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DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

**EXTERNAL INFLUENCE OVER FOREIGN
POLICY AND INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS:
THE CASE OF REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA**

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ABSTRACT

In an era of dynamic international integrations, the role they play not only in the international but also in the domestic relations, merits a particular scholarly attention. This dissertation addresses the issue of international and national integration interplay, by exploring a relationship between foreign policy behavior and inter-ethnic relations in small, multi-ethnic states. The role of foreign policy is observed through its international integration posture, namely through the behavior it demonstrates towards external factors which condition the state's international integrations. The effects of this behavior are explored within the internal relationships of ethnically different groups. The research uses the case of Macedonia to explore the above-mentioned relationship between foreign policy and inter-ethnic relations. Its main arguments, formulated on the basis of two research questions, state that foreign policy acts as a factor of unity between ethnically different groups, who project similar preferences towards foreign policy orientation. External challenges to such foreign policy orientation, however, represent threats which may diminish the unifying role that foreign policy projects over ethnic groups with low level of national integration.

The thesis is structurally organized into the theoretical and empirical chapters. It mainly uses an explorative approach as the most suitable methodology to explore complex relationships which require complex understanding. The thesis also presents existing knowledge on small states' foreign policy and national integration theories, needed for helping the qualitative findings take the form of statements and gain transferable application to other settings. The introduction chapter of this thesis presents the research problem, questions, aims, and disposition. The following three chapters present different theoretical aspects, beginning with a historical overview of Macedonia's foreign policy and inter-ethnic relations, then with a review of existing literature, and finally with construction of a theoretical framework. The empirical chapters begin with the description of methodological approaches, focusing on semi-structured interviews as the main tool for data collection and on thematic analysis as main instrument for the findings' analysis and discussion. The chapters of findings, discussion, and conclusion present the main results gained from the research. They reveal a strong unifying role that foreign policy has over Macedonia's inter-ethnic relations, which is, however, highly challenged by

external bilateral threats. Foreign policy's response towards the external threats results as a significant determining factor of unity or division between ethnic groups of a small state.

PREFACE

Born and raised within a family environment in which politics is followed both as passion and profession, I became conscious since very early on about the political challenges that my country was going through since its birth. Within a context of political, ethnic, religious and social polarities, the 'reality' lies in the eye of the beholder. Through a scientific research of political and social phenomena, I decided to explore the multi-faceted perceptions on the Republic of Macedonia's main external challenges, its foreign policy behavior towards the latter, and the effects of this behavior over the inter-ethnic relations domestically. Hence, the main purpose of this research would become to shed some light over a social and political reality, as it may be perceived and experienced by different parties, in a given moment of time.

The scientific approach towards external and internal challenges, which the Republic of Macedonia began to encounter immediately after its independence, is principally divided. Most studiers, search the roots of domestic challenges, especially of the inter-ethnic disputes, within the internal factors. The existing scientific analysis on the absence of inter-ethnic cohesion, which ultimately impedes the building of a collective identity, refers to the lack of internal will of the domestic groups, political factors, and domestic policies. Much less attention is paid to the international environment and the analysis of its impact on the unification or division of the ethnic groups.

As the Republic of Macedonia embraced a pro-western international integration agenda, since the first decade of its statehood, the question that began to form in my mind was whether this foreign policy orientation could play a role or act as an influencer of the inter-ethnic relations domestically? This inquiry was further supported by an observation of the inter-ethnic resemblance of attitudes on the international integrations, a similarity that is rarely noticed in different policy areas, especially in the domestic ones. The impediment of the international integration agenda by the aggravation of external bilateral disputes, however, seemed to complicate the relationship between international and national integration. Precisely, such complex developments, triggered an interest to research and explore whether there is a

relationship between international and national integration, and how such relationship is affected by the presence of external disputes, which Macedonia faces with its neighboring states. I began this research with the conviction that it would offer an interesting scientific contribution, as it would link foreign and domestic policy by studying foreign policy ties and challenges, and their ability to create divisions or unification between different ethnic groups. Furthermore, this research is expected to shed light over the factors which dominate the foreign policy debate within a multi-ethnic state, with few inter-ethnic commonalities.

At this point, it is significant to stress that the main arguments, on which the research is based, endured quite some changes, during the writing process. As a work which belongs the social sciences family, the evolution of the researched factors is an expected phenomenon. However, it is impossible, considering the narrow scope of this research, to account for all evolved/modified phenomena, especially as they take place after the process of data collection. Instead, this work captures only a certain time-frame, during which the majority of the data was collected, and it consequently bases its findings and analysis on the already gathered evidence. However, in order to provide a whole contextual picture for the reader, it is important to indicate the major changes which developed in foreign policy, almost immediately after the empirical data analysis of this work ended.

Several undertaken activities in foreign policy led to a change in the tensioned relationships with the neighboring states and in the frozen progress of international integrations. Although many of such activities were finalized after 2018, their realization cannot be attributed solely to the 2017 change of government. The previous government, ruling since 2006, is credited for preparing the Agreement with Bulgaria (almost 90% of its contents) and for leading continuous negotiations with Greece during its entire mandate. As a result of the continuous intensive negotiations, two agreements were signed between the Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia and Greece, respectively. The first agreement aimed to end a relatively long dispute with Bulgaria over historical and language issues. The second agreement aimed to settle a long-standing confrontation over the constitutional name of *Macedonia* and its ethnicity, causing, among other things, the change of the country's constitutional name from the "Republic of Macedonia" to the "Republic of North Macedonia". The agreements led to several changes, internally and externally, the most important one being the resuming of a faster pace towards the Euro-Atlantic integration. Nevertheless, this work does

not capture the whole period of the newly created political reality. The findings and conclusions of this work, reflect only the situation which was current during the gathering and analysis of the empirical data. The newly created circumstances, in which external challenges have modified, are not a direct object of this work. However, due to the significance they produce over the inter-ethnic relations, I will provide an in-depth analysis on these developments, conducted from desk research. However, I should point out that the analysis of the arguments under changed circumstances, would require additional empirical data collection and evidence, which is not within the scope of this study.

In order to remain true to the political reality of the time when the empirical data was gathered, I will use the term *Macedonia* when citing direct quotes from the interview subjects. I will also refer to the state by the name Republic of Macedonia or simply Macedonia, appropriate to the context when the thesis is written, that is up until 2019 (as the state bore this official name until February 2019, when it was changed into Republic of North Macedonia). The state will be referred to as the Republic of North Macedonia, only when it is of relevance to the context, namely when it is necessary to indicate the endured change in the state's name as a consequence of the bilateral dispute.

I consider that the findings of this research are quite useful as they portray a complexity of possibilities of the relationship development between international and national integration. This work presents how the external conditionings may alter such relationship and furthermore how the former's nature may influence the change of internal perceptions and consequently preferences over foreign policy's orientation. By relating the two sides of integration policy, the research tries to explore the existence of an interaction between the concept of security and integration-oriented foreign policy, by presenting the two, sometimes in rivalry and other times in harmony with one another, depending on the inter-ethnic perception of the former.

The perceptions, stances, opinions, of the interview subjects involved in the case study of Macedonia, as the main source of empirical data collection, are not expected to represent only their subjective thinking. By making a purposeful selection of respondents who play a role and produce certain influence on the public life in the country, the aim has been to extract from them stances that represent a wider category of the society, be it ethnic, political, party, ideological, professional, academic, scientific, etc. As such, this study may be useful both for the implementers of policies such as the executive governmental branch, as well as for the academic

and research world, who create, propose, and recommend, theoretical solutions to political challenges.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

“Albanians will join NATO and the EU, with or without the Macedonians”, stated a senior official of the biggest Albanian party in Macedonia, the Democratic Union for Integration, in 2009 (Radio Free Europe, 2009). This statement caused a huge stir in the public opinion, followed by reactions and counter-reactions between the Macedonian and Albanian communities. Similar statements followed soon by other public figures, raising concerns about a new inter-ethnic division, which wasn’t caused by the constitutional structure nor by power-sharing issues, but rather by the timetable of EU and NATO. In such context, an interest developed to carry out a study which would explore the reasons behind a newly-emerged inter-ethnic division, which seemed motivated more by external than by internal factors. This situation seemed even more paradoxical, as up to that point, international integrations represented the most consensual policy which united the otherwise divided ethnic groups. How did events leading to a new and even externally motivated inter-ethnic division develop? How much were the external open issues responsible for the internal polarization of the two biggest ethnic groups in the country? Was foreign policy transforming into an object of inter-ethnic contestation? The process of answering such questions was leading towards an analysis of *perceptions*: the extent to which perceptions determine foreign policy ties/threats and, in turn, their influence over inter-ethnic relations (Stein, 2013).

In weak states “who should be classed enemy and who ally, simply depends on one’s point of view...” says Buzan (1983, p.68), strongly challenging the traditional view of notions such as *national security*, and firmly hinting at a constructivist approach towards them. Intrigued

by such reasoning, this academic journey begun with an aim to explore the validity of the above statement in the case of Macedonia, in which there were indications of perception differences towards national security threats and foreign policy response. The decision to explore a yet to be defined small and weak state, on the outskirts of Southern Europe, didn't derive only from subjective feelings about it. Instead, it was motivated far more by the challenges that this relatively new state was facing externally and internally, and which, in my conviction, represent an interesting case in international relations.

Although the conventional wisdom points to the dialectical relationship between external and internal security challenges, in the case of Macedonia, these aspects initially seemed as loosely related to one another. However, as they developed further, each one in their own trajectory, a relationship between the two became more obvious. This relationship became more evident through sporadic political declarations and increasing studies which measured popular perception on foreign policy and domestic relations (Klekovski 2013, Bliznakovski and Popovikj 2015, Damjanovski 2016, Klekovski, Mihailovska, Jovanov 2018, etc.). The major breakpoint, one can argue, occurred after the Bucharest Summit of NATO, in 2008, when the Republic of Macedonia was refused membership, due to the name dispute it had with Greece. The internal attitudes and declarations, which followed, began to demonstrate an inter-ethnic polarization. Unlike in the past, when such polarization was motivated by internal factors such as power-sharing or the constitutional status of ethnic groups, this time it seemed to be caused by the Euro-Atlantic agenda. As Pendarovski (2012) claims in his work, "in the post-Bucharest period, the strategic goal that previously had served to enhance the internal cohesion, [now] provided ground for inter-ethnic division...Until recently, it was beyond belief that the main division line should be the timetable for the Euro-Atlantic integrations" (p.85).

Hence, I decided to conduct a dissertational study on the political context of a small state, which aimed at making sense of the interrelation of foreign policy and domestic relations. The work leaned on previous theoretical works (ex. Keohane 1969, Zahariadis 1994, Shulman 1996 and 1998, Hey 2003, Haas 2004, Rogers 2007, Maass 2009, Eriksen 2010, Pendarovski 2012, Marolov 2013, Vankovska 2017, etc.), in order to build its own analytical tool box in exploring whether there is any relationship between foreign policy, including its challenges and objectives, and inter-ethnic relations. The carrying out of this research required gathering and analysis of data which shed light over the influence of external challenges on inter-ethnic cohesion, in a state

with a history of inter-ethnic tensions. More importantly, it focused on the impact of these external issues on the two ethnic groups' perceptions over foreign policy and national security.

Furthermore, the data analysis shows how the case of Macedonia's foreign policy behavior fits into a theoretical paradigm, and how such behavior has endured changes and under what circumstances it produced a certain domestic effect. In other words, the analysis has tried to assess how a certain foreign policy behavior towards external ties or contests, may act as object of unification or fragmentation of different ethnic groups. And to study such foreign policy effects, I accounted for inter-ethnic perceptions which converge and/or diverge, depending on the social context within which they have been build, transformed, and been given a meaning.

Structure of the problem

Reviewing the literature on foreign policy behavior, one comes across abundant theories which try to explain certain foreign policy behaviors, through certain theoretical lenses. This literature, however, seemed to be predominantly focused on two elements: big states and the system level. In other words, the dominant knowledge on foreign policy seems to pay greater attention to the big states and their role in the international system. By contrast, the role of small states seems quite undermined by researchers, while their pursuits of interests are often dismissed as insignificant. The narrow role of small states in international relations, and furthermore, their foreign policy behaviour, is mostly described as one which produces a balancing or bandwagoning behaviour (Waltz 1979, Walt, 1987, etc.). This explanation is mostly attributed to the realist approach, which rests on the assumption that small states subordinate to an anarchic international system, within which, they must align with great powers in order to obtain security. However, when explaining foreign policy behaviour through the concept of security, realists assume that security is an objective notion, determined by material factors (military, economic, political resources and leverage etc). Logically, in their view, small states fall short in enhancing security on their own, and therefore their behaviour in relation to other states is predictable and limited. Such viewpoint, however, seems insufficient to explain a foreign policy behaviour of small states, whose security issues derive not from military or traditional threats, but from other types of challenges. Such theory also results as inadequate when foreign policy behaviour does not depend solely on the external environment, but also on its domestic constellations.

The second element on which the dominant literature bases its explanations, the system level analysis, attributes all foreign policy behaviour to the level of the international system. According to this analysis, the states, in their pursuit of interests through foreign policy, apply certain influence over the international system, and likewise, the international system produces certain influence over these states' foreign policy. Whereas big states are considered to possess greater foreign policy space to cause certain system level changes, the small states are seen as entities whose foreign policy maneuverability is quite limited. According to these theorists, small states, being unable to project any changes on the system level, subordinate to the system level rules (Rothstein 1968, Keohane 1969, Vital 1971, Waltz 1979, Walt 1987, Snyder 1991, etc.). However, this level of analysis ignores many cases in which foreign policy behavior is not only dictated by the international, but also by the domestic and even the individual level. Thus, the system level of analysis results as insufficient when needed to assess whether a certain foreign policy behaviour is dictated by the state's relations with other states or by the internal national preferences, or whether it's a product of both.

Scarce appear the theories which study the interaction between foreign and domestic policy and the role such interaction plays at the international or domestic level. In other words, the focus of the majority of researchers is either on the international or the domestic level. Schulman (1998) argues that while comparativists study the integration within the state, international relations specialists study the integration between the states, but few of them make a correlation between these two levels, namely between international and national integration (p.110). Yet, during the research process, I came across a few theories, such as the diversionary theory (Russett 1990, Fordham 1998, DeRouen 2000), which attempt to explain the interaction between foreign and domestic policy. The diversionary theory explains that many of the decisions which are made in the realm of foreign policy derive from domestic motives or from political actors who wish to dispel an internal dispute or to consolidate political power. Often, foreign policy serves as an instrument for diverting attention from internal problems of economic, social, ethnic or other natures, by creating or confronting an external adversary. Hence, the foreign policy behaviour, performance and decision-making, cause certain effect over the internal political environment. Already, the sociologists Georg Simmel (1898) and Lewis Coser (1956) considered that "conflict within a group can be diminished if the group is faced with an external threat" (as cited in Mintz and DeRouen 2010, p.129). Gibler (2010) emphasizes

that domestic centralization is a result of external threats. He argues that under external threats, domestic changes take place, where it is highly possible for opposition forces to join with the government or implement less control over the leadership. So, Gibler measures the effects that external territorial threats produce over domestic unity and furthermore over domestic centralization of power (as cited in Mintz and DeRouen 2010, p.520). This approach explains, to some extent, the interaction between external and internal politics, yet it under-stresses other forms of external pressures, which not necessarily classify as wars or territorial threats. There are many external challenges which appear in the form of pressures, blockades, sabotages, which consequently produce certain effect on the domestic environment. Furthermore, when Gibler discusses the external effects over the domestic realm, he focuses merely on political elites: opposition and leadership, as the two sides of power. But, in order to find out about the national preferences or attitudes towards external pressures, which are not always war-like pressures, a more multi-dimensional analysis is needed. The relationships within a state are more complex than just the government and opposition relationship, and such complex relationships sometimes lead to diverse and at other times to unified national preferences, when met with external pressures. Shulman (1998) broadens his analysis beyond war or territorial threats. He analyses a state's international integrations or its foreign ties and their effect over the unity or division of its society. By making a correlation between the two dimensions of policy, he argues that foreign policy may "assist or impede states in forging national unity and constructing a collective or national identity" (p.110). Putnam (1988) calls the correlation between the two levels, as the *Two Level Game*. In this game, the domestic pressures or preferences must be harmonized with the international push and pulls. In this way, the agreements are reached differently from how they would be reached, had they taken place in a pure national or international context. These theoretical approaches are an introduction to the theoretical chapters of this research, which will provide multi-nuanced insights into the interaction between foreign policy ties and challenges and domestic division or unity.

The theoretical framework, which will be presented in greater depth in the following chapters, will serve as basis for investigating a concrete case study, namely the Republic of Macedonia. Macedonia is a small state in the international system, which faces internal challenges, among which inter-ethnic bipolarity, and external challenges, among which bilateral pressures by neighbouring states. Macedonia represents an interesting case for researching the

interaction between external pressures and domestic inter-ethnic unity or fragmentation. Through the case of Macedonia, my intention is to show whether foreign policy is an outcome of unified or diverse inter-ethnic preferences. In other words, whether the external pressures towards Macedonia's foreign policy cause changes in the inter-ethnic preferences/perceptions, and consequently inter-ethnic divisions? Further, how are inter-ethnic relations reflected upon the state's foreign policy approach towards the external pressures? The intertwining between external pressures and domestic relations is going to be studied within a certain cultural and political context. But to provide the reader with greater understanding of such context, an overview of Macedonia's path of consolidation as a new state, its multi-ethnic cohabitation, and its endeavours in the foreign policy realm, will be presented in the following chapter. The external pressures derive from Macedonia's bilateral relations with its neighbours, in particular with Greece. The nature of the pressures, the developments, and most importantly the effect they produce over Macedonia's foreign policy objectives and inter-ethnic relations, will be elaborated in greater depth in the following chapters.

Research questions

The intention of this study is to research the interrelation between foreign policy and ethnic cohesion in the case of Macedonia. In order to carry out this broad intent, I have formulated two separate research questions, each one of which brings to the focus a particular variable or condition; the foreign policy and the inter-ethnic relations. There are two overarching research questions in this thesis, as during previous literature review on the topics of international and national intertwining, I came to assume that in the case of Macedonia, the phenomenon of international and national correlation is quite complex in nature. The two research questions will help break down this complexity, by focusing on each dimension separately, and then explore the interrelation between the two of them.

The first research question states:

In what ways have external pressures influenced Macedonia's foreign policy objectives?

Through this question I aimed to collect a particular set of data, which are exploratory and semi-structured in nature. They provided some answers on Macedonia's foreign policy, with an emphasis on the international integrations' objectives of this policy. Its primary aim was to explore *how* the external pressures affected the progress of Macedonia's foreign policy

objectives. More precisely, the first research question intended to analyze the effects that external pressures produce over Macedonia's foreign policy, i.e. Euro-Atlantic integrations' objectives.

The second research question states:

In what ways have external pressures influenced inter-ethnic relations in Macedonia?

Through this question I aimed to enhance the understanding on the relationship between inter-ethnic relations and international developments. More precisely, the second research question aimed to analyze the effects that the external pressures, which develop at the international level, produce over inter-ethnic relations, which take place at the national level. Assuming that the external pressures produce certain effect over the foreign policy aspirations, the second research question aimed to investigate how these external pressures, by affecting foreign policy objectives, influence the relations between the two biggest ethnic groups in the country, causing either division or unity between them. So, the second research question aimed to analyze the indirect interrelation between external pressures and inter-ethnic relations. In this way, the first research question is related to the second and both helped the process of data collection on the intertwining of international and national integration.

The data to the two research questions are derived from the perspectives of the interviewed subjects of this study, i.e. experts, academicians, and politicians from various political camps. As will be shown, the data below indicates a complexity of perceptions, opinions, attitudes, experiences of the interview subjects, deriving from the discourses extracted and explained in the findings' chapter. The data was analyzed in a way that describes how the interrelation of foreign policy and inter-ethnic relations is shaped.

Research Aim

At the onset of this research, I decided to combine the analysis about Macedonia's foreign policy challenges, as an outcome of its external open issues, with the positions of the two biggest ethnic communities in the country. Somewhat aware of the nature of the external pressures, I assumed that they may produce different impacts over the two ethnic groups, causing some kind of inter-ethnic division in relation to the pressing external issues. Further, at the initial phases of literature review, besides a few scientific articles (see Konseka 2014, Vankovska 2017, 2020), there seemed to be a lack of theoretical abundance which interrelates the international and

national level of policy making. Researching about previous studies on the case of Macedonia, I came across several research publications that deal with the external open issues, such as the name issue with Greece or the language dispute with Bulgaria, and the effects they produce over the country's Euro-Atlantic integration aspirations. The focus of these studies, (Zahariadis 1994, Pettifer 1999, Pop-Angelov 2010, Mavromatidis 2010, Daskaloski and Risteska 2012, Naumovski 2013, Marolov 2013, Karadzoski and Adamczyk 2014, Vangelov 2017, Kostoska 2018, Markova 2018, etc.), when explaining foreign policy making and performance, is solely on the international factors or on the inter-state relations – Macedonia's foreign policy is explained either as an outcome of motivations for increasing prosperity and positioning itself better in the international arena, or desire to protect itself from external pressures, perceived as threats to the wellbeing of the state or its people. On the other hand, I also came across studies and publications (ICG 1998, Beska and Najcevska 2004, Chivvis 2008, Maleska 2010, Lesnikovski 2011, Reka 2011, Tepfenhart 2013, Zendeli 2015, Demjaha 2017, etc.) which focus on the inter-ethnic relations in Macedonia, where the focus of the researchers/authors is exclusively on the domestic factors and their effects over this relationship. Nevertheless, the interaction between international and national integration in the case of Macedonia is much less studied. There are, however, some scientific articles (Engstrom 2002, Maleski 2013, Nuhija 2013, Vankovska 2017, etc.), which treat such interactions, and these works have served as basis for the construction and expansion of this thesis' main arguments.

The first aim was to find out about the behavior of a small state's foreign policy, which is faced with external bilateral challenges. The behavior was explored by analyzing the effects that external challenges may produce over the progress of foreign policy's strategic objectives. Through this perspective, I attempted to collect data which provide insights about the foreign policy actions or response towards the external challenges. The assessment of foreign policy behavior provides insights about the importance of foreign policy priorities, relative to the role it tries to project internationally and nationally. The aim was thus to assess in what ways external factors influence foreign policy' role or function, either by strengthening or compromising it, and the foreign policy response towards such influence. Foreign policy can play many roles or functions in service of the national interests' protection. This thesis, however, will focus on two particular functions, assessed as significant to its case study: the *security* and *integration* roles. Through the analysis of foreign policy security role, the thesis will attempt to disclose foreign

policy objectives, threats to such objectives, and behavior towards such threats. By exploring the foreign policy integration role, this thesis will try to analyze not only the dynamics of external integrations of a country but also the role foreign policy has, directly or indirectly in the internal or domestic integration. These two roles may help investigate whether there is a relationship between foreign policy's external objectives and challenges and inter-ethnic relations.

The second aim of the research was to find out in what way inter-ethnic relations, besides being a product of internal factors, such as the inter-ethnic struggle for greater power, are influenced by external factors. In Macedonia's case, the aim was to find out how external factors influence the unification or division of communities who are of diverse ethnic origin within a country. As such, the goal was to examine in what way the impact of external pressures differs for each ethnic group, and how the two ethnic groups experience the external pressures, and in what way the two ethnic groups maintain divided or unified perceptions concerning the foreign policy approach towards the resolution of the external open issues.

By intertwining the two levels of policy, international and national, through a study of a small state's case, such as Macedonia's foreign policy challenges and inter-ethnicity, the aim of this research is to provide a cutting-edge contribution to the literature of international relations and comparative politics.

Disposition of thesis

The structure of this thesis is divided into two main pillars, the theoretical and the empirical pillar respectively. The theoretical pillar consists of several chapters, following the introduction chapter. The second chapter provides a historical overview of Macedonia's developments in foreign policy and inter-ethnic relations since 1991. This chapter will present the context within which the researched phenomena are to be studied in the case of Macedonia. It will offer a short historical overview of Macedonia's consolidation as a new state and its specificities in this process. It will provide an overview of Macedonia's foreign policy's main objectives, since its independence to the present day, by specifically focusing on Macedonia's strategic priorities, namely its aspirations for double integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures. Here, it is important to clarify that out of many foreign policy objectives the country has, such as economic diplomacy, multilateral cooperation, commitment for a secure, stable, and prosperous region,

etc.¹, Euro-Atlantic integration is consciously singled out for investigation in this thesis, since it is considered as the sole foreign policy objective which relates to both research objectives: external pressures and inter-ethnic relations. Namely, the Euro-Atlantic integrations objective is the *knot* between Macedonia's foreign policy response towards external bilateral pressures, and inter-ethnic relations. The thesis will then continue to elaborate on Macedonia's foreign policy, while narrowing its focus on Macedonia's bilateral relations with its five neighbors, dwelling on the specifics of each relationship. The other part of this chapter enters into the domestic politics of Macedonia, focusing on the development of inter-ethnic relations, the divisions and tensions which characterizes the two biggest ethnic groups, with a specific focus on the struggle for power-sharing between them. These two parts of the chapter, Macedonia's foreign policy and its domestic politics, represent the two dependent conditions of the two research questions. The last section of this chapter endeavors to intertwine Macedonia's foreign policy and inter-ethnic relations. The following two chapters comprise the literature review in chapter 3, as well as the theoretical framework of this study in chapter 4. The theoretical part is mainly focused on elaborations and a synthesis of previous findings and events, which relate to the research questions of this thesis. The third chapter provides a review of the relevant literature, which is needed in order to show how this study aims to contribute further to the existing research. The theories which will be reviewed in the third chapter derive from the field of international relations, foreign policy, specifically of the small states, and of national integration, with focus on ethnic theories.

The empirical pillar consists of chapters that present the findings, which are analyzed and discussed in relation to the two research questions and the derived hypotheses. In chapter five the methodology of this work is presented, focusing on the qualitative approach, the instruments of data collection and the way data was analyzed. The sixth chapter will present the findings from the collected and analyzed interviews and will offer an analytical approach, where the generated themes will be discussed in relation to the research questions. In the seventh chapter, the findings will be discussed and compared in relation to the previous studies. This chapter will discuss the indications of harmonization between the arguments (hypotheses) of this thesis and the findings. The same chapter will also present the conclusive remarks. It will discuss this study's findings

¹Read more on Macedonia's foreign policy topics on <https://www.mfa.gov.mk/mk/page/21/za-ministerstvoto>

and its theoretical implications for our understanding of small states' interrelation of foreign policy and inter-ethnic relations. Furthermore, this chapter will provide recommendations on avenues for future research.

CHAPTER 2. OVERVIEW OF MACEDONIA'S FOREIGN POLICY AND INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS

The history of the consolidation of the state of Macedonia since 1990

The state was born with the dissolution of Yugoslavia as the Republic of Macedonia. A small, landlocked country, the Republic of Macedonia gained international attention due to the existing conflicts in the surrounding countries. Considering the conflicts which broke out in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and later in Kosovo, as an outcome of Yugoslavia's dissolution and the declaration of independence by its constituent republics, the international factor grew fearful of a potential spillover effect of these conflicts into the small territory of the Republic of Macedonia. This fear materialized further when taking into consideration the demographic structure of this country. According to the last census conducted in 2002, in Macedonia cohabit a variety of ethnic groups, with a majority of ethnic Macedonians (64 percent), followed by Albanians (25 percent), Turks (3.9 percent), Roma (2.7 percent), Serbs (1.8 percent), Bosnians (0.8 percent), Vlach (0.5 percent), and other (1 percent) (The State Statistical Office, 2002, p.34). Despite the high possibility of being absorbed into the armed conflicts that surrounded it, the Republic of Macedonia luckily escaped the crisis of Yugoslavia's fall in a peaceful manner. However, as Siljanovska-Davkova (2013) states, a number of other challenges were ahead of this country:

The Republic of Macedonia was overnight faced with a plethora of challenges: how to avoid the bloody scenario of dissolution of the common state after having five-decades of common life in a union; how to transform ownership; how to build democratic institutions; how to conclude the process of establishment of independence; how to neutralize the centrifugal tendencies, which were immanent to the complex ethnic, religious and linguistic structure of the state (p.111).

The independence of the Republic of Macedonia was backed by a referendum for independence, held in September 8, 1991, in which the majority of population declared their support for independent country (Vankovska, 2014). The Republic of Macedonia held the first multi-party elections in November and December 1991. These elections produced several political parties. The first one was VMRO-DPMNE (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity). This is a party, in favor of independence, reached the greatest number of parliament members, with a total of 37 seats. It was followed by SDUM (Social Democratic Union of Macedonia), which was later transformed into SDSM (Social Democratic Alliance of Macedonia). This party belonged to the reformed communist class and achieved to seize 30 seats in the Parliament. The third party, supported mainly by the Albanian ethnic group, PDP (Party for Democratic Prosperity) gained 24 seats in the Assembly. A number of smaller parties also gained several seats out of the total of 120 seat of the then Republic of Macedonia's Assembly. According to Ackermann (2000, pp.57-59), the main difference between the two Macedonian parties, VMRO and SDSM, lay in the process of breaking off from Yugoslavia. VMRO was profiled as a nationalistic party, whose main objectives was the independence of the then Republic of Macedonia from the Yugoslav Federation. SDSM, on the other hand, fearing a scenario like in Croatia or Slovenia, held a more moderate and cautious stance, proposing a compromise solution, according to which, the Republic of Macedonia would remain part of a Yugoslav Union but as a sovereign entity with enhanced autonomy. The first government in the pluralistic (multi-party system) of the Republic of Macedonia, was nevertheless of a technical nature, containing experts and only a few representatives from the newly emerged political parties, who'd enable a peaceful political transition of the state. The choice of appointing Gligorov as the President, a former communist official in favor of reforms within Yugoslavia in the 1980s, was a deliberate attempt by liberals to avert external conflict with Serbia and internal conflict between major ethnic groups. Despite the efforts of Gligorov and Izetbegovic of Bosnia and Herzegovina to establish a platform for the creation of a union of federal states of Yugoslavia, this platform failed, as it was rejected by Croatia and Slovenia. As the remaining options for Macedonia were either secession and declaration of independence, or remaining within a mini-federation dominated by Serbia, its leadership decided to hold a referendum for independence, after which, the latter was declared on September the 8th, 1991 (Marolov, 2013, p.40). After the referendum, the Parliament adopted the

constitution which defined the political and constitutional foundations of the new state, “respectively, it was a reflection of the self-determination right of the Macedonian people” (Vankovska, 2014, p.157).

Although the Republic of Macedonia can be considered as fortunate for avoiding bloodshed and conflict during its secession from Yugoslavia, its road towards consolidation, as an independent state, was quite thorny and bumpy. Initially, the country was faced with the need of creating a state apparatus, which would guard its sovereignty. Another success of Macedonia’s leadership is considered the peaceful withdrawal of the YPA troops, who continued to stay on the Macedonian soil even after its independence. Through negotiations between Belgrade and Skopje, YPA, on April 1993, finally withdrew peacefully from the country. Such success, according to Marolov (2013, p.41) should not however be attributed only to the domestic leadership but also to the external circumstances. Since an atrocious conflict was going on in Bosnia, for Milosevic was unaffordable to keep the military troops in Macedonia. The author argues that the withdrawal of the YPA troops from Macedonia, as much as it was considered a success, it also represented a risk for the newly emerged country, which had a fragile sovereignty and an unstable northern border. Since the relations between the Republic of Macedonia and Serbia were already strained due to Macedonia’s secession from Yugoslavia, the new state was living in fear from the threat of being invaded by the Yugoslav Army. Such fear resulted in Macedonia’s request for deployment of UNPROFOR troops on its borders, who would patrol the territory in the north and west part of the Republic of Macedonia. Such an act, besides the security dimension, contained another symbolism as well; that of rapprochement with the western world, precisely with the USA, as a new strategic orientation of the newborn country.

[Macedonia’s challenges during its consolidation as a state](#)

In contrast to most of the other countries, Macedonia’s secession from Yugoslavia was a peaceful one. Its path towards consolidation as a democratic state, nonetheless, was a thorny one. The period after the declaration of independence is characterized as a vulnerable period. Marolov (2013, p.46) discusses the threats which the Republic of Macedonia faced immediately after declaring independence, classifying them into internal and external threats, which many times

have intertwined or have served as each other's instrument. The author argues that the act of independence declaration, itself, provoked an external threat, which mainly derived from the neighboring countries. Initially, the act of declaring independence made Greece anxious, reviving the Macedonian Question again. Greece demonstrated their nervousness through a military exercise on Macedonia's border. Serbia was not less of a threat either. It expressed its indignation about Macedonia's secession from Yugoslavia through an anti-Macedonian rhetoric and propaganda in Belgrade, reflected in its press. Marolov (2013) doesn't exclude Albania either from the threatening category of countries. He describes Albania as a threatening and destabilizing factor to Macedonia due to the fact that it supported Macedonia's ethnic Albanians' boycott of the independence referendum and refused to recognize the official statistics of the percentage of the Albanian population living in the Republic of Macedonia (pp.49-50).

The internal threats, on the other hand, derived from the multi-ethnic structure of the country. The boycott of the independence referendum by the ethnic groups, Albanians and Serbs, indicated their discontent with their political and constitutional position in the new country. Another internal challenge, the new country faced, was the economic fragility, which received a hard blow as a result of the transition from the socialist system to that of free trade. The country's economy suffered the heaviest blow with the dissolution of Yugoslavia's common market, which enabled Macedonia for decades to maintain a stable economy, through a steady transfer of resources from north to south (Gallagher, 2007, p.80). The economic challenges derived not only from internal factors though. According to Phillips (2004, p.54), the political contest, which emerged between Greece and Macedonia, caused the former to impede foreign aid from entering Macedonia through the Greek border. Also, the decision of Greece to put an oil embargo against Macedonia weakened further the country's economy. The economic state was further aggravated in an indirect way, through the embargo that the Security Council imposed to Serbia, which Macedonia continued to trade with, hence forcing the Republic of Macedonia to reorient its economic axis from north-south into east-west, i.e. with Bulgaria and Albania. The problem with this re-orientation, however, was the fact that Macedonia had very poor infrastructure connections with these two countries, hence achieving not much of an economic progress (Marolov, 2013, pp.52-52).

Although the challenges the new country faced were many and some of these persist to this day, the focus of this thesis is on the inter-ethnic relations aspect, as an internal challenge to

the political stability of the country, as well as the inter-neighborly relations, as an external challenge to the security and the international affirmation of the small country. The sections below will provide an overview of these two dimensions of analysis and their interaction.

Inter-ethnic relations since 1991

Although there live more than two ethnic groups in Macedonia, their significantly smaller percentage makes the other ethnic groups much less of an influencing factor in the political developments in the country. Therefore, the focus of this thesis is on the relations, including clashes and tensions, between the two biggest ethnic groups, Macedonians and Albanians. The past of these two ethnic groups' cohabitation, under the Yugoslav federation, tells about two communities which have "led peaceful, but increasingly separate lives" (Beska and Najcevska, 2004, p.2). The separate lives of these two communities caused them to become prone to prejudices and misjudgments about one another. As Ackermann (2000) emphasizes, based on her interviews carried out in both ethnic camps, "much of the suspicion between Slavic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians, is driven by ignorance of each other's culture" (p.64). Leading separate lives, not only in the figurative sense, but also physically in the greatest parts of the country, led each ethnic group to develop prejudices about the other, which triggered fear and impeded the building of an inter-ethnic community. Moreover, Bieber (2008) considers the limited communication between the two ethnic groups as the cause for tensions. According to him:

At the same time, Macedonia is a deeply divided society between the Macedonian majority and the Albanian minority. Divided by language, religion and a strong sense of national identity, communication between both communities has been limited in the past decades. The tension between Albanian minority and Macedonian majority has thus been a defining feature of the Macedonian state at its birth (p.14).

However, an opposing argument states that limited communication and inter-ethnic gap is rather a consequence and not a cause. The consequence may be attributed to documents such as the Ohrid Framework Agreement, which may have helped institutionalize the ethnic differences, despite trying to promote a contrary process. Such effects will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapters.

According to Gallagher (2007), the fear and prejudice of Macedonians towards the Albanians relates with several aspects. Firstly, he emphasizes the demographic aspect, or the

number of the Albanian population, which marks an increasing trend. According to the author, many Macedonians view this increase in population as a purposeful strategy for dominating and taking over the country: “not a few Macedonians were, and are, convinced that Albanians are deliberately out-breeding them in order to take over Macedonia” (p.86). Another prejudice has to do with the pan-Albanian, trans-border links. The dominating feeling in the majority of Macedonians is that the shared solidarity among the Albanians in the Balkans, derives from their “shared ideal to create a greater Albania”. This conviction was further strengthened by the fear that the number of the Albanian population in Macedonia may further increase with the immigration of many ethnic Albanians from Kosovo, as a result of the repression they suffered under Milosevic’s regime. According to Ackermann (2000, p.65), Macedonians question the feeling of belonging and loyalty of Albanians towards the state of Macedonia, since in the early years of independence, they many times have proclaimed territorial autonomy in different forms.

Looking at the issue from the Albanian perspective, the latter have felt excluded from the institutions of the new state. Having only a small percentage of employment in state institutions, (about 4.2%), many Albanians felt as ‘second class’ citizens. According to Gallagher (2007), Albanians were under-represented in different sectors, such as the Ministry of Interior or the Army Forces, even in the areas where they dominated as a percentage. Besides the state institutions, Albanians felt excluded also from the economic sector, either state-controlled enterprises or the private ones. As a result of feeling excluded, only a small percentage of Albanians showed readiness to learn Macedonian language, as the state’s official language, while a high percentage of them fiercely oppose ethnically mixed marriages. Also, the struggle to establish higher education in Albanian language, strengthened further the Albanian conviction of being discriminated on political and legal grounds. However, the Albanians’ limited participation in state and/or other institutions may also be attributed to their self-exclusion, undertaken deliberately by them in critical points for the international recognition and constitutional build-up of the Macedonian state (some examples include the Albanian boycott of the referendum 1991, declaration of autonomous Illyrida, boycott of the census, etc.).

Such conflicting perceptions between Macedonians and Albanians are surely factors which impede the building of a multi-ethnic community. However, they seem insufficient for instigating an inter-ethnic armed conflict. How did Macedonia get from an ‘oasis of peace’ to an armed conflict between the two ethnic groups, and what was the epilogue of it? Certainly,

several events, characterized by sporadic tensions and clashes between the two ethnic groups, or more precisely between the Albanian ethnic group and the Macedonian government, set the conditions for the outbreak of an armed conflict. The latter, as much as it is perceived as an outcome of the internal discontent, is also considered as a spillover of the surrounding conflicts, especially the one occurring in Kosovo (Beska and Najcevska 2004, Bieber 2008, Marolov 2013, etc.).

The 90s, according to Bieber (2008), are characterized by a double contradiction: on one hand by the political inclusion of Albanians, and on the other hand, by the widening gap between the two communities (p.14). The first crack between the two communities occurred when the Republic of Macedonia declared independence, in 1991. According to Griessler (2014, p.5), although Albanians were not against the declaration of independence, they opposed the conception of the new state as a *nation-state*, which would belong only to one ethnic group. Vankovska (2014, p.155) argues that the Albanians were discontent with their political status in the new country and with the unresolved Albanian issue. As a result of such discontent, they boycotted the referendum of 1991. They, instead, held a separate plebiscite, which declared a part of Macedonia's territory as autonomous. This act triggered mistrust early on between the two ethnic groups, while the later developments only widened the gap between them (Griessler, 2014, p.5).

Immediately after the referendum, the first constitution of the independent state was adopted. It again represented a conflicting issue, as it was perceived as a document with which the political and legal status of the Albanians in the Republic of Macedonia was 'downgraded'. From the Albanian viewpoint, this constitution "established a dominance of the Macedonian nation not only in the Preamble, where the country was described as the state of the Macedonian nation, but also in designating Macedonian as the state language and singling out the Macedonian Orthodox Church" (Bieber, 2008, p.15). The refusal of the Albanians' demand to be represented as a constituent-people in the new constitution, caused this ethnic group to reject the adoption of the constitution altogether (Ceka, 2018). From the Macedonian viewpoint, the boycott of the Albanians towards state institutions was a sign of unloyalty to the state and thereof a source of insecurity to societal cohesion. These perceptions were reinforced by a later proposal of Albanians to create an autonomous province of "Illirida" (Adamson and Jovic, 2004). Despite the Albanian boycott, the constitution was adopted in the parliament, in November 1991. Bieber

(2008) views the character of the newly independent state Republic of Macedonia rather as hybrid. On one hand, he perceives it as “a nation-state, both in some of its form and in regard to the public administration, the use of languages and other domains, and on the other hand as a civic state which was governed by a cross-national government since independence” (p.15).

Expanding on Bieber’s analysis, it may be argued that Albanians were politically well established. The biggest Albanian party was included in informal grand coalitions since the first technical government onwards. The other Albanian political parties had their representatives in the assembly. The practice of grand-coalition arrangement was perceived as the best way to achieve coordination of governmental policies across the inter-ethnic divide. In this context, Daskalovski (2004) calls a paradox the fact that Albanians generally held an obstructionist approach towards Macedonia’s state foundations (such as the referendum, constitution, census, etc.) yet participated in the country’s political system (as part of governing coalitions). However, this form of governance still didn’t satisfy the Albanians’ request for a formal system of power-sharing which would enhance their political position. A series of tensions continued to occur between the two communities. The earliest one is the riot at the Skopje open market, ‘Bit Pazar’, where the clash between the marketeers and the police resulted in the death of three Albanian men and a Macedonian woman. Another incident occurred when the Macedonian authorities discovered a secret paramilitary organization which operated within the Army of the Republic. The authorities suspected of the involvement of Albanian officials from PDP in these paramilitary structures (Turton, 1997, p.89). The opening of the University of Tetova, as an Albanian language university, marked one of the biggest incidents between the two ethnic groups, up until the armed conflict of 2001. The demand of the Albanians to establish a university in Albanian language, which would promote their culture, language, and national values, was met with a refusal by the government (Ceka, 2018). As a reaction, the university was opened in private spaces, donated by ethnic Albanians. During its formal opening ceremony, the government reacted by sending police forces in order to prevent the first classes from being held. In the clash between the Albanians and the police, one person died, many others were wounded, and a considerable number of students and university professors and staff were arrested. The opposition of ethnic Macedonians to the opening of a university in Albanian language derived from their perception that it was an attempt for creating parallel institutions, or much worse, as the first step to secession. In the Albanians’ perception, on the other hand, the founding of a

university in their language represented a symbolism for equal rights, and furthermore for affirmation of their ethnic culture, which according to them had been marginalized by the Macedonian institutions (Ackermann, 2000, pp.67-69). Another inter-ethnic clash occurred in 1997, in two western cities of Macedonia, where the Albanian population dominates. The police intervention aimed at the removal of the ethnic Albanian flags, which the two city mayors, of Tetovo and Gostivar, had hung before their city halls. The police intervention was based on the prohibition of the placement of the Albanian national flags in front of public objects by the Law on Flags. After the removal of the flags by the police forces, riots broke between ethnic Albanians and the latter, which resulted into three dead and several others injured. Both mayors and the two heads of city councils, were sentenced to several years of prison, to be released after a few years under the 1999 amnesty (Gallagher, 2007, pp.90-91).

The armed conflict² between the paramilitary National Liberation Army (NLA) of Albanians and the Macedonian Security forces represents the culmination of the inter-ethnic tensions between Macedonians and Albanians. It ended after a six-month period, in August 2001, with the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA). Vankovska (2007) argues that the 2001 event still lacks a clear definition. The international community has oscillated in its characterization of the conflict and the NLA members from “extremists, murderous thugs, and terrorists” into “human right fighters” (p.8). Consensus on the definition of this event seems to be missing in the domestic realm as well. Thus, there is a version by the ideologue of the NLA, Fazli Veliu that the 2001 conflict was about territories. Another version by the former leader of an Albanian party (DPA), Arber Xhaferi, states that the conflict was about seizing power through a coup d’etat, referring to the Albanian guerilla leader and other members, and their political ambitions to seize power through violent means. A third and a fourth version sees the conflict as an external aggression deriving from Kosovo, terroristic battle against the state, etc. Among the many arguments which try to explain the 2001 crisis, three are the most dominant. The first explanation depicts this conflict as a classic war with territorial claims, through which NLA aimed to create the *Great Albania* by joining the territory of Macedonia with that of Kosovo to

²The Uppsala Conflict Data Program states that an “armed conflict broke out between the Macedonian government and UCK (National Liberation Army) consisting of ethnic Albanians. On 22 January, UCK attacked a police station in western Macedonia, and one policeman was killed. The following day, UCK issued a communiqué stating the group’s dedication to fight Macedonian oppression and to achieve the full equality of Albanians with the Macedonian people.” Read more on the conflict’s main developments and other details on <https://ucdp.uu.se/conflict/417>

Albania (Chivvis 2008, Sielska, 2018). But Chivvis (2008) argues that this version is the least convincing, since NLA never made any statements about territorial claims. Instead, through its statements it insisted that their war was being waged for advancing the collective rights of Albanians in Macedonia (Ceka, 2018). Moreover, according to Chivvis (2008), neither Albania's leaders nor those of Kosovo demonstrated interest in creating the Great Albania. The second explanation about the conflict is that it was a spillover of Kosovo's conflict, since NLA itself derived from Kosovo (Sielska 2018), and possibly was encouraged by the "US support for Kosovars in their war against Serbian troops of the Milosevic regime" (Lock, 2003). The third explanation, has to do with the discontent of the Albanians with their representation within the country, their treatment as 'second-class' citizens, and their under-representation in the public institutions (Ceka, 2018). According to some arguments, the inter-ethnic disagreements and the sporadic tensions, which developed mainly due to the dissatisfaction of the Albanian community with the constitutional definition of the country as a nation-state, and consequently due to their institutional under-representation, culminated with the armed conflict of 2001. According to Vankovska (2014) "After 2001, there emerged statements that the Constitution was precisely the generator of the crisis, and even *casus belli* (reason for war)" (p.159). Adamson and Jovic (2004) argue that the 'national question' was the main reason behind the conflict, referring to the Albanians' demand for redefinition of the state from a nation-state into a bi-national state. Liotta (2003) argues that the division in 2001 was not only inter-ethnic but also intra-ethnic. There was a division even within the Albanian ethnic group. Some of them were disappointed in the Albanian political factor in power for not fulfilling their demands, while others justified them by referring to their limited power mechanisms (pp.96-98).

The conflict continued for several months, peaking in May 2001. This conflict caused a full engagement of the western diplomatic corps, in trying to resolve the crisis. They were committed to create negotiating teams led by the French Foreign Minister, Francois Leotard, appointed by the EU, and the Ambassador James Pardew, appointed by the USA. The negotiations resulted in a framework agreement, consisting of a program of reforms, which was signed in Ohrid, on August 2001, by four major political parties' representatives (two of each ethnic group). The reforms outlined in this document were guaranteed by the international community (Marolov 2013, Piacentini, 2019).

According to Bieber (2008), the OFA, was more than an agreement which ended the conflict in the Republic of Macedonia. It was a document which changed the nature of Macedonia's constitution, introducing the system of power-sharing. It thus laid the basis for consociational³ democracy with regulations, which served for protection of minorities from majorization in certain political fields. The document aimed at the integration of the ethnic minority groups, through their political, social, and cultural participation in state institutions. According to Vankovska (2014, p.160), although in independent Republic of Macedonia, since early on there were traces of consociationalism, such as the tradition of inter-ethnic coalitions, where the Macedonian winning party would invite into a coalition an Albanian party, such form of power-sharing was more of an unwritten rule, which resulted from the political pragmatism than a formal form of power sharing.

The incorporation of the consociational model after the signing of the OFA, represents the most substantial change of the constitution after 2001. Although controversial, the OFA introduces a new system of power sharing between the two biggest ethnic communities, along the lines of the consociational model. OFA is considered as controversial by some scholars since it doesn't define clearly the state character. Nonetheless, it caused a change of the country from "a self-defined nation state with an informal grand coalition arrangement into a state straddling between nation state, civic state, and bi-national state with a formal power-sharing structure." (Bieber, 2008, p.17).

From the main changes in Macedonia's legislature that this agreement initiated, the most significant one was the official use of the language of communities, which make up 20% of the population (i.e. the Albanian community). It also introduced a double majority voting mechanism in the parliament, according to 'Badinter's rule', where for certain legislation areas there is required not only the majority in Macedonia's Parliament, but also the majority of the ethnic minority in it. It also predicted an equitable representation in the public and state administration at the central and local level. Finally, it required local government reform and promoted decentralization. Although OFA attempted to give the state a civic character by not referring explicitly to the ethnic communities, it contributed to the increase of Albanians'

³Lijphart defines the following as defining criteria of consociationalism (1) grand coalition, i.e. the inclusion of all major groups in the Government; (2) proportional representation of all relevant groups in the Parliament and public administration; (3) inclusion of the major groups in the Government; (4) veto rights; and (5) a high degree of autonomy (decentralization) (1977, p.25).

participation in the public institutions and to the advancement of their rights, aiming to reduce, in this way, their discontent toward the state (Piacentini, 2018).

Although the advocates of this agreement perceive it as the greatest success for having ended the inter-ethnic conflict, yet, according to Bieber, it didn't achieve to transform fundamentally the inter-ethnic relations (2008, pp.209-210). Demjaha (2017, pp.15-16), sixteen years after the signing of this agreement, still views the inter-ethnic relations as burdened with prejudice and stereotypes. The first inter-ethnic crisis after the agreement emerged in 2006, when for the first time the tradition of coalition formation between the winning Macedonian party and the winning Albanian party was broken. When the Macedonian winning party, VMRO, decided to include the second winning party from the Albanian camp, Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA), into the coalition, the winning Albanian party, Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) left the seats in the Parliament. DUI's action created almost a political stalemate by blocking legislation, which required double majority. This political crisis ended with an agreement reached in May 2007, according to which both sides agreed that coalitions would be formed only between winners.⁴ In 2012, there were recorded two other incidents, which triggered massive protests in both ethnic camps. In February 2012, an off-duty officer killed two ethnic Albanians in Gostivar, while on April of the same year, five ethnic Macedonian boys were killed near the Smilkovci lake. The charge against several ethnic Albanians for the murder of the five victims, and their sentence of life imprisonment, sparked massive protests among Albanians, against a so called politically influenced verdict of the court, risking almost another inter-ethnic conflict. A series of smaller inter-ethnic clashes took place in the following years, between the Macedonian and Albanian youngsters, in buses and streets, causing injuries to each other (pp.15-16). Another major incident, which brought the state almost to the verge of another inter-ethnic conflict, occurred in May 2015 in Kumanovo, where police forces battled against an armed group, which identified itself as former members of NLA. This raid caused the death of 8 police officers and 10 members of the militant rebels, while 30 others were arrested with terrorism related charges. The spokesperson of the interior ministry identified these gunmen as being led by "by ethnic Albanian former rebel commanders from Kosovo, which broke away from Serbia in war in 1999." (Al Jazeera, 2015). Protests followed, believing that the whole incident was a set-up,

⁴This rule would be violated again in 2017 when the Albanian winning party DUI, after failing to form a coalition with the Macedonian winning party, VMRO, entered a coalition with the Macedonian second winning party, SDSM.

staged by the current government for power abuse and in order to divert attention from the political crisis which was going on during that period (Mejdini, 2016). This event occurred amidst a political turmoil, which began with the release of incriminating wiretapped conversations between high rank officials of the government, undertaken by the Macedonian opposition party. There are cleavages over the motives behind such incident. One version claims that this group of people are terrorist who have come to “kill in the name of greater rights for ethnic Albanians in Macedonia” and they’ve been under surveillance to the point when the government’s attempts to arrest them turned into a bloodbath. The other version claims that the group acted in self-defense after the police attacked them (Arifi, 2018). However, this version doesn’t explain their presence, heavily armed, in the neighborhood of Kumanovo. According to Cvetanoski (2017) it is still ambiguous whether this group acted as terrorists or mercenaries. The fact that none of the accused provided convincing motives for this incident reinforces further the uncertainty over it. The accused testimonies were inconsistent, as some of them admitted to have intentionally participated in armed clashes with the police forces, while others to have come to push forward the Albanians’ rights cause, while denying to have attacked the police forces. The Skopje Court convicted for the act of terrorism 33 out of the 37 participants in the Kumanovo shooting, where “7 out of the 37 defendants received life sentences, 13 were sentenced to 40 years of conviction, 6 to 20 years, and one to 18 years. The last 6 defendants were sentenced to 14, 13, and 12 years in prison. Charges were lifted for 4 defendants for lack of adequate evidence.” (Cvetanoski, 2017). The Appeal Court confirmed the Primary Court’s verdict. The incident incited several reactions. There were protests, albeit little attended. The defense announced they would soon release documents confirming that this incident was staged by the secret services of the state (Jajaga, 2017). Macedonian Interior Minister, Spasovski, announced additional investigation under international supervision which would shed more light over this event. The Albanian leader of the DUI party also demanded an international investigation over this case. Such request, coming from DUI’s leader, Cvetanoski (2017) argues, is quite suspicious as there are allegations (made by the accused and media) that he, along with other high-ranked politicians of the coalition VMRO-DUI, were behind this staged incident, with the purpose of diverting attention from the wiretapping scandal.

The election of 2016 didn’t resolve the political crisis, which soon would escalate further. A series of protests took place after the elections, causing the two-year political crisis to almost

slide into an inter-ethnic crisis, due to the demands of the united Albanian political factor. The Albanian political parties in Macedonia, after a meeting with the Prime Minister of Albania, Edi Rama, presented a joint platform, with key conditions for their participation in the future governing coalition. The conditions presented in this platform mainly dealt with the officialization of Albanian language throughout the Republic, and other points, through which full equality between Macedonians and Albanians was demanded (Mejdini, 2017). After the winning Macedonian party, VMRO, failed to form a coalition with the Albanian winning party, DUI, the leader of the Macedonian second winning party, Zoran Zaev, achieved to form it. Nevertheless, Zaev wasn't granted a mandate to form the government by the President of the country. The latter, accused Zaev for accepting a platform which undermines the sovereignty of the country and changes the constitutional order, turning the Republic of Macedonia from a multi-ethnic and unitarian, into a bi-national state (EBW archives, 2017). A new wave of protests followed against the new coalition between SDSM and DUI, viewing it as a threat to the national unity. The protests escalated when the protestors stormed the parliament, on April 27, 2017, as the new coalition was electing the new Speaker, Talat Xhaferi, who was an ethnic Albanian. Uttering the word 'traitors', the protesters attacked the MPs, throwing hard objects at them (the Guardian, 2017). As a consequence of the storm, 77 persons were injured, including 22 police officers.

A new inter-ethnic polarization, reflected mainly at the political elite levels, was caused by the adoption of the Law on the Use of Languages. This law aims to regulate the use and implementation of the language spoken by at least 20% of the population (a percentage reached only by the Albanian ethnic community). In other words, the language foresees the Albanian language to become the second official language on national level. The proposed law at the Parliament in 2017 caused fierce debate between the parliamentary groups, focused on the need for adoption of such law as well as on the procedure of its adoption. The government (of SDSM and DUI) described this law-proposal as one which is "within the frames of the OFA's implementation...and is part of the European integration process" of the country, and one which would help in forging inter-ethnic cohesion in the country (Gorgevik, 2019, p.1). The arguments of the opposition (VMRO-DPMNE), on the other hand, stated that this law is anti-constitutional and discriminating against the other ethnic minorities, who cannot reach 20% of the population in the country, and that its adoption would cause violation of the Rules of Procedure of the

Assembly. After the first voting in Parliament in January 2018, the decree of proclamation of this law was refused to be signed by the President, Ivanov. Consequently, the law returned to Parliament. Upon its return, a total of 35,569 amendments were submitted in the Parliament, of which 35,563 were submitted by the VMRO-DPMNE. On March 14, 2018 the law was voted again in the Parliament, disregarding the submitted amendments. Again, the President refused to sign the decree of its proclamation. The President claimed that the law represents a 'blow to democracy', violating all legal procedures, proceedings and deadlines. The law was nevertheless published in the Official Gazette, on January 2019 without the President's signature. Following this act, the President stated that the procedure represents violation of Article 75 of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia and that the "the publication of the law has been done illegally and represents basis for criminal prosecution." (Gorgevik, 2019, p.15). Towards this accusation, the Public Enterprise "Official Gazette" responded that the publication of the law is in accordance with the Constitution and laws, although President Gjorge Ivanov did not sign the law. The "Official Gazette" refers to Article 52, paragraph 2 of the Constitution, which states: "Laws enter into force at the earliest on the eighth day from the day of publication, and as an exception, determined by the Assembly, on the day of publication." (p.15). Arguments on the legality of adopting this law exist on both opposing sides, but the sole competent organ to decide upon the clash of competences between the legislative, executive and judicial power is the Constitutional Court.

The description of inter-ethnic relations in Macedonia shows the struggles that the country has faced in consolidating its diverse society. Although through OFA, it was attempted to transform the state into a society with a civic identity, the ethnic differences and competing visions on the state form persisted and dominated the political agenda. However, the struggle to achieving internal consolidation, was further aggravated as a result of external disputes, which the country faced since its birth. As much as it was a struggle for Macedonia to forge a common identity internally, equally difficult for it was to safeguard and demonstrate its unique identity externally. The following section of this chapter will present Macedonia's foreign policy, with an accent on the challenges that derive from its bilateral relations with the neighboring countries.

Macedonia's foreign policy since 1990

Structure and actors of Macedonia's foreign policy

Before narrating Macedonia's foreign policy evolution since independence, it is necessary to map out the most important actors and state institutions, as well as dominating ideologies and their evolution as reflected on the foreign policy making of the state. Such narration will help us understand, further in the text, the complex constellation of Macedonia's foreign policy choices and behavior, which intertwines strategic and security issues with domestic governmental orientations and identity issues.

The difficulties facing the drafting of Macedonia's foreign policy were not only a consequence of a lack of capacities for building the latter, as foreign policy had been exclusively under the domain of the federative institutions (of Yugoslavia), but also a consequence of a transformation of political institutions from socialistic to democratic and pluralistic ones. With independence, Macedonia's foreign policy endured two transformations: one pertained to the actors/institutions with foreign policy competencies and the other to the foreign policy orientation. Regarding independent Macedonia's foreign policy actors/institutions, they fall mainly into the executive branch of the state power-division. Within this branch, the two main institutions responsible for foreign policy making are the President of the state and the Government (Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs). The share of competences in foreign policy by the President and Government derives from the semi-presidential system established by the Constitution of 1991. According to the latter, the President is the Commander in Chief of the Army Forces, head of the National Security Council and representative of the state in international relations. The Government (prime minister and foreign minister) also represent the country internationally, is responsible for drafting and executing foreign policy, for consulting the parliament on foreign affairs, etc. Konseka (2014) argues that the division of foreign policy competencies between the President and Government are not so clear cut. Rather they have been determined by the personal charisma and leadership skills of the individuals holding either one of these functions. Koneska argues that the first decade of Macedonia's foreign policy was dominated mainly by the President, Kiro Gligorov, either as a result of inertia, as foreign policy had been dominated by the President office in Yugoslavia, or as a result of

Gligorov's personal charisma, complemented with his long experience in international relations and foreign policy. Thus, the president's role in Macedonia's first foreign policy endeavors, such as in negotiating independence from Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, securing international recognition, and negotiating bilateral settlement with Greece over the name issue, was way more determining than that of the young and inexperienced Prime Minister, Branko Crvenkovski.

The President's role in foreign policy influenced the foreign policy ideology as well, characterized by almost a realist position on small states. Hence, Gligorov pursued the idea of balance of power, state security in international relations, and reliance on international organizations/alliances for guaranteeing the state's security and interests. His system level approach towards Macedonia's foreign policy may have been driven by the existing contextual factors such as the surrounding conflicts due to Yugoslavia's dissolution and the external bilateral issues contesting the country's vital identity elements. He paid much less attention to the domestic factors shaping foreign policy, and described EU and NATO integration as a necessary strategy for safeguarding the country's security, rather than as a way of identification with Western/European norms and values, which would be embraced only by a later foreign policy discourse (Koneska, 2014).

The transition of foreign policy making from the President to the Government occurred as a result of the evolution of the political system from semi-presidential towards a more classical parliamentary system. This evolution, according to Koneska (2014), occurred also as a result of the 2001 constitutional changes which strengthened the government's role, i.e. ethnic coalition government, in policy decision making, including foreign policy. These developments caused the shrinking of the President's role in favor of an expanded Government's role. Furthermore, the integration process into the EU entailed long processes of legislation and policy harmonization with the EU acquis, that were to be carried out by the government (ministerial cabinets such as the Secretariat for European Affairs), civil servants, and agencies. This process, thus, gave the government an upper hand over foreign policy making. Besides these structural changes, the change of the actor-president, from Gligorov to Trajkovski, an actor who did not seek dominance over foreign policy, also facilitated this transition.

The transition of foreign policy domination from the President to the Government, Koneska (2014) argues, allowed greater space for political parties and social groups' influence

over the foreign policy objectives. However, the political parties' influence over foreign policy strategic objectives, according to Koneska (2014), has been quite limited, as none of the most significant political parties have projected distinct foreign policy objectives from EU and NATO integration, regional cooperation and peaceful resolution of conflicts. These objectives have enjoyed an all-party consensus on foreign policy since 1991. However, the author stresses that some dilution of the EU and NATO consensus has occurred since 2006, when the newly formed VMRO-led government began to argue against a conditioned EU and NATO integration with a name change of the state. Also, the 2001 constitutional changes, allowed the infiltration of the ethnic component in policy decision-making, including foreign policy. Although such an ethnic competition over policy decision-making didn't reflect as much on foreign policy objectives, it still reflected on the instruments and methods chosen to achieve those objectives. Thus, the implication of the ethnic component in policy making, may have caused an increase of ethno-nationalism doses in all policy areas, including foreign policy. The external blockades as a consequence of external contestations of national/state identity, have helped enhance further the ethnic/national identity component, caused initially by internal developments. Koneska (2014) argues that under VMRO-s leadership, a foreign policy focused on boosting of Macedonian national identity, caused a strain in the domestic inter-ethnic relations between Macedonians and Albanians. Nevertheless, the author argues that despite these strains, the "Albanian politicians have played a constructive role in foreign policy and in particular in the name dispute with Greece, supporting Macedonian efforts to keep the country's constitutional name – Republic of Macedonia – unchanged." (p.104). This argument, however, does not seem reliable, considering the foreign policy actions of the Albanian political factor in Athens, Brussels, and USA. The one-sided actions of the Albanian political factors, i.e. of DUI, which aimed at a quick resolution of the bilateral contest with Greece and unblocking of the Euro-Atlantic integrations, were not only uncoordinated with the Macedonian coalition partner (VMRO), but also in contradiction to the official stance of the state over these bilateral issues. Such divergence of the ethnically dominated political parties in foreign policy, Vankovska (2017) expresses in the following way: "While the Macedonians hold hard line positions in terms of preservation of state name, the ethnic Albanians from Macedonia have overtly proposed accepting compromise in direct quasi-diplomatic offensives in Athens, Washington DC or Brussels." (p.10).

From the present viewpoint, we may argue that, officially, all political parties, alternating in power since 1991, declaratively hold the same position regarding foreign policy objectives. If we analyze the most recent electoral programs (of 2020) of the coalitions/parties in parliament, we'd find very approximate stances over foreign policy, especially in regard to EU and NATO objectives. Hence, SDSM led coalition relate, in its program, the national security with NATO membership, stating that "Our national security has never been on a higher level. We are a member of the most powerful alliance in the world – NATO. We will never be alone and unprotected anymore." (SDSM program of activities 2020, p.13)⁵. It further argues that membership in NATO is a ticket to entrance into the EU. Regarding the latter, the SDSM led coalition program states clearly its dedication towards the "beginning of negotiations, and Europeanisation of the country!" (p.13). Similarly, the VMRO led coalition, views the "the membership into EU and NATO as the completion of Macedonian statehood and the beginning of a process of international affirmation of Macedonian culture, language and uniqueness, according to the motto of our ideologist Goce Delchev 'I understand the world as a field for cultural progress between nations'" (VMRO-DPMNE program 2020, p.207)⁶. The Albanian main political parties, DUI and Alliance for Albanians express the same commitment to NATO and EU objectives of foreign policy. Regarding NATO, in its electoral program (2020), DUI states "Membership in the most powerful and successful military alliance in human history, for a young and still fragile state, located in a still unconsolidated region - both economically, politically and in terms of security - has a special and vital importance." (p.53). Similarly, it "considers full integration in European Union as the only alternative to the RNM, as one of the main priorities of political action since the founding of the party..." (p.54)⁷. The Alliance for Albanians coalition, as the second biggest Albanian party in Parliament, holds identical views regarding these two objectives of foreign policy, by stating in its electoral program (2020) that "AA is committed to the membership of the Republic of Macedonia in NATO and the EU" ⁸. Out of the Macedonian and Albanian political parties represented in the Parliament of 2020, only

⁵Read more on SDSM 2020 electoral program in https://sdsd.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Programa-2020_Mozeme.pdf

⁶Read more on VMRO-DPMNE 2020 electoral program in <https://www.vmro-dpmne.org.mk/programa/programa2020.pdf>

⁷Read more on DUI 2020 electoral program in <http://www.bdi.mk/programi2020/BDI-PROGRAMA-2020.pdf>

⁸Read more on AA 2020 electoral program in <https://www.aleanca.eu/programi/>

one Macedonian party, Levica, holds a different view regarding the double integrative agenda. Namely, in its electoral program (2020) it pursues “Urgent withdrawal of membership from the NATO pact, due to non-compliance with the constitutional procedure for joining a military ‘alliance’” (p.31). However, it holds a view regarding the EU that is consistent with that of the other political parties. It declares “Support for Macedonia's membership in the European Union, by insisting in the negotiation process that Macedonia be individually valued - without putting it in a package with other countries.” (p.31)⁹

The main political parties, though reflecting a consensus regarding Macedonia's EU and NATO objectives, show slight differences regarding the resolution of the external issues which block(ed) these integrations. Thus, whereas SDSM, DUI, and AA hold almost similar position regarding the approach to bilateral issues, expressing support to the chosen method of resolving these issues (by signing bilateral agreement with Greece and Bulgaria and undertaking consequent constitutional changes such as the name of the state), VMRO holds a slightly different approach. It stresses that its “priority will be to stop and hinder all future initiatives that have been launched after the national humiliations for the expansion, deepening and personal interpretation of the agreements signed by Zaev and Dimitrov.” It continues to present its approach towards mitigating and neutralizing the negative effects of these agreements “through a scientific approach and preparation of scientifically based analyzes” (VMRO-DPMNE electoral program 2020, p.207-209). Levica (electoral program 2020) reflects a stauncher attitude regarding the Agreement with Greece (PA), calling for its annulment and of the “criminal illegal constitutional amendments resulting from it”. It also announces “Revision of the Good Neighbor Agreement with Bulgaria, due to historical revisionism and rehabilitation of fascism.”(p.31)

Koneska (2014) argues that besides the political parties, the influence of other social actors in foreign policy decision-making has been minimal. She even includes the Parliament in the list of institutions/actors which minimally affect foreign policy. Instead of being the place where foreign policy decisions are discussed, it has become a place which ‘rubber stamps’ the executive's decisions. Koneska argues that there hasn't been a case when the Parliament has voted against a government's foreign policy decision. This argument is reinforced by Parliament's voting of the last two controversial bilateral agreements, which despite opposition,

⁹Read more on Levica 2020 electoral program in <https://levica.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Levica-programa-A4-final-za-net-12.06.2020-1.pdf>

still gained a simple majority vote in the Parliament. The parliament also voted in favor of the constitutional changes in 2018, which required a double majority.

Public opinion also produces certain influence over Macedonia's foreign policy. Koneska (2014) argues that major foreign policy objectives, established by the government, have been in compliance with the public opinion's stance. Hence, establishing NATO and EU integration as one of the main foreign policy objectives, has enjoyed a high support by public opinion, which has remained relatively constant, since the 90s. This support is based on several polls conducted by relevant institutions. As an illustration, according to an IRI poll conducted in August 28, 2018, support of Macedonia's citizens for joining EU is 83% while for joining NATO is 77%. Another poll, conducted by Damjanovski (IDSCS and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2020, p.8) also indicates a continuous high support for joining the EU from 2014-2018 with percentages moving from 72 to 80. A fall of support for EU integration is recorded by this poll in 2019, where the total percentage in support of EU is 65. A survey conducted by Bozinovski (the Institute for Political Research – Skopje, 2018), also shows a relatively high support for EU integration (66.9% in 2016 and 64.2% in 2017) and NATO integration (70.7% in 2016 and 66.0% in 2017).

Similarly, the public opinion has also shaped the governments' approach towards foreign policy issues, such as the name dispute with Greece. A resisting public opinion on negotiating the constitutional name of the country, Koneska (2014) argues, has constrained consecutive governments to adopt resolutions which go against the main attitude of the public. Thus, as many polls illustrate, Macedonia's public opinion has shown consistently low support for resolution of bilateral disputes by accepting constitutional changes. According to polls (ex. Klekovski et al., MCIC, IDSCS, M-Prospect, 2018) 48.3% of the total population is against any change of the constitution, of which 60.7% are ethnic Macedonians while 5.2% are ethnic Albanians. The acceptability of a name change solution with a geographical determinant (regardless of the name variants) is also low (55.1% of ethnic Macedonians are against any name change option, while only 9.9% of ethnic Albanians are against any name change option (pp.15-16)). Similarly, the majority of population has shown consistent attitudes against a change of any other factor defining national identity, especially the language (see more in Klekovski et al, 2018). When EU and NATO integration are conditioned by a name or other constitutional changes, the high support these two foreign policy objectives enjoy, falls drastically. As the IPRS poll (2018, p.4) indicates, to the question: would you accept a change of the constitutional name in order

Macedonia to become EU and NATO member? 47.1% answered with a NO, and 38.2% answered with a YES, and the other 14.7% answer with I DON'T KNOW or NO ANSWER. These figures show that despite EU and NATO being highly supported as the state's foreign policy objectives, when conditioned with constitutional changes, the support begins to fade.

On the regional level, the public opinion is affected by the bilateral disputes and neighboring states' (obstructive) behavior towards Macedonia's international integrations. Consequently, the public opinion perceives Greece as the least friendly state (1,1%) towards Macedonia. Perceptions on Bulgaria's friendliness towards Macedonia are also relatively low (11,2%), yet not as low as on Kosovo (2,0%). On the other hand, Serbia enjoys the highest support in the public opinion as the friendliest oriented state towards Macedonia (44,3%), followed by Albania (14,8%). The quantitative data derived from the above and other polls, frequently indicate an inter-ethnic rift on the issues above. The greatest divisions appear over issues which affect national identity, perceived in ethnic/national terms. Thus, whereas ethnic Macedonians show greater opposition to externally imposed identity changes, including name change¹⁰, Albanians show much less opposition or favor such changes. The rift is also reflected upon public opinion's perception of the neighboring states. Whereas 52,0% ethnic Macedonians perceive Serbia as the friendliest state, only 17,2% of ethnic Albanians perceive Serbia as such (Klekovski et. al 2013). On the other hand, whereas 54,0% of ethnic Albanians perceive Albania as the friendliest state, only 4,3% of ethnic Macedonians perceive Albania as such.

According to Koneska (2004) the perceptions of the population on the neighboring states have a longer-term effect on the inter-neighborly relations than, say, inter-governmental agreements. Regardless of the governments' declarations on their commitment towards good neighborly relations, the public opinion's perceptions linger and indicate the closer reality on these relationships. However, despite the population's positions, the governments have many times acted against the majority's popular opinion, such as allowing NATO to use Macedonia's airspace during its bombing campaign over Yugoslavia in 1999, or such as the bilateral agreements with neighbors which have led to constitutional changes. Thus, we may argue that the public opinion's role in foreign policy decision-making though important in several foreign

¹⁰According to a poll conducted in 2018, 59.6% of ethnic Macedonians' are against any change to the name of the country, while only 6.6% of ethnic Albanians are against any change to the name. Inversely, only 4,7% of Macedonians are in favor of a new "erga omnes" name, while 42,3% of Albanians are in favor of this option (read more in Klekovski et al, MCIC and IDSCS, 2018, p.13)

policy decisions, is also many times neglected and overlooked, similarly with that of the Parliament or other actors of foreign policy.

Foreign policy developments since 1991

As Macedonia parted from the Yugoslav federation, it also left behind the communist-Marxist ideology, re-orienting itself towards Europe and the occident. But its path towards this new strategic orientation is characterized by ambiguities, oscillations, and many challenges. Ambiguity emerged since the beginning, as no newly formed party in the new pluralistic system had exposed a clear orientation of foreign policy on its platforms. According several authors (Ackermann 1999, Sokalski 2003, Pendarovski 2012, Marolov and Mitev 2016), two main foreign policy options appeared in the early 90s. The first option was the Republic of Macedonia to become an independent and sovereign state, although it wasn't mentioned as the only option in any of the political platforms. The second option was the Republic of Macedonia to continue to remain part of Yugoslavia, even in new circumstances, where there would be less countries within the federation. Sokalski (2003) argues that second options derived mainly from fear that a potential secession from Yugoslavia may trigger an attack by the Yugoslav National Army on Macedonia. The Albanian political bloc, according to Pendarovski (2012), had unclear positions about foreign policy. Within the Coordinating Council of all ethnic Albanians, the Albanians of Macedonia sought a 'federation within a federation', demanding the advancement of their collective rights to the same level with the ethnic Macedonians, in a still intact Yugoslavia.

The first foreign policy formulations were made on a document adopted by the Republic of Macedonia's Parliament ten days after the declaration of independence. This document stressed the alignment of Macedonia with key United Nations' resolutions, while emphasizing that the strategic interest for the country was joining the European integration process (Sokalski, 2003). However, the Law on Foreign Affairs, which was supposed to define specifically the objectives and principles of the Republic of Macedonia's foreign policy, would not be adopted until a decade later. In December 1991, the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Macedonia, through a letter sent to Brussels, requested the recognition of the Republic of Macedonia's independence by the European Economic Community. The latter set up a commission to evaluate

Macedonia's application, led by Robert Badinter. The commission issued a positive report, stating that "Macedonia had satisfied all of the EC's conditions: constitutional changes making clear that the new state had no territorial claims beyond its existing borders; no use of hostile propaganda against its neighbors; and a pledge to fully respect the UN Charter..."(Sokalski 2003, p.46) Once the report was published, the EC announced recognitions of Croatia and Slovenia, and later of Bosnia. Macedonia was left ostracized by this decision. Despite EC's hesitation, many regional and global states, such as Bulgaria, Croatia, Slovenia, Turkey, Russia, and later China recognized Macedonia as early as 1992. The United States, on the other hand, declared that it would recognize the Republic Macedonia's independence, regardless of Europe's position. The USA recognized formally the country on February 8, 1994, while on September 13, 1995, the two countries established diplomatic relations. Furthermore, the USA recognized the country under its constitutional name, Republic of Macedonia, in 2004 (Bojadzievski, VOA, 2015).

Among the major factors that complicated the recognition of Macedonia's independence and consequently the additional criteria that EEC imposed on Macedonia as a precondition for its recognition by the European states, was a reactivated dispute with Greece. Under severe diplomatic pressure, Macedonia, in the early years of its independence, was forced to change its flag and a few articles in its constitution. The main obstacle between the two states, however, remained the name of the state, namely the term *Macedonia*, which Greece demanded to be removed from the northern neighbor's official name (Daskalovski, 2017).

Found in a situation of internal and external insecurity, the Republic of Macedonia decided to pursue the unidirectional orientation of the other, former Yugoslav countries, proclaiming the agenda for the country's double integration into NATO and the EU. But in the regional context, Macedonia established a specific foreign policy doctrine, based on 'equidistance' from the neighbors. According to the supporters of this cautious foreign policy approach, the country was obliged to maintain an 'equidistance' from its neighbors, in order to preserve inter-ethnic relations, as an internal factor of stability, and join Euro-Atlantic structures, as an external factor of stability. Maintaining this balance would be difficult if Macedonia were to demonstrate closeness or prioritization of any of its neighbors (Marolov and Rodrigues, 2014). However, under new circumstances, and especially as a result of the EU's condition on

Macedonia to work on resolving issues with the minority, as well on solving the issues with Greece and Bulgaria, Macedonia abandoned the equidistance approach.

Macedonia's admission to the UN in 1993 occurred while the latter was in difficult circumstances. The country had undefined border with Serbia, a language dispute with Bulgaria, complex relations with Albania because of the status of the Albanians of in Macedonia, and a series of disputes with Greece, ranging from the name of the state to the rights of the Macedonian minority living in this state. The country was admitted to the UN not with its constitutional name (then Republic of Macedonia) but under the reference "the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", which the Macedonian leadership promptly rejected. However, having no other option, Macedonia's government accepted such condition of membership in this organization, despite the opposition's protest that the national interest was being damaged (Marolov and Mitev, 2016).

In 1994, the NATO alliance, through the launched program, Partnership for Peace (PfP), aimed at transforming the former socialist states' armies into professional military formations, placing civilian control over militaries, thus expanding the democratic order and stability. The Republic of Macedonia took part in some of this program's activities, simultaneously preparing the formal application for NATO membership, which it would submit only four years later. The European Union, in 1996 through the program *Agenda 2000: for a stronger and wider Union*, intended to promote sustainable regional cooperation among the countries that aimed membership. Macedonia's work towards achieving NATO criteria for membership has mainly been conducted within the Ministry of Defense, while being closely supervised by the North Atlantic Council (Stojanovski and Marolov, 2017). However, no one could foresee that due to the external blockade and the internal instability, Macedonia's road to NATO and the EU would be much longer (Pendarovski, 2012).

The equity-distance policy was declared obsolete and was replaced with a new orientation, following the formation of a new government coalition between VMRO and DPA in 1998. This new orientation was called 'positive energy' which would serve as a guiding principle in building more direct relations with the neighbors. The first results of this policy were felt when the Republic of Macedonia began building economic cooperation with Greece and Bulgaria. (Marolov and Rodrigues, 2014)

Meanwhile the Republic of Macedonia was progressing towards membership into EU and NATO. In 2000, Macedonia signed the Stabilization and Association agreement with the EU, gaining a special status called “potential candidate”. Soon after the 2001 conflict, Macedonia surprised Brussels when in 2004 submitted its candidacy. In 2005 it gained the candidate status by the European Council. Similarly, Macedonia was progressing towards NATO membership. In 2002 was founded the fundamental trilateral initiative between Macedonia, Albania, and Croatia. This initiative, which later transformed into the Adriatic Charter, aimed at founding a quadrangle in the Balkan’s region, which would bring these countries closer to the security umbrella of NATO. The Republic of Macedonia continued to show its commitment to NATO by sending military forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. But, according to Pendarovski (2012), NATO, besides being a military alliance, in which realm Macedonia had advanced remarkably, it was also an organization which promoted stability through economic progress, social cohesion, and consolidated democracy. In this aspect, Macedonia was lagging behind.

Regardless of the advancement made in the Euro-Atlantic agenda, the open disputes Macedonia had with its neighbors, but especially with Greece, brought the integration dynamics to a stall point. In the 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest, Macedonia’s bid for membership was turned down. “‘We have agreed that an invitation to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia will be issued as soon as a mutually acceptable solution to the name issue has been reached,’ NATO Secretary-General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, told a news conference” (Reuters, 2008). The declaration at NATO’s Summit was unique in character, as it recognized that Macedonia had fulfilled the criteria set by the Alliance, yet the latter couldn’t grant the country membership due to Greece’s opposition. The diplomatic endeavors to get Macedonia into NATO under its provisional name failed as well, despite such option being foreseen in the Interim Accord of 1995. The dispute with Greece obstructed the EU integration process as well. Although in 2009 Macedonia received a positive recommendation by the Commission to begin accession talks, the EU officials promptly declared that Macedonia’s further progress towards the EU depended greatly on the resolution of the disputes with its neighbors, especially with Greece (BBC, 2014).

Macedonia’s government responded to Greece’s blockade by filing an application at the International Court of Justice, instituting proceedings against Greece, in regard to the interpretation and implementation of the Interim Accord, signed between the two countries in

1995. Macedonia maintained that Greece, by impeding its membership in NATO, had violated the agreement, according to which, Greece would not object Macedonia's membership into international organizations under its provisional name. The Court ruled in favor of the Republic of Macedonia, concluding that Greece "had failed to comply with its obligation" (ICJ report, 2011), deriving from the Interim Accord. Yet, the symbolic nature of the Court's ruling, caused the stalemate to continue. Its decision in favor of Macedonia did not affect at all the foreign policy turn-out, as Greece continued to firmly maintain its attitude towards the naming dispute. It became obvious that this political problem with Greece would become a determining factor in stalling Macedonia's integration agenda (Daskalovski, 2017).

The obstruction of the Euro-Atlantic agenda caused a profound disappointment in the Republic of Macedonia. Although from 2009 to 2015 the country continued to make some less significant movements towards the EU¹¹ and NATO, its pace slowed down dramatically. Furthermore, Macedonian officials even marked an 'undeclared' retreat from the EU and NATO agenda, indirectly arguing that accepting a compromise for the name dispute with Greece, is too high of a 'national' price that isn't worth paying (Pendarovski 2012, Koneska 2014). This situation led to the consideration of some other foreign policy alternatives. Some such endeavors were the reawakening of the Non-Aligned Movement¹², a greater rapprochement with Turkey, argumentation about the need of a new security concept, through the new Euro-Asian security architecture, and the Euro-Asian Economic Community (Pendarovski, 2012). However, despite these latent signals, no government has officially ever announced a different foreign policy strategic orientation (Vankovska, 2017).

The Republic of Macedonia's foreign policy seemed to take a new approach in 2017. Coming out of a long political crisis, the newly established government focused on the open foreign policy issues. Its first steps were made in the direction of improving the relations with the neighbors, which had become the main obstacle to the country's international integration. In August 2017, the Republic of Macedonia signed a Friendship Accord with Bulgaria, an agreement aiming to terminate the lingering disputes between the two, over the Macedonian

¹¹After Greece's opposition to the start of the negotiations between the EU and the Republic of Macedonia, the EC devised a special mechanism, the High Level Accession Dialogue, in order to maintain the pace of reforms and implementation of the NPAA. This instrument however was not a substitution for the negotiation process.

¹²A forum of 120 countries, founded in 1961, whose members are not opposed or formally aligned with any of the major power blocks.

language and history. Besides mending their bilateral relationship, this agreement was perceived as a positive step which might help Macedonia in its bid to join NATO and EU. This act was followed by another move, with the purpose of resolving the long-term dispute with Greece. In this direction the new government made some symbolic changes such as the change of the name of the airport and highway, which bore the name of Alexander the Great, a glorious historical figure claimed by both countries. Whether these steps signify a new approach of the country's foreign policy and whether they'll culminate with the resolution of the most pressing bilateral issues, are part of the inquiry of this research, which aims to explore whether there is an interrelation between foreign policy action or initiative and inter-ethnic relations¹³.

As elaborated above, besides the main objectives of Macedonia's foreign policy, which are integration into international organizations such as NATO and the EU, the relations of this country with its neighbors are as important and determining, not only for the country's performance in the international realm, but also for its internal stability. But what are the roots of the disputes with the neighbors and how did these relationships develop? What was the influence of the neighboring states over the realization of the strategic orientation of Macedonia's foreign policy? The section below will present, in a brief manner, the relations between the Republic of Macedonia and its neighbors since independence.

Relations with Albania

Regarding the relations between Macedonia and Albania, Sokalski (2003) argues that they've largely depended on the domestic situation of Albania as well as the state of the Albanian minority in Macedonia. Anyhow, the formation of a new country on the eastern border was welcomed by Albania, mainly because it was considered as a "counterweight to Serbia and an irritant to Greece" (Pettifer, 1999, p.21). Albania recognized the Republic of Macedonia's independence in 1993. However, according to Marolov (2013, p.84), the initial endeavors of Albania's foreign policy were to condition the recognition of Macedonia with the fulfilment of the demands for advanced rights by the Albanian minority of Macedonia. The Republic of

¹³This chapter is written before the Agreement between Greece and Macedonia took place in 2018, which changed the country's constitutional name into the Republic of North Macedonia. Hence it reflects the author's dilemmas of the then situation regarding the way forward of the country's foreign policy.

Albania, though willing to recognize the new state, still maintained that it didn't belong only to the ethnic Macedonians (Isakovic, 2000, p.220). Nonetheless, the internal fragile state of the Republic of Albania, and the external pressure, especially by the USA, to refrain from involvement in the internal affairs of Macedonia, with the purpose of preserving peace in the Balkans, rendered Albania a non-threatening factor towards Macedonia's existence. It also caused it to recognize Macedonia unconditionally (Engstrom 2002, Marolov 2013,). In 1992, through an official declaration by the Republic of Albania, the latter recognized the independence of the new country, but not under its constitutional name. It rather recognized the country under the provisional name, "the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (Marolov, 2013, p.85). Such ambiguous position by the Republic of Albania towards the Republic of Macedonia, according to Lani and Shmidt (2008, p.86), resulted on one hand, by its desire to enhance cooperation and strengthen economic ties with Macedonia, and on the other hand, by its concern of not giving the impression that it was neglecting its role in defending the Albanian minority in Macedonia. This role was the topic which caused the major contentions between the two countries. Albania conditioned its relationship with Macedonia on the advancement of the political status of ethnic Albanians since 1997. Ortakovski (2001) argues that in turn, Albania made no reciprocal efforts to advance the Macedonian ethnic minority rights in Albania. The rhetoric of Albania's President during the 90s, in favor of the fulfilment of the political and constitutional demands of the Albanian ethnic group in Macedonia, caused indignation and protest in the ethnic Macedonian group, who considered such position by its western neighbor as classic interference in their internal affairs. Relations aggravated when official Tirana held side with the radical wing of the Albanian party Democratic Party for Prosperity (DPP), which wanted to withdraw from the governing coalition due to the unwillingness of the Macedonian coalition partner to fulfill the demands of the Albanian political factor. Albania's president, Sali Berisha, not only sided with the radical wing of this party, but also criticized heavily the other wing for collaborating with the Macedonian government. He toned down his position only after receiving criticism from Skopje and most importantly from the US (Human Rights Watch, 1996). The cold relations between the two countries continued to deteriorate even more when Albania came to the support of the founding of an Albanian language university in Tetovo, which Macedonia's government treated as classic meddling in its internal affairs. Berisha's

praising of the self-proclaimed rector of this university, caused additional strains in the relationship between the two countries (Koinova, 2008).

The relations between the two countries, however, have not been linear. From a cold beginning, the two countries began to improve their relations during the mid-90s. After the reciprocal visits of the foreign policy officials and the establishment of diplomatic relations, the two countries began their rapprochement. The first steps indicating the new relationship were the opening of borders by Albania for Macedonia, during the Greek blockade towards the latter. In efforts to help the economy of Macedonia, Albania gave the latter access to its seaport in Durrës, which was highly important for the Macedonian economy, considering the trade blockade by the southern neighbor (Lani and Shmidt, 2008, p.86). On the other hand, Macedonia supported Albania during the 1997 Civil War, opening its airport in Ohrid. Another positive step was Albania's recognition of the Macedonian minority and their rights in the areas where they were concentrated. Koinova (2008) argues that a relaxation of relations became more evident with a change of government in Albania of 1997, with the new Prime Minister, Fatos Nano, demonstrating a greater commitment towards regional cooperation, visiting Macedonia twice in 1998 and signing eight bilateral agreements with Macedonian government. In regard to the Albanian question in Macedonia, he maintained a distanced approach, "openly discouraging separatism and stressing that Albanians should view their future in light of regional and European integration" (ICJ 1999, as cited in Koinova 2008).

Albania's corruption problems are also viewed by some authors (ex. Thayer, 1999 as cited in Brown et al 1999; Koinova 2008) to have had spillover effects in Macedonia's internal stability. The discovery of a paramilitary activity in Macedonia's army in 1993 is thought to have had ties with corrupted officials in Albania. Illegal crossing of the Albanian Macedonian border happened continuously despite this border being guarded by UNPREDEP and OSCE missions. Upon Albania's collapse in 1997, illegal weaponry was also smuggled into Macedonia and the trend worsened further during the 1999 refugee crisis of Kosovo. The armed conflict which erupted in Macedonia in 2001 is also thought to have had connections with Albanian politicians, although officially the Prime Minister of Albania, Ilir Meta, publicly condemned the event (Koinova, 2008).

As to the ethnic Albanian rights in Macedonia, with the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement (2001), Albania considers that the issue of political and constitutional rights of the

Albanian minority has found legal basis for a dignified solution. Albania has continuously supported this document and has appealed constantly for its full implementation. According to the Foreign Ministry's official page (Relations with the countries of the region, accessed on May 2019):

Albania has repeatedly sought full respect for the Ohrid Framework Agreement, which regulates the relations between the two main ethnic groups of Macedonia, Macedonians and Albanians, enhances trust between them and serves as a basis for democratic stability in the country and Macedonia's intention to integrate into Euro-Atlantic structures, the EU and NATO. In this context, there are still delays regarding the implementation of the Albanians' right to use their mother tongue, the Albanian national flag, employment, budget, etc.

Albania also expressed the support of Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic agenda, showing a diligent co-operation in the framework of the Adriatic Charter and other spheres. However, the Ohrid Agreement has several times resulted into a cause for disputes between the two countries. At the NATO summit, held in Wels, Prime Minister Rama directly conditioned Albania's support for Macedonia's NATO membership with a request for the fulfillment of the Ohrid Framework Agreement (Milori, 2015). Nonetheless, these declarations were later interpreted by official Tirana as non-conditioning. On the contrary, Albania reemphasized its full support for Macedonia's membership into the Euro-Atlantic structures.

The sensitive relations between the two countries escalated in 2016, after the parliamentary election in Macedonia, which ended the one-year political crisis. Before the formation of the new coalition, the main Albanian parties were summoned in a meeting by the Prime Minister of Albania, Edi Rama, in Tirana. Ten days after this meeting, the Albanian political parties in Macedonia released a joint platform, which would serve as basis for their coalition formation negotiations (Kadriu, 2017). This platform however, caused fierce reactions in Macedonia. The President of the state, Gorge Ivanov, refused to hand over the mandate for government formation to the Macedonian party SDSM for having accepted the demands which derived from the Albanian joint platform. In an interview for a foreign editorial, the President qualified this document as a platform of a foreign country. Calling it *Tiranska Platforma* (Tirana Platform), the President argued that this document risks the state's sovereignty and that it is anti-constitutional (EBW archives, 2017). This document instigated a wave of protests under the initiative "for United Macedonia", during which the protesters demanded to end this platform (Marusic, 2017). The Albanian Prime Minister, on the other hand, denied the existence of a

Tirana Platform, stating that “there is no platform of Tirana, but a platform of the Albanian political parties, whom we offered our help” (EWB Archives,2017).

The relations between the two countries have developed in the spirit of cooperation and reciprocal support since then. The adoption of the law on the official use of the Albanian language by the Assembly of Macedonia has been welcomed by the high officials of Albania, qualifying it as an act with a historical importance not only for the Albanians, but also for the European future of Macedonia (Portalb, 2018).

Albania’s internal difficulties with the rule of law, democracy, economy, etc., caused the latter to not “focus more than a rhetorical attention on issues raised by Macedonia’s Albanians” (ICG Macedonia Report, 1997 p.3). However, even if purely rhetorical, its constant interference in support of the Albanian ethnic group in Macedonia causes continuous mistrust, often causing the Macedonians to question the sincerity of Albania’s commitment to the territorial and political sovereignty of Macedonia. Taken in general, Albania’s role in terms of Macedonia’s (in)security issues can be seen as dual or Janus-faced. Under international pressure, it has maintained a non-interventionist official approach. Unofficially, however, it has pursued an interventionist agenda (Koinova, 2008).

Relations with Bulgaria

The disputes, which characterize the relations between Macedonia and Bulgaria, begin since the 90s, although, according to Marolov (2013, p.98), the roots of the problematic relations go further back in time. As the Bulgarian president has claimed, Macedonia has been treated as “the most romantic part of Bulgarian history”, a statement which by itself reflects the identity contestation as the essence of the dispute between the two countries. Engstrom (2002) attributes the roots of the dispute to several factors. It begins with Bulgaria’s perception of Macedonia’s people and land. Bulgaria still marks the 3rd of March as national holiday, as on this date, in 1878, the San Stefan agreement was signed, which foresaw a big part of Macedonia’s geographic territory to become part of the new Bulgarian state. Within a short time, this agreement was cancelled by the Great Powers, fearing that a big Bulgarian state would bring Russian domination in the Balkans. They handed Macedonia’s territory back to the Ottoman empire.

Bulgaria regarded this act as violation of the national rights of Bulgarians, as it left a part of the Bulgarian ethnic group outside the borders of the new state of Bulgaria.

Another factor for the dispute between the two countries is history. In the Bulgarian perception, many of the national figures of Macedonia represent, in fact, Bulgarian heroes. Moreover, Bulgarians contest the uniqueness of the Macedonian history, claiming that history is shared by both countries. By denying the historical uniqueness, they also deny the existence of a unique nation, which is different from the others (Engstrom, 2002, p.8). Macedonia and Bulgaria have disputes also about the ethnic minorities living in both countries. Bulgaria maintains that a part of Macedonians are actually ethnic Bulgarians, while Macedonians accuse Bulgarians for not recognizing the Macedonian minority living in Bulgaria (Karadzovski and Adamczyk, 2014, p.223).

Paradoxically, Bulgaria was the first country to formally recognize Macedonia as an independent state in 1992. Emerging in difficult political circumstances, Macedonia's recognition by Bulgaria had a special significance and became a basis for building good neighborly relations (Marolov, 2013, p.99). While Bulgaria recognized the new state, it refused to recognize the Macedonians as a constituting nation, which is different from Bulgarians. They also disputed the authenticity of the Macedonian language, considering it a dialect of the Bulgarian language (Poulton, 2000, p.116). Furthermore, in order to appease Greece, which strongly reacted to Bulgaria's recognition of independent Macedonia, the Bulgarian president Zhelev stated that "from the Bulgarian point of view, Macedonia was only a 'geographical term, and not the name of a nation'" (Engstrom, 2002, p.7). The 'language problem' between the two countries burdened further their relationship. Every cooperation was made more difficult due to the non-recognition of the Macedonian language. Although the Bulgarian president Zhelev, stated upon the recognition of Macedonia, that Bulgaria will not interfere in Macedonia's internal affairs, by denying the self-determination of the population in Macedonia, Bulgaria in fact, did quite the opposite (Stojanovski et. al, 2014).

The blockade between the two countries was resolved in 1999, when a joint declaration was signed. Based on this declaration, the language issue was resolved and both sides agreed on using the following formula: "Bulgarian language according to the Bulgarian constitution, and Macedonian language according to the Macedonian constitution" (Stojanovski et. al, 2014, p.305). In this manner, the language issue between Macedonia and Bulgaria was treated in legal

terms and not as an ethno-national issue. Through this formula, Bulgaria and Macedonia could draft official documents, without Bulgaria having to recognize officially Macedonian language and indirectly the Macedonian nation.

The agreement enabled the normalization of relations between the two countries and furthermore became a basis for Bulgaria's support of Macedonia's path towards the EU and NATO. It committed both countries to mutual cooperation, especially in the field of economy, infrastructural connectivity, tourism, culture, education, health and sports, etc. However, strangely enough, some clauses in this agreement, obliged only Macedonia and not both, producing asymmetric effects between the two states. An example is the following: *"The Republic of Macedonia hereby declares that nothing in its Constitution can or should be interpreted as constituting, now or whenever in the future, a basis for interfering in the internal affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria for the purpose of defending the status and the rights of persons who are not citizens of the Republic of Macedonia."* (Stojanovski et. al, 2014, p.207).

The position of Bulgaria changed in 2006. In this period, the Bulgarian President and the Foreign Minister stated that the Bulgarian support would not be unconditional "and in the future, Bulgarian support will depend on the willingness and the success of the Republic of Macedonia in adopting and maintaining a policy of good-neighborly relations" (Karadzoski and Adamczyk, 2014, p.224). This position was reconfirmed in 2008 as well, when following Greece's veto in NATO's Summit in Bucharest, the spokesperson of the Bulgarian Foreign Minister stated that "taking into account the historical and geographical determinants, Bulgaria would not be supporting Skopje unconditionally." (Karadzoski and Adamczyk, 2014, p.224). "In this context, the then Foreign Minister of Bulgaria, Nikolai Mladenov, in 2012, stated that the initially announced unconditional support for Macedonia's European integration is no longer guaranteed, unless the relations between the two states face improvement" (Markova, 2018, p.3).

The relations between the two countries worsened even more when in 2012, at the European Council, after Greece, Bulgaria also blocked the opening of negotiations for Macedonia. As a condition for removing the blockade by Bulgaria, Sofia imposed the signing of an agreement for good neighborly relations (Karadzoski and Adamczyk, 2014, p.225).

The relations between the two countries moved from a frozen point in 2017, when the two signed a bilateral agreement, which was a build-up of the 1999 agreement. This agreement focused on the good neighborly relations and cooperation in key fields between the two

countries. This agreement was furthermore perceived as a key step for removing the blockade on the Euro-Atlantic integrations, and as basis for turning Bulgaria into one of the strongest supporters of Macedonia in its integration path (Đukanović, 2018).

Relations with Greece

Greece was the most reluctant country to accept the new reality of a dismantled Yugoslavia. The reason for this wasn't only the loss of a stable market, which Greece had enjoyed for years in Yugoslavia, but also the reawakening of an old problem, which affected the ancient cultural heritage and brought two independent states into a clash. Contrary to some Greek claims of being unaware of the Macedonian issue before its independence from Yugoslavia, Jovanovski and Vasilevska (2018) argue that not only the Greek factor has been well aware and involved in the Macedonian issues long before 1990, but this issue has many times presented a "possible source for misunderstandings"(p.6) between Greece and Yugoslavia, part of which was the then People's Republic of Macedonia. According to the authors, the Macedonian issue was even considered as the only open issue between Greece and Yugoslavia, as stated by a Greek foreign minister, during a meeting with his counterpart in 1960. As the article points out, the unreconciled positions of the two states (Yugoslavia and Greece) on the Macedonian issue, were the reason for the gradual deterioration of relations between them. The deep roots of this dispute, which go way back in time, explain the reemergence of the dispute after Macedonia's independence. Thus, the dispute between Greece and the Republic of Macedonia, as known in the present times, is in fact not as recent, as sudden, and as unexpected. Having stated that, however, this work will focus on the more recent period of this dispute, namely, on the period since 1990 onwards.

Since its independence, Greece had decided to use all methods within its power, as a member of the EU, to prevent the recognition of the new state called 'Macedonia' (Pettifer, 1999, p.23). The essence of the contest between the two countries is the constitutional name of the new country, *Macedonia*, as well as its state symbols such as the *Sun of Kutlesh* / *Star of Vergina* (depicted on Macedonia's state flag till 1995), which, are appropriated by Greece as their own identification symbols (Nedelkov, 2016). However, as Ljorovski et. al (2019) argue

that such approach reduces the true dimensions of the dispute, which have developed into multiple directions, manifesting through political, semantical, cultural, ethnic and other issues. Furthermore, Daskalovski (2017) calls an euphemism the ‘name dispute’ between Macedonia and Greece, claiming that the latter, in fact, contests the “very existence of the Macedonian state and nation” (p.331) while hiding behind the name issue.

Certainly, this complex contest is perceived differently by the two sides in conflict. According to Sofos (2013, pp.226-228), the Macedonian side views the conflict with Greece as an irrational demand. The denial of the people’s right to call themselves in a way by which they identify, to the Macedonian people represents a violation of the right to self-determination, both as a legal and moral right. Another argument is that there are no two legal entities (states) which bear the same name and the same nationality. The name, furthermore, is an expression of a state’s sovereignty and equality among states, thus Greece’s insistence on changing Macedonia’s name means a denial of its sovereignty. Also, as an accepted international principle, the name of the state represents a purely domestic matter. Hence Macedonia’s right to determine its form of representation (externally and internally) is violated at the moment when it needs to be negotiated with Greece (Daskalovski, 2017). Based on the arguments above and many others, the demand of Greece to change the name of this country and the ownership that Greece tries to get over this name, represents to Macedonians a non-negotiable issue.

The Greek side, on the other hand, views the naming of this state *as the Republic of Macedonia* as a provocation by the northern neighbor, as a tendency of appropriating key elements of the Greek ancient history, and furthermore as a tendency to disguise potential territorial claims towards Greece. The use of the name *Macedonia*, according to Kofos (2001, as cited in Daskalovski, 2017) questions “the validity of the Greek national narrative in the region of Macedonia and the close relationship of Greek Macedonians with their past and their tradition” (p. 330). Sofos (2013) describes this contest as an issue deeply enrooted in Greeks’ psychology, who for 200 years learn the Ancient Macedonian and Hellenic past as part of the Greek history. Thus, any use of the elements of this history, be it the name *Macedonia* itself, to the Greeks represents an unjustified appropriation.

The mobilization of the Greek population against the name of *Macedonia* and the emergence of the first protests occurred immediately after Macedonia’s independence. The massive contestation to the use of the name *Macedonia* and of other symbols, either by the

nationalistic circles, by the civil sector, or by the general population, caused this issue to become an integral part of the political agenda of Greece. It furthermore caused the latter to develop multi-faceted diplomatic pressure upon Macedonia, manifested through diplomatic blockade on the state's international recognition and integration, economic embargoes, and even military threats (Stojanovski et. al, 2014). It, thus turned into an issue, which impeded the rapprochement and the building of sustainable relations between the two countries.

Greece avoided referring to the neighboring country as the *Republic of Macedonia* and used instead the reference term FYROM (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), or the name of the capital, Skopje. In addition, it led an active campaign against the international recognition of the Republic of Macedonia. It considered as unacceptable the admission of the state into prestigious international organizations such as the UN, under its constitutional name, Republic of Macedonia (Pop-Angelov, 2010, p.4). Using its leverage within the international community, Greece began lobbying to isolate Macedonia internationally.

In 1993, the Republic of Macedonia became a member of UN, but not under its constitutional name. According to UN Security Council's 817 Resolution, due to the differences between the two states on the use of the name Macedonia, the latter would be referred to in the UN under the provisional name FYROM (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), until a mutually acceptable solution was found between the two countries (UNSCR, 1993).

According to Pop-Angelov (2010, p.4-5), the recognition of Macedonia by the USA in 1994 and the following establishment of diplomatic relations in 1995, represented a concern for the Greeks and a weakening of its diplomatic position. In response, the Greek government decided to suspend the trade links with Macedonia, imposing an oil embargo and closing the border to prevent the exchange of goods between the two countries.

Under Greek pressure, Macedonia was forced to undertake a series of changes. Among them were the amendment of several constitutional articles, which according to Greece, represented territorial claims by Macedonia (Perry, 2000). The new amendments specified that Macedonia wouldn't project any territorial claim towards its neighbors, and it wouldn't interfere in the sovereign rights of other states (Pop-Angelov, 2010, p.17). In 1995, Macedonia also changed its official flag, which depicted the *Star of Vergina*, a sun with sixteen rays, from the era of ancient Macedonian kingdom (Shkaric, Student Project, 2009).

The relations between the two countries improved slightly in 1995. The two countries signed an Interim Accord, in which, each side agreed to make certain concessions. Macedonia agreed to change the state flag and adopt certain constitutional amendments in order to clarify that it had no territorial pretensions towards its neighbors. Greece, on the other hand, assumed the obligation to not hinder Macedonia's integration into international organization under its provisional name, FYROM (Marolov, 2013, p.112).¹⁴

But the cooperation epoch didn't last long. The cold relations reached its peak in 2008, when at NATO's Summit in Bucharest, Greece vetoed Macedonia's accession to the alliance, despite having accomplished the required criteria (Fidanovski, 2018). Greece announced that it would hold the same position regarding EU integration as well. Despite the International Court of Justice's verdict in favor of Macedonia, Greece continued to block the country's international integration in the following years. In 2012, at the European Council summit, the leaders of EU countries, in unanimous manner, required from the Republic of Macedonia to build good neighborly relations and find a mutually acceptable solution to the name issue with Greece, under UN mediation. Thus, "the conditional invitation to NATO was translated into a conditional open recommendation to open accession talks with the EU." (Fidanovski 2018, p.26).

The relations between them deteriorated further as a result of launching the so-called project "Skopje 2014" (Karadzoski and Adamczyk, 2014, pp.221-222). This project, which initially aimed to rebuild the capital of the Republic of Macedonia, Skopje, broadened its scope to encompass the erection of monuments and the naming of roads and airports, after the glorious figures of ancient Macedonia. Such policy became known as the 'antiquization process' of Macedonia. (Marolov, 2013, p.112). Such process infuriated further Athens, which once more blamed its northern neighbor for appropriating its historical and cultural elements. (Karadzoski and Adamczyk, 2014, Fidanovski, 2018)

The first changes in the relationship between the two countries emerged in 2017. By changing the name of the airport and roads, the Republic of Macedonia made some symbolic steps towards rapprochement with Greece (Radio Free Europe, 2018). Since the 1995 Interim Accord, this move represents a signal for a major change in the foreign policy approach

¹⁴Greece violated this provision in 2008, when it blocked Macedonia's membership in NATO, despite having fulfilled the required criteria to join this alliance. The case was taken before the ICJ, which ruled in favor of Macedonia, reinforcing Greece's violation of the Interim Accord.

undertaken by Macedonia until now. A separate sub-chapter will delve on the significance of the Prespa Agreement, signed between Macedonia and Greece after the empirical research of this thesis took place. Due to its implications in Macedonia's foreign policy and inter-ethnic relations, an extensive elaboration of this agreement is deemed important, thus presented from desk research.

Relations with Kosovo

The relations between the Republic of Macedonia and Kosovo are specific for the very fact that Kosovo is a sovereign state only since 2008. Although the official relations between Kosovo and Macedonia are quite recent, the two countries have developed a relationship long before Kosovo's independence. The fact that Kosovo was involved in Yugoslavia's conflicts indicated that the Republic of Macedonia should build a foreign policy with Kosovo, before the latter was a state in the formal sense of the word. The escalating resistance of the Albanian population in Kosovo against Milosevic's repression was the reason for the then President Gligorov's request for deployment of UN observes in Macedonia. There was a fear of a spill-over possibility in the northern border of the country (Liotta, 2010). According to Marolov (2013, pp.95-96), the official political position of the Republic of Macedonia was divided in regard to the conflict between Kosovo and Serbia. The then president of Macedonia, Kiro Gligorov, claimed that the remaining of Kosovo under Serbia would be a better option for the Republic of Macedonia, in which case, it would border only four neighbors. On the other hand, the then Prime Minister of the Republic of Macedonia, Ljupco Georgievski, was in favor of a closer cooperation with Kosovo, proven by the reciprocal official visits and the intention of opening a mission office in Kosovo. But such unharmonized positions were not divided along party lines.

Regarding Kosovo, Macedonia faced another crisis. In the middle of the conflict between Kosovo and Serbia, a big wave of refugees settled in Macedonia. Although the country's capacity of accommodating refugees was only about 20,000, in total there were settled around 350,000 refugees (Marolov, 2013, p.96). The settling of refugees from Kosovo in Macedonia was met with certain fear about potential consequences for the country. President Gligorov even proposed the opening of a corridor through Macedonia, which would allow the refugees only to

pass through the country and settle in Albania. But this proposal was fiercely refuted by the Albanian coalition partner of that time, the DPA. Some of the main reasons for the resistance of the Macedonian officials to accept refugees was the economic inability to accommodate such a flux of people, in a time when the country was just recovering from the economic embargo imposed by Greece, and was still dealing with a fragile economy. According to Ortakovski (2001) the volume of refugees fleeing into Macedonia, brought the latter nearly to an economic and social collapse. The other reason was the fear that such a big number of refugees would disrupt the demographic balance in Macedonia, causing the number of ethnic Albanians in the country to increase (Perry, 2000). A third reason was linked to security, expressed as fear of infiltration of radical elements from Kosovo into Macedonia, which could instigate radicalism in the Albanians of Macedonia (Vankovska, 1999, pp.11-12). In this context, Krcmaric (2014) links Kosovo's refugees flow into Macedonia with an almost civil war in the latter, had not been for the international community which prevented it effectively. He argues that the refugee influx disrupted the ethnic balance in the state relative to which power was distributed. Thus, it was considered, that the refugees' stay in Macedonia (especially the ones who'd remain permanently in the country) would "tilt the latent power balance in favor of the ethnic Albanians"(p.206). This rapid shift in power caused by the refugee influx, the author argues, caused almost a full-scale conflict in Macedonia, prevented by an international intervention.

Many authors perceive the armed conflict of 2001 in the Republic of Macedonia, as a spillover of the surrounding events, and especially of the conflict in Kosovo. Daskalovski (2004) argues that the inter-ethnic relations in Macedonia suffered mostly during the Kosovo War and NATO air bombing campaign. Liotta (2003, pp.96-98), relates the emergence of Kosovo's Liberation Army in Kosovo, with the following emergence of the Liberation Army of Presevo, Medvege, and Bujanovci in Presevo's valley, Serbia, and finally with the emergence of the National Liberation Army in Macedonia. He claims that the 'success' conflict story in one place, encouraged the rising of a military formation in another place. In other words, the formation of one army led to the other. The spillover from Kosovo's war is described in terms of weapons' smuggling, army recruits, fighting tactics/skills of the NLA, etc. (Krcmaric 2014). Schulz and Sorensen (2020) argue along similar lines when stating that the Kosovo conflict had a direct effect over the relations between the Macedonian ethnic majority and Albanian biggest minority. Likewise, they view the NLA as "closely linked and partly overlapped with the KLA in

Kosovo”(p.98). Furthermore, the strategy of the NLA is argued to have been inspired from the KLA’s approach. The authors argue that the NLA was determined to gain attention from the international community in a fashion that had worked for the KLA in Kosovo, that is by using direct violence, instead of passive resistance strategy.

The relations between the two countries improved with Macedonia’s recognition of Kosovo’s independence in 2008. Marolov (2013, p.96) argues that the decision was based on the rational thinking of the Macedonian politicians, who followed the position of the United States and the demand by the Albanian political factor in Macedonia. The only condition posed by Macedonia was the respect of the border demarcation with Kosovo, as foreseen by Ahtisaari’s plan. Since then, the countries have established reciprocal diplomatic relations and have focused on developing the economic cooperation.

In Kumanovo’s incident in 2015, where there was a shootout between Macedonia’s security forces and an armed group with Kosovo’s citizenship, there were allegations by some Macedonian authorities, that the aim of this incident was to destabilize the country through militant leaders from Kosovo. These allegations were made based on the activity of the Kosovar gunmen, who had fought in the Kosovo war of 1999 and the 2001-armed conflict in Macedonia (Bogdanovski, 2015). It seemed that Kosovo once again became a security threat to Macedonia. However, Kosovar authorities distanced themselves from the incident, emphasizing that they “condemn any involvement of the citizens of the Republic of Kosovo in Macedonia’s incidents aimed at destabilizing Kosovo and neighboring countries, putting peace and security to the test and endangering the lives and property of citizens” (Kelmendi, 2015). The then Prime Minister of Kosovo, Isa Mustafa, stressed that this incident hasn’t damaged the good relations between the two countries, putting down allegations that Kosovo is “exporter of terrorism” and claiming that his country would cooperate closely with its neighbors, including the Republic of Macedonia, in the war against terrorism (AA, 2015).

Relations with Serbia

The initial position of Macedonia to remain a sovereign republic within a restructured Yugoslavia, was considered as a pro-Serbian mood in Macedonia. According to Marolov (2013, p.118), this qualification is incorrect since Macedonia eventually decided to separate from

Yugoslavia, unwilling to remain under a mini federation dominated by Serbia. The ultimate decision to separate and declare independence, Daskalovski (2004) argues, came only after Gligorov's (Macedonia's President) and Izetbegovic's (Bosnia's President) efforts to mediate between Serbia and Slovenia for a peaceful resolution of the crisis in Yugoslavia failed.

Although Macedonia's secession was peaceful, the relations with Serbia, under Milosevic's regime weren't smooth. The first crack in their relations occurred when the Serb minority from Macedonia boycotted the independence referendum, followed by Serbia's rejection of the official percentage of the Serb minority in Macedonia, claiming it was much higher (Marolov, 2013, p.119). Serbia's stance on Macedonia's independence was divided. One group accepted the new reality of an independent Macedonia, while the other continued to consider Macedonia as Southern Serbia.

The relations between the two countries began to normalize after 1996, following the meeting of the two foreign ministers, who signed an agreement for normalization of relations. The reason for such a late recognition of Macedonia by Serbia, according to Marolov (2013, p.90), results from the hidden intentions of Milosevic in cooperation with Greece, regarding Macedonia. But the two war fronts Serbia had opened with Bosnia and Croatia, made impossible the realization of such intentions.¹⁵

As opposed to Bulgaria and Greece, Serbia did not contest Macedonia's constitutional name, Republic of Macedonia, or the uniqueness of its nation and language. Nevertheless, the recognition of Macedonia by Serbia did not pass without problems either. Two issues, which caused tension between the two countries, were the demarcation of the northern border between Macedonia and Serbia, and the recognition of the Macedonian Orthodox Church. Although it should've been treated as a technical issue, the demarcation of the northern border of Macedonia became more of a political issue, as it affected a part of Kosovo's territory, which Serbia did not recognize as a state entity. Hence Serbia didn't allow Kosovo's involvement in the northern border demarcation. Consequently, the Kosovo leaders protested the achieved agreement between Macedonia and Serbia, claiming that Serbia had no longer jurisdiction over Kosovo, therefore shouldn't interfere in the Kosovo-Macedonian border (Engstrom, 2002, p.10).

¹⁵At the beginning of the 90s the Greek and Serb governments made a secret agreement to partition Macedonia between Athens and Belgrade (see more in Philips, 2004, p.54, Liotta and Jebb, 2004, p.8, Marolov, 2013, etc.)

The second issue of dispute between the two countries, cannot be classified as a political or state issue. It is rather a religious dispute, nonetheless, with potential to become an inter-state conflict (Marolov, 2013, p.91). The essence of this problem stands in the non-recognition of the Serb Orthodox Church (SOC) of the autocephalous status of the Macedonian Orthodox Church (MOC) (Đukanović, 2019). When politicians have endeavored to discuss this issue, they have been criticized for interfering in the autonomy of the churches. But not seldom, this dispute has escalated into political clashes, as it the case when SOC prohibited Macedonia's delegation to celebrate the national holiday, *Illinden*, at the Prohor Pcinjski monastery ¹⁶.

Another disruption of relations between the two states occurred when Macedonia officially recognized Kosovo's independence. As a result of this action, Serbia expelled Macedonia's ambassador from Belgrade. But the relations between the two countries quickly ameliorated (Marolov, 2013, p.92). Another incident happened when Serbia abruptly withdrew its diplomatic staff from the embassy in Skopje. This action came as a result of the events of 27th April, 2017, when a group of people stormed the Parliament. It was evidenced that in the violent event was involved a Serbian intelligence officer, who worked as adviser at the Serbian Embassy in Macedonia (Đukanović, 2019). This involvement raised suspicion about Serbia's role in this event. Serbia categorically denied this accusation (Marusic and Zivanovic, 2017).

It seems that besides these disputes, the two countries have flattened their differences and have turned toward mutual economic and political cooperation, in the spirit of integrating into the EU, which both countries view as a common destination.

Bilateral Agreements between the Republic of Macedonia and its neighbors

This section will provide an overview and analysis of the two agreements signed between the Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria (2017), and the Republic of Macedonia and Greece (2018). Although this thesis has been mainly written in the period before these two agreements were signed and adopted, their importance in relation to the objects of this research (external threats and inter-ethnic relations) dictates the need for their elaboration in this section. In other words,

¹⁶This was a monastery where the ASNOM (Anti-fascist Assembly for the National Liberation of Macedonia) session was held, founding the state of Macedonia in 1944. After the demarcation of the border, this monastery became part of modern Serbia (Marolov, 2015, p.125)

these two agreements may have produced a double effect: on the international aspect they may have affected the Euro-Atlantic integration agenda by closing bilateral blocking issues, while on the domestic aspect, they may've indirectly affected the inter-ethnic relations. Although mainly in function of relieving external strains caused by bilateral disputes, these two agreements may have produced an internal impact as well, due to the relationship between the external factors and internal relations. In this regard, a distinction between the two agreements needs to be drawn in the sense that their impact is not of equal measure both in the external and internal realms. Thus, I'd argue that the agreement with Bulgaria affects less the inter-ethnic relations since it attempts to resolve issues which have no direct (impeding) power (at least not until the present moment) over Macedonia's international integration agenda. On the other hand, the agreement with Greece may produce greater impact over the inter-ethnic relations, as it undertakes the resolution of an issue with a blocking effect over Macedonia's international integrations. Therefore, the length and depth of the elaborations below will reflect the asymmetry in the significance of the two agreements in the international and national integration realms.

The Agreement with Bulgaria

The Agreement with Bulgaria, officially known as the Treaty of Friendship, Good-neighborliness, and Cooperation between the Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Bulgaria, was signed between the two governments in August, 2017. This Agreement aims to resolve the disputes between the two states, by leaving aside their differences mainly over historical and language issues. This document seeks to address complex issues on history, through the creation of the Joint Multidisciplinary Expert Commission for Historical and Education Issues (article 8 paragraph 2)¹⁷. The Agreement, does not refer directly to the language differences. However, in article 14 it stipulates that the agreement will exist in two languages according to the respective constitutions of the two signatory states.

Relevant to this thesis, this Agreement may represent a step towards the elimination of the risk that Macedonia may face by a potential Bulgarian obstruction of Macedonia's integration into the EU (and NATO, before becoming a member in March 2020) (Casule and

¹⁷More on the agreement between Bulgaria and Macedonia in: <https://mfa.gov.mk/en/document/1712>

Krasimirov, 2017). In this context, Vankovska (2020) characterizes the dispute as a “typical Balkan-like identity ‘dispute’ [which] was far less troublesome as Bulgaria never explicitly vetoed Macedonia’s association to NATO and EU as Greece used to do” (p.11). But, Đukanović (2019) argues that although Bulgaria has not officially exercised a veto against Macedonia’s international integration, it has often used EU and NATO as ‘latent threats’ to blackmail Macedonia over the open issues. This Agreement may in such case present a novelty in the relationship between the two states, as it asserts that Bulgaria will show support and commitment to Macedonia’s efforts in the EU and NATO path (Article 2, paragraph 2). Through such open commitment by Bulgaria, we may argue that the dilemma over the position of Bulgaria regarding Macedonia’s international integration is eliminated. But is this so? The arguments below may guide us to an answer.

The signed Agreement between the two countries was presented to the public swiftly and received no major public contestations. The media rushed to declare the Agreement as a landmark Accord which would bring a new momentum in the bilateral relationship of Skopje and Sofia. The EU officials also welcomed the Agreement qualifying it as “key to new regional dynamism” (EU Parliament Press Releases, 2017). The Agreement was welcomed by other members of the international community as well.

Though this Agreement produced much less internal echo in comparison to that of Prespa (with Greece), in fact it did not pass without reactions. The reactions were between the two main ethnic Macedonian parties (VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM). Whereas the signatory party of this Agreement, SDSM, qualifies this document as an “inspiration for cooperation and good-neighboring relations...bringing to the Macedonian nation and all citizens of the Republic of Macedonia a safe, stable, and secure future in NATO and EU” (SDSM, 2020), the opposition party, VMRO thinks differently. Qualifying the Agreement as damaging to Macedonia’s national interests, VMRO-DPMNE insisted that SDSM withdraws from the Agreement since the day it was signed (Faktor, 2017). The intra-ethnic division over this agreement was reflected in the voting process of the Parliament for the ratification of the Agreement. The latter was adopted with 61 votes in favor and 1 abstention. During this voting process the major Macedonian opposition party, VMRO-DPMNE, did not attend the session (DW, 2018). The intra-ethnic division as reflected on the two major parties, continued to develop to the present day. VMRO-DPMNE’s opposition to this Agreement and that of Prespa (with Greece) was reflected in their

electoral program of 2020. In its program, among other things, it states that VMRO-DPMNE's "foreign policy priority will be to stop and hinder all future initiatives which are launched with the national humility for expansion, deepening and personal interpretation of signed agreements by Zaev and Dimitrov" (Electoral Program of VMRO-DPMNE, 2020, pp.207-209). Since the 2020 elections produced the old-new government (SDSM and DUI), not much change regarding this Agreement and bilateral relations with Bulgaria is expected. However, the opposing attitudes of the Macedonian political factor illustrate the difficulties and lack of internal consensus in approaching the complex bilateral issues such as the one with Bulgaria.

The Albanian political factor in the Parliament voted in favor of this Agreement. In this regard, the inter-ethnic element in Macedonia seemed not affected by this Agreement. Although the ethnic Albanians seemed to have indifferent and uninvolved attitude towards this Agreement, they consensually supported the latter. In this context, the leader of the biggest Albanian party in coalition DUI, Ali Ahmeti, expressed the support of the Albanian political factor for this Agreement. Furthermore, he qualified this Agreement, alongside the Ohrid and Prespa Agreements, as "the Alpha and Omega of peace, stability, and security..." (Bajrami, MIA, 2020).

However, the way events developed in the upcoming period, cast doubts both over the possibility of the Agreement to end the open disputes and over the declared support of Bulgaria to Macedonia's EU integration efforts. In fact, soon after the signed Agreement, the rhetoric between the two countries' authorities began to roughen, reaching its deterioration peak in march 2020, when Macedonia was celebrating the green light of the EU Council of Ministers to start accession talks. Bulgaria's reaction towards this event was a threat to veto Macedonia's integration into the EU, arguing that there was lack of progress in the work of the Joint Commission. Adopting a so called "Framework position", Bulgaria attached to the Council of Minister's decision a separate statement, which, "among other things, insisted on scrapping references to the Macedonian language and to the existence of an ethnic Macedonian minority in Bulgaria." (Maksimovic 2020). Brunnbauer (2020) views the new conditions set forth by Bulgaria as an attempt of the latter to impose on Macedonia, in the name of mutual friendship, its own, very specific, viewpoints on Macedonia's history. The author argues that considering the low enthusiasm of old EU members to include the Balkan states into the EU soon, there would hardly be any EU member who'd confront or prevent such endeavors by Bulgaria.

Bulgaria's statement was condemned by Macedonia's Foreign ministry, deeming it as a document which doesn't alter the legal effect of the EU Council of Minister's decision for start of talks with Macedonia. Furthermore, according to Bojan Marichikj, an EU negotiator of Macedonia, Bulgaria's one-sided statement does not represent any list of pre-conditions for starting accession talks, and much less does it affect EU's decision for start of negotiations (Maksimovic 2020). This statement, or as Brunnbauer (2020) calls it, a *wish list* by Bulgaria, however, has become a new reason for the two countries to engage in a coarse discourse, mainly coming by the authorities in Sophia. In Vankovska's (2020) opinion, the Bulgarian demands articulated in the Agreement between Skopje and Sofia, in fact represent an even tougher conditioning of Macedonia's EU integration in comparison to that of Greece.

Regarding these recent developments with Bulgaria, the authorities in Skopje have expressed their hope that the differences between the two countries will be sorted out during the following meetings, through 'active cooperation and good will'. Whereas these statements may be true, the fact that the Agreement did not succeed in eliminating veto threats, even if they are simply declarative, indicates that external threats from Bulgaria persist. The question then becomes, may such threats by Bulgaria question once again Macedonia's EU future? If yes, then may such a persisting dispute also impact the inter-ethnic relations, in a way similar to the dispute with Greece? The answer to these questions relates both to the essence of the dispute and Bulgaria's leverage in instrumentalizing this dispute. The essence of the dispute, as explained above, seems related to bilateral identity issues (mainly to language and history). As such, this dispute affects directly the Macedonian ethnic group. In this regard, Vankovska (2020) qualifies this dispute and the following Agreement as a heavier burden for the ethnic Macedonians than the Agreement with Greece. However, the threats of using a veto against Macedonia's EU integration, as a blackmailing mechanism over the latter, gives an international dimension to this contest with inter-ethnic implications. Bulgaria's instrumentalization of Macedonia's EU integration project in its own favor, renders Bulgaria a threatening factor internally as much as externally. Although it would be too early to judge the (in)efficiency of this Agreement, its first effects may lead to greater pessimism regarding its success.

The Agreement with Greece

Macedonia and Greece signed an agreement in the Prespa setting, a lake region from which the Prespa Agreement (PA) takes its name. It was signed on June 17, 2018, by the Macedonian and Greek Foreign Ministers, Dimitrov and Kotzias, respectively. This ceremony was attended by the two countries' Prime Ministers, Zoran Zaev of Macedonia and Alexis Tsipras of Greece. International representatives were also present, including the UN's special representative and mediator Mathew Nimitz, the EU High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, EU Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighborhood Policy, Johannes Hahn, etc. (Tagaris and Vasovic, Reuters, 2018).

This agreement aims to close a 26-year dispute between Macedonia and Greece, which mainly involves Greece's contestation of the constitutional name of the Republic of Macedonia. The implementation of this agreement would take place after its ratification in the parliaments of both countries, followed by constitutional changes in the Republic of Macedonia. The PA, as it states in its preamble, reflects the aim to achieve an agreement over existing differences according to UN Security Council Resolutions (817) and (845), the ending of the Interim Accord of 1995, as well as the establishment of a strategic partnership between the two countries. The first part of this agreement deals with the issues related to the differences over the name of the state. Therein, the agreement stipulates the change of Macedonia's constitutional name into the Republic of North Macedonia, with an *erga omnes* use. The nationality is defined as Macedonian/Citizen of the Republic of North Macedonia, while the official language as "Macedonian language" (Article 1, paragraphs 3a/b/c). Article 2 (par. 1-4) defines another important issue with relevance for this thesis. It emphasizes that Greece will not obstruct Macedonia's membership in international, multilateral, and regional organizations under its new name "Republic of North Macedonia". While in a specific way it stresses the removal of Greece's blockade on Macedonia's membership in NATO and EU. This is, however, preconditioned by Greece with the holding of a referendum as well as constitutional amendments of Macedonia. The first part of the agreement defines a number of other issues such as the confirmation of the existing border as an international frontier, reciprocal respect for sovereignty,

territorial integrity, and political independence, refraining from irredentism, strengthening of friendly bilateral relations, etc. Article 8 defines the use of symbols which the other state considers as theirs, requiring Macedonia to review the status of monuments, public buildings and infrastructures on its territory, and insofar as they refer in any way to ancient Hellenic history...” and foresees the creation of a “Inter-Disciplinary Committee of Experts on historic, archaeological and educational matters, to consider the objective, scientific interpretation of historical events...”. The second part of the agreement determines the areas where mutual cooperation shall be established. This part foretells, among other things, the raising of the diplomatic relations between the two countries to ambassadorial level, the prioritizing of the economic, educational, scientific, etc. fields for future cooperation, cooperation in defense and civil protection, etc. Parts three and four define the settlement of disputes and final clauses.¹⁸

The Agreement was followed by a referendum, which according to Đukanović (2019), illustrated interesting moods of the citizens. Although the majority voted for the acceptance of the Agreement (95%), these voters represented only one third of the registered voters (36,79%). Over half of the registered voters did not vote and therefore the decision for adopting the referendum could not be made (Official Gazette, 2018)¹⁹. The VMRO-DPMNE’s leader, Mickovski assessed that the voters who abstained from voting “sent the most important message – this is Macedonia, here live Macedonians, the identity and language is Macedonian.” (Osilo, 2018), thereof asking the government (led by SDSM) to respect the will of the citizens (as demonstrated by the boycott of the referendum). The government, however, proceeded in taking the issue to institutions, i.e. to the Parliament. The Prime Minister, Zaev, urged the Members of

¹⁸More on the Agreement between Greece and Macedonia in: <http://morm.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/spogodba-en.pdf>

¹⁹ “The official results of the Referendum, held on September 30, 2018, announced by the State Election Commission are:

- the total number of registered citizens in the Voters' List: 1,806,336,
- the total number of citizens who voted: 666,344,
- the total number of unused ballots: 1.139.992,
- the total number of invalid ballots: 19,221,
- the total number of valid ballots: 647,114,
- the total number of votes "FOR": 609,427 and
- the total number of votes "AGAINST": 37,687.

According to the final results of the 2018 Referendum vote, the decision was not adopted because more than half of the total number of citizens registered in the Voters’ list did not vote.” (Official Gazette, 2018 p.12)

Parliament to follow the voice of the majority in the Referendum and vote for the adoption of this Agreement, albeit the majority he referred to represented only one third of the total registered voters (Radio Free Europe, 2018).

The Agreement was nevertheless adopted by the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia, on June 2018, with 69 votes in favor and none against. The MPs of the opposition party, VMRO-DPMNE, once more boycotted the voting process. Instead, on a press conference, the representative of this party requested the Venice Commission to rule on the legality of the agreement (DW, 2018). The adoption of the treaty in the Parliament was followed by the procedure of initiating constitutional changes. 81 (2/3 of the total number of MPs) voted in favor of the constitutional changes in alignment with the Prespa Agreement, while 39 voted against in January 2019. The MPs voting in favor, besides the ones of the parties in government and Albanian opposition party, also included part of VMRO-DPMNE's MPs, more precisely 8 MPs. Whereas the government celebrated this event as an act which reflects the culmination of the state's efforts to find a solution in the interest of the citizen's future and which would open the state's doors to NATO and EU membership (DW, 2018), the leader of the opposition party VMRO, reacted to this event by qualifying it as an "act of betrayal" and one which "inflicts injustice", consequently demanding early elections (Dimeska, DW, 2019).

The Prespa Agreement and the constitutional changes which followed, among which, the change of the country's constitutional name from the Republic of Macedonia into the Republic of North Macedonia is characterized by both support and criticism among experts and academicians. Relevant to this work, both specters of attitudes will be discussed below, with a focus on its effect on the inter-ethnic relations. These attitudes divide along the loss/gain arguments over this agreement in terms of national identity and security. The division in attitudes reflects a perceptive approach towards this issue, or more precisely towards the effects this Agreement produces over the entanglement of national identity and security matters. Authors such as Satanakis (2018), Petrusseva (2018), Joseph and Vangelov (2018), Risteski et. al. (2019), Fouéré (2019), Armakolas and Petkovski (2019), etc., see this agreement as highly significant in terms of reinforcing national/state identity, building inter-neighborly cooperation, averting internal and external conflict, and moving forward in the foreign policy agenda. Joseph and Vangelov (2019) regard this agreement as important precisely because of the link between national identity and violent conflict. In their words "by directly and comprehensively tackling

all facets of their identity clash, the agreement brings to a close the century old Macedonian question and dims any prospect of armed conflict” (p.37). The authors not only regard the agreement as a strengthener of the Macedonian identity, through its “explicit recognition of their [Macedonian] nationality and language as uniquely Macedonian, not some Slav derivative.”, but they also view it as a document which guarantees the state’s security from a potential inter-state violence outbreak. Elaborating on the historical territorial ambitions of Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria, the authors argue that the open issue with Greece represented not only societal insecurity but also territorial (or even military) insecurities. In their words, “without the guarantee over its borders that NATO membership confers, Macedonia, along with Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina, remained one of the three open questions in the Balkans, tempting those with territorial designs” (referring to Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria) (p.40). Moreover, as this issue blocked the Euro-Atlantic integration of the country, Joseph and Vangelov (2018), argue that if the dispute were not closed by the PA, it would have also caused internal aggravation “with the large Albanian minority in Macedonia, which has long resented being kept out of the Alliance over a name dispute that means little to them...”(p.40) However, the authors acknowledge that any new blockades in Macedonia’s path to the EU, as it happened with the French *non* to the opening of negotiations, would make it more difficult for “Zaev to sell the name compromise to his people” (p.42), undermining the significance of this agreement in averting the above-mentioned consequences. Koneska (2019) argues along similar lines, claiming that the success of the Prespa Agreement depends on external factors (referring to EU and NATO) as much as on internal ones.

The other specter of attitudes reflected by a number of authors such as Fidanovski 2018, Apasiev 2018, Nikodinovska Krstevska 2018, Janev 2019, Daskalovski 2019, Vankovska 2020, etc., presents this Agreement as detrimental to national identity and consequently as dangerous to the state’s security (read: survival). These attitudes maintain that the Prespa Agreement and the following developments it has initiated (referendum, constitutional changes) entail several breaches of the Constitution, UN Charter provisions, Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, and the International Law norms, rendering it illegal and harmful to the national interest and a negative precedent in the International Law practices. The Prespa Agreement’s legality is related to the UN Security Council Resolutions 817 and 845 of 1993, as the agreement aims to resolve a dispute imposed as a condition for Macedonia’s UN membership. Thereof, the breaches resulting

in the Prespa Agreement have their roots in the breaches of the UN's Charter and the *jus cogens* norms of International Law embedded in the UN Charter of 1993. Janev (2019) argues that the two conditions imposed on Macedonia upon its admission in the UN (“(i) to accept a provisional name for all purposes within UN and (ii) to negotiate with Greece over its name”), represent several violations of the UN Charter, including Article 1 (2) on the principle of “equal rights and self-determination”, Article 2 (1) “sovereign equality of Members”, Article 2 (7), “prohibiting United Nations to intervene in matter (s) of the domestic jurisdiction of states”, etc. The UN conditions, which represent breaches as indicated above, become the main reference object to be treated by the Prespa Agreement. Consequently, this agreement builds on and expands the violations initially caused by UN SC resolutions. As it takes upon itself the resolution of the “differences over the name”, the agreement marks the first violation of International Law which states that “no state has an exclusive right over a name”. Hence Janev (2019) adds that the “Greek demand that Macedonia changes its name has no basis in the international law and practice” (p.51), as the choice of names is considered as an inherent right of states belonging within its domestic jurisdiction. The freedom of each state to exercise this right may be limited only in cases when such name represents an “overlap of legal identities”. However, as Janev (2019) argues, this is not the case between Macedonia and Greece, as the territory of the latter, bearing the name Macedonia, does not represent an international juridical (legal) person. Another violation of this Treaty becomes evident in its Preamble, as it refers to the signatory parties in an asymmetric way. It refers to the First Party by its constitutional name (Hellenic Republic) while it refers to the Second Party by a state “which was admitted to the United Nations in accordance with the United Nations General Assembly resolution 47/225 of 8 April/1993”(p.53), thus violating the principle of ‘sovereign equality’. Further, although the Agreement pretends to resolve the differences over the name of the state, through its vague wording indicates that it would also address “remaining issues”, referring to matters of national identity, state language, constitution, etc. Hence, provision 2 and 3 of Article 7 limit the use of *Macedonia* and *Macedonian* only to a specific territorial, historical, and cultural context, denying the right to self-identification of Macedonian minority in Greece and elsewhere. Janev (2019) argues that among the greatest violations to International Law, Article 8 (5) represents a major breach, by stipulating the formation of a Joint Commission of Experts on historic, archeological and

educational issues. This provision, the author argues, harms the sovereign rights of a state, allowing permanent interference in its internal affairs from abroad (from Greece in this case).

The agreement is also considered to be standing in violation to the internal law, or formal law, reflecting several breaches during the process from being signed to being ratified in the Parliament. Hence, Nikodinovska Krstevska (2018) argues that the PA represents breaches to the Constitution (Article 119) and Law on International Agreements (Article 3) as it was signed by the Foreign Minister, Nikola Dimitrov, when the law stipulates that this right belongs to the President of the state. Furthermore, the agreement was ratified by the Parliament, causing additional breaches to the Macedonian law. It violated the procedural regulations for ratifying an agreement, as the President did not sign the agreement and used the ‘pocket veto’ against it. These actions, according to Nikodinovska Krstevska (2018), besides representing violations of laws and regulations of fundamental importance to the internal law, also violate “essential values which guarantee the rule of law” in Macedonia (p.128).

Apasiev (2018) investigates the legality of the referendum related or more precisely deriving from the Prespa Agreement. He points to several violations beginning with the Venetian Code of Good Practice on Referendums, the formal-legal reasons, and material-legal reasons, rendering the referendum illegal. Thus, Apasiev (2018) argues that the referendum does not fulfill the ‘triple test of unity’. It was not united in form, as the question linked two unrelated issues, namely, a certain agreement and an uncertain membership. It was not united in content, as the questions did not reflect an intrinsic link between them, since EU and NATO are two separate processes. And, it was not united in hierarchy, as the same required legal procedure for implementing the referendum’s results cannot be applied to EU and NATO, whose membership foresees separate legal regimes. The author argues that the referendum question was manipulative and suggestive, implying that the citizens have recognized the existence of the Prespa Agreement when *de iure* the latter doesn’t exist, as it is signed by an unauthorized person. Also, the question is tendentious and incorrect as there isn’t any membership decision by the EU, but the latter is rather a future and conditional fact. Further, he argues that the question is in fact a trap question (*captio quaestio*), since it can be answered only with FOR or AGAINST. In such case, if a voter is FOR the first part of the question but AGAINST the second and third part, he/she cannot answer according to his/her own will but only *en bloc*, which ultimately causes an unrealistic representation of the citizens’ mood. Apasiev (2018) argues that the decision of

holding a referendum breaches several mandatory constituent parts foreseen by the Law on Referendum (2005) and therefore “it is impossible to evaluate the legal result of the decision to hold a referendum as well as the legal consequence of a potentially carried out referendum” (p.12). Finally, the author argues that Macedonian law indicates that the referenda regarding joining alliances, unions with other states, and of the like, should be obligatory and not consultative in nature, as the last referendum was. They should, furthermore, take place at a time when such an invitation is extended to the state by these organizations (which hasn’t occurred in the case of the EU).

Vankovska (2020) perceives the Prespa Agreement as part of the traditional pattern of Western Interventionism, despite the fact that the western powers have been careful to attribute all 'merits' for its achievement to the local leaders. The reason the great powers' leaders applauded the PA as a "result of great statesmanship", the author argues, was to give the Agreement more legitimacy. The Agreement, however, resulted in contradiction with the internal population's will (as shown by the referendum), was carried out under high public pressure, and in violation of formal-legal procedures. In this context, Vankovska (2020) argues that all these processes helped promote illegality in return for political usefulness. Besides being externally imposed, this agreement, about which Macedonia has held only an observer’s role, puts the two signatory states in an asymmetric position, where Greece imposes to Macedonia an inferior position with “less equality, less sovereignty, and less possibility for intervention” (p.14). The reasons for imposing such an agreement by the external powers, are viewed in the “national security of the USA and the Western Allies”. Considering Macedonia, along with Bosnia and Montenegro, as the frontline between the West and Russia, Macedonia’s membership in NATO became not only an urgent matter but also a symbolism of victory over Moscow, and a possibility for the US to extend and strengthen its hegemony in the Balkans.

In analyzing the advertisement of this agreement as a win-win situation, Vankovska (2020) argues that in fact the situation resulted into a non-zero sum game, in which case some gained, but Macedonia had more to lose. Whereas the gains of the US along with the EU may be seen in their enhanced security and dominance in the Balkans, by adding Macedonia to the list of NATO members, thus thwarting away Russian influence from this frontline state; Greece's gains lie in preserving an exclusive right over *Macedonia* in the ancient historical and cultural context (Tzifakis, 2019). The agreement also helps Greece improve its international reputation by

stopping to act as an obstructer of another state's integration into international organizations. Macedonia, however, experienced a major disappointment soon after it adopted the PA and it revised its constitution accordingly. In spite of the sacrifice it entailed, the Agreement proved to be a no 'pass' for the opening of negotiation talks, as Macedonia received the French *non* at the EU Summit. Much worse, Macedonia was placed in the same category with Albania, whose integration path is characterized by more difficulties, delaying further and unjustly its integration into this organization. Hence the compromise to the detriment of Macedonia's national interests seems to not have brought any rewards (in terms of the state's advancement in its foreign policy agenda). Vankovska (2020), argues that undertaking such compromises in exchange for EU integration is not only risky (as the future and sustainability of the EU itself is uncertain) but also limits Macedonia's opportunities for development (through a more multi-vectoral foreign policy approach).

Considering the two sides of arguments on the Prespa Agreement, we may argue that although the document was seemingly effective in closing bilateral issues, its controversial characters allows space for the development of new disputes (for example arising from provisions which allow external interference in Macedonia's internal affairs). The evaluation of this Agreement, in terms of security and inter-ethnic relations, would ultimately depend upon the perception of the latter. The defenders of this agreement present it as a guarantee for state's double security, externally, by unblocking Macedonia's integration into NATO (thus ensuring its security in relation to hostile and pretentious neighbors) and internally, by appeasing the two major ethnic groups (aggravated because of the stalled Euro-Atlantic integration agenda). On the other hand, the critics argue that the PA puts the survival of the state to a greater risk, as it questions Macedonia's statehood and its identity. Imposed from abroad, the PA may cease to exist or be replaced by other agreements (which similarly violate international norms) as per the convenience of the great powers. Adding internal divisions to this scenario, the future existence of the state becomes rather uncertain. Whereas EU integration remains an uncertain future, Macedonia's security may be harmed by this agreement both externally, as it allows perpetual external intervention and meddling in internal affairs, and internally, as foreign players may manipulate ethnic divisions for further weakening of the state.

The relationship between foreign policy and inter-ethnic relations

In many studies on Macedonia's inter-ethnic relations, the roots of these relations have been searched within the internal factors. Foreign policy and the possibility of it influencing these relations and vice-versa, have remained in the margins of the scientific interest. This study's argument is that the relationship between foreign policy and inter-ethnic relations has varied in different periods of time. At first sight it seems that foreign policy had little to no influence on the relationship between the two biggest ethnic groups. This impression derives from the fact that the disputes between Macedonians and Albanians, since independence onwards, have developed around internal political issues. In this context, Albanians haven't contested the name/nation of *Macedonia* and neither its ancient past. Although Albanians boycotted the independence referendum in 1991, their contestation towards the new state had to do with the constitutional order and not with the symbols of the state. However, not seldom has foreign policy been used as an instrument for achieving internal desired changes. Hence, Daskalovski (2004) argues that during the 90s, the Albanian ethnic group has lobbied for Macedonia's non-recognition by the UN and EC, lest the demands of this ethnic group for advanced constitutional rights are respected.

Although at first impression foreign policy seems to not influence the internal disputes, which result from the fragile inter-ethnic relations, several authors (ex. Engstrom, 2002, Daskalovski 2004, Vankovska 2017, etc.) make a correlation between the two, by analyzing the inter-ethnic perceptions of the bilateral relations of Macedonia. Engstrom (2002) claims that the contestation of the Macedonian ethnic identity by the neighboring countries is reflected in the contestation of the Albanian ethnic identity by the ethnic Macedonians. The pressures by Bulgaria, Serbia, and Greece, which contest the authenticity of the ethnic identity of Macedonians, makes the latter fearful for their existence. Hence, such external contestation causes an enhancement of nationalism among the Macedonian ethnic group, in an effort to consolidate their ethnic and national (state) identity. Such assertion of Macedonian cultural identity, in response to external contestation, in turn, leads to the Albanians' need of asserting their own cultural identity. According to Ackermann (2000, p.5), this leads to a vicious circle, where the opposite process is also true. Namely, the Albanian ethnic group's nationalism, which

derives from its ethnic affiliation with brethren countries (Albania and Kosovo) precedes and incites Macedonian nationalism, as reaction to a perceived threat to their own identity. Thus, the more Albanians try to assert their ethnic and cultural identity as a constituent people, the more it clashes with the Macedonians' wish and efforts to consolidate their own ethnic identity. The reason these two identities clash instead of cohabiting, according to Ackerman, is precisely foreign policy and its specific challenges. In other words, the author argues that if the Albanians demand to become a constitutive people by changing the constitution is accepted by the Macedonian side, then the state would no longer be a unitary state but rather a bi-national one, with two constituent nations. Thus, "without a state of its own, the Macedonian nation would become an easy target for those Balkan neighbors" who have claims over it. (Ackermann, 2000, p.15). Thus, the issue of identity has characterized Macedonia's foreign policy by being deeply ingrained in the diplomatic relations with its neighbors (Vankovska, 2017, pp.5-6).

Nonetheless, foreign policy, as much as it is a dividing factor between the two ethnic groups, it also represents a unifying factor. The unifying effect of foreign policy lays in the strategic orientation of the country. Besides the bilateral challenges of this country, its foreign policy is also preoccupied with the integration of the country into the international structures such as NATO and EU. This orientation, as much as it represents a strategy for the external security of a small and weak state, it is also a way of maintaining the internal stability, by satisfying and bringing closer the two otherwise alienated ethnic groups. According to Vankovska (2017), the objective of the Republic of Macedonia to access NATO and EU is closely linked to the country's internal affairs. According to her, "belonging to NATO and EU is seen as the ultimate way to achieve and secure the country's sovereignty and state security. Furthermore, NATO and EU are much more than usual foreign policy goals - they are tightly related to the internal state of affairs, including interethnic peace and stability" (pp.6-7). Within an ethnically polarized society, as is the case with Macedonia, foreign policy, namely the international integration into structures such as EU and NATO, may be the strongest dimension able to forge an inter-ethnic consensus. In Vankovska's (2017) words "The society deeply divided along ethnic/religious/language lines sees NATO (and EU for the same reason) as a glue to keep society together" (p.6). The international integration of the country has enjoyed the highest level of support regardless of ethnicity and has been interpreted as all-national consensus and a long-term solution to the problems, especially in the political and economic sphere (p.3).

All polls carried out until the present day show a high support among Macedonians and Albanians for the EU and for NATO (above 60%) (IDSCS and MCMC 2013, IDSCS 2016, IPRS, ISHR, and FAC 2016, etc.).

But the bilateral issues seem detrimental to foreign policy's *glue effect* for Macedonians and Albanians. Consequently, foreign policy transforms from a unifying into a dividing factor between the ethnic groups. The bilateral disputes condition Macedonia's international integration agenda, which in turn, serves as a unifying element of the two ethnic groups. Due to the nature of the bilateral disputes and the different ethnic perceptions towards them, there lacks a unified official stance towards their resolution. While the conditioning of the international integration with the resolution of bilateral disputes with the neighbors, intensifies even more the internal division²⁰ (Vankovska, 2017, p.7).

Since foreign policy in Macedonia may serve as a mechanism for achieving internal and external security, the blockade caused by Greece in 2008, may be perceived as a dramatic turn not only in the international realm but also in the internal affairs. In the international aspect, according to Koneska (2014), within the governing party of that time, VMRO, the consensus over NATO and EU integration as the only foreign policy alternative began to fade, due to being conditioned with a name change. According to Pendarovski (2012), the government began to mark a subtle shift in the foreign policy orientation, as some of its representatives began arguing against the unconditional commitment towards NATO and EU membership.

In the internal aspect, the contestation of identity, which derived from the bilateral disputes, sparked ethnic nationalism in efforts of identity building. The result of this approach was also the project "Skopje 2014", in which, Maleski (2013) views the correlation between foreign policy challenges and ethnic nationalism. Namely, he views Macedonians' nationalism as the cause, which infuriates the neighbors, such as Greece and Bulgaria, who in turn, obstruct Macedonia's integration into EU and NATO (p.23). However, the opposite argument is that the external contestation of Macedonia's identity and consequently its Euro-Atlantic objectives, may be a cause for a rise in nationalism. Developing in parallel, the Albanian nationalism, causes further hardships not only the internal aspect, challenging the unitary concept of the state, but

²⁰According to polls conducted in 2010-2017, when citizens were asked to choose between: EU and NATO or preserving the constitutional name, a significant ethnic divide appeared. Hence about 64,9% of ethnic Macedonians were pro preserving the name, while 68% of ethnic Albanians were pro EU and NATO (IDSCS and MCMC 2014, p.19)

also in the external voice of the state. The argument goes that instead of contributing to a cohesive stance towards external challenges, the Albanian nationalism causes divisions and disharmony in the foreign policy behavior towards external threats.

As a result of the external pressures by the neighbors and the conditioning of the Euro-Atlantic agenda with the resolution of the external disputes, Macedonia's foreign policy was becoming less coherent and more fragmented. But, the diversification of the foreign policy approach, according to Vankovska (2017), came also as a result of the internal diversity among the political actors, who being of different ethnic origins, are not affected in the same way by the bilateral issues. In absence of a consensus over the 'national interest', the involved actors in foreign policy making, possessing different values and interests, began projecting uncoordinated or even contradictory actions. As the external disputes, and especially the name issue, affect the Macedonian ethnic group more than the Albanian one, the former adopted a more cautious approach in their foreign policy action. According to Maleski (2013), the bilateral contests, and especially the one with Greece, is perceived by the majority of Macedonians as an "as an attempt to destroy their existence as a moral personality" (p.26). Thus, the ethnic Macedonian parties seemed to maintain a rigid position in preserving their constitutional name against the Greek pressures for its change. The Albanians, on the other hand, seemed less affected by an issue, which doesn't concern their ethnic identity. Furthermore, given the blockade the name issue causes in the international integration process, Albanians showed more flexibility in accepting a compromise with the neighbor over the name of the state. The latter's separate diplomatic offensives in Athens, Brussels or Washington D.C, where they were urging for a solution to the name issue and unblocking of the international integration agenda of the state, caused further division and mistrust internally (Vankovska, 2017). This internal division and mistrust, though deriving from the Albanian political factor's behavior in foreign policy, was also helped externally. Greece, aware of the Albanians' flexibility towards the name issue, tried to instrumentalize this ethnic group in achieving its goal to change Macedonia's constitutional name. In this context, the Greek Ambassador to Skopje, Tirana, and Washington, Alexandros Mallias, argued that Greece should follow its own interest and not that of Serbia, therefore, it should work on reanimating the relations with the Albanians in Macedonia, which according to him "had fallen in a lethargic state". He suggests that "the Albanians, as citizens of Macedonia, should have equal political rights and make decisions on the most important issues related to

Macedonia's membership in NATO and EU.”(Ανιχνεύσεις (Anichnefseis), 2011). These attitudes of Mallias explain the following official meetings of the Albanian politicians (representatives of DUI) with Greek officials in Athens, which, in turn, have caused internal mistrust and division. According to this source, the Greek exploitation of the Albanians has not been done only for achieving their goal in regard to Macedonia's name change. The instrumentalization of the Albanians has also derived from Greece's need to prevent what they call the greatest threat, which is the “Albanian-Muslim” nationalism which is encouraged by Ankara (Athanasopoulos et. al, 2018). Hence, we may argue that the manipulation of the Albanian nationalism by Greece has been used to a double effect: to achieve identity changes in Macedonia and to control Turkish influence in the region.

According to Pendarovski (2012), the EU and NATO agenda, especially since 2008 onwards, became a dividing factor between the two communities. Due to the different perceptions of the ethnic groups over the external disputes, the Republic of Macedonia found it difficult to forge a unifying stance over their resolution. As these pressures affect international integrations of Macedonia, the Macedonian and Albanian community began to deepen their gap of positions regarding NATO and EU. According to Nuhija (2013, p.6), most of Albanians even feel as ‘hostages’ of the Macedonian political inertness regarding the external obstacles to the Euro-Atlantic integrations. Nuhija argues that Albanians regard the Macedonian politicians’ approach towards the bilateral open issues as insufficiently serious and committing. Consequently, the Albanian political factor has carried out several separate diplomatic offensives, in pursuit of a quicker solution. Macedonians, on the other hand, consider such behaviors as disregarding of the ‘national interests’ and as detrimental to the inter-ethnic trust and cohabitation. Furthermore, the Albanians’ haste in closing the issue with Greece is considered as an indication of this ethnic group’s disinterest in the name issue. As Koppa (1994) argues, the only version of a new name that Albanians would contest is one with a Slavic adjective (ex. Slav-Macedonia). They would accept any other version though, including Central Balkan Republic of Vardar Republic, as long as such solution opens the path to Euro-Atlantic integrations. In analyzing the Albanian question in Macedonia, Koppa describes the Albanians’ indifference towards the Macedonia’s name state as a result of their affiliation and unification with the Albanian factor in Kosovo and Albania, which, the author warns, may produce consequences not only for Macedonia, but for the entire region as well. Thus, we may argue the

ethnic Albanians non-identification with the state of their citizenship, further complicates not only the internal relations, but also the forging of a consensual attitude towards the external threats.

Many authors argue that EU and NATO integration are undisputedly a positive impact on the inter-ethnic relations and that further delay in resolving external disputes, which block integrations, could lead to inter-ethnic tensions and deteriorate the domestic stability (Pop-Angelov 2010, Pendarovski 2012, Nuhija 2013, Vankovska 2017, Marolov and Stojanovski 2017, etc.). Hence, the foreign policy approach towards external pressures or conditions may affect not only the external stability of a small country but also its diverse internal ambience. Given the complicated nature of the external pressures and their conditioning effect over Euro-Atlantic integrations, the approach towards their solutions is not expected to produce linear effects domestically. Whereas the resolution of external bilateral disputes with neighbors may open up Macedonia's perspective towards EU and NATO, it is unclear whether it will lead toward inter-ethnic rapprochement and unity. This work will attempt to answer the former dilemmas by relying on the data derived from the views, perceptions, arguments, and positions of the participants in the empirical research of the thesis. The focus will be on the reciprocal relationship between foreign policy (in)action towards bilateral issues and inter-ethnic relations during a period of transitioning governance which signals changes in the foreign policy approach.

Before unraveling the findings from the empirical part, the following chapter will present most relevant theories of foreign policy and national (inter-ethnic) integration. The aim is to draw links between the two sets of theories, and possibly construct a theoretical framework. Within the latter, a set of hypotheses will be constructed, which would enable the investigation and possibly the explanation of a link between foreign policy behavior (towards external threats) and inter-ethnic relations.

CHAPTER 3. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

This chapter represents a complex review of separate theories which will be intertwined in building the theoretical framework in the following chapter. The current chapter reviews two sets of theories: the first set includes some of the most relevant theories on foreign policy and the second set includes some of the most relevant theories on national integration. The foreign policy theories are initially analyzed in general, within the three dominant IR theories: realist, liberal, and constructivist theory. Viewing foreign policy within broader IR theories, allows the exposure of a plethora of factors, which are considered as main drivers of foreign policy. Such diversity of foreign policy driving factors, as viewed by each IR theory, is important in explaining, later on, the multi-facedness of the foreign policy behavior of small states. Later the focus of the chapter narrows down on small state's foreign policy, as this category of states is different and perhaps unique in its foreign policy behavior. In analyzing small states foreign policy, the chapter employs a cross level analysis: international or system level, state or unit level, and individual or sub-unit level. However, besides presenting all three levels of analysis and their views on small state's foreign policy, the chapter clarifies that its focus will be on two levels, namely on the systemic and state, as they resonate more closely with this work's research objectives.

Within the analysis of small state's foreign policy, the attention is focused on two foreign policy roles or functions, which play out across the two levels (international and state level). These two roles are *security* and *integration*. Within these two roles, the chapter aims to provide a theoretical basis for explaining Macedonia's foreign policy behavior. Both roles are necessary to explain Macedonia's foreign policy choices and behavior both in the international and national realm. The security role is expected to expose a state's foreign policy choices of integration into international institutions and of response towards external threatening factors, in the function of

preserving and enhancing the state security. The integration role is expected to expose a state's foreign policy choices towards multilateralism, by integration into regional and global organizations, but also their effect over internal integration. Combined, these two roles may enable the explanation of a small state's foreign policy choices, challenges, responses, and effects both internationally and nationally.

In exploring the security role of foreign policy, the chapter reviews relevant security theories (mainly relying on Buzan 1983 and Buzan and Weaver 2003 works). The choice to elaborate on such theories is made with the purpose of explaining concepts such as state security, threats to security with a focus on the political and societal threats, and foreign policy action/options in response to security threats. These theories are important in allowing us to understand and perhaps explain, later on, Macedonia's nature of security issues, and foreign policy options/choices of response towards them.

In exploring the integration role of foreign policy, the chapter reviews a synthesized national integration theory (mainly relying on Shulman's works 1996 and 1998). Before intertwining national integration with foreign policy (oriented towards international integration), the chapter explains significant notions which constitute national integration theories, such as ethnicity, nation and respective identities. It then continues to assess foreign policy's role of integration not only through the perspective of the international integration theory but also through the perspective of the main national integration theories, such as the theory of commonalities and differences, theories of social interactions, and theories of value consensus. By looking at foreign policy's role of integration through a synthesized national integration approach, the chapter allows us to understand whether foreign policy in Macedonia's case may compensate for internal policies in forging commonalities, value consensus, and social integration, resulting, eventually into national integration.

Literature review

The key concept of this dissertation is *foreign policy*. It is the knot that connects the international environment with the domestic one. As such, its behavior is not merely analyzed as an outcome of a state's external relations, as the system level predicts, but also as an influencing factor

within the domestic realm, namely of the internal societal relationships. The existing theories of foreign policy acknowledge a wide array of actors which, besides the state, as the traditionally known actor, within IR realism in particular (Waltz 1959, Morgenthau 1966), are also in a reciprocal influencing relationship with foreign policy. Nevertheless, the focus of this work is on the relationship between a state and its foreign policy, namely the former's foreign policy behavior within a given context.

But before studying the above relationship, we must develop an understanding of the concept of *foreign policy* itself. The wide variety of definitions reveal different phenomena or highlight different aspects of foreign policy. A broader and generally accepted definition by the theorists of international relations is provided by Christopher Hill. According to him, foreign policy represents “the sum of external relations conducted by an independent actor (usually but not exclusively a state) in international relations” (Hill, 2016, p.4). Hill's definition, however, is often criticized for highlighting only general trends in foreign policy, while neglecting individual actions. White gives a definition which is oriented more towards individual actions and decisions, by focusing on the state as the main foreign policy actor. According to him foreign policy represents “government activity conducted with relationships between state and other actors, particularly other states, in the international system” (White, 1989, p.1). Nonetheless, White's focus on the state excludes other important structures with a developed foreign policy such as regional actors, as the EU. Rosenau, narrows the definition of foreign policy by focusing on its behavior. According to him foreign policy is “the external behavior of states” (Rosenau, 1971, p.95). But this definition is often criticized for focusing on state behavior such as balancing, bandwagoning, interdependency, and overlooking internal foreign policy decision-making, and internal actors' impact over its behavior (Beach, 2012). Since foreign policy, in this dissertation, is treated as multi-dimensional, there emerges a need for a more comprehensive definition. Such one is provided by Derek Beach (2012), according to whom:

Foreign policy is both the broad trends of behavior and the particular actions taken by a state or other collective actor as directed toward other collective actors within the international system. Foreign policy actions can be undertaken using a variety of different instruments, ranging from adopting declarations, making speeches, negotiating treaties, giving other states economic aid, engaging in diplomatic activity such as summits, and the use of military force (p.3).

Since the focus of this study is the analysis of a small state's foreign policy behavior under external pressure and its impact on the internal relations of the country, the syntagma *foreign policy analysis* must also be defined. Foreign policy is usually studied within the IR discipline, however, foreign policy analysis, as opposed to IR, has a much narrower focus. While foreign policy analysis is focused on the relations that states have among themselves in their foreign policies, IR goes beyond this relationship, studying also the international system's structure itself and its impact over the world politics. According to Beach (2012), foreign policy analysis, as a sub-discipline of IR, "has a narrower focus, zooming in on the determinants of the foreign policies of a single state (or other collective actor) viewed either as general trends (e.g. US foreign policy toward Latin America) or as specific actions (e.g. the EU's decision to inflict economic sanction against Russia in the Ukraine conflict" (pp.4-5). Given this distinction, the analysis of the determinants of a state's foreign policy, and their resulting either as a general trend or a specific action, represents the primary interest of this research.

The study of foreign policy helps us understand why and how certain choices are made by state representatives, what are their cost/benefits internationally but also domestically, etc. But, whereas the why-s and how-s explain the actions of a state in foreign policy, these explanations differ according to the theoretical approach applied. As long as foreign policy is considered part of IR, the latter's theoretical tools are applicable to the foreign policy analysis too. The three main IR theories, namely realism, liberalism, and constructivism, serve for analyzing foreign policy, but each one is different in its analytical viewpoint. In a brief manner, all three theories and their application to the foreign policy analysis will be elaborated in this section.

Realism explains the international system as a perpetual struggle for more power between the sovereign and independent states within an anarchical international system. The two distinguishing assumptions of realism are the assessment that the international system is anarchical and that states are mainly preoccupied with their survival and independence. By conceiving the international system as anarchical, the realists argue that the states may protect their national interest or ensure their survival not through the international institutions, but rather through threats or use of military force. Regarding the international institutions, such as the International Court of Justice, the structuralist realists think that the latter play only a limited role, since they do not have the ability and coercive mechanisms to oblige great powers to

change their behavior. Furthermore, they view alliances, such as NATO, as instruments in the hands of the great powers used for influencing the foreign policy of other states. Also, according to Waltz (1979), the anarchical nature of the international system causes pressure upon the states, which, in case of failing to conform, risk to be 'punished' by the system, even to the point of ceasing to exist. The realists analyze the behavior of the state in international relations through the system level. The state, being preoccupied with its survival, and given its relative position in the international system, will constantly search for a behavior which it believes is more appropriate for its survival. Therefore, the rational leaders choose the most suitable behavior in order to maximize the survival of their state, regardless of their personal conviction or ideology. Moreover, according to the realists, neither the domestic differences nor the type of the regime has the ability to influence the foreign policy behavior of the states, which feel pressured for their survival. In other words, realist theory argues that foreign policy is dominated by material factors, namely by the relative power of other states and the position of the state in the international system, and is used as an instrument for achieving gains. (Beach, 2012, pp.17-20).

Liberalism oftentimes emerges as a more optimistic version than realism, regarding the unavailability of a conflict between states, as an outcome of their preoccupation with the issue of survival. In the essence of this theory is *progress*, while liberals argue that the self-interest of the states may also lead, in certain circumstances, towards cooperation among states. However, besides the cooperation between the states, this theory doesn't exclude the possibility of conflict either, while the odds for cooperation or conflict, according to liberals, depend on the distribution of states' preferences. Liberals have their divisions, especially over the nature of the international system. The classical liberals, such as Moravcsik (1997) or Keohane (2002), resemble the realists in their conception of the international system as anarchical. But, as opposed to the realists, the liberals believe in the role or the power of the international institutions to regulate and mitigate unwanted effects created by the anarchical system, and to stimulate cooperation with mutual benefits. The neoliberal institutionalist, or short neoliberals, on the other hand, with renowned representatives such as Ernst Haas (1961) and Leon Lindberg (1963), believe in the transformation of the anarchical system, which is characterized by conflicts, into a system which is characterized by cooperation and peace. They believe that such transformation may be achieved through interdependence, institutionalization, and democracy. Another difference between the classic liberals and neoliberals is that the former believe that the

international institutions are tools controlled by the states, while the latter believe that the international institutions would eventually break off from state control through the integrative process, which would help the integration of the states into a new political community, which is above states. Such community would diminish the control of sovereign states and would transfer it to the supranational structures. Regarding the foreign policy level of analysis, liberals are again divided. Some of them, such as Keohane (1969), like the realists, focus on the system level, while others, such as Moravcsik (1997), also account for the state level, while emphasizing the role of other actors such as corporations, public opinion, or interest groups, with influential powers over foreign policy. Nonetheless, liberals agree on three explanatory factors which may help the international system to pass from conflict to sustainable peace. These factors have been inspired by Kant's pamphlet "Perpetual peace", on the achievement of sustainable peace among states. These factors, two of which belong to the system level are: interdependence, international institutions, and democracy. Liberals, like realists, agree that the material factors dominate the ideational ones. In this way, they view foreign policy as a product of the self-interested preferences of the internal actors which derive from the domestic political system, but do not exclude the influence of the system level on foreign policy behavior either (Beach, 2012).

The constructivist theory focuses on the idea of a socially constructed reality, which results from interactions among actors, and which furthermore leads to the formation of identity and interests (Beach, 2012, p.22). According to Wendt (1992), meanings are 'socially constructed' and "people act towards objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meanings that the objects have for them" (pp.396-397). Constructivists view patterns, relationships, and states themselves through the lenses of meaning and practice. Since meaning and practice are not fixed factors and may change in time, so may the patterns, that once looked established and permanent, change or transform as well. Hurd (2008) cites the example of a state's sovereignty, provided by Biersteker and Weber (1996), which represents a socially constructed institution, understood as such only when people and other states view it as "corporate actor with rights and obligations over territory and citizens (and they act accordingly)" (as cited in Hurd, 2008, p.300). Nonetheless, the right of international intervention in states where massive human rights violation is found, undermines the meaning of sovereignty in its traditional sense. International intervention, therefore, serves as a factor which changes the meaning of sovereignty, by reducing the autonomy of leaders who violate human rights and by enhancing the power of the

international intervention institutions. In sum, factors such as sovereignty rely on shared ideas and practices of the people and actors. But, the main argument of constructivists is that ideas which construct social reality and therefore the international politics, are not merely individual beliefs. Rather, they define ideas as intersubjective and institutionalized. By intersubjective they refer to the ideas that are shared among people and therefore go beyond individual social actors. By institutionalized they mean that such ideas are embedded in social routines, practices and identities (Hurd, 2008, p.301). By viewing material forces from the social concept, makes the constructivists have a relativist approach towards them. For instance, a threat to national security, by being a social construction, may not be perceived equally by all or may not be perceived as a risk at all. According to Campbell (1992), “not all risks are equal, and not all risks are interpreted as dangerous” (p.2). Constructivists view national interest in the same relative manner. As opposed to other schools of thought, which view national interest as a practical goal, such as survival, power, wealth, and security, which is fixed and unchanging, constructivists perceive national interest based on the social relations, which are changeable. Hence, they view national interest as a construction which may be influenced by the system. At the system level, Pevehouse (as cited in Hurd, 2008), argues how the state’s interests, represented in their constitutions, are affected to the point of being modified by their membership in regional or international organizations. Other authors argue that internal factors such as coalitions, economic factors, institutions, etc. also influence national interests (Rosenau 1971, Elman 1995). Constructivists believe that national interest changes also due to interactions. In regard to structure versus agency, constructivists hold a co-constitution approach. According to them, both the states and international institutions, not only are reciprocally influenced through mutual interaction, but they may be also redefined as a result of their interactions. Thus, states affect the formation of international institutions and their regulations, and in turn, these institutions affect the defining, socialization, and influence of the states. (Hurd, 2008, p.204). Hence, according to Giddens (1984), although states create laws and institutions, these afterwards convert into a ‘frame’ which dictates a behavior that the states accept. Therefore, the states, according to constructivists adjust their behavior to match international norms, but also reconstruct these norms to justify their actions. Constructivists are divided over the relevance of ideational over material factors. They, as opposed to liberals and realists, believe that ideational factors matter, but many post-structuralist constructivists also recognize the influence of material factors.

In analyzing foreign policy creation, choices, and determinants, Hill (2016) argues that two factors are crucial in defining the above: actors and structures. In this context, he defines foreign policy as “a complex process of interaction between many actors, differentially embedded in a wide range of different structures. Their interaction is a dynamic process, leading to the constant evolution of both actors and structures” (p.28). A wide range of actors, both domestic and international are usually involved in foreign policy decision making. At the same time, a wide range of structures, both domestic and international exert their influence over these actors and the choices they adopt in foreign policy. The relationship between and within each factor strongly determines the coherence of foreign policy. In order to understand better their relationship in creating foreign policy, it is important to identify key actors and structures involved in foreign policy. Smith et. al (2012) identify several key actors of foreign policy, beginning with the heads of states, the heads of governments, the foreign affairs ministers or state secretaries, parliament and parliamentary commissions on foreign policy affairs, political parties, etc. These, the authors argue, are considered as institutional actors, who bear political responsibility in decision making are usually elected democratically (though it is not always the case), and act internationally on behalf of the polities they represent. Beside them, there is also a wide range of other actors, including civil servants and experts working closely with the actors above (in ministries or other governmental bodies), as well as the media, lobbying groups, think-tanks, research and academic institutes, etc. They are usually located domestically but cooperate closely with counterparts abroad, including non-governmental organizations and institutions. The structure (usually referring to bureaucracy, institutions, or the state) also includes a wide range of factors. The realist school of thought has attributed structural factors only to the international system. However, many authors agree that this is a narrow view of structural factors – political, economic, cultural, technological, or national, regional, international, or cognitive and normative, which may be present in all layers of societal systems though not all contain the same relevance to foreign policy making.

The relationship between the actors and structures is important in order to be able to explain the influences over foreign policy decision-making. Hudson and Day (2020) argue, however, that this is not an easy task, since it is believed that foreign policy decision making can be influenced by as many factors as the color of a room, where a decision is made! The authors merge actors and structures when analyzing foreign policy decision making across nine levels.

Thus, the above authors analyze foreign policy decision-making by examining the decision-makers' personalities, by analyzing small or big groups' effects, by analyzing the cultural setting, the domestic policies, the national attributes, systemic influences, etc. However, without integrating these separate analyses, there cannot be derived a holistic explanation of foreign policy decision-making. Hudson and Day (2020), claim that decisionmakers during their daily acts, integrate the wide range of influential variables (such as the ones above) across different levels of analysis. The authors illustrate this integration in the following way: "any given high-level small group of foreign policymakers will contain a variety of individuals, each of whom: possesses unique personalities; is embedded in national and subnational cultures; is likely to either represent or favor particular organizations which play particular stakeholder roles in the bureaucracy; is aligned with larger political, ideological, or religious groups; and is living in a nation-state with specific national characteristics that help define its place in the international system."(p.191).

Such interaction of actors and structures, exerts certain influence over foreign policy decisions. As such, every decision is an outcome of unique intertwining between actor and structural factors. Thus, for a better understanding of a certain foreign policy decision, the particular context where the decision is made should be considered meticulously. However, the contextual analysis renders each decision unique and difficult for comparison. In spite of their uniqueness, many scholars attempt to find commonalities of foreign policy decision making. Thus, foreign policy decisions commonly target external entities, but may also target domestic entities. During decision-making, actors move through several stages, from the problem detection, definition, and perception stage, to goal prioritization, risks and option assessment stages. Further, not every decision leads to action. Sometimes, decisions are made to produce inaction. Also, foreign policy decision has a particular aim, but Hudson and Day (2020) emphasize that very rarely do decisionmakers achieve a complete success in reaching their set aim. In fact, the success in reaching the set aim may range from one extreme, where the aim is successfully achieved, to the other extreme, where the decision leads to an unwanted provocation, inciting a reaction opposite to what was intended. In such context, decisionmakers should be aware that they cannot fully control the outcome of the decision they make and much less foresee long-term consequences. As a result of the inability to control fully the outcome of decisions, the latter may be subject to future modifications, based on an examination of the

consequences they've produced. In sum, the explanation of foreign policy decision-making implies that the latter is a multi-vectoral process, while their analysis should be done through a multi-leveled approach.

Considering the complexity of foreign policy analysis, this work will not focus on the general characteristics of its decision-making and behavior. It will rather narrow its focus on the interplay of two levels (domestic and international), involving institutional key actors, in order to examine the decisions made and the behavior manifested. The analysis of the foreign policy behavior of a state and the relationship it has with the domestic environment, in this research will be conducted by studying this behavior within the context of a small, multi-ethnic state. More specifically, within such context will be studied the behavior or action of foreign policy and its influence over the inter-ethnic relations, when the state is exposed to external influencing factors. In order to analyze the foreign policy behavior under external pressuring factors and the influence of this behavior over the internal inter-ethnic relations, the focus will be on two elements which characterize the role of foreign policy. Initially, the behavior of foreign policy will be elaborated from the perspective of *security*, or the preoccupation of a state's foreign policy with security. The behavior of the state thus will be analyzed in relation to the external factors which are perceived as threats or constraints to the state's security. The realist theory is more renowned for a security approach to foreign policy analysis, but the position of other theories will also be explained further down. Secondly, foreign policy behavior will be analyzed from the perspective of *integration* and *identity*, or from the influence that foreign policy has over the integration of different ethnic communities within a multi-ethnic state, by helping forge a common identity between them. The constructivist theory, as mentioned above, explains such interaction as an interaction between agency and structure, and moreover, views these concepts as fluid and changeable.

The elaboration and analysis of foreign policy, based on these two roles, will help the construction of a theoretical framework which, through the raised arguments, will relate a small state's foreign policy behavior in terms of security and integration, under external conditionality, to inter-ethnic relations. The purpose here, as explained in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, is to assess whether there is a causal relationship between the foreign policy behavior towards external security threats and inter-ethnic relations. This chapter will continue reviewing the existing literature, while providing explanations for key concepts and necessary

theories for the construction of the theoretical framework, which will be tested by the empirical findings of this research.

Concept of small states

The purpose of this dissertation is to study the behavior of small states in the field of foreign policy, which has often been overlooked by the scholarly interest. Focusing on a case study which may be considered, by all of its features, as a typical small state, it becomes even more indispensable to try to define the concept *small states*. In a context defined mostly by great powers, the study of small states has often been undeservedly neglected. But the changes in the international system which led to multipolarity, have provided greater space and opportunities for small states to demonstrate foreign policy action and maneuverability (Browning 2006, Scheldrup 2014). However, considering the diversity of small states, finding a pattern of their foreign policy behavior is quite difficult, as there is a great level of variation in the foreign policy initiative of small states. What causes some small states to demonstrate certain foreign policy behavior or greater initiative than other states? Supporters of different schools of thought point out to several external and internal factors which act as determinants of a small state's foreign policy behavior. But, before analyzing a small state's foreign policy behavior and its determinants, this section will provide an overview over the analytical concept of *small states*.

Despite the many efforts, from the conducted research on small states it results that there is no scholarly consensus on the definition of small states. Although there is a variety of proposed definitions and characterizations of small states, there seem to exist many differences in the way scholars conceptualize a small state. According to Maass (2009), in the center of these differences stands the nature of *criteria* that scholars use to define a small state. Some of them rely on so called 'hard' or quantifiable criteria in order to determine the essence of small states, while others analyze the political aspect or use qualitative criteria in defining small states. Anyhow, this diversity of scholastic positions on the concept of small states offers a wide range of definitions which not necessarily impair the study of small states. In the contrary, according to Maass (2009), the lack of consensus on the definition of small states allows a flexible understanding of this concept, which in a way reflects the reality in which small states exist in variance, within the international states system. Being too many in number and diverse in nature,

this work will present the different conceptualizations which adapt to the small state(s), and eventually will construct a synthesized definition for a small state.

The lack of consensus over a unique definition of a small state is acknowledged by many authors. Henrikson (2001) reflects that “there is no internationally established or academically agreed upon definition of the ‘small state’” (p.56). Ingebritsen et al., (2006, p.5) on the other hand, claims that small states are defined by “what they are not”. Either way, the absence of a comprehensive definition of a small state which would resist time and circumstances, according to Rothstein (1968, p.23), may also result from the difficulty of defining other terms such as ‘weakness’ or ‘power’, which are related to the concept of small states. For this reason, the definition of the small state results to be more arbitrary than precise. If we accept this proposition, according to Maass (2009), the result is twofold: on one side it limits the comparative study of small states, but on the other hand it allows a more comprehensive understanding of the concept of a small state (p.66).

From the research done until today on the small states, there result three approaches in defining the former. The first approach is based on rigorous criteria which rely on quantifiable data. This approach tends to offer definitions which are more precise about the size of the state, and thus more strictly separate a small from other, bigger states. The second approach is focused on small states as a political term, analyzing them within the international system. Thus, this approach offers more contextual definitions. The third approach combines these two. But, before analyzing each approach, which discusses what a small state is, a clarification of the concept *state* itself is necessary. In the current literature of international relations, there are generally four recognized criteria which define a state: a sovereign territory, a permanent population, a government in control, and participation of the state in international relations (Dixon, 2005, pp.105–108). Furthermore, the ideal state can be illustrated by four characteristics: The state is territorially defined; The state has the monopoly over the use of legitimate force; It is the authority over a specific population which in turn recognizes the state as the predominant organization, and if we account for a nation-state, then we may add that the population should, ideally, develop into homogenous identity formation, i.e. a common nationality; The state and its population have an exchange of duties and benefits in the form of taxes, military services, creation of material welfare, and so forth (Finer 1975, Lindblom 1977, Hettne 1993, etc.). But the state, at least in the English language, is also referred to with other terms such as *nation*,

country, or *nation-state*. According to Ingebritsen et al. (2006, p.4), until the 20th century none of the above terms was used to refer to a state. Instead, this unit has been referred to as *power*. This work will stick, however, with the term *state*, as a basic unit of analysis in the Westphalian international states system, and furthermore, because it is the composite part of the notion *small state*. As such, the historical processes of the modern state in Western Europe “were consolidation of territorial control, differentiation of governments from other organizations, acquisition of autonomy (and mutual recognition thereof) by some governments, centralization and coordination” (Tilly 1975, p.70).

The following question, once the definition of the *state* is provided, is what determines the *size* of a state? In other words, which criteria should be applied in order to separate a small from a medium or big state? As stated above, one set of criteria, known as quantifiable criteria, is based on physical features or on measurable elements such as the surface of a state’s territory, its economy, military, etc. But among all these criteria, the most commonly used one is the population size of a state. According to Maass (2009), the use of population as a criteria for defining a small state has several advantages, such as the fact that the data about this criteria are generally available in contemporary studies, that this criteria help divide precisely a small from a big or medium state, and that population relates to other elements which indicate the state’s size such as the economy, military, etc. (p.75). But the problem with using population as an identifying criterion of a small state has to do with setting the limit of the population number. In this aspect, there seems to be a lack of consensus among the scholars who study small states and difficulty in differentiating it from the category of microstates. Maass (2008) argues that though there are tendencies to equate small states with microstates, in general, the latter are defined as a “subset of small states and are described as extremely small” (p.2). In defining small states from a population size viewpoint, scholars hold various positions regarding the exact number of people who constitute a population. Clarke and Payne (1987, xvii) set 1 million as the defining number for a small state, East (1973, p.563) maintains that small states are all those states with a population of under 23.7 million, while Ingebritsen et al. (2006, p.6) claims that the European ‘bar’ for small states has been set at about 16 million (the population size of Netherlands). This variation indicates that while the population is considered as an ‘objective’ criterion for defining the size of a state, setting a cut-off of the population of a small state is rather a ‘subjective’ process. Some studiers, such as Karl Deutsch, use the economy or Gross National Product, and

others the size of a state's territory as a single criterion of definition (Thorhallsson 2006, Maass, 2009). But both criteria have found very little support among scholars. As Thorhallsson (2006), argues if a state's GDP is a determining criterion of its size, then Poland would be a much 'smaller' state than Luxembourg, while the populations of these two states indicate the opposite. Similarly, the size of geographical territory does not suffice to define a small state, if the other criteria do not correspond with it. For greater accuracy, many authors (see in Maass, 2009) use population in combination with the other quantifiable criteria such as the geographical area as well as the gross domestic product or wealth of a country to distinguish small from big states. The usage of quantifiable criteria allows studiers to focus on the visible features of a state, nevertheless, many times they fail to explain, in its entirety, the complexity that small states reflect within the international system. Furthermore, Thorhallsson (2006) argues that these criteria may've been more helpful in defining small states in the "old international systems where: where military capacity was the key to the survival of states; manpower for military purposes was highly important; the size of the economy was a basis for building up the militia; and states attached importance to concrete territorial gains."(p.13) Hence, authors who wish to study the small states within a new international system, or more precisely within the 'new Europe' look into other, not so visible, factors such as 'power' and 'strength' and even 'self-perception' in the international system, in order to capture a more current, comprehensive, and concrete meaning of a small state.

The usage of so-called qualitative criteria is perceived as a subjective approach towards defining a small state (Scheldrup, 2014, p.5). It is considered as subjective because their size is defined according to their position in the international system or in comparison to other greater states. In the Cold War period, authors (ex. Keohane 1969, Vital (1971) defined small states as incapable of influencing the international system. In their opinion, small states mattered much less than bigger states, due to their inability to affect the international states system. This perception of small states has a historic background which dates back to the Congress of Vienna, which positioned the great states much higher in the international system hierarchy. During the Congress, it was decided that all issues with great significance will be discussed and dealt with by the five great powers of the time. The other states, which will be considered as important to include in consultations, agreements, treaties, etc., were considered as middle powers, although their number in the 19th century was almost insignificant. While the states which were deemed

unimportant to be included in decision making, were called small states (Ingebritsen et al., 2006, p.4).

The change of the international world order after the end of the Cold War, brought about different conceptions of small states and their perceived influence on the international system. As Neumann and Gstöhl (2004) argue, the problem with the traditional definition of small states and their limited capacity to influence the international relations, was that it was time-bound, and did not take into consideration the changes in the international environment. In the newly created circumstances, in the context of regional integrations, globalization, development of modern technology and communication, small state's role within the international system came to be perceived differently. In the post-Cold War context, Thorhallsson (2006) argues that, under the influence of social constructivism and its focus on international norms, beliefs, ideas, and identity, the room for small states' maneuverability within the international system has grown. Small states have become advocates of international norms and through them have been able to project influence internationally (ex. Nordic states pushing forward human rights, women's rights agendas in the international institutions). Also, small states' relations with the big powers is no longer defined only by bargaining processes, but also by arguing, framing and creating identities and policies that are more favorable to them. In doing so, small states enable the creation of a collective identity which includes the great powers in it as well. Risse-Kappen (1995, as cited in Thorhallsson 2006) takes the example of NATO, within which, the small member states, through shared values and norms, have been able to influence even the US' security policies. Finally using soft-power to compensate for missing hard-power, small states have also become influential in several aspects (technological, ecological, etc.) within the international system (Browning 2006).

Another qualitative approach towards defining a small state is analyzing their foreign policy behavior and finding patterns of it as a group. According to the advocates of this stance, small states exhibit specific behavior within the international system, which distinguishes them from the other states (East, 1975, p.160). Some of the common characteristics of their behavior according to authors such as Evans and Newnham (1998), Hey (2003), Steinsson and Thorhallsson etc (2017), etc., is their limited foreign policy priorities, which are mainly local and regional, but rarely global, their limited interference and involvement in international issues, their advocacy and support for the international laws as well as of international organizations,

their preference for multilateralism as a way of exerting their influence and protecting their security from external threats. Maass (2009, pp.78-79) points out to several shortfalls of this approach. First of all, he views the correlation between a small state and certain foreign policy behavior not necessarily as a causal relationship, in which small states behave differently in foreign policy (they prefer alliances and integration, support international organizations, refrain from using military force, etc.). Both these can stand as independent variables, or in some cases a small state can even be the dependent variable while foreign policy behavior the independent one. Furthermore, he argues that such specific behavior of small states in international relations may not be so specific for this group of states after all, since it may be applicable to other, bigger states, who may choose to behave in certain ways for ethical and normative considerations. But, despite these shortfalls, the advantage of the qualitative approach in defining small states is that they are based on empirical data collection and analysis, and therefore produce results which are concrete and context-based.

An alternative way of defining a small state is through self-perception or that of the third parties. This approach is proposed by authors such as Hey (2003) and is based on the self-perception of a state about its role in the international hierarchy. Nonetheless this approach raises several issues. The first problem is about determining whose perception should be taken into consideration, and what if perceptions stand in contradiction with each other? Secondly, the perception of a state about its size may often-times be subjective and therefore distorted. Also, if the defining of a small state is left on the hands of the politicians or diplomats, it could result into politically motivated and thus biased definitions. However, Hey (2003, pp.3-4) suggests that this approach is useful in that it is closely related to foreign policy. Based on the self-perception of small states, outcomes about its foreign policy behavior can be derived. As with other approaches, it is suggested the combination of it with other, more 'objective' approaches, such as the size of population or economy, in order to reach a more comprehensive definition for a small state. In this context Henrikson states that besides being small in the quantitative sense, small states must also 'feel' and 'act' as such (Henrikson, 2001, pp.62–63).

Small versus weak states

In an attempt to define small states, scholars also use terms such as *strength* and *power* interchangeably. Whereas strength can be considered as a quantitative criterion which can be physically gauged, the extension of this concept in international relations has caused the former to overlap with the concept of power, which in turn represents more of a qualitative criterion. Using the concept of power to define a small state, in a way causes scholars to equate *small* with *weak*. In a world driven by power politics, small states are not only considered small but also weak in the sense that they lack the power to impose their will in the international relations or resist the imposing of other states' will on themselves. This parallelism between small and weak concepts in small states is reflected by many definitions, which mainly fall into the realist but also in other schools of thought. Keohane (1969, pp.291-310), for instance, defines small states as incapable of affecting the international system. Along similar lines, Fox (1959, pp.2-3) defines small states as entities which lack the power to apply power in the international system or to resist the power of the other states from being applied on them. However, the concept of a weak state is not always perceived relative to the state's power in the international system. This work will present other viewpoints (ex. Buzan 1983) on the concept of weak states, which look into domestic factors in determining a state's weakness.

Applying the concept of *power* to the definition of a small state adds a security dimension to it. Unable to project power in their international relations, the small states' security becomes vulnerable to external threats. Although the linkage between *power* and *small state* was predominantly used by the realist thinking, and mostly during the first decades of the bipolar world order, Neumann and Gstöhl (2004) argue that "external security issues, regained prominence" after the Cold-War period, manifested by an increasing number of small states seeking membership in EU and NATO (p.12). Hence, a number of authors define small states as those whose security is threatened by other greater and more powerful states, and they are weak as they cannot provide security by relying solely on their capabilities (ex. Rothstein 1968, Ingebritsen et al. 2006, Bailes et al. 2016, Steinsson and Thorhallsson 2017, etc.). They maintain that alliances are a useful tool for small states to safeguard and enhance their security, but also to enhance their influence in international relations.

Putting an equation mark between small and weak states adds a foreign policy dimension to it. Arguing that small states are unable to impact the international system and to enhance security (from external threats) by relying on their own capabilities, the supporters of this position imply that small states project certain foreign policy behavior which is oriented towards their own survival (Maass, 2009). Instead of meddling with greater international affairs, the foreign policy agenda of small states is oriented towards their own defense. Raeymaeker (1974) illustrates this stance by claiming that “the foreign policy of small states, therefore, aims at withstanding pressure from the great powers, at safeguarding their territorial integrity and independence, and at ensuring the continued adhesion to national values and ideals. A small power is a state on the defensive, a state that thirsts for security” (p.18). The argument that small states are weak as they subordinate to dominant states (or international organizations) is supported by many authors (ex. Weber, 2000, Cooley, 2005; Donnelly, 2006, Lake 2009;). They argue that small and weak states’ benefits from relying on these (more powerful) structures outweigh their sovereignty loss costs.

However, other authors (see in Steinsson and Thorhallsson, 2017), who account for other theories (ex. liberal and constructivist) argue that small states are not necessarily weak, since their ability to exert influence over the international system is not determined solely by their possession of ‘raw power’. In compensation of their traditional weakness (ex. military), they apply soft power to produce certain level of influence in the international system (ex. the Nordic states within the EU). Being unable to compete in terms of hard power, small states are able to get what they want through non-coercive means or through soft power. Many small states have been able to push forward important agendas in the international system, such as environmental, human rights, conflict resolution causes, through the use of soft power. Also, the increasingly inter-dependent world, allows small states greater opportunity to lobby the foreign policy establishments of larger powers. Also, by appealing to international norms and law, which underline international cooperation, small states are able to exert more influence than they would in the realist viewpoint.

Thorhallsson and Wivel (2006) rely on the experience of small states within the EU in studying their foreign policy maneuverability and influence within international structures such as the EU. The authors argue that the reason small states gained greater foreign policy maneuverability after the Cold War, lies in the EU norms and institutions, which have helped

modify small states' traditional security issues and provided benefits (ex. economic) which traditionally have been available only to large powers. Within institutionalized environments, the traditional 'hard' power, which small states lack, matters less. In an institutionalized environment all states, big or small, are subject to the same rules, at least in theory. And institutionalized economic integrations allow small states to access greater economic benefits. However, the authors argue that regardless of a natural tendency of small states to favor institutionalization of inter-state relations, small EU member behave differently within this Union. The authors try to search for the reasons within each school of thought, beginning with the realists, who point to the importance of geopolitics in determining small states' behavior, especially in security policies, continuing with the liberals, who stress that interest groups are the ones which determine small states' foreign policy, especially in terms of economic and trade issues, and ending with the constructivist, who point to the importance of discourse, in explaining small states' foreign policy decisions which are impacted by the dilemma of preserving national autonomy or trading it off for influence in the EU. Analyzed in combination, the authors argue, may help us explain certain foreign policy behaviors of EU small member states. Using such approach, they argue that small state's influence within the EU varies across policy areas and institutions. Regarding policy areas, small state's influence is smaller in security policy issues compared to all other policy areas. They've projected greater influence in policy areas such as the monetary or environmental issues (ex. Belgium, the Netherlands, etc.). Also, small states' success in influencing certain policy areas depends on their ability to build coalitions (with larger powers or institutions) which would support their bids to increase influence (ex. the Netherlands allying with Germany to push forward environmental policies, or Belgium allying with the Commission to establish the European Monetary Union). Regarding institutions, Thorhallsson and Wivel argue that the change in the voting system within the Council from simple majority and unanimity to qualified majority voting may appear to be detrimental to small states' influence in the EU, as the simple majority guaranteed same weight of each state in the decision-making process while unanimity required approval by all members on a certain decision. However, these two mechanisms were not a significant guarantee for small state's increased maneuverability since only a limited legislation passed through a simple majority voting and since small states aren't able to use veto power which unanimity guarantees as large states do. Whereas big states are known for voting against or abstaining from a decision

which disfavors them, small states, Heisenberg (2005, as cited in Thorhallsson and Wiesel, 2006) argues, hardly ever do that. The reason small states behave differently within the EU, the authors argue, lies in cross-examination of the material resources (according to realists), soft power (according to liberals), and the understanding of political elites and public opinion of a state's role in regional and global context (according to constructivists). Whereas some state's foreign policy behavior may be driven more by economic incentives, others by security issues, and thirds by the dilemma of preserving state autonomy or enhancing their regional influence through integration.

The wide range of characteristics which define small states, as provided above, imply that there is no single way of conceiving small states. The lack of a consensus on defining a small state and the diversity of characteristics which also shift and expand over time, only reflect the reality in which small states exist, in their uniqueness and diversity, in the international states system. Hence, students may choose to use either one set of criteria, or combine all of the above, when studying a particular or several small states, depending on their compatibility with the state in question. As mentioned in this text, small and weak states are particularly interrelated with certain foreign policy behavior. In this context, I will attempt to apply my own working definition, which is inclusive of some of the criteria above, and reflects some features of small states as elaborated above:

A small state is one which is aware of its 'smallness' and illustrates this awareness by acting and feeling small in international relations. Being incapable to secure its survival on its own, a small state chooses to rely fundamentally on the aid of other states, alliances, organization, which, in turn, confine or dictate its political maneuverability both internally and externally.

Before studying our case state, namely Macedonia, in the following section, I will provide a literature overview of the foreign policy determinants of a small state. This section is necessary for understanding the interplay of external and internal factors, which act as determinants of a small state's foreign policy behavior, and furthermore for assessing whether the scholarly consensus on such determining factors is also applicable in the case of Macedonia.

Foreign policy of small states

With the fundamental changes of the international system, the scholarly interest to research on the small states' role in the international relations grew significantly. The earliest researches on the small state's foreign policy behavior, were mainly under the influence of the realist perspective of the international relations, which analyses the small states' behavior from a systemic level. This approach revolved mainly around the *security* element, as a factor which defines foreign policy behavior. Vital (1971) is among the first researchers who analyzed the role of small states within a hierarchical international system, in which, he argues that the power of small states is limited. Despite cases where small states have demonstrated and used force against bigger ones (ex. Vietnam against USA, or Afghanistan against USSR), theorists such as Vital argue that generally small states, in conflict with more powerful ones, are limited in their ability to use force. Due to the limited capacity of the small states to use force and protect themselves, their vital preoccupation revolves around the element of security and response towards the external threatening environment. Concerned with security, a common characteristic of small states becomes their search for security through multilateral organizations and alliances (Hey, 2003, p.4). Steinsson and Thorhallsson (2017) name such small state's foreign policy as 'shelter' strategy. In their words "shelter is an alliance relationship where small states alleviate their political, economic and societal vulnerabilities by allying with large states and joining international or regional organizations" (p.10). Thus, it is typical for small states to pursue membership into regional and international organizations in order to ensure security and advance their foreign policy goals (Bailes, Thayer, & Thorhallsson, 2016; Thorhallsson, 2011). Another characteristic of small states' foreign policy behavior, is to compensate for their *inbuilt weakness*, which limits their foreign policy choices, by prioritizing their efforts and invest more (of their limited resources) to specific issues of greater relevance to them; by building coalitions with other small states or relying on technocratic international organizations' bodies in order to exert influence in international relations; by using their informal and flexible diplomatic forces to make decisions quickly; by benefiting from their self-perceived image as neutral and peaceful in gaining fact-finding, investigative and mediating roles in international issues; by focusing on

developing soft power which renders them with economic and other benefits, etc. (Steinsson and Thorhallsson, 2017).

Is it then possible to find out and define what common characteristics do small states demonstrate in their foreign policy behavior? From the conducted research which tends to explain small states' foreign policy behavior, a long list of characteristics results. A summary of the general characteristics of small states' behavior is provided below (Hey, 2003, p.5):

- the scope of small states' foreign policy activities is rather small, perhaps also due to lack of or limited possession of essential resources.
- small states have short term goals and are limited to their closer geographic arena, as opposed to great states, whose goals are long termed and their actions are usually global.
- small states tend to behave morally, by supporting international principles and law.
- small states tend to rely on international organizations or multinational institutions, through which they respect and adopt international rules and law; they rely on superpowers for protection, partnership, and resources.
- small states tend to cooperate and avoid conflict, especially when major powers are involved, therefore they may act as good mediators; they also tend to choose neutral positions, whenever possible.
- security is an important factor in small states' foreign policy. To ensure their physical and political survival, small states may choose to join alliances or choose a neutral position.
- small states' foreign policy activity is curtailed by the international system, and they have far less options than the great powers.

As will be discussed in greater length below, Macedonia fits into most of these non-exhaustive criteria used to define a small state. Macedonia's lack of resources (in terms of GDP, military, or population) limits the state's foreign policy activities, merely to ones which safeguard its own survival, without further interference in the issues of other states. Macedonia's support and abiding by international laws is demonstrated not only through its multilateral memberships in international organizations, but also through its appeal to international bodies (such as the UN/ICJ) in resolving disputes (such as the name issue with Greece). Its foreign policy objective of joining a military alliance such as NATO, demonstrates its reliance on powerful alliances to ensure its survival. Its sole strategic objectives, EU and NATO integration, since 1991, fit the

criteria of a small state which postulate that the latter have less foreign policy options in comparison to a more multi-vectorial foreign policy that big states cultivate.

According to Hey (2003), this list of characteristics is rough and many times contradictory. For instance, it predicts how small states tend to remain neutral and at the same time it explains their tendency of joining defense alliances. Also, many of these points do not find a general applicability in all small states. Therefore, their applicability depends on the conditions or factors which determine their behavior. Depending on the circumstances, a small states foreign policy may be more active or more passive. Thus, a small state's way of responding to different conditions varies greatly, depending on the situation a state finds itself and the factors which influence a particular behavior.

Determinants of small states foreign policy behavior

It is important to consider the levels of analysis, as developed by Rosenau (1971), when it comes to explaining the determinants of a small state's foreign policy behavior. Rosenau developed five levels of analysis, but this section will present three levels, as used and modified by Hey (2003): the international system or system level, the state level, and the individual level. Analyzing influences on foreign policy across these levels, will allow a better understanding on the behavior of a small state in its foreign relations but also its impact domestically.

The conventional wisdom on the small states foreign policy behavior derives mainly from the systemic level of analysis. This system is considered as more adequate level for analyzing and explaining the small states' foreign policy behavior, as these states hold security and survival as their main preoccupation. As such, the small and weak states, which in this thesis will be used interchangeably, feel more threatened by the external environment for their security and survival than the great and powerful states. Thus, their foreign policy is defined more by the international environment constraints than by the domestic ones. Consequently, their foreign policy options or choices are curtailed and their space of maneuverability is limited. According to Wolfers (as cited in Elman, 1995), the fear of small states for survival is more of a variable than a constant. Depending on how much threatened a small state feels from external pressures, it will be more compliant with the structural rules of the international system. Due to the security factor, the

variability of a small state foreign policy behavior is smaller than that of a big state, which is less constrained by the external environment. Rosenau similarly posits that the external environment is a more important factor when explaining the determinants of a small state's foreign policy, while the domestic factors may apply more in explaining a great state's foreign policy behavior (as cited in Elman, 1995, p.176). Other authors (Goetschel 1998, Lake 2009, Sherwood 2016, Thorhallsson and Steinsson 2017, etc.) also holds the security dilemma as the main factor which influences a small state's foreign policy behavior. Many of these authors are in line with Jervis' (1978) argument of small states having a smaller margin of error in response to external threats than big states. Hence, they deem the consequences for possible mistakes to be much more costly for smaller states. Thus, the small states, being small and weak, need to be more attuned to external constraints and act more prudently towards the external circumstances. According to Sutton (1987, p.20), due to the weakness and security objective of small states, they are incapable of acting as agents of change within the international system, and their role is rather passive-reactive.

Another assumption about the small states foreign policy advocated by realists and neo-realists is that small states, which are weak, are most likely to bandwagon with a threatening state than to balance against it. Waltz (1979) explains this behavior of small states from the international level perspective, in which small states are more vulnerable to external aggressiveness and therefore tend to ally with the powers which threaten their security, in order to avoid attacks. This behavior is most likely to take place when the small state finds no other more suitable alternative for alliance with great powers. Labs (as cited in Elman, 1995) holds similar stance when explaining the small state's choice of balancing or bandwagoning against a powerful threat, maintaining that it would depend on the other options for alliance available to a small state.

But many agree that the system level of analysis is often insufficient to explain a small state's behavior in its entirety. This insufficiency became even more evident after the Cold War period, when small states' foreign policy ceased to be thought of as merely a reflex towards the oscillation of the balance of power, and instead, began to be perceived as shaper of international developments (Browning, 2006). If we accept such premise, then we must look into other levels, such as the state (unit) level, in order to understand more holistically a small state's foreign policy behavior. The state level analysis argues about other relevant factors which influence the

foreign policy of small states, besides the international environment, and though not exclusively, it is more elaborated within the liberal theory. In this context, Elman (1995, p.17) adopts an institutionalist approach to explain the behavior of small states, addressing the shortcomings of other approaches such as societal and statist approach. She maintains that the domestic institutions define the specific policy instruments which allow policy makers to assess the options they have in foreign policy (Elman, 1995, p.182). Furthermore, the author claims that both the international and domestic levels are important in explaining foreign policy behavior, because “while the international environment influences domestic political choices, these institutional decisions shape foreign policies in later periods” (p.171).

David McGraw (as cited in Hey, 2003), points to another factor of influence in foreign policy. He talks about the impact of ideology on the foreign policy, delving into the case of New Zealand. He emphasizes that the ideological differences of the two biggest political parties there cause foreign policy variation in the country. According to McGraw, the two parties, the Labor and National party, maintain different positions regarding foreign policy issues such as its moral aspect, multilateralism, and economic issues. Thus, the Labor party tends to project a more idealist and internationalist image, while the National party a more realist one. Consequently, the foreign policy approach changes in accordance with the exchange of parties in power.

A similar state level approach is also adopted by Sergey Khrychikov (2000). In his study *The Effect of NATO Partnership with Ukraine on Inter-Ethnic Relations within the Country*, he points out to the internal make-up of the country, namely its social, political, and economic specifics, as a determinant of foreign policy. He focuses on ethnicity and foreign policy, namely on the impact that different ethnic groups have on the orientation of foreign policy. He argues that different ethnic groups project different foreign policy preferences, rendering the foreign policy of a country as vague and loose. Hence, internal cleavages, which derive from ethnic and cultural differences, are reflected as ambiguity and indecision on the foreign policy level as well. His main argument is that the relationship between national identity and foreign policy is dialectical, where foreign policy plays an important role in the “identity building, shaping people’s attitudes to other countries and international organizations”, but on the other hand, “the identity of the groups a state consists of, places considerable constraints on the development of foreign policy, restricting government in defining goals and selecting partners” (p. 2).

In *Thinking Outside the Block*, Gvalia et al. (2013) look towards constructivism, when discussing the domestic factors which shape foreign policy. Those factors are identified as elite ideas, identities, and preferences. The authors posit that the elite ideas are determining for Georgia's foreign policy, which has remained unchanged even in the face of external environment changes. These ideas reflect the pro-European and pro-western positioning of the political elite of Georgia, which is not different from the position of the public opinion. In Georgia's case, foreign policy doesn't only reflect the security aspect but also the identifying values of the political elite with the European ones. The article emphasizes that Georgia's foreign policy helps the construction of a European identity of Georgia, which is based on European values and standards such as "robust democracy and market economy along with effective state institutions" (p.112). Moreover, the pro-European orientation of its foreign policy is closely connected with the modernization concept. Being part of Europe, the political elite of Georgia thinks that the modernization of the society will take place more efficiently. If it fails to do so, the society will head towards decadence, corruption and crime. Thus, as the article states "joining NATO and EU are valued not only in terms of the security and prosperity they afford, but equally as an external affirmation of Georgia's European identity." (p.116). In Georgia's case, there is an overlap between the realist and constructivist approach in terms of foreign policy making. The realists would describe the pro-European orientation of Georgia's foreign policy, in the face of the threatening external environment, as a choice to balance instead of bandwagon. Instead of bandwagoning with Russia, Georgia is determined to join the western alliances. Given that the European Union plays an important role in shaping Georgia's western identity, it can also be claimed that its foreign policy behavior is driven by identity/idea rather than structure. Although security is still an important element of Georgia's foreign policy, its identity component, is also as determining of its behavior in the international relations.

The above discussion portrays a number of factors which influence the behavior of a small state's foreign policy across several levels of analysis. The systemic level stresses the external environment and the need of small states for security as main determinants of foreign policy behavior. The state level includes other influential factors such as the society, institutions, political ideology, ethnic preferences, etc. While at the individual level, ideas and preferences of political elites or leaders are one example of foreign policy determinants. Accounting for a multiple level influence, when analyzing foreign policy behavior, allows a holistic understanding

of the latter, nevertheless, this research will focus only on two levels: namely on the system and state level, as necessary approaches to understand the interaction between external pressures, foreign policy behavior, and inter-ethnic relations.

Security oriented Foreign policy

The two levels of analysis, international and state level, are important in allowing us to understand the foreign policy behavior of a small state which is mainly characterized by two functions: *security* and *integration*. Regarding the security function of foreign policy, Thorllhansson and Steinsson (2017) argue that not all small states are affected in the same manner by security challenges. The challenges may differ and so does a state's adopted security policy. The external and domestic unique circumstances dictate the security approach that a small state undertakes. Therefore, not all small states' responses to security threats are applicable to other states. But many scholars agree that small states adopt multilateralist approach both in pursuing their foreign policy goals but also in restraining potential threats. Based on Hey's (2003) characterizing elements of small states' foreign policy, security is an important factor in their foreign policy and in order to preserve it, they tend to join alliances or choose neutral positions. As presented above, other authors such as Rothstein and Keohane also maintain similar positions regarding a small state's search for security through alliances and membership in international organizations. Logically, we may infer that any factor, external or internal, which may affect a state's prospects of joining international organizations, would ultimately risk the state's security, and consequently become a security threat to it. Focused on the external factors and their influence over a state's international integration processes, the question becomes: what kind of foreign policy response does a state adopt in the face of external constraints which block the security prospects that a small state tries to achieve through international integrations? Before reviewing existing approaches of a small state towards external constraints/threats which undermine its security, we must understand thoroughly the concept of security itself and the types of threats to it.

The concept of security

As vital of a concept that security is, at the same time, its meaning is often disputed and contested by different scholars (Buzan 1991, 1998, 2003, Gaspers 2005, Collins 2007, Jolly and Ray 2007, Kaldor 2007, etc.). Because of a conceptual vagueness that the security concept entails, the defining process of it is the more difficult. Nevertheless, most of the definitions emphasize a common element: the existence of a threat to certain values of the referent object, or more precisely, threats which endanger its survival. But different theories attach different meanings to the concept of threat and security. Hence, the realist theory adopts an objective view of security, defining it as the main preoccupation of a state, which tries to preserve it by eliminating or managing threat through force and interaction with other states (Nye and Keohane, 2001). The constructivist theory conceptualizes security in subjective terms. It defines security as an outcome of interactions and negotiations of various actors with certain values and identities. Accordingly, security is reached not by eliminating an objective threat but rather by changing the perception towards it and overcoming fear among one another. Wolfers, in this context, draws a distinction between security in the objective sense, which implies lack of threat, and security in the subjective sense, implying the lack of fear, claiming that both elements are necessary for security to be achieved. The interpretation of security has also varied. To the end of the Cold War period, security has been interpreted as state-centered, where the state was considered as an absolute category, while the ultimate goal was the protection of sovereignty, in terms of people, political system, and territorial integrity. This concept is otherwise termed as *national security*. But, after the end of Cold War, the concept of security shifts attention from state to human related issues. It focuses on human rights, safety, and sustainable development (Paris 2001, p.88).

This work builds mainly on Buzan's security theorizing (1998, 2003), since he looks into the concept of security from a much broader perspective than the traditional view. Buzan's framework of security may help us understand the concept of security in a much wider sense, which goes beyond the traditional approach. He builds his theoretical framework starting off the argument that the rational theory on security, which analyzes the latter based on the concepts of *war* and *peace*, reduces its complexity to solely a 'struggle for power'. This theory, whereas

functional during the World Wars, where states fought for power, in the period after the Cold War, resulted as insufficiently explanatory. It is much less self-explanatory if the focus is on the small states' security. As described above, the way small states function and securitize issues differs from that of the big states and even among the small states themselves. Thus, to reduce security only to the struggle for power, would make it difficult to explain many empirical cases of small states. In his work *People, States and Fear* Buzan (1991) supports other authors' (ex. Wolfers, 1952) claims on the difficulty of defining security, yet argues that this should not discourage students from further research into this concept. He admits that security is rather multi-faceted, as he goes about analyzing several interacting levels and sectors, while unfolding security complexes. Through a constructivist approach he doesn't accept a given state of security, but analyses every element which he considers as a constituent part of the security package, thus offering a more holistic understanding over security (Stone, 2009). This approach, besides the main object of reference, the state, also includes other levels (international and sub-unit levels) and several sectors (military, political, economic, societal, environmental).

Building on Buzan's security theorizing may help us in the process of answering our two research questions, by analyzing if it finds applicability in the empirical findings of our case study. Such theory may provide reliable and holistic explanations on the interrelations of internal and external threats a small state faces, which seem to travel not only across different levels of analysis but also across different security sectors. Since this work's case of study is the state of Macedonia, it implies that the focus will be on the state, as the main unit of the theoretical analysis. However, this doesn't mean that the other levels (international and sub-unit levels) do not interfere in issues of security with the state (unit) level, as the main referential object of security. Hence during the unfolding of the theoretical analysis, the three levels will be analyzed in relation to their interaction with security issues. Buzan (1983) offers a useful framework for analyzing these levels and sector interactions, by maintaining the focus on the level of the state. He goes about explaining such an interaction by describing three main components of the state, as objects of its security.

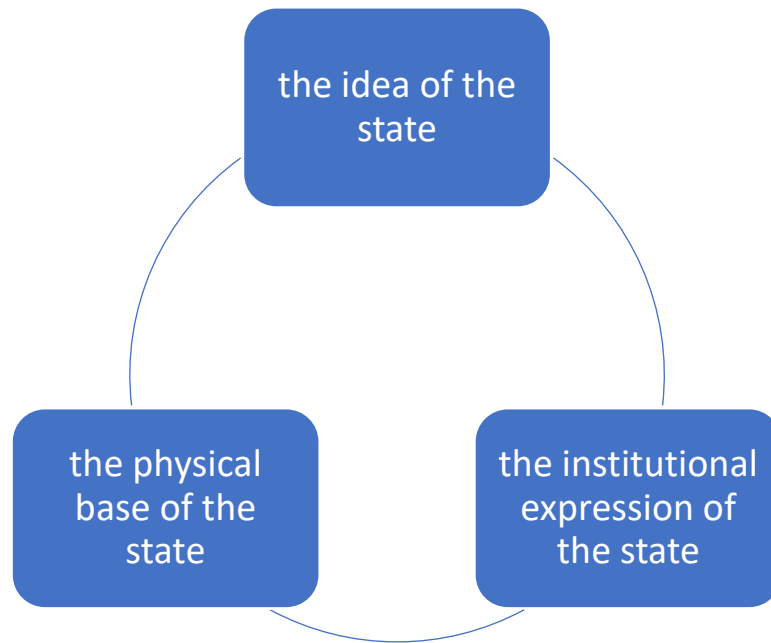


Fig. 1 Taken from Buzan (1983, 40)

This model presents the main components a state should possess, beginning with its physical base, which is mainly composed of its population and territory, the governing institutions, which govern its people and territory, and the existence of an *idea of the state* in people's minds, through which the state applies its authority over them. Beginning with the most concrete component of the state, its physical base, the threats directed towards it are consequently the easiest to identify. Composed of mainly its population and territory, the physical base of a state may be threatened by both external factors, through invasion (ex. Russian annexation of Crimea), and internal factors, through secession (ex. Catalans of Spain). Hence such kinds of threats are mostly territorial. Territorial threats, as described by realists, are the most typical form of threat towards a state, nonetheless, this form is incomprehensive of other types of threats.

Buzan's elaboration of the *idea of the state* would be the most appropriate model for studying the case of Macedonia, as it will be argued in the later sections. In order to understand the idea of the state, Buzan argues that the national security concept can be of help. This term implies that the object of security is the *nation* itself. If we accept this premise, then we should further analyze the relationship between the *state* and the *nation*. Buzan defines the nation as "a large group of people sharing the same cultural heritage...and normally live in one area" (1983, p.45). If the state and the nation happen to coincide, then the state would serve the purpose of defending and expressing the nation and all it entails. If we can define a state as a single, unified

nation, then this definition would provide us with an understanding on what are the highest security priorities of this state and which values are mostly threatened. The problem here is, however, that only a few states would fit into this model. There are many cases where state and nation don't coincide, such as cases of nations which don't have their own state (Kurds, Palestinians), states whose nation lives scattered in other states (Germans, Somalis), or states in which more than one nation coexist (Bosnia, India).

By analyzing the link between the *state* and the *nation*, Buzan develops four models of states. The first is the *nation-state* (Japan, France), in which the nation is older than the state; thus, the nation contributes to the emergence of the state. In these cases, the state and the nation are one. The relationship between the two is quite strong and this link gives the state an internal legitimacy and a strong identity in its international relations. The second model is the *state-nation* (USA), which stands in opposition to the first model. According to it, it is the state, which through a top-down approach, constitutes a nation, by projecting unified cultural elements, which are embraced by all diverse populations living in that state. According to Buzan, this model can be tried to be applied to multi-national states as well, however, this would demand the subordination of indigenous people in their territory, which is much more difficult than achieving the subordination of immigrant people who have come to an empty or loosely held territory. The third model is called *part-nation state* (Somalia). In this model fit all cases in which the main nation-state exists, but parts of this nation live as minorities in neighboring states. The idea of unifying this nation-state, according to Buzan, may represent a serious case of security threat. The fourth model is that of *multi-national states* (Bosnia). In these states co-exist at least two full nations. Buzan divides these states into *federal* and *imperial*. In federal states, these nationalities do not necessarily try to impose upon themselves an artificial structure of a nation-state, nor do they attempt to dominate entirely the state structure. The security implications for these states are related with the fact that they lack a unifying principle among these nationalities, hence are more characterized by separatism or dismemberment, or even foreign intervention. Nationalism may convert into a security issue for these states, as was the case with Yugoslavia. In imperial states, one of the nations may try to dominate the whole state structure for its own benefit. Within these states, the dominant nation may attempt to eliminate other nations, in its efforts to create a sort of a nation-state. Such attempts may range from use of violence to softer approaches such as cultural absorption. This nation may even use the state machinery to maintain its dominant position,

without eliminating or absorbing other nations, and it may also act as if it leads a non-nationalist policy which tries to overcome national issues, but in fact maintains its status-quo. Both the federal and imperial states are endangered, in terms of their security, by national divisions. According to Buzan, the stability in these states depends on the ability of the dominant nation to safeguard its control over the state structures. Buzan argues that the imperial state is one of the most endangered types by political threats, either by internal developments or by external interventions, which may undermine the dominance of a nation over the state, bringing the latter on the verge of collapse (1991, pp.44-49).

Elaborating on the institutions, Buzan's argument, which may mostly resonate with this work, is that unstable *institutions* may represent a source of threat to a state. Such institutional instability may come as a result of the lack of a general population's support, which in turn results from the fact that the idea of the state is quite weak. In other words, if the nations that constitute such state do not agree among themselves on the idea of the state, this may shatter the basis for the legitimacy required for exercising power (1983, pp.60). But what if the idea of the state is also contested externally? How may such external contestation threaten to worsen the internal instability? How would such a state react towards threats that come both from the external and internal environments? Buzan divides the states into the ones which belong in either one of these specters and the ones which lay between the two. In relation to the questions above, my research interest concentrates precisely in the states that lie in the center of the two specters, or which in an equal way face both internal and external insecurities (Argentina, Ethiopia, Pakistan). What should be securitized in these states? The answer to this question, may provide an explanatory basis for this work's case as well. But in order to answer this question, the level and meaning of the threat should be evaluated. Buzan argues that it is almost impossible to measure or even define these threats, much less distinguish between a domestic and external threat, unless we use the impressionist approach, which claims that states are not the same in terms of their political integrity. In other words, states may be weak not only relative to the power they possess (within the international system), but also relative to the internal dispute of the idea about it and its institutions. In such cases, what is it that needs to be secured?

Buzan argues that a weak state is one whose idea and institutions are weak. He illustrates this argument through the examples of China and the Soviet Union, which may seem strong states in terms of power, but at the same time, are weak states in the sense that they lack a

comprehensive idea of the state and an internal consensus on an organizing ideology. As opposed to the strong states, the identification of external threats to the weak states is more difficult and ambiguous. This is true since in weak states, the idea and institutions are internally contested, to the point of violence, thus, they (idea and institutions) do not represent a strong point of reference for national security. In Buzan's (1983) words:

When there is almost no idea of a state and the governing institutions are themselves the main threat to individuals, national security almost ceases to have content and one must look to individuals and sub-state units for the most meaningful security referents. Foreign intervention becomes much harder to assess in national security terms, because outside powers will be helping factions which are themselves in conflict...[In weak states] who should be classed enemy and who ally simply depends on one's point of view... (p.68)

What we can conclude from Buzan's elaboration of the state's three components is that they may be affected differently by certain threats, since there is no internal consensus on what the national interests, which must be defended against such threats, are. Hence, they give different meanings to the concept of national security, which go beyond the mere military sense. As states are so diverse in structure and circumstances, national security is difficult to be studied in general terms. Buzan suggests that the true essence of this concept may be captured only by linking it to concrete cases of study.

Threats to security

The end of Cold War brought up the need to reconceptualize the concept of security, which would fit more adequately the new world order reality. Most importantly, security entails not only factors which threaten it, but also other factors which are termed as challenges, vulnerabilities, risks, and of the like. Although this thesis will build on the concept of *security threats*, as a variable which is hypothesized to affect foreign policy and inter-ethnic relations, a necessary distinction between threats and other factors linked to security, is necessary to be drawn. From the distinction drawn, it will be easier to understand the thesis' choice to focus on security threats, as the most accurate explanation of the factors studied in this work.

Oftentimes, the term security *challenges* is used synonymous to that of security threats. But the need to conceptually separate challenges from threats rose after the Cold War period,

which introduced non-traditional security issues, that cannot be defined as threats *per se*. Challenge as a political concept is often associated with terms such defiance, provocation, interrogation, contestation, trial, ultimatum, etc. Challenges are often defined as less urgent or non-violent security issues compared to threats. They also may target the domestic security agenda more than the external one. Among the typical security challenges are listed the environmental challenges (ex. ozone depletion, increased greenhouse emissions, future uncertainties, etc.) which are more closely linked to human insecurity than to state insecurity. Though security challenges may primarily derive from human activities, they may also be part of the global (and state) security issues (infectious diseases, ecological degradation, refugees, etc.). As such challenges may be multidimensional and manifold. They are also dealt with by a vast range of factors (individual, national, and international) depending on the type and nature of the challenge.

The political meaning of *vulnerability* is often associated with terms such as defenselessness, openness to attack, exposure, unsafety, susceptibility, etc. Vulnerability also entails a vast number of security dimensions, such as political, economic, cultural, environmental, educational, natural, physical, etc. In Nathan's (2009) words, vulnerability is "a *complex* process encompassing multiple intricate dimensions [constantly changing]" (as cited in Brauch 2011, p.1125). He argues that security vulnerability entails two distinguishing features: exposure (which may be physical or socio-ecological) and insufficient capacities (such as physical weakness, legal, organizational, technical, political, socio-economic, psychological and cultural vulnerability). In terms of its use within the security studies field, Brauch (2011) argues that vulnerability has been used much more during the Cold War period (to explain issues in technical systems, military and command, infrastructure communication, etc.). The term seems to be used much less after the 90s, or it is used under very specific meanings.

Risks, as a political concept is closely related to danger, gamble, jeopardy, uncertainty, instability, etc. Among other theories, this concept is used widely in the decision-making theory (which also includes foreign policy decision-making). In the post-Cold War era risk management became an important security task. Since the 1990s, clearly defined threats have almost perished as a concept. Consequently, Daase (2002, as cited in Brauch, 2011) states that a fundamental difference between risks and threats emerges in that "the certainty of expectation has disappeared with the departure of a clearly defined threat." In such context, the author argues that "instead of

reacting to perceived security threats, a proactive security policy should focus on the prevention of the causes and effects of risks.” (p.84). In this sense, risks precede the circumstances which might turn into threats, therefore risk management is more effective than securitization of a perceived threat.

As stated above, the focus of this thesis will lie in the so-called security threats, which represent one of the many security issues (as discussed above). The reason for hypothesizing the conceptions of external influential factors as security threats, rather than vulnerabilities, challenges, or risks, lies in the very definition of threats itself. Although a wide array of definition on threats exists, the common denominator indicates that a threat is a broader concept which includes all of the above security problems. As such, threats involve the exploitation of vulnerabilities and challenges in targeting the object of reference. By exploiting the vulnerability and challenges of the reference object, a threat aims to obtain, modify, damage, or destroy the latter. Risks, therein, become a function of threats, as they indicate the potentials for loss/damage, that a threat may cause to the object of reference, by exploiting its vulnerability/challenges. Thus, the presence of vulnerability in the object of reference indicates the scale of risk a threat may cause. The less vulnerable/challenged a reference object is, the less risk there is in being obtained, damaged, destroyed, etc. (Threat Analysis Group, 2020). Considering these security issues to be integrative parts of threats, this work will proceed in elaborating in greater detail the concept of threats, centered around the state (as a reference object) and within a wider security framework.

Whereas the definition of security is tightly related to the factors which threaten it, the concept of threat is often difficult to grasp, or define in precise terms. It has furthermore endured evolutions, gradually losing its traditional sense and gaining new attributes in the post-Cold War period. In the conventional wisdom, the threat to a state’s security is considered to derive from another state. The security studies, dominated at large by the realist theories, have explained the security of a state through military terms, where the state is central to their analysis (see Morgenthau, 1966). But in the aftermath of the Cold War, these explanations have many times resulted incomprehensive. For instance, the emergence of the EU project, influenced a change in the world order as conceived by the realists, while the dissolution of federations such as the USSR or Yugoslavia, brought to the surface a number of other threats to the security of states. For instance, besides military threats from other states, a state may also be threatened internally

by minorities or ethnic groups (Baylis et. al, 2011, p.233). Baldwin mentions another threat, the so called ‘communist threat’ which has persisted during the Cold War, but argues that the former hasn’t been specified for whether it represents an ideological, military, economic threat or a combination of all the above (1997, p.15).

The common denominator of the above authors is that besides the traditional military or territorial threats, states face a number of non-traditional threats, be they economic or social threats, cyberattacks, terrorism, environmental threats, etc. In order to understand the type of threat that a small state may face, and thereafter the response towards it, a definition of *threat* is necessary. Singer defines threat as “capability coupled with intent” (1958, p.94) This definition however, applied to the confrontation of the major powers, the US and USSR during the Cold War period, defines *capability* in military terms. Later, Buzan (1983, p.57) completes the concept of threat by combining two features: a threat by force (capabilities) and by ideas (ideology) to a state as the object of security. Besides providing a more comprehensive definition for threats, Buzan also categorizes all known threats into five main sectors: the military, economic, political, societal, and environmental sector. He determines each sector based on the type of security relationship. Thus, the military sector encompasses relationships of forceful coercion. Relationships of governance, authority, and recognition develop within the political sector. Relationships about the collective identity are categorized under the societal sector. The economic sector represents relationships of trade, finance, etc. And lastly, the environmental sector expresses the relationship between the environment and the human activity. Moreover, the location of security dynamics varies from one sector to the other. The military, political, and societal sector seem to be dominated by regional security complexes, while the economic and ecological sectors by global security dynamics, with the latter sector being impacted, at large, by local levels as well. Additionally, each sector seems to produce its own units, such as the state, which may then show up in other units as well.

Although when analyzing the concept of national security some of its threats emerge in the surface, in order to understand fundamentally the former, the nature of the threat and the objects towards which they are directed are a prerequisite. Linking Buzan’s framework of threats with our research questions, suggests the delving of threats which are related to two sectors: political and societal. These two sectors are of particular importance to this work, since they relate to the idea of the state, more specifically to the organizing ideology and the institutions

which express it, the two of the three state components, discussed above. The analysis of these two sectors would provide us with insights not only into the nature of threats, their position in the specter of threats, but also into the way a state may respond to them, by politicizing or securitizing them, and furthermore, the implications such response may have for the state cohesion itself.

The political sector

According to Buzan, political threats tend to emerge in cases where the idea of the state and its institutions are internally contested. However, similarly to the military ones, political threats may also emerge in the form of external penetration. “Political threats stem from the great battle of ideas, information, and traditions, which is the underlying justification for the international anarchy” (1983, p.77). Hence the idea of the state, besides being threatened internally, may become externally threatened as well, if contested by another state. Buzan et al. (1998) define political threats as follows:

Political threats are aimed at the organizational stability of the state. Their purpose may range from pressuring the government on a particular policy...to fomenting secessionism...The idea of the state, particularly its national identity, and organizing ideology, and the institutions which express it are the normal target of political threats. Since the state is essentially a political entity, political threats may be as much feared as military ones. This is particularly so if the target is a weak state (p.142).

Establishing the argument that political threats are directed towards the state’s sovereignty, Buzan et al. claim that they may be directed both to the internal and the external legitimacy of the state, with legitimacy being the domestic pillar of a state. Threats to the internal legitimacy of the state have to do with the ideologies or ideas and other issues which define the state. External threats may also target the domestic legitimacy, in other words, the internal idea of the state (1998, p.144).

Since the physical base of the state is mostly related to other sectors (such as the military, economic, and environmental one), the idea of the state and its institutions, as the two other components of the state, would be more appropriately dealt with within the political sector. Comparing these two components, the idea prevails over the institutions, since the latter are built

upon the idea which serves for consolidating the state. Typical examples of such ideas, which help hold a state together, are nationalism and/or ethno-nationalism, which oftentimes rises above the civic aspect, and the political ideology. Since institutions are created on the basis of these ideas, a threat to the latter may also put to risk the political order. Threats to the political order may be of different kinds, such as threats to the government, to the territorial integrity, or to the existence of the state itself, by not recognizing its autonomy/independence.

The problem here, however, is how to define *what is* and *what is not* a political threat, and moreover, who has the competence of making such decision. The question of what should be ‘defended’ in the case of political threats, may produce ambiguous and contradicting answers. If we assume the government is the legitimate actor for securitizing political threats, the question is whether all political actors would interpret in the same way the issues that represent a ‘threat’ to the object of reference?

According to Buzan et al. (1998), the main element based on which a threat may be qualified as a political threat to the state is its *sovereignty*. The threat to sovereignty is ultimately considered a threat to the state. By equating sovereignty with self-determination, or with “the right to decide on the political form of the state without external forceful interference” (p.152), any type of external interference, which goes against such internal will about the form of the state, may be considered as a threat towards the state security. From here, we may derive that a typical political security issue involves a state, which for the sake of its sovereignty, tries to avoid threats by another actor, which is usually external, i.e., by another state. But this framework is further complicated if we are to apply it over weak states. Depending on the type of a state’s weakness, the level of its vulnerability towards a political threat may change as well. In this work’s case of study, we are dealing with a state where the nation and the state do not coincide. Here, according to Buzan et al., the ethnic division, which in turn is caused by other issues and then it is politicized, would be the main problem, as it has the tendency of causing instability. Such type of a weak state, questions its sovereignty in terms of self-determination, since it doesn’t reflect an internal unity on the idea of the state’s political form. In this case, such state would open up to external actors’ influences, who may play a significant role. Through their actions, the external actors (i.e. states) may aggravate the existing fragmentations within a weak state. The question then becomes, which type of threats the state security action focuses

upon and consequently how is the state-to-state security interaction built within a regional context?

Out of the nine categories of the threat types that Buzan et al. (1998) develop within the political sector, the first and third type may be more explanatory for our case of study. The first type, defined as *Intentional threats to (weak) states on the basis of their state-nation split*, contains security dilemmas which arise as a result of the inconsistency between the state and the nation and are reflected as secessionist or irredentist demands by internal actors, such as ethnic groups, or external actors, such as neighboring states. Such type of threats may undermine the stability of the state structures and its national ideology. They often are bilateral, trilateral, and link several sectors, especially the political with the societal one, but may also involve the military sector. The second type, named as the *Inadvertent, unit-based threat to state-nation vulnerable states*, includes threats which occur between two or more states due to their incompatibility in terms of their state organizing principles. In other words, the conflict between the two states may take place if the way state A defines itself is considered as a threat to state B and its policy, and vice-versa. Examples of a state's organizing principle may be its ideological basis, but also the material components of it, such as its territory. The national identity of a state, which is opposed by another state or by an entity within the state, is also an example of such organizing principle. Buzan et al. (1998) argue that such security dilemmas require that the involved parties self-reflect upon their identity and their concept of statehood (pp.150-157).

In terms of the regional implications, the political threats are less regional, and mostly bilateral. However, this doesn't oppose the regional concept, since regions consist of a network of unit-to-unit threats. Hence small constellations become merged with bigger ones at the regional level. According to Buzan et al. (1998), the linkage of states in this sector differs from the other sectors, as it is based mostly on principle. But principles can also be regional and even global. In cases where principles are regional, the small bilateral or trilateral constellations link up together at a regional level, since other actors with a commitment to the same principles would join the constellation because of the interest they may have in the outcome of the conflict or on the effect it would produce over those principles (pp.159-161).

Societal sector

However, the political sector cannot explain entirely the concept of national security threats. Due to the term *national security* itself, this type of security requires delving into a more profound analysis that may go beyond the state. Accepting the premise that the state may not coincide with the nation, then the latter should be analyzed in its own right, and the societal sector may be of help in this direction. Although the societal may overlap with the political sector, it still has substantial differences from the latter. The concept *society* as opposed to the concept *state* is not fixed. As Buzan et al. (1998) state, “society is about identity, self-conception of communities, and of individuals identifying themselves as members of a community.” As *identity* is the organizing concept of a society, a security threat would be any event which may threaten the survival of this identity. As opposed to the political sector, where the main value to be defended against threats is sovereignty, in the societal sector, this value is identity. Defense against threats in the societal sector therefore means defense of the identity, which may or may not correspond with the state borders. The identity should not necessarily be national; it may also be religious or racial, however, our focus in this work would be on the former one, i.e. on the national identity, as it may be more explanatory for our case of study (pp.119-210).

But both the societal and national terms are ambiguous and multi-faceted. Buzan et al. (1998) argue this is true since they are self-constructed elements which refer to an imaginary community that individuals wish to identify with. If we accept the premise that identity is a human construction, then the threats towards it are consequently constructed as factors which threaten the sense of “us”. Buzan et al. identify two ways of responding towards these threats. The first way is through activities undertaken by the community itself. The second way is by taking the issue to the political or military level, hence by placing it on the agenda of the state. If the issue is taken to the state level, then it may become resolved through legislation or political agreements. In this case, the societal sector merges with the political sector (p.122).

The referential object (or who is being threatened), according to the constructivist approach is what the main group treats, in a way or level, as the feeling that the “we” is being threatened. In the societal sector, “we” means the identity. The latter has taken different forms throughout time. But in the modern time, the nation is one of the main objects of reference within a society (1998, p.123). Buzan et al. analyze two scenarios when the nation is the threatened object: when the nation and the state align and when they don’t. If the state and the nation correspond more or less, those in power are usually the ones who make references to the

nation and identity. Since the nation and state align, by referring to the nation, powerholders refer at the same time to the state and its sovereignty. In these cases, national and state threats usually merge together. In the cases where the nation and state don't correspond, the object of reference are the minority nations, by actors who vary from the groups who demand separation and founding of their own state, to the ones who try to protect the identity of that minority. In these cases, national and state threats don't always coincide.

Since identity is a social construction, the threats towards it depend on the way identity is constructed or on what is perceived as a vital value being threatened. Hence, if a nation controls a state, but represents a majority only by a marginal difference, then a natality increase in minority groups may represent a threat to it. Buzan, during the definition of threats in the societal sector, groups them into three categories: migration, vertical competition, and horizontal competition. The latter provides a theoretical framework which may resonate more closely with this work's case of study. Horizontal competition operates in all levels. At the local level it describes situations where the minorities within a state are concerned about the domination by the majority. At the regional level the weak or small states are afraid of the influence of the stronger states. At the global level some smaller civilizations fear the impact of the greater ones (pp.123-126).

To answer the question of whether the societal sector's security issues produce regional dynamics, Buzan et al. (1998) argue that the space dimension is as essential as it is in the military sector. In other words, in the societal sector too, threats travel better across shorter rather than longer distances. The rivalry between ideas of 'who we are' is usually more regional, or inter-neighborly, than global. In order to analyze the societal threats within our case of study, we must view the latter within the regional complex of Europe. In Europe's context, societal security, according to Buzan, has to do much with the nation or national structures such as ethnicities, minorities, regions, etc., and these have caused "complex constellations of multilayered identities" (p.132). The author argues that most local conflicts occur as a result of vertical competition (between nation states and minorities). However, even in horizontal competition cases (where a nation state competes against a nation state) there is usually a minority, or another irredentist element, that acts as a trigger of inter-state conflict. Furthermore, the inter-sectorial interaction in Europe's case, produces rather convergent regions, in at least the political and

societal sectors. Thus, the fears in one sector line up with the fears of the other sector, within the same region.

National identity contestation as source of external threat to security

Expanding on Buzan's et al. (1998) definition about societal threats as attacks on the nation itself, the purpose of this work is to enhance the understanding on the external threats which cannot be categorized as territorial or military threats, yet which affect in certain ways the security of a state. Based on the structuralist approach, as small states are more exposed to external threats than great states, their main foreign policy preoccupation becomes security for their survival and independence. Given their weakness and limited capacity to counteract against threatening powers on their own, small states tend to seek security through membership in alliances and international organizations. As the conventional wisdom relates a small state's security with multilateralism and international integration, consequently, factors which condition or prevent a small state's international integration agenda, may also be considered as threats to its security. Then what type of external threats, other than military or territorial, may exist and what role do they play on the security of a small state, by affecting the factors which ensure its stability and independence? Can inter-state disputes about national identity or symbols, represent such threats and consequently produce certain effects on a small state's foreign policy behavior?

Zahariadis (1994), elaborates on the influence of external threats on the foreign policy behavior of a small state, which involve non-territorial issues. He focuses on nationalism, namely symbols and ideas, as source of dispute between states. Defining nationalism as a sentiment which ties people together through common historical, cultural, and ancestral roots, Zahariadis argues that as long as unifying nationalism, which is based on symbols and ideas, serves for integration within disintegrated societies, it constitutes no threats for other countries. However, if this collective feeling spills beyond the borders of a given state, it becomes a source of tension between states. Relating security to ideational factors such as symbols or ideas, the author argues that they may present a destabilizing factor, even if the other state is not territorially threatened. In this context Zahariadis states:

Symbols, ideas, names, and the historical memories that make up the nationalist package have a propensity toward exclusivity because they are the ideational mechanisms of

demarcating communities. Adopting a particular symbol, such as a flag, choosing a certain name, such as the name of a country, are some ways of acquiring an identity. Disputes are likely to erupt when symbols, ideas, and even history itself becomes contestable -that is, when two or more entities lay claim to the same thing... The more important the symbol or idea in nationalist ideology, the greater the trauma to another nation's heritage and by consequence the more intense the dispute is likely to be (p.651).

Barth (1969, pp.14-15) points out that it is not cultural differences, but rather the social boundaries, that play a key role in emphasizing ethno-national differences. He maintains that not what is *inside*, but rather what is *between* groups, is what creates differences. These are rather perceived differences between the members of a group and the 'others'. Along similar lines, Anna Triandafyllidou (1998), through the elaboration of the concept *the significant other*, explains that national identity is not only defined internally, through unifying elements, but also externally, through differentiation from others. She holds a similar stance with Zahariadis in referring to the national identity elements as a source of external dispute and threat. Just as it is defined, national identity may be threatened both internally and externally, precisely due to the presence of the significant others. This may occur if the identifying national features of a state are claimed by the others as their own. In such case, Triandafyllidou considers the presence of the significant other as threatening to the national identity of a state. By relating national identity with the existence/survival, hence with the security of the state, the author assesses that the contestation of the national identity elements by others represents a threat to the independence of a state. In this context, she defines the significant other in the following way:

The feature that makes some other group a 'significant other' is the fact that it is perceived to pose a threat to the existence of the nation. This threat may concern the nation's [state's] independence and self-determination [sovereignty]... Thus, it may be a group that is culturally related to the nation and therefore puts in question the authenticity of its identity."(p.600)

The central problem, according to Triandafyllidou, in the national identity disputes is the inability of a state to assert itself as distinctive from the others. These 'others' may be both internal or external groups. But, as the focus of this thesis is on the external influencing factors, we will rely on Triandafyllidou's conception of external significant others and their threatening powers towards the existence of a state. In this context, she claims that "a neighboring group which shares a set of cultural traditions and/or historical experiences with the nation is perceived as a significant other because it threatens the sense of distinctiveness and uniqueness of the

latter” (p.600). This statement is in line with Turner’s (1975, p.22) conclusion on groups’ behavior, which posits that the greatest conflict among two groups is most possible when the two have the least distinguishing features. In turn, Lemaine et. al (1978, p.287) argue that a ‘threatened identity’ may be restored only through searching differences and creating heterogeneity.

Several authors (ex. Lemaine et al. 1978, Zahariadis 1994, Buzan et al. 1998,), argue how the inability of a state to differentiate the national identity elements such as the name, language, history, etc. from the other states leads to a conflict between them. But, how are such conflicts manifested upon the security of a small state? Relating the concept of security to a state’s ability to assert its uniqueness in the international arena, as well as its ability to become part of larger international organizations and alliances, one can assume that such external threats may affect security in two ways: internally - by demanding changes in the national identifying features, and externally - by causing international isolation of a state, whose central foreign policy objective is international integrations. Hence, such specific external threats, may demonstrate its complexity by producing two types of effects over the security of a small state. One effect may be related to the national identity, termed by Buzan et al. as a societal security issue, and the other to the international integrations processes of a small state, known as a political security issue.

Authors such as Turner (1975), Lemaine et al. (1978), elaborate on the effect that such external threats may produce internally, or over the national identity of a state. The main argument here is that external factors may threaten the state’s authenticity and uniqueness by claiming its cultural heritage, including its symbols, myths, ancestors etc., as their own. This may be true especially if the state is defined by ethnic (cultural) rather than by civic elements. Based on the significant other’s power and leverage in the international arena (ex. a neighborly state), this threat may lead to a coercive redefinition of the threatened state’s identity elements, in order to assert uniqueness and differentiate itself from the significant other. Hence the external threat in this case threatens the national identity of a state. But, as stated above, the national identity is related to the state’s existence and legitimacy, hence the acceptance of external demands about changing identifying features of its national identity is not easily accepted by a state. Therefore, the demanding state oftentimes uses different methods in order to *coerce* the other state to accept its demand.

One way of conditioning a state to accept external demands is blocking its integration foreign policy agenda. In this way, the presence of such external conditions from other states may affect the security of a state. According to Rothstein, the main motivation of the small states to integrate into international organization or alliances is precisely their security. He presents three attributes of the international organizations which are attractive to small states in terms of ensuring security: “their formal equality, the potential security of membership, and the possible capacity of the organizations to restrain Great Powers” (as cited in Ingebritsen et al., 2006, p.58). Relating this theoretical stance to this work’s case, we may argue that aware of the dependency of a small state’s security and prosperity on international organizations and alliances, the external conditionality on a small state’s foreign policy, may be used by other state(s) as an instrument to pressure the small state to accept redefinition of its identity. This strategy is an alternative to using forceful or military measures by the demanding state in order to achieve the fulfilment of its demands by another state. Alexander George (1992) names such strategy as *coercive diplomacy* or *coercive persuasion*. In general terms, George defines coercive diplomacy as “intimidation of one kind or another in order to get others to comply with one’s wishes...” (p.5). Rothchild (2002, as cited in Lund 2003) uses the example of cutting off aid to illustrate a form of coercive diplomacy. Using this term in the context of international conflict, George (1992) distinguishes two types of coercive diplomacy: the defensive type, which implies “efforts to persuade an opponent to stop or undo an action he is already embarked upon” and the offensive type “to persuade a victim to give up something of value without putting up resistance” (p.5). Lund (2003) argues along similar lines when explaining that coercive diplomacy, in the form of threats of using force or economic sanctions, is used when “needed to reverse undesired actions or compel desired actions” (p.305). The effect of coercive diplomacy on the targeted state depends on the latter’s rational perception of the potency and consequence of the threat imposed by the demanding state, in case of noncompliance. If the targeted or the victim state perceives the threat imposed by the other state as credible and potentially threatening for its security, it will lead to the victim state’s compliance with the demand. This outcome is usually preceded by the victim state’s evaluation of the imposed threat through collecting all relevant information, evaluating it correctly, making proper judgement about its credibility and its evaluation, that it is in the victim state’s interest to comply with the demand, given the potential benefits or political

gains it may accumulate for complying with the coercer, or given the potential consequences it may face in case of showing a contrary behavior. (George 1992, p.4; Jentleson, 2006).

Further in the section below, I will present two theoretical frameworks, which predict a small state's foreign policy response in the face of existing external threats or constraints to the security of a small state. Each framework presents a certain behavior of a small state's foreign policy, given its perception towards the *intensity* and *meaningfulness* of the external threat to its security. Hereby, the purpose of the section below, is to find out whether there may be a pattern of small states' responses towards the external threats, based on the perceived intensity and meaningfulness of such threats.

Foreign policy action/options in the face of external threats to security

As presented above, the system level of analysis discusses security issues, such as survival and independence, as the main preoccupation of small and weak states within the international system. Depending on the external threat, its nature but also its intensity, a small state may project different foreign policy behaviors or actions. In his research about *The Foreign Policy of Sweden during the Mosul Crisis*, Rogers (2007) constructs a theoretical framework which explains the behavior of a small state's foreign policy based on the presence and intensity of an external threat. The small state's perception of an external threat may motivate in the former certain foreign policy behavior such as an anti-balance behavior, in order to ensure protection for itself. In the contrary, if there doesn't exist any potent threat for a small state, its foreign policies may be oriented more towards supporting international rules and finding of solutions within the international organizations. As he states in his article, "The presence of an external threat to the existence of a small state is thus a critical factor in considering the options open to small states" (p.354). Considering this factor and the way of how small states perceive their position in the international environment, the author explains that a small state's foreign policy behavior may be based on four strategic options: realism, isolationism, idealism, and expansionism.

The realist approach places security in a central position. If small states perceive that their security is threatened by external factors, considering their size, and weak and limited military capacities, they tend to project anti-balancing behavior. In the face of external threats, small states tend to side with the strongest and the most powerful states in order to ensure

protection for themselves. Rogers describes the isolationist approach as an extreme form of realism. The states which adopt such strategy tend to protect themselves from getting involved into conflicts. For this reason, they either withdraw or play a passive role in international relations, maintaining a rather observant role over the events. The idealists base their foreign policy on values and principles. Employing moralistic attitudes, the premise of idealist foreign policy is relying on international rules of law to ensure security and protection. The expansionist approach of foreign policy has to do with the tendency of the small states to realize their goals through an enhanced role in the international relations (p.355).

Rogers (2007) relates the foreign policy alternatives of a small state with the presence of an external threat to their existence. Depending on the perceived degree or intensity of the external threat by a small state, the foreign policy options of such state may range from limited to multiple, and consequently the actions of foreign policy from highest to lowest. Hence, Rogers relates the realist approach with the highest foreign policy action. If a state perceives an external threat to be salient to their survival or to represent an imminent danger, then their foreign policy options are quite limited. In such situations, the state must demonstrate high foreign policy action, making quick choices which would be based on a realistic judgement of the available options, in order to avoid negative consequences for its security. In the contrary, if threats aren't perceived as imminent, then small states have greater foreign policy maneuverability. Thus, states may adopt an isolationist approach if they assess that this approach would help preserve their security through maintaining a status-quo towards external threats. Acting passively in their foreign policy, small states, through a status-quo behavior, expect that the external threats will diminish or disappear with time on their own. The idealist strategy is adopted by a small state if the external threat is perceived in vague terms to their security, or if such threat may represent an issue for the security only in the long term. In such case, the foreign policy action may be low and oriented towards international protection of security, through organizations such as the UN or the ICJ (pp.355-356).

Regarding external conditions and state's reaction towards them, many authors (Handel 1990, Hey 2003, Browning 2006) argue that a small state's foreign policy action/initiative depends on the volatility of the external environment, respectively on the perception of a salient external threat to its survival by another state. Nonetheless, such changeability in the international arena, according to some authors (Browning 2004, Gvalia et. al 2011), is not

necessarily caused only by external threats but also by opportunities that motivate such high-level actions. Although conventional (Vital 1971, Jervis 1978, Snyder 1991) thinking argues that that the external circumstances pressure small states to act prudently towards them, as their 'margin of error' is small and often 'beyond repair', the post-Cold War created external circumstances which represented opportunity rather than constraint for small state's foreign policy action (Browning 2006). From here, we may predict two modes of foreign policy behavior based on the state's perception about the external constraints' variation and their effect on the security of the state. On one hand, if we accept the conventional position, we may argue that if external constraints are threatening and unlikely to change from a status-quo, then the small states would not undertake active foreign policy initiative. But if we extend this proposition by maintaining that if a state considers that its enhanced external actions may produce significant benefits, then we'd argue that such a state would pursue a higher level of foreign policy initiative, regardless of the (changed or not) position of the external factors. On the contrary, if the state perceives the status quo as more favorable, the state would not undertake foreign policy action. In this case, a small state's foreign policy action or inaction would depend on the perception of meaningful threats or potential benefits to their security.

The commonality of the arguments above is that they mainly employ a systemic approach in explaining a small state's behavior in the face of external threats or constraints. Nonetheless, many arguments (Elman 1995, Hey 2003, Doeser 2011, etc.) also account for domestic factors when explaining the constraints or maneuverability of foreign policy actions. In order to explain adopted foreign policy choices of small states, these arguments range from a focus on the individual level, namely on the 'belief system' of the policy-makers (ex. Goldstein and Keohane 1993, Walker and Schafer 2010), to the internal stability and preferences as an important factor which drives foreign policy initiative (ex. Moravcsik 1997, Beach 2012). Nonetheless, whereas they discuss about the influence of domestic factors on foreign policy behavior (namely on the adopted actions or initiatives by the state), they do not account for the reciprocal process. In other words, these theories fall short in explaining the role that a specific foreign policy behavior/action towards external circumstances may have over the domestic environment, in terms of social relations.

In order to understand the reciprocal effect between internal environment and foreign policy behavior, we must assess the role that foreign policy plays in the process of national

integration, namely in forging domestic unity or division among groups with emphasized differences. The analysis of such role played by foreign policy is of utmost importance, in order to understand the interrelation between external conditionalities and domestic unity or division. Presuming that foreign policy plays an indicative role in forging national unity, any external constraint that it may face, may ultimately threaten its role domestically, resulting in an opposite process in terms of national unity. In this case, the approach or foreign policy action towards the external constraints would ultimately produce an effect over the domestic unity or division.

A review of national integration theories would provide us with a theoretical basis for investigating the role that foreign policy may have over the unification or division of domestic groups. The next section will reveal the existing literature contribution to the relationship between foreign and domestic policy. Building mostly on Shulman's (1996) synthetization of national integration theories, I will account for the most relevant theories which explain national integration, and which furthermore intertwine the role of the international with national integration.

Integration oriented foreign policy

Before assessing the integration function of foreign policy within the domestic environment, important processes such as national integration, in terms of inter-ethnic relations, should be initially explained. When discussing national integration, we often think about the process of amalgamation of small groups into bigger units. Nonetheless, many studies of integration (Deutsch 1966, Birch 1989), seem to treat integration and assimilation indistinctively, by describing the former process as one which includes movement from rural zones to urban ones in search of jobs and better lives, breaking ties with the kinship, substituting the local language with a dominant national language, and losing the unique cultural features. Birch (1989) argues that integration is motivated initially by social and economic developments and later by governmental policies as well. He calls a *social mobilization* the unplanned component of integration. He describes it as a process of workers' movement from rural to industrial areas, eroding the social communities in the rural areas and becoming absorbed by wider national societies. This process is further helped by the transformation of communication and mass media, which brings people closer together on national-basis, culminating eventually into a

national whole. Yet, John Barry (1997, pp.9-11) differentiates the above concept from that of integration. He considers a situation in which individuals, through social interactions, adopt the dominant culture, while abandoning their own original identity, as assimilation. By contrast, he defines *integration* as a process during which individuals pursue regular contact with the dominant society, while at the same time maintaining their cultural identity intact. Berry argues that for integration to occur, the dominant society needs to accommodate the non-dominant groups, openly and inclusively, leading towards a cultural diversity. Hence, integration helps people embrace both cultures, a term also coined as *biculturalism* (as cited in Schwartz and Zamboanga, 2008).

But the focus of this thesis is to study a particular group and the process of its integration into a society or country. It is about ethnic groups or communities and their inter-relations in multi-ethnic societies. This societal category, which has been forged as a concept in recent times, represents an object of study for many authors. *Ethnicity* not only is accounted for its important role in the building of nation-states, but also for its role in its disintegration, due to ethno-national mobilization (Schulz et.al., 2001, p.9). Considering that only a few countries in today's world are nationally homogeneous, the disagreements between ethnic groups and the potential escalation of such disagreements into violent actions, represent a central feature in the contemporary world. Thus, the study of the ethnic groups' role in the process of national integration is of high significance. In order to understand better the process of inter-ethnic integration in a multi-ethnic state, a clarification of the concept of *ethnic* and *national* identity and the compatibility between the two is necessary.

Ethnic versus national identity

The debate around ethnicity is centered around the latter being mostly a perception rather than a fixed reality. Barth (1969) criticizes the conventional approach to ethnicity, which defines ethnicity as: "biologically self-perpetuating; sharing fundamental cultural values, realized in overt unity in cultural forms; making up a field of communication and interaction; membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories from the same order"(pp.10-11). Contrary to objectivists, he claims that

ethnicity is not a fixed concept. It is instead defined by situational circumstances. He claims that the definition of ethnicity lies not in the mutual cultural elements, but in the practice of classification and categorization, as self-ascribed and as ascribed by others. Barth furthermore posits that it is the ethnic boundary what defines a group, through the division of 'us' and 'them' during social interaction (pp.11-15). Along similar lines, Eriksen (1992) defines ethnicity as "the social reproduction of basic classificatory differences between categories of people and to aspects of gain and loss in social interaction" (p.264).

Eriksen (2010) defines ethnicity based on the existence of a relationship. Also, according to him, in order for there to be ethnicity, there should also exist 'the others'. In other words, ethnicity is made of the relationship among people who think they are different from the members of other groups, with whom they may be in a relationship. Along similar lines, Foon (1986, as cited in Shulman 1996) presents two criteria of ethnicity's definition: "self-identification" and "attitudes towards the other groups". These definitions show a constructivist approach towards ethnicity, since they portray the latter as a desire of individuals to perceive themselves as unique and different from the others. Usually, the cultural differences are referred to as elements which enable such differentiation, however, according to Eriksen (2010, p.16), not always are different ethnic groups culturally different as well. For example, Serbs and Croats, have had a violent inter-ethnic relationship at the demise of Yugoslavia, but their cultural differences have been/are negligible. Thus, cultural differences take an ethnic element only when they are perceived as socially and politically important.

In order to understand national integration and the factors which influence it, we should initially analyze the distinction between the terms *ethnicity* and *nationality* or nationalism. Eriksen (2010) argues that similarly with the ethnic ideologies, nationalism also relies on cultural differentiation, by drawing a boundary between 'us' and 'them'. But what distinguishes nationalism from ethnicity is the relationship it has with the *state*. Nationalist movements demand the political boundaries to be congruent with the cultural boundaries. And when ethnic movements demand the same thing, they become ethno-nationalist movements. According to Gellner (1997), the link between ethnicity and nationalism is reflected by the case where a certain ethnic group thinks that it should dominate the state. Hence, by incorporating its identity markers (such as language, history, religion), into the state's official symbolism and legislation,

the ethnic group creates the so-called *nation-state*. In Eriksen's words "a nationalist ideology is an ethnic ideology which demands a state on behalf of the ethnic group" (2010, p.145).

If we accept this claim, the question that follows is whether nationalism would create problems in a multi-ethnic society, where besides the ethnic group which dominates the state, live other ethnic groups as well? According to Eriksen, the relationship between ethnicity and nationalism is complex, hence the answer to the above question cannot be straightforward. Firstly, nationalism not always relies on ethnic ideologies based on shared cultural roots. Nationalism, in certain cases, such as in Africa, may express supra-ethnic ideology, placing the emphasis on civic elements, where none of the ethnic groups tries to convert the nation-state into its own ethnic project. In such case, nationalism and ethnicity should not be in conflict.

However, if nationalism is unfolded as a universal ideology in a multi-ethnic state, the ethnic organization within that state, may be considered as a threat to the national cohesion, since it has a particularistic nature. This situation may lead to conflict between nationalism and ethnicity. This conflict is characterized by the rivalry between the dominating ethnic group and the dominated ethnic group(s), within the context of the nation-state. In this case, the dominated ethnic group would perceive the nationalism exercised by the dominating ethnic group not as universalistic, but as a particularistic, "where the mechanisms of exclusion and ethnic discrimination are more obvious than the mechanisms of inclusion and formal justice" (Eriksen, 2010, p.145).

Banton (2000) discusses the division between primary and secondary ethnicity. The difference between these two stands in the fact that the primary ethnicities are characterized by their wish or conviction that they belong together "as members of a sovereign political unit" (p.482). The secondary ethnicities consider themselves as a sub-division within a sovereign political unit. These categories are very much different from one another as they produce different political consequences. Thus, nationalism in an ethnic group which aims to build its own state is different from nationalism in an ethnic group which wishes to live in an existent state. As primary ethnicity doesn't identify itself with the existing political unit, and aims to form its own sovereign unit, based on the differentiating features of its ethnic group, the tendency of this group to integrate with other ethnic groups and form a national (civic) identity, which will transcend ethnic identity, will be much lower.

In a society with heterogeneous ethnicity, the forging of a national identity, through inter-ethnic integration, is crucial. But whether the national and the ethnic identity are compatible with one another is an issue which preoccupies the students of national integration and ethnic issues. Chew Sock Foon (1986, as cited in Shulman 1996) argues about the possibility of cohabitation between an ethnic and national identity. He constructs a scheme in which he describes the possibility of an individual to be loyal both towards his/her ethnic group (internal-ethnic pull) and towards the national identity (internal-national pull). According to Kaplan (1999), the melting of differences between the ethnic and national identity is made possible when each loyalty is strictly demarcated and “may work until the point where the demands made by each identity come into conflict” (as cited in Hin, 2003, p.27). “Thus, if the ethnic group controlling the state adopts a national identity that is exclusive to ethnic minorities, for example, by perceiving themselves as superior to other ethnic groups, ethnic and civic identity become incompatible.” This situation may aggravate if a minority ethnic group, due to the domination of the state’s identity by the majority ethnic group, begins to nurture ambitions for territorial secession from the existing state. This is the point when the competition between national and ethnic identity prevalence begins. Such competition often erupts into inter-ethnic conflict (Hin, 2003, p.27). But are multi-ethnic states doomed to perpetual conflict, because of the incompatibility between nationalism and ethnicity? The answer is no! According to Eriksen (2010, p.145), in polyethnic societies, tensions between nationalism and ethnicity may be alleviated if nationalism is presented as a supra-ethnic ideology, which guarantees civic equality and justice for all. Thus, national (civic) identity is necessary for achieving political stability in a given country.

Eriksen (2010) argues about three options a nation-state may use in dealing with the ethnic groups which happen to be a minority, namely who are in fewer numbers than the ethnic group which dominates the state. The first option is assimilation of the other ethnic groups into the dominant ethnic ideology. This process, according to Eriksen, is not an easy one, since it signals to the minority ethnic groups that their own traditions and uniqueness is of no value. The second option of the nation-state is domination, which leads to segregation between the dominant ethnic group and the ones that are deemed ‘inferior’. This approach often leads to drawing boundaries and refraining from ethnic ‘mixing’. The third option is for the nation-state to opt for transcending ethnic ideology into multi-cultural ideology. Such transcendence would allow the

cohabitation of civic and ethnic identity, as it would ensure that the civic rights of all citizens are compatible with the several ethnic identities. Eriksen also argues that a political system which may accommodate both ethnic and civic identity is a federal system, or even a republican system, where cultural identity is mainly irrelevant in comparison to the civic one (pp.149-150). I would argue that the third option is the most adequate one to help the process of national integration. It may trigger a response within the minority ethnic groups, who neither favor assimilation nor secession. This option allows space for ethnic minorities to develop mechanisms for co-existence within the nation-state, while negotiating for a certain level of autonomy in matters of language or other ethnic identity markers. This process of integration, is described by Eriksen (2010) as the mid-way or a compromise, allowing ethnic minorities for “simultaneous participation in the shared institutions of society and its reproduction of group identity and ethnic boundaries”(p.151).

Theories of national integration

The common assumption underlying national integration is that in its final phase it should result into a common national (civic) identity, which would serve as the most effective mechanism in avoiding inter-ethnic divisions and conflict. If the ethnic identity, as described above, lies on the differences between groups with different features, national integration should logically lie in the construction of commonalities among different groups. Usually the analysis of national integration of the contemporary time refers to states with multi-ethnic structure. This is especially true when analyzing Eastern European states. In this context, Shulman (1998) defines national integration as a “process by which the constituent regional, ethnic, social and class subgroups of a state become unified into a common political community sharing a sense of collective identity” (p.112). Charles Westin et.al (2010) posit that “collective social identities stand out and are articulated when groups from different social, cultural, ‘racial’, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic backgrounds share societal space in public arenas, in housing estates, at workplaces and in schools” (p.9). Theoreticians refer to different factors which influence the construction of a national identity. Many of the national integration theories refer to internal factors such as a common mass culture (Smith, 1991), homogeneous political culture (Lijphard, 1971), social communication or interaction (Deutsch, 1966), etc., which help national integration

by diffusing cultural and ethnic differences. Shulman groups the existing national integration theories into three categories: theories of commonalities and differences, theories of social interactions, and theories of value consensus. Besides the theories which look into the internal factors of national integration, Shulman (1996) also refers to the international integration theories, which may also explain the process of national integration.

Relevant to this thesis, which tries to understand the impact of foreign policy on inter-ethnic relations, Shulman presents the theories of International Behavior as a category which attempts to explain external influential factors on national integration. According to Shulman, with an exception of the studies which correlate war, as an external influence, with national centralization, as an internal effect, all other theories focus on internal roots when attempting to explain the processes of national integration. However, some theorists have attempted to study the role of the international environment in national integration or national identity. Shulman argues that the majority of theoretical approaches such as the pluralist, functionalist, neo-functionalist and federalist, which study the role of international integrations in the process of national integration, agree on the position that the former plays a significant role in weakening or shrinking the national identity in favor of building a supra-national identity. Some studiers such as Charles Pentland (1973) posit that international integrations cause a gradual shift from national to supra-national identification. Others, such as Chew Sock Foon (1986, as cited in Shulman 1996), maintain the position that multiple identities, namely national and supranational ones are possible and can co-exist peacefully. Yet, a common position of the international integration theories is that integrative ties help weaken nationalism and national identity in hope to motivate a “shift from conflictual nationalism to benign supra-nationalism” (Shulman, 1996, p.23). Ernst Haas, a renowned advocate of international integration processes, focusing upon the European integration, argues about the ‘new nationalism’ which the logic of integration would bring about and which would produce “a convergence of beliefs, values and aspirations that would unite the peoples of the European community” (as cited in Fligstein and Sandholtz, 2012, p.106). This process would furthermore lead to a shift of not only identity but also of loyalty from national to supranational organs.

But when these theories discuss the international integrations’ weakening effect over national identity in favor of a supra-national one, they assume that the national identity is well consolidated and established within a state. Such assumption results from the international

integration theories' main focus on the Western European case, whose states have enjoyed relatively well-developed national identities when they accessed the process of integration into the EU. Nevertheless, little attention is paid to the role of international integrations in multi-ethnic states with weak or contested national identities. Could the role of international integrations in these states be opposite from that in states with consolidated national identities? Instead of weakening national identity, can integrative processes help forge a common national (civic) identity by providing a basis or a vision for a new, replacive identity, which is inclusive of different ethnic groups?

In order to gain understanding on how foreign policy can become a determining factor in unifying the different ethnic groups who compete over the domination of national identity, we must analyze international integration policies from the perspective of national integration theories as presented by Shulman. These theories may reveal ways through which foreign policy, through its international integration agenda, may project a common vision which would compensate for the divisive elements that build along ethnic identities. As such, foreign policy may help forge a national identity with supra-national elements, which isn't a cause for inter-ethnic competitiveness but rather a factor of inter-ethnic inclusion or unification.

The literature of national integration places an important emphasis on the *values* or *consensual attitudes* in the process of integration. Sharing common values (some of which may be more overreaching than others, as for example the constitution, democratic norms, etc.), according to Jacob and Teune (1964) and Schulz (1996), is an essential factor for building a cohesive society. A condition for building a cohesive community is the prevalence of shared values over the competitive interests of its members. The theory of value consensus is analogous to the consensus theory of social integration. The latter is built on the hypothesis that the integrative process is more successful if the different groups share a greater number of common cultural values. But Shulman (1996) draws attention to the failure of the national integration theories to define more precisely the values and their relevance in relation to building a consensus within a diverse society. Hence, he points out that values can be treated as *preferences*, which portray values as goals, and as *norms*, which essentially represent standards of good and bad, or right and wrong. Reaching a consensus in both aspects of values is essential for enhanced solidarity and cohesion in a society.

Viewing the process of value consensus building from international integrations level, we may pose the question to what extent do international integrations help the process of building value consensus in a multi-ethnic society? In line with Deutsch (1953) and Mitrany (1966), who posit that international integration process is a bottom up process which is driven by the “imperatives of economic and technological modernization” (as cited in Shulman, 1996, p.24), the international integration posture adopted by a state thus reflects value consensus among its constituents. Hence, we may argue that a small state’s strategic choice of foreign policy orientation, plays a role in forging common values in groups with otherwise low-value consensus. This may be true under the condition that the groups or communities within such a state demonstrate similar preferences or goals about the foreign policy orientation of their state. In Shulman’s (1996) words “the peoples’ desire to associate with particular international posture is a demonstration of their values in terms of preferences and norms” (p.25). Building on this logic, if ethnically different people demonstrate consensus over the international integration posture of their country, then such posture reflects values which unite rather than divide them.

In analyzing the role of the international impact in the national integration process in Estonia, Solska (2011) argues that the prospect for economic growth through international integration have “nurtured a consumerist value system”. She explains how international integrations have contributed to building a basis for a common, higher-level identity, between ethnically divided groups, such as Estonian majority and Russian-speaking minority. According to the author, the emerging new identity between these two ethnic groups revolves around common material and economic goals (p.1101). Similarly, we may argue that the common position of ethnically divided groups about other values which are achieved through international integrative ties, such as security growth, democratization of institutions, economic incentives, etc., also serve as a fundamental factor for national integration.

Gvalia et al. (2013) argue that the foreign policy movement towards a certain orientation has to do with the identification of the country in relation to its international integration posture. According to the article, Georgia is determined to follow European integration instead of bandwagoning with threatening powers such as Russia, because it *feels* European. The authors maintain that “states choose international alliances based on their ideas about their state identity” (p.109). Reformulating this statement from a value consensus perspective, we may argue that the values which are reflected by an international organization, a state adheres to, are values which

the state wants to identify with. In the article's case study, "Georgia's European identity implies that Georgia should strive to build the country in accordance with Western standards and values, including a robust democracy and market economy, along with effective state institutions" (p.112). When Gvalia et al. argue about the compatibility between the state identifying values with the international ones, they explain that this identification derives from the elite's ideas and preferences, but they do not exclude the consensus of the public opinion in terms of their preferences for western and European identification. Based on such premise, we can argue that if ethnic groups, who may have internal cleavages, share a common stance on the identification of their state with particular international integration posture, then the latter may help forge their internal integration process, bridging their ethnic and cultural differences by orienting them towards a new supra-national identity, which is based on common values and standards. Furthermore, Haas (2004), in his analysis of the European integration process, argues about the latter's role in shaping common values and beliefs which unite nations under a new national consciousness.

As the process of integration proceeds, it is assumed that values will undergo change, that interests will be redefined in terms of a regional rather than a purely national orientation and that the erstwhile set of separate national group values will gradually be superseded by a new and geographically larger set of beliefs. The scheme, finally, assumes that the process of integration will yield a new national consciousness of the new political community, uniting the erstwhile nations which had joined." (pp.13-14)

The theory of Haas (2004) asserts that international integration not only reflects values which people identify with. The integration processes, according to him, enable the replacement of the values and beliefs that are based on national or ethnic orientation with a wider set of values or beliefs based on a regional orientation. This process, in its end, would naturally lead to a new and inclusive identity of nations within a 'broader' Europe. Applying this theory to a multi-ethnic state with a low level of national integration, we may infer that the processes of international integration, help integration not only across borders but also within them. By projecting certain values and beliefs, international integration postures fulfil the national values vacuum in multi-ethnic states.

The theories of commonalities and differences emphasize that the common features are a crucial factor in the national integration. A nation is unified over common factors, which

distinguish it from other communities. Anthony Smith (as cited in Shulman, 1996, p.112) predicts several essential features which help national integration:

1. a historic territory, or homeland
2. common myths and historical memories
3. a common, mass public culture
4. common legal rights and duties
5. a common economy and territorial mobility for members

The more a group feels it shares the above elements, the more integrated it becomes and the more different it feels from other groups, whom it doesn't share such elements with. Anthony Smith (1991) and other authors (ex. Raymond Grew (1986) and Arend Lijphart (1971) as cited in Shulman 1996), underscore the importance of the common cultural features as basis for building a national identity. In this context, Shulman argues that the ethnic factor represents one of the main obstacles in the process of national integration, by interfering with the process of creating a common culture and consequently of building a national identity. This occurs due to the existing fear that being culturally different, during the process of national integration, one ethnic group may be dominated, absorbed, or even destroyed by other ethnic groups.

Within such context we may raise the following question: can international integration homogenize the cultural differences of ethnic groups, by diffusing an overreaching and dominant culture it reflects? Shulman (1996) argues that both the international environment and the inter-state ties can serve as a source for intra-state (intra-community) solidarity. Thus, the external environment and the relations a state has with other states/entities, may serve as a factor which forges cultural and other similarities within a multi-ethnic state. Shulman cites Dittmer and Kim, who develop the concept of positive and negative international reference groups, defined as states or communities which influence the national identity of a state based on its association with them (1996, p.28). They make such correlation in an indirect way, by explaining the importance of the *symbols* for achieving national unity among its members. Indirectly, they imply that similarly to the domestic symbols, such as the flag, anthem, myths, traditions, sacred texts and documents etc., the international reference groups, (that is states or communities a state wants to associate with), are also part of the national symbols and are symbolically important to national identity. Shulman argues that international ties play a significant role in defining national and ethnic identities." He claims that:

Integration policies can perform both an exclusionary and inclusionary function. People will tend to prefer relations with other peoples or states if they are seen as being

culturally similar, in part because people simply like those that are similar to themselves, but in part also because such ties symbolically reinforce and legitimate one's own cultural identity. Strong ties with such states, which we call positive reference groups, erode the social boundary between like peoples (p.29).

Based on the concept of reference groups of Dittmer and Kim, as well as on the argument of Shulman on the inclusionary function of international policies, we may deduce that international integrations play a significant role in forging unity in states with emphasized ethnic and cultural differences. The cultural traits reflected by the international community or organization, a multi-ethnic state strives to associate with, may help bridge the ethnic cultural differences, as long as all ethnic groups agree with the degree of cultural similarity they share with the international community or organization, and agree in their assessment of these communities as positive reference group.

The theories of international integrations focus on the process of the European integration to prove how international integrations replace national identity with a supra-national identity and loyalty which is based on the European cultural traits and more. But what are some of the dominant cultural traits which identify Europe and which the different ethnic groups may identify with? On discussing the *Idea of Europe*, Amin (2004) describes the four defining cultural traits:

The prevailing Idea of Europe is based on four myths of origin: first, the supremacy of a legal system based on Roman law; second, an ethos of social solidarity and common understanding based on Christian piety and humanism; third, a democratic order rooted in recognition of the rights and freedoms of the individual; and fourth, a universalism based on Reason and other Enlightenment principles of cosmopolitan belonging. (p.2)

Smith (1991), places a special emphasis on the cultural foundations of Europe in explaining the role that the EU has in forging a common identity across member states. He claims that identification with Europe occurs because of the phenomenon *family of cultures* which the EU nourishes, and according to which the cultural diversities are accepted as part of the EU identity umbrella. He also states that the EU projects political and cultural traditions which are shared and overlap with those of the European nations. Features such as romanticism, roman law, parliamentary democracy, humanism, classicism, etc., represent a basis for the creation of an identity which is inclusive of ethnic or national identity. Authors such as Garcia (1993), Meehan (1993), Howe (1994), posit that the EU, besides its cultural features, also reflects civic components which play a crucial role in influencing national integration in an adhering state.

According to them, just like the cultural features, the civic elements of the EU, such as shared political rights and democratic citizenship, represent an important integrative force. The civic component, thus, defines the rights, obligations, and freedom of the citizens. By identifying with the EU as a relevant institutional framework, the citizens also identify with its state-like symbols such as its flag, anthem, institutions, *acquis*, etc. This perception applies not only to nation-states but also to multi-ethnic ones. Moreover, in the case of multi-ethnic states, with a lack of national/civic identity and with competing ethnic identities, identification with supranational elements and institutions, such as those of the EU, may serve as basis for building a new civic identity, which would nourish new commonalities in terms of mass culture, legal rights and duties, common economy and territorial mobility, and other features which forge national integration as argued by Anthony Smith.

Lastly, the role of international integration in national integration should be also viewed from the perspective of social interaction. The theories of interaction maintain that the more people interact with one another the easier it is for them to unify or achieve a collective identity. Karl Deutsch (1953) correlates national unity with social communication by claiming that "Membership in a people essentially consists in wide complementarity of social communication. It consists in the ability to communicate more effectively, and over a wider range of subjects, with members of one group than with outsiders" (as cited in Shulman, 1996, p.16). Deutsch distinguishes three methods which help develop social interaction: communication, exchange of goods and services, and mobility. These methods of interaction are expected to play a role in diminishing the differences among the people, and to provide a cultural standardization which could be achieved through diffusion of ideas, values, language, and other cultural traits. Such standardization would make people feel more similar, and consequently they would feel they belong together.

But what kind of role can international integrations play in motivating a larger scale of social interaction in multi-ethnic societies? In multi-ethnic societies, with a low level of national integration, the interaction among the different communities is often scarce. International integration often serves as an incentive but also as a condition for the intensification of social interaction at the domestic level. One of the conditions for membership of a state in international structures is oftentimes a higher level of social and political integration. In analyzing the role of the international community in the inter-ethnic integration in Estonia, Kuus emphasizes that that

the inter-ethnic integration between the Estonians and the Russian-speaking population in Estonia is not only a domestic issue, but also a highly significant issue of foreign policy, since it is a request for the integration of the country into the EU and NATO (2002, p.96). Deutsch also discusses the incentive element of social interaction. He foresees that the joint rewards for the interacting people will motivate them to forge the sense of common belonging. Fligstein and Sandholtz (2012), in discussing the merging of national identities into an inclusive European identity, put a special emphasis on the element of routine interaction among societies which is promoted by the European Union's policies such as economic, social, and political fields of cooperation. In their words, "It is the people, who are involved in these routine interactions, who are most likely to come to see themselves as Europeans and be involved in a European national project" (p.109). The common benefit of the EU policies motivates interaction, and through it, integration, to the point of *Europeanisation*. Although these authors discuss about interactions among nations, the same logic can be applied to communities within multi-ethnic countries. Hence, to the extent that international integrations are beneficial and advantageous to all ethnic communities indiscriminately, then in line with Deutsch's theory, we may infer that international integration encourages a sense of solidarity and communication among the diverse ethnic groups, thus serving as a source for national integration (as cited in Shulman, 1996, p.17, pp.33-34).

The elaboration of the theories above reflects another role of foreign policy, besides security. By intertwining the concept of international integration with the most significant theories of national integration, we were able to infer the important role that foreign policy plays in the process of national integration. The presentation of the existing literature on the two roles of foreign policy, namely of security and integration, will allow us to construct a theoretical framework which will investigate the interrelation of these two roles, examined under the presence of external threats.

Contribution of this study

While the literature review section presented important theories related to the two roles of foreign policy, namely to security and integration, each one of these theories stands in its own and separately from others. Thus, it is necessary to construct a theoretical framework which will help us not only understand better the reasons for the selection of the above theories, but also understand the interconnectedness of the different theoretical parts presented in the literature review. This framework attempts to connect the roles that foreign policy may play in a small, multi- ethnic state, and to raise assumptions about the inter-influence or inter-action they may have with one another, when the state is faced with external threats or pressures. Although in essence this research is explorative, it still doesn't diminish the need of applying a theoretical framework which would serve as a tying knot between theory and empirical findings. As such, this framework would be used to analyze the data, to interpret or discuss the findings, as well as to underscore recommendations in the final chapter of the thesis.

This work aims to contribute to the existing literature which relates international and national integration. It will build upon and expand on the frameworks of authors such as Wiberg(1987), Shulman (1996), Chandler (2010). Similar to authors such as Shulman (1996), who argues that international integrations cause national division rather than unification between the ethnic groups, this work aims to contribute to the literature which focuses on the international regimes and their impact on multi-ethnic societies. Throughout the literature review, there was an impression that the literature on the external pressures or threats and their influence on the foreign policy behavior of a state, is mainly focused on typical military or other conventional threats. Much scarcer appears to be the literature which treats cases exposed to other threats, such as political and societal, which presumably would be more relevant to analyze the relationship between external foreign policy challenges and inter-ethnic relations in the case of Macedonia.

From the theories presented above, each one of them captures specific constitutive elements of the researched phenomena, but they do not explain holistically the interaction between them. Thus, the purpose of this framework is to make a connection between the theoretical pieces presented in the literature review, while exploring the influencing relationship between the foreign policy behavior and inter-ethnic relations, when a small state is exposed to non-typical, or military external threats.

CHAPTER 4. TOWARDS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The first part of the theoretical chapter presented the contributing literature in the realm of foreign policy, more precisely of a small state's foreign policy, which is oriented towards international integration as its strategic objective. Hence, foreign policy, equated with the term international integration posture, was analyzed from the viewpoint of two roles/functions: security and integration. To construct a theoretical framework, which will be used to analyze the empirical findings of this thesis, it is necessary to synthesize these two roles of foreign policy and evaluate their effect in foreign policy behavior. The framework is divided into two parts. The first part is built on the synthezation of small state's foreign policy theories, focused on security threats and appropriate response. The second part is built on the synthezation of foreign policy with national integration theories, focused on the integration role that foreign policy reflects nationally (indirectly, through international integration). Each of these two parts produces a strand of hypotheses, foreseeing opposing scenarios. Although the hypotheses in a qualitative study cannot be proven or disproven by the empirical findings, in this work, they serve as a tool to restate or clarify the direction of each research questions, in terms of the relationship between the research conditions/factors (control, independent, dependent). As such, the hypotheses would be helpful in showing whether there is any evidence in the findings which indicates support or refutation to the stated hypotheses.

To construct the first part of the theoretical framework, it is necessary to synthesize some of the most relevant theories which explain the behavior of foreign policy towards external conditioning factors or threats. One of them is the realist theory, which perceives the small state's security as its main objective (Vital, 1971). This theory argues that small states face greater external threats to their existence and independence in comparison to bigger states. Hence, the small states' main foreign policy preoccupation becomes ensuring security of their survival. In relation to this function, among the main characteristics of small state's foreign policy, presented mainly through the liberal perspective, are the endeavors of small states to shield under the protective umbrella of larger international structures, which they strive to achieve through membership in alliances and multilateral organizations (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2009, Chong and Maass 2010, Johnson & Leeds, 2011). Hence, we'd argue that any threat or constrain to the accession of a small state in international organizations and alliances, due to inter-state contests, ultimately becomes a threat to the security of the targeted state. In the context of this research, such inter-state contests, which lead to international integration blockades of the targeted state, were defined in the literature review as political and societal threats, directed towards the obstruction of international integrations and against the state's national identity (Gellner 1964, Buzan 1983 and 2003, Zahariadis, 1994). The response of the state towards the external threats, would depend upon the perception of the threat's intensity and its meaning to security. The literature review presented the theory on *coercive diplomacy* (George 1992, Rothchild 2002, Lund 2003, Jentleson 2006), according to which, the targeted state acts towards an external threat based on its rational perception towards the threat. Hence, in line with the constructivist approach, we can imply that the small state's position towards external threats is closely tied to its *perception* of the effects that such threats may produce over its security. And in order to find out about such perceived effects, security, in terms of what/who is being threatened, should be simultaneously determined. In the context of this thesis, based on a synthesize of the above theories, two hypothetical conclusions about the small state's response can be derived: If a small state assesses that security lies in the political sector, namely in the international integration processes, and the external threats are potent enough to block such processes, then the tendency of this state may be to resolve or mitigate the external threats, by accepting external demands. If, however, a state considers that security lies in the societal sector, namely in the protection of ethno-national identity, and the acceptance of external

demands may lead to the redefinition of that identity, then a small state's tendency may be to engage less with the resolution of these threats or may choose to maintain the status quo, even at the cost of remaining outside of some relevant international organizations. In order to investigate this presumed relationship between perception of threat and foreign policy response, I will partly use Rogers' (2007) theoretical framework, complemented by a constructivist approach on the meaning of external threats, as presented in the literature review section.

The theoretical framework of Rogers relates the foreign policy action of a small state with the presence and intensity of an external threat. Depending on these two variables, the foreign policy action of a small state may vary from high to low. But Rogers's theory is limited as it accounts only for traditional threats to the security of a small state, such as military or territorial threats, when he theorizes on the available foreign policy options that a small state has. His prediction, therefore, is limited for cases in which external threats fall in the non-traditional threats' category, such as the political or societal threats. Hence, it is necessary to complement his framework with the constructivist approach on small state's foreign policy drivers. This approach will allow us to focus, in addition to the intensity of the threat, also on the meaning of such threat to the security of the small state. According to the constructivist thinking (ex. Browning 2006, Gvalia et. al 2013) a small state will demonstrate certain foreign policy behavior (including high or low action towards external threats) depending on its perception of the meaning of the threat. Thus, if a small state considers that dealing with an external threat or constrain is more meaningful for its security and prosperity, it will demonstrate higher foreign policy initiative. If it perceives that non-dealing with an external threat is more meaningful for its security, it will maintain a status-quo or will demonstrate low foreign policy initiative. Under *dealing* with an external threat is meant engaging full diplomatic forces in an attempt to resolve external threats and eliminate their effect over the state's security.

Relevant to the first research question, in order to find out how external factors impact foreign policy objectives and how the state responds towards such factors and their impact, a synthesis of the theories on security and external threats (Rothstein 1968, Keohane 1969, Vital 1971, East 1975, Buzan 1983, Buzan et al. 1998), coercive diplomacy (George 1992, Lund 2003, Jentleson 2006), foreign policy behavior (Browning 2006, Rogers 2007, Gvalia et. al 2013, Steinsson and Thorhallsson 2017) may be reformulated into two strands of a hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a: If external threat(s) are perceived to have higher intensity and be more meaningful for the security of the small state then the latter will demonstrate higher foreign policy action towards the threat(s)

Hypothesis 1b: If external threat(s) are perceived to have lower intensity and be less meaningful for the security of the small state, the latter will demonstrate lower foreign policy action or a status-quo behavior towards the threat(s)

In relation to the second research question, which inquires how external factors influence inter-ethnic relations, we must analyze the relationship between foreign policy and inter-ethnic relations. The analysis of this relationship would allow us to understand how, depending on the foreign policy behavior towards external pressures, inter-ethnic relations are affected for better or worse. This relationship, was elaborated through the integration role that foreign policy may have among ethnically different communities, in the literature review section. When talking about the potentially integrating role of foreign policy, we presuppose that the inter-ethnic integration level is low within a particular country. Banton (2000) explains the low level of inter-ethnic integration as a result of the existence of primary ethnic groups, who don't identify themselves with the existing political unit (the state), and aim to form their own sovereign unit based on the differentiating features of their ethnic group, contributing to the rivalry between ethnic and national (civic) identity. Although Foon (1986, as cited in Shulman 1996), argues about the possibility of cohabitation between ethnic and national identity, other authors (Horowitz 1985, Kaplan 1999) argue that such cohabitation may exist only up to the point when the "demands made by each identity come into conflict" (Kaplan 1999, pp.41-42), and especially when one ethnic group, typically the majority, appropriates and dominates the national (civic) identity, basing it on its ethnic features, and excluding it of other ethnicities' elements. According to Kaplan, this act causes the other minority ethnic groups to identify even less with the national identity.

As explained above, in absence of internal commonalities, as influencing factors for inter-ethnic integration in multi-ethnic states, the international integrations orientation of a state's foreign policy, may play a significant role in the rapprochement of positions of ethnic groups, characterized by deep internal differences. Using Shulman's (1996, 1998) compilation of theories on national integration, in the literature review, we analyzed the role of international integrations from the perspective of national theories such as the theory of value consensus, theory of commonalities and differences, and theory of social interaction. Within these theories,

the role of international integrations, as a central objective of foreign policy, consists in the development of an inter-ethnic consensus over common values, inspired and projected by the international structures the state adheres to, in forging cultural similarities which are based on a regional and civic rather than ethnic or national elements, in enhancing internal social interaction as conditions or motivations applied by the international organizations, and in providing a unifying identity for divided societies by eroding ethnic nationalism in favor of supra-ethnic (national) identity. But, as argued above, this unifying effect of foreign policy, may be reached as long as the different ethnic communities demonstrate similar affiliation with the international integration orientation of the country. Assuming such affiliation to be established in this thesis' case of study, it can be argued that any external factor, which threatens the international integration agenda the country has set as its foreign policy objective, may also cause the shrinking of the integration role that foreign policy plays over the inter-ethnic relations. If we accept the premise that foreign policy serves as a common vision which inspires inter-ethnic integration, then its response towards the external factors/threats, may also affect the unity or division of ethnic groups. On the contrary, if foreign policy does not play a role in inter-ethnic integration, then foreign policy behavior towards external factors/threats, is much less important in terms of inter-ethnic relations.

Considering the two roles of foreign policy, we may argue that the existence of external threats or constraints produces a double effect. The first effect is felt over the external security of the state, by blocking its possibilities of membership in international organizations. The second effect is felt over the internal security, namely over the inter-ethnic cohesion, forged by the common foreign policy vision. Hence, the first function of foreign policy, namely the state's response towards external threats in order to defend its security, is ultimately related to its second function, namely its influence over inter-ethnic unity through international integrations. By interconnecting these two roles of foreign policy, we will raise the second set of hypotheses which relate a small state's foreign policy action towards external threats, as the independent condition, to the inter-ethnic unity, as the dependent condition.

Hypothesis 2a: If the small state exhibits higher foreign policy action in trying to mitigate or resolve external threats, then this behavior will also lead to inter-ethnic unity

Hypothesis 2b: If the state exhibits lower policy action or status-quo behavior in response to external threats, then this behavior will lead to inter-ethnic division

The concept map below, represents visually the interconnection of the two sets of hypotheses:

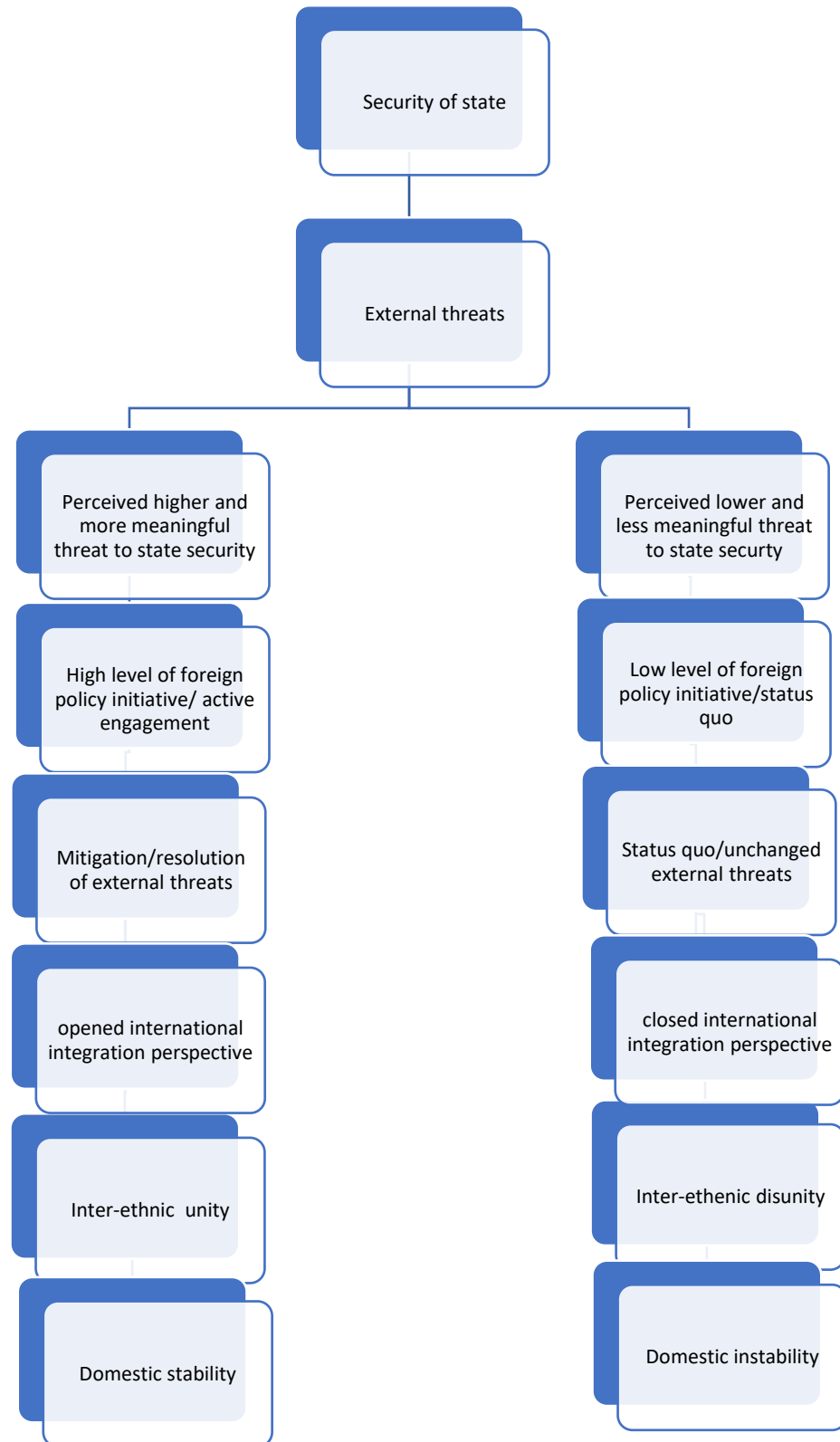


Figure 1. Concept Map

This concept map visualizes a potential causal relationship between external threats or pressures, foreign policy behavior and inter-ethnic relations. It presents the dependence of foreign policy behavior on the perception of external threats. Based on the perception, two strands of cause and effect may develop. If the external threats are perceived as highly risky for the security of the state, and security lies international integrations (political securitization), then the state would demonstrate higher foreign policy initiative/action, which would consequently result into mitigation or elimination of external threats, through resolution of inter-state contests. The resolution or elimination of external threats, which block international integrations, would then result into inter-ethnic cohesion, given that the international integration agenda serves as the inter-ethnic glue.

If external pressures/demands are perceived as threats to the state security, and security lies in preserving national identity (societal securitization), then the state would demonstrate a much lower intensity of foreign policy initiative/action. The low level of foreign policy action would consequently render a status-quo situation towards external pressures, given that the external circumstances do not change. Consequently, the international integration progress, which is conditioned by external pressures, would slow down or stall. This, in turn, would indirectly also cause an inter-ethnic division, due to disagreements over the state's foreign policy approach or behavior.

But how may this hypothetical structure apply to a concrete case? How may these theoretical predictions manifest, if contextualized in Macedonia's case? To understand foreign policy reaction towards external threats, and the internal impact of such reaction on inter-ethnic relations, it is necessary to initially define the country's smallness and/or weakness and its relationship to foreign policy behavior, as well as to the state of inter-ethnic relations. In order to identify Macedonia's place within these categories, the thesis will rely on the above theories of small and weak states. Furthermore, in order to study the relationship between foreign policy and inter-ethnic relations, it is necessary to map the dominating security issues of this country, including the interplay of the regional and internal dynamics. As the above scheme depicts, the intention of this work is to find out if the relationship between external threats and inter-ethnic relations is causal and interdependent. If we go by this assumption, then the security issues of Macedonia, be they internal inter-ethnic issues, or external issues with neighbors, cannot be

considered as isolated events. Hence, the internal inter-ethnic relations may be linked to the long processes of the creation/disintegration of the regional nation-states. Likewise, conflicts deriving from external sources, may entail, to a certain level, the domestic actors and their internal relations as well.

Is Macedonia a small and weak state?

The aim in this section is to find out whether Macedonia fits in the small and weak states category and how this identification may influence its foreign policy behavior, oriented towards security and integration. In order to provide a clearer profile of Macedonia's size and power, we will initially analyze these two concepts separately and then assess whether they intertwine in this country's case and whether they can be used interchangeably in this thesis. The analysis will partly rely on the small state's working definition, provided in the literature review section, in order to evaluate whether Macedonia fits the criteria postulated by that definition.

Beginning with the concept of smallness, the less difficult way of assessing Macedonia's 'smallness' is by applying the quantifiable criteria, which are physically perceived or measurable. By territory (25,713 km²), population (2,022,547), GDP (\$16,253 per capita), and other criteria, Macedonia may certainly be defined as a small state. However, it is important to remind ourselves of the already stated missing consensus, in the literature review chapter, on setting clear 'bars' which would separate a small from a medium and a big state. Nevertheless, the above figures fit more closely with the small state category than the other two. These figures, however, are not sufficient to define clearly a small state, since there are a number of other states which may territorially be small or may have a significantly smaller population, but fulfil another criterion (ex. strong military or high GDP) based on which they cannot be classified as typical small states (ex. military powerful Israel, wealthy Luxembourg, etc.).

The challenge in defining Macedonia by quantitative criteria leads us to the second set of criteria, namely the qualitative ones. If we accept the physical reality of Macedonia as a small state, does this mean that the country is small also in terms of its 'strength' and 'power'? As elaborated in the literature review, this criterion relies on the question: does a certain state have power or strength to force its will on other states, while resisting other states' imposed will on it? This criterion entails an international dimension of a state. If we analyze the Republic of

Macedonia's case under this criterion, we may argue that its 'smallness' has been manifested through the international challenging relations it has had since its independence. The membership of the Republic of Macedonia in the UN (1993) represents a precedent in International Relations in the sense that the country was admitted in this organization under a provisional name (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and not under its constitutional name, the Republic of Macedonia (see more in Janev 1999, Nikodinovska-Krstevska 2018, Apasiev 2018, Janev 2019 etc.) The Republic of Macedonia was not able to resist the imposed decision by the UN, which derived from Greece's pressures, in spite of it being in direct contradiction to the country's internal will. Vankovska (2017) describes this process as "a turning point that made the Macedonian state not only small but also weak both in terms of international relations and domestic politics" (p.5). The undertaken changes which resulted from the Interim Accord with Greece of 1995, including certain modifications in the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, the state symbols (including the flag), in the 1991-95 period, guarantees of non-territorial pretensions, etc., (Ljorovski et al. 2019), represent another externally imposed will, eventually accepted by the Macedonian state. The agreements with Bulgaria (of 1999 and 2017), on the other hand, may not be a one-sided imposed will, since the Macedonian side has also shown readiness to resolve the issues with Bulgaria. Yet the source and nature of the dispute may be considered as an externally imposed will as "this problem stems from Bulgaria's denial of the existence of distinctly different Macedonian language." (Stojanovski et al., 2014). Furthermore, the fact that the two countries have signed a recent agreement of friendship in 2017, does not signal an end to historical or language disputes, but may rather serve as an opportunity for filing new demands by the Bulgarian side. As the historian Ulf Brunnbauer states (2020, as cited in DW 25.07.2020) the "framework position" submitted by Bulgaria before the enlargement summit of the European Council, consists of "of a long list of demand wishes' for North Macedonia – with all these wishes being related to historiography and national identity issues – shortly stated, Bulgaria ultimately demands the undertaking of its own historical viewpoint on Macedonia". Another event in the history of independent Macedonia which indicates its inability to resist external demands even when they were considered as risky for the internal stability of the country is the period of the Kosovo War in 1999. Macedonia, despite Gligorov's suggestion of allowing a corridor through which the Kosovar refugees would pass into Albania, the Macedonian government not only accepted

Kosovar refugees in its country, but it even far exceeded the number the state had capacity to admit²¹. This was considered as an important security issue for Macedonia since the large inflow was seen as a “direct disruption of the demographic structure of Macedonia.” (Marolov, 2013). There are also other events in Macedonia’s foreign policy which portray its inability to resist external will or constellation and which furthermore demonstrate the narrow margin of error a small state is allowed to make in its foreign policy choices. One instance which illustrates this argument is Macedonia’s established diplomatic relations with the Republic of China (Taiwan), which instigated a harsh response from Chinese government and led to eventual derecognition of ROC as it resulted into a costly adventure for Macedonia’s national interests (Tubilewicz, 2004).

This qualitative criterion discussed above entails another connotation. This criterion of a state’s smallness, also signifies a state’s weakness in applying influence (or even in resisting external influence) within the international system directed by world powers. But before moving to the concept of a ‘weak’ state, let’s analyze the third qualitative criterion of the ‘small’ state concept, or that of a state’s behavior within the international system. According to authors mentioned above (Huldt 1977 as cited in Rogers 2007, Evans and Newnham 1998, Hey 2003, Browning 2006, Steinsson and Thorhallsson 2017, etc.), small states have limited priorities in their foreign policy, with little to no international interferences, and a significant reliance on international law and organizations. Macedonia’s foreign policy priorities focus on Euro-Atlantic integrations, followed by bilateral and multilateral cooperation, contribution to a stable and prosperous region, etc. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia). The Euro-Atlantic integration priority points to a uni-vectoral foreign policy orientation that enjoys inter-party consensus. However, this orientation began to show signs of broadening towards a multi-vectoral orientation in the period of the VMRO-DPMNE led government (2006-2016) (Bieber, 2018). Motivated by economic reasons this government began launching official visits and road-shows across the globe in order to attract foreign investments in the country. It also began building cooperation with Russia in the energy sector (Vankovska, 2017). However, whereas this opening up of Macedonia’s foreign policy orientation was rather economic, the strategic objectives of its foreign policy were not altered. Such unchanged orientation since 1991 shows a rather limited foreign policy approach, inspired, perhaps, also by the similar foreign

²¹Based on the estimations of the Macedonian authorities, the country had capacity to accommodate only about 20,000 refugees. In fact, the country ended up accepting about 350,000 refugees (Marolov 2013).

policy choices of other regional states (Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Kosovo, etc., have all embraced the EU integration foreign policy choice, while there are differences in the NATO foreign policy choice). Considering Macedonia's background, we may argue that it is a country with no international interference record, and its focus has instead been on safeguarding itself from international interference with harmful effects for its national interests. The reliance of the country on international law and organizations, as the third qualitative criterion of small states, has been manifested through several forms. Macedonia's bid for membership in organizations such as the Council of Europe, UN, NATO, EU, and others, shows the state's embracing approach of international organizations and laws. Furthermore, the Republic of Macedonia has also appealed to international law as it is the case with the country's filing of petition against Greece before the International Court of Justice, on grounds of violating the Interim Accord of 1995. As a small state, the Republic of Macedonia decided the issue of blocking the country's Euro-Atlantic integration by Greece to be judged by the most important international legal body, the ICJ. The latter's decision in favor of Macedonia's position represented legitimation of Macedonia's efforts to resist Greece's pressures for identity changes, but the one-sided reliance of Macedonia on ICJ's verdict did not suffice to close the dispute (Georgievski, 2013). Greece, also a small state according to several quantitative and qualitative criteria, refused to abide to international law, thus devaluating the significance of such international institutions and making the appeal of other small countries to these institutions futile.

Although it is difficult to find a single pattern of a small state's foreign policy behavior, the above events illustrate a typical small state behavior in its foreign policy endeavors. Having argued this, however, it is important to point out that Macedonia's foreign policy behavior has also broken this pattern in several forms and time periods, thus causing its typical 'smallness' to become ambiguous. The long resistance of external pressures by Greece (and Bulgaria), despite remaining outside international organizations, has not proven detrimental to Macedonia's survival. Furthermore, the uncertainty regarding the survival of these international organizations themselves (considering the crisis they face), backs up further the righteousness of the state in resisting external pressures, harmful to its national interest, in return for membership into uncertain international organizations (Bieber 2018). Furthermore, the reliance of Macedonia on international organizations and law is not typical for small states only. Many medium and big

states prefer relying on such structures for ethnic, political, and many other reasons, or in resolving difficult bilateral or other issues.

Another way of identifying the size of a state is based on the state's self-perception on its role in the international relations or on the way others perceive it. As a subjective approach, it is much more difficult to gauge how Macedonia perceives itself or how others perceive it. If we assume that Macedonia perceives itself as 'small' in its international ties, then its foreign policy actions towards, say, Bulgaria or Greece (ex. signing of agreements, accepting constitutional changes) may be understandable. Macedonia's self-perceived smallness may also be evidenced by its limited foreign policy priorities (EU and NATO). However, as argued above, it is difficult to state that Macedonia's foreign policy behavior has been uniform. If we analyze certain foreign policy behaviors demonstrated especially under the last government, led by VMRO-DPMNE, we might uncover another self-perception of Macedonia's size. Hence during VMRO-DPMNE's reign, the foreign policy focus began to expand, embracing a more multi-vectoral approach, albeit mainly out of economic reasons (Vankovska, 2017). It also began to increasingly argue against a conditioned EU and NATO integration with a name change (Koneska, 2014). Such behavior signified that Macedonia should not be limited to few foreign policy options, especially if the latter affect its perceived national interest. Such behavior, consequently, may indicate that Macedonia is not 'small' at least in the foreign choices it has decided to pursue. The question here then becomes: is it possible for the same state to be differently self-perceived, depending on different factors such as governmental leading party, external circumstances, or even time-period? If the answer is yes, then upon which self-perception should we rely in defining the size of the state? The answer is obviously difficult as this criterion is quite subjective in nature and therefore elusive. As such, it should be considered in combination with the other, already elaborated criteria. Thus, if we accept the premise that Macedonia is territorially, economically, and population-wise a small state, it has limited foreign policy options, appeals to and abides by international law and organizations, and undertakes imposed changes from external factors because it is self-perceived as small, then we may conclude that this state is indeed small. These behaviors would also fit the working definition constructed in the literature review chapter, which roughly stated that a small state is one which is aware of its 'smallness' and illustrates this awareness by acting and feeling small in international relations, trying to secure its survival by relying fundamentally on the aid of other states, alliances, or organization, which, in turn,

confine or dictate its political maneuverability both internally and externally. However, as the events above indicate, this state does not fit all these criteria perfectly and at all times. As discussed above, Macedonia has demonstrated exceptions from the pattern of a 'small' state behavior, if there is a single pattern to begin with. What we may claim for certain is that the 'size' of the state is fluid in nature and therefore prone to change. And Macedonia is part of this concept.

Moving onto the concept of a 'weak' state, it is important to underline the close relationship between 'small' and 'weak'. This relationship derives from an overlap of criteria used to define both concepts. Thus, mutual concepts such as 'strength' and 'power' has led authors (ex. Fox 1959, Keohane 1969, Browning 2006, Steinsson and Thorhallsson 2017, etc.), to merge small and weak state concepts. Just like the small state concept, the weak state also entails a foreign policy dimension. According to Raeymaeker (1974) (as cited in Maass 2009) a small and weak state leads a foreign policy which is oriented towards resisting great powers' pressures, towards preservation of territorial integrity and independence, and towards guarding its security. Certainly, while these criteria do not define only weak states, the first one, namely resistance of great powers' pressures is more typical of the former. This criterion, moreover, overlaps with the qualitative criterion of a small state, which in Macedonia's case has in certain cases manifested through non-resistance to externally imposed will. Yet, what can be said about Macedonia's strive for preserving its territorial integrity, independence and security? In this direction we may argue that Macedonia's foreign policy course since independence (including changes and adjustments of the course) has been directed towards its survival. As described in the historical chapter of the Republic of Macedonia (1991-2018), the latter initially adopted the 'equidistance' foreign policy approach. This approach may be argued to have served precisely the aim of preserving its independence at a time when this country's neighbors were not only involved in conflicts, but could have also dragged Macedonia into them easily (Marolov and Rodrigues, 2014). The equidistance can be argued to have served for internal stability purposes also, as external factors might have used internal factions to their benefit and consequently cause externally fueled inter-ethnic crises. The change of Macedonia's course from equidistance to closer regional cooperation might have derived from the international organizations' demands, yet serving the same purpose as equidistance, i.e. preserving territorial integrity and independence and guarding its security. The determination to join EU and NATO may be well

considered as an effort to preserve its existence. Whereas Koneska (2014) sees Macedonia's foreign policy objectives as divided into two sets: one oriented towards preserving the state's sovereignty and security, and the other towards integration in EU and NATO (among other relevant international organizations), Vankovska (2017) argues that the two of them cannot really be seen as separate from one another "for belonging to NATO and EU is seen as the ultimate way to achieve and secure the country's sovereignty and state security." (p.6). Finally, the acceptance of external pressures for the sake of joining international organizations, may represent another indication of the state's vulnerability, whose membership in organizations such as NATO and the EU is viewed as more important for its security and survival than resisting to external pressures.

Although the analysis of a state's foreign policy behavior may represent an important indicator for measuring its 'weakness' in international relations, it is still not an exhaustive criterion. As elaborated in the literature review chapter, Buzan (1983) argues that a state can be *weak* not only because it can or cannot project its power in international relations. It can be weak also because of internal contestation of its idea and institutions. In such cases, when the idea and institutions of the state are contested internally, it is difficult to articulate the national interest of the country. Thus, what represents a threat to the national interest for one group may not apply to the other group. Such lack of internal cohesion renders a state quite weak both towards external and internal threats. Buzan (1983) argues that in such cases, foreign powers may even fuel internal polarization, hence weakening the state even more.

But where does Macedonia stand in Buzan's scheme of a weak state? If the country's consolidation as an independent state is analyzed, it would become evident that the Republic of Macedonia has endured internal contestation of its idea and institutions since the very beginning. The contestation is manifested mainly through the ethnic Albanian opposition of the country's main philosophy and institutions. As elaborated in the historical chapter, the contestation of the state's idea and institutions by Albanians was manifested by their boycott of the referendum for declaring the Republic of Macedonia as an independent state in 1991. Later in that year the Albanian ethnic group also boycotted the adoption of the first Constitution of the independent state, presenting several objections to it. Following this boycott, Albanians organized their own referendum for declaring a territorial autonomy, which was supported by 74% of Albanians. In the face of external disputes with neighbors, and especially with Greece, the internal

contestations over the idea and institutions of the state by the Albanian ethnic group rendered the Republic of Macedonia a weak state.

The heaviest blow towards the idea and institutions of the state may undoubtedly be considered the 2001 armed conflict. As Kim (2002) states, the outbreak of an armed conflict was surprising for the very fact that the Republic of Macedonia was considered by the international community as a model, albeit not a perfect one, of inter-ethnic cohabitation, confirmed also by the regular inclusion of the Albanian political factor in all governments since 1991. Thus, the confrontation of the police and security forces by ethnic Albanian guerilla forces represents a violent way of contesting the state's idea and institutions, leading furthermore to changes in other important institutions such as the Constitution (through OFA).

Such internal contestations were not sealed with the OFA. Similar contestations have been manifested in the later years as well by inter-ethnic incidents such as the Kumanovo shootout, the Tirana Platform, and other smaller events. Their common denominator is that they reflect the ethnic Albanian's opposition to the idea of Macedonia's state and its institutions.

As stated above, such internal contestation, not only renders a state *weak* but makes the identification of external threats more difficult. This is due to the fact that internally contested idea and institutions of the state do not represent a strong referential point for national interest. In absence of an inter-ethnic cohesion over the national interest, external threats become not only more difficult to discern but also become differently perceived. Thus, if Albanians contest the idea of Macedonia's state, they consequently perceive differently the external threats towards it. Disagreements may arise not only around the way they are perceived but also whether they represent threats at all. Thus, whereas to ethnic Macedonians the interference of Tirana in the preparation of a common platform of Albanian political parties on Albanians' demands may be perceived as political threat and a classic interference in internal affairs, to ethnic Albanians such interference may not only be perceived as positive but also as necessary for the defense of this minority in the country. Similarly, whereas Greece's pressures for name change may represent a societal threat which directly affects the identity elements of the Macedonian nation, Albanians may see this pressure only in terms of a political contest which threatens to stall Euro-Atlantic integration. In such way, the weakness of the state which derives from the internal contestation by certain groups (Albanian ethnic community in Macedonia's case), is ultimately projected in the state's foreign relations, including its challenges and threats. The following section will

construct a security complex to analyze in more detail the security issues that Macedonia faces, and which may be partly related to its smallness and weakness in the sense that was elaborated in this section.

Macedonia within the Western Balkan sub-regional security complex

Since the security dynamics are by nature relational, analyzing the security issues of Macedonia, would require analysis within its regional context. The regional level explains the way security is sufficiently linked with other units. Buzan and Waever (2003) define the Regional Security Complex as “a set of units whose major processes of securitization, de-securitization, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another” (p.44). The relations within regions are characterized by patterns of amity and enmity, caused usually by historical or cultural factors, and the closer these states are located physically, the greater their security interaction may be. Thus, the standard form of RSC is characterized by rivalry, power balancing, or alliance building among the main powers of the region, however, the latter may also be penetrated by external powers (pp.40-44).

Macedonia is located within the Balkans, a region which moved from being almost a complex in its own right, through the process of *Balkanization*, in early 90s, to a subcomplex of the wider Europe-EU regional complex by late 90s. The fact that security issues in the Balkans of the 90s, such as ethnic cleansing, wars, dehumanization, were substantially different from the issues within the region of Europe, motivated scholarly attempts to delimit this region as a world region, separate from that of Europe. These attempts were furthermore strengthened by the fact that interaction and security interdependence were considered to be much greater within the Balkan units than between the latter and external actors (Buzan and Waever, 2003). The fixation of the perception of the Balkans as ‘the other’, according to Todorova’s *Imagining the Balkans* (1997), derived from the Great Powers (including most of European states), in a time context from the 19th to the 20th century. This period reflected violence among local actors over the division of Macedonia, which “was returned to the direct rule of the Porte (Ottoman Empire) after the Treaty of Berlin 1878” (p.117). The Macedonian question, the author argues, incited revolution against Ottoman authorities but also violent clashes between the neighboring actors with pretensions towards Macedonia, thus “enhancing the reputation of the peninsula as a

turbulent region and of Macedonia as the ‘land of terror, fire, and sword.’” (p.117). In this time context, the author argues, the Western World began to stigmatize heavily the Balkans, as backwards, uncivilized, violent, etc. An imagined Balkans, according to this view, stood in sharp contradiction to the Western values, characterized by rule of law, order, civilization, efficient bureaucracies, etc. The tendencies to depict the Balkans as ‘the other’, imposed from an outside view, were further reinforced by the internalization of this image, by Balkans’ own popular figures.

The counter-argument to this position, however, is that the Balkans region was never completely independent from the European influence. In this context, Todorova (1997) argues that it would be a mistaken approach to view the Balkans independently of the wider entanglements, in particular of the socio-economic and intellectual formations of Western Europe, as they have had certain influences over the realities in the Balkans. The interaction of the Balkans with the wider European security dynamics oscillated from being almost independent to merging into one European regional complex. For instance, during the Balkan wars against the Ottoman rule, local actors counted on the European support and borders were drawn according to the Great Power’s interests. According to Buzan and Waever (2003) during World War I the Balkans completely merged into the European complex, sharing the same security issues as the western European states. Also, the emerging of the Serb-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom (1918), seemed to be a decision of the great powers as much as it was a reflection of the Pan-Slavic and nationalistic constellations. The new Yugoslavia emerged almost within the same borders as the SCS Kingdom, while it served as a buffer zone between the East and West during the Cold War years. The collapse of Yugoslavia, has been associated with both internal and external factors. In analyzing the bad prognosis of Yugoslavia, Wiberg (2004) argues that Yugoslavia embraced many internal elements which define a domestic war. For example, its constituents showed disagreements on the form of the state, generating several constitutional crises. Its ethnic heterogenous structure distributed as a ‘leopard pattern’, also “contributed to bad prognosis on statistical grounds” (p.45). According to opposing arguments, although seemingly an internally driven process, motivated by nationalism and irredentism, Yugoslavia’s dissolution also reflects influences by external factors. During the 90s conflicts, following the break-up of Yugoslavia, the involvement of the external powers was not only evident but also highly expected by the internal actors. In Wiberg’s words the “the actors in FY

were bent to believe that they had some bargaining cards in terms of potential external support, but they were no better than others in guessing who would intervene, when and how, and in favour of whom” (p.45). The wishful thinking of the Yugoslav actors about external actors’ involvement, Wiberg argues, may have led these actors to enhance their demands, to show reluctance for compromise, and to “get into a war by accident or even by intention” (p.46). Along similar lines, Buzan (2003) claims that the influence of the external factors on the internal Balkans conflicts impacted the outcome of these conflicts, causing the latter to linger, as powerful external friends offered their support on either side of the conflicting parties (ex. Croats counting on Germany, Serbia on Russia, Bosnians and Kosovar Albanians on USA, etc.).

In order to identify and define holistically the main security issues of Macedonia, we must analyze them in relation to other states within the Balkan subcomplex, by relying on main regional security complex theories. Of all sectors, the societal sector appears to be crucial within the Balkans, as national identity issues represent the main element around which circulate the greatest fear and insecurity of Balkan countries. Although religion may also play a role as a divisive line between Balkan nations, Buzan argues that religion serves mostly as an identity marker of ethnic or national groups, and not as a security issue on its own right. The Balkans also represents an intersection of the political with the societal sector, reflected through ethno-territorial conflicts (Buzan and Waever, 2003, p.384).

Macedonia would be an example which embodies all of the above security issues. Having stated this, it is also important to emphasize that societal and political are not the only sectors across which threats arise. There are arguments that Macedonia’s security threats derive from economic hardships as much as from societal or political issues. This is true especially when analyzing its internal security complex characterized by inter-ethnic tensions. As the ESI article examines, although the OFA seemed to be look as a promising document for building permanent inter-ethnic peace, the article’s analysis suggests otherwise. It advises that a sustainable strategy for building internal peace is to address the underlying causes of insecurity which deal not with political or societal causes, but rather with economic causes. Hence it argues that unless issues such as “the collapse of Macedonia's industrial society, the weakness of its new private sector, the absence of a responsive state in many parts of the country” are dealt with appropriately, the “economic collapse... coupled with ethnic mobilization ... makes for a uniquely combustible combination” (ESI Macedonia Security Project, 2002). However, whereas other threat sectors,

such as the economic one, may be important in analyzing the internal inter-ethnic relations in the country, these economic parameters do not seem adequate for explaining external security issues. In order to gain a better understanding of the security threats Macedonia faces, we will rely on Buzan and Weaver's (2003) security complex scheme as elaborated below.

When analyzing the conflict issues existing within Macedonia, Buzan and Waever (2003) divide them into two categories. In the first category they place the internal conflicting relationship between the strong Albanian minority, and the Macedonian majority. This tensioned relationship culminated into armed clashes in 2001. In the second category they place the external relations Macedonia has, mainly with its neighbors: Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, Albania, and Kosovo. These relations are considered as source of insecurity within the Balkan subcomplex, due to the competing interpretations of Macedonia's statehood and nationality (pp.384-385). Buzan defines Macedonia as a uniquely complicated case, where all of its neighbors have a role in defining it. Greece contested its constitutional name "Republic of Macedonia", claiming that it belongs to the Greek province and is part of its historic and cultural heritage. Bulgarians contest the unique Macedonian nationality, considering the state as 'west Macedonia', Serbs contest the project of it being an independent state, as they consider the latter a product of Yugoslavia's project. Albania, on the other hand, has a salient interest in this country due to the big minority of Albanian population who lives in it (p.378). In the following section I will elaborate on these two categories separately, in order to be able to later draw a relationship between the internal and external main security issues that Macedonia faces. Besides the internal and sub-regional complex, I would add another category of security issues, which Macedonia is affected by. The internationalization of Macedonia's Question, reflects the impact of external powers (with a focus on the EU) over its bilateral and internal conflict, thus interfering with its main security issues.

Before going into each security complex however, which aims to deconstruct the security issues this country faces, it is significant to present another, seemingly paradoxical, yet significant image or status which the Republic of Macedonia has enjoyed at least until 2001. In spite of the carnage taking place in the region at the demise of Yugoslavia, the Republic of Macedonia was long considered as a miraculously 'oasis of peace'. In Vankovska's words (2007) "The third miracle was the Macedonian "oasis of peace" that incorporated a multiethnic model of coexistence and the UN's unique preventive deployment mission" (p.3). The loss of

this status may be blamed upon the international community as much as upon the internal factors. Paraphrasing the author, we may argue that the international community may have brought about the disturbance of peace in Macedonia in two ways: firstly, by making Macedonia a collateral damage of the international community's policies against Yugoslavia (economic sanctions which caused an economic collapse of Macedonia) and secondly by acting as a quick but inefficient fixer of the country's issues (through actions such as UNPREDEP deployment, Ohrid Framework Agreement, etc.) Through such actions, the international community has acted not only incompetently (by not knowing the root causes to the conflict and by rather focusing on individual actor's story-telling) but also indifferently (by disregarding the consequences that the quick and inefficient solutions of this community would produce over the state of Macedonia). Thus, the international community focused on conflict prevention, instead of addressing the roots of an already existing conflict in Macedonia (such as lack of internal social contract between the state and society), which furthermore undermined the internal sovereignty of the state. In other words, the international community offered conflict prevention solutions instead of offering sustainable mechanisms for prevention of violence outbreak.

From the above analysis, we may argue that although in Macedonia's case security threats may be viewed predominantly through the societal and political sectors, a more comprehensive analysis of the situation, which would have considered other non-ethnic sources of conflict (ex. economic and social) would have provided not only a more objective picture of the situation but would have also led to the building of more sustainable mechanisms for prevention of the violence outbreak. Considering the role of the international community in handling the security issues in Macedonia, we argue that its intervention cannot be considered only as a *consequence* of the violence outbreak. The international community's intervention may also be considered as a *cause* which has led to the emergence of conflict outbreak in the country or to the deepening of the security issues in the country. These issues will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

Macedonian-Albanian security complex

This complex defines and explains the internal conflicts that the Republic of Macedonia faces since its independence in 1991. I argue that the main reason behind these conflicts revolves

around the *idea of the state*, since its birth. The definition of the Republic of Macedonia, in its first constitutional preamble, of 1992, as a “national state of the Macedonian people, in which full equality as citizens and permanent co-existence with the Macedonian people is provided for Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Roma, and other nationalities living in the Republic of Macedonia” (RNM Constitution, Preamble²²), would become the internal source of dispute among the ethnic majority of Macedonians and the big ethnic minority of Albanians. Although more than two ethnicities live within the territory of Macedonia, their significantly smaller percentage, left room for the inter-ethnic conflict dispute to be concentrated only on the two largest groups: Macedonians (64 percent) and Albanians (25 percent). ²³The essence of their differences lies on the idea of the state. In general terms, ethnic Macedonians insist that the state is built on the basis of its ethno-nation, or a nation-state of the Macedonian people, where other ethnic groups would be treated as equal citizens before the law. This idea is fiercely contested by the Albanian ethnic group, who favor a binational state, where the Albanians would be considered as a constituent nation, alongside the Macedonian nation.

Even the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA), which closed the armed conflict of 2001, did not resolve fundamentally the inter-ethnic tensions. With an amended preamble and several other amendments, it attempted to transform a self-defined nation-state to what Bieber (2008) describes as “a state straddling between nation-state, civic state, and binational state with a formal power-sharing structure” (p.17). Yet, its ambiguous nature, left room for different and often contradictory interpretations. In turn, this ambiguity created discontent in both ethnicities. Despite its attempts to resolve inter-ethnic conflict, the OFA became rather a controversial document. The Macedonian ethnic group has remained, in its majority, skeptical towards the agreement, fearing that it would eventually lead to loss of their control over the state and even

²²The preamble has endured two changes since the first version with amendments IV and XXXIV. Significant to this thesis are the changes which state that “the citizens are constituents of the Macedonian state; the Macedonians are defined as a people; national minorities are transformed from nationalities into part of the people;” (Majhosev and Denkova 2019, p.195)

²³Census is issued by the State Statistical Office of 2002. Considering its date, it is important to emphasize its limitations, since the current census reality may have changed much since 2002. However, being the last official census, we must rely on these data, albeit with certain level of reservation on their reliability. The planned 2011 population census failed due to too much political involvement by Albanian and Macedonian politicians. According to Director General of the SSO, Apostol Simovski, “both sides (Macedonian and Albanian politicians) encouraged their supporters to add so many family members living abroad — and hence ineligible to be included — that before the census was over, they realized the inflated numbers would be so incredible “that no one would accept them”, so they aborted the process”. The new census is postponed to 2021 (Judah, 2020).

worse to secession (Bieber, 2008, p.36). Although initially supported highly by the Albanian community, OFA's failure to establish formal power-sharing system in Macedonia and lack of political commitment for its thorough implementation, has caused much frustration among the Albanian community as well (Demjaha 2016, Aziri 2008).

When discussing the security issues within the Macedonian-Albanian security complex, we should take into account two opposing attitudes regarding OFA's role in the security aspect of the country. Whereas the first view establishes this document as effective in closing an inter-ethnic conflict, mainly through introducing power-sharing, and thus contributing to the enhancement of the state's security, the other view maintains the opposite. In the latter view, OFA's solution to the conflict is rather perceived as a hastened approach, rushing to fix quickly an inter-ethnic conflict, without understanding deeply the root causes behind it and therefore falling into the trap of ethnic arguments about the impossibility of coexisting (Kaldor 1999, as cited in Vankovska 2007).

In analyzing OFA's role from Macedonia's security aspect, we should focus on the power-sharing mechanism it promotes. The power-sharing mechanism, also called as consociationalism, is "characterized by formal institutional rules which give multiple political elites a stake in the decision-making process" (Norris 2008, p.23). Power sharing is thought to work best for multi-ethnic societies, as it helps mitigate conflict among different groups by giving to different and often rival leadership elites a stake in the decision-making process. According to Lijphart "power-sharing regimes are not only best for creating a durable long-term accommodation of cultural differences; in reality these are the only conditions which are broadly acceptable when negotiating any post-conflict settlement." (as cited in Norris, 2008). In this context the question becomes: has OFA's power-sharing introduction accommodated ethno-cultural differences, thus contributing to the stabilization of a post-conflictual environment such as Macedonia? The arguments in favor of OFA maintain that it ended an inter-ethnic conflict, or even averted a civil war. Through its power-sharing mechanism it promised to distribute power more equally between the parties in conflict. In Ripiloski's and Pendarovski's (2013) words the OFA called for "changes to Macedonia's power-sharing arrangements, designed to better integrate ethnic minorities- above all the Albanians- into the day-to-day running of the state, in exchange for a cessation of violence and a commitment by all to the political process" (p.137). Furthermore, it reassured the unitary nature of the state, against the demands for territorial

solutions. According to Stojanovski et al. (2014) the protection of the unitary character of Macedonia was of high significance especially because of Yugoslavia's negative experience with its republics and provinces, whose gained autonomy was a first step towards their later independence. One of the international signatories of this agreement, Pardew (2011) sums up the positive sides of this document as such: "The Ohrid Agreement is not perfect—negotiations under the threat of war are rarely perfect—and implementation has not been without issues as well. Overall, however, the Ohrid Agreement has held up well as a model for ethnic relationships in Macedonia and elsewhere. The two great principles of Ohrid— respect for the cultural identity of everyone and the equal rights of every citizen without regard to ethnic background—remain valid today" (p.23). But was OFA indeed successful in restoring peace, integrating inter-ethnic groups, and ensuring equal rights of every citizen, mainly through its power-sharing mechanism? If yes, then how can later inter-ethnic incidents be explained?

Many authors answer the above question with a *no*. In discussing the shortcomings of the OFA Vankovska (2007) argues that the document was not all-inclusive as not all parties were involved, the transparency on its contents was at the lowest level, it was an imposed agreement by third parties (i.e. the EU and NATO), the facilitators did not enjoy full neutrality due to their involvement in previous issues (such as in Kosovo), and the signatories of this document did not enjoy internal legitimacy. Significant to the Macedonian-Albanian security complex, the OFA is a document which, Stojanovski et. al (2014) consider to have created other problems. In fact, it may have contributed to further inter-ethnic division by neglecting the 'civic approach' and sacrificing multi-ethnicity in favor of bi-nationalism. In this context Vankovska (2017) views the OFA as a document which sidelines the multi-ethnic concept and instead strengthens bi-nationalism while at the same time weakening democracy. Authors such as Stojanovski et al. (2014) think along similar lines when discussing the 'multi-ethnic character' that the OFA tries to promote. In their words, such approach is problematic, as instead of promoting the civil society concept, it promotes multi-ethnicity, "which in the context of Macedonia is reduced to bi-nationalism and a binational state" (p. 315). Thus, whereas OFA claimed to promote the 'multi-ethnic character' of the country, in fact it only helped advance Albanians' constitutional and political status, bypassing or even marginalizing the other ethnic groups (which cannot reach the required 20% at state level). As such, the OFA intentionally or not, contributes not to the creation of a multi-ethnic but to a bi-national state (Ripiloski and Pendarovski, 2013). Such

reality may only satisfy the ethnic Albanians' ambitions, while alienating all other ethnic groups, including the majority of Macedonians. The latter may feel fearful that an expansion of power in the hands of the Albanians may undermine their primacy over state institutions. The other ethnic groups, a minority in the country, may feel discriminated by the imposed percentage of OFA (20%), which they can hardly reach (especially at state level). A procedural mechanism of OFA which strengthens the bi-national state to the detriment of a civic state is the so called Badinter's majority.²⁴ This mechanism, again, prioritizes the Albanian community at the expense of other minorities. Although the Badinter's majority applies to the other minorities as well, their significantly lower number of seats at the Parliament renders them dependent on the Albanian community for reaching such majority. Such mechanism, thus, marginalizes further the position of the minorities while cementing bi-nationalism in the state. OFA's intention of strengthening the autonomy of local government, cements further the segregation between Macedonians and Albanians. Such segregation, then risks the treatment of other cleavages, such as socio-economic and political, in ethnic terms as well (Schulz and Sorensen, 2020).

Another argument regarding OFA's power-sharing mechanism is that it leads to the undermining of democracy in the country. By introducing power-sharing, the OFA imposes a system which needs substantial financial means for its proper functioning. In a case like Macedonia, with an already weary economy, such system may be perceived as a burden more than a solution. In other words, although power-sharing claims to enhance 'democracy', the latter is in fact quite expensive to afford in an environment which is already burdened by high rates of unemployment, corruption, and other economic disfunctions. Also, the OFA, besides legitimizing violence, has also led to power being distributed to those who were responsible for disrupting peace. The ethnic elite responsible for the outbreak of violence, are the same ones who compete for more share of power, thus inhibiting a wider participation of citizens in the process of policy-making and power-share. OFA's persistence to ensure peace even at the cost of democracy has undermined the latter, has empowered corrupted political elites, and has institutionalized and politicized ethnic differences. Many laws²⁵, vaguely conceived and problematic to implement, are adopted only because they derive from the Ohrid Agreement. The

²⁴According to Badinter's majority the legislation that is important to ethnic minorities should pass with a double majority in the Parliament (majority of all PMs and majority of ethnic minority).

²⁵See for example the Law on the Territorial Organization of 2004, which proved controversial as local self-government became less about citizens' participation and more about local ethnic governing elites.

successful implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement almost serves as a *carte blanche* for the corrupted and inefficient political elites, justifying every action or failure of theirs for the sake of keeping alive the spirit of OFA. The concept of ‘equitable representation’ promoted by the OFA has deviated into party controlled public and state administration, through massive ethnic employment of party affiliated individuals (Vankovska, 2007).

As seen from the elaborations above, and in line with Horowitz thinking, “power-sharing regimes may in fact serve to institutionalize ethnic cleavages, deepening rather than ameliorating social identities.” (as cited in Norris 2008, p.28). Deriving support mainly from within their own (ethnic) communities, the power-sharing system allows (ethnic) community leaders to manipulate their voters and enhance support by using populist rhetoric, playing on sentimental cards, and instilling politics of fear. This system is therefore disadvantageous to leaders who seek cross-ethnic support as in such societies, characterized by deep divisions, they would be labeled as ‘traitors’. Thus, “by failing to provide leaders with an effective electoral incentive for cross-group cooperation, Horowitz suggests that in the long-term proportional representation (PR) may serve to institutionalize and thereby reinforce ethnic tensions in society, generating greater political instability, rather than managing and accommodating communal differences” (Horowitz 2003, as cited in Norris 2008, p.28). Considering the case of Macedonia, we may then argue that the OFA has not proven successful in resolving inter-ethnic conflict causes, but in the contrary, it may have helped institutionalize them further, harming not only the inter-ethnic integration process but also the democratic processes in the country. As Schulz and Sorensen put it, agreements such as the OFA, if neglecting to deal appropriately with the four aspects²⁶, necessary in negotiating inter-ethnic conflicts, then they “risk freezing conditions around which conflicts can re-crystallize and re-emerge for years and even decades after the treaty was signed” (p.103).

In efforts to systematize the internal security issues that Macedonia faces since its birth, we may argue that they represent an intersection of the societal and political sector. At first sight, it seems that the conflict holds in its essence a political dispute, and therefore it should be cataloged into the political sector. From the Albanian viewpoint, the conflict reflects the resisted

²⁶Schulz and Sorensen (2020), argue that four dimensions are critical when analyzing and designing peace agreements which aim to resolve inter-ethnic conflicts: “the rationality structure of the local agents; ii) structural conditions (especially social and economic relations); iii) institutional conditions and relations; and, iv) the space for contestation in implementation enabled by the agreement (or the ‘level of vagueness’).” (p.80)

demands of the Albanian ethnic group about their political and legal status advancement. From the Macedonian viewpoint, ceding advanced rights to Albanians might empower them to a point that they become a threat for the territorial integrity of the state. Advanced and decentralized powers for Albanians evoke fear in Macedonians for potential secession of the western part of the state, where ethnic Albanians are mostly concentrated (Engstrom, 2002, pp.13-14). In Buzan et al. (1998) terms, any threat that may target the sovereignty of a state, yet uses non-military means, may be therefore considered as a threat within the political sector. Considering the Albanians' demand for power-sharing in Macedonia's case, one might argue that even if territorial sovereignty is not under direct threat, the idea of the nation-state surely is, and this, to some extent, might also mean loss of sovereignty, as long as the latter depends upon the existing organizational stability of that state (Buzan et al.1998, pp.141-144).

If the arguments above illustrate how internal conflicts in Macedonia are in essence political insecurities, then how can it be that the latter intertwine with societal insecurities? Macedonia's Albanians have sporadically and individually contested the state's and ethnic Macedonians' identity²⁷. These declarations, however, have been mainly considered as the unofficial stance of the Albanian political factor. As Engstrom (2002) puts it, Albanians in reality do not contest the ethnic identity of Macedonians, including its integral components, such as the name of the state and nation, language, history, religion, etc. However, their political demands towards a bi-national state,²⁸ if accepted, would consequently affect the Macedonian identity, by changing or modifying the political character of the state of Macedonia. As several authors argue (ex. Loomis, Davis and Broughton 2001, Engstrom 2002, Brunnbauer 2002) ethnic Macedonians' primacy over the state, is, partly related to identity threats it endures from external factors. As the Macedonian identity is threatened externally, this nation links closely its territory and internal legitimacy in controlling state institutions with the possibility of protecting and asserting its unique identity against external threats. Hence, to Macedonians, the preservation of the nation-state of the Macedonian people philosophy would be a way of securitizing their

²⁷See MP Ziadin Sela's (currently leader of the biggest Albanian opposition party) declaration denying the Macedonian identity. Read more in: <https://sitetel.com.mk/skandalozni-izjavi-na-partnerite-na-zaev-makedonskiot-identitet-ne-postoi-pred-100-godini-nemalo>

²⁸Although Albanian politicians officially claim that their ethnic demands are embedded in the OFA and do not go beyond this framework, their actions (ex. request for officialization of Albanian Language in all territory, Albanian Prime Minister, etc. unofficially indicate their purpose of reaching a status of a constituent nation in a bi-national state rather than a merely advanced minority status in a civic state.

identity not so much towards Albanians, as the second largest ethnic group, as much as towards the external states, which contest it.

The contestation of the authenticity of the Macedonian identity by the neighbors, is in a reverse way, also linked to the internal insecurities. Such contestation, indispensably stirs nationalism within Macedonians, as a tool to justify their being as a state-nation. In order for Macedonians to be able to defend their distinctive and authentic national identity towards external threats, they need to consolidate their nation internally, by submerging it into the idea of the state and consequently into the state institutions. However, the process of Macedonian national identity consolidation seems to be in direct contradiction to the Albanian endeavors to preserve and assert their distinctive identity. This may be further aggravated if the state tries to impose an overreaching (ethno-national) identity over other ethnic groups, especially if these two ethnic groups consider themselves to have mutually exclusive identities. According to Buzan et al. (1993) being mutually exclusive identities, the inter-ethnic rivalry would pose a real threat to the societal security. In looking for the sources of such ethnic incompatibility in Macedonia's case, we argue that the ethnic rivalry in this country may be caused by the distinct sources of Macedonian and Albanian nationalism. Thus, the Albanians' nationalism is part of a pan-Albanian nationalism, with its roots in the neighboring states (Albania and Kosovo). Consequently, we may argue that Albanian's source of nationalism doesn't allow compatibility between ethnic and national/state loyalty. They may either be loyal to their ethnic kin or to the state of citizenship. The Macedonian nationalism, on the other hand, sees the *state* as the protector of their identity, which is not enrooted elsewhere beyond the borders of Macedonia. Any modification to this source of Macedonians' identity may therefore become a threat to the latter (Brunnbauer, 2002). From here, we may derive that the two different sources which feed Macedonian and Albanian nationalism are a cause in itself of an assumed incompatibility between ethnic and national identity. And this incompatibility, in turn, may represent a source of insecurity for the country, both political and societal.

Hence, the conflict between Macedonians and Albanians represents an intersection of the political and societal sectors, and is characterized by a vertical competition, between the nation-state and a minority group. Granting Albanians the status of a constituent nation represents an issue which affects the perseverance and legitimacy of the Macedonian national identity (which is embedded in and protected by the state identity). In this conflict, therefore, it is not only

political referential objects, such as the state's unitary system or its sovereignty, in terms of ethnic Macedonians self-determination, that are being at stake. The Macedonian contested identity from other states is perceived as another existential threat that leads to the securitization of its national identity, as a referential object within the societal sector.

Macedonia-Neighbors security complex

Macedonia's disputes with its neighbors involve security issues which seem primarily societal in nature. However, through the attempts of merging social and political identity, by building a nation state where the state and society interests would converge, the societal security issues ultimately become political issues as well. Buzan et al. (1998, p.122) argue that society can react to societal threats in two ways. The first way is by moving the issue into the state agenda, hence by merging it with the political sector, and the second way is by avoiding the involvement of the state and resolving the issue(s) at the community (or non-state) level. Most societal issues, however, are dealt with at the state level, hence, the differentiation between the two sectors becomes difficult. Macedonia, I would argue, illustrates such cases.

The intertwining of the political and societal sectors in Macedonia vis-à-vis its neighbors, is reflected through the close connection of the state sovereignty with its (ethno) national identity. Besides Albania and Kosovo, Macedonia's relationship with the rest of its neighbors (Greece, Bulgaria, and Serbia), is defined by societal insecurities which arise as a result of its neighbors' contestation of the authenticity of vital elements of its ethno-national identity. The dispute with Greece is characterized by the latter's contestation of the Macedonian state and ethnic flag, depicting the Star of Vergina (now a long-time solved dispute), by negating the application of the term *Macedonian* to the majority ethnic group, and by opposing the constitutional name *Republic of Macedonia* (Stojanovski et. al 2014, Daskalovski 2017, Vangelov 2017, Kostoska 2018, Fidanovski 2018, Satanakis 2018). The conflict with Bulgaria targets another element of identity: the nation. Bulgaria doesn't recognize the distinctiveness of the Macedonian nation, including its language, history, etc. In Nancheva and Koneska's (2015) words "long-standing political animosities over interpretations of history framed Bulgaria as a potential threat to Macedonian national identity. Bulgaria's denying of the existence of a separate Macedonian language and historical tradition challenged the fundamental narrative upon which

Macedonian statehood was constructed” (p.234). The relationship with Serbia also reflects identity dispute. It concentrated around Serbia’s denial of the Autocephalous Macedonian Orthodox Church (Gjorgjevski 2017, Đukanović 2019). However, this dispute cannot be viewed merely as a religious issue. In Risteski’s (2009) opinion, religion in the Balkans has not served only as a spiritual dimension, but also as basis for the nations’ building of their political identities. And Macedonia was not an exception to this process. Since religion represents an identity marker of Macedonian’s ethno-nationality, more than a security issue on its own, the targeting of the religious autocephality by Serbia, represents a societal threat for Macedonia’s national (state) identity. The relations with Kosovo and Albania cannot be defined precisely in terms of societal security, in the sense that there isn’t a direct identity contestation by these two neighbors. The issues with Albania rather fall under the political sector, as the former does not agree with the ‘nation-state of the Macedonian people philosophy,’ claiming that Albanians constitute a large minority in Macedonia, hence their rights and political status should reflect their numbers accordingly. Albania’s interest in the issues of the Albanian minority in Macedonia, are considered by Macedonians as direct intrusion into its internal affairs, hence a threat to the state’s sovereignty. However, since the nation-state is a tool Macedonians use to legitimize their national identity, any external interference into the affairs of this state may be also considered as a threat to its national identity. Albania’s interference in Macedonia on behalf of the ethnic Albanians may also be perceived as a military threat, if we consider the armed conflict in 2001 as an outcome of this interference. According to Jenne (2004) if the minority group “receives some signals that its lobby state might be supportive, it radicalizes to obtain concessions from its host state even if the majority guarantees protection to the minority” (as cited in Koinova 2008, p.8). If we accept the assumption that Albania’s support to the Albanian ethnic group in Macedonia has encouraged them to radicalize and demand more rights, then we may also infer that the 2001 conflict outbreak was an indirectly impacted event by this support. In such case Albania’s and Macedonia’s relationship, besides being characterized by political security issues, was (at least in 2001) indirectly also characterized by military security issues.

The relationship with Kosovo, albeit a new state, reflects several security issues, across different sectors. Migration of Albanian Kosovars into Macedonia, mostly during the 1998-1999 Kosovo War as war refugees, may be considered as a source of competing identity. Kosovo immigrants into Macedonia hence could be considered as a direct identity threat (or societal

insecurity) by their potential to cause the *Albanization* of Macedonia. Another security issue related to Kosovo is the spillover effect, many authors argue, the Kosovo war had in Macedonia's 2001 armed conflict. The military threat coming from Kosovo was manifested in different forms, such as weapon smuggling, army recruits, conveyed combat skills and tactics etc. Moreover, these authors add to the spillover effect of Kosovo's war the inability of the international community to prevent conflict in Macedonia (Kim 2002, Daskalovski 2004, Chivvis, 2008, Ragaru 2008, Liotta 2003, Ilievski and Taleski 2010, Veljovski 2016, Schulz and Sorensen 2020, etc.) Connecting this conflict to the Kosovo Question and to the direct support by Kosovo's Liberation Army, the former becomes a political threat against the existing order in Macedonia which is not only induced by internal discontent but also influenced and supported externally. The conflicts around Macedonia's external bilateral relations also represent an intertwining of the political and societal sector. In the case of Kosovo, one could argue that the conflict also represented a military threat, if the spillover effect of the former's war into Macedonia's 2001 conflict is taken as a reliable argument.

Security threats in Macedonia have also come to travel across other sectors, such the economic one, considering the Greek economic embargo imposed on the Republic of Macedonia in 1994, and the economic sanctions against Yugoslavia, or even the military sector in the 90s, considering the surrounding conflicts characterizing the disintegration of Yugoslavia (especially in Bosnia and Kosovo) (Rubeli, 2000). However, the main security issues' essence lies in the identity issues. Thus, Macedonia's external (in)security dynamics may be catalogued well within the societal sector. However, the response towards the external societal threats involves the state, hence transferring these issues into the political sector. The dominance of the state by the Macedonian majority, in turn, facilitates the process of involving the state in response to external threats. The typical state response to these threats is illustrated by bilateral agreements, or even by internationally supervised processes of inter-state conflict resolution. Although Buzan et al. (1998) admit that identity may consist of objective elements such as language or location, it is still a constructive concept. It is a political and personal choice of a group to identify with certain community, therefore a threat to such identity is consequently a threat to what is perceived as 'we'. In case of identity conflict then, the authors (Buzan et al., 1998, pp.121-122) predict two ways of reaction. The first way is the redefinition of the identity of a unit (state), thus differentiating it from the 'others', as the most adequate security strategy. However, if the

identity is so stable, or even a pillar of a nation's survival, then the best security strategy is to assert this stability in relation to others, which is indeed the second way of reaction.

Macedonia-the EU security complex

Buzan and Weaver (2003) argue that the Balkans's region, within which Macedonia is located, cannot be considered as a separate RSC, since its developments did not take place in an isolated fashion. The internationalization of Macedonia's issue(s) and the level of international involvement in it may be an example which illustrates the above argument. The fact that external actors exert their influence on the formation of events in the Balkans, causes the latter to be considered as part of EU-Europe RSC. Such involvement by external actors, besides deriving from their perception of the Balkans as 'part of us', or as 'Europeans', is also demanded and expected by the Balkan's local actors. The opening of an EU perspective for the Balkan countries, including Macedonia, would become a signal of Europe's perception of the Balkans as part of the European RSC. The question then is where does Macedonia stand in relation to EU-Europe as a world region, and how do its security issues interact with the latter? In order to answer these questions, an overview of the main security patterns within EU-Europe region will be provided below.

Analyzing the security patterns within the Europe of post-Cold War period, Buzan (2003) argues that two dominant issues became almost the main organizing principles of this region. The first issue was the determination to avoid returning to the old Europe and balance of powers, which had caused devastating wars. The result of this determination brought about the project of integration, as the utmost solution. The second issue, stood in contradiction to the first, as it maintained that integration would threaten national identity. In relation to the first issue, it is precisely the Balkans, the "Europe's ghost reminding it of the risks of war" (p.357). Furthermore, during the 90s, the ethnic conflicts, typical for the Balkans, would become a security issue for Europe due to their possibility of dragging the big powers into opposing sides of the conflict and reinstalling power politics among main EU states. These conflicts are therefore related to the calculations of the EU integration/fragmentation effects. In other words, EU integration, becomes a security dimension which would prevent the return of Europe to the infamous past, by disabling wars and power balancing. To EU, whereas the German-French relationship represents the conflicting past of Europe, acting against conflicts, such as in Bosnia

or Kosovo, represents the way of defending a peaceful future. Thus, EU integration, according to Buzan, represents a security strategy more so for the states with concrete and realistic EU membership perspective, such as Hungary at the beginning of the 2000s (and what would be most of the Balkan states today). This is so, since the integration mechanism within such states may help downplay other security issues, such as minority issues, until the state reaches a stronger position (as an EU member) before reopening them. Furthermore, EU integration enables the change of identity, hence old security issues stop being security issues any longer (2003, pp.364-365). Would this be true in the case of Macedonia then? Would EU integration help relativize societal and political insecurities by overlaying its identity over the small nation-state and its ethnic groups? If yes, then would it affect the internal insecurities the same as the external ones?

As opposed to the passive role the EU had played in the previous Balkan crises, in the armed conflict which broke in 2001 between ethnic Macedonians and Albanians, the EU decided, head on, to take the lead in mediating and bringing the fighting parties to an agreement. During this time, EU had already shown its determination to become involved as an external actor in the Republic of Macedonia, as it had signed the Stabilization and Association Pact with the latter in 2001. By opening the path to the Republic of Macedonia's EU membership, Europe signaled the attitude towards the Republic of Macedonia as 'part of us'. Six months into the conflict, the EU (and USA) managed to close the 2001 ethnic crisis, by bringing the two sides on the same table, and having them sign the so called Ohrid Framework Agreement, drafted on the basis of EU's legal expert, Robert Badinter. The EU would continue to remain present in this country in the aftermath of the conflict, and in 2005 it would advance the Republic of Macedonia's position towards the EU by granting it the candidate member status in 2005 (Dobbins et al., 2008, p.51). Macedonia-EU relationship may be considered as complex which generates both security and insecurity issues for the former. If seen from the domestic perspective, becoming an EU member may represent a mechanism for this country to overcome its internal insecurities. This process is best explained by Waever and Kelstrup, through their suggestion for a European overreaching identity. Using integration as an analytical tool, they argue that by developing an overreaching split identity, along *cultural* and *administrative* lines, (as cited in Tsai 1993, p.615) the EU would be addressing the internal insecurities that are of societal character in member states, or even in candidate states, such as Macedonia. The EU

would address the fear of national identity loss by enabling the nation to preserve its cultural identity and all that it entails, such as social welfare and education, and at the same time, by ensuring the representation of the member states' interests by giving the European Community state-like institutions. In this way the "nation becomes a cultural community, without political or economic claims to sovereignty" (p.615). This approach would eliminate the core of the inter-ethnic conflict, which results from competition over state institutions' control and domination. In this perspective, then we may argue that EU integration represents a mechanism for resolving societal and political insecurities in the sense of vertical competition. The overlaying EU identity should play almost the same role in resolving Macedonia's external societal and political insecurities. Membership into the EU would relativize national identity, which in turn, is the core dispute between Macedonia and its neighbors; (the same case has occurred during Yugoslavia's integration, when the Macedonian Question remained dormant, until Yugoslavia dissolved). However, this scenario may be impossible for two reasons. The first one is related to the uncertainty of the EU identity development, since current evidence shows that national identity in much older EU member states is still much stronger than the EU one (France, Great Britain, etc.). Also, the EU as a unique organization, passes through many crises, such as rise of populism and strengthening of national identity to the detriment of a potential EU identity. But even if the EU would consolidate its identity and overlay it over the existing national identities of member-states, Macedonia's case still would not fit into the latter category. This is so, due to the fact that Macedonia, before it is able to embrace an EU identity and thus eliminate national-identity issues with its neighbors, is stalled from the process of becoming a full EU member, precisely because of these external factors. Two out of the five neighbors are already EU members, and out of the two, Greece has played the most decisive role in impeding Macedonia's path to full integration, before this state agrees to make national identity changes, such as changing its name, citizenship, etc. Hence, the EU itself, through Greece's veto, becomes a threat to Macedonia's societal and political security. Remaining stalled from EU integration would not only flare up internal inter-ethnic tensions, due to lost EU perspective, but would also make the isolated country more vulnerable towards the neighbors it is in conflict with, because of their superior international position. On the other hand, succumbing to external demands to unblock the EU path may serve as a tool of resolving the above mentioned societal and political threats. However, it may also represent a threat for a forever lost or modified national identity of the

majority ethnic group, and along with it, of the state it predominantly controls. The state's response towards these societal and political threats, would depend upon the perception of where its most vital security lies: as long as it lies in preserving its national identity, it would resist any external pressures for identity changes, and as long as it lies in the *Europeanness* and the overlaying identity it may generate, it would succumb to external pressures, as the only way for unblocking that path.

The presented theoretical framework serves as a structure whose primary function is to orient the thesis from the problem formulation phase, to the findings' analyses, and discussion and conclusion. However, due to the fact that this thesis is mainly explorative in nature, and includes a combination of the deductive and inductive approach, it indicates that the theoretical framework will serve more as a guide than as a framework which is borrowed and applied in the data collection and their analysis process. Thus, the empirical part of the thesis would not be constrained by the theoretical framework; it will rather be mainly data-driven, from an inside-out perspective of the participants in the research. The empirical chapter of this dissertation may, hence, serve for the comparison and contrasting with the theories laid in this chapter, perhaps identifying or expanding on a new theoretical approach.

CHAPTER 5. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

Methodology

Qualitative Research

The central idea which motivated this research was to explore Macedonia's foreign policy dynamics and external constraints, and whether they produce an effect over the inter-ethnic relations. Considering the obstacles the country faces, in its struggle to achieve the foreign policy goals, my focus narrowed down on the external factors, mainly exposed through the bilateral issues Macedonia has with its neighbors. Hence, as elaborated in greater detail in chapter one, this research developed two aims. The first aim was to explore the influence of external pressures over Macedonia's foreign policy objectives and its response, while the second was to explore how these pressures, directly or indirectly, affect the inter-ethnic relations of the country.

The initial plan regarding the research methodology, was to adopt a 'mixed method' approach to the research, where both qualitative and quantitative methods would be used when collecting the data. However, due to the limited possibility to launch a survey, not least because of financial constraints, I abandoned the quantitative methods. As the research developed further, I instead focused solely on the qualitative methods, which seemed much more suitable in serving the purpose of this study. As the research questions suggest, this work attempts to carry out an in-depth analysis, based on perceptions, opinions, experiences, actions, etc., of personalities who have been involved in the foreign and domestic policy realm either as direct decision-makers, or as experts, opinion makers, etc. in Macedonia's society. "Qualitative research claims to describe life worlds 'from the inside out', from the point of view of the people who participate. By doing so, it seeks to contribute to a better understanding of social realities and to draw attention to processes, meaning patterns and structural features" (Flick, Kardorff, and Steinke, 2004, p.3). Whereas quantitative methods, such as surveys or questionnaires, would provide a more generalized picture of the social realities in relation to the research questions, they would prove insufficient for providing an in-depth understanding and perspective of individuals who are involved with the phenomena being researched. Also, there are enough secondary studies of public opinion polls (Klekovski 2013, Bliznakovski and Popovikj 2015, Damjanovski 2016, Klekovski 2016, Klekovski et al. 2018, IRI 2018, IPRS 2018, etc.) on the key issues this thesis deals with, hence additional quantitative data would not represent any authentic contribution. Furthermore, the plan of conducting my own survey resulted costly and even methodologically challenging, not least due to census related issues.

Although qualitative methods of data collection are often criticized for not being representative of a larger population, due to the small samples it uses, the "epistemological

principle of qualitative research is the understanding of complex relationships rather than explanation by isolation of a single relationship, such as cause and effect” (Flick, Kardorff, and Steinke, 2004, p.8). By adopting a qualitative research methodology for data collection, this research intends to project itself as “exploratory, fluid and flexible, data-driven and context sensitive” (Mason, 2002, p.24). The research is exploratory in nature as it aims to explore the interaction between foreign policy and inter-ethnic relations, without *a priori* fixed idea or structure. Hence, a case study, as a research strategy, seems as an appropriate tool which supports the exploratory motives of this study (Yin, 1984, p.3). Nonetheless, the case study does not serve only as an exploratory strategy. In this research, the case study serves as a descriptive and explanatory strategy as well, in an attempt to answer the research questions in a given specific context. Considering the research questions, this research encompasses a case study on Macedonia’s foreign policy developments and their influence over inter-ethnic relations. The aim of conducting a study on the case of Macedonia is to explore foreign policy relations and behavior within a multi-ethnic context, where interactions between the two specters and their reciprocal influences, when exposed to external pressures are to be observed and studied.

Although this research is initially exploratory in nature, it still presents existing theories on foreign policy and security of small states and theories on national and international integration. The purpose of using these theories is to evaluate whether they offer an explanation on the relationship between international and national integration in multi-ethnic states, after being compared to the empirical case study. Besides the theoretical method, driven by the two research questions, this research uses the inductive approach as well. This approach is “bottom-up, using the participants’ views to build broader themes and generate a theory interconnecting the themes” (Creswell and Clark, 2007, p.23). Thus, the focus of this research is inductive, as it aims to develop an understanding or generate broader themes on the interaction of foreign and national integration from the views of individuals.

Semi structured interview

The use of qualitative methods for data collection implies the fact that the generated data is expected to be in the form of words rather than figures. Hence, there is a wide array of methods

used in qualitative methodology, which use different sources for collection of data. It is thought that *people* are the most frequently used source for data collection in quantitative research. Nevertheless, there are other types of data sources such as texts, settings, organizations and institutions, objects, events, etc. Among the most well-known methods in qualitative research are focus groups, interviews, participant observations, etc. Out of all these methods, interviews are by far the most widely used. Interviews, usually referred to as ‘qualitative interviews’, can be in-depth, semi-structured, or loosely structured (Mason, 2002, p.65).

This research uses ‘qualitative interviews’ as the main empirical base. As such, this method of data collection in this research has several characteristics which are common for most interviews. One of the characteristics is that they are based on interactively exchanged dialogue, meaning that the interviews have developed as a face-to-face conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee. Another feature is that the interviews are thematic or topic-centered, where several topics or issues have purposefully been covered by the questions. A third feature is the contextual element, where relevant contexts are brought into focus with an aim of extracting a situated or context-based knowledge (Mason, 2002, p.62).

The form of these interviews is semi-structured, which involves key issues, reflected or formulated into questions. The main characteristic of these interviews is that it consists of certain structure or method, however, it is also flexible in the manner the interview is conducted (Gibson and Brown, 2009, p.87). So, the interviews of this research may be considered as semi-controlled, meaning that a certain guide, in the form of questions has been used, in order to maintain the focus on the topics or issues needed to cover. This decision to engage with some structured topics, in a deductive manner, derived from some of my pre-theoretical understanding of the key issues of this research. Hence, the questions resulted as standardized, with a specific order, which hasn’t been necessarily followed in the strict sense of the word. But at the same time, I used an inductive approach, by employing an open-ended interview method, in order to give space for development and exploration of the existing theories. “This kind of interview collects detailed information in a style that is somewhat conversational” (Harrell and Bradely, 2009, p.27), enabling a more fluid interaction between the researcher and interviewee. In this fashion, initial questions have been complemented with follow-up questions, whenever considered as necessary for further clarification, elaboration, or connection to other matters of relevance. Also, follow-up questions have been used in order to diminish inconsistencies, to

verify the responses, and to ensure that the answers reflect the independent view of the respondents, and not an imposed view by the interviewer.

Planning and conducting the interviews

When planning out the interviews, the topic of the research, as well as the research question, suggested a type of sampling known as purposive or purposeful sampling. Patton explains that the “purposeful sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources” (as cited in Palinkas et al., 2013). Taking into account the specificity of foreign policy, as a dimension of policy making which involves only a limited number of individuals, who actively engage or hold knowledge of its dynamics, I decided to select the interviewees purposefully, as other forms of sample selections, were unfit for the purposes of this research. However, unlike other types of selection, such as probabilistic or random sampling, purposeful sampling has a potential for bias, as the selection is done based on the prior knowledge of the researcher about the respondents and their knowledge or experience with the researched phenomenon. Another limitation is the inability to ensure generalizability of the results as the sample is much smaller than random or other types of sampling. Nevertheless, when sampling for the purposes of this research, I tried to minimize a potential bias by trying to identify and select all cases (interviewees) that meet the predetermined criteria, set as important at the planning phase of the interview.

Despite the initial plan to conduct fifteen to twenty interviews, the inaccessibility of the individuals I requested interviews from, caused the number of total interviewees to drop to thirteen. I selected interviewees who possessed of adequate knowledge or experience in relation to the phenomena being researched. The interviewees were approached based on a prior knowledge about their involvement and expertise in the foreign policy and inter-ethnic issues. Some of the interviewees were approached based on my personal contacts, and others based on recommendations from other interviewees. By participating in the Foreign Policy Forum, organized by the Foundation “Friedrich Ebert” in cooperation with the Institute “Progress”, the Diplomatic club, the Faculty of Law “Justinian I” of Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, the University American College and University of South East European University, I gained the

initial idea of conducting interviews and selecting interviewees. When drafting the list of interviewees, I focused on two most relevant categories of individuals in relation to my research questions. I decided to approach politicians of the most relevant parties in the country, with the intention of receiving their views in the role of direct policy makers or executors in the past or current governments. Besides active politicians, I also approached non-political actors, such as academicians or representatives of research institutes, who have academic knowledge but may have also had an experience in the foreign policy realm. When making the purposive selection, I kept into account to have a sample with balanced ethnic and party representation.

A greater number of interviewees in the list consists of politicians, a category of individuals responsible for policy making and execution. In order to provide a balanced representation of policy making in Macedonia, I decided to include politicians of the most relevant political parties in the country, while keeping into consideration their experience and background in the field of foreign policy. Hence, I carried out interviews with three individuals who represent the Macedonian party in government, SDSM. The first respondent, Stevo Pendarovski, was interviewed in the role of the National Coordinator for preparing Macedonia to join NATO, while the second respondent, Radmila Sekerinska, was interviewed in the role of the current Minister of Defense. I also interviewed Dane Taleski, in the role of the Foreign Policy Adviser to the Prime Minister. Besides SDSM representatives, I interviewed two political representatives of the Macedonian oppositional party, VMRO. The two current Members of Parliament served as Foreign Ministers during the VMRO led government. Antonio Milosovski served as Foreign Minister from 2006 to 2011, while Nikola Poposki from 2011 to 2017. Besides the two most relevant Macedonian political parties, I interviewed one representative from three most relevant Albanian political parties. Hence, I interviewed Teuta Arifi, current Mayor and Former Vice Prime Minister for European Affairs, as the DUI representative, currently in coalition government with SDSM. Besides DUI representative, I interviewed two representatives of two Albanian opposition parties. Hence, I selected Afrim Gashi, a current Member of Parliament, who is a member of the oppositional Besa party, and Arta Toci, a former Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, and member of the oppositional Alliance for Albanians.

Besides active politicians, I also interviewed individuals from the academic and research institutions, who contain adequate knowledge in political science, foreign policy, diplomacy and international relations. Some of them have participated directly in the foreign policy service of

the country in the past. In this group is Blerim Reka, a current university professor and former Head of mission to the EU, Risto Nikovski a former diplomat with illustrious diplomatic career, Veli Kreci, a current university professor and former member of the Security Council of the Republic of Macedonia, Zhidas Daskalovski, a university professor and member of the executive board of the Center for Research and Policy Making, and Marko Trosanovski head of a research institute, namely the Institute for Democracy Societas Civilis -Skopje.

As mentioned above, the nature of the interview was a focused semi structured interview, where questions covered topics relevant to the research questions, while allowing flexibility for respondents when presenting their views. Although there was a total number of ten questions, during most interviews, follow-up questions arose when further clarification or elaboration was needed. Hence, many interviews lasted in a time range from 30 to 45 minutes, with some of them took even a longer time. Most of the interviews were conducted verbally and face to face, where respondents answered to questions while the conversation was recorded using a phone device. Fewer respondents, however, due to their specific circumstances, asked for the interview to be carried out in a written form, hence, they provided me with written answers to the questions I sent via email. The interviews were conducted in three languages, Macedonian, Albanian, or English, depending on the preference of the interviewees. Most of the interviews were conducted in Skopje, in different institutional environments, such as the Parliament, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and research institutes, whereas some interviews were conducted in Tetovo in the South East European University environment. The time of conducting the interviews ranges from December 2017 to June 2018. The appointment of interviews depended on the convenience of the respondents.

Limitation of the study

Considering the qualitative nature of this study, which relies mainly on an inductive approach, one of its main disadvantages is about the generalizability of the findings. “Smaller sample size raises the issue of generalizability to the whole population of the research” (Harry & Lipsky, 2014). Considering the small number of population that this research’s sample consists, the findings cannot be extended to the whole population. Nevertheless, the intention of using this

research methodology hasn't been to provide statistical accuracy but to provide an understanding with thorough and in-depth analysis of participants' opinions, feelings, and experiences, related to the researched phenomena in the specific context of Macedonia's society, and thereafter to interpret meanings and generate ideas in response to the research questions. Another issue which affects the generalizability of this research relates to the demographic composition of the country where the research is conducted. Despite the multi-ethnic structure of the country, where ethnic Macedonians consist of 64 percent, ethnic Albanians 25 percent, ethnic Turks of 3.9 percent, Roma of 2.7 percent, Serbs of 1.8 percent, Bosnians of 0.8 percent, Vlachs of 0.5 percent, and others of 1 percent (approximate percentages deriving from the State Statistical Office, 2002, p.34²⁹) the research focuses only on the two biggest ethnic groups, the ethnic Macedonians majority and ethnic Albanians biggest minority. The inclusion of all ethnic groups in the research goes beyond the scope of possibility and interest in the given research structure. Also, the significantly smaller percentages of the other ethnic groups make their inclusion into the methodology too difficult. The inaccessibility of several selected respondents or their refusal to participate in the study may also be considered as a limitation which deprives the study from extracting richer and multi-faceted data. More than a dozen of individuals (politicians of major political parties, academicians, institute researchers, etc.), planned to be interviewed in this research were either inaccessible (did not respond to my several requests for an interview), or declined the invitation for an interview for different reasons.

Analyzing Data

Transcription and translation of the recorded interviews are the following step in the methodology of the research. The purpose of transcripts is to "make fleeting conversational behavior permanently available on paper for scientific analysis" (Kowall and O'Connell, 2004, p.248). Transcriptions serve as basis for further analysis of the data, hence the process was carried out meticulously, paying attention to every word, pause, sigh, and other elements which may convey a meaning. Transcriptions usually followed immediately after the interviews, while the conversations were still fresh in my memory, in order to put on paper as accurately as

²⁹For lack of an updated and more accurate census, I must refer to the last official census, conducted in 2002. The 15-year delay in conducting another proper census, however, renders the existing official census as less reliable and accurate of the current population living in Macedonia.

possible the ideas the respondents expressed orally. In regard to the written interviews, there was no need of transcription, but only of translation. Verbal and written interviews, after being organized on paper, were translated from Macedonian or Albanian into English, as it is the working language of this research.

The following step in the methodology of the research was the analysis of the interview content. Considering it as the most appropriate tool, I decided to use *thematic analysis* as a method of analyzing qualitative data. According to the theoretical framework of Braun and Clark “thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (2006, p.6). Although in qualitative research there are no fixed or ideal methods of analysis, I chose thematic analysis as it provides insightful data in answering the research questions, while “seeking to describe patterns across the qualitative data” (Braun and Clark, 2006, p.7). However, as opposed the other analytical methods, such as the grounded theory or discourse analysis, thematic analysis is not theory bounded, hence allowing a “more accessible form of analysis.” (Braun and Clark, 2006, p.9) Thematic analysis has facilitated the process of analyzing the interviews by allowing me to gain data driven perspectives by using an inductive approach, while being able to check for the consistency of the data with the research questions throughout the process.

When using thematic analysis “the aim is to note, for every single interview transcript, the topics that occur and individual aspects of these which can be related to the context of the research questions” (Shmidt, 2004, p.254). The main aim of thematic analysis is to draw similarities and differences in the data set, as well as to look for and examine potential relationships (Gibson and Brown, 2009, p.128). Out of these comparisons or contrasts, several themes may emerge. “A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun and Clark, 2006, p.10). When deciding about a potential theme, frequency of its appearance across the data set is not the only criterion. The relevance of a theme is another important factor which is based on the judgement of the researcher, who may consider that it captures important aspects in relation to the research questions, despite the quantity of evidence that exists in the data set.

Before the generation of themes, the data analysis went through several phases. These phases are not unique to this type of method and may apply to other qualitative methods as well.

The main phases which a researcher goes through are familiarization with the content of the data, search for patterns and generation of initial codes, and finally emergence of themes. The process of transcribing and translating of the interviews helped me become familiar with the contents of each respondent, identify their style, and understand their latent meanings. Due to these elements of the transcription phase, many researchers consider it as “a key phase of data analysis within interpretative qualitative methodology” (Bird, 2005, p.227). But, the fact that I personally conducted all the interviews, allowed me to gain knowledge and think of analytical aspects prior to their transcription. However, this does not mean that it was unnecessary to reread the written interviews several other times after being transcribed. As it happened many times, my understating of the data changed from the point of interviewing to that of transcription. In this phase, patterns of thought and initial coding ideas began to emerge.

The coding process in this research began with the process of familiarization of the data. Codes refer to “the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon” (Boyatzis, 1998, p.63). Initial codes and concepts were jotted down on paper, since the beginning of the data analysis. The coding process was carried out manually, where pens, post-it notes and highlighters, were used to identity and codify concepts. The process of coding was not linear in this research as I found necessary to move back and forth across the data set to verify the generated codes. Although while coding, I had the research questions in my mind, the coding process was generally data-driven, where patterns emerging from the data set were codified as narrower concepts which then could evolve into broader themes. The codes were matched up with the extracts that serve as evidence for the code. It also ensured that all extracts are carefully examined and used. The approach was the coding of as many different patterns or ideas, regardless if they were inconsistent or would not fit with a certain theme or with the research questions. Many of these codes, which reflected common concepts, were then collated together.

The next phase and most crucial in the research process, diverts the attention from a narrow to a broader level. Here, codes are analyzed and combined to manifest a potential theme. “A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun and Clark, 2006, p.10). During this phase, I manually wrote down potential themes and added the matching codes besides every theme. In the mean-time, I realized that there were a few codes which do not

fit with any of the generated themes, and tried to combine them in another, new, theme, or if considered unfit, I discarded them. The initial generation process consisted of about fifteen themes. While reviewing the themes, I realized that some themes do not consist of sufficient evidence and therefore I removed them altogether. Some themes resembled with one another and there was a possibility to combine them into a single theme. During the process of reviewing the themes, I also changed or modified the titles given to each theme during the initial phase of generating them. While mapping out the themes, I had in mind two particular aspects. On one hand, I paid attention to the validity of the themes in relation to the research questions. On the other hand, I also considered the ‘accurate representation’ of each theme, by assessing whether each theme is supported accurately by the evidence in the data set.

In the final phase, or when producing the analysis report, I kept into account the necessity of providing enough evidence for each theme. Hence, data extracts, which I considered as significant in relation to the theme, are provided in each theme’s analysis, along with the citation of the author. Extracts are accompanied with an analytical narrative, which analyses the positions of the respondents, making arguments in relation to the research questions.

Ethical considerations

The first and most important consideration while conducting the empirical part of this research, was ensuring respect for the persons who acted as interview subjects. As a researcher, I tried to express this value to the respondents in several manners. First, when approaching a respondent with a request for an interview, I informed the respondent maximally about the purpose of the request. Hence, I explained to the respondent about the nature of the research I am conducting, methods, and possible uses of it in the future. The interviewees were informed about the topic of the thesis, as approved by the Teaching-Scientific Council of the Philosophical Faculty at Ss. Cyril and Methodius University. They were also familiarized with the nature of questions of the interview before the interview was conducted and the approximate time an interview might last. The respondents were assured that the data provided by the interviews are going to be used for writing a dissertational thesis, with the purpose of obtaining a Ph.D. degree in International Relations and Conflict Management. Secondly, I requested a consent by the respondents of my request, after explaining thoroughly the purpose of the interview. Hence, all respondents, fully aware of the process of the interview, gave voluntary consent for giving an interview at a time

and place of their convenience, with the right to withdraw and cease their participation from the interview at any time they wish.

Due to the nature of the research itself, the selected participants are mostly public figures who play or are significantly involved with foreign policy affairs or domestic politics. Therefore, the rule of anonymity in this case is inapplicable. Hence, the names and positions of the participants are presented along with the citation of their speech. The respondents have been informed and have given consent for their conversations to be cited for the purposes of the research. In respect to the contributions of the participants, I have endeavored to portray their views and claims in the most effective way, by citing the data truthfully and accurately.

CHAPTER 6. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

As described in the previous chapter, the selected methodology for data processing of this research is known as thematic analysis. Although thematic analysis in minimal form organizes and describes the data set, it often goes beyond a mere description, by “interpreting various aspect of the research topic” (as cited in Selvam and Collicutt, 2012, p.88). Hence, “thematic analysis can be a method which works both to reflect reality, and to unpick or unravel the surface of reality” (as cited in Braun and Clark, 2006, p.9). Thematic analysis may be ‘inductive’, ‘theoretical’ or both. The inductive approach produces data-driven themes, which the researcher

doesn't try to fit into pre-existing coding frame, or has no research question in his/her mind prior to formulating the themes. The theoretical approach, on the other hand, presents an approach which is driven by the interest of the researcher over some specific analytical aspect. Based on this approach, the coding process takes place according to the specific research questions, while according to the inductive approach, the research questions may emerge and evolve during the coding process itself (Braun and Clark, 2006, p.12). This research has implemented both approaches. The theoretical approach has helped the process of data collection and analysis, through the two research questions, determined at the beginning of the research. The two research questions have determined the content of the interview questions, the follow-up of the conversations, as well as the data processing, from the data organization as the first phase to the generation of themes as the final phase. However, the research, especially the empirical process, is also characterized by an inductive approach. The semi-structured form of interviews allowed follow up questions and answers which led to the rise of data-driven concepts, which then evolved into themes. Hence, the ten themes, which emerged from the data set are a result of combined approaches, where the research questions guided the process and maintained focus while the semi-structured method allowed the appearance of data-driven evidence which doesn't necessarily link directly to the research questions, but still enriches the wider spectrum of the researched phenomena. The ten questions (provided in the appendix) were formulated in correlation with the two research questions, and captured several aspects of foreign policy and inter-ethnic relations in Macedonia in the period 1991-2018. The two research questions guided not only the process of data collection, but also the process of formulation, analysis, and order of the themes in the research. Ten themes emerged from this empirical research, and they are all a product of a long and attentive process of thematic coding. The titles try to capture multi-faceted aspects each theme aims to reflect. The titles have emerged as a result of personal inspiration from the gathered empirical data and the meanings they have produced. Thus, some thematic titles are direct, uncovering unambiguous meanings treated in a particular theme, while some others are metaphoric or more figurative, which convey a clearer meaning only when elaborated further. The ten themes are:

Theme 1: Unwavering strategic goals

Theme 2: The southern neighbour, an inhibitor of the Euro Atlantic aspirations

Theme 3: Neighbours who cross the fence

Theme 4: Foreign policy, a victim of faulty domestic policy

Theme 5: Foreign policy, a monopoly of a single ethnic group

Theme 6: Two ethnicities divided by EU and NATO

Theme 7: EU and NATO, a guarantee for domestic stability

Theme 8: Compromise, a pathway to accomplishment

Theme 9: Vital decisions require collective responsibility

Theme 10: Time is now

The order of the generated themes follows the order of the research questions, when they stand independently from one another. But there are also several overlapping themes, which provide insightful evidence for both research questions. I have drawn a table (shown below) which indicates which themes correspond with each or both research questions.

First research question themes:

R.Q. 1: In what ways have external pressures influenced inter-ethnic relations in Macedonia?

Theme 1: Unwavering strategic goals

Theme 2: The southern neighbour, an inhibitor of the Euro-Atlantic aspirations

Theme 4: Foreign policy, a victim of faulty domestic policy

Second research question themes:

R.Q. 2: In what ways have external pressures influenced inter-ethnic relations in Macedonia?

Theme 6: Two ethnicities divided by EU and NATO

Theme 7: EU and NATO, a guarantee for domestic stability

Overlapping research questions themes:

R.Q. 1 and 2: In what ways have external pressures influenced foreign policy objectives and inter-ethnic relations in Macedonia?

Theme 3: Neighbours who cross the fence

Theme 5: Foreign policy, a monopoly of a single ethnic group

Theme 8: Compromise, a pathway to accomplishment

Theme 9: Vital decisions require collective responsibility

Theme 10: Time is now

In continuation of this chapter, I will provide analytical elaborations for each theme separately, while discussing it in relation with the research question(s). Themes will be analysed in their numerical order, while their relation to the first, second or both research questions will be duly explained. Analytical discussions will be supported by direct quotations extracted from the interviews realized for the purpose of this study.

Theme 1: Unwavering strategic goals

The first theme emerges as an answer to the first research question as it defines clearly the foreign policy objectives of the state, which is the object of the first research question. As the first research question attempts to find out how external pressures influence the foreign policy objectives of the state, this theme annuls any dilemmas that may have existed prior to data collection, regarding the shift of foreign policy objectives due to external pressures, which play a conditional role over the former. Prior to the interviews, I have been aware of existing voices and declarations of public and political figures, in support of a shift or revision of Macedonia's current foreign policy objectives, proposing an alternative integration agenda to that of EU and NATO membership, or adopting a so called multi-vectoral foreign policy. The advocates of this position have justified their stance by claiming that the current objectives are not worth of succumbing to external demands made by the neighbouring states. Nevertheless, the data gathered from the sample of interviewees suggest otherwise. All respondents have directly or indirectly established the Euro-Atlantic integration agenda as the main foreign policy goal of the state, and moreover as the strategic orientation of the state. The declarations of the respondents about EU and NATO integration are characterized by a political will for enhancing the country's security and prosperity through membership in these two organizations. The included term *unwavering* in this theme illustrates well the solidity of the respondents' attitude regarding the foreign policy objectives of the state. A few quotations below illustrate the clarity and unequivocal stance of the respondents in regard to the foreign policy objectives:

“Foreign policy may be assessed by the fulfilment of two main strategic goals, membership in EU and NATO...”

Marko Trosanovski

“...These priorities are accession to the EU and NATO...”

Zhidas Daskalovski

“...the general foreign policy priorities of Macedonia which as you know are the EU membership, NATO membership...”

Veli Kreci

It is significant to point out that this theme reflects a unity in attitudes regardless of political or ethnic polarization. Hence, respondents of the Macedonian ruling SDSM show no difference from those of oppositional VMRO, and so do respondents of Albanian ruling DUI in relation to oppositional BESA and Alliance for Albanians. The citation extracts below illustrate the unified stances of the respondents, despite political orientations or ruling positions:

“Membership in EU and NATO are the basic postulates of action in Macedonia’s diplomacy.”

Radmila Sekerinska

“Macedonia has a strategic goal, a long-term goal. In that context, we have the most general and widest consensus, national and political, about membership into EU and NATO alliance.”

Nikola Poposki

“...we know that Macedonia has had clear objectives towards Euro-Atlantic integrations”

Arta Toci

Similarity of attitudes are perceived across inter-ethnic respondents as well. Hence both respondents of Macedonian and of Albanian ethnic background hold affirmative views regarding the Euro-Atlantic foreign policy objectives of the state. Below are shown two extracts of a Macedonian (Dane Taleski) and Albanian (Teuta Arifi) respondent, which illustrate the unity of their stances:

“The strategic and long-term goals of the foreign policy of the Republic of Macedonia are full-fledged EU and NATO membership for Macedonia,”

Teuta Arifi

“Let’s define first what are the foreign policy objectives. They are the membership of EU and NATO.”

Dane Taleski

As the quotes above indicate, there is a consensus on the EU and NATO integration agenda which reflects both inter-ethnic and inter-party harmony. And when asked about other priorities of Macedonia’s foreign policy, some of them also pointed to the economic aspect: *“Surely a greater focus should be on the economic promotion, which would become the key diplomatic occupation, after membership in NATO, and in parallel with the EU accession process”* (Nikola Poposki). Others add more factors that are related with the domestic factors such as *“democratization, and rule of law, vibrant civil society, and market economy”* (Zhidas Daskalovski). Hence, as respondents clarify that the most important aspect of Macedonia’s foreign policy is EU and NATO integration, some of them do not neglect to mention other important aspects such as strengthening the economy, rule of law, and democracy, as mechanisms which should develop in parallel with the international integration process and even help accelerate the latter. Since most interviews have been carried out during the transition period of governments (2016-2017), from VMRO, which ruled since 2006, to SDSM which seized power only in May 2017, it is interesting to note that despite the different approaches of the two governments towards the external pressures and obstructions to the EU and NATO agenda, the foreign policy preferences or orientation hasn’t changed or diversified.

Besides establishing the foreign policy objectives in a direct way, this theme holds an implied meaning as well. Within an ethnically divided society, where inter-ethnic integration is a slow and difficult process, and the economic conditions disadvantageous, this theme presents a common vision around which both ethnic groups are brought together. Through the declared positions, an inference may be made that foreign policy serves as the most unifying dimension of policy between ethnic groups.

Another interesting dimension of analysis is the support both organizations, NATO and EU, enjoy equally according to the respondents' discourse. Whereas in the public opinion there are voices which draw a distinction between the two organizations, supporting integrations into the EU but not into NATO, the findings of this research do not reflect such distinction. Both EU and NATO are mentioned jointly by the interviewees whenever they refer to the foreign policy objectives. The quotations above illustrate that the undistinctive support derives from all major parties and both ethnicities. This position finds support in several surveys conducted by different institutions, which reflect high support among Macedonia's citizens for both organizations. In a survey conducted by the International Republican Institute, 77% of population supports NATO integration and 83% supports EU integration (IRI, 2018). Similarly, in a survey conducted by Macedonian Center for International Cooperation, 79,9% of population supports NATO and 80.4% supports EU integration (MCIC, 2018, p.16).

Theme 2: The southern neighbour, an inhibitor of the Euro-Atlantic aspirations

The second theme emerges as a logical continuation of the answer in the first theme. As the research question holds the *external pressures* as a subject of the sentence and tries to find out the influence which they may produce over the object, *foreign policy*, it has led to data which have given rise to this theme. Once the respondents establish the clearly defined foreign policy objectives in the first theme, they continue to elaborate on the several challenges that inhibit the realization of these objectives for more than a decade. This theme provides evidence for the external influence over foreign policy objectives, hence answering the first research question. Although the research question maintains a neutral tone regarding the potential influence external factors may produce over foreign policy, the extracts of the data organized in theme two characterize that influence mostly through negative attributes. Greece is identified as the greatest external influence over the foreign policy objectives' fulfilment, while its influence is defined indirectly as blocking, pressuring, conditioning, limiting, etc.

“Well, definitely, it is Greece, the number one factor which influences the non-fulfillment of Macedonia's foreign policy objectives, and the inability to find solution to the name dispute...”

Dane Taleski

“The greatest problem is without doubt the contest Macedonia has with Greece about the name of the state.”

Afrim Gashi

Another analytical point in this theme is that all respondents show a unified stance when identifying the influential external factor over Macedonia's fulfilment of foreign policy objectives. Whereas some of the respondents also point out to other factors, either external or internal, the strongest accent is put, undoubtedly, over Greece. What is characteristic in this theme is that a greatest number of respondents, despite political or ethnic affiliation, neutrally and unequivocally point out to the contestation of the constitutional name by the southern neighbor as the greatest challenge of the country's foreign policy and membership into Euro-Atlantic structures. Fewer respondents, however, perceive the name issue only as a pretext for justifying 'darker' agendas for the country. They perceive Greece not as a lonely player, but rather as a proxy instrument in the hands of greater powers, whose interests clash over Macedonia. The first group of respondents' attitudes regarding the reason of the bilateral contest is illustrated as follows:

“Aside from the regional complications, Republic of Macedonia has faced a bilateral contest with the Republic of Greece which has contested the national symbols and the name of the state...”

Radmila Sekerinska

“The most acute issue – and the one that if resolved would have most positive impact – is the long-running name dispute with Greece.”

Teuta Arifi

The second group, the one who perceives the contest with Greece as an issue which goes beyond the bilateral dimension, is difficult to categorize, as they belong to different political, professional, and ethnic orientations. As indicated by the quotes below, they reflect a common stance on Greece's role as a proxy element of the great powers, but they differ when identifying these powers and their motivations behind the issue. Contrastingly, former ambassador Reka points out to Russian influence, while former ambassador Nikovski to that of the United States. From their arguments, in support of their reasoning, there are two explanations for the contrasting views these two respondents have, in regard to the greater powers' involvement in

Macedonia through Greece's name pretext. Reka, argues about the Russian involvement by linking it closely to the country's NATO membership. He explains that Russia, through Greece's pretext over the name of the state, aims at blocking Macedonia's NATO prospects: "*I have the impression that Greece...has played the role of a Russian advocate in Balkans, by blocking Macedonia's integration in NATO, with the pretext of the name...*" When asked why would Russia be interested in acting in such way he responds: "[in order] to *disable the finalization of the southern circle of NATO*" and thus maintain a channel of influence in the Balkans. In his words "*[Macedonia], according to Moscow's strategists, must remain outside of NATO, so that the tenth corridor of Budapest-Belgrade, Thessaloniki-Athens, is opened not only for Serbia but also for Russia.*" Reka, however, does not provide further explanation behind the reasons for an accepted Russian influence by Greece. The stance of Reka may seem paradoxical if we consider the fact that Greece is a NATO member, yet accepts the "*role of a Russian advocate in Balkans*" (B. Reka). Yet, an interplay between the international and domestic levels of Greece's politics, where Russia's role and its counterbalance to Greece's relations with US/NATO could be examined, is beyond the focus of this thesis. Furthermore, Reka's discourse doesn't provide sufficient evidence for analysis in relation to his claim about Greece's proxy role as *Russian advocate*.

Nikovski, on the other hand, argues about the USA's influence by linking it and the other western powers to their aim of annihilating or modifying the Macedonian people. After he mentions the name, as the main obstacle to international integration, he substitutes it with the notion 'the people' claiming that, in fact, it is the 'people' whom the international factor, would like to modify: "*...the main reason why we are so long before the doors of Brussels is - the name. More precisely - the people...It must be clear to us that NATO and the EU will not accept us under the reference because it will mean an end to the attempts of renaming the country and erasing the Macedonian people, which is, obviously, not acceptable to Washington, Brussels, Berlin, Paris...*" (Risto Nikovski)

So, the motivations of the two great powers are quite different according to the two respondents' reasoning. The motives of Russia are about hindering the country's foreign policy prospects, while the motives of the United States are about "*destroying the national identity of the Macedonian people*" (Risto Nikovski), while both use the same instrument for achieving their aim, Athens. Nikovski, like Reka, doesn't provide sufficient arguments in support of his

position about USA's role in *destroying the Macedonian people*. Nikovski considers the renaming of the country as an attempt to destroy the national identity of the Macedonian people, and views the USA's role as detrimental in this process: *"Our big mistake is that we treat the United States as our partners, even strategic ones, and they are the main factor that openly and persistently works on renaming the state and destroying the national identity of the Macedonian people."*

Considering the strategic partnership Macedonia has with the USA and its foreign policy orientation towards integration into the NATO alliance, the position of Nikovski also appears paradoxical and requires further elaboration, which is missing in the data set of this research. The fact that Nikovski decided to send me a written interview, made impossible the posing of follow-up questions, which could've helped clarify his position regarding the role of the EU states and the USA over Macedonia's name issue.

The reason behind these two respondents' way of thinking in regard to the involvement of the greater powers in the contest with Greece is difficult to interpret. Reka, being an ethnic Albanian and referring to Russian meddling behavior, and Nikovski, being an ethnic Macedonian, and pointing out to USA's meddling behavior, matches an existing assumption about polarization of ethnic affiliation with greater powers in Macedonia, according to which Macedonians feel more affiliated with Russia, while Albanians feel more affiliated with the United States. But this argument is difficult to prove in this research. A survey conducted by the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation, shows some differences in perception between Macedonians and Albanians, yet it does not reflect wide and significant gaps between the two ethnicities in relation to their preferences towards USA or Russia.³⁰ In relation to the argument of ethnic preferences towards global powers, Stevo Pendarovski, makes a statement which supports the argument of Albanians' affiliation with the USA: *"But Albanians in Macedonia, the same is with Kosovo and Albania, but in Macedonia absolutely, not only in 2001, but since 1991, they never do significant political moves without prior consultancy with the Americans by the US embassy."* Nikovski also makes a reference about Albanians' affiliation with the USA and Macedonian incompatibility in such constellation: *"the main factor in the Balkans has become*

³⁰According to the survey of MCIC, 15.9% of Albanians have identified the USA as the best country from a global political aspect as opposed to 9.9% of ethnic Macedonians. Reversely, 4.1% of Macedonians have identified Russia as the best country from a global political aspect, as opposed to only 1.2% of ethnic Albanians (Klekovski, 2013, p.6)

the United States. They dominate and Macedonia is a victim of their regional interests. Washington plays on the map of the Albanians, who have become their strategic partners in the region, and Macedonians are not compatible with their combinations.” On the other hand, Reka makes a reference about Macedonians’ affiliation with Russia by stating: *“while in the last years, there is a decrease in the number of ethnic Macedonians [who support EU and NATO], and an increase by 1% of their support for Russia.”* Despite the positions that Reka and Nikovski maintain regarding the proxy role Greece plays in the contest over Macedonia’s name, and the involvement of either great power in this bilateral issue, the dataset of this research provides no sufficient evidence which allows the tracing of Reka’s and Nikovski’s pattern of thought into other respondents. Hence there cannot be drawn conclusions about divided ethnic attitudes towards great powers’ involvement in the bilateral contest with Greece.

The third respondent, Antonio Milosovski follows the same line of thought of the Nikovski and Reka, as he emphasizes that the true motives of Greece hide behind the name issue. Hence, he also considers the name contestation as a mere pretext. Nevertheless, he differs from the two respondents above, by not making any direct references to the involvement of the greater powers such as USA or Russia:

“So, Greece doesn’t mind the name of the state, in essence. I think that they use the name as a pretext in order to achieve their goal. And their goal is the weakening of the statehood of Republic of Macedonia...”

Antonio Milosovski

Milosovski explains his position about Greece’s usage of the name issue as a pretext by offering a specific perspective on Greece’s foreign policy towards Macedonia, which dates back to the 1990s. Referring to *a common border* between Serbia and Greece, Milosovski claims that the initial aim of Greece, after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, has been the disappearance of Macedonia from the map: *“Most likely the primary goal of Greece, they still hoped, was whether Macedonia could become inexistent. Greece preferred Macedonia to become part of a mini Serboslavia”* (A. Milosovski). Once this scenario had become impossible, Milosovski argues that Greece’s aim became the weakening of Macedonia’s statehood by blocking the Euro-Atlantic perspectives of the country. *“The blocking itself of Macedonia to become a NATO and EU member makes the state weaker, since when you are in NATO and EU some better economic, security, and other perspectives are opened up. And now when the state is weaker, they (Greece) hope that the state will be less efficient and more involved in its own problems, tensions.”* When

asked why would the weakening of Macedonia be an interest of Greece, Milosovski claimed that *“it is difficult to answer this question, since rationally, every neighbor would prefer its neighbor to be stable”*. However, he argued that the weakening of the northern neighbor, was only a second plan for Greece, after its initial “secret” plan with Serbia, to have a “common border” on the territory of Macedonia, failed: *“In ‘91, the Prime Minister Mitsotakis, the Foreign Minister Samaras, they then talked with Milosevic... They secretly discussed about a project which was called a ‘common border’. Now, if you think of a common border between Greece and Serbia, where would that be? Certainly not in Cyprus. It would be somewhere here [referring to Macedonia]”*. What we can infer from Milosovski’s perspective, is that it is ‘expectable’ for a state like Greece to work on having a weak northern neighbor, as some sort of compensation for not being able to dissolve it completely right after Yugoslavia’s fall. The mere existence of Macedonia, and not only its name, in Milosovski’s opinion, represents an unwanted or even a threatening fact for Greece. However, Milosovski’s stance and argumentation behind Greece’s blocking role over Macedonia is unique in this study and cannot be traced as a pattern of thought in other respondents, though the essential meaning of his argument resembles that of Nikovski and Reka.

Theme three clearly focuses around a single determining factor and its inhibiting role towards Macedonia’s foreign policy: on Greece. But, the dataset of this research reveals another external potential factor with a role on Macedonia’s foreign policy. However, this factor is mentioned more latently and in a secondary manner. The open issue with Bulgaria, which revolves around historical/language differences between the two countries, is mentioned as the second external threat, after Greece, to the realization of Macedonia’s foreign policy aspirations. But when elaborating on Bulgaria’s role, as compared to the case with Greece, respondents treat it as a potential external pressure, but acknowledge that it has recently become a less salient issue. In the period when most of the empirical data of this research were gathered, the Macedonian government had signed an Agreement of Friendship, Good Neighborly Relations and Cooperation with Bulgaria. Thereof, many respondents refer to the case with Bulgaria as an issue which might have escalated into an external pressure with blocking effects for Macedonia’s foreign policy, but which now has become a resolved issue, referring to the mutual agreement. Some of the quotations below reflect this stream of thought. What characterizes the positions of these respondents is some affirmative tones they attach to their statements about the reached

agreement. Another characteristic of these positions is the inter-ethnic unity. Respondents of both ethnic backgrounds treat the issue with Bulgaria as a less salient issue due to the reached agreement between the two countries. Here is how both Macedonian and Albanian public figures interpret the issue with Bulgaria and the mutual agreement signed between the two countries:

“...we jointly closed many bitter issues with the Republic of Bulgaria and signed a Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighborly Relations and Cooperation. We have solved a Balkan problem in a European way and have proven that we do not want to just go to Europe, but we want to bring Europe to the Balkans.”

Radmila Sekerinska

“The greatest problem is undoubtedly the contest Macedonia has with Greece, over the name of the state. And no less important was the contest with Bulgaria. But, with the last agreement, which was ratified in parliament, i think that the issue with Bulgaria was overcome...”

Afrim Gashi

“Until recently, it was also Bulgaria, because until August 2017, Macedonia had an opened issue with them. But after Macedonia signed the good neighborly relations agreement between Prime Minister Zaev and Borisov, things have changed. That issue is closed and now Bulgaria is one of the main supporters for Macedonia’s entry into EU and NATO.”

Dane Taleski

“There is progress in resolving open issues with Bulgaria with the signing of the Agreement on Good Neighborly Relations”

Teuta Arifi

Another characteristic when discussing the opened issue with Bulgaria, is that many respondents do not put the accent over the issues which exist between the two countries or that are going to be resolved through the mutual agreement, but rather on the symbolism of this agreement. The agreement is perceived as a signal about a new way of governing in relation to the neighbors. It is qualified as a new foreign policy approach and as a signal of continuous efforts for normalization of relations with other neighbors, such as Greece. An inter-ethnic consensus about this position is evident as well.

“Something is changing with the new government and especially with prime minister Zaev... Issue with Bulgaria was briefly resolved...”

Stevo Pendarovski

“The government gave the first signs that the foreign policy of Macedonia will be opened and will move towards relaxation of relations with the neighbors. Here, we must not overlook the agreement with Bulgaria, which was a good omen about the creation of new relations between the countries.”

Arta Toci

“Prime Minister Zaev began to make the first steps, by signing the agreement for good neighborly relations with Bulgaria, which was ratified in both parliaments, and now, we may at least hope that a hot-point with the neighbors, with Bulgaria, is being closed.”

Blerim Reka

“I think, the government, when it started to build good relations with Bulgaria, it was just sending positive/constructive signal to other neighbors that this is going to be our approach. So, they started with a less difficult issue...”

Veli Kreci

The positions on Bulgaria's role, however do not reflect a perfect consensus. Three respondents think differently about both the potentials of a Bulgarian veto on Macedonia's foreign policy and about the reached agreement. Without commenting on the agreement with Bulgaria, Marko Troshanovski argues about the lack of Bulgaria's capacity to undertake a blocking foreign policy approach towards Macedonia. Hence, Troshanovski differs from the above respondents by discarding the possibility of a Bulgarian veto on Macedonia's foreign policy, even if there were no agreement between the two countries.

“I think that the issue with Bulgaria was never of a substantial significance as a problem of the Euro integrative process, precisely due to what's called leverage of Bulgaria to obstruct the [integration] process; it is much smaller than the veto capacity Greece has, in the sense that it [Bulgaria] cannot block a state such as Macedonia at the cost of all other negative repercussions which it would face in the international relations. I think Bulgaria could not have afforded that.”

Marko Trosanovski

Antonio Milosovski and Risto Nikovski's positions show some similarity and some difference. Milosovski, similarly with Nikovski conveys notes of pessimism about the agreement with Bulgaria. He considers it as a unnecessarily imposed agreement by Bulgaria which has derived from an asymmetrical position between Bulgaria and Macedonia, as the former is member of EU and NATO while Macedonia is aspiring to become one. But he differs from Nikovski in his qualification of the agreement. Milosovski only expresses doubtfulness about the effectiveness of the agreement in overcoming long-standing disputes between the two countries. He

acknowledges that the agreement may serve as an instrument for rapprochement between the two countries, but at the same time he draws attention to shortcomings in the agreement which may serve as a cause for future abuses or misunderstandings:

“The agreement, as long as there is good will by both sides, may signify a resolution to the opened issues. But, in the agreement there are clauses, about which we as a political party had remarks and which deal with history textbooks, about certain responsibility about the fulfilment or unfulfillment of the agreement...in certain cases the agreement can be misused...so it can serve both as an instrument for understanding, progress, and overcoming all issues by looking towards the future and perspectives, but it can also leave a possibility for subjective interpretation and abuse of certain articles of the agreement for possible impediments in the future.”

Antonio Milosovski

Nikovski, on the other hand, holds a condemning attitude towards the agreement with Bulgaria. As opposed to the respondents above, he views this step of the new government as a bad omen for future actions in its foreign policy approach.

“The problems with the neighbors, which have a historical character, should in no way be resolved (through) based on our capitulation, as in the case with Bulgaria... With Bulgaria we bent the spine and now we are on our way to do it with Greece as well in an even more drastic way”

Risto Nikovski

The evidence in this theme in relation to the first research question is important for several reasons. First it points out a political and ethnic consensus on the detrimental effect that Greece has over Macedonia's foreign policy perspective. Other external issues, such as the opened issue with Bulgaria, are referred to as much less pressuring and salient in comparison to the issue with Greece. Secondly, this theme reveals a distinction between respondents who think that the name issue is a direct issue between Macedonia and Greece, and others who think that, in fact, the dispute with Greece is a proxy conflict, directed by greater powers, whose interests clash over the back of Macedonia. Thirdly, it provides a surface argument about diverse foreign policy affiliation of the two ethnic groups, which may serve as component for future research into foreign policy preferences based on ethnic background.

Theme 3: Neighbours who cross the fence

The third theme is also generated in response to the first research question. Attempting to find out about the external factors which produce an effect over Macedonia's foreign policy, I have come across data which besides Greece, and to a lower extent Bulgaria, also make references to other neighbors and their behavior in relation to Macedonia. What is specific about this theme is that it reveals external factors which do not show a direct conditioning effect over Macedonia's foreign policy achievements, yet, using the foreign policy instrument, they play an interfering role into the domestic affairs of the country. Hence, this and the previous theme establish two types of bilateral relations that Macedonia has with its neighbors. The first type is characterized by external pressures which produce a direct conditional effect over the country's foreign policy prospects, while the second type is characterized by external pressures or threats which do not have an immediate conditional effect on foreign policy, yet their 'meddling' or unprincipled behavior can produce a destabilizing effect within the inter-ethnic relations in the country. The second type countries, whom respondents refer to, are Albania, Kosovo and Serbia. Whereas most references are made to Albania, there are respondents who also mention the role of Kosovo and that of Serbia in destabilizing inter-ethnic relations. All three of these neighbors are specific for sharing the same ethnic identity with various ethnic groups who live in Macedonia, namely with Albanians (25 percent) and Serbs (1.8 percent). Three citations below illustrate the respondents' thinking on these three countries:

"...And the 'Tirana Platform' occurred to us, under the auspices of Prime Minister Edi Rama, which dealt with the internal issues in the Republic of Macedonia. In my opinion, such attitude does not help the inter-ethnic relations in the state."

Antonio Milosovski

"So, when Kosovo gained independence in 2008, all of these ethnic tensions which have been in high alert for years and years before simply decreased"

Stevo Pendarovski

"But Serbia wants Macedonia to have a different foreign policy and plays on the ethnic divide. So this is also problematic because you have moments, like currently, where you have cold relations between Macedonia and Serbia and then you have the inability to constructively contribute to good neighborly relations."

This theme emerges as a response to the first research question, providing evidence of other neighbors who produce certain effect over foreign policy, yet not a conditional one. The reason for not being able to produce a blocking effect over Macedonia's international integration agenda is may be the fact that neither one of these three states is member of EU and only Albania is a member of NATO. This theme also provides certain evidence for the second research question, which aims to find out about the effect of external pressures over inter-ethnic relations. Therefore, theme three is an overlapping theme of both research questions. Respondents offer arguments for both research questions by citing a declaration of Albania's Prime Minister, Edi Rama, who conditions Albania's support for joining NATO with the fulfilment of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. Most respondents classify such conditioning as a mere verbal declaration, pointing out to Albania's lack of capacity to enforce blockage on Macedonia's bid for NATO membership: *"The declaration of the Prime Minister [Edi Rama], I don't consider as great threat or risk towards our foreign policy...the Albanian [Republic of Albania] capacity to block the country is small, Albania cannot allow such moves, since it largely depends on international partners..."* (Marko Troshanovski). But, when it comes to the effects such declarations produce in the inter-ethnic realm, the respondents demonstrate a concern about potential disturbance of the domestic stability: *when there are statements like this, we have to take into consideration the internal dynamics... it may polarize ethnically the communities and then you have an issue to take care of, which takes your time and energy from other reforms for EU and NATO integration."* (Dane Taleski)

What is characteristic when discussing the role of Albania in Macedonia's foreign policy and domestic affairs, seems to be the division of respondents according to their ethnic background. This theme reveals that the perceptions towards neighbors such as Albania and Kosovo and their behavior towards Macedonia, are contradictory, seemingly due to ethnic affiliation. The evidence in theme three suggests two patterns of attitudes regarding the role of Albania and Kosovo over Macedonia's foreign policy and inter-ethnic relations. The common denominator of ethnic Macedonians when describing the role of Albania is emphasizing its meddling behavior in Macedonia's internal affairs. But they differ when they assess the effects of this meddling behavior. Some of the respondents describe the effects of a meddling behavior by Albania as harmless or insignificant, while others assess them as detrimental to the internal

stability. Party or ideological influence over the respondents' attitude is difficult to be evaluated as the evidence is scarce, but the two excerpts below, which reflect the above-mentioned difference, belong to SDSM (Stevo Pendarovski) and VMRO (Antonio Milosovski) respondents respectively.

“Edi Rama has given some statements, but they are just political statements, they cannot disturb or destabilize the country’s situation in Macedonia...”

Stevo Pendarovski

“...Such behavior represents a classical violation of the sovereignty of the state and internal affairs...And I think that such behavior, regardless of what was discussed about, but the very act, creates mistrust.”

Antonio Milosovski

From the available evidence here, it seems that the attitude of ethnic Albanians regarding Albania's role over Macedonia's foreign policy and inter-ethnic relations is instead supportive and defensive. Using words such as *supportive* or *constructive*, the data show that ethnic Albanians hold a diametrically opposite view regarding the role of the Republic of Albania in Macedonia's internal affairs. The data set extracted from ethnic Albanian respondents, either makes no reference to the Tirana Platform³¹ or foreign policy declarations of Prime Minister Edi Rama, or justifies an external involvement of Albania as the right political behavior, based on the preamble of its constitution. Two short citations illustrate the attitude of Albanian respondents as analyzed above:

“Albania, even when it recognized Macedonia, and in all relations after 1991... has shown a constructive policy... Normally, Albania... based on the preamble of its constitution, has the

³¹A joint Albanian platform signed by the leaders of main political parties representing ethnic Albanians was signed after the December 2017 general elections in Macedonia and became a condition for the formation of a new government. The document focuses on full political and economic equality between Albanians and Macedonians in harmony with the Ohrid Framework Agreement. The document also focuses on the full equality of Albanian language and its use in all levels of government, as well as the opening of discussions about state symbols to represent multi-ethnic character of the country. The document also urges quicker integration in EU and NATO. (Mejdini, 2017). This document became soon controversial and a target of fierce criticism from the ethnic Macedonians. It became the so-called ‘Tirana Platform’ as the leaders of the Albanian parties of Macedonia gathered in Tirana, with the invitation of Albania's Prime Minister, Edi Rama, where they discussed the contents of the document. Rama declared that his role has only been consultative (EWB Archives, 2017). Nevertheless, this act came to be considered by some ethnic Macedonians as direct external interfering and threatening of Macedonia's sovereignty (RFE/RF 2017). The document became a factor of division between ethnic Macedonians as VMRO condemned it, while SDSM accepted it. After the acceptance of the joint Albanian platform, followed a SDSM leading coalition government with two other Albanian parties (DUI) and (Alliance for Albanians).

right to show interest about the status, state (situation), position of the Albanians outside Albania.”

Blerim Reka

“Albania never had any problems with Macedonia...it is surprising the fact that when Macedonia is facing its own identity problems, it takes wrong approaches in its foreign policy towards the neighbors.”

Arta Toci

Regardless of the objectivity of the respondents' stances, this theme reveals a significant aspect of inter-ethnic cohesion or lack of. In my interpretation, the diametrically opposite perceptions regarding the influence of Albania and Kosovo in Macedonia's foreign policy and inter-ethnic relations, derive from the strong ethnic identification which comes before national or civic identification. Such ethnic identification causes the minority ethnic groups, such as the Albanians of Macedonia, to project closer affiliation with their nation-state, than with the state they are citizens of. Their positive stance on Albania is ultimately a product of this affiliation. Foon (1986, as cited in Shulman 1996) describes such behavior as external national loyalty, which happens when the citizens are more loyal to the country they share the same ethnic identity with, than with the country of citizenship. Contrastingly, the ethnic Macedonians, whose ethnic group is different, perceive such affiliation mostly through negative lenses. This perception creates certain mistrust in ethnic Macedonians towards the neighboring state, Albania, and certain doubts about Macedonia's ethnic Albanians' loyalty towards the state of citizenship. The fact that the role of Albania is perceived differently by the two ethnic groups in the dataset may indicate that dual loyalty, internal (towards the state of citizenship) and external (towards the nation-state), may be mutually exclusive or incompatible. However, more data is needed to test this hypothesis.

Theme 4: Foreign policy a victim of faulty domestic policy

The fourth theme is also considered as a product of the first research question. Asked to elaborate on the influence of external factors over Macedonia's foreign policy, many respondents have been careful to also place an emphasis on the internal factors and their effect over foreign policy. Although the majority of respondents clarify that the biggest obstacle for Euro-Atlantic integration, but especially for NATO integration, is Greece's blockage, there is a number of them

who also maintain the internal factors culpable for slow reform dynamics, necessary for joining these two organizations. *"I think it [foreign policy] hasn't stagnated; it is moving forward very slowly. And the reasons for that are...strong party influences on policy making, in a way that it prevents having professional public administration, and professional policy makers in the ministries, local government, agencies, and so on."* (Zhidas Daskalovski). Respondents such as Daskalovski, not only insist on domestic factors being the main impediment to the fulfillment of foreign policy objectives, but they also argue that should there be a higher internal political and economic cohesion, the country wouldn't have to rely so much on its foreign policy for future development: *"I mean there is a chance we can develop fairly well, even if we are not part of EU and NATO, and I think if the parties find a consensus on the economic development, we could have progress"* (Zhidas Daskalovski). But since some respondents agree that such cohesion is missing in the domestic politics of Macedonia, then they conclude that foreign policy objectives become highly significant in fulfilling this gap. As Veli Kreci points out *"Macedonia cannot sustain lacking good relations with the neighboring countries. We are not a country in Europe, we are not such a big country to sustain ourselves..."* implying that regional stability is necessary for Macedonia to counterbalance its internal fragility.

But when it comes to discussing the internal factors responsible for delaying the foreign policy agenda, respondents show diverse attitudes. Whereas not all respondents point out to the same internal factors, most of them hold the previous government as responsible for stalling the foreign policy agenda. Two other respondents point out to the politicization of institutions but do not make direct references to any political party; Asked whether the foreign policy halt may also be an outcome of the domestic policy, Marko Trosanovski answers: *"Absolutely. The domestic politics, i.e. the politicization of the public administration, concretely, the Secretariat for Foreign Affairs, substantially weakened its capacities [needed] to harmonize the domestic legislation with the EU acquis."* One respondent, a representative of an Albanian oppositional party, BESA, refers to the constitutional definition of Macedonia as a nation-state as the source problem to both internal and external issues. Gashi criticizes the constitution which bases the state of Macedonia on an ethnic definition, rather than on a civic one. According to him, such constitutional philosophy ignores the multi-ethnic reality in Macedonia, causing subordination of the collective rights of other ethnic groups to a single majority ethnic group. He holds such constitutional definition, where ethnic Macedonians are the only state constituent nation, while

other ethnicities are treated as minority, responsible for internal inter-ethnic disputes which are then projected externally as well: *“It has been insisted and even violently has been built a political system which projects Macedonia as a nation state, while the reality of Macedonia is that it is multi-ethnic. And here lies the problem in the inter-ethnic relations and then it has been reflected in the foreign policy...”* (Afrim Gashi)

The respondents who make references to previous government’s ruling and foreign policy approach, which was led by VMRO (Macedonian senior partner) and DUI (Albanian junior partner), are both of Macedonian and Albanian ethnicity. Yet, what is distinctive in the Macedonian group of respondents, is that they either are SDSM affiliated or apolitical, while in the Albanian group there are DUI, Alliance for Albanian’s Party, and apolitical respondents. Although DUI has been part of the previous coalition government, it seems to distance itself from the Macedonian ruling partner, VMRO, in the realm of foreign policy. Although the foreign policy portfolio, the Secretariat for European Affairs, was held by a DUI representative in the previous government, it seems that the Albanian coalition partner had little to no influence on foreign policy making. This conclusion leads to the following theme which discusses the ethnic participation in foreign policy making and behavior. Below are provided two short quotations which illustrate the stance of SDSM (Radmila Sekerinska) and DUI (Teuta Arifi) respondents on the internal factors’ influence over foreign policy:

“We inherited a system with undermined foundations, eroded institutions, a ruined state of law, hostage media, international isolation and a bunch of domestic problems... In parallel with all these, we have open issues with our neighbors.”

Radmila Sekerinska

“It’s worth to mention that there was little interest in pushing forward the integration agenda.”

Teuta Arifi

However, in this theme there are also voices who oppose the stance that domestic factors play a determining role on the foreign policy challenges. Asked about these factors and their role on the (un)blocking of the integration processes, Nikovski decisively answers: *“Macedonia certainly needs to be reformed a lot and deeply, however, the main reason why we are so long before the doors of Brussels is - the name.”* The same relativization of the domestic factors’ role is perceived in the discourse of the Former Foreign Minister Milosvoski, from VMRO: *“I don’t*

want to leave out the domestic factors which have also slowed down the dynamics. They have also played their role. However, that role is significantly smaller than the one played by the external factors.” The tendency to relativize or exonerate the domestic factors for the stalled foreign policy agenda, may be related, to some extent, to party affiliation, where SDSM supporters tend to blame while VMRO supporters tend to defend the domestic factors and their role over foreign policy.

Theme 5: Foreign policy, a monopoly of a single ethnic group

Aiming to explore about the external effects over foreign policy objectives, I have come across data, which reflect an internal constitutive element of Macedonia's foreign policy. Distancing ourselves from the external factors variable for a moment, another characteristic of Macedonia's foreign policy rises to the surface: an ethnic domination over foreign policy making. The way this ethnic domination of foreign policy is portrayed to influence both foreign policy performance in relation to the external open issues and the inter-ethnic relations, provides insights into both research questions. This theme brings into the surface several similarities and distinctions among the respondents. The dominant point of argumentation, around which most respondents agree, is a distanced or a lesser role played by the Albanian political factor in the foreign policy realm, especially in relation to the bilateral open issues. This argument has inspired the title of this theme. Different political representatives, academicians, and opinion makers, both ethnic Macedonians (ex. Stevo Pendarovski) and Albanians (ex. Arta Toci) come together around this argument:

“I don't think that the [Albanian] political parties in government have had an impact on foreign policy, in any way,”

Arta Toci

And that was the weakness of Macedonian foreign policy, not to have ethnic Albanians fully being represented in forging and implementing foreign policy...”

Stevo Pendarovski

Although the majority of respondents agree on a somewhat withdrawn role of Albanians from foreign policy, they differ when they elaborate on the reasons behind it. Thus, the respondents' opinions may be divided into two categories in relation to the reasons of the Albanians' distance from foreign policy. Some respondents describe it as a voluntary retreat of Albanians from foreign policy making and implementation. Others describe it as an imposed retreat by the majority ethnic group. The respondents who argue about a voluntary withdrawal points out several reasons. The first reason is the preoccupation of the Albanian ethnic group with the internal struggle for enhancing their collective ethnic rights. The second reason is the lesser identification of Albanians with the state. And the third reason is the nature of external pressures on foreign policy, which affect the identity of an ethnic group rather than that of a common society. Two quotations below illustrate each reason behind a self-withdrawal of the Albanian political factor from foreign policy. Afrim Gashi (ethnic Albanian) points out to reasons such as a higher interest of Albanian parties for political support, which they aim to mobilize by playing patriotically and leading internal politics, hence neglecting foreign policy as unimportant for immediate political points. He also argues that such behavior of the Albanian political factor has led to a perception by the ethnic Macedonians about Albanians' unloyalty and disinterest in the state, and a focus only on their internal collective rights. Antonio Milosovski (ethnic Macedonian) points out to the third reason, namely to the nature of the external pressures and their relation to Albanians' marginalized role in foreign policy. He maintains the position that Albanians, aware of the fact that external pressures do not affect the elements of their ethnic identity but rather of the Macedonians, have held a voluntary distance, leaving room to ethnic Macedonians for resolving the issues that affect them the most and thus avoiding being misunderstood.

"I think that the Albanian political parties, for the sake of political points and internal struggles about which party is more patriotic...have dealt only with Albanian issues, while handing the authorship of foreign policy to the Macedonian ethnic group...Macedonians have exploited this phenomenon in order to make the claim that the Albanians are not loyal to the state, they don't care about the state..."

Afrim Gashi

"So I think that in the years 1996-2000 there was a certain distance [of Albanians], but a good-willed distance, not in the sense of 'do what you like' or 'we don't care about the resolution', but in the sense that 'this issue affects you more than us, so we encourage you to find a solution, but we do not want to directly become involved so that we are not misunderstood.'"

The other group of respondents considers the distance of the Albanian political factor as an imposed will by the majority ethnic group. These respondents argue that ethnic Macedonians, as a majority ethnic group, possesses the greatest share of power. Consequently, in regard to foreign policy issues, they have deliberately marginalized Albanians, either by not giving them any relevant foreign policy portfolio or by not including them in any vital process of the country's foreign policy. This position is shared by both ethnic Macedonians and Albanians. The quotations by Blerim Reka (ethnic Albanian) and by Stevo Pendarovski (ethnic Macedonian), illustrate the same essence of thinking in regard to the imposed marginal role of Albanian political factor in foreign policy.

"That's why I am saying that we haven't self-withdrawn, but we've never had any offer from any government to be included with our proposals, ideas, concepts, projects about overcoming the issue. Thus, the withdrawn role of the Albanians has been imposed by Macedonians since we cannot go and negotiate without a prior authorization or mandate..."

Blerim Reka

"Ethnic Macedonians have been at the head of all vital processes in Macedonia for many many years at least in the first decade of our independence, up to the OFA, after the conflict. And they (ethnic Macedonians) have not been quite happy to see ethnic Albanians being around or especially not to see ethnic Albanians being in the key decision makers' role. So, they have not invited Albanians..."

Stevo Pendarovski

As seen from the illustrations above, there is a unified stance of respondents regarding the marginalized role of Albanians in Macedonia's foreign policy, at least up until the recent decade. The division between them begins when they elaborate on the reasons behind it. But this division is not characterized neither by political affiliation nor by ethnic belonging. In both groups there are Albanian and Macedonian respondents, of different political parties or apolitical, who support the first pattern of thought or the second.

There is another division among respondents that is revealed through this theme. The second distinction is about a recent greater involvement of Albanian political factor in resolving the foreign policy issues, especially in the resolution of the name dispute with Greece. The first group of respondents maintain the stance that a greater participation of the Albanian political

factor in foreign policy issues is righteous and structured. They point out to the solidarity, correctness, and unison of the Albanian factor with the official Macedonian position in regard to foreign policy.

"...in my opinion, the last one and half year, I see more active and to some extend aggressive involvement of representative of government from the Albanian political party...They need to show concrete actions that this is what we are doing in order to achieve this [Euro-Atlantic integration]. So, we are not against the Macedonian identity, we are not against the future of Macedonia, we are very constructive in terms of building safe and better future for Macedonia..."

Veli Kreci

"I think the recent greater initiatives for inclusion of the Albanian community occurred after the transfer of the government last year, especially through the initiative for including representatives from the Albanian community in the negotiations... the Vice-Prime Minister for Euro Integrations [ethnic Albanian], visited Greece several times in the past period, and was included in the negotiations, as a mediator for softening positions and sharing our positions with Greece..."

Marko Trosanovski

The second group of respondents thinks differently about a recent greater involvement of the Albanian political factor in foreign policy issues. They argue that Albanian politicians many times have engaged into foreign policy issues beyond their institutional authorization. Respondents refer to several cases of incoordination between the Albanian political factor and the Macedonian official standing, on crucial issues such as the name issue. Several respondents explain such behavior as a result of a greater urge on the Albanian side for deblocking the Euro-Atlantic agenda, as the latter is a top priority in their political agendas. Such urge, according to respondents has led to self-initiated diplomatic actions of political figures with no foreign policy portfolio or competence. The consequences, according to them, are mistrust between coalition partners and consequently between ethnic groups.

"The Albanian factor is part of all state institutions and there is no need for it to be involved directly and out of institutions in solving problems with neighbors, as it was required by the "Tirana Platform".

Risto Nikovski

"...I think there is an urge on Albanian side, and it is more proactive but less structured. There are a lot of things that people do individually. For example, Artan Grubi going to a prayer breakfast in Washington, and scheduling himself a meeting with Mathew Nimitz! And Artan

Grubi is an MP, has no competence in foreign policy, but is meeting the mediator on the name issue and saying 'I would give him ideas how to solve the name issue'. And this raises a lot of issues: was this coordinated, by whom, what kind of messages are delivered?

Dane Taleski

"In the recent period there were instances and situations which didn't strengthen trust... it was maybe in 2009 or 2010 when Ali Ahmeti was in Athens, and had a meeting with Dora Bakoyannis [former Foreign Minister of Greece], but with his request, at the meeting did not participate the ambassador of the Republic of Macedonia in Athens, Vlado Handziski³². And discussing something behind closed doors, without him [the ambassador], creates mistrust."

Antonio Milosovski

What is characteristic about the first and second group of respondents in regard to a greater involvement of the Albanian political factor in recent years is the division along ethnic lines. The first group, which portrays Albanian's involvement in resolving foreign policy issues as positive, consists of both Macedonian and Albanian respondents. The second group, however, which denounces the Albanian's uncoordinated behavior, are all ethnic Macedonian respondents. Here, again, the ethnic bias causes the two ethnic groups to hold opposite views in regard to ethnic participation in foreign policy issues. Arta Toci, an ethnic Albanian and currently a representative of an Albanian oppositional party (Alliance for Albanians), is the only Albanian who holds a criticizing stance on the Albanian ruling party's intensified involvement in the resolution of the name issue. However, her criticism is more about the internal political struggle between Albanian political parties to participate in the foreign policy issues and to take merit in their resolution. *"DUI excludes, at all costs, the participation of the Albanian opposition parties in these talks... The now increased interest of DUI to become actively involved in foreign policy is a result of an internal policy of DUI... They are sensing that the resolution of the opened issues with Greece is approaching. And along with resolution comes the merit."* (Arta Toci)

This theme is important in relation to both research questions. It provides insights into the inter-ethnic foreign policy structure. It describes the positions of both ethnic groups within foreign policy in relation to the disputable issues with neighbors. It also reveals the stances of both ethnic groups, regarding the adequacy of the role and behavior of both ethnic groups in resolving foreign policy matters. These stances are characterized by certain divisions along

³²Vlado Handziski was a former Ambassador to Greece, appointed by the VMRO led government. He is an ethnic Macedonian, and the exclusion of the ambassador at the demand of Ali Ahmeti (Albanian leader of DUI), is interpreted by Milosovski as an attempt of the Albanian political factor to pursue ethnic foreign policy, which is uncoordinated with the ethnic Macedonian community.

ethnic lines, as analyzed above. This theme, in contrast from the first theme, reveals tendencies of dichotomy and division between ethnically different coalition parties, in the realm of foreign policy. It portrays how foreign policy is not a unified field of policy, but an area of inter-ethnic clashes. The nature of external pressures plays a certain role over the inter-ethnic role and position in foreign policy. These tendencies become more evident in the following theme, where the motives behind an inter-ethnic incoordination in foreign policy are revealed more clearly.

Theme 6: Two ethnicities divided by EU and NATO

Besides the fifth theme, the second research question gives rise to the following sixth and seventh theme. Theme six provides insights into how external pressures influence inter-ethnic relations. This influence is exercised indirectly, through foreign policy blockage. Whereas external pressures, such as the name issue, directly affect the Macedonian ethnic group, they affect the relations between Macedonians and Albanians only indirectly. As the data indicate, if external pressures wouldn't have any effect over the foreign policy objectives of the state, the ethnic Albanian community would remain indifferent or would play only a marginal role in their resolution. This analysis is illustrated in theme five as well. When it becomes obvious that external pressures, especially the name issue with Greece, are the main inhibitors of Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic perspective (theme three), the Albanians not only engage in an enhanced manner in foreign policy, but also begin to demonstrate dichotomous actions from the Macedonians. Hence, the conditioning of the country's name change with the Euro-Atlantic perspective leads to inter-ethnic divisions and clashes.

The data set of this theme indicates that there are two positions linked to different security perceptions. The different positions derive from an ethnically perceived need for international security. In absence of a national (state) identity, both ethnic communities struggle for preserving their ethnic wellbeing. This struggle causes them to develop diverse foreign policy objectives and grow separate from one another. Macedonians dread that the external pressures could be a factor which would weaken their ethnic identity. Albanians, on the other hand, do not feel any risk to their ethnic identity which could be caused by the bilateral contests. Such ethnic perceptions cause the two ethnic groups to build two different approaches towards the external pressures and foreign policy. An analysis which derives from the dataset is that Albanians aren't threatened by the external pressures in terms of their ethnic identity survival, therefore their

approach towards the external pressures is about reaching a quicker resolution, which would deblock the Euro-Atlantic path of the country. An underpinning assumption is that the Albanian's urge for closing the bilateral contests and opening the path towards the EU and NATO is motivated by an ethnically perceived security need. Albanians feel that the resolution of external pressures will indirectly lead to the strengthening of their ethnic identity, as the state will become member of EU and NATO, where ethnic Albanians will no longer be divided by state borders. Living scattered in two other neighboring countries, which also aspire to become EU and NATO members, ethnic Albanians of Macedonia, through a pro-active foreign policy, seemingly aim to fulfill a long-wished dream about unification under the EU flag. By contrast, the fear of weakening their ethnic identity, by succumbing to external demands, causes the Macedonian ethnic group to act reservedly, doubtfully, and slowly towards the resolution of external issues. The cost of compromise over the ethnic identity elements causes ethnic Macedonians to become less keen on the EU and NATO agenda. The external conditioning of the state's and ethnicity's name change with the entrance into EU and NATO puts ethnic Macedonians before a Hamletian dilemma about embracing or abandoning the Euro-Atlantic aspiration. These divisive attitudes are illustrated below:

"So if you look at foreign policy, all of its problems, they are problems of the ethnic Macedonians, not of all ethnicities. The Albanians do not care whether it [the country] will be called Northern or Upper Macedonia."

Afrim Gashi

"The Albanian politicians, and not only politicians, say that because we do not have the horse in that race, we are not caring too much, it is not about us, as identity, but about other people living here. You should change everything in order to get into NATO and of course into the EU project, where the Albanians are not going to be divided by borders."

Stevo Pendarovski

"It is a fact that among the Albanian leaders in the country there are also those who dream of a great Albanian dream, and this is also reflected in their attitude towards open issues with neighbors."

Risto Nikovski

"I think that in a way, the ethnic identity of Albanians is politically articulated in the neighboring country, the native country, Albania, while regarding the Macedonians, there is a worry and fear as they have no other country."

Marko Trosanovski

“There is data suggesting that ethnic Albanians are more willing to support a compromise with Greece. Not any kind of compromise, but for them, there is a greater sense of urgency to solve it as soon as possible, because that is the main condition to go forward to EU and NATO... Ethnic Macedonians are more hard and difficult to convince because they are more afraid that it will have consequences for their identity.”

Dane Taleski

“Albanians are definitely readier [for a consensus on the name], because to Albanians this issue is not so sensitive. To Macedonians this is about their identity. Although Macedonia’s foreign policy has declared its red lines about the Macedonian identity which it won’t cross, the change of name itself carries with it consequences... Now, our [Albanian] identity is not affected. If Macedonia is renamed, then from being Albanians of Macedonia, tomorrow we’ll be Albanians of a state with a geographic qualifier...”

Arta Toci

“All surveys say that Macedonians won’t support a name change even for the sake of EU and NATO integration. Albanians on the other hand, would accept a name change for the sake of EU and NATO, but the (gap) has fluctuated.”

Zhidas Daskalovski

“So, the perception of Albanians became, ‘ok we are very much interested in becoming a member of EU and NATO, that is our goal, regardless of the name change’. For the Macedonian side, this is definitely seen as an act of eliminating the Macedonian nation, changing the identity.”

Veli Kreci

This theme holds specific relevance as it provides evidence about how external pressures cause division, instead of unification, within a multi-ethnic country. The division is created as a result of an ethnic perception of the external pressures. All respondents acknowledge the existence of a divided perception between Macedonians and Albanians regarding Greece’s pressure, and justify their arguments by referring to the identity component of the dispute, which affects one ethnic group but not the other. The ethnic approach towards the external pressures is sensed even when respondents discuss about possible solutional approaches towards the name issue. The red lines drawn by Macedonians and Albanians, in regard to the name issue, reflect positions which guard the ethnic identity of each ethnic group. Hence, any name change, which would imply an ethnic definition instead of a civic definition of the state, becomes a factor of a new inter-ethnic dispute and rejection. *Slavo-Macedonia*, is an example of a proposed new name which could close an external issue but open up an internal dispute, as such proposals hold ethnic instead of civic connotations.

“But, again, it is not the same for Albanians. And Ahmeti, is right to point several times that for Albanians it is not acceptable for the country to be called as Slavo-Macedonia or Slavic-Macedonia. And this would imply an ownership which Albanians don’t want to be associated with.”

Dane Taleski

“And every geographic qualifier for Albanians is acceptable as long as it doesn’t consist of a Slavic connotation. Because, we will not accept a name such as Slavo-Macedonia, as it directly affects our identity.”

Arta Toci

I have divided the analysis of theme six into two parts. The first part analyzes the effect of external pressures over inter-ethnic relations. In other words, the first part of analysis establishes the fact that external pressures, such as the name issue with Greece, cause divided perceptions between Macedonians and Albanians. The second part of this theme tries to analyze the epilogue of such inter-ethnic divisions. When discussing possible developments of divided perceptions, respondents are divided in their positions. In other words, the second part of this theme reveals two streams of thought about how such divisions in perceptions, caused by external pressures, may develop in terms of inter-ethnic relations. The first position maintains that external pressures lead to inter-ethnic divisions which may furthermore deteriorate and escalate into tensions if neither ethnic group is willing to compromise and move from a static position. What is characteristic about this position is that some respondents only elaborate on the potentials of inter-ethnic frictions and possible dark scenarios in terms of inter-ethnic relations, but do not believe that such scenarios are to take place in the current circumstances. Other respondents see such escalations as quite possible. It is difficult to categorize the respondents based on party ideology, as respondents are of all parties or apolitical profiles. Nevertheless, differences arise between Macedonian respondents and Albanian ones, when they discuss the reasons behind possible inter-ethnic escalations. Macedonian respondents, regardless of political affiliation, talk about potential inter-ethnic escalations by pointing to Albanians as potential culprits. Aware of Albanians’ flexibility towards Greece’s demands, the respondents think that the relations between the two ethnic groups may deteriorate only if Albanians pressure the Macedonians to make concessions which they aren’t ready to make. Below, three quotations by ethnic Macedonians illustrate the above argument:

“The pressure of Greece to change the constitutional name can create divisions among the ethnic communities if, the Albanians are willing to accept it and Macedonians are not. Then it becomes a domestic problem. But I don’t think this is the situation currently.”

Dane Taleski

“It is possible, [tensions can develop], if Albanians, in the government especially, or vital Albanian political factors will say that you should accept this one or reject this proposal. If ethnic Macedonians, for example Zaev says ‘no, no, I cannot sign this agreement with Greece, that’s too much for the Macedonian people’, and if Albanians say ‘no you are going to sign this, otherwise we are going to leave the government’.”

Stevo Pendarovski

“Blockades, blackmail and the ultimatums that we are exposed to from outside have a direct negative impact on interethnic relations all these years. It is regrettable that some Albanian extreme politicians use the aggression that is being carried out against the Macedonian people for the political convenience of the Albanians in the country...”

Risto Nikovski

“There was a statement, an inappropriate statement according to me, by the vice-speaker of the Parliament at that time, Mr. Rafis Aliti, who after the blockade of Macedonia by Greece in Bucharest, stated... if Macedonians manage to resolve the dispute with Greece, fine. If they don’t then we, as Albanians, will find a way, to join NATO. And this statement goes in favor of what Antonis Samaras stated in 2009, that this [Macedonia] is an incohesive state and that the blockade of Greece will achieve its goal, which is implosion of the state [Macedonia]...”

Antonio Milosovski

Albanian respondents, who think there are potential risks of inter-ethnic tensions, refer to several reasons, which cannot be patterned. Thus, Afrim Gashi speaks about potential escalations if Greece imposes a name which Albanians are not willing to accept: *“Macedonia’s political, judicial, and constitutional system should be placed in harmony [with the reality]. If the neighbors aim at deepening this deformation, for instance, if the Greeks insist that the name of the state be Slavo-Macedonia, or to have a prefix which is related only to the Macedonian ethnicity or their origin, then it would naturally deepen and worsen the inter-ethnic relations....”*

Blerim Reka speaks about possible escalations if Macedonians remain rigid about not changing the name: *“Galup international polls and others, consistently show that 90% of Albanians are pro EU and NATO, while in the last years, there is a decrease in the number of ethnic Macedonians [of support for EU and NATO], and an increase by 1% of their support for Russia. If this gap between the two major ethnic groups within the country continues to deepen, then such a difference in strategic orientations, may lead to political differences, and without*

hyperbolizing, it may lead even to ethnic conflicts...” In this context, Reka offers a unique interpretation of Albanian’s favoring position of a name change, by linking the name change with the state’s enhanced security. He claims that Albanians, through a name change, wish to strengthen the state’s security, which is endangered if the country remains outside NATO and EU: *“the Albanians in Macedonia are pro ‘state’, while Macedonians are pro ‘name’. But, by being pro ‘name’, they may lose the state, if the latter remains outside of NATO....Would you want Macedonia to exist as a state but with a compromise to change its name, or would you want to destroy the state for the sake of the name, and cause the disappearance of Macedonia tomorrow?”* Reka’s discourse illustrates the conceptual differences that exist between Macedonians and Albanians over state security. He, as opposed to some ethnic Macedonian respondents, who view security in terms of ethnic identity, views the state’s security in international integrations.

Arta Toci links escalations to domestic reasons, claiming that Albanians may become a destabilizing factor and withdraw the support for foreign policy issues, if their domestic rights are not fulfilled by the Macedonian political factor. By domestic rights, she primarily refers to the Law on the use of languages, based on which, the Albanian language would become the second official language of the state. The fact that this law has become controversial and highly opposed by the ethnic Macedonian oppositional party, VMRO, makes Toci believe that Albanians would withdraw their support for the official foreign policy approach, as a reaction of their domestic discontent. She doesn’t, however, go into detail in explaining how the Albanians may turn into a destabilizing factor and whether such destabilization would affect foreign policy, inter-ethnic relations, or both: *“I regret that the Albanian support for the current government, regarding foreign policy, may be transformed into internal discontent, if their rights, foreseen with some governmental strategies, are not fulfilled. Then, the Albanian factor may become a destabilizing factor of Macedonia’s foreign policy plans.”*

The second position reveals a consensus or rapprochement between the two ethnic groups in regard to external issues as a more possible scenario. Some respondents view such an epilogue in the context of the new circumstances created by the establishment of a new government. When talking about new circumstances, respondents refer to the several steps the new government has made in both foreign and domestic policy. In foreign policy, respondents mention the signing of an agreement with Bulgaria and the agreement with Greece about

changing the name of the airport and highway. In domestic policy, respondents refer to the support of SDSM (ruling party) of the law of languages, which has been a demand of the unified Albanian political factor, prior to government formation. The new foreign policy approach has caused the gap of perceptions between Macedonians and Albanians to become narrower and their positions to come closer towards the resolution of external issues. Below are a few citations which illustrate the analysis of this paragraph.

“However, I think that if we look together towards the future and orient ourselves towards the development of our society, and not towards historical discussions – consensus is possible. Politics is a space where social processes are discussed, not history.”

Radmila Sekerinska

“Something is changing with the new government and especially with Prime Minister Zaev. Let’s say a new policy in the inter-ethnic field. Not only with these issues, such as the issue with Greece, which is long standing...but that will be recognizable even when speaking about the law of languages. That’s purely domestic issue but it is showing the will of the new government and the new Prime Minister, to approach the Albanian community in the most sincere way, compared to his predecessor. Certainly, with this government the gap between the two ethnic groups is not wider.”

Stevo Pendarovski

“But of course, it is possible to bring together citizens of both ethnicities around a common agenda of mutual interest. I think that Macedonia has moved forward from an ethnic divided, polarized and segregated society and has matured enough to realize that the social economic and political transition of the country will be finished in parallel with the fulfillment of the standards and criteria for integration and the actual membership of the country to the EU and NATO.”

Teuta Arifi

“A recent poll that has been done, said that the support for solving the name issue is more than 62%. It has never been as high. What has happened in the last two or three months that this percentage has changed? I think there are many issues, but we have to focus that there is a positive environment, and the government has solved the opened issue with Bulgaria, we don’t have any problems with Albania...”

Veli Kreci

“We live in this country, Macedonians are our neighbors and fellow citizens and we should build good relations with them, and should never build our own good on the misfortune of others...I would like for us altogether to be winners, and there is, of course, a way for achieving this.”

Afrim Gashi

The respondents who maintain the view that consensus between the ethnic groups is more possible are mainly SDSM affiliated, DUI and oppositional Albanian parties, and apolitical. VRMO representatives or affiliated respondents appear to maintain a contrary view, pointing out to difficulties of reaching a consensus or rapprochement of position between Macedonians and Albanians. These respondents do not refer only to a missing inter-ethnic consensus, but also to the lack of intra-ethnic consensus, or consensus among Macedonians themselves.

Considering the concrete solutions, it is obvious that we had different approaches. Every government has the right to conduct its own policy. But we must be very careful about what is national interest. Let's not get into a concept in which you ask us something that we cannot deliver."

Nikola Poposki

There is another shortcoming which produces an influence, and that is the lack of internal Macedonian consensus. If there would be a consensus among all Macedonians, among the political parties SDSM, VMRO, Liberals, and if they'd say these are our common principles: this can be negotiated about, and this we cannot give in about. If such consensus is built, then it would be much easier to offer that principle or red lines to the Albanian political entities and to ask them to show solidarity and to accept it as well.

Antonio Milosovski

Theme six is highly relevant in relation to the second research question. It answers the second research question by revealing the ways of how external pressures influence inter-ethnic relations. This theme is also a continuation of theme five, which presents the positions of the two ethnic groups in foreign policy. Theme six reveals how external pressures, by blocking the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of the country, cause deep divisions between the two ethnic groups. It is important to emphasize the blocking of Euro-Atlantic aspirations in order to point out that external pressures cause inter-ethnic divisions in an indirect way. The effect is indirect because external pressures affect directly only one ethnic group, i.e. the Macedonians. But, by producing a blocking effect over the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of the country, the external pressures become a significant cause of inter-ethnic division.

Furthermore, theme six puts forth two scenarios of possible developments of the existing division between Macedonians and Albanians over external issues. One of the scenarios speaks

about the risks of an inter-ethnic escalation while the other about the possibilities of inter-ethnic rapprochement or compromise. Given the fact that this research is qualitative, it is impossible to say which scenario dominates in the dataset. Yet, if we refer to the quotation which talk about a new momentum in foreign policy, the majority of respondents opine that regardless of the existing divisions, new conditions have developed recently which promote unification of positions between Macedonians and Albanians over foreign policy, and consequently their relations are to be characterized by compromise and not tension.

Theme 7: EU and NATO, a guarantee for domestic stability

Whereas theme six presents the possibilities of an inter-ethnic escalation, as a result of differences in perceptions towards external pressures, theme seven, delves deeper into risks which may result from external pressures, should they persist in blocking the Euro-Atlantic perspective. Theme seven links directly inter-ethnic tensions with Euro-Atlantic integrations. It indirectly rises as a response to the second research question as it doesn't focus on the direct effect external pressures have on inter-ethnic relations. Rather it reveals how external pressures produce an effect over inter-ethnic relations, by influencing the foreign policy objectives primarily. Integration into EU and NATO is perceived as a guarantee for internal stability between the polarized ethnic groups. In a hypothetical contrary scenario, respondents number several negative consequences that may come about in terms of inter-ethnic relations. Respondents who point out to the possibility of worsening of inter-ethnic relations in absence of Euro-Atlantic perspective are of both ethnicities. Politically viewed, most respondents who maintain this view are SDSM, DUI and other Albanian opposition parties, and politically unaffiliated. Nonetheless, one VMRO respondent, the former foreign minister, Poposki, also shares a similar view. Therefore, it is difficult to find a pattern of thought based on ethnic or political background. Below are a few citations of each respondent who represents different ethnic, political, or apolitical backgrounds but all maintain the same stance:

"...This is why putting forward the common interest of all citizens, that is the integration of Macedonia in the EU and NATO, is highly important for bringing communities closer and boost participation in the democratic processes."

Teuta Arifi (DUI)

“Issues get resolved anyways, but the opening of new ones is not unlikely. The best guarantee for their reduction is if the integration of the Balkan states in the EU is completed.”

Nikola Poposki (VMRO)

“One of the things we have an inter-ethnic consensus over in the Republic of Macedonia is membership in EU and NATO. When that agenda is alive, when the country moves towards that direction – our society is stable and the inter-ethnic relations are better.”

Radmila Sekerinska (SDSM)

“A declaration by the EU was quite clear. If Macedonia fails to enter EU and NATO, the consequences would be tragic.”

Arta Toci (Alliance for Albanians)

A far fewer number of respondents hold views which stand in opposition to the ones described above. The failure in resolving external issues, which in turn results into blockage of Euro-Atlantic perspective, is not perceived to drag behind negative consequences in terms of inter-ethnic stability. But the tone of each respondent when discussing possible consequences in absence of NATO and EU is different from one another. Antonio Milosovski acknowledges that there may be additional strains the country would endure if integrations are delayed, but doesn't think the results would be disastrous in terms of inter-ethnic stability. Risto Nikovski, on the other hand doesn't make any connections between EU and NATO and inter-ethnic instability. Making no references to inter-ethnic relations, Nikovski emphasizes the unworthiness of becoming a member of possibly temporary organizations and in return giving up eternal identity symbols such as the name of the state.

“I think that these would be the two constants: the non-resolution of the problems would not mean the end of the world and the dramatics that the state will collapse and disappear, but at the same time it means a closed perspective and additional resources spent on the blockade, leaving the state with internal modest resources to overcome and maintain that level of economic, political, and ethnical development and stability.”

Antonio Milosovski

“Macedonia can develop well for another 100 years without NATO and without the EU, and whether they will survive as long, nobody knows. We need to do everything to enter the EU, but not at all costs. Under no circumstances as disfigured.”

Theme seven brings to the surface several issues, two of which are directly linked to the research questions of this thesis. When elaborating on a hypothetical absent perspective of Euro-Atlantic integrations due to external blockages, respondents refer to two major consequences which are interrelated. The first consequence is deterioration of inter-ethnic relations, while the second is the creation of a vacuum state which may leave room for an increased influence of eastern great powers. Respondents argue that in absence of a Euro-Atlantic perspective, ethnic and nationalistic ideologies may gain more power and consequently deepen the divisions along ethnic lines. The second consequence, namely the increase of Russian and/or Turkish influence, is also linked to the aggravation of inter-ethnic relations, due to the different foreign policy preferences of the two ethnic groups as elaborated in theme six. The delay in resolving the external issues, which in turn block the country's Euro-Atlantic perspective, only deepens the divided preferences of the two ethnic groups. The unifying point upon which the two communities may build a cohesive society therefore becomes a weaker vision, leaving room to uncertainties and instabilities. Several respondents link in a chain of causes and consequences these three dimensions: diminished Euro-Atlantic perspective leads to increase of influence of eastern powers, which leads to further divisions between Macedonians and Albanians. This is how Blerim Reka describes such potential developments:

"I consider that leaving Macedonia in a vacuum state, without a strategic orientation, outside of Euro-Atlantic integrations, leaves space for the involvement of players outside of the Euro-Atlantic community. Here, for the most part, I refer to Russia, China and Turkey. And in such hopeless situation of becoming one day part of Europe, there could be tensioned relations between the citizens of different ethnic groups in Macedonia." When he is asked about whether there is any evidence of divided foreign preferences between Macedonians and Albanians, that may have developed as an outcome of the stalled foreign policy agenda, Reka refers to the *"Galup international polls and others, [which] consistently show that 90% of Albanians are pro EU and NATO, while in the last years, there is a decrease in the number of ethnic Macedonians [of support for EU and NATO], and an increase by 1% of their support for Russia."* When asked why is there an increase in support for Russia, Reka argues that it represents an *"alternative to the EU and NATO agenda"*. But as he continues to elaborate on this claim, he emphasizes that

this is an alternative promoted by the previous government (led by VMRO), and not necessarily a reflection of the ethnic Macedonians' affiliation with Russia. However, in Reka's opinion the latter is not an impossible scenario, should EU and NATO persist in being a conditioning factor for a name change. In such case, ethnic Macedonians may not be willing to integrate into these two organizations, considering the high price to be paid, and would therefore turn their efforts to forge another alliance, such as with Russia. This change of preference in ethnic Macedonians, however, would not be shared by ethnic Albanians, who would continue to support the EU/NATO agenda, under any condition. In such a hypothetical situation, Blerim Reka argues: *"If this gap between the two major ethnic groups within the country continues to deepen, then such a difference in strategic orientations, may lead to political differences, and without hyperbolizing, it may lead even to ethnic conflicts."*

We find such observation also in Veli Kreci's discourse: *"We have identified, or major players, Europeans and Americans, have identified that there is a Russian network of influence through the internet, changing the [inter-ethnic] perception, in the crucial moments of the country."* Kreci argues how Russian involvement helps deepen the inter-ethnic divided perceptions. He maintains that Russia's goal to impede Macedonia's entrance in NATO may be realized only if the external open disputes with the neighbors linger. What we may infer from Kreci's arguments, is that Russia, exploiting the sensitive issue of the state's name, tries to impact negatively the perception of ethnic Macedonians towards EU and NATO. Feeding such perception in the Macedonian ethnic group, in consequence may produce an even greater gap in relation to the ethnic Albanian perception.

Marko Trosanovski adds another element to the scenario of a cancelled EU and NATO integration. He posits that the absence of a European perspective for Macedonia would leave room to nationalism. The latter would be exploited by the daily politics, consequently driving the two ethnic groups further apart: *"The ethnic issues' demands will grow on both sides. The Albanians will not see their future in such hopeless context of a country [Macedonia] outside of EU and NATO, which will feed the positions, will enhance the popularity of the ethnically oriented political parties...this is a scenario which according to me is most likely to happen."* In his observation, Trosanovski seems to perceive the most negative scenarios only as less probable though. However, hypothetically he still argues of a darker scenario, such as *"the collapse of the*

country, federalization, separation, interference of the greater powers, which want to create destabilization, such as Turkey and Russia.”

Trosanovski's analysis resembles that of Reka and others as he argues that there is an enhanced interest *“especially of Russia, in creating a controlled chaos in the [Balkan] countries”*. Clearly, he portrays Russia's increased influence as dangerous for the inter-ethnic cohesion, since its involvement in internal affairs of the country is not consensually supported by the two ethnic groups. Whereas Russia may produce greater impact over the ethnic Macedonians, *“generally through fake news, propaganda, political declarations which may cause turbulences in the public opinion”* the Turkish influence is predominant within the Albanian population. Trosanovski doesn't make such claim directly. Instead, he argues that Turkey projects its influence mainly through *“religious elements, enforced islamization”*. However, knowing that the majority of the Albanian population is Muslim, we may certainly infer that the Turkish influence through religion and culture is much more present in the Albanian community. Since Russia and Turkey influence the two ethnic groups differently, we may conclude that the greater their presence in the country becomes, the more it may cause divided ethnic preferences for the state's foreign policy. Divided foreign policy preferences, in turn, may bring about domestic inter-ethnic tensions.

Risto Nikovski is among the respondents who acknowledges a possibility of an increased Russian presence in Macedonia. But he holds a diametrically opposite view regarding the nature of influence Russian involvement produces over inter-ethnic relations. As opposed to the stances above, Nikovski sees a potentially greater Russian involvement more as a consequence than a cause. Quite in contradiction to the opinions above, Nikovski views a potential inter-ethnic division as an outcome of the manipulative policy of the super power (read: USA). In his words: *“It must be known that the international factor, symbolized in the only super power, controls (almost) everything in the country. This includes inter-ethnic relations as well. They [inter-ethnic relations] are their important tool for crushing the Macedonianism and they [USA] will not allow them to move in a direction that is unacceptable or unfavorable to them.* He doesn't, however, explain what such *direction* would be and whether it would harm or mend inter-ethnic relations. However, taking the liberty to interpret his thinking, based on his statement that the super power uses inter-ethnic relations as a tool to crush *Macedonianism*, we may derive that Nikovski assumes the USA's role to be damaging to inter-ethnic relations. This stance is unique

within the empirical findings of this study, as it isn't encountered in other respondents' discourses. Nikovski maintains that inter-ethnic divisions may not escalate to a war point precisely because the Russian factor would prevent it, by becoming involved in the process, which, in turn, is least desired by USA: *"There will be no new wars in the Balkans, that is for sure, and interethnic relations will not lead to such perpetrations. There will be no war, because that would mean the inevitable return of Russia to the Balkans, and that is something that the United States desires the least. Fear is always a strong factor in politics."* From this statement we may infer that Nikovski foresees a balance of power approach, in case of an inter-ethnic clash between ethnic Macedonians and Albanians in Macedonia and beyond. Russia's involvement, in a hypothetical scenario, on the side of ethnic Macedonians, would ensure the limitation of USA's sphere of influence, which USA tries to expand through the Albanian population. Hence, Nikovski, in contrast from the other respondents, views Russia's potential influence as stabilizing and war-preventing element. Nikovski stands alone in comparison to a majority of respondents who maintain a contrary view regarding Russian involvement, however, the attitudes in this theme are not a reflection of the wider ethnic perceptions towards the two poles of power.

Theme 8: Compromise, a pathway to accomplishment

Theme eight is relevant for both research questions, as it discusses the importance and manner of resolving the external open issues. The latter, as analysed in the other themes, and especially in theme two, six or seven, affects both foreign policy and inter-ethnic relations. Hence, theme eight emerges as a logical continuation of the topics discussed above, which expose the role of external pressures in hindering the realization of foreign policy objectives, and through it, in becoming a cause for inter-ethnic divisions, which in continued absence of foreign policy realizations, may deteriorate further into tensions. Acknowledging the chain of cause and effects, the majority of respondents elaborate on the necessity of a concept most of them call *compromise*, but which in fact embraces a wider meaning. They elaborate on the need for a change in the foreign policy approach or embracing a new methodology towards the resolution of issues with 'stronger' neighbours, and with a final aim of moving from a status-quo point. An example of this stance is shown below:

“Macedonia is not at the same level with Greece. We have to choose a method of resolving the issues, all other outcomes are very unfavorable for the country. This approach, through negotiations, making of concessions in several points of the negotiations, the seven points that are constantly mentioned, I think is inevitable...we showed that we cannot confront.”

Marko Trosanovski

Through this statement Marko Trosanovski reveals a feature of small states foreign policy which is typical of bandwagoning. Having no large capacities to lead a foreign policy that would best protect its national interests, a small state has to choose, among the main foreign policy priorities, the one which would play the most crucial role in preserving its security and survival. In Macedonia's case that would mean conceding to the demands of another state(s), which would otherwise threaten its international integration. Accepting demands from a state which threatens the international integration perspective of a small country, may be considered as the optimal foreign policy maneuver of a small state, whose security lies in international integration and alliances.

This theme is not a product of unanimous attitudes of all respondents. Based on their perceptions, this theme reveals a division which is characterized by ethnic and political orientation. The respondents who argue in favour of finding a compromise or moving from a status quo situation as the optimal way of overcoming problems with the neighbours, are of Macedonian and Albanian ethnic belonging. But the respondents who oppose compromise and propose other ways of finding a solution, are only of Macedonian ethnic origin. So, the division is not only inter-ethnic, between Albanians and Macedonians, but also intra-ethnic, between the Macedonians. The division between Macedonians is characterized by party or ideology affiliation. SDSM affiliated respondents are in favour of compromise and negotiations. They favour a quicker resolution, pointing out to the repercussions the country may face if status quo continues. The following statements are two illustrations by SDSM members:

“A small and land-locked country cannot expand its strategic depth without external leverage. There are two, out of many, political choices at hand: integration into the wider international institutional networks and active diplomatic presence in the surrounding areas...”

Stevo Pendarovski (SDSM)

“It is a statehood approach to guard the basic elements of our culture and identity, but also to listen to the other side and find a solution. Status quo is not convenient for anybody anymore, and much less for us...It takes a lot of patience, openness, constructiveness and trust.”

Radmila Sekerinska (SDSM)

VMRO affiliated respondents, on the other hand, are not against the resolution of open disputes in principle. However, they resist the approach of compromise. Instead they advocate for symmetrical positions between the countries in conflict, especially when it comes to finding suitable solutions. Some respondents propose solutions which are not carried out at the bilateral level, but which instead would pass through the UN. Below are two quotations from VMRO members illustrating their position on the resolution of external disputes:

“Opened and equally reciprocal approach is the best guarantee for sustainable relations”

Nikola Poposki (VMRO)

“The best way of resolving contests is when they are resolved at a time of equal status; an equal international status between the neighboring countries which resolve a certain contest... I think that in such a situation, when the two states are at the same level of membership or non-membership in a given organization, is easier to solve [the issues] than when there is asymmetry. This can be seen in the case with Greece...”

Antonio Milosovski (VMRO)

But the fact that there are responders who argue against the government’s approach towards the external pressures, yet are not officially VMRO affiliated, or have an apolitical profile, demonstrates that the division is not only inter-party but also intra-ethnic. Two short citations illustrate the stances of two apolitical respondents who argue against the government’s approach of resolving external issues.

“The government approaches the issue from the perspective that this is a question which you rationally resolve and make compromise. What I am saying is that you cannot make compromises, because you have violated the legal equality of the country within the UN... You don’t compromise on some issues.”

Zhidas Daskalovski

“The problems with the neighbors, which have a historical character, should in no way be resolved (through) based on our capitulation, as it was the case with Bulgaria...The name issue,

on the other hand, needs to be brought again to the Security Council, with an appropriate Memorandum, through the UN Secretary General.”

Risto Nikovski

Hence, theme eight presents another important aspect, which although is not the focus of the research questions, is related to ethnicity and foreign policy. Whereas positions between different ethnic groups come closer, division appears between the same ethnic group over the approach towards external opened issues, such as the name issue with Greece or the agreement with Bulgaria. Hence, in contrast to what the second research question attempts to find out, theme eight suggests that external pressures and the approach towards their resolution cause an intra-ethnic rather than an inter-ethnic division. The intra-ethnic division, as illustrated above, is characterized by a group who supports a compromising approach towards external pressures and another group who opposes compromise in the given circumstances. What seems to divide the ethnic Macedonian respondents is their perception of security. The first group of respondents, who view security in terms of NATO and EU membership, is characterized by elements of pragmatism, wishing to accept a compromise in order to move forward from a longstanding status-quo in foreign policy. The second group, who view security in terms of national identity preservation, is characterized by elements of reservation and restraint, showing greater concern about safeguarding the ethnic identity elements even if that means a continuation of the status quo in the international integration agenda. A division within the Macedonian ethnic group into *pragmatists* and *nationalists* is expected if we consider the identity related nature of the external pressures and the blocking effect they produce over the foreign policy orientation of the country. Considering the limitations of evidence, however, this aspect of theme eight only serves as an initial avenue which might inspire a greater scientific interest for further research into this outcome.

Compared to existing statistics, the divisions which appear in this theme seem to reflect the wider reality in Macedonia, to a certain extent. Nevertheless, this research does not pretend to make generalizations of attitudes based on its findings, but it only aims to present analysis of the stances of the selected respondents and the implications they produce. Accounting for the foreign policy approach and actions of the VMRO and of the SDSM led government, it seems that the attitudes of the respondents align with either one approach based on their party affiliation. The attitude of the Albanians, which is reflected in this theme, is also in alignment with the Albanian

political factor's urgency or priority for quicker integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures, which was elaborated in greater detail in theme six. Below is an excerpt of an Albanian respondents, who is also a representative of the Albanian party, DUI, in both VMRO and SDSM led governments:

“The right approach in solving open issues with neighboring countries would be an open, honest, down to earth dialogue, which would result in concrete measures taken by the parties...It is important the process of the name dispute [negotiations] to continue, and only then can we hope for results.”

Teuta Arifi

The DUI representative's statement is closer to the statements of the SDSM members, thus standing in opposition to the VMRO members' attitudes. Consequently, the Albanian political factor's consistency of foreign policy attitudes, has led to divisions with the VMRO coalition partner, as illustrated above. The divisions have not persisted into the new government, led by the SDSM, precisely because the new Macedonian coalition partner has shifted from the previous government's position. The newly developed foreign policy approach by SDSM has caused the attitudes of the two ethnic groups, represented by the two coalition partners in government, to come closer together.

In a direct relation to the second research question, theme eight demonstrates a rapprochement of attitudes between Macedonians and Albanians. More precisely, it shows similarity in thinking between Macedonian and Albanian political parties. As several respondents mention themselves, this rapprochement is a recent phenomenon, when comparing it against a greater gap of attitudes between Macedonians and Albanians in the previous years. The following theme provides a greater insight into the reasons behind a newly emerged consensus between Macedonians and Albanians regarding external open issues and the approach towards them.

Theme 9: Vital decisions require collective responsibility

While theme eight reveals arguments about the necessity to change the foreign policy status quo position by compromise and negotiations, theme nine elaborates on the concept of collective responsibility, which must reflect ethnic and political inclusion, when engaging into a new foreign policy approach. Theme nine is also a product of both research questions. This is true

because it correlates the chosen foreign policy approach towards the resolution of external issues with inter-ethnic cohesion. Thus, many respondents, considering the weight and nature of the external issues, emphasize the necessity for an inclusive approach by the government in its endeavors to resolve the blocking external issues, as an only way to reaching sustainable solution. Here is how Radmila Sekerinska, the SDSM Minister of Defense, describes such inclusion:

“Regarding issues which affect Republic of Macedonia as a whole, all citizens must be included. Not a single problem can be resolved without an internal consensus...Republic of Macedonia has a short but rich history in this aspect. Inclusivity can never cause harm, instead, it only contributes to a better decision-making process...”

Radmila Sekerinska

The MP of the Albanian oppositional party Besa, Afrim Gashi, further adds that if the inclusivity approach is not applied in sensitive issues such as the name dispute, the resolution would not reflect a winning situation for all actors. *“Be it any government, if this problem is presented as a problem which depends on the relationship government-opposition, we automatically have an unsolvable problem...we mustn’t view this problem [the name dispute] as an issue where one party wins and the other loses.”* When asked to elaborate more on his concept of winning and losing sides in the name dispute context he adds: *“If SDSM solves the name issue today, VMRO would treat them as traitors.”* Hence, the one-sided approach or initiative to resolve issues that affect the core of the country’s being, in Gashi’s opinion, would only produce heroes and traitors, depending on the side the story is viewed from. In order to avoid further divisions within the Macedonian society, Gashi proposes *“that SDSM together with VMRO, the Albanian parties, the academic world, should take upon themselves a collective responsibility, more general, more social responsibility, and when a solution is found, it must be a joint resolution. It may sound utopic, but it is not unreal.”*

But, according to the gathered evidence, theme nine implies that the inclusivity and the achieved consensus regarding the bilateral opened issues, such as the name issue, are more of an inter-ethnic character than of an inter-party one. The recent consensus achieved between Macedonians and Albanians may be viewed not so much as a result of the Albanians’ change of position but rather as that of the Macedonian ruling party. In consistence with this new approach, respondents acknowledge several concrete actions taken by the Prime Minister in trying to

overcome bilateral contests with Bulgaria and Greece, which have helped bring the positions of the two ethnic communities closer together:

“For a small country, with less than two million inhabitants, and with ¾ of borders contested by neighbors, it is quite problematic to consolidate as a state. The first steps were made by [Prime Minister] Zaev, by signing the agreement for good neighborly relations with Bulgaria, and we can at least hope that one hot point will be closed. He made some other symbolic steps such as changing of the airport’s name, of the highway, etc. Accepting to change the name with a geographic qualifier, is the next step he made with Greece...”

Blerim Reka

“I think, the government, when it started to build good relations with Bulgaria, it was just sending positive/constructive signal to other neighbors that this is going to be our approach. So, they started with a less difficult issue ... This discourse has a positive balance to the current government, because they are building confidence on [?] and skills to resolve some issues that haven’t been resolved for a long period of time. This is a government we can actually rely on solving the name issue.

Veli Kreci

These actions are described as signals by the new government of a newly embraced foreign policy approach towards neighbors. A shown commitment about negotiations by the Macedonian leading party is in accordance with the Albanians’ will (described mostly in theme five and six) in regard to external pressures. Hence, as attitudes come closer and gap becomes smaller, structured inclusivity between Macedonians and Albanians, takes place more evidently. Sometimes such shared responsibility or inclusivity between the two ethnic groups is stated directly. At other times it is implied by Albanian respondents, who show a support for the government’s actions in foreign policy, which, in contrary circumstances, would not have been shown. There are two quotations below, by two ethnic Albanian respondents, one of whom represents the Albanian party in government (Teuta Arifi), while the other an Albanian party in opposition (Arta Toci). Yet, both reflect their support for the government’s foreign policy approach, showing inter-ethnic rapprochement and inclusivity on foreign policy matters:

“Obviously, there is a new dynamics and strong political will from the current government to resolve the open issues and hasten the process of the countries Euro-Atlantic integration. Of course, we have to bear in mind the complexity of the issues, the international context and domestic political situations in our country and the neighboring countries, but I believe we have reached a good political moment to intensify talks and eventually negotiate agreeable solutions

for all countries concerned, and more importantly display such solution as a common vision of all different and relevant factors within Macedonia's society."

Teuta Arifi (DUI)

"This government, known as reformatory, orients its reforms mainly towards its foreign policy. I claim that Macedonia's foreign policy is heading towards the right path, considering the very fact that it is working towards the relaxation of relations with the neighbors; it is one of its objectives."

Arta Toci (Alliance for Albanians)

But, when vital decisions, which require joint responsibility, are at question, an inter-party inclusivity of the Macedonian community is missing. Once they emphasize the importance of collective participation in finding solutions to external pressures, some respondents point out to the absence of consensus between the two greatest Macedonian parties, SDSM and VMRO. Respondents assess such lack of consensus as negative for the perspective of the country, however, they do not elaborate in depth on the motives or implications behind it. Besides Blerim Reka, the other respondents only make references to VMRO's objection to the government's foreign policy approach, but do not elaborate on VMRO's own stance nor do they discuss any consequences which may follow. Based on the dataset, an only inferred conclusion about VMRO's stance towards the governmental approach is that it is disapproving or critical. Nonetheless, this is simply an inference which is not necessarily valid. The citations below illustrate the perceptions of some respondents regarding the lack of consensus between the two parties and the implications of it.

"We are talking about the constitutional order of the state. We are not talking about the name of the government. If it were about the name of the government, Zaev [the Prime Minister] would have chosen it himself. But we are talking about the whole state, all of its inhabitants, all people, position, opposition, civil society. In other words, Macedonia, as a unison, as a whole, should find the force to go beyond itself and its nationalistic feelings, etc. for the sake of future, for the new generations..." Blerim Reka

When Reka is asked whether he is referring to any specific political subject when discussing the need of moving beyond the nationalistic feelings, he states the following: *It isn't right for an oppositional political conjuncture to victimize and hold hostage the fate of all Macedonia and the entire young generations only for the sake of whims and political stubbornness of being in opposition...they were in government for eleven years, why didn't they solve it? Now, someone*

else, in their place in government, wants to solve it, and they say no!...This according to me is political immaturity..."

When he refers to the opposition, he only means the ethnic Macedonian oppositional party, VMRO, since in the foreign policy realm, the Albanian oppositional parties show no difference of attitudes from the Albanian party in power. Reka doesn't provide any other motivation behind VMRO's behavior besides pointing to a *caprice* for not being in power. He does, however, call for greater reflection within VMRO, arguing that a status quo is damaging for the future of the country:

"So, I expect the oppositional VMRO to reflect a bit more rationally on these issues; we are not talking about today, we are talking about future generations. Anyhow, this state, should continue [to exist] and the new generation should develop further. With a status quo [of foreign policy agenda] there is no progress, development, advancement."

Trosanovski sounds even more pessimistic about the possibility of reaching an inter-party consensus on the external open disputes. *"It would be best to have a wider responsibility of political actors. That is very difficult to happen ... But, it is very illusory to seek a way for political consensus over the [name] compromise between all parties...they would not agree - the opposition at the moment [would not agree]."* He points out, however, to the existence of another consensus, one which is inter-ethnic, namely between the ethnic Macedonian party SDSM and the Albanian parties: *Whereas a consensus between the current Macedonian party in power and the rest of the parties certainly exists."* Although Trosanovski is skeptical of an agreement between the two biggest Macedonian parties on the foreign policy challenges, he doesn't exclude the possibility of VMRO accepting 'silently' a resolution of external disputes, such as the name issue. In Trosanovski's opinion, such a quiet support, would be convenient for VMRO, as a highly sensitive foreign policy issue would be resolved by another political party (SDSM), thus taking off VMRO's shoulders a major historical responsibility: *There is a lack of consensus by VMRO, which could still, in a tacit way, support the resolution."*

Arta Toci, in an effort to illustrate the role of VMRO in crucial decision-making times for the country's foreign policy, refers to VMRO's rejection of the Law on the use of languages. She views VMRO's behavior as a tactic to delay the discussions on the salient foreign policy issues and as a way to divert the population's attention from external issues to internal inter-ethnic issues.

“During these great and key moments for Macedonia, when long lasting problems are being resolved, which are a precondition for moving forward, the orientation is defocused on something irrelevant. Instead of Macedonia’s government and opposition joining together towards the fulfilment of the [foreign policy] goal, the opposition [VMRO] of Macedonia submits 36 thousand amendments for the law on the use of languages. This is a way for avoiding the vital issues, and I don’t understand such defocusing of opinion by the Macedonian opposition party.”

Arta Toci

Whereas the citations above point to VMRO for demonstrating uncooperative behavior with the government in resolving external issues, Risto Nikovski, attributes such lack of cooperation or inclusivity to the Zaev government (led by SDSM). He stands in opposition to the above cited respondents, by claiming that the way of action of the current government is exclusive and nontransparent. Besides VMRO’s exclusion, which Nikovski doesn’t make direct reference to, he talks about other factors, who are significant, yet are not included in this process. Nikovski’s stance here, who views the government’s approach as exclusionary and amateurish, is a coherent continuation of his thoughts expressed in the previous theme, which reveal his opposition to the government’s approach towards the resolution of external issues:

“The bearer should of course be the Government, but for key issues, such as the name of the state, all relevant social factors must be included. It must not be negotiated in an utmost secrecy and without proper in-depth analysis, as it is now. Foreign experts must be involved because we do not have enough domestic political, legal and diplomatic capacities. Their non-involvement, in turn, speaks of clear amateurism.”

Theme nine is significant in relation to both research questions. Unlike theme two, it doesn’t focus on how external pressures affect foreign policy objectives, but it is still relevant to the first research question as it provides evidence about the governmental response to the external issues which, as theme two establishes, produce a blocking effect over the foreign policy objectives. By explaining the governmental approach towards the external issues, this theme also provides answers for the second research question, as the governmental response towards external issues involves inter-ethnic inclusion and shared responsibility. Hence, it indirectly reflects how external pressures have influenced a rapprochement between the two ethnicities in response to these opened issues. Here, theme nine contradicts theme six, which portrayed an inter-ethnic division over external pressures. But chronologically viewed, theme nine presents a situation where ethnic positions have evolved from being divided to being unified as a result of newly created circumstances. Hence, this theme can be considered to reveal a later stage of the

relationship developments between the two ethnic groups in regard to the external pressures and their effects over foreign policy objectives. It portrays an evolution of the developments laid in themes five, six, and seven.

Theme 10: Time is now

Theme ten is both similar and different from theme eight and nine. The sufficient differences it embraces, however, make it stand as a separate theme. Theme ten discusses the concept of time in relation to external pressures. As such, it provides insights into the first research question, as *time*, just like *compromise*, is an important integrative component in the governmental approach towards the external opened issues. Similar to theme eight, theme ten provides insights into the governmental approach towards external issues, but the approach this time is not about the method but about the time. Also, just as theme eight and nine, this theme brings to light a similar division between respondents over the concept ‘time is now’. The two quotations below illustrate the division between respondents:

“Yes, I would even say it differently. Not only it is the right time, but it is the only possible period when this issue can be resolved.”

Blerim Reka

“I’d estimate the quality of the Government by the quality of the solutions, and not by the speed [they are resolved at].”

Nikola Poposki

The division in theme ten has great resemblance with that of theme eight as it illustrates unified positions between the two ethnic groups towards the external issues. Thus, the rapprochement between Macedonians and Albanians becomes evident once more in the current theme. Below are provided two quotations, one by an ethnic Macedonian and the other one by an ethnic Albanian, both of whom show resemblance in thinking regarding the right time of resolving the external issues:

“...Nonetheless, I consider that this government is quite dedicated to solve this problem, and I consider that it is of utmost importance to be resolved now...”

Marko Trosanovski (ethnic Macedonian)

“The current government puts the Euro- Atlantic integration of Macedonia on the top of its agenda, so I do believe that the process will be hastened and the impact on the country’s overall development will be positive.”

Teuta Arifi (ethnic Albanian)

Another resemblance between theme eight and ten is about the consistency of the respondents’ views across the two themes. The same respondents who argue about ‘time is now’, argue in favor of negotiations and compromise in theme eight. On the other hand, the respondents who argue against ‘time is now,’ similarly argue against compromise as a method of resolving opened issues with neighbors in theme eight. Based on their logic of reasoning, the respondents link the method and the time into one concept, either being pro or against both.

Theme ten also presents an inter-party and intra-ethnic division. Like theme eight, respondents who are SDSM affiliated favor a quicker solution to the name issue with Greece. On the other hand, respondents who are affiliated with VMRO consider that time shouldn’t be used as a pressuring instrument for reaching a solution with the neighbors. The fact that besides SDSM and VMRO representatives, there are independent respondents who are divided over the concept of time, shows that the division, besides being inter-party, is also an intra-ethnic one, just as it was in theme eight. The citations below illustrate the double division explained in this paragraph. The respondents are all of ethnic Macedonian background, of either one of the two major parties, and independent ones:

“...in the interim accord we have with Greece, there isn’t a time limit, while both sides should be aware that is in the interest of both the sooner settlement of the dispute...but if one side holds time as an argument and claims that the more the issue is delayed then you [Macedonia] will be damaged, while the other side is put under pressure, then a resolution of the dispute may come, but that will not be a fair solution, but a pawnbroker solution.”

Antonio Milosovski (VMRO)

“...And this whole charade of ‘now is the moment’, ‘now is the time’, is only a charade and it’s not going to bring anything good.”

Zhidas Daskalovski (non-party affiliated)

“All political factors that are now in power think that time has come for resolving the issue about Macedonia’s integration into NATO, as we hold the notorious record of being the state with the longest candidacy...”

Stevo Pendarovski (SDSM)

“...Nonetheless, I consider that this government is quite dedicated to solve this problem, and I consider that it is of utmost importance to be resolved now...”

Marko Trosanovski (non-party affiliated)

The division between the respondents in theme ten, which is intra-ethnic, and inter-party, would be almost identical to that in theme eight. But an exception to this pattern is the position of an Albanian respondent, Afrim Gashi, who argues against the concept ‘time is now’:

“The mechanism is for us to come altogether and to discuss for days...I even think that regarding these things [opened issues with neighbors], a dialogue which is not time limited is needed. Let it begin today and last a year or two...if we can achieve a solution today, let us resolve it, but if not...then this would be the way.”

Afrim Gashi

Gashi’s position may seem paradoxical, if we consider the general attitude of the Albanian political factor, as expressed by most respondents, which is in high favor of Euro-Atlantic integrations and therefore of a quicker resolution of external blockages. Nevertheless, if we analyze the position of Gashi about the external pressures, such as the name issue with Greece, we can conclude that he views the external matters only as a consequence of the internal deviations of the political system:

“...A political system has been built that projects Macedonia as a nation state, while the social reality in Macedonia is that it is a multiethnic state...So defining the state as unitary (nation-state) has also created problems with its neighbors.”

Hence, when elaborating on the ways of approaching the external opened issues, Gashi maintains a constant focus on the need to correct the constitutional philosophy, which is ethno-nationally based, into a multi-ethnic one, as the first and most important step, which will then lead to the resolution of the consequential external issues the country has with its neighbors. By seeing the root of the problem in the *distorted* constitutional reality of Macedonia, Gashi acknowledges that the process of mending this problem is rather complex and therefore shouldn’t be time limited. As such, Gashi’s position may resemble that of the other ethnic Macedonian respondents in arguing against time as the main argument for resolving the external issues. But in essence, his position is different from the other respondents who argue against ‘time is now’. Unlike Gashi, the other respondents view the contests with neighbors not as a reflection of the domestic, but rather as externally imposed contests, which shouldn’t be approached in the manner that the government is doing.

The last theme unfolds the attitudes and outlooks of the respondents in relation to the external open issues. As seen in several themes, the positions of some respondents on the external pressures are conditioned by the effect they produce over foreign policy and

consequently over inter-ethnic relations, and in some others the positions are conditioned by the effect the external pressures produce on the national (state) identity, which is equalized with the ethnic identity of the majority of population. Depending on the significance each respondent attaches to either one factor, foreign policy versus national identity, they either support or object the timing factor in the resolution process of external opened issues. These attitudes of respondents are not characteristic only for theme ten, but for all themes generally, as every attitude is a reflection of the respondents' feelings and reasoning towards the external issues and all the effects they may produce.

As explained in the beginning of this chapter, the approach to theme generation was data driven while guided by the two research questions. Hence, the ten themes which emerged from the data set are a result of ten standardized questions of the interview I conducted with thirteen respondents, and which were formulated in correlation with the two research questions. The intention was to capture the aspects of how external pressures impact foreign policy and inter-ethnic relations in Macedonia in the period 1991-2018, as perceived by the selected respondents. The frequency of appearance across the dataset was not the only criterion for the generation of the ten themes. In the process of theme generation, there were other criteria as well, such as the relevance of a theme in relation to the research questions, which was perhaps based on a subjective judgement of the researcher. The meanings or implications in each theme are important dimensions of this research and they have been pointed out and analysed whenever encountered.

The ten themes of this research, seen as a whole, represent a correlation not only with the research questions but with one another as well. They altogether represent a multi-faceted narrative on external pressures, foreign policy, and inter-ethnic relations. As such, these themes present the complexity of the relationship between external pressures and foreign policy and external pressures and inter-ethnic relations, as this relationship varies and evolves from one theme to another. Such complexity is best described by the respondents themselves, who at times agree and other times contradict each other. The similarities or differences among the respondents derive from their perception on the effects of the external pressures over foreign policy and inter-ethnic relations. Whereas this research attempts to analyse this external effect on only two dimensions, foreign policy and inter-ethnic relations, it is impossible to overlook another important effect the external pressures produce; and that is the effect over the ethnic

identity of the majority community, i.e. the Macedonians. It is precisely this effect which influences the respondents to show certain attitudes when elaborating on the other effects. As the ten themes reflect, the similarities or differences which arise among respondents are sometimes characterized by ethnic belonging, by party affiliation, or by other factors. Sometimes, there is pattern of thought which can be traced in the respondents' overall views, but sometimes their attitudes switch to an extent that the pattern is lost. Themes themselves can be contradictory to one another. Whereas one theme establishes an inter-ethnic division about external pressures, other themes portray the opposite – an inter-ethnic unity. But the themes merely present the evolving nature of these relationships from one contextual circumstance to another.

Besides the direct meanings which each theme presents, there are several underpinning assumptions or implications. Besides establishing more obvious phenomena such as stalled foreign policy or divided inter-ethnic attitudes over external pressures, there are other subtler aspects the themes reveal. This approach is called by Braun and Clarke as latent themes, and is based mostly on the subjective judgement of the researcher and perhaps on his/her prior knowledge of the contextual setting. According to the latent theme approach, the researcher is not only focused on the surface meaning of the dataset, but goes beyond what is said, trying to find underlying meanings and search for patterns of latent attitudes in the data set (Braun and Clark, 2006, p.14). Different ethnic preferences about foreign ties, prevalence of ethnic identity over national (civic) identity, ethnic perceptions towards external issues, intra-ethnic lack of consensus in relation to external pressures, are some of these latent aspects, each of which is analysed in greater detail within the appropriate themes.

CHAPTER 7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Discussion

As the introductory chapter of this thesis states, this work begins its empirical research being guided mainly by two research questions. Indeed, this work is partly of an explorative nature, led and structured by the attitudes of the interview subjects, who represent individuals with knowledge and influence in the areas of foreign policy and inter-ethnic issues. But, as already stated before, the research also combines semi-structured methods, led by the two research questions, which serve mainly for maintaining the focus on the relationship between foreign policy and inter-ethnic relations, as the main objective of this work.

Coming back to the first research question, which stated: In what ways have external pressures influenced Macedonia's foreign policy objectives? the empirical content provides answers which are almost consistent in their narrative logic, and where almost no contradiction among the respondents is noticed. This is best reflected in theme one, which in a direct manner establishes the objectives of Macedonia's foreign policy objectives. Although this theme reflects a unity of attitudes among different respondents, including the ones of opposite political wings, it still doesn't answer the first research question entirely. Besides establishing the main objectives of Macedonia's foreign policy, which are EU and NATO integration, this theme also demonstrates an inter-ethnic unity in relation to the joint integrations objective of foreign policy. The second and fourth theme, may also be considered as answers to the first research question, although the answers from theme two to theme four are not only different but, at times, also contradictory. Theme two answers the first research question by describing the external factors as the main factor that impacts the slow-down and even the halt of the foreign policy progress towards the Euro-Atlantic integration. Theme two focuses upon the Greek neighboring state, describing it as the main influential factor over Macedonia's foreign policy objectives. This influence is almost unilaterally described as negative and damaging to foreign policy. The respondents emphasize that Greece, because of the bilateral contest it has with Macedonia over

its constitutional name and over the state symbols, which also overlap with the symbols of the Macedonian ethnic group, conditions the Republic of Macedonia to undertake changes in its name and other state identity symbols, by impeding its integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures. The reasons behind Greece's behavior towards Macedonia, according to the data, fall under a wide spectrum. Some of the reasons are limited only to a bilateral contest between the two states over national identity issues, while others go beyond a mere bilateral dispute, to include the role of other powers, such as Russia or U.S.A., who aim to carry out their own interests through this contest. In addition to Greece, this theme brings to attention yet another factor, who may've exerted a similar influence, or in other words, impede the objectives of the country's foreign policy. This other factor is Bulgaria, another neighboring state, with which the Republic of Macedonia has open identity issues as well. Nevertheless, the role of Bulgaria, is described by many respondents only as secondary, for two reasons. The first reason is the low leverage of Bulgaria in international relations, in comparison to Greece, and consequently its insufficient capacity to initiate an international blockade on a neighboring state. Secondly, the contest with Bulgaria, considered as a less complicated one, was already underway to being resolved at the time the empirical research of this work took place. Thus, this issue is portrayed in the data as a process which was moving quickly towards resolution and therefore as an issue which was going to be closed soon. Although this theme dominates significantly in the respondents' discourse, regarding the external factors and their influence on Macedonia's foreign policy objects, theme four represents the other side of the medal. It narrates about internal factors, which in the opinion of respondents are as detrimental to the process of foreign policy progress as the external factors. Although the first research question is concentrated only on external factors and their impact over foreign policy, the explorative and only semi-structured nature of this research, has allowed the surfacing of data which point towards other influential factor, internal ones, such as the slow reform process, the politicization of institutions, nationalism, the constitutional philosophy which defines the country as a nation-state, etc.

The diversity of respondents' answers was more than expected, considering the selective choice of respondents in this work, aiming to bring together in a sample ethnically and politically different respondents. Therefore, the factors and the reasons behind the negative impact over the realization of Macedonia's foreign policy objectives are elaborated within a wide spectrum, starting from the external to the internal factors. Relevant to the first research question, however,

is the fact that the external factors, characterized through the neighboring states, are well established as blocking and impeding factors of Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic objectives.

While the first research question tries to find out whether there is a direct relationship between external factors and foreign policy objectives, the second research question is more complex, as it tries to research an indirect relationship. Spelled out as: In what way have external pressures influenced inter-ethnic relations in Macedonia? the second research question finds a more profound answer within theme six, which continues to develop into theme seven. Theme six, in fact, expresses the indirect impact that external factors produce over inter-ethnic relations. Such impact is perceived through EU and NATO, thus the title of this theme states: Two ethnicities divided by EU and NATO. This theme establishes two phenomena. The first is the inter-ethnic division which is caused as a result of the external pressures, and which implies the existence of an ethnic perception towards the external contests. The inter-ethnic division is characterized by the different perceptions, between the Macedonians and Albanians, over the external contents, and especially over the one with Greece on the name of the state. But this division is also characterized by a different inter-ethnic perception over EU and NATO integration. This may seem paradoxical, as we already stated that theme one establishes an inter-ethnic unity over the integration agenda of the country. How is this division explained in theme six then? The inter-ethnic division over EU and NATO integration in theme six results as a consequence of the connection between the external contest and the integration agenda of Macedonia. Since the foreign policy agenda is closely related to the resolution of bilateral contests, the perception over the first dimension (external factors) is ultimately reflected over the second dimension (international integration). The second dimension is the epilogue of this division, which, according to the data, has a potential of worsening if the conditions of the external factors persist. The second phenomenon is best elaborated in the following theme, i.e. in theme seven. This theme, through the impressions and attitudes of the respondents, presents two hypothetical potentialities and a third explanation. The first is a potential for further escalation of inter-ethnic division over bilateral contests and consequently over international integrations, and the second is the de-escalation of inter-ethnic division and emergence of inter-ethnic unity based on a changed political approach over bilateral contests and consequently over international integrations. The third explanation does not relate bilateral contests with inter-ethnic relations.

The empirical indications provide some explanations in relation to some of the raised arguments (hypotheses) in the theoretical chapters as well. Firstly, the hypothesis 1a gains support on the basis of the respondents' attitudes, who are both ethnic Macedonians and Albanians, and who qualify the external pressures as a threat to the state security, in the sense that they, if left unresolved, may cause international isolation of the country. The interview subjects' understanding of the linkage between security and international integration, suggests that external factors indeed represent security threats to a small and weak state, which is incapable of defending its sovereignty independently of international allies. To clarify further the support that hypothesis 1a gains from the empirical findings, I will divide it into two parts. The first part of this hypothesis, as already stated above, seems to gain some evidence, as the bilateral pressures, by nearly all respondents, are qualified as political threats with high intensity and meaningfulness to the state security, which, in turn, is closely related to the integration processes. By describing the bilateral contests as the main impediment to the country's international integration, and by emphasizing the inability of a small state's survival, which is faced with internal (inter-ethnic) and external (inter-neighbourly) instability, outside the alliances and international organizations, such as the EU and NATO, the data indicates that the disputable issues with neighbours, and in particular with Greece, are considered as highly threatening and meaningful to the state's security. As a logical consequence, the respondents indicate support for the second part of hypothesis 1a, i.e. of the demonstration of a higher foreign policy action/initiative towards the external threats. Throughout the empirical indications, from nearly all interview subjects, such high action or initiative is described as a policy of *compromise*, which would be characterized by bilateral agreements, that would close the contests with the neighbours and would consequently open the country's path towards Euro-Atlantic integrations. Such high foreign policy initiative towards external threats, the respondents view as an already signalled new foreign policy approach, reflected through several symbolic steps, such as the agreement with Bulgaria, the change of the name of the Skopje airport, of the name of a highway, etc.).

For the opposite sub-hypothesis, or H1b, on the other hand, there are much less empirical indications. However, some respondents identify the situation predicted by H1b with the period of the VMRO rule. Some data indicate that during the period of a decade long reign of VMRO, the external disputes with the neighbours have been perceived as a threat, however, mainly as a

societal threat, as in their perception, it targeted the identity elements of the state. Consequently, given the limited foreign policy manoeuvrability, due to the external conditions, there are some empirical data that give indications that foreign policy response has been at low or at status-quo level. From the attitudes of the respondents we may infer that this hypothesis represents *a state of the past* in terms of the relationship between external threats and foreign policy action. The transition from this state to the one hypothesized in H1a occurs precisely due to a change in perception regarding threats and security issues, as reflected in the empirical findings.

The second hypothesis was born out of the second research question, which tried to explore how external pressures might affect inter-ethnic relations. This hypothesis, however, does not stand independent, but in relation to the first one. Similar to the first hypothesis, the second hypothesis was also developed in two opposing scenarios. The empirical findings, however, provide indications which seem to support the first scenario, or hypothesis 2a. This outcome was expectable since hypothesis 1a and 2a are interrelated in a causal relationship, just as 1b and 2b are. Since hypothesis 1a found greater empirical support previously in the empirical indications, the support followed in favour of the hypothesis 2b later. By describing the political developments on the basis of their perceptions, the respondents provided data which testify to how higher foreign policy actions towards external bilateral pressures, which lead to their resolution, provide opportunity for inter-ethnic rapprochement and ultimately unification. According to most empirical evidence, some indications, such inter-ethnic unity is demonstrated by both Macedonians and Albanians. This demonstration is either expressed directly, or indirectly, through the expression of support for the current foreign policy behaviour towards the neighbours. From such support, we may infer the conclusion that the ethnic groups have developed closer attitudes than before towards foreign policy, which in turn, has helped further the rapprochement of the ethnic groups. This rapprochement, as an end process, may lead to an advanced stage of inter-ethnic integration under a European identity.

Being the opposite of hypothesis 2a, hypothesis 2b, appears to find much less supportive indications in the empirical findings. What seems more significant to mention, is the fact that my assumption of an existing relationship between hypothesis 1b and 2b does not appear to be substantiated sufficiently by the empirical indications. Hence, the data seem to indicate that there isn't a necessary interrelation between external threats and inter-ethnic disunity. While some respondents account for the existence of inter-ethnic division, they do not attribute such division

to the country's foreign policy behaviour towards the external contests. As the data appears to indicate, in relation to hypothesis 2b, the scenario foreseen by this hypothesis is no longer a scenario with a potential to develop in the future, but rather a situation of the past, which has come to an end with the change of government in 2017.

If we approach the two hypotheses in a holistic manner, the analysis of the empirical findings seems to point to the existence of a relationship between the three main elements of the research triangle: external factors – foreign policy – inter-ethnic relations, while the knot of this relationship appears to be foreign policy. Foreign policy, as the findings indicate, examined free of external pressures, results as a significant role player over the unification of ethnic groups, otherwise divided. This happens due to the existence of same inter-ethnic preferences over the international orientation of the state, as nearly all research subjects express. Such indications may help future research reach a conclusion that foreign policy, by influencing the supra-ethnic consciousness of the different ethnic groups, may help the construction of a state/national identity based on civic values. The recurring themes in the research of the relationship between foreign policy and inter-ethnic relations provide indications on the role of security and integration played by foreign policy. In other words, the empirical findings enhance our understanding on foreign policy's double role within a small, multi-ethnic state: that of security and integration. The findings suggest that through international integrations, foreign policy aims to enhance the small state's status in the international realm, but also to forge internal, inter-ethnic integration. Consequently, this enables foreign policy to perform its double security role, by guaranteeing a small state's security both in the international and domestic environment.

The foreign policy international posture, as the case of Macedonia demonstrates, is the most consensual factor between the two major ethnic groups, thus reflecting a stabilizing role within the domestic realm of a multi-ethnic country. By qualifying foreign policy as "*the most general and widest consensus, national and political*", international integration is viewed as a factor which affects national integration between different ethnic groups, just as much or even more than other internal factors. Although the empirical findings do not provide thorough elaborations on the reasons for a unified support of the double integrative agenda, they indirectly allude to supra-ethnic or civic values and institutions that the Euro-Atlantic perspective projects.

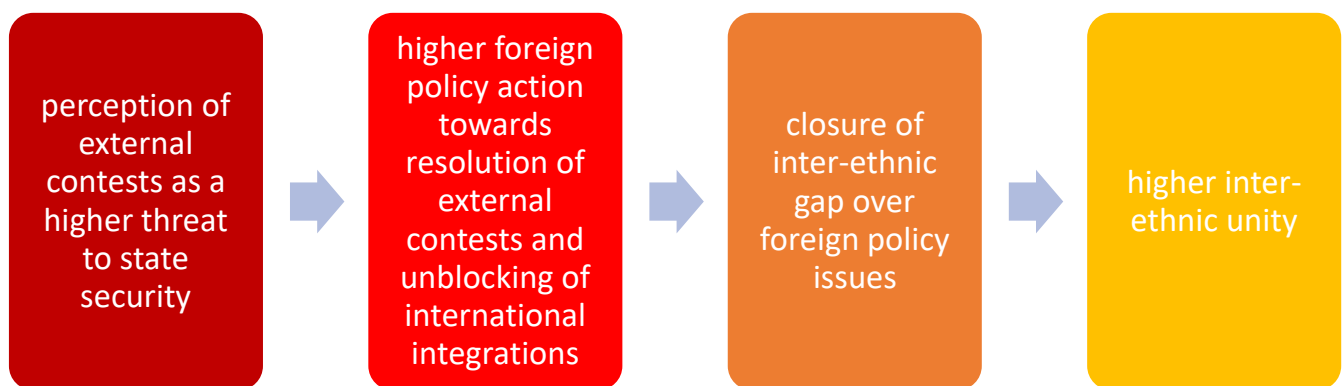
Such perception over international integrations, however, changes at the moment when foreign policy becomes conditioned by external threats. Since the external threats, which derive

from the bilateral contests Macedonia has with its neighbors, consist of identity disputes which affect the state and the majority ethnic group, they are not perceived equally by both ethnic groups, Macedonians and Albanians. The interview subjects indicate that with the distinctive perceptions the gap between the two ethnic groups begins to emerge. The empirical indications seemingly show that the division between the two ethnic groups is mostly reflected over the foreign policy approach towards the external threats. It is argued, within the empirical findings, that since these threats obstruct the international agenda of the country, the inter-ethnic perception begins to diverge not only over the foreign policy approach towards these bilateral contests, but also towards the Euro-Atlantic orientation of the country. The empirical findings indicate that the Macedonian ethnic group, being highly more affected by the external threats, demonstrates greater reservation towards a proactive foreign policy, which would attempt quicker resolution of the bilateral contests with the neighbors. Consequently, in nearly all of the respondents' understanding, this ethnic group shows the same reservation towards the Euro-Atlantic process as well, which being blocked by the bilateral contests, is transformed into an indirect factor of pressure to Macedonia's foreign policy. As the findings show, such reservation, however, is not as evident within the Albanian ethnic group, which seems to be much less affected by the bilateral threats. Furthermore, since Albanians are portrayed by nearly all interview subjects as strong supporters of the Euro-Atlantic agenda, and since the interviewees suppose that this agenda is stalled due to the external contests, their position demonstrates that the Albanians demand a more proactive foreign policy, which would resolve these contests as quickly as possible. Nevertheless, as the findings indicate, the Albanian ethnic group doesn't seem to account for the consequences of the contests' resolutions, as this process appears to not affect their ethnic identity. But the indications suggest that the situation is completely different with the Macedonian ethnic group. The findings show that here emerges the gap of perceptions between Macedonians and Albanians in relation to foreign policy's approach to external threats. There is evidence, by a handful of respondents, which shows that such gap, may only be widened if the status-quo of foreign policy persists. In such case, relying on the empirical indications, we may assume that the longer external threats linger, the further apart the two ethnic groups would grow, to a point where their division turns into open antagonism and tension.

The research into the presence of external threats provides some insight and indication that strong ethnic identification prevails over national or state identification. In the presence of

external pressures, the cohabitation between ethnic and national identity, as Foon (1986, as cited in Shulman 1996) argues, appears to become impossible. This is because the two ethnic groups begin making conflicting demands in regard to the foreign policy of the state. At this point, the data results provide some supportive indications to Shulman's second part of his main argument in the *National integration and foreign policy in multi-ethnic states* (1998), according to which, foreign policy becomes an object of political contestation among groups who do not share the same vision of it.

However, another significant finding in the empirical data reveals that the above developments, are almost developments that belong in the past. The empirical indications show that such relationship, between foreign policy status quo and inter-ethnic division, is beginning to change. The data pinpoints to a turning point in the perception of the external threats and consequently in the foreign policy approach to them. This turning point seems to occur as a result of a change in perception towards external threats and their effect over foreign policy, precisely in the Macedonian ethnic group. The research highlights some of the respondents' assessment of the international integrations' stall as a greater security threat than the change of state identity symbols. Hereby, the empirical indications suggest that the perception of Macedonians begins to approach that of the Albanians. Such change in security perception, is expressed in the empirical findings as a starting point for a higher inter-ethnic support of a more proactive foreign policy approach, which would attempt to resolve external disputes and consequently unblock the Euro-Atlantic agenda. In sum, the empirical indications show that as a result of a change in perception towards security and threats, a turning point in Macedonia's foreign policy emerges, which, in turn, helps forge an inter-ethnic unification. Such analysis is visually presented below:



In the qualitative studies, as opposed to the quantitative ones, the presentation and discussion of the findings is usually done in relation to the context within which the data was generated. But this doesn't mean that the qualitative findings do not rely on any existing knowledge. In the contrary, the discussion of existing literature is very important, in order to be able to analyze the research's contribution to it. Furthermore, theory helps the qualitative findings take the form of statements with transferable application to other settings or contexts (Collins and Stockton, 2018). But, according to Anderson (2010), such theoretical justification of the qualitative research, should be done "in light of the research questions" (p.4) and in close relation to the context of similar theories. Therefore, this chapter will discuss some theoretical implications, which in my subjective viewpoint, may resonate more closely with the context in which the findings were generated.

Obviously, this research shows limitations in terms of the validity (accurate representation of the researched phenomena) and reliability (ability of reproduction) of its findings. However, as mentioned earlier, the aim of this study was to study the relationship between policy fields which involve complex interactions that cannot be reduced to numbers, and which therefore demanded complex explanations and understanding. In this regard, a qualitative study seemed as the most adequate approach. But whereas this study offers a deeper sharing of understanding into several individual's perceptions and experiences, its investigation is intended to lead into future quantitative studies. Hence, it is recommended for the findings, deriving from this study, to be used in future, and possibly more theory-centered, quantitative investigations, which would be able to test, compare, and in the end, provide more generalized picture of the researched phenomena. A complementation of this study with future quantitative research would furthermore strengthen the validity and reliability of the findings.

In efforts to relate the findings to similar existing theories, we must begin with the concept of foreign policy, which represents the key factor, connecting the two other dimensions: external threats and inter-ethnic relations. As shown in the analysis section, the empirical findings try to offer a deeper understanding of the foreign policy behavior of Macedonia. In the empirical indications, this behavior is described as one which has endured a change or that is beginning to mark a turning point. But such change seems to emerge only in relation to the way

foreign policy approaches external threats. In relation to inter-ethnic integrations, the foreign policy behavior does not show any change from the initial position. Such a supportive behavior of Macedonia's foreign policy towards international integrations, matches the liberal prediction of small states' foreign policy behavior. As the first theme and the following ones demonstrate, Macedonia, as a small state, tries to achieve external security by sheltering under the umbrella of powerful international organizations. Such endeavor is exemplified by sentences such as "*when you are in NATO and EU some better economic, security, and other perspectives are opened up*" (Antonio Milosovski) or "*Macedonia...cannot exist as a self-sufficient country functioning separately from the regional democratic and economic developments and the processes of Euro-Atlantic integration.*" (Teuta Arifi). The influence international integrations exert over a small state, such as Macedonia, aligns with the liberalist thought, elaborated in the theoretical chapter. According to liberalists, international institutions play a powerful role, not only in mitigating adverse effects that may be caused from the anarchical system of international relations, but also in driving states towards cooperation and mutual benefits, out of which, small states may be the greatest profitters. As opposed to the conventional thinkers (Rothstein 1968, Keohane 1969, Vital 1971, Zahariadis 1994), who argue that only the system level may influence foreign policy, there are other scholars (Putnam 1988, Elman 1995, Hey 2003), who argue that besides the system level, the foreign policy behavior may also be impacted by the unit or domestic level, and even by the individual level. The harmonized support of Macedonians and Albanians towards the international integration process, indicated through the interview subjects, appears to highlight the influence that the domestic environment has over the foreign policy orientation. But at the same time, the empirical indications provide some evidence about a reciprocal influence. Namely, they show that foreign policy also exerts influence over inter-ethnic relations. International integrations, as described and evaluated in the findings analysis chapter, appear to unify the two ethnic groups, as no other domestic policy.

However, the findings deriving from Macedonia's case, provide us with an understanding that foreign policy behavior endures changes when met with external pressures, in the form of security threats. In such case, the theory of liberalism becomes insufficient to explain foreign policy behavior in its entirety. As the findings indicate, foreign policy, faced with external blockades, which stall its international integration agenda, seems to be faced with a security dilemma: to accept the neighboring states' demands and undertake changes that would affect the

state and national identity, or to refuse such demands, and consequently perpetuate the status-quo of the international integration agenda. The gained answers over this dilemma lead to another theory of international relations, the constructivist theory. The seemingly *change* in perception over what represents a greater threat to the state's security, appears to be one of the most significant insights deriving from this research. According to most respondents, a shift has occurred in Macedonia's foreign policy behavior towards the disputes with the neighboring states, which matches a newly developed perception that deems the stalled international integration agenda as a higher and more meaningful threat to the state's security than the potential modification of the identity features of the state and of the majority ethnic group. This change of perception, observed mainly within the Macedonian ethnic group, results to be in harmony with the new foreign policy approach, which had just emerged, at the time of data collection. The constructivist theory seems the most suitable approach to explain such foreign policy behavior, as it explains international relations through factors such as meaning and practice, which are not fixed, but rather changeable. By describing threats as a social construct, the supporters of this theory argue that what may be considered a threat, is relatively dependent on the perception of the people and actors. Precisely for this reason, constructivists emphasize that threats to security are not always perceived equally by all actors, to the extent that they may not even be perceived as threats at all.

In the research, we may observe from the respondents' opinions, that the different perceptions on what constitutes a threat to state security, whether national identity changes or remaining outside of international structures, are initially based on ethnic belonging. However, the changes in perception within one of the ethnic groups and consequently the inter-ethnic rapprochement in terms of security perception, demonstrate that the argument which relates perception with ethnicity is not valid in this case. Furthermore, the data indications show that in parallel with the inter-ethnic rapprochement over foreign policy perception, a new division is emerging, an intra-ethnic one, i.e. within the Macedonian ethnic group. This division is expressed by the interview subjects, through their impression that there are developing opposing perceptions within the ethnic Macedonians, over foreign policy's external threats and the approach towards their resolution. Such processes, found within the empirical data, support the constructivist thought and their central argument that concepts, such as threats to a state's

sovereignty, identity, national interest, etc., are simply concepts based on social relations, that are rather evolutive or changeable in nature.

The influence of the Euro-Atlantic agenda over the unification of the two ethnic groups, is also supportive of the constructivist theory, in particular of the one which describes the notion national (state) identity as a social construct which may change as a result of interactions, interdependency, and integrations. This stance, is also in line with the liberalist view, in particular with the *hard* liberalists. The findings indicate that the major impact the EU and NATO produce in guarding inter-ethnic stability and harmony, may eventually contribute to the forging of a new, supra-ethnic identity, which would consist of civic values and international institutions. Thus, this work's empirical indications may provide some evidential support to the integrationist theoreticians, who argue that the integrative processes may lead to the relativization of inter-ethnic rivalry over state domination. Furthermore, under the effect of international integration, we may argue that ethno-nationalism would not have the same dividing power domestically, as perception towards national identity would change due to an overlay of a regional and civic identity. In sum, in line with both constructivist and liberalist thought, foreign policy, through its international integration agenda, may help forge a new national (state) identity, with supra-ethnic elements, which is no longer a cause of inter-ethnic competitiveness, but rather a factor of unification.

The empirical findings provide some evidence in support of foreign policy's double role in multi-ethnic, small states. The double roles, namely the security and integration role, that foreign policy may play over a small state, were analyzed in interrelation with one another, within the theoretical chapter. Hence, I'd begin discussing the integration role first, as in Macedonia's case, finds unequivocal supportive indications. In the data, we can observe that while ethno-nationalism is perceived to be causing divisions, foreign policy seems to be playing a completely opposite role. But, not any type of foreign policy. As Macedonia's case shows, only a foreign policy which is oriented towards Euro-Atlantic international integrations, is able to forge unity between otherwise antagonized ethnic groups. Such role is portrayed in the data set through a support, reflected by ethnic Macedonian and Albanian respondents, towards the Euro-Atlantic agenda. The respondents' observations that the Euro-Atlantic agenda represents the widest inter-ethnic consensus in the country, pinpoints to the significance that foreign policy has in Macedonia, in forging inter-ethnic unification. Also, some of the respondents' warning against

negative scenarios, which may come to life if the Euro-Atlantic agenda is undermined or remains dormant, demonstrates about risks which may develop in the absence of such role. Some examples of such risks, as stated by the interview subjects, are enhancement of nationalism and growth of political populism, ethnic frustrations, and all the way to inter-ethnic conflict. By linking Euro-Atlantic integration with inter-ethnic stability, respondents appear to confirm the integration role that foreign policy plays in Macedonia's society. Although this argument is not fully developed in the dataset, especially in the direction of exploring the reasons for such a strong role foreign policy plays, we may still infer that the main factor for such role is the ability of international structures to overlay a new identity, through values and institutions, which would help diffuse the ethnic differences and build a supra-ethnic and even a supra-national identity, based on civic values. Based on the understanding we gain from this work's case of study, we may then make the following argument: since ethno-nationalism represents the major obstacle to national integration, foreign policy may serve as an instrument which helps the transcending of an ethno-national identity into a multi-cultural identity, where the civic and ethnic identity may even cohabit in peace. Hence, the empirical indications of this work seem to align with the integrationists' predictions, according to whom, international integrations would produce "a convergence of beliefs, values, and aspirations that would unite the peoples ..." (Haas, 2004, pp. 13-14).

However, foreign policy and the roles it plays, seem not so straightforward, after all. Much less if we consider the case of Macedonia. The latter, although provides some evidence in support of the integration role that foreign policy has over different ethnic groups, at the same time, points to the threats directed to this role, which rise as a result of bilateral disputes between this small country and its stronger neighbors. Since these neighboring states, which dispute Macedonia's identity features, are already members of international organizations, towards which the Republic of Macedonia adheres, they are portrayed in the empirical indications, as superior to Macedonia's position in the international relations. Hence, they are able to initiate blockades to Macedonia's international integrations, until the latter accepts and implements their demands.

The way these bilateral contests are qualified within the empirical findings, resemble a combination of political and societal threats, as elaborated by Barry Buzan (1998). However, the identification of external threats in the case of Macedonia does not appear as an easy process. In

fact, the empirical indications point to a complexity of perceptions, which make difficult the categorization of external factors as political, societal, or other threats. The reasons for such difficulty in identifying what constitutes a threat to the state's security, according to Buzan, lie in the concept of a *weak state*. In the theoretical chapter, Buzan (1983) defined the weak state as one whose idea and institutions are internally contested. For this reason, the identification of external threats becomes difficult and ambiguous, as different domestic groups perceive differently the *idea* and *institutions* of the state, and consequently the *threats* towards it. As Buzan claims, in these states, who is the ally and who the enemy, simply depends on one's perception (p. 68). In this work, such division in perceptions over external threats initially appears between ethnic groups, and later even among the same ethnic group. In most of the respondents' opinion, ethnic Macedonians appear to view the external factors mostly as societal threats, since they affect their national identity, which, in turn, represents the organizing concept of their society and therefore of the state. The process of threat classification however begins to complicate when Albanians are brought into the analysis. Albanians, according to nearly all respondents, seem to not identify the external factors as societal threats, because their ethnic identity features are not affected by them. However, most interview subjects indicate that the Albanian ethnic group does consider them as threats, but rather as threats which endanger the sovereignty or even the existence of the state, by leaving it internationally isolated. As some empirical indications show, Albanians, by connecting a state's survival with its international integrations, seem to treat external factors rather as political threats which endanger a state's sovereignty/existence. Based on the respondents' indications, we may infer that the two ethnic groups, who hold different perceptions on the *idea* of the state, also show differences in the way they classify threats to the state's security. Such general assumption, however, should be further tested through quantitative methods.

As threat and security are closely associated, foreign policy's security role may only be vaguely identified and categorized within the empirical data. As previously stated, the security role of Macedonia's foreign policy is not exposed clearly in the empirical data, due to the presence of external factors. In their absence, though, the data indicates much more clearly that a small and weak country's security may enhance through international integration into alliances such as NATO and organizations such as EU. With the presence of external factors, however, this perception begins to cloud. Depending on how external factors are perceived, what

constitutes state security also varies. Thus, as the empirical indications show, to some, security lies in preserving intact national identity, while to others, in moving forward with the international integration agenda. Such diverging attitudes over state security and threats to it, seem to lead furthermore to divisions over the foreign policy approach towards the external factors. The ones who view security in terms of national identity appear to prefer lower direct foreign policy action, some even a status-quo, while the others, who view security in terms of international integration seem to prefer higher and more direct foreign policy action towards resolution of external disputes.

Within such ambivalence, however, a good part of the empirical findings shows indications of another significant development. It shows an evolvement of perceptions towards threats in the majority ethnic group. Due to such evolvement, the perception towards security also appears to begin to change, and to resemble more and more that of the other ethnic group. In such case, we may infer that Macedonians and Albanians gradually come to think of state security in terms of Euro-Atlantic integrations, and therefore appear to confirm a significant security role that foreign policy plays both externally and internally. However, the indicated inter-ethnic rapprochement, leads to another manifestation. That of an intra-ethnic division. By making an inference from these indications, we may cautiously argue that the dichotomy of perceptions towards state security seems to no longer lie between ethnic groups but among the same ethnic group.

The inter-ethnic consensus which appears as a newly forged phenomenon in the case of Macedonia, represents an evidence of foreign policy's security and integration role. The described consensus over foreign policy, by most of the interview subjects, demonstrates that EU and NATO are not only appreciated in terms of security and prosperity, for a small and weak country, but also as an internal and external affirmation of Macedonia's European identity. Hence, we may argue that the importance of the foreign policy agenda indicates a driving force behind a proactive approach towards the resolution of external factors which threaten the above agenda.

In the rivalry between political threats and societal threats, the empirical indications show that Macedonia's foreign policy behavior seems to prioritize political threats over the others. The reasons for such prioritization seem to be in proportional relationship with the consequences the political threats produce over security. According to Buzan's schematization (1991), and based

on the empirical indications, Macedonia appears to fall into the so called *imperial states*, in which, more than one full nation co-exist and where the dominant nation is in a continuous battle with other nations in efforts to preserve its control over the state. Consequently, these states are the most endangered type by political threats, expressed either through internal developments, or through external interventions. As Macedonia's case indicates, both internal (inter-ethnic) and external (inter-neighborly) political threats are not only present but also in a close relationship with one another. Thus, the consequences the unattended political threats would produce would be felt internally and externally, with a potential of bringing the country on the verge of collapse. As the generated themes indicate, the best mechanism against such developments would then be a high foreign policy action, with double effect: external, by solving bilateral disputes and consolidating the path towards Euro-Atlantic integrations, and internal, by diminishing causes for inter-ethnic conflict over the state's foreign orientation and integrating ethnic groups under a supra-national identity. Evidence in support of such developments is found within the empirical indications, as respondents express it by referring to bilateral agreements, such as that with Bulgaria, as well as through intensified talks with Greece, and several domestic changes, such as the name of highways and airport, as signals towards an amiable neighborly policy.

What would the role of foreign policy be in terms of the societal threats then? If political threats are given an advantage over the societal threats, and demands by neighbors are consequently accepted, how can foreign policy help mitigate the societal effects of such behavior? Obviously, accepting external demands which lead to national identity changes, in the name of good neighborly relationships, may enhance fear of identity loss in the majority ethnic group, as most respondents indicate, and consequently may undermine the dominance of a nation over the state. In such case, I'd argue, foreign policy, through international integrations, may address such concerns through overlaying an overreaching split identity, along cultural and administrative lines. In other words, the integrative process into NATO and EU would address the fear of national identity loss by giving to a nation(s) a cultural identity, and by giving to the state, state-like institutions. The nation, would become merely a cultural entity, while the political and economic interests of it would be represented by supra-national institutions. This approach would relativize national needs for affirmation and eliminate the need for inter-ethnic conflict over domination of state institutions. Hence, international integration may become a

mechanism for resolving both societal and political insecurities in the horizontal and vertical competition.

Conclusion

The explorative nature of this work was deemed as the most adequate approach, considering my previous insights on the complexity of the relationship(s) I decided to research. Such complexity is an outcome of the difficulty of a small and weak state to maintain a delicate balance between its international positioning as a nation state and domestic accommodation of inter-ethnic demands. This balance, as discussed above, is highly challenged by external threats but also by internal responses, putting at risk both the international affirmation and domestic stability of the small state. Thereof, the exploration of this relationship in this work leads not to statistical accuracy, but rather to multi-dimensional and deep conclusions on the interrelation between external threats, foreign policy, and inter-ethnic relations. The explorative method enabled such multi-dimensionality to be researched more profoundly, by allowing a more flexible, but at the same time more comprehensive and explanatory data collection, which served as evidence for the two research questions posed at the beginning of the research. The research questions' aim was to trigger a more profound research within a relationship which is less researched in the international relations' field in general, and in the multi-ethnic, small states' foreign policy, in particular. The specificity of this thesis' case of study, both in terms of the ethnic issues, as well as of the external challenges of the state, motivated the selection of the explorative method as a more suitable approach to collect data, which may be less objective, yet, which offers more profound explanation into the ways and reasons for the development of a relationship between the two levels of integration: the international and national integration.

The explorative methodology is not the only impediment to the generalizability and applicability of the findings. The specific nature of the case study itself, represent almost a unique example, which may only find a narrow theoretical applicability. The study of Macedonia results as a difficult case for comparative studies, for the many untypical elements it entails. As this work shows, Macedonia results as a typical small state by many definitions, especially by the ones which define its international role as insignificant and weak in terms of imposing its will

or resist the will of others. Furthermore, it results as a weak state by Buzan's definition of states whose idea, ideology, or any other element that acts as its organizing principle, is internally or/and externally contested. As it represents a state in which the nation and state do not coincide, i.e. *a multi-national state*, the internal ethno-national rivalry over state control makes it difficult for this state to consolidate its position in the external relations as well. Precisely because of these specific features, which define the state of Macedonia, the findings of this work reflect complex and sometimes contradictory answers to the researched relationship, that may be unique to this case of study. But being such a case, it also allows the researcher to understand more profoundly and comprehensively the balancing behavior of a small state's foreign policy, which acts both against threats which derive from the inconsistency between the state and the nation, and against threats which occur between two or more states which contest each other's organizing principles.

It is important to emphasize that this work has several limitations, which may be overcome in future research through the use of different methodology, or specifically through the mix of qualitative with quantitative methods. For instance, the conclusions extracted from this work are surely more of an individual perception than a dominant attitude within the society. Although I've tried to offer a balance of attitudes through the purposeful selection of the respondents, as the main source of data collection, the small sample (due to the difficulty of obtaining interview approvals by many subjects) weakens the objectivity of this work. In order to gain a more accurate and general picture of the researched phenomena, it would be useful for future researches to complement the qualitative data collection with the quantitative methods, where numbers or figures would confront and neutralize any bias that might arise during the process. Another limitation to this work is the complexity of the relationships I've tried to research. I've attempted to research the effect of the external pressures on the inter-ethnic relations indirectly, in other words, through the effect that external pressures produce over foreign policy objectives or over international integrations. Such indirect relationship between external pressures and inter-ethnic relations makes difficult the reach of accurate and straightforward results. It also impedes a more thorough research on issues such as the national/civic and the ethnic identity, the challenges of these identities in the face of external challenges and the similarities or differences of the ethnic direct positionings towards the latter. Instead, this research explores the relationship between external pressures and inter-ethnic

relations through the foreign policy lenses, the ethnic preferences towards the state's foreign orientation, and the infringing of these preferences by external pressures, which may consequently cause inter-ethnic division. Thus, issues such as nationality and ethnicity were possibly analyzed only under the influence of foreign policy and its reaction towards external challenges. Also, the fact that the research is conducted during a governmental transitioning period, it presents the status quo of foreign policy behavior towards external pressures and consequently the aggravated inter-ethnic relations, as a matter of the past, while foretelling the beginning of a new foreign policy approach, which supports compromise/resolution of external pressures and consequently inter-ethnic unification. As such, the research hints at the possibility of external pressures being eliminated as conditional factors over foreign policy and inter-ethnic relations. If this scenario is to occur, then foreign policy behavior should be examined under new conditions or within a new reality. Whether its security and integration role would change, persist, or fade within such a new reality may be a good direction for future research.

This work represents a modest contribution to the field of international relations and comparative politics, by shedding light over a small state's foreign policy, its international posture and challenges to it, and its relationship with the inter-ethnic relations. Some of the findings may be considered, to some extent, as a pattern which explains the relationship between international and national integration. Above all, it demonstrates that the more contentious foreign policy becomes, the less integrated internally the state will become, and vice-versa. This research has focused on the external pressures and inter-ethnic relations in order to reach the above conclusion. However, this statement may be applicable to other cases, where foreign policy may play a divisive or unifying role internally, depending on the internal similar or different preferences over the state's international posture, as well as on the external environment. The study of external pressures has also allowed the extraction of indications, according to which, consideration of ethnicity and identity dominate the debate and approach to foreign policy. This conclusion may hold true for other multi-ethnic states, where foreign policy preferences are built upon ethnic and identity affiliation (the Baltic states, Cyprus, Georgia, etc.). Finally, there are some indications that foreign policy may play both "an inclusionary and exclusionary function that constructs identity" (Shulman, 1998, p.294). In this work's case of study, the inclusionary function is evident in the absence of external pressures with identity character. The exclusionary function seems to appear only under the presence of external

pressures which affect an ethnic group. In other cases, where there are no external conditions, these two functions may be performed within societies with different preferences for international ties.

A broadened focus, which would include the impact of foreign policy behavior, not only on the relationship between major ethnic groups, but among all existing ethnic communities, would be another recommendation for future research. A wider scope of research, I believe, would contribute to reaching conclusions that would portray more accurately the social reality of multi-ethnic states, that consist of less numerous ethnic groups, who nevertheless may both affect and be affected by foreign policy behavior. An encompassing analysis of all other ethnic groups, regardless of their percentage, may also help build a more accurate security complex around a particular country, since many of the ethnic communities have significant ties and therefore cause security dynamics with other states. Also, a more profound research over the security and integration role that foreign policy may play in the domestic realm of multi-ethnic states, would allow, perhaps, the reaching of stronger evidence on the foreign policy's ability to forge a common national identity, through nurturing common preferences over the country's international ties and relations. As indicated earlier in the text, this work consciously singles out two out of many foreign policy objectives, EU and NATO integration, in measuring their impact over international and national integration. However, other aspects of foreign policy may also produce certain influences over the relationship between international and national integration, thus, a recommendation for future research would be to account for other foreign policy objectives in evaluating the impact they may produce over such relationship.

The validity of this work's hypotheses may be tested through further (possibly quantitative) research into other states, which are characteristic for their multi-regionalism or multi-ethnicity. Not very far away from Macedonia, the case of Kosovo and Bosnia would be two avenues of fruitful research. Two post-war states, resemble the case of Macedonia in terms of their bilateral contests, especially with Serbia. Determined for EU integration, it would be useful to investigate whether these countries' foreign policy is broken along ethnic lines and whether the influence of external pressures is felt over the foreign policy debate and consequently over inter-ethnic relations. Eastern European countries such as Ukraine and Moldova, and also the Eurasian country, Georgia, are also suitable cases to investigate the relationship between international and national integration under external pressure. All three of

these countries may be researched about the role that foreign policy has on the unification or division of their different ethno-regional groups, and on the influence that external factors such as Russia versus the EU may play both over their foreign policy orientation and national unity. Countries that undergo the formal process of EU integration may also be researched to find out if the latter influences the internal ethnic/cultural relations, and whether the existence of external conditionings alters such influence. In an era of dynamic international integrations, their role on the building of civic identities in states with multi-ethnic character, merits a particular attention. A multidisciplinary approach would allow the building of theoretical paradigms on the interrelation between foreign policy and ethno-national identity. Such studies would be able to explain the relationship on the integration between the states and (dis)integration within them.

ANNEX

1 - Map of Macedonia and its neighbors



2 - Sample of interview questions

1. Што мислите за динамиката на исполнувањето на целите на Македонската надворешна политика?
 - a. Низ кои фази поминала таа од независноста на државата?
 - b. Каде мислите дека агендата за интеграција стагнира и кои се главните причини?
 - c. Што би требало да се прави поинаку?
2. Како влијаат надворешните фактори врз неисполнувањето на целите на надворешната политика во Македонија?
 - a. Кој надворешен фактор е поголем предизвик за надворешната политика на Македонија?
 - b. Зошто токму овој фактор?
3. Кој би бил најдобриот начин за решавање на отворените прашања со соседите?
 - a. Дали мислите дека надворешната политика на Македонија има потреба од нов пристап?

4. Што може да се случи, во среднорочен и долгорочен рок, ако Македонија не успее да ги реши отворените прашања со своите соседи?

5. Дали мислите дека надворешните услови врз Македонија можат да влијаат на меѓуетничките односи меѓу Македонците и Албанците?

а. Дали има веројатност овие односи да се влошат како резултат на надворешните услови?

6. Според вас, колку е албанскиот политички фактор вклучен во решавањето на отворените прашања со соседите?

а. Дали неговото вклученост била во иста мерка од 1991 година или варијала во различни периоди?

7. Дали мислите дека етничките Македонци и Албанци имаат различни перцепции за отворените прашања со своите соседи и начините на нивното решавање?

а. Може ли да се постигне консензус меѓу Македонците и Албанците за решавањето на отворените прашања со соседите?

8. Кои од отворените прашања со соседите мислите дека се попредизвични, но исто така и по приоритетни за решавање?

9. Дали мислите дека е време да се решат отворените прашања и дали мислите дека актуелната влада има капацитет да ги затвори истите и да се придвижи напред со евроатлантските интеграции?

10. Дали имате да додадете нешто?

1. Çka mendoni për dinamikën e përmbushjes se objektivave të politikës së jashtme të Maqedonisë?

a. Neper cilat faza ka kaluar ajo qe nga pavaresia e shtetit?

b. Ku mendoni se ka stagnuar agjenda e integritimeve dhe cilat janë arsyet kryesore?

c. Çka do te duhej të bëhej ndryshe?

2. Si ndikojnë faktorët e jashtëm në mosrealizimin e qëllimeve të politikës së jashtme të Maqedonisë?

a. Cili faktor i jashtëm është me sfidaues për politikën e jashtme të Maqedonisë?

b. Përse pikërisht ky faktor?

3. Cila do të ishte mënyra më e duhur për zgjidhjen e çështjeve të hapura me fqinjët?

a. A mendoni se politika e jashtme e Maqedonisë është në nevojë për një qasje të re?

4. Çfarë mund të ndodhë nëse Maqedonia nuk arrin t'i zgjidh çështjet e hapura me fqinjët në plan afatmesëm dhe afatgjatë?

5. A mendoni se kushtëzimet e jashtme ndaj Maqedonisë mund të ndikojnë në marrëdhëniet ndëretnike midis maqedonasve dhe shqiptarëve?
 - a. A ka gjasa që këto marrëdhënie të përkeqësohen si rezultat I këtyre kushtëzimeve?
6. Sipas mendimit tuaj, sa është I përfshirë faktori politik shqiptar në zgjidhjen e çështjeve të hapura me fqinjët?
 - a. A ka qenë përfshirja e tij gjithmonë në masë të njëjtë nga 1991 apo ka variuar ne periudha të ndryshme?
7. A mendoni se grupi etnik maqedonas dhe ai shqiptar kanë perceptime të ndryshme sa I përket çështjeve të hapura me fqinjët dhe mënyres së zgjidhjes së tyre?
 - a. A mund të arrihet konsensus mes maqedonasve dhe shqiptarëve mbi zgjidhjen e çështjeve të hapura me fqinjët?
8. Cila nga çështjet e hapura me fqinjët mendoni se është më sfiduese por edhe më prioritare për tu zgjidhur?
9. A mendoni që tani është koha për t'I zgjidhur çështjet e hapura dhe a mendoni që qeveria aktuale ka kapacitetin për t'I përmbyllur çështjet e hapura dhe të ecë përpara me integrimet euro-atlantike?
10. A keni të shtoni diçka?
 1. What do you think in regard to the fulfillment of the Macedonian foreign policy objectives?
 - a. Through which phases has it passed since the independence of the state?
 - b. Where do you think the integration agenda has stagnated and what are the main reasons?
 - c. What should be done differently?
 2. How do external factors influence the non-fulfillment of Macedonia's foreign policy objectives?
 - a. Which foreign factor is more challenging for Macedonia's foreign policy?
 - b. Why exactly this factor?
 3. What would be the best approach of resolving the opened issues with the neighbors?
 - a. Do you think Macedonia's foreign policy is in need of a new approach?

4. What may happen if Macedonia does not succeed to resolve the opened issues with its neighbors in a medium and long-term period?
5. Do you think the external conditionings towards Macedonia may impact the inter-ethnic relations between Macedonians and Albanians?
 - a. Are there risks of aggravation of these relations as a result of the external conditionings?
6. In your opinion, how much is the Albanian political factor included/involved in the resolution of the opened issues with its neighbors?
 - a. Has its involvement been of the same level since 1991 or has it varied in different periods of time?
7. Do you think the ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians have different perceptions regarding the opened issues with the neighbors and the way of their resolution?
 - a. Is it possible to be reached a consensus between Albanians and Macedonians about the opened issues with the neighbors?
8. Which of the opened issues with the neighbors do you think is the most challenging but also with the highest priority for being resolved?
9. Do you think now is the time for resolving the opened issues and do you think the current government is capable of closing the opened issues and for moving forward with the Euro-Atlantic integration process?
10. Do you have anything to add?

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