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# **THE ROLE OF THE EURO-ATLANTIC INTEGRATION ON THE RELATIONS BETWEEN MACEDONIA AND KOSOVO DURING THE 2001 CONFLICT<sup>1</sup>**

## **1. Introduction**

*A*s already known, since February 2001, the armed conflict between the National Liberation Army (NLA) and the Macedonian army has escalated from a small local violence happening on the Macedonian–Kosovo border region to the limits of a full-blown civil war. Throughout the whole process which was actually interrupted several times either by the withdrawal of the NLA’s rebels in the northwest mountain areas or by the unstable armistices, EU and NATO were involved quite deeply with the hope to prevent any further escalation. (Schneckenner, 2002, p. 24) Undoubtedly, NATO’s important role on the Macedonian crisis was among

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others also related to its new and evolving crisis management abilities. At the same time, its military structure acquired for over decades, was also an important asset for to these tasks. On the other hand, EU was also better equipped to handle the crisis in 2001 than during the armed conflicts that occurred in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. Since then, several new mechanisms and instruments were introduced with the new institutional framework for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP), as most important ones. The inclusion of these new abilities resulted in increased opportunities for EU in relation to continuity and rapid reaction to crisis, besides those of the Presidency of the EU Council.

As mentioned earlier, when the conflict started NATO officials were already present in Macedonia. Besides that, as one of the signatories of the Military Technical Agreement in June 1999, NATO had the authority to make changes to the Ground Safety Zones, and at the same time, through KFOR, was engaged in the KLA's demilitarization and prevention of new hostilities. Moreover, the initial KFOR's task in relation to Macedonia was to prevent the crossing of the extremists and weapons across the border and to prevent other forms of smuggling activities. Similarly, EU was able to apply a wide range of instruments, including economic assistance, police, soldiers and high-level political representatives, in order to influence the events in Macedonia. Besides its own assets, EU was able to integrate the efforts, resources and influences of many other institutions and national governments, mostly of NATO and USA, into an effective international effort. (Dobbins, 2008, p. 71-72)

Kosovo was in several ways also involved in the conflict in Macedonia both due to its proximity but even more due to strong ties between Albanians on two sides of the border. Firstly, for quite some time certain arms smuggling and trafficking has been taking place in and out of Kosovo, especially in the mountainous border area between Macedonia and Kosovo. It is estimated that up to 750,000 pieces of Kalashnikov rifles, together with three million hand grenades, somehow found their way into Kosovo, whereas about half a million pieces of weapons that were stolen from the Albanian state armories in 1997 were circulating in Macedonia. (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, 2003, p. I6) Secondly, the key NLA leadership, although having Albanian-Macedonian descent, were among the KLA leading figures in Kosovo. For example, Ali Ahmeti – Supreme Commander and the NLA representative – was one of the founding members of the KLA and served on its General Staff, while Gezim Ostreni - the NLA Chief of Staff – was a KLA Senior Commandant and later Head

of the General Staff of KPC. (Kola, 2003, p. 378.) Thirdly, large part of the NLA warriors consisted of Albanians from Macedonia who already fought in Kosovo, and among them there were also some of the KLA warriors that had come to help their brothers in Macedonia. Finally, the Kosovo uncertain status was by itself an invitation for the Albanian extremism. As long as the Albanians from Kosovo believed that the international community devises a plan to reunite it with Belgrade, sympathy for the radicals who were claiming that the violence is the only way to change the mind of the Western countries was prevailing. (International Crisis Group No. 109, 2001, p. 9)

## **2. The Influence of Various Factors on the Relations between Macedonia and Kosovo**

In this part, we will analyze the role of the Euro-Atlantic integrations in the relations between Macedonia and Kosovo during the 2001 conflict in Macedonia. At the same time, the influence of other relevant factors, i.e. ethnic, economic and the policy of equidistance, will also be analyzed. The fact that the nature of the conflict in Macedonia was an inter-ethnic one implies that the role of the ethnic factor on relations between the two countries during this period was predominantly negative. At this point, it should be clarified that due to the fact that the conflict in Macedonia was fought along ethnic lines, its outcome also had a direct impact on relations between Macedonia and Kosovo. Escalation of the conflict into a full-blown war would have ultimately caused further deterioration of relations between the two countries. On the other hand, successful resolution of the conflict would have eventually improved the prospects for increased cooperation in the future.

We should note that during the conflict in 2001, Macedonia was sharply divided along ethnic lines. Macedonians and Albanians in the country had totally different views about the causes of the conflict and its aftermath. Prior to the conflict, a large segment of the ethnic Albanian population generally rejected the idea of violence as a means of achieving constitutional rights. In fact, according to several surveys, ethnic Albanians had more faith in governmental structures than their Macedonian co-citizens, but a general feeling of hopelessness, particularly among young people, had been expressed for years. (Daskalovski, 2006, p.185-186) Therefore, when the armed revolt started, it was explained as a necessary response to the decades of discrimination, following the failure of all other efforts. (Norwegian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, 2003, p. 19) As a result, the majority of ethnic Albanians expressed their support for KLA and for the rebellion, as

a way for achieving the vital political aims of the Albanians. On the other hand, the majority of the ethnic Macedonians strongly rejected the Albanians' argument that the rebellion is a reaction to the systematical discrimination against the Albanian population and thus, it represents legitimate fight for greater rights. For them, the rebellion had to be viewed in a wider regional context, because it is a direct result of the Kosovo events in 1999. Namely, since NATO intervention in 1999, ethnic Macedonians were claiming that the uncertain situation in Kosovo could be a threat to the stability of Macedonia. Moreover, ethnic Macedonians were maintained that the NLA is organization based in Kosovo with Albanians from Kosovo as leaders and warriors. (Buhaug, 2008, p. 4)

The opinions of political leaders of both ethnic communities were more or less along the same lines. Initially, the Albanian political parties in Macedonia were careful to distance themselves from the violence. According to Menduh Thaci, the DPA Vice-President, the NLA were the traitors to the Albanian cause in Macedonia, and the government should exert its power in the entire region it governs. On the other hand, PDP and its leader Imer Imeri, appeared to be more hesitant and did not distance themselves from the NLA as energetically as DPA. In spite of this, on 20th of March, Albanian political parties released a joint declaration that condemned the use of violence for political purposes on the basis that it undermined the democratic process. In addition, the declaration pleaded all illegitimate armed structures to lay down their arms. (Sokalski, 2003, p. 230) However, when through its communiqué number six, the NLA changed its rhetoric and argued that it was "fighting for the human rights of the Albanians in Macedonia and for constitutional reforms," the Albanian political parties were quick to endorse these moderate political aims that actually coincided with political claims of their party programmes. (Rozen, 2001)

The Macedonian politicians similarly to their citizens generally blamed the insurgency on external factors, and refused to ascribe it to Macedonian minority policy. For example, Filip Petrovski, at that time VMRO – DPMNE's member of the Parliament, pointed out that "this rebellion is a result of the situation in Kosovo. It is a fact that the NLA are extremist Albanians from Kosovo for whom instability in Macedonia is indispensable to continued criminal activities." According to Radmila Shekerinska, the Vice President of SDSM, the main responsibility for the Albanian uprising relates to difficult developments in Kosovo, as well as to the ethnic Albanian criminal elements that needed to ensure further instability in the region in order to continue their activities. Nevertheless, at the same time she also expressed concern as to the recruitment capability within the Al-

banian community in Macedonia, pointing to wide-ranging dissatisfaction among the Albanians in the country. (Norwegian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, 2003, p. 24) On his address to the nation, Prime Minister Ljubco Georgievski insisted that the conflict is a result of aggression that was planned and led from Kosovo, and also blamed the international community and the KFOR troops for allowing the “rebel gangs” to “invade Macedonia”. (International Crisis Group No. 109, 2001, p. 9) At this point the ethnic divisions in the country reached their peak, while the relations between Macedonia and Kosovo reached the lowest level ever. Thus, leading us to conclude that during the conflict in Macedonia the impact of the ethnic factor was predominantly negative.

On the other hand, the economic factor might have had a certain positive role in mitigating the conflict in 2001. Clearly, the crisis precipitated a recession and threatened to derail future prospects for growth by scaring off critical foreign capital. There was a marked slowdown in production, and exports declined as a result of the closing of trade routes through the crisis regions. (World Bank, 2001, p. 4) Also, a negative GDP growth rate of more than 4% was registered, primarily due to the decline in the industrial manufacturing, the reduced trade profit and the reduced manufacturing in a number of other economic activities. According to Nanevski, this negative impact was especially visible after March 2001, when due to the worsened security situation in the country overall demand was reduced, especially for products that were earlier exported to the foreign markets. The industrial manufacturing was to a large extent reduced as a result of the disrupted supply of resources and raw materials and lower demand due to the cancellation of numerous contracts with foreign partners. (Nanevski, 2002, p. 244)

In addition, the balance of payments was under pressure because of large purchases of foreign weapons by the Macedonian state. Consequently, both macroeconomic relief and industry recovery were more than necessary. Moreover, in order to sustain the growth, the country still needed to complete the structural transformation of the economy from the central planning era. Such transformation from the state-run economy to a liberal model of a free market, created social and political difficulties that further contributed to the already tense environment. The crisis only stressed out the urgent need for successful transformation. (Dobbins, 2008, p. 57) Therefore, it could be said that from the economic point of view it was in the interest of the government of Macedonia to solve the conflict, and that consequently the economic factor should have played a positive role in this direction. In that case, we could say that this would in turn also improve the prospects of relations between Macedonia and Kosovo.

The third factor, the regional balancing policy or the policy of equidistance, did not play any specific role during the conflict in 2001. This policy that was designed and initiated by Kiro Gligorov, the first President of independent Macedonia, was already abandoned by Prime-Minister Georgievski during the conflict in Kosovo. When in 1999, Boris Trajkovski replaced Gligorov as the President of the country it further lost in its importance. Consequently, with the influence of all these three factors being weak, non-existent or even negative, we will now turn to the analysis of the role that stabilization and integration policies of NATO and EU had on relations between Macedonia and Kosovo during the conflict in Macedonia.

From the outset of the conflict, the EU and NATO have exercised pressure on warring sides in Macedonia, and their representatives Javier Solana and George Robertson visited the country on several occasions. Moreover, the international community in general, and especially NATO and EU, have immediately formulated clear aims regarding the conflict in Macedonia. The main aim was to prevent the extension of the fights from the rural areas to the multi-ethnic cities, and thus to prevent a civil war. In addition, the international community aimed at preventing the Macedonian Government of declaring a state of war, achieving a stable armistice, and convincing the sides to the conflict to agree on a peace arrangement by applying political and economic pressure. (Jurekovic, 2002, p. 128)

It should be mentioned that there was already a consensus between the Macedonian and Albanian population and leadership regarding integration into the EU and NATO. Macedonia has since 1995 maintained contractual relations with the EU and became eligible for funding from the PHARE and OBNOVA programs. Macedonia and EU signed cooperation and trade agreements in 1997. These programs were aimed at strengthening the public institutions, advancing the adoption of *acquis communautaire* and enhancing the economic and social cohesion. From 1995 to 2000, Macedonia received 180 million Euros from the PHARE and OBNOVA programs, which were in 2001 replaced by the CARDS program. In 1998, the European Commission opened the Office of the Resident Envoy in Macedonia, which was in 2000 upgraded to the level of a permanent Delegation of the European Commission. (Sandevski, 2009, p. 42) Similarly, Macedonia achieved a national consensus regarding its aspiration for NATO membership, which was expressed in the Resolution on the Accession of the Republic of Macedonia to NATO, adopted by the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia on 23rd of November 1993. (Dimitrov, 2006, p. 115) On 15th November 1995, at the NATO headquarters in Brussels, the Republic of Macedonia signed the Framework Document for accession to the PfP Program, and at the same

time, joined the North-Atlantic Cooperation Council, which was in 1997 transformed into the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council.

Since the very beginning of the conflict, the EU assumed a leading role in international diplomatic efforts for promoting peace in Macedonia. During the conflict, the EU successfully utilized its foreign policy instruments to convince Macedonian politicians to take certain course of action. In coordination with NATO, the EU performance was crucial in preventing the escalation of the violence. As early as 19th of March, the EU Foreign Ministers agreed on a package of measures that included border control assistance to provide support to the Macedonian Government and promote inter-ethnic relations. Only four days later, on 23rd of March, during their meeting in Stockholm, the EU Foreign Ministers expressed solidarity with the Macedonian Government, urged continuation of the restraint, and pledged assistance with border management, local self-government, refugee support, and the judicial reforms, including the minority rights. (Daskalovski, 2004, p. 17-18)

The Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) played particularly important role, and was actually a first step towards the EU membership. Macedonia signed that agreement on 9 April 2001, and thus became the first Balkan country to achieve the SAA. The EU perceived the agreement as a diplomatic gesture aimed at forcing the Macedonian political leadership to end the violence and implement political reforms. Besides that, EU attempted to promote the SAA as a framework for dialogue. In the context of the necessary adjustment to the EU standards of democracy, human rights and rule of law, the parties were supposed to resolve their inter-ethnic problems, as agreed by the SSA. This formula was also applied to the strategy for preserving the credibility of the ethnic Macedonian politicians who did not want to appear as making concessions of any kind to the Albanian extremists. Bz the same token, throughout the entire process, the EC offered intensified financial and technical assistance. (Schneckener, 2002, стр. 31) As a consequence, the External Affairs Commissioner, Chris Patten, for the first time was authorized to spend 2,5 million Euros from the Rapid-reaction mechanism funds to repair the houses damaged during the fights in February and March. (Daskalovski, 2004, p. 18)

Similarly, from the beginning of the crisis, NATO was heavily involved in the conflict in Macedonia both politically and by using the forces in KFOR across the border, militarily as well. The increased violence that took place in Macedonia during March prompted NATO to send larger KFOR troops in the border area, and in the same time to ask the participating countries to send more troops. Furthermore, new senior representative, the Ambassador

Hans-Joerg Eif, was sent as a support to the permanent NATO liaison officer based in Skopje, and a military liaison team led by a senior NATO military officer based in the Ministry of Defence in Skopje was also established. (Yesson, 2003, p. 34) In addition, NATO political envoy Pieter Feith played an important role during the negotiations of several cease-fire agreements in Macedonia. In spring 2001, NATO rejected the requests for military intervention in the conflict, and NATO General Ralston, testified in front of the U.S. Congress that additional troops should assist the KFOR mission, but argued against the expansion of the KFOR mission to Macedonia. According to the General, the key consideration was not to have NATO forces interfere in the conflict, but the fact that the mountainous Kosovo-Macedonian border could not be entirely sealed off. (Daskalovski, 2004, p. 20)

Still, further escalation of the crisis required intensive coordination and cooperation between NATO and the EU. Consequently, both in Brussels and Skopje, NATO and EU established intensive working relations, which did not exist previously. Solana and Robertson met several times with both, Macedonian and the Albanian leaders, thus de facto taking position of mediators. (Schneckener, 2002, p. 32) On 13th of May, under the EU and NATO pressure, four major political parties in Macedonia – VMRO-DPMNE, SDSM, DPA and PDP – formed the government of national unity. The purpose of the new coalition was to promote a unified approach to the crisis by overcoming political and ethnic differences. (International Crisis Group No. 113, 2001, p. 4)

In fact, despite international assistance, the political dialogue in the country was not showing any considerable progress. On the contrary, by this time, Prime Minister Georgievski came closer to Macedonian-nationalist hardliners within the Government who were convinced that the army is able to militarily defeat the NLA. Nevertheless, insistence on a military solution to the crisis only underlined the limited capability of the Macedonian armed forces, whose failure to suppress the rebellion was only further strengthening the NLA, and was triggering additional international concern. By the summer of 2001, it seemed that the country was heading towards a civil war: significant parts of territory in northern and western Macedonia were under NLA control; about 60 Macedonian soldiers and police officers were killed either in combat or NLA ambushes; tens of thousands of civilians, ethnic Macedonians and Albanians, were displaced by the fighting; the Albanian villages located in and around the NLA strongholds were significantly damaged as a result of the military attacks; and the inter-communal clashes though still relatively isolated, were anyway becoming more frequent. (Sokalovski, 2003, p. 232)

On 29th of May, at the peak of the crisis, the country was shocked by the proposal for partition of the country along ethnic lines which was presented by the influential Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts (MANU). The proposal was certainly supported by certain elements within the ethnic Macedonian political and intellectual elite, primarily by Georgievski, who was privately advocating country's division along ethnic lines as a solution to the rebellion and to the broader hostility between the Macedonian and Albanian communities. (International Crisis Group No. 113, 2001, p. 13) With Georgievski advocating the declaration of a state of war on the one hand, and NATO and EU officials repeatedly urging for a negotiated settlement on the other hand, President Trajkovski on 1st of June issued a peace plan. The plan called for a compromise under which the Macedonian government would institute political reform in exchange for the NLA laying down its weapons. It proposed that NATO send a force into Macedonia to coordinate the disarmament of the NLA. The coalition government, which included strong representation from Albanian parties, quickly accepted Trajkovski's peace plan. NATO also agreed to deploy a peacekeeping force to disarm the NLA, while the EU and United States appointed full-time special envoys, Francois Leotard and James Pardew, to guide the respective parties to a political settlement. With Americans on board, and with EU and NATO already insisting to resolve the crisis, the peace process gained a new sense of urgency. Consequently, on 13th of August, a comprehensive, internationally-mediated peace settlement, the Ohrid Framework Agreement, was signed, under the auspices of President Trajkovski, by the four political parties comprising the national unity government to end the conflict.

Clearly, the country wide consensus on Euro-Atlantic integration enabled EU and NATO to successfully operate a carrots and sticks policy. In close coordination, the two organizations were successful in preventing the escalation of violence. Relying on a mixture of leverages, the EU and NATO proved capable to force the Macedonian government and the rebels to accept a peace settlement. The elites in Macedonia recognized the immense benefits of EU and NATO membership, and were therefore willing to cooperate with EU and NATO leaders in finding a solution to the conflict. Consequently, we can conclude that the Euro-Atlantic integrations were key in mitigating the conflict, and have thus contributed in improving the prospects for increased cooperation between Macedonia and Kosovo in the future

We will now shortly turn to reactions of Kosovan political elites during the conflict in Macedonia, as well as the eventual impact that EU and NATO had in shaping their positions. It should be noted that the immediate reaction of the politicians from Kosovo was quite cautious. Hashim Thaci, one of key

Kosovo political leaders decried the violence, saying it was unacceptable that it take the place of political process. Veton Surroi, publisher of *Koha Ditore*, stated that the Macedonian stability was in the Albanians' interest and therefore any type armed group should be politically isolated. (Balkan Report, 2001) Even the Prime Minister of Albania, Ilir Meta, expressed hope that the Albanians in Macedonia will choose a dialogue because otherwise they will be isolated and will lose everyone's support. Moreover, he said that the extremists in Macedonia should be punished and that Albania should support the territorial integrity of Macedonia. (Balalovska, 2002, p. 20) On the one hand, apparently such position was due to fears that international hostility to a new ethnic Albanian guerrilla group in Macedonia might endanger the project of an independent Kosovo. On the other hand, obviously Kosovan leaders were also under pressure from EU and NATO officials. According to John Phillips, the Kosovan-Albanian leadership of Rugova, Hashim Thaci, Ramush Haradinaj and Agim Ceku, and the Prime Minister of Albania, Ilir Meta, were all present at Robert Frowick's Prizren meeting, and helped convince Ahmeti to cease the NLA's armed struggle, and formulate political demands that would be agreeable to Skopje. (Phillips, 2004, p.118)

### **3. Opinions of the Interviewed Representatives of the Political Elites from Macedonia and Kosovo**

Most of the persons interviewed both in Macedonia and Kosovo also recognized the role that the EU and NATO have played in shaping the decision of the Macedonian government and Kosovan political elite regarding the conflict in Macedonia. Thus, according to Antonio Miloshoski, from the perspective of EU and NATO, the 2001 conflict in Macedonia was a test for the success of their performance of the inter-institutional cooperation between the EU and NATO in the area of crisis management, an area in which at that time, for some time already, both organizations were conducting preparations for formalization of the relations. Miloshoski further points out that to the satisfaction of all parties involved, including Macedonia, the test is considered successful, because on the one hand, it contributed towards the stabilization of the situation in the country, and on the other hand, it represented a cornerstone of the NATO-EU relations, and therefore, from today's perspective, the role of the EU and NATO during the conflict in Macedonia serves as an example of successful cooperation.<sup>2</sup> (Miloshoski, 2011)

Ivica Bocevski points out how strong was the factor of the Macedonian determination to EU and NATO, because even in the most difficult times

of the conflict, no one in Macedonia did not even consider to withdraw applications to EU and NATO, and no politician distanced himself from the road towards NATO. It is true that some of the operations were verbally evaluated in many ways, but neither verbally nor by some action one cannot say that any strange activity has happened, a fact that is undoubtedly interesting. Bocevski also considers that EU and NATO got involved in the very beginning of the conflict. More concretely, according to Bocevski, EU was the carrot in the whole story, but in conflict situations this is not enough and therefore, the involvement of NATO was necessary. However, Bocevski points out that Macedonia has touched the lowest point, found itself in a situation where no turning back is possible, but at the end managed to find the right way ahead.<sup>3</sup> (Bocevski, 2011)

According to Vlado Buckovski, it was obvious that international community in general and certain influential individuals in particular, have left a mark in the political resolution of the crisis in Macedonia. He stresses that in the beginning, the whole Macedonian story was not so naive, primarily due to the unsettled status of Kosovo and the uncertainty whether it will become independent. Buckovski believes that the question regarding the unitary character of RM would be opened if the definition of the requests did not happen, which transformed into political requests from all the representatives of the Macedonian Albanians during the meeting held in Prizren, where the Prizren Declaration was promoted. According to him, from a number of political documents, it was obvious that the international community took the major role and it is fact that the representatives of the EU and U.S. were the sponsors of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, and that the key allies in the implementation of the agreement were NATO and OSCE. On the other hand, Buckovski points out that the crucial influence of the international community on the politicians from Kosovo was evident. From his personal experience and from conversations with the most influential politicians from Kosovo, he has no doubts that they were all to a great extent coordinated by the international community. The representatives of NATO and EU made it clear to them that Kosovo independence could not be achieved if Albanians continue to be considered as a destabilizing factor in the region. As a result, especially from the year 2000 until the declaration of independence, the

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2 Antonio Miloshoski was Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia from August 2006 to July 2011, and now he is a member of the Parliament of Republic of Macedonia and a Chairman of the Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs.

3 Ivica Bocevski was Vice Premier for European Affairs and Spokesperson of the Government of Republic of Macedonia. He has worked for the Government of Republic of Macedonia and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

role of demonstrating that they have the capacity for establishing alliances instead of causing problems in the region was imposed to the leaders from Kosovo.<sup>4</sup> (Buckovski, 2011)

According to Ivon Velickovski, the political intervention from NATO and EU was made in the right moment in order to prevent the escalation of the conflict that came closer to the periphery of the capital and it paved the way to the Ohrid Agreement that was signed in August 2001, with the EU and United States as guarantors. As a consequence, he argues that these supranational organizations actually had a positive and active role in modeling of an enduring and functional system which preserved the country's unitary character (highly significant for the Macedonians), but at the same time enabled the achievement of the collective rights of the non-Macedonian communities, primarily of the Albanians in Macedonia. Furthermore, it prevented the change of the borders as a potential threat for repetition of the long-lasting conflict in the Balkans, by establishing security guarantees in the practice which assured the stability of Macedonia as a country and gave the society a new momentum in its development.<sup>5</sup> (Velickovski, 2011)

According to Radmila Sekerinska, the role of NATO and EU was enormously important during the crisis in Macedonia. She thinks that for the first time they have intervened on time, in a quite coordinated manner, and on an appropriate, very high level. Also, she stresses that EU and NATO, together with U.S., were involved as guarantors in the negotiations of the Ohrid Agreement. So, they were involved in the beginning, during, and after the crisis. According to Sekerinska, the role of the EU was particularly important, since for the first time it succeeded to have a common foreign and security policy in the Balkans. Therefore, the EU representatives are right when considering Union's involvement in Macedonia as one of the most successful engagements ever. At the same time, Sekerinska believes that these two organizations also had positive influence on institutions from Kosovo during that period. Above all, a very important fact was that NATO (KFOR) was controlling the border between the two countries, and was preventing uncontrollable entry/exit of people and weapons between the two countries. NATO and EU also had great influence on the Albanian leaders in Kosovo and on their attitudes towards the conflict in Macedonia.

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4 Vlado Buckovski was a Prime Minister of the Republic of Macedonia from December 2004 to August 2006, and before that, from May 2001 to November 2001 and from November 2002 to December 2004, Minister of Defence. Also, from November 2004 to November 2006, he was President of the Social-democratic Union of Macedonia.

5 Ivon Velickovski is current President of the Liberal Party of Macedonia and from 2010 he has also become a member of the Parliament of Republic of Macedonia.

These attitudes were mainly moderate not radical, as could be expected. According to Sekerinska, undoubtedly one can say that leaders from Kosovo had positive influence over the NLA's leaders in terms of calming down the tensions and improving the cooperativeness.<sup>6</sup> (Sekerinska, 2011)

Views of ethnic Albanian politicians both in Macedonia and Kosovo regarding the role of the EU and NATO during the conflict in Macedonia are similar to the views of ethnic Macedonian politicians. According to Ali Ahmeti, the involvement of the EU and NATO prevented a tragedy in Macedonia similar to ones in Bosnia and Kosovo. He points out that NATO decided to seriously engage in the conflict after realizing that the NLA was well organized in political-military units, and was waging the war on strong political and military basis. At the same time, he acknowledges that by signing the SAA with Macedonia, the EU provided the necessary carrot to the Macedonian government, while at same time motivating it to solve the conflict in a manner of a responsible state. According to Ahmeti, timely and coordinated involvement of NATO, EU and USA led to the Ohrid Agreement - a pact between two biggest communities in the country that stopped the war and paved the way for political dialogue and tolerance. On the other hand, Ahmeti is certain that Kosovan politicians, majority of whom he knows very well personally, were under heavy pressure by EU and NATO officials during the conflict in Macedonia. He clarifies that despite clear sympathies towards the just war of NLA in Macedonia, due to international pressure, Kosovo politicians behaved in a responsible, constructive and cooperative manner.<sup>7</sup> (Ahmeti, 2011)

Arben Xhaferi on the other hand claims that it was not troops and weapons that stopped the violence, but rather it was the hope provided by the EU that it would intervene in starting political negotiations. Xhaferi also points out that coordinated engagement of the EU and NATO prevented in Macedonia a tragedy similar to ones in other parts of former Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, he emphasizes the importance that overall Albanian factor in Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania had in constructively cooperating with the EU and NATO, while at the same time pressurizing the NLA to accept

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6 Radmila Sekerinska was a Deputy Prime Minister of Republic of Macedonia responsible for European Affairs, and from 1998 she is a member of the Parliament of Republic of Macedonia. Also, from November 2006 to May 2009, she was a President of the Social-democratic Union of Macedonia.

7 Ali Ahmeti is President of DUI since its establishment, and from 2002 is a member of the Parliament of Republic of Macedonia. During the 2001 conflict, he was NLA's Supreme Commander and representative.

a negotiated solution to the conflict. Xhaferi asserts that though such a role has often been minimized, Albanians have once again shown their commitment for prosperous future of Macedonia.<sup>8</sup> (Xhaferi, 2011)

According to Agim Çeku, though the EU and NATO were initially caught by surprise with the conflict in Macedonia, shortly after they took a decisive role in mitigating the conflict. In addition, he points out that during this conflict NATO had neither the mandate nor the willingness for military involvement. Instead, the EU took the lead in negotiating the Ohrid Agreement, while NATO played crucial role in stabilizing the country in the aftermath of the crisis.<sup>9</sup> (Çeku, 2011) Similarly, Lulzim Mjeku also praises the EU and NATO for successfully containing the conflict in Macedonia from escalating into a regional war. According to him, NATO played a crucial role in preventing the escalation of the conflict into a full-blown war, while the EU played a crucial role during the negotiation process by fully taking advantage of its newly enhanced CFSP mechanisms. Mjeku also emphasizes the constructive and responsible role that Kosovo politicians have played throughout the conflict.<sup>10</sup> (Mjeku, 2011) Other renowned Kosovo politicians such as Bajram Rexhepi<sup>11</sup>, Fatmir Sejdiu and Vlora Citaku<sup>12</sup> have also recognized the important role that the EU and NATO have played during the conflict in Macedonia.

#### 4. Conclusion

It may be concluded that during the 2001 conflict in Macedonia, relations between Macedonia and Kosovo dropped to the lowest level ever. We have also shown that in addition to NATO and the European Union, Kosovo itself was in several ways involved in the Macedonian conflict. At the same time,

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8 Arben Xhaferi was President of DPA in Macedonia from 1997 to June 2007, and from 1998 was a member of the Parliament of Macedonia.

9 Agim Çeku is a Minister of the Kosovo Security Force since February 2011, and from March 2006 to December 2007 was a Prime Minister of Kosovo. Also, since 2008 he is leader of the Social Democratic Party of Kosovo.

10 Lulzim Mjeku is a Director-General of Kosovo Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 2008, and before that he was an Advisor to the Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo, Hajredin Kuqi.

11 Bajram Rexhepi is Minister for Foreign Affairs of Republic of Kosovo from February 2011 and he is a member of the Kosovo Parliament. From March 2002 to November 2004, he was the first elected post-war Prime Minister of Kosovo.

12 Vlora Citaku is Minister for European Integrations of Republic of Kosovo, while during the previous government she was acting Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Kosovo.

the influence of other relevant factors, i.e. ethnic, economic and the factor of regional balancing policy was weak, non-existent or even negative. Again we have seen that due to the country wide consensus between Macedonians and Albanians on Euro-Atlantic integration, the EU and NATO were able to successfully operate carrots and sticks policy and played a crucial role in containing the conflict and negotiating an agreement mutually acceptable to both Macedonians and Albanians. Clearly, the elites in Macedonia recognized the immense benefits of EU and NATO membership, and were therefore willing to cooperate with EU and NATO leaders in finding a solution to the conflict. On the other hand, due to international pressure, Kosovo politicians behaved in a responsible, constructive and cooperative manner despite their compassion for the Albanian cause in Macedonia. Consequently, we can conclude that the Euro-Atlantic integrations were key in mitigating the conflict, and have thus contributed in improving the prospects for increased cooperation between Macedonia and Kosovo in the future.

## Abstract

The main aim of this paper is to analyze the role of Euro-Atlantic integration on relations between Macedonia and Kosovo during the conflict in Macedonia in 2001. Article also analyses the influence of other relevant factors, i.e. ethnic, economic and the policy of equidistance. Since the conflict in Macedonia was fought along ethnic lines, its outcome clearly had a direct impact on relations between Macedonia and Kosovo. Escalation of the conflict into a full-blown war would have ultimately caused further deterioration of relations between the two countries. On the other hand, successful resolution of the conflict would have eventually improved the prospects for increased cooperation in the future. It is in this context that the influence of NATO and EU on political elites in Macedonia and Kosovo was analyzed. In addition, for the needs of this article, specific interviews with relevant governmental officials and politicians both in Macedonia and Kosovo have been conducted, in order to receive additional data and first hand information.

## Резиме

Главната цел на овој труд е да се анализира улогата на евро-атлантските интеграции врз односите меѓу Македонија и Косово во текот на конфликтот во Македонија во 2001 година. Истовремено е анализирана и улогата на други релевантни фактори, т.е. етничкиот, економскиот и политиката на еквилибранска. Бидејќи конфликтот во Македонија во принцип имаше интер-етнички карактер, јасно е дека неговиот исход имаше директно влијание врз односите меѓу Македонија и Косово. Ескалација на конфликтот во целосна војна, во крајна линија ќе предизвикаше понатамошно влошување на односите меѓу двете земји. Од друга страна, успешното решавање на конфликтот ќе ги зголемеше можностите за засилена соработка во иднина. Во тој контекст е анализирано влијането на НАТО и Европска Унија врз политичките елити во Македонија и Косово. Истовремено, за потребите на овој труд, се спроведени специфични интервјуа со релевантни високи владини службеници и политичари од Македонија и Косово, за да се добијат дополнителни податоци и информации од прва рака.

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