

The role of foreign policy threats on inter-ethnic relations

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the influence of foreign policy on the inter-ethnic relationship in multi-ethnic states. Focused on external disputes, which revolve around issues of national identity, the article attempts to find out how foreign policy constraints and pressures may affect the unity of ethnically different groups. From the existing literature on international and national integration, the article derives arguments which relate foreign policy's behavior toward external threats to inter-ethnic unity or division. International integration policies, as part of the official foreign policy, influence the unifying mentality of ethnically different people, helping to foment a national (state) identity, based on civic elements. External obstructions to such policies, however, risk to transform foreign policy into an object of contestation between ethnic groups, who, due to the presence of external disputes, no longer share the same vision over the state's foreign policy. Using an exploratory approach, this article uses the case of Macedonia to provide greater understanding of the arguments above, and consequently presents the empirical findings collected from semi-structured interviews.

KEYWORDS: Multi-ethnic states, external threats, inter-ethnic relations, international integration, identity.

1 INTRODUCTION

The extant literature on the national integration of multi-ethnic states, usually focuses on the internal factors of influence on the unity or fragmentation of ethnically and/or culturally different groups. In such context, the influence of external factors, including the ties and disputes a state has with other states, is quite neglected by scholars. Even in the cases where such relationship is studied, the scholars' approach is quite narrow, focusing on a reciprocal relationship between external factors and internal unity only under conflicting situations or under the existence of traditional and military threats (ex. Simmel 1898, Coser 1956, Gibler 2010). Being exclusionary of other forms of external factors, which not necessarily classify as wars or territorial threats, such theories fall short when it comes to a more holistic explanation of the relationship between foreign policy and domestic relations,

National and international integration literature, each focus on the integration between and within states respectively, but rarely do they make a correlation between the two. Shulman not only studies such a relationship, but he also broadens his analysis beyond war or territorial threats, and analyses their effect over the societal cohesion within multi-ethnic states. He analyses a state's international integrations or its foreign ties and their effect over the unity or division of its society. By drawing a correlation between the two dimensions of policy, he argues that foreign policy may "assist or impede states in forging national unity and constructing a collective or national identity". In his article, he argues that different ethnic groups are concerned about the vitality of their ethnic identity and the ways foreign policy, through its ties, can strengthen or weaken such identities [1]. This article tends to go further, in order to analyse such role of foreign policy, when the latter is faced with external pressures or constraints. In other words, it will try to explore whether the presence of external pressures may influence ethnic identities differently, and whether such influence may lead to changes in the inter-ethnic preferences/perceptions over foreign policy orientation and even to divisions between them.

The existing literature reveals several gaps. Firstly, there is a gap in the literature which connects international integrations with inter-ethnic integration. With the exception of a few authors, such as Shulman, who argues that international integrations cause national division rather than unification between the ethnic groups, most of the literature, which focuses on the national

integration's role that international integrations play, focuses not in multi-ethnic but in the so called nation-states, where national identity is well established before it is transformed into a supranational one [2]. Secondly, the literature on the external pressures or threats and their influence on domestic realm, is mainly focused on typical military or non-military threats. However, there is scarce literature which treats cases that are exposed to specific threats, which affect both the external security of a small state, by disabling its integration into international structures, and the internal security, by dividing ethnic groups, who hold different perceptions over the effect of such threats.

In order to evaluate the relationship between foreign policy and inter-ethnic relations within a multi-ethnic state, this article will present a theoretical framework, which intertwines the existing international relations and national integration theories, by focusing on two foreign policy functions: security and integration. These two roles will then be analysed for the effect they produce over the inter-ethnic relations, within a state which is exposed to external pressures.

2 EXISTING THEORIES ON FOREIGN POLICY'S SECURITY AND INTEGRATION ROLE

State's search for security is described as one of the main foreign policy determinants [3]. However, the way smaller states seek to enhance security differs greatly from the big states. Such differences are evident across the different levels of analysis. The systemic level stresses the external environment and the need of small states for security as main determinants of foreign policy behavior. According to this level, small and weak states feel more threatened by the external environment for their security and survival than the great and powerful states. Consequently, their foreign policy options or choices are curtailed and their space of maneuverability is smaller. But many agree that the system level of analysis is often insufficient to explain a small state's behavior in its entirety. In this context, the state level tries to fill in the gaps by arguing that there are other influential factors on foreign policy, such as the society, institutions, political ideology, ethnic preferences, which may also affect state's security. Elman claims that both the international and domestic levels are important in explaining foreign policy behavior, because "while the international environment influences domestic political choices, these institutional decisions shape foreign policies in later periods" [4]. At the individual level, ideas and preferences of political elites or leaders are one example of foreign policy determinants.

2.1 THE SECURITY ROLE OF FOREIGN POLICY

The analysis across levels allows us to investigate more thoroughly the security function performed by a small state's foreign policy and its impact on inter-ethnic relations. According to Thorlthansson and Steinsson, the external and domestic unique circumstances dictate the security approach that a small state undertakes. Therefore, not all small states' responses to security threats are applicable to other states. These authors state, however, that many scholars agree that small states adopt multilateralist approach, both in pursuing their foreign policy goals but also in restraining potential threats [5]. Based on Hey's characterizing elements of small states' foreign policy, security is an important factor in their foreign policy and in order to preserve it, they join alliances and other international organizations or choose neutral positions [6]. Thus, we may deduce that any factor, external or internal, which may affect a state's prospects of joining international organizations, would ultimately risk its security, and consequently become a security threat. Depending on the nature of security threats, each state adopts its own approach towards the latter. Each approach, consequently, produces certain impact domestically, causing inter-ethnic division or unity.

The concept of security and threats to it are thoroughly elaborated by Buzan, whose constructivist perspective allows him to analyze security using an approach, which goes beyond the traditional thought, and which, ultimately, provides a much wider and more holistic explanation. Although the vagueness of the security concept makes its definition more difficult, the majority of authors agree that security is characterized by the perceived presence of a threat to certain values of the referent object, or more precisely, threats which endanger its survival [7]. In the conventional wisdom, the threat to a state's security is considered to derive from another state. Also, security is traditionally explained through military terms, where the state is central to the analysis (see Morgenthau 1966). Overtime and especially after the Cold War period, the conventional approach towards security, however, has resulted as incomprehensive. The change in the world order and the strengthened role of international organizations, such as the EU, changed dramatically the meaning of security, attaching to it other types of non-military threats.

Buzan links threats to five sectors: economic, ecological, political, societal, and the military sector. He determines each sector based on the type of security relationship. Thus, the military sector encompasses relationships of forceful coercion. Relationships of governance, authority, and recognition develop within the political sector. Relationships about the collective identity are categorized under the societal sector. The economic sector represents relationships of trade, finance, etc. And lastly, the environmental sector expresses the relationship between the environment and the human activity. Moreover, the

location of security dynamics varies from one sector to the other. The military, political, and societal sector seem to be dominated by regional security complexes, while the economic and ecological sectors by global security dynamics, with the latter sector being impacted, at large, by local levels as well. Additionally, each sector seems to produce its own units, which may then show up in other units as well [8].

The reference to sectors, as developed by Buzan and Weaver, serve the analysis of the distinct patterns of relations which exist within this work's case of study, helping to identify such relationships and locate them within certain or overlapping sectors. The analysis and identification of the existing relationships in Macedonia's case is important not only for explaining the security threats towards the state, but also for evaluating their effect on the inter-ethnic relations. Since this state is faced with external threats which target the national identity elements of the former, such as the name of the state, of the majority ethnic group, the flag, the official language, history, etc., then, according to Buzan's classification, we may derive that this relationship is characterized by specific bilateral disputes taking place within the societal sector. Additionally, the effect these relations produce over the domestic inter-ethnic relationship, falls once again in the societal sector. Although the societal and political sectors are closely related, the former is different from the latter, especially in terms of the actors and reference objects. In the societal sector the main actor is the nation (and nation-like ethnic units), while the referent objects are any threats to the national identity. Whenever the nation and the state coincide, an overlap between the political and societal sector is more evident and a distinction between the two more difficult. However, accepting the premise that in most cases the state does not coincide with the nation, then the latter should be analyzed on its own right, within the societal sector, as the most adequate one. According to Buzan, the concept *society* as opposed to the concept *state* is not fixed. He states that "society is about identity, self-conception of communities, and of individuals identifying themselves as members of a community". As *identity* is the organizing concept of a society, a security threat would be any event which may threaten the survival of this identity. Nonetheless, Buzan and Weaver view identity as a social construction. Thus, they argue that threats towards national identity depend on the way *identity* is constructed or on what is perceived as a vital value being threatened. Hence, if a nation controls a state, but represents a majority only by a marginal difference, then a natality increase in minority groups may represent a threat to it. Additionally, in the societal sector threats travel better across shorter rather than longer distances. Consequently, the rivalry between ideas of 'who we are' and threats towards the perceived "we", are usually more regional, or inter-neighborly, than global [9].

In Macedonia's case, the bilateral relationships with the neighboring states, seem to represent threatening relationships directed towards the identity elements of the Macedonian ethno-nationality. Until this point, such relationships appear easy to define and analyze within the societal sector. However, depending on the internal effects and the response towards such threats, an overlap of the societal with the political sector seems to emerge. Buzan identifies two ways of responding towards the societal threats. The first way is through activities undertaken by the community itself. The second way is by taking the issue to the political or military level, hence by placing it on the agenda of the state. If the issue is taken to the state level, then it may become resolved through legislation or political agreements. In this case, the societal sector merges with the political sector [10]. Hence, for the purposes of this article's case of study, in addition to the societal sector, the political sector will also be discussed, as an important factor in the analysis of the threat relationships.

According to Buzan, political threats tend to emerge in cases where the idea of the state and its institutions are internally contested. However, similarly to the military ones, political threats may also emerge in the form of external penetration. Hence the idea of the state may itself become a threat for this state, if contested by another state [11]. Typical examples of such ideas, which help hold a state together, are nationalism and/or ethno-nationalism, which oftentimes rises above the civic aspect, and the political ideology. According to Zaharidias, nationalism, namely symbols and ideas, are not only a glue for internal cohesion, but also a source of external disputes with other states. In his words " [external] disputes are likely to erupt when symbols, ideas, and even history itself becomes contestable -that is, when two or more entities lay claim to the same thing..." [12]. But how and why may the external contestations of such elements be treated as political, and not merely as societal threats? According to Buzan, as long as such ethno-national symbols, ideas, and other features become embedded into the state's identity, the threats towards them move from the societal to the political agenda. This is so, since the state represents the main actor within the political sector, while threats to its sovereignty, represent the main referential object of this sector. However, threats to sovereignty here do not entail only the typical territorial threats, but also a state's sovereignty in terms of the state's right to self-determination. By equating sovereignty with self-determination, or with "the right to decide on the political form of the state without external forceful interference", any type of external interference, which goes against such internal will about the form of the state, may be considered as a threat towards the state security [13]. Additionally, since sovereignty represents efforts of survival, many authors relate state sovereignty, in particular that of small states, with the latter's ability to join alliances and international organizations. Hence, any external factors, which act as blockades of a state's international integrations' agenda, may also be considered as political threats directed to the state's sovereignty. Though

indirectly, such political threats do affect the sovereignty of a state, in particular that of a small state, whose survival depends upon external affirmation and protection.

Relating the concept of security to a state's ability to assert its uniqueness in the international arena, as well as its ability to become part of larger international organizations and alliances, one can assume that such external threats may affect security in two ways: internally - by demanding changes in the national identifying features, and externally - by causing international isolation of a state, whose central foreign policy objective is international integrations. Hence, such specific external threats, may demonstrate its complexity by producing two types of effects over the security of a small state. One effect may be related to the national identity, termed by Buzan as a societal security issue, and the other to the international integrations processes of a small state, known as a political security issue.

The decision to use such security framework, and apply it to the case of Macedonia, may help us derive conclusions which expose not only the nature of its external threats, but also their effect on inter-ethnic relations, especially through the foreign policy response or state's action towards these threats. In such context the question becomes: Does the existence and nature of threats, located within the societal and political sector, affect the inter-ethnic relationship within the state of Macedonia, by dividing or unifying these ethnic communities and why? In order to answer this question, we must investigate the second proposed function of foreign policy, namely that of integration. As stated above, it is argued by many international relations authors (ex. Haas 2004, Lindberg 1970), that foreign policy also plays an integration role on the domestic different groups, by forging a common identity, which reflects a common inter-group vision of it. In order to investigate this role in the case of Macedonia, the article will use a synthesis of national and international integration theories as developed by Shulman [14]. Consequently, it will assess whether the integration role of foreign policy is threatened or even changed under the presence of external threats.

2.2 THE INTEGRATION ROLE OF FOREIGN POLICY

The common assumption underlying national integration is that in its final phase it should result into a common national (civic) identity, which would serve as the most effective mechanism in avoiding inter-ethnic divisions and conflict. If the ethnic identity, as described above, lies on the differences between groups with different features, national integration should logically lie in the construction of commonalities among different groups. Usually the analysis of national integration of the contemporary time refers to states with multi-ethnic structure. This is especially true when analyzing Eastern European states. In this context, Shulman defines national integration as a "process by which the constituent regional, ethnic, social and class subgroups of a state become unified into a common political community sharing a sense of collective identity". National integration theories, have predominantly focused on internal factors, which Shulman groups into three theories: theories of commonalities and differences, theories of social interactions, and theories on value consensus. However, relevant to this article is Shulman's synthesis of these theories with that of international relations theory, in order to evaluate the role of foreign policy, as an external factor, in the process of inter-ethnic unity or fragmentation. According to him, a common position of the international integration theories is that integrative ties help weaken nationalism and national identity in hope that they will motivate a "shift from conflictual nationalism to benign supra-nationalism" [15].

In order to gain understanding on how foreign policy can become a determining factor in unifying the different ethnic groups, who compete over the domination of national identity, this article will analyze international integration policies from the perspective of national integration theories, using Shulman's framework. The aim is to find out whether foreign policy, through its international integration agenda, may project a common vision, which would compensate for the divisive elements that build along ethnic identities in a multi-ethnic state. As such, we may argue that foreign policy helps forge a national identity with supra-national elements, which isn't a cause for inter-ethnic competitiveness but rather a factor of inter-ethnic inclusion or unification.

The literature of national integration places an important emphasis on the *values* or *consensual attitudes* in the process of integration. The theory of value consensus is analogous to the consensus theory of social integration. The latter is built on the hypothesis that the integrative process is more successful if the different groups share a greater number of common cultural values. Viewing the process of value consensus building from international integrations level, we may pose the question: to what extent do international integrations help the process of building value consensus in a multi-ethnic society? In line with Deutsch (1953) and Mitrany (1966), who posit that international integration process is a bottom up process which is driven by the "imperatives of economic and technological modernization", the international integration posture adopted by a state thus reflects value consensus among its constituents [16]. Hence, we may argue that a small state's strategic choice of foreign policy orientation, plays a role in forging common values in groups with otherwise low-value consensus. This may be true under the condition that the groups or communities within such a state demonstrate similar preferences or goals about the foreign policy

orientation of their state. In other words, if ethnically different people demonstrate consensus over the international integration posture of their country, then such posture reflects values which unite rather than divide them.

The theories of commonalities and differences emphasize that a nation is unified over common factors, which distinguish it from other communities. Such factors may be a common territory, language, history, myths, mass culture, etc [17]. Out of them, the common mass culture is considered as one of the most significant factors of inter-group unification. In such context, Shulman argues that the ethnic factor represents one of the main obstacles in the process of national integration, by interfering with the process of creating a common culture and consequently of building a national identity. This occurs due to the existing fear that being culturally different, during the process of national integration, one ethnic group may be dominated, absorbed, or even destroyed by other ethnic groups [18]. Here, then, the question becomes: can international integrations homogenize the cultural differences of ethnic groups, through diffusion of a dominant culture it reflects? Based on the concept of reference groups developed by Dittmer and Kim, according to which, states like to associate with other ethnically or culturally similar states/entities [19], as well as on the argument of Shulman on the inclusionary function of international policies, we may deduce that international integrations play a significant role in forging unity in states with emphasized ethnic and cultural differences. The cultural traits reflected by the international community or organization, a multi-ethnic state strives to associate with, may help bridge the ethnic cultural differences, as long as the international organization/alliance is perceived as a cultural umbrella which identifies with all ethnic groups within a multi-ethnic state.

Lastly, the role of international integration in national integration should be also viewed from the perspective of social interaction. The theories of interaction maintain that the more people interact with one another, the easier it is for them to unify or achieve a collective identity. But what kind of a role can international integrations play in motivating a larger scale of social interaction in multi-ethnic societies? In multi-ethnic societies, with a low level of national integration, the interaction among the different communities is often low. International integration often serves as an incentive but also as a condition for intensification of social interaction at the domestic level. One of the conditions for a state's membership in international structures is oftentimes a higher level of social and political integration. Along these lines, Fligstein and Sandholtz, discuss the merging of national identities into an inclusive European identity, putting a special emphasis on the element of routine interaction among societies, which is promoted by the European Union's policies such as economic, social, and political fields of cooperation. Consequently, they conclude that the common benefit of the EU policies motivates interaction, and through it, integration to the point of Europeanisation [20]. Hence, to the extent that international integrations are beneficial to all ethnic communities indiscriminately, we may infer that international integration encourages a sense of solidarity and communication among the diverse ethnic groups, thus serving as a source for national integration [21].

3 TOWARDS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Alexander George's theory (1992) on coercive diplomacy, the targeted state acts towards an external threat based on its rational perception towards the threat [22]. Hence, in line with the constructivist approach, we can imply that a state's position towards external threats is closely tied to its *perception* of the effects that such threats may produce over its security. And in order to find out about such perceived effects, security, in terms of what/who is being threatened, should be simultaneously determined. In the context of this thesis, based on George's theory, two hypothetical conclusions about the small state's response can be derived: If a small state assesses that security lies in the political sector, namely in the international integration processes, and the external threats are potent enough to block such processes, then this state will show higher foreign policy action/initiative to resolve or mitigate the external threats, by accepting external demands. If, however, a state considers that security lies in the societal sector, namely in the protection of the ethno-national identity, and the acceptance of external demands may lead to the redefinition of that identity, then a small state's tendency may be to engage less with the resolution of these threats or may choose to maintain the status quo, even at the cost of international isolation.

The elaboration above, however, does not answer the following question: how is foreign policy response towards external threats related to inter-ethnic division or unification? The answer may lie in the following argument: through the impact of external threats on foreign policy's integration role. If we accept the premise that international integrations consist in the development of an inter-ethnic consensus over common values, inspired and projected by the international structures the state adheres to, in forging cultural similarities, which are based on regional rather than ethnic or national elements, in enhancing internal social interaction as conditions or motivations applied by the international organizations, and in providing a unifying identity for divided societies by eroding ethnic nationalism in favor of supra-national one, then we may logically conclude that foreign policy does play a unifying role between different ethnic groups in a multi-ethnic state. However, the presence and nature of external factors, which may threaten such role, may contribute to the opposite effect in terms of inter-ethnic relations. In other words, any external factor which threatens the international integrations' perspective of a multi-

ethnic state, may also cause the shrinking of the integration role that foreign policy exerts over the inter-ethnic relations. If we accept the premise that foreign policy serves as a common vision which inspires inter-ethnic integration, then we may derive that its response towards the external factors/threats, may also affect the unity or division of ethnic groups.

The other argument of this explorative article then becomes the following: Considering the two roles of foreign policy, security and integration, we may argue that the existence of external threats or constraints produces a double effect. The first effect is felt over the external security of the state, by blocking its possibilities of membership in international organizations. The second effect is felt over the internal security, namely over the inter-ethnic cohesion, fomented by the common foreign policy vision. Hence, the first function of foreign policy, namely the state's response towards external threats in order to preserve its security, is ultimately related to its second function, namely its influence over inter-ethnic unity through international integrations.

4 INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN MACEDONIA: THE CONFLUENCE OF EXTERNAL FACTORS, FOREIGN POLICY, AND INTER-ETHNIC COHESION

The theoretical framework above will be evaluated through the case of Macedonia. Emerging from the ruins of Yugoslavia, Macedonia walked a path of thorns towards its consolidation as an independent state. When analyzing the conflict issues existing within Macedonia, Buzan and Waever divide them into two categories. In the first category they place the internal conflicting relationship between the strong Albanian minority, and the ethnic Macedonian majority. This tensioned relationship culminated into an opened armed conflict in 2001. In the second category they place the external relations Macedonia has, mainly with its neighbors: Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, Albania, and Kosovo. These relations are considered as source of insecurity within the Balkan subcomplex, due to the competing interpretations of Macedonia's statehood and nationality. Buzan defines Macedonia as a uniquely complicated case, where all of its neighbors have a role in defining it. Greece contests its constitutional name "Macedonia", claiming that it belongs to the Greek province and is part of its historic and cultural heritage. Bulgarians contest the unique Macedonian nationality, considering the state as 'west Macedonia', Serbs contest the project of it being an independent state, as they consider the latter a product of Yugoslavia's project. Albania, on the other hand, has a salient interest in this country due to the big minority of Albanian population who lives in it [23].

As Macedonia parted from the Yugoslav Federation, in 1990, it also left behind the communist-Marxist ideology, re-orienting itself towards Europe and the occident. But its path towards this new strategic orientation is characterized by ambiguities, oscillations, and many challenges. Found in a situation of internal and external insecurity, Macedonia decided to pursue the unidirectional orientation of the other former Yugoslav and communist countries, proclaiming the agenda for the country's double integration into NATO and the EU. But in the regional context, Macedonia established a specific foreign policy doctrine, based on 'equidistance' from the neighbors. According to the supporters of this cautious foreign policy approach, the country was obliged to maintain an 'equidistance' from its neighbors, in order to preserve inter-ethnic relations, as an internal factor of stability, and join Euro-Atlantic structures, an external factor of stability. However, the latter soon became blocked by the external factors, namely the neighboring states, rendering the 'equidistance policy' as no longer efficient. The open disputes Macedonia had with its neighbors, in particular with Greece, brought the international integration dynamics to a stall point. In the 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest, Macedonia's bid for membership was turned down due to Greece's veto. The dispute with Greece obstructed the EU integration process as well. Although in 2009 Macedonia received a positive recommendation by the Commission to begin accession talks, the EU officials promptly declared that Macedonia's further progress towards the EU depended greatly on the resolution of the disputes with its neighbors, especially with Greece. Furthermore, the European community, which Macedonia aspired to join, set the state the condition of facing the internal reality, by working on resolving issues with the minority, as well as the external reality, by solving the issues with Greece and Bulgaria [24].

Ignoring, temporarily, the presence of external threats, would allow us to analyse the role of foreign policy, on its own right, over inter-ethnic relations in Macedonia. The data gathered mainly through semi-structured interviews with competent and experienced individuals in domestic and international politics of Macedonia, provide strong evidence which suggests that the foreign policy of Macedonia represents a unifying factor. The unifying effect of foreign policy lays in the strategic orientation of the country, namely double integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures: NATO and EU. In the respondents' perception, within an ethnically polarized society, as is the case with Macedonia, foreign policy, namely the international integration into structures such as EU and NATO, is the only dimension able to forge an inter-ethnic consensus. From the data, we may infer that there is a consensus on the EU and NATO integration agenda, which reflects both inter-ethnic and inter-party harmony. Quotes such as "*we have the most general and widest consensus, national and political, about membership into EU and NATO alliance.*" (Poposki, Former Foreign Minister, unpublished source) serve as illustration of the unifying effect that foreign policy, oriented towards EU and NATO integration, produces over the inter-ethnic relations. The findings present a common vision

around which both ethnic groups are brought together. Through the declared positions of ethnic Macedonian and Albanian respondents, an inference may be made that foreign policy serves as the most unifying dimension of policy between ethnic groups in Macedonia. Another interesting dimension of analysis is the support both organizations, NATO and EU, enjoy by the respondents equally. Whereas in the public opinion there are voices who draw a distinction between the two organizations, supporting integrations into the EU but not into NATO, the findings of this research do not reflect such distinction. Both EU and NATO are mentioned jointly by the interviewees, whenever they refer to the foreign policy objectives, as illustrated by the following quote: *The strategic and long-term goals of the foreign policy of the Republic of Macedonia are full-fledged EU and NATO membership for Macedonia*” (Arifi, Former Vice-Prime Minister for European Affairs, unpublished source).

However, the unifying effect foreign policy produces over the two biggest ethnic groups in Macedonia changes dramatically when existing external pressures are brought into the picture. The qualitative data, besides revealing the presence of external threats, expressed through pressures and demands for changes in Macedonia’s identity features (such as the constitutional name of the state, flag, history, language, etc.), shed light over the adverse effect these threats produce on the unifying role foreign policy exerts over the ethnic groups. The external threats are defined in the dataset as blocking, pressuring, conditioning, and limiting towards the international integrations’ agenda. The greatest number of respondents, despite their political or ethnic affiliation, neutrally and unequivocally point out to the contestation of the constitutional name by the southern neighbor, Greece, as the greatest challenge of the country’s foreign policy and membership into Euro-Atlantic structures. This position is illustrated by statements such as: *Well, definitely, it is Greece, the number one factor which influences the non-fulfillment of Macedonia’s foreign policy objectives*” (Taleski, Adviser to Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs, unpublished source).

Bulgaria’s demands are also classified as an external factor with a potential negative role on Macedonia’s foreign policy. However, this factor is mentioned more latently and in a secondary manner, due to an already signed agreement of friendship between the two states in 2017. Both Macedonian and Albanian public interviewees interpret the issue with Bulgaria through the lens of hope that such contest would not grow to become as big of an obstacle to Macedonia’s Euro-Atlantic integration, as the name issue with Greece. Here is how the ethnic Albanian professor Reka, views this issue: *Prime Minister Zaev began to make the first steps, by signing the agreement for good neighborly relations with Bulgaria, and now, we may at least hope that a hot-point with the neighbors, with Bulgaria, is being closed*” (unpublished source).

Relating external threats to foreign policy and inter-ethnic relations, the findings of the exploratory study indicate the existence of an indirect relationship between external threats and inter-ethnic division. This relationship is developed through the effect external pressures produce over foreign policy’s international integration’s objectives. Hence, the findings offer support for the main argument of this article, which claimed that the presence and nature of external factors, which threaten international integrations, as a state’s main foreign policy objective, also contribute to the shrinking of the latter’s integration role between different ethnic groups. The findings indicate that whereas external pressures, such as the name issue, directly affect the Macedonian ethnic group, they affect the relations between Macedonians and Albanians only indirectly. If external pressures wouldn’t have any effect over the foreign policy objectives of the state, the ethnic Albanian community would remain indifferent or would play only a marginal role in their resolution. However, when it becomes obvious that external pressures, especially the name issue with Greece, are the main inhibitors of Macedonia’s Euro-Atlantic perspective, the Albanians not only engage in an enhanced manner in foreign policy response towards external threats, but also begin to demonstrate dichotomous actions from the Macedonians. Hence, the conditioning of the country’s name change with the Euro-Atlantic perspective causes inter-ethnic divisions and clashes. In such way, foreign policy not only loses its integration role, but also puts to a threat its security role, by risking to become a factor of inter-ethnic objection and disagreements.

In the respondents’ subjective perception, this division, emerges seemingly from the distinctive security perceptions of the two ethnic groups. In absence of a national identity, both ethnic communities struggle for preserving their ethnic wellbeing. This struggle causes them to develop diverse foreign policy objectives and grow separate from one another. Macedonians dread that the external pressures could be a factor which would weaken their ethnic identity. Albanians, on the other hand, do not feel any risk to their ethnic identity which may be inflicted by the bilateral contests. However, Albanians relate their ethnic security with the international integrations of the state they live in. Albanians feel that the resolution of external pressures will indirectly lead to the strengthening of their ethnic identity, as the state will become member of EU and NATO, where ethnic Albanians will no longer be divided by state borders. The different security perceptions based on ethnic belonging, bring about inter-ethnic division over foreign policy’s vision. Ethnic Albanians demonstrate a higher determination for an active foreign policy which aims at the resolution of external contests, even at the cost of accepting identity modifications, in order to deblock the Euro-Atlantic integration process. Ethnic Macedonians, on the other hand, fearing that the acceptance of external demands may weaken their ethnic identity, demonstrate greater reservation or even reluctance towards the resolution of the external contests. Since external threats are linked to international integrations, ethnic Macedonians, consequently show less enthusiasm about the EU and NATO agenda. Such perceptions are illustrated by the following direct

quote: *“There is data suggesting that ethnic Albanians are more willing to support a compromise with Greece...because that is the main condition to go forward to EU and NATO... Ethnic Macedonians are more difficult to convince because they are more afraid that it will have consequences for their identity.”* (Taleksi, Adviser to Prime Minister for Foreign Affairs, unpublished source).

As the findings indicate, the division caused by foreign policy, which is conditioned by external threats, is manifested through dichotomous foreign policy activities by the two ethnic political groups. These activities are described by the respondents as one-sided initiatives of the Albanian politicians, including MPs and Albanian party leaders, to meet with the neighboring state officials and the UN mediator, and try to intensify the dynamics of negotiations, until a final resolution, without a prior coordination or even consultation with the Macedonian side. The dichotomous foreign policy declarations, accompanied by opposing actions by both sides, are evaluated by the respondents as a signal of an inter-ethnic division over the foreign policy vision. Seeing the situation as a vicious cycle, the respondents opine that the more external pressures persist over the foreign policy blockade, the more diverge the ethnic positions will grow, and the more inter-ethnic tensions increase, the less is the possibility of resolving external issues and deblocking international integrations, which in turn leads to further inter-ethnic divisions. Unless a rapprochement of inter-ethnic positions towards foreign policy action is evident, this cycle may exist perpetually.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In the data, we may observe that while ethno-nationalism causes divisions within a multi-ethnic state, foreign policy plays a completely opposite role. But, not any type of foreign policy. In Macedonia's case, only a foreign policy which is oriented towards Euro-Atlantic international integrations, is able to forge unity between otherwise antagonized ethnic groups. Such role is portrayed in the data set through a support, reflected by both ethnic Macedonian and Albanian respondents. The respondents' observation that the Euro-Atlantic agenda represents the widest inter-ethnic consensus in the country, testifies to the significance that foreign policy has in Macedonia, in forging inter-ethnic unification.

However, this role, in the respondent's opinion is largely obstructed by the presence of external factors, categorized by respondents as a combination of political and societal threats. When foreign policy is faced with external blockades, which stall its international integration agenda, the state is put before a security dilemma: to accept the neighboring states' demands and undertake changes that would affect the state and national identity, or to refuse such demands, and consequently perpetuate the status quo of the international integration agenda. This dilemma is enrooted in the inter-ethnic division of perceptions towards the external threats and the approach towards their resolution. Based on the respondents' stance, to the majority of one ethnic group, security lies in preserving the intact national identity, while to the majority of the other, in moving forward with the international integration agenda. Such dichotomous attitudes over state security and threats to it, lead furthermore to divisions over the foreign policy approach towards external factors. The ones who view security in terms of national identity prefer lower foreign policy action and even a status-quo, while the others, who view security in terms of international integration prefer higher foreign policy action towards resolution of external disputes. In this sense, foreign policy transforms itself from a factor which encourages inter-ethnic integration through its international agendas, to a factor of contestation between ethnic groups, who no longer share the same vision over it.

Certainly, a single study, which is furthermore explorative in nature, does not pretend to serve as an exhaustive support to the raised arguments above. However, the case of Macedonia presents an adequate and fruitful case to begin studying the relationship between foreign policy and domestic group's integration level, in multi-ethnic states with salient ethnic cleavages and arduous external pressures. Additional research is necessary for further evidence and sophistication of the arguments presented in this study.

A broadened focus, which would include the impact of foreign policy behavior, not only on the relationship between major ethnic groups, but among all existing ethnic communities, would be a recommendation for future research. The arguments of this thesis may be evaluated through further research of other states, characteristic for their multi-regionalism or multi-ethnicity. Not very far away from Macedonia, the case of Kosovo and Bosnia would be two avenues of fruitful research. Two post-war states, resemble the case of Macedonia in terms of their bilateral contests, especially with Serbia. Determined for EU integration, it would be useful to investigate whether these countries' foreign policy is broken along ethnic lines and whether the influence of external pressures is felt over the foreign policy debate and consequently over inter-ethnic relations. An interdisciplinary approach, which would unite international relations and comparative politics, would allow more meticulous studies to be conducted on the relationship between international and national integrations.

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