States of Conflict

A case study on conflict prevention in Macedonia

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Acknowledgements

'States of Conflict'

This paper is one of a series. The other papers are: *States of Conflict: A case study on statebuilding in Kosovo* and *States of Conflict: A case study on peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Due for publication in Autumn 2009, they will be available from www.ippr.org/publicationsandreports

Abbreviations and definitions

CAG	Citizens Advisory Group
CARDS	Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation
CAS	Country Assistance Strategy
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CCF	Country Cooperation Framework
CICR	Committee for Inter-Community Relations
CICR	Committees for Inter-Community Relations
CPS	Country Partnership Strategy
DPA	Democratic Party of Albanians
DUI	Democratic Party for Integrations
EAR	European Agency for Reconstruction
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
EUMM	European Union Monitoring Mission
EUPAT	European Union Police Advisory Team
EUSR	European Union Special Representative
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
fYROM	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HCNM	High Commissioner on National Minorities
HOD	Head of Delegation
ICFY	International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDA	International Development Association
IFS	Instrument For Stability
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NLA	National Liberation Army
NSDP	New Social Democratic Party
OCC	Operational Capabilities Concept
OFA	Ohrid Framework Agreement
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PARP	Planning and Review Process

PFP	Partnership For Peace
SAA	Stabilisation and Association Agreement
SALW	Small Arms Light Weapons
SDSM	Social Democratic Union of Macedonia
SEED Act	Support for East European Democracy Act
SEEU	South Eastern Europe University
SFRY	Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe
SUT	State University of Tetovo
TSS	Transitional Support Strategy
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMAS	United Nations Mine Actions Service
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNPREDEP	United Nations Preventive Deployment in Macedonia
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VMRO-DPMNE	Democratic Party for Macedonian Unity
WHO	World Health Organisation
WTO	World Trade Organisation

Introduction

The break-up of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) was followed by a series of bloody and protracted conflicts. Throughout the 1990s the Balkans were engulfed by inter-ethnic violence of such a magnitude as to prompt unprecedented international intervention in the region. In contrast to its neighbours, however, and despite the hostility of its surroundings, Macedonia[1] escaped the conflict of the post-Cold War decade. Moreover, although the country suffered a violent inter-ethnic crisis in 2001, it has made substantial progress over the past eight years to the extent that Macedonia now stands at the gateway to both the European Union and NATO.

That Macedonia has made the transition from Yugoslav republic to independent state relatively smoothly is due in no small part to the sustained preventive engagement of international actors in the country. Of course, some substantial challenges still remain and the country has not, as yet, emerged from the shadow of the 2001 conflict. Nonetheless, the range of activities undertaken by the international community in Macedonia since its independence has no doubt helped to prevent protracted violent conflict from taking hold.

In a context where examples of successful conflict prevention are scarce, the tools deployed by international actors to forestall violence in Macedonia merit further attention. The country has been a conflict concern for the international community for over 15 years and during this time it has experienced the full panoply of conflict prevention initiatives, ranging from the pre-emptive deployment of international forces, through high-level diplomacy to confidence-building initiatives designed to promote long-term inter-ethnic cohesion.

What is particularly interesting about Macedonia is that conflict prevention in the country has been a continually evolving process, developing alongside and adapting to the changing nature of events on the ground. Mistakes have inevitably been made along the way, but at the same time lessons have been learned and shortcomings addressed; something which all too often does not happen. As well as demonstrating that sustained effort over a long period of time can help to prevent violent conflict, other aspects, such as the notable level of coordination between international actors evidenced during the 2001 crisis, make Macedonia a particularly instructive example of international preventive action. Indeed, whether in the form of shared strategic goals or coordinated programming, the preventive activities of different international bodies have, on the whole, been well aligned and complementary and this has often been critical to their success.

This report presents a rundown and analysis of conflict prevention in Macedonia. First, however, it presents a brief overview of background material on the country for the reader not familiar with Macedonia and its circumstances.

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1. Due to an ongoing naming dispute with Greece (see Foreign Relations section below), Macedonia is recognised by multilateral organisations such as the European Union, United Nations and NATO under its provisional name 'the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia' (fYROM). The country's constitutional name is the 'Republic of Macedonia', used by many countries (including the United Kingdom and the United States) for bilateral and internal purposes. For clarity and ease of understanding, this paper will refer to the country as 'Macedonia' throughout.

Country overview

Recent history

From the end of the Second World War to the early 1990s, Macedonia formed one of the constituent Republics of President Tito's SFRY alongside the present-day states of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia and Kosovo. But as Communism fell throughout Eastern Europe and the SFRY began to dissolve, Macedonia gained its independence, becoming a sovereign state in September 1991.
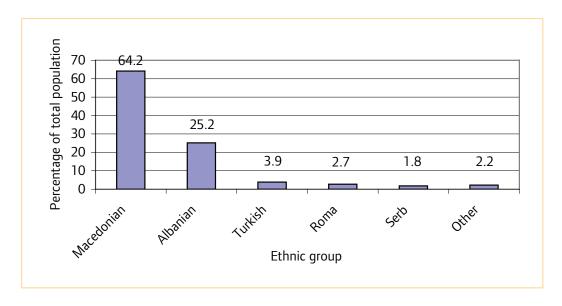
As mentioned above, Macedonia was the only country to secede peacefully from the Yugoslav federation and although tensions between the country's ethnic Macedonian majority and ethnic Albanian minority were ever-present during the 1990s, such tensions did not manifest themselves violently during this period, despite the volatile regional situation. In early 2001, however, the National Liberation Army (NLA), an Albanian rebel group motivated by ethnic minority grievances, launched an attack on Macedonian security forces, which resulted in a six-month armed conflict. An internationally-brokered peace deal – the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) – brought the fighting to an end in August 2001. Since this point Macedonia has focused on implementing the reforms laid out in the OFA as well as moving towards both EU and NATO integration.

Geography and people

Macedonia is a small, land-locked country with an area of 25,333 square kilometres and a population of just under 2,067,000 (CIA World Factbook 2009). It borders Serbia and Kosovo to the north, Greece to the south, Albania to the west, and Bulgaria to the east. Macedonia has a diverse ethnic population with a substantial Albanian minority. Figure 1 shows the country's ethnic makeup as recorded in its most recent census carried out in 2002.

Figure 1. Ethnic make-up of Macedonia

Source: Republic of Macedonia 2002

Economy

Macedonia is a lower-middle-income country with an open economy and a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of around US$8 billion (World Bank 2008). Annual growth in GDP stood at around 5 per cent in 2007, the highest growth rate experienced in the country since independence and a marked improvement since the 2001 conflict, when growth levels contracted by 4.5 per cent (ibid). Relative to the rest of the Balkan region, however, Macedonia has lagged behind in terms of attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) and job creation. FDI remains the lowest in the region and unemployment in the country is persistently high at 35 per cent (ibid).

Macedonia's economy is particularly vulnerable to external economic shocks and the global economic downturn has already begun to take its toll on the country, resulting in falling FDI and a slowdown in export growth (CIA World Fact Book 2009).

Politics and governance

Macedonia is a parliamentary democracy: the Prime Minister is selected by the party that gains the most seats in Parliament and the President (primarily a figure-head position) is elected by direct general ballot. The two main ethnic Macedonian political parties in the country are the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation – Democratic Party for Macedonian Unity (VMRO-DPMNE), led by Nikola Gruevski, and the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM), led by Zoran Zaev. The two main ethnic Albanian parties in the country are the Democratic Party for Integration (DUI), led by Ali Ahmeti, and the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA), led by Menduh Thaci.

In the country's first post-conflict parliamentary elections in 2002 the SDSM came to power and formed a coalition with the DUI and the smaller Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). However, the 2006 elections ushered in a new period of centre-right politics for Macedonia, with a VMRO-DPMNE-led government under Prime Minister Gruevski assuming power in coalition with the DPA, the New Social Democratic Party (NSDP) and a number of smaller parties. Early parliamentary elections in 2008 consolidated power for the VMRO-DPMNE under Gruevski, which now forms a coalition government with the DUI.

Foreign relations

Aside from Macedonia's accession process with the EU and NATO, the country's foreign relations are dominated by the ongoing bilateral dispute with Greece over the issue of its name. Athens does not recognise the country by its constitutional title The Republic of Macedonia, viewing it as an expropriation of Greece's Hellenic heritage and a potential territorial claim against Greece's northern province of the same name (International Crisis Group 2009). This has resulted in turbulent and bitter bilateral relations between the two countries. A trade embargo imposed on Macedonia by Greece in 1994 was brought to an end by the signing of an Interim Accord between the countries in which Greece agreed, *inter alia*, that it would not block Macedonia's entry into international organisations. However, a Greek veto on Macedonia's accession to NATO at the 2008 Bucharest summit has resulted in the Macedonian government taking Greece to the International Court of Justice for breaching the terms of the interim accord. Relations between the two countries therefore remain extremely strained.

Phases of conflict prevention

In the pages that follow, three interlinked phases of conflict prevention in Macedonia are considered:

- The preventive initiatives of the 1990s, following Macedonia's independence from the SFRY

- The preventive initiatives surrounding the 2001 crisis

- 'Post-conflict' initiatives including the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement and current ongoing conflict prevention activities.

Each section surveys the preventive tools that were adopted by key international actors and considers the impact of international activities in averting the eruption of protracted armed conflict in Macedonia.

Phase 1. Conflict prevention in the 1990s

After gaining independence, Macedonia faced two major challenges during the 1990s:

- Preserving its territorial integrity in the face of external threats and the potential spill-over of violence from other Balkan conflicts

- Addressing the inter-ethnic tensions that existed within the country, between ethnic Macedonians and the ethnic Albanian minority.

Both were potential conflict risk factors for the nascent state, which emerged from the break-up of the SFRY with a weak economy and fragile state institutions. The political challenges facing the country were very similar to those that led to Bosnia's downward spiral into violent conflict in the 1990s. Yet in Macedonia conflict was avoided and the concerted activities of a number of international actors played an important role in ensuring that peace prevailed during this period.

The three key international actors engaged in Macedonia during the 1990s were the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia (ICFY) Working Group on Ethnic and National Communities and Minorities (the ICFY Working Group), the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (including the High Commissioner on National Minorities [HCNM]) and the United Nations (UN). All of these players had specifically preventive mandates and between them employed a variety of military, monitoring, diplomatic, confidence-building and development tools in order to prevent the outbreak of violent conflict.

Military and monitoring tools

The task of preventing the spill-over of other regional conflicts and deterring acts of aggression from Macedonia's neighbours was primarily undertaken by the United Nations. Potential Serbian aggression was the main concern in this regard and although, with the benefit of hindsight, some might draw the conclusion that President Milosevic did not have territorial aspirations that included Macedonia, at the time the regional security situation was sufficiently volatile as to make a Serbian incursion a viable possibility. On numerous occasions prior to the 1996 accord between Serbia and Macedonia, small contingents of Serbian army troops crossed the Macedonian border occupying territory and sparking fears of a larger confrontation, before retreating following negotiations (Lund 2000).

The UN's first (and only) preventive force, the Preventive Deployment in Macedonia (UNPREDEP) was established in December 1992, following a request from the country's then President, Kiro Gligorov. It remained in Macedonia until March 1999. Initially, UNPREDEP in Macedonia was a part of UNPROFOR (the United Nations Protection Force in Croatia). However, it became an independent mission in 1995. A relatively small mission,

UNPREDEP had a military contingent of just 1,049 and also incorporated 35 military observers and 26 civilian police (United Nations 1999a). From 1995 until its termination in 1999, the mission cost approximately US$570 million (Fleitz 2002).

The 'military pillar' of the mission had responsibility for monitoring and reporting to the Secretary General any developments in the border areas with Albania and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) that could pose a threat to the country, and was also tasked with deterring any such threats and preventing clashes between external elements and Macedonian forces.

UNPREDEP was undoubtedly an efficient deterrent. At a time when the rest of the former Yugoslavia was overwhelmed by protracted and bloody armed conflicts, UNPREDEP contributed significantly to Macedonia's peaceful transition from former Yugoslav republic to independent state.[2] Indeed, in the absence of any national military capacity, the presence of a UN force gave a sense of confidence and security to the fledgling state and its citizens.[3] Given the small size of the UN deployment and the fact that it was not mandated to use force, had a large-scale Serbian incursion occurred it is highly unlikely that UNPREDEP would have been able to stop it (Ackermann 2003).

However, UNPREDEP's deterrent capability was not based on its military strength; rather, it came from what the force represented, namely the support of the Western powers and particularly of the United States. Indeed, UNPREDEP had a component of approximately 500 US troops and this physical presence – as well as the fact that the force had Security Council backing – sent a clear message to Belgrade, and other neighbouring capitals, that the international community supported the territorial integrity of Macedonia and that any act of aggression would have severe consequences.

The OSCE[4] Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje, established in September 1992, was the first organisation tasked with preventing the spill-over of conflict in the former Yugoslavia. To this end it was initially concerned with monitoring the border areas with Serbia and Albania. However, given the mission's small size – it consisted of just six to eight monitors – when UNPREDEP arrived in December 1992, the UN assumed the main border monitoring role.

Nonetheless, in its early phases the OSCE Mission did contribute towards resolving a number of border incidents concerning Serb incursions. The Mission also acted as an important early warning device for potential internal sources of conflict, particularly concerning minority issues. Due to its substantial network of high-level and grassroots contacts among political parties, non-state actors, and ethnic and religious groups, the Mission was able to report regularly on incidents of unrest, alleged human rights violations and inter-ethnic tensions when they occurred.[5]

Diplomatic, confidence-building and development tools

While the military tools outlined above were clearly suited to deterring external threats to Macedonia, defusing inter-ethnic tensions between ethnic Macedonians and the ethnic Albanian minority, and helping these two communities to co-exist peacefully within

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2. It is interesting to note here that when Bosnia-Herzegovina's President Alija Izetbegovic had requested a UN preventive deployment in December 1991 the appeal was ignored. Given the success of the preventive deployment in Macedonia, it is reasonable to speculate as to whether Bosnia's fate might have been distinctly less bloody had the request been granted.
3. Interview with senior operational adviser, OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre, OSCE Secretariat, Vienna, 11 October 2008.
4. It should be noted that prior to its renaming at the December 1994 Budapest Summit, the OSCE was known as the CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe). For reasons of clarity we shall refer here to the OSCE, whether speaking about the pre- or post-1994 period.
5. Interview with policy support officer, OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre, OSCE Secretariat, Vienna, 11 October 2008.

Macedonia's borders, was a task better suited to diplomatic, confidence-building and development tools.

The ICFY Working Group played a key role in this regard and was the first preventive actor to begin work in Macedonia, arriving in its first guise in October 1991 as part of the Conference on Yugoslavia. The Conference, sponsored by the European Community, was designed to assist the former Yugoslav Republics in finding a comprehensive peace settlement, but was dissolved just eight months later due to disagreements between participating Community states. However, with the establishment of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia held in August 1992, the Working Group was reformed, under the title of the Working Group on Ethnic and National Communities and Minorities. The ICFY was sponsored by both the EC and the UN, and despite its overriding focus on Bosnia, the Working Group carried out important work in Macedonia under the direction of German diplomat Geert Ahrens.

The Working Group was established as an instrument for promoting dialogue between the Macedonian government and the country's ethnic minority populations. It focused primarily on relations between the government and the Albanian and Serbian minorities and employed three main preventive tools: field visits, personal shuttle diplomacy and trilateral forums (Ackermann 2000).[6] The trilateral forums, adopted for the Albanian and Serb cases, involved officials from the Macedonian government, representatives from the minority group and members of the Working Group. This three-pronged approach enabled the Working Group to build up trust with minority groups and the government, channel grievances into constructive political dialogue and uncover potential sources of conflict early on.

Perhaps the main achievement of the Working Group was in persuading the Albanian leadership not to pursue its claims for territorial autonomy, which could easily have sparked an armed confrontation with the government (Czaplinski 2008). The Group also played an important role in establishing acceptable terms and conditions for an internationally monitored census designed to provide accurate population statistics, particularly on the number of ethnic Albanians in the country. This was a sensitive issue, especially as some Albanian nationalists falsely claimed that Albanians comprised 40 per cent of the total population, and were therefore less than enthusiastic about an official census which could dispute this (Ackermann 2000).

The Working Group also contributed to a number of gains in minority rights issues in the 1990s. It played a key role in attempts to increase Albanian participation in the Cabinet, the military and the civil service as well as contributing to progress in other areas such as increases in minority-language media coverage, increases in the number of secondary school classes taught in Albanian, and an agreement allowing the Albanian national flag to be displayed on Albanian holidays (Ackermann 2000). With regard to the Serbian minority, the Working Group contributed to progress made in the areas of education, religion, culture and heritage, the media and group status (ibid).

Promoting dialogue between different ethnic groups was also a key component of UNPREDEP's mandate. Its 'political pillar' and the good offices element of its mandate allowed it to employ a variety of tools such as quiet diplomacy, mediation and confidence-building in order to promote dialogue between political parties and ethnic groups on questions surrounding minority rights and representation. The mission's head and Special Representative of the Secretary General, Henry Sokalski, also acted as a mediator in a number of disputes between political parties and between the leaders of various ethnic groups within the country (Ackermann 2003). UNPREDEP also carried out a limited amount of developmental and peacebuilding work through its 'human pillar', such as economic and

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6. Although Macedonia had only a small Serbian minority (approximately 2 per cent) it was feared that Serbian Nationalists within the country might be encouraged by Belgrade to spark violence as a pretext for Serbian territorial claims on the country.

social development, institution building and good governance. Apart from the developmental impact of this work, it also helped in building mutual trust between the UN mission and the government and people of Macedonia (Sokalski 2003).

Finally, the OSCE played a central role in addressing inter-ethnic tensions and minority rights issues in Macedonia during the 1990s. In addition to its monitoring and early warning role described above, the Spillover Mission also encouraged and facilitated dialogue between different groups and mediated in minority rights disputes.

The mission's work was complemented by the work of the HCNM, Max van der Stoel. The High Commissioner played an important role in Macedonia during the 1990s working on longer-term activities to address inter-ethnic tensions, as well as acting in an operational capacity responding to serious inter-ethnic incidents that had the potential to erupt into larger conflicts.[7] Much of the High Commissioner's work to reduce tensions between ethnic groups was done quietly behind the scenes through the promotion and facilitation of dialogue.[8] However the Commissioner also used his position to make a number of recommendations to the Macedonian government on minority rights issues and pressed them to make progress on the management of inter-ethnic tensions and the accommodation of minority demands in areas such as use of language, education and representation of Albanians in public administration (Ackermann 2003).

The High Commissioner played a particularly important role in the field of higher education, an issue which for many Albanians lay at the heart of the grievances between their community and the Macedonian government. Prior to 1991 the majority of Albanians had studied at Pristina University. However, independence and the fact that teaching in the Albanian language was banned by Milosevic in the last days of the SFRY closed off this access for Macedonian Albanians, a situation exacerbated by the fact that in the post-independence era there was no facility within Macedonia for Albanians to be taught in their own language in higher education institutions. The High Commissioner had used his position to persuade the government to introduce a number of other measures to appease the Albanian minority, including the creation of a pedagogical faculty in the Albanian language at Skopje university and the implementation of the 'transitional year project', a programme of additional language courses to help Albanian students pass Macedonian university entrance exams (Czaplinski 2008).

This, however, was not enough to prevent the creation, by ethnic Albanians, of the illegal Tetovo University (TU), which provided Albanians with access to higher education in their own language but was not recognised by the Macedonian government as an official state university. TU was highly contentious for the Macedonian government because it was viewed, and to an extent was, a hotbed for Albanian radical nationalism. The High Commissioner played a key role in mediating this dispute and in creating an alternative to TU where Albanians could receive higher education in their own language. Negotiating with the Macedonian government to make a change to the law allowing the creation of private universities that taught in languages other than Macedonian, the Commissioner oversaw the creation of the first tri-lingual university in Macedonia, the South Eastern Europe University (SEEU), which taught in Macedonian, Albanian and English.[9] The creation of SEEU considerably neutralised what had previously been a key source of tension between Albanians and Macedonians.[10]

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7. Interview with senior policy support officer, OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre, OSCE Secretariat, Vienna, 11 October 2008.
8. For further information on the mandate of the HCNM see OSCE 1992.
9. It is interesting to note that aside from the Albanian community, no other minority group in Macedonia has been given the opportunity to study for a university degree in their own language.
10. Interview with senior political adviser, office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, The Hague, 22 January 2009.

Conclusions to Phase 1

The story that clearly emerges from the activities outlined above is that during this period each organisation played to its strengths by bringing relevant and complementary expertise to the table, be that in the form of military muscle, preventive diplomacy or mediation. On their own, such activities may not have been able to prevent the outbreak of conflict in Macedonia, but when taken together the collective impact of international engagement was enough to stop any potential violence from erupting at a time when the rest of the Balkans region was being ravaged by it. Helping to align the activities of the international players was the fact that all of the key actors were tied by the twin and shared objectives of preventing the spill-over of conflict from other former Yugoslav states on the one hand, and averting the eruption of hostilities between ethnic Macedonians and the ethnic Albanian minority on the other. Underpinning these aims was an understanding on the part of all of the organisations involved that any conflict in Macedonia, while obviously having a devastating effect on the citizens of that country, might also have added a new and explosive layer to existing conflicts in the Balkans with the potential to ignite a wider regional conflict drawing in Macedonia's Southern Balkan neighbours (Glenny 1995).

What ultimately undid much of the excellent work by international organisations during this period was the lack of sustained engagement in Macedonia. Firstly, the mandate of the ICFY Working Group was terminated in 1996 following the signing of the Dayton Accords. Though the ICFY's primary focus had always been on Bosnia, the Working Group had contributed significantly to the promotion of inter-ethnic dialogue in Macedonia and its departure therefore left this task to the UN and the OSCE to continue. This was by no means an insurmountable problem; however, UNPREDEP's mandate was prematurely terminated in February 1999 following a Chinese veto in the Security Council as a result of Macedonia's decision to open diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

The force withdrew from Macedonia in March 1999, leaving the small OSCE mission as the only conflict prevention actor in Macedonia from this point onwards. Given both the precariousness of the regional security situation (with regard to Kosovo) and Macedonia's ongoing internal problems, the withdrawal of the UN force at this time was a massive error of judgement. Indeed, just one month prior to its departure UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan had recommended UNPREDEP's mandate be extended due to the ongoing conflict in Kosovo, and continuing inter-ethnic tensions within Macedonia (United Nations 1999b).

Secondly, although some progress was made on (Albanian) minority rights issues during the 1990s, many of the more contentious questions, such as the status of Tetovo University and the recognition of Albanian as an official language, were not able to be resolved (Ackermann 2003). Not enough progress was made in integrating Albanians into the political apparatus of the state and therefore a decade after independence many Albanians still felt marginalised from mainstream politics, a sense that was exacerbated by poor economic prospects and high levels of unemployment. Macedonia's internal political landscape therefore remained fractured at the end of the decade, pointing to the need for a more inclusive political settlement in the country.

Ultimately, the unresolved grievances of the ethnic Albanian minority within Macedonia and the security vacuum left by the termination of UNPREDEP contributed in large part to the outbreak of violence in 2001. However, the response of the international community to the 2001 crisis was not only rapid and coordinated but also sustained and forward-thinking, allowing a durable peace to be maintained in Macedonia.

Phase 2: The 2001 crisis

Residual tensions finally erupted into violence in late January 2001 when an ethnic Albanian rebel group, the National Liberation Army (NLA) led by Ali Ahmeti, launched an insurgent attack against the Macedonian Government. The ranks of the NLA were filled by large numbers of unemployed Albanian youths, frustrated by the limited progress made on

minority rights during the 1990s (Dobbins *et al* 2008). Fighting ensued between the two groups in the Tetovo and Kumanovo areas and even spread to the capital, Skopje, threatening to engulf the entire country in civil conflict. However, rapid intervention by a number of international actors, primarily NATO, the EU, the OSCE and the US, meant that full-blown civil conflict was avoided and a peace agreement – the OFA – was signed by the government and the NLA.

The gravity of the situation and the potentially devastating consequences of a further Balkan conflict, including the impact that this might have on Western European countries in terms of, *inter alia*, refugees and financial commitments, meant that the typical gap between early warning and early response was bridged successfully in Macedonia. Given the continued fragility of the regional security situation, many Balkans experts believed that had the violence been allowed to take hold, a wider Balkans conflagration could have erupted, potentially drawing in Albania, Bulgaria and even threatening to involve Greece and Turkey (Ashdown 2007). As the former international High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina Paddy Ashdown puts it, Macedonia was 'the bomb in the Balkans…The stakes were very high' (Ashdown 2007: 154).

Diplomatic tools

Even before the intensive negotiations surrounding the OFA had begun, and just weeks after the first signs of violence, there was intense engagement in Macedonia in the form of shuttle diplomacy from the EU and NATO. George Robertson, then Secretary General of NATO, and Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, both visited the republic a number of times during the initial phases of the crisis, persuading all parties to end the violence and seek a political solution. This succeeded in controlling the spread of violence in the short term. However, rebel advances into the town of Aracinovo (on the outskirts of the capital, Skopje) and failed negotiations led by Macedonian President Boris Trajkovski made it apparent that shuttle diplomacy would not be enough to induce a lasting political solution to the conflict and as a result international involvement was rapidly scaled up.

A permanent negotiating team was deployed, led by former French Foreign Minister Francis Leotard and US Balkans expert Ambassador James Pardew. The arrival of permanent US and EU Representatives allowed a new round of focused negotiations to begin, known as the Ohrid process. Indeed, a framework agreement, based on a proposal from French legal expert Robert Badinter, was agreed and signed by all political parties on 13 August 2001, formally ending hostilities just seven weeks after international negotiators had arrived. The Framework Agreement negotiated by the international community was specifically designed to go to the very root of the conflict and aimed to address many of the minority rights issues that had not been successfully tackled in the 1990s. Unlike Bosnia's Dayton Agreement, the OFA aimed to foster 'institutional inter-ethnic integration and accommodation in a unitary state' (Ordanoski and Matovski 2007). Its purpose was not only to ensure an end to the violence but also to build a more inclusive political settlement in the country and lay the foundations for a functioning and multi-ethnic country. The OFA introduced constitutional and legislative changes in order to:

- Set underway a decentralisation process giving substantial powers to local government units in areas including education, public services, local economic development, culture and social welfare

- Ensure fair representation of minority communities in public administration, including in the police forces

- Allow greater use of national symbols and languages including the provision of education to minority communities in their native language and making Albanian an official state language alongside Macedonian

- Prevent the majorisation of minority groups in the Assembly by introducing the so-called 'Badinter majority', which meant that certain bills required approval by the majority of minority party MPs in the Assembly, as well as an overall two-thirds majority, in order to be passed.[11]

Military tools

On 27 August 2001, just two weeks after the OFA had been signed, NATO deployed Operation Essential Harvest. Essential Harvest consisted of approximately 3,500 NATO troops with logistical support. The 30-day mission had a strict mandate and was limited to collecting weapons voluntarily surrendered by the NLA (Laity 2008).

Conclusions to Phase 2

The escalation of the 2001 crisis into a full-blown civil conflict was prevented for a number of reasons, but chief among them was the early, decisive and coordinated action of the international actors involved. The international community had learned from both Bosnia and Kosovo that once violence has been allowed to take a hold, conflict becomes substantially more difficult to end, let alone to end using diplomatic and non-military means. But in Macedonia, action – led by the EU and supported by NATO and the US – was taken in the formative stages of the crisis in order to prevent it from erupting into a larger conflict.

Inter-agency coordination among the main international actors was critical to success in 2001.[12] There are few (if any) other examples of where the international community has acted in such a united way. The sudden engagement of so many international actors in such a short period of time could easily have led to confusion over aims and disagreement over roles. Yet in Macedonia all of the international players involved had a common vision for the country, allowing each actor to play to their strengths and contribute to a 'clear and achievable end state' (Laity 2008: 78).

Underpinning this shared vision was the close cooperation between all of the actors involved, at both the leadership and the operational level (Laity 2008). During the Ohrid negotiations, international actors adopted a two-pronged approach with the EU and US negotiating a political settlement between legitimate ethnic Albanian and Macedonian political parties[13], while NATO began direct talks with the NLA in order to prevent the insurgency from escalating and secure a voluntary end to hostilities (ibid). NATO negotiated a timetable for the disarmament and disbandment of the NLA, as well as securing amnesty for the rebel fighters. It should be noted that although the EU and US did not negotiate directly with the NLA, NATO was in constant contact with the group's leadership and the personal trust that was built up between Peter Feith (NATO's lead negotiator) and Ali Ahmeti (Leader of the NLA) was critical to the drafting of the OFA and the maintenance of the ceasefire.

At the very highest level, strong relationships were maintained between Lord Robertson and Javier Solana and between the key OFA negotiators Francois Leotard (EU) and James Pardew (US) (Laity 2008). Despite the ongoing and tortuous high-level negotiations between the EU and NATO over the European Security and Defence Policy, on the ground in Macedonia both parties were willing to 'set aside stickiness of ESDP negotiations' in order to address the matter at hand (Robertson 2008). At the operational level too, NATO, OSCE and EU staff worked together closely, sharing vital information quickly and efficiently, thus allowing what Laity refers to as 'superb situational awareness' (Laity: 81). Weekly meetings,

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11. For the full text of the OFA see: faq.macedonia.org/politics/framework_agreement.pdf
12. This came across clearly in interviews with senior officials from international organisations with offices in Macedonia, carried out in Skopje from 26-30 January 2009.
13. The two main ethnic Albanian political parties were the DPA and the PDP. The two main ethnic Macedonian parties were the VMRO-DPMNE and the SDSM. During the time of the 2001 crisis, The VMRO-DPMNE was the ruling party, in coalition with the DPA.

hosted by the OSCE, allowed all of the actors to come together and share information while towards the end of the crisis the weekly principals meetings (hosted by the EUSR) allowed all organisations to coordinate their post-conflict activities effectively (the principals meetings are discussed in further detail below).

Cooperation between international and local actors was equally important. As Laity notes, the international team was constantly engaged with the Macedonian government throughout the crisis, ensuring that it was a part of the solution and thus avoiding the risk of alienating key moderate players (Laity 2008). This cooperation was assisted by the fact that international engagement in Macedonia came from the highest level, with the active engagement of NATO's George Robertson and the EU's Javier Solana. This sustained and high-level engagement built up a sense of trust between local and international actors that was critical to success (Robertson 2008). Indeed, both Robertson and Solana were personally involved in the negotiation of several ceasefires between NLA fighters and Macedonian forces during the crisis. They also played a key role in persuading President Trajkovski on a number of occasions to resist the hardline voices from within the VMRO party that were pushing for a full military attack on the NLA. Such a course of action would almost certainly have led to a serious conflagration, increasing support for (and recruits to) the NLA from neighbouring Albania and Kosovo and transforming a crisis into a protracted civil conflict (Chivvis 2008).

Despite the potential for confusion, international organisations worked together coherently both at the highest levels and on the ground in order to execute a successful preventive intervention. Not only did this save lives, but it also forestalled the need for expensive military action at a later stage.

Phase 3: The post-conflict phase

The signing of the Ohrid Agreement did not signal the end of international involvement in Macedonia. On the contrary, in the post-conflict period the international community has continued to play a critical role in preventing the country from sliding back into conflict, maintaining a durable peace and assisting the Macedonian government to implement the OFA reforms. The Framework Agreement specifically invites the international community to assist in its implementation and as a result there has been a significant amount of external activity in the country since 2001. Moreover, Macedonia's EU and NATO accession hopes have provided an additional framework for international involvement in the country in the post-conflict era.

The key international actors in this period are the EU, OSCE, NATO, the US, the World Bank and UNDP. Their efforts have also been supported by a host of other international organisations, bilateral donors, international NGOs and local civil society organisations. Below we briefly describe the tools used by each of these international organisations in order to consolidate peace and security in Macedonia following the 2001 conflict.

The EU

In the post-crisis period both the European Commission and the Council of Ministers of the European Union were represented in Macedonia. The Delegation of the European Commission was established in Skopje in March 2000, with the specific aim of facilitating the development of political, economic and trade relations between the country and the EU, and promoting the values of the EU in Macedonia. Since April 2001, the main framework for this has been the country's Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA).

Following the 2001 crisis, EU development and reconstruction assistance to Macedonia was handled by the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR)[14], via the CARDS (Community

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14. The EAR was tasked with managing, on behalf of the European Commission, the EU's main aid programmes to Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Macedonia. The agency was established in February 2000 and its mandate ended in December 2008.

Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation) programme. In the immediate post-conflict period assistance was largely focused on reconstruction of damaged housing and infrastructure in conflict-affected areas. This rapidly expanded, however, to include a wide range of areas in the field of social, economic and political development. Focus areas included: confidence-building and inter-ethnic relations; justice and home affairs (including police and judicial reform); political reform and decentralisation; democracy and rule of law; economic growth and reform; minority representation in the civil service; civil society development; and education (EAR 2008).

In the period 2001–2008 the EAR channelled more than EUR300 million into Macedonia for state-building programmes (EAR 2008). Since Macedonia was made an EU candidate country in December 2005, the EU's focus in Macedonia has moved away from crisis management and reconstruction and towards ensuring that Macedonia is able to fulfil the criteria necessary for EU accession. The Commission works primarily on structural political reform and currently has five key priorities, all of which are linked to the OFA:

1. Judicial reform

2. Public administration reform

3. Police reform

4. Corruption

5. Political dialogue.

Having said this, addressing the root causes of conflict (for example inter-ethnic tensions) remains an important cross-cutting theme in much of the EU's ongoing work, particularly in areas such as justice and home affairs.[15] The EAR officially closed on 31 December 2008 and coordination of pre-accession assistance has now transferred to the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), though Macedonia also remains eligible for funding through the Instrument for Stability (IfS). The European initiative for democracy and human rights (EIDHR) is also active in Macedonia.

From 2005 onwards the EU mission in Skopje has had a double-hatted leadership with Erwan Fourere representing both the Commission as head of delegation (HoD) and the Council as EU Special Representative (EUSR). The first EUSR, Francois Leotard, was appointed by the Council in April 2001 and tasked with helping to consolidate peace in the country and to ensure the full implementation of the OFA, thereby facilitating the country's progress towards EU accession (European Union 2009a).

The EUSR played a crucial political crisis-management role in the post-conflict period negotiating new – often highly contentious – laws, mediating between political parties and defusing political crises. As EUSR/HoD, he continues to hold a critical diplomatic position, conveying key messages to government in areas such as security, inter-ethnic issues and Ohrid Framework implementation, and offering 'the European Union's advice and facilitation in the political process' (European Union 2009b). The EUSR/HoD also continues to encourage and facilitate dialogue between political parties, something which has been particularly important following the fractious 2006 elections. In preparation for the March 2009 elections the EUSR also held regular meetings with the leaders of all political parties conveying key messages and stressing the importance of the elections meeting international standards.[16]

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15. Interview with senior EU official, Office of the European Commission Delegation, Mission of the European Union to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Skopje, 26 January 2009.
16. Interview with political adviser, Office of the EUSR, Mission of the European Union to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Skopje, 26 January 2009.

The European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in the Former Yugoslavia also played a role in the post-conflict environment.[17] The mission's small contingent in Macedonia was tasked with monitoring political and security developments in the former crisis areas of Macedonia and acted as a source of early warning as well as contributing to the formulation of effective EU policy in the country. More importantly, Macedonia was also the location for the EU's first military mission under the ESDP. Operation Concordia took over military control from NATO's Operation Allied Harmony on 31 March 2003. It consisted of around 400 troops and had a mandate for monitoring and protecting non-military international actors from other organisations such as the OSCE and EU monitors.

Operation Concordia was replaced by an EU Police Mission, Operation Proxima, on 15 December 2003. Proxima consisted of around 200 personnel, tasked with monitoring, advising and helping to develop Macedonia's police force in line with EU standards. Proxima's mandate expired on 15 December 2005 and it was replaced by an EU Police Advisory Team (EUPAT). Alongside the work of the CARDS programme described above, EUPAT provided an important capacity-building tool for the Macedonian police force. Its mandate expired in May 2006.

The OSCE

Following the 2001 crisis the OSCE spillover mission took on an enhanced mandate and rapidly up-scaled its operations in Macedonia, increasing in numbers from 26 to 210 (OSCE 2007a). Seventy-two of these extra personnel were confidence-building monitors who, alongside the EUMM monitors, reported regularly on the security situation in the crisis zones as well as monitoring border areas for human trafficking and reporting on refugee return and the humanitarian situation. Confidence-building monitors worked from the two OSCE field stations in Kumanovo and Tetovo, established in April 2001. Sixty police advisers were deployed to former conflict hot-spots in order to assist in the phased and coordinated redeployment of national police forces to the crisis areas (OSCE 2007a).

In the immediate post-crisis phase, and as stipulated in the OFA, the OSCE played a leading role in police training and reform, including the training of 1,000 ethnic minority police cadets at the OSCE Police Academy and the redeployment of multiethnic police forces to former crisis areas.[18] The OSCE also assisted OFA implementation in other areas, such as public administration reform (decentralisation), rule of law reforms, media development and inter-ethnic reconciliation and confidence-building (including work on education).

The current mandate of the OSCE in Macedonia is broad, reflecting the multi-pronged approach of the organisation as a whole.[19] The key focus areas for the organisation are policing, rule of law, public administration reform, and monitoring and good governance. Since the completion of the phased redeployment of police, OSCE's policing work has evolved. The training of national police continues with an emphasis on 'training of trainers' in order to build local capacity and assist the police forces in meeting EU policing standards.[20] However, it should be noted that the EU now takes the lead in the area of police training.

The OSCE also continues to play a key role in introducing 'community policing' to the municipalities, which aims to build trust between local communities and their police forces and to encourage them to work together to address community problems. To this end, the

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17. EUMM operated in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, Albania and Macedonia.

18. Interview with senior OSCE official, police development, OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje, Skopje, 28 January 2009.

19. Interview with programme coordinator, OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje, Skopje, 28 January 2009.

20. Interview with senior OSCE official, police development, OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje, Skopje, 28 January 2009.

OSCE has introduced Citizens Advisory Groups (CAGs) in a large number of municipalities that act as long-term forums to bring together local police, citizens and municipal structures in order to discuss important community issues.[21]

The OSCE's monitoring and good governance work covers confidence-building, inter-ethnic dialogue and education. The OSCE continues to have a field presence in Macedonia, which provides early warning for the head of mission and other international agencies in the country.[22] Confidence-building monitors based at the Tetovo field-station regularly monitor and report on the security situation in the former crisis zones where they have a strong network of contacts among local stakeholders.[23] The organisation also supports projects that facilitate inter-ethnic dialogue and address the root causes of conflict, such as providing assistance for multi-ethnic civil society groups.

Education remains a priority area for the mission and is viewed as a key instrument for conflict prevention in the long term. The mission's focus is on issues such as promoting ethnic integration, facilitating inter-ethnic dialogue among students, and the depoliticisation (and de-ethnicisation) of schools and education.[24] The mission works closely with the OSCE HCNM, who is also actively involved in education issues in Macedonia, identifying areas of concern, offering high-level advice to government and making recommendations for reform. Increasing segregation has been a key focus area for the Commissioner, with two major reports to the Macedonian government (in 2004 and 2008) outlining country-specific recommendations for education reform.[25]

Other areas of focus for the HCNM have included the depoliticisation of curriculum and text book development, particularly in the sensitive areas of history, geography and languages, which are often the victims of political manipulation. The Commissioner also continues to work on the issue of increasing minority access to higher education and has given continued support to the SEE University (established in 2001) and to other projects, including the transition year project (mentioned above) which continued in the post-conflict environment, coming to an end in mid-2006.[26]

Rule of law is currently the overarching priority for the OSCE and it has a unique capacity to act in this area.[27] The mission conducts both monitoring and capacity-building activities in order to assist the Macedonian government in the formation of effective rule of law mechanisms in the areas of anti-trafficking, civil society and the justice system. Work on judicial reform focuses on the development of an independent and representative judiciary as well as assistance in the reform of legislation and training of trainers in human rights standards.[28] Capacity-building of domestic human rights institutions and civil society is also a priority area for the OSCE and it plays a leading role in supporting the development of an accountable oversight mechanism for law enforcement agencies (see OSCE 2008a and 2008b).

21. ibid
22. Interview with senior confidence building officer, OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje, Skopje, 28 January 2009.
23. Meeting with OSCE confidence-building officers and community police advisers, OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje, Tetovo, 29 January 2009.
24. Interview with education development officer, OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje, Kumanovo, 28 January 2009.
25. Interview with senior political adviser, office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, The Hague, 22 January 2009.
26. ibid
27. Interview with programme coordinator, OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje, Skopje, 28 January 2009.
28. ibid

Public administration reform has focused mainly on assisting the Macedonian government with the decentralisation process. Phase one of the decentralisation process was completed in 2008, with phase two concentrating primarily on fiscal management and responsibility.[29] The OSCE's priority focus areas are monitoring and analysis, capacity-building for civil servants, and promotion of citizens' participation in local decision-making processes. The mission produces an annual Survey on Decentralisation which acts as an aid to government policymakers in steering implementation of reforms in this area (see OSCE 2007b). The mission also provides training for municipal civil servants in order to build the capacity of local governments and supports activities to promote participatory decision-making at the local level, such as the development of municipal Committees for Inter-Community Relations (CICRs) (see Community Development Initiative 2007 and OSCE 2008b).

NATO

NATO's role in the immediate post-crisis period was a military one, focused primarily on re-establishing and maintaining security in order that the Ohrid reforms could be implemented. Operation Essential Harvest, as mentioned earlier, was a 30-day mission with a strict mandate limited to collecting weapons voluntarily surrendered by the NLA (Laity 2008). In order to maintain a secure environment and allow the implementation of the OFA after Operation Essential Harvest had ended, a smaller NATO follow-up mission – Operation Amber Fox – was deployed in the country between 27 September 2001 and 15 December 2002. Amber Fox consisted of 700 troops mandated to protect the EU and OSCE monitors who were deployed to ensure compliance with the OFA.

Amber Fox was succeeded by Operation Allied Harmony, which had a smaller number of NATO personnel, approximately 450. The operational units of Allied Harmony provided protection for international monitors as well as demonstrating NATO's continuing commitment to facilitating the reconciliation process in the country. The advisory units of Allied Harmony provided advice to the Macedonian government in the area of security sector reform and other military matters. As discussed above, NATO handed over operational control to the EU on 31 March 2003.

However, this was not the end of NATO's role in Macedonia. Because the EU's Operation Concordia acted under 'Berlin Plus' arrangements (see below for further details), NATO's Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe, Admiral Rainer Feist, was mission commander and thus NATO remained highly engaged in the operation. Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) also became Concordia's operational headquarters and NATO remained on hand in case an emergency situation arose (Chivvis 2008). Furthermore, even after operational control had been handed over to the EU, NATO remained in Macedonia in an advisory capacity assisting the Macedonian government in the areas of defence and security sector reform in order that the country could make progress in meeting the standards necessary for NATO accession. NATO maintains an advisory presence in Macedonia with a military advisory team located in NATO HQ Skopje.

Indeed, Macedonia has been on the path to NATO membership since the mid 1990s, becoming a member of NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) initiative in 1995 and joining NATO's Membership Action Plan (MAP) and the PfP Planning and Review Process (PARP) in 1999 (Republic of Macedonia 2005). Under the PfP and MAP, NATO has been able to provide a framework for advice, assistance and practical support to Macedonia in the areas of security sector and defence reform. NATO has assisted Macedonia in developing a transformation plan for its armed forces, which included detailed programmes covering logistics, personnel, equipment, training and a timetable for the restructuring of key military units (Republic of Macedonia 2009).

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29. Interview with policy support officer, OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre, OSCE Secretariat, Vienna, 11 October 2008.

A key objective of the PfP is to develop the armed forces of partnership countries in order that they are able to operate effectively with the armed forces of Alliance countries and therefore contribute to NATO operations. To this end, in 2005 Macedonia joined the Operational Capabilities Concept (OCC), which allows military units available for PfP operations to be more easily evaluated and better integrated with NATO forces. Other key objectives of NATO assistance in Macedonia have included improving ethnic minority representation in civil/military defence structures and judicial and police reform (Republic of Macedonia 2009).

The United States

Although the US has, in the post-conflict period and particularly following 9/11, increasingly looked to the EU to take on a larger role in the Balkans from both a military/operational and financial perspective, it has remained an active partner for Macedonia in this period. The US played a key negotiating role during the Ohrid process and US bilateral engagement in Macedonia has continued in the post-conflict era. The country continues to support multilateral efforts to facilitate Macedonia's path towards Euro-Atlantic integration, and an integrated and stable Europe (which includes Macedonia and the rest of the Western Balkan region) remains a key US policy objective (Congressional Research Service 2005).

As well as playing an important diplomatic role, the US is one of Macedonia's key bilateral donors and has supported the country with foreign assistance for democracy and economic reforms, security and defence reforms, and programmes to strengthen rule of law and improve education. Immediately following the 2001 crisis, US bilateral assistance increased from US$32.9 million to $41.64 million and bilateral assistance to Macedonia under the Support for East European Democracy (SEED) Act totalled over $440 million between 1990 and 2008 (US Department of State 2008).

United States Agency for International Development (USAID) programmes in Macedonia have focused largely on implementation of the OFA. In terms of governance and democracy reforms, USAID primarily assisted the Macedonian government with the decentralisation process, as well as supporting free and fair parliamentary elections, facilitating a national census, encouraging democratic political competition and supporting the government in developing a state programme for the prevention of corruption (on decentralisation specifically see USAID 2007). Economic reform focused mainly on assisting Macedonia's transition to a market-based economy and helping the country to bring its legislative and regulatory frameworks inline with EU standards. USAID also assisted Macedonia in reaching the standards necessary for World Trade Organisation (WTO) membership, which the country joined in 2003 (USAID 2008b).

Currently USAID focuses on three key areas: democracy and rule of law; economic growth; and education. Democracy programmes assist the government with the second phase of decentralisation (fiscal management issues) and focus on other areas such as judicial reform, tackling corruption, strengthening civil society, capacity building for local government and strengthening internal democratic practices among political parties (USAID 2008a). Economic growth programmes focus on the macro level in order to improve the business environment and encourage investment and the micro level in order to improve the productivity and competitiveness of individual businesses in Macedonia (USAID 2008b). Education projects currently focus on improving the quality of teaching and modernising education, for example through providing more facilities in information and communication technology and through a focus on disadvantaged minorities such as the Roma population (USAID 2008c).

The US also provides security assistance to Macedonia, aiding the government in meeting specific NATO and EU reform targets for the military and police. For example, it has financed military equipment in order to improve interoperability between Macedonian and NATO forces.

The World Bank

Following the 2001 crisis, the World Bank initiated a Transitional Support Strategy (TSS) in Macedonia, allowing the country exceptional access to World Bank International Development Association (IDA) funds (World Bank 2001). The TSS provided a framework for rapid assistance in the post-conflict period, in addition to the Bank's established Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) in Macedonia for the years 1999–2001. Priorities for the CAS 1999–2001 were promotion of private sector growth and job creation, improving the efficiency of state administration and poverty alleviation/human capital development (World Bank 1998). TSS assistance provided Emergency Recovery Assistance Credit to the value of approximately US$15 million in order to help the government mitigate the economic impacts of the crisis, financing for the reconstruction of local infrastructure, financing for public sector management reform (decentralisation), and financing for social cohesion and inter-community integration programmes (see World Bank 2001 and Government of the Republic of Macedonia 2005).

Following the immediate post-conflict period and implementation of the TSS, World Bank assistance to Macedonia under CAS 2003–2006 focused on promoting effective management of public resources, tackling corruption and supporting decentralisation, promoting job creation through private sector growth, and building human capital through education and protecting the most vulnerable sections of society (World Bank 2003). The CAS 2003–2006 provided a lending facility of up to $165 million.

Current World Bank support to Macedonia, under the framework of the 2007–2010 Country Partnership Strategy (CPS), provides support of up to $280 million (World Bank 2007). The priorities of the 2007–2010 CPS are centred on Macedonia's ambitions for EU accession and are structured around two pillars of activity:

1. Fostering economic growth, job creation and increasing the living standards of all

2. Improving the governance and transparency of public service delivery to support the market economy. (World Bank 2007)

Pillar one aims to foster a comprehensive approach to improving employment levels in Macedonia through improving the country's business environment, improving competitiveness among businesses, improving infrastructure for growth by increasing public/private partnerships and developing an appropriately skilled labour force (World Bank 2007). Pillar two aims to promote good and effective governance, to tackle corruption in the country through judicial reforms, provide assistance to municipal governments in the area of public financial management and assist health service reform (World Bank 2007).

United Nations/UNDP

A number of UN agencies have been crucial in Macedonia since 2001, including the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organisation (WHO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). UNHCR played a particularly important role in the post-conflict context, assisting approximately 140,000 refugees and internally displaced persons to return to their homes and providing emergency shelter materials for families whose homes had been damaged during the fighting. Other UN agencies including the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), the UN Mine Actions Service (UNMAS) and the World Food Programme also assisted the safe return of those displaced by violence in 2001.

However, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the organisation that has been most consistently involved over the longer term. Immediately following the 2001 crisis, UNDP's 2001–2003 Country Cooperation Framework (CCF) for Macedonia focused on the areas of local government and municipal development, and environmental governance and sustainable development. Following the completion of the Common Country Assessment

(CCA) and the development of a United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for the country, UNDP's priorities in the country shifted to:

- Good governance and rule of law

- Poverty reduction through economic development

- Sustainable development, environmental protection and natural resource management

- Conflict prevention and recovery. (United Nations 2004)

Good governance work focused on both national and local level and included support to central government ministries in the planning, implementation and management of the decentralisation process as well as capacity-building for local government structure and officials. Poverty reduction programmes focused on issues including unemployment, provision of micro-credit schemes for small businesses and measures to address the informal economy. Sustainable development and environmental programmes focused on issues such as sustainable livelihoods for communities and environmental protection (United Nations 2004).

In 2006, the UN Country Team in Macedonia undertook a strategic review of UN activities in the country in order to assess how the UN could best contribute to Macedonia's EU accession process through its programming. As a result of the review, four overarching themes for UN operational activities were decided upon:

1. Promoting social inclusion

2. Achieving gender equality

3. Achieving decentralisation, respect for diversity and human rights

4. Protecting the environment and improving disaster preparedness and response. (UNDP 2008a)

These themes are reflected in UNDP's current areas of focus in Macedonia:

- Social inclusion

- Local governance/decentralisation

- Environment.

UNDP takes a capacity-building approach to its work, aiming to develop institutional and human capacity within government and civil society in order that the country can achieve its objectives for European integration and attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (UNDP 2008a). Support for local governance/decentralisation has been an ongoing priority area for UNDP in the post-conflict environment.[30] At the central level, UNDP continues to assist the government with the second phase of the decentralisation process – fiscal decentralisation reform. At the local level, since the decentralisation process is almost complete, current UNDP programme activities are increasingly focused on making effective local government a reality on the ground.[31] Training and capacity-building for local government officials, facilitation of inter-municipal cooperation, support for improved municipal service delivery, and increased transparency and reduced corruption at the municipal level are just some of the activities being undertaken in this area.[32]

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30. Interview with programme officer, UNDP in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Skopje, 27 January 2009.
31. ibid
32. Interview with programme officer, UNDP in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Skopje, 27 January 2009.

UNDP, alongside UNICEF and UNESCO, will also shortly begin a programme of activity focused on enhancing inter-ethnic community dialogue and collaboration.[33] The programme aims to build local and national capacity for problem-solving and conflict resolution as well as building a mutli-cultural civic identity. The key focus of the programme is on developing the capacity and efficiency of existing mechanisms such as the Committees for Inter-Community Relations (CICR) and multi-ethnic municipal councils for institutional and non-institutional dialogue at local and national levels, in order to facilitate inclusive dialogue and problem-solving is. The programme concentrates particularly on areas with existing ethnic tensions and where conflict transformation systems are dysfunctional.[34]

With regard to UNDP's social inclusion work, the Programme provides advisory support and technical assistance in three main areas: social inclusion policy development and reform, building national capacities to develop and implement programmes promoting social inclusion (for example, promoting the integration of marginalised communities into the labour market), and strengthening national capacities to collect, disseminate and use social statistics for analysing and monitoring social inclusion (UNDP 2008a). UNDP's new People-Centred Analyses reports contribute towards the formation of evidence-based policy, presenting relevant and timely data on emerging social trends and raising awareness of social exclusion/inclusion issues in the country (UNDP 2008b). Finally, UNDP's environmental work focuses on assisting Macedonia to align with EU standards in the areas of adapting to climate change, control of natural resources (especially water management), biodiversity protection and industrial pollution clean-up and control.

Combined effect

The cumulative effect of the international actors working in post-conflict Macedonia has been considerable and the international community has achieved much since 2001. In particular, and in addition to the avoidance of a further major outbreak of inter-ethnic violence, there has been a combined effect in the three key areas of:

- Security
- Political stability and decentralisation
- Minority rights and inter-ethnic issues.

Each of these is dealt with in turn below.

Security

Following the 2001 crisis, the primary concern for international actors was clearly to consolidate peace and ensure that Macedonia did not slip back into conflict. From the outset there was an understanding among all international organisations that the political reforms set out in the OFA would not be able to take place unless the security of the country could be guaranteed.

NATO's Operation Essential Harvest was successful in disarming the NLA, which volunteered a total of 3,875 arms, including four tanks and armoured personnel carriers and 483 machine guns (Dobbins *et al* 2008). Although high numbers of small arms and light weapons (SALW) still remain in Macedonia, just as important as NATO's disarmament role was the message conveyed by the visible presence of its troops on the ground. NATO, and later EU, troops acted, as UNPREDEP had done in the 1990s, as a deterrent to potential spoilers demonstrating sustained and united Western support for the OFA and playing a critical

33. Interview with senior UNICEF official and UNICEF education specialist, UNICEF in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Skopje, 27 January 2009.
34. ibid and interview with programme officer, UNDP in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Skopje, 27 January 2009.

confidence-building role. Moreover, international actors in the post-conflict period had clearly learned lessons from the UN's prematurely terminated preventive deployment in Macedonia in the 1990s. This time, care was taken to ensure that a visible military presence was sustained for as long as it was deemed necessary by both the international community and the Macedonian government.

As described above, Essential Harvest was followed by two further NATO deployments and then by EU military and police deployments. It is a testament to the success of the NATO and EU missions that, just five years after the conflict had begun, foreign security forces were no longer considered necessary to maintain security in Macedonia and violence has not re-erupted.

With regard to the reform of Macedonia's own security apparatus, the policing programmes carried out by the OSCE and EU have been largely successful. Indeed, by 2003 multi-ethnic police forces had been efficiently trained and returned to former crisis areas.[35] Notwithstanding the fact that the politicisation of the police forces remains a problem in Macedonia, marked improvement has undoubtedly been made since 2001 in the area of policing and the EU's latest progress report for the country describes advances in police cooperation as 'significant' (European Union 2008). The introduction of community policing has also helped to improve the relationship between members of the public and the police forces. In particular, the Citizens Advisory Groups (described above) have provided an effective mechanism for building confidence between communities and police forces and have contributed to a sense – on both sides – of the benefits of working together for the common good.[36]

Defence and military reforms, in order to meet NATO targets, have also progressed well since 2001. The country adopted a strategic defence plan in 2004 and is now in the final stages of its defence reform plan, having significantly restructured its armed forces (moving from conscripted to volunteer military forces) and defence and security architecture. Macedonia is considered by NATO to have reached the standards necessary for accession, and was expected to be accepted into the Alliance, alongside Albania and Croatia, at the April 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest. As noted earlier, a Greek veto – as a result of the ongoing name disputes – prevented this. However, Allied leaders have agreed to invite the country to become a member as soon as the naming issue with Greece has been resolved (NATO 2008).

Political stability and decentralisation
Political tensions still exist in Macedonia and politics remains divided along ethnic lines.[37] Intra-ethnic disputes and tensions also continue to pose challenges and have in recent years resulted in occasional violence, as was the case during the 2008 parliamentary elections.[38] Despite this, however, significant steps forward have been taken and relations between political parties have become more stable since 2001. Following the effective disbandment of the NLA by NATO forces, its former commander Ali Ahmeti became the leader of a newly formed Albanian political party, the DUI. The country's first post-crisis elections in 2002 passed peacefully and the DUI entered into government in a coalition with the SDSM. These elections were widely viewed as a sign of considerable democratic progress in Macedonia and signalled the willingness of Ahmeti to participate in the political process (Dobbins *et al* 2008).

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35. Interview with senior OSCE official, police development, OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje, Skopje, 28 January 2009.
36. ibid
37. Interviews with Executive Director, FORUM, Center for Strategic Research and Documentation, Skopje, 28 January 2009 and President, Center for Research and Policy Making, Skopje, 27 January 2009.
38. Interview with political adviser, Office of the EUSR, Mission of the European Union to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Skopje, 26 January 2009.

Substantial amendments to the 1991 constitution were also adopted by parliament, recognising the equal place of ethnic minority communities alongside the Macedonian majority in the country. The majority of the legislation adopted under the OFA was passed between 2002 and 2003, including the Law on Local Self-Government, setting out the framework for decentralisation. The country's first local elections were held in March 2005. The ongoing decentralisation process, while suffering some setbacks in terms of local capacity and training issues, has moved forward successfully in the majority of municipalities and is now in the advanced stages of implementation.[39] At the national level, despite a number of serious ruptures (see below) and ongoing friction, lines of communication and frameworks for dialogue have been established between most of the major political parties. Furthermore, the DUI and the Macedonian nationalist party the VMRO-DPMNE, once sworn enemies, are now in a coalition government together (albeit a fragile one).[40]

The combined efforts of the international community have played no small role in facilitating and encouraging this dialogue and advancing the political reform process in Macedonia. Political stabilisation in the aftermath of the 2001 crisis was perhaps the biggest test for the international community in Macedonia. Indeed, the diplomatic and crisis-management skills of international actors – particularly the EUSR and the US Ambassador – have been rigorously tested in the eight years since the crisis. In 2002 and 2003, when the majority of pieces of legislation from the OFA were framed, the international community was critical in influencing and persuading the government to press ahead with reforms, sometimes in the face of a distinct lack of political will on the part of the ruling SDSM/DUI administration.[41]

The issue of decentralisation proved to be a particularly problematic issue when in 2004 opposition parties challenged the government's decentralisation policy in a nationwide referendum that threatened to derail the entire Ohrid process. International actors worked together to play a key role in ensuring that the referendum failed: pressure was applied to both political parties by EU, US, NATO and OSCE leaders, and strong public messages were communicated by both the EUSR and US Ambassador that a rejection of decentralisation would severely hamper Macedonia's chances of EU and NATO membership (Chivvis 2008). On the eve of the referendum Washington also moved to recognise Macedonia by its constitutional name. These combined diplomatic efforts culminated in the failure of the referendum, ensuring that the peace process was not derailed.

EU and US diplomats also played important roles following the contentious 2006 election when the decision of the winning Macedonian party, VMRO-DPMNE, to form a coalition with the smaller of the two Albanian parties (rather than the larger DUI) resulted in political deadlock and the DUI withdrawing from parliament. The EU and US both facilitated negotiations and applied diplomatic pressure to DUI's leadership, resulting in the party returning to parliament in May 2007.

Minority rights and inter-ethnic relations

Significant progress has also been made in the area of minority rights since 2001. As per the OFA, Albanians are now able to receive both primary and secondary education in their mother-tongue: in the school year 2005/2006 98 per cent of ethnic Albanians received elementary education in their own language (UNDP 2008b). Albanians also have increased

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39. Interviews with policy support officer, OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre, OSCE Secretariat, Vienna, 11 October 2008, senior political adviser, office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, The Hague, 22 January 2009, and senior EU official, Office of the European Commission Delegation, Mission of the European Union to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Skopje, 26 January 2009.
40. Interview with political adviser, Office of the EUSR, Mission of the European Union to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Skopje, 26 January 2009.
41. Interview with senior political officer, OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje, Skopje, 29 January 2009.

access to higher education with the opening in 2001 of the SEEU and the (de-facto) recognition of Tetovo University as the State University of Tetovo (SUT) in 2004. In the 2007/2008 school year, 95 per cent of the 10,000 students attending SUT were from the Albanian community (ibid).

A law on the use of languages spoken by at least 20 per cent of citizens (which only applies to the ethnic Albanian minority) was adopted in August 2008 (European Union 2008). The law extends the scope for the use of non-majority language at certain levels of national and local government, although it does not apply to more sensitive areas such as police and military forces. Progress towards achieving more equitable representation of the Albanian minority in the public sector has also been made, albeit slowly. As of 2007, overall minority representation in Macedonia's state administration stood at 15 per cent (Dobbins *et al* 2008). Representation of Albanians in the security services has seen a more marked improvement, with the number of Albanians in the armed forces increasing from just 3 per cent in 2002 to approximately 20 per cent in 2006 (Ordanoski and Matovski 2007). The OSCE's training of 1,000 minority cadets (completed by 2004) has also contributed to significant improvements in minority representation in the police forces.

Steps towards achieving more equitable representation of minority communities in public service continue and the EU's recent progress report noted that from January 2007 to January 2008 the number of ethnic Albanian civil servants increased by 3.75 per cent, and that six of the 15 members of the Judicial Council were now from non-majority communities (European Union 2008).[42]

At a more general level, the prospects of EU and NATO accession have also contributed substantially towards uniting ethnic Albanians and ethnic Macedonians behind a common goal. As the International Crisis Group notes, the promise of EU and NATO integration has been a critical factor underpinning the Ohrid agreement and continues to play a unifying role between the two communities (International Crisis Group 2009). At a local level, although tensions remain, UNDP data has revealed that among both Albanian and Macedonian communities, the risk of ethnic tensions erupting into violent conflict is seen as being very low (UNDP 2008b).

As noted above, many of the programmes of activity being implemented by international actors in Macedonia either have an explicit inter-ethnic confidence-building focus (as in the case of the OSCE and UNDP), or have the theme of inter-ethnic relations mainstreamed through their programme work. The continued long-term focus on inter-ethnic issues, particularly through activities in the education sector, has been important in the post-conflict era especially given the backdrop of increasing segregation between communities.

Conclusions to phase 3

Successful action on the part of international actors to prevent conflict in the post-2001 era was marked by a number of distinguishing features, all of which contributed towards ensuring the success of the activities described above.

Firstly, post-conflict efforts to prevent the re-eruption of violent conflict were largely focused on tackling many of the underlying drivers of conflict. Indeed, the OFA's primary aim was to tackle these root causes by addressing the issue of minority rights and inter-ethnic tensions. The Framework Agreement was in itself an instrument of long-term conflict prevention.

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42. Although much progress has been made in terms of Albanian minority rights, other smaller minority groups, such as the Serb and Roma communities, have received far less attention from government and the international community. This situation is slowly beginning to change: the Macedonian government has adopted the law on the use of languages for minority communities whose languages are spoken by less than 20 per cent of the population, and international organisations such as the EU, OSCE and UNDP are beginning to focus more on non-Albanian minority groups in their programme work.

Moreover, many of the issues that have been successfully addressed by the OFA, such as the right to education in the mother tongue and the recognition of Albanian as an official language of the state, are those that the international community struggled and failed to tackle adequately during the 1990s. The conflict prevention efforts of the 1990s, while successful in preventing the spillover of violence from other Balkan conflicts, did not pay sufficient attention to addressing the underlying drivers of conflict in Macedonia or building an inclusive political settlement. By contrast, the OFA confronted these issues directly, therefore providing a viable and long-term political solution to Albanian grievances.

Secondly, coordination between organisations has been pivotal to success in the post-conflict environment. Implementation of the Framework Agreement has been the central focus for all external actors in Macedonia in the post-2001 period and this common objective has therefore resulted in a high degree of inter-agency coordination. Similarly, EU accession has given many international organisations a framework for programmatic action in some key areas, as we have seen from the activities described above.[43]

The EU has played an important coordinating role in this sense, hosting the regular meetings of the Principals Group. The Group, formed following the 2001 crisis and consisting of the principals from all leading international actors (EU, US, OSCE, NATO), has since held weekly or fortnightly meetings in order to ensure that the international effort is coordinated and that programme and diplomatic activities are complementary. This has allowed each organisation to play to their individual strengths and has ensured that international action in Macedonia has been consistent in following common objectives.[44] The Principals Group acted as a very effective mechanism for quick joint action in the post-conflict period, since it allowed the key players to react rapidly to the changing situation on the ground. It has also played an important role in coordinating key messages from the international community and ensuring that international actors present a united front to the Macedonian government on important issues.[46]

Regular Principals meetings are ongoing today, and the group continues to act as a focal point for all international organisations operating in Macedonia. For example, the EU, NATO, US and OSCE coordinated closely in the run up to the March 2009 elections, deciding on priorities and communicating key messages to the Macedonian government. In the sphere of policing, coordination between different international actors, and with the Macedonian Ministry of Interior, has been particularly strong. The main players – the OSCE, EU and relevant bilateral actors such as the US, France, Norway and the UK – meet on a regular basis to share information and ensure that programmes are complementary.[47]

Among the main military actors, too, coordination and cooperation has contributed significantly to successful operations. NATO/EU military collaboration during the immediate post-conflict period was very close. Coordination between NATO and the EU was critical during the hand-over of security control to the EU, and as described above Operation Concordia acted under 'Berlin Plus' arrangements, which meant that it had access to NATO assets and capabilities for the duration of its mission. This in itself is a significant achievement since negotiations on the Berlin Plus arrangements had been ongoing since 1998 and Concordia was the first such mission to operate under the new arrangement.

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43. Interview with political adviser, Office of the EUSR, Mission of the European Union to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Skopje, 26 January 2009.
44. Interview with political adviser, Office of the EUSR, Mission of the European Union to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Skopje, 26 January 2009.
45. Interview with senior EU official, Office of the EUSR, Mission of the European Union to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Skopje, 26 January 2009.
46. Interview with senior political officer, OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje, Skopje, 29 January 2009.
47. Interview with senior OSCE official, police development, OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje, Skopje, 28 January 2009.

It is not only through complementary programming and common objectives that international actors work together in Macedonia. They also share monitoring and early warning intelligence and information. The OSCE's confidence-building monitors perform a crucial function in this regard as the only organisation in the country with a widely dispersed field presence. Confidence-building officers based at the Tetovo field station regularly monitor developments and potential sources of conflict in the former crisis zones, reporting back not only to OSCE HQ in Skopje but also to other international organisations in the country.[48]

Thirdly, incentives, and in particular the prospect of EU and NATO membership, have played a very important part in moving forwards political reforms in the post-conflict period. The prospect of EU accession in itself plays a stabilising and unifying role within Macedonia, acting as an incentive for reform and development and therefore a significant instrument for long-term conflict prevention.[49] There is a broad consensus among the representatives of international organisations in Macedonia that without the lure of EU membership, many of the reforms that have taken place over the past eight years may not have been so willingly implemented by the national government.

In order to bring better coherence to the work of the EU in Macedonia, from 2005 onwards the EU mission in Skopje has had a double-hatted leadership with Erwan Fourere representing both the Commission as head of delegation (HoD) and the Council as EU Special Representative (EUSR). This has given the EUSR/HoD a broader range of complementary tools to work with, enabling him, when speaking with the government, to use a political vocabulary that is also backed up by the weight of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA).[50] The double-hatting was important in relation to the March 2009 elections as it allowed the EUSR/HoD to add real weight to the message that the elections must meet international standards in order for Macedonia to be recommended a date to begin negotiations for accession.

48. Interviews with senior confidence building officer, OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje, Skopje, 28 January 2009 and policy support officer, OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre, OSCE Secretariat, Vienna, 11 October 2008.

49. This point came across strongly from the majority of officials interviewed at OSCE, EU and UN offices in Macedonia.

50. Interview with political adviser, Office of the EUSR, Mission of the European Union to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Skopje, 26 January 2009.

Overall conclusions

Much has been achieved through the collective efforts of the international community since Macedonia's brush with conflict in 2001. As noted in the introduction to this case study, Macedonia stands alone in the Balkans region, and more generally in the field of conflict prevention, as an example of successful pre-emptive action to prevent protracted violent conflict from taking root.

As a result of the implementation of the OFA and the combined effect of the work of international actors in Macedonia, the risk of an imminent return to armed conflict in Macedonia is low. But despite the considerable progress made, Macedonia is not yet out of the woods. The good work that has been done should not lead us to become complacent about Macedonia's prospects. A number of challenges remain in the country which, if left unchecked, could cause instability in the future.

Firstly, and most significantly, there remains a great deal of mistrust and suspicion between ethnic Albanians and ethnic Macedonians. The two ethnic groups are geographically, politically, and linguistically segregated, essentially living in parallel communities with very few points of contact or opportunities for interaction.[51] This serves to reinforce myths and stereotypes of the 'other', which then feeds into further cycles of mistrust and division.[52] Illustrating this point is the fact that rates of inter-ethnic marriage are extremely low, at close to nought per cent.[53]

Increasing segregation in primary and secondary education is particularly concerning. It is now commonplace for children from different ethnic groups to attend schools in shift systems or, in some cases such as the town of Kumanovo, to be taught in completely separate buildings.[54] Moreover, the high level of ethno-politics in education too often results in decisions for educational reform being made purely for the benefit of one ethnic group or another, rather than as a result of any long-term strategic vision for improving education in the country. Even more worryingly, the past few years have witnessed increasing numbers of violent inter-ethnic incidents in schools.[55]

In a country that suffered a violent inter-ethnic crisis just eight years ago, these trends are clearly worrying and in the long term they could be significant risk factors for conflict, particularly if combined with deteriorating socio-economic conditions. Slow economic growth coupled with lack of suitable skills and education has led to an increasing pool of unemployed and frustrated young people (UNDP 2008b). Unemployment is persistently high in Macedonia, currently standing at around 35 per cent (Ordanoski and Matovski 2007). These conditions could provide fertile ground for political opportunists to channel frustrations back into ethnically-focused violence (ibid). Indeed, such a path would be facilitated by the high numbers of small arms and light weapons that are present in Macedonia, both as a result of residual stocks left over from the 2001 conflict and of the continued smuggling of arms across the border from Kosovo and Albania.

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51. Interview with senior confidence building officer, OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje, Skopje, 28 January 2009.
52. ibid
53. Interview with political adviser, Office of the EUSR, Mission of the European Union to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Skopje, 26 January 2009.
54. Meeting with students and teachers from Goce Delcev secondary school in Kumanovo participating in OSCE-funded project on Multi-Ethnic Extra-Curricular Activities for Secondary Schools, Kumanovo, 28 January 2009.
55. Interview with education development officer, OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje, Kumanovo, 28 January.

Secondly, Macedonia also faces a number of potentially problematic flashpoints over the coming years which, if not handled sensitively, could have a destabilising effect on the country both politically and socially. Of marked concern are the four former International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) cases that have been returned to Macedonia by The Hague. The cases relate to alleged war crimes carried out by former NLA members during the 2001 conflict, including a highly sensitive case against current DUI leader Ali Ahmeti. Ongoing disputes between the DUI and VMRO-DPMNE over whether these cases fall under the 2001 Amnesty law and should therefore be dismissed, are already putting increased strain on political relations between the two parties and have the potential to create real political and social instability.[56]

Macedonia's ongoing dispute with Greece over the issue of the country's name, as well as being a source of strain in its bilateral relations and on its possible accession to the EU and NATO, contributes to the country's internal fragility. Since the April 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest when Macedonia's accession to the alliance was blocked by a Greek veto, political tensions between Albanians and Macedonians have risen substantially with Albanians increasingly critical of the government's uncompromising stance on the issue.[57]

Finally, we must not forget the regional context Macedonia sits in. Kosovo, which borders Macedonia's primarily Albanian north-western provinces, remains volatile and is an ever-present threat to the stability of its neighbour. If the security situation in Kosovo did deteriorate and conflict re-erupted, the consequences for Macedonia would be disastrous as violence, small arms and refugees could flow easily across the porous border separating the two countries. In addition to this, politicians in Macedonia are particularly fearful of any developments in the future that might lead to the partition of Kosovo. This would, many believe, set a dangerous precedent and could lead to increased internal tensions between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians within Macedonia.

Nevertheless, Macedonia does represent a relative success story. Although any preventive intervention should be the result of context-specific analysis, the material presented in this paper suggests a number of important lessons for international actors tasked with preventing and responding to conflict:

1. Inclusive political settlements are integral to building sustainable peace in fragile and conflict-prone environments. The OFA, which was specifically aimed at opening up political processes and increasing the rights of minority communities, demonstrates this.

2. Longer-term and upstream structural prevention focused on addressing the potential underlying causes of conflict is crucial in conflict-prone environments. Had more attention been focused on addressing inter-ethnic tensions in Macedonia during the 1990s, there may not have been a violent conflict in 2001.

3. When operational prevention is necessary, high-level preventive diplomatic engagement, when conducted in a timely manner and backed by clear incentives and inducements for the parties to a conflict, can and does work.

4. A knowledgeable field presence in country, such as that presented by the OSCE in Macedonia, is vital for context-specific and timely interventions that influence the real dynamics of the problem.

56. Interview with policy support officer, OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre, OSCE Secretariat, Vienna, 11 October 2008.
57. Interviews with senior political adviser, office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, The Hague, 22 January 2009, and political adviser, Office of the EUSR, Mission of the European Union to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Skopje, 26 January 2009.

5. The ability to coordinate the actions of a variety of international players behind a negotiated plan or framework setting out shared objectives is vital for maximising their combined effect on the ground.

6. A combination of complementary conflict prevention instruments, carefully selected with reference to the context on the ground, is the most effective way of preventing the eruption of conflict and consolidating peace.

7. Hard power instruments are a key dimension of preventive action at times but these can involve relatively small numbers of troops and monitors and still be highly effective, provided the commitment is backed up by a credible threat to deploy more if necessary.

8. Even taking the above into account, long-term commitment to conflict prevention is absolutely fundamental. As demonstrated in Macedonia, conflict prevention is and should be considered by all international actors, an ongoing process requiring flexibility and the ability to adapt to the nature of events on the ground.

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- The Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, The Hague
- The Mission of the European Union to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Skopje
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- UNDP in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Skopje
- The OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje, Skopje and Tetovo
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- The Center for Research and Policy Making, Skopje

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