Ethnicity and Politics in South Eastern Europe

Nikolai Genov, Berlin

1. Introduction

During the nineties some societies in South Eastern Europe manifested a return to tribalism and primordial hostilities, which seemed to belong to a rather outdated chapter of continental history. The interethnic war in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the most telling example of this type of de-modernisation. Other societies in the sub-region were also marked by ethnicisation of politics and politicisation of ethnicity. These domestic developments were at least partly facilitated by the international setting and had far-reaching international implications. Logistics of supranational crisis management were tested in the sub-region. Now is the time to draw conclusions from this experience and consider options for handling situations which still remain full of potential and manifest risks.

Whatever the amalgamation of domestic and international causes and reasons of crisis situations in South Eastern Europe may be, there is one strategically most relevant common denominator of the processes. It is the perennial and continuing instability of economy, politics and culture in this European sub-region. One may try to explain this instability mainly by referring to the *multiethnic composition* of South East European societies. In fact, this is not a specific feature of the societies in the sub-region alone. The multiethnic type of cultural life and political organisation is getting more and more predominant in the development of countries and regions worldwide (Bös 2002). Nevertheless, the point is well taken since the issue of interethnic relations is undoubtedly an important source of tension and conflict in South Eastern Europe. But it is questionable if it is basically the multiethnic composition of societies that provokes tensions and conflicts. One broader hypothesis might read that they are primarily caused by the context of *belated nation-building and state-building.* Its latent problems always become manifest in times of *economic, political and cultural crisis* as was the case in South Eastern Europe during the nineties. Now *the open question concerns specific combinations of these factors in determining the success or failure in the management of interethnic relations under specific circumstances.*

One guiding idea for answering the question seems quite obvious today. It concerns the capacity of the constitutional and institutional arrangements to secure human rights and thus to alleviate interethnic tensions and conflicts. This solution is simple and efficient only at first glance, however. Recent processes in South Eastern Europe show that there are differences in understanding and protecting *individual* and *collective* rights of ethnic minorities. This issue is closely connected to *civic* and *ethnic* trends in nation-building and state-building. Moreover, the recent history of the sub-region under scrutiny shows that there are powerful economic, political and cultural factors counteracting the pattern of nation-building and state-building based on the recognition of universal rights of human individuals.

Therefore, we still have to learn lessons from the interplay of both constructive and destructive forces in developing multiethnic societies in South Eastern Europe. The learning process is painful since the peaceful interethnic co-existence and the clashes of ethnic groups show surprising variety, endurance and dramatic moves. These dynamics teach that the management of interethnic relations remains one of the most intriguing issues requiring interdisciplinary research.

2. The Ethnic Varieties

Both experts and lay people in South Eastern Europe are well aware of the complexity of ethnic groups and structures traditionally influenced in the sub-region by Catholicism, orthodox Christianity and Islam. Nevertheless, studies on the ethnic composition of the societies there face a present and perennial *informational problem.* The statistical data on the issue is often outdated or unreliable. One has to check and compare various national and international information sources in order to get a tentative overview of the ethnic composition of the societies under scrutiny.

The unreliability of information about the ethnic composition is often rooted in politically motivated approaches of governmental statistical offices. For instance, Turkish society is ethnically homogenous according to the official statistics. In reality, it is a public secret that approximately one fifth of the population of the country has a Kurdish ethnic identity. In the case of Greece, the official statistics do not record large numbers of immigrants settled in the country on permanent basis. They are roughly estimated at about one million. Among them there are probably 600,000 or even more Albanians described as a „huge portion of the Greek labour force and major contributors to the growing Greek economy“ (Danopoulos 2003: 4). The utmost relevance of the issue is underlined by estimations saying that in 2015 one fourth of the population inhabiting Greece will consist of immigrants, the largest part of them of Albanian origin.

In some cases like Montenegro there are widespread uncertainties in the population itself regarding the ethnic self-determination of individuals and groups. Due to war-caused migration, the actual ethnic composition of the Croatian and the Serbian societies very much deviates from the situation at the beginning of the nineties. The status of large groups of refugees or displaced persons in both countries is still unclear.

Table 1: Ethnic composition of South East European societies[1]

Albania	Albanian 95 %, Greek 3 %, other 2 % (Vlach, Gypsy, Serb, and Bulgarian) (1989 est.)
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Serb 37.1 %, Bosniak 48 %, Croat 14.3 %, other 0.6 % (2000)
Bulgaria	Bulgarian 83.6 %, Turk 9.5 %, Roma 4.6 %, other 2.3 % (2001)
Croatia	Croat 89.6 %, Serb 4.5 %, Bosniak 0.5 %, Hungarian 0.4 %, Slovene 0.3 %, Czech 0.2 %, Roma 0.2 %, Albanian 0.1 %, Montenegrin 0.1 %, other 4.1 % (2001)
Cyprus	Greek 85.2 %, Turkish 11.6 %, other 3.2 % (2000)
Greece	Greek 98 %, other 2 %
Macedonia, FYR	Macedonian 64.2 %, Albanian 25.2 %, Turkish 3,9 %, Roma 2.7 %, Serb 1.8 %, Bosnian 0.8 %, Vlach 0.5 %, and other 1.0 % (2003)
Romania	Romanian 89.5 %, Hungarian 6.6 %, Roma 2.5 %, Ukrainian 0.3 %, German 0.3 %, Russian 0.2 %, Turkish 0.2 %, other 0.4 % (2002)
Serbia and Montenegro	Serbia (without Kosovo): Serb 82.9 %, Hungarian 3.9 %, Bosniak/Muslim 2.1 %, Roma 1.4 %, Yugoslav 1.0 %, Croat 0.9 %, Montenegrin 0.9 %, Albanian 0.8 % (2002) Montenegro: Montenegrin 40.6 %, Serb 30.0 %, Bosniak/Muslim 13.7 %, Albanian 7.1 %, Croat 1.1 %, Roma 0.4 % (2003)
Slovenia	Slovene 88 %, Croat 3 %, Serb 2 %, Bosniak 1 %, Yugoslav 0.6 %, Hungarian 0.4 %, other 5 % (1991)
Turkey	Turkish 80 %, Kurdish 20 % (estimated)

Many current and future concerns about interethnic relations and policies are caused by or connected to demographic trends. There is a clear difference of the fertility rates in South East European societies along ethnic lines which partly coincide with religious differences. The Slavic population in the sub-region has low and declining birth rates leading to the demographic crisis in Bulgaria, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia and among the Slavic population of Macedonia. The ethnic majority in Romania follows the same demographic pattern. The demographic decline among the ethnic majorities is the background of a slow but substantial change in the ethnic composition in the whole South-East European region. Consequently, complicated problems tend to appear in countries with

Table 2: Population under 15 and over 65 years in a time perspective (in %)

Country	**under 15 years**		**over 65 years**	
	1975–2001	**2001–2015**	**1975–2001**	**2001–2015**
Germany	15.4	13.2	16.7	20.8
Hungary	16.7	13.3	14.7	17.4
Egypt	35.7	31.5	4.5	5.4
Albania	29.0	22.9	6.0	8.1
Bosnia-Herzegovina	18.3	14.1	10.3	13.6
Bulgaria	15.3	12.6	16.3	18.0
Croatia	17.0	16.5	15.9	17.8
Greece	14.9	13.2	17.8	20.0
Macedonia, FYR	22.3	20.0	10.2	12.2
Romania	17.7	15.4	13.6	14.8
Slovenia	15.4	12.1	14.2	18.5
Turkey	31.2	25.0	5.6	6.7

strong ethnic minorities marked by a higher birth rate. The political implications of the uneven demographic development of ethnic groups might be well exemplified by the demographic and political processes in Kosovo. This experience throws a long shadow on the interethnic relations in Macedonia, in Southern Serbia and in parts of Montenegro. There are specific problems in this respect caused by the fast absolute and relative growth of the Roma population in all South East European societies. On average, the representatives of this ethnic group have an educational level and cultural specifics, which make them less competitive under the conditions of mass unemployment and the challenges of the emerging information-based society.

With the exception of the Roma population, all other politically relevant ethnic minority groups in South East European societies have an affiliation to ethnic majorities in neighbouring states. In this way, the interethnic and minority issues get immediate international dimensions. As seen from this angle, the developments in Kosovo and Macedonia are and will remain a strong warning to the international community. The issue becomes particularly relevant in view of demographic trends in particular countries. Albania and Turkey are close to the demographic pattern of typical developing countries like Egypt, while other South-East European societies follow the demographic pattern of the Western and the Central European countries exemplified below by Germany and Hungary (UNDP 2003a: 250–252).

There are international implications of the above indicated uneven demographic developments. Turkey will be the country with the largest population in the European Union or will be approaching this status when – most probably – becoming member of the Union. In formal terms, this demographic situation would imply a new constellation in the European Parliament. Taking into account the strengthening of the Turkish ethnic component in the countries of the present-day and future European Union, the sub-regional demographic processes in South Eastern Europe receive a continental dimension as well (UNDP 2003a: 250–252).

It is this geopolitical context in which the analysis of ethnic minorities, minority rights and interethnic relations in the countries of South Eastern Europe receives its complex meaning and relevance.

Table 3: Change of population numbers 1975–2015 (Mill.)

Country	1975	2001	2015
Germany	78.7	82.3	82.5
Hungary	10.5	10.0	9.3
Egypt	39.3	69.1	90.0
Albania	2.4	3.1	3.4
Bosnia-Herzegovina	3.7	4.1	4.3
Bulgaria	8.7	8.0	7.2
Croatia	4.3	4.4	4.3
Macedonia	1.7	2.0	2.2
Romania	21.2	22.4	21.6
Slovenia	1.7	2.0	1.9
Turkey	41.0	69.3	82.1

3. Constitutional Arrangements Concerning Ethnic Minority Rights

There are a wide variety of treatments of the issue of ethnic minorities and minorities' rights in the constitutions in South Eastern Europe. In most cases, they acknowledge the existence of ethnic minorities explicitly and introduce various degrees of regulations of their rights. However, there are also far-reaching differences in the accentuation in these constitutional arrangements due to specific traditions, situations and political considerations. For instance, the Greek Constitution dating back to 1975 is strikingly unspecific on the issue. According to its Art. 5, it guarantees freedom and integrity to all persons on the national territory disregarding their nationality, race, religion or political orientation. Art. 13 underlines the freedom of religious expression as long as it is in congruence with the public order and morale. The Turkish Constitution is also rather general concerning the issue under scrutiny. Its Art. 10 stipulates that all people should be equal by law without discrimination, but ethnic minorities are not mentioned explicitly. In contrast to that, until recently languages other than Turkish were put in a clearly disadvantaged position.[2]

In contrast, in the Yugoslav successor-states the rights of ethnic minorities are recognised as being important and treated in detail. For instance, Art. 48 and Art. 56 of the Macedonian Constitution of 1992 affirms the full cultural development of minority groups and the support of this development by the state. The corresponding Croatian text names all national minorities in the preamble and guarantees them a representation in parliament (Art. 15). Similar articles can be found in the Slovenian (Art. 64) Constitution. The Romanian Constitution exempts parties of national minorities from the duty to get at least five percent of the votes before being allowed to enter parliament. It guarantees the right to have an ethnic identity, to preserve, develop and express the cultural, linguistic and religious origin and the protection of them (Art. 6). There are also provisions for education in the mother tongue (Art. 32)[3] and for the right to use it in court (Art. 127). Some recent laws determine that public officials appointed in minority areas[4] should know the local language and that universities should have departments for minorities.[5]

Against the background of the broad range of issues and attempted solutions, two examples might be indicative

both in terms of issues connected with ethnic minority rights in South Eastern Europe as well as with a view to trends in dealing with them. The examples under scrutiny are the Bulgarian Constitution of July 12, 1991, and the Constitutional Charter of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro passed by the Federal Parliament on February 4, 2003. At first glance, the reason for this choice is formal, but it is quite essential in reality. The Bulgarian Constitution in question was among the first post-socialist constitutions in Eastern Europe while the Constitutional Charter of Serbia and Montenegro is the most recent one. There was a period of intensive institutional learning between the two events. The Constitutional Charter of Serbia and Montenegro includes the results of this learning process concerning interethnic relationships and ethnic minority rights in South Eastern Europe. But it refers also to the conceptual and practical experience in broader terms since some substantial innovations occurred also in international law on ethnic minorities' rights during the nineties.

A. The Great National Assembly which adopted the **Bulgarian Constitution of July 12, 1991** (amended in September, 2003) had to deal with the then recent heritage of interethnic tensions due to the forceful change of names of the Turkish population in the country in the mid-eighties. It was followed by the mass exodus of Bulgarian Turks in the summer of 1989. Handling the still burning issues, the Constitution incorporated key ideas of modern law concerning ethnic minorities and minority rights.[6]

Article 6 [Human Dignity, Freedom, Equality]

(2) All citizens shall be equal before the law. There shall be no privileges or restriction of rights on the grounds of race, nationality, ethnic self-identity, sex, origin, religion, education, opinion, political affiliation, personal or social status or property status.

Article 11 [Political Parties]

(4) There shall be no political parties on ethnic, racial, or religious lines, nor parties, which seek the violent usurpation of state power.

Article 36 [Language]

(1) The study and use of the Bulgarian language is a right and obligation of every Bulgarian citizen.

(2) Citizens whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian shall have the right to study and use their own language alongside the compulsory study of the Bulgarian language.

Article 44 [Association]

(1) No organisation shall act to the detriment of the country's sovereignty and national integrity, or the unity of the nation, nor shall it incite racial, national, ethnic, or religious enmity or an encroachment on the rights and freedoms of citizens;

Article 54 [Culture, Creativity]

(1) Everyone shall have the right to avail himself of the national and universal human cultural values and to develop his own culture in accordance with his ethnic self-identification, which shall be recognised and guaranteed by the law.

The generalised form of the above arrangements notwithstanding, the new Bulgarian Constitution facilitated very much the democratisation of the interethnic relations in the country. However, the precision and practical relevance of these constitutional arrangements should not be overestimated. Against the background of the experience during the eighties, the Constitution clearly prohibits, for instance, the establishment of political parties on an ethnic basis. Ironically enough, it was exactly the Movement of Rights and Liberties – namely, the ethnic party of the Bulgarian Turks – which very much contributed to the stabilization of the democratic political order in the country after 1989. The result is the decline of interethnic tensions and conflicts and the substantially reduced intensity of the perception of interethnic relations as a major risk facing Bulgarian society.

The institutional achievements and their implications in everyday life should not be overestimated either. In Bulgaria, it took a long time to get education and broadcasting in the Turkish language well established. The improvements notwithstanding, the social distance between representatives of the major ethnic groups in the country remains significant – especially concerning the Roma ethnic group.

Table 4: Would you accept a Turk/Roma for: (National polls, only answer „No", in %)[7]

	1998		2001	
	Turk	**Roma**	**Turk**	**Roma**
– Neighbour	24.8	66.4	14.6	58.9
– Colleague at the workplace	21.7	60.2	11.2	49.5
– Close friend	44.8	79.6	31.0	75.0
– Member of your family	72.2	88.8	63.2	87.0

B. Constitutional Charter of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro of February 4, 2003 (Constitutional Charter 2003). The major innovation in this most recent Eastern European Constitution is formulated in its Art. 8. It declares that a special Charter of Human and Minority Rights and Civil Freedoms shall form an integral part of the Constitutional Charter and shall be adopted under the procedure and in the manner stipulated for the adoption of the Constitutional Charter itself. However, there are clear formulations concerning ethnic minority rights in the Constitutional Charter itself. More specifically, Art. 45 stipulates the establishment of a Ministry of Human and Minority Rights. The Minister „shall monitor the exercise of human and minority rights and, together with the competent bodies of the member states, shall coordinate activities for the implementation and compliance with international conventions for the protection of human and minority rights".

The constitutional arrangements concerning minorities are dealt with in an exceptionally detailed way in the Charter on Human and Minority Rights and Civil Freedoms. Compared to the Bulgarian Constitution, which deals with ethnic minority rights only in terms of individual rights, the above Charter introduces the explicit formulation of collective minority rights:

Article 47 [Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities]

Persons belonging to national minorities shall have individual and collective rights, rights that are exercised individually or in community with others, in accordance with the law and international standards.

Collective rights imply that persons belonging to national minorities shall, directly or through their elected representatives, take part in decision-making process or decide on issues related to their culture, education, information and the use of language and script, in accordance with the law.

In addition to the term „national minorities", other terms established by the constitutions and laws of the member states may be equally used.

The Charter also avoids the explicit prohibition of the establishment of political parties on the basis of ethnicity as it is the case in the Bulgarian Constitution. But the permissiveness of the Charter remains in this respect more implicit than explicit:

Article 53 [Right to Assembly]

Persons belonging to national minorities shall have the right to establish educational and cultural organisations and associations, which are financed voluntarily.

Nevertheless, due to the specific circumstances of the dissolution of the multiethnic former Yugoslav state, the experience from the bloody interethnic wars on its territory and especially due to the painful experience of the conflict in Kosovo, the above Charter on Human and Minority Rights and Civil Freedoms is a major breakthrough in the constitutional arrangement concerning ethnic minority issues in South Eastern Europe. Given some recent debates in Western Europe (the issue of wearing religious symbols in public places, for example), the arrangements incorporated in the Charter might even be seen as a breakthrough in a broader cultural context.

Being relevant as they indeed are, constitutional arrangements might only be the safe basis for resolving social and political issues. The real institutional practice of approaching these issues might very much deviate from the constitutional arrangements because of specifics of the economic, political and cultural situations. Since these are usually complicated and rather dynamic in South Eastern Europe, reality often deviates from the constitutional arrangements. There are usually economic causes and reasons lurking behind these deviations.

4. The Challenge of Economic Underdevelopment

The efforts to democratically manage complicated interethnic relations in the former socialist societies in South Eastern Europe face the harsh reality of economic underdevelopment and related phenomena or consequences. It is only against this background that one can properly understand the specifics of ethnic divisions in the sub-region and particularly the extremes of political use and abuse of ethnic divisions.

The economic situation in most former socialist societies in South Eastern Europe deteriorated during the nineties. The drop of GDP in the Federation of Serbia and Montenegro is particularly sharp. However, the decline of the number of employed and the rate of registered unemployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina lead to the conclusion that in the nineties the drop in production has been even deeper there (UNECE 2003: 224f.).

The above data indicate widespread unemployment and poverty in most countries in the sub-region. Mass poverty reproduces shortened aspirations for education and employment, restricted horizons for time planning and social marginalisation. Without determined national and international efforts, the various manifestations of persistent poverty will continue to lead to discontent and consequently to social tensions and political instability. Given the ethnic mixture in the sub-region, there are and there will be groups ready to interpret the difficult economic situation and the general underdevelopment in ethnic terms and to draw political conclusions and orientations for action accordingly. The readiness to move in the direction of interethnic confrontation is especially facilitated by mass unemployment, which is the major cause of mass poverty in the sub-region. Typically, unemployment is structural since it is mainly caused by the decline of the industrial production developed during the state socialist modernisation (UNECE 2003:226)

Only foreign investment, mostly from the European Union, may slowly alleviate the problems of unemployment and

Table 5: Socio-economic development in South Eastern Europe 1989–2002

Country	GDP 2002 (1989 = 100)	Employed 2001 (1989 = 100)	Registered Unemployed 2002 (%)
Hungary	111.7	73.8	8.4
Albania	113.9	74.3	14.5
Bosnia/Herzegovina	–	64.6	39.9
Bulgaria	82.9	67.4	16.3
Croatia	86.4	82.4	21.5
Macedonia, FYR	78.5	57.7	42.0
Romania	87.4	97.7	8.1
Serbia/Montenegro	49.5*	80.4	27.9
Slovenia	117.3	82.3	11.8

* Without Kosovo

poverty. The quality of the new job opportunities is also very important since there is a strong tendency in the sub-region to keep intact or to create low quality jobs.

National and international statistics register negative tendencies also in the main spheres of reproduction of human capital in most countries of South Eastern Europe. Typically, the share of GDP invested in education declined there during the nineties. The same applies to the expenditures in public health care. One has to take the decline of GDP and its generally low level in South Eastern Europe into account in order to obtain a realistic picture of the situation (UNDP 2003a: 295-297).

5. Macedonia as a Testing Ground

The impact of the above social and economic problems on interethnic relations in South Eastern Europe can be best exemplified by the developments in Macedonia. The decline of industrial production by more than a half is the most important direct factor for the very high rate of unemployment in the country. The problem is just apparently only economic. The Macedonian industry employed predominantly Macedonians of Slavic origin. The Albanian population is concentrated in the rural areas and was less affected by the collapse of the industry. In this sense, the structural unemployment of the previous industrial labour force has a clear ethnic dimension. But the open and hidden unemployment is also high in the villages due to different reasons. The rural Albanian households have a high birth rate and a substantial surplus of a young labour force. Practically, their major source of revenue is the shadow economy. Under these precarious conditions it is easy to manipulate the opinion of ethnic groups by blaming either the ethnic minority or the ethnic majority for the sufferings that actually affect both ethnic groups although in different ways.

Table 6: Industrial production in South Eastern Europe 1980–2002 (1989 = 100 %)

Country	1980	1989	2002
Hungary	92.9	100.0	142.3
Albania	77.0	100.0	26.2
Bosnia-Herzegovina	106.0	100.0	12.9
Bulgaria	71.3	100.0	44.5
Croatia	88.7	100.0	63.6
Macedonia	72.1	100.0	43.5
Romania	76.9	100.0	57.6
Serbia and Montenegro	80.0	100.0	39.9
Slovenia	90.3	100.0	84.6

Thus, all references to Macedonian society as a success-story in managing interethnic relations (Troebst 2002) or the interpretation of the armed interethnic clashes in 2001 as an unexpected sudden break in the smooth development of a truly multiethnic society before that year reveal lack of proper information or poor demagogy. The preconditions for ethnic interpretation of economic and political issues, and thus for violent interethnic conflicts, matured in Macedonia during the whole difficult period of the nineties. This destructive development has been facilitated by traditional cultural distances. In addition, the Kosovo crisis immediately triggered the explosion of armed interethnic clashes since the Macedonian Albanians were convinced by the Kosovo experience that the use of armed force for resolving interethnic issues can be rewarded by the international community.

The Ohrid Agreement reached under the pressure of the European Union brought about exactly this effect. More precisely, it is a political solution that puts the individual *and* collective rights of the Albanian ethnic minority into

Table 7: Changing public expenditures on education and health care as % of GDP

Country	Education		Health care	
	1990	2000	1990	2000
Hungary	5.8	5.0	–	5.1
Albania	5.8	–	3.3	2.1
Bosnia-Herzegovina	–	–	–	3.1
Bulgaria	5.2	3.4	4.	3.0
Croatia	–	4.2	9.5	8.0
Macedonia	–	–	9.2	5.1
Romania	2.8	3.5	2.8	1.9
Slovenia	–	–	–	6.8
Turkey	2.2	3.5	2.2	3.6

practice. The major mechanism for achieving this effect is the participation of the Albanian minority in political decision-making, implementation of decisions and political control. The administrative decentralisation agreed upon in Ohrid has to materialise this principle by bringing the quantitative participation of the Albanian population in state administration in correspondence with its relative weight in the population of the country.

Under the precarious economic circumstances in Macedonia, public services are the most reliable source of income in the country. Thus, for the Albanians, the participation in public services according to their share in the total population is of utmost importance since it opens the access to this source of income to them. However, the change has to be implemented in a situation where the number of civil servants in Macedonia has to be radically reduced according to recommendations of the World Bank. Thus, the large group of civil servants mostly of Slavic origin is under double pressure leading to accumulation of interethnic tensions. This detail must be accounted for together with many others in order to understand the completely diverging opinions of the two main ethnic groups on the Ohrid Agreement (UNDP 2003b: Annex 6.5).

Table 8: Do you agree or disagree with the Ohrid Agreement? (in %)

	Macedonians	Albanians
– Fully agree	5.7	68.1
– Somehow agree	32.3	23.5
– Somehow disagree	17.2	1.5
– Fully disagree	37.9	1.2
– No answer	0.4	–
– Do not know	6.5	5.6

In light of this radical disagreement it is not surprising that about one-fourth of the respondents supported a partition of Macedonia according to the data from the same representative public opinion poll. This perspective is not desirable for the international community for many reasons, the major one being the feared change of borders and the domino-effects thereafter. But the events in August–September 2003 clearly demonstrated that the much-feared intensification of interethnic tensions in Macedonia is quite possible in spite of the efforts of the peace-keeping forces.

6. Conclusions

The example of Macedonia includes all determinants and manifestations of interethnic tensions and conflicts in South Eastern Europe. The multiethnic composition of Macedonian society is the fertile soil for the intensive problems of belated nation-building and state-building. More precisely, we may notice the clash between the civic and ethnic trends in nation-building and state-building. While the first trend has the universal individual rights as its guiding idea, the second heavily relies on the idea of collective rights of ethnic groups. In the complicated and dynamic situation of Macedonian society, both domestic and international factors develop changing preferences in favour of these alternatives. It is easy to foresee future difficulties due to diverging interests or due to inconsistent policies according to changing preferences.

Indeed, all components of politics in South Eastern Europe are currently determined by the need to manage intensive risks (van Meurs 2003) since the policies of states and political entities in the sub-region have to cope with situations which are far away from the key parameters of sustainable economic, political and cultural development. Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia and Kosovo still represent obvious instances of instability. In the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, no expert can estimate the financial aid still needed for the country in order to transform it into a viable social system. The latent ethnic tensions there are still so strong that a withdrawal of international troops would be probably followed by new interethnic clashes and the very much feared change of state borders. The only effective counter-strategy is to focus on the economic stabilisation of the country. However, this promising perspective is questioned by the already well rooted rent-seeking mentality that developed under the conditions of an international protectorate.

As for the case of Kosovo, the continuing diplomatic debates about „standards“ and „status“ of this political entity only strengthen the assumption that the interethnic clashes in March 2004 could be repeated. The expectation that the issue would be automatically resolved by the integration of the Western Balkans into the European Union might be easily questioned by the different timing of both processes.

These and other examples show that there is a continuous and urgent demand for the transfer of institutional experience concerning the handling of risks in the sub-region. For instance, it will take decades before the health care systems there reach the level of correspondence with the criteria of a modern social policy. Therefore, the national and international efforts to improve social policy and thus to reduce the concomitant interethnic tensions in the sub-region will run under the header of „addressing emergency" (Kausch 2001). In this context, there is a broad range of open questions concerning the interethnic relations in South Eastern Europe which will remain quite topical in the foreseeable future, although with modifications from country to country:

- How far is the ethnic representation in political decision-making legally and institutionally guaranteed?
- Is there a functioning arrangement for education of minorities in their mother tongue?
- Is the development and expression of ethnic culture institutionally well regulated?
- To which extent are there equal opportunities at the workplace for members of different ethnic groups, particularly for the new ethnic groups of migrants?

The above problems should be carefully discussed in the context of the gradual accession of the South East European countries into the European Union. A specific but nonetheless important problem in this context regards the situation of the Roma ethnic group. It can be addressed separately but it would be advisable to discuss it in a broader context of interethnic relations in particular countries and in the whole area of South Eastern Europe. Indeed, the major conclusion from the experience of dealing with interethnic relations in the sub-region is exactly this: they should be studied and practically dealt with in accordance with the multidimensional and quite dynamic local and international context.

***Nikolai Genov** ist Universitätsprofessor für Soziologie am Osteuropa-Institut und am Institut für Soziologie der FU Berlin.*

[1] Mostly according to information from the widely cited web page *http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/fields/2075.html*

[2] In October 2001, significant changes were introduced. Among others, Art. 26 and Art. 28 were abolished in order to diminish the dominance of the Turkish language. Further steps will follow.

[3] While the 1992 legislation comprises many restrictions to mother tongue education for ethnic minorities.

[4] Those are regions in which 20 percent or more of the population belong to a national minority.

[5] Instead of creating universities exclusively for each minority.

[6] See *http://www.parliament.bg/?page=const&lng=en*.

[7] Data from the national surveys on Transformation Risks carried out by a team headed by the present author.

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