



International Conference on Diplomacy and International Relations

Diplomacy and the Politics of fear:

The 21st Century Challenges to the
Theory and Practice of Diplomacy
and International Relations

Proceedings

12 September 2016

International Conference on Diplomacy & International Relations

ICDIR 2016

Proceedings of International Conference on Diplomacy and International Relations (ICDIR -2016) is published by the

College of Law, Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Derby, Kedleston Road, Derby, United Kingdom

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ISBN: 978-1-910755-07-5

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PAPER 3:

CURRENT SECURITY IMPLICATIONS IN THE BALKANS, WITH A FOCUS ON MACEDONIA

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Abstract

A Macedonian friend in Skopje recently observed that his grandmother had lived in five different states without ever moving house!

Macedonia is the smallest state in South Eastern Europe with a population of only two million inhabitants. Blighted by its economic geography, Macedonia is a land-locked state with poor infrastructure, scarce natural resources, and small market potential. The country was hit by the 2007 Euro crisis and the effects of high youth unemployment at 52 per cent continue to linger. There have been internal rifts, resulting in armed conflict between Albanian separatists and the Macedonian Army in 2001. Macedonia has also been deeply affected by migration. There were 90,000 from the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina between 1992-95; then, in the spring of 2001 a further 360,000 refugees crossed over

the borders from Kosovo, the equivalent of 17 per cent of Macedonia's population, raising inter-ethnic tensions with the possibility of a permanent change to the ethnic balance of the country and stretching institutional capacities to their limits (Pendarovski, 2011) and Macedonia continues to be affected by the current European refugee crisis that grew exponentially throughout 2015 and 2016.

Macedonia is defined by its Foreign relations. It has problems with all five of its immediate neighbours. It has had a long dispute with Bulgaria, which denies the existence of the Macedonian nation and does not recognise the Macedonian language. Since independence in 1991, there has been a long-running naming dispute with Greece, which has delayed Macedonian entry into the European Union and NATO. Albania frequently raises concerns over the rights of the large ethnic Albanian community in

Macedonian which make up twenty per cent of the country's population, added to which there have been security spill overs from Kosovo, dating from NATO's conflict over Kosovo in 1999 and the conflict in the north-west of Macedonia with the Albanian National Liberation Army in 2001. Meanwhile, Serbia, once the pivot state in the region, denies the autonomy of the Macedonian Orthodox Church.

Twenty-five years into its political transition, Macedonia's future is essential to the future European security architecture (Liotta and Jebb, 2001, p.50). Yet, Macedonia's problems are unique and quite different to those of all the other so-called Yugoslav successor states. This paper will set out to explain how this seemingly benighted European state is actually a poorly understood success.

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