginning, present were tripartite delegations as well as international community representatives. Analysts believe that Gruevski has made a mistake by not recognizing Kosovo together with the two waves of groups of states, in order not to make it sound like a “blackmail” from any of the two main ethnic Albanian parties in the country. At present however, there is an additional obstacle, emerging from the pressure Greece is making to Serbia to change its position and recognize the country by the FYROM reference instead of its constitutional name. Good justification for this move by Serbia would be the eventual recognition of Kosovo by Macedonian authorities.

## **6.5. EU Presidency taken over by France**

Hopes for Macedonia are not very high for improving the EU rapprochement pace, when France took the second half of 2008 EU Presidency. On the conference entitled “Review of the Slovenian Presidency over EU and presentation of priorities of the French Presidency” the Slovenian Ambassador to Macedonia, Alain Brian Bergant pointed out:

“make sure the criteria are met, find a mutually acceptable settlement on the name and let’s celebrate the start of pre-accession talks between Macedonia and EU this autumn.”..“Slovenia’s stance remains unchanged. The solution must not be brought under dictate of the opposite side, and the nation’s right to its own language, culture and identity has to be respected. Therefore, we encourage both sides to find a solution as soon as possible”- he added.

Presenting the priorities of the France’s Presidency over EU, the French Ambassador Bernard Valero said that Paris will continue its enlargement on the Balkans and will keep supporting the two major goals of Macedonia in 2008 – receiving a date for start of accession talks, which should be preceded by a positive Report of the European Commission and liberalization of the visa regime. The Report on Macedonia’s progress is due to be released in early November.

## **6.6. Ohrid Summit of Central European Countries**

The 15<sup>th</sup> Summit of Central Europe Heads of state was held in Ohrid on May 2-3. The main topic was “together in the future, EU enlargement challenges”. A total of 17 state presidents took part, whereas Romania and Italy were represented by ambassadors. “Integration and possibility for stronger and more competitive economy - Energy perspectives and challenges” is the topic of one of the sessions. The meeting’s final conclusions were adopted following the addresses of Presidents of Macedonia, Turkey, Croatia, Moldova, Bulgaria, the Czech republic, Montenegro, Slovakia, Serbia, Austria, Germany, Ukraine, Poland, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania. The draft-final document implied that the Euro-Atlantic integration process cannot be considered complete without the full inclusion of western Balkan countries in NATO and the EU. Central Europe Heads of State are urged to adopt the conclusion that economic development remains one of the most important priorities for regional countries.

Czech President Vaclav Klaus said” no one possesses the EU and that’s why no one must be excluded from this process”. According to him, the name of Macedonia could not be obstacle for accession of the country in the Euro-Atlantic structures. Slovenian president Danilo Turk said that the EU will succeed as global player if it includes candidate countries. At no price it must be allowed the Balkans to remain black hole and be outside the EU, adding that the Republic of Macedonia has candidate country status and won large support. He added that the name dispute between Macedonia and Greece (same as the Czech President) said that the name issue is not irresolvable problem, if compromise is made.

## **6.7. Ljube Boskovski Freed**

Former Interior Minister Ljube Boskovski, indicted by the Hague for alleged command responsibility for war crimes, won acquittal on all counts on July 10<sup>th</sup>. However, co-defendant Johan Tarculovski, a low-ranking police officer, was sentenced to 12 years in prison for murdering three people in the village of Ljuboten during the 2001 conflict in Macedonia. Following his release, Boskovski enjoyed a hero’s welcome in Macedonia.

The delegation greeting him at the Skopje airport included Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, a number of high-level officials, followers of VMRO-DPMNE and members of the former Lions Police Unit. The Government expressed pleasure with Boskovski's acquittal and was hopeful that Tarculovski would have a chance to present facts in his own case and submit an appeal. According to the prosecutors, during the raid on Ljuboten, police brutally beat Albanian villagers with rifle butts or pieces of burning wood. The Tribunal held Tarculovski responsible for three of seven reported murders, as he personally led the operation and was with the police as it moved through the village.

### **6.8. Historical Triads Shall Deal With the VMRO-DPMNE Unfaithful Followers**

In the continuation of the VMRO-DPMNE party efforts for introducing a new type of politicians, introducing new working standards and elaboration on the ethical codex idea, the party opted for forming "triads". This system was used in the historical VMRO organization, for traitor's elimination. Today it is about dealing with the party internal control, which system will be held responsible to the party Secretary General Martin Protoger, and shall have the task "to follow the work of party functionary, to prevent creation of local sheriffs, as well as not to happen party functionary lose contact with reality and forget who chose them and for whom they work for". The control shall consist of "triads" from the historic VMRO and shall function in the interest of maintaining the party image and the state and party interest. It is said that this system aims to demonstrate readiness and decisiveness for non-compromised application of principles of ethical behavior in politics based on open, transparent and honest relation towards the work and the citizens. It will understand work in citizen's interest, struggle against crime and corruption, but also raising the standards of political behavior. It is expected, this –as some say- hunt of the disobedient party members to start by the end of August.

### **6.9. The Strumica Opposition Mayor Arrested**

In mid-July the successful Strumica mayor and head of opposition SDSM party Zoran Zaev, was detained alongside four other persons, suspected for abuse of their official position. Skopje district court made the decision after 12 hour interrogation of detainees suspected of wrongdoings in the construction of Global mall in Strumica. Accusation was that it was not terminated the procedure for denationalization of the territory on which is placed the mall, that there is a breach of the Public Procurement law and that construction is on state owned land. Zaev's detention outraged the opposition bloc "Sun", all MPs left the Assembly session in protest and announced that they will boycott further Assembly's work. Some say that next in line for arrest is the opposition Ohrid mayor Aleksandar Petreski. This time the initiative for criminal persecution was issued by the State Anticorruption Commission.

In his defense in front of the media, Zaev stated that he presented his facts in front of investigation judge, showing that there is no crime committed. All citizens who had denationalization procedure requested a temporary measure, but both the Strumica and the Appellate court refused them, also citizens were compensated for that from 1958 to 1972; according to the detailed and general urban plans on the place where the mall is

built there should be a building of public interest, while there is no public procurement breach, because there was no public procurement procedure initiated.

Firstly, Zaev was released on bail, but The Criminal Council of the Department Against Organized Crime in the Skopje Court I, on the second appeal of the Public Prosecution, requested his imprisonment again, “due to his possibility to influence the witnesses”. Due to this act, SDSM excluded all their mayors from participation in ZELS.

The Macedonian Helsinki Committee reacts against the spectacular arrests conducted by the police and always in the media presence. It considers that these arrests have nothing in common with the struggle against crime and corruption, neither with the respect of the presumption of innocence. “The Ministry of Interiors behaves unethical when they invite journalists in order to make the arrests top topic for the news. Putting handcuffs to the arrested and their carrying in jail under the camera’s objectives is against the right of presumption of innocence and the police code of ethics. The HC criticize the Ministry of Interiors that breaks the code of police ethics and by doing that does not take care of the principles of data confidentiality and personal integrity, but informs the media for the day, hour and place of arrest and leaves an opportunity the spectacle to ruin a person’s dignity in front of the whole Macedonian public.

Some media commented that “the spectacular arrest of the successful Strumica mayor and the potential leader of the opposition SDSM, Zoran Zaev, with unhidden political motives, confirmed the dark picture of the Balkan type of democracy. “In this cases, for the political power everything is allowed: submission of the judiciary, suspension of state institutions, elimination and compromising of political opponents in such a way that police shall expose them to public police and media treatment without mercy, so this “contribution against crime and corruption” shall be repeated in all the news. The goal is manifestation of power and arbitrary behavior of a political group (in this case VMRO-DPMNE), which autocracy, aggressiveness and arrogance rely on the fact that there is no such a state non-partial mechanism which will bridle or limit it. In addition, there is weak and non-organized opposition, latent conflict of two mutually intolerant national (Albanian) groups and..here is the opportunity that initial forms of autocracy shall continue in a form of cruel volunteerism and absolutism.“

Analysts think that still, the common citizen “has had enough of sterile democracy” and in fact needs a “master” who in any moment shall know what he needs to do and who at the end, shall put order in the chaos that was created politicians themselves to finally “make the people happy”. That way, almost legitimately, one arrives to the closed isolated society, the nationalism, as the most complete and functional effort of totalitarian logic of governing “in the name of democracy and the people”.

The opposition boycott initiated the reaction from the EU ambassador Erwan Fouere and the US Ambassador Gillian Milovanovich in which they are sending a message that the opposition should return to the Assembly. This was said by Mr. Fouere to the Vice-Prime minister for EU integrations Ivica Bocevski, stating that in one hand the boycott undermines the institution functioning in the country, while on the other discourages



foreign investments. According to him, there should be promotion of political dialogue, in which all sides are to be included, as the best indicator that there is healthy democracy and well established systemic institutions. In fact, one of the eight benchmarks is introducing laws by consensus and maintaining cooperation with the opposition. In spite of these efforts, there were little chances that opposition shall return, due to the manner of adopting the new Assembly Book of Rules. Andrej Zernovski (LDP) stressed that they shall return in the Assembly when the Government will ensure functional democracy in the state. Contrary to this, the VMRO-DPMNE port-parole stated that acting out of the institutions is not the real manner in achieving a legitimate political struggle in a normal country. Therefore, the party asked SDSM for the sake of the country's image not to get out of the democratic rules.

### **6.10. Islamic Religious Community Turbulences**

The Head of the Islamic Religious Community Sulejman Redzepe, has been heavily criticized by Muamer Vejseli, member of the highest organ of the IRC, and one of the persons who helped him come to power two and half years ago. He stated that Redzepe although before his election as Head of IRC was warned due to his "past", he dared to make illegal changes in the Constitution of IRC in order to avoid his dismissal. Vejseli estimated that IRC started its stabilization period after election of the Skopje mufti Tajedin Bislimi and the vice-president Bahri Aliu. However, disagreements with Redzepe have started in 2007 when he denied persistently to discuss matters of the work of IRC, he did not call for session of the Assembly which is to be called twice per year, he gave no financial review, formed committees and worked in the last two years contrary to the Constitution. Redzepe now has power to personally change the muftis, muftis now have no 5 year reelection period, mufti assemblies have been abolished so it is the IRC Head that decides on personal solutions for muftis' appointments. Thus, there is a vicious circle created in which the Assembly is completely suspended. Vejseli also stressed that IRC shall not become immune from party influences until the leading persons and the muftis knock on the political parties' doors for their bigger personal in IRC.

## **7. PARTY DEVELOPMENTS**

### **7.1. Radmila Sekerinska Steps Down After Election Defeat**

A couple of days after election defeat, Social Democratic Alliance of Macedonia (SDSM) leader Radmila Sekerinska announced that is leaving her post. She stressed that her decision is final and attributed it to "the principle of responsibility". Sekerinska became chairwomen of the SDSM in November 2006. At present, the party faces the dilemma who shall be elected as the new party leader, -whether he (she) shall be seeked among the current vice-presidents or should it be someone from the older and more experienced cadres. Followed consultations with President Crvenkovski, where Mrs.Sekerinska reconfirmed her resignation and repeated that SDSM is in need for a new president, because she gave her maximum. She refused the idea to stay on the position just until the upcoming local elections. Opinions are that for now it is important the new leader not to stir up new divisions in the party, although this looks like an impossible task.

## **7.2. DPA and PDP Merging Together**

At the end of July, by signing a joint decision as an official support, DPA and PDP merged together. On the political scene will further exist DPA, its leader will still be Menduh Tachi, while the up to now PDP leader Abduljadi Vejseli will become its vice-president. Both party representatives expressed their satisfaction, stating that this is a historical step for the two parties that played important roles for the Albanians in Macedonia. However, there was a dissatisfied wing of the PDP party that announced that they shall proceed with the existence of the party.

## **7.3. Liberal Party Congress**

On July 27<sup>th</sup> was held the Congress of the Liberal party, in which was elected Borche Stojanovski the president of the Bitola branch of the party for a new leader, committees have been appointed, and new presidency. The long-term party leader Stojan Andov stepped down from the function after 17 years of being the party leader. This party is now in opposition in the SDSM block. On the other hand, at the extraordinary party congress of the Liberal Party fraction, was elected Zoran Krstevski as the new leader. Delegates who voted him unanimously, counted him as the legitimate leader. This wing declared the wish to continue the cooperation with VMRO-DPMNE.

## **PUBLIC OPINION POLLS**

A poll released by the Institute for Democracy on May 26<sup>th</sup> prior to election date, showed more than 20% of undecided voters. The VMRO-DPMNE coalition showed a lead of 31,3% support, SDSM 11,2%, DUI 9,1% and DPA 5,6%. Prime Minister Gruevski is seen as the country's most trustworthy politician. The main dilemma is whether VMRO-DPMNE shall achieve obtaining a sufficiently comfortable parliamentary majority to overcome opposition objections to legislative content and procedure. The Assembly Book of Rules is to be revised and will require cross-party consent, as will the Law on the Use of Languages. The decision of which Albanian party becomes part of the governing coalition will have important implications for Assembly's upcoming agenda. DUI and DPA both claim they should be part of the government. DUI claims that the party with the most votes should be in government, but DPA expects to remain in office should VMRO-DPMNE prevail.

The July Eurobarometer public opinion survey results show that around 82% of Macedonian citizens believe that the country would benefit from EU membership, which is much greater percentage compared with other two candidate countries – Croatia and Turkey. The vast majority of this group deem that a key benefit would be the economic growth, followed by maintenance of peace and stability in the country, a better living standard and new employment opportunities.

Although the supporters of further EU enlargement outnumbered the opponents, there are still a significant number of EU citizens who object to enlargement. In autumn 2007,

enlargement was supported by 46% and opposed by 40% of those surveyed in the EU countries. In spring 2008, enlargement was supported by 47% and opposed by 39%.

The percentage of Macedonian citizens who expect their life to improve is two times higher (40%) compared to the citizens who are pessimistic about the future. In the last six months, the percentage of citizens who estimated that the country is moving in the right direction increased by 9% (from 38% to 47%).

However, there is a growing public concern in the country about the increase in prices and inflation as is the case with the public in other states included in the opinion poll. This problem is still in the shadow of the problem of employment (61%) and the country's economy.

Interestingly enough, in spite of the upcoming veto signals, at the end of March, public opinion poll made by the "Forum" magazine, from 28 March 2008 were showing a high level of optimism among the Macedonian citizens on the NATO invitation. On the question "Do you believe that shall be found a solution on the name issue and Macedonia shall obtain NATO invitation?", 75% of the polled replied "Yes", 18% "No" and 7% "don't know". On the question "Is it a good idea to accept some kind of change in the name for the sake of entering in NATO?", 35% thought it is a good idea, 59% replied negatively and 6% positively. Both major ethnic group - Macedonians and Albanians showed the same general trends in the first question. On the second, 62% of the Albanians thought that the change of the name is a good idea, while 70% of the Macedonians replied negatively. Still, when asked "If the name change becomes unavoidable, which name is the most acceptable for you?", answers were: Republic of Macedonia-Skopje 26%, New Republic of Macedonia 16%, Upper Republic of Macedonia 6%, whichever of the three 4%, don't know 4% and "none" 44%.

In spite of the difficulties the Republic of Macedonia encounters on its road towards the EU, Macedonians do not show a downwards trend in their desire to join the EU. In August, the research made by the Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis" shows that out of the 1.110 polled persons 87,5% say they would reply positively on a supposed referendum for EU accession, while 64% think that EU membership is the most important one for the country. Citizens expect that the EU process of joining will bring them improvement in their standard of living (48%), visa abolishment (27%), unemployment decrease (16%), while only 2,1% think that it will contribute to the country's democratization. Citizens believe that by accessing the EU the country will benefit by achieving economic development (29%), shall gain more direct foreign investments (11%), the quality of life will improve (16,6%).

## **FUTURE POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENTS**

There are a couple of significant events that are on the agenda for Macedonia until the end of the year.

1. Possible important developments or even solving the “name” dispute by September and possible referendum initiation by the Government for the name chosen
2. EU decision based on the report for benchmark accomplishments, based on which a possible date for starting EU negotiation will be suggested. As prospects are, there will be a lot of remarks included in the report.
3. If the “name” dispute settled, there is a possibility for Macedonia to “catch the train” to NATO membership
4. In September, the Assembly shall have SDSM returned, while there are hopes that DPA shall decide the same
5. The Assembly has a huge agenda to deliver in order to satisfy the EU prerequisites; therefore it is expected that there will be big dynamics in passing laws these autumn (including more detailed provisions of the functioning of the Assembly and its relation with the President of the Republics’ duties)
6. The whole political climate shall start to slowly prepare itself for next year’s local and presidential elections