

Process of Reconciliation in a Postconflict Macedonia

Biljana Popovska, MA
Ministry of Defense, FYROM

Zhanet Ristoska, PhD
Editor in chief, "Shield" publication of the Ministry of Defense, FYROM
Asistent Professor, Military Academy General Mihailo Apostolski, Skopje, FYROM

Abstract

In this article we will consider reconciliation in a post-conflict Macedonia. When Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) was signed, the international community greeted the achievements of the international community as it was signed under specific circumstances. Since it stopped the conflict, it had achieved its goal. Legally, the country became a multiethnic one with a power-sharing government. Yet, the political and intellectual elite, which slightly differ from each other, did not invest intellectual and political capital when searching for a specific Macedonian (inter) national identity, which goes beyond the limitations of the ethnic definitions and mythology around them. Instead, the national discourse is emphasized. Using the terms such as multiculturalism, multiethnicity and polylingualism creates additional confusion. When media and politicians use these phrases and incorporate their own political discourses, the damage is done. Critical thinking is not on the agenda in the educational process and the young people are expected to listen rather than think. There is a need for a structural communication among the citizens, a social link but also a philosophical and maybe an ideological communication, so as to fill in the gaps and avoid further divisions. The only way to accomplish that is to have an open and inclusive society. In order to achieve this, the culture of dialog should be nurtured. It is not enough for Macedonians and Albanians to know each other's folklore and cultural history. Coexistence requires knowing the modern reality. Structured communication is a key. Absence of public discourse has a positive effect on the society's wellbeing. A debate is not a threat to the process of creating politics. Instead, it legalizes the decision-making process. The intellectual elite should take the lead, show its grandiosity, and view Macedonia as a whole in a joint narrative, which considers all the specifics of the different cultures living together and integrates them in a common goal. In that respect, the OFA was the first necessary step, and its treatment as a Holy Grail ignores the fact that the job is not done. Instead it has just started.

Keywords reconciliation; Macedonia; post-conflict period; political elites; identity

Introduction

Truth and justice commissions help adversaries remake a damaged political culture. Victims heal when they tell their stories in public and their losses are acknowledged. Offenders who cooperate with full disclosure of their crimes and apologize to the victims for political crimes can get amnesty, and can be reintegrated into society. The public learns about the killings and torture that they found convenient to ignore. A “historical memory” is put on record by authoritative commissions that will make it more difficult for extremists to practice fabrication and misinformation in public debate. Just as important, the police, the security services, and the courts that perpetrated and condoned the culture of violence can be reformed. Judge Goldstone reflected on the TRC when he wrote: *It should be recognized that in a perfect society victims are entitled to full justice, namely trial of the perpetrator and, if found guilty, adequate punishment.* However, that ideal is not possible in the aftermath of massive violence. There are simply too many perpetrators. Even the most sophisticated criminal justice system would be completely overwhelmed. Some societies simply forget about the past and attempt to induce national amnesia in their people. Of course that is bound to fail – the victims do not, indeed cannot, forget. And their unanswered call for retribution develops into hate and hate is directed collectively at the group from which perpetrators came¹. In line with that, I would argue that reconciliation has never seriously been attempted in Macedonia. The question of the armed conflict of 2001 has been avoided in public debate. However, ignoring reconciliation and justice can lead to the absence of a long-term and sustainable peace. Even the absence of violence would seem uncertain. In lieu of the above said, we will try to apply the concepts presented in the previous chapter to see how they translate into the specific case of Macedonia.

The conflict & conflict assessment

The Macedonian constitution adopted in 1991 created considerable tensions between Macedonian and Albanian communities within Macedonia. Armed clashes eventually erupted in early 2001 between government forces and the National Liberation Army (NLA-UCK) consisting of ethnic Albanians. Despite the collapse of several ceasefires, a peace agreement was signed in August 2001 and constitutional changes were made to improve the status of the Albanians living in Macedonia².

At the onset of the conflict, NLA goals were unclear. In communiqués it claimed it was fighting against ‘Slavo - Macedonian’ oppressors and for a ‘Greater Kosovo’ or a ‘Greater Albania’. Later, the NLA changed its rhetoric and argued that it was “fighting

¹ In Oberschall, A.2007

² Uppsala Conflict Data Program(retrieval date 2012/12/29) UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia: www.ucdp.uu.se/database, Uppsala University Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Conflict database @pcr.uu.se

for the human rights of the Albanians in Macedonia and for constitutional reforms.” Ahmeti’s³ group soon became a powerful actor in Macedonian politics, capable of prolonged combat and further exacerbating the country’s ethnic divisions. With emotions running high among government officials and ordinary Macedonians and Macedonian Albanians alike, the danger of civil strife was real. Following international mediation, Ahmeti agreed to keep the NLA at bay if the Macedonian government enacted constitutional reforms to improve the position of the Macedonian Albanians. The constitutional reforms envisioned in the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) effectively entrenched special rights for this ethnic group.⁴ Thus, at this stage of the research it would be useful to give some details related to the conflict assessment.

The conflict assessed through the lenses of the actors involved is defined as an intrastate conflict. The date of the first stated goals of incompatibility is 23 January 2001. According to the number of fatalities, it belongs to the group of low intensity⁵, minor conflict. The conflict actors have been the government of the Republic of Macedonia and the UCK (NLA). The date when conflict reached 25 battle-related deaths is May 2001. The last week of fighting turned out to be the bloodiest week of the conflict. All in all, up to 100 people died in battles during the course of the conflict. On 13 August, a peace accord was agreed upon. The four largest parliamentary parties signed the agreement, which provided for greater rights for the ethnic Albanians⁶

Comment on the peace agreement

The agreement stipulates a complete cessation of hostilities, a complete voluntary disarmament of the ethnic Albanian armed groups and their complete voluntary disbandment. External defense would in the future be handled by the central government, but the agreement provides an arrangement with the goal of reaching total ethnic equality in the police forces, and as a first step 500 policemen not of Macedonian ethnicity were to be hired. It was furthermore agreed that the UCK members would cede their armaments to NATO troops. The peace agreement provided for greater rights for the ethnic Albanian community. Constitutional changes were to be made on a number of aspects: members of the minority groups, such as the Albanians,

³ Ali Ahmeti is the political leader of the Democratic Union for Integration, a governing political party in Republic of Macedonia. He was the political leader of the former Albanian National Liberation Army in the Macedonian Conflict in 2001. In http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ali_Ahmeti, accessed on February 21, 2013

⁴ Zhidas Daskalovski, 2005:80-99

⁵ Ljubomir D. Frchkovski, 2011 In *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol.2, No.3, September 2011, - From an international perspective it has been ranked as a low-intensity internal conflict (in a legal sense something between rebellion and insurgency. It is a political act of internal character with legal considerations. Frchkovski further explains: it is internal because of the parties involved in its creation and signing besides the strong foreign mediation and presence, which was only as guarantors’ presence. It is not a peacemaking one, in spite of certain criteria which refer to ceasefire and an end of hostilities, as there has never been a war or officially declared emergency state throughout the conflict.

⁶ Uppsala Conflict Data Program (retrieval date 2012/12/29) UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia: www.ucdp.uu.se/database, Uppsala University Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Conflict database @pcr.uu.se

were to be referred to as Macedonian citizens, and Albanian was given the status of an official language in areas where speakers constituted at least 20% of the population. Furthermore, Albanians were given the right to proportional representation in the judiciary, all areas of government administration and the security forces. Greater rights were also provided in national and local politics, education and state employment. The 'double majority method' was adopted, whereby legislation affecting minorities required not only a majority of parliamentary votes, but also a majority of votes of those deputies who were not members of the ethnic majority. Lastly, a program for the resettlement of displaced persons was established⁷. However, OFA doesn't stipulate institutions for transitional justice and reconciliation but commitment for "rebels' disarmament, their re-socialization with no specified measures and additionally an amnesty law. It turned out to be a minimalist program for quick reintegration, which, although functioning, is still contested on some issues. The principle of "inclusiveness" (specified in part 1.4 in the basic principles) opens the window for reconciliation so as to reflect the multiethnic character of the society in the constitution. Yet, without deeper reconciliation processes and "official truth" concerning the past, and justice, a more fundamental/sustainable peace-related perspective of the community as a whole is impossible⁸.

The Post-Conflict period

A legal framework has been established for OFA implementation. Constitutional amendments and more than 130 laws were adopted. Most of the adopted laws have been passed to enable equal representation and nondiscrimination; identity, language and education; and development of decentralized government/authority. In most of the cases, the laws have been passed later than originally planned (45 days after OFA was signed by the end of 2002). The last laws were the law for the use of language and for territorial organization (municipalities). However, part of the legal framework existed before OFA, especially in the part related to identity (flags) and use of language in education and procedures like part of the previous system or with harmonization of the legislation with ratified international conventions. In spite of the view that a legal framework for OFA implementation has been completed, there are those who believe that for the framework to be complete the following amendments should be enacted: in the law for the use of the Albanian, use of the flags (due to the rejection of certain regulations by the Constitutional Court), the forces that served in the conflict, the ex-NLA and the Law on Amnesty. In line with this in 2011, some interventions were made in some areas-language, flags and the amnesty law⁹.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ljubomir D. Frchkovski, 2011 In *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol.2, No.3, September 2011

⁹ Fisnik Shabani, *Legal Framework: Comprehensive review of laws for implementation of OFA* (36-44) OFA-Case studies(MCIS), August 2011

Yet, there are differences between the attitudes of the ethnic Macedonians and Albanians over whether OFA is a legal project or more like a legal framework. Such differences might not be related to the accomplishment of the legal framework but to the implementation, efficiency or a critique of the agreement. Some critics say OFA has not been sufficient and there is a need for a new agreement. In addition, besides lists of passed laws, public opinion related to the completeness of the legal frame is important too. The majority of citizens (50,4%) thinks that all the necessary laws or most of them have been adopted (perception of the completeness of the legal framework). Every third citizen (37,2%) thinks that a certain portion of the laws were adopted (perception of non-completeness of the legal frame) and 12,4% do not have an answer. In the pool of the public and informed people, the majority (90%) has an attitude that almost all or the greatest portions of the laws were passed. In addition, various opinions about the completeness of the legal frame are present among politicians as well. On one side are those who think that the legal framework hasn't been fulfilled. On the other are those who think that everything that was considered or mentioned in the OFA has been translated into the constitution and the laws. In sum, if we analyze along ethnic lines, the different points of view may indicate that the differences in the attitudes of ethnic Macedonians and Albanians are not in the assessment of the fulfillment of the legal framework but in the application and the effectiveness of it. Alternatively they may be expressing a critique of the actual agreement¹⁰. Related to the Post-Conflict state and the accomplishments of OFA ten years after the conflict, among politicians and academics as top leader and middle-range actors in the post conflict society there are more voices calling for the need of a shared vision for the future of Macedonia. Some, pointing to the mono-ethnicity of political parties, say there is a lack of cohesive factors, apart from NATO and the EU. Others say Macedonia lacks a shared agenda. Some believe that a wider social debate is necessary, led by the government, in order to achieve a comprehensive agreement for a mutual vision of the future of Macedonia. According to others, the agreement has no measures of cohesion, so they should be developed as post-Ohrid measures, but thus far, there has been no response to that. Also, the focus needs to be on improving mutual trust. There are those who believe that we should press forward and that the future of Macedonia is Euro-Atlantic integration. Then there are those who say that for common dreams, there is a need of policies for integration, i.e. Macedonians and Albanians "share the same bed, but have different dreams", so for sharing a vision, greater efforts need to be made towards integration. There are no mechanisms for determining common values. On the other hand, for some, part of the shortcomings is in the failure to build a system of shared values. There are those who believe that implementation of the strategy for integrated education is necessary. Also, a state strategy for integration is necessary, especially in education. For improving multiethnic relations, the common

¹⁰ Ibid.

things (and myths) that ethnic Albanians and Macedonians share need to be nurtured, and the secularity of the state needs to be preserved. Others contend that for a more effective solution of the interethnic problems it is necessary to overcome fears, and that politicians, Macedonians and Albanians, need to clearly oppose the radicals in their groups. In addition, leadership for the measures for cohesion should come from the politicians and the political parties. There are also those who believe that the political parties have achieved a certain improvement in support of multiculturalism¹¹.

Amnesty law and the authentic interpretation

Ethnic Albanian rebels welcomed the new amnesty law encouraging them to come down from highland strongholds and reintegrate into society as part of a Western-backed peace plan. The law¹² passed by the Macedonian parliament effectively frees from prosecution several thousand insurgents who took up arms in 2001 to fight for greater rights for their community. The amnesty covers crimes including high treason, mutiny, armed rebellion and conspiracy against the state. The law was to be a key to attracting millions of dollars in reconstruction aid pledged by the European Union and the United States if a peace deal was implemented fully. The law was welcomed by the international community, and as a spokesman for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva said, the law would encourage the return of displaced persons within Macedonia and refugees in neighboring Yugoslavia -- about 26,000 people¹³.

In addition, the “tough” part of the transitional justice in the post-conflict Macedonia the war crime trials, was placed under the jurisdiction of the Hague Tribunal. According to some experts, this was done rather selectively, as only people from the national security authorities (Ministry of Interior and one police officer) were tried. The first one was convicted and served a sentence 4 years’ imprisonment, the other was sentenced to 12 years in prison. Also, four other war crime cases against ethnic Albanians (NLA members) were considered by the tribunal which found that the cases were out of its jurisdiction and returned them to the domestic courts. This created a feeling of injustice and tension especially among Macedonians. So, instead of providing relief it narrowed down the opportunities for reconciliation among the actors in the conflict. It, also, created additional tensions in the ruling coalition on the Macedonian and Albanian side, as the Albanians insisted on amnesty, while the Macedonians wanted a trial.¹⁴

¹¹ Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (MCIC) – ORD interviews, Skopje, 2011

¹² Amnesty Law (Official Gazette issue 18 / 2002)

¹³ Ermira Mehmeti, Associated Press Writer, In *Associated Press (AP)*, March 08, 2002 accessed on Wednesday, August 31, 2011 (March Archives,2002)

¹⁴ Ljubomir D. Frchkovski, 2011 In *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol.2, No.3, September 2011

However, in July 2011 parliament adopted a new interpretation¹⁵ of the 2002 Amnesty Law, which had granted amnesty to those involved in the 2001-armed conflict, except in cases taken under the jurisdiction of the tribunal. This interpretation, which violated Macedonians international obligations, stated that four war crimes cases returned in 2008 from the tribunal to Macedonia for prosecution could only be prosecuted by the tribunal and not by domestic courts. As a result, in September, the Skopje Criminal Court dismissed the “Mavrovo” road workers case at the request of the Public Prosecutor. In 2001, the road workers were allegedly abducted, ill-treated, sexually abused and threatened with death before release by the ethnic Albanian National Liberation Army (NLA). The court granted the victims leave to claim compensation in civil proceedings. The remaining cases were annulled by the end of October¹⁶.

The Constitutional Court has rejected the two initiatives for assessing the constitutionality of the authentic interpretation of the amnesty law. Judges anonymously rejected the initiative which referred to the amnesty law from 2002, while the one concerning the authentic interpretation was discarded with the majority of the votes. DUI didn't believe that the opposite could have happened and threatened more radical steps – a filibuster and a flood of proposed amendments - to prevent passing the law on defenders¹⁷. Therefore, this has created more derivative issues to be resolved and raised tensions too.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs)

Return of the internally displaced persons from the 2001 conflict is still an unresolved issue. Yet, there are ethnic Macedonians who are denied access to their homes (mostly in majority ethnic Albanian villages) and still live in special centers in Kumanovo and Skopje. This is one of the issues impeding the reconciliation process, as only one ethnic group feels itself to be a victim - ethnic Macedonians mostly from the villages with a majority Albanian population¹⁸. As one IDP says, they have sued the state, which did not guarantee their safe return home. However, the Macedonian court has rejected most of their complaints. Consequently, they have appealed to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. They claim that experts' examination has shown they all have post-traumatic stress and will have lifelong problems. Yet, the court has rejected their appeal for compensation, as they have not suffered physical dismemberment. There is a feeling of disappointment, as the court has rejected some of the cases when reparation was allocated for the traumas. Now, those people are required to give the money back¹⁹.

¹⁵ Authentic interpretation of article 1 of Amnesty law (Official Gazette issue 99/2011)

¹⁶ Amnesty International, *Amnesty International Annual Report 2012 - Macedonia*, 24 May 2012, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4fbc392941.html> [accessed 2 January 2013]

¹⁷ <http://utrinski.com.mk/?ItemID=6BE00DA020DD6A4DA02DC67EAE409B2A> accessed on 31.10.2012, 12:32

¹⁸ Ljubomir D. Frchkovski, 2011 In *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol.2, No.3, September 2011

¹⁹ <http://www.balkaninsight.com/mk/article/> - families of the kidnapped Macedonians are looking for a final outcome

Media - reframing the 'other' & other initiatives in the country

The way in which the media are conveying this information to ordinary citizens and the role of the media in the conflict transformation process in Macedonia is an aspect that should not be neglected. Generally speaking, in recent years, there has been a rise in attention to the positive role that media can play in post-conflict society contexts, contributing to coexistence, reconciliation and peace building. Programming may be used to contribute to conflict transformation and social change through: countering stereotypes and misconceptions; depolarizing attitudes by emphasizing stories of intergroup cooperation; promoting empathy by portraying similarities with the 'other'; and facilitating dialogue and understanding. Programming has taken various forms, including radio shows, soap operas, call-in shows, video projects and documentary films. The form of programming is usually chosen based on the most popular and accessible forms of media in the country. Some programmes are also designed to target and engage different segments of the population, such as youth, women, minorities and the illiterate. The representation of a range of voices and the development of tailored programming assists in promoting inclusion and widespread dialogue²⁰.

What has been done in that respect in the specific case of Macedonia? The US organization, Search for Common Ground (SFCG) produced a children's television programme called *NasheMaalo* (Our Neighborhood). The half-hour show, created by a mixed team beginning in 1999 and broadcast on both Macedonian- and Albanian-language channels, aimed to foster intercultural understanding and mutual respect and to counter the pervasive negative portrayal of other groups in the country. The show's long-term goal was to break the cycle of mistrust and to promote positive attitudes and behavior among children concerning their multi-ethnic society. It also sought to promote cultural awareness as a necessary component of conflict prevention. In 2001, when armed conflict broke out in the country, the television station A1 TV sought permission to air *NasheMaalo* episodes on a daily basis. In addition, the cast of children, who have become role models for children across the country, filmed a public statement in Macedonian and Albanian, "We want our neighborhood to be a peaceful neighborhood". This was in line with other public campaigns by the child actors on open-mindedness and tolerance.²¹ The idea behind this is that programmes can promote empathy by getting the audience to think about the hopes and fears of the other ethnic group.

Now, let us see the kind of media messages we receive and the kind of peace, tolerance and dialog-promoting initiatives the people of Macedonia are exposed to.

²⁰ Huma Haider (2011): Social repair in divided societies: integrating a coexistence lens into transitional justice, *Conflict, Security & Development*, 11:02, 175-203 To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2011.572458>

²¹ Ibid.

I shall refer to some of the initiatives related to the transitional justice and promoting reconciliation. RECOM²², BIRN²³ Balkan Insight.

²⁴Balkan Transitional Justice ²⁵Nansen Dialogue Center - Skopje²⁶, Edno -Initiative for tolerance and mutual respect²⁷ are such initiatives in Macedonia.

Data show Macedonia's centre-right government has spent up to 20 million euros in the past five years on around 40 public awareness campaigns. Topics range from promoting ethnic tolerance, family values and patriotism to fanfaring the city-wide makeover known as "Skopje 2014". The problem is that while ministers say the campaigns educate people on important social issues, experts and opposition politicians say their primary purpose is to trumpet the government's own achievements and buy the media's favor. They also question whether all the money earmarked for these campaigns actually reaches its intended purpose²⁸. The discourse of the daily media goes from headlines such as "Project Skopje 2014 survived the opposition critique in the Parliament"²⁹; "Dui threatens to leave the government – Ahmeti in a front for the defenders";³⁰ "Reaction of the association "Bedem" to laying flowers in front of a monument in Slupchane";³¹

²² The Coalition for RECOM is a non-political regional gathering of civil society organizations. It consists of a network of more than 1800 non-governmental organizations, associations, and individuals who represent and promote the Initiative for RECOM towards the establishment of a regional commission tasked with establishing the facts about all victims of war crimes and other serious human rights violations committed on the territory of the Former Yugoslavia in the period from 1991-2001 (RECOM).

²³ The Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, a group of affiliated charitable organizations from across the region funded by a range of international governments, non governmental organizations and charitable funds with an interest in the region. The organization's core work is the promotion of a free and independent media and the training of journalists and media houses to international standards.

²⁴ Balkan Insight is the leading news site covering the Western Balkans Region - a product of BIRN. They also publish commentaries and opinions from international political and government figures.

²⁵ This is a regional initiative funded by the European Commission and the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland that aims to improve the public's understanding of transitional justice issues in former Yugoslav countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia). Balkan Insight's Transitional Justice website brings the latest stories from the Balkans on war crimes, reparations, lustration, criminal justice efforts, refugees and returnees, missing persons; regional cooperation and other transitional justice related topics.

²⁶ Nansen Dialogue Center Skopje (Macedonia) is a local non-governmental and non-profit organization, established the year 2000 supported by the Nansen Academy from Lillehammer, Norway. Since the end of the conflict in Macedonia in 2001, NDC Skopje has focused its activities towards promoting the Framework Peace Agreement and has continued to work with young people from the areas mostly affected by the conflict. In 2003 and 2004, the focus of the program activities was put on strengthening the capacities of the political parties. In 2005, NDC Skopje started the implementation of the program "Dialogue and reconciliation" in the Municipality of Jegunovce. Starting from the school year of September 2011/2012, NDC Skopje has signed partnership agreements and will implement the Integrated Education programs in two more primary schools/municipalities: "RajkoZinzifov" Chair, and "Goce Delchev" Municipality of Vasilevo.

²⁷ This initiative is targeted to the people of Macedonia (Macedonians, Vlachs, Turks, Roma, and Albanians) and it is in Macedonian and Albanian. There are three components: "We are all people" (*adverts, prints, other*); "Getting to know each other" (*Did you know?* - interesting facts about distinguished people of each of the nationalities living in Macedonia; *kitchen-recipes; stories*); "Show respect" (*dictionary, face in a hole-exchanging messages, quiz*).<http://www.edno.com.mk/> accessed on 01.12.2013

²⁸ ValentinaStojancevska, BIRN Skopje In Culture watch as of January 16,2013 <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-s-costly-media-campaigns-raise-suspensions> accessed on Jan 24 2013

²⁹ <http://www.dnevnik.com.mk/default.asp?ItemID=C60C5D2C35867F44ACBE70F784211E5F> 21.08.2012, 17:42

³⁰ <http://www.dnevnik.com.mk/default.asp?ItemID=ABD89DA66DA02742BFA557D34627702D> 21.08.2012, 18:06

³¹ <http://www.sitel.com.mk/dnevnik/makedonija/reakcija-na-zdruzeniето-%E2%80%9Ebedem%E2%80%9C-za-polozuvanjeto-cveke-pred-spomenik-vo-slupchane>14.08.2012 - 20:48

“The government has not sent a delegation; its members went to Slupchane in a private arrangement”;³² “VMRO-DPMNE: The event in Slupchane will hurt interethnic relations;”³³ “Osmani’s administration wants to honor fascists’ by naming streets after them;”³⁴ “In an armed incident a policeman of ethnic Macedonian origin in a banal fight killed his two ethnic Albanian neighbors;”³⁵ “In Struga, the Macedonian flag was burnt;”³⁶ “Incidents with interethnic background are continuing – Fights among minors of different ethnicity have not stopped;”³⁷ “Vevchani fueled the religious spirits – The government will extinguish the carnival fire;”³⁸ “Bloody Maundy Thursday in Skopje – brutal execution in Skopje;”³⁹ “SDSM with different truth than DUI’s – Crvenkovski did not trade the Hague cases with Ahmeti;”⁴⁰ “Experts’ assessments about the governments’ projects – They build together but celebrate separately;”⁴¹ “Rainier: Integrated education – key for multiethnic coexistence;”⁴² “Interculturalism or search for common ground – Everyone talks about it, but nobody knows what it means;”⁴³ “After the incidents during the handball game in Prishtina – political parties kept silent after the national flag was burnt”.⁴⁴

Thus, although, there are certainly many initiatives to promote the ethnic tolerance and dialogue the discourse media doesn’t always seem to be in line with it. It does not point out to specific cases of conflict transformation. Instead, it does show that there has been a restless peace with a public discourse occasionally to fuel the ethnic propaganda.

Post-Conflict Macedonia as seen by the international community

Reconciliation is sometimes a nation-building, unwritten rule when the government is made up of representatives of two communities. The fact that Macedonian and Albanian parties are in a coalition is a phenomenon, as the second biggest community

³² <http://www.sitel.com.mk/dnevnik/makedonija/vladata-ne-ispratila-delegacija-nejzini-chlenovi-privatno-bile-vo-slupchane15.08.2012-17:27>

³³ <http://www.dnevnik.com.mk/default.asp?ItemID=4EECEE78DA9C8647AAE35D4921172D92> 16.08.2012, 14:49

³⁴ <http://www.sitel.com.mk/dnevnik/makedonija/soveticite-na-osmani-sakaat-da-imenuvaat-ulici-po-fashistite20.08.2012-17:23>

³⁵ <http://dnevnik.com.mk/default.asp?ItemID=0D7F334345F11248ACF2F5A16EA2A07801>.03.2012, 18:22

³⁶ <http://www.sitel.com.mk/dnevnik/makedonija/vo-struga-popladnevo-zapaleno-makedonsko-zname23.01.2012-18:02>

³⁷ <http://sitel.com.mk/dnevnik/makedonija/incidentite-so-megjuetnichka-pozadina-prodolzuvaat10.03.2012-20:56>

³⁸ <http://dnevnik.com.mk/default.asp?ItemID=01F2921413CF554EAEFC630C5536CF4C29>.01.2012, 19:08

³⁹ Five ethnic Macedonians from Skopje were brutally murdered near the Skopje village of Smilkovci while fishing <http://www.dnevnik.com.mk/?ItemID=97644CC78255EC4E846C1C3C848ACC3D13>.04.2012, 19:28

⁴⁰ <http://dnevnik.com.mk/?ItemID=422646FA9D61C74F82A5F247B923190304>.01.2012, 18:10

⁴¹ <http://dnevnik.com.mk/?ItemID=08E89545D130EF429BC924F83CFBCFDD20>.01.2012, 18:20

⁴² Lately we have witnessed serious incidents that can influence the efforts for promoting a mutual coexistence. I am encouraged by the responsibility shown by the government but I am convinced that the support the International Community is providing is necessary and important – General Secretary OSCE, Lambert Rainer <http://sitel.com.mk/dnevnik/makedonija/ranier-integrirarno-obrazovanie-klich-za-megjuetnichki-sozivot13.03.2012-12:01>

⁴³ <http://www.dnevnik.com.mk/?ItemID=FC71213F9DFA6B49A544CFD37DF64558> 04.07.2012, 22:09

⁴⁴ <http://dnevnik.com.mk/default.asp?ItemID=EF1CA2040C71D940B6DA3E2DB4C1499E> 19.02.2012, 18:29

is participating in the government⁴⁵. Despite the fact that the two communities do not share most of the public holidays sometimes there are occasions when leading representatives from both communities show respect to each other, such as when Arben Xhaferri⁴⁶ died there were representatives from other parties who expressed their condolences. Yet, there is no consensus on how to deal with the conflict of 2001(to build a bridge) e.g. Slupchane, the law on defenders, the animosity among the people when they talk about the past. Is there is a state point of view that these people (NLA/ONA) won't anymore be our enemies as the conflict is over? The religious leaders should play the role. If NLA and defenders build the bridge and if the state does it, the reconciliation as healing the wounds is achieved. Based on OSCE reports, the critical issue is that of language (the age when Albanian minorities should start learning Macedonian. The issue produced negative feelings and the government through the Ministry of Education suspended studying the language at the proposed age. However, the general line should be to study Macedonian as early as possible. "Skopje 2014" is a step to make the city more beautiful and an attempt to manifest historic roots. Maybe it helps part of the population to see the city as more European. However, the number of monuments in a small area should reflect the feelings of the people. The Amnesty Law was inevitable as part of the reconciliation process. Many conferences have been organized on the topic of reconciliation with Macedonian participants. There are many initiatives and a lot of work at the grassroots level by NGOs like RECOM, LOYA and others reported in Balkan Insight. Curiously enough, no political force is interested in the 11 missing people, and that will hinder the process of reconciliation. In general, Macedonians think that Albanians as a whole are not loyal to the state. In a sense, they are right. Albanians think that Macedonians are not accepting them as equals. Both sides have a distortive view of their position in the state despite OFA. There is no intellegenzia/academics to say *it is our problem. It will be painful but we have to do it*. There is no party which tries to solve it and embraces all citizens.

NGOs like Loya and RECOM do an excellent job at grassroots levels. Nevertheless, at the official level the work of the grassroots does not get recognized. Albanians complain they are regarded as a minority that has no right to be here. Albanians feel like a part of the Greater Albanian people. As far as language is concerned, it is a good idea to have incentives to learn Albanian in different parts of Macedonia even in ethnically uniform parts like Delchevo. The state can give incentives and say: *We can support Macedonians who want to learn Albanian*. There seems to be a lack of willingness to face one's own prejudices and to try to reflect what can be done to make this a place for all who are living here. There should be a developed sense of common goods such as the economy. So far, all the progress achieved here has

⁴⁵ Interview 1 with the member of the international community

⁴⁶ Arben Xhaferri (25 January 1948 – 15 August 2012) was an Albanian politician in Macedonia.

only occurred if it is supported by NGOs. There is a lack of common responsibility⁴⁷. Albanian society is conservative and partly backward in a social sense; living in a pre-modern society characterized by clan and arranged marriages-, which they consider a way of protecting themselves. Even intellectual Albanians like to ignore the problem and do not try to promote improvements. Yet, it is a problem that can be changed by Albanians. Reconciliation requires each group to identify its problems (analyze what hinders them and approach the other side. Two reasons why more Albanians than Macedonians migrate (demography); The first reason is that Albanians have more young children and second they have enough relatives that can care for them (if they go abroad and help them with a job). There is no loyalty to the state. After the collapse of Yugoslavia (1991), Albanians found themselves living in a state where they did not want. However, Gligorov, who was very sensitive and caring about this issue, involved some people in politics (government). An observation: Orthodox churches are built with state money. The Muslims build mosques with private money. Communities are divided and live separate lives. There are mixed marriages, but they are not publicized, as if people are ashamed of mixed marriages. "Skopje 2014" is forcing a certain style or copying of something of the past - Western Europe 19th century glorifying the past. Macedonians can not afford it⁴⁸.

Conclusion

Generally, in the Macedonian case doesn't show specific events of reconciliation. Instead, it does confirm that the reconciliation has not been seriously attempted in the state. A lot of work has been done at the grassroots and top level. The link between the top and the grassroots level seems to be missing. The middle level actors should be more proactive and the progress from issues through relationships should go via subsystem to system. There seems to be an absence of vision about the social structure and relationships we desire. There is an absence of an official truth about the conflict. Truth and justice, peace and mercy do not seem to kiss at the place called reconciliation.

⁴⁷ Interview 2 with the member of the international community

⁴⁸ Ibid.

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