



FORUM: MACEDONIA

Peace, Stability and Elections: An Opinion Poll and Its Implications

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Seeking the People's Views on Conflict Resolution

Peace and peace processes are not easy. Macedonia managed to stay out of the worst of the Balkan wars and Northern Ireland is having a good year after a generation of 'The Troubles'. Israel and Palestine are not doing so well. There tanks, F16s and helicopter gun ships 'face off' against suicide bombers with the most tragic of consequences. The election of a hard liner, Sharon, to the leadership of the Israeli State may have helped to re-ignite the conflict in the Middle East. In Northern Ireland next year's elections could see new politicians in power and a reversal of fortunes there. While here, in Macedonia, the up coming elections may determine the fate of the peace process in this part of the Balkans.

What are the critical problems that the next Macedonian government must deal with? What policies can best meet these challenges? What will happen if these problems are not dealt with and can the people of Macedonia be persuaded to come out and vote for the politicians they believe can best deliver long term peace and stability?

Eight public opinion polls were run in support of the Northern Ireland peace process so that the people of Northern Ireland would have an opportunity to tell their politicians what they thought should be done. This public opinion poll uses the same methods as those used there so that the people of Macedonia can have an opportunity to express their views on the way ahead. The results are reviewed below and full comprehensive reports will be sent to all the parties who have been elected to the Parliament of Macedonia and to the EU, OSCE and other interested National and International organisations.

Reasons for the Lack of Peace and Stability in Macedonia

People from different communities often hold very different views about the causes of a conflict and, in this case, the lack of peace and stability in Macedonia. To deal with this issue the first question in the poll asked people to indicate which problems they considered to be 'Very Significant', 'Significant', 'Of Some Significance', 'Of Little Significance' or 'Of No Significance' at all. Table 1 lists the results for the two main communities in order of importance from one to twenty four (per cent 'Very Significant'). Some concerns are the same for both Macedonians and Albanians, but some are not.



Table 1: Macedonian and Albanian Views on the Causes of Conflict in Order of Significance

	Macedonian		Albanian
Activities of Albanian paramilitary groups still operating in Macedonia (ANA).	85	Discrimination against minority ethnic groups in employment, education and language rights	80
Incomplete disarmament of NLA by NATO	78	Activities of Macedonian party police and paramilitary groups operating in Macedonia (Lions, Poskoks).	67
Many illegally held weapons in the region	74	Bribery and party political corruption that undermines the democratic foundations of the state	66
Serious organised crime including businessmen, paramilitaries and politicians	70	Poor economic opportunities for all sections of the society	61
Bribery and party political corruption that undermines the democratic foundations of the state	65	The failure of the Macedonian economy	58
Amnesty that includes ALL serious crimes against humanity	62	Serious organised crime including businessmen, paramilitaries and politicians	56
The failure of the Macedonian economy	53	Biased media and abuse of information due to gross political interference	55
Poor economic opportunities for all sections of the society	52	Bad interethnic relations between the people of Macedonia	53
Bad interethnic relations between the people of Macedonia	48	Lack of understanding of democracy by the people's elected politicians	46
Lack of action by the International Community to create peace and stability in Macedonia	46	Bad interethnic relations between the politicians of Macedonia	40
The FA goes too far regarding the requests for reforms	43	Lack of transparency in government at all levels	36
Displaced people within Macedonia	42	Many illegally held weapons in the region	27
The dispute about the border with Kosovo	42	The dispute about the border with Kosovo	27
Lack of transparency in government at all levels	38	Interference of the religious communities in politics	25
Bad interethnic relations between the politicians of Macedonia	36	The FA does not adequately deal with the requests for reforms	25
Lack of understanding of democracy by the people's elected politicians	35	Unequal treatment of different ethnic groups by international institutions and NGOs	23
Unequal treatment of different ethnic groups by international institutions and NGOs	32	Displaced people within Macedonia	19
The FA does not adequately deal with the requests for reforms	32	Lack of understanding of democracy by the people of Macedonia	17
Macedonia has not resolved its name dispute	30	Amnesty that includes ALL serious crimes against humanity	15
Biased media and abuse of information due to gross political interference	26	Macedonia has not resolved its name dispute	15
Interference of the religious communities in politics	22	Lack of action by the International Community to create peace and stability in Macedonia	12
Lack of understanding of democracy by the people of Macedonia	16	Activities of Albanian paramilitary groups still operating in Macedonia (ANA).	10
Discrimination against minority ethnic groups in employment, education and language rights	13	Incomplete disarmament of NLA by NATO	9
Activities of Macedonian party police and paramilitary groups operating in Macedonia (Lions, Poskoks)	13	The FA goes too far regarding the requests for reforms	6

Problems of security feature at the top of the Macedonian list with 'Activities of Albanian paramilitary groups' as their number one concern (85% 'very significant') followed by 'Incomplete disarmament of NLA by NATO' at number two (78%) and 'Many illegally held weapons in the region' at number three (74%). This is followed by problems of serious organised crime and corruption at four and five.

Similarly Albanians place corruption and organised crime high on their list of causes too at third and sixth respectively (67% and 56% 'Very significant'). The problem of security comes in at number two on their list but for them it is the 'Activities of the Macedonian party police and paramilitary groups' that continue to worry them (67%). However, for Albanians their number one problem is not security it is 'Discrimination against minority ethnic groups in employment, education and language rights' (80% 'very significant').

In many ways the major concerns of the 'Other' ethnic groups in Macedonia (for the most part, Turks, Romas, Serbians and Vlachs) are the same as those of the Macedonians with the activities of Albanian paramilitaries at the top of their list as well.

Clearly the different problems of security of each community must be dealt with if peace and stability is to be achieved in the long term and, for Albanians and some groups of 'Others', questions of discrimination must also be addressed. Beyond this all the people of Macedonia, whatever their ethnic background, consider the problems of corruption in government and the poor economic prospects of the state to be the greatest threat to the ultimate success of the peace process.

Interestingly, with regards to the peace process, it should be pointed out that the idea that the Framework Agreement goes too far with reforms came in at item 11 on the Macedonian list (43%) while the suggestion that the Agreement does not go far enough came in at item 15 on the Albanian list (25%). Clearly the Framework Agreement, as such, is not a major problem for either community although its outworking, in terms of security, equality and the rule of law, has yet to reach its full potential.

Priorities for Lasting Peace and Stability

In the second question people were asked to go through a list of twenty four steps that could be taken to help secure a lasting peace and permanent stability in Macedonia. For each step or option they were invited to indicate which ones they considered to be 'Essential', 'Desirable', 'Acceptable', 'Tolerable' or 'Unacceptable' as part of a successful peace process. Table 2 lists the results for the two main communities in order of importance. Again some priorities for peace and stability are the same but some are different.

The first three priorities for Macedonians relate to security and the rule of law. Their number one priority is for 'Effective measures against paramilitaries and organised crime (83% 'Essential'). This is followed by 'Strengthening the rule of law' and 'True court independence' both at 75%. For Albanians their first three priorities all deal with questions of equality and social reform. Their number one priority is for a 'State funded University in Albanian' (85% 'Essential') followed by 'Full implementation of the Framework Agreement (FA)' at 84% and 'Strong measures to prevent ethnic discrimination at 82%. Both of these communities list 'Free and fair elections' as their fourth priority.



With one notable exception there should not be too much community based resistance to the implementation of these apparently separate lists of needs. Albanians also want 'Strengthening the rule of law' (77% 'Essential') and 'True court independence' (66% 'Essential'). For Albanians 'Effective measures against paramilitaries and organised crime' is 16th on their list at 45% 'Essential', 22% 'Desirable', 22% 'Acceptable', 10% 'Tolerable' and only 1% 'Unacceptable'. Similarly 43% of Macedonians consider 'Strong measures to prevent ethnic discrimination to be 'Essential' with only 2% considering such a policy to be 'Unacceptable'. 'Full implementation of the FA' is not an easy matter for all Macedonians but most find it either 'Essential' at 13%, or 'Desirable' at 20%, or 'Acceptable' at 22%, or 'Tolerable' at 19%. A minority of 26% consider this option to be 'Unacceptable' and so for them it is still a problem.

Unfortunately the one priority upon which there seems to be little or no 'meeting of minds' is the desire for a 'State funded University in Albanian'. This option is at the bottom of the Macedonian list with 78% considering such funding to be 'Unacceptable' while 85% of Albanians consider it 'Essential'. Hopefully Macedonians will now begin to understand how important such a University is to Albanians. Conversely Albanians must make an effort to understand why Macedonians are so opposed to such a policy and try to put such concerns as they may have to rest. Some very careful diplomacy and/or mediation is clearly needed here.

Much more could be said about the two lists of priorities. But, for the most part, there is more agreement than disagreement about policies and reforms which can be taken forward with strong and effective political leadership. Everyone wants Macedonia to be a democratic and economic success and will welcome all efforts made to achieve that end.

Table 2: Macedonian and Albanian Priorities for Peace and Stability

	Macedonian		Albanian
Effective measures against paramilitaries and organised crime	83	State funded University in Albanian	85
Strengthening the rule of law	75	Full implementation of the FA	84
True court independence	75	Strong measures to prevent ethnic discrimination	82
Free and fair elections	72	Free and fair elections	80
Rebuild the houses of displaced people and secure their safety	72	Local government development	78
The International Community should make greater efforts to remove all illegally held arms from the region	69	Proportional representation for all ethnic groups in the public administration, police and army in Macedonia	78
Strategic plan to eliminate social decline and poverty	68	Strengthening the rule of law	77
The state keeps control of strategic industries and resources	58	Strategic plan to eliminate social decline and poverty	73
Resolving the question of the name of Macedonia	51	Rebuild the houses of displaced people and secure their safety	67
EU membership	50	True court independence	66
Strong measures to prevent ethnic discrimination	43	Strategic plan to build confidence between different ethnic groups	66
Religious communities should not interfere with politics	40	EU membership	62
Local government development	34	Integration of ex-paramilitaries into civil society	59
Transparency in the grant giving of international institutions and NGOs	32	The state keeps control of strategic industries and resources	54

International help to build new and strengthen existing institutions of government	27	International help to build new and strengthen existing institutions of government	49
Strong measures to prevent gender discrimination	27	Effective measures against paramilitaries and organised crime	45
Strategic plan to build confidence between different ethnic groups	26	The International Community should make greater efforts to remove all illegally held arms from the region	40
International monitoring of the activities of key Ministries	23	Strong measures to prevent gender discrimination	38
Full implementation of the FA	13	Religious communities should not interfere with politics	38
Build new communities for displaced peoples in Macedonia	10	Transparency in the grant giving of international institutions and NGOs	37
Proportional representation for all ethnic groups in the public administration, police and army in Macedonia	8	International monitoring of the activities of key Ministries	33
Integration of ex-paramilitaries into civil society	6	Resolving the question of the name of Macedonia	25
State funding for an Faculty for Turkish Studies within an existing University	1	State funding for an Faculty for Turkish Studies within an existing University	14
State funded University in Albanian	1	Build new communities for displaced peoples in Macedonia	12

The Consequences of Failure

Of course everyone hopes that everything that has to be done to help make Macedonia a successful democracy with a growing economy will be done. But if the Government of Macedonia and the International Community fail to take the necessary steps needed to help secure a lasting peace and permanent stability what will happen then? From a list of fourteen different possibilities people were asked to indicate which ones they considered to be 'Very probable', 'Probable', 'Not sure' about, 'Improbable' or 'Very improbable'. Table 3 lists the results for all of Macedonia, for the Macedonian and Albanian communities separately and for the 'Other' minorities together.

Table 3: What will happen if the Macedonian Government and International Community fail to act? (Per cent 'Very probable')

	All	Macedonian	Albanian	Other
Increased poverty	77	78	74	74
Increased violence	62	68	43	62
Emigration of young people	61	64	50	64
There will not be fair and free elections	57	59	45	64
Few people will bother to vote in the coming elections	49	50	39	59
Immigration from Kosovo	32	40	6	32
The new Macedonian government will be weak and ineffective	32	31	33	38
Creation of ethnically clean communities	30	35	14	34
Restart of conflict initiated from Kosovo	27	34	5	27
State of emergency declared and elections cancelled	21	23	18	13
Aspirations of neighboring countries and break up of the state	21	24	13	19
Civil war and imposition of International Protectorate	16	19	9	11
Civil war leading to a regional war	12	14	7	11
Exchange of territories with neighboring countries	9	10	7	10



Nearly everyone is agreed that a failure to adequately address the problems that the Government and International Community must deal with will lead to 'Increased poverty' (77% 'Very probable'); 'Increased violence' (62%); 'Emigration of young people' (61%); and that 'There will not be fair and free elections' (57% 'very probable').

However, although 40% of Macedonians believe a failure to implement policies to deal with the Nations problems will also lead to 'Immigration from Kosovo' only 6% of Albanians share this view. Similarly only 5% of Albanians think a 'Restart of conflict initiated from Kosovo' is 'Very probable'. 18% of Albanians and 23% of Macedonians consider the prospects of a 'State of emergency declared and elections cancelled' to be 'Very probable'. While 24% of Macedonians and 13% of Albanians consider the break up of the country as 'Very probable'.

Beyond that the more serious prospects of a civil war leading to an International Protectorate (16% 'Very probable'), regional war (12% 'Very probable') or exchange of territories with neighbouring countries (9% 'Very probable') are not perceived to be very serious possibilities at the present time. Clearly the people of Macedonia do not fear war nearly so much as they fear a collapse of society resulting in increased poverty, violence, emigration and the failure of the democratic process. These prospects they consider to be very real indeed.

Fair and Free Elections

The desire for fair and free elections comes in as one of the top priorities for everyone living in Macedonia just behind the need for security and, for some, equality. Many may consider fair and free elections to be an indispensable part of any plan designed to deliver long term peace. With this point in mind the people of Macedonia were asked what steps should now be taken to help secure fair and free elections. From a list of twelve options which ones did they consider to be 'Essential', 'Desirable', 'Acceptable', 'Tolerable' or 'Unacceptable' as part of a successful peace process. Table 4 lists the results for all of Macedonia, for the Macedonian and Albanian communities separately and for the 'Other' minorities together.

Table 4: Requirements for Fair and Free Elections (Per cent 'Essential' or 'Desirable')

	All	Macedonian	Albanian	Other
Parties should cease all violence and intimidation during elections	93	94	97	86
The politicians should avoid using language and speeches that incite ethnic hatred	88	85	98	88
All the political parties should sign a pledge for fair and free elections	88	87	92	87
International monitors should be pro-active in the maintenance of international standards for fair and free elections	81	78	89	77
The news media should avoid publishing and broadcasting stories that incite ethnic hatred	80	75	95	80
The police, army and paramilitary groups should stay out of the electoral process	79	77	87	77
International monitoring teams should be deployed in Macedonia at the earliest opportunity	76	74	88	71
There should be a campaign to educate and encourage citizens to vote	76	78	73	70
International monitors should be present in each polling station	60	60	60	55

International forces should be used to monitor and close the border to paramilitary groups intent on disrupting elections	58	69	21	67
International forces should be used to monitor the voting process throughout Macedonia during the elections	50	51	51	46
A policeman should be present in each polling station	42	51	13	49

Again, with only a few minor exceptions, there is a great deal of agreement across all sections of Macedonian society on these issues. Ninety three percent believe it is 'Essential' or 'Desirable' that 'Parties should cease all violence and intimidation during elections' and that language that incites ethnic hatred should be avoided (88%); that parties should sign a pledge for fair and free elections (81%); that the news media should not incite ethnic hatred (80%); that the police, army and paramilitaries should stay out of the electoral process (79%); that international monitoring teams should be deployed (76%); that there should be a campaign to encourage citizens to vote (76%); and that there should also be international monitors in each polling station (60%). There is no significant dissension on any of these points so perhaps they could all be included in some sort of pledge for fair and free elections.

However, the use of international forces to monitor the elections is only considered 'Essential' or 'Desirable' by about half of the population and only about half of all Macedonians and 13% of Albanians want a policeman present in each polling station. Responsible behaviour, on the part of parties, politicians and the media is what people seem to want most of all coupled with the assurance that international monitors can bring. Forces, either domestic or international, are not so welcome perhaps because they are not considered to be a proper part of the electoral process in the free and democratic society that everyone now aspires too.

Table 5: If these conditions for fair and free elections can be met do you think people should vote? (Per cent)

	All	Macedonian	Albanian	Other
Yes	87	88	83	89
No	4	4	3	5
Do not know	9	8	15	6

Table 6: And would you vote under these circumstances?

	All	Macedonian	Albanian	Other
Yes	80	81	79	78
No	10	10	7	12
Do not know	10	9	14	10

But even if all of this can be done, if the politicians do now seek to address the issues and policies reviewed in this poll and if they do sign and keep to a pledge for fare and free elections – will the people of Macedonia come out and vote. Recent elections suggest they will not make the effort. But perhaps things could now be different. Perhaps people will vote if they do now believe their vote can make a difference. On this last critical point people were asked 'If these conditions for fair and free elections can be met do you think people should vote?' 87% said 'Yes' (Table 5). And when they were



asked if they themselves would vote 80% said they would (Table 6). Let us hope the politicians and the people can now meet this challenge.

COMMENTARIES

The Great Divide

Stefan Troebst, University of Leipzig

In 1979, as a graduate student at Skopje's Cyrill and Methodius University, I lived in the 'Gotse Delchev' dormitory on a floor together with students predominantly from the fringes of the republic - from Berovo, Valandovo, or from Ohrid. On the occasion of one of our frequent improvised kitchen parties, I had bought on the Bit Pazar open market a so-called *plis*, the egg-shaped, white felt cap frequently worn by Albanian men. Dressed with my new headgear, I entered the kitchen where the party was already in full swing. Complete and hostile silence befell my fellow students. It was up to my neighbour and friend Atso from Bitola to make it unmistakably clear to me that only due to my status as an outsider, who probably did not know better, my transgression was not sanctioned immediately by my Macedonian peers. Then I realized that I had stepped over a divide so far hardly visible to me. Soon after, I also realized that not a single Macedonian Albanian was living in the whole dormitory, and that ethnic Albanians as a whole were a tiny minority in the university.

In the 1990s, the political elites of Macedonian-speaking and Albanian-speaking Macedonians managed to bridge the divide a bit, yet 2001's *drôle de guerre* deepened it further. The CDRSEE Poll is an impressive indicator of this. In particular, it demonstrates the completely reversed perceptions which Macedonian-speaking and Albanian-speaking citizens of the Republic of Macedonia have on each other. Table 1 on 'Macedonian and Albanian causes of conflict in order of significance' is a particularly revealing example: While Macedonian-speaking Macedonians consider 'activities of Albanian paramilitary groups still operating in Macedonia (ANA)' as well as 'incomplete disarmament of NLA by NATO' to be the most significant causes of conflict, Albanian-speaking Macedonians put both these factors at the very end of their own scale of significance. Instead, for them 'discrimination against minority ethnic groups in employment, education and language rights' and 'activities of Macedonian party police and paramilitary groups operation in Macedonia (Lions, Poskoks)' rank first - two causes that are at best of marginal importance for their Macedonian-speaking counterparts. Comparing these completely diverging views the divide becomes visible. Seen from this perspective, there is little consolidation in the fact that both groups attribute almost the same degree of significance to 'bad interethnic relations between the people of Macedonia'. Also, one has to suspect that it is 'them' rather than 'us' who are responsible for this.

Table 2, 'Macedonian and Albanian priorities for peace and stability', gives a very similar picture: While Albanian-speaking Macedonians rank the establishment of a 'state-funded University in Albanian' top, Macedonian-speaking Macedonians give this issue the lowest priority on their own list. And their top priority - 'effective measures against paramilitaries and organised crime' - is given hardly medium priority by Albanian-speakers. Again, similar degrees of importance allotted by both groups to 'fair and free elections', 'strengthening the rule of law', or 'true court independence' cannot cover up the divide.

Table 3, 'What will happen if the Macedonian Government and International Community fail to act', on the one hand indicates two similarities in the responses – namely 'increased poverty' and that 'the new Macedonian government will be weak and ineffective'. On the other hand, this table indirectly shows that the perceptions of Albanian-speakers by the Macedonian-speaking majority are far more negative than the other way round: With regard to a worst-case scenario clearly more Macedonian-speakers than Albanian-speakers expect 'increased violence' or the 'creation of ethnically clean communities'. In return, Table 4 on 'Requirements for fair and free elections' reveals the negative image Albanian-speaking citizens have concerning the security forces. Accordingly, they prioritize the presence of international election monitoring during the upcoming parliamentary elections.

It does not come as a surprise that both groups give overwhelmingly positive answers to the final questions: 'If these conditions for fair and free elections can be met do you think the people should vote?' 'And would you vote under these circumstances?' The lesson of the 1995 parliamentary elections in Macedonia was that the decisive question is not whether elections are fair and free, but whether all political parties arrive at this conclusion. In 1995, two parties declared against all evidence that the elections were neither fair nor free, and boycotted parliament for a whole legislative period. At the time, it was an *ideological* cleavage running through both the Macedonian-speaking majority and the Albanian-speaking minority, and separating them both into (post-)Communists and anti-(post-)Communists. But what if during or after the upcoming elections the cleavage between those who consider them to be fair and free and those who don't coincides with the ethnolinguistic divide?

Compared to Macedonia, I am afraid, the 'Great Divide' which, according to Studs Terkel, runs through the blue collar and the white collar segments of US society is just a furrow. And while Terkel in 1988 had 'Second Thoughts on the American Dream', even considered the social barriers unsurmountable, I see good reasons for having second thoughts on the 'Macedonian Dream' of an economically prosperous multiethnic society – a dream dreamt predominantly in Brussels, Strasbourg and Vienna, and much less so in Berovo, Valandovo, or Ohrid.

The Common Ground

Jenny Engström, London School of Economics and Political Science

On 15 September, parliamentary elections were held in Macedonia, an event generally regarded as a crucial component of the peace process that was formalised by the Framework Agreement last year. Nearly 900 OSCE observers were present on election day, making it the biggest OSCE monitoring mission ever deployed in Europe. According to representatives of the international community, the elections were largely 'free and fair', despite some 'irregularities', preceded by an election campaign that was marred by violence, particularly in western Macedonia. Whilst elections in Macedonia have in the past been accompanied by skirmishes and occasional outbursts of violence, they have never led to any major violent confrontation. Hence, this year's election campaign followed what might be seen as a general trend in Macedonia since the first multiparty elections were held in 1990: periods of increased tension, on an inter- as well as intra-ethnic level, in the run-up to elections, but without actually throwing the country into complete disorder.

In his timely study of Macedonia, Dr Irwin emphasises the importance of the elections, suggesting that they may well 'determine the fate of the peace process in this part of the



Balkans.' Though external and domestic observers alike proclaimed this year's parliamentary elections as constituting a crucial test for the durability of Macedonia's fragile peace and democracy, the real litmus test comes with the formation of a new government. What matters, above all, are the steps taken by the elected, and non-elected, politicians from here and onward. Having beaten the incumbent government coalition of two nationalist parties, one Macedonian (VMRO-DPMNE) and the other Albanian (DPA), the opposition alliance 'For Macedonia Together', headed by the Social Democrats (SDSM), now must decide which, if any, Albanian party to invite as a coalition partner in the new government. This is not an enviable task for SDSM, given that the majority of the Albanian votes went to the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), a party recently established by the former guerrilla leader Ali Ahmeti. Branded a terrorist by most Macedonians, and blacklisted by the US government, Ahmeti's inclusion in the new government would undoubtedly be met by bitter protests from Macedonians who hold him responsible for last year's war, and might lead to further frictions between the Macedonian and Albanian communities. On the other hand, failing to include DUI and Ahmeti in government structures would most likely anger many Albanians and, in a worst-case scenario, lead to the resumption of armed activities by disillusioned ex-guerrillas. Additional causes for concern in the post-election period are recent, and by no means unexpected, claims by outgoing VMRO-DPMNE that election results were forged by the winning SDSM and DUI, as well as lingering tensions within the Albanian community, which remain a threat to the country's stability.

One of the principal challenges facing Macedonia today is undoubtedly that of governance. The country's party system remains strictly divided along ethnic lines, leaving little room for any serious development of nation-wide political strategies by any political party. In Macedonia, party politics is not about competing policies for the country as a whole, but about stuffing one's pocket and retaining power for the sake of power itself. In the introduction to his study, Irwin makes a comparison between Macedonia and Northern Ireland, but the differences between these two countries are so significant that it is perhaps questionable whether a reasonable comparison, or parallel, can be drawn. In Northern Ireland, despite the 'troubles', there is arguably a greater understanding, respect, and capacity for democratic concepts such as 'representation' and 'accountability', than in Macedonia, which is one of the most corrupt societies in Europe today.

Irwin asks whether the people of Macedonia can 'be persuaded to come out and vote for the politicians they believe can best deliver long term peace and stability?' But who are these politicians? Do they even exist? As the study shows, both Macedonians and Albanians rate political corruption as a very significant problem in Macedonia, and one that poses a real threat to peace and stability. Arguably, both sides also consider organised crime to be an important problem, even if the Albanians rate it lesser in terms of significance than do Macedonians.

Although Irwin's polls show some discrepancies between Macedonian and Albanian views on the causes of the conflict, and preconditions for peace, these are perhaps not as significant as the points on which Macedonian and Albanian views converge. A common problem with public opinion polls is that because the questions posed tend to be based on certain assumptions made by the people/institute responsible for conducting the poll, the questions are often 'leading', thus resulting in answers that follow the general patterns of prejudice and stereotyping in a given society. Polls, therefore, can prove everything, or nothing, depending on the assumptions underlying the questions asked.

The polls in Irwin's study are not an exception, as illustrated by the number one concerns on each side in Table 1 and the top priorities in Table 2. Therefore, it is perhaps more useful to focus on the issues that both Macedonians and Albanians hold as very important, such as the strengthening of the rule of law and efforts to eliminate social decline and poverty, both of which are connected with the problems of corruption and organised crime.

Further, Irwin's study suggests that security is a key problem according to Macedonians and also an important issue for Albanians. Whilst security surely is a significant concern for all communities in Macedonia, its importance is perhaps somewhat - and deliberately - exaggerated, in the sense that expressed concern for security, especially amongst the Macedonians, is used to justify state sanctioned security measures targeted primarily against the Albanian community but also against 'enemies' within the Macedonian camp.

In the end, people from all ethnic communities are seeking, above all, politicians who act responsibly, within a moral, legal and democratic framework, to guide Macedonia towards economic development and European integration. Sadly, such politicians are hard to come by in Macedonia today, largely due to entrenched corruption, a criminalized economy and the prevalence of ethnic politics.

REPLY

Making Dreams Come True

Colin Irwin, Queen's University Belfast

In part influenced by his own experience of studying and living in Macedonia Stefan Troebst chooses to focus on 'The Great Divide' that separates the Albanian and Macedonian speaking communities of this former Yugoslav Republic. For him the glass of Macedonian social, economic and political potential is not half full or, perhaps, even half empty. For him the glass has barely any contents of significant value at all. The 'Macedonian Dream', he suggests, is 'dreamt predominantly in Brussels, Strasbourg and Vienna, and much less in Berovo, Valandovo, or Ohrid'. Jenny Engström also picks up on those issues that separate the two communities. However, following a most helpful review of the state of current electoral politics in Macedonia, she chooses to focus on 'The Common Ground' in which the 'people from all ethnic communities are seeking, above all, politicians who will act responsibly, within a moral, legal and democratic framework, to guide Macedonia towards economic development and European integration'. This 'Macedonian Dream', I would suggest, is dreamt by almost everyone that answered the questionnaire. The problem is how do we get from 'here to there'. Jenny Engström does not think the Macedonian politicians are up to the task. Most people did not think the Northern Ireland politicians could do it either. Left to their own devices they probably couldn't. But with the good will of their neighbours and the international community the Belfast Agreement was signed and is slowly, sometimes painfully, being implemented. With appropriate help and support Macedonia should be able to do as much or more and that is why I was asked to undertake a poll there using the same techniques as those run in support of the Northern Ireland peace process.

Critically the questions for this poll were not written by me, but rather by a group of Albanian and Macedonian academics and politicians. I was the facilitator and no leading questions, or ones that invited value judgements about the 'other' community, were asked. Such questions, called 'beauty contests' in Northern Ireland, were carefully avoided and everyone interviewed at this stage of the research had to be satisfied that



all topics were fairly dealt with to their satisfaction. Inevitably this technique exposes some stark realities in the first 'causes of the conflict' question. But it is interesting to note that similar results were achieved in Northern Ireland with demilitarisation and security issues at the top of the Protestant list and equality issues and policing at the top of the Catholic list (Irwin, *How Public Opinion Polls Were Used in Support of the Northern Ireland Peace Process*, *Global Review of Ethnopolitics* Vol. 1 No. 1, 2001). Perhaps a similar pattern will be found in other ethnic conflicts suggesting that the effective application of international human rights standards would go a very long way to preventing such hostilities. But the Macedonian poll was not undertaken as a piece of pure comparative research, it had a clear applied intent, and that was to address the immediate problem of improper interference in the September elections and perversion of the democratic process. Outline solutions to all the problems raised in Question 1 can be found in Question 2 but only the pressing issue of free and fair elections was elaborated in some detail in later questions on this occasion. The results, published widely in the local newspapers in April of this year, in press conferences, seminars, television interviews and in detailed reports to all the political parties elected to the Parliament of Macedonia, relevant interested governments, NGOs and IGOs had the desired effect. With the demonstration of wide popular support for all that needed to be done to ensure free and fare elections all those in a position to take action did:

1. Many politicians thought the questions asked were the right questions, from the Office of the First President on down, and consequently the results of the poll were taken seriously leading to the reform and strengthening of domestic electoral law with the passage of the Law on Election of Members of Parliament in June of this year.
2. The Greek Minister for the Province of Macedonia and Thrace, who financially supported the research, went to Skopje to offer the former Yugoslav Republic the support of his government in Athens.
3. The Foundation for Open Society Institute in Macedonia (FOSIM), who had also backed the polling research, along with other NGOs, set up programs to motivate and educate the electorate as well as monitor voter registration and the elections on the appointed day through the Citizens Association MOST and Citizens for Citizens.
4. The US (through the National Democratic Institute – NDI) and UN (through former United Nations Assistant Secretary General Cedric Thornberry) facilitated the negotiation and adoption of the proposed Code of Conduct for Free and Fare Elections. Twenty nine parties signed the code in July.
5. A new State Election Commission (SEC) was established on July 12 and issued guidelines to supplement the election law, establish an information and press centre, create a website, initiate voter election programs, train election officials, produce election materials and arrange election logistics.
6. A high-level international assessment mission (including Lord Alderdice, Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly and Assistant Secretary General Thornberry) went to Macedonia to report on the state of the electoral process in August (Statement of the International Pre-Election Delegation to Macedonia, Skopje, August 29, 2002).
7. In September, the OSCE/ODIHR and European Commission deployed 800 observers in Macedonia, the largest election observation effort undertaken since the Albanian elections of 1997.

On September 15th, Macedonian moderates swept into power. With a strong voter turnout of 74% Prime Minister Georgievski conceded defeat and called the vote the most democratic in the history of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Prime Minister-elect Crvenkovski said 'We showed that Macedonia is going to survive for eternity. I want to thank everyone who went out and voted. Together we are going to show that we are people who know when and what to do ... and how to do it'. George Robertson, NATO Secretary General, praised voters for their 'political maturity' and said the elections were 'a decisive step in the right direction'.

The elections did not pass without incident but in the absence of a clear demonstration of strong cross community support for free and fair elections and all the domestic and international efforts that flowed from that fact it is less likely that Macedonia would be where they are today. As for tomorrow, well there is still the 'Macedonian Dream' and there is no reason why that too can not be pursued with equal rigour. Only the free and fair election issues were elaborated from question 2 in the final part of this poll. But all the proposed solutions to Macedonia's problems can now be explored in the same way, the results made known, public support engaged, civil society activated and the international community brought on board to provide political and material support. Peace processes are not easy, they require continual commitment and effort but with the people, politicians, civil society and international community working together dreams can be made to come true.