One Macedonia With Three Faces: Domestic Debates and Nation Concepts

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Macedonia, Europe's youngest nation, after its third free parliamentary election in its short and turbulent history is still coping with "ethnic" quarrels in internal affairs, and with a foreign policy akin to a balancing act on a high-wire, in other words, trying to avert national claims of its neighbors, often called the "Four Wolves" – Bulgaria, Serbia, Albania and Greece. Max Weber hit the point when he said that the term "nation," *imposes* on certain groups of people a specific notion of solidarity vis à vis others."[1] Hardly any other country in Europe is probably regarded by its neighbors as much of an imposition as the Republic of Macedonia.[2]

Until recently, the country could not settle any treaties with Bulgaria because Bulgaria did not accept Macedonian as a proper language. It is true that Bulgaria was among the first states to officially recognize the Republic of Macedonia. But it denied a Macedonian nation and it considers its inhabitants to be Bulgarian. The Greeks speak of a "brutal rape of history."[3] For they confiscate the historic regional term of Macedonia for their own Hellenistic national project.[4]

Radical Serbs consider Macedonia to be Serbian. They point to the Empire of Stefan Dusan, who resided in Skopje at the end of his reign (1331-1355). Fanatic Albanians demand a "Greater Albania" which is to comprise parts of Montenegro, Greece, West-Macedonia and the province of Kosova. Even after the NATO intervention in Kosova, however, it is still a minority only who raises these claims.

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[1]Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, (Tübingen: 1921), 528. (original emphasis).

[2]This naming follows the state's constitution and will be used as an equivalent to the internationally valid name "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (FYROM).

[3]Pantelis Giakoumis, "Hellas und die Makedonische Frage," *Südosteuropa*, (7-8/1992), 450.

[4]For more historic and political background, see i.a.: Jens Reuter, "Politik und Wirtschaft in Makedonien," *Südosteuropa*, (2/1993); Ibid., "Die Beziehungen zwischen Griechenland und der BR Jugoslawien von 1991 bis zur Gegenwart," *Südosteuropa*, (7-8/1997); Duncan M. Perry, "Crisis in the making? Macedonia and its Neighbors," *Südosteuropa*, (1-2/1994); Idem, "Mazedonien," in Werner Weidenfeld ed., *Demokratie und Marktwirtschaft in Osteuropa*, (Bonn: 1996); Heinz-Jürgen Axt, "Jugoslawien-Krise und Makedoniens Unabhängigkeitserklärung," *Südosteuropa*, (11-12/1991); James Pettifer, "Die neue Mazedonienfrage," *Europäische Rundschau*, (4/1992); Svetozar Pribichevich, *Macedonia, Its People and History*, (London 1982); for Bulgaria: Stefan Troebst, "Die bulgarisch-jugoslawische Kontroverse um Makedonien 1967-1982," (Munich: 1983); Mercia Macdermott, *A History of Bulgaria 1393-1885*, (London: 1962); idem, *A Short History of Modern Bulgaria*, (Cambridge 1987); for general information, i.a.: Edgar Hösch, *Geschichte der Balkanländer, Von der Frühzeit bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: 1993).

For some time, the former mainly social democratic government in Skopje has tried to stabilize the situation with a policy of "equi-distance" towards all its neighbors. Meanwhile, this concept is considered to be outdated by most political parties. Even those parties which are formed along "ethnic" cleavages are predominantly striving for integration into Western European institutions – above all, into NATO and the EU. Thus a rapprochement with Greece should be inevitable. Additionally, the large Albanian minority in the country predicts good relations with the progressive government in Tirana.

The domestic political situation is equally tricky. Political debates and parties are formed almost exclusively along "ethnic" cleavages. Ironically, those parties who cater most exclusively to competing "ethnic" constituencies won the election in October 1998, consequently bridging their ideological gaps and forming a governing coalition. The strongest party is the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for the Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE), and is the most radical representative of "ethnic" Macedonian claims. Despite this, it took with it the distinctly "ethnic" Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA) into government, and was finally joined by the center-oriented Democratic Alternative (DA). The second paradox followed shortly thereafter in November 1999: The VMRO also succeeded to push through its presidential candidate Boris Trajkovski – and to a large extent, it was the "Albanian" vote which decided the race in favor of him against the social democrat Tito Petkovski. This constellation surprisingly shows that Ethno-national counterparts seem to cooperate more easily with one another than with political parties which attempt to transcend ethnic cleavages. The social democratic era, upon which former president Kiro Gligorov left his imprints since the country's independence, has come to an end.

This development may further complicate Macedonia's competing concepts of nationhood and geographic vocabulary. For during the last decade the different levels of the term "Macedonia" have been considerably confused. "In Macedonia, the concept of a nation has created a lot of confusion," says Ivan Toshevski, the Macedonian ambassador to the United Nations in New York. The country's politicians, historians and journalists are strongly stirring this explosive mixture, consciously or carelessly. Few actors, if any, distinguish the *political-etatist*, the *"ethnic"* and the *historic-regional* term. If the three levels of meaning of "Macedonia" were clearly distinguished, there would be a chance to reduce the subjective feeling of "imposition" towards the existence of the Macedonian state.

The Political-Etatist Term

"We are Macedonians. We are all citizens of this country," says Kiro Gligorov. "On the ethnically colorfully mixed Balkans it is impossible to form compact nation states, in which only members of one nation live."[5]

[5]"Interview with the President of the Republic of Macedonia, Kiro Gligorov," *Südosteuropa*, (8/1995), 512.

"We see Macedonia as a multi-ethnic state, in which Macedonians, Albanians, Serbs and other Slavs live,"[6] says Xheladin Murati, member of the moderate Albanian Party of Democratic Prosperity (PDP).

Legally, the Republic of Macedonia has created a constitutional state for all "ethnic" groups and nationalities.[7] The preamble of the constitution stresses the "full equality" and the "permanent co-existence" of the "Macedonian people" with "Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Romanics and other nationalities living in the Republic of Macedonia."[8] The meaning of the term Macedonia/Macedonians is thus related to what is written in the citizens' identity cards. This is close to the French national concept of the *citoyen*, however, without mentioning the word "citizen" even once.

Article 48 of the constitution states: "Members of nationalities have a right to freely express, foster and develop their identity and national attributes. The Republic guarantees the protection of the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of the nationalities."[9] This political-etatist concept is firmly in the minds of many Albanians, Turks, and other groups in the country. The majority consider themselves to be "Macedonians" of Albanian, Turkish origin, and they prefer to continue living in "Macedonia," [10] even though they are not fully satisfied with the rights granted to them.

The parliamentary leader of the PDP, Ismet Ramadani agrees, "The Albanians fully and strongly support the Macedonian nation."[11]With the following statement, he refers equally to the etatist nation concept of Macedonia: "We want to solve all the problems within our institutions."[12] Ramadani sees the PDP as balancing on a tight rope, considering the dissatisfaction of the Albanian population. This mediator position became even trickier when the PDP had been voluntarily integrated into the coalition government by the Social Democratic League of Macedonia (SDSM) in 1994. Since the last parliamentary election in October 1998 both the PDP and the social democrats have been united again – on the opposition benches. This is not a coincidence. For, as already hinted, it turned out that "ethnically" oriented parties – even from the extreme opposite sides – were able to cooperate better politically than they did with the PDP and SDSM who try to transcend these "ethnic" cleavages.

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[6]In a personal interview with the author in Skopje on the 17th of November 1997.

[7]Duncan M. Perry, "Crisis in the making?" *Südosteuropa*, (1-2/1994). Perry rightly hints that the term "nationalities" is only a euphemism for "minorities". This terminology has taken ground in the former Yugoslavia whose peoples were revalorized to "nations" by the Yugoslav constitution. In this context, Josip Broz Tito "created" also the "nation" of the Muslims in Bosnia-Hercegovina und the Macedonians as a buffer against the larger "ethnic" nation projects of Croatia and Serbia.

[8]Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, Skopje 1994, 3.

[9]Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, Skopje 1994, 17.

[10]Duncan M. Perry, "Mazedonien," in Werner Weidenfeld (ed.), *Demokratie und Marktwirtschaft in Osteuropa*, (Bonn: 1996), 292.

[11]In a personal interview with the author in Skopje on the 18th of November, 1997.

[12]Ibid.

For this purpose, the PDP wants to get even closer to the French concept of *citoyen* than the constitution does. Ramadani pledges to replace the "nationalities" in the preamble with "citizens" and to erase article 48 completely. Citizens' rights are the rights of all nationalities, he says, they do not need any further subdivisions. "There is no chance that the Macedonians will assimilate the Albanians. And there is no chance that the Albanians will assimilate the Macedonians," says Ramadani.[13] This is why he strives to replace the "ethnic" concept by a political concept of citizens. The PDP-politician, however, rejects a "crash solution" which could lead to further "ethnic" conflicts. He holds that a constitutional change has to come about softly.

Ivan Toshevski has similar ideas. He is special negotiator in the Macedonian-Greek talks held in New York and chairman of the Working Group for Missing Persons of the United Nations Human Rights Commission. "[W]hen you say the ethnic Albanians (or Turks, for example) are a national minority in Macedonia, this mean[s] [...]that they are an ethnic, linguistic, or religious minority of the Macedonian nation!"[14] For him, state and nation are "Siamese twins." He cites Switzerland as an example, where there are no "ethnic" groups or nations but only Swiss of different mother tongues.

Toshevski considers the "ethnic" theory of nation to be undemocratic. For example, he criticizes the Croatian constitution as fostering "constitutional nationalism"[15]in that its preamble describes Croatia as a "national state of the Croatian people and a state of the other peoples and minorities that are its citizens (Serbs, Muslims, etc.)."[16] According to Toshevski, this excludes Serbs and Muslims from the Croatian nation and reduces them to second-class citizens. He sees Macedonia as a counter model to the Croatian concept of nation.

This makes Toshevski one of the most distinct critics of the present Macedonian constitution. Relating to the preamble, he says: "It is clear that the meaning of the words nation and national is purely ethnic. I have the impression that this part of our Constitution looks more like an ethnic map than a contemporary political legal document."[17] According to him, the root of the evil is that the preamble talks of a "national state of the Macedonian people." These terms, he says, were taken over all too uncritically from the constitutions of the republics of the former Yugoslavia. He concludes: "The Republic of Macedonia should neither have been nor should it remain a 'national state of the Macedonian people', but the unique and inseparable nation that is comprised of all its citizens, regardless of language, religion or customs or any other attributes. There are only Macedonians in the Republic of Macedonia! This is the only civic and democratic formula on the basis of which the Constitution must be changed, considering the declarative determinations for our full accession to Europe."[18]

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[13]Ibid.
[14]"The Republic of Macedonia is a Nation!" *The Macedonian Times*, July-August 1997, 6.
[15]Ibid., 8.
[16] *The Macedonian Times*, July-August 1997, 8.
[17]Ibid., 8.
[18]Ibid., 9.

With this criticism in mind, the question remains whether those political representatives of the country who speak of an "etatist" Macedonia really mean it. Are they are conscious of the problem which they create when they confuse the political and "ethnic" meanings of the word nation? Or do they pursue a kind of nepotism in favor of "ethnic" Macedonians – and thus in favor of the majority of votes in the country.

These questions create potential points of attack. During the 1994 election campaign, Angelka Peeva, the Vice President of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) reproached the government for "playing the card of inter-ethnic conflict." "Always when an economic crisis comes up, the inter-ethnic tensions get the first news in the state-owned television, not the economic questions." she said.[19] According to Peeva, the LDP stands for a clearly articulated cross-ethnic and economically orientated policy. Paradoxically, however, she did not follow the Western European concept of the citizens' state. Instead, she stuck to the "ethnic" orientation of the constitution. "This is the Balkans," she justified her view. "If you delete the nationalities from the constitution, you will die!"[20]

The political success of Macedonia depends decisively on its capacity to accommodate ethno-political claims. Natasha Gaber, author of a study on the Macedonian voting system, pleaded to loosen the majority voting system. People, she said, had ceased to vote in "ethnic" blocks: "Things are ripening. Earlier, we had one Albanian party only. Now we have three. This is healthy. For such a big group cannot have one single interest."[21] The votes cast by many Albanians for the VMRO presidential candidate in 1999 supports her view in an unprecedented manner.

On the opposite side, law-professor Gorgi Ivanov favored keeping the majority vote system. "The parliament must be a strong decision-maker beyond ethnic cleavages which is able to solve problems of every-day life, like economics," Ivanov said.[22] What he has in mind is to remove "ethnic" conflicts from the parliamentary agenda and address them instead through a Council for "ethnic" Affairs. According to his ideas, it should be elected through proportional representation as a second chamber and cope with language-problems, questions of education etc.

Ivanov holds the consensus-model of Arend Lijphart[23] – including proportional representation and clear power-sharing mechanisms – to be misplaced in an environment of "ethnic" tensions. This model, he said, already paralyzed the executive power in today's Bosnia-Hercegovina.

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[19]In a personal interview with the author in Skopje on the 18th of November 1997.
[20]Ibid.
[21]In a personal interview with the author in Ohrid on the 20th of November, 1997.
[22]In a personal interview with the author in Ohrid on the 21st of November, 1997.
[23]Arend Lijphart, *Democracies*, (New Haven/London: 1984).

Finally, before the parliamentary elections in October 1998, a compromise on the voting system was adopted similar to the German one. It is a mixed version of proportional representation (party lists) and majority vote (direct candidates), with a scale of 85:35 seats in the parliament of 120 members.

These debates show that politicians and scientists in Macedonia are trying to bridge "ethnic" cleavages by converting them into social and economic ones by new institutions. Thus, Samuel P. Huntington's observations are turned upside down. Pointing to societal transitions, he stated: "The primary problem of politics is the lag in the development of political institutions behind social and economic change."[24]However, in Macedonia, like in the other republics of the former Yugoslavia, institutions are being sought and created which are themselves supposed to bring about societal change and to help overcome the "ethnic" orientation of politics.

If this endeavor succeeds, the political nation concept of the Republic of Macedonia could be strengthened. In this way, the country would gain plausibility and legitimacy.

The "Ethnic" Term

The confusion between the political-etatist and the "ethnic" terms of Macedonia is present both the country's mass media and in every-day life. This worries neighboring countries and the internal non-Macedonian minorities (in the "ethnic" sense). As already stated above, even the Macedonian constitution has failed to make a clear distinction between these two notions. Journalists, politicians and historians are trying to carve out the long tradition of the Macedonian ethnicity. Therefore, they frequently air new "historic proofs." This is very similar to what Eric J. Hobsbawm observed. He said that nation building goes with the "invention of traditions" in order to create "ethnic" solidarity. "[M]odern nations and all their impedimenta generally claim to be the opposite of novel, namely rooted in the remotest antiquity, and the opposite of constructed, namely human communities so 'natural' as to require no definition other than self-assertion."[25] Ernest Gellner points it and says that nationalism is gaining importance *only when* people, folk and mass culture become artificial.[26]

Whereas the official Bulgarian and Greek positions thoroughly deny a Macedonian "ethnicity", the "ethnic Macedonians" tirelessly point to a "long history", which is to legitimize them as an ("ethnic") nation. Dependent on which magazine one picks or which literature one reads, the "Macedonian consciousness" begins in the 10th, in the 19th or in the 20th century. The handbook on the country, published by the Macedonian government, emphasizes: "The first Macedonian Slav state was the Kingdom of Samuel (976-1018). The tradition of this state has

[24]Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, (New Haven/London: 1968), 5.
[25]Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge: 1983).
[26]Ernest Gellner, "Nationalism," in: George Weidenfeld and Nigel Nicolson (eds.), *Thought and Change* (London: 1964) emphasis added.

remained deeply rooted into the minds of the Macedonian people", and later on: "The 19th century is a period of growth of national awareness among the Macedonian people."[27]

Georgi Ivanov holds that an "ethnic" consciousness of the Macedonians has come up in the 1820s as a reaction to the upcoming nation state of the Greeks.[28] Another option would be to take the Osmanization during the 14th and 15th centuries as a cut and an impulse for the process of "ethnic" identification.[29]

In September 1997, the government-friendly newspaper *The Macedonian Times* proclaimed euphorically, that the Russian historian Zhila Lenina found three documents from 1829 in the central archive of St. Petersburg; a poem on Macedonia, a proclamation for the Macedonian people, and a memorandum to the chief of the Second Russian Army, who was supposed to free Macedonia from its "misfortunes." Probably referring to the actual flag of the Republic, the paper was titled: "The Bright Sun Rises in the East" and concluded that the documents "included the formation of a vast Macedonian state, but not a separate state of Bulgaria."[30]

This is a typical construction of national history in the Gellnerian sense. It is supposed to reach as far into the past as possible. For Gellner, this is a characteristic corner stone of nation building.[31] In this context, Stefan Troebst emphasizes the flexibility and dynamics of the "ethnic" and the national concept. He points to the different "states of aggregation" of social cohesion which distinguish ethnicities, nations, and nationalism (Georg Elwert[32]). The term "nationalism" is differentiated by Miroslav Hroch and his model of three phases.[33] In this concept, the idea of a nation can turn from elitist circles to the agitation of minorities to a mass-based movement. Young Macedonia is about to enter the third phase.

Troebst sees the Macedonian process of nation building as a perfect example of Gellner's theory of nationalism. Since the foundation of the Yugoslav republic this construction was conducted in haste and hurry: "National language, national literature, national history and

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[27] *Facts about the Republic of Macedonia*, Skopje 1997, 7.

[28] In a personal interview with the author in Ohrid on the 21st of November, 1997.
See also Dionysios Zakythinos, *The Making of Modern Greece, From Byzantium to Independence* (Oxford: 1976); Richard Clogg, *A Short History of Modern Greece*, (Cambridge: 1986).

[29] In this context, see Edgar Hösch, *Geschichte der Balkanländer*, (Munich: 1993), 78ff.; Peter F. Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule 1354-1804*, (Seattle/London: 1977), vol. 5 in the series: Peter F. Sugar and Donald W. Treadgold (eds.), *A History of East Central Europe*.

[30] "The Bright Sun Rises in the East," *The Macedonian Times*, September 1997, 6.

[31] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, (Ithaca, New York: 1983).

[32] Georg Elwert, "Nationalismus und Ethnizität, Über die Bildung von Wir-Gruppen," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* (41;1989), 3.

[33] Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups Among the Smaller European Nations*, (Cambridge: 1985). For the application of this model on the case of Macedonia, see Jutta de Jong, *Der nationale Kern des makedonischen Problems, Ansätze und Grundlagen einer makedonischen Nationalbewegung, 1890-1903* (Frankfurt/Main, Bern: 1982).

national church were not available in 1944, but they were accomplished in a short time. The south-east-Slavic regional idiom of the area of Prilep-Veles was codified as the script, normed orthographically by means of the Cyrillic Alphabet, and taken over immediately by the newly created media."[34] And the people have been patching up the national history ever since. Thus, they are forming more of an "ethnic" than a political concept of nation.

The linguistic history, in particular, is experiencing its high season.[35] On the 24th of May, the Macedonians (or better: their historians) celebrate "the Day of Slav Enlightenment and Culture." "We, the Macedonians [...] feel this celebration with pride," proclaimed *The Macedonian Times* in May 1997.[36] It is the clerical scholars Cyril and Methodius who are put up against the Bulgarian nationalists. In the 9th century, they had developed the first Macedonian script in Ohrid by standardizing the afore mentioned regional idiom. Thus, the Slavic alphabet and literature had been created "as an everlasting flame [which] lit the path through the centuries of darkness, heroic deeds, fame and slavery."[37]*The Macedonian Times* emphasized that Cyril and Methodius had additionally pushed forward Christianization in the Balkans – Christianizing the Macedonians *before* the Bulgarians. With this evidence, the author intended to reject any Bulgarian claims on the two saints, and on the Macedonian language as such. Historic justifications of this kind can be found in each edition of the *Macedonian Times* and many other papers. The permanent emphasis on the "ethnic"-Macedonian creates a climate of mistrust and irritation. It also triggers defensive reactions among the minorities.

The Albanians have, for a long time, raised claims to introduce their tongue as the second official language. The field of education has been particularly affected by the controversy. The so-called Mala Recica University in the predominantly Albanian city of Tetovo has called into question Albanian loyalty to the Macedonian state. Albanian students want to take lessons there in Albanian, although the Macedonian constitution provides this for primary and secondary schools only. The former Macedonian government had even taken the risk of bloodshed in order to prevent the lessons. Another conflict broke out over the use of Albanian and Turkish flags which were hoisted provocatively over official buildings in the cities of Tetovo and Gostivar. Riots broke out when the police tore them off on July 9th, 1997.

It is precisely Gellner's criteria of nation-building which are stirring the moods: The national use of education, language and symbols. The political concept of nation has got visible cracks. In such an environment, former President Gligorov's attempt to calm down the flag controversy did not help much, although he conjured the political state project: "Respect and duties toward the state also encompasses respecting the state symbols, because they express

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[34]Stefan Troebst, "Makedonische Antworten auf die 'Makedonische Frage" 1944-1992: Nationalismus, Republiksgründung, *nation-building* in *Südosteuropa*, 7-8/1992, 431.

[35]For more, see Leopold Auburger, "Überblick über die äußere Geschichte makedoslavischer Ausbausprachen (Altkirchenslavisch und moderne makedonische Standardsprache)," in *Sprachen und Staaten, Festschrift für Heinz Kloss (Languages and States, Memorial Edition for Heinz Kloss), part II: Nationalitäten- und Sprachenfragen in weltpolitischer Perspektive*, (Hamburg: 1976).

[36]"Cyril and Methodius in Macedonian and Pan-Slav Culture," *The Macedonian Times*, May 1997, 22.

[37]Ibid.

the territorial integrity, independence of the state and the right of all citizens of Macedonia to decide about their destiny."[38]With Gellner's criteria as a measurement, several nations are being formed on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia. This is also reflected in the societal discourses which follow "ethnic" cleavages. The Albanian and the Macedonian media alike follow the "ethnic" nation project of their respective clients. "Unfortunately, journalists spread the ethnic hatred," complains Aleksandar Damovski, chief editor of the independent daily *Dnevnik*. He even observes an increase in "ethnic" thinking among the young colleagues: "We are living in parallel roles without crossroads between our worlds."

The police reports and the government papers always mention the "ethnic" origin of a criminal, says Damovski. "We get the impression that all Albanians are smugglers and muggers."[39] On the other hand: "When you hit a smuggler with a club on his head, he says this is because of ethnic reasons," jokes Georgi Ivanov. [40]The high standards of minority rights granted by the constitution seem, in comparison, to have only little effect on the moods.

Mistrust of the country's neighbors is another consequence. With the same frequency as articles appear on language and national history, there are reports on Macedonian minorities in neighboring countries. *The Macedonian Times* claims that "practical and statistical genocide" was done to Macedonians in Bulgaria, Albania and Greece.[41]

Above all, a study by law professor Vladimir Ortakovski has sparked debates on "ethnic" minorities.[42] He criticized neighboring states of not recognizing the Macedonians who live in their countries. Indeed, Bulgarians and Greeks deny the existence of Macedonian minorities. For the Bulgarians see Macedonians as Bulgarians anyway, and the Greeks see them as a mixture of Slavs, Albanians and Turks etc.[43]

Ortakovski hailed Macedonia as an example for its neighbors because, he said, minority rights were dealt with there in an exemplary way. He stated enthusiastically "Luckily, the process of disintegration could stop in our country, because throughout its history and in its collective memory there have been no ethnic clashes, and the equal position of minorities has always been one of the clearly stated and realized principles."[44] This quotation shows clearly a mixing of the "ethnic" and the political term of nation. With "history" and "collective memory" he refers to the "ethnic" term of nation; with the "equal position of minorities" he probably refers to the situation of the Republic as a political project.

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[38]*The Macedonian Times*, July-August 1997,12.
[39]In a personal interview with the author in Ohrid on the 21st of November, 1997.
[40]In a personal interview with the author in Ohrid on the 20th of November, 1997.
[41]"Practical and Statistical Genocide", *The Macedonian Times*, April 1997, 17ff.
[42]Vladimir Ortakovski, *The International Position of the Minorities* (Skopje: 1996).
[43]For more information on Macedonian minorities in general, see: Duncan M. Perry, "Crisis in the making? Macedonia and its Neighbors," *Südosteuropa*, (1-2/1994); idem, "Mazedonien," in Werner Weidenfeld ed., *Demokratie und Marktwirtschaft in Osteuropa* (Bonn: 1996).
[44]Vladimir Ortakovski, "The Minorities and Macedonia: A Spirit of Tolerance," *The Macedonian Times*, April 1997, 20.

The same kind of confusion was apparent in a remark by the former Macedonian foreign minister, Blagoj Handzhiski, directed against the Greeks: "I think the knowledge that our name, which we had for centuries, is connected with our identity – is ripening and nobody has the right to demand changes of the constitutional name of the country!"[45] With the "century-long tradition" he refers to the – supposed or actual – Macedonian "ethnicity". The name, of course, is connected with the Republic which, however, does not exist out of "ethnic" Macedonians only.

With such a fragile situation in the young state, a meticulous statistic science of minorities cannot remain a purely academic project. The interest of the Macedonian media (in the "ethnic" sense!) and the prominence of Ortakovski's studies show that numbers do indeed make politics. The OSCE observers, too, had to go through this experience when they supervised the census in 1994. Albanians still contest the results.[46] Albanian refugees from Kosova could finally tip the delicate demographic and political balance.

The ("ethnic") Macedonians justify their reference to minorities on the other side of their borders with the high standards which European institutions demand from the Republic in respect to minority rights. However, in an international surrounding as tenuous as Macedonia's, it does make little sense to pass on the blame to the neighboring "wolves." The Macedonians should rather look ahead, try to bring their own house in order, and strive for good neighborly relations in order to solve minority problems instead of creating new reasons for domestic and international affronts.

The Historic-Regional Term

"Mother Macedonia is very weakened. After it gave birth to Saint Cyril and Methodius, mother Macedonia is lying, very weak and exhausted."[47]Here, the ancient term gets mixed up with the "ethnic"-Macedonian one. The national appropriation of Cyril and Methodius, and the simultaneous appropriation of Alexander the Great can only terrify neighboring Greece. Things are further complicated since the Greek position also claims the name "Macedonia" for its own Hellenistic-nationalistic state project.

The irony is not lost when both sides refer ardently to the writers and heroes of antique Greece and Macedonia. The bust of Alexander the Great stands in the corner of a conference room in the foreign ministry in Skopje. *The Macedonian Times* published a series on ancient

[45]"Greece Pressed for Time over Name Issue," *The Macedonian Times*, June 1997, 6.

[46]According to this census of 1994, in the Republic of Macedonia there are 66,5% Macedonians (in the "ethnic" sense), 22,9% Albanians, 2,3% Romanies, 2,0% Serbs, 0,4% Turks, 0,4% Vlachs, 1,8% others and 0,1% "undecided." The Albanians claim to represent 40% to 50% of the population. OSCE observers concede that about 120.000 people stay in Macedonia without having any legal citizenship. The OSCE representatives do not give any information about these people's origin.

[47]"Cyril and Methodius in Macedonian and Pan-Slav Culture (2)," *The Macedonian Times*, June 1997, 36. The author of the quoted article, Blazhe Ristovski, cites Prlichev in 1885.

history; one particular article was titled "Arguments for the Undying Saga of Ancient Macedonia."[48] Interestingly, the relatively progressive constitution of the Republic of Macedonia contains precautions against such attempts of appropriation. In this context, there is again a juxtaposition of the political-etatist and the historic-regional term. The constitution was amended in two important ways on January 6th, 1992:

> I.1. The Republic of Macedonia has no territorial claims against neighboring states.
> I.2. The borders of the Republic of Macedonia could be changed only in accordance with the Constitution, and based on the principle of voluntariness and generally accepted international norms.
> II.1. The Republic shall not interfere in the sovereign rights of other states and their internal affairs.[49]

But what is the reality? The Greek position points to, above all, the existing political forces who strive for a "Greater-Macedonia". The strongest representative of this position has been the presently ruling VMRO – which has conquered the political stage with the party attribute DPMNE. The VMRO itself was founded as a resistance movement in Thessaloniki in 1893. It fought not only against the Ottoman rule but also against Greek and Serb claims on Macedonia.[50]

Radical members of VMRO demand a unification of the three parts of the historic region of Macedonia: Pirin Macedonia in southern Bulgaria, the Republic of Macedonia and the Greek regions of Macedonia, including its capital Thessaloniki. The VMRO-DPMNE's wing which demands a unification of the Republic of Macedonia with Bulgaria has been particularly vocal. They often make reference to Gotse Delchev, the founder of the VMRO. Macedonians cherish him as a Macedonian national hero, and Bulgarians do the same. "Some Macedonian politicians have grown beards like Gotse Delchev had one," says Nano Ruzin, a member of parliament for the SDSM, and a sociologist.[51]With this knowledge, it becomes clear why moderate "ethnic" Macedonians consider the VMRO to be the most important internal enemy, and Bulgaria as the most important external one. Both threaten their young state project.[52]

Obviously, the different levels of meaning ascribed to the term "Macedonia" serve to justify particular positions. A contradiction appears among those who advocate the political state project against the VMRO and Bulgaria, and in the same breath, talk about Cyril and Methodius and the "long historic consciousness" of a Macedonian people as predecessors of the present Republic.

The Greeks fell into the same argumentative trap during the name controversy with their northern neighbors. They might have still been on the same level of terminology when they called

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[48]"Arguments for the Undying Saga of Ancient Macedonia," *The Macedonian Times*, April 1997, 35.
[49]Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, Skopje 1994, 47.
[50]For more, see: Jens Reuter, "Politik und Wirtschaft in Makedonien" *Südosteuropa*, (2/1993); Duncan M. Perry, *The Politics of Terror, The Macedonian Liberation Movements 1893-1903*, (Durham: 1988).
[51]In a personal interview with the author in Ohrid on the 20th of November, 1997.
[52]See *The Macedonian Times*, June 1997, 36.

for a removal of the Star of Vergina from the Macedonian flag because the symbol had been found on the grave of Philip II modern day Greece. Both countries' present territory lies partly in the former historic-regional Macedonia. Any symbol from the ancient age has no place on the label of a modern national state (this is true for Macedonia as well as for Greece).

However, the Greek position boils down to political shadowboxing because it stays exclusively on the level of historic-regional terminology. On the official level, Greece has recognized the Republic. If the Macedonians, for their part, are consequent in sticking to their term of a modern "nation state,"[53] both sides keep talking like the blind with the deaf. This explains why most of the states of the European Union do not come to understand the position of the Greek government.[54]

The Greek have tried to fight 20th century political problems through references to Homer, Herodotus, Pausanias etc.[55] In this endeavor, they refer, among others, to the Olympic Games in ancient Greece. As an example, they cite the time when the Macedonian Alexander I had applied to participate in the Games: "His Greek descent was recognized. He could participate in the race, and he arrived at the goal together with the winner."[56] Alexander I himself is also quoted, telling the envoys: "Report to the King, who sent you, that a Greek ruler from Macedonia has received you well."[57]

The community of Thessaloniki has published a scroll as a tourist souvenir with the "Oath of Alexander the Great," in several languages. Within the text, the ruler says to tribal representatives of the city of Opis in 324 B.C.: "I do not make discriminations between Greeks and barbarians as narrow-minded people do. [...] I will consider you all equal, white or black. And I would like you to be not only subjects of my Commonwealth but also participants and partners."[58]The scroll tries to fight the impression that Greeks and Macedonians are different people. Such a position is typically articulated by those in the Republic of Macedonia; the claim is that the Greeks have labeled the Macedonians as "barbarians" without accepting them as Greeks.

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[53]The term relates to a state project in the time of the principle of the nation state since the 18th and 19th centuries. A "pure nation state" with a congruence of people and territory is, of course, misplaced in the case of the political project of Macedonia, as with most of the other states of the world.

[54]For more about the Greek-Macedonian conflict since 1991 in a general overview, see Jens Reuter, "Die Beziehungen zwischen Griechenland und der BR Jugoslawien von 1991 bis zur Gegenwart," *Südosteuropa*, (7-8/1997); Duncan M. Perry, "Crisis in the Making? Macedonia and its Neighbors," *Südosteuropa*, (1-2/1994); idem, "Mazedonien," in Werner Weidenfeld ed., *Demokratie und Marktwirtschaft in Osteuropa* (Bonn: 1996).

[55]For debates of such kind, see: "Pantelis Giakoumis, Hellas und die Makedonische Frage," *Südosteuropa* (7-8/1992).

[56]Herodot, *Historien V*, 22,2. Heimeran publisher quoted from: Giakoumis.

[57]Herodot, *Historien V*, 20,4. Quoted from: Giakoumis.

[58]Republic of Greece, Community of Thessaloniki, Council of the First District ,ed., The Oath of Alexander the Great, n.d.

The Macedonians, however, can only legitimately argue consequently against the Greek position if they stick to their *political* state project. For they have hardly anything in common with the ancient land of Macedonia, apart from parts of the territory. The "ethnic" composition of the local population has fluctuated throughout history. The "core" land of ancient Macedonia was supposedly initially inhabited by the Dorics. After them, the Celts, Romans, Kumans, Avars, Goths and Slavs passed through the lands, with continuous "ethnic" mixing. During the 18th century, nomadic clans crossed the territory, mostly Muslim Albanians.[59] In today's administrative regions of West-, Central- and East-Macedonia in northern Greece, the present population originates mainly from Greek immigrants who crossed over from Asia Minor after the Greek-Turkish war in 1923 (and concurrently, Turks from Greece moved towards the East in great numbers). Thus, neither Greece nor the Republic of Macedonia can truly substantiate territorial or population claims to ownership of the historic heritage of "Macedonia".

On the one hand, Pantelis Giakoumis is correct when he says, "The multinational Republic of Skopje has equally little to do with the history and the culture of the Macedonians as, for example, the Germans have to do with Eskimos."[60] On the other hand, in his argumentation he also confuses historic-regional terms with the terminology of a modern "nation state" like Greece. Therefore, his attack against the name and the Republic of Macedonia has equally little to do with his references to ancient history as Germans have to do with Eskimos – under the condition, that the Macedonians themselves keep apart the different levels of the terms!

Conclusion:

The Republic of Macedonia is currently in a state of psychological nation-*finding*. In this process, two levels of national concepts and national identification compete with each other: the political-etatist and the "ethnic". In addition, a historic-regional level has conquered the debate. Macedonian politicians, academics, and journalists, as well as their colleagues in neighboring countries, contribute to the current confusion.

The conscious or careless mixing up of the terminological meanings deepen and radicalize "ethnic" cleavages within Macedonian society. Additionally, this debate encourages nationalist tendencies in the neighboring countries which are hostile towards the "ethnic" national project of the Macedonians.

The Republic of Macedonia has gained official recognition from the international community. Only the name issue has been left unsolved because of Greek pressure. The level minority rights in the country meet European Union standards. The government's foreign policy, with its caution and balance, stands out positively against the other states of the former Yugoslavia. Tellingly, not a single shot was fired during its process of independence in 1991.

[59] See Duncan M. Perry, "Mazedonien," in Werner Weidenfeld ed., *Demokratie und Marktwirtschaft* in *Osteuropa* (Bonn: 1996) and Perry in Weidenfeld, 287.
[60] Giakoumis, 450.

These are the features of the political project of Macedonia which the international community has recognized. They have also calmed down internal "ethnic" tensions even after the influx of refugees from Kosova during the NATO intervention in 1999. This is why the question has to be raised as to why the political opinion-makers of the country do not stand up more strongly for a *political* concept of nation and reject the "ethnic" version. A political nation project is relatively history-less. It is, admittedly, a quite untypical version for the Balkans. There, history is a kind of "self-defense", criticizes Georgi Ivanov: "On the Balkans, if you don't care about your history, you will be dead. You will be taken over by other people and their state projects."[61] Nano Ruzin calls to break out of this vicious circle: "Free Europe from its old icons!" Ruzin, who belongs to the European Movement in Macedonia and has founded the Young European Federalists there, points to a new solution for Macedonia: "Our new icons should be the Deutsch Mark, the U.S. Dollar, NATO and EU."[62]

Remarkably, almost all parties, whether "ethnically" oriented or not, display one common aim: to integrate the Republic of Macedonia with the European Union. Perhaps this vision has the chance to strengthen political understanding of the *citoyen* and to push "ethnic" cleavages into the background. "We hope that the national element will go out of fashion with the elimination of the borders in Europe," says Angelka Peeva (LDP).[63] Even if joining the EU lies relatively far in the future of Macedonia, the creation of a Macedonian civil society is an important step into the right direction. Precisely because the country has gained its strongest legitimacy because of its modern characteristic as a citizens' state, or as an "administrative nation"[64]the country must push aside the "ethnic" version of nation.

If the Macedonian state wants to continue playing a positive regional role, and to be fully recognized by its neighbors, it must ensure that a clear concept of the nation is reached. Macedonians must stand up in domestic and international politics in order to keep apart the three terminological levels. Otherwise, the neighbors will not cease to regard their "specific notion of solidarity" as an "imposition" in the Weberian sense.

[61]In a personal interview with the author in Ohrid on the 21st of November, 1997.
[62]In a personal interview with the author in Ohrid on the 21st of November, 1997.
[63]In a personal interview with the author in Skopje on the 20th of November, 1997.
[64]Stefan Troebst, "Makedonische Antworten auf die 'Makedonische Frage'," *Südosteuropa (*7-8 1992), 441.