

# **The Apple of Discord, the 2001 Macedonian conflict,**

Explaining the absence of ethnic war in Macedonia

**Name:** Willemijn Westerlaken

**Student number:** s0712019

**Track:** International Relations

**Date:**

**Supervisor:** Dr. J. G. Erk

**Second reader:** Dr. F. P. S. M. Ragazzi

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## Introduction

Macedonia has a truly unique history within the Balkans. It has been a multiethnic and multicultural country since its origin. This composition has been created through time because Macedonia has been part of the territory of many different states. Each state brought its own uses, religions, languages and people, creating an interesting mix which has resulted in today's Macedonia. Although unique, Macedonia also has some resemblances with some of its neighboring countries. It shares ethnic elements with Greece, Kosovo and Albania. One common denominator is for instance the presence of an Albanian community. Other minorities are Vlachs, Roma and Serbs, but the Albanian minority is the biggest after the ethnic Macedonians. The history of the Balkans has been a story filled with conflict, changing power blocks and traditions. Ottomans, Serbs, Greeks, Bulgarians and many other nations have tried to gain more influence in Macedonia at the expense of others. Conflict in the Balkans has been a catalyst for greater conflict in the region and therefore the international community has since long time been concerned with instability and unrest in this part of the world. Engraved in the memory of many are the conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s But also Macedonia has had its share of unrest after the dissolution of Yugoslavia. The most recent conflict was a clash between Albanians and Macedonians in 2001. During this conflict, the Albanian minority in Macedonia demanded more rights and violently expressed their feeling of deprivation. At that point in time, many expected the conflict to escalate and spill over to the rest of the region, creating new instability in the Balkans. Nevertheless, this did not occur, the conflict was resolved relatively shortly after the start and Macedonia has not been in such an instable situation since 2001.

It is exactly the fact that large scale violent conflict has not occurred in Macedonia that poses a question, namely:

*What factors can explain the non-existence of large scale, violent ethnic conflict in 2001 in Macedonia?*

This thesis tries to clarify what circumstances contributed to the fact that the 2001 conflict did not escalate into a bloody ethnic war such as the wars in Kosovo or Bosnia. In order to do this, the thesis will be divided up in four parts. In the first part, the use of the methodology of negative case method will be explained. Secondly, theories on the rise and escalation of ethnic conflict will be discussed. This is necessary to identify the theoretical framework with which to analyze a case such as Macedonia. The theories show when a positive outcome is likely to be expected, namely the occurrence of war. To put them along the Macedonian case should make clear what factors, discussed in those theories, are lacking in Macedonia. A central place in this thesis is dedicated to a discussion of the Macedonian case. Therefore, the third part will be used for a case study of Macedonia. The focus of this case study will be to look at possible explanatory factors and events that have prevented the conflict from escalating. Once a clear and detailed study of Macedonia has been established, the fourth part will be used to point out the characteristics of the case that have contributed to a containment of aggression and the solution of the conflict using the negative case method. It will also indicate in which aspects theories of ethnic conflict fail to explain a case such as the Macedonian. The goal of this thesis is therefore twofold, it wants to explain the Macedonian case, which, because of its uniqueness within the region, can also contribute to theories on ethnic conflict and ethnic conflict resolution by showing the gaps of some theories.

A few factors can be expected to be decisive as an answer to the central question, based on a literature and case study, those will be elaborated and explained throughout the thesis. First of all the role played by the international community can be regarded as having influence on the process that took place in Macedonia. The organizations and countries involved have mediated during the negotiations. More importantly, the fact that NATO and several EU member states

were already present in Macedonia and the region has is of considerable importance. Secondly, the attitude of the parties involved, the Macedonian Albanians and ethnic Macedonians, has contributed to a successful resolution. Had the political elites of both groups not been as cooperative and willing to make concessions as was the case during the Ohrid peace negotiations. A third explanation has to do with the regional context and recent history, This is intertwined with the former two but has to be mentioned separately. The conflicts in other parts of the Former Republic of Yugoslavia have been a lesson to both the international actors and the parties involved in the conflict. Related to this is the fear of a spill over effect. This effect could work in two directions. First, the unrest in Kosovo, with a big number of Albanians, has caused fears among the ethnic Macedonians that the Kosovar Liberation Army would continue its war for a Greater Albania in Macedonia. Second, the influx of Kosovar Albanian refugees changed the demographical composition in Macedonia and created instability. The other direction of the effect would be the instability in Macedonia, this could spread to other, unstable countries in the region such as Serbia, Albania and Kosovo.

This thesis therefore, will try to provide the answers to a question that has not been asked before, and should not only clarify the 2001 conflict in Macedonia, but also puts other similar conflicts in another context in order to be understood better.

## Macedonia as a negative case

This part of the thesis tries to explain why the use of negative case selection is the most effective method to analyze the Macedonian case. A short overview of the rationale behind the method will be provided and the usefulness for Macedonia will be indicated.

The conflict of 2001 in Macedonia requires a method that is effective in discovering the explanations for the 'non-escalation' of the conflict. A comparative method would probably look for similarities in other cases, which can be found in for instance Kosovo, but the chances of such a method in overlooking important facts and events are present. Negative case selection has been a relatively underdeveloped method within comparative and international politics<sup>1</sup>. It is interesting and worthwhile to apply this method to the Macedonian case for several reasons. One has to do with the specific geographical location of the country. Because it has its place in the Balkans, it would have been very likely of conflict had escalated in 2001. Close to Macedonia, a decade before, intense conflicts erupted after the dissolution of Yugoslavia and spill over was very likely. Also, Balkan countries are similar in their diversity of ethnic composition and they often share history. When investigating a complex case such as the Macedonian, necessary to make a comparison with cases that are similar because this comparison can shed light on important explanatory aspects of the conflict. As has been pointed out above, logical, comparable cases can be found close to Macedonia.

A comparative design on the basis of similarities or differences for instance could be used. But this method has some deficiencies for the Macedonian case. One deficiency is that, in a certain way, the 2001 conflict of Macedonia is, unique and cannot be adequately compared to other cases. The most important, maybe even essential difference with other cases is the fact that it did not escalate into civil war among the Albanian and Macedonian ethnic groups in contrast to other cases. There are theories, which would hypothesize that it would be very likely for conflict to

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<sup>1</sup> Mahony J. and Goertz, G. (2004), 'The Possibility Principle: Choosing Negative Cases in Comparative Research', *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 98, No. 4, p. 653

arise in such a context as the Macedonian one, but those will be elaborated further in the part on theories of ethnic conflict. At first instance, it would seem impossible to investigate a case in which something did not happen. It is exactly this point which would be useful in order to discover the reasons for the non-existence of the conflict's escalation.

The negative case analysis of the 2001 conflict in Macedonia has several advantages. First of all it gives an insight into the details that can explain which factors contributed to the resolution of the conflict. Secondly, it develops the negative case analysis method into a new direction. It is not a very common method of comparative research but in specific cases, such as this, it can contribute to the understanding of this case specifically but also to other similar conflicts that are on the verge of escalating. The negative case method fills the gaps where theory cannot explain observation, because no significant phenomena can be observed. Because the case is observed in detail, factors can be discovered that might be overlooked in other comparative methods. It expands theories because it touches upon their boundaries and it puts other theories in context. What is important to mention here is that the negative case method can only be selected if the outcome can also be a positive one. In this case it would be the escalation of the Macedonian conflict<sup>2</sup>, which, as the theories will show, was indeed likely to expect.

According to Rebecca Emigh, negative case methodology is especially useful when there are not enough cases that can be compared<sup>3</sup>, the 2001 conflict in Macedonia is such a case. Its exact constellation of minorities, timing and geographical location makes it difficult to find a case similar to Macedonia. Of course, certain elements are comparable to cases such as Kosovo. But whereas Kosovo is the case that probably comes closest, still, the essential difference is the absence of escalation in Macedonia. Put differently, Macedonia is a deviant case and exactly therefore interesting to investigate<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Mahoney and Goertz, p. 653

<sup>3</sup> Emigh, R. J. (1997), 'The Power of Negative Thinking: The Use of Negative Case Methodology in the Development of Sociological Theory', *Theory and Society*, Vol. 26, No. 5, p 649-650

<sup>4</sup>

The selection of a negative case could cause some problems, since some case have overlap with positive cases. In order to judge whether a case is truly negative, comparison could be made with other, 'positive' cases, such as Kosovo. There should be some independent variables that will predict the positive occurrence of an event<sup>5</sup>. In her article, Jenne has applied the negative case method to conflict in the Balkans. She has not looked at one specific conflict but has zoomed in to certain factors that should have contributed to conflict in Yugoslavia, but have been absent. She stressed the importance of the involvement of a third party in negotiations on peace agreements<sup>6</sup>. Nevertheless, she has not looked at the Macedonian conflict, but building on her work on other Balkan conflicts, this thesis could contribute to the negative case method.

Negative cases also serve as better historical reference points<sup>7</sup>, meaning that a negative case that is described can also be used to explain other, similar historical events. Since the Balkans have a history of ethnic conflict, using the negative case method to clarify events in 2001 will certainly contribute to a better understanding of other cases of ethnic conflict.

Using a negative case should lead to the discovery of variables that cannot be discovered using a normal comparative method since comparative methods look for events that have occurred. The method can work in two ways, since it contributes to a better understanding of the case specifically and because it also shows the limits of existing theories that predict the opposite outcome, specifically those that will be discussed in the next part<sup>8</sup>. These limits would be the boundaries of a theory that fails to explain why conflict did not occur. In this case, it would be theories on ethnic conflict, and more precisely, theories on factors that contribute to the rise and escalation of such conflicts. Taking this one step further, using the negative case method, also gaps and limits in theories on conflict resolution might be discovered. An important side note to this however is, that not all single cases can be used, this is also pointed out in the article of Mahoney and Goertz. Cases in which a positive

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<sup>5</sup> Mahony and Goertz, p. 657

<sup>6</sup> Jenne, p. 730

<sup>7</sup> Emigh, p 650

<sup>8</sup> Emigh, p. 654



outcome, hypothetically is not possible, won't be valuable cases to examine. This means that a case with a negative outcome, needs to contain at least the hypothetical possibility of a positive outcome<sup>9</sup>. Macedonia therefore, is an excellent case to examine because, as will be argued in this thesis, it contained the hypothetical positive outcome, the escalation of the conflict into civil war.

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<sup>9</sup> Mahoney, Goertz, p. 653

## Theories on the rise and resolution of ethnic conflict, the cases of Kosovo and Bosnia

Before going to the Macedonian case, it is useful to look at what theorists have already said about ethnic conflict and the resolution thereof. This part of the thesis will be used for a literature review of several theories that provide possible explanations for the rise and escalation of ethnic conflict as well as the ways in which those can be resolved. It is relevant to look at what theories indicate as variables that lead to the escalation of a conflict or event. This way, it is possible to discover if such variables were lacking in the Macedonian case and if those can be considered explanatory factors that have led to the successful resolution of the conflict before it escalated<sup>10</sup>. In addition to this, attention will be paid to two positive cases, Bosnia and Kosovo. Those cases are used because of their similarity with the Macedonian case and they will strengthen the argument that all factors pointed to a similar outcome in Macedonia.

First of all it seems appropriate to clarify what is understood as *ethnic* conflict. Although common sense might give a first indication, one could say that it is a situation in which two ethnic groups are in disagreement with each other and might even use violence to gain power or secure the interests of their own group. In their article on Bosnia, Slack and Doyon define ethnicity as:

“... the identification of a people by language, religion, geographical location, the sharing of common historical experience,....<sup>11</sup>”

A first theory that provides a basis for the explanation of ethnic conflict is provided by Stanovčić. He addresses the problems that can come up in a society with various different ethnicities. Five factors that can lead up to ethnic tension are identified: firstly the formal ethnic structure of the country, secondly the pattern of change in

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<sup>10</sup> Emigh, p 649

<sup>11</sup> Slack, A. and Doyon, R. (2001), 'Population Dynamics and Susceptibility for Ethnic Conflict: The Case of Bosnia and Herxegovina', *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 38, No. 2, p. 140

this structure, thirdly the degree of territorial concentration of the ethnic groups<sup>12</sup>. To this third factor, an addition needs to be made. Beside the way groups are distributed, it is important to look at the degree in which the minorities live together in mixed constellation, meaning that a geographical concentration, within a state, of an ethnic minority also matters. A fourth factor is the degree in which an ethnic group is aware of its status as an ethnicity. And the fifth and last factor according to Stanovčić is the conflicts of interests between the groups. He notes that hostile images often occur with groups who are very similar in ethnic makeup, culture and language<sup>13</sup>. The change in the pattern of structures in multi ethnic societies is influenced for a great degree by demography. If one ethnicity grows faster, this might pose a threat or at least change the balance of power within a state because of the changed demographic composition. There is a greater possibility for tension if an ethnic minority is dispersed around various nation states. Interests over which ethnic conflict arises are connected with the ethnic identity and the will to express this identity. This can be cultural aspects like traditions, flags and clothing but also education. Another point where interests may clash is the participation in power by the minority. In politics, a minority can feel excluded or disadvantaged, but also socially and economically. This position is always compared to that of the majority and therefore, relative, it does not necessarily say anything about the absolute economic situation of the minority.

To resolve such tensions or prevent the rise of those, Stanovčić proposes three solutions. He seeks an institutional solution to the problem of ethnic tension. If the formal institutions of a state can guarantee individual rights instead of minority rights, this should prevent a feeling of deprivation among minorities because certain rights are not granted on basis of ethnicity. This way, there will be no sentiments of inequality between the ethnic groups within the state. Another institutional solution can be ethnic federalism or consociationalism as ways to govern ethnically diverse societies<sup>14</sup>. In an ethnic federal system, there is a clear division of regions according

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<sup>12</sup> Stanovčić, V. (1992), 'Problems and Options in Institutionalizing Ethnic Relations', *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 13, No. 4, p. 360

<sup>13</sup> Stanovčić, p. 361

<sup>14</sup> Stanovčić, p. 361-363

to ethnicity, incorporated in a federal system. In a consociational system, a clear power sharing agreement among several ethnic groups creates order in such a divided society.

An article that has been mentioned before discussing the negative case method is that by Erin Jenne. But the article is also relevant in this part of the thesis. For one reason because she has written on the conflict in Kosovo, which is quite similar to the Macedonian conflict. The similarities will come up later in this thesis, for now to state that because of its geographical location, history and origins of the Kosovo conflict, both cases could be compared. But also because she has developed a new part of theories on ethnic conflict, namely a theory on ethnic bargaining. Therefore, Jenne's theory could, at least partially be valuable to apply to the Macedonia conflict of 2001.

She proposes that when an ethnic minority can be 'rescued' by their homeland, the incentives for a minority to secede from their host state are higher. In this case, the homeland would be the state in which the majority of the ethnic group lives. Rescue would mean that the minority knows that they will be supported by this homeland when they demand independence. She also mentions institutions of autonomy that might create or foster claims for more independence or autonomy<sup>15</sup>. When the central authorities weaken, ethnic minorities will demand more rights because they see a bigger chance of being granted those rights. She also classifies certain demands that minorities can have in order to secede or separate. Those can be demands for culture or linguistic autonomy, for regional autonomy or demands for complete secession.

Eventually, Jenne develops a system that classifies ethnic conflicts. She makes a distinction between a majority that can suppress a minority or not and also sees the presence or absence of the influence of a lobby or home state as an important dichotomy. This classification should lead to a prediction of the possibility of conflict erupting. The classification which probably comes closest to Macedonia is something in between a stadium with a non-repressive majority and non-supportive

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<sup>15</sup> Jenne, p. 731

lobby state and a repressive majority and a non-supportive lobby state. The first of which leads to a State of Peace and the second to a State of Vulnerability, which poses a difficult question to answer since both seem very distant. In the first state, a minority within a society feels respected and equal to the majority. Therefore, there is no incentive to secede or exert pressure on the majority or centre. Also, there is no strong home state that can protect the minority or form a refuge. The costs of radicalization are too high and the minority will gain more by accommodating the majority. In the other State, one of vulnerability, there is no home state that provides a security guarantee to the minority and the ethnic majority has a repressive policy. This creates a situation in which the minority has a very weak position<sup>16</sup>. Also in this state of the world, costs of war are too expensive and it is better for the minority to accommodate the majority. It seems that a great deal of weight to be assigned to the existence of a supportive home state. Jenne also calls such a state a lobby state, which implies that it does not necessarily need to be a state which is the home state of the ethnic minority. Another example could be a state that supports the minority's goals without being ethnically linked. The same, however, goes for the majority. A decisive factor for a majority in deciding to accommodate the minority or to repress could also be a state which supports the goals of the majority<sup>17</sup>.

Cowan does not explicitly use a clear theoretical framework in her book on Macedonia, but does pose an interesting hypothesis. If a region is characterized by heterogeneity of ethnicity, this means that it is very hard to establish a central power that can coordinate and control all ethnicities in one coherent way. A region, therefore, can only be administered by intervention of external agencies<sup>18</sup>. Those could be international organizations such as the UN but also neighboring states. It might be interesting to apply this statement to the Macedonian case, since the country has been subject to such 'external agencies' like the Ottomans and Yugoslavia.

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<sup>16</sup> Jenne, p. 734-736

<sup>17</sup> Jenne p. 737

<sup>18</sup> Cowan, J. K., Macedonia, the Politics of Identity and Difference, London: Pluto Press, 2000, p. 9

Cowan also states that the organizational principle of a multi ethnic society matters, one needs to think about the stratification of such a society. This is a question of what is considered the first determinant of identity; class, ethnicity or religion for example. A possible scenario would be a class society in which ethnic groups are divided along class lines. What matters in such a society is whether ethnic groups can be socially mobile. The degree in which minorities can move on the social ladder is also connected with how well local elites are connected with the centre, how well a minority is being represented at the national level<sup>19</sup>. This might have consequences for the degree to which a minority feels represented in society. Dissatisfaction might give cause for unrest and this might lead to conflict situations.

David Carment has emphasized the influence of the international dimension on ethnic conflict within one state. He states that ethnic conflict has a national, internal dimension, but also that ethnic conflicts can spill over to neighboring states. A reasonable proposition made by Carment is that it is more likely to expect higher levels of violence in ethnic conflicts than in conflicts that do not have an ethnical dimension<sup>20</sup>. Something else that is hypothesized by Carment is that involvement of a new, or third, state will increase the level of violence in an ethnic conflict<sup>21</sup>.

Whereas the possible origins of ethnic conflict have been laid out in the former part, the step that follows after conflict has started, resolution, also needs to receive attention. Coakley proposes that the resolution of ethnic conflict has four dimensions. The first is a physical one where a minority fights for physical survival, a territorial one, in which there is a conflict between the state boundaries and the territory of the minority. More over there is a cultural dimension that shows a conflict between the state culture and that of the minority and the political dimension in which the interests of the minority and the majority diverge. In each dimension, or type of conflict, a different strategy of resolution needs to be applied<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Cowan, p. 40

<sup>20</sup> Carment, D. (1993), 'The International Dimensions of Ethnic Conflict: Concepts, Indicators, and Theory', *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 30, No. 2, p. 139-140

<sup>21</sup> Carment, p. 143

<sup>22</sup> Coakley, J. (1992), 'The Resolution of Ethnic Conflict: Towards a Typology', *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 13, No. 4, p. 345-347

In order to create stable conditions and find a solution to ethnic conflict, one first needs to establish the conditions for reaching a peace agreement. Ross has developed a typology or route that could lead to successful conflict management and resolution. Two steps need to be taken, the first one being preconditions that will convince both parties that change can be achieved and structural peace can be established. The next step would be for both parties to incorporate the interests of both parties in an arrangement. An essential condition for this is to start on a quite small scale with local groups, the changes achieved there can spill over to the rest of the group<sup>23</sup>. The term opted by Ross is that of 'community relations' which is a concept that emphasizes on change at a local level<sup>24</sup>. Communication and tolerance need to be increased among ethnic minorities. A second method that Ross considers is that of 'principled negotiation'. This method tries to separate the persons from the interest in order to increase understanding on the other party. Emotional attachment needs to be diminished, and an emphasis needs to be placed on mutual gains<sup>25</sup>. When taking a closer look at the conflict that took place in 2001 in Macedonia, it should become clear whether such patterns can be found.

In the cases of Bosnia and Kosovo, the result of ethnic tensions were bloody civil wars among ethnic minorities. In the case of Bosnia, the Serbs and Muslim Bosniaks and in the case of Kosovo, the Kosovar Albanians and Serbs. It is useful to look at those cases in short before turning to the Macedonian conflict of 2001 because Bosnia and Kosovo illustrate how ethnic tension can lead to war and that it was likely to see the same occur in Macedonia.

The conflict in Kosovo between the Serbs and Kosovar Albanians in the 1990s has had an impact on Macedonia because the Albanians in Macedonia are ethnically connected with the Kosovar Albanians<sup>26</sup>. This is also the main similarity between

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<sup>23</sup> Ross, M. H (2000), 'Creating the Conditions for Peacemaking: Theories of Practice in Ethnic Conflict Resolution', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 6, p. 1002-1003

<sup>24</sup> M. H. Ross, p. 1009

<sup>25</sup> M. H. Ross, p. 1012

<sup>26</sup> Clément, S. (1997), 'Conflict Prevention in the Balkans, Case Studies of Kosovo and the FYR of Macedonia', *Institute for Security Studies-Chailot Papers*, No. 30, p. 7

Kosovo and Macedonia<sup>27</sup>. In Kosovo, the biggest group were the Kosovar Albanians. They already felt deprived of their rights as equal citizens within Yugoslavia<sup>28</sup>. The Serbs, by the time of 1997, wanted to end the claims of the Kosovar Albanians for an independent Kosovo. Those claims had been suppressed, but this suppression had also caused the rise of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and the creation of parallel, underground institutions in Kosovo. The Kosovar Albanians had organized underground elections and had a Kosovar government<sup>29</sup>. One can see the armed response of Serbian military forces to the KLA as the start of the conflict. The military campaign conducted by the can be seen as a coordinated attempt to 'cleanse' Kosovo from the Kosovar Albanians<sup>30</sup>. With the war in Kosovo, many Albanians fled to the other side of the border, which meant a sudden and big influx of refugees in Macedonian territory. Attempts were made to resolve the conflict by bringing the parties to the negotiations table, but both the Serbians and Kosovar Albanians did not agree with the propositions made in the Rambouillet Agreement<sup>31</sup>. Milosevic did not adhere to the agreements and started to send reinforcements to Kosovo<sup>32</sup>. The fighting intensified and, despite efforts made by the international community, the only solution by NATO seemed to be the bombing campaign Operation Allied Forces in 1998. This only happened after the massacre at a village called Racak, which raised international attention. By then the NATO considered the acts by the Serbs to be aggressive and expected their goal was to expulse the Kosovar Albanians out of Kosovo. The Western countries expected the Serbs to surrender, since they did not have the same capacity as the military alliance<sup>33</sup>. But the campaign had the opposite effect, and the Serbs decided to speed up their campaign to oust the Kosovar Albanians out of Kosovo<sup>34</sup>. The Kosovo

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<sup>27</sup> ICG, p. 12

<sup>28</sup> Freedman, L. (2000), 'Victims and victors: reflections on the Kosovo War', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 26, p. 347

<sup>29</sup> Clément, S., p 23

<sup>30</sup> Malcolm, N., 'The War over Kosovo', in Bitz, B. K., *War and Change in the Balkans, Nationalism, Conflict and Cooperation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 152

<sup>31</sup> Posen, B. (2000), 'The War for Kosovo, Serbia's Political-Military Strategy', *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 4, p. 44

<sup>32</sup> Freedman, L., p 350

<sup>33</sup> Posen B., p. 59

<sup>34</sup> Malcolm N., p.



conflict in the late 1990s has been an important catalyst for events in Macedonia. For one reason because there was a great influx of Kosovar Albanians into the country closest to the Kosovar border, Macedonia<sup>35</sup>. Risks of conflict in Macedonia have been related to spillover effects from the Kosovo conflict<sup>36</sup>.

Closely related to the war in Kosovo is a conflict that preceded it in 1992, Bosnia. But besides the similarities with the Kosovar case (a suppressed minority, ethnic cleansing campaign conducted by Serbs, no peaceful end of the conflict), there also are some similarities with Macedonia. They have the same Yugoslav legacy and have been subjected to territorial claims of other countries as well as some similarities in demography. Economically seen, they have never been of major significance in the Balkan region. But for both countries, their geographical location has been an important asset. In Bosnia, the location at the Adriatic sea is of importance and Macedonia is the passage from Turkey and Greece to the rest of the Balkans. They both have always needed external powers to guarantee the internal between the minorities such as the Ottomans and Yugoslavia<sup>37</sup>. It is interesting to see that, in an article written in 1995, Glenny foresees the same situation occurring in Macedonia as did occur in 1992 in Bosnia because of the instability caused by disagreements between minorities. He implicitly assumes that once the backing of a greater state is absent, small states which contain several minorities will be subject to instability because minorities might demand more rights in a military way.

Bosnia had also been part of the republic of Yugoslavia and when this state dissolved, the ethnicities started to find a new balance of power. Like Macedonia, the Bosnian territory contains a multiplicity of minorities. In Bosnia, three main ethnicities are present; Bosniaks (who are Muslims), Croats and Serbs. However, the Bosnian Muslims never had claims for self determination that were as strong as those of the Croats or Serbs<sup>38</sup>. The Bosnian territory was divided among those three ethnical groups in the hope that this would appease them. The effect was the

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<sup>35</sup> Cameron in Blitz, p. 99

<sup>36</sup> Cameron in Blitz, p. 105

<sup>37</sup> Glenny, M. (1995), 'Heading Off War in the Southern Balkans', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 3, p. 98-99

<sup>38</sup> Slack, A. & Doyon, R., p. 141

opposite, the separation of the three ethnic groups was complete and hostile images arose and were fed by distrust about the intentions of the other groups<sup>39</sup>. Fighting started and the Serbs and Croats started to 'cleanse' their parts of Bosnia from the Bosniak population. The international community tried to resolve this conflict and the result of their diplomacy were the Dayton Agreements which separated the minorities, but failed to solve the bigger problem, instability in former Yugoslavia<sup>40</sup>. But this agreement proved problematic because it legitimized the actions of the two aggressors, Croats and Serbs<sup>41</sup>. The cause for the war in Bosnia was an unsure political situation in which ethnic nationalism became powerful. This nationalism fostered demands for self determination and demands on territorial control<sup>42</sup>. The Croat and Serb minorities also enjoyed strong moral support from their 'homestates' Croatia and Serbia. According to Slack and Doyon, the most important factor that led to the escalation of the Bosnian conflict was the demographic shift caused by the 'new' ethnic boundaries. Conflict will arise for resources and territory and if this is fueled by ethnic nationalism, conflict is likely to arise<sup>43</sup>.

Based on the cases of Bosnia and Kosovo and on the theories discussed, some expectations about what would be likely to have occurred in Macedonia in 2001 can be formulated. The similarity of the cases shows, as was also argued by Glenny, that the same scenario could be expected in Macedonia. The combination of ethnicities and attitude of the government. Also the history of all three countries is similar, all three states have been dependent on other states for their safety and internal stability. First of all, the Macedonian Albanians in Macedonia were territorially concentrated just like the Bosniaks and the Kosovar Albanians. The fact that the Albanian minority was spread across several states increases the chances of conflict arising because the minority might feel deprived of its right to self determination

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<sup>39</sup> Kurspahic, K., 'From Bosnia to Kosovo and beyond: mistakes and lessons', in Bitz, B. K., War and Change in the Balkans, Nationalism, Conflict and Cooperation, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 76

<sup>40</sup> Kurspahic, K., p. 84

<sup>41</sup> Banac, I., 'The Politics of National Homogeneity', in Bitz, B. K., War and Change in the Balkans, Nationalism, Conflict and Cooperation, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 40

<sup>42</sup> Slack, A. & Doyon, R., p. 140

<sup>43</sup> Slack, A. & Doyon, R. p. 143- 145

because it is separated<sup>44</sup>. This would be even more likely if this minority would be supported by a home state, which, in the case of the Macedonian Albanians, would be Albania. Also, the fact that the Albanian minority is distributed over different states gives the conflict an international dimension<sup>45</sup>. It is therefore likely that the conflict in Kosovo between the Serbs and Kosovar Albanians has had influence on the Macedonian conflict. The institutional structure also seems to matter, which is connected with claims of more autonomy or self determination of the minority. If the Macedonian Albanians would feel under represented in the Macedonian system, this could be a cause for the conflict.

Conflict would be more likely to arise if those claims of the minorities are in conflict with the interests of the state<sup>46</sup>. What does matter in such a case is the attitude and action that the government of this state attaches to this conflict of interests. If a state would react with suppressive policy, it is more likely that conflict will erupt than if a government would accommodate the minority<sup>47</sup>. This would mean that if the demands by the Albanians in Macedonia would be in conflict with the interest of the Macedonian state, conflict would have escalated. Social mobility, and connected with that, the economic position of the minority can also be of influence on the decision of the minority to start a conflict or not. If it is possible for members of an ethnic minority to reach higher positions in a society, they will be less likely to feel deprived<sup>48</sup>.

For a conflict to be resolved, it is necessary that both parties are convinced that they will gain from a possible peace agreement. This means that a mediator has to pursue both parties to join the negotiations in the first place and that the demands of both parties have to be reflected in the final agreement to make sure both live up to their obligations<sup>49</sup>. What the cases of Bosnia and Kosovo show is that the influence of a mediator does not necessarily mean that an agreement is successful. Success in the resolution of a conflict would mean that both parties agree

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<sup>44</sup> Stanovčić, p. 361-363

<sup>45</sup> Carment, p. 143

<sup>46</sup> Jenne, p. 731

<sup>47</sup> Jenne, p. 734-736

<sup>48</sup> Cowan, p. 40

<sup>49</sup> M. H. Ross, p. 1009

to stop fighting. Possibly, the presence of an external actor such as NATO or a country such as the US, with an extensive diplomatic network, can contribute to the early and successful resolution of a conflict<sup>50</sup>. The Macedonian case could give more insights into what creates a situation in which parties can successfully comply with the agreement.

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<sup>50</sup> Glenny, M. p. 103

## The Macedonian Case

The central question of this thesis is why, although everything pointed towards the escalation of the tensions in 2001, this did not happen in Macedonia. In order to find the factors or aspects from the Macedonian case that can explain this, this part of the thesis is used to. First of all, the historical, regional context will be shortly described. After that, the thesis will zoom in to the Macedonian case and will describe what the origins of the Macedonian nation state are. This is relevant because here, the causes for the conflict are illustrated. Then, before turning to the actual conflict, attention will be paid to some underlying causes of the tensions that arose in 2001. Afterwards, the conflict itself and its resolution, the Ohrid Agreement will be described.

### *Historical introduction, the Balkan context*

The history and recent events in Macedonia therefore cannot be understood without some understanding of the entire Balkans. In order to have a better understanding of the Macedonian case, the historical and regional context also has to receive some attention, since Macedonia's history is closely connected with that of the other countries in the Balkan like Kosovo. This part of the thesis tries to highlight some relevant events and developments in the Balkans.

One important development has been that of the rise of nationalism in the region, paralleled with the 'fall' of communism in former Yugoslavia. When talking about a concept as nationalism this concept can also be understood as the rise of ethno-consciousness<sup>51</sup>. Instead of thinking about the extreme violence that can be an effect of nationalism, one can also think of an ethnic minority that develops consciousness about its identity as a minority is also part of this concept. In some cases, nationalism resulted in violence in the Balkans, in other cases, it merely created this awareness among ethnic groups.

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<sup>51</sup> Blitz, B. K., 'War and Change', in Blitz, B. K., War and Change in the Balkans, Nationalism, Conflict and Cooperation, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 2

It was with the dissolution of Yugoslavia that new states were established within the Balkans. The new constitutions often institutionalized those ethnic tensions<sup>52</sup>, not purportedly but to meet the demands of the ethnic minorities within their boundaries. Part of this problem lay in the institutional structure of former Yugoslavia. The policy used in Yugoslavia towards ethnic minorities had two opposite effects. One effect was that, being used as a tool to create coherence and order, it provided the central government had a clear overview of which minorities had which place within the republic. This was necessary because the communists needed to find an effective device to manage their multiethnic republic. To provide an extra tie, Tito's communism was the ideology used to connect the various populations, but also the leadership of Tito himself proved to be an important binding factor<sup>53</sup> But another effect was that misunderstandings arose between the various nations that were part of Yugoslavia about their own position and their relation to others within the republic<sup>54</sup>.

A problem for many former Yugoslav states, after the fall of the Iron Curtain, was the absence of a strong civil society and a stable political culture. Such a society and culture are needed if a new state needs to be build<sup>55</sup>. Also, after the dissolution new boundaries were created, and some ethnicities became part of a nation with whom they did not always share a common history or culture. The result was a fragile beginning for many new states and soon the unstable situation caused tensions among several ethnicities. The conflicts that erupted in the 90s in former Yugoslavia have had a certain amount of influence on the 2001 Macedonian conflict. Bosnia can be seen as a good example here, when the international community became involved, this turned out to be a failure since civilians could not be protected against Serb aggressors by UN troops. Also, the Dayton agreements in 1995, did solve the Bosnian war, but did not address the seeds that caused a following war in Kosovo. Concessions made to the Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs in the Dayton agreements

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<sup>52</sup> Blitz, p. 3

<sup>53</sup> Slack, A. and Doyon, R., p. 142

<sup>54</sup> Schöpflin, G., 'Yugoslavia: State Construction and State Failure', in Bitz, B. K., War and Change in the Balkans, Nationalism, Conflict and Cooperation, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 15-17

<sup>55</sup> Schöpflin in Blitz, p. 19

caused grievance under the Albanians<sup>56</sup>, those concessions mainly concerned the geographical separation of the various ethnicities within Bosnia. This resulted in the territorial separation of the Bosnian Muslims, with whom the Albanians felt connected because they had also been suppressed minority. They therefore felt disadvantaged and it was the Kosovo conflict in the late 1990s that has been an important catalyst for events in Macedonia. Firstly, because there was a great influx of Kosovar Albanians into the country closest to the Kosovar border, Macedonia<sup>57</sup>. And secondly because of the number of Albanians that were already present in Macedonia at the time the conflict in Kosovo broke out. This shows how closely linked Macedonia's past and present are with the region.

### *Macedonia's path towards becoming the F.Y.R.O.M*

To put the conflict in 2001 in its proper context, it is important to show how the country that is internationally known as the Former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia (FYROM) has developed through history. Parts of this national history might be explanations for the fact that tensions arose in 2001 and maybe also for the resolution of those tensions. Goal of this part of the thesis is to sketch a detailed view of the Macedonian situation. In order to do this, a historical overview will be given, ending with a description of the 2001 conflict. This conflict has been the most recent eruption of ethnic unrest. It cannot be seen as a sudden and unexpected eruption of ethnic violence and therefore needs to be placed in its historical context. The historical overview should clarify how Macedonia developed from being a loose collection of ethnicities into a nation state with a certain amount of homogeneity or at least a stable number of ethnicities within its borders. A distinction should be made here between Macedonia as a nation and Macedonia as a state. The fact that the country now has established borders, a bureaucracy, party system and a stable

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<sup>56</sup> Kurspahic, K., 'From Bosnia to Kosovo and Beyond: Mistakes and Lessons' in Bitz, B. K., War and Change in the Balkans, Nationalism, Conflict and Cooperation, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 77

<sup>57</sup> Cameron, F., 'The European Union's role in the Balkans' in Bitz, B. K., War and Change in the Balkans, Nationalism, Conflict and Cooperation, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 99

number of minorities does not mean that Macedonia is a united nation as well. As the following part of the thesis will show, not all minorities identify themselves as being primarily Macedonian.

One central question throughout history therefore probably is whether Macedonia is a true nation state. The current borders were established with the independence of Macedonia in 1991. Before that, Macedonia has existed in various compositions. Since the independence of 1991, but also before this, there has been no big inter-ethnic conflict that can be compared to a civil ethnic war<sup>58</sup>. The minorities have co existed for quite a while. This seems to indicate that minorities in Macedonia had developed a way to coexist. In a way, the unrest in 2001, was quite remarkable because no internal uprising had occurred before. Macedonians have revolted against, for instance their Ottoman rulers, but this was no internal conflict but acts against an external aggressor.

There is a reason for Macedonia to be called the Apple of Discord of the Balkans<sup>59</sup>. Many states have had Macedonia within their borders at one point in time. Many boundaries divide the country, starting with more or less geographical ones, depending on what cultural or ethnic perspective one uses. For example, one could say Macedonia as a geographical part of the Balkans can be divided into three parts; Aegan Macedonia, Vardar Macedonia and Pirin Macedonia. Those three terms refer to the Greek, Serbian and Bulgarian view of what constitutes Macedonia<sup>60</sup>. The oldest inhabitants of the Macedonian territory are part of what one now calls Greeks, Vlachs and Albanians<sup>61</sup>

Besides territorial boundaries, another boundary that can be drawn is that of religion, since there are multiple religions within Macedonia. The 1923 Treaty of Lausanne established religious affiliation as the prime determinant for nationality<sup>62</sup>. But also before this Treaty, religion in the Ottoman Empire was an important factor.

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<sup>58</sup> Ortakovski, p. 25

<sup>59</sup> Poulton, H., *Who are the Macedonians?*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995, p. 6

<sup>60</sup> Cowan, p. xiii

<sup>61</sup> Poulton, p. 2

<sup>62</sup> Cowan, p. 11



Since Macedonia was part of the Ottoman Empire, they were also subjected to their policy, in which religion took a central place. Initially, the Ottomans were successful in integrating and assimilating ethnic minorities<sup>63</sup>. But the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, which already started at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>64</sup>, lay the roots for the unrest in the Balkans in the 1990s. The disputes that have been going on since the 19<sup>th</sup> century have their basis in the rise of nationalism in that period<sup>65</sup>. Because parallel to the fall of the Ottoman Empire, nationalist feelings arose in the several countries that belonged to the empire. According to the Ottoman system, Muslims were considered first rank citizens, and Christians second rank. They also performed different duties within the empire and had an official different status. Each religious community formed its own *millet*, or unit, which functioned as an important organizational tool for the Ottoman rulers. It are those *millets* that have left an important imprint on the current Macedonian society. Because this way, religion has, throughout history, been an important determinant of ethnicity or identity and this is also the case in Macedonia. It is a strange contradiction that exactly those *millets*, intended to peacefully incorporate and accommodate the different groups, did create the opportunities for nationalism to develop among the various ethnicities. Nationalism could spread through education, since each religious entity or *millet* could retain its own education, and because religion was often linked with a certain ethnicity<sup>66</sup>.

Nationality, or better said, nationalism has had its influence in shaping Macedonia. With nationalism here, it is presumed that it means that members recognize themselves as being part of a nation and want to organize this nation into a nation state. Also, the interests of their own nation is given preference over those of others<sup>67</sup>. For a long time there has not been one homogenous Macedonian identity but four ethnicities or nationalities have had their place within Macedonia, being Greek, Macedonian, Bulgarian and Albanian<sup>68</sup>. These four nation each have distinct

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<sup>63</sup> Poulton, p. 8

<sup>64</sup> Cowan, p. 1

<sup>65</sup> Cowan, p. 1

<sup>66</sup> Poulton, p. 38

<sup>67</sup> Slack, A. & Doyon, R., p. 140-141

<sup>68</sup> Cowan, p. 13

claims on Macedonia as their territory. For the Serbs it is the related culture, since the ethnic Macedonians are considered to be Slav. For the Greek it is the history of Alexander the Great that is also part of their national heritage. The Bulgarians have claims similar to the Serbs saying Macedonians are physiologically closer related to them<sup>69</sup>.

Nationalism also rose in Macedonia through the establishment of the Macedonian nationalist organization VMRO in 1893, based in Bulgaria<sup>70</sup>. After 1878, with the Treaty of Saint Stefano, a lot of ethnic Macedonians had fled to the Bulgarian capital and started to develop a resistance movement. But soon this organization was split into a moderate and radical part and became partly a military organization<sup>71</sup>. In the Treaty the Russians decided to 'give' the Slav part of Macedonia to Bulgaria based on the common denominator of the Orthodox Church<sup>72</sup>. The year of 1878 was also a decisive year because in addition to the treaty of St. Stefano, at the Congress of Berlin, European leaders decided not to create a Greater Bulgaria and therefore created Macedonia as a buffer state<sup>73</sup>.

An important moment for the ethnic Macedonians is the Ilinden uprising in 1903 on St. Elijah's Day. It was a revolt organized by VMRO against the Ottoman rulers and the intensity surprised both the Great Powers and Bulgaria. The goal of this uprising was to provoke Great Power action against the Ottomans, but no one supported the Macedonian revolt<sup>74</sup>. The rebels declared the independent republic of Kruševo. But the uprising failed unfortunately and unrest seemed to have been suppressed by the Ottomans for a while. The repercussions were severe and the rebels partly succeeded in gaining the attention of the Great Powers since they mediated in the conflict's resolution<sup>75</sup>. After this, Macedonia remained part of the Ottoman Empire until its dissolution after the First World War. But before WWI, with the first Balkan war in 1912, a coalition of forces tried to force the Turks out of

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<sup>69</sup> Philips, p. 22

<sup>70</sup> Poulton, p. 53

<sup>71</sup> Poulton, p. 55

<sup>72</sup> Philips, p. 25

<sup>73</sup> Philips, p. 21

<sup>74</sup> Poulton, p. 56

<sup>75</sup> Philips, p. 27

Macedonia<sup>76</sup>. At the end of the first Balkan war in 1912, Macedonia gained autonomous status for the first time, but did not have the shape and boundaries it has today<sup>77</sup>, in addition to this, after the Second Balkan War, parts of the country were divided between Greece and Serbia. This war took place in 1913, just before the first World War started<sup>78</sup>. The Balkan Wars have left a great deal of resentment and disappointment in the part of the Balkans where Macedonia is located. Bulgaria saw itself as the big loser of the Balkan Wars. And Serbia (and later on to a lesser extent also Yugoslavia) was also treated with mistrust by Macedonians because of their enduring claims on the territory<sup>79</sup>.

Since then and until the 1990s, Macedonia has been part of the Republic of Yugoslavia. This part of Macedonian history has already shortly been introduced but it is worthwhile to repeat it here shortly. Tito wanted Macedonia to be part of Yugoslavia as a rump state of Vardar Macedonia, the Serbian part of the territory<sup>80</sup>. Macedonia chose to be part of the republic of Yugoslavia because it wanted to be safeguarded against Greece, and also against countries within Yugoslavia. It provided them with a safe balance of power<sup>81</sup>. During the Second World War, in 1943, Macedonia was granted official status as a state by Tito. Although Serbia did not agree with this, since they considered Macedonia to be part of their territory<sup>82</sup>. Macedonian culture became institutionalized. Language and territory and the Macedonian Orthodox Church were granted official status<sup>83</sup>. Because of this, ethnic Macedonians became a majority within their own state. Although already then, the Albanians were the biggest minority within Macedonian borders<sup>84</sup>. The balance of power changed after Yugoslavia broke up in 1990, and Macedonia needed to find a

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<sup>76</sup> Philips, p. 26- 29

<sup>77</sup> Poulton, p. 73

<sup>78</sup> Philips, p. 30

<sup>79</sup> Poulton, p. 80

<sup>80</sup> Veremis, T, 'After the Storm: Greece's Role in Reconstruction' in Bitz, B. K., War and Change in the Balkans, Nationalism, Conflict and Cooperation, Camebridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 177

<sup>81</sup> Rossos, A., 'The Disintegration of Yugoslavia, Macedonia's Independence and Stability in the Balkans', in Bitz, B. K., War and Change in the Balkans, Nationalism, Conflict and Cooperation, Camebridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 111

<sup>82</sup> Philips, p. 34

<sup>83</sup> Poulton, p. 116

<sup>84</sup> Poulton, p. 126

new position within the Balkans and a few solutions were proposed. One of those was the incorporation of Macedonia in what was left of Yugoslavia to provide a balance against the Serbs, but this was not preferred by the Macedonians. Another proposal was to partition Macedonia under Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia and Albania. Initially, Greece opposed the dissolution of Yugoslavia because they foresaw instability close to their borders<sup>85</sup>.

But the probabilities of this solution causing even more disagreement were too high. Therefore, the Macedonians opted for a third solution, declaration of complete independence and sovereignty. They did this through a referendum in 1991, which was boycotted by the Albanian minority. Nevertheless the Declaration of Independence was accepted<sup>86</sup>. But the fact that the Macedonian Albanians did not recognize the legitimacy of this declaration already can be considered as a vague sign of dissatisfaction. The greatest problem of Macedonia therefore was already visible at the start, namely, inter ethnic tensions, the 1991 declaration of independence from the Yugoslav Republic has been a key moment<sup>87</sup>. But not even in name has Macedonia been a stable state since then, because from the outside and inside, this new state was contested from the beginning. For example, the name issue in which Macedonia became immediately involved with Greece. Greece considers Macedonia to be part of its national history since Alexander the Great had his roots in Macedonia but is a Greek national hero. Also, Macedonia is the name of a province, located within Greece. The name of Macedonia is contested by Greece ever since the independence of 1991<sup>88</sup>. This dispute seems to received less attention, because of the outbreak of war in Kosovo at that same time, but has been an obstacle for Macedonia to join the EU and NATO under its official name. Macedonia has therefore presented itself on the international level as the FYROM (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).

The economic situation at the time of early independence in Macedonia was not very promising. But conditions have deteriorated since then, because Yugoslavia

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<sup>85</sup> Veremis in Blitz, p. 178

<sup>86</sup> Philips, p. 48

<sup>87</sup> Cowan, p. 4

<sup>88</sup> Cowan, p. 5

did not leave the economic or political structures that were needed to improve the situation<sup>89</sup>. With high unemployment and a system filled with corruption, rapid change is not to be expected. The Macedonians also consider the government that was in power in 2001 to have stopped all improvement and deteriorate the situation even more<sup>90</sup>. Also, in the 90s the Greek blockade constrained economic development and this has had an effect into the next millennium, and Belgrade had cut off free trade agreements with Macedonia. Still trade within the region is troubled at times which has not been in favor of the development Macedonian economy. The corruption has created a political and economic system based on clientelism. Another consequence of the fragile system and institutions has been that the political elites have not been able to create the prerequisites for a stable civil society to develop. The result of all these factors was a country in 2001 that still needed to develop in many areas. In 1999 Macedonia was enrolled in the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. This gave Macedonia the opportunity to develop infrastructure and finance other projects. Although the money was divided selectively over the country, which caused some regions to be advantaged compared to others<sup>91</sup>. After its independence in 1991, Macedonia has received financial aid from the EU to develop both economically, politically and culturally. One important goal of this help was the equal position of minorities, the development or recognition of minorities. The EU, in a way, thus stimulated the development of a strong sense of Albanians as a minority within Macedonia. In 2001, Macedonia has become a stratified society in which the ethnicities lived parallel lives<sup>92</sup>. It was therefore, only in the 1990s, that the Albanians became aware of their identity as an ethnic minority<sup>93</sup>, but this will be elaborated later on. The events in 2001 have been preceded by earlier unrest, which provided the culmination of distrust and aggression. One of those moments is a confrontation in 1997 in July, in the town of Gostivar. This was a clash between Albanian demonstrators and Macedonian police

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<sup>89</sup> USIP Report, 'The Future of Macedonia: A Balkan Survivor Now Needs Reform', March 2001, United Institute of Peace, p. 4

<sup>90</sup> USIP Report 2001, p. 4

<sup>91</sup> USIP Report 2001, p. 6-7

<sup>92</sup> Cowan, p. 14

<sup>93</sup> Cowan, p. 127

forces. Three persons were killed and about 200 injured. Cause for the reaction of the Macedonian police was the display of an Albanian flag outside a town hall<sup>94</sup>. Those events have torn the both groups more apart since the protest gave Albanians the opportunity to express their frustration and confirmed Macedonians in their image of Albanian aggression<sup>95</sup>. Macedonians started to move out of mixed neighborhoods since they wanted to live in 'ethnically pure' ones. Both in Macedonian and Albanian press, the protests were covered with another narrative<sup>96</sup>.

### *Albanian nationalism*

The fact that both parties in the end reached an agreement in the end with the conclusion of the Ohrid Agreement shows that the political elites of both ethnic groups were willing to make concessions and compromise. Nevertheless, the underlying sentiments do deserve some attention because the presence of nationalism and the stereotypes existing among the Macedonians and Macedonian Albanians have greatly influenced the causes of the conflict. Paying attention to these attitudes explains the underlying sentiments that were cause for the tensions to arise.

The Albanian minority in Macedonia 'became' a minority in the 90s, shortly after the dissolution of Yugoslavia due to European policy and the unrest in other parts of the Balkans. It became a minority partly because the momentum gave the opportunity for ethnic groups to express their identity, supported by policies from the EU and also because of the new geographical constellation of the Balkans. In Macedonia, the Albanian population is located in the west and north-west of Macedonia and holds the majority of inhabitants in the cities Tetovo, Gostivar, Kičevo and Debar<sup>97</sup>. The Albanians have been dispersed over the Balkans, but have remained unified partly through religion, because most Albanians converted to

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<sup>94</sup> Cowan, p. 131

<sup>95</sup> International Crisis Group (1998), 'The Albanian Question in Macedonia: Implications of the Kosovo Conflict for Inter-Ethnic Relations in Macedonia', ICG Balkans Report No. 38, p. 8

<sup>96</sup> ICG Report, p. 9

<sup>97</sup> Philips, p. 44

Islam during the Ottoman rule<sup>98</sup>. It might be because of the conversion, but the Ottoman rulers have held a benevolent attitude towards the Albanians, granting them independence. It was this promise that formed the basis for later demands for a 'Greater Albania'<sup>99</sup>. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Muslims had become concentrated in Macedonia and in 1878; a big revolt took place against Ottoman rule<sup>100</sup>. It was also in 1878 that a first sign of organized Albanian nationalism became manifested through the League of Prizren. An organization with the aim of raising Albanian consciousness<sup>101</sup>. Although this league was not very successful, it was a first sign of a call for more cultural recognition of Albanians in the Balkans. After this, Albanians have turned to more guerilla like movements, using guerilla tactics to enforce this recognition. The Albanian Revolutionary Committees were the predecessors of the KLA and NLA, protagonists of the Kosovar and Albanian wars. Remarkably enough, the Albanian nationalists have not always been hostile to Macedonians. Within the Yugoslav republic, Albanians obtained a secondary position in comparison to other ethnicities. They also had a minor disadvantage since their motherland, Albania, was not part of Yugoslavia. The policy of the Serbs towards Albanians could be labeled as hostile. Serbs wanted to contain Albanian nationalism but achieved the opposite. The Macedonian VMRO and Albanians made a pact to free Macedonia<sup>102</sup>. Already with the 1998 election it became clear that the two ethnic groups had become separated, political parties had become segregated, no voters from the other ethnic group would vote for the other<sup>103</sup>.

Out of their sense of relative deprivation and inequality certain demands originated. The Macedonian Albanians wanted official recognition and better representation at the national level<sup>104</sup>, although some extremist Albanians also demanded secession<sup>105</sup>. But the mainstream demands of the Albanians concerned mainly five points. First of

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<sup>98</sup> Poulton, p. 29

<sup>99</sup> Philips, p. 20

<sup>100</sup> Poulton, p. 45

<sup>101</sup> Poulton, p. 65

<sup>102</sup> Poulton, p. 92

<sup>103</sup> ICG, p. 10

<sup>104</sup> Philips, p. 80

<sup>105</sup> Philips, p. 67

all, they want a different constitutional status, more equal to that of the Macedonian majority. Also, demands for more linguistic rights and rights to higher education in the Albanian language are important demands. Fourth and fifth are greater representation of Albanians in the public sector and greater autonomy for the regional forces<sup>106</sup>. But the demands by the Albanians do need to be put in perspective. Their perception was that they were treated as second rank citizens in a system that looked like the apartheid system in South Africa<sup>107</sup>. The demands that were stated by the NLA were the same as advocated by the Albanian political parties<sup>108</sup>. The history of Albanians nationalism, and their claims can be seen as important contributions to the rise of the tension before 2001, but also the attitude of the ethnic Macedonians deserves some attention.

### *Parallel societies, mutually reinforcing stereotypes*

Both the Macedonian and Albanian nationalist sentiments have helped the conflict in 2001 to start. The United States Peace Institute has conducted an interesting research into what views both groups held towards each other. To know those attitudes might also explain better why the conflict started and lasted for a few months.

What needs to be mentioned here are the diverse views held by both ethnic groups, Albanians and Macedonians<sup>109</sup>. Macedonians doubted the loyalty of Albanians towards the Macedonian state because of the displayed Albanian nationalism. Also, the Albanian minority was developing much faster demographically, which seemed a threat to Macedonians because they could be outnumbered<sup>110</sup>. On the other side, the Albanian perception was that of discrimination. In addition to this, they felt victims of social exclusion because of

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<sup>106</sup> Ortakovsky, p. 34

<sup>107</sup> Philips, p. 13

<sup>108</sup> Philips, p. 120

<sup>109</sup> Petroska-Beska, V. and Najcevska, M. (2004), 'Macedonia, Understanding History, Preventing Future Conflict', Special Report No. 115, United States Institute of Peace, p. 2

<sup>110</sup> Petroska p. 3



limited education possibilities in the Albanian language and limited job perspectives within the state apparatus. Cowan described the Macedonian society at that time as a zero-sum game. She uses this term to explain that both parties thought they could only gain at the expense of the other party. Those perception only reinforced the negative images both parties had about each other and deepened the divide<sup>111</sup>. Both the Macedonian and Albanian nationalist attitudes are mutually enforcing<sup>112</sup>, if both would keep their stands, perceptions of the other group will probably get more extreme.

One of the factors contributing to this view is the fact that both ethnicities enjoy education in parallel systems<sup>113</sup>. The effect has been that both groups only gained information about each other indirectly, and did not see falsification of this in real life. Shortly before the conflict broke out, several programs had been initiated to diminish the gap between Albanian and Macedonian students<sup>114</sup>.

The Macedonian perception of what lead to the escalation of the conflict lay mainly in the economic situation at that time and the instability in Kosovo. They blamed the Albanians for seeking affiliation with a greater Albania. They also claim Albanians are not being discriminated. They portray themselves as victims of the conflict, especially Macedonians who have lived in the villages attacked by Albanians. The role of the international community is also not perceived in a positive way, since the international security forces are being 'accused' of supporting the Albanians<sup>115</sup>. The Albanians however, have a slightly different perception of the events. They stressed the effects of government policy on the Albanian community. They also equated their position with the one of Kosovo, which meant that they also felt that they were repressed by the Macedonian authorities<sup>116</sup>. They approved of the attacks of the NLA and regarded the Macedonian government as not willing to meet the Albanian demands. The Albanians also thought that the support of the

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<sup>111</sup> Petroska, p. 2

<sup>112</sup> ICG, p. 7

<sup>113</sup> Petroska, p. 3

<sup>114</sup> Petroska, p. 4

<sup>115</sup> Petroska, p. 8

<sup>116</sup> Petroska, p. 7

international community was welcome and successful in managing the conflict<sup>117</sup>. Both parties however regard the ethnic Macedonians as being the losers of the conflict. Reason for this is that they have to make concessions in the Ohrid Agreement<sup>118</sup>.

Already in the 1980s, Macedonian authorities had fears of the Albanian population outgrowing the ethnic Macedonian one because of the demographic changes within the Albanian part of the population<sup>119</sup>. They therefore conducted a policy to diminish the strength of Albanian nationalism mainly directed to Albanian-language schools and the curriculum at those schools<sup>120</sup>.

The relationship between the Macedonians and Albanians has been central to many of the existing tensions in Macedonia. Despite their participation in the political scene, the Albanians do not see themselves as full worthy citizens of Macedonia. There also is a gap between the political reality and the social reality. On governmental level, parties, and ethnicities cooperate, on social level however, there is not a lot of inter-group contact<sup>121</sup>.

Also, during the 2001 conflict, Albanians claimed to be portrayed wrongly in the media, both in Macedonia and internationally. Certainly, different narratives were used to describe the events in pro-Albanian and pro-Macedonian media<sup>122</sup>. After the conflict, with the Ohrid Agreement, the perceptions of both groups did not change on a day. There was a general lack of confidence in the intentions of both groups<sup>123</sup>. The nationalist feelings seem to have contributed to the unrest that erupted in 2001, and it is therefore necessary to dedicate part of the thesis to this. An important characteristic of the Albanian nationalism in Macedonia was the NLA (National Liberation Army) which is an offspring of and related to the KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army) in Kosovo<sup>124</sup>. Initially Albanians demanded that the north-western

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<sup>117</sup> Petroska, p. 8

<sup>118</sup> Petroska, p. 9

<sup>119</sup> Philips, p. 45

<sup>120</sup> Philips, p. 45

<sup>121</sup> USIP Report 2001, p. 3

<sup>122</sup> Philips, p. 89

<sup>123</sup> Philips, p. 189

<sup>124</sup> Veremis in Blitz, p. 179

part of Macedonia, which is mainly inhabited by Albanians would be added to Kosovo in order to create a bigger Albanian territory<sup>125</sup>. Macedonians have regarded those developments with suspicion, since they saw a threat in the Albanian nationalism. They also hold the attitude that Albanian leaders do not conduct attempts to diminish the Albanian nationalism, at a point at which they consider themselves to have diminished the Macedonian equivalent<sup>126</sup>.

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<sup>125</sup> Poulton, p. 126

<sup>126</sup> USIP Report 2001, p. 2

## The 2001 conflict

Eventually, all preceding events and underlying sentiments have led to the eruption of interethnic violence in 2001. An overview of what took place in those months is given and factors that were of importance in the causation and resolution of the conflict are highlighted. This should also indicate the possible explanations for the fact that the tensions did not escalate into war. First of all, a chronological overview of events is given. Then, some more underlying topics will be discussed such as nationalism and the attitudes of the groups engaged in the conflict. Also, the eventual Ohrid agreement receives attention because the content can provide explanations for the early resolution of the conflict.

There are a few general factors of importance in the run up to the Macedonian conflict<sup>127</sup>. The inequality as perceived by the Albanians was a catalyst for the conflict. Also, the fact that the economy in Macedonia at the time of the conflict was weak created a vulnerable situation in which both groups felt threatened by demands of the other group<sup>128</sup>. The weak economy also resulted in a mistrust against the government, which was also fuelled by the widespread corruption among politicians mentioned earlier. Also, parallel societies existed within Macedonia. Albanians and Macedonians did not interact very often. This resulted, in stereotypes that were fuelled when the unrest started to mount<sup>129</sup>.

The soil of the conflict has been identity, for both Albanians and Macedonians, their national identity and demand for recognition of it has been the stake in the conflict. The Albanian nationalism fueled the action undertaken by the NLA (National Liberation Army), and created support among the Albanian minority. This is similar to the Kosovo case since the KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army) was a nationalist movement. Albanian nationalism in Macedonia has been influenced by

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<sup>127</sup> Hislope, R. (2003), 'Between a Bad Peace and a Good War: Insights and Lessons from the Almost-war in Macedonia', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 1, p. 131

<sup>128</sup> Hislope, p. 137

<sup>129</sup> Petroska, p. 2

the ideas and action of the KLA<sup>130</sup>. The spillover effect from Kosovo can be named as one of the factors contributing to the start of the conflict. For one reason because the influx of refugees from Kosovo destabilized Macedonian society<sup>131</sup>. For another reason because of the close ties between the KLA and NLA. After the war had ended in Kosovo, the KLA found a new goal in supporting the NLA in its battle<sup>132</sup>.

At the time of 2001, the Albanian minority made up for 23 percent of the population<sup>133</sup>, which makes it the biggest minority in Macedonia. The political scene at that time contained two important Albanian parties were the PDP (Party of Democratic Prosperity) and the DPA (Democratic Party of Albanians). The first was in opposition, but held a more moderate position on the question of the Albanian minority rights. This party also gained political control over the western part of Macedonia<sup>134</sup>. The second party was in government and had separated from the PDP recently. The most important Macedonian party was the VMRO-DPMNE (Democratic Party of Macedonian National Unity), which was in government with the DPA<sup>135</sup>. This was quite a unique situation because since the 1991 independence, Albanians had not been in government. It seemed as if a period of more mutual respect and tolerance had begun. Partly because of this coalition between an ethnic Macedonian and a Macedonian Albanian party, partly because some inter ethnic projects had started, like the production of an Albanian-Macedonian series<sup>136</sup>. Because of the coalition, a goal of both the PDP and the DPA was closer in their reach, namely the amendment of the constitution in order to equate the status of the Albanians with the Macedonians<sup>137</sup>. The first president of an officially independent Macedonia in 1991 was Krste Gligorov, an ethnic Macedonian politician from the communist party<sup>138</sup>. Although he was Macedonian, he managed to appeal to the Albanians as

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<sup>130</sup> Hislope, p. 141

<sup>131</sup> ICG Report, p. 12

<sup>132</sup> Hislope, p. 141

<sup>133</sup> ICG Report, p. 4

<sup>134</sup> Pearson, B. (2002), 'Putting Peace into Practice, Can Macedonia's New Government Meet the Challenge', Special Report 96, United States Institute of Peace, p. 3

<sup>135</sup> Cowan, p. 134

<sup>136</sup> Cowan, p. 135

<sup>137</sup> ICG, p. 6

<sup>138</sup> Philips, p. 47

well. It is because of this appeal that several times at instable occasions, he succeeded in mediating between the two groups and prevented escalation of those conflicts.

Nevertheless, he also had to take into account other interests that were present among the ethnic Macedonians. For the Macedonians, their aim was to maintain territorial and political control also over the parts that were dominated by Albanians. Initially, they did not want to grant equal status in the constitution. But an important pressure on the change of the position of minorities in Macedonia, was the possible accession to NATO and the EU because this would improve living conditions in Macedonia. The demands of those two organizations would be important incentives for the Macedonians to alter their position<sup>139</sup>. Concerning the policy towards minorities in general in Macedonia, the constitution needs to be taken as a starting point. The Macedonian constitution officially provides protection of minorities. A few articles acknowledge the existence of minorities within Macedonia and also their religious freedom is guaranteed<sup>140</sup>. It must be mentioned that the article that provides for the equality of citizens, also is the article that is being contested by Albanians. They see this recognition of individual rights Albanians explicitly in the constitution as being equal to the Macedonian ethnic group.

The Macedonian policy towards the Albanian minority was designed out of fears for the presumed various threats the Macedonian Albanians posed to the unity of the Macedonian nation state. The Macedonian policy therefore, was aimed at controlling the Albanian minority. They did this through control on the education, the banning of Albanian names, demographic measures against large families and an explicit aim to diminish signs of Albanian culture<sup>141</sup>, and this caused resentment under the Albanians. In reaction to this, VMRO-DPMNE also radicalized and became more nationalist. This does not coincide with what has been claimed by ethnic Macedonians, namely that the Macedonian nationalism was not existent anymore.

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<sup>139</sup> Philips, p. 79

<sup>140</sup> ICG Report, p. 24

<sup>141</sup> Poulton, p. 128

Part of the reason for the PDP to be in government was to contain the Macedonian nationalist parties<sup>142</sup>.

Albanians continued to feel disadvantaged. For instance, in 1992, a citizenship law was adopted that said that to become a citizen of Macedonia, the requirement was that one needed to have lived in Macedonia for 15 years. This meant for a lot of Macedonian Albanians that they were denied Macedonian citizenship<sup>143</sup>. Albanians also felt deprived since many Macedonians who live abroad hold a passport, but have never lived in Macedonia<sup>144</sup>. Another example refers to the case of education. It was one of the major points that caused dissatisfaction among the Albanian part of the population. In 1994, at the University of Tetovo was established, which was a university in which Albanian was the language of education. The Macedonian authorities were not pleased with this and did not recognize the university<sup>145</sup>. Which in turn upset the Macedonian Albanians. The government also claims to have conducted an active policy in creating greater opportunity for minorities to participate, the question remains however, how the minorities concerned perceive this. It seems likely that it were those conflicting interests on cultural issues and issues about the minority identities, that caused ethnic tensions. Also, the fact that the Albanians were territorially concentrated supports the expectations that it was likely that the dissatisfaction among the Macedonian Albanians would lead to violent conflict<sup>146</sup>. The policy of the Macedonian government only created extra awareness on the Albanian identity, which was the exact opposite of what the government was aiming at.

In 2001, the NLA, the Macedonian Albanian's armed resistance group, launched attacks in the north-west of Macedonia, The Macedonian government responded with violence, but was warned by the international community not to use violence against the NLA<sup>147</sup>. Significant was the occupation of a village called

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<sup>142</sup> ICG, p. 6

<sup>143</sup> ICG, p. 4

<sup>144</sup> USIP Report 2001, p. 2

<sup>145</sup> Ortakovski, p. 37

<sup>146</sup> Stanovčić, p. 361

<sup>147</sup> Veremis in Blitz, p. 179

Tanusevci by a group of extremist Albanian nationalists<sup>148</sup>. In the spring of 2001, there was an uprising. A television crew that was at location to report the unrest got kidnapped. The broadcasting company claimed that the kidnap was conducted by Albanians. The crew was released safely but the Macedonian authorities responded by attacking the village Tanusevci in order to find the kidnappers. This resulted in a clash between the Macedonian army and the NLA in which two Macedonian soldiers were killed. When the authorities tried to mediate in the conflict and tried to start conversation with the NLA, the official send by Skopje were attacked by the NLA<sup>149</sup>. International aid arrived very quickly, from various parties, the armed response of the Macedonian military for instance was supplied by Ukraine<sup>150</sup>. Also, the US funded the Macedonian army, this was part of longer term aid, but during the conflict, this aid persisted. The NLA was supported by the Kosovar Albanians from the KLA who had crossed the border<sup>151</sup>. With the support from those states, and the KLA from Kosovo, it seemed likely that Macedonia found itself in a state of conflict. The supportive lobby states and the policy of the Macedonian government towards the Macedonian Albanians could have caused the last group to opt for a radicalization of demands and means to achieve those<sup>152</sup>. The attacks described above indicate that the NLA indeed opted for this strategy. This in contradiction to the attitude of the political parties of the Macedonian Albanians, as will be elaborated later on.

But the Albanians are not the only ones to be blamed for starting the unrest in 2001. At a certain moment, the NLA felt strong enough to propose an ultimatum to the Macedonian government to meet their demands. One of those demands was that the Macedonian republic would become a confederation<sup>153</sup>. But the Macedonians responded with declaring a truce. The goals was to make the NLA withdraw from Tetovo so that peace negotiations could start<sup>154</sup>. The NLA in turn made clear that

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<sup>148</sup> Ortakovski, p. 25

<sup>149</sup> Philips, p. 11

<sup>150</sup> Philips, p. 86

<sup>151</sup> Philips, p. 90

<sup>152</sup> Jenne, E., p. 735

<sup>153</sup> Philips, p. 182

<sup>154</sup> Philips, p. 94



their goals was not secession or the creation of a greater Albania<sup>155</sup>. Since the end of the war in Kosovo, Macedonian troops did not have to be alarmed about a possible threat from the north. The military therefore, needed another focus. Skopje initially wanted a military solution to the problem<sup>156</sup>. And not only the military engaged in the conflict. Some paramilitary groups were trained in order to force the NLA out of the territory<sup>157</sup>. Although this was the goal of the paramilitaries in the beginning, when the conflict continued, the function changed. Paramilitary troops also started attacking Albanian citizens, committing ex judiciary executions. Their motivation was that they helped the army in punishing terrorists. But several monitoring organizations like the OSCE had expressed their worries about the crimes committed by those groups. The mission deployed by the OSCE to monitor the situation was the biggest and most longstanding mission conducted by the organization<sup>158</sup>. Even after the Ohrid agreement was reached, the foreign influence remained strong on Macedonian politics<sup>159</sup>.

Rossos states in Blitz's book that the Macedonian conflict had the potential for an international war<sup>160</sup>. According to Rossos, there were too many nations involved, although some indirectly. First of all, the Balkan states were often connected with Macedonia through ethnic ties and they were concerned for a repetition of events in Bosnia and Kosovo. Secondly, Greece and Turkey, as NATO members, also wanted to prevent instability in a region close to their borders<sup>161</sup>. The Serbs supported the ethnic Macedonians in their attitude<sup>162</sup>. This was for two reasons, firstly because the Serbs felt ethnically related to the Macedonians since they considered them both to be Slav. The fact that the orthodox Macedonians and Serb orthodox church were related provided another tie. But the Serbs had also dealt with the Albanians demands for secession or autonomy in Kosovo and they feared that the demands of

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<sup>155</sup> Philips, p. 95

<sup>156</sup> Philips, p. 12

<sup>157</sup> Philips, p. 9

<sup>158</sup> Philips, p. 141

<sup>159</sup> Philips, p. 118

<sup>160</sup> Rossos in Blitz, p. 110

<sup>161</sup> Rossos in Blitz, p. 110

<sup>162</sup> Philips, p. 81

the Macedonian Albanians would give cause for renewed unrest in Kosovo. Where the Serbs supported the ethnic Macedonians, the Albanians and Kosovar Albanians supported the Macedonian Albanians because of ethnic ties. There was however also reason for Albania to support Macedonia in order to keep the Macedonian state unified. Albania was happy to have Macedonia in the region because it provided a counter weight against Serbia<sup>163</sup>. They were therefore reluctant to become closely involved although that would make sense considering the ties with the Albanian community. This is contradictory to the assumption that the Macedonians had the backing of a supportive lobby state, possibly an important reason for the fact that the Macedonian Albanians did not choose to continue fighting. Already in 1998, the International Crisis Group reported on the potentially risky situation in Macedonia and warned that:

“... relations between communities within Macedonia are deteriorating alarmingly<sup>164</sup>.”

The report also stated that although it valued the presence of the international community in the area, possible military action would only inflame tensions in Macedonia<sup>165</sup>. It also saw a causal relation between the war in Kosovo and the Albanian minority and foresaw that spill over was possible<sup>166</sup>.

The severity of the conflict is shown in the case against the Macedonian Interior Minister Ljube Boskovski, a claim has been brought to the ICC in The Hague for being involved in ethnic cleansing operations. This was a claim for the possibility of crimes committed in Ljubance on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August. This supposedly was an operation conducted under close supervision of Boskovski trying to ‘clean’ the village from Albanian inhabitants<sup>167</sup>. Eventually, in 2008, the ICC, judged on a case relating to events two days later in Ljuboten. Eventually, Boskovski was found not

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<sup>163</sup> Philips, p. 82

<sup>164</sup> ICG, p. i

<sup>165</sup> ICG, p. ii

<sup>166</sup> ICG, p. 1

<sup>167</sup> Philips, p. 139

guilty, but when reading the report of the events, it seems unlikely to suppose that, as an Interior Minister, he was not aware of what happened in Ljuboten. This is even more so since he was present at the time of the killings. This supposes also some involvement in the planning of the operation<sup>168</sup>. The reason for the delayed ruling was the fragile balance and level of trust at that time. NATO, but also the US and the EU enjoyed little support among the Macedonian population. If a member of the government would have been summoned to the ICC at that moment, it would have meant a blow to the trust and support that the government of Macedonia had in the international community<sup>169</sup>. But it proves that there were several ethnic cleansing operations conducted, purportedly and on the initiative of Macedonian government officials. The effect of those operations was that the Albanian population no longer felt secure and fled to Serbia, even though, a few years before, refugee flows had gone the other direction.

#### *Interference of the international community*

The role of the international community cannot be overlooked in this conflict. Almost since the beginning of the Macedonian republic, an international prevention force was located in the northern Balkans to monitor the situations<sup>170</sup>. The international community was aware of the potential of escalation in Macedonia. A UN mission was already present in the Balkans; UNPREDEP. With this mission, the UN tried to stabilize the region through preventive diplomacy.

But, the international community has, just as the Macedonian authorities have been, not always consistent in their support or approval of conducted policies towards the Albanians. With the 1997 unrest in Gostivar for example, the US and several international organizations supported the Albanians but France and the UK on the other hand were in favor of the Macedonians<sup>171</sup>. Also, there was a difference between the NATO troops that controlled the borders of Macedonia and

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<sup>168</sup> ICC Ruling Bokovski-Tarculovski, p. 248

<sup>169</sup> Philips, p. 140

<sup>170</sup> ICG, p. 15

<sup>171</sup> Philips, p. 71

Kosovo-Serbia and the diplomats in Skopje. They both approached the conflict differently, NATO perceiving the problem as an Albanian Question, the diplomatic corps in terms of interethnic conflict<sup>172</sup>. They therefore could not agree on a consistent strategy, as has been the case on several other occasions in Macedonia. Of course, lessons learned from the earlier, and very recent conflict in the Balkans played a role in the decision making of the international community. Intervention would possibly give cause for disapproval of other countries, especially those who felt they had a stake in Macedonia, such as Russia, Bulgaria and Greece. But the choice not to intervene could result in ethnic cleansing, as had occurred in Bosnia and Kosovo.

The renewed influx of refugees in other Balkan countries from Macedonia would destabilize the region. The first strategy deployed by the West was to constrain the military operation of the Macedonians. But this resulted in a weak army and caused for an increase in violence on the Albanian side<sup>173</sup>. A lesson learned was that of prevention and early detection of possible conflict prone situations<sup>174</sup>.

The shelling of Albanian villages and the increase in the refugee flow were therefore the direct motivation for the international community to become militarily engaged. This caused for an increased involvement of NATO troops since the flow of refugees also effected the situation in Kosovo. NATO decided to deploy 4000 men in Macedonia, a mission led by Britain. The operation was named 'Essential Harvest' and had as its main goal to disarm both factions. The disarmament also was part of the Ohrid Agreement and the NATO troops secured the compliance of both parties to this part of the agreement. This mission ended at the 26<sup>th</sup> of September 2001, but 1000 men remained<sup>175</sup>. This was done because both sides still received new weapons. Ukraine and Russia supplied the Macedonians. This was done because Russia was not pleased with the fact that it had not been invited to act as a mediator. The country still wanted to have some amount of influence in the region and

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<sup>172</sup> Pearson, p. 5

<sup>173</sup> Pearson, p. 5

<sup>174</sup> Kurspahic in Blitz, p. 85

<sup>175</sup> Philips, p. 144

supported the Macedonians. The NLA was provided with weapons by smuggling arms, from Albania and Kosovo, but were also trained by the US<sup>176</sup>. Also, the paramilitary groups were not disarmed by NATO<sup>177</sup>. The conflict resulted in 200 casualties and more than 180.000 persons internally displaced. Some parts were under the control of the NLA and the Macedonian authorities spread weapons among ethnic Macedonian paramilitary troops<sup>178</sup>.

But still, the operation 'Essential Harvest' can be considered a key moment for the peace talks, that had started, to succeed. The troops deployed, who had to make sure the conflict did not escalate started transporting NLA troops out of the city of Aracinovo. This town, the closest the NLA came to Skopje, had been occupied by the Macedonian Albanians. But the NLA agreed to be moved out of this village. It was a sign for both parties that at least the extreme wing of the Albanian minority was willing to make concessions. It made sure a truce was put in place, although this was broken again later on because Macedonians and Albanians did not stop planning and executing attacks.

This shows that the international community had become deeply involved in the conflict. Possibly, the presence of an external actor such as NATO or a country such as the US, with an extensive diplomatic network, has contributed to the early and successful resolution of the conflict<sup>179</sup>. Javier Solana, as EU representative, mediated between the Albanians and Macedonians and brought together a government of unity in May 2001<sup>180</sup>. Both the US and EU eventually realized that another civil war would disrupt the recent stability in the region and therefore forced both parties to enter peace talks<sup>181</sup>. In this case, the expectation of Carment that involvement of a third party in an ethnic conflict will likely cause the level of violence is proven wrong. Since the mediation of the international community in the conflict, the use of violence had been contained.

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<sup>176</sup> Philips, p. 144

<sup>177</sup> Philips, p. 166

<sup>178</sup> Pearson, p. 2

<sup>179</sup> Glenny, M. p. 103

<sup>180</sup> Philips, p. 117

<sup>181</sup> Pearson, p. 2

For the EU, Macedonia became an important case. The EU replaced the NATO mission in 2003 and remains present in the country to monitor the current situation<sup>182</sup>. They included Macedonia in the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) which gave Balkan countries the prospect of joining the EU. Javier Solana was a relatively successful attempt in bringing the parties together, as preparation for reaching a peace agreement. The NLA however, was not invited to the table but the Albanian parties who were also part of the government of national unity. But neither of the parties was, at that point willing to make concession<sup>183</sup>.

At the end of the offensive in March, positions of both parties had become polarized, also in politics. The Albanian PDP had withdrawn from parliament. The DP, the Albanian party in government however did not withdraw<sup>184</sup>. The president in power at that time, Boris Trajkovski, laid down the stepping stones for a peace agreement. It was this basis that was used by the mediating parties to gather the Albanians and Macedonians together and come to consensus<sup>185</sup>. But the president did not enjoy support among the Macedonian part of the population. They wanted the military to end the violence, the prime minister, Georgievski was a proponent of this tactic, which shows that the president also faced resistance in his government. By the time the talks started, violence was still continuing. Partly because the Macedonian nationalists were not very eager to cooperate. With their paramilitary groups, they continued attacks on Albanian villages. Also, the army felt the support of such parties and did not feel the need to stop fighting<sup>186</sup>. The troops that were organized were called the Red Berets and the Tigers, both groups were disbanded in 2002. The fighting ended officially in August 2001, when both parties reached an agreement in Ohrid<sup>187</sup>, although the unrest continued in some parts of Macedonia.

After the conflict was settled with the Ohrid Agreement on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August 2001, the situation in Macedonia should have stabilized. This can be said, partly, for

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<sup>182</sup> Cameron in Blitz, p. 101

<sup>183</sup> Popetrevski, V. & Latifi, V. (2004), 'The Ohrid Framework Agreement Negotiations', *Conflict Studies Research Centre*, June 2004, p. 29

<sup>184</sup> Philips, p. 97

<sup>185</sup> Philips, p. 120

<sup>186</sup> Philips, p. 128

<sup>187</sup> Petroska, p. 2

Macedonian politics, but some remarks need to be made. The implementation of the Agreement has not been easily accepted by Macedonians. Although they claimed to be victors in the conflict, they are generally seen as being the losers. The Macedonians still see the Albanians as aggressors and do not want to reward such behavior. They also fear that having granted the changes in the Agreement, the Albanians later on will demand more once they gain more power<sup>188</sup>.

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<sup>188</sup> Pearson, p. 3

## Ohrid Agreement

The Ohrid Agreement probably is the most important aspect of the Macedonian case because it has been the key to the resolution of the conflict. It shows that in Macedonia, ethnic groups, with contrasting interests were able to find a compromise that was workable for both groups. Thus, when looking at this agreement, and especially the process during which it has been created in the wider context of the Balkan conflicts, it can be seen as one of the biggest explanatory aspects of the Macedonian case. Although it has been mentioned several times as being the end of the conflict, it is useful to discuss its content and the way it was achieved more elaborately.

The parties, brought together at Ohrid were the representatives of the groups involved in the conflict, the Macedonians and Macedonian Albanians. The DPA and PDP represented the Albanian part and the VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM the Macedonians. The NLA was not represented at the negotiation table, but the Macedonian Albanian leaders were in contact with the NLA leaders during the negotiations<sup>189</sup>. This is clearly a different setting than that of Kosovo. In that case, the Kosovar Albanians were not represented in government, nor were parties invited to the table for peace talks<sup>190</sup>. The international mediators that led the peace talks were James Pardew who represented the US and Francois Leotard who was a French diplomat but who represented the EU. When, in a later phase, the negotiations seemed to have entered a dead lock, Javier Solana, at that moment the EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, also made an important contribution. He convinced the Macedonian Albanians to give up their demand for local police control. This was a big blockade for negotiations to proceed. Another reason for this extra international pressure was the violence that intensified, Solana even used the words 'ethnic cleansing' to describe the actions undertaken by the Macedonian military<sup>191</sup>. Solana was helped by a Ukrainian diplomat, Anatoly Zlenko<sup>192</sup>. The help of

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<sup>189</sup> Popetrevski, V & Latifi, V., p. 31

<sup>190</sup> Malcolm, p. 147

<sup>191</sup> Idem note 182, p. 34

<sup>192</sup> Idem note 182



Ukraine can be explained by the fact that it had been involved quite early in the conflict because of its military support to the Macedonian forces.

The agreement was based on a few principles that both parties needed to comply with in order to implement the rest of the agreement successfully. The use of violence was out of option in any case and the territorial integrity and sovereignty needed to be respected at any time. Democracy was emphasized in the agreement and also the need to develop strong local government<sup>193</sup>. Obviously, a peace agreement cannot become effective if parties are still fighting, which explains the first principle. A peace agreement implies a truce. The fact that the territorial and sovereign integrity of the nation needs to be respected<sup>194</sup> is a call to the Macedonian Albanians not to demand secession or call for parts of Macedonia to be added to Albania or Kosovo to create a 'Greater Albania'. The call for democracy and stronger local government are the pillars on which the other parts of the agreement are build. The demand for stronger and more autonomous local government<sup>195</sup> was a demand expressed by both the Albanian political parties and the NLA. More competencies should be delegated to municipalities on matters relating to public services, culture and education. This meant an important concession to the Albanians since some villages are populated entirely by the Albanian minority. To have a say about their culture and education policy means that they would be able to express their identity without being restrained by law. This also was a point at which both parties stood at opposite ends. There was a fear among the Macedonian negotiators that granting to much autonomy to local branches of government would weaken national unity<sup>196</sup>

Another important article in the agreement is on equitable representation<sup>197</sup>. A big complaint or a big part of the frustration within the Albanian community was based on the fact that in the judiciary, the police and in ministries, deployment of Albanians was still low compared to the number of Macedonians. The authorities

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<sup>193</sup> Ohrid Agreement, 13.08.2001, p. 1

<sup>194</sup> Ohrid Agreement, art. 1.2, p. 1

<sup>195</sup> Idem note 147, art. 3.3, p. 1

<sup>196</sup> Popetrevski, V. & Latifi, V., p. 30

<sup>197</sup> Idem note 147, ch. 4, p. 2

therefore were obliged by the agreement to work on a more equitable representation of minorities in the branches of government and central and local public bodies<sup>198</sup>. It has been mentioned that the use and recognition of the Albanian language was an obstacle during the peace talks towards progress on other subjects. A separate part of the agreement is therefore dedicated to education and language. In which it is stated that the Albanian language will be recognized in the constitution as one of the official languages of Macedonia. Also, if more than 20 percent of the population in a municipality speaks Albanians, they are permitted to use Albanian in official documents<sup>199</sup>. But still, Macedonian will be the official language in international relations<sup>200</sup>. It was a compromise which the mediators had to find because initially, the Macedonians refused to recognize this demand of the Macedonian Albanians<sup>201</sup>. The percentage requirement is connected with demographic changes and provided the Macedonians with the guarantee that the concession to the Macedonian Albanians would not be irreversible. Also, strict guidelines and timetables were established and incorporated in the agreement. One point that has been a reason for dissatisfaction among Albanians was that it was difficult for them to obtain a Macedonian passport and acquire full nationality. The agreement does not specify any measures of improvement on this however. A breakthrough in the peace talks was the agreement reached on the use and recognition of Albanian language in Macedonia. This seemed to be the main blockade towards agreement on other, less sensitive subjects<sup>202</sup>.

The final Ohrid agreement was a result that both parties did not see as completely satisfying, but both regarded it as the most workable solution for that time<sup>203</sup>. It therefore did not mean an end of the war. The more extreme wings within both factions tried to make the agreement a dead letter by continuing with the use of violence. The Agreement was officially signed on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August, but three days before the signing, Macedonian soldiers were killed and the Macedonian army

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<sup>198</sup> Ohrid agreement, art. 6.4 p. 2

<sup>199</sup> Idem 150, art. 6.5, p. 3

<sup>200</sup> Philips, p. 2-3

<sup>201</sup> Popetrevski, V. & Latifi, V., p. 32

<sup>202</sup> Philips, p. 134

<sup>203</sup> Philips, p. 136

responded to this by reprisals in the village of Ljuboten<sup>204</sup>. The international mediators present knew to convince both parties that total withdrawal from the agreement would mean an escalation. It can be assumed that if the Macedonians and Macedonian Albanians had decided not to sign the agreement, the conflict would have escalated into a war that can be compared to that of Bosnia and Kosovo. The agreement was officially ratified on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 2001 by the Macedonian parliament<sup>205</sup>.

For a conflict to be resolved, it is necessary that both parties are convinced that they will gain from a possible peace agreement. This means that a mediator has to pursue them to join the negotiations and that the demands of both parties have to be reflected in the final agreement to make sure both live up to their obligations<sup>206</sup>. The Ohrid Agreement can be seen as an excellent example of this. Although until the last moment, both parties still considered violence to be an option if the peace agreement would not have a satisfactory outcome. It is the credit of the international community's mediators that both parties were convinced to sign the agreement in the end. But also, when looking at the content of the Agreement, it shows that both parties were met in some of their demands. For the ethnic Macedonians, one of their most important demands, the unity of the Macedonian state was retained by the importance that was given to territorial integrity in the agreement. For the Macedonian Albanians, the two most important issues were solved namely the recognition of Albanian as an official language and an increase in autonomy in the local branches of government.

The contrast with the cases of Bosnia and Kosovo and the way the agreements were achieved and their success is clear for several reasons. Firstly, both in Bosnia and in Kosovo, the mediators encountered great difficulty in getting the groups in conflict at the negotiation table. With the talks at Rambouillet, Milosevic only agreed to be present when he received a guarantee that there would be no mention of the ICTY

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<sup>204</sup> Popetrevski, V. & Latifi, V., p. 35

<sup>205</sup> Philips, p. 156

<sup>206</sup> M. H. Ross, p. 1009

(International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia) in the final agreement because he feared prosecution<sup>207</sup>. Also, both agreements were not satisfactory for the groups engaged in the conflicts. The Bosniaks lost at the expense of the Croats and Serbs and in the case of Kosovo, the Serbs violated the agreement by continuing their 'ethnic cleansing' campaigns directed against the Kosovar Albanians.

In both cases, the international community was responsible for mediating between the parties, Bosnia and Kosovo show that the influence of a mediator does not necessarily mean that an agreement is successful. Success in the resolution of a conflict would mean that both parties agree to stop fighting.

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<sup>207</sup> Stuebner, W. A, 'American cooperation with the ICTY', Bitz, B. K., War and Change in the Balkans, Nationalism, Conflict and Cooperation, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 90

## Conclusion

With the Ohrid Agreement as the closure of the conflict in 2001, some conclusions can be drawn. Initially, when looking at the stage at which the conflict took place, everything pointed to a repetition of the wars that had taken place in the Balkans; Kosovo and Bosnia. The ethnic composition and the tensions that had preceded the outburst in 2001 were similar to that of Macedonia. The attitude of the Macedonian government towards the Macedonian Albanians caused dissatisfaction among this group. Also, because both minorities lived in separately organized societies, negative stereotypes fed the tensions, similar to what happened in Bosnia. The ethnic Macedonians and Macedonian Albanians had a conflict of interests namely that the Macedonian Albanians wanted a stronger position as minority in Macedonia. The ethnic Macedonians however, saw threats in the demands for more cultural and political autonomy. When the unrest started with attacks by the NLA, the response of the Macedonian government and the way the conflict developed seemed to indicate the same scenario as that of Kosovo. However, this did not happen. The central question of this thesis was what possible explanations for this could be.

Three factors emerge out of the case study as being capable of explaining why the conflict did not escalate into war. First, the influence of the international community. The fact that from an early stage of the conflict, NATO and the EU tried to mediate shows that they were aware of the possible instability in Macedonia. It has been due to the efforts of the mediators at the Ohrid negotiations that eventually an agreement was reached. The compliance of both parties has been secured by the NATO operation Essential Harvest. There is a clear difference with interference of the international community in Macedonia and that in Kosovo and Bosnia. Possibly, the NATO and EU were aware of the possible risk their interference posed to a possible escalation of the conflict. Also, the fact that they had learned from earlier conflicts is of influence, which is connected with the third explanatory factor.

A second factor is the attitude of the political elites of both groups. In order to reach a peace agreement, both parties need to be willing to give up fighting and therefore, the agreement needs to be satisfactory for both. This was the case with

the Ohrid Agreement because both the ethnic Macedonians and Macedonian Albanians were willing to make important concessions. The fact that the most important Albanian parties, the PDP and DPA were included in the peace negotiations, and the fact that they were in touch with the NLA has contributed to the successful resolution of the conflict.

And a third, more underlying factor is the regional context that was a motivation for both the mediators and the groups in conflict. The conflict in Kosovo had only recently ended and the influx of refugees into Macedonia had been of influence on the attitudes of both groups. The ethnic Macedonians were afraid that the demographic changes would affect the position of the Macedonian Albanians and this group on their turn radicalized their demands, resulting in the attacks from the NLA. The international community had learned from the conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo and recognized the possible dangers that the Macedonian tensions inhibited. This is likely to have influenced the way in which they mediated between the two groups. Also, it is likely that the international community expected that a war in Macedonia would renew tensions in Kosovo, this would mean a new instable situation in the Balkans.

The way in which the conflict in 2001 was solved in Macedonia could be used as an exemplary case in other research on ethnic conflict resolution. It must be mentioned however that Macedonia can be considered a unique case and therefore does not represent a formula that can be applied to any case. Some general lesson can be drawn however. First of all, the presence of external actors is of importance. Both in the phase of early monitoring as at the point at which resolution of the conflict needs mediation. The fact that the NATO and EU were already present in the Balkans and aware of the possible risk of escalation of the tensions in Macedonia.

Also, the fact that the Ohrid Agreement ended the conflict in 2001 does not mean that all tensions among ethnic minorities have been resolved. Further research should indicate how the agreement has affected the Macedonian society and also the risks of new conflict. In other words, until now the Agreement has served as an effective means to manage inter ethnic relations.

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