



## EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES

*Helping to bridge the gap between the scholarly and policy worlds here and throughout the disparate countries of the region*

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# EES NEWS

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2001

## Making EU Enlargement Work

Fraser Cameron

*Fraser Cameron is Head of Political and Academic Affairs for the Delegation of the European Commission in Washington DC. He spoke at an EES noon discussion on November 1, 2000. The following is a summary of Dr. Cameron's presentation prepared by Sabina Crisen, EES Program Associate. Meeting Report # 213.*

Europe is currently enjoying an unprecedented level of integration and unity in a number of key areas. Among some of the most important elements of an integrated union, the EU has achieved:

- ♦ a common commercial policy;
- ♦ a single market;
- ♦ a common foreign and security policy;
- ♦ a single currency (Euro); and
- ♦ a European judicial system.

Given the recent progress the EU has made on internal integrative measures in these key organizational areas it is harder to join Europe now than in the past. Regardless, Mr. Cameron states, Europe will expand within this decade. Indeed the process is well under way, started shortly after the fall of communism in the early 1990s with the signing of association agreements with certain Central East European countries and continued with the recent stabilization and association agreements signed with the former Yugoslav states. The EU also has free-trade agreements in place with nations of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA).

Against this background, Mr. Cameron identified several long-range challenges for the EU, similar to those the U.S. faced in its first 50 years:

- ♦ the expansion of territory;
- ♦ the question of national sovereignty versus the growing powers of the Union;
- ♦ free trade versus protectionism; and
- ♦ the ongoing debate over those "in" and those "out" on key policy issues such the single currency and Schengen, both issues on which the British and Danes have opted out. A developing variable geometry is becoming increasingly evident within the European Union.

Currently, the European Union is bolstered by the fact that there is no major outside threat. With the recent developments in Serbia, Europe is finally at peace within itself and can concentrate on integrative issues like fully implementing the single Euro currency, which remains a major source of debate. Difficult debates are similarly expected in areas such as the size of the European Commission, and how some states or groups of states can move ahead on flexible cooperation. These "Amsterdam leftovers" will have to be cleaned

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### A WORD TO THE READERS OF EES NEWS

Due to the heightened number of meetings and events the program has been hosting over the past six months, EES is experiencing a backlog of meeting reports. To ensure adequate timeliness of all reports, we will continue to post all articles on our website but will only feature a select number of articles in *EES NEWS*. These articles will be chosen on the basis of their relevance to key, current or historical developments in the region and at the discretion of the editor. For full content of *all* meeting reports and most up-to-date information on all scheduled events, please continue to refer to the EES website at: [www.wilsoncenter.org/ees](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/ees).

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# Languages and Ethnicity in Balkan Politics: Macedonian, Bulgarian and Albanian

Victor A. Friedman

*Victor Friedman is professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Chicago, IL. He spoke together with professor Robert Greenberg and PhD Candidate Burcu Arkan, at an EES seminar entitled "Languages and Ethnicity in the Balkans" on April 11, 2000. The following is a summary of Dr. Friedman's presentation. Meeting Report # 215.*

The Balkans in general and Macedonia in particular have been characterized by widespread multilingualism. Ironically, while the term *Balkanization* has come to mean "fragmentation," the linguistic term *Balkanism* refers to shared grammatical and lexical features which originated through intense multilingual contact. Such contact could only have arisen under conditions of predominantly peaceful coexistence. Yet, although language served as a group marker, religion was a more important source of identity in Ottoman Turkey where it constituted the basis of an individual's *millet* ('nationality').

Throughout the nineteenth century, the basis of national identity in European Turkey gradually shifted from religion to language. The various Eastern (Greek) Orthodox Christian populations under the Patriarchate of Constantinople were most affected by this shift, although the change also impacted some Muslims, especially Albanian-speakers. After the recognition of a separate Bulgarian church (the Exarchate) in 1870, the term *Bulgarian* often meant "adherent of the Exarchate" (which was declared schismatic by the Greek Patriarchate). In the context of Macedonia, the most important contrast among Christians was between the Slavic-speaking and

dialects.

Macedonia was at the periphery of Serbian, Bulgarian, and Greek state and literary language formation in the nineteenth century, and was thereby at the center of their overlapping territorial claims. Serbia and Bulgaria in particular utilized conflicting linguistic arguments among other nationality-defining tools to advance their respective territorial interests. Greece generally attempted to eliminate other languages on its territory.

Although the Slavic dialects spoken on the territory of Macedonia represent a particularly complex intersection of dialects, the west central region (Veles-Prilep-Bitola-Kichevo) forms a relatively homogenous area. In general, Slavic-speaking Orthodox Christians on the territory of Macedonia at the beginning of the nineteenth century usually chose the label *Bulgarian*. Among the populations of Macedonia's western and northern regions, the option *Serbian* was occasionally selected. The small Slavic-speaking intelligentsia that emerged in Macedonia during this period usually envisioned a Bulgarian literary language based on their dialects or at the very least a literary language incorporating most of these dialects to a significant degree.

Throughout the nineteenth century, literary Bulgarian became more firmly established on the basis of eastern Bulgarian dialects, while literary Serbian was established on the basis of the northern dialects of Serbia proper. By the middle of the century, it was clear to some Macedonian Slavs that their dialects, which were used as the basis of textbooks and similar publications on the territory of Macedonia, were not included in the canonization of the literary language and state formations emerging among other Christian groups of the Ottoman Empire. This marked the birth of the concept of *Macedonian* in opposition to *Bulgarian*, *Serbian*, or *Greek*.

Throughout this period, censuses and ethnographic maps were used to justify conflicting territorial claims in Southeastern Europe. Consequently, between 1889 and 1905, wildly different census figures for the largest ethnicity in Macedonia were quoted by different sources, each betraying its national origin: Bulgarian (52%), Greek (38%), Serbian (71%), or Turkish (52%). The Greek and Turkish sources used religion as their classificatory principle, thereby disregarding the Albanian population completely, the Serbian source counted all Slavs who kept certain folk customs as Serbian, while the Bulgarian source extrapolated from a census based on household figures and assumed that Christians had larger households than Muslims. None of these

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Greek-speaking (or Hellenized) Greek Orthodox. As Ottoman territorial control of the Balkans retreated, the predecessors of the modern-Greek, Bulgarian, and Serbian literary languages and nation-states arose and expanded.

The entire territory of Bulgaria and former Yugoslavia, together with the relevant adjacent parts of neighboring states, constitutes a continuum on which dialectal differentiation proceeds with greater or lesser rapidity from village to village. Dialectal differentiation is particularly complex in Slovenia and Macedonia, but on contiguous South Slavic territory the differentiation is never so sharp that adjacent Slavic-speaking villages have mutually unintelligible

sources allowed for the possibility of self-identified Macedonians, although by this time they existed. Similarly, Bulgarian linguists used (and sometimes still use) dialectical differences to define as “ethnically” Bulgarian all of Macedonia as well as southern and eastern Serbia, while in 1919 a Serbian linguist used a different dialectical feature to claim most of Macedonia and western Bulgaria as Serbian.

In a similar example of oversimplification, ethnographic maps were and are still used to erase complexity and advance ethno-political claims. A Bulgarian-based map of Macedonia, published in 1914, displayed ethnicities in solid colors, with the overwhelming majority color representing *Bulgarian*. A Serbian-based map from the same publication showed *Macedonian Slavs* with a separate color and attempted to give some indication of ethnic complexity by portraying some regions with stripes of different colors, thereby representing a mixture of different ethnicities. An ethnographic map of the Republic of Macedonia, published by the national Bureau of Statistics and based on the 1994 census, used different sized human figures to represent individuals in seven colors (one for each of the constitutionally recognized languages and a seventh for *Other*) to dramatically capture the ethno-linguistic complexity of the Republic. In a stunningly retrogressive map, published by the National Geographic magazine of February 2000, solid colors were used to represent “ethnic groups that make up more than fifty percent of the population in their region” without any indication of the size of the “regions” used to calculate the placing of the colors. Moreover, with the simple caveat “Greece does not recognize ethnic divisions,” the cartographers portrayed Greek ethnicity as corresponding solely to a solid color and fitting exactly to Greece’s political boundaries. The result is a misleading map worthy of the nineteenth century.

Since the 1944 recognition of Macedonian as the official language of the Republic of Macedonia as well as a minority language in Bulgaria (1946-48) and in some of the regions in Albania, politics has been involved in the process of standardization. This process is complicated by the fact that Macedonian was never officially recognized in Greece. In 1999, the Bulgarian government officially recognized literary Macedonian as the standard language of the Republic of Macedonia but continues to claim its own self-identified Macedonian minority, as well as all the Slavic dialects of Greece and Albania, as Bulgarian.

Since the first literary Macedonian codification conference in 1944, it was agreed that the official alphabet would be Cyrillic. Argument over whether the principle should follow the nineteenth century Serbian or the more archaic Bulgarian and Russian type of Cyrillic persisted. The one-letter-per sound principle of Serbian was chosen. From a strictly linguistic point of view, the Serbian Cyrillic alphabet

was adequate for the representation of the phonological system of the Macedonian dialects. For ideological reasons, however, new letters were created to represent certain sounds that phonetically differed from Serbian. The fear, in part, was that Serbian graphic representation would encourage Serbian phonology. Another issue was the inclusion of the many Turkish words which had entered the spoken language during the course of five centuries of Ottoman occupation. Although one faction encouraged incorporating these into the formal style, Turkisms were relegated to archaic or stylistically colloquial registers.

The rise of pluralist politics in former Yugoslavia in 1990 witnessed the deployment of linguistic issues in Macedonian politics. An example was the proposed introduction of a Cyrillic letter that would represent the vowel *schwa*. The *schwa* does not occur in the west central Macedonian dialects on which the standard language is based. This same sound does not occur in standard Serbian or in most of its dialects. Right-wing political parties accused those in power of “Serbianizing” Macedonian by omitting a letter to represent *schwa*, while left-wing parties accused the right wing of attempting to “Bulgarize” Macedonian.

Albania portrayed similar linguistic complexities and difficulties throughout its state formation and consolidation periods. Due in part to the Muslim heritage of the majority of Albanian-speakers in Ottoman Turkey, an Albanian national movement began relatively late in the nineteenth century and widespread efforts at establishing Albanian as a literary language were similarly delayed. A watershed event was the 1908 Congress of Manastir (Bitola, Republic of Macedonia), where intellectuals representing the three religions (Islam, Catholicism, and Eastern Orthodox) and two major dialects of Albanian (Geg in the north and Tosk in the south) agreed on adopting the Latin alphabet. However, two then-competing Latin alphabets were sanctioned. Although A. Xhuvani published a brief proposal for a unified Tosk-based literary standard in 1915, it was not until after World War II that a unified Albanian literary language, based on the Tosk dialect of Korcha emerged, and not until 1968 that the Albanians of Yugoslavia decided to give up their own Geg-based literary Albanian in favor of the standard language of Albania for the sake of ethno-national unity. This decision culminated in the unified orthographic conference of 1972. In 1992, as part of the rise of pluralist politics, some intellectuals in the northwestern Albanian town of Shkodra organized a conference whose theme was the possibility of re-introducing bi-dialectalism in the literary language. The northern Albanians were not supported by the Kosovar representatives, who continued to favor unity.