

MACEDONIA

Albanians

Activity: 1991-2020

General notes

NA

Movement start and end dates

- The first political parties claiming to speak for the Albanian minority in Macedonia appeared as soon as communism made its way out (see Macedonian Albanians under Yugoslavia). In Macedonia we code the Albanians as of 1991, the year of Macedonian independence and indicate that the movement was active and non-violent prior to independence (start date: 1990).
- The Party of Democratic Prosperity, the Democratic Party of Albanians, the National Democratic Party, the Democratic Alliance of Albanians are among the organizations that represent the Albanians in Macedonia. Some of them came to life as a consequence of a split within older parties, most of them are competing against each other in the elections. Most also ask for regional autonomy with widespread powers.
- In 2000, two militant organizations appeared as well: the Kosovo Protection Corps and the Albanian National Army (AKSH). These groups enjoy support from similar ones active in Kosovo. Albania has spoken in the name of the Albanians in Macedonia in international forums and defended their demands.
- Albanian political parties and at least one informal group demanded greater rights for Albanians in the 2010s. The main Albanian party, the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) focused on the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement of 2001, which rules out federalization, and demanded the following rights: state-wide use of the Albanian language, equal access to good jobs and a meaningful role in running the state. While these are not SD claims as defined here, other Albanian parties including the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA), Alliance for Albanians (AA) and Besa made for autonomy/federalization. For example, the DPA party leadership referred to Ohrid Framework as a “dead deal”, and expressed views Western Macedonia as exclusively Albanian and Albanians should hold the power there. Moreover, in 2015, a group of ethnic Albanian gunmen engaged in a shootout with the police in a town called Kumanovo. The armed group rejected Ohrid and believed that Macedonia should become a federal state with an Albanian unit. On this basis, we code the movement as ongoing (Bennett 1994; Election Guide 2013; International Crisis Group 2015a; 2015b; Hewitt & Cheetham 2000; Koppa 2001; Marshall & Gurr 2003, 2005; Milosavlevski & Tomovoski 1997; MAR; Poulton 1993, 2000; Saveski & Sadiku 2012; Reuters 2013; Rexhepi 2008; UPI 2013; Xharra 2016). [start date: 1990; end date: ongoing]

Dominant claim

- Claims vary from moderates who are committed to the unity of the Macedonian state and demand “non-territorial autonomy in the political sphere” (Ackermann 2000: 61-62), to radicals who wish to secede from Macedonia in order to unify with Kosovo and / or Albania (Hewitt & Cheetham 2000: 178). However, support for outright separation is low among the popular Albanian politicians. For instance, when comparing the situation of Albanians in Kosovo and Macedonia in 1999, Arben Xhaferri, the leader of one of the more radical Albanian parties, the DPA (PDSH), stated that Albanians in Macedonia have been politically but never administratively separate and

therefore, “it is impossible to talk of reshaping the borders in Macedonia” (Minorities at Risk Project).

- The majority of Albanians favor a solution in the middle between these two extreme positions: regional autonomy (Bajrami 2009). In particular, it has to be noted that the majority of the NLA/UCK insurgents fighting against the Macedonian authorities in the civil conflict in 2001 were not secessionists and did not demand independence, in contrast to the Albanian insurgents in Kosovo. Their major aim was a better representation of Albanians in the Macedonian government, that is “human rights of the Albanians in Macedonia and constitutional reforms” (Daskalovski 2004: 61).
- The Democratic Party of Albanians and other right wing ethnic Albanian groups expressed dissatisfaction with the Orchid Agreement in recent years and demanded greater self-rule for Albanians and the federalization of Macedonia (International Crisis Group 2015a; 2015b; Sinisa-Jakov Marusic 2009; Saveski & Sadiku 2012).
- Based on this, we code an autonomy claim throughout. [1991-2020: autonomy claim]

Independence claims

NA

Irredentist claims

- Lund (2005: 232) suggest that 1,000 protesters demanded unification with Albania in 1990. Yet, the main Albanian parties accepted Macedonia’s territorial integrity. Hewitt & Cheetham (2000: 178) suggest that radicals wish to secede from Macedonia in order to unify with Kosovo and / or Albania. Support for union with Albania is not large, but Roth (2015: 143) describes the movement as “semi-active”. On this basis, we code the irredentist claim as ongoing, but note that this coding decision is ambiguous. [start date: 1990; end date: ongoing]

Claimed territory

- The clearest articulation of a territorial claim we could find relates to the “Republic of Illyrida”, which Albanian nationalist proposed in the 1990s, with backing from the Macedonian UCK/KLA (Roth 2015: 142). However, the precise extent of this territorial claim remains unclear, as proposals for the republic appear to vary considerably. We therefore flag this claim as ambiguous and code it based on a map shown in Roth (2015: 137).

Sovereignty declarations

- In January 1992, Macedonian Albanians organized a unilateral referendum on their autonomy (Engström 2003). The Macedonian government denied the validity of the poll (Bennett 1994; Lund 2005). We found no evidence for a declaration in the context of the referendum, however, except for a marginal declaration of independence proclaimed three months after the referendum: in April 1992, the breakaway Republic of Ilirida was proclaimed in the town Struga, which, however, did not receive popular support (Ramet 1997; Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2000). We do not code the declaration since it came from a marginal faction.

Separatist armed conflict

- The MAR rebellion score is 3 in 1997, suggesting a “local rebellion”. However, the MAR coding notes make mention of only two deaths, thus 1997 is coded as NVIOLSD: “Demands by ethnic Albanian for greater rights erupted into conflict on July 9 after the government sent in special

forces to take down the Albanian, Turkish and Macedonian national flags flying outside Gostivar's town hall. Police shot dead two young ethnic Albanian, a third man was beaten by police and later died from his injuries, while several policemen received bullet wounds. The interior ministry said 312 people had been arrested, including the town's newly-elected radical mayor, Mr Rumi Osmani. Officials suspected some of the Gostivar protestors had been brought in from Albania and Serbia (Financial Times)."

- The LVIOLSD coding for 2001 follows UCDP/PRIO (which however considers this an insurgency over the government; clearly, though, the rebels aimed at territorial self-determination). In line with this, Keesing's reports that separatist clashes in 2001 led to 81 deaths.
- As noted in Minorities at Risk, violence from 2002 onward has been minimal.
- In May 2015, there was a shootout in the town of Kumanovo between ethnic Albanian gunmen and police, which left 18 dead. Some of the gunmen supported the federalization of Macedonia (International Crisis Group 2015; Xharra 2016). We do not code separatist violence in 2015 because the 25-deaths threshold was not met.
- [1991-2000: NVIOLSD; 2001: LVIOLSD; 2002-2020: NVIOLSD]

Historical context

- The 1980s saw assimilationist campaigns and repeated acts of repression against ethnic Albanians in Macedonia. For instance, in 1983, teachers in Tetova were disciplined and dismissed from the League of Communists for not observing certain regulations concerning the use of Macedonian in official paperwork. In December 1986, a registrar in Tetova was expelled for registering names "which stimulated nationalist sentiment" (Poulton 1993: 80). Repression appears to have intensified towards the end of the decade. According to Milosavljević & Tomovski (1997), in the late 1980s, the Albanian language was removed from public sight, and Albanian families were prohibited from naming their children with Albanian names. Also, Albanian families were prohibited from having more than two children. In 1988, a ban was introduced on restricting the selling of land in western Macedonia to ethnic Albanians. This was to prevent ethnic Albanians buying land, thereby creating ethnically pure areas (Poulton 1993; Bennett 1994). Hence, there was a cultural rights restriction due to the events in the late 1980s (we code it in 1988). [1988: cultural rights restriction]
- In 1990 Macedonia's constitution was amended. The amendment redefined the state from a "state of the Macedonian people and the Albanian and Turkish nationalities" to a "national state of the Macedonian people" without making mention of Albanians (Poulton 2000). [1990: cultural rights restriction]

Concessions and restrictions

- The 1991 constitution of independent Macedonia did not make mention of the ethnic Albanians as a constituent national group, a status that dissatisfied the Albanians (Zahariadis 2003: 262). Bennett (1994) quotes a PDP member saying: "In 1944, when Macedonia was created by Tito, both Albanians and Macedonians started out on an equal footing, but now we are treated like second class citizens". Furthermore, the new constitution disadvantaged the Albanians with regard to language (e.g. no use of Albanian with state authorities), education (no higher education in Albanian) and the use of national symbols (e.g. limited use of Albanian flag) (Karajkov 2008). Thus, the Albanians' cultural rights were restricted. [1991: cultural rights restriction]
 - o Note: Hewitt & Cheetham (2000: 178) note that the Macedonian Albanians, citing discrimination in higher education, established their own Albanian university in Tetovo (in 1994). According to Hewitt & Cheetham (2000: 178), the Macedonian government has declared the university illegal. It only recognized the university after the Ohrid agreement (see below). We do not code a separate restriction because the declaration of the university as illegal/non-recognition of the university (it has continued working, it appears, despite non-recognition) appears very much related to the 1991 constitution, which did not provide for higher education in Albanian.

- In July 1997, violence erupted (3 deaths) when the Macedonian government took down the Albanian flag from the town hall in Gostivar, resulting in widespread demonstrations (Koppa 2001; Karajkov 2008). Due to this contested display of the Albanian flag in Gostivar, Tetova and other towns, which is perceived as a separatist act by the Macedonian government, the Constitutional court forbade the use of Albanian flags. As a consequence, the parliament adopted a law on the restricted use of the Albanian flag (BBC 2012). [1997: cultural rights restriction]
- In July 1999, Macedonia's foreign minister announced that country's Albanian minority will be allowed to have a university where instruction will be in their own language (Naegele 1999). In 2000, the Albanian-language Tetovo University was legally recognized (Cunningham 2014: 216). [1999: cultural rights concession]
- In 2001, political violence escalated when ethnic Albanian rebels (the National Liberation Army, NLA/UCK) attacked Macedonian police stations and military posts in northern and western Macedonia. The relations between Albanians and Macedonians deteriorated, and between 70 and 250 people died during the armed clashes (Lacina and Gleditsch 2005). The civil conflict ended with the Ohrid Framework Agreement in August 2001. The Ohrid agreement involved various features of consociationalism, such as a minority veto in parliament regarding key decisions, proportional representation in the public administration, autonomy in the form of municipal decentralization, as well as concessions on language (Bieber 2005). With regard to autonomy, the local self-government sketched out in the Ohrid agreement is limited in nature, especially with regard to legislation and unified institutions, but it still constitutes some form of territorial self-government for the Albanian community (Bieber 2005). The number of competencies exercised at the municipal level was significantly increased, aiming to provide the local level greater control over the management of their own affairs (Lyon 2011; Kreci & Ymeri 2010). With regard to cultural rights, the Ohrid Agreement reduced the threshold for the official use of languages other than Macedonian in municipalities from 50 to 20 percent (Lyon 2011). As a result, Albanian has acquired official status in 29 of 85 municipalities in total (Turkish, Serbian, Romani, and most recently Vlach also acquired official status in a few municipalities). Moreover, the Albanian-language University of Tetovo has been recognized by Macedonian authorities." (BBC 2012; Minority Rights Group International). It is somewhat ambiguous whether the Ohrid agreement should be coded as an autonomy concession or (merely) a cultural rights concession. We code it as a cultural rights concession since there was devolution but not to regions but to municipalities. [2001: cultural rights concession]
 - o Note: this concession occurred after the onset of violence in 2001 and ended the violence.
- With regards to the Ohrid agreement, it has to be noted that "[...] ethnic Albanians who live in areas where they do not constitute 20 per cent of the population [still] face problems with language use in public administration and access to education in their mother tongue. Ethnic Albanians are often victims of hidden discrimination, including by public officials" (Minority Rights Group International).
- To further implementation of the Ohrid Agreement, the Macedonian parliament in 2004 initiated legislation on redrawing local boundaries in order to give the Albanians more local autonomy in areas where they constitute the majority. Ethnic Macedonian nationalists initiated a referendum against this legislation, but the referendum failed due to low voter turnout (BBC 2012). We do not code a concession since the legislation implements the 2001 Ohrid Agreement, which was coded already. Moreover, the reform did not effectively increase the level of Albanian self-rule, for instance, the Albanians are still underrepresented in the police or military, even in the municipalities where they predominate.
- In July 2005, the Macedonian parliament passes a law which gave Albanians the right to fly the Albanian flag in districts where they form the majority (BBC 2012). [2005: cultural rights concession]
- In January 2019, Albanian language rights were extended. Albanian was recognized as the official language at the national level, and it is no longer restricted to areas where the Albanians exceed 20 per cent of the population. (Minority Rights Group International). [2019: cultural rights concession]

Regional autonomy

- The Ohrid Agreement devolved certain competencies to municipalities; devolution to a region was specifically avoided (Bieber 2005; Minorities at Risk Project). The underrepresentation of ethnic Albanians in the police and the military provides suggestive evidence of the lack of regional autonomy: the Albanians claim that even in areas dominated by ethnic Albanian, the police force remains overwhelmingly ethnic Macedonian. The situation in the military is the same where the proportion of the ethnic Albanian in the ranks is estimated at 25 percent, while in the officer corps it is even lower (Minorities at Risk Project). There is no evidence that the level of regional autonomy increased substantially after the Ohrid Agreement (International Crisis Group 2015; Minority Rights Group International). Hence we do not code regional autonomy.

De facto independence

NA

Major territorial changes

- Macedonia attained independence in 1991, implying a host change. [1991: host change (new)]

EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Albanians
<i>Scenario</i>	1:1
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	Albanians
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	34302000

Power access

- We follow EPR. [junior partner]

Group size

- We follow EPR. [0.251]

Regional concentration

- The majority of Macedonia's Albanians are concentrated in western Macedonia (MRGI). They form more than 75% of the local population in their "regional base" according to MAR.
- Further evidence in favor of regional concentration comes from Macedonia's 2002 census. The 2002 census counted 509,000 Albanians. Macedonia is divided into eight statistical regions. There were 223,000 Albanians in the Polog region, where Albanians make up 73% of the local population. An additional 82,000 Albanians were in the Southwestern region, where Albanians make up 37% of the local population. Combining the two, 60% of the Albanians lived in those two regions, and they made up 56% of the local population.
- Further evidence in favor of regional concentration comes from Macedonia's 2021 census. Per the 2021 census, there are 446,245 Albanians in North Macedonia. Municipality level data shows

that Albanians are mainly concentrated in the western Polog and Southwestern regions. These two regions house 226,193 or 51% of all Albanians. Moreover, Albanians make up 53% of the two regions' overall population (State Statistical Office 2022 – see the table below) [concentrated]

Region	Municipality	Municipality population	Albanians
Polog - Total population 251,552 - Albanians 173,344	Bogovinje	22,906	20,475
	Brvenica	13,645	7,377
	Vrapchishte	19,842	15,109
	Gostivar	59,770	33,076
	Zhelino	18,988	18,191
	Jegunovce	8,895	3,482
	Mavrovo and Rostusha	5,042	470
	Tearce	17,694	14,704
	Tetovo	84,770	60,460
Southwestern region - Total population 177,398 - Albanians 52,849	Vevchani	2,359	14
	Debar	15,412	8,438
	Debarca	3,719	59
	Kichevo	39,669	16,373
	Makedonski Brod	5,889	38
	Ohrid	51,428	1,942
	Plasnica	4,222	13
	Struga	50,980	25,785
	Centar Zhupa	3,720	187
	Total Polog and Southwestern regions	428,950	226,193

Kin

- In neighboring Albania, in Yugoslavia (mainly Kosovo), and after 2008 also in Kosovo (EPR). [kin in neighboring country]

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