The Albanians in Macedonia: The Role of International Organizations in Empowering the Ethnic Albanian Minority

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THE ALBANIANS IN MACEDONIA[1]:
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The paper analyses the measures taken by the agencies of the international community, i.e. EU, UN, OSCE and NATO during and after the 2001 conflict in the Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) to promote the integration of the Albanian minority into the political system of Macedonia. When in spring 2001 a violent conflict erupted between the Macedonian security forces and the Albanian paramilitary National Liberation Army (NLA), the international community was quick to bring the most important political parties of Macedonia, including two Albanian parties, together to negotiate an agreement and to end the violence. The negotiations of the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) with the support of the US and EU were successfully concluded in August 2001. This paper will analyse the methods used by the international community to de-escalate the conflict and the approaches applied to overcome the difficult inter-ethnic relations in Macedonia, which were the cause of the crisis. The paper starts with a short description of the sensitive relationship between Slav Macedonians and the Albanians, which emerged during the founding years of the state in the early 90s. Moreover, the paper will identify elements of power-sharing and anti-discriminatory policies established in the OFA and promoted by the international agencies. In 2001 the inclusion and empowerment of the Albanian minority in Macedonia aimed to prevent the dissolution of the state and avoided an escalation of the conflict.

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I.   INTRODUCTION

This article attempts to analyse the efforts taken by international actors to strengthen the constitutional position of the Macedonian citizens of Albanian origin, constituting approximately 25.2 per cent[2] of the population, in the aftermath of the 2001 conflict. It will look at what approaches and mechanisms were used by the international community and the local political elite to settle the conflict peacefully and what

measures where inscribed in the OFA to establish a stable inclusive democracy system, which strengthen the rights of the Albanians. The content of OFA will be analysed against theoretical concepts of empowerment,[3] minority assimilation, integration and the concept of autonomy[4] to identify the instruments applied to appease the minority group and satisfy the Slav Macedonians. At first the paper will provide an overview of the issues in relation to the contested identities in Macedonia which surfaced during the 1991 declaration of independence and during the adaptation of a new constitution. Moreover, it will briefly describe the background of the 2001 crisis, when the Albanian paramilitary National Liberation Army (NLA), claiming to fight for basic rights and equality for Albanians in Macedonia, fought against the mainly ethnic Slav Macedonian police force. The cessation of the fighting and the disarmament of the paramilitary fighters in summer 2001 were agreed upon in the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA), which in return included a number of concessions for the Albanian community and contributed hugely to the empowerment of the Albanians. Hence, in the second part the paper will give a description of the OFA and its implication for the Macedonian constitution. The third part analyses the activities of international actors in addressing the issues of the conflict. And finally the article analyses various approaches to minority empowerment and inclusion strategies.

II. BACKGROUND: IDENTITY, CONSTITUTION AND THE 2001 CRISIS

The Republic of Macedonia, internationally known under the name of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), proclaimed its independence in September 1991, after it became apparent that the Socialistic Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was disintegrating into its constituent republics. Serbia under its nationalistic leader Slobodan Milošević was perceived by both the Albanians and ethnic Macedonians as the biggest threat to the independence of the young Macedonian Republic. Apart from the Serb nationalists, who considered the Macedonians to be South Slavs rather than having an own distinct ethnicity, the Macedonian identity was contested by other countries such as Bulgaria, which respectively defined the Macedonians as Bulgarians and the Greeks perceiving the naming of the Republic as a territorial claim to parts of Greece. The issue of identity is a crucial one for the Slav Macedonian population, who in 1991 intended to establish a distinct ethnic Macedonian state, despite the fact that other ethnic groups were living within the boundaries of this new state. Neighbouring Albania was seen by the ethnic Macedonians as a danger to its territorial integrity. The area populated by Albanians in Macedonia is concentrated in the northwest of the country and in a region close to the capital Skopje. Geographically, these areas could have been easily merged with the Albanian homeland. Although the Albanian state has not made any indications of supporting the idea of a

"Great Albania" or made any demands on border changes, some radical Albanians in Macedonia have expressed their wish to reunite the Albanian-speaking areas of the Western Balkans into one Albanian state.[5] Whilst Albania did not reject the idea of an independent state called Republic of Macedonia, it perceived the state as not exclusively belonging to one ethnic group.[6] Hence, the Albanian population in Macedonia boycotted the referendum on the independence of Macedonia and held a separate plebiscite in 1992 on an autonomous territory for the Albanians in Macedonia, which was accepted by a huge majority of Albanian Macedonians,[7] resulting in the proclamation of a Republic of Ilirida. Obviously, these developments did not help to establish trust between the two ethnic groups. At the time of independence in 1991 the ethnic Macedonians feared not only an international rejection of their identity by their neighbouring states,[8] the so-called "four wolves",[9] and a denial of their right of self-determination, but as well a secession of a part of Macedonia to Albania. The external pressures increased the anxiety within the country and its ethnically divided population.

The Macedonian constitution enacted in 1991 was another conflict issue, as it was perceived by the Albanians as a continuation of a policy of "downgrading" their status within the state. Already in 1989, before the dissolution of the Yugoslav Federation, an amendment to the constitution was subjecting the Albanians to a status of "second class citizens", when the Socialist Republic of Macedonia declared itself as a "nation-state of the Macedonian people".[10] The Macedonian constitution from 1991 replaced the old 1974-Yugoslav constitution and the 1989-amendments, but it retained the notion that Macedonia is the state of the Slav Macedonians and therefore defining the Albanians as a non-constituent people (narodnost). The Albanians vigorously rejected the constitution and boycotted the referendum on the basis that Albanians should receive the status of narod, a constituent people,[11] equally to the Slav Macedonians. Despite the boycott of the Albanian deputies in the National Assembly, the new constitution for the Republic of Macedonia was finally adopted in November 1991.[12]

On the political level the Albanian political parties were always well established and have been coalition partners in the Macedonian governments from 1992 onwards. Even the expert government from 1991 until 1992 included Albanian ministers.[13] The Albanian political elite had established lines of communication and were actively involved in politics with the Slav Macedonians. The common practice of installing grand-coalitions, consisting of Macedonian and Albanian parties, has proven to be an acceptable way of coordinating government policies across the inter-ethnic divide and to achieve broad support on government decisions. Although the founding of grand coalition governments was not introduced as a formal institutional power-sharing arrangement, it was adopted in the early 90s and has been accepted ever since as an informal practice.

The violent campaign of the paramilitary National Liberation Army (NLA) in spring 2001 has to be put into the

context of developments in the region at the time. The Serbian threat of *Milošević's nationalism* disappeared in 2000, the NATO bombing of Belgrade in 1999 successfully pressed for a withdrawal of Yugoslav troops from Kosovo, Albanian insurgents were active in the Preševo Valley in the South of Serbia[14] and the military resistance of the UÇA in Kosovo led to the implementation of a UN-Administration with military assistance of NATO in Kosovo. Tens of thousands of Albanian refugees escaping the fighting in Kosovo entered an internally instable Macedonia, which at one stage decided to close the borders, as there were fears that the state would not be able to cope with the masses of refugees. Although the EU provided assistance to manage the influx of refugees from Kosovo and established a European Union Monitoring Mission,[15] the fear of profound changes to the ethnic composition of the state remained. Around the same time the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) became active and worked in cooperation with other international organizations to ease the burden of the refugees. Furthermore, the EU and NATO forces realised that illegal drug and weapon smuggling across the border had to be contained as these activities were accompanied by violence, which would have spilled over into other areas of the Balkan, particularly into Macedonia.

The international community, namely the US and the EU, immediately appeared on the scene when the fighting broke out in 2001 in Macedonia. Both aimed to assist in containing the fighting and to negotiate a political deal to end the conflict, which was to include the demands by Albanians for non-discriminating measures, equal status and a change of their constitutional status. The EU and the US had their first success of crisis management, when the Macedonian political parties took their advice and formed a unity government, thereby marginalising the NLA, while integrating the Albanian parties into government. In August 2001 the political negotiation facilitated by NATO representative James W. Pardew and EU representative François Léotard ended successfully with the OFA. Although the Macedonian parties were critical about the outcomes of the agreement, it could be achieved because of the expectations by the Macedonian parties that the international community, especially the US and EU, would honour their willingness to compromise and in return would treat Macedonia favourably in their efforts to join NATO and in their evaluation of their EU application to become a candidate country.

The Ohrid peace accord is a key document, because the measures taken by the international community to strengthen the position of the Albanians in Macedonia and the assigned responsibilities of the international organizations to assist these developments were written into the agreement.

III. THE OHRID FRAMEWORK-AGREEMENT (OFA)

The main objective of the OFA was to defuse the conflict by finding a way of coexistence between the majority of Slav Macedonians and the large minority of Albanians within a multi-ethnic state. It was one of the few

political successes of the international community in the Western Balkans, who mediated the ceasefire between the Macedonian security forces and the NLA and negotiated the OFA with the political parties. However, the ethnic Macedonian parties in general were suspicious of the process, rather disliked the OFA,[16] as they felt that the Albanians turned out to be the winners of the political negotiations. Whereas the international community was clear about the territorial integrity, it supported the concept of a Macedonian nation state and the government's stance on these issues. The underlying principles of the negotiations were that "there is no territorial solution to the ethnic crises" and that the "multiethnic character of the state must be preserved and reflected in public life".[17] The objectives of the international negotiators were to preserve the state in its current borders, yet to meet some of the Albanian demands, therefore aiming to create a situation of equal participation, non-discrimination and inclusion of Albanians into the political system of Macedonia. This was to be achieved not only through strengthening the minority rights, but by changing the political and administrative organization of the state. Consequently, the policy of decentralization of the state administration and a revised law of Local Self-Governance to increase the political participation of Albanians had to be included into the OFA.[18]

Although the Albanians were not able to "upgrade" their minority status to become the second constituent people of the state, they gained a number of their demands, especially in the language issue. For example, in any

municipality where more than 20 per cent of the local population speaks another language than the official Macedonian language, the second language has to be recognised as official language beside the state language. The Macedonian government has also agreed to pay for university education in any other language, if the language is spoken by more than 20 per cent of the population of the country. Positive discrimination in university appointment for other than Macedonian speakers was also granted and translations of official documents into the mother tongue of the citizen, if not Macedonian, and the provision of translations in criminal and civil judicial proceeding.[19] The 20 per cent-threshold gives the Albanian minority an advantage over the other recognised minorities in Macedonia, which are much smaller groups with percentages of 3.85 per cent for the Turkish minority, 2.67 per cent Roma, 1.78 per cent Serbian and 0.5 per cent Vlach.[20] Nevertheless, there are some local municipalities where Turkish, Serbian and Romani became official languages. Furthermore, a municipality has the right to take a decision on declaring a language as an official language in their area.[21]

The OFA also provides for special parliamentary procedures for issues directly affecting minority rights, as "culture, use of language, education, personal documentation, and use of symbols", and of laws in relation to local administration, as "local finances, local elections, the city of Skopje, and boundaries of municipalities".[22] The required double-majority for selected minority related issues also applies to amendments of certain aspects of the constitution. The OFA states that a

"qualified majority of two-thirds of votes, within which there must be a majority of the votes of representatives claiming to belong to the communities not in the majority in the population of Macedonia".[23] The so-called Badinter majority protects the constitutional rights of the minorities and cannot be changed without consent of the minorities.

The process of decentralization and the devolution of power to the municipalities, aiming to empower the local communities was another central measure to include Albanians into the state administration. The revision of the Law on Local Self-Government required a redrawing of local municipality borders, which was based on the population figures of the 2002-census, and the enhancement of competences in the area of local "public services, urban and rural planning, environmental protection, local economic development, culture, local finances, education, social welfare, and health care".[24] The OSCE became central in assisting the Macedonian government to implement the project against the backdrop of a huge opposition in the country. The accompanying law was passed by the parties of the government coalition, the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM), the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), the new Albanian political party under the leadership of Ali Ahmeti, which emerged from the paramilitary NLA. The lack of transparency of the negotiation process was criticised by the opposition and large parts of the population rejected the plan after its publication in 2004 and initiated a referendum to halt its implementation. This political dispute led to heightened inner-ethnic tensions and to an incident in which a group of armed Albanians occupied Kodovo, a suburb of Skopje. Despite this incident the opposition's referendum to halt the implementation of the decentralization failed in November 2004. The successful implementation of decentralization was seen by the Macedonian political elite as a requirement for membership in the EU and NATO.[25]

Discrimination of Albanians in public sector employment was another issue of concern for the international community, as it created societal frictions which deepened divisions within society. These divisions were particularly visible in the labour market, as ethnic groups were represented in specific employment sectors. The Slav Macedonians occupied jobs in the public sector, in the police force and in the army, meaning that Albanians had to find employment in the private sector. The low representation of Albanians and other ethnic minorities in the public service, particularly in the police force and army, was finally addressed by the EU and OSCE after the signing of the OFA in 2001.

Many reforms agreed in the OFA were not wholeheartedly supported by ethnic Macedonians, but accepted as compromise for gaining "closer and more integrated relations" with the Euro-Atlantic community.[26] In the following years the OSCE mission in Skopje focused especially on advising the government and the local authorities on the decentralization efforts of the state administration.

IV. THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN MACEDONIA

Isabelle Ioannides describes the situation in Macedonia in the aftermath of the 2001 crisis as an "overcrowded international scene".[27] However, even before 2001 a number of international organizations, especially the OSCE, UN, EU, and NATO were present in Macedonia to monitor the borders to Kosovo, to prevent any border violations, to deal with the Kosovar refugees or to contain weapon or drug smuggling. Although Macedonia until 2001 did not experience major political violence within the country, it was severely affected by the Kosovo war and the violent conflict in South Serbia, which required the Macedonian government's cooperation to allow NATO supplies to be transported from Greece through Macedonia to the conflict areas. Due to the militarily instable situation in Kosovo at the time of the war, NATO decided in May 1998 to increase the strength of its forces in Macedonia.[28]

During the 2001 crisis, several international organizations - when not already based in Macedonia - (re-)emerged to assist in finding a military and political solution for the country. The priority was to stop the fighting between the Albanian paramilitary NLA and the Macedonian state forces, as it was perceived as a risk to develop into a full-blown civil war. At first the political mediators, NATO Secretary General George Robertson and European Union Foreign Policy Chief Javier Solana, persuaded the Macedonian political parties to establish a unity-government ensuring political stability

in the country. The following political discussions between the parties were held under the auspices of the EU and USA, which had nominated François Léotard as representative for the EU and James W. Pardew for the US as mediators. The two main objectives of the political talks were to foster the inclusion of the Albanian population into the public institutions and to ensure the unity of the state, of which the latter was a key demand by the Slav Macedonian parties. These aims overlapped with the interests of the two mediators aiming to avoid the break-up of Macedonia, but ensuring that necessary minority rights were written into the Macedonia constitution and power-sharing arrangements, designed for the political system to protect these laws, were installed. To achieve the constitutional changes and the implementation of a number of projects, the assistance of international organizations, such as NATO, OSCE and EU, was required and requested by the Macedonian president and the signatories of the agreement. The various tasks conducted by the international organizations had to be written into the OFA to avoid any legitimacy problems arising from the presence of "foreign" organizations on Macedonian territory. The reason for this procedure was that the international organizations were not at all welcome in Macedonia and faced some strong opposition from hard-line Slav Macedonians, the mainstream Macedonian media[29] and parts of the public opinion. The Slav Macedonians felt that the international community was biased against them,[30] as they seemingly were acting in favour of the Albanian community, because these organizations pressured the government

to grant language and cultural rights to the Albanians and supported them in their demand for equal employment in the public administration. As a consequence the international organizations were placed in a very uncomfortable position, even resulting in physical attacks against their personnel.

The roles and activities of the international organizations were specified in the OFA under Annex C, where it was stated that assistance was requested by the Albanian and Macedonian parties and the Macedonian president:"The parties invite the international community to facilitate, monitor and assist in the implementation of the provisions of the Framework Agreement and its Annexes, and request such efforts to be coordinated by the EU in cooperation with the Stabilization and Association Council".[31] To facilitate and coordinate the activities of the international community in Macedonia offices were set up in the capital Skopje. The OSCE Mission in Skopje established in 1992 and still active today, assists with the implementation of the provisions in the OFA. The OSCE is currently involved in advisory tasks, i.e. the improvement of inter-ethnic relations, good governance, support of the police service to adapt to a multi-ethnic environment, application of the concept of rule of law, support of the Ombudsman institution and is monitoring local and national elections.[32] These projects are aimed to strengthen the democratic system and to improve the inter-ethnic relations between Macedonians and Albanians. NATO originally established their Headquarters in Macedonia in April 2002. NATO is currently active in consulting the Macedonian government on military aspects

to prepare the Macedonian army for NATO operation and to strengthen the Euro-Atlantic Integration.[33] In September NATO was the main actor in the disarmament of the paramilitary NLA. Mission "Essential Harvest" was followed by mission "Amber fox" (27 September 2001 until 15 December 2002) to protect members of the international community working in Macedonia. The EU dispatched an armed force as replacement for NATO forces in 2003. Its mission CONCORDIA lasted only eight months, from 31 March until 15 December 2003, and was followed by mission PROXIMA, which finished in December 2004. The EU's EUPAT project aimed to promote European policing standards by cooperation between EU police experts and the Macedonian police force, started in December 2005 and ended in June 2006.[34] Already in 1992 the UN deployed to Macedonia; it was established as United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) until 1995 and remained until 1999, as United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP).

In the following, the paper looks at the methods the international community used to empower the Albanians in their role as Macedonian citizens. These included a number of activities in relation to redrafting and implementing a new constitution, monitoring elections, advising government in policing and security issues, and working on projects to improve the inter-ethnic relationships among the population of Macedonia. The instruments to empower the Albanians and other minorities in Macedonia will be discussed in the following.

V. THE CONCEPT OF EMPOWERMENT

As the inter-ethnic tensions in Macedonia originate from the competition between two main identities, we can speak of an identity-based conflict. Especially, during the nation building process, the fear of being marginalised by the majority group on the one side and the perceived threat by the majority of being undermined by a relatively large minority on the other side, were powerful emotions, which could have resulted in the use of violence against each other. A threat to identity tends to create a reaction of self-protection and develops a one-sided view of the conflict causes.[35] The issue of perception of the other's behaviour and the perceived danger to one's own identity can lead to violent conflicts, which often require the assistance of external mediators to find an acceptable solution for all conflict parties.

Research has identified three approaches of empowerment, which are relevant for minority issues: the structural approach, the relational approach and the motivational or self-empowerment approach.[36] All three are interrelated as the self-empowerment has an impact on the relationships of people and this might lead to the transformation of societal and political structures of society. In specific circumstances external support is needed to implement one of the above mentioned strategies. However, although mentioned as a distinct dimension in the Berghof Glossary on Conflict Transformation, "empowerment as professional external support or element of a third-party intervention",[37] is not indicating

how empowerment will be achieved, but focuses on who will apply empowerment strategies. Of course, the appearance of an external actor can affect the relational aspects of the conflict again and therefore empower a conflict party. External actors can be hugely important for implementing empowerment strategies, but for analysing empowerment of minorities, it is useful to focus on what is transformed within society (i.e. structures, relationships or personal attitudes). These three approaches are a combination of concepts from business and peace studies, although originating from different disciplines; they cover all aspects of empowerment within society and can therefore be applied to cases of inter-ethnic conflict situations.

Firstly, the structural approach assumes that structures foster and sustain discrimination; therefore empowerment means to strengthen minority groups in identifying and removing these structural obstacles. Minorities are often faced with obstructive structures in society, which hinder them to reach a desired goal. Empowerment in this respect assists in overcoming these obstacles by "positive discrimination". This requires a political decision to change the structure, which defines the relationship between the state and the minorities or with the wider society.

The second approach is based on the idea that relationships between groups or people are constructed on the bases of power distribution and dependency of one person over the other.[38] The relationships between the minorities and the majority-group in a country is determined by the respect and the

willingness of the majority to, first of all, declare the minorities officially as national minorities, secondly, to grant minority rights and finally, to protect these special provisions and the distinct cultural identity of those minorities. Nowadays, international organizations are pressuring states to provide minority rights and protection. These conditions of political compliance can also be found in the international recognised norms of human rights. Human rights, originally focusing on the individual, have shifted to recognise the protection of groups and support the idea of "the recognition and accommodation of minorities and the adoption of positive measures to protect their existence and facilitate the expression of their distinctive cultures".[39] The issue of the contested Macedonian identity impacted negatively on the relationship between the Albanians and the Slav Macedonians. The insecurity of the Macedonian side was overcome by the guarantees of the international community to maintain the state as a Macedonian nation state in its 1991-borders. In a way, the international community empowered the Macedonian side to be able to make concessions and grant stronger minority rights to the Albanians. Empowerment on the relational level goes both ways.

The third approach, the motivational construct of empowerment, refers to the motivation to assume power or can be described as "an intrinsic need for self-determination".[40] This is an actor-focused approach, which would identify the personal reasons for empowerment and combat to overcome discrimination. This approach

suggests that every person has the intrinsic need to achieve certain goals and empowerment will help to overcome the internal obstacles. The Berghof Glossary on Conflict Transformation – similar to the concept of empowerment in a mediation process - claims that empowerment in its core is individualistic. Individuals should be enabled to trust and believe in their own skills and strengths to achieve personal autonomy and self-determination and to articulate their own interests.[41] The intrinsic or self-empowerment approach can explain inner group dynamics, which might impact on inter-ethnic relations. A simplified idea of empowerment is the assumption that people through the process of empowerment will be enabled – "empowered"– to help themselves. This article uses an adapted definition borrowed from Conger and Kanungo[42] to apply it to the case study of Macedonia, which defines empowerment as "a process of enhancing feelings of self-efficacy" among conflict parties "through the identification of conditions that foster powerlessness and through their removal by both formal (…) practices and informal techniques of providing efficacy information".[43] This definition combines the relational, structural and intrinsic (self-empowerment) approach, as identified in the mediation process, by empowering a weaker party to enable it to remove the discrimination structures impacting negatively on the relations between parties.

While applying the three identified approaches of empowerment to the case study of Macedonia, it becomes obvious that these will overlap. For the process of conflict

transformation the self-empowerment, which will influence the relationship aspect of the parties in conflict, is the crucial one. A sustainable agreement to resolve a crisis has to be negotiated between equal partners, who are able to agree on a solution of the conflict out of their own will, ability and independently without any external pressure. Unfortunately, in the majority of conflicts the necessary equality of parties ("*parity of esteem*") does not exist, subsequently a correction of this imbalance is required to conduct fair and successful negation. A so-called third party entering the conflict situation as mediator needs to ensure that peace talks take place in a neutral environment and that the same rules apply to all parties. More precisely, it requires that during the mediation process, the structural and the power-relational disadvantages have been removed. Mediation processes in contrast to negotiation processes, aim to transform the negative primed relationships into positive ones, based on trust, empathy and understanding of the other parties' needs. Empowerment in mediation occurs, when the parties gain "a greater sense of strength of self, including self-respect, self-reliance, and self-confidence"[44] and is defined as "the restoration to individuals of a sense of their value and strength and their own capacity to make decisions and handle life's problems".[45] The mediator or third party's role during a mediation session is confined to the facilitation of the process, but should refrain from controlling or influencing the outcome, neither should the third party's interests taken into account by the conflict parties, nor is the mediator allowed to define the relevant problems for the conflict parties

or to suggest any solution to them.[46] This concept of empowerment is based on the idea to strengthen the parties in a conflict situation, i.e. intrinsic or self-empowerment approach, thereby improving their relationship to each other and to create a situation where all parties are able to solve the conflict out of their own strength and capacities, rather than accepting externally developed solutions.

It is argued here that the negotiations of the OFA in 2001 were driven by the self-interest of the third parties – in this respect the EU and US – who dominated the entire process and impacted on the outcome of the agreement. Therefore we cannot speak of a mediation process, but of a negotiated settlement of the conflict. Promises were made by the US and EU to support the wish of the Macedonians to establish closer relations to EU and NATO. When it became apparent that the NATO membership was blocked by Greece and the EU-accession talks were delayed, due to the "enlargement fatigue" or the limited "absorption capacity" of the EU, the Macedonian parties lost trust in the international organizations. Since then Macedonian politics has become more nationalist, emphasising their distinct Macedonian identity, unfortunately fuelling ethnic and political tensions.

VI. CONCEPTS OF ASSIMILATION, INTEGRATION AND AUTONOMY

In the OFA the political structures were changed to better accommodate the Albanians in the political and administrative state

structures. A nation state can adapt three strategies to deal with their minorities: to assimilate them, to integrate them or establish a group or a territorial autonomy.[47] The assimilation approach, defined as a merging of a distinctive different identities with the dominant culture of the nation state,[48] is not acceptable for the Albanians in Macedonia. The strategy of integration, according to Hadden[49] maintains the distinctive identity of the minority, but establishes measures to ensure that the minority can fully participate in society. The efforts by the government and the international community – based on the strategy of integration - were focusing on introduction of non-discrimination policies and equal rights for the Albanians in Macedonia. As a consequence of this approach, the preamble of the constitution was changed to reflect the civic concept of the state, which includes all citizens of Macedonia, regardless of their ethnic background.[50] A territorial autonomy was dismissed by the Macedonian parties fearing a secession of Albanian areas from Macedonia. A compromise was found in enhancing the competences of local self-governments and the decentralization of public administration, which can be classified as a form of limited administrative autonomy for people living in that particular area.

The integrative approach is reflected in the amendments of the Macedonian constitutions. The preamble refers to the concept of a Macedonian national state as a historical fact, but expresses the full equality of other ethnicities living on the territory of Macedonia, as it states that "(…) Macedonia is established as a national state of the Macedonian people, in which full equality as citizens and permanent co-existence with the Macedonian people is provided for Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Romanies and other nationalities living in the Republic of Macedonia, (…)".[51] Although the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet is still the official language throughout the republic and is used in international relations, any other language is considered to be an official language, if it is spoken by at least 20 per cent of the population.[52] The same rule applies of units of local self-government, in which any other language than Macedonian becomes an official language, if 20 per cent of the population speaks it. This implies that people have the right to use their language as official language in the local self-government unit for official business and have the right to get their official documents issued in the other language.[53] The constitutional rights of minorities in the area of culture, language, education, identification of symbols and the decentralization of the state administration are protected by a veto-right or special majority, which requires a majority in the assembly making a decision "by a majority vote of the Representatives attending, within which there must be a majority of the votes of the Representatives attending who belong to communities not in the majority in the population of Macedonia".[54] Furthermore, as agreed by the signatories of the OFA that non-discrimination and equitable representation will be respected according to the law,[55] and that primary and secondary education will be provided in the student's native language and funding for third level education in languages

spoken by at least 20 per cent of the population is provided by the state.[56]

The second approach of granting minority groups a group or territorial autonomy was out of the question for the Slav Macedonians. Nonetheless, the decentralization plan, which was developed during the political negotiations, is a rather "soft" version of a territorial autonomy for the Albanians living in the predominantly Albanian area. It can be assumed that the implementation of the decentralization plan by the government facilitates an equal and full representation of Albanians in political life and administration in their local area. Due to the law on decentralization a number of competencies were transferred to the local level, such as management of primary and secondary education, medical and social services, as well as cultural institutions and activities. The local head of police was to be voted by the municipal council on basis of a list of recommendations by the Minister for Interior. Double majority voting, i.e. a majority by both communities, was accepted as the voting rule in the new municipal councils.[57] The main problems faced by the municipalities concerned the issue of finances, as local debts for public projects accumulated on the balance sheets and created political and ethnic tensions at the municipal councils.

Facilitating a more permeable access to the political system and enacting constitutional provisions for the protection of minority rights are only two strategies to assist empowerment and the inclusion of minorities in public life. Empowerment can be achieved as well through improving the quality of communication and the relationship

between the conflict groups. Therefore, important contributions by the OSCE and the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) are to re-establish respect and tolerance between the various groups in Macedonia. The UNDP in an attempt to move forward in the area of community relations promotes a programme to "Enhance Inter-Ethnic Dialogue and Collaboration".[58] The OSCE Mission established a "Programme Co-ordination Unit on Inter-ethnic Relations.[59] Both, the UNDP and the OSCE conduct projects on good governance. OSCE furthermore focuses on media and education. All these activities are aimed to cease tensions between the ethnic groups in Macedonia and to change attitudes towards cooperation and to bridge ethnic boundaries. In addition to the improvement of the relational aspects of empowerment and the specific measures to protect their distinctive identity, the Macedonian political structure exerts two forms of power-sharing, the "tradition" of grand-coalition, which has been common practice since the early 90s, and double-majority voting, introduced by the OFA in 2001.[60] Both instruments are designed to include Albanians in political decision making process and to get their full support for decisions taken in the assembly or in the government.

VII. CONCLUSION

The Ohrid peace accord designed by the international community is based on the idea that empowerment can be achieved by reducing the structural obstacles for Albanians in public life; this consequently
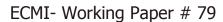
fosters equality and political and societal inclusion of Albanians. Three methods of achieving these aims can be identified in the OFA. First of all, the effort was made to strengthen the cultural, educational and language rights in the constitution. Secondly, formal power sharing instruments were designed and included into the constitution to ensure a special cross-ethnicity quota for amending laws in relation to language, education, local governance and other minority issues. And finally, the OFA included the notion that Macedonia is a multi-ethnic state, where the focus lies on citizenship rather than on ethnicity. If the people of Macedonia can honour the civic state concept, it strengthens both parties, as inter-ethnic competition over the state would be reduced. To disseminate the concept of the civic state among the people, projects to improve relationships between ethnic groups to establish trust and understanding need to be initiated.

The use of empowerment as a strategy to settle the conflict was not the actual aim of the international organisations in Macedonia, but it became an intrinsic element of the political process. During the political discussions the external negotiators had to address the grievances and needs of the Albanian population, but also the concerns of the Macedonian side. The importance of relational empowerment cannot be underestimated in a society divided by conflict and a distorted image of "the other" and "the other's" intention. It is not by chance that international organizations are currently initiating projects trying to improve and foster inter-ethnic relations, as it will be necessary

for Macedonians to establish a stable political state together with Albanians. Structural empowerment was incorporated in various parts of the OFA document. The means to achieve structural empowerment are through power sharing (formal and informal) arrangements and the removal of obstructive structure by implementing anti-discriminatory policies and protecting the minority's distinct identity and by improving inter-ethnic relations.

It has to be acknowledged that the international organizations and the external actors were crucial in assisting to end the conflict in Macedonia in 2001. The international community started a number of initiatives to support the Ohrid peace accord and after the initial conflict settlement activities, these organizations turned to long-term projects of reconciliation and working with the people to foster understanding and a sense of belonging for all citizens of Macedonia. Empowerment should help to remove the fear and inter-dependence of people. This can only happen if both communities are empowered and able to face challenges.

The political developments since 2001 indicate that the Macedonian state is developing into a bi-national state,[61] the constitutional amendments and ethnographical facts would support this assumption. The political system was transformed to accommodate the demands of the Albanians, but the primary motivation was to satisfy the EU's recommendations and the requirements for EU accession.[62] The EU's hesitation on starting EU accession talks, the refusal of NATO-membership, and the still ongoing

name issue with Greece are political issues, which create some frustration and an atmosphere of heightened nationalism, impacting negatively on sensitive inter-ethnic relations. The current development indicates that Macedonia will in future need further international support to overcome its internal and external difficulties.

Endnotes

[1] The author uses the name Macedonia or the Republic of Macedonia instead of Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM).

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