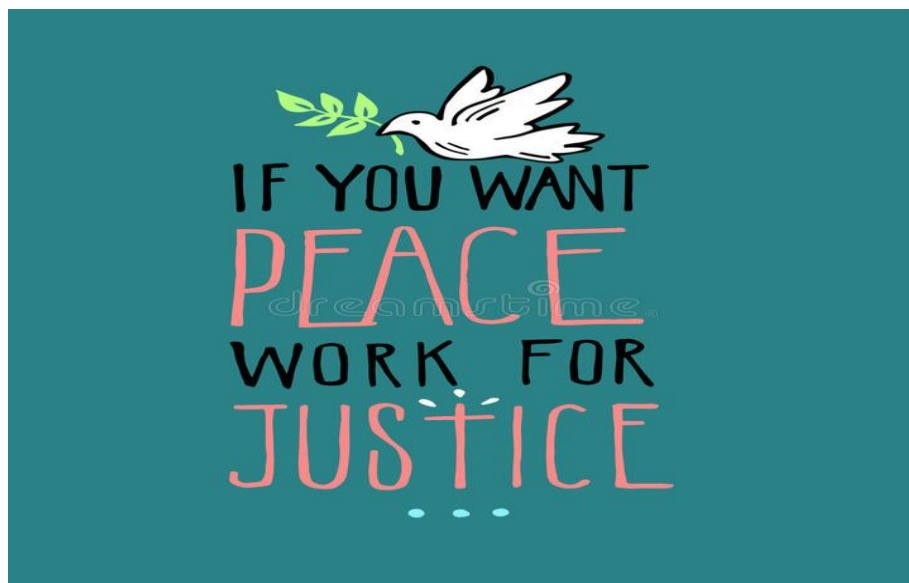


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Conflict resolution and interethnic disputes, the 2001
crisis in FYROM and the case of the Ochrid
Agreement.



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Corinth, March 2018

Πανεπιστήμιο Πελοποννήσου

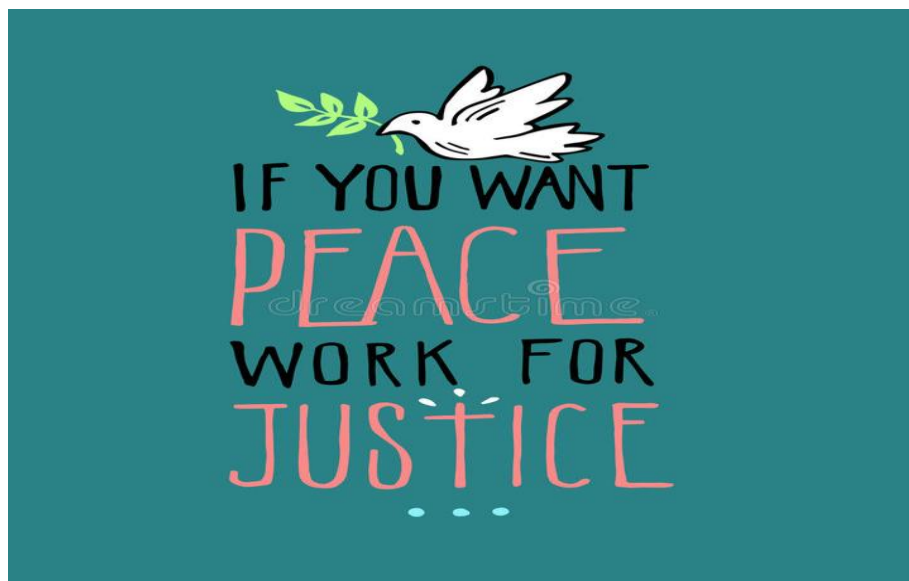
Σχολή Κοινωνικών και Πολιτικών Επιστημών

Τμήμα Πολιτικής Επιστήμης και Διεθνών Σχέσεων

Πρόγραμμα Μεταπτυχιακών Σπουδών

«Μεσογειακές Σπουδές»

**Η επίλυση συγκρούσεων και οι διεθνοτικές διαφορές,
η κρίση της ΠΓΔΜ το 2001 και η περίπτωση της
Συμφωνίας της Οχρίδας.**



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I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for an academic degree. Except where states otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

Δηλώνω υπεύθυνα ότι αυτή η διπλωματική εργασία αποτελεί εξ' ολοκλήρου δικό μου συγγραφικό έργο και δεν έχει υποβληθεί εν όλω ή εν μέρει σε προηγούμενο ακαδημαϊκό πρόγραμμα σπουδών. Το έργο που παρουσιάζεται είναι εξ ολοκλήρου δικό μου, εκτός από τα σημεία που σαφώς παραδέχομαι ή παραπέμπω αλλού.

To my family, for

making me who

I am today...

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like thank my thesis' supervisor, professor Tsardanidis Charalampo, in the department of political studies and international relations at University of Peloponnese. He understood and showed flexibility in my handing in the essay despite the difficulties I confronted.

I would also like to thank all the professors which helped me hand in my essay, even with a short delay, understanding the circumstances of the region where I work.

Finally, I would like to show my gratitude to my family and my colleagues which supported and encouraged me in hard times.

Thank you.

Dimitris Sotiriou

ABBREVIATIONS

CARDS	Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development, and Stabilization
CAS	Country Assistance Strategy
DPA	Democratic Party of Albanians
DUI	Democratic Party for Integrations
EAR	European Agency for Reconstruction
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
EUMM	European Union Monitor Mission
FYROM	Former Yugoslavia Republic of Macedonia
HCNM	High Commissioner on National Minorities
ICFY	International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NLA	National Liberation Army
MAP	Medical Assistance programme
OCC	Operation capabilities Concept
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
OFA	Ochrid Framework Agreement
PFP	Partnership For Peace
SEEU	South East European University
SAA	Stabilization and Association Agreement
SFRY	Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
T.S.S.	Transitional Support Strategy
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific and cultural Organization
UNICE	United Nations Children Fund
UNRA	United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration
UNPREDEP	United Nations Preventive Deployment in Macedonia
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force

VMRO- Democratic Party for Macedonia Unity
DPMNE
WHO World Health Organization

How The resolution of 2001 crisis in FYROM became a model for future conflict resolutions?

KEY WORDS: [Ochrid Framework Agreement (OFA), conflict resolution, conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacebuilding, FYROM, NLA]

ABSTRACT

The beginning of 21st century can be characterized as a turning point for the history of FYROM. The greatest challenge, so far, since its independence from Yugoslavia, brought the state in the front door of a bloody civil war. However, the interstate political procedures alongside with the prompt reaction of international diplomacy, succeeded not only in preventing one more bloody war in the region, but also in establishing an new era in the resolution of crisis. This thesis, by drawing a detailed picture on the background of the conflict, analyzes, in depth, the procedures and the actions taken by the international diplomacy to avoid an impending bloodbath.

We can characterize the case of 2001 conflict in FYROM, as a ‘zero-sum’, in which the author analyzes, in three phases, the procedure of conflict resolution. It starts from preventing a crisis to suppressing it, and finally from upholding peace to consolidating it. The methodology of analysis, which is used in this thesis, is the political analysis, with case study the 2001 crisis in FYROM and the Ochrid Framework Agreement, of primary and secondary resources, based on the action of the global presence in the area, before, at the time of the crisis resolution and after it.

Πως η επίλυση της κρίσης του 2001 στην ΠΓΔΜ έγινε μοντέλο για μελλοντικές επιλύσεις συγκρούσεων;

Λέξεις κλειδιά: [Συμφωνία της Οχρίδας, επίλυση συγκρούσεων, αποτροπή συγκρούσεων, ειρηνευτική διαδικασία, οικοδόμηση ειρήνης, ΠΓΔΜ, Εθνικός απελευθερωτικός Στρατός]

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Οι αρχές του εικοστού-πρώτου αιώνα αποτέλεσαν μια σημαντική στροφή για την ιστορία της ΠΓΔΜ. Η μεγαλύτερη πρόκληση, μέχρι τώρα, από την ανεξαρτησία της από τη Γιουγκοσλαβία έφερε τη χώρα στο κατώφλι ενός αιματηρού εμφυλίου πολέμου. Εντούτοις, οι διακρατικές πολιτικές συμφωνίες μαζί με τη άμεση αντίδραση της διεθνής διπλωματίας επέτυχαν όχι μόνο την αποτροπή ενός ακόμα πιο αιματηρού πολέμου στην περιοχή, αλλά επίσης να αποτελέσουν μια νέα εποχή στην επίλυση των κρίσεων. Αυτή η θέση, με το να περιγράφει το προσκήνιο της διαμάχης, αναλύει σε βάθος τις διαδικασίες και τις δράσεις που ελήφθησαν από την διεθνή διπλωματία για να αποφύγει μια ενδεχόμενη αιματοχυσία.

Η περίπτωση της σύγκρουσης στη ΠΓΔΜ το 2001 μπορεί να χαρακτηριστεί ως ένα πεδίο, πάνω στο οποίο ο συγγραφέας αναλύει σε τρεις φάσεις τη διαδικασία επίλυσης της διαμάχης. Αρχίζει από την αποτροπή της κρίσης μέχρι την καταστολή της, και τελικά, από την διατήρηση της ειρήνης στην εδραίωσή της. Η μεθοδολογία της ανάλυσης που χρησιμοποιείται σε αυτήν τη θέση είναι η πολιτική ανάλυση των πρωτευουσών και δευτερευουσών πηγών, βασισμένη στη δράση της διεθνούς παρουσία στην περιοχή, πριν και μετά τη συμφωνία της Οχρίδας.

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INTRODUCTION

It has been almost ten years since the dissolution of the Yugoslavian confederation and the independence of FYROM. The new-born state became the center of global attention. The reason was that a new interethnic conflict in the region came close to become a civil war. Despite the fact that the conditions which formed the conflict between the two sides were similar to those in Bosnia and Kosovo, their results were entirely different.

This essay intends to name all the actions taken by the international community in order to resolve the conflict and to avoid a new bloody war in the region. It succeeded, by building a long-lasting peace till this day. This thesis can be analyzed in three stages. Firstly, the stance that the international community held towards the new-born state comes into focus. By avoiding an in-coming conflict, the new state spent the first decade, since the dissolution of Yugoslavia in a peaceful manner to a great extent. Secondly, all the diplomatic and political endeavors needed to guide those internal actors, who involved in the resolution of the conflict, which got broader, because of the emergence of the national-liberation army and ended with the accumulation of a great part of its armament. The third distinct part of the mentioned thesis has to do with the actions taken to keep peace and consolidate it, according to the European standards in order to prevent a new conflict in the future.

The author, in the first chapter of this thesis, is going to analyze the theoretical background aiding to a more thorough understanding of conflict resolution. In the second part, he targets to elucidate the causes and conditions leading to the crisis in FYROM. The third chapter focuses on the prevention of an incoming conflict in the first decade of new state's existence. In the fourth chapter, the resolution of the conflict, as it was formed by the diplomats and the international community, is stated.

In the fifth chapter, he examines the endeavors needed for the consolidation of peace by the military and police presence. In the sixth chapter, the actions taken by a state, with multinational characteristics, to get synchronized with the western standards are mentioned. In conclusion, the author projects a model according to which future internal interethnic conflicts can have a peaceful resolution.

1 THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1.1 CONFLICTS IN INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

Conflict resolution constitutes one of most difficult and complex aspects of international security and international relations. In order to define the term ‘resolution’ we should always take into account the *ad hoc* circumstances of the crisis to be resolved. However, when a crisis has international repercussions, the process of its resolution encompasses a series of common actions that allows us to speak of an international practice or a model of conflict resolution.

The history of international conflicts shows that the two crucial factors in their evolution are the international environment and the time in that they are taking place. Parties involved in a crisis spend their efforts trying to impose themselves. Although a different set of circumstances may cooperate closely in order to enhance their dynamics. We should, thus, acknowledge that, in a crisis among two or more parties involved, there are even more players who either support some of the opposed parties or try to assure the continuation or termination of the crisis by pursuing their own interests.

In many cases, international security can be considered as the ‘mechanism’ that ensures the ‘security’, globally. The term ‘security’ should not be interpreted literally but as a state of equilibrium between Peace and War. In other words, the crisis occurs as a result of the pursuit of specific interests and ends up for the same reasons. By other words, in realism point of view, a crisis never ends as long as interests keep changing and sustainable peaceful environment, cannot be achieved. (Ηρακλειδής, 2009. p 34-40)

We can identify two types of peaceful conflict resolution in the international system: positive and negative peace. (Ηρακλειδής, 2009, p 27-29; Grewal, 2003). The first occurs when both parties acknowledge the mutual effort to resolve a dispute and resort to common efforts, whereas the second implies that both sides relapse to the conflict either because of failure to fulfill the agreed terms or due to the pressures of international environment.

The model of positive peace is a diplomatic approach which benefits both parties, whereas the negative peace model is a ‘lose-lose’ situation for both sides (Ηρακλειδής,

2009). Interethnic conflicts within a state also fall under that context, when a crisis have a regional imprint that occurs in areas of increased interest, and it calls for international intervention. A classic example of such international practice is the intervention of Javier Solana in the Ochrid Framework Agreement, which represents a specific model of conflict resolution, which managed to establish peace in FYROM in a short time, and in the early stages of an interethnic conflict in an explosive regional environment. (Reka, 2011, p 21-23).

1.2 THE IDENTITY OF CRISIS AND THE THEORY BEHIND CONFLICTS RESOLUTION

The appropriate study of a conflict requires a comprehensive investigation of its identity before selecting the path of actions to follow towards its resolution. Three aspects should be analyzed in the beginning. The first involves the relations between players and the way that those address the whole situation. In this stage, one should analyze the allegations of the parties involved. The second aspect requires the analysis of the external factors, which intervene to influence the structure of the game. Finally, a third aspect examines the neutral stance of an observer who expresses morality, which will not necessarily be applied in the given "game". The point of view of the international community is important in this stage as well as in the time that this is expressed and mobilized. (Ηρακλειδής, 2009)

The ad hoc or massive manifestation of violence in the form of organized crime is the crucial point in which the crisis is identified as international and calls for intervention. Especially, when this escalates into armed conflict. The situation that escalates in that manner and its arbitration is led by a group of diplomats and mediators and can only have limited solutions, which are related to the profile of the crisis. The non-conciliatory use of violence which surpasses the morals of the conflict is highly probable in this case, which places the party who uses it in disapproval or isolation.

The case of the Balkan states eloquently demonstrates the way that the interventions of international community have influenced the outcome of a crisis. The dissolution of the USSR and the collapse of the Socialist regimes in the Balkans where the beginning of an ongoing establishment of New States (Hadzic, 2003). The common feature of those crises and conflicts were their intense military activity, the foreign interests that those attracted and the fact that the international community followed tactics of mediation and "firefighting" rather prevention. However, none of these practices had any permanent results to restore normality(Ηρακλειδής, 2009).

Violence usually occurs when the confrontational relationship is crystallized as a result of stereotypes or behavior that is expressed by distinct groups. The crisis is self-sustained and it reproduces itself, even if dynamic inputs from the outside, terminates. It is impossible for the key players to reach a mutually accepted and reasonable compromise. In their plans can only be one 'zero-sum' game with one

winner and one loser(Ηρακλείδης, 2009, p 28). In other words, the only acceptable solution is to impose one's will on the other. This leads to polarization which may, in many occasions, escalate in armed conflict. In the case of ethnic disputes, an armed conflict may take the form of domination of a particular territory, which is either historically associated with an ethnic group or plays a critical part in the group's aspirations. (Ηρακλείδης, 2009, p 27-34).

Intense psychological and emotional burden, suspicion, fear, nationalism, bipolar stereotypes overwhelm the players. The opponent is described as violent, threatening, and ruthless, without human feelings, respectfulness or moral restraints. These features intensify the distrust between players and prolong the lack of confidence. This is typical in conflicts of two different cultures, with language and religion barriers, and with demographic frontiers, that may be visible in the local geography, or need to become clear by taking up a cause (Ηρακλείδης, 2009 p 27-34).

The resolution of a crisis may often require acknowledgment of the problem. Even if we grasp the root of the problem, however, it is very likely that we won't be able to impose its total resolution. Therefore, it is often required not to resolve the problem but first to foster those conditions which will allow the de-escalation of the conflict and then pave the way to mutual compromises. For example, the intervention in Afghanistan came at a time when the opium production was exploited by the Taliban in order to finance the extremely expensive operations of the organization. The dramatic reduction of the opium production was expected to provoke mass reactions from the local society, as opium is its most important commodity of income. During the conflict resolution process, the sudden change of parameters may lead to opposite results and aggravate the problem. (Goodhand, 2002)

It is, thus, necessary to understand that in inter-ethnic disputes, the burden of negotiations does not involve only the two oppositions, but also other related factors. The most important of them are the State, the Constitution, the political representation (parties, single representatives etc.) and of course their relations with the 'parallel state' of organized crime, rebel or guerilla forces and its connections with the external environment. The nature of the dispute is, thus, different than the society is manipulated to believe.

1.3 RESOLUTION OF INTERETHNIC CONFLICTS

In multi-national states, national polarization often becomes the essence for the existence of different power centers. States, such as FYROM, include societies with a divided concept about the source of democracy. Each minority group is treated as a separate sub-group of the society. If the dynamics of this group subside, this group of citizens will be disenfranchised (Καϊρίδης,2016, p73-132)

The low standards in living, training and education lead to deception and vulnerability to propaganda. These factors sustain the nationalistic policies of the Past, over the years. In cases that democratization has either been achieved or is under process and the state structures are still incomplete, each nationality expresses a separate power centers, all of which tend to collide and intensify frictions among ethnicities.

Conflict resolution does not aim as a total ending of the conflict. If that was the case, the international community would have to deal with a divided state and its geographical division would be a conflict issue for the next years. With a general perspective, conflict resolution includes all the necessary efforts to equalize the opposite groups, to establish common values and structures of management, and to develop trust and cooperation bonds between them in order to homogenize society.

A conflict resolution model, especially when the conflict is interethnic or religious, has the following features(Wallensteen, 2015;Schweitzer, 2009):

- I. Proactive diplomacy, which encompasses diplomatic and military actions aiming at preventing the crisis from escalating to an armed conflict. This often involves isolating the crisis by declaring demilitarized zones, monitoring the political index of the society and attempting to promote cooperation.
- II. Restoring the peace by taking all necessary measures to achieve a ceasefire that will be respected by both sides and potentially have it extended to an agreement which, through negotiation, may resolve the conflict in non-violent terms.
- III. Upholding the peace. This involves the intervention of the peace-keeping forces, following the agreement of the two sides, in order to prevent a future conflict. Most reforms take place at this stage, regardless of the size of the military force that will be applied, and aim towards resolving the conflict and reinstating respect and cooperation.

IV. Post war peace. This involves further actions to restore additional communication channels and further establishment of trust between the two sides. Peace-keeping operations usually depart and efforts are made to harmonize the State with the ongoing conflict, to other states and international organizations.

Ethnic conflicts resolution theory as a practice was largely studied in Post- Cold War period. That era marked the emergence of multi-national states, which posed several problems due to the way of functioning. They usually involved a dominant ethnic group that controlled the state, while its relations to the others were usually the object of political maneuvering. Those states were usually geographically located in regions of significant geopolitical importance, namely the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe, Middle East etc., where the internal affairs are associated or influenced by the proximate or international environment, depending on the circumstances. The case o FYROM allowed positive results at the international community and especially at the way that the states are organized against serious interethnic disputes.

2 CRISIS OF 2001 IN FYROM

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As in the most states in the Balkan Peninsula, FYROM's society is divided through the typical religious and ethnic cleavages. Slavs, Vlachs and Serbs formulate the distinct orthodox religious group which outnumbers the Albanians, Turks and Romani, who are in their majority Muslims. (Ilievski, 2007, p 4-6) This ethnic and religious distinction is also reflected geographically, as the Albanian population dominates the north-western part of the country, near the borders with Kosovo and Albania. The region encompasses the cities of Tetovo, Skopje, Gostivar, Kumanovo, Kičevo, Struga and Debar where the Albanian population has a great influence.(Daskalovski, 2005, p 7-10)

FYROM was the only State that became independent by the Social Federation Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), although, often, after the Yugoslavia's dissolution, the main ethnic groups came into clash. The most significant, was in 2001 in which the Ethnic Union government and the National Liberation Army signed the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) at 13th August (Reka, 2011, p 21-23).By this, there was an end at a six-month armed conflict. Since then, FYROM's policy has turned toward western institutions. Many reforms that laid out in the OFA have legislated under EU and NATO support.

In FYROM's recent history, we can distinguish three international community's "attempts" for peace and conflict prevention. The first were the preventive initiatives following FYROM's independence. The second were the effort for peace at 2001 crisis until the OFA and the third were the post conflict attempts to OFA implementation and the stability the support's further activities

2.2 THE FYROM'S INTERETHNIC CONFLICT AFTER THE DISSOLUTION OF YUGOSLAVIA

An examination of the FYROM's crisis shows its similarities with the conflicts in the Balkans and the states, which sprang in the aftermath of the collapse of the Iron Curtain. Although the crisis in FYROM has geopolitical effects which are closely related to the West, we cannot, assume that the break-up of Yugoslavia was the result of the crisis between East and West.

The ethnic and religious diversity in the Western Balkans has a geographical imprint and the passivity of the area has always been evident. After the WW2, national consciousness in the Yugoslavia and in the Western Balkans, in general, has succumbed due to the integration trends of socialist ideology. In the case of Yugoslavia, however, the national character left its mark on the Republics of the Federation. The problem was the emergence of a national conscience in its peoples, who were a part of the Federation but whose rights differed from each Republic. The most typical example was the Albanian nation, which was dispersed on all Western Balkans and which represented the main ethnic issue, in combination with the Muslim ethnic –religious groups, like the Muslims of Bosnia (Bebler, 2008; Hadzic, 2004, p 7-12; Ilievski 2007, p 5-9).

The crisis in FYROM and the War in Kosovo were caused by almost identical reasons. The difference was that autonomy tendencies in Kosovo, which could be detected before the break-up of Yugoslavia, were suppressed right after the break-up of the Republic. The Albanians of FYROM tried to pursue more rights in the newly –founded state with any means they possessed, following the lead of the Kosovo population, a few years before. In the case of Kosovo, its cessation was necessary to achieve stability, whereas the autonomy of Albanians in the North-Western FYROM would not necessarily produce a more stable state and might trigger new tensions in the Western Balkans. (Cooley, 2013)

2.3 THE EVOLUTION OF THE CRISIS AND THE ENDEAVORS FOR A POLITICAL RESOLUTION

It is difficult to determine the end and the beginning of the FYROM ethnic-religious conflict. As opposed to the establishment of other states of the post-Yugoslavia era, the founding of the FYROM state was not the result of a national liberation struggle but of a relatively regular administrative division. The multi-national profile of the state was not reflected on its constitutional break-up since the Federation era. The Slav majority mainly reflected its national identity. However, we must note that this was the result of the persistent strategy of the Federation to establish a 'Macedonian' national identity. (Ilievsky, 2007, p 5-9)

The 'Macedonians' represented a mix of people, who lived in FYROM, despite their origins. The newly-founded state followed the same model in order to assimilate the multinational elements and reinforce its identity. The problem was that the Albanian nationalism, which was more intense after the cessation of Kosovo, had increased the distance between the Albanian minority and the 'Macedonian' identity.

The ethnic and religious aspects of that distance were particularly evident after the central government stalled reforms about minorities. The distance grew further by the end of 2000 and reached its peak during the crisis of 2001. The episodes between the government and the Albanians became more than visible, when part of the minority was organized in a paramilitary group to achieve its goals. NLA's (National Liberation Army) characteristics and methods of action were identical to those of UCK in Kosovo. (Daskalovski, 2005, p 7-10)

The crisis went through three stages until the implementation of the Ochrid Agreement. In the first, NLA made its mission clear, in the second the international community took action, when faced with the government's failure to contain the situation, and in the third, the formation of the Government of National Unity has led to the Ochrid Agreement. (Paintin, 2009, p 9-12).

Despite the diplomatic efforts in the first and second stage, an actual agreement was achieved when the International community put pressure on both Government and insurgents by invoking sanctions. The most important factors in the resolution of the conflict consisted in the attempts to reach a political understanding and downplay the part of NLA as a non-institutional factor. The latter attempt sent out the message that

the International community followed a democratic policy in FYROM instead of threatening with armed violence. On the other hand, international attempts to prevent the President from declaring the country in a state of war and pursue a military solution, proved to be equally important with the isolation of NLA shortly before the Ochrid Agreement. (Ilievsky, 2007, p 5-9; Daskalovski, 2005, p 7-15)

2.4 THE UNIQUENESS OF THE CRISIS

The post-Yugoslavia period was a landmark for the establishment of Common EU Foreign Policy. The break-up of Yugoslavia and the establishment of new states led to new power arrangements in the Western Balkans. That gave the EU an opportunity to promote European integration. The low standards of living, the great challenge of the new states to reinforce their security, to ‘crack down’ their isolation and overcome many of the social, political and economic problems, which they inherit from the transition—from central controlled economy to the Free market. This new environment presented a unique opportunity for the EU (Paintin, 2009, p 16 -18).

This perception on the Western Balkans was reflected on the EU’s immediate intervention to settle the crisis. Failing to pursue an autonomous policy in the region, however, it used the similar policy patterns of NATO and US. The presence of delegations and mediators from both NATO and the EU underline the previous factor. An important development for the resolution of the crisis was the US stance, which expanded its dogma from the Balkans to broader peripheries, such the Pacific Ocean and the Southeastern Europe. (Περάκης,2009, p 186-195)

During the Clinton presidency, in the beginning of the crisis, the US had a more dynamic and clear strategy in the Balkans. During the Bosnia and Kosovo wars, the USA deployed approximately a force of 60.000 men, which gradually reduced during the Bush administration. The reason that NATO, and not the USA, took action in the region had to do with the USA position that the EU had to develop its own forces and mechanisms to ensure the security of the continent. (Περάκης,2009, p 186-195)

By the end of the crisis, the EU intervention mechanisms in its periphery had entered a new phase with the creation of rapid reaction units and civil prevention and conflict resolution units. On the other hand, the Ochrid Agreement is considered an exemplary agreement regarding armed conflict resolution in international case-law. This mostly involved the procedures and the political, diplomatic and military means deployed by the international community.

2.5 THE CAUSES OF THE CRISIS

Anarchy and dismantling of state structures is a great social problem, which not only undermines state functions but also has long term negative effects. In case of FYROM, for example, the break-up of Yugoslavia followed an economic collapse. The society was put through enormous pressure, especially after the opening to the markets of the former republics, in which the old system collapsed together with the old power vacuum.

FYROM's integration in the West was relatively smooth, compared to the other Republics. However, objections and problems existed and escalated in the 2001 crisis. The Albanian minority pursued more rights in the new state but also the regional environment, was ideal for the emergence of national movements. It's useful to underline, that the ethnic and religious conflict in FYROM was a part of similar movements in the Balkans, however its roots were not purely nationalistic but a hybrid of interests which emerged and tried to use the opportunities in the transformations that the country went through. (Ilievski, 2007, p 5-9)

It was evident that the distance between the two main ethnic groups was fuelled by their power centers. Politics in the interior were divided into two side, although, the two larger Slav parties with the two smaller Albanian parties participated in the governments (Ilievski, 2007, p 9-12). OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) stated that the elections process lacked transparency; the formation of government was an informal process relying on the consent of one of the two Albanian parties. Following this, the President of the Republic, which was of Slav origin, had increased competences and influence. The greatest problem in the political system was the limited representation of minorities. In parallel, the Albanian side had close relations with the Albanians in Kosovo and Albania itself, which influenced the autonomy of the minority from the state (Ilievski, 2007, p 5-9). The relations with Kosovo Albanians were a lot more evident in the new generations, due to the Albanian speaking Universities in Kosovo and Tetovo. It was natural that the insurgent activities of Kosovo Albanians influenced the stance of FYROM Albanians.

The activities of Albanians in FYROM were reinforced even more by the refugee flows from Kosovo to the Northwest regions of FYROM. This flow played an important part in the state's minority policy as the state failed to support the great flow

of refugees, who were more than 140000¹ people and quickly integrated in the minority. This was treated with suspicion fueled by the uneasiness in the bilateral relations between the two ethnic groups. The naturalization of part of the refugees was used to increase the leverage of the Albanian minority in FYROM's politics.

Of course, the distance between the two ethnic groups was due to many other factors. The Church played a dominant part in the Slav policy. Moreover, the religious character of the state, which was reflected in the predominance of the Orthodox religion, was a source of discontent for the other religions and naturally for the Albanian-speaking Muslims. (Καϊρίδης,2016)

The economic embargo imposed by Greece over the name dispute was also an important factor. The name dispute is an open bilateral issue to this day, which has an impact in the internal relations between the two ethnic groups. The name 'Macedonia' is used de facto name, which resulted a in a delay of FYROM to engage with international institutions, such as NATO and EU.

The Slav's opinion is still using the term 'Macedonia', as a common title for the identification of the folk of the state, as it described in the Constitution. In the opposite side, Albanian minority is following a policy of Albanian origin identification and national symbols, which the Slav majority rejected as unacceptable. (Περράκης,2009, p 204-209)

¹The exact number of refugees is not known. Some academics are supposing that the refugees were fewer, although the opposite site comments that the refugees number was much higher. The reality is that the refugees became an object of instrumentation to create further political pressure to the government, to apply a new policy about minorities' rights.

2.6 CONCLUSION

A future historian will describe the decade that followed the independency of FYROM as such, the new State had crucial similarities compare to other post-Yugoslavian states. The causes of Bosnian Civil war, but also the Kosovo war weren't individual cases of conflicts. We should describe them by a greater framework which analyses West Balkans, as an area that, historically is creating ethnographic and geopolitical processes. As such, geographically, we can characterize it, as an area, in limited area, compare to rest of Europe, where an orgasm of population interaction.

FYROM was this special case of modern state that caused huge changes in the international security system, on the way of conflict resolution to the Balkan Peninsula. The western Balkans was, already, part of a European maturation, which was very influential, not only in FYROM's political system but also the rest of Balkan populations.

The need for a sustainable Balkans peninsula was asking for a significant participation of all the countries to establish a new, balanced transformation in the European political identity and culture. The timing that FYROM's crisis established was quite characteristic for a bunch of reasons. We can identify one of them, as the change of USA foreign policy (in this particular area) and in parallel, the need for initiatives from EU for a more secure and sustainable region. This very time brought, also, the need for a different approach in terms of crisis, which, later, proved as a prototype system for the global or regional diplomacy.

The stages of conflict, could divided as such the actions that took place from the beginning of the crisis until the smoothing of communities interrelations. This became a fact, some years after the Ohrid Agreement. The first stage of conflict resolution is resulting in disarmament of NLA, and the second stage is about the establishment of peaceful coexistence among the communities. The last stage was the outcome of diplomatic, political and military tools.

The resolution of interethnic conflict in FYROM might not have the opportunity to end up as such. We resulted in this fact, by underlining the elements of specific actions by the diplomatic and military centers, in the name of international community (Paintin, 2009).It could drive FYROM to experience crucial similarities, with the two previous neighbor conflicts, in Bosnia and Kosovo. According to this, we can comment

that, the conflict resolution of interethnic disputes, started, just after the independence of FYROM.

3 THE PREVENTION OF FYROM'S CONFLICT BEFORE 2001

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Yugoslavia was a geographical area in which the socialist ideology acts as the base of a multi ethnic country. The independence of the successor states wasn't a quiet simple procedure. Balkan Peninsula came up against two long and turbulent wars. NATO was following the international Community permission (Paintin, 2009) involved in a crucial role like in Bosnia and Kosovo war. Although FYROM looked to have a more peaceful independence in which the international role reacted differently at the crisis' dynamics.

The Balkans was an interconnected cluster of states in which external factors had an impact on the interior as well. In the case of FYROM (Paintin, 2009, p9) and the relationship with Kosovo is a system of communicating vessels. As long as independence was established the newborn state had to resolve the following challenges (Paintin, 2009, p 9):

- I. *Firstly to preserve its borders and the territorial integrity from the external threats and especially the influence that the society could have by the other Balkan conflicts.*
- II. *Secondly but equally significant, to address the interethnic tension between the main national state's communities which could spark off a new internal conflict in the area.*

Both of them were security challenging scenarios. FYROM was a civic state with fragile institutions and low economic activity. From the break-up of the SFRY, the cleavage between the two communities was growing more and more and the circumstances were similar to the other new-borne states, which driven closer to an internal war (Ilievski, 2007, p 5-9)

FYROM's conflict was prevented by a number of international peace supporting operations, which helped the state to not engage in a interethnic conflict. According to Katie Paintin, the most important international actors were three. *The International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia (ICFY) Working Group on Ethnic and National*

Communities and Minorities(the ICFY Working Group), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (including the High Commissioner on National Minorities [HCNM]) and the United Nations(UN)(Paintin, 2009, p 9-12). Their focus wasn't only on the outbreak of the conflict, but they took action in other fields, where the two ethnic groups could cooperate. So, the three organizations worked over a variety of military, monitoring, diplomatic, and confidence-building and development tools in order to prevent war (Scweitzer, 2009).

3.2 MILITARY AND MONITORING TOOLS IN THE FIRST DECADE OF THE STATE

Today, nearly three decades after the collapse of Yugoslavia, we can see that the peripheral instability of the Western Balkans was closely linked to the attitude of the successor states and their nationalities. FYROM was not the first threat to the efforts of Serbian President Milosevic (Miroslav, 2004) to recover the most of the lost territories of Yugoslavia, but on the basis of political feasibility, the country could become the victim of a military intervention. Whether the reasons were political or military, the United Nations chose to protect the territorial integrity of the state through a generalized intervention in the western Balkans (Paintin, 2009).

The first UN independent operation on FYROM could be made in 1995 but this was the continuation of a previous operation by the organization that took place at the request of the Skopje president. Thus UNPROFOR, which was operating in Croatia, developed UNPREDEP, the only enterprise to prevent war in FYROM. UNPREDEP remained in its area until March 1999 with approximately a one-thousand-men force (Sicamma, 1996; Jentelson, 2000, p 173-210)

The Skopje's request for intervention by the UN forces was mainly a political choice. Within the framework of the operation, besides the peacekeeping forces, a group of military observers and police officers also acted. The majority of them were Americans and Europeans, nations that were directly involved in the stability of the Western Balkans and key critics of Serbia's attitude to the Yugoslav period (Paintin, 2009, p 9-13).

The operation's priority was to monitor state borders with both Serbia-Montenegro as well as with Albania. Despite the fact that within the framework of the UN forces' mission, the defense against any force was acting against the state, but such an action could not protect its territorial integrity. The size of the mission did not have much military depth but mainly political. As Katie Paintin says, the international presence was a beacon to the neighboring states, sending a message mainly to Belgrade about respect for the new borders (Paintin, 2009, p 9-13).

The UN may have played an important role in the security of the new state, but OSCE was the organization that first focused on controlling them with forces and means

three months before with Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje. However, its limited capacity was replaced by UN forces. The mission of the organization was largely adjusted to observe the conflict between the two nationalities. The organization focused mainly on the study of the interethnic differences and worked as a warning system for tensions between the two sides (Paintin, 2009, p 9-13).

A decade later, its representatives contributed to resolving the 2001 conflict. It is a fact that OSCE's presence from the independence of the state gave the 2001 negotiators the necessary knowledge of the limits and positions of both sides. Since its inauguration, the organization has been studying the weaknesses of the country's political system, the reforms of the constitution for the organization of the state, the respect for human rights, the relationship of the dominant ethnic group with the minorities, the dynamics of the parallel state, and the size neighborly conflicts affect internal stability.

3.3 THE INITIATIVES FOR THE GROWTH OF STABILITY IN THE REGION

Despite the safety net in the borders, the real threat for the state stability was still present and was not only political. The above-mentioned operations were not only military but also deployed diplomatic means. It was understood that the cooperation under common structures would enhance the bonds between the two ethnic groups. This attempt began with the establishment of inter-ethnic talks.

In the case of UNPERDEP this inter-ethnic cooperation provided many diplomatic tools, namely ‘quiet diplomacy, mediation and confidence building’, (Vankovska- Cvetkovska, 1998) which boosted the political debate between the parties, brought the minority rights and their representation to the spotlight. In many cases of inter-ethnic tensions, the special envoy took over as mediator and constrained the conflict. The operation followed the UN main pillar and it was people-oriented. The General Secretary of the operation worked towards the improvement of the administration in order to promote economic and social administration (Ackermann, 2003).

The OSCE –led operation had as its main mission the observation of inter-ethnic conflicts and the direct intervention for their resolution, especially in cases of escalation. Despite his mediation competences, the General Secretary also used his position in order to provide recommendations to the government concerning issues that could promote peaceful co-existence and appease disputes. These recommendations mainly involved the national languages, public education system reforms and better political representation of the communities (Zoe, 2000).

The organization’s main mission was to include the Albanian population of FYROM in all levels of educations and especially in second and third level. Until the state’s independence, the Albanian–speaking University of Pristine was the most important university for the minority. However, the prohibition imposed on Albanians in FYROM preventing them from enrolling in the University under the Milosevic regime, as well as the prohibition of the use of the Albanian language as a teaching language, led to the development of a non-legal Albanian speaking University in Tetovo, which was never recognized as an official University Authority by the state. (Paintin, 2009).

The HCNM's efforts focused on three directions: first, to ensure that the Albanian youth would not be organized against the government on academic issues, thus, triggering a new conflict; to raise the Albanian population's standards of living in the midterm and to establish joint groups to cultivate trust and cooperation between the two ethnic groups. In order to do so, the HCNM tried to convince the government to implement academic reforms and new legislation that would found new non-Slav – speaking private Universities. Finally, the HCNM promoted the idea for a new trilingual South Eastern Europe University (SEEU, with courses in Albanian, Slav and English) (Paintin, 2009;).

Apart from the two significant OSCE and UN efforts, the EU also took important initiatives to safeguard stability in the country. The EU's strategy was directly influenced by the European integration policy for the Western Balkans. So it mainly focused on issues of governance and sustainable security institutions which would inspire cooperation and trust among the two ethnic groups. ICFY was the first attempt to prevent conflict in all the Republics of the former Yugoslavia, but it was dissolved, mainly for political reasons and was re-established under a new name and assisted by the UN. (Paintin, 2009)

This new cooperation under the name 'Working Group on Ethnic and National Communities and Minorities' mainly aimed to eliminate disputes between ethnic groups by diplomatic means. Its diplomatic tools include the establishment of common tripartite meetings, among the members of the Working group. In parallel, an agent of field work in the places of interest was part of those meetings. Concerns and needs of the two parties were communicated through diplomatic channels and were then introduced in the agenda, which led to targeted reforms and conflict resolution.

The Working Group contributed to the networking of the two parties and clarified the real dimensions of the inter-ethnic crisis. Also, it assisted to identify a database, namely the real numbers of the Albanian minority and its needs. In fact, its actions led the Albanian side to change its claims for territorial autonomy and request its upgrading to a main pillar of the state (Ackermann, 2003). Thus, the Albanian speaking population received a progress in its citizenship status, not only by its participation in secondary education, but also the fact that the local government and its efforts were made to expand the use of the Albanian language, ethnic-religious symbols, like the Albanian flag, under certain conditions. The attempt to develop bonds

of trust between the groups, involved the participation of minorities in the state security forces, however, some parts of the minority remained cautious towards that practice and did not follow through. (Paintin, 2009).

3.4 CONCLUSION

The fact remains that international efforts to solve minorities' issue, were not enough to prevent tensions between minority population and the central government. Military operations were clearly successful in their goal, to impose the sense of law of the state integrity and prevent a civil war. However, tensions fueled by extremists never ceased to exist.

Slavs showed their intention to make necessary reforms and compromises in order to safeguard the integrity of the country and minorities were positive towards giving equal rights to ethnic groups and not granting autonomy to the western part of the country, as a form of real cooperation. Most diplomatic efforts ultimately came to an end, leaving the state to act alone. Thus, many important issues, which were considered as red lines remained unresolved and the relevant reforms were not implemented. The main issue was the University of Tetovo, whose function was prohibited. The peaceful coexistence was initially interrupted after the withdrawal of the security forces. China decided to veto the UN's assistance to FYROM, after the recognition of Taiwan by FYROM in 1999, and three years ago the ICFY efforts were terminated and UN and OSCE took over (Paintin, 2009).

As a result, shortly before the outbreak of the armed conflict in FYROM, the state was almost unprotected by international forces especially against the war in Kosovo. The minor OSCE force was not able to handle the control and safety of the borders, and reforms remained incomplete. The situation led to the emergence of extremism, which ultimately led to armed conflict.

4 CONFLICT RESOLUTION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The ethnic and religious disputes in FYROM became a great environment for the upcoming military conflict. Nationalistic views of both sides, the question of independency by the Albanian population in 'post-Yugoslavic' States, but also, the close relations with the Kosovo population, create a power vacuum into Albanian minority, organized in powerful cells within FYROM's northwest borders (Daskalovski, 2005). This move gave a rare opportunity to the central government, not to improve the minorities' citizenship issues. In parallel, a huge immigration wave from Kosovo, create a friendly environment for the Albanian extremists to recruit new members.

Since the mid-2000s, it's clearly visible that the crisis was becoming an open armed conflict, and in parallel, a vast amount of territory wasn't under the direct control of the State's police authorities. However, there were a great number of violent incident against State's targets, before NLA declare open warfare against FYROM's police forces. After the first violent attacks against State's institutions, and in parallel with the declaration of targets by NLA, it was clarified that the conflict had national and religious background (Daskalovski, 2005; ICG Balkans Report, 2001).

The intensity of this conflict, emerged the international diplomatic society, to act fast to create a framework for conflict ending. This will be gathers by all means, not only diplomatic tool-kits, but also by military or police participation. The ethno-religious crisis of 2001 met a successful ending point, after the diplomatic supervision of EU, USA, OSCE and NATO. For the peaceful resolution, it was needed a common ground of understanding, from both sides, which became almost true, by the supervision of the superpowers.

4.2 DIPLOMATIC ACTIONS AND THE ROLE OF THE REPRESENTATIVES

It was not long before diplomatic efforts to deal with the increasing tensions in FYROM. A few days after the outbreak of the conflict and the emergence of a climate of armed ethnic conflict, the international community took action against escalation and tried to come up with a compromise regarding the issue of the Albanian minority. The first attempts were made by George Robertson, then Secretary General of NATO, and Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, who focused on a peaceful resolution of the conflict, political dialogue and establishment of the necessary channels of communication with the political parties and the NLA (Daskalovski, 2005). Their efforts were undermined by the armed occupation of Aracinovo and the collapse of the negotiations. The two envoys led the president to form a government of national unity, which was established almost one month after the first attempts for a common stance against armed conflicts (Cooley, 2013).

Despite their support to the government of national unity, this was undermined when the security forces tried to ensure a military victory in the occupied territories and when the Albanian parties threatened to withdraw from the government if the main requests of the minority were not satisfied (Daskalovski, 2005). The envoys efforts took place in parallel with the adoption of a perspective regarding the future of the country. The diplomatic agenda included economic assistance, European integration and NATO involvement to maintain the peace in case of a total ceasefire and promoting dialogue and reforms for the constitutional upgrading of the minority (Paintin, 2009).

In the framework of the negotiations for the Ochrid Agreement, a permanent negotiation team was established led by former French Foreign Minister Francis Leotard and US Balkans expert Ambassador James Pardew. The base for the negotiation was the previous effort of the envoy of OSCE to achieve a ceasefire, which was turned down because of the unilateral acts of the Albanians and the proposal for granting total amnesty to NLA insurgents (Daskalovski, 2005).

The new agreement was signed by all parties and the NLA, on August 13th. The new agreement signed by all parties but also from NLA, as well, in 13th of August. The materialization of the new policy was due to start right after the first NATO troops step foot on the ground of FYROM (Daskalovski, 2005).

The Agreement aimed at paving the ground for all reforms which were not implemented, in order to upgrade the minorities' citizenship and to ensure its rights and the multinational character of the state. The immediate aim was to improve the function of the form of government, boost the dialogue between party representatives and put an end to the use of armed violence because of ethnic and religious differences. The envoys' diplomatic efforts, and especially of Xavier Solana, who promoted the European perspective of the country created the necessary de-escalation in order to avoid a new ethnic and religious conflict in the Western Balkans (Ilievski, 2007).

4.3 FYROM UNDER EU INFLUENCE

The EU played a leading role in the diplomatic efforts, to promote peace in FYROM. The outbreak of the civil war forced all sides to realize that the state needed political, economic and social reforms (Nadege Ragaru, 2008). On the first level, EU actions, in coordination with NATO, were mainly directed by adopting those measures that allow the de-escalation of the tensions. On March 19th, the EU Ministers of Foreign Affairs agreed upon a set of measures, including their contribution in border control and promotion of inter-ethnic relations (Daskalovski, 2004). The focus of EU diplomacy was clearly the government, towards which they renewed its support, clearly showing that peace would be reached through negotiations and not military intervention.

Apart from its support towards the government, the EU also supported the EU perspective of FYROM and the provision of economic and logistical aid. It also pledged that they would contribute 40 million Euros from the Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilization program (CARDS), 50 million in macroeconomic investments and additional assistances(loans and other facilities) (Daskalovski, 2004). Emphasis was placed on immigration issues, assistance for the affected population and post-conflict rehabilitation and development.

To boost further negotiations, the EU and FYROM signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement(SSA) (ICG, 2001). However, the whole concept was in the early stages, and this was the reason that the state wasn't ready to enter the integration stage. Because of its unsolved internal affairs, those issues moved FYROM's committed politicians to pursue the necessary reforms and pave the way to the rest Western Balkan states, in regards to their future.

During the conflict resolution process, among government and insurgents groups, the greatest issue that posed by, was the failure to achieve a political understanding in order to promote reforms. In reality, the convergence of political powers was clearly under international pressure and it aimed primarily at a ceasefire and secondarily to the prevention of armed conflicts between the two communities in the long term. However, as this is a common ground in many ethnic conflicts, FYROM was not far from this 'normality', which can be described as: nationalism is not the only factor which encircling the problem, but also as the power centers (government and

minority) polarized the scene. The effort to solve the conflict was directed to convince the insurgents to agree on the termination of the conflict, instead of received a violent crackdown. This couldn't have been achieved without the convergence of all decision-making centers(ICG, 2001).

A month after the leaders meeting, Solana enabled the formation of national unity all-party government and subsequently promoted a mutually accepted agreement. An improved version of the ceasefire agreement in Prizren², which had fallen through, was brought back to the table. Fearing a military intervention instead to restore the peace which would establish a precedent, president Trajkovski was convinced that only a national unity government would resolve the crisis and prevent the declaration of a state of war and UN or NATO probation (Ilievski, 2007).

From a diplomatic point of view, the FYROM's issue was addressed as a clearly European affair, which would be resolved in cooperation with NATO and the USA. On June 25th, the EU appointed former French Defense Minister Francois Leotard (Daskalovski, 2004) as special permanent envoy to Macedonia in order to discuss the details of the peace settlement, participated by the US special envoy in FYROM. In order to guarantee, that all political parties was committed to resolve the conflict, the EU set a 'tool- kit' for any future assistance through EU integration prospect, a process of peaceful conflict resolution (Daskalovski, 2004).

²Prizren efforts for political resolution of the FYROM interethnic dispute was fallen when photos saw the leaders of the two Albanian parties to negotiate without governments permission with the NLA leader, Ali Ahmeti.

4.5 THE ROLE OF NATO IN THE APPEASEMENT OF TENSIONS

NATO followed the EU's diplomatic involvement. Thus, by having intervention in Bosnia and Kosovo, NATO was reluctant to an additional intervention in the Western Balkans. In order to support a peaceful resolution, it abstained from further military interventions in the conflict area. However, as an institution competent to prevent any further escalation, it appointed NATO General Secretary George Robertson as mediator, who, along with Javier Solana mediated an order to achieve a political solution(Reka,2011).

KFOR was already regionally based in Kosovo. Logistic support to the Albanian insurgents led the FYROM government to blame the Alliance for limited control of weapon trafficking (Kriendler, 2004). The Alliance significantly increased border controls and sent experts who would assist the government to deal with NLA attacks. It also appointed German ambassador Hans-Joerg Eiff as its senior representative in FYROM.

NATO General Ralston argued that a special NATO force in FYROM wouldn't be efficient. Instead it would be pragmatic to add more troops to KFOR and expanding it into more conflict-hit regions (Daskalovski, 2004). His stance was utterly consistent with the Alliance stance that Kosovo and Western FYROM regions were a region with similar characteristics³.

In mid-June, a month before OFA, FYROM's government requested assistance from NATO about NLA disarmament, as NATO was the only neutral force that could guarantee the state's security. In this context, NATO pressured all political forces to cooperate posing four conditions (Daskalovski, 2004, p. 19-21):

- I. The leaders of the main parties represented in the FYROM Parliament would sign a peace agreement.*
- II. a status of forces agreement with FYROM would stipulate the conditions of NATO troop deployment*
- III. A plan for weapons collection, including the NLA's explicit pledge to disarm, would be agreed upon, as well as an enduring ceasefire.*

³The area in which NLA rebels was active, is located between Kosovo and the FYROM mountainous a ground, with unlimited access through the borders. The role of NATO on borders control was difficult and is unable to be fully effective on.

Following constant diplomatic pressure from NATO and the EU, the above conditions were gradually fulfilled, following continuous negotiations. The ceasefire agreement came on July 5th⁴, while in the meantime the required reforms were put in place until August 13th. Later this period of time, it followed by the signatures of the Ochrid Framework Agreement, whom the FYROM government and rebel forces agreed to have NATO assistance in demilitarizing the NLA (Daskalovski, 2004).

⁴In FYROM's case, the ceasefire agreements were violated, because of the mosaic of the Albanian minority. There were two main political parties and a rebel group with military capabilities and its thesis represented by them. On the other hand, the central government and especially the Slav's rhetoric were led to a parallel military dominance with political resolution. The government deals with the two Albanian political parties and counteracts the rebels as a third actor which creates instability to the negotiations. So we see two a cease fire to take part in when another one didn't stop yet.

4.6 THE US APPROACH TO THE CRISIS

The EU and NATO pressure managed to bring the two sides to the negotiating table. However, Washington used its experience in conflict resolution and based its stance on the notion of power. It became clearer that, respectfulness to minority rights and their integration was the case of the new situation that has been developed as a result of the liberation war of the Albanian minority. This should have been guaranteed by the resolution of tensions in political means and not armed conflicts. In that spirit, the USA conflict resolution model relied more on mutual and radical compromises from both sides (Nikovski, 2014).

To increase the state's stability, it was agreed to send an air unit to monitor and control the collection and exchange information. Due to the government's anti-American feelings during the crisis (Daskalovski, 2004), the USA attempted to adopt a more covert cooperation based on logistics and material assistance of any potential NATO operations, and at the same time, it was clear that they would not deploy their military forces in FYROM to disarm the NLA, without posing objections to any involvement of other Alliance members⁵.

Washington's stance should not be interpreted as contempt, towards to international security that they guaranteed, as the only superpower, but as the result of self-restraint to a conflict resolution operation, which was practically under European oversight. It prohibited people, who threaten the Balkans stability, including NLA leaders, from entering in the USA and prohibiting their economic transactions. USA's opinion was that, the two Albanian parties were the official and only legitimate representatives of the minority (Daskalovski, 2004).

As sign of support to the Albanian minority and not to the extremists, President Bush encouraged the FYROM government to cooperate with Albanian parties and promote the necessary constitutional reforms. On March 23rd he condemned the violence of Albanian extremists (Daskalovski, 2004). In a symbolic move President Bush pledged to finance the Southeast European University in Tetovo in order to resolve a source of tension for the Albanian side (Daskalovski, 2004).

⁵This attitude was taken by George Bush presidency. Washington's center of interest moved to Pacific and central Asia. On this option, EU should re organize its power as a second pillar with USA in NATO Alliance and Balkan situation was an opportunity for this.

For USA, the Balkans and especially the manner of whom the EU responded to the FYROM crisis, was a European affair. It was geopolitically associated with the EU's effort to develop the structures which would allow responding autonomously in similar cases. On the other hand, we could interpret the US reluctance to intervene in coordination of the focus of US foreign policy in South Caucasus and Central Asia. The USA has changed its perceptions concerning military involvement following the presidential change from Bill Clinton to George Bush. (Περγάκης,2009, p 186-195)

4.6 THE OSCE'S SERIES OF ACTIONS FOR THE CRISIS' RESOLUTION

Even if USA had put immediate pressure on the parties for the resolution of the conflict, it seems that they pushed towards a quick solution through NATO and OSCE, whose actions was focusing in the inter-ethnic conflict in FYROM. OSCE didn't coincide with the beginning of the conflict but took place with the declaration of independence of the state.

Robert Frowick, representative of the president of OSCE, was in charge for these actions since the beginning of the conflict. Despite the declared neutrality of the organization, the diplomatic representative adopted the American stance during the negotiations (Daskalovski, 2004). During talks with guerillas and Albanian parties' representatives, he emphasized on a quick ceasefire in exchange of political amnesty for those involved⁶. Following this, FYROM's government disagreed with his handling on the situation and accused him for being in direct order from the Pentagon (Grillot, Paes *et al*, 2014) Later though, his mandate was terminated and the international community, with cooperation of the political parties adopted, more or less, the Prizren's Declaration (Daskalovski, 2004), about the foresaw amnesty under certain conditions.

The amendments to the declaration made the agreement more stable and resulted in an agreement which granted amnesty to those who were not implicated in war crimes. This led to the satisfaction of both sides, namely those who recognized the conflict as a liberation war and those who saw NLA members as international terrorists (Daskalovski, 2004).

⁶This effort was based on another success case in which Robert Frowick organized in south Serbia – Kosovo bringing improvement in the area.

4.7 THE NLA'S AMBITIONS AND THE OCHRID FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT (OFA)

Whether an international agreement can solve the problems, for which it is dedicated to find solutions, peaceful processes etc., or not is quite easy to be confirmed. This is due to the parallel examination of the final text of peace process, and the contrasting of demands of the insurgent group. More specifically, in the context of this project, the final text of Ochrid Agreement, in contrast with the NLA demands, could lead us to some useful outcomes⁷.

In such an occasion, reading the two formal papers, in parallel, is paving the way to characterize the peace process as a successful one. In addition to this, we can also assess the political profile of the two fighting sides, in the post-agreement period. More analytically, if we read deep inside the two texts, we can exact the political thought of each side in contrast with the other.

We will realize later in the essay that the first and crucial demand of the Albanian side was not satisfied. However, diplomacy showed the way, of how to continue the process in peaceful and political manners with the strong intention of satisfying secondary demands, even if the main demands of one side are not realized.

In such cases, we can claim that the secondary matters create a common ground for a peaceful and cooperative society. On the other side, the primary demands are hiding nationalistic feelings, not promoting peaceful process and social behavior, and also creating stereotypes, inside the co-existing communities—the basic seed of civil crisis.

From this comparison, we can finally exact the opinion, that concerning the political part of NLA, its isolation from international community led them to change its demands: from total separation from FYROM, to a greater autonomy of its territory, within the national borders of FYROM. In spite of this, some years after the Ochrid Agreement, we can identify that the secondary demands accepted by the Agreement, are becoming the seeds for a new national autonomy, greater than before (Cooley, 2013, p 162-199).

⁷ OFA is available on OSCE's official Website at : <https://www.osce.org/skopje/100622>

The special occasion of the Albanian side, concerning two independent parameters, NLA with its extreme way and the political parties gave the Albanian side a great opportunity for peace talks and agreements becoming an open process. The political pressure exercised upon government was visible, from both sides, the Albanians and the Slavs. As for the latter, Slavs were not able to reduce the crisis to an anti-terror war, by identifying NLA as a terrorist cell (Cooley, 2013, p 162-199).

4.8 CONCLUSION

Many factors averted to ethnic civil war in FYROM but the most important was the prompt measures taken to de-escalate the crisis. The war in Bosnia has already shown that lack of communication can lead an ethnic dispute to escalation and a very costly military intervention. In the case of FYROM dispute, the conflict resolution began with diplomatic means and the intervention of people, who set up the necessary communication channels, promoted the dialogue among the parties.

George Robertson's and Javier Solana's mediation with frequent trips, managed to establish trust between the two parties. Their stance, which was also EU and NATO's official stance(Cooley 2013), to avoid direct talks with NLA representatives, reinforced democracy in the country and led to the formation of a national unity government. The Union and the Coalition, thus, became indispensable for the resolution of the conflict. This was also understood by the political parties and the NLA. So both sides proceeded to successive ceasefires.

Finally, all sides supported the national unity government, but this wasn't lead to the expected results (Jano, 2009). Arbitration between parties was fair, though. The EU and the USA both appointed their own representatives, who used diplomatic tools and exchanges, in order to convince the two sides to sign the Ochrid framework Agreement (Daskalovski, 2009).

Since the OFA implementation and the promotion of stability, a number of reforms were implemented through a series of peace-keeping operations, which gradually became training operations and operations for the surveillance of state functions and especially of the security forces and of the government.

5 FROM DIPLOMACY TO REFORMS AND PROBATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The conflict resolution process didn't meet a conclusion due to the Agreement. Probation and conditions of peaceful co-existence were also part of the process. A unique model of conflict resolution was applied in the case of FYROM. NATO and the EU did not intervene in the country to achieve a ceasefire but to enhance its democratic institutions. This naturally resulted in the promotion of reforms and the respect between minorities for a peaceful coexistence.

The operations that took place in FYROM had three goals. The first was the deployment of NATO forces with the consent of both sides in order to disarm the NLA groups, which were scattered all over the western part of the country. The second was to ensure the safety of the observers and diplomatic officials who operated in the country. And finally, the third was to encourage and support reforms that would give stability and a European perspective to the country. The three goals were achieved with positive results through time-limited NATO and EU-led operations.

5.2 OPERATIONS “ESSENTIAL HARVEST” AND “ALLIED HARMONY”

The first operation, which took place, involved the disarmament of the NLA (and the destruction of its weapons). The operation began, following the government’s request on July 29th and the assent of NLA leader Ali Ahmeti (Daskalovski, 2009). The signature of the Ochrid Agreement was set as a prerequisite. In exchange, the government and the President would grant amnesty to anyone who had taken part in the ethnic conflict.

The ceasefire agreement was still very fragile. In its attempt to further weaken the insurgents’ position, the government set the surrender of weaponry and its stockpile as a clause for amnesty, clarifying that those who would refuse to do so would face accusations at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (Paintin, 2005).

The first official operation, for the conflict resolution, in FYROM was signed the day before the signature of the Ochrid Agreement and was officially launched following its approval from the NATO Council on August 22nd. (Daskalovski, 2009; Laity 2008). Its target was the safe landing of the forces and the installation and safety of the personnel, the collection of weapons and sells, their destruction and finally the departure of peacemaking forces. The operation practically lasted 45 days with the deployment of 3500 men and it operated in parallel with the observers who involved in reforms implementations. The disarmament operation took place in three stages (Goris, 2001 p.9-11):

- I. Following the collection of 1/3 of the weapons, the FYROM president would request the beginning of the process for Constitutional amendments, which then must be approved by the Parliament.*
- II. After the collection of 2/3 of the weapons, the Parliament shall adopt the proposed reforms.*
- III. And finally, following the completion of the collection of weapons on September 27th, 45 days after the signature of the Agreement, the Parliament shall adopt the entire legislative package. Two weeks after the termination of the mission, the forces departed.*

Operation *Amber Fox* followed the operation for the disarmament of the Albanian insurgents. The Ochrid Agreement had given equal rights to both communities, but

reforms in security and human rights issues had not been adopted yet. In this specific context, the safety of the regions, where the NLA operated, was not guaranteed and there were questions about the stance of the government's security forces. On the other hand, it wasn't clear the real size of the insurgents' weaponry. Therefore, the international presence was deemed necessary, in order to ensure the safe return of the displaced population.

The government's request towards NATO officers, shortly before the termination of the weapons collection operation, was immediately accepted. The forces that were deployed were mainly aimed to ensure the safety of international observers and to supervise the transformation of the local security forces. Overall, 1000 men were deployed and the time-schedule of their mission was limited to December 15th 2002 (Kim 2001).

The peace-keeping operation was a complete success. Many reforms were advanced and the danger of de-stabilization was minimized. The operation was followed by Allied Harmony, a transition operation. This was implemented following a request by President Trajkovski and it emphasized on supporting the state to assume the ownership of the state's security. (Goris, 2001). The improvement of the peaceful co-existence conditions terminated NATO's involvement in FYROM and the EU took over. In the context of the FYROM's European perspective, it was agreed to continue the operation until March 31st and then have it followed by EUFOR, a European stabilization operation (Daskalovski, 2009).

5.3 “EUFOR CONCORDIA” AND “EUPOL PROXIMA”

The cooperation of NATO and the EU did not stop following the termination of NATO's presence in the country. On the contrary, the Alliance offered significant assistance in matters of infrastructure. From an EU perspective, the novelty was that, operation Concordia was implemented entirely by European forces and was fully aligned with the European objective to enhance the European perspective of the Western Balkans (Mace, 2007).

In fact, from the beginning, the EU was not in a position to create a frame work to stabilize FYROM. Its failure to do so was due to the lack of permanent military forces, capable to support the EU strategic interests, namely the stability and the European integration of the Balkan countries. A new chapter in the history of the EU opened on March 31st (Mace, 2007). The Union undertook the implementation of the Foreign & Security Policy, utilizing forces that directed from its member states.

The Union's involvement in peace – keeping operations in FYROM was the first ESDP action that did not involve suppression. In parallel, the EUMM (European Union Monitoring Mission) was directly linked with a prevention and early warning system for the above-mentioned operations. Like OSCE, the EUMM functioned as an information tool regarding the situation in the country (Cameron, 2007).

The FYROM government supported operation Concordia as a chance to convince the EU about its determination to pursue the European perspectives. Its cooperation with European forces was not limited to validating the states stability, but it also aimed at networking in order to obtain the status of an EU candidate country (Cameron, 2007). It focused on diplomacy and reforms based on the Ochrid Agreement and the wish to pursue the peaceful co-existence of the communities. Its wish to continue operation Concordia was accepted and the operation's mandate was prolonged until September 15th of the same year (Cameron, 2007). Despite the fact that the operation was under European leadership, it took advantage of the Berlin plus Convention to connect to NATO.

The second and last operation of the EU in FYROM took place after the termination of operation Concordia. EUPOL PROXIMA did not focus on military security but on training the police to deal with crime and its underworld (Kim, 2005). Since the beginning of European involvement in the security issues of the western

Balkans, it became clear that the EU had a wide perspective in state regards to the centers of decision-making of states. It emphasized on addressing the parallel state and on emphasizing the role of democracy.

PROXIMA operation was manned with 200 international militaries and civilians, who aimed at assisting the Ministry of Interior in supervising the function of the police forces, providing aid at suppress the organized crime and helping the establishment of border police force (Kim, 2005). Its aim was not only to enhance the police forces functionality, but to establish a feeling of trust between them and the population. This trust was translated in countering the limitless power of state defense and polices forces.

The final assistance programmed did not involve the deployment of police and military forces but the establishment of advisory police forces competent to cooperate and operate with the European agents. PROXIMA contributed in adopting a new security strategy, which involved a decentralized supervision of police forces and border control according to European standards. The operation was terminated on December 14th 2005 and it was succeeded by technical assistance through the CARDS program.

5.4 MILITARY DIPLOMACY AND STABILITY

The EU and NATO operations in FYROM were not the only tool that used by security forces to develop bonds of trust with the local society. Despite their neutral stance during the ethnic conflict, we can conclude in result that trust created due to the participation of armed forces officers in the peace keeping operations.

The country's cooperation with NATO forces had begun with the signature of collaboration agreements many years before the start of the ethnic conflict. The country had cooperated with the Alliance under Partnership for Peace (PfP), signed in 1995, Membership Action Plan (MAP) and PfP Planning and Review Process (PARP) in 1999. Under these agreements, the country and the Alliance had developed many communication channels, regarding consultation in material support so that the country would organize its armed forces more effectively (Daskalovski, 2009; NATO, 2015).

Those agreements gave the necessary impetus to FYROM to develop its armed forces according to NATO's standards and promote international cooperation. The need for efficiency led to the signature of Operational Capabilities Concept (OCC) agreement with NATO in 2015 (NATO, 2015) which set the requirements for common operations abroad and enhanced the Coalition's support in terms of training and modernization.

NATO and FYROM relations described above have resulted in an increase of minorities' representation in the armed forces. The after OFA period brought on a change in the armed forces, which were no longer faced with obvious external and internal threats, leaving, thus, the country's presence abroad as their main mission. Under that prism, the reliability of the armed forces was upgraded, not only in the interior but also abroad.

5.5 CONCLUSION

During the post-crisis period, the deployment of the military and police forces was multidimensional. Securing safety and stability was a main pillar for peace-keeping. The cost of a new crisis would be greater than limited operations, which would be gradually transformed in trust and co-dependence between the ethnic groups.

However, good international relations could not remain under a status of averting a new conflict. Therefore, in order to secure a safe path, it was necessary to eliminate discrimination among ethnic groups, aiming, thus, to reform society in the long run. This is the way the international community understood the need to transform society so as to prevent ethnic and religious differences from setting off a new conflict.

6 PEACE AND STABILITY IN POST-CONFLICT REALITY

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The international community's intervention to secure stability with military operations in order to promote reforms and avoid new conflicts did not end with the signing of the Ochrid framework agreement. The military and police forces that were deployed immediately after the collection of NLA weapons were a part of peace-keeping in the post –crisis period.

The promotion of reforms was not an easy process for the FYROM government. With OFA, the state committed to reforms with the support of the FYROM government. These reforms did not aim only at the constitutional upgrading of the Albanian minority but also at addressing the ethnic and religious disputes and increase the co-dependence and trust between the two communities. It was understood that the new reforms should aim at the political modernization of the form of government on multi-ethnic basis, economic growth and cultural liberalization with respect to differences among ethnic groups (Paintin, 2009).

The main international factors in promoting monitoring and support of these reforms were mainly EU, NATO, the USA, OSCE, the World Bank and UNDP. NGOs, international organizations, donors and the local society also took part. Many of the actors acted complimentary to each other. The rule of law, minority rights and state functions of modernization were the subjects of a negotiation process, which focused mainly on the European course of the country.

6.2 FYROM'S INTEGRATION INTO THE 'WESTERNIZED' INSTITUTIONS

The European course of the Western Balkans was directly linked with the strategy of NATO, part of which involved European security. Even though, there wasn't an immediate threat by a military force. Instability in FYROM could stir-up conflicts in the entire peninsula causing insecurity in the EU (Daskalovski, 2005).

That instability was caused by multiple factors. Ethnic disputes, the economic state of affairs, government functions, international relations, human rights and interaction with the rest of the region were some of the sectors that needed improvement in order to prevent a new conflict. The EU and NATO acted to maintain peace in the region, mainly through diplomatic contacts in the context of the European enlargement process.

The European strategy for FYROM, mainly involved the promotion those reforms that would help the parallel function of the institutions of the two parties. That effort had begun two years before the end of the conflict. Since 2000, the EU was represented in FYROM through a European Parliament and Council representation, and in 2001 the Stabilization Agreement was already in force (Markovic *et al*, 2011). Like the rest of the Western Balkan countries, FYROM was a country where the CARDS program (European Commission, 2002) financed the reconstruction of infrastructures and the rebuilding of damaged houses.

The EU's primal target was to expand, the Ochrid Agreement provisions, in the reforms. The funds were targeted at: 1) Judicial system reforms, 2) public administration reforms, 3) police reforms, 4) limitation of corruption and, finally, 5) political reforms. In parallel, the EU set up a road map for the country's EU integration course. In the light of its European perspective, the state forced to create additional reforms that would eradicate ethnic and religious disputes. Those reforms would thus be negotiated in a broader level that would play a significant part not only for the state but also for the lives of its citizens.

The result was the politicization of the NLA leaders (Ragaru, 2008) and the transformation of the armed organization in a legitimate political party, the creation of stronger and more stable government institutions and the improvement of the two parties' political fingertip. Apart from the EU and the UN, OSCE was mostly involved in the rule of law and decentralization reforms (Paintin, 2009). The organization mainly

focused on education and equality, as it did during the post-conflict period. It was understood that in order to achieve those targets, the political system should be cleared of its ethnic and religious features; the administration should have a more national character at a local level and the central government a neutral character.

As far as education was concerned, it was deemed necessary that all citizens had access to a basic level of education. In order to promote that effort, the OSCE set up associations under its wing where citizens took initiatives concerning the cooperation with government organizations and security forces. In addition, in cooperation with EU and NATO, OSCE also organized minority police training, whereas intercultural cooperation was integrated in the public sector.

6.3 THE ECONOMIC SUPPORT FROM THE WESTERN INSTITUTIONS

Apart from EU and NATO, the World Bank and the UN were also intensely involved in FYROM in the post conflict period. The World Bank has also financed a series of state reforms and presented a special plan to support the economy (Paintin, 2009). By promoting a growth mode, the World Bank aimed at developing counter policies for unemployment.

The promotion of a growth model was deemed necessary in order to create a middle class, which would ultimately shape a sustainable political system. The ideology of Europeanism that was gaining ground resulted in the reinforcement of central powers and countered the polarization caused by nationalism. The World Bank supported the government and financed infrastructures that would create decentralization, in order to achieve economic balance between center and periphery. T.S.S. (Transitional Support Strategy) mission began two years before the conflict and it had supported the efforts to rationalize the government structures in FYROM through C.A.S. (country assistance strategy) (Paintin, 2009).

The World Bank activities are divided into two periods: The activities in the first period, from 1999 till 2006, aimed at state stability. During the second period, from 2007 till 2010, the World Bank with the EU worked in parallel and directed their efforts at improving the fiscal strategy and the health system.

On the other hand, the UN mainly focused on the humanitarian aspects of the conflict. The 140.000 refugees (Paintin, 2009) raised many issues concerning the respect of human rights, the safety of civilians and public health. A series of missions took place, following the end of the conflict, like UNICEF missions for the protection of children, UNRA (U.N Refugees Agency) mission for refugees, WHO and IMF missions.

The UN priorities involved rule of law, counter-poverty policies, environment and natural resources management, and finally preventing a new conflict. Until 2006, UNDP (United Nations Development Program) and CCF (Country Cooperation Framework) also took action in FYROM. From 2006 and onwards, the UN missions were directed at promoting social cohesion, gender equality, human rights, respect to ethnic differences and common exploitation of natural resources (Daskalovski, 2005; Paintin, 2009).

The mission of the World Bank was the economic reconstitution of the state and its institutional integration with the EU member states, whereas the UN was responsible for a common humanitarian policy.

6.4 POST-CONFLICT RESULTS

The funds that were recovered by international organizations, which aimed at reconstruction and material support, had clearly improved the state structures, the rule of law and helped the transition to peace.

The ethnic and religious disputes, however, did not cease to be a problem. The reason was their dynamics and influence in the interior and abroad. The Church, the Albanian minority behavior, the weakness of radical reforms continued to cause polarization. Nationalism did not cease to define the choices and the political agenda of the government and parties (Petkovski, 2015).

A typical example was the cooperation of pioneer Slav parties with small Albanian parties, which were not in a position to pursue the best model of conflict resolution but avoided moves that would jeopardize the stability of government formulations.

Other examples are two important events that reveal the decisive part played by the international factors. The first is the recognition of FYROM by the USA with the constitutional name Macedonia. As a result, the referendum process, that was in contrast with the terms of the Ochrid Agreement, collapsed (Δελεαστικ,2008,p70-77). The other event, which showed the importance of the international factor, was the pressure on politicians for the comeback of the largest minority party in the Parliament through elections. The aim was to normalize political processes and to appease ethnic tensions in the two communities, preventing a new escalation.

6.5 CONCLUSION

Ochrid Agreement and the new policy reforms create a new, almost peaceful coexistence era among the two communities. State's security interrelated directly through the extension of minorities' rights. However, the Government remains concern, not only for the Albanian minority issues, but also for the wider geopolitical environment of West Balkans. The rise of Albanian nationalism, but also the circumstances that affect the general situation of the population of Kosovo and Albania, could let in instability, not only FYROM but also vice versa.

As we are moving in this framework, we can note the tendency of international community to find a balance among the two national societies, in FYROM. This is due to establish new trends policies onto regional security. EU political directive for a Balkan integration in the Union is directed by the need of a secure environment, but also to terminate the inter-national conflicts. In parallel, another goal is to eliminate the populism and nationalism, in the area.

Today, State's issues and especially 'the name dispute' with Greece, is delaying the further progress of stability in international environment. Problems, such the above, or the Albanian minority issues, are causing new delays in FYROM to join the international institutions such European Union and NATO. We have to note that, after the Ochrid Agreement, the interstate tensions were eliminated significantly, and any kind of dispute among the central government and the minority, is getting solve by political means and procedures. Indeed, the strategy sustainable and peaceful coexistence of the two communities in FYROM became, 'till today, a successful policy. In parallel, this is reflecting directly, to the regional security.

CONCLUSION

The above essay covers the stance and actions of the international community against the risk of instability in the Balkan region, since the Kosovo war. The strife between Slavic and Albanian communities of the state is a reality, which has become the object of examination by the international community, since after the state's independence. The importance of the relationship between the two interethnic groups was quite great. The north-western part of the state interacted with the Kosovo region, where Albanian nationalism and intention of independence was aligned with significant armed activity.

The ethnic isolation of the Albanian community was not caused only by the government's actions. It was for this reason that the international community was significantly present in the pro-crisis period. The prevention of the war was to be achieved by the action controlling borders, including acceptance of the state's territorial sovereignty and, additionally, the further modernization of infrastructure and state operation in both constitutionally and functionally modern state. This attitude totally coincided with the European policy concerning the western Balkan region. Their European fulfillment was intended to provide stability in the peninsula.

The new state faced many security issues to the post-Yugoslavian period. The international presence, alongside with the local government tool a number of reforms. However, the fulfillment of the reforms ceased by the end of the 90s, thus, increasing the distance between ethnic groups. The outbreak of the crisis did not take the international community entirely by surprise. This is why, it reacted promptly with diplomatic and political debates intending to the beginning of talks between the two sides. However, the special features of the Albanian side, due to the two different approaches – military by NLA and political by the parties, slowed down the rapid solution of the conflict.

The Ochrid Agreement created many institutional and functional effects on the state mechanism. The government was committed by the OFA to improve the position to minorities institutionally and the decentralization of administration according to the given ethnic character of the province. This commitment was practically, in exchange

with consolidation of the State with the parallel disarmament of the rebels under NATO intervention.

The resolution of the conflict was completed with the splitting of insurgents, and then, the consolidation of peace and stabilization followed. The presence of foreign troops was ceased despite the promise that the war was not to break out. Quite the opposite, a number of operations were to follow that secure the continuation of reforms. A part of those reforms comprised the proportional participation in security troops, the building of trust by the minorities' contribution to the state operation and finally the security of the cooperation between the two ethnic groups.

The final phase of the conflicts resolution is the consolidation of peace without active foreign presence. Concerning this fact, the EU, UN, NATO, World Bank and OSCE led their action in the promotion of common working groups. The state as a whole won't be incorporated into the international coalitions, as well as, in the economic and social homogeneity of the society with respect to their cultural and national uniqueness.

These days, one and a half decade after Ochrid Agreement, it is fair to be claimed that the model of resolving conflicts gave stability to FYROM. It is not an exaggeration to claim that the case of FYROM became the example of resolving conflicts and consolidation peace in other regions. The European policy in defense and security was formed and new institutional organizations were created in order to secure the presence of forces preserving peace in the periphery of the Union. OFA constituted the model of resolving interethnic conflicts.

The model of resolving the crisis in FYROM will not stand in history as a case of coping with a generic conflict. Quite the contrary, the broader aspects underlying it set this particular case as an example of resolving conflicts with more general features of interethnic differences. The secret of resolving these conflicts, projected from the very beginning as that specific mechanism which will ensure the stability, was undoubtedly the perseverance of the external factors in establishing equality among the national communities.

The rule of law, the proportional representation of communities in the state functional structures, the equal parliamentary distribution of the community groups, the supporting of the above proposals with constitutional reforms will secure the further

evolution of the state in the modern multinational world. However, all the mentioned reforms can't be considered as the key to the crisis resolution, unless the citizens are not homogenized leaving apart their extremist opinions. The case of the national conflict in FYROM proved that the desirable results are not to be achieved only by the means of signed agreements which bound people to a certain degree. The wanted goals are indeed achieved if people get more closely acquainted with distinctive features of the other side, respect for their culture, collaboration and the process of promoting mutual trust.

Nationalism and populism can't be wiped out only by political means. The dynamic movements and the levers of power will continue to exploit them for their interest, as long as the environment allows it. It has been proved that a society would not avoid extremist rhetoric, unless the vast majority improves significantly their social state. This fact surely encompasses not only economical aspects, but also the matters of social integration of the minorities and homogeneity. Strategic planning and significant efforts are needed to achieve these goals. In fact, it entails real interest on society, programs for the economic support of the citizens and investments in infrastructure.

The reality of revolutionary armed forces violates the stability in the country. Nevertheless, this situation should not necessarily be handled by the security mechanisms of the state with the same severity. In this case, the isolation of these groups and the quest for democratic forces has to be the ideal choice. In a similar case to the above, adopting a common preventive plan should not be rejected a priori for a long period of time. Quite the contrary, such solutions should be intended as promptly as possible and be approved of all democratic political forces.

All these desired goals need a vision to be achieved. It is precisely this vision that will make the preservation of a common path among the national communities essential. In a situation such as that of FYROM, this vision would be achieved through the European fulfillment and the country's integration into the western coalitions. In conclusion, this direction is adopted by all the political forces, even those who were reluctant at first.

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