



## **Weekly Briefing**

**North Macedonia external relations briefing:  
Macedonian foreign policy in convergence with the EU and  
divergence with its people  
Gjorgjioska Marija Adela**



## **Macedonian foreign policy in convergence with the EU and divergence with its people**

### **Summary**

*Throughout 2022, the foreign policy decisions, statements and actions taken by Macedonian officials and government representatives, have been a replica of the positions taken by NATO and the EU on a variety of important geopolitical developments. The situation remained unchanged in the early autumn months. This state of affairs represented a continuation of the foreign policy from previous years, when the Euro-Atlantic narrative on regional and global events was uncritically adopted and supported by the country's establishment. In response to the conflict in Ukraine several actions were taken which not only demonstrated the subservience of the political elites, but also undermined the country's economic and security interests, and increased its dependency especially in the energy sector. This foreign policy line in turn contributed to the widening of the large rift between the government and the population, which increasingly saw itself as a victim of the policies it doesn't support.*

Throughout the early autumn period, Macedonian officials continued to replicate the Euro-Atlantic narrative on global and regional affairs and to take corresponding actions. This was evident in the foreign policy decisions, statements and actions espoused by the President, the Prime Minister, as well as the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the Defence Minister. It was also visible on the multilateral level, most notably in the country's voting records on several UN Resolutions.

On September 9th, President Pendarovski met with General Wesley Clark, former commander of NATO's Supreme Allied Command for Europe. During the meeting, Pendarovski reaffirmed his support for Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. He also pointed out that "North Macedonia, as a member of NATO, will continue to provide military, humanitarian and diplomatic assistance within the limits of its possibilities, with the ultimate goal of putting

an end to the military aggression.”<sup>1</sup> On the following day, advisers to President Pendarovski met with the Ukrainian MP Kira Rudik. The advisers “reaffirmed the position that the Republic of North Macedonia fully and unequivocally supports the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine within its borders until 2014.”<sup>2</sup> Several weeks later Pendarovski signed a joint statement by the Presidents of Central and Eastern European NATO Member States, which condemned Russia’s actions in Ukraine, and reiterated their support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. In the statement, the Presidents also supported Ukraine’s NATO accession and called for all Allies to substantially increase their military aid to Ukraine.<sup>3</sup> The actions taken by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its diplomatic representatives followed the President’s line in relation to the developments in Ukraine. On November 5th, the Ambassador to NATO, Dane Taleski, paid a working visit to Ukraine, as part of a group of ten Ambassadors from member states of the Alliance. As reported by the Ministry “the purpose of the visit was to demonstrate staunch support to Ukraine in dealing with the challenges that the Russian military aggression has brought on the country.”<sup>4</sup> The staunch support towards Ukraine was also demonstrated in the several donations of military equipment to the country by the Ministry of Defence. In July an unspecified number of Soviet-era tanks were donated to Ukraine.<sup>5</sup> In August, it was reported that the country has donated its four Sukhoi Su-25 ground attack jets to Ukraine.<sup>6</sup> Prime Minister Kovacevski reiterated his Government’s support for Ukraine in his

---

<sup>1</sup> Meeting with General Wesley Clark, former commander of NATO’s Supreme Allied Command for Europe, published on 09.09.2022, available at

<https://pretsedatel.mk/en/meeting-with-general-wesley-clark-former-commander-of-natos-supreme-allied-command-for-europe/> accessed on 30.10.2022

<sup>2</sup> Advisers to President Pendarovski meet with the Ukrainian MP Kira Rudik, published on 10.09.2022, available at

<https://pretsedatel.mk/en/advisers-to-president-pendarovski-meet-with-the-ukrainian-mp-kira-rudik/> accessed on 30.10.2022

<sup>3</sup> Joint statement of Presidents of Central and Eastern European NATO Member States on Russian attempts to illegally annex Ukrainian territories, published on 02.10.2022, available at

[https://pretsedatel.mk/en/izjava\\_02102022-2/](https://pretsedatel.mk/en/izjava_02102022-2/) accessed on 30.10.2022

<sup>4</sup> North Macedonia Ambassador to NATO, Dane Taleski, Pays Working Visit to Ukraine,

<https://mfa.gov.mk/en/page/13/post/3156/press-release>, published on 05.11.2022, accessed on 07.11.2022

<sup>5</sup> North Macedonia donates tanks to Ukraine as it modernizes own military, published on 29.07.2022, available at

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/nmacedonia-donates-tanks-ukraine-it-modernises-own-military-2022-07-29/> accessed on 30.10.2022

<sup>6</sup> North Macedonia Maintains Silence Over Jet Donation to Ukraine, published on 04.08.2022, available at

address at the UN General Assembly Speech on the 24th of September. He said that his country has joined global efforts responding to the war in Ukraine. He called on the Russian Federation to put an immediate end to the aggression and withdraw its troops from Ukraine. The developments in Ukraine pushed numerous other global conflicts to the background, he continued, noting that terrorism, hybrid threat and fake news continue to constitute a serious threat to humanity.<sup>7</sup> On the multilateral level, the same position was upheld. Macedonia voted against a draft resolution on combating the glorification of Nazism proposed by the Russian Federation at the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. Only two countries voted against this resolution in 2021 (USA and Ukraine), however that number increased to 52 in the November 2022 vote. The Macedonian vote changed from abstaining in 2021 to a vote against in 2022, and in doing so followed the vote of the members of the EU and the other candidates for EU membership from the Balkan region, with the exception of Serbia, which voted abstained.<sup>8</sup>

This alignment of the country's external policy with the EU bloc was lauded in the 2022 progress report for North Macedonia published by the European Commission. The report notes that "North Macedonia has made very good progress by fully aligning with the EU common foreign and security policy, following Russia's aggression against Ukraine. By doing so, North Macedonia has shown it can be a reliable partner."<sup>9</sup>

Although the majority of political actors from the country's establishment demonstrate an alignment with the EU's and NATO positions on foreign relations, this is not a unanimously supported view. In particular, the political party "Levica" demonstrates a consistent divergence with the official foreign policy actions adopted on the state level. They have criticized the

---

<https://balkaninsight.com/2022/08/04/north-macedonia-maintains-silence-over-jet-donation-to-ukraine/> accessed on 01.09.2022

<sup>7</sup> Republic of North Macedonia, H.E. Mr. Dimitar Kovachevski, Prime Minister, 24 September 2022, speech at the UN General Assembly, available at <https://gadebate.un.org/en/77/republic-north-macedonia> accessed on 25.09.2022

<sup>8</sup> Third Committee Approves Eight Draft Resolutions, including Texts on Indigenous Peoples' Rights, Privacy in Digital Age, Condemning Glorification Of Nazism, published on 04.11.2022, available at <https://press.un.org/en/2022/gashc4365.doc.htm> accessed on 07.11.2022

<sup>9</sup>EC Enlargement Progress Report for 2022, published on 13.10.2022, available at [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/north-macedonia-report-2022\\_en](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/north-macedonia-report-2022_en) accessed on 31.10.2022

support provided for Ukraine, and urged for a neutral position in relation to the war in Ukraine, noting geopolitical, economic and security concerns as the reason for their opposition. They also condemned the UN vote against the resolution on the glorification of Nazism. “The current Governing elite, in the spirit of its vassal status, abandoning its national interests, has obediently solidarized with its superiors and has voted against the UN resolution that calls for a fight against the contemporary forms of fascism and Nazism”.<sup>10</sup> Several days earlier the political party sent an Open Letter to the European Commission, urging the representatives of its highest institutions to express their position on the opening of Bulgarian cultural clubs on the territory of Macedonia that carry the names of fascist and Nazi collaborators from the Second World War. “Two citizen associations orchestrated by the Bulgarian state have been registered and began to operate in Macedonia. Both of them use symbols and hold activities that glorify Nazism and fascism and make an attempt to grossly revise history by denying the anti-fascist history of the Republic of Macedonia,” the letter informs. It further adds: “Your silence as well as the statements of representatives of the institutions of the Union, who in the past period actively participate, observe and evaluate the relations between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia, leave the impression that the European Union encourages this trend of promotion and glorification of Nazi-fascists ideologies and their modern derivatives.”<sup>11</sup> Finally it calls on the EU officials to publicly condemn Bulgaria’s actions of promoting and supporting associations that glorify Nazism, anti-Semitism, fascism and anti-Macedonian ideology. This however is unlikely to happen. What is more likely to ensue is that the EU will continue endorsing Bulgaria's use of the EU enlargement process as an instrument of its assimilationist policies towards Macedonia. Based on the French proposal, the EU has endorsed the importing of a bilateral historical dispute into the EU accession negotiating framework for Macedonia, thereby giving Bulgaria a free hand in dictating the terms of the country’s progress towards the EU, conditioning any progress on their demands, which deny its history, language and right to self-determination.

Besides the fading promise of EU membership there is hardly anything which the country has gained from blindly following the EU’s foreign policy in relation to Ukraine and Bulgaria.

---

<sup>10</sup> [https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=696917808457953&id=100044192211463](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=696917808457953&id=100044192211463)

<sup>11</sup> The Left: The EU should condemn the promotion of associations that glorify Nazi collaborators, published on 02.11.2022, available at

<https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/en/levica-eu-da-go-osudi-promoviranjeto-zdruzhenija-koi-glorificiraat-nacistichki-sorabotnici/> accessed on 07.11.2022

The actions taken in relation to the conflict in Ukraine have not only demonstrated the subservience of the political elites, but have also undermined the country's economic and security interests, and increased its energy vulnerability and dependency. Macedonia, a country completely dependent on Russian gas for its supply, now faces an uncertain winter. The country is yet to start with the construction of the interconnection gas pipeline with Greece in order to diversify its sources of gas. The interconnection with Greece however will only provide access to the far more expensive liquified natural gas, increasing the country's dependency on both Greece and the United States, thus cementing its status of a vassal state.