



# **SECURITY FORUM 2021**

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS FROM  
THE 14<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE,  
FEBRUARY 10<sup>TH</sup>, 2021

MATEJ BEL UNIVERSITY, BANSKA BYSTRICA, SLOVAKIA

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# **SECURITY FORUM 2021**

*14<sup>th</sup> Annual International Scientific Conference  
February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
at Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia*

*Conference Proceedings*

**Banská Bystrica, Slovakia 2021**

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*Paper have been double-blind reviewed before the final submission to the conference. Initially, papers abstracts were read and selected by the conference international scientific board for submission as possible papers for the conference.*

*Many thanks to the reviewers who helped to ensure the quality of the full papers.*

*The autors of the articles are responsible for the content and language form of the individual articles.*

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**ISBN 978-80-973394-5-6**

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# NATIONAL STATE OR AN UNDEFINED FORMATION? - CASE STUDY OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA – PRESPA AGREEMENT, FROM NATIONAL TO ARTIFICIAL STATE

Oliver Andonov<sup>1</sup>, Jana Kukeska<sup>2</sup>

## **ABSTRACT**

*Contemporary global trends in the world become so irrepressible, undefined and even violent for small states and peoples. This is not just an ordinary, politically motivated attitude, or a conclusion derived under unfavorable circumstances, but it represents a theoretically-based feeling of losing the national state and the perception of the traditional paradigm of "the idea of statehood and nation" towards something so-called "new" but predominantly undefined. At the same time, it is not about an undefined social system, but about the changes of constitutional and political system within a single historical cycle through various violent and subtle methods, resulting in a change of its national character, thus creating a pseudo-state with an amorphous mass of population. Due to the fact that the authors think it is an experiment on a global level, aiming at identity changes of states and nations and the process of creating an amorphous group of human entities based on the "walling of the Babylonian Tower" principle, this paper represents comparative analysis of documents which on the example of the Republic of Macedonia led to a fundamental change of the state and national identity of the Macedonian nation and of the Macedonian state. In this paper we analyze the part of the so-called "Prespa Agreement", part of the good neighbor agreement between Macedonia and Bulgaria, the Bulgaria Policy Strategy towards Macedonia in 2008, and finally, we analyze the Constitutional Amendments 33 to 36 which were adopted on 11 January 2019 in the Macedonian Parliament despite the referendum held on 30 September 2018. Majority of Macedonia's citizens refused to declare acceptance of the so-called "Prespa Treaty" with Greece, the consequences of which are these constitutional amendments. The authors' research attitude is that the case of the Republic of Macedonia and its Macedonian nation is just one example how in the future the model could be used towards other nations and states worldwide in creation of anational states and amorphous masses of population, certainly with one single goal, to manage socially incompatible collectivities easier, at least at the level of the ethnic community, promoting the "freedom" of the individuals with nocoherency or affiliation.*

**Key words:** nation, national state, undefined formation, amorphous mass, strategy

## **Introduction**

The paper presents an analysis of the political destabilization of a country, the Balkan region and anachronistic phenomena in the European Union

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contemporary politics. It deals with the long-implemented strategy for breaking a state and a nation, in this case: the Macedonian nation and the Macedonian state, based on the strategic principles of Greece and Bulgaria, which are primarily based back in the 19th century.

The present conditions point out to the abuse of the NATO and EU membership position by Greece in order to achieve its own national interests which are completely contrary with the modern civilization achievements and the European values as well. Additionally, many viewed the situation as the stronger state was “bullying” the weaker one. (Manzinger, 2000) From this perspective and approximately two years after the Constitutional changes in the Republic of Macedonia (which did not exclusively refer to the country name change), we may believe that Greece itself becomes aware of its wrongdoing and worthlessness of this dispute, opened by the Konstantin Mitsotakis' administration in the early 1990s. According to the former Greek Foreign Minister Kotsias: "this dispute was completely unnecessary and exhausting for Greece and Greece found a satisfactory way out of it." That the dispute opened the Pandora Box on the Balkans is confirmed by another statement of Mr. Kotsias accusing Bulgaria for becoming a destabilizing factor in the Balkans, for blocking the Macedonia's EU membership talks, citing the provisions of the Prespa Agreement on the right to use the adjective "Macedonian". (Damceska, 2020)

It is a matter of fact that through the Prespa Agreement (PA) and the Greek pressures within the Balkan geopolitical framework (in view of Macedonia as an interspace between the Russian and the United States influence), agreement between Macedonia and Greece was reached for Macedonia's NATO membership and stabilization of the South Wing. This Agreement is by itself in conflict with jus cogens norms of international law and enters in legal matters that belong *stricto sensu* in the domain of the domestic jurisdiction of the other party. (Janey, 2019)

One of the Prespa Agreement's crucial parameters was the attempt to tackle the ‘elephant in the room’ of the name dispute, i.e. the identity and the heritage. (Armakolas, Petkovski, 2019) However, this agreement is greatly unfavorable for Macedonia demonstrable from today's perspectives in the relations with Bulgaria trying to copy Greece in its attitude towards Macedonia. In addition, instead of resolving a dispute, the PA is likely to grow into an additional source of regional destabilization (Vankovska, 2020) thus will continue to cause long-term instability in the Balkans.

In this manner, the Prespa Agreement has proved its capacity to evoke prolonged destabilization instead of pacification and de-escalation of the conflicts in the Balkans, especially of the ethnopolitical conflicts. Unfortunately, Bulgaria has tried to export this conflicting capacity to the EU, in light of the new negotiating framework, which was blocked by the Czech Republic and Slovakia as they determined it is a destabilizing long-term factor not only for the EU enlargement but also for the relations among the EU member states .

In this paper we will try to present how the constitutional changes in Macedonia were made, over a bilateral agreement signed illegally and unconstitutionally by the Macedonian Foreign Affairs Minister along with a judicial and political pressures on several Macedonian MP's after the failed referendum in the country. This process of name change followed by a political violence as well, will have visible aftereffect for Macedonia, the region, but also in more global terms.

## **1 Brief analysis of the so-called Prespa Agreement**

Final Agreement for the settlement of the differences as described in the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 817 (1993) and 845 (1993), the termination of the Interim Accord of 1995, and the establishment of a Strategic Partnership between the Parties is the full and official name of the so-called "Prespa Agreement".<sup>3</sup> (Final agreement for the settlement..., 2018) The agreement's text is explosive, having been crafted to fundamentally confirm and consolidate a radical 'otherness' of the two parties involved (that is, Greece and Macedonia), encompassing their populations and histories. (Rohdewald, 2018) Therefore, this Agreement is an inexhaustible source for analysis and study of a bilateral agreement visibly asymmetric because the first party (Greece) has rights and the second party (unnamed in the Agreement) has obligations. Regardless of the fact that Greece was the stronger party in this dispute, primarily due to its established international position as an EU and NATO member, Macedonia could have achieved a much better agreement, especially in terms of the sensitive identity issues.

It should be noted that this agreement in its formal legal status has a crucial flaw that is contrary to the Macedonian Constitution. Namely, "International agreements are concluded in the name of the Republic of Macedonia by the President of the Republic of Macedonia"<sup>4</sup> and afterwards are ratified by the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia.<sup>5</sup> The government or individual ministers, even with an authorization, are not entitled to sign such agreements. For this reason, this "Prespa Agreement" is legally invalid and opens the possibility for its annulment as against the Constitution. We are faced both with "negotiorum gestio" act as well with an ultra vires act, because (the Macedonian signatory) Mr.

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<sup>3</sup> For full text of the Agreement, please see: <https://vlada.mk/sites/default/files/dokumenti/spogodba-en.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> article 119 of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia. Please see [https://www.sobranie.mk/the-constitution-of-the-republic-of-macedonia-ns\\_article-constitution-of-the-republic-of-north-macedonia.nspix](https://www.sobranie.mk/the-constitution-of-the-republic-of-macedonia-ns_article-constitution-of-the-republic-of-north-macedonia.nspix)

<sup>5</sup> article 68 of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia. Please see [https://www.sobranie.mk/the-constitution-of-the-republic-of-macedonia-ns\\_article-constitution-of-the-republic-of-north-macedonia.nspix](https://www.sobranie.mk/the-constitution-of-the-republic-of-macedonia-ns_article-constitution-of-the-republic-of-north-macedonia.nspix)

Nikola Dimitrov has overstepped his mandate, and has violated the Constitutional and legal prerogatives. (Siljanovska, 2018)

Seen through the prism of international law, such an act of concluding the Prespa Agreement is not in accordance with the norms of articles 7 and 8 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties of 1969, in the matter of "jurisdiction to conclude an international agreement" and "its subsequent confirmation if concluded without the consent of the state" (Nikodinovska, 2018) According to article 7 (a) a person is considered as representing a State for the purpose of adopting or authenticating the text of a treaty or for the purpose of expressing the consent of the State to be bound by a treaty if he produces appropriate full powers<sup>6</sup> and in case a person cannot be considered as authorized to represent a State, according to article 8 of the Convention, for that purpose the act relating to the conclusion of a treaty is without legal effect unless afterwards confirmed by that State.

We will now focus on the material shortcomings in the text and make a brief analysis solely on the disputed articles. They are undoubtedly contrary to the United Nations Charter and the Declaration of Human Rights, and at the same time do not close the famous dispute but create a long-term conflict capacity between Macedonia and Greece, but also in the region.

At the very beginning, in the Preamble of the Agreement, the contracting parties are defined as: The First Party, the Hellenic Republic (the "First Party") and the Second Party, which was admitted to the United Nations in accordance with the United Nations General Assembly resolution 47/225 of 8 April/1993 (the "Second Party"). Although both parties are recognized international entities with equal contracting status, it is noticeable that the First party is a superior contracting entity and the Second Party is unnamed thus have a subordinate contracting status. Furthermore, the Constitution of Macedonia is violated because the then constitutional name of the state is not mentioned. Such a situation can also be seen as suppression / ignoring the state continuity between the Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of North Macedonia. (Kjulavkova, 2020)

In Part 1, article 3, paragraph 3, under a) it is stipulated that "The official name of the Second Party shall be the "Republic of North Macedonia which shall be the constitutional name of the Second Party and shall be used erga omnes." According to this erga omnes nature of the name change, it will be used both internationally and bilaterally, so that the 140 or more countries that had previously recognized the name (Republic of) Macedonia will also have to adopt (Republic of) North Macedonia. (Gjorgioska, 2020)

Any analysis on the naming of States inescapably starts from the admission that the choice of a name is a core manifestation of State sovereignty or as has been eloquently put 'un refuge de la souveraineté', and a linchpin of a people's right to self-determination. (Pergantis, 2019) In a sense, a State's name is a matter

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<sup>6</sup>[https://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/1\\_1\\_1969.pdf](https://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/1_1_1969.pdf)

of domestic jurisdiction, where the non-interference principle is applicable. (Zaikos, 2010)

This is where the problem pertaining to the use of the adjective for belonging "Macedonian" begins, and the same is manifested in regards with the recent Bulgaria's claims to Macedonia. In the same article, in paragraph d) is stipulated that "the terms "Macedonia" and "Macedonian" have the meaning given under Article 7 of this Agreement." and accepted to be deprived of the right to be named as Macedonia, against the will of the majority of citizens, agreed to redefine the existing 1945 identity registered in the UN documents (according to the identity card of the Republic of Macedonia, its language was Macedonian without any restrictive additions, and the people - Macedonian). (Zaikos, 2010)

Articles 7 and 8 of the Prespa Agreement are especially interesting for analysis. They refer to the use of the terms "Macedonia" and "Macedonian", as well as the use of symbols (primarily the "Vergina sun" or the "Kutlesh Star", which was the symbol formerly displayed on its former national flag of Macedonia after its independence), but above all it is a model for restricting the use of historical symbols, which were used in Macedonia from antiquity to present day even within the Christian cultural tradition, such as church ornaments or symbols or coats of arms of Macedonia. Long is the list of scientific arguments proving that antiquity is not an exclusive Greek cultural heritage, but a common civilization gain. Neither Ancient Macedonia is Greek and may be subject of international bargaining.

The Prespa Agreement is set exclusively towards the ancient historical and cultural heritage (it denies the elementary right of Macedonia and the Macedonian people to any, albeit symbolic, identity) referencing, identification, and even study of the history of the ancient Macedonians and ancient Macedonia. The scientific truth about such a policy of decree is irrelevant, and Greece is, a priori, authorized to appropriate the ancient Macedonian identity, regardless of existing or new objective indicators. (Zaikos, 2010)

Despite its ancient name and self-presentation, Modern Greece is not an old nation. (Liakos, 2007) The Greek national state was born as the result of a separatist war, which, in the second decade of the nineteenth century, carved the territory from the Ottoman Empire. (Liakos, 2007)

In a disputed procedure, representatives of the Republic of Macedonia accepted a revision of the ethno-national narrative, and thus of the cultural and national history of the Macedonians. (Kjulavkova, 2020) Namely, (in Article 7) they agreed with the ban on Macedonia and the Macedonians to refer, in any situation, to a history older than the one related to the Slavic character of the Macedonian language, people, history and culture, and they also agreed with the cultural policy that challenged the existence of the Macedonian people (ethnic Macedonians) and the Macedonian nation (all citizens of Macedonia), i.e. they have accepted not only a revision and reduction of the Macedonian identity, but also its negation and

substitution with the category "citizens of Northern Macedonia". (Kjulavkova, 2020)

As a result, two years after the Prespa Agreement the adjective "Macedonian" is officially deleted from all national institutions, such as Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts; Macedonian Theater, Macedonian Ballet Macedonian Television, Macedonian Radio, etc.

## **2 Review of the Constitutional amendments No. 33-36 of the Republic of Macedonia Constitution**

In this part of the paper we will focus on a more detailed analysis of the Constitutional amendments which were an "obligation" for the Republic of Macedonia arisen from the signed Prespa Agreement. These Amendments are directly related to the redefinition of the national state of Macedonia and the Macedonian people. In addition, these Constitutional Amendments are a historical anti-process regarding the anti-fascist struggle of the Macedonian people and the creation of the Macedonian state as a modern European state. What message is sent by overthrowing the ASNOM anti-fascist foundations of the Macedonian statehood is yet to be determined?

### **2.1 Amandman 33**

1. In the Constitution, the words "Republic of Macedonia" shall be replaced with the words "Republic of North Macedonia", and the word "Macedonia" shall be replaced with the words "North Macedonia", except in Article 36 of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia.<sup>7</sup>

Everywhere in the text, the Republic of Macedonia is replaced with Republic of North Macedonia, which means a complete change of the name of the country. The Republic of Macedonia, especially its basic denominator, "Macedonia", derives back in the history. A reminder of the social order (Republic) is not important, because according to the highest constitutive act there will be a new state called "North Macedonia" and it will be a bearer of a new nation (according to the state principle), which builds a new identity and history in 2019.

Therefore, the following questions arise:

- Were they Macedonians so far and who are they?
- Who (which entity-ethnic community, which common history, culture, language and tradition) creates this new nation?

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<sup>7</sup>[https://www.sobranie.mk/the-constitution-of-the-republic-of-macedonia-ns\\_article-constitution-of-the-republic-of-north-macedonia.nsp](https://www.sobranie.mk/the-constitution-of-the-republic-of-macedonia-ns_article-constitution-of-the-republic-of-north-macedonia.nsp)

- It is not a question of whether they will, but to what extent will the neighbors sequester a part or parts of the history of the Macedonian people?
- What will be the consequences for the perseverance of the Macedonian people in future and can there be retrograde processes in relation to the death of the nation?
- What will be the further demands of the Macedonia's neighbors, especially with respect to the use of instruments and mechanisms in the process of negotiations for Macedonia's full EU membership?

These are not hypothetical questions, but essential scientific questions that need to be answered, although some of them can only be in the form of assumptions, and their empirical verifiability will only be possible in future terms depending on the political thresholds in Macedonia and regional influences.

## 2.2 Amandman 34

In the Preamble of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia (...) the words “the decisions of the ASNOM” shall be replaced with the words “the legal decisions cited in the Proclamation of the First Session of the ASNOM to the Macedonian people about the said session of the ASNOM”, the words “which expressed the will to create an independent sovereign state and the Ohrid Framework Agreement” shall be added after the word “year”, and the words “have decided to“ shall be deleted.<sup>8</sup>

Erasing the decisions of ASNOM has immediate effect toward the history and state decline i.e. the legal continuity of the Macedonian state and the historical proof of the Macedonian people statehood.

The entry: "Proclamation of the First Session of the ASNOM to the Macedonian people " instead of "the decisions of the ASNOM" represents a historical generalization and relativization of the Macedonian nation-state in a historical moment. This is due to the fact that the proclamation of the people is evident for the purpose of acquainting oneself with important historical events, and not for the legal and constitutional confirmation of the statehood. The proclamation does not mention the key legal acts that the Macedonian state and the Macedonian nation establish with their postulates as documents that are not permanently binding, such as:

- ASNOM as the highest legislative body and representative body of state power of the DEMOCRATIC (REPUBLIC) OF MACEDONIA, or its successor
- the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia.
- Macedonian language as the only official language in the Macedonian state and its entire territory (introduction to abolition of the Macedonian language)

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<sup>8</sup>[https://www.sobranie.mk/the-constitution-of-the-republic-of-macedonia-ns\\_article-constitution-of-the-republic-of-north-macedonia.nsp](https://www.sobranie.mk/the-constitution-of-the-republic-of-macedonia-ns_article-constitution-of-the-republic-of-north-macedonia.nsp)

- Respect for the People's Liberation Army (abandonment of the anti-fascist struggle) and renunciation of the anti-fascism ideology as a historical, cultural and democratic benefit for the Macedonian people

- Declaring Ilinden a national state holiday of the Macedonian state (it is disputable whether this will lead to abolition of Ilinden (and its celebration) which presents a foundation of the Macedonian state, statehood and symbols of the national struggle of the Macedonian people for independence)

By avoiding ASNOM's decisions with the constitutional changes, the tendencies to "unite the entire Macedonian people" have been essentially erased, as a new nation (North Macedonia) is being created, while denying the "Rights to full freedom and equality of all nationalities in Macedonia" and therefore:

- It is the entry of the Ohrid Agreement into the preamble to stir up the undefined statehood and "bi-nationality", as an artificial pseudo-state creation

- Why the word "decided" is deleted from the Preamble? It is a lexical, semantic, legal and historical issue claiming that the Macedonian people and all minorities have not decided to establish the Republic of Macedonia, but it is being resolved by someone else. This creates a new nation and state without the continuity of history; composed of an amorphous mass without collective memory — history, culture, religion, language, tradition.

Authors believe that this amendment will have a further impact on the Macedonian peoples' redefinition in a new, artificially created country without foundation.

### **2.3 Amendment 35**

1. The Republic shall respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the neighbouring states.
2. This amendment shall supplement Article 3 of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia.<sup>9</sup>

A completely unnecessary amendment which serves to defocus the public. Namely, in the current Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, Article 34, Amendment I.1, clearly states that "The Republic of Macedonia has no territorial pretensions towards any neighboring state." The question is whether the neighboring countries of the Republic of Macedonia have such guarantees in their constitutions in the Republic of Macedonia? This argument is certainly in the direction of building mutual trust and reciprocity in the mutual relations of states.

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<sup>9</sup>[https://www.sobranie.mk/the-constitution-of-the-republic-of-macedonia-ns\\_article-constitution-of-the-republic-of-north-macedonia.nsp](https://www.sobranie.mk/the-constitution-of-the-republic-of-macedonia-ns_article-constitution-of-the-republic-of-north-macedonia.nsp)

## 2.4 Amandman 36

1. The Republic shall protect, guarantee and foster the characteristics and the historical and cultural heritage of the Macedonian people.

The Republic shall protect the rights and interests of its nationals living or staying abroad.

The Republic shall provide for the diaspora of the Macedonian people and of part of the Albanian people, Turkish people, Vlach people, Serbian people, Roma people, Bosniak people and others and shall foster and promote the ties with the fatherland.

In doing so, the Republic shall not interfere with the sovereign rights of other states and with their internal affairs.<sup>10</sup>

2. This amendment shall replace Article 49 of and Amendment II to the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia.

Hereby, the Republic waives its protection for the rights and status of Macedonians in neighboring countries as well as the Macedonian emigrants as regulated by Article 49, paragraph 1.

New provisions include flocculus and study provisions such as:

1. The Republic shall protect, guarantee and foster the characteristics and the historical and cultural heritage of the Macedonian people. (This is unnecessarily included in Article 49, which refers to the protection of the Macedonian people living in the Republic of Macedonia, because the Constitution itself protects its citizens, including Macedonians (which is obviously only between itself and Macedonia). That makes the constitution a mess filled with nebulae. Namely, Macedonia should guarantee the ethnic, cultural and linguistic identity of minorities living within its borders, and the Macedonian people in their nation-state should not be guaranteed collective and national rights. It is the misconception that troubles the Macedonian people because while the amendment provides for minority protection living within the country, same rights are not guaranteed in neighboring countries where there is a Macedonian minority.

2. In paragraph 2 of the Amendment 36, the Republic shall protect the rights and interests of its nationals living or staying abroad. Why is this provision required when according to the international law, the right of a state to afford protection to its citizens whilst they are abroad is a universally accepted canon of international law. (Sen, 1965)

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<sup>10</sup>[https://www.sobranie.mk/the-constitution-of-the-republic-of-macedonia-ns\\_article-constitution-of-the-republic-of-north-macedonia.nsp](https://www.sobranie.mk/the-constitution-of-the-republic-of-macedonia-ns_article-constitution-of-the-republic-of-north-macedonia.nsp)



3. Paragraph 3 „The Republic shall provide for the diaspora of the Macedonian people" provokes two logical questions:

- First: What care is to be taken, for a better life, for health, for property...? Or, that the Republic should protect the rights of Macedonians living abroad?

- Second: which Macedonians will be protected? Those who have been citizens of neighboring countries for generations, and Macedonians by gender? Or those who call themselves Macedonians, and their domicile state does not recognize them as such? Or for everyone, because according to amendments 33 and 34, there will be no Macedonian nation but Citizens of North Macedonia.

4. Given these changes and the constitutional renunciation of the Macedonian people in neighboring countries and the reduction of the level of protection for citizens living abroad, it is clear why the "citizenship of Macedonians / citizens of North Macedonia" is used - in accordance with the Prespa Agreement.

Therefore, according to the logical way of thinking, several other important questions arise:

- The state renounces Macedonians and Macedonian citizens in neighboring countries

- In the explanatory memorandum of the amendment there is no significant need for change of the Constitution even for the purpose of improvement of human rights and freedoms and development of the Republic of Macedonia. However, everywhere it is mentioned the: "implementation of the Agreement with Greece for accession to the EU and NATO".

- Finally: The present Macedonian government has shown complete unity and ignorance of the foundations of international law, diplomacy and international relations, and is already perceived in the international arena as a fickle and uncertain partner.

## **Conclusion**

The famous Prespa Agreement has far-reaching consequences for Macedonia and its nation. From a nation state belonging to the Macedonian people, the country is gradually becoming an undefined state entity. When the foundation of the state has been violated, ie the functioning of the Macedonian people as the „leading“ part of the Macedonian nation and state (composed of other peoples as minorities), there is a tendency to define the population according to the ethnicity in a so called ethnic communities." Starting from the exact scientific determination of the "nation", the "ethnic community" (Weaver, Buzan, Kelstrup, Lamaitre, 2003), and thus of the people (or the majority of people), we may conclude that the Republic of Macedonia is making a shift from a nation state towards an undefined state formation.

In such a dramatic geopolitical constellation it was reasonable to expect that the negative and appropriative policies towards the Macedonian people, their

national and cultural history and their language would expand and radicalize. These consequences are visible only two years after the constitutional changes, in the Bulgaria's attitude towards Macedonia and its blackmailing intonation in order to thwart the EU integration proces if the country does not accept the Bulgarian standing that the Macedonian identity is an artificial (Yugoslav) construction dated back in 1945.

Unfortunately, the international community is reserved and ignorant to defend the universal principles and rights inherent to the modern civilized world.

At the end, instead of being a final solution to the long lasting naming issue between Macedonia and Greece, the Prespa Agreement, which is highly controversial, both in terms of internal and international law, has further complicated the identity dilema and imposed the burden of concessions solely on the Macedonian side.

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