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**The influence of antiquisation policy in the national
narrative shift: The case of North Macedonia**

Abstract

This thesis examines and analyses the evolvement of a narrative on identity markers from both the Prime Minister and the President in the Republic of North Macedonia during the period 2006-2016. It explores the concept of antiquisation, since its mobilisation both in the nation-building process in the country and in the formation of the new narrative. In this attempt, the research will shed light into the critical importance of the Greek veto in North Macedonia's bid for NATO membership in 2008 and the country's further European integration. Moreover, this thesis will explore how antiquisation influenced the statements of the aforementioned political actors. They aimed to redefine the narrative on key identity markers and how their statements materialised to actions embodied in the cultural project 'Skopje 2014'. This study employs a discourse analysis in the statements of these key politicians in the country, where it is aimed to further understand the use of words and strategies behind the redefinition of the national narrative on key identity markers. Furthermore, visual tools such as a table enabling these discursive strategies and pie charts on key national issues, will further increase the validity and credibility of the project.

Keywords: Antiquisation, North Macedonia, Ancient Macedonia, national identity, nation-building, construction of myths, invention of traditions

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Introduction

On the 17th of June 2018, Greece and the newly renamed state, North Macedonia, signed a landmark agreement to resolve a multi-year dispute about the name of the country, previously known as Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The dispute was initiated after the declaration of independence under the constitutional name of 'Macedonia' in 1991 (Tziampiris, 2012). The term 'Macedonia' was a core aspect of controversy because there is a geographical region in Northern Greece with the same name (Tziampiris, 2012). Therefore, the two countries reached an agreement, known as the 'Interim Accord', which was signed on 13 September 1995. This established the provisional name 'Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia' or F.Y.R.O.M. (Interim Agreement, 1995) until a solution was found to the name dispute, which was ultimately done in June 2018.

The name itself is linked with core aspects of national identity, culture and symbols which are the factors that define the long-lasting dispute (Tziampiris, 2012). In North Macedonia, the reference to 'Alexander the Macedonian', the proclamation of a 'Macedonian' language and the adoption of Vergina star as a national symbol also constitute essential elements in the dispute (Vangeli, 2011). 'Alexander the Great' or 'Alexander the Macedonian' was a King of the Ancient Macedonian Kingdom (Vangeli, 2011). Both terms are used to define this historical figure. The Vergina Star is an ancient symbol of the kingdom, which was discovered in Northern Greece in the late 1970s (Vangeli, 2011). North Macedonia has claimed an appropriation of the abovementioned figures and symbols linked to Greek antiquity (Danforth, 2010). Moreover, regarding the dispute, there has been a debate on the linkage between current North Macedonia and ancient Macedonia under the term of 'antiquisation'. The concepts of national identity and nation-building along with antiquisation are essential parts of this thesis regarding the case of North Macedonia. The term 'antiquisation' derives from the history of arts and marks "*the Renaissance practice of giving a city the appearance*

of ancient Rome or Athens through the introduction of structures organized in the classical mode” (Tzonis and Lefaivre, 1986, p. 263). In contemporary rhetoric in North Macedonia, antiquisation “*refers to the identitarian policies based on the assumption that there is a direct link between today's ethnic Macedonians and Ancient Macedonians*” (Vangeli, 2011, p. 13). The theory of antiquisation in this case is linked with the theory of myth construction (Schöpflin, 2000) and Hobsbawm, and Ranger’s (1992) theory of inventing traditions. Furthermore, antiquisation constitutes a governmental attempt in mobilising myths of ancient descent to create a sense of self-identification among the North Macedonian population with the ancient Macedonian Kingdom (Vangelov, 2019). Moreover, Vangeli (2011) refers to antiquisation as a process of reinterpreting history.

In light of these facts, the goal of this thesis is to shed light on the phenomenon of antiquisation and how this has been included in the nation-building process in North Macedonia. This will be conducted through the exploration and comprehension of statements from both the former Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and the President Gjorge Ivanov of North Macedonia during the period 2006-2016. Their target has been the empowerment of the narrative on identity markers, such as language, name, history and national identity itself, based on the construction of myths and traditions that derive from antiquity. Another target was to project an antique version of the North Macedonian identity (Vangelov, 2019). A critical reason towards the aforementioned political objectives was the Greek veto in North Macedonia’s bid for NATO membership in 2008 (Vangelov, 2019). Therefore, this thesis aims to tackle the question: How did the antiquisation contribute to the evolvement of the national narrative on identity markers in the case of North Macedonia? The current study will be based on a qualitative research design, with North Macedonia as the case study. Discourse analysis will be conducted on statements of the abovementioned politicians. Furthermore, this research will also explore if the population supported and self-identified with antiquisation. It will also be

presented how the statements evolved and how they were materialized into actions such as the project ‘Skopje 2014’. This architectural project is constituted in the building of monuments and statues that derive from antiquity, which is included as well in the evolvment of the national narrative in North Macedonia.

This research is posited within the academic literature regarding the challenging issue of the North Macedonian identity. This area, linked directly to antiquisation, is under-researched in the field of political sciences. This current research will utilise the works of Vangeli (2011) and Vangelov (2019) on the nation-building initiative, marked as antiquisation in their studies. Thus, this thesis shall attempt to fill the gap on the examination of antiquisation regarding the issue of the North Macedonian identity. The concepts of antiquisation, national identity and nation-building and their relationship amongst them will be assessed. Additionally, little attention has been given to the involvement of antiquisation in the statements of government officials. Therefore, this shall be achieved conducting a discourse analysis on statements from Nikola Gruevski and President Ivanov. In addition, this research can add to the understanding of a narrative based on antiquity and on an ancient descent to influence the national self-identification of a population. An emphasis will be placed on adding knowledge on how governmental policies and acts in the context of antiquisation can be mobilised as well in another national context to redefine the self-identification of a country.

Literature Review

Starting with the overview of the existing academic literature on North Macedonia, Agata Rogoś (2018) makes a significant contribution on the term of antiquisation linked to nation-building and national identity, carrying out a comparative analysis on the antiquisation processes in North Macedonia, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan and how visual constructs shape political conceptions. She claims that in these countries, the nation-building processes were

demonstrated through the transformation of the public place, influenced by the concept of antiquity and a new understanding of history (Rogoś, 2018, p. 116). Rogos focused on the analysis of national systems of symbols in the public spaces of the capitals of those three countries and how they transformed in the post-socialist era based on the construction of a new national iconography. Through this transformation, in her work, she indicated the vital relationship among architecture, power and national identity reconstruction in terms of national ideologies. She makes a high contribution in the existing academic literature interpretation that arguments based on history contributed to expose the previous control over particular territory through the power structure (Rogoś, 2018).

A study that communicates with the work of Rogoś (2018) is the study of Gori (2014), because both of the authors refer to the process of redefinition of national identity through a transformation of public spaces with buildings and monuments deriving from antiquity. Gori conducts research on the relationship between nationalism and archaeology, which examine how Greece, ex-Yugoslavia and North Macedonia mobilised archaeology to construct national identity. She adds that archaeology contributed to the empowerment of feelings of belonging and continuity in terms of national identity. Gori (2014) elaborates on the concept of nation-building linked to the cultural appropriation of ancient remnants from the government of North Macedonia to trace the roots of its national identity back to ancient times. Gori (2014) expands the existing knowledge on North Macedonian identity through the concept of archaeology as a vital tool towards its redefinition.

Moreover, the work of Sazdovski (2015) provides another dimension on the nation-building policy, which is labelled as antiquisation, in the case of North Macedonia. He applies the concept of social security dilemma on the nation-building project, which was initiated after North Macedonia's declaration of independence from Yugoslavia. This policy has been mobilised as a response to deal with identity threats. The identity threats derive from external

and internal factors. The external factors are Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece. The internal factor is the ethnic Albanian population in the country. Both factors are posing as disputes regarding characteristics of its identity (Sazdovski, 2015). Additionally, he refers to the project 'Skopje 2014' as the embodiment of the narrative based on antiquity. Nevertheless, Sazdovski (2015) does not give the proper focus to the multidimensional nature of antiquisation but deals with the element of security connected to nation-building in the case of North Macedonia.

On antiquisation and its involvement in the project 'Skopje 2014', Kubierna (2012) also states that the narrative on antiquity is formulated through the construction of buildings and monuments. The goal is to project the linear continuity of North Macedonian identity and the nation's perpetual existence since ancient times. In addition to the previous studies on antiquisation, Tziampiris (2011) refers to the concept of antiquisation. He makes a review on claims and criticisms over the name dispute between Greece and North Macedonia along with Greece's role on that issue. His main argument is that academics and politicians in North Macedonia are wrong to think that the best policy to strengthen the national identity is antiquisation, combined with the construction of national myths and irredentist claims over Greek history. This policy is wrong for North Macedonia to achieve political objectives such as the Euro-atlantic integration (Tziampiris, 2011).

Additional research surrounding North Macedonian Identity is centred around the anthropological approach. Danforth (1993) conducted research on the construction of national identity, where the Macedonian question could be seen as a competition between two conflicting nationalist ideologies of North Macedonia and Greece. In both cases, the arguments on the racial and cultural ties with the ancient Macedonians are the products of the nation-building process. Through a historical retrospection, he indicates that the identity of ancient Macedonians is a matter of contest to the present. In anthropological terms, the conflict between them is marked by the formation of two distinct national identities, which are shaped by the

same raw materials and national symbols (Danforth, 1993). However, his reference to an existent 'Macedonian minority' in Greece is a controversial issue because there is not such a recognised or even existed minority in Greece and raises confusions over his subjectivity on the topic.

Other researches that communicate with Danforth's study in anthropological terms are the works of Cowan (2000) and Poulton (1995), which deserve attention, in reference to identity issues. They also deal with the construction of national identity in an anthropological perspective. Their historical and anthropological approaches assist in discovering the core causes of many problems that apply to the construction of the North Macedonian identity. Cowan's (2000) "Macedonia: the politics of identity and difference" introduces a broader view of North Macedonians as a community, not only in their country but also in Greece and foreign countries, presenting the existence of a 'Macedonian' nation, distinct from the Greek geographical province of Macedonia. Poulton (1995) conducts more generalized research on the issue of the identity of the North Macedonians. He makes causal links between several historical periods and identity change, stating that the national identity of the country is receptive to alteration taking into consideration the particular rulers of the region. His work is valuable because we can measure the development of the region, both geographically and nationally since the antiquity.

Theoretical Framework and Concepts

The concept of antiquisation is the most important for this research (Georgievski, 2009). It reflects a process of redefinition and reconstruction of a nation, tracing its origin back to antiquity. In the contemporary debate, the concept represents the link between contemporary North Macedonians and Ancient Macedonians (Vangeli, 2011). Antiquisation was included in the nation-building process of North Macedonia during the Yugoslav era through references to

Alexander the Great as the most important figure of the national history (Vangeli, 2011). The image of that aforementioned figure was revised by the ‘Macedonian’ diaspora, along with the use of ancient symbols to define themselves, which initiated the process of antiquisation in the country (Vangeli, 2011). Troebst (2003) refers that since 1991 the government of VMRO-DPMNE¹ party in North Macedonia attempted to create a prehistoric narrative based on the connection with Alexander the Great. The adoption of ancient symbols such as the ancient Greek symbol named as ‘Star of Vergina’ were a core part of the government policies in the North Macedonian self-identification with ancient Macedonia (Vangeli, 2011, p. 17). These policies also included constant references on the ancient Macedonian Kingdom as part of ‘Macedonian’ national history and the presentation of a ‘Greater Macedonia’ in maps and academic manuals (Vangeli, 2011, p. 17). Vangeli (2011) states that antiquisation in the contemporary North Macedonian discourse was an efficient tool for political mobilization.

Vangelov (2019) states that the antiquisation project was “both a domestic and international assertion of Macedonian's name, identity, and history” (Vangelov, 2019, p. 203). He claims the government-adopted policies aimed to redefine the national narrative on identity, which is reflected on the “national renaissance” project ‘Skopje 2014’ (Vangelov, 2019, p. 203, 214). One of the main reasons for this policy shift was the Greek veto in North Macedonia's membership bid in NATO Summit in 2008. To sum up, the narrative linked to antiquisation signified the reaction both to the Greek policies to undermine the uniqueness of a 'Macedonian' identity and the requests to alter the name of the country (Vangelov, 2019).

Kubiena (2012) also refers to antiquisation as a recent phenomenon. It is embodied in the project ‘Skopje 2014’ (Kubiena, 2012). He argues that the government under ex-Prime Minister Gruevski pursued a political project of urban development of the capital Skopje with

¹ Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (Troebst, 2003)

monuments and buildings deriving from antiquity and medieval times until today. The core goal was to construct a narrative of Macedonian identity and destiny, by drawing continuity from both ancient times and medieval times to the era of Macedonia's attempt to achieve nationhood until the contemporary time of the city's constructed image (Kubiena, 2012, p. 96).

Gori (2014) also refers to her work in the term of antiquisation, claiming that North Macedonia has also followed antiquisation policy through archaeology and heritage. Archaeology is essential in the construction of narratives of national unity and cohesion in the case of North Macedonia (Gori, 2014). Through her work, contributes to the existing knowledge on antiquisation and discusses the divisive views on the antiquisation policy, which results from the lack of support from several archaeologists and historians on the antiquisation policy pursued by the previous government. This research will communicate more with the approaches and definitions provided by Vangeli (2011) and Vangelov (2019) on antiquisation. This can be seen as an attempt to assert North Macedonia's identity, name and history both domestically and internationally, which is embodied in the project 'Skopje 2014'. They examine antiquisation from its emergence until its materialisation in social and political level. Moreover, they encompass the main idea of antiquisation better than other approaches. Therefore, Vangeli's (2011) and Vangelov's (2019) contribution on the term of antiquisation are both valuable in the academic literature and research, as well as integral to the specific case of the redesign of the national identity in North Macedonia.

Along with antiquisation, national identity is also included in the attempt to connect the fate and existence of the state to ancient Macedonia. Antiquisation in the current study is directly linked to national identity as particularly the theory of national myth construction of Schöpflin (2000). This theory is linked to the attempt to redefine and reconstruct a nation, tracing back to antiquity through the policies made. In that case, the figure of Alexander the Great is highlighted as one of the most important examples to connect the roots of the modern

state of North Macedonia with antiquity. The theory of Schöpflin implies that nations tend to mobilise myths. For instance, the myth of Alexander the Great as the ancestor of the North Macedonian citizens is mobilised in order to create a narrative on the origin of the national identity. Moreover, the attempt aims to signify the divide between 'us', the members of one national origin, and 'them', members of another community. In the current case, 'us' is considered to be North Macedonians and 'them' are the Greeks.

Building on the existing research about the divide between 'us' and 'them' in the context of national identity, another theory that is useful is that of Triandafyllidou's (1998) theory on national identity. She presents the dimensions of the 'outsider' and the 'insider' in a community in the process of redefinition of group identity. Triandafyllidou (1998) argues that the members of one group have some common characteristics such as "language or dress code" which define their identity (p. 596). The 'outsiders' speak another language or have a "different dress style", therefore they are different from the 'insider' group (Triandafyllidou, 1998, p. 596). The thesis will follow Triandafyllidou's and Schöpflin's approaches to examine how the relationship between the 'insider' and the 'outsider' or 'other' of a community is incorporated into the national narrative towards the redefinition of national identity.

Another theory that is integral in our examination of the concept of national identity derives from Berg-Schlosser et al. (2011). It refers to the concept of national identity as vague and disputatious. Depending on the context if it is personal, social, cultural and national, it can have different meanings. The definition is given in Berg-Schlosser et al. (2011) is described in our words as a unique form of identity, either collective or political which constitutes of a self-portrait dependent on specific presumptions about common attributes such as culture, history, language, subjective sentiments of belongingness, as well as citizenship (p. 1645). Moreover, Smith (1991) argues that national identity is a multifaceted concept, expanded to incorporate a particular language, feelings, and symbols. In the case of North Macedonia, there were official

statements on the historical uniqueness of the 'Macedonia's' identity linked to Alexander the Great (Ilieski, 2017). Emile Durkheim explains that "the lineation of an 'in-group' must necessarily entail its demarcation from numerous 'out-groups', and that demarcation is an active and ongoing part of identity formation" (1964, as cited in Neumann 1999, p. 4).

This research fits with Schöpflin's taxonomy of national myths and especially the seventh and the eighth types of myths ('myths of foundation and myths of ethnogenesis and antiquity respectively') enhance the capabilities of the current thesis to explain the narrative and policies used by Nikola Gruevski and President Ivanov (Schöpflin, 2000, p. 90-98). Schöpflin's (2000) theory on national myths construction along with the theory of invention and mass production of traditions (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992) indicate that antiquisation constitutes an attempt of re-evaluating and re-defining history. The theory of myth construction is embodied in the project 'Skopje 2014', which is the tangible component of antiquisation. The general function of the myth construction of Schöpflin (2000) is to crystallize the self-identification of a community, North Macedonia, and enables the overlap of the older identity (the old Yugoslav one while being part of the Yugoslav federation) from a new one, the 'ancient Macedonian'. The myth functions as a tool of projecting an ancient past of a community, such as North Macedonia in this case, imagining itself as a descendant from ancient Macedonia.

Apart from national identity, the concept of nation-building is integral in our research to understand antiquisation in depth. It reflects the policy of North Macedonian politicians to trace their origin and ancestry back to the past, influenced by the process of antiquisation. The theory of invention and mass production of traditions (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992) along with the definitions by Berg-Schlosser et al (2011) are crucial elements for the theory of antiquisation in order to explain more accurately the narrative evolvement and the content of politicians' statements. Anthony D. Smith (1991) presents the idea that nations are in historical terms embedded in pre-modern ethnic ties, memories, and heritage. Miroslav Hroch (1996)

discusses ties of economic, political, linguistic, cultural, religious, geographical and historical character and defines them as 'objective relationships' (p. 79). These relationships affect the group's consciousness and play a major role in the nation-building process. He utilises many examples of these relationships. However, the few that will be discussed in this case are: a memory of a mutual past, considered as the group's fate and a consistency of ties related to culture and language, which include a higher level of social communication inside the group than outside of it (Hroch 1996, p. 79).

Berg-Schlosser et al (2011, p. 1646), present nation-building as a 'process' to formulate a collective identity in order to claim power in a particular territory. It alludes to existent 'institutions, customs and traditions' enabling the redefinition of 'national characteristics' (Berg-Schlosser et al, 2011, p. 1646). The nation-building is dependent on 'values and beliefs' that reinforce the potential for a new legitimate state (Berg-Schlosser et al., 2011, p. 1646). Also, in the definition of nation-building, it is essential to mention the theory of invention and mass production of traditions (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992). The reflection of the theory in the case of North Macedonia lies on the process of building monuments of ancient figures such as of Alexander the Great and Philip II and battles. Moreover, celebrating national holidays such as Xantica festival is done to reinforce the perception of continuity of the North Macedonian identity since ancient times.

Moreover, the current study of particular strategies in the discourse analysis theory of Wodak et al. (1999) will be employed to assist us in the process of understanding the attempt of particular politicians to articulate and construct their narrative on the concepts examined. Wodak et al (1999) referred to these strategies as "constructive", "transformative" and strategies of "justification" (Wodak et al, 1999, p. 33, 36). The constructive strategies will be recognised by the use of discourse and words that emphasize common features and underline unity, similarity, sameness and togetherness (Wodak et al, 1993). The transformative strategies

will be recognised by phrases and words that are relevant to the “warning against the loss of national autonomy” (Wodak et al, 1999, p. 40). The strategies of justification will be recognised through emphasizing the difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’. This study will also focus on the use of language in the discourses. Particularly, the use of structure “we” from Wodak et al (1999) will be considered in the process to identify North Macedonians in the national narrative that signifies unity and sameness with the antiquity.

Research Design

1. Case selection

The case of North Macedonia is essential to the contemporary understanding of antiquisation and how national identity can be reconstructed through a narrative evolvement of political actors. The current case enriches the academic literature on the understanding of a country where its politicians pursued a narrative based on ancient myths and traditions.

The idea of a distinct ‘Macedonian’ statehood and nationhood along with a ‘Macedonian’ ethno-nation status arose in the course of the World War II, which resulted in the declaration of a Macedonian state or republic in 1944 as part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Vangelov, 2019, p. 207). The nation-building attempt was undertaken by official scientific and cultural institutions in the state during the Yugoslav era. The first act in the process of nation-building was the proclamation of ‘Macedonian’ language as the official language of the state along with the authorship and publication of the nation's history (Vangeli, 2011, p. 16). During the same era, the concept of Ancient Macedonian origin was included in the nation-building policy. There were references to antiquity, such as the reference to ‘Alexander the Macedonian’ in history books and the chapter on Ancient Macedonia in the book “History of the Macedonian People” (Vangeli, 2011, p. 16). Moreover, the ‘Institute of

National History' was established in 1948 with the mission of making and remaking the myths on ethnonational self-identification, which was considered as high national interest (Vangeli, 2011, p. 16). The myths had also a big influence in the development of the 'Macedonian' diaspora during the 1980s, which mobilised ancient Macedonian symbols to define themselves abroad (Vangeli, 2011).

The proclamation of a unique Macedonian identity and language has been contested by Greece, claiming appropriation of identity markers such as the name of the country itself, Macedonia and national symbols, such as the star of Vergina (Vangeli, 2011). The star of Vergina is a Greek symbol from the time of Ancient Macedonian Kingdom, which was discovered in Northern Greece in the late 1970s (Danforth, 2010, p. 587). However, the 'Macedonian' self-identification in ethnonational terms has been an issue of controversy among North Macedonians, Bulgarians, and Greeks. The 'Macedonian' language is considered a Bulgarian dialect, according to Bulgarians. Greece has posed a variety of arguments to justify its dissatisfaction. Greece has claimed that this state was an invention of the Yugoslav President, Josip Broz Tito to express "irredentist claims on Greece's share of geographical Macedonia" (Vangelov, 2019, p. 207). Another argument is that North Macedonians, deriving from the Slavic tribes that settled 1000 years after Alexander the Great died, do not have any circumstantial evidence to call themselves 'Macedonians' (Danforth, 2010, p. 576).

The myths of ancient origin started to gain ground when Nikola Gruevski was elected Prime Minister in 2006. According to Vangeli (2011) and Vangelov (2019), he proceeded to actions with the ultimate goal to connect modern-day North Macedonia with ancient Macedonia during 2006 and 2007. These led Greece to veto North Macedonia's bid for NATO membership in the NATO Summit of 2008. Despite the veto, the government under Nikola Gruevski continued these acts and pursued a cultural policy to distinguish the uniqueness of the national identity of North Macedonia from that of neighbours, embedded in the project 'Skopje 2014'. The current

paper will focus on both the President and the Prime Minister because they were elected to the highest positions in the political hierarchy. Moreover, they are the ones who expressed official views of the country regarding national identity, history, origin, and ancient Macedonia.

The ultimate goal of the Government has been the recognition of the link between modern North Macedonians and ancient Macedonians. The project 'Skopje 2014' was a vital instrument of the governmental policy and the final product of the narrative shift on the national identity. This thesis is going to shed light on these statements and examine how they materialized into actions.

2. Methods of data and operationalisation

The research design that is chosen is qualitative design in our case study, focused on North Macedonia. In order to answer the research question and measure the concepts, the choice for the method of discourse analysis has resulted in a thorough search for relevant documents. Statements, made by Nikola Gruevski and Gjorge Ivanov between 2006-2016 will be of high importance in this work.² The Greek veto in North Macedonia's application in NATO Summit in 2008 was a critical factor for the empowerment of the discourses relevant to antiquisation, national identity and nation-building. The table below projects the terms that this thesis will look at in order to examine the concepts. For instance, on antiquisation, this research will examine statements that refer to the name, history, 'ancestors' of the country as well as to use of words relevant to the we-structure. Furthermore, references to the divide between 'us' versus 'them', the 'internal and the external other' as well as defining adjectives for the latter will be examined regarding national identity. On national identity, the 'we-structure' and references to institutions such as NATO and the EU will be also studied. To conclude,

² The statements are acquired mainly from Koneska (2011), which derive from the VMRO-DPMNE party's official website and other sources.

statements that refer to the name, language and the project ‘Skopje 2014’ will be explored concerning nation-building.

Table 1: Operationalisation of the concepts in the statements

| Concepts | Terms of examination |
|-------------------|--|
| Antiquisation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● History ● Ancestors ● We-structure (use of words such as us, our, ours) ● Name |
| National identity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Us vs them ● Internal-external other ● Defining adjectives for the internal/external other ● references to Europe and NATO ● We-structure (use of words such as us, our, ours) |
| Nation-building | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Language ● Name ● ‘Skopje 2014’ |

Additionally, this research aims to examine the concepts of national identity and nation-building focusing on the use of particular words and phrases that the political actors mentioned in their discourses. The discursive strategies identified by Wodak et al (1999) will be highly important to examine the possible realisation of their discourses. Moreover, in the examination

of those concepts, this study will present and deconstruct statements that examine the role that an external ‘other’ plays for another group to establish stable group identity. In the current case, in the face of the dispute over the name and the national identity with Greece, the external ‘other’, which provided the cause for discursive interventions from political actors regarding the national identity of North Macedonia, was Greece. The second category will include statements that present the ‘internal’ other in the narrative of government officials on national identity and actions taken under the context of antiquisation, which in that case is the opposition.

On the concept of antiquisation, this thesis will examine statements that refer to identity markers and antiquity by looking at the ‘we’ structure that politicians used to connect the fate of North Macedonia with ancient Macedonia. The statements aimed to prove the historical legitimacy to identify North Macedonians as descendants of ancient Macedonia. Regarding the realisation of their attempt, this research will also consider the approval rating that the public gives to the cultural project of ‘Skopje 2014’ and by polls examining which is the most important figure and most defining time period in the development of the North Macedonian identity. The polls derive from a study conducted by the Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities Skopje (ISSHS) in September 2013. This study has two components. First, it is based on the results of a national poll that measures the support of the population of antiquisation policy undertaken by the government. This policy materialised into the architectural project of ‘Skopje 2014’ to form a narrative about the national identity in North Macedonia (Kozolova, 2013). This is based on a desk analysis of EU institutions’ official policy documents, statements and decisions regarding the impact of the proposed project on the EU integration process for North Macedonia (Kolozova, 2013). It was concluded that the EU integration process was not affected significantly by the ‘Skopje 2014’ project, but mostly by the name dispute between Greece and North Macedonia. Moreover, this study stated that

both the majority of the entire population and the ethnic North Macedonians do not support the continuity of the antiquisation project ‘Skopje 2014’. Furthermore, the study indicated that North Macedonians identify more with the Slavic heritage of the country, rather than antiquity (Kozolova, 2013).

Nikola Gruevski and Gjorge Ivanov were selected as case studies because they were in the highest positions of the political hierarchy. Being in the highest political positions, they proceeded to make statements in order to empower a narrative on the name, national identity and origin of the country linked to antiquity. Nikola Gruevski, the North Macedonian representative in the NATO Summit in Bucharest, experienced the veto on his country’s membership bid.

The specific period between 2006-2016 was chosen because it encompasses the administration of Nikola Gruevski, that ran from 2006-2016. Furthermore, President Gjorge Ivanov proceeded to make statements during the same period. This was done as President which he served from 2009 until May 2019. This period of time is also significant because this was the period that antiquisation was strengthened in North Macedonia. This was achieved through actions under the label of antiquisation, embodied in the project ‘Skopje 2014’ (Vangeli, 2011).

First antiquisation acts, its consequences in relation with Greece and the importance of NATO-EU membership

The importance of myths from ancient origin started to prevail when Nikola Gruevski won the parliamentary elections in 2006 with the political party VMRO-DPMNE and became the Prime Minister of the country. After his win, he started to promote the figure of Alexander the Great as the father of the modern nation of North Macedonia. The Prime Minister also

proceeded to reinforce an attempt to connect modern-day North Macedonia with ancient Macedonia under the influence of antiquisation according to Vangeli (2011) and Vangelov (2019). At the end of 2006, he decided to rename the international airport of the capital Skopje to “Alexander the Great airport”. This is a clear example of frustration over the Greek demands to refrain from adopting any symbols that derive from Greek antiquity (Danforth, 2010).

Moreover, he undertook actions that depicted the process of inventing traditions. According to the theory presented by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1992) invented tradition is “*a set of practices, typically governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual of symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate specific values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past*” (p.1). The following examples show the realisation of the theory of inventing traditions in North Macedonia. The first one is the ‘rebirth’ of the ancient Macedonian holiday named ‘Xantica’ in 2007, where the participants are dressed in a way that corresponds to the ‘phalanges’ of the army of Alexander the Great. It was an initiative implemented by the youth segment of the VMRO-DPMNE party (Vangeli, 2011, p. 19). Another festivity is the celebration of ‘Ilinden Uprising’ on 2nd of August, where traditions and symbols that were relevant to the resistance against the Ottoman empire are reinvented and have been replaced by traditions and symbols that resemble the era of the ancient Macedonian Kingdom (Vangeli, 2011, p. 19). Additionally, the North Macedonian diaspora in Australia presented the dance named ‘oro’, influenced by the abovementioned theory (Vangeli, 2011, p. 19). The diaspora redesigned this folk dance to illustrate a battle between ancient Macedonians and ancient Greeks with the participation of the character of Alexander the Great (Vangeli, 2011).

Nikola Gruevski, took office in 2006, has swayed to identity politics, promoting a narrative that derived from antiquity. In this attempt, both theories of the construction of myths and inventing traditions were mobilised to reinforce the North Macedonian identity that aimed

to connect with ancient Macedonian nationhood (Vangeli, 2011). Gruevski decided the renaming of the main airport in the country and the reshaping of cultural events (Vangeli, 2011). Greece reacted to Gruevski's approach on the origin of national identity in North Macedonia, expressing the view that North Macedonia will adopt an irredentist approach in the future (Tziampiris 2012). Subsequently, Greece exercised its right to veto North Macedonia's bid for NATO membership in the NATO Summit in Bucharest. It occurred in 2008 when Albania, Croatia and North Macedonia were invited as candidate members in the alliance through the "NATO Membership Action Plan" (Vangelov, 2019, p. 212).

Currently, it is prudent to refer to the importance of both NATO and the EU potential membership for North Macedonia. The prospective integration in both NATO and the EU has been one of the most important strategic goals for North Macedonia and leverage for economic progress (Vangelov, 2019; Vangeli, 2011). North Macedonia has also been a participating country in initiatives and activities under the auspices of NATO (Vangelov, 2019). Initially, Greece supported the North Macedonia's application to international organisations such as NATO and the EU, especially during Greek's presidency of the EU in 2003 (Vangelov, 2019). During this period, Greece promoted the European integration of Western Balkans countries, including North Macedonia (Vangeli, 2011). However, the ongoing name dispute between the two countries and the use of ancient Macedonian symbols and traditions by North Macedonian governmental institutions provoked Greece. Greece decided to veto the North Macedonia's aspirations for membership in NATO and the EU until a final solution was found regarding the name controversy (Vangelov, 2019). The Greek veto was viewed as a total failure of foreign policy and diplomacy by the North Macedonians, which hurt their 'ego' and augmented sentiments of defeat (Koneska, 2011).

Statements of both the President and the Prime Minister on national identity, antiquity and nation-building

1. Statements on national identity

a. Statements on the 'internal other'

As it has already been mentioned, the Greek veto to future integration of North Macedonia into NATO and the EU in 2008 was a determining factor for both Nikola Gruevski and Gjorge Ivanov to strengthen the narrative on identity markers (Vangeli, 2011; Vangelov, 2019). The goal was to connect modern-day North Macedonia with ancient Macedonia. Therefore, this thesis will examine statements from these politicians and see how their narrative evolved on terms of self-identification with ancient times. This paper aims to divide statements that refer to the 'internal' and the 'external' 'other' in the process of declaring the 'Macedonian' unique identity. Moreover, statements on nation-building will follow. To conclude, statements about the historical legitimacy to connect ancient Macedonia with current North Macedonia will also be presented (Koneska, 2011). Discourse analysis will be carried out along with the assistance of antiquisation, which will provide insight into the content of the statements. Thus, a further aim is to examine if these statements were materialised into actions since Nikola Gruevski came to power in 2006.

President Ivanov and Prime Minister Gruevski, in their statements about the name dispute and the failure in NATO Summit, included the constitutional name and the identity. Nikola Gruevski in December 2008 characterised them as "*high national interests*" and not as "*political party interests*" (Koneska, 2011, p. 13). Through his previous claim, Nikola Gruevski attempted to underline what are the national interests. Any actors or policies that

stand against national interests meant that they act against the nation and its citizens. These actors are labelled as the ‘internal other’, meaning the politicians coming from the opposition, against which the process of creating a stable North Macedonian identity occurs (Koneska, 2011, p. 13). Moreover, Nikola Gruevski in September 2008, claimed that the opposition acts in favour of others’ interests.

On the same topic over the role of the opposition, President Ivanov stated, “*I find that those politicians who are playing with artificial constructs such as ‘antiquisation’ and ‘slavisation’ because of daily politics are politically irresponsible to say the least, and possibly also with evil intentions*” (Koneska, 2011, p. 14). He accused the opposition of disapproving governmental policies, which proceeded with the construction of statues and monuments and use of ancient symbols that derive from ancient Macedonian history. Taking into consideration the previous statements from President Ivanov about the utmost importance of the name as well as the identity as national symbols, any threat over them is a threat over high national interests. The role of the ‘internal other’ is necessary for the process of establishing a unified identity. In the case of North Macedonia, the government under Nikola Gruevski was the actor that attempted to project the opposition as the ‘internal other’, who poses a threat to the national interests of the country.

b. Statements on the ‘external other’

In the narrative evolvement on national identity and origin of modern-day North Macedonia, Nikola Gruevski and Gjorge Ivanov also made statements involving an ‘external other’ over North Macedonian identity. Koneska (2011) claims that an ‘external other’ is valuable in the process of creating a stable identity of a community (p. 15). The presence of an ‘external other’ assists in drawing boundaries that construct a stable group identity. In this paper, the ‘external other’ that mobilised North Macedonian politicians to get involved in the

discourses on identity markers was a neighbouring country, Greece. In the discourse at the political level, Greece was presented by President Ivanov in April 2009 as *“mighty and difficult opponent”* for Macedonia, which aims to *“step over the will, identity and dignity of Macedonian people”* and demands an alternation of North Macedonia’s constitutional name (Koneska, 2011, p. 15).

In North Macedonia, the discourse on Greece was constructed in such a way to create a sentiment of threat in the population. This was created by the behaviour of Greece, which demanded changes in core elements of the country. One of the adjectives that the North Macedonian politicians used to present Greece regarding its stance on the name dispute was *“irrational”* (Koneska, 2011, p. 15). In April 2008, after the Greek veto in the NATO Summit, Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski stated that *“in Bucharest Macedonia had strong support for membership. However, Greece’s irrationality and insistence to block us ... prevented us from reaching our goals”* (Koneska, 2011, p. 15). Likewise, President Gjorge Ivanov in March 2009 marked the name dispute with Greece as *“irrational”*, which has been considered as an obstacle to the country’s integration in the Euro-atlantic zone of influence (Koneska, 2011, p. 15). Later, in the same year, he stated: *“Despite all, not getting a date to start EU accession negotiations revealed the true nature of the problem. [It is] the irrational resistance of the political elites from our southern neighbour to Macedonia’s accession to EU and NATO”* (Koneska, 2011, p. 16).

Through the presentation of Greece and its politicians as ‘irrational’, North Macedonian politicians attempted to present their country as the reasonable and rational actor in the name dispute between the two countries. North Macedonian politicians implied through their discursive interventions that the combination of might and irrationality of Greece was a significant element in the unfair Greek veto in North Macedonia’s bid for NATO membership. The might and power of Greece was a result of the country's membership in organisations such

as the EU and NATO. President Gjorge Ivanov in May 2010 claimed that “*arguments for the name, identity, and language are on our side, power is on the Greek side*” (Koneska, 2011, p. 16). Moreover, Nikola Gruevski in December 2009 stated that “*this problem will be solved when the use of the argument of might will stop and we will talk with arguments of reason*” (Koneska, 2011, p. 16). Through these statements, these two politicians wanted to underline the dichotomy between the good (us) and the evil (them) in the name dispute.

The victory in the negotiations over the name dispute was the next target that needed to be accomplished according to North Macedonian politicians (Koneska, 2011). Ljubisav Ivanov, the leader of the Socialist Party in North Macedonia in 2008, announced that “*everyone who opposes our identity and our name will be defeated, and should, therefore, keep away from the Macedonian name and Macedonians*” (Koneska, 2011, p. 17). This was a member of the coalition government under Gruevski, who referred to the importance of the identity and the name for the country. The President and the Prime Minister were not the only ones that made statements relevant to this analysis. It is claimed that the statement made from Ljubisav Ivanov was targeted to both the ‘external and the internal other’ in the name dispute. This is because in previous statements that this paper has referred to, both Nikola Gruevski and Gjorge Ivanov condemned the opposition of serving foreign interests against the name and identity of the country. They have tried to depict the North Macedonian side as the rational, reasonable one and the Greek counterpart as the ‘external other’, which demands unfair changes to the designated ‘red lines’ of North Macedonia in the negotiation, such as the constitutional name, identity, and origin.

Moreover, Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski in February 2009, in the issue of entering the EU and linking the European identity with the North Macedonian identity, included the Greek factor. He claimed that “*it would be absurd if the price for entry in Europe is something directly opposite to European values – abandoning one’s own identity*” (Koneska, 2011, p.

12). He wanted to clarify that North Macedonia will not refrain from any references or acts that try to connect the current state with the ancient Macedonian heritage. He indicates that it would be unreasonable for North Macedonia to be prevented from defending their identity, which is in opposition to 'European values'. The Prime Minister is posing North Macedonia as sharing a common European identity. Moreover, this thesis argues that North Macedonia will not obey to the Greek demands and withdraw claims of history of ancient Macedonia in order to enter the EU or NATO in the future.

The political discourse in North Macedonia promoted the construction of a new narrative on national identity connected with an 'internal' and an 'external' other. There was an extensive use of the adjective 'irrational' to describe Greece both on the negotiations on the name dispute and its behavior in the NATO Summit. This fact, along with the attempt to paint North Macedonia as the rational and reasonable side of the issue, were political endeavours to encourage the population and empower its support of the governmental policies over the name issue. The use of words, relevant to the 'we-structure', such as our and ours while referring to identity and language, was also mobilised in the realisation of this attempt.

The theory of national identity with the role of the 'other', presented by Triandafyllidou (2010), can shed light also on the statements over the 'internal' and the 'external' other. The role of the 'other' is linked to the shaping of the national identity of a group. National Identity signifies the differences among different groups and identity markers such as language, religion or culture which are the elements to indicate the differentiation. North Macedonian politicians made statements to differentiate themselves with both the opposition and with Greece. Their target was to assert the national identity linked to antiquity in a double-edged relationship. However, the politicians proceeded to actions that are related to history to legitimise the connection of the North Macedonian identity and origin back to Ancient Macedonia.

2. Statements on antiquity

After the reinforcement of the narrative on national identity along with its definition with an ‘external’ and an ‘internal other’, both the Prime Minister and the President of North Macedonia proceeded to trace the origin of the country back to antiquity and history. Another goal was to acquire legitimacy for their discourses and actions to empower the narrative on national identity itself. Nikola Gruevski, one month after the Greek veto in NATO Summit, in May 2008, stated: “*History is cyclical. History repeats itself. The battles of the past generations are repeated, and so are the challenges that our people have faced, their successes as well as their failure. But, the dreams are repeated, too! The dreams of our ancestors! Those are our dreams and their battles are our battles too*” (Koneska, 2011, p. 18). Through this statement, using phrases such as ‘our dreams’ and ‘our ancestors’, he wanted to indicate that history repeats itself, after the diplomatic failure that North Macedonia experienced in the NATO Summit. Therefore, the failures and the suffering in the present for North Macedonians constitute a repetition of the failures and the suffering that happened in the past for their ancestors. This argument communicates the claims of Koneska (2011). In that sense, they share the same dreams and goals and they are a single national community, existing continuously from the past. Therefore, the failure to achieve membership status in NATO Summit in 2008 should not be seen as a total failure, but as a normal consequence of the history of the nation. Successes would replace the failures. To conclude, the abovementioned statement reflects the theory of myth constructions, through which those key politicians claimed in their discourses a clear connection with their ‘ancestors’, meaning Ancient Macedonians.

President Gjorge Ivanov also made a statement on the same context in his inauguration speech in May 2009. He would refer to an “*obligation*” set by the “*great ideals*” and actions by their “*ancestors*” and to a “*commitment to the future of our successors*” (Koneska, 2011, p. 19). The President added that what politicians can do is dependent on their obligations to take

action for the actualisation of their ancestors' ideals. The ultimate goal of this statement was to signify unity and continuity among North Macedonians of the past, present, and future. Moreover, Nikola Gruevski in September 2008 stated, “*We are for NATO and for the EU. But we can't go any further than what history allows us and what the majority of our citizens allow*” (Koneska, 2011, p. 19). He claims that the limits to the political actions regarding the integration into NATO and the EU were set by the citizens of the country and its history. The alteration of the country's constitutional name, along with the ‘Macedonian’ identity and origin are factors that cannot be realised because of historical obligations to the ancestors and the modern-day citizens of the country.

3. Statements on nation-building

After the examination of these statements on national identity and antiquity, it is fruitful to refer to statements and facts that are relevant to the concept of nation-building. Nation-building is a process that is linked with a particular name, language, memories and heritage (Smith, 1991). The name and language of the state appeared more often in the political discourse after the diplomatic failure in NATO summit which can be viewed in several statements of Nikola Gruevski and Gjorge Ivanov (Koneska, 2011). They made statements related to the name and the language in order to create a common narrative among the citizens of the country tied to ancient Macedonia. For instance, in May 2008, Nikola Gruevski stated that “*language is one of the basic elements that define one nation. It is a means of self-identification and distinction from other nations, through which national and cultural distinctiveness is expressed; a means that unites and personifies certain population*” (Koneska, 2011, p. 8). Moreover, President Ivanov, in March 2009, made a statement about the significance of the name, claiming that “*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” (Koneska, 2011, p. 8).

The name and language were upgraded to high priorities of the nation since they were marked from Nikola Gruevski in May 2008 as “*national interests*” and “*red lines in negotiations with Greece*” (Koneska, 2011, p. 9). The politicians in North Macedonia mobilised the terms of language and the name for multiple reasons. For instance, a core reason was to signify unity and togetherness around those identity markers, as unifying common features with the past of the Macedonian Kingdom (Koneska, 2011, p. 9). The language also differentiates the ethnic North Macedonians from the significant ethnic Albanian minority within the country. Therefore, the language is a unifying factor for North Macedonians and not Albanians, which Koneska (2011) also claims. Moreover, Hobsbawm and Ranger’s (1992) theory of inventing traditions can shed light into the nation-building process in North Macedonia. For instance, the reappearance of an ancient Macedonian holiday named ‘Xantica’, the redefinition of the commemoration day for the Uprising in Ilinden and the creation of a national dance named ‘oro’. These were included in the nation-building project to empower the historical narrative in North Macedonia (Vangeli, 2011, p. 19).

Furthermore, an architectural project that included building monuments and statues within a historical context named as ‘Skopje 2014’ was part of the nation-building process (Vangeli, 2011). Nikola Gruevski described the core target of this process through this project. He stated in 2015 that the project “will strengthen the national identity of Macedonians and it will change the national institutions of Macedonia” (Blazhevski, 2016). It is argued that the nation-building process through the project ‘Skopje 2014’ is directly linked to antiquisation and national identity, because it is a national attempt to connect the fate of the country with the glorious past of Ancient Macedonia.

Antiquisation acts after the Greek veto in NATO Summit in 2008 and the project ‘Skopje 2014’

The statements related to antiquity, nation-building and national identity are discursive attempts from the two key politicians to link the fate of the country with ancient Macedonia. This thesis communicates Vangeli's (2011) and Vangelov's (2019) claims that the narrative of a glorious past of the modern state of North Macedonia has been materialised into actions. This can be seen through governmental actions that were taken and the 'Skopje 2014 project'. It included renaming streets and buildings, constructing monuments and statues of historical figures among others.

Before the initiation of the project, the government of Nikola Gruevski, after the Greek veto, undertook actions to integrate the ancient Macedonian narrative into the state. This included renaming of a stadium in Skopje "Philip II of Macedonia" and the country's main highway "Alexander of Macedon" in December 2008 (Vangelov, 2019, p. 213). Between 2008 and 2009, the government also renamed streets both in the capital and other cities as "Alexander the Great" (Vangelov, 2019, p. 213). Also, in 2008, the government welcomed the Hunza royal family of the Burusho tribe from Pakistan to the country, claiming that they are descendants of Alexander the Great and that North Macedonia is their true homeland (Vangeli, 2011, p. 21). These actions have been characterised as 'antiquisation' in the process of connecting Ancient Macedonia with modern-day North Macedonia (Vangelov, 2019).

Regarding the project 'Skopje 2014', it has been described as the continuation of the abovementioned antiquisation policies (Stefoska and Stojanov, 2016, p. 361). The project 'Skopje 2014', since it was announced in 2010, has also been labelled as a "building revolution" and as a "national renaissance" project (Stefoska and Stojanov, 2016, p. 357; Vangelov, 2019, p. 203). It is considered the visible and tangible factor of the antiquisation

policy. The project started with the announcement from the government of the erection of a monument of Alexander the Great in the centre of Skopje, which is the cornerstone of the project (Vangeli, 2011). Overall, 137 structures are included as part of the project (Prizma database). Almost half of them are sculptures and monuments of ancient figures, and the goal of their construction has been to “demonstrate the historical continuity of our country” according to Pasko Kuzman, director of the ‘Macedonian Institute of Archaeology’ (Vangelov, 2019, p. 215). However, the ancient figures derive from many different historical periods, starting from antiquity such as Alexander the Great and the Byzantine Empire to early Christianity. Moreover, figures from the revolutionary period of the country fighting for independence in the end of 19th to the beginning of the 20th century are included. The aim of this attempt was to assert worldwide a linear historical continuity and destiny of the country (Kubiena, 2012).

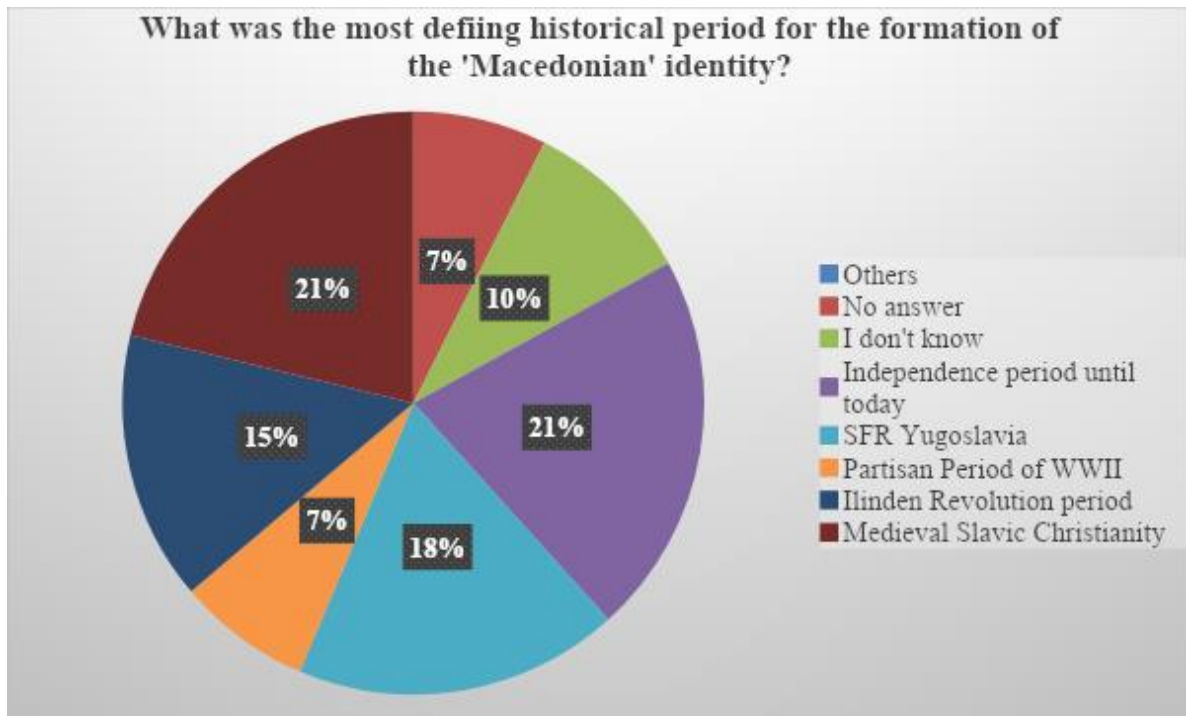
The principal investor of the project was the government under Nikola Gruevski (Muhić & Takovski, 2014). Nikola Gruevski was a staunch supporter of the project, stating in January 2012: “*Yes, I stand behind this project, I think it is a good and useful project, and there is nothing wrong with it. Yes, I support this project and will continue to support it*” (Vangelov, 2019, p. 215). The policy to transform the capital, giving it a classical architectural style through new buildings and structures has been attributed to “*the frustration and depression felt after the NATO Summit in Bucharest*” according to President Gjorge Ivanov (Georgievski, 2009). It constitutes a nation-building project and functions as a mechanism to change the narrative over the origin of North Macedonian identity. It is also argued that the project constitutes a political statement to the Greek demands and aims to enhance the national spirit of the citizens about the name dispute (Muhić & Takovski, 2014, p. 143).

However, the project is criticized for its high cost so far. As of December 2017 it had amassed costs of almost 684 million euros (Prizma database). The project did not have the

support of the majority of archaeologists and historians in North Macedonia. Moreover, there was a negative opinion of the project and the antiquisation acts in the country on the whole (Gori, 2014). Archaeologists and professional of various disciplines did not support both these antiquisation policies and the project 'Skopje 2014' (Gori, 2014). In a survey conducted after the project's announcement, 54% of the public were opposed to the project, whilst 46% was in favour of it (Vangelov, 2019, p. 214). This fact signifies the opposition of the majority of the population to the governmental policies under antiquisation, such as the project 'Skopje 2014'.

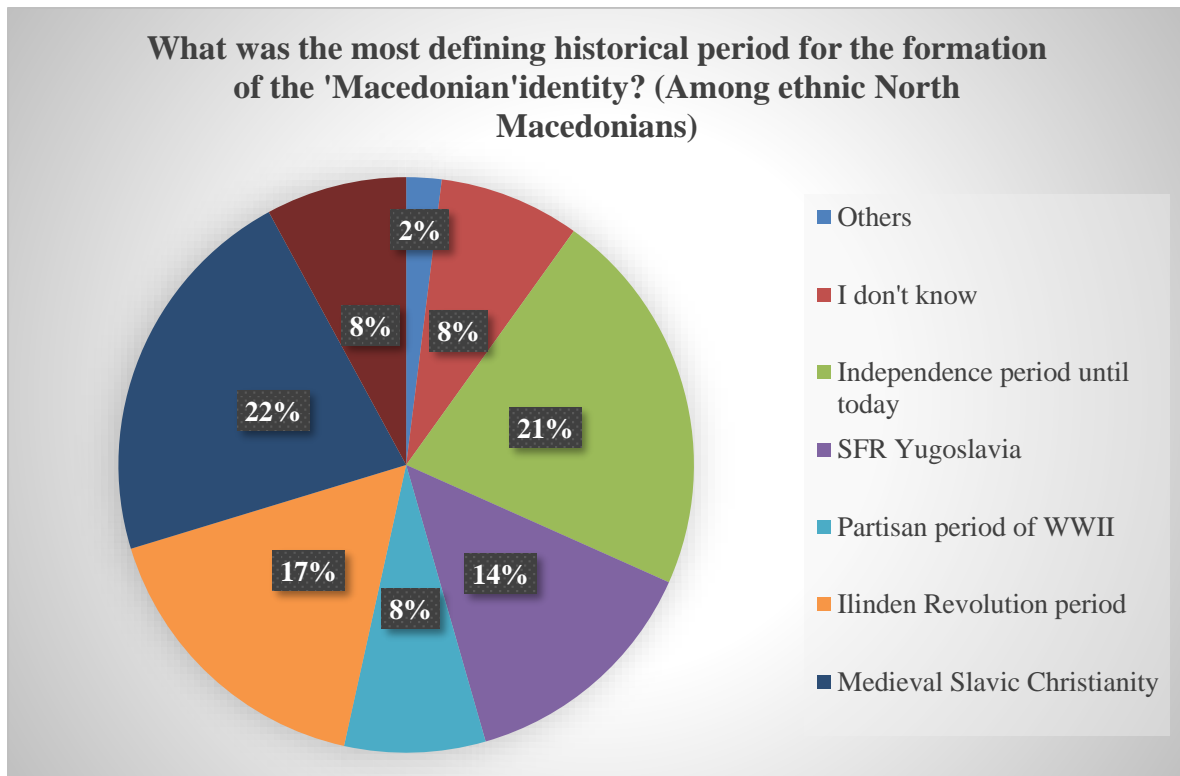
Despite the government's attempt to promote a historical narrative through architecture and archaeology, the results of the policy study on antiquisation and the name dispute between Greece and North Macedonia conducted by the Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities Skopje, contradicted the government's attempt. The policy study presented polls on key questions. For instance, as Figure 1 below indicates on what was the the defining historical period for the formation of the 'Macedonian' identity, only 5.8% of the whole population supported antiquity, while among ethnic North Macedonians, as Figure 2 shows, this support reached 7.6% (Kolozova, 2013, p. 8). In Figure 2, antiquity was the period that received the lowest percentage among other preferences. Moreover, as Figure 2 indicates, among the ethnic North Macedonians, the defining periods that received the highest support were the independence period from the Yugoslav federation and the period defined as 'Medieval Slavic Christianity' (Kolozova, 2013, p. 8).

Figure 1



Source: Kolozova et al (2013: 8)

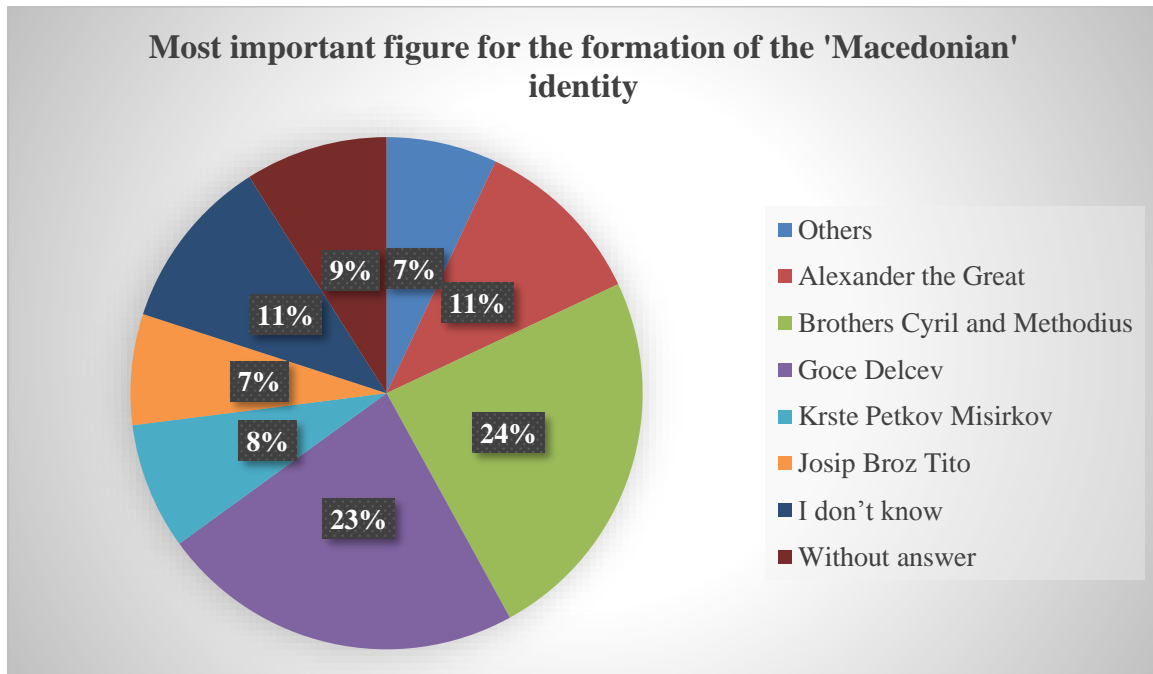
Figure 2



Source: Kolozova et al (2013: 8)

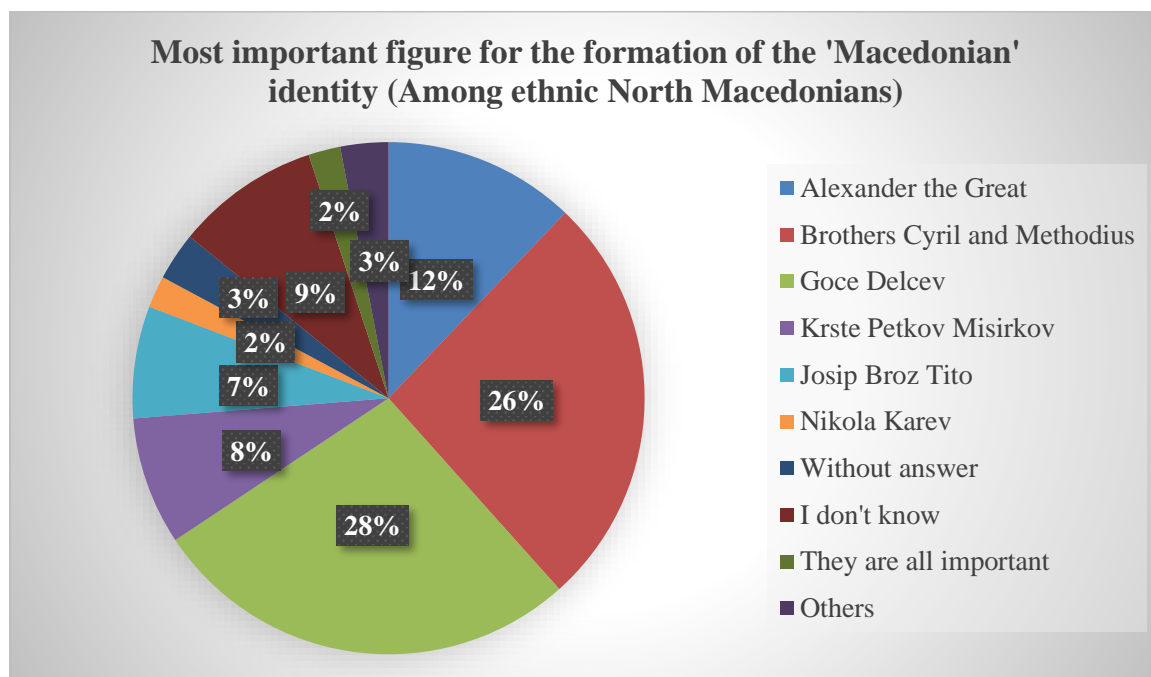
Likewise, in polls regarding a question over the most important historical figure for the formation of the 'Macedonian' identity, Figure 3 below indicates that only 10% of the population selected Alexander the Great, whilst among ethnic North Macedonians in Figure 4 the percentage was 12.3%. In both polls, the most important figure was the national hero Goce Delcev (Kolozova, 2013, p. 9). It is argued that the self-identification of ethnic North Macedonians with the Slavic and Orthodox heritage opposed to antiquity and Alexander the Great indicated the differentiation between the government's narrative on antiquity and policy of inventing traditions that advances and the population's mentality.

Figure 3



Source: Kolozova et al (2013: 8)

Figure 4



Source: Kolozova et al (2013: 8)

Conclusion

This research aimed to present, understand and explore the concept of antiquisation linked to national identity and nation-building. The discourse analysis of statements, made by Nikola Gruevski and Gjorge Ivanov, uncovered the influence of antiquisation in the evolvement of the national narrative on identity markers in North Macedonia. The analysis showed that identity markers, such as language, name and history are directly linked with the concepts of antiquisation, national identity and nation-building that this paper examined. This thesis found that the Greek veto in North Macedonia's bid for NATO membership in 2008 was the trigger point for the evolvement of the national narrative. This incident exasperated the political reaction in North Macedonia in face of the Greek policies and sparked the emergence of antiquisation policy on political level. Antiquisation, as it was observed through the

statements, not only influenced a national narrative evolution, but also an alteration of it, linked to antiquity. Antiquisation was a political tool in the attempt to prove the connection between current North Macedonia and Ancient Macedonia, which finally materialised to the nation-building project 'Skopje 2014'. Antiquisation, in terms of art, is giving the capital Skopje an appearance or an image connected to ancient Macedonia through structures that originate from the period of ancient Macedonia.

Moreover, despite the government's attempt to alter the national narrative through antiquisation, constructing myths and inventing traditions and the project 'Skopje 2014', the population did not self-identify with this decision. Both the survey and the polls, which were mentioned above, indicate the general population self-identified with the Slavic heritage. Additionally, the population opposed antiquity and the figure of Alexander the Great as the core cultural traits of the North Macedonian state. With respect to the ancient rhetoric of 'Skopje 2014' advancing antiquity as the cultural indicator of the North Macedonian identity, most of the people in the country expressed an opposing view.

Furthermore, Vangeli's (2011) and Vangelov's (2019) valuable works on antiquisation emphasise the necessity to study this phenomenon and provide introductory remarks, giving the essential information for future scholars on the subject. The thesis engaged with their works and aimed to contribute to the field of antiquisation, shedding light into its involvement in national discourses of key politicians in North Macedonia. One of the limitations of this proposed research is that there is scarce academic literature on the subject. Therefore, the pool of sources is somewhat scant. As this area is under-researched in the field of political sciences, there is a limited bibliography. Therefore, this thesis attempts to expand on the current literature, as well as furthering the academic debate.

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Appendix

Considering that discursive strategies are employed by actors to express their ideas with a specific intention, a table below shows how those strategies are observed in the case of North Macedonia on the importance of national interests such as national identity, name and language.

Table 2 Discursive Strategies behind Nikola Gruevski's and Gjorge Ivanov's statements

| Nikola Gruevski and President Ivanov | Strategies |
|---|--|
| <p>'language is... a means that unites and personifies certain population'</p> <p>'the name is the most important symbol of our country, an identity that ties the citizens and the Macedonian nation to its history, language and culture'</p> <p>'arguments for the name, identity, and language are on our side'</p> | <p>Constructive (unifying common features, unity, togetherness, sameness and similarity)</p> |
| <p>'it would be absurd if the price for entry in Europe is something directly opposite to European values'</p> <p>'everyone who opposes our identity and our name will be defeated'</p> | <p>Transformative (warning against the loss of national autonomy)</p> |
| <p>'those politicians... are politically irresponsible... and possibly also with evil intentions'</p> <p>'mighty and difficult opponent'</p> | <p>Strategies of Justification (emphasizing the difference between 'us' and 'them')</p> |

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