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Translated by Helen Levy

Analysis

The authorities in office are due to strengthen their power after the presidential and legislative elections in Macedonia

1.7 million Macedonians will be electing the President of the Republic on 13th April next. If in the first round none of the candidates wins more than 50% of the vote, a second round will take place two weeks later on 27th April. On the same day general elections will take place, which will be the third to be organised early since those on June 1st 2008. This election follows tension between the Revolutionary Organisation-Democratic Party for National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE), of Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and its government partner the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI-BDI). The electoral campaign for the presidential election will begin on 24th March, and that for the general election on 6th April.

The incumbent government's power is due to grow

At the end of February outgoing head of State Gjorgji Ivanov (VMRO-DPMNE) said that he would be running again. He is said to have taken this decision after the publication of a petition signed by some public figures (doctors, athletes, artists) in support of his re-election. Gjorgji Ivanov was officially appointed as a candidate on March 1st. He announced that his campaign will be based on three principles: honesty, sincerity and values. The DUI-BDI, VMRO-DPMNE's government party which represents the country's Albanian speaking population (1/4 of Macedonians) asked the Prime Minister to appoint a candidate of consensus who it would support in the presidential election. Nikola Gruevski rejected what he defined as interference by the DUI-BDI in his party's business and said that the choice of candidate in the presidential election was an issue that was specific to his party. "We must defend our dignity and the will of the Albanian speakers," Bujar Osmani, the DUI-BDI's spokesperson as he added, "Gjorgji Ivanov has not responded the what the Albanians want."

The Albanian NGO "Wake Up" led by Artan Grubi has called to boycott the presidential election: "We are asking civil society, the Muslim community and the Albanian speaking media to commit to preventing the election of a President who the Albanians will not acknowledge." The decision to boycott the election is threatening the

turnout rate which according to the electoral law must absolutely be over 40% for the election to be declared valid.

Bujar Osmani has asked the Albanian speakers not to support any of the candidates and the VMRO-DPMNE to organise early general elections in order to bring the tension between the two parties to an end.

By announcing Gjorgji Ivanov as its candidate the VMRO-DPMNE was then forced to grant the DUI-BDI its wish and organise an early general election. A request which the party agreed with since all of the polls forecast an easy victory for it.

Many political analysts believe that the "dispute" between the two government parties was just a pretext to organise early elections in which the two parties have interests. According to the polls they should win most of the seats in the Sobranie – the only chamber in Parliament. Both government parties vaunt their firmness and their nationalism. "They want to improve their popularity within the population and divert attention from the country's socio-economic problems," maintains Zravko Saveski, a teacher at the FON University in Skopje.

"For the good of the State and national interests I accept the organisation of early elections," declared Nikola Gruevski on March 1st. The elections will take place on 27th April on the same day as a possible second round in the presidential election.

The Prime Minister maintains that the DUI-BDI has set its sights on one the country's three key positions (Presidency, Prime Minister or leader of parliament) and that the VMRO-DPMNE absolutely needs to win the absolute majority (ie 62 seats) in the general elections in order to prevent the Albanian speaking party from imposing its conditions regarding participation in government. Nikola Gruevski has asked his supporters to mobilise "so that his party will not be subjected to any pressure or blackmail on the part of its Albanian partner." The DUI-BDI reminded its supporters that they had to fulfil their civic duty so that the party could be an influential player in parliament. It maintains it needs at least 25 seats in order to be able to influence decision-making. In Macedonia tradition has it that the government coalition includes a Macedonian party and an Albanian speaking party so that both of the country's two main ethnic groups are represented.

Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski highlights his economic results. Macedonia's economy grew by 2.8% in 2013, notably thanks to household consumption and exports. Unemployment which totalled 36% in 2006 the year in which Nikola Gruevski took office now lies at 28%. Inflation lies at 1.4%. According to analysts it is due to lie at 2.7% on average for the next four years. Nikola Gruevski emphasises his country's low public debt which lies at 35.5% of the GDP.

The government has raised salaries and pensions as well as social aid by 5%. Nikola Gruevski has promised that taxes will not increase in 2014 and that VAT would be reduced in several areas. Finally he is planning to grant aid to a total of one million euro to businesses which recruit new employees. In his opinion this measure would lead to the creation of 4000 new jobs.

Opposition lagging far behind

During a congress on 4th March the Social Democratic Union (SDSM) appointed Stevo Pendarovski, a professor of political science at the American University of Skopje as its presidential candidate. He chaired the Central Electoral Commission during the election of 14th and 28th April 2004 and was advisor for national security and foreign policy to two former Presidents of the Republic Boris Trajkovski (1999-2004) and Branko Crvenkovski (2004-2009). He wants to increase the power enjoyed by the head of State, accusing Gjorgji Ivanov of having undertaken his mandate under the government's supervision.

The leader of the main opposition party Zoran Zaev has also accused the outgoing President of being the Prime Minister's "yes-man" and not a President of

all Macedonians as he should have been. The Social Democratic Union has lost all of the elections organised in Macedonia since 2006 – 7 in all.

In spite of the poor result it is being credited with in the polls the left opposition which criticises the government for the delay that has occurred in undertaking reform supports the organisation of early general elections. The SDSM has drafted a new electoral programme promoting the "restoration" of the middle class, which has been suffered under the present government. It accuses the government of having made Macedonia dependent on loans, of having increased the gap between the rich and the poor and of not respecting the rule of law. Stevo Pendarovski maintains that there are political prisoners. He is also planning to develop the natural gas network and build three next stretches of motorway between Veles (centre), Prilep and Bitola, between Stip and Kocani, and between Strumica and the Bulgarian border.

Nikola Gruevski deems the opposition's promises unreasonable. "You must be totally ignorant of the way investments are made or liar to promise investment of 3 billion euro," he stresses.

As for the Albanian speakers Iljaz Halimi will be running for the Albanian Democratic Party (PDA-PDSH) in the presidential election. He will be the only candidate of the country's biggest minority. "Things are clear: Gjorgji Ivanov is the election favourite. Our goal is to get to the second round," indicated the party's leader, Menduh Thaci. He has condemned the call for boycott by the DUI-DBI. Iljaz Halimi would like to stand as the candidate for all Albanians and wants to reassert that Macedonia is also a country for Albanians. Many of the latter deplore the fact that Albanian is still not considered an official language in regions where more than 20% of Albanian speakers live.

Finally Zoran Popovski will be running in the presidential election for the Citizens' Option for Macedonia (GROM), a party founded in 2013 by the Mayor of Karposh and former Deputy Chair of the SDSM, Stevce Jakimovski. He sits in the centre of the political scale.

The Macedonian Political System

The Presidential Office

The President of the Republic is elected for five years and his mandate is renewable once. His powers are relatively limited and the position is mainly an honorary one. The head of State is the commander of the armed forces and presides over the Republic's

Security Council comprising the Prime Minister, the leader of the *Sobranie*, ministers whose office is linked to the security, foreign relations, defence and three personalities appointed by the President himself. According to the electoral law the presidential election must be organised in the 60 days prior to the end

of the mandate. In order to be able to stand for the supreme office any candidate must be aged at least 40 and have the support of a minimum 10,000 voters or that of at least 30 MPs.

Turnout has to reach at least 40% for the election to be declared valid.

Reminder of the Presidential Election results - 22nd March & 5th April 2009

Turnout : 56.90% (1st round) and 42.61% (2nd round)

Candidates	No of votes won (1st round)	% of votes won (1st round)	No of votes won (2nd round)	% of votes won (2nd round)
Gjorgji Ivanov (Revolutionary Organisation-Democratic Party for National Unity VMRO-DPMNE)	345 850	35,04	453 616	63,14
Ljubomir Frckoski (Social Democratic Union SDSM)	202 691	20,54	264 828	36,86
Imer Selmani (New Democracy)	147 547	14,95		
Ljube Boskoski (independent)	146 878	14,88		
Agron Buxhaku (Democratic Union for Integration, DUI-BDI)	73 629	7,46		
Nano Ruzin (Liberal Democratic Party)	40 042	4,06		
Mirushe Hoxha (Democratic Albanian Party, PDA-PDSh)	30 225	3,06		

Source : http://www.sec.mk/arhiva/2009_pretsedatelskiIlokalni/2009/fajlovi/rezultati/konecni/Izvestaj_do_SOBRANIETO_NA_RM_zapretsedatelskite_izbori_2009.pdf

The Legislative System

The Macedonian parliament is monocameral. The Sobranie has 120 members elected by proportional voting (according to the d'Hondt method) for a four year term in office. For the general elections the country is divided into six constituencies electing 20 MPs each. The electoral system guarantees the representation of the minorities (Albanian, Turkish, Serb, Roma etc ...) as well as that of women since the electoral lists have to include at least 30% of the opposite sex. Political parties, party coalitions and groups comprising at least 500 voters are allowed to run in the general elections.

The political parties represented in the present parliament are:

– a six party coalition led by the VMRO-DPMNE,

nationalist Christian Democratic, founded in 1990 by former Prime Minister (1998-2002) Ljubco Georgievski and led since 2005 by the outgoing head of government Nikola Gruevski, with 63 seats;

– a three party coalition led by the SDSM created in 1991 and led by the Mayor of Strumica (south), Zoran Zaev, with 27 seats;

– the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI-BDI), a party founded in 2001 and which succeeded the National Liberation Army (UCK) which officially disbanded in 1999. Member of the outgoing government coalition led by Alija Ahmeti, with 18 MPs;

– the Albanian Democratic Party (PDA-PDSh), created in 1997 by Arben Xhaferi, led by Menduh Thaci, with 11 seats;

– Democratic Revival (RDK), an Albanian speaking party founded in 2011 and led by Rufi Osmani, with 2 seats.

Reminder of the general election results on 5th June 2011 in Macedonia

Turnout: 63.48%

Political Parties	No of votes won	% of votes won	No of seats won
Coalition led by the Revolutionary Organisation-Democratic Party for National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE)	438 138	38,98	56
Coalition led by the Social Democratic Union (SDSM)	368 496	32,78	42
Democratic Union for Integration (DUI-BDI)	115 092	10,24	15
Albanian Democratic Party (PDA-PDSH)	66 315	5,90	8
National Democratic Revival (RDK)	29 996	2,67	2
Others	106 027	9,42	0

Source : <http://217.16.84.11/Default.aspx>

The VMRO-DPMNE easily won in the recent local elections on 24th March and 7th April 2013. The party won 56 towns and 41.75% of the vote, whilst the SDSM won 4 with 26.64% of the vote. The DUI-BDI won 14 towns and 11.84% of the vote and the Albanian Democratic Party 2 with 7.02%.

According to a most recent poll undertaken in March by the Political Studies Institute in Skopje (IPIS) the outgoing President is due to win 29.3% of the vote

on 13th April, Stevo Pendarovski 19.4%; Iljaz Halimi 6.1% of the vote and Zoran Popovski, 1.5%.

The VMRO-DPMNE is due to win the general elections with 24.2% of the vote followed by the SDSM which is due to win 17.4% of the vote, the DUI-BDI 6.9%, the Albanian Democratic Party, 3.9% and National Democratic Revival 1.2%.

One third of those interviewed said they had not yet made up their minds.

Outgoing head of State Gjorgji Ivanov wins 51.63% of the vote in the first round of Presidential election but a second round will be necessary

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Results
1st round

Outgoing head of State Gjorgji Ivanov (Revolutionary Organisation – Democratic Party for National Unity, VMRO-DPMNE) easily came out ahead in the first round of the presidential election on 13th April in Macedonia (FYROM). He won 51.63% of the vote ahead of his main rival Stevo Pendarovski (Social Democratic Union, SDSM) who won 37.55% of the vote. Iljaz Halimi (Albanian Democratic Party, PDA-PDSH) came third with 4.49% of the vote; Zoran Popovski (Citizens' Option for Macedonia, GROM) won 3.61% of the vote.

Although the outgoing President won the absolute majority of votes, he only won 25.19% of the votes of those registered far from the 50% +1 required by the electoral law to win in the first round.

Most of the Albanian speakers in Macedonia (a quarter of the population) indeed abstained. The Democratic Union for Integration (DUI-BDI), partner of the VMRO-DPMNE in government and representative of the

Albanian speakers called for a boycott of the election after Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski's refusal (VMRO-DPMNE) to appoint a consensus candidate that the party might also support. "We must defend our dignity and the will of the Albanians," declared Bujar Osmani, the DUI-BDI spokesperson who added, "Gjorgji Ivanov has not succeeded in meeting the Albanians' requirements."

A second round of voting will therefore take place on 27th April. On the same day general elections will be organised early – a year ahead of time. This general election follows the tension that has continued to rise

between the VMRO-DPMNE of Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and the DUI-BDI.

Many analysts believe however that the "argument" between the two government partners is but a pretext for the organisation of early elections in which both parties have an interest. According to the polls they are due to win a majority of the seats in the Sobranie, the only chamber in Parliament.

Less than one Macedonian in two turned out to vote on 13th April: turnout totalled 48.86%, 8.04 points less than in the first round of the presidential election in 2009.

1st round results of the presidential election on 13th April 2104 in Macedonia

Turnout : 48.86%

Candidates	No. of votes won (1st round)	Votes won in % (1st round)
Gjorgji Ivanov (Revolutionary Organisation –Democratic Party for National Unity, VMRO-DPMNE)	448 304	51,63
Stevo Pendarovski (Social Democratic Union, SDSM)	326 069	37,55
Iljaz Halimi (Albanian Democratic Party, PDA-PDSH)	38 965	4,49
Zoran Pospovski (Citizens' Option for Macedonia, GROM)	31 360	3,61

Source : Macedonian Electoral Commission <http://rezultati.sec.mk/President/Results?cultureSign=en-US&roundID=1&roundDetailsID=r&municipalityID=All&pollingStationID=All>

Gjorgji Ivanov will probably win on 27th April next. The presidential election will probably be overshadowed

by the general elections which are due to be won by the VMRO-DPMNE.

Gjorgji Ivanov is re-elected President of the Republic of Macedonia and the outgoing Prime Minister's Party wins the general elections.

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Outgoing head of State Gjorgji Ivanov (Revolutionary Organisation-Democratic Party for National Unity, VMRO-DPMNE) won the second round of the presidential election on 27th April. He won 55.25% of the vote ahead of Stevo Pendarovski (Social Democratic Union, SDSM), professor of Political Science at the American University of Skopje, who won 41.17% of the vote.

Gjorgji Ivanov won the first round on 13th April with 51.67% of the vote ie an absolute majority but turnout was below 50% +1 (48.86%) i.e. below the threshold set by the electoral law to validate victory in the first round. On 27th April turnout totalled 54.33%.

Results
2nd round

Results of the Presidential Election on 13th and 27th April 2014 in Macedonia

Turnout : 48.84% (1st round) and 54.33% (2nd round)

Candidates	No. of votes won (1st round)	Votes won in % (1st round)	No of votes won (2nd round)	% of votes won (2nd round)
Gjorgji Ivanov (Organisation révolutionnaire-Parti démocratique pour l'unité nationale, VMRO-DPMNE)	449 068	51.67	534 154	55.25
Stevo Pendarovski (Union sociale-démocrate, SDSM)	326 133	37.52	398 008	41.17
Iljaz Halimi (Parti démocratique albanais, PDA-PDSH)	38 966	2.19		
Zoran Pospovski (Option citoyenne pour la Macédoine, GROM)	31 366	1.76		

Source : Macedonian Electoral Commission
http://rezultati.sec.mk/President/Results_R2?cs=en-US&r=3&rd=r&eu=All&m=All&ps=All

The Macedonians were also called to elect the 120 members of the Sobranie (the only Chamber of Parliament) on 27th April.

The VMRO-DPMNE, led by outgoing Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski came out ahead in the election with 42.18% of the vote and 61 seats, an absolute majority

(+5 in comparison with the previous election on 5th June 2011). It came out ahead of the SDSM of Zoran Zaev which won 24.91% of the vote and 34 seats (-8). As for the Albanian-speaking parties, the DUI-BDI, led by Alija Ahmeti and member of the outgoing government coalition won 13.48% of the vote and 19 seats (+4); the Albanian Democratic Party (PDA-

PDSH) led by Menduh Thaci won 5.83% of the vote and 7 seats (-1) and finally National Democratic Revival (RDK) led by Rufe Osmani, won 1.56% of the vote and retained only one of its seats.

The Citizens' Option for Macedonia (GROM), a party founded in 2013 by the Mayor of Karposh and former Deputy Chairman of the SDSM Steve Jakimovski, won 1.56% of the vote and 1 seat.

Turnout totalled 64% i.e. +0.52 points in comparison with the elections on 5th June 2011.

The elections on 27th April, the third to be organised early (by a year), since those of 1st June 2008, followed tension that has been increasing between the

VMRO-DPMNE and its government partner, the DUI-BDI, which accused Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski of refusing to nominate a consensus candidate that the Albanian speaking party would also have supported in the presidential election. Many analysts now believe that the "fight" between the two government partners was a pretext to organise early general elections in which both parties had vested interests. "It was a false dispute between the partners in office orchestrated to give them an excuse for convening these elections so that they could assert their power more easily," declared political analyst Aleksandar Damovski.

General election results of 27th April in Macedonia

Turnout: 64%

Political Parties	No of votes won	% of votes won	No of seats won
Coalition led by the Revolutionary Organisation-Democratic Party for National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE)	480 588	42.18	61
Coalition led by the Social Democratic Union (SDSM)	283 869	24.91	34
Democratic Union for Integration (DUI-BDI)	153 577	13.48	19
Albanian Democratic Party (PDA-PDSH)	66 392	5.83	7
Citizens' Option for Macedonia (GROM)	31 610	2.77	1
National Democratic Revival (RDK)	17 783	1.56	1
Others	48 083	9.27	0

Source : Macedonian Electoral Commission
http://rezultati.sec.mk/President/Results_R2?cs=en-US&r=3&rd=r&eu=All&m=All&ps=All

As soon as the first results were announced the social democratic opposition denounced fraud and pressure placed by the VMRO-DPMNE in office and challenged the validity of the elections – both the presidential and legislative. "Those in power purchased votes en masse in the presence of and with the assistance of the police. Macedonian citizens have been deceived. The elections were stolen," declared the SDSM leader Zoran Zaev who called for the formation of a technical government and the organisation of a new election. The Electoral Commission indicated that voting had

taken place in a correct manner. The VMRO-DPMNE said it was pleased with the election "that was perfectly calm, a proof of Macedonia's democratic maturity."

Aged 43, Nikola Gruevski comes from Skopje. A graduate of economy from the University of Saint-Clement of Ohrid of Bitola and of the University of Saint-Cyrille and Method in Skopje, he was first a trader for the Balkanska Banka AD. He made his entry into government in 1998 as Trade Minister and was then appointed Finance Minister in 1999. He was

Presidential and general elections in macedonia 13rd April 2014

elected MP during the general election – lost by his party – on 15th September 2002. In 2003 he took over as head of VMRO-DPMNE. On 5th July 2006 the party won the election and Nikola Gruevski was appointed Prime Minister, a post he retained after the elections on 5th June 2011. After the election on 27th April he is due to continue his work as head of government. The VMRO-DPMNE has committed to improving the political and economic situation in Macedonia and to continue reforms.

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