



UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE www.usip.org

SPECIAL REPORT

1200 17th Street NW • Washington, DC 20036 • 202.457.1700 • fax 202.429.6063

ABOUT THE REPORT

This report focuses on recent developments in Macedonia, and seeks to identify the obstacles to and opportunities for continued democratization and greater ethnic harmony in a country that has—despite many difficulties—avoided the kind of violent conflict seen elsewhere in the Balkans during the past decade. This report, written by Senior Fellow Keith Brown and Research Assistants Edvard Bestic and Kristine Herrmann, is based on information presented at a meeting of the Balkans Working Group in December 1999. The United States Institute of Peace co-sponsored the meeting with the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the National Albanian American Council. The Balkans Working Group is a policy forum convened by the Institute to facilitate discussion and development of policy options by representatives from government agencies, think tanks, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Institute of Peace, which does not advocate specific policies.

March 27, 2000

CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Gligorov's Legacy	2
1999 Presidential Elections	2
The Politics of "Winner Takes All"	3
Macedonian Grievances	4
Albanian Concerns	4
The Dangers of Parallelism	5
The Urgent Need for Dialogue	5
Kosovo: A Key Issue	6
Macedonia's Other Neighbors	7
Macedonia, Europe, and NATO	7
Conclusions	7
Recommendations	8

Macedonia Prevention Can Work

Briefly...

- Macedonia begins the new century under the leadership of people who spent most of the 1990s in opposition. Outgoing president Kiro Gligorov left office with the state well established and enjoying normal relations with its potentially hostile neighbors. Issues at the forefront now include economic development, political reform, and improving internal ethnic relations.
- The centralization of political power and a "winner takes all" political ethos continue to hinder the smooth functioning of Macedonian democracy, especially the development of local governance and political parties.
- The 1999 presidential elections highlighted the political importance of Macedonia's Albanian population, as their votes were key to Boris Trajkovski's electoral victory.
- Ethnic Macedonians are concerned about the growing political and demographic power of Macedonia's Albanian population. Albanians claim they remain second-class citizens due to denial of cultural and language rights and under-representation in government employment.
- The relevant historical legacy is not "ancient hatreds," but rather the socio-economic structure left over from communist Yugoslavia. Concerted efforts are needed to overcome obstacles to establishing inter-ethnic relations on a basis of mutual understanding and respect.
- The massive influx of refugees from Kosovo strained Macedonia's new coalition government and population. While the myth of pan-Albanianism has been deflated, the international community must realize that decisions on the final status of Kosovo will inevitably impact Macedonia.
- Macedonia has emerged from successive crises—economic blockade, an assassination attempt on its president, clashes between citizens and police, and the influx of refugees from Kosovo—with its democratic institutions intact. To secure its future, Macedonia needs economic and development support, and visible progress towards admission into NATO and European institutions.

Introduction

Macedonia represents an apparently successful model of preventive diplomacy and improving inter-ethnic and inter-state relations. It is now entering a new phase: after a change in government in 1998, and presidential elections in 1999, it begins the new century under the leadership of people who spent most of the decade in opposition. A party once criticized for ethnic chauvinism, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization–Democratic Party for Macedonian Unity (VMRO-DPMNE), now operates in coalition with a multi-ethnic party (the Democratic Alternative Party) headed by a prominent former Yugoslav politician, and with an Albanian party (the Democratic Party of the Albanians) associated in the past with calls for separatism. The new government, led by Ljubco Georgievski, weathered the Kosovo crisis in spring and summer 1999. It also survived internal frictions over the presidential elections.

The Balkans Working Group meeting, held in December 1999, sought to identify key areas for concern in Macedonia's future:

- What is the state of play in Macedonian politics after the presidential elections?
- How have ethnic tensions developed in Macedonia, and how might they be reduced?
- What initiatives within and outside Macedonia offer the best hope for the continued security of the Macedonian state while protecting the human and cultural rights of all its citizens?
- How will developments in Kosovo and Yugoslavia affect Macedonia?

Gligorov's Legacy: Independent Macedonia

Former president Kiro Gligorov of Macedonia stepped down from his position, in accordance with the country's constitution, at the expiry of his mandate on November 19, 1999. He was the first of the generation of leaders who oversaw the dismantling of Yugoslavia to retire from politics. As president, he steered Macedonia through the difficult times that followed the declaration of independence in 1991. Macedonia stayed out of wider conflicts in the region, and although internal tensions often rose to high pitch, Macedonia's citizens never resorted to widespread violence of the kind witnessed in other parts of the former Yugoslavia.

Nevertheless, Macedonia faced military, diplomatic, and economic threats from neighbors. Gligorov himself was the target of an assassination attempt in 1995, and the war in Kosovo drove approximately a quarter of a million Albanian refugees into the country. Yet Gligorov leaves the political stage having earned respect for consolidation of the Macedonian state, his commitment to dialogue, and his shrewd politics of "equidistance." Macedonia sought, and received, the United Nations' most successful preventive deployment (UNPREDEP). By increments during his stewardship the republic's relations with potentially aggressive neighbors were normalized and international recognition was achieved (even if the issue of what the country will be called officially remains unresolved, especially for Greece). Independence and recognition were no longer on the agenda for presidential candidates in November and December 1999. What the campaign demonstrated instead was the salience of other issues: the need for economic development, further political reform, and improved relations among the different ethnic groups that have been polarized by events of the recent past.

1999 Presidential Elections

It took Macedonia's voters two rounds, and a repeat of the second round in some electoral districts, to elect a successor to Gligorov. The successful candidate, Boris Trajkovski from VMRO-DPMNE, was finally inaugurated as president on December 16, 1999.

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE

The United States Institute of Peace is an independent, nonpartisan federal institution created by Congress to promote research, education, and training on the prevention, management, and resolution of international conflicts. Established in 1984, the Institute meets its congressional mandate through an array of programs, including research grants, fellowships, professional training programs, conferences and workshops, library services, publications, and other educational activities. The Institute's Board of Directors is appointed by the President of the United States and confirmed by the Senate.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chester A. Crocker (Chairman), James R. Schlesinger Professor of Strategic Studies, School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University • **Max M. Kampelman**, Esq. (Vice Chairman), Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver and Jacobson, Washington, D.C. • **Dennis L. Bark**, Senior Fellow, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford University • **Stephen J. Hadley**, Esq., Shea and Gardner, Washington, D.C. • **Theodore M. Hesburgh**, President Emeritus, University of Notre Dame • **Zalmay Khalilzad**, RAND Corporation, Washington, D.C. • **Seymour Martin Lipset**, Hazel Professor of Public Policy, George Mason University • **W. Scott Thompson**, Professor of International Politics, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University • **Allen Weinstein**, President, Center for Democracy, Washington, D.C. • **Harriet Zimmerman**, Vice President, American Israel Public Affairs Committee, Washington, D.C.

MEMBERS EX OFFICIO

J. Stapleton Roy, Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research • **Daniel H. Simpson**, Vice President, National Defense University • **Walter B. Slocombe**, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy • **Richard H. Solomon**, President, United States Institute of Peace (nonvoting)

His victory tested the fabric of political culture in Macedonia. After the first round, the leading candidate was Tito Petkovski of the Social Democratic Alliance of Macedonia (SDSM), which had become the parliamentary opposition in 1998. Fractures within the governing coalition, and a trend among Macedonian voters to use the presidential vote as a referendum on the first year of the Georgievski government, led to a situation in which the endorsement of Albanian political leaders was a key element in Trajkovski's victory. Petkovski's anti-Albanian rhetoric during the campaign gave Albanian voters a further incentive to turn out and vote against what they saw as a threatening future.

Although observers stated that in most of the country the elections were conducted properly, some districts in Western Macedonia saw proxy-voting, especially at the expense of women, and ballot-stuffing. Voting was therefore repeated in some districts, with the same result: in those areas of Western Macedonia where Albanians are in a local majority, Trajkovski outpolled Petkovski by a massive margin. Without those votes, Trajkovski would have lost, albeit by a slim margin, to Petkovski. In the city of Skopje itself, Petkovski outpolled Trajkovski by a wide margin. Although recognized as legal and constitutional, then, the election highlighted stark divisions in the political landscape.

Trajkovski had meetings with Albanian diaspora organizations before the elections, and there is a general consensus within Macedonia that, without having made any formal commitments, he is indebted to the Albanian community. According to some sources, the Democratic Alternative Party (DA) tried to extract advantage for turning over its presidential votes to Trajkovski. While its leader, Vasil Tupurkovski, gained a position as deputy prime minister, the party and its leader can no longer play a "king-maker" role. Petkovski's drift towards virulent chauvinism in his speeches, and his success with Macedonian voters, was also noted.

The elections confirmed the electoral dominance of the Democratic Party of the Albanians (DPA), the party headed by Arben Xhaferi, among the Albanian population of Macedonia. In the first round of elections, DPA put forward their own candidate, as did its main rival for Albanian support, the Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP), led by Abdurahman Aliti. As the two parties had formed a pre-election coalition before the parliamentary elections of 1998 (despite the fact that at that time PDP was a coalition partner in government, while DPA was a young opposition party), the presidential elections of 1999 represented their first direct trial of strength. The result of this "election within an election" was a convincing victory for DPA, and showed how completely DPA has supplanted PDP as the main electoral force among voters in predominantly Albanian districts. It gave Xhaferi authority to speak for a large constituency and thus swing the election decisively by encouraging Macedonian Albanians to vote for Trajkovski in the second round.

The Politics of "Winner Takes All"

With Trajkovski's victory, the presidency and government are from the same political alliance, as they were until 1998. This arrangement, as with the earlier regime, appears to encourage a "winner takes all" attitude in the party in government. This has remained notable since the election of a new government in 1998: control over a wide realm of life, but in particular over a huge range of employment positions, remains vested in the executive government, which is dominated by a single party or coalition. The lack of cooperation between government and opposition is notable: the parliament, still composed largely of part-time members, tends to function only to approve decisions taken by the executive.

A key issue remains centralization of political power, which was a feature of the Yugoslav period. Then there were only 34 local governments in Macedonia. Now there are more than 123 local governments, including 7 in Skopje alone. However, they have no economic infrastructure or independent sources of revenue. Local governance does

The 1999 presidential elections confirmed the electoral dominance of the Democratic Party of the Albanians (DPA), the party headed by Arben Xhaferi, among the Albanian population of Macedonia.

Control over a wide realm of life, but in particular over a huge range of employment positions, remains vested in the executive government, which is dominated by a single party or coalition.

not really exist—everything is controlled in Skopje. Unless the central government is prepared to extend greater fiscal means and accountability to local government, the political polarization of Macedonia's population will continue. The reliance on majority rule and disinterest in broadening the appeal of parties will buttress the existing understanding of politics as a zero-sum game.

Macedonian Grievances

Unless the central government is prepared to extend greater fiscal means and accountability to local government, the political polarization of Macedonia's population will continue.

In the 1998 election, which brought an end to six years of SDSM control, the opposition benefited from a protest vote generated by declining living standards, widespread corruption and patronage, and nontransparent transfer of economic assets into private or foreign hands. Some economic scandals became public, and in part as a consequence Macedonians in 1998 voted for a coalition between VMRO-DPMNE and DA campaigning under the slogan of "Changes."

A year later, the Macedonian public used the presidential elections to send a message of dissatisfaction to the new government. The changes had been at the level of personnel: the system remained the same, and Macedonians accused the new coalition government of perpetuating a regime of patronage and cronyism. Civil servants were replaced for political reasons, rather than on grounds of competence or qualifications. The new government's foreign policy also came in for criticism. Macedonians were particularly skeptical of the government's decision to recognize Taiwan—an action they believed would anger Beijing—in return for what were perceived as vague investment promises. Some critics expected that China, as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, would make Macedonia suffer in the international arena.

Additionally, Macedonians are concerned about the power that DPA and its leader, Arben Xhaferi, appear to have in the government coalition—a political alliance formed only after the elections of 1998. The international community's support for Albanians' rights in Kosovo and Macedonia contributes to a fear among Macedonian voters that the boundaries of their state and their position in the state are not secure. Past actions by Albanian individuals and political parties, such as their boycott of the referendum on Macedonian independence in 1991, and the tendency to celebrate Albania's independence day but not Macedonia's, fuel the impression that Albanians have only a weak commitment to the Macedonian state. Petkovski's election message played on such fears.

Of particular concern to many Macedonians is the specter of federalization, which from observing former Yugoslavia and Kosovo they see as the first step on the road towards partition and creation of "Greater Albania." These fears are heightened by a common perception that the Albanian population of Macedonia is growing faster than the Macedonian, and thus that the demographic balance of power will shift.

Past actions by Albanian individuals and political parties, such as their boycott of the referendum on Macedonian independence in 1991, and the tendency to celebrate Albania's independence day but not Macedonia's, fuel the impression that Albanians have only a weak commitment to the Macedonian state.

Albanian Concerns

Albanian politicians claim that the status quo makes them second-class citizens, and that radical changes are needed in order to normalize the situation. They stress that the high Albanian turnout in the presidential elections demonstrates that Macedonian Albanians have a stake in Macedonia's future, and are currently not interested in stirring up problems in Macedonia. These politicians emphasize the denial of two rights: display of Albanian cultural symbols, and access to higher education in Albanian. They also point to the under-representation of ethnic Albanians in government employment, including the police force and the army. The percentage of Albanians in the civil service is remarkably low—only 4 percent by some estimates. Although 40 percent of enlisted soldiers are Albanian, they are not well represented in the officer corps. The politicians also stress the impact that the "hardening" of the border between Kosovo and Macedonia has had on the social life of the Albanian community of the former Yugoslavia. Whereas in for-

mer Yugoslavia Albanians moved freely between Kosovo and Western Macedonia, they now have to cross an international border.

Albanian politicians trace many of these problems to the Macedonian constitution, in particular to the precedence they claim it gives to the Macedonian people. Also important are the specific conditions of the 1980s, when Macedonian authorities followed Belgrade's lead in Kosovo and, fearful of Albanian political activism, took measures against the Albanian population. As well as creating a reservoir of hostility and mistrust, certain measures had specific institutional consequences, including legislation on education that reduced the availability of Albanian-language secondary education. In 1995, when the extralegal Albanian University in Tetovo was forcibly closed by authorities, and in 1997, when demonstrations in Gostivar over the display of the Albanian flag were met with police violence, Albanians accused the government of perpetuating the Yugoslav-era approach, and colluding with Serbia.

The Dangers of Parallelism

Albanians call for constitutional change, arguing that many problems will thus be solved. They appear to expect major concessions from Prime Minister Ljubco Georgievski's government, which shares a strong aversion to certain aspects of the Yugoslav past. Some analysts consider in particular that speedy recognition of Tetovo University by the government would be a major step forward, widening access to educational credentials gained through the medium of the Albanian language.

Others, however, argue that this would serve to confirm and strengthen the polarization of the country's major population groups, as it would cement in place parallel tracks. Macedonia at present is made up of mostly non-intersecting and parallel parts, representing a curious mix of pluralism and segregation at the same time. Albanian and Macedonian are mutually unintelligible languages. Few Macedonians speak Albanian, while the majority of Albanians are multilingual in Macedonian, Albanian, and sometimes Turkish. However, recognition of Tetovo University would reduce the incentive of Albanians to learn the Macedonian language, thereby furthering segregation—as did Yugoslav policies encouraging cultural expression on the part of minority groups, evidenced by the history of the university in Pristina.

Inter-ethnic relations are often framed in terms of ancient hatreds with timeless effects, but the key historical legacy in Macedonia is the socio-economic structure left behind by Yugoslavia. Because of the particular constitutional arrangements of federal Yugoslavia, Macedonians were recognized as one of the constituent peoples, a majority in "their" republic. Albanians were only a nationality (not a constituent people); although more Albanians than Macedonians lived in federal Yugoslavia, Albanians were divided among the republics of Serbia (which included Kosovo), Montenegro, and Macedonia. Attempted solutions that are based on the notion of "peoples" and status, and that reinforce this "separate but equal" model, recall the failed strategies of the Yugoslav period.

The Urgent Need for Dialogue

Although many external analysts, Macedonian citizens, and politicians emphasize the wide divide between Albanian and Macedonian communities, other perspectives do exist. It is true that the DA's presidential candidate, Vasil Tupurkovski, did poorly; still, the DA remains a parliamentary party with members from different ethnic communities. The current political leadership coalition offers opportunities for inter-ethnic communication at the top level (as did the previous governing coalition). This national-level dialogue needs counterparts at every level. Some NGOs active in Skopje and elsewhere seek to bring people together on issues that transcend ethnic allegiance. The theater and media

Albanian politicians trace many of these problems to the Macedonian constitution, in particular to the precedence they claim it gives to the Macedonian people.

Macedonia at present is made up of mostly non-intersecting and parallel parts, representing a curious mix of pluralism and segregation at the same time.

Cultural and political identities are not necessarily linked. For many citizens of Macedonia, solidarities of profession, neighborhood, generation, or gender are just as significant as those of ethnic group.

The influx exerted immense pressure on the coalition government and Macedonia's population. Their willingness to rise to the challenge was a remarkable achievement that has not yet received the international recognition it deserves.

communities in Skopje also are vibrant and embrace multiculturalism. In all these realms, members of Macedonia's smaller ethnic groups, especially Turks and Roma, play a large role. Cultural and political identities are not necessarily linked. For many citizens of Macedonia, solidarities of profession, neighborhood, generation, or gender are just as significant as those of ethnic group.

A key element in Macedonia's future would seem to be broadening the ground on which communication between citizens can take place. Systemic obstacles exist in the field of education and in inherited socio-political structures, but these might be overcome by concerted efforts. Given the current political and economic centralization, initiatives must come from the central government, and there are encouraging signs that the current regime is prepared to take on the task. Yet the atmosphere of cooperation between representatives of different views in government should also be encouraged and propagated among Macedonia's wider population. Above all, Macedonia needs to cement the link between civic rights and responsibilities, and to create a sense of a common stake in the country's survival and prosperity. This process might be served by the radical decentralization of political and fiscal power from Skopje, thus granting citizens of all political allegiances a greater sense of empowerment and representation.

Kosovo: A Key Issue

The question of Kosovo's future is a key one for Macedonia. During the 1999 crisis, over a quarter of a million refugees found temporary haven in Macedonia, in camps and private homes. The influx exerted immense pressure on the coalition government and Macedonia's population. Their willingness to rise to the challenge was a remarkable achievement that has not yet received the international recognition it deserves. Nonetheless, the end of the war—which was ratified in a meeting held on Macedonian soil—came none too early. In the long term, the refugees would have posed an intolerable strain on Macedonia's capacity.

The Kosovo refugee crisis had the potential both to reinforce existing sentiments of solidarity among Albanians in the region and to make people aware of their differences. Strong ties were created between Kosovo and Macedonia in the Yugoslav period, when Pristina was a major meeting point for people from different republics. Those ties are still significant, as are economic and kin connections. However, one overlooked consequence of the war was that Albanians from Kosovo and in Macedonia realized they have differences. The myth of pan-Albanian sentiment was deflated, at least in part.

Opinions differ on the impact on Macedonia if Kosovo becomes independent. Some believe that an independent Kosovo would have a stabilizing effect on Macedonia, satisfying a major Albanian aspiration and opening opportunities for Albanians in Macedonia to work, study, or live in Kosovo, where ethnic Albanians would be the majority of the population. Others believe an independent Kosovo would inspire separatist sentiments among Albanians in Macedonia, leading inevitably to conflict within Macedonia and eventual partition. Albanian leaders would gravitate to Pristina, which would not serve the interests of the Albanian community in Macedonia. Independence for Kosovo might also re-open divisions within Macedonia's Albanian community, between those who see their future in an enlarged Albanian state, and those who are committed to the security and existence of a multicultural Macedonia. Recognition of Kosovo independence could thus lead to the eventual partition of Macedonia, which would exacerbate tensions between Macedonians and Albanians.

These different views share one key dimension: international initiatives on the status of Kosovo will simultaneously and inevitably impact on Macedonia, and possible repercussions within Macedonia should therefore be taken into account.

Macedonia's Other Neighbors

Participants in the working group observed that with regard to relations with existing neighboring states, Macedonia's situation is as good as it has been since independence. Serbia continues to pose a potential military threat to Macedonia, and Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic maintains influence among some pro-Serbian elements. A treaty of mutual recognition between Yugoslavia and Macedonia was signed in April 1996, but the border remains disputed in part. The Republic of Macedonia did not permit direct action against Serbia to be taken from its territory during the NATO action in 1999. When Serbian forces drove refugees into Macedonia, it was seen by some as an attempt to destabilize the republic: the presence of NATO forces in Macedonia would seem to interdict more direct assaults on Macedonian sovereignty.

VMRO-DPMNE's anti-Yugoslav stance, although focused on the past, seems likely to result in closer ties with Bulgaria. The settling of language issues between Bulgaria and Macedonia in February 1999 lays the ground for closer cooperation, and Bulgaria's recent gifts of military hardware represent goodwill.

Relations between Albania and Macedonia have been troubled in the past by treatment of Albanians in Macedonia and over Tetova University. Albania seeks to build common ground among Albanians in different states, urging, for example, that they all use the same history textbooks. Albania also sees Macedonia as a counterbalance to Greece and Serbia. Pan-Albanian sentiment in Albania is not strong, largely because of the need to deal with pressing issues in Albania itself. The Kosovo crisis also posed a strain, and again made people aware that while they feel solidarity, they also have divergent experiences that distinguish Albanian communities in Macedonia, Kosovo, and Albania.

Macedonia, Europe, and NATO

A majority of Macedonia's citizens are committed to a future as citizens of a sovereign state that is itself part of "Greater Europe." The Republic of Macedonia in 1991 met the Badinter Commission's criteria for independence, and Europe then had an opportunity to recognize it. Failure to extend immediate recognition, whatever the motivations, contributed to the subsequent worsening of conditions. Throughout the 1990s, though, the country's citizens and a majority of its politicians resisted the slide into the ethno-nationalism that has been associated elsewhere with civil violence, the decline of living standards, and isolation from the world economy. The country has vibrant, free media and an active NGO community; it has been consistently governed by multi-ethnic coalitions, and the new president has pledged to uphold the principles of dialogue and non-violent solutions set by his predecessor. Macedonia has emerged from successive crises—economic blockade, an assassination attempt against its president, violent confrontations between citizens and police, and the influx of a large body of refugees—with its democratic institutions intact. Participants in the Balkans Working Group all emphasized, though, that to secure the future of Macedonia, the country will need assistance with its economy and infrastructure. Enactment of the Stability Pact and progress towards admission of Macedonia into NATO and the European Union would also serve to signal external commitment to practical support of multicultural ideals.

The new president has pledged to uphold the principles of dialogue and non-violent solutions set by his predecessor.

Conclusions

Political culture in Macedonia took a regrettable retrograde step during the last presidential campaign, conducted in the shadow of the Kosovo crisis. The anti-Albanian rhetoric of the Social Democratic candidate, Tito Petkovski, and the conduct of the election itself—in which irregularities occurred in Albanian-majority areas—combined to widen ethnic divisions as well as divisions within the Macedonian community. Efforts



Macedonia

For more information, see our web site (www.usip.org), which has an online edition of this report containing links to related web sites, as well as additional information on the Balkans.

SPECIAL REPORT 58

should be made to heal these wounds. This is, above all, the job of the new president, who has sought to reach out to former opponents. It is critical that the United States and other international actors not exacerbate current tensions by appearing to be partisan in directing their aid and attention.

The status quo in terms of legislation on education and cultural symbols is not an option, given the reliance of the new president and government on support from Albanian voters and parties. Pragmatism and consistency suggest that Albanian claims in the realm of cultural rights be recognized and addressed. There are signs in various parts of the Macedonian community—political, academic, and media—that this acknowledgment will be forthcoming. Individuals and groups that work toward the goal of greater rights for all citizens can assist and further this process.

At the same time, the concerns of Macedonians over the future status of the country should also be recognized. Albanian political leaders might do more to distance themselves from statements that call for a separate Albanian state.

On the issue of constitutional change, there is provision within the constitution for greater local autonomy in fiscal and political terms. Grassroots democratization is made more feasible if resources are controlled locally. The central government should take steps to allow for this, while retaining control of key ministries, such as defense, and of countrywide infrastructure.

Although Macedonians and Albanians constitute the two largest collectivities, legislation should recognize the rights and responsibilities of other constituencies: Roma, Turks, Serbs, Macedonian Muslims, and Vlachs. Some believe this would best be achieved by the constitutional recognition of the equal participation and rights of all citizens as individuals, rather than as members of ethnic collectivities. Others advocate constitutional recognition of Macedonians and Albanians as state-forming nationalities, with full equality and coexistence granted for the other minorities.

Recommendations

- With the state established and the most immediate threats of violent conflict prevented, Macedonia needs to focus on economic development, further political reform, and improving relations among ethnic groups that have been polarized by events of the recent past.
- Power should be decentralized from the central government, and local government institutions should be strengthened.
- Steps should be taken to make the civil service more representative of the Macedonian population as a whole.
- The existing parallel ethnic communities should be encouraged to interact more, especially at the grassroots level, with the aim of developing a genuinely multicultural polity.
- Efforts should focus on education, with the aim of breaking down ethnic isolation from a young age and breaking the pattern of zero-sum gamesmanship that dominates ethnic relations.
- The greater cultural recognition sought by Albanians needs to be satisfied within the overall Macedonian constitutional context and in a way that does not threaten partition.
- Revising the constitution to recognize the equal participation and rights of all citizens as individuals, rather than as members of ethnic collectivities, would move Macedonia beyond the socio-economic legacy of communist Yugoslavia and ease ethnic tensions.
- The international community can learn from the Macedonian example: it is better to focus on preventive diplomacy early than reconstruction later. The time to do so is now.



**United States
Institute of Peace**
1200 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20036