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A MODEL FOR FUTURE MULTI-ETHNIC COEXISTENCE?

MACEDONIA 10 YEARS AFTER THE OHRID FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

Anja Czymmeck / Kristina Viciska

On September 8, 1991 the Republic of Macedonia seceded peacefully from Yugoslavia following a constitutional referendum. However, the complex transition of the country into a liberal democracy suffered a serious setback in 2001. Members of the country's Albanian population resorted to armed conflict in order to strengthen their demands for greater involvement in Macedonian politics and society. The conflict was settled with the help of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, a treaty designed to guarantee the rights of minorities in the Republic of Macedonia. 20 years after the country's independence and ten years after the dramatic turning point brought about by the peace agreement it is now time to take stock. What have been the effects of the constitutional changes resulting from the agreement?

THE CONFLICT, THE AGREEMENT AND THE PARLIAMENT

Following the Kosovo crisis in 1999, the Albanian National Liberation Army, the ONA (Albanian acronym), was set up in Northern Macedonia. Their goal was to fight for the rights of the Albanian minority that made up 25 per cent of the population, and in February 2001 they took a number of villages by force and attacked civilian and government buildings. The result was an armed conflict between members of the Liberation Army and the Macedonian security services. The conflict was further inflamed by biased media reporting on both sides that demonised the opponents. While the Macedonians for their part were scaremongering about territorial integrity, because they were worried about plans for a Greater Albania, the

Albanian groups themselves were protesting forcefully for greater political and social recognition, more involvement in state institutions and the retention of the Albanian language.¹ Following the military conflict in Kosovo the international community was anxious to resolve the armed conflict in Macedonia as quickly as possible and to avoid yet another civil war in the Balkans. As early as May 2001 a "Government of National Unity" was set up, made up of representatives from the international community. It entered into negotiations with the leaders of both parties to the conflict but progress was very slow. Because of the ongoing clashes between the two groups the international community called for joint talks to be held. The negotiations with the Albanian and Macedonian leadership were led by two diplomats, François Léotard (European Union) and James Perdue (USA). The discussions went on for weeks and the result was a Framework Agreement designed to guarantee the integration of the Albanian minority and ensure peace for the people of the country.² The agreement included solutions to the problems of access to public office, languages used, the status of the Albanian minority, decentralisation and a recommendation for a new preamble to the constitution.³

Discussions went on for weeks and the result was a Framework Agreement designed to guarantee the integration of the Albanian minority and ensure peace for the people of the country.

The agreement was signed on August 13, 2001. It was a compromise that offered the Albanian population the rights that they were looking for but it also required the immediate disarming of the Liberation Army in order to bring peace. The explicit exclusion of any federal or territorial solutions ensured that Macedonia's territorial integrity was also guaranteed.

On August 16, 2001 the President, Boris Trajkovski, presented proposals to parliament for amending the constitution.⁴ As a result NATO was able to start operation

1 | Cf. Boris Tanevski, "The problem between the Macedonian and Albanian ethnic groups in the Republic of Macedonia and its future", *New Balkan Politics*, Vol. 9, 2005, 60-81.

2 | Cf. Heinz Willemsen, "Das politische System Makedoniens", Wolfgang Ismayr (ed.), *Die politischen Systeme Osteuropas*, Wiesbaden, 967-1005.

3 | Cf. Kathrin Ahlbrecht, Annegret Bendiek, Reinhard Meyers and Sabine Wagner, *Konfliktregulierung und Friedenssicherung im Internationalen System*, Wiesbaden, 2009.

4 | Cf. Sonja K. Delevska, *Vest 13./14. August 2011*, 8-9.

“Essential Harvest” to disarm the Albanian Liberation Army on August 27, 2001.

Despite the concessions on both sides the implementation process dragged on longer than planned due to the need to get a broad consensus on the changes to the constitution. A two-thirds majority, i.e. 80 votes out of 120, was required to pass the motion.⁵ The process was also delayed by the many lengthy discussions in parliament on the contents of the agreement itself and it was not possible to meet the original deadline of 45 days envisioned in the agreement. The last bills relating to the agreement were passed into law by parliament in September 2002. The reaction of parliament can be seen as relatively cooperative, bearing in mind the fact that only the leadership were able to influence the contents of the agreement and that internal party consensus had to be sought after the event.

In parallel to the political process NATO, and later the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), set about the process of disarmament. In 2003 this process was taken over by the first EU mission – Concordia. Apart from one or two isolated incidents, clashes between the parties were successfully avoided following the signing of the agreement. With the help of the international missions there was a controlled disarmament of the rebels and the establishment of peace.

CONTENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND ACTUAL EFFECTS

Alongside the political reaction to the Ohrid Framework Agreement within Macedonia itself and within international organisations, civil society and academics – especially from the fields of political and social science – also took a close interest in the agreement. In recent years a wide range of analyses and case studies have been published on the effects of the agreement.⁶ Because of all the different

5 | Since the elections in 2011 the Macedonian parliament now has 123 seats. Three constituencies have been created to represent Macedonians living abroad.

6 | A good overview of the wide range of case studies carried out can be found in the work of the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation: *Ohrid Framework Agreement, Studii na Slucaj, Sveti Kliment Ohridski*, Skopje, 2011, <http://mcms.org.mk/images/docs/2011/ohridski-ramkoven-dogovor-2011.pdf> (accessed September 12, 2011).

aspects studied by the researchers we now have a whole body of work that allows us to gain an insight into how multi-ethnic coexistence in Macedonia has been able to progress.

The Ohrid Framework Agreement is made up of ten articles and three appendices. The articles are divided into paragraphs relating to specific areas:

1. Securing peace (Articles 1 and 2),
2. Decentralisation and use of emblems (Articles 3 and 7),
3. Regulations relating to minorities (Articles 4 and 5) and
4. Education and use of languages (Article 6).⁷

Article 8 covers the implementation of the laws that are listed in Article 9. The text of these laws reflects to a large extent the provisions formulated in the previous articles but also state to which part of the constitution they refer and which laws will be replaced or amended. Article 10 offers the possibility for further laws to be created. This states that further legislative provisions may be enacted in so far as they are necessary to give full effect to the agreement.

1. Securing peace

At the heart of the Framework Agreement is the creation of a stable and long-lasting peace for the benefit of all the people of Macedonia. The introduction of new institutions and mechanisms for power sharing was designed to bring about a settlement of the conflict, while the institutionalised strengthening of the inclusion of minority groups was seen as a step in the right direction in the creation of a multi-ethnic democracy.⁸

The introduction of new institutions and mechanisms for power sharing was designed to bring about a settlement of the conflict.

The desire of the Macedonian government to become part of the European Union also helped to speed up the negotiation

7 | The original English version of the Framework Agreement: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives/seerecon/macedonia/documents/framework_agreement.pdf (accessed September 12, 2011).

8 | Cf. Merle Vetterlein, *Konfliktregulierung durch power-sharing-Modelle: das Fallbeispiel der Republik Makedonien*, Baden-Baden, 2010.

process between the government and the Liberation Army. Even while the conflict was going on, the Macedonian government was able to sign a stabilisation and association agreement with the EU that opened up the possibility of future membership for Macedonia but which at the same time obliged it to recognise and implement the 1991 EU Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.⁹

The first and most important agreement of the framework treaty was the complete and unconditional voluntary disarmament of the rebel groups (article 1, paragraph 1, Ohrid Framework Agreement). As a quid pro quo the Macedonian government would agree to significantly strengthen the rights of the minorities through constitutional changes and to actively promote governmental decentralisation. This article of the Framework Agreement also established the basic principles for all the agreements contained within the document.

The disarmament activities covered by article 2 and carried out by international missions successfully helped to avoid the outbreak of new conflicts. On August 15, 2001 the president of Macedonia granted an amnesty to all ONA fighters who voluntarily gave up their arms.

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The much-feared security vacuum failed to materialise. Even now, ten years after the agreement was signed, the security situation is considered to be largely stable.

This situation is helped by the presence of the OSCE in Macedonia, via their Mission to Skopje, which has the task of supporting the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement not only by helping to train the national police force but also by its involvement in legal issues, education and multi-ethnic dialogue.¹⁰

9 | Cf. Council of Europe, *Venice Commission: Protection of Minorities*, http://venice.coe.int/site/main/Themes_Transn_GER.asp#minderheit (accessed September 12, 2011).

10 | Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), *Spotlight on Projects*, 2008, Issue 11, <http://osce.org/skopje/35881> (accessed 12, 2011).

The security situation has changed significantly since 2001. For instance, there have been discussions in parliament this year about whether the amnesty agreement should be extended to include those individuals who have been charged by the International Criminal Court in The Hague. An extension of the amnesty can only be carried out under national law and is therefore not legally possible for this type of crime.¹¹

There have been discussions in parliament about whether the amnesty agreement should include those individuals who have been charged by the International Criminal Court.

In addition to the discussions on the amnesty, the DUI, an Albanian political party that grew out of the ONA, also requested that pensions and social security benefits be granted. The public were very critical of these requests, as agreeing to them was tantamount to recognising armed conflict as a legitimate way of resolving problems.¹² Questions are also now being asked in academic circles as to whether the discussions with the Liberation Army simply led to their political status being elevated and the use of force being legitimised as a means to an end.¹³

Despite this, the Framework Agreement has proven to be an effective peace agreement. The country's current stability is proof positive of the effectiveness of the agreement itself and also of the way it was strictly implemented, which has helped to gradually bring about a stronger and more peaceful multi-ethnic coexistence in Macedonia.

2. Decentralisation and Use of Emblems

The Ohrid Framework Agreement encompassed the key demands of the Albanian minority. As a quid pro quo, representatives of the Macedonian government demanded recognition of their territorial borders and the sovereignty and unitary character of the state (article 1, paragraph 2, Ohrid Framework Agreement). In order to meet demands for a higher degree of autonomy for the regions article 3 addresses decentralisation in the country as a key element

11 | Cf. *Dnevnik*, "Sudot odlucuva za amnestija" (The court makes a decision on amnesty), July 19, 2011.

12 | Cf. *Dnevnik*, "Paket za branitelite i za Ona" (Package for the defence and the ONA), November 09, 2009; cf. *Vecer*, Stanovi, "Ra-bota i penzii za borcite na Ona?!" (Housing, work and pensions for ONA fighters?!), April 4, 2010.

13 | Cf. Ahlbrecht et al., n. 3.

of the agreement. By guaranteeing more self-government, with the added possibility of using ethnic emblems in those communities with an Albanian majority (article 7), the hope was that this would satisfy the needs of the Albanian minority to such an extent that calls for a federal state would no longer feature in speeches by the leadership.

The legislative proposals on self-government which were clearly set out in the Framework Agreement represent a continuation of changes to the law that had already started. When the country was formed in 1991 Macedonia was divided into 34 local authorities based mostly in larger cities. In 1996 the first ever law aimed at strengthening self-government was passed. The number of self-governed areas was increased to 124, although they were not granted significant powers. One year later, in 1997, parliament ratified the European Council's charter on local autonomy. The provisions of the Framework Agreement aimed at strengthening self-government were similar to those in the EU charter. The changes recommended by the Framework Agreement were passed by parliament in January 2002 with 85 parliamentary votes in favour. This legislation served to strengthen the authority of the elected representatives and the local authorities. This meant that for the first time

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local authorities could introduce legislation designed to protect minorities as well as establish a minority veto.¹⁴ Comprehensive legislation aimed at resolving contentious issues relating to local self-government, such as local funding, was not passed until 2004. This legislation covered the definition of electoral constituencies, the funding of self-governed areas and legislation relating to the city of Skopje.¹⁵

The Albanian population's goal of gaining more autonomy for the regions was also meant to be further strengthened by the redrawing of municipal boundaries. Kičevo for example, a city with a high number of ethnic Albanian

14 | Cf. Mirjana Maleska, "What kind of political system did Macedonia get after the Ohrid Peace Agreement?", *New Balkan Politics*, Vol. 9, 2005, 5-13.

15 | Macedonia is currently made up of 84 municipalites and the city of Skopje. Cf. OSCE, *Decentralization Survey, Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje*, 2009.

inhabitants, was to be merged with several of the surrounding local authorities.¹⁶ This meant that the Albanian population would have a majority which would then give them additional rights, such as the right to use national emblems on public buildings. Article 7 of the Framework Agreement established the right of municipalities where the majority of the population belonged to one of the minority groups – which in reality only affected the Albanian people – to publicly express their national identity. Since that time this has been predominantly expressed by the flying of the Albanian state flag on public buildings, but they are only allowed to do so alongside the Macedonian flag. Even though this only has a relatively small impact on peaceful coexistence it is still considered somewhat controversial.

The Framework Agreement established the right of municipalities where the majority of the population belonged to one of the minority groups to publicly express their national identity.

All of the provisions of the Framework Agreement relating to self-government have now been largely implemented and yet the process of strengthening the regions continues unabated. Various international and German organisations are helping to support the Macedonian state with knowledge transfer and capacity building.¹⁷

However, problems have been encountered when it comes to redrawing municipal and city boundaries. The Macedonian people objected strongly to attempts to establish new municipal boundaries for Kičevo, which was meant to be merged with four of the surrounding municipalities. This would have meant Kičevo becoming the fifth city with a predominantly Albanian population (after Tetovo, Gostivar, Debar and Struga). This political dispute over Kičevo should be resolved in 2013 when the boundaries are due to be redefined. However, the ruling VMRO-DPMNE party is trying to get the redrawing of the boundaries postponed until 2017, a proposal that has been rejected by their DUI coalition partners, as a postponement until 2013 was agreed between Nikola Gruevski and Menduh Thaçi, leader

16 | Cf. *Dnevnik*, "Machtkampf um Kicevo", July 20, 2011; cf. *Dnevnik*, "Kicevo in der Zange zwischen Parteikonflikten", August 3, 2011, 2.

17 | In addition to the OSCE, the EU and the German Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) are also working on the decentralisation of Macedonia.

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of the Democratic Party of Albania (DPA), in 2008.¹⁸ If they stick to the 2013 deadline, it will be important from a strategic point of view whether the changes take place before or after the local elections that are due to take place in 2013. At the last local elections in 2009 the two Albanian parties, the DUI and DPA, had 14 successful mayoral candidates (VMRO-DPME 56, SDSM 6), which meant that the Albanian people had moderate representation.¹⁹

The country's decentralisation, which not only represents a redistribution of political power, but is also of economic significance for the regions, remains an area where there is still much work to be done. Unlike the other legislative changes, decentralisation is not exclusively an inter-ethnic issue but is a process that is being pushed through for the whole country.

3. Regulations Relating to Minorities

The key goals of the Ohrid Framework Agreement are strengthening the rights of minorities in the long-term and guaranteeing the equality of all population groups within the justice system. The agreement proposes many changes to legislation aimed at guaranteeing long-term dialogue between different population groups. Once the agreement was passed by parliament the changes were implemented relatively quickly.

Constitutional changes range from the somewhat symbolic amendments of the preamble to more concrete legislation on the sharing of power. The latter includes mechanisms designed to protect minorities and integrate them into society and politics by carrying out police reforms, guaranteeing equality in the justice system and introducing minority quotas for jobs in the public administration and public enterprises. At the political level the double majority principle was introduced and the Commission for Interethnic Cooperation was set up. The more socially-oriented measures along with the changes to the political

18 | Cf. *Dnevnik*, "Machtkampf um Kicevo", n. 16.

19 | Cf. OSCE, n. 15.

system have served to strengthen Macedonia's democratic elements.²⁰

The original preamble to the constitution only recognised ethnic Macedonian people as citizens, although other nationalities were explicitly granted legal equality with them. In order to abolish this division the Framework Agreement proposed that all inhabitants of Macedonia should be given citizen status and that the specification of individual ethnicities should be dropped. In the end a compromise solution was agreed on November 15, 2001. This designated Macedonia as a state to which all citizens belonged. This was then subsequently further defined with the Macedonian people and those citizens living within Macedonia's borders – the Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Serbs, Roma, Bosniaks and others – being listed separately.²¹

While this change to the preamble is significant, it could only really hope to have a recognisable effect over a long period of time, whereas reforms to the police were designed to bring about immediate changes.

Once the Framework Agreement had been signed, the lack of representation of ethnic Albanians in the police force was immediately addressed. As early as October 2001

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mixed ethnic police patrols were sent to less dangerous areas of conflict, accompanied by NATO troops and OSCE observers. The hope was to gain better acceptance by the minority population by overcoming cultural and linguistic barriers. The fact that the number of Albanian police was not sufficient to set up mixed patrols across the country was quickly addressed. Through a mechanism of positive discrimination, whereby an individual from a minority group was preferred over someone with the same qualifications from the majority population, representatives of ethnic minorities in 2002 made up 427 of the 526 graduates of the police academy in 2002. This mechanism continued to be used in the years after 2001 with the result that the per centage of minorities in the police force rose from 3.8 per cent in 2001 to 15 per cent in 2005. One positive

20 | Cf. Maleska, n. 14.

21 | Kristina Bogevska-Malinka, "Od etnicka raznovidnost do etnicka ednakvost: Ulogata na Ramkoven Dogovor vo integracijata na etnickite zaednici", Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (ed.), *Political Thought*, No. 3, 2011, 37-46.

effect of these measures can be seen in the growing trust that people have in the police.²² The OSCE is continuing to provide assistance with police training.

More minorities were to be employed through a mechanism of positive discrimination so that state organs would reflect the diversity of the population.

Article 4 of the Framework Agreement covers non-discrimination and equitable representation of minorities and contains a proposal that quotas be introduced for the employment of minorities in the public administration and public enterprises. The aim was for more minorities to be employed through a mechanism of positive discrimination so that state organs would reflect the diversity of the population. After the law was passed this quota system was introduced immediately and still applies to public institutions, including administration at the various ministries, public enterprises and state-run hospitals.

One problem that was identified immediately after the quota was introduced was the lack of people with the necessary qualifications. To combat this problem, special training was set up for minorities in order to provide them with the requisite qualifications. The proportion of the Albanian population employed in public administration increased five-fold up to the year 2006.²³ As a result the total number of people employed in this sector in Macedonia stands at approximately 120,000 from a total population of around two million, which is relatively high.²⁴ Because the number of employees appears to exceed the number of actual jobs, more and more reports are reaching the public about civil servants who are officially employed, receive a regular salary but are not actually required to do any work.²⁵ What is not clear is whether the desired recognition

22 | Cf. Rade Rajkovcevski, "Implications of the Ohrid Framework Agreement on Police Work: A Decade after signing", Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (ed.), *Political Thought*, No. 34, 2011, 81-88.

23 | Cf. Radmila Sekerinska, "Post-Ohrid cohesion measures are necessary", *Ohrid Framework Agreement, Interviews*, 2011, 24.

24 | Although this is only a rough estimate as exact figures for those employed in public administration are not available. Cf. Ljubomir Frckovski, "The Ohrid Agreement is an agreement for building the state", *Ohrid Framework Agreement, Interviews*, 2011, 56; *Dnevnik*, "Alle kürzen, wir vergrößern die Verwaltung", October 6, 2010.

25 | Cf. Maja Malahova, *Jahresbericht der Kommission für Beschwerden an öffentlichen Beschaffungen*, 2010, 8.

of the minority groups by the Macedonian people will be achieved if people are only offered jobs due to quotas and not because they are the best people for the job.²⁶

A new form of minority veto was introduced for votes in parliament as well as for the election of judges to the Constitutional Court. Using the double majority principle, also known as the Badinter principle after French UN politician Robert Badinter, the votes of minorities were given additional weighting

All laws relating to culture, language use, education, the issuing of personal documents, use of emblems, local authority funding, local elections, electoral constituencies and the city of Skopje not only require a majority of votes in parliament but also a majority of votes among those members of parliament present who belong to one of the minorities. One consequence of this legislation is that the Albanian parties are more than just junior coalition partners in the government. Within the coalition itself they may also play a leading role in certain issues by threatening to use their minority veto and by using the need for consensus-building as a bargaining chip in negotiations.²⁷

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The strengthening of the inter-ethnic Inter-Community Relations Committee is designed to ensure that dialogue is predominantly based on debate and cooperative negotiations. Since the Framework Agreement was signed the committee is made up of 19 MPs, of which seven are ethnic Macedonians, seven are Albanian and there is one representative from each of the Turkish, Vlach, Roma and Bosnian and Serbian communities in Macedonia. The committee's job is to come up with recommendations and solutions to inter-ethnic questions. Parliament, for its part, has a duty to listen to these recommendations and to take them into account. The committee is also called upon to intercede in inter-personal conflicts within parliament itself where there is an inter-ethnic background, such as the use of language, and to come to a majority decision. An

26 | Cf. Nancy Fraser, *Die halbierte Gerechtigkeit*, 2001, 30.

27 | Cf. Maleska, n. 14.

analysis of the committee's activities shows that while it works well, it rarely actually acts on its own policies.²⁸

The new mechanisms for power sharing have completely changed the political system as a result of the many changes made to the constitution. Long-term and immediate measures have been introduced, with the changes affecting both civil society and the political system as a whole. The veto option makes it possible for the minorities to use bargaining as a means of negotiation, while the new set-up of the committee ensures that there is constructive interethnic dialogue at the same time. The implementation of these measures has been relatively strict. Public criticism has mostly been limited to the employment of unqualified people in order to achieve quota levels. This issue is being addressed by introducing additional measures to provide the necessary qualifications and through reforming the education system.

4. Education and Use of Languages

Many people have personal experience of how language skills can open doors and lack of them can just as easily close them. It is also not unusual in Europe for language and language use to be seen as closely linked to pride and national identity. As part of the desire to promote the legitimate rights of minorities, the Albanians pushed especially hard for the public use of the Albanian language to be one of the requirements of the Framework Agreement. These demands were met when the agreement was signed and the legislation on language use was passed by parliament in June 2002.

As part of the desire to promote the legitimate rights of minorities, the Albanians pushed especially hard for the public use of the Albanian language to be one of the requirements of the Framework Agreement.

Any language that is spoken by at least 20 per cent of the population is given the status of an official language. Since this currently only affects Albanian both languages are spoken in parliament and parliamentary documents are also published in both languages. This rule is applied at both national and regional level. In areas where more than 20 per cent of the population speaks a minority language

28 | Cf. Renata Deskoska, *Constitutional Mechanisms for inter-ethnic dialogue in the Republic of Macedonia*, 2009.

they have the right to consider that language to be an official language alongside Macedonian. Nevertheless, Macedonian is also protected as the official language because it is the only language which can be used for external communications.

In addition to this ruling on language use within the administrative and political spheres, comprehensive reforms on the use of languages within education have also been introduced. In order to protect minority languages, all primary and secondary school teaching should be carried out in the pupils' native language. This means that there are now segregated classes and if there are enough pupils schools are even divided along ethnic lines. Those pupils whose native language is not Macedonian have to learn it as a second language. The Framework Agreement also aimed to solve the problem of the low numbers of Albanian students. The fact that all teaching was in Macedonian was a barrier to many students. The agreement gave private universities the right to teach in Albanian and award officially-recognised qualifications. A good example of such a university is the trilingual South East Europe University (SEEU) in Tetovo, whose founding is seen as a success for the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA).²⁹

Although on the face of it the implementation of this legislation seems to satisfy the demands of the Albanian minority, it has also led to new inter-ethnic problems. The segregation of school classes has actually resulted in a marked drop in inter-ethnic communication. It is difficult for the pupils to mix, not least because of the language barrier. This type of segregated education has also resulted in pupils having insufficient knowledge about the culture, history and religion of the other community. This type of mono-ethnic school system does not allow for the sort of personal contact which is provided by mixed school sport, school trips and free time activities that can help to foster tolerance at an early age and consolidate it for the long-term. In order to make such exchanges possible

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29 | Merle Vetterlein, "The Influence of the Ohrid Framework Agreement on the Educational Policy of the Republic of Macedonia", *Paper at the 8th Annual Kokkalis Graduate Student Workshop*, 2006.

in the future and to promote constructive coexistence it will be necessary to reform the school system even further. The introduction of integrated education is one proposed concept for allowing this to happen.³⁰

The country needs integrated concepts for the population as a whole. Macedonia's bi-nationalism is erecting language barriers. The number of minority groups who don't speak Macedonian has grown in recent years and as a result people's lives can run along parallel tracks and it can be difficult to get jobs. A solution needs to be found that protects cultural and linguistic diversity while at the same time preventing the development of subcultures and language barriers.

CONCLUSION

What has been achieved so far? Firstly it can be seen that, ten years after the end of the armed conflict, a stable peace has been achieved in Macedonia. The heat was taken out of the conflict by disarming immediately after the agreement was signed and there have been no further outbreaks of fighting, apart from the occasional isolated incident. So we can say that the primary goal of any peace agreement – the establishment of peace – has been successfully achieved.

The measures designed to strengthen the rights of minorities have created a more dynamic political system in the country. Changes to the existing regime and new approaches introduced into parliament to help protect minorities are so far having a positive long-term effect on the integration of the Albanian people. The number of ministers from Albanian parties has also grown since signing the agreement.

Public opinion on the Framework Agreement has changed significantly. While the Macedonians may have seen it initially as something that was forced upon them, they now see it as a symbol for the cooperation and multi-ethnic dialogue that the country needs. The fact that the ministerial department responsible for the implementation

30 | Cf. Harald Schenker, "Integrated Education: Emerging Concepts In Macedonia", Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (ed.), *Political Thought*, No. 33, 2011, 19-24.

of the Ohrid Framework Agreement is still in existence is seen as evidence that there is still a desire to work on multi-ethnic coexistence.

What still needs to be done? One of the biggest criticisms of the Ohrid Framework Agreement is the bi-nationalism which it has brought about in Macedonia. The lower limit of 20 per cent stipulated in the agreement for the recognition of a language and the possibility of expressing one's own national identity has left other minorities with no chance of claiming similar rights (in Macedonia four per cent of the population are Turks, 1.3 per cent Roma, one per cent Bosnians, 0.5 per cent Vlachs). It is only on the Inter-Community Relations Committee that the other minorities have a seat where they can have a consistent voice. However, they cannot use these seats to safeguard their own rights as they are not able to build a majority on concordant or divergent issues. It is also not really clear whether the minority veto that was introduced has been good for the minorities or not, as this particular instrument is predominantly used for political power struggles.

There is no doubt that the education system requires further reform. The segregation of school classes may have been a short-term measure to help with de-escalating the conflict but it cannot be seen as a model for the future. Issues which relate to the education system in particular show how inter-ethnic mistrust in some regions is still as strong as ever. Some former multi-ethnic village communities were not willing to try to live peacefully together after the conflict, resulting in many people not returning to their homes.

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Ten years after the agreement was signed there are signs of a significant improvement in the way Macedonia deals with minorities, but the status quo should not be seen as set in stone. It is much more important to work on correcting the mistakes that have been made.

OUTLOOK

In August 2011 international representatives and Macedonian politicians got together at beautiful Lake Ohrid on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement to take stock of developments. Peter Sørensen, at that time the former European Union ambassador to Macedonia, also attended the conference. In his speech he described Macedonia's progress as positive but pointed out that there was still work to be done if they wanted to join the rest of Europe.³¹ However his speech was only heard by members of the international and the Albanian delegations. The Macedonian signatories to the agreement and representatives from the current opposition and ruling parties did not show up. The other conference delegates and the media were baffled by this decision not to attend. But the decision also serves to highlight the fact that the level of acceptance of the agreement differs within the various parties, even within the Albanian parties. Some Albanian parties see the agreement as the foundation for positive changes, while others feel that the changes have not gone far enough and see the Framework Agreement as something that actually limits potential change.³²

Some Albanian parties see the agreement as the foundation for positive changes, while others feel that the changes have not gone far enough.

A few weeks after the conference, on September 8, the Macedonian government organised to a big celebration to celebrate the tenth anniversary of Macedonia's independence. What was noticeable was the fact that the celebration lacked any real multi-ethnic flavour. Only Macedonian artists were asked to provide the entertainment and the whole idea of a multi-ethnic state that belonged to all citizens was somehow ignored.

This serves to underline how important it is to continue working towards peaceful dialogue at all levels. Social processes and political developments are in a constant state of flux and while politicians must ensure that there

31 | Cf. Peter Sørensen, "Conference on the occasion of the 10th Anniversary of the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement", *Ohrid*, August 13, 2011.

32 | Cf. *Koha*, "The state to understand the concept of the Ohrid Agreement", August 10, 2011.

is a stable framework for change, they must also ensure that there is sufficient room for manoeuvre, and view the implementation of the Framework Agreement as a process of continuous change.