Marshall Center Macedonia, Workshop
"NATO and the Regional Stability of Western Balkans – Smart Power Approach"

SHARING HISTORY IN A
POST - CONFLICT SOCIETY –
THE CASE OF MACEDONIA

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Objectives of the research

- to explore the situation of post conflict Macedonia
- to understand what lies behind the post conflict discontent
- The teaching history case as one of the tools for transitional justice
- how it could bring to the reconciliation process and by it to a sustainable peace.

Methodology of the research

Qualitative and quantitative methods, as well as use of both secondary and primary sources.

Academic research techniques that were used included:

- interviews,
- content analysis of the legislative and other relevant documents

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The research subject - reconciliation.

Premises:

- Reconciliation has never seriously been attempted in Republic of Macedonia.
- The question of the armed conflict in 2001 has been avoided in public debate in the state.
- Signing the OFA brought an end to the hostilities and further violence.
- Ignoring reconciliation and justice could lead to the absence of a sustainable peace.

Delimitations of problem: small number of interviews with history teachers, government officials and representatives of the international community.

Intention: approach the post-conflict discontent from two different perspectives:

- introducing a theoretical framework and apply it to the specific case
- teaching history as one of the tools of the transitional justice.

DESIGNED AND TESTED HYPOTHESIS

The Ohrid Framework Agreement, which ended the escalation of the fighting in the Republic of Macedonia, has nonetheless for ten years perpetuated the underlying conflict, albeit in a latent form: It has arguably preserved the internal security of the country and made possible the sustainable security of Macedonian society. However, a negative tendency can sometimes be seen in certain educational indicators, not to mention the obvious segregation of society along ethnic lines.

Supporting hypotheses:

- By regulating the right to education of the nation's ethnic communities, the Ohrid Framework Agreement makes it possible for them to preserve and develop their cultural identities.

- The development of an integrated system of education in the Republic of Macedonia and the promotion of a shared post-conflict history will keep ethno-political discord at a latent level and relax inter-ethnic relations on a long-term basis.
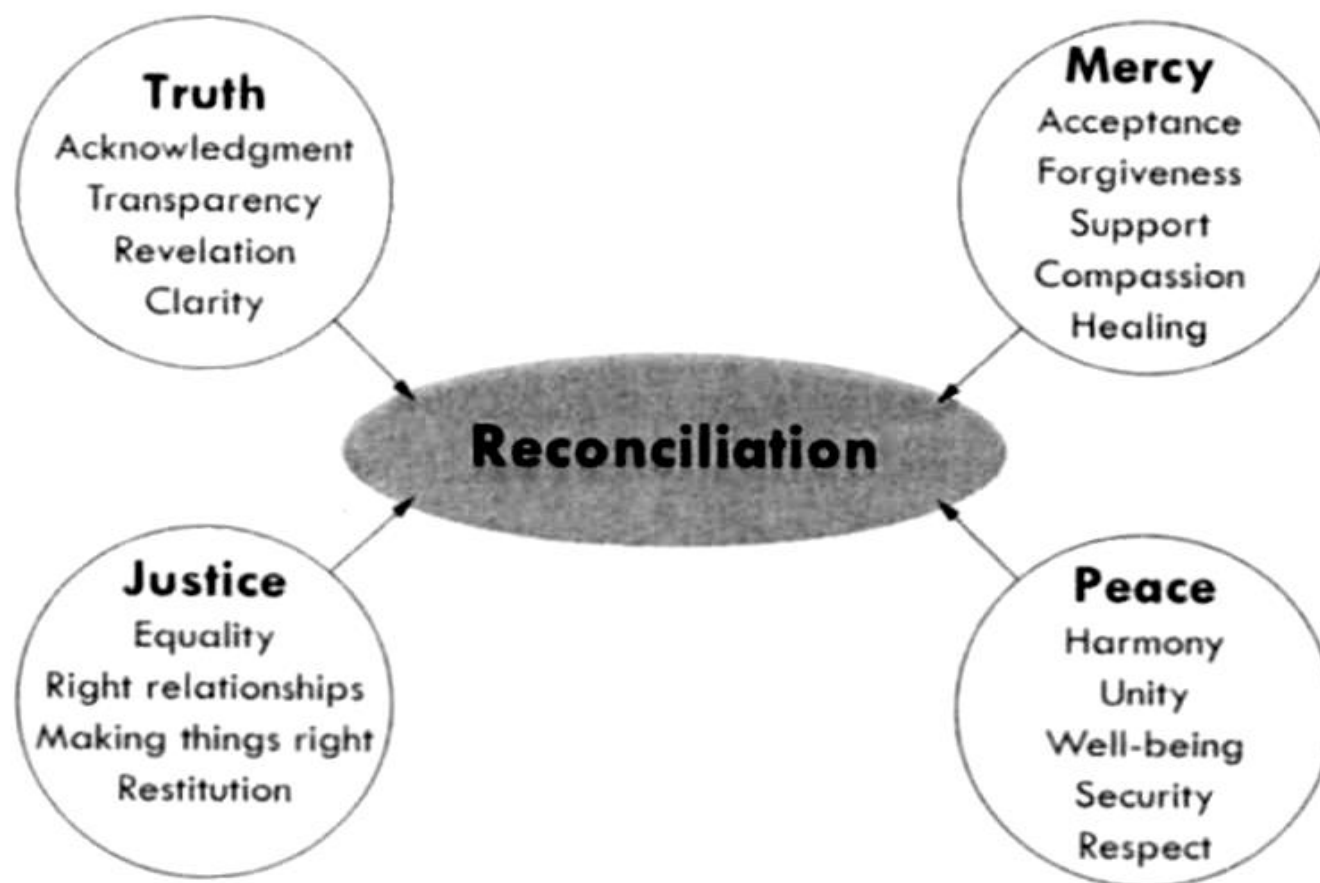
RESEARCHED TOPICS

- Reconciliation (for the teaching history case it was implicitly stated through the questions related to the experience/benefit from "Understanding History" project while for the international community this term was explicitly stated);
- Integration of the Ethnic communities in the Educational process;
- Amnesty Law;
- Skopje 2014;
- The Encyclopedia (published by the Macedonian Academy of Science and Arts);
- Internally Displaced People (IDPs);

Theoretical framework of the research (Definitions/Interpretations)

- Reconciliation must find ways to address the past without getting locked into a vicious cycle of mutual exclusiveness inherent in the past.

- Acknowledgment is decisive in the reconciliation dynamic. It is one thing to know; it is yet a very different social phenomenon to acknowledge.

- *Acknowledgment through hearing one another's stories validates experience and feelings and represents the first step toward restoration of the person and relationship. At the same time, reconciliation must envision the future in a way that enhances interdependence. In all contemporary internal conflicts, the futures of those who are fighting are ultimately and intimately linked and interdependent (Lederach, John, Paul „Building peace: sustainable reconciliation in divided societies", USIP, 1997).*

- Opportunity must therefore be given for people to look forward and envision their shared future.
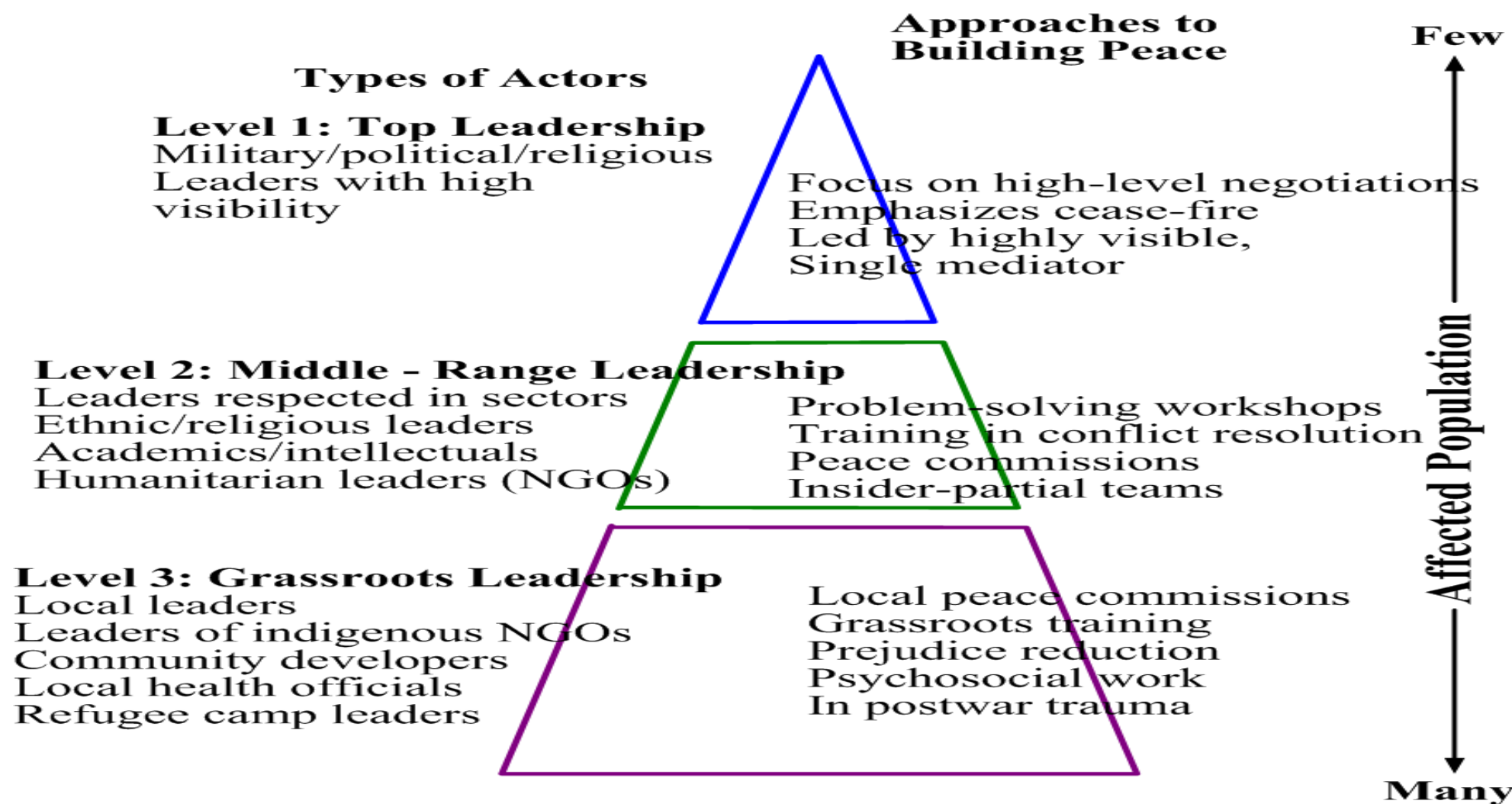
Theoretical framework of the research (Concepts) Source:Lederach,1997

Truth
Acknowledgment
Transparency
Revelation
Clarity

Mercy
Acceptance
Forgiveness
Support
Compassion
Healing

Reconciliation

Justice
Equality
Right relationships
Making things right
Restitution

Peace
Harmony
Unity
Well-being
Security
Respect

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Theoretical framework of the research (Actors &Approaches)

Approaches to Building Peace

Few

Types of Actors

Level 1: Top Leadership
Military/political/religious
Leaders with high
visibility

Focus on high-level negotiations
Emphasizes cease-fire
Led by highly visible,
Single mediator

Level 2: Middle – Range Leadership
Leaders respected in sectors
Ethnic/religious leaders
Academics/intellectuals
Humanitarian leaders (NGOs)

Problem-solving workshops
Training in conflict resolution
Peace commissions
Insider-partial teams

Level 3: Grassroots Leadership
Local leaders
Leaders of indigenous NGOs
Community developers
Local health officials
Refugee camp leaders

Local peace commissions
Grassroots training
Prejudice reduction
Psychosocial work
In postwar trauma

Affected Population

Many

An Integrated Framework for Peacebuilding
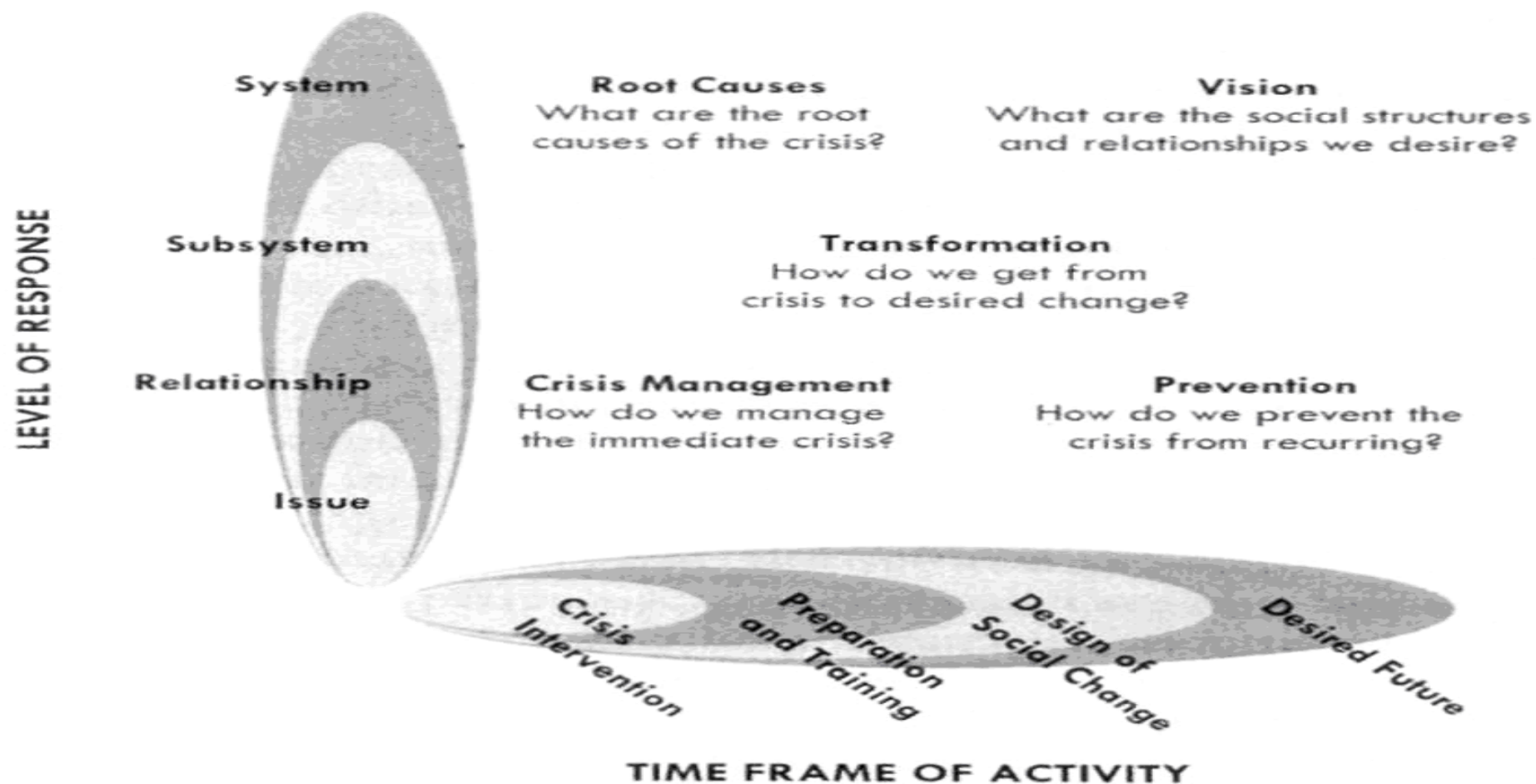
Theoretical framework of the research
(Applying Concepts to the Case -1)

- MK multiethnic with a power-sharing government.

- Political and intellectual elite, did not invest intellectual and political capital when searching for a specific Macedonian (inter) national identity, which goes beyond the limitations of the ethnic definitions and mythology around them.

- National discourse is emphasized.

- Creating a new antique Macedonian identity is in full bloom.

- Need for a structural communication among the citizens, a social link but also a philosophical and maybe an ideological communication, so as to fill in the gaps and avoid further divisions.

- Not enough for Macedonians and Albanians to know each other's folklore and cultural history. Coexistence requires knowing the modern reality. **Structured communication is a key.**

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Theoretical Framework of the Research
(Applying Concepts to the Case - 2)

- The intellectual elite should take the lead, show its grandiosity, and view Macedonia as a whole in a joint narrative.

- **The OFA was the first necessary step, and its treatment as a Holy Grail ignores the fact that the job is not done. Instead it has just started.**

- Generally, the case doesn't show specific events of reconciliation.

- A lot of work has been done at the grassroots and top level.

- **There is an absence of an official truth about the conflict**. Truth and justice, peace and mercy do not seem to kiss at the place called reconciliation.

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The Role of Teaching History for a Nation - Building Process in a Post Conflict Society – the Case of Macedonia
Theoretical framework and expectations(1)

- Structural issues: financing, ethnic segregation, access and equality, choice of language as a medium of instruction etc., are key to determine the role of the education in the post conflict reconstruction.

- Teaching history as integral part of transitional justice and social reconstruction can support or undermine the transitional justice mechanisms.

- How to deal with the past as a sensitive issue for the societies recovering from conflicts? Sometimes, political leaders prefer social amnesia for the sake of stability.

Theoretical framework and expectations(2)

- Who decides which version to be taught in schools?

- Do these choices promote a cohesive and tolerant society?

- How to develop secondary text books?

- The influence of the academic historians and transitional justice processes on history.

- Some truths exist: so called forensic truths – facts of interest to human rights inspectors. Challenge to teach history and search for a platform for common future (life together).

Case- selection and method of analysis

- It is easier to reform the pedagogy of the teachers than to revise plans and programs immediately after a conflict.

- MK Project (.....Understanding History, *The Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe, Clio in the Balkans, the Politics of History Education)*

General Analysis – respondents attitudes

○ MK education system is centralized. Teachers have right to 30% creativity but do not use it.The dates, facts etc., are boring themes for the students and hard to be memorized. The notion of culture concerns art and architecture and not its anthropological sense

○ There is enough input/lessons about Albanian ethnicity in the text books.

○ Educational Ministry developed materials, but are they used? Some translations of MK to AL language are of bad quality

CONCLUSIONS

- It took the group (MK project) a year to write few pages about a joint lesson of the recent past and it had to have 3 versions(MK/AL/Consensual).

- Sometimes joint work lasts as long as the time of the project-no initiatives for sustainability.

  The problem of collective action. There is a need for coordination and expertise.

- In RM the sides of the conflict need a vision of the common good.

- Common good for RM is modernized country, competitive in the global world.

CONCLUSIONS

- Out of this vision of common good of modernity we can re-interpret national identities in the light of the new criteria (what is good/bad) to the benefit of a peaceful future of the two ethnicities.

- The case of Macedonia is typical for the post-conflict societies, which finished or evaded a situation close to a civil war.

- The next challenge of such a society is a vision of common and past history.

- **There is democracy but the question is how it is consumed**.

- The representatives of the sectarian parties of a latent conflict have to realize that their visions of **national identity is a program rather than an ontological fact.**

CONCLUSIONS

- For Macedonia as for the similar societies the vision of the common good can and should be formulated along the lines of Max Weber method of ideal types as a modernized meritocratic society with modernized institutions, which are also a prerequisite for an entrance to the European Union.

- This vision of the past as of a "Weberian" transition to modernization could give a common ground for building a system of historical education, which would not ignore the past conflicts, but which would judge them in a light of common good future (a "psychological therapeutic" reinterpretation).

- The conceptual clarity of the named issues for the intellectual community of a country is a prerequisite for further political peaceful solutions for the post-conflict societies, where a historical education is an essential part of their peaceful coexistence. Future research based on this postulates could be a modest contribution to the process.

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