Macedonia's Ontological Insecurity
and the Challenges of Stabilizing Inter-ethnic Relations

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Introduction

The wars in former Yugoslavia and the questionable minority policies of the Balkan states seem to suggest that having an equitable multi-ethnic society in a Balkan state is difficult. In that context Macedonia was seen as part of the Balkan "powder keg," because of its supposedly explosive ethnic and religious mix[1] that just waited to explode in a bloody conflict. Despite that, unlike other parts of the former Yugoslavia, Macedonia long avoided war and was dubbed "the oasis of peace," first by its president Kiro Gligorov and later used by many. The armed conflict in 2001 seems to confirm the stereotype of "ancient hatreds" toward the Balkans. However, it was brief, with comparatively few casualties, and a political agreement that ended the violence was reached in Ohrid that same year. The so-called Framework Agreement or Ohrid Agreement required constitutional amendments, some power-sharing arrangements, and concessions to the minorities, de facto mainly the ethnic-Albanian one,[2] regarding the usage of language and symbols. These were major changes that were adopted in the Macedonian Parliament and officially redefined Macedonian society, but not without some resistance from the Macedonian side.

This brief paper will explore the challenges of transition to a system more accommodating to the country's largest minority, the ethnic Albanians, as they perceive it and the resistance by the majority group, the ethnic Macedonians, but mainly concerning the "symbolic issues" of the character of the state. This is due to the peculiar context of contested Macedonian identity by its neighboring countries whether it is the constitutional name of the country "The Republic of Macedonia," the independence of the Macedonian church or the Macedonian language and the very identity as a distinct Macedonian nation. I try to capture this situation with the concept "ontological security,"[3] Steele's concept of ontological security[4] assumes that nation-states seek ontological

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[1] Because of which it was called a (Macedoine) mixed fruit salad.

[2] *De jure* Albanians were not mentioned as such, but they were the only ones to fulfill the criteria in most parts.

[3] Anthony Giddens in *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford University Press, 1991) used the concept of ontological security to refer to the confidence that most humans beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action. Jennifer Mitzen in *Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma* (*European Journal of International Relations,*2006) extrapolate this individual need described by Giddens to the level of the state and add ontological security as a need to the traditional physical security need, and regards it as a constant.

[4] B. J. Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations: Self-identity and the IR State* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008).

security because they want to maintain consistent self-concepts, and asks whether there is anything more political than the struggle over identity. His objection to Mitzen is that reifying ontological security to whole societies obscures the political process of self-identity contestation as narrative-based disagreements. While Mitzen omits narrative, for steele understanding ontological security needs to integrate the ability of the narrative to organize and provide coherence to the Self. For example, without narrative we know the states only spatially, not as an idea. The reason states have ontological security is because states have a historical account of themselves that has been built up by the narrative of the agents of the past, present and future. Ontological security comes about when agents choose actions that reflect their sense of self-identity. In understanding the self-regarding behavior of state agents one must evaluate the context within which it takes place.

I will focus particularly on one political event, the referendum to repeal the new law on administrative territorial boundaries in 2004 that was regarded as the first major challenge jeopardizing the Framework Agreement,[5] and reveal the issue of the Macedonian ontological security or rather insecurity.[6] I do not try to offer a single factor explanation but rather hope to draw attention to an aspect that, I find, was not sufficiently explored.

Background

Macedonia as a wider region in the Balkans (today's northern Greek province of Macedonia, the country Macedonia, and the Bulgarian southwestern region known as Pirin Macedonia, as well as some bits of eastern Albania)[7] was one of the last regions occupied by the retreating Ottoman Empire that ruled it for more than 400 years. As a consequence, the then newly established states of Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia fought first against the Ottoman Empire and then against each other in the two Balkan wars to incorporate this region within their states. At the end of World War I this multi-ethnic region was consequently divided where roughly 50% went to Greece, 40% to Serbia (later part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and then Yugoslavia) and 10% to Bulgaria. This is how it remains today, after a small redrawing of the boundaries during World War II, with the exception that the Yugoslav part today is a separate country, The Republic of Macedonia, which was already a separate federal unit within socialist Yugoslavia by the end of World War II.

Immediately after the Balkan wars each country sought to assimilate this diverse population, often with forceful methods. The biggest groups in the said region were Orthodox Christian Slavs and

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[5] Another reason is that this was only the second successful referendum to be organized after the referendum for the independence of the country in 1991.

[6] Catherine Kinnvall in *Globalization and Religious Nationalism in India: The Search for Ontological Security* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006) speaks more of ontological insecurity and links it with globalization. She says that the combination of religion and nationalism is a particularly powerful response in times of rapid change and uncertain futures, and is therefore more likely than other identity constructions to arise during crises of ontological insecurity. Here the Macedonian ontological insecurity refers more to the insecurity caused by its contested identity on various fronts mentioned above.

[7] This is the general consensus now about the boundaries of the wider region of Macedonia, but this was not always the case in the past.

Turks, followed by Albanians, Vlachs, Jews, Muslim Slavs, Romas and other less known today. Muslims were mostly expelled from Greece by "exchange of population"[8] with the newly established Republic of Turkey,[9] but the assimilation of the Slav population proved most contentious. Both Serbia and Bulgaria claimed them as their own, and Greece sought to Hellenize them. Only with the establishment of socialist Yugoslavia under Tito did the Macedonian Slavs get their own state within a federation where they could start nation-building freely as Macedonians for the first time in history. During nation-building the state established its own literary standard, the Macedonian language, and later proclaimed autonomy from the Serbian Orthodox Church that until then exerted religious authority in Macedonia. All these historical contingencies cause grievances and historical claims even today, and the claims made almost 100 years ago are still persistent today.

Macedonia and its Contested Identity

Macedonian identity is contested by its neighboring countries on several issues: there is a dispute with Greece over the right to use the name of "Macedonia"; Bulgaria is disputing the national identity and the language of the Macedonians claiming them as a variation of the Bulgarian identity and language; the Serbian Orthodox Church is disputing the independence of the Macedonian Orthodox Church claiming patriarchy or in other words religious authority over it and with that potentially a Serb authority over Macedonia,[10] and finally, Albanian nationalists claiming Greater Albania that includes Kosovo and the western part of Macedonia as its own.[11] Coupled with a history of wars with neighbors over its territory, all these attacks on Macedonian identity create insecurity for ethnic Macedonians, and because it threatens their very existence as Macedonians it is a highly sensitive issue.

The most serious among them is the dispute with Greece, since Greece used economic blockades and aggressive diplomacy to force The Republic of Macedonia to change its name[12] claiming the exclusive historical right to the name of Macedonia. With all of its neighbors disputing an aspect of its identity this was not an option for Macedonia, so as a compromise the country

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[8] There were various pressures in the other countries, but only Greece and Turkey engaged in organized ethnic cleansing. For example, between Bulgaria and Greece or Yugoslavia and Turkey, based on a treaty allowing "free" migration.

[9] 1.5 million Christians were sent to Greece.

[10] Which also has concrete territorial consequences by claiming church properties.

[11] Victor Roudometof, *Collective Memory, National Identity, and Ethnic Conflict: Greece, Bulgaria, and the Macedonian Question* (Westport: Praeger, 2002); Keith Brown, *The Past in Question: Modern Macedonia and the Uncertainties of Nation* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003), pp. 23-50; Loring M. Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict: Ethnic Nationalism in a Transnational World* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995); John Shea, *Macedonia and Greece: the Struggle to Define a New Balkan Nation* (North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 1997); P.H. Liotta and Cindy R. Jebb, *Mapping Macedonia: Idea and Identity* (Westport: Praeger, 2004).

[12] When Yugoslavia broke up in 1991, the Republic of Macedonia was the only country that met the requirements for joining what was then still the European Community, and Greece blocked that. There were also Greece's illegal embargos in the 1990s that none of the western countries did anything about.

became a UN member under the provisional name of The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, often referred to by the acronym FYROM,[13] until an agreement is reached with Greece. Until today such an agreement has not been reached and Greece has so far blocked Macedonia from joining NATO using its veto right as a member and is threatening to block its EU integration with a veto, too, although Macedonia is a candidate country (in 2009 Greece blocked the decision to start accession talks with the EU). Although over 100 countries, including Russia and China, have bilaterally recognized Macedonia as The Republic of Macedonia, due to strong Greek lobbying EU countries and other Western countries such as the US, Canada and Japan have only recently recognized the country under its constitutional name. So, the identity issue has serious consequences for the people of Macedonia and its state and is a great source of insecurity.

The "Macedonian question" has a history dating from the latter half of the nineteenth century, when its territory and people were targets of the new expansionist Balkan states, and many times borders were drawn and redrawn, civilians suffered from all sides, so historical grudges and mistrust were and are still present.[14] But, for example, the "name dispute" with Greece is quite new. The dispute with Greece that has a longer history is the status of Greece's own minorities in its northern province of Macedonia. Greece claims it is ethnically homogeneous and does not recognize its Macedonian minority.[15] The northern province of Macedonia became part of Greece in 1913 and its classical heritage is now part of the national heritage. However, before the archeological discovery of the tomb of Phillip II of Macedonia, the father of Alexander the Great, in the 1970s, the name of Macedonia and its classical heritage symbols did not have a special place in Greece's national discourse, and even after the discovery, that discourse placed more emphasis on other people and places. The emphasis on ancient Macedonia and its heritage took center stage after the independence of The Republic of Macedonia in 1991. In the past Greek national intellectuals even rejected both Phillip and Alexander as conquerors of Greece.[16]

Independent Macedonia

Following the break-up of Yugoslavia and the proclamations of independence by Slovenia and Croatia, Macedonia proclaimed independence, after a successful national referendum on September 8, 1991, which became official after the passing of the Constitution on November 17 of the same year. However, the referendum was boycotted by the Albanian minority (as well as the Serbian minority), and the Albanian minority subsequently held its own referendum for the creation

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[13] "The" is part of the compromise name. In the list of UN member nations, Macedonia comes between Thailand and Timor-Leste.

[14] Vemund Aarbakke, *Ethnic Rivalry and the Quest for Macedonia: 1870-1913* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 2003).

[15] Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *Denying Ethnic Identity: The Macedonians of Greece* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1994), UN, A/HRC/10/11/Add.3, *Report of the Independent Expert on Minority Issues: Mission to Greece, 8-16 September 2008* (UN, 18 February 2009).

[16] Yannis Hamilakis, *The Nation and its Ruins: Antiquity, Archaeology, and National Imagination in Greece* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

of an autonomous entity called "Ilirida"[17] which never materialized but the overwhelming support of the referendum was used by the Albanian parties to press for more cultural and political rights.[18] This caused resentment among the Macedonian majority.

The independence did not go smoothly internationally either. After the collapse of Yugoslavia, the Council of Ministers of the European Economic Community established the so-called Badinter Arbitration Committee to give legal advice on the independence of the new states and only Slovenia and Macedonia were recommended for recognition, having been judged to have met the requirements of the commission.[19] However, the European Commission (EC) disregarded the recommendations by the committee and recognized only Slovenia[20] and not Macedonia due to Greek objection to its use of the name "Macedonia." This also caused resentment by the Macedonians, and not only towards Greece but also the EC. Greece used its leverage in the EC/EU and NATO, so countries like the US also did not recognize the country, yet. Also, Serbia under Slobodan Milosevic did not recognize the country until 1996, and even then, its international boundaries with Macedonia were not agreed upon.[21]

Bulgaria was the first country to recognize Macedonia, but only as a state. The language and identity as a nation of the Macedonians were explicitly not recognized. Countries such as Turkey, China and Russia had no problems recognizing Macedonia with its constitutional name. After it entered the UN under the name "The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" which was part of a temporary settlement with Greece, the US and the EC/EU countries followed in recognition but under its UN name, not its constitutional name.[22]

Brubaker identifies two key elements in a nationalizing state: the sense of "ownership" of the state by a titular nation, and the "remedial" project of using state power to promote specific national interest.[23] He sees all the post-communist states as nationalizing states, and the states in the Balkans are no different, including Greece as well. But this is not to suggest that socialism kept a lid on nationalism in the past. On the contrary, national identities were reified and nationalism is as much a legacy from socialist times.[24] In such a context Macedonia drafted a constitution, which was mostly

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[17] From Illyria+Dardania, non-Greek entities from classical times with whom Albanians claim linguistic and national connection.
[18] The rights, however, were not forthcoming at that time.
[19] Alain Pellet, "The Opinions of the Badinter Arbitration Committee: A Second Breath for the Self-Determination of Peoples," *European Journal of International Law* No. 3 (1992).
[20] Also, subsequently Germany unilaterally recognized Croatia, and then the rest of the EC followed.
[21] The tensions that followed the withdrawal of the JNA, the Yugoslav army, negotiated by Gligorov in 1992 brought about the first UN preventive deployment in the history of the organization. When UNPROFOR was deployed to Macedonia in 1993, it was the first time in UN history that peacekeepers were sent to a region where war was not already in progress. Until the recognition in 1996, Serbia insisted that its border with Macedonia was administrative, not so international, it was monitored by UN troops, and there were repeated incidents.
[22] Greece has tried to foist the acronym on Macedonia and elsewhere as another strategy for erasing Macedonia's name.
[23] Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
[24] Katherine Verdery, "Nationalism and National Sentiment in Post-socialist Romania," *Slavic Review* Vol. 52, No.2 (1993).

civic and liberal-democratic, however, in its preamble it constituted the Macedonian people as constituent, although granting equal rights to other "nationalities" such as Albanians, Turks, Roma and Vlachs. Also, it had articles that gave preferential status to the Macedonian Orthodox Church, the Macedonian language as the only official language at the state level (other languages could be official at the local level), as well as an article that committed the country to promote the rights of ethnic Macedonians abroad.

Ethnic Albanians perceived these provisions as giving preferential status to the Macedonians and relegating them to a status of second class citizens. They repeatedly demanded a change to the preamble that would make them constituent people as well, and also grant them rights to use the Albanian language on all levels, including the establishment of an Albanian language university.[25] Greece claimed the article promoting the rights of Macedonian living abroad as a provocation and a tool to interfere into their internal affairs,[26] since it does not recognize the Macedonian minority. Soon after its adoption, Macedonia made amendments to the Constitution stating that it will not interfere in any state's internal affair and it had no territorial claims against its neighbors.

During the 1990s there were two serious incidents between the Macedonian government and the Albanian minority where the international community (UNPREDEP, OSCE and the EU), fearing escalation, all in the context of the situations in Bosnia and Kosovo, politically intervened. One was the case of the illegal establishment of an Albanian-language university in the ethnic-Albanian dominated town of Tetovo, where the government sent the police and in a clash one Albanian was killed and the heads of the university arrested. The other case was when the mayors of the ethnic-Albanian dominated towns of Gostivar and Tetovo raised Albanian flags in front of the town halls, which was illegal at the time, and the police were sent to Gostivar. In this case one Albanian was killed in the clashes and the two mayors were arrested.[27]

Challenges of the Post-conflict Transition

The seven-month armed conflict between ethnic-Albanian guerrillas and Macedonian state forces in 2001 was concluded with a peace agreement, called the Ohrid Framework Agreement, which redefined the state as a power-sharing model of democracy. Although part of ethnic-Macedonians are Muslim and many are atheists, the majority are Orthodox Christian and Macedonian identity is promoted as being strongly tied to the Macedonian Orthodox Church, as well as to its distinct language and the territory traditionally known as Macedonia and hence the state of

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[25] Nevena Dimova, *Identity of the Nation(s), Identity of the State: Politics and Ethnicity in the Republic of Macedonia 1990-2000* (Ethnologia Balkanica 12, 2008).

[26] However, the article in the Macedonian constitution was modeled on the Greek constitution: Article 108 of the Greek Constitution says that the Greek government "shall care for Greeks residing abroad and for the maintenance of their ties with the Mother Fatherland."

[27] Henryk J. Sokalski, *An Ounce of Prevention: Macedonia and the UN Experience in Preventive Diplomacy* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2003); Abiodun Williams, *Preventing War: the United Nations and Macedonia* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2000); Alice Ackermann, *Making Peace Prevail: Preventing Violent Conflict in Macedonia* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1999).

deemed unacceptable.[31]

Redefining the Internal Boundaries

An important part of the peace agreement was the more extensive decentralization of the state after redefining the existing local government boundaries.[32] The new Law on Local Government Boundaries in 2004 was already more than two years late[33] due to its contentious nature, so it was agreed in a non-transparent way by the incumbent political elites, SDSM[34] and DUI,[35] behind closed doors over the course of 40 days. After a heated debate in Parliament it was passed into law without any problems due to the power balance at the time. But the new boundaries were perceived by the opposition and the general public as tailored to create municipalities with over 20% of ethnic-Albanians by adding villages to cities, because the peace agreement gave extensive rights to minorities if the minimum of 20% were present in the municipalities.[36] This can be illustrated by looking at the municipal boundaries as defined in 1996 with 123 municipalities,[37] and valid up to 2004, and the revised boundaries in 2004 which reduced the number to 84,[38] together with the population breakdown along ethnic lines, focusing on the ethnic-Macedonians and ethnic-Albanians, according to the census data of 2002.[39] Prior to 1996 there were 36 municipalities, and during socialist times municipal borders changed several times. However, the change in 2004 was the only time that caused public outcry, especially for the cities of Struga, Kichevo and Skopje.

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[31] Some saw it as a delaying tactics of reluctant politicians, however the reluctance was not explained but taken for granted. See Veton Latifi, *Macedonian Unfinished Crisis: Challenges in the Process of Democratization and Stabilization* (Skopje: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2003).

[32] The Framework Agreement stipulates under its "1. Basic Principles" that "1.3. The multi-ethnic character of Macedonia's society must be preserved and reflected in public life" and that "1.5. The development of local self-government is essential for encouraging the participation of citizens in democratic life, and for promoting respect for the identity of communities."

[33] Under "3. Development of Decentralized Government" it stipulates that "3.2. Boundaries of municipalities will be revised within one year of the completion of a new census, which will be conducted under international supervision by the end of 2001. The revision of the municipal boundaries will be effectuated by the local and national authorities with international participation." Also, in Annex B, Legislative Modifications under "3. Law on Municipal Boundaries" it says "The Assembly shall adopt by the end of 2002 a revised law on municipal boundaries, taking into account the results of the census and the relevant guidelines set forth in the Law on Local Self-Government."

[34] The Social Democratic Union of Macedonia, successors of the Macedonian Communists League.

[35] Democratic Union for Integration, the former Albanian guerrillas transformed into a political party.

[36] Annex A of the Framework Agreement proposed constitutional amendments of which Article 7 was to be amended as "(6) In the units of local self-government where at least 20 percent of the population speaks a particular language, that language and its alphabet shall be used as an official language in addition to the Macedonian language and the Cyrillic alphabet..." This part of the amendment was adopted unchanged.

[37] http://www.stat.gov.mk/TematskiKartiGrupaN/PDF/TematskiMapi/AdinistrativnaPodelbaPdf/G01_Opstini96.pdf

[38] http://www.stat.gov.mk/TematskiKartiGrupaN/PDF/TematskiMapi/AdinistrativnaPodelbaPdf/G01_Opstini04.pdf

[39] http://www.stat.gov.mk/publikacii/knigaX.pdf

Map 1

Map 1 shows the municipal boundaries of five municipalities (the urban town of Struga, and rural Lukovo, Delogozhdi, Labunishta and Veleshta) prior to the 2004 revision with dotted lines, and with a full body line the new merged municipality of Struga. Map 2 shows how four rural municipalities (Zajas, Oslomej, Vraneshtica and Drugovo) were added to the urban town of Kichevo.

The old urban town of Struga had a population of 36,892 of which 19,939 were ethnic-Macedonians or roughly 54% of the total population and 15,408 were ethnic-Albanians or roughly 41%. By merging the rural municipalities as shown on Map 1, especially Delogozhdi and Veleshta, the ethnic balance was changed to roughly 32% ethnic-Macedonians and 56% ethnic-Albanians. Same with Kichevo, by merging the four municipalities with Kichevo, especially Oslomej and Zajas, the old urban town's balance of 53% ethnic-Macedonians and 30% ethnic-Albanians would be changed to 35% ethnic-Macedonians and 54% ethnic-Albanians in the new enlarged municipality of Kichevo.[40] Enlarging Struga caused some violent backlash, so the enlargement of Kichevo has been postponed twice, so far, until 2012. Also, two predominantly ethnic-Albanian municipalities, Saraj and Kondovo, were added to the capital, the city of Skopje, in order to reach the 20% threshold and make it bilingual.[41]

The opposition, local governments, independent experts and the broader public were not involved in the process and this caused a general atmosphere of disapproval. The World Macedonian Congress, a citizen's association with strong links to the traditionally nationalist diaspora, initiated a referendum to repeal the new law, and in Parliamentary procedure the referendum was to take place on November 7, 2004. The government coalition saw this as a threat to the

Map 2

[40] Census figures of 1994 and 2002 were used for comparison.

[41] The government argued that other issues were at stake, such as access to resources, and the opposition (asked why Petrovec and Ilinden, which are predominantly Macedonian) were not added for the same reasons.

implementation of the Framework Agreement and started a PR campaign to discourage the referendum by promoting a boycott of it. The government and its supporters, including the president, argued that: the new Law on Local Government Boundaries saved the unitary character of the state; it was an agreement approved by a parliament majority of both ethnic camps; the previous law was in conflict with the implementation of the Framework Agreement; revising the Framework Agreement is dangerous and the Euro-Atlantic future of Macedonia could be jeopardized. The Ohrid Agreement was brokered by the EU and the US, and both saw the referendum as a threat to their stabilization efforts. The EU presented the issue of the referendum as a choice between EU integration or isolation, and offered financial support to implement the decentralization.

Many NGOs, media and independent experts were pro-referendum using rational arguments, such as the fact that it is non-democratic to draw local government boundaries without even consulting those affected,[42] also arguments that adding villages to cities artificially world hamper development of either by losing the focus. The main contested issue was that the boundary drawing was ethnically motivated[43] not economically or rationally. All polling made and reported by the media in that period were in favor of repealing the new law, showing 50-60% support for the referendum, so the stick and carrot approach by the EU and the coalition government was not helping much. And then, a few days before the referendum the US government made an extraordinary move and recognized Macedonia under its constitutional name of The Republic of Macedonia. It was said that it was for stabilization of the country.[44] This caused euphoria in the public and raised hopes that this move world be followed by other major countries, especially in the EU. On the day of the referendum the turnout was low and it failed.[45]

Borrowing from the Copenhagen School of IR's well-known concepts,[46] the securitizing

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[42] The European Charter of Local Self-Government, Strasbourg, 15 October 1985, of which Macedonia is a party, says in Article 5, Protection of local authority boundaries "Changes in local authority boundaries shall not be made without prior consultation of the local communities concerned, possibly by means of a referendum where this is permitted by statute."

[43] Arguing that it is also in breach of spirit of the Framework Agreement which says under "1. Basic Principles" that "1.2. Macedonia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the unitary character of the State are inviolable and must be preserved. There are no territorial solutions to ethnic issues."

[44] Some saw it as a reward for Macedonia's contribution to the war in Iraq and as a reprimand for the reluctance of Greece. See Sean D. Murphy, *Principles of International Law* (St. Paul, MN: Thomson/West, 2006).

[45] Zidas Daskalovski, "The New Law on Local Government Boundaries and the Democratization of Macedonia," *Walking on the Edge: Consolidating Multiethnic Macedonia 1989-2004* (Skopje: Dominant, 2005) pp. 187-198; Kamelia R. Dimitrova, "Municipal Decisions on the Border of Collapse: Macedonian Decentralisation and the Challenges of Post-Ohrid Democracy," *Southeast European Politics* Vol. 5, No. 2-3 (December 2004), pp. 172-186; Goran Stojkovski, "Analysis of the Referendum and the Post-referendum Situation in Macedonia," *IRIS 2005* (Sofia: Institute for Regional and International Studies, 2005); Ann-Sofi Jakobsson Hatay, *International Assistance to Post-Conflict Democratisation and Reconciliation in Macedonia* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2005).

[46] Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: a New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998). "Securitization" is defined as "constituted by the inter-subjective establishment of an existential threat with a saliency sufficient to have substantial political effects." "Referent objects" are defined as

actor was the civic society and the opposition parties where the real referent object of security was Macedonian identity and its ontological security. It may be argued that what was at stake was the local government boundaries or democratic principles, but then it's harder to explain why the referendum failed since none of the stated claims were met, and the explanation that the US recognition of Macedonia's constitutional name of the country created euphoria doesn't explain why this made people suddenly forget about the issues that prompted the referendum in the first place. So, it can be argued that the real referent object was the Macedonian identity, where making cities traditionally perceived as Macedonian bilingual or the Macedonian majority a minority overnight was seen as a threat to it. When the Macedonian's contested identity issue was addressed positively, by the US recognition of the country's constitutional name, the issue of the new local government boundaries was de-securitized by decreasing the ontological insecurity of Macedonia. The EU did not address the Macedonian ontological security, but it addressed the issue only as an internal one, and with a carrot and stick approach tried less successfully to discourage the referendum. All the threats and money promised could not match the one smart diplomatic move for "stabilization of the country" as a preventive activity.

Conclusion

The specific cases presented here show that in order to understand an internal conflict such as the one between the majority Macedonians and minority Albanians and their political dynamics, it is essential to know the local, regional and national context while taking history into consideration. Such a view is not so new but what I hope to have contributed is to look at it as an ontological security issue. The traditional security approach[47] solely cannot explain the new conflicts, such as those in the former Yugoslavia, nor does it take into consideration the cases like Macedonia. The widening of the security agenda[48] changed the focus from states to societies and individuals, but what is more important here is taking into consideration issues like identity as a referent object of security, for which purpose I used the concept of "ontological security."

The Balkan state boundaries are now mutually recognized (with the notable exception of Kosovo) but other "symbolic" boundaries still overlap and this, I hope I have shown with the case of Macedonia, have an overlooked impact on the political dynamics in the region that have the potential to burst into another violent conflict. Democratization did not make these issues obsolete; they are as much alive as they were a century ago. For now, EU integration serves as an "overlay" that makes open violent conflict between the state and its people difficult. However, the rejection by NATO in 2008 and the delayed EU integration due to Greece's veto and the naming dispute have made things worse in Macedonia.

"things that are seen to be existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survival" and "securitizing actors" as "actors who securitize issues by declaring something, a referent object, existentially threatened."

[47] With the realist paradigm of states in a state of anarchy and in an amity-enmity dynamics.

[48] Which started with the human security concept introduced in 1994 with UNDP's Human Development Report.