



## Individual Advanced Research Opportunities Program

### Research Report

*The opinions, recommendations, and conclusions of the grantee are his/her own and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IREX or the US Department of State.*

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***Title of Research Proposal:*** *Notorious Subjects, Invisible Citizens: Albanian Migrants in Turkey*

**Topic of Research:** The research I completed during my two-month stay in Macedonia was primarily oriented toward the completion of my dissertation, currently being undertaken at the University of Toronto. The focus of my dissertation is to compare the roles of Albanian and North Caucasian immigrants in creating the Republic of Turkey. I particularly focus on the Turkish War of Independence. Among the questions that I probe in my dissertation is what became of the hundreds of thousands of Muslim Albanians that fled to Anatolia between the years 1912 and 1936. In terms of my research within both the Ottoman Archives in Istanbul and the Republic Archives in Ankara, I have found little in the way of Turkish sources that discuss the settlement and integration of Albanian immigrants into Anatolian life during this period of time. This problem is in part due to the fact that much of the Ottoman and Turkish archival holdings remains unorganized or unaccounted for. There is also an ideological element that comes into play when looking at the origins and settlement of Albanian refugees in Turkey. For one thing, both Ottoman and Turkish officials rarely took note of the ethnic origin of refugees and immigrants entering Anatolia, labeling them strictly as Muslims within the confines of bureaucratic reports. After the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the issue of ethnic origins became highly politicized. By 1927, it was

legally mandated that only “Turks” or those “with close claims to Turkishness” were allowed entrance into Turkey. Under this guise, Albanians were strictly banned from entrance into Turkey. However, from 1918 forward, hundreds of thousands of Albanians did enter and settle in Turkey and now comprise a significant (if uncounted) segment of the Turkish population.

### **Relevance and Contribution to Field; Approach and research methodology; list of research sites**

I sought to come to Macedonia to approach this problem from another angle. In lieu of the fact that Turkish sources are silent on the issue of its Albanian immigrant population, it was my intention to understand origins and causes of Albanian immigration to Anatolia. After two months of research in the State Archives of the Republic of Macedonia (*Drzven Arhiv na Repubulika Makedonija*) and the National Library of the Republic of Macedonia (*Naroda Biblioteka na Republika Makedonija*), I have made some progress in looking at this issue (despite a good deal of institutional resistance, a subject I will return to later). This issue is no mere footnote to the respective histories of these two countries. In fact the mass migration of the Albanians from the southern Balkans to Asia Minor is crucial to understanding the evolution of both of these region. Firstly, the immigration, and forced expulsion, of Muslims from Macedonia and Kosova was part in parcel of the creation of the Yugoslav state between 1918 and 1991. The newspapers and documents I surveyed during my stay demonstrate that a very open state program of disenfranchisement and expulsion aimed at “cleansing” the southern portions of Yugoslavia of its Muslim population existed during this period of time, particularly during the interwar period. Secondly, records show that the Muslims fiercely resisted these aggressive actions undertaken by the largely Serb-dominated government in Belgrade, leading to a violent guerrilla war between state forces and Albanian bands in western Macedonia and Kosova. Thirdly, there is evidence that also suggests that the Republic of Turkey was at some level complicit in this program of expulsion, enticing urban Muslims not affected by government attacks on rural Albanians to join in the exodus to Anatolia. While it was originally intended that these Albanian migrants would be used to populate and dilute the Kurdish-inhabited regions of Eastern Anatolia, one sees evidence in the interwar Serb-language press that Albanian migrants had no intentions of straying so far from the region and instead established a kind of “dual-allegiance” to their new home and their points of origin in Macedonia. This last point tells us much of the wealthy, albeit informal, trade relationship that Turkey continues to maintain with Macedonia, a trade carried out largely by the descendents of this massive migration (both anecdotal and empirical evidence suggests that Macedonia and Kosova are the primary point of origins for the vast majority of Albanians living in the contemporary Republic of Turkey).

### **Research findings and preliminary conclusions**

With the establishment of the Yugoslav Kingdom of Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia, the central government in Belgrade established firm control over the two regions of Kosova and Macedonia. Collectively known as “South Serbia”, this former portion of the Ottoman Empire had long been a sought-after prize for the Serb state. Yet the integration of these two provinces into the Serb state was immediately obstructed by the

fact that more than half of the population constituted Turkish and Albanian-speaking Muslims, a people who symbolized the vary culture and political system against which Serbian nationalism defined itself. Within the first years of the Yugoslav state, Belgrade took immediate steps to “remake” both Kosova and Macedonia into a Serb-speaking, Christian polities devoid of Ottoman influence. The brunt of this effort centered upon the gradual disenfranchisement and expulsion of Muslims from the rich agricultural regions of western Macedonia and central and western Kosova. This was achieved under two auspices. Firstly, a program of “agrarian reform” was instituted in these regions, whereby the lands owned by Albanians and Turks were expropriated or greatly reduced in favour of Serb migrants brought in by the central government. A second, more insidious, series of measures were undertaken in the mid-1920s with the expanded use of the army and Serb gendarmerie to forcibly evict Muslims from their land. This action was met with violent resistance by Albanian-led guerrillas (called *kaçaks* in the press), leading to an ongoing state of emergency throughout much of Southern Serbia. While officials tallies vary, it is estimated that some 50,000 families were expelled or migrated as a result of these efforts. Conversely, there appears to be no evidence that suggests that similar measures were implemented against urban Muslims in both Kosova and Macedonia. This may be due to the fact that urban Muslims in such towns as Skopje, Prizren, Tetova, Prishtina and Peja were among the wealthiest members of society and control highly lucrative trade networks. Rather than confront this segment of the Muslim population head on, evidence suggests that the Turkish government may have played a hand in trying to entice wealthy Muslim notables to immigrate through newspaper articles and advertisements. Later on with the establishment of Tito’s Yugoslavia in 1945, Belgrade redoubled its efforts in inducing the migration of urban Muslims through strict laws regarding the practice of Islam and forced collectivization. These actions under taken by the Communist government initiated a second massive of migration in the mid-1950s, leading tens of thousands of Albanians and Turks to seek asylum in Anatolia.

### **Future research agendas**

Over the course of the following twelve months, it is my intention to complete the writing of my dissertation. However, during this period of time, I plan on spending an additional five months in the Turkish Republic, based primarily in Ankara. There I intend to work in the Library of the National Parliament (*Milli Meclis Kütüphanesi*) and continue my research in the Republican Archives of Turkey (*Türk Cumhuriyet Arşivi*). I will be particularly researching newspaper holdings and approach the question of elite understanding of the Albanian and North Caucasian communities during the War of Independence.

### **Policy recommendations**

Before closing, I would like make two observations regarding my experiences in the Republic of Macedonia (one particularly relevant to the question of research in Macedonia; one related to U.S.-Macedonian relations).

It is important to note that this history of Muslim migration from Yugoslavia remains largely unknown to the mast majority of Slav Macedonians and Serbs. While it

is a subject widely discussed and understood among both Albanian and Turkish speakers in Kosovo and Macedonia, it was rare occasion when I met a non-Muslim who had heard of or was sensitive to these early campaigns of ethnic-cleansing in the former Yugoslavia. Moreover, my research was greeted by and large with suspicion and aversion on the part of Macedonian scholars. During my stay, I was repeatedly told that certain files and newspapers didn't exist, when in fact they did. Despite requesting several documents to be photocopied, it was revealed that virtually none of my requests were fulfilled (this may have largely been the result of incompetence as well as personal aversion). Upon broaching this with Macedonian officials, I was indirectly accused of "spying" and it was publicly ordered that no one within the archive was to assist me any further. While factors may have come into play (such as the general Macedonian distrust of Americans and clerical incompetence), this is a problem that is shared by native Albanian and Turkish scholars researching past transgressions by the Yugoslav government. My experiences over the course of the last two months have demonstrated to me that further research into this topic through the use of indigenous sources will continue to be problematic for native and foreign researchers alike and necessitates greater interest and pressure on the part of the broader academic community and the international community as well.

The second observation concerns the broader implications of the resistance I mentioned above. The depths of the ethnic and sectarian divide in Macedonia (i.e. Albanians and Macedonians) remains quite profound despite the US/EU brokered accord in 2001. While both the Albanian and Macedonian language press do speak of greater political cooperation between the two sides (with some progress made in regards to the integration of state and public institutions such as the police force), society in Macedonia remains highly segregated. The divergence between Albanian and Macedonian press (which I read on a regular basis) is so dramatic it is often difficult to believe both sides are speaking of the same country. My casual social interactions with both Albanians and Macedonians confirmed that few among these groups interact with each other (economic interaction being the primary source of intercommunal contact; casual social interaction remains so uncommon that it seems at times almost nonexistent). This divide has direct implications of the future role of the United States in Macedonia and the region on the whole. Albanians possess almost to a man a favorable attitude towards the United States. Macedonian opinions appear more mixed. Many Macedonians in fact expressed their satisfaction in Al-Qaida's attack on the United States on September 11<sup>th</sup>. All things remaining equal, the combined implications of these two phenomena will force the American in the Southern Balkans. Should Albanians seek a *de jure* independent state in western Macedonia, American policymakers will be forced to choose between forfeiting the committed policy of a united, sovereign Macedonia and alienating the vast majority of pro-American Albanians. While the possibility of this occurring still remains remote, events on the ground (such as the up coming question of an independent Kosovo and ongoing communal tensions in Skopje, Tetova and Kumanovo) may force the United States to its policy goals and interests in the region.