

**Albanian Minority questions in Macedonia:
Selected Issues**

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Political Preferences
2018, vol. 19: 77-90.
DOI: 10.6084/m9.figshare.6726944
journals.us.edu.pl/index.php/PP
Submitted: 07/05/2018
Accepted: 14/06/2018



Abstract:

In the article I tried to select the most important issues and events related to the Albanian minority question in Macedonia. In the very beginning I explain the origin of the name Macedonia, the location of Macedonia and roughly summarize its way to independence in the 90's. Then I elucidate where the Albanian minority in Macedonia came from and why the conflict in Tetovo broke out. At the end I try to chronologically describe the events from 2001 that had impact on today's political situation in the state with special regard to the political crisis that lasted from 2014 to the implementation of the law guaranteeing Albanian as the second official language in Macedonia.

Key words:

Macedonia, Albanian minority, identity, conflict

Introduction

The etymology of the term *Macedonia* (Macedonian: *Македонија*, Greek: *Μακεδονία*, Latin: *Macedonius*) is under discussion, for instance a *Greek-English Lexicon* explains that the term derives from the Greek adjective *makednos* (*μακεδνός*) which means *tall* and defines a kingdom named after the ancient Macedonians (Liddell & Scott 1940). Nonetheless, *Online Etymology Dictionary* states that the term *Macedonia* comes from Proto-Indo-European root *mak-* means *long, thin, tall* and suffix *don-* means *land*, therefore it's literally *highlanders* or *the tall ones* (Douglas 2001).

The Republic of Macedonia or the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is located in the Balkan Peninsula. The country has an area of 25,713 km², population around 2.2 million and borders with Greece to the south, Albania to the west, Serbia and Kosovo to the north and Bulgaria to the east (Kawka & Płaneta 2013: 23). It comprises of the Republic of Macedonia

(land of Vardar Macedonia) which covers the north-western part of geographical Macedonia and other regions such as The Blagoevgrad District in southwestern Bulgaria (Pirin Macedonia), and the district of Makedhonia in the province of Northern Greece (Aegean Macedonia).¹

A trial of dissolution of Yugoslavia – a creature of Tito, which conglomerated six republics together – has began in 1991. A popular saying stated that Yugoslavia is a country with seven borders, six republics, five nations, four languages, three religions, two alphabets and one leader (Szczesio 2013: 180). After Tito died, the nationalist parties whose main aim was the separation from Yugoslavia, came to power in Serbia, Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia and Hercegovina. Therefore, the bloody conflict in this countries has started.

It was not alike in the Socialist Republic of Macedonia because most of population nourished the nostalgic feelings about Tito and the Yugoslav welfare system (Brunnbauer 2003: 161). In September 1991, an independence referendum was held in Macedonia and was approved by 96.4% of voters. It is possible that the referendum question had some impact on the results due to its construction: *Are you for a sovereign and independent state of Macedonia, with a right to enter into any alliance with sovereign states of Yugoslavia?* However, it is worth mentioning that the turnout was only 71.6%. The reason was the case of Albanian minority who boycotted the referendum because they did not want to separate from the families they had in Kosovo (Majewski 2013:128).

Thus, after Macedonia gained full independence, new questions arise. The name issue with Greece, unwillingness of Bulgaria to recognize independent Macedonian language and nation, the Serbian pretention towards the Macedonian Orthodox Church. Already in February 1992, Macedonian Interior Minister Ljubomir Frčkovski said: *"Serbia recognizes the existence of a nation, but does not accept the Macedonian state, Bulgaria recognizes Macedonia as a state, but does not recognize the nation, and Greece does not accept the state or the Macedonian people"* (Stets 1992: A01). Additionally there was one more issue with Macedonian-Albanian relations and the problem of the Albanian as a second language in Macedonia.

The aim of the article is to present selected issues with the Albanian minority living in Macedonia. The dissertation has been divided into four parts. The first one describes issues related to the national identity of Macedonians, which complexity and problems affect today's events. In this part, the author defines the concept of identity and evokes events that influenced

¹ These lands were divided into three countries (Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece) after 1912 and 1913, as a result of the Balkan wars (Kawka & Płaneta 2013: 24).

its formation. In the second part the reasons related to the appearance of the Albanian minority, its population and the resulting animosities are explained. This part is an introduction to the third and the fourth part, which present the events of the conflict in Tetovo and contemporary events that have influenced the problems studied in this article.

Macedonian identity

National identity can be defined as a relation of the nation to oneself or collective self-knowledge and a possibility of identification of members of the community (Wojtaszczyk & Jakubowski 2007: 187). In Ottoman Macedonia the Slavs did not have clearly developed feeling of national identity (Stojanovski et al. 2014: 300). Individual units felt attached to their tribes, families and churches but not to the whole nation of Macedonia.

One of the elements which affect the formation of identity is religion. Thus, Macedonian models of self-identification were shaped by neighbouring Churches such as the Patriarchy of Constantinople, Bulgarian Exarchate, Serbian and Greek Autocephalous Churches. However, *Some of them may have had strong feelings of loyalty towards Greece or Bulgaria, when were asked who they are, many insisted on that they always were "Christians"* (Mazover 2000: 219).

Another identity binder is the state in the economic and social sense, but also its lack. Very often the national identity is getting stronger when the attributes of the independence are at risk, since the lack of future outlooks and the myths of *golden past* influence the identity connected to a given nation among the members of community (Sielska 2016: 141).

Nation and identity were developed on the Balkan Peninsula in the 19th century. This coincided with the era of Romanticism and *Volkgeist*, which made people think about their nationality. The Macedonian proto-nationalism developed simultaneously with the other Balkan nations. At the same time the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization was created, and it gave an impulse to the first Iliden Uprising in 1903 against Ottomans.

After two Balkan wars of 1912 and 1913 and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, most of the Macedonian territories were divided between Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia. The territory of the modern Macedonian state² was annexed by Serbia and named "Southern Serbia". Thereafter Serbia started anti-Bulgarian campaign which was based on the fact that they wanted to build new Macedonian identity. They started systematic repressions of the Bulgarian activists, altering family surnames, and internal colonisation (Катарциев 2000: 329).

² Vardar Macedonia.

In 1944 the *Anti-Fascist Assembly for the National Liberation of Macedonia* (ASNOM) proclaimed the People's Republic of Macedonia, *belonging to ethnic Macedonians* as part of the People's Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Furthermore, the same assembly approved Macedonian language, the idea of equality of nations and their right to self-determination within the future state was promoted in Yugoslavia. Bulgarian and Greek nationalists, who proclaim that Macedonia is not an independent nation, insist that Macedonian identity rose because of Serbian propaganda.

After VMRO-DPMNE (eng. *Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity*, мац, *Внатрешна македонска револуционерна организација – Демократска партија за македонско национално единство*), a national party came to power, and the myths and symbols revived anew. In 2007, the authorities changed the name of the airport to the Alexander the Great and put ancient artefacts in front of the Council of Ministers building. It was the process of conducting the so-called "Anti-image" of the Macedonian identity, which was to refer to the ancient Macedonia and the discovery of a true Macedonian identity, which was based on the creative coexistence among contemporary Macedonians, anti-Macedonian and Slavic genes and ancient cultural heritage. The system of education and the basis of teaching were also subjects to changes (Brunnbauer 2003). In 2014 the "Skopje 2014" project was started, under which the centre of the capital acquired ancient features.

Albanian minority in Macedonia

Albanians are the largest minority in the Republic of Macedonia. According to the census of population households in the republic of Macedonia in 2002, 25.2 percent of the population consider themselves as Albanians (*Census of Population...*). Unfortunately, no censuses were made in the following years. However, in Macedonia there are more and more Albanians strongly identifying themselves with their nationality. The most influential factors here are the patriarchal family model and high birth rate. That is why the Albanian minority issue in Macedonia becomes more and more visible in the society.

Albanian minority is aggregated in the northwest of the country and in a region close to the capital Skopje. This nation appeared in Macedonia already in the Ottoman era, between the 19th and 20th century. Moreover, Ottoman Turks supported the settlement of Albanians because they willingly changed their religion to Islam and they filled the ranks of the Ottoman army (Stawowy-Kawka 1996: 81-93).

The diminishment of the Albanian population in Macedonia was visible since 1912. This was caused by the decision to create a state Albania. However, during the Second World War and also afterwards the migration of Albanians to the People's Republic of Macedonia intensified.

The next increased migrations waves took place after Macedonia gained full independence. After a trial of dissolution of Yugoslavia many Albanians migrated to their families in Macedonia, but also escaped from military activities in Kosovo and later Serbia (about 300,000 refugees) (Majewski 2013: 162).

It is worth pointing out that Albanians have built political groups representing their socio-economic interests and taking part in consecutive parliamentary elections beginning from 1990. Albanians have built several political groups, notwithstanding three are the most important parties: The Party for Democratic Prosperity (*Partija za demokratски prosperitet – ПДП, Partija za demokratski prosperitet – PDP*), and contemporary major parties: Democratic Union for Integration - DUI (*Bashkimi Demokratik për Integrim/ Demokratska Unija za Integracija/ Демократска Унија за Интеграција*), Democratic Party of Albanians - DPA (*Partia Demokratike Shqiptare/ Demokratska Partijana Albancite/ Демократска Партија на Албанците*).

Significant problems with Albanians appeared after the right-wing Prime Minister Ljubčo Georgievski, famous for his anti-Albanian rhetoric, came to power (Wojnicki 2016: 164). The ethnical conflict was looming. In addition, the matter strengthened the disagreement between the Albanians on their social status and economic and democratic problems in the state (Гроздановска Димишковска 2010).

Battle of Tetovo and Ohrid Agreement

On February 16, 2001, armed groups of NLA³ attacked the Macedonian police stations in the village near Tetovo, killing one police officer and injuring three others. Then the military conflict known as a Battle of Tetovo began. Military operations took place in the areas of Tetovo, Kumanovo and at north Macedonia, until August 2001, when agreement in Ohrid was signed.

³National Liberation Army (Albanian: Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare - UÇK; Macedonian: Ослободителна народна армија - ОНА, Osloboditelna narodna armija – ONA) also known as the Macedonian UÇK, is the Albanian terrorist organization that operates in Macedonia with Kosovo Liberation Army. Its goal is to create the “Grater Albania” - an irredentist concept of lands that are considered to form the national homeland by many Albanians, including Kosovo and the Preševo Valley of Serbia, territories in southern Montenegro, Northwestern Greece and a part of Western Republic of Macedonia (Kędziora-Płachciak 2015: 263).

The first sign of the NLA activity was the message from January 2000, that: *All armed attacks near Skopje in January and the killing of policemen in the village near Kičevo and the destruction of the police station was the work of the Albanians*” (Stawowy-Kawka 2016: 47). They added that the negotiations will be no longer conducted because they were ignored. Thereafter, until 2001 bomb attacks took place in Macedonian cities and at Kosovo-Macedonian border.

According to the Ministry of Defence and Kosovo Force (KFOR) the Albanian armed forces, Commanded by Ali Ahmeti, numbered about 8,000 people. A large group of warriors were radical Albanians from Macedonia or neighbouring countries, especially from Kosovo. Just as every terrorist organisation has been successful in recruiting young and unemployed people. In the initial phase of the conflict the goal of NLA was to overthrow the “occupation” power in Skopje and the territories where most Albanians lived (Stawowy-Kawka 2016: 50-51). They also wanted to establish the Albanian power and most probably to create Great Albania.⁴

After the Yugoslav Army, the Macedonian Army was very weak and practically devoid of equipment. Fifteen thousand soldiers served in the army and at the helm, according to the constitution, was the contemporary President of Macedonia – Boris Trajkovski (Valecki 2013).

During the conflict, the NLA attacked police stations, military units, communication routes and Macedonian population, forcing them to escape from areas mostly inhabited by Albanians. Thus, until March 14-16, the area of Tetovo was taken over. After that, the Macedonian Government announced the mobilization, however, due to the NATO and EU pressure they did not introduce martial law (Petrovski 2006: 16). Global public opinion was afraid that the conflict will escalate on to the whole country.

Military operations lasted whole March and April, bringing the state to paralysis and social discontent. In Bitola and Skopje people went out to protest against Albanians in Macedonia. Therefore, on 8th May 2001, President Trajkovski decided to engage in a new offensive against the NLA – “MX-2”, in order to drive them out of their strongholds in the villages north of Kumanovo. The action was unsuccessful, because the authorities in Macedonia were afraid of the increased number of victims among civilians. Albanian fighters took hostages and used them as living shields (Stawowy-Kawka 2016). As a consequence, a great coalition was

⁴ The concept of lands that in future will create Great Albania based on regions like Kosovo and the Preševo Valley of Serbia, territories in southern Montenegro, northwestern Greece and western part of Republic of Macedonia.

formed with the Albanian opposition party - DPD. The negotiations were led by Anna Lindh and Javier Solana and were successful but just for a short term.⁵

At the time, Ali Ahmeti sought support among Albanians parties in Macedonia. On May 22, the leading political leaders of DPA and PDPD met with representatives of the NLA in Prizren in Kosovo and the agreement was signed. The desire for peace was clearly outlined but amendments to the Constitution of Macedonia were an ultimatum for the completion of military operations. One of the points was to recognize the Albanian language as official in Macedonia (Iseini et al. 2008: 22-23).

The negotiations were resumed in June, but there was still no peace. The Ohrid Framework Agreement put an official end of the armed conflict. On August 13, 2001, the amendments to Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia were approved and signed in Ohrid. It is worth mentioning that agreement was signed under the influence of NATO and the European Union. The Macedonian side was represented by the VMRO-DPMNE and the SDSM⁶, while the Albanian side was represented by two Albanian parties - the DPA and the PDP. The NLA was included neither in the negotiations, nor in the signing of the document. The Ohrid Agreement contained⁷:

1. Reinstatement of the terms *national minority, Macedonian people, nationalities*, replacing it with *majority population, communities and communities not in the majority*.
2. Ethnic communities were granted the right to receive higher education in their own language, finance from the state budget.
3. *Communities* gained their representatives (in proportion to their number) in offices, courts, police and army.
4. The provision in Constitution that Macedonians were state-building nation was abandoned.
5. It was written down from the Constitution that the Macedonian Orthodox Church was the most important religious community in the country.
6. An official language was introduced in municipalities, where over 20 per cent of the population is not of Macedonian origin (this applies mainly to Albanians) (Brunnbauer 2002).

⁵ Anna Lindh was in that term Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Sweden and Javier Solana was The EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (Stawowy-Kawka 2016: 57).

⁶ SDSM (eng. *Social Democratic Union of Macedonia, мац. Социјалдемократски сојуз на Македонија, Socijaldemokratski sojuz na Makedonija*) is the main left-wing party in Macedonia. The party was established in 1991 due to transformation of the Macedonian Communist Party (Wojnicki 2016: 161-162).

⁷ The author of the article decided to point out only those provisions which were considered crucial for the article and issue.

As a consequence, the conditions of peace were introduced and the autonomy of the Albanians was broadened. Lubčo Georgevski was criticized by all political options in Macedonia and VMRO – DPMNE failed at the elections in 2002 (Majewski 2013: 165-166).

Contemporary issues of the Albanian minority in Macedonia

After the conflict and the Ohrid Agreement, Ali Ahmeti formed his own party – Democratic Union for Integration and in elections to the legislature on 15 September, 2002, won 11.9% of the popular vote (70% of Albanian votes). Furthermore, from 2002 to 2006 DUI was in the ruling coalition with SDSM and Liberal Democratic Party. New Prime Minister, Branko Crvenkovski, was a champion of the Macedonian and Albanian rapprochement.

Due to the new political reality and an open dialogue between the authorities and the Albanian minority, on April 1, 2004, the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union (signed in 2001) came into force (Lubik-Reczek 2011: 209). It was a real success for Macedonia due to the internal conflict and ethnic tensions inside the country.

After the aircraft crash in 2004, in which President Boris Trajkovski died⁸, Prime Minister Branko Crvenkovski took part in the election of the President of the Republic of Macedonia, and won it. Vlado became the president of the ruling party and the Prime Minister from December. Unfortunately, he did not have political backing, which is why conflicts broke out in the party. The consequence of these incidents was the breakdown of NSDP (New Social Democratic Party) in 2005. The cases of high corruption, clientelism and often a dishonest process of privatisation⁹ in the state also did not help the ruling party.

In July 2006, the next parliamentary elections took place in Macedonia. The election campaign was marked by serious cross-political confrontations, occasionally resulting in violence mainly between the two major ethnic Albanian parties DUI and DPA. Vice President of the DPA party, Menduh Taci, argued that the Albanian national question in Macedonia had not yet been resolved (Jordanovski 2006).

Therefore, the conservative party VMRO-DPMNE won the elections in Macedonia, obtaining 45 of the 120 seats in the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia and Nikola Gruevski remained the Prime Minister. After unsuccessful negotiations between VMRO-DPMNE and DUI considering the structure of the new government, Nikola Gruevski decided

⁸ Although the cause of the crash is not known, most of the Macedonians believe that it was an assassination attempt. On the same day, Macedonian efforts to enter the European Union were officially initiated.

⁹ Large-scale Privatization took place in 90s, while the SDSM was in power. As a consequence, the following factories such as "October 11", "Slavia", "Železara", "Centro" and many others were closed. As a result, thousands of citizens lost their jobs (Crvenkovski *so apsurdni...*).

to form a government with the DPA. VMRO-DPMNE ruled until 2016 winning the elections in 2008, 2011 and 2014.

After the elections in 2008, VMRO-DPMNE formed a coalition with the Albanian party DUI. However, there were plenty of problems with an ethnic edge. Before the elections in 2011, the DUI organised a protest against the construction of a church-like building, which was held around the old Skopje Fortress. The government claimed the building should become a museum. However, the remonstrance changed into violent inter-ethnic incident quickly (Stojanovski 2011).

After the coalition of VMRO-DPMNE and DUI won the elections in 2011, the opposition party SDSM and the other Albanian party DPA did not hide their dissatisfaction. The leader of DPA asserted that DUI had failed to advance the needs of ethnic Albanians. He also ordered the introduction of further amendments to the constitution, above all he wanted the Albanian language to be the second official language alongside Macedonian (*Macedonia: Ten years...*).

The situation between the Albanians and the Macedonians in the country was visibly tense. In April 2012, the incident which gave rise to the anti-Albanian offense took place. Five ethnic-Macedonian civilians were shot and killed by ethnic Albanians at a man-made lake near the village of Smilkovci. The Macedonians named this occurrence a *massacre at Smilkovci Lake*. In response to the murders, the protests were organised in cities throughout Macedonia. In the village of Smilkovci and the city of Skopje, the remonstrance turned violent. The protesters chanted: *A good Albanian is a dead Albanian and Gas chambers for the Albanians* (*Марш низ Битола...*).

Early elections were held in 2014. The ruling party won, and Gorge Ivanov was reelected. He was strongly associated with VMRO-DPMNE, and criticized the Ohrid Agreement from 2001, which gave a number of rights to the Albanian minority. During this period, dissatisfaction among the Albanians grew, which led to tension between the Albanians and the authorities in 2014. In July this year, the Albanian minority took to the streets to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with a death sentence for the Albanian from Smilkovci (Biernat 2014).

The political and economic crisis with corruption in the background led to a great dissatisfaction of the society, leading to the outbreak of demonstrations by students and other social groups. In the meantime there have been numerous attacks on police stations, but also on the headquarters of the Albanian party or incident using grenades for the parliament building. In 2015, the incident in Kumanovo took place. According to the Macedonian Ministry of the Interior, on May 9, police forces entered the Albanian district in Kumanovo to capture people

suspected of planning terrorist attacks on state institutions. As a result of two days of clashes, 8 policemen and 14 Albanians were killed, and 37 people were injured. These people were associated with the NLA terrorist organization. Views on the incident are divided. According to the Polish organization *The Center for Eastern Studies*, this act could be used especially by VMRO-DPMNE and Nikola Gruevski. At the time, the opposition party SDSM published a series of wiretaps that the party was supposed to perform on politicians, dignitaries, and members of the government (Szpala 2015).

The political crisis in Macedonia was increasing all the time. On 11 December, 2016, early parliamentary elections were held and were considered a part of an agreement brokered by the European Union to end the protests against the government of Nikola Gruevski

The ruling party, with 39.39% of votes, has won the December elections but it was only 1% more than SDSM (37.87%). As a consequence, the coalition with Albanian parties was important for the formation of the future government. The leaders of the three Albanian parties: DUI, BESA and AzA¹⁰) created the so-called *Tirana Platform*¹¹ and began post-election negotiations with a joint list of postulates which contained the strengthening of the Albanian language status and co-financing Albanian communes. Among the Albanian applications, there were also proposals for changing the flag, national emblem and national anthem. President Ivanov appealed to international leaders that the demands of the *Tirana Platform* threaten the sovereignty and independence of Macedonia (EWB Archives 2017).

After the failure of talks between the Albanian parties and Nikola Gruevski, the *Tirana Platform* started negotiations with the opposition - SDSM. Zoran Zaev, the chairman of the party, claimed the mandate to form a government but President Gorge Ivanov refused to give his consent. Mediation was conducted by Federica Mogherini, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy until May 2017. Finally, after EU involvement in the Macedonian conflict, the new government was constituted on the 31st of May 2017 (Domachowska 2017).

Many people were disappointed, especially conservatives and nationalists from the association called *За заедничка Македонија* (*For A United Macedonia*). This society was formed in February 2017 to organize protests across the country against the *Tirana Platform* („*За заедничка Македонија*“) and was responsible for the incident in April 2017. Storming

¹⁰ *Besa Movement*, Albanian *Lëvizja Besa* – Albanian party formed in December 2014; AzA - *Alliance for Albanians*, Albanian - *Aleanca për Shqiptarët* – Albanian party formed in 2015.

¹¹ The declaration, which formed The *Tirana Platform* of the political parties DUI, the Alliance for Albanians and Besa, was signed in January 2017 in Tirana with the mediation of Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama.

of the Macedonian Parliament¹² also known as Bloody Thursday was a reaction to the election of Talat Xhaferi, an ethnic Albanian, as a speaker of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia. Around 200 demonstrators broke through a police cordon, entered Macedonian parliament and attacked the MPs, despite a months-long deadlock in talks to form a new government (Testorides 2017).

The Zaev's party along with the Tiranian platform in January 2018 voted in The *Sobranie* for the use of Albanian as another official language, with 69 votes "for". The opposition party VMRO-DPMNE boycotted the vote (*Sobranje potvrdilo...*). Passing the bill was considered controversial and the President Ivanov did not sign it into law as Macedonian nationalists strongly oppose it. As a result, he returned the bill to *Sobranie*.

On March 15, 2018 the law was again voted in *Sobranie*, by a majority of 64 votes to 123 (*Macedonia's Albanian language...*). The President announced that he would not sign it. According to the Article 75 of the Constitution the president is obliged to sign the decree on the pronouncement of the Law on languages because he has already exercised the veto power, but the deadline for doing so is not prescribed (*Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, art. 74*).

The previous law, which arose from a 2001 peace deal that ended an armed conflict between ethnic Albanian rebels and government forces, secured the official use of the Albanian language in communities where the minority is more than 20% of the population. After Macedonian Parliament has approved a law Albanian is going to be the second official language throughout the country, in institutions like municipalities, hospitals and courts, even in the regions where Albanians do not live.

As Prime Minister Zoran Zaev pointed out: *There are no bilingual notes, there will be no bilingual uniforms in the Army, unless the Venetian Commission confirms that this is in accordance with the Constitution, we do not have prejudices (Што содржи законот за јазуџи?)*. However, in municipalities where Albanians population exceeds 20% of the total ,the police, fire fighting and health units will be in Albanian and the banknotes will contain the elements of Albanian culture, but not the text in Albanian.

These are not only the problems of the Zaev's government, since January 2018 negotiations with Greece related to the name of Macedonia have been conducted. Greece does not want the word *Macedonia* to appear alone in the name of the country,¹³ and proposes such

¹² Macedonian Parliament/ The Assembly of the Republic of *Macedonia or Sobranie, mac. Собрание*.

¹³ Greece accuses Macedonia of the attempts to steal a part of its cultural heritage, stressing that Macedonia is a geographical and historical concept referring to a specific region of 'Aegean Macedonia', not a state with a capital in Skopje.

names as *Republic of Skopje* and *Upper Macedonia*, mac. *Горна Македонија, Gorna Makedonija*. However, the Albanian party Alliance for Albanians wants to take part in the negotiations, and proposes that the name of Macedonia should not be Slavic and should also refer to the Albanian minority (*Albanci u Makedoniji...*).

Conclusion

The process of shaping identity in the territory of the Balkan Peninsula undergoes constant transformations along with the transformation of cultural reality, and thus consciousness. National identity was getting stronger when the attributes of the independence were at risk, which is why Macedonia, together with the whole region of South-eastern Europe, is often referred to as a *Balkan Cauldron*.

Today's Macedonia is being developed as a politically and economically stable state. According to the government data from 2017, the year-on-year economic growth has reached 1.2% (*Macedonia Economic Outlook 2018*). Macedonia is also a full member of international organizations, for instance: International Monetary Fund, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Council of Europe, World Trade Organization and United Nations. However, Macedonia is still referred to as the provisional name of the FYROM in the international forum. That is caused mainly by the non-recognition of the name *Macedonia* by Greece and the blocking of accession talks with the European Union and membership in NATO.

Macedonia has always been a strategic political area in the Balkans. For this reason, Macedonia's neighbours have always sought to subjugate this state. Till now Serbia does not accept Macedonia as a state, Bulgaria does not recognize the Macedonian language and nation, and Greece does not accept the state, even a nation. But Macedonia not only must face the external identity problems, but also its internal aspects.

The Albanian issue in Macedonia began with the disintegration of Yugoslavia leading to the conflict in Tetovo in 2001. Thanks to the intervention of international organizations, a consensus was reached on the basis of the Ohrid agreement. However, the animosities between Macedonians and Albanians are still visible. However, Prime Minister Zoran Zaev expects a quick resolution of the political stalemate in 2018 and the implementation of the law guaranteeing Albanian as the second official language in Macedonia. Society seems to be divided into those who are tired of constant conflicts and lack of perspectives, who are able to devote their country's name and the whole complex of emblems and national symbols and those who strongly identify with the name and tongue and will protest and show dissatisfaction.

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