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The relations between Turkey and Macedonia: The incoherencies of a political partnership

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Ankara recognized the Republic of Macedonia on the February 6, 1992, at the same time as it did all four former Yugoslav republics. Ever since, it has remained constant in this global and undifferentiated approach to the four republics: on the August 28, 1992 in London, the foreign minister, Hikmet Çetin, signed the protocol on the establishment of diplomatic relations with these republics and, in October, the appointment of ambassadors was announced. Only the official relations between Turkey and the FRY were interrupted, but not contacts between the two. The Yugoslav ambassador in Ankara, Trajan Petrovski, was recalled on of January 31, 1992, a few days after Turkey announced its imminent recognition of the four secessionist republics. Of Macedonian origin, Petrovski was accused by Belgrade to have urged Turkey to recognize the Macedonian state.[1]

Isolated in the area with its tense or ambiguous relations with all of its neighbors, suffering from a lack of international recognition, and weakened by a difficult economic transition and a rather divided territorial ethnic composition, the Republic of Macedonia warmly welcomed this public support to its independence and its territorial integrity. The two countries shared the same local enmities, especially with Greece, and Turkey looked like the sole regional country liable—and willing—to cooperate with Skopje. Bulgaria, which has recognized the independence of Macedonia as soon as January 1992, did not extend this recognition to the "Macedonian nation", leading the Macedonian leaders to fear that its intentions were rather ambiguous. Last, by developing tight cooperation with Turkey, the Macedonian leaders tried to counterbalance a perceived hostile alliance between Serbia and Greece.

As for Turkey, it took advantage of the isolation of the tiny republic to set it up as a local partner. Most of Balkan countries have kept mixed feelings (if not deep rooted enmity) toward the Turks, perceived as the heir of the Ottomans who dominated the area for several centuries. In this context, the very fact that the Macedonian leaders were not reluctant to cooperate with Ankara (indeed, partly because they felt isolated) pleaded in favor of this partnership. Last, Turkish analysts thought that the preservation of the stability of this country was essential to avoiding a general flare-up of the area, and therefore, that it should be supported in its quest for recognition.

A firm support to the independence and the territorial integrity of the Republic of Macedonia

The first official visit abroad, always a very symbolic move, of President K. Gligorov, was to Turkey (in March 1992) and President T. Özal was the first foreign chief of state to undertake an official visit to Macedonia (in June 1993). Pubic statements pronounced during official visits are always extremely cordial and the leaders of both countries regularly praise the excellence of their bilateral relations. Turkish leaders do not miss any opportunity to recall that they were one of the first countries to recognize Macedonian independence, moreover under its constitutional name of "The Republic of Macedonia".[2]

Nevertheless, first or second, Turkey very soon supported the independence of this country and acted in all international spheres to support its independence and territorial integrity. Currently Turkey is still the only NATO member to have recognized the "Republic of Macedonia" under this name and not as "FYROM" (which causes the now-familiar footnote "Turkey recognizes the Republic of Macedonian under its constitutional name" in all NATO official documents). Skopje named an ambassador to

[1] Şule Kut, "Yugoslavya bunalimi ve Türkiye'nin Bosna-Hersek ve Makedonya politikasi : 1990-1993", *in* Faruk Sönmezoğlu (ed.), *Türk dis politikası analizi*, Istanbul, Der, 1994, p. 165.

Ankara in July 1993. The position was held by Trajan Petrovski, the former and last Yugoslav ambassador to Turkey. [3]

In February 1994, Greece imposed a total embargo on the Republic of Macedonia (it had already imposed an oil embargo the previous year). The tiny Republic was therefore completely landlocked, as its main—and almost unique—line of communication, the Morava-Vardar valley, was cut off, in the north, by the international embargo on the FRY and, in the south, by Greece. A few days before, the United States had recognized the Republic of Macedonia (under the name of FYROM). At this point, relations between Turkey and Macedonia tightened very rapidly. Two days after the announcement of the Greek embargo, the document on the construction of an east-west corridor stretching from Durrës in Albania to Varna in Bulgaria was signed. The following month, an agreement on economic cooperation between Turkey and Macedonia was signed and Turkey committed to raise $25 million of credits for the Republic.[4] The State Minister, Murat Karayalçın, came to Skopje in May 1994 and announced the donation of 10,000 tons of corn to the republic. Ankara had already supplied Macedonia with fuel during the Greek oil embargo in 1993. The bilateral treaty was signed the following year (July 1995) as were the agreements regulating legal trade (June and July 1995). Last, cooperation in the military field was enhanced.

The Republic of Macedonia inherited very little military equipment from the former Yugoslavia. With a total of 12,000 men in 1995, no air force and only two T-34 tanks from Second World War, [5] this army did not at all represent a dissuasive force. In 1994, the United States committed themselves to supply materials from the American surplus.

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[2] The Turkish press even went as far as stating that Turkey was the first country to recognize Macedonia under its name (*Turkish Daily News*, July 17, 1995, October 12, 1996). It was, of course, Bulgaria who / which, three weeks before Turkey undertook this step.

[3] The first Turkish Ambassador to Skopje was Suha Noyan. He was replaced in June 1995 by Unal Marasli, and in November 1997 by Mustafa Fazli Kesmir.

[4] The March 1994 agreement foresees cooperation in the fields of agriculture, tourism, construction, chemical industry and transportation. It came into force in April 1995.

[5] Ducan Perry, "Macedonia: From Independence to Recognition", *RFE/RL*, Vol. 3, n°1, 7 January 1994, p. 121; *Military Balance*, 1994/95, p. 95.

Negotiations in military fields were initiated in June 1993 with the Macedonian Chief of Staff's visit to Turkey and with the Defense minister's visit in November. Turkey agreed to train Macedonian officers in its academies (this cooperation is mentioned as well in the protocol signed by the two foreign ministers in December 1993). In 1995, negotiations accelerated and several agreements were signed. One, dating from April 1995 ("Agreement on industrial and technical cooperation in the field of defense"), set up the legal basis for this cooperation (this agreement came into force after the arms embargo on Macedonia was lifted)[6]. Three months later, a "Document on mutually complementary confidence and security building measures", called as well the "Skopje Document", was concluded. This agreement foresees exchange of military experts, observations of respective military activities and joint military exercises[7]. Annual cooperation programs were later organized. Last, an agreement on the training of Macedonian pilots was signed in March 1996.

In 1997, while chaos was spreading in Albania (with the Pyramid scheme scandal) and threatening to expand to Macedonia,[8] Turkey deepened its military cooperation with Macedonia. It deployed a preventive diplomacy combining military delegations' visits, joint military exercises and public support to the territorial integrity of Macedonian territory: on the March 15, a Turkish military delegation officially visited Skopje; ten days later, the under-secretary of Foreign Affairs came to Skopje with a new military delegation; in April, the Turkish government announced it would take charge of the formation of Macedonian officers (although apparently, this training had already begun); the following month, the first common bilateral military exercises were organized in Macedonia, etc.[9] In March 1997, Turkey agreed as well to give the Macedonian army several transport vehicles, two patrol boats and a communication system. [10]

[6] MIC, April 14, 1995; MILS, April 14 and 17, 1995.
[7] OMRI Daily Digest, July 21, 1995; *Turkish Daily News*, July 22, 1995; MIC, July 20, 1995; *Turkish Probe*, July 28, 1995, p. 15.
[8] Macedonian authorities actually their troops on a state of alert at the border in March 1997. A few days before, border posts had been assaulted by Albanians. (MILS, March 13, 1997). Several incidents at the border occurred during this crisis in Albania.
[9] *Hürriyet*, May 12, 1997; MILS, March 17 and 26, 1997, April 21, 1997.
[10] MILS, March 17, 1997.

A year later, a civil war broke out in Kosovo (spring 1998). This time, the threat of an extension of the combats to the Macedonian territory was highly feared as the Albanians in Kosovo and in Macedonia maintained close relations within Yugoslavia. Very quickly Turkey proposed to equip Macedonia with combat planes and entered into negotiations on twenty F-5 planes.[11] The delivery of these planes did not finally take place for "obscure" reasons[12] but, again, Turkey showed its willingness to back Macedonia during regional crisis.

In 1999, the repression in Kosovo and the fear that an ethnic cleansing plan was about to be implemented in the province by Belgrade prompted NATO to carry on air strikes against FRY. Albanians were massively expelled from the province and took refuge mainly in the neighboring Albania and Republic of Macedonia. An estimated 950,000 Kosovars left Kosovo, by fear or by force, and, according to the UNHCR, a total of about 250,000 had found shelter in Macedonia when a cease-fire was concluded. Here again, Turkey extended its help to Macedonia.

As the significant strategic importance of the Republic was underlined by all analysis, Turkey deepened its military assistance to Macedonia with a new donation of equipment and ammunition worth $1.9 million.[13] Furthermore, Turkish leaders feared—or understood—that the fragile and tense relations between the Macedonian and the Albanians in Macedonia could be further endangered by the flux of refugees from Kosovo. Ankara therefore opened its doors to refugees. A total of 18,000 Kosovars took refuge in Turkey from April to June 1999, some of them transferred by plane from Macedonia.[14] The Turkish Red Crescent (*Kızılay*) also sent some humanitarian aid equipment (tents, food, clothing, etc.) and set up a tent-site in Macedonia (and another one in Albania).

[11] *Hürriyet*, July 6, 1998; MILS, July 1 and 9, 1998.
[12] The deal was finally cancelled because, first official reason, the maintenance of these planes was too expensive, or, second official reason, because Turkey had requested the purchase of a transport plane from Turkey as a prerequisite for the transaction. Most probably, the deal was cancelled because of strong Greek reactions. MIC, July 10 and 16, 1998; MILS, November 12, 1998, March 17, 1999.
[13] *Turkish Daily News*, June 14, 1999.
[14] All of them returned to Kosovo during the summer of 1999.

On the whole, this Turkish effort was highly praised by Macedonian leaders.[15] Turkey was even elected as a "model country" by the Macedonian prime minister for its assistance to Kosovar refugees.[16] On the Turkish side, President Demirel declared, during his visit in April 1999, that Macedonia had shown an "exemplary attitude" in providing temporary shelter for Kosovars.[17] Demirel's appraisal was widely reported and commented on in the Macedonian press, whereas Macedonia had been under hard criticism for the passive if not inhumane way it behaved toward refugees.[18]

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Last, in September 1999, the long-awaited free trade agreement between the two countries was signed. This agreement is asymmetrical: Macedonia will have a more liberal access to the Turkish market than the other way around (taxes will be decreased slower), in order to lower the deficit Macedonia has in its exchange with Turkey.[19]

On the cultural level, several projects were carried out: conferences, concerts, film festivals, exhibitions, and so on, were organized jointly. A symposium on Atatürk was organized by the University of Gazi (Ankara) and the University of Bitola in October 1998,[20] a symposium on Turkish culture in Skopje was held in March 1998, a film was jointly financed,[21] in 1995, the annual "Goce Days" were organized in Istanbul (featuring exhibitions, concerts, conferences), and so on.[22] The Turkish Cooperation Agency opened an office in Skopje in May 1997. It participated in several conferences, financed the formation of specialists in statistics, etc.[23]

[15] See, for example, *Türkiye*, April 8, 1999; Anadolu Ajansi, April 7, 1999; MIA, April 7 and 11, 1999.
[16] Anadolu Ajansi, April 7, 1999.
[17] Anadolu Ajansi, April 11, 12, 1999; *Milliyet*, April 12, 1999.
[18] See, for example, Astrid Patozi, "Tirana-Skopje : le retour de l'inimitié", *AIM*, Tirana, April 10, 1999.
[19] Details of the agreement in *Makedonya Ülke Etüdü*, Istanbul, Istanbul Ticaret Odası, 1999-44, pp. 31-31.
[20] *Milliyet*, October 10, 1998.
[21] "Intiharin El Kitabı", by Erbil Altanay. See *Milliyet*, November 7, 1997.
[22] On cultural relations, also see, Mehmet Turna, "Makedonya-Türkiye ilişkileri ve Makedonya'nın geleceğine bakış", *Avrasya Dosyası*, Vol. 3, n°3, Spring 1996, p. 76.
[23] Details of the projects they have financed in *Eurasian File*, n°76, June 1997, p. 3, n°96, April 1998/1, p. 3 ; *TICA, 1997, Annual Report*, p. 12.

These projects have limited ambition but, together with the firm and constant political support that Turkey has extended to Macedonia, they have contributed to a noticeable improvement of the image of Turks in Macedonia. [24]

The Turkish minority in Macedonia: bridge of friendship?

There are officially some 80,000 Turks in Macedonia today (77,000 according to the April 1991 census, 83,000 according to the July 1994 census, i.e. roughly 4% of the country's population). This minority seems to have at its disposal much more cultural facilities than the Albanians. For example, the Albanians, five time more numerous than the Turks, barely have more publications or radio programs than the Turks[25]. The journal [newspaper?] *Birlik* is published since 1944 and another newspaper, *Vardar*, appears every two weeks. In 1992, 55 Turkish-Macedonian primary schools (among which 28 had education only in Turkish) were open in the country.

A Turkish Democratic Union (*Türk Demokratik Birliği*) was created in July 1990. This "Union" became a political party in October 1992 under the name of Democratic Party of the Turks (DPT) – *Türk Demokratik Partisi*, but it did not meet much success on the national scene. None of the 11 Turkish candidates passed the first round in the October and November 1990 legislative elections, and only 22 candidates were elected at the local level (i.e. 1.45% of the total of local elected officials, whereas the Turks represent 4% of the population). The Turkish population abandoned the "Turkish party" for the more general parties (Social Democrats, Liberal Party), or for the Albanian ones. Seven local elected officials out of 22 were members of the Albanian Party for Democratic Prosperity. In addition to this lack of political-ethnic cohesion, their geographic dispersion and the electoral law (quota of 7%) made the election of Turks to local assemblies more difficult. For the 1994 general elections, the DPT associated itself with the SDA-Islamic Path and obtained one

[24] Cultural events might, however, prove counter-productive. Various incidents (talks given in Turkish or Albanian without any translation, etc.) occurred during the "Days of Macedonian culture", organized in Turkey in 1995. MILS, April 18, 1995.
[25] See the official data in *Basic Statistical Data. Second Supplemented and Revised Edition*, Statistical Office of Macedonia, Skopje, December 1992.

deputy in Gostivar (Kenan Hasip). Out of the 57 DPT candidates, only seven passed the first round.[26]

However, the DPT claims that the Turkish population in the eastern part of the country has been prevented from voting.[27] The DPT proclaims the Turks are being discriminated, and campaign on this cause. In a widely attended press conference in April 1993, Erdoğan Saraç, its president, denounced the "genocide of the Turks" and requested the appointment of Turks in the government and in other administrative organs (justice, police, army, etc.).[28] The DPT regularly sends some alarming reports to international organizations (such as to the OSCE in January 1993, to the European Court in February 1995, etc.), but the *ad hoc* mission set up by the OSCE concluded that there was no major abuse against the Turks (April 1993). However, with the noticeable exception of İsmail Güner, who was the Minister of Culture and later the government spokesman,[29] who is Turkish but not a member of the DPT, the Turks are indeed very poorly represented in national administrative institutions.

The DPT was also actively involved in the dispute over the education in eastern Macedonia and in Župa (Zhupa) in the area of Debar where, in 1995, Turkish classes were canceled by the Ministry due to the fact that the pupils "do not speak Turkish"! The DPT organized several protests and the boycott of primary schools in these areas (the protests went on for several years) and was behind the hunger strike movement undertaken in September 1996 by roughly 50 parents demanding for their children to be educated in Turkish.[30] The local Debar Macedonian community, on its part, accused the DPT of forcing these children (200 were involved in the dispute) to learn Turkish, sometimes by violent means.[31] The Minister of Education declared as well

[26] Şule Kut, "Macedonian Politics: First Multiparty Elections after Independence", *Turkish Review of Balkan Studies*, n°2, 1994/95, p. 40.
[27] MILS, October 20, 1994.
[28] MILS, June 27, 1994.
[29] Ismail Güner was a member of the Social Democrat Alliance (SDSM). He resigned because of his opposition to the new law on the media.
[30] Two illegal elementary schools where classes were taught in Turkish were as well torn down by the police in June 1995, following a decision of the Ministry. On this dispute, see MILS, February 9, 1995, June 9, 1995, August 29, 1995, September 5 and 26, 1995, September 4 and 16, 1996, December 27, 1996, January 15, 1997.
[31] Murder attempts and child kidnapping were even invoked in the protest letter sent to the Ministry of Education in September 1995. MILS, September 26, 1995; MIC, September 27, 1995.

that "the request of the parents (Macedonian Muslims) to hold classes in Turkish was made under pressure from various political parties and groups".[32]

Deep identity problems of the "Macedonian Muslims" (as well known as Torbeş) are at the center of this dispute. Some of them consider themselves as Turks who have lost their mother tongue and, on these grounds, they receive support from some Turkish movements, eager to fight the assimilation of the Turks in Macedonia. Mustafa Balbay narrates a "typical" dialogue between a Macedonian Muslim and the administration:

- "You, you are not Turkish, you are Macedonian. Your language is Macedonian.
- No, we are Turks. But we have forgotten our language. You must recognize our right to an education in our mother tongue.
- What is your mother tongue?
- Turkish.
- But you don't speak Turkish!
- We already told you that we have forgotten …".[33]

But representatives of Macedonian Muslims (namely the Association of Macedonian Muslims) accuse the DPT of pressuring them to declare themselves as being Turks. For example, they complained that in Western parts of Macedonia, the 1994 census was carried out under the directive of the DPT and that the party's activists frightened the Macedonian Muslim population, ordering them to "negate their Macedonian language and national affiliation".[34]

Turks in Macedonia are indeed threatened by assimilation. With their small numbers, their proximity to the Albanians (half of the Turkish community live in the north-east of the country, an area inhabited mainly by Albanians), they tend to integrate, mainly through marriages, into the Albanian community. On the political level, the Turkish leaders disagree with most of the Albanian demands, which are considered as extreme. The Turks find themselves squeezed between the Macedonian majority and the imposing Albanian minority, between Albanian and Macedonian nationalism and between their own struggle for minority rights and their struggle against assimilation by the Albanians. Relations between the DPT and the

[32] MIC, September 27, 1995.
[33] Mustafa Balbay, *Balkanlar*, Istanbul, Çağdaş, 1998, p. 72.

"Macedonian Islamic Community" (*Meshibat*), dominated by the Albanians, are as well quite tense.[35] The publication of the book "The Albanians in Macedonia" in 1995 motivated angry reactions from the Turkish community. This book expresses open animosity toward the Turks and the Ottoman empire ("the Ottoman Empire slaughtered Albanian women, children and the elderly", "the Turks are blood-thirsty occupiers", etc.).[36]

Several 'incidents'" worsened these relations within the Albanian community. At the beginning of 1997, the Albanian mayors of Gostivar and Tetevo revoked Turkish as an official administrative language in their cities, on the grounds that the legal prerequisite of 20% of the local population was not met. The DPT strongly reacted and justified its claim on grounds that first, the decision was based on unsubstantial data, and that, second, the "Framework Convention on Minority Protection" considers that a minority language should be an administrative language in areas where it has been traditionally spoken, regardless of the fact that little of the overall population may be Turks.[37]

Last, the Macedonian Turkish minority is divided between a secularized tendency and a more Islamist one. After a struggle within the DPT, the latter dominates the party whereas the former has not constituted any political movement. The secularists, however, express their views in the monthly *Vardar*. This newspaper has probably been financed by the Turkish embassy.[38] A few Turks gather as well around the SDA-Islamic Path (*Islam Yolu*), an Islamist if not pan-islamist movement. It changed its name in 1995 to SDA-Right Path (*Hak Yolu*) to moderate its religious image.[39] The Fund for Human Aid, *El Hilal*, plays as well a pivotal role. It works

[34] MILS, June 27 and 30, 1994.
[35] There is a representative of the Turkish community in the *Meshibat*, Anvi Engülü, journalist and former president of the Democratic Alliance of the Turks (this association was disbanded in July 1992).
[36] MILS, March 29, 1995. Nathalie Clayer, "A propos du livre *Les Albanais de Macédoine*, publié à Skopje par la Communauté musulmane de la République de Macédoine", paper presented at the conference *Journées macédoniennes*, Paris, INALCO, 28 September 1997.
[37] *Nova Makedonija*, February 7, 1997 (translated by MILS, February 10, 1997). These Albanian mayors based their decision on the results of the 1994 census, results that they reject as far as the Albanian data are concerned!
[38] "L'islam, facteur des recompositions internes en Macédoine et au Kosovo", *in* Xavier Bougarel, Nathalie Clayer (dir.), *Le Nouvel Islam balkanique*, Paris, Maisonneuve & Larose, 2001, p. 190.
[39] Ibid, p. 190.

within the framework of the *Meshibat*, and cooperates with the Turkish "Direction of Religious Affairs" (*Diyanet*)[40], but is accused by the Macedonian press of links with the *Refah*![41] The Fethullahcı are as well rather active in the country: they opened a high school in Skopje in 1997 (the "Yahya Kemal" college)[42] and publish a local weekly, *Zaman-Makedonya*, since March 1994.[43] Relations between these actors have fluctuated since 1992 and no stable picture can be drawn of their political and religious positions.[44]

On these all the issues championed by the DPT (teaching in Turkish in some areas, recognition of Turkish as an official language in some areas and representation of the Turks in administrative bodies), Turkey did not take any offficial position. On the contrary, Turkish leaders tend to praise the way Macedonian authorities handle this minority. Through the *Diyanet*, they have good relations with the "Macedonian Islamic Community" (*Meshibat*), headed by Albanians. Last, the somewhat radical tendency of the DPT, and the sometimes extremist declarations of its leader on the "genocide of the Turks" incite the Turkish leaders to keep their distance, at least officially. During the official visit of the late President Özal in February 1993, the Turkish consulate declared it would prevent the DPT to use this opportunity to diffuse political messages.[45] The Turkish government officially condemned the raising of the Turkish banner on the side of the Albanian one during the flag controversy in Gostivar in the Summer 1997.[46] Actually, it was not the DPT, but the SDA-Islamic Path, who undertook this move; the president of the DPT, Erdoğan Saraç, publicly opposed this initiative.[47]

[40] Ibid, pp. 198-199.
[41] *Nova Makedonija*, March 26, 1995, translated by MILS, March 28, 1995.
[42] *Zaman*, October 19, 1996, September 25, 1997.
[43] This 16-page newspaper (10 pages in Macedonian and 6 in Turkish) paper has a circulation of 6500.
[44] For a detailed account of these relations and fluctuations, see Nathalie Clayer (2001), *op. cit.*, pp. 189-190, 197-200, 204-205.
[45] Hugh Poulton, "The Republic of Macedonia after UN Recognition", *RFE/RL*, Vol. 2, n°23, 4 June 1993, p. 27.
[46] On the July 8, 1997, the Macedonian parliament voted a law on the flag of minorities that stipulates that their flags can be hoisted on national holidays alongside the Macedonian one. The day after, the police took down the Albanian flag displayed for the previous six month on the municipal buildings of Gostivar. Clashes with the local Albanian immediately irrupted as they tried to hoist again their flag.
[47] Interview with Erdogan Saraç in *Zaman*, March 29, 1995.

Up to the bloody clashes in Macedonia in 2001, little attention was devoted to this Turkish minority in official declarations as well as in the Turkish press. The problems faced by this community were covered almost exclusively by the Islamist papers (*Türkiye* and *Zaman*) and the Turkish leaders, eager to maintain the "excellent relations" with Macedonia, avoided commenting on the disputes between the Turkish minority and the Macedonian authorities, maintaining [???] their views to the rhetorical bridge of friendship" between the two countries.[48]

How deep is this partnership?

Turkey hurried to extend help to the Republic of Macedonia when it was threatened or weakened. During the "double embargo", it extended humanitarian aid and signed economic agreements, and, in 1997 and 1998, when the stability of the country was endangered (by the riots in Albania in 1997, and the repression in Kosovo), it deepened its military cooperation with Macedonia. In 1999, when the repression in the Kosovo province prompted many Kosovars to flee, again, Turkey expressed its readiness to help Macedonia to overcome the "refugee crisis".

However, notwithstanding this support to Macedonia during 'crises', bilateral relations suffer several deficiencies if not incoherencies in Turkish diplomacy. This is notably the case for economic cooperation which, beyond the numerous declarations of intention made by the Turkish leaders, did not receive the official backing one could have expected.

Bilateral trade is indeed very low. Up to 1995, it represented roughly 3% of the total of Macedonian exchanges. It rose in 1995 to reach – according to the Turkish State Statistics[49] – $126 million, but dropped later in 1996 when Skopje resumed its

[48] Tansu Çiller, MILS, January 16, 1995 ; İsmail Cem, Anadolu Ajansi, February 1, 2001 ; Bülent Ecevit, *Türkiye*, June 14, 2001.
[49] Macedonian data are significantly lower than Turkish ones : 93 millions of dollars in 1995 (MILS, April 17, 1996).

trade with its 'traditional partner', the FRY. Besides, contrary to the case of Bulgaria or Romania, this trade balance shows a large surplus in favor of Turkey.[50]

Exchanges between Turkey and Macedonia (in thousands of dollars)

Year	Turkish exportations	Turkish importations	Total
1992	5,000	12,910	17,910
1993	33,750	17,590	51,340
1994	60,380	18,660	79,040
1995	76,467	50,364	126,831
1996	74,050	31,430	105,480
1997	77,392	30,217	107,609
1998	68,190	13,237	81,427

Source : Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü (Turkish State Statistics), Ankara[51]

Turkish investments in this country are also fairly low. From 1990 to 1996, Turkish businessmen had invested a total of $2.6 millions in Macedonia (compared to $19.4 millions from Germany, $15.2 millions from Italy or $8.3 millions from Greece). In 1998, there were officially 315 Turkish companies in Macedonia, half of them operating with 100% Turkish capital.[52]

Macedonian leaders have expressed several times their disappointment with this very low level of trade. Again recently, in an interview with the daily *Radikal*, the Macedonian President pointed out that if Ankara and Skopje have very fruitful relations on the political level, Turkey was left behind on the economic level.[53] This is blamed on Turkey's delay to sign bilateral agreements and to liberalize bilateral trade. Indeed, economic bilateral agreements were signed only in 1995 (prevention of double taxation in June 1995 and Mutual Promotion and Protection of Investments in July 1995),[54] the Joint Economic Council met for the first time in August 1996 and the bilateral Business Council was created in November 1995 (agreement on its

[50] Major export and import items changed quite a lot during the last five years. See, *Eurasian Files*, n°105, August 1998/2, p. 6 and *Makedonya Ülke Etüdü*, Istanbul, Istanbul Ticaret Odası, 1998-44, pp. 33 and 36; See as well Mehmet Turna, *op. cit*., p. 77.
[51] Quoted in *Makedonya Ülke Etüdü*, *op. cit*., p. 31.
[52] *Makedonya. Ülke Etüdü*, *op. cit*., p. 37 and 83.
[53] *Radikal*, June 21, 2001.

operation signed the previous month). Credits extended to the tiny Republic are as well low (25 millions of dollars) and, in reality, this credit was not delivered.[55] Humanitarian assistance to the land-locked Republic was also low.[56]

Macedonian leaders complained several times about the administrative obstacle of Turkey's policy to protect its own production, and repeatedly asked to have a special status in Turkish economy.[57] The free trade agreement was finally signed on September 1999, but bilateral trade had fallen in the meantime, mainly as a result of the liberalization of trade between Macedonia and the European Union on the January 1.

This neglect of an entire segment of bilateral cooperation is quite surprising, as Turkish leaders are well aware that the main motive for Macedonia's rapprochement with Ankara relies on its regional isolation and on its fear of dismemberment. If this political partnership is not strengthened with firm economic cooperation, it might fail as soon as Macedonia no longer feels any danger.

Besides this delayed implementation of economic tools, Turkey was finally rather cautious in its political initiatives concerning Macedonia. The Turks suffer from a particular and persistent negative stereotype inherited from the Ottoman Empire perceived as a *Dark Age* in the area. As a consequence, Turkey is regularly suspected and accused of renewed 'its' expansionist tendencies. Considering the fact that the very existence of the Republic of Macedonia has been contested or challenged, strong political support to such a state might have been—and was—appreciated by some local actors as an appropriate way for Turkey to "come back to the Balkans". Serbs denounced the fierce Islamization of FYROM,[58] and Greece has attempted to isolate it.[59]

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[54] The agreement was ratified by the Turkish parliament in July 1996. *Hürriyet*, July 26, 1996.
[55] Only "insurance facilities" were extended in 1997. Interview with Tülin Kalkay, Turkish Eximbank, 26 October 1998.
[56] According to Şule Kut, "Yugoslvya bunalim ...", *op. cit.*, p. 177.
[57] See, for example, MILS, November 8, 1995, April 17, November 4, 1996.
[58] Tanjug, June 28, 1994 / BBC Summary World Broadcasts, June 30, 1994.

It was only in July 1995 that the bilateral "Treaty on friendship, good-neighborly relations and cooperation" was signed, while Turkey signed similar agreements with other Balkan countries as early as 1991 (September 1991 with Romania, May 1992 with Bulgaria, June 1992 with Albania). In sensitive fields such as military co-operation, Turkey has followed the path of the United States. The first steps in military cooperation (training of Macedonian officers, mid-1993) were undertaken while the US soldiers were deployed in Macedonia in the frame of the UNPREDEP (*UN Preventive Deployment Force*), and the framework cooperation agreement with Macedonia was signed in April 1995 only after the US had signed a similar agreement (November 1994 and May 1995).

The Mesut Yılmaz Government formed in July 1997 adopted a more dynamic policy toward this country. Mesut Yılmaz's visit in July 1998, the first visit of a Turkish Prime minister to Macedonia, was aimed at enhancing bilateral ties. An agreement on social security was signed[60], Turkish Airlines inaugurated a regular flight to Skopje, and a Turkish consulate was opened in Bitola (Manastir). Three months after President Demirel undertook his second official visit (as president), several projects were launched (creation of a joint-venture in Strumica for the management of a sunflower oil factory, infrastructures in the Vardar Valley, etc.). Turkey also initiated negotiations on delivery of combat planes to Skopje, motivating the angry reactions from Athens, denouncing this "threatening alliance on its northern and eastern fronts".

In November 1998, a new Macedonian government was formed: coalition of VRMO[61] – Democratic Alliance and DPA (Democratic Party of Albanians), under the leadership of Ljubco GeorgievskiThis change did not augur well for bilateral cooperation. The new government expressly gave its priority to the relations with

[59] MILS, May 16, 1994. This interpretation should not, however, be excluded!
[60] *Hürriyet*, July 7, 1998 ; Anadolu Ajansi, July 5 and 6, 1998.
[61] VRMO : *Vnatrešna Makedonska Revolucionerna Organizacija* – Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization. Since its foundation, the VRMO has been suspected of being pro-Bulgarian. In the past two years, it has been accused of coming to power to implement this orientation to the detriment of Macedonian ethnic identity and the state of Macedonia. See, for example, "After 50 years, old dilemma, all over again", *AIM*, Skopje, October 31, 2000; Zeljko Bajic, "Macedonian Nervous Over Bulgarian Rapprochement", *Balkan Crisis Report*, n°150, Institute of War and Peace Reporting, June 20, 2000.

Bulgaria, Greece and Albania. The first official visits abroad were dedicated to these countries and Turkey did not receive much attention in the first speaches of the new Macedonian leaders. These declarations focused on Turkey's barriers to cooperation in the economic field and the rather low level of Turkish investments in the country, and the 'excellency' of bilateral relations, which had been constantly emphasized, did not seem any more to be the center of attention. However, as a new regional crisis (Kosovo, 1998 and 1999) irrupted, Macedonia could, again, appreciate the help extended by Turkey.

The Republic of Macedonia's normalization of relations with its neighbors

Since the end of 1995, Macedonia's relations with its neighbors have undergone normalization. The Dayton agreement had opened the way for the reopening of its northern border, and tensions rapidly decreased (for a few months) after this peace agreement. In September 1995, Greece, isolated in the area and more and more aware that their stance on the Republic of Macedonia's name was deteriorating its image and its relations with the E.U., signed an intermediary agreement with Skopje. This agreement did not settle the main point of disagreement—the name of the Republic, put off to later negotiations, and still not settled—but Athens committed to recognize "the Skopje state" and to lift the embargo (which was done a month later).

In April 1996, Skopje signed a mutual recognition agreement with Belgrad and trade immediately resumed.[62] This recognition seriously weakened the regional position of Greece, which had counted on its Serbian ally for backing in its controversy with Skopje. Greek leaders probably underestimated the *realpolitik* of Slobodan Milošević and the desire, if not the need, for Belgrad to break its regional (and international) isolation. As for Macedonia, it gained much from this normalization with Belgrade as its external trade relies mainly on the "Serbian route" (the Morava-Vardar valley). Even when the East-West corridor will be completed (which will probably take years), this northern route will remain the most convenient

[62] The agreements on economic cooperation (prevention of double taxation, mutual promotion and protection of investments, etc.) were signed in September 1996.

(and Macedonia will always have to deal with the Serbs!). When the "double embargo" was imposed on the Republic in 1994/95, Bulgaria and Italy managed to develop some economic relations with Skopje (the two countries represented respectively 17.5% and 10% of the external exchanges of the Republic at the time). Bus, as soon as 1996, the FRY again became the main destination for Macedonian goods (27% of its total exports and 10% of its imports). Slovenia and Germany also represent noticeable fractions of this external trade (respectively 20 and 13% of the country's exports and 15 and 8% of its imports).[63] Here again, only the Morava-Vardar axis can be used for this trade. The Morava-Vardar was therefore involved in at least—without taking into account exchanges with Central and Western Europe—60% of Macedonia's exports.

Relations with Albania have always been troubled by the huge Albanian presence in Macedonia. The Albanians account for 20% to 40% of the population of the country according to various estimates, and since they have boycotted all censuses since 1991, these estimates are subject to harsh debates.

The Albanians demand the change of the Macedonian constitution in order to ensure the equal status of the Macedonian and Albanian "nations", the equalization of the status of the Albanian and Macedonian languages, and the possibility to be educated in Albanian at all levels, notably the legalization of the Tetovo university. This controversy is a good illustration of the continual tensions between the two communities since 1991. In February 1995, the Albanians in Tetovo, an area where protests are strongest, disregarded the official prohibition and opened an Albanian university. The police shut it down at once and put under arrest the president of this 'university', Fadil Sulejmani. Demonstrations and clashes with the police that irrupted ended in one death and ever since, this illegal university had been a major subject of dissension.

Daily relations are poisoned by mutual incomprehension: the Albanians blame to the Macedonians for the discrimination, if not racism, they suffer ; the Macedonians suspect the Albanians of seeking a separation from the State in order to create a

[63] *E.I.U. Country Report*, "Macedonia", n°4, 1997, p. 33.

"Great Albania". No Albanian political party in Macedonia or Albania openly advocates such an aim. Of course, it could be argued that such a goal would not be very prudent for political parties which are looking for national and international recognition. So far, however, discourse on this topic is more the outcome of internal political fights than anything else. Actually, the two main Albanian political parties in Macedonia softened or hardened their position on the Albanian rights according to their relations with the state (and notably their participation in the government).[64]

As for Albania, it recognized the Republic of Macedonia in April 1993. While the stability of the peninsula was challenged by the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albanian leaders thought it was important to strengthen the position of its nearby neighbor by granting it official recognition.[65] Moreover, at the time the two countries had tense relations with their common southern and northern neighbors (Greece and the FRY). The Turkish press often stressed the intermediary role played by Ankara between the two countries, actually its two main strategic partners in the area. Relations between Ankara and Tirana, particularly at the time of former president Berisha (1992-June 1997), were excellent, and Turkish leaders might indeed have been instrumental in this recognition.

However, as President Berisha's policy was more and more contested within the country, he adopted a much more nationalistic approach that prevented the 1993 rapprochement movement from taking shape. During the course of 1996, it took side with more radical movements in Kosovo and Macedonia. Relations between the two countries entered a new phase with the nomination of socialist government in Albania in the summer of 1997. For the first time since the break-up of Yugoslavia, an Albanian prime minister visited Skopje (January 1998), and several agreements were signed on this occasion.

[64] The Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA) is, however, more radical than the Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP). The DPA is part of the current governmental coalition. On dissensions among Albanian parties in Macedonia, see Nexhbedin Shaqiri, "Relations Between Albanian Parties in Macedonia", *AIM*, Skopje, November 18, 2000;Veton Latifi, "Albanian Division Exposed", *Balkan Crisis, Report*, n°174, Institute of War and Peace Reporting, September 20, 2000.

[65] Duncan Perry, "Une crise en gestation? La Macédoine et ses voisins", *Politique Étrangère*, n°1, 1994, p. 193.

Relations with Bulgaria are hampered by the very question of the Macedonian national identity which Bulgarians are reluctant to accept. The Macedonian and Bulgarian languages are very close and Bulgarians tend to consider Macedonians as "Bulgarians". Sofia recognized the independence of the Republic of Macedonia as early as January 1992, but it expressly did not extend this recognition to the Macedonian national identity. The bilateral agreements rapidly concluded after 1992 waited to be ratified until that the two agreed on the language(s) used in these documents (only Bulgarian, or Bulgarian and Macedonian). Several incidents highlighted this "disagreement": in April 1996, the Bulgarian foreign minister canceled his visit to Skopje due to the "anti-Bulgarian" rhetoric in Macedonia;[66] in October 1996, the Bulgarian national television diffused a documentary on « The Bulgarians in Albania » ("Bulgarians" who are, according to Skopje, "Macedonians");[67] during the Summer 1998, the official expiration of the Treaty of Neuilly motivated new declarations, duly commented in Skopje, on the reunification of the three Macedonias,[68] and so on.

The disagreement was finally settled in February 1999 with a joint declaration. The two countries declared that they have no territorial claim on each other, with the document written in both languages. Eight agreements were signed at once, regulating political and economic relations.[69] Last, a military cooperation agreement was signed on the delivery of 150 tanks and 150 cannons to the Macedonian army.[70]

As for Macedonia's relations with the FRY, no visible progress was achieved after the establishment of diplomatic ties in April 1996.[71] These relations focused for a long time on the pending question of the definition of the common border. This

[66] The cancellation of this visit was particularly badly perceived in Skopje. "A diplomatic scandal" headlined *Nova Makedonia* on the 24 of April (MILS, April 24, 1996).
[67] MILS, 8/10/96.
[68] BTA, 2/11/98.
[69] Full text of the joint declaration in MILS, February 23, 1999 and BTA, February 22, 1999. See, as well, Iso Rusi, "Skopje's Bulgarian Question", *Balkan Crisis Report*, n°5, Institute of War and Peace Reporting, mars 1999 (internet source).
[70] On this military arsenal gift (right in the middle of the Kososo crisis), see, MILS, February 23, 1999; BTA, February 22, 1999; *Gazeta 55*, May 16, 1999.
[71] Tatjana Stankovic, Yugoslavia and Macedonia. Opening the Door to Good Neighbourly Relations", *AIM*, Belgrade, November 17, 2000 (internet source).

controversy was finally settled in February 2001 and relations rapidly developed.[72] Faced with what they perceived as a joint Albanian extremist movement, the two countries tend to enhance their cooperation.

Turkey and the Spring 2001 crisis in Macedonia

In February 2001, clashes between Macedonian government forces and a newcomer to the Balkan scene, the National Liberation Army (NLA/UÇK), occurred in several places not far from the Kosovo border. Rebels carried out their attacks in the course of February and March and fighting was reported in several villages near the northern border. After relative calm in April, the killing of eight policemen and soldiers in a rebel ambush at the end of that month motivated a strong angry reaction among the Macedonian population and a new government offensive near Kumanovo. Successive peace talks, cease-fires and fierce fighting (mainly around Kumanovo and later Tetovo) continued until the signing of a peace agreement on of August 13. [73]

There is a wide-spread idea in Macedonia (and elsewhere) that the conflict has been imported from Kosovo. Macedonian authorities portray the NLA fighters as a largely alien group of terrorists from Kosovo.[74] "It is no secret that for a month now, Macedonia has been target of aggression from the Northern Province of Kosovo…. This aggression is no secret to us. It has been prepared, organized and maximally realized with logistic support of parties and structures from our northern neighbor…. There is abundant material evidence to prove this was a long planned aggression of Kosovo toward Macedonia…. We will not leave one centimeter of our territory to our enemies", declared Prime Minister Ljubcho Georgievski in its address to the nation.[75] The spokesman of the Macedonian Interior Ministry alleged as well that the rebels used recruitment and training centers in Kosovo.[76] The general interpretation also put

[72] Vladimir Javanoski, "Serbia and Macedonia Partners Again", *Balkan Crisis Report*, n°248, Institute of War and Peace Reporting, May 18, 2001.
[73] Details of the agreement in Reuters, August 13, 2001 and MILS, August 14, 2001.
[74] "Macedonia : UCK Insurgency shifts focus to Tetovo", RFE/RL Features, March 16, 2001
[75] MILS, March 19, 2001.
[76] RFE/RL, March 8, 2001.

forward that besides its irredentist goals, the KLA, corrupted by criminal affairs, provoked the crisis in Macedonia in order to preserve power, privilege and position.[77]

The Albanian paramilitary organization certainly has roots both in Kosovo and in Macedonia.[78] The logistic is probably imported from Kosovo and some Albanians fighters might have indeed received their training in Kosovo. The Kosovo war also had an impact on the decision of Albanian insurgents to take arms.[79]

However, conflicts in Kosovo and Macedonia present very different profiles and the 'import' thesis does not resist further analysis. In the Macedonian case, contrary to the Kosovo, local Albanian parties do not advocate independence and fighters do not seek secession of ethnic Albanian areas from Macedonia. Rather, they demand the end of what they say is discrimination in daily life. During the fighting, the two main Albanian parties in Macedonia, the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA – Arben Xhaferi) and the Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP – Ymer Ymeri) reiterated their views on the country's territorial integrity. Although some radicals do advocate federalization, Albanian parties in Macedonia have not brought up the issue in any official requests.[80] The Albanian population also backs Macedonian unity. A poll conducted in April 2001 on the behalf of the US State Department's Office of Research shows that 71% of Albanians in Macedonia would prefer to live in an ethnically-mixed Macedonia rather than a greater Albanian state.[81] Finally, Macedonian authorities cannot be accused, as was the case for the Milošević regime in Kosovo in 1998-1999, of having launched—or of having planned to launch—an ethnic cleansing campaign.[82]

As for the illegal Albanian movement in Kosovo, it had unification as part of its program, but the KLA leadership altered this view during the war. Backers of this idea

[77] Philip Schwarm, *AIM*, Belgrade, March 20, 2001.
[78] Farihma Daftary, "Testing Macedonia", *ECMI Brief*, n°4, May 2001(www.ecmi.de).
[79] Biljana Vankovska, "The way from 'Power Keg' to the Oasis of Peace – and Back : Macedonia after the Kosovo War", *Balkantrust*, 2000 (www.balkantrust.net/articles).
[80] Fehim Rexhepi, *AIM*, Prishtina, March 19, 2001. As far as it is known, only the National Democratic Party, formed in March 2001, has federalizating the country as part of its program (on this party, see *AIM*, Skopje, March 17, 2001)
[81] Tim Judah, "Albanians Back Macedonian Unity", Institute for War and Peace Reporting, *Balkan Crisis Report*, n°250, May 25, 2001.
[82] Although the proposal made by former President Gligorov, in February 1998, to provide a humanitarian corridor to Albania for Albanian refugees in case of clash in Kosovo has been interpreted by some Albanians as an appeal to ethnic cleansing. Biljana Vankovska, *op. cit.*

play an insignificant role in political life, and voters themselves pushed them to the margin in the 2000 local elections.[83] Finally, there is an easy confusion between the UÇK in Kosovo (*Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës* – Kosovo Liberation Army - KLA) and the UÇK in Macedonia (*Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare* – National Liberation Army - NLA).[84]

Albania gave full support to the Macedonian government and, in contrast to the Kosovo crisis, when the KLA managed to use the Albanian territory as a background, there is no indication that this is the case with the Macedonian crisis. Actually, all sides in Tirana fear the diabolization of the Albanians, and more precisely the irreparable harm this could make to the Albanian image and the hostility of the West that this might entail.[85] However, with the exacerbation of armed conflict and the bombing carried out by the Macedonian army, Tirana's stand has become more reserved.

Again, Turkey was a destination for refugees: as early as March 22, 5700 refugees had found shelter in Turkey (2700 of them entered in the three previous days). As Turkey does not require an entry visa for Macedonian citizens, they could easily find shelter in Turkey while waiting for the clashes subsid (providing they had a passport!). In total, 12,000 refugees came to Turkey. Most of them stayed with relatives in Istanbul but some were settled in the Gaziomanpaşa "guesthouse" near Kırklareli in Thrace. All of them returned to Macedonia as soon as clashed decreased.

As usual, Turkey benefited from its NATO membership. For example, the short visit to Ankara undertaken by the Macedonian foreign minister on March 17 was aimed at securing Turkish backing a few days before meeting between NATO countries.[86]

Turkish leaders naturally insisted on the preservation of the recognized borders of the Republic of Macedonia and regularly conveyed messages of support to the

[83] Fehim Rexhepi, *AIM*, Pristina, March 19, 2001.
[84] For analysis of this crisis and positions and policies of the Macedonians, the ethnic Albanians and the international community, see Farimah Daftary, *op. cit.*; Tim Judah, "A Greater Albania", *The New York Review of Books*, 17 May 2001, pp. 35-37.
[85] Remzi Lani, *AIM*, Tirana, March 24, 2001.
[86] *Turkish Daily News*, March 18, 2001; Anadolu Ajansi, March 18, 2001.

Macedonian leaders. They denounced this wave of "terrorist attacks" and strongly condemned Albanian fighters' assaults on Macedonian soldiers and policemen.[87] On the whole, it is hard to imagine Turkey supporting a separatist movement (or one so perceived by the international community) when it is fighting a similar movement on its own territory! And, as it was the case during the first phase of the Kosovo crisis (1998), Turkey was rather cautious in its demands for international intervention in Macedonia (here again, especially during the first phase of the fights). The official position expressed by the Turkish Minister of Defense illustrates well this caution: "Turkey could make a contribution to an international formation… in case developments reach a serious dimension… if needed…after ensuring a cease-fire".[88]

Turkish leaders insisted on the moderation of each other's views (to find the "middle way between the two ways"[89]). They emphasized that "the Macedonian authorities should remove different implementations among people living in Macedonia"[90] but as well that "the Albanians should not have immoderate demands".[91] Foreign Minister İsmail Cem strongly criticized, as well, the international community for conditioning economic aid to Macedonia.[92]

Finally, Turkish leaders expressed their particular concern over the fate of the Turkish minority, squeezed between the Albanians fighters and the Macedonian army. As soon as the end of March 2001, the leaders of the Turkish community in Macedonia (and in Kosovo) were received by President Sezer and Prime Minister Ecevit.[93] The Turkish press also stressed this 'uncomfortable' position of the Turkish community.[94] Houses and shops owned by Turks were actually attacked in Bitola (Manastir) at the beginning of May.[95] As was the case for the Turks in Kosovo, Turkish leaders demand the participation of the Turkish community in political dialogue and the definition of a

[87] See the various declarations of İsmail Cem, *Cumhuriyet*, May 10, 2001; Anadolu Ajansi, March 8, 2001.
[88] *Türkiye*, June 28, 2001; *Hürriyet*, June 29, 2001.
[89] Minister of Foreign Affairs, İsmail Cem, Anadolu Ajansi, July 19, 2001.
[90] Defence Minister of Defence, S. Çakmakoğlu, *Türkiye*, June 28, 2001.
[91] Minister of Foreign Affairs, İsmail Cem, Anadolu Ajansi, July 19, 2001.
[92] *Cumhuriyet*, July 20, 2001; Anadolu Ajansi, July 19, 2001.
[93] *Cumhuriyet*, March 28, 2001.
[94] See, for example, "Makedon Türkleri diken üstünde" (Macedonian Turks on needles), *Milliyet*, June 21, 2001.

status for them in the new constitution.[96] Several times the 1974 constitution has been mentioned as a reference base for negotiations.[97] Macedonian authorities tend to subscribe to this request, which allows them to break the unity of the Albanian demands and prevent the Macedonia from becoming a bi-polar Albanian-Macedonian state.[98] "Citizens of Turkish origin in Macedonia are faithful citizens of Macedonia and I believe that their participation in the political dialogue will positively affect the dialogue" declared Ilinka Mitreva, Minister of Foreign Affairs.[99] The Macedonian Prime Minister, Ljubco Georgievski, even pressed Turkish authorities to bring this issue into the agenda in his meetings with US and E.U. officials. Indeed, Western officials fear that the participation of Macedonian ethnic Turks in the political dialogue might incite other groups to come up with similar claims. The Turks were finally marginalized in the first round of negotiations (that ended with the August 13 agreement), increasing frustration within the community. A poll conducted at the end of July shows that 50% of the Turks in Macedonia are planning to boycott elections.[100]

Finally, 150 Turkish troops (out of a total of 4500) are participating in the NATO force in charge of collecting arms from Albanian militants (operation "Essential Harvest"). These troops were transferred from Bosnia-Herzegovina. As NATO is accused of having sided with the militants, anti-NATO feeling is spreading in the country and the deployment of this force met with some protests, and some barricades were even raised to obstruct the passage of NATO's (and other international missions') vehicles. However, the protesters let the Turkish troops pass, on the grounds that "Turkey is [our] ally and the only NATO country to recognize Macedonia's independence with her constitutional name".[101]

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[95] See the editorial of Sami Kohen in *Milliyet*, June 21, 2001.
[96] *Cumhuriyet*, July 20, 2001; *Zaman*, July 20, 2001; Anadolu Ajansi, July 19, 2001; *Turkish Probe*, n°444, July 12, 2001.
[97] See the declaration of İsmail Cem, *Zaman*, July 20, 2001; the declarations of President Sezer, Anadolu Ajansi, March 21, 2001.
[98] The case is actually similar in Kosovo and at the time of the former Yugoslavia, Belgrad had, for this purpose, granted a lot of cultural rights to the Turks (notably publications). For details of these publications, see C.N.O. Bartlett, "The Turkish Minority in Yugoslavia", *Bradford Studies on Yugoslavia*, n°3, 1980).
[99] Anadolu Ajansi, July 19, 2001.
[100] "Macedonian Disappointments and Fears", *RFE/RL Balkan Report*, Vol. 5, n°60, 24 August 2001.
[101] *Türkiye*, August 29, 2001; MILS, August 29, 2001.

S. Gangloff, "Turkey and Macedonia", *Turkish Review of Balkan Studies*, n°6, 2001, pp. 37-56.

Conclusion: The self-limitation of Turkish diplomacy in the Balkans

Turkey seems to have hesitated to act unilaterally towards this Republic whose name, if not identity, was contested. In the years 1992-1994, the recognition of the independence of the Republic and the establishment of diplomatic relations was estimated to be the most Turkey could do in such an international and regional context. It acted as much as it could within international organizations to which it belongs, but avoided tightening bilateral links on sensitive (political or strategic) issues. Turkish leaders feared accusations of trying to stir up trouble in the area (or even of trying to restore a Turkish domination over the Balkans) if they sided too much with the "contested state". In fact, Turkish leaders waited for the United States to create a precedent, and only after the Washington had done so did they sign military agreement with Skopje (April and May 1995).

This "self-restrained" Turkish diplomacy in the Balkans—as Şule Kut put it[102]—illustrates a consciousness among Turkish diplomats of the emotional barriers they are confronted with and the necessity to act in a cautious way when "litigious cases" are involved (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Kosovo). Just an example: an article in the Serbian daily *Vecernje Novosti*, in June 1994 denounced the "the increasingly aggressive manner with which Turkey has been approaching the FYROM, using its difficult economic position" and reached the conclusion that "Turkey's objective is to recover areas in the southern part of the Balkans which the Ottoman empire lost".[103]

Yet, this prudence does not explain or justify the incoherencies of the Turkish diplomacy toward this country, and notably the late signing and implementation of economic cooperation instruments, whereas exchanges are the best way to strengthen, in the long term, a political partnership.

[102] Şule Kut, "Turkey in the Post-Communist Balkans: Between Activism and Self Restraint", *Turkish Review of Balkan Studies*, n°3, 1996/97, pp. 39-45.
[103] Tanjug, June 28, 1994 translated by BBC Monitoring Summary of World Broadcasts, June 30, 1994.

However, the self-proclaimed lawyer of Macedonia, as Turkey was called by Greek press,[104] gained substantial credit in Macedonia, among political leaders as well as among the population, for its early and constant support of the independence and the recognition of the country under its constitutional name. This support to a fragile state in conflict with all of its neighbors was widely appreciated in Macedonia. It even radically modified the traditional image of the Turk/Ottoman among Macedonians. During its trip to Turkey, the Macedonian Defense Ministry praised for example, the "historical" (?) relations between the two countries.[105] President Gliogorov evoked the "common historical and cultural relations" during the joint-press hold with President Demirel in April 1999.[106]

[104] *Nova Makedonija* reporting from Athens / MIC, July 17, 1995.
[105] *Hürriyet*, October 15, 1996.
[106] Anadolu Ajansi, April 12, 1999.