

PROJECT ON ETHNIC RELATIONS

The **Project on Ethnic Relations (PER)** was founded in 1991 in anticipation of the serious interethnic conflicts that were to erupt following the collapse of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. PER conducts programs of high-level intervention and dialogue and serves as a neutral mediator in several major disputes in the region. PER also conducts programs of training, education, and research at international, national, and community levels.

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Individuals and institutions wishing to receive PER publications should write to:

PROJECT ON
ETHNIC
RELATIONS



15 Chambers Street
Princeton, New Jersey 08542-3707, USA
Telephone: (609) 683-5666
Fax: (609) 683-5888
E-mail: per@per-usa.org
Web Site: www.per-usa.org



**Macedonia's
Euro-Atlantic Integration:
Advancing Common
Interests**

MAVROVO, MACEDONIA

NOVEMBER 18-19, 2006

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PREFACE

On November 18-19, 2006 the Project on Ethnic Relations (PER) in cooperation with the Swiss Embassy in Macedonia organized a roundtable in Mavrovo, Macedonia, titled “Macedonia’s Euro-Atlantic Integration: Advancing Common Interests.” The roundtable was the first such meeting organized after Macedonia’s new multiethnic government took office in the fall of 2006. As in the previous Mavrovo sessions, the first day was dedicated to the most pressing issues that the present ruling coalition is facing, while the second day was intended for a dialogue between the ruling coalition and the opposition. The newly elected Prime Minister of Macedonia attended the roundtable as was the case with all his predecessors. Other senior members of the cabinet, opposition leaders, and senior international diplomats accredited in Skopje also took part.

Macedonia has made important strides towards membership in the European Union under the previous government including obtaining the status of a candidate country. However, the road to membership still has a number of obstacles that the country and its political class have to overcome. The present ruling coalition has pledged to continue the policies of the previous government in regards to EU accession and implementation of EU-related reforms.

The roundtable in its informal setting at Mavrovo was considered by the participants very timely since the political discourse in Macedonia still shows serious divisions between government and opposition, as well as between majority and minority. The purpose of the roundtable was to advance the political dialogue, to increase trust and find common ground among the stakeholders in the country. One high-ranking member of the ruling coalition mentioned in Mavrovo that all Macedonian



Participants in the roundtable.

politicians must rally around what is good for the country and not just consider issues central to their party interests.

The report of the meeting ably written by Professor Steven Burg of Brandeis University, who is a member of the PER Council for Ethnic Accord, tried to capture the most significant exchanges among the participants while at the same time keeping in line with the PER rules of non-attribution.

PER expresses its sincere gratitude to the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs for its support of the Mavrovo Process, as well as to the Swiss Embassy in Macedonia. We particularly thank Ambassador Thomas Füglister for his personal involvement in and commitment to this initiative along with Armin Rieser, Mimoza Angelovska, Albert Hani and others from the staff of the Swiss Embassy in Skopje whose help was indispensable for organizing the Mavrovo series.

Alex N. Grigor'ev, PER's Director for the Western Balkans, was responsible for planning and organizing the Mavrovo roundtable on the PER side. The roundtable was chaired by PER's President Emeritus and Senior Advisor Dr. Allen H. Kassof, and was opened by Ambassador Füglister.

The report was not reviewed by the participants, and PER assumes full responsibility for its contents.

Livia B. Plaks, President

Princeton, New Jersey
January 2007

* In this report, except as otherwise noted, the term "Albanian" is used to refer to ethnic Albanians living in Macedonia.



From left to right: Imer Selmani, Nikola Gruevski, Allen Kassof, Thomas Füglister, and Gabriela Konevska Trajkovska.



Radmila Sekerinska and Jani Makraduli.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The seventh Mavrovo roundtable of leaders of Macedonia's parliamentary parties revealed deep fissures between the leading political parties in the government and those in the opposition, as well as within some of the opposition parties. Tensions between the two major ethnic Albanian parties, and between the leading Albanian opposition party and the government, were evident in a series of events that occurred in the weeks immediately preceding the meeting. They were reflected in the decision by a key Albanian opposition leader not to participate in this Mavrovo meeting. The internal divisions within each of the Albanian parties were evident in the discussions. Reconciliation between the government and the main Albanian opposition party was hampered by disputes between them over issues of local governance, establishment of the parliamentary committee on communities, adoption of the police law, and implementation of the language provisions of the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA), and by the suggestion that the leading party of government was intent on "splitting" the Albanian opposition rather than working with it.

Senior members of the government at Mavrovo made it clear that the government has accepted responsibility for continuing the policies of the previous government with respect to EU accession, and is intent on adhering to EU standards. But, at the same time, the government showed its impatience with the delays inherent in democratic processes, and pressed for changes in parliamentary procedures designed, according to them, to energize the parliamentary process, or as the opposition sees it, to reduce opportunities for debate and disagreement. Participating MPs who are not members of the three major ruling coalition parties all criticized the government's proposals for limiting parliamentary debate, and called for dialogue between government and opposition to be carried out within state institutions, including the parliament.

Representatives of the main opposition parties expressed deep skepticism about the government's calls for dialogue and professed their unwillingness to enter meaningful dialogue at this stage on any issues other than those required by the EU accession process. Internal differences among opposition leaders, evident in their statements at Mavrovo, complicated the task of shaping any process of consultation or dialogue with a strong potential to achieve consensus.

The discussions at Mavrovo suggest progress on contentious issues of

local and national policy will be difficult to achieve in the absence of a concerted effort first to resolve internal political questions among the major actors in Macedonian politics. Measures required by the EU accession process appear to be the only ones on which at least a declaratory political consensus is now possible.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

The prime minister opened the meeting by identifying the main challenge before his government and the country as implementation of economic and political reforms that will qualify Macedonia to receive a specific date for negotiations over EU membership. He reported the government has developed an action program, based on the EU *acquis*, with a precise timetable for overcoming the backlog of tasks that were unfinished in '05 and '06. It is the government's goal, he stated, to complete major legislative tasks by July '07, and secondary tasks by the end of 2007. He acknowledged the need for greater attention to implementation of reforms, as called for in the recent EU Commission progress report on Macedonia. He also noted the need to complete implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA). In this regard, he reported that his government had tripled the amount of resources dedicated to fulfilling the Agreement, especially with respect to employment of representatives of non-Macedonian ethnic communities. He suggested a goal of employing as many non-Macedonians in the first year of his government as had been employed in the previous three years. He reported the government had increased the budget for new state employment from 45 to 150 million Macedonian denars. With respect to implementation of the OFA, the Prime Minister noted that this task has been the subject of discussion in most of the sessions of the government, which wants to complete implementation as soon as possible. Full implementation, he pointed out, will improve the lives of all Macedonian citizens and, he argued, eliminate any excuse for radical groups intent on raising tensions. He reported that his government had expanded use of the Albanian language, and that Ramadan Bajram is to become a national holiday for all Macedonian citizens, not just for Muslims.

The overall goal, he suggested, is to improve the standard of living, establish the rule of law, and draw closer to NATO and the EU. By emphasizing improvements in the quality of life in Macedonia, he

stressed, it may be possible to legitimate painful economic measures. He suggested that there had not been enough progress over the past 15 years, so that people in all social groups – the unemployed, those in agriculture, and businessmen – are impatient with the pace of change. He suggested there was a need to establish a new ministry of information technology. He also noted the experience of past governments suggests it is easier to adopt laws than to implement them.

Another member of the government underscored the high priority assigned to implementation of the OFA. One of the first decisions of the new government, he reported, was to undertake a review of OFA implementation. A survey of 170 institutions and organizations under the authority of the government, the president, and the parliament has been carried out to determine the composition and characteristics of state employees. This will contribute to achieving the “equitable and appropriate” representation of minorities by providing a “roadmap for future action.” He noted that while many Albanians feel that no progress has been made on this, Macedonians also have complaints. The government, he asserted, is firmly committed to transparency in this area, so all citizens will know what is going on. The increased budget mentioned by the Prime Minister is a response to what the data have revealed. Another participant argued that it is in the strategic interest of the state for the government to consult and work with the opposition in implementing the OFA, even though, he argued, the opposition does not view successful implementation of OFA by this government as something that is in their interest.

Another member of the government shared this view, suggesting that opposition parties might be opposed to successful implementation of OFA since non-implementation might create a basis for mobilizing opposition to the government. He therefore expected the opposition to obstruct government attempts to achieve progress. Despite this, he asserted, the government intends to fulfill OFA completely so as to be able to focus on economic issues.

One participant, representing a small ethnically Macedonian party in the government coalition suggested that disagreement over OFA implementation and other issues affecting inter-ethnic relations reflected a continuing disagreement over the nature of the Macedonian state. He suggested two concepts were in conflict: the concept of Macedonia as a multi-national

state, and Macedonia as a bi-national state. His comments echoed remarks by a participant representing one of the smaller ethnic communities, who suggested a need to replace what he called “a bi-national atmosphere” in Macedonia with a “genuinely multi-cultural atmosphere.”

A senior member of the government acknowledged that the government has been accused of politicizing state employment, and reported that although the government had not, in fact, dismissed or employed very many individuals up to now, he had requested the civil service commission to conduct an examination of recent dismissals. The government, he declared, emphasizes competence and qualifications in employment decisions. However, he acknowledged that at the level of directors and deputy directors, employees are expected to implement government policy. Another participant suggested that these issues were exacerbated by the lack of trust between government and opposition. Trust needs to be built up inside institutions. But in order to achieve this, the “other side” also must be ready to extend its hand. However, this participant from the government coalition asserted, there must be “discontinuity” in those administrative entities long characterized by corruption. That is why, this participant reported, the government appointed non-party people to positions in the customs service and the financial police, organizations long associated with corruption. Nonetheless, a senior member of the government reported, there are still offices of government dominated by employees appointed under the previous government and now affiliated with the opposition.

Another senior member of the government noted that fighting corruption and criminal activity is a high priority, but that the government faces strong resistance from those engaged in gray/black market activity. The persistence of corruption has created “a habit, or culture of corruption.” He reported that the new government has already been “under pressure” from certain corrupt interests, but has resisted that pressure.

A member of the ethnic Albanian party in the government coalition reported that there isn’t “perfect agreement” within the government on all issues. He estimated that there was agreement on about half of the issues discussed. He emphasized elimination of the consequences of 2001 as a priority for his party. He called for repair of the material and physical damage, and for addressing the psychological and emotional effects, the human costs of 2001. He drew attention to the treatment of

“heroes and victims” of the conflict. On the issue of Albanian language use, he argued that a step-by-step approach is better than drastic measures, since his party did not want to cause problems for the Macedonian parties. He suggested that the estranged relationship between the government and the opposition Albanian party created an abnormal circumstance.

Disagreement over the Ohrid Framework Agreement implementation and other issues affecting inter-ethnic relations reflects a continuing disagreement over the nature of the Macedonian state.

government; a thinly-veiled statement of opposition to inclusion in the government of a party that competes with his own for support among ethnic Albanian voters. He called attention to three contentious issues: personnel issues inside the Ministry of the Interior, the status of Tetovo University, and signs of radicalism among Muslims in Macedonia.

A member of another coalition party suggested that the government agreed on about 80 percent of the issues it confronted, not 50 percent. A representative of a smaller coalition party cautioned against the metaphor of a “war” against corruption. He insisted on thinking in terms of “police action” and emphasized the “lawful prosecution” of crime. A Romani representative attributed the absence of progress on implementation of the governmental Roma strategy to the diversion of millions of euros; that is, to corruption, and he called for an official inquiry.

The representative of another small party in the government coalition called for more inclusive dialogue in the government. He argued that if the “internal dialogue” of the government were “brought to fruition,” it would not be difficult to implement policies. He called for the establishment of a “regular schedule” for meetings. This participant also objected to an earlier reference by a representative of one of the larger government coalition parties to a “three-party coalition,” as it ignored the presence of

several smaller parties in the coalition. The representative of yet another small party argued that the government’s dependence on several small parties for a parliamentary majority was an advantage, rather than a disadvantage. A large majority had allowed past governments to rule irresponsibly. This government, because of its small majority, would have to be more responsive to a broader range of interests. For the first time, for example, an Albanian party in government is attaching more importance to economic and educational issues. These participants clearly were dissatisfied with their limited influence in the coalition and in the formulation of government policies.

A senior member of the government reacted to this line of argument by criticizing the lack of discipline in the government’s parliamentary majority. The opposition, he noted, sometimes pays more attention to parliamentary processes than the government. He reported that government ministers have on occasion had to chase down MPs and drag them into the chamber to vote for government proposals. He noted that the opposition seemed to be “blocking” government action by means of frequent, long speeches that tie up the parliament. It is for this reason, he reported, the government was proposing changes in parliamentary procedures to limit the length and frequency of speeches by MPs. Another participant also alleged the opposition in parliament was obstructionist. This participant suggested the opposition was “more skilled at parliamentary procedure” than the government MPs, and used the rules to delay and obstruct legislation. The division between government and opposition made it difficult, if not impossible, to achieve the super majority (two-thirds) required to pass key measures.

A leader of the main opposition party later criticized the government’s approach to dialogue, and especially its proposal to change parliamentary procedure so as to limit debate time. This participant suggested the government had reduced dialogue to a discussion of “technicalities rather than substance,” to “photo opportunities instead of real dialogue.” This participant argued the government needs to enter into discussion with the opposition in at least those areas that require a super majority in parliament. But dialogue should also take place on other issues as well, such as judicial reform, the law on religious communities, and administrative reform. This opposition leader rejected the suggestion that the opposition was “blocking progress.” The leading party in the current government had exploited parliamentary procedures when it was in

the opposition to delay government actions it opposed, and no one characterized their actions as “blocking.” If such behavior is a form of “blocking” action, this participant suggested, Macedonia should just get rid of democracy and let the government work. The previous government, in which this opposition played the leading role, had considered reform of parliamentary procedures and carried out a technical/professional review with the assistance of experts from Slovenia. According to this critic of the present government, the results of that effort appear to have been discarded. A senior government official, however, declared the government’s readiness for an open discussion of parliamentary procedures, including consideration of the results of the earlier review.

Another leader of the same opposition party offered an even harsher criticism of the view that legislation is blocked by long discussions, and of the government’s proposal to limit parliamentary debate. This participant argued these views suggest the government believes formulation of law should be left to the government alone. Another member of this party, who is also an MP, criticized the government’s effort to restrict parliamentary debate on the floor of parliament, including limits on the ability of MPs to submit amendments to government proposals, and limits on discussion in the parliamentary committees. He noted the government’s insistence that any act deemed in conformity with the constitution should not be subject to debate, which he suggested had the effect of preventing any debate at all. He also criticized the government for its failure to consult with anyone in advance of significant decisions such as the establishment of nine new state holidays. He raised the prospect that five or six of these holidays would be eliminated once this government was replaced, introducing an unnecessary instability into Macedonian society. This opposition party, like other parties represented at Mavrovo, appeared to be internally divided. This participant questioned the right of his own party leader to conduct talks with the government coalition in the name of their party, and the multi-party coalition of which it is the leading member.

The representative of a small party with a regional base of support spoke on behalf of the interests of the Macedonian Muslim population, known as the Torbesi, which he estimated to number about 100,000 people, concentrated mostly in the area of Kichevo and southwest Macedonia. He criticized the governments of Macedonia for failing to develop the region, and criticized this government in particular for refusing to grant

his party representation in local institutions. The leader of another small party representing a different small ethnic community called for the establishment of a new ministry for the protection of minority rights and minority communities.

A representative of the Albanian party in government responded by suggesting the government should cooperate with all other parties in order to achieve the parliamentary super majority required for major legislation. But he opposed any notion that there must be a majority among the Albanian MPs in support of any legislation. This qualification reflected the fact that his party holds fewer seats in parliament than the opposition Albanian parties. He declared that his party considered the major ethnic Albanian opposition party to have gained its legitimacy, its support, through force. Nonetheless, his party, the Albanian party of government, was ready to discuss all issues. But, he warned, discussions among parties should not be allowed to undercut state institutions. Discussions should take place within state institutions, particularly the parliament. A representative of the major Albanian party in opposition took a different position on these issues. He declared there must be both political and ethnic consensus on the rules of procedure in parliament.

Another member of the government suggested that the work style of the new government differed from that of its predecessors. He suggested this government has a more pragmatic, simpler approach; it looks at a wide variety of options and then picks the most beneficial one. There is no distinction, he reported, between the EU accession process and the process of improving the economy and society. The EU accession process imposes high standards on Macedonia, and the government wants to achieve high standards. Implementation of OFA and EU accession, he argued, are mutually supportive.

Another senior member of the government echoed these views, declaring the government is characterized by “realistic optimism.” Changes and reforms are not put forward because of the EU, but because the government desires them for Macedonia. The government feels “personal

There is a great need for national consensus on accession and reform. These processes do not belong to the government alone, they belong to the people.

ownership” of the program of change. At the same time, this government is committed to a principle of continuity with the previous government with respect to the accession process. The previous government did not get everything done, so this government must do more, in less time. This participant defined the operating principles of the government as “accountability and transparency.” Reform of the judiciary and the police, as well as anti-corruption efforts, are necessary in order to meet European standards. In response to earlier suggestions of a lack of agreement in the government, this participant pointed out that the government will never be able to achieve complete harmony or consensus on policy questions, simply because it is a coalition. The key task is when the government adopts a decision, it must implement it.

This participant argued that decision-making requires the government to consult with those who are going to be affected by the decision. There is a great need for national consensus on accession and reform. These processes do not belong to the government alone, they belong to the people. This participant, a senior member of the government, declared that whenever there are to be discussions of policy, the government will be happy to invite all those who wish to participate. The government is open to informal meetings, early in the process of formulating policies and legislation, and will take a constructive approach. The minister acknowledged that such discussions might not produce consensus, but declared what is important is for participants to hear each other. Another participant cautioned, however, that while the government must extend its hand to the opposition, the opposition must act constructively and be careful not to do damage to the state. There were repeated assertions by participants from the government coalition parties of the readiness of the government for dialogue with the opposition, including a suggestion by a senior government official to institutionalize consultation in the form of a monthly breakfast of party leaders. The idea of a regular consultative process among leaders of the four major parliamentary parties was supported by several participants over the course of the discussions. At the same time, however, this senior government official characterized some of the most critical comments of the opposition in these discussions as a “distortion” of the actual situation.

Several participants, from both government and opposition parties, questioned exactly what the agenda of such discussions might include. Several members of the government and the coalition parties argued

that, in the words of one minister from the leading coalition partner, there must not be disagreement on legislation and policies required to conform to EU standards. This was a view reinforced by a representative of the EU participating in the meeting, who argued that consensus is vital for the success of the reform process and, ultimately, accession. He urged participants to set aside party interests in order to move the national interest forward. Government ministers recognized the need for dialogue, and prior consultation, in order to achieve consensus on certain particularly sensitive issues, such as those involving national symbols and the use of languages. Participants associated with opposition parties tended to enumerate longer lists of issues requiring such consultation.

In the end, however, opposition leaders appeared unready to enter into any such dialogue. One opposition leader pointed out that the government needed dialogue, and would benefit from it, more than the opposition. This participant characterized the government’s position on parliamentary rules of procedure as “dialogue is not needed.” From the perspective of the opposition, it is easier to criticize government action if no prior consultation has taken place. But, on some issues, the opposition recognizes that the interest of the state demands dialogue and consultation so as to ensure consensus. Language policy is, in the view of this participant, one such issue. Issues on which a super majority is required in parliament are also issues that require dialogue. But this opposition leader pointed out that it is the political imperative of state interest, more than the super majority rule, that dictates dialogue and provides an incentive for reaching agreement.

Another leader of the main opposition party reminded the government that his party was no longer in government and no longer responsible for public policies. The government coalition parties would have to make and implement policies, and the opposition would hold them accountable. When the government is able to identify solutions to the problems his party was unable to solve when it was the government, he declared, his party would support the government.

Another member of the government pointed out that the challenge of

Progress toward EU integration might be achieved by first establishing integration in the Balkans as a steppingstone.

implementation includes economic reforms that will have unpleasant consequences for citizens of Macedonia. With respect to police reform, a long process of drafting new legislation with expert participation resulted in adoption of police reform legislation by the previous government. What is crucial now, he reported, is reform inside the ranks of the police itself, including education and training. He also noted that the principle of “community policing” needed to be upgraded in Macedonia. He argued that Western standards and methods of community policing are the only way to increase effectiveness.

Another minister suggested that progress toward EU integration might be achieved by first establishing integration in the Balkans as a stepping-stone. He cautioned that inter-ethnic relations are crucial to this process, and that these do not depend on political parties alone. He observed that Macedonians and Albanians tend to go to different cafes, that they are still living in parallel worlds. He suggested the inter-ethnic issue is fundamentally an economic question, not a political question. A senior member of the government insisted that opposition parties should not be allowed to avoid discussion of specifics, especially on economic issues. They should be required to develop their own proposals, voice them among the people, and let the people judge them at election time.

Clear differences on the question of cooperation were evident among representatives of the Albanian parties, both in the government coalition and in the opposition. One leader of the Albanian party in government called repeatedly for cooperation and inter-party dialogue, and even offered some conciliatory gestures to the Albanian party in opposition on questions of staffing local police and the judicial council. But another member of his own party leadership opposed him. Similarly, one leader of the Albanian party in opposition suggested there was no need for an argument between the two Albanian parties. He conceded that the two parties have opposite views on some issues, but no conflict. He attributed their difficulties to a lack of communication. But another member of his own party leadership took a much more confrontational position, asserting that he saw no evidence of any good will, or a constructive approach in the discussions. Some participants from the government coalition suggested exploiting these differences in the Albanian opposition. A minister called for an analysis of the opposition Albanian party to distinguish between what he called its “intellectual wing” and its “military wing,” and a leader of a smaller party called for identifying “democratic forces” in the

Albanian opposition party with whom the government could work in a constructive manner.

Participants returned several times over the course of the meeting to discussion of the monument to Skenderbeg planned in Skopje by (and, since the Mavrovo meeting, erected in) Cair municipality and by Saraj municipality. Cair is governed by an opposition Albanian party and Saraj by an Albanian party that is part of the governing coalition. These discussions reflected considerable inter-ethnic tensions. Senior government officials objected to the alleged failure of local officials to follow established procedures for securing a construction permit and adhering to city planning regulations. A government minister suggested the mayors of Cair and Struga, both municipalities with Albanian majorities and governed by an Albanian opposition party, were intentionally taking steps to increase tensions and called for sanctions against them. Another participant suggested the issue was not one of provocation, but of violation of existing laws.

There was considerable discussion devoted to the relationship between the central government and local elected officials in municipalities dominated by the Albanian opposition party. Members of the government declared that the party should permit its mayors to establish contact and work with the central government, pointing out that the government was consulting with local authorities through the state association of local governments. Representatives of the Albanian opposition party defended the prerogatives of local governments, however, arguing that the super majority required for key legislation at the national level should be applied to equivalent issues at the local level. This would further empower local ethnic minority populations, whether Albanian or Macedonian, or another group. This suggestion was opposed by other participants, although one government minister used the example of a recent controversial local decision to suggest that super majority rules might discourage provocative acts by local politicians. Another participant from a government coalition party described provocative behavior by a local mayor, and asked whether that behavior was endorsed by the opposition Albanian party of which the mayor is a member, or was simply an example of personal irresponsibility. A senior representative of the party defended the mayor by pointing out decisions in the locale were taken by elected officials in local institutions. A senior member of the government suggested that if the super majority principle is to apply to

key issues on the national level, it ought to apply at the local level, as well.

A participant from a Macedonian party in the coalition pointed to another problem on the local level. He noted the widespread possession of arms among the population, and the increasing frequency of shooting incidents in local communities. He called for cooperation between government and opposition parties on an intensified police campaign to bring this problem under control.

A senior member of the government reported that electoral reform might include a provision allowing citizens of Macedonia who are abroad to vote. But this proposal was opposed by other participants, including a senior member of the Albanian opposition party. He warned that, even though the ethnic Albanians would be the ones benefiting most from such an arrangement, the country did not have the capacity to conduct elections in foreign countries, and that allowing the diaspora to vote might have unforeseen negative consequences.

The role of the parliamentary committee for inter-ethnic relations was the subject of several exchanges. Participants representing small Macedonian parties viewed the committee as a potential instrument for addressing inter-ethnic issues. A representative of the opposition Albanian party, however, dismissed the committee as having “no legitimacy” due to the manner in which it was formed. This participant noted that his party also questioned the legitimacy of the government. Participants who are MPs devoted considerable attention to parliamentary rules, to the role of the committee on inter-ethnic relations, and to the importance of locating consultative processes within established institutions; taking positions that affirmed the importance of institutionalizing the political process in the parliament and other state institutions.

CONCLUSIONS

The discussion at Mavrovo reflected the high level of tension between the major Albanian parties, and between the main Albanian opposition party and the government. These tensions were evident in a series of events that occurred in the weeks immediately preceding the meeting. Reconciliation between the ethnic Albanian parties was difficult to achieve at Mavrovo because of the decision by a key Albanian opposition leader not to participate, and by the evident internal divisions in each of the Albanian parties on the question of cooperation. Reconciliation

between the government and the main Albanian opposition party was hampered by disputes between them over issues of local governance and implementation of the language provisions of the OFA, and by the suggestion, implicit in the statements at Mavrovo of some members of the coalition, that the leading party of government was intent on “splitting” the Albanian opposition rather than working with it.

Senior members of the government at Mavrovo made it clear that the government has accepted responsibility for continuing the policies of the previous government with respect to EU accession, and is intent on adhering to EU standards. But, at the same time, the government showed its impatience with the delays inherent in democratic processes, and pressed for changes in parliamentary procedures designed, according to them, to reduce opportunities for debate and opposition. Participating MPs not members of the three major ruling coalition parties all criticized the government’s proposals for limiting parliamentary debate, and called for all discussions between the government and the opposition to be carried out within state institutions, including the parliament.

Representatives of the main opposition parties expressed deep skepticism about the government’s calls for dialogue. However, they did not appear willing to enter meaningful dialogue at this stage on any issues other than those required by the EU accession process. At the same time, internal differences among opposition leaders complicated the task of shaping any process of consultation or dialogue with a strong potential to achieve consensus.

The seventh Mavrovo roundtable thus revealed deep fissures between the leading political parties in the government and opposition, as well as within some of these parties. These fissures may make progress on the many contentious issues of local and national policy very difficult to achieve in the absence of a concerted effort first to resolve internal political questions among the major actors in Macedonian politics. Measures required by the EU accession process appear to be the only ones on which at least declaratory consensus is now possible.



From left to right: Kenan Hasipi, Ivan Stojiljkovic, Gillian Milovanic, and Nezdet Mustafa.



From left to right: Gordana Jankulovska and Antonio Milososki.



From left to right: Nikola Gruevski, Allen Kassof, and Gabriela Konevska Trajkovska.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

(English alphabetical order)

Democratic Alliance

Pavle Trajanov, President; Member, Parliament of Macedonia

Democratic Party of Serbs in Macedonia

Ivan Stojiljkovic, President; Member, Parliament of Macedonia

Democratic Party of Turks in Macedonia

Kenan Hasipi, President; Member, Parliament of Macedonia

Democratic Party of Albanians

Sulejman Rushiti, Minister of Education and Science of Macedonia

Imer Selmani, Vice President; Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Health of Macedonia

Menduh Thaci, Vice President; Member, Parliament of Macedonia

Arben Xhaferi, President; Member, Parliament of Macedonia
(took part in the opening dinner only)

Democratic Revival of Macedonia

Liljana Popovska, President; Member, Parliament of Macedonia

Democratic Union for Integration

Rafiz Aliti, Vice President; Head, DUI Parliamentary Group, Parliament of Macedonia

Agron Buxhaku, Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Integration; Member, Parliament of Macedonia

Musa Xhaferi, Secretary for Human Resources

Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization-Democratic Party of Macedonian National Unity

Silvana Boneva, Head, VMRO-DPMNE Parliamentary Group, Parliament of Macedonia

Nikola Gruevski, President; Prime Minister of Macedonia

Gordana Jankuloska, Secretary General; Minister of Internal Affairs of Macedonia

Gabriela Konevska Trajkovska, Deputy Prime Minister of Macedonia

Antonio Milososki, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Macedonia

Trajko Slaveski, Vice President; Minister of Finance of Macedonia

Zoran Stavreski, Deputy Prime Minister of Macedonia

Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization-People's Party

Slobodan Casule, Chairman, Commission for Foreign Affairs

Vesna Janevska, President; Member, Parliament of Macedonia



Liberal Party

Ristana Lalcevska, Member, Parliament of Macedonia

Liberal Democratic Party

Risto Penov, President; Member, Parliament of Macedonia

Andrej Zernovski, Member, Parliament of Macedonia

New Social Democratic Party

Lazar Elenovski, Minister of Defense of Macedonia

Goran Misovski, Head, NSDP Parliamentary Group, Parliament of Macedonia

Party for Democratic Prosperity

Abdyladi Vejseli, President; Member, Parliament of Macedonia

Party for European Future

Fijat Canoski, President; Member, Parliament of Macedonia

Roma Alliance

Shaban Saliu, President; Member, Parliament of Macedonia

Social Democratic Union of Macedonia

Igor Ivanovski, Vice President

Jani Makraduli, Vice President; Head, SDSM Parliamentary Group, Parliament of Macedonia

Ilinka Mitreva, Member, Parliament of Macedonia

Nikola Popovski, Member, Parliament of Macedonia

Radmila Sekerinska, President; Member, Parliament of Macedonia

Socialist Party of Macedonia

Jovan Lazarev, Secretary General; Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Macedonia

United Party of the Roma of Macedonia

Nezdet Mustafa, President; Member, Parliament of Macedonia

European Union

Erwan Fouere, Ambassador; Special Representative in Macedonia; Head, Delegation to Macedonia, European Commission

Florian von Koenig, Political Adviser to the Special Representative in Macedonia and to the Head, Delegation to Macedonia, European Commission

Niamh Walsh, Political Adviser to the Special Representative in Macedonia and to the Head, Delegation to Macedonia, European Commission

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

Natalya Drozd, Ambassador; Acting Head, Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje

Sebastian Dvorack, Head, Political and Reporting Unit, Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje

Project on Ethnic Relations

Steven Burg, Professor, Brandeis University; Member, PER Council for Ethnic Accord

Alex Grigor'ev, Director, Western Balkans

Allen Kassof, President Emeritus and Senior Adviser

Swiss Confederation

Mimoza Angelovska, Assistant to the Ambassador, Embassy in Macedonia

Thomas Füglister, Ambassador to Macedonia

Albert Hani, Collaborator, Embassy in Macedonia

Markus Heiniger, Deputy Head, Peace Policy Section, Political Affairs

Division IV (Human Security), Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

Armin Rieser, Regional Peace Building Adviser, Embassy in Macedonia

United States of America

Steven Huber, Political Section, Embassy in Macedonia

Gillian Milovanovic, Ambassador to Macedonia

Katrina Mosser, Political Officer, Embassy in Macedonia



From left to right: Natalya Drozd, Agron Buxhaku, Musa Xhaferri, and Goran Misovski.



From left to right: Shaban Saliu, Trajko Slaveski, Slobodan Casule, and Erwan Fouere.

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- *The Media of Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union: Reporting on Interethnic Relations* (1994)
- *Managing Ethnic Conflict: The Kona Statement* (1994)
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From left to right: Sulejman Rushiti, Menduh Thaci, and Liljana Popovska.