Renaming Macedonia:

From Conflict to Consensus through Bargaining the Prespa Agreement

Gegeen Togooch

g.togooch@umail.leidenuniv.nl

S1258001

Supervisor: Dr. J.H. Valk

Second reader: Dr. V. Thakur

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# Introduction

In early 2019, the end of a twenty-seven-year-old bilateral naming dispute was celebrated by Macedonian Prime Minister Zoran Zaev and Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras. This diplomatic dispute over the meaning and exclusive rights to the symbolism of 'Macedonia' was finally settled with the Prespa Agreement, that codified the mutual agreement on changing Macedonia's name into 'North Macedonia' (Ventouratou 2018). This naming dispute could be traced back to the moment Macedonia declared itself independent under the name of 'the Republic of Macedonia' in 1991 (Daskalovski 2017, 327). Since Greece perceives Ancient Macedonian history and heritage as a part of its own national identity, the country refused to recognize its neighboring country and even vetoed Macedonia's attempts from NATO and EU accession (Mavromatis 2010). Macedonia on the other hand, refused to give in to its neighbor's threats and calls it any nation's sovereign right to protect its identity and name.

For almost three decades, the international community has seen this diplomatic clash over symbolism and historical narratives unfold into an asymmetric power struggle between the two states, in which Greece made use of its position to exclude Macedonia from membership to international organizations (Agnew 2007). While some academics were intrigued by this complex naming dispute, to many it was hard to comprehend how a disagreement over a name could lead to such severe diplomatic and economic consequences. Also, the fact that there is little known about the Balkan region within the West except for the violent Balkan Wars in the late twentieth century, did not help to unravel the origins of the naming dispute between Macedonia and Greece. Therefore, this thesis will take into account the western discourse of 'Balkanization' (Boer et al. 2006, Todorova 1997), in order to get a better understanding of the contemporary naming issue.

In the time period between 1991 and 2018, the domestic politics in Macedonia and Greece could be characterized as mutually exclusive regarding the ownership of the symbolism of Macedonia. Neither countries were willing to sit around the table and compromise, rather both expected the other to let go of the symbol of Macedonia (De Munck and Risteski 2013). What happened instead, was the rise of nationalism in both countries. As a new state, whose sovereignty and existence was doubted by the international community, Macedonia invested in nation building projects. The biggest example is "Skopje 2014", an urban transformation of Skopje that symbolically referred to Ancient Macedonia (Rogos 2018, 117). Greece in return

answered with boycotts of sports events in Macedonia and refused to call its neighbor "Macedonia", but instead used substitute vocabulary such as "Land of Skopje" (Takovski and Markovikj 2017, 745).

Considering the three decade long mutually exclusive attitudes about the ownership of the symbolism of Macedonia, it is quite surprising how fast the negotiation and ratification of the Prespa Agreement happened. Therefore, this thesis will seek to answer the following research question:

*How did Greece and North Macedonia come to a consensus resulting in the Prespa Agreement, despite a three decade long mutually exclusive political attitudes about the meaning of 'Macedonia'?*

This thesis will argue that in the period between 2008 and 2018 Greece and Macedonia were not able to end the naming dispute because their negotiations were based on arguing. When negotiating through arguing, persuasion of the other party will be sought with no option left for compromises as both parties will stick to their own belief system (Holzinger 2004). As Macedonia and Greece expected recognition and help from the international community in order to solve their bilateral problem, they were not able to directly communicate with each other. The settlement of the naming issue was possible because this time the two parties used the negotiation tool of bargaining, which allowed for both parties to keep their belief system regarding the meaning of Macedonia (Risse 2000). Moreover, both Macedonia and Greece were able to strategically use the Prespa Agreement in order to negotiate the boundaries between their national identities. The final factor that has pushed the two parties to an Agreement, is the desire to be recognized by and to participate within the international system.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter will provide the main concepts that will be used: the politics of place-naming, arguing and bargaining, and sovereignty through symbolic form. The politics of place-naming in this thesis will be defined as an act of linguistic control over both space and the inhabitant's view on his or her identity within a territory (Elden 2007). Since control over a name and place oftentimes leads to confrontation between different groups, the concepts of arguing and bargaining will be analyzed. As the naming dispute in itself is a symbolic act, its relation to identity (Anderson 1983) and sovereignty (Bartelson 2014) will be explored. The second chapter will focus on the time period of 2008 until 2018. This chapter

will argue that the Macedonia-Greece naming issue could not be solved, because both parties had the unrealistic expectation that the other party had to give up its belief system in order for a settlement to happen. Furthermore, the fact that Macedonia and Greece bad mouthed each other in public rather than negotiate directly, was proof of their dependency on the international system's recognition. The final chapter will argue that the bilateral dispute came to an end, because both nation states had the opportunity to use the Prespa Agreement for negotiating their national identities as well as improve their position within the international system (Oluf 2013).

**Methodology**

In chapter 2 and 3 a discourse analysis will be made of speech acts from the Greek and Macedonian governments. Through connecting the speaker's context with what was uttered, the intention and meaning of these words will be interpreted (Chapman and Routledge 2009). In the Macedonia-Greece naming dispute critical discourse analysis will help in understanding how the interstate political dynamics between Greece and Macedonia before and around the Prespa Agreement have changed, by analyzing texts and utterances from both parties about each other and about their dispute.

According to Müller the conduct of international relations has always involved the use of persuasive discourse (2004). This certainly applies to the Macedonia-Greece naming issue because Greece and Macedonia have tried to convince one another of their sole right to the symbol of Macedonia. Since this thesis tries to answer how it was possible for both states to solve the name dispute through negotiating, the concepts arguing and bargaining will play a central role in the discourse analyses in chapter two and three. In the academic debate arguing is perceived to be a communicative action, while bargaining is associated with strategic action. Müller (2004) and Holzinger (2004), however, classify arguing and bargaining as two different types of speech acts. Speech acts are performed by a speaker who pronounces an utterance that serves as a communicative tool (Chapman and Routledge 2009, 212). In order to understand a speech act, both knowledge of language and tools for interpretation are required to make sense of what has been uttered (ibid.). Therefore, the speech acts on the Macedonia-Greece naming issue will be interpreted alongside its sociopolitical context.

This thesis will attempt to find out how the Macedonian-Greek naming dispute was settled after nearly three decades despite the existing mutually exclusive political attitudes regarding the use of 'Macedonia'. In order to answer this question, the research will mainly focus on Greek and

North Macedonian government statements, speeches and official interviews on the naming issue. Since this thesis revolves around the transformation of the bilateral relations between the two states, it is important to analyze the link between the root of the naming issue and how both governments have positioned themselves within this naming issue throughout the years.

# Chapter 1: The politics of place-naming

In this thesis, the politics of place-naming is approached as an act of linguistic control over both space and the inhabitant's view on his or her identity within a territory (Elden 2007). In case public spaces are the object of place-naming practices, they oftentimes become the disputed issue in negotiation processes amongst groups that have different views on a name change, as this name change indirectly influences people's sense of belonging and identity within a certain territory (Wilkinson 1952). Therefore, the concepts of arguing and bargaining will be used as a means for negotiating identity through place-naming within this research. The concept of sovereignty as symbolic form will also play a key role, because the very act of place-naming is of symbolic nature and the Macedonia-Greece naming dispute in particular touches upon a state's sovereign right to determine and express its own identity through symbolic form (Brown 1994). In this chapter, the three main concepts of this thesis will be introduced and contextualized. The first concept, the politics of place-naming, will function as the broader concept that is connected to the two sub-concepts of 'arguing and bargaining' and 'sovereignty as symbolic form'. These two sub-concepts will explore the broader concept of politics of place-naming from two distinct angles.

## The politics of place-naming

The study of place-naming, or toponymy, has undergone a critical change throughout the twenty-first century as scholars let go of the traditional focus on etymology and taxonomy by emphasizing the politics of place-naming (Rose-Redwood et al. 2010). The traditional assumption until then had been that place-naming was more of an empirical geographic description of a place (Carroll and Parsons 2013). Kripke was critical about this, he argued that the act of naming cannot be taken as a simple definition or description of an object. He argued that in the process of naming, meaning is added (Clarkson 2003, 37). Zelinsky connects Kripke's idea on naming with his own 'place-making', stating that places are acts of human made fabrications of reality (1992, 183). With this he means that the link between places and names are human constructs that consist of patterns and structures through which we make sense of the world (Zelinsky 1992, 175). Whilst the act of place-naming seems 'neutral' by nature, it in fact is more than a description of a place as it adds layers of meaning in the naming process.

Place-names, or toponyms, are an important part of cultural and linguistic heritage that allow for reflection on the belief and value systems of the name givers and the relation between the name giver and the named (Clarkson 2003). Furthermore, they give an insight into the historical and social circumstances at the time of naming (Tent and Slatyer 2009, 5). In many circumstances, groups of people or places are given a name through interaction or contact with other groups. While it is often assumed that the purpose of naming is to only describe the characteristics of an object that has been named, this act of naming actually reflects more on the name giver than the named object. Also, naming patterns could reveal the relations between namer and named (Clarkson 2003, 42). This is applicable to the naming issue between Macedonia and Greece, since the bilateral naming dispute involves Macedonia as the object of place-naming, and there is need for Greece's approval as the co-name giver in order to end the naming conflict.

The act of place-naming has several consequences, of which the most performative consequence is claiming ownership of a place by naming it (Tent and Slatyer 2009, 5). Possessing through naming was a practice that happened frequently during European conquests between the 16$^{th}$ and 19$^{th}$ century (Azaryahu 1996, 313). Here, naming was used in two ways: as an act that functioned as proof of having taken control over a colonial territory, as well as a taxonomic strategy that supported European attempts of inserting a hegemonic version of history into the colonial landscape (Tent and Slatyer 2009, 9). An example of claiming ownership of a place could be found in the remains of the colonial place-names in Australia and New Zealand (Tent and Slatyer 2009, Kearns and Berg 2002). The British, Dutch and the French each had their own naming practices. While the early Dutch navigators had no interest in exploration and therefore have left the least place-names, the French and the British explorers had the tendency to name places in the Australian Southland after their notable native historical figures in science, literature or after the expedition itself (Tent and Slatyer 2009, 21).

Today place-names, whether just street names or names of states, mainly function as a political tool for asserting control into a space (Azaryahu 1996). Especially commemorative street names or names of monuments allow for insertion of hegemonic structures within public spheres (Azaryahu 1996, 11). Place-names therefore are a powerful mechanism that legitimate and enforce the existing sociopolitical order (Azaryahu 1996, Walzer 1967). While in the past possessing through naming was an objective during colonial conquests, today's place-naming practices are more about the struggle for control over the production of space (Elden 2007,

105). With this Elden means that a space is socially constructed and used by people and therefore did not 'just' exist by itself. Elden agrees with Lefebvre and Jameson on space as a social and political product through the use of spatial language that asserts meaning into a space (2007, 107). The processes behind place-naming practices make the given names seem like a natural way of defining a place, while place-names in fact are carriers of meanings about oneself and the other (Elden 2007, Tent and Slatyer 2009). Thus, place-naming is an act of linguistic control over space and indirectly also influences the inhabitant's identity within it (Elden 2007), ultimately deciding who does or does not belong to a certain space (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983).

**Arguing and bargaining**

As the concepts of arguing and bargaining are interlinked with the broader theory of conflict resolution, first the more general terms of negotiation and consensus will be explored before diving into arguing and bargaining. Negotiation is the interaction between two or more parties who are involved in a conflict and experience differences in interest or values, but still are willing to seek a compromise through negotiation (Raiffa 1982, 7). To some scholars, however, the purpose of negotiation is not to just find a common ground, but it is an opportunity for all parties to influence one another's decision (Fisher 1983, 150). While the object of negotiation and its context might vary for each specific dispute, any case of negotiation starts with contrasting claims about what is and what should be (Cohen 2000, 317). Depending on the nature of a dispute and the willingness of the parties involved, a negotiation could lead to consensus building. Consensus building is a process of seeking unanimous agreement. A consensus is reached when the stakeholders agree they can live with a proposal that has sought to meet the interests of all parties involved (Susskind et al. 1999).

Negotiation for the resolution of international conflict faces an extra set of challenges regarding culture and language. Cohen argues that in international negotiations, parties most likely will face different ethics and approaches to a problem, since language reflects the shared body of sense and significance of one community that might be impossible to read for someone coming from another cultural paradigm (2000, 319). Therefore, it is important to take into account the cultural aspects in international negotiations before directly aiming for a compromise (Avruch and Black 1991, 22). In the case of the Macedonia-Greece naming dispute, differences about the meaning and functioning of 'Macedonia' between the two states together with general cultural differences have added to the complexity of the bilateral negotiations.

The second chapter will assess to what extent the 2008-2018 negotiation attempts between Macedonia and Greece showed signs of arguing and bargaining. Simply put, bargaining takes place when two or more parties make the effort to reach an agreement through rationally negotiating a compromise in which both parties try to find a 'win-win' solution, leaving aside the option of only one party taking the full 'win' (Susskind 2009). Arguing differs from bargaining, because the object of negotiation is approached from a value and belief system point of view, rather than from an outcome-based solution (ibid). Essentially, it means that in negotiations based on arguing, parties will attempt to change one another's belief system (Risse 2000, 8). Thus, the main difference is that arguing contains claims over factual truth or normative validity and has the intention to convince the other party, while bargaining works through mutual adjustment of both parties in order to come to a consensus. When bargaining, the parties involved try to solve a conflict in a way that does not require giving up their factual or normative beliefs (Holzinger 2004, 202).

In the third chapter the focus will shift to political bargaining and its lack of recognition for social identity as an interest. In traditional political theory, actors who bargain during negotiations are assumed to focus on outcomes rather than on the negotiation process which is an important aspect for arguing (Kotzian 2007, 80). Bargaining, therefore, is closely linked to rational choice theory, because when a bargaining agent has to choose between multiple options, the agent will pick the option that in his or her opinion will lead to the best outcome (Aguiar and De Francesco 2009). Furthermore, bargaining in political theory as well as in rational choice theory is concerned with the allocation and (re)distribution of scarce material resources (Doron and Sened 2001). Both theories support the idea that bargaining only prevails between actors who are involved in disagreements over material interests, and therefore exclude the possibility of disputes over intangible interests such as social identities (Aguiar and De Francesco 2009). However, by overlooking the role of identity in rational choice theory and political bargaining, there is a gap in the academic literature for the analysis of cases that do involve interstate negotiation of social identity. The aim of this research is to understand how Macedonia and Greece have bargained a name that has consequences for their national identity. This thesis will explore to what extent the concept of bargaining could be applied for a case that concerns the negotiation of identity.

**Sovereignty as symbolic form**

In this thesis the traditional IR conception of sovereignty as a fixed given will be challenged. Instead, this thesis explores Bartelson's concept of sovereignty as a symbolic form. He argues for the functioning of sovereignty as an instrument for interstate negotiation of boundaries a state identity. As sovereignty touches upon the concepts of belonging and national identity, these will first be introduced. After that, the link between sovereignty and symbolic form will be discussed.

In his famous work *Imagined communities* Anderson has argued that the idea of 'belonging' to a community comes from its foundation in language (1983). It was initially through the consciousness of speaking different languages, that imagined communities were constructed. Moreover, imagined communities came to be because of the connection between the awareness of a shared language and the ideas languages provide to their speakers (Anderson 1983, 14). Languages thus are the medium through which ideas on meaning and worldmaking are communicated, while at the same time also functioning as the mechanism that constructs ideas on a community's identity.

When a community has become aware of its own distinct identity that sets it apart from other communities, from a realist point of view becoming conscious of pre-existing shared identity would lead to the community's declaration of sovereignty (Doty 1996). However, by conceptualizing the state as a given, unitary entity, the distinction between state, nation and sovereignty becomes blurred (Doty 1996, 121). National identity today functions as a 'fixed' foundation for a state's sovereignty. Unfortunately, this foundation is inherently fragile, because national identity is always in the making and can never be a finished product (Doty 1996, 123). Statecraft happens in twofold: it is not only about relations between different state units, but also about the (re)construction of one's own unit itself (Doty 1996, 141. In this thesis, the ambiguous relation between statecraft as an international relations mechanism on the one hand, but also a tool for domestic control is central.

Within IR Wendt was one of the first scholars who spoke against the anarchic world order in which states compete for material resources and rely on self-help (1992). He agrees with Anderson on the social aspect of a state's identity formation but also adds the interactive aspect to his idea: collective identities are formed through interaction between states (Wendt 1992,

406). This means collective identities are not the precondition for declaring sovereignty but actually happen after sovereignty, when states interact as entities with one another. Furthermore, Wendt calls sovereignty 'an institution' because it only exists through interstate understandings, recognition and expectations (1992, 412). This institution constitutes a form of interstate community that is based on mutual recognition of one another to have political authority over a negotiated territory (Wendt 1992, 413). Here, the ambiguous nature of sovereignty becomes evident as the seemingly 'fixed' boundaries of a sovereign state in reality are negotiable objects amongst states. In the next two chapters the negotiable nature of sovereignty as symbolic boundaries will be analyzed within the Macedonia- Greece naming dispute.

Bartelson makes the link between sovereignty and symbolic form, by stating that sovereignty functions as a symbolic form (2014). He speaks of the mismatch between the concept of sovereignty and the political realities, in which sovereignty is reduced to an object and instrument of governance in the interest of maintaining international order. This deviates from the original concept of sovereignty which stands for a nation or a group of people that had been a subject of sovereignty already and therefore has 'claimed' its sovereignty (2014, 31). Bartelson argues that the concept of sovereignty today is kept alive as a symbolic form for two purposes. The first purpose is to allow for the precondition of sovereign authority over a territory, of which the boundaries are negotiated and recognized amongst states (Bartelson 2014, 28). The second purpose is to maintain the hierarchical norms of the imagined international community and its superior position towards domestic spheres (Bartelson 2014, 98). While the international system has come to be in order to bring order and peace amongst states, in reality it is organized and structured in legal and moral standards that exclude and marginalize states that do not yet make part of the system. These standards maintained by the international community, ultimately add to friction among nation states (Bartelson 2014, 83).

The use of symbols creates a sense of unity and makes the invisible aspect of 'sovereignty' and 'states' visible (Bartelson 2014, 15). Through the use of symbols and symbolization state-entities are made personal and alive (ibid.). However, the process of making these concepts tangible is not a neutral one. The construction and reproduction of symbolic forms has become a mechanism of worldmaking through which people structure and make sense of events (Tygstryp 2010, 88). Symbolic forms provide a starting point for distributing political discourses via units of thoughts that are held together by the medium of language (Walzer 1967,

195). The meaning of symbols as well as the systems they are embedded in, shift and change as symbolic activity is always on the move (Walzer 1967, 198). While symbolic activity is not stable of nature, its mechanism is inherently stable as it follows the ongoing process of symbolic construction of reality (Cassirer 1955).

# Chapter 2: Arguing Boundaries through Symbolic Form

This chapter will argue that the bilateral politics of place-naming between Greece and Macedonia in the time period of January 2008 until January 2018 has functioned as an attempt to negotiate the boundaries of national identity through symbolic form (Agnew 2007). While for each state the symbol of 'Macedonia' did refer to something else, it still continued to be an object of dispute, because both states held on to their own belief system and contested the option of two co-existing belief systems. Therefore, the bilateral relations between 2008 and 2018 regarding the naming issue mainly show signs of arguing. Furthermore, I will argue that in this case both Macedonia and Greece in this time period heavily relied on recognition from the international system (De Munck and Risteski 2013), which is proof of the international system's authority over interstate issues concerning sovereignty and identity (Oluf 2013). A direct effect of this need for international recognition could be found in the avoidance of direct communication by both states.

This chapter will specifically focus on the time period between January 2008 and 2018 for two reasons. First, the analysis of the whole decade prior to the Prespa Agreement will help to get to a more balanced understanding of what factors have played a crucial role in the final settlement. Secondly, 2008 was the starting point of a new 'epoch' regarding bilateral efforts to settle the naming issue. As big external circumstances such as Greece's financial position during the Eurocrisis (*The Guardian* 2010) and the ICJ's judgement against Greece's veto of Macedonia's application to join NATO (ICJ on 17/08/2008) have influenced the behavior of both states, these events have been included into the timeframe.

Since nation states are approached as 'person-like' political agents whose interactions are the core of this thesis, this chapter will mainly analyze utterances made by the Greek and Macedonian governments. In this chapter a discourse analysis will be made of speech acts such as official statements, interviews and speeches regarding the naming dispute coming from both governments. More specifically, the discourse analysis will explore to what extent Greece and Macedonia have a different meaning of 'Macedonia' and how both states frame their ownership of its symbolism. This chapter is divided into three sections: after a theoretical section about boundaries and international recognition, an analysis will be made of the political attitudes of the Greek and Macedonian government, followed by a discussion.

**The functioning of symbolic boundaries and international recognition**

In the previous chapter the importance of symbolic form in making the state 'visible' was discussed (Walzer 1967). In this thesis symbolization should be interpreted in a broader sense than only as a form of visual representation. Symbolization in this research is approached as a structure that creates units of discourse around which emotions of belonging and loyalty are clustered (Lebow 2009, 232). This discourse of belonging, however, is dependent on the binary mechanism of exclusion and inclusion, which always happens at the margins of identity (Doty 1996, 128). With this Doty means that through the existence of borders and boundaries the construction of identity is made possible. Place-names as a symbolic form, however, do have a complex relation with the concept of borders and boundaries. Since the act of place-naming makes use of language to insert physical control over a territory, place-naming as a result creates both physical and mental territories. These 'mental' territories come to be through the distribution of discourse about self and other via language. Without borders, conception of where 'self' starts and where that what is 'other' ends would not be tangible. Therefore, physical borders and mental boundaries make sovereign nation states rather than visa versa (Agnew 2007, 399).

From traditional IR point of view, the relation between sovereignty and territorial control was assumed to be a logical and natural one. In his work, Stuart Elden asks the question whether this assumption is viable today, pointing at the specific contemporary case of war against terrorism by nation states such as the United States in a highly mobile and globalized world (2006, 21). The problem here is that states try to keep control over their borders in a globalized world, while globalization enables (terrorist) non-state actors to cross national borders easily. Nation states still function as entities with fixed borders in a world where an agent's mobility has exponentially grown, and the idea of hard national borders has become of less importance. In contrast, in *Uncertain Territories* boundaries are conceptualized as unstable 'spaces of negotiation' (Boer et al. 2006, 10). Here the conventional idea of boundaries is challenged by theorizing boundaries as a function or a structure that allows for contrasting visions to meet and together negotiate boundaries. These boundaries are arbitrary, temporary and changeable of character (ibid). The focus in this approach of boundaries does not lie in the visible, material referent of boundaries. Instead it zooms in on the way boundaries are organized through language (Milani 2016).

In the first chapter the connection between sovereignty as symbolic form and the prominent position of the international system was mentioned. Bartelson has argued that sovereignty as symbolic form allows the international system to maintain its exclusionist legal and moral standards regarding nation states (2014, 98). Nicholas Oluf adds the notion of recognition to Bartelson's problematization of the international system. Oluf mentions that self-recognition depends on recognition from others (2013, 124). Consequently, in political theory the process of mutual recognition is accepted as the factor that allows nation states to recognize each other as equals (Oluf 2013, 130). However, Oluf thinks we mistakenly assume that equality is decided through the interaction of states who mutually recognize each other. Without the structure provided by the international society, this process of equality formation through mutual recognition would not exist (Oluf 2013, 131).

The struggle for recognition stems from the historical shift from empires to the society of nations (Philpott 1999, 566). IR theorists perceive the modern world in two levels: the level in which people constitute themselves within a political society and the level in which a collective of societies constitute themselves as a system or society (Oluf 2013, 132). This society of nations promises potential new members equality when they are allowed to join the club (Oluf 2013, 133). However, this process only constitutes internal equality once a nation is invited to make part of the international society. It indirectly implies inequality between those nation states who are part of the society and those who are not (Philpott 1999, 569). Thus, the mechanism for recognizing nation states as a members of the international society, has put the international system into the hierarchical  position that enables it to decide whether a nation state should be measured as an equal, sovereign nation state (Bartelson 2013, Philpott 1999).

Especially for small or newly founded states, exclusion from international organizations can impact their status as a 'sovereign state' in the traditional sense. In the case of Balkan states like Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina the impact of non-recognition by the international society is that they will become isolated as they are not allowed to participate within the international system (Thiessen 2013, 44). A clear example is the effort made by Macedonia to qualify for EU accession. Although the main reason for the EU's refusal of allowing Macedonia as an EU accession candidate was tied with Greece's position in the naming issue, Thiessen argues that it is because of the EU's exclusionist policies that Macedonia started functioning as the symbolic border of the EU (2013, 55). Macedonia became

not only the EU's physical border but was also perceived as the "other" whose identity does not fit within the EU's identity (Thiessen 2013, 49).

**Discourse analysis**

*Speech acts Macedonian government 2008-2018*

At the UN Assembly PM Gruevski speaks about his people being blackmailed by their Southern neighbors who do not just protest against their country's name, but more importantly, "against who we as people are and how we live" (Gruevski on 24/09/2011). After making a clear link between name and identity, Gruevski remarks that every nation has the right to its own identity and unity over its own national myth (on 24/09/2011). By saying this, PM Gruevski indirectly admits that national identities are not just a given but are constructed for the sake of unity. This goes against the general idea that there already was a collective identity within a homogenous group, that later proclaimed sovereignty based on a preexisting identity (Rae 2002). Moreover, Gruevski admits the necessity of nation-building. In a statement on the project Skopje 2014, the Macedonian government declares to transform national cultural institutions, with special attention to cultural heritage preservation (on 22/04/2013). Even though the government speaks of restoration, it also explains that Skopje 2014 is more than just maintenance, it is a re-imagined view on their glorious Ancient Macedonian past.

A year later, just before another meeting with Greece on the naming issue, PM Gruevski assures that he will address the link between Macedonian language and identity with his Greek negotiators, because altering a state's name has severe consequences for the nation's language and identity (on 25/02/2012). Here Gruevski's statement is in line with Anderson (1983) and Walzer (1967), who both have argued for the inseparable connection between language and identity. Changing a state's name by force, takes not only a nation's right to self-determination away, but also asks a nation to redefine its identity which is given meaning to via language.

In 2011, the International Court of Justice concluded in favor of Macedonia after Greece blocked Macedonia's integration to NATO at the Bucharest Summit (Daskalovski 2017, 329). Despite winning the proceedings, Macedonia's integration to NATO and the EU still was blocked by Greece. The Minister of Foreign Affairs (FM) Poposki therefore calls Greece's actions "illegal" since Greece has ignored "the assessment of the highest international court" (on 13/01/2012). By making use of the terminology "illegal", Poposki wants to accentuate that while Macedonia plays by the international rules, Greece does not show respect to the

international system. Then FM Poposki goes on and says, "the rule of law is our common value", linking Macedonia with NATO and EU, and at the same time excluding Greece from this "common value" (on 13/01/2012).

After winning the proceedings in The Hague, Macedonia subtly changes its national narrative from a passive victim who was blackmailed by a neighboring country into the active, lawful state that does make efforts to solve the naming issue. FM Poposki and PM Gruevski highlight Greece's unwillingness to solve the naming issue: "There is a serious intention of not solving the name row" (Gruevski on 14/12/2011). By frequently addressing their contrasting positions Macedonia tries to profile itself as the 'proactive' and 'trustworthy' one in the dispute in contrast to Greece, that has proven itself as a hindrance for a swift settlement. Keeping in mind that in this period Greece was facing criticism from other EU member states for hiding its national debts and becoming the epicenter of the Euro crisis, mentioning Greece's passive position could be interpreted as a strategic move (*The New York Times* 2011).

Besides blaming Greece for ignoring the ICJ judgement, Macedonia lays out the lack of regional Balkan solidarity coming from Greece. Poposki argues that Greece's self-centered stance "brings harm to the common interest" of the Balkans and does not "contribute to a stable, prosperous Balkans within Europe (on 13/01/2012). In this speech act, Poposki aims at more than just blaming Greece for its self-centered stance on the naming issue, by reminding the EU of its interest to keep the Balkan region stable. Especially after the EU's failed attempts to mediate and act upon the Balkan wars in the nineties, Poposki seeks to grab the EU's attention through warning them for the impact of future instability in the region (Juncos 2015).

Another thing FM Poposki mentions at the EU Civil Protection Mechanism meeting in Brussels is that "a swift settlement of the name issue may contribute to improving the climate in the entire region" (on 23/02/2012). Instead, the name issue has become a non-productive obstacle that targets more than just Macedonia, but also the whole Balkan region. Again, another contrast is constructed through speech acts in which Greece on the one hand is portrayed as the self-absorbed party and Macedonia on the other as the caring and pragmatic party who keeps in mind the sub-regional Balkan relations as well as the Balkan's position regarding the EU.

*Speech acts Greek government 2008-2018*

In 2011, Greek Foreign Ministry's spokesman Delavekouras criticized "Skopje's archaization policy", aiming at the cultural heritage project 'Skopje 2014' introduced by the Macedonian government (on 14/01/2011). According to him the placement of an Alexander the Great statue at Skopje's central square was an "effort to usurp Greek history with a view to cultivate nationalism and conflict". He then continues to warn the neighboring country by announcing Greece will "warn its partners and allies, as well as international organizations about these provocative actions". With these words, Delavekouras not only blames Macedonia for appropriating and 'stealing' a symbol that belongs to Greece only, but also accuses the state for wanting to start an interstate conflict.

Greece has been very clear about its view on Alexander the Great and Ancient Macedonia as an important part of Hellenic history. After Macedonia's independence from Yugoslavia, Greece decided to back its ties to Ancient Macedonia with archeological proof (Silverman 2015). Greece reluctantly admits that the territory of Ancient Macedonia today is divided over Greece, FYROM and Bulgaria. However, Greece argues that since the biggest part of Ancient Macedonia today makes part of Greece and most Ancient Macedonian artefacts are found in Greece, this state does have more 'right' to Ancient Macedonian history and heritage (Daskalovski 2017, 329).

In an interview with the Greek negotiator Vassilakis and UN Secretary General's personal envoy Nimetz, the FYROM name issue was discussed (on 26/07/2012). When speaking of FYROM, Vassilakis refers to the country as "Skopje", "our Northern neighbor" and "the Government of Skopje". In 2017, the Foreign Ministry even announced the withdrawal from the Women's under 17 Handball Match against Macedonia at the European Championship in Skopje, because Macedonia participated under its constitutional name of 'Republic of Macedonia', which the Greek government interpreted as a violation of the Interim Accord (on 03/08/2017). These speech acts show that Greece does not approve of Macedonia's name in two ways. The first way is denial of name through substitute words that refer to the state (Takovski and Markovikj 2017). The other way is through the use of performativity through language. The announcement to withdraw from the sport's event, served as the linguistic enactment of disapproval and non-acknowledgement of their northern neighbor's constitutional name.

Another, perhaps more convincing justification for Greece has been the regional aspect of Macedonia. Since 'Macedonia' also refers to different regions in three countries, FYROM might bring tension to these three countries if the state continues its plan to base a state's name after a region (Delavekouras on 14/01/2011). Greece's argument led to the delay of formal recognition of the Macedonian state by the European Communities. Only after the Interim Accord in 1995, did the EC explicitly state that they acknowledge FYROM as a sovereign state within its present borders (Ionnidas 2010, 522).

During the Joint Communiqué of the Conference of Western Balkan States, the spokesman of the Greek MFA states that the name issue is not a bilateral issue, but an international one, that needs international approval (Koutras on 29/08/2014). In another press conference Greek MFA spokesman Delavekouras draws upon the "international community" that according to him has acknowledged Greece's issues with "Skopje", so therefore it is up to FYROM to "take the steps they need to take" (on 01/03/2011). These speech acts attempt to frame the name issue as one that needs international input from other states and international organizations. Considering the fact Greece is already part of NATO and the EU, this utterance could be interpreted as a call for alliance coming from these particular international organizations. While reaching out to the international community, the speech acts also target Macedonia. By mentioning its powerful alliances, Greece accentuates its stronger position within the naming issue and uses that to pressure its neighboring country to let go of the symbol of Macedonia.

**Discussion**

In the discourse analyses of the speech acts from the Macedonian and Greek government, the differences in what the symbol 'Macedonia' means to both nation states have become evident. PM Gruevski has mentioned several times how a possible name change would have negative consequences for the Macedonian national identity and has reminded the international community of what he called "the sovereign right to choose one's own national myth" (24/09/2011). While Macedonia's approach has been rather transparent about the nature of national identity being constructed, Greece more explicitly holds on the idea of sole ownership Ancient Macedonian history and heritage. In fact, Greece made use of multiple justifications to prove its sole right, of which the geographical and territorial aspects were the most important. As the biggest part of Ancient Macedonia's territory belongs within modern day Greek borders, logically the place-name of 'Macedonia' should belong more with Greece than with Macedonia

or Bulgaria. This way of reasoning shows elements of exclusion and inclusion in the present using historical territorial boundaries. What is interesting here is that Greece utilizes the concept of Ancient Macedonian territorial boundaries for the purpose of creating mental boundaries between modern day Greece and Macedonia. This turns the place-name of Macedonia into a space of negotiation, a symbolic border between the two states. However, since the two states fully focus on their own distinct perception of what 'Macedonia' means, it is nearly impossible to negotiate boundaries when neither of the parties involved have identified one another's referent objects.

Greece and Macedonia were not able to settle the naming dispute in the time period of 2008 and 2008 because of their unwillingness to come to an agreement in which it would be possible for both states to keep their own belief system about the meaning of Macedonia. In the speech acts from the Greek and Macedonian governments could be found that they were mainly concerned with publicly arguing and justifying why their view on the naming issue was the most legitimate one, instead of hearing out the other party's perspective. This competitive aspect of the bilateral dynamics between Greece and Macedonia, fits with the concept of arguing as a tool for negotiation (Risse 2000). Arguing excludes the possibility for negotiating parties to mutually adjust their expectations of one another, because the participants believe that the only way their disagreement can be settled is when the other party changes its normative beliefs (Holzinger 2004, 202). While this interstate issue about place-naming has functioned as an attempt to negotiate the boundaries between Greek and Macedonian national identity through symbolic form, it was doomed to fail because both parties involved were not prepared to accept two co-existing belief systems about the meaning of the symbol Macedonia (Daskalovski 2017).

What was striking in these speech acts, was the fact that both Greece and Macedonia sought support and recognition from the international system in their bilateral dispute. This happened in multiple ways. In the case of Macedonia, most speech acts were indirectly meant for the international community. These speech acts were attempts to win over the international audience by using the binary frames in which Macedonia is portrayed as the responsible, EU orientated actor and Greece as the less reliable actor who refuses to settle the naming issue (Gruevski on 14/12/2011). Perhaps not literally speaking to the international audience, but the statements issued by the Macedonian government do mainly target the international audience. Furthermore, Macedonia clearly makes use of recognition from international organizations, like

the International Court of Justice's judgement, in its arguments against Greece to gain sympathy and support from the international society. Greece, on the other hand, was very vocal about its perception of the naming issue as an international matter that should be solved with help of the international society (Delavekouras on 01/03/2011). Since Greece is in a more secure position as it is a member of the EU and NATO, the state makes strategic use of this advantage in public statements, as a way to discourage its neighboring country and as a means for profiling itself within the international system.

These speech acts have revealed the importance of the international system to Macedonia and Greece and its authority over both states in the naming issue. As mentioned in this chapter's theoretical section, the international system's recognition has started functioning as a measuring stick that decides whether a state would count as sovereign and equal state in the international sphere (Oluf 2013). In the case of Macedonia, it has struggled to get recognized by prominent international organization such as the UN, NATO and the EU from its early days on as a nation state. Even though these hinderances posed by the international system have excluded Macedonia from fully participating in the international sphere, Macedonia paradoxically still attempts to obtain recognition from this system. In this specific naming dispute the struggle for international recognition has resulted in the avoidance of direct communication between Macedonia and Greece. Ultimately, the lack of bilateral communication and the use of arguing as the main negotiation tool resulted in the delay of a consensus in an already decadelong naming dispute.

## Chapter 3: Bargaining National Identity through the Prespa Agreement

This final chapter will argue that Greece and Macedonia were able to end their twenty-seven-year-old naming dispute through the process of bargaining the Prespa Agreement. I will explain how the settlement of this issue relied on the combination of a shift from arguing to bargaining and the use of this negotiation method as a tool for securing Macedonian and Greek interests on both the domestic and international level (Putnam 1998). More specifically, this compromise resulting in the name 'North Macedonia' became an opportunity for both nation states to affirm and strengthen narratives on their nation's homogeneous Macedonian and Greek identity (Rohdewald 2018). Furthermore, this chapter will challenge the notion of bargaining as a political negotiation tool for conflicts about material interests only, by posing that Greece and Macedonia have bargained their national identities through the Prespa Agreement. This chapter will conclude that Greek and Macedonian governments have turned sovereignty into an instrument for negotiating the boundaries between their national identities.

Since the main objective of this chapter will be to find out how the negotiation process of the Prespa Agreement served as a tool for bargaining national identity on the domestic and interstate level, the time period between 24 January 2018 and 12 February 2019 will be analyzed. The negotiation process started officially on 24 January 2018 when the Foreign Ministers of Greece and Macedonia met in Davos to discuss a possible name change (MFA Hellenic Republic 2019). After months of bargaining a new name and the conditions for its ratification, both governments agreed on the consensus of 'North Macedonia' and came together to sign the Prespa Agreement on 17 June 2018 (Ventouratou 2019). The period after signing the Agreement was a crucial moment for Macedonian PM Zoran Zaev and Greek PM Alexis Tsipras, as their Agreement needed to be approved by both Greek and Macedonian parliament before it could be ratified on 12 February 2019. Logically, this would be the time for both Prime Ministers to convince members of their parliament to vote in favor of the Agreement. Therefore, the focal point of this chapter will be the months between June 2018 and February 2019.

Because this chapter aims to unravel what domestic and interstate motives have brought the two nation states together to settle the naming dispute, there will be specific attention for how the Macedonian and Greek government justify and frame the reasons for signing the Prespa Agreement to the public via government statements, speeches and interviews. This chapter is

divided into four sections. First, a theoretical section on bargaining national identities on the domestic and interstate level will be provided. After that, a discourse analysis will be made of the Prespa Agreement, followed by an analysis of Greek and Macedonian government outlets on the Agreement. Finally, this chapter will be concluded with a discussion.

**Bargaining national identities through two-level games**

*Balkan national identities*

After the end of the Balkan Wars and the First World War the first borders of modern-day Balkan states like Greece and Bulgaria were established (Cowan 2000, 144). Before these wars, the Balkan territories made part of the Ottoman Empire for nearly four centuries. During the Ottoman reign, identification of 'self' and 'other' mainly happened through differences in religion, because that was the only measure for the Ottomans to categorize people (Couroucli and Marinov 2015, 4). The Ottoman administration in the Balkans stimulated people from different ethnical and religious backgrounds to mingle, out of which new social groups emerged (Cowan 2000, 142). When the first national movement thoughts arrived from the West in the nineteenth century, the concepts on national identification and mobilization were immediately adopted on top of the complex Balkan multicultural structured societies (Stamenova 2017).

In *Imagining the Balkans* Todorova problematizes national identity in contemporary Balkan states based on the Western model of nation states (1997). She remarks that along with the acceptance of the Westphalian model, the Balkan region had started internalizing the notion of 'Balkanism', the outside Western perception of the Balkans (Todorova 1997, 39). Today, the EU as an institution has become the main factor that divides the Balkans into two groups through offering membership to some Balkan states. The fact that Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and Croatia have become EU member states, perpetuates the internalized 'otherness' of those Balkan states who have not obtained EU membership yet (De Munck and Risteski 2013). As a result, interstate Balkan relations between EU member states and aspiring Balkan states have become asymmetric (ibid). This factor has played an important role in the power dynamics between Macedonia and Greece, as Greece already is part of those international organizations Macedonia is eager to join.

As of today, the underlying discourse in many Balkan nation states is based on the idea of having a uniform and homogenous national identity that is distinct from other Balkan national identities. The problem is that there are two conflicting conceptions of national identity. The

first conception of national identity is connected to the idea of belonging to a specific society through 'citizenship' (Stamenova 2017). The other conflicting conception of national identity qualifies 'ethnicity' as the measure for belonging to a nation state. The danger here is that in practice these two notions of national identity will result in either misinterpretation or in one of these notions replacing the other, leading to exclusion and confusion among marginalized people who do not fit within these frames of national identity (Stamenova 2017). As most Balkan states consist of multiple ethnical groups, especially the representation of national identity based on ethnicity becomes problematic (Liotta and Jebb 2004). In the case of Macedonia about 20 percent of its citizens are ethnic Albanians and have struggled with structural political exclusion from Macedonian national identity (Popovska 2015). This exclusion from national identity has resulted in armed conflict when ethnic Albanians and the Macedonian forces fought one another in 2001.

*Domestic politics and diplomacy: a two-level game*

Although many academics agree that domestic politics and international relations are connected with each other in some way, the existing theories on the interaction between the two levels have not been very fruitful in making sense of how these levels are interlinked (Putnam 1988). The academic field of IR traditionally tends to belief in keeping domestic and international level analyses separate, because these levels would be of mutually exclusive nature (Moravcik 1993, 6). As many people have seen the role of domestic politics become more important in foreign policy matters after the end of the Cold War, the academic interest for the formation of international alliances led by domestic interest groups has grown (Pahre and Papayoanou 1997, 4).

Putnam, as one of early academics to conceptualize the domestic- international linkages, has distinguished two levels of analysis: the international level focuses on a state's position within the international system, whilst the domestic level looks into the societal and political institutions within a nation state (Moravcik 1993, 5). This two-level game approach is a theory of international bargaining that explains how domestic factors have been pushed into the international level (Moravcik 1993, 16). Statemen play an essential role, as they are in the position to bargain with one another and have the power to strategically mold domestic political outcomes by setting the international agenda (Moravcik 1993, 26). The ultimate goal for statesmen is to find that 'sweet spot' on both the international and domestic table, where the

international level might enable an outcome for the domestic table, which would have been hard to obtain otherwise (Putnam 1988, 434).

The bargaining process on the international level is followed by national bargaining, which oftentimes is the hardest part. Ratification of international agreements on the domestic level depends on the relation between these two factors: the possibility of tradeoffs and the composition of the domestic public opinion (Putnam 1988, 448). The question to what extent the national governments are able to offer tradeoffs to non-agreeing domestic parties, will influence the chances of an international agreement's ratification (Putnam 1988, 446).

**Discourse Analysis of the Prespa Agreement**

In this section the "Final Agreement for the Settlement of the Differences as Described in the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 817 and 845, the Termination of the Interim Accord of 1995" (2018) will be the main focus of analysis. The aim is to unravel the underlying meanings and implications proposed in this document on the settlement of the naming question. The Prespa Agreement was signed on 17 June at Lake Prespa, in Greece, and consists of two parts. In the first part, all pending issues related to the disputed name have been put together and in the second part a document on "The Establishment of a Strategic Partnership" has been added (Ventouratou 2019). Since this thesis is about the negotiation process around the naming issue, only the first part will be analyzed.

In the Prespa Agreement's preamble the geographical nature of this place-naming agreement has been mentioned three times in a row through the words "international border", "frontiers" and "territorial integrity" (Hellenic Republic and FYROM 2018, 1). Here, both parties have declared and assured that the name change would not allow any violation of the already existing borders between Greece and Macedonia. To ensure how important these borders are, the definition of what is meant with border has been written in the articles 3 and 4. Interestingly, the conception of "border" in the Agreement does not only refer to the territorial aspect, but also the "sovereignty and political independence of the Other Party" (Hellenic Republic and FYROM 2018, 5). This is a proof of how the politics of place-naming is based on linguistic control over a place which is negotiated amongst different groups (Zelinsky 1992, Tent and Slatyer 2009). Furthermore, the fact that the along with the territorial boundaries, the parties have agreed on respecting boundaries between Greek and Macedonian national identities,

means the parties have managed to negotiate identity (Boer et al. 2006) through the Prespa Agreement.

In article 1c and article 7 of the Agreement, Greece promises to acknowledge the Macedonian people as a distinct nation along with their native tongue, which is the Macedonian language. Until the Agreement, Greece refused to recognize Macedonian as a distinct language and kept on classifying it as a "Slavic language". Also, the Macedonian inhabitants were addressed through substitute vocabulary such as "the people of Skopje" or "our Slavic neighbors" (Ventouratou 2019, 2). While this new acknowledgement of the Macedonian language and people looks like a positive development, it assumes that all citizens of Macedonia are Macedonian or identify as Macedonian. Also, the Agreement seems to identify only one official language to be spoken in Macedonia. Although almost have of the Macedonian population speaks Albanian, the multilingual or diverse aspect of Macedonian society has not been mentioned (Rohdewald 2018, 592). In the past, many Albanian Macedonians were not content with the fact that they were excluded from joining international organizations for a name the Albanian minority could not identify with at all (Rohdewald 2018, 589). After the armed conflict between Albanians and the Macedonian forces in 2001, the Macedonian government adopted the OHRID framework that promised minorities equal political representation. However, according to the Human Rights Report from 2017, there has not been much improvement (Rohdewald 2018, 588).

The biggest difference with previous negotiation attempts of settling the naming dispute would be that Greece and Macedonia have mutually agreed on "sharing" the symbolism of Macedonia. In the second chapter it became clear that neither parties were willing to accept the other party's belief system about the symbolism of Macedonia. Moreover, they were not even willing to directly communicate with each other. However, there still is a distinction made in which specific meaning of the symbol 'Macedonia' belongs to what nation state. Greece managed to insist on full ownership of Ancient Macedonia's history and heritage, meaning Macedonia will take away all symbolic references to Ancient Macedonia in public spaces after the Agreement's ratification (Hellenic Republic and FYROM 2018, 7). What is left for the state of Macedonia is its narrative as a sovereign nation state, with its homogenous Macedonian citizens (Joseph and Vangelov 2018, 41).

The most important tradeoff for Macedonia in these negotiations will be Greece's promise to not object Macedonia's membership in international, multilateral and regional organizations (Hellenic Republic and FYROM 2018, 4). What is remarkable is that article 4 contains instructions for both parties to take actions regarding Macedonia's future applications for NATO and EU accession. It says that after ratification Greece will be expected to notify the President of the Council of the EU that it supports the opening of EU accession talks with Macedonia (Hellenic Republic and FYROM 2018, 5). Especially in this article the willingness of the two parties to bargain with one another is evident, because the Prespa Agreement has secured the next steps for the phase after ratification. Still, we need to keep in mind that it was Macedonia that was desperate to secure its future as a member of NATO and the EU, as well as its national and mental borders with other neighboring Balkan states of Bulgaria and Serbia (Joseph and Ognen Vangelov 2018, 40).

**Analysis of Greek and Macedonian government speech acts on the Prespa Agreement**

A week before the Prespa Agreement would be signed by PM Zoran Zaev, he announced that there finally would be a "historical and everlasting solution" to the nearly three-decade old naming dispute between Macedonia and Greece (on 13/06/2018). With this solution, the Macedonian identity will be strengthened and secured for good. After mentioning the consensus of "North Macedonia", he continues to justify the consensus as the right solution that will open the door for NATO and EU membership. By explaining the timeline for NATO application right after the Agreement is ratified, he urges people to vote in favor of their Macedonian future: "Join in and let us walk forward together, towards the World and towards a better life" (Zaev 13/06/2018). This last sentence draws upon the Macedonian people's emotion and frustration about being excluded from the international system for so long. Furthermore, he frames the ratification of the Prespa Agreement as the guarantee for youth in Macedonia to become equal to their peers in the EU. While this last remark was made to encourage Macedonian people to vote for the realization of EU integration, the language used by Zaev reveals both the desire for recognition from the international system (Oluf 2013) as well as the internalized Balkanization (Todorova 1997).

During another speech prior to the Macedonian government's vote about the Prespa Agreement, Zaev had to full fil his goal of leading the Agreement to its ratification. Therefore, he asked his fellow politicians for once to put away political alliances and reminded them to strategically vote in favor of future Euro-Atlantic national interests (Zaev on 24/10/2018). Compared to the

previous statement targeting the Macedonian people, Zaev has chosen a more rational approach for the members of the parliament. Instead of trying to push his ideas on why the Prespa Agreement is the best option, he asks for a one time only strategic vote for a long-term solution.

In contrast with international agreements on material interests, the bargaining of identity as an immaterial interest needs to be communicated and justified to the public via emotion (Aguiar and De Francesco 2009). Because negotiating about one's identity and belonging, compared to an economic deal that has been bargained, is a very personal and essential matter that needs a personal and expressive mode of communication (Aguiar and De Francesco 2009, 551). The fact that the object of bargaining is of sensitive, non-quantifiable nature, there is need for careful communication to the public, whereas the numbers for an economic trade deal could speak for itself. While in the main object of bargaining in this case has been identity, there is a lack of theorization on the bargaining of identity.

In the following interview with Greek newspaper Ta Nea, Zaev speaks multiple times about the need for a stronger Balkan region and the need for a better reputation of the region (on 14/10/2018). At that time, the Prespa Agreement was accepted by the Macedonian people during the referendum, but the Greek parliament yet had to vote on the Agreement's ratification. Throughout this whole interview Zaev explains how the Agreement would be the beginning of the Balkan region's new image as a "peace-builder", which hopefully would replace the old images of the Balkan states. By creating the idea of a shared Balkan identity, Zaev strategically makes use of the two-level game on the interstate level (Putnam 1988). Even though the two nation states already have signed the Agreement together, there is the need for pushing through the domestic level of bargaining in order to get the naming dispute officially settled.

Compared to Macedonia, Greece's justifications for the Prespa Agreement show defensive patterns. The day before the Prespa Agreement would sign the Agreement, the Greek opposition called for a motion of no confidence. During the debate that followed, foreign minister Kotzias explains that the Agreement in fact does serve Greece's national interests, as it will secure Ancient Hellenic heritage as exclusively Greece's historical roots (Kotzias on 16/06/2018). Then he asks what people think could happen without compromises, by reminding his audience that non-agreement especially in the Balkans could lead to war. By framing the naming dispute as a possible security threat, Kotzias explains to necessity for the Prespa Agreement. In an

interview de day after signing the Agreement, Kotzias emphasizes again that Greece has not lost their symbol, but in actuality "got back" Ancient Macedonia (on 19/06/2018).

While Kotzias admits the Prespa Agreement perhaps was not the most ideal model for Greece, he speaks of "both sides having won" (on 20/07/2018). The Agreement is a peaceful compromise that has excluded a possible violent escalation between the two nation states. Furthermore, foreign minister Kotzias argues Greece needs to change its national course to a "course of growth" within the international system (on 20/07/2018). This part of his speech, underlining how Greece should pursue more recognition from the international system, proves that Greece wants to improve its position within the international system image through the Prespa Agreement (Oluf 2013, Phillpot 1999).

Whilst the speech acts from both parties try to justify how they as agents have chosen to bargain the Prespa Agreement, PM Zaev and FM Kotzias have expressed several times their shared desire for changing the international system's image of the Balkan region. This desire for recognition, however, has been partially the result of the international system's authority over nation states (Bartelson 2014, 98). The traditional IR view on sovereignty as a given, in practice has been replaced by the international system's authority to permit membership to international organizations (Oluf 2013). This means that the international system's mechanism of exclusion or inclusion ultimately decides whether other nation states will perceive a nation state as 'equal' and 'sovereign' (Phillpot 1999). Although the naming dispute could not have been settled without the efforts of active bargaining between Greece and Macedonia, we should also keep in mind that the international system has directed both actors towards an agreement.

**Discussion**

In the previous chapter it became clear that Greece and Macedonia were stuck within a dispute that was impossible to solve as long as both nation states were refusing to actively engage in a negotiation that would allow both parties to could keep their normative beliefs about the symbol of Macedonia. In contrast to those past negotiations, a swift negotiation process of only a year has led to the ratification of the Prespa Agreement (Ventouratou 2018). This time around, the parties involved were willing to divide the symbolism of Macedonia amongst one another. As the meaning of both national identities are tied to this symbolism, the two parties also have negotiated the new boundaries between their identities (Boer et al. 2006). These boundaries, defined as both geographical and identity-based borders, form the base of the Prespa Agreement

and have been repeated multiple times in the accord. The fact that the boundaries of Macedonia's new name explicitly have been described in relation to territory and identity, shows how powerful acts of place-naming are (Zelinsky 1992, Tent and Slatyer 2009).

The Greek and Macedonian governments have come with the solution of dividing the symbol "Macedonia" in two distinct meanings to which only the rightful state is allowed to refer. While both nation states have the right to use the symbol of Macedonia, Macedonia has given up its claim to ancient Macedonian history and heritage and Greece in return can neither refuse nor claim the existence of the Macedonian state (Hellenic Republic and FYROM 2018, 7). While this bargaining process led to the acknowledgement of Macedonia's national identity, distinct language and of the Macedonian people, this very act also excludes certain marginalized groups in Macedonia who do not identify as Macedonian. As the Prespa Agreement only mentions the mono-ethnic traits of the Macedonian and Greek nation states, the presence of ethnic and linguistic minorities in Greece and Macedonia have been denied (Rohdewald 2018). This part of the Agreement reflects the exclusionist aspect of negotiating interstate boundaries and domestic identity, and therefore reveals the presence of two different levels of exclusionism within the Agreement.

Although the Macedonian and Greek governments have used different frames for why they believe in the Prespa Agreement, both sides have made careful use of emotion as a communicative action for bargaining the Prespa at the domestic level. Traditionally, bargaining has always been associated with the negotiation of material interest (Doron and Sened 2001). As bargaining focuses on the outcomes rather than the process towards the outcome, the immediate problem for the naming issue is the fact that political theory and rational theory do not have the vocabulary for immaterial communicative tools like emotion. Furthermore, identity as an interest is hard to grasp, which makes it hard for international negotiations to quantify the possible tradeoffs. This thesis has identified a gap in the existing literature on bargaining in comparison to the several contemporary cases of international bargaining of identity.

A constant factor throughout the whole Macedonian- Greek naming dispute has been the desire for recognition from the international system. Prior to the Prespa Agreement negotiations, both nation states turned to the international system for help and recognition within the bilateral case. While both parties have taken on a proactive role in the time period between 2018 and 2019,

the urge for ending the naming dispute was connected with both states' wishes to improve their national image within the international system. As mentioned before, this "desire" for recognition is actually an internalized effect of the international system's authority (Oluf 2013). Sovereignty has become an instrument for the international system, which gives it the authority to include and exclude nation states from participating within the international society. This mechanism of exclusion and inclusion, paradoxically, fuels the need to become a member state at any cost which in return perpetuates the international system's hierarchical position over nation states (Phillpot 1999, Bartelson 2014). In conclusion, the Prespa Agreement has been both a product of intranational bargaining efforts from Greece and Macedonia but also has functioned as an object of the international system.

# Conclusion

This aim of this thesis was to find out how it was possible that the long-term naming dispute between Macedonia and Greece was settled after almost three decades of political threats, economic sanctions and refusals to acknowledge one another's perception about the meaning of Macedonia. In this research the two nation states have been approached as 'person-like' unitary agents. The first chapter provided the core concepts: the politics of place-naming, arguing and bargaining and sovereignty through symbolic form (Bartelson 2014). Then, in the second chapter, speech acts of the time period between 2008 and 2018 were analyzed alongside the additional concepts of recognition (Oluf 2013) and boundaries (Boer et al. 2006). The final chapter discussed the role of 'Balkanization' (Todorova 1997) in the process of bargaining the Prespa Agreement on both the intra-national and domestic level (Putnam 1988).

In the first chapter the main concept of the politics of place-naming has been defined as a linguistic act through which one can claim ownership of a territory and the people living in within this space. While the act of place-naming might seem natural, it in fact serves as a powerful way of creating structures of meaning about a place and the identity of people living within its borders (Zelinsky 1992). Place-naming is regularly followed by conflict, especially when it occurs in public places where people from different social groups come together. Therefore, place-naming oftentimes involves negotiation. The quality of negotiation in combination with the appropriate negotiation style will decide whether a place-naming issue could be settled. In this specific naming dispute negotiating through arguing proved unfruitful, as both Macedonia and Greece were not willing to listen to one another's point of view within the dispute. In the third chapter, however, we saw that the parties started bargaining their national identities through the Prespa Agreement.

In the time period between 2008 and 2018, the bilateral dynamics between Macedonia and Greece had a passive-aggressive nature since there was minimal interaction between the two parties. Most statements and speeches were targeted at the international community and contained complaints about the other party's lack of interest to solve the bilateral issue. The bilateral dispute had become a competitive race for winning over the international society's favor. In the case of Macedonia, the urge for recognition is rather paradoxical since the rules of the international organizations have allowed for exclusion or inclusion. Bartelson calls this the international system's authority over nation states: the very mechanism of granting membership

to nation states gives the international system its hierarchical position above nation states (2013, 98).

In the time period from 2018 until 2019, Macedonia and Greece were able to end the three-decade long naming issue through negotiating and signing the Prespa Agreement. The first reason for why this was possible was the change in political attitudes. In comparison to previous attempts, the political leaders were willing to listen to each other's perspectives on the meaning of Macedonia and to find a middle ground through bargaining. Secondly, the Prespa Agreement became an opportunity for negotiating and refining the national identities amongst the two nations. The negotiation of identity happened on two different levels, which connects the international level with the domestic level (Putnam 1988). The Prespa Agreement became a way for the two states to acknowledge one another's national identity, however, in that process the Agreement creates the assumption of two homogenous nations (Rohdewald 2018). This is problematic since both nation states are multiethnic, especially in the border regions. Given the fact that Macedonia already experienced an armed conflict between ethnic Albanians and the Macedonian forces, this Agreement is yet another way of excluding the Albanian minorities. Likewise, the Agreement has not mentioned anything about the Macedonian minorities living in Greece (Liotta and Jebb 1989).

After the Prespa Agreement was signed by PM Zaev and PM Tsipras, it was time for the parliaments to vote for its ratification. In speech acts of the time period between 2018 and 2019, both Zaev and Tsipras expressed their desire for wanting to change the 'Balkan image' for the better. While this sounds like a good starting point for the improvement of their bilateral relations, both states still seem to attach great importance to recognition from the international society. This reoccurring pattern is in accordance with Todorova's idea of 'balkanization' (1997). With the arrival of Western thoughts in the early nineteenth century, the Balkans were exposed to Western thoughts about the Balkan 'other'. Considering that the notion of nation states coincided with 'Balkanization', these two thoughts have grown inseparable in modern day Balkan states. For this specific naming dispute, it means that both countries struggle with internalized ideas about oneself as the Balkan 'other'.

While it is true that the efforts made by the political leaders from Macedonia and Greece have made the Prespa Agreement possible, the underlying urge for recognition and approval from the international society has also contributed to the final settlement. This urge, according to

Bartelson, is the effect of the international society's authority over deciding whether a nation state does or does not have the right to participate and belong within its system. Thus, the Prespa Agreement came to fruition through the combination of proactive bargaining processes between Greece and Macedonia, and the mechanism of the international system.

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