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## **REPORT OF THE SEMINAR "ASSESSING SECURITY RISKS IN THE BALKANS: A FOCUS ON FYROM"**

*by Radoslava Stefanova*

Report of the seminar on "Assessing security in the Balkans: a focus on Fyrom"  
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In the welcome address **General Maurizio Coccia, head of the Italian Center for Defense Research (CASD)** briefly introduced the participants to the Center, and underlined the importance of the topic to be covered. On behalf of the **Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Ettore Greco, the Deputy Director**, welcomed the audience, and pointed out to the fact that the seminar is the second of a series of seminars (the first was devoted to Kosovo and held in April 1998) organized under the premises of a wider project the IAI is conducting with the support of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung of Rome, and the German Marshall Fund. The USIS, the British Council, and CASD are also among the co-sponsors of the current seminar. The IAI's activities also include other projects on regional cooperation in the Balkans, such as a contribution on FYROM to the Yearbook of the Conflict Prevention Network of the European Commission in Brussels, a project on the Balkans conducted in cooperation with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as two conducted in cooperation with the University of Florence, and CASD. Some of the final products of these studies have been published in the *Istituto's* English-language journal, *The International Spectator*.

The objective of the seminar is to both analyze in depth the current developments in FYROM, and to propose useful policy suggestions aimed at easing the tensions in the region. Four major topics are to be covered in the seminar: (1) Domestic developments, and scenarios such as a change in the country's leadership, overview of the partisan landscape, and a look at the inter-ethnic relations; (2) The regional configuration analyzing FYROM in relation to the other crisis areas in the Balkans; (3) Bilateral relations with Bulgaria and Greece; (4) International involvement (military and civilian presence), and general dilemmas for Western policy in Macedonia.

The first speaker, **Carlo Belli from the University of Florence**, covered the topic related to the domestic situation of FYROM. After UNPREDEP was deployed to the region, it can safely be said that a direct threat towards the territorial integrity of Macedonia is no longer feasible, which does not solve, however, the severe internal problems of the country. In fact, currently, the greatest challenge is the maintenance of its internal stability. To better understand the situation it is necessary to identify and analyze the role of the main policy making actors of the country.

Undoubtedly, the actor possessing the highest relative power is the 81-year old President Kiro Gligorov, nicknamed "the Balkan Fox" for his astounding political capacity. Gligorov is the head of a young and moderate government, which, however, looks too inexperienced to be able to act without his close supervision. The President is old, and there was already one assassination attempt on him in October 1995, which leaves an impression of vulnerability. Furthermore, a credible leader to substitute him seems to be lacking.

It is important to underline Gligorov's main achievements, high among which ranks his ability to arrange for the peaceful secession of his country from the Yugoslav Federation

at the beginning of the Bosnian war in 1991. Gligorov's role in promoting FYROM's international recognition was also important. He also solicited the timely deployment of UNPREDEP to block an eventual Serb aggression and established good neighborly relations with most of the countries around Macedonia. Gligorov's ambitions include EU and NATO membership for his country, the extension of the UNPREDEP mandate, and most importantly promoting a continued US presence in the country.

The ethnic problem is among the most complicated ones on Gligorov's agenda. He favored the involvement of a moderate Albanian party, the Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP) in the government, and showed readiness to negotiate a more favorable status for the Albanian minority in FYROM. Gligorov's efforts should be seen in the light of the growing popularity of the radical Albanian party, the Democratic Party of the Albanians (DPA), led by Arben Xhafferi, which has a real potential of undermining FYROM's internal stability.

In 1994 there was an important governmental reshuffling, which produced the current composition of the government, led by the Social Democratic Alliance of Macedonia and headed by Prime Minister Branco Tsrvenkovski. Tsrvenkovski is young, and probably not experienced enough to exercise a decisive leadership without Gligorov. The ruling coalition is composed by the Social Democratic Alliance, the Socialist Party, and the PDP. The PDP, which has been losing support among the Albanians, has gained more importance since Fatos Nano came to power in Albania and sided with the moderate Albanians in Macedonia. That policy is rather different from that of his predecessor Berisha, whose support for Xhafferi's DPA did much to hoist this party's standing among the Macedonian Albanian electorate.

The radical DPA, led by Arben Xhafferi and Menduh Thaci (DPA Chairman) remains in opposition. It is a merger of two smaller Albanian parties, the Party for the Democratic Prosperity of the Albanians (PDPA), and the Democratic Party (DP). The DPA is not yet officially registered by the Macedonian government, which continues to find bureaucratic procedures as a convenient excuse for the official non-recognition of the most influential Albanian minority party, concentrated in the north-western parts of FYROM around the towns of Tetovo and Gostivar. The radical Albanians strive for independence as a final objective, and for a bilingual state, and a "co-founding people" status as intermediate objectives. The PDP is rather popular among the Albanian minority. Its popularity should also be considered in conjunction with the developments in Kosovo.

Another opposition party is the center-right VMRO-DPMNE, an acronym taken from the movement for Macedonian independence during the Ottoman domination late last century. It is led by Ljubcho Georgievski, a very charismatic leader, who boycotted the parliamentary elections in 1992, which cost him his parliamentary seat. The VMRO's influence has growing in the last couple of years. It can be characterized as highly nationalist, anti-communist, anti-Albanian, anti-Serbian, pro-Bulgarian party. VMRO would become the only organized political alternative to the government, if the latter were to lose its majority, which would mean the radicalization of the Macedonian political life. The VMRO further does not accept Macedonia's current borders, striving for what it calls "Macedonian national unity". It has no serious economic or social program, although its political activity is notable. However, at this point in time the VMRO does not seem likely to emerge as the winner in the coming parliamentary elections.

To counter possible pessimistic scenarios with regard to the situation in Macedonia, several policy recommendations are in order. The international community should maintain and even reinforce its military presence in the country to both prevent eventual upsurge of violence, and show its solidarity with the current moderate leadership, without

which the political situation will undoubtedly radicalize. The country also needs economic assistance and directions to reinforce its current policy with regard to human rights observance.

There are three scenarios related to the future of Macedonia: (i) a positive scenario, where the democratization process will stabilize; (ii) a status quo scenario, where the country's progress in the problematic areas is blocked, thus eventually undermining its political stability; (iii) a negative scenario involving a rapid deterioration of domestic politics in a response to an escalation in the neighboring countries, and particularly in Kosovo. The advent of one scenario or another is conditioned on the relative power of the major actors, their interaction, and the strategies each one of them chooses in order to reach their objective.

The second speaker, **Christian Faber-Rod, Head of the OSCE Spillover Mission to Skopje**, spoke about the inter-ethnic problems of FYROM. The OSCE Mission has been the longest lasting mission of the organization, in place for over seven years. Its mandate is extremely broad, and includes monitoring the border with Serbia, providing for stability and security, and helping prevent eventual conflicts. Thus far, it can be claimed that the Mission has been successful, which is an example in favor of preventive diplomacy.

FYROM is certainly a country with serious minority problems. It is extremely difficult, however, to address this topic with local leaders, because they simply deny its existence. Moreover, they claim that their constitution gives sufficient civil rights protection to all citizens, including minorities, and refuse to comment collective civil rights violations, such as ban of schooling in minority languages, or negation of the ethnic belonging of minority members (the Turks, for example have to use the reference "Macedonian Muslims"). With regard to the Albanians, which have come to be identified as the biggest trouble makers, the attitude is that problems arise from "other" Albanians, coming from Kosovo, or Albania, while "their" Albanians actually have no reasons to complain, because they are much better off than any other minority in the region. The Macedonian majority certainly nurtures a lot of prejudice and suspicion with regard to the Albanians, who organized a referendum on their own, voting outstandingly for secession from the Macedonian state, very much in the fashion of Kosovo.

Many of the human rights problems, therefore, have to do with the great and growing amount of mistrust between the two communities. The Slav Macedonians in power assume almost automatically, that, if they agree to an Albanian-language university, the next step would be a proclamation of independence.

It is important to note in this context that it is very unhealthy to create policy linkages with Kosovo, where the Albanians claim they lost an autonomy status they had, while in Macedonia they feel they should have the same status as the Slavs, in view of their active role in the proclamation of the Macedonian independence from Yugoslavia. In Macedonia a dialog should be promoted, which would eventually help marginalize Kosovo-like extremist Albanian leaders, and clear the way for moderates.

Another thing to be considered in Macedonia and Kosovo is the extremely strong and radical influence of the potent Albanian diaspora abroad. Furthermore, radical Albanian leaders in Macedonia, such as Arben Xhafferi, like to resort to vague threats referring to an alleged interest on the part of fundamentalist countries willing to offer help on the basis of religious affiliation.

The Macedonians, on their side, really have no policy of dealing with the radicalization of the ethnic problem. According to estimates, however, by 2020 they might

well be the ethnic minority. A curious fact is that the official census is firm on the fact that currently ethnic Albanians constitute 22.9% of the country's population. However, when international participation in UNPREDEP was being considered, President Gligorov opposed Russian presence on the grounds that 1/3 of the population would feel there is too much Slavic influence on them, revealing probably the real percentage of ethnic Albanians in Macedonia.

The ethnic Albanian parliamentary party PDP has become quite unpopular among ethnic Albanians, who have increasingly begun showing open support for their ethnic brethren in Kosovo. Most Macedonians, on the other hand, sympathize with the Serbs and look convinced that Milosevic is doing the right thing in Kosovo. At present no side seems to be ready for a dialog. It can be predicted, therefore, that with the up-coming elections, ethnic radicalization will exacerbate. The opposition VMRO-DPMNE is probably the only party that has expressed some support for the idea of pursuing inter-ethnic dialog, which is certainly another reason for the government not to undertake any steps towards it.

A solution to the ethnic problems in Macedonia will certainly take a lot of time to take effect, not unlike Northern Ireland, for example. In the meantime the Macedonian leadership should be encouraged to seek accommodation, rather than confrontation or simply overlook the Albanian minority. The Albanians, on the other hand, should also be pushed towards dialog and tolerance within the country's borders, reassured about their civil rights, but discouraged from secession.

The third speaker, **Patrick Moore, team leader at the RFE/RL Newsline**, covered the topic of the regional context around Macedonia with regard to regional security.

First, it could be claimed that there are some permanent factors of instability in the country, and foremost among these is the inherent weakness of the country. Institutions are not stable, there is no democratic tradition, and the excessive concentration of power in the hands of aging President Gligorov does not work to counter these problems. Nationalism is pervading, while poverty has been one of the regions prevailing characteristics dating back to its membership in the Yugoslav federation.

An important factor relates to the geography of the region. Two major regional axes are of great importance for Macedonia. The first axis involving potential vital infrastructural links running from North to South is situated between two important regional actors, Serbia and Greece. Serbia is now led by Slobodan Milosevic, who can be regarded as the single individual most responsible for the Bosnian war, and the escalation of tensions in Kosovo. Greece did not live up to general expectations to become a regional leader in view of its EU and NATO membership and significant economic power with respect to the rest of the countries in the region. Important policy-makers in Greece belonging to various formation from the entire political spectrum in Greece succumbed to anti-Macedonian nationalism, which contributed to the erosion of security in the region. The second axis is the East-West one, which includes the proposed Durres-Istanbul transnational corridor, and emphasizes Macedonian relations with Albania, Bulgaria, and Turkey.

Finally, the ethnic composition of the region is one of the most important factors, which conditions the stability of the area. It is important to consider the violence potential that could come from Kosovo and induce confrontation between culturally diverse Slavs and Albanians. There are two hypothetical scenarios, that could develop if Albanians over the borders of three states decide to form a united state entity: one, the "Holbrook" scenario, whereby Bulgaria could seize a piece of what is left adjacent to its border to the South-West, or, more likely, two, what is left of Macedonia could become a satellite of Serbia.

Since the beginning of 1997 we can observe an "arc of crisis" around Macedonia, which tends to extend to it as well. On the one hand, Albania is laboriously recovering from a catastrophic social and economic situation due to the crumbling of the pyramid schemes in 1996-1997. Even if attempts have been made to remedy the grave consequences from the crisis, there is still much to be desired in order to achieve a satisfactory level of stability and security in Albania. There is a level of high polarization between supporters of Fatos Nano and those of former president Berisha, which will tend to persist in time. The economy seems to be recovering from the collapse, but the level of production is still very low. There are signs that a large part of the country's income comes from illegal transfers of arms and drugs.

After Nano's electoral victory in June 1997, Albania seems to have abandoned expansionist ambitions, which found more support under the administration of Berisha. However, Nano did receive a delegation of ethnic Albanians of Macedonia and expressed solidarity with some of their demands, such as the banned Albanian-language university in Tetovo. Albania has no interest and is really in no position to pose a serious threat of destabilization in the region.

There is a qualitatively different situation in Kosovo. There is some uncertainty about whether the Kosovo Liberation Army may have some support in terms of funds or arms based in Macedonia, deriving from a close affinity between members of the leaderships of the two Albanian minorities. It is important to underline that the threat to regional stability in this sense is Kosovo and not Albania. The latter observation is also reinforced by the almost complete isolation of Albania during communism, to be contrasted with a relative openness of the regime in Belgrade, which facilitated freedom of movement, and helped cultivate links between members of the Islamic communities. It is worth noting, however, that both the Kosovar and the Macedonian Albanian leadership have remained rather secular.

The main threat to the region's security, and to that of Macedonia, is Serbia led by the current president Milosevic. Milosevic did not recognize Macedonia's territorial integrity until 1996, and in 1998 he made claims on some strategic border points in Macedonia, seeking to incorporate them into the Yugoslav Federation.

Another potential threat to security relates to a possibility for the Slav leadership in Serbia and in Macedonia to coin a common approach with regard to their respective Albanian minorities, in view of the certain affinity of the Slav Macedonian administration to the regime in Belgrade. Furthermore, there may be informal links between the security and military services in Belgrade and in Skopje left over from the days of Yugoslavia, when strong and professional hierarchy was rigidly maintained. There was recently an announcement in the British press about a Serb proposal to the authorities in Skopje to pursue UCK leaders hiding in Macedonia. There is also a strong economic cooperation between Serbia and Macedonia, again inherited from the days of the larger Yugoslav federation, which is driven by mutual interest.

To contain the strong violence potential currently present in the region, it is advisable to situate a NATO contingent on the Albanian border with Macedonia and Kosovo to serve as a deterrent. If all diplomatic efforts were to fail, air strikes on strategic Yugoslav military targets, and establishment of a no-fly zone may prove to be the only options left. PfP could launch more concrete initiatives in Albania and Macedonia.

Finally, democracy in Serbia should be encouraged by all means, therefore giving more support to independent media and to the opposition to Slobodan Milosevic. Greece needs to take the initiative to integrate its aspirant neighbors in various regional, particularly

economic, initiatives and eventually, in EU and NATO. Albania should be particularly encouraged and assisted to rebuild its democracy, and finally, more advice regarding democratization process should be given to the Slav and to the Albanian leadership in Macedonia.

The fourth speaker, **Mr. Evangelos Kofos, a senior advisor at the Greek institute ELIAMEP**, addressed the topic of the Greek and Macedonian bilateral relations. According to a recent report of the meeting of the two countries' foreign ministers, Hadjiski and Pangalos, the bi-lateral relations are improving, although a compromise on the name is still not in sight. In an interview for the Macedonian daily "Dnevnik" this April, Pangalos stated the Greek intention to move away from semantics in search of a compromise. Ljubcho Georgievski of the Macedonian VMRO enthusiastically greeted the interview, although some criticized it in Athens. Economic relations between Greece and FYROM have been intensifying, particularly since 1995, when the Interim Accord between the two was signed. Greece is now the biggest investor and the third largest commercial partner of FYROM operating US \$250 million, next to Yugoslavia's US \$ 400 million, and Germany's US \$ 338 million in 1997. A series of investment and economic cooperation agreements have already been signed and more are impending. An office for political consultation has been established between the foreign and the defense ministries of the two countries. Moreover various PfP/NATO exercises provide for direct cooperation between military units from FYROM and Greece.

Greece has expressed support for FYROM's association agreement with the European Union, as well as further links between FYROM and NATO. A potential problem is the eventual up-grading of FYROM's agreements with the EU and NATO, because of prospects for a difficult ratification procedure in the Greek parliament due to the unresolved controversy over the name, despite an expressed support on the part of the current government.

Recently, the Kosovo problem has brought the two countries closer together. They shared position on almost all points related to the cessation of hostilities. Greece has furthermore signalled a willingness to participate in a reinforcement of the UNPREDEP contingent in FYROM, if asked to do so. The sole divergence is to be found in what FYROM President Gligorov described as safe corridors, which Greece sees as a gateway for illegal economic refugee flow to Greece.

In September 1995 the US mediated an Interim Accord between FYROM and Greece. Greece recognized FYROM and lifted an embargo it had persistently maintained on it. FYROM, on its part agreed to replace the star of Virginia on its national flag, and reconsider clauses from its constitution, which Greece interpreted as territorial claims. The issue of the name was expected to be resolved soon afterwards, but this issue still remains thorny in the relations between the two neighbors. There has been some tendency to procrastinate with the search for a compromise on the side of the Gligorov administration. The Simitis government in Greece, on the other hand, has managed to achieve an almost complete black-out on the Greek media on the question of the on-going negotiations mediated by Cyrus Vance under the auspices of the UN, which helps avoid or provoke excessive public reactions against them. At the same time diplomats are working on various ways of getting around the name problem, while progressing on other fronts, a rather ostrich-like technique. The Interim Accord, for example, was signed by two unidentified entities, "the Party of the first Part" and "the Party of the Second Part" in lieu of names of states. At various international conferences country names have been replaced by flags, or

the names of the people representing them. At the recent joint military exercises it was agreed that the troops would wear fatigues instead of their standard military uniforms, which bear the initial of their country. The signs on the Greek side of the border with FYROM still point at the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

It is also worth pointing out that the Simitis administration has showed an unprecedented willingness for rapprochement with its neighbor to the north-west, and for a final adjudication of the name problem, despite strong opposition in the Northern regions of Greece. However, impending general elections in FYROM in the fall and presidential elections next year make it difficult for Skopje to advance with revolutionary proposals in this period. A real break-through should, therefore, not be anticipated in the immediate future. The problem is further complicated by the fact that the accommodating attitude displayed by the present government in Greece is not necessarily shared by other politicians in Greece. It offers a particular opportunity, which, however, may not be necessarily forthcoming in the future if the government in Athens changes.

Finally, what needs to be considered is the core of the problem, namely the national dogma of Macedonism, which permeates the educational system in FYROM, which is fundamentally a very nationalist approach to history. What is taught is the history of the entire Macedonian region, thus "renting" entire episodes of the national history of Bulgaria, Albania, and Greece. Greater Macedonia is thus viewed as the homeland of the Macedonian nation. This approach creates a mentality in the younger generations, which considers the geographical extension of Macedonia to completely coincide with the ethnic one.

After 1995 both sides did show willingness to proceed with settling existing divergencies. It is worth investigating the origins of such good will. It is probably not to be found so much in the disposition of the current leadership, but rather, it is a reflection of a general realization on both sides that their strategic interests coincide in many respects. There are no territorial pretensions on the Greek side with regard to its new northern neighbor, and Greece is keenly interested in maintaining and enhancing security in the region. Therefore, it can be said that the Greek overreaction in 1996 under the Papandreu government, when Greece imposed a unilateral embargo on FYROM, was a serious mistake. This evaluation refers not only to the moral implications of such decision, but, most importantly, to the Greek strategic interests in the region, because it contributed to the further weakening of the newly emerged states. It was only fortunate that at that time the UCK had not yet made its appearance in Kosovo.

The fifth speaker, **Radoslava Stefanova, researcher at the Istituto Affari internazionali in Rome**, continued the focus on the regional context by addressing the question of Macedonian-Bulgarian relations. Similarly to the way bi-lateral problems between Greece and Macedonia are defined in Greece, in Bulgaria the existing controversy is also deemed to be semantic rather than real. It is important to underline, however, that semantics is the favorite and rather superficial scapegoat of politicians in a hurry of obtaining a more tangible progress in bi-lateral relations, which is not unfortunately the right approach to the problem. What stands behind the mere semantics of the problem is the very essence of state formation in the Balkans, widely viewed as nationhood, rather than statehood. Unlike in Western democracies, in the Balkans states were formed on the basis of the nation, or even the ethnies, and therefore, with a particular emphasis on all symbols and the cultural heritage of that nation, rather than around institutions or legal order. Therefore, the linguistic controversy goes well beyond the rather technical problem of



defining whether or not Macedonian is a language of its own, or a dialect of Bulgarian. It is clearly the realization of both parties that recognition of the Macedonian language as structurally different from Bulgarian would automatically imply a controversy related to the entire historical and cultural heritage of both countries, which would lead to more serious frictions in bi-lateral relations, compared to the just “semantic” ones at present.

Bulgaria was the first country to recognize Macedonia in 1991, almost immediately after the Macedonian proclamation of independence. Bulgaria further recognized its South-Western neighbor under its new constitutional name, "the Republic of Macedonia", although it was quick to specify that it did not consider either the population, or the language of the new state to be fundamentally different from those in Bulgaria. This stance has impeded the signing of over thirty agreements on mutual cooperation in various fields.

The current administration in Bulgaria, in power since 1997, has proved very committed to make up all the time Bulgaria lost in its progress towards integration with Western institutions. Any tension with neighboring countries is, therefore, viewed as an impediment to Bulgaria's bid for membership in the European Union and NATO, which Bulgaria articulated clearly only after the fall of the last ex-communist government in late 1996. Bulgaria's relations with all of its neighbors other than Macedonia have never been so good, which fundamentally makes the linguistic controversy the only real problem in Bulgaria's regional affairs.

Alleged territorial claims on both sides belong quite obviously to each side's own propaganda rhetoric. It would be difficult to imagine that borders could be changed in the Balkans without a major war, and such intentions, even if only hinted would irreversibly undermine Bulgaria's aspirations for Western integration. The problem is that Bulgaria fears minority claims on the part of Macedonia with regard to the Bulgarian population in the South-West part of the country, adjacent to Macedonian territory. As mentioned in the beginning, such claims would also imply a claim on parts of Bulgarian history and cultural heritage, which would be politically and technically unacceptable to any government in Bulgaria.

Furthermore, it might be curious to know that a political formation homonymous to the major opposition party in Macedonia, VMRO, makes an integral part of the coalition in power in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian VMRO is led by a young and ambitious leader, Krassimir Karakachanov, who is quite satisfied with his position in the parliament on the side of the majority, and who would, by implication, be very reluctant to have to let it go. In fact, one of the most moderate proposals for ending the linguistic controversy with Macedonia came precisely from there, namely the VMRO proposed to invoke in the final clauses of the accords the respective constitutional clauses of both countries, where the official languages spoken are specified. This formula would even imply that different languages are spoken in Macedonia and Bulgaria, without explicitly breaking the Bulgarian official thesis.

On the Macedonian side the situation is viewed somewhat differently, and much of it has to do with the fact that Macedonia is a very young state with a lot of insecurities rising from unresolved issues with all of its neighbors--with Bulgaria it is the language and the ethnic, with Greece it is the name, with Serbia it is the common border, with Albania it is the large ethnic Albanian population concentrated to the North-West, all in the context of a lack of international recognition of the country's name. Most of these problems are vital to the survival of any state, and consequently, the rhetoric in Macedonia is more aggressive in search of a more self-assertive approach.

Currently it looks like there is more will for solution on the Bulgarian side, where the new pro-Western administration is impatient of making fast progress toward Bulgaria's

integration with the West. It is willing to straighten relations with neighbors, so that it is viewed as an impeccable candidate. The Macedonians feel they can take their time. The agreement with Greece in 1995 lifted the embargo on the South, and the easing on international sanctions on Serbia reestablished traditional links to the north, which no longer made Bulgaria Macedonia's only secure land connection to Europe, and thus lowered Bulgaria's strategic importance for Macedonia. Therefore, a vigorous way of affirming its fragile statehood is currently deemed more important in Macedonia, than solving its problems with Bulgaria, even if that implies a halt on important economic cooperation agreements.

The agreements have not been signed because the Macedonian side insists that the last clause of each agreement specify that it was signed in Macedonian and in Bulgarian language. The Bulgarian side refuses to give recognition to a Macedonian language on any diplomatic level, and has proposed, in turn, to sign the agreements in some "neutral" language, such as English or French.

Currently, there are 12 proposals on the Bulgarian side suggesting different forms of compromise, and 5 on the Macedonian side. The Bulgarian proposals mostly advance no mention of the language in the accords, or a citation of each country's constitutional official language-related clause. The Macedonian proposals are five different variants of an explicit articulation of "Macedonian language" in the accords.

Despite the continued diplomatic deadlock, it is worth mentioning that four agreements have actually been signed already, of which three at the highest diplomatic level. One was signed in October 1992 and related to coordination of efforts against the trans-border organized crime, a serious problem for both countries. That agreement was signed in a way similar to the Interim Accord with Greece in 1995, namely the both countries signed an original in English, which they then undertook to translate in their own languages. Currently, however, the Macedonian side refuses to use the same formula. The other two agreements related to cooperation in the energy field, and were both signed in English in September 1995, and in October 1996. The Macedonian side currently refuses to continue using that formula, too. Finally, in 1997 the universities of Skopje in FYROM and Veliko Turnovo in Bulgaria both bearing the name of the most important Orthodox saints Cyril and Methodius, signed an agreement for mutual cooperation in Macedonian and Bulgarian. The Bulgarian universities have complete autonomy in conducting their affairs, which is what the dean of the Bulgarian university used in practically recognizing a Macedonian language in the accord, contrary to the official governmental policy. This event did provoke outcries in the Bulgarian press, but they also died out quite soon, while nobody questioned the legal validity of the accord. That unprecedented event indicates that probably a compromise is impending, above all because of more urgent needs of cooperation between the two neighbors.

The interim government, which was formed in Bulgaria in the first months of 1997, and headed by the current mayor of Sofia, Stephen Sofianski, showed an unprecedented good will in trying to solve the language problem with Macedonia, giving some indications that the Bulgarian side might recognize Macedonian as a separate language in the final count. The same signals, although less emphatic are to be found in the present administration, although it is clear that a compromise will not be reached without some demonstrations of good will on the Macedonian side.

It could be assumed that sooner rather than later the intensification of economic relations and wider political interests in the Balkans, and the growing importance of all-

embracing regional schemes for partnership are bound to pave the way towards a compromise and normalization of relations between the two countries.

The sixth speaker, **Alice Ackerman, Assistant Professor at the University of Miami**, addressed the topic of international intervention in internal conflicts with a focus on FYROM. Macedonia is a test-case for successful international preventive action, although it is not a perfect case.

It is worth providing an analytical framework for this discussion. Macedonia fits in a growing pattern of internal conflicts with a considerable regional spillover potential. Prevention in this aspect is a complex endeavor bound to rely on many actors. Macedonia also provides a unique case because of its location in a war zone, which makes preventive efforts there structurally different from other similar undertakings carried out, for example in Estonia, Slovakia, or Hungary. In Macedonia there is also a multiplicity of actors involved in prevention ranging from domestic leadership to regional and international organizations, all addressing different levels of the conflict.

The case of Macedonia offers some generic factors related to prevention, which can be pulled into a more comprehensive hypothesis about what constitutes successful prevention. First among these is the early preventive action in the non-escalatory stages of conflict, when violence is non-existent, or sporadic. After the escalation of hostilities a sense of victimization is created among the warring groups, which to a large extent invalidates any preventive efforts. Timely involvement also implies intensive dialog with belligerents, and the recognition of the non-violent commitment of leaders, to be found, for example, in the case of Kosovo, which should have been supported on a much wider scale.

Second, it is fundamental to give due support to the involvement of third parties intending to end the conflict. In the case of Macedonia, for instance, the US support was crucial, as was the presence and the activities of the OSCE and the UN.

Third, as already mentioned, complex conflicts require multi-faceted action. In Macedonia, the UN deployed preventive troops. The Working Group of the Conference on the former Yugoslavia was crucial in promoting a dialog between ethnic Albanians and Macedonians, which prevented secession. The OSCE also helped maintain a dialog between the two ethnic communities. A lot of small-scale activities were undertaken at the grass-root level, which is fundamental in combatting engrained stereotypes.

Fourth, another fundamental characteristic of preventive diplomacy is moderate leadership at the local level. In Macedonia, the figure of President Gligorov stands high in this respect. Political leadership in Macedonia is highly devoted to peace, and his early request for international intervention is quite indicative. Much of this attitude was also to be found in Bosnian leader Izetbegovic. This kind of moderate leadership is to be contrasted with the role Milosevic played in inflaming nationalist sentiments in Serbia, which points out to the enormous consequences of inapt or ill-minded leadership. Therefore, moderate leadership should be praised and supported at an international level.

Lastly, when devising preventive strategies it is important to consider intrinsic factors of the conflict, rooted in the collective consciousness of the group, such as the perception and self-perception. For example, the presence or absence of collective memories of traumatic historical experiences, such as genocide, mass expulsion make it much more difficult to prevent impending conflicts.

In conclusion, prevention is an on-going process, which does not aim at the elimination of conflict, but at the identification of niches for dialog between the belligerents, which might eventually lead to compromise. It also provides more time for search for an

accommodation. It is, therefore, important to follow-up conflict prevention strategies with long-term conflict management. NGO support is fundamental in this respect.

Some conflict analysts, such as Ted Gurr, sustain that there has been a normative shift in the behavior of ethnic groups in conflict, which has rendered them more accommodating now than at any time in the past. If this trend is indeed to be identified in global group psychology, it can be inferred that there is more room for conflict prevention, and by implication, more opportunities for peace.

The seventh speaker, **James Gow from King's College, London**, focused on the topic of the European policy towards FYROM.

European policy towards Macedonia is not precisely an easily qualifiable concept, which is why should be clarified, to the extent possible, to avoid unnecessary confusion. European can be defined to mean EU as a whole, the cumulative policies of the 15 member-states taken individually (as already seen, the attitude of Greece alone makes for a lot of "policies"), or a larger group of states including European non-EU states and even Russia. In this presentation European will be understood mostly as EU, although specific reference to the other possible actors that could be included under this definition will also be made. Policy, on the other hand, implies a coordinated set of initiatives, which would not necessarily correspond to what can be derived from the definition of "European." In that sense the word "approaches" would be more appropriate.

There are two strategic objectives with regard to the Balkan region: internal and external stabilization, and fostering policy, or rather, personality change in Belgrade.

There is an outspoken support for the improvement of the Greek-Macedonian relations. The EU does have some programs of economic assistance through its PHARE program, which could be used as a way of facilitating or mediating the ethnic problem in Macedonia, for example, the issue of the ethnic university. The EU is also most likely to continue support for OSCE activities, and even efforts to strengthen its involvement in Macedonia.

Looking to the strategic dimension of the country, it is obvious that the situation in Kosovo is intrinsic to the security of Macedonia. It is only fortunate that the two have yet not converged in view of the sympathy the Slavic and the Albanian communities across the border with Serbia nurture among themselves. The reason for this pacific behavior is probably to be found in the strategy Belgrade has pursued in its ethnic conflict--concentrating troops on the border with Albania, already destabilized, instead of provoking trouble in Macedonia, where international military presence and keen Greek interests would certainly ricochet on Belgrade. However, partition of Kosovo should not be excluded, and this is a serious development, which should in all cases be avoided because of the dangerous precedent it would create.

With respect to keeping Macedonian territorial integrity, there is a clear European consensus as to the necessity to prolong and strengthen the UNPREDEP mandate. Russian proposals go even farther suggesting that UNPREDEP should be given a broader monitoring role of the security situation in the country. That might help Milosevic by preventing an establishment of the UCK in Macedonia, which is coherent with the Russian affinity with the regime in Belgrade.

The Europeans have remained rather aloof to the US-inspired regional initiatives, such as the newly formed Balkan military unit, which is bound to have at least operational difficulties. PfP in this sense remains fundamental in fostering stability in the region by indicating an international will for commitment. Frequent PfP activities, such as military

exercises, also act as a deterrent to potential destabilizing forces in Macedonia and in the region. Forthcoming exercises in Albania in September function in the same way, and the combination of these regional initiatives also serve to put pressure on Belgrade.

It could thus be said that there is no European policy as such, but a widely shared approach aimed at fostering stability in the region. The European policy context also has wider implications to consider beyond the objective of sustaining regional peace in Macedonia. These include the relationship with the US and Russia, and the policy dynamics which might be created inside NATO.

It is important for international diplomatic efforts to focus on Montenegro in order to ease rising tensions there, and also to keep pressure on Milosevic high. Removing Milosevic from power in Belgrade is not an official European position, although there is certainly significant support for that idea in different European administrations.

The eighth and final speaker, **Craig Nation from the US Army War College**, followed on the topic of international policy towards the region by focusing on the analysis of current US attitudes with regard to the Macedonia. US Macedonian policy exists as part of the US Balkan policy, which is a contested issue in US policy-making circles. On a bilateral diplomatic level, the US has excellent relations with Macedonia, and is strongly committed to the stability and integrity of the country, which is considered crucial for the maintenance of peace in the region. The US is also committed to the pursuit of various reassurance measures, such as economic assistance, military cooperation agreement in force since 1994, US military presence in the UNPREDEP contingent. When the extension of UNPREDEP was being discussed in November 1997, Russia objected for three reasons: (1) the Force's anti-Serb bias, (2) on-going and open-ended US military presence, and (3) costs, which Russia calculated as US \$ 2 million from its side. The US then bound to Russian pressure, and accepted that the extension granted to UNPREDEP would be the final renewal for a period of nine months starting from December 1997. The US has since been considering a kind of a follow-on force, with US, but also multi-national and European participation, an idea particularly upheld in February and March this year in the background of the events in Kosovo. It looks like there is a consensus for such a post-UNPREDEP package, with three dimensions.

First, the US is committed to border control patrolling to enforce UN Resolution 1169, which imposes an arms embargo on Yugoslavia, and to further preventive deployment in Macedonia and possibly Albania (a preliminary study showed that the US would need to commit about 25 000 soldiers). In the medium term the US is working to prepare a well-trained Macedonian armed force for when UNPREDEP is no longer in the region. Currently the US prefers to keep its own forces adjacent to the North-East border with Serbia, and has resisted pressure on the part of the Nordic battalion to move westwards, where US troops would be more exposed to hostile fire.

Second, the US strongly supports an enhanced involvement of NATO/PfP in Macedonia. The "cooperative best effort" exercise planned for this coming September is being reworked, and considerably expanded in size and scope. The US is also considering possible use of the Krivolak firing range in Macedonia to organize a permanent PfP training peacekeeping center.

Third, the US is committed to strengthen Macedonia's defense capabilities. It has increased security assistance for Macedonia from US \$ 2 million to US \$ 8 million in 1998, with a possible average of US \$ 7 million in the coming 5-6 years. The bulk of these funds

are committed to training and equipment expenses with the long-term objective of helping FYROM build its own well-organized and operational military force.

Potential weakness of the US approach have to do more with the regional environment, rather than with Macedonia in particular. The main problem is that seven years into the Bosnian conflict, the US still does not have a principal basis for peacemaking and the maintenance of the regional order. State borders remain very vulnerable.

In this environment, as Mr. Gilbard stated, the UCK is clearly a terrorist organization actively operating for over seven months now. The original logic of preventive deployment in Macedonia is, in fact, a containment logic vis-à-vis Kosovo. The problem is that by working against the UCK this logic works for Belgrade, creating a clear conflict with the US anti-Serbian policy. The logic of intervention, would, on the other hand, work against Belgrade, but also on behalf of an armed secessionist movement. The two US policy objectives, should therefore, be reconciled in some way. Coercive diplomacy and threat of intervention should be used to pressure Belgrade, but a strengthening of UNPREDEP should also be realized.

Furthermore, the US currently enjoys a very strong leadership position in global politics, but it relies on a weak domestic consensus. A lot, therefore, is hinged on the US presence in the Balkans, while there is little popular support for such involvement reflecting a profound scepticism over the US Balkans policy. Much of this popular attitude is to be found in Congress, and in the armed forces, which point out that defense budget has been drawn down by 30% since 1991, while deployments have increased by over 50%.

Another weakness is to be found in the changing nature of the US-Russian relationship. A key instrument of coercive diplomacy in the region has been NATO, and Russia is strongly opposed to any interventions without a UN or an OSCE mandate. It is clear that any kind of a more vehement US unilateral involvement would have a negative effect on relations with Russia, which will certainly be reflected in the UN Security Council.

Finally, FYROM is a fragile state, and it is likely to remain so, even if worst-case scenarios do not come true. This inherent instability can only be managed by drawing Macedonia into the larger South-East European context, in the framework of a more vivid EU, rather than US engagement.

In the discussion period the following points were addressed:

The polarization of Albanian political life is essential in understanding the influence of the country's leaders on the Albanian communities in Kosovo and Macedonia. Both Berisha and Nano are careful not to appear as encouraging secession in the neighboring countries, but Berisha when in power gave the Kosovars the impression that their rights were being carefully monitored and would be safeguarded if needed. Nano, on the other hand, appears more detached from the Albanian communities in Kosovo and Macedonia (his meeting with Milosevic last fall was quite indicative in that respect), which might have served as a signal for the Albanians in Macedonia and Kosovo to take their fate in their own hands.

. The administration in Albania understands that in order to get badly needed international economic assistance and cooperation on all fora, it would not have to appear as instigating secession in neighboring countries. There is a definite change of style between Nano and Berisha in that respect. Nano did a lot to improve relations with Macedonia, not least by clearly stating that Albanians living in other countries should be loyal citizens of those countries.

This open policy does not necessarily exclude an underground support of an all-Albanian coordination. It looks like the Albanian communities across state borders have been coordinating their activities and objectives. In fact, there has been information that the Albanians have been trying to establish a common platform articulating clearly what their short-, medium-, and long-term objectives are. The Tirana Academy of Sciences and the Pristina University seem to have taken up the task of formulating such initiative. In mid-May the first draft of this "manifesto" was submitted for review to President Nano, who asked that it be reworked, allegedly, because it was too radical. Xhafferi is firmly for secession, he looks convinced that the cultural difference between the two ethnies is too big to allow for cohabitation.

It should be borne in mind that the Albanian national reunification idea is particularly strong. In that respect it is fundamental to keep in mind that whatever solution is found for Kosovo, will have a tremendous impact on the Albanian communities elsewhere.

The relationship between the Macedonians and the Albanians in the old Yugoslavia was certainly worse than that between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo because of Kosovo's autonomy status, and in that sense the situation has deteriorated enormously since the times of the old Yugoslavia.

What needs to be done is to create some kind of comprehensive coordinated framework. The strategy was applied to Northern Ireland, where deployment of troops to contain the situation was coupled with a series of other initiatives aimed at removing the root causes of conflict.

Milosevic certainly personifies many of the inherent problems and precipitates a lot of the ethnic antagonisms present in the area. Therefore, it can be assumed that with his removal substantial progress will be made, both in Kosovo and Macedonia. It is important to keep in mind that regional order in the Balkans cannot be recast without a reformed Serbia. In that sense, it is important to stimulate change in the leadership there.

However, we should also keep away from personalizing too much the problems of Serbia. It would be more helpful to analyze the situation in a more complex way, coming to some satisfactory explanations as to why the current course of the country has found sufficient public support for so long.

Most countries are multi-ethnic, and it can be said that ethnic harmony does not exist anywhere. Tensions between ethnically different communities tend to be much lower, where democracy has persisted for conspicuous periods of time. Macedonia is a young and very fragile democracy, which helps explain some of the policy makers' attitude with regard to minority rights. Macedonia will, therefore, need a lot of time to create its own democratic traditions with respect to cohabitation of different ethnic groups. As long as violence is avoided in this process, it should be considered that the country is normally pursuing its route of democratic self-affirmation. Furthermore, the attitude of the current Macedonian administration should not be criticized so harshly--it would be difficult to accept claims of flying other countries' flags in minority populated municipalities, full federal autonomy, official language status. These are claims that few governments would be prepared to meet fully.

Another important point to keep in mind is that in view of the strong influence of Gligorov on the policy course of Macedonia, an eventual presidential change, which is bound to come in 1999, might prove catastrophic. Gligorov continues to be an extremely popular leader, and no other figure has proved so charismatic, although the US immigrant

Vassil Tubarkovski, and the President of the Parliament, Tito Petkovski, have expressed an interest in running for the presidency.

The Balkan implementation unit's potential role should not be overestimated, at least with regard to Macedonia, which seems to oppose possible deployment of that unit in the region.

It can be assumed that the US will continue to be fundamental to peacekeeping and conflict management in the region, regardless of the indicated public reluctance over US involvement in the Balkans.

The international community should be prepared to distinguish the propaganda of the various parties with a stake in the region, from objectively existing circumstances, which is not an easy distinction to make. In that sense, on-sight experience and careful analyses should be encouraged.