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INTERETHNIC RELATIONS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS: IMPLICATIONS FOR KOSOVO

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Executive Summary

The violent dissolution of Former Yugoslavia has left a legacy of deep mistrust and animosities between majority and minority ethnicities in the new states that emerged out of it. The exception of the rule is Albania, where interethnic relations between Albanian majority and Greek, Macedonian and other minorities are relatively good.

A burdening issue in all countries of the region, but Montenegro, are disputes over the number of members of the minority communities that are residing within these states. The additional feature of ethnic minorities is the issue of non-declared nationality in the national censuses. Also, these states, with the exception of Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro, have undergone dramatic changes of their ethnic composition structure, due to the wars and atrocities that were also accompanied with refugee and internal displaced people problems.

In addition, the chapters of position of ethnic minority communities in the states of the region, but Albania and Croatia to certain extent, are still open. Croats and especially Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina still do have separatist ambitions, regardless their equal status with Bosnians and federal nature of this state. In Kosovo, Serbian community claims stronger territorial autonomy, while those who are living in the north of the country are highly prone to separatism and unification with Serbia. Albanians in Macedonia are dissatisfied with their position and are claiming more rights at national level. Situation is more or less the same with Serbian ethnic minority within Montenegro. In Serbia, both, Bosnians in Sandjak and Albanians in Presevo Valley are claiming territorial autonomy and are prone to separatism and unification with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, respectively.

Inter-ethnic and interstate relations in and between individual countries of the Western Balkans are the components of the same equation. Improvements or deteriorations of relations between individual countries of the Western Balkans have a direct impact on inter-ethnic relations within these states. Regardless of improved relations, mistrust still prevails in bilateral relations between neighbouring countries in the Western Balkans, mainly due to the fear of using ethnic minorities by other neighbouring states for separatist or destabilizing aims.

Recommendations:

1. Government of Kosovo should pay a special attention to the situation of inter-ethnic relations in the neighboring countries and Bosnia and Herzegovina. For these purpose, within the Directorate for Regional Affairs of Ministry of Foreign Affairs a Task Force on this issue has to be established in order to follow systematically this issue.
2. All countries of the region, especially Serbia in relation with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, and Kosovo in relation with Presevo Valley should make clear that changes of the borders are not acceptable.
3. EU in conjunction with OSCE and Council of Europe should make a particular pressure in all countries of the region to organize credible censuses in order to solve prevailing disputes on the number of the members of ethnic minority communities.
4. European Union, OSCE and Council of Europe should strengthen the regional approach on inter-ethnic and interstate relations. Special attention has to be paid to Sandzak and Presevo Valley that are left out of the scope of inter-state relations between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia and Kosovo, respectively.
5. OSCE should consider the option of opening field offices in Sandzak and Presevo Valley in order to follow closely developments in these two areas that are left practically without protection.

1. Introduction

The dissolution of Former Yugoslavia has had major implications for people that were living in the territory of this state. Huge portions of populations that have enjoyed the status of nations, overnight became national minorities in the states that emerged out of the ashes of Former Yugoslavia, with the exception of Albanians in Kosovo, whose status changed from national minority to majority. Also, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo became an exception of the rule in comparison with the other countries of the Western Balkans, as single countries that do not have a titular nationality. On the other side, transition from communism to democracy in Albania made able recognition of national minorities as well.

All countries of the region, with the exception of Albania and Montenegro, have had wars and inter-ethnic armed conflicts. Thus, accommodation of ethnic minorities in the new states became one of the key features that characterized transition from war torn societies to democratic ones. However, this transition has had different patterns in the countries of the region. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia and partially Serbia, have addressed the accommodation of ethnic minorities with negotiation processes mediated by international community, while Albania and Montenegro have done it through internal reforms, though pushed by different international organizations.

In terms of representation of minorities, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia have envisaged guaranteed seats in their National Parliaments¹, while other countries of the region have not foreseen such a representation. However, Kosovo is the most advanced country in the region in terms of representation of ethnic minority groups by guaranteeing 20 out of the 120 seats for their representatives.

It has to be noted that these changes have created mono-polar centres of Serbianism and Croatism, and of a bipolar, two-centred, Albanianism. However, there is a distinction between Croatism and Albanianism, on the one hand, and Serbianism, on the other. Croatia, Albania and Kosovo encourage the integration of Croats and Albanians, respectively, in the countries where they reside, while Serbia is not doing the same with the Serbs living abroad, and especially with those living in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Kosovo. In these two countries Belgrade is pushing non-integrationist policies, in conjunction with normative definition of territories where Serbian ethnic minority constitutes majority². However, the most unprotected ethnic minority in the Western Balkans by a mother country are Bosnians, because of the very nature of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina that disables the possibility of playing such a role by Sarajevo.

¹ Croatian Parliament; Constitutional Act Amending the Constitutional National Minority Rights Act. Class: 011-01/10-01/50, Reg. no.: 71-05-03/1-10-2, Zagreb, 18 qershor 2010.

Kushtetuta e Republikës së Kosovës; Kapitulli IV – Kuvendi i Republikës së Kosovës, Struktura e Kuvendit. Nenin 64. Paragrafet 2 dhe 3.

Parliament of Montenegro: Law on Minority Rights and Freedoms, Article 23.

Law on Elections of members of Parliament; "Official Gazette of Republic of Srebia", no. 35/2000, 57/2003 – decision of CCRS, 72/2003 – oth.law, 75/2003 – correction of oth. law, 18/2004, 101/2005 – oth. law, 85/2005 – oth.law, 28/2011 – decision of CC and 36/2011". Article 81.

² Lulzim Peci, "Kosovo in the Security and Defense Context of the Western Balkans", KIPRED, shtator 2014, fq.19.

On the other side, NATO's enlargement in the Western Balkans has a fundamental role in non-changing the interstate borders of the individual countries of the region. NATO membership has faded ambitions of a part of ethnic Albanian elites in Kosovo for unification with Albania, and of a part of ethnic Croatian elites in Bosnia and Herzegovina for unifications with Croatia³. However, the circumstances of non-membership in NATO and/or EU of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia and Serbia are still keeping alive potential of inter-ethnic disputes and conflicts between Republika Srpska and Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, North of Kosovo, Serbian populated areas of Montenegro, Western Macedonia, Sandjak and Presevo Valley.

This paper examines problems of inter-ethnic relations in the countries of the Western Balkans, including background, ethnic composition, rights and political representation. In a number of countries, the disputes are related to the number of members of ethnic minorities, while in others, these are related to claims for more ethnic minority rights, including territorial autonomy.

³ *Ibid*, fq.73.

2. Albania

Albania emerged after the collapse of communism as the most isolated and the poorest country in Europe. The extremely cruel communist regime repressed all forms of political dissent, religious affiliation and independent civic activity in Albania. Human rights and liberties of all ethnic groups, both minorities and majorities, were grossly violated during this period. In addition, religious and ethnic forces were mitigated by communist ideology, which privileged social identity over primordial identities.⁴ As a result, during the communist period, Albania was generally viewed from abroad as an ethnically homogeneous state. However, this has been continuously questioned by different ethnic minorities in Albania as well as by some of the neighbouring countries. Such claims have intensified even more after the end of communist rule and the democratization of Albania. Consequently, the main inter-ethnic dispute in Albania is actually about the size of different minorities living in the country.

Currently, Albania recognizes as national minorities, Greeks, Macedonians, Montenegrins and Serbs, while Vlachs/Aromanians and Roma people are recognized only as linguistic/cultural minorities. Both national and linguistic minorities are recognized under the multilateral treaty of the Council of Europe - Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) - that Albania has ratified in 1999.⁵ In today's Albania, in addition of being the largest ethnic minority, the ethnic Greek minority represents the only minority large enough to have sufficient political, economic and social significance. The dispute about its actual size is especially contentious because it is inextricably linked to the historical territorial claims on southern Albania by various Greek nationalist groups and state representatives, which claim that part of southern Albania –known to the Greeks as Northern Epirus – belongs historically to Greece.⁶ Political significance of the Greek minority is further amplified by the proximity of the Greek state which nurtures close economic and cultural links with its minority.⁷ The Greek minority are represented by the Democratic Union of the Greek Minority, OMONIA, and by the political party the Union of Human Rights Party (UHRP). The UHRP was established in February 1992 following the enactment of legislation banning parties based upon “ethnic principles”. The party became the electoral successor of OMONIA, winning two Assembly seats in March 1992 as against OMONIA's five seats in 1991.⁸

Otherwise, Albania's commitments towards the protection of minorities started after World War I, with its admission to the League of Nations in December 1920. Accordingly, since 1921, Albania's ethnic Greek population has been registered as a minority living in recognised “minority zones”.⁹ According to the inquiry established by the League of Nations in 1922, there

⁴ Barjarba, Kosta, “Migration and Ethnicity in Albania: Synergies and Interdependencies,” *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Vol. XI, Issue 1, Summer/Fall 2004, p. 233.

⁵ “World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples – Albania,” Minority Rights Group International, 2007; <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4954cdfc1a.html> (04.11.2014).

⁶ Vickers, Miranda, “The Greek Minority in Albania – Current Tensions,” *Balkan Series* 10/02, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, 2010, p. 2.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Barjarba, 2004, p. 235.

⁹ “Minority zones” are particular districts (Gjirokastrë, Sarandë and Delvinë for persons belonging to the Greek minority, and districts of Korçë (municipality of Liqenas) and Devolli (municipality of Vernik) for persons belonging

were about 25,000 Greek speaking people in Albania. However, since the study was conducted only on limited parts of the southern border, there is good reason to believe that the estimate was too low.¹⁰ After the Second World War, the new Albanian Communist regime narrowed the area of southern Albania described as a “minority zone” to just 99 villages in the districts of Gjirokaster and Saranda, without including the three villages of Himara, Drimades and Palasse, which had been recognised as minority areas by the League of Nations in 1921.¹¹ Such definition also excluded ethnic minorities living elsewhere throughout the country. Mixed villages outside this designated zones, even those with a clear majority of a certain ethnic minority, were not considered minority areas and therefore were denied any language, cultural or educational provisions.¹² In addition, as part of the communist population policy to prevent ethnic sources of political dissent, many Greeks were forcibly removed from the minority zones to other parts of the country. Moreover, during the communist regime, Greek toponyms were changed to Albanian ones and use of the Greek language was limited only within the minority zones.¹³

According to the last census in Albania during the communist rule held in 1989, there were 58,758, or 1.8 percent ethnic Greeks living in the country. However, these official figures were heavily disputed by both the Greek community and the Greek authorities. Leaders of the ethnic Greek community claim that their numbers are around 260,000, with some estimates going as high as 400,000. According to the Greek Helsinki Committee, the figure is around 150,000, the CIA World Fact Book 1994 estimates the Greek minority at 3 percent of the population, or about 100,000 people.¹⁴ The first census after the fall of communism in 2001 contained no question related to ethnic or religious origin. As a result, the chairman of The Democratic Union of the Greek Minority, OMONIA accused the Albanian authorities of trying to reduce numbers of the Greek minority and therefore urged the Greek minority to boycott the census.¹⁵ After several recommendations by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), Albanian government finally decided to conduct a country-wide general census that would include a question pertaining to ethnic identity.¹⁶ However, the Albanian authorities made last minute amendments by introducing fines for incorrect responses to the questionnaire. According to these changes, a reply would be considered incorrect if it did not correspond with the data contained in the civil registry.¹⁷ Such steps were again heavily criticised by OMONIA and Greek opposition parties who also called to boycott the census.¹⁸ According to official results, ethnic minorities in Albania shrank in number, with citizens of Greek ethnicity accounting for only 0.87 per cent of the population. The Greek minority reacted furiously, with OMONIA refusing to accept the census outcome and claiming that the results have been falsified to the detriment of

to the Macedonian minority) categorised as such under the communist regime, inhabited by substantial numbers of persons belonging to national minorities; see “Third Opinion on Albania,” 2011, p. 11.

¹⁰ Pettifier, James, “The Greek Minority in Albania in the Aftermath of Communism,” Conflict Studies Research Centre, July 2001, p. 6.

¹¹ Vickers, 2010, p. 3.

¹² “Albania: The Greek Minority,” *Human Rights Watch/Helsinki*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 2 February 1995, p. 6.

¹³ Pettifier, 2001, p. 7.

¹⁴ Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, 1995, p. 6.

¹⁵ “Albania: State of the Nation,” International Crisis Group, Balkans Report N°111, 25 May 2001, p. 12.

¹⁶ See “Third report on Albania,” European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, 17 December 2004.

¹⁷ “Third Opinion on Albania,” ACFC/OP/III(2011)009, Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, 23 November 2011.

¹⁸ Krasniqi, Gezim, “The Politics of Numbers and Identity in Albania,” *Citizenship in Southeast Europe*, 14 March 2012; <http://www.citsee.eu/blog/politics-numbers-and-identity-albania> (10.11.2014).

ethnic Greeks and other Orthodox minorities.¹⁹ The Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities also “considers that the results of the census should be viewed with the utmost caution and calls on the authorities not to rely exclusively on the data on nationality collected during the census in determining its policy on the protection of national minorities.”²⁰ Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that the overall population of Albania has also declined for roughly 8 percent since 2001, and the actual numbers are especially difficult to determine today due to enormous migration of Albanians and other ethnic minorities since 1991.²¹ On the other hand, a considerable number of the Greek minority population moved to Greece where it enjoys quite privileged status. They are granted highly prized Greek visas, residence and working permits and enjoy privileges regarding employment, schooling of their children and medical treatment.²²

In addition to the dispute about the size, for quite some time inter-ethnic relations between the Greek minority and the Albanian majority were shaped by Greece’s territorial claims over southern part of Albania. During communism, policies of the Albanian authorities designed to impede the maintenance or growth of a distinct Greek ethnic identity within Albania, were significantly influenced by the official irredentist claims of Greece.²³ During the initial years after communism, relations between Greece and Albania were cold and at times even frosty, while the ethnic Greek minority was often treated as a pawn by the two fractious neighbours.²⁴ Hostilities between the two countries reached its peak in 1995, when five Omonia activists were arrested and imprisoned, under accusation of collaborating with Greek secret service against the integrity and sovereignty of Albania.²⁵ Nevertheless, after the riots in 1997 and subsequent change of the government, the relations have slowly normalized.

Currently the main issue regarding the Greek minority has to do with the political, human, educational and cultural rights of the Greek community in Albania. Nowadays, as a result of the adoption of legislation improving Greek minority rights, one could say that most of the minorities’ cultural and educational needs have been addressed. Albania has also made improvements in the minorities’ political representation, thus ensuring they are adequately represented at least at a local level if not on a national level. The fact that ethnic Greek minority freely participates in Albanian politics shows that the group is unlikely to experience any disadvantages due to deliberate group discrimination.²⁶ Nevertheless, there are some complains by the Greek minority “about the government’s unwillingness to recognize ethnic Greek towns outside communist-era “minority zones,” to utilize Greek in official documents and on public

¹⁹ “Final census findings lead to concerns over accuracy,” *Tirana Times*, 19 December 2011; <http://www.tiranatimes.com/news.php?id=14605&cat=1> (10.11.2014).

²⁰ “Third Opinion on Albania,” 2011, p. 6.

²¹ According to the Albanian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, in 1999 there were some 800,000 Albanian emigrants, with 500,000 in Greece and 200,000 in Italy; see King, Russell and Vullnetari, Julie, “Migration and Development in Albania,” *Sussex Centre for Migration Research*, December 2003, p. 25. On the other hand, According to Vickers, since the end of the one-party state in 1991, up to two-thirds of the Greek minority population have gone to live in Greece; see Vickers, 2010, p. 1.

²² Vickers, 2010, p. 10.

²³ Pettifier, 2001, p. 8.

²⁴ Especially during the presidency of Sali Berisha (1992-1997); see Vickers, 2010, p. 3.

²⁵ Barjarba, 2004, p. 235.

²⁶ Vickers, 2010, p.9.

signs in ethnic Greek areas, and to include a higher number of ethnic Greeks in public administration.”²⁷ Still, it is our firm belief that future inter-ethnic relations between the Albanian majority and the Greek minority will greatly depend on overall relations between Albania and Greece. Recent improvement of such bilateral relations will undoubtedly contribute to the relaxation of the overall relations between the two ethnicities. On the other hand, good and stable relations between members of the two ethnic groups in Albania could serve as a guarantee for everlasting good neighbourly relations between the two countries.

Other minorities in Albania have also disputed official figures regarding their size in the country, most notably the ethnic Macedonian minority. Ethnic Macedonians were given a minority status after the Second World War, when the Republic of Macedonia was created in socialist Yugoslavia. The Macedonian national minority is concentrated in the area of Prespa situated 30 km northeast from Korca district. This area extends to the south-eastern corner of Albania, bordering the Republic of Macedonia and Greece. The Macedonian minority lives in compact manner in the rural environment, but there are also inhabitants of this ethnicity settled in the cities of Korca, Pogradec, and Tirana. However, similarly to the Greek minority, Albania recognizes minority rights only within the “minority zones”.²⁸ According to the last communist census in 1989 their number amounted to 4,700. Similarly to the Greek minority, leaders of the Macedonian minority have boycotted the census in 2001 and have also called for the boycott of the census in 2011 because of the last minute amendments. Though according to official results they make up only 0.2 percent (5,512) of the total population of the country,²⁹ ethnic Macedonians (and often certain representatives of the Republic of Macedonia) have speculated with much higher numbers.³⁰ Nevertheless, it seems that these exaggerated figures represent more a tendency of creating certain parallel with huge Albanian minority in Macedonia, rather than a factual reality. Beside their size, main issues regarding the Macedonian minority in Albania are related to their political, educational and cultural rights. Regarding education, there has been instruction in Macedonian within the minority zone since 1945 in elementary education up to the fifth form, for which textbooks have been issued by the state. Major claim of the Macedonian minority is to extend the right to instruction in their mother tongue, according to international standards, to pupils of Macedonian ethnic affiliation in other parts of Albania. Based on cooperation agreements in the field of education signed with Macedonia, there are hopes that instruction in Macedonian language will also be introduced in secondary education.³¹

²⁷ “Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2013: Albania,” United States Department of State (USSD), 27 February 2014 <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2013&dld=220247> (11.11.2014).

²⁸ For more details regarding the Macedonian minority see Minority Rights Group International, *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Albania: Macedonians*, 2008; <http://www.refworld.org/docid/49749d65b.html> (15.11.2014).

²⁹ “Population and Houses Census,” Instituti i Statistikave, Republika e Shqipërisë, 2011, http://www.instat.gov.al/media/178070/rezultatet_kryesore_t_censusit_t_popullsis_dhe_banesave_2011_n_s_hqip_ri.pdf (17.11.2014).

³⁰ For instance, in 2003, the Association of Macedonians in Albania conducted its own census of the number of Macedonians in Albania. It estimated a population of between 120,000 and 35,000; see *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Albania: Macedonians*, 2008.

³¹ *Ibid.*

As mentioned earlier, other recognized minorities in Albania include Vlachs/Aromanians and Roma people that only have a status of linguistic/cultural minorities. Main issue regarding these two minorities is related to their claim to be considered national rather than linguistic minorities.³² On the other, more problematic is the issue of Egyptians and Bosniaks is more problematic because they are not recognized as either a national or a linguistic minority, despite their requests to be recognised as persons belonging to a national minority. Though such recognition would enable members of these two groups to benefit from the protection of the Framework Convention, their requests have not been examined by the Albanian authorities and their existence as distinct groups with specific identities has not been acknowledged.³³ Nevertheless, it should be noted that in general, a climate of respect and tolerance between national minorities and the majority population prevails in Albania. In terms of the respect for and protection of minorities, inter-ethnic relations are also generally good.³⁴ The most pressing issue remains a nation-wide population census that would provide reliable data on number of persons belonging to national minorities in line with the principles of free self-identification and internationally recognised data collection and protection standards.³⁵ Although the last census in 2011 contained for the first time since the fall of the communism questions on ethnic origin, it failed to produce reliable data regarding the number of minorities in the country. In addition of being questioned by representatives of almost all minorities, the fact that 14 percent of the population refused to answer the question on ethnic origin is rather worrisome. Such ambiguity regarding numbers of the ethnic minorities leaves space for speculation by both representatives of the minorities in Albania as well as governments of some neighbouring countries. In turn, this only burdens the inter-ethnic relations in the country and needlessly strains Albania's relationship with its neighbours.

3. Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) was often described as the “Yugoslavia in miniature” since it was the most multi-ethnic and multi-faith republic of former Yugoslavia. For centuries, three main ethnic groups – Bosnian Muslims (or Bosniaks), Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs used to live peacefully next to each other.³⁶ Consequently, Bosnia and Herzegovina was widely seen as the melting pot of Yugoslavia with the highest number of ethnically mixed marriages and harmonic overall inter-ethnic relations. However, immediately after its declaration of independence, BiH was torn by the most destructive war (April 1992 – December 1995) of Europe since World War II that killed some 200,000 people.³⁷ The war was characterized by

³² “World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples – Albania,” 2007.

³³ “Third Opinion on Albania,” 2011, p. 10.

³⁴ “Albania: Minority ethnic groups,” Country Information and Guidance, Home Office United Kingdom, 14 November 2014, p. 15.

³⁵ “Third Opinion on Albania,” 2011, p. 34.

³⁶ Marko, Joseph, “Bosnia and Herzegovina - Multi-Ethnic or Multinational?,” in Council of Europe (ed.), *Societies in Conflict: The contribution of law and democracy to conflict resolution*, Science and Technique of Democracy No. 29, Strasbourg 2000, p. 92.

³⁷ There are very different estimates regarding the number of casualties. Although the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) operates with the figure of 102,622 killed, the Bosnian Government and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have estimated that the number of direct and indirect casualties might be up to 200,000 people; see Kivimäki, Timo, Kramer, Marina and Pasch, Paul “The Dynamics of

extreme nationalism, violence and ethnic cleansing, with many attempts from all sides to territorially divide BiH along ethnic lines. While the Dayton Agreement in 1995 stopped the bloodshed, it also essentially justified ethnic cleansing and the boundaries formed by armed violence. Most importantly, it did not bring a long-term stability and development to the country.

The Dayton Agreement set up two separate entities in Bosnia and Herzegovina: a Bosniak-Croat Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina with 51 per cent of the territory, and the Bosnian Serb Republic, or Republika Srpska (RS) with 49 per cent of the territory, each with its own president, government, parliament, police and other bodies. However, it also defined it as a complete state, as opposed to a confederation, with no entity or entities having the right to separate from BiH unless through due legal process. Although highly decentralised in its entities, BiH retained a central government, with a rotating State Presidency, a central bank and a constitutional court. In addition, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was also divided in 10 cantons that serve as the second-level units of local autonomy and federal units of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. On the other hand, Republika Srpska has a centralized government and is divided directly into 63 municipalities. Finally, the ethnically diverse Brčko District represents a special case and since 1999 is placed under the direct jurisdiction of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition, the agreement mandated a wide range of international organizations to monitor, oversee, and implement components of the agreement, of which the Office of the High Representative (OHR) was charged with the task of civil implementation.³⁸ Such an elaborate multi-tiered system of government, with cabinets and parliaments at the state, entity, and cantonal levels, condemned an impoverished and war-torn country to an overburdened structure of politicians and civil servants.

As before and during the war, current inter-ethnic relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina are defined by overall relations between three constitutive ethnic groups (nations) – Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats. However, the long tradition of peaceful coexistence has now been replaced by mutual distrust and strong prejudice against “others”. The ethnic cleansing during the war has also dramatically changed the demographics of the country. Before the war, Bosniaks made up 44 percent, Serbs 31 percent, and Croats 17 percent of the overall population of the country.³⁹ In addition to dead and missing persons, war in BiH resulted on over half the pre-war population of 4,365,574 being displaced from their homes. Of those, more than a million became refugees while an additional million people were estimated to have remained internally displaced within the country. Most importantly, ethnic cleansing has significantly changed the ethnic configuration in most parts of the country, and by 1995 the former territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina was a patchwork of new ethnically-cleansed spaces.⁴⁰ The ethnic structures of the two entities have considerably changed, and today both the Federation of BiH and Republika

Conflict in the Multi-ethnic State of Bosnia and Herzegovina,” *Country Conflict-Analysis Study*, Sarajevo: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), March 2012, p. 14.

³⁸ Since 1997, OHR was granted additional powers to adopt binding decisions when local parties seem unable or unwilling to act as well as to remove from office public officials who violate legal commitments or the Dayton Agreement; see “The General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” 21 November 1995; http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/BA_951121_DaytonAgreement.pdf (20.12.2014).

³⁹ These are figures based on 1991 census; see Kivimäki and others, 2012, p. 14.

⁴⁰ Gearóid Ó Tuathail and John O’Loughlin “After Ethnic Cleansing: Return Outcomes in Bosnia-Herzegovina a Decade Beyond War,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol.99, Issue 5, 2009, p. 1047.

Srpska can be seen as almost ethnically homogeneous. For instance, while in 1991 Bosniaks and Croats comprised 28.77 percent and 9.99 percent respectively of the population on RS territory, in 1997 they accounted for only 2.19 percent and 1.02 percent. On the other hand, the percentage of Serbs jumped from 54.3 percent to 96.79 percent of the estimated 1,437,000 population of the Republika Srpska.⁴¹ Similarly, according to the 1991 census, the Federation had 52.3 percent Bosniaks, 21.9 percent Croats, 17.6 percent Serbs, 5.9 percent Yugoslavs and 2.3 percent “others”. According to estimates in 2010, Bosniaks constitute over 70 percent, Croats around 25 percent and Serbs only 1-2 percent of the Federation’s population.⁴²

As a result, all three constituent ethnic groups have found themselves in a rather peculiar position of being an ethnic majority in some parts of the country and an ethnic minority in some other parts. Namely, though the preamble of the Dayton Constitution determines Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs as constituent peoples in BiH, the Entity Constitutions have reduced constituency to the level of the entities. Therefore, members of the three main ethnic groups enjoyed the status of a majority within their own entity, but were denied such constitutional right in other entities since they were treated as a minority. For instance, Bosniaks and Croats living in Republika Srpska, as well as Serbs living in the Federation, despite their constituent status on the country level, lived under conditions worse than those of traditional minorities simply because they lacked any constitutional or legal protection. Though constitutional and legal inequality was eliminated by the decisions of the Constitutional Court that extended constituent status to the whole country, practical implications of such reality continued to exist. Consequently, each of the three constituent ethnic groups has faced visible discrimination in territories where they were a minority.⁴³

Currently, the overall composition of the population in BiH is still unclear. Though the first census in the country after the war took place in October 2013, the full official results have not been disclosed yet. However, first preliminary data published in November 2013 has shown that total population decreased from 4,377,033 in 1991 to 3,791,662 in 2013. On the other hand, the Sarajevo daily newspaper “Dnevni Avaz” has published in January 2014 preliminary but unofficial results on the ethnic composition - 48.4 percent Bosniaks, 32.7 percent Serbs and 14,6 percent Croats.⁴⁴ While awaiting the official results, the census itself has already given way to many speculations and heated debates. Obviously, politicians of three main ethnic groups were more interested to confirm existing tripartite ethno-national labels, rather than introducing any notion of accountability to all citizens. Consequently, the census turned into debate about the

⁴¹ “Bosnia: What does Republika Srpska want?,” International Crisis Group, Europe Report N°214, 6 October 2011, p. 1.

⁴² “Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina – A Parallel Crisis,” International Crisis Group, Europe Report N°209, 28 September 2010, p. 1.

⁴³ Kukić, Slavo, “Položaj nacionalnih i vjerskih manjina u Bosni i Hercegovini,” *Politička Misao*, Vol. 38, br. 3, 2001, p. 123.

⁴⁴ This meant that the country has 585,411 less citizens than in the 1991 census, distributed as follows: 62,55% in the Federation, 35 % in Republika Srpska and 2,45 % in Brčko; see “Bosnia Census in 2013,” European Parliamentary Research Service, 27 January 2014; <http://eprthinktank.eu/2014/01/27/bosnia-2013-census/> (21.12.2014).

war and ethnic cleansing, control over certain territory, and eventual demographic shifts.⁴⁵ All in all, instead of providing a basis for joint future policies in the country, the census turned into highly controversial game of numbers that could upset the existing quota-based power-sharing system between the previously warring Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats.⁴⁶

Therefore, though the war ended almost two decades ago, the inter-ethnic relations in modern day Bosnia still remain rather problematic. Similarly as during the war, the main conflict is basically over territory. The status of the territory of BiH was in dispute for much of the 19th and 20th century, from the time of the “Eastern Question” until the end of World War II.⁴⁷ As mentioned earlier, throughout the war 1992-1995, both Serbs and Croats aimed at creating separate territorial entities that would eventually join their respective “homelands”. Such plans were openly encouraged and supported by Milosevic and Tudjman who seem to have agreed on dividing Bosnia and Herzegovina between Serbia and Croatia. It was only Bosniaks who did not support partition of the country and fought for of BiH as their only homeland country.⁴⁸ Even today, Bosnian Serbs and Croats identify themselves more with Serbia and Croatia respectively, rather than with Bosnia.⁴⁹ Since the end of the war, there have been endless acts by Serbs and Croats that challenge the state’s territorial integrity and undermine the functioning of the BiH as a joint state. Leaders of RS have repeatedly threatened with referendum on independence whenever they were dissatisfied with decisions of the BiH state or the OHR.⁵⁰ On the other hand, after failing to create the third entity – the Croatian Republic of Herceg-Bosna – Croats have largely ignored the Federation and focused instead on a eventually carving a third entity out of the state by pursuing unrealistic campaigns to consolidate the cantons they controlled.⁵¹

Peace between the conflicting ethnicities and restoration of trust between people represents one of the key prerequisites to rebuild Bosnia’s society after the war. However, the fact that during the war everybody fought against everybody has made the reconciliation process quite difficult.⁵² While war crimes were clearly committed by all sides, Bosniaks have undoubtedly suffered most of the casualties.⁵³ Such atrocities of war aiming at ethnic cleansing and the partition of BiH have further strengthened the Bosniak sense of ownership and unity of the country since they still

⁴⁵ Rachel Irwin, [Dzenana Halimovic, Maja Bjelajac, Dražen Huterer and Mladen Lakić](https://iwpr.net/global-voices/bosnian-census-risks-deepening-ethnic-rifts), “Bosnian Census Risks Deepening Ethnic Rifts,” *Institute for War & Peace Reporting*, 6 December 2013; <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/bosnian-census-risks-deepening-ethnic-rifts> (21.12.2014).

⁴⁶ Hopkins, Valerie “Bosnia census results threaten power-sharing system,” *Global Post*, 13 November 2013; <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/europe/131113/bosnia-census-results-threaten-power-sharing-system> (21.12.2014).

⁴⁷ Burg, Steven, and Shoup, Paul, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention*, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1999, p. 17.

⁴⁸ Kivimäki and others, 2012, pp. 15-16.

⁴⁹ For instance, only 13 percent of Serbs identify with BiH, while up to 70 percent identify with the Serb nationality, Orthodoxy and Republika Srpska; see ICG Report N°214, 2011, p. 11.

⁵⁰ Of all politicians, Milorad Dodik, the President of the RS, is the one who has advocated the referendum the most; see ICG Report N°214, 2011, pp. 13-16.

⁵¹ ICG Europe Report N°209, 2010, pp. 2-3.

⁵² Though initially Bosniaks and Croats fought the Serbs together, after 1993 they engaged in a war against each other; ICG Europe Report N°209, 2010, p. 2.

⁵³ Though data about casualties differ considerably, Muslims suffered the greatest losses of 57,992 (3.1% of the 1991 census population), Serb casualties amount to 19,398 (1.4 %), while Croats show the lowest losses of 7,543 (about 1 percent); for a detailed insight on war casualties in BiH see Jan Zwierzchowski and Ewa Tabeau, “The 1992-95 War in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Census-based multiple systems estimation of casualties undercount,” Conference Paper for the International Research Workshop on “The Global Costs of Conflict,” Berlin, 1-2 February 2010.

associate partition with war atrocities and violent ethnic cleansing.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the question of ethnicity continues to pervade all aspects of everyday life. Social and economic aspects of life are continuously over-shadowed by strong ethno-nationalism. Obviously, the country is in urgent need of radical constitutional reforms. The so-called 'Bosnian Spring' of 2014 which featured anti-government protests was seen by many as first sign of a genuine unity that transcends ethnic divisions; amongst other reports, it was claimed that demonstrators were waving all three flags, Bosnian, Serb, and Croat, side by side. The protests, in effect, constituted a rebellion against nationalist and political elites, whose individual goals are perceived to be in conflict with the citizens' well-being.⁵⁵ Furthermore, the war, followed by the current constitutional makeup, has led to a space where the majority of BiH's population is precluded from participating in any meaningful political or civic action without the mediating structures of both the various levels of government and of political and government agents themselves. This is because in the final analysis, the upshot of the war and the subsequent constitution has been the systemic isolation of BiH's constituent peoples (most importantly Bosniaks and Serbs) from each other; firstly, as was already noted, the Bosniak and Serb populations have almost completely settled on opposite sides, in the Federation of BiH and RS respectively; and secondly, the fact that constituency status at the entity level was different from that at the country level means that the three constituent people of BiH share no common ground for communication qua constituent peoples. BiH's chief problem vis-à-vis interethnic relations is that every instance of inter-ethnic dialogue occurs in a framework where only one ethnic group functions as a majority and legal constituent, and the other functions as precisely that: an "other".

4. Croatia

Despite the presence of other minorities in the country, inter-ethnic relations in Croatia were and continue to be mainly defined by relations between ethnic Croats and ethnic Serbs. In principle, the relations were marked by a conflict over territory, since from the creation until the dissolution of former-Yugoslavia, and the ethnic Serbs in Croatia have continuously insisted on territorial autonomy of Serbian dominated territories in Croatia or on their full secession. It should be mentioned that relations between Serbs and Croats had a bitter history dating back to the Second World War. During this period, Serbs in Croatia were victims of persecutions, expulsion and even mass execution.⁵⁶ Consequently, relations between the Croatian majority and the local Serbs in Croatia had been marked by mutual fear and suspicion since the very creation of socialist Yugoslavia. On the one hand, Croats feared Serbian domination, while Serbs, on the other hand, were anxious about eventual repetition of 1941 and looked on socialist Yugoslavia as the guarantor of their personal and national security. Namely, immediately after the war, ethnic Serbs have demanded a Serbian autonomous province within Croatia. While their request was rejected, in 1971 such claims have re-emerged again during the so-called Croatian Spring. Clearly,

⁵⁴ Kivimäki and others, 2012, p. 16.

⁵⁵ Ginnell, Luke, "Bosnia Divided," Roads & Kingdoms, 2014; <http://roadsandkingdoms.com/2014/bosnia-divided/> (22.12.2014).

⁵⁶ Because of this period during the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), every call for increased national rights in Croatia was branded as "nationalistic" and "extremist," while often labelling Croats as Ustashes; see Bjelajac, Mile and Žunec, Ozren "The War in Croatia, 1991-1995," Round table in Zagreb, Scholars Initiative report, 20 October 2007, p. 9.

although Serbs constituted only 12.2 per cent of the total population in Croatia, they were obviously a potent, political factor living in concentrated areas that had to be taken seriously.⁵⁷

The beginning of the dissolution of former Yugoslavia and Croatia's wish for independence has again revived the claims of Serbs in Croatia for territorial autonomy. Serbian proposals for autonomy have ranged from very limited cultural autonomy to extensive territorial and political autonomy for extensive parts of Croatia. On the other hand, the most radical Serbian forces have consistently regarded autonomy within an independent Croatian state as completely unacceptable.⁵⁸ Consequently, a day before the ratification of the constitution of Croatia, the Community of Municipalities opted for a territorial autonomy within Croatia by proclaiming a Serb Autonomous Region (SAO) of Krajina.⁵⁹ A day later, on 25 June 1991, Croatia declared its independence and guaranteed the Serbs in Croatia respect for all human and civil rights. Afterwards, in order to satisfy the requirements for international recognition, the Croatian parliament passed the *Constitutional Law on Human Rights and Freedoms* and granted an autonomous status to the regions of Knin and Glina.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, frightened by nationalist policies of Tudjman on the one hand, and encouraged by political and military support from Serbia on the other, Serbs in Croatia further radicalized their demands. As a result, on 18 March 1991, the Municipal Assembly of Knin adopted the decision to separate SAO Krajina from Croatia, thus leading to an inter-ethnic war between Croats on one side, and ethnic Serbian insurgents and Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), on the other.⁶¹

Encouraged by initial war advances, on 19 December 1991, the parliament of SAO Krajina consequently proclaimed the Republic of Serb Krajina (RSK), which was later joined by SAO of Slavonia, Baranja and Western Srem and SAO of Western Slavonia.⁶² To prevent further casualties and atrocities, in January 1992 ceasefire was agreed and the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) was deployed. Since then, the front lines were effectively frozen and until 1995 fighting became largely sporadic. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that during this period Serb's controlled territories comprised some 30 percent of territory of Croatia.⁶³ Meanwhile, as an attempt to end the war, Serbs were offered a large autonomy under the so-called Z4 Plan drawn up by the so-called "Mini-Contact Group".⁶⁴ The plan proposed extensive autonomy for areas with a Serb majority in accordance with the 1991 census. In addition, Serbs were promised separate currency, their own parliament, police force, fiscal policy, and links with Serbia. Though Eastern Slavonia was not covered by the arrangement of this far-reaching autonomy, it was planned that international forces would be deployed in the region for a period

⁵⁷ Huszka, Beáta, *Secessionist movements and ethnic conflict: debate-framing and rhetoric in independence campaigns*, New York: Routledge, 2014 p.76.

⁵⁸ Caspersen, Nina, "The Thorny Issue of Ethnic Autonomy in Croatia: Serb Leaders and Proposals for Autonomy," *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, Issue 3, 2003, p. 1.

⁵⁹ Territorial autonomy was given its first form when The Community of (Serb) Municipalities of Northern Dalmatia and Lika was founded in late April 1990, though then the leader of Serbs in Croatia Rašković denied that this Community was an expression of territorial autonomy, and argued instead that it could form the basis for cultural autonomy; see Rašković, J., *Luda Zemlja*, Belgrade: Akvarijus, 1990, p. 311.

⁶⁰ Caspersen, 2003, p. 11.

⁶¹ For a detailed discussion on the war in Croatia 1991-1995, see Bjelajac and Žunec, 2007.

⁶² Petricusic, Antonija, "Nation-Building in Croatia and the Treatment of Minorities: Rights and Wrongs," *L'Europe en Formation, Journal of Studies on European Integration and Federalism*, Issue 3, 2008, p. 136.

⁶³ Hudson, Kate, *Breaking the South Slav dream: the rise and fall of Yugoslavia*, London: Pluto Press, 2003, p. 90.

⁶⁴ US, Russia, EU and UN representatives from the Peace Conference on the Former Yugoslavia.

of five years.⁶⁵ Despite Belgrade's readiness to accept this proposal, radical Serbs in Croatia rejected it with the hope of full secession from Croatia. In response, in May 1995 Croatian troops successfully launched military operation Flash and took control over Western Slavonia. In an act of desperation, in June 1995 the RSK Parliament unanimously voted to form a union with the Bosnian Serbs despite Belgrade's opposition. However, on 14th of August, Croatia responded with operation Storm swiftly retaking Krajina in just several days and causing massive exodus of Serbs out of Croatia into Bosnia and Serbia.⁶⁶ The remnant of RS Krajina, the Eastern Slavonia, as the only territory under Serb control was put under the transitional administration of the UN (UNTAES), and transferred back to the administration of Croatia in January 1998.

Such reality has transformed the inter-ethnic relations between Croats and Serbs from a conflict over territory to a conflict about minority rights. After retaking control over Serb controlled territories, the Croatian government started undercutting the autonomy and political representation provided to Serbs in the 1991 Constitutional Law. Consequently, the provisions for proportional representation and special status of certain districts were suspended until the next census.⁶⁷ Moreover, intolerant and jingoist policies towards national minorities (especially the Serbian one) as well as numerous forms of discrimination were pursued throughout this period.⁶⁸ As reported by Human Rights Watch in 1999, as a result of discriminatory policies and discriminatory practices, Serbs remained second class citizens in Croatia after the war.⁶⁹ On the other hand, aware about the newly created reality, the Serb National Council (SNV) founded as an umbrella association of Serb associations and political representatives in July 1997, acknowledged that territorial autonomy was neither feasible nor possible, and therefore it clarified that Council's main objective was personal autonomy along with the mechanism of municipal councils.⁷⁰

As a consequence of the war, the number of Serbs living in Croatia has been dramatically reduced, while the remaining ones were basically scattered throughout the country. According to the last census in 2011, percentage of Serbs has decreased from 12.6 percent to 4.36 percent. It should be mentioned though, that the war has also drastically altered the overall structure of the Croatian population: overall population has decreased from 4,784,265 in 1991 to 4,456,096 in 2011. The percentage of minorities in the country has also decreased, and according to the last census except Serbs, all other 21 minorities living in Croatia constitute less than 1 percent of the overall population. As expected, due to considerable decrease of the minority population and on-going migration of Croats from other parts of former-Yugoslavia into Croatia, the overall number of Croats has significantly increased from 78.1 percent in 1991 to 90.42 percent in

⁶⁵ Caspersen, 2003, p. 13.

⁶⁶ Tens of thousands of Serbs have fled immediately after the defeat of the RSK army, while it is estimated that 300,000 to 350,000 Serbs left Croatia during the war; for a detailed account about the operations Flash and Storm see Žunec, Ozren, "Operations Flash and Storm", in Magaš and Žanić, *The War in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina 1991-1995*, New York: Frank Cass Publishers, 2001, p. 71.

⁶⁷ See for instance, Trifunovska, Snezana, "Minority Rights in Croatia." *International Journal of Minority and Group Rights* 6(4), 1999, pp. 474-5.

⁶⁸ Tatalović, Sinisa, "National Minorities and Croatian Democracy," *Politička misao*, Vol. XLIII, No. 5, 2006, p. 46.

⁶⁹ Human Rights Watch, *Croatia: Second Class Citizens - The Serbs of Croatia*, 1 March 1999, p. 3; <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/03/01/second-class-citizens> (17.12.2014).

⁷⁰ Caspersen, 2003, p. 18.

2011.⁷¹ Nevertheless, it is obvious that the Serbian minority has immensely shrunk numerically, while its position is much weaker than in 1990. Undoubtedly, such substantial decrease is a consequence of the war: most Serbs were expelled or have fled the country, only few have returned after the war, while others were eventually assimilated. In addition, since military victories in 1995 and peaceful reintegration of Eastern Slavonia and Barania in 1998, the Croatian government has re-established full control of the whole territory in the country, while Serbs were under constant international pressure and without support from Belgrade.⁷²

Still, after the change of the party in power in 2000 Croatia moved towards real political transition that also created a momentum for the protection of the rights of national minorities. In addition, the legislative regulation and the practical fulfilment of the rights of national minorities became one of the political pre-conditions for Croatia's integration in the EU and NATO. Altogether, this led to the creation and the implementation of the minority policies aiming at integration of the national minorities into the Croatian society as well as the preservation of their national identities.⁷³ As a result, the "Law on the Use of Language and Script of National Minorities in the Republic of Croatia" was adopted in May 2001, while the long-awaited "Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities" (CLNM) was passed in December 2002, thus creating a comprehensive normative framework for the exercise of national minority rights in the country.⁷⁴ In addition, members of national communities in Croatia were guaranteed the right to representation in the Croatian parliament, the right to representation in the representative bodies of local self-government units and in the representative bodies of regional self-government units.⁷⁵

Currently, Serbs in Croatia are guaranteed cultural autonomy, proportional representation and a very limited form of territorial autonomy. While this is similar to some of the demands made by Serbs in early 1990, it is by far less than their maximalist demands made during different stages of the conflict.⁷⁶ Main dissatisfaction among Serbian political representatives in Croatia refers to the fact that Serbs have lost the constitutional status they previously held in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia until 1990. While during former-Yugoslavia, the constitution of the Republic of Croatia defined it as the national state of the Croatian people, the state of the Serbian people and the state of other peoples and nationalities that live in it, the new Constitution of Croatia deprived Serbs from their their status as constituent peoples.⁷⁷ In addition, Serbs also complain that due to lack of political will, the implementation of the CLNM has mostly remained a dead letter. Expectations were especially met in regard to the Councils of National Minorities at the local and regional level, since local and regional authorities did not consider them as serious partners.⁷⁸ In addition, Serbian minority is also affected by the delays

⁷¹ See Croatian Bureau of Statistics, http://www.dzs.hr/default_e.htm (17.12.2014).

⁷² "Croatia Country Report," Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI), 2014, p. 6.

⁷³ Tatalović, 2006, p. 46.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 49.

⁷⁵ Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities, *Official Gazette*, 155/2002, Article 19 and 20.

⁷⁶ Caspersen, 2003, p. 20.

⁷⁷ See *Constitution of the Republic of Croatia*, 22 December 1990; <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b551c.html> (18.12.2014).

⁷⁸ Minority Rights Group International, *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Croatia: Overview*, 2008; <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4954ce1ec.html> (17.12.2014).

and problems with enforceability in relation to property rights. Namely, pursuant to the “Act on the Temporary Takeover and Administration of Property”, “all movable and immovable property in the formerly occupied territory of the Republic of Croatia was put under the temporary administration of the State, and the citizens whose property had been taken in such a way, were given a statutory period of 8 days to lodge appeals against such decisions.” Such absurdly short deadline for appeal, made it impossible for Serb refugees living outside the country to claim their properties. In turn, this has considerably affected the overall process of the return of Serb refugees into their homes.⁷⁹ Though the Croatian government claims that 96,500 Serbs have returned by November 2002, it is clear that this figure overrates the actual number of returnees, since many of them have after a short stay again left to Bosnia, Serbia or Montenegro.⁸⁰ According to Minority Rights Group International, in 2006, 85,000 ethnic Serbs remained displaced and officially registered as such in neighbouring countries.⁸¹

Political representation represents another aspect of minority rights that Serbs complain about. Croatian citizens belonging to ethnic minorities have the right to choose whether to vote for an electoral list in the electoral district in accordance to their place of residence, or vote for candidates of ethnic minorities in the special 12th constituency. According to the Constitutional Law, minorities whose number exceeds 8 percent of total Croatian population are guaranteed proportional representation in the Croatian National Parliament, Government of Republic of Croatia and judicial authority bodies. On the other hand, “Members of ethnic and national communities or minorities whose share in the population of the Republic of Croatia is below 8% shall be entitled to elect at least five and maximum seven representatives to the House of Representatives of the Croatian National Parliament, under the Law on the Election of Representatives to the Croatian National Parliament.”⁸² Significant decrease of the Serb population well below of the 8 percent threshold has made the first provision inapplicable. On the other hand, despite the clarity of the second provision, there was only one reserved seat for Serb minority in the Croatian Parliament during 2000-2004 mandate.⁸³ Nevertheless, the situation regarding political representation of Serbs has gradually improved, and currently, after parliamentary elections held in December 2011, Serbs have 3 seats in the parliament.

It should be mentioned that as the only member of the European Union out of seven countries under consideration, Croatia has recently made serious progress in its system for protecting national minority rights as part of its legal and legislative framework, while at the same time attempting to give maximum consideration to the views of national minorities.⁸⁴ Still, every now

⁷⁹ “The Position of National Minorities in the Republic of Croatia - Legislation and Practice,” Ombudsman Report, Republic of Croatia, Zagreb, April 2008, pp. 6-7.

⁸⁰ Caspersen, 2003, p. 15.

⁸¹ Minority Rights Group International, 2008.

⁸² Constitutional Law on Human Freedoms and Rights and Rights of Ethnic and National Minorities, 2000, Article 17.

⁸³ Djuric, Ivana, “Local Governance, Integration and Participation of Croatian Serbs: In search of a prosperous model,” Paper delivered at the NISPAcee Annual 10th Conference “Delivering Public Services in CEE Countries, Trends and Developments,” Krakow, Poland, April 2002, p. 2.

⁸⁴ For details see “Third Opinion on Croatia,” ACFC/OP/III(2010)005, Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, 6 December 2010; see also “Fourth Report of the Republic of Croatia on the Implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities,” ACFC/SR/IV(2014)012, Government of the Republic of Croatia, July 2014.

and then ghosts of the past are awoken and ethnic tensions between Croats and Serbs re-surface. Such case was recently witnessed regarding the official use of the Serbian national minority language and script in the city of Vukovar. On the basis of a minimum one-third share of persons belonging to national minorities in the local population, the city of Vukovar is obliged by law to stipulate equal official use of the Serbian national minority language and script. However, contrary to legal provisions, the government of the City of Vukovar has in November 2013 adopted amendments to its charter which exempt it from the obligation to secure equal official use of the Serbian language and the Cyrillic script.⁸⁵ Swift reaction of the Ministry of Public Administration that suspended enforcement of these provisions triggered massive protest throughout the country led by war veterans. When local authorities eventually began installing bilingual signs on public administration buildings in Vukovar, tensions increased additionally. Despite firm position of the central government regarding this issue, the veterans have launched campaigns demanding that minority language rights should apply only in places where at least half of the population was from an ethnic minority, while at the same time continued to tear down the bilingual signs whenever they were reinstalled.⁸⁶ Although in August 2014, the Constitutional Court of Croatia rejected demands for referendum to tightened restrictions on the use of Cyrillic language signs in areas of Croatia populated by the Serb minority,⁸⁷ such incidents are a stark reminder how fragile are inter-ethnic relations between Croats and Serbs in the country.

5. Kosovo

Historically, inter-ethnic conflict in Kosovo has exclusively been over its territory. Both sides, Serbs and Albanians, have made claims about history and ethno-demography to justify their alleged exclusive right to this ethnically mixed region. According to the Conferences of London (1913), Versailles (1919), and Paris (1946), despite the free will of the majority of its people (Albanians), Kosovo became a part of Yugoslavia.⁸⁸ After the Second World War, with the establishment of communist Yugoslavia, the Albanians of Kosovo were granted a degree of autonomy within Serbia. After demonstrations of Albanians demanding the status of the republic for Kosovo in 1968, the 1974 Yugoslav constitution gave Kosovo a significant autonomy. Although technically still within Serbia, in reality the region was granted a status similar to that of the constituent republics of the federation, which allowed for the political and cultural affirmation of Albanians. After Tito's death, a series of Albanian demonstrations in 1981, once again asked for the elevation of the status of Kosovo into a republic within the federation. The demonstrations were brutally crushed by the police and military forces, a state of emergency was declared, and thousands of mainly young Albanians were convicted with heavy jail sentences.

⁸⁵ "Fourth Report of the Republic of Croatia on the Implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities," 2014, p. 65.

⁸⁶ Pavelic, Boro, "Croatia: Serbian Language Dispute Creates Discord," *Balkan Insight*, 26 December 2013; <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/croatia-serbian-language-dispute-sparks-discord> (20.12.2014).

⁸⁷ Ilic, Igor, "Croatia rejects demand for referendum to restrict Cyrillic signs," Reuters, 12 August 2014; <http://news.yahoo.com/croatia-rejects-demand-referendum-restrict-cyrillic-signs-160846457.html> (20.12.2014).

⁸⁸ Initially as a part of the Yugoslav monarchy, and after the Second World War as a part of the new socialist Yugoslavia. For details see Hivzi Islami, "Demographic Reality of Kosovo," in Dusan Janjic and Shkelzen Maliqi, eds., *Conflict or Dialogue: Serbian-Albanian Relations and Integration of the Balkans*, Subotica: Open University, European Civic Centre for Conflict Resolution, 1994, p. 30

When Kosovo's autonomy was forcibly swept away in 1989, the conflict reached a new stage of intensity, and practically overnight Albanians were dismissed from their jobs, denied education in their own language, and exposed to a massive abuse of their human rights and civil liberties.⁸⁹

After the disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1991, Kosovo Albanians organized a referendum and opted for independence. On the other hand, the Serbian authorities insisted on Kosovo's constitutional status as an integral part of Serbia. Despite warnings by numerous scholars and political observers about potential escalation of the violence, the international community proved unable to prevent it. Consequently, from February 1998 onwards Kosovo engulfed into a full-scale armed conflict between the Albanian guerrilla Kosova Liberation Army (KLA) on one side and the Serbian special police force as well as regular units of the Yugoslav military on the other.⁹⁰ In order to stop ethnic cleansing in Kosovo and end the humanitarian disaster, NATO launched a 78 day military air campaign targeting FRY military forces and Serbia's infrastructure. On 3 June 1999 the FRY Parliament ratified the Ahtisaari-Chernomyrdin Plan, which included a total (verifiable) withdrawal of FRY military forces from Kosovo, the safe return of all refugees, and an UN-based civil mission to implement the Rambouillet Agreement's peace plan, which would be secured by NATO troops.⁹¹ However, the consequences of the war were tragic: at least 10,000 people were killed, some 800,000 became refugees or displaced persons, and large parts of the country were devastated.⁹² On the other hand, the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) that aimed to administer Kosovo without prejudging its external status was almost unprecedented by the standards of UN field operations. Not only was it empowered to assume full interim administrative responsibility over the territory of Kosovo, it was also given a central political role in setting the conflict.⁹³ Since the international community perceived the war as an ethnic conflict, "multiethnicity" was one of the basic goals of the international presence in Kosovo. While UNMIK always asked for tolerance and mutual respect between different communities in Kosovo, in reality the international administration strategy led to more segregation between Albanians and Serbs. Under UNMIK administration "Serb enclaves" were created, with "Northern Kosovo" being the biggest and the most troublesome one.⁹⁴

On 26 March 2007, after more than a year of unsuccessful United Nation-sponsored negotiations between Serbia and Kosovo to reach a political settlement on the status of Kosovo, the United Nations (UN) Secretary General Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari prepared a Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement. While reiterating that independence was the only viable option, the report acknowledged Kosovo's limited capacity to ensure minority protection, to develop viable democratic institutions, to grow the economy, and to

⁸⁹ Demjaha, Agon "Kosovo: A Perspective from Inside," in Ramesh Thakur and Albrecht Schnabel ed., *Kosovo and the Challenge of Humanitarian Intervention: Selective Indignation, Collective Action, and International Citizenship*, United Nations University Press, Tokyo, December 2000, p. 33.

⁹⁰ Calic, Marie-Janine, "Kosovo in the twentieth century: A historical account," in Ramesh Thakur and Albrecht Schnabel ed., *Kosovo and the Challenge of Humanitarian Intervention: Selective Indignation, Collective Action, and International Citizenship*, United Nations University Press, Tokyo, December 2000, p. 19.

⁹¹ Selatin, Kllokoqi, Blerim Ahmeti, Glauk Konjufca and Valon Murati, "Glauk Konjufca The Role of Human and Minority Rights in the Process of Reconstruction and Reconciliation for State and Nation-Building: Kosova," "Human and Minority Rights in the Life Cycle of Ethnic Conflicts, February 2008, p. 4.

⁹² Calic, 2000, p. 19.

⁹³ Yannis, Alexandros, "The UN as Government in Kosovo," *Global Governance* 10, 2004, p. 67.

⁹⁴ Kllokoqi et al., 2008, p. 12.

achieve interethnic reconciliation. Accordingly, Ahtisaari proposed that Kosovo's exercise of independence and its implementation of the concrete features of the Comprehensive Proposal be "supervised and supported" by international civilian and military authorities. He urged a 'strong' but 'focused' international authority over community rights, decentralization, and protection of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the rule of law. These international authorities would have the power to 'correct actions', that is, to veto local governmental decisions that would "contravene the provisions of the Settlement proposal and the spirit in which they were crafted."⁹⁵ Following unsuccessful efforts for adoption of a resolution of the UN Security Council, on 17 February 2008, the Kosovo assembly adopted a declaration of independence. It declared Kosovo to be a democratic, secular, and multi-ethnic republic and fully accepted the obligations for Kosovo under the Ahtisaari proposal.⁹⁶

Currently, Kosovo recognizes seven ethnic groups as official minorities: Serbs (1.5%), Bosniaks (1.6%), Turks (1.1%), Ashkali (0.9 %), Gorani (0.6%), Egyptians (0.6%) and Roma (0.5 %).⁹⁷ It should be mentioned though that the results of the 2011 census were seen as controversial because they excluded the four Serb-majority northern municipalities of Leposaviq/Leposavić, Zubin Potok, Zvečan/Zveçan and North Mitrovicë/Mitrovica. Partially, this was due to the fact that Serbia was not interested in calling on Serbs from the north of Kosovo to participate in the census. Instead, Serbia pledged to conduct its own census in the north of Kosovo in order to determine the number of Serbs living there.⁹⁸ On the other hand, the results were also criticized by the Kosovo Academy of Arts and Science that claimed that the actual number of Albanians in Kosovo is higher than shown by the census. Consequently, the census did not meet the expectations of ethno-national elites and institutions in both Kosovo and Serbia, since both saw it as a means of legitimizing the nationalist discourse of the other.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, while other minorities have basically integrated well into the new reality of independent Kosovo, it is the relation between Albanians and Serbs that causes main inter-ethnic tensions in the country.

As already hinted, the number of Serbs living in Kosovo represents the initial source of discord between the two communities. Serbs claim much higher numbers, especially of those who left Kosovo after 1999. According to the Kosovo census from 1981, there were 77.4 percent Albanians, 13.2 percent Serbs and 9.3 percent members of other communities living in the province. The latest census organized in former Yugoslavia in 1991, showed that the total population of Kosovo was 1,956,196. According to the estimate of former Federal Institute of Statistics, there were 1 596 072 (81.6 percent) Albanians (who actually did not participate in the census), while the second largest community was the Serbian one, with 194 190 inhabitants (9.9

⁹⁵ For more details regarding Ahtisaari's proposal see United Nations, "Report of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Kosovo's Future Status," S/2007/168, 26 March 2007.

⁹⁶ Tansey, Oisín, "Kosovo: Independence and Tutelage," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 20, No. 2, April 2009, p. 159.

⁹⁷ "Estimation of Kosovo Population 2012," *Press Release*, Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 06 March 2013; <http://esk.rks-gov.net/rekos2011/?cid=2,40> (16.11.2014).

⁹⁸ Karadaku, Linda, "Kosovo completes 2011 census without data from north," *SETimes*, 16 October 2012; http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/features/setimes/features/2012/10/16/feature-04 (20.11.2014).

⁹⁹ Beha, Adem, "Minority Rights: An Opportunity for Adjustment of Ethnic Relations in Kosovo?," *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, Vol 13, No 4, 2014, p. 86.

percent).¹⁰⁰ Following the conflict in 1999, a considerable number of Serbs and other minorities left Kosovo and moved to Serbia. However, figures regarding this issue are quite different and contradicting. According to the Serbian Government 230,000 Serbs have left Kosovo, while ICG figures state that 97,000 Serbs have remained in Kosovo after the war, and around 100,000 have fled. On the other hand, according to European Stability Initiative (ESI), 130,000 Serbs are still living in Kosovo, which accounts for 2/3 of the total pre-war Serbian population in Kosovo.¹⁰¹ Moreover, the Serb population in Kosovo has continuously changed both because of their return to Kosovo and because many continue to leave due to the economic uncertainty in Kosovo and their perceptions that a more sustainable future is available outside of Kosovo.

While number of Serbian minority remains a highly controversial issue and a source of continuous tensions between Serbia and Kosovo, the reality shows that numbers are not the main driving force of inter-ethnic tensions between Albanians and Serbs. Namely, though the majority of Serbs in Kosovo live outside the “Northern Kosovo” it is the latter that sparks major problems in the country. While Serbs living in other parts of Kosovo have been much more cooperative and have slowly began to integrate within Kosovo reality, the northern part of Kosovo continues to be characterized by tensions and periodical outbreak of violence. In addition, the divided town of Mitrovicë/Mitrovica has continuously been a hotspot of inter-ethnic tensions and became a synonym for an unresolved conflict in the northern part of Kosovo.¹⁰² The situation has deteriorated further after Kosovo’s declaration of independence, since Serb leaders in the North have rigorously refused any governance by Kosovo. As a result, different circles have often proposed partition of the North from Kosovo or “territorial swap” with Southern Serbia, as a modality to overcome the status quo. Yet such proposals have at least formally been rejected by both Kosovo and Serbia. Prishtina rejects the idea of partition, claiming that Kosovo’s borders cannot be compromised, and the North, though currently uncontrolled, remains an integral part of its territory. Though intimately, many Albanians both in Kosovo and Southern Serbia might be ready to accept the idea of the “territory swap”, Kosovo leaders are aware that such step would open the so-called “Pandora’s Box” that would further encourage Serbs in Bosnia and Albanians in Macedonia. On the other hand, by accepting partition Belgrade would basically have to recognize the loss of the rest of Kosovo. Moreover, such partition or “territory swap” would undoubtedly trigger ethnic cleansing of the 60 percent Kosovo Serbs living south of the Ibar river.¹⁰³

It should be mentioned that Kosovo Constitution recognizes the ‘group-differentiated rights’ of Kosovo Serbs as the biggest minority in Kosovo. Namely, Article 57.1 of Chapter III of the Kosovo Constitution regarding Rights of Communities and their Members, clearly states that

¹⁰⁰ Djukanovic, Dragan, “The Post-conflict Integration of Minority Ethnic Communities in Kosovo,” presented in the *Third Annual Conference on Human Security, Terrorism and Organized Crime in the Western Balkan Region*, organized by the HUMSEC project in Belgrade, 2-4 October 2008, p. 2.

¹⁰¹ See “Kosovo Communities Profiles, *Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe*, Mission in Kosovo, 2010, p. 241; see also “The Lausanne Principle: Multiethnicity, Territory and the Future of Kosovo’s Serbs,” *European Stability Initiative*, Berlin/Pristina, 7 June 2004, p. 2.

¹⁰² Brand, Judith and Idrizi, Valdete, “Grass-root Approaches to Inter-Ethnic Reconciliation in the Northern Part of Kosovo,” *Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development*, Prishtina, February 2012, p. 4.

¹⁰³ For a more detailed discussion and some additional proposals, see Rossi, Michael, “Ending the impasse in Kosovo: partition, decentralization, or consociationalism?,” *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, Vol. 42, No. 5, 2014, p. 871.

“Inhabitants belonging to the same national or ethnic, linguistic, or religious group traditionally present on the territory of the Republic of Kosovo (Communities) shall have *specific rights* as set forth in this Constitution *in addition* to the human rights and fundamental freedoms provided in Chapter II of this Constitution.”¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, Ahtisaari’s proposal stipulates extensive minority rights that even go beyond those included by the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM). For instance, Serbian is an official language throughout Kosovo, including areas where the Serb community is not in the majority.¹⁰⁵ In addition, the legislative framework in Kosovo has sought to invest communities and their members with advanced rights of effective participation. These include the right to form political parties, and guaranteed representation at all levels of government. In the central government, community participation is assured through guaranteed representation in the Kosovo Assembly, the Government, the judiciary and other bodies. Consequently, 20 out of 120 seats of the Assembly of Kosovo are guaranteed for representation of communities that are not in the majority in Kosovo. The Kosovo Serb Community is entitled to a minimum of 10 guaranteed seats (even if the number of seats won in an open election is less than 10), while additional 10 seats are guaranteed to members of other communities in the country.¹⁰⁶ At the local level, in municipalities where at least 10 percent of municipal citizens belong to communities not in the majority in that municipality, a post of Deputy Chairperson for Communities will be reserved in the Municipal Assembly for a representative of those communities.¹⁰⁷ It should be mentioned that the Ahtisaari plan was implemented to a large extent in the south of Kosovo. However, no progress has been achieved in the four northern Serb-majority municipalities that basically refuse any formal cooperation with Kosovo institutions.

Despite evident progress of the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia facilitated by the EU, the governance or status of the North is still not on the agenda. Kosovo, Serbia and the EU have decided that tackling the North’s governance or status is too difficult before more efforts are made to secure cooperation on improving the region’s socioeconomic development, security and public order. Nevertheless, in mid-January 2013 the Serbian government adopted and the parliament endorsed a platform for talks with Prishtina which in fact accepts Kosovo’s territorial integrity and jurisdiction over the North. The platform calls for the creation of an “Autonomous Community of Serbian Municipalities”, comprised by the North and other six Serb-majority municipalities elsewhere in Kosovo. Though such Community would have broad self-governing powers, it would still be integrated into the Kosovo legal system and apply Kosovo law. While the platform and the parliament’s resolution repeat Serbia’s traditional rejection of Kosovo’s independence, it is clear that Serbia’s government is attempting to accept and work with the *de*

¹⁰⁴ “Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo,” Article 57.1, Chapter III, 15 June 2008, p. 16.

¹⁰⁵ See United Nations, “Report of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Kosovo’s Future Status,” S/2007/168, 26 March 2007.

¹⁰⁶ 3 seats for the Bosnian community, 2 seats for the Turkish community, 1 seat for the Gorani community, 1 seat for the Roma community, 1 seat for the Ashkali community, 1 seat for the Egyptian community, and 1 additional seat for the Roma, the Ashkali or the Egyptian community with the highest overall votes.

¹⁰⁷ “Political Participation,” Office of the Prime-minister of the Republic of Kosovo, Office for Community Affairs; <http://www.kryeministri-ks.net/zck/?page=2,88> (02.12.2014).

facto reality of a sovereign Kosovo, while setting aside *de jure* recognition of independence.¹⁰⁸ On 19 April 2013, under the auspices of the European Union, Kosovo and Serbia signed “The First Agreement of Principles governing Normalization of Relations.” Though the agreement was opposed in both Serbia and Kosovo, it was afterwards approved by both the parliaments in Belgrade and Prishtina.¹⁰⁹ Successful implementation of this agreement could contribute to the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia on the one hand, and Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo on the other. Undoubtedly, the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia would have a huge impact on the integration of the Serb community into Kosovo society. The agreement has shown certain positive signs in the North as well. After being encouraged by leaders of Serbia, Serbs in the North have participated in great numbers in last parliamentary elections in Kosovo held in June 2014. According to the Kosovo's Central Election Commission, the overall turnout in the four northern municipalities was 42 percent, just little less than the overall turnout throughout Kosovo.¹¹⁰ While the road ahead is long and bumpy, overall improvement of relations between Kosovo and Serbia could definitely contribute to overall relaxation of inter-ethnic relations between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo, and eventually contribute to effective solutions that would diffuse tensions in the North.

6. Macedonia

Macedonia is the only republic of former Yugoslavia that gained its independence in 1991 without warfare in its territory. However, its independence was followed by enormous external and internal challenges. Externally speaking, Albania did recognize both the Macedonian state and nation, but made it clear that its goodwill would depend on the status of the Albanian minority in Macedonia. Serbia recognized the state *de facto* by setting up a new Yugoslavia without Macedonia, but Serbia has failed to recognize the separate existence of the Macedonian Orthodox Church. Bulgaria recognized the state, but has refused to acknowledge that there is a legitimate Macedonian nation for fear of encouraging secessionist tendencies among the inhabitants of the Bulgarian Macedonia, many of whom have rejected a Bulgarian identity in favour of a Macedonian one. Moreover, Greece opposed Macedonia's constitutional name and refused to accept that its citizens could legitimately be called Macedonians.¹¹¹ Internally, serious concerns were raised in regard to the specific character of its multi-ethnic and multi-confessional composition. Macedonia is a country where minorities represent one-third of the population and

¹⁰⁸ For details see “Serbia and Kosovo: The Path to Normalisation,” International Crisis Group, Europe Report N°223, 19 February 2013, pp. 8-9.

¹⁰⁹ The agreement is also referred to as the Brussels Agreement. Among others, it specifies “that neither side will block, or encourage others to block, the other side's progress in the respective EU paths”. Although earlier draft referred to “accession to international organisations,” it was rejected by Belgrade since it thought it would lead to its formal recognition of Kosovo. See “Information Session: First Agreement Between Serbia and Kosovo of Principles Governing Normalization of Relations,” *Wilson Center*, 24 April 2013; <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/information-session-first-agreement-between-serbia-and-kosovo-principles-governing> (17.10.2014).

¹¹⁰ Rettman, Andrew, “Ethnic Serbs vote as normal in Kosovo elections,” *EUobserver*, 10 June 2014;

<http://euobserver.com/foreign/124538> (02.12.2014).

¹¹¹ Glenny, Misha, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, 3rd edition, London: Penguin Books., 1996, p. 255.

where the citizens have different religious affiliations, even within the same ethnic group. Clearly, in such an environment certain amount of social and cultural prejudice was to be expected.¹¹²

Nevertheless, despite being considerably ethnically and religiously mixed, main inter-ethnic tensions were manifested between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians, as two major ethnicities in the country. During the times of former Yugoslavia, relations between these two ethnicities have been rather problematic, especially after a series of Albanian demonstrations in 1981 that asked for the elevation of the status of Kosovo into a republic within the federation. Macedonians feared that such proposed seventh republic that would include Albanian dominated parts of Western Macedonia would have severely truncated Republic of Macedonia and most probably revived Bulgarian, and even Serbian and Greek claims. Thus the growth of Albanian nationalism in Macedonia was seen as possibly fatal, not only to territorial integrity of the republic but even to the very existence of the Macedonian nation.¹¹³ On the other hand, continuous harsh repressive measures by Macedonian authorities only fuelled the Albanian nationalism and their belief that as a distinct national group, like all other nations in Yugoslavia, they had the rights and powers to control and decide their own political and cultural destiny. These processes further widened the gap between the two communities, and though the two communities co-existed in the same territory, they became more distrustful of each other.

However, the new constitution of the Republic of Macedonia has on the contrary downgraded the position of Albanians because it defined the country as “the national state of the Macedonian people” rather than “the state of the Macedonian people and the Albanian and the Turkish nationalities” as it had stood before. As a result, Albanians boycotted the national referendum on the independence of Macedonia in 1991 to stage their own unofficial referendum on territorial autonomy for western Macedonia.¹¹⁴ When a similar formula was accepted in the Preamble to the 1991 Constitution, Albanian political elites again protested against these developments and demanded that the Albanians living in Macedonia should be given a status of the constituent nation.¹¹⁵ Moreover, though the constitution of the newly created Republic of Macedonia promised Albanians and other nationalities “full equality as citizens and permanent co-existence with the Macedonian people,” the structural inequalities between the ethnic groups persisted, fuelling Albanian resentment.¹¹⁶ Undoubtedly, in terms of advancing legitimate political and cultural demands, the Macedonian state failed its Albanian minority. The community's core demands - greater representation, recognition of Albanian as an official second language, the right to Albanian-language Higher Education and administrative autonomy at a local government level - remained unmet some 10 years after independence.

¹¹² Simoska, Emilija, “Macedonia: A View on the Inter-Ethnic Relations,” *Perceptions*, 2 (2), June-August: 96, Istanbul, p. 98.

¹¹³ Poulton, p. 127.

¹¹⁴ Ortakovski, Vladimir, “Interethnic Relations and Minorities in the Republic of Macedonia,” *Southeast European Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 1, May 2001, p. 34.

¹¹⁵ Among others, Albanians MPs boycotted the voting on new constitution; see Daskalovski, Zhidas, “Census taking and inter-ethnic relations in Macedonia,” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 365–379, 2013, p. 369.

¹¹⁶ Petroska-Beska, Violeta and Najcevska, Mirjana, “Macedonia: Understanding History, Preventing Future Conflict,” Special Report 115, Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, February 2004, p. 3.

Consequently, an armed conflict between ethnic Albanian rebels and government forces erupted in 2001. Luckily, the conflict was quickly ended through an EU- and US-mediated agreement, signed in August 2001. The Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA), in addition to ending the armed conflict, also provided for a range of legislative and policy measures to ensure equality and minority protection. As a result, constitutional changes were made, while existing legislation was introduced or amended. This package of decentralized power, gave official status to a minority language in areas where at least 20 per cent of the population speak it, adopted proportional representation, strengthened education in the Albanian language, and improved participation and employment of minority peoples in public life and state institutions. The Ohrid Framework Agreement led to the 'double majority' rule, meaning that any parliamentary decisions affecting the rights of communities or local self-government must be passed both by a majority of all MPs and a majority of the total number of votes by MPs from the minority community. At the municipal level, Committees for Inter-ethnic Relations are being established in areas with more than 20 per cent minority population; if given a meaningful role, these could be an important mechanism for participation.¹¹⁷ However, more than ten years after, inter-ethnic relations in Macedonia still remain burdened by prejudice and stereotypes, rather than cooperation and mutual prosperity.

Moreover, ethnic tensions between Macedonians and Albanians in Macedonia have further increased during last several years. Sparked initially by ethnically charged incidents at sports matches, the ethnic tensions between the two communities have soon deteriorated into violence when in February 2012 an off-duty police officer killed two ethnic Albanians in the town of Gostivar, and when five ethnic Macedonians were killed near lake Smilkovci in April 2012. Both incidents have triggered massive protests of ethnic Albanians and Macedonians respectively, ending in violence and serious damage to civilian properties. Afterwards, there had been a series of attacks on buses and in the streets involving clashes between Macedonians and ethnic Albanian youths, and several youngsters on both sides have been seriously injured.¹¹⁸ The situation was further worsened when several Albanians were imprisoned and then sentenced for the execution-style murder of five ethnic Macedonians. Thousands of dissatisfied Albanians rioted against the outcome of a politically charged murder trial, thus bringing the country on the brink of another ethnic conflict.¹¹⁹

Such strained relations between two major ethnic groups are a result of several factors that often interact with each other. To begin with, much of the tensions resulted due to the different perceptions of the two communities about the underlying concept of the Macedonian state. Albanians argued that Macedonia ought to be the state of equal citizens and ethnicities, but Macedonian elites preferred ethnocentric state where they would have dominant position. Accordingly, as already mentioned, the new constitution favoured ethnic Macedonians by

¹¹⁷ For more details see "Ohrid Framework Agreement," 13 August 2001.

¹¹⁸ "Situation in Macedonia calmer but inter-ethnic tensions with Albanians linger," *The Sofia Echo*, 14 March 2012; <http://sofiaecho.com/2012/03/14/1787294-situation-in-macedonia-calmer-but-inter-ethnic-tensions-with-albanians-linger> (27.10.2014).

¹¹⁹ Davies, Jack, "Is Macedonia on the brink of another ethnic conflict," *Vice*, 15 July, 2014, <http://www.vice.com/read/albanians-in-macedonia-are-pissed-off-jack-davies-777> (27.10.2014).

treating them as both the only “constitutive nation” as well as a “majority” within the state.¹²⁰ Although, with constitutional changes following the Ohrid Agreement, the preamble of the Constitution has changed in order to reflect the multicultural nature of the state, ethnic Macedonians still perceived Macedonia as their “natural” state.¹²¹ The main argument often goes along the lines that Albanians already have two states (Albania and Kosovo), and therefore it is understandable that Macedonians should have at least one. Therefore, despite ongoing claims by Albanians for an official bi-ethnic state system, Macedonians have been very reluctant to move in that direction. Consequently, with such political transformation being formulated as a zero-sum game, the misperception over the basic idea behind the concept of the state continues to be a major cause of inter-ethnic tensions.

The second factor that spurs ethnic disputes between Macedonians and Albanians comes from differing perceptions about Albanian claims deriving from the Ohrid Agreement. While Albanians regard the overall process as an issue of collective and human rights, Macedonians believe that the dispute is actually about territory. Moreover, Albanians view the agreement as a starting point, a dynamic platform from which their overall position will additionally improve. Consequently, they view the Ohrid Agreement as a starting point rather than ceiling of their collective rights.¹²² On the other hand, although Ohrid Agreement has preserved unitary character of the country, Macedonians remain mistrustful of the Albanians’ true intentions, and suspect their claims for more rights as designs for a “greater Albania” (or “greater Kosovo”).¹²³ Namely, ethnic Macedonians have argued that independence of Kosovo represents only the first step towards the political unification of all Albanians, setting off a domino effect of secessions by the Albanians of the Republic of Macedonia, followed by the Albanians of Montenegro and southern Serbia.¹²⁴ In this context, Macedonian political elites argue that the ethnic Albanians and other minorities in the country already enjoy minority rights that are in line with the highest standards of international legislation.¹²⁵ However, ethnic Albanians have refused to be considered as an ethnic minority in a Macedonian nation-state, and have claimed collective minority rights well beyond international standards. As a result, continuous tendency of ethnic Macedonians to draw parallels between Albanian demands for increased collective rights in Macedonia and territorial integrity of the country will undoubtedly contribute to further tensions between two communities.

The final element that has additionally contributed to inter-ethnic tensions between two major communities in Macedonia is closely linked with Euro-Atlantic integration of the country. Although officially Euro-Atlantic integration still represents one of the country’s main priorities, Macedonia’s membership to NATO and EU has been seriously halted in recent years. Moreover,

¹²⁰ Adamson, Kevin and Jovic, Dejan, “The Macedonian–Albanian political frontier: the re-articulation of post-Yugoslav political identities,” *Nations and Nationalism* 10 (3), 2004, p. 294.

¹²¹ Slaveski, Stojan and Kozarev, Atanas, “‘Europeanization’ of the Macedonian National Identity,” *The Western Balkans Policy Review*, Volume 2, Issue 1, Winter/Spring 2012, Prishtina, p. 28.

¹²² Aziri, Etem, “Inter-ethnic Relations in the Republic of Macedonia before and after the Ohrid Framework Agreement,” *Balkans: Foreign Affairs, Politics and Socio-Cultures*, pp. 131-156. Epoka University, October 2011, p. 148.

¹²³ Fraenkel, Eran, “Macedonia,” in *Nations in transit 2003*. New York: Freedom House, 2004, p. 403.

¹²⁴ Batt, Judy. “Introduction” in Judy Batt eds., *Is there an Albanian question?*, Chaillot Paper No. 107, January 2008, Institute For Security Studies, p. 5.

¹²⁵ Daskalovski, 2013, p. 370.

support for membership in these two organizations has seriously dropped in recent years by both Macedonian politicians and ethnic Macedonians in general. On the other hands, ethnic Albanians in Macedonia strongly support Euro-Atlantic integration of the country. As mentioned in several occasions by different Albanian politicians throughout the region, Europe and not Greater Albania represents a viable path towards unification of all Albanians in the Balkans.¹²⁶ Although membership to NATO and EU has also been promoted as the main priority of the Democratic Union for Integration – Albanian party in the coalition government of Macedonia – such prospects remain rather poor. Such reality, in combination with the above mentioned factors, could seriously contribute to further deterioration of already tense relations between Albanians and Macedonians in the country.

7. Montenegro

Montenegro's path towards independence after the disintegration of former Yugoslavia has undergone three major phases – from Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) (1992 – 2003), through State Union of Serbia and Montenegro (2003-2006), to independent Montenegro (after 2006). Such different stages of statehood have also accordingly reflected on the status of minorities and overall inter-ethnic relations in the country. During the joint asymmetric state with Serbia, the status of different ethnic groups living in both Serbia and Montenegro was viewed in the framework of much larger entity. As a result, Serbs and Montenegrins had a status of constituent people, though numerically Montenegrins were very small. By the same token, the percentage of other ethnicities living in Montenegro was basically symbolic.¹²⁷ It should be mentioned, that although this paper will primarily deal with inter-ethnic relations after independence of Montenegro, certain attention will be given to earlier periods due to their impact on current state of affairs.

Montenegro has managed to escape large-scale ethnic and armed conflicts after the dissolution of Yugoslavia. However, different factors such as migration, settlement of refugees and certain shifts in ethnic identification, have altered the ethnic and demographic structure of Montenegro during the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the consequent wars in 1990s.¹²⁸ As already explained, according to the last census held in 2011, in addition to Montenegrins (45%), three largest ethnic groups in the country are Serbs (28,7%), Bosniaks (8,6%) and Albanians (4,9%).¹²⁹ Having in mind historical past and their high percentage, there are even debates whether Serbs should be considered a minority in the country. Montenegrins and Serbs have been members of

¹²⁶ See “Topi thotë se e ardhmja e Shqipërisë është Evropa jo Shqipëria e madhe,” SETimes, 14 July 2008; <http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/sq/features/setimes/newsbriefs/2008/07/14/nb-05> (27.10.2014); see also “Rama: Projekti ynë aktual është Evropa e Madhe, jo Shqipëria e Madhe,” Agjensia e Lajmeve Sot News, 21 October 2014; <http://www.sot.com.al/politike-intervista/rama-projekti-yn%C3%AB-aktual-%C3%ABsht%C3%AB-evropa-e-madhe-jo-shqip%C3%ABria-e-madhe#sthash.wfFAbb7n.dpuf> (27.10.2014).

¹²⁷ Except for Albanians during FRY since Kosovo was officially part of the same state.

¹²⁸ Šistek, František and Dimitrovová, Bohdana, “National minorities in Montenegro after the break-up of Yugoslavia,” in *Montenegro in Transition: Problems of Identity and Statehood*, Florian Bieber (ed.), Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden, 2003, p. 159.

¹²⁹ “Population by Age and Ethnicity,” Population Census in Montenegro 2011, Statistical Office of Montenegro, <http://www.monstat.org/eng/page.php?id=393&pageid=57> (29.10.2014).

the same state for over 85 years.¹³⁰ Consequently, self-identification as a Serb or a Montenegrin in Montenegro has for years been a matter of personal choice based on political, cultural and other grounds. Such an ‘ethnic’ division has actually existed even inside many families in the country.¹³¹ Nevertheless, today Serbs are officially considered a minority in Montenegro and are basically scattered throughout the territory of the country. According to the 2011 census, Serbs are absolute majority in three and relative majority in another three municipalities, and constitute less than 20% of population in only four out of total 21 municipalities in the country.¹³²

Throughout history, Montenegrins have in general had long periods of coexistence, sometimes even identification with Serbs. Two nations have shared the same language and religious beliefs as well as certain common features of their respective traditional cultures.¹³³ Accordingly, many scholars have argued that Montenegrins are basically part of the Serbian nation that took refuge in that region after defeats in different wars.¹³⁴ However, there are others who maintain that Montenegrins are a separate nation with a different political history and longstanding existence of an apparent horizontal self-identification.¹³⁵ What is certainly true is that for centuries there were no inter-ethnic tensions between Montenegrins and Serbs. First tensions began in 1996 due to signs of political discord between parts of Montenegrin leadership and the Serbian leadership. Since then, subsequent governments in Montenegro have distanced themselves from Milosevic’s nationalistic agenda and policies of genocide. Tensions between Montenegrins and Serbs culminated around the period when Montenegro pressed for its independence and separation from Serbia.

The “pro-independence” block was led by Milo Djukanovic, the Prime Minister and former President of Montenegro as well as the leader of the Democratic Union of Socialists (DPS). On the other hand, Predrag Bulatovic the head of the Popular Socialist Party (SNP) was the leader of the “pro-Serbia unionist” block. The referendum campaign was highly polarised, with most ethnic Montenegrins supporting independence, while most of the Serb population favoured the continuation of the union with Serbia. When the independence referendum was passed by a comfortable majority on 21 May 2006, the tensions between the two communities reached their peak.¹³⁶ Following confirmation of independence, the Serb parties adopted a defiant attitude, refusing to officially acknowledge the outcome of the referendum and boycotting parliamentary

¹³⁰ Starting with Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1918, then Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia, and after its disintegration, in Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and State Union of Serbia and Montenegro.

¹³¹ For a detailed discussion about this issue, see for instance Pavlović, Srđa, “Who are Montenegrins? Statehood, identity, and civic society,” in *Montenegro in Transition: Problems of Identity and Statehood*, Florian Bieber (ed.), Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden, 2003, pp. 83-107.

¹³² See “Structure of population by ethnicity per municipalities in %,” Population Census in Montenegro 2011, Statistical Office of Montenegro, <http://www.monstat.org/eng/page.php?id=393&pageid=57> (30.10.2014).

¹³³ Hastings, Adrian, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 142.

¹³⁴ See Watson, R. W. Seton, *The Rise of Nationality in the Balkans*, New York: Howard Fertig, 1966, p. 31.

¹³⁵ Tomašević, Jozo *Peasants, Politics and Economic Change in Yugoslavia*, Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1955, p. 126.

¹³⁶ Referendum was approved by 55.5% of voters, narrowly passing the 55% threshold. See Traynor, Ian, “Montenegro vote finally seals death of Yugoslavia,” *The Guardian*, 22 May 2006; <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/may/22/balkans> (01.11.2014).

sessions.¹³⁷ Moreover, there were warnings that future conflicts over the constitution, state symbols, the position of the church, as well as the relationship between the government and the opposition could lead to new clashes.¹³⁸

Indeed, since independence the Montenegrin society has been divided among many issues. In addition to tensions between Montenegrins and Serbs, the crucial role of other minorities who were positive on independence referendum has further deteriorated inter-ethnic relations between Serbs and these minorities. Nevertheless, being dispersed throughout the country, Serbian political representatives did not pursue any claims for territorial autonomy. Instead, their primary objective was “the protection of the constitutionality and full affirmation of the identity and freedom of the Serb people.”¹³⁹ Such agenda consisted of several key demands: (1) Serbs should be defined constitutionally as a distinct and equal nation (not as a national minority); (2) Serbs should be represented on a proportional basis in state and local governing bodies; (3) They should have the right to display Serbian national symbols; and, (4) There should be a constitutional confirmation of Serbian as an official language and the Cyrillic alphabet as an official script.¹⁴⁰ Nevertheless, in order to conciliate internal political divisions Montenegro’s constitution denoted a “civic state”, whereby sovereignty was vested in the “citizens having Montenegrin nationality”. In addition, such a definition was also a barrier against the claims of Serbs in Montenegro to be recognised as a constituent people that would in turn lead to multipartite power-sharing.¹⁴¹

As far as use of official languages of minorities is concerned, current legislation is more restrictive than former national legislature and standards of other countries in the region and further. The Montenegrin Constitution stipulates that the official language in the country is Montenegrin with equal usage of Cyrillic and Latin alphabet, while members of national minorities have the right to official use of language solely at the local level, in local governance units in which minority constitutes majority of population.¹⁴² Despite minor differences between Montenegrin and Serbian languages, the Serbian population has opposed to the idea of a linguistic separation in the country.¹⁴³ Additional tensions between the two communities have been in regard to the separation of the Montenegrin Orthodox Church from the jurisdiction of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Final blow in terms of inter-ethnic tensions between Montenegrins and Serbs has come with the official recognition of Kosovo’s independence by the Montenegro government. While Serbia promptly expelled Podgorica's ambassador, the pro-Serb opposition parties in Montenegro organized country-wide demonstrations against the

¹³⁷ “Independent Montenegro: Early Assessment and Prospects for Euro-Atlantic Integration,” Committee Reports, 160 CDS 07 E BIS, 2007 Annual Session of NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 2007; <http://www.nato-pa.int/default.asp?SHORTCUT=1162> (02.11.2014).

¹³⁸ Morrison, Kenneth, “Change, Continuity and Consolidation: Assessing Five Years of Montenegro's Independence,” *LSEE Papers on South Eastern Europe*, Issue 2, February 2011, p. 2.

¹³⁹ “Party Program,” The People’s Party of Montenegro,” December 2006, p.3.

¹⁴⁰ Morrison, 2011, p. 6.

¹⁴¹ Džankić, Jelena, “Montenegro’s Minorities in the Tangles of Citizenship, Participation, and Access to Rights,” *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, Vol. 11, No 3, 2012, p. 44.

¹⁴² “Minorities in Montenegro Legislation and Practice,” *Report number 1, Human Rights Protection Program, Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Montenegro, February 20th 2007*, p. 19.

¹⁴³ Language separation has included the creation of a new Montenegrin Cyrillic alphabet which is basically the Serbian Cyrillic alphabet with the addition of two new letters.

government's decision on Kosovo.¹⁴⁴ Nevertheless, despite evident tensions before and immediately after independence, overall relations between Montenegrins and Serbs have since been more or less normalized.

Other minorities, on the other hand, in addition to being much smaller numerically can also to some degree be defined territorially since they are generally concentrated on the periphery of the republic – Albanians along the border with Albania; most Bosniaks-Muslims along the northern frontier with Serbia in the Montenegrin part of the Sandžak region; and Croats in the Boka Kotorska, close to the border with Croatia. It should be mentioned that the period between 1992 and 1997 was characterized by violations of fundamental human rights and particularly of the minority rights. During this period, political parties representing minorities were marginalized with regard to the political affairs, and they were excluded from any decision-making.¹⁴⁵ Montenegro's process of separation from Serbia since 1997 has resulted in an improvement in majority-minority relations since Montenegrin leadership sought to build a domestic coalition for greater autonomy and eventually independence, which necessitated the inclusion of minorities.¹⁴⁶ Consequently, Montenegro's 2006 Law on Minority Rights and Freedoms defines a minority as “a group of nationals of Montenegro, fewer in numbers than the prevailing population, who have common ethnic, religious, or linguistic characteristics, different from the remaining population, who are historically connected to Montenegro and who are motivated by the desire to preserve national, ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity”. Clearly this law aimed at showing the international community that Montenegro is a positive example of interethnic relations in the Balkans and at attracting the votes of non-Christian Orthodox minorities.¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, after independence these minorities have often felt betrayed by the pro-independence coalition.

8.

Although not so large numerically, due to geographic proximity with Albania and Kosovo the Albanian minority deserves special attention in terms of inter-ethnic relations in Montenegro. It should be mentioned that the position of the Albanian minority and the degree of co-operation and integration with the majority society has been far greater than in the case of Albanian minorities in Kosovo before 1999, or in Macedonia and southern Serbia. Montenegrin Albanians have not attempted to organise referendums on territorial autonomy or independence, they have not boycotted republican elections and there have been no attempts at armed rebellion or signs of terrorist activities. Albanians in Montenegro have been concerned by the dramatic developments concerning Kosovo Albanians and, to a certain degree, the Albanian minority in Macedonia. Therefore, subsequent to the change in political orientation of the Montenegrin ruling elite in 1997-98, the government has, likewise, demonstrated an increased degree of co-

¹⁴⁴ “Montenegro formally recognises Kosovo's independence,” *SETimes*, 13 October 2010; http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/features/setimes/features/2008/10/13/feature-01 (02.11.2014).

¹⁴⁵ Sindik, Nedeljka, “The Role of Political Parties in Minority Participation in Montenegro,” in *Political Parties and Minority Participation*, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung - Office Macedonia, Skopje, 2008, p. 182.

¹⁴⁶ Bieber, Florian, “The instrumentalisation of Minorities in the Montenegrin Dispute over Independence,” The European Centre for Minority Issues, March 2002, p. 3.

¹⁴⁷ Dzankic, Jelena, “Understanding Montenegrin Citizenship,” *Citizenship Studies*, 16, 3-4, 2012, p. 343.

operation and dialogue.¹⁴⁸ Among others, the 1998 Election Law the Albanian minority was guaranteed five MPs out of 78 from an electoral unit in an area where Albanians are majority.¹⁴⁹

Nevertheless, like other minorities in the country, after independence Albanians' expectations were not met and they found themselves disillusioned about their future. Their grievances stem from significant shortcomings in terms of translating high level constitutional commitments regarding minority rights into concrete laws and policies. In addition, Albanians complain for slow implementation and biased application of existing laws. Their demands are mainly related to enhanced decentralization process, wider use of the Albanian language including university education in their own language, school curricula in primary and secondary classes¹⁵⁰ and economic underdevelopment.¹⁵¹ Although most of the demands of the Albanian representatives can realistically be fulfilled by the Montenegrin government, so far its measures have felt short of Albanians' expectations in the country. The lack of jobs and future prosperity has continued to encourage emigration of Albanians abroad, mainly to the US, thus further reducing the Albanian population in Montenegro.

9. Serbia

Serbia and Serbs were basically involved in all conflicts following the disintegration of former Yugoslavia, except the one in Macedonia. On the other hand, Serbs were by far the biggest nation and Serbia was the largest republic in former Yugoslavia. Serbia was the only republic that included two autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina. These two autonomous provinces were supposed to provide additional rights to Albanians and Hungarians¹⁵² as large ethnic minorities that were excluded from their adjacent "motherland" states (Albania and Hungary). However, the break-up of former Yugoslavia and the wars that followed have drastically change ethnic configuration of Serbia. As already mentioned, after the military defeat, several hundreds of thousands of Serbs from Croatia left the country and mainly moved to Serbia. On the other hand, after the Kosovo war in 1999, considerable number of Serbs also fled to Serbia, while the number of Albanians in the Republic of Serbia dropped dramatically. Consequently, today's inter-ethnic relations in Serbia to great extent reflect these ethnic changes after 1991.

¹⁴⁸ Šístek and Dimitrovová, 2003, p. 172.

¹⁴⁹ Sindki, 2008, p. 181.

¹⁵⁰ The quality of translation of some textbooks from Montenegrin into Albanian language is very poor and that the lack of textbooks for some subjects is hampering knowledge acquisition altogether. In addition, the history of Albanians is hardly taught and some textbooks do not reflect Albanian culture adequately; see "Second Opinion on Montenegro adopted on 19 June 2013," ACFC/OP/II(2013)002, *Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 24 February 2014, p. 29.

¹⁵¹ For a detailed discussion on grievances of Albanians in Montenegro see Boga, Cafo and Wolff, Stefan, "Albanians in Montenegro: Waiting for Godot?," *Illyria*, #2067, 12-14 July 2011, pp. 1-7.

¹⁵² Although the autonomous province of Vojvodina was home to some 25 ethnic groups, Hungarians who after the second World War comprised 25.8 percent were the largest one; see Károly Kocsis and Saša Kicošev, "Changing Ethnic Patterns on the Present Territory of Vojvodina," Geographical Institute, Research Centre for Astronomy and Earth Sciences of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences; http://www.mtafk.hu/konyvtar/kiadv/etnika/ethnicMAP/005_session_e.html (28.12.2014).

Although according to the last census held in 2011, Hungarians represent the largest ethnic minority in Serbia with 3.5 percent of the country's population, their political importance has greatly diminished in recent years. Hungarians have always been concentrated primarily in Vojvodina where today they make only 13 percent of Vojvodina's population, while Serbs represent an absolute majority with 66.76 percent.¹⁵³ It should be mentioned that when in 1920 based on the provisions of the Trianon Treaty, Vojvodina became part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Hungarians were a majority population, while Serbs constituted only 25.2 percent.¹⁵⁴ Drastic changes of the ethnic structure of the population were initially a result of the colonization policies adopted by both Kingdom of Yugoslavia as well as Socialist Yugoslavia. After the disintegration of former Yugoslavia this was amended with the influx of Serbian refugees on the one hand, and immense migration of Hungarians to Hungary, on the other. When similarly to Kosovo, Vojvodina's autonomous status was forcibly swept away in 1990, Vojvodina in general and Hungarian minority in particular, lost their political relevance. Today, the province still witnesses sporadic inter-ethnic tensions and violence, however, the overall position of ethnic minorities is better than in other parts of the country.¹⁵⁵

Despite much lower numbers, the two most important minorities in Serbia in terms of inter-ethnic tensions are Albanians and Bosniaks that are concentrated in the Preshevo Valley¹⁵⁶ and Sanxhak region respectively.¹⁵⁷ The conflict in southern Serbia's Preševo Valley, where the majority of Albanians in Serbia live, was directly related to the forcible abolishment of Kosovo's autonomy in 1989 and the disintegration of former Yugoslavia. Unlike Kosovo, the Albanian population here had organized political parties from the very beginning of the 1990s, and it has participated in Serbian local and national elections since that time. However, decades of institutional discriminatory policies were only sharpened during the Milosevic's totalitarian regime. Consequently, in a referendum organized by the Albanian political parties in 1992, an overwhelming majority of Albanians in Preshevo Valley voted to join Kosovo.¹⁵⁸ The referendum was recognized neither by Serbia nor by the international community, and despite

¹⁵³ See "Ethnicity: Data by municipalities and cities," *2011 Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Serbia*, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Belgrade, 2012, p. 22.

¹⁵⁴ "Ethnic Hungarians in Ex-Yugoslavia," S.O.S. Transylvania – Geneva Committee, Ottawa, April 1993, p. 11.

¹⁵⁵ See Pekusic, Biljana, "Leaders call for action to halt ethnic violence in Vojvodina," *South East European Times*, 14 March 2013; http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/features/setimes/features/2013/03/14/feature-04 (07.01.2015). See also Milford, Joanna, "Ethnic Tensions Reemerge In Temerin," *The Balkans Daily*, 23 October 2013; <http://www.thebalkansdaily.com/ethnic-tensions-reemerge-in-temerin/> (07.01.2015).

¹⁵⁶ The Preševo Valley comprises the municipalities of Preševo, Medvedja and Bujanovac in southern Serbia, occupying approximately 120 square miles and located on the border between Serbia and Kosovo. The percentage of Albanians in Preševo, Bujanovac and Medvedje is 89.09, 54.69 and 26.17 respectively; see "Serbia: Maintaining Peace in the Presevo Valley," *International Crisis Group*, Europe Report N°186, 16 October 2007, p. 2.

¹⁵⁷ According to the 2011 census, Albanians comprise only 0.08 percent and Bosniaks 2.02 percent of the total population. However, it should be mentioned that there was a widely observed boycott of the census by Albanians in the country. Usually the figure of Albanians in the Preshevo Valley is estimated at 60,000-70,000; see "Third Opinion on Serbia," ACFC/OPIII (2013)006, Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, 28 November 2013, p. 7. See also *2011 Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Serbia*, 2012, p. 22.

¹⁵⁸ ICG Europe Report N°186, 2007, p. 1.

recurrent human rights violations by the Serbian regime, in the shadow of the Kosovo conflict, the problems of the Preshevo Valley remained almost unnoticed.¹⁵⁹

The entrance of NATO troops in Kosovo in June 1999, and a new set of security measures imposed in that region by the Technical Military Agreement opened a possibility for eventual replication of the KLA model in Preshevo Valley.¹⁶⁰ Consequently, former KLA fighters from Preshevo Valley created a new guerrilla - the Liberation Army for Preševo, Medveđa and Bujanovac (UCPMB) – that started an armed conflict with Serbia. The UCPMB applied same KLA tactic of “liberated territories,” and put forward official claims for political and territorial autonomy of Preshevo Valley within Serbia.¹⁶¹ After seventeen months of a low-grade fighting, through KFOR intermediation, an agreement on an unlimited ceasefire and commitment for a peaceful solution to the conflict was reached between Serbian authorities and the UCPMB on 28 November 2000.¹⁶² Few days later, on 30 November 2000, NATO Secretary-General Lord Robertson introduced a plan to lower violence in the region, which included a package of political and military measures that would encourage further dialogue.¹⁶³ Consequently, in May 2001, helped by strong NATO mediation, the UCPMB and the Serbian government signed the so called “Konculj Agreement” to end the conflict. The Albanians pledged to demobilise, disarm and disband the UCPMB if guaranteed that their fighters would be amnestied and refugees would be allowed to return to their homes. They also requested creation of multi-ethnic police force and integration of Albanians into public institutions. On the other hand, Serbia’s Deputy Prime Minister, Nebojsa Covic drafted a detailed plan with clear goals and timelines, to be implemented in Preshevo Valley – the so called “the “Covic Plan.”¹⁶⁴ In the end, the total number of casualties during the conflict on both sides was less than 100, while some 14,000 refugees have fled from Preshevo Valley to Kosovo.¹⁶⁵

However, more than ten years later, despite considerable infrastructure investments, Albanians in the region still feel like second-hand citizens and continue to complain about their overall political and economic position within the country. Their grievances are related to the lack of equal opportunities and economic prosperity, unemployment, but also to discrimination, repression, violence and arbitrary imprisonment.¹⁶⁶ The level of stereotypes and prejudice about

¹⁵⁹ For an in-depth discussion about this issue see “Southern Serbia: In Kosovo’s Shadow,” *International Crisis Group*, Europe Briefing N°43, 27 June 2006.

¹⁶⁰ The Technical Military Agreement was signed by NATO and the Yugoslav Military on 9 June 1999. Among others it stipulated creation of a five-kilometre security zone between Kosovo and Serbia; see <http://www.nato.int/kosovo/docu/a990609a.htm> (09.01.2015).

¹⁶¹ For an detailed discussion on UCPMB see Agon Demjaha and Lulzim Peci, “Insurgencies in the Balkans: Albanian Liberation Armies,” in Albrecht Schnabel and Rohan Gunaratna ed. *Wars from Within: Understanding and Managing Insurgent Movements*, London: Imperial College Press, 2015.

¹⁶² See Zëri Ditor, Prishtina, 29 November 2000.

¹⁶³ See for instance “NATO condemns violence in Presevo Valley,” *NATO Update*, 30 November 2000; <http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2000/1129/eng.htm> (09.01.2015).

¹⁶⁴ For a detailed discussion see “*Southern Serbia’s Fragile Peace*,” *International Crisis Group*, Europe Report N°152, 9 December 2003.

¹⁶⁵ According to reports, 10 civilians died and 45 were injured within the safety zone, while 24 policemen and servicemen were killed and 78 were injured; see Radosław Zenderowski, Rafał Wiśniewski, “The Ethnic Conflict in the Preševo Valley: The Role of the Orthodox Religion in the Conflict,” *Codrul Cosminului*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2014, p. 244.

¹⁶⁶ See for instance Matic, Marko, “Manjine u Srbiji – meta državne represije,” *Aljazeera Balkans*, 7 June 2012; <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/manjine-u-srbiji-meta-drzavne-represije> (11.01.2015).

Albanians is very high and persists for a long period despite Serbia's considerable efforts to develop comprehensive policies for minority protection and integration. Research has shown that Serbs in general don't consider members of ethnic minorities as suitable to carry out responsible positions in the society. However, the biggest social distance of Serbs is expressed towards Albanians, with 60 percent of the respondents having negative stereotypes towards Albanians and 40 percent not being happy to have them as residents in their country.¹⁶⁷ On the other hand, economic deprivation of Albanians is obvious by simple observation of GDP figures within the country. For instance, in 2005 in the Medveda municipality GDP per capita was \$347, \$571 in Bujanovac and \$288 in Preševo, compared to the national average for Serbia of \$2,057.¹⁶⁸ Similarly, the pattern of official economic discrimination is most evident in the investment of the Serbian government in the three municipalities. Obviously, such investment favours areas where Serbs represent a majority: in 2006 Serbia invested substantially more per capita in Medvedja municipality than in other two Albanian majority municipalities.¹⁶⁹

Obviously, in addition to enhanced minority rights and economic prosperity, the conflict in Preshevo Valley is also a conflict over territory. The already mentioned referendum and insurgency were primarily about claims of the Albanians from the Preshevo Valley to join Kosovo. In January 2006, all Albanian members of the three assemblies of the Preshevo Valley municipalities adopted a platform calling for a high degree of decentralisation and territorial autonomy for Albanians in southern Serbia similar to what Belgrade has asked for Kosovo Serbs. They have also adopted a platform demanding that the valley's three municipalities should join Kosovo in case of Kosovo's partition.¹⁷⁰ On the other hand, as discussed earlier, there have been several proposals from different circles for territory exchange of Preshevo Valley with Northern Kosovo. However, so far such proposals have at least formally been rejected by both Kosovo and Serbia, and are also vehemently opposed by the international community that fears that such step would open the so-called "Pandora's Box" by further encouraging Serbs in Bosnia and Albanians in Macedonia.¹⁷¹ Although likelihood of Preshevo Valley joining Kosovo is rather low, recently there has been a stark reminder of such a possibility by the president of the Movement for Democratic Progress party (PDP) and current mayor of Bujanovac, Jonuz Musliu in connection with the events in Crimea.¹⁷²

As already stated, the other ethnic minority that demonstrates antagonistic inter-ethnic relations with the Serb majority is the Bosniak one. The majority of more than 145,000 ethnic Bosniaks in Serbia are concentrated in the Sandzak region.¹⁷³ Serbian part of Sandzak consists of six

¹⁶⁷ Gavrilović, Daniela and Petrušić, Nevena, "Međunacionalni odnosi i zaštita manjinskih prava u Srbiji," *Migracijske i etničke teme*, Vol. 27, No. 3, 2011, pp. 421-422.

¹⁶⁸ ICG Europe Report N°186, 2007, p. 16.

¹⁶⁹ As a result, Presevo with 89.09 percent Albanian population, received only 35 percent of the per capita investment of Medvedja, where Serbs make up 68 percent of the population; see *Ibid*, p. 3.

¹⁷⁰ ICG Europe Report N°186, 2007, p. 10.

¹⁷¹ See Rossi, 2014, p. 871.

¹⁷² "Serbian Minister Vulin: Albanians from Presevo Valley Threaten Serbia," Independent, The Macedonian English Language News Agency, 18 March 2014; <http://www.independent.mk/articles/2801/Serbian+Minister+Vulin+Albanians+from+Presevo+Valley+Threaten+Serbia#sthash.gclQdho6.dpuf> (10.01.2015).

¹⁷³ Sandzak is a multi-ethnic region of approximately 8,700 square kilometres located in the south-west of Serbia and the north of Montenegro that also borders Bosnia and Herzegovina on its western side and Kosovo on its south-

municipalities with overall population of 235,567 inhabitants, of whom 142,350 (60 percent) Muslim Bosniaks and 90,314 Orthodox Serbs or Montenegrins (38 percent).¹⁷⁴ Similarly to Albanians, during early years of former-Yugoslavia, Bosniaks were often exposed to repressive measures by Rankovic and were therefore steadily migrating to Turkey. However, their position improved considerably since 1971 when Muslims (Bosniaks) were defined as one of the constitutive nations in socialist Yugoslavia.¹⁷⁵ Since then, the region was mainly characterised with a peaceful coexistence of different ethnic and religious groups who mainly spoke a common dialect of Serbo-Croatian language. Nevertheless, after the break-up of former Yugoslavia, and especially the war in BiH, the position of Bosniaks in Sandzak has deteriorated significantly. During the Milosevic regime, Bosniaks were exposed to official state terror that included ethnic cleansing of entire villages, murders, kidnappings, arbitrary arrests and dismissal from jobs.¹⁷⁶

Initially, after the dissolution of former Yugoslavia, the conflict between Bosniak minority and Serb majority was a conflict over territorial control. On the one hand, Serbian nationalists were quick to accuse Sandzak Bosniaks as renegades and potential fifth column that threaten the security of Serbia and Montenegro. On the other hand, feeling marginalised and threatened by such aggressive Serbian nationalism, many Bosniaks looked toward Bosnia as their spiritual homeland, thus further reinforcing the paranoia of Serbian nationalists about separatist tendencies of Bosniaks in the Sandžak.¹⁷⁷ Consequently, on 25-27 October 1991, Bosniaks organized a referendum on the Sandzak autonomy. The turnout was almost 70 percent, out of which 98 percent of Sandzak Bosniaks voted for the “complete political and territorial autonomy with the right to join one of the republics.”¹⁷⁸ However, the referendum was not recognized either by the Serbian authorities or by the international community. Instead, Yugoslav army forces and Serbian and Montenegrin paramilitary forces started a campaign of ethnic cleansing of Sandzak Bosniaks both in Serbia and Montenegro. Obviously, the aim was to remove "hostile" Bosniak populations that might potentially help the war of Bosnian Bosniaks across the border as well as to secure Sandzak's territorial integrity.¹⁷⁹ Bosniaks were given a clear message that any attempt for secession (or even greater autonomy) would be viewed as an act of aggression and would certainly be met with force. During this period, due to immense repression and state terror, some 60,000 Bosniaks were forced to flee their homes and search safety in Turkey, Macedonia and Western countries.¹⁸⁰

However, such tensions also fuelled Bosniak claims for independence of Sandzak from Serbia. The newly-formed Sandžak branch of the SDA, led by Sulejman Ugljanin, advanced arguments in favour of independence, and argued that if BiH secedes from Yugoslavia, the Sandžak should

eastern edge; see Morrison, Kenneth, “Political and Religious Conflict in the Sandžak,” Balkan Series 8/13, Advanced Research and Assessment Group, Defence Academy of the UK, April 2008, p. 1.

¹⁷⁴ Six municipalities are Novi Pazar, Sjenica, Tutin, Nova Varos, Prijepolje and Priboj; see “Serbia’s Sandzak: Still Forgotten,” International Crisis Group, Europe Report N°162, 8 April 2005, p. 1.

¹⁷⁵ Morrison, 2008, pp. 2-3.

¹⁷⁶ ICG Europe Report N°162, 2005, p. 10.

¹⁷⁷ Morrison, 2008, p. 3.

¹⁷⁸ Biserko, Sonja, *Minorities in Serbia*, Belgrade: Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, 2000, p.100.

¹⁷⁹ To achieve that objective Serbian forces committed murder, torture, kidnapping, bombing, beatings and even forced expulsion of Bosniaks from entire villages. For more details see ICG Europe Report N°162, 2005, p. 10.

¹⁸⁰ Dimitrova, Bodhana, “Bosniak or Muslim? Dilemma of one Nation with two Names,” *Southeast European Politics*, October 2001, Vol.II, No.2, p.98.

be unified with Bosnia. In March 1992, immediately prior to international recognition of Bosnian independence, the SDA leader also warned that Sandzak might attach itself to Bosnia if Serbia did not grant it autonomy. However, some years later, after repeated Western rejection of Sandzak Bosniaks' territorial claims, the Sandzak SDA dropped secession from its agenda and pressed for greater political and cultural autonomy.¹⁸¹ Still, the overall level of tensions remained high and sporadic inter-ethnic incidents continued throughout the 1990s. Even after the fall of Milošević's regime, antagonism between the two communities continued throughout most of the 2000s.¹⁸²

Unfortunately, the subsequent governments in Serbia failed to undertake positive steps that would ease the tension between the two main ethnic groups. Similarly to Albanians in Preshevo Valley, Sandzak Bosniaks continue to face economic deprivation, high levels of unemployment and lack of opportunities. Though bad economy, low standard of living, and dysfunctional and corrupt government represent a reality in almost all municipalities in Serbia, Bosniaks in the ethnically mixed Sandzak, view such failures as deliberate attack by the Serb ruling majority.¹⁸³ Disillusioned by dysfunctional state authorities, Bosniaks in Sandzak have turned to Islam as a shelter. Today, Islamist radicalism in Sandžak is growing, and it further inflames fragile inter-ethnic relations in the region. Bosnia and Sandzak are currently very often seen as the main centres of Islamic radicalism in the Balkans.¹⁸⁴ If state authorities in Serbia do not seriously engage in addressing existing grievances of Sandzak Bosniaks, existing tense inter-ethnic relations might soon be overshadowed by even harsher inter-religious relations between the Serb majority and Bosniak minority in the country.

Although home to almost 30 different ethnic minorities, the wars following the dissolution of former Yugoslavia have transformed Serbia into an almost homogenous country (Serbs make up 83.32 percent of the total population). Nevertheless, despite small numbers, the inter-ethnic relations between the Serb majority and certain ethnic minorities remain tense and problematic. When it comes to Albanians in Preshevo Valley and Bosniaks in Sandzak, such relations are undoubtedly influenced by overall Serbia's attitude towards Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Serbia has recently achieved certain progress in dealing with its minorities. However, there is still a lack of comprehensive and strategic approach to the integration of national minorities in Serbia, while inter-ethnic relations in the country remain a source of serious concern. Xenophobia and religious intolerance continue to characterize Serbian society, while persons belonging to national minorities are still a target of racist attacks. In addition, national minorities continue to be significantly under-represented in state-level public administrations and public enterprises.¹⁸⁵ It is the high time that Serbia departs from its past, and as a responsible EU candidate country concentrates in providing its minorities the rights and freedoms in accordance to the highest European standards.

¹⁸¹ Ron, James, "Boundaries and violence: Repertoires of state action along the Bosnia/Yugoslavia divide," *Theory and Society*, No. 29, 2000, p. 613.

¹⁸² Morrison, 2008, p. 7.

¹⁸³ ICG Europe Report N°162, 2005, p. 16.

¹⁸⁴ See for instance Maksimovic, Zoran, "Extremists Stir Up Tensions in Serbia's Sandzak," *Balkan Insight*, 23 September 2014; <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/extremists-stir-up-tensions-in-serbia-s-sandzak> (13.01.2015). See also "Is Islamist Radicalism Rising in Serbia?," *The XX Committee*, 14 September 2014; <http://20committee.com/2014/09/14/is-islamist-radicalism-rising-in-serbia/> (13.01.2015).

¹⁸⁵ "Third Opinion on Serbia," 2013, p. 2.

10. Conclusions and Recommendations

The violent dissolution of Former Yugoslavia has left a legacy of deep mistrust and animosities between majority and minority ethnicities in the new states that emerged out of it. The exception of the rule is Albania, where interethnic relations between Albanian majority and Greek, Macedonian and other minorities are relatively good.

A burdening issue in all countries of the region, but Montenegro, are disputes over the number of members of the minority communities that are residing within these states. The additional feature of ethnic minorities is the issue of non-declared nationality in the national censuses. Also, these states, with the exception of Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro, have undergone dramatic changes of their ethnic composition structure, due to the wars and atrocities that were also accompanied with refugee and internal displaced people problems.

In addition, the chapters of position of ethnic minority communities in the states of the region, but Albania and Croatia to certain extent, are still open. Croats and especially Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina still do have separatist ambitions, regardless their equal status with Bosnians and federal nature of this state. In Kosovo, Serbian community claims stronger territorial autonomy, while those who are living in the north of the country are highly prone to separatism and unification with Serbia. Albanians in Macedonia are dissatisfied with their position and are claiming more rights at national level. Situation is more or less the same with Serbian ethnic minority within Montenegro. In Serbia, both, Bosnians in Sandjak and Albanians in Presevo Valley are claiming territorial autonomy and are prone to separatism and unification with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, respectively.

Inter-ethnic and interstate relations in and between individual countries of the Western Balkans are the components of the same equation. Improvements or deteriorations of relations between individual countries of the Western Balkans have a direct impact on inter-ethnic relations within these states. Regardless of improved relations, mistrust still prevails in bilateral relations between neighbouring countries in the Western Balkans, mainly due to the fear of using ethnic minorities by other neighbouring states for separatist or destabilizing aims.

Recommendations:

1. Government of Kosovo should pay a special attention to the situation of inter-ethnic relations in the neighboring countries and Bosnia and Herzegovina. For these purpose, within the Directorate for Regional Affairs of Ministry of Foreign Affairs a Task Force on this issue has to be established in order to follow systematically this issue.
2. All countries of the region, especially Serbia in relation with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, and Kosovo in relation with Presevo Valley should make clear that changes of the borders are not acceptable.

3. EU in conjunction with OSCE and Council of Europe should make a particular pressure in all countries of the region to organize credible censuses in order to solve prevailing disputes on the number of the members of ethnic minority communities.
4. European Union, OSCE and Council of Europe should strengthen the regional approach on inter-ethnic and interstate relations. Special attention has to be paid to Sandzak and Presevo Valley that are left out of the scope of inter-state relations between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia and Kosovo, respectively.
5. OSCE should consider the option of opening field offices in Sandzak and Presevo Valley in order to follow closely developments in these two areas that are left practically without protection.

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