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Nation-building Under the Societal Security Dilemma: the Case of Macedonia

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Abstract: In 2009, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia announced the Skopje 2014 Project, a project that envisioned an urban reconstruction of the city through a series of monuments of historical and religious figures, as well as various public buildings resembling neo-classical, or neo-baroque style. The Project was the culmination of a wider nation-building project initiated several years earlier that became known as “antiquisation” that sought to reconstruct and redefine Macedonian national identity, in which the uppermost importance was given to the figure of Alexander the Great. The nation-building project stressed a linear continuity of Macedonian national identity from antiquity to the present thereby emphasizing the nation’s unceasing existence and affirmation throughout the centuries. But what were the underlying causes that shaped the nation-building project? How have historical, political and other factors influenced the nation-building project in Macedonia? And why was ancient Macedonia chosen as the narrative around which the nation-building project could take place? These are the questions that the present article will attempt to answer. The aim of this article is to examine the complex interplay between security policy and nation-building, in the Macedonian context. More specifically, it will argue that the current nation-building project in Macedonia has been developed as a response to internal and external perceived identity threats. Namely, ever since declaring independence the Republic of Macedonia has been facing a double societal security dilemma – an external, stemming from the country’s immediate neighbors who constantly dispute the existence of a distinct Macedonian national identity, and an internal reflected in the constant challenges of the character of the State, by the country’s ethnic Albanian community. In response, the nation-building project sought to address these concerns.

Keywords: Macedonia, security dilemma, Skopje 2014, antiquisation, nation-building, national myths

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Introduction

“I am a Macedonian, I have a Macedonian’s consciousness, and so I have my own Macedonian view of the past, present and future of my country and of all the South Slavs”

Krste Petkov Misirkov

In 2009, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia announced the Skopje 2014 Project, a Project that envisioned an urban reconstruction of the city through a series of monuments of historical and religious figures, as well as various public buildings resembling neo-classical, or neo-baroque style.¹ The Project was the culmination of a wider nation-building project initiated several years earlier that became known as “antiquisation” that sought to reconstruct and redefine Macedonian national identity, in which the central and uppermost importance was given to Ancient Macedonia, and the figure of Alexander the Great. The nation-building project stressed a linear continuity of Macedonian national identity from antiquity to the present thereby emphasizing the nation’s unceasing existence and affirmation throughout the centuries. The Project, in the words of Valentina Bozinovska chairwoman of the state commission for relations with religious communities, is “a statement of all that we have had from the ancient period until today. For the first time we have a chance to create a tangible manifestation of Macedonian identity. [...] Civilization practically started here.”² But what were the underlying causes that shaped the nation-building project? How have historical, political and other factors influenced the nation-building project in Macedonia? And why was Ancient Macedonia chosen as the narrative around which the nation-building project could take place? These are the questions that the present article will attempt to answer.

The aim of this article is to examine the complex interplay between security policy and nation-building, in the Macedonian context, or rather how societal security concerns impact the nation-building project. More specifically, it will argue that the nation-building project in Macedonia has been shaped as a response to internal and external perceived identity threats. According to Waever, to understand the logic of societal security it is necessary to study the “process whereby a group comes to perceive its identity as threatened, when it starts to act in a security mode on this basis and what behavior this triggers.”³ Accordingly, this article will explore the process whereby Macedonians came to perceive their identity as threatened, when they started to act in security mode, as well as the reactions these perceived identity threats triggered. Namely, immediately after declaring independence the Republic of Macedonia came into permanent conflict with all of its immediate neighbors. Whereas, all of them recognized the new State, as an entity, each denied a segment in which the Macedonian nation was defined. In addition, internally, the ethnic Macedonian character of the new Republic was constantly challenged by Macedonia’s ethnic Albanian population. These perceived identity threats triggered a

1 Kubiena 2012, 87.

2 Grozdanovska 2010, 2.

3 Waever, Buzan, and Kelstrup 1993, 23.

double societal security dilemma – an external, stemming from the country’s immediate neighbors who constantly dispute the existence of a distinct Macedonian national identity, and an internal reflected in the constant challenges of the ethnic Macedonian character of the State, by the country’s ethnic Albanian community. In response, the nation-building project sought to address these concerns.

Before examining the specificities of the Macedonian case, it is necessary to introduce the theoretical framework that underpins the concepts used in this article.

Theoretical Framework

In an attempt to construct a concept in which issues such as nationalism and ethnic conflict could be fully addressed within the framework of security studies, scholars of security tried “to revise the basic traditional conception of security so that it could still say the old things but also include the new things in their own right”⁴ The dangerous security dynamic that followed the disintegration of large multi-national States and the array of ethnic conflicts that sprang out from the dissolution of Yugoslavia challenged the applicability of existing concepts in explaining security in the new global political order. The predominant state-centrism of the existing concepts and their focus on the military aspects of security threats failed to take into account the various non-military, identity based concerns that emerged in the post-Cold War transformed world. One school that attempted to overcome these inabilities is the Copenhagen School of security.

The Copenhagen School proposed re-conceptualization and stretching of the concept of security in order to encompass a much broader range of concerns and issues. This broadening of the concept emphasized the crucial link between security and identity. In this, the Copenhagen School highlighted the extent to which post-Cold War security “has been bound up with perceived threats to the identity of discrete political communities, and the consequent search by such communities for ways of preserving and expressing their identity”⁵ For that purpose, they introduced the concept of “societal security” which enables the security analysis to look at “society” as a referent object of security alongside “the state”, in which identity based threats and insecurities are of primary concern. For, as Buzan and Waever argue “survival for a society is a question of identity, because this is the way society talks about existential threats: if this happens, we will no longer be able to live as ‘us’”⁶ Thus, the key notion in the Copenhagen School’s re-conceptualization is survival. While state security refers to threats to state sovereignty – the State will not survive as a State if it loses its sovereignty, societal security refers to threats to identity – the society will not survive as society if it loses its identity.⁷

4 Buzan and Wæver 1997, 242.

5 Aggestam and Hyde-Price 2000, 6.

6 Waever, Buzan, and Kelstrup 1993, 25.

7 *Ibid.*, 25–26.

According to the Copenhagen School, the most important identity communities (societies) in modern times are ethnic groups and nations. What characterizes every identity community is that its members “afford it a claim to survival which is ultimately self-referential. Since it is bound up with their identity, they value the community’s preservation as an end in itself, rather than just as a means to achieving other ends”.⁸ Thus, as Buzan concludes, the logic of societal security is “always ultimately about identity”.⁹

Taking this into account, Waever defines societal security as “the ability of a society to persist in its essential character under changing conditions and possible or actual threats. More specifically, it is about the sustainability, within acceptable conditions for evolution of traditional patterns of language, culture, association and religious and national identity and custom”.¹⁰ According to Roe, threats to societal security exist when a society believes that its “we” identity is being put in danger, whether this is objectively the case or not.¹¹ The perception of threat to the identity depends on whether the particular action is defined as a part of the societal security requirement.¹²

Threats to identity, however, can take many forms. They can range from direct and blatant denial of the group’s identity, as in the case of Greece’s and Bulgaria’s denials of Macedonian national identity, or more indirect denials through the denial of legitimacy, as in the cases with Serbia and Albania, and Macedonia’s domestic ethnic Albanian population. The reaction of societies to these perceived identity threats, how they choose to defend their identity is crucial point in the study of the societal security dilemma.

The concept of the societal security dilemma is a reformulation of the traditional security dilemma concept which allowed for an “explicit treatment of identity concerns in their own right”¹³. The concept of security dilemma was first introduced by John Herz and Herbert Butterfield in an attempt to explain the Cold War setting “where groups live alongside each other without being organized into a higher unity, has appeared the so-called security dilemma”.¹⁴ According to them, uncertainty, misunderstanding, and fear of the other’s intentions on both sides, can lead them to an unintentional conflict. And exactly this, according to Butterfield is the paradox or the “tragedy” of the security dilemma – what one does to enhance one’s own security causes reactions that, in the end, can leave one less secure”.¹⁵

8 Theiler 2003, 251.

9 Waever, Buzan, and Kelstrup 1993, 122.

10 *Ibid.*, 1993, 23.

11 Roe 2005, 48.

12 Roe 1999, 196.

13 Roe 2005, 55.

14 Herz 1950, 157.

15 Posen 1993, 28.

The first author to utilize the concept of the security dilemma on inter-ethnic conflict was Barry Posen who furthered the application of the concept of security dilemma to incorporate the intra-state level, providing an explanation for the outbreak of violence between neighboring groups. He argues that security dilemmas occur within states in the situation “when one group of people suddenly find themselves newly responsible for their own security”.¹⁶ This usually occurs after the collapse of large multi-ethnic states, or empires. However, Posen’s approach focuses too heavily on structural factors such as the nature of the international system, while neglecting the various cultural aspects which are crucial for the maintenance of a group’s collective identity. One author that does take into account these factors is Stuart Kaufman who points out that (societal) security dilemmas at the intra-state level invariably bring with them specific, identity-centered security concerns, in particular threats to ethnic symbols, that are not as salient in the inter-state context.¹⁷ According to him, the security dilemma is one of three required elements for ethnic war.¹⁸ He maintains however, that in order for the security dilemma to be successful, mutual fears of extinction must exist.¹⁹ Kaufman suggests that a number of necessary conditions must exist in order to precipitate fear within societal groups: first, negative group stereotypes; second, threatened ethnic symbols (flags, statues); third, a threatened demographic situation; and fourth, a history of ethnic domination (the group’s past victimisation).²⁰ At least three out of these four conditions, the history of ethnic domination excluded, exist in the Macedonian case.

The most significant contribution to the concept of the societal security dilemma has been Paul Roe’s approach, which attempts to refocus the security dilemma from the “fundamental compatibility of “goals” to the fundamental compatibility of “security requirements”.”²¹ In doing so, Roe refocused the concept on “what” is to be secured and “how” to secure it. Whereas the traditional concept’s predominant state-centrism focused on the military sector of security, threats to societal identity are more often than not, of non-military nature. Thus, the defense of societal identity often calls for non-military means.²²

When the society is threatened in terms of its identity, it tries to protect itself by strengthening its identity, as Waever suggests “for threatened societies, one obvious line of defensive response is to strengthen societal identity. This can be done by using cultural means to reinforce societal cohesion and distinctiveness and to ensure that the society

16 *Ibid.*, 27

17 Roe 2005, 68–69.

18 Kaufman 1996, 149–72.

19 *Ibid.*, 157

20 Roe 2005, 68–69

21 *Ibid.*, 13.

22 *Ibid.*, 56–59.

reproduces itself”²³ The defense of “culture with culture”, as Roe argues may often manifest in terms of what John Hutchinson calls cultural nationalism. Hutchinson maintains that “cultural nationalism is designed to generate a strong feeling of self identification. It emphasizes various commonalities such as language, religion and history, and downplays other ties that might detract from its unity”²⁴ As such, cultural nationalism is designed to generate a strong feeling of self-identification and distinctiveness when societal identity has been threatened.

Cultural nationalism often takes the form of reconstituting traditions and history and reconstruction of societal identity to address these perceived identity threats. Or, as Roe asserts: “in defending against perceived threats, societal identity is (re)constructed and thus also strengthened”²⁵ In that sense, in the defense of identity, cultural nationalism recurses to the society’s own culture, replete with its own indigenous national myths and symbols. Indeed, as Waever claims: “it offers a particularly attractive mode in times of crises and depression since the link to a glorious past... donates immediate relief, pride and shield against shame”²⁶ This is because “the identity of a people... is reflected and concentrated in what has been created in the mind – in what is known as ‘culture’. If this identity is threatened with extinction, cultural life grows correspondingly more intense, more important, until cultural life itself becomes the living value around which all people rally.”²⁷ As a consequence, Waever concludes, “culture becomes security policy”²⁸

Societies may try to strengthen group identity through nation-building, through cultural- and/or ethnic-nationalist projects, which are aimed at maintaining the group’s distinctiveness, authenticity and self-identification. It is such projects that are reflections of the societal security dilemma. Macedonia’s “antiquisation” project is one such example. In defending their identity, however, groups can trigger threat perceptions in others, and as a consequence ensue in an escalatory action–reaction dynamic, which if not adequately addressed through existing legal and political means could lead to the outbreak of violence. For the societal security dilemma, the action–reaction process can be conceived in terms of escalating nationalisms.

Applying the concept of societal security dilemma to the Macedonian case is not unproblematic. In the following sections I will firstly provide a detailed examination of the process whereby Macedonian national identity came to be perceived as threatened, from both within (by the domestic ethnic Albanian population) and from without (by Macedonia’s immediate neighbors), which triggered the societal security dilemma and set

23 Waever, Buzan, and Kelstrup 1993, 191.

24 Hutchinson and Smith 1994, 123.

25 Roe 1999, 195.

26 Waever, Buzan, and Kelstrup 1993, 21.

27 Verdery 1991, 1.

28 Waever, Buzan, and Kelstrup 1993, 24–25.

off the action-reaction dynamic. Then by looking at the “antiquisation” project and the Skopje 2014, as its culmination, I will argue that the ongoing nation-building project in Macedonia has been developed as a reaction to these perceived identity threats. Finally, following the logic of the societal security dilemma, in the final section, I will conclude my argument, briefly explore the reactions to the Macedonian “antiquisation” project, and discuss how the Macedonian case advances the theoretical debates.

Macedonia’s External Dynamic

At the beginning of Yugoslavia’s turmoil and eventual disintegration, Macedonia played minor role. Being heavily dependent on the Federation for security, because of its high conflict potential and hostile regional environment, the dire economic situation as the poorest Republic in the federation, as well as the lack of independent statehood tradition, Macedonia’s independence came much more out of necessity, than of an intended state-building policy.²⁹ The necessity came from the fact that staying in the “revised Yugoslavia” without Slovenia and Croatia would lead to Serbian domination, or “Serboslavia”.³⁰

Thus, on the 8th of September 1991, the Republic of Macedonia declared its independence, after a successful referendum, and “peacefully, legally and democratically”³¹ dissociated itself from the Yugoslav Federation. The Preamble of the new Constitution, now established the Republic of Macedonia as “a sovereign and independent state, as well as a civil and a democratic one”.³² Immediately after coming into being, the new state began its struggle to gain international recognition under its constitutional name. However, in the process “the identity of this state, its name, symbols, language and history, emerged as one of the most contentious issues in the Balkans”.³³ Namely, Bulgaria, while being the first country to recognize the Macedonian state, it nevertheless denied the existence of a separate and distinct Macedonian nation and language; Greece on the other hand, recognizes the existence of a separate Slavic nation and State, however claims that a Slavic people had misappropriated the name of Macedonia, a name that “was, is and always will be Greek”³⁴; Serbia while it does not dispute the existence of a distinct Macedonian nation and language, it denies the existence of an autocephalous Macedonian Orthodox Church; and finally, Albania while not laying any direct claims towards Macedonia, it maintains that the State does not belong exclusively to the ethnic Macedonians.³⁵ These

29 Vankovska 2000, 10–11.

30 *Ibid.*, 11.

31 Mircev 2001, 201.

32 Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia “*The Preamble*”, 1991 For the full version of The Preamble and the Constitution visit: <http://www.sobranie.mk/en/default-EN.asp>

33 Dreyzov 2001, 47.

34 Danforth 1995, 21.

35 Dreyzov 2001,15–27

issues became aspects of what James Pettifer calls the “New Macedonian Question”³⁶, referring to the historical “Macedonian Question”.

The Macedonian Question—that is, “the issue of who would control the people and the territory of Macedonia” – has dominated Balkan politics and history for over a hundred years.³⁷ It appeared on the political and historical scene of the Balkans in the late nineteenth century, when Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria contended for “the largest remaining, nationally undetermined portion of the Ottoman Empire in Europe”³⁸ With the establishment of the People’s Republic of Macedonia after the Second World War, as one of Yugoslavia’s constituent Republics many of the issues regarding the Macedonian Question were temporarily frozen; it was even considered that the Macedonian Question has finally been resolved.³⁹ However, with the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the insecurities regarding Macedonian national identity have been revived.

Whereas this section will not look in full detail the position of each country, in what follows I provide a general survey of each position in regards to Macedonian national identity.

Bulgaria

Bulgaria was the first country to officially recognize the independence of the Macedonian republic; however, from the outset it was made clear that Bulgaria does not recognize the Macedonian nation, as a separate nation, distinct from the Bulgarian. Although the issue of the nation was not explicitly mentioned in the official recognition, it was raised indirectly, through the issue of language.⁴⁰ Sharing most of the characteristics that distinguishes the Bulgarian language from the other Slavic languages prompted the view, as Poulton argues, that Macedonian is nothing else than a Bulgarian dialect.⁴¹ As a result, Bulgaria refused to employ interpreters in official dealings with Macedonia, claiming that there was no need for them – a claim that warranted a fierce opposition by Macedonians.⁴² Since 1999, the language issue has taken a new turn, as the political leaders of both states signed a joint declaration employing a practical formula “Bulgarian language according to the Bulgarian Constitution, Macedonian language according to the Macedonian Constitution”, which enabled the drafting of official documents in both Bulgarian and Macedonian, without

36 Pettifer 2001, 15.

37 Danforth 1995, 19.

38 International Crisis Group 2001, 11.

39 Engstrom 2002, 5.

40 *Ibid.*, 7.

41 Cited in *Ibid.*, 9.

42 Roudometof 2002, 41.

Bulgaria having to recognize the existence of a separate Macedonian language, and implicitly, a nation.⁴³

Historically, Bulgaria has been the country most closely occupied with the Macedonian Question. The “Greater Bulgaria” that was created with the San Stefano Treaty in 1878 included most of geographical Macedonia. The revision of the San Stefano Treaty at the Congress of Berlin, excluded Macedonia from the territory of the Bulgarian State, and since then both the Bulgarian State and its intelligentsia have repeatedly asserted claims on Macedonian territory.⁴⁴ Since independence however, although Bulgaria does not make any official claims on Macedonian territory, it has assumed the role of “big brother” with explicit interest in the political development of Macedonia, as it still considers Macedonia a significant part of Bulgarian national history.⁴⁵ Furthermore, Bulgaria has continuously exerted an overt cultural pressure on Macedonians arguing that “Macedonia and Bulgaria have a shared history that cannot be separated from each other.”⁴⁶ In accordance with this position, Bulgaria has consistently claimed the Macedonian historical figures as Bulgarian heroes.⁴⁷

Consequently, as Kyril Drezov sums up the official Bulgarian position on the Macedonian Question, “Bulgarians either deny the contemporary reality of a Macedonian nation and language, or – when they acknowledge it – ascribe it entirely to Serbian, Comintern and Titoist propaganda.”⁴⁸

Serbia

In the early stages of the Yugoslav crisis, which would later bring about the disintegration of the Federation, Macedonia was not vocal about independence, as was the case with Slovenia and Croatia. Thus, when Macedonia declared independence, this was met with surprise in Serbia, and was considered as a move of disloyalty.⁴⁹

Although, Serbia did not react militarily, its position on Macedonia’s independence was unclear as it neither accepted, nor clearly opposed the move. It did however express its desire to win back Macedonia. In that sense, Serbia relied on its Serbian minority in Macedonia, who with support from Belgrade organized a referendum on joining the Yugoslav Federal Republic.⁵⁰ Similarly, as Petiffer and Dobrkovic show, Serbian nationalists were very

43 Engstrom 2002, 5–6.

44 Roudometof 2002, 39.

45 Engstrom 2002, 6.

46 *Ibid.*, 8

47 *Ibid.*

48 Drezov 2001, 51

49 Dobrkovic 2001, 84.

50 *Ibid.*

much opposed to Macedonia's independence and claimed historical rights of Serbia over Macedonia's territory. In an attempt to undermine Macedonia's independence, their position was that "only Serbs, Greeks and Bulgarians live in Macedonia".⁵¹ This position was similar to the position of Serbian academics, which Dreyzov sums up "that throughout the ages the Macedonian Slavs were devoid of any particular ethnic characteristics, and always represented a part of "une masse flottant" that stretched between "true" Serbs and "true" Bulgarians".⁵² In that sense, until the official recognition of Macedonia in 1996, the borders between Serbia and Macedonia were seen as merely administrative borders, rather than as international ones.⁵³

Since then, although Serbia officially recognizes both the Macedonian state and the Macedonian nation, it denies the existence of an autocephalous Macedonian Orthodox Church, which is considered an integral part in the Macedonian national self-identification. While this dispute is not seen as a major issue, it is perceived as an implicit negation of an important segment of Macedonian national identity, which in the prevailing internal and external surroundings serves to intensify the Macedonian societal security concerns.

Greece

Out of all of Macedonia's neighbors, the relationship with the Republic of Greece was by far the most complex. Unlike Serbia and Bulgaria, Greece's opposition to Macedonia was much more explicit and direct, and while Greece does not deny the existence of a distinct Slavic nation in Macedonia, and recognizes the independence of the State, the dispute is around the application of the term "Macedonia" as its name. The Greek official position was that there is only one "Macedonia" – Greek Macedonia and no region in the Balkans, except the Greek province of Macedonia can be associated or identified with the ancient kingdom of Macedonia and no people, except Greeks, are entitled to call themselves Macedonians, either as a cultural-ethnic or a geographic-regional denomination.⁵⁴

In the first years of Macedonia's independence, Greece exerted serious political and economic pressure on the new Republic. In that sense, using diplomatic pressures, Greece managed to strain Macedonia's efforts to gain international recognition under its constitutional name. This was most expressly stated in Macedonia's attempts to join the European Community in 1991, when at the insistence of Greece, the EC stated that it would not recognize the Republic of Macedonia until it guaranteed that "it had no territorial claims against any neighboring state...including the use of a name which implied territorial claims".⁵⁵ In addition, in June 1992 the EC adopted the Lisbon

51 Rakipi 2006, 153.

52 Dreyzov 2001, 53

53 Rakipi 2006, 153.

54 Dimova 2010, 2.

55 Danforth 1995, 21.

Declaration in which it stated that “The European Council expresses its readiness to recognize the country within its existing borders under a name which does not include the term Macedonia.”⁵⁶ Similarly, Macedonia’s efforts for admission into the UN under its constitutional name, in 1993, were met with fierce opposition by Greece. Accordingly, under strong political and diplomatic pressure the UN Security Council recommended admission of Macedonia with its Resolution 817 from April 1993, according to which the Republic would be admitted to the UN under the temporary provisional name “the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.”⁵⁷ In addition, Greece enforced two economic embargos towards Macedonia (in 1992 and 1994) arguing that they had to do it because the neighboring country continuously refused to change its name and constitution.⁵⁸

These political and economic pressures seriously worsened the relations between the two countries, and under international mediation a bilateral agreement which ended the Greek embargo was reached in the form of an Interim Accord. With the agreement, the bilateral relations between the two countries were clearly defined and normalized on every level.

In 2008, however, the relationship between the two countries took a new turn, when at the NATO summit in Bucharest, Macedonia applied for membership, and Greece, as a member state of NATO decided to veto Macedonia’s admission. At the summit, it was not disputed that Macedonia had fulfilled the criteria for NATO membership, and Macedonia was commended for “its commitment to NATO values and Alliance operations.”⁵⁹ Nevertheless, it was stated that the negotiations for the differences concerning the name of the country were not successful and an agreement could not be reached, and therefore it was concluded that an invitation “will be extended as soon as a mutually acceptable solution to the name issue has been reached.”⁶⁰ The decision was received as a humiliation in Macedonia and intensified Macedonia’s identity concerns. For President Gjorgje Ivanov: “The name is the most important symbol of our country; it is a point of unification, an identity that ties the citizens and the Macedonian nation to its history, language and culture.”⁶¹ Similarly, Prime Minister Gruevski announced: “We will not give up our identity, culture and language...there is no substitution for our identity...therefore we will join Europe not as anything else, but as Macedonians.”⁶²

56 Trifunovska 1994, 347.

57 Janev 1999, 155.

58 Shea 2008, 289.

59 International Crisis Group 2001, 7.

60 *Ibid.*

61 Cited in Koneska 2011, 8.

62 Cited in Slavevski 2013, 68.

Albania

Finally, in Albania, the independence of Macedonia was received positively, as it was seen as “a counterweight to Serbia and an irritant to Greece”⁶³ However, while Albania recognized the existence of the Macedonian nation and State, it maintained that such a State does not belong exclusively to the ethnic Macedonians.⁶⁴ Whereas Albania did not pose any serious threat to the territorial integrity of Macedonia, the open support by the Albanian political leadership for the radical wing of the Albanian PDP party from Macedonia, as well as the frequent statements by Albanian political figures regarding the rights of ethnic Albanians in Macedonia, was perceived as an attempt of Albania to interfere in Macedonia’s internal affairs.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, relations between Macedonia and Albania have been peaceful and established in a good neighborly manner, with just a few occasional backlashes. However, Albania still not extended formal recognition of Macedonia under its constitutional name.

In sum, in Macedonia’s relationship with its neighbors, while each of them recognized the existence of the State, each denied a segment in which Macedonian national identity was defined. Thus, at the inter-state level the main security concern was not the territorial integrity of the State, but rather the existence of a distinct, authentic Macedonian national identity. The relationship between Macedonia and its neighbors is best summarized by Isakovic, “The Bulgarians are the main identity threat from the point of view of language, Serbs from a religious point of view, Albanians from the point of view of statehood, and Greeks concerning the name of its nation, its language and the state.”⁶⁶

Macedonia’s Internal Dynamic

While the external challenges indeed served as facilitating conditions to the course on which the nation-building project was set, it was Macedonia’s internal dynamic that was at its core. The center of this dynamic were the relations between the majority – ethnic Macedonians, and the largest ethnic minority – ethnic Albanians concerning the character and of the new State.

Despite the differences in the state-building projects that the ex-Yugoslav republics have undertaken, each of them, as Brubaker shows have tended to engage in some form of “nationalizing project” in which the dominant elites “promote the language, culture, demographic position, economic flourishing, or political hegemony of the nominally state-bearing nation.”⁶⁷ In that sense, Macedonia’s state building project was no different.

63 Pettifer 2001, 21.

64 Engstrom 2002, 10.

65 *Ibid.*, 11

66 Isaković 2000, 220.

67 Brubaker 1996, 57.

Following the examples of the other Yugoslav successor states, Macedonia also adopted the nation-state model, as Denko Maleski points out “Macedonia was just doing what others were doing, building a nation-state”.⁶⁸ As Macedonia gained independence ethnic Macedonian political elites were determined about a “Macedonian” character of the new State, as the symbolic link between the Macedonian people and the Macedonian state needed to be protected, not just from outside threats but also from within the republic, where the ethnic Albanians posed the greatest challenge. Thus when the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia was adopted in 1991, its Preamble clearly defined Macedonia as a democratic State, and a State of the Macedonian people. Moreover, the Constitution proclaimed the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet as well as the Macedonian Orthodox Church, as the official language and religion in the country.

However, from the outset, the legitimacy of the nation-state building project was challenged by Macedonia’s ethnic Albanian population. The growing dissatisfaction with the unresponsiveness of the Macedonian government to ethnic Albanians’ grievances,⁶⁹ as well as the optimism that once Yugoslavia disintegrated, Albanians could gain their right to self-determination⁷⁰ led to their boycott of the Macedonian referendum for independence and the Constitution. When independence was proclaimed in 1991 without the support of the ethnic Albanian population, several Albanian politicians initiated an unofficial referendum for the establishment of the so-called Republic of Ilirida, in Albanian-inhabited areas in Western Macedonia. As Roudometof shows, of the 92 percent eligible voters who participated in the referendum, 74 percent voted for territorial autonomy.⁷¹ Despite the fact that the Republic of Ilirida proved to be a hoax, it had wider symbolic and political implications. Since then, ethnic Albanian demands were always associated with irredentism and seen as a part of a wider secessionist platform aimed at federalization, and ultimately partition of the country. The acceptance of such demands would mean to jeopardize the existence of the country.

For the ethnic Macedonian political elite, the boycott of the referendum and the Constitution represented a sign of disloyalty by the ethnic Albanians and the Constitution was adopted by the Parliament, despite the boycott of the ethnic Albanians. For the ethnic Macedonians, the Constitution represented a legal culmination of their national struggle, and as a result it was constructed in a manner that protected Macedonian ethno-national identity. As Graham Holliday asserts “From an ethnic Macedonian point of view, the territorial integrity of the independent state henceforth became directly linked to the preservation and consolidation of their newly constructed national identity, mobilizing national sentiment around issues of history, language, religion and culture as a means of affirming their existence.”⁷² Moreover, the dominant view among ethnic Macedonian

68 Cited in Hafner 2003, 18–19.

69 Roudometof 2001, 172.

70 Vankovska 2000, 13.

71 Roudometof 2001, 172.

72 Holliday 2005, 144.

political elites was, as Ilievski shows, that while Albanians had kin states in Albania and Kosovo, the Republic of Macedonia was considered as essential to the protection and nurturance of the Macedonian ethno-nation.⁷³ On the other hand, ethnic Macedonians were doubtful of the willingness of the ethnic Albanians to integrate into the new state structures, and expressed their loyalty elsewhere.

Macedonia's security concerns were further intensified in 2001 when an armed conflict occurred between the National Liberation Army (ethnic Albanian paramilitary organization) and the Macedonian Security Forces broke out. Wider escalation of the conflict was prevented with the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) which included "both general principles and suggestions for solving concrete inter-ethnic problems, including decentralization, non-discrimination in public service, special parliamentary procedures for changing the Constitution and other major laws, education and language matters, as well as the expression of identity".⁷⁴ Ultimately, the Agreement transformed Macedonia from an ethnic nation-state into a civic, multi-ethnic one.

From the outset, the ethnic Macedonian opposition to the Agreement "arose mainly against those provisions...that dealt with the identity of the State", for as Brunnbauer argues, "ethnic Macedonians did not want their national identity to be disconnected from that of the State, because they feared that this would jeopardize their existence as a nation".⁷⁵ Moreover, given that the Macedonian claim to national self-determination is based on the premise that the Macedonian nation is authentic, and the fact that this authenticity is contested by Macedonia's neighbors, the need for the Macedonians to defend the ethnic Macedonian character of the State was particularly crucial. Accordingly, while provisions of the OFA which granted the ethnic Albanians a broad legislative veto, or provisions related to the just and equitable representation, and other power-sharing mechanisms, were passed without any opposition, the entire debate focused around symbolic issues that related to how ethnic Macedonians perceived themselves and the identity of the State. Consequently as "many Macedonians see their security as vested in a State that their language often represents as exclusively 'theirs'",⁷⁶ any attempt to change the State's character was perceived as a threat to the very existence of the Macedonian nation. In this regard, as Lesnikovski concludes, "the altered character of the State in post-conflict Macedonia was seen as further weakening of the base of the Macedonian identity".⁷⁷

In sum, the armed conflict from 2001 and the OFA indeed served to intensify ethnic Macedonians' perceptions that their national existence was under threat. As the State

73 Lebamoff and Ilievski 2008, 9.

74 Schneckener 2002, 34.

75 Brunnbauer 2002, 7.

76 Brown 2003, 135.

77 Lesnikovski 2011, 67.

was “charged with the task of defending and enhancing”⁷⁸ their insecure national identity, any attempt to change its character was perceived as a threat to the existence of the Macedonian nation, since without a state of its own, the Macedonian nation could become an easy target for those Balkan neighbors that consider it as a historical falsification. In that sense, the OFA lacks devices for “societal peace-building”⁷⁹ in particular to address ethnic Macedonians’ societal security requirements in preserving the ethnic Macedonian character of the State, which was perceived as the only protector of the Macedonian nation. In such a situation of internal and external perceived identity threats “Macedonian nationalism grew not so much from pride, but from desperation to survive”⁸⁰

Nation-Building under the Societal Security Dilemma

A nation is defined by Anthony Smith as a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members.⁸¹ This implies that each nation and its identity are authentic and distinct from other nations. In the Macedonian case, as was previously shown, the authenticity and distinctiveness of the Macedonian nation was contested by Macedonia’s neighbors, and implicitly by Macedonia’s domestic ethnic Albanian population, which triggered the societal security dilemma. As a reaction, perceived identity threats can be addressed through nation-building, through cultural- and/or ethnic-nationalist projects, which are aimed at maintaining the group’s distinctiveness, authenticity and self-identification. Accordingly, the Macedonian ongoing nation-building project manifested through the “antiquisation” and the Skopje 2014 Project as its culmination, was developed as a reaction to internal and external perceived identity threats to Macedonian national identity.

With the coming to power of the VMRO-DPMNE, under the leadership of Nikola Gruevski in 2006, the nation-building project in Macedonia took a new turn. Namely, the Party initiated a process of redefining and reconstructing Macedonian national identity, which in the Macedonian public discourse became known as “antiquisation”. The antiquisation narrative stressed a linear continuity of Macedonian national identity from antiquity to the present, linking the roots of the modern Macedonian nation to antiquity, to those of the ancient Macedonians. The initial antiquisation measures, as Vangeli argues, “were rather spontaneous and resembled political populism”. He further contends that “the name of Alexander the Great was used to simply depict the nation’s grandeur and to nourish the people’s spirit”⁸² In this regard, in 2006 Skopje airport was renamed to “Alexander the Great Airport” and new antique-style statues were placed in front of the government’s

78 Brunnbauer 2004, 157.

79 Slavevski 2009, 52.

80 Cited in Slavevski 2013, 68.

81 Smith 1991, 14.

82 Vangeli 2011, 20.

building entrance. Furthermore, this was accompanied by a series of printed editions of textbooks that glorified the “shadowy historical materials of the ancient Macedonian identity and historical events that expanded unfounded borderlines between purely the heroic ‘ours’, and the dirty ‘theirs.’”⁸³

The antiquisation narrative became much more assertive after the second victory of VMRO-DPMNE, in the early elections in 2008, and especially after Macedonia’s efforts to join NATO that same year, were blocked by Greece because of the name issue. The post-2008 antiquisation measures as Vangeli argues were “numerous and multifaceted.”⁸⁴ Subsequently, the Skopje stadium and the main highway which was part of the pan-European Corridor X were renamed to “National Arena Philip II” and “Alexander of Macedonia” respectively. Moreover, the government initiated a campaign for “raising the national dignity and optimism” titled “You are Macedonia.” The campaign consisted of video clips and posters portraying Alexander the Great as a brave warrior who never backs off, since it was not “Macedonian” to retreat.⁸⁵ Similarly, in the aftermath of the presidential elections in 2009 another campaign under the title “Pride” was initiated.⁸⁶

In addition, as Vangeli shows, the antiquisation process gradually gained scientific and pseudo-scientific support from ethnic Macedonian intellectual circles. In that sense, he gives the examples of the newest official version of “The History of the Macedonian People” published by the Institute for National History which claimed “during the interaction of the immigrant Slavs and the native Ancient Macedonians, the ancient features prevailed and defined the development of the region”; as well as the genetic survey conducted by the Swiss project iGenea whose findings suggested that “Macedonians have more ancient Macedonian blood than Greeks.”⁸⁷

Finally, this new nation-building project was most explicitly reflected in the Skopje 2014 Project which represented a culmination of the antiquisation process. Namely, the project includes the reconstruction of the buildings destroyed by the earthquake in 1963, re-creation of “authentic” Macedonian architecture, as well as building of monuments and statues of “Macedonian” heroes from all eras. The heroes represented stemmed from antiquity – Alexander the Great and his father Philip II of Macedon; through the Roman Era- the monument of Iustinianus Primus; the Slavic Era and the Middle Ages – Cyril and Methodius, and Naum and Clement, as well as the monument to the “Macedonian” Emperor Samuel; through a series of monuments of the Ottoman Era and the inter-war period; and finally monuments from the Communist Era as well as monuments from recent Macedonian history – the monument for the victims of the 2001 ethnic

83 Frckoski 2011 48.

84 Vangeli 2011, 18.

85 *Ibid.*, 18–20.

86 Andreassen 2011, 43.

87 Vangeli 2011, 20.

conflict. Furthermore, the spatial proximity of the monuments and their concentration in the central area together with the “simple fact that the statues range from antiquity and the Roman-Byzantine Empire to Christian missionaries of the first millennium and revolutionary figures of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, suggests a linear trajectory towards a national identity”, which Kubierna concludes is “impossible to ignore”.⁸⁸ In Kubierna’s words, through the Project “a mythical representation of an imagined singularity of Macedonia’s formation as a nation state was being engineered by moving back from the present into an idealized and selective version of the past”.⁸⁹

As Anthony Smith shows, national myths appear at certain junctures, “periods of profound cultural clash, and accelerated economic and social changes, a definite political or military threat from the outside to the viability of the community”⁹⁰. Thus, the link to antiquity satisfied ethnic Macedonians’ needs for an authentic self-definition, in the face of external and internal identity threats, around which the nation-building project could take place. The central position in the Project of Alexander the Great and his father Philip II, and the sheer size of the monuments of these two figures just further substantiated the claim. Myths of authenticity, as Anthony Smith argues satisfy the community’s needs for specific identity and their quest for unique-ness. In that sense, he argues “authentic identity” has two meanings:

The first is that of origin: who are we is determined by ‘whence we came,’ a myth of origin and descent...The second is that of difference: who are we is determined by our relations with the ‘outsider,’ the other who is marked off from ‘us’ by not sharing in our distinctive character, our individuality.⁹¹

Furthermore, they present “particular formations of the nation as the natural and authentic version and thus glosses over its heterogeneity and internal diversity”⁹²

In addition, Anthony Smith argues that the myth of authentic identity sanctifies the origin of the group and locates the community in its own historic space, its sacred homeland.⁹³ In that sense, the community which was “prior to everybody has the right to that territory over all others, meaning that, say the rights of citizenship must take second place to those of ethnicity and that those who have primacy also have the right to define (and maybe circumscribe) the rights of citizenship”.⁹⁴ Thus, autochthonism becomes the principle that “determines the historical right of the particular nations over controlling certain territories and symbols – the older the nation is imagined, the more powerful it is, thus

88 Kubierna 2012, 90.

89 *Ibid.*, 88.

90 Smith 1999, 83.

91 Smith 2004, 221.

92 Özkirimli 2005, 164.

93 Hosking and Schöpflin 1997, 49–50.

94 Schöpflin 2000, 96.

the more right to manifest its dominion”⁹⁵ Consequently, by transforming the territory into the ‘historic homeland’ “what is asserted is that an old state that once upon a time controlled the territory in question was a national state of our group”,⁹⁶ where “our’ sages, saints, heroes and great men lived, worked, prayed and fought”⁹⁷

Namely, tracing the roots of the modern Macedonian nation to antiquity, satisfies the “quest for authenticity” and unique-ness of the Macedonian nation and the “urge to differ from the neighbors and ethnically different compatriots”.⁹⁸ The portrayal of the “authentic” Macedonian identity as rooted in antiquity, thus highlighting its pre-Slavic origins, disputes the expansionist claims from neighboring Slavic nations (Serbia and Bulgaria), who challenged the existence of a distinct Macedonian nation. Furthermore, by depicting the contemporary Macedonians as direct descendants from the ancient Macedonians means that “their ancestors have inhabited this territory prior to the ancestors of other peoples – Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbs, and Albanians”.⁹⁹ In that sense, the ‘natural’ right of the Macedonians over the land, as the autochthonous and indigenous people of the territory, implies having much more historic rights on the territory and its resources than the others, and at the same time played down ethnic Albanians’ demands for equal ownership of the State, since “they have come from somewhere out there and now they want to take over our land”.¹⁰⁰ The strategic positioning of some of the monuments, more specifically Christian religious figures, in a predominantly ethnic Albanian populated area of the city, together with the increase of the number of national flags in the public space, throughout the city, further emphasize this point.

Very closely related to myths of authenticity, Smith introduces the national myths of continuity. According to Smith:

The return to a golden age suggests that, despite all ravages of time and the vicissitudes of social change, we are descendants of the heroes and sages of the great age...By establishing genealogical descent as well as cultural affinity with heroic age(s), later generations realize their own genuine heroic individuality.¹⁰¹

Furthermore, he highlights that “the greater, the more glorious, that antiquity appears, the easier it becomes to mobilize people”.¹⁰² Consequently, the myths of continuity establish a

95 Vangeli 2011, 23

96 Kolsto 2005, 22.

97 Smith 1999, 150–53.

98 Vangeli 2011, 23.

99 *Ibid.*

100 Vangeli 2009, 61.

101 Smith 2004, 223.

102 *Ibid.*, 213.

sense of commonality between generations investing them with a special dignity by virtue of antiquity, pedigree and past glory.¹⁰³

Thus, in the antiquisation narrative, and its culmination the Skopje 2014 Project, ancient Macedonia was seen as the Golden Age of the Macedonian nation. As such, the antiquisation narrative was designed to generate a strong feeling of self-identification, which as previous chapters have shown has been denied, or disputed by its neighbors, by constructing a link to the Golden Age of the Macedonian nation, a link to a glorious past. Moreover, the organic bonds of the Macedonians with their “homeland”, co-relates with the perennial existence of this identity in continuity from antiquity to the present, thus emphasizing the nation’s “unceasing existence and affirmation throughout the centuries”.¹⁰⁴ More specifically, the Project implicitly established the presence of the name “Macedonia” throughout all periods from antiquity to the present. In that sense, the naming issue with Greece has been included indirectly in the Project. Finally, by linking the contemporary State to the ancient empire of Alexander the Great and his father, the Project compensates the lack of statehood tradition which has served as grounds for denying the existence of a distinct Macedonian national identity by Macedonia’s neighbors.¹⁰⁵

In conclusion, the aim of the Project is highlighted by Prime Minister Gruevski himself: “the main driving power of each success is the national spirit. The love for one’s past and inherited values has raised many nations from the ashes. Skopje 2014 puts an end to Macedonia without monuments...accompanied by constant denials of our nation, language, identity, history”.¹⁰⁶

The Societal Security Dilemma as Tragedy

This article applied the concept of the societal security dilemma on the nation-building project in Macedonia. The article traced the process whereby Macedonian national identity came to be perceived as threatened, both externally (from Macedonia’s neighbors) and internally (by Macedonia’s domestic ethnic Albanian population), which triggered the societal security dilemma. The reaction to these perceived identity threats was manifested in the ongoing nation-building project, expressed through the “antiquisation” and the Skopje 2014 project. Whereas, rather modest generalizations can be achieved through studying only one case, the Macedonian case does highlight some significant implications. It shows that the concept of the societal security dilemma is relevant in studying post-conflict nation-building projects in multi-ethnic societies, particularly because it shows “what” needs to be secured (identity) and “how” to secure it (through nation-building). More importantly however, it highlights the dynamic interplay between security policy

103 Lomonosov 2012, 32.

104 *Ibid.*, 46.

105 Elchinova 2003, 23.

106 International Crisis Group 2011, 2.

and nation-building, or rather how societal security concerns can impact and shape the nation-building project, which has so far been neglected in the literature.

Following the logic of the societal security dilemma, however, the attempts of one group to strengthen its societal security (and thus identity) may lead to societal insecurity for another, as societal security is perceived as a “zero-sum” game, where more security for one group, means less security for another. In this regard, Macedonia’s nation-building project provoked reactions both from within the country and from Macedonia’s neighbors. Accordingly, both Greece and Bulgaria regard the project as a direct provocation and an attempt for confiscation of their histories, as the project includes figures considered as parts of their national histories (such as the figures of Alexander the Great, or Philip II in Greece, or the figures from the revolutionary period such as Goce Delchev and Dame Gruev in Bulgaria). Even more so, they assert that the project is further proof to the historical falsification of the Macedonian nation, as a nation without history, forced to “steal” history from more “established” nations. This exacerbated the relations between the countries and further stalled Macedonia’s integration into the NATO and the EU, with now not only Greece, but also Bulgaria threatening to block Macedonia’s entrance. On the other hand, Serbia and Albania have not been particularly vocal in their reaction to the project. However, whereas not directly related to the Macedonian nation-building project, recent actions undertaken by them, such as the stalemate in the issue regarding the autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, as well as the recent territorial reorganization in Albania, and the consequent abrogation of the ethnic Macedonian municipalities, point to a significant declining dynamic in the relation between the countries.

Internally, the nation-building project has been also contested by the domestic ethnic Albanian population. The majority of the Albanian population sees it as ethnocentric and offensive and an attempt to marginalize them and exclude them from the national narrative. Their reactions have been manifested through demands and political pressures for more of “their” monuments, which further strain the already tense inter-ethnic relations. These demands culminated in a parallel project called “Skenderbeg Square” dedicated to the Albanian national hero Skenderbeg, which addresses ethnic Albanian concerns about “their” position in the Macedonian state. In addition, this is followed by processes of renaming of schools, streets, and other public buildings in predominantly ethnic Albanian populated areas, with names from Albanian history. Thus, internally the nation-building project caused a situation of competing nationalisms, which manifest in lack of trust, misperceptions, enhanced negative group stereotypes and sporadic incidents.

Initially designed to strengthen Macedonian national identity in the face of internal and external perceived identity threats, the nation-building project caused a situation where the country is facing international isolation, even stronger identity concerns and unstable inter-ethnic relations. In this sense, the Macedonian case confirms the “tragedy” of the security dilemma, what one does to enhance one’s own security causes reactions that, in the end, can leave one less secure.

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