THE BALCAN REGIONAL SECURITY ASPECT – IMPACT OF THE MACEDONIAN-GREEK CONFLICT

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ABSTRACT

The Balkan is constantly latent unsecure region in Europe. Permanent conflict processes between the countries of the region, historically move in the spectrum of the phase of the escalation of violence to phases of constant latency, but almost never in conflict resolution phase. As a result of persistent and latent conflicts at best, the Balkan is a region that is constantly able to export instability. Long-standing conflict between Greece and Macedonia has a permanent impact on regional security. As a result of long-term failure to Greek-Macedonian conflict process and the absurdity of this whole conflict, it affects the emergence of new political-economic conflicts in the region. This paper will attempt to briefly present the impacts that Greek-Macedonian conflict has on achieving regional security. Through maintaining the conflict process and causing exclusion of the region in the European security space can export constant instability. This instability is particularly true of the Republic of Macedonia endangering its security and emphasizing the European security space.

Key words: conflict, regional security, national interest, identity, Macedonia, Greece

Introduction

Speaking of conflicts and theoretical concept on conflicts, it is necessary to say that they have their own structure and phases, and they do not appear out of nowhere. Based conflicts are not isolated violent acts, but a process that involves parties with certain views and defined goals for entering the conflict process in which the already latent phase transit in the phase of the violence.

This conclusion applies to the Greek-Macedonian conflict process, with a lot of specifics in terms of interests, goals, fears, attitudes of the parties to the conflict. However, this conflict process exceeds the characteristics of simple bilateral conflict but political pragmatism has grown into a conflict that after more than twenty years, seriously affecting the Balkan region. Especially it should be kept in mind that the regional geopolitical situation when this conflictive process started today completely changed. The conflict process can seriously affect regional security in contemporary circumstances and dynamics which manifests itself, in particular in terms of contemporary risks and threats to regional security.

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This paper will attempt to briefly lay the theoretical aspects of the conflict, as well as contemporary risks and threats, and also through part of the research paper to show how it can affect the achievement of national and vital interests of the Republic of Macedonia. Moreover, it is necessary to know that the basic national and vital interests of the Republic of Macedonia is the survival of the nation and the state (Defense Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia; 2010), and it is actually a national interest of every modern European state. Threat of this basic and most national interest inevitably leads to the intensification of the conflict process. Conflict process in question is littered with many factors of influence, particularly on national interests primarily with the life of the nation and the state.

1 International relation and conflicts

Usually the conflict is understood as an armed conflict or war. For most people only war is a conflict or a conflict situation. However, this conflict understanding represents one sided and unscientific approach. In the scientific literature different definitions of conflict can be found, primarily depending on how approaches to defining the term and that the parties to the conflict process. Thus, we can speak of intergroup or intra-group, ethnic, social, political, international or internal conflicts.

In terms of international conflicts we can say that it is a situation in which an entity is engaged in conscious opposition to another entity in the international community because they have conflicting goals, and the conflict is that part of the dispute in which there is a danger of the use of military force or it is already used. (Ortakovski, 1999). This is only an introductory understanding of the conflicts in the international community and we believe that in order to survive a conflictive process in bilateral or multilateral relations in international relations it is not at all necessary to use armed force to be considered as a conflict. Basically conflict process can be long, but in the entire period to be in the phase of latency, i.e. not to grow into violent or armed conflict process. It's not unusual in international relations, and quite relevant to such a conflictive process is exactly the conflict process between Macedonia and Greece.

Within security studies, and in the definition and understanding of international conflicts, they represent a security dilemma to which turns **Robert Kaplan**. In this definition, conflict is defined as violent, and as a consequence of the belligerent cultures which participate. This conclusion of **Kaplan** is due primarily on historical-political and ethno-cultural characteristics of ethnic communities or states that participated in the wars in the former Yugoslavia (Carlsnaes, Risse, Simmons, 2012). However, mainly in security studies, international conflicts are understood as armed violent conflict or coincide with the definition of war. We will not agree with this approach to defining conflicts in international relations, mainly because further in this paper we have

completely different international conflict, with special specifications. Theory of conflict within the security studies, associates conflicts with ethnic conflicts at international level. Basically this is a relatively accurate determination, especially if we start from the fact that conflict in international relations between states conflicts between nations and nations is based on ethnicity. Conflict primarily as a result of the conflicting interests of nations or ethnic groups carry the notion of state in certain countries. Especially in the Balkans this is typical, because states are accepted according to the traditional approach of interpreting the nation state as a political creation. Even in the functioning of the liberal state and the recognition of the existence of separate ethnic minorities with wider powers, ethnic majority displays its interests as a priority for the country in international relations. In this, ethnic identity is socially constructed relying on tradition, and that constructivists call "invented tradition" (Williams, 2008).

Linking the conflicts and international relations, we can say that they are the result of violations of human rights by both or one of the parties to the conflicts, minority issues, territorial issues, resources, or cultural differences (Stetter, 2007). Macedonian-Greek conflict is a complex combination of many of these reasons, but mostly an identity conflict that directly affects the realization of national interests, or it is at least crucial for Macedonia.

2 National interests and issues of identity

National interests are very important questions in this conflict, but there are defined in different ways, depending on the purpose and position of the state in international relations, but also on the basis of assessment of the risks and threats to security. Especially important is the assessment of the threats to the national identity, constitutional order and territorial integrity. Generally there are no major differences in the definition of national interests and national security associated with its accomplishment, but also with the dilemma of moral principles in international relations and the achievement of national interests.

One very essential definition of the national interest as a combination of the national security, morality and international relations is as follows: "The national interests of a nation that is conscious not only of their own interests, but also that other nations have their own national interests, must be defined in compatible relationship with them, as in the multinational world is a requirement of political morality, but in a time of total war it is one of the conditions for the survival of the nation "(Pham, 2008).

It is the nation's survival and the preservation of national identity, whether it is a direct violation of security by military action or is it political, economic or other influence. From this aspect, the Republic of Macedonia as a basic national interest determines the survival of the nation and Republic of Macedonia. Like other vital interests determined like:

• Protection and promotion of peace and security, life and health, property and personal safety of the citizens;

• preserving and promoting the democratic values of the state: human rights, rule of law, political pluralism, the principle of sharing of powers, protection of cultural identity and heritage of all citizens of the Republic of Macedonia;

• preserving and promoting strong and functional multiethnic democracy and the constant improvement of interethnic relations;

• NATO's political and defense integration, political, economic and security integration in the European Union and active participations in other forms of international cooperation.

Reality requires constant emphasis on the preservation of national identity, primarily as a negative historical experience for the Macedonians. It will have an impact not only in the relations with the neighbors that are littered with historical undefined issues and open conflicts, but will show an impact in terms of acceptance of Macedonia to the European security identity. In addition, Macedonia is a small country which is not strong and that faces the inner etnopolitical conflict, and those factors influence the practical political rhetoric and behavior in the present conflict process with Greece.

Definition of Greek national interests is very difficult to determine. Primarily due to the fact that Greece is a member of NATO and the EU and their identity issues has plagued even in relation to the security identity in the EU and NATO. Greece. However, dispute of the identity of the Macedonians is primarily eufeministic two-decade question about the name of the state of the Republic of Macedonia.

3 Greek-Macedonian conflicts and the impact on regional security

Greece is one of the most important and powerful countries in the Balkans, especially rising towards the end of the twentieth century after the breakup of Yugoslavia (Shea, 2008). Despite this conclusion, the conflict in Macedonia and in general "Macedonian Question" is an ethnic conflict with deep roots in the collective memory of the Macedonians, and political position within the conflict set by Greece. The most disputed is the worst ethnic cleansing against Macedonians that took place in the time of the civil war in Greece from 1947 to 1949. During this war, political internal conflicts in Greece are used to solve the "Macedonian Question" in the Aegean part of Macedonia as part of Greece after the Balkan wars of the last century through the most drastic and undemocratic methods.
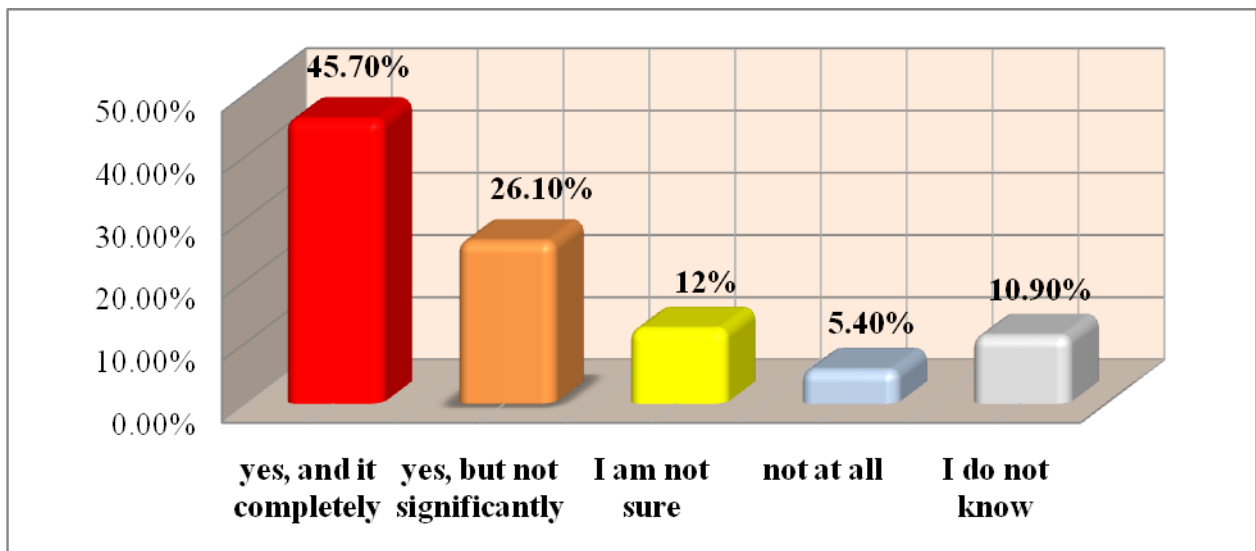
From a security perspective we can agree with the claim that every modern English political leader is fully aware that there is no way the idea of "Macedonians in a state" to be applied in practice and it does not cause disruption of regional security (Gallagher, 2005). Contemporary Macedonian

policy is not geared towards this form of survival of the nation and such a unification of divided Macedonia. Macedonia is aware of the exposure of internal conflict processes before etnopolitical conflict process by Albanians, as well as the regional environment in which Albanians whether it is a policy of the Republic of Albania or Kosovo are under expansionist nationalism. Therefore, even people in Macedonia originating from Aegean Macedonia (Greek part), and those who in their youth actively participated on the side of the Greek Democratic Army (Communist resistance) in the civil war, will not believe that the Macedonian Question will be solved by changing the boundaries. Rather on the conflict process it is to respect fundamental human and minority rights for Macedonians living in Greece, and those exiled during the Civil War and today they would like to return to their homes and their TTC (Danforth, 1995). One of the reasons for the continuation of the conflict process and the issue of the name Macedonia by Greece as a historical-political problem that Greece will have to tackle in the internal relations, but also with the international public by recognizing several genocides carried over non- Greek population in the course of the twentieth century.

This is the continuation of the conflict process in Greece, and thus is hampering Macedonia to become a full member of NATO and the European Union, an accelerator of possible disruption to regional security. The disruption of regional security in the Balkans will not pose a risk only to Macedonia, but rather for the broader region. Greece, which is a member of NATO and the EU has repeatedly used its position to call upon danger from Macedonian "irredentism" and basically it does not apply rationally and as we said the beginning of this section as a regional leader. Faced with their own problems, primarily economic, the issue of conflict of the name of Macedonia is an alibi and incomprehensible distractions for NATO and the EU from the real risks and threats to regional security. Such real risks and threats to regional security may have implications on the Central and Western Europe before Islamic radicalism and economic instability.

For Macedonian experts' public, the impact of the conflict process between Macedonia and Greece causes danger to the Macedonian national interests and vital interests of the European Union. For the purposes of this paper we used experts public opinion in Macedonia gathered by conducting a survey related to the realization of national interests within the European vital interests over European security policy. The research results can be viewed in the following graph:

Do you think that long-term unsolved conflict process between Macedonia and Greece can realistically threaten the national interests of the Republic and of the EU's vital interests in the region?

From the results obtained in the research we can conclude that experts in the Republic of Macedonia have no particular difference in attitude which is due to ethnicity, 71.8% considered that even this conflictive process can realistically threaten the national interests of Macedonia and the vital interests of the Union, only 5.4% think that endangerment is not possible, and 22.9% are not sure or do not know how it could happen.

This simple and brief overview indicates high percentage of risk awareness among the Macedonian expert public on the interests not only of Macedonia and the European Union that may be the result of failing to address the conflict process. In practice, the threat to the national interests of Macedonia can be an introduction to the insecurity of the country due to the escalation of internal conflicts. Regional instability in turn, caused by escalating internal before etnopolitical conflict processes in Macedonia threatens Europe's vital interests, primarily those relating to sustainable security situation, particularly in terms of preserving security stable on European security area. Inherent in this area is of course the Republic of Macedonia, although not a full member of the Union.

Conclusion

When Balkans are in question, the reality of security imposes unambiguous conclusion that any conflict in this region should not be seen as isolated. Especially in case of interstate conflict that has deep roots. In combination with other existing conflicts processes that represents multiplied risk to regional security. Practically in political and security rhetoric there is an ample potential for conflict escalation. Clash of national interests and collective memory filled with mutual violence and history in which always someone must lose for the other to get and eventually recognizing the historical mistakes and violence represents permanent accelerators for possible security crisis. Triggers

that would trigger crisis are constantly present and thanks to the impact of international public, both internal and bilateral Balkans conflict processes are held in permanent latency.

Seeing the Macedonian-Greek conflict process, we can say with certainty that it has the potential to destabilize the region and to threat the security. This applies above all to direct Macedonian-Greek relations, who have not reached the stage of violence primarily because it would mean an international armed conflict, and it is almost incredible in these conditions. But, the ability of this conflictive process is a strong accelerator for internal etnopolitical conflict process in Macedonia. Greek long-term strategy for keeping Macedonia under constant threat and possibility of security threats by escalating etnopolitical conflict process between Macedonians and Albanians, in the hope that it will cause internal destruction of the Republic and thus avoid the overcoming of the "Macedonian Question" is an irresponsible political and security game of Greece in relation to the entire region.

In this context we must consider the interests of all countries in the region, and they are not exclusively political-historical as Greece. But also to include territorial interests that are mutually irreconcilable. Causing weakness to a country in the region, even if it is the Republic of Macedonia and Greece is a threat to regional security with the highest risk of an escalation of the conflict. It will cause escalation and other forms of threat intentionally or accidentally although political elites do not think about. Although for Greece this conflict is as a matter of fighting "Macedonian irredentism" and thus a key national interest of priority for the security. The real motives of Greece have nothing to do with preserving security in practice and its own, but also the regional one.

The influence of the Macedonian-Greek conflict on regional security process indirectly has the effect of multiplying and accelerating other conflicting processes, especially those relating to the Republic of Macedonia in the internal relations and bilateral relations with other countries in the region and several key issues. In this paper we will not dwell on them, but as a disclaimer would only say that the outstanding issues with Albania and Kosovo have already been mentioned and expressed through national Albanian expansionism. The issues of church relations and the recognition of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, which impedes Serbia, but affects Greece too and relations with Bulgaria are having amplitude of extremely close to extremely strained, due to historical issues.

Through the promotion and maintenance of these conflicting processes, Macedonian-Greek conflict has direct impact on non - membership of Republic of Macedonia to the European Union, and that influence the security of the European security space.

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