

“Skopje 2014” – Between Belated Nation-Building and the Challenges of Globalisation

A Dissertation

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SUMMARY

The study focuses on the project “Skopje 2014” in Macedonia, a controversial, expensive, mass construction project, evidently related to boosting national pride, but also legitimised as nation-(re)branding venture, aiming to attract tourists and foreign investment in the relatively new country. Embedded in the policy of “antiquisation” (new national mythopoesis grounding Macedonian identity in antiquity), the monuments and the facilities built during short four years period have created conflicts both within the country, by challenging the old national narrative of the Slavic origins of present-day Macedonians and complicating the relationships with the ethnic Albanians, and internationally, by challenging the Greek national myth as a cradle of Western civilization.

The last point is very important having on mind that Greece has vetoed Macedonia’s accession to NATO and the EU for longer than two decades based on the fray over the ancient Macedonian heritage. Simultaneously, the opposition parties and the press critical of the government have accused the political entrepreneurs not only of altering the Macedonian identity but also of money laundering during this most expensive investment in the history of the country, funds later assumed to be re-directed into election frauds and other means of sustaining power illegally.

The case is especially interesting because the (right-wing) populist tones of the project and the autocratic implementation of it signal governing elites’ distrust in pluralist democratic institutions. Constructivist and legitimisation discourses from the written and visual media further suggest distrust in the establishment and appeal for majoritarianism. On a longer period, these discursive practices could lead towards erosion of the democratic institutions of the country. In a meantime similar projects have appeared in other Western Balkan countries (Albania and Serbia), whose populist rhetoric suggests possible linkages between these authoritarian regimes and mutual fascination with autocratic-populist regimes from the wider region (Hungary and Turkey) who are also engaged in a process of re-definition of national identity by grounding it in distant history. The deconstruction of the Macedonian case, thus, can be telling of autocratic populism in the region in general.

I hypothesize that the rhetoric of “Skopje 2014” is autocratic-populist and ask which concrete negative impacts the project “Skopje 2014” could have on Macedonian democracy. More concretely, the study tries to answer how the discourses on national identity and development of the Macedonian governing elite have been incorporated in the project “Skopje 2014” and how, in turn, the Project and its legitimization has reinforced the existing discourses; how these discourses were challenged and de-constructed; to which extent the realisation of the project produced contestation and conflict in the society and with the neighbours; how the EU as main foreign political and economic partner and monitor of democratisation on the Balkans behaved during this process?

To answer these questions the study draws mainly on Critical Theory (world-system analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA)) as theoretical and methodological background. Beside the phenomenological site of the project (content, size, number of monuments and facilities) I systematically analyse a large corpus of written texts (four daily newspapers from Macedonia), video materials (documentary films, TV interviews and TV debates), public and commemorative speeches delivered by top government officials and documents (reports) issued by different bodies of the European Union. The study focused on the analysis of the discursive strategies and argumentation schemes employed by the actors.

Analyses have shown that “Skopje 2014” has supported and re-enforced on official state level previously existing right-wing populist ideas of territorial rootedness of the Macedonian nation and identity in the antiquity. This implied using of naturalisation strategies, “proving” the continuity of the nation in the Macedonian soil and blood. The government’s identity policy follows the Occidentalist principles of evolutionism, dualism, and naturalised notion of culture, understanding the Macedonian, and not the competitive Greek, as the first modern Western civilisation, status that would granting it the exclusive “rights” among the “civilised”, western countries, such as the EU membership. One of the main strategies of “Skopje 2014” was to *de-essentialise* or systematically delete the traces of “the previous regime”, thus not problematizing the past through critical deliberation but forcefully imposing new identity. The repositioning of the Macedonian nation as the cradle of the Western civilisation in international setting thus went hand in hand with the reinterpretation of the more recent history of the Macedonian people in regional context. Next to imposing new national identity other actions related to “Skopje 2014” have also signalled autocratic behaviour of the current governing elite directed against the pluralist institutions of the country. Most importantly, the role of the Parliament was undermined in a series of cases. Discursive practices of the Prime Minister and the party led by him suggested personalisation of power, equation of “the people” with “the party” and the “party” with the “state”, systematic degradation of the civil society sector and insulting of the political opponents beyond the norms of contest in plural democracy.

Of special interest in this thesis is the instrumentalisation of the cultural elites in general and the media in particular in relation to the processes surrounding “Skopje 2014” and the antiquisation policy. Most notable is the pattern where the political actors demonstrate cautiousness in argumentation while the pro-government media actively elaborates and propagates the governmental elite’s ideas. The analysis of the discursive strategies and argumentation schemes employed by the media actors supports the thesis that the media became ‘one of the constitutive pillars’ of the autocratic-populist government in Macedonia.

Both the political and cultural elites have systematically used *offensive, counterattacking* rhetoric, *simplistic* illustrations, *victimisation* of ‘its own people’, dramatization and *emotionalisation* and perhaps most often *calculated ambivalence*. One interesting unique feature of Prime Minister’s rhetoric was the maintaining of *oppositional language* and *worm’s-eye view* even after a decade of holding the executive power in Macedonia.

The de-construction of “Skopje 2014” focused on counterfeiting of the national history and identity, allegations for money laundering, politicisation of art, functionalisation of the project in election frauds, disrespect of rule of law. An exceptional role in these attempts had not only the critical media outlets but also the NGOs, providing a mass of information on the project and organising a series of peaceful protests related to “Skopje 2014”.

The analyses demonstrated that the project was predominantly directed at the domestic audience, bringing the governing elite short-term victories, but one leading towards long-term societal divisions and conflicts. The project was carefully planned and systematically implemented, but it was also consistently criticised and interrupted by the minorities, the opposition and the neighbouring countries. The study has also demonstrated that responsibility for emergence and sustainability of the autocratic-populist regime in Macedonia also has the EU, as representative of the core of the

world-system. The thesis shows the mechanisms of maintaining autocratic power in Macedonia under the conditions of government's embracing of neo-liberal reforms and sustaining of external appearance of democracy. In this regard, Western Balkan autocracies were collectively exalted for their ability to immediately deliver on the expedient demands of Western powers in series of current crises, guaranteeing thus the stability in Europe. However, this passivity towards (right-wing) autocratic-populist regimes can result in violent conflicts, something confirmed by the Kumanovo clashes in Northern Macedonia.

The final goal of Critical Theory in general and CDA approach in particular is not only to raise awareness of problematic discursive strategies, but also to offer emancipation and to contribute to the debate around the crisis of representative democracy in context of right-wing populism re-emergence in Europe and elsewhere. Hence, despite offering newly found characteristics of right-wing populist discursive schemes in the case of Macedonia and generating some hypotheses in relation to the phenomenon of autocratic-populism in South-East Europe, this study also contributes to the debates between modernisation and critical theories focused on the relationship between democracy and socio-economic development.

The findings of this study are supportive of Critical Theory's claim that interventionist political programs stemming from Eurocentrism-grounded modernisation theory lead towards unsustainable democracy and socio-economic exclusion in the non-Western, 'rest' of the world. In order this pattern not to perpetuate on both nation-state and international levels today's model of representative democracy should be improved in direction of popular inclusiveness, deliberation and emancipation, as well as through introduction of policies aiming to diminish inequalities, such as redistributive schemes and political empowerment.

The study concludes with some recommendations for improvement of the critical approach in context of its ability to combine macro (world-system) with micro (CDA of nation-state actors) perspectives and its ability to serve as a basis for sustainable democratic political program, elements perceived as weakness of the world-system analysis and other critical theories. I propose starting points for merging of popular democracy and constitutionalism (pluralism) and reflect on theoretical rethinking of world-system analysis in regards to its leaning towards majoritarianism, underestimation of civil rights and economism, elements shared with populism or modernisation rationales.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Diese Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit dem Projekt „Skopje 2014“, das in Mazedonien realisiert wurde und als kontrovers, kostspielig und als Megabau-Projekt galt. Die Verstärkung des Nationalstolzes muss offensichtlich in Bezug zu diesem Vorhaben gestanden haben, jedoch wurde es als Vorhaben zur „(Re-)Branding der Nation“ mit dem Ziel Touristen und ausländische Investoren anzuziehen legitimiert. Eingebettet in eine Politik der „Antikisierung“ (eine neue nationale Mythopoesie, die versucht die gegenwärtige mazedonische Identität in die antike mazedonische Kultur zu gründen) hat das Bauen von Denkmälern und Gebäuden, die während einer kurzen Periode von vier Jahren gebaut worden sind, Konflikte innerhalb des Landes und auf internationaler Ebene provoziert. Zwei Probleme ergaben sich innerhalb Mazedoniens. Zum Einen wurde die alte nationale Narration der slawischen Herkunft in Frage gestellt. Zum Anderen wurden die Verhältnisse mit den albanischen Mazedoniern kompliziert, weil sie aus dem Projekt ausgeschlossen wurden. Mit diesem Bauprojekt wird der griechisch-nationale Mythos herausgefordert, in dem man vorschlägt, dass Mazedonien die Wiege der westlichen Zivilisation sein soll.

Zudem ist es wichtig daran zu erinnern, dass Griechenland seit mehr als zwei Jahrzehnte das Veto zum Beitritt von Mazedonien in die NATO und in EU eingelegt hat, basierend auf dem Streit um die antike mazedonische Herkunft. Gleichzeitig ist die Kritik an dem Projekt bezüglich des ökonomischen Aspekts von Bedeutung, dass die Oppositionsparteien und die regierungskritische Presse politische Unternehmer beschuldigt haben, nicht nur die mazedonische Identität verändern zu wollen sondern auch Geldwäsche während der kostspieligsten Investition seit der Gründung des jungen Landes zu betreiben. Diese Gelder, so wurde vermutet, wurden für Wahlbetrug und für andere, illegale Tätigkeiten zum Erhalt der Macht missbraucht.

„Skopje 2014“ ist besonders deshalb interessant, da die rechtspopulistischen Töne des Projektes und die autokratische Implementierung das Misstrauen der Regierungselite in pluralistische demokratische Institutionen signalisieren. Konstruktive und Legitimierungsdiskurse, die aus Druck und Visuellen Medien heraus gezogen worden sind, suggerieren zusätzlich, dass die Regierungselite staatlichen Einrichtungen misstrauen und daher ein Mehrheitsprinzip fordern. Diese diskursiven Praktiken würde jedoch auf lange Zeit gesehen zu Erosionen der demokratischen Einrichtungen des Landes führen. Zur gleichen Zeit haben sich ähnliche Projekte in anderen Westbalkanländern (zum Beispiel in Albanien und Serbien) entwickelt. Die populistische Rhetorik der Projekte lässt vermuten, dass diese autoritäre Regierungen verlinkt sind und gegenseitige Faszination mit autokratisch-populistischen Regimen aus der weiteren Region (Ungarn und der Türkei) ausüben, die sich ebenso in einem Prozess der Neudefinition der nationalen Identität befinden, indem diese Länder sie in der früheren Geschichte begründen. Die Dekonstruktion des mazedonischen Falles kann also in der Region im Allgemeinen von autokratischem Populismus erzählen.

Ich habe die Hypothese aufgestellt, dass die Rhetorik von "Skopje 2014" autokratisch-populistisch ist und frage, welche konkreten negativen Auswirkungen das Projekt "Skopje 2014" auf die mazedonische Demokratie haben könnte. Konkreter versucht die Studie die folgenden Fragen zu beantworten: wie die Diskurse der mazedonischen Regierungselite über die nationale Identität und die Entwicklung in das Projekt "Skopje 2014" aufgenommen wurden; wie das Projekt und seine Legitimierung die bestehenden Diskurse verstärkt haben; wie diese Diskurse herausgefordert und dekonstruiert wurden; in welchem Ausmaß die Realisierung des Projekts Streit und Konflikt in der mazedonischen Gesellschaft und mit den Nachbarländern verursacht hat; wie sich die EU als

wichtigster politischer und wirtschaftlicher Partner und Monitor der Demokratisierung vom Balkan während dieser Prozesse verhalten hat.

Um diese Fragen zu beantworten, stützt sich die Studie hauptsächlich auf die Kritische Theorie (Weltsystemanalyse und kritische Diskursanalyse (CDA)) als theoretischen und methodischen Hintergrund. Neben dem phänomenologischen Aspekt des Projektes (Inhalt, Größe, Anzahl der Denkmäler und Einrichtungen) analysiere ich systematisch einen großen Korpus von Texten (vier Tageszeitungen aus Mazedonien) und Videomaterialien (Dokumentarfilme, Fernsehinterviews und TV-Debatten) sowie öffentliche Gedenkreden von Führungsregierungspolitiker und Dokumente (Berichte), welche von verschiedenen Gremien der Europäischen Union herausgegeben wurden. Die Studie konzentriert sich auf die Analyse der diskursiven Strategien und der Argumentationsschemen der Akteure.

Analysen haben gezeigt, dass "Skopje 2014" auf offiziell staatlicher Ebene bisher bestehende rechtsextreme populistische Ideen der territorialen Verwurzelung der mazedonischen Nation und der Identität in der Antike unterstützt und umgesetzt hat. Dieses bedingte die Verwendung von Naturalisierungsstrategien, um die Kontinuität der Nation im mazedonischen Boden und durch das Blut zu "beweisen". Die Identitätspolitik der Regierung folgt den okzidental Prinzipien des Evolutionismus, des Dualismus und des naturbasierten Verständnis von Kultur. Dabei proklamiert sie die antike mazedonische Zivilisation als die erste moderne westliche Zivilisation und nicht die wettbewerbsfähige griechische, so dass bei europäischer Anerkennung dieser Argumentationslinie Mazedonien exklusive "Rechte" unter den "zivilisierten" westlichen Ländern wie zum Beispiel die EU-Mitgliedschaft erhalten würde. Eine der Hauptstrategien von "Skopje 2014" war es, die Spuren des "vorherigen Regimes" zu deessentialisieren oder systematisch zu löschen und damit wurde die Vergangenheit nicht durch kritische Überlegungen hinterfragt, sondern es wurde eine neue Identität erzwungen. Die Neupositionierung der mazedonischen Nation als die Wiege der westlichen Zivilisation im internationalen Umfeld ging mit der Neuinterpretation der neueren Geschichte des mazedonischen Volkes im regionalen Kontext Hand in Hand. Neben der Durchführung einer neuen nationalen Identität haben auch andere Handlungen im Zusammenhang mit „Skopje 2014“ das autokratische Verhalten der derzeit herrschenden Elite gegen die pluralistischen Institutionen des Landes signalisiert. Am wichtigsten war das die Rolle des Parlaments in einer Reihe von Fällen untergraben wurde. Diskursive Praktiken des Premierministers und der von ihm geführten Partei suggerieren die Personalisierung der Macht, die Gleichsetzung des „Volkes“ mit der "Partei" und die "Partei" mit dem „Staat“, die systematische Abwertung des zivilgesellschaftlichen Sektors und die Beleidigung der politischen Gegner jenseits der Normen der Verhaltensregeln von demokratischen Debatten.

Von besonderem Interesse in dieser Arbeit ist die Instrumentalisierung der kulturellen Eliten im Allgemeinen und im Besonderen in den Medien im Zusammenhang mit den Prozessen rund um "Skopje 2014" und der Antikisierungs politik. Am bemerkenswertesten ist das Muster, in welchem die politischen Akteure in der Argumentation vorsichtig erscheinen, während die regierungsnahen Medien die Ideen der Regierungselite aktiv ausarbeiten und propagieren. Die Analyse der diskursiven Strategien und Argumentationsschemen der Medienakteure unterstützt die These, dass die Medien zu ‚einer der konstitutiven Säulen‘ der autokratisch-populistischen Regierung in Mazedonien wurden.

Sowohl die politischen als auch die kulturellen Eliten nutzten systematisch *anstößige, gegensätzliche Rhetorik, vereinfachte Illustrationen, Viktimisierung* von "eigenen Leuten", *Dramatisierung und Emotionalisierung* sowie, das vielleicht am häufigsten angewandte Muster, *berechnete Ambivalenz*. Eine interessante Besonderheit der Rhetorik des Premierministers war die Aufrechterhaltung der *oppositionellen Sprache* und der *Wurm-Perspektive* auch nach einem Jahrzehnt, in dem er die Exekutivgewalt in Mazedonien gehalten hat.

Die Dekonstruktion von "Skopje 2014" konzentrierte sich auf die Fälschung der nationalen Geschichte und Identität, Vorwürfe über Geldwäsche, die Politisierung der Kunst, die Funktionalisierung des Projekts für Wahlbetrug, Respektlosigkeit der Rechtsstaatlichkeit von der Regierungselite. Eine außergewöhnliche Rolle bei diesen Versuchen spielten nicht nur die kritischen Medien, sondern auch die NGOs, die eine Menge von Informationen über das Projekt anboten und die eine Reihe von friedlichen Protesten im Zusammenhang mit "Skopje 2014" organisiert haben.

Die Analysen zeigten, dass das Projekt überwiegend auf das nationale Publikum gerichtet war und dass die Regierungselite Kurzzeit-Siege erhielt, aber einer, der zu langfristigen gesellschaftlichen Spaltungen und Konflikten führte. Das Projekt wurde sorgfältig geplant und systematisch umgesetzt, wurde aber auch von den Minderheiten, von der Opposition und von den Nachbarländern konsequent kritisiert und unterbrochen. Die Arbeit hat auch gezeigt, dass die Verantwortung für die Entstehung und Nachhaltigkeit des autokratisch-populistischen Regimes in Mazedonien auch bei der EU als Vertreter des Kerns des Weltsystems liegt. Die Dissertation zeigt die Mechanismen der Erhaltung der autokratischen Macht in Mazedonien unter den Bedingungen, dass die Regierung neoliberale Reformen betreibt und dass die äußere Erscheinung der Demokratie gewahrt wird. In dieser Hinsicht wurden die westlichen Balkan-Autokratien kollektiv für ihre Fähigkeit bejubelt, sofort auf die Anforderungen der westlichen Mächte in Reihe von aktuellen Krisen zu reagieren, so dass die Stabilität in Europa garantiert wird. Allerdings kann diese Passivität der EU gegenüber (rechtsextremen) autokratisch-populistischen Regimen zu gewalttätigen Konflikten führen, welches mit dem Beispiel der Kumanovo-Zusammenstöße in Nordmazedonien bestätigt wurde.

Das endgültige Ziel der Kritischen Theorie im Allgemeinen und des CDA-Ansatzes insbesondere ist nicht nur das Bewusstsein für problematische diskursive Strategien zu wecken, sondern auch Emanzipation zu bieten und zur Debatte um die Krise der repräsentativen Demokratie im Kontext des Rechtspopulismus-Wiederauftauchens in Europa und anderswo beizutragen. Trotz des Angebots von neu gefundenen populistischen diskursiven Schemen im Fall Mazedoniens und der Erstellung von Hypothesen in Bezug auf das Phänomen des autokratischen Populismus in Südosteuropa trägt diese Studie auch zu den Debatten zwischen Modernisierungs- und Kritischen Theorien bei, die sich auf das Verhältnis zwischen Demokratie und sozioökonomischer Entwicklung konzentriert.

Die Ergebnisse dieser Studie unterstützen die Behauptung der Kritischen Theorie, dass interventionistische politische Programme, die sich aus der eurozentrisch-basierten Modernisierungstheorie ergeben, zu einer nicht nachhaltigen Demokratie und einer sozioökonomischen Ausgrenzung in der nicht-westlichen "Rest" der Welt führen. Um dieses Muster nicht auf nationaler und internationaler Ebene zu verewigen, sollte das heutige Modell der repräsentativen Demokratie in Richtung der populären Inklusion, der Deliberation und der Emanzipation verbessert werden. Dieses Modell kann weiterhin durch Einführung von Politiken, die

darauf abzielen, Ungleichheiten zu vermindern, wie etwa Umverteilungspläne und politische Ermächtigung, positiv verändert werden.

Die Studie schließt mit einigen Empfehlungen zur Verbesserung des kritischen Ansatzes im Kontext seiner Fähigkeit Makro (Weltsystemanalyse) mit Mikro (CDA von Nationalstaaten Akteuren) Perspektiven zu kombinieren und seiner Fähigkeit nachhaltiges demokratisches politisches Programm zu liefern, da diese Elemente als Schwäche der Kritischen Theorie wahrgenommen wird. Ich schlage vor Ausgangspunkte für die Verschmelzung von Volksdemokratie und Konstitutionalismus (Pluralismus) zu machen und über das theoretische Umdenken der Weltsystemanalyse im Hinblick auf ihre Neigung zum Majoritarismus, ihre Unterschätzung der Bürgerrechte und ihr Ökonomismus zu reflektieren, da diese Aspekte mit dem Populismus oder den Modernisierungsrationalen geteilt werden.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In 2010 the government of the Republic of Macedonia launched a project named “Skopje 2014”. It included building of several museums (among which the most important are the Museum of the Macedonian Struggle and the new Archaeological Museum) and around 40 large sculptures of national heroes, mainly on the central square of Skopje and within the radius of one square kilometre around it. Among the tallest and most central monuments are the one of Alexander the Great and of Philip II of Macedon, each 15 metre tall. Allegedly, the project aimed to return the “classical” outlook of the city before the earthquake of 1963 and after the long dominance of plain communistic architecture. However, the project was surrounded with controversies and criticism from the beginning. Aside from being perceived as waste of resources in a country with high unemployment and poverty, the main critique concentrated on the government’s policy of “antiquisation” or the attempt to create and impose a new national identity based on the ancient Macedonians. In this context, probably no European country in the recent history has undergone such a rapid change of the concept of its past. Antiquisation ideas are to be found even in the re-written history books for primary school. Many interpret this purposeful management of the collective memory in context of the country’s unsuccessful integration in the European structures, mainly due to the Greek blockade in relation to the ancient Macedonian heritage. Firstly and above all seen as a resistance to the Greek interpretation of the history of central Balkans, the myth-making narratives of “Skopje 2014”, however, were also interpreted as anti-Bulgarian or even anti-Albanian. The conservative VMRO-DPMNE government implementing “Skopje 2014” claims its ideological roots in the IMRO, the 19th century revolutionary organisation for liberation of Macedonia from the Ottoman rule. Wings of IMRO regularly hesitated between independent and common struggle against the Ottomans with Bulgaria. Celebrating historic figures deemed earlier as Bulgarian only has sparked outrage in this country, making Bulgaria reconsider Macedonia’s accession to the EU. Finally some observers have seen in the monoethnic character of “Skopje 2014” and the antiquisation ‘a double goal, which is to marginalize the Albanians (second largest ethnic group in Macedonia, 25% of the population) and create an identity that will not allow Albanians to become Macedonians’ (*Balkan Insight*, 2009).

Part of the project also envisioned the construction of The Museum of the Macedonian Struggle for Statehood and Independence, a museum comprised of the Museum of IMRO for Independence from the Ottomans and the Museum of the Victims of the Communist Regime. The name of the second museum already attracts conflict within the Macedonian society - the current Social Democratic opposition leans towards the formerly accepted narrative of the Slavic heritage of the Macedonians. The building of many new facilities in “classical” European style, but also the “baroque” re-designing of the modernist facades of older buildings in the Skopje’s city core symbolising the ‘era of the former regime’ have been perceived as attempt to cover the “shameful past” of the nation and to prove the final victory of the conservatives in modern Macedonia.

The construction of “Skopje 2014” went hand in hand with the construction of new national identity. While oppositional voices tried to de-construct these attempts as falsification of history, the government officials and the domestic media and art institutions under control of the government have engaged in fierce legitimisation and perpetuation of the newly constructed national myth, claiming that “Skopje 2014” should be rather perceived as a nation-branding project aiming to attract foreign investments than as re-interpretation of history. Aside of this, among the promoters of the project discursive strategies and argumentation schemes were practiced, involving right-wing

populist and autocratic ideas. While insisting on genetic purity, continuity and naturalised notion of culture, the supporters of “Skopje 2014” have continuously used *offensive, counterattacking* rhetoric, often *slandering and insulting* the political opponents, all resulting in severe *polarisation* of the society and prolonged political crisis.

After the announcement of the project in 2010 a series of criticisms followed by the political opposition and part of the cultural elite of the country. If at the beginning the critique focused on portrayal of “Skopje 2014” as forceful imposition of new national identity, the later critique concentrated on allegations for misuse of public funds and money laundering on state level. The deconstruction of “Skopje 2014”, hence, went along two lines: related to identity and related to development (model of fake modernisation).

Building new image of the nation, however, is not an isolated case on the Balkans at this moment. Building projects similar to “Skopje 2014” have been launched in neighbouring Albania and Serbia. Right-wing populist policies similar to the Macedonian antiquisation have been in force, more systematically than in other countries from the region in Hungary and Turkey. Focusing on the more similar cases from Western Balkan (the non-EU countries from former Yugoslavia plus Albania and Kosovo) the blending of authoritarianism and market economics seems to become a successful formula for most of the local rulers. Rooted in modernisation theory this recently resurgent model holds that the fusion of authoritarianism and capitalism is a viable arrangement that can spur development and sustain over time. However, many have problematised this strategy as dangerous, leading towards stability in the region (and in Europe) on short-term bases, but, through the undermining of the democratic institutions in the countries, potentially resulting in violent clashes on many levels: intra-ethnic, inter-ethnic or inter-national. In this context, the attitudes and behaviour of the European Union towards the increasingly autocratic-populist tendencies in Macedonia and the surrounding region are of special concern in this study, more so, because on background of series of crises (Financial-, Ukrainian-, Refugee-crises) the Union has continuously neglected the emergence and strengthening of autocracy in Western Balkans, almost explicitly preferring security over democracy and rule of law.

Problem(s) and research question: As Macedonian and sociologist, “Skopje 2014” attracted my attention from the moment it was announced. Considering that “Skopje 2014” is the most expensive investment in the history of independent Macedonia and a first ‘comment on national history’ after the fall of socialism, I was mostly intrigued by the question how difficult it will be for the political opposition to firstly debunk the newly constructed myth and then to give new meaning to it, a meaning which will not offend the newly shaped national feelings. I was equally interested in the consequences of the project for the international relations, especially with Greece, having on mind that similar frays over symbols related to ancient Macedonia were already fought between the countries, with Macedonia having to compromise on national identity in return for mitigating economic problems. After the announcement of the Project it was almost immediately hypothesised that this project would slow down Macedonia’s integration in the Euro-Atlantic bodies.

The fervour and dynamism with which the governing elite has defended this project demonstrated that it is one of its main ventures, integrating both identity and developmental aspects. The visual, performative and discursive sides of the project have all suggested autocratic-populist mindset behind the project development. In a meantime one could observe indices of autocratic-populist

tendencies in many other policies and aspects of governing. The discourses of Prime Minister Gruevski, other government executives and the media supportive of their policies, seemed to hint distrust in the institutions of pluralism and representative democracy.

In this context the intention of the dissertation is to answer to which extent discourses of and around the project “Skopje 2014” have or could have a negative impact on the Macedonian democracy. If observed as expression of right-wing populism, which concrete influences on pluralism “Skopje 2014” involves? In which discourses “Skopje 2014” is embedded and re-enforces? As most influential foreign factor in both economy and politics, how the EU behaved during this process?

To answer these questions the study draws mainly on Critical Theory (world-system analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA)). Because the study tries to answer how the construction, legitimisation and perpetuation of new hegemonic narratives on national identity and development influence the (anti)democratic developments in Macedonia in the last ten years, the study has to be able to identify potentially problematic discursive strategies and argumentation patterns practiced by political and other actors, that can be used as tools for systematic undermining of country’s established democratic institutions.

Grounded in earlier studies of right-wing populism in Austria (Reisigl 2008; Wodak and Forchtner, 2014) and autocratic-populism in Macedonia and Western Balkan in general (Frckovski, 2014), I hypothesise that the constructive and legitimisation discourses of “Skopje 2014” carry the potency to negatively influence the institutions of plural democracy in Macedonia. More concretely, I assume that authoritarian-populist tendencies, as manifested through “Skopje 2014”, are domestically implemented through the attempt for nation-rebranding, but are externally cemented through links with the transnational capital and the negligence of the supranational structures (EU) monitoring and controlling the region.

For the study of right-wing populism in general the work of the Austrian linguist Ruth Wodak and her former colleagues and PhD students (Rudolf de Cillia, Martin Reisigl) from the Department of Linguistics at the University of Vienna are of great importance. Wodak’s research is mainly located in Discourse Historical Approach and Critical Discourse Analysis, interdisciplinary, problem-oriented approaches to analysing the change of discursive practices over time and in various genres.

Wodak’s studies (2001, 2007, 2014) offer an immense theoretical and methodological material on analyses of right-wing populism, especially in Austrian context. Aside of underscoring the importance of *personalisation of power* and *distrust in the establishment* as one of the “traditional” characteristics of right-wing populism, Wodak also studies new characteristics of modern right-wing populism, such as the tendencies towards *fictionalisation and commodification* of the politics. Reisigl’s (2008) study also concentrates on raising awareness of problematic discursive strategies by researching the rhetorical principles of oppositional right-wing populism in Austria. He found patterns such as the subdivision of the world of social actors into *friends and enemies*, intentional *reduction of complexities*, *insulting* of the political opponent, pathetic dramatization and *emotionalisation*, use of *calculated ambivalence* and *promise of salvation* as typical of Austrian right-wing populism. He also focuses on analyses of *fallacious right-wing populist argumentations*.

Frckovski’s (2014) work on the other hand focuses mainly on the emergence of right-wing populism in Western Balkans and in Macedonia in particular. Differently from the Austrian and generally the

European right-wing populism, the autocratic-populism with right-wing ideology in the Balkan states is implemented by the major conservative governing parties. Frckovski focuses on the peculiarities of this regime in Macedonia, by claiming that this populism skips recent history and produces political mythology into two controversial myths: *the heroic myth* and *the myth of the victim*. The heroic myth perceives an imagined 'zero point' in history, when under the leadership of Alexander the Great the unity of the nation had been established, and then later has been lost during a long period of suffering (the victim myth). A rebirth of the nation is suggested in the contemporary frame: the myth of the victory under the new leadership of the populist leader is again launched: 'victorious, new, fearless Macedonians' are 'reborn'. This process is not only characterised by right-wing argumentations of purity and superiority but also by serious undermining of the institutions of democracy, such as the media freedom and the independence of the judiciary. Frckovski is also the first to draw the attention to the 'grotesque situation' in which the EU factually assists the system of authoritarianism on the Balkans with "European money". In this context, the analysis shows that both the EU and the Macedonian governing elite implementing "Skopje 2014" embrace modernisation theory's concepts and discourses. While the Macedonian governing elite reportedly embraces nation-branding and a series of *laissez-faire* reforms as precondition for attracting foreign capital, the EU, as seen from the Progress Reports, is predominantly preoccupied with the adaptation of the Macedonian economy to the market mechanisms.

Since "Skopje 2014" is primarily identity-related and development-related project embedded in the government's modernisation discourse in this study I introduce and critically elaborate some of the main principals of the Modernisation Theory and the consequences of policies grounded in the same on democracy. To contribute towards prolific debate and grounded critique of the project "Skopje 2014" Modernisation Theory is juxtaposed with Critical Theory with concrete focus on the political recommendations or programs stemming from the both.

In relation to government's identity-related policies in context of EU integration one could at first glance observe acceptance of Occidental and Eurocentric assumptions implemented in "Skopje 2014" and the antiquisation policy in general. These policies try to re-connect Macedonia to the West by underscoring nation's contributions to the Western civilisations as the first to conduct Western civilising mission in the rest of the world. Fearing to be sanctioned for 'not bringing Macedonia in Europe', the regime decides to 'bring Europe home' with the baroque facades and the 'cradle of Western civilisation and Christianity' narratives expressed in the project. It is easy to observe these policies as response to the efforts of the EU's enlargement policy to 'Europeanise' the 'traditional' rest of Europe. This strategy of requiring for paternal recognition from Europe, however, further reinforces *evolutionism* (the notion that the human civilisation proceeded in unidirectional way from nature to Western civilisation) and *dualism* (Weber's "West" versus the "Rest" philosophy) grounded in Eurocentrism and modernisation rationale. These principles are best preserved in the Copenhagen criteria used for evaluations of applicant countries with 'pedagogical overtones'.

More than on cultural and identity-related independent variables current Modernization Theory reflects on the emergence and sustaining of democracy and especially on its dependence on development (or affluence more generally). The first version of Modernisation Theory focused on explanation how the West developed, but to legitimise Western hegemony world-wide it both isolated the development within the nation-state and prescribed modernisation paths to the rest of the world to be achieved through guidance of the West. Generally two schools of modernisation or

two political programs have developed from this theory. At the beginning the modernisation theory paid little attention to the relationship between economic development and democracy. Some scholars, such as Lipset (1959) and Rostow (1960), argued that democratization follows modernization, especially after economic development. This version stayed vital through its acceptance and development by theorists such as Huntington (1968 and 1991). Democracy in this context was even seen as inferior regime compared to autocracy, since it was assumed that it is slower and harder to organise. The second version or school (Rostow (1970), Lijphart (1968), Douglas (1972)) claimed quite the contrary, that political reorganisation or democracy is needed for modernisation to follow. Within this school democracy as such was not necessarily considered as the final goal but a crucial tool to achieve affluence and modernisation. Later versions of the theory such as the one of Halperin *et al.* (2010) seem to value democracy as independent societal good, independently from the economic results it yields. This notwithstanding, in each of its versions this theory links democracy with introduction of market economy. Critical Theory (Wallerstein 2001 and 2010; Robinson, 1996 and 2013), however, has claimed that 'democracy promotion' rather serves the hegemonic forces of the world-system to effectively exercise control over the rest of the world rather than it serves the disadvantaged classes of the world population to achieve affluence and empowerment.

Later modernisation theorists (Lane and O. Ersson, (2003); Inglehart and Welzel (2009)) still explain democracy predominantly as a product of economic development and affluence, appealing national governments to *accommodate* to capitalism and accept more of the institutions of the market economy. While the critical also agree with the modernisation theorist that democracy is closely related to affluence, they differently than the last ones do not continue to observe affluence as something innate to or achieved within the nation-state. Through disregarding historical connections to the underdeveloped world moral debates around the past legacies and, more importantly, the future of the world order are avoided by modernisation theorist.

Although research tends to show that democracy depends on socio-economic equality and empowerment, the second political program of the modernisation theory, or the "democracy first" school, seems to prevail today. Nevertheless, independently which strategy (the "development first" or the "democracy first") is perused by the political elites the results seem to be disappointing, leading not only towards reaffirmation of centuries old global inequalities but also towards many cases of nation-states in the current world-system with democracy but without affluence or with affluence but without democracy. According to the Critical approach Modernisation Theory fits for creation of political programs for slow and gradual developmental processes controlled from the established players in the economic arena, who do not allow radical changes of the world-level socio-economic equilibrium.

Modernisation Theory can thus be said to be the theory of the establishment. This is evident in the fact that many of the social scientist developing it were close advisors to the politicians: Rostow was a counsellor of J.F. Kennedy, Douglas a consultant of the U.S. State Department and Huntington an adviser on security in the Carter administration. It was therefore very close to the politics from the beginning.

World-system analysis appears in this context as a critique of the Modernisation Theory. It agrees with the last one that what we define today as democracy is limited to the core states. However, it

argues that emergence and especially maintenance of it is not due to affluence or culture *per se* but due to the position of the democratic nation-states in the hierarchy of power in the capitalist world-order. While modernisation theory tries to legitimise and replicate the current privileges of the core, world-system analysis as critical theory tries to de-construct its discourse, to challenge the power relations in the world-system. From both of the theories diverging political programs are stemming. As proponent of the critical school I try to demonstrate the flaws of the modernisation theorising and praxis, but also the weaknesses of the world-system approach in definition of what democracy is and how it should be realised.

Turning to the standing points of Critical Theory towards plural democracy there seem to be some ambiguities. Critical theorists should make clearer distinction between popular and populist democracy. I indeed agree with some anti-establishment stances of the populist platforms, however, some of their principles are directly attacking and are incompatible with representative democracy. These elements of populism should be in all instances avoided. Each populism imagines special, 'non-political' leadership 'originating from and struggling for' the people, therefore sowing antagonism, leaning towards personalisation of power in charismatic leader and promotes authoritarian, hierarchical and leader-oriented attitude typical to these processes. Wallerstein's appeal for system in which the *demos*, or the majority, should rule leans towards populism and legitimisation of majoritarianism.

As one of the most recently developed critical schools CDA in this regard is suitable to criticise not only Modernisation Theory principles but also to complement the shortcomings of world-system analysis within the Critical approach. Scholars working in the tradition of CDA generally argue that (non-linguistic) social practice and linguistic practice constitute one another and focus on investigating how societal power relations are established and reinforced through language use. CDA as part of the Critical approach claims that discursive practices may have major ideological effects, i.e., they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations within the society. Language can be used as a powerful instrument in political competition. With its focus on particular actors and their practices CDA can serve as powerful tool for detecting political responsibility, one of the weakest points of world-system analysis. CDA assumes freedom of choice enjoyed by the political players and space for critic of fallacious or dangerous discursive schemes, as well as adaptations in future political action. This approach underscores political responsibility and proclaims emancipation as the ultimate goal of the research.

I adhere here to the opinions of Hopf (2004, 31) and Wodak (2000, 2) that CDA is theory as much as it is a method, and that CDA is neither a closed and "finished" theory, nor do the researchers in CDA follow only one methodology. Nevertheless, they all agree that CDA focuses on power analyses, that the approach is problem-oriented (e.g. populism, identity, autocracy) and eclectic (theories and methodologies are selected that are able to adequately understand and explain the investigated object), that the interpretation is always embedded in historical and political context and that the findings serve as guides for human action.

CDA also admits its limitations. Discourse Analysis acknowledges that the interpretation or the meaning of the text is fixed. The meaning of discursive unit depends on the contexts in which the text is being performed as well as on the relationship of that discourse other discourses. Statements about meaning and drawing generalized conclusions about one's qualitative findings must therefore

be moderated accordingly (Hopf, 2004, 31), more so because certain phenomenon of interest is socially constructed in a particular context, and so may not be present on other places, or at a different time. Knowledge claims about social phenomena, hence, must be less ambitious. The result of the analysis is strong claims, but within more bounded historical and temporal domains (*Ibid.*).

The study focuses on the analyses of macro and micro discursive strategies. Macro strategies encompass the *genre* (e.g. tragedy, parody) in which certain “text” is written or spoken and the *content* or the main topic of the same. Here of great importance is also the *avoidance* of topics. Macro strategies also refer to the systematic ways of using language with the intention to constitute knowledge and establish or challenge relations between social groups. In this context four main discursive *strategies* have been recognised: constructive, legitimising, transformative and de-constructive. Micro strategies on the other hand are related to the process of labelling and symbolic classification of events and actors. Shortly, micro strategies refer to the actual *linguistic tools* or the means and forms of realisation of the discourses, e.g. the nomination, predication and perspectivisation strategies. This study also pays attention to other discursive strategies such as collocation of words, the use of enthymeme and archetypal metaphors, the relation between the structure of the text and temporality, where the break in the progression of the narrative carries a message, etc.

Special space in this dissertation has the so called argument analysis focused on the functionality of arguments within one text or across texts and time. Arguments tend to stimulate debate, to reframe problems or to persuade someone. On macro level argument analysis focuses on the arguments development over relatively long periods of time and shows if certain arguments prevailed over other and how and why this has happened. On micro level the main task of this analysis is to find and interpret the links between the premises and the conclusion of a text and pinpoint problematic or fallacious argumentation schemes that infringe rules of rational and plausible argumentation, known as *fallacies*. This is especially the case when the research aims to demonstrate the workings of socially dangerous discourses such as chauvinistic or right-wing populist discourses. Reisigl (2008) identifies some of the mostly performed fallacies in right-wing populist discourses: *argumentum ad populum* - when populist politicians use the authority or the ‘voice of the people’ as legitimacy for many of their policies; the *fallacy the ‘people’s’ democratic participation*; argumentation based on *authority* - which overemphasises generalisations; and the *fallacy of threat* which refers to constructing argumentation scheme of perceived threat with final end to inspire fear and stimulate emotional response, but one which usually disregards the obligation to give reasons for such fears. All of these argumentation patterns can be found at the centre of populist argumentation.

For the needs of the analyses this study considers discourses from various sources. Beside the phenomenological site of the project (content, size, number of monuments and facilities) I systematically analyse a large corpus of written texts (newspaper articles), video materials (documentary films, TV interviews and debates), public and commemorative speeches delivered by government executives, and documents (e.g. progress reports) issued by different bodies of the EU. The study also focuses on critical interpretation of performances using “Skopje 2014” as a “stage”. The discourses of political and the cultural elites are put under scrutiny, compared between each other and during the course of time.

The debate around “Skopje 2014” has moved around three main topics: national identity, national development and democracy. Therefore the analytical process starts with identification, interpretation and naming of discursive patterns emerging from the data within the aforementioned topics. Patterns or themes are identified in repeated ideas, concepts and words, and not only in similarities among the units of the analysis, but also in the frequency and intensity of repetition in the material under elaboration, as well as in their location in the discourse as a cognitive element and effective organizer of experience (Bendassolli, 2013, 6). Themes are assumed to take both categorical and frequential forms. Identifying themes is recognised as an initial act of induction. The analytical process moves forward with categorization and conceptualization or the reduction of the material with the raising of the level of abstraction. The findings are contextualised in a broader picture where these concepts make sense. The study links the categories among themselves and relates them to the existing theories, ending with formulation of new research hypotheses.

During the analysis of “Skopje 2014” as identity-alteration or developmental project I factually “dive” into the data and represent and critically interpret most of the argumentations and discursive strategies used by the actors. The analytical chapters dedicated to the topic “democracy”, following thereafter, serve both as a type of summary of the findings of the previous analytical chapters and as a forum for more direct linking of the discursive strategies from the previous analysis to the topic “democracy”. This step makes the discussion on the extent to which the actions and behaviour of the governing elite have negatively impacted the democratic institutions of Macedonia more comprehensive and better grounded. The idea here is to gradually “come-out-on-the-surface”, distance the research from the data and re-connect to the theory of democracy and (autocratic) populism. This section of the thesis is more than a *résumé* of the previous findings, it also offers new insights, which in turn provide the chance to easily move to the last analytical chapter dedicated to the analyses of EU’s behaviour towards Macedonia in particular and towards the Western Balkan region in general. This last chapter focuses on the interconnections between nation-state and international (or supranational) democracy.

Analyses have shown that “Skopje 2014” has reinforced and further developed previously existing right-wing populist ideas. One of the main goals of “Skopje 2014” was to systematically delete the traces of socialist “shameful past”, thus not problematizing the history through debate but forcefully imposing new interpretation of the history and new national identity. Actions related to “Skopje 2014” have also suggested autocratic behaviour of the current executives directed against the pluralist institutions of the country. In series of instances the role of the Parliament was undermined, the civil sector derogated and power personalised in the face of the Prime Minister.

Based on the results of the analysis I conclude that the realisation and justification of “Skopje 2014” have contributed to severe polarisation of the Macedonian society, creating identity confusion and conflict among the ethnic Macedonians as well as tensions between the Macedonians and the other ethnic groups not identifying with ancient Macedonian heritage. The executive political elite and the cultural elite supportive of it have used offensive right-wing populist discourses and fallacious argumentation schemes that violate the principles of rational deliberation, thus directly putting the value of the pluralist democratic institutions of the country under question. I further conclude that this project has deepened the gap between Macedonia and its neighbours in relation to interpretation of historic events, something resulting in continuous delay of country’s Euro-Atlantic integration and destabilisation. Based on these statements I argue that as long as governing elites

avoid deliberation on national history and legacies from the past, systematic interruptions in national mythopoesis and conflicts will be generated in the society. The imposition of new identity will always be confronted by minorities, especially in increasingly pluralist societies. In the same line, I conclude that as long as economic developmental projects are used for sponsoring party and clientelistic networks and not for redistribution of affluence and empowerment of formerly or temporarily disadvantaged groups, popular dissatisfaction will follow.

I develop the same argument regarding the relations core-(semi)periphery of the world-system: as long as EU policies of enlargement do not translate in redistribution and empowerment systematic backslides into autocracy and populism will follow in both candidate countries and in the existing members of the EU. The major conclusion of this study is that without broad popular inclusiveness and participation democracy reduces to polyarchy or contest for privileges between elites, becoming thus an unsustainable political system prone to eruptions of social conflicts. Elites are in the focus of both schools of interventionism in the semi-periphery and the periphery of the world-system. For stability to be achieved on nation-state and international levels socio-economic concerns and equality of all social groups and pluralistic political options should be considered. This implies redefinition of the current capitalist world-system based on economic and political exclusion. I therefore propose that practice-oriented debates focused on reduction of global inequalities should also reflect on creating of political program grounded in critical scientific theory that will not only emancipate against the dangers of right-wing populism, but will go further and pinpoint the unsustainability of democratic development designs stemming from modernisation theory rationales. In this vein I offer few ways of how today's representative democracy could be rethought. In my view the political action should concentrate on the strengthening of the pluralist concept of constitutional democracy in order to hinder unchecked centralisation of power. The powers of the Parliaments should be enhanced in the system of the division of state power, but also, within the Parliament, more space for control of the representatives has to be created through processes stimulating interaction between the electorate and the MPs, making the representatives responsive to the people and not to very small powerful elites.

The results of the study also served as grounds for generating hypotheses for further studies. One of the hypotheses is related to the phenomenon of autocratic populism in South-East Europe. The comparisons between "Skopje 2014" and similar projects from this region hinted discursive and behavioural commonalities among some of these regimes. I hypothesise that there exists mutual imitation and cooperation between some of these regimes and that the main goal of the populists is to achieve firm grasp of the executive power in period long enough to establish and consolidate new right-wing powerful elite in the individual nation-states. The critical de-construction of similarities in further studies could serve as a tool for discouraging individual autocratic regimes to copy practices from one another and weaken possible cohesion among them.

The second hypothesis is related to the indices that the EU's interventionism in Western Balkans in particular, and in former socialist countries in general, follows the pattern of polyarchy promotion described by Robinson (1996 and 2013). Based on the analyses of EU's behaviour in Macedonia after 2015 I hypothesise that while the Union officially promotes democracy it factually is promoting polyarchy in the countries of its interest. Polyarchy or 'regimented democracy' is here understood as regime that limits democracy to strictly controlled contest of elites on elections and a type of political system that serves for keeping of popular discontent within the manageable limits of the

world-system hegemonic powers. In this context EU's support of the mass protests against the Macedonian government in 2016 following after a decade of tolerance for the autocratic government embracing *laissez-faire* reforms came as a surprise. EU's tolerance of autocratic-populism and abrupt alteration of policies towards the same in Macedonia can be compared to cases of EU interventionism in other countries in the recent past. Groups struggling for global justice can better understand the polyarchy promotion models and properly position themselves when their genuine revolt is utilised in the re-affirmation of an old elite or consolidation of a new one.

The ultimate goal of Critical Theory in general and CDA approach in particular is not only to raise awareness of problematic discursive strategies, but also to offer emancipation and contribute to the debate around the crisis of representative democracy in context of right-wing populism re-emergence in Europe and elsewhere. This study contributes to the understanding of (right-wing) populism in general and in Macedonia and South-East European region in particular. It underlines the similarities with this phenomenon in Austrian and Western European contexts but, based on the analyses it also describes newly found characteristics of right-wing populist discursive schemes used by the Macedonian governing elite in the "Skopje 2014" case. This research offers starting points for further study of similar cases and processes in the region. The newly found characteristics of right-wing populist discursive patterns found in the Macedonian case are especially relevant in the cases of Western Balkan as region comprised of states that are not part of EU and one still contested between the "East" and the "West".

The study also offers some insights in the nation-building and identity-construction processes in the new post-socialist democracies in Europe. This is especially interesting in context of the new circumstances where nation-(re)branding, understood as partly state and partly private venture, is under strong influence of market mechanisms and other, non-state actors, such as marketing and media institutions and transnational economic elites.

The dissertation is also significant because it highlights aspects of polyarchy promotion by the EU. Until now mostly the political interventionism of the United States as the single most powerful hegemon in the world has been under scrutiny. However, the EU, just as the USA earlier, in the last two decades has also formed different new bodies with the aim to 'promote democracy'. For instance, through closely related organisation, such as OSCE, missions exist on the Balkans, in Ukraine and in South Caucasus countries, with the primary focus on democratisation and elections observation. With sensitivity towards different historic legacies, geographic and geo-political differences, studies of power negotiation in context of membership in supranational organisations can also benefit from the analyses of Macedonia's ambitions to join the EU presented here. From this angle of special interest is the behaviour of the supranational organisation, its responsibility for the democratic developments in individual nation-states. The thesis shows the mechanisms of maintaining autocratic power in Macedonia under the conditions of government's embracing of neo-liberal reforms and sustaining of external appearance of democracy as sufficient conditions the candidate country to continuously receive the Recommendation for EU accession negotiations.

On theoretical level this study contributes to the debates between modernisation and critical theories, especially in regards to definition of democracy and the relationship between democracy and economic development. It shows that in the case of Macedonia none of the expedient technocratic formulas for modernisation required by the hegemonic powers of the world-system,

and especially the EU, have resulted in sustainable democratic development and prosperity. Both “the economic reform first” and “the political reform first” projects have failed to thrive. Modernisation theory although slightly changing its starting principles it still perceives ‘traditionalism’ as the principal reason for underdevelopment, it further sees accommodation to capitalism as the sole alternative for national development and continuously favours interventionism over genuine and independent development paths as envisioned by the actors experiencing ‘underdevelopment’.

Simultaneously, this study pinpoints the weaknesses of the current Critical Theory, especially in regards to its inability to give concrete definition of *popular democracy* and to create a new political program for action that goes beyond the de-construction of the tenets of modernisation theory. World-system analysis as macro approach is incapable of detecting political responsibility for democratic flaws within the nation-states, especially in the regions of the world recognised as (semi)peripheral. Another weakness of this theory recognised in this study is its leaning towards majoritarianism, underestimation of civil rights and economism, elements shared with populism or modernisation rationales. This theory in continuum fails to more precisely define what *popular democracy* as ideal realisation of democracy is or could be. The CDA approach with its ability to focus on concrete actors, however, can help diminish these shortcomings within the Critical Theory. I also propose that the concept of popular democracy should be closely connected with the concept of constitutionalism (pluralism) as inseparable part of any representative democratic system that stands opposite populist and authoritarian regimes. Not only scientific theory but also political and civil organisations and social movements interested in diminishing of global inequalities can benefit from more encompassing theoretical and methodological approach, a meeting point of the critical theories on the one side and the theory of constitutional democracy on the other, one which also combines macro (world-system) with micro (nation-state) perspectives.

Finally, the study is also innovative in its methodological approach, in that it recognises and analyses as discourses not only spoken and written texts but also “silent” messages transmitted through the phenomenological and the performative. For the understanding and critical interpretation of “Skopje 2014”, the visual aspects or the phenomenology of the structures were also analysed, as well as the meaning of individual performative acts as a form of communication between the political actors and their imagined audience. CDA in this sense proved to be especially suitable approach for the analysis of construction and de-construction of national identity. I believe that future studies will also benefit from this approach, where series of acts and the performative and visual aspects related to certain project are treated with equal attention by the scientist as the written and audio materials. This approach not only enriches the discourse-poll but also tells why specific media is preferred over another for the transmission of sensitive information. This is especially relevant in referral to the use of the so called *calculated ambivalence* or intended vagueness, enabling the rhetor to both transmit radical stances and simultaneously not to be easily held politically responsible and socially sanctioned for the conduct.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Research problem

In the last two and a half decades the Balkan region, and Macedonia as a part of it, is making a democratic transition from one-party system to multi-party system or polyarchy (Robinson, 1996; Dahl, 1989). The disintegration of Yugoslavia meant a creation of seven new Balkan republics, including Kosovo. This democratic transition was a result of the new configurations of power on global level. As the armed conflicts in Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo and Macedonia demonstrate, the collapse of the eastern bloc has given the western powers increased opportunities for control and management of crisis in the whole South-East European region. Therefore we can say that the new sovereignty of the small and weak states stemming from the former Yugoslavia was, and still is, marked with increased cultural and economic dependency from the ever more powerful European Union. Stepping out of the Yugoslav federation all new republics were hoping for a swift membership into another federation, the EU.

After the integration of Bulgaria and Romania in the Euro-Atlantic structures, linking the new Central Europe with Greece and thus making a belt around the new, small, former Yugoslav republics, discouraging the reviving Russian Federation of influencing the Western Balkans, the euro-sceptics of former Yugoslavia started a public debate questioning if the new states had at all choice of not joining the EU and/or NATO.

However, the integration into the EU structures of the region was delayed. The world economic crisis and the possible exit of Greece from the Euro-zone, the Arab Spring revolts in the Maghreb region, the regulation of the conflicts in Syria and Ukraine were on the top of the EU agenda in the last years.

In a meantime some analysts note that in all Balkan countries through which the fast rail funded by China and the gas pipeline "Turkish Stream", financed by Russia, should pass, there are governments that could hardly be labelled as democratic (*Utrinski Vesnik*, April, 2015). Recently the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia, Sergey Lavrov, said that "the entry of Western Balkan countries into NATO is a serious threat to Russian interests," and his colleague, the US Secretary of State, John Kerry said that "Macedonia is among the countries in the firing line between East and West." Why Macedonia at this point is so interesting for the major powers is its geopolitical position and importance in two major infrastructure projects. Prime Ministers of Macedonia, Serbia and Hungary signed in December, 2014 a memorandum with Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang in Belgrade to build a fast rail-line from Athens via Skopje and Belgrade to Budapest. China's announced that it is ready to establish a new fund amounting 3 billion dollars, which will become available to the countries of South Eastern Europe, within a total credit package which should amount up to 10 billion dollars. This is how, using the Greek port of Thessaloniki, China is getting closer to Western European markets. The second infrastructure project is the pipeline "Turkish stream." But this infrastructure project differently from the first has encountered a strong opposition from the US and the EU. After clashes in Ukraine, through which the pipeline supplying Russian gas in the EU countries, the US and the EU decided to reduce the dependence of EU countries on Russian gas and began to build the gas pipeline "Nabucco", through which gas from Azerbaijan via Turkey should come to Italy and Central Europe. This should prevent Russia to use the supply of gas as an instrument of political pressure on countries that depend on it. Russia, for its part, due to the tightening of relations with Ukraine,

announced that by 2019 it will stop using Ukraine for transporting gas to the EU countries and launched the pipeline "South Stream" which was supposed to pass through Bulgaria, Serbia and Hungary to Western Europe. However, after the change of the government in Bulgaria, the new Prime Minister refused to build the pipeline through its territory. After Putin's visit to Turkey it was announced that a new pipeline, named "Turkish stream", will be built. This pipeline should pass from Russia through Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, Serbia and Hungary to Western Europe. Recently for this purpose in Budapest it was held a meeting of foreign ministers of Hungary, Serbia, Macedonia, Greece and Turkey. Obviously, the non-integrated part of the Western Balkans is still a site of contest between the 'West' and the 'East', and thus, a site for opportunistic politics for the local political elites.

Contemporary debate about the relationship between democracy and developmental paths has been again focused on the resurgence of *authoritarian capitalism*. Rooted in modernisation theory this model holds that the fusion of authoritarianism and market economics is a viable arrangement that can sustain over time. Fused with a strong dose of nationalism, the seeming economic vibrancy of authoritarian Singapore, China, and Russia represent an attractive contemporary alternative model to low- and middle-income country autocrats. (Halperin *et al*, 2010). The rise of Russia and its model as an alternative went hand in hand with unclear strategy and tactics of the EU diplomacy regarding the Western Balkans: 'One notices hesitation in the use of diplomacy of pressure and coercion ("offer more stick than carrots") when there is clear stagnation or retrograde tendencies in the accession process, the entire project of enlargement and placing it below other priorities of the EU' (Frckovski, 2014, 10).

Mainly because of the delayed EU integration, but also due to region's one-party system legacies associated with nationalism and political mobilisation based on ethnic membership, continuous economic crisis and absence of predictable legal certainty, lately has been hypothesised that the whole region is becoming trapped in *autocratic populism*. In the member states of the EU of special concern is the emergence of right-wing populism, typically growing in periods of economic stagnation, immigration flow and fear from globalisation. If the populism in Europe is still on the political margins, but picks up in countries such as France and Italy, or in Austria and the Netherlands, where the right-wing parties even entered the governing coalitions, then right-wing populism should not be surprising in countries with less democratic checks-and-balances out of the EU structures. Even more shocking is the emergence of autocratic populist regimes within EU, Hungary. The Union evidently has no issues with their emergence. The European Commission's President Jean-Claude Juncker has welcomed Hungary's Prime Minister Orban on the summit in Riga, Latvia with the words: "Here comes the dictator", after which he routinely embraced the PM in unexpected familiar manner, as if he is a naughty but favourite child¹. In the region of the Western Balkans, there are different degrees of established local authoritarian populism, from Macedonia, where the system has been completed, to Serbia where elements of the system can be detected in the judiciary, the national science and arts academies, etc., to Montenegro, Albania under the Berisha government, Kosovo, and to Bosnia similarly. In the wider region, it also includes Hungary and Turkey. In the following thesis I will focus on the case of Macedonia, and further try to link this case with the countries from the wider region, as well as the relation of the region with the European Union.

¹ *Euronews*, published on 22 May 2015, last viewed 20.02.2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1hl83Jpd_OI

It is important to note that populist rhetoric was not typical in many of these countries prior to the delayed EU integration. The economic *status quo* and the political insecurity in the region has become fruitful soil for the traditional right-wing populist argumentation about the decadence of the elites and the need to restore democracy. To create and later legitimise their regime the populist leaders from South-East Europe, mobilise loyal supporters by constructing its own political mythology, connecting it with history and with fear of the lost national unity! According to Frckovski (2014) authoritarian regimes in the region use almost the same technique: by searching for the zero point of national harmony in the distant past. This populism skips recent history and produces political mythology (the examples of Gruevski, Orban, and Erdogan) into two controversial myths: *the heroic myth* and *the myth of the victim* -all Balkan nations have such logic of a victimized nation, are not willing to compromise, think that all others owe them something, are harsh toward the minorities, and subject to manipulation about conspiracies (Frckovski, 2014, 15). The heroic myth perceives an imagined start when under the leadership of Alexander the Great the unity of the nation had been established, and then later has been lost during a long period of suffering (the myth about the victim). A rebirth of the nation is suggested in the contemporary frame: the myth of the victory under the new leadership of the populist leader is again launched: 'victorious Macedonians, new Macedonians, shift from insignificant and fearful macedonian - with small "m"- to a big and fearless huge Macedonian, etc.' (*Ibid*).

The present identity politics purposefully makes discontinuity with everything previous and more recent in history and tries to be based on the imagined zero point of national harmony somewhere in the distant past (in the case of Gruevski, it is Alexander the Great; for Orban, it is the ancient Hungarian tribes and the myth about the Four Fathers of the Asian Hungarians; and for Erdogan, it involves the famous Ottoman sultans). Then, from that point in history, there is a construction of a mystic bridge connecting such point with the present reborn dictatorship, suggesting this dictatorship as continuation or revival of that heroic age. This is the construct, pattern that is repeated, an ideological tool and a product of the regime which is sold, meanwhile, to the always shocked citizens living in transition (Frckovski, 2014, 16).

This new political mythology in Macedonia was realised through the so called policy of "antiquisation". In 2010 the Government of the Republic of Macedonia launched a project named "Skopje 2014". The video presentation demonstrated the projections for the revamp of the old city centre. It included building of dozen administrative buildings, few bridges, several museums (among which the most important are the Museum of the Macedonian Struggle and the Archaeological Museum) and around 40 large sculptures of national heroes, mainly within one square kilometre in the centre of Skopje. Allegedly, the project was meant to return the classical outlook of the city before the earthquake of 1963 and after the long dominance of plain communistic architecture. As the name suggests, the realisation of the Project supposed to end in 2014. However, the project was surrounded with controversies and criticism from the beginning. Aside from being perceived as waste of resources in a country with high unemployment and poverty, the main critique concentrated on the government's policy of "antiquisation" or the attempt to create a new national identity based on the ancient Macedonians. Probably no European country has undergone such a rapid change of the concept of its past. Changes are to be found even in the history books for primary school.

To gain more fruitful insights, this purposeful management of the collective memory should be observed in the context of the country's unsuccessful integration in the European structures. Since its

independence in 1991 Macedonia's attempts to enter the Euro-Atlantic structures (EU and NATO) were obstructed by Greece, because of the name of the republic, since a Greek northern province carries the same name. Greece has repeatedly accused Macedonia for trying to steal its cultural heritage, but actually the directing of the debate into the cultural sphere silences the forced exodus of the Macedonian minority from its northern province following the Ottoman's departure from the peninsula. Later analysis revealed that the Project was planned as early as 2006, but it was intensively implemented only after the Greek veto to Macedonia joining NATO on the summit in Bucharest in 2008. Firstly, and above all, seen as a resistance to the Greek interpretation of the history of central Balkans, the myth-making narratives of "Skopje 2014" were lately interpreted as anti-Bulgarian or even anti-Albanian: "Antiquisation has a double goal, which is to marginalize the Albanians and create an identity that will not allow Albanians to become Macedonians" (*Balkan Insight*, 2009).

By placing on the main square of the country figures who acted in the times when nation-states in the modern sense of the word still did not exist, like Alexander the Great², Justinian I³, King Samuil⁴ or Ss. Cyril and Methodius⁵ as only Macedonian national heroes, may well serve the national identity or the popularity of the ruling government, but may not escape creating enemies on a long run. The contemporary Macedonians are impelled to believe that they are descendents of the same people that once ruled half of Asia, but later were also the one to invent the Slavic alphabet. Therefore, beside the Greek veto on the country's EU integration based on the disagreement about the name of the Republic, mid September the Bulgarian government threatened with its own red line for the country's EU accession based on the disputed interpretation of the cultural heritage.

The potency of the project to produce conflicts is not ending there. The national mythology as re-interpreted in the new museums is largely different from the one existing only a decade ago. The choices of topics covered in "The Museum of the Macedonian Struggle for Statehood and Independence" – a Museum comprised of the "Museum of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization for Independence from the Ottomans" and the "Museum of the Victims of the Communist Regime", offer a new version of the recent Macedonian history. The name of the second museum already attracts conflict within the Macedonian society, if we know about the leaning towards the Slavic heritage of the Macedonians nurtured by the social-democratic opposition (mainly former members from the communistic party of Yugoslavia). The undermined role of the socialist politicians in the aftermath of the Second World War, seen in the under-representation or marginal position in the Project or the elevation of monuments of politicians with largely disputed heritage for the Macedonian statehood opened old disputes within the ethnic Macedonian community.

Questions which first could emerge in the mind of a curious social scientist would include: what did the government expect with this project? Which ends should it serve: once and for all to give the final version of the Macedonian's identity, to block the country's entrance in the EU or to strengthen its position for the next elections? As in Macedonia most of the practices after the elections are

² According to Skrinis (2010) the image of Alexander the Great as conqueror and ruler of Greece was altered into symbol of Greek unity and culture, only after 1870, when the newly established Greek state put claim on Macedonia and mainly only after the same claim was put forth by Bulgaria

³ Byzantine Emperor who sought to revive the Empire's greatness and re-conquer the lost western half of the classical Roman Empire

⁴ The king of the First Slavic Kingdom on the Balkans during the medieval period, both Macedonian and Bulgarian national hero

⁵ Byzantine Christian missionaries and creators of the Slavic alphabet

based on retaliation, one cannot stop asking oneself how difficult it will be for the opposition's government firstly to debunk this myth and then to give new meaning to it, a meaning which will not offend the newly shaped national feelings, but will also keep its position on the Macedonian history vital and will it use the same places for celebration of the national holidays on the so detested sides of built-up-nationalism?

When the project was first presented to the public, its total costs were estimated around 80 million Euro. In 2014, the government came out with the final calculation of 207 million Euros. However, non-government organisations have calculated that at the end of 2015 the project cost 8 times more than the announced 80 million, or 633 million Euros. At the same time, the project did not stop in 2014, but continues until the moment of the writing of the thesis. Simultaneously, a project "Macedonia 2017" has been announced, using the same "antiquisation" themes in other cities of the country. The continuous project now encompasses 27 buildings, 5 squares, 39 sculptures, 34 monuments, 4 bridges, one arch (resembling the Triumph Arch in Paris), 6 storey garages, and including a new party-headquarters building, and the replacement of the modernist facades in the heart of the city with semi-baroque or neo-classical style facades to cover the traces of the socialist past. The transformation of the facades includes the government and the Parliament buildings, the main postal office and several ministries and dwelling houses. Finally, the project includes the construction of a Ferris wheel to offer a panoramic view of "Skopje 2014" (resembling the London's wheel), fountains and docked boats (resembling pirate's ships) in the river Vardar; carousel and several horse-carriages (associated with Western European 19th century imagery). The procedures of decision-making and quality of realisation of the project with public money were not transparent at any point, until the newly-elected oppositional mayor has announced a revision of the project in 2013. The election of the new mayor was brutally obstructed with frauds and intimidations, leading to three revote rounds. The day after the final approval of his entrance in office, the governing elite announced a 'transparent' account of all the expenses. Thus, a new door for criticism was opened. Allegations of illegal transfers and money laundering were following, becoming the marrow of the opposition's rhetoric. Indices of dubious transactions were revealed on daily bases: the costs of single monument equals the costs of whole building; artists with no previous recognition were granted the realisation of the most expensive structures of the project, receiving 'astronomic' remuneration for their involvement; irrational choice of executives of art works on tenders (many times more expensive than the second applicant), associations of architects stayed completely silent after the expedient and illegal change of the detailed urban plan of the centre of Skopje, etc. To these critiques, new were added, not only with the ideological and financial, but also with legal utilisation of the project in elections related purposes.

The governing elite has rejected any of the allegations for altering of the national identity of the Macedonians, for provoking Greece to veto each next trial for EU/NATO integration, or for non-transparent working with the public funds. Instead, it stated that "Skopje 2014" is a part of a campaign for attracting foreign investment and tourism in the country. Shortly, it is a developmental strategy with expected turnover. This way, the unsatisfied citizens could be appeased and the spending of the public money justified. It was thus, in the first more systematic study of the Project assumed that 'The "Skopje 2014" project, then, houses a cascading set of state goals, each targeted to different audiences: it aims to sculpt Macedonia's image and boost its international visibility, to "normalize" and "Europeanize" the capital, and to assert (ethnic) Macedonian identity against factors perceived to be threatening, i.e., Greeks and ethnic Albanians (Graan, 2013). The same study found

that: 'Moving from the status quo was the main impetus for the voters to support the project: Indeed, the most frequent praise that I heard for "Skopje 2014" centered less on the project's specific vision for the city than on the perception that the government was finally "doing something" to improve the country and its international image' (Graan, 2013).

Through the heavily controlled media the governing elite offered its vision of the project as a nation-branding project in neo-liberal circumstances, a logical developmental policy, with no reference whatsoever to national or political issues that could surround it. It was natural for the Macedonian voter to accept this as valid argumentation, especially knowing that differently from the previous governments, the government of Gruevski has shown vigorous pro-activity, new managerial style and entrepreneurial character. Under his leadership Macedonia has started to promote itself as one of the 'most competitive business and manufacturing locations in Europe' and due to its free trade zone with the EU as a 'gateway to Europe' for Asian entrepreneurs. To this end many new laws were passed, whose primary goal was the attracting of foreign investment in the country. Gruevski's rhetoric is overloaded with managerial and entrepreneurial terminology and categorisation. The type of business partners the government has chosen were very different from the traditional relationships with primarily regional and European countries: the multimillionaire from India, Subrata Roy, the emirs of Qatar, China, demonstrating that Gruevski finds easier 'common language' for doing business with the East than the West. This could not be perceived wrong *per se* if not having on mind, as it will be demonstrated later, that most of the foreign business partners of his government have been accused in their countries for frauds and corruption, or that most of them are not comprehending under 'doing business' anything that goes beyond expedient turnover, not willing to include any environmental or labour-force rights in the contracts. After reforming the labour market and shortening of the bureaucratic procedures for starting a business Macedonia, under the leadership of Gruevski earned the 25th place in the world according to the World Bank for good climate for 'doing business'. Hence, when "Skopje 2014" was presented to the public as a foremost developmental project, a project of nation-branding in neo-liberal settings trying to attract investment and tourism and confront competitive narratives of private and state actors, no serious social upheavals followed. It was advertised and well received by private actors like *CNN*, *Euronews*, *the Wall Street Journal*. The EU has never commented on "Skopje 2014", and only briefly on the "antiquisation" policy and its populist overtones in context of good inter-neighbour relations with Greece and Bulgaria.

In this context, the discourse and the actions of the current government are allegedly pro-democratic and pro-European, but in practice are very ethnocentric and isolationist. Namely the prospects for EU integration carried substantial weight in the people's choices on the elections in the last two decades. By this reasoning the current government should have been overthrown in the recent elections. However, this did not happen. One may hold responsible the government in Skopje, being in position to control the media, the judiciary and the police forces. However, the EU also seems undecided with its strategy for the region and the enlargement process in general. Thus, aside of the permanent name-related-issue with Greece, the EU officials as barrier for the EU accession of the country recently mentioned the downturn in democracy: election fraud, closing of the opposition-related TV-station A1, using of the national TV service for personal advertisement out of the election campaigns. In 2014 Macedonia was ranked on 123rd place on the freedom of speech index of *Reporters without Borders* – down from 39th place in 2009. As early as 2008 in an open letter to its membership party of Gruevski, after winning the elections set out its mission in almost apocalyptic

terms. It said it is ready “for the final battle with politicians who have left behind a wasteland and poverty in our country and have brought crime, immorality, lies and distorted our values” (*Balkan Insight*, August, 2014).

Another major barrier the EU continuously mentions is the status quo with the building of pluralistic society. Instead of building multiethnic society “Skopje 2014” appeals for nationalistic unity in a divided country. On the reactions for the negligence of the Albanian minority in the Project the political entrepreneurs answered with parallel project in the Albanian part of the city, the Scanderbeg Square- displaying Albanian heroic figures without any significance for the ethnic Macedonians.

Nevertheless, different bodies of the EU have continuously encouraged Macedonia to continue on the road to the Union, confirming this legally, with the annual progress reports and the recommendations for start of the accession negotiations. The same bodies, completely aware of the situation (as they list in detail these democratic flaws in their recommendations) support the government in the accession process. It has been does debated that, apparently, the EU prefers *stabilocracy* in the Western Balkans. For instance growing authoritarianism in some Western Balkan countries was put very low on the agenda of the 2014 Berlin summit for future enlargement of the EU in Western Balkan States, despite the Reports by the *Bertelsmann Foundation* and by the rights watchdog organizations *Reporters without Borders* and *Freedom House* pointing to a marked decline in democratic standards and freedom of press in Macedonia, Serbia and Bosnia especially (*Balkan Insight*, August, 2014).

It can be hypothesised that the EU as a monitor of the democratic process in South-East Europe in general and the Western Balkan in particular, closes its eyes on injustice, when transnational elites gain profit from autocratic regimes, giving priority to economic over political gains. The regimes from the region have realised that and utilised their opportunities. The connections and the mutual fascination between the countries of the region are also growing stronger and become more visible. For instance the Turkish President Recep Erdogan is often praised by the pro-government intellectuals in Macedonia as a “role model reformer and a leader who democratized the Turkish society”. Admiration for Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban is even greater. In December 2013, Macedonia gave Orban its highest state medal, the September 8 Order, for his special contribution to the autonomy and sovereignty of the country (*Balkan Insight*, August, 2014).

Interesting enough, projects similar to “Skopje 2014” have emerged recently in Albania and Serbia. Thus, clarifying the meaning of “Skopje 2014” in Macedonian context, may cast light on the understanding of the similar projects and their meaning in the neighbouring countries. This will offer policy-makers insight in the mindset of its creators and type of politics they do. Critics have claimed that ‘the wider picture of such system is hard to see at a first glance because all of these countries show strong pro-European and democratic rhetoric; however, it has penetrated everywhere and therefore a common EU strategy on this phenomenon is necessary, possible, and sustainable. Such strategy is the only guarantee of the success of real EU-backed reforms in these countries’ (Frckovski, 2014).

We have, thus, two interpretations of the project “Skopje 2014”: one of them seeing it as a legitimate developmental project in neo-liberal circumstances and another, critical one, seeing it as a combination of policies intended to stabilise autocratic populist leadership and endanger democracy

in context of hesitant EU strategy for the wider region. The critics posit that “Skopje 2014” is only a petrification of the right-wing populist discourses of Prime Minister Gruevski, serving his pragmatic goals of circumventing democratic procedures of gaining and maintaining power. In his study of the populist regimes in Western Balkan Frckovski underlines that since the right-wing populists do not believe in, but are also not able to completely avoid elections, they have to extend their office mainly through one major strategy: the creation of ‘their own people’ with their own identity. The abundance of critical materials indicating machinations of public funds related to the realisation of “Skopje 2014” could become a foundation for another hypothesis. Opposition’s critique, for instance, has switched from earlier allegations of ‘ideological frauds’ for maintaining power, to later allegations of real illegal financial frauds. The assumption here is that the public money intended for “Skopje 2014” construction could easily transform into party money, and without control of the judiciary the same could be used for winning of the elections and prolongation of the office.

A general research question emerges from the research problem: Do discourses of and around the project “Skopje 2014” have a negative impact on the Macedonian democracy or can it be so?

The literature review would reveal the definition of the main categories for the study and the relevant relationships between them as found in previous studies. In context of the general research question we can ask: What is right-wing populism (and discourse) according to the relevant literature? What is the relevant literature telling us about the relationship between (right-wing) populist discourse and democracy? Lastly, what kind of relationship could there be between (un)democratic construction of national identity and populism and between (un)democratic development and populism.

As mentioned, there is no specific study of the regimes of South-East Europe in general and the Western Balkan in particular, and the links between them. There is even less scientific research on the specific ‘revamp’ projects and their constitutive role in the establishment of a populist regime. If these countries blend neo-liberal capitalism and autocracy and offer regional stability, it could be hard to criticize them. However, on long term the autocracies could increase conflict, downplay progress, mock pluralism and therefore endanger democracy.

Democracy – a contested notion

It is crucial before moving forward to define what in this study will be understood under the notion of democracy, which could be endangered by the right-wing populism, as manifested through “Skopje 2014”.

It is important to begin the debate with the acknowledgment that democracy is basically contested term. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, democracy is a process; it is not dichotomous but scale notion: among the countries that are not evident dictatorships, there are different levels of liberalism. At the same time, democracy is an *ideal type* notion, allowing to be upgraded with the

evolution of society. For instance, the new media, based on new technologies, may enhance people's integration in the main political process (on-line elections) and in multi-faced participation (through information and opinion making). Representatives, for instance, can be suggested directly by popular initiative, instead of parity's candidates. Secondly, there is a great discrepancy in the understanding of what democracy means within and between the nation-states.

Referring to the first point, Wallerstein (2001) asks: Why did the term "democracy" evolve from being the expression of revolutionary aspiration to a universal platitude? Originating in the Greek political philosophy through the eighteenth century, democracy in the Western thought had always been taken to mean what its Greek roots indicate, the *rule of the people* - as opposed not only to the rule of one person but even more to *the rule of the best people*, or aristocracy. Therefore democracy was first of all a quantitative concept, appealing for equality within basically inegalitarian situation: if there exist "best" people, then there must have been "less good" people ignorant, uneducated, poor. Therefore, democracy as an idea, and a movement, was originally intended to refuse such a distinction as foundation of organizing political life.

Wallerstein gives the answer to his question: 'The idea that the "people" might actually "rule" was considered by all respectable people as a political nightmare, dreamed up by irresponsible radicals. In fact, the principal objective of respectable people was how to make sure that it was *not* the majority of the people who had the authority to decide. This authority had to be left in the hands of people who had interests in preserving the world as it was, or as it should be. These were people with property and wisdom, who were considered competent to make decisions' (Wallerstein, 2010).⁶

After the social and national revolutions of 1848, men of 'competence' grew frightened and they responded first with repression, and then with calculated concessions. The first concession was the gradual admittance of the people, to the ballot. This concession, however, has not satisfied the demands of the "people". Many of the civil rights we know today, as the right of free assembly, the right to publicly express opinion, freedom of the press, the recognition of particularistic identities, were also gradually won by the middle strata of the world-system. Over the next 150 years, this concession worked to a considerable degree and protected by citizenship. Thereafter and moreover, the middle strata has 'being constantly solicited and appeased by the upper strata, who need their assistance to maintain the political equilibrium of the overall world-system, that is, to hold in check the dangerous classes (now the uncivilized working classes of the world-system without citizenship).' The last and most important concession was the welfare-state or the redistributive schemes protecting the underprivileged citizens. According to Wallerstein, namely this concession explains Social-Democrat's gradual 'shift away from a radical politics to a very centrist orientation' (Wallerstein, 2010).⁷

⁶ "Democracy – Everywhere? Nowhere?", Commentary No. 289, Sept. 15, 2010, <http://iwallerstein.com/democracy-everywhere-nowhere/>

⁷ "Does Social-Democracy Have a Future?", Commentary No. 290, October 1, 2010, <http://iwallerstein.com/does-social-democracy-have-a-future/>

Thus, radicalism was muted and after 1945, the very word, democracy, was co-opted, just as in the heyday of imperialism, in the late nineteenth century, the term "imperialism" was a word of honour in the imperial states, but with the delegitimisation of imperialism after the Second World War it suddenly became a negative word. After 1945 and especially after 1990, every country claimed to be in favour of democracy, which still holds today. However, not everyone is convinced in that. Therefore, Wallerstein believes that we should think of democracy as a claim and an aspiration that has not been realized anywhere yet and that while some countries may seem to be more undemocratic than others, there are no countries demonstrably more democratic than others.

This brings us to the second contradiction of the term democracy. If for the most of the underprivileged world the term democracy is predominantly associated with welfare-state in particular or redistribution in general, and if we apply the same formula of democracy on international level, the world should undertake revolutionary change. This redistribution, however, is not typical even within the 'democratic club' of the EU, where there is no visible convergence between the old members and the Eastern enlargement countries to be observed. According to Wallerstein (2001) 'if the dangerous classes are no longer dangerous, if the uncivilized working classes are now accepted as citizens, then the rhetorical line between civilized and uncivilized shifts to being one between civilized countries and uncivilized countries. This would then become the chief rhetorical justification of imperial rule, and the rhetorical basis of demanding and obtaining working-class participation in the glories of the civilizing mission'....'Thus, because the resonance of the concept of democracy had changed, the very groups which dreaded the word in the first half of the nineteenth century came to adopt it by the end of the century and were using it as their theme song by the second half of the twentieth century. At this point, the concept of democracy became primarily a symbol of, a consequence of, a proof of civilization. The West is democratic; the rest are not. The hegemonic forces in the world-economy proclaim themselves thereby the moral leaders. Their hegemony is the basis of progress throughout the world. They offer democracy as a Holy Grail. They therefore incarnate virtue'.

This explains why democracy has enormous meaning for one fifth of the world population (since it implies a real improvement in their political and socio-economic situation) and very little meaning for the rest. The fact that only few countries of the world have more wealth and a more liberal state with functional multiparty systems, 'in short, the fact that a few countries are civilized, is *not the cause but precisely the consequence* of the deep inequalities in the world-system as a whole'.

Politically, the popular demand for democratization has translated into demand of redistribution on world level but this kind of democratization is, evidently, 'less popular with capitalists in general than are civil liberties, and the struggle to limit the redistribution, to reverse the pattern and reduce the rate to the degree possible, is the bread and butter of conservative political programs'. This explains why two-thirds of the world does not have liberal states, but mainly clans and family systems of corruption and nepotism, trying to sustain the control of the scarce resources, which in many countries makes the difference between life and death. This also explains why democracy comes (with hope) and goes (with disappointment) in waves, as Huntington observes them. Namely, because of the structure of the capitalist world-economy which makes it impossible for the majority of the countries to have such political regimes, since the foundation of the system is to accumulate human capital, financial capital and wealth on one place, not to disperse it. Moreover, the working classes of the core countries are not ready to share their welfare privileges with non-citizen or

'foreign' minorities within their states, as demonstrated by the Swedish elections from September 19, 2010 when the Social Democrats lost the election badly. Since 1932, the Social-Democratic party has governed the country 80% of the time, and this was the first time since then that a centre-right party won reelection. And to compound the bad showing, a far right, anti-immigrant party entered the Swedish Parliament for the first time. This is how Wallerstein comments the event: 'Social-democrats have never been very strong on the rights of ethnic or other "minorities" – still less on the rights of immigrants. Social-democratic parties have tended to be parties of the ethnic majority in each country, defending their turf against other workers whom they saw as undercutting their wages and employment. Solidarity and internationalism were slogans that were useful when there was no competition in sight. Sweden didn't have to face this issue seriously until recently. And when it did, a segment of social-democratic voters simply moved to the far right. Thus great disappointment in the 'virtuous Middle Way between the two extremes represented by the United States and the Soviet Union, 'combining egalitarian redistribution with internal democratic politics' follows (Wallerstein, 2010).⁸ Democracy, can be said, is mostly used as rhetorical tool.

Thus, Wallerstein concludes that the working classes out of the core countries are not in condition to fight for concessions. They were also not able in Europe – they were rather offered to cooperate in the world injustice. "It is not about multiparty systems, it is not about civil liberties, democracy, it must be said, is about equality, which is the opposite of racism. Liberty does not exist where equality is absent, since the powerful will always tend to prevail in an inegalitarian system" Wallerstein (2001).

Since Wallerstein does not give explicit definition of democracy, probably MacPherson's definition would be the closest to the overall concept of democracy envisioned by Wallerstein: 'As soon as democracy is seen as a *kind of society, not merely a mechanism* of choosing and authorising governments, the egalitarian principle inherent in democracy requires not only 'one man, one vote' but also 'one man, one equal effective right to live as fully humanly as one may wish' (MacPherson 1973, 51 in Lane and O.Ersson, 2003, 26).

The mainstream politologists and sociologists, on the other hand, accept the purely procedural definition of democracy as a system of government decoupled from the economic or legal spheres of life. These procedural definitions are especially reluctant to couple democracy with economic equality or wealth-redistribution.

We use the word democracy to signify a political system, separate and apart from the economic and social system....Indeed, a distinctive aspect of our approach is to insist that issues of so-called economic and social democracy be separated from the question of governmental structure. (Diamond, Linz and Lipset (1983) as cited in Robinson, 1996, 625). A more recent statement by Barry (1989, 25 in Lane, 2003, 26): 'I reject the notion that one should build into 'democracy' any constraints on the content of the outcomes produced, such as substantive equality, respect for human rights, and concern for the general welfare, personal liberty, or the rule of law'.

Even the most fierce advocates of democracy today, tend to miss the socio-economic elements of democracy in their definition: 'When we refer to democracy we mean those governance systems in

⁸ "Does Social-Democracy Have a Future?", Commentary No. 290, October 1, 2010, <http://iwallerstein.com/does-social-democracy-have-a-future/>

which national leaders are selected through free and fair elections, there are institutions that foster a shared distribution of power, and citizens have extensive opportunities to participate in political life. This explicitly requires a high degree of basic political freedoms, civil liberties, and political rights' (Halperin *et al*, 2010, 10). Moreover, when incorporating socio-economic aspects into the definition, they tend to equate capitalism (free market) and democracy: 'The competitive nature of democratic political markets, as with economic markets, makes them inherently efficient. The structures of both markets are organised to promote wealth-maximising outcomes. The parallels are striking. Politicians can be thought of as political entrepreneurs who, like their economic counterparts, are rewarded for efficient behaviour. The populace is allowed to judge their accomplishments, just as the market judges products and services. And voters can reject political leaders just as consumers have the freedom to reject whatever is offered for sale. Rival politicians can *profit* by exposing the shortcomings, just as companies can publicize their competitors' flaws' (*Ibid*, 49).

Therefore, each decoupling of development - understood as an umbrella of socio-economic liberties including welfare redistribution - from the notion of democracy, will free the controlling forces from the responsibility for full approach to the dependent countries. In other words, it gives the policy-makers the freedom to 'promote democracy' without redistribution of wealth and empowerment in global frames. They measure democracy and development separately and find correlations that serve the politics. In line with Wallerstein's theorising, Robinson (1996, 624) claims that what the core countries have achieved and what are they in fact promoting in the rest of the world is *polyarchy*, or a 'system in which a small group actually rules and mass participation in decision-making is confined to leadership choice in elections carefully managed by competing elites'. This redefinition of the classical meaning of democracy as a 'rule of the people' into the polyarchic definition was according to Huntington more 'realistic' and 'compatible with modern society' and was elaborated in details in the work of Dahl *Polyarchy* (1971), to win hegemonic place in the social-science after the 1970s.

Robinson (1996, 624) acknowledges that one of the main causes that reinforce the position of the polyarchic definition is the absence of genuine theory on *popular democracy*. He vaguely defines popular democracy as a model which 'conjoins representative government and elections to forms of participatory democracy that hold states accountable beyond the indirect mechanisms of periodic elections... an emancipatory project... where democratic participation is a tool for changing unjust social and economic structures'.

As another important idea for conceptualising democracy I would like to introduce the notion of *constitutional liberalism* as understood by Zakaria (1997), as I find the constitutional liberalism to be the most indispensable element of each system which tends to be named democratic. According to Zakaria the tendency for a democratically elected government to believe it has absolute sovereignty (that is, power) can result in the centralization of authority, often by extra-constitutional means and with grim results. Zakaria gives an succinct example of the statement of the American diplomat Holbrooke given in September 1996 regarding the elections in Bosnia, which were meant to restore civic life in the post-war country: "Suppose the election was declared free and fair and those elected are "racists, fascists, separatists, who are publicly opposed to peace and reintegration. That is the dilemma." Democratically elected regimes, often ones that have been reelected or reaffirmed through referenda, routinely ignore constitutional limitations on their power and deprive the citizens of basic rights and freedoms. Zakaria (1997) argues then that constitutional liberalism is about the

limitation of power, democracy about its accumulation and use. As if replying to Wallerstein, Zakaria claims that this is why some eighteenth- and nineteenth-century liberals (Wallerstein's men of 'competence') saw in democracy a force that could undermine liberty. He further argues that after the end of the Cold War democracy, defined as free and fair elections, is flourishing and constitutional liberalism, or pluralism, is not.

In almost all of its variants, constitutional liberalism claims that human beings have certain natural (or "inalienable") rights and that governments must accept a basic law, limiting its own powers, that secures them. Historically then, unchecked centralization has been the prime enemy of liberal democracy. Zakaria compares countries such as England and Sweden, where during the nineteenth century popular political participation increased and it was accommodated smoothly due to the long existence of medieval assemblies, local governments, and regional councils, with countries such as France and Prussia, where the monarchy had effectively centralized power (both horizontally and vertically) and often ended up illiberal and undemocratic. He thus concludes that pluralism in the past helps ensure political pluralism in the present. To ground his argument better, he compares two *ideal type* models of pluralistic democracies that differ in the implementation of the constitutional liberalism, the American and the French model. The American system is based on the pessimistic conception of human nature, assuming that people cannot be trusted with power, while quite the opposite, the French model places its faith in the goodness of human beings, assuming that once the people are the source of power, their power should be unlimited so that they can create a just society. He thus agrees with John Acton that the French revolution was not about the "limitation of sovereign power but the abrogation of all intermediate powers that get in its way", and contends that "most non-Western countries have embraced the French model, not least because political elites like the prospect of empowering the state, since that means empowering themselves, and most have descended into bouts of chaos, tyranny, or both. This should have come as no surprise. After all, since its revolution France itself has run through two monarchies, two empires, one proto-fascist dictatorship, and five republics".

Zakaria concludes that in countries not grounded in constitutional liberalism, the rise of democracy may bring hyper-nationalism and war-mongering. In an open political system groups with incompatible interests may gain access to power and insist on their demands. Political leaders can realize that to succeed they must rally the masses behind a national cause. The result is invariably aggressive rhetoric and policies, which often drag countries into confrontation and war, e.g. Napoleon III's France, Wilhelmine Germany, Taisho Japan or Milosevic's Serbia.

Although in different context and with completely the opposite conclusions of Wallerstein's, Fareed Zakaria advises that 'the absence of free and fair elections should be viewed as one flaw, not the definition of tyranny. Elections are an important virtue of governance, but they are not the only virtue. Governments should be judged by yardsticks related to constitutional liberalism as well. Economic, civil, and religious liberties are at the core of human autonomy and dignity'. He thus underlines that there exist some degrees even in democratic systems. The endangering of *constitutional liberalism* is worse crime than holding flawed elections.

Zakaria's arguments can be criticised from several aspects. He overlooks, for instance that the American model of constitutional liberalism is only an *ideal type* notion, implemented only gradually and slowly in the American history: not all human beings (the Afro-American population) have had

certain natural (or "inalienable") rights and were equal under the law. He, more importantly, misses to clarify the order of causes and consequences that lead to tyranny. Free and fair elections should *not* be viewed as one, but the crowning flaw of illiberal society. Free and fair elections should *not* be considered as possible cause for establishment of anti-constitutional government. Rather, we can assume that a party that already secured anti-constitutional power can organise or participate in flawed elections and legitimise its power further. When I say 'already secured' power, I mean not necessarily having the institutional power, but the popular support based on populist promises. Once in office, this kind of party can much easier perpetuate its power through organising unfair elections.

Zakaria's reasoning, however, is fruitful for at least two aspects: it underlines that there are degrees of endangering democracy and that centralisation of power and majoritarianism (as opposed to pluralism) should be observed as the prime anti-democratic practices.

Thus, while agreeing on most of his theory on democracy, I, however, do not agree with Wallerstein, in several points.

Firstly, Wallerstein neatly clarifies the distinction between democracy as rhetoric and democracy as realisation. He, however, does not go beyond the critique of this hypocritical process, inasmuch he is not clear with what *popular democracy* is or how it should be established, since he believes that democracy has still never been realised. Since, democracy should be a system in which the majority rules, this definition without the additional explanations for the protection of the minority rights, calls to mind ideas such as Rousseau's *General Will* or *Majority Will*, notions very close to populism. As such, I dismiss the realisation of the *General Will* as democracy, as it contains totalitarian inclinations. Wallerstein himself claims that the one-party systems of the 'second world' and the methods they used to enact 'equality' in their polities were false realisation of popular democracy. Each proponent of democracy should then acknowledge that even a largely egalitarian society, where the majority would bring the decisions, could not be a society without hierarchy or contest-free society. In reality group interests are always mediated by parties, as aggregators and articulators of interests. It thus follows that the majority could never rule differently than through representatives. What then is more important is how 'representative' these representatives are, how they are chosen, how their powers are confined to the interests of the electorate, etc. In order to avoid a situation in which the *majority* would take the form of a *mob* or Le Bon's *crowd* a political system should accept referenda and peaceful protests as the 'final say of the people', both of which are, however, anticipated by the polyarchic definition of democracy. Each definition of democracy should inevitably be founded on constitutionalism, which restrains the power of the majority and favours pluralism, active civil society and decentralised power.

Secondly, and closely related to the first point, Wallerstein's critique, probably unintentionally, seems to rhetorically position the *civil rights* only as complementary to the *economic rights* or the economic equality. Arrighi's critique of the modernisation theory also concentrates on the distribution of income as the main indicator of world inequalities. This reasoning forces us to think of the underprivileged as the one who are 'only hungry for bread, but not for justice'. All the more so the distinction between civil and economic rights is not always clear cut and they usually reinforce each other, as the study of Amartya Sen's *Development as Freedom* (2000) demonstrates. Each definition of democracy should thus explicitly link procedural democracy with civil and economic rights together.

Considering the few disagreements with Wallerstein's concepts of democracy I would, hence, combine Halperin's procedural definition of democracy and MacPherson's definition of democracy as system focused on civil and economic rights in my concept of democratic rule. In this study democracy will be regarded as a governance system founded on institutions that foster shared distribution of power, in which leaders are selected through free and fair elections and where citizens have extensive opportunities to participate in political and economic life, with final end of establishing an egalitarian kind of society with equal opportunities for all members of the society.

What can be then endangered by (right-wing) populism is what *already* exists (polyarchy), but also what *could* exist: clear division of the three branches of government (constitutionalism and pluralism), the peaceful replacement of ineffective politicians through deliberation and fair elections, the extended opportunities to participate in political decision-making, and extended opportunities to participate in the economic life and to improve the standards of living (right to competitive education, employment opportunities, benefits of established state welfare-system). This concept of democracy reconciles dynamic and static, political and socio-economic, present and probable, polyarchic and popular forms of democracy. It appeals for pluralistic, participative and deliberative governance which tends to build a kind of society based on merits as opposing concept of society based on ascribed criteria of social stratification or inherited privileges like property or citizenship.

Democracy and Populism

The political theory on populism reveals that populism is quite an ambiguous notion. Nohlen and Schultze (1998, 518) distinguish three different meanings associated with 'populism': politics which is judged negatively or positively; populism as a social-political movement that concentrates on masses of people (national populism) or on a single politician as leaders; and populism as a political strategy of mobilisation and unification (Reisigl, 2008, 102). It can be generalised that the notion of the people as nation is especially linked with right-wing populism and national populism; the people as class (in socio-economic sense) is especially linked with left-wing populism; and the notion of the people as political sovereign is especially linked with a type of populism most likely to be compatible with democracy (Reisigl, 2008, 103).

It has been vehemently debated in the literature if populism has its own ideology and program or is only a discursive style. Reisigl (2008, 102) suggests that "populism does not constitute an ideology in the classical sense. It consists of syncretic combination of heterogeneous and theoretically inconsistent elements. It relates to political representation and it is a political style in a sense of a complex syndrome and functional way of political expression or articulation". However, Frckovski (2014, 2) claims that in line with thinkers such as Laclau, Mouffe, and Panizza among others, "it is a question of consistent ideology of populism, which can be politically conceptualized and which has several key elements of self-creation and several key rhetoric of criticism towards the institutions of parliamentary (representative, liberal) democracy; these elements and rhetoric are constant and can

be singled out in all characteristic cases of populism in all political spectrums". According to Frckovski, if we understand ideology as a coherent collection of ideas, which offer basis for political action, usually aiming at maintaining or challenging the balance of powers, including the assessment of the existing order, projection of a new ideal order and the way of the realisation of the same, then "populism is determined as ideology according to the manner in which it constructs the notion of "the people"; afterwards, populism leans entirely on "the people" and, according to its own beliefs, it finally "generates people who are reborn" (*Ibid.*). From this definition follows that populism is not a temporary political episode, tactics or communication style, but a well elaborated and planned political platform with concrete goals. What is crucial for the definition of populism, is then, the construction of the 'people', the link of these 'people' to the new, 'unpolitical' leadership and the 'direct' participation of the sovereign 'people' into the decision-making processes, circumventing the elites and their procedures. Thus, the populist leaders are the key of the populist programs. They constantly refuse to be defined as 'politicians', but rather as a 'common man', one from the people (and for the people), but with special features and mission. In this sense, some of the populist practices do not deny democracy per se; but still, such practices refute the present organizational form of democracy – representative, liberal parliamentary democracy. According to the populist stance, representative democracy needs a revival, restoration, rebirth (remorse – redemption), and not a mere replacement. According to populists, democracy is in essential crisis, because of the corruption of the representational process and its participants – the elites, who do not represent anybody now, but themselves and the close oligarchy around them (Frckovski, 2014, 3). This implies popular action, intermediated by special leadership, to owe back democracy by clashing with the elites and their structures of power. Therefore, an indispensable feature of populism is sowing antagonism.

Hence, the basic feature of the authoritarian populism, and a feature by which one can clearly identify and differentiate this phenomenon, is its attack on the independent institutions of constitutionalism (the Constitution). This is exactly what Zakaria warns us about, the blurring of the lines between the executive, legislative and judicial branches of the government. According to Frckovski (2014, 12) in Macedonia, compared to the similar other Western Balkan regimes a separate devastating attack is made and has been completed on the judiciary: 'the judiciary is completely under the ruling party influence and is very unqualified, not by chance. The Constitutional Court of the country has also been a special target of such devastation'. Interesting feature of this populism is the production of a enormous number of laws, a 'legal fog'. This legislation is often internally controversial – but this has been done so intentionally. In such situation of general in clarity and contingency, the interpretation and application of the laws is completely in the hands of the administration and the government. Thus, the presumption of the citizens' innocence has been removed. Frckovski (2014) names this 'a Kafkaesque situation' where 'everybody is potentially guilty, because the law is probably violated by somebody somewhere, but his guilt has still not been processed and is so at the mercy of the administration when it will be done so'. To fascinate its citizens with 'western' methods of law enforcement, 100 Euro fines for throwing cigarette butts on a public place were introduced and citizens were fervently penalised.

Another feature of the authoritarian populism, closely related to the attack on the constitutionalism, is the regimes' disbelief in elections. Authoritarian populism uses elections only to come on power and once power has been grasped, only for its own legitimisation. It is fascinating that this populism is in fact obsessed with elections and turns all political public life into constant election campaign and

election issue. Frckovski names this phenomenon an 'election paradox'. The governing party, for instance, was advertising the alleged achievements of its program in a election-campaign-format, on the national TV service and out of pre-election periods or it put large stickers reading 'a donation of the government of Macedonia' on the newly purchased public buses. This campaigning was, moreover, centred on the vilification of the opposition, as much as on the self-promotion. As such, the authoritarian populism still treats elections as artefact of democracy and pluralism, one that endangers the illusion of homogeneity of the reborn nation. Essentially, the authoritarian populism believes only in verification of itself and its policies through elections and in nothing else, especially not in the plurality of opinions and alternatives. Therefore, it routinely abuses the police at elections, abuses the electoral lists or blackmails the -always increasing number of- administration employees at the elections (Frckovski, 2014, 13).

Since its policies were defined as simulacrum, imagined – eclectic synthesis of left-wing and right-wing approaches- these policies depend heavily on their presentation to the public through the media and not on their accomplishment. Therefore, the media is the key to the populist policy and its implementers getting and maintaining power. In such context, the media becomes 'a constitutive part of the organisation of power of the authoritarian populism' and not just its instrument as until now' (Frckovski, 2014, 10). In the case of the antiquisation policy in general, and "Skopje 2014" in particular, the creation of loyal media outlets and the pressure on the independent or anti-government media has become as normal as in the communist regimes, which this government so fiercely attacks. The role of the media in legitimising the regime's policies is of crucial importance for the general public acceptance.

Importantly, right-wing populist parties' success also depends on performance strategies in modern media democracies (Wodak and Forchtner, 2014, 237). This implies the extensive use of the media (press and TV, new media such as comics, homepages, websites, Facebook, Twitter and so forth, which Wodak labels as *fictionalisation of politics*. The trends of *personalisation* and *commodification* in politics, in addition, underpin the focus on 'charismatic' leaders: 'leading populist politicians employ front stage performance techniques which are frequently linked to popular celebrity culture: they oscillate between self-presentations as Robin Hood (i.e. saviour of 'the man and woman in the street') and self-presentations as 'rich, famous and/or attractive' (i.e. an 'idol'). Thus, a 'softer' image has been recently created – at least on front stage'. Wodak's analytical study of the Austrian populist leader Strache, emphasises that right-wing populist politicians are 'well trained as media personalities', 'they exhibit youth, they are handsome, fit and well dressed', shortly: 'they assume the habitus of serious statesmen and stateswomen'. Gingrich (2002) states, that 'such leaders can dress and behave like 'a man/woman for all seasons', carefully preparing their performance in front of different audiences. Their rhetoric and programmatic proposals are heavily context-dependent. This implies a specific selection of meeting places (beer tents, pubs, discos), the clothes they wear (from suits to casual leather jackets, T-shirts or folklore dress), and the selection of accompanying 'performers' on stage, the music, posters and logos on display, and so forth (Wodak and Forchtner, 2014). In this context, Gruevski, indeed 'communicates' with the 'ordinary citizens' per Facebook, in most of his public appearances he wears only a sweater, the average age of his first cabinet of ministers was slightly above 30 (unseen before in Macedonian politics), he indeed employs entertaining format during TV election-campaigns and New Year's addressing to the nation, hosts of TV-shows regularly refer to him with 'you' in a singular form. Similarly, a recently made documentary

serial in 34 episodes on the 'Macedonian history' from the Neolithic period until today begins with a long introduction and long sequences in the genre of *comics*.

The performances of the right-wing populists are embedded in networks of narratives, narratives about the past (of the country, the party, the leader, etc.) which go beyond profane interests but enable emotional bonds (Eder, 2010: 431). According to Wodak (2014, 238) 'constructing a scenario in which people vote for a party thus demands the construction of an entire story which links people (the leader of the party with potential voters), the contemporary situation (be it the city/country or a particular meeting place) as well as the historically existing meanings (stored in the collective memories of groups)'.

As argued earlier, since the populist forces in the society are not capable of avoiding the elections altogether, they mock them, change the rules. I agree with Frckovski then that the most dangerous element of the authoritarian populism in the Balkans in sociological, psychological and political context is its ability to create 'its own people' (to change the matrix of political pluralism and so not to depend on the free will of the voters, but to create "its own voters" as such, one who constantly have only one aim or desire). Differently from the one-party systems where elections were held but there was no real competition between parties, in this system oppositional parties do exist and free elections as such as well, but the elections are not possible to be won by any other party but the ruling one, since the majority of the votes, is one way or another, already 'secured' by the governing party.

Hence, if we assume that populism is a dimension of politics, and its quintessence is the construction and giving sense to the notion of "people", such sense that has never existed before and does not coincide with similar concept – this assumption can then be built further on the view of Foucault that the collective memory of the people is "subject to fight for control..., memory control in the people and groups is social control..., controlling the memory and deciding what such memory contains determine the dynamism of a nation..." (Frckovski, 2014). Thus the implementation of its own memory as dominant in the new identity of its own people is the core of the populism. A very eclectic and pragmatic fusion of narratives is thus produced telling how sovereignty has been lost in favour of corrupted elites, how the sovereignty was stolen and the people were cheated – exactly such competitive memory becomes the prime political tool of the populist narrator. A 'zero point' in history is fabricated, where the contemporary sovereignty and nation-state were founded, and where the sovereignty was initially transferred to the representative elites, thereby founding democracy (in a pluralist form). The people or the community then feel sorry for such loss, for the 'genuine' togetherness. 'This sentiment then spins the political knitting of the identity of the people – how they see themselves, what they want, whom they support, how they fight (Frckovski, 2014, 5).

No doubt, this is a powerful message and mobilizing creed, although the final unity of the people is an illusion (just as a classless or society without hierarchy is). Nevertheless, appealing to the people is very efficient, especially in situation of socio-economic crisis and collective existential fear based on a combination of real and exaggerated threat to the nation. Hence, as in the populist ideology, "their people" is perceived as organic unity, problems dividing the people, the whole pluralism, and especially the representative elites from the opposition, but also from its own government, are put aside; these elites are entirely portrayed as corrupted political class. The epicentre of political antagonism and clash with the status quo is thus shifted from the democratic pluralism to a new level – the new people and their leaders versus all the rest (Frckovski, 2014, 6).

As presented earlier, this populism promotes the story of the fear of unity lost by combining two controversial myths: *the heroic myth* and *the myth of the victim*. *Raison d'être* of these myths is the discontinuity in narrating of history, by selectivity and skipping of periods. From antiquity to today, Macedonians were victims of various nations and after a long period of suffering the victory under the new leadership of the populist leader is again launched. According to Frckovski (2014, 7) 'such transformation of the political discourse and rhetoric aimed at the collective phantasms is experienced by the people as "cultural revolution" and collective catharsis, unpunished outburst of xenophobia, hatred, demonization, while multiculturalism, for example, is signified as a fraud made by the intellectuals and imposed by them'.

Here comes to the fore a crucial element of the authoritarian populism, the importance of the (charismatic, although not necessarily) leader: the masses of people are politically activated and organized by appeal to the leader who is supposed to know what they want. The leader is the one helping the individual and the masses to become a subject, an actor. The masses need mediation in form of authority in order to move forward on the road of political action and defining what they actually want from politics and who they are (Frckovski, 2014, 8). It can be argued then, that it is not possible to carry out such political mobilization without the role of the authority, either in emancipative or in manipulative direction. 'The power of the populist ideology lies in this point. It is not found in the content of its political program that is eclectic, rather in the manner of approaching the relationship leader-people-direct action, in shaping the political identity of the newly constructed people and their desires. The basic action and only dynamics of such constructed people, under the leadership of such lonely leader, is to search and exterminate domestic and foreign state enemies' (*Ibid*). The rest of the political life is reduced to tranquillity and *status quo* of the regime. The people are forced to be in constant spasm and state of caution and intimidation about some foreign conspiracy, to "withstand until the very end" as if it was normal that all others are against them, as if there were some kind of historical curse and destiny. The people are forced to wait for some unclear better moment in the future – that will free them and so make them a harmonious and united people (Frckovski, 2014, 14). In Macedonian circumstances, the people are constantly offered conspiracies between the domestic and the foreign enemies - the opposition parties are portrayed as domestic enemy, trying to 'sell the Macedonian name' to Greece for 'earthly', 'immoral' gain, the entrance to the EU. At the same time the population is not actively discouraged on the road to the Union, but is summoned to withstand until the very end for a better moment in the future to negotiate with Greece. According to Gruevski, because of the 'strategic mistakes' of the former government, the Macedonian position is now worse than the initial position, after the independence of the state.

In this context, the populism from the Balkan countries seems cleverer and slyer than similar historical examples have been. This type of populism develops what Frckovski labels as undemocratic proceduralism, authoritarian or empty proceduralism. The populist government adopts pro-European legislative on national level without implementing it. In other words, it creates double reality. The normative fog of pro-European legislation serves as a show-room to foreigners, while simultaneously there exists a cosmos of subrules, namely subrules that actually are more important and serve to solve the essential problems of the citizens (the actual reality): 'these subrules say who is the boss, where in the ruling party one should apply to solve some personal problem, and how to interpret the rules to the foreigners (mostly, not to take them seriously)' (Frckovski, 2014, 11-12). The author claims further that the ability of the leaders of such populism to draw European money from various funds and aid grants for local legislative projects, and at the same time to remain

unchanged and strengthen their local authoritarian power, makes them cynical towards European values of pluralism, and they even openly call for the legitimacy of such political program/fraud. Finally, the “positive” reports made by EU on such countries are especially bizarre. In the effort to assist such countries in their EU accession process, the Union ends up in grotesque situation and factually assist the system of authoritarianism with “European money”.

Thus Frckovski concludes that the local rulers from Western Balkan sell their politics surprisingly well to the Eurocrats, with whom they are mutually working on the enlargement policy of the Union. They seem to find the right point in the EU policy towards the region: security before democracy, or *stabilocracy*, ‘offered by the authoritarian local rulers to the Eurocrats, in exchange for EU tolerance for violation of human rights and demolition of the rule of law in their own countries!’ This perplexes the voters in Macedonia. This inconsistency is manifested as hypocrisy and creates dissatisfaction and disappointment in the Union as democratic alternative. This finally results in disconnection with the ‘EU values’ as shown by the public polls.

We can, therefore, hypothesise that authoritarian populism is internally realised through identity change (creating its ‘own people’ with distinct community spirit and values), but it is externally cemented through links with the transnational capital (increased turn-over of money in the national economy without benefit for the majority) and the negligence of the supranational structures which monitor and control the region. Hence, it is crucial to understand the correlation between the success of the populist regimes and their identity and developmental policies in inter-national settings. In other words, it is important to understand how such populist project as “Skopje 2014” could have been realised on the doorstep of ‘Europe’ as response to the dominant cultural and geo-political currents in the world-system. It is assumed here that the core units of the system hold the definition power of the world affairs through their own interpretation of the global order.

Based in Eurocentrism, and later in Occidentalism, Weber’s theory of culture (assuming in his *Protestant Ethic West’s* unique valuation of rationality as key for its exceptional development) and Rostow’s (1960) theory of modernisation have been the most widely accepted theories on global socio-economic inequalities among sociologist in the last century. They served as foundations for successive modifications of the modernisation argument. Basic features of these theories are to take the nation-states as units of analysis independent from the world-system and to assume linear and teleological progress, which began on the West and disperses in the rest of the ‘traditional’ world. The social scientists, who are very often advisors of the political elites of the core countries of the capitalist world-system, have insisted on the ‘West versus the Rest’ dichotomy in explaining the difference in wealth and progress between the West and the rest of the world. On the terrain these views have translated into mixture of policies towards the particular regions of the world, in accordance with the practical goals of the core units of the system. Each national government, and especially the more radical, populist one, have reacted to this dominant interpretation of the world affairs in different, yet similar way, framed by the opportunities offered by the neo-liberal economic system. I will analyse “Skopje 2014” as a masterpiece of a populist regime, as an entanglement of identity and developmental policies ‘giving an answer’ to the challenges of globalisation.

National identity and Democracy

Insistence on West-Rest dichotomy

According to Quijano (2000a, 543 cited in Boatca, 2015), the worldwide propagation of Eurocentrism relied on two foundational myths, evolutionism, the notion that the human civilisation proceeded in a linear and unidirectional way from nature to Western civilisation in several stages, and dualism, between Europeans and the 'Others' in terms primitive -civilised, irrational -rational, traditional -modern. In line with Quijano, Boatca argues (2015, 115) that these two elements have formed the several successive global designs, managed from Europe: Christian mission (juxtaposing Christian vs. Barbarian), Civilising mission (Civilised vs. Primitive), Developmental mission (developed vs. Underdeveloped), Global Market mission (Democratic vs. Undemocratic).

After the end of the World War I the evolutionist element of Eurocentrism has been delegitimized, as linear progress based on reason could not continue. The end of the World War II, on the other hand, meant actual decolonisation and delegitimation of biological racism, or shaking the foundations of the second element, the dualism. Inequality among racial and ethnic groups then has recourse to a naturalised notion of culture. Countries were treated as 'closed entities with incompatible sets of values and norms that situated them on irreconcilable temporal stages in a linear process of socio-economic evolution' (Boatca, 2015, 104). This marked an obvious shift from differentiation based on race to the one based on ethnicity, without however, altering the West-Rest paradigm. It was a shift from comprehension of modernity as a *process* to modernity as *civilisation*. This paradigm entailed new hierarchy within the world-system, the one among ethnicities.

Both, the theory of modernisation and Weber's cultural theory have seen the 'innate traditionalism' of the underdeveloped world as a 'natural' explanation for the difference in wealth and progress between the West and the rest of the world. This is yet a modified racial theory, which fuels right-wing argumentations, and is base for nativistic, stereotypical discrimination and xenophobia, typical for its proponents. These theories silence the explanation that the West developed at least partially, if not mostly, dependant on the unequal relationships with the rest of the world. It sees the non-Western modernities as mere extension of the Western one.

This world-view is reflected in the European Project further, especially in the EU's enlargement policy. After appropriating the label 'Europe' only for the members of the Union, the EU continued its expansion with 'Europeanisation' of the rest of Europe, as tautological as it may seem. Based on Weber's theory of culture, Huntington has explained the conflicts in the post Cold-War era are based on consistent differences in culture or civilisation. Huntington theorised that beyond the 'Iron Curtain' there still exists the so called 'Velvet Curtain of Culture'. This curtain clearly separates Eastern Europe (with Ottoman and Byzantine heritage) from Western Europe (allegedly incorporating legacies of the Greek and Roman civilisations, and further advanced during the Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution). The theory supposes that Eastern Europe was only 'lightly touched from these events'. According to Huntington, after the collapse of the communist project on the east, this line should have been used to determinate which countries are eligible for EU membership, namely those with Catholic heritage. However, critics have pointed out in the shortcomings of this reasoning. Boatca (2015, 219) thus claims that 'instead of treating them as structural positions on a continuum of power constantly renegotiated throughout the European

history, Huntington's model freezes the inequalities of economic and political power around the year 1500 into immutable cultural essences forever divided by civilisational fault lines', thereby reviving old racist stereotypes and prompting new one. Also, within the EU, the countries of the Iberian Peninsula, or the first colonial powers with declining importance today, have been marked as 'decadent Europe' and the countries of the Balkans as 'imitative Europe'. This shows that although seemingly acceptive, the core countries of EU have not missed the opportunity to build inner hierarchy within the 'club'. The study of Rovisco (2010) on the narratives of Europe in France and Britain highlights the contest (fought through symbolic classifications) for the label 'core Europeans' even between countries within the 'heroic Europe'. This clearly demonstrates that 'core' and 'periphery' states are temporary positions, and in accordance with the world-system analysis theory, subject to 'continual struggle to gain or stay in the higher reaches' (Arrighi, 2002).

Nevertheless, imagining a culturally and historically consistent Europe prompts the idea that this unique civilisation has influenced the modernisation of the other civilisations, especially of the bordering. We should bear on mind, however, that before the 'Eastern Enlargement' the member states of the EU were the former colonial powers, who in the wars between each other lost total control of their possessions, which led to the 'transformation of the strictly national colonial projects into a joint European colonisation' (Hansen and Jonsson, 2011). Understanding 'Europe' as unique entity they hold the 'definition power necessary for imposing that representation as a valid both to the in-group and the targeted out-groups' (Boatca, 2014, 216). Setting the mission to 'Europeanise' Eastern Europe, formerly European countries as Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania, were treated as if they are semi-European. Thus, the moving frontiers of 'Western Europe' have gradually monopolised the label of 'Europe' only for the member states of the EU, 'with profound identity politics of the excluded countries' (Boatca, 2014, 214). In sum, the European Project reintroduces dualism and gradual evolution (through reform) in its program for enlargement.

Eastern Europe and the Balkans

In her 1995 *Nesting orientalism* Bakic-Hayden demonstrate exactly how the belonging to the Union has profoundly influenced the identity politics of the excluded countries. The most north republics of former Yugoslavia, Slovenia and Croatia, in line with Huntington's reasoning, believed that because of their Hapsburg heritage they are qualified to join Europe. This image has been endorsed by the western media when these republics were presented in the news as 'industrious Roman Catholic Slavs' juxtaposed to 'those for the most part Eastern Orthodox or Muslims' republics Bakic-Hayden (1995, 923). The later were also marked as 'Yugoslavia with southern 'Balkan burden'. Serbia has thus labelled itself as 'the last barrier to the ongoing onslaught and aggression of Islam' in the contemporary Europe, recalling the sufferings of the Ottoman past and the current threats of the Albanian minority. A study of Neofotistos (2008) also finds that 'the Macedonian Self is construed as closer to "the West" and superior to its 'Albanian Other', which is construed as closer to "the Orient" and inferior'. Neofotistos also pointed to another peculiarity of the Macedonian reasoning: according

to the former Prime Minister Buckovski, Macedonia is assigned an interstitial position on the Balkans: it is neither part of “the Balkans” - because it has managed to escape violence and adhere to the principle of inter-ethnic cooperation since 2001- nor part of “the West”, because it is not a full member of NATO and the EU. Thus Macedonia has the potential to become Western country, or it is the ‘Balkan’s Other within’. We can then easily imagine how this ‘matryoshka effect’ has worked out in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where Bosnians with Croat-Catholic-, Serbian-Orthodox- and Bosnian-Muslim heritage cohabit.

I consequently agree with Boatca (2015, 221): ‘The fact that the theory and practice of the EU’s ‘eastern enlargement’ act as an ‘orientalising tool’ becomes apparent in the fact that, for now, the last countries to have achieved admission into the EU should be Romania, Bulgaria, and Croatia, and that among the last to be negotiating it should be Macedonia, Serbia, and Montenegro’. Turkey, on the other hand, is an applicant for more than thirty years, and it does not seem any closer to the Union now than when it applied for membership.

As Todorova (1997) argued, in line with the logic of imperial and colonial difference, the Balkan is not ‘an incomplete Other’ but ‘incomplete Self’ of Europe, because it is white, Christian, but semi-oriental, semi-civilised, semi-developed, imitative and catching-up. Thus ‘Balkanism’ differs from ‘Orientalism’ in the degree of sovereignty and likeness to the Western ideals. Ottoman ‘oriental’ legacy is accordingly represented as an anathema which held countries, or the region, away from progress and prosperity. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the European shaping of the Balkan states’ institutions and legislations, as well as political and cultural identities, Romania, Croatia, Greece and others have marked themselves as the ‘bulwark of Christianity’. The countries used many metaphors such as ‘return to Europe’, ‘liberation from Balkan darkness’, or more recently, and this is common with almost each Eastern European country, they portrayed themselves as ‘bridge between West and East’.

While downplaying their ‘Easternness’, sharing in Western privileges thus appears a more urgent task than pointing out the power asymmetries within the pan-European political and economical structures (Boatca, 2015, 224). In this context, „Skopje 2014” is a demonstrative case. In the struggle with Greece about the Macedonian heritage, “Skopje 2014”, as a masterpiece of the antiquisation policy aimed at reasserting Macedonia as cradle of Western civilisation, is even repositioning Hellenism as a successor of the newly invented ‘Macedonism’. Being ‘descendants of Alexander’ gives the Macedonians right to be recognised as legitimate Westerners and members of the EU family, while being Slavs would impose them to accept that they are ‘only a second class Europeans’- this is the type of reasoning that could be expected from the mastermind of the Project.

Other actors in identity and development politics (transnational non-state elites)

Differently from the established western European nation-states, the post-communist states had double challenge to establish identity domestically and internationally. During the Cold War the

'second world' tried to catch-up the 'first' one by becoming a second core of the industrial world and eventually to become the leader in development. After the crisis of 1989, however, the West was reestablished as the locus of superior science, technology and ideas. The countries of CEE were supposed to undergo a linear transformation from state-command economies to free market ones, and from authoritarian one-party systems to liberal democracies. The logic of the 'transition' was thus used not only in political and economic spheres of life, but also in the post-communist national identity construction, summarised as 'the transition between shameful and desired identity' (Ditchev, 2000 as cited in Kaneva, 2012). Western consultants such as the IMF, World Bank, USAID recommended 'shock therapy', a call for rapid privatisation of state enterprises, liberalisation of the prices, slashing of social services, opening of the financial and trade systems. The only path to democratisation was the 'modernisation by imitation'. Along these strategies, the nation-branding rationale was exported into the region. The advertising gurus or the image experts became active in negotiating over national identity within the branding framework; they become intermediaries between the world audience and the political elites/local population. The countries had a chance to 'tell their story' helped by the transnational distribution networks.

Alongside the political actors, then, economic and media actors have penetrated the new states with demands for liberalisation and new type of identity management with final goal economic profit. Simon Anholt, the supreme authority on and advocate of nation-branding claims that 'countries have to play the market rules just as companies do, like it or not. Otherwise they are doomed to fail' (Sussman, 2012, 30). States find their place in the world economy by competing with one another to become a desirable destination for capital. The application of marketing and branding techniques can be a powerful force for global wealth distribution and cultural as well economic development. For realisation of their agendas the branding agencies relied heavily on their ability to gain the support of the local political elites and state bureaucracies. The principal objectives of nation-branding are concerned with attracting investment and encourage trade and tourism. 'The trade and investment designs clearly point to small class of transnational executives seeking networked profit opportunities through ties with local compradors who are likely to engage in corrupt practices to secure the relationship. Tourist oriented branding is 'conducted from uneven power bases as encoded in commodified identities' fortifying hegemonies of class, race, and gender (Sussman, 2012, 42). Phrases as "Malaysia - truly Asia" or "Incredible India" are not foreign to any 'adventure-seekers' in the western hemisphere. Branding, however, is regarded as one, probably the crowning neoliberal reform as precondition for attracting foreign capital: 'Having a country brand is necessary but not enough; there must be infrastructure, a skilled workforce, favourable tax policies and returns on investment', claims Szondi (2007) one of the most demanded 'country reputation managers'. Szondi thus argues that 'for countries whose image is better than reality (Poland, Czech Republic, Romania), the challenge is to transform their superior image into concrete investment projects, while for countries such as Hungary, who score higher on reality than on image, to improve their perception on the market (*Ibid*, 15). From EU perspective branding also serves to modify historic nationalism, particularly in Eastern European states, therefore 'contributing greatly to the further pacification of Europe (van Ham, 2001). It also forces these nations to compete between each other for supremacy, which bolsters their entrepreneurial and free market spirit.

The realisation of the national campaigns, yet, relied heavily on the distinction East/West. In these conditions the eastern countries have produced and reproduced (internalised) the so called *self-colonisation* or the self-exoticisation due to their desire to 'return to Europe'. They had to resist the

Western tendency to lump all post-communist states together into an unknown, but instantly recognisable whole (mixing e.g. Moldova/Macedonia, Latvia/Lithuania, Slovenia/Slovakia) and the Cold War ideological orientations and stereotyping, marking, for instance, Russia not as *post-Soviet* but as *former-Soviet* (Saunders, 50). Estonia, on the other hand, labelled itself not as post-Soviet but as *pre-EU* state. In a form of “crypto-colonialism” (Neofotistos, 2012), even the old member of the EU, Greece, has struggled to position itself as ‘authentically European’. Although it has never formally been a Western colony, Greece nonetheless has been economically dependent on the West and constructed its national culture and history in ways that suit Western models (*ibid.*). Regarding the *self-exoticisation* strategy, Romania, for example, has embraced the Dracula myth and Macedonia the ancient Macedonian myth. Although they are officially fighting against, they more often reinforce the Western stereotypes of the James Bond and Indiana Jones movies. The Central and Eastern Europe region had, therefore, the fastest advertising growth rate in the world according to *World Media 2007* (Kaneva, 2012).

Critics have indicated to other pitfalls in the nation-branding rationale. According to Kaneva (2012, 10) branding is a neo-liberal tool that creates value through the commodification of affective attachments. Through the magic of branding, individual and collective loyalties enter into market circulation as symbolic capital and work to generate economic capital, which allows for extraction of economic profit from all the realms of life, including areas of experience that were relatively independent from the market in the era of industrial capitalism. This is the other side of the coin of the nation-branding. National identity is sold and bought just as any other product. While it allows the nations to present themselves ‘in the best light’, it dictates the carriers of the national identity to *internalise* the story they sell. This leads us back to the democratic debate.

Anholt (2007, cited in Kaneva 2014) assures us that a brand-led approach to public affairs is inherently democratic, because it ensures a fair contest between the private and the public bodies of the state with the domestic and foreign publics. Van Ham (2001) also argues that nation-branding is a necessary response to the changing rules of international relations shaped by shift in political paradigms, a move from the world of geopolitics and power to the postmodern world of images and influence. Nevertheless, for the realisation of the brand-led approach to public affairs, presented as ‘inherently democratic’, Anholt (2003) advocated tight, hierarchical control over the brand, ‘making sure that every single message that comes out of a country...plays unerringly on the same basic themes’. He draws an analogy to the ‘despotic management styles’ involved in corporate branding and warns that unless nations can develop ‘the same single-minded sense of purpose and control’ their branding efforts are ‘doomed to fail’ (*ibid.*). Moreover, critics have pointed out that nation-branding is a ‘successful mechanism for transferring public funds and authority into private hands. It thereby contributes to advancing and naturalising market fundamentalism’ (Jansen, 2012, 93).

Finally, nation-branding ignores historical foundations of the state, as it silences critique of the social relations and views of the subaltern voices. It does not allow for the citizens to play a significant civic role in the branding process. Branding *per se* can only simplify and homogenise by offering images which mask inequalities, current conflicts, lack of political freedom and decline of social services. It is hierarchical and reductive form of communication intended to privilege one message, and requires, insofar as possible, that all the voices of authority speak in unison, while marginalising dissenting voices (Jansen, 92). Thus, Singapore with its rigid media censorship and authoritative government ranks as number one global nation brand on the *East West Communications Global Index 200*. Nation-branding trivialises public discourse, reduces history and culture and thereby fosters anti-

intellectualism, astonishingly similar to the right-wing populist narration. Kerrigan *et al.* (2012, 324) study on the reception of the “Incredible India” brand reveals that the Indian citizens find it as an ‘acceptable projection of India sought by the western tourists but also as a fantastic regressive image, which fails to incorporate the modern India that embraces technology and progress’.

Another interesting case and a school-example of failed strategy is Estonia. To convey to investors in highly regulated economies of Western Europe Estonia has constructed an image of a capitalist heaven where western companies can escape business regulations, strong labour unions and high taxes. In this campaign many socio-political issues were silenced, e.g. the segregation of the Russian minority, the lowest life expectancy for men in Europe, highest HIV/AIDS rate in EU, widest wage gap. Once it joined the NATO and the EU Estonia reflected on these issues and the internal plea for social justice. Due to the rising social contradictions it has been predicted that it will take 15-20 years for Estonia to implement the EU standards of social policy. This projection predates the worldwide recession which hit Estonia much harder than any EU state: Estonia’s GDP has declined 15% between June 2008 and June 2009 (Jansen, 87), which can be directly linked to the US-like-liberalisation and foreign credit indebtedness.

In another case of alleged democracy, the citizens were invited to participate in the creation of the Slovenian brand over the internet. Where once the invocation was to *participate in nation building*, in the new millennia this has given way to the injunction to *share in nation branding* (Volcic, 159). This has created a unique situation from the perspective of the citizens, because the nation-branding has two audiences, the external, enticed to spend or invest in the given country, and the internal, which is supposed to form the empowerment of the brand, to maximise the resources available to them, thus promoting *commercial nationalism* for the sake of profit. Volcic (160) argues that ‘offloading the labour of building brand identity onto the populace means assigning them the responsibility for its success and their own (success)-and making the link between the two’. The market thus becomes a dominant platform not only for participation in a culture of exchange, but also for political participation in a democratic, national public sphere (Ibid). In this way the citizen is forced to become a consumer and to treat one’s national identity as something to which the consumer has the individualised, choice-based relationship associated with consumption (Volcic, 158). Shortly, it forces the citizens to calculate with their identity, to think how they can capitalise on the merchandising of who they are.

This notwithstanding, nations with happy and well-cared-for citizens do not need branding since their well-being speaks for itself. Other cases, such as Ukraine and Georgia, demonstrate that branding has no lasting impact on democracy, especially after leadership is found suspected in corruption and abuse of power. It also has no enduring effect on development, as demonstrated through the case of Estonia.

As mentioned before, “Skopje 2014” was legitimised to the Macedonian public as a nation-branding venture. In this way too, nation-branding would allow the government to claim, and domestically profit from, the mediating role in relation to international political and economic structures. Not surprisingly, foreign spectators were presented as the key audiences of the project. Expensive promotion in leading transnational media, such as *CNN* followed just after the erecting of the most important structures of the project, supported by a series of videos named “Macedonia Timeless”. Considering, however, the type of government that stood behind the project and the time of its realisation (following the non-invitation to NATO), one can question the claim about the foreigners as

the desired consumers. Considering, as well, that no world-famous branding guru officially led the Project or that no star-architect was invited to take part in the revamp of the city-centre, which is typical for all similar projects around the world (Saadiyat Island and the cultural district in Abu Dhabi designed by star-architect Norman Foster (Ponzini, 2011) or the Beijing Olympic stadium designed by star-architects Herzog and de Meuron (Ren, 2008)), while spending more than a half billion Euros on it, already raises doubts. Since distinctive characteristic of a authoritarian populist regime is the circumvention of the fair competition for the running of the office, we can hypothesise that facing the possibility to be punished for 'not bringing Macedonia in Europe', the regime decided to 'bring Europe home' with the baroque facades and the 'cradle of Western civilisation and Christianity' narratives expressed in the project. So many monuments build, so monumental sculptures erected, so much money spent at the same time, could not be perceived differently then as demonstration of power to the domestic audience. It could only impress the supporters and frighten the opponents of the government.

Constructing national identity in neo-liberal conditions

The construction of the new nation-state needs a founding myth, a narrative of the historical events which brought the citizens to the present state. Narratives of the common past and the use of symbols have become the cornerstones of the nation-state's myth-making, meant to produce mass loyalty among the citizens and enabling the state to become the dominant political institution in modern times. This collection of stories calls to mind ideas of struggle and perseverance, righteousness and compromise, integrity and fate, all supposedly describing the journey towards today's success and the character of those who made this success possible (Zaiotti, 2010).

Thus, these narratives are constitutive of imagined communities (Anderson, 1988), and substance of the discursive construction of national identities (Wodak *et al.*, 1999). The founding myths and the reconstruction and imaginaries of the collective experiences form a part of the official past of every nation-state. According to Spinner-Halev (2008) a national identity gives people a strong sense of purpose as they build up state institutions; it encourages them to make the necessary sacrifices to do so. He argues, however, that it is difficult to see how republican citizenship can be implemented in new, democratizing states. Republicans want citizens to identify with the state, but the identity of newly emerging states is typically weak. He suggests then that the new democracies are on more secure ground if they can appeal to an identity apart from the state, which nationality readily supplies. It is doubtful, he argues, that the idea of good government is enough to motivate people to make such sacrifices in new democracies since the government is too young to be proven to be good. A new democratic state, he contends, has little or no history to teach in schools, but a history of the nation can be created and taught that reaches back into the mists of time. Such narratives are (re)produced through films, documentaries, political speeches and schoolbooks; moreover, they are also transferred into the private spheres of families and peer-groups (Wodak, 2007, 338).

The origin of these narratives and the identity they create is not clear in the social sciences. One school of thought states that identity is rooted in common culture, another in common history and/or memory. The first version is tending to essentialise the national identity as something given in the nature, existing prior to the government, while the second version insists on more dynamic, constructivist vision of the origins of the national identity, managed by the political elites.

Bernard Yack (2001), for instance, argues that the idea of popular sovereignty means that the sovereign people exist prior to the government. In line with this argument, Charles Taylor argues 'a sovereign people, in order to have the unity needed for collective agency, had already to have an antecedent unity or culture, history or (more often in Europe) language' (Taylor, 1999a, 141 as cited in Spinner-Halev, 2008, 605). However, modern social science leans more on the constructivist premise (Zaiotti (2010), Spinner-Halev (2008), Wodak (2007, de Cillia *et al.* (1999)). Yack and Taylor are mistaken to suggest that democracies must rest on a pre-political nation. This is sometimes the case, but a state or political organization fighting for independence can do much of the work to create that nation. In other words, nations and their identity might be pre-political, but they are more often a product of a politically articulated process. National identities will almost always have some cultural component, but rarely will national identity and national culture fully encompass one another (Spinner-Halev, 2008, 606-607).

I have thus taken as a starting point for my definition of national identity the Weber's definition of *ethnie*: "We shall call ethnic groups those human groups that entertain subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or costumes or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration. This belief must be important for the group formation; conversely, it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists. Ethnic members differ from the kinship group precisely by being a presumed identity"(Weber, 1978, 389).

It is clear that national and ethnic identities are not one and the same. What I find crucial in Weber's definition is that he takes the 'subjective, presumed belief' in commonalities as material for constructing a collective identity. Moreover, "Skopje 2014" was factually addressed only to the *ethnic* Macedonian majority of the nation by political elite evidently not prepared to contemplate on *national* identity.

Salazar goes even further by characterising the national identity with the "need for transcendence", "a desire for eternity", "a form of religion", which "links people not only with a present inhabited by other people they do not and could not possible know, but also with a past and a future"(Salazar, 1998, 120).

I therefore in this thesis treat national identity simply as a feeling of sameness with a group, based on subjective belief and symbolically (discursively) constructed in order to secure the reproduction of the nation-state and the position of the elites in the societal hierarchy through the loyalty of its subjects.

Even after two decades of its independence the Macedonian state has not commented its identity. "Skopje 2014" as such, was the first interpretation of the nation's past, and these interpretations, or the petrification of some narratives, will be treated in this study as a product of a political process of building a new nation. Its narrative had to be glorious, but many times, nation's past is also shameful, and 'has to be concealed'. Moreover, individual and collective memories do not overlap. Also, groups (as classes or *ethnies*) within the larger collective, the nation, have different interpretation of same

historic events. In the violent history of international affairs and the civil wars and repressions within the nation-states, memories are competing to become dominant.

Thus, different groups in the society compete for the one and only narrative which should become hegemonic. This has a major impact on the discursive construction of national identity and draws on a wide range of collective and individual memories. National narratives do not emerge from nowhere and do not operate in a vacuum, but are rather, produced, reproduced and diffused by actors in different, mainly institutional, contexts. A nation is a symbolic community constructed discursively (de Cillia *et al.*, 1999). Collective memories place people in a narrative, one that reaches from the past to the present and into the future, giving sense to our lives. Belonging to a group situates us in the world. It gives us a point of reference, and a point of pride (Spinner-Halev, 2008).

The construction of national identity, hence, builds on the emphasis on a common history, and history has always to do with remembrance and memory. Halbwachs's (1985) states that 'collective memory', is a selective recollection of past events which are thought to be important for the members of a specific community. Collective memory, according to Halbwachs, maintains historical continuity by recalling specific elements from the archive of 'historical memory'. Halbwachs's concept is particularly adequate for analytical approach to the subjective discursive construction of national identity, primarily concerning the question of whose 'national history' is told by a nation's citizens, what and how they recollect, and between which 'events' they make a connection in their subjective 'national narrative' (de Cillia *et al.*, 1999).

Collective memory, therefore, cannot be equated with history, although it is linked to it and has multiple effects on the future: 'History defines us just as we define history. As our identities and cultures evolve over time, we tacitly reconstruct our histories. By the same token, these new collectively defined historical memories help to provide identities for succeeding generations (Pennebaker and Banasik, 1997, 18 cited in Wodak and de Cillia, 2007, 338). The historical narratives are continuously discursively and visually (re)constructed, changing and shifting, due to contexts and diverse, often contradicting and conflicting, political interests (Wodak and de Cillia, 2007, 339). We cannot, therefore, speak of one single past or one unique narrative, but on the contrary, of many competing narratives which are products of different interests, confronting with each other for hegemonic position. Narratives are produced in a variety of public spheres; they interact and are recontextualized with the use of the media and in every day communication.

The national identity construction is always based on stories which relate the past, present and future in specific ways, a aspect which Denis Martin summarizes very concisely: 'To put it in a nutshell, the identity narrative channels political emotions so that they can fuel efforts to modify a balance of power; it transforms the perceptions of the past and of the present; it changes the organization of human groups and creates new ones; it alters cultures by emphasizing certain traits and skewing their meanings and logic. The identity narrative brings forth a new interpretation of the world in order to modify it (Martin, 1995: 13 cited in Wodak and de Cillia, 2007). Along this line of reasoning, Zelizer (1998, 3 cited in Wodak and de Cillia, 2007, 344) emphasizes that collective memories contribute to the definition of national identities as a creative and purposeful process that 'allows for the fabrication, rearrangement, elaboration, and omission of details about the past, often pushing aside accuracy and authenticity so as to accommodate broader issues of identity formation, power and authority, and political affiliation'.

Bearing this on mind, I would like to illustrate the deep societal conflicts and struggles surrounding the project “Skopje 20143” and the diverse efforts to reconcile with the past in independent Macedonia. Thus, I agree with Gronbeck (1998, 58) that collective memory is ‘an evoking of a past to frame a present but also to conform that past to the present’.

As in the case with other nations, there is no doubt that some narratives or ‘memories’ have been explicitly invented by the political elites (in the past and in the present) and later become a marrow of the national identity. Living in a country with insecure borders, surrounded with stronger neighbours, the Macedonian nation has a belated statehood and unstable identity. The new Macedonian government thus followed the techniques that have characterized the construction of the modern nation-states earlier on the Balkans and in Europe, homogenising the differences through centralisation and invention of commonalities.

This study will interpret the influence of the narratives on the creation and the sustaining of the collective identity of the Macedonians and how these narratives mediate the social relations, since they are an ideal type of story, regulating through telling. The political myths make sense of the world and motivate powerful emotional responses, contributing thus to the construction of community with distinct collective identity. Malinowski summarized the “indispensable function of the myth to express, enhance and codify a belief; safeguard and enforce morality; containing practical rules for the guidance of man” (Zaiotti, 2011).

Thus I will summarise some assumptions from these theoretical debates, important for the creation of hypotheses and the further theory-building. In this study (1) nations are to be understood as mental constructs, or ‘imagined political communities’ (Anderson 1988, 15). In the minds and memories of the nationalized citizens nations are imagined as limited and sovereign political units. This constructs can become very influential guiding ideas with sometimes tremendously serious and destructive consequences. I also agree with de Cillia *et al.* (1999) that national identity, in line with Anderson’s argumentation, is (2) discursively -mainly by the use of language, but also through other use of symbols- produced, reproduced, transformed and destructed. The idea of a specific national community becomes reality through interpretative discourses continually launched by politicians, intellectuals and media people and disseminated through the education system, mass media, sports competitions. National identity is a political identity, sustained by political institutions for political purposes, though this identity may contain some ethnic or abstract principles within it (Spinner-Halev, 2008). Further, the discursive construction of national identities always goes together with the (3) construction of distinctiveness and uniqueness. Both the construction of sameness and the construction of difference violate pluralistic and democratic variety and multiplicity by group-internal homogenization (of in-groups as well as out-groups). The solidarity among the citizens is not only in the interests of the elites but it also benefits the members of the dominant national group, while simultaneously it is a source of inequality, discriminating the members of the ethnic minorities (Spinner-Halev, 2008). A further premise – and this is the last assumption – is that (4) there is no such thing as the one and only national identity in an essentialising sense, but rather that different identities are discursively constructed according to context, depending on the situational setting of the discursive act and the subject of the debate. Shortly, national identities are not stable, consistent and immutable, but instead understood as dynamic, fragile and often incoherent (de Cillia *et al.*, 1999).

Based on these assumptions, it can be speculated that within carefully managed authoritarian regime the selection of collective memory and the controlling function would belong to the governing elite personally, and the national identity construction would be part largely assigned to the cultural elite (e.g. journalists, architects, historians, professors) through the discursive (re)construction of history and discourses of legitimisation.

In sum, “Skopje 2014” can be analysed as a response to several external and internal urgencies. The appropriation and monopolisation of everything ‘progressive’ and ‘European’ only within the EU borders and the demands of the nation-branding companies for positioning on the market as preconditions for attracting investments can be taken as external factors. Supposedly, these external factors have to be harmonised with the urge for building solidarity through national identity in a young democratic state taken as internal factor. However, knowing the historical and situational context of the antiquisation policy in general, and the realisation of “Skopje 2014” in particular, in the case of populist government this could translate in increased freedom of constructing its own vision of the nation’s past, which will be helpful in the creation of its ‘own people’. By combining the myth of the victim, the myth of the unity lost, the heroic myth and the nation-branding rationale, the elites constructed a new image of Macedonia and the Macedonian nation for the international and, mainly, for the domestic audience. In other words, the external challenges to national identity could be utilised as justification for imposing hegemonic version of national narrative serving the internal identity policy, and therefore the short-term (winning elections) and long-term (reproducing its power) political goals of the governing elite.

National Development and Democracy

The argument for authoritarian rule (‘economic development first’ school)

Regarding the success of the business-minded, ‘developmental’ populist regimes in international setting, the existing theory (Halperin *et al.*, 2010) suggests that it is a result of the revived and modified implementation of the so called *authoritarian argument* by the core countries towards the semi-peripheral and peripheral countries in the last two decades. Firstly appearing in the Cold War era, when right-wing dictatorships were supported because of the threat from the communist regimes around the globe, it was later replaced by the policy of democratisation or polyarchy promotion, mainly by newly created agencies of the US and EU political establishment. Inconsistency of politics towards the Balkan region, combining ‘economic development first’ and ‘democracy first’ policies, is typical after the end of the Cold War. Translated in European context this means that as from 1993, the EU has prepared accession criteria, the Copenhagen criteria (after the European Council in Copenhagen in 1993 which defined them), as essential conditions all candidate countries must satisfy to become a member state. They encompass political criteria as stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities

(constitutionalism and pluralism); economic criteria: a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competition and market forces; and administrative or institutional capacity and ability to take on the obligations of membership. The Copenhagen criteria are used as ground for evaluations with what Boatca (2015) calls 'pedagogical overtones', directed at the applicant countries. These criteria suppose, thus, that the candidate countries have not completed all or some of the criteria to 'join the club' and that they need mentorship in achieving them. It also allows the EU to justify the prolonged integration of a candidate country on some, if not on all, the criteria. Sequentially then, Macedonia was not institutionally and economically prepared to enter the EU after the independence, although it was a new democracy with a constitution. Now, however, it is economically and administratively prepared, but it is not democratic, pluralistic society.

For better understanding of the 'development first' school, just as in the case of democracy, I would shortly reflect on the contested notion of development. The analysis of modernisation practices in the rest of the world suggest that the western 'developmental' policy-makers tend to decouple the economic from the political or legal sphere of life and measure democracy and development indexes separately, something which is not scientifically illegitimate, but is usually done with the mere purpose of finding correlations that serve the politics without genuine redistribution of wealth and empowerment in global frames. As a consequence, development as a notion tends to be related to the economic sphere of life only, decoupled from the political regime. In a broader context development is associated with the Enlightenment idea of progress and modernisation, or the more recent idea of accumulation and consumerism. In its narrower definition it is associated with growth in GDP, rising financial turnover, rising employment rate and general capital accumulation. I understand under it something more than only rising nominal GDP or GDP per capita. In financial terms development should be associated with GDP purchasing power parity per capita or lower Gini index. More encompassing measures of development would include next to income, education and life expectancy, such as the human development index (HDI). In this way, development can be defined as enhanced access to goods and activities that improve human capabilities for alleviating not only income-poverty but also social and political deprivation. Since Macedonia cannot be easily situated into the 'global South', its underdevelopment can be observed as very restricted access to employment and choice of profession coupled with low welfare-state. The role of the EU for the development of Macedonia is crucial in this context. Not only as a trade partner (even 68.8% of the foreign trade in 2014 was done with the EU) but also through the opening or the denial of access to Macedonian citizens to the Union's labour market.

Returning to the argument for support of authoritarian rule it is noteworthy that this argument was firstly developed during the post-war era. The West's support for selected dictatorships across Southern Europe, Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, and Asia has been mainly based on Cold War calculations. According to Halperin *et al.* (2010), however, the support for these regimes, has been further legitimised by the conviction that promoting democracy in poor countries is naïve and potentially dangerous as it would spur economic stagnation and civil unrest. Popularized by Lipset (1959), this perspective sees democracies flourishing only if they are grounded in a literate and urbanized middle class. The key argument is that while democracy is desirable, it is a goal that can best be achieved after a sequence of economic development. Shortly, democracy should be seen as the crowning achievement of a long process of modernization. Huntington (1968) has developed this theory further in his still influential "*Political Order in Changing Societies*", where he elaborated the advantages of one-party states for low-income countries. He has seen the dominant political parties,

particularly those backed by the military, as unifying institutions. Huntington claims that the efficiency of authoritarian systems allegedly lies in their perceived longer-term planning horizon. Not been confined by the deadlines imposed by elections, they can set long-range objectives, decide on the optimal policies for achieving them and implement the same without deviating from the master plan, without wasting time in endless negotiations with the opposition or the special interest groups, as democratic governments must do. These groups can be safely ignored, and although underprivileged at first, they will ultimately realize they also benefit from the modernization efforts of a benign dictatorship (Halperin *et al.*, 2010, 4). He argued further that the authoritarian governments are more capable of instituting a fair, consistent rule of law, better able to establish and protect the property rights that form the basis for investment and asset accumulation, and in a stronger position to enforce contracts—thus assuring firms that enter into agreements that they will be paid.

The argument claims further that the firm hand of an authoritarian government is required to maintain order and stability in nations in which clan loyalties, economic disparities, social tensions, and regional conflicts are plentiful. In Africa, Asia, and parts of Latin America, especially in the former colonies, the argument goes, too often, the people lack a solid national identity. In such countries only a strong national government can provide the security needed for people to go about their daily lives. Shortly, only a monopoly of power in the early stages of a country's economic development can prevent anarchy. According to this school of thought, democracies in ethnically diverse societies are highly vulnerable to social fragmentation; weak politicians will have obvious incentives to stir up ethnic divisions in order to cast themselves as defenders of their own cultures against the one of rival groups. Such a stance might win them public office, but it can also unleash violent passions (Halperin *et al.*, 2010, 6).

The appeal of this perspective extended beyond the Cold War mindset in the West. The orthodoxy of this view was captured in the World Bank's 1993 report "The East Asian Miracle" in which the global development bank endorsed the notion that authoritarian governments (such as the East Asian Tigers South Korea and Taiwan) were better able to generate economic growth in the early stages of their development. This has been further reflected in a 2002 report to the Asian Development Bank that concludes, " ...whereas democracies have been slow in grappling with poverty, the authoritarian regimes in the miracle economies achieved spectacular success (Halperin *et al.*, 2010, 5).

In sum the theorists who favour authoritarian rule for poor nations see themselves as pragmatists who do not reject freedom but for whom the key to democratic development is timing. The assumption is that a country that has achieved a middle-income level of development is more likely to have an established middle class that by its nature is a moderating political force. It is believed that poor people are forced by necessity to strive for short term gain and that the middle class is concerned about economic stability and the prospects for continuous prosperity. The middle class has, hence, more incentives to work within than against the political system, and preference for pragmatic politicians than for radicals. It is also hypothesised that as the economy develops, the behaviour of a nation's political elites also changes. The elite will find common interest with the middle class on many issues, especially when facing the danger of populist politicians who can become threat for their wealth and status. Thus, they will become more willing to compromises and sharing power. Gradually, they will come to accept the concept of political equality, even to the point of giving the poor a voice in the nation's affairs. This whole process arguably characterizes the transition to democracy by the southern European dictatorships of Spain and Portugal and certain of

the East Asian Tigers, such as South Korea and Taiwan (Halperin *et al*, 2010, 7). This school appeals for democratising from the top.

It does not need a trained social scientist's eye to understand that this argument explicitly favours security of investment, stability and control more than civil liberties. This theory, however, seem to serve the capitalist world-system better than the nations for which they are designed. The accent is put on protection of property rights, security of investment and asset accumulation, from which the domestic capitalist elite could benefit most; and on the ability to enforce contracts, from which the foreign capitalist elite could benefit most. In accord with these ends, a supportive argument about the ability of these governments to maintain order and stability has been added. Most paradoxically, the theory suggests that after striking a deal for sharing power between the newly formed middle class and the top capitalist elite the ability of the authoritarian regime to maintain order and stability would be manifested through the superior readiness to fight the emergent threat of populist politicians. This is contradiction - authoritarian regimes are supposed to fight the emergence of other authoritarian regimes. Just as the populist regimes, who are presumed to be confronted, each other type of authoritarian regime is based on personalisation of power, embodied in the charismatic leader and the patronage clan surrounding the leader. Finally, the assumption that a country that has achieved a middle-income level of development is more likely to have an established middle class is also hard to prove. If a nation has rising GDP, this not necessarily means that the purchasing power per person in the country has risen or even less that the Gini index has decreased.

Recent research (Halperin *et al*, 2010) has shown that among the handful of authoritarian governments that have grown steadily over an extended period of time (such as Singapore, China, Soeharto's Indonesia, Tunisia, and Egypt), most have been no more willing to share power after decades of growth than they were at early stages of development. Therefore, the theory has been eroded, since one of its main weaknesses is that it does not specify at what level of economic development an autocracy becomes ready to make the big leap to democracy. Further, this democratisation theory does not take into account the social and cultural dimensions of life in autocratic society. Political systems affect the culture, values, incentive structure in the economy. Nations that live with authoritarian rule undergo a persistent deterioration of societal values and cohesion. The further down an autocratic path a society has gone, the longer and bumpier is the road to democracy (Halperin *et al*, 2010, 18). Finally, this type of development thinking was always dominated by the belief that purely top-down technocratic solutions could stimulate economic growth - if the correct 'development formula', such as industrialization, direct investment, forced austerity measures or import substitution will be used, success is unavoidable. Shortly, the appeal of this hierarchical approach has been always related to its expediency, relative to the democratic time-consuming procedures.

For historical perspective Halperin *et al*. (2010, 20) refer to some of the one-party states of the 1960s touted by Huntington and followers as models for development: the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Mexico, North Korea, and North Vietnam. They achieved rapid growth over an extended period. In some years, they even set the pace for growth globally. However, in none was the early growth sustained into subsequent decades. Actually they all went through disastrous economic phases between growth periods. The study concludes: 'Volatility is characteristic of growth in authoritarian economies. While a small number of countries with closed governments post the most rapid growth rates in the world, a much larger group of them clogs the ranks of the worst performers. In many cases the same country can occupy both positions in a period of a few years. The poor track record of

even the historically star-performers of the autocratic-growth thesis reveal the sandy ground upon which this model is built' (*Ibid*, 20).

In sum, the focus on expedient economic results using top-down technocratic solutions has proved to lead towards unpredictable, volatile development patterns managed by authoritarian governments, not willing to share power even when growth was achieved, resulting in persistent deterioration of societal values, grounded in the patronage networks upon which they rely to stay in power.

Later versions of the theory, such as the one elaborated in Huntington's article *Democracy's Third Wave* from 1991, although with slight modifications, still maintain the earlier tenets. Huntington still recommends military interventionism as instrument for "promoting democracy", assuming that a "large American military deployment in the [Persian] Gulf, if sustained over time, would provide an external impetus toward liberalization if not democratization, and a large American military deployment probably could not be sustained over time unless some movement toward democracy occurred" (Huntington, 1991, 15). He further concludes that poverty is the ultimate obstacle to democracy, but does not reflect on the causes of poverty on global level: "The conclusion seems clear. Poverty is a principal--probably the principal--obstacle to democratic development. The future of democracy depends on the future of economic development. Obstacles to economic development are obstacles to the expansion of democracy" (1991, 31).

Most importantly, at the end of the article Huntington again returns to prescriptions for future action, where he concludes that the two most decisive factors for the consolidation and spread of democracy are economic development and political leadership: "Economic development makes democracy possible; political leadership makes it real. For democracies to come into being, future political elites will have to believe, at a minimum, that democracy is the least bad form of government for their societies and for themselves" (1991, 32-33). Huntington claims that political elites will have to have skills to face 'radical oppositionist and authoritarian hard-liners' in their efforts to achieve democratisation. This last statement signals some changes away from the former theory in that it perceives radicals and authoritarian hard-liners into the enemies of democracy. Not only autocrats but also both left-wing and right-wing radicals are perceived as opponents of the desired regime. Huntington's revised theory of modernisation envisions democratic core which stays stable democratic and few new-comers adding to the core in consecutive waves. This theory does not presume more revolutionary forms of popular mobilisation and redistribution of empowerment as plausible or superior solution to authoritarianism on world level.

In sum, Huntington's theory of economic development decoupled from popular empowerment represents an argumentation scheme which secures rather direct form of coercive global hegemony by the core countries of the world-system. Interventionism, focus on economic development and the political elite and subjugation of more revolutionary forms of popular mobilisation are stable principles of this school. Based on the weakness of this school's arguments another school has emerged which calls for a consensual mechanisms of social control.

Political-culture determinism or the ('political reorganisation first' school)

According to Boatca (2015, 108) within Occidental perspective, the question of democratisation, although present in the normative canon of the modernisation theory, only took central stage towards the end of the twentieth century, as the ideology of *developmentalism* was slowly translated into the language of globalisation (neo-liberalism), a very similar yet distinct global design, especially after the end of the Cold War. The shift from nationally organised to globally managed economic growth appealed for consensual or coerced democratisation of the non-Western world, that would lead to the liberalisation of its markets economies, almost equalising democratisation and neo-liberal reforms. Robinson (1996) names this qualitatively new stage of the world-system, a shift from world-system to global-system; while the modern world-system was characterised by dominant capitalist mode headquartered in the West, under globalisation these capitalist production relations are displaced and mobile, enabling separation of classes (transnational elites) from territoriality. The main assumption here is that dispersal of global decision-making away from the core states takes place and that the new transnational elites manifest their influence through the rising structural power of the transnational capital and the institutional power of supranational organisations. The elites from the core countries, especially the U.S., but also the European elites, are playing a leadership role on the behalf of the emergent transnational elite.

Thus, understanding the flaws of the 'development first' approach and the urges of the emergent global system, approximately at the same time another school has appeared with exactly the opposite argumentation, winning prominence in the political circles of the core countries. According to this school of thought authoritarian political systems are unable to manage the expensive social intercourse associated with the global economy. Social and economic interaction on a world scale is obstructed by authoritarian political arrangements. Democracy is better equipped under the conditions of social dislocation and political reorganisation that accompany each nation's entrance into the global economy to confront, or at least control, popular sectors and their demands. In other words, democracies lend themselves to more durable forms of social control, and therefore to stability, due to more propitious institutional arrangements for the resolution of the sharpest social tensions among dominant groups through inter-elite compromise and accommodation (Robinson, 1996, 635).

William Douglas, a political scientist and consultant of the U.S. State Department in his 1972 '*Developing Democracy*' suggests that U.S. should promote regimented democracy. He claims that the people of the Third World require tutelage and social control to alter the underdevelopment which is a result of their 'traditional attitudes' and that democracy could achieve these goals more effectively than authoritarianism. He argues further, 'that a firm hand is needed is undeniable, but democracy can provide as efficient degree of regimentation, if it can build up the mass organisations needed to reach the bulk of the people on a daily basis. Dictatorship has no monopoly on the tutelage principle' (Douglas, 1972). Thus, Douglas recommends political instead of military or economic aid, claiming that 'Just as economic aid addressed economic underdevelopment, political aid addresses political underdevelopment'. (*Ibid*, 641) The final goal of this political strategy is not only to secure and stabilise democracy but also to have the U.S. and the local elites thoroughly penetrate the state, and also the civil society, and from *therein exercise* control over popular mobilisation and mass movements, preventing any substantial change to the global or regional social orders. This new policy urges the creation of new foreign-policy agencies, such as the quasi-governmental National Endowment for Democracy (NED), which helps build up political actors in

other polities, rather than merely seeking to influence existing ones (Robinson, 1996, 643). In Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), for instance, has missions only in the former Eastern bloc countries: Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, Macedonia, Moldova, Ukraine, Russian checkpoints in Donetsk and Gukovo, Azerbaijan, Armenia. As in the case of supporting autocracies the accent here is put on the elites as carriers of social change. This system, however, envisions at least two competing political elites that struggle to win the executive power through periodic elections, limiting popular participation in politics to voting on elections.

In the former socialist countries from East and South-East Europe the new class struggles have begun after the economic and political liberalisation. The 'democracy promotion' in these countries has been introduced mostly in the form of *consociational* democracy. The concept of consociational democracy has been developed as early as 1970, when Rustow challenged Lipset's thesis that economic growth causes stable democracy. He suggested that the process went *vice versa* in countries like England or Sweden, in the time when they were indeed economically backward. The key was the political reorganisation in a form of cooperation between the elite representatives from different political camps in order to avoid the least attractive outcome. After the reconciliation follows habituation, a phase of learning mutual trust in a process of trial and error. Economic determinism is thus completely abandoned. The most important is to open the process of democratisation and keep it alive as long as possible, to secure it through the socialisation and the education system. However, for democracy to be born and survive, argues Rustow, there is only one basic precondition, national unity. He thus believed that religious and linguistic divisions are most difficult to handle, even easier than class divisions. Lijphart (1968), however, develops this argument further, and believes, on the evidence provided by the European countries, such as Belgium and the Netherlands, that even this is to be managed. His theory is named *consociationalism*. For consociationalism to succeed the theory assumes that the political elites should enjoy high degree of freedom of choice. Another precondition is that no party has the potential to dominate the game, and therefore propagates proportional electoral formulas. It further assumes that also the positions in the bureaucracy should be distributed proportionally. As a last alternative it suggests federalism. Arrangements are worked out in bargain processes which build sense of community among the highest echelons of political life. It is recommended to maintain separation between the parties; this will secure and reinforce the representative position of the elite actors and the loyalty to the leaders. The theory posits that in religiously, ethnically or linguistically divided countries this is the 'only game in town' for democratic peace to be sustained. The weakness of this theory is that it does not provide successful examples outside of relatively culturally homogenous Western Europe. Its application in Macedonia has been slow and gradual after the independence in 1991, since no real cleavages have existed in the rather egalitarian post-socialist society. It was, under great international pressure however, adapted in the period after the conflict with the Albanian insurgents in 2001. In highly divided countries, like Macedonia, the differences between the ethnic Macedonian majority and the Albanian minority are versatile: linguistic, religious, ethnic. The suggested separation of the parties (supposed to breed loyalty to the leaders) and high degree of freedom of choice left to the leaders, as pillars of consociationalism might paradoxically be as well the causes for failure of this democratic projects. As feared by the followers of this school, instead of building trust this arrangement may breeds corruption, clientelism, alienation and frustration which will lead to authoritarian state or conflict with the one who 'do not get any piece of the cake'. The proponents of consociationalism thus warned the policy-makers that if this coalition does not open the doors for other actors, social upheaval is the only option. Under such conditions a strong man with populist appeal enters the

stage, one who could be a reformer, but most of the time is a power-concentrator. This is exactly what happened in Macedonia. VMRO-DPMNE, the party of Gruevski, was afraid of complete and continuous isolation, after the representatives of the Albanian insurgents formed a party and struck a deal for power-sharing with the Social-Democratic elite. Gruevski rebranded the party, appeared with nationalistic and ethno-defending rhetoric, overtook the power and tends to isolate Social-Democrats from the executive office on long period. Consociationalism succeeded, but democracy failed. Ethnic cleavages were softened but class cleavages reinforced, which in turn, bolsters not only class but also ethnic cleavages again. Now EU prefers stability in the country, and the region, and more dynamic economy, returning to a modified version of the authoritarian argument. This stability, however, is not peace. It is stability with growing potency to burst into conflict.

To demonstrate the power of their argument against support of authoritarian regimes, Halperin *et al.*(2010), supporters of the 'democracy promotion' school, have juxtaposed in their research the countries who accepted polyarchic form of governance to the one with the authoritarian regimes in the last 20 years and concluded that there have only been a handful of cases of sustained growth under authoritarian regimes: Bhutan, China, Egypt, South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Tunisia, and Vietnam. However, the authors argue that to hold these up as a model for other developing countries requires ignoring the 60 or more other dictatorships that had sustained sub-par growth during this period: "In other words, seven times as many authoritarian regimes had poor growth as had superlative growth. Moreover, 43 had at least one episode of a disastrous economic experience—which we define as an annual contraction per capita GDP of 10 percent or more—during this time" (Halperin *et al*, 2010, 19). The authors invite the readers to compare East versus West Germany, North versus South Korea, Haiti versus Dominican Republic, China versus Hong Kong and Taiwan, and contend that the advantage of countries with more open governance structures has been self-evident. They notice, however, that not all democracies enjoy sterling development experiences, nor that certain autocracies have not realized rapid economic growth. What they try to underline is "that when one looks at the experience of developing countries as a whole, those with more representative and pluralistic political systems have typically developed significantly more rapidly, broadly, and consistently than those with closed systems. It is the experience of this solid majority, rather than the exceptional cases, that should guide our understanding of democracy's role in sustaining development. This is what is most relevant for policy guidance" (Halperin *et al*, 2010, 11).

It is expected that countries with more open governance will have advantages; it is not, however, clear due to what mechanism it is so. All the countries which are better off are relatively small in size and population, allowed to export on the West without immediate reciprocal opening of their markets, they are relatively ethnically homogeneous, and in most of them the former colonial powers helped in shaping the key legal and economic institutions, such as property rights laws, land reforms, business and accounting codes and financial institutions, especially in South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia (Halperin *et al*, 2010, 56). The authors had to confess that the *economic and not the civil rights* have brought the development in the successful authoritarian regimes of East Asia. They found that those countries that have stronger accountability institutions, such as contract enforcement, property rights, protection of expropriation and capital mobility, have enjoyed more rapid economic development (Halperin *et al*, 2010, 60). Zakaria (1996) confirms this in other words: "The recent history of East Asia follows the Western itinerary. After brief flirtations with democracy after World War II, most East Asian regimes turned authoritarian. Over time they moved

from autocracy to liberalizing autocracy, and, in some cases, toward liberalizing semi-democracy. Most of the regimes in East Asia remain only semi-democratic, with patriarchs or one-party systems that make their elections ratifications of power rather than genuine contests. But these regimes have accorded their citizens a widening sphere of economic, civil, religious, and limited political rights. As in the West, liberalization in East Asia has included economic liberalization, which is crucial in promoting both growth and liberal democracy. Historically, the factors most closely associated with full-fledged liberal democracies are capitalism, a bourgeoisie, and a high per capita GNP. Today's East Asian governments are a mix of democracy, liberalism, capitalism, oligarchy, and corruption -- much like Western governments circa 1900".

It all sums up then not to 'openness' of the government systems as such, but to the *linkage* to the core capitalist countries (or to the transnational capital in general) of the world-system; in other words, a controlled development of few countries that do not challenge the global order. Another study (Arrighi, 2002) confirms the same regarding the linkage, but in context of critique of the modernisation theory - within the overall tendency to catch up with the modernised West 'there were few instances of genuine upward mobility, notably, Japan and Italy, which moved from the middle- to the high-income group and Taiwan and S. Korea, from the low- to the middle-income group', achieved mainly through the strengthening links with the core countries. States that de-linked, moreover, did not perform better than the one who stayed linked. The study also finds that there was convergence in the level of industrialisation among countries but, contrary to the modernisation theory, there was no narrowing of the income gap between the rich and the poor countries: 'all the great transformations that go under the name globalisation have had little impact on the three-tiered stratification of the global economy'. Indeed, in the period 1980s-1990s there were only few cases of upward mobility: Hong Kong, Singapore and Thailand. The new wave of 'modernisation' understood as convergence towards democracy and markets presents the exactly same problem as the convergence towards nation-state and industrialism: it leaves the fundamental gap in distribution of wealth. Thus, the primary locus of convergence, Eastern Europe and Latin America, as a middle stratum, has fallen even further behind the standards of wealth of the high-income countries' (Arrighi, 2002). The reconstruction of 'civil society' is according to Arrighi a new meaning added to the already overloaded concept of modernisation. Democracy and market liberalisation have shown no tendency whatsoever to solve the problem of global inequalities that was the centre of the old controversy between modernisation theorists and their dependency and world-system critics.

The latest versions of modernisation theory, such as the so called Revised Modernisation Theory of Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel elaborated in their *Modernisation, Cultural Change and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence* (2005), declaratively tries to move away from some of the earlier postulates of the theory such as linear evolution of the society and purely economic determinism of democracy. According to this theory culture and history matter for the sustainability of democracy even after development reshapes the values of the people. It also claims that modernisation is not linear- after reaching inflection points it changes. Authors exemplify this with the industrialisation, assumed to be related to secularisation of authority, and postindustrialisation, assumed to be associated with postmodern self-expression values of independence from authority and increased choices of alternative life-styles. The conclusion is that economic development triggers cultural changes, which in turn lead to the emergence and flourishing of democratic institutions (2005, 6), a reaffirmation of the Inglehart's propositions from *Modernisation and Postmodernisation*

(1997). In their later work *How Development Leads to Democracy* Inglehart and Welzel (2009) stay firm on the principles of the Revised Modernisation Theory.

The new modernisation theory seems to move away from economic determinism by giving more weight to cultural factors. This was embraced even earlier by Huntington (1991) in the revision of his earlier Occidentalism assumptions, in that Huntington in *Democracy's Third Wave* allows for other cultures to confront less with democratic values after they achieve economic development: "great cultural traditions like Islam and Confucianism are highly complex bodies of ideas, beliefs, doctrines, assumptions, and behaviour patterns. Any major culture, including Confucianism, has some elements that are compatible with democracy, just as both Protestantism and Catholicism have elements that are clearly undemocratic. (...) Cultures evolve and, as in Spain, the most important force bringing about cultural changes is often economic development itself" (Huntington, 1991, 30). Although embracing cultural explanations, the Revised Modernisation Theory still perceives development and democracy only within the nation-state or at most within the civilisation. Based on large-N comparative surveys measuring attitudes the theory explains shifts from traditionalism to secular-rational and from survival to self-expression values without reflecting on historical interrelations and dependencies. It factually only explains how the change from traditionalism and survival values to rational and self-expression values has happened on the West, but says nothing about the relatedness of this mechanisms with historic events, thus, prescribing traditionalism as innate to the underdeveloped world. Although this theory includes culture as explanation of democracy, it nevertheless, once again, underlines that affluence and economic development are the key variables for sustaining democratic institutions.

Parallel to consideration of cultural factors recent large-N modernisation-driven research also concentrates on institutional factors of emergence and sustainability of democracy on world level. In their empirical work *Democracy: a comparative approach* Lane and O. Ersson (2003) are testing the effects of institutional and economic factors on democracy sustainability and among other things conclude that Parliamentarism relative to Presidentialism yields more positive influence on democratic consolidation. The same counts for the existence of veto-points and the institution of Ombudsman, as mechanisms for limiting the ambitions of autocracy-leaning politicians. These institutional factors play role even when factor like affluence is taken into consideration. Nevertheless, the authors underscore that economic institutions are more important for political democracy. Authors claim that there are two links between economy and democracy. The first link is between economic affluence and democracy and the second between economic and political freedom. The summary of their argument is that the market economy strongly stabilises democracy *if* it produces affluence, but if it fails than the contribution is far weaker (Lane and O.Ersson, 2003, 96). According to Lane and O.Ersson (2003, 97) to enhance democratic probability the governments should "accept more of the institutions of the market economy and attempt to enforce such rules of the economic game".

The Revised Modernisation Theory focuses on large-N empirical studies, considering not only economic but also cultural and institutional factors for sustainable democratic development. I agree with the consideration of these factors, but only embedded in historical context. Culture and history, as Inglehart claims, indeed matter. However, the interpretations of differences in current cultural and economic developments should be embedded in historical interdependencies. Traditionalism and affinity for despotic political organisation cannot be perceived as innate to the Orient and without relatedness to historic developments. Although not directly suggesting interventionism as

earlier schools did, the Revised Modernisation Theory still perceives the 'Rest' of the world as traditionalist and in need for mentorship in order to make the necessary cultural and institutional changes that would lead towards sustainable democratic development as on the West. Focusing on nation-states, decoupling development from democracy and measuring them in order to explain global inequalities seems to be the most stable features of modernisation rationales and the interventionist political programs stemming from them.

Whatever the 'development first' or the 'democracy first' school, both are missing the target, because they do not address economic and political (including civil) liberties simultaneously, nor they see it as a genuine, more or less independent project of the actors experiencing 'underdevelopment'. Although it seems that the strategies are oppositional, both have something in common, and this seems to be crucial: development is always seen as accommodation to capitalism, opening to the market forces, to the slow and gradual process controlled from the established players in the economic arena, who do not allow dramatic change of the overall equilibrium of the system. The second school seems to be more democratic, insofar it allows deterritorialisation of the capital and creation of transnational capitalist elites that do not necessarily originate from the core countries. This however, translates in opportunity only for small political elite from each nation-state to gain access to the market-shares of the global economy, while keeping the majority of the population away from participation in the wealth re-distribution. In sum, the understanding of the politicians as entrepreneurs, of the voters as consumers, of the opposition as a market-competitor and of the election system as market mechanism (Halperin *et al.* 2010); of development as improved 'business climate', 'rising GDP', 'increased turnover of money in the national economy'; and of application of dubious and provisional welfare transfers prior to elections as welfare-system, gives the political elites the freedom to position themselves as democrats only because they respect the rules of the capitalist game. The states they run, however, can be best described as *lumpenstates* and their development policies as *lumpendevelopment* (Frank, 1972). The original meaning of lumpendevelopment is to be found in Frank's theory of underdevelopment in South America, where colonial and post-colonial powers acquire resources and goods found in the colonies, facilitated with incorporation of the local elites into the system, as they become intermediaries between the rich colonial buyers and the poor local producers. In the so called "crypto-colonial" circumstances on the Balkans, this usually takes form of labour resource, as most of the new nation-states do not have any other specific resource to join the global capitalist market. The implementation of radical developmental programs flavoured with populist rhetoric and authoritarian management style, is thus, almost unavoidable consequence of the system.

In this context, the EU did not accept Macedonia when it was evidently democratising during longer period, although for instance, Eastern Germany was accepted in the Union the same day the country was unified with Western Germany. The Union waited until the inter-ethnic war was waned, although, after the conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia, it was expected that it will expand on the south of former Yugoslavia. It later enforced the consociational democracy, which required several constitutional changes. Ever since, the EU is the main intermediary in the inter-party conflicts that followed after Gruevski sized power and undermined the existing democratic institutions, more often weakening the opposition's struggle for human rights than challenging the autocratic rule of the Prime Minister. The opposition concentrates its critique of the regime on the government's failure to integrate the country in the EU, but the Union never really supported this critique with clear and unified policy towards the regime. The EU chooses to stay aside from influencing Greece on the

name dispute or on the protection of the minority rights of the Macedonians in Greece and Bulgaria, but is always willing to 'arrange peace agreements' and to send ambiguous messages to the Macedonian voters, thus legitimising an illegitimate regime.

Before concretising the main research questions and hypotheses, I would return to the basic assumption from the debate about the relationship between populism and democracy, and namely that authoritarian populism is internally realised through national identity change and externally cemented through links with the transnational capital and the negligence of the supranational structures which monitor and control the region. The cursory overview of the data corpus and the review of the relevant literature suggest that the project "Skopje 2014" can indeed have negative impact on Macedonian democracy in multiple ways. If the regime's primary goal is not the democratic development of the country, but the maintaining of power through avoiding fair political contest, we can dismiss Graan's (2013) assumption that "Skopje 2014" is foremost a project intending to boost Macedonia's visibility internationally and to assert (ethnic) Macedonian identity against factors perceived to be threatening. We can instead expect that the government had to disguise the identity policies as developmental policies, since governments are held responsible primarily for their economic and not 'cultural' performance. However, even when realised as developmental, these policies have proved fully capable of being *lumpendevelopment* projects.

Research questions

The general research question stemming from the research problem introduced at the beginning of the theoretical chapter was: 'Do discourses of and around the project "Skopje 2014" have a negative impact on the Macedonian democracy or can it be so?' After the preliminary overview of the data and the literature, a more specific research questions and more elaborate hypotheses can be defined.

The main research question can then be: if the autocratic-populist rhetoric as manifested through the project "Skopje 2014" is negatively influencing the Macedonian democracy, which concrete influences it involves? This question can be answered by answering the following questions: how the discourses on national identity and development of the Macedonian governing political elite have been incorporated in the project "Skopje 2014", and how, in turn, the Project and its legitimisation has reinforced them?; how the construction of hegemonic narratives has influenced the (anti)democratic developments in Macedonia (or how the discourses and their realisations were functionalised and which ends they have served)?; and how the EU behaved during this process?

Hypotheses

The main working hypothesis before the detailed analyses of the data corpus will be: “Skopje 2014” negatively impacts the Macedonian democracy and pluralism by creating internal divisions (among ethnic Macedonians and between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians) and external conflicts (with Greece and Bulgaria). This influence on the Macedonian democracy is supported by the negligence of the EU. This main hypothesis can be divided on several hypotheses, which can be separately analysed.

H1: The project “Skopje 2014” is a stimulator of conflicts and syndrome of undemocratic developments (tool for winning elections and change of the classes). Two assumptions can be spelled out related to this hypothesis. Firstly, the project was planned very carefully, but it was also systematically interrupted by the minorities and the opposition. As long as the elites do not acknowledge the plurality of perspectives on collective memory and national identity this kind of confrontations will occur continuously and deepen the conflict on three levels: inter-ethnically, among ethnic Macedonians and internationally. Secondly, “Skopje 2014” as both, most expensive investment in the history of Macedonia and probably the most non-transparent project of this character, raises the doubts that it was utilised for money laundering and illegitimate overthrowing of the former political elite. This will further intensify the conflict between the parties and the division between their supporters in ‘Montague versus Capulet’ manner.

H2: “Skopje 2014” was mainly constructed for the domestic audience as final ‘consumer’ of the ‘cultural goods’, because the voters will determinate the future governing party of the country even if tourists/investors do not come to Macedonia or the nation would not join the European family.

H3: The evident populism of “Skopje 2014” and the right-wing rhetoric of the “antiquisation” policy were indirectly supported by the negligence of the EU. I assume that as long the EU ignores the undemocratic developments by employing the “stability first” as a form of “development first” strategy (just another form of Huntington’s thesis for autocracies support) in the candidate countries, it only explicitly legitimises the anti-liberal governments, makes parody of its own, allegedly unique European values- which the Union promotes as accession criteria-, weakens the hopes for democratic developments in the accession countries and strengthening the standing points of the autocratic forces. Having no united stand on the case, the different institutions of the EU send ambiguous messages to the Macedonian voters. As long as the national and supranational governments do not address socio-economic issues along procedural democracy, there cannot be stability in any region or in the world.

The research questions and the hypotheses linked to them imply analysis of discursive practices and actions within given context. The analysis should demonstrate how this purposefully newly constructed identity could become a ‘matter-of-factness’, accepted as ‘common sense’ at least among a big part of the Macedonian population. As it is assumed that the main goal of a populist regime is to reproduce itself through the creation of its ‘own people’ all other goals of a given government should be subdued to this end. Therefore, the identity policy is the key policy of this regime, which rests on irrational loyalty of the newly constructed ‘people’. Its development policy is strongly entrepreneurial, ‘developmental’, rests on international ratings and is discursively utilised as legitimisation of the identity policy by the populist leader and by his ‘people’ in the media.

To understand how “Skopje 2014” is affecting Macedonian democracy I will analyse the discursive practices of the creators, the supporters and the opponents of the project. I take as a premise that from the perspective of its creators “Skopje 2014” is embedded in the “antiquisation” and ‘nation-branding’ discourses and has been materialisation of the ideas behind these discourses. As such, “Skopje 2014” constructs a new reality, a new interpretation of the history, a new collective memory and originating from that, a new national identity. Oppositional voices, on the contrary, have tried to de-construct the mythology behind the project, to present it as a basically contested project, creating conflicts within the nation and inter-nationally and thus, endangering the democratisation process of the young republic. I will apply critical discourse analysis, which will allow me to pinpoint the possible fallacious argumentation schemes of the actors, refine existing theories, offer new research hypotheses and potentially prepare grounds for practical recommendations for policy-makers.

The study is actor- or action-centred, i.e. it focuses on the choices of policies taken by the political players, such as Prime Minister, parties, the governments, bodies of the EU. It takes as a premise that the emergence of the populist governments in the region is a result of the world-system imbalances of power and sized as *opportunity* by the local political elites within the same system. The premise holds that the national governments cannot alone be held responsible for the re-emergence of populism, as the key for the longevity of these systems lays in two interconnected policies: creation of its ‘own people’ (cultural or identity related policy) and linkage to the transnational capitalistic elites (development policy) and the negligence of the EU. This premise entails that politicians have freedom of choice and that some choices can be criticized as false.

The discursive practices of the populists are dependent on their overall strategy of unfair political contest. Some features, such as the strong distrust in the ‘establishment’, fictionalisation and functionalisation of politics as typical for right-wing politicians were already outlined earlier in this chapter (Frckovski, Wodak). Another study (Reisigl, 2008) on the top of these finds some other, very closely related, general characteristics of oppositional right-wing populism in Austria: a strong tendency towards *personalisation* on the one hand and *collectivism* and *assimilatory* identity politics on the other hand; *agitation, irrationalism and anti-intellectualism*; and finally, a seemingly radical-democratic attitude on the one hand, but anti-democratic, *authoritarian, hierarchical and leader-oriented* attitude on the other hand. The same study summarises the populist rhetorical principles of oppositional right-wing populism in Austria:

1. Subdivision of the world of social actors into *friends and enemies*
2. Reduction of complexities, *simplistic illustrations*
3. *Insulting* the political opponent
4. *Worm’s-eye view* or one of yours and for you
5. Pathetic dramatization and *emotionalisation*
6. Insistent *repetition*
7. *Calculated ambivalence*
8. Promise of *salvation* and liberation

Not surprisingly, the cursory observation of the discourses of Macedonian top government executives and journalists supportive of their policies reveals that they have used most of the aforementioned principles in justifying their stances and actions.

Worth mentioning separately, right-wing populists use *oppositional language* in order to challenge the governing parties, labelled as elites. In sense of depending on and stimulating antagonism and dynamics of clashing with the status quo their argumentation schemes are valid at least until the moment of coming to power; however, afterwards, a new dynamics is put in place – shifting the place of confrontation. The Austrian case has demonstrated that governing right-wing populism cannot employ populist argumentation schemes without the risk of losing credibility. Sometimes populist schemes were utilised as possible argumentation schemes, but more often realised as fallacies, endangering democracy (Reisigl, 2008, 116). However, rare and new are the cases when oppositional right-wing populist completely overtake the power or implement populist strategy after winning the office. There is no study which would report on the relationship between governing populist and their identity and development policies. Some rhetorical principles cannot be utilised when the opposing populist becomes governing, but if the party of a populist leader becomes major governing party it can continue scapegoating the opponents as if they still have the power to control the judiciary or have committed strategic mistakes in the past (privatisation, country's name) that now need a long period of recovery. The lost of the 'those up there' is compensated by new scapegoats such as the political opposition ('those over there') as 'internal enemies' and Greece, the 'great forces', 'the West' or 'the EU' as 'external opponents'. Governing right-wing populism seems to be a medium-term phenomenon, whereas oppositional right-wing populism still remains a problem that should not be underestimated (Reisigl, 2008, 114). Gruevski seems to understand that and this is why he and the media supportive of his policies, still hold the oppositional discourse line, although Gruevski's party governs in Macedonia for more than 10 years. This is the only way he could justify the failure of his policies and still convince the 'people' that they have the power.

All these universal features of the right-wing populism and its discursive principles will be scrutinised with the help of critical discourse analysis (CDA) of the texts produced by the Macedonian political and intellectual elite.

The study of discursive practices should always take into consideration the political and the historical context in which the discourses were delivered. This allows the researcher to fully comprehend the meaning of the analysed texts. As reality changes the discourses are adapted so to conform the events to retaining the power in the political struggle. Structural changes as reorganisation of parties, redistribution of power among ethnicities or inter-national (re)distribution of power influences the discourses temporarily. As the task of the discourse analyst is to 'observe continuities and commonalities, but also to document changes and differences' (Reisigl, 2008, 113), referring to the political and historical context is inevitable part of discourse analysis.

CHAPTER 3: HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL EMBEDDEDNESS OF “SKOPJE 2014”

Political and historical context

As argued before, I will embed the analysis of speeches and the newspaper articles in three contexts: the historical, the urban and the situational context. Depicting the historical context I will reflect on the political events which shaped the debate around the national identity in post-independent Macedonia. I will dedicate special attention to the Bulgarian and the Greek national myths as preceding and competitive to the Macedonian. Representing the urban context, I will scrutinise the architectural and historical developments in the city of Skopje, especially following World War II. Finally, in the situational context section I will introduce the major political events from 2010, when the Project was officially announced, until today. This period was marked by two parliamentary election campaigns in which “Skopje 2014” had one of the central roles, particularly in the programs of the opposition.

As I believe there is no continuous Macedonian national identity transmitted from generation to generation earlier than the mid-nineteenth century, I would suggest to start the elaboration namely with the period of national awakening of the Balkan peoples, commencing with the liberation of Peloponnese as the core of the Greek state in 1832. Preceding this period, all the peoples of non-Turkish origin, subjects of the Ottoman Empire, were foremost identifying themselves as Christians, then as any of the today known national identities of the Balkans. Certainly, there was a variety of languages and differences, in what could be named cultural patterns, but they were not sufficiently strong to define certain populace as *ethnically* distinctive from the surrounding ‘others’ or able to unite under political cause and challenge the superiority of the Ottoman Empire. However, following the inexorable weakening of the Empire at the end of the 19th century, Romania won its independence in 1877, Serbia in 1882, and Bulgaria in 1908. During this period the geographical territory of Macedonia, now surrounded by the new Balkan states, but still under the Ottoman rule, was populated by a great variety of ethnic, religious and linguistic groups, none of which was dominant enough to form the marrow of a new nation-state able to put the populace behind unifying political platform and challenge the Ottoman power.

According to Skrinis (2005, 199) when the modern Greek state was founded in 1832, and during the first years of independence, the image of the national self that was projected both outside and inside the country, was rather different from the one that has been consolidated since the end of the 19th century. In the period between 1770 and 1850 dominated the concept that the Greeks are direct descendants of the ancient Greeks of the classical period. Skrinis argues that this had to be linked with the admiration of the classical civilization by the Europeans at that point, and that it was rather convenient for the creation of a proud nation with a noble past and tradition. Neofotistos (2012, 293) mentions Bernal’s work *Black Athena* (1987) where he analyses the construction of ancient Greece as the “epitome of Europe” and Europe’s “pure childhood” in Western scholarship and notes how this construction is inseparable from the growth of racism in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe and the quest for racially pure origins. The Greek intelligentsia educated on the West and foreign advocates of Hellenism (the so called philhellenes) supported the Greek War of Independence from Ottoman rule on the implicit understanding that the Greek people would reciprocally embrace the role of living ancestors of European civilization. Thus the support of

Greece's independence, along with the construction of ties to ancient ancestors and the possession of civilization, was key to the rejuvenation of Europe and the project of European modernity (Neofotistos, 2012, 300). A wide-spread image during that period was that of the mythical phoenix, representing Greece, that after being dominated by Macedonians, Romans and Ottomans, was reborn again from its ashes. Due to the admiration of antiquity by the Bavarians the direct origin from ancient Greece was extremely popular during the reign of Otto I. This was manifested by the choice of Athens as the capital city. The link between the Greece of the past and the present day Greece was thought to be easily proven by the use of the Greek language that was very similar to the one spoken in the same area during the classical years.

This, however, left the creators of the national myth in front of the task to somehow connect the past and the present, a temporal leap of two thousand years. There had to be a national continuum. Therefore, during the 1870s the image of the Macedonian kingdom was changed and the Greek character of Macedonia was stressed. Until then, in the geography books, Macedonia and Thrace were not mentioned as parts of ancient Greece, although without ruling out their Greek character. Ancient Macedonians were perceived Greeks, it was argued that they participated in the Olympic Games, spoke a language very similar to ancient Greek, believed in the same gods and were educated in the Greek way (Aristotle as teacher on the Macedonian court). Alexander the Great was no longer considered the conqueror and ruler of Greece, but the disciple of Greek civilization and a symbol of unity (Koulouri 1988, 70-73 in Skrinis, 2005, 200). Simultaneously, the Greek history was expanded towards the distant past, as the pre-Greek Cycladic, Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations were considered part of the Greek national heritage. This was most likely again connected to the political struggles of the day, namely the legitimisation of the support of the Cretan people in their efforts to join the Greek state during the same period.

Moreover, the Greek state started incorporating the less distant past into the national narrative. As descendants of the Eastern Roman Empire taking pride in Orthodox Christianity and the recent victory against the Islamic Ottomans, the role of Byzantium was newly evaluated. The historians of the Enlightenment period contradicted Hellenism with the Christian Byzantium; the latter frequently considered being a period of decadence and cultural darkness. By 1894, however, in the history course books, it was possible to recite the positive aspects of the Byzantine Empire and its contribution to history (Koulouri 1988, 36 in Skrinis, 2005, 200). Thus, in the period 1880-1895 the notions about Byzantium changed and this Empire was presented in the history books as an organic part of the Greek continuum. As the earliest non-Islamic nation-state on the Balkans, thus, Greece had the chance to partly fabricate the historical facts and supported by the needs and power of colonial-time Europe, to incorporate in its national mythology all the glorious civilisations thriving on the southern Balkan Peninsula. As a result, at the end of the 19th century, the Greek national myth freezes in a linear continuum connecting the classical antiquity with the modern-day Greek nation-state. However, as Skrinis argues further, this image of a glorious past and virtuous ancestors, influenced the way modern Greeks perceived themselves and their neighbours.

Building on other authors, such as Heraklides (2001) Skrinis assumes that despite the fact that there were things they could be proud of, such as the glorious past or the expansion of their country, the Greek people had complex of inferiority when they compared themselves with their contemporaries, especially the great powers of Europe. This is assumed to be the cause to urged them to engage in irredentist activities related to the neighbouring countries. The Hellenistic period could thus be easily related with Macedonia and the Byzantine period with Constantinople (Istanbul). A few decades after

the foundation of the Greek state, and the construction of the national myth, the territories with Greek nationals (in the Balkans and the Near East) were described as “free” or “enslaved”. Hence, in order to liberate the “enslaved brothers” Greece claimed the territories where peoples with “Greek conscience” lived. After Thessaly and southern Epirus were incorporated in the Greek state (1881), according to Skrinis (2005, 201) the new goal of the Greek state was the claim of Macedonia and Thrace, mainly after Bulgaria had put forth the same claim. Although not forming the majority of the populace in the area, the safeguarding of the interests of the Greek population, was used as a legitimisation of the irredentist activities. Thus, the Greek-Macedonian dispute over Macedonian heritage has its roots in the process of competitive identity production in the nineteenth century Balkans, whereby Greece and also Bulgaria and Serbia used their national schools, Orthodox churches, and national societies to compete vehemently against each other and implement their nationalist policies of territorial expansion and political control over Macedonia.

Against the background of *concerted efforts* to convert the population in Macedonia to Greek, Bulgarian, and Serbian nationalist causes, a small group of men worked to promote the establishment of autonomy for all of geographic Macedonia and in late 1893 formed the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (Vnatesna Makedonska Revolucionerna Organizacija, or VMRO) in today’s Greek city of Thessaloniki (Neofotistos, 2011). It is very important for the later debates, that in all issued documents, like manifestoes or pamphlets, this organisation has never linked the Macedonian identity with the ancient Kingdom of Macedon, but rather with the Slavic and Christian heritage. Even independent intellectuals, such as Krste Petkov Misirkov, the first Macedonian to work on the standardisation of the Macedonian language in 1903, have argued that Macedonians are distinct people among the South Slavs, and therefore they deserve a separate state. VMRO was often ideologically and nationally hesitant, thus divided on leftist and rightist wings, the later having close ties with the Bulgarian national cause, and leading even to armed conflicts within the group. On 2 August 1903 the revolutionaries have organised an uprising in the city of Krushevo, which was suppressed by the Ottoman army in only 10 days, but was crucial for the raising Macedonian national awareness at the time and still serves as the cornerstone of the modern Macedonian nation-building myth. The failure of the uprising has intensified the Greek-Bulgarian struggle over Macedonia culminating in the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913 and the signing of the Treaty of Bucharest in August 1913. Under the Treaty the Macedonian land was divided among Greece, who took 51% (Aegean Macedonia), Serbia (Vardar Macedonia, or present-day Macedonia), and Bulgaria (Pirin Macedonia, the smallest portion of historical Macedonia). It is worth mentioning that the Bulgaria stayed the only dissatisfied party of the partition of Macedonia and the only new state which continuously insisted that all the Slavs in Vardar Macedonia and Greece were Bulgarians. On the other hand, Greece and Yugoslavia had agreed that the people in Macedonia are Greeks south of the borderline and Serbs, on the northern part of it, that they would not make irredentist claims against each other and not ally with Bulgaria while only accept its claims of the existence of a Bulgarian minority on their territories. Since then Greece and Serbia launched an anti-Bulgarian campaign in the newly won areas. Macedonians have suffered terrible atrocities in all the regions, like prohibition to speak their language (at that point still not standardised and therefore routinely described in the literature simply as a dialect of the Bulgarian or the Serbo-Croatian), population expulsions, and executions. Forced assimilation persisted over the interwar period and even after the World War II.

Greece was indeed planning to “get rid of” the Macedonian Slavic minority in several occasions, since this minority was not “easily-convertible” in Greek. The first attempt was after the Peace Treaty of Neuilly (1919), following the World War I, when Greece agreed to an exchange of populations with Bulgaria, hoping that the exchange of populations would solve the problems with Bulgaria. At this period Greece ceased to call these people Bulgarian-speakers or Bulgarians, and used the terms “Slavophones” or “Macedonian Slavs”, so they would not necessarily be linked to Bulgaria. Eventually, the exchange of populations between Bulgaria and Greece was not as voluntary as it was supposed to be, neither for Bulgarians nor for Greeks, and especially for the so called Slavophones, who were not easily identifying with Bulgaria. After the migrations a large population of Slavophones had remained in Greece, an estimated 80000. The Greek government claimed that these people had Greek national conscience, and that was the reason they had remained in Greece during and after the exchange of populations (Divani 1995, 339 in Skrinis, 2005, 205).

This notwithstanding, the right-wing dictatorial regime of the general Metaxas (1936) affected the lives of the minorities. The ultra-nationalists were anxious to get over with these “dangerous” populations from the fragile Macedonian environment as quickly as possible. All the members of the minorities, regardless of their age, were forced to attend evening courses in Greek, and it was prohibited to use their native language in public places (Divani 1995, 115 in Skrinis, 2005, 205).

Greece has henceforth systematically undermined the existence of Macedonian identity and minority as different from the Greek. This was particularly made clear during the Greek Civil War (1947–1949), fought between the royalist right-wing government and the Greek Communist Party (GCP). In this conflict the Macedonian minority, living in the northern province of Macedonia has supported the GCP. Just as Yugoslavia, Greece was at this historical juncture, namely the beginning of the Cold War, on the fire line between the East and West. Knowing the price of the victory, both of the conflicting parties were especially brutal during this relatively short war. This resulted in evacuation of large number of people, especially children, usually between the ages of 3 and 14 (though often younger or older children as well) out of their homes and away from their parents. Those who were “forced to leave [their] home[s] and country of origin because of a well-founded fear of persecution” (Danforth and Boeschoten, 2012, 265 in Neofotistos, 2012, 605)—were evacuated to children’s homes operated by the Greek Communist Party in Eastern Europe and to *paidopoleis* (literally meaning “children’s cities”) by the Greek government in locations throughout Greece. During the Civil War, the partisan troupes evacuated some 20.000 children to Eastern Europe and the Greek government under the auspices of Queen Frederica of the Hellenes sent approximately 18.000 children to 54 *paidopoleis* throughout Greece.

According to the Greek government, the refugee children— referred to as “Greeks” although a significant number of them originated from families that self-identified as Macedonians and had acquired Macedonian as their first language—were forcibly abducted and held hostages by the partisans with the alleged purpose of de-hellenisation, Slavenisation, and communist conversion. According to the latter, it was the Greek government and Queen Frederica who removed the children from their homes against their parents’ will with the supposed purpose of indoctrinating them against communism and turning them against their parents, whom Greek officials called “Slavs” among other epithets. Also, both sides of the debate depict their respective evacuation programs as nothing but voluntary and inspired by humanitarian considerations, such as saving and educating the children (Neofotistos, 2012, 607). It was later estimated that the children with Macedonian identity

were making up about 50 percent of the total number of children crossing the Greek border and after a long and arduous journey were arriving in Eastern Europe in the spring of 1948 (*Ibid*, 608).

The Greek government legitimised the introduction of *paidopoleis* only as a reaction of the evacuation programs of the partisans, but Danforth and Boeschoten (2012) expose the falsity of this contention when they point out that the first *paidopoleis* opened in July 1947 while the evacuation program of the Greek Communist Party began in March 1948 or almost a year later (Neofotistos, 2012, 609).

Later, the defeat of the GCP in the Civil War and the Cold War tensions provided fertile ground in which to cultivate the view that refugees living on the other side of the Iron Curtain were “dangerous” and “undesirable,” contributing to the Greek government’s eventual decision to block their return, thus precluding the swift return to Greece of the majority of children evacuated to Eastern Europe. Moreover, due to a 1982 decree “the free repatriation and restoration of Greek citizenship” only of political refugees who were “Greeks by birth” was announced. Macedonians who cannot return to their homes in northern Greece thus view themselves as permanent exiles and self-identify as refugee children from Aegean Macedonia, although they are now in their 60s and live in cities around the world. Their relationship to their lost homelands in Greece has become the primary means of identification, and many of them are actively engaged in drawing public attention to their ongoing plight (Neofotistos, 2012, 612). These people have grounded the Association of Refugee Children from Aegean Macedonia, a transnational organization, established in the mid-1980s in Toronto and headquartered in Skopje. The association is primarily concerned with preserving selected memories of the Civil War, namely memories of the violence of the Greek state and the right-wing paramilitaries, and gaining public recognition for its specific account of history through activities such as the publication of a newsletter and the organization of reunions.

Danforth and Van Boeschoten (2012) suggest that the persistence of the controversy over the political responsibility related to the evacuation of children from northern Greece 60 years after the end of the Greek Civil War and 20 years after the end of the Cold War is intimately linked to the stubborn refusal of the Greek government to allow the return of former refugee children with a Macedonian national identity and to restore their property rights for fear that the Macedonian minority living in Greece (whose existence the Greek government continues to deny) might become radicalized (Neofotistos, 2012, 615). I would thus argue that Greek nationalist scholars and politicians have established exclusivist claims to the name “Macedonia” and to the heritage of the ancient Macedonia, claiming that the Republic of Macedonia was an invention of Tito, not only because of the lucrative brand “Macedonia”, but much more because of the intention to delimit the association of the name Macedonia with the brutal and complicated past of the region in which the Greek state had committed crimes worth the attention of the international courts of justice and the world public in general.

It can be thus concluded that throughout the century-long history of modern Greece sustaining ethnic diversity was not a priority of the government. Quite the opposite, all the ethnicities were supposed to either become Greeks through assimilation or to leave the country. Through these policies (and the elimination of the Jewish community in Thessaloniki) Greece has become, after World War II, one of the most ethnically homogeneous countries in Europe. The Greek citizenship has been identical (almost) to a Greek-speaking, Orthodox population. Thus, instead of respecting

and integrating the ethnic minorities and formatting them into parts of the Greek state, only one ethnic majority has been formed (Skrinis, 2005, 208).

The introduction of the Bulgarian national myth at this moment would yield a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding the “Macedonian question” and the Macedonian identity in present day Macedonia.

Although since 1970s the Bulgarian state promotes the idea that the ancient Thracians (contemporaries of the ancient Macedonians and Greeks) are the civilisation ancestors and genetic kin of the Bulgarian people, the marrow of the Bulgarian national myth and a point of pride was and is the Slavic medieval state ruled by Tsar Samuil from the region Prespa in present day Macedonia. This is regarded as the first and most powerful Slavic kingdom on the Balkan Peninsula rivalling Byzantium during the Middle Ages. Ever since its birth in the 19th century, the Bulgarian national ideology has invariably listed the Slavic alphabet, created by the missionaries Cyril and Methodius in the 9th century, among the “Bulgarian” cultural achievements (Marinov, 2011, 6). However, ever since Macedonia was in position to build its own national narrative (within the Yugoslavian Federation), Tsar Samuil and Cyril and Methodius and their disciples were celebrated as Macedonian national heroes with universal importance for the pan-Slavic civilisation.

Marinov (2011) argues that the medieval Bulgarian state map has been unabashedly stretched out in both historic atlases and on T-shirts. Samuil’s empire, which was situated between the Adriatic, Aegean and the Black seas, is referred to as “Bulgaria on three seas”, and represents the mythological fatherland of the Bulgarians yielding a formidable list of “lost lands” that Bulgaria is – both “historically” and “ethnically” – entitled to claim. Top place in the list is allocated to Macedonia, a land with importance for the Bulgarian national myth, just as the Kosovo myth for Serbia or the Transylvanian myth for Hungary. In fact, Bulgaria fought all its battles and expanded only towards Vardar Macedonia (belonging to Serbia after 1913) during the Balkan Wars and the First and the Second World Wars. A key point for frustration is the Macedonians’ desire to form a separate nation-state. The notion that the latter was “artificially created” within communist Yugoslavia (also a Greek stance) and that Macedonian language is no more than a Bulgarian dialect has enjoyed an outstanding currency – even among intellectuals who tend to go quite “liberal” on historical issues (Marinov, 2011, 7). Bulgaria even officially attacked the existence of the Macedonian language as a unique language, through the publication of the book *“The Unity of the Bulgarian Language in the Past and Today”*, originally published by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in Bulgarian in 1978 and translated in English, French, German, and Russian and circulated to the respective audiences thereafter (Neofotistos, 2012, 296).

Marinov (2011) also claims that the history taught at school has cultivated among Bulgarians the feeling that they have always lost – unfairly, despite their gallantry at the battle field – on the political arena, this partially attributed to the imperialist tendencies among the Great Powers. Nurtured by history textbooks, the Bulgarian martyrdom myth has been reinforced by the cliché that deep down its core the Bulgarian is “a tolerant nation” that caused no pain to members of any other national community and sustained a unique ethnic coexistence model in its “own” state (ibid, 7). To prove this Bulgarian national mythopoesis provides the case of the Bulgarian Jews who were not deported in the Nazi death camps during World War II, but refuses to admit any responsibility for the deportation of the Jews from the occupied territories of Greece and Yugoslavia, the multiple campaigns of the abuse and expulsion of major portions of the domestic Muslim population since the

1878 creation of the Bulgarian state up until the 1980s, the destruction of the Ottoman cultural heritage or the forced assimilation of the Macedonian minority in Pirin Macedonia. It can be then summarised that the Bulgarian, just as the Greek state, has used brutal assimilatory politics towards the minorities, exchange of populations as alternative to assimilation, denial of the Ottoman heritage and “antiquisation” of its own through the linkage with the Thracians. Differently from Greece, however, Bulgaria was not only interested in the Macedonian territory and (ancient) history, but also in winning ‘the hearts and minds’ of the Macedonian people and, through the acquisition of their Slavic cultural heritage and identity. Marinov (2011, 8) concludes that actually the post-communist transition discourse has even further entrenched Bulgarian nationalism and mainly along two traditional lines: anti-Turkish or anti-Islamic and the so-called nostalgia for Macedonia, claiming that the communist regime was “nationally nihilistic” in its core and sold Bulgarian interests out to Moscow. This politics towards Macedonia is still reflected in the current relations between the countries, mediated, as in the case with Greece, by the EU membership of Bulgaria.

BULGARIAN CITIZENSHIP Complete legal processing service with naturalization number for ID card and passport (advertisement in *Dnevnik* newspaper, 29 July 2008).

Advertisements for acquisition of Bulgarian citizenship such as this one appear on regular bases in the daily newspaper *Dnevnik*, which has one of the largest circulation and readers-base in the Republic of Macedonia. According to estimates given by the Bulgarian ambassador to Macedonia, 60,000 Macedonians were on the waiting list for Bulgarian citizenship at the end of 2007, the year when Bulgaria became a member of the EU, while over 10,000 Macedonians had already been granted Bulgarian passports prior to that date (*Utrinski Vesnik*, December, 2007). Different estimates put the number of Macedonians who have applied for Bulgarian passports at around 100,000 (Pond 2006 in Neofotistos, 2009, 19), or about 7.6 per cent of the Macedonian population. Neofotistos engaged in anthropological study of the phenomenon in Macedonia and reported that those who agreed to speak with her generally expressed willingness to inform her that they are ‘not ashamed’ to have applied for Bulgarian passports (Neofotistos, 2009, 19).

What is stunning about this procedure is that only ethnic Macedonians (and not Albanians, Serbs or members of other ethno-national communities in Macedonia) are eligible to apply for the Bulgarian citizenship. Additionally, the Bulgarian government claims as Bulgarians more than 5000 Macedonians who live in Albania, and also the Gorans (Slavic Muslims who speak a mixture of Macedonian and other Slavic languages and live in the bordering mountain regions between Macedonia and Kosovo and Albania).

According to the Bulgarian Ministry of Justice, application requirements for inhabitants from Macedonia include submission of a health certificate, a certificate proving that the applicant has no criminal record, and a document, such as a birth certificate or passport, attesting that s/he has at least one parent of Bulgarian origin to the Bulgarian embassy in Skopje or the consulate in the town of Bitola. As an alternative, the State Agency for Bulgarians Abroad can issue a certificate of Bulgarian nationality on request; with the presumption that ‘ethnic Macedonian’ factually means ‘ethnic Bulgarian’, as applicants are also required to sign a statement certifying that they are Bulgarian. Neofotistos (2009) informs that in practice, however, the procedure is a lot more lax, and hence encourages a large number of applications. According to her interlocutors who had no documentation to prove the Bulgarian origin of one of their parents (or any other close relatives), used the service of the Macedonian notaries authorized by the Bulgarian embassy in Macedonia to

fill out and file the paperwork who frequently used false information, such as residential addresses and names of fictitious forebears in Bulgaria, before the submission of the application packages to the Bulgarian embassy for official approval. In fact, few of my relatives have acquired Bulgarian passports and I have been informed that the procedure takes anywhere from three to five years, which corresponds with the findings of Neofotistos' study. She also concludes that the expediency of preparation of the document often depends on the amount of the bribe the applicants paid to the middlemen or bureaucrats processing the applications, despite efforts undertaken by the Bulgarian and Macedonian states to combat corruption (Neofotistos, 2009, 20). What is even more astonishing about the acquisition of the passport as a 'gate to Europe' is that the overall cost for the purchase of the document starts at a few hundred Euros. Ethnic Macedonians are permitted to hold dual citizenship, which means that those who are granted Bulgarian passports do not need to renounce their Macedonian citizenship.

It should be clear that a grand majority of the applicants do not feel as Bulgarians, but find the application for passport as simple common sense. Most of them are frustrated by the lack of employment opportunities in the country and the tight social networks and political patronage, which interfere with and the search for jobs. Additionally, they are dissatisfied with the fact the even political figures, such as Ljubco Georgievski, the former president of VMRO-DPMNE and Prime Minister of the country between 1998 and 2002, has acquired Bulgarian citizenship and moved to Bulgaria after the *fiasco* of his political career in Macedonia. Moreover, even though the Macedonian media has actualised the so called "purchasing of Macedonian soles", a complete lack of political action to ensure that this will not happen has followed. Thus, the Bulgarian passport could be seen as a fetishized object which absorbs into its materiality the value created by social, economic and political relations that Bulgarians as citizens of an EU member state enjoy in the international arena (Neofotistos, 2009, 22). Moreover, the Bulgarian government has used the recognition of the "Bulgarian minority" in Macedonia as one of the conditions for Macedonia to join the European Union. Just as the Greek government, it also described the monuments from "Skopje 2014" as provocation and "stealing of the modern Bulgarian history" (Sloboden Pecat, November, 2013), something which also requires re-evaluation on the road to Europe.

Comparing the national mythopoesis in Greece and Bulgaria one can conclude that the contestation of Macedonian history and identity have been constitutional part of their respective historiography and identity construction plans. Moreover, both Greece and Bulgaria have instrumentalised their historiography and national mythology in political struggles such as territorial expansion or minority assimilation. After the both countries have become EU member states, they have in every possible way used their position of an 'insider' to blackmail Macedonia on further concessions towards its past, present and future.

In this context it is important to underline that during 1930's the revolutionary spirit of IMRO was gradually suppressed, not only in Greece and Bulgaria, but also in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Thus, through the weak national identity among its people and the insignificant activities of IMRO the belated statehood of the Macedonian people can be explained. It is important for the later debate to know that Macedonian national awakening preceded the creation of its own state, but the (regimented) creation of a distinct Macedonian identity within a state, can be only traced back to Tito's Yugoslavia (after 1945). Even during the war against fascism, and especially in the end phase of the World War II, part of the Macedonian partisan troupes wished to fight for the freedom of the Aegean and Pirin Macedonia, but for their ideals they were treated as separatist and punished with

labour camps by the new federal state. The communist leader Josip Broz Tito, has envisioned Yugoslavia (the “land of south Slavs”) as a federation of equal sovereign republics and posited common Slavic ancestry for the populations of these republics (except for Albanians), and recognized in November 1943, the formerly Serbian, Vardar Macedonia as the new Macedonian state and one of Yugoslavia’s constituent republics. Nonetheless, the Macedonian national identity was continuously obstructed throughout the Yugoslav period. For instance, the Serbian patriarchate has denied, and still denies, the autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church proclaimed since 1967 by the Macedonian clergy.

Namely these relatively recent collective memories of persecution, forced assimilation and denial of the right for self-determination from all mightier neighbours of Macedonia are the heart of the contemporary struggle for the Macedonian identity.

The period after Macedonia’s independence

After a series of economic and political crisis 1991 has witnessed the outbreak of the armed conflicts for independence from the Yugoslav Federation. Slovenia won its independence first, followed by Croatia and Macedonia. However, the independence process was marked by conflicts and few deaths, signalling the upcoming war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, based mainly on ethnic and religious grounds. The Macedonian people voted in favour of independence on referenda, but there are indices, as seen through the ever persistent nostalgia for the Yugoslav past, that the decision was taken not only as a real desire for statehood but also as an alternative to the war on the side of JNA (the Yugoslav National Army, now the army of the Serbs and the Montenegrins) against the Croats, the Bosnians, and later, the Kosovo Albanians.

A year before the independence, of the country was declared in September 1991, two main parties have fought for the Parliament seats on the first multi-party elections, the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (mainly former members of the Communist Party) and VMRO–DPMNE (the conservative, nationalistic party, whose membership claims to be a direct ideological ancestor of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (VMRO). On these elections VMRO–DPMNE became the strongest party in the Parliament, but because it did not achieve a majority of seats, the party was forced to form a coalition with an ethnic Albanian party. The party refused to do so. This hard line on ethnic issues is one of the party’s pillars of popularity among the ethnic Macedonians, even until today.

The formation of the new country has opened an old wound in the Balkan history, the name dispute with Greece. Greece refused to recognize the country’s constitutional name despite the fact that Macedonia (and not Croatia) met the criteria for recognition that were established by the Badinter Commission, a group of jurists set up by the EU. The centre-right government of Constantine Mitsotakis, argued forcefully in the early 1990s that Macedonians had no right to their name

because, *unlike Greeks, they were not descended from ancient Macedonians* and that alleged intentions to steal Greece's cultural heritage could potentially be accompanied by irredentist aspirations. Hence, a cabinet meeting on 4 December 1991: "Set three conditions to the Skopje Republic, which must be accepted, if recognition is wanted. First, [it must] change the name 'Macedonia' which has a geographic but not an ethnic basis, second, [it must] acknowledge that it has no territorial claims against our country, and, third, [it must] acknowledge that no 'Macedonian Minority' exists in Greece" (Papakonstantinou 1994, 419 in Tziampiris, 2012, p. 154).

Athens set itself a task to translate this decision into European policy. At the subsequent meeting of the European Community's (EC's) Foreign Ministers on 15 December 1991, the criteria that would be utilized in recognizing the various new republics were decided. For the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia it was stated that it should: "Adopt constitutional and political guarantees ensuring that it has no territorial claims towards a neighbouring Community State and that it will conduct no hostile propaganda activities vs. a neighbouring Community State, including the use of a denomination which implies territorial claims" (EPC Press Release P. 128/91 16 December 1991, in Tziampiris, 2012, 154). This policy was strongly accepted by the Greek population, as demonstrated with the protest of, according to Tziampiris (2012, 154), one million people or about a tenth of the country's population, on the 14th of February 1992, about the Macedonian issue in the city of Thessaloniki. They approved the following resolution: "The Greek government is called upon to stand by the spirit and message of [this] resolution and demonstration. The people of Macedonia and Thessaloniki request from the Foreign Minister that he continues to fight, and not accept the recognition of the state of Skopje with a name or designation that will include the name Macedonia" (*Ibid*).

Not being compatible with Greece's maximalist stance two names were negotiated in the years 1992-1993, namely, 'New Macedonia' and "Republic of Macedonia (Skopje)", but they were immediately rejected by Greece. With war raging in Croatia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the need to ensure the country's stability became an urgent priority for the international community. The problem of possible Serbian territorial ambitions had been a long-running concern in Macedonia, which some nationalists in Serbia still called "South Serbia" after its pre-World War II name. The deteriorating security situation led to the UN's first-ever preventative peacekeeping deployment in December 1992, when UN Protection Force units were deployed to monitor possible border violations from Serbia. Under strong international pressure also for the first time a country has been accepted in the UN under temporary name. On 7 April 1993, the UN Security Council endorsed the admission of the Macedonia under the name Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (FYROM). Both Greece and Macedonia have agreed that the appellation "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" is a provisional term to be used only until the dispute was resolved. The conservative VMRO-DPMNE will later label this treaty as treason of Macedonian national interests.

In 1994 Greece imposed on Macedonia a nineteen-month trade embargo, a punitive action against Macedonia's name and the selection of the Vergina sun—a symbol from the ancient Macedonian past for the Republic's flag. The embargo had devastating consequences for the young Macedonian economy, especially combined with the armed conflict on the north of the country as well. The Social Democrats have overtaken the power on 1995 elections, trading the national flag's symbol for the termination of the economic embargo. This will be the first concession made to Greece by the Social Democrats, which a decade later VMRO will use as main arguments of what they call "the strategic mistakes" against their opponents on the elections. The second would be the acceptance of the

name FYROM (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) as a temporary name under which the country was recognised by the UN, thus been the first and only member of the organisations to be accepted under this condition.

In line with the normalization of the bilateral relations an Interim Agreement was signed in New York on 13 September 1995. This led not only to the removal of the star from the flag, but also the 'offending' articles of the Constitution. However, it had not resulted in solving the name dispute. Greece, on the other hand, agreed that it would not object to any application in international organisations made by Macedonia as long as the country used only the appellation set out in "paragraph 2 of the United Nations Security Council resolution 817" (i.e. "former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"). The Interim Accord also provided a sufficient framework for a spectacular improvement in bilateral economic relations. Between 1995 and 2000, Greece became 'the second largest trade partner of FYROM ... and the largest investor in the country'. Greece was also in the third place as a destination for FYROM's exports and in the second place as the country of origin of its imports (Nikas 2003, 122 in Tziampiris, 2012, 155-156).

After winning the 1998 election VMRO–DPMNE finally formed a coalition government with an ethnic Albanian party and a new government with Ljubco Georgievski, the former and the leader of the party since 1990, as a Prime Minister. This also marked the political debut of Gruevski, the present Prime Minister of Macedonia, who became a Finance Minister, a founder of the Brokerage Association of Macedonia in 1998 and the man who made the first transaction on the Macedonian Stock Exchange. This highlights the character of this politician, as entrepreneurial, young, western-oriented, character, which later will be modified in the uncompromising battle with the opposition of his policies.

In February 1998 another Balkan crisis has commenced, the Kosovo crisis. According to figures released on 17 May by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, there were circa 229.300 Kosovo refugees in Macedonia within the first months of the conflict (International Crisis Group, 1999). Approximately 78.900 of these lived in refugee camps; 120.432 were registered as refugees and lived with host families; and 30.000 were believed to be staying with host families without having been registered. The number of refugees in Macedonia thus, equalled roughly 11 percent of that country's population (*Ibid.*). According to another source, during the 1999 Kosovo crisis, 360.000 people sought refuge in Macedonia (U.S. Committee for Refugees World Refugee Survey, 2001), and this equalled 18 percent of the population. It is not hard to imagine what kind of consequences this could have for one of the three poorest countries in Europe. At the same time, insurgents from the Kosovo Liberation Army began crossing the border and entrenching themselves in Albanian-populated municipalities of the Republic. Macedonian authorities frequently intercepted and seized weapons deliveries en route to Kosovo (Kim, 2002). This demonstrates how fragile are the new states on the Balkans politically, economically and diplomatically, and how they were a mere terrain for the fulfilment of the new geo-political designs of the 'great powers' as seen mirrored through the re-distribution of power among the nations in South-East Europe. Particularly after the 1999 Kosovo crisis, there was a strong conviction that the security of Europe is also related to the security of the Balkans, thus their integration into Western structures was strongly promoted. Within this framework, the Greek threat of blocking Macedonian candidacy posed and still poses a serious problem for the overall EU enlargement strategy.

Macedonia entered the Stabilisation and Association Process in November 2000, and on 9 April 2001 successfully completed the negotiations for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement, that entered into force on 1 April 2004 (European Commission, 2006, 4). In fact, Macedonia was the *first country of the Western Balkans to achieve this* (Mavromatidis, 2010, 52). At this point, both Greece and Macedonia, came close to an agreement on the basis of the name 'Gornamakedonia' [Upper Macedonia], in combination with the provision of substantial Greek aid and security guarantees. However, the outbreak of the 2001 armed ethnic crisis in Macedonia effectively ended this attempt (Tziampiris, 2012, 156).

Between February and August 2001 Albanian insurgents, mostly in the north and west of the country, started an armed conflict with the Macedonian police and army units, after the demands for more political rights were not negotiated with the ruling VMRO. This was the first case of serious use of EU and US military power in Macedonia. The conflict ended relatively fast, and in particular, as a result of EU and US mediation. Notably, the EU pressed for a resolution and the EU was the agency that monitors it. The so called Ohrid Framework Agreement was the peace deal signed by the government of the Republic of Macedonia and ethnic Albanian representatives on 13 August 2001. Among other, the Agreement also included provisions for recognition as an official language of the country any language spoken by over 20% of the population, thus becoming co-official with the Macedonian language on municipal level. This turned the Albanian, with an approximate 25% of the population, into second official language in the country. The Agreement also predicted revision of the Law on Local Self-Government, which will strengthen the powers of local elected representatives. This resulted in the prolonged public display of the Albanian flags on the streets of municipalities with Albanian majority, not accompanied by the Macedonian ones, thus perceived as 'marking of our own territory'. It envisioned full respect of the principle of non-discrimination and equal fair treatment of all persons under the law. This principle had to be applied in respect of employment in public administration and public enterprises, which resulted in quota-based, mass fictive employments, when ethnic Albanian public employees received salaries without regularly visiting their working place. One of the most significant changes that followed after the signing of the Agreement was the forming of the new Albanian Democratic Union for Integration party (DIU), having as a founder and as a president Ali Ahmeti, the leader of the former Albanian National Liberation Army in the Macedonian Conflict in 2001. In 1996, he was one of the main founders of the Kosovo Liberation Army, and in 1998, when the Kosovo war began, he was elected member of the main headquarters of the Kosovo Liberation Army. DIU's party elite was also constituted by former insurgents, later becoming crucial players even as ministers in the government. After the *full amnesty* of the NLA insurgents, DIU has entered the government, forming a coalition with the winning Social Democrats, who received a second chance and again returned as "saviours" of the people after the armed conflict. This party, since then, will enter any new government, thus 'guaranteeing the rights of the Albanians' and clearly having no distinctive ideological background.

The defeat on the 2002 elections has marked a new episode in the history of the conservative VMRO-DPMNE. This was a period of infighting within the party. Gruevski emerged as the pro-EU leader, and he was elected as leader of the party after Ljubco Georgievski left the position, formed his own insignificant party (VMRO-People's Party) and started living in Bulgaria, thus revealing his pro-Bulgarian political affinities, typical for the party, as already mentioned, ever since its birth at the end of the 19th century. However, VMRO-DPMNE retained most of the party's supporters, and under Gruevski commenced a rebranding process, mainly based on fixing of Georgievski's policies, rather

than on real ideological changes. What is also typical of this re-branding is that also the leadership style of Gruevski was something completely new on the political scene. He built an image of a politician far away from the 'professional' politicians known to that date, a young person, without any affairs behind him, welcoming the young to take executive positions, extremely pro-European and reform-oriented.

In 2004 the longstanding leader of the Social Democrats, Branko Crvenkovski, who served as Prime Minister of Macedonia from 1992 to 1998 and from 2002 to 2004 became President of the Republic of Macedonia a post that he held until May 2009. The Presidency of the party was handed to Vlado Buckovski, who was the party leader and Prime Minister until the 2006 Parliamentary elections. This total overtake of power has frightened VMRO-DPMNE, especially after the leadership of the Social Democrats was advancing on the EU agenda. It is crucial for the later debate to keep on mind that in small and impoverished country like Macedonia, the political party who will be able to take the country into the European Union, could hope for many years of mass support and incumbency.

On 22 March 2004, FYR Macedonia submitted an application for EU membership and the Commission published its opinion based on the Copenhagen Criteria on 9 November 2005. The Commission recommended to the Council that candidate status be granted as a political recognition of a closer relationship between the EU and Macedonia on its way towards membership (European Commission, 2005a, 137–139). The Council granted FYR Macedonia candidate status but without setting a date for commencing the candidacy negotiations (Heaney, 2007, 409 in Mavromatidis, 2010, 52).

In approximately the same time, the Macedonian diplomacy had another international success. In October 2005 the Macedonian Prime Minister Vlado Buckovski visited the United States and while meeting with the officials focused on the progress Macedonia has made since the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement in August 2001. Buckovski praised Macedonia as "the only functional and stable multi-ethnic democracy in the Balkans", "a success", and a country that "sets a precedent for the entire Balkan region". He also *expressed appreciation to NATO and the European Union (EU) for having provided critical assistance to Macedonia*, noted that Macedonia has been cooperating in the effort to *strengthen democracy*, and assured that his country is committed to upholding democratic principles and that through interethnic cooperation Macedonia has moved away from being a "consumer" to being a "producer" of security and stability (Neofotistos, 2008, p 21). Buckovski, thus, has sent a clear message for the form of the trade off that should happen in the nearest future: as Macedonia was cooperating with the West and it is in her own best interest to join NATO and the EU, it is also in the best interest and it is expected from the to West to support Macedonia in such efforts as a way of instilling democracy in the region and motivating other surrounding countries to embrace further democratic transformations. Soon after, on 4 November 2004, mainly as a reward for the participation in the 'war on terror' in Iraq and Afghanistan, the US have recognised the Republic of Macedonia under its constitutional name, thus winning another important ally against Greece.

In March 2005, the UN negotiator for the name dispute with Greece, Nimetz, submitted a proposal suggesting that FYROM's international name be changed to 'Republica Makedonija-Skopje' (Republic of Macedonia-Skopje in Macedonian), but the proposal was rejected by Skopje although it was viewed favourably in Athens and accepted as a basis for further negotiations, which was a clear

indication that Greece was moving away from the maximalist 1992 position on the name dispute (Tziampiris, 2012, p 157). This seems as an illogical step for such an extremely pro-EU elite but it can be explained with the prolonged status quo of the Macedonian economy and the upcoming parliamentary elections in 2006. If the Social Democrats would do further concessions on the national identity amidst the deteriorated economic conditions in the country, the parliamentary elections would have been almost certainly lost. These concerns have triggered internal conflicts among the Social Democrats.

On 30 November 2005, shortly before the end of the SDSM mandate in the Parliament, one of the most prominent members of the SDSM, Tito Petkovski, left the party to form the New Social Democratic Party, thus marking the first fracturing within the party. This has given VMRO-DPMNE an advantage and the party became the largest in Parliament again after a net gain of over a dozen seats in the 2006 parliamentary elections. With 44 of 120 seats, the party formed a government in coalition with the Democratic Party of Albanians. After the 2006 election defeat the leadership of the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia was transferred from Buckovski to Radmila Sekerinska, who kept it until 2008, succeeded by Zoran Zaev (2008–2009). This was marking further insecurities within the party, later to be 'fixed' by the unchallenged authority of Crvenkovski, who returned to the seat only after the end of his presidency with the Republic in 2009.

As the rebranded VMRO-DPMNE sized the power in 2006 the so called *antiquisation* policy has been pursued, although many analysts erroneously suggest that the policy was implemented after Macedonia's non-invitation to NATO in 2008. This policy clearly differs from the pro-Bulgarian, and thus Slavic, version of the Macedonian origins and cultural heritage of the former VMRO-DPMNE. Hence, on 29 December 2006, it was announced that FYROM was renaming the Skopje airports to Alexander the Great.

The Commission's 2007 Progress Report noted that "The renaming of Skopje airport after Alexander the Great was received as a provocation, contrary to the 1995 Interim Agreement. Actions which could negatively affect good neighbourly relations should be avoided. Renewed efforts are needed, with a constructive approach, to find a negotiated and mutually acceptable solution on the name issue ... thereby contributing to regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations. (Commission of the European Communities 2007, 18) According to Mavromatidis (2010), the EU as a whole has been loyal to Greece throughout the whole period of negotiations with Macedonia, but many EU member states were not. Therefore, during this period, many EU member states began to recognise FYR Macedonia as the Republic of Macedonia (the trend was reinforced with the 2004 enlargement, since the majority of the new member states had already recognised the new state). Obviously, Greece was losing the only stronghold, the EU, and hence, on 30 September 2007, Greece publicly and unambiguously rejected the 1992 maximalist position on the name issue in favour of a more moderate stance. Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis explained in Parliament that her country 'pursues the finding of a mutually acceptable solution on the basis of a compound name'— meaning that the inclusion of the term Macedonia was now acceptable. It was subsequently clarified that Athens was aiming for a compound name with a geographical connotation (e.g. Northern Macedonia) *erga omnes* (Tziampiris, 2012, p 160), albeit the Greek public was against such decision. For instance, an opinion poll on 24 February 2008 showed that 80 per cent of the Greek population was against a name that contains the term Macedonia (Mavromatidis, 2010, 59).

On the 6 February 2008, Gruevski suggested that the best time for a solution of the name dispute would be after Macedonia receives an invitation to join NATO and before the Greek Parliament's ratification of it. He however, suggested that any compromise on the name would have to be endorsed by a majority of the Macedonian citizens in a referendum, something no other politician has ever promoted. At the end of the next month, Nimetz proposed the name 'Republic of Macedonia-Skopje' (In English). Skopje claims to have accepted this proposal, subject to a popular referendum. Despite intense pressure emanating from Washington D.C. it was rejected by Athens (Tziampiris, 2012, p 162).

The US support did not cease in the months to come. On the first day of the Bucharest NATO summit in April 2008, President Bush stated that the next day Albania, Croatia and Macedonia would enter the Alliance, although simultaneously Greece was mentioning the veto. Shortly before the summit, the Greek Prime Minister Karamanlis in his speech on foreign policy stated: "Without a mutually acceptable solution the road to NATO cannot be opened for our neighbouring country. It cannot be invited to join" (27 March 2008). At the same time, perhaps partly inspired by this statement and also by the rejection of the name suggested by Nimetz in March, billboards, advertising a private art exhibit of the artist Atanas Botev entitled "60 years of exodus" depicting the Greek flag with the swastika covering the cross and placing in the middle of the flag a photography of his grandparents and their children, who fled northern Greece during the Greek Civil War and relocated in the Republic of Macedonia, appeared in Skopje. Another incident was the visit of the grave of Goce Delcev, the most prominent VMRO revolutionary, by the Prime Minister Gruevski few days before the summit. The TV cameras of the national television have clearly shown the map of 'United Macedonia' (starching in today's Greece) above the grave of Delcev in the moment when the Prime Minister was bowing to the grave and laid fresh flowers. The association between Nazi Germany and Greece sparked Greek fury and a few days later, on 3 April 2008, Greece vetoed Macedonia's accession to NATO, despite Macedonia's significant progress toward satisfying the accession criteria established in NATO's Membership Action Plan. Greece also claimed that similar action would follow when Macedonia tries to join the EU in the future, unless the country changed its name.

The non-invitation to NATO also spurred reactions in Macedonia. The Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) has proposed early parliamentary elections, and the ruling VMRO-DPMNE supported them as a legitimacy test. Although the opposition Social Democratic Union and Liberal Democratic Party boycotted the vote, 70 of the 120 MPs voted in favour of the motion, with all others absent from the vote. Elections had not been due until 2010, and these were the first early elections since independence in 1991. In the 120 seats Parliament, VMRO-DPMNE won 63 seats, enough to form its own government, and by that, the party won 4 more years of dominance in the Macedonian Parliament (mandate period 2008-2012) and government control, despite the number of irregularities reported during the elections.

This marked the period of unchallenged political dominance for the party. Within this context, when Macedonian national identity has been under attack and Macedonia has carried little weight in the international arena, the NGO 16:9, close to the government and its aims, supports efforts to establish links with the Hunza people of Pakistan, a self-proclaimed descendants of the ancient Macedonians, living in the mountain tops of the Himalayas. After the preparation of a documentary film, which highlights the alleged similarities of the two nations, based on nativistic simplifications and historical counterfeiting in the same 2008 the Hunza Prince visits Macedonia and thus marks the intensification

of the myth-making practices of the political elites. What was hidden from the public was the fact that there was a completely comparable Greek project few years earlier, involving the Kalasha people of Pakistan, a neighbouring people of the Hunzas, and that the Macedonian project almost in details copied the strategies of approximation with the 'distant relatives'.

Nevertheless, in the 2008 Commission Progress Report, Macedonia's satisfactory progress towards SAA implementation is noted. However, the shortcomings that are mentioned in the Accession Partnership remain, the most serious being the irregularities in the 2008 elections (European Commission, 2008). Encouraged by the lack of consequences on the EU level, the VMRO government started maintaining a hard line on the negotiations, without any room for compromises. The hard position is consistent with the electoral programme of the party, which in the next elections will use the name issue as the core of its policies. Ever since then the Macedonian government puts more issues on the negotiation table, such as the Macedonian minority in Greece and compensation for those who left Greece after the end of the Greek civil war. For instance, on 14 July 2008, the Macedonian Prime Minister sent a letter to the Greek Prime Minister, calling on him to recognise the rights of the Macedonian minority, which for Greece does not exist (Mavromatidis, 2010, p 49). Also in November 2008, Macedonia took Greece to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) arguing that it had violated the Interim Accord by blocking the country's NATO entry.

In 2009, the party had another two major successes. The VMRO-DPMNE-led coalition "For a better Macedonia" won in 56 out of 84 municipalities and the party's presidential candidate Gjorge Ivanov also won the presidential election. Now VMRO-DPMNE had the situation in its own hands, resembling the case of the Social Democrats in 2004. The myth about the 'greatness' of the nation and the respect that the world owes to today's Macedonia, due to the Alexander's achievements, reached new pinks. Blending of the Hellenistic heritage (re-named into Macedonistic) with the Christian conservative values was the renewed form of glorifying of all that the name Macedonia could sustain. In 2009 the Macedonian Radio-Television, aired a video named "Macedonian prayer" in which the Christian God was presented calling the people of the Republic of Macedonia "the oldest nation on Earth" and "progenitors of the white race", who are described as "Macedonoids", in opposition to Negroids and Mongoloids. The God also call upon 'his people' to keep the faith and do not give up in these tremendously difficult times for their identity. The government has rejected the links with the material but played the video on the following national holidays. The propagandistic nature of the video spoke of the ties of the national with the governing elite and the distorted independence of the national TV service.

In May 2009, after finishing the 5-year-term of President of the Republic, Branko Crvenkovski returned to the SDSM and was re-elected as a party leader. He tried to reorganize the party profoundly, but resigned after the party's defeat in the 2013 local elections. In June 2013, Zoran Zaev returned as the new-old leader of the party.

The 2009 EU Progress Report is even more positive than the one from 2008, considering Macedonia's readiness for entering negotiations with the EU, but the fear of the Greek veto is still apparent. The same year, the Commission has decided to recommend the opening of accession negotiations with the country. The EP was once again supportive, calling the Council to act in accordance with the Commission's recommendation. The new Greek government led by George Papandreou although demonstrating a renewed willingness for dialogue, remained on the position that 'the name issue

must be resolved before ... accession negotiations with Skopje are opened'. Thus the EU Council ignored the recommendations of the Commission and the EP in 2009.

On February 2010 the project "Skopje 2014" has been officially announcement with a video clip circulating the national and private TV stations and the internet, featuring most of the capital objects and monuments to be built until 2014. The only buildings to be built before the announcement were the National Theatre, The museum of the Macedonian Struggle and the Museum of Archaeology. Many of the monuments, the new seat of VMRO, the changed facade of the government building and many other facilities were not formerly predicted.

Meanwhile just as in 2009 the EU Council ignored the Commission's and the EP's recommendations for beginning of negotiations with Macedonia also in 2010 and 2011. In this context on 5 December 2011 the ICJ reached its decision on Greece having violated the Interim Accord signed with Macedonia, by blocking the country's accession in the NATO. However, the ruling does not proscribe Athens future actions on the name issue, allowing Greece to continue with the same strategies. Moreover, after the ICJ judgement no pressure towards Greece was registered by either NATO or the European Union.

The Macedonian government continues with "Skopje 2014" even after the officially announced end of the project in 2014. Moreover, in pre-election campaign in 2013 Gruevski announces that "Skopje 2014" will become "Macedonia 2017".

Urban context

The earliest evidence of systematic settlement at the present site of the city of Skopje date from the 4th century BC. The city came under Roman rule in 148 BC – a period associated with the founding of the ancient city, whose site can be found approximately 4 km north-east of the present centre of Skopje. The area was gradually settled by Slavonic tribes migrating from the north, while coming under the rule of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian. Latter, the city became the seat of the Slavic Tsar Samoil's empire, only to be recaptured by the Byzantines in 1018. It also became a capital of the Serbian kingdom of Stefan Dusan in 1346, but fell under Turkish Ottoman rule in 1392.

The Ottomans, who ruled the city for the next five centuries, left a profound imprint on its urban landscape. It gradually assumed a distinct Ottoman appeal, with distinct concentration of densely-knit residential quarters around a central market area – coinciding with its key public buildings, including mosques, baths and caravanserais.

In 1929, Skopje became the administrative capital of the Serbian 'Vardarska Banovina'. After World War II, surviving the severe bombing damage during the German raids in 1941, the city has been transformed in an unprecedented manner. The Yugoslav socialistic authorities pursued a policy of rapid industrialisation and modernisation, adopting master plans that introduced automobile traffic,

modernist dwelling houses and new office blocks into and around the urban core. Following the end of the 50's the city core started getting signs of Western architecture with functional shapes and simple geometric contours and facades.

But they were dramatically interrupted by the catastrophic earthquake that struck the city on the 26th of July 1963, killing over 1000 of its inhabitants and injuring a further 3000, leaving some 100,000 of its residents homeless and 80% of the buildings destroyed. The United Nations General Assembly appealed for international support for the rebuilding of the city, in one of the rare examples of synchronised action at this level of governance. Skopje was declared an 'international city of solidarity', which resulted in significant aid from over 80 countries to the alleviation of the earthquake's consequences. According to Causidis (2010) "the fate of Skopje will be dragged into the "machine" of Yugoslav and international architectural competitions and juries. As a consequence, the Macedonian capital will become a mirror of the world's most avant-garde trends of contemporary architecture". The detailed city centre planning will be awarded to the Japanese architect Kenzo Tange, who played a central role in the rebuilding of Hiroshima and the urban planning of Tokyo. Tange's ideas completely restructured the historical centre of Skopje. Although his plan retained some parts of the old Ottoman market, as well as the mediaeval fortress Kale and 20th-century central square, most of the residential quarters and public buildings were completely destroyed. Some churches and buildings evoking 'bourgeois' architectural style, were intentionally not reconstructed by the socialistic elites. In part, they were replaced by a number of monumental brutalist structures, which gave the city, in the words of the Lonely Planet country guide for the Western Balkans, a 'superb period ensemble of concrete apartment towers, vast avenues suitable for tank parades and weird space age public buildings' (Plunkett *et al.*, 2006, p. 236 as cited in Buzarovski, 2010). Causidis (2010) describes this as a "cruel imbalance between the plans for the construction of new Skopje and the visions and wishes of its citizens about the appearance of their city", housing structures "such as its existing citizens could not assume that may exist", "away from the real measure of Skopje and away from the desires, needs, tastes and spirit of its inhabitants". It was a city imposed from above, as it could be seen from other, namely the migration policies after the earthquake. During this period, from the surrounding villages and towns huge number of citizens has moved to the city which had been struggling to build even elementary urban utility components. The intention was to pull this people away from their provincial environment and lead them into the new worlds of, futuristic buildings, to turn the farmers into cosmopolitan. "But the opposite happened - the new citizens of Skopje pulled down the city from the clouds to the ground, Kenzo Tange was defeated by the chaos and poverty of post-socialist society and Macedonian chronic disease - small personal and kin-clan interests placed above the common good. The world-famous town plan started to fall apart under the usurpation of the new local "capitalist-oligarchs" and various other strongmen" (Causidis, 2010).

The local council of the Centre municipality that encompasses the urban core of Skopje supported the systematic revitalisation of the city centre with an adoption of a new detailed urban plan in 1997, envisioning a construction of a wide range of residential, public and business buildings. The plan differed radically from the earlier conceptualisations of the of the city's urban core morphology, abolishing most of the broad streets and open public spaces predicted by the 1964 reconstruction, reverting the area to the urban form it possessed prior to the earthquake. However, with the exception of a few residential and office buildings, because of the persistent lack of investment capital, only few of the objects foreseen by the plan were built in the following years. The empty land

in the city centre failed to attract any significant developments. Yet, this changed rapidly in 2007, when the newly elected right-wing government declared the revamp of the city centre of Skopje as one of its key political and culture-related priorities. As a result, the area saw an unprecedented input of public funds towards the construction of a number of iconic projects.

In order to accommodate the government's policy within the existing planning framework, the detailed urban plans for the municipality of Centre – where VMRO-DPMNE also has a majority in the local council – were changed four times during two years, 2008 and 2009. The expeditiously implemented modifications, however, were criticised for lack of transparency and quality, especially as they were not embraced by the local population and the expert community. The fierce opposition culminated on the 28th of March 2009, when a public gathering against a building of a church on the main square, mainly led by students and staff from the State University's Faculty of Architecture, was interrupted by a right-wing counterdemonstration, resulting in violence and injuries for some of the genuine, student protesters. The protest of the students was announced earlier and therefore police forces were present on the site of the violence, but did not take any action to stop it. Latter, all of the violators were amnestied, thus, their action justified. The student initiative had been partially motivated by the controversies surrounding an earlier initiative to build a memorial home for Mother Teresa, who was born in Skopje in 1910 and lived in the city for 18 years before the beginning of her missionary work in India. Even though the Ministry of Culture opened an international competition for the project – eventually won by the Portuguese architect Jorge Marum – the government eventually chose to rely on the work of a Macedonian architect, who designed, according to Pencic (2009, p. 21) a building that offends 'with its pretentiousness, with its arrogance, with its tastelessness', mainly 'by totally ignoring any architectural correlation with the life and work of Mother Teresa' (Bouzarovski, 2010, 272-273).

It is also worth knowing that after the disintegration of the Yugoslavia, Skopje, as the third largest city of the former federation and the biggest city in the new country, became the only centre of economic and political power, seat of all the embassies, foreign agencies and NGOs and a magnet for internal migration. The loss of industrial employment was, to a certain extent, compensated by the expansion of the service sector, which has been mainly represented by construction, retail, trade, and finance: for example, Skopje currently hosts more than 80% of the country's banking industry, with total assets exceeding 3.5 billion Euros. The city's host region currently produces about half of Macedonia's GDP, attracting almost 90% of all new investment in the country (Cangova, 2007 as cited in Bouzarovski, 2010). One fourth of the total population (2002 census) of the country lives in Skopje. Roughly one third of the total number of active businesses is operated in the capital city, with 1088 million US dollars total value of exports out of the respective 2401 million on country level and 2506 million US dollars total value of imports out of the respective 3763 million on country level (Bouzarovski, 2010). Hence, the realisation of the Project in a country so strongly dependant on its capital city, is a logical and expected political move.

Situational context

After the announcement of the Project some political events were closely entangled with its realisation. During this period there were two parliamentary and one local elections. The Project was in the heart of the debates surrounding the elections. This is also the period in which the authoritarian character of the ruling party came to fore and was intensified, which triggered another strategy on the side of the opposition. These times, differently than before, the critique of the opposition has concentrated on the lack of democracy in the country and on demands for more transparency and fairness in the political competition.

For instance, a bitter dispute between the ruling coalition and the opposition was triggered when a police-assisted raid of public revenue officers took place at the end of 2010, on a group of related companies including a private TV station, three daily newspapers, and other companies, for alleged tax evasion offenses. The Social Democrats claimed that the media were raided because of their anti-government inclinations. On 28 January 2011 the opposition walked out of the Parliament in protest, alluding to government's lack of democratic capacity, and demanding early election. The ruling coalition initially rejected this request for early election, noting strong public support and strong parliamentary majority as main reasons, but after a one-month status quo, the Prime Minister accepted the request and announced on 23 February 2011 that early elections will eventually take place. After the failed attempts of the major parties to reach consensus on the changes of the electoral law and other demands of the opposition during March, the Parliament was dissolved in April and the election date set for 5 June 2011. The coalition led by Gruevski won election, their third electoral victory in a row. Objections of misuse of state resources, including the blackmail of over one hundred thousand public servants to act as agitators were neglected.

On September 11, 2011, the 20th anniversary of the Independence, the opposition parties have participated in the celebration of the holiday within the parliamentary house, but rejected to attend the events on the main square of Skopje, hosting all the new sculptures, narrating another vision of the nation's past and heritage. They have attacked the celebration as "a promotion of Gruevski and of Skopje 2014". As it will be demonstrated later in detail, this public celebration was used as another opportunity for legitimisation of this new narrative, through myth-making rituals.

In October 2012 a rally organised by the opposition demanded March election, mainly based on the dissatisfaction with spending of the public money for the "Skopje 2014" project. The mayor candidate said: "There is only one motive behind it: stealing money. This crime has cost more than 500 million euro!" (Balkan Insight, October, 2012). The conflict has heated on December 24, 2012, when following a fist-fight, the opposition MPs and journalists were thrown out of Parliament with police assistance during a debate on the state budget. The opposition has fiercely opposed the continuation of the Skopje's revamp and the loans planned to be taken from international institutions to plug the gap in the budget. Government debt has risen sharply in 2012 when Macedonia took out or agreed to take out almost 700 million Euros in loans from foreign banks and financial institutions. In April that year Macedonia has accepted the offered 75 million Euros to pursue reforms and address social welfare issues from the World Bank, it took a loan of 250 million euro from Deutsche Bank to fill the budget gap and a year earlier, in November 2011, Macedonia borrowed 130 million Euros from Deutsche Bank and Citibank with a guarantee from the World Bank. In March 2011, it drew 220 million euro from its IMF precautionary credit line (*Balkan Insight*,

November, 2012). Following the expulsion of the opposition, the government parties passed a budget for 2013 during few minutes. After this incident the Social Democrats and their supporting parties have boycotted the Parliament.

In early February 2013, the government parties pushed through a change in the parliamentary rules of procedure to limit debate, despite the absence of the opposition. The political status quo lasted until March 1, when an EU-assisted agreement was struck between the government and the opposition. Under the agreement, both sides were supposed to sign a joint declaration on the EU and write a joint report on the crisis, recommending mechanisms to encourage political fair play. However, the main demand of the opposition, to call immediate early general elections, was not heard. Instead, the opposition had to agree to return in the Parliament and participate in local elections, scheduled for the end of March and the beginning of April. With no time to shift its focus from big state issues to practical issues of local importance, the opposition was doomed to a crushing defeat at the election. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the opposition has won the municipality of Centre, the place where all the revamp was supposed to continue. The new mayor, winning after three rounds of re-election because of different governmental obstructions of the victory, has announced a moratorium and revision of the whole Project. The local elections saw a serious erosion of democratic principles and procedures in Macedonia, CIVIL, an NGO, said in its report (*Balkan Insight*, 2013). The NGO recorded widespread violations of the campaign rules, misuse of public administration and funds, threats of dismissals or visits from the financial police, as well as cutting off social and health assistance and payment for votes. The NGO noted that public administration personnel were obliged to attend ruling party rallies during working hours or provide replacements or they would face dismissal". It says that while "shady funds" in the financing of political parties is nothing new, it was noteworthy that this time the ruling VMRO DPMNE party spent more than all other parties put together. The NGO also noted the increased intensity of family voting and the unauthorized presence of political party staffers in and around polling stations. The report of CIVIL also informed that ethnic Macedonians, "inhabitants of villages in the municipality of Pustec, in Albania, were hired *en masse* to vote in the Skopje municipality of Centre. The reason was that the opposition was very likely to win the municipality and threatened to stop the government's flagship project, the re-modelling of the city centre known as Skopje 2014". It says that Pustec residents "were given fake Skopje addresses and ID cards" and were escorted to designated polling stations. This could "only be carried out by the authorities in charge of personal identification documents, i.e. the Ministry of Interior," CIVIL says (*Balkan Insight*, 2013). Although with many irregularities, reported by OSCE/ODIHR, like partisan media coverage, blurring of state and party activities, voter intimidations and several cases of apparent misuse of state resources for campaign purposes, the EU praised the generally *positive* character of the elections and in October, the European Commission delivered its annual report on the country, for a fifth year in a row extending a recommendation for a start to EU membership talks. As the election was described as positive, but no references were made to its fairness, or regularity in general, the EU coined a new expression for democratic governance applicable on the Balkans, thus indirectly supporting the established regimes and even inviting them in the 'club of the democracies'. This happened despite the fact that the World Media Freedom Index 2013, published by Reporters Without Borders, ranked Macedonia in 116th place out of 179 countries, representing a sharp drop of 22 places from the previous year and a drop of 82 places compared to 2009, when the country was ranked in 34th place in the same index.

After a year of prolonged political crisis in the country, VMRO-DPMNE won the 27 April 2014 parliamentary election, providing Gruevski a new term as Prime Minister.

In early 2015 the opposition leader Zoran Zaev claimed to own audio materials reportedly proving government's extensive use of domestic intelligence to spy on the opposition and Gruevski's own political associates. According to Zaev the materials were handed over to him by employees in the intelligence service refusing to participate in act contrasting their ethical code. The opposition leader offered the PM to form a transitional government of experts while the authenticity of the audio materials would be investigated, but Gruevski declined the offer and accused Zaev of blackmailing and coup d'état attempt. On 31 January 2015, the leader of SDSM Zoran Zaev was officially charged with conspiring coup d'état with the help of a foreign intelligence service. Foreign diplomats' involvement was also assumed in the alleged attempt. The affair was named "Putsch" in the pro-government media. Under the assumption that the opposition leader would flee the country his passport was seized by the police and few suspects were detained.

In February 2015, on the other hand, Zaev accused Prime Minister Gruevski of wiretapping and illegally spying on at least 20,000 people. Zaev and the Social Democrats published hundreds of audio materials in which the voices of top government officials were to be recognised. The materials covered from manipulation of public contract law and exercising pressure on the media to police brutality and organising violent responses to oppositional protests to covering political murders. Many of the published conversations were related to "Skopje 2014". The publication created strong resonance in the public, leading towards more organised forms of public disobedience. As the protesters took the streets demanding the political actors to take responsibility for the wiretapping, the country has entered the worst political crisis since 2001.

On the 9-10 May, 2015 a conflict between the Macedonian police forces and an ethnic Albanian armed group identified as the National Liberation Army (NLA) erupted in the northern Macedonian town of Kumanovo claiming 18 lives. Pro-government media accused SDSM in organising the act in order to destabilise the country. Social Democrats and their supporters, on the other hand, claimed the government coalition partners to had orchestrated the conflict in order to defocus the protesters. Two days after the conflict, however, the director of the intelligence service and first cousin of the Prime Minister, Sasho Mijalkov, resigned. The protesters' long awaited resignation of the Minister of Internal Affairs Gordana Jankuloska also followed.

A European Commission inquiry from 8 June, 2015 determined that "many of the suspicions previously raised, concerning interference in judicial affairs, restrictions of freedom of the media, electoral irregularities, blurring of state and party, as well as lack of oversight over intelligence activities have been confirmed by the findings of the group." (Recommendations of the Senior Experts' Group on systemic Rule of Law, 2015). The same inquiry confirms that "The recordings are also of a quality, scale and number to be generally acknowledged to have been made inside the national intelligence service's facilities. The content of many of the recordings provide indications of unlawful activities and abuse of power by senior government officials." (*Ibid*).

Few days before the publishing of the findings, in a meeting on June 2, 2015 attended by the main opposition leader Zoran Zaev, the Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and the EU enlargement commissioner Johannes Hahn, the Pržino Agreement was signed. In order to overcome a deep political crisis the political leaders agreed to hold early elections on June 5, 2016. The Agreement also

predicted establishing of a Special Public Prosecution (SPP) set in charge of the wiretapping scandal and Gruevski's resignation, assumed as precondition for fair elections. Gruevski, however, actively participated in campaigning, making daily media appearances. The work of the SPP has been steadily obstructed by the Ministries, the intelligence service and the Constitutional Court, all assumed to be under continuous control of the temporary removed Prime Minister.

Summary

For clarity I would make a short summary of the historic and political contexts in which the project "Skopje 2014" and the debates around it took place.

Macedonia was one of the last nations on the Balkans to form a state. All its neighbours have one thing in common: they did not and still do not recognise some (although different) elements constitutive for the Macedonian statehood. In the newest history of this young country, this was translated in demands which condition the accession of the country in the so called Euro-Atlantic structures (the EU and NATO), seen by an overwhelming majority of the Macedonian population as a source of territorial integrity, security and economic prosperity. In fact, Greece has managed to exploit its comparative advantages by upgrading its status as the only EU member in the region. This upgrade seems to make Greece the main political interlocutor between the Balkans and the EU and an important factor of stability and development (Mavromatidis, 2010, 54).

The real source of instability was, however, stemming from within the country. The armed conflict with the ethnic Albanians resulted in drastic changes of the Constitution, been the second change within 15 years after the deletion of the 'offensive articles' to Greece. Another hallmark of the Macedonian political system are the many early parliamentary elections, which together with the constant changes in the Constitution demonstrate how fragile are the institutions of the new democratic state.

The Social Democrats were always returning as saviours of the country, firstly by compromising on the national flag in exchange of the economic embargo and secondly after the armed conflict with the Albanian insurgents. During its two terms in the government the relations with Athens were immensely improved. It is also the party which carried out most of the legal preparations and administrative reforms related to EU accession. As such, this party can be labelled as a carrier of milder policies, prepared for compromises, a party which has not endangered the democratisation of the country, but had poor economic performance, primarily through the wrong policies of privatisation and inability to attract foreign investments. This has led to fractionisation of the party and subsequent poor performances on the elections.

The Conservatives, on the other hand, were almost always more popular party and until the coming on power of Gruevski, had rather pro-European stances. After the re-branding of the party, Gruevski succeeded to return the thrust in the party, which brought him, and the party, an unprecedented popularity. He misused this power, personalising politics and concentrating power. Under his reign the bilateral relations with Athens has been worsened like never before. Using the name dispute as a core policy on each consecutive elections, building a strong coalition with the most popular Albanian party and using different means for unfair elections (mainly media control and blackmailing public administration), his power stayed unchallenged for more than a decade, a sufficient period for

experimentations with the national identity and fuzzy developmental strategies embedded in the neo-liberal logic, undermining the democratic institutions and the mechanisms for legal change of power for the first time in the history of the young country.

The strongest party of the Albanians, DUI, pursues strong pro-NATO and pro-EU policy and it is considered as one of the greatest supporters for the country's access in the Euro-Atlantic structures. USA as a guarantee of the Albanian interests in the wider region enjoys special recognition and affection by this party. After entering the government in 2002, the party has never allowed any other Albanian party to form coalition with the election winners of the Macedonian parties, thus forming unprincipled coalitions with both, the Social Democrats and the Conservatives. DUI has many times used a threatening language for the continuous delay of entering NATO and the EU. However, as a smaller coalition partner of VMRO-DPMNE in the government of Gruevski, analysts tend to agree that this party has been "tamed" and became rather conservative, under the condition that it benefits, proportionally to the voting body it represents, from all the entrepreneurships of the government, including "Skopje 2014".

The EU as a broker of all the inter-ethnic and inter-party conflicts in the country has only partially managed to sustain peace and prosperity in the country in the last two and a half decades. Using double standards it has shattered the hopes of many pro-European forces in Macedonia and legitimised the cynical stances and autocratic tendencies of the populist political elite. By not paying any special attention to the ethnic minority rights in its member countries it further erodes the public support in the candidate countries.

Europe in general and the EU as the prime entity behind it in particular, can also be held responsible for the continuous "*occidentalisation*" of Greece and for all the accompanying consequences of those views. Greek nationalists and some intellectuals, what is more, have adapted the Western European ideology, whereby Greece is the "cradle of Western civilization", to satisfy Western standards according to which the Greek nation-state could secure its position as an EU member in the international arena (Neofotistos, 2012, 300). This logic has been pursued by the Macedonian government as well, leading to fundamentally comparable and competitive Greek and Macedonian modernist projects, which are geared toward laying claims to the heritage of Alexander the Great, presumed an ancestor of Western civilization and conquer and civilizer of the so-called uncivilized world, establishing connections with peoples who are allegedly living ancestors of white Europeans, and asserting, respectively, that Greece and Macedonia are "modern," "Western" states (Neofotistos, 2012, 293).

The EU has also provided the context in which identification documents may be viewed as objects that neither necessarily fix nationality nor are ineluctable guarantees of belonging to the (Bulgarian) nation-state (Neofotistos, 2009, 22). In this context we can understand state documentation practices as practices that do not always produce determined identities and citizen-subjects (*Ibid.*), but a commodity eligible for trade.

Paradoxically, perceived as "heaven" of security and democratic prosperity by the candidate countries, the EU itself prefers stability over democracy and rule of law. The Union has shown preparedness for immediate action in Macedonia and in the Western Balkan region in general only when inter-ethnic clashing appeared, assumed to have negative influence on the Union itself.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY AND METHOD

CDA as methodological frame

As my study tries to answer how the construction of new hegemonic narratives on identity and modernisation has influenced the (anti)democratic developments in Macedonia in the last ten years, I have to be able to identify if texts and speeches as political tools were systematically undermining the established democratic institutions of the country. Through legitimisation of undemocratic practices and deconstruction of the prior narratives, or the narratives of the 'others' in general, language can be used as a powerful weapon in political competition, producing or reproducing deep-seated structural inequalities within the society. I therefore need to use critical methodological approach, which demands reflection, deliberation and criticality. Within this framework each individual or a group is granted equal integrity and dignity, regardless of their location in the social reality. Thus, rooted in the rationalism of the Enlightenment, this approach believes in the human ability to alleviate the continuation of injustice by analysis, interpretation and change of social reality. In this context the genesis of some decision-making processes is uncovered and alternative ways of thinking and acting that could negate such practices are sought. According to Reisigl (2008, 117) the careful formulation of a critique aims to answer the research question by raising awareness of problematic discursive strategies, for example, right-wing populist *nominations* and *predications* that are insulting and discriminating as well as *fallacious right-wing populist argumentations*. A critique attempts to develop an accurate characterisation of the most striking anti-democratic strategies and elements that can be found in the rhetoric of politicians. Additionally, it aims to identify populist strategies and elements with political controlling functions. He also argues that the critique should not end up only as a critique, but should be applicable, at least in the scientific context: 'The social application of the analytical results will build on the critique. The utilisation may consist of offering politolinguistic tools that enable us to identify democratically dangerous right-wing populist rhetoric that infringes on principles of rational deliberation (Reisigl, 2008, 117). Others, moreover, believe that the critique should lead to policy changes.

Another important perspective in this approach is that a text is almost never a work of a single person. A text is always related to other texts and its meaning always depends on the context. As such, power does not derive itself from language, however language can be *used* to challenge or redistribute power in the short and long term. I therefore, adhere to the opinion of Wodak and Fairclough (1997, 258) that discourse, seen as language use in speech and writing, is a form of 'social practice'. For answering the research questions I have to, accordingly, analyse discourses, i.e. written and spoken texts, as units of analysis, but in relation to other texts (intertextually) and in context. However, the abovementioned definition takes discourse as practice, as something dynamic. According to another definition, discourse is the content and construction of meaning and the organization of knowledge in a particular realm (Crawford, 2004, 22). Under this definition discourse also contains a static part, as it is organised knowledge. Wodak (2014, 234) also defines discourse as structured knowledge. This implies that discourse as knowledge shapes the language practice of a politically active subject, but also that this subject, through socially practicing language, shapes the organised, structured knowledge. Discourses are thus "concrete" in that they produce a material reality in the practices that they invoke. Accordingly, a discourse can also be defined as a system of texts (and images) that brings objects into being (Parker, 1992 as cited in Hardy *et al.*, 2004, 20). For

example, the post-70's discourse of gay and lesbian rights has brought about the contemporary idea of sexual minority rights and the discourse of gender equality has empowered groups of feminist activists. Discourses are then inherently political. They are about the production and distribution of power, and struggles over knowledge, interests, identity and the social relations they enable or undermine (Laffey and Weldes, 2004, 28). Discursive practices may have major ideological effects — that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people" (Wodak and Fairclough, 1997, 258).

Barring on mind that I have to demonstrate the operation and effects of rhetoric and texts, i.e. discourses, I find the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the most appropriate approach for answering of the research questions and formulating the adequate critique.

From the outset, it must be acknowledged that Discourse Analysis is in fact a political theory as much as a method of inquiry (Hopf, 2004, 31). There is a lot of criticism directed against Critical Discourse Analysis claiming that there is no one, unique, existing theory. However, according to Wodak (2000, 2) CDA is neither a closed and "finished" theory, nor do the researchers in CDA follow only one methodology. Rather it is the case, that very different theoretical and methodological approaches are united through some programmatic principles. The researchers that claim to "belong to CDA" adhere to these principles. One of the consequences of such a program is a large heterogeneity and scholarly openness. CDA could be labelled as a school. The notion of "critic" inherent in CDA's program is understood quite differently by the researchers adhering to the different 'schools'. Some base their critique to Marx's notions, other to the Frankfurt School, yet others to a notion of literary criticism. There are also differences between the American and the European understanding of DA and between the French, e.g. Foucauldian, and the German approaches (i.e. Frankfurt School). In total, "critical" is understood as distancing from the data, embedding the data in the socio-political context, explicitly taking a (political) position, and focusing on self-reflection during the research. This heterogeneity makes it difficult, to really understand CDA as unique theoretical and methodological approach, but it also allows for change and for diversity of even contrasting and conflicting approaches, which can be debated and discussed simultaneously. These debates are always fruitful for academic life and encouraging innovation.

CDA may be defined as fundamentally interested in analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as they are manifested in language. In other words, CDA aims to critically investigate social inequality as it is expressed, constituted or legitimized by language use (Wodak, 2000, 4).

In short, discourse analysis is a methodology for analyzing social phenomena that is qualitative, interpretive, and constructionist. It explores how the socially produced ideas and objects that populate the world were created and are held in place (Hardy *et al.*, 2004, 19). While other qualitative methodologies try to understand and interpret the existing social reality, discourse analysis tries to disclose the way that reality is produced. At the same time, it also examines how discourses are naturalised in such a way as to become common sense, the 'regime of the "taken-for-granted"' (Hall, 1985: 105 as cited in Laffey and Weldes (2004, 28).

As discussed above, discourses have no inherent meaning in themselves. To understand how they operate, i.e. to understand their constructive effects, scientists must locate them historically and

socially. The meanings of any discourse are 'created, supported, and contested through the production, dissemination, and consumption of texts; and emanate from interactions between the social groups and the complex societal structures in which the discourse is embedded' (Hardy, 2001, 28). This means that discourses are always context-dependant. Discourses as commemorative speeches, which are very rare and usually held in ceremonial manor and in front of a large audience (including the imagined audience in front of the TV sets) are very different from discourses published in tabloids or among peers. The media carriers, the assumed audience, the political events prior to the discourse, are only some of the 'contexts' for the production of a new discourse. This brings us to another, closely connected, point.

Because meanings are constructed over time and within as well as across cultures, so are political arguments over political issues developed over some duration. Thus, seeking to understand how some interpretations of the world established as dominant and other were erased or submerged, or how new meanings took hold, one must examine some parts of the discourse prior to and co-terminus with the research question. In other words, the analyst must make choices about the kind of discourse they will focus on and the boundaries of the discourse — both temporal and genre — that they will examine (Crawford, 2004, 23). Thus the discourse-analytical approach attempts to embed the analysis of all the relevant sources of information into the historical and political contexts, but at the same time it is interested in the changes of the types and genres of discourse, revealing the dynamism of the political, or the negotiation power of the actors at certain temporal point.

Before moving to the summary of the CDA principles, I would like to stress one more point, which in a way distinguishes my work from the majority of other books or articles using CDA as a research approach. I already mentioned that the CDA takes into account not only the spoken, but also the written discourses as a form of social practice. However, I agree with Hopf (2004, 32) that DA is about more than words or written texts. It is also about the daily conduct in which each of us engages to make our way in the social world. The author gives an example: when a white woman walking down the street shifts her handbag to the other side of her body upon espying an approaching pair of young black men, she is discursively constructing race relations in that context. She has said not a word, and there is no written record of the event. But that simple action produces as much meaning as a few choice words (Ibid.). Wodak (2014) also analysed images in form of comics and political campaign billboards in a recent article on right-wing discourses, and what she calls fictionalisation of politics, during 2010 local elections in Austria. In my dissertation, I will also pay some attention to the content, the composition and the size of the monuments, part of the project "Skopje 2014", taken as silent discourses, which communicate with the implied audience, send a message and expect reaction. In this sense, I will apply a broader definition of the notion of discourse.

The principles of CDA according to Wodak

Before moving to the description of the concrete method applied to data gathering and analysis, I would summarise the principles of CDA as a research methodology. Wodak (2001) argues that there

are some underlying principles which can be taken as common for almost all research designs using CDA.

1. The approach is interdisciplinary, it assumes that the reality is too complex to be studied by only one discipline. Therefore, the theories are drawn on neighbouring disciplines and usually a team of different professionals engages in the study of the same social phenomena. In other words, knowledge from sociology, politics, linguistics, history, anthropology, ethnography, etc., is required to fully deconstruct certain bulk of written or spoken texts.
2. The approach is problem-oriented, not focused on specific linguistic items. Social problems are the items of research, such as identity, gender, racism, democracy.
3. Following from the first two principles, the methodologies are adapted to the data under investigation. The theories, and the methodologies, are eclectic, chosen so that they will be adequate in understanding and explaining the investigated object. Also, the categories and tools for the analysis are defined according to the specific problem and its context.
4. The approach requires constant movement back and forth between theory and empirical data.
5. Multiple public spaces are studied and intertextual (interdiscursive) relationships are examined. According to Wodak (2001), recontextualization is the most important process in connecting these genres as well as topics and arguments.
6. The historical context is always analysed and integrated into the interpretation of discourses and texts. The change of discursive practices over time is one of the most important elements of the analysis.
7. Grand theories may serve as a foundation, however, in the specific analysis middle-range theories serve the ends better. The problem-oriented approach entails the use and testing of middle-range theories.
8. Critical theories, such as CDA, have special position as guides for human action. They aim to produce enlightenment and emancipation. CDA seek not only to describe and explain, but also to eradicate a particular kind of delusion. The results should be made available to experts and applied with the goal of altering certain social practices.

From principles such as interdisciplinarity, eclecticism and triangulation, it can be concluded that CDA gives the researcher relatively great freedom in choosing the exact tools for understanding, interpretation and deconstruction of discourses in given context. However, after the summary of the advantages of the CDA and prior to the description of the concrete method of inquiry I use in the study, it is worth mentioning some of the limitations of this type of analysis.

Limitations of CDA

Discourse Analysis recognizes that discourses reside in open social systems. In other words, it is impossible to control for “omitted variable bias” (King *et al.*, 1994, 172 as cited in Hopf, 2004, 31).

The meaning of any discourse is far from fixed; it is dependent on the contexts in which a text is being performed. The meaning is not only dependent on the text in question, but also on the relationship of that text to other texts. Because DA does not expect even a same word to mean the same thing whenever and wherever it is said, but instead, believes that statements and actions are always within a broader (con)text giving them meaning, each text is in what Hopf (2004) names 'meaning-giving and meaning-taking' relationships with other texts. DA therefore assumes intertextuality. Hence, it is impossible to ever specify with certainty where the texts stop, so to speak, it is an open social system, and statements about meaning must therefore be moderated accordingly (Hopf, 2004, 31). Neuendorf (2004) appropriately warns against 'drawing generalized conclusions about one's qualitative findings'. The lack of certainty about the concrete meaning is partly rooted in the assumption that the phenomenon of interest is socially constructed in a particular context, and so may not be present on other places, or at a different time. Shortly, the meanings and categorizations are social, not natural, kinds. They are products of human agency, not of God or Nature, so the meanings stand mostly in relation to each other, rather than in relationship to an objective reality (Hopf, 2004, 31). Without the objectivist perspective, natural kinds are impossible, from which follows, generalizations with strong scientific certainty are impossible as well. Discourse Analysis, however, has no intention to solve the problems stemming from notions such as open social systems and omitted variable bias, natural versus social kinds, etc. by calling for application of yet more methodological techniques. Instead, it admits that knowledge claims about social phenomena must simply be less ambitious. The result is strong claims, but within more bounded historical and temporal domains (Hopf, 2004, 31).

As already mentioned, CDA researchers have to admit another limitation within the scope of their work, which on the one hand it is advantage, but on the other hand, simultaneously, it is a disadvantage. This is the problem of subjectivity in the interpretation. Each critical scientist has to openly address her/his own standing points, before or while practicing critique. But before doing that a researcher has to be empathetic with the rhetor. Crawford (2004, 25) argues 'a certain degree of empathy — the cognitive and emotional apprehension (of) the world from another perspective — can sharpen the analysis'. Only by being fully empathetic can the researcher comprehend the speaker and be sure in the foundations of her/his critique, and moreover, in the offer of policy advices. I therefore, acknowledge subjectivity and empathy as different sites of the same coin, presenting, both advantage and disadvantage, for any discourse-analytical undertaking.

Research design

Following a typical CDA design to research the interdependencies of discursive practices and social event I use the principle of triangulation, which appeals for interdisciplinary approach, integrating historical, socio-political and linguistic perspectives, for employing various methods of data collection and analysis of different corpora: newspaper articles and interviews, TV debates and interviews, TV documentaries, and public speeches. This will allow for a detailed insight into the variety of

interpretations of the same social phenomena. As one of the key principal of CDA, eclecticism entails a choice of the proper methods of data analysis, which are able to illuminate the hidden patterns in written and spoken discourses. Among the many available methods, I will use only three: analysis of the macro-strategies (or genres) in the texts, the analysis of certain linguistic tools and the so called argument analysis within and across the texts.

The method

In this section of the methodological chapter I would like to reflect upon the practical aspects of data collection and data analysis. I will firstly present the three main analytical tools I will use in the examination and interpretation of texts: the macro-strategies (genres), the linguistic tools and argumentation analysis. I will later continue with scrutinising the data collection method, which included newspapers, video materials and documents as sources. Special attention I will dedicate to the corpus-building technique and the description of the public speeches in general and the genre of commemorative speech in particular, as specific sources of discourses, embedded in wider performances of myth-making.

Macro-strategies

De Cillia *et al.* (1999, 157) outline three important interrelated dimensions of Critical Discourse Analysis almost inevitably used in any process of analysis of discourse. These three discourse-analytical tools are the *content* (or *topic* (de Cillia, 1999); or *themes* (Bendassolli, 2013)) of the discourse, the discursive *strategies* of the actors and the *linguistic means* and forms of realisation.

Each research starts with the definition of the main *topic(s)* of the discourse. The topic is closely related to the main categories of the research. The genre in which certain text is written or spoken is also closely related to the main idea or the *topic* of the discourse. This is crucial, as the continuous avoidance of certain topics within given context, also signals the importance of some aspects related to the discourses, which the rhetor prefers to hide. The *avoidance* of a topic is an important part of argumentation analysis, something I will elaborate later in this chapter. After defining the main topics of the discourse the analysis of discursive strategies follows.

All politically active subjects transmit messages to their imagined audiences. To sound convincing their messages have to be systematically presented and repeated over longer period of time. This means that the politicians, the journalists or other commentators of social events employ different linguistic strategies to prove their points in the competitive public opinion sphere. Wodak and de Cillia (2007, 347) define strategy as a “more or less accurate and more or less intentional plan of practices (including discursive practices) adopted to achieve a particular social, political, psychological or linguistic aim”. In other words, discursive strategies are systematic ways of using language. Through their rhetoric the orators constitute knowledge, assign social roles and identities and establish relations between social groups, and many times, through classifications, of vertical,

hierarchical character. They are capable of constructing social conditions, perpetuate, reproduce or justify certain social *status quo*, function as transformative tool or can be applied in deconstructing that same social status quo (de Cillia *et al.*, 1999). Therefore four main discursive macro-strategies can be distinguished: constitutive, perpetuating, transformational and destructive. When analysing a single text only one of these four strategies can be used by the writer or the speaker. When certain process or event is regarded positively by a media or public commentator, even the intertextual analysis would reveal the choice of only one of the respective macro-strategies over a long period of time.

According to de Cillia *et al.* (1999, 160), in their study on national identity, “*constructive* strategies encompass those linguistic acts which serve to ‘build’ and establish a particular national identity,” or “linguistic procedures which constitute a national ‘we-group’”. This entails a use of persuasive linguistic devices which call for identification and solidarity with the national group and for simultaneously distancing from the ‘others’. As the name suggests, *perpetuation* strategies serve to preserve, support continuity and reproduce national identities. Justification and *legitimation* strategies are subtypes of perpetuation strategies mainly used to defend or maintain a controversial version of national history and identity. These strategies would be given a special attention in my work. The strategies used to transform already established aspects of national identity or the same identity altogether are called *transformative* strategies. Finally, dismantling or *de-constructive* strategies serve to de-mythologize or demolish existing national identities or elements of them (de Cillia *et al.*, 1999, 161). The bread and butter of the daily political activities of the oppositional parties and critical journalists is namely to deconstruct the decisions and the discourses of the governing parties. This will be not an exception in the case of such a controversial project as “Skopje 2014”.

Closely related, but still slightly different to the notion of the discursive macro-strategies is the notion of narrative genres. This concept originates in the literary studies and critique, which defines four classical genres of comedy, romance, tragedy and irony. These narrative types can be very helpful analytical tool for the study of cultural and social change processes. Rovisco (2010) claims that “The formal properties of narrative in connecting narrators, texts and audiences have important implications for how events are interpreted in the public sphere” as they involve a particular agenda for action, structure of feeling and different moral choices”. Employing a specific genre, the rhetor creates expectations in the audience and in her-/himself. Gill and Whedbee (1997, 164) argue that “speech genres organise our speech in almost the same way as grammatical forms do. When hearing others’ speech, we guess its genre from the very first words, we predict a certain length and a certain compositional structure, we foresee the end”. These expectations are determining the vocabulary, the argumentation moves, the syntax and the structure of the speech. In other words, the same way the genres are used to tell fictional stories they can be utilised in narrating stories about politics, identity or history. I will demonstrate that the choice of a particular narrative genre to tell a story about “Skopje 2014” is evidently related to certain assumptions, feelings and expectations existing within a concrete national public sphere.

Linguistic tools

After defining the macro-strategies of a text or group of texts, the analysis can shift to the micro level, employing several analytical categories. One of the basic functions of a given discourse is to label the processes, the events or the actors in predominantly positive or negative light. The positive or negative presentations of facts and opinions is realized through discursive micro-strategies, and namely, strategies of *nomination* (how social phenomena, persons, groups are linguistically constructed by naming), *predication* (labeling, attribution) and *perspectivisation* (the perspective and therefore, the involvement of the author, e.g. through the use of metaphors and punctuation signs).

Avoiding hate-speech sanctions, each orator or writer of a text is usually very careful in the choice of nominations. However, the labeling of events and news-actors through adjectival and verbal choices with negative semantic load are harder to control in discursive practices. Thus, one of the basic tasks of the analytical process on this level is to take a closer look of the predication patterns in the text, or the attribution of positive or negative traits, features and qualities to the social actors related to the Project.

Regarding perspectivisation, “the primary function of perspective should be to manipulate the reader’s orientation for a purpose in accord with the author’s narrative plan ... Another use of perspective is its employment to manipulate and produce various emotional states in the reader” (Eisner 2008b, 92 as quoted in Wodak, 2014, 235). For instance, typical for the right-wing orators is the so called worm’s eye view, which implies looking up, from below into the world of the elite or ‘those up there’. The intention of this strategy is to help the reader or the listener to easily identify with the rhetor, to feel solidarity and loyalty with supposed collective ideas or political agendas.

Despite the main linguistic or micro-strategies of nomination, predication and perspectivisation, situation-dependent I will sometimes use other, more adequate, analytical resources to provide a better-grounded argumentation. I will, hence, refer to discursive strategies such as *transitivity*, *modality* or *collocation*.

Transitivity is a resource for construing our experience in terms of configurations of a process, participants and circumstances (Martin et al. 1997, 102 as cited in Mautner, 2008, 41). Transitivity refers to how events are described: who is the active and who is the passive actor; what has been done and to whom; what would happen without interference of the actors. Concisely said, through the strategic use of linguistic forms such as passive and active voice different effects are expected in the audience, and the workings of these strategies are uncovered by the analytical category transitivity.

Modality refers to the ways in which language is used to encode meaning such as degrees of certainty and commitment, or alternatively vagueness and lack of commitment, personal beliefs versus generally accepted or taken for granted knowledge (Stubbs, 1996, 202 as cited in Mautner, 2008, 41). The choice and frequency of use of words such as “can”, “might” or “perhaps”, are having a different effect than the use of words like “must” or “certainly”.

Lastly, *collocation* is concerned with “the dynamism of meaning-making as the text proceeds” (Mautner, 2008, 45). This means that the meaning of a single word in the text or group of texts depends on the collocation of the same with other words. It is expected that the key words combination “Skopje 2014” will collocate with different group of words in the pro-government

relative to the oppositional media and that these words collocations will repeat over longer period of time. In this way, one and the same key word will be associated with collocating words in the text, words which are often carefully chosen and systematically used to foster certain feelings.

Only to limited extend, since it was rarely found in the data, I will also reflect on *metaphor* as a specific linguistic form, or tool, with rhetorical effect. According to Gill and Whedbee (1997, 173) “the fundamental form of human understanding is a metaphoric process; the mind grasps a unfamiliar idea only by comparison to or in terms of something already known”. Especially interesting for the researchers are the so called ‘archetypal metaphors’, or the one which operate across generations and evoke deep-seated associations and feeling. This is more so, when the rhetor uses *anaphora*, or repetition, of the same metaphor in important commemorative occasions or broadcast debates.

Argumentation analysis

A principal space in the analytical chapters I will dedicate to argumentation analysis. Succinctly said, this means the analysis of which arguments and argumentation patterns persons or groups are using when trying to justify or delegitimize certain claims including a set of nominations and predications. In general, two types of argument analysis can be distinguished: argument analysis within one text and argument analysis across texts and time. These types can be simply named micro and macro argument analysis. I would firstly describe the later type.

According to Crawford (2004) argumentation analysis starts with identification of the main problem or the topic of the debate. After identifying a problem or issue area, the analysts seek to identify the purpose, or the function, of particular arguments that are being used in efforts to support or challenge a practice. The task of the analyst is to specify the role of the argument. A possible role of a concrete argument can be to stimulate debate, to reframe the problem or to persuade someone. In my analysis the persuasion function is of special interest. Crawford (2004, 23) claims that “In the transition from established behavioural norms to new norms, there are likely to be periods of confusion and uncertainty”. It is exactly at these junctions that ethical arguments may be the most prolific and specific, as speakers strive to be clear and persuasive in their attempts to maintain an establish practice or spur a new mode of behaviour. Therefore, analysing the arguments put on the table from the announcement of the Project until the completion of it, or the period covering the years 2010-2015, we can be sure that the most persuasive arguments related to “Skopje 2014” will be covered in this study.

While dealing with argumentation analysis, one must identify the *specific beliefs* that are held by the main political actors in a given historical context. One also has to be aware that the effect of the argument depends not only on what the speaker says but also on the location (forum) where the arguments are made. All this implies so called context sensitivity, which is in general important for any discourse analysis.

In the final stage, argument analysis may attempt to show how and why some beliefs and arguments won out over others and ultimately why certain policies were chosen (Crawford, 2004, 24). Shortly,

this means finding out whether and how the given arguments succeeded in changing the terms of debate and whether an argument meant to overturn a practice was able to delegitimize and change actors' conceptions or interests, change the balance of power, and have its normative beliefs institutionalized. As Laffey and Weldes (2004, 29) marked, after the identification of the signifying elements of the discourse "the further analysis requires discovering the articulations of these representations with, and their sedimentations in, institutions". The authors suggest that many times discourses are more powerful than opposing ones simply because they are articulated to, and partake of, institutional power. As an example they give Thatcherism as a discourse, firstly articulated to think tanks such as the neo-liberal Institute for Economic Affairs and the Centre for Policy Studies, then to the Conservative party, and finally to media outlets like *The Sun*.

The fact that the ultimate task of the researcher is to show if certain arguments prevailed over other and when they do, how and why this has happen, implies that this method focuses on the arguments development over relatively long periods of time. Namely the development of the arguments and the change they bring about are the focal points of the argument analysis.

Turning now to the micro argument analysis, I would like to underline that this type of argument analysis is especially well suited for the deconstruction of discourses written in a form of *commentary*, since this subgenre of a newspaper article is an opinion-oriented and its main task is to persuade the readers. It is also very suitable for analysing ceremonial or commemorative speeches. Both of these sources of data are encompassed in this study and therefore argumentation analysis is of great importance for the answering of the research questions.

The micro argument analysis starts with an overview of the *functional structure* of the article or the text. The macrostructure of a text consists of introduction, exemplification (or argument building) and conclusion. The most important task of the researcher is to find and interpret the links between the premises and the conclusion. Some of these links are plausible argumentation schemes and those are named *topoi*. However, for the researcher is of greater interest to point to the so called *fallacies*. According to Reisiigl (2008, 119) ' *fallacy* is an argumentation scheme that infringes rules of rational and plausible argumentation such as the freedom of speech, the obligation to give reasons, the correct reference to previous utterances by the antagonist, the correct reference to implicit premises, the respect of shared starting points, logical validity'. This is especially the case when the researcher wants to demonstrate the workings of socially dangerous discourses such as chauvinistic or right-wing populist discourses. Reisiigl (2008) mentions only few of the mostly performed fallacies in right-wing populist discourses: *argumentum ad populum*, the *fallacy the 'people's' democratic participation*, the *fallacy of threat*. All of them can be found at the centre of populist argumentation.

Argumentum ad populum, for instance, is based on the authority of the anonymous *vox populi*. The populist politicians use the authority or the 'voice of the people' as legitimacy for many of their policies; it is an argument which concludes that a proposition is true only because the majority of the people believe it as if it is a 'common sense' or 'a matter of fact'. In this way, it is double wrong: it is an argument based on authority and it is argument based on alleged unity of the people. The argument based on authority is usually performed through the use of generalising nominations like 'the politicians' or 'the people' as if all of them are included within the category. However, a single politician who does not act in the way predicted by the rhetor would prove the logical fallacy of the proposition.

The *fallacy of threat* refers to constructing argumentation scheme of perceived threat with final end to inspire fear and stimulate emotional response, but one which usually disregards the obligation to give reasons for such fears. This fallacy can be best explained through a practical example. If a populist journalist writes that the uncontrolled influx of refugees is going to ruin the welfare system of the country, but does not give any additional arguments, we can say that the argument is not backed and that the validity of the argumentation scheme is uncertain.

It is almost obvious that argumentation is closely related to nomination, predication and perspectivisation schemes. However, there are distinct rhetorical forms of argument, such as the *enthymeme*, which do not depend on any of the above mentioned schemes, but rather on the links between two or more statements or premises in the process of deduction. The *enthymeme* is also known as abbreviated syllogism. And it is 'abbreviated' because "it omits a premise and (it is expected that) the audience creates coherence in the incomplete argument by consciously or unconsciously supplying the 'missing' link from the premises in their own belief system" (Gill and Whedbee, 1997, 171). As an example, we can take the following statement of the Macedonian Prime Minister, Nikola Gruevski, in a TV show from 2008, following the question of a viewer: "Does the Prime Minister consider himself as a successor of Alexander, just as most of the Macedonians feel?":

"Well, genetically speaking, we are, right (?), mix of all peoples living in this area from the time of Alexander, before him, and onward. So certainly we have (gens) from that period... That was also genetically investigated as far as I know, in Spain, in institutes, etc."⁹

Three premises can be distinguished from this short speech:

We are mixture of all people living on this land.

Identity is transmitted genetically (or it should depend on genetics)

Therefore, we also have something of Alexander.

The *enthymeme* or the third, missing or implied premise from this statement could be spelled out: as in the italicised text. Although not said loud, the audience was forced to 'hear' or invited to 'provide' this missing premise, in order to have the logical conclusion: "we also have something of Alexander's Macedonian genetics". As the example demonstrates, this argumentation scheme allows the critical analyst to examine the connections between the speaker, the text and the audience. Creating and responding to *enthymeme* the actors "reveal the unstated beliefs and values, their 'implicit philosophy' about the nature of reality, of their community and the conception of appropriate social relations" (Gill and Whedbee, 1997, 172).

Along with the systematic analysis of the macro-strategies (including genres), linguistic tools and argumentation schemes used in the discourses, during the research I will also analyse one extra discursive element, which can be crucial in the understanding of the overall political strategy of the actors. This element is the *absence*. It can take two forms, as an absence of certain topics itnertextually, or as silencing some voices by privileging other within one text. For the analysis of a project whose realisation requires long period and therefore, longer period of legitimisation in the media, I find especially important the first form of absence, or the continuous and consistent

⁹ "Late Night Show 10 maj - Milenko Nedelkovski-Nikola Gruevski", published on 12.05.2008, last viewed 27.01.2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g8lHp_q-Wto

avoidance of reporting on some aspects of the project in the pro-governmental media outlets. Moreover, the same aspects had a central position in the critically oriented print-media, which supposed to spur an answer in the pro-governmental media, but this did not always happen.

Commemorative public speeches

The above described data analysis procedures are applicable on both, written and transcribed spoken discourses. When analysing parts of TV interviews or, especially, newspaper articles written by journalists and other public figures, in terms of context-sensitivity we can be sure that all the aspects of these texts and their effects can be captured by the data analysis. There is, however, one type of discourse, or oratory, which can be distinguished and contains special features, not to be found in written articles, TV debates or interviews. This special type of discourse is the commemorative public speech. The commemorative public speech is unique discourse because it is always delivered by a political actor, and therefore from a rhetor with high authority; it is relatively rare, and therefore distinct linguistic tolls are used to address issues allegedly independent from the current political life; it offers opportunity for winning public consent, which cannot be achieved with the other speech acts. We can therefore, argue that the genre of commemorative public speech creates extra context to be taken into account when analysing such discourses.

As a particularly relevant for this study, I will dedicate special attention to the public speeches given at the opening of new monuments or facilities of the project „Skopje 2014“. In more than one occasion these speeches were delivered on special commemorative dates, thus gaining additional meaning and value. Moreover, these commemorative speeches can be a constitutive part of a myth-making performance, the intention of which is to create effects on the audience beyond the mere speech act.

The genre of commemorative speech and myth-making

As already argued, CDA takes an interest in the ways in which linguistic forms are utilised in various expressions and manipulations of power. But, power is signalled not only by grammatical forms within a text, but also by a person's control of a social occasion by means of the genre of a text. It is often exactly within the genres associated with given social occasions that power is exercised or challenged (Wodak, 2000).

Wodak (2014, 346) reminds that classical rhetoric distinguishes three classes of oratory: the judicial, the deliberative and the epideictic. All of these oratories are distinguished by the temporal, thematic and functional aspects on which they concentrate. Thus, judicial oratory is focused temporally on the past, thematically on justice or injustice, and its function is to accuse or defend. Deliberative rhetoric is associated with the future, thematically with expediency or harmfulness, and functionally with persuasion or discouragement. Finally, epideictic oratory refers to the present, thematically to honour or discredit and functionally to praise or blame. Commemorative speeches may be attributed

to epideictic oratory in a broader sense. However, all of the above mentioned classes occur in mixed form: a diversity of topics and temporal references usually results in the simultaneous presence of elements from all three oratorical categories within one and the same speech (Wodak, 2007, 346).

However, epideictic oratory does not exclusively serve as mechanism for the linguistic self-promotion of the speakers, but it also has an 'educational' function, i.e., it seeks to "convey certain political values and beliefs to construct common characteristics and identities and to create consensus and a spirit of community which in turn is intended to serve as a model for future political actions of the addressees" (Wodak, 2007, 346). In general, anniversary speeches often contain deliberative and argumentative elements, and sometimes even traces of judicial rhetoric, if a given speech is discussed or sought to justify disputed actions and events.

Barring on mind that the rhetor has the control of the social occasion, he or she has the power to decide how much judicial or deliberative elements the commemorative speech will contain. The balance of the three types of rhetoric within one speech could thus signal the intentions of the rhetor. These occasions are often site of power claims, mainly executed through selective reviving of past event which can justify the present political interests and deeds.

Another aspect of the commemorative speeches interesting for the study is that these speeches are only a part of a ceremony which marks some anniversary. In the case of "Skopje 2014", some of the main structures, such as the "Warrior on the Horse" (Alexander the Great), the "Museum of the Macedonian Struggle for Sovereignty and Independence - Museum of VMRO - Museum of the Victims of the Communist Regime" and the "Arch Macedonia" (Triumph Arch exhibiting the history of the Macedonian territory from antiquity until today), were finalised for the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the independence of the republic in 2012. They were set as a sort of stage for a ceremonial performance, which offered a new interpretation of the past. Each ceremony is a performative act constituted of speeches and rituals. The narratives, in a shape of a myth, are establishing practices, which in turn are crystallizing the meaning of the myths, reinforcing the meaning of the shared values and uniforming the behaviour of the subjects performing them. Therefore, this study will sometimes go beyond the mere interpretation of the narratives and the symbols of this identity-building Project and will concentrate its attention on the practical dimension of the national mythopoesis, the myth-making performances, understood not as spontaneous acts, but as dramatic performances that involve actors and audience (Bowie, 2006 as cited in Zaiotti, 2010).

The performative approach, hence, has the advantage of highlighting aspects of the myth-making that are not possible by the sole interpretation of the narratives and the symbols. The performances involve symbolic communication enhanced in places and times that have themselves symbolic meaning. Thus, performances related to official opening of a new architectural object, the celebration of national holidays or sportive success on particular monumental sides will be analyzed along with the analysis of the commemorative speeches.

Data collection

As already mentioned, I will use two media sources to collect data for the analysis, and namely printed and video sources. From the printed media written texts will be selected from online versions of newspapers. From video materials in various forms, such as TV debates, documentaries and commemorative speeches, spoken discourses will be selected, transcribed and analysed. I will describe firstly the process of data collection from newspapers.

Newspapers as a source

Mautner (2008, 32) believes that intensity of usage, public attention and political influence are good enough reasons to attract the attention of the social scientist and motivate one to study the print media. At least the high-circulation or “glossy” print media reflects the social mainstream (or one of the few, in the democratic, pluralistic societies). The dissemination to large audiences enhances the constitutive effect of discourses, the power to shape widely accepted constructions of the socio-political reality. Therefore, every scientist interested in dominant discourses must consider print media as key data source (*Ibid*). Before the gathering of the data the researcher should be aware of two important elements of the news: news values and news sources.

For events to become news, they have to be *newsworthy*. The analysis of discourse is therefore often concentrated on the events which contain news values, such as relation to political power, entertainment, surprise or shock, celebrity, follow-up of already reported event, importance for the particular newspaper’s agenda and similar values. This guarantees that the discourse analysis will be concentrated on event or a process which deserve the continuous interest of the public.

Another important element of data collection is the source of news. According to Bell (1991: 56-65, cited in Mautner, 2008, 33): “Journalists draw on information they themselves elicit and on the one they are offered- by news agencies, on press conferences, press releases and on variety of other documents such as reports or minutes”. Therefore, a considerable part of what journalists write comes from organizational sources that have ‘organized relationship with the press’, like government spokespersons or committee reports (*Ibid.*). The newsgathering routines of the journalists are, hence, inevitably biased in favor of the political elites, able to push their agendas and views into the media, which thereafter creates or frames ‘public opinion’. Moreover, differently from the ordinary citizens’ views, the journalists’ written reflections give a better interpretative access to the events’ contexts, both cognitive and historical (Diez-Medrano, 2003, p. 106), making them primary source for data collection for discourse analysis. Especially valuable sources of news are the opinion articles in the quality press. They usually show persistency in the opinion and continuity in the argumentation schemes over longer periods of time. Since I am interested in the discourses and their development over five years opinion articles in the quality press would be the natural choice for data collection. However, I was surprised to discover that only few such articles were written from the media outlets generally supporting the Project, but there were articles in abundance focused on its critique. Therefore, I was collecting data from the ‘informational’ articles, which very frequently contain quotes of political speeches and are, consequently, not opinion-free. I have chosen the so called quality press for two reasons. Firstly, reflecting on the legacy of the Project, the opinion-makers from

the quality press are not necessarily occupied with the consequences for the Macedonian citizens that can be observed in the present time. They are rather concerned with the long-term impact that they expect “Skopje 2014” to have on the national identity, on the shaping of the national memories and the nation’s unity and progress. Through the complex media diffusion processes the journalist, or the educated, cultural elite, together with the political elites create and perpetuate public discourses. Their discourses become reference points around which readers’ “knowledge” oscillates.

For data collection I focused predominantly on what is considered as high-circulation, quality press in Macedonia. This is not because the popular media is not expected to address topics like “Skopje 2014”, but because it is not expected to properly or independently articulate the intentions behind the Project and directly shape the public opinion. These outlets are rather expected to be recipients and reproducers of the ideas articulated in the quality press. I was, however, interested in the difference of news reports between the more and less popular media, and as I will argue later, there was almost no difference in the style or argumentation schemes between the both. This indicates something very important, which will be discussed in length later in the thesis.

Also, empirical research has shown that the themes and interpretation schemes which emerge during interviews of citizens or focus groups in many regards reflect, what is heard and read in different media (Rovisco, 2010). For instance, even those people who showed little or no interest whatsoever in issues of EU governance were able to reproduce published or broadcast comments by politicians, journalists and representatives of various interest groups (Diez-Medrano, 2003: 33).

Corpus-building from written materials

Every researcher on this stage realizes that there is a ‘universe’ of possible discourses or texts ‘out there’ in the press and only some of these should be selected as a representative sample and analyzed. However, for qualitative research projects random selection is not appropriate, because the size of the ‘population’, of articles on the topic, is not known and because the variety of representations and topic or the argumentative patterns, should not be determined *a priori*. Instead of random sampling, Mautner (2008, 35) recommends a cyclical process of data collection. The author suggests to begin with selection of a small, but relevant and homogeneous corpus, analyze it and on the basis of the findings to select new articles. New material should be added until the point when, according to the law of diminishing returns, the adding of new data would no longer yield new insights. This corpus can be taken as ‘saturated’. A saturation point is reached when the adding of new articles is simply repeating what the corpus already contains, and is thus, superfluous for improved understanding. There are at least two general hypotheses of which the researcher should be aware before and during the selection of articles; firstly, discursive representations are politically polarized and secondly, discursive representations are changing over time, with some ideas, concepts and events gaining momentum and other losing it. From the first hypothesis follows that the articles from sources predominantly supportive of the government policies should be compared with articles from sources predominantly critical of the government policies. Just as the parties have certain ideological continuity and values, so the newspapers’ editors have them. Hence, we can say that there are sources of information who are ideologically *a priori* closer to some party, if not directly dependent from it. In socio-political circumstances, which can be mildly nominated as non-

democratic, if not anti-democratic, this dependency is very strong and news media are used as mere tools for wide-spreading of political ideas in a discursive form which appears as less politically and more popularly modeled, but is nevertheless directly dictated by the governing political elite. In the same circumstances we can assume that the discursive representations are even more politically polarized than in relatively stable political circumstances, as their aim is to mobilize the citizens for action. Informing on government policies in the pro-government outlets can even take a form of political advertisement in this state of affairs. From the second hypothesis follows that the researcher should be attentive of the changes or adaptations of the discursive representations over time, usually depending on the reactions of the public in general and the opposing groups specifically. Hence, each new event related to the subject of inquiry is a chance for the political actors and commentators to either fix or perpetuate their discourses on the subject in general. Each report related to a new event is thus a potentially fruitful source of new argumentations. In this regard, in the study were included all the major events related to "Skopje 2014". However, I did not try to draw representative sample of articles per year for the period 2010-2015. The most heated debates in the major media sources took place in the first years after the announcement of the Project, 2010-2012. Thus, many of the analysis-relevant articles were taken from this period.

In this study I collect and analyse data from five online versions of daily newspapers, four of which are written in Macedonian language: *Utrinski Vesnik*, *Sloboden Pecat*, *Vecer* and *Republika*, and one in English, mainly written for the international audience, *Balkan Insight*. The newspaper *Utrinski Vesnik* was first published on the 23th June, 1999 and *Vecer* on the 11th November, 1963. *Republika* and *Sloboden Pecat* are informing only since 2013, so they are covering only the events of the last two, three years, sometimes also referring to the events related to the Project before the year 2013. *Balkan Insight* informs on-line since 2007.

My first intention is to compare the pro-government and the pro-opposition discourses on different aspects of the "Skopje 2014" project. I compare the discourses of the political and cultural elites of the ruling party with the one of the opposition in all aspects of the Project. This can be summarised in the following statement: what do they inform and what do they avoid to inform, and how do they inform on the events that they decide to cover.

My second intention is to compare the discourses of the political elite with the one of the cultural elite. This is of particular interest regarding the ruling party and the commentators supporting the Project. Taking into consideration the (un)democratic settings in the country, and namely, the assumption of personalisation and concentration of power in the hands of the Prime Minister, the exercise of pressure over the oppositional media and the close links with the pro-government media untypical for pluralistic societies, as well as the importance of keeping the 'face' of the populist leader as pure as possible, the arrangements informational media-politics are assumed to be shaped by the daily needs of the governing party. This includes very careful chosen language of the political actors, most notably the Prime Minister and his closest associates in the Project, such as the Minister of Culture, related to cultural politics and simultaneously very detailed, full with argumentation and interpretations language of the journalists close to the government. However, the discourses are assumed to be completely depending on the interpretations of the mastermind of the Project, i.e. the Prime Minister. With this strategy, in case of public disagreement with the Project, which was possible and later even evident, the Prime Minister and his party, could not take any special responsibility for the actions and keep the high rating on the opinion polls further, at the same time

pushing their cultural agenda or at least nourish the nationalistic sentiments of some part of the population.

My third intention is to observe discursive nuances also within the preselected sources. I therefore selected *Utrinski Vesnik* of centre-left orientation and *Sloboden Pecat* of rather left orientation, much more direct and radical in its critique of the whole Project. Different from *Utrinski Vesnik*, which is an established newspaper with one of the largest circulation and readership base, *Sloboden Pecat* was formed in 2013 as a reaction to the shutting down of many critical media outlets. It almost completely concentrates on the downplay of the democratic institutions in the country and therefore in very short period produced relatively many relevant articles regarding “Skopje 2014”, sometimes opening topics which were not mentioned even in the newspapers with large circulation. Both of these newspapers incorporate many op-eds, in contrast to the pro-government newspapers.

Within the pro-government newspapers, *Vecer* is an established newspaper, which existed even in Yugoslavia, but now is very close to the government and is of centre-right orientation. *Republika* is an exceptional case among the selected outlets. *Republika* has only an online version. In my view, it is a party tool, targeting the young readers. These two outlets do not differ significantly in the linguistic strategies or the choice of topics and genres, sometimes even publishing exactly the same articles with few changes in the text, showing the interconnections between the media or their mutual dependency on the news source, the party they serve.

My final intention is to follow the changes in discourse practices over time. Of special interest are the practices of the politicians, but references to the practices of journalists will be analysed as well. Although the period under analysis is relatively short, the analysis reveals interesting insights, i.e. the Prime Minister almost always refuses to mention “Skopje 2014” on the party’s campaigns for elections, or he does not comment on the Project and lets other colleagues, such as the Minister of Culture, the Mayor of the Municipality of Centre and the Director of the Procurement Bureau to be the final instances of the accountability reporting related to the Project. This avoidance to comment on it speaks of the estimated, at least partial, failure of the Project. The Project was announced in 2010 and officially it was planned to end in 2014. Facilities thematically belonging to “Skopje 2014” were built even after 2014, however, most of the planned project was realised within the four years period. To track for changes in discourse strategies after the official end of the Project I have included in the analysis articles from 2010 until 2015.

Following Mautner’s (2008) and Rovisco’s (2010) strategy, in the first stage of data collection and analysis, I read and analyzed many randomly selected articles from the two major, glossy newspapers *Utrinski Vesnik* and *Vecer*, retrieved in order to gain a general understanding of the key issues and debates on “Skopje 2014” project. For this end I simply used the key word “Skopje 2014”. The retrieved sample consisted of a set of news articles, op-eds and editorials taken from the years 2010 to 2015. The search by this key word combination on the 22.09.2015 yielded the following results per news-outlet: *Vecer* 60 articles, *Utrinski Vesnik* 1576. Only the newspaper *Utrinski Vesnik* offers the opportunity for ‘random sampling’ of articles, under these conditions. Regarding the articles from *Vecer*, I read and analyzed all the available articles. I realised that few major topics are saturating the conflict between the political camps: discourses related to the urban planning, artistic and esthetical aspects of the public works, “Skopje 2014” as a national identity building project, as developmental project (rebranding of the city/nation and the transparency or the project’s realisation) and democratic procedures (legality). Most of these topics overlap in the outlets. However, as expected,

certain topics were predominantly repeated within one of the newspapers and other topics in the other newspapers.

Considering the fact that *Vecer* yielded only around 60 articles on the topic “Skopje 2014” in the second stage of analysis I decided to increase the pool of articles by using two strategies. Firstly, I decided to add two more outlets as sources of data. The research on 22.09.2015 by the key words combination “Skopje 2014” yielded 40 articles from *Republika* and 35 from *Sloboden Pecat*. This has allowed not only for numerical enlargement of the data base, but more importantly, for the enrichment of the discourse-pool, put under scrutiny. Especially *Sloboden Pecat* has opened new critical insights related to the Project, which were not touched even in the opinion pieces of the *Utrinski Vesnik*. Therefore, at this early point of the data collection process, I also decided to analyze the nuances among the discourses of the same political camps, as it can also elicit some strategies of the main political actors and opinion-makers. Secondly, knowing the main themes related to the key word combination, in the search field I combined “Skopje 2014” with other key words such as: “development”, “democracy”, “identity”, “antiquisation”, variances of “European Union” (“EU”, “Union”, “Europe”), “Gruevski” - the surname of the Prime Minister, “Kanceska” - the surname of the Minister of Culture, whose ministry was responsible for the building of the bulk of identity-related constructions (museums and monuments) of the Project, “Zernovski” - the opposition mayor of Municipality Centre in Skopje, who was elected in the middle of the realisation of the Project and whose governance was centre of political controversies and struggles for a prolonged period of time. This research strategy was mainly applied on the outlet *Utrinski Vesnik*, because it is the only newspaper that offers so many articles, many of which opinion pieces, even including authors who are not critical but supportive of the Project. This newspaper was thus serving not only for providing detailed insight into more specific aspects of the Project, but also a rich source for quotations of both, government and oppositional politicians. However, since certain events or persons could be the central topic of an article related to “Skopje 2014”, but not necessarily mentioning it, I also applied this research strategy to the other three outlets. For instance, the key word “Zernovski” offered over 20 articles in *Vecer*, almost directly referring to the project “Skopje 2014” but many times not explicitly mentioning it. Also, one of the few affairs related to the transparency of the Project initiated by the opposition and named “Patriotic Broom”, offered few relevant articles when used as a search key word. Thus, we can conclude that each next step of the data collection process was dependent on the previous accumulation of knowledge, simultaneously trying to equalize the number and quality of the discourses (arguments) per political camp put under scrutiny. This procedure originates from one of the CDA principles, which calls for constant movement back and forth between theory and empirical data.

Finally, as argued earlier in the text, this study tries to demonstrate that the Project is a meeting point and a central piece of at least two main governmental policies and the legitimization discourses linked to them: the developmental and the national identity policies. I therefore, in the last, third stage of the data collection, I used all the mentioned outlets to search for articles containing the key words: “development” and “identity” (including “antiquisation”), after which I have randomly chosen few, who right-to-the-point demonstrate the opinions of the main actors on these policies. I used these articles to demonstrate to which extend “Skopje 2014” is embed in the development and identity-building rationales of the governing elite. For this end, I have also used video materials, as explained later in the text.

Before describing the second stage of data analysis I would like to comment on the special status the online newspaper *Balkan Insight* had in the data collection process. *Balkan Insight* is a product of BIRN, the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, funded by a range of international governments, NGOs and charitable funds with an interest in the region. BIRN is a group of editors and trainers that enables journalists in the region to produce in-depth analytical and investigative journalism on complex political and socio-economic themes. All the articles are written in the domestic languages but the archive of the newspaper is only in English. Since 2015 “BI” also offers a special section of articles and an interactive data base of all the expenses related to “Skopje 2014”. From all said, it can be concluded that *Balkan Insight* is mainly written for the international readers and the highly-educated domestic audiences. As such, this site can be opinion-making source only to a very limited extend within Macedonia, and therefore, it is not relevant for the analysis. However, barring in mind that BI enables investigative journalism the articles of this site provide information which is hard to be found in the domestic outlets. Therefore, I do not systematically analyze the articles of this news provider, but I will use the raw facts (numbers) or the transcripts of politicians’ speeches as relevant for the analysis.

In the second stage of analysis, I focused on and analyzed in detail the news articles covering a set of key events related to “Skopje 2014” that prompted active public debate about national identity, development alternatives and democracy. The selected news articles were assessed in terms of their relevance for illuminating typical discursive practices and their effects. During the analysis I was not concentrated on the events *per se*, but rather on the theory and hypothesis related categories. This, however, necessarily included all the key events that initiated active deliberation. In analysing each article, I focused on few aspects of the news narratives: (1) the macro-strategies and genre in which stories about “Skopje 2014” were told; (2) the patterns of symbolic classifications realised through the use of linguistic tools; and (3) the argumentation schemes of the narrators.

With respect to the research questions certain criteria should help to order and select concrete discourse fragments from the articles. As suggested by Reisigl (2008, 104) criteria included among other are: representativity (intertextual/interdiscursive), impact, salience, exceptionality, originality of the data.

Video materials as a source

The visual mode of positive self- and negative other presentation is superior to the written mode in at least two regards: firstly, it increases opportunities to convey messages through the use of images, thus opening up space for *calculated ambivalence* and secondly, it offers much easier or more pleasant, entertaining way of information for the audience. As such, the spoken discourses from TV debates or interviews, documentaries, short video spots and TV translated commemorative speeches are very powerful political tool, with assumingly much larger audiences then the press media. Sometimes, parts of these speeches are found in the newspaper articles, but only partially, and not always put in context. When analysing, a commemorative speech, for instance, it is crucial to know the length of the speech, the genre and the spacious context in which the speech took place in order to fully comprehend the functions of certain paragraphs or the total effect of the speech. For number of reasons, then, the spoken discourses cannot be ignored in this study. It is important to underline

that this study in most of the occasions will be occupied only with the meaning of the discourses captured in the audio-video materials. Therefore, when extracting spoken discourses from these materials, in many ways the study will ignore the context, i.e. the body-language of the orator, the movement of the camera, or similar message-conveying elements of the speech. Mainly when analysing documentaries and short video clips I will briefly refer to the visual or audio effects of the material. This is necessary because the visual contains increased potency for calculated ambivalence. The latter is defined as the fact that one utterance carries at least two more or less contradictory meanings, oriented towards at least two different audiences. This not only increases the audience, i.e. the electorate, but also enables the speaker to deny any responsibility as if saying “after all, it was not meant that way”. Although the blurring of fiction and reality does not necessarily create ambivalence, it certainly does widen the possibilities of authors to create and play with meanings (Wodak and Forchtner, 2014, 2014, 237).

The procedure of extracting political speeches from video materials is relatively simple. To generate content related to the Project in the video-sharing website YouTube I firstly used the key word combination “Skopje 2014”. The resulting videos yield by YouTube search depends on a combination of factors. Primarily they depend on the relevance, i.e. the likeness of the typed search terms (or keywords) to the keywords that have been implemented in the title, the description, and the tags of a certain video uploaded by a YouTube user. Secondly, the videos with greater number of viewers and more interaction in forms of “likes” and “comments” prove to the algorithm that it successfully meets search criteria. Thirdly, retention and average view length of the video also tells the search algorithm something about the relevance of the video. In essence, the relevance to the tags in the description and some additional criteria are propelling certain videos over others. Finally, YouTube offers the opportunity for advertising. Certain videos may appear on the top of the search due to their status of paid advertisement. The fact that certain entity is willing to pay for this status also speaks of the relevance of the video material. Cristos Goodrow, one of the main code developers in YouTube informs that the algorithm that produces and suggests related videos is constantly updated over time based on experimentation and former experience. Although it is flexible few criteria stay stabile, such as the number of viewers and the average watch time of the video.¹⁰

Thus, the use of YouTube has two advantages: it selects the videos by key word relevance and it offers related videos to the one already selected for viewing. The researcher can thus be sure that certain content is more relevant or influential than other. The scientist can also content-wise easily find related video materials. This enables what is in the quantitative methodology of data collection known as snowball-sampling procedure. The search for the key word combination “Skopje 2014” over longer period offered, for instance, the promotional video “Macedonia Timeless Capital Skopje 2014” as top-rated video on the topic. This is the government-financed video of the Project, used for the official announcement of “Skopje 2014” to the public and frequently played on the national and private TV stations. Another very popular video on the topic is also the documentary film named “Project Skopje 2014”, produced by the national radio and TV service (*MRTV*). I have chosen this documentary as seminal video material for few reasons. The structure of the film is set in the way that in the first third of the motion picture some of the strongest arguments from delivered public speeches from the government politicians are juxtaposed to the public speech argumentation of the opposition politicians. During the whole film, but especially during the second third of it,

¹⁰ YouTube's Secret Algorithm – Computerphile, on the channel Computerphile, published on 24 Apr 2014, last viewed 29.01.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BsCeNCVb-d8>

argumentation from standing not-political public commentators of the pro-governmental camp is juxtaposed to the respective argumentation of the critical commentators. The discourses of the public commentators in this documentary film are some of the most important discourses analysed in this study. More importantly in this context, this documentary has revealed the key opinion-makers from the cultural elite most fiercely defending and legitimising the Project. Using the names of the politicians or public personas next to the combination “Skopje 2014” offers many videos with desired content for the study. Snowballing-wise, the themes and categories emerging from the previously seen videos were later used as keywords for searching for new videos related to “Skopje 2014”. Finally, I could also follow the links with the speeches of the main contributors to the debate recognised and recommended by YouTube as topic-wise related videos.

Corpus-building from video materials (snowballing procedure)

Just as in the case of the written materials found in newspapers, there exists a universe of discourses ‘out there’ to be found recorded on videos. From the above mentioned, however, it follows that relative to the extraction of discourses from written materials the corpus-building procedure from video materials is more difficult.

Firstly, while in the case of written materials the researcher under certain criteria can choose the most relevant written sources of data from previously defined and comparable but contrasting sources, in the case of video materials one cannot easily track the source of information in YouTube videos. Therefore, relative to texts from newspapers video materials cannot be easily treated as ‘systematic production of reality’.

Secondly, while the written texts are relatively fixed in electronic archives and can be thus easily accessed and ordered by time or relevance, the video materials on the YouTube are relatively chaotically archived and in some cases with limited accessibility.

When trying to compare the discursive patterns of contrasting political camps the researcher thus must put extra efforts to carefully order and connect the “texts” within each group. The meanings behind the ‘systematic production of reality’ are produced by the examination of the intertextual (interdiscursive) relationships of the texts. Strategic adaptations in the argumentation patterns is achieved through the tracking of recontextualisation, treated as the most important process in connecting the genres, the topics and argumentation lines within a political community (Wodak, 2000).

Following Mautner’s strategy of cyclical process of data collection, as in the case of the written materials I started the corpus-building from video sources by the analysis of a small, but relevant corpus of videos. After analyzing that corpus, on the basis of the findings, I have selected and included new related videos. I added new videos in the pool until the ‘saturation’ point was reached, the moment when the adding of new materials did not yield new insights. As argued earlier, saturation point is reached when the adding of new articles is simply repeating what the corpus already contains, or simpler said it offers ‘more-of-the-same’, and is thus, redundant.

As in the case of the written sources I have limited the collection and analysis of materials contained in videos published until 2015. Within the final corpus I have used then the criteria suggested by Reisigl (2008, 104) to select the texts I will include in the final analysis. Among the most important are: typicality or representativity, impact, salience, exceptionality, originality. For instance, the documentary film “Project Skopje 2014”, production of the national TV service offered typical or representative legitimization discourses delivered by the pro-government cultural elite. Regarding impact and salience, the speeches of Prime Minister Gruevski on the official openings of “Skopje 2014” facilities or on celebrative or commemoration days were treated as valuable source of argumentation delivered by the governing political elite.

During this study materials from video and written sources will be used simultaneously. Both sources will be treated as mutually complementing and equally valuable. As stated earlier, the study will orient on few key topics (identity-building, development and democracy) and analysis of key events and themes “saturating” the discourses delivered in relation to “Skopje 2014”.

Since the main hypothesis of the thesis is related to the estimation of the level of societal polarization due to the government’s decision to built “Skopje 2014” I will mainly focus the attention on the analysis of discourses produced by the government elite and the media supportive of the government. The main attempt, hence, is to pinpoint problematic discursive patterns which have the potency to negatively impact Macedonia’s democratic institutions, such as discriminating or *fallacious right-wing populist argumentations*. As main carrier of policies in relation to the EU integration the discourses of the government officials relative to the discourses delivered by oppositional voices will be given priority in the analysis. This notwithstanding, I will also represent and analyse discourses of the oppositional voices. However, this will be only in context of demonstrating to which extend the views and attitudes of the both political parties are differing and to which extend and how the government elite and the media supportive of its policies were avoiding “sensitive” topics related to the Project. The answering of the both questions would highlight the proportions and variety of the societal conflicts resulting from the implementation of “Skopje 2014”.

Documents as source for CDA

To assess the role of the European Union in the growth of populism in Macedonia I will use documents, such as press realises, reports, council conclusions, which can be found on the official websites of the EU. These texts are formal in nature, without the typical discursive freedom of expression. However, knowing the exact political and historical context in which these documents were issued, and the message they tried to convey, even the use of formal language should not be an insurmountable barrier. The reports are usually tailored in a form of recommendation with tutelage character and, therefore, they abound with arguments and requirements. Not the force of the argumentation will be in the centre of the analysis in this case, but rather the *changes* in the choice of words over time. The intertextual analysis is supposed to reveal the behaviour of the different bodies of the Union in particular, and the behaviour of the Union in general over the last ten years related to the obviously rising populist rhetoric and actions of the governing elite in Macedonia in the same period. Some statements from EU officials will be also extracted from the newspapers or the

TV news, only to demonstrate how the pro-government media recontextualized the statements in order to legitimise anti-democratic practices of the populist regime. It will be also interesting to analyse if the changes in the EU rhetoric have also altered the rhetoric of the government and the pro-government cultural elites towards the EU integration.

Structure of the chapters (a topic and themes oriented study)

After reflecting on the sources and the methodology of collection and analysis of the data extracted from the same, for clarity reasons I would give a short overview of the structure of the chapters in this thesis. As outlined in the theoretical chapter, the debate around “Skopje 2014” has moved around three topics, and namely national identity, national development and democracy. I will dedicate two chapters to each of these topics. In general, in the first chapter within each topic I will analyse the discourses of the governing political elite followed by the discourses of the pro-government media actors (the cultural elite). In the second chapter within the same topic I will represent the oppositional voices, both from the political and the cultural elite. In the chapter dedicated to the role of the EU in the process of democratisation of Macedonia, the same logic will be followed, with the distinction that beside the discourses of the governing and oppositional political and cultural elites also the discourses of different EU bodies will be scrutinised.

It is worth reminding that “Skopje 2014” is a multi-purpose project and that for each of its aspects different media was used by the actors to communicate their messages to the audience. For instance, for dissemination of the antiquisation ideas mainly monumental art, performative acts and documentary and short movies were used. Evidently, the identity-related aspects of the Project were more conveniently transmitted through the visual, most probably due to the increased possibilities for propagation of previously set ideas. Newspapers as media were, on the contrary, seldom used. Only few opinion pieces regarding legitimisation of “Skopje 2014” could be found in the selected press. Video materials will consequently be more often used in the identity-related chapters.

Opposite to that case, newspapers were used for ‘systematic production of reality’ in the case of “Skopje 2014” observed as a development project. Both the governing and the opposition elites and their respective media supporters have engaged in elaborated argumentation of the economic cost-effectiveness of the project, in the transparency of the signed contracts, etc. In the chapters dedicated to “Skopje 2014” observed as a development project I will hence use much more often the written texts, where discourses were found not only to be more representative, original and salient than some discourses recorded on a video material, but they were also ordered in chronological order, easing the tracking of temporal systematic adaptations in the argumentation strategies due to some events in the given period.

Independently of which sources I will predominantly use in the pairs of chapters dedicated to one of the three main topics (identity, development, democracy), I will always identify, interpret and name discursive patterns emerging from the data. According to Bendassolli (2013, 6) patterns or themes can be identified in repeated ideas, sentences, concepts, words, images and sounds; not only in similarities among units that make up the analysis material but also in the frequency and intensity of repetition in the material under analysis as well as in the location of the themes in discourse and in

its centrality as a cognitive element and effective organizer of experience. In short, themes can assume both categorical and frequential forms. Identifying themes is recognised as the first leap from the empirical to the theoretical, an initial act of induction.

The analytical process will end with categorization and conceptualization. According to Bendassolli (2013, 6) at this point, the purpose of analysis is to reduce the material even further, simultaneously raising its level of abstraction. Classifying or clustering themes into categories allows researchers to organize them and develop conceptualizations about them, i.e. to explain them. To achieve this, I will contextualize my findings by encompassing a broader picture in which these concepts make sense, link the categories among themselves and relate them to the theories from the theoretical chapter. In case of their appearance I will also try to explain outlying or unexpected discursive patterns. This last procedure of qualitative analysis allows the researchers to formulate new research hypotheses or develop a theory that goes beyond a simple synthesis of descriptions.

Detecting themes or patterns, e.g. and building concepts of them is especially important in the analysis of discursive construction of national identity. This will become evident in the following two chapters.

It is worth underscoring that in the pairs of chapters designated to the analysis of “Skopje 2014” as predominantly identity-alteration or predominantly developmental project I will factually “dive” into the data and represent and critically interpret most of the argumentations and discursive strategies offered and used by the political actors. The pair of chapters dedicated to the topic “democracy”, following thereafter, will serve as a type of summary of the findings of the previous analytical chapters offering better grounded discussion on the extent to which the actions and behaviour of the governing elite have negatively impacted the democratic institutions of Macedonia. In the same chapters I will try to more explicitly connect the discursive strategies from the previous analysis and relate them to the topic “democracy”. The idea here is to gradually “come-out-on-the-surface”, distance the research from the data and re-connect to the theory of democracy and (autocratic) populism.

Tending to be more than a simple wrap-up of the previous findings, these chapters will offer new insights which will provide the opportunity to more easily move to the last analytical chapter dedicated to the attitudes and behaviour of the both oppositional Social Democrats and, especially, of the governing conservatives towards the EU integration. In the same chapter I will also analyse EU’s behaviour towards the candidate country Macedonia in particular and towards the Western Balkan region in general.

Summary

“Skopje 2014” can be understood as a site which draws on existing and imagined, fictitious collective memories about the struggles of the Macedonian identity (a century of denial and non-recognition from its neighbours) and current discourses on identity in Macedonia (as illustrated in the Project), as well as a site of mobilising and radicalising these discourses. In this way it has the potency to negatively influence the Macedonian democracy, silencing or marginalising large social groups from

the participation in the national identity construction, while favouring narratives well suited for winning elections through bolstering ethnocentrism and loyalty. It can also be understood as a locale of societal debate around the different developmental paths ahead of the young republic in globalised world, paths which again, favour some groups and circumvent other. In this context, the question of the country's integration in the EU is of crucial importance, since the EU insists on (and monitors) the implementation of democratic rule of law as a precondition for membership, but is reluctant to impose its legal aspects in the applicant countries, thus leaving the door open for flawed procedures of governance. It is evident, then that "Skopje 2014" is a site of political struggle and power negotiation on different levels, within the nation-state and between the state and the supra-national structures.

In this regard, CDA is a viable method of studying populism and its ambivalent relationship with democracy. CDA offers critical understanding of how discursive practices are *creating power* or challenging democratic procedures. CDA embeds the discourses in historical context and therefore it is indicating socio-political, and to some extent, cultural *trends*. This methodology provides a *wide range of approaches* to analyzing and understanding populism, because it allows *detection of strategies and actions* that are typical of the political actors enforcing authoritarian rule. Finally, CDA helps in *capturing the movement of power from one level to another* in many contexts: from political to cultural level or from supra-national to national level in a multi-level governance system; and offers comprehension of the deeper meaning behind such interactions of power.

Because this methodology provides a variety of research tools it is suited for analysis of different sources of data, involving different perspectives and research depending on the aim of the study. Given the rising right-wing populism in Western Balkan and some EU countries the critical analysis of the populist's discourses on identity, development and democracy can offer fruitful, relevant and significant insights, which can serve as foundations for policy advisors and comparative studies of populism.

CHAPTER 5: ANTIQUISATION POLICY

Research question and hypotheses

Before moving to the analysis of the discourses, I would shortly refer to the main research question of this dissertation and the hypotheses related to the next two chapters. I will follow this order in each consecutive analytical chapter. This chapter treats the project “Skopje 2014” as an attempt to alter the national identity of the Macedonian people or part of them.

The main research question of the dissertation is how “Skopje 2014” influences the democratic development of Macedonia. Observing “Skopje 2014” as a national identity alteration project, we can ask how the governing elite’s discourses on national identity have been incorporated in the Project and how, in turn, the Project and its legitimisation has reinforced them?; how the construction of new hegemonic narrative has influenced the social relationships in Macedonia?; and finally, how the discourses and their realisations were functionalised in realisation of political goals?

I have hypothesised that “Skopje 2014” is a stimulator of conflicts and syndrome of undemocratic developments. More precisely, I have argued that the project was mainly constructed for the domestic audience as final ‘consumer’ of the ‘cultural goods’ and in function of winning voters’ “hearts and minds”, done in a populist way and in order to win the executive power in a period long enough to overshadow the power of the former political elite and discourage *any* attempt for restoration of its former societal positions. As such, I treat this project as undemocratic political tool.

In a nutshell, I assume that the project was planned very carefully, but it was also systematically interrupted by the opposition, the minorities and the neighbouring countries. Hence, I claim that as long as the elites do not acknowledge the plurality of perspectives on history and identity and openly confront and discuss them, such disruptions will probably always occur and have to be viewed as a typical and systematic response, which in turn brings confrontations and deepens the conflict on three levels: inter-ethnically, inter ethnic Macedonians and internationally, and thus negatively impacts the democratic development of Macedonia.

The following two chapters aim to demonstrate the interplay of the discourses with the embodiment of the identity-alteration (antiquisation) ideas in the architecture and monumental art of “Skopje 2014”, as well as the construction of new hegemonic narrative on national identity and the deconstruction of the same through oppositional voices.

Firstly, I will therefore, represent the ideological context in which “Skopje 2014” was developed, i.e. the “antiquisation” policy and the embeddedness of the Project in it.

Secondly, I will analyse three aspects of the Project: the content and the composition of the monuments and the facilities, performative acts related to “Skopje 2014” and genres and argumentative patterns from written texts.

In this study I have adopted the widest definition of discourse analysis, the one which treats as materials not only the written texts, but also the visual and performative acts. This implies that I will analyse not only the written and spoken discourses of approval and disapproval of “Skopje 2014”,

but I will also analyse the phenomenological aspects of the project and the performative acts utilising the structures of “Skopje 2014” as a scene for conveying silent messages.

In this, and particularly in the next chapter, I will especially refer to the political acts, which also carry discursive message. Sometimes, the message of these acts is more powerful than the oral or written argumentation. For instance, the invitation of the Hunza royal family in Macedonia, the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Independence next to the “Warrior on the Horse” statue or the covering of the “shameful” with “antique” façades in the city centre are all (political) acts and performances, conveying its own discursive message deserving equal scientific attention as the discourses found in the press or on the TV. The same counts for the silent messages transmitted through the content and the composition of the monuments of “Skopje 2014”. In the following chapter I will dedicate a special section to reflect on the imminent, phenomenological messages of the structures.

Finally, I will reflect on “Skopje 2014” as a nation-building venture in national and international settings in the sum up and conclusion section.

Following the structure of the chapters outlined in the methodological chapter, in this chapter I will compare the views of the governing politicians with the views of the cultural elite supportive of their policies as well as track the possible shifts and adaptations in the discursive strategies over time. From the themes and argumentation patterns found in the analysis of the discourses delivered by the politicians I will build concepts applicable in the analysis of the discourses of the pro-government media in the second section of the same chapter in order to measure the relations and level of cooperation between the both.

In the next, closely related chapter I will follow the same logic without focusing on the discourses delivered by the political opposition, since the oppositional politicians criticized “Skopje 2014” mainly as politically anti-democratic and economically non-transparent project serving the enrichment of the governing elite and its party. The more systematic critique offered by non partisan actors such as the one of the NGO “Ploshtad Sloboda” or the critique by the archaeologist Causidis in his book “The Project „Skopje 2014“ - Drafts for Some Following Research” were found as most comprehensive and insightful for the understanding of the stances of the oppositional voices in the society. In few instances in the same chapter I will also provide and briefly analyse discourses delivered by government executives in order to provide context for the critique expressed by the oppositional voices or for my interpretations.

As the main focus of the dissertation, in the both chapters I will offer critical interpretation of the (pro-) government’s construction-, perpetuation- and legitimisation discourses and whenever intercepted I will pinpoint and analyse problematic discursive patterns which can negatively influence Macedonia’s democratic institutions.

In the methodological chapter I have underlined that identity-related messages of the “Skopje 2014” were most frequently transmitted through the visual arts and media, probably due to the increased possibilities for propagation of the antiquisation ideas to a broader audience. Therefore in the following two chapters I will use video materials as sources of discourses more often than in the other chapters. Many of the discourses were extracted from speeches delivered in four documentary films (“To the End of the World” by Marina Dojcinovska, “Project Skopje 2014” production of the national TV Service and two short documentaries produced by the NGO “Ploshtad Sloboda”: “Genetic

Engineering” from Predrag Petrovic and “Divided City” by Ljubisha Arsić). I have also analysed one short film (“Macedonian Prayer”) produced by the national TV service, several video in-depth interviews with politicians, speeches delivered by politicians from two official openings of facilities part of “Skopje 2014”, as well as speeches from promotional videos and press conferences (such as the welcoming of the Hunza royal family in Skopje).

In line with the methodological rules, regarding the data collection and analysis of written materials, I have selected articles from previously defined and comparable but contrasting sources. For the analytical needs of the two following chapters I have used 17 articles from *Vecer*, 5 articles from *Republika*, 3 from *Sloboden Pecat* and 11 from *Utrinski Vesnik* explicitly containing the search key words “Skopje 2014” and “identity”. In total 14 articles from the oppositional media and 22 from the pro-government press explicitly referring to “Skopje 2014” were systematically analysed.

Additional search of articles containing the key word “antiquisation”, on the other hand, yield for instance on the 22.09.2015, 30 articles in *Vecer*, 189 in *Utrinski Vesnik*, 15 in *Republika* and 3 in *Sloboden Pecat*. Many of these articles proved to be a valuable source of data, especially in the section where I embed “Skopje 2014” in the antiquisation policy.

During the process of critical analysis and interpretation in few instances I have also included short excerpts from articles found in foreign press such as *Kleine Zeitung*, *The Guardian*, *The Economist* and *International Herald Tribune*. These texts will not be analysed systematically but only used to support my argument.

In the analysis of written materials I have also included two books: the newest official “History of the Macedonian People” published by the Institute for National History in 2009 and Causidis’ “The Project Skopje 2014 –Drafts for Some Following Research” published in 2013.

Finally, I would underscore that differently than in the analysis of the discourses from the newspapers in the chapters dedicated to the topics of development and democracy, in these chapters I was not trying to represent the speeches in a very strict chronological order, since during the preliminary analysis of the texts no major changes could be observed in the government’s policy on national identity within the short time-frame of five years.

Governing elite's discourses

Antiquisation discourses and mythopoesis

In the theoretical chapter of this study I have argued that “Skopje 2014” is deeply embedded in the “antiquisation” policy and discourse. It can also be argued that “Skopje 2014” is extension of this policy or a process of petrifying idea into stone. After the completion of some structures from the Project, the same were used as sites for anchoring of the existing myths or for constructing new one on the same theme. A plethora of acts, discourses, performances, which could also be observed independent from “Skopje 2014”, have formed the marrow of what has been labelled as policy of “antiquisation”. In this regard it is impossible to disentangle this policy from the project “Skopje 2014”, but for analytical purposes I will temporarily treat them separately and observe “Skopje 2014” as the crown or the “hardware” of the policy. In the following chapter in turn, I will descent from “Skopje 2014” to the antiquisation policy and reflect on how they complement each other.

As Vangeli (2011, 18-19) noted in Macedonia the post-2008 manifestation of antiquisation policies were numerous and multifaceted. After seizing power the government of Gruevski renamed the international airport of Skopje into “Alexander the Great”, Skopje’s stadium into the “National Arena Philip II,” and the main highway, part of the pan-European Corridor X, into “Alexander of Macedonia.” As of 2011 around 300 boulevards, streets and bridges caring names of leftist politicians were renamed, e.g., Leninova (Lenin street) was renamed into Amyntas III¹¹, marshal Tito into Makedonija, Bihachka (the street of the Social Democrats’ headquarters) into Pavel Shatev¹².

Simultaneously, the government has sponsored and broadcasted video clips with explicit nationalistic and populist content featuring Alexander the Great, as part of a governmental campaign for “raising the national dignity and optimism” titled “You are Macedonia”. It additionally filmed documentary serial, each longer than 30 minutes, named “Macedonia throughout the history”, re-evaluating the “ancient Macedonian heritage” at least in one third of the 32 episodes. Several other documentaries with quasi-scientific and content based on conspiracy theories on which I will return later in the chapter were also shot in this period.

It is also remarkable the use of ancient symbols during this period. For instance, ancient symbols have been exploited in the campaigns of the governmental Agency for Youth and Sports, which earned it the ironic label “Agency for Youth, Sports and Ancient Macedonian Propaganda” (Vangeli, 2011). Among the most illustrative method of the “antiquisation” related to the use of symbols is the process of “inventing traditions.” Hobsbawm and Ranger (1992 as cited in Vangeli, 2011) refer to inventing traditions as a “set of practices of symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.” A case in point is the so-called rebirth of the ancient Macedonian spring-welcoming holiday, Xantica, promoted by the VMRO-DPMNE Youth Association in 2007. The participants in the celebrations wear armour and symbols resembling the phalanges of Alexander the Great (Vangeli, 2011). Traditional

¹¹ a king of Macedon in 393 BC, and again from 392 to 370 BC and a father of Philip II, the father of Alexander the Great

¹² Controversial revolutionary of IMRO, suspected of pro-Bulgarian stances

ceremonies, such as the celebration of the national holiday Ilinden¹³ are also being rearranged to suit the new traditions. For instance, the cavalry dressed like 19th century anti-Ottoman revolutionaries as part of the celebration of the holiday at the historic site near Krushevo (a ceremony invented after the World War II), have been replaced in the last few years by another horsemen dressed like ancient Macedonian soldiers. The invention of traditions thus went hand in hand with performative myth-making practices.

The process of antiquisation was also accompanied with frequent archaeological excavations sponsored by the government. It was expected that the archaeology can “find the final proof of ‘our’ origins” and moreover, it was expected that this can happen very fast if many archaeological sites will be excavated simultaneously and thoroughly. This fits the assumptions that archaeology is often utilized by nationalism and archaeologists become politically significant personae (Vangeli, 2011). E.g. the controversial archaeologist Pasko Kuzman, who once was fervent admirer of Josip Bros Tito, has been appointed a chair of the governmental Bureau for the Protection of Cultural Heritage and became one of the few fathers of antiquisation and loud spokesman and propagator of the idea in the media, based on his scientific authority.

These examples notwithstanding, I would designate as most prolific antiquisation project to be the ethnological study in the Hunza Valley of the Pakistani Himalayas, a project which aside of “Skopje 2014” led to most fruitful innovations in the nationalist discourse.

Researchers from Macedonia discovered that according to oral tradition of the people from the Burusho tribe or Hunzukuts - the term that people of the Hunza Valley use to refer to themselves – they are descended from five Macedonian soldiers in the army of Alexander the Great, who arrived in the Hunza Valley, formerly Persia, more than twenty centuries ago, and are, therefore, a self-proclaimed Macedonians. The Hunzukuts people believe that today’s Macedonia is their remote homeland. Officially, this tale of the Hunzukuts’ ancient Macedonian origin has inspired the members of the “Macedonian Institute for Strategic Research 16:9” (MISR 16:9), a recently founded NGO with close ties to the Macedonian government, to first visit the Hunzukuts people in Pakistan and shoot a documentary film about their alleged cultural similarities with contemporary Macedonians and also to invite the royal delegation from the Hunza Valley to visit Macedonia and demonstrate the purported ties among Macedonians living in present-day Macedonia, the Hunzukuts people, and ancient Macedonians. The contact with the Burusho tribe was initiated by the members of the MISR 16:9 who visited the Hunza Valley in 2005 and produced the Macedonian-language documentary film “Do Krajot na Svetot”, or “To the End of the World.”

The next step in the fraternization with the “remote Macedonians” occurred during the summer 2008 when the royal couple of the Hunzukuts people escorted with few of their countrymen visited their “remote homeland”. When the royal delegation landed in Skopje Airport, the entourage got a boisterous Balkan greeting, complete with some 20 men dressed as Alexander’s soldiers – with spears, helmets, shields and ancient uniforms. Several hundred well-wishers chanted “Macedonia!” and waved Macedonian flags. Some shouted “Welcome home!” Bishop Peter of Bitola proclaimed that the prince “looks like Alexander the Great” and one man signed over to the prince a plot of land near Lake Ohrid “so that he would always have a place in his homeland” (*International Herald*

¹³ Holyday related to two dates important for the statehood of modern Macedonia

Tribune, October, 2008). The government had an idea to build there a Hunza Palace, but the idea was later revoked (*Utrinski Vesnik*, December, 2010). During the week-long trip, the royal family was received by the Prime Minister Gruevski, (who offered 10 scholarships for Hunza students at Macedonian universities), the Archbishop Stephan, unrecognized head of the Macedonian Orthodox Christian Church and the Mayor of the capital. In the later text I will demonstrate how the cultural elite close to the governing party has embraced, interpreted and further developed the myth of common ancestors with the Hunza people and how this mythopoesis has served the political agenda of the governing party. These practices, such as renaming of the public spaces, intensified archaeological excavations, public performances with use of ancient Macedonian symbols, the official acceptance of the Hunza royal family in the cabinet of the Prime Minister and other, have provided the ground for “re-discovery” of the reportedly forgotten Macedonian identity. As it will be demonstrated later, different argumentation schemes were employed by the cultural elite based on these performative and behavioural infrastructures offered by the government. Before moving to the analysis of the cultural elites’ discourses, I would like to underscore that the antiquisation promoted rootedness of the nation in the distant past and thus formed the bases for the building of “Skopje 2014”. The buildings of “Skopje 2014”, on the other hand, served as a scene for further advancement of the antiquisation ideas. This relationship will be elaborated in the next two short parts of the chapter.

Understanding of the national identity statically

One of the consequences of the antiquisation policy is the fixing of the national identity to the territory where the *ethnie* currently exercises its sovereignty and control, thus de-historising and eternalising identity. De Cillia *et al.* (1999) refer for instance, to the case where Stone Age mummy was discovered in the Alps on the border of Austria and Italy in 1991. Both of the nations put claims that the mummy belongs to them. The authors described the attempt of the both nations to adorn their respective ‘national past’ with a historically highly significant archaeological find as a typical nationalizing strategy of usurping and taking possession of past contingencies. In the same text, dedicated to the construction of Austrian national identity, the authors recognise that one of the crucial ideas of building a cohesive national identity in Austria is the idea of *Homo Austriacus*, or the Austrian as such. Weber (1978, 389) claims that ethnies ground their identity in the subjective belief of common descent, physical similarities and costumes, or in memories of migration and colonization. The idea of *Homo Austriacus* or any similar construct prefers the belief in common descent and alleged similarities in physical appearance and costumes. Similarly, the antiquisation policy stimulated the acceptance of the notion of *Homo Macedonicus* in Macedonia.

The idea of *Homo Macedonicus* is based on the principle of territoriality. As argued, according to this point of view, everything that happened on the current territory of the country belongs to the *ethnie*, or nation, and should be considered as national heritage of the same people. This view ignores the dynamism of the world history and the migration and diffusion of ideas and cultural influences through trade and conquest as a possible source of collective identity. It also entails the reasoning whereby the older the nation, the more “rights” it has, especially relatively to its neighbours. The

indoctrination of this logic was pursued on state level, very carefully, but systematically and consistently.

The speech of the Minister for Culture on the opening of the new Archaeological Museum of Macedonia as part of the “Skopje 2014” project could serve as a summary of this argument. In the speech the Minister describes the museum as:

..,“an important investment, which confirms our millennia-long civilised existence, through original and argumentative artefacts, that are presented exactly in the Archaeological Museum, our identity, our rich cultural heritage, all that we possess as a state” (October 18, 2014, Kanceska-Milevska, Minister of Culture).¹⁴

Of special interest here is how the PM Gruevski and the political elite involved in the “Skopje 2014” project (e.g. the Minister of Culture, Kanceska-Milevska) are cautiously avoiding the debate around the antiquisation. Within the whole written and video data corpus gathered for this study only few discourses of these executives refer to interpretation of identity, and even then the argumentation line is much milder than the one of the academic “experts”, although it is to be assumed that in authoritarian states any policy, including the identity policy, is firstly decided ‘on the top’ and then implemented ‘on the bottom’. Responding to the opposition’s accusations for antiquisation, assumed to deteriorate the position of Macedonia in the name dispute with Greece, the Prime Minister claimed that in the past on the Macedonian territory have “lived many civilizations and we cannot distance ourselves from one and to identify with others” (*Vecer*, December, 2009). In the same speech Gruevski argues that:

“We live in time of strange and silly debates about ancient and Slavic Macedonians. (...) I think that after 5 decades or after 10 decades, future generations will wonder what happened in this period in which someone was provoking the people to divide each other on Slavic or ancient (Macedonians), some to belittle the others or deny them, it's funny. These are part of the civilizations that were before us and we neither can (deny) the Slavic nor the ancient (Macedonians) or those who were from the Stone, Bronze Age, to negate them, or only some to exhibit, and others to put sweep under the rug, Gruevski said at the presentation of part of the artefacts found this year at several sites across the country.” (*Ibid.*)

The argumentation in this text is interesting from several aspects. The identity confusion which actually started only after the introduction of the antiquisation policy in general and the “Skopje 2014” project in particular is prescribed to the opposition. The opposition is reportedly ‘provoking’ the people to divisions. Another point is that reportedly the new government offers a unifying platform for building of identity, grounded in all the civilisations that were living on the current territory of the country. However, only in few instances references were made, for instance, to the Dardanians or the Paeonians, the tribes settling the territory of today’s Macedonia before the ancient Macedonians did. To my knowledge, only one sculpture from “Skopje 2014” is dedicated to these people, and namely the “Paeonian priestess” placed in front of the Archaeological Museum. No place in the construction of the national identity has the influences of the Ottoman past as well. The influence of this civilisation is evidently “swept under the rug”.

¹⁴ “Archaeological Museum of Macedonia Opens Tonight”, news from the TV station *Chanel 5*, published on 27 Oct 2014, last viewed 27.01.2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HC_b9vohw1A

In another occasion the Prime Minister commented:

“I think it is high time to stop already to divide the people of ancient, Slavic or I do not know what. We are all Macedonians and we should jointly continue to build Macedonia without divisions. The people are any way saturated by being deeply divided by party (loyalty) and another (many) types of divisions, so now to still divide them on ancient or Slavic Macedonians, the Prime Minister Gruevski said. He appealed to the opposition not to divide people in this way in this campaign. - I understand that it is a (election) campaign; I understand that the opposition must seek ways to chase the score and try to achieve higher gains and that is legitimate. However, to infuse such a climate among citizens, so that people will argue whether they were Slavic or ancient is really something that is inappropriate. We should finally put an end to it and say that we are all Macedonians, Gruevski said.” (*Vecer*, February, 2009).

The strategy of vilification of the political opponent is even clearer in this excerpt. It not only positions the party of the Prime Minister as completely innocent of the instrumentalisation of the antiquisation policy and discourse in election campaign context, but also blames the opposition in doing so. The exclamation that “We are all Macedonians...”, however, shows that the PM indeed offers national identity as *a la carte* choice, some can chose to be Slavic Macedonians and other can embrace identity of ancient Macedonians, however, they are ‘all Macedonians’ and should together ‘build the state’. Not only this reasoning introduces *a la carte* identity it also neglects the fact that in most of the cases the new-coming civilisations on the Macedonian soil were rather antagonistic than complementing each other, in term of religion, language and customs. For instance, the Slavs were long-term enemies to the Byzantine Empire. Control over the Balkan territories was negotiated over several centuries, many times escalating in wars with many casualties. The celebration of Tsar Samuil and Justinian I on the same square, as representatives of two opposing groups with which the people of present day Macedonia are summoned to identify, is thus contradictory. Celebrating of the cultural heritage of conquering civilisations is not illegitimate *per se*, but the re-evaluation of the influence of other cultures should be put in context and not to blur the obvious differences between the civilisations in the past (in this context the Slavic and the Roman Byzantine) as instrument for diminishing the evident dominance of the current Slavic mainstream culture and the identity based on it. Also, the acknowledgement of these influences should include all the civilisations, especially the one that are more recent. The Roman and the Ottoman civilisations are strongly neglected in this regard.

Genetic versus cultural foundation of identity

Along with the revision of history, genetic surveys turned out to be the second most important asset for the proponents of ancient Macedonian continuity as well. According to Vangeli (2011, 20) particularly valuable has been the survey by the Swiss *Genetist.ch GmbH*, named project iGenea, whose findings were interpreted as proof that “Macedonians have more ancient Macedonian blood” than Greeks. According to the findings of the DNA test 30% of the “Indigenous peoples in Macedonia” have origins from Ancient Macedonians, 20% Teuton, 15% Slav, 15% Hellenic People, 10% Illyrian, 5% Hunnian, 5% Phoenician. These are the respective percentages for the “Indigenous

Peoples in Greece”: Hellenic People 35%, Slav 20%, Phoenician 20%, Teuton 10%, Illyrian 10% and Ancient Macedonian 5%.¹⁵

The description of the YouTube video reads: “iGenea DNA test prove ethnic identity of Macedonians. These test are the most reliable in the world and do not focus on political quarrels, but on facts. In science there is no place for politics and propaganda!”

The survey has stirred very positive public reactions after the publication of the data on YouTube and on the TV station *Sitel*, one of the constitutive pillars of power of Gruevski’s government. The argumentation is straightforward in turning the “Greek truth” up-side-down. It states that the DNA test proves ethnic identity of Macedonians, that it is reliable scientific fact ‘discovered’ by impartial and renowned foreign institute, and against any politics or propaganda. According to this study there are even more Slavic people in Greece than in Macedonia.

This, however, was not the only genetic study on the topic. A team of scientists in the Spanish laboratory of Antonio Arnaiz-Villena in 2001 published a scientific paper, entitled “HLA Genes in Macedonians and the Sub-Saharan Origin of the Greeks,” in the journal *Tissue Antigens* (Neofotistos, 2012, 302). The team conducted DNA testing using population samples of 172 Macedonians from Skopje and 417 Greeks from the prefecture of Attica and some islands of the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas, including Crete and Cyprus. According to the research findings:

“Macedonians are related to other Mediterraneans and do not show a close relationship with Greeks; however they do with Cretans (...) This supports the theory that Macedonians are one of the most ancient peoples existing in the Balkan peninsula, probably long before arrival of the Mycenaean Greeks about 2000 B.C. (...) The reason why Greeks did not show a close relatedness with all the other Mediterraneans analyzed (...) was their genetic relationship with sub-Saharan ethnic groups now residing in Ethiopia, Sudan and West Africa (Burkina-Faso)” (in *Neofotistos*, 2012, 302).

The study carried implicit racial argument and namely that “Greeks are Africans, Macedonians are Europeans”. The findings of this study have been widely dispersed on Macedonian listservs, such as *maknews.com*, and fiercely debated between Greek and Macedonian bloggers.

Officially, the government of Macedonia did not have any involvement in these researches. However, the governing elite has never publicly denounced them. In one occasion the PM Gruevski has even referred to this study on a long in-depth TV-interview. When asked by TV-viewer if he, as most of the Macedonians do, considers himself as a descendant of Alexander, he answered:

“Well, genetically speaking, we are, right (?), a mix of all peoples living in this area from the time of Alexander, before him, and onward. So certainly we have (genes) from that period... That was also genetically investigated as far as I know, in Spain, in institutes, etc...”¹⁶

The emphasis on the ‘African roots of Greek culture’ and the fact that ‘they came later on the Balkan peninsula than the closely related Macedonians and Cretans’ clearly supports the claims that Macedonians are an older and racially purer people than Greeks and, hence, are the true descendants of ancient Macedonians and the only ones to embody “modern,” “Western” qualities.

¹⁵ “DNA of Macedonian people by IGENEA”, published on 19.02.2009, last viewed 27.01.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ujBXeEXI-Q>

¹⁶ “Late Night Show 10 maj - Milenko Nedelkovski-Nikola Gruevski”, published on 12.05.2008, last viewed 27.01.2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g8lHp_q-Wto

Here, again, the objective is not only to provide counter-arguments to the neighbouring countries who question the authenticity of the Macedonian national identity but also to assert the political legitimacy of the Macedonian state in the international system: as Europe's ancient civilization, Macedonia should be treated as a legitimate, "modern" and already authentically "Western," state deserving of EU membership (Neofotistos, 2012, 302). Referring to this study, some Macedonians claimed that not Greece but Macedonia is the cradle of western rationality and democracy. As such it deserves recognition from Europe today. This conviction is to be seen in the architectural expression of "Skopje 2014", as it will be demonstrated in the following chapter.

That the governing elite was not refraining from usage of racist argumentation in other occasions will be demonstrated further, when analysed the discourses of the cultural elite. Here it suffices to note that the political elite, untypically for plural democracies, did not hold back from racist stances if not encouraging them explicitly.

Rebirth in 100 Steps

Frckovski argued that the new populist, anti-intellectual political discourse and rhetoric aimed at the collective illusion of unity and great ancestry is experienced by some people as "cultural revolution" and collective catharsis. Estimating "Skopje 2014" as a successful project, the 'cultural revolution' or 'rebirth' of the nation has also become a project of itself. In a local elections campaign in 2013 PM Gruevski stressed the importance of "Skopje 2014" in front of his party supporters: "Because it is a project, which also raised the head of the Macedonians in Macedonia, a project that showed a lot about the identity of this nation and this people. From here in Centre (municipality of Skopje), I can announce that "Skopje 2014" will become "Macedonia 2017".¹⁷

The installation of statues of Alexander the Great or his father Philip, have followed in other bigger cities as well (Prilep, Stip, Bitola).

On the 15th Congress of the party, held in Kumanovo in 2015, the Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski also said:

"Skopje 2014 is a great project, with a significant essence, related to our so much negated identity and history but maybe it was our fault that we wanted to build everything [that has been] missed [to be built] in the last 50 years?.. These monuments and the events and the characters depicted on these monuments, will hold the backbone of the Macedonian nation in the future, the same way these figures have held the spine of the Macedonian nation upright when they were alive and acting throughout history. That is how they became the heroes and famous figures with whom most of us identify today, Gruevski underlined" (*Republika*, 2015).

It seems that both "Skopje 2014" and "Macedonia 2017" were in fact planned as early as 2006, just after the parliamentary victory the same year. A text from the daily *Vecer* from 2006, reveals that the government has planned a *revival* of the nation:

¹⁷ <http://grid.mk/read/news/501619909/1724778/gruevski-proektot-skopje-2014-ja-krena-glavata-na-makedoncite-vo-makedonija>, last viewed June 2016

“In (the program) "Rebirth in 100 Steps" also stands the building of a museum of VMRO and museum of the victims of the communism” (*Vecer*, November, 2006).

In this context, “Skopje 2014” was the first step towards the embodiment of this program. The name and the content of the "Rebirth in 100 Steps" hinted intentions for imposing a new hegemonic narrative on the national identity. Considering that this is the first comment on the Macedonian identity in public space in the two and a half decades of independence of the republic, it can be assumed that the developers of “Skopje 2014” had increased freedom to question the history or politically score on its reinterpretation. The intellectuals supportive of this idea have passionately defended this intention, and as it will be demonstrated, had crucial role not only in the articulation and dissemination of the ideas behind “Skopje 2014” but also and especially in the acceptance of the Project by the public.

Utilisation of the “Skopje 2014” as a “scene“ for identity change

The architect and former mayor of the municipality Centre, Miroslav Grcev, one of the greatest opponents of the project “Skopje 2014” has argued in a TV-interview that “the idea of these buildings is to represent a new coulisse, theatrical coulisse for a quick change of the identity of the people”.¹⁸

I would provide few excerpts of public speeches by Prime Minister Gruevski delivered on the sites of “Skopje 2014” where he directly refers to antiquity and connects present commemorative moments with this distant past, suggesting continuity and revival of the nation under his rule. It is significant that commemorative dates were especially chosen for opening new monuments or facilities, thus justifying parts of the mass building project with anniversaries, deserving a reminder for the future generations in material form. It is also important that these new facilities were erected on streets or squares which were renamed and received an “ancient” name related to the Kingdom of Macedon. The following excerpt is from Prime Minister’s speech dedicated to the opening of the new facility of the Foreign Affairs Ministry:

“First of all let me congratulate you on the great holiday, October 23, the day of Macedonian Revolutionary Struggle. Today Macedonia celebrates 119 years of the formation of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization.... Our ancestors left many great deeds, deeds to remember, acts of celebration....

With this project the Foreign Affairs Ministry, here on the street Philip II of Macedon, can fully respond to its unique function, and that is, to represent the statehood, the state policies and the dignity, of the Macedonian State and of all our citizens as well”¹⁹.

¹⁸ Short film „Pro(paganda)ject Skopje 2014“, production of Bulgarian TV station, published on 28.01.2012, published 28 Jan 2012, last viewed 22 06.2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=abxbnR5faqY>

¹⁹ Speech of the PM Gruevski on the official opening of the facility of the new Ministry of foreign Affairs, TV *Orbis*, published on Oct 24, 2012, last viewed 27.01.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfysiMo-2VI>

The opening of the “Warrior on the Horse” and the “Arch Macedonia” was scheduled for the anniversary of the state’s independence:

“Although its construction ended the previous month, as planned, in the year we celebrate the 20th anniversary of independence of Republic of Macedonia, we have decided its official promotion to be on this beautiful day”.²⁰

The pro-government media has also underlined the connection between the distant past and the present, thus trying to strengthen the “antiquisation” thesis:

“On the square “Pella”²¹ in Skopje today the object “Arch Macedonia” was officially launched, on which motives of the Macedonian history, culture and tradition are shown”(Vecer, 2012).

The textual *collocation* of „Skopje 2014“ with “ancestors”, “remembrance”, “celebration”, “statehood”, “Macedonian history” calls to mind patriotism, national dignity and pride, but also current government’s care for the historical legacies of the previous generations, thus legitimising each particular facility that has been opened and the project “Skopje 2014” in general. The *collocation* of “Skopje 2014” with “Philip II of Macedon”, “Pella”, “the day of Macedonian Revolutionary Struggle”, on the other hand, suggests historical continuity from the antiquity, through the revolutionary aspirations for statehood in the 19th century to today’s triumph celebrated with the Project.

The linking of antiquity and present is continuing even after the official end of the project in 2014. During the election campaign period in 2014 it was decided that the Central Concert Hall (“Univerzalna Sala”) will be officially renamed into a Public Institution Convention Centre “Alexander of Macedonia - Skopje” in 2015. (*Vesti.mk*, January, 2015)²²

This Hall is one of the landmarks of post-earthquake Skopje, built on donations of 20 countries, and symbol of the “old regime”. The disassembling of the old Hall and the building of a new one on the same place has been used as a moment for renaming the facility, which in campaigning period has the potency to strengthen nationalism and party loyalty.

In performances such as these one can see the entanglement of the antiquisation argumentation with the project “Skopje 2014”. Although discreetly, “Skopje 2014” is used by the leading politician of the country to refer to the antiquisation theses and to construct a new imagery of the Macedonian past and present.

²⁰ Arch Macedonia, official opening (6.1.2012), published on 10 Jan 2012, last viewed 27.01.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUQDoCKD8VU>

²¹ Pella was the ancient capital of the Kingdom of Macedon

²² *Vesti.mk*, last viewed 11.04.2017, <http://vesti.mk/read/news/4273988/1603618/univerzalnata-sala-dobi-novo-ime-aleksandar-makedonski>

Pro-government cultural elites' discourses

Understanding of the national identity statically

In the following part of the chapter I will demonstrate how the cultural elite has accepted the antiquisation ideas in "Skopje 2014" and helped in their interpretation and dissemination in the broader public. As mentioned earlier, archaeology was one of the cornerstones of the antiquisation policy, since it was assumed to offer evidence for the continuous presence and dominance of the ancient Macedonian culture on the Macedonian soil through the centuries. The opening of the new Archaeological Museum of Macedonia as part of the "Skopje 2014" project served as a platform for grounding these beliefs. It is intriguing that many speakers from different walks of life have defined the exhibition and the alleged new light it shades onto the Macedonian history in very similar way. Here are some of the discourses delivered in this occasion:

"Every nation celebrates its history, celebrates its heroes. Macedonia is doing this with dignity, exactly through "Skopje 2014". The magnificent Archaeological Museum displays to the public historical cultural heritage, accumulated over the centuries in the Macedonian soil (*Republika*, 2014).

„Today, from this central position, in the heart of the Republic of Macedonia, once again we remind the world about the role and value of our rich cultural tradition created through centuries on this, our Macedonian soil" (the director of the Archaeological Museum).²³

However, the most mythopoetic is the statement of the narrator from one of the promotional videos named "*Explore Macedonia*", dedicated to Kokino, a Bronze Age archaeological site with one of the oldest megalithic observatories in the world (similar to Stonehenge in UK) and discovered in 2001. In the video sponsored by Gruevski's government and intending to develop domestic tourism, the narrator says:

„4000 years refute 4000 speakers who deny our existence. The mystique of this space leads us to thinking about a place where one people lives for generations".²⁴

It is evident that this way of theorising is adopted by the cultural elite from the argumentation schemes of the political elite. It clearly states that one and the same people were living on the same soil only slightly adopting but mainly adapting the customs and cultural preferences of the potential newcomers. Contrary to the former myth of the Great Migration of the Slavs to the Balkans around the sixth century the academician Blaze Ristovski from the Macedonian Academy of Arts and Sciences claims that:

²³ "Archaeological Museum of Macedonia Opens Tonight", news from the TV-station *Chanel 5*, published on 27 Oct 2014, last viewed 27.01.2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HC_b9vohw1A

²⁴ "Research Macedonia-Kokino", published on 20 July 2010, last viewed 27.01.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4EOwwwRHcK8>

“We have with those ancient Macedonians a common name, no one else is Macedonian worldwide. We have (same) territory. This country is called Macedonia. Not now it is named so, it carries this name for millennia”²⁵.

What this definition of reality privileges is the territory, the soil, and not the people settling it, as a source of identity. Following from the argumentation, whoever settles the territory has not only to carry the name but also to draw one’s identity from the name of the territory. These narratives are therefore approximating, or even equalising, the notions of “name” and “identity”, the same way the European nations in the colonial time were placing works of art of the classical civilizations in the same rooms with the items from the national history, suggesting thus a direct link with, if not a continuous progression from, the classical civilizations, everything pinpointing at teleologically connected triumphant past and presence (dos Santos, 2003).

This discourse has gradually earned solid support within the Macedonian scientific and the pseudo-scientific public. E.g., the newest official “History of the Macedonian People” published by the Institute for National History in 2009, argues:

“The evidenced continuity of (ancient) Macedonians as the majority population in Macedonia had substantial impact on the process of transferring of the Macedonian traditions on the Macedonian Slavs who populated the territory from the 7th century onwards. This was confirmed by the latest historical and archaeological studies that show that the Slavic settlement in Macedonia did not constitute a mass colonization with capacity to fully alter the ethnic constellation in Macedonia.... also the Slavs themselves during the 7th century have undergone a demographic crisis it can be concluded that the ancient Macedonians had a strong influence on the process of group identification and creation of the collective identity of the Slavs in Macedonia”(Cepreganov *et al.*, 2009).

This presents a major revision of the Institute’s position, which since its foundation, had argued that after the Great Migration, Slavs imposed their culture in the new lands, thus Macedonian culture was Slavic. Panov, the major author of the chapters on ancient and medieval history, has published a series of articles where he argued that the political “tendency of the historiography in Yugoslavia based (...) on the relations between Belgrade and Athens” has produced ignorance towards the obvious continuity of Ancient Macedonians (Vangeli, 2011).

This short excerpt is telling in many aspects. It demonstrates how unilaterally and hastily, without any public debate or international scientific conferences on the topic, the history of one people was rewritten under the dictate of the political elite. It argues that ‘the latest historical and archaeological studies’ have shown that the Slavic settlement in Macedonia was not in fact a mass colonization, that the Slavs in that period have undergone ‘demographic crisis’ and therefore the largest community of Ancient Macedonians had strong influence on the collective identity of the newcomers. The rhetors tend to overemphasize the role of the frequent archaeological excavations throughout the whole country in the ‘search for the truth’, although in these matters quantity does not mean quality. Moreover, this was not a joint venture of the Balkan countries and therefore cannot be telling of the magnitude and significance of the Great Migration in a larger context. Also the thesis about the ‘demographic crisis’ was not anyhow supported by the neighbouring countries. This weak argumentation line also raises at least two crucial questions: firstly, how only the ethnic

²⁵ Short film „Pro(paganda)ject Skopje 2014“, production of Bulgarian TV station, published on 28.01.2012, published 28 Jan 2012, last viewed 22.06.2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=abxbnR5faqY>

Macedonians among other Balkan ethnicities have protected their genetic and cultural uniqueness after five centuries of Roman, nine centuries of Byzantine and five centuries of Ottoman rule; and secondly, why differently than the languages spoken on the territories of today's Albania and Romania, who were strongly latinised after the Roman rule, the Macedonian language (just as the languages of the other Slavic tribes which migrated in the area following the breakdown of the Roman Empire) stayed practically intact? Moreover, why after the presentation of the new 'historical and archaeological' findings all other former Yugoslav republics do not reconsider their national identity and win prominence in the international hierarchy of states as descendants of the Roman civilization, for instance? Slovenia and Croatia in this regard only went that far in the history as to reintroduce their Habsburg heritage in this context.

At this point of the analysis we can state that some Macedonian academics have taken much stronger positions on the ancient Macedonian past than the politicians. As argued before, the few statements of the PM Gruevski related to the identity of the Macedonian people as seen through the prism of "Skopje 2014" and the antiquisation policy in general are not offering a lot of space for critical analysis, although the project has evident political overtones. More explicit and argumentative statements during this period, however, the Macedonian public could read or hear from carriers of professions whose essence is not political, such as TV-hosts, actors, artists or architects. The politicisation of arts will be discussed at length in another chapter, but in this context it is worth to compare the statements of the actor Petar Temelkovski and the architect Vangel Bozinovski with the one of the Prime Minister Gruevski, since the juxtaposition of these groups of texts offers insight into the mechanisms of the antiquisation policy. The lack of acceptance of these policies among some voters could be thus softened by refusing any responsibility by the political top.

Performing arts have also been used to wide-spread the antiquisation messages. Historical, patriotic and nationalistic topics have dominated in the repertoire of the theatres across Skopje. In the context of the building of the new-old baroque Skopje Theatre, the Minister of Culture, Elizabeta Kanceska-Milevska, has stressed that the actors and all the workers in the art sector are receiving 60% higher income after the government of Gruevski has entered the office four years ago.²⁶ The interview with the actor Petar Temelkovski for *Vecer* reveals how performing art is used as ideological tool for 'returning to the roots'.

"Petar Temelkovski, winner of the award "October 11" for 2011. Analyzing the current moment and "popularity" of the concept antiquisation, Temelkovski said: "Too bad that so beautiful and complex word when used in "worldly" political moment becomes repulsive and not because of our fault, because the Antiquisation marks our ancient, antique, Old Testamental Biblical roots that the whole world respects. It is a real luck that only a small portion (of the Macedonians) do not consider them as their own, but gives them to someone else as inappropriate gift... As verification of that there also exist historically proven facts - Philip II in the battle of Chaeronea defeated Athenians, alias Greeks. Has Philip, winning that battle, fought against his own people?! George Ellis in his scientific paper "Philip II and the Macedonian imperialism" clearly stated that the 4th century BC lacks the Macedonian view, and I am glad that that is finally accepted. I hope that Alexander (his statue) from Macedonia Square will make us all reasonable and we will all respect our roots so that we can enjoy their benefits, and only through good and harmonious life with all of our neighbours, go forward (in the future). (...)

²⁶ „Interview with Elizabeta Kanceska Milevska for the Radio Free Europe”, published 10 December 2010, last viewed 17.02.2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vd_o2_JdPDE

Petar Temelkovski informed us that at the moment, after "Philip II", he prepares the "Justinian", whose premiere is expected on May 11 in the year of the birth of the founder of the law. "Is it not wonderful to work on something related to a man who gave justice to the history and the world, while (knowing) that he was one of us (Macedonian)" added Temelkovski."(*Vecer*, October, 2011).

This text highlights the idea about the unaltered Macedonian civilisation, reportedly rooted in the Biblical period of the Old Testament, developed by Philip of Macedon and continued through Justinian in Byzantium to today's Macedonia, which celebrates the father of the nation with Alexander's statue as part of the project "Skopje 2014". The rhetor employs fallacious argumentation pattern where only because the Greeks have lost the battle against Alexander's army (proving thus that they cannot claim the Macedonian heritage), it is assumed that no one else could have won that battle but the ancestors of the present day Macedonians. The rhetor assumes with haughtiness that only a small portion of the Macedonian population has stayed 'unreasonable' and that the large statue from the main square of Skopje should help make them reasonable. He does not clarify in which way this could happen, but the silent statement behind the statue, its volume and price as expression of power, should probably have its input in this process. Finally, Justinian I is perceived as 'one of us', 'the one who live on this territory' or Macedonian. It is worth nothing that the emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire lived in time when Macedonian national identity in modern sense of the word was not even possible. In a culturally diverse empire, submerged in Roman traditions, where Latin and later ancient Greek was used as *lingua franca* and official government language is hard to imagine particularistic ethnic identity of Macedonians based on continuity of Alexander's civilisation. In this regard Macedonia is following the Greek pattern of nation-building, only with slight difference: while the Greek expansion in historical glory was going hand in hand with the acquisition of new territories, the Macedonian glory-expansion stayed fixed to time, by returning in more distant past.

In sum, this argumentation scheme transmits the message of an alleged continuity of the Macedonian civilisation, rooted in the Kingdom of Macedon. It offers a static image of national identity based on territoriality, rather than on migration, interaction and hybridisation of people and cultures. Finally, relative to the statements of the PM Gruevski, the statement of Temelkovski lacks any *calculated ambivalence*; it clearly assumes that present day Macedonians are descendents of the ancient Macedonians (the statue of Alexander on the Macedonia Square symbolising the magical bridge between the past and the present) and that only few Macedonians today doubt these ancient origins.

Of great analytical value I also find the speech of the architect Vangel Bozinovski delivered in the documentary dedicated to "Skopje 2014" and its legitimisation on the national TV station *MRTV*. In this speech Bozinovski not only constructs a narrative of 'rooted' nation but also offers an explanation *why* it is so important to have national identity grounded in the territory of present day Macedonia²⁷.

In this excerpt of the interview Bozinovski argues that being rooted in the territory has great psychological importance for the nation's success. Quite the opposite, if the nation, or more correctly the *ethnie*, has migrated in the area it is assumed to have had no culture, no civilisation prior to the migration, and therefore it was barbaric, passive and waited to be cultivated by the others. In sum, Bozinovski argues that if the people are not native to the region, they could not feel 'rooted' and

²⁷ Full text is available in the Appendix under Text 4.

would therefore always have inferiority complex in relation to the surrounding people, who already claimed to be native in the geographical area. Bozinovski further argues that the authoritative educational system of the previous regime has to be held responsible for the acceptance of the allegedly falsified, *slovenised* version of the Macedonian history.

Bozinovski offers no argument when in the mist of time the “conspiracy” against the “authentic” Macedonian culture has began, since we can assume that the seven decades of reportedly very repressive Yugoslav regime could still not be powerful enough to wipe out all the evidences of millennia-long ancient Macedonian cultural uniqueness and identity. It seems that the main message behind this reasoning is that if present day Macedonians prefer to keep the old narrative they cannot be in position to claim to be the oldest European civilisation, a condition necessary to challenge the position of Hellenism in world history.

Challenging the position of Hellenism in the world history

The importance of being ‘rooted’ is thus a quintessential element of the antiquisation narrative, since without this assumption the deconstruction of Hellenism cannot be a successful venture. Bozinovski, once more, was one of the loudest speakers defending this position:

“Until Greece blocked Macedonia’s accession to NATO in 2008, the government in Skopje never really took the history bait from Greece. Since then, however, the nationalist ideologues have become louder. Far from the Macedonians being an invented nation, as the Greeks argue, Vangel Bozinovski, one of the architects working on Skopje’s revamp says that it is in fact the Greek nation that was invented in the 19th century, and hence it is they who are stealing Macedonian history, including that of Alexander the Great” (*Economist*, 2013).

Bozinovski and other speakers, such as the artist Aco Stankovski, went even further and developed a whole new theory about the merits of so called Macedonism for the world culture and especially of the impact it had on the European:

“The square in Baroque style in front of the largest Catholic Cathedral of St. Peter in Rome is a copy of the square in Jerash (city on northern Jordan), built by Macedonian architects in the campaign of Alexander III of Macedonia. The domes of Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza²⁸ are actually a copy of architecture that left Macedonism, called (wrongly) Hellenism in Petra. When talking whether Macedonian culture, architecture, art, history have Baroque, it should be said that essentially Macedonian architecture shaped the Baroque”.²⁹

Bozinovski thus constructs the new Macedonian national myth by the deconstruction of the Greek national myth. Just as Skrinis (2005) and Neofotistos (2012) have outlined the flaws of the Greek national myth, Bozinovski uses these deconstructions, this demystification to mystify and construct

²⁸ Roman Catholic church in Rome built in 1642-1660 by the architect Francesco Borromini and considered to be a masterpiece of Roman Baroque architecture

²⁹ Short film „Pro(paganda)ject Skopje 2014“, production of Bulgarian TV station, published on 28.01.2012, published 28 Jan 2012, last viewed 22 06.2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=abxbnR5faqY>

the new Macedonian myth, stretching in the past more distant than the Greek. He thus demystifies the construction of the Hellenism as 19th century European urge for civilisation and mystifies the construction of Macedonism by simple re-nominating of the process of Hellenisation of Asia into Macedonisation. The underlying logic is: if Alexander has won the battle with the Greeks, then all the heritage of Greece belongs to Macedonia.

In another occasion Bozinovski explains how through shaping Classicism and Baroque art Macedonism has also influenced Neoclassicism, and thus the modern-Europe high regard for a classical period.

“Skopje as a crossroads of various civilizations has always been a city which blended several types of architecture. Baroque, Classicism and Neoclassicism were and are inseparable, rooted elements of the Macedonism in this region. This, among other things, was said at the panel discussion titled "Skopje 2014", which was organized by the institute "Pavel Shatev" on which yesterday debated university professors, architects, experts and journalists at the hotel Holiday Inn.

- The style is a reflection of the opinion of the architect. He can mix and fit anywhere, but one needs to know how and when. One who has gathered no courage to overcome fear has no love, and the one who does not love, does not love oneself, its people or the state. So far, more than a hundred years no government that ruled has overcome that fear and started to realize something like this, said architect Vangel Bozinovski. He said that time has come when we should be realistic and not sceptics to ourselves” (*Vecer*, February, 2010).

In this article Bozinovski not only underpins the impact of Macedonism on European art preferences, but also reflects on the courage and the mindset of the so called New Macedonians, who, for the first time in a century are ‘realistic and not sceptical’ of themselves. The idea of the New Macedonians is clearer in a TV interview with the journalist Vasko Eftov. The interviewer provoked Bozinovski by asking him how it is possible that seven billion people all around the world are studying that the Baroque is an art form originated in 17th century Italy, while the Macedonians should study that this artistic style has originated in ancient Macedonia; is this not solid ground for the ‘world to mock us’? Bozinovski answered:

“Many things are changing in the 21 century. Some things will start (changing) beginning with me. Is it impossible one Macedonian to make a difference? It is possible. The thing that they laugh at us from outside....it is not that (really) to what they laugh, but it is the misery of our spirit that produces jokes here, and then the same jokes with the same words return from there (from outside). It is not their invention. If you mock me and someone joins you, some foreigner will come, he will mock me too. So what I have said already is not without quoting and that someone else has not said that. Nothing is imagined. Everything exists. Look at the archaeological sites in Macedonia, look at the artefacts in the museums and you will see that we do not imagine here anything. We simply refuse to enter the pattern that was enforced upon us until now.” (*Ibid.*)

These discourses of Bozinovski reveal the need for construction of new image of the Macedonian people, a new Macedonian, the Macedonian with capital M (Frckovski, 2014). Due to their rediscovered rootedness in the Macedonian territory this proud new Macedonians are capable of great deeds, they are people who can make a difference, are able to build great works of art, to write the “real” history of the Macedonian people, to challenge the position of Hellenism in the history of the world and place the Macedonian civilisation as Europe’s ancient civilisation, with all the consequences of it, such as the Baroque, Classicism and every artistic style that followed being only a

variation of Macedonism. Differently than Gruevski, who is careful and employs the strategy of *a la carte* identity, Bozinovski, just as Temelkovski, considers that present day Macedonians are nothing else but descendents of the ancient Macedonians. He, moreover, argues that the Slavic narrative was completely imposed on Macedonians from “Others”, and therefore follows that all the influences of the Slavic culture are imagined or marginal. This urge to turn the history up-side-down, however, can in fact be observed as an expression of inferiority complex.

At this point we can conclude that the notion of national identity bound to territoriality, typical for the antiquisation argumentation patterns, was incorporated in “Skopje 2014”. The ideas of the new official “History of the Macedonian People”, rooting the present-day identity of the Macedonians in millennia-long cultural purity and continuity was adopted or reinforced by non-academic cultural commentators who in occasions such as the opening of the new Archaeological Museum, the new old-Theatre and other facilities of “Skopje 2014” have used the same reasoning to justify the Project. The understanding of the identity statically allows the proponents of the idea to challenge the former national myth based in migration and hybridisation and also to reposition Macedonia in the international hierarchy of states by challenging the national myths of the neighbouring countries, (most notably the one of Greece) and by depicting it as a cradle of the European civilisation.

Genetic versus cultural foundation of identity

As stated earlier, the government has never officially pursued identity policy grounded in genetic argumentation. Nevertheless, it has never denounced the fallacy of these patterns used by other public commentators and opinion-makers. In this section of the chapter I will demonstrate how in fact, performances or works of art (such as documentary movies or short films with political messages) or the findings of some “scientific researches” have been embraced by the political elite and denounced only after reactions of some opponents.

While representing the government’s policy of antiquisation, I have underlined the importance of some or performances, such as the celebration of Xantica or the welcoming of the Hunza delegation in Skopje as the core of the policy. In this part of the chapter I will analyse how the discourses of the political elite were accepted by the cultural elite and how they were used for further promotion of the antiquisation messages. I will start with the analysis of the welcoming of the Hunza royal delegation in Macedonia. In this example it is clear that beside the government, evolved were NGO activists, the Macedonian Orthodox Church and journalists, all of which are strong opinion-makers.

The mythopoesis behind this performance is more than evident. The ‘blessing’ from the official state top, as seen through the official reception of the royal family, clearly demonstrated approval if not an entire patronage of the “Hunza” project. Moreover, ‘blessing’ of this project the NGO activists received from the highest religious authority in the country, the Church. This is significant from two perspectives. Firstly, the Church, differently from the government of the state, had very important role in the sustaining of distinct non-Islamic identity in the Ottoman period (typical for all the occupied Balkan people within that time frame), in the organisation of the education system and socialisation and even in the support of the revolutionary struggles of the Macedonian people prior

to and after the Ottoman rule. Therefore, the stances of the Church are always taken as 'less political', 'more honest' and 'closer to the people's needs'. The fact that the Church also decided to participate in this mythopoesis, reflects the new relationship it build with the state establishment, in which the Church obtained new role and power, in exchange for active support of the government's policies. Secondly, the new narratives of the conservative and populist government regarding the Macedonian history (as it will later be analysed in greater detail) review Macedonia not only as "Europe's most ancient civilization", but also "a Biblical land", among the first to accept Christianity. The new myth of Macedonia is therefore a eclectic and mysterious blend of ancient Macedonism and Christianity, often both based in and productive of conspiracy theories. The discourses delivered by the Bishop Agafangel and the prince of the Hunza, Mir Gazanfer Alikan, in the main cathedral of the Macedonian Orthodox Church are telling of the "new epistemology" of national identity building in Macedonian context.

In this context it is also important to reflect on the "scene" where the royal family communicated with the Macedonian people. One of the halls was organised for interactive communication between the journalists and the believers on the one side and the royal family and their escorts on the other site. Behind the scene where the guests were seating a great carpet with the face of Jesus Christ was hanging and on the table in front of the guests, the old Macedonian flag of Vergina (the one disputed with Greece and associated with the more nationalistic elements of the Macedonian electorate) not accompanied by the new official flag of the country. Metropolitan Bishop Agafangel had the opening speech:

"After 23 centuries the remains of the army of Alexander the Macedonian, who walked on this Macedonian land, (also) in Pakistan, in Hunza, here are our brothers in blood, body, thanks to the providence of God ... without God's providence, my dear, nothing happens. We can conclude how God finds us dear and how God loves us. In the most difficult moment for our country, God has brought us the Prince and the Princess in Macedonia (gently hugging the shoulder of the Prince).

To love Macedonia is holiness. To love the Macedonian man is sacred.... (and also) your country.. and to give her your hard- that is love. We, as same-blooded brothers, to our guests have opened our heart and we gave all our love we have. And Europe knows, the Balkan knows, the neighbours know, that we are the only country in the world bordering with itself."³⁰

In the first paragraph the bishop builds immediate bridge between the two lands and people, geographically and temporally. The fact that the two groups are self-proclaimed descendants of ancient Macedonians is taken as a proof that the groups are fraternised by blood.

In the same paragraph, the church official mentions the God's providence behind the final meeting of the brothers, thus giving the blessing of the church to the antiquisation policy. What is of special importance, and this is repeated in the discourses of many antiquisation proponents, God's providence occurs 'in the most difficult moment for our country'. The speaker does not mention why it is the most difficult, but he is sure it is so, as if there were some kind of historical curse and destiny to which Frckovski (2014) referred. The second paragraph discloses the meaning of this 'curse' because 'Europe, the Balkan and the neighbours know that Macedonia is the only country in the world bordering with itself'. This is play with the words. In Balkan context Macedonia neighbours

³⁰ "Royal Family of Hunza back to their Roots in Macedonia", published 20 July 2012, last viewed 27.01.2017 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MevlanmZhck>

with itself because Pirin Macedonia (now under Bulgaria) and Aegean Macedonia (now under Greece) neighbour with Vardar Macedonia (today's territory of Macedonia. In the speech of the Bishop the spectators are invited to think of Macedonia as the country that neighbours with itself in the context of Alexander's empire, stretching from today's Macedonia on the west to the Hunza Valley on the east. Europe, or more concretely the EU, Greece and to some extent Bulgaria are here almost explicitly portrayed as the 'enemies'. According to the artist Aco Stankovski, one of the most passionate supporters of "Skopje 2014, this 'curse' originates as early as the second century A.D. with the first 'Western' invasion of Macedonia by the Romans, who together with their Greek partners (who reportedly have survived two centuries of slavery under Macedonia) wanted to destroy their [Romans'] genetic brother, the Macedonian, because of alleged jealousy or fear.³¹ This point is very important, since it links the 'experiences' from the distant past with the experiences from today in some vicious historic cycle that repeats 'under the same scenario' and as such it is easy to be functionalised in the current political struggles.

Returning to the bishop's speech, the fact that 'God has brought us the Prince' back to Macedonia reveals some elegy for monarchic past, or present. However, as a 'rightful' prince of Macedonia should be considered the one who is related by blood with Alexander the Great, but the myth of the Hunzukuts people states that they are only descendant of soldiers of Alexander's army. This is a clear argumentation fallacy trying to eternalise the blood-line of Alexander and its relation to modern Macedonia. This is in close relation to the imagining of *Homo Macedonicus* (or the Macedonian as such) as expressed through the sentence: "To love the Macedonian man is sacred..." this imagery of the 'Macedonian as such' from the start rejects any idea of possible hybridisation with other cultural influences throughout the history. This is true for the 'modern' Macedonians and for the 'remote' Macedonians.

It is significant that the prince Mir Gazanfer Alikan's speech following after the one of the bishop's discloses similar argumentation patterns and conclusions similar to the one of the 'modern' Macedonians:

"...we are proud of you, because a nation, that has so many nationalities in their hearts will always get success. We feel very proud to call ourselves the descendants of Alexander the Great ... because for more than 2000 years Alexander went to our areas and his people refuse to come back and settled....So we, our family, is considered to be a direct descendant of Alexander the Great...and we, who are living in that part ... we consider ourselves a very privileged society, or we feel very proud among other people. We Hunza, have very small kingdom, and we ruled with Hunza for more than 1000 years, for 27 generations, our people, they do not want any change, to keep our cultural tradition, because we think we are superior race, because we are descendants of Alexander the Great. We also had very hard times, with other nations, with other countries, we fought wars, we liberated our area and today our government gave us all the autonomous powers.....

We people believe in God, look at the western countries. They became very business-minded and money minded ... And you live in an open society, without worry, security, which is greatness, and you should be all grateful to Almighty God."³²

³¹ "Ace Stankovski in Milenko Nedelkovski show", published on 25 November, 2011, last viewed 27.01.2017
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4IbI088y0hE>

³² "Royal Family of Hunza back to their roots in Macedonia", published 20 July 2012, last viewed 27.01.2017
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MevlanmZhck>

The Hunza prince portrays his people and the society they live in as 'privileged' and 'proud among other people'. It is a 'small' yet self-sufficient kingdom that 'does not want any change'. The people of Hunza 'keep their cultural traditions' as they think of themselves as 'superior race', because they are 'descendants of Alexander the Great'. They 'also had very hard times with other nations' but they fought for liberation and today they live in 'open society'. The analogy with 'modern' Macedonia is more than evident. The main message is that Macedonians living in Macedonia should not hesitate about their origins and identity in trade off for the 'Western' values of the 'money minded' Europeans. Instead, they should nurture their racial superiority and keep their traditions intact. It is significant that this right-wing populist reasoning is coming out of the mouth of 'impartial foreigner' and a 'same-blooded' prince, who perhaps, unintentionally and not completely aware of the etiquette of discursive political correctness in European context, uses wording which is offensive of the non-ethnic Macedonians in Macedonia, but it is a wording which is simultaneously simple and direct, thus easily acceptable by the nationalist-populist elements of the Macedonian society.

The self-proclaimed Hunzukuts' Macedonian identity was also taken as sufficient ground to insist on the kin between the two peoples. Dojcinovska, the moderator of the documentary film named them "far relatives". The assumption here is that the blood kin, more than any other marker of identity, provides solid ground for building a sense of community. Other members of the royal family and some of the delegates have also argued in this direction. During the presentation of their experiences in Macedonia, the Princess Rani Attica talked about the similarities of the Macedonian people and the people of Hunza, interpreted by the journalist as "yet another evidence for the common Macedonian ancestry":

"The vibrations that we got from you were pure love and we really felt that, yes, we belong to same blood".³³

One of the delegates escorting the royal family was even more explicit:

"Ladies and gentlemen, we are proud to bring you the king, the Macedonian king, descendant of Alexander. His blood, our blood, your blood, is the same, and I will volunteer in front of the cameras for DNA test, that I am Macedonian.... and we (paraphrasing the "disbelievers") do not believe in history, we do not believe in archaeology, but we believe in blood. Let's prove with the blood! Maybe the historians would lie, maybe they will say something else, but blood never speaks lie" (*Ibid.*).

It should be kept in mind that prior to the visit of the royal family the documentary film of the MISR 16:9 member and journalist, Marina Dojcinovska, named "To the End of the World" was frequently broadcasted and debated in the Macedonian media and society. Dojcinovska also hosted the royal family in her own show and was a guest in the shows of other pro-government showmen, presenting 'our part of the story'. The standing points of the Hunza people was then a 'confirmation' of the 'truth', it is not, as alligators see it, only a narcissistic chimera, but reportedly proven scientific fact that 'European Macedonians' and the 'remote Macedonians' from the Himalayas are one and the same people. To fully grasp the mechanisms behind this 'confirmation' I will shortly present some of the argumentation schemes employed in the documentary and in Dojcinovska's explanatory discourses from the TV shows.

³³ "Royal Family of Hunza back to their roots in Macedonia", published 20 July 2012, last viewed 27.01.2017 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MevlanmZhck>

Dojcinovska's film is completely grounded in the narrative of the supposed links between the two peoples and Alexander the Great, and therefore, of the undisputable ties between the 'far relatives'.

"The walk through Karimabad (...), the central place of Hunza, resembles a walk in familiar places, or perhaps the alleys in Krushevo or Vevcani (small Macedonian towns). The small stores are the same as the stores in the old bazaar in Ohrid. I have bought a piece of embroidery that is identical to this one (the narrator shows the piece) in the bazaar in Struga (another Macedonian town). Surely, all these familiar associations make me feel like home. This is the fortress Baldit, once a fortress for the kings of Hunza, today a museum (...) To me, this construction looks like a Macedonian monastery."³⁴

Not only architecture, but also similar embroidery patterns, traditional clothes, myths, customs, and even folklore music rhythms, allegedly provide further evidences to the ties between Macedonians and Hunzukuts. Offering artefacts and social practices as evidence, the alleged similarities are also productive of the "truth" about contemporary Macedonian national identity. Moreover, the film portrays the people of Hunza as the living embodiment of the ancient Macedonian past, effectively protected by the remoteness of the Valley. The journey to Hunza is thus displayed as a return to a pure past. During the following discourse, visual effects were employed mediating images of meditative landscapes, vast greenery and mountain tops in eternal ice:

"It becomes clear to us that the truth can never be lost in the clouds of history (...) All that had been deeply frozen in Macedonian collective memory for twenty-three centuries emerges as knowledge, as an already lived vision, or as self-knowledge".

The beauty of the place, the narrator argues is to be understood only by "those who have known the Macedonian vision deep within themselves and thus have a personal criterion for beauty, which is passed down from generation to generation if you are born Macedonian. Then, that is eternal Macedonian beauty".

According to Neofotistos (2012, 308) this argumentation falls into the template of naturalization, whereby constructions of history are entwined with constructions of nature and presents the historical relations and kinship ties between Macedonians, Hunzukuts, and ancient Macedonians much like "nature" itself: an allegedly immutable fact that is not subject to criticism. Thus, through time suppression, special approximation and naturalisation strategies, the journey to the Hunza Valley is informed as awakening of the memories of the past dating more than two millennia back to Alexander the Great or an awakening of national consciousness that originates long before Macedonia's declaration of independence in 1991, involving "knowledge" that individuals are part of a larger, culturally and racially pure Macedonian collectivity that spans twenty-three centuries, and on the European and Asian continents. Simultaneously, through the representation of Alexander's conquest as civilizing mission of "uncivilized" and contaminated by "Oriental" influence peoples, and the possession of pure ancestors, a measure of European civilization according to Eurocentric premises, Macedonia puts itself into position to claim "modern", "civilised" and "Western" national existence (*Ibid*).

³⁴ Program "Makedonium", documentary film "To the end of the world with Marina No.1", published 26 May, 2011, last viewed 27.01.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-HfmFg3INs>

The themes of *Homo Macedonicus*, *genetic purity* and *superiority* as both cornerstones and building-blocks of national identity are to be found in the discourses of all the rhetors involved, despite the evident socio-political and cultural differences of the representatives of the both peoples. This suggests a grand premeditation of the whole Hunza Project. In the scientific community this became clearer after Neofotistos in 2012 revealed the Greek Kalasha Project as predecessor of the Macedonian equivalent Hunza Project. The Kalasha people are a neighbouring tribe to the Hunza people and just as the last ones they nurture the belief that they are descendants from the Alexander's army. However, as early as 2003 or few years before the 'original endeavour' of Dojcinovska, the Greeks have come into contact with the Kalasha people and constructed the narrative about the 'intact Greek culture' preserved in the Himalayas, based on the 'astonishing similarities' with the contemporary Greek culture. In addition, the Greek state offers educational scholarships to Kalasha students (just as later the Macedonian government offered the Hunza students) and also has undertaken initiatives to introduce the Kalasha to a wider Greek audience, including the screening of the documentary "Kalasha" at the 5th Thessaloniki Documentary Festival in Greece in 2003. A Greek NGO named "Greek Volunteers" in 2004 completed building a community centre, which operates as a school, health centre, museum, and conference hall. The Greek documentary film reflects on the "last remaining worshipers of the 12 gods of ancient Greece" and draws on other allegedly shared similarities, such as the dances, the music, the clothes of the Kalasha people to lay exclusive claim to the ancient Macedonian past. The filmmakers use deductive reasoning whereby because modern-day Greeks own the ancient Greek past and ancient Macedonians are coeval with ancient Greeks, the ancient Macedonian past also belongs to modern-day Greeks (Neofotistos, 2012, 299).

The earlier Greek venture on the Himalayas, thus, offers two important insights. Firstly, the Greeks are also feeling insecure about the 'Macedonian heritage' and therefore they feel urge to 'provide more evidence' for their story. Secondly, the Macedonian equivalent of the Kalasha Project was not even original entrepreneurship of the Macedonian political elite but copied venture, highlighting thus the purposeful invention of tradition in the both countries in the contest for supremacy in the international hierarchy of nation-states.

Significantly, to (re)claim modernity, both nations construct a sense of Anderson's (1991) "imagined community" with peoples who actually contradict the European ideal of white, Christian, civilised, and geographically located in Europe. This highlights the awareness of the both states that the possession of distant past and heritage is considered as crucial evidence of national existence and distinctive "rights" in the international political scene. Moreover, the Hunza Project offers the Macedonians the chance to lay claims to the title of "Europe's ancient civilization", a traditional Greek claim, and advance the thesis that Macedonia, as a modern and already authentically European state, deserves to participate in the EU (Neofotistos, 2012, 294).

"Macedonian Prayer", a short film, produced in December 2008 and aired daily for the first several weeks of 2009 on a nationwide scale in Republic of Macedonia by the public TV station MRTV was another source of political propaganda embraced by the political elite. The text of the movie was authored by Niche Dimovski, the vice-President of the NGO "World Macedonian Congress". The video featuring ancient Macedonian, Roman, Byzantine scenery and symbols, contains a male-voice monologue followed by another male monologue (supposed to be God), superimposed on background of Orthodox Christian hymn style.

The first monologue contains a prayer towards God in which grievances and laments over former and current injustice towards the ethnic Macedonians in general are expressed. The vocal complaints about worldwide-reaching conspiracy woven by the neighbours of the ethnic Macedonians, who allegedly have falsified the historical truth at the Macedonians' disadvantage:

"But the truth is at the Almighty. Ask Him and He will tell it, because our Macedonian era has arrived. O, Lord, only You know that two truths exist, but the justice is only one. Thousands of books were spread all over the world by our neighbours with fake history and twisted truth about Macedonia"³⁵

"God" is supposed to say the following:

"(...) I have waited for thousands of years to be called by you. (...)Your mother Earth I have inhabited with three races: the White-Macedonoids, the Yellow-Mongoloids and the Black-Negroids. The rest-all are mulattoes. From you, Macedonians, the descendants of Macedon, I have impregnated the White race and everything began from you, to the Sea of Japan. All White people are your brothers because they carry Macedonian gene. And all the migrations started from your place towards the north. (...) Here, I am now coming to Macedonia, I am now among you, to tell you the truthful truth, which is among you under the soil. The grave of Alexander, the Macedonian Tsar, I shall open it, and the entire world at bowing in front of you I shall bring. How many Macedonian graves I have yet to open, because souls near me desire the truth. Love your greatest enemies, because I send them to be of greatest help to you. The truth about Macedonia and you, Macedonians should be known to the world. Because you were first among the firsts, most dignified among the most dignified. Now the Macedonian era arrived, the whole world to obtain the truth, to see that honour and blessing is to be a Macedonian, a descendant of Macedon and son of the God of Universe."³⁶

The text is evidently full of right-wing populist themes and rhetoric principles, such as the subdivision of the world of social actors into friends and enemies, the reduction of complexities, worm's-eye view, pathetic dramatization and promise of salvation and liberation. The text is written in the genre of tragedy, assumes conspiracy against the 'inner group', but promises messianic salvation, successfully combining the heroic and the victim myths. The text is based on the *fallacy of threat* and also employs a fallacious mixture of antiquity and Christianity as one and the same civilisation, where Macedonians are assumed to be the main protagonists and cultivators of the same over the millennia.

The Macedonian portal *okno.mk* in February, 2012 informed that the US ambassador Reeker in a personal meeting with PM Gruevski condemned the video, but the later denied any awareness about the existence of the video.³⁷ The airing of the video ceased permanently after a few weeks but two years after the scandal "Macedonian Prayer" was played on the video beams during the celebration of the national holiday Ilinden, where the Prime Minister traditionally delivers a speech with commemorative and patriotic overtones. Even if the government could not be directly held responsible for the airing of this video on the TV, the fact that its content has been encouraged by

³⁵ Translation from the site of Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macedonian_Prayer_%28video%29

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *okno.mk*, last viewed 11.04. 2017, <http://okno.mk/node/17205>

the antiquisation policy in general, and the fact that the video was aired on the commemorative day of Ilinden in particular, suggests accordance with the stances expressed in the film.

Later, the author of the "Macedonian prayer" has also commented on "Skopje 2014" as preparation for the unveiling of the Alexander's tomb in Macedonia. After the Greek daily *Kathimerini* has reported that the archaeologists on the ancient site of Amphipolis in northern Greece are on the threshold of "extraordinary important discovery" (assumingly the tomb of Alexander) Dimovski replied:

"It is not true that the tomb of Alexander of Macedonia is in Greece. I am categorically claiming that it is in Macedonia. (...) They [only] test the pulse and the reactions of the world historians. For three days we will know that they cannot always deceive the world as before stealing the Macedonian ancient mythology and history. (...) There is a reason that is not disclosed where the grave is. Everything that is done with the project "Skopje 2014" is preparing to unveil the tomb, to bring glow (to it) and to be seen that the tomb is here, in Macedonia - explains Dimovski (*Sloboden Pecat*, August, 2014).

In the same time near the Macedonian town of Sveti Nikole, excavations of another archaeological site are in progress, also with the main purpose of "finding the tomb of Alexander". Archaeology is thus, intertwined with genetic research and the architecture of "Skopje 2014" to construct a right-wing narrative of purity and superiority whereby referring to the current political struggles is allegedly marginal. The instrumentalisation of 'blood-based' arguments is in fact the marrow and not the margin of these texts. The following text from the pro-government daily *Vecer* is indicative of this standing point:

"ON THE NEW ROUND OF NAME NEGOTIATION IN NEW YORK ANOTHER INDICATION FROM OUR DIPLOMATS TO NIMITZ Everything that is denial of Macedonian identity is unacceptable! Macedonian representatives in the negotiations in the name dispute, Martin Protoger and Nikola Dimitrov in New York on the meeting with UN mediator Matthew Nimitz presented Macedonian position, which states that all that implies denial of Macedonian identity is unacceptable. Therefore, everything that was on the table and was discussed during the recent visit of Nimitz to the region and affects (what means) Macedonian identity, such as change of the Constitution and giving up the ancient past, for Macedonia is unacceptable. However, the country remains committed (and finds necessary) that the issue should be closed and continues with the negotiations"(Vecer, 2008).

After few sentences the article closes with the following, evidently loosely related paragraph, which has the effect of conclusion:

ASSOCIATION "MIJACHKI ZOGRAF" RECOMMENDS UNESCO to protect genetic Macedonian identity. The way of resolving the dispute over Macedonia's name is wrong and not in accordance with natural laws. The only solution to this problem is genetic, says research colony "Mijachki Zograf." According to the association, the constitutional name of Macedonia does not come from the geographical qualifier, but the Macedonian people as his carrier. "The identity is revealed, explored and developed on systemic experiential level using genetic methods and knowledge", says Anna Bobinkova of the Association and adds that (they will) ask UNESCO to protect the Macedonian genetic identity"(Ibid.)

This article demonstrates once more how concrete, current political struggles are mediated with questions referring to distant past, kin and cultural identity, with argumentation which borders on conspiracy theory, pseudo-science and *fictionalisation* of politics. The genetic argument is actually

the same narrative as the rootedness of the Macedonian identity in territoriality, only using other elements to construct the national myth. Typical for the both, is however, to insist on continuity, purity and superiority; and to utilise these ideas in current political struggles. As in the fields of history and culture, also in the field of genetics the political elite was avoiding direct interpretation or debate around the “findings” of the tests. Mainly the media actors and the NGOs close to the government have played the role of dissemination and grounding these ideas, a strategy which secures effective ideological campaign without taking any responsibility by the political elite.

Bearing in mind the argumentation from the mythopoesis related to the Hunza valley and the one from the films we can now return to the argumentation deriving from the scientific researches of the genetics of the Macedonian and the Greek people.

It is evident that the proponents of the antiquisation take genetics, kin relations or simply ‘the blood’ as basis for identity. The speakers insist that racial differences based on genetics should be decisive for the national identity of the people, not the language, the cultural traits or the common experiences in the past. Any dynamism and contingency should be avoided, the influence of any hybridisation minimised. This is obviously a dangerous strategy rooted in right-wing radicalism and racism. Even if the findings of the two studies are true, the strategy of seeking the evidence is problematic and degrading for each participant in this kind of “research projects”, namely because of the potential of these findings to be used as political tool or ground for construction of hierarchical racial theories, anchored in today’s inequalities in economic and political power on global level.

In fact, after the publication of another article researching the relatedness of the Jews and the Palestinians, the research methodology used by the team of Arnaiz-Villena laboratory was seriously criticized for lack of scientific integrity and inappropriate use of a scientific journal for political purposes. This led to an apology by the editors and the deletion of the article from the scientific literature. It is worth nothing that the “findings” of the both genetic studies are contradictory, the one, for instance, finding the Greeks to be genetically almost completely European (having genes from the Hellenic People, Slavs, Phoenicians, Teutons, Illyrian, and Antic Macedonian; where only the Phoenician could be regarded as non-European) while the other claiming strong relatedness to sub-Saharan ethnic groups now residing in Ethiopia, Sudan and West Africa (Burkina-Faso). It was “too late” for the withdrawal of the “findings”, however. The news was already widespread by the nationalistic media outlets and presented as unquestionable scientific truth provided by the authority of respectable institutes. These studies are extremely compatible with the message contained in the so called “Macedonian Prayer”.

It can be summed up that the antiquisation discourse offers several grand themes or ideas and repeats them over the time. *Homo Macedonicus*, *genetic (and cultural) purity* and *superiority*, and nation’s rebirth in ‘hard times’ are guiding ideas of the defenders of the antiquisation policy in the public debates and represent the material out of which other discourses are born and developed. Importantly, these themes are closely related to current political struggles – domestically and internationally - and this process can be marked as *functionalisation* of the ideas into political purposes. I therefore argue that the antiquisation mythopoesis is directly linked to “Skopje 2014” and that both are instruments for political ends. The two most imminent ideological consequences of the main antiquisation ideas: the understanding of national identity statically (bound to territory) and the preference of explaining the distinction between nations genetically rather than culturally, are easily found in the constructivist and legitimisation discourses surrounding “Skopje 2014”. Public

commentators from different professions were engaged to promote the ideas of antiquisation in reference to the project “Skopje 2014”. Archaeology, national research institutes, theatre, the national television service and the newspapers were all used to promote new identity during and after the building of “Skopje 2014”. Performative acts, and not only the welcoming of the Hunza delegation, were also used for the same purpose. As it will be demonstrated later, other acts performed on commemorative dates, have also transmitted political messages, sometimes more powerful than any spoken or written text could do.

Renewal of the nation (*ethnie*)

After grounding “Skopje 2014” in the antiquisation thesis we can now look at the constructivist and legitimisation discourses surrounding “Skopje 2014”. The message of the great number of political personas depicted in exaggerated volume and within ‘ancient and classical Western scenery’ aiming to overshadow the architectural symbols of the socialist past can be summarised as overture of great change that is about to come. One of the “fathers of the antiquisation”, the architect Vangel Bozinovski, even named it a “rebirth of the nation”.

As mentioned earlier a text from the daily *Vecer* from 2006, reveals that just after the parliamentary victory the same year the government has planned a *revival* of the nation. The same article reports on the government’s idea for the Skopje’s revamp as early as November 2006, only few months after VMRO’s parliamentary victory. Under the title “Skopje will get an identity- the citizens support the return of the authentic look of the capital city”, the text reveals:

“Restoration of authentic cultural monuments as the City Tower, the Old Skopje Theatre, City House building on the site of the former Officer’s House, and a full restoration of the Skopje Fortress, are part of major cultural projects, which the Government has planned in its program.

The Ministry of Culture has already started a public debate on these projects, which should return the authentic look of old Skopje, following the example of all the major metropolises, whose historical landmarks from different causes were also destroyed in the past. Betty Kanceska-Milevska, State Secretary at the Ministry of Culture, recently told TV “Sitel”, as a first project of the government agenda, has announced the renewal of the Officer’s House on the Vardar quay, next to the Stone Bridge.” (*Vecer*, November, 2006).

The idea about the restoration of these landmarks of pre- earthquake Skopje has been debated ever since the independence of Macedonia. Due to lack of finances, these restorations were not enabled by the previous Social-Democratic government. It can be treated as a strategically clever move of the conservative VMRO to commence the project “Skopje 2014” under the label ‘restoration of old Skopje’, since the public was waiting for this for more than a decade. Some of these facilities, however, were not built at all, such as the City Tower, and the building of the former Officer’s House has only began in 2015, after the completion of the most of the structures of the Project that did not exist prior to the 1963’s earthquake. The text also discloses a particularly close relationship, or

familiarity, of the newspaper's editors with the Minister of Culture, Elizabeta Kanceska-Milevska, naming her here "Betty".

The imposition of the new hegemonic national narrative required a construction and solidifying of a new "Father of the Nation" myth. The following excerpt of the same article in the newspaper *Vecer* is telling of this:

"Because of different opinions in the expert community as to whether the capital should renew some of these important monuments that were destroyed by the earthquake in 1963, recently a public opinion survey has been made in Skopje.

Pulse check is made to the citizens of Skopje also for the construction of a monument on the square "Macedonia". When asked to which historical figure a monument should be build on the largest square in the country, Alexander Macedonian and Goce Delchev³⁸, are the individuals for who are equally determined 30 percent of those 1111 surveyed respondents. Far fewer citizens believe that on Skopje square a monument should be built to Metodi Andonov-Cento³⁹ (6%) and Tsar Samuil⁴⁰ (4.8%), while 23 percent said it should be the other person in the history of Macedonia" (*Vecer*, November, 2006).

One of the main intentions of the text is to convince the reader that a democratic survey of the public opinion has been made, something expected in participative and deliberative democratic systems. However, the text does not tell who has executed the survey, what methodology was used or when it was conducted? It is even less clear why the government has decided to give advantage to Alexander the Great over Goce Delcev, (a undisputed hero of all political affiliations among ethnic Macedonians), or why monuments to Cento and Samuil were built, knowing the weak support for their commemoration. Evidently, the intention of the project developers was to show longevity and continuity of the nation.

This new vision of the nation's history has challenged the previous myth in which, in fact, there was no room for a leader of that kind. The cult of Yugoslavian President Tito could not be contested by a parallel national hero as a "Father of Nation" in a federal republic. The long-standing former leader of the Social Democrats, Branko Crvenkovski, publicly admired Tito and in 2008 initiated the construction of a monument in front of the eponymous high school in the centre of Skopje saying that: "Josip Broz Tito is one of the undisputed leaders in the fight against fascism in the Second World War and historical figure who gave exceptional contribution to the Macedonian national issue and the building of the Macedonian state" (*Vecer*, February, 2010).

However, with the erosion of his authority within the Social Democratic Party (SDSM) these links with the communist past were becoming weaker. According to Vasko Eftov, a journalist and political analyst: "SDSM today completely abandoned its ideology, almost became faceless and allowed some strategists to impose them a standpoint that first association of communism is lustration, is Goli

³⁸ The most important anti-Ottoman revolutionary, both celebrated in Macedonia and Bulgaria

³⁹ A Macedonian statesman, the first president of the Anti-Fascist Assembly of the National Liberation of Macedonia and of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia within the Yugoslav Federation after the Second World War, sentenced to twelve years in prison for having worked to achieve a "completely independent Macedonia".

⁴⁰ The king of the First Slavic Kingdom on the Balkans during the medieval period, both Macedonian and Bulgarian national hero

Otok⁴¹. In fact SDSM [acts as if it is] ashamed of its past, does not mention its past. In general, nobody today from SDSM says that the communists formed the Macedonian state, that at the time of the communists the Macedonian Orthodox Church was renewed, that at the time of the communists the Macedonian language was codified and the Macedonian Academy of Arts and Sciences was formed, i.e. that at the time of the communists the foundations of the modern Macedonian state were laid. Until SDSM returns back to those roots, until SDSM (stays) faceless, it has no chance to defeat VMRO-DPMNE".⁴²

This means that the possibility to impose a new national narrative and construct a myth of a new "Father of the Nation" went hand in hand with the abandonment of the former national narrative by its own carriers and supporters, the members of the Social Democratic Union, the successor of the Communist Party of Macedonia.

Among the supporters of VMRO-DPMNE, indeed, the "re-discovery" of the Macedonian roots and identity took shape of collective catharsis (Frckovski, 2014). A pro-government journalist has most concisely described this process rhetorically asking if [we] have noticed that words like 'makedonce' (diminutive, but also pejorative word for "Macedonian", Frckovski's 'Macedonian with small 'm'), 'narodecot' (derogatory word for "people") are not in use any longer'. He also argued that one could 'rather feel pity for the little monument of Misirkov'⁴³, and claimed that 'the spiritual national libido has been elevated as well as the [national] self-respect.'⁴⁴

To Skopje's city centre it was designated a special role in that process as it could disguise the real intentions of the project (namely the construction of a 'New Macedonian') through the long-awaited revamp and restoration of Skopje's pre-earthquake symbols. The revival of the nation supposed to be evident in the arising pride of the people, populist argumentation which completely neglected the rising identity confusion and the conflicts originating from this venture. The capital was supposed to 'get identity' presupposing thus that not having 'ancient colonnades', 'Western facades' or square overcrowded with monuments means 'not having identity'. The following statement clearly demonstrates that the new narrative is embedded in the "antiquisation" discourse, trying to connect Macedonian identity with the "beginning of Europe". A professor of the state university and a columnist writes:

"Macedonia needed "Macedonia Timeless"⁴⁵, the beautiful videos for promotion of the country in the world, but also all those documentaries in recent years that put the Macedonian history on sight! The real one, the actual, such as it is, and it was not adequately represented in the Macedonian educational system.

Every nation celebrates its history, celebrate its heroes. Macedonia has done that with dignity, exactly with "Skopje 2014" (*Republika*, 2014)

⁴¹ An island in the Adriatic Sea used as political prison in Yugoslavia in the period 1949-1989

⁴² Program "In Centre", episode "Antiquisation against Titovisation" with TV host Vasko Eftov, published 22 April 2014, last viewed 27.01.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ng341dyr-gc>

⁴³ a philologist and historian who first affirmed the existence of a Macedonian national identity separate from other Balkan nations, and attempted to codify a standard Macedonian language

⁴⁴ "Late Night Show" with the TV-host Milenko Nedelkovski on 07. 03.2014, published on 09 March 2014, last viewed 27.01.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J9f5E534IGc>

⁴⁵ A tourist promotion campaign

'The real one, the actual, such as it is' implies that the previous version was fake or partially fake. It also implies that history exists 'such as it is' or as something given, that is not open for multiply interpretations. The following discourse from a debate organised by the Association of citizens "Great Mother – Goddess" reveals several linkages to the "antiquisation" policy:

"Skopje 2014 example of a powerful civilization

The debate was attended by Valentina Bozinovska, the president of the Commission for Relations with Religious Communities and Religious Groups (...)

Valentina Bozinovska noted that since 1991 Macedonia has practically never commented its own identity. She (Macedonia) made that by the creation of the Macedonian state as an independent, but de facto has never realized that on cultural grounds.

- I believe that the Project 2014 is determination of everything we had from ancient times, Neolithic and up until today. For the first time we postulate specific Macedonian identity, and especially in downtown Skopje, the crossroad where many foreigners were coming. Practically the civilization has begun from here. This is the first time we comment on our identity and it will be a loud revelation before the whole world about Macedonia, with all those monuments that need to be built and I think this government has made a big step by commenting it in such an historic period, said Bozinovska. (...)

...pointing out that this project will be done now and immediately and will start with its positions, or Macedonia, the City of Skopje, will remain rustic, a provincial town which cannot be an example of a large powerful civilization" (*Vecer*, March, 2010).

The argumentation of Bozinovska is interesting from three perspectives. Firstly, in the last sentence she juxtaposes two alternatives in front of the people of Skopje and the people of Macedonia in general: one, to build "Skopje 2014" as envisioned in the TV campaign video 'now and immediately' and another, to 'remain provincial town (nation) that could not represent a powerful civilisation. There is no doubt that the civilisation to which Bozinovska refers is the Alexander's (not the Slavic) civilisation, so admired on the West. It is amusing that Skopje as middle-size city with modest finances and human capital, in this regard, contains two potencies which cannot be compatible. One and the same city cannot be provincials in 2010 and become an example of powerful civilization' and European metropolis in 2014, after the termination of the Project.

Secondly, this argumentation assumes static identity, one which has its roots in the Neolith and stayed untouched until today. According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica* the Neolithic Period, also called New Stone Age, is the final stage of cultural evolution or technological development among prehistoric humans, which began about 11.700 BC in some parts of the Middle East, and later in other parts of the world, and ended around 2000 BC.⁴⁶ The argumentation of Bozinovska, but also of other intellectuals (the architect Vangel Bozinovski) holds that the people from the Neolithic period had collective identity just as people in today's nation-states. It also assumes sedentary civilisation which only marginally absorbed some cultural traits of the 'foreigners' which came in great number in Macedonia, this 'centre of the world', 'where civilization begun', thus essentialising Macedonians as given, as race. By positioning Macedonia as the cradle of the civilised world it challenges Greek views and points of pride.

⁴⁶ <http://www.britannica.com/event/Neolithic-Period>

Finally, it alludes that the project is a loud revelation and a brave act of the government considering the ‘importance of the historic moment’ in which it is intended to be realised. The ‘moment’ of which Bozinovska speaks is the Greek opposition to the alleged ancient heritage of Macedonia. This depicts the political leaders as moral, proud and loyal to the national cause even in the hardest times of the nation.

The discourse of a pro-government journalist, Mirka Velinovska, delivered in a documentary film, a part of the legitimisation campaign sponsored by the government, goes in line with the argument about the ‘importance of the historic moment’. In this statement she comments on the arguments given by the opposition against the Project:

“So, none of these arguments holds, except that one and only (argument), of which we read recently in NY Times, and contained in the statement of Vladimir Milcin,⁴⁷ presented as a distinguished intellectual, NGO activist, in which he says: the construction of “Skopje 2014” ... was intended to rebuild the nation, and once the nation is renewed, it will be hard to solve the dispute with Greece. That is the main reason why it was poured a dreadful amount of money and why so many activists were bought, to propagate against the construction of Skopje, or the revamp of Skopje”.⁴⁸

As typical for the (right-wing) populist discourses two strategies were implemented in this discourse to prove a standing point: *recontextualisation* and *vilification* of the political opponent. The intertextual analysis of Milcin’s statements discloses that he could not perceive the project “Skopje 2014” as genuine revival of the nation. A revival in this context would mean debating the past and bolstering the nation’s pride, which not necessarily includes imagining out-of-scratch a brand-new narrative based on populist premises. Velinovska questions Milcin’s status of intellectual or at least mocks him as quasi-intellectual, only because of his political stances. Finally, it assumes that a ‘dreadful amount of money’ was used to ‘buy activists’ who will oppose the project, although the real activism can be summarised to a small, beaten-up group of student of the Architectural Faculty of Skopje.

From the analysed discourses follows that the political leadership and the cultural elite supportive of their policies have interpreted the Project as a revival of the nation, which is urgent and necessary, particularly in the (hard) historic circumstances, when the stronger neighbours are conditioning the development of the country (EU accession) with what they present as cultural self-betrayal. This is the argumentation that Frckovski (2015) deconstructed as the reason given by the political elites of why the Macedonian people should “withstand until the very end” and wait for the ‘better point in the unknown future’ when this problem will be solved.

The revival of the nation, however, was not limited only to debating the distant past and the relationship with the neighbouring nations, but enforced a new hegemonic narrative on national identity, radically challenging the old one. This would be a valid policy if most of the Macedonian citizens were rejecting the allegedly imposed-from-the-top former narrative. The repositioning of the Macedonian nation as the cradle of the Western civilisation in international setting thus went hand in hand with the reinterpretation of the more recent history of the Macedonian people in regional, and particularly in Yugoslavian context. More profoundly this will be demonstrated in the following

⁴⁷ The head of the Open Society Foundation in Macedonia

⁴⁸ Documentary film “Project Skopje 2014”, published 4 July 2013, last viewed on 27.01.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Rml3nphEzU>

chapter, where I will analyse the redefinition of recent history in the newly constructed Museum of the Macedonian Struggle for Sovereignty and Independence - Museum of VMRO - Museum of the Victims of the Communist Regime (in later texts referred to as Museum of VMRO).

At his point it can be summarised that the political entrepreneurs have envisioned “Skopje 2014” as a project of nation revival. Through it they try to impose a new hegemonic narrative of national identity, rooted in the antiquisation ideas of territoriality, continuity and rebirth in difficult times for the nation. The constructivist discourses concentrated on the building of a bridge between the assumed distant and the recent past of the nation, turning the revival of the nation into a project that would be a simultaneous ‘response’ to the homeland ‘traitors’ and the foreign ‘enemies’. More precisely, the de-construction of the former national narrative through the opening of the debate about the sufferings of the anti-Yugoslav revolutionaries from the early years of the federation has been used as a tool for both the rejection of the Slavic national identity narrative of Yugoslav Macedonia and the acceptance of the new, antiquisation narrative.

This construction of new national myth was accompanied with the “search for the roots of the nation” and that in turn implied a construction of a new “Father of the Nation” myth that would enable the current political leadership to build analogy of their rule with the one of the rulers of the heroic era, when the assumed unity of the people was not corrupted. This ‘bridge’ between the distant past and the present provides the platform for the experience of “cultural revolution” and collective catharsis of the revival of the heroic era.

Another aspect on which I will focus in the end of this chapter is the legitimisation discourses related to the construction of new national identity through “Skopje 2014”. The content of these discourses reveals that the rhetors are advocating a specific social identity of the “newly-born Macedonians”. In other words, their texts portray an “ideal supporter” of the Project. The legitimisation discourses thus take a form of *perpetuation* strategy, which serves to preserve, support continuity and reproduce national identities.

Desired social identity of the supporters (legitimisation discourses)

In context of imposing a new hegemonic narrative on national identity, “Skopje 2014” as embodiment of the “antiquisation” policy represented a new arena for debates not only on topics related to the distant past of the nation, but also and more important, on topics relating this distant past with the daily political issues within the country and on the international stage. The legitimisation discourses on “Skopje 2014” thus offer argumentation patterns, which connect the struggles of the past and the presence and appeal for a specific social identity assumed to defend the newly constructed national identity. The acceptance of this social identity, in turn, is closely related to, and has consequences for, political action not only in the nearest future, such as elections, but also on long-term political orientations, such as e.g. Euroscepticism.

In this part of the analysis I will analyse two articles from prominent supporters of the government policies. I will analyse these articles in length because they are the only opinion texts in the pro-government media directly referring to antiquisation and defence of “Skopje 2014” or national

identity in general. Also, the linguistic analysis of the structure of the texts offers some insights in the discursive devices of populism.

The opening paragraph of the text 1 from the appendix (published on 7 March, 2010 in *Vecer*), written by Dragan Pavlovic, the editor of the news section on the pro-government outlets, the TV station *Sitel* and the newspaper *Vecer*, is supposed to convince the reader of the loyalty and affection of the writer towards the city of Skopje, the place where he was born and raised. As such, the reader should assume that the rhetor is indeed genuinely concerned with the future of his city, as he has “no intention to go somewhere else, and (he does) not believe that anywhere else would be better for (him)”.

Throughout the text Pavlovic describes himself as a person that has “seen the world”, travelled and/or planned to live in Ljubljana, Istanbul and Amsterdam, an “adventurer” and a “fighter”:

“Here I have made all my sins. And there are many, to tell you the truth” (...) I have realized that no one (has prepared) for us something in this world. You should search and fight for his place. With these, and similar, I've travelled the road to our own bread, and for (earning) a name, which will be special among the many in the Skopje telephone directory. Here I grew up and fell. And stood up not to fail”.

Later, as a mature person he becomes a “solder” and a “father”:

“From here they sent in the army. Here I got drunk with Rego Balic, with Zokjo and Dragan Popovski. And in the morning, here I was becoming sober. On the local musicians I have spent so much money you could buy a decent car. (...) Here, with my Maria, we have put our name plate on the door. Here we have raised our two children. They are also Skopjani (people from Skopje), as I am. And I want, in this city, to build something for them”.

The reader is thus led through the life of Pavlovic, who “fought his way” in the society, from rebellious young man to a open-hearted and generous person, who defends his country and family. As such, he underlines the qualities and the values of the winners: conservative values of local patriotism, machismo values, traditional family values. He portrays his masculine way of fighting for the name and identity, as if saying: if you do not want to deprive of these characteristics, you have to be a supporter of the Project, understood as “building of Skopje”.

It is also interesting that Pavlovic uses the names, or rather the nicknames, of his friends from the childhood to construct a sense of familiarity, assuming that we know these people. This familiarity helps to build the connection between the writer and the reader, and the construction of the “we” group. It is curious in this context that he mentions Agim (evidently Muslim name) at the end of the ordering of the nicknames. This is the one and only person which is with “different” background and stands at the symbolical last place in the sentence. Gill and Whedbee (1997, 174) remind of the *iconicity* (icon as a sign that mimics what it represents) as one of the most significant features of the text, which function similarly to metaphors. As such, “Agim” is part of the “we” group but only on the last place, as marginal.

What follows in the text of Pavlovic, can be best understood by referring to the connection between *structure* and *temporality* in the text, or the relationship between the introduction, the body and the conclusion of the text. The first third of the text created a temporal and special setting which provides progression from the past to the present to the future. The second third of the text begins

with an interruption of this progression. The leader of the opposition, Branko Crvenkovski (in the text of Pavlovic referred to only as “Branko”) and allegations of his wrongdoings have been introduced at this point:

“Here I have seen, from my working-class neighbourhood, how Branko closes their factories. Cold-bloodedly, as if picking pears, which, fuck, will grow up again next year. Here in my neighbourhood, I have seen how working-class daughters and women age faster than those married in the gentlemen's houses. (...) prematurely aged, burdened by debts and illnesses they suffer silently and wait for their children to be different. If they will be.”

The introduction of Crvenkovski in the middle of the text, thus, takes the form of an interruption of the existing harmony, an intrusion made by the elite, accused of corruption and nepotism. According to Gill and Whedbee (1997, 171) the break of the progression in a speech is a source of the power of the text that follows. With the intrusion of the elite, the lost unity transferred to the representatives is juxtaposed to the alleged former harmony of the people. Further characteristics of the “we” group are displayed in this part of the text: Pavlovic takes a *worm's eye perspective* and describes himself as a dweller of working-class neighbourhood of people disenfranchised by the elites.

Following the second third of the text there is again a balance, a harmony provided by the re-introduction of the political hero, the one who “came out of us”, “the people”: “And now someone, out of that order (mindset), has decided to change that”.

This person, “someone from the people and building for the people”, builds not only for the generations living now, but also for the generations to come.

Pavlovic further portrays the critique as only on aesthetical level, not considering the content (identity change) and the allegations of financial frauds. Moreover, “theatres, museums, stadiums, hospitals” are depicted as the essence of the Project, assumed that it is a common sense “hospitals” to be supported. However, stadiums and hospitals were not predicted in the revamp, as the promotional video shows, although some of them were restored. This argumentation scheme thus puts in the same basket all the facilities and the monuments and calls for blessing of everything or nothing. The author does not refer to the total price of the monuments compared to the facilities. As it will later be demonstrated, individual monuments cost almost the same as the building of a new facility. We can, thus, conclude that the rhetor uses *calculated ambivalence* as discursive tool of legitimisation.

Finally, the idea that ‘today against [the Project] are protesting those, who would first escape outside [the country]’ is one of the leading ideas of the article – the article opens with this allusion and then it is repeated at the end of it, in the last two, concluding paragraphs. This has two ends. Firstly, Pavlovic accuses the rich, the elite, the one in position to freely choose where to live, of no loyalty towards Skopje. Secondly, this scheme juxtaposes to the former group the “we” group of the “poor”, the “disenfranchised”, the “people”, the “working-class”, but also “fighters” against the “elite” and assumes “final” victory of this group, as argued in the last paragraph:

“No longer will I look how from mine, public funds, further the houses of politicians and their relatives are built. How yachts and apartments in Europe are bought“...

From this argumentation follows that the opposition could not return to power ever, as if claiming that the corrupted elite will never get a second chance.

The last two sentences: "Let them remember us as those who were building. After all, we are only what others, keep of us in their memories" related to the one from the middle of the text: "And they stay for the children after us", uttered in a prophetic, messianic tone, just as the most repeated metaphor from Gruevski's speech, alludes to the eternity, to the distant future, to the "timelessness" of this endeavour and *promise of salvation* and liberation, as typical for populist speeches.

This legitimisation discourse, thus, contains almost all the populist rhetorical principles of oppositional right-wing populism described by Reisingl (2008) in his study of Austrian populism: strong *distrust in the establishment*, *worm's eye perspective*, *calculated ambivalence* and *promise of salvation*. It also employs *simplification* of the language and *insulting and vilification* of the political opponent as populist tools.

Pavlovic also uses subdivision of the world of social actors into *friends and enemies*, *reduction of complexities* through *simplistic* illustrations and *pathetic dramatization* and *emotionalisation* as discursive populist devices and instruments of justification of the new government's policies.

The text pictures an assumed harmony of the people, a battle of two political camps (people against the elite), the emergence of a non-political hero and a promise of salvation and reestablishment of popular unity. There is no reference to pluralism or multi-ethnicity. The grand narrative is about winning back the power and keeping it. As such the text portrays the "we" group of supporters of the project, as mono-ethnic, masculine, victorious fighters and patriots, and agitates for the preservation of these conservative values through continuous support of the government and the new hegemonic narrative on national identity.

The text 2 from the appendix (published on 24 August, 2011 in *Vecer*) is written by Janko Ilkovski, the TV host who appealed for counter-protests against the peaceful group of students from the Architecture Faculty. He is one of the most prominent supporters of Gruevski, many times hosting him, his ministers, and all the journalists that support the government in his TV-show.

In the first paragraph Ilkovski attacks the Social Democratic party and "its NGOs", alluding the SDSM are direct descendants of the former 'totalitarian regime' and as such they are prone to 'erase, falsify, lie, at any level' related to the assumed new self-discovery described in the text as 'spring of searching and revelation of who we are and what we are'. He further tends to equalise the "SDSM", with the "Left", the "atheists", those who are "like the statuette Oscar (with) human form, but no character" and who together with "Soros" are willing to trade their Macedonian identity for EU – NATO accession. Aside of *offending the political opponents* Ilkovski constructs conspiracy theory of the "world" against Macedonia. In a strange combination, but one typical for right-wing populism, he puts into one club the "Left" and "Soros" and he is evidently against both, the communists and the capitalists, the leftist and the EU.

The second paragraph de-mystifies and attacks Europe: "vulgar schemes like the legalization of almost every possible perversion, things that were always denounced by the healthy cells of the society" and "vulgar volvox association, a group of individuals with low awareness of the environment which only stick to each other in an attempt to make an organism. Beware, (it is only

an) attempt, the volvox had never had evolutionary development, it is simple, vulgar set of single-celled organisms that cannot be developed and that dies without achieving something in the scale of evolution”.

In this part of the text the author is alluding that “Europe” is “perverted”, “vulgar”, perhaps because of the legalisation of sexual minorities and not sanctioning alternative forms of family arrangements. Ilkovski was recently accused by the Macedonian GLC for “hate speech” and a process was started against him. In this context it is noteworthy that these statements are grounded in the machismo stereotypes widespread in Macedonia, Serbia and the Balkan region, where one of the first associations of ‘Europe’ and the ‘West’ is the legalisation of homosexual partnerships. In this paragraph Ilkovski also uses evolutionism and biological terminology, typical for explaining racial differences, to describe political causalities in European context. The imminent message of this reasoning is that if Macedonia accepts to become a part of Europe, it would become just another small, insignificant country in faceless amalgam of nations.

The third paragraph portrays “the end of Europe”: “No ideology, no empathy, except personal well-being. Of course, the character tragically ended on the dunghill of history, as every normal (person would have) expected.”; while the fourth paragraph is explicitly linking the ‘inner’ with the ‘foreign’ enemies in a conspiracy against the new, pure government of the people: “And now what and how to (go further) when we despite pressures from outside, (we also have) the ‘ajvanite’⁴⁹ from inside, who are in great number, and whose mental chips are still encoded on ideology before 30-40 years ago (and) who would simply bloodily fight to downplay and depersonalize any attempt of the people in their final national awakening that had to happen.”

The last paragraph anyway implores for paternal recognition from that same Europe or the ‘West’ as he concludes: “But the world can recognise us also through other elements. (...) In this moment we need heroes, (...) that the “world” will recognize when seeing or hearing them and perceive them as Macedonians. (...) who will attract the attention of the modern world. We should not be satisfied with the average; we have to be more successful, as Pink Floyd, Dali, Djokovic, Beckham, Gates, Spielberg, Branson, characters with such “impact”⁵⁰ needs this country, something that the world will identify us with, perceive us, characters that will not be only local but global heroes.”

Most significantly, Ilkovski is calling for a new man, messiahs, “heroes that the world will recognise”. Interesting is the type of *modality* Ilkovski employs in this case, “We should not be satisfied with the average, we should be more successful“. This call for a new man, not satisfied with the average is very close to the notions of Nietzsche’s superman or the fascist values of the Italian Futurists, as expressed in their Manifesto. Moreover, only Western heroes are provided as reference points to the still-not-come Macedonian heroes.

Finally, the author concludes with: “Alexander is known as “Macedonian”, but since then no one has received such spectacular epithet, and it is high time for that.”

There are two points in this sentence. Firstly, this sentence links Alexander with the West as it calls for someone who will become as great as Alexander, who will revive the heroic era. Secondly, the argumentation scheme inverts the causes and the consequences: in this sentence the greatness of

⁴⁹ Turkish word for “animal” adopted in the Macedonian language and having pejorative meaning

⁵⁰ The English word “impact” is used.

Alexander originates in the name Macedonia, not Macedonia is great because of Alexander and his heritage.

It can be summed up that, just as the text of Pavlovic, Ilkovski's legitimisation and perpetuation discourse also abounds with right-wing populist argumentation schemes, and most notably: construction of *conspiracy theses, vilification and insulting of the political opponent*, construction of *simplified world of 'friends' and 'enemies'*, as well as constructing and legitimising a myth of the *return of the heroic era* (Frckovski, 2014), *strong distrust in the 'establishment'* (Frckovski, 2014; Wodak and Forchtner, 2014) and *agitation and anti-intellectualism* (Reisigl, 2008). The rhetor also completely omits to address his text to the 'Other' ethnic and religious communities in Macedonia, focusing only on the current negotiation of power within the ethnic Macedonian community. It is unique for this text to also exercise Euroscepticism as additional argument to "withstand until the end" against any challenge to 'our' identity.

As argued earlier, the authors of these texts are advocating a specific social identity of the "newly-born Macedonians" assumed to preserve, support the continuity and reproduce the new version of the national identities for a period long enough to discourage *any* restoration of the former version and the power that comes with it. These discourses are evidently serving the current negotiations of political power within the Macedonian society in a way that undermines the democratic institutions of the country.

Summary

In this chapter I have demonstrated how "Skopje 2014" is embedded in the antiquisation policy. The main themes of this policy could be easily found in some constructivist and legitimisation discourses about "Skopje 2014".

Through time suppression, special approximation and naturalisation strategies a myth of the fraternity between the people from Hunza and the 'modern' Macedonians was constructed. The ideas of *Homo Macedonicus*, monarchic past, genetic (and cultural) purity and superiority, nation's rebirth in 'hard times', against the 'conspiracy against us' and the 'curse' assumed to repeat in vicious historic cycles, are later further developed in a vision of static identity rooted in the Macedonian soil, one assumingly assimilating all the civilisations that arrived on the Balkan peninsula.

This narrative has been supported not only with cultural arguments but also with genetic ones, 'proving to the world' that Macedonians are the original, white Western people, older than the Greeks, and therefore embody "modern," "Western" qualities. Hence, the Baroque, Classicism and every artistic style that followed in Europe are only a variation of what is called Macedonism.

It was also evident that the project developers and their supporters wished to construct an image of themselves as re-born or "New Macedonians", capable of great deeds, people who can make a difference. The idea of the New Macedonian is closely related to the revival of the heroic era myth. This myth, on the other hand, was closely related to the myth of the victim, developed similarly in the "Macedonian Prayer" of Dimovski.

Further, the argumentation schemes legitimising the project reveal preference for machismo values, patriotism, conservatism, ethnocentrism and ambivalent combination of longing for recognition from the 'West' and Euroscepticism. The texts of Pavlovic and Ilkovski incorporated almost all the discursive strategies and argumentation schemes typical of right-wing populism as described by Reisigl (2008).

This chapter has also shown how archaeology, performing and visual arts are closely intertwined with genetic research and the architecture of "Skopje 2014" to construct a right-wing narrative of purity and superiority, instrumentalising 'blood-based' arguments in political struggles. In this chapter I have also demonstrated how daily political struggles are mediated with argumentation patterns which borders on conspiracy theory, pseudo-science and *fictionalisation* of politics (Wodak and Forchtner (2014).

Finally, in this chapter I have provided few short instances when sites of "Skopje 2014" were used as a platform for further spreading the antiquisation message. I will reflect on this at length in the next chapter.

It is especially intriguing that academics, TV hosts, actors, artists or architects have promoted the antiquisation thesis more 'loudly' than the politicians. The lack of acceptance of these policies among the voters identifying themselves primarily as Slavs, Muslims or something else could be thus softened by refusing any responsibility for the antiquisation theses by the political leadership.

In the next, closely related chapter, I will demonstrate how the erected structures have enriched the antiquisation discourses. I will firstly describe the phenomenological site of "Skopje 2014" and the messages "hidden" in the composition, the size and the spatial arrangement of the monuments and the facilities and only then relate these messages with the antiquisation policy and national identity policy in general, and with current political struggles and elections in particular. This order of relating "Skopje 2014" with national identity policy shows how the project has not only spurred conflict among the ethnic Macedonians and between Macedonia and the neighbouring countries, but it has also renewed the conflict with the ethnic Albanian community in the country. It also gives the opportunity to see how different oppositional actors have reacted on particular elements of "Skopje 2014".

CHAPTER 6: "SKOPJE 2014" AS IDENTITY-ALTERATION PROJECT

The composition of the monuments

Discourse analysis in this study will be understood in the broadest sense possible, incorporating not only written and spoken texts but also the messages communicated to the public in a form of art work or performance. This is the 'silent language' between the producers and the consumers of public goods. The producers 'communicate' with the recipients through the choice of the location of the art works, the content, the number, the size and the composition of the monuments in the space, their functionality or the role in commemorative or celebrative performances, etc. This 'mute discourse' can be traced also in the way the Project was enforced after the first public reactions that followed the video presentation of "Skopje 2014". For instance, the heavy security employed to protect the monuments, the surveillance cameras in the museums, as well as the high expenses for the security is also a discourse worth of critical analysis. I will start this analysis with the scrutiny of the monuments, their content, the number, the size and composition, all transmitting certain message to the people and the way they could or should receive the Project. These messages and their interpretation have important consequences for the national identity of the citizens. When analysing the monuments almost at first instance few basic conclusions could be drafted, which could later be better explained.

Firstly, a great majority of the monuments are dedicated to statesmen (political and historical personas), honouring other contributors of Macedonia's independence and freedom, such as intellectuals and artists is minimal.

Secondly, there exists a complete mixing of the historical epochs through the representation of heroes on the main square of the city: Alexander the Great (antiquity), Justinian I (Byzantium), Tsar Samuil (Middle Ages), Delcev and Pitu Guli (Ottoman period revolutionaries), Cento (statesman and revolutionary in the World War II period).⁵¹

Thirdly, the monuments have exaggerated size and volume.

Lastly, there was frequent adding, replacement or permanent removal of monuments, often followed after societal critique, showing inconsistency in the identity politics and suggesting confusion and fluidity of the stances, as well as using of the project for daily political games.

Referring to the first point, one can immediately understand that the project developers envisioned "Skopje 2014" as project related to history and politics. On the square "Macedonia", the main square of the city and the country, were placed monuments of historical persons from different epochs. Two additional squares, very close to the main square, were arranged with monuments mainly with historical figures from one epoch: the "Philip II Square" with monuments from antiquity and the square in the "Park Woman-Warrior" with monuments from the modern history of Macedonia. On almost each crossroad or roundabout in the city centre monuments of VMRO revolutionaries were placed. The only honouring of cultural personas as part of "Skopje 2014" was the placing of statues

⁵¹ Pictures facilitating visualisation of some of the monuments and the space around them are to be found in the picture directory beginning on the page 372. Pictures 1-5 are related to the monumental part of "Skopje 2014"

of 20th century artists (painters, poets, singers, etc.) on the newly constructed “Art Bridge”. This clearly shows that the political entrepreneurs pursue political agenda through the commemoration and re-interpretation of history.

The creator(s) of the project have understood the display of the monuments as a “museum under open air”. The Project takes the territory of the whole square “Macedonia” out of historical context and utilises it functionally, placing the statues like on an altar. We can assume that the size always speaks of might, importance. We can also assume that the centrality in the space also speaks of importance. The tallest monuments are the one of Alexander the Great and of Philip II of Macedon, his father, surmounting the size of the other monuments several times. For instance, the monuments of Justinian I and Tsar Samuil are seated on a pedestal which is 3.5 m tall, while the kings upon their thrones measure a further 5 m. The bronze sculpture of Alexander is 14.5 m tall and it stands on a cylindrical column, which itself is 10 m tall. The size of the whole monument, incorporating fountains and further 8 soldiers and additional 8 bronze lions that ‘protect’ Alexander comes even further to the fore, when compared with the small five stores building in the background. Cast in Florence, “Alexander” was officially completed on September 8, 2011 to commemorate 20 years of the independence of the Republic of Macedonia. More importantly, all the other kings and statesmen: Cento, Tsar Samuil, Justinian I, Delcev and Pitu Guli are looking towards Alexander, as if honouring him as the Father of the nation. Philip II of Macedon greets Alexander from the other square, over a bridge which connects the square “Macedonia” with the square “Philip II of Macedon” where the eponymous statue with a fountain is situated.

This square serves as a main entrance to the Old Turkish Bazaar. The square underwent a major reconstruction as part of “Skopje 2014”, and its new centrepiece became the statue and fountain officially named “Warrior,” though it is widely believed that the statue is a depiction of Philip II of Macedon. The statue was placed onto the square on 22 May 2012. Made in Vicenza, the statue is 15 m tall and is placed on a 13 m tall pedestal. Next to it there is another enormous fountain officially named “Fountain of the Mothers of Macedonia”, but factually depicting Alexander’s mother, Olympias, in four different states, beginning with her pregnancy and later playing and educating a boy (Alexander the Great). Both of these monuments, as well as all the fountains on the square were not predicted in the Project as the official promotional video of “Skopje 2014” from 2010 discloses.

The Prime Minister Gruevski denied that the composition of the monuments and the Project in general are concentrated on antiquisation. This is a piece of interview the Prime Minister has given for the daily *Vecer* in 2011:

Journalist question: But the Social Democrats have postulated a public debate on the topic antiquisation, you cannot deny that.

“Such a project with such a name does not exist. This manipulation originates from SDSM and their supporters. A lie repeated a thousand times becomes truth, people say. Their whole thesis about antiquisation is based on the “Skopje 2014” project and the renaming of the airport and the stadium with names from that period. The most interesting thing is that in the so called “Skopje 2014” project not a single building is realized in a antique style and of all over 20 monuments that the municipality Centre envisaged and implements, only the monument of Alexander the Great is used to support this thesis. The other monuments are connected to another period, and if we look through that prism “*slavenisation*” is more appropriate expression than “antiquisation”. Because we have a monument of

Sts. Cyril and Methodius, St. Clement and Naum⁵², and near the main Church there is a special monument of St. Clement. The Government also finances the construction of the monument of St. Naum in Ohrid (another Macedonian city). And most of the other monuments refer to periods that do not have any thing in common with antiquity. On the other hand, the styles of the buildings that are being built are mainly three and none of them is antique. [They are built] in modern style, Baroque and Neoclassicism....

Is the re-foundation of St. Clement's University associated with the antiquity or the Memorial House of Mother Teresa? So then, it is a pure, classical manipulation. Practically from more than 1000 reforms and projects that the government conducts in the past four years in all areasSDSM with some journalists and media close to them managed to impose the topic that we are exclusively looking towards the antiquity, and I believe that part of their membership, and perhaps some other sympathizer has believed in this manipulation. But this is not truth" (Vecer, January, 2011).

The Prime Minister uses several argumentation schemes to cover the real 'silent' message of the monuments. He firstly rejects the idea that national identity alteration policy of "antiquisation" exists and is pursued on state level. He tries to dismiss the thesis by arguing that there is only one monument among 20 that refers to the ancient history of Macedonia. However, there is not only one, but three other monuments (there is one more monument of Philip II in another Skopje municipality) referring to this period. Moreover, they are the biggest among the collection of neatly and carefully allocated monuments and as mentioned, the smaller statues are facing Alexander, and the statues of Alexander and his father communicate through the 'greeting sign' Philip II sends to his son. Because of the enormous difference in size between the 'antique' and the 'Slavic' group the adding of any new 'Slavic' small monument into the composition would only reinforce the importance of the 'antique' group relative to the 'Slavic'.

His second argument is that we can rather call this process "*slavenisation*", because of the share number of Slavic heroes depicted on the monuments. However, these monuments are scattered around the city, or even in other cities. The importance of the figures, however, originates when they are measured or juxtaposed to each other, only in relation to other group of national heroes who lived and worked in another historical period.

What is especially symptomatic in Gruevski's argumentation is that he numbered only the change of the names of two facilities and the construction of only one monument as a process that the opposition labelled as "antiquisation". Not only the government changed 300 names of streets and bridges in the city of Skopje alone in the same year the interview had been given, but also built few additional monuments of great size depicting 'ancient' Macedonian heroes the following year. It is interesting that the statues of Philip and Olympias 'simply had to be there' to communicate with Alexander's statue. These 'antiquity' personas are placed on a square where close to each other already existed aesthetically non-combinable architectures: 19th century Christian Church, two modernist structures of the former Transportation Ministry and the newly made Holocaust Museum and the former Ottoman Baths now serving as art galleries. The discrepancy between the words and the deeds seems to indicate that the governing elite wanted to satisfy the nationalistic elements of the voting body further, while not losing electorate among the proponents of the 'Slavic origin'

⁵² Saints, scholars, writers and enlighteners of the Slavs, they are the most prominent disciples of Saints Cyril and Methodius, associated with the creation of the Glagolitic and Cyrillic scripts and their popularization among Christianized Slavs. He was the founder of the Ohrid. Both of them are subject of disputes and veneration in Macedonia and Bulgaria

thesis. This, on the other hand, opened another debate. As already demonstrated in the previous chapter, Gruevski refused to take responsibility for the splitting of the ethnic Macedonians that this policy brought, offering a “unifying” concept and *a la carte* identity:

“I do not see a dividing concept, but a unifying. In times of antiquity some have marked the period, at the period of Samuil Kingdom another one, at the time of Cyril and Methodius - they marked the period. In this area lived various people who have left their mark, the concept is unifying, everyone is represented. I do not know why someone wants to divide the people to Slavs and to some who believe that they originate from the ancient period. We are descendants of all who lived here. You cannot set things either-or.” (*Vecer*, February, 2009).

Nevertheless, these debates did not even exist before. As the former Prime Minister, Ljubco Georgievski argued: „from 1940s to 1990s there was a great polemics to which nation [Macedonian or Bulgarian] the Ss. Cyril and Methodius, St. Clement, Delcev and other revolutionaries from the Ottoman period belong. And they have interrupted it the best way possible by going back into ancient Macedonia”.⁵³

With the strategy used by the Prime Minister on the one hand everything that happened on the territory of Macedonia in the earlier, distant history is labelled as ‘our’ heritage and identity, and on the other hand everything that is more recent - sometimes disputable but can be supported by documentation and other artefacts - such as the Turkish or with Bulgaria shared heritage - as clear cut different from ‘us’.

Monuments’ exaggerated volume and number

The exaggerated size of the monuments it’s a discourse itself. From the perspective of the political entrepreneurs, it can be most simply interpreted as an act of satisfying of its ‘own people’, by simultaneously strengthening its own power, especially legitimate reaction after all the identity-related humiliations suffered recently. They can be also interpreted as demonstration of power. These kind of megalomaniacal structures were not unknown to fascist or communist leaders. The monument of Alexander the Great almost surpasses the 5-stores building behind it. The monument of Philip II of Macedon surpasses the bell-tower of the nearby church. The worst example, however, is the monument of Nikola Karev⁵⁴ in front of the Parliament. Causidis (2013, 59-60) finds that:

“Even worst is the horseman statue of Nikola Karev which with its robust volume and weight simply cannot fit in the small lawn in front of the Parliament so that it is almost overhanging the street, competing with the overall dimensions of the double-decker buses and trucks passing here. Not to mention its relationship with the building of the Parliament, who compared to it begins to resemble an ordinary kiosk.”

⁵³ Short film „Pro(paganda)ject Skopje 2014“, production of Bulgarian TV station, published on 28.01.2012, published 28 Jan 2012, last viewed 22 06.2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=abxbnR5faqY>

⁵⁴ A local leader of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization and the president of the small and short-lived Krushevo Republic in 1903. Celebrated both in Macedonia and Bulgaria as a national hero.

The author argues that the large volume, however, does not represent the best, nor the most beautiful, nor the strongest. The phallosoidity of the pedestals and the size of the monuments can be metaphorically interpreted as:

“...an attempt to compensate for some complexes related to the size or status... as a low level of personal maturity, low social status, low self-esteem and confidence etc. In this case these categories could apply to some collective entities such as the State, i.e. the government’s power in global frames or the party’s (VMRO-DPMNE) power. Equally they can be applied to the common man who standing like a small ant under the pedestals of these monuments, looking at the soles of the horses’ feet displayed compensates for the poverty and powerlessness in which it lives, the humiliations suffered by neighbouring countries (but also by their own leaders) as well as their dissatisfaction with the size and power of the nation and the state to which it belongs.”(Causidis, 2013, 60).

In similar vein Causidis explains the number of monuments placed on such a small territory in such a short period as compensation of the missed opportunities for statehood in the past. The most telling is the example of the number of horsemen situated in a 500 square meters in less than two years. In the middle of 2013 there are six bronze horseman statues on or around the main square of the city, the Macedonia Square. Usually on the main squares of the big metropolises around the world stands only one statue of a horseman, a famous rebellion leader or a king, symbolising the might of that one, single ruler over the land he governs in that particular period. The presence of so many horsemen in small space can be thus a symbol of the actual fragmentation of the Macedonian society, where each group (ethnic, class) has ‘its own leader’. From the reference point of the political elite standing behind the Project the placing of so many horsemen simultaneously, can thus symbolise the strong will for ruling or, on the contrary, compensation for the low amount of entitled authority. From the reference point of the popular supporters of the Project, then again, the acceptance of so many horsemen ‘riding’ next to each other can be accepted as a compensation for the ‘lack of actual sovereignty of the collective to which they belong, or the desire to be mastered i.e. to have a real leader, a big, powerful, dignified, intelligent and capable, which decisively and manly-with a firm hand will lead them down the right path. The prominence of such monuments can metaphorically be presented as a strong need of the eternal child within us to find the "Great Father" who will protect us from the threats of "aggressive neighbours that constantly tease us and insult us’ (Causidis, 2013, 63). The support of the horsemen statues can also be simply interpreted as striving of the people who did not have its own rulers (monarchic dynasty) for centuries to complement this ‘shortage of history’.

Inconsistency during the project

Following the continuous resistance to the Project domestically and the critique from Greece for the intention to ‘steal her ancient heritage’, the mastermind of the Project grew hesitant and inconsistent with the firstly proclaimed courage. These activities undermine the over-emphasized heroism outlined in its monuments and facilities.

The most indicative example is the official naming of the monuments: the monument of Alexander the Great was named ‘Warrior on a Horse’, the monument of his father, Philip, was officially named

“Warrior” and the one of his mother Olympias, “Fountain of the Mothers of Macedonia”. What is more scandalous, however, but it was never debated publically in the broadcast, is the absence of some spokes of the Vergina Suns presented on the soldiers’ shields ‘protecting’ the statue of Alexander. As already mentioned, the Vergina Sun has 16 spokes of light, and it was used as a symbol on the first flag of independent Macedonia. It later became the cause for several months economic embargo from Greece, which had devastating consequences for the young republic. On some of the shields we can witness today there are only 5, 8, 12 or 15 spokes. According to the version of the NGO „Ploshtad Sloboda”⁵⁵ this is only a consequence of inaccuracy due to low-standards quality-assurance criteria implemented during the whole project. According to the version of Causidis (2013), however, this is a consequence of the fear from international (Greek) reactions and it was done purposefully just after the monuments arrived from Florence and before the assembling of the warriors on the square with the use of electric grinders. The message of this act Causidis interpreted as follows:

"I want bravely and boldly, in defiance of the Greeks and the whole of Europe to display the Star of Vergina on the central square in the capital of the modern sovereign Macedonia. ... But I am a bit afraid that someone may reproach me. So, therefore, for any case, I will cut off two or three spokes, so no one can catch me on word. If anybody will give me a remark, I would answer that this is a motif that accidentally resembles the Star of Vergina because it has not 16 but only 14 spokes." (Causidis, 2013, 65-68?).

Namely this cowardice towards the possible Greek reactions, represented in the domestic media as courage, makes many critics to think that the Project is predominantly envisioning the Macedonian spectators as the prime audience. Following the fierce domestic critique and only few months after the utilisation of the monument of the new father of the nation in performative purposes related to the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Macedonian independence, the intention for building of a statue of Skopje native Mother Theresa, surmounting the size of the “Warrior on the Horse” was announced on 29 June 2012⁵⁶. The monument planed to be located near the Alexander’s and it is planned to stand around 30 m tall, which is the maximally allowed height. In line with the previous inconsistencies, the statue of Mother Theresa is supposed to bring new message within the composition of monuments. If the statue of Mother Theresa will be taller, then it will shadow the one of Alexander, making her the centre of the altar. This changes the previous concept from two perspectives: gender and ethnicity. The masculine father of the nation will be replaced by a woman, and namely by ethnic Albanian woman born in Macedonian city, which could reconcile the two major ethnicities after the ethnic Albanians were offended for not being represented in the project. Moreover, the Nobel-prize winner for peace Mother Theresa is a symbol of compassion and reconciliation.

In sum, the size and the content and composition of the “Skopje 2014” monuments represent discourses themselves. The size of the historical figures from the antiquity relative to the size of the monuments from the other historical periods shows their importance for the project developers. The spatial arrangement of the monuments also helps to get the same impression, thus relating “Skopje 2014” directly with the antiquisation policy. The political elite imposing this policy is continuously

⁵⁵ “The image of bad quality discourse” from Harald Shenker, NGO „Ploshtad Sloboda”, published 15 April 2013, last viewed 27.01.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1ZZQhZ9eKA>

⁵⁶ <http://b2.mk/news/kje-se-gradi-spomenik-na-majka-tereza-povisok-od-voinot-na-konj?newsid=9SxW>, July, 2012

refusing to take any responsibility for the spurring of identity conflicts among ethnic Macedonians, while simultaneously satisfying of its 'own' electorate and strengthening its own power. Oppositional voices have also systematically undermined the project by criticizing the large number of the monuments build in a short period as a demonstration of power or compensation for the low amount of entitled authority. Due to domestic and international pressure the government became inconsistent with the implementation of the antiquisation policies through "Skopje 2014".

Buildings as elements of the project "Skopje 2014"

The list of facilities built or planned to be built, reconstructed or altered within the project "Skopje 2014" is indeed long. It included the construction of government or state buildings: Agency for Electronic Communications, Criminal Court Building, Financial Police Building, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, New City Hall, restoration of Old City Hall, Water Management Building; cultural buildings: Macedonian Philharmonic Orchestra hall, Museum of Archaeology, Museum of the Macedonian Struggle, National Theatre, a new Party (VMRO-DPMNE's) headquarters; reconstruction of facades: buildings around Macedonia Square, City Trade Centre, Department of Transport and Communications Building - located on Philip II Square, Government of the Republic of Macedonia building, Parliament building - including a construction of cupolas atop the building.

As part of the Project under the category "miscellaneous" structures were erected that can mainly be observed as 'amusement' facilities: Ferris wheel (resembling the "London eye"), fountains in Vardar river, three willow trees planted in the Vardar River in central Skopje (all together worth 250.000 Euros), two boats looking like pirate's ships docked in central Skopje on either bank of the shallow Vardar River to house restaurants and one 'old looking' carousel. Within this frame "Skopje 2014" also encompasses the construction of a new church Ss. Constantine and Helena, few hotels, including a Marriott Hotel under construction on Macedonia Square, several parking garages, one Office building on Macedonia Square, Skanderbeg Square construction (the ethnic Albanian twin-project) and the restoration of the medieval fortress "Kale", the Karposh's Rebellion Square and the buildings in the historic Old Bazaar.

As in the section dedicated to the analysis of the 'silent discourse' of the monuments, I would outline the mute discourse of the "Skopje 2014" facilities and of the activities surrounding the construction of the same.⁵⁷

Firstly, the project "Skopje 2014" is cowardly implemented subversion of existing buildings, reportedly symbolising the 'shameful past'.

Secondly, contrary to the proclaimed 'returning to the roots', the project is using 19th century Western Europe as a paradigm for nation-state building.

⁵⁷ Pictures facilitating visualisation of some of facilities and the space around them are to be found in the picture directory beginning on the page 372. Pictures 6-7 are related to the analyses in this section

Thirdly, on the part of facilities the project “Skopje 2014” is a mixture of nation identity and amusement buildings, increasing the potential for discursive calculated ambivalence.

Finally, a great number of activities such as restoration practices, endangering rare artefacts, mixing styles and functions of the facilities demonstrate careless attitude towards the existing cultural heritage, while allegedly re-creating the old, perished heritage.

Disguising the ‘shameful past’ and subversion of the exiting

After the official video presentation of the project “Skopje 2014” in 2010 some critics have recognised an attempt of the current government to delete or disguise the past of the city. According to Predrag Petrovic from the NGO “Ploshtad Sloboda” the project “Skopje 2014” meant “not only changing of the face of the city by adding new buildings among the existing, but also a systematic deletion of the traces of the architecture and history of another time. As if with some prejudice, hatred, desire to erase its own memory and past all the traces left by the architects in the 20th century in Skopje, and of those before them, were removed.”⁵⁸

Danica Pavlovska, the President of the Association of the Architects of Macedonia has described it as “attack on the collective aesthetics that we built in the last fifty years” (*Ibid*).

Jasmina Siljanovska, a professor on the Faculty of Architecture claims that Skopje “had a bad fate” because it was many times destructed not only by natural disasters but also by the “wishes of each new ruler to do something new and thus destroy the old”. Natural disasters were in fact used as an excuse to build new structures on top of the old ones. She suggests that this is probably the “strongest continuity of our culture”. She reminds that the Detailed Urban Plan for Skopje realized in the period 1914-1938 was completely changed in 1948, as if not city existed there before. After the earthquake similar behaviour could be observed. She sees the same attitude with “Skopje 2014” although limited to the city centre, but it is a change, she stresses, not undertaken by the professionals (the architects), but by a “political structure that defines the aesthetic criteria in advance and so redefines some identity frames” (*Ibid*).

These critics tend to underline the incompatibility of the “baroque” structures in the futuristic setting envisioned and mostly realized with the post-earthquake Plan for the city centre by Kenzo Tange.

According to many critics the building of new facilities in more classical styles underlines the wish for recognition from the western nations of the ‘worth’ of the Macedonian people to belong to the West in general, and the EU in particular. The subversion of the existing buildings, however, is more telling of the internal symbolical struggles with its own history. It is interesting why certain buildings, or even group of facilities, were built just in front of the existing and functional modern buildings. For instance, the Memorial House of Mother Teresa was built just in front of the entrance i.e. the front

⁵⁸ “Genetic Engineering” Predrag Petrovic, NGO “Ploshtad Sloboda”, published on 20 Mar 2013, last viewed on 27.01.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jx2EVNoch4c>

facade of "the House of the Army" (the former "Home of the Yugoslav People's Army"), within its pedestrian zone, without any 'stylistic dialogue' with this building. Also, the new Archaeological Museum and some government buildings in 'Neoclassicism' were built in a row along the Vardar river to completely cover the existing complex of the "Commercial Bank", the "Macedonian National Theatre" and the "Macedonian Philharmonics", all large, modernist structures of the Yugoslav period along the river Vardar. Finally, a multi-storey garage was built just in front of the front facade of the main Postal Building facing the banks of the Vardar. All these facilities were built as if there is no other place for their construction. In fact, after the earthquake, in the central area of Skopje many deserted territories have continued to exist up until today, not effectively being turned into parks, parking or dwelling areas.

Causidis discovers the political entrepreneurs' intention "through the infiltration of a new building from "our project" to avert or to devalue the meaning of existing ("their") structures, because of our negative attitude to their epoch, culture, ideological matrix and "their institutions" who framed the building of those facilities. In that case, the new facilities become a symbol and metaphor of "our victory" and "their defeat," the defeat of what those buildings symbolize" (Causidis, 2013, 19-20)

Another strategy of 'dealing with the past' is the *de-essentialisation* of the existing buildings, through the cynical 'masking' of their facades. Unwanted buildings remain standing, probably due to their material and functional value, or to avoid the reaction of the citizenry, the opposition or some international organizations, but through 'face-lifting' their authentic identity is completely altered or eradicated.

The most striking example of these procedures is the remake of the former and relatively new, governmental building, built in modernist, glass-facade style. The new facade is made of solid material and resembles late 19th century European architecture. According to Causidis the Prime Minister "cannot forget that each day he is coming to work and receive guests not in his "own house", but in "the house of his enemies" - the "burrow of the communists", the former building of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Macedonia. Given that he has no money, nor the courage to bring it down to the ground and build another – in his own taste, chooses a cheaper and seemingly less radical solution - only altering of its exterior" (Causidis, 2013, 68).

The 'beautifying' of the facades takes form in adding of 'classical' friezes and capitals made of styrofoam and plaster, so that no one no longer could recognize in them the old 'komunjarski' (pejorative form of communist) buildings. Moreover, the presence of such facility is taken as an occasion and excuse for the metamorphosis of the facades of all the surrounding buildings. For instance, the „Arch Macedonia“ was placed in the middle of simple and functional residential buildings constructed in the socialist period (50s and 60s) who for decades have been pressed into the memory of the "old Skopje citizens". The infiltration of the new facility was later used as an excuse for the transformation of the facades of all the surrounding buildings by adding them gypsum-styrofoam facades in supposed to turn them into pseudo-baroque palaces in the spirit of the late 19th century. Even the simplistic, modernist and bulky building of the City Trade Centre nearby was supposed to be 'redressed' and 'ornamented' with "Spanish Steps", alike the one in Rome.

Belated nation-building using the 'West' as paradigm

Closely related to the strategy of *de-essentialisation* of the existing architecture by visually covering it with new and bigger structures or simply by changing the facade of the old building into even "older" style, is the strategy of 'Europeanisation' of the city centre.

"Vladimir Todorovic, the municipal head of Skopje's central district, added that Skopje 2014's redesign would "give the city a new image, the style of a European metropolis" (*Vecer*, February, 2010).

In the pre-electoral campaign, where he was running for re-election he stated: "The story about Centre must go on, because Centre deserves to keep the attribute European" (*Republika*, 2013).

It is impressive that although the Project is declared as traditional, patriotic and in national-romantic spirit the buildings from the project are in fact not reflecting the architecture typical of Macedonia in the last centuries. It is symptomatic that the classical style (called among the people Baroque) tended to underline the ancient roots of the contemporary Macedonian nation. Nevertheless, just as the PM Gruevski argued, not the authentic antique architecture was used in the Project, but rather the newer versions (Renaissance, Baroque and classical), created in the last few centuries in modern Europe. Thus, Causidis (2013, 79) argues that the project developers communicate with its own ancient Macedonian identity not directly, but indirectly - through the vision of Europe and its knowledge of the history and culture of ancient Macedonia, taking as its actual paradigm the European states and nations mainly formed between 18th and early 20th century. This is a obvious contradiction- on the one hand the project creators insist on the Macedonian uniqueness as indigenous Balkan, Orthodox and ancient-Macedonian culture, but at the same time through the choice of styles in "Skopje 2014" show a strong affinity for the landmarks of classical, modern-history European culture. This is how Causidis concisely interprets this:

"The son who is not recognized by his father, is seeking in his appearance and behaviour as much as possible to resemble him (often even with overstating the similarity), in order to demonstrate and prove the belonging to his family and thus to enable and legitimize his integration in his family" (Causidis, 2013, 80).

The paradoxes deriving from this logic of forced, pragmatic 'aging' of the city are not few. E.g. parts of the old Railway Station (a landmark of the earthquake today used as a museum) have been pulled down in order to build new few-floors parking garage designed in the so-called "Baroque" style. This indifference towards the old architecture and cultural heritage by the carriers of the project has been also reflected in the reconstruction of the medieval Kale fortress. Parts of the stone-walls and some towers were completely demolished in order to be newly constructed, probably because it was easier and cheaper to use new materials than to restore the old one. This behaviour shows that the new 'old architecture' of the city centre has no value in itself but it is used as means to achieve some other goals. Another example of careless attitude towards the cultural heritage is the placing of the Museum of Archaeology next to the river Vardar. This can endanger the artefacts, sensitive to water and humidity as a recent flood in early 2014 has warned the authorities.

Mixing styles and functions

Referring to the 'silent discourse' of the buildings, I would lastly reflect upon the buildings which have fallen under the category 'miscellaneous' in "Skopje2014". What is most important about the adding of these kinds of facilities into the official project "Skopje 2014" is that it increases the so called calculated ambivalence of the final purpose and the functions of the project. As it will be demonstrated later these objects have been used in the legitimisation discourses of the governing elite and its supporters. The Ferris wheel, the huge bouts in river Vardar, the expensive willow trees and the number of fountains (competing with Rome), gives the creators and the supporters of "Skopje 2014" to present the project as one which primary goal is to attracts tourists. This, self evidently, allows the same speakers, but in different context, to defend the project as primarily a project that should boost the national pride and dignity. In these discourses, however, it is hard to find explanation why one 'tourist attracting' project has dedicated so many monuments to the 19th century Macedonian revolutionaries from the small and in global frames relatively unknown group of VMRO.

This mixture of architectural styles and functions of the Project are factually making it more vulnerable to critics. Contrary to the expectations of the creators of the project to 'Europeanise the capital' the critics fear that post-"Skopje 2014" Macedonian will be taken up as counterfeit nation, perceived as nation which engages in an unauthorized reproduction of European "originals" by the international publics imagined as the primary audience for the project (Graan, 2013, 173). The project's structures were thus labelled as "collection of souvenirs from different space-times" (Siljanovska, 2010) or "masks that ignorant provincial thieves wear while running through the department store of European history" (Grcev, 2010). This laughable kitsch can thus, even through attracting tourists, shame the nation and ruin the image of the country on a long-term basis. Indeed, some western press already adopted the label 'Disneyland of the Balkans' (*Kleine Zeitung*, November, 2013), 'mini-Las Vegas' (*Guardian*, August, 2011) or the (amusement park of) Asterix and Obelix (*The Economist*, May, 2011) when referring to the revamp of Skopje's centre.

The same critics fear that Greece or Bulgaria can easily prove their standing points to the international audience that this is how Macedonia 'steals history' from them or that Macedonia is nothing but Tito's 'invention'.

In sum, facilities were built, redesigned or "masked" with new facades mainly to *de-essentialise* or completely cover the 'shameful past' of the nation. The project developers have used the 'West' as paradigm of nation-building, thus 'proving its Europeanness' and asking for recognition by the western nations and the EU in particular. The mixing of styles and functions of the facilities was used as a strategy of calculated ambivalence, easing the defence of the project in total, but this has made the project more vulnerable to critics, as it can be easily perceived as kitschy and counterfeit, damaging the Macedonian image and identity on a long-term. It can be generalised that the monuments and the buildings part of the "Skopje 2014" project certainly had one thing in common: to give Skopje more 'classical' outlook. However, while the monuments can be easily connected to the antiquisation policy, the facilities can be rather perceived as trial to compensate for the belated nation-building in Western European context.

Imposing new hegemonic narrative

In the previous chapter I have suggested that the enforcement of a new hegemonic narrative on national identity went hand in hand with the reinterpretation of the more recent history of the Macedonian people.

As a good starting point for comparison of the confronted alternatives of national identity we can take the statement of the first Macedonian President, Kiro Gligorov: "We are Slavs who arrived at the 6th century on the Balkan and do not have anything in common with Alexander's civilisation".⁵⁹

This was the official hegemonic narrative of the communist, and the two post-communist governments of Macedonia. Not only the Social-Democrats (majority of who were former members of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and later adopted centrist position) but also the Conservatives' VMRO-DPMNE had the same stances, although sporadically flirting with the antiquisation.

The re-branded VMRO-DPMNE of Gruevski, however, found that history has to be changed. This entails redefinition and ordering of the entire history and of the recent history in particular. Consider the discourse of the architect Vangel Bozinovski:

"The fact that the history has been changed is necessity, because the whole history is upside down and has nothing to do with Macedonia. But what I want to do, and what others want to do, is the following. All those events and personas to be arranged in one ordered mosaic, and not to be run-run... (and then) event. So the whole thing is to show the continuity. What I want to represent is that there are no new comers, we are the native and we have never abandoned this territory".⁶⁰

In the same interview Bozinovski admits that he supports 'and maybe too often publicly praises Gruevski' namely for 'crystallizing the past, here, in Skopje' (*Ibid.*).

A special place in the redefinition of recent history was the construction of the Museum of the Macedonian Struggle for Sovereignty and Independence - Museum of VMRO - Museum of the Victims of the Communist Regime (later referred to as Museum of VMRO).

The Museum

I already argued that although the Museum is tending to be a museum of national history in the period 18th-20th century, in fact it is a museum of IMRO (today VMRO) and repositioning of the organisation in the Macedonian history. Not only the role of IMRO is reviewed, but also the link between the IMRO and VMRO-DPMNE suggested. This is what Gronbeck (1998, 58) marked as 'an evoking of a past to frame a present but also to conform that past to the present'.

⁵⁹ "Kiro Gligorov (ex-President of F.Y.R.) - Admits: "We are Slavs", published on 21 Dec 2008, last viewed 27.01.2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_gjBAhak18

⁶⁰ Program "In Centre", episode "Antiquisation against Titovisation" with TV host Vasko Eftov, published 22 April 2014, last viewed 27.01.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ng341dyr-gc>

What is stunning about the museum is the way the 'truth' is presented there, in an unprecedented top-bottom manner neglecting basic democratic principles of freedom of thought. The museum which houses more than hundred wax figures and as many large canvases mostly of heroic battles and blood-shade offers only guided tours through 13 exhibits ending in front of the original copy of the 1991 Declaration of Independence. The guided tour is approximately one hour long and each group visit should be earlier announced.

"No individual visits are possible, only groups and only with a guide. God forbid anyone would want to move along individually and draw their own conclusions! The individual is nothing. It is the group that has to digest the collective information transferred by an authorised medium.

And indeed, the entire setting complies with this logic. At no moment in the entire museum is there an explanatory note, other than title and author of the paintings and the characters depicted by the more than one hundred wax figures" (*Balkan Insight*, 2013).

In 2014 I have personally visited the museum and asked the curator why we are not allowed to walk alone in the museum. He answered that 90% of the Macedonian population does not know its own history. He told me that they are planning to let the people walk alone later, but for the time being it is obligatory to observe the exhibition with a guide- to acquaint the public with its history. The director of the museum in a TV interview mentions that the 'educative exhibition' is enriched with photos, monitors and audio effects, which enhance the impressions on the visitors.⁶¹ It is clear that from the beginning the exhibition of 'truth' was envisioned as what the pedagogical theory would name as frontal teaching. This type of instruction does not allow deliberation and debate, the more so because of the time limits and the group environment of the visit.

Not only the communist period as the period of forming the Macedonian statehood is avoided, the socialists are stigmatised only as predators for the 'victims' who wanted to free the whole Macedonia. This cannot be a museum of national history, but of the history of one party or just of one of the 'truths' about the Macedonian history. IMRO has never succeeded to win independence for Macedonia. It had too many factions, divisions on radical leftists and radical rightist politicians, as well as blood-shading conflicts between them. At certain periods it was nothing more than a terrorist organisation organising assassinations of statesmen. One of its factions was strongly pro-Bulgarian and this continued even after 1990s. Nothing of this was mentioned in the museum. There is an arrogant assumption that someone, the majority, does not know its own past and that someone else knows it better, as if the personal experience or contemplation is less 'real' than the one narrated by others, 'who know better' and 'serve the truth on a plate'. It also assumes that the majority is not acquainted with its own past. If it is so, then the 'truth' presented in the Museum is a vision only of small, chosen group and therefore cannot be representative, widely accepted and shared version of the past. Shortly, it is a narrow interpretation of the recent past imposed from the top and serving the current needs of the governing elite.

This Museum, just as the Archaeological museum, has been praised for the multimedia technologies that try to bring the visitor in the 'ambient of the events' presented in the exhibition. This simplification of reality and commodification of history is purposeful and can be used in ideological

⁶¹ "Museum Complex - Macedonian Struggle", published on 25 Oct 2011, last viewed 27.01.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NYCizJU9PhU>

and socialisation ends. This is typical for all right-wing populist strategies of *fictionalisation* of politics (Wodak and Forchtner, 2014).

The Museum was also used as a site of performative mythopoesis. On 8 September 2011, the day of the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the independence of the Macedonian state, the original copy of the Declaration of Independence was transferred from the Parliament building into the Museum. The ceremonial procession led by the President Gorge Ivanov went under the Triumphal Arch Macedonia, passing by the monument of Alexander the Great on the main square, and handed the Declaration in the main hall of the Museum, thus legitimising the whole content and the “final truth” presented in the museum. The route to the Museum was also not coincidental. It was as if firstly giving honour to the newly (re)discovered father of the nation, Alexander the Great, and then proceeding to the more recent history and giving honour to the newer ‘sons of the nation’, who sacrificed their lives for the freedom of the Macedonian people in the battle against the foreign, but also the domestic enemies, including the communists. This is again one of the ‘mystical bridges’ of which Frckovski (2014) speaks, connecting the distant leadership with the present reborn dictatorship, suggesting this regime as continuation or revival of that heroic age. To be sure of the desired effect, after the handing of the Declaration in the Museum by Ivanov, Gruevski officially opened the monument “Warrior on a Horse” and gave his own speech dedicated to the anniversary. An act that deserves a special attention is the handing of the Declaration of Independence in the Museum. The reputation of the Parliament as the house of people’s representatives was undermined with this act. The house of pluralistic and constitutional democracy is thus perceived as less valuable guardian of this important document than a newly constructed Museum with disputed contend and contested messages about the past.

The purposeful simplification of reality and commodification of history, as demonstrated in the case of the Museum of VMRO is typical right-wing populist strategies of *fictionalisation* of politics and is used in ideological and socialisation goals. Performative acts, among other, have undermined the reputation of the Parliament as the house of people’s representatives, once more challenging the democratic institutions of the country.

All these strategies of constructing a new identity have been used in period when the carriers of the former narrative have slowly abandoned their ideology and links to the communist past, when the foundations of the Macedonian statehood were in fact laid. The words of Vladimir Gligorov, a prominent economist and the son of the first President of Macedonia, Kiro Gligorov, in a 2009 interview concisely summarized the two possible negative impacts of the antiquisation policy and “Skopje 2014” as part of it:

“One thing is the redefinition of the new Macedonian history, with this anticommunism, that is very bad. Another thing is the redefinition, or the rewriting of the history of Macedonia in general, with the linking to Alexander the Macedonian. Those are the same models, for some practical, temporary and very basic political goals, to redefine something so serious, as the identity of one nation... That is a very big problem, a political instrumentalisation. There are no any historical reasons or any intellectual leverage [for this]”.⁶²

⁶² Program “In Centre”, episode “Antiquisation against Titovisation” with TV host Vasko Eftov, published 22 April 2014, last viewed 27.01.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ng341dyr-gc>

From the press and the elections program of VMRO-DMPNE for 2006 (announcing a nation's revival in 100 steps) it is clear that the party had an intention to reinterpret the history of the Macedonian people by the institutionalisation of the "antiquisation" policy on a state level. According to this perspective Macedonia in the last 50-60 years had no opportunity to comment its history and identity. The same argumentation holds that "Skopje 2014" is the first authentic voice of the Macedonian people regarding their identity after the World War II. This argumentation scheme, hence, negates the fact that Macedonia, as any other republic part of the former Yugoslavia, had very high level of autonomy within the federation. Causidis (93, 2013) even suggests that Yugoslavia collapsed among other reasons also because 'unlike other nearby "normal countries" in its capital there was no real national museum, one that would represent in its showcases the whole country and the whole Yugoslav nation. Instead, in each of the republican and provincial capitals there was a separate "National Museum"'. The former National Museum of Macedonia still exists in Skopje. This undermines the standing point that there was strict surveillance over the identity policy of each republic.

This is only partially true. Within the Yugoslavian federation Macedonia has celebrated even the revolutionaries from IMRO, who preceded the efforts for attaining Macedonian statehood before Yugoslavia was even imagined as possible state of all south Slavs. However, the Slavic heritage of Macedonia has never been disputed during this period. What could then be the substance of the review of the history and the renewal of the nation, one may ask. It would be fair to say that what has been 'missed' to be commemorated or what had to be revised was the newer history of Macedonia, the post-Ottoman period and the period when she was becoming one of the federal republics of Yugoslavia. Referring to the post-Ottoman period what had to be revised and brought to light and maybe more internationally than domestically debated would have been the suffering of the Macedonians during the Aegean exodus and the minority rights of the Macedonian minority in the neighbouring countries today, supposedly guaranteed by the EU laws. Similar venture has undertaken the Armenian government by opening the question of the genocide conducted by the Ottoman army in 1915. This would require political willingness and boldness of which a populist government would not profit on a long-term basis. The government of Gruevski indeed opened these questions with Greece but only on the margins of 'Alexander's heritage' debate. It is interesting in this context that although not part of the official project "Skopje 2014", in the period 2005-2011 the Holocaust Memorial Centre for the Jews of Macedonia was build, commemorating the deportation and extermination of the Macedonian Jews in Treblinka. If the government had willingness to reflect on the sufferings of its own people in similar vein a "Museum of the victims of the Macedonian Exodus" would be more urgent than the "Museum of the Macedonian Struggle for Sovereignty and Independence - Museum of VMRO - Museum of the Victims of the Communist Regime". The long name of the museum suggests that all of those things could be a part of the content of the museum the government has built, but factually it is nothing more than its middle name, a Museum of IMRO or the rebel organisation of which VMRO-DPMNE claims ideological descent. The Exodus is only marginally mentioned in this Museum, while the sufferings of the pro-Macedonian intellectuals in early Yugoslavian history are depicted in length, details and dramatically. As mentioned in the historical context section, during 1930's IMRO was gradually suppressed in Yugoslavia and in the neighbouring countries. During the ending days of World War II one part of the partisan troupes was fighting for complete independence of Macedonia. These people were sentenced to working camps or died while fighting with the Yugoslavian authorities. It is democratically legitimate to give voices to these people and their role in the Macedonian history but to necessarily link them to the ideals of

IMRO or question their Slavic cultural identity and construct a new narrative about their identity as people with unique Macedonian identity rooted in antiquity would be a manipulation, since no documents, such as pamphlets, books or internal documentation, exist where these revolutionaries have linked their identity with the antiquity. The story of the atrocities that these people have survived (some of them documented and therefore part of the collective memory of the contemporary Macedonians) was thus functionalised for emotional response and rejection of the entire national identity narrative of Yugoslavian Macedonia, and most notably questioning the Slavic cultural heritage of the nation. The “revival of the nation” then could be interpreted as a simultaneous ‘response’ to the homeland ‘traitors’ and the foreign ‘enemies’. It can be, hence, assumed that the released vengeance towards the former regime can be utilised in easier acceptance of the new narrative. This narrative, in turn, favours the political elite of VMRO-DPMNE as moral leaders in the society and provides them with long-term gains in the future elections.

Until now I referred to the identity policy of Gruevski’s government as “revival of the nation”. More so, because the proponents of the policy have referred to these processes as “national”. Factually, however, they were directed to the ethnic Macedonians in the country. As it will be demonstrated in the following section, other ethnicities, especially the largest minority in the country, the Albanian, has not identified with the content of the “Skopje 2014” monuments and buildings even partially. The complete focus on the ethnic Macedonian past has offended the minorities, which were supposed to be integrated into the more plural democratic society as envisioned by the Ohrid Framework Agreement in 2001. Hence, conflicts have sharpened not only among ethnic Macedonians but also between the ethnicities. The debate about the workings of “Skopje 2014” has then frequently switched from discussing the distant past to discussing the very present, with all the consequences for the daily functioning of the Macedonian society.

The omission of the non-ethnic Macedonians from the Project and the appeal for a specific social identity of the assumed supporters of “Skopje 2014” cast light on current negotiations of political power within the Macedonian society, the same way the antiquisation mythopoesis reflects the current power renegotiation in international setting.

Forgetting the multiethnic setting

Sam Vaknin, a Israeli writer and former adviser to Nikola Gruevski, has stated that the project “Skopje 2014” is not anti-Greek or anti-Bulgarian, but anti-Albanian. In an interview, he said "Antiquisation has a double goal, which is to marginalise the Albanians and create an identity that will not allow Albanians to become Macedonians" (*Balkan Insight*, October 27, 2009). On the background of the critique exercised by the neighbouring country accusing of “stealing history” and the domestic opposition accusing of “reverting history”, the Albanian political bodies in particular and the Islamic community in general have criticized the Project for completely forgetting the multiethnic setting in which it has been envisioned. The video from 2010 revealed no plans for building of any monument that would celebrate Albanian or Turkish, or generally Ottoman or Muslim historical personas related to Macedonian history. It did, however, include the construction of the church “Ss. Constantine and Helen” on the main square of the city and later also the construction of

another church on the Fortress Kale. Only after the reaction of the NGOs and the Albanian coalition partner in the government, DUI, monuments of Albanian figures were added or churches on public places with public money were not built.

According to the NGO "Ploshtad Sloboda" a building of a new church on the main square of the city was going to be an illegal act, namely because building of a religious facility on public space by state institutions is against the law. They argued that the building of the church "Ss. Constantine and Helen" was planned on a public space and therefore "the municipality Centre was supposed to free of charge alienate and reallocate the plot and pardon the utility charges, [and] all of that secretly, without any public-opinion survey, public presentation or debate between the citizens and the experts. It was government's idea and the activities have been taken by the Ministry of Culture"⁶³ On the 28 March 2009 less than few hundred students of the Architectural Faculty have organised a small protest against the usurpation of public space and spending of 15 million Euros for the building of the church. The same day the famous TV-host Janko Ilkovski on his blog urged his viewers to counter-protests. In the years that followed, counter-protests were happening on many issues, but always in favour of the government. The Albanian population was provoked by this decision and insisted on building of the Burmali Mosque on its old location, also on the main square "Macedonia". In June 2009, three months after the incidents Gruevski decided that, both, the church and the mosque will be built on the square. Nevertheless, ten months after the fight on the square "Macedonia", the government announced that both of the buildings are not to be built there. The church, however, it is decided to be erected on another location, very close to the square. The Islamic community felt betrayed with these acts. This was the first time that the government demonstrated hesitancy and calculation in the inter-ethnic affairs.

In this context it is noteworthy the tone of threatening that the Albanian political actors have used: "The head of the Parliamentary Group of New Democracy, Flora Kadriu commented on "Skopje 2014" as a "project (which) represents strictly the cultural, spiritual and historical features of the Macedonian people, reflects mono-ethnicity and presents a tendency to escalation and deterioration of interethnic relations" (*Utrinski Vesnik*, March, 2010).

The Albanian and Islamic Community NGO sector was milder in the requests, and indeed appealed for pluralistic democracy in identity related matters:

"We seek also to fully restore the Old Bazaar, to renovate the Albanian Theatre, complete the construction of the Stone Bridge" – the list of requirements was complemented by "Wake Up" (Albanian NGO). They (too) believe that with the construction of monuments of Albanians on the Skopje square, (the Project) will get a multi-ethnic, multi-confessional and multicultural spirit and identity, (something) which is not envisaged in the government project "Skopje 2014", assessed as discriminatory. Such assessment of the urban visions of the Centre (Municipality) yesterday gave the "Matusiteb", the Union of Turkish NGOs. They consider that the most controversial segment of the government project is the planned construction of the church "Ss. Constantine and Helen", but not the Burmali mosque. "We are not against the construction of the church, but insist on the restoration of the mosque which would reflect the real situation in the city. On the place of the sculpture of Justinian I we request to put the sculpture of Fatih Sultan Mehmet, who is a builder of the Stone Bridge", reported yesterday the "Matusiteb". They also wonder why the government does not envisioned

⁶³ "Divided City" by Ljubisha Arsikj, NGO "Ploshtad Sloboda", published on 28 Mar 2013, last viewed 27.01, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHdpI2pj6OI>

construction of monuments of prominent figures from the Turkish history such as Yahya Kemal, Celebi Ishaq and others, which will show the multicultural and multi-confessional character of Skopje. (...)

Apparently, the appeals and demands of many thousands Muslim population do not reach this government, which has no sensitivity for the spiritual and other needs of the Muslims in Macedonia. Burmali Mosque with its presence would make a profound symbiosis of the both banks of the Vardar River. It would show once again that the squares are a place to get together and (re)join, and not a place, as currently envisioned, for division and separation" a message was sent yesterday from the Islamic Religious Community (IRC)" (*Utrinski Vesnik*, February, 2010).

Another occasion when the government has "played" with the religious and ethnic feelings of the Macedonian citizens was the restoration of the Skopje Fortress (Kale).

The Skopje Fortress (Kale)

As part of the still unannounced "Skopje 2014" project in 2007 archaeological excavation on the Skopje Fortress Kale began. The fortress is situated in the city centre on one of the few hills in the Skopje valley, but more importantly on the invincible border line between Muslim- and Christian Skopje. After the excavation of the foundations of a medieval Christian church and a few fragments of church frescoes have appeared the government has seen a good opportunity the fortress again to return to "Christian Skopje". Rumours have started spreading in the public that full recreation of the church is planned, but the Albanian parties have announced that no such thing will be allowed. In February 2011 some parts of the church structure have become visible and the same month the church has been ruined by Albanians led by the politicians in the governmental coalition, such as ministers and the mayor of the municipality. The following days mobs comprised of the opposing ethnicities have met on the site of the destruction and engaged in a fist-fight. Not only that there were no trials for the fights, there was no process initiated for the ruining of the Church, acts which show that the government admits the building of the church as a mistake. No explanation was offered to the public for any of these decisions.⁶⁴

This notwithstanding, because the first plan of the government could not be realised, the pro-Christian initiative was taken off at a lower level. A construction of a modern building on the site of the newly discovered church, which would serve as a museum presentation of the Christian artefacts, was predicted. In order this structure not to be destroyed again, to the Albanian community another museum for display of Islamic artefacts was offered. This is how Causidis (92, 2013) deconstructs this decision:

"For you [the Albanians] not to rebel because we [the Macedonians] build on Kale a "church under the alibi of a museum", we will approve that you also build "a mosque under the alibi of the museum". It was also suggested a third Museum - "Museum of Prehistory", apparently to hide the evidently vulgar bipolar conception".

⁶⁴ "Divided City" by Ljubisha Arsikj, NGO "Ploshtad Sloboda", published on 28 Mar 2013, last viewed 27.01, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHdpI2pj6OI>

This concept "we our museum – you your museum", as the author argues further, is anti-museum *par excellence*, as it undermines the basic principles of a phenomenon called a museum, a place where artefacts of different culture stand next to each other and are celebrated as a world cultural heritage. The repetition of the scenario with the church and the mosque on the square "Macedonia" again demonstrates that "Skopje 2014" was used not only as a tool for establishing of dominant new narrative on a long run but also to renegotiate power in the current political settings and moreover, in the "re-conquering" of the actual territories of the city.

DUI's hypocrisy

The behaviour of the largest and most popular Albanian party in this context is of great importance to understand the consequences of the monoethnic vision of "Skopje 2014". At the beginning of the project DUI was very critical of it:

"The statements of the Skopje Mayor Koce Trajanovski that a monument of Alexander the Macedonian not more than two years from now will be placed on "Macedonia" square, the ruling DUI yesterday assessed as populist. According to party spokesman Elmira Mehmeti, the least Macedonia needs at this point is populism. She calls for building a common strategy for the negotiations on the name dispute with Greece.

-Those are populist statements. We regret that such atmosphere has been created. Macedonia rather than monuments should build a common strategy for the name (dispute with Greece), Mehmeti said.

According to her, the international community in the future will have an important role in resolving the dispute with its southern neighbour.

-Very often for the key processes in Macedonia are given more emotional than rational statements. In this process we are not alone. We do not lead the process about the name alone, neither as a party nor as a coalition, nor as a state. An important role has the international community, and I think the same will happen in the next six months, said Mehmeti" (*Vecer*, December, 2009).

This article clearly shows that DUI evaluates the Project as populist and one which will damage the relationship with Greece and the chances to join the EU soon. In another article from *Vecer* in early 2010 DUI again warns to include the EU in the matters related to the worsening of the inter-ethnic relations due to "Skopje 2014":

"The debate on the "Skopje 2014" is moving to Brussels. After yesterday for the fourth time, because of no quorum, the discussion of the Project in the Parliament Committee on Interethnic Relations (PCIR) was again postponed, Xhevat Ademi of DUI, who chairs the Committee, announced that he would notify of this the European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso. DUI recommends that if some of the MPs deliberately boycott the PCIR, this should be immediately discontinued. Teuta Arifi directly accused VMRO-DPMNE of obstruction of the work of the Committee. She is not even sure that the DUI had been informed about the project before it was presented to the public.

In DUI we have other dilemmas about this project, (namely about the) ethnic and national balance. We think there are other priorities at the moment (than the re-construction of the city-centre), said Arifi". (*Vecer*, March, 2010).

From the same article it is also evident that VMRO-DPMNE is directly held responsible for the worsening of the inter-ethnic relations.

Only five months later, however, the positions of DUI on "Skopje 2014" change dramatically:

"THE MONUMENTS OF DUI NEXT YEAR ON THE SQUARE IN SKOPJE

The spokesman of Municipality Center, Jovica Ackovski informed the media that DIU has initiated a procedure for the installation of monuments of historically and culturally important Albanian figures from the Macedonian history. "According to him it is a contract for multi-ethnicity within the project "Skopje 2014" by the coalition partners in the government and should be no problem (in the realization of the initiative)" (*Vecer*, August, 2010).

From a critical DUI became a collaborating entity in "Skopje 2014". The description of the agreement by the municipality's spokesman as a 'contract for multi-ethnicity within the project "Skopje 2014" by the coalition partners' clearly shows that Gruevski's party has engaged the Albanian coalition partner in the Project involuntary. It had to be explained to the VMRO's electorate and the general Macedonian public that in the rationale of the Ohrid Frame Agreement, the governing partners should designate proportional quotas even in matters of cultural representation.

In early 2012, or four months after the decision to install monuments of Albanian public figures from the Macedonian history *Dnevnik Online* informs of "another concession" to the Albanian partner in the government:

"On the 100th anniversary of the independence of Albania, as well as the anniversary of the death of the Albanian prince Skanderbeg, Municipality Cair hit the cornerstone for building the "Skanderbeg square" (...) The construction of the square is an investment of the Government of Republic of Macedonia" (*Dnevnik Online*, January, 2012).

This venture will require building a portion of the square on top of Goce Delčev Boulevard. Aside from plenty of open space, the square will contain an amphitheatre, a fountain, and underground parking. Returning to the territory negotiation debate, the extension of the square on top of Goce Delcev Boulevard can be symbolically interpreted as a "conquest" of ethnic-Macedonian territory by the ethnic Albanian community.

The actions and reactions of the governing VMRO-DPMNE in relation to the demands of the Albanian and Islamic communities in general, and to DUI in particular, show that these "concessions" were used as tool for appeasing the demands of some of the oppositional voices in context of "Skopje 2014". Importantly, no such "concessions" were ever given to the demands of the ethnic-Macedonian opposition.

“Exit” strategies and their de-construction

In the last section dedicated to the link between “Skopje 2014” and the multiculturalism in Macedonia I will analyse two legitimisation discourses delivered by the Prime Minister and one de-constructive discourse from the newspaper *Sloboden Pecat*.

In the first excerpt of an article I want to demonstrate that, as it will be evident in the later chapters, one of the main strategies of PM Gruevski related to his opportunistic identity policies is the distancing from individual unsuccessful ventures part of “Skopje 2014”. For instance, responding to a question about the construction of the Church and Burmali Mosque on the square the Prime Minister denies any responsibility for the construction of the church:

“Gruevski: I do not decide on religious buildings

Meetings with coalition partner DUI are regular, but for the construction of a religious facility decides the one who builds it. We do not build, so I do not decide, said Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski” (*Vecer*, February, 2010).

In a documentary prepared by “Ploshtad Sloboda” the Head of the Islamic Religious Community claims: “I have personally asked the PM if he has political willingness to rebuild the Burmali Mosque on the square” after which he got in response that “he (Gruevski) is not at all against the reconstruction”.⁶⁵ The Head of IRC clearly points to the Prime Minister as the decision-maker behind the process. On the official promotion of the “Arch Macedonia” in 2012 Gruevski officially recognises that he and his government stand behind the Project, and this religious object, the Church of Ss. Constantine and Helen was indeed part of the official video promoting the project in the public.

The next two articles from *Republika* and *Sloboden Pecat* are source of legitimisation and de-constructing discourses respectively. The second article can be treated as a response to the first one.

“-It is a crystal clear project in terms of legal procedure, a project with a great purpose. Not against anyone, it is for us Macedonians. Not against Albanians, against the Bulgarians or Greeks, or against the Serbs or against anyone else. Some have tried to present it in this context, that “Skopje 2014” is anti-Albanian project, said Gruevski.

He asks why is it an anti-Albanian project, why is the new-Old Theatre anti-Albanian, why is the Archaeological Museum or the Constitutional Court anti-Albanian.

- I cannot understand. Some Albanian analysts wanting to pour out “bad blood” were coming out with thesis that this is anti-Albanian project. After a number of years, when only the deeds will stay and all these spins and fog clear up, then we will have the real evaluation, Gruevski said” (*Republika*, 2014).

The article from *Sloboden Pecat* represents the unbearably bad conditions of the theatres in the towns around Macedonia after which it tries to juxtapose their condition with the one achieved by

⁶⁵ “Divided City” by Ljubisha Arsikj, NGO “Ploshtad Sloboda”, published on 28 Mar 2013, last viewed 27.01, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHdpl2pj6OI>

the minorities in Skopje. The author first mentions the unacceptable aesthetic and sanitary conditions in the provincial theatres after which the article continues with a new under-title:

“The Albanian and the Turkish Theatres in new buildings

The building of the Albanian Theatre in Skopje will be thoroughly renovated with an investment of eight million, announced this weekend the Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski.

- In order to satisfy the needs of the Albanian and Turkish theatres, after the reconstruction of this building which will function as Albanian theatre, by the end of this month we will start the construction of a new Turkish theatre - said Gruevski” (*Sloboden Pecat*, January, 2014).

Of central analytical value from the first of the last two articles is Gruevski’s rhetorical question ‘why is the new-Old Theatre anti-Albanian, why is the Archaeological Museum or the Constitutional Court anti-Albanian’. Using *calculated ambivalence* the PM tries to defocus the attention of the audience by comparing cultural and state institutions under one project. Moreover, asking this question he uses also the strategy of *avoidance* – by asking about the content of those three structures he escapes to speak about the ‘Western’ facades, the ‘antique’ columns and the monuments of the ethnic Macedonian revolutionaries from IMRO scattered around the city’s centre. In fact, in his rhetorical question the Prime Minister unintentionally gives as examples two of the few most controversial facilities together with the Museum of VMRO producing identity confusion and conflicts due to delinking from multiculturalism and pluralism. The Archaeological Museum displays artefacts from the antiquity supposed to serve as evidence of the longevity of the ethnic Macedonian culture and the dominance of the ancient Macedonian elements in the modern Macedonian culture relative to the Slavic elements. There is certainly not a lot of place for the Albanian heritage in the Macedonian soil in this context. Referring to the new- Old Theatre one may ask why the Albanian and the Turkish Theatres have insisted on the reconstruction and construction of their own houses respectively, if they were contented with the new “Baroque” building of the Skopje’s Old Theatre. This clearly speaks that the minorities are not integrating in the Macedonian society but build parallel cultural worlds within the same city and limited to “their territories”.

The author of the second article directly wants to draw a parallel between the treatment of the ‘one who rebel on ethnic background and with threatening tone for the stability of the country’ with the ‘one who are powerless to impose any change’ for their profession and cultural offer in the smaller towns. This argumentation is closely related to the frustration of the intransigence towards the oppositional ethnic-Macedonian demands.

In sum, it can be generalised that as the promotional video of “Skopje 2014” firstly aired in 2010 shows the political leadership of Macedonia has completely “forgotten” to incorporate the ethnic and religious minorities in the Project.

As the restoration of the Fortress and the building of the Church have shown the Project was used as a tool for symbolical overtaking of city’s fragile border-line territories and thus it was a site of conflict between the major ethnicities, which could escalate in armed conflict. This led to what can be named federalisation of cultural representation. The coalition partners have negotiated “balanced”, “quota-like” representation on separate squares. The coalition partner DUI, and the populace it represented, were thus “appeased”. The conflict between the ethnicities ended up in confirmation of their “own territories” of the city and parallel building projects with financial weight probably corresponding to

the proportional difference in population. DUI only acted as political force responsible for “fair representation” of the Albanian minority, just as by using arms it has secured a “piece of the pie” in the tight political patronage networks and clientelistic employment structures in the Macedonian society.

VMRO on the other hand, has demonstrated hesitancy and calculation in the realisation of its monoethnic vision of Skopje as seen in the cases of escaping any debate in the PCIR or the giving of “concessions” only after demonstration of power by the minorities. This was the case in many circumstances, the building of the church and the mosque on the “Macedonia square”, the building of museums on Kale, the renovation and building of theatres. It is perplexing that this happens over longer period of time and lessons were not learned. This suggests that the government of Gruevski had become increasingly less principled on nationalism after it felt that power could be lost due to attritions within the governing coalition. This ability to “strike deals” within the government has earned the governing coalition the infamous nomination of “tender coalition” among the public. The deals negotiated by the “tender coalition” related to “Skopje 2014” have become a *par excellence* demonstration of misuse of the consensual democracy principles.

As in similar other instances, the political leadership has denied any responsibility for the rising inter-ethnic tensions with the construction of “Skopje 2014”. Mainly through the strategy of distancing and the discursive strategies of calculated ambivalence and avoidance of certain topics within the deliberative processes the political leadership of the country escapes any penalty by the Macedonian public.

Among other things the renewed conflict with the Albanian minority has also demonstrated the new role of the religion (the Church) in the new regime and the intransigence towards the demands of the former political elite.

Conclusions

In the first two analytical chapters I tried to answer how “Skopje 2014”, seen as identity alteration project, influences the democratic development of Macedonia. Earlier I have hypothesised that “Skopje 2014” is a stimulator of conflicts and syndrome of undemocratic developments. I argued that the project is a populist tool mainly constructed for the domestic audience and in function of winning votes, in order to win the executive power in a period long enough to establish a new hegemonic national myth potent to overshadow the power of the former political elite and discourage *any* attempt for restoration of its former societal positions.

I have focused on the questions how the governing elite’s discourses on national identity have been incorporated in the Project and how, in turn, the Project and its legitimisation have reinforced them; and how the construction of new hegemonic narrative has influenced the socio-political relationships in Macedonia.

In the analytical chapters I scrutinised a variety of discourse, the evident but silent discourses behind the phenomenology of the structures, the discourses behind the political actions and behaviour, and the textual discourses of construction, legitimisation and de-construction.

I have firstly shown how “Skopje 2014” is embedded in the antiquisation ideas of territorial rootedness of the nation, continuity, and genetic and cultural immutability and *superiority*. It is a continuation of the same ideas which simultaneously challenge the former Slavic narrative, the place of Hellenism in the world history and the expectations for building of multicultural and pluralistic society. I have demonstrated that the government’s identity policy follows the Occidentalist principles of *evolutionism*, *dualism*, and naturalised notion of culture (Quijano, 2000a, 543), understanding the Macedonian as first modern Western civilisation with special “rights” among the “civilised” countries. However, as I argued in the theoretical chapter, the naturalised notion of culture is just a modified racial theory, which charges right-wing argumentations, and provides a base for nativistic, stereotypical discrimination practices and xenophobia.

I have further interpreted the size and number of monuments depicting political personas as demonstration of power and strong will for ruling or, on the contrary, compensation for the low amount of entitled authority. The acceptance of the project by the people could, on the other hand, be interpreted as willingness to have a strong leader. Both of these inclinations are encouraging autocratic rule.

The recognized *de-essentialisation* of the existing buildings from the past by building of new buildings in front of them or by simply putting a new facade on top of the old one, I interpreted, in line with other authors (Causidis, 2013), as a tendency to delete the ‘shameful past’ of the nation and all the marks of the ‘former elite’.

The analysis of the constructivist and legitimisation discourses following after the construction of the most of the “Skopje 2014” structures revealed that the project was understood as “revival of the nation” which I interpreted as an intention to impose a new hegemonic narrative on national identity. This intention could be easily traced especially in the content and the strictly guided way of presentation of the same in the Museum of VMRO, as well as in the process of searching for a new “Father of the Nation” that went hand in hand with the abandonment of the former national narrative by the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia. The repositioning of the Macedonian nation as the cradle of the Western civilisation in international setting thus went hand in hand with the reinterpretation of the more recent history of the Macedonian people in regional and Yugoslavian context. I therefore assumed that the released vengeance towards the former regime was intended to be used in the acceptance of the new hegemonic narrative.

The structures of “Skopje 2014” have also enabled the political leadership through performative acts to construct ‘mystical bridge’ between the past and the present and relate the new versions of the distant and the recent past in function of the current negotiations of power in the society.

The complete avoidance of referral to the Ottoman and Islamic heritage in the project and the complete exclusion of the Albanian population from the “*revival*” project resulted in what can be described as calculative process of threatening and appeasing. The major “guarantor” of the rights of the Albanians in Macedonia has played a hypocritical role of firstly attacking the project as populist lately accepting to be a partner in its realisation, however, only on ‘its own territory’ of the city. Through the process I marked as federalisation of cultural representation DUI only acted as political

force responsible for “fair representation” of the Albanian minority in the project “Skopje 2014”. Through escaping any debate in the PCIR, the strategy of distancing from the construction of certain parts of “Skopje 2014” (in this case the Church in Ss. Constantine and Helen), and the discursive strategies of calculated ambivalence and avoidance of certain topics within the deliberative processes the political leadership of the country tried to escape any penalty by the Macedonian public, while “striking deals” within the “tender coalition” behind the close doors. I argued that this is *par excellence* case of misuse of the principles of consensual democracy.

In context of the ability of the Albanian minority to negotiate power and permissiveness towards their demands in the current political setting, I have pointed out to the intransigence towards the demands of the former political elite within “Skopje 2014”. This once more clearly shows against whom it was primarily directed the new vision of the Macedonian *ethnie* within the original project.

Two additional conclusions follow from the summary of the results. The first conclusion is that the political actors were rather cautious in their discourses relative to the legitimisation discourses of the media actors. The milder form of imposition of new identity, as in the case of Gruevski’s *a la carte* identity, offers the political leadership to escape negative feed-back on the upcoming elections in the nearest future, while through the media actively promoting a narrative which could serve only his party, by bolstering nationalism among its supporters on a short run and by offering version of the history which when established serves the consolidation of power on a long run.

The second conclusion is grounded in the summary of politically important dates. The brief analysis of the order of events in a short period of eight years can hint on some links between “Skopje 2014” and the results of the elections during the same period. Although the “Revival in 100 steps” was announced with the parliamentary elections victory in 2006, the real spur for ‘playing the nationalistic card’ was the result of the 2008’s NATO Bucharest summit. The period after the victory on the early Parliamentary elections in June 2008 and before the defeat of VMRO in the Centre Municipality on the April, 2013 local elections, is the most prolific from perspective of the antiquisation policy. In early July 2008 the Hunza delegation visited Macedonia. In December 2008 was aired the “Macedonian Prayer” and earlier then February 2009, the study of iGenea conducted “proving that Macedonians have more ancient Macedonian blood than the Greeks”. This period can be marked as the period of establishing of the new national myth. In order to be on time for the celebration of the Day of Independence in early September, 2011, used as an opportunity for bolstering nationalism through performative acts, the establishing-myth-period overlapped completely with the building of the most of the monuments and identity-related structures of “Skopje-2014”. We can assume that the victory on the June 2011 Parliamentary elections and the total victory on the 2013 April Municipal elections (aside of the great symbolical defeat in the Centre Municipality) are closely related to the populist overtones of the Project.

We can now more confidently claim that through using and closely relating genetics, performative arts, archaeology and architecture on top of visual arts in the media coverage Gruevski’s government tried to build a new national myth. This type of radical identity-building has created identity confusion and conflict within the ethnic Macedonian population, sparked inter-ethnic instability and by challenging the meaning and the influence of Hellenism in the world history but simultaneously not quitting the shared Slavic cultural heritage with Bulgaria it transformed the neighbours into enemies and almost directly perpetuated the delay in the EU accession process.

The analysis also demonstrated that the Project was predominantly aimed at the domestic audience and the cultural and identity policy of the governing VMRO has brought them short-term victories, but one that lead towards long-term divisions. In sum, I have demonstrated that the project was planned very carefully and realised systematically, but it was also consistently interrupted by the minorities, the opposition and the neighbouring countries. Hence, I assert that as long as the elites do not acknowledge the plurality of perspectives on history and identity and openly engage in a debate about them, this kind of disruptions will always occur as typical and systematic response, which in turn brings confrontations and deepens the conflict on many levels, domestically, locally and internationally, and thus negatively impacts the democratic development of Macedonia.

The identity crisis following after the intervention of the political entrepreneurs has also some positive aspects as it offered opportunity for reflection on substantial question of who the Macedonians are as well as for hearing of some of the oppressed voices from the 20th century Macedonian history. It also offered insights into the larger frames of the identity-building process, such as the neo-liberal 'nation-branding' rationale and the 'European project' as contexts that inform the nation-building.

Related to the 'European project', for instance, is the difficult position of the countries excluded from the EU 'with profound identity politics of the excluded countries' (Boatca, 2014, 214). The relationship EU-candidate country also opens the question of the treatment of minorities in neighbouring countries, supposedly guaranteed by the Union. Greek science e.g. admits that on the territory of Aegean Macedonia there was a multinational setting before Greece conquered the territory from Turkey, (Tziampiris (2011); Skrinis, (2005), Neofotistos, (2012)) thus providing the grounds for recognition of minorities. As informed in the chapter on 'historical context, however, Greece claims to have no minorities living on its territory, despite the fact that Macedonian speaking minority, among other, lives in the northern province of Macedonia and through its own party seeks ways for recognition of minority rights. On the other hand, while not recognising the Macedonian minority in its western part of the country, Bulgaria, using its position of an EU member, literally buys citizens in Macedonia and requires recognition of its 'minority' in Macedonia if the country wants to join the Union. If correctly managed, the problematizing of the recent past of the country and the questioning of the 'international justice' in EU context can provide fertile ground not only for 'righting the historic wrongs' but also for self-cognition based on evidences and deliberation, as conditions for self-respect and respect of the 'Others' and their standing points. The rushed intervention in the identity of the people through imposition of new national narrative without consulting the oppositional voices was therefore criticized in these chapters as counterproductive political tool with negative impact on the Macedonian democracy.

CHAPTER 7: A LEGALY CLEAN NATION-BRANDING PROJECT

Research question and hypotheses

Following the same order as in the previous analytical chapters, in the beginning of this chapter I will once more refer to the main research question and to the hypotheses related to the main topic of this chapter, and namely, the observation of “Skopje 2014” as a developmental project led by political entrepreneurs.

The main research question of the dissertation concentrates on how “Skopje 2014” impacts the Macedonian democracy. In this context more specific questions were developed, such as how the discourses on development of the governing political elite have been incorporated in the Project?; how the legitimisation discourses have constructed a vision of “Skopje 2014” as a tourist- and investment attracting project and how this narrative has been deconstructed by the discourses of the oppositional voices?, and finally, how was the realisation of the Project functionalised or which ends has it served?

The answers to these questions will offer insights into the multiplied influences that the project “Skopje 2014” seen as developmental project had and continues to have, as of today, April 2016, on the Macedonian democracy.

I have hypothesised that “Skopje 2014” is a stimulator of conflicts and syndrome of undemocratic developments, or more precisely, an instrument for winning elections and illegitimate overthrowing of the former political elite. “Skopje 2014” as the most expensive investment in the history of Macedonia and at the same time one of the most non-transparent projects of this character, raises doubts that it was utilised for money laundering used for mid-term to long-term removal of the opposition from the executive power. As expected, these actions have the potential to further intensify the conflict between the parties and their supporters. In this regard I argue that as long as governments do not address socio-economic issues along procedural democracy and general accumulation of capital, there cannot be stability within the nation-state, or on regional level, when observed from the point of view of the EU and the Balkan region.

I have also hypothesised that “Skopje 2014” was mainly constructed for the domestic audience as final ‘consumer’ of the ‘cultural goods’, because the voters will determinate the future governing party of the country even if tourists/investors do not come to Macedonia or the nation would not join the European family. I argued that as long the EU ignores the undemocratic developments by employing the “stability first” as a form of “development first” strategy (just another form of Huntington’s thesis for autocracies support) in the candidate countries, it only explicitly legitimises the anti-democratic governments.

This and the following chapter aim to demonstrate the interplay of the discourses with the actions, or the realisation of the (developmental) ideas; as well as the interplay of the constructive and the de-constructive discourses. The analysis of “Skopje 2014” as a developmental project will follow the same logic as the analysis of the Project as an identity-alteration project. This implies that I will firstly embed the Project in the general developmental rationale of the Macedonian government and after that concentrate on “Skopje 2014” as part of it. More concretely, in this chapter I will firstly

represent the discourses of the governing political elite, followed by a section dedicated to the analysis of the discourses of the pro-government media. In the following chapter I will precede with the presentation and analysis of the discourses of the oppositional politicians and the media supportive of their views. At the end of the same chapter I will then draw some conclusions regarding the two chapters dedicated to “Skopje 2014” observed as developmental project, mainly based on the juxtaposition of the discursive strategies of the political opponents and their respective media supporters. As the searching for discursive schemes with populist or right-wing features that could negatively impact the democratic institutions of Macedonia is in the centre of the dissertation, I will always juxtapose the de-construction argumentations of *Utrinski Vesnik* and *Sloboden Pecat* with the respective one from the pro-government media in the cases when *Vecer* and *Republika* have commented on the same topic or event. I will also reflect on the similarities and differences between the discourses of the political actors and the discourses of the public opinion makers. Finally, when analysing discourses it is also relevant to demonstrate eventual temporal changes and adaptations in the actors’ discursive strategies and patterns. However, due to the short time-frame of five years within which the texts were written or delivered, it is hard to assume that some major alterations could take place.

In the following just as in the previous chapters will also refer to political acts as units of analysis, which also carry discursive message. For instance, placing a monument illegally, adopting a law to serve the agenda of the party, charging the opposition MPs for exercising critique of the project “Skopje 2014”, paying high honorariums to previously anonymous authors for building monuments, are all political acts carrying equally valuable messages as the written or spoken texts.

For the analytical needs of the two following chapters I have used 13 articles from *Vecer*, 14 articles from *Republika*, 10 from *Sloboden Pecat* and 18 from *Utrinski Vesnik*. In total that is 28 articles from the oppositional media and 27 from the pro-government media. I also analysed articles from *Balkan Insight*, and namely 6 articles. As argued earlier (methodological chapter, page 18), the articles of *Balkan Insight* were used only as sources of numbers and speeches of political actors. The discursive patterns and argumentation schemes of this source were not of interest in this work since this would mean introduction of a third source on the site of the oppositional voices. Also three articles, two from *The Economist* and one from *The Wall Street Journal* are analysed but only as texts directly or indirectly quoted in the domestic, Macedonian newspapers. In sum, I used more than 60 texts from 6 newspaper outlets.

Additionally to the written texts, I also included video materials in the analysis: three short documentaries from the NGO “Ploshtad Sloboda”, six video interviews with politicians, and speeches delivered by politicians from two official openings of facilities part of “Skopje 2014”.

Governing elite's discourses

Macedonia the most competitive business and manufacturing location in Europe

Just as I tried to embed the project "Skopje 2014" in the antiquisation policy, before the analysis of the legitimisation discourses portraying the Project as development venture, I would like to firstly introduce the type of development policy that the government of Gruevski promoted domestically, but as well internationally.

In the theoretical chapter I already mentioned that the type of developmental policies that this government enforced could be best described as *lumpendevlopment* or disguised underdevelopment (Frank, 1972). This fake development could be observed in the simple observation of some implemented projects such as the introducing of internet in the public busses, which are often older than any minimal ecological standards would require and too overcrowded to enable the potential user to use electronic devices. The government also invested heavily in the building of a few large shopping malls in Skopje and cut large green area to build funicular connection to the top of the mountain Vodno, overlooking Skopje and offering views close to the 66-metre Millennium Cross. The building of "spectacle architecture" made of gips façades as part of "Skopje 2014" could also be observed as "development", as well as the purchase of large number of 'London-looking' decked Chinese buses, which were supposed to return the "old spirit of Skopje".

In the last ten years the Macedonian government under PM Gruevski has become notably younger. The average age of the ministers in the cabinet has dropped to around 30-35 years. The intention of the government leadership was to hint to the public that differently from the previous governments this one is a reform oriented government willing to 'create chance for the young'. The discourse of the ministers has also changed dramatically. For instance, when referring to state policies, the executives often speak of "projects", wording typical of private firms. The governing leadership also gives high value to ratings and often uses them in the political speeches and in the argumentation. From the beginning of the first mandate the new executives in the government built an image of proactive entrepreneurs, something especially evident in the Prime Minister's discourses. Finally, the government used untraditional methods of attracting international investors, e.g. through road-shows. Of special interest is the 'doing business' with Asian billionaires, which traditionally have never been economic partners to Macedonia.

Through the analysis of few discursive excerpts from the written media, we can better understand the developmental 'philosophy' of the Macedonian governing elite. The following text is a part of an interview from the daily newspaper "Veceer", where Gruevski felt summoned to defend his positions regarding the constant critique from the opposition that he is too stubborn on the name issue with Greece and therefore turned more towards the ancient past than towards the future of the country:

"This is pure manipulation. A man who is so committed to reform and who made so many reforms, changes and modernization in these four years in no way can be turned more to the past than to the future. Ask the IMF and the World Bank what kind of policies Macedonia conducts in the economy, so you'll see who is facing where. After all, the statements of the leaders of these institutions and their reports are telling everything. See the reports of the EU and will see how in all 35 chapters in 2009 and in 2010, Macedonia has made progress. See what have we all made with the information society, computer and internet in front of each student, internet penetration of 16 percent for four years has

reached 52 percent, we opened two new universities, over 25 new faculties, we have introduced compulsory English language from the first grade (of primary school) to the end of secondary school and another world language from 6th grade, introduced informatics in the schools, each year students began to receive free textbooks, we have permanent campaign to encourage young people to study more, thousand textbooks from the most prestigious universities have been translated, laboratories have been procured in all areas worth about 60 million, we offer a number of scholarships for study at prestigious universities, even introducing wireless Internet through villages in Macedonia, so far 600 villages got wireless internet, we are constantly on top meetings in Brussels and in the capitals of Europe for talks with aim Macedonia to move forward, investing in energy, connecting the country with power lines with other countries, reduce taxes and now we have a project for the supply of 500 most modern electronic boards in school.... This is not done by government and Prime Minister who look into the past, but towards the future” (Vecer, January, 2011).

Szondi (2007) argues that ‘Having a country brand is necessary but not enough; there must be infrastructure, a skilled workforce, favourable tax policies and returns on investment’. He regarded branding as only one of the necessary precondition for attracting foreign capital. In the same line, in interview for a Bosnian TV station PM Gruevski, while defending “Skopje 2014”, argues that his government is not only concentrated on international advertisement of the country but also on internal reforms that form the grounds for advertisement. He, hence, claims that after reforming some of its laws Macedonia now offers the lowest costs for making business, including the lowest taxes in Europe. Reforms include the lowering of personal income tax, making it the lowest in Europe and the decreasing of pension and health care tax. He also mentions that tax on profit is 10% for companies that distribute their profit in dividends, while all other companies pay no taxes, independently of the duration of their “doing business” in Macedonia or the amount of profit they accomplish. As closely related to these reforms, he argues that his government has made good investment in the working force, by investing 6% of GDP in education, which, he claims, helps to build a competitive working force; then by the introduction of English language from the first grade, and other reforms in the education system. Another reform allows the opening of so called free economic zones where foreign entrepreneurs in first 10 years pay no taxes, including personal income tax, value added tax, and extremely low prices for the parcels, where they build the factories. He reveals that the government plans to build 14 such zones, while three are already functioning. Shortening of the bureaucratic procedures for opening business in Macedonia by changing “thousand” laws allows registering a company “within four hours or less”. These reforms, he claims, are the cause why Macedonia is according to the World Bank on the 25th place in the world in terms of good climate for ‘doing business’. He finally claims that few of the great economic players opened already second factory after they were sure that everything works as promised. Having these bases for advertisement, he is proud to share that in 30 countries around the globe, Macedonia has offices with promoters who constantly contact local investors. Also, one “uniqueness” of his government is the continuous organisation of road-shows.⁶⁶

The analysis of Prime Minister’s discourses shows that his government embraced *laissez-faire* reforms as developmental strategy of the country. Far from the regulations of Europe, but still geographically close to EU, Macedonia was promoted as the ‘door to Europe’ in the Asian road-shows.

⁶⁶ “Interview 20 - Nikola Gruevski, Sanela Prašović Gadžo”, published on 18 Dec 2013, last viewed 17.02.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNZs1EZRWhQ>

„Skopje 2014“ as visually dominant part of the developmental policy of the government was persistently in the focus of the media. In the following text I will try to demonstrate the big difference in reporting on the project in the pro-government media, *Vecer* and *Republika*, as opposed to the critical media, *Utrinski Vesnik* and *Sloboden Pecat*. The first pair of news outlets has embedded “Skopje 2014” in the government’s discourse of development, by stressing the branding and promotional aspects of the project. Special accent was put on the notion of “building as development”, the fact that each facility construction is *per se* development. While the government officials were underlining the multidimensionality of the project (offering jobs for many people, keeping the construction companies busy in time of world economic crisis, etc.) and the modern capitalist thinking implemented during the realisation of the project, the news media was constructing a narrative of the generally positive acceptance of the project in the “world” and the country’s gains from tourism. Despite offering this version of the Project, *Vecer* and *Republika* have escaped any comments on “Skopje 2014”, except when defending the government’s officials charged by the opposition for corruption or vilifying the opposition’s politicians for alleged incompetence. The critical media, on the other hand, has opened a number of topics completely silenced in the pro-government media, such as allegations of money laundering with non-transparent annex agreements, late accountability report on the project, preference of “development” over democracy, interference of the state in the market mechanisms, publishing, etc.

I will now proceed with the presentation of the discourses of the top government representatives and the media supportive of the project the portraying “Skopje 2014” as nation-branding project while offering my interpretations of the speaker’s intentions. In the following, closely related chapter, I will represent the oppositional voices in a written “debate” with the pro-government press.

Multidimensionality of the project

The basic feature of the discursive legitimisation strategies of the government officials regarding the project “Skopje 2014” was the multidimensionality of the project or the fact that there is no only one principal objective behind the project’s idea and realisation. As argued earlier, this strategy certainly increases the opportunity for *calculated ambivalence*. In each commemorative occasion, TV debate or interview the PM Gruevski and the Minister of Culture Kanceska-Milevska have unavoidably mentioned that the project has created new jobs, supported the domestic construction industry and the tourist branch, enabled the state to save on renting room for the public institutions etc, and all of that in time of the world economic crisis. More importantly, these politicians have always underscored that the investments in “Skopje 2014” have been only minimal in comparison to the total investment in the other fields of living, stressing here especially the investments in such areas as hospitals, schools and industry. This strategy was later incorporated in the media supportive of the project, where journalists, professors and other public figures have adopted the same argumentation line.

Expressing public gratitude to the artists participating in the project during the official opening of the Arch Macedonia in January, 2012, Gruevski said:

“You have created new postcards from Macedonia, new calendars, new pictures, new photos, new first impressions, landmarks of our metropolis, new souvenirs that will be bought by millions of tourists in the future, new meeting places for the lovers.

Yes. I support and will support this project, as I do that in thousands other cases, when I believe in something, when I have, and we have, ideas and vision as how something to be better, more useful and more effective for the citizens and the state. Just as I stand behind and support thousands other projects of the government, whether it is computers for children in the schools, or subsidies to farmers, whether in the construction of sport halls, the construction of industrial and tax-free zones, mines, power plants, hospitals, changes (of laws) used to attract new investors, new factories, or other reforms and actions. Of course, I'm not alone and without my co-workers probably part of all those projects would have remained just a good idea, as this project „Skopje 2014“, and therefore today I want to publicly thank them.

Finally, dear present, let me tell you: I will be very happy if any future government will compete with the created works in all areas, and in this, I would say, wider field, or combination of fields, such as culture, art, architecture, construction, tourism and commemoration of our historical figures and events. All of these are part of this project“.⁶⁷

He has underlined the same standing points at the opening of the new Ministry of Foreign Affairs in October, 2012 as well:

“Finally, with the project, we once again proved that we give generous support of the construction sector in our country. On this facility, as indeed on all other facilities that are building or are yet to be built, operated numerous companies and many workers who directly or indirectly are connected to the construction industry.

And precisely because of that, in the times of the global economic crisis, when in some other countries workers have been dismissed, here, in Macedonia, more work in the construction industry has been required.

And every worker more means more income for every family ... and therefore the construction industry here is one of the pillars of our economy. It clearly confirms the correctness of our policy and it further motivates us to continue in the same direction.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are building and we will continue to build. With our entire energy, with all our desire, with dedicated work throughout Macedonia new pillars are erected, pillars of new facilities, of new museums, of new theatres, new schools, new stadiums and sports halls, new hospitals, new dams, new social housing, and many others buildings. Pillars of our statehood, pillars that will remain a witness of a period of construction of Macedonia, pillars for a better life for all citizens of the Macedonia, and pillars of all future generations. We are building for the future and so we will continue“.⁶⁸

In the same context, the interview on the national TV service MRTV with the journalist and host Robert Popovski from July, 2012 is also informative. Popovski provokes the Prime Minister to answer why he and his government are not prioritising the investments as the common citizen would expect (in energy, infrastructure, etc.), mentioning that in “Skopje 2014” there were “a bunch of

⁶⁷ Promotion of Arch Macedonia on 06.01.2012, published on 10.01.2012, last viewed 17.02.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUQDoCKD8VU>

⁶⁸ Speech of Prime Minister Gruevski on the official opening of the new facility of the Ministry of foreign Affairs from the TV *Orbis*, published on 24.10.2012, last viewed on 17.02.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfysiMo-2VI>

monuments, which were expensive”, underlining that “you (the government) came out with the total cost of 80 million and the opposition with the estimate of 350 millions, and that the number will rise”. Gruevski answers:

“Skopje 2014 has many dimensions. Some, you have mentioned, have influence in the construction industry. Maybe it was not the main (dimension), the main was (the investment) of 120 millions in the regional,...and local roads, and in the regional as well,...but “Skopje 2014” also had its own share in it (the construction industry). So, when you support the construction industry you support 26 other sectors of the same industry. (...)

Secondly, (costs) for paying rent in the future are decreasing. Thirdly, tourism; tourism grows. Only within the first quartile, which is not important seasonally for us, we have 24% higher rate of foreign tourist visits in this year compared to the previous. The previous year we have ended up with 20% more foreign tourist visiting compared to the year before that. The current year I am confident we will end up with more than 30-40%. Skopje becomes a tourist centre...

The journalist interrupts the Prime Minister with the question: “The amount 350 million (Euros), is it correct?”

After laughing shortly, Gruevski answers...“what I say does not suit you, so now (you ask about) the amount. (Purposefully ignoring the question, he continues his previous thought): “Skopje becomes, and Macedonia becomes, a attractive touristic centre, many more (tourists) are coming, spend money in the hotels, so this is another dimension. Finally, it has cultural dimension.”⁶⁹

In sum, “Skopje 2014” has been celebrated as a project with many faces, contributing to many economic fields. As it will later be demonstrated, the gains in tourism have been especially underlined. What is typical for these discourses is their *insistent repetition*, one of the features of rhetorical principles of oppositional right-wing populism (Reisigl, 2008). The Prime Minister was repeating the same arguments in same order, sometimes with astonishingly similar wording. Later the same argumentation schemes were adopted by the Minister of Culture and other defenders of the project. In this vein, in the legitimisation discourses of the subordinated politicians also *hierarchical and leader-oriented* attitude could be observed. For instance, the Minister of Culture in few instances has praised the Prime Minister for his “patriotism, care and love for the country”, while the Centre Municipality’s Mayor Todorovic, who managed the municipality during the realisation of the larger part of the project, before being replaced by the candidate of the opposition, stressed that:

“The project “Skopje 2014” is a mega-project, which could hardly be realized by any government in any country. The opposition attacks it without arguments just to justify their incompetence when it was on power.” (*Republika*, March, 2013).

⁶⁹ Nikola Gruevski in “X/O” with Robert Popovski on 25.06.2012, part 4, published on 26.06.2012, last viewed 17.02.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WmtxCPOxKgU>

Modern capitalist thinking and state-of-the-art technology

Interesting feature of the project's representation by its developers and supporters is the argumentation that "Skopje 2014" is a reflection of modern capitalist way of thinking and acting. For instance, the following excerpt from *Republika* informs on the "innovative" way of acquainting with "Skopje 2014":

"The tourists will stroll around "Skopje 2014" with electric cars

Yesterday on the session of the City Council decision was taken, the city to buy ten electric vehicles with which the citizens and the tourists will stroll around downtown Skopje.

This idea is part of the project "Skopje 2014" and according to the (Council of the) City of Skopje, the new electric vehicles will allow the citizens of Skopje and the tourists to observe the new buildings and monuments in the city centre" (*Republika*, July, 2013).

This paragraph alludes to type of modernisation thinking sensitive to energetic efficiency and ecological awareness, a advanced type of capitalistic thinking practiced mainly in Europe and partially in the USA, but less so in China, for instance. It is worth mentioning that this kind of decisions were taken only after the persistent critique by the NGOs, such as the "Ploshtad Sloboda", who was attacking the extensive usage of electricity for the night illuminations of the facades and monuments of the Project especially fiercely.

Gruevski has also underlined the ecological awareness of the government during the opening of the new building of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in June, 2012:

"It is a one of the largest buildings build in Skopje in the recent past (...) in the facility are installed the state-of-the-art systems for heating, cooling, ventilation...with which it falls into the category of energy efficient buildings".

The Minister of Culture, Kanceska-Milevska in almost each interview or public appearance related to the opening of the new Archaeological museum was pointing to the highly-developed technologies used to protect the 'heritage of the state' or to bring the visitor in the era when Macedonian culture was produced:

"...the state-of-art technologies to find oneself in the ambient of prehistory, the Neolithic, the middle Ages, the Roman period, etc."⁷⁰

In the same interview with one of the greatest supporters and promoters of the antiquisation policy, the showman and the host Janko Ilkovski, was continuously drawing comparisons between the Archaeological Museum and the British Museum in London.⁷¹

These texts highlight the intention of the political entrepreneurs, through the press, to convince the Macedonian public that the project was given the due time for its development and that innovative solutions were implemented, solutions adapted to the needs of the "pickiest" international visitors.

⁷⁰ Archaeological Museum of Macedonia Opens Tonight", news from the TV station *Chanel 5*, published on 27 Oct 2014, last viewed 27.01.2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HC_b9vohw1A

⁷¹ Program "Eat burek – Archaeological Museum" with Janko Ilkovski, episode "interview with the Minister of Culture, Kanceska-Milevska", published on 4 Nov 2014, last viewed 28.01.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MoLhbWwAKOU>

This implementation of “state-of-the-art technologies”, however, could also be interpreted as a way to amaze the domestic audience by “bringing development” in underdeveloped Macedonia.

Pro-government cultural elites’ discourses

The reaction of the world

One of the strongest arguments defending “Skopje 2014” used by the government and especially by the pro-government media was that the reaction of the world regarding the project has been generally positive. *Vecer* and *Republika* have intensively reported on awards won on international competitions for tourism-related videos, portals advertising Skopje as a touristic magnet, western journals with high reputation reporting on the revamp, and even on alleged copying of the “Skopje 2014” branding idea by neighbouring countries. The outlets were also often using numbers (surveys and statistics) to prove their arguments. The recognition by the West, the neighbours and the international tourist of “Skopje 2014” has thus served as the core legitimisation argument of the project. The city-branding and nation-branding rationale comes as a foreground of the project.

We can consider a few excerpts from *Vecer* and *Republika* informing on the reportedly positive impact of “Skopje 2014” on the promotion of the city and the country in general.

Attraction of foreign tourists

As shown earlier in this chapter, at the official opening of the Arch Macedonia in January, 2011 Gruevski, when expressing public gratitude to the artists of the project (the one who have created the new postcards and souvenirs of the capital), among other things, referred to “Skopje 2014” as a project for attracting tourists. The same argumentation was adopted by the media outlets supportive of the project:

“Skopje 2014 - a magnet for foreign tourists

Even 17 percent more foreign tourists have visited the capital in June, compared to the same month last year

THE NEW IMAGE OF THE CITY HAS BROUGHT US GUESTS

The last two years, Skopje slowly but surely is becoming an increasingly interesting tourist destination on the European map. It is enough to walk through the centre of Skopje, Macedonia Street or the Old Bazaar to notice that the visit of our capital is on the agenda of more and more tourists. On these

places there are sometimes more foreigners than citizens of Skopje. As expected, the city is more crowded by foreign, rather than domestic tourists, but certainly what brings tourists in Skopje are the investments that have been realised in recent years for city's beautification.

(...) the large number of "almond-eye" (far East, Asian) tourists tirelessly walk around and make photos of the new monuments and landmarks in the city: "Warrior on the Horse" with its fountain, Memorial House of Mother Teresa, Arch "Macedonia" (...) are only some of the monuments which the foreign tourists keep as a souvenir from Skopje in their photo-cameras.

Tourist guides say foreign tourists who have seen the new face of the metropolis have been mostly fascinated by the fountain "Victory" and "Warrior on a Horse". According to them, the guests were pleasantly surprised by the arrangement of the downtown area, although they perceived it as too monumental.

For the development of tourism in the capital contributed large number of projects that Skopje has implemented in order to enrich the tourist offer of the city. One of these projects was the opening of several souvenir shops in the city centre, from where they say that the interest for their products is really great.

They say that the (souvenir) best-selling copy was and still is the "Warrior on the Horse", and there is interest in other modern materials, such as Arch "Macedonia" (Vecer, 2012).

The main idea of this article is to portray Skopje as a European metropolis with touristic attractions, where even far-East tourists - depicted in stereotypical way "walking with their cameras" - are impressed of the "city's beautification". Reference is made to all the additional efforts of the government to support tourism, such as souvenir shops, organised guide-tours, and in other articles, to the new hotels build to accommodate the rising number of tourist.

There are two additional and closely related points in this article. The first point is that "the city is more crowded by foreign, rather than domestic tourists". The second argument is that the rising amount of tourists in the city is due to the recent investments in capital city. The author has referred to this fact twice in the text. Additionally, it has been underlined that 17 percent more tourists have visited the capital compared to the previous year. These arguments intend to reassure the readers that the main audience of the project were indeed the foreigners and that this entrepreneurship idea of the government turned out to be lucrative.

Another article offers the same argumentation scheme:

"Greeks most frequent visitors to the "Skopje 2014"

Tourists from Greece are the most numerous guests in March that stayed in Macedonia. The most visited city was Skopje.

They are followed by the tourists from Serbia and Turkey, and among the destinations where the tourists were most numerous was Skopje.

According to the State Bureau of Statistics (...) the number of tourists visiting the country in March was 34.495 and compared to March last year increased by 7.5 percent. An increase of 18.4 percent was recorded among foreign tourists and the domestic decreased by 8.8 percent" (Republika, May, 2013).

The speaker assures the readers that even the Greeks like the project, followed by other regional tourists from Serbia and Turkey, while the domestic tourism has decreased as much as the international has risen.

A more recent article, from 2015, again uses the authority of the State Statistical Bureau to demonstrate the reportedly continuous effect of the government's investment in tourism:

"Croatian portal "24 Sata": Historically rich Skopje invites you to visit it

Croatian portal "24sata" in its section dedicated to travel, proposes to its readers Skopje as a tourist destination to visit.

The portal writes that in historically rich Skopje, with an easy stroll through the city centre one can cross the Stone Bridge and visit the Museum of the Macedonian Struggle and the Memorial Centre of Mother Teresa.

Some of the places that the Croatian portal proposes to visit are Skopje Fortress Kale, the Millennium Cross, the church "St. Spas "and many others.

State Bureau of Statistics earlier reported that in the period from January to May 2015, compared to the same period last year, the number of tourists increased by 8.3 percent" (*Republika*, 2015).

All the articles put the rising tourism in context of the "Skopje 2014" project. Critics, however, have argued that the reason that so many tourists are coming in Skopje, and generally in Macedonia, is the recent relative stability of the region and the low costs for flying and stay in Macedonia. Low-cost airlines, such as *Easyjet* or *Wizzair*, have recently opened destinations on the Balkans: Thessaloniki, Sofia, Pristine, and even Skopje and Ohrid in Macedonia. Skopje is only few hours bus ride from these cities in the neighbouring countries. We can easily argue that the so called Easyjet-generation tourists from Europe, who have experienced all the attractive destinations within the continent, are expected to be interested in new, comparably different and easily available, close and also many times cheap touristic destinations. It can be argued as well that not necessarily are the visitors coming because they are amazed by the beauty of the new monuments as much of the uniqueness of the project, many times mocked in the international media.

Winning international competitions

Another strategy of praising „Skopje 2014" as successful project was the winning of international attention on international events:

"IN COMPETITION WITH OVER 300 PROMOTIONAL FILMS FROM 56 COUNTRIES

"Skopje 2014" awarded on Zagreb Film Festival

The promotional film "Skopje 2014" won the third prize at the international tourism festival "Zagreb Film Festival" which for the second time took place from 3 to 5 July this year in the museum "Mimara" in Zagreb. The award has been won in the category of films lasting less than two minutes in

competition with over 300 promotional films from 56 countries worldwide” (*Vecer*, July, 2013)

It is significant that *Republika* reports on the same event on the same date with exactly the same article, with almost the same wording. This suggests very close ties with VMRO-DPMNE’s press office.

Another article of *Vecer* in November the same year informs:

“BEST VIDEO CLIP IN WORLDWIDE COMPETITION

“Skopje 2014” won gold in Azerbaijan

The project "Macedonia Timeless" continues to receive awards, and most recently it won the First Prize for promotional film for “Skopje 2014”. Golden Prize is won in the most prestigious category of videos promoting country, region or city on the International Film Festival of Tourism BITFF "in Azerbaijan. The clip was directed by Darko Mitrevski and beat 13 movies, including videos for Salzburg, Dubai, Stockholm...” (*Vecer*, November, 2013).

What is typical of the both articles is the fallacious argumentation scheme, which represents the “Skopje 2014” as winning project against similar projects from other countries. However, not “Skopje 2014” as idea and realisation has won on these competitions, but the video representing the project. It can be assumed that one video is not evaluated for what it represents but how it represents the content of the advertisement, in this case a touristic offer or a revamp of a city central area.

Original idea that neighbours copy

A special accent of “Skopje 2014” as a branding project was made through the promotion of the idea that similar projects emerging in the neighbouring countries have “followed the (good) example” of the Macedonian government and tried to capitalize on such venture. I would exemplify this with the following article from *Vecer* informing on the intention of the Serbian City of Nis⁷² to build in 2013 a monument of Emperor Constantine I the Great, marking 1700 years of the adoption of the Edict of Milan:

“SKOPJE’S IDEA OF BEAUTIFYING THE CITY ALSO BY THE NORTHERN NEIGHBOUR

“Nis 2013” following the example of “Skopje 2014”

Aiming at touristic promotion of the city, following the example of Skopje that was turned into modern European metropolis, the mayor of Nis, a few months ago announced the "Nis 2013" project. (...)

...the dimensions are impressive, and envisions the Monument to be six meters tall and the Gate (accompanying it) to be 20 meters”. The idea of Nis, undoubtedly resembles the idea that promotes "Skopje 2014". The only drastic difference is that in Nis this idea was accepted with great joy and attention by everyone.

⁷² City in Serbia, where the Roman Emperor Constantine I was born. He is famous for the issuing of the Edict of Milan, officially granting full tolerance to Christianity and all religions in the Empire.

Not even single Serbian media until now has reported a negative article to the "Nis 2013". Not a single journalist or politician said that there is no need of spending money on monuments. No one has pointed out that there is no need for such grandiose monuments and no one has used arguments that someone is trying to Romanize the city of Nis and the Serbian people.

It was so in our case. "Skopje 2014" even before being launched has been condemned by the opposition and the media close to it. Apparently, politicians of Nis and the Serbian people well know to use their cultural heritage and how to commercialize it, utilising it as a good tourist offer with Skopje idea." (*Vecer*, September, 2011).

This article is interesting for several reasons. It firstly, explicitly underscores in several instances that the Serbian project is actually copying the Skopje's idea, most notably by emphasising that the planned monument's "dimensions are impressive" and alluding the resemblance with the one of the "Warrior on the Horse". Secondly, it describes the Serbian project as "aiming at touristic promotion of the city" and a project able to "commercialize, utilise" the cultural heritage of the region as a good tourist offer. Finally, it stresses in a form of conclusion at the end of the article, that differently from Macedonia, no one in Serbia has opposed the project.

Thus "Skopje 2014" is represented as an intellectual property of the Macedonian government worth of copying, due to its ability to turn into money the cultural and historical heritage of the people, in the way Kaneva (2012, 10) described branding as a neo-liberal tool that creates value through the commodification of affective attachments, which through the enchantment of branding puts the individual and collective loyalties into market circulation as symbolic capital in order to generate economic capital. The pro-government media not once have underscored the originality of "Skopje 2014" as branding project. In July, 2013 *Republika* informed about the "Albanian "Skopje 2014" of the resigned Prime Minister Sali Berisha". I will return more to this article later in the dissertation, because the content of the respective article corresponds more to the content of one of the next chapters. What is more important in this context is how the article concludes that societal critique is not welcomed in such projects. The way the author portrays the opposition to the project ("the opposition and the media close to it"), excludes any imagery of possible genuine people's protest against "Skopje 2014" and directly accuses the major opposition party, the SDSM, of organised undermining of the government's efforts for successful city- and nation- (re)branding. This argument is in line with Anholt's (2003), who advocated tight, hierarchical control over the brand, 'making sure that every single message that comes out of a country...plays unerringly on the same basic themes'. As argued in the theoretical chapter, branding ignores historical foundations (Jansen, 92) of the state and silences the critique of the social relations and the views of the subaltern voices. This call for anti-deliberation, anti-intellectuality, and the reduction of the whole project as if it is only a tourist attraction and developmental project houses potentials to harm the democratic procedures and institutions of the country.

Comments of respectable international media outlets

As a last strategy employed by the written media to direct the public opinion in support of the government's project "Skopje 2014", I will analyse the reference of the Macedonian outlets to the international journals and media houses reporting on "Skopje 2014". The first article is from *Vecer*, allegedly quoting UK's respectable weekly *The Economist*:

"A Macedonian makeover

The capital city gets a facelift

The capital gets a facelift, writes *The Economist*, slapping the face of the so called architects: Skopje has a lot of amenities, but the architecture is not one of them.

Built after the earthquake which in 1963 has destroyed most of the city, Skopje was characterized by ugly concrete buildings and strange empty spaces. However, earlier this year the Conservative government of Nikola Gruevski, presented the video revealing the full ambition of "Skopje 2014", its plan for a radical change in the city centre.

It was hard the plan to be taken seriously. Fifteen grand buildings, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Constitutional Court, will be built from scratch. (*Vecer*, August, 2010).

What is controversial about this article from the start is that the translator of the English text from *Vecer* has omitted the word "controversial" from the title of the original article in "The Economist". The full title of the Economist's article is thus: "A Macedonian makeover. The capital city gets a controversial facelift" (*The Economist*, August, 2010)⁷³. The careful reading of the English text reveals rather neutral position of the author on the project "Skopje 2014". The omitting of the word "controversial" in the article of *Vecer*, however, serves the interpretation of the whole text that follows and the personal opinion expressed by the author writing for *Vecer*. Knowing the content of the text from *The Economist* the first sentence of the article in *Vecer*, namely "slapping the face of the so called architects" opposing the project, would not be logical. In the same context, the fact that "it was hard" to take the plan for building fifteen grand buildings "from scratch" seriously, does not have the same meaning when the word "controversial" is missing in the title. It can also have a critical tone, underlining a wrong choice under the priorities of a country with poor economy. As assumed, the intertextual analysis of the articles dedicated to "Skopje 2014" written in the electronic form of *The Economist* shows that this article was rather mocking the revamp than supporting it. Consider the following excerpt from an article from the same outlet seven months later:

"Macedonia's ethnic disharmony

How many building booms can one city take?

OBELIX, the fat Gaulish friend of cartoon character Asterix, has a catchphrase: "These Romans are crazy!" Walk around Skopje, the Macedonian capital, and you find yourself thinking the same about Macedonians. I don't mean this to be snide. But the pace of building in and around the city does bring

⁷³ <http://www.economist.com/node/16891819>

to mind the Mansions of the Gods⁷⁴. (...) With an election in the offing, Mr Gruevski will no doubt enjoy taking credit for the new structures mushrooming throughout the city centre. (...) But that is just one element. Museums, domes, a new foreign ministry, a bridge bedecked with statues of lions and, as in the Asterix book, a triumphal arch are all springing up, transforming the centre of town" (*The Economist*, March, 2011).

The very comparison with the comic book heroes and the Macedonians, or their government, shows rather negative position on the project. The genre of the article is parody. The use of the words "crazy" and "mushrooming" only consolidate this impression. Moreover, one of the three photos inserted in between the text depicts a stretching dog in the foreground of a building site, a typical stereotype for the Balkans, imagined as lazy and backward. Finally, *The Economist* brings "Skopje 2014" in a direct link with the approximating elections, where it is supposed that the PM Gruevski would like to take "credit for the new structures". There was no reference to this article in *Vecer* or *Republika*, as it could be assumed.

We can now analyse another article, where *Vecer* referred to the international TV channel *Euronews*:

"REPORT ON THE INTERNATIONAL TV CHANNEL EURONEWS
Others' eyes see "Skopje 2014" better

This year Macedonians celebrate 20 years of independence. Driving nation, a city undergoing transformation. Citizens witness a new-old Skopje, which contains elements and statues from the past and from modern times. With these words the reporter Sajmus Kearney from international television channel Euronews started the program with which the project "Skopje 2014" and the placing of monuments in the centre of the capital are presented. In the six-minute television reportage the journalist Kearney mentions the devastating earthquake of 1963 that struck Skopje, that created the need for the (reconstruction) of the former appearance of the city, which with a touch of modernity and along with the fusion of history, it is what it is today.

(...) Historian Kirovska explains that after many years of debates in the Town Hall, the selected old-new face of the city is an excellent architectural solution" (*Vecer*, May, 2011).

On the top of the reference to an authoritative international media, this article constructs a narrative of the allegedly respected democratic procedures in the decision-making processes for the project. The international media is portrayed as a neutral observer with "eyes (that) see "Skopje 2014" better". The author also claims that as a prime motive behind the Skopje's city centre revamp was noting more but the nostalgia for the spirit of old Skopje, a standing point I have already tried to deconstruct in the previous chapter. I would bring the article referring to *Euronews* near to another article (this one referring to the prestigious *Wall Street Journal*) in order to have a closer look at the argumentation schemes employed in the both articles related to the political struggles and democracy in Macedonia within this period:

"Until Europe stagnates, Skopje re-designs
"Skopje 2014" on the cover of "Wall Street Journal"

⁷⁴ A comic book from 1973 with recent cartoon adaptation, where the Romans try to absorb the disobedient Gaulish village into Roman culture by establishing a Roman patrician colony around it, called the 'Mansions of the Gods'.

Opposition claims that "Skopje 2014" will expel foreign investments and charges of unsettled property issues the most famous business journal evaluates as pretentious.

"While the economic crisis slows the development of many European capitals, Skopje, the capital of Macedonia gets new magnificent views along the river Vardar," begins the article on "Skopje 2014" in the renowned "Wall Street Journal".

(...) Despite the urban setting *Wall Street Journal* "believes that the project will affect the strengthening of the national pride of the country, but also predict that "Skopje 2014" will bring investment boom and boost tourism.

"When the grandiose endeavour was announced, many were sceptical that it will remain on paper. This, as many other projects for nation-building, is the brainchild of Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, who in June goes to early elections. Given that SDSM is in chaos and decay, Gruevski will probably win the election, "wrote" *Wall Street*. " (...)

"Currently in Skopje most worthy is investing in shopping centres and international hotels because there are not many, " concludes the general manager of "Forton International ", Javier Pinchard" (*Vecer*, May, 2011).

It is significant that the both articles are written in May, 2011, just one month before the Parliamentary elections in June the same year. The *Wall Street Journal* assesses that "the capital of Macedonia (will) get new magnificent views", that "Skopje 2014" will 'bring investment boom and boost tourism' and therefore recommends that 'currently in Skopje most worthy is investing in shopping centres and international hotels'. Simultaneously, it assesses that the major opposition party, SDSM is 'in chaos and decay', 'Gruevski will probably win the election', while the charges of unsettled property issues the journal 'evaluates as pretentious'. As it will be demonstrated later in the dissertation, not only the major opposition party has researched, analysed and criticised the transparency of the realisation of the Project, but also the non-government sector and the journalists have scrutinised these processes and found many grounds to believe that there were legal flaws in the financial part of "Skopje 2014". The NGO "Ploshtad Sloboda" has produced ten independent in-depth studies (and respective short documentary films) related to the project, some of which directly scrutinised the transparency processes, for instance in the adding of annex agreements to the original contracts for the facilities. The Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), a network of local non-governmental organisations promoting freedom of speech, human rights and democratic values has created a interactive database "Skopje 2014 under magnifying glass". The database, based on eight-month investigation which draws on written document or data sent to reporters by the institutions, gives many answers not only for the amount of money spent per item, but also how companies, authors and architects taking part in the project were chosen, how much they profited from their engagement, etc. Some of the NGOs' findings of grounded suspicion in legal flaws were confirmed by *Transparency International*. In this context the groundless judgment of the *Journal* about the charges of unsettled property issues related to "Skopje 2014", used by *Vecer* as an argument in the domestic debate is nothing but fallacious argumentation scheme based on authority. Moreover, the business-focused daily speculates about the country's political ambient in the nearest future in context of the investment climate, evidently neglecting all the controversies and social conflicts on the terrain. The portraying of "Skopje 2014" as a branding project in the domestic setting thus can be said, culminates with its acceptance as such in some international media and in turn the reference that the domestic media makes to these outlets.

In sum, the pro-government newspapers *Vecer* and *Republika* have depicted “Skopje 2014” mainly as a developmental project which turned the former town into European metropolis in order to capitalize on international tourists as main audience of the project. More precisely, Skopje’s revamp was labelled as city-branding project for touristic promotion of the city tending to commercialize, utilise the cultural heritage of the region. In general, the intertextual analysis supposed to lead the reader to the conclusion that the “world” has positively evaluated the project. It is remarkable that these newspapers almost never commented on any controversy surrounding the project, except in the later years of the construction and mainly after the announcement of the new Mayor of the Centre Municipality that the project will be audited. In line with the government’s entrepreneurial spirit and management style, these outlets have fulfilled two functions: served as a promotional channel in keeping Anholt’s (2003) “tight, hierarchical control over the brand” and as a “constitutive part of the organisation of power of the authoritarian populism” (Frckovski, 2014, 10), encouraging anti-deliberation, anti-intellectuality and simplification of the social reality. Coupled with the perspective that “Skopje 2014” is a multidimensional megaproject with modern capitalistic flavour and state-of-the-art technological solutions, the positive international acceptance of this venture creates a powerful brand, expected to be internalised and “lived” by the domestic public. This picture of “Skopje 2014” has been continuously attacked and de-constructed by oppositional voices, as it will be demonstrated in the following chapter.

Transparency in realisation of “Skopje 2014”

Patriotic broom affair

During this chapter I have shown how “Skopje 2014” perceived as developmental project has been embedded in the general developmental strategy of the government and how the media supportive of the governmental policies has accepted and developed these views in the articles reflecting on the Project. This early phase of the project can be described as a period of *constructivist* and *perpetuation* discourses by the actors standing behind the project. Just as de Cillia *et al.* (1999, 160) argue *perpetuation* strategies serve to preserve, support continuity and reproduce a version of the reality. As expected, during this period the oppositional voices have offered *deconstruction* of the same discourses, offering alternative views on the project. However, succeeding this early stage of the project, actions were taken and events have happened that led, or were supposed to lead to legal and political consequences for the political actors involved. This means that aside of offering two polarised opinions, one of which has portrayed “Skopje 2014” as developmental project and the other as a “money laundering machine”, the media has engaged in commenting of the events and the controversies related to “Skopje 2014” on daily bases. In other words, some events following the first wave of construction were important enough to become one of the central news for the both

media camps, highlighting the fact that written and spoken discourses were used as political tool for winning the public sympathies. This period can be marked as period of *legitimation* discourses. The plethora of *constructivist* and *perpetuation* discourses portraying “Skopje 2014” as developmental project found in the media outlets and analysed in this chapter has allowed clear cut differentiation of the materials on one predominantly demonstration the views of the political entrepreneurs or other predominantly displaying the views of the journalists or other media personalities. I have already underlined that the discourse analysis has shown close interweaving of the ideas offered by the political elite and the further development of the same ideas by the media in something like a chain of systematic production of reality with clear division of labour and set targets. As in the following section of the chapter will be demonstrated, however, the discourses of the governing politicians and the media commentators almost completely overlap, making the distinction between political and societal impractical. The articles offered by *Vecer* and *Republika* in fact do not offer individual opinion on the matter but are mostly compound of lengthily quotations of the speeches of the government officials from press conferences or similar events. The absence of articles on these event in general, and the articles’ content reflecting the opinion of the governing party in particular, demonstrate in fact the close relationship between the political and the media actors in a way that is threatening the democratic institutions of the state. Although formally these articles will be analysed as opinion expressed by the media, they are simultaneously the best source available for the analysis of the opinions of the politicians.

The first of these events was the so called “Patriotic broom” affaire. As early as November, 2010 the opposition party, SDSM has accused the ruling VMRO-DPMNE in money laundering through the project “Skopje 2014”. The Social Democrat MP Igor Ivanovski has shown to the public an internal document from the Ministry of Culture (MC), in which employees from the Ministry claimed that tender documents for four projects part of “Skopje 2014” have been destroyed, most important of which was the documentation for the Old Theatre, one of the most expensive facilities in the project. Ivanovski named the affair “Patriotic broom”. As *Vecer* informs the first reaction of the ruling party was the complete denial of the affair:

“Internal correspondence filed without a number and a stamp is the document which SDSM claims to be evidence of missing documentation for projects from “Skopje 2014”, claims the Ministry of Culture. They again denied the allegations of SDSM’s MP, Igor Ivanovski that tender documentation is missing 14 cases, presenting the archival documents publicly. (...)

- Unfortunate and irresponsible it is for an MP elected by the citizens, to use lies and manipulations for millions (of Euros), a man who has not left any deed behind, and has not realized any investment for the benefit of the citizens and the state. For all these fabrications and lies that harm the reputation of the Ministry of Culture he will be accountable in front of the Court, and there he will have to publicly present evidence and arguments, was said in the statement from the Ministry of Culture.

According to them this is a manipulation of SDSM to hide the crime scandal “Hope” of the leader Branko Crvenkovski, who during the presidency spent 340.000 Euros for party PR-strategy” (*Vecer*, November, 2010).

It is interesting that the Ministry, and later the party itself, have not only denied the allegations but also portrayed them as completely imagined affair whose intention is to cover the alleged crime in the latest elections PR-strategy of the SDSM leader Branko Crvenkovski:

“SDSM IN COUNTERATTACK

Skopje 2014 to cover Branko's Hope

According to VMRO-DPMNE, SDSM's accusations are a vain attempt to divert public attention from the real affair of the major scandal "Hope", in which is personally involved their leader Branko Crvenkovski.

- You want to escape from the fact that you gave state money for a party strategy. You want to be forgotten that each page of your party strategy, cost 3.400 Euros of taxpayers' money, replied back from VMRO-DPMNE. They reminded that just last week Ivanovski falsely defended his boss (Branko Crvenkovski) that related to the party's PR-strategy for the presidential elections he spent only 50.000 Euros. Crvenkovski himself later admitted the entire amount of 340.000 Euros for consultancy services” (Vecer, November, 2010).

From discourse analytical point from special interest is the argumentative scheme used in the two articles. Accent is not so much put on the innocence of the government officials as much on the (counter)attack of the political opponent by opening a new “affair”, the so called “Hope” affair related to the leader of the opposition party.

Despite the denial of any wrongdoings within the Ministry a month later in an interview for the *Radio Free Europe* (December, 2010)⁷⁵ when asked if she feels any responsibility for the missing tender documentation from “Skopje 2014” the Minister of Culture, Kanceska-Milevska firstly denies that documentation was missing but simultaneously admits that against the public servants responsible for the missing documentation a disciplinary procedure has been started:

The interviewer asks her: If I understand correctly, you will first wait for the report from the Interior Ministry before you penalize the responsible?

The Minister answers: What measures to take, I do not understand you.

The interviewer: For the public servants...

The Minister: We as a Ministry of Culture, according to Law for State Officers have undertaken measures, such as disciplinary procedure etc.

The interviewer: Are there any of those people punished?

The Minister: Yes! We have conducted disciplinary procedure.

It stayed unclear why the Ministry of Culture has initiated disciplinary procedure against some public officers if there were no grounds for legal process, such as missing documentation. Moreover, the public servants were found guilty. “Patriotic broom”, however, did not end with the disciplinary procedure against the public officers. The Minister of Culture has initiated a private lawsuit against Ivanovski and won the case three years after the opening of the affair. This has given the outlets ground to comment again on the affair:

⁷⁵ „Interview with Elizabeta Kanceska Milevska for the Radio Free Europe”, published 10 December 2010, last viewed 17.02.2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vd_o2_JdPDE

"IGOR IVANOVSKI, THE FIST OF SDSM, HAS LOST THE CASE AGAINST THE MINISTER OF CULTURE

Igor Ivanovski, after all, had no arguments to attack the Minister of Culture, Elizabeta Kanceska - Milevska about the project "Skopje 2014" and everything he said on several press conferences at the headquarters of his party was just lies and slander. Therefore, he was yesterday found guilty in private lawsuits that the Minister Kanceska - Milevska filed against him and is obliged to pay 300 thousand denars for impaired honour and reputation." (*Vecer*, February, 2014).

The discourse analysis of this excerpt once more clearly shows the alignment between the outlet and the political elite. The nonchalant wording such as 'after all' and 'therefore' are the keys for the understanding of this paragraph. 'after all' shows that it was long expected to be proven something that everybody should have assumed, namely that the Minister of Culture was innocent. 'therefore' is used as a "common sense" in this context, alluding that everybody exercising critique in the political battle will be punished. This phrasing wants to underline that oppositional politicians are not going to suffer only political consequences in the future but also pay materially for their argumentation. This message will be clearer after the analysis of the oppositional argumentation in the next chapter.

Accountability Report

Following the accusations related to the "Patriotic broom" affair, the government was continuously denying any misuse of public money for the needs of "Skopje 2014". In early 2012 the Vice President of SDSM, Goran Georgiev expressed new criticism to Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski. This coincided with the opening of "Arch Macedonia" and just few days after the report of the State Audit Office on the work of the Ministry of Culture, one of the main carriers of the project "Skopje 2014" was published. It is noteworthy that VMRO-DPMNE did not answer to these challenges fiercely. Only after the candidate of the opposition has won the local elections in the Centre Municipality VMRO-DPMNE reacted with delivering an Accountability Report (AR), action which was required for more than two years by the critics of the project. The two articles represented here demonstrate how the media outlets have interpreted this action, supporting the politicians' claims that the government has adhered to the principals of transparency during the whole process of building "Skopje 2014". The following article from *Republika* sums up the most important arguments from the AR:

"Skopje 2014 does not cost as much as the opposition claimed – the government with a detailed report

With a detailed accountability report on the project "Skopje 2014" the government stopped all the speculations associated with it. The project does not cost even closely as much as the opposition claimed, (namely) more than 500 million Euros.

The Minister of Culture emphasized that this project makes a large contribution to the country. The Project, added the Minister, is not an obstacle to realize numerous investments in other spheres, such as transport infrastructure, health, labour and social affairs and so on. It was informed that the project cost is minimal compared to other projects in agriculture, health, education, social security, Ministry of Interior, defence, environment, transport and infrastructure and other areas. (...)

The percentage annually for capital investment in the project "Skopje 2014" in 2008 was 0.5 of the total budget of the Republic of Macedonia, in 2009 0.76 percent, in 2010 1.1 percent, in 2011 2.2 percent, in 2012 1.6 percent and in 2013 1.5 percent. (...)

The Minister noted that since 2008 the Government of the Republic began to respect the principle of accountability and publicly disclose all contracts on the website of the Public Procurement Bureau. As she said, earlier there was no practice that all public procurement contracts are made public on the website of the Public Procurement Bureau, so they were an enigma to the citizens and were not available to the public.

- Although the website of the Bureau is available and each has access and can inspect them, we have witnessed numerous allegations, speculation to defocus the public. The total amount of the project "Skopje 2014" is 207 million - she said.

Vladimir Todorovic, said that from the overall amounts referred to as honorarium for the authors, only 10-20 percent are given to the artist, and that the rest of the money are spent for production costs (lease of space, engagement of assistants and associates, making mold in clay, making mold in plaster, casting etc.). He stressed that much of this money the authors return again to the state treasury as value added tax and income tax. (...)

Asked about allegations regarding the stylistic solutions, Culture Minister said she cannot talk about style because, as pointed out, in the past was not built at all. She emphasized that parallel with the monuments, in all other areas of society has been built." (*Republika*, April, 2013).

Several important points are stressed in this article. The main message, however is that with the mere revealing of the final number of the costs related to "Skopje 2014" the AR of the government has 'stopped all the speculations'. The Minister of Culture has underlined that this investment was 'not an obstacle to realize numerous investments in other spheres' with 'cost minimal compared to other projects'. The former Mayor of the Municipality even came out with numbers per year and stressed that the much speculated high honorarium paid to the authors were in fact very low and that part of this money has 'return again to the state treasury' in a form of tax. Pinpointing how the principals of transparency have been taken care of during the realisation of Project, the Minister claimed that 'since 2008 the Government of the Republic began to respect the principle of accountability and publicly disclosed all contracts on the website of the Public Procurement Bureau', something which had been an 'enigma to the citizens' before.

In the conclusion again the author returns to the aesthetical questions, putting into shadow all the financial and transparency questions.

Another article from *Vecer* from the same date (text 5 in the appendix) offers other arguments and discursive strategy. The article concentrates more on attacking the opponent with counterarguments then on the defence of the own arguments, a strategy often used by oppositional populist politicians. The article opens with the paraphrasing of the VMRO-DPMNE's spokesman that indirectly accuses the political opponent in corruption by asking 'where the money was spent when they were in power?' The speaker continues with *offences* of the opponent by using predication such as "liars" and "insolent and rude"; or by accusing the political opponent of 'spitting', 'snitching' and 'coordination with the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs'.

Just as the Minister of Culture during the AR, the author of the text, paraphrasing VMRO-DPMNE's spokesman, claims that the total cost of the Project is in fact 'much, much less than what SDSM claimed'. This is a curious fact, since the opposition as early as 2010 came out with better assessment of the costs than the planners even if the real expenses ended up on 207 millions:

"According to the authorities, this project will cost around 80 million Euros. Opposition came up with a calculation that for the "symbol of corruption, crime and merciless spending public money" 350 million Euros will be spent." (*Utrinski Vesnik*, December, 2010).

Further in the text, it has been once more underlined that the government has 'publicly and transparently presented all documents', alluding that few hours of representing facts and figures and answering on questions of the journalist amounts to AR which closes all questions. As it will be later presented, the real Revision of the Project took more than three months to be completed and misuse of total of 8 million Euros was found.

Finally, the last two paragraphs conclude with accusation of the opposition in disrespect for the Macedonian activists from the Ottoman period (all the national heroes mentioned in the parenthesis are from this period) and with assertion that SDSM has cooperated with the "foreign enemy", Greece, in attacking the Project. This argumentation, however, is inconsistent with the previous statements of VMRO-DPMNE as SDSM and Greece have indeed attacked only the antique heroes depicted on the square, on the ground that the link between the antique and the modern Macedonians is hard to be proven. Diverting the attention to the Macedonian activists from the Ottoman period and avoiding the reference to the antiquity marks a change in the argumentation schemes by VMRO-DPMNE, mostly due to the comprehension that the antiquisation policy went unaccepted by the general public.

Authorship of "Skopje 2014"

Closely related to the notion of accountability and transparency, the media has also played role in what can be nominated as *victimisation* of the artists who took part in the Project. As early as March, 2011 the authors of the monuments felt summoned to react on the accusations of the opposition about the financial and legal aspects of their work as well as for the quality of their art-works. In a joined respond they underlined that they feel like victims in a political game:

"A group of artists, authors of some of the monuments of the project "Skopje 2014", sharply reacting to the constant pressure and criticism, summed them up as unfounded discredit of the work of the artist and of art as a profession.

- Anti-campaign ran by some media, coupled with the support of certain political parties, reduces to amateur and completely unfounded criticism of the artistic value of the projects contained in "Skopje 2014", confirms in fact the ignorance of the matter and the procedure for making art stays in the written information to the media, signed by 18 authors of the draft monuments. According to them it is not correct that in the race to gain some political points, the parties lead the battle on the backs of the artists.

- We do not do politics, we create art. We do not work secretly. The end result of our work is visible and measurable. For each project of "Skopje 2014" there is a tender procedure, legal procedure and offered competitive solution. Each of us reported to the contest and for each project of "Skopje 2014" is preserved that procedure. Therefore it is incomprehensible and banal the debate about whether the projects from "Skopje 2014" are legal, stays in the written response.

The authors argue that the royalties are far smaller than the media speculates. According to them the amounts placed in the media are inaccurate and exaggerated or speculate with nude figures, and they do not tell the full cost of making a work of art. Deliberately and with some different purpose all costs are called royalties to turn the public the wrong perception of the whole project." (Vecer, March 2011).

The article highlights few important arguments. Firstly, in their statement to the public, they underline, just as VMRO-DPMNE does, that the media critical of the project is concerted by 'certain political parties'. Instead of defending their works of art with artistic arguments they engage in political speech claiming that the opponents are 'ignorant' in starting a 'banal' debate about the legality and quality of their work, as if opening a debate in democratic society is not welcomed or it is an insolent act. This is yet another example of practicing *slandering and counterattacking* discursive strategy. Secondly, they try to dismiss the argument that art can be political, saying 'We do not do politics, we create art. We do not work secretly. The end result of our work is visible and measurable.' In this statement they use *calculated ambivalence*, trying to reduce their work to something which is 'viable and measurable', evidently underlining the aesthetical aspects of their work. However, a work of art can be both 'beautiful' and 'illegal' in the same time. Moreover, as I will demonstrate later in the text, the authors indeed were working secretly, at least regarding their fees. Thirdly, in the last paragraph, they argue that 'Deliberately and with some different purpose all costs are called royalties to turn the public the wrong perception of the whole project.'" As the later analysis will show, the contracts signed with the authors in fact were not specifying the exact sum of money paid as royalties to the authors, proving that the critique was indeed grounded.

In sum, the AR and the portraying of the artists of the Project as innocent victims in a political game were one of the strongest arguments against the opposition's accusations for low transparency. The AR was assumed to put an end to all the "speculations" and "allegations". It was presented as a common, established, although new, not previously used method, of transparent reporting on the activities behind huge projects such as "Skopje 2014". The in-depth analysis of the articles from the pro-government media related to "Skopje 2014" as a developmental project revealed that while portraying the Project as a nation-branding endeavour, these outlets have not only avoided to comment on the transparency of the activities related to "Skopje 2014" but have done that only when necessary and in close cooperation with the governing elite. It can be assumed that any debate on accountability or transparency related to the key word "Skopje 2014" in the newspapers on regular basis would provoke negative associations with the project among the consumers. I interpret the involvement of the artists in the political contest with the opposition as an attempt to involve the "citizens' voice" into the argumentation scheme of the government officials. The *victimisation* strategy typical of oppositional populism here once again assumes that even when the power is held by the populist party the final say in the society is still, somehow secretly, in the hands of the former decadent elites.

Preference of development over democracy

Differently than in the period when the municipal office was held by a VMRO-DPMNE representative, after the opposition's candidate became a Mayor of the Centre Municipality in April 2013, *Vecer* and *Republika* have more actively engaged in defending the governing elite from allegations and during legal procedures taken against some institutions involved in the realisation of "Skopje 2014". The search for the key word "Zernovski" (the surname of the new Mayor) together or independently from the key word "Skopje 2014" yield many articles, especially related to the announced and realised Revision of the project. This key word was almost exceptionally in collocation with negative news and only related to the "Skopje 2014" project. From the announcement of the Revision to its realisation and its aftermath this act was labelled by the pro-government media as a destructive politics. This is to be seen from the following articles, the first from April, 2013 and the second from January, 2014, after the realisation of the Revision:

"HE BECAME A MAYOR AND HE BEGAN WITH DESTRUCTIVE POLITICS

- We regret that Andrej Zernovski from the first day (in office) began with moratoria and blockades. This is how he will also finish. You can tell the day from the morning. He begins his mandate with a desire to stop that on which already has been worked on. We would like to emphasize that for all the facilities that are under construction, there are legal contracts with precise deadlines for construction. For all obstacles and delays, legal entities will be able with lawsuits and penalties to protect themselves against the illegal acts of Zernovski. In that case, the damage will have to be paid by the budget of the municipality Centre and not by Andrej Zernovski personally. We will carefully follow all procedures and will oppose any decision that would impair the budget of Centre, i.e. the citizens of Centre," stayed in the statement of VMRO.

On the decision of the Mayor of the Municipality of Centre, Andrej Zernovski, to declare a moratorium on the buildings from "Skopje 2014", reacted also the Ministry of Culture. In the Ministry's statement, stays that the mayor of this municipality has no legal grounds to prescribe any moratorium on construction of objects that are under responsibility of the Ministry of Culture." (*Vecer*, April, 2013)

The second article is also from the daily *Vecer*, underlining the "destructive" politics in the title:

"Zernovski continues with the idea of ruining "Skopje 2014"

THE MAYOR OF CENTRE AGAIN WITH DESTRUCTIVE POLICY

Although the new buildings and bridges along the Vardar are refreshments and a magnet for tourists who visit Skopje, the mayor of Centre, Andrew Zernovski, continues his destructive policy towards the project "Skopje 2014". Yesterday on a press conference he declared that 12 of the 32 monuments on the "Eye" bridge are constructed without municipal approval, and that he will give an order to the Department of Urban Planning of the municipality to determine whether the sculptures are set according to the current Detailed Urban Plan." (*Vecer*, January, 2014).

The first article starts with the depicting of the moratorium for building and the announcement of the Revision as 'destructive' and 'illegal acts' which obstruct the realisation within the deadlines for construction. Moreover, practical recommendations to the private and public entities involved in the realisation of the project are given, reminding and encouraging the same to use 'lawsuits and penalties to protect themselves against' these acts. In this way, the Revision as legal and democratic tool for testing the possible misuse of public assets by political actors is not only unwelcomed but it is

almost criminalised. The rhetor also assures the reader that in case the Municipality will not find any misuse the damage for the companies involved in the Project 'will have to be paid by the budget of the municipality Centre and not by Andrei Zernovski personally'. This assumption equates serving in a public office with private entrepreneurship, where the head of the organisation is assumed to *personally* take the material responsibility for the consequences of the actions. This fallacious rationale impedes any politician of initiating any procedure on larger societal level and with the help of the institutions, since this same person alone should be able to pay, as if private venture, the whole procedure of auditing.

The second excerpt also underscores the "destructiveness" of the politics of Zernovski and puts it in a close relationship to the nation-branding rationale of immediate magnetism that the structures of "Skopje 2014" are assumed to have for the tourists. The argumentation scheme of these excerpts evidently favours the deadlines of the individual projects over the democratic procedures of the state. In line with Huntington's (1968) reasoning security of investment, stability and control are preferred over the right of the people to know and influence the ways the public money is spent. Here we can see in full force how Huntington's argumentation for dominant political party with stronger position to enforce contracts within longer-term planning horizon is favoured and legitimised in real-life example.

Despite general denigration of Zernovski's politics towards the Project, *Republika*, and especially *Vecer* have systematically exercised *vilification and offence of the political opponent* as discursive strategies during the same period, again, mostly through paraphrasing DPMNE's spokesman and other officials as to be seen in the next excerpts:

"Andrej Zernovski obviously lacking any idea what to work will spend the entire term in the office on the audit. Only thirty days are sufficient for a review of about 30 monuments, the only to be under responsibility of the municipality Centre and are part of "Skopje 2014". This means that until now the audit had to be completed.

We ask ourselves only what he was working an entire month so far Andrei Zernovski? -We hardly wait and once again appeal Andrei Zernovski to complete the audit and communicate the results. But he needs to understand that he should not spend a full term only announcing and making revisions. In fact, save the announcement that he will change a switch on one telephone pole, he did not do any other job.

The Commission, composed by Zernovski is not in the least independent. Sladjana Taseva and Dragan Malinowski are officials elected by Parliament at a time when the majority was held by SDSM and LDP. The two, in fact, are vocal supporters of the policy of the opposition and regularly participate in activities organized by the so-called NGOs of Soros, aiming to challenge the policies of the current government. (...)

What today Zernovski does is solely a way to pay Sladjana Taseva and Dragan Malinowski the fee for their current and future services for spitting on the government for alleged corruption, through the so-called NGOs they represent." (*Vecer*, May, 2013)

"Mayor Zernovski himself declared incompetent mayor. As for all the questions and problems of the citizens of Centre Municipality, the same way related to the so-called review of the project "Skopje 2014", Zernovski again escapes from responsibility and deserves the title incompetent mayor, said the councillor in the Municipality Centre from the ranks of VMRO-DPMNE, Daniela Rangelova. (...)

- Knowing that his audit is forcibly written document of the party committee and that there was no legal basis for any accusations Zernovski wants to escape the topic "Skopje 2014" and the responsibility for all the false accusations during the campaign speeches to shift to the Public Prosecution." (*Vecer*, August, 2013).

The last excerpt is from *Republika* informing on the delayed results from the announced Revision:

"10.000 Euros spent - still no revision of the "Skopje 2014"

(...) Neither Taseva neither Malinowski came out with the data in the public, although the citizens of Centre Municipality have paid them 10.000 Euros for that. The opposition in Centre (VMRO-DPMNE) protested that SDSM and Zernovski paid their party cadres and that they failed to find anything (corruptive) in "Skopje 2014".

(...) - Thus it has been proved that SDSM and Mayor Andrew Zernovski have lied to the public with a series of fabrications and unsubstantiated criticism. The Commission of Zernovski save for the high salaries paid to its members, cannot be remembered for anything effective - the statement said. Malinowski and Taseva announced the latest results on 12 August." (*Republika*, November, 2013).

It is noticeable that few ideas are common for all the texts. The rhetors employing the genre of irony are underscoring that the Revision is only an excuse for the new Mayor who is reportedly 'lacking any idea what to work' and who except for the announcement to 'change a switch on one telephone pole, [he] did not do any other job'. In line with this reasoning in the second discourse it is even twice underlined that Zernovski is 'incompetent mayor'.

Another claim is that Zernovski's audit is 'forcibly written document' and not individual and genuine idea of the Mayor. It has been proposed to better understand the alleged incompetence of the Mayor and his submission to the party through the choice of the members of the Commission in charge for the announced Revision. Quoting DPMNE's official, *Vecer* concludes that both of them are 'not in the least independent' but loyal to the values of the opposition and supporters of the 'foreign enemy' Soros. The article argues that the Revision is imagined in order to pay 'the fee for their current and future services for spitting on the government for alleged corruption'. The same idea is developed in the article of *Republika* stressing that the Revision even after three months has not been conducted 'although the citizens of Centre Municipality have paid them [the Commission] 10.000 Euros for that'. Reproducing another statement of DPMNE's official *Republika* concludes that except 'for the high salaries paid to its members, [the Commission] cannot be remembered for anything effective'.

It is significant to pinpoint that additional to the *personalisation of power* around charismatic leader for autocratic and populist regimes is also typical to exercise *personalisation of politics* in general and in discursive strategies in particular. One of the main critique of the Revision in these articles is not centred on the rightness of the Revision or the opposition in general, but on the personalities and biographies of the individuals involved in the process. Among other arguments related to the personality of the members of the Commission it is underlined their alleged profit from the Revision as private entities not as employed officials. It is assumed that the commissioners personally are paid '10.000 Euros for that' and that although being paid high salaries the commissioners have not revealed any result of their work. The *personalisation of politics* as argumentation scheme is to be witnessed in other contexts as well:

„THE SECOND REPORT FROM THE AUDIT OF THE PROJECT WITH EXPECTED RESULTS

VMRO-DPMNE insists Mayor of Centre, Andrew Zernovski, personally, without delay and without attempts to find excuses to file criminal charges against those deemed to have violated laws in the project "Skopje 2014".

-We demand the same from Zoran Zaev, Radmila Sekerinska and all that during the past five years were throwing around accusations and came out with amounts such as 500 million, 200 million, 2 billion, 100 million, and today came to 8 million. (...) ... they should stop hiding behind committees behind announcements, behind institutions, the Public Prosecution, paid portals, etc., and themselves without delay, based on the law to file criminal charges for their claims of laws not being obeyed.

- VMRO-DPMNE insists on going to the end. (...) VMRO-DPMNE will not allow Zernovski's lack of ideas and the staff deficit and internal problems of SDSM to be covered with false accusations about the project "Skopje 2014". The mountain was shaking and (only) a mouse was born. No fanfare, no battles against the government, no revolutions and uprisings by SDSM, (there is) today only a questionable and funny information from Centre Municipality about allegedly problematic conduct with about 8 million Euros, they say from the party." (*Vecer*, November, 2013).

The article continues with a paragraph serving as a conclusion:

"BEST VIDEO IN A WORLDWIDE COMPETITION "Skopje 2014" won gold in Azerbaijan

The project "Macedonia Timeless" continues to receive awards and most recently the First Prize for the promotional film for "Skopje 2014". Golden Prize is won in the most prestigious category of videos to promote the country, region or city of the International Film Festival of Tourism BITFF "in Azerbaijan" (*Ibid.*).

The most radical form of inviting the reader to comply with the logic of *personal* rather than collective responsibility for the political actions is to be seen in the statements such as: 'DPMNE insists on going to the end', 'insists [that] Mayor of Centre, Andrew Zernovski, personally (...) to file criminal charges against those deemed to have violated laws'. Other individual such as the leader of SDSM, Zaev and MP Sekerinska are also summoned to 'stop hiding behind committees, behind institutions, paid portals, etc., and themselves without delay' to do the same. Evidently individuals are more vulnerable than collectives against the government institutions and as it will be demonstrated in the next chapter, the appeal for individual responsibility and the punishment of it was one of the tools to silence the oppositional voices related to "Skopje 2014".

Finally, in the last excerpt a fallacious argumentation scheme has been used to distract the readers' attention from the real content of the published Revision's findings. *Vecer* claims that the opposition was falsely accusing the government 'with amounts such as 500 million, 200 million, 2 billion, 100 million, and today [to] came to 8 million. The mountain was shaking and [only] a mouse was born', stays in the article. However, the opposition has come out with the large number not related to the suspected misuse of public money, but as a final number of all the costs for the Project. The misuse of 8 million Euros, however, refers only to the monuments placed in the heart of the city, which were under the jurisdiction of the Municipality, the Ministry for Culture having the jurisdiction over most of the facilities of the Project. As an extra argument for the profitability of "Skopje 2014" the last article concludes with an extra paragraph in which the readers are reminded that the promotional

video for “Skopje 2014” had recently won first prize on a competition in Azerbaijan, again justifying any possible misuse of the public funds with material gain, favouring development over democracy.

Summary

At the end of the chapter it can be generalised that the governing political elite has embedded the project “Skopje 2014” in its general developmental policy and discursively labelled it as such. This idea was adopted by the pro-government media and was further developed to convince the Macedonian public that the project is nothing more than effective nation-branding strategy in neo-liberal conditions. Following the earlier period of constructing and perpetuating this version of the project and especially after the change of power in the Centre Municipality in April, 2013, DPMNE and the media outlets supportive of its policies, have predominantly concentrated on defending the project as legally and financially clear. Through the Accountability Report, but also through fierce critique of the announced Revision, the Macedonian citizens were supposed to believe that the government worked transparently with the taxpayers’ money. The discursive strategies and argumentation patterns chosen to prove their version of the reality, however, was very close to and typical of radical, oppositional populist parties or authoritarian regimes with which they manage. Among other techniques, *Vecer* and *Republika* have systematically used *offensive, counterattacking* rhetoric, often *slandering and insulting* the political opponents while *victimising* its ‘own people’. Another pattern frequently used in the articles was the one of *personalisation* of politics. This argumentative strategy reduces political contest to personal battle, or at least to battle between clans. This discursive practice has potency to threaten the democratic institutions of the state.

CHAPTER 8: "SKOPJE 2014"- A MONEY LAUNDERING PROJECT

The opposition's critique

Parallel to the promotion efforts of the pro-government media to portray the government of Gruevski as proactive, entrepreneurial and successful political elite the critical press from Macedonia, has engaged in continuous de-construction of the governments' developmental policies. These outlets were especially concentrated on the priorities of Gruevski's government, which have changed over time, from focusing on Euro-Atlantic integrations as economic development path towards independency from the European partnership in particular and the West in general:

"Gruevski at the moment, with everything he does, indicates that it is easier for him to do business with the East than with the West. Key infrastructure projects in Macedonia today are making the Chinese and Russian companies, and the businessmen from Greece, Serbia and India with whom he collaborates are already in jail on charges of corruption and money laundering.

For the Chinese 'Sinehidro' which was granted the construction of highways in Macedonia, the economic expert Maxwell Saungveme from Zimbabwe, in whose country the same company builds highways worth a billion dollars, said:" The Chinese are favourite investors of corrupt government officials because their investments come with very few conditions on such topics such as ethics, environmental protection, corruption, the rule of law." This company that signed contracts with Gruevski, according to *Deutsche Welle*, has been temporarily suspended from the World Bank because of corruption.

The Russian company "Strojotrans", which began the construction of the pipeline Klechovce -Negotino and investing 75.7 million is owned by oligarch Gennady Timchenko. He is on the list of persons sanctioned by the United States related to the crisis in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea to Russia.

The director of the Greek company "Aktor", Babolas, which won the tender for construction of highway in Macedonia from Demir Kapija to Smokvica, with bid higher for 40 million Euros compared to the best bidder, was recently arrested in Athens on charges of corruption and money laundering. Also in prison for corruption and fraud, is the owner of the foundry "Jeremic" from Serbia, through which Gruevski procured monuments for "Skopje 2014". Against the Greek billionaire, Kondominas, who Gruevski has sold the largest building plots on the square in Skopje, is also under investigation. Indian billionaire Subrata Roy was represented as the greatest investor in Macedonia in the field of agriculture and tourism (his son and his wife were granted Macedonian citizenship by Gruevski because of their "merit in the country's economy") is in prison for financial fraud of millions of citizens." (*Utrinski Vesnik*, April, 2015).

Another article from the same newspaper tries to debunk the myth of "successful policies" by focusing the attention to the final results of the international promotion of the country, thus approximating the critique closer to "Skopje 2014" as project of this type:

"It remains to see how much investment will bring this year's road-shows. From the last year [results] so far we cannot be satisfied. According to the National Bank of Macedonia, foreign direct investment last year amounted to a modest 105 million, which was the weakest result investment in recent years. Of these, almost half or 44.7 million entered in December." (*Utrinski Vesnik*, April, 2013).

Ultimately, within the field of economic policies of the state, as independent from the political sphere of de-linking from the West, critique has focused on the bad image that the country can earn

by “having friends” among the potentially corrupted Asian businessmen, harm which is expected to have long-term impact on the country’s perception internationally. This is an excerpt from *Balkan Insight*, where the history of the relationship between the Macedonian government and the Indian billionaire Subrata Roy was discussed:

“Later he revealed his plans to build a luxury recreational complex on the shores of Lake Ohrid, somewhat controversially in the middle of a UNESCO-protected heritage zone. (...)

Macedonians recently heard about Roy’s troubles back in India where a court has charged him with tax evasion and frozen all of his assets there.

According to reports, he has also been ordered to repay some 4.5 billion dollars that he owed depositors in one of his companies.

“Roy is rich but he is also a world-class manipulator. He owes his own country billions, but abroad he squanders that same money that he owes the Indian poor,” a former Macedonian ambassador to NATO, Nano Ruzin, said.

Ruzin told *Deutsche Welle* that the “Phenomenon called Subrata Roy” might prove damaging for the country’s image, and for Prime Minister Gruevski, in the end.” (*Balkan Insight*, October, 2013).

It can be seen that the construction of the developmental myth of Gruevski’s government was permanently de-constructed by the opposition. We can assume that “Skopje 2014” as the marrow of the developmental policy of the government would be also discursively constructed and de-constructed in the same way as the general developmental policy of Gruevski’s team.

In this chapter of the dissertation on top of the discourses related to the “Patriotic broom” affaire and the Accountability Report (AR) I will analyse in detail the oppositional discourses on the authorship of the monuments within the project and the tender procedures and annexes to primary contracts (frequently related to facilities and facades) as primary sources of discontent and critique often associated with money laundering procedures. As primary sources of discourses I have used the newspapers *Utrinski Vesnik* and *Sloboden Pecat*. In this context I will provide articles from the oppositional daily newspapers *Utrinski Vesnik* and *Sloboden Pecat* covering topics which were partially or completely avoided in the pro-governmental newspapers. This, as expected, offers another perspective of “what-in-fact” the project “Skopje 2014” is. Hence, articles with allegations for low transparency of the planning and realisation procedures of the project, for non-transparent procedures of awarding artists, unfair competition in the tender procedures or non-transparent upgrading of the primary contracts with annex agreements, are to be found only in these outlets. I have systematically analysed and compared the differences in discursive practices of these outlets with the pro-government *Vecer* and *Republika*. In addition to this I used the findings of in-depth studies, such as few short films produced in mid-2013 by the NGO “Ploshtad Sloboda” dedicated to different aspects of the Project or the BIRN’s eight-month investigation of the costs of “Skopje 2014” in mid-2015.

Money laundering allegations

Focusing on “Skopje 2014”, the political opposition led by SDSM, has accused the government of money laundering with the “Skopje 2014” project as early as 2010. “Patriotic broom” can be treated as an overture and an integral part of the longer process of investigation of the (il)legal aspects of “Skopje 2014” and the de-construction discourses related to the same. SDSM has also referred to the findings of the first state revision of the project “Skopje 2014” after which nothing was undertaken:

“Opposition SDSM sent a new criticism to Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski for the opening of “Arch Macedonia”, which came just days after the report of the State Audit Office on the work of the Ministry of Culture, the carrier of the project “Skopje 2014”:

-State Auditor appointed by Nikola Gruevski stated that there is almost no object, no tender or a contract of 'Skopje 2014' on which there are no remarks about illegal operations and extremely questionable spending of public money. There are too many allegations that the project "Skopje 2014" is a huge money laundry", said at the press conference yesterday in front of Arch Macedonia the Vice President of SDSM, Goran Georgiev, adding that auditors (thus) confirmed the affair "Patriotic Broom"- the disappearance of part of the tender documentation for the project "Skopje 2014".
-Just what evidence is required for the Public Prosecutor's Office, finally, to begin with the clearing of this affair, asked Georgiev, announcing that he will initiate public debate and propose conclusions on the findings of the auditors” (*Utrinski Vesnik*, January, 2012).

This article clearly shows that the opposition referred to the findings of an independent institution of the state regarding the non-transparent way of working with the public funds and was legitimately asking for legal investigation of the processes. This process was never initiated by the Public Prosecutor's Office. This abstinence of action was interpreted by the opposition as a signal of government’s control over the legal system. The first case with legal unfolding was in fact related to the “Patriotic broom” affaire. While the pro-government media was highlighting the victory of the Minister Kanceska-Milevska against the SDSM’s MP Igor Ivanovski in the affair, *Sloboden Pecat* offered another interpretation of the events:

“The list of defendants and convicted opposition MPs increasingly longer

"Patriotic Broom" swept 5.000 Euros to Igor Ivanovski

MP from SDSM Igor Ivanovski needs to 'pay damages of 5.000 Euros to Minister of Culture Elizabeta Milevska because, according to the Court, against her he has presented a number of qualifications which' have violated her reputation and her honour, in the affair known to the public as "patriotic broom". Despite Ivanovski, on the list of opposition MPs sued by officials in the government, which in recent times is becoming longer, are Jani Makraduli Vesna Bendevska, Biljana Kazandziska, Andrei Petrov, Pance Orcev, Tito Petkovski and Goran Misovski. Ministers of Culture and Interior Minister Gordana Jankulovska as well as the head of the Directorate of Intelligence, Sasho Mijalkov are among those who appear in the role of prosecutors, and according to forensic expertise, due to their fragile mental health the statements of the (opposition) MPs inflict upon them severe mental pain.

MP Jani Makraduli so far lost two cases and paid damages of 4.000 Euros. In one case he was sued by Transport Minister Mile Janakieski for defamation and in the other by Sasho Mijalkov. He was also sued by Rafajlovska, former minister of economy, and by the MP and businessman Ortse Kamcev, but those cases did not finish. Announcement for a lawsuit Makraduli had received also from the chief editor of *Sitel*, Dragan Pavlovic - Latas, but it has not been realized yet.

Current is the case in which Minister Gordana Jankuloska sues for defamation SDSM spokesman, Peter Shilegov. (...) Jankuloska seeks damage reparation of 10.000 Euros. The first hearing took place ten days ago, but the minister did not appear. Lawsuits against Shilegov are also announced by Minister of Culture, Elizabeta Kanceska-Milevska, the Deputy Minister of Environment, Sonja Lepitkova, the Health Minister, Nikola Todorov as well as the MP, Silvana Boneva.

Last month, the Appellate Court upheld the decision of the Basic Court Skopje 2, NSDP leader Tito Petkovski because of impaired honour and reputation of Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and causing severe mental pain, to pay 10.000 Euros." (*Sloboden Pecat*, February, 2014).

The mere number of opposition MPs sued by officials in the government speaks of intense conflict within the Parliament and generally in the society. *Sloboden Pecat* informs not only that many opposition MPs are charged in the same time, but also that one and the same politicians are persistently legally persecuted by many ruling party MPs simultaneously. Evidently, the opposition MPs were always losing the cases and paid high fines. The transfer of political battle from the political into the private stage already signals deep political crisis embedded in distrust in the democratic institutions of system if not misuse of the executive power.

The same article continues with a subtitle:

"Ivanovski: Despite the Court and the Minister, all know about the frauds in "Skopje 2014"

Does anyone in Macedonia has doubts that "Skopje 2014" is the largest orange money laundry, reacted yesterday MP Igor Ivanovski of the court decision, and noted that all audit reports conclude massive irregularities and questionable procedures in the spending of public money.

- In November 2010 to the public I have shown an internal document from the Ministry of Culture (MC), in which they themselves claim that tender documents for 4 projects have been destroyed, among them the documentation for the Old Theatre. What I stated was then confirmed by Interior Ministry (IM), which filed the criminal charges against three employees of the MC, and confirmed by the Public Prosecution in this document which states, and I quote, "of the inspection conducted and after the committee review, the IM found that offers have been destroyed with the complete supporting documentation of the bidders". And only I am punished because I discovered and reported the illegal operation. So it is a notorious fact that the tender documentation was missing and destroyed, we all know that but the Court and the insulted Minister - said Ivanovski" (*Sloboden Pecat*, February, 2014).

Jani Makraduli also concludes: "Clearly, all these processes are politically installed and in them the judicial power has been misused, because we are convicted before the process can begin. They do this to silence us, but they will certainly not succeed" (*Ibid.*).

Differently than *Vecer*, *Sloboden Pecat* embeds the epilogue of the "Patriotic broom" in the smear campaign against the opposition MPs. Ivanovski claimed that although Interior Ministry as well as the Public Prosecution have confirmed his findings, he was the one to suffer the penalty for publishing them. Finally, Makraduli portrayed the chain of events as classical misuse of the judicial power in order to silence the opposition to the Project. This article demonstrates something typical for the outlet *Sloboden Pecat*, and namely the extensive quotation of SDSM officials. This newspaper was opened in 2013 mainly as an alternative source of information in circumstances of already strongly controlled media. As such, it is evident that the outlet is used as political tool of the opposition. Differently than *Utrinski Vesnik* it exercises fierce critique of the government's policies and more

courageously then other critical press involves in offering more information on and interpretation of social events. This will be even more apparent in the following excerpts of the chapter.

After the audit in 2013 the opposition became even louder on the money laundering issue. However, another aspect of the project's biography, which was not scrutinised in detail until the BIRN's investigation of the costs of "Skopje 2014" in mid-2015, also indicates that the project could be used for non-transparent malpractice of public funds. Namely, the project envisioning the construction of some forty monuments, sculptures, facades and new buildings promoted in the 2010 video presentation, supposed to be finalised in 2014. Oliver Derkovski, a DPMNE MP in the Macedonian Parliament and moderator of a public debate claimed that 'the project started in 2007 and it will end in 2014. There will be no building until 2018, as someone has presented yesterday, Derkovski said, adding that upon completion of the Project, major effects are expected, such as spurring of the tourist sector in Skopje" (*Vecer*, 2010).

Moreover, it was not expected that new structures which thematically and spatially belong to "Skopje 2014" will be added to the list for construction. However, the project continued after 2014 and according to *Balkan Insight* (July, 2015) it became 'seven times more expensive and three times bigger' than planned. The fact that the government was continuing building even against the background of public opposition in the Municipality Centre and the comprehension that "Skopje 2014" as a whole was not received well by the Macedonian public (as it became evident from the avoidance of any referral to the Project in the public speeches of the Prime Minister) constituted a fertile ground for the conviction among the opponents of the project that "Skopje 2014" was profitable venture at least for the political elite developing it.

It is also noteworthy that even within the period 2010-2014 major structures were build completely not envisioned in the presentation video of the project from early 2010. Among other, the financially weighty reconstruction of the "Karposh's Rebellion" Square (renamed into Philip II Square) now housing the project's second largest monument of Philip II with fountains, the large "Mothers of Macedonia" fountain with sculptures and many additional monuments was completely not planned as it was not depicted in the video. Another square, the "Holy Mother of God" Square, spaciouly and stylistically close to Macedonia square and Philip II Square, displaying the majority of "Skopje 2014" structures, has been reconstructed during this four years period and ornamented with few fountains and columns resembling the Trajan's Column in Rome. This square was also not predicted in the 2010 video presentation and it can be assumed that its reconstruction has composed a significant part of the total financial weight of the project. According to BIRN's calculations the reconstruction of these two additional squares and of the also unpredicted "Skender Bey" Square (still in construction and build only for "appeasing" the Albanians) and "VMRO" Square, housing the new Baroque headquarters of the Party, cost together almost 32 million Euros. The Prime Minister and his party have announced that only 80 million Euros will be spend for the official part of "Skopje 2014", however only for unplanned squares reconstruction more than a third of the announced sum has been spent. This suggests that even on the background of public discontent the political entrepreneurs have continued with a project which brings them ideological gains, financial gains or both. This is an excerpt from the critical media, reporting on the special and temporal continuation of the Project out of the predicted frames:

“On sight new Baroque offensive

Facade-makers are sought after for 36 buildings in the Centre, for money not to fret!

Skopje requires architects who will design the layout of the 36 buildings that are located in the downtown area. Three streets and two squares in it will be covered by this wave of reconstruction, which are organic continuation of the project "Skopje 2014". (...)

500 Euros per square meter Baroque

It is not the first time for the Baroque to consume large amounts, usually separated from the state treasury. For the facility in which the restaurant "Pelister" is situated almost half a million Euros had been spent, or more precisely 487.000 Euros. This is approximately around 500 Euros *per square meter* in baroque.

During the 2014 the City already projected that from the budget 2.32 million Euros will be allocated for the reconstruction of facades, but the money comes directly from the top. Skopje's Mayor, Trajanovski, previously clearly stated that the funds are not from the City, but were transferred from the State Budget, that is, they are received from the Government. Anyway, it sums up to the taxpayers' money, so ultimately the people are the one to pay the Baroque, which floods Centre. The question remains whether the planned amount of 2.32 million Euros will be enough to cover the expenses for the new facades of 36 buildings, if only for one facility the City has estimated that nearly 1 million is needed." (*Sloboden Pecat*, July, 2014).

The article stresses few crucial points which will be occasionally referred to in the later text of this section as well. Firstly, the author underlines that the new 'Baroque offensive' is an 'organic continuation of the project "Skopje 2014'. The article is written in a genre of irony, using sarcastic remarks such as: 'Facade-makers are sought after for 36 buildings in the Centre, for money not to fret!' This sentence clearly points that the political entrepreneurs have intention to continue with the Skopje's revamp beyond the planned reconstruction of the city centre and beyond the year 2014. Secondly, the article points out that taxpayer's money are used for this government's project. Finally, the author argues that the real amounts of money needed for similar ventures are much higher than the one reported in the media by the responsible politicians, thus directly alluding that through non-transparent procedures the real flow of finances from and in the Budget cannot be evaluated.

Accountability Report revisited

In few instances I have argued earlier that performative acts can carry message more powerful than the oral or written argumentation can convey. In line with this argument, I will start the following text by referral to such action, action which provides the context for the analysis of the newspaper article.

One of the main topics, which were not discussed in the pro-government newspapers during the realisation of the project "Skopje 2014", was the transparency of the financial and legal processes. As an overture to the government's Accountability Report (AR) was serving the local elections' victory of

the opposition's mayor candidate for the Municipality of Centre, where most of the "Skopje 2014" structures have been erected. Zernovski, the new Mayor, has announced his plan for moratorium and Revision of the project during the electoral campaign in case he wins the office. After his victory was denied in the first round and obstructed in two additional voting-rounds (a process I will discuss in length in the next chapter), Zernovski won the elections. Two major events have marked the period of re-voting and the period after the victory of the opposition's Mayor candidate: the first being the nightly installation of dozens of monuments on the territory of the Municipality after the loss in the second round; and the second - the Accountability Report prepared by the Minister of Culture, the former Mayor of the Municipality and the Director of the Public Procurement Bureau just a day after the official victory of Zernovski was proclaimed. Importantly, some of the ministries and the Cadastre worked during the weekend prior to the third round, according to the opposition, with the intention to conceal documents.⁷⁶ As the opposition and *Sloboden Pecat* will point out later, all the people involved in the Project were to be found later on the lists for MP candidates on the upcoming Parliamentary elections. The status of MP grants immunity from legal charges.

The nightly installation of monuments was interpreted by Zernovski as 'revenge towards the citizens' who voted against "Skopje 2014" in the Centre Municipality. However, it can also be explained as an urge to complete the unfinished of the project while it is possible. The three rounds of voting in the municipality testify that the ruling party wanted 'under any circumstances' to win the mayor's office in the municipality. The fact that the ministries and the Cadastre worked during the weekend prior to the third round as well as the fact that many politicians involved in "Skopje 2014" were placed on the list for MPs in the upcoming Parliamentary elections already became ground for suspicion in the legality of many operations related to the realisation of "Skopje 2014". It was in these circumstances of inability ensure incumbency that the ruling party answered with an immediate Accountability Report. The opposition was asking for this Report for more than two years and it was not getting it while the government was in fact able to prepare it in less than a day and only after Zernovski has threatened in his campaign that he will organise an audit of the Project.

Straight after the AR the oppositional voices have exercised new critique. The critique has been closely related to the 'final cost' of the Project (the ongoing costs for the facilities still unfinished on the day of the AR as well as the running costs for night illuminations and security of certain objects) and brought closer to more general economic issues of the country, such as the Budget deficit and the rising Government's debt in the same period. Finally the Project was related to the EU perspectives of the country.

The first critique was focused on the so called 'final number' of the "Skopje 2014" costs:

"The main thesis related to the amount, which needs to find a ground in the thinking among the citizens is that the opposition lies that 500 million Euros were paid. Reportedly that was not true, instead only 208 million were paid. Is there anyone to tell the Minister that her 208 millions are not in fact 208. "Skopje 2014" started intensively to be built in 2009, therefore let Kanceska-Milevska look how much Macedonia has indebted in this period and how much it will pay in the future. Just one example. At that period the Government broadcasted on the international financial market a bond of 150 million Euros to support the Budget, with interest of 9 percent annually. Only for interest of that debt nearly fifty million Euros have been paid, so that for three years the 208 million Euros have

⁷⁶ Program "In Centre", episode "Stalingrad for the government" with Vasko Eftov, published on 26 Apr 2013, last viewed 28.01.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HzyLhfTkQ1Q>

become 250. Because over the last year and early this year to pay off that bond and for Budget support the country again borrowed over 200 million Euros, to be returned after five and seven years with interest rate between 4 and 5 percent, the price of "Skopje 2014" grows. The borrowing on the domestic market is another story" (*Utrinski Vesnik*, 2013).

As argued in the chapter dedicated to the historical and political context in the country during the building of "Skopje 2014" the Government debt has risen sharply in 2012 when Macedonia took out or agreed to take out almost 700 million Euros in loans from foreign banks and financial institutions. In April, 2012 among other the country took a loan of 250 million Euros from Deutsche Bank to fill the Budget gap. Later, in September, 2014 the former Minister of Finance, Cevdet Hajredini, directly brought in relation "Skopje 2014" and the tailoring of the Budget:

"Minister Stavreski and PM Gruevski tailor the budget and they are its bosses. Moreover, they do not hear any opposition or experts. The opposition pointed out that it would be difficult to meet obligations to foreign creditors at the beginning of 2013 and sought to cut costs - says former Finance Minister Cevdet Hajredini.

Hajredini says he is confident that in the final account of the Budget there is a lot of "tuning" and that it cannot be seen for what really the public money is spent.

- Here I think most of the "Skopje 2014". In figures there is no hiding, sooner or later they will come to light. Already there is some doubt about the prices of some buildings and monuments. I expect some of the excess money to be allocated to various items through the budget, and then from there to be pumped out - considered Hajredini."(*Sloboden Pecat*, September, 2014).

Thus, the very low percentages of the state Budget spent on "Skopje 2014" reported during the AR have been juxtaposed to the rising indebtedness of the state, and namely the loan taken to fill the budget deficit, an amount higher than the reported 'final number' of 208 million Euros invested in the Project. Moreover, the opposition was unsatisfied not only with the rising indebtedness of the country due to the gaps in the Budget but also claimed that the Budget was used to serve as money laundering platform for the costs related to "Skopje 2014".

The next point of critique related to the 'final number' after the AR became the costs for ongoing facilities that were still not finished in the moment of the reporting as well as the building of "unprofitable" facilities which, according to the opposition and the non-governmental sector, require extra money even after they are finalised.

BIRN's eight-month investigation drawn on data procured through the Access to Public Information Act, the official web page of the Public Procurement Bureau, the "Skopje 2014" Audit and the Government's AR presented after the 2013 local elections, has translated into numbers the argument that the Project further brings money to the political elite:

"Fast forward to 2015 and the number of buildings and monuments has tripled. The price tag of Skopje's new look has meanwhile also shot up, far surpassing the initially announced figure of €80 million, to around €560 million, a BIRN investigation shows. (...)

Some, like the Philharmonic, the headquarters of the state power company ELEM, the Criminal Court, and the Administrative Palace "Lazar Pop Trajkov" and others, remain unfinished.

Some are at a stage where only the designs have been chosen, which fuels suspicions that the final price tag of the controversial project will in the end rise even higher than €560 million.

The costs of security and maintenance are constantly sucking up more funds from the state budget.”
(*Balkan Insight*, July, 2015).

This article clearly points out that even two years after the official closing of the Project some buildings envisioned by the video promotion from 2010 were still not finished while new facilities have been added to it. The ‘final number’ of 560 million Euros in July, 2015 calculated after eight-months investigation has been juxtaposed to the one of the Government calculated in April, 2013 during one night after the lost municipal elections in the Municipality of Centre amounting 208 million Euros. The running costs of security and maintenance were also touched in this article.

Similarly, in the short documentary “Maintenance of Skopje 2014”, the member of “Ploshtad Sloboda” and author of the video, Zarko Nastoski asks:

“130.000 Euros for two years pays the Municipality of Centre to a private agency for the protection of the monuments on the square only. Why the police is not enough?”⁷⁷

Among other things, Nastoski also touched the topic of the rate of return of the new building of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. One of the main and many times repeated arguments of the Prime Minister and other top politicians regarding the profitability of the Project was that the Ministries will not pay rent any longer. Nastoski reminds that VMRO-DPMNE’s MP Vlatko Gjorcev, in a column attacked the businessmen that have rented space to the ministries. Among other things Gjorcev has written that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has paid 90.000 Euros annually to the owners of the space. Thus, the new facility can be hardly justified. According to the AR the new facility of the Ministry is worth 13.5 million Euros. Under that condition “it would take 140 years (until 2151) in order the new building of the diplomacy to pay back” concludes Nastoski. (*Ibid.*)

Finally, as many other political issues in the country, the critique of the Project after the AR has also concentrated on the prospects for EU accession, this time also in a ‘war of numbers’ with the figures of VMRO-DPMNE. This excerpt is from an article following after the EU Commission’s Report on the progress of the country on the road to EU:

“This time the European government much more forcefully questioned also the major economic successes and reforms with which the Macedonian government is so proud and with which it fills our ears every day. The European Commission says it is alarming the speed with which Macedonia indebts itself. They in Brussels haven’t heard that we are among the countries in Europe with the lowest debt, so wantonly published data that the central government debt stood at 33.6 of GDP by the end of July 2013, which is an enormous increase compared to 27.8 percent of GDP at the end of 2011. European Commission for the first time clearly shows that it wants to see the accounts where the money is spent from the bloated budgets. (...)

The EU Commission indirectly relates the rapid borrowing abroad to the construction of “Skopje 2014” and the non-priority facilities, as the Report stresses that the gross external debt has increased to 65

⁷⁷ “Maintenance of Skopje 2014” prepared by Zarko Nastoski, NGO “Ploshtad Sloboda”, published 15.03.2013, last viewed 17.02.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vXwshRO2E0U>

percent of GDP. This debt includes the debts of the municipalities and the one of the public and the private companies, which the Macedonian government regularly “jumps over” when talking about the level of indebtedness.” (*Utrinski Vesnik*, October, 2013).

The analysis of the discourses delivered after the publication of the AR has shown that the opposition got a new chance to more fiercely attack the policies of the governing political elite, bringing “Skopje 2014” closely to the economic performances of the country and its political future in relation to the EU.

Authorship of “Skopje 2014” revisited

Along with the political actors the non-government sector has also criticized “Skopje 2014”. In fact, “Ploshtad Sloboda” and BIRN have provided more grounded investigation and analysis of the transparency-related issues of “Skopje 2014” than the political opposition did. As a prime source of critical voices regarding the authorship of “Skopje 2014” I used the short documentary film prepared by Mary Jordanovska from the NGO “Ploshtad Sloboda”, published on 01.04.2013⁷⁸, and the findings of BIRN published in several articles from their own product, *Balkan Insight*.

The critique was following several lines: non-transparency of the authors’ fees, the competence of the authors relative to the price of the art-work, the high prices of the art-works, non-transparency of the decision-making procedures regarding the choice of the authors, of the quality of the work and materials used in the Project.

Related to the critique of the amount of the authors’ honorariums, Jordanovska starts her analysis by quoting the statements of two artists involved in the Project: Konstantin Janev and Darko Dukovski. After the public has insisted on more transparency of the amounts of the authors’ fees for their work Janev, the author of two sculptures of lions on the “Goce Delcev” Bridge has commented: “Honey, this I would not answer even in a police station without a presence of a lawyer. To ask about the honorary is equal to swearing”. Darko Dukovski, another artist when asked the same question answered: “I do not know those things, my wife is doing that stuff [the accounting].” (*Ibid.*).

Both artists are evidently secretive about their earnings in the beginning of the project. A major critique, however, was exercised on the high fees paid to the previously unknown author Valentina Stevanovska, accompanied with critique of her competences, regarding the quality of her work. The main controversy was that Stevanovska has earned one fifth of the author’s honorarium for the whole project: “The documents made available to BIRN show that Stevanovska received almost 3 million Euros for these sculptures, a sum that included the cost of their construction.” (*Balkan Insight*, July, 2015).

⁷⁸ „The authorship of Skopje 2014” by Mary Jordanovska from the NGO “Ploshtad Sloboda”, published on 01.04.2013, last viewed 17.02.2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ej33_-73apE

In her investigations Jordanovska informs that Stevanovska has 'graduated at the age of 35 and had no previous experience in sculpture'. The rhetor claims that Stevanovska worked as a fashion designer and that according to her biography, the only sculptural work before getting involved in the project "Skopje 2014" is to make a sculpture of the Macedonian historian Ljuben Lape at the eponymous school in Aerodrom Municipality. After that she immediately gets involved in the project "Skopje 2014" and produces the Arch "Macedonia", the "Warrior on a Horse" (Alexander the Great and the fountain) on the square "Macedonia", "Warrior" (Philip II and the fountain), more sculptures on the bridge "Eye", and many other monuments ("Horseman" in the Municipality of Gazi Baba, "Hristo Tatarcev") etc.

The critique is evidently concentrated on the previous anonymity of the author and the questionable skills of the author – with her late graduation on 35 and almost no previous experience in producing public art-works her talent is doubted. The critics agree that author with this biography does not deserve such responsibility in arranging the urban core of the city and earning such royalties for the work. Suzana Milevska, an art historian and one of the interlocutors in the film, claimed:

“The amounts [of money] received by world-famous sculptors, to say... for the works of not exactly monumental character but a public sculpture, are much lower when it comes to real world stars. I will mention Richard Serra, whose projects often spurred various controversies in the public....and [namely] the famous case, for a project in Germany, which was disputed because of the [received] royalties of 10.000 Euros.”

Jordanovska also mentions that it was not possible to get a concrete answer from the Municipality of Centre regarding the honorarium of Valentina Stevanovska, the spokesman of the municipality always refused to meet the journalist, 'although there is a Law on Free Access to Information, which guarantees publishing of official documents' concludes Jordanovska. The BIRN also criticized the transparency of the authors' royalties namely through the example of Stevanovska:

“If you look how Stevanovska was making the calculation for the "Warrior on a Horse", you can see that under author's honorarium she added also the preliminary design, materials, workers, transport of gypsum and clay, etc. Nowhere in the document is specified the precise amount for each item separately, and according to the statement of ex-mayor of Centre, Vladimir Todorovic, the authors gave no statement about how they spend the money.

-These are the costs that the author represents to us and we do not check if it is so, but in the negotiations, the Committee always tries to cut them and not to recognize some of them, he said in 2013, when giving a report on the project "Skopje 2014 ".

-I hope that all the authors were honest, he added.

The question remains of how it is possible under the item "author's honorarium" to add workers, the buying of materials and rental space, and no author to give precise details of how the funds were spent.

Looking at the cost of other authors, one can notice amounts that were planned for coffees, drinks, rent for hangars, workers, transport, and all of that in the contracts with the Municipality Centre enters under the category "royalty."(*Balkan Insight, July, 2015*)

The author of this article tries to clarify how through the avoidance of specifying the exact cost per item in the list of costs, the signatories of the contracts have escaped the responsibility to report on the exact royalty they have received for the design and production of the art-work. It is significant that 'no [single] author gave precise details' on the honorarium. The statement of the Mayor Todorovic: 'I hope that all the authors were honest' is given in a sarcastic tone, underlining that in projects handling millions of Euros personal trust has been given more importance than written and accurate documentation of costs. In this context another article from the same month also claims:

"The documents also reveal that the state institutions avoided signing separate contracts with authors that specifically disclosed their fees. Instead, the contracts mention all the works needed for the construction of the sculptures." (*Balkan Insight*, July, 2015).

This way, the BIRN and other critics, most notably the SDSM, suggested that the political entrepreneurs and the artists signing the contracts with them could appropriate part of the taxpayers' money intended for the construction of the monuments, while officially respecting the rules of the legal system. This argument was closely related to the argument about the high prices of the art-works relative to monuments built prior to 2010 and out of the "Skopje 2014" project.

In the film prepared by Jordanovska, the former Mayor of Skopje, Risto Penov, claims that: "In comparison to the millions [spent] for the individual monuments, "Skender Bey" monument cost only 82.000 Euros, 60.000 for the making and 22.000 for taxes and other costs." Trying to allude to financial machinations behind "Skopje 2014" in the same interview Penov adds that: "The whole reconstruction of the "Macedonia" square which I conducted cost million and a half Euros".

The analyses of BIRN's database shows that out of the 34 monuments part of "Skopje 2014" even one is not as close to the amount of "Skender Bey". In fact, the cheapest, the one of the Ottoman period revolutionary "Nikola Jonkov Vapcarov" cost 125.860 Euros, while the average price of all the monuments comes to exact 988.836 Euros per object or nearly one million Euros per individual art-work. Horseman monuments similar in size and complexity to the one of pre-"Skopje 2014" monument of "Skender Bey" cost from approximately 270.000, for instance the horsemen monuments of Jane Sandanski and Pitu Guli, to approximately 540.000 Euro for the Ottoman-era hero Vasil Cakalarov.

Based on the findings of the former State Anti-Corruption Commission's audit of the "Skopje 2014" project the critics have suggested that the project developers have continuously chosen bidders with higher prices on the tenders. This argument was also closely related to the non-transparent choice of the authors. The major opposition party asked under what criteria the selection of the authors of the project "Skopje 2014" was made: "Where else in the world an author who until yesterday was total anonymous for making only one art-work would be paid a fee of 1.5 million Euros [Stevanovska for the "Warrior on the Horse]" (*Utrinski Vesnik*, March, 2011).

In Jordanovska's short documentary film, the art historian Suzana Milevska argues in the same direction: "Project of this domain and such size....and nowhere appeared for this project a [list] with the names, where it will stay who exactly is the initiator of the project, author-wise, who stands behind it, who are the participants in the team, from which aspect, etc. Even no data is available for who were the members of juries to decide on these competitions".

The opposition and the NGO sector have attacked the alleged transparency of the building of “Skopje 2014” from many angles. They have firstly pinpointed at the secrecy of authors’ royalties, not only the institutions but also the authors of the sculptures did not want to even approximately disclose the fees paid for their art-works. The NGOs have also provided arguments about why the government officials would not want to be transparent: the institutions avoided signing contracts with authors that specifically disclosed their fees, the chosen authors avoided to specifying the exact cost per item in the list of total costs and bidders with higher prices on the tenders were continuously chosen. Finally, some intellectuals have argued that neither individual nor a team has ever legally, morally and officially stood behind the Project.

I would summarise this section with the analysis of the discourse delivered by the Vice President of SDSM, Goran Georgiev, in the same short film of “Ploshtad Sloboda”. This excerpt not only attacks “Skopje 2014” as money laundering process but also most explicitly underlines the source and the consequences of this type of art-production:

“In no schoolbook, in no domestic or foreign literature, the name of let’s say, that [unknown] Valentina Stevanovska, means something. And even a layman in art and architecture knows that. So, they [the authors] are selected by a pawn’s logic, they are simply ordinary, I call them, textile dolls stuffed with rags inside, who only need to finalize a story, the vision of the Leader. Gruevski would summon Vale Stevanovska and he would say: - Hmmm, I want you to make one Alexander if you can. – Well, how big should [the statue] be? –The largest in the world. –Or, Philip how big? - A little smaller. - Where to put it [the statue of Alexander]? Hmmm, in the centre [showing with his hands how the other sculptures are arranged around the one of Alexander]. So, Valentina Stevanovska will be just one [of the many] shameful heroes in this story, as well as all other authors who agreed to be servants of the author, the creator of the idea, and that’s Nikola Gruevski.”

Expressed in the genre of irony, the rhetor de-constructs the processes of producing art in “Skopje 2014”. He belittles the artists taking part in the Project (naming Valentina Stevanovska as Vale, a colloquial version of the name, suggesting close personal relations with the Prime Minister or calling her ‘textile dolls stuffed with rags inside’) and puts in question the processes of choosing the same and the quality of the artists’ works, but most notably, it evaluates these processes in context of what he calls ‘the vision of the Leader’. Thus, Georgiev argues that bad quality art-works, moreover produced for very high prices is inevitable consequence of artists ‘shameful’ subjugation to the will of the political actors. In this way some commentators of the opposition tend to underscore yet another aspect of “Skopje 2014”, the politicisation of art, usually and easily associated with totalitarian regimes.

Annexes of the primary contracts

If the authorship and the non-transparent methods of decision-making and financing were the prime focus of the opposition’s critique regarding the production of the Project’s monuments, the focus of critique regarding the major facilities part of “Skopje 2014” were the annexes of the primary contracts. One of the main sources of information on this topic is the short documentary film of

“Ploshtad Sloboda” named “Annexes in public procurement related to „Skopje 2014“” from Zorana Gadzovska⁷⁹, published on April 9, 2013.

If annex agreement can be defined as agreements for additional and unforeseen works, for something that it is not predicted with the primary contract, it is interesting that almost for all construction objects such agreements have been signed during or after the realisation of the same:

“According to data available on the website of the Public Procurement Bureau it could be noticed that almost all the primary contracts for the project are enlarged and upgraded with annex agreements” (Gadzovska, NGO “Ploshtad Sloboda”, 2013).

The author further informs that:

“The Museum complex supposed to cost 4.5 million Euros, but with 10 annex agreements, out of which individually no one exceeds the legal limit of 30% of the original contract, the total amount increased by more than three times, i.e. it cost now almost 15 million Euros” (*ibid.*).

Critique was not only focused on the fact that only for few buildings of “Skopje 2014” annexes were not signed, but also on the fact that in some cases more than 10 annexes were added to the primary contract. Further, in the AR the Minister of Culture underscored that although all the documentation related to “Skopje 2014” is available on the website of the Public Procurement Bureau and everyone can access and inspect them still there have been numerous allegations and speculation to defocus the public. Gazovska, however, finds that some important documents were missing:

“The original contracts for the [VMRO] Museum and the Old Teatar were signed in 2007-2008, but they are still not available to the public”.

She also finds that the new Old-Theater which was announced to cost 6 million Euros, after all the annexes already costs 35 million Euros, information later confirmed with the BIRN’s eight-month investigations of the costs. More importantly, “no details have been described of the grounds for these annexes”.

Aside of the Museum and the Old Teatar, on the original contract for the building of the Arch Macedonia worth 4.3 million another 1.2 million Euros have been added. Also for about a dozen of monuments due to untimely planned pedestal and decorations in the primary contracts annexes had to be signed.

Giving examples of only three of the major structure of “Skopje 2014”, the author stresses that some buildings after the annex agreements have reached prices from three to up to six times higher than the originally predicted price. She, however, also points that individually no one exceeds the legal limit of 30% of the original contract. This is very important, since the government officials were justifying the legality of the Project namely with the fact that each action behind the facilities and monuments of “Skopje 2014” is supported by legal documentation.

Other NGOs have also engaged in the critique of the extensive use of annexes. Sladjana Taseva from *Transparency International*, Macedonia claims:

⁷⁹ “Annexes in public procurement related to Skopje 2014” from Zorana Gadzovska, NGO “Ploshtad Sloboda”, published on April 9, 2013, last viewed 17.02.2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l_4L_-jv1G8

„ (...) what is happening here, for example with the Arch or the Theater is, as if when you are building a house and you have not predicted that the house should have windows and doors. (...) too often craft works, sculptures or elements of copper and wood have been done with annexes, as if the designers did not know beforehand that all that should have been part of the object or the facility.”

The last point of Gadzovska’s short documentary film was on the limitation of competition during the tender procedures. For instance, Sabina Fakic from the Center for Civil Communications responsible for monitoring public procurements states:

„The institutions set too high qualification criteria, require too much experience for companies to be eligible to apply to tenders, and in some cases require namely experience with (building) state institutions“, arguing that this results in situation where tenders can be won by a small group of companies.

The same argument was further developed by BIRN after their investigation of the Project in 2015:

“One company built third of the project:

An overview of the data that BIRN obtained shows that the “Beton” construction company has won most contracts and built most of the buildings and sculptures that form part of “Skopje 2014”.

The company has earned €163 million, a third of all the money spent on the revamp, from the project.” (*Balkan Insight*, July, 2015).

With this argumentation the opposition speculated that the government through assigning very specific conditions for winning a tender could factually boost the chances of the preselected partner for building of the facilities.

The film of Gadzovska was the first in-depth work on the annex agreements. BIRN’s investigation has later confirmed some of the findings or added new, building thus the grounds for new discursive deconstruction of the transparency myth of the government:

“The sums reported when setting the cornerstones were commonly hacked several times. The primary contracts were burdened with dozens of annexes. When that was not enough new primary contracts, new "revised basic projects" were made and more professional supervisions conducted.

Some of them are not published. For example, the primary contract on the construction of the building of the Criminal Court is not available on the website of the Public Procurement Bureau. The information about the amount on which the primary contract was signed we found in the verdict of the Appeals Commission for Public Procurement (available in the database) in which it is stated that the original contract had 21 annexes. Of these [annexes] only two are published. The Ministry of Justice is the only institution that did not respond to BIRN’s questions. (...)

Absence of basic planning, which has resulted in the demolition of the constructed or the relocation of the set [objects] within the project, is dramatically visible, and in the database this is easily verifiable. Indeed, why would anyone spent thousands of Euros to restore the Skopje City Beach, only to ruin it and turn it into a construction site?

Why would anyone call a competition for 35 sculptures, and then would have allowed their dislocation or allowed to be thrown in corners or be buried in a construction chaos?

The Ministry of Culture is silent, silent are the authors as well. And those who with their first sculptures have bought a ticket to participate in the entire project and became its loud proponents, again and again were elected on the next competitions, were receiving a second, a third or winning awards, as the documents in the database disclose." (*Balkan Insight*, July, 2015).

The additional value of BIRN's investigation was that a larger and internationally more recognised organisation could stand behind the publication of the findings. A new aspect on which they shed light was the government's volatility in planning and realisation of the project's facilities. As it was earlier stressed by Causidis (2013) certain planned objects were built on other locations after it was concluded that due to citizens' dissatisfaction and special or legal limitations it was impossible to be built on the firstly predicted place. For the opposition this signalled that the whole project was hastily planned and a product of the wishes of the "Leader". As the last paragraph of the article shows not only the institutions standing behind the project, such as the Ministry of Culture but also the authors have stayed silent for the displacement or complete removal of some sculptures from the public places due to reorganisation of the building plans. By stressing that 'those who with their first sculptures have bought a ticket to participate in the entire project and became its loud proponents, again and again were elected on the next competitions, receiving a second, a third or winning awards' in line with the opposition politicians' argumentation the author of the text tries to underscore the politicisation of arts for the purposes of the governing elite.

Preference of development over democracy revisited

The final event which boosted the critique of "Skopje 2014" as developmental project was the Revision announced and completed by the Centre Municipality few months after Zernovski took the office of the municipality. As argued already by VMRO-DPMNE, the Municipality has had jurisdiction only on the monuments as part of the project "Skopje 2014". The malpractice of 8 million Euros reported after the Revision applies, thus, only to the monuments as part of "Skopje 2014". In this context it is noteworthy that according to the data available on the BIRN's website the total costs of the monuments have reached only one tenth of the total costs for the new facilities built within the Project. Simultaneously, they are approximately equal to the total costs for new facades in the city centre. Hence, 8 million Euros misuse only for the part of the monuments, gave the opposition ground to confidently suspect that misuse of higher amounts could have happened related to the building of the facilities. This is the statement of the Mayor Zernovski after the publication of the Revision's findings:

"Mr. Prime Minister, do not hide behind the totally non-inventive (written) reactions of VMRO-DPMNE. Come out in the public and say whether, after the documented evidences of the Revision, there was or there was no crime in the project "Skopje 2014", and if you knew about it? Is it as well for you, as it is for the party whose leader you are, a millions of Euros misused money and this only for the harmful agreements for the casting and the marble for 11 monuments 'only' 8 millions, a small and inconsiderable amount?" asked Zernovski the PM Gruevski in an open letter.

Answers to almost the same questions he asked also from the Minister of Culture. "Mrs. Kanceska-Milevska, have you also did not know or deliberately have avoided the truth, when you came out after

the elections at a press conference and tried to sell the project "Skopje 2014" as a patriotic and honest story?", asked the mayor Centre.

He believes that in the public should also personally speak the sculptor Valentina Stevanovska. "If she claims to be the purest and that she has not taken such great honorariums for the "Warrior" and the "Warrior on a horse" under authorship agreement, where she has received more than two million Euros, let her go out and let her say who took them in her name?", asked yesterday Zernovski stressing that the public rightly and with great expectation is looking forward to the answers." (*Utrinski Vesnik*, December, 2013)

After the press-conference with the Mayor of Centre, VMRO-DPMNE invited Zernovski to start criminal proceedings against the suspected institutions and persons. In the following article from *Utrinski Vesnik* professor Spasov explains why the party of the Prime Minister feels so comfortable in legitimately asking Zernovski to begin lawsuits against the wrongdoers:

"Following an audit of the project "Skopje 2014" by the Centre Municipality, in which experts from the former State Anti-Corruption Commission announced that according to their findings, there is a reasonable suspicion of abuse of office in the signing of contracts for casting monuments in Florence and disbursement of high authors' fees, with which the budget is damaged for millions, the only reaction by DPMNE was that "the mountain was shaking, but only a mouse was born."

But the shame is not only about this. For casting in bronze of each monument by the end of 2010 was regularly paid almost twice higher price than the one of the second bidder, who became competitive only after electronic bidding was introduced. The marble monuments of Cento, Justinian I, the King Samuil, according to the auditors, were purchased from an Italian firm, which was not registered for making monuments but only to trade with sculptures, and namely for double higher prices than the prices of the second supplier, which were anyway too high. How much higher than the normal price was the price of the second bidder became clear when after the introduction of electronic auctioning the foundry "Jeremic" from Serbia (as a second bidder) has decreased the initially offered price of 700 thousand Euros for the "Monument to the Fallen Heroes" to 275 thousand Euros. And that same "Jeremic" is accused and is under custody in Serbia on charges of using false invoices for charging 20 times higher prices fees for sculptures that they made for the pharmaceutical company "Galenika" in Belgrade.

According to the audit, to an almost unknown sculptor, who travelled 25 times on account of the Municipality Centre in Florence, has been paid royalties for her work in the amount of one and a half million Euros. When in 2009, the owner of the foundry "Arte bronze" from Italy said that instead for 8.5 million, which shall be paid to "Marinelli", he could have poured in bronze these monuments for only 2.7 million Euros, it was expected that someone in Macedonia would think twice. But that did not happen. The journalist Milka Smilevska, who now works for *Al Jazeera*, then announced that the sculptor Andrea Pisani was shocked by the amount that the Municipality of Centre paid to the foundry "Marinelli" and said: "I do not know how the authorities in Skopje have paid this money. But after such a big profit, those of 'Marinelli' are free to close the foundry."

DPMNE encourage all citizens who have questioned the fairness of the implementers of this project, and especially the mayor Zernovski, to file criminal charges, after which our independent judiciary would have issued a judicial confirmation that all are innocent. Their courage in this case is based on the conviction that each paid sum was covered by legal authority and was made within the law and jurisdiction. (...)

After the publishing of the two reports on the deals under the "Skopje 2014", it becomes clear why Andrej Zernovski had to compete for his position and win in the "ninth round" of elections. Why the State Election Commission and the Constitutional Court shamefully and persistently annulled the elections, when it was clear that Zernovski wins. Why that circus and a disgrace with the voters from Pustec⁸⁰ has happened, with the blocking of the lifts, and why the President of the Council of the Centre, Miroslav Shipovik, is in custody." (*Utrinski Vesnik*, December, 2013).

Based on the findings of the audit, Spasov accuses the government of irrational choice of partners on the tenders related to the casting of the "Skopje 2014" monuments, where companies with dubious background were preferred or one which offer their services for unreasonably higher prices. Although, the financial transactions were legal, he argues, from the point of view of the citizens and the public funds with which the government was paying these art-works the choices were incorrect. More so, because they were never publically discussed. In this regard, the author alludes that the government has engaged in money laundering.

In the second paragraph of the excerpt, he also mentions that although legally covered, the royalties paid to the author of the "Warrior on the Horse" are extremely high. This can be considered as a second point of accusation in money laundering.

In the final two paragraphs, Spasov connects the 'covered by legal authority' money laundering with the courage of the ruling party to ask the Mayor of Centre to file a lawsuit against the suspected. The author sarcastically notes that 'our independent judiciary would [then] issue a judicial confirmation that all are innocent'. He also reminds that now it 'becomes clear why Andrej Zernovski had to compete for his position and win in the "ninth round" of the elections'. In other words, just after the Revision, differently than in the "Patriotic broom" case, the opposition could more confidently argue that the government 'simply had to win in Centre' because a large sum of money was handled incorrectly. Thus, the author connects the allegations for non-transparent misuse of public funds with election frauds and general distrust in the independence of the judiciary.

In the last section of this chapter I will demonstrate how the deconstruction of the Project developers' acts and discourses has been extended to more general critique of the developmental policies and discourses of the government.

⁸⁰ The case with the 'voter from Pustec' and the 'blocking of the lifts' will be discussed deeper in the next chapter. Here it will suffice to mention that the government has issued documentation and organised transport to several hundred of ethnic Macedonians living in the town Pustec in today's Albania to vote for DPMNE's candidate. Other 'technique of winning votes' was the massive disabling of the lifts in the multi-floor buildings of the Centre Municipality where many elderly voters, usually voting for the SDSM, were assumed not to show up on the polling stations on the designated voting-day due to their limited ability to walk down the stairs.

Fake development

During 2014, the year when the Project supposed to be finished as it was officially announced, the critique focused on the quality of the project as a whole. At this point most of the announced major structures were indeed completed and the idea named "Skopje 2014" and its effects could be evaluated altogether. To the ongoing critique of the legal and financial aspects of the Project, thus, the critique of the project as construction venture was added. The main message behind the oppositional voices was that "Skopje 2014" is an embodiment of fake development, 'a facade' of underdevelopment or 'a camouflage of high culture'.

Writing in genre of irony, especially critical was *Sloboden Pecat*, persistently informing on all the material consequences of the heavy rain falls and the subsequent flooding around the bank of the river Vardar in May, 2014. As discussed earlier, some of the most expensive structures such as the Old Theatre, the Museum of the Macedonian Struggle, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Archaeological Museum and the Constitutional Court were built in a narrow belt between the river Vardar and the buildings of the 'shameful era' that supposed to be subverted with the new and large structures. Even before the flooding Causidis (47, 2013) was critical of the urban planning behind "Skopje 2014":

„Has it, at all, occurred to someone's mind to assess how the sensitive archaeological items that will be placed in the [Archaeological] Museum will act on the proximity of the river and the moisture that spreads from it?"

Sloboden Pecat continues with the same argumentation:

"The facilities of "Skopje 2014" are magnet for floods

After the storm on Sunday the basements of the Old Theatre and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as the basement of the Constitutional Court were filled with water. There is a visible damage on the facades of these facilities from the water, and in the past two days the construction workers have again returned to repair them and to make new walls in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The flooding of the basement led to the suspension of the play "Eternal House", which was played on the stage at the moment, so the guests were evacuated.

A year ago, also in May, the basements of the Archaeological Museum and the Constitutional Court were flooded, after the level of water has increased in Vardar."

The same article continues with two subtitles:

"Waterfalls" in "Surgery" and in the Paediatric Clinic

"Culture" ⁸¹leaks first

One can see peeling of the part of the facade of the Museum of the Macedonian Struggle and in parts of the Archaeological Museum there were leaks.

⁸¹ the Ministry of Culture

The facade of the museum was damaged in several places, and inside there is some moisture. Allegedly as a result of weak earthquake the day before a piece of the facade has fallen down.” (*Sloboden Pecat*, May, 2014).

The author of the text evidently escapes to inform only on the damages of the current natural disaster. By mentioning the similar consequences from a natural disaster a year ago the rhetor tries to underline that due to bad quality of the building materials and the hastily planning and realisation of the project the flooding of the objects, the piling of the facades or the licking of the roofs should be expected to repeat regularly in the future. The subtitle referring to the "Waterfalls" in "Surgery" and in the Paediatric Clinic constructs a narrative of fake development in general, stressing that priorities were given to less important institutions in "Skopje 2014" as a building project.

Following the same argumentation pattern the same daily tries to compare what could have been built with what has already being built under "Skopje 2014". The construction of the new Old Theatre officially costed the state not less than 36 million Euros. The Macedonian actors from the other towns have complained that due to the re-construction of this theatre in Skopje they have to work in unprecedented conditions:

“Desperate conditions in theatres across the country. Actors’ breath freezes

Employees of the theatres in the smaller towns complain of not having elementary conditions for work – water flows from the roofs, air blows out of the walls and heated hall in the winter is unattainable standard.

The actress Jasmina Vasileva says theatre in the town of Kumanovo has many problems, but the most actual is the [lack of] heating. (...) On the last performance we used as firewood parts of old scenery. (...) It is similar in the theatre of the town of Prilep, and therefore the actors are rarely on stage. They add that the building is old and ruined. A regular visitor claimed that in the theatre blows from all sides, there are holes in the ceiling which for years have not been repaired, that there is no regular repertoire and that in the corners there are heaps of old requisites...

Actor Marin Babic believes that with the money spent on the old-new theatre in Skopje all other theatres in the country could have been equipped. But according to him, the authorities are trying to create a facade, a camouflage of high culture.” (*Sloboden Pecat*, January, 2014).

The idea of camouflaged underdevelopment was also used in the general critique of the government’s developmental policies. The main arguments of the oppositional politicians and media outlets concentrated on the continuous emigration of young, educated Macedonians out of the country and on the general failure to improve the unemployment figures:

“Eurostat and SDSM de-construct Gruevski

Gruevski’s government successes – we are third in poverty in Europe!?

Macedonia is the third poorest country in Europe, according to Eurostat, published the renowned international organization, just a day after Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski presented the achievements of the government in the sphere of foreign investments (...) poorer than Macedonia are only Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina. (...)

- The government of VMRO-DPMNE recently came up praising how they reduced the unemployment and how everything is super thanks to the policies of the government. But the denial came very

quickly. Eurostat published data that Macedonia is the third country in Europe in poverty. Full stop. That's it with the allegedly successful policies of the Macedonian Government – said the [SDSM's] Secretary General Oliver Spasovski at the open debate with the citizens of Gazi Baba." (*Sloboden Pecat*, December, 2013).

Thus, the policies of active promotion of the country, the nation re-branding, the facilitation of legal procedures for 'doing business', the road-shows of the Prime Minister and other developmental policies were together with the cultural policy of nation revival and the demographic policy for boosting fertility deconstructed as fruitless policies with negative consequences for the state:

"Thanks to the revival, the big government project for national and cultural awakening, its investments in the attempt to give us back the sense of superiority and power as the successors of the heroes of the past - which could be seen from the presented in "Skopje 2014" – in Macedonia there are less Macedonians.

That fact that we became great Macedonians was confirmed by the State Statistical Office. For the first time in its history, it has published the fact that last year less than half of newborns in the state were ethnic Macedonians. (...) For our patriotic forces it is not terrible that there were born only a few Macedonians - that is, and still will be, their problem - but the fact that in the same period died 14.213 Macedonians and ONLY 3.230 Albanians (...)

Now the government is in a dilemma whether to continue the demographic policy or, together with the data, to dismiss the Director of the Statistical Office and whether to continue to pay the allowance for the third child, which any way comes delayed for about nine months and does not give any results. Except in the municipalities with non-Macedonian population, which is not for showing off. From all of that, it will probably decide to pursue further with its populist policies. It produces results even in uninhabited areas." (*Sloboden Pecat*, June, 2014).

The rhetor explicitly concludes that 'thanks to the revival, the big government project for national and cultural awakening...in Macedonia there are less Macedonians'. The argument is further developed by the comparison of the population growth rates of the ethnic Albanians and the ethnic Macedonians in Macedonia, undermining the premises of the demographic policies of the 'patriotic forces'. Lastly, the author sarcastically remarks that the Prime Minister can either decide to dismiss the data and punish the Director of the Statistical Office for the publication of the same or continue with the populist policies, hence suggesting that the government is both autocratic and populist. *Utrinski Vesnik* six months earlier also exercised critique on the same topic, speculating that the ethnic Macedonian leadership is afraid of conducting the long avoided census of the population due to fear of eventually narrower gap between the number of ethnic Albanian and ethnic Macedonian population:

"Gruevski is the first Prime Minister in Macedonia that does not dare to make a census of the Macedonian population and whose co-workers proposed census which would not contain nationality column." (*Utrinski Vesnik*, November, 2013).

Regarding the demographic portray of the country, in late 2015 the same outlet also compared the findings of the domestic statistical office with the one of international organisations, hence, just as *Sloboden Pecat*, hinting that the domestic institutions are strongly controlled by the authoritarian state:

"Macedonian institutions do not have an exact figure how many people are leaving the country. But recently the State Statistical Office come up with publication "Migration 2014", which covers the total migration of the Macedonian population in the period from 2010 to 2014. According to this document for 5 years, or since 2010, and as of 2014, in total out of the country have moved 5592 people, of which 5081 were (ethnic) Macedonian citizens.

A defeating fact is that of the total number of emigrant Macedonian citizens, compared with the other categories of citizens, the highest number is the one of the "active" citizens, i.e. the people who already had jobs. (...)

These figures from the State Statistical Office are very small relative to the actual. If our statistics says about 1000 people a year are moving out of the country, World Bank data shows much higher figures. According to this international financial institution between 1998 and 2012, 447.137 Macedonian citizens have left their country and went to a foreign country.

And, according to "Eurostat", the figure in the same period amounted to 230.000 people who have already obtained a regulated stay. Both sources state that about 50 percent of them are young people aged up to 30 years. Also Macedonian demographers consider the number of people who left the country certainly much larger than what our statistics represents." (*Utrinski Vesnik*, September, 2015).

Relying on the authority of foreign institutions such as the Eurostat and the World Bank the author claims not only that many more young people are leaving the country then the official state statistics reveals, but also that this population is the 'active' one or the citizens who were already employed in their homeland. This reasoning leads one to conclude that the economic are not the only reasons for leaving the state.

In this last section of the chapter I have demonstrated how the opposition and especially the media outlets critical of the policies of the government have brought closer the project "Skopje 2014" as part of the antiquisation policy of bolstering the national spirit of the ethnic Macedonians to the failure of the state to provide concrete solutions to the threats posed by the globalisation in fields as diverse as the economic, the demographic and the cultural. The critique was varying. While some rhetors were only indirectly hinting on the relationships between the Project and the failures of the state, other directly related the poverty and the lack of prosperity for the younger generations with the revival of the nation and "Skopje 2014" as the manifestation of this policy.

Conclusions

In the last two analytical chapters I tried to answer how "Skopje 2014", observed as developmental project, influences the democratic development of Macedonia. Earlier I have hypothesised that "Skopje 2014" is a stimulator of conflicts and syndrome of undemocratic developments. Based on the preliminary analysis of discourses from variety of media outlets I have argued that the most expensive investment in the history of independent Macedonia was at the same time one of the most non-transparent projects of this character, utilised for money laundering and non-democratic overthrowing of the former political elite. Although promoted as nation-branding project intended for the international audience, I argued that "Skopje 2014" was mainly constructed for the domestic audience as the final 'consumer' of the 'cultural goods'. I interpreted the government's intention to

build this mega-project not only as attempt to bolster the nationalistic feelings of the ethnic Macedonians but also to impress the domestic audience by bringing 'development' in the country, independently from the continuously delayed EU-integration. I finally assumed that as long as the national and supranational governments do not address socio-economic issues along procedural democracy, there cannot be stability in a given nation-state or any region of the world.

More concretely, I have focused on the questions how the governing elite's discourses on development have been incorporated in the Project and how, in turn, the Project and its legitimisation have reinforced them; how the pro-government media constructed and perpetuated discourses promoting "Skopje 2014" as legally clean branding project in the new competitive environment for attracting investments in the country; and how these discourses were systematically de-constructed by the oppositional politicians and media outlets.

To this end I scrutinised a variety of discourse, focusing not only on the spoken and written but also on the silent discourses behind the actions and the behaviour of the political actors.

I have firstly shown how "Skopje 2014" is embedded in the developmental ideas of the governing elite. The officials have promoted Macedonia as the most competitive business and manufacturing location in Europe by adapting the legal system for easing the business procedures in the country. Through aggressive promotional activities like road-shows the governmental top had easy task to portray "Skopje 2014" as only one aspect of this promotional campaign for reminding the world of the possibilities Macedonia offers. To calm the domestic dissatisfaction the government assured the population that the Project is multidimensional, offering many jobs while not hindering investments in other fields and a project implementing modern capitalist rationale and state-of-the-art technology.

The outlets such as *Vecer* and *Republika* have embraced this logic and systematically legitimised it. The analysis of the constructivist and perpetuation discourses following after the construction of some of the most important structures of "Skopje 2014" revealed that these outlets have almost completely avoided any association of the Project with the oppositions' allegations for non-transparent handling of public funds. These outlets have for the first time engaged in fierce defence and legitimisation of the Project only after the Municipality Centre was overtaken by the opposition's candidate Andrej Zernovski in April, 2013. While legitimising the Project, the pro-government media too often used lengthily quotations of the government officials, thus providing evidence for the strong cooperation between the politicians and the public opinion-makers.

In the following analytical chapter I have demonstrated how the opposition and the oppositional media have deconstructed "Skopje 2014" as developmental project. The opposition has also embedded the project into the developmental rationale of the government but underscored namely the negative consequences of it. Referring to domestic and international bodies such as the State Audit Office, the Eurostat, the World Bank and other the opponents of the Project have in fact recognised "Skopje 2014" as a branding project but one which failed to satisfy the expectations of the citizens for economic and democratic development of the state. Grounded in the findings of the in-depth studies of the NGOs "Ploshtad Sloboda" and BIRN the opposition fiercely attacked the government on several legal points: the authorship of the project, the annexes to the primary agreements, the prolongation of "Skopje 2014" out of the announced time-frame, etc. The opposition has concluded that "Skopje 2014" is a money laundering project, the realization of which

leads not so much towards personal enrichment of the actors involved in it as much towards the increased opportunities for the Prime Minister's party to control the society and win the consecutive elections. The core ideas behind the oppositions critique is that "Skopje 2014" represents a camouflaged underdevelopment or a facade of development, which indeed embraces the "development first" hypothesis. They further developed closer relationship between the failure of the economic and demographic policies of the state with the "Skopje 2014" as the core of the nation revival project. In this vain, some authors claimed that due to the building of the Project the country was further indebting, making it even less attractive partner for the EU. However, just as in the case with the antiquisation policy, the EU was neither exercising any substantial critique on the project as a developmental strategy nor pressure on the country for the further indebtedness as a solution to the futile attempts to develop independently of the European partnership.

Regarding the differences between the discourses of the oppositional politicians and the oppositional media one cannot notice a strong influence of the first over the second, except in the case of *Sloboden Pecat*, which served among other things as a platform for the SDSM in the strictly controlled print media in Macedonia. The fact that the NGO sector, representing the interests of the broader citizenry, has also reacted ferociously on the low transparency of the financial aspects of the Project gives one impression that even against the concerted effort of the government to present a better picture of "Skopje 2014" than the real one the dissatisfaction of the project found itself a medium to be expressed and publicly debated. In fact, most of the investigations of the legality of the Project have been conducted by, at least officially proclaimed, non-political actors such as these two NGOs. Thus, comparing the topics on which the pro- and anti-government media outlets were informing related to "Skopje 2014" one can notice only a monotonous promotion of the project as a creative and successful venture on the one site and a variety of critique of almost each aspect of the project on the other site.

Regarding eventual temporal changes and adaptations of the discourses, the analysis shows that while the opposition and the oppositional press were continuously advancing the older premises by adding new facts in the critique, the government and the pro-government media have switched the strategy from the one promoting the project as a lucrative entrepreneurship to another defending the transparency-related aspects of the project after Zernovski entered the Centre office. This signals that the first strategy was not convincing enough and new priorities in the legitimisation of the Project had to be set.

Returning to the hypotheses from the theoretical chapter, we can conclude that, indeed, the non-transparent handling of the public funds for the needs of the "Skopje 2014" project have polarised the society and stimulated conflicts, especially between the two biggest ethnic Macedonian parties. As reported in the chapter on the political and historical context, the conflict erupted on December 24, 2012, when following a fist-fight, the SDSM MPs and all the journalists were pushed out of the parliament with police assistance during a debate on the state budget. The grounds were the opposition's fiercely opposed continuation of the Skopje's revamp and the loans planned to be taken from international institutions to plug the gap in the budget. The opposition was afraid that the revamp and the taking of loans are instrumentalised in unfair winning of the upcoming elections. Other actions, such as the delayed Accountability Report, the cruel punishment of the MPs critical of "Skopje 2014" in the "Patriotic broom" affaire and the smear campaign against Zernovski after he announced Revision of the project are a continuation of the political polarisation firstly demonstrated on December 24, 2012.

The polarisation of the society on 'us' against 'them' can also be seen in the discursive strategies and the argumentation schemes of the governing elite frequently using *calculated ambivalence*, *insistent repetition* and *hierarchical and leader-oriented* attitude, and of the pro-government media systematically using *offensive, counterattacking* rhetoric, many times *slandering and insulting* the political 'other' while *victimising* its 'own people'. I have also pinpointed another pattern frequently used in the articles of *Vecer* and *Republika*, the *personalisation* of politics, an argumentative strategy which reduces political competition to personal or battle between clans, a discursive practice, which I interpreted as highly risky and carrying potency to threaten the democratic institutions of the state.

This polarisation of the society can be observed as a consequence of the government's policy of rewarding only its 'own people' while not addressing broad socio-economic issues. While feeling proud with the results of its developmental policy and keeping a facade of compliance with democratic principles and the procedures of the legal system of the state, the analysis of the texts revealed that the governing elite has neglected the fundamental needs of the citizens, such as the improvement of the medical and cultural institutions around the country. This is evident in the number of young educated citizens leaving the country, even when they are part of the 'active', employed population. The de-construction of the developmental policy of the government is, hence, supportive of the hypothesis that there cannot be stability in a given nation-state until socio-economic concerns of all strata and political options are considered along with the respect for the principles of procedural democracy.

Thus, aside of being informative on the (un)democratic practices of the Macedonian government during the realisation of the project "Skopje 2014", these two chapters also offered insights into the larger frames of the developmental processes, especially in the context of neo-liberal conditions with 'nation-branding' rationale and the strategic adaptations of EU-candidate countries with delayed integration in the 'European family'.

CHAPTER 9: GOVERNING ELITE'S CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY

Grounded debate about Macedonian democracy

“Democracy” as topic was in focus of many articles related to “Skopje 2014”, observed primarily as identity-alteration or primarily as developmental project. Identity and development policies are inherently connected to democracy. Nevertheless, in these analytical chapters I have referred to democracy rather indirectly, through the prism of these policies. I tried to demonstrate how inclusive or how democratic the production of the new national narrative was. I also tried to show to which extent the efforts of the government to create benefits for the larger population with “Skopje 2014” observed as a nation-branding (developmental) project were comprehensive. In the following three closely related chapters, however, I will address democracy more directly or try to demonstrate how the attitudes and actions of the main political actors in Macedonia defer in regard to pluralism. Additionally, however, I will also dedicate a special chapter to the analysis of the discourses of the EU officials. Since the European Union as the main monitor of the developments on the Balkan in general, and the Western Balkan in particular, also plays crucial role in the balance of powers, I will at this point also scrutinise its actions and discourses before I return to reconsideration of the premises of the modernisation and world-system theories in the conclusive chapter.

The upcoming chapters are therefore not going to follow the same logic as before. Differently than in the chapters where I descended in the details of “Skopje 2014” as an embodiment of the identity and development policies of the government, in the chapters that follow I will apply the opposite strategy, where I will connect my interpretations with the broader picture of the Macedonian society in European context. This implies ascending from details about “Skopje 2014” to impacts on Macedonian democracy to democratisation of the country in context of EU integration. This will allow me to answer the third hypothesis outlined in the theoretical chapter and to draw conclusions on how to improve the theory for democratic development in the debate between the modernisation and the world-system paradigms.

In these efforts I will certainly repeat some earlier argumentation points once more, but the main focus will be not only on providing a summary of the interpretations, but more on offering new insights and demonstrating their relation to the regional, continental and world-system levels. Focusing on these aspects of “Skopje 2014” I will gradually approach the more general topic of the relationship between democracy and populism addressed in the theoretical chapter, but now equipped with more details from the development and implementation of the Project.

Differently from the previous chapters, the accent will be put on the democracy as legal order, a set of rules and laws, the respect for them or their circumvention by the political actors. In these chapters I will pay special attention to three aspects of democracy, observed as a political and legal system. I will firstly focus on the discourses and actions related to the elections as mechanisms for fair selection of representatives. Secondly I will focus on the latent discourses about class struggles as manifested through the debates around “Skopje 2014”. Lastly, I will concentrate on the general legality of the Project, mostly observed through alteration or adaptation of laws to comply with the intentions of the project developers. Discussing this aspects of “Skopje 2014” I will relate elections, class struggles and the legality of the Project among others with freedom of expression, rule of law and consociationalism as inseparable attributes of plural democracy.

The three following chapters have something in common with the chapters dedicated to the “identity” topic. These chapters will concentrate more on the attitudes and behaviour of the political rather than on the cultural elite. Also the chapters will not be strictly structured, divided on sections where firstly the discourses and actions of the political elite will be presented followed by a later section which puts the cultural elite under scrutiny.

Regarding to the first point, I intent to focus on the decision-makers, since their stances and behaviour are determining the future of the country more than the journalists or other intellectuals and opinion-makers. This is more so in conditions where, one may assume, each level of living is politicised or depending on the connectedness to the executives in the government, as in the case of modern Macedonia. The focus on the governing elite is to be also legitimised by the fact that namely these actors are tailoring the policies towards the EU integration, something of crucial importance in the chapter dedicated to the analysis of the behaviour of the EU and the role it plays in Macedonia’s domestic political struggles.

Referring to the second point, the following chapters will not be strictly structured as in the case where I have analysed “Skopje 2014” as developmental project, mainly because the chapters dedicated to the “democracy” topic serve as well as a summary of government’s democratic performance and are therefore oriented on main themes or discursive and behavioural patterns which are assumed to be embedded in populism as anti-plural ideology.

After these chapters I will draw my final conclusions and estimate the limits until which modernisation theory of democracy is capable to explain the emergence and sustenance of populist, right-wing governments on the Balkans against the same capabilities of the world-system theory. I will thereafter offer frame for further research of the same phenomenon elsewhere in similar conditions.

For the needs of the analysis I have used both video and written materials. The selected discourses are organised thematically. Each theme highlights different aspects of the (un)democratic behaviour of the Macedonian government in relation to “Skopje 2014”.

To find discourses related to the topic of “democracy” next to the key word “Skopje 2014” I used the key word “democracy”. This combination yielded no results or some which only marginally related the Project to democracy as system or process in all four newspapers. Even the search under these criteria in the newspaper most oriented on editorials and op-eds, *Utrinski Vesnik*, yielded only 12 articles on the 22.09.2015. I therefore, with small exceptions, used excerpts or whole discourses which originate from videos or articles previously used in the dissertation. In total I used five videos, one documentary film, one book critically reviewing “Skopje 2014” and 21 newspaper articles.

In the selection of the discourses from the video sources I was guided by the criteria outlined in the methodological chapter: representativity, impact, salience, exceptionality, originality.

Prime Minister's commemorative addressing bordering hate-speech

Wallerstein (2001) claims that democracy has become everyone's slogan today. There is neither leader that does not claim that democracy is a good thing, nor politician that does not assert that the government of which she is a part of and/or the party that she represents wishes to maintain and extend it. Even against many allegations for autocratic rule expressed by the domestic opposition and evaluations from international organisations (e.g. *Reporters without Borders*) the government of Prime Minister Gruevski claims to rule democratically.

In the theoretical chapter I have underlined that indeed the notion of democracy is contested one. Even among theorists believing in the uniqueness of the Western democracy there are disagreements over the normative superiority of one of the recognised or established systems: majoritarianism and pluralism.

The populist version of democracy leans towards the majoritarian form of democracy. Critics of majoritarianism fear that minorities in the society may be deliberately targeted for oppression by the majority. More radical forms of populism may ultimately turn into form of governing known as the "tyranny of the majority". Democratic systems lacking solid, established institutions to "check and balance" the power of autocratic leaders backed with powerful parties are especially vulnerable to this form of majoritarianism. In this chapter it will be discussed to which democratic form the government of Prime Minister Gruevski adheres to and to which extend the discursive patterns of the political and the cultural elite supportive of the same are capable to negatively influencing the democratic developments in Macedonia.

In this chapter related to the governing elite I will analyse two exceptional discourses. The first discourse is delivered by Prime Minister Gruevski on the official opening of the "Arch Macedonia", which coincided with the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the republic's independence. In this context, this speech will be treated as a commemorative speech. This type of speech offers the rhetor the opportunity to use distinct linguistic tools to address issues allegedly independent from the current political life and that as such it offers opportunity for winning public consent which cannot be achieved with other speech acts. Keeping this in mind I will treat this speech as a unique discourse bearing the potency to reveal many aspects of how the Prime Minister and the governing Party portray the current and future socio-political relationships in the country. The second discourse, or a compilation of discourses, is the documentary film "Project Skopje 2014", production of the national TV service, produced with evident involving of the government elite.

Both the Prime Minister's public speech and the documentary film "Project Skopje 2014" seen as "final products" are offering a variety of discourses which in total give a more holistic vision of how the developers of the Project justify the role of "Skopje 2014" in the current Macedonian "history making". I will later connect these discourses with the general democratic philosophy of VMRO-DPMNE under the leadership of Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski. Here I focus on the analysis of discourses delivered by Prime Minister Gruevski under the assumption that he is an autocratic leader of hierarchical and leader-oriented party, and hence has powers shaping the governing model of the country that go beyond the expected limits of a constitutional democracy.

Returning to the analysis of the Prime Minister's speech on the celebration of the anniversary of Macedonia's Independence Day I would once more underscore few aspects of commemorative speech as additional context in which the discourse is embedded.

The commemorative public speech is unique, rare discourse delivered by leading political actor, rhetor with high authority. It is important that the rhetor has control of the social occasion by choosing the genre of a text. Content-wise, in these occasions the speaker almost inevitably calls to mind ideas of struggle, integrity and fate, assumingly describing the journey towards the current success and the character of those who made this success possible (Zaiotti, 2010). Hence, these ideas are constitutive of imagined communities (Anderson, 1988), or substance of the discursive construction of national identities (Wodak *et al.*, 1999), encouraging citizens to make the necessary sacrifices to build up state institutions (Spinner-Halev, 2008). As such the commemoration of the past in form of anniversary is supposed to be a national consolidation (or reconciliation) event with 'educational' function, i.e., event that seeks to transmit specific political values and beliefs and to create consensus and a spirit of community which in turn is intended to serve as a model for future political actions of the audience.

The analysis and interpretation of this speech⁸² delivered on the 6th January, 2012 revealed that the discourse of the Prime Minister in many ways failed to comply with the assumed task of the commemorative speeches to bring national reconciliation.

Following the *structure* of the text, or the relationship between the introduction, the body and the conclusion of the text I have detected three main themes. In the very short introduction the rhetor focuses his speech on what can be named honouring of the forefathers, one of the typical beginnings of commemorative speeches. The many body of the speech is dedicated to the opponents, the supporters and the artists of the project "Skopje 2014" respectively. In the conclusion of the speech the Prime Minister brings the building of the Arch Macedonia and "Skopje 2014" in general closer to honouring the nation's past and reminding the audience of all the reforms, in all fields of life that followed along the building of "Skopje 2014". Typically for this kind of speeches, he concludes in optimistic tone, promising bright future to the nation under his leadership. Importantly, in this last part of the text, the speaker refers to the 'new energy of our country', portraying thus the period of his governing as a unique period of the history of the nation, as a turning point or 'enlightening' moment of self-cognition.

In this case I will not concentrate on the analysis of the visual. Considering the context, however, it is worth mentioning that in scenery common for commemorative speeches, the Prime Minister delivered his speech on a small stage beneath the Arch, surrounded by many national flags and the political elite in the front row of the audience. It is important that during the speech, and especially in the first part of it, through the Arch the TV camera shows the statue of the Alexander the Great ("Warrior on the Horse"), seen through the Arch and in the background, mimicking thus to the audience the supposed nation's origins in a 'mysterious way', underlining a direct line from Alexander to the present day Macedonians.

In the first part of the speech the rhetor declares the purpose of the facility and historical moment: 'Although its construction ended the previous month, as planned, in the year we celebrate the 20th anniversary of independence of Republic of Macedonia, we have decided its official promotion to be

⁸² Full text in the Appendix text 3

on this beautiful day' [as] 'the Arch Macedonia was conceived as a symbol that will mark the 20th anniversary of the independence of Republic of Macedonia.'

After briefly referring to the sacrifices that the national community has gone through to win its independence, the Prime Minister starts his attack on the political opponents:

'..with the blood of thousands of human sacrifices made in hundreds of years, precisely because of the acquisition of independence, sometimes I was asking myself, why some people, do not recognize the moment of gaining the independence as the single most important historic event. (...) maybe someone from the last generation, this ours, us, who are alive today, perhaps somehow, we saw that independence as easily obtained'.

When asking the rhetorical question if maybe some of the living Macedonians feel that independence has been 'easily obtained', it is unlikely that the Prime Minister puts himself in the same group with those Macedonians. He therefore easily concludes that everyone thinking that way criticises the Arch and "Skopje 2014" on 'daily-political' bases.

To my knowledge, the Arch Macedonia was never announced as a symbol-to-be of the Macedonian independence. Portraying it as such it is easy to discursively construct a scenario in which the critique of the opposition looks like 'daily-political', since even being announced as such before its construction the opposition has criticised it all the time.

In the text that follows I recognise the beginning of the second part of the speech or the body of it. It seems as the rhetor announces a break with the past discourse, but this in fact does not happen:

'But to leave that, that is behind us. Today is a great day and I will not talk about some bad memories'.

The speech is again directed towards the opponents and the uncertainty if the art-works of the Project have been widely accepted. Proposing that 'it is the people who have the right to judge' and that the 'cleanest judgment will be the one of the future generations, relieved by today's daily party-related disputes' the rhetor tries to accomplish two ends: firstly, mentally separate the 'opposition' or the 'politicians' from the 'people', and secondly, to designate as final arbitrators not the people who witness the results of the Project, but the 'future generations'. This strategy relativises and compromises any critique of the project. Moreover, by designating the 'history' to judge the project the rhetor tries to add value to the facilities as something that is of such great ideological and factual quality that it will outlive all critiques and obstacles of time:

'..or rather, history is the one which will give the final judgment'... 'all great works were created through pain, through suffering and many opponents' (...) For this favour, let me today publicly firstly say thanks to all my opponents and all opponents of the project. Without their opposition to the "unseen" and "undone", without their, mostly unfounded, criticism, without protests, demonstrations and spitting on this project, today, and in the future, it would not be what it is now'.

In the same manner, the rhetor later argues that, also partially because of the loud opposition to the Project, the art-works from "Skopje 2014" will become part of the European and world art history. The speaker is also referring to van Gogh as one of the artists unrecognised during his life time but widely celebrated after his death.

In the genre of irony and in cynical way the Prime Minister in this part of the speech with small variations in the text repeats four times that 'for this we should be immensely grateful to our opponents'. In the last instance he even uses the words 'opponents and enemies'.

There is another argumentation fallacy within this discourse. The protests of the oppositional voices were not based on "unseen" and "undone", as early as 2010 there was a promotional video of the design solutions for the Macedonia Square. The students protests were grounded namely in this draft of the Project. The argumentation scheme which describes the protest as mostly unfounded 'spitting' on the project enables the rhetor to introduce here the so called 'myth of the victim'. Not only the artists of "Skopje 2014" but also the political elite that stands behind the project are depicted in this context from worm-eye view, as victims of the 'the part of the media and their representatives' and of the 'NGOs, who mostly in agreement with the opposition parties, have organized protests'.

The speaker portrays public expression of discontent, even in a form of peaceful protest against government's policies, almost as illegitimate tool in democracies. Typical for autocratic-populist regimes with strong leaning towards *authoritarian, hierarchical and leader-oriented* attitude (Reisigl, 2008) with no extra argument offered the civil sector is accused in collaboration with the political opponents. It seems as all the threads are held by the opposition, in being able to control the media and the NGOs, while the actual political leadership of the country is fighting to resist this assault.

In this part of the speech the rhetor crystallises the description of the opposing groups, by creating 'We' group versus 'They' or 'Other' group(s):

'Here let me make a distinction between the opponents of this project, and namely on those who were politically motivated, with the sole objective we to lose points among the public and they to win points, in order to fulfil their political, party agenda and were in the vast majority between those who publicly protested; and the second group of opponents who were not party-politically motivated and that simply had a different opinion, and this is the group to which I would especially like to express my public respect, because I have respect for every person who has a different opinion than mine or anyone's, and its expression is implementation of democracy. They are our citizens and they deserve respect regardless of their views.'

In this excerpt of the speech the rhetor clearly delimits the non-supporters from the supporters of the project. Moreover, with this distinction, he excludes the formation of other potential groups, such as 'un-decided', 'ignorant of politics' or the least desired 'opponents within the party sympathisers'. He further makes distinction between the non-supporters: one group of politically motivated citizens and other group which simply has different views from the governing elite. What is interesting here from point of view of discourse analysis is that through the strategy of distinguishing within the group of non-supporters of the project between the one group that aimed to 'fulfil their political, party agenda and were in the vast majority between those who publicly protested' and another group that 'simply had a different opinion', the rhetor tries to belittle the expression of public protest to a small oppositional elite motivated solely by seizing of the executive power in the state.

Interestingly, the rhetor uses in this context an *enthymeme* or abbreviated syllogism. By underscoring that there exist two groups of non-supporters and one of them deserves to receive Prime Minister's expression of 'public respect', the rhetor invites the audience to logically complete

the argumentation pattern and conclude that the other group of opponents does not deserve the same treatment.

While expressing public respect to the second group, the Prime Minister uses the words 'they are our citizens' and therefore they deserve respect regardless of their views. One may ask why the rhetor uses the word 'our' in this context. To whom these citizens belong? To the party? To the state? This wording equalises citizens with subjects, one may say 'with the one with whom we rule'. This logic also supports the assumption that some citizens deserve while the other do not 'deserve respect', because the last ones are not 'our citizens'. Frckovski argues that one of the crucial elements of populism is its ability to create 'its own people'. In this part of the discourse it is easy to recognise the creation of the notion of 'our people'.

With the statement 'Second gratitude let me convey to our supporters' the speaker opens a new part of the speech. Contrary to the expectations, the Prime Minister is not addressing the supporters of the project but once more accuses the opponents in manner of severe political differentiation and polarisation:

'Without the support of all of you we would hardly be able to resist a good party and politically motivated and organized campaign of one really Goebbels'-like propaganda of the lowest type and of emotionless wiping of the floor with anyone who would dare, for instance in the last and the year before, to say anything positive about this project.'

This is another example of exercising worm-eye view. Although the opposition parties are not in position to control the media their protest is associated with 'Goebbels'-like propaganda of the lowest type'. The rhetor also constructs a *fallacy of treat* in which someone should 'dare' to publically support "Skopje 2014", because one could become a object of an 'emotionless wiping of the floor' if noticed by the opposition.

At the end of the main part of the speech the Prime Minister expresses his third gratitude to the artists of the "Skopje 2014" art-works. In patriotic tone he again refers to the expression of 'honour and remembrance' for the Macedonian historical figures and events, 'who long ago have deserved at least this, which today we have created'. Differently than the opposition's depiction of the artists as co-operators in money laundering and lackeys creating politicised art, the Prime Minister defends the artists as victims, being 'criticized' and 'humiliated', despite being 'innocent'. Here one can notice patterns from the myth of the victim.

The constant referral to the artists in context of fulfilling their 'patriotic duty' towards the political figures of the past can be observed as yet another expression of *calculated ambivalence*: a constant appeal to the people to agree with the idea that the whole project is nothing but respect for the ancestors, something that they should not express discontent with. This fallacious argumentation pattern tends to hide that part of "Skopje 2014" were also the expensive willow trees planted in the river Vardar along the boats which by many critics have described as pirate-like, the building of a carousel next to the Stone Bridge, as well as the most expensive investment of the project, the panoramic wheel "Eye" still in construction.

From structural point of view the commemorative speech almost ends with the gratitude towards the artists. It is significant that the whole speech lasts a little longer than 31 minutes and the commemorative speech as a form of deliberation ends only at the end of the 13 minute. The whole

speech turns in to public expression of gratitude towards all the participants in the project: companies, Centre Municipality, artists, ministries, etc. Until the 26 minute the commemorative speech factually turns into simple naming of anyone participating in the project.

In the last minutes of the speech, in something that can be observed as conclusion of it, the rhetor again returns to the current political straggles:

‘Maybe this is why I was sometimes criticized for hiding behind other people, that I avoid to admit my role in this project. Today, today is a good opportunity to answer to these critiques. Yes. I stand behind this project. I think it's good, of good quality and useful, and that there is nothing wrong with it. Yes. I support and will support this project, as I do that in thousands other cases, when I believe in something, when I have, and we have, ideas and vision as how something to be better, more useful and more effective for the citizens and the state. Just as I stand behind and support thousands other projects of the government, whether it is computers for children in the schools, or subsidies to farmers, whether in the construction of sport halls, the construction of industrial and tax-free zones, mines, power plants, hospitals, changes (of laws) used to attract new investors, new factories, or other reforms and actions.’

In a discourse delivered on the anniversary of the Independence Day, a day supposed to be a moment of conciliation of the nation and of coming to terms with the past, the Prime Minister opens the conclusion with defence of his personality and his personal role in the project “Skopje 2014”. He further argues that this is just one of ‘thousand other’ project in the fields of education, welfare, business, health, etc, which are supported by his government. This rhetoric was later widely accepted by the ministers and the media supportive of the government.

In my view, the rhetor of this discourse failed to follow the formal rules of the genre of ceremonial speech. The speaker failed to refer to the moments of the creation of the Macedonian state. The strategy of *avoidance* can be easily explained, knowing that both of the statehoods of Macedonia (the one within Yugoslavia and the complete independence) were won during the reign of the Left, personified in the Social Democrats in the current political struggles.

Further, the speaker fails to create a feeling of national reconciliation with this speech. In this regard, the rhetor to often created conflicting groups during his speech, or the feeling of ‘We’ against the ‘Other’. Although the rhetor seemed to have had intention to equally grant attention to all of these groups in his speech, factually, even when referring to the supporters or the artists of the Project, he addresses his ‘enemies’. In this context, the Prime Minister uses vilification of the political opponent, sometimes bordering with what is named hate-speech. Hence, not only this speech is not a source of national reconciliation, it is a source of potential polarisation and conflict in the society.

Finally, the speaker seems to glorify his personality through the role he designates to himself and his ideas in the history of the nation. After publically admitting for the first time that he stands behind this project he declares:

‘Dear citizens, one day all of us will be gone [will die], only the deeds will continue living. Politically-party motivated “fog-making” and “blowing up political dust” one day will fade away and the sight will not be blurred by anything the deeds will continue to shine with their glow and the critics and the future generations not burdened by the daily-political and party manipulations will be able to give their final judgment.’

It is important to underline that, as in the beginning of the speech, during these concluding sentences the TV camera was centred on the large statue of Alexander the Great, seen through the “Arch Macedonia” in the background. The *implicit audience* (Gill and Whedbee, 1997) to whom the final conclusions of the speech are clearly directed is neither the audience standing in front of the speaker nor the audience in front of the screens, but the ‘future generations’. With this strategy the rhetor tends to both immortalise his ideas (and their embodiments) and secure positive evaluations by the future generations. This intention is even more evident if we bear on mind the visual effects with the statue of Alexander the Great in the background. This shows continuity from the distant past to today’s day to the distant future or the ‘eternity’. One can easily notice a wish for recognition of greatness in the Prime Minister’s speech. This can also be marked as tendency towards *personalisation* or *leader-oriented* attitude (Reisigl, 2008).

It is paradoxical, nevertheless, that the rhetor not even once in his speech alludes to the creation of new identity of the Macedonian people. As discussed earlier, the governing political elite, and especially the Prime Minister, was particularly cautious in the dissemination of the antiquisation ideas, while subtly attracting new voters (mainly through ‘silent’ conveying of messages such as extensive use of symbols and visual aids or explicit argumentations by public but non-political personas in the media), the discourses of the politicians were supposed not to offend the feelings of the voters with the ‘old’ national identity.

In sum, the commemorative speech delivered by the Prime Minister on the celebration of the Independence of the Republic was abounded with argumentation schemes dividing the society on ‘friends and enemies’ and potent to further polarise the positions of the political opponents along several lines. Moreover, the speech was full of symbolic qualifications bordering hate-speech, something unexpected in celebrative occasions and from such a high political authority.

At the end of this chapter I will present several texts from Prime Minister Gruevski where without direct referral to “Skopje 2014” he practices populist speech. My intention will be to embed this speech in the general populist argumentation scheme of the Prime Minister and to demonstrate that this exact speech is not an exception but only a part of discursive strategy which can be marked as structural populism.

Class struggles

In the beginning of the thesis I have defined democracy as a governance system founded on institutions that foster shared distribution of power, in which leaders are selected through free and fair elections and where citizens have extensive opportunities to participate in political and economic life, with final end of establishing an egalitarian kind of society with equal opportunities for all members of the society.

An important part of this definition is the extension of the definition beyond the political into the socio-economic sphere. This definition calls for pluralistic, participative and deliberative governance tending to build a merits-based society as opposing concept of society based on ascribed criteria of social stratification or inherited privileges. As such, democratic systems are assumed to provide for

individuals' equal opportunity for vertical mobilisation in the society without the use of violence or coercion by the governing political elite in attempt to temporarily or permanently isolate certain groups from these democratically guaranteed right. This on the other hand, assumes flexible majorities, free and informed electorate able to peacefully replace ineffective politicians through deliberation and fair elections in attempt to improve its standards of living. In a nutshell, democracies are based on the idea that there are no fixed classes and fixed interests in the society. While they predict re-distribution of economic rights and political power to formerly disadvantaged groups, they exclude any attempt for systematic denial of access to assets or power to certain groups.

To which extend the governmental elite and the cultural elite supportive of the same are adhering to this standing point can be observed in the aforementioned documentary film "Project Skopje 2014". The 50 minutes long documentary is available only in Macedonian language and without subtitles.⁸³ The film was produced in mid-2013. At this point the Project was still unfinished but facing fierce criticism the government and the supportive media engaged into justification of it.

Most of the conclusions will be drawn on the basis of the structure of the movie and on the relation of the structure and the content. The documentary is based on a series of archive materials, mainly speeches of the leading politicians from the government as well as from the opposition, and on interviews with non-politicians, all of which are commenting on "Skopje 2014" in general and on the discourses of the political actors in particular. All these public personas and opinion-makers are expressing their views individually, in their private settings and without the interference of the interviewer. The author of the film tries to create what can be named an "artificial debate" between the political opponents by simple offering of confronted argumentations. This scheme is almost consistently used until the end of the documentary when audio effects suggest ideological leaning towards one of the political actors. This will be discussed at the end of this section.

The film starts with an Introduction in which the arguments of the opposition leader, Branko Crvenkovski, are displayed. These are meant to be refuted in the later artificially created debate:

"Skopje 2014 so far cost more than 250 million [Euros]. No one can say how much will be the price in the end". Gruevski: "[they, SDSM] misinform the public that the project will cost 200 million Euros, which is completely untrue. According to calculations the project should cost about 80 million Euros in 8 budget years. (...)

When people get poorer, when the economy collapses, when debts are rising, the government is spending huge public money, your money, our money on crazy projects. While people do not have bread to eat they built monuments, waxwork museums, museums on water, triumphal arch. What triumphs do we celebrate? What victory are we celebrating?" (...)

"If there is money for sculptures, statues, monuments, museums, waterfalls, fountains, etc .., then there must be money to help the living. (...)

⁸³ Documentary film "Project Skopje 2014", published 4 July 2013, last viewed on 27.01.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Rml3nphEzU>

“Mr. Gruevski, do you know in which country do you live? Do you even know the history of your people? Do you know how many hospitals, how many kindergartens, schools, how many factories lie and hide in these new buildings of yours?”

The leader of the Social Democrats draws an apocalyptic scenario where ‘people get poorer, when the economy collapses, when debts are rising’. He claims that ‘while people do not have bread to eat’ public money is spent on ‘crazy projects’. Finally he asks ‘how many hospitals, how many kindergartens, schools, how many factories lie and hide in these new buildings?’ These argumentation can be summaries in the last statement of Crvenkovski: “If there is money for sculptures, statues, monuments, museums, waterfalls, fountains, etc .., then there must be money to help the living’.

After the eight minute of the film a series of new speakers are introduced, all of them but one, supporters of the project “Skopje 2014” and the government policies in general. The first to express his opinion is the TV host and showman Milenko Nedelkovski, followed by the artist Aco Stankovski, the journalist Mirka Velinovska and the architect Vangel Bozinovski. The publisher Nikola Gelevski is the only non-political figure that defends the argumentation of the oppositional voices.

In the first discourse delivered by a non-political actor the TV host Milenko Nedelkovski portrays the opposition of the project as an illegitimate political tool in democracies:

„Protesting against, say the church on the square, or against „Skopje 2014“... and how do they call them, the “Ploshtad Sloboda” their goal is not not to have church or not to have a mosque or to have a mosque... This is not it their goal. Their goal is to make such a confusion, that a heap of dissatisfaction will arise, which will pass to another and third discontent, so that ultimately it isn’t not to have a church ... ok, there is no church here, big deal, it is not here it will be elsewhere, it is not it, but to ... out of the institutions... out of the citizens’ will.... to overtake the parliamentary and the executive power. This is their goal.“

Nedelkovski’s argumentation scheme clearly puts under doubt the peaceful protest of the architecture students guided by “Ploshtad Sloboda” as part of the process to gain power ‘out of the institutions’, ‘out of the citizens’ will’. The rhetor employs *fallacy of treat* to prove that these protests have no other intention but to illegally ‘overtake the parliamentary and the executive power’. Peaceful protests, however, are predicted expressions of the citizen’s will even in the polyarchic societies and indeed are effective mechanisms of balancing or correcting the actions of the political elites. Peaceful disobedience along referenda is indispensable element of participative or *popular democracies*.

In this context is also interesting the way the rhetor has referred to the non-government sector in general. When mentioning the name of the NGO “Ploshtad Sloboda” he uses the wording ‘...how do they call them’, as if he does not even remember their name or as if they do not deserve to be remembered. The degradation of the civil society sector is thus, typically, part of the discourse even of the non-political actors defending autocratic populism.

The next significant discourse of the documentary film was delivered by the artist Aco Stankovski, one of the most fervent defenders of the antiquisation thesis:

“...on the other hand appeared criticism based on a sociological level, who suggested... unprincipled behaviour of the government about the project “Skopje 2014” because huge funds have been invested in useless things, such as monuments and buildings, and not given to redundant workers and other poor for food and medicine. So, once more, a “partisan” rhetoric that appears, right, as a retro-Bolshevik ideology. But my vision *visa vie* those stories is .. first let’s say, where do they come from, these critics? The criticism comes from people who have been in power 15 years and never found the means to do something for the common good, but always, this money ended up on some Cayman Islands, right? .. In some banks or we are looking it has been built pretty much on Vodno (elite neighbourhood in Skopje on the mountain Vodno), a whole city with tens of thousands of houses made in the 15 years of transition. So now we have an inversion. Previously, this money was going into private houses built on Vodno, and today the private houses on Vodno are built by businessmen generating non-state money, but money from their own businesses. But on the other hand, we see that the state has found it necessary to do something for the people, in the valley ... something that is not done for decades.(...)

The story about the food is idiotic story. It's pathetic, sentimental story that should mobilize the masses and is rendered by the richest strata of Skopje. All of those who are re-telling this story are residents of those houses, right?...Vodno, Debarmaalo, Karposh, that higher-middle class, right? ... all those who are members of the former red bourgeoisie. So, an incredible hypocrisy reigns. (...)

“...all the time some hypocrisy reigns. From that peasant-proletarian rebellion which never existed, but has been accented historically as such, to their enrichment through expropriation of the land and the wealth of the peasants and the bourgeois of the former state, of Macedonia..or the Vardar Banovina (the name of today’s Macedonia under Serbian reign), so to say... It was in fact a violent seizure of wealth, that later becomes state’s and then it gets acquired by the red bourgeoisie. And now that red bourgeoisie, which you know, is working through the opposition parties, imposes itself, and the martyrs of fifty years, right, who were in shadow and exile, and who suddenly gained power and finally grabbed it well and are in a position to build something.... this is what, perhaps this three-generational hypocrisy, tries to destroy. This is what annoys me!”

In terms of caring the main message of the film I find this discourse as probably the most important. Together with the concluding discourse by Bozinovski, Stankovski’s discourse brings about the idea that “Skopje 2014” symbolises the clash of the former and the current elite and the final victory of the later. Significantly, the rhetor uses terminology easily associated with Marx’s class theory when speaking about opposition’s ‘partisan rhetoric’, ‘retro-Bolshevik ideology’, and describing it as ‘red bourgeoisie’ that in the past came to power through ‘peasant-proletarian rebellion that never existed’. In this context the use of this terminology is used as discursive strategy of negative predication of the opponent under two assumptions: that terminology related to or associative with the class theory of Marx is offensive⁸⁴ and that the Social Democratic elite should be further associated with communism even after it officially abandoned the communist ideology.

⁸⁴ I.e. some of the most offensive words in the street jargon during the post-socialist period were the words ‘komunjar’ or ‘komunjaga’, both a pejorative form of the word ‘communist’. These words were not necessarily directed against the Left-wing but rather directed against the traditionalist or the one not acceptive of the symbols of the assumed new rapid Western modernisation. The words ‘partisan’, ‘Bolshevik’ or ‘red-bourgeoisie’ could, thus, be observed as a continuation and variation of the same pejorative labelling.

The rhetor firstly tries to uncover the assumed hypocrisy behind the argumentation of the SDSM leader and secondly to portray the 'reality'. The rhetor argues that the former elite has 'never found the means to do something for the common good', due to corruptive enrichment in the 15 years after the independence of Macedonia. However, Stankovski returns further back in history. He connects this political elite from the post-Yugoslav period with the 'red bourgeoisie' from the period between the World War I and World War II, when Macedonia firstly became a province of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, managed mainly by Serbia, and then a republic within the socialist Yugoslav federation. The rhetor factually tries to embed the oppositional elite from pluralist Macedonia in the older establishment of Yugoslavia, thus making it easier to construct his own anti-establishment rhetoric.

Constructing temporal order the rhetor describes the overthrowing of the former elite as a *salvation* and righting an historic wrong:

'So now we have an inversion. Previously, this money was going into private houses built on Vodno, and today the private houses on Vodno are built by businessmen generating non-state money, but money from their own businesses'.

Without offering additional arguments to support the thesis that contrary to the previous the current business elite is not corruptive the rhetor continues his discourse. In this context it is worth mentioning that the deforestation and urbanisation of Vodno has never developed with such a rapid pace as during the last ten years, during the governing of VMRO-DPMNE. This led to erosion of the soil and ruining of the foundations of many newly-built houses. Moreover, after the dense urbanisation of the foot of the mountain Vodno facing the city Skopje the government is currently negotiating with private investors the conditions for building of the controversial "Sunny Town". The "Sunny town" is envisioned as completely new elite district to be built on the other side of the foot of the mountain Vodno not facing the city Skopje. Due to legal shortcomings in which top government officials were involved the Constitutional Court has stopped the realisation of the plan in 2008. Applying the rationale introduced by the speaker the intensified urbanisation of Vodno in the last ten years and the involvement of the government in "Sunny Town" can as well be observed as evidence for corruptive enrichment of the current elite. If so, the tacit message of Stankovski's argumentation scheme is that the actions of the current political elite are to be justified if we take into consideration the urbanisation of Vodno, observed as symbol of corruptive enrichment, during the former elite. As in the case of systematic devaluation of the buildings symbolising the power of the former elite in the city centre by building larger facilities next to them or "masking" them with new facades, the intensified urbanisation of Vodno can also be observed as symbolical demonstration of power. In a retaliatory way, on the same place and on a larger scale, the new governing elite has continued to build elite housing. This action shows that the leadership of VMRO-DPMNE is at least embracing the same policy of demonstrating power as their predecessors. As in the case of "Skopje 2014" in the city core the unprecedented scale of building on mountain Vodno can also symbolise no intention to give up the executive power in a democratic way in a relatively long period.

As in many discourses analysed earlier here again the speaker combines the *heroic myth* and the *myth of the victim*. In this part of the discourse Stankovski explicitly states that the victims of the former elite 'who were in shadow and exile' have gained and finally have firm grasp of the power:

'And now that red bourgeoisie, which you know, is working through the opposition parties, imposes itself, and the martyrs of fifty years, right, who were in shadow and exile, and who suddenly gained

power and finally grabbed it well and are in a position to build something.... this is what, perhaps this three-generational hypocrisy, tries to destroy’.

According to the rhetor the discontinuity is interrupted, the ‘organic unity’ of the people is once again established, the ruling class has been overthrown and elections-based switch of power typical for democratic systems it is impossible to envision in a longer period to follow. This is what Frckovski (2014, 6) described as circumvention of pluralism. The problems dividing the people, the meaning of different cleavages in the society are belittled or ignored. The representative elites, especially from the ranks of the opposition, are put aside and entirely portrayed as corrupted political class. However, the suggested final “unity of the people”, is an illusion, just as a classless or society without hierarchy is. In this line, evidently the proportions, the intensity and the multidimensionality of the resistance to the Project have demonstrated that “Skopje 2014” is far from embodiment of “common good” or symbol of the “unity of the people”. Additionally, against the argumentation of the rhetor one may ask how democratic the representation of history in the new Museum of national history is.⁸⁵

In sum, despite constructing reality in which the ‘organic unity’ of the people has been once again established, the discourse of Stankovski also legitimises the coercive mechanisms of governing by the new political elite. The speech as a whole suggests that the classes have switched and now the newly established elite has the same rights to usurpation of the state apparatus as the previous elite had. This is to be hinted by the vengeful and cynical rhetoric with the rationale “if they were allowed to do that, then we are as well” or “if someone was wasting the resources, I also have the right to waste them”, although “the wasting” is represented through its opposite, “the building”. Further, the discourses of the political opposition are described as ‘idiotic’ or ‘pathetic, sentimental story’. This is typical offending of the political opponent, characteristic of right-wing populist discursive patterns.

Although the critique of the violent mechanisms of gaining power by the former elite can be accepted as normatively justifiable, there are several argumentative fallacies used within the discourse. Firstly, the Social Democratic elite from pluralist, democratic Macedonia cannot be easily equalised with the former communist political elite. Secondly, it is not normatively justifiable to legitimise the current coercive imposition of new national identity and enrichment of the new political elite if the same mechanisms were assumed to be used by the former executive elite. In the same line, it is also not normatively justifiable to appeal for support of the new elite on the expense of hatred and exclusion or isolation of the former political elite. This is moreover so because the pluralistic society does not assume firm ideologies or firm majorities among the voters.

Despite strong distrust in the ‘establishment’ and the combination of the heroic and the myth of the victim discussed by Wodak *et al.* (2014) and Frckovski (2014), from the repertoire of rhetoric principles used by oppositional right-wing populism discussed by Reisigl (2008) the rhetor also used *insulting* of the political opponent and promise of *salvation* and liberation as discursive rhetorical principles with potency to negatively influence the democracy in Macedonia.

The next speech I found important for discourse analysis was delivered by the journalist Mirka Velinovska, writing for *Vecer*. This discourse was only shortly interrupted by the speech of Nikola Gelevski, a publisher by profession. The message of his speech can be summarised in its first sentences:

⁸⁵ I discussed this in length in chapter 5

„Gruevism works only on creating impression, only on facades. Nothing grounded, nothing durable and nothing as investment in people, according to me.”

As short interruption of Velinovska’s speech the discourse of Gelevski should be understood as a background for the following argumentation, the one offered by Velinovska. Gelevski advances a argument widely accepted by the oppositional intelligence in general and the political Left in particular, as well as by the opponents of “fake aesthetics“, most authentically represented by the students of architecture and the NGO sector (i.e. “Ploshtad Sloboda”). This argumentation scheme holds that all policies of the populist regime of Prime Minister Gruevski are nothing more than simulacrum or “imagined policies” (Frckovski, 2014, 10) aiming to mask the reality of economic underdevelopment and poverty. Gelevski tries to draw an analogy between these fake or “imagined policies” and the creating of “façade of development” through “Skopje 2014”.

As counterargument to this argumentation, Velinovska at the beginning of her speech legitimately argues that ‘spiritual upgrade’ should not be perceived as of second importance in comparison to the “policies of full stomach”. However, in her later discourse, the rhetor uses several argumentation patterns which can be marked as typical of oppositional (right-wing) populist rhetoric threatening pluralist society: sharp *anti-establishment* rhetoric, subdivision of the world of social actors into *friends and enemies*, and most notably, *insulting* of the political opponents:

“There were people who tried to equalize the “policies of full stomach” with what is spiritual upgrade ... justifying that now is not the time ... because we do not have money ... and forgetting to ask themselves the additional question: if the peoples were realizing their spiritual needs only when they had their stomachs full the world would not be today the way it looks like. (...)

In this public debate, the aggressive propaganda against the construction of the “Skopje 2014” project, I think that the critics of the projects entered, totally unprepared. There was a complete cacophony in their views. Some of them were so absurd, not to say stupid, that they embarrassed us as a nation. In a perfidious way, a thoroughly planned script, was implemented by a certain group....I am not convinced that all of them were aware for what purpose they were engaged and for whom they are working. Since, you know, when you have narrowed consciousness, or do not know anything about yourself, or are at the stage where you have no interest whether you exist...you have no identity and you do not need it.”

Referring to the opponents of the Project and their views in one and the same discourse Velinovska argues that there were both ‘complete cacophony in their views’ and concerted work by the opposition of the Project (a ‘thoroughly planned script, implemented by a certain group’). This reasoning invites the viewer to fallaciously conclude that all the critique comes from only one centre, the Social Democrats (or the Soros Foundation), capable of manipulating with all the protestors. However, different groups have expressed criticism on different aspects of “Skopje 2014”: some criticized the aesthetic aspects, others the religious or ethnic and only some were political, in the narrower sense of the word. As expected in pluralist society, some of the different oppositional groups could also have antagonistic arguments grounded in the variety of their interests, i.e. the arguments of ethnic Albanian Muslim community are not necessarily compatible with the arguments of the Orthodox-Christian ethnic-Macedonian community or the interests of the students from the Faculty of Architecture are not necessarily identical with the one of the Social Democrats. Moreover, it should be assumed that relative to the government the political opposition is not capable of imposing its interests on the rest of the society since it does not possess the instruments of the state power. The variety of interests and the variety of arguments used against “Skopje 2014” are

therefore rather evidence of genuine, authentic protest than artificially created unison from individual political actor.

In the same context, most important are the rhetor's *nomination* and *predication* strategies. She describes the actions of the protestors as 'aggressive propaganda', some of their views as 'absurd, not to say stupid', and their actions performed 'in a perfidious way'. Velinovska further claims that the individuals involved in the protests have not deliberately decided to participate in them, but were rather bribed and manipulated. According to her many of them were individuals with 'narrowed consciousness', who 'do not know anything about [them]-selves, or are at the stage where [they] have no interest whether [they] exist, '[nor] aware for what purpose they were engaged and for whom they are working'. Velinovska simply puts all the oppositional voices into one 'Other(s)' or into the category of 'enemies' and describes them as politically immature and manipulated masses.

The last rhetor before the concluding discourse of Prime Minister Gruevski is delivered by the architect Vangel Bozinovski. Most of this discourse was presented and analysed in the earlier parts of the dissertation (chapter 4) where Bozinovski argues that the rootedness of the identity in the territory has a crucial 'psychological importance for the nation's success'.⁸⁶ In this context I will only refer to the last part of the same discourse where Bozinovski states:

'The other variety is, you will form a party and will be in opposition and now as opposition will start criticizing, and this ["Skopje 2014"] really is very easy to accept as an opportunity to criticize, because "we all know that the Macedonians cannot do anything, not a thing".'

Earlier in the same text Bozinovski claims that due to the bad educational system, where the students' 'roots and pride [were] cut off' the academic citizens [could] become journalists, editors, professor or a Prime Minister, but they necessarily would have to 'feel inferior to anyone from outside' the country. In the sentence above he claims that alternatively the individual with inferiority complex may form a party and become an opposition and then as opposition start criticizing. This single sentence holds two powerful claims. It firstly assumes the "unity of the people" as something given in the nature and secondly it assumes the forming of opposition party as something recent in the history (with the development of the plural societies, perhaps the 19-20th century) and one that challenges the previously given "unity of the people". The rhetor describes the forming of the party as 'opening new business' or not as an action that encompasses accumulation and articulation of political interests of groups in the society but as private enterprise of individuals with final goal erosion of the "unity of the people".

Considering the tone of the whole documentary film and the speaker to whom the final, concluding words are given (the Prime Minister) this discursive strategy clearly exalts the current political leadership and excludes it from any decadence ascribed to the elites. The documentary film ends with the short speech of Prime Minister Gruevski delivered from his cabinet (alluding an aura of serious statesman):

„When one day, the whole political dust that rose up, the whole fog created from various manipulations and lies, slander ... when that fog will fall down, when that dust will fall down, when generations of politicians will change, 10,15,20 years pass ... what will remain is the deeds.”

⁸⁶ Whole text in the Appendix text 4

Importantly, just after the final message of the PM the film continues with clips showing the assembling of the statue of Alexander the Great on the Macedonia Square accompanied with glorious music suggesting righteousness or a sort of victory of the pro-government argumentation over the arguments of the oppositional voices.

This short speech is having the effect of conclusion. Prime Minister Gruevski uses the same metaphor at the end of the official opening of "Arch Macedonia" on 6 January, 2012, at the end of his speech on the Congress of the Women of VMRO in December, 2011, and in March, 2014 in the night-show of Milenko Nedelkovski. Reisigl (2008) describes *insistent repetition* as one of the ten populist rhetorical principles of oppositional right-wing populism.

Gill and Whedbee (1997) on the other hand underscore the importance of '*archetypal metaphors*' as discursive tools. The authors claim that *archetypal metaphors* are especially powerful metaphors because they operate across generations and evoke deep-seated associations and feeling. This is more so, when the rhetor uses *anaphora*, or repetition, of the same metaphor in important commemorative occasions or broadcast debates.

Regarding the documentary film as a whole, at the end of the analyses one may draw few conclusions.

Firstly, the language of the pro-government speakers is much more offensive and ideologically charged than the language of the oppositional rhetors.

Secondly, relative to the great number of pro-government speakers, only two speakers from the oppositional voices have expressed their views on the matter. This, naturally, resulted in disproportionately less amount of time given to the opponents to represent their views. While the artist Aco Stankovski and the journalist Mirka Velinovska are given a considerable time in the central part of the documentary, the 7 minutes speech of the architect Vangel Bozinovski at the end of the film is given the form of "final remarks", after which the conclusion of the Prime Minister follows. On the other hand, the speeches of the publisher Nikola Gelevski are serving only as short interruption between the speeches of the pro-government speakers while the speech of the other non-supportive actor involved in the documentary is only 40 seconds long.

Lastly, except from archival clips from public speeches the views towards "Skopje 2014" by the leader of the main oppositional party, Branko Crvenkovski, could not be heard. Additionally, no discourses of other political leaders, including the leader of the main ethnic-Albanian party, have been represented through this documentary film. This evidently gives advantages to the Prime Minister Gruevski, who in several occasions during the film defends his theses about different aspects of the Project. Additionally, the documentary film ends with clips showing the assembling of Alexander's statue accompanied with glorious music. These facts suggest that the government is the direct commissioner of the film with final aim to legitimise the project.

Following the common narrative thread of the argumentations of the pro-government speakers in the documentary film one can notice that according to them "Skopje 2014" symbolises the clash of the former and the current political elites and the final victory of the later. It is a clash of two identities and two versions of history, where the building of "Skopje 2014" marks the victory and establishment of a new, and reportedly previously suppressed, version of the Macedonian past. Together with the establishment of the new national myth and identity, it is also supposed that new

elite has been established to protect this 'version of the reality'. However, the establishment of the new elite is described in a way that counters the democratic principles of flexible majorities and deliberative electorate. Both Stankovski and Bozinovski portray the switch of the elites not temporarily, but rather similarly to the populist concept of reestablishment of the "unity of the people", something which is assumed to last very long and ideally forever. Stankovski advances argumentation that allows retaliatory politics, according to which the newly established elite has the same rights to usurpation of the state apparatus as the previous elite had. "Skopje 2014" symbolises overshadowing of the former elite's power and should serve as discouragement for any attempt for restoration of its former societal positions. The argumentation of Nedelkovski and Velinovska on the other hand, put forward arguments which contradict to democratic principles of expressing public disobedience through peaceful protest, such as degradation of the civil society sector and smear campaign against the political opposition assumed to manipulate with all the protestors prepared to cheaply sell-out their national identity. All the discourses signal that the "former corrupted political class" has been overthrown and deserves no further chance to participate in the executive power in relatively long period. These discursive patterns clearly contradict democratic and pluralist principles.

Tightly controlled and instrumentalised media

Another aspect worth of discussion in context of the relationship between "Skopje 2014" and the democratic philosophy of the governing elite is the treatment of the media by the executive power. Unfair representation of opposition's argumentation, the use of symbols and audio-visual effects to favour the pro-government stances and other elements presented in the first two sections of this chapter are signalling involvement of the political elite in the publically funded national media. In the previous chapters I have also analysed the close cooperation between the private pro-government media houses *Vecer* and *Republika* and the government. *Republika* in particular has quoted in length the speeches of VMRO-DPMNE's spokesman and of the government officials without offering journalist's or editorial's opinion on the issues discussed in the articles. In more than one instance during the analysis of the texts from *Vecer* and *Republika* I found almost complete overlapping of wording in the articles dedicated to current events related to "Skopje 2014". This signals close cooperation between the party's press relations team and the media houses defending and legitimising the government's policies. In this context I will present an exceptional discourse from *Republika* illustrative of the media dependency from the governing party. The article is from mid-June, 2013 and reflects on the project similar to "Skopje 2014" realised in Albania's capital Tirana during the same time:

„...with accelerated spending motivated by political ambition ahead of this year's elections in Albania were erected a series of monuments to controversial historical figures with questionable aesthetic values. (...) The huge number of monuments, 20, is the largest investment in commemorative art that Albania has experienced in recent decades. The costs of this initiative supported by the state, for the public still remain unpublished and unknown. (...) ...it was conducted by politicians, who utilised this opportunity to improve their agenda and to boost public sympathy for them ahead of parliamentary elections this year. (...) Instead of celebrating the life's work of individuals who were selected, the statues turned into an instrument of further polarizing of the Albanian, already poisoned political climate, which grew with the newborn nationalism of Prime Minister Sali Berisha. (...) To present

himself as a nationalist ahead of elections (...) ...underline that the politicization of the selection process alienated many Albanian. They are unlikely to be significant for future generations, according to analysts, due to ideological and administrative chaos that characterized the Albanian government and its institutions. (...) ...promotes controversial political figures, who pursued politics of separation, stressing the ideological confusion of the Albanian elite. (...)

Albania has no specific law that regulates the criteria for building the monuments. In order for a monument to be built, a approval by the local city council is needed, and the municipalities bear the costs and provide guidelines for the artists. However, the selection and financing of most of the monuments discovered during the celebration was conducted by the central government. The government set up a ministerial committee that chose the historical figures in honour of whom a monument will be erected, and it had the final say in the approval of the artworks. The committee was led by Prime Minister Berisha. (...) ...has excluded the historical figures that are considered leftists, but also approved artworks that have little respect for the orthodoxy of commemorative art. (...) The opposition, which had no say in the selection process of the monuments set for the celebration, accused the government of poor planning and ignorance. "I've never heard of a government that first represents the project to build a monument, and then is searching for a place to build it," said the opposition leader. (...) ...claiming that many monuments of this period were placed in the wrong place and sometimes poorly made. (...) "The reason for this lays mainly in the short term of the competitions and the rush monuments to be erected," he said. Monuments set up in honour of specific individuals or in the service of political systems often do not stand the test of time." (*Republika*, June, 2013).

This article demonstrates how the pro-government media in Macedonia is tied to the political agendas of the governing party. Using almost the exact wording and argumentation patterns as the Macedonian opposition used in the critique of "Skopje 2014", *Republika* attacks the Albanian government for instrumentalisation of the project in encouraging nationalism and 'boost public sympathy ahead of the elections'.

In the first paragraph *Republika* describes the project as 'the largest investment in commemorative art that Albania has experienced in recent decades', with 'huge number of monuments, 20', most of monuments to be dedicated to 'controversial historical figures' and built 'with questionable aesthetic values'. It further argues that this 'accelerated spending [was] motivated by political ambition ahead of this year's elections'. The author argues that 'the costs of this initiative supported by the state, for the public still remain unpublished and unknown', thus questioning the transparency of the project. It also alludes that this project 'turned into an instrument of further polarizing of the Albanian, already poisoned political climate, which grew with the newborn nationalism of Prime Minister Sali Berisha'. The author also assumes that the 'politicization of the selection process alienated many Albanian' and that therefore these monuments 'are unlikely to be significant for [the] future generations'. This project is marked as 'politics of separation, stressing the ideological confusion of the Albanian elite'.

In the second paragraph of the excerpt it is explained how the selection and financing of most of the monuments was conducted by the central government in which the Prime Minister of Albania had the final say, while alienating the left-wing parties from the processes. Even more remarkable is that the opposition of the project in Albania has used almost the same arguments against its own government regarding their project, underscoring that the new government tries to come to terms with its communist past through projects such as this. *Republika* quotes these politicians in the

article and represents their argumentation as valid and morally viable against the evident autocratic and populist tones of the Albania's governing elite's identity policies.

Not only was the wording borrowed by the Macedonian opposition regarding the critique of "Skopje 2014" but also the conclusions about the final ends of the project were borrowed. The same outlet that was furiously defending "Skopje 2014" in the Macedonian public sphere against the same arguments of the domestic opposition now criticises a foreign project with almost the same argumentation schemes. This suggests that this media outlet expresses no genuine opinion by its own journalists and editors but simply serves as what Frckovski names 'one of the constitutive pillars' of the autocratic populist government in Macedonia.

This article also shows that not only Serbia undertook similar project to "Skopje 2014" in the city of Nis, but also Albanian capital Tirana, was turned into mass construction site. The case of Tirana, however, resembles the case of Skopje much closer than the case of Nis, for the Albanian case evidently involves the same identity-alteration intentions on state level, underlining not only heroes from the past but also one prioritising right-wing figures while excluding left-wing activists. It becomes clear that the whole region plunges into similar rhetoric for similar goals of the governing elites.

Quasi NGOs

Typical for all political regimes grounded in autocratic-populist ideology is to try to circumvent the legal procedures of the pluralist model of democracy. In the earlier chapters on national identity I have shown how "Skopje 2014" spurred violence among ethnic Macedonians as well as inter-ethnically, in both cases without any consequences for the organisers of the violations of the public order and the integrity of the peaceful protestors. In this context it is noteworthy that these groups were reacting very fast, were violent and mainly composed of young people, such as football fans. Most of the times they were appearing as counter-protesters to active protesters. There was, however, at least one instance in which they used violence as protest against the decision of the newly elected Mayor of Centre Municipality to put moratorium on the building of "Skopje 2014" in 2013. The group, later to be known as association of citizens "Veritas", has demolished the fence of the Municipality, broke many windows of the facility and entered in the office of the Mayor, to be stopped by the police only at that point of their action. No person or organisation was penalised for this violent expression of discontent.

In this context it is important to underline that "Skopje 2014" served as a project prolific of various organisations willing to defend the building of the monuments or the facilities as imagined by the project planners. The idea was to underline that popular intellectuals in particular, and the civil society in general, stand behind the idea and that democratic procedures are taken into consideration before the start of the Project.

Here I will provide three short excerpts from *Vecer* and *Republika* reporting on such organisations and the events organised by them:

"DEBATE OF THE ASSOCIATION OF CITIZENS "GREAT MOTHER - GODDESS"

Skopje 2014 example of a powerful civilization.

Organized by the Association of Citizens "Great Mother - Goddess" a public debate was held on the topic "Skopje 2014". The debate was attended by Valentina Bozhinovska, the representative of the Commission for Relations with Religious Communities and Religious Groups, Danilo Kocevski, critical chronicler, Vangel Bozinovski, architect and Goce Nanevski, sculptor." (*Vecer*, March, 2010).

"2000 intellectuals and doctors of sciences stand behind the project "Skopje 2014"

"Skopje as a crossroads of various civilizations has always been a city which blended several types of architecture. Baroque, Classicism and Neoclassicism were and are inseparable, rooted elements of the Macedonism in this region. This, among other things, was said at the panel discussion titled "Skopje 2014", which was organized by the institute "Pavel Shatev" on which yesterday debated university professors, architects, experts and journalists at the hotel Holiday Inn." (*Vecer*, February, 2010).

The last excerpt is from an article from the outlet *Republika*:

"Public Opinion Poll: Macedonians support "Skopje 2014"

At the request of the Institute Dimitri Cupovski, the agency "Ipsos Strategic Puls" conducted a survey of public opinion in several political and social issues."(*Republika*, July, 2013).

As noted, the first article reports on debate attended by representative of the Commission for Relations with Religious Communities and Religious Groups, critical chronicler, architect and sculptor, while the second article informs about '2000 intellectuals and doctors of sciences' who 'stand behind the project Skopje 2014.' The authority of different officially non-political actors, such as civil associations and institutes, as organisers of these debates was utilised to underscore the purely scientific character of the debates and the impartiality of the attendees. The authority and impartiality of these organisations is, however, questionable. Some of these organisations have in fact not existed before VMRO-DPMNE under the leadership of Gruevski won the elections in 2006, and not long before the erecting of "Skopje 2014" in particular. For many of these institutions there are no evidences for their official status. For instance, the Association of Citizens "Great Mother – Goddess" has no official website or any presence on the internet. The existence of the institutes "Pavel Shatev" and "Dimitri Cupovski" on the other hand, can be confirmed only through their presence on social media websites, such as Facebook profiles.

In the following chapter I will represent the democratic philosophy of the opposition embedded in the "Skopje 2014" debate. There I will more deeply analyse the argumentations of the oppositional voices regarding the freedom of expression as aspect of political rights in the current political life in Macedonia. In this context, however, it will be more effective to shortly juxtapose the arguments of the political opponents more specifically regarding the role of the civil society organisations in the everyday politics.

In a debate about the non-government sector in Macedonia one of the members of "Ploshtad Sloboda", Nikola Naumovski, explains why "Ploshtad Sloboda" is different from "Veritas":

„Ploshtad Sloboda did not succeed to gather thousand people on the square in few hours, but for four days succeeded to gather, together with “First Archibrigade”⁸⁷ [only] 150. All of them came personally [on the protest], with name and surname.”⁸⁸

He further clarifies that “Ploshtad Sloboda” is formed and officially registered by 15 people, most of which publicly known persons. He underscores that one of the most important differences between “Ploshtad Sloboda” and “Veritas” is the relationship towards the media, where the members of the first NGO are characterised by openness for giving interviews, the members of the second are never willing to do so. The activist stresses that on Google search is not possible to find any information neither about the association nor about some public persons that are its members nor the stakes for which they are organised.

Finally, Naumovski claims:

‘...and now suddenly this person who has never come out in public, who probably has never been engaged even in the house committee of his building, is capable to call for several hours thousand people and on top of that they to be so motivated that they are able to demolish [windows], while someone also secures catering [sandwiches for the participants] and eggs [for throwing] and to finance it.” (*Ibid.*).

In this way, the opposition of the “Skopje 2014” claimed that no one else but the governing elite stands behind these violent groups and so called associations, institutes and quasi-NGOs, organised for fast and effective reaction and disorganised as rapidly and effectively after the completion of their mission of ‘silencing’ or legitimising the government’s short-term goals.

On the background of this conclusion, it is crucial to note that the government and especially the pro-government media outlets, most notably *Vecer*, have waged systematic smear campaign against all the established NGOs in Macedonia assumed to be under the financial umbrella of the Soros’s Foundation. It was assumed that the member of the former political elite and current members of SDSM have build strong connections to this foundation and that the last has intention to destabilise the Macedonian state and overthrow the current government. The head editor of *Vecer*, Dragan Pavlovic, even pejoratively labelled the members of these NGOs as “sorosoids”, term later widely accepted among the media outlets supportive of VMRO-DPMNE.

Structural populism

In the final section of this chapter I want to demonstrate the embeddedness of the constructivist and legitimisation discourses referring to “Skopje 2014” in the general autocratic-populist discourse of the governing elite. This way I want to indicate that the political leadership uses similar argumentation patterns when defending “Skopje 2014” as in other cases when defending its general

⁸⁷ Another small NGO organised mainly by the students from the Architectural Faculty

⁸⁸ Debate “Civil organisations, first part”, on-line TV project “Zebra”, last viewed on 04.02.2017, <http://zebratv.mk/index.php?navig=4&vid=47>

policy. I would especially want to draw parallels to the speech delivered on the official opening of the “Arch Macedonia”. I assume here that the found similarities will demonstrate that “Skopje 2014” is nested in autocratic-populist mindset.

In this part of the chapter I will present three short excerpts from Prime Minister’s discourses. The first excerpt is from a speech traditionally held on the celebration of the anniversary of the Ilinden Uprising⁸⁹.

Against the unsolvable name dispute with Greece and the expectations of the majority of the Macedonian public to join the EU in the nearest future Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski in his exposé related to the 110th anniversary of the Ilinden Uprising called for ethnic, religious and political unity, in effort to ‘preserve the common interests and the existence of the state’:

"Moments are coming in which we will face numerous challenges. These challenges will aim to separate the Macedonian national tissue along few lines, bringing restlessness, anxiety, frustration and perhaps a sense of devaluation among Macedonians. We are aware of it, we know that, and want to say, we will respond, and we will confront that with our strongest ally - the people. As Karev and Pitu acted together with the people, as Cento, Panko and Apostolski⁹⁰ together with the people took their decisions, so we will, as before, with the people continue to act together" Gruevski delivered." (*Utrinski Vesnik*, August, 2013).

This short excerpt contains all the elements of populist discourse pattern: the *fallacy of threat* aiming to unify the people around the strong leader capable to fight against it, pathetic *dramatization and emotionalisation* and *insistent repetition* of the noun ‘people’.

Gruevski mentions that time comes when the Macedonian people ‘will face numerous challenges’, aiming to ‘separate the Macedonian national tissue’. He later states that together with ‘our strongest ally - the people’, his party will be able to fight back this threat. There are few meanings hidden in this short discourse. Firstly, the ‘people’ is constructed as a uniform group of persons with completely overlapping political interests and values. Secondly, this ‘people’ is assumed to be an ‘ally’ of the political party VMRO-DPMNE in fight against threats and not *vice versa*, thus factually putting the interests and the value of the party above the people’s.

The rhetor too frequently uses the noun ‘people’ in his speech. He reminds that just as the national heroes from the modern history of Macedonia ‘acted together with the people’ ‘so we [VMRO-DPMNE] will, as before, with the people continue to act together’.

The Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski consistently continued to use the same populist argumentation schemes over the years. This is what he said on a VMRO-DPMNE gathering in March, 2015 in the city of Bitola referring to the name dispute with Greece:

⁸⁹ On 2 August 1903 the IMRO revolutionaries have organised the Ilinden Uprising, suppressed by the Ottoman army in less than two weeks. This uprising was crucial for the raising of Macedonian national awareness at the time and still serves as the cornerstone of the modern Macedonian nation-building myth, especially favoured by VMRO-DPMNE.

⁹⁰ Macedonian national heroes

“Gruevski: Referendum for the name is the final answer of Macedonia

To clarify to those who refuse to see the citizens of Macedonia, the Macedonians, that the state is our common home, that through difficulties and bloodshed our ancestors have created, and we, as their descendants, with suffering and enormous obstacles preserve, maintain and upgrade, for it is for us the only one and irreplaceable [home]. Without Macedonia, we ourselves will become someone's tenants. It is natural that we will not allow that, however packaged and sold it is to us. If we do not convince them in this format, we will march. We will go to referendums. Eventually, they will have to see us. They will not be able to avoid us.

- Our position, among other things, says, yes, politicians will talk, negotiate, accept, offer, refuse, something they will see as good, something as bad, someone under pressure, blackmail, threats or offers. ... they could do anything, but if someone negotiated, made an agreement, promised or accepted, the final word cannot have the politicians, the ministers, the Prime Minister or the president, but all the people through a referendum that would tell whether an idea, suggestion or solution is good or not, and that, only that can be the final answer of the Republic of Macedonia, underlined Gruevski.” (*Utrinski Vesnik*, March, 2015).

Later during the same speech Gruevski claims:

“The winner is always and solely the people. Especially in such a dangerous historic turmoil. The people is historical winner even when opposed to it has a tenfold stronger opponents, only if it is united and as such awaits any danger to its survival” (*Ibid.*)

The text is explicitly monoethnic, calling for unity and patriotism. It firstly calls to mind the difficulties the people have encountered to ‘build their own home’ and then assumes that some domestic traitors are ready under ‘pressure, blackmail, threats or offers’ to betray its own people and agree in the name of the people to change its identity.

In several instances these people are marked as ‘the politicians’, alluding that the governing politicians themselves are not politicians but ordinary members of the people. At one point even military rhetoric is used, when Gruevski threatens that the people will march to be seen and not avoided. This rhetoric portrays the majority of the people and the governing elite as like-minded but insignificant players, that only united could fight back the will of the domestic traitors, embodied in the political opposition.

It is also interesting that Gruevski calls for referendum in this context. Since 2006, after VMRO-DPMNE sized power and was never replaced from the governing position, no referendum was held on any question. Macedonian independence referendum in 1991 and the referendum for greater autonomy to ethnic Albanians following the Ohrid Agreement in 2004 were both held under the governing of the Social Democrats. These is what Reisigl (2008) described as paradoxes of oppositional right-wing: on the one hand seemingly a grassroots democracy attitude but on the other hand an anti-democratic, *authoritarian, hierarchical and leader-oriented* attitude with strong tendency towards *personalisation* on the one hand and *collectivism* and *assimilatory* identity politics on the other hand. In this context it is worth mentioning that holding a referendum is not politics-free process, as portrayed by Gruevski, but a decision-making process under strong media influence and agitation of the main political players, one of which is the Prime Minister’s party.

Referring to the second excerpt of the same speech, one may once more notice the *insistent repetition* of the noun 'people'. The rhetor underlines that 'the winner is always and solely the people' and 'the people is historical winner even when opposed to it has a tenfold stronger'. Again the *fallacy of threat* is used as background for this argumentation: 'especially in such dangerous historic turmoil' and 'only if it is united and as such awaits any danger to its survival'. Questioning the 'survival' of the nation can also be interpreted as *pathetic dramatization and emotionalisation* strategy.

Finally, I will present a short excerpt of Gruevski's speech in June, 2015, in which the Prime Minister not only plastically describes the actions of his political opponents the way he sees them but also assigns the same group a role it is supposed to play in the domestic political arena in the longer period that follows:

"I would like to tell the domestic Fifth Column⁹¹ that there is people in this country who would resist their games, spy methods, their anti-state actions.

I read three days ago the last public opinion and I said to myself, well now, after the next elections, how SDSM will justify [its defeat], what they will invent then? Will they find the strength to admit a defeat, to reach out their hand and leave Macedonia to continue forward, and they to be opposition [as] in any normal country? "(Utrinski Vesnik, June, 2015).

On top of accusing the political opponents for plotting conspiracy against its own people and state in the first paragraph, in the later text the Prime Ministers expresses his opinion with such wording which not only predicts political opponents to lose the elections but also assumes it to stay opposition in relatively long period. This vision assumes static majoritarian rule whose stability can occasionally be challenged but never overthrown.

In populist style the rhetor also tends to equate "the people" with "the party", assumed to be prepared to resist the 'games, spy methods [and] anti-state actions' of the alleged domestic traitors.

Referring again to the Gruevski's commemorative speech analysed in the beginning of the chapter, one can easily observe similarities in the discursive strategies and argumentation schemes employed by the Prime Minister in all of these speeches. The discursive strategy implies existence of *threat* of domestic *betrayal* and *victimisation* of the 'people'. It further assumes cooperation between the Prime Minister' Party and the 'people' in the effort to overcome this threat. This strategy discursive tends to equalise the interests of the Party with the one of the 'people'. It also suggests the need of a strong uncorrupted leader capable to unite the people against the aforementioned threat. The subdivision of the world of social actors into '*friends and enemies*' or unchangeable and antagonistic groups and the exercising of *slander and smear campaign* against the opponents are inevitable elements of this populist narrative. As Frckovski (2014, 6) argues the epicentre of political antagonism is thus shifted from the democratic pluralism to a new level –the new people and their leaders versus all the rest.

⁹¹ According to the on-line Cambridge Dictionary a "Fifth Column" is a group of people who support the enemies of the country they live in and secretly help them. Clandestine "fifth column" activities can involve acts of sabotage, disinformation, or espionage executed within defence lines by secret sympathizers with an external force.

Conclusions

The intention of this chapter was to provide summary of the democratic philosophy of the governmental elite which stood behind the realisation of “Skopje 2014”. On the background of this task I have also provided few exceptional or outstanding discourses highlighting current Macedonian conservative wing’s attitudes and behaviour towards democratic institutions.

One can conclude that VMRO-DPMNE under the leadership of Prime Minister Gruevski practices structural populism. The analysis have shown that the party’s leadership on the course of many years has used well established populist discursive strategies and argumentation schemes capable to negatively influence the institutions of plural democracy in Macedonia.

More concretely, the speech delivered on the official opening of “Arch Macedonia” portrayed the society as a battlefield of two unchangeable and antagonistic groups who are more likely to compete and win against one another out of the established democratic rules for peaceful replacement of ineffective politicians through elections. Many discourses from the second section dedicated to class struggles signalled rhetors’ vision for stabile majoritarianism at least in mid-term perspective, seeing elections only as confirmation and legitimisation of the government policies.

The third section demonstrated the level of subjugation or dependency of the media on the government. Media houses close to the government have regularly engaged in systematic degradation of the civil society sector and smear campaign against the political opposition.

Finally, the section dedicated to the non-government sector has shown that while long existing NGO’s were labelled as extended arm of the political opposition associations, institutes and quasi-NGOs were routinely organised for express and effective reaction against opposition actors and disorganised as rapidly and effectively after the completion of their ‘mission’ for the government. This temporary institutionalisation of mobs for violent purposes may be the single most anti-democratic element of ruling party’s strategy of maintaining power.

A series of civil liberties such as freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, freedom of press were frowned upon and considered dangerous for the elite on power.

The following chapter will concentrate on discourses from the oppositional press. I will mainly represent the opinions of the oppositional cultural elite. Considering “Skopje 2014” as a platform for exercising critique, journalists from *Utrinski Vesnik* and *Sloboden Pecat* and other intellectuals have pinpointed not only to the negative impact of government’s policies on the abovementioned civil liberties but also on rule of law in general. Among other things the critics of “Skopje 2014” have seen in this project a symbol of failed consociationalism expected to be built between the ethnic-Macedonian and ethnic-Albanian communities in Macedonia.

The oppositional cultural elite has closely related the critique of “Skopje 2014” with the general critique of democratic deficiencies in the country. The Social Democrats and especially the cultural elite supportive of their policies have called for more deliberation and participation in politics, for respect of the rules of constitutional democracy and preparedness for consensus-building in inter-ethnic questions.

CHAPTER 10: OPPOSITION'S CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY

Freedom of expression

Throughout the thesis I have demonstrated the tight control exercised by the governing elite over the media in Macedonia since 2006. Other professions, such as archaeology, museum work, theatres and film industry, fine arts were also in one way or another under strong influence of the government, especially in playing their own role in the process of antiquisation. In the first section of this chapter I will show how the oppositional voices have portrayed the impact of the government on the architectonic profession in Macedonia, observed through the case "Skopje 2014". I will later link this discourse with the politicisation of art in general. In this regard the most representative is the article from *Utrinski Vesnik* written in February, 2010, in the period just after the Skopje's city centre revamp was announced in the media with the promotional video for "Skopje 2014". Written in the genres of tragedy and parody the text calls for more commitment, for more deliberation and participation in the political life by the organisations of the architects in Macedonia:

"Architects in deep underground

All quiet on the project for Skopje – the Academy, the Association of Architects, the Community of Architects, and the Faculty of Architecture

(...) Why most of the architects decided to keep quiet? [They] did not even dare to boast a well made film, let alone to criticize it.

Roaring silence "is heard" by the highest body of the Macedonian architecture, the Academy of Architects, where there is no official position on the project "Skopje 2014", although their opinion should be the main determinant the architecture in Macedonia should follow. Obviously already nobody takes into consideration the architecture academics or, with some exceptions, the rest of them not wanting to close their rich treasure trunks, have not even dared to publicly express their positions. The fact is that many of them are members of committees in the tenders for the facilities that the government builds.

The President of the Academy Dimitrov believes that their eventual public appearance would not have any contribution, because nobody asks (for their opinion) anymore, and they, therefore, have no power to do something. "I do not want political power to occupy my square, the place where we should not bring banners, but pencils and markers to shape it. I do not want to be marked as protestor", Dimitrov said, adding that he personally would like the square to be reformed as a professional and as citizen of Skopje, but not with nostalgia for the old Skopje, but for this Skopje where we live today.

If the Academy does not have an instrument to act, then where are the other architectural organizations that are legal entities, which means to be committed to the respect and enforcement of the law. Where is the Chamber, the Association, the Community of Architects of Skopje?

The Association of Architects of Macedonia (AAM) with its official stance would come out only after the regular annual meeting. For the Association apparently there is no provocation in the solutions for the centre of the capital as a possible reason to call for an emergency session. Its members act as if nothing has happened, although the architectural guild in the country recently experiences tectonic shifts.

The President of the Association of Architects, the architect Kokan Grcev, refused to give his personal view. He says he had a bad experience, so he does not want to comment outside the Associations' frames. This attitude among the first of the architects in Macedonia is absolutely incomprehensible, given that he should feel the responsibility and duty to express his opinion on the case. The task of the President of AAM is not just to lead the meetings of the Association and to award prizes to architects. He should voluntarily come out in public and say, if not the Association's, then at least his personal views on certain matters.

And, while the silence of the AAM is hard to understand, the silence of the Community of Architects of Skopje, is not so unexpected. Especially knowing that this association includes more members who are more or less fictitious, while the presidency is rotating, and on its post rotate the names of two, recently exceptionally exposed architects, whose involvement in many of the government's urban architectural projects is a public secret.

Finally, where are the professors from the Faculty of Architecture? It is unacceptable that they only declaratively support their students, while as cannon fodder to send them alone to fight against crime in the urban planning. With what face they will continue to teach and what will they teach the students? Is the loss of eventually two-three projects worth more than the reputation among the students! (*Utrinski Vesnik*, February, 2010)

From the beginning of the article its author asks a rhetoric question: 'Why most of the architects decided to keep quiet?' Later in the text it is suggested that this silence is not due to ignorance but due to corruption or intimidation of the architects. Just as in the case of the consecutive election victories of VMRO-DPMNE, the opposition has put forward corruption and intimidation as the most common governing elite's practices of 'securing public consent'.

The author claims that while some architects are not willing 'to close their rich treasure trunks' others have intentionally decided to keep silent because they became 'members of committees in the tenders' related to "Skopje 2014". Lastly, the silence of some academics is suggested when sarcastically asked if 'the loss of eventually two-three projects worth more than the reputation among the students?'

From the perspective of the suppressed freedom of expression, however, it is more important to understand why other architects 'have not even dared to publicly express their positions'. The author is not simply proposing a hypothesis in this context but offers statements from two top architects directly referring to intimidation as reason for not expressing their opinions on "Skopje 2014". The first collocutor is the President of the Academy, Dimitrov, saying: "I do not want political power to occupy my square, the place where we should not bring banners, but pencils and markers to shape it. I do not want to be marked as protestor.' The author claims that the second interviewee, the President of the Association of Architects, the architect Kokan Grcev, 'refused to give his personal view' due to having a 'bad experience'. Grcev therefore prefers 'not want to comment outside the Associations' frames'. It can be then concluded that both of the author's collocutors reject to give personal opinions and simultaneously not to have the institutions the lead as leverage, because of fear to lose their jobs or the status in the society when facing with the government's penalisation.

As a solution to this behaviour the author of the text urges for politically active and responsible citizenry, especially in times when the 'architectural guild in the country experiences tectonic shifts.'

She suggests that the 'task of the President of AAM is not just to lead the meetings of the Association and to award prizes to architects.' Finally, the author finds that it is completely unacceptable that the professors on the Architectonic Faculty only declaratively support their students, while sending them as 'cannon fodder alone to fight against crime in the urban planning'.

While pledging for more involvement in public deliberation and more dignity among the architects, the text sometimes indirectly and other times directly alludes that the governmental elite suppresses the freedom of public expression of opinion. At the same time other public personas have criticized the government for politicisation of art. Differently than in the case of the architects the sculptors were accused of participation in systematic spreading of political propaganda, the last also being perceived as another form of limiting or suppressing the freedom of expression.

Politicisation of art (the common platform of the monuments)

One of the phenomenological aspects of the monumental part of "Skopje 2014" that I have not analysed in length was the so called "common platform" of a big number of sculptures especially those that depict figures from the more recent Macedonian history. This evidently expressed desire for style unification was best elaborated by Causidis:

"Have you noticed that almost all the statues of historical figures, regardless of their composition and performance style, are placed on pedestals, unified in terms of their basic conception, the volume and material used? [They are all] made of polished travertine, with "classically" rounded profiles and from each side complemented by shallow bronze reliefs" (Causidis, 2013, 81).

This phenomenon is reflecting the "common platform" that the project-developers imposed on the authors of the statues. Causidis argues that judging by concrete examples, we can conclude that the part of the "Skopje 2014" related to monumental sculpture consisted of pre-set stylistic and other parameters (iconography, symbols, dimensions) within which artists' personal creativity could move. He thus claims that the sculptors had neither opportunity to personally choose these pedestals, nor to adapt them to the drafts of their statues, except for the dimensions and proportions. He, therefore, concludes that although the stylistic equalizing of the monuments was supposed to guarantee their homogeneity, in all cases where there was a step forward in some stylistic freedom, an anticipated non-compliance between the monuments happen, something even more emphasized because of the small distance between them.

Causidis suggests that this can be best seen through the monuments of Goce Delchev and "Gemidziite"⁹², standing close to each other near the Stone Bridge. Their pedestals are shaped the same way, despite their drastically different styles. While he finds the monument of Delchev to be derived in a fairly rigid academic realistic spirit, the one of the "Gemidziite" is in a 'very interesting,

⁹² The Boatmen of Thessaloniki or the Assassins of Salonica, was an anarchistic group, active in the Ottoman Empire in the years 1900 to 1903. The members of the Group were predominantly students from Veles, Macedonia in Thessaloniki. In April and May 1903 the group launched a campaign of terror bombing in Thessaloniki, the so-called "Thessaloniki bombings of 1903", with the aim to attract the attention of the Western Powers to Ottoman oppression in Macedonia and Thrace.

expressionistic, in a certain sense, surrealistic style (quite atypical for the project)'. Another case is the interaction between the densely arranged statues in the "Woman Fighter" park. For instance, next to each other are to be found a gilded Prometheus accompanied by four horses and a female personification aiming at metaphorical-symbolic expression and the bronze group of "the First Assembly of ASNOM"⁹³ 'composed of stiff bronze puppets sculpted in an amateur social-realist approach'.

The common platform of the sculptures assumed to guarantee their homogeneity suggests that all the sculptures were part of one greater idea of probably one person. This on the other hand suggests strong dictate of politics on art production. Causidis advances an additional argument to argue that there is a major involvement of politics in the art works of the project "Skopje 2014":

"What is generally lacking or completely is absent in the statues of the project "Skopje 2014" is the attempt by the authors to show the inner spirit of the depicted characters. Their sculpture is poor with emotion, charm, movement, play and metaphysical dimension. It is reduced to a simple statement and declaration, undue magnitude, theatrical heroism and unsupported pride. But, this are the usual defects of politicized art that always and everywhere, at any time and any space, where quantity (size and the number of cases) is more important than quality (their artistic range), the respect of the dead-lines more important than their spiritual depth" (Causidis, 2013, 82).

Here the author of the text tries to indicate another similarity between "Skopje 2014" and the art-works produced under the dictate of the state, typical for totalitarian systems: mass production and the importance of adhering to pre-set dead-lines. In the chapters on "Skopje 2014" observed as development project, I have mentioned that many sculptures were firstly placed on one place in order later to be replaced on another or be completely withdrawn from the public space. This indicates that indeed the art works were produced as serial products. The fact that some stylistically very different monuments are placed among a group of stylistically similar monuments suggests that the production of art-works was on such mass scale that for some art works there was simply no "other place" but to be placed in a group where they do not belong. Later in this chapter I will also show how the political elite reacted to the rulings of the Constitutional Court about the legality of the changes made into the Detailed Urban Plan of the city centre. Politicians' discourse, and action, clearly gave preference to dead-lines relative to rule of law. In this line, I agree with Causidis, that failure to depict the inner spirit and character of the historical figures is inevitable and usual defects of politicized art.

Contrary to the claims of the political elite that "Skopje 2014" has offered a chance to the young artists to express their creativity and become famous even outside of Macedonia (i.e. Prime Minister Gruevski underscored this few times during the official opening of the "Arch Macedonia"), there is no recorded evidence that the artists indeed have come out of their anonymity. Moreover, the artists themselves have argued that some media outlets practice smear campaign against them. The following article, however, demonstrates how Dragan Pavlovic-Latas, the chief editor of both the most pro-government private TV station *Site1* and the pro-government newspaper *Vecer* mixes the surnames of Valentina Stevanovska, the author that earned most in "Skopje 2014" and Valentina Bozhinovska, the president of the Committee for Relations with Religious Communities, a case alluding that even artists that became centre of controversies for many months stayed anonymous soon after completing their works for the Project:

⁹³ Anti-fascist Assembly for the National Liberation of Macedonia from 1944

“Name with political connotation

What type of relationship the artist and the politician have in Macedonia could be read in *Vecer*, more concretely in the Monday column of Dragan Pavlovic-Latas: "Zernovski, off-the-cuff, evaluates that the sculptor Valentina Bozhinovska and her associates have taken excessive honorarium. No analysis, comparison or vocational study. Valentina Bozhinovska is one of the best sculpturing names in the Balkans, which is proved and evident with the works completed. (...)

Earlier, in an interview on TV "Sitel" where Latas is chief editor Stevanovska said: "For the first time young artists have a chance to prove their abilities. It is unfortunate that from certain media they are belittled, without any respect. "

The dictate of politics on art has culminated in "Skopje 2014". Therefore, the authors who realized the great political works remained anonymous strangers, without authority (regardless of the signature under a fee of two million Euros). Therefore, the error of Latas is only necessary, inevitable result: compared with any name from the politics - not only by Valentina Bozhinovska, president of the Committee for Relations with Religious Communities - the name of the artists will remain less known, without honour, even without an apology." (*Sloboden Pecat*, August, 2013)

It is evident from the quoted text from *Vecer* that Pavlovic mentions Valentina Bozhinovska instead of Valentina Stevanovska at least twice in his article. The fact that this mistake is committed by an editor of the news section of the newspaper and in a written form (assuming that during a writing process the author has more time and freedom to formulate his thoughts) hints that Pavlovic was indeed neglecting the work and the personality of Valentina Stevanovska, the author of Alexander the Great on the Macedonia Square. In the genre of tragedy and irony, the author of the text concludes that Stevanovska did not receive for this indifference 'even any apology' by Pavlovic. While *Sloboden Pecat* tries to emphasise the politicisation of art in Macedonia, some intellectuals have underlined that in the current Macedonian context one should not speak only of politicisation of art but also of politicisation of life in general. Differently from the names of the artists, the names of the politicians and the names of the opinion-makers from the media, portrayed by Frckovski (2014) as 'one the constitutive pillar of the regime' are very well known and discussed on each level of social life.

In the earlier chapters I have mentioned that performative arts, such as theatre and the film industry, were actively used in spreading of the ideas of new national identity in a form envisioned by the government. Here I have presented how the oppositional media has criticised the gradual process of politicisation of art in Macedonia through the project "Skopje 2014". The architectonic guild was criticised for staying silent in challenging times for their profession, the artists participating in the realisation of the Project were criticised for their submission during the realisation of the governing elite's ideas and for being non-transparent with the spending of the public funds and some journalists for their negligence of the politicisation of arts. This section of the chapter, hence, aimed to show that not only some media outlets have played a crucial role in the support of Gruevski's regime but also other professions, some indirectly, through their passivity, while other actively, through their obedience and cooperation.

Rule of law

Express and adapted laws

Huntington argues that relative to the democratic the autocratic regimes have more power to enforce rule of law. This claim is grounded in the assumption that democratic regimes have 'checks and balances' that slow down the decision-making and the enforcement processes, especially in contingent circumstances of building a new nation-state. Similarly, however, this gives the autocratic regimes an opportunity to abuse their power and to namely easily circumvent, not impose, the rule of law. Arbitrariness in law enforcement thus becomes a typical attribute of these regimes.

Sloboden Pecat as the newspaper closes to the policies of the largest opposition party SDSM has most systematically exercised critique related to this circumvention of laws. The outlet has also pinpointed to the adaptation of law(s) to the needs of the governing elite in cases when no other alternative could be followed. Typical repertoire of this type of critique includes allegations for corruption, interference in the market mechanisms, allegations in 'renationalisation' of the private property, etc.

Already in the early phase of the realisation of the Project, or just after the video promotion of "Skopje 2014" in 2010, its opponents have directed their critique towards what they perceived as unlawful actions of the government. This is how the oppositional press has commented on the adaptation of the Detailed Urban Plan (DUP) "Small Ring" for the needs of "Skopje 2014":

"The decision of the Constitutional Court did not stop the project "Skopje 2014". Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski said yesterday that he expects no slowdown in construction, because for most of the facilities building permits had already been secured.

Although the latest amendments of the DUP "Small Ring" were considered by the [Constitutional] Court as unconstitutional, anyway, most likely almost everything planned will be built. According to city planners, the inconsistencies in national legislation gives space the project to continue further, although it is based on an unlawful document. [Allegedly] determining is the time period during which the licenses were issued, by which [reportedly] smooth construction is ensured.

Construction permit is already obtained for the controversial Triumphal Arch. This was yesterday confirmed by the Minister of Culture Elizabeta Kanceska-Milevska, who for the Radio Free Europe said that regardless of the case, the Arch will continue to be built, because for the object the Ministry has secured a building permit prior to the decision of the constitutional judges" (*Utrinski Vesnik*, July, 2010).

In another article from the same month another journalist expressed sharper criticism:

"What even to the layman for a long time has been clear now was confirmed by the Constitutional Court. The amendments to the DUP "Small Ring", confirming most of the buildings of the "Skopje 2014", were adopted illegally. States, judicial decisions are not commenting, but implemented. But here, unfortunately, just comment, and neither respected nor enforced.

The ease with which he ignored the court decision is more than worrying. (...) Trampling on the Constitution, with his arrogance he only confirmed that Macedonia is not a legal state. And if the government itself does not respect the court, then it should not expect any citizen to do so.

"In fact, the Court's decision offers a choice: either demolishing of the facilities or putting them in a legal framework. And when from the two evils the lesser will be chosen, it makes sense to adopt a new DUP for "Small Ring". (...)

"If Centre [Municipality] really intends to respect the constitutional decision, which is its legal obligation, then it has to stop all activities on the square until a new DUP will be created. And that would mean at least six months break in construction." (*Utrinski Vesnik*, July, 2010)

These articles demonstrate that already in 2010 allegations of erosion of the judicial branch of power during the governing of PM Gruevski could be registered. Using the genre of parody the second commentator most notably underlines that the Prime Minister has put himself above the institutions. This is in line with Frckovski's (2014) argumentation that there exists a consistent ideology of populism the marrow of which is the criticism towards the institutions of parliamentary (representative, liberal) democracy; and that the basic feature of the authoritarian populism is its attack on the independent institutions of constitutionalism (the Constitution).

Sloboden Pecat has turned the attention towards another case related to "Skopje 2014" when the governing elite tried to avoid the routine legal procedures of constitutional democracies:

"Monument to the fallen law

The nightly demolition of the rule of law created ground, foundation for "Skopje 2014". Fallen law is the hallmark of all that now register the cameras – the touristic at day time and the security [cameras] at night. Memorials are [the] upgrade of the thorough manipulation of regulations.

Under Memorials and Monuments Law, a *memorial* is built as a tribute to the people and events important to the state, and *monuments* are built in honour of those persons who are of local importance (mostly busts, plates, taps, etc.). *Memorial* may approve, vote or built ONLY the Parliament of Macedonia, and the municipalities are only responsible for *monuments*.

To avoid legal proceedings and, in particular, the risk of voting in Parliament, the government undertakes dark-smuggling operation. All *memorials* were (dis)qualified as *monuments* in order to transfer the responsibility to the Municipality, in this case the Centre, where they can push it through without a problem. And with unprecedented insolence: the Initiative in which the Ministry of Culture explained that the *monuments* are [dedicated] to "prominent figures in the history of Macedonia, extremely important for the statehood," was submitted to the Centre Municipality and implemented in accordance with the procedure for raising a *monument*!

In truth, only thus grounded pedestal can stand idiocy of monumental proportions." (*Sloboden Pecat*, December, 2013).

In this article *Sloboden Pecat* not only accuses the governing elite for corruption but also explains the mechanisms through which corruption works. Indeed, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Culture in many occasions have described the monuments of "Skopje 2014" as dedicated to "prominent figures in the history of Macedonia, [and as] extremely important for the statehood", thus admitting that they should be treated as a *memorials*. To avoid dissatisfactory results in the Parliament of the Republic the government has changed the law, re-qualifying *memorials* as *monuments*, while

authorising the Centre Municipality, a lower legal body in control of the governing party, to implement this law. This is at least a second instance where the highest institution of a democratic political regime, the Parliament, is avoided in order the executive branch of power to implement its earlier formulated plans. Considering, however, that the governing party at that point in time had “comfortable” majority in the Parliament and could thus easily win the majority of MP votes regarding the building of memorials, one may conclude that the governing party was in fact trying to limit public deliberation on the content and cost of the memorials. One of the three channels of the national TV service *MRTV* broadcasts the whole sessions of the Parliament live stream. Knowing the negative resonance “Skopje 2014” has created in the public in the previous years and especially after the December 24, 2012 incident when following a fist-fight, the opposition MPs and journalists were thrown out of Parliament, one can assume that the government tended to avoid any further public debate on the same topic. This can be interpreted as ignorance towards the independent institutions of constitutionalism.

Renationalisation

Despite the amendments of the DUP “Small Ring” in 2010 and the adaptation of Memorials and Monuments Law in 2013 the oppositional outlets have also informed on the amendments to the Building Law, adopted in February, 2014. These amendments were, once again, passed in order to fit the demands of the project “Skopje 2014”:

“The City of Skopje can “swallow” one floor of City Trade Centre (CTC)?!

The City of Skopje may become the owner of part of the CTC if the Baroque reconstruction plans will be realised. This is allowed by the amendments to the Building Law, which were adopted in February and with which the City won powers it did not have before.

Under the new Law, approval of a facade reconstruction of facilities of this type can be issued by the City [authorities], if it is considered to be of national importance or interest of the state. In that case, the City becomes an investor in the renovation of the building and the owner of the space to be finalised.

Under the plan, not only CTC will get a new facade in the Baroque style, but it will also be completely closed⁹⁴ and upgraded for an additional floor. On the other hand, it has been already announced that the state would participate financially in the realisation. Therefore, stemming from the provisions in the Act, the City may receive ownership of the baroque upgrade, if City councillors give consent to intervene in the facility.” (*Sloboden Pecat*, August, 2014).

Before the passing of the amendments to this Law, the Centre Municipality, in which the facility is situated, had the final say on its appearance and utilisation. After the change in municipal leadership of Centre in 2013, the new Mayor from the opposition, Andrew Zernovski, made clear that he would not allow a facade change of CTC and repeatedly said that any intervention would be unlawful,

⁹⁴ The three-floor modernist building of CTC has open outer facade and small open-air inner yard. The CTC is one of the symbols of the “former political era”.

because part of the building would be illegally built. As a reaction to his decision amendments to the Building Code brought a solution for this problem as well:

"The Municipal Council, the [members] of the Municipal Council [participating] in the City Council, or the Council of the City of Skopje with [legal] Decision can determine the appearance of the facade of [new] facilities that are put into use or of illegally built facilities which are located in the city centre for whom, in accordance with the Law For The Treatment Of Illegal Buildings, a legally-binding Decision on determining legal status has been issued, if they determine that this is important for the Municipality or the City Skopje", says the new text of the Law." (*Sloboden Pecat*, August, 2014).

Because the passing of the Building Code amendments coincided with the resistance of the new Mayor to alter the CTC facade the oppositional intellectuals claim that the sole purpose of the amendments is to overcome the obstacles that have arisen with the change of political power in Centre.

Additionally, based on the fact that the City as an investor in the renovation of the building becomes an owner of the space to be finalised, the oppositional press has accused the government in attempt to "renationalise" private ownership. The same article ends with the short statement of CTC's CEO Ago Abazovski:

"Abazovski: the City cannot get property in CTC

Ago Abazovski, CEO of CTC JSC, believes that it is impossible the City to get a share of ownership of the object. The changes in the law, he says, are just passed and it cannot be predicted what their application will mean, but, he added, it is impossible only because of the decision for building by the Municipality or the City they to obtain ownership of certain parcel.

- It does not make sense, we are a limited company, we are not state owned. This comes as a porch hanging in the air, not on the sky, nor on the ground - he says." (*Sloboden Pecat*, August, 2014)

The same fears for attempts of "renationalisation" and general interference in the market mechanisms were drawn in another article from *Sloboden Pecat* earlier the same year:

"WHEN BAROQUE SKOPJE WAS PROMOTED THE PRICELIST WAS ALSO "COOKED"

Square metre in Centre 1 Euro, and in Pripor⁹⁵ - 50 Euros?!

Four years ago when the project "Skopje 2014" was promoted the government passed a Decree on the price of state land meant for construction, according to which, for the construction of hotels the starting price for bidding is one Euro per square meter. This Decree remained almost unnoticed in the public. What, in fact, it meant became clear last week when a plot in downtown Skopje on which it is planned to build a baroque hotel, was sold at a price of 71 denars⁹⁶ per square meter, or about 3.000 Euros. (...)

The architects do not want to comment on something that is now supported by law, but consider that it was a failure that no criticism was expressed when it was first mentioned that state land will be sold for one Euro in the centre of Skopje. On the website of the Ministry of Transport, however, one may

⁹⁵ District on the outskirts of Skopje

⁹⁶ Approximately 61 Macedonian Denars are equal to 1 Euro, the course being very stabile over the years

notice that the prices of state land were constantly altering and even seven changes were committed, but when it comes to hotels, the government here had a clear strategy - from the outset the initial cost is one Euro per square meter and that is independent from whether the hotel will be in the centre of Skopje, or, for example, in Probistip⁹⁷. (...)

"VERO" PAID 550 EUROS PER SQUARE METER!

For the attractiveness of the area in which the Baroque hotel is planned to be build testify the battles being waged for the space from across the street, where today is "Vero"⁹⁸. Once "Mercator" and "Delta" came out of the game Greek "Veropolus" for this space in 2005 paid 550 Euros per square meter." (*Sloboden Pecat*, January, 2014).

In this article *Sloboden Pecat* portrays the hotel business on national level as a "private business of the state elite". According to the rhetor against all the market mechanisms for price determination the government 'had a clear strategy' when it comes to building of new hotels in the country, to pull down the initial cost of the state-owned land meant for construction to one Euro per square meter. To strengthen the argument the journalist adds that private companies had to invest 550 Euros more per square meter to buy state-owned land in the centre of Skopje in order to build new facilities for their businesses. In this context the oppositional intellectuals have represented the interventionism of the government in the private sector as an attempt for "renationalisation". In the same argumentation line, the sporadic social transfers, typically becoming more frequent prior to elections and labelled by the government as welfare-system, in many instances the opposition interpreted as "buying votes". In this context I want to delimit redistribution patters typical for socialist republics or established welfare-systems typical for the Scandinavian societies on the one side from interventionism, or rather "protectionism", as played out by right-wing populist government on the other site. In the second case, just as Jansen (2011, 93) described nation-branding as a 'mechanism for transferring public funds and authority into private hands', the state's attempt to interfere the market mechanisms should not be necessarily observed as protectionism but rather as governing elite's private entrepreneurship with public funds in conditions of market fundamentalism.

In sum, the oppositional press has identified few instances of government's disrespect for the rule of law related to the project "Skopje 2014". This has happened repeatedly and continuously from 2010 and beyond 2014 when the project officially, but not actually, ended.

Frckovski (2014) claims that the Macedonian judiciary is completely under the influence of the ruling party and that it is intentionally very unqualified. He further argues that the Constitutional Court of the country has been a special target of such devastation. He finds that essential feature of the new regime is the production of a enormous number of laws or 'legal fog', a legislation that is very often intentionally made internally controversial so that in a situation of general inclarity and contingency, the interpretation and enforcement of the laws is completely in the hands of the administration and the government. Frckovski names this 'a Kafkaesque situation' where presumption of the citizens' innocence has been removed and 'everybody is potentially guilty, because the law is probably violated by somebody somewhere, but his guilt has still not been processed and is so at the mercy of the administration when it will be done so'.

⁹⁷ A very small town in Macedonia

⁹⁸ A Greek chain of supermarkets

Interestingly, this has been confirmed by the head anticorruption commissioner Ilmi Selami as early as 2010:

“I will finish the listing of wrong policies with "Skopje 2014", for which I will quote the thought of the head anticorruption commissioner Ilmi Selami, according to whom related to this project everything is in accordance with the laws, but, he explains: "When we make laws, we should synchronize them with each other and to control them, in particular to deliver them to the Anti-Corruption Commission for revision, so that the Commission in terms of anti-corruption and anti-conflict of interest, to give its opinion. Such best practices, are slowly faltered and increasingly laws are carried out in a speedy manner and are not submitted for an opinion to the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption, which contributes the laws themselves to generate corruption, the system to produce corruption; and so we come to a situation when we have - tender procedures anticipated by law, realization of contracts as required by law and in the end - we still have corruption" (*Utrinski Vesnik*, December, 2010).

With similar but more closely related conclusions to "Skopje 2014" came out the group of BIRN journalists after the in-depth investigation from 2015:

“The procedures are turned upside down and serve to satisfy the form. On the Initiative of a government ministry, a local government, etc., the Centre Municipality at the time of Mayor Vladimir Todorovic brings a decision and then the decision becomes official with the publication of the same in the state's Official Journal. But by that point, the competitions are behind, the solution for the design chosen, the contracts signed with the authors and the monuments themselves practically cast.” (*Balkan Insight*, July, 2015)

These findings of BIRN can be at least partially confirmed by the fact that some facilities from the project "Skopje 2014" were firstly erected and only later it was decided which institution they will house. This brought chaos and sometimes illogical combinations of institutions within one facility, e.g. the building of the Archaeological Museum also houses some archival and juridical institutions. The Minister of Culture, Kanceska-Milevska, for instance, in an interview with the TV-host Janko Ilkovski related to the promotion of the newly opened Archaeological Museum did not know with certainty which two additional institutions will be situated in the same facility together with the Archaeological Museum, saying: "The State Archive and the Public Prosecution, I think?"⁹⁹

This speaks of government's arbitrariness and appropriation or privatization of the public facilities for 'their own administration'. It can be, hence, concluded that the disrespect of the rule of law as observed through the actions of the Macedonian governing elite related to "Skopje 2014" is not only related to allegations for corruption, money-laundering and fake development in general, but also to misuse of the executive branch of power in constitutional democracies in particular and erosion of the Macedonian democratic system in general.

⁹⁹ Program "Eat burek – Archaeological Museum", prepared by Janko Ilkovski, interview with the Minister of Culture, Kanceska-Milevska, published on 4 Nov 2014, last viewed 28.01.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MoLhbWwAKOU>

Voting irregularities in the municipalities

In the section that follows I will represent two in-depth interviews with the investigatory journalist Vasko Eftov dedicated to the allegations for voting irregularities in the Municipality Centre in 2013 local elections. On weekly bases Eftov prepares hour long program on current political issues usually interviewing 2-3 politicians, public persons, journalist or other opinion-makers. Differently then TV-shows or traditional interviews with politicians, Eftov's program is very questions-and-answers intense and therefore program with great impact on creation of opinions.

In the chapter on "Skopje 2014" as a money laundering project, in the section on the Accountability Report I have already described some events of the local elections in 2013, where the opposition's candidate has won the office in the Municipality of Centre after three rounds of voting. There I have mentioned that two major events have marked the period of re-voting and the period after the victory of Zernovski: the nightly installation of dozens of monuments on the territory of the Municipality after the loss in the second round and the preparation of Accountability Report by the government officials just a day after the official victory of the opposition's candidate was proclaimed. Importantly, some of the ministries and the Cadastre worked during the weekend prior to the third round, according to the opposition, with the intention to conceal documents related to "Skopje 2014".

Here I will present parts of the interview of the new Mayor of Centre Municipality, Zernovski and the journalist Vasko Eftov in the program named "Stalingrad for the government". As the content of the interview reveals, Eftov has named the episode this way since he believes that the "raping of the electoral process" in Centre and the resulting defeat of the governing party in it has turned the opposition from complete loser into complete victor of the 2013 local elections: "Now everything is forgotten, it stays only the victory in Centre, because that is the last", concludes Eftov.

This interview serves as a good summary of how the opposition exposes all the flaws of the electoral process in the Centre Municipality. In different parts of the interview with Eftov Zernovski refer to some of these flaws, only to underline that even against such "cheap methods" the opposition has won the election. One of the biggest affairs related to this re-vote was the so called "Voters from Pustec". According to the opposition, some several hundred of ethnic Macedonians living in the town Pustec in today's Albania were issued identification documents with fictitious registration on Centre Municipality address by the Ministry of Inner Affairs (MIA) and buses were organised to transport those "phantom voters" to vote for DPMNE's candidate on the voting day. The search on December, 2016 by the key words "voters" and "Pustec" in *Utrinski Vesnik* yielded 42 articles on the topic. Also few video materials are available for analysis. This alone speaks of the resonance this affaire had in the Macedonian public.

Zernovski, however, argues that the famous voters from Pustec were in fact "three times less" than the voters brought [with buses] from other Macedonian cities and added to the Electoral Roll [in the Municipality Centre]." Eftov ironically named the process "rural tourism".

The new mayor of Centre later claims that: "It is well known who is the organiser, it is known which institution, what man in that institution named Ministry of Inner Affairs issues Personal Identification Cards", and appeals for legal consequences for the alleged wrongdoer.

Besides making allegations for illegal “phantom voting” in the municipality during the interview, the two interlocutors expressed additional argumentation why the voting was exceptionally illegitimate: on all polling stations where the candidate of the governing VMRO-DPMNE, Todorovic, won there was no re-vote. In accordance with Zernovski’s argumentation scheme, then, one should conclude that this is evidence enough that the government was purposefully entering in an unfair contest with the political opponents.

Additionally, the speakers have gradually linked the attempts to unlawfully win the votes in Centre with the wider conflicts within the increasingly politically polarised Macedonian society. During the interview Zernovski underscored that the Ministry of Transport and Communications and the Cadastre worked during the weekend prior to the second re-vote in order to conceal documents with questionable validity related to “Skopje 2014” and that all the people involved in the Project were put as party’s holders of the lists for the upcoming parliamentary elections, granting them immunity. He also reminded the viewers that most probably the government was laundering money on the project, while simultaneously practising the strategy “impoverish the people to be able to buy them”. Eftov concludes that “this is why they needed 250 million for the budget, to win the election, this is why they were beating in the Parliament”, calling to mind the expelling of the opposition MPs and the journalists by police forces on the 24th December, 2012.¹⁰⁰

To discursively add value to the victory in the municipality Eftov underlines that Zernovski won the elections against the most powerful people of VMRO-DPMNE: the head of the election headquarters in the second round was Gruevski personally, in the third round his cousin and the head of the MIA’s secret service, Mijalkov, and moreover, the difference between the votes has risen from the second to the third round from 1000 to 3000 voters in favour of the opposition candidate. Zernovski concluded that ‘the frustration has culminated after the loss in the second round, when, right?, the same night the pedestals of 28 new monuments were set in the Centre Municipality. Then the whole frustration has poured out.’

This interview also served as a platform for the opposition to express hope that the results from Centre could become message for the rest of the republic that the battle against the will of the people cannot be won. This is how Zernovski explains that:

“In the first round I was fighting against Todorovic, in the second round we fought against Gruevski, in the third round the battle was between the government and the people, this battle cannot be won. (...) This is the message that this government should understand”.

Few more arguments from the interview are worth to be analysed in this context. Several days before the third voting representatives from the International Community (ambassadors, EU representatives) publicly declared that international election monitors will not allow falsifying of the results, nor they will tolerate any democratic flaws in the last round. Ambassadors announced to personally stand on the polling stations.

During the preparation of the last round of voting three major political events happened in the region: the US State’s Department issued statement on the human rights in Macedonia (evaluating the situation negatively), a deal was struck between Belgrade and Pristina about the new status of

¹⁰⁰ Program “In Centre”, episode “Stalingrad for the government”, prepared by Vasko Eftov, published on 26 Apr 2013, last viewed 28.01.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HzyLhfTkQ1Q>

Kosovo and the ambassadors of few Western countries backed the Macedonian opposition in the demand for fair local elections in the Centre Municipality. Both of the speakers concluded that the coincidence of these events with the re-voting had notable impact on the outcome of the voting, highlighting that people were feeling encouraged to express their voice in circumstances of fair elections, monitored by the representatives from the International Community. Eftov, however, discursively hinted that without intervention of the International Community, as the presence on the polling places and the presentation of the human rights report just before the elections, as well as the tectonic shifts of balances of power in the region (the case of the deal for Kosovo's status), the people of individual countries cannot hope for major changes against their government's policies. In this line I also argue that only coordinated intention and efforts of the key player countries from the EU and/or the USA to change the balances of power in favour of the opposition in the whole region can result in changes in the individual Balkan societies. I will develop this thesis in the following chapter dedicated to the Macedonia's EU integration process.

Related to the next analysis it is worth reminding that together with the huge building endeavours to reshape the public space, and thus the identity of the people, the government has also changed more than 300 names of the streets, mostly in Skopje's Centre and Karposh municipalities and in the municipality of Bitola, the second largest ethnic-Macedonian urban centre in the western part of the republic. The names of the streets associated with the socialist past were replaced with names of personalities from the history of IMRO or from the antiquity. The critique of the opposition was again directed towards the government's intentions to alter the Macedonian identity. Other analytics, however, such as the investigative journalist Vasko Eftov, have seen something more practical in this effort. Under the assumption that in these urban centres, where most of the buildings of "Skopje 2014" were planned to or were placed, most of the voting population is one way or another associated with the former political elite and is simultaneously wealthy enough not to be bribed on the elections, the government, according to Eftov has come out with alternative strategy of 'winning votes'.

In another of his programs Eftov discusses with Violeta Duma, a member of the State Election Commission, the probability that the government has intention to abuse the election processes in two municipalities of Skopje where most of streets' names have been changed. Eftov remarks at the beginning of the program:

"It is interesting that only in the municipalities of Centre and Karposh is the biggest number of the streets with changed names. Here we can ask the question: Is it because VMRO-DPMNE has much lower rating then SDSM in these two municipalities that [the government] purposefully has changed the names of the streets in order to create a platform for falsifying the local elections one way or another?"¹⁰¹

Eftov's interlocutor Duma then explains her suspicions about the intentions behind this process. After the renaming of the streets, the borders of the municipalities were redrawn and new regrouping of the voters in different polling stations followed. Few weeks before the elections the voters of Centre and Karposh could check if their name is in the Electoral Roll, but they were not informed on which exact pooling place they will vote until the voting day. Duma, thus, assumes that after coming to the pooling station where they have traditionally always voted, some voters would

¹⁰¹ Program "In Centre", episode "The Baton and the Money of the Government", prepared by Vasko Eftov, published on 8 Mar 2013, last viewed 28.01.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VSZECDBIKRE>

give up voting when realising that they have to vote on another station, “especially if they have to walk a kilometre on the new voting place” (*Ibid.*).

Hence, Eftov and Duma, both conclude that there is a big chance that the governing elite has planned to both artificially add to the Centre and Karposh municipalities voters from the neighbouring municipalities, where the support for the governing party is much higher and to simultaneously discourage some of the voters from Centre and Karposh to vote in the newly assigned polling station on the voting day.

The oppositional outlets have not only criticized the governing elite for limiting the freedom of expression, politicisation of art, disrespect for the rule of law and involvement in voting irregularities as practiced through “Skopje 2014”, but also brought the Project in very close relationship with other drawbacks in democratic governance and civil rights and liberties. In this part of the chapter I will analyse four articles in which the authors try to connect “Skopje 2014” not only with irregularities during the voting day but with the voting process in general. Special accent the rhetors have put on the pre-election campaigning, trying to highlight different downsides of current Macedonian democratic system not discussed in the pro-government press.

As it is thematically close to the previous section I will firstly analyse an article from *Sloboden Pecat* where VMRO-DPMNE has been criticized for nominating known party officials and people in top positions in the state apparatus involved in the “Skopje 2014” project as MP candidates for the upcoming parliamentary elections, providing them with parliamentary immunity from prosecution if elected as representatives:

“Opposition recognizes "rescue action" of the ruling party

Lists of VMRO-DPMNE tailored only to provide immunity to the narrowest party officials

- VMRO-DPMNE late last night in greatest secrecy has conducted the operation "Lists of immunity" in which on the MP lists most of their officials who worked illegally have been placed on a secure place - say senior party sources in SDSM.

SDSM reminds of their series of press conferences on which serious indications of committed criminal offenses [committed by VMRO-DPMNE officials] and offenses such as failure to report property and alike were presented and supported with documents.

They reproach Gruevski for standing at the forefront of the "cousin-godfather"¹⁰² network for which SDSM since long ago claims to have dubious deals in the “Skopje 2014” project.

To Zoran Stavrevski the opposition cannot forgive his conduct during the "Black Monday," when opposition MPs were expelled from Parliament. According to the opposition Stavrevski is a regular accomplice in the pumping of budget funds for party purposes.

- Evidently none of the holders of the list has intention to become an MP. Instead, the goal is the executive power. On the places of the holders of the list in the Parliament will enter anonymous

¹⁰² The “cousin” is the Head of the State Directorate for Security and Counterintelligence, Sasho Mijalkov, a cousin of the Prime Minister Gruevski, many oppositional intellectuals believing to be the country’s “ruler in shadow”. The “godfather” is Zoran Stavrevski, the Minister of Finance and a godfather of PM Gruevski’s children.

[persons], novice lackeys and mute puppets responsible for lifting arm on the demand of the master in the executive power. This is not the way of getting majority but of killing the Parliament and destroying the idea of a democratic state - says analyst Mirjana Najchevska." (*Sloboden Pecat*, March, 2014).

The close to the Social Democrats *Sloboden Pecat* recognises the preparing of the Parliamentary Lists for the upcoming elections in 2014 as 'rescue action' for the 'narrowest party officials who worked illegally'. Most notably they reproach Gruevski and his relatives in the government assumed to have had 'dubious deals in the "Skopje 2014" project'. The main message of the article is, hence, that elections related legislation is used for tricking the legal system in providing 'secure place' for potentially corrupted politicians.

As it will be as well typical for the following articles, the author connects "Skopje 2014" not only with corruption and nepotism, but with other serious offences of the democratic system in Macedonia. For instance, the Minister of Finance Stavrevski, described as 'regular accomplice in the pumping of budget funds for party purposes', has been mentioned in context of the "Black Monday", when SDSM MPs and journalists were expelled out of the Parliament due to opposition MPs' strong disagreed with the continuation of the Skopje's revamp and the loans planned to be taken from international institutions to plug the gap in the budget. Also, in the last paragraph, the analyst Mirjana Najchevska has been quoted, claiming that after receiving immunity many of these close colleagues of PM Gruevski will in fact take more important positions in the executive power while leaving behind inexperienced 'novice lackeys and mute puppets responsible for lifting arm on the demand of the master'. Najchevska asserts that this is yet another form of degradation of representative, constitutional democracy through the undermining of the Parliament as place of participation and deliberation.

In the second article the author of the text tries to describe aspects of personalisation of power, perceived as inseparable characteristic of autocratic rule, in the Macedonian political system as practiced by PM Gruevski. The following discourse refers to who has taken the responsibility to represent the Accountability Report for "Skopje 2014" after the defeat of VMRO-DMPNE on the local elections in Centre Municipality in 2013:

"...is to find an answer to several questions. The first is related to the question who was selected to go out in the public. Why the Minister of Culture has appeared at a time when the Prime Minister is not in the country? Next discussion is why the Accountability Report is given after the lost election for Mayor of Municipality Centre?

It is known that Gruevski usually leaves the "tickling" questions for others. That itself shows that the estimates of the government for their ratings associated with the project "Skopje 2014" are not positive. Therefore, the main purpose of the government's allegedly precise representation of the costs [with the Accountability Report] is to close the public observation and discussion about the project "Skopje 2014". Meanwhile, the Prime Minister to stand aside and the responsibility to be taken by others, in this case Todorovic and Kanceska-Milevska" (*Utrinski Vesnik*, April, 2013).

This article tries to underline that the Prime Minister successfully plays the role of "teflon politician", one from whom the affaires are bouncing away, thus securing the position of the Prime Minister on many more elections to come. According to the rhetor, Gruevski uses as shields even his closest colleagues only to keep his rating high. Evidently, even Ministers do not have anything against this strategy. This shows *authoritarian, hierarchical and leader-oriented* attitude on party and state level.

The PM as the most probable designer of the project “Skopje 2014” was not only absent on the presentation of the Accountability Report but he also stopped referring to the project in any election campaigns after the defeat in Centre Municipality on the local elections in 2013.

The strategy of avoiding political responsibility for failures in his policies was better captured in another article of *Utrinski Vesnik*, exactly a year later in April 2014:

“What stabs in the eyes in this aggressive campaign is the keeping in silence of the grandiose project “Skopje 2014”, the biggest pride and greatest success of Nikola Gruevski in these past eight years. They say, it reminds him of the local elections in the municipality Centre, where the bulk of the money was thrown, for the ungrateful, spoiled residents in the navel of Skopje. The Prime Minister did not even mention the grandiose monuments of ancient heroes and the quest for beautiful and glorious past. He did not say a word about the amazing Baroque and Rococo, in which he wrapped the centre of the capital. He did not give the due respect even to Alexander Macedonian, his father King Philip II, Amyntas III. Nowhere Gruevski said anything for the museums, theatres, garages, willows, carousels, Ferris wheel, lions and horses, the fountains, the old buildings disguised in fancy luxury, the great ancient pillars, bridges and galleys in Vardar. For all that “mukla” (not even muttering the utterance “mu”). [He utters] no “a” or “b”, says nothing about how beautiful they are, how much they cost, how high are the artist’s fees, how much the people will benefit from these miracles, nor we have found out why they were built. Were they built in willingness to spite someone, or for the government to feel better?

Gruevski on the rallies and the public appearances tells us only what he will build in the next four years. Keeping silence for the most expensive investment in the history of Macedonia suggests recognition of a great failure, or at least, what has been missed in the past eight years. (...)

Gruevski in all appearances notably avoids the word democracy. Even demagogically or in populist context he cannot pronounce it. Human rights and freedoms, the independence of the media and the shameful position of the Macedonian journalism on the world-rankings are taboo for our Prime Minister. Very little and only in exceptional situations, Gruevski talked about the priorities of the country, the membership in NATO and the EU, and only in one context, to blame the Greeks and the great powers. His policy is flawless in terms of the Europeanization.” (*Utrinski Vesnik*, April, 2014).

In a sarcastic tone the author assumes that DPMNE’s leader felt that “Skopje 2014” was generally negatively accepted by the Macedonian public and therefore he decided simply not to mention it in his pre-election rally. What the rhetor tries to underline is that a responsible politician should take the courage and defend his policies instead of avoiding mentioning them. The author reminds that Gruevski concentrates ‘only [on] what he will build in the next four years’, without contemplating on what had he built in the previous mandate. The rhetor thus wants to underline that PM Gruevski does not consider himself as regular politician, one who can be replaced by dissatisfied new majority on following elections, but as someone whose mistakes are to be “forgiven” as temporary. Interesting in this text is that the author tries to relate the avoidance of the topic “Skopje 2014” with the avoidance of the word “democracy” in the speeches of the Prime Minister: ‘even demagogically or in populist context he cannot pronounce it’. The author thus opens the topic of violation of human rights and freedoms in Macedonia as described in the reports and annual world-rankings made by global NGO’s such as *Reporters Without Borders*.

In this line, and especially after 2013, the critics of the un-democratic behaviour of the government have attracted the public attention towards more serious violations of human rights and liberties in context of “Skopje 2014”. Most notable is that case of the Chairman of the Council of Municipality

Centre, Miroslav Shipovikj, who was detained by the police based on the charges of involvement in criminal activities in the company “Mashinoprom” where Shipovikj was the head of the board of directors before becoming Chairman of the Council of Municipality Centre. He was accused of using money from the account of “Mashinoprom” in the moment then the company was in pre-bankruptcy procedure and, in accordance with the law, a ban on disposal of assets was predicted. It is interesting that on the second session of the Council of Centre, following after the release of Miroslav Shipovikj from custody, the chairman surprised the public and in relation to laws concerning the building of “Skopje 2014” and the urbanization and deforestation of mountain Vodno, voted against his own councillors group in the municipal Council. The public was shocked by this behaviour and interpreted it not only as strong resistance to the opposition SDSM but also to the policies of Andrew Zernovski, who was already dealing with strong obstructions from the executive power during his mayoral term. This is an excerpt from an interview with Zernovski for *Sloboden Pecat* in October, 2014 related to Shipovikj’s behaviour:

“How do you interpret the behaviour of Shipovikj and what do you believe it is due to? Do you think this way he saved himself from threats, which according to SDSM were directed at him?”

- As I already said, I am not as mad at Shipovikj as to those that brought him into this situation. This definitely proved that Shipovikj’s arrest, detention and release to defend himself from bail, was politically motivated. Shipovikj was forced to vote against the interests of the citizens, against the attitudes and principles of our coalition, and I am sure, against his own convictions; because everyone remembers his efforts and statements against the rampage of the urban mafia on Vodno and the destruction of greenery there. Did he really saved himself from further threats, time will show. (...)

What do you expect now in the Council? Do you think that your coalition still has the majority, or after this (Shipovikj changing his mind) the central government party took another councillor on their side?

- Well known are the threats and blackmails made by the ruling party. Our councillors are also continuously exposed to them. The government is no longer trying even to hide the fact that now, as before, obstructs the clearly expressed will of the citizens. The citizens of Centre had voted for this option and told them clearly that they are against the policies which were conducted in the municipality of Centre in the past 13 years. Everything is possible, but I hope that the majority will remain on the side of the citizen’s will. Has VMRO-DPMNE now secured the last necessary vote for majority in the Centre, or all of this was because of the disputed [urban] plans, will become clear very quickly.”(*Sloboden Pecat*, October, 2014).

Without focusing on the veracity of the charges against Shipovikj, Zernovski’s discourse highlights two curious coincidences in the case “Mashinoprom”. The first is the detention of Shipovikj exactly in the period after the victory of Zernovski on the local elections in the Centre Municipality. The second is Shipovikj’s voting behaviour in the tightly divided Council after he was released from custody. The opposition openly uses the words ‘threats and blackmails’ practiced by the government to explain this behaviour.

In the same argumentative line the opposition has portrayed the (anti)democratic behaviour of the executive power not only in context of “Skopje 2014” but also in all spheres of political life. In the discourse analysis of the next two excerpts I will try to embed the critique of “Skopje 2014” as undemocratically implemented project, into the general critique of the (un)democratic practices of the executive power. In the first article *Utrinski Vesnik* comments the actions and discourses

delivered by the executive politicians after the legal adaptations to the Electoral Code were negotiated between the governing and the oppositional parties ahead of the new elections:

“The fourth argument is two-dimensional, showing absurd not to be found in the world of democracies. The government as a chief promoter of the thesis that they have met the demands of the opposition has put the Minister of Police! She claims that they accepted and fulfilled all demands of the opposition and that the adjustments to the Electoral Code are put into parliamentary procedure. As head of the commission for cleaning of the Electoral Roll the government has declared the head of the parliamentary group of SDSM, without her knowledge. What is most absurd, VMRO-DPMNE came up with a threatening, unprecedented statement in the public: "There are times when democracy is ensured at any cost. We're in such a moment and we will provide democracy"! Does that mean that they will provide it using force!? Will they use jeeps and special police units to bring the opposition in the Parliament to vote the rapidly prepared laws for the fast elections to follow!? As in 2008 it guaranteed that all available police forces will ensure fair elections and in turn bloody elections [have happened]¹⁰³, of which Macedonia was ashamed, and the world shuddered. Democracy and the police do not go together. Democratic and fair elections provide a democratic dialogue, alignment of attitudes and creating a democratic setting, not at any price!" (*Utrinski Vesnik*, March, 2010).

As in the case of the chairman of the Centre Municipality Shipovikj, the author of this text pinpoints at the government's excessive use of force in the attempts to ensure democracy. According to *Utrinski Vesnik*, not only the government has appointed the head of the parliamentary group of SDSM as head of the commission for cleaning of the Electoral Roll on the side of the opposition 'without her knowledge', but it has also used the Interior Minister for ensuring that the demands of the opposition for fair elections have been satisfied. The rhetor calls to mind the 'bloody elections' from 2008, claiming that those events have damaged the international image of Macedonia as peaceful country. The author argues that 'creating a democratic setting' of fairness and trust is the core of democratic system, and that these values are not to be enforced by the use of physical power, expediently and 'at any price'.

The author of the second text practically tries to number all the democratic shortcomings related to pre-election campaigns committed by the party of the governing elite:

“The Electoral Code was adopted without the presence of the opposition, without acceptance of its proposals and without the implementation of some suggestions from ODIHR since the elections in 2008! From relevant ministries the Electoral Roll was handed over to the State Electoral Commission as cleaned, although the presence of many death persons and a whole generation of young before becoming eligible for voting were found! Haste and improvisation with the voting regulation for the diaspora will make their voting to formally to legal, but actually to be illegitimate because of the possibility of only a few dozen voters to choose an MP! With many billboards VMRO-DPMNE started a campaign earlier than it is legally allowed, something that was not recognised until they revealed their campaign slogan! There is evident merging of the Government and the ruling party in the campaign events, their financing and other resources. Headquarters are demolished on daily basis, above all, the one of SDSM and the “United for Macedonia” coalition, but so far not even one perpetrator was detected! All senses of the citizens are attacked with thousands of billboards and posters of Gruevski!

¹⁰³ A young protestor against the government's policies was beaten to death by the Prime Minister's bodyguard at a party rally. The bodyguard has not faced any penalties after the event, which boosted additional unrest

There are serious indications with evidence of pressure and blackmail for the civil and public servants jobs - to make lists of 15 to 30 people who will vote for the ruling party! Similarly relatives of candidates for deputies are appointed to count the votes and to control the regularity of the electoral process!

VMRO-DPMNE for a third time is avoiding public confrontation of the Prime Minister and the leader of the opposition on a TV debate. (...) Hence, in Macedonia there is no pre-election dialogue, which is absent for five years after the country has been ruled by this party.

The problem of democracy in Macedonia is that the institutions obligated to react on the violation of the legality of the electoral process, due to their radical partisanship, do not react. The State Election Committee's hands are tied because of the supremacy of the governing party in the Commission. The Anti-corruption Commission is like a branch of the ruling party. Public Prosecution, despite the obtained lists and sound recordings as evidence of pressure on the administration, despite the urgency, is silent and waits tactically. The government does not reduce the pressures and abuses. The International Community, which was always in such conditions loud and clear, now behaves silently and lazily. Is it waiting for the Government to commit more irregularities or the government has given some promise about a solution over the name [dispute with Greece], so it stays silent and waiting – it will be seen soon. (*Utrinski Vesnik*, May, 2011)

Utrinski Vesnik informs that instead of offering inclusive work-frame and dialog, VMRO-DPMNE adopted the Electoral Code in absence of the opposition in the Parliament. According to the outlet, not only the suggestions from the opposition and ODIHR were not implemented, but many irregularities were found during the cleaning of the Electoral Roll, such as presence of illegible persons for voting in the List or voting rules enabling a very small number of voters to choose an MP. The author of the text numbers a myriad of irregularities in the pre-election campaigning. He accuses the ruling party for starting the election campaign earlier than it was legally allowed, for merging of the state and the ruling party, unpunished demolition of opposition's headquarters on daily basis, for pressure and blackmail of the civil and public servants and for passivity of the institutions, such as the Anti-corruption Commission and the Public Prosecution, in dealing with these irregularities. The Prime Minister is also accused for avoiding public confrontation with the leader of the opposition on a TV debate in the last five years.

Additionally, the rhetor is disappointed with the inactivity of the 'International Community', most commonly referred to the EU institutions in Macedonian context. This will be discussed in-length in the following chapter dedicated to the role of the EU in the democratisation processes in Macedonia, but in this context it suffices to mention that the EU neglected the fact that ODIHR's suggestions for fair elections were not implemented not only in the upcoming elections but in any following elections until 2016. The reports of the different bodies of the EU have continuously mentioned the same democratic shortages as the author of *Utrinski Vesnik* in the last article did, but the Macedonian government was never reproached for its conduct. Moreover, in its annual candidate-country reports Macedonia was staidly encouraged to 'continue further on its way to Europe', as if no serious democratic flaws were to be observed in the country.

Failed *consociationalism* (worsening of the inter-ethnic relations)

Before moving to the next chapter I would dedicate only a short section to the worsening of the interethnic relations as one of the most important and simultaneously neglected aspects of the democratisation process in Macedonia. I have already discussed this earlier in chapter five, where I have concluded that “Skopje 2014” has encouraged and resulted in what can be named federalisation of cultural representation in Macedonia. From blocking the debates on “Skopje 2014” in the Parliament’s Committee on Interethnic Relations to the attempts to build symbols of ethnic Macedonians on city’s fragile border-line territories to the negotiation of quota-like representation of cultural heritage on separate squares the government’s policies have surely “appeased” the coalition partner DUI but have not led towards harmonious inter-ethnic coexistence. The fact that the government’s “appeasing” policies have not translated into mutual trust and urge for living with and accepting the ‘Other’ in Macedonia is the statement of DUI’s leader Ali Ahmeti from January 2015, when he once more threatened that peace cannot be sustained in Macedonia if the country continues to neglect the Euro-Atlantic integration:

“But I wonder how democratic and how much space for dialogue allows the statement of the leader of DUI [who said that] if in 2015 we do not resolve our membership in NATO and do not get a date for EU membership talks the Ukrainian scenario could happen to us. And now I (naively) wonder whether Mr. Ahmeti was thinking when mentioning the Ukrainian scenario. Was he predicting that the citizens of Macedonia supportive of NATO- and EU membership, regardless of ethnicity will rise up and simply wipe the government coalition, which since 2008 has done nothing in this matter, as they did in Kiev?! Or to Mr. Ahmeti the referendum on Crimea and the Russian separatists are "closer to his heart." (*Utrinski Vesnik*, January, 2015).

Ahmeti’s statement only shows how fragile peace is in Macedonia. The deals negotiated by the “tender coalition” related to “Skopje 2014” have become an example of misuse of the principles of consociationalism. While securing stability on short term they carry the potency of violent break up. As in similar other instances, the political leadership in the government has denied any responsibility for the rising inter-ethnic tensions due to democratic shortages in context of the construction of new identity in general and its realisation through “Skopje 2014” in particular.

Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to portray the democratic philosophy of the oppositional political and cultural elites. It is easy to notice that the opposition to “Skopje 2014” has used the project and its realisation as a lever to pinpoint, according to them, serious democratic flaws on state level.

The critique was focused on a series of drawbacks in relation to civil liberties, disrespect for the rule of law and instability of the inter-ethnic relations in Macedonia due to this Project.

Regarding the first point of the critique, the oppositional press has accused the governing elite for using intimidation, blackmail or bribery in order to suppress the freedom of public expression of

opinion. The government was also accused for systematic spreading of political propaganda and strong dictate of politics on art production.

Related to the second point of critique, I have tried to demonstrate that the discourses about the disrespect for the rule of law are nested in a more general critique of the erosion of the judiciary system in Macedonia, discussed by Frckovski in the theoretical chapter. Namely this point was completely avoided in the media houses such as *Vecer* and *Republika*, and therefore of special interest in this chapter.

More concretely, the critique followed two lines. The first line was the frequent and rapid adaptation of laws enabling the government to realise its plans regarding the city centre's revamp. In this context, officials were also accused of interference in the market mechanisms for private interests. More importantly, however, journalists underlined that the Prime Minister has put himself above the institutions, thus disrespecting the Constitution and the division of state power on three branches. According to them, constitutional democracy was also circumvented with the isolation of public deliberation on *memorials* law out of the Parliament. The critique of the poor condition of the judiciary in the current Macedonian political system ends up with the allegations for overproduction of unsynchronised laws and for arbitrariness in law enforcement.

The second line of critique focused on the powerlessness or the passivity of the courts to act in cases where the opposition has recognized election irregularities. Only in the case of the local elections in the Centre and Karposh municipalities the opposition has recognized more than few democratic flaws: illegal issuing IDs to citizens living out of the municipalities, changes in the Electoral Roll, forced re-elections, intimidation of opposition politicians, etc. After the defeat of the governing party in the Centre Municipality *Sloboden Pecat* has identified the placement of many of the Prime Minister's colleagues involved in "Skopje 2014" on the Parliamentary Lists as candidates for MP in the upcoming elections in 2014 as preparation of "lists of immunity". In relation to the perceived unpopularity of the Project the critics have also perceived personalisation of power in the hands of PM Gruevski, especially when, according to *Utrinski Vesnik*, ministers and other state officials were prepared to sacrifice their carriers in order to provide alibi for the political failures of their party leader.

One could also easily draw parallels between the argumentation patterns aiming to deconstruct the democratic flaws in relation to the local elections in 2013 and the argumentation schemes employed in the critique of the election campaigns and election implementation in earlier and later electoral cases. As especially serious democratic flaws were regarded the merging of the state and the ruling party and the use of force and intimidation in the "enforcing of democracy", including among others the unpunished demolition of opposition's headquarters, pressure and blackmail of the civil and public servants, police brutality and media control.

On the background of the generally tragic genre employed in relation to the topic "democracy", the opposition has created another, more optimistic narrative after the victory on the local elections in the Centre Municipality. Politicians expressed hope that this victory won against all the illegalities and against the most powerful people of VMRO as heads of the election headquarters will send a positive message for the rest of the republic, namely message that in the battle between the government and the people, the government cannot win. In the same more optimistic manner the opposition has concluded that very important role in the resistance against the perceived autocratic

rule of PM Gruevski has the international factor, or more concretely the regional policy of the European Union in general or the monitoring of the election processes by EU officials in particular. This important point will be analysed and discussed in the following chapter.

Finally, the government was criticised for worsening of the inter-ethnic relationships through the disrespect for the principles of plural democracy. Through the blocking of the debates on “Skopje 2014” in the Parliament’s Committee on Interethnic Relations, to the federalisation of cultural representation, the decisions and behaviour of the ethnic-Macedonian partner in the government coalition did not result in reconciliation of the major ethnic groups on broader societal level after the end of the conflict in 2001. The statement of DUI’s leader Ali Ahmeti related to the delayed Euro-Atlantic integrations was offered as evidence that DPMNE’s policies on inter-ethnic relations as important element of democratic sustainability resulted only in securing stability on short term while carrying the potency of violent outbreak on a long term. Shortly, the oppositional press claimed that DPMNE did not succeed to build trust among the ethnicities even after ten years in the office.

The erosion of the judiciary system, the suppression of the media and the politicisation of art have thus become the main themes of around which the opposition has constructed its discourses in the critique of the government’s policies. All these democratic flaws are supposed to contribute towards further polarization of inequality in the society. The irreconcilability of political opponents’ stances on democratic values and realities in Macedonia can, thus, be understood partially as a consequence of “Skopje 2014” observed as a process through which many of the assumed democratic deficiencies of the regime became more vivid and severe, deepening the existing political crisis.

Aside of serving as a type of summary, the chapters dedicated to the topic “democracy” have also served as an overture for the following chapter where I discuss government’s and opposition’s attitudes and behaviour towards the EU integration. As underlined in the methodological chapter, my intention is to gradually embed the debate about “Skopje 2014” into the wider debate about plural democracy in Macedonia, which in turn will be nested into the debate about interdependencies of domestic and international democracy, as observed in the case of Macedonia’s integration in the European structures.

CHAPTER 11: THE ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION FOR THE MACEDONIAN DEMOCRACY

Interdependence of domestic and international political order

The last hypothesis outlined in the beginning of the dissertation assumes that authoritarian populism in Macedonia is internally realised through identity change but it is externally cemented through links with the transnational capital and the negligence of the supranational structures which monitor and control the region. I have further assumed that as long the EU ignores the undemocratic developments in the candidate countries by employing the “stability first” strategy, it only implicitly legitimises the anti-liberal governments, while weakening the democratic forces in the society. The sending of ambiguous messages to the Macedonian citizens can thus result in Euroscepticism, mockery of the democratic values and continuous victory of anti-plural governing elite on the elections. I finally claim that as long as the national and supranational governments do not address socio-economic issues along procedural democracy, tending not only towards legal but also towards economic equality, there cannot be stability and progress in any geographical unit or in the world.

In the previous chapters democracy in Macedonia was observed almost entirely on the level of the nation-state. In this chapter, in line with Wallerstein’s theory I will, on the contrary, observe democracy in Macedonia embedded in larger, regional and European contexts. This will show the level of power disbalance between the core and the (semi)periphery of the world-system. More precisely, this will help to better understand the level of democracy in Macedonia *vis-à-vis* the demands of the oppositional voices for more inclusiveness and equality and will show the level of political responsibility the EU carries for the developments within Macedonia. In other words, the main goal of this chapter is to observe the interdependencies of domestic and international democracy, as observed in the case of Macedonia’s integration in the European structures.

As earlier, in this chapter I will again analyse the discourses of both the political actors and the cultural elite. Additionally, however, I will analyse the discourses of third political actor with great influence in the domestic and regional politics, the EU.

In the analyses that follow I will give more attention to the governing than to the oppositional elite, since the government is the main creator of policies related to international relations and the reactions of the EU on these policies. Here, as before, I assume if not dictate then at least firm collaboration between the government and the majority of the media houses in Macedonia on the same principals, where cautiousness is typical of politicians’ discourses and dissemination, lengthily argumentation and legitimisation of more radical stances on the same issues is typical of the media, perceived as one of the pillars of the organisation of power of authoritarian populist political regime.

When turning the attention to the EU I will firstly embed the analysis in the regional policy of the Union. Secondly, I will outline the general standings (argumentation schemes) and features of the discourses delivered by EU officials from different bodies in relation to Macedonia. Noteworthy, while examining EU discourses I will make distinction between discourse analysis of individual statements from EP MP’s and systematic analysis of documents (reports) issued by different bodies of the EU. The reports from the Commission and the Council as in-depth studies prepared on annual basis deserve different treatment than the statements from the EP MPs. Aside of being grounded in in-depth evaluations of Macedonia’s progress on the acquisition in the Union, these reports are also

prepared from relatively higher authorities in the decision-making pyramid of the Union, having more impact on the future behaviour of the domestic elites.

Because one of the main goal of this chapter is to observe the interdependencies of domestic and international, and more specifically European democracy, before the analysis of the attitudes and behaviour of the political actors in relation to European integration, I will once more reflect on the theoretical debates around the contradictions of the notion of democracy and provide a short introduction of Macedonia's level of connectedness with the EU and the barriers on its way to become an EU member-state. In relation to the last point I will provide a short summary of the advantages and the disadvantages for the Macedonian and the Greek side in the name dispute alongside the behaviour of different EU bodies in the same issue. I will treat this dispute as one of the central political issues around the EU integration in which both the domestic and foreign political actors have their own stakes.

For the needs of the analysis of the Macedonian political and cultural elites I have used both video and written materials. The selected discourses are organised thematically. Since the structure of this chapter differs from the previous in that it endeavours to represent discourses from an additional actor, the EU, in this chapter on top of representativeness an especially important criteria for selecting and analysing discourses will also be their salience.

As expected, the key words combination "Skopje 2014" and variances of the word "EU" have produced an insignificant number of articles from the newspapers. The search in *Utrinski Vesnik*, the newspaper most oriented on opinion pieces, under the keyword combination "Skopje 2014" and "EU" yielded 3 articles, under the keyword combination "Skopje 2014" and "Europe" 9 and under the keyword combination "Skopje 2014" and "Union" only 2 articles on 22 September, 2015. The other outlets produced even less results. The preliminary analysis of these articles proved that when informing or debating on "Skopje 2014" the outlets only marginally referred to the European perspective of Macedonia. This notwithstanding, in context of the topics such as national identity or antiquisation, on which "Skopje 2014" had great impact, the EU integration was closely related and discussed. This was especially the case in the oppositional outlets. The most representative discourses will be analysed in this chapter. The newspapers have also served as source for statements from EU officials.

Equally valuable source of discourses for this chapter were video materials found on video sharing website YouTube. For this chapter I have extracted two discourses from news reports from private TV-station *Sitel*, one from a TV-debate on Euroscepticism prepared by *Zebra* on-line television and one from Prime Minister's public speech. I have also analysed a short promotional film named "You are Macedonia", produced by the national TV-service *MRTV* and financed by the government of Macedonia. In the selection and analysis of video materials I was also guided by the criteria of representativeness and salience.

Finally, for the systematic analysis of EU's discourse on Macedonia's democratic development I have used four documents: EU Commission's Progress Report from 2011, the Stabilisation and Association Council's Report from July 2014, Council's conclusions on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia from June, 2015 and the Commission's Staff Working Document from October, 2015, found on the official site of the EU.

International (European) democracy and domestic democracy

There is a great discrepancy in the understanding of what democracy means within and between the nation-states. This is one of the greatest contradictions of the term democracy. Just as after the end of the World War II the comprehension of modernity as a *process* shifted to understanding of modernity as *civilisation* (Boatca, 2015), the same way, by the second half of the twentieth century the concept of democracy became primarily a symbol or a proof of civilization (Wallerstein, 2001). The domestic formerly dangerous, “uncivilised” working classes were gradually accepted as citizens, process shifting the rhetorical line between civilized and uncivilized to be one between civilized countries and uncivilized countries. The conviction grew that the “West” is democratic; the “rest” is not. This claim was grounded in the factual empowering of the domestic proletariat and its allowance to participate in the redistribution of wealth as predicted with the concept of welfare-state. The hegemonic forces in the world-economy thus proclaimed themselves the moral leaders - while offering democracy as a “Holy Grail” their hegemony is portrayed as the basis of progress throughout the world (*Ibid.*).

This rhetoric was adopted on the level of the European Union as well. The EU also tends to respond to the increased pressures for inclusiveness and equality. Under the Lisbon Treaty, for instance, seats in the European Parliament are allocated to each state according to its population. Hypothetically, if the same rule would be applied to the world population, China and India e.g. would have been granted more decision-making powers in the world-economy and politics. Also, under the assumption that for the most of the underprivileged world the notion of democracy is predominantly associated with redistribution, the applying of the same formula of democracy on international level would create a revolutionary change in the world. This redistribution, however, is not typical even within the ‘democratic club’ of the EU, where there is no visible convergence between the old members and the new, Eastern Enlargement countries to be observed. Wallerstein (2001) theorises that due to reluctance of the core states for redistribution most of the world does not have liberal states, but mainly *clans and family systems* of corruption and nepotism, trying to sustain the control of the scarce resources, somewhere making the difference between life and death. Because of the structure of the capitalist world-economy grounded in ceaseless accumulation, and not dispersion, of capital (financial, human, etc.) it is impossible for the majority of the countries to have such political regimes. In this line one can conclude that Europe behaves relatively democratically within but not necessarily democratically outside its borders. In other words it can be said that within the world-system analysis framework, the EU, representing a substantial part of the core of the capitalist world order, is rather a hegemonic force reproducing long existing power asymmetries than a union of states with primary goal of equal (re)distribution of economic and political resources.

In context of the theoretical debate and in function of the analysis that follows it is important to understand the character of the relationship between Macedonia and the EU. The importance of integration in Europe for candidate countries in general, and for Macedonia in particular, originates from at least three factors. Firstly, after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, and the Eastern bloc in general, the EU became an icon of democratic prosperity and security. Secondly, from great importance for the country’s accession to the Union is the factual dependency of Macedonia’s economic development from the linkage to the Union. Lastly and closely related to the previous points, the geographic proximity of Western Europe as core of the world-system makes it a “natural choice” for economic, political and security-related partnership. This last point is as equally important for the EU countries, which understand that the security and stability of Balkans is also crucial for their security.

This was evident in the European refugee crisis from 2015 when most of the migrants used the so called Western Balkan route.

Returning to the first point, it is noteworthy that Macedonian public had expressed continuously high level of aspiration to join the Union and this fact has substantial weight in the politicians positioning and decision-making processes. For instance, on the 2007 Eurobarometer question asking if the membership in the European Union is good for the country, almost 80 percent of the Macedonian population answered positively. Until 2011 in comparison to both neighbouring members of the Union, such as Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia, and non-members, such as Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, Macedonia had continuously expressed highest support for the EU, entering the group of the Baltic countries known to have one of the highest levels of support of the Union. Just as in the case of the Baltic countries, most probably the high level of support is due to the perceiving of the EU, together with NATO, as a stabilising or protective factor. Under the leadership of VMRO-DPMNE and with the failure to join the Union in earlier expected time-frames this support has significantly dropped in the last years.

Referring to the second point or the level of dependency from the Union, according to the Macedonia's State's Statistical Office Report on Foreign Trade in 2014, the most important export partners of the country were the EU-28 countries (76.6%) and the West Balkan countries (14.0%), while the most important import partners were the EU-28 countries (63.5%). According to the total volume of international commodity trade, the most important trade partners of Macedonia are Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Serbia and Italy (51.7% of the total international commodity trade).¹⁰⁴ Equally important is the level of funding Macedonia receives from the Union. Under pre-accession assistance the EU plans to allocate € 664.2 million to Macedonia in the period 2014-2020.¹⁰⁵

These figures are even more significant considering the gray economic situation in the country. According to Gallup Balkan Monitor Report from 2010 Macedonia has one of the highest shares of people struggling financially in Europe, with 72% of its citizens stating that they could only manage on their household's income "with difficulty" or "with great difficulty".¹⁰⁶ According to the Progress Report of the EU Commission for 2015 the 'unemployment remains high at 28%'.¹⁰⁷

The European Union in the name dispute between Macedonia and Greece

Considering the high level of support for membership and the high level of dependency from the Union, for the analyses that follow it is also essential to know the most significant details of the persistent issue blocking the country's accession in the Western structures, the name dispute with Greece. In this regard, it is also interesting to observe the role of the EU in the dispute as well.

¹⁰⁴ http://www.stat.gov.mk/PrikaziSoopstenie_en.aspx?id=78&rbr=1590, last viewed on 17.02.2017

¹⁰⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/instruments/funding-by-country/former-yugoslav-republic-of-macedonia_en

¹⁰⁶ http://www.balkan-monitor.eu/files/BalkanMonitor-2010_Summary_of_Findings.pdf

¹⁰⁷ European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document on FYROM, Brussels, 10.11.2015, SWD(2015) 212 final

After the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the subsequent independence of Macedonia the “Macedonian question” was once more raised on the international scene. From the beginning of the issue the membership in the EU was used by Greece as a powerful lever against Macedonia, since despite the Commission’s support for the opposite, Greece blocked Macedonia’s recognition by the EU and its member states. Over the time, however, the solidarity with Greece within the EU was not strong enough and some member states disagreed with Greece’s position. The issue of stability in the region e.g. was of higher priority for some EU member states. According to Mavromatidis (2010) particularly after the Kosovo crisis, there is a strong conviction in the Union that the security of Western Europe is also linked to the security of the Balkan countries. Therefore, their integration into the Western structures has been promoted. Within this framework, the Greek threat to create difficulties for the overall enlargement strategy, by blocking Macedonian candidacy, poses a serious problem for the EU (*Ibid.*). Hence, after 1999 many EU member states began to recognise Macedonia under the constitutional name (Republic of Macedonia), a trend reinforced with the 2004 Eastern Enlargement. This demonstrates that most of the member states want Macedonia to join the Union but simultaneously they have to remain ‘loyal’ to Greece.

One of the strongest sides of Macedonia, on the other hand, is the support of the USA on the name issue. Due to Macedonia’s extreme pro-US position, as evident through Macedonia’s participation in the “war on terror” in Iraq and in Afghanistan, the country gained in turn the patronage from the US in the name dispute, ultimately culminating into unilateral recognition of the state under its constitutional name. Also, Macedonia has been recognised under its constitutional name by the majority of UN member states, although not by the UN itself.

Given the background, the behaviour of the EU in the name dispute also carries great weight in the problem’s resolution. On top of Union’s official neutrality on the issue, the division of competencies between the EU institutions over the issue, particularly between the Council and the Commission, poses additional complication of the matter.

Although the most democratic institution of the Union (composed of directly elected representatives every five years by universal suffrage) the European Parliament has no power to decide on candidate country’s accession. As such, it is only a forum for frequent ‘clashes’ between MEPs regarding the position of the Parliament in the dispute. Most important institutions of the EU in regard to EU membership are the European Commission (so called the European government) and the European Council.

The European Commission (EC) is the executive body of the European Union responsible for proposing legislation, implementing decisions and respect of the EU treaties. On the level of this institution there is neutrality, since the dispute is mainly negotiated with UN appointed mediator. Until now EU Commission’s intervention in Macedonia’s accession has taken the form of encouraging compromise, something to be observed in the annual progress reports and in the official statements of EU officials.

On the level of the European Council, as a strategic and crisis-solving body that provides the Union with general political directions and priorities, the divisions between the member states are vague. Importantly, even though the Commission deals with the everyday workings of the enlargement, it is the Council that takes the final decision on EU membership. It follows, bargaining among the member states yields the final result. Hence, in spite of the divisions and Commission neutrality,

overall EU pressure on Macedonia reduces to no membership without a solution to the name dispute and quiet solidarity with the Greek veto. According to Mavromatidis (2010) Greece believes that the deeper inside the Union, the more powerful and secure it is. This strategy proved sustainable for the country.

The tensions between the neighbours, however, continued with the appeal of Macedonia to The Hague against Greece on the issue with the Macedonian minority in Greece and the taking of Greece to the ICJ for violation of the Interim Accord from 1995 predicting Greece to refrain from further vetoing of Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic integration on the grounds of the name dispute. With the European economic crisis hitting Greece the hardest, the name dispute with Macedonia shifted to the bottom of the priority-list of the country. In the period that followed civil unrest and government instability in Greece coincided with raising populism and nationalism in Macedonia. On the background of economic and political problems in the Union and the slowdown of the enlargement process, the standing points of the Union in relation to the name dispute became relatively stable, summing up to the expectation the neighbours to find a common solution in a bilateral agreement.

The behaviour of the Macedonian government in relation to the EU

Taking into account the nature of Macedonia's connectedness to the EU and the barrier(s) on the country's accession in the Union, I will next focus on the government's attitude towards the EU integration. To do so I will analyse two discourses. I will firstly analyse the two and a half minutes long video clip "You are Macedonia"¹⁰⁸ aired on the national TV service *MRTV* in mid-2009. The second text is from a speech delivered by Prime Minister Gruevski on an anniversary of the Union of Youth Forces (UYF) of the governing party.

To fully understand the meaning of the first discourse I would once more refer to the situational context in which the video was produced and aired. During its first mandate 2006-2010 under leadership of Gruevski, VMRO-DPMNE has played the nationalistic card especially after 2008's NATO Bucharest summit when due to the unsolved name dispute with Greece the country was not invited to join the alliance. The period between the Bucharest fiasco in 2008 and the defeat of the party on the local elections in the Centre Municipality in 2013, can be marked as the most prolific from perspective of the antiquisation policy. In mid-2008 the Hunza delegation visits Macedonia, while in December 2008 the "Macedonian Prayer" was aired. In about the same period the study of iGenea was conducted "proving evidence that Macedonians have more ancient Macedonian blood" than the Greeks. "You are Macedonia" discursively belongs to the same "texts" and can be seen as a remedy for the assumed public disappointment for the failure to join the Euro-Atlantic structures.

The video begins with a scene depicting a Macedonian scout is silently observing the ancient Assyrian settlement of Gaugamela, the place that will become the battlefield where in 331 B.C Alexander the Great wins the decisive battle against the outnumbering "barbarian" Persian army.

¹⁰⁸ "You are Macedonia", national television *MRTV*, published on 15.06.2009, last viewed on 16.02.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yiki7bEszrQ>

In the second scene the scout enters the tent of Alexander, where he plans a war strategy with his generals:

Alexander: They are more, they can beat us. I think it is most clever to attack them from the flank.

The scout: Don't! They come, from each side! They are already 200.000, five times more than us.

Another general: They are too many, we have too small chances.

An anonymous voice asks: Would Alexander be the most celebrated general of all times if he was going to immediately kneel down to the challenges and if he did not take the things in his own hands?

Alexander [clenching his fist]: It is good that those as you are few. I went [on a mission] to free the world and not to teach the weak what is courage and responsibility. I believe in myself, I believe in my decisions and I believe in my own people!

In the last, third scene Alexander stands in front of his army on the battlefield. Raising his sword he exclaims: We go in victory!

After this scene, the text appears on the screen read by the same anonymous voice [while a waving Macedonian flag and the phalange formations marching are depicted]: "Believe in yourself, believe in your decisions, be responsible and take the things in your own hands! In what kind of Macedonia you will live today, depends only on you, because you are Macedonia". While the last word "you are Macedonia" are pronounced a pinpointing finger appears on the screen, similar to the image of the 'I want you for the US army' posters, so widely used in popular culture, and associated with propaganda.¹⁰⁹

The video ends with the statement pronounced by the anonymous voice: "Project of the Government of Republic of Macedonia".

It is hard one not to associate the allocation of roles in the clip with the political players in the reality. The numerous army gathered against Alexander is personification of the European Union, the voices of the generals in the Alexander's army are the oppositional voices within Macedonia, reportedly the one always ready for compromises, and Alexander the Great is the Prime Minister Gruevski himself.

Once more the 'mystic bridge' between the people's unity under a great ruler in the distant past and the unity of the people in the present, (supposedly, under another 'great ruler') is suggested. The rule of Gruevski is thus depicted as continuation or revival of the Alexander's "heroic age". After a long period of suffering (the myth about the victim) the unity of the nation has been established under the new leadership of the populist leader, giving birth to 'victorious Macedonians, new Macedonians, shift from insignificant and fearful macedonian - with small "m"- to a big and fearless huge Macedonian' (Frckovski, 2014).

¹⁰⁹ For instance the poster „Ты записался добровольцем?“ ("Did you register as a volunteer?") – a Bolshevik propaganda poster created by artist Dmitry Moor in 1920, during the Civil War in Russia drawn in the likeness of the American propaganda posters of World War I «I want you for U.S. army». Based on the popularity and effectiveness of the poster, Moor later creates another one „Ты чем помог фронту?“ („[And] how have you helped the Front?“)

The leader with big 'I' is a person portrayed in machismo fashion: he is courageous commander, who can win against a 'five times' more numerous opponents, a self-confident and responsible leader, who takes 'things in his own hands' and one that 'believes' in his own decisions.

He is assumed to have two missions, one to 'free the world', which could be also interpreted as "teaching Europe a lesson", and second, to 'teach the weak what is courage and responsibility', or "teaching the political opposition a lesson". In this context, the 'Leader' is supposed to teach the 'hesitant', 'the-one-always-ready-to-compromise', what 'greatness' and 'courage' are.

Finally, the video ends with a voice reminding that this is a 'Project of the Government of Republic of Macedonia'.

It is impressive that the Eurocrats monitoring the happenings in the candidate countries could not see the hidden Eurosceptic message and anti-pluralism in this 'Project of the Government of Republic of Macedonia'.

This short video clip in fact comprises all elements of the regime's populist narrative: the *fallacy of treat, vilification* of the opposition for weakness or treason, *promise of salvation* and protection of the "unity of the people" under the strong leadership of a non-political actor. One can also conclude about the government's attitude towards the EU from this narrative. Except nominally, the EU is not a strategic determination of Gruevski's government. The establishment (EU), together with Greece and the "domestic traitors" are all enemies of the people and their leader. The "bold" messages behind "Skopje 2014" seen as continuation of this narrative produced the expected reactions of Greece and Bulgaria. The name dispute with Greece, keeping the country in prolonged isolation, is just a lever for increasing control over society and ground for legitimisation of the tendencies towards autocratic rule, since allegedly only a strong protector of the national interests could lead the people through the "threats of the difficult times".

The same building blocks of the populist narrative are to be found in the next discourse that Gruevski has delivered on the Celebration of the 19th anniversary of the Union of Youth Forces (UYF) of VMRO quoted in *Vecer*:

"In his speech, he said that UYF was one of the main pillars to overcome the difficult period when all possible shocks have happened – from the biggest global crisis to the political torpedoes that more than ever were directed towards Macedonia [in efforts] to change its name and identity.

Although Macedonia led by VMRO-DPMNE has met all conditions for NATO membership and start negotiations with the EU, in both cases we were blocked by Greece. That, according to Gruevski, is one of the major historical injustices taking place on European soil. He rejected the accusations that the government is not interested to join NATO and the EU, but reiterated that the government will not kneel under the pressure.

- Various emissaries, analysts, politicians ... daily inspire fear and threaten that the EU will defocus from Macedonia, and NATO will require re-evaluation of Macedonia, that instability and ethnic conflict will be installed, that DUI will leave the government, that they will alleviate the credibility of VMRO-DPMNE and bring to power another government that will change the name. I do not exclude that some of the threats will be realized, but there is no threat that will push us to do damage to national interests in terms of name and identity. In this state, except politicians and government there are two million living souls who think with their own head, have their needs, their opinions and feelings. This

people, not politicians and missionaries is the master of this space and it decides for its name and identity, Gruevski said.

He reiterated that the name issue can be decided only by the people in a referendum and only in the case when a proposal will be obtained that will be a real compromise. At this point, Gruevski does not see that Greece is ready, with the prospects for a solution assessed as minimal. The government, however, will not give up and continue with rational behaviour and with a strong will for a solution.”(*Vecer*, May, 2010).

This text contains all the elements of (right-wing) populist speech. The introduction is dedicated to the description of the so called “foreign threat”: ‘when all possible shocks have happened – from the biggest global crisis to the political torpedoes that more than ever were directed towards Macedonia [in efforts] to change its name and identity’. The assumed existence of “threat” by the establishment is supposed to create a stronger cohesion in the ‘we’ group, in this context the UYF, ‘one of the main pillars to overcome the difficult period’.

The second paragraph contains a statement delivered from *worms-eye view*, perpetuating the “myth of the victim”, where although ‘VMRO-DPMNE has met all conditions for NATO membership and start [of the] negotiations with the EU, in both cases [Macedonia] was blocked by Greece’. In the genre of the “heroic myth”, however, the Prime Minister underlines that the ‘government will not kneel under the pressure’.

In the third paragraph, the rhetor once more accuses ‘various emissaries, analysts, politicians’ of inspiring fear on daily bases, threatening that the EU will defocus from Macedonia. In typical populist argumentation pattern, and as already analysed in the previous chapters, Gruevski does not count himself as a ‘politician’, and therefore, feels comfortable in accusing the ‘politicians’ for plotting conspiracy against the interests of the people. Reminding that “some of the threats [may be] be realized” Gruevski underlines that in Macedonia ‘except politicians and government there are two million living souls who think with their own head’ and namely ‘this people, not politicians and missionaries is the master of this space and it decides for its name and identity’. This statement is interesting from two aspects. Firstly, the speaker continuously returns to the theme of the “threat”. While the political opponents were assumed to ‘inspire fear’ in order to fulfil their political goals, the speaker factually does the same, only attempting to realise the completely opposite ends. Secondly, the rhetor assumes that ‘the people’ or all the two million citizens of Macedonia have same interests and stances on national identity, and namely, the same with the one that the Prime Minister has. This wording hints that the Prime Minister has no personal or party-related stakes in the “name issue” with Greece, but is simply a protector of the alleged unanimous people’s decision to withstand against any changes of the identity.

In the final paragraph, *Vecer* informs that ‘Gruevski does not see that Greece is ready’ for finding a solution. Blaming Greece for not having the political will to find a solution to the name dispute is essential final building block of VMRO-DPMNE’s populist narrative. If accepted, this argument provides easy justification why the country is not entering the European Union. The ever delayed EU integration on the other hand gives the governing party the opportunity to play the nationalistic card, something which is assumed to bring relatively long and stabile dominance on the domestic political stage.

Vilification of the political opponent

One of the top priorities of Gruevski's autocratic-populist regime is the smear campaign against the former political elite. Beginning 2013 the Prime Minister of Macedonia has systematically accused the opposition for the country's failure to join the Union. Opposition's boycott of the work of the Parliament after the closing of some media houses critical of the government and especially after the incident of 24 December, 2012, as the last available peaceful action to counterbalance the executive power and appeal the international community (mainly the EU) to react on the autocratic inclinations of Gruevski's government was interpreted by the governing elite as 'harm to the state' and 'disruption of the [good] image Macedonia gained' under his rule. One should note that the opposition decided to walk out the Parliament not only because of the aforementioned reasons, but also because the Parliament stopped being pluralist institution of debate and compromises and turned in a mere confirmation of the government's policies, just as each consecutive elections after the seizure of power were used only as legitimisation of the all, including the unpopular policies, such as "Skopje 2014".

The first discourse I will analyse in this section is from the speech of Gruevski in front of the VMRO-DPMNE senior membership in relation to the local elections in 2013:

"In these 20 years in which our country is striving to realize the European and the Euro-Atlantic integration the obstruction, will not come from outside, from someone else, but for the first time it will come from an insider, someone from home, instead from Greece it will come from Branko Crvenkovski. With his behaviour this last month and a half Branko has contributed not to make progress, i.e. our progress to be devalued. What we do with the reforms, what we do with the projects, what we do with the changes in all spheres to be devaluated because of his decision, which harms the state. With our penetration into the EU integrations Branko Crvenkovski obviously is unable to reconcile, and because of that he does everything to harm and then to blame us, that we have been unable and that it is our fault. And all see...all see....dear friends, that ... Branko became more Greek even then Samaras (the Greek PM at the time). And if the most famous Greek in the past was Zorbas¹¹⁰, if he continues with this damage that he makes to Macedonia, if he stays strong until the end of this boycott and disrupts the [good] image that Macedonia gained, and we lose the positive evaluation and the recommendation (for accession), then the most famous Greek will not be Zorbas but it will be the Greek Branko. Because with his behaviour...he works out for Greece."¹¹¹

In this short text the Prime Minister collocates words such as "damage", "harm", "blame" next to the name of the opposition leader. The usage of the name of the opposition leader without his surname, as if it is a nickname or a name of someone who does not deserve any respect, is another method of belittling of the political opponent. Branko Crvenkovski is described as an "insider" and a traitor who 'works out for Greece' and is 'more Greek even then Samaras'. One can thus notice trend towards *personalisation* of politics, which reduces public affairs to personal disputes if not between two leaders of political elites than at least between two "clans" of patronage networks, a discursive pattern typical of autocratic populism.

Another conclusion arising from the analysis of the text is that the Prime Minister is content even with getting recommendation for EU accession based on the annual evaluation reports the

¹¹⁰ The main character of the book "Alexis Zorbas" from the acclaimed Greek author Nikos Kazantzakis, sometimes translated as "The Greek Zorbas".

¹¹¹ Gruevski, party rally for the local elections 2013, <http://grid.mk/read/news/501619909/1724778/gruevski-proektot-skopje-2014-ja-krena-glavata-na-makedoncite-vo-makedonija>

Commission prepares. This is so because the government of Gruevski interpreted the positive evaluations as legitimisation of their policies. As it will be seen later in the chapter, the “positive evaluations” were widely used by the pro-government media to explain the public that only the name dispute with Greece is standing on the Macedonia’s way to Europe. Usually details of these reports were not presented nor discussed to the public, so no acknowledgment of any democratic deficiencies found by the Commission’s staff were reported on the news.

In the following short excerpt from Gruevski’s public speech in 2013 one can see even sharpened language in the portrayal of the opposition’s leader as alleged traitor and collaborator of the Greeks:

“From the behaviour of the Greek Branko only Greece rejoices. Imagine, he says, if I provide a solution to the name issue, he would not require early elections. What a blackmail, for whom this person works, I wonder. How is he not ashamed so directly to work for someone? It should be clear that if we get negative report from the European Union this year it will be the personal merit of Branko Crvenkovski and a direct result of his shameful policies.”¹¹²

The idea that close cooperation and alignment of common strategies exists between the Social democrats, the NGO sector financed by the Soros Foundation and the Greek politicians was accepted and more precisely elaborated by the pro-government media. In this context later in the same chapter I will analyze an article from *Vecer*.

The same rhetoric Gruevski used later against the newly elected leader of the Social Democrats, showing that this type of critique is not necessarily pointed at the personality of the political opponent as much it is an inseparable part of Prime Minister’s discursive style:

„I think that the happiest man in that moment will be Zoran Zaev, and he will jump one meter high, if he finds out that Macedonia has lost the Recommendation (for accession to the Union).”¹¹³

Independently who is the head of the opposition party, Gruevski finds that person most responsible for the negative evaluations of the Union, as if the opposition has more power to manage the state or it uses illegitimate methods to express dissatisfaction with the policies of the government which are assumed to harm the image of the country.

Another curious fact is that Gruevski has escaped any pre-elections public duel with the leader of strongest opposition party for the last 6 years. Paradoxically, while the Prime Minister builds a personal image of a non-political actor working only for the “good of the people”, he in fact is not only a political actor but also one who places himself above the other political actors, finding them unworthy to challenge his arguments and policies.

¹¹² *MRTV*, Nikola Gruevski speech on 19.02.2013, published 20 Feb 2013, last viewed 24.02.2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fhGcx9_T3Bo

¹¹³ The official website of the SDSM, last viewed 02. 01.2016, <http://www.sdsm.org.mk/default.aspx?mId=55&agId=4&articleId=11100>

Foreign intervention through the opposition

The claims that the opposition leaders are cooperating with Greece in order Macedonia to get negative reports from the EU or the allegations that Branko Crvenkovski has blackmailed the Prime Minister to find a solution in the name dispute for the opposition to withdrawal the demands for earlier elections have later developed into more comprehensive narrative about the attempts for foreign intervention through the opposition. This came to the fore especially after the so called "Putsch" affaire. This idea was widely exploited by the pro-government media thereafter.

If the previous article highlighted the assumed conspiracy of the opposition with official Athens, the following excerpt of public speech delivered on the party congress in 2015 already blames the opposition for *coup d'état* attempt in cooperation with foreign forces. It is noteworthy that the "party" and the "state" are treated as interchangeable notions in the discourse:

"In the last 5-6 months VMRO-DPMNE tides over the biggest blow so far given, in extremely cowardly and manipulative way. Unable to be defeated in a normal political battle, in the competition of ideas, the opposing team, cooperating with dark forces, tried in most brutal, most cowardly and most undemocratic way to crash the party. But instead, they will topple themselves and already are beginning to crumble.

To the domestic Fifth Column I want to pass a message, that there is people in this country who would resist their games, spy methods, their anti-state actions. (...)

Our goal is as quickly as possible our country to become a member of NATO and the EU. Our goal is also the continuous economic growth, increase of the living standards and job creation. Our goal is continuous and ceaseless struggle against crime and corruption." (*Utrinski Vesnik*, June, 2015)

The *predication* pattern lacks any sensibility for political correctness typical for pluralist, democratic societies. Insulting words such as "dark forces", "brutal", "cowardly" and "manipulative" are used to describe the opposition or its actions. VMRO-DPMNE, on the other hand, is portrayed as passive actor, a victim. This speech evidently polarizes the society through the creation of two irreconcilable options in front of the citizens.

At the end of the speech the superficial commitment towards the Euro-Atlantic integrations and the fight against crime and corruption have been underscored. On the same party congress Gruevski won 100% of the votes to continue with the presidency with the party, a signal of absolute control over the party's hierarchy.

The attitude of the pro-government cultural elites' towards the EU

Euroscepticism

The discourse analysis in the earlier chapters has shown that the politicians were exceptionally cautious and calculative in statements related to identity politics. For instance, the antiquisation ideas were mainly disseminated by TV hosts, journalists, artists or NGO activists close to the government. The same strategy was actually utilised in the case of the EU integration processes. The same actors responsible for propagation of the antiquisation ideas were employed in the process of legitimisation of the government policies related to the EU integration. This way while officially staying pro-European the government used channels to soften the public anger of the delayed integration through media content that sometimes was even explicitly eurosceptic. It can be easily assumed that in case of success in the EU integration process, the same actors will immediately stop the critique of the Union and focus on praise of the government's achievements in the field of Euro-integrations.

It is noteworthy that, differently from the Social Democrats, after the failure to join the NATO in 2008, the conservative and increasingly populist VMRO-DPMNE, for the first time in the history of independent Macedonia started systematic propagation of Euroscepticism. "You are Macedonia" can be treated as the first step towards this policy. Events such as the Euro debt crisis in 2009, which defocused the Union from the enlargement, gave an extra impetus to the government and especially to the pro-government media to continue further with Eurosceptic discourse. The behaviour of the Union in this period and the efforts of the media to tarnish the reputation of the Union in the public have resulted in a big drop of support of the EU in Macedonia, from 76% in 2007 to 57% in 2011, as the Eurobarometer has shown.

Some of the Eurosceptic argumentations delivered by pro-government journalists and other public opinion-makers were indeed based on evidences, and therefore not fallacious. E.g. on a TV-debate¹¹⁴ dedicated to EU integrations and Euroscepticism in Macedonia the journalist Mirka Velinovska from *Vecer*, reminds the viewers that there are countries in the EU that still have colonial possessions, that the EU as organisation is not interested in guaranteeing the rights of the minorities from non-members states, that related to the name dispute with Greece the Union does not give the people of Macedonia the fundamental right for self-determination, enshrined in the UN Conventions. Finally, Velinovska claims that, among other reasons, because of racism and xenophobia the Union keeps Turkey as candidate country for decades. At the end of her speech she asks a rhetorical question: should such organisation be an ideal of non-member countries?

Other critics of the EU, however, ground Euroscepticism in a mixture of factual and fallacious argumentation schemes, typical of (right-wing) populist discourses. The editor of *Vecer*, Dragan Pavlovic, in his column (text 6 from the appendix) for the eponymous newspaper focuses his Eurosceptic discourse on the hypocrisy of the Union:

¹¹⁴ "Euroscepticism in Macedonia – part two", ZebraonlineMK, last viewed 13.02.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6tgTC0fc-wM>

“The Union remarks to Macedonia and Serbia that they have unsettled relationships with neighbouring countries, and therefore they are not granted membership. What about Cyprus? What are the Greek relations with Turkey? Or Turkey is not a country? (...)

Why the Tribunal is established if no one respects it? Or is it there just to rule in the interest of corporate colonialism, when opponents of neo-colonialism such as Gaddafi, Saddam Hussein, Assad have to be pulled down... only then rulings are important? And enforceable?

The Court ruled that Kosovo's secession was not against international law. And that was the alibi for the European countries to claim they recognized Kosovo on legal grounds. Not only because of daily political interests.”

Pavlovic, recounts at least three major instances in which the Union acts inconsistently with its official stances for democracy and rule of law. Most notably, in context of the Tribunal's rulings the author also legitimately asks why the Tribunal is established if it enforces its rulings only in exceptional cases.

However, throughout the text and next to this logically consistent argumentation, the author uses fallacious or contradictory argumentation patterns. Mainly through the combination of three rhetorical principles -subdivision of the world of social actors into *friends and enemies*, *reduction of complexities* (or simplistic illustrations) and pathetic *dramatization and emotionalisation*- Pavlovic builds not only Eurosceptic, but also powerful anti-pluralist narrative simultaneously directed against all the political opponents.

In three instances the author uses contradictory argumentation with the aim to *emotionalise* political issues. In the first case, as seen from the cited text, Pavlovic firstly delegitimizes the EU as a hypocritical organisation, but simultaneously, within the same text, the author calls upon the authority of the Union to legitimise his claim that the political opponent Crvenkovski was wrong when criticizing the government for delaying the EU integration through the antiquisation policy saying that ‘more skilled than him, those who sit in NATO and the European Union estimated that we are ready indeed’.

In the second case, Pavlovic in sequential paragraphs accuses first the Greek government and later the leader of the opposition, Branko Crvenkovski, as sole creator of the name dispute:

‘The Greek government now has a better position than yesterday; if it really wants to resolve the dispute it imposed itself. They have a verdict to use in front of its public, as a reason to soften the position and accept at least a double formula [for the name].

But Greeks do not announce such intentions. On the contrary. They declare that the reference FYROM was not their choice. In 1995 we ourselves, governed by Crvenkovski and Gligorov have voted into Parliament to give up the name Republic of Macedonia and to be renamed into FYROM. Which is true.

As it is true that Crvenkovski, who is the author of that problem, now trumpets around to be ready to save Macedonia and bring it into Europe.’

The argumentation scheme in this excerpt is evidently fallacious. The author claims that Greece can ‘resolve the dispute it imposed itself’, thus recognising Greece as creator of the problem. In the following paragraph, however, Pavlovic assures the reader that ‘it is true that Crvenkovski, who is the author of that problem’ now tries to win political points by criticising Prime Minister's policies towards the EU. At the end of this paragraph it is not clear who indeed is the initiator of the dispute.

Lastly, in the final paragraph, the author both claims that the Union is dissolving ('now furious because of everything that happens with the dissolution of their Union') and that Macedonia's goal is to enter in it with better prepared economy and democratic system ('Most importantly, during the negotiation, to create a country that is economically more powerful, and democratically more upgraded. As such it will be more respected by the Europeans'). If the author indeed believes that the Union will soon fall apart then there will be no reason for Macedonia to further aspire for and negotiate accession in the EU with better economic and political systems.

In all of these instances the author simplifies complexities and constructs reality in which the "enemies", such as the EU, Greece or the leader of the opposition should be easily recognisable as hypocritical, calculative, traitorous.

Insulting the political opponent, another characteristic of right-wing populist argumentation patterns, is also utilised against the opposition's leader: 'Branko behaved Greek, even more than the Greeks.' The wording is evidently adopted from the speeches of Prime Minister Gruevski, suggesting strong impact of the political actors over the public opinion-makers. In another case other "opponents" are described in negative terms: 'Poor and depressed faces no one needs. Especially not the Europeans, who are traditionally arrogant and full with prejudices'.

The common "domestic traitors" are also referred to in another *anti-pluralist* statement: 'Unlike us, they [the Greeks] are united. They have one people, one religion, and a long state history.' This wording hints that "we", the Macedonians, in turn, are not united, are not one people, confessing not the same religion, and having not a long state history. Pavlovic is not satisfied that ethnic Macedonians are not united behind the government in "keeping the name" under any unfavourable circumstances imposed by Greece and the EU. He is also unsatisfied that Macedonia is multiethnic and multiconfessional society, prone to conflict of interests and in need of making compromises, typical for pluralist societies.

At the end of the analysis of this text I would focus the attention to the overtly *Eurosceptic* argumentation patterns I found in the discourse. In the beginning of the text the author claims that Macedonia has managed to fulfil what was required even from member states such as the Netherlands [while] 'for Bulgaria, Romania and Greece I do not even want to talk ... it is clear to us even without the evaluations of the EU, every day we see that they are behind us.'

In this excerpt Pavlovic tries to underscore that even though these Balkan countries are members of the Union Macedonia can still perform better than they do. No further arguments, however, are offered to support this claim. Overt Euroscepticism is also to be seen in the final statements of the text where Pavlovic concludes that the Europeans are 'now furious because of everything that happens with the dissolution of their Union.' The author, thus, argues not only that Macedonia is better off out of the Union, but that it is even illogical to strive to enter the Union since the EU is in process of dissolution. No further arguments are offered to support this claim as well. What is more important in context of overt Euroscepticism, however, is not the logical coherency of the argumentation scheme but how Euroscepticism as narrative is utilised in winning the "hearts and minds" in the domestic political arena. Against complete comprehension of the mechanism of the *Realpolitik*, the pro-government media, just as the political elite, speculates with the facts in an attempt to construct a scenario with zero sum outcome for Macedonia's involvement in the EU project.

The rhetor mixes facts and assumptions to describe the unbalanced power relations between Greece and Macedonia, claiming that 'they [the Greeks] are stronger than us, have more powerful friends, geo-strategic position and rich emigration which give them supremacy over all our policies'. Further, Greeks are 'members of the current royal families in England, Spain' and have 'finance[d] campaigns of US presidents'. In short, Pavlovic claims that 'Greece is more necessary to them than Macedonia' and 'even if Greece pretends to respect the ruling of the ICJ, and will not veto further, Cyprus will veto for them. Or any of its allies, primarily Spain or France'.

There are two dominant messages of these claims. The first message is that Macedonia is a victim of a "bigger power". The second message is that Greece is completely unwilling to find solution of the name dispute and would use even other countries to block Macedonia's entrance in the Union.

The two decades history of the dispute have indeed proven that, through the EU Council as the *de facto* decision-maker on enlargement matters, Greece has effectively conditioned Macedonia's entrance in the Union. *Realpolitik*, however, imposes that the longstanding applicant country with fewer alternatives on the negotiation table would initiate compromise. More so, in case when the country for more than two decades officially carries the name "Former Yugoslav" in its name, something which the governing elite assumes to have negative impact on the country's international image and it also stands in complete opposition to the efforts behind the antiquisation policy. However, the *victimization* strategy opens the opportunity to depict the Macedonian government as ethically stronger and allegedly more enduring side in an unequal struggle.

One can conclude that the portrayal of Greece as politically unwilling opponent is one of the necessary pillars of the government's populist discourse which in daily politics draws its legitimacy as a "protector" of the national interests. This argumentation pattern is evidently embraced and more deeply elaborated by the media. In the Macedonian case, hence, Euroscepticism is inextricably related to populist argumentation schemes directed more against the domestic political opponents than against the international establishment.

Common enemies

Another focal point of the media supportive of the government in referral to the EU integrations was the construction of scenario where the SDSM are depicted as "traitors" and "traders with the name" of the country. *Vecer* comments on the text published by the Greek newspaper *Proto Thema*:

"CLOSE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE MACEDONIAN OPPOSITION AND OFFICIAL ATHENS

SDSM and the Greeks with same stances about „Skopje 2014“

Just like the opposition party SDSM the media in Greece continually expressed dissatisfaction with the monuments and buildings of the project "Skopje 2014". The newspaper *Proto Thema* under the title "New provocations - they have a fountain of Philip in Skopje", reports that in Skopje is already in use fountain of Philip of Macedonia titled "Warrior".

- In Skopje is officially opened the fountain that surrounds the monument of King Philip of Macedonia, in the central square of the capital, says the text of the *Proto Thema*.

The nationalist daily rates this as a provocation of the neighbours.

- Despite the southern neighbour and its problem with our promotion and nurturing of the Macedonian identity that the project "Skopje 2014" represents, the most vocal in Macedonia practicing negative criticism of the project is SDSM and several non-governmental organizations funded by the Foundation Soros. SDSM members were always at the forefront of protests directed against "Skopje 2014" organized by these organizations. The last presidential candidate of SDSM Frckovski, once threatened that if SDSM returns to power they will destroy the monuments of the Macedonian heroes of the project "Skopje 2014", wrote the portal.

The Greek media, however, has made a sensation from the statements of SDSM leader Branko Crvenkovski within his attempt to make humour at the expense of the monuments dedicated to the members of the Macedonian royal dynasty.

-The Greeks and SDSM were also aligned in relation to the changing of the names of streets in Skopje. In fact, the opposition and Greece vehemently opposed (the decision) by which the street where the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is situated, is now re-named into Philip II of Macedonia, and is the address to which all international institutions and countries, including Greece, now send diplomatic mail, is added in the text.

Some Macedonian media, however, recently reported that the head of public relations at the Greek embassy in Macedonia several times has been seen at the headquarters of the opposition party SDSM" (*Vecer*, March, 2013).

The reasoning behind this text excludes any coincidence of stances between the Social Democrats and the Greek side: 'Just like the opposition party SDSM the media in Greece' and 'The Greeks and SDSM were also aligned in relation to the changing of the names of streets in Skopje'. The text assumes Greek mentorship of the Macedonian opposition in the effort to topple the current Macedonian government.

Another junior partner in the alleged conspiracy against the government is the NGO sector: 'the most vocal in Macedonia practicing negative criticism of the project is SDSM and several non-governmental organizations funded by the Foundation Soros. SDSM members were always at the forefront of protests directed against "Skopje 2014" organized by these organizations'. Activists from the NGO sector critical of "Skopje 2014" and the antiquisation policy in general were even given a pejorative label "Sorosoids", a name proposed by Dragan Pavlovic and embraced by all pro-government media.

The same link was made by Janko Ilkovski in his column "National Identity" for *Vecer*, 2011:

"I remember when the megaphones of the Left and Soros began, a year ago, with one quasi-intellectual thesis of "slippery" identity. Passed as a fiasco, but do not be naive, that is the idea of new Europe which sees itself as a civilized society based on some mature specific grounds, but it is in fact nothing more than a vulgar volvox community, a group of individuals with low awareness of the environment which only stick to each other in an attempt to make a organism."(*Vecer*, August, 2011).

Here the Left, or the Social Democrats, together with Soros funded NGOs are also accused for readiness to compromise with the national identity only to come on power.

The *Vecer* article from March, 2013 ends with the conclusion that ‘some Macedonian media, however, recently reported that the head of public relations at the Greek embassy in Macedonia several times has been seen at the headquarters of the opposition party SDSM’. The author does not offer any additional argument to support this statement. Moreover, from the context the reader is invited to believe that the meeting between the leader of the opposition in Macedonia and the ambassador of a foreign country is illegal and namely in direction of harmonisation of the strategies against the current government.

From this and other texts presented in this chapter one may conclude that Macedonia’s governing elite and the media supportive of their policies assume that the only way the opposition can win back the public affection is through secretive “selling-off of the name” and joining the EU, also assumingly, under foreign intervention in the domestic matters of the country. If this portrayal of the opposition is accepted as truthful, it leaves the voters no choice but to continuously support the current executives.

Through slander of the political opponents and other populist discursive strategies, VMRO-DPMNE and the media supportive of the party have sometimes overtly and other times indirectly expressed Euroscepticism. In pattern already discussed, while the politicians have shown caution in the statements, the media has engaged in more detailed argumentation. After the failure to join the NATO in 2008, one can observe increasingly Eurosceptic discourse on the behalf of the government officials and some media outlets. Gradually, the integration in the Union as a priority becomes only a tool in the daily politics. One can conclude that since the airing of the video “You are Macedonia” and especially after the building of “Skopje 2014” VMRO-DPMNE and its leadership have been only declaratively committed to the EU agenda.

The attitudes of the opposition towards the EU

Social Democrats have always demonstrated higher preparedness for concessions and compromises in relation to country’s stability and European integration. SDSM was compromising on the name of the country in exchange for peace in 1993 and on the national flag in exchange of the cancelation of the Greek economic embargo towards Macedonia in 1994. During its two terms as executive power the relations with Athens were significantly improved. The same party carried out most of the legal preparations and administrative reforms related to EU accession. In view of Social Democrat MP Lidija Dimova, Macedonia has ‘no other choice for democratic development’ but the EU¹¹⁵. This position has crystallized in the ranks of the Social Democrats especially in the prolonged rule of the conservative VMRO-DPMNE, which officially not, but factually has started searching for alternative partners for development.

¹¹⁵ “Euroscepticism in Macedonia – part two”, ZebraonlineMK, last viewed 13.02.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6tgTC0fc-wM>

Practically, during their mandate as opposition in the Parliament the Social Democrats have focused their critique of the government mainly on the scandals related to “Skopje 2014” and the government’s failure to integrate the country in the EU. Both of these discourses could be easily integrated into one narrative, where “Skopje 2014” is directly or indirectly influencing the outcome, just as VMRO-DPMNE packed into one narrative the need of grounding its name and identity into the antique as common response against the domestic “traitors” and the foreign threat (Greece, the EU establishment) conditioning the entrance in the safety net of the Euro-Atlantic structures.

I will capture the stances of the oppositional SDSM in relation to EU integration in two articles from *Sloboden Pecat* from 2013. In one of the articles the opinion of a Social Democrat MP Lidija Dimova on EU matters are displayed and in the next the views of *Sloboden Pecat* as oppositional outlet. The first article concentrates more on the relationship between government’s democratic deficiencies and the ‘shattered hopes’ for EU integration:

“The government not interested in the EU

The Prime Minister shattered the hopes for EU [integration]

It has become slightly hideous to comment that this government is not, nor ever was seriously interested in EU membership - said Lidija Dimova from the Centre for European Education.

To Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski it is not important whether we join the European Union, he feels no responsibility for anything he does, he does not feel that he should be held accountable, and the results of his activities he measures with his own yardsticks. This is how intellectuals in the country comment Prime Minister’s statement: “if we do not get a date for negotiations in December, the sun will shine again.” (...)

Evidence for the indifference of the government to get a date for negotiations with the EU is actually the passivity towards the three requirements delivered by the EU MP Richard Howitt. Negotiations with the Association of Journalists are frozen because the government does not want to withdraw the media law of parliamentary procedure. The implementation of the recommendations of the Inquiry Committee on the events of 24 December is also stacked, and there is no shift in the issue of good neighbourly relations with Bulgaria as well.

Gruevski gave his controversial statement in Slovenia, [and only] a day after the statement of Foreign Minister Nikola Popovski that until December, that is, until the Summit of the European Parliament, the country will be in a diplomatic offensive.

- If the Council will not set a date for negotiations with Macedonia, probably the next day the sun will shine again. We will not wait for anything. We will continue to work as we did before - said Gruevski. (*Sloboden Pecat*, November, 2013)

In genre of tragedy *Slobodan Pecat* quotes the statements from the head of the Centre for European Education and SDSM’s MP Lidija Dimova. She regrets that contrary to the official statements, such as the one of Foreign Minister Nikola Popovski regarding the plan for diplomatic offensive, the current Prime Minister demonstrates complete indifference towards EU integration. Dimova even doubts that PM Gruevski was ‘ever seriously interested in EU membership’.

In view of the Social Democrats a government leader should not allow himself to ignore the joining of the Union as number one strategic priority of the country: ‘he feels no responsibility for anything he

does, he does not feel that he should be held accountable, and the results of his activities he measures with his own yardsticks.’ The opposition has recognised negligence of the EU question even in the unserious treatment of the EU recommendations delivered by the EU MP Richard Howitt: changes in the media law, forming of Inquiry Committee on the events of 24 December, and good neighbourly relations with Bulgaria. This is not only numbering of democratic shortcomings but also expression of readiness to compromise with the national interests only to join the Union.

The second article focuses more directly on the influence “Skopje 2014” had on the further delay of the country’s EU accession:

“Bulgarian MEPs accuse us of nationalism

Macedonia became a hostage of “Skopje 2014”

The assumptions made by *Sloboden Pecat* that Bulgaria will become a major obstacle for EU integration processes of the country have been confirmed.

Bulgarian MEPs have excided their Greek colleagues in the sharpness of their criticism directed at Macedonia in Wednesday's debate in the European Parliament where Rapporteur Richard Howitt presented the draft resolution urging the country to immediately get a date for negotiations at the EU summit scheduled for next month.

- The current government in Skopje has a nationalist agenda. The monuments in the centre of the capital are representing the ancient history of Greece and the modern history of Bulgaria. All this is done by force. Also, the prosecution of persons who consider themselves Bulgarians continues in the country- said Bulgarian MEP Evgeni Kirilov to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

He stressed that Macedonia does not want to sign an Agreement for good-neighbourly relations with Bulgaria and that only simulates dialogue on joint celebration of historical events and personalities.

- Our position is constructive, but Macedonia refuses to comply. They have the right to build new image of the nation, but why on anti-Bulgarian base - asked Kirilov.

His countryman from the camp of the liberals, Stanimir Ilchev added that in the future, except Bulgaria and Greece, Macedonia will face problems with Serbia for the church and with Albania in relation to history.

- In Macedonia they should be rational, not to provoke their neighbours. Even if they begin accession negotiations, how can we be sure that they will meet the requirements of the Chapters [of the Agreement], the requirements of previous resolutions, such as the joint celebration of common historical events, [etc.] - indicated Ilchev, according to whom the Macedonian authorities have recently stopped joint Bulgarian-Albanian celebration of Ohrid-Debar Uprising in Macedonia. (*Sloboden Pecat*, November, 2013)

The author of the text reminds the readers that *Sloboden Pecat* has already assumed that Bulgaria will be the next country to create additional conditions to Macedonia regarding EU accession. Just as “Skopje 2014” paradoxically tended to celebrate all the historic figures that operated on the territory of Macedonia (including sometimes antagonistic cultures such as Byzantium and Slavic figures), so has Bulgaria accused Macedonia of appropriation of all ‘the ancient history of Greece and the modern history of Bulgaria’. Following this argument, Greece has right on the ancient Macedonian

and Byzantine heritage and Bulgaria on the entire Slavic heritage, hence, stripping Macedonia from genuine right to any heritage of these civilisations.

An additional occasion for claims from Bulgarian side has been produced with the celebration of previously controversial historic persons from the ranks of IMRO such as Pavel Shatev, Hristo Tatarcev and Todor Aleksandrov with "Skopje 2014". Until 2010 all of them were considered pro-Bulgarian revolutionaries within IMRO. The IMRO, the historic predecessor of VMRO-DPMNE, was historically under strong pressure of the Bulgarian Revolutionary Organisation. Fractions from IMRO did not believe in the capability of Macedonians to win independence from the Ottomans without Bulgarian help and were therefore openly pro-Bulgarian. This internal hesitation of the Organisation was used by Bulgaria to claim some if not all political figures from IMRO and the temporary successes in the independence movement as its own.

Sloboden Pecat thus asserts that 'Macedonia became a hostage of "Skopje 2014"'. The outlet quotes in length the Bulgarian MP, who in the context of "Skopje 2014" also declares that Macedonia continues to prosecute persons who consider themselves Bulgarians, 'does not want to sign an agreement for good-neighbourly relations with Bulgaria' and 'only simulates dialogue on joint celebration of historical events and personalities'. Hence, Bulgaria conditions Macedonian accession in the Union with more than one condition, while hinting that due to revision of history Macedonia will also soon have issues with Serbia and Albania. The oppositional media seems to agree with the Bulgarian MPs that "Skopje 2014" stimulates conflict with the neighbouring countries.

The outlet also underscores that after the realisation of the "Skopje 2014" Bulgaria started with provocations for which earlier it would not have grounds and legitimacy. For instance, according to another Bulgarian MP, Stanimir Ilchev, 'the Macedonian authorities have recently stopped joint Bulgarian-Albanian celebration of Ohrid-Debar Uprising in Macedonia.' According to the Bulgarian version, this Uprising was organised by the people with Bulgarian national consciousness living in Western Macedonia and the ethnic Albanian from the same region against the Serbian occupation of Vardar Macedonia in 1913. In this context Ilchev assumes that Bulgarians and Albanians would have the right to celebrate an event on the territory of Macedonia without "inviting" the hosts. It is unheard of case, however, where two other nationalities would celebrate a historic event on the territory of a third country. This claim clearly reveals irredentist intentions.

"Skopje 2014" has thus opened the door to Bulgaria to insist not only on the recognition of the "Bulgarian minority" in Macedonia but also to condition Macedonia's integration in the EU with concessions towards its recent historic events and figures. The author tries to underline that Bulgarians from the whole political spectrum are united in the claims towards Macedonia, since this claim was expressed in the European Parliament by a 'countryman from the camp of the liberals'.

Just as the SDSM has perceived, *Sloboden Pecat* also concludes that "Skopje 2014" leads towards conflicts not only within Macedonia but also with all its neighbours, thus providing the Union with another argument against Macedonia's acceptance in the EU.

In sum, contrary to the leadership of VMRO-DPMNE, the one of the Social Democrats has recognised the joining of the Union as number one strategic priority of the country. Typical for their awe towards the Union, they have even linked the accountability and the legitimacy of the politicians in relation to the success in the EU integrations. The numbering of the democratic shortcomings in the

country was thus always related to the EU issues. The analysis has shown that relative to the conservatives, SDSM has demonstrated greater readiness to compromise with the national interests in attempt to join the Union. In fact, the critique of the isolation from the Union has been along with the “Skopje 2014” the opposition’s strongest argument against the government ever since 2006. “Skopje 2014” was evaluated as yet another reason to delay the EU integration offering the neighbouring countries new demands in exchange for the accession.

The role of the EU in the Macedonian democratic developments

In the section that follows I will analyse statements and documents issued by different bodies of the European Union and pinpoint both stable discursive features and discursive adaptations signalling changes in the policy towards the current Macedonian government. I will firstly, however, embed the analysis in the regional policy of the Union. This will provide background for better understanding of the discourses delivered by EU officials and in reports prepared by EU bodies.

Regional policy

Due to many hostilities, irredentist claims, wars and belated nation-building relative to the European states the Balkans earned the derogative epithet “Powder keg of Europe” on the West. Others have suggested, however, a more righteous description of the region, characterising it as space echoing the changes (and interests) of the ‘Great Powers’, a space simultaneously claimed by Western Europe, Russia and Turkey (as it was the case of their respective historic predecessors). As the most powerful of the competitors the Union constructs scenario in which the region has to choose between the Western “moral democrats” and the Eastern “despots”.

Even though the accession of former Yugoslav republics after the admission of Romania and Bulgaria in the NATO/EU became almost certain, the part of Western Balkans still not integrated in the EU is still a site of contest between the ‘West’ and the ‘East’, and thus, a site for opportunistic politics for the local political elites. For instance, in context of the Ukraine crisis two major infrastructure projects, the “Turkish Stream” financed by Russia is supposed to supply gas in to Western Europe through Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, Serbia and Hungary. Alternative gas pipeline “Nabucco” is supposed to be built between Azerbaijan and the EU via Turkey, some Balkan countries and Italy in attempt to reduce the dependence of EU countries on Russian gas (and influence). China also invests millions in order to connect the Greek port cities with Western Europe through the Balkans. The European refugee crisis has also enhanced the significance of the Balkans, since the “Balkan route” was one of the most used by the refugees.

In relation to their foreign policy the analysis of the past behaviour of hegemonic core countries or supranational hegemonic organisations such as the EU convinced many that individual countries are treated in context of the region where they belong. Two premises originate from this theoretical frame. Firstly, the established core of the world-system treats the “rest” of the world as “regions” and leads towards them regional politics (something obvious in the enlargement policies of the EU, when blocks of geographically related countries were permitted as member states in the Union simultaneously). Secondly and more importantly, this assumes that the intensified interventions in neighbouring countries from the region will almost certainly signal interventions in and consequences for any other individual country. This, however, works in the opposite side as well-temporal passivity towards one state is reflection of the passivity towards the entire region.

I will focus on these two premises to highlight aspects of the regional policy of the Euro-Atlantic structures in general and the EU in particular.

Referring to the first premise, one could observe that after the fall of the “Iron Curtain” both NATO and especially the EU have enlarged by admitting closely related countries, forming a region (Portugal and Spain joined the Union in 1986; Finland, Sweden and Austria in 1995; the Eastern Enlargement from 2004 predicted integration of almost all of former Eastern Europe; and the joining of Balkan countries Bulgaria and Romania followed in 2007). This means that shifts of balances of power in geographic units as parts of the three-level hierarchy of the world-system, can even better predict the future of individual country than the policies of the current governing elite in the nation-state. More concretely, the dynamics of changes in particular region in relation to EU accession can better predict the moment of country’s accession in the Union than the intensity of the personal efforts to approximate to the Union exercised by individual nation-states.

There is, however, more than just geography in this policy, especially in context of the Balkans. According to Todorova (1997) in line with the naturalised notion of culture, typical for both the theory of modernisation and Weber’s cultural theory, the Balkan is not ‘an incomplete Other’ but ‘incomplete Self’ of Europe, since it is white and Christian, but semi-oriental, semi-civilised, semi-developed, imitative and catching-up. These notions are nurtured in the Enlargement policy of the Union. Boatca (2015, 221) thus claims that ‘the theory and practice of the EU’s ‘eastern enlargement’ act as an ‘orientalising tool’ [which] becomes apparent in the fact that, for now, the last countries to have achieved admission into the EU should be Romania, Bulgaria, and Croatia, and that among the last to be negotiating it should be Macedonia, Serbia, and Montenegro’. Turkey, however, even being an applicant for longer than any of these Balkan countries it does not seem any closer to the accession now than when it applied for membership. In her *Nesting orientalism* Bakic-Hayden (1995, 923) also reports on how the Western media constructs differences between ‘industrious Roman Catholic Slavs’ from Slovenia and Croatia as desirable future members in contrast to ‘those for the most part Eastern Orthodox or Muslim’ republics, such as Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the same group Albania and Kosovo could be mentioned.

Referring to the second point, one could recently notice intensified action of the Euro-Atlantic forces on the Balkans. Albania and Croatia became NATO members in 2009. With the beginning of the Ukraine crisis, the NATO priorities have shifted toward expanding in the Balkan region and minimizing Russian influence, especially in Russia’s “traditional allies” Serbia and Montenegro. In December 2015, NATO officially invited Montenegro for membership and also signed with Serbia in

January, 2016 an Individual Partnership Action Plan, which deepens cooperation between the Serbian and the Western military alliance, granting NATO troops immunity and freedom of movement throughout country's territory.

The EU is also active in the region. In 2013, Croatia joined the EU, after nine years as a candidate state. The year before, Serbia became an official candidate for membership in the Union. Even Kosovo, whose independence is unrecognized by five EU member states, signed recently a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU, opening its way for future membership in the Union. All these events are triggering changes in the neighbouring countries.

Coming closer to the Macedonian case, embedded in the "Western Balkan region", I have already referred to this intensified regional policy, which was evidently reflected in the domestic politics in Macedonian local elections in 2013. After longer period of passivity towards the region, during the preparation of the last round of voting in the Centre Municipality few political events happened which signalled intensified activity of the West in the region: Belgrade and Pristina achieved new levels of agreement about the new status of Kosovo, the US State's Department issued negative evaluation on the condition of the human rights in Macedonia and the ambassadors of few Western European countries backed the Macedonian opposition in the demand for fair local elections in the Centre Municipality. All these actions had notable impact on the outcome of the voting in 2013, leading towards symbolic victory of the Macedonian opposition.

With the NATO and EU activities in the region, it is clear that the Western core countries do not lose the interest in the Western Balkan. What is more interesting, however, is why in all of these states traces of autocratic leadership can be easily detected. The autocratic trend in all Western Balkan countries is not a coincidence. Hanging between the delayed integration in the EU structures and facing post-conflict poverty and unemployment populist leaders emerge as "saviours" and "protectors" of the citizens and the societal values. Being leaders of countries suffering the highest unemployment rates in Europe it is common for almost all the leaders to undermine their domestic opponents by making citizens almost entirely dependent on state-controlled patronage networks for jobs and other resources, while simultaneously exerting control over the media and the judiciary. As in the case of Macedonia, all or some of these political strategies can be witnessed in Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo.

In the case of Montenegro, Milo Đukanović, the current Prime Minister, and his Party rule the country for almost 25 years. With small interruptions, Đukanović has served three times as Prime Minister, a position he holds now, and once as a President of the Republic. Critics accuse him of turning Montenegro into 'his family's private fiefdom' (*Foreign Policy*, April, 2016). The brother of the Prime Minister, Aco Đukanović, became one of country's wealthiest men after he became the primary shareholder of "First Bank", which underwent what many believed to be a manipulated privatization after the 2006 independence from the federation with Serbia. The privatization involved an open tender procedure yielding only a single bidder, a company owned by Aco Đukanović. The bank became Montenegro's largest bank, while its largest client became the government itself. As of 2007 the Prime Minister is also charged by Italian prosecutors for involvement in cigarette smuggling and money laundering in the 1990s, something Đukanović has continuously denied, while relying on his diplomatic immunity to avoid cooperating with the prosecution.

The ally of the former Serbian dictator Slobodan Milošević, the current Prime Minister of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić, has rapidly become a treasured partner of the West after he expressed both willingness to cooperate with the NATO and readiness to negotiate the future status of Kosovo. Most important, however, is the unexpected signing of agreement with the NATO, practically depriving Russia's efforts to more concretely exercise influence in the Western Balkans. Nevertheless, Vučić signed a contract for purchasing Russian military equipment in October, 2015. Differently than other neighbouring countries Serbia has resisted EU demands to stop selling goods in Russia, imposed after the Ukraine crisis. In December, 2015 Vučić arrested few dozen former officials, including former ministers, on charges of corruption. Conveniently, most of the arrested were members of the opposition parties. Country's independent media have also suffered under his rule, with one of the highest number of attacks and threats against journalists in the region. For instance, Serbia's national TV service journalist was recently fired for asking Vučić "inappropriate questions" about his role in the ethnic cleansing of the 1990s. Critics believe the punishment was severe because of the bad timing for the question, namely, just ahead of elections the Prime Minister was actively displaying his reformist and pro-EU positions, expecting to win the elections easily.

From the other countries in the region, neighbouring Kosovo is also characterised by autocratic trends. The leader of the Democratic Party of Kosovo, former Prime Minister and recent President of the republic, Hashim Thaci, did not succeed to gain a ruling majority in the 2014 Parliamentary elections and kept the power mainly by relying on the party's control over the Constitutional Court (*Foreign Policy*, April, 2016). Under the pressure from the EU and the US, in late 2015 the government of Kosovo under the rule of Thaci's DPK agreed to recognize some of the parallel institutions of the Serbian minority in Northern Kosovo, a move that spurred a political conflict. In response to the opposition's protests against the agreement, the government has arrested dozens of opposition MPs and the leader of the main opposition party, while using anti-terrorist police units to ravage the main opposition party's headquarters.

From corruption, nepotism and abuse of power stemming from diplomatic immunity in the case of Montenegro to arrest of opponents and control of the media in Serbia to control over the Constitutional Court and suppressing political opposition through use of police forces in Kosovo, all countries have something in common with the Macedonian case of (anti)democratic practices.

It is intriguing that in context of the aforementioned global and European crises the power of the Balkan rulers has been enhanced, making leaders like Vučić and Đukanović especially important partners against Russian influence in the region. There is an impression that western support in recognizing Serbian claims in northern Kosovo for instance is a direct result in this dynamically changing geopolitical game, in which the NATO is willing to compromise in order to calm Serbia.

The ability of the Balkan regimes to immediately deliver on the expedient demands of Western powers against refugee flows from the East has been valued equally if not more than their success at the longer processes of democratic and judicial reform. In this context Macedonia became an important frontier state, and the EU has forgiven government's use of police brutality to keep Middle East refugees from entering the country on their way to Western Europe. Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sebastian Kurz, even participated in the election campaign of VMRO-DPMNE, publically expressing gratitude for regime's "management of the crisis". Serbia's efforts in this regard

have been equally praised, especially in context of great dissatisfaction of the immigrant flow in increasingly right-wing leaning Hungary.

Aware of their role in the strategic interests beyond democracy and the rule of law, leaders from the Western Balkan have cunningly used the political cover offered by strengthened NATO/EU ties to undermine domestic opposition, in many cases claiming that, unlike their opponents, they enjoy the support of the West. As historic records of Huntington's theory on empowering despotic governments have proven tolerating autocratic trends for stability on short-term bases may result in violent clashes and severe consequences on long-term bases. One may claim that while not insisting on meaningful political changes in the candidate countries, the Euro-Atlantic structures in general and the EU in particular can be directly held responsible for the consolidation of autocratic trends on the Balkans.

The analysis of discourses delivered by EU officials in the following section will demonstrate how the balancing between Union's own security and the democratic principles expected to be upheld by candidate countries in context of their EU perspectives led the EU in stalemate position of legitimising autocratic governments while holding the banner of democratic values. Discursive strategies and argumentation patterns used in statements and reports are marked by hesitancy and ambiguity, ultimately resulting in prolongation of the *status quo* in the autocratic regime(s).

Burring the past

One of the most important aspects of the EU's foreign policy is the Union's unwillingness to engage in frays based on so called "historic arguments" between countries. Geddes and Taylor (2013), however, show at least two cases: Italy and Slovenia and Slovenia and Croatia when in bilateral disputes between a Member State and an applicant, the Union used its transformative power to pressure for solution. More clear-cut involvement was to be observed in the case of Italy versus Slovenia where the former used its membership to block the accession of the second. The so called 'Solana compromise' ended the crisis between the countries resulting in Slovenia's integration in the Union. On the background of this case, however, the authors concluded that EU's transformative power does not necessarily support the MS, nor it flows towards the state seeking membership. Since the result can be potentially destabilizing, i.e. can lead to a decline in the EU's legitimacy, it is not surprising that the Commission prefers disputes to be resolved bilaterally or via a third-party, such as the UN in the case of the Macedonian-Greek name dispute.

Although the EU was not taking any official stances on the antiquisation policy it noted in at least two instances that it could harm the EU integration process. The Commission's 2007 Progress Report noted that 'the renaming of Skopje airport after Alexander the Great was received as a provocation, contrary to the 1995 Interim Agreement. Actions which could negatively affect good neighbourly relations should be avoided.' (Commission of the European Communities (2007, 18) in Tziampiris (2012)). Two years later in 2009, the name issue became the last stumbling block on Macedonia's

way to negotiations for full EU membership. After the European Commission suggested that Macedonia was ready to start accession talks, the invitation for membership negotiations from the Council of Europe failed due to intervention of Greek officials. Here, antiquisation was also mentioned as the EU Parliament in a recommendation on Macedonia noted “with concern the use of historical arguments in the current debate, including the recent phenomenon of so-called antiquisation, which is liable to increase tensions with neighbours and create new internal divisions.”(Thaler, 2010, 7).

Both of the reports clearly mark that historic arguments should be avoided in the solving of the name dispute, since they are not only ‘liable to increase tensions with neighbours’ but also capable to ‘create new internal divisions’. By treating the antiquisation efforts in Macedonia as ‘provocation, contrary to the 1995 Interim Agreement’ the EU Commission, protects the stances of the EU member Greece in the issue.

One may think that the EU tends to exclude ancient history from the debate. Other discourses, however, suggest that even the recent history of the Macedonian people should not be used in the debate:

“On [our] observation that in this resolution again is reflected his struggle and the struggle of the European Parliament for [the rights of] some Bulgarian minority in Macedonia and on the question whether he will use the same energy and effort to secure a recognition of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria and Greece with all the rights enjoyed by minorities in Macedonia [EP Rapporteur for Macedonia] Howitt refuses to answer: - I will not answer that question because I am in favour of the country to move forward and I urge you all to join me in this goal. I just want to take your country in the EU. It is the choice of all of us who work on the country's accession to the EU. We use language, points and questions that are constructive and bring people together, whereby the state has benefit. We do not search for anything that separates the people, non-constructive, arguments that will hold back the country, said at the end Richard Howitt” (*Utrinski Vesnik*, April, 2013).

In chapter 2 of the thesis I have explained the motivation and mechanisms of receiving Bulgarian passport. A study of Neofotistos (2009, 19) confirmed that acquisition of the Bulgarian passport as a ‘gate to Europe’ had nothing to do with the Bulgarian identity of the applicants. The EU Parliament here turns a blind eye on Bulgaria’s misuse of its membership status to produce its “own minority” in Macedonia. While history should be avoided, “history is produced” in matter of few years. Simultaneously Rapporteur for Macedonia Howitt refuses to answer direct question related to human rights of historically existing and unrecognised minorities in EU member states. Howitt’s argumentation line clearly suggests forgetting of the recent past as a way to ‘move[ing] forward’. Even without using more diplomatic linguistic strategy, the rhetor explicitly declares that all those who work on the country's accession to the EU ‘use language, points and questions that are constructive’ and ‘do not search for anything that separates the people, non-constructive, arguments that will hold back the country’. Thus democratic rights such as the right of identity self-determination of ethnic minorities in officially democratic countries and members of the EU are found to be obstacles on the “road to Europe”. Additionally, not solving the name dispute and not recognising the “Bulgarian minority” in Macedonia ‘hold back the country’ from Europe.

Democratic responsibility and tutelage

Frckovski (2014) argues that there is unclear strategy and tactics of the EU diplomatic policy of “conditionality” towards the applicant countries from the Western Balkans. He notices hesitation in the use of diplomacy of pressure and coercion when there are clear evidences of retrograde tendencies in the accession process. This hesitation as well as the ‘clientelist instinct’ of some of the EU countries towards the Western Balkans is recognised as the main obstacle for faster and genuine integration in the EU. According to Frckovski this splitting between democratic values and practical needs of the Union is obvious in the ambiguous messages towards the political actors in the domestic politics. In this argumentation line I will analyse two discourses from EU officials transmitting indefinite stances on democracy, and moreover, being expressed with pedagogical overtones, i.e. in the spirit of Douglas’ assumption that the people of the Third World require tutelage and social control to alter the underdevelopment assumed to be a result of their ‘traditional attitudes’.

The first discourse is again from the EP Rapporteur for Macedonia Howitt delivered on a background of few events that sealed the ongoing political crisis. The statement comes almost a year after the “Black Monday” (when the opposition was thrown out of the Parliament) and the controversial change in the parliamentary rules of procedure to limit debate, despite the absence of the opposition in the Parliament. Noteworthy, the statement also comes few months after ODIHR and many Macedonian NGOs have reported of a variety of violations on the 2013 local elections:

“Rapporteur for Macedonia Howitt warned that if the country does not get a date for negotiations, not only the credibility of Brussels will be threatened, but also the one of the United Nations, whose negotiating framework for a solution to the name issue yields no results.
- We do not want to see slipping back. Everybody knows that the events of last December and the difficulties from this year were challenging for the country, but we do not want the accession process to regress. The one blocking the country, whether in Brussels, in another country or in the opposition, should understand the true cost of the failure - Howitt told MIA” (*Sloboden Pecat*, November, 2013).

This statement is interesting from two aspects. Firstly, the Rapporteur, against the Copenhagen political criteria, disregards serious allegations of disrespect for the rule of law in the country and urges for fast integration in the Union. This shows that not only “historical” events and actions from the ancient and recent history should be avoided as arguments in the accession process, but also the actions “from yesterday” can be easily forgotten in achieving the EU agenda.

Secondly, the rhetor not only neglects the ‘events of last December’ in the effort the country not to ‘slip back’, but in the last sentence of the discourse intelligibly includes the opposition among the one who can be held responsible for the possible failure to join the Union. It can be assumed that this wording gave the Prime Minister the opportunity to accuse the opposition and their leaders as equally responsible as the executive power for possible negative evaluations of the Union. Simultaneously, the reproach of the opposition can be seen as attack on the constitutionally guaranteed right of the civilians to express non-violent, public discontent with government’s policies.

The second discourse comes from Elmar Brok, Euro-Parliament’s President of the Committee of Foreign Affairs delivered on 24 March, 2015. This discourse contributes towards even greater ambiguity, supplying the domestic governing elite with possibilities to legitimise its rule. Moreover, context for this statement was provided not only by the aforementioned events from 2012 and 2013 but also from the June, 2014 report of the Stabilisation and Association Council expressing concern

'about the assessment of biased media coverage and the lack of separation between state and party activities, leading to a lack of a level playing field in the 2014 elections'. The statement also follows after the Prime Minister Gruevski accused the opposition leader Zaev for coup attempt, while the later has accused Gruevski for illegal wiretapping of his own associates, the opposition leaders and over 20.000 citizens, publishing some of the most controversial conversations in the public during the first quarter of 2015. A set of the conversations was reportedly indicating organisation of election frauds with the participation of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Internal Affairs, the Head of the Intelligence Service and some party leaders, deeming the results of the latest Parliamentary and Presidential elections illegitimate.

Under the title "Strong slap for Zaev from the European Parliament. Declaration for condemnation of the opposition's actions"¹¹⁶ the private pro-government TV-station *Site1* firstly transmits Brok's statement and then interprets the text:

"I do not believe that the opposition has to be loyal, but sure there is needed a way of pretty behaviour, in positive style. I do not believe it is the right way not to attend parliamentary sessions, to boycott the majority to do law by not be present. That is obstruction. But within the system, in the Parliament, the opposition has also right to opposition, and to say no, stop a government, make problems to the government, destroy the government, the majority of the government...But within the rules and attending the parliamentary sessions. But if they are ready to break the majority of the government, as the opposition politicians would always like, it's a right, it's a duty...but normally is ...that the government is elected for a period of certain time, 4 or 5 years, and that this is the legal right, so long this government has the majority in the Parliament to continue for this time as a government".

The statement of Brok is later interpreted by the TV-host. Additionally, excerpts of other EP MP's are also quoted and added to Brok's argument:

"Heavy criticism for the actions of Macedonian opposition from the EU Parliament's MPs in Brussels. Vice President of SDSM, Radmila Sekerinska, could personally hear the clear views of Euro MPs referring to the position that no one can distort the will of the voters. Messages such as the one from the one of MP Kukan were very precise; SDSM should realize that it is not shameful to be an opposition. (...) SDSM and its representatives survived cruel debacle by European MPs here in Brussels. Namely, on the debate about political culture in Western Balkans the MEPs unanimously sent their message to Macedonia's Social Democrats, that they should not boycott the Macedonian Parliament and that what they do is wrong and anti-democratic, that it is something that absolutely no democracy recognizes [as valid political tool]." (*Ibid.*).

The intention of representing the interpretations of the TV-host is to demonstrate how the EU officials provide not only the government but also its media supporters with the opportunity to legitimise the current policies of the governing elite, demonstrating how international and domestic democracy are related. The authority of a high-ranked "foreign democrat" is used to legitimise "domestic democracy". In climate of deep distrust in the democratic institutions of the country based on unproved allegations of misuse of power, the EP's President of the Committee of Foreign Affairs clearly takes side in the domestic struggles. Differently than the Council's report from June, 2014,

¹¹⁶"Strong Slap for Zaev from the European Parliament. Declaration for condemnation of the opposition's actions", published on 27.03.2015, last viewed 08.02.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9enFLKz62A>

Brok expresses no concerns about the developments in the country. This clearly puts the Macedonian citizens perplexed about the stances of the EU on the current political crisis.

Interestingly, this statement is delivered on the 'debate about political culture in Western Balkans' organised by the EU and attended among others by Macedonian MPs from the government coalition and from the opposition. The pedagogical tone of the rhetor is evident in the statement. Brok explains what democracy is and how one *should* behave in it. The name of the debate suggests that the problems emerging in the Western Balkans are innate of their 'political culture' rather than consequence of the region's 'structural position on a continuum of power constantly renegotiated throughout the European history' (Boatca, 2015, 21). The wording 'political culture' is frequently found in the reports of the Commission and the Council. Brok teaches that issues should be solved 'within the system' or 'within the rules and attending the parliamentary sessions.' This argument would be valid under the assumption that against the government in Skopje no allegations of corruption and serious charges in relation to human rights would be raised. As evident from the second excerpt, additional arguments from other participants in the debate were supporting the main argument of Brok.

This allows part of the Macedonia's cultural elite to conclude that 'MEPs unanimously sent their message to Macedonia's Social Democrats'. The 'unanimity' was underscored with other wording such as 'the clear views of Euro MPs' and the 'messages such as the one of MP Kukan were very precise'. The journalist could use descriptions such as 'cruel debacle by European MPs' and 'heavy criticism' of and 'strong slap' for the opposition in Macedonia.

To discard the impression that only the Parliament's President of the Committee of Foreign Affairs has this stances, the journalist quotes other EP MPs mentioning among other that 'no one can distort the will of the voters', that it is 'not shameful to be an opposition' and that it is 'wrong and anti-democratic' to be absent of the parliamentary sessions, 'something that absolutely no democracy recognizes'. Even if one assumes that these statements are exaggerated, one cannot deny that on the debate prevailed the tendency towards legitimisation of the Macedonia's government rather than condemnation of its policies.

Special attention deserves Brok's and other MP's argument that 'no one can distort the will of the voters', supported with additional argument that as long this government has the majority in the Parliament it has the legal right to continue its office in the government. If opposition's allegations of electoral fraud organised by the top government executives were to be confirmed, the majority in the Parliament would be illegitimate, revoking the right of the politicians in the government to 'continue its office' within the legally predicted mandate. In their discursive strategy Brok and other EP MP's do not presume this alternative as possible. The negligence of allegations of autocratic tendencies in Macedonia suggested in the Stabilisation and Association Council's conclusions from June, 2014 directly or indirectly led to the Kumanovo clashes, only three months after Brok's statement. Commission's Progress Report prepared six months after the debate on the political culture in Western Balkans completely contradicted the statements of the Euro-parliamentarians.

EU Reports

The EU Commission and the EU Council prepare annual reports evaluating the candidate's country progress on the Copenhagen criteria. These bodies of the Union use a variety of sources and human capacities to compose the final report. As such, these reports are considered as in-depth study of all the aspects of the state that can be put under scrutiny. Therefore, these documents are valuable source of discourses for analysis. One of the main goals of this section is to detect and interpret changes in Union's discourses, signalling eventual acknowledgment of opposition's allegations for autocratic trends in the state apparatus and changes in the future policies towards the Macedonia and the region.

I will firstly analyse the EU Commission Progress Report for 2011 (text 7 in the appendix). I have focused on the Democracy and the Rule of Law chapter from the Report. This chapter concentrates on the early parliamentary elections called for 5 June, 2011. The irregularities of the same elections were already noticed by the oppositional press such as *Utrinski Vesnik* and were already analysed in the previous chapter. A prelude to these early elections was the withdrawal of the opposition from the Parliament at the end of 2010 due to a bitter dispute between the ruling coalition and the opposition triggered by a police-assisted raid of public revenue officers on a group of related media outlets, including a private TV station, three daily newspapers, and other companies, for alleged tax evasion offenses. The Social Democrats claimed that the media were raided because of their anti-government inclinations. The text from the chapter reminds that a cross party agreement was reached on a code of conduct for the elections. OSCE's ODIHR proposed several recommendations for improvement of the Electoral Code and these were assumed to be implemented as soon as possible before the elections. "Europe" thus stresses its role as an intermediate and important player on the domestic political scene.

What is fascinating about the Report is that although written in a formal, legal language it allows room for ambiguous interpretations of the "success" of the elections. On the one hand, the Report states that 'The finding of the OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission was that the elections were competitive, transparent, and well-administered throughout the country', but on the other hand it numbers a dozen of serious election flaws, which would factually claim the elections irregular and unfair. The compilers of the text celebrate the fact that the political parties have accepted the results of the elections and that that the opposition has returned in the Parliament after elections where 'the voters were able to freely express their choice in a peaceful atmosphere from a diverse and pluralistic choice of candidates', [where] 'freedom of expression, movement and assembly was respected' [and] 'the media provided extensive coverage of the campaign, enabling voters to make an informed choice'.

Only few lines further in the text the authors reflect on all the gaps and ambiguities that remained in relation to the ODIHR recommendations from 2009:

"ODIHR reported credible allegations of insufficient separation between state and political party, and pressure on civil servants. (...) The public broadcaster, contrary to legal obligations and its public mandate, favoured the government and strongly criticised the opposition in its coverage. (...) Also, the recommendation for a thorough audit of the Voters' List has not been implemented... and concerns remain that the list is inflated. Questions remain about the arrangements for out-of-country voting."

On top of these flaws the EU institutions are aware and refer to another weakness of the elections, and namely that the 'Electoral Code was amended by a slim majority and only two months before the election, which is not consistent with best practice.'

Symptomatic is that just after numbering all the downsides of the election process the Commission's Report once more concludes:

"Overall, there has been progress in the conduct of elections. The elections were competitive and well-administered throughout the country. The government needs to implement fully the conclusions and recommendations of the OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission."

This wording seems like encouragement of the re-elected Macedonian government to "continue on the European road" as if nothing has happened. The EU institutions seem to be satisfied with two additional achievements after the end of the elections: the opposition has returned in the Parliament and the inter-ethnic tensions are not escalating. Referring to the first achievement, the Commission even reproaches the opposition for practicing passive and non-violent protests against what they perceive as repressive, autocratic regime:

"Some progress has been made on the reform of the Parliament. (...) However, political dialogue needs to be further strengthened in order that problems can be resolved through the institutional framework. The boycott by the opposition hampered the functioning of the Parliament."

As Frckovski (2014) and other intellectuals have claimed, the EU takes special pride on securing "stabilocracy" on the Balkans. This is particularly important to the Union in matters of inter-ethnic relations, and became imperative after the independence of Kosovo was proclaimed. In this line, one can witness exceptional satisfaction with the advancements in the legislation related to the improvement of the inter-ethnic relations:

"The new Parliament, still under the technical government, enacted in shortened procedure amendments to the Laws on Use of Flags of Communities, Languages, Broadcasting Council, Judicial Council, Council of Public Prosecutors and adopted an authentic interpretation of the Law on Amnesty."

The Laws on Use of Flags of Communities, the Law on Use of Languages and the Law on Amnesty are all concerning questions of securing more rights and greater autonomy of the Albanian minority in Macedonia. Although the Report informs that 'political parties campaigned almost exclusively along ethnic lines, reflecting the ethnic polarisation of society', this seems to be of second importance relative to the ratification of the aforementioned legislation.

In sum, the re-elected Macedonian government could not but feel encouraged to continue with its tendencies towards autocratic rule although accused of use of administrative resources for winning the elections, exercising pressure on civil servants, involvement in the media coverage and other imperfections regarding the legality and fairness of the election process. The opposition is not only discouraged to exercise its democratic right to passive and peaceful resistance to the autocratic rule of Prime Minister Gruevski but it is even condemned for hampering the institutions. Despite being aware of the inter-ethnic polarisation in the country the Commission still celebrates the stability provided by the VMRO-DPMNE/DUI coalition. Even this Report from 2011 clearly demonstrates that although the EU was sufficiently aware of the democratic flaws in Macedonia, it still encouraged

Gruevski's nationalist, autocratic government to further strive to join the "democratic club" of the European countries.

The second text I will analyse is the Press Release from the eleventh meeting of the Stabilisation and Association Council between the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the EU (SA Council) held 23 July 2014 in Brussels (text 8 in the appendix).

In the period between the Progress Report from 2011 and the SA Council Release from 2014 the Macedonian public has witnessed serious erosion of democratic principles and procedures. Few events were especially indicative of this trend.

This period was marked by steep rising of the government debt, when only in 2012 Macedonia took out or agreed to take out almost 700 million Euros in loans from foreign banks and financial institutions. After organising rally for demanding early elections in October 2012, mainly based on the dissatisfaction with spending of the public money for the "Skopje 2014" project, the opposition MPs and journalists were expelled out of the house of the Parliament with police assistance during a debate on the state budget on December 24, 2012. The already mentioned changes in the parliamentary rules simplifying the procedure to swiftly pass laws in the Parliament followed in February 2013. ODIHR and the non-government sector have reported of a variety of violations on the 2013 local elections. Nevertheless, the EU has continued extending the Recommendation for a start of EU membership negotiations. This happened despite Macedonia's sharp drop of 82 places between 2009 and 2013 on the *World Media Freedom Index* evaluating 179 countries. After another year of prolonged political crisis in the country, VMRO-DPMNE won the April 2014 parliamentary election.

In this political climate the Press Release from the eleventh meeting of the SA Council and Macedonia has been issued. In this paper the candidate-country Macedonia is evaluated according to the Copenhagen criteria or more precisely on variety of political, economic and administrative aspects. Without concentrating too much on them it is worth noticing that the text abounds with what Boatca (2015) calls 'pedagogical overtones', directed at the applicant country. The very name of the Council [for] "Stabilisation and Association" hints that the main priority of Macedonia is to become "stable" before the "association" with the Union. The preference for stability over democracy is also to be seen in quantitative terms: the attention given to democracy and human rights is evidently smaller than the one granted to inter-ethnic relations and economic development.

It is striking that concerning the political criteria the Council reviewed the conduct of the April 2014 presidential and early parliamentary elections, and noted the OSCE/ODIHR assessment that 'they were efficiently administered'. In this context one should mark the difference in the choice of words describing the electoral process in this text differently from the text of the EU Commission's Progress Report from 2011. While in 2011 the elections were characterised as 'competitive, transparent and well-administered' in 2014 they are described as 'effective'. Macedonian intellectuals have interpreted this shortening as a "diplomatic language", one of the few final definitions left available to the Eurocrats to describe the negative trends in the country and simultaneously keep Macedonia engaged on the "road to Europe". In short, the critics have argued that elections cannot be "effective" or "ineffective" but rather "fair" or "unfair", yielding "legitimate" or "illegitimate" MPs. If proclaimed unfair, election results should be announced as void and the government illegitimate. In this line, the Council has only 'expressed concern about the assessment of biased media coverage

and the lack of separation between state and party activities, leading to a lack of a level playing field'. One notices the cautious usage of the word 'assessment' before the numbering of the democratic shortcomings related to the elections. Interestingly, the SA Council' acknowledged the electoral reforms that have taken place in consensus with the opposition, in line with ODIHR recommendations, but reminded that similar concerns were raised in 2011 and 2013'. It is flagrant that the Council was aware of and acknowledged the same democratic deficiencies in 2011 and 2013 and yet still tolerates them even in 2014.

The report further reflects on the rule of law: "As regards rule of law, the SA Council recalled the high level of alignment, including improved efficiency of the courts, but stressed that greater emphasis is needed on the quality of justice."

Again the word "efficiency" has been used to describe how the courts work. Courts, however, are not expected to be "efficient" but just. Appreciation is expressed for the candidate's 'high alignment' with the European legislation. 'Independence and quality of justice' are mentioned only afterwards, thus symbolically granted only secondary importance. Frckovski (2014, 11-12) marked the 'high alignment' with European legislation typical of Balkan populist regimes as undemocratic proceduralism, authoritarian or empty proceduralism. He claims that the populist government adopts pro-European legislative on national level without implementing it. In his view the normative fog of pro-European legislation serves only as a show-room to foreigners, while simultaneously the governments create a 'cosmos of subrules', that factually are more important and serve to solve the essential problems of the citizens. Frckovski, hence, concludes that by granting "positive" reports to such candidate-countries, the Union ends up in grotesque situation and factually assist the system of authoritarianism with "European money".

Regarding relations between the communities, 'the EU expressed concern about inter-community relations, and called for more pro-active long-term confidence-building measures. (...) The SA Council encouraged work on the independence of public administration and respect for the principles of transparency, merit and equitable representation.

The calling for 'pro-active long-term confidence-building measures' underlines the role of the Union as an inter-ethnic-relations mediator and guarantor of stability in the country. As it will be clear from the other texts as well, the EU pays great attention to the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. It seems that only in regard to inter-ethnic relations the Union factually insists on the value of "democracy first" paradigm. The implementation of Lijphart's (1968) concept of consociationalism or the recommendation for 'equitable representation' in the bureaucracy on ethnic lines in effort to avoid inter-ethnic conflicts is thus, one of the central concerns of the EU in the region and Macedonia in particular. The rights of other but ethnic minorities, such as the rights of religious minorities, the LGBTI community, the person with special needs, or more generally, the gender related rights or the rights of the children are not addressed in the text.

In this regard one may notice astonishingly small attention given to human rights in the report:

"As regards the protection of human rights, the EU continued to stress the need for a more proactive approach by the authorities to the promotion and protection of fundamental human rights, in line with European standards."

On the other hand, the report pays too much attention to the economic indicators. It states that ‘the economy had started to recover last year, that macro-financial stability was maintained, and that the inflation environment stayed benign.’ The Council acclaimed the country for the ‘high level of trade integration’ and encouraged the commitment to ‘invest greater efforts into increasing absorption of EU funds, and improving the capacity of institutions involved in their implementation. The SA Council also noted the importance of sound public financial management and the need for a clear link between EU assistance and national reform strategies, moving to a sector-based approach, preferably in the framework of an over-arching national development strategy.’

The SA Council also praised the Macedonia’s continued active participation in regional cooperation, as exemplified through the ‘current chairmanship of the Central European Free Trade Area (CEFTA)’ and the ‘upcoming presidency of the Central European Initiative Presidency (CEIP).’

In sum, the SA Council praised the government of Macedonia for the maintenance of the macro-financial stability of the country, for the high level of trade integration with the Union and for the active participation in regional and pan-European cooperation. Again, stability and linkage to the core countries of the EU are in the focus of the report. The encouragement of the government to use EU funds and build an over-arching national development strategy on the same looks like invitation for greater dependency of the country from the EU, without conditioning the use of the funds with maintaining democratic governance in the country. The fact that Macedonia is a non-member but still has the right to temporarily lead organisations such as CEFTA or CEIP already speaks of certain level of integration in the European institutions. Some Balkan countries, including Macedonia, were also granted facilitated visa regime with the Union during the same period. This is where Frckovski (2014) recognises the unclear strategy and tactics of the EU diplomacy in context of monitoring and defending its own values by means of the policy of “conditionality” (“offer more stick than carrots”). In the context of offering some level of integration in the European market without enjoying all the benefits of full membership, one can interpret the unconditionally given “carrots” as means to keep Macedonia (and other Western Balkan countries) interested in the Union in increasingly competitive geopolitical situation. Certainly, national governments are aware of this and utilise it in exchange for EU’s negligence of democratic deficits in these countries.

The first major change in discourse follows the Kumanovo clashes in May, 2015 and the 8 June EU’s Senior Experts Group Recommendations related to the communications interception. This can be seen from the Council’s conclusions on the FYR Macedonia from June, 2015 (text 9 in the appendix).

The Council prepared its conclusions after the meeting of Macedonia’s party leaders, the Commissioner Hahn as well as some MPs of the European Parliament seeking to reach solutions of the prolonged political crisis in the country.

For the first time a high body of the EU ‘reiterates its grave concern at the situation in the country’. The council expresses satisfaction with ‘commitments by the leaders of the main political parties to address serious rule of law concerns and to remain committed to the country’s EU accession process and democratic principles, including by maintaining good inter-ethnic relations through the full implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement and by strengthening good neighbourly relations.’

Related to “stabilocracy” as its highest priority in the region, the EU expresses its ‘grave concerns’ about ‘serious rule of law’ issues in the country only in context of ‘maintaining good inter-ethnic

relations' in the country, the 'implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement' and the 'strengthening [of] good neighbourly relations'.

It is interesting that after a long period of at least five years a top body of the EU reacts for the first time so hastily and determinately in response to indices of backslides in rule of law. This determination is evident in the wording of the text. E.g., the Council 'calls upon' all signatories of the Pržino Agreement to 'implement all recommendations of the Commission, starting with the urgent reform priorities, in relation to systemic rule of law issues'. The Council further warns that the 'implementation of these recommendations will be closely monitored by the Commission'. Additional reforms are also 'urgently required', such as the electoral reform in line with recommendations by OSCE/ODIHR, ensuring a level playing field ahead of future elections. The free and fair conduct of the elections will be also considered as an 'important indicator of reforms' in this regard. Finally, the Conclusion states that it is 'necessary to ensure as soon as possible' a 'thorough and independent investigation of the material revealed and any criminal wrongdoing, with full regard for due process, the principle of the independence of the judiciary and the presumption of innocence.'

I will finally analyse the EU Commission Staff Working Document (or the Progress Report) on FYR Macedonia covering the progress of the country under the Copenhagen criteria in the period October 2014 to September 2015 (the text 10 in the appendix).

The summary of the Progress Report notes that 'serious challenges reported in previous years have been underscored by the country's most severe political crisis since 2001 with intercepted communications, apparently involving senior government officials, suggesting breaches of fundamental rights, interference with judicial independence, media freedom and elections, as well as politicisation and corruption.'

With the very opening statement of the Summary the Commission admits that 'serious challenges reported in previous years' have been underscored. This goes in line with the claim that the Union acted very passively in relation to acknowledged threats to democracy in Macedonia.

Further in the text, almost each consecutive paragraph referring to progress in different aspects of the acquisition criteria contains the word "however". The Report notes:

'The country is moderately prepared in the area of public administration reform. There has been progress on some issues. However, concerns about politicisation have been reinforced by the content of the wiretaps, and merit based recruitment continues to be undermined. Public trust in the functioning of the institutions has further eroded.'

After the critique of the public administration reform the reform of the judicial system and the limited efforts to fight corruption have been criticised:

"The country's judicial system has some level of preparation. The situation has been backsliding since 2014 because the achievements of the last decade's reform process have been seriously undermined by actual and potential political interference in the work of the judiciary. Indications of wrongdoings and offences arising from the intercepted communications still need to be fully investigated.

Concerning the fight against corruption, some level of preparation has been achieved. Legislative and institutional achievements were, however, overshadowed by a lack of political will and political interference in the work of the relevant bodies, especially in high-level cases."

Finally, drawbacks in human rights and freedom of expression have been underlined with the same conditionality of the “progress” with the word “however”:

“The legal framework for the protection of human rights is broadly in line with European standards. However, implementation is lacking, in particular in the areas of prison reform, Roma integration, rights of the child and persons with disabilities. (...) The country shows some level of preparation regarding freedom of expression. Exercising this freedom, however, is a serious problem in the current media culture and political climate, and the country continued to backslide in this area. Attempts to limit media reporting on matters of public interest are worrying.”

Just as the Stabilisation and Association Council Report from 2014 regarding the rule of law paradoxically praised the ‘high level of alignment’ but stressed that ‘greater emphasis is needed on the independence and quality of justice’, here the Commission underscores: ‘the legal framework for the protection of human rights is broadly in line with European standards. However, implementation is lacking’.

Noteworthy, Macedonia still received “passing grade” from the Commission, something which the pro-government media was easily interpreting as “positive” Report in the past. Against *status quo* or setbacks in public administration and the judicial system reforms, in the protection of human rights and freedom of expression, one may notice that the wording is still encouraging and not decisively condemning.

At the end of the systematic analysis of the documents annually prepared by the EU bodies I would summarise the main features of the discourses and offer critical overview of EU’s behaviour.

The multi-level governance system of the EU makes it difficult to generalise the behaviour of the Union towards Macedonia in general and the (un)democratic behaviour of the Macedonian government in particular. It can be, however, generalised that EU embraces modernisation theory principals and discourse grounded in Eurocentrism. The discourses of the Union are grounded in evolutionism, linearity, and dualism. The EU assumes thus a ‘civilising mission’ on the Balkans. It assumes to be a sole spring of modernity, the only to offer democratic development in the region, therefore claiming to be morally superior to the accession countries or regions. The Union organises debates in the Euro-Parliament on the topic ‘political culture’ in Western Balkan countries, assuming ‘innate traditionalism’ that has to be altered by mentorship. In this spirit countries are guided through the achieving of the requirements of the Copenhagen criteria.

One can note that all the reports are written in a tone of encouragement. On the background of the shifting interests such as the European debt crisis and the Ukrainian and the Refugee crises, placing the entire enlargement project below other priorities of the EU, the Western Balkan peoples had to be kept motivated on “their way to Europe”, against evident democratic flaws in the whole region. Astonishingly, however, in the reports measuring Macedonia’s progress on democratic reforms very small attention was given to human rights, especially relative to achievements in economic reforms. Against continuous awareness of democratic flaws in the judicial and media spheres, “passing grade” was given to the candidate country. Hastily and determinately to indices of backslides in rule of law was responded only after fears of inter-ethnic clashes were spread in mid-2015. The improvements were ‘urgently required’ and implementation was warned to be ‘closely monitored’ by the Union. Maintaining good inter-ethnic relations in the domestic politics was put next to the priority of

strengthening good neighbourly relations in the international politics, both assumed to prevent the country from straying out of the European path. This once more underlines that the EU closely relates country-level with regional stability in a common regional framework that should guarantee stability in Europe as well.

EU's hesitance on implementation of democratic reforms could be traced in two instances. In the first case, different bodies of the Union, and more precisely the Euro-Parliament on the one side and the Commission and the Council on the other, almost simultaneously have issued conclusions and recommendations that contradict each other. In the second instance, one and the same body of the Union has produced reports which only in matter of a year had diametrically opposite conclusions from the previous years. This was a direct result of using so called "diplomatic language" to cover up democratic deficiencies in hope that this would encourage the Macedonian government to shift its policies. This led the Union into situation where no room was left for using more of its "diplomatic language", constructing ambiguous notions when criticizing the democratic flaws in the country while providing for "passing grade" and continuation of the Recommendation for accession negotiations. Calculating between regional stability and democratic reforms resulted in extended erosion of democratic institutions and prolonged political crisis in Macedonia.

Conclusions

In this chapter I tried to demonstrate with interplay between the Macedonian domestic and the international or European democratic regimes, with special accent on the role and character of EU's influence on the Macedonian democratic processes. Of significance in this context is the treatment of the whole Western Balkan region as "secured under EU's wing" against competitors, such as Russia or Turkey, a notion gaining weight especially after Romania and Bulgaria were permitted firstly in NATO in 2004 and later in the EU in 2007.

Within these geopolitical constellations, local leaders built strong autocratic regimes grounded in populist discourses and promises. In the case of Macedonia, Gruevski built his legitimacy as a "protector" of the national interests and identity from the waves of globalisation, as EU integration was portrayed. Prime Minister's strategy is thus heavily concentrated on balancing between the widely supported people's aspirations for EU integration and the needs of the generally Eurosceptic, nationalist elements of the conservative wing, factually sustaining his power. One of the main features of government's populist strategy is the sustaining of the illusion of country's (and regime's) independence and sovereignty. Nevertheless, although the EU is not explicitly involving in the name dispute with Greece, it has been a broker of the signing of all the agreements crucial for the future of the Macedonian state. The EU was one of the key players in the signing of the 2001 Ohrid Framework Agreement reconciling ethnic Albanians and Macedonians. It later assisted agreement between the government and the opposition in March, 2013, after the "Black Monday" incident in December, 2012, insisting both sides to sign a joint declaration on the EU and write a joint report on the crisis, recommending mechanisms to encourage political fair play. Finally, the Pržino Agreement signed on June, 2015 following after public disobedience rallies and the Kumanovo clashes predicted the

establishing of a Special Public Prosecution (SPP) set in charge of the wiretapping scandal and Gruevski's resignation, assumed as precondition for fair early elections to be held on 2016.

On the background of rising revolt within the country and the increased pressure coming out of the country, Gruevski and his party became increasingly populist (and autocratic), using populist discourse as the strongest weapon against the 'common enemies'. The Macedonia's governing elite and the media supportive of their policies constructed a scenario in which the only way the opposition can win back the public affection is through secretive "selling-off of the name" and joining the EU, also assumingly, under foreign intervention in the domestic matters of the country, leaving the voters in a position where they are supposed to have no choice but to continuously support the current executives.

Through slander of the political opponents and other populist discursive strategies, VMRO-DPMNE and the media supportive of the party have sometimes overtly and other times indirectly expressed Euroscepticism. In pattern already discussed, while the politicians have shown caution in the statements, the media has engaged in more detailed argumentation. Critics of the EU grounded Euroscepticism in a mixture of factual and fallacious argumentation schemes, typical of (right-wing) populist discourses, such as *reduction of complexities* and *pathetic dramatization and emotionalisation*. The media built not only Eurosceptic, but also powerful anti-pluralist narrative simultaneously directed against all the political opponents. Additionally, the theme song of all the discourses was the *victimization* strategy, where Greece is portrayed as unwilling to find solution on the name issue and the domestic opposition is therefore 'increasingly prepared to compromises'.

After the failure to join the NATO in 2008, one can observe increasingly Eurosceptic discourse on the behalf of the government officials and some media outlets. Gradually, the integration in the Union as a priority becomes only a tool in the daily politics. One can conclude that since the airing of the video "You are Macedonia" (combining the *fallacy of treat, vilification* of the opposition for weakness or treason and *promise of salvation* through the revival of the "heroic age") and especially after the building of "Skopje 2014" VMRO-DPMNE and its leadership have been only declaratively committed to the EU agenda, while using the media for cynically mocking the democratic and human rights values. In this context, the "positive evaluations" received from Brussels were widely used by the government and some media to explain the public that only the name dispute with Greece is standing on the Macedonia's way to Europe.

The leadership of the Social Democrats, on the other hand, has recognised the joining of the Union as number one strategic priority of the country. Typical for their awe towards the Union, they have even linked the accountability and the legitimacy of the politicians with the possibilities for success in the EU integrations. Historically seen SDSM has demonstrated greater readiness to compromise with the national interests in attempt to join the Union. In fact, the critique of the isolation from the Union has been along with the critique of "Skopje 2014" opposition's strongest argument against the government ever since 2006. This notwithstanding, the opposition was relatively long accused of 'hampering the institutions', or not working 'within the system'.

As the main mediator of conflicts and monitor of democratic reforms in the country, the EU, as political actor in the developments before and especially following the announcement of "Skopje

2014”, had and continues to have, only partial success. The behaviour of the Union can be characterised mainly as based on double standards and passive or belated.

The analysis shows that this behaviour suits autocratic populists from the region. Being predominantly occupied with the functioning of the market economy and the security matters in the region, the Union neglected evident backslide in democracy in Macedonia. Paradoxically, perceived as “heaven” of security and democratic prosperity by the candidate countries, the EU itself prefers stability over democracy and rule of law. The Union has shown preparedness for immediate action in Macedonia, and in the Western Balkan region in general, only when inter-ethnic clashing appeared, assumed to have negative influence on the Union itself.

The EU could observe emerging (right-wing) populist, autocratic rhetoric in the antiquisation policy in general and “Skopje 2014” in particular, but reacted only marginally on this issue. On the background of obvious *anti-pluralist* discursive schemes: distinction of ‘common enemies’, derogatory and disparaging remarks regarding the leadership of the opposition and evidences of Euroscepticism or even anti-Europeanism, “positive evaluations” and “passing grades” were given. This continued even when evidences of corruption and disrespect for the rule of law provided in the Report related to the communications interception were at hand after June, 2016.

The reactions of the EU were hesitant, balancing between its own security and the EU perspective of the region. This was obvious in the ambiguity of the messages sent not only to the political actors in Macedonia, but more importantly, to the Macedonian citizens. On the one hand the Macedonian opposition was criticized for its methods of struggle against the government while on the other hand, few months later, the government was sharply criticized through the Progress Report, abandoning with statements beginning with the word “however”. Similarly, on the one hand Macedonia was requested to “bury its past” in exchange for fast-track integration and sharing the privileges of the EU citizenship, but on the other hand however, the Union showed no intention to exercise pressure on the recognition of minority rights of the Macedonians in the neighbouring countries. Most importantly, on the background of continuous awareness for gaps in democratic reforms and serious allegations of disrespect for the rule of law, the government was encouraged to follow the “path to Europe”. Being satisfied with superficial signs of approximation to the Union, such as the ‘high alignment’ with the EU legislation, high level of trade integration with the Union and conducting of ‘well-administered’ or ‘effective’ elections, drawbacks in human rights and freedom of expression were marginalised in the progress reports. This hesitant political strategy leaves plenty of room for criticism and doubts, gradually leading towards cynical mockery of EU’s behaviour and proclaimed values and adoption of similar hypocrisy towards the demands of the Eurocrats in the domestic politics. Backed with media campaigns promoting Eurosceptic views, the Macedonian citizens responded with dramatic decrease in support of the EU as a symbol of democratic values.

More importantly, the negligence of anti-democratic trends in Macedonia, contrary to the expectations for stability, has yielded conflicts. The prolonged institutional and political crisis, accompanied with frequent mass protests have ultimately resulted in violence, as seen in the cases of police brutality on the protests and the inter-ethnic clashes in the town of Kumanovo.

This chapter has demonstrated that responsibility for emergence and sustainability of autocratic-populist regimes have equally the core states of the world-system as much as the nation-states

where they appear. It also demonstrated the mechanisms of maintaining autocratic power under the condition of embracing neo-liberal reforms and facade of democracy. The analysis has shown that political programs of democratic development stemming from modernisation theory lead towards unsustainable democracy.

The emergence and sustaining of autocracy “with European money” in Macedonia is not an isolated case. The EU tolerates similar behaviour in the neighbouring Western Balkan countries as well. The emergence of similar political regimes in the neighbourhood of Macedonia can be explained as response to delayed but “certain” accession and the need of the EU to secure fast answer against perceived treats.

As these countries are evidently related in the EU agenda, one may expect that *de-autocratisation* of all the regimes and inclusiveness of the oppositional voices in the decision-making processes will follow simultaneously and after a straightforward EU support of the popular struggle to achieve genuine democratization. For the sustainability of the democratic regimes, however, would be needed much more than *de-autocratisation* - redistribution of wealth and empowerment of formerly disadvantaged social groups would be necessary for democracy to be stabile within and between the nation-states. Region’s democratic perspectives continue to be uncertain, as redistribution is the least popular measure of the self-designated promoters of democracy.

CHAPTER 12: CONCLUSION

This thesis focused on the problematic relationship between right-wing populism, as manifested through the project “Skopje 2014”, and democracy in Macedonia in context of country’s effort to join the European Union. More concretely, it tried to understand which concrete negative influences this populism involves for the pluralist institutions of the country. To understand how “Skopje 2014” could negatively affect Macedonian democracy I analysed the discursive practices of the creators, the supporters and the opponents of the project. To this end I applied critical discourse analysis, which allowed me to raise awareness of problematic discursive strategies, such as (right-wing) populist *nominations* and *predications*, concentrated on insulting and discriminating political ‘others’, as well as *fallacious argumentation schemes*, violating rules of rational and plausible argumentation and aiming to create positive self- and negative other presentation through spreading antagonism.

With careful formulation of critique I aimed to use existing and offer new politolinguistic tools that would enable us to further identify democratically dangerous right-wing populist rhetoric that infringes on principles of rational deliberation, and not only in Macedonia, but also in similar South-East European regimes and elsewhere in the world. As the approach is problem-oriented, meaning it concentrates on certain phenomenon (such as emergence and maintenance of autocratic-populism), I found it necessary to extend the analysis out of the nation-state and embed it into the broader picture of core-periphery relationships, highlighting thus the political responsibility of the EU for the weakened democracy in Macedonia. The critique aims to discourage problematic discursive practices through enlightenment and emancipation.

The research has demonstrated that “Skopje 2014” is embedded in the antiquisation policy. The main themes of this policy could be easily found in some constructivist and legitimisation discourses about “Skopje 2014”.

“Skopje 2014” in general and the monumental part of it in particular has supported and re-enforced the right-wing populist ideas of territorial rootedness of the Macedonian nation in the antiquity. This implied using of identity-naturalisation strategies, “proving” the continuity of the nation throughout the centuries. Ideas of *Homo Macedonicus*, monarchic past of the nation dating back to Alexander the Great, genetic (and cultural) purity and superiority against its neighbours, as well as the ideas of nation’s rebirth in ‘particularly hard times’ were all supported by the building and legitimising the Project.

A vision of static identity, rooted in the Macedonian soil and blood, one assumingly assimilating all the civilisations that arrived on the Balkan Peninsula, was further utilised in the construction of the “re-born” or “New Macedonians”, one capable of great deeds, people who can make a difference under the new leadership.

Right-wing populist notions with negative impact on plural democracy could be also perceived through the monoethnic character of the Project. Excluding Ottoman legacy and current Albanian presence in the new national myth eased the re-establishment of the long-awaited “unity of the people” mythopoesis.

The analysis has demonstrated that the government’s identity policy follows the Occidentalist principles of evolutionism, dualism, and naturalised notion of culture (Quijano, 2000a, 543), understanding the Macedonian, and not the competitive Greek, as the first modern Western

civilisation, status granting it the exclusive “rights” among the “civilised”, western countries. Courting Europe the government of Macedonia disseminated in the domestic public sphere a naturalised notion of culture, a form of racial theory, charged with right-wing argumentations, providing a base for nativistic, stereotypical discrimination practices and xenophobia.

In line with earlier research (Causidis, 2013) I have further interpreted the size, the number and the spatial composition of the monuments depicting almost exclusively political personas from the Macedonian past as demonstration of power and strong will for ruling. These aspects of “Skopje 2014” also suggest linkage between the assumed past and contemporary leadership of the country. The tendencies towards *personalisation* of power and autocratic rule under the “strong hand” of the new leader were also evident in the video “You are Macedonia”, where similarities between the leadership characteristics of Alexander the Great and the ones of Prime Minister Gruevski have been hinted. The acceptance of the project by some people could, on the other hand, be interpreted as willingness to have a strong leader, one who can “protect” their identity. Both of these inclinations are encouraging autocratic rule.

The implementation of “Skopje 2014” in the part of building new facilities and re-arrangement of facades of existing buildings also suggested autocratic tendencies. The subversion of the existing facilities by building bigger building in front of them or the covering of the modernist with more “classical” facades could be easily interpreted as wish to conceal the nation’s “shameful past”, where the new facilities become a symbol and metaphor of “our victory” and “their defeat”. This strategy of *de-essentialisation* or systematic deletion of the traces of another time was interpreted as desire to erase its own memory, thus not problematizing the past and urging critical deliberation over it, but brutal imposition of new identity, one marking red lines between the past and the future. This discourse certainly offends the feelings of a great part of the population, still emotionally connected to the recent history of the nation, and labels them as fixed ‘others’ and ‘defeated’ in their own country.

The analysis of the constructivist and legitimisation discourses following after the construction of the most of the “Skopje 2014” structures as well revealed that the project was understood as “revival of the nation”, one requiring re-definition and imposition of a new hegemonic narrative on national identity domestically and one aiming to rethink and challenge the established historical role of Hellenism internationally. The repositioning of the Macedonian nation as the cradle of the Western civilisation in international setting thus went hand in hand with the reinterpretation of the more recent history of the Macedonian people in regional and Yugoslavian context. I therefore interpreted government’s reformulation of the role of the former regime for the Macedonian statehood as intention to create negative feelings towards the former national myth, where the released vengeance towards the former regime’s atrocities could be utilised in the rejection of the entire national identity narrative of Yugoslavian Macedonia and the acceptance of the new hegemonic narrative.

Legitimation discourses have also underlined a specific social identity to be upheld by the supporters of the Project. Conservative values of local patriotism, machismo-masculine and traditional family values were preferred and propagated as qualities of the winners in the “Skopje 2014” debate. The legitimisation discourses contained almost all the populist rhetorical principles of oppositional right-wing populism described by Reisigl (2008) in his study of Austrian populism.

This study has also shown how archaeology, performing and visual arts were politicised and closely intertwined with the “findings” of genetic research and the architecture of “Skopje 2014” to construct a right-wing narrative, potent of creating identity confusion and conflict in the Macedonian society. The study found tendencies towards *fictionalisation* and *commodification* of politics and identity-building, described as typical of right-wing populists by Wodak and Forchtner (2014) in all of these professions, especially in the production of short and documentary films with strong propagation tones. Sites of “Skopje 2014” on the other hand were used as a “scene” for further spreading the antiquisation message through delivering of public speeches, national celebrations and performances of other type.

Aside of imposing new national identity that on a long-term could serve only the governing conservative elite, other actions related to “Skopje 2014” have also signalled autocratic behaviour of the current governing elite directed against the pluralist institutions of the country. Most notably, the role of the house of representative democracy, the Parliament, was undermined in a series of instances. The Declaration of the Independence was removed from the Parliament into the newly constructed Museum of VMRO on the twentieth anniversary of the country’s independence. The Parliament became a place for personal or clan-type struggles between MPs. With the initiation of private lawsuits against oppositional MPs the governing elite misused its executive power and expressed distrust in the democratic institutions of system, signalling thus deep political crisis. Demands for more transparency in relation to spending of public money was met with ignorance and resulted in delayed Accountability Report and smear campaign against the newly appointed Mayor of Municipality Centre, who announced Revision of the project. Conviction of dubious activities increased after the findings of the Revision and BIRN’s in-depth investigation were published and no charges against individuals or collective involved in the realisation of “Skopje 2014” were ever raised by the Public Prosecutor’s Office. The rules of representative democracy were manipulated through the utilisation of the immunity status for MPs, when contrary to expectations for temporal resignation and defence of their case in the Court, party officials involved in “Skopje 2014” became MP nominees for the upcoming parliamentary elections. As the case of the ignorance of transparency demands and the case of adaptations in the Monuments and Memorials Law have shown, the governing elite has purposefully isolated public deliberation out of the Parliament. “Taming” the Albanian partner in the government through offering it a parallel building project “on their own territory”, VMRO’s officials participated in the downplay of *consociationalism* in Macedonia, envisioning stabile majoritarian rule with the country on relatively long period, trying to turn elections only into confirmation and legitimisation of the government policies. Prime Minister’s speech delivered on the official opening of “Arch Macedonia” portrayed the society as a battlefield of two unchangeable and antagonistic groups, where the current power of the governing elite cannot be challenged through elections as established democratic procedure for peaceful replacement of ineffective politicians.

The political leadership practiced caution and avoidance of debating on identity and financial issues related to “Skopje 2014” as strategy against receiving of negative points on the consecutive elections. Discursive practices of the Prime Minister himself, but also discourses of his closest colleagues have suggested *personalisation* of power in VMRO-DPMNE’s leader and chef of the government. To protect the reputation of the leader, these politicians have delivered and defended the Accountability Report, thus trying to secure Gruevski’s image of uncorrupted “person from and for the people”. Avoiding of political responsibility for failures such as “Skopje 2014” was also to be

witnessed in the discourses delivered by the leader of DPMNE during the campaign rallies related to the elections in 2014 (*Utrinski Vesnik*, April, 2014). As a 'protector of the national interests' against the 'domestic traitors' and the 'foreign enemies', Prime Minister rhetoric has increasingly received more populist tones than at the beginning of his first mandate. Aside of employing *fallacy of threat* the governing leadership also heavily relied on the so called authority of the anonymous *vox populi*, a fallacious scheme assuming both romanticised form of 'unity of the people' and legitimisation of argument based on authority of the assumed unison of 'the people'. In discursive schemes tending to equate "the people" with "the party" and the "party" with the "state" the Prime Minister systematically degraded the civil society sector and fiercely attacked the political opponents as "conspirators" against and "traders" with the national interests. From the characteristics of right-wing populist politicians outlined by Reissigl (2008) the political leadership of Macedonia has most often used the division of social actors into '*friends*' and '*enemies*', *insulting* of the political opponent, pathetic dramatization and *emotionalisation*, insistent *repetition* and perhaps most often *calculated ambivalence*. One interesting unique feature of Prime Minister's rhetoric was the maintaining of *oppositional language* and *worm's-eye view* in his speeches even after one decade in the office. While sometimes depicting the opposition as completely collapsed and weak, other times he portrayed the society as "occupied" by the opposition. Keeping the oppositional language is suitable for transferring responsibility to the "politicians" labelled as decadent elites, argumentation scheme typical of populist politicians. The use of these discursive principals shifts the epicentre of political antagonism from the democratic pluralism to a new level, the "new people" and their leaders against all the rest (Frckovski, 2014).

Of special interest in this thesis was the division of labour between the governing and the cultural elites in the processes surrounding "Skopje 2014". While the political actors were rather cautious in their statements the discourses of the media actors were rather elaborated and propagandistic. In this regard most noticeable was the example where in attempt to both escape negative feed-back on the upcoming elections and win passionate support among the "newly-born Macedonians" the political leadership offered *a la carte* identity to the ethnic Macedonians, while the media was actively promoting a narrative which could serve only the conservative party.

The study found especially intriguing that people from all walks of life, with professions as different as journalists, historians, actors, artists, architects, non-government activists, academics or TV-hosts, have promoted the antiquisation thesis more 'loudly' than the politicians. The lack of acceptance of the antiquisation thesis among some voters identifying themselves primarily as south Slavs, Albanian, Muslims or something else, could be thus softened by refusing any responsibility for the antiquisation theses by the political leadership.

The comparison of the articles offered by *Vecer* and *Republika* sometimes revealed striking similarities not only in the argumentation lines but also in the exact wording, suggesting strong dictate of the politics over the texts. Both of the media houses, but especially *Republika*, wrote in the period 2010-2015 articles related to "Skopje 2014" mostly compound of lengthily quotations of the speeches of the government officials delivered on press conferences or similar events, with few short comments following after the citations. Articles, such as the one from *Republika* focused on the critique of the Albanian project resembling "Skopje 2014", have suggested that these outlets in some instances actually do not offer individual opinion on the matters but follow and help the daily party agendas of the governing party.

In general, both of the outlets refrained from opinion pieces on identity related issues stemming from the construction of “Skopje 2014”. Quite the contrary, the pro-government newspapers have actively propagated the vision of the Project as mainly developmental project which succeeded to turn the former provincial town into recognisable European metropolis, one bringing capital from international investors and tourists as main audience of the project. More concretely, Skopje’s revamp was labelled as city-branding megaproject with modern capitalistic flavour and state-of-the-art technological solutions, allegedly resulting in positive international acceptance. As typical for the political, the cultural elite has systematically avoided commenting on controversial aspects of the project, even after opposition’s fierce attack of the project in the period 2010-early 2013. Similar to marketing campaigns in promotion of products or services, the outlets avoided debates around “Skopje 2014” that could damage the image of the government’s “product”. This strategy changed only after the oppositional Mayor Zernovski overtook the office in mid-2013. Only then the pro-government media engaged in debates and legitimisation of the government’s actions (such as the Accountability Report), fierce critique of the announced Revision and questioning the competence of the new Mayor to accomplish a Revision of the Project. This signals that the first strategy was not convincing enough and new priorities in the legitimization of the Project had to be set.

The discourse analyses from the penultimate and last chapters have also shown that the media has played a crucial role in systematic disparaging of the civil society sector and the spread of Euroscepticism in the country. Embedded in government’s cynical attitude towards the values of pluralism, the degradation of the non-government sector and the spreading of Euroscepticism were going hand in hand, mutually reinforcing each other. Related to Euroscepticism, it is especially interesting that the pro-government media has prolifically criticised the politics of the EU, while the political elite they support and serve was declaratively strongly pro-European. In argumentation scheme which brought close together the civil sector, the opposition, the southern neighbour and the international community (EU) in preparing conspiracy against the “united people” of Macedonia, these outlets have both legitimised the political leadership as strong protector of national interests and spread distrust in any associational life not controlled by or same-minded with the state executives.

Having the freedom of not carrying any political responsibility for their statements, media houses supportive of the government policies have in fact much more practiced discursive strategies and techniques potent to destabilise democratic institutions in Macedonia. *Vecer* and *Republika* have systematically used *offensive, counterattacking* rhetoric, *simplistic* illustrations, often *slandering and insulting* the political opponents while *victimising* its ‘own people’. Another pattern frequently used in the articles was the one of *personalisation* of politics. This argumentative strategy reduces political contest to personal battle, or at least to battle between clans.

The fact that these media outlets have very often avoided debating on social issues, expressed no genuine opinion by its own journalists and editors but simply quoted the politicians they support and served as a marketing machinery for promotion of government’s ideas supports the thesis that the media became ‘one of the constitutive pillars’ of the autocratic-populist government in Macedonia (Frckovski, 2014).

The picture of “Skopje 2014” as developmental city-branding and nation-rebranding project has been continuously attacked and de-constructed by oppositional voices. The opposition in general and the Social Democrats in particular have firstly attacked the ambition of the current government to

change the identity of the people through the Project. As political parties are evaluated primarily regarding their economic policies, through the short period of five years encompassed in this study the political opposition has increasingly focused on the financial affairs related to "Skopje 2014". In Parliamentary debates the low transparency of spending public funds and the autocratic tendencies of implementation of the Project were underlined. The opposition has therefore also embedded the project into the developmental rationale of the government but recognised mostly negative consequences from it. The allegations for money laundering through "Skopje 2014" became the strongest affair against the government, one almost directly leading towards the police-assisted through out of the oppositional MPs from the Parliament session dedicated to the voting of the State Budget on 24 December, 2012. Another constantly repeated argumentation pattern was that "Skopje 2014" contributes towards the delay of Macedonia's integration in NATO and the EU. Straying away from the Western partnerships was one of the most powerful discursive schemes the political leadership of the opposition has used against the populist tones of the antiquisation policy.

The analysis of the discourses delivered after the publication of the AR has shown that the opposition got a new chance to more fiercely attack the policies of the governing political elite, bringing "Skopje 2014" closely to the economic performances of the country and its political future in relation to the EU. In this context *Utrinski Vesnik* and *Sloboden Pecat* were covering topics which were partially or completely avoided in the pro-governmental newspapers. Both of the newspapers were constantly offering critical insights related to "Skopje 2014", through frequent publishing of opinion pieces, something untypical for the pro-government outlets. Allegations for low transparency of the planning and realisation procedures of the project and politicisation of art were to be found only in these outlets. Referring to domestic and international bodies such as the State Audit Office, the Eurostat, the World Bank and other, the media opponents of the Project have at least partially recognised "Skopje 2014" as a branding project, but one which failed to satisfy the expectations of the citizens for economic and democratic development of the state. Connecting it with the gray demographic picture of the country and the potency for damaging for the country's image, "Skopje 2014" as a branding project was portrayed as 'historical counterfeit', a 'camouflage of high culture' and a 'facade' of underdevelopment.

An exceptional role in the expression of public opinion and civil will also had the organised civil society sector. Through offering critical overviews of "Skopje 2014" and the providing of information to the public and the decision-makers, these institutions challenged many of the government's policies. The newly formed NGO "Ploshtad Sloboda", born as a reaction of the announced plans for Skopje's city centre revamp, and the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) have contributed towards informed and grounded critique of the financial mechanisms behind "Skopje 2014".

"Ploshtad Sloboda" organised small student protests against the planned building of religious object (the Church Ss. Constantine and Helena) with public money on the main square of multi-ethnic Skopje. It later, however, grew in one of the most organised forms of opposition of the Project. Through a series of short documentary films the NGO highlighted different shortcomings of "Skopje 2014": financial, aesthetic, inter-ethnic and inter-cultural, all of which were assumed to undermine pluralism in Macedonia. The interactive database "Skopje 2014 under magnifying glass" based on eight-month investigation by BIRN provided many answers related to the amount of money spent per object and the tender procedures related to the Project.

The arguments offered by these NGOs suggested that even on the background of public discontent the political entrepreneurs have continued with a project which brings them ideological and financial gains. Reporting on the special and temporal continuation of the Project out of the predicted frames, the irrational choice of partners offering unreasonably higher prices, the non-transparent procedures of awarding artists the NGOs had great contribution to the de-construction of "Skopje 2014" as developmental project.

The de-construction of "Skopje 2014" from variety of actors and from perspective of identity-alteration or developmental policy have shown the extent to which the project has polarised the society and became ground for serious conflicts. The analysis demonstrated that the Project was predominantly directed at the domestic audience and bringing the governing elite short-term victories, but one that lead towards long-term divisions. The project was carefully planned and systematically implemented, but it was also consistently criticised and interrupted by the minorities, the opposition and the neighbouring countries. The radical type of identity-building has created identity confusion and conflict within the ethnic Macedonian population, sparked inter-ethnic instability and by challenging the meaning and the influence of Hellenism in the world history, but simultaneously not quitting the shared Slavic cultural heritage with Bulgaria, it transformed the neighbours into 'enemies' and almost directly perpetuated the already delayed EU accession.

The opposition brought different aspects of autocratic rule very close to the implementation of the Project, such as threats, blackmails and bribery of oppositional politicians, using physical force against individuals and groups 'threatening' the realisation of the project, manipulation of voting processes. Special accent was put on the control of the judiciary: frequent and rapid adaptation of laws enabling the government to realise its plans related to Skopje's revamp, overproduction of unsynchronised laws and arbitrariness in their enforcement, merging of the state and the ruling party, pressure and blackmail of the civil and public servants, Prime Minister's conduct signalling that he positions himself above the institutions.

In the period between the end of 2015 (the end date for selection of texts for analysis) and the moment when I am finalising the dissertation (April, 2017) few important political events have confirmed the symbolic value of "Skopje 2014".

On 12 April 2016 protests lasting until 20 July 2016 began in the Republic of Macedonia against Gruevski's ally, the incumbent President Gjorgje Ivanov, after he surprisingly ordered the end of the inquiry on the wiretapping scandal conducted by the newly-appointed Special Public Prosecution and abolition of all politicians involved in the same. This controversial decision would effectively free Gruevski and dozens of politicians who were allegedly involved in the wiretapping scandal from the potential prospect of facing criminal charges for their conduct. Referred to by some as the "Colourful Revolution", the demonstrations were supported from coalition led by the Social Democrats, the newly formed party "Levica" (The Left) and other opposition parties, demanding the President to step down from the position, the interim government predicted by Pržino Agreement to resign for the formation of a technical government, and the parliamentary elections planned for 5 June 2016 to be cancelled on the grounds that the conditions for free and transparent elections are not in place.

The ongoing indignation towards the Project could be further observed as with the beginning of the "Colourful Revolution", when paint-balls in different colours were thrown on the facilities of the institutions responsible for building the project (the government building, the building of the Ministry

of Culture) or directly on the facilities part of “Skopje 2014”, such as the “Arch Macedonia”, the new Ministry of Foreign Affairs and others. The protesters have also written “robbery” on the Arch and spread red colour in the fountain surrounding the monument of Alexander the Great, in all likelihood symbolising the “bloody wounds” or the pain suffered by the people under the regime. These acts reinforce the thesis that “Skopje 2014” mirrors and has become a symbol of contestation and conflict on many levels of the society.

The polarisation of the society can be observed as a consequence of the government’s policy of rewarding only its ‘own people’ while not addressing issues of disadvantaged socio-economic groups in general and of the political ‘Other’ in particular. The analysis of the texts revealed that simultaneously to the building of “Skopje 2014” the governing elite has neglected the fundamental needs of the citizens, such as the improvement of the medical, cultural and education institutions around on the country, or the ecological and sanitary conditions in the capital. At least partially, this resulted in evident outflow of young educated citizens, pattern even more stable for the active, already employed young population. The de-construction of the developmental policy of the government is, hence, supportive of the hypothesis that there cannot be stability in a given nation-state until socio-economic concerns and equality of all strata and political options are considered along with the respect of the principles of procedural democracy.

The key for the successful sustainability of the Macedonian political regime seems to be the tolerance for *authoritarian capitalism* by the hegemonic powers of the world-system, and most notably in this case, the EU. The resurgence of this model is to be understood in context of earlier tenets of the modernisation theory holding that the combination of autocracy and capitalism is a viable arrangement for development and stability that can sustain over longer period of time. What seems to please the EU as hegemon and controller of the Balkan region is the capitalist, entrepreneurial spirit of the Macedonian governing elite. Despite introducing a plethora of other *laissez-faire* reforms the government of PM Gruevski engaged in road-shows campaigns and nation-branding, regarded as precondition for *attracting foreign capital*. As Sussman (2012, 42) pointed out, however, place- and nation-branding is always directed at small class of transnational executives seeking networked profit opportunities through ties with local elites who are likely to engage in corrupt practices to maintain the relationship. This is especially valid for trade and investment designs in contrast to tourist oriented branding, which tends more to simplify and homogenise the social reality (by offering images which cover inequalities and current conflicts) and to reconfirming uneven power bases by fortifying hegemonies of class, race, ethnicity and gender. The Macedonian governing elite has tried both ways, which resulted in more vibrant market economy, one however, reinforcing existing inequalities in the society. This comes to no surprise considering that nation-branding is an effective mechanism for transferring public funds and authority into private hands, something that contributes to ‘naturalisation of market fundamentalism’ (Jansen, 2012). This radical type of capitalism suits and fuels authoritarianism in two ways- by creating clientelistic network between the governing and the economic elite and by stimulating ‘tight, hierarchical control over the brand’, which reduces history and culture, trivialises public discourse, reinforces stereotyping and fosters anti-intellectualism (patterns astonishingly similar to right-wing populist). The analysis has shown that over long period of time the World Bank has praised the Macedonian opening for business, while the EU was preoccupied mainly with securing functional capitalism in Macedonia. Macro-economic stability was the main concern in the many of the annual Progress Reports of the candidate country.

On the background of the increasing polarisation of the Macedonian society, the discourse analysis of statements and documents of different individuals and bodies representing the EU have demonstrated that Union's passivity to react against evident backslides in democratic reforms resulted in extended erosion of democratic institutions and prolonged political crisis in Macedonia. Due to shifting interests, such as the debt-, Ukrainian- and Refugee crises, placing the entire enlargement project below other priorities of the EU, and against evident democratic flaws in the whole region the Western Balkan, autocracies were collectively praised for their ability to immediately deliver on the expedient demands of Western powers, thus guaranteeing stability in Europe. In this context, the analysis has shown rapid changes in discursive strategies towards determination and insistence on action only after inter-ethnic clashes in the town of Kumanovo in May, 2015. Kumanovo clashes, however, have also shown that passivity towards (right-wing) autocratic-populist regimes can result in violent outburst. This last analytical section of the dissertation has demonstrated how national and supranational democratic processes are connected, supporting Wallerstein's (2001) thesis that two-thirds of the world do not have stable democracy, namely because of the structure of the capitalist world-economy, which makes it impossible for them to have such political regimes.

The organisation of and events following after the "Colourful Revolution" seem to follow the pattern of 'promoting polyarchy' by the EU. The EU strongly criticized the decision of President Ivanov and this resulted in the withdrawal of the abolition. The popular dissatisfaction with the government has been widely supported by the Union, but the genuine grievances have been "tamed" and channelled almost entirely in a dialog between the established political elites, supposed to contest their newly gained positions in the soon-to-be-organised parliamentary elections. These actions are in line with 'polyarchy promotion' as a type of 'regimented democracy' - one limiting democracy to strictly controlled contest of elites on elections, turning it to an institutional arrangement that serves very well not only for resolution of the sharpest social tensions but also for external interventionism.

Through the analysis of "Skopje 2014" embedded in context of country's attempts to officially join Europe I "dived" into the most recent democratic processes in Macedonia. Grounded in the analyses I tentatively conclude that as long as governing elites avoid debate and deliberation on the national history and legacies from the past, systematic interruptions in national mythopoesis and conflicts will be generated in the society. The forcefully implemented identity will always be confronted by minorities, especially in increasingly pluralist societies with multi-ethnic and multi-cultural settings and many political 'others'.

In the same line, I conclude that as long as developmental projects are used for financing party and clientelistic networks and not for dispersion and redistribution of affluence and empowerment of formerly or temporarily disadvantaged groups, popular dissatisfaction will follow.

The same conclusions apply in relations core-(semi)periphery of the world-system. In this regard as long as EU policies of enlargement do not translate in redistribution and empowerment systematic backslides into autocracy and populism will follow not only in EU candidate countries, but as well in existing members of the Union. Prolonged dissatisfaction in some member states may even lead towards mass abandonment of the Union and major shifts in power on the continent.

The tentative conclusion of this study is that without broad popular inclusiveness and participation democracy indeed reduces to polyarchy or contest for privileges between elites. This counts on both

nation-state and international levels. Systematic exclusion from debates on national identity should not only move towards invitation of different political, ethnic and cultural groups to engage in deliberative processes of conceptualisation of the nation, but also aim at scientific research, as well as education and emancipation of the involved. This process should result in compromises and tolerance of in-compatible points of view, typical for pluralist societies.

Equally important for stable democracy is the equality of economic chances and participation in wealth redistribution. Just as systematic exclusion of economic life ultimately results in violent clashes, policies stimulating equal economic chances result in better allocation of society's talents and innovation, as well as in trust in and loyalty towards the democratic institutions of the polity.

Significance of the thesis for further studies

In line with Hopf's (2004) widest possible definition of discourse in this dissertation I scrutinised not only written and spoken discourses relevant to the understanding and critical interpretation of "Skopje 2014", but also the 'silent' discourses behind the phenomenology of the structures, the discourses behind the series of political actions as well as some individual performative acts. CDA in this sense proved to be especially suitable approach for the analysis of construction and de-construction of national identity. I believe that following studies should also benefit from this approach, where the chronology of acts, the performative and the visual are treated with equal attention by the researcher as the written and audio materials.

This study can also contribute to future empirical studies by offering a set of newly discovered discursive strategies used by Macedonian right-wing populist governing elite, something assumed to be especially relevant in the cases of Western Balkan and South-East Europe in general.

Despite the extensive use of already outlined right-wing populist (Reisigl, 2008; Wodak and Forchtner, 2014) and autocratic-populist (Frckovski, 2014) discursive principals and patterns, this study has found some unique techniques or strategies used by Macedonian governing and cultural elites in their constructive and legitimisation rhetoric efforts.

Most notably, both elites have widely used *avoidance* of deliberation and debating as strategy for minimising negative critique. Prime Minister Gruevski, for instance, continuously avoids pre-election debate with the opposition leader, debate on transparency issues and national identity were avoided in the Parliament, the pro-government media outlets avoid reporting on contested aspects of "Skopje 2014". On the behalf of the political leadership this is clearly related to avoiding political responsibility for policies such as the antiquisation, charged with opportunistic right-wing argumentation that could potentially de-legitimise the government if de-constructed as fallacious or dangerous by the opposition.

Another relatively unique right-wing populist pattern used by the political elite was the *victimisation* as form of *worm's eye view*. Too often the ethnic Macedonians, the "party", the artists of "Skopje 2014" were represented as victims of assumed conspirators against them. The discursive strategy

was to construct scenario of 'one against all', scenario which worked effectively from the level of the party against all other political opponents on the domestic stage to Macedonia against all its neighbours (and the EU) on the international stage. Two additional elements of the victimisation strategy are also relatively unique (partially typical for other Balkan nations, but not typical for Western European right-wing populism): symbolical appeal for *parental recognition* from the core countries and overemphasis on *historical arguments*, especially one based in the antiquity. The frequent combining of the victim myth with the heroic myth results, thus, in creating of ambivalent feelings towards the domestic and international 'others'. This creates more space for manoeuvring in later discourses when depending on the situation one of the poles of the hero-victim myth can be stressed in function of providing support for anticipated weaker arguments.

Third uniqueness of Macedonia's governing elite (right-wing) populist discourses found in the study was the insistence on *oppositional language* even when the ruling party governed the country in a relatively longer period of ten years. In fact, this practice was reinforced in the later years of the regime. Reisingl (2008, 116) found that predication strategies formerly directed against the established power by the right-wing populists can become a boomerang after they enter the government. This was experienced by the Austrian FPÖ, which after governmental change in 2000 was criticized for broken promises, programmatic contradictions, lack of competence and professionalism, incapacity to resolve party-internal conflicts, nepotism and unpredictability. The author demonstrates how governing right-wing populism could not effectively employ populist argumentation schemes without the risk of losing their credibility. Differently from FPÖ, VMRO-DPMNE was and is an established and declaratively conservative party. Nevertheless, the leader of the party embraced anti-establishment populist discourses not only while challenging the elites in pre-elections but also during the term in the office. Some Western Balkan autocracies are in this regard rare and new cases in the latest history of Europe when oppositional right-wing populist completely overtake the power and moreover implement populist policies after winning the elections. Governing political elite and supportive media in Macedonia have regularly argued that the opponents still have the power to control the judiciary, the non-government sector or the media ('to resist a good party and politically motivated and organized campaign of one really Goebbels' propaganda of the lowest type'). As oppositional language challenges the power of the opponent through stimulating antagonism, this discursive strategy can be interpreted as one of the ways to defocus the public and justify possible or real failures of government's policies. This discursive strategy also has the function of keeping the 'face' of the populist leader as pure as possible. Through imagining and wide-spreading the idea of common conspiracy against the party organised by the opposition, financial magnates such as George Soros, the NGO sector and the foreign 'enemies' such as Greece, the Macedonian governing elite indeed constructed a narrative in which VMRO-DPMNE can be perceived as opposition in the country. The use of oppositional language is thus closely related to the victimisation strategy or the worm's-eye view that defy the establishment.

It is also interesting that governing elite's *diverges from the traditional right-wing populism* in some crucial regards. The discourse and actions of the executives is not openly anti-Semitic or openly anti-Albanian. Macedonia built very good relations with Israel in the last decades. By some interpreted as a gesture of friendship and by others as wooing powerful partners, parallel to "Skopje 2014" the government of Gruevski has also built the Holocaust Memorial Centre for the Jews of Macedonia. Nevertheless, it can be, generalised that this populism is monoethnic, nationalistic, latently xenophobic and strongly anti-establishment. If earlier critique of strong international NGOs and

Euroscepticism were practiced, after the signing of the Pržino Agreement in 2015, predicting serious curtailing of Prime Minister's power, open rhetoric against USA and the 'foreigners' was expressed.

Finally, this study detected a systematic pattern of *division of labour* between the governing elite and the cultural elite or the media in the dissemination of right-wing populist argumentation. This practice releases the politicians from political responsibility but gives them the opportunity to actively propagate its version on history, identity and socio-political reality.

Knowing some unique features of right-wing populist discursive practices of the governing elite in Macedonia it would be interesting for future studies to show if similar discursive strategies are used in other surrounding countries with autocratic, anti-pluralist tendencies.

Compared to the other Western Balkan countries there is one element which made and still makes great difference for Macedonia in this context. Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Bosnia and Kosovo cannot refer to such distant and important for the Eurocentric paradigm past as the ancient Macedonian. As the study of Bakic-Hayden (1995) demonstrated Serbia can built its image as 'the last barrier to the ongoing onslaught and aggression of Islam'. Serbia is also proud of its Byzantine heritage, but it is assumed that with this heritage it is not possible to capitalize in the 'Western club', but rather build closer ties with the 'successor of the Byzantine Empire' – Russia. Similarly to Serbia, Montenegro is proud of its Orthodox Christian heritage and long resistance and independence from Ottoman rule on the Balkans. Because of their Islamic heritage Albania, Bosnia and Kosovo are not in position to "contribute" to the Eurocentric mythopoesis and thus (re)enforce the right-wing-leaning hegemonic narrative of European cultural exceptionality.

This notwithstanding, as noted earlier by Frckovski (2014), almost all Balkan nations have strongly embraced the logic of a victimized nation -claiming that neighbouring 'others' owe them something- and are therefore not willing to compromise on ethnic identity questions, while they are harsh toward the ethnic and religious minorities. Recent conflicts have also proved that these nations use the easier road of political mobilization on the line of the ethnic homogeneity. Based on preliminary research I therefore provisionally assume that similarly to the Macedonian case for the most of the Western Balkan populist autocracies typical are the combination of the victim and heroic myth and the monoethnic, nationalistic, latently xenophobic narrative. In same argumentation line, from the previously outlined unique discursive strategies and discursive practices that characterize Macedonia's elites I assume that the for the Western Balkan governing elites typical is the insistence on oppositional language, the divergence from traditional right-wing populism and the division of labour between the political and cultural elites in propagation of sensitive ideas related to history, identity and socio-political reality.

Aside of Macedonia's governing elite, Serbia's and the governing elites from Turkey and Hungary, from the wider region, demonstrate strong anti-establishment attitudes.

On the background of the Macedonian case, further research could also highlight the function of fascination with antiquity (and history in general) in the building of autocratic regimes in South-East Europe. The elites of the countries which currently show strong anti-establishment sentiments happen to be the same elites that recently engaged in "re-discovering" their monarchic and distant past. Most notable is the Turkish case.

The President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has been recently accused by domestic opposition of 'seeking to become a sultan'. This claim followed after President's personal involvement in the designing and building of the world's biggest presidential palace, 'boasting more than thousand rooms and being four times the size of Versailles' (*The Telegraph*, November, 2014).

Similarly to the "redressing" of the cavalry in ancient Macedonian armour on celebration of national holidays (formerly dressed like 19th century revolutionaries) in Macedonia, in the spirit of revival of Ottoman traditions Erdogan has greeted the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas with an Ottoman-style ceremony in the new presidential palace, with guards dressed in costumes representing founders of sixteen great Turkish Empires in history. Even while serving as the Prime Minister of Turkey, Erdogan made references to the Ottoman era during election campaigns, such as calling party supporters 'grandsons of Ottomans', perceived by some to be an open attack against the republican nature of modern Turkey.

The Turkish President has been also accused of Anti-Semitism and silencing the media. He as well recently put the existence of the Turkish Constitutional Court under question and announced changes of the Constitution, broadening his powers.

The Turkish case of building populist autocracy is similar to the Macedonian in several aspects, such as the focus on mass building projects, the rethinking of historic legacies, overt and hidden challenges of the pluralist institutions.

Frckovski (2014) also mentions the Hungarian case, where right-wing populism combines re-thinking of the heritage of ancient Hungarian tribes (the myth about the Four Fathers of the Asian Hungarians) with major constitutional and legislative reforms, under the leadership of Prime Minister Victor Orban.

One of the articles from *Republika* analysed in the thesis has also informed on the so called Albanian equivalent of "Skopje 2014" implemented in the capital Tirana under the patronage of the former Prime Minister Sali Berisha. The article underscored the explicit distancing from left-wing events and personas in the project development and strong leaning towards historical figures from the monarchic past of the country.

Analysing all these cases there seems to be an almost clear pattern within the wider region. The countries that had, or are in position to imagine to have had, great imperial past use it in the construction of the so called 'mystical bridge' between the distant past and present, a necessary element in the narrative of the 'unity of the people' re-established under the leadership of un-corrupted leader. The elites that did not have "glorious past" limit their populist narratives on monarchic past and celebration of right-wing leaning political figures from the past. Simultaneously, often but not always, governing elites engage in mass building projects and pose challenges to the institutions of constitutional democracy, by mainly controlling the judiciary and the media and significantly weakening but not prohibiting the opposition.

Related to economic policies, although not all of the elites engage in political entrepreneurship from the type of city- and nation-branding, there are indices that "traditional" methods of controlling of economic opportunities are characteristic not only for Macedonia but for the most, if not all, from the abovementioned regimes: the state becomes the single most important employer in the country, creating clientelistic network of ever growing contingent of civil and public servants, later to be easily

pressured and blackmailed; using public money for semi-private entrepreneurship; accommodation to capitalism by embracing neo-liberal reforms, such as deregulation, free trade and creating “positive climate” for business with strategies combining tax holiday for direct foreign investors with reductions in government spending. All these policies, however, have not resulted in diminishing socio-economic inequalities in the countries. The main goal seems to be the firm grasp of the executive power in relatively long period in order to establish and consolidate new powerful elite.

The in-depth study of other autocratic-populist regimes on the Balkan may pinpoint to other, here not mentioned, discursive and behavioural commonalities among them. Sticking similarities in patterns could suggest mutual imitation and/or cooperation between some of the regimes. This could ease the de-construction of autocratic-populist regimes in Western Balkan, just as in the case of the Greece-versus-Macedonia contest over ancient Macedonian heritage, where the de-construction of the earlier “Kalasha project” eased the understanding and de-construction of the later, imitative in nature “Hunza project”. The critical de-construction of similarities, in turn, could serve as a tool for discouraging individual autocratic regimes to further copy similar practices from one another, or even weaken possible networking between similar regimes.

This study has also contributed to the understanding of polyarchy promotion by the EU. It indicated that the EU has exceptionally high involvement in the inner affairs of the territorially, demographically and economically small non-member states of Western Balkan. This with certainty can be claimed for countries such as Macedonia, Bosnia, Albania and Kosovo, where no other traditional partnerships existed or no development alternatives to EU were sought, with exception of recent efforts of Macedonia to build good relationships with Asian partners. Equivalent to USA’s National Endowment for Democracy organisation, active in ‘democracy promotion’ in more than hundred countries around the globe, in Europe, the OSCE has organised missions in all non-EU South-Eastern and few non-EU Eastern Europe countries which among other activities mainly focuses on democratisation and elections observation. Robinson (2013) claims that United States’ political intervention programmes are organized around elections. Elections allow transnational elites and their internal agents to ‘harvest and channel legitimate grievances into a change in regime and a project of neo-liberal integration into global capitalism’ (Robinson, 2013, 231). The work of Robinson concentrates, however, mainly on cases of US involvements in the inner affairs of other nations and mainly on case studies from Latin America. Nevertheless, he underscores that the EU and other supranational bodies have lately also deeply engaged in interventionism, mainly through elections, but also through coercive and other forms of diplomacy, economic aid or sanctions and international media and propaganda, all with the final goal of tempering popular discontent within manageable limits. If we would take as an indicator of Europe’s interests the countries where OSCE missions exist it is evident that the Balkans, Ukraine and South Caucasus countries are the primary focus of Europe on global level. The analysis of EU’s discourses and other practices in relation to tolerating of autocratic-populist regime in Macedonia and rapid shifting of its policies following events that could erupt in domino effect beyond Union’s control can be compared to cases of EU interventionism elsewhere in the recent past. Civil society, organisations and individuals fighting for freedom and global justice can better understand the polyarchy promotion models and position themselves adequately when their genuine rebellion is ‘channelled’ in the establishment or consolidation of yet another elite.

Conclusions related to practice-oriented debates

According to world-system analysts (Wallerstein 2001, 2010; Robinson, 2013) the 2008 collapse of the global financial system triggered a global rebellion that resulted in conditions where consensual domination is increasingly difficult to sustain. What concerns many is the rise of the ultra right in many countries, something that may lead towards reintroduction of more coercive forms of social control. The victory of right-wing populist on the latest US Presidential elections may again put the delegitimisation of biological racism under question. Both scientists conclude that the only viable solution to the crisis of global capitalism is a massive redistribution of wealth and power towards the poor majority of humanity. They agree, however, that the only way this to be realised is through mass transnational struggle from below to achieve popular democratization against the mechanisms of domination imposed in the name of 'promoting democracy'. In agreement with this theory I believe that the transnational elite will try both rhetorically and practically to keep its privileges in the definition of any possible new system.

Nevertheless, on the background of current developments in the world-system Critical Theory has not been able to offer any viable programmatic alternative to free-market capitalism, thus jeopardising the potential for transnational counterhegemonic projects. I therefore propose that practice-oriented debates should not only focus on detecting and addressing agents interested in reducing of global inequalities and articulating of the various popular demands but also on creating of political program, grounded in critical scientific theory, that will not only emancipate against the dangers of right-wing populism, but will go further and demonstrate the unsustainability of democratic development designs stemming from modernisation theory principles.

In many ways the Modernisation Theory, or more concretely the political programs stemming from it, seem to have the function of legitimising Western supremacy in the world. The dissertation has shown that both the Macedonian governing elite and the European Union have followed the tenets of modernisation theory and both failed to deliver what the people have hoped for.

The Macedonian government sought radical developmental paths in attempt to accommodate to market fundamentalism. The neo-liberal nation-branding project was conducted with 'despotic management styles' peculiar to corporate branding. The antiquisation policy was evidently grounded and supportive of Eurocentrism and evolutionism. The implementation of "Skopje 2014" on the background of the antiquisation policy took the shape of creation of new elite.

The Modernisation Theory has also served as guiding point to the EU. The political programs of this theory have translated into mixture of policies towards the region, in accordance with the daily goals of the core units of the world-system. Each program has failed to maintain democracy stabile. Most importantly, four decades after the establishment of the schools, the EU and other core units, still practice combination of these interventionist schools, rooted almost in the same principles as in the 1970s. With few small redefinitions the first tenets of the theory are still vital today. Its theorists and practitioners still insist on the 'West versus the Rest' dichotomy. Modernisation, or emergence and maintenance of democratic development, is still observed almost entirely isolated within the nation-state. Interventionism, even military one (Huntington, 1991) is seen as legitimate act and factor supportive of 'democratisation'. Focusing on political leadership or political elites as driving force of social change is probably the most important principle, especially in polyarchy promotion projects. On the background of numerous allegations of corruption the EU, e.g., expressed no critique against

the forcible creation of the new elite in Macedonia in the last decade. Genuinely interested only in maintenance of market economy and conduct of periodic elections, the EU engages in no genuine emancipatory projects in the candidate countries. The realisation of programs grounded in Modernisation Theory boils down to securing functioning of capitalism and 'democracy promotion' without redistribution of wealth and empowerment in global frames, which by the majority of the people is experienced as inconsistency, hypocrisy and disappointment in democratic values.

Critical Theory with approaches such as world-system analysis, CDA and discourse-historical approach can offer tools for emancipation. In this study I have used Critical Theory to critic the principals of the Modernisation Theory found in the political programs of national and supranational governing elites. Wallerstein neatly clarifies the distinction between democracy as rhetoric and democracy as realisation and calls for merits-based society as opposing concept of society based on ascribed criteria of social stratification or inherited privileges.

The Critical Theory elaborately pinpoints all flaws of the modernisation argumentation but its weakness is that it does not go beyond the critique of this hypocritical process. Wallerstein's theory e.g. is not specifying what *popular democracy* is, and more importantly, how it could be established. Robinson also acknowledges that one of the main causes that reinforce the position of the polyarchic definition is the absence of genuine theory on *popular democracy*. In other words, current right-wing populism is more successful than left-wing populism in popular mobilisation at least partially due to lack of left-wing political program grounded in the de-construction and de-legitimation of democratic flaws conducted by right-wing populists, autocrats, but as well 'democracy promoters' from the core of the world-system. In this context, individuals and organisations committed to global justice and equality should more bravely offer a platform for action.

Political and civil organisations, NGOs, as well as social movements interested in popular mobilisation and politicisation can benefit from more encompassing theoretical and methodological approach, a meeting point of the critical theories on the one side and the theory of constitutional democracy or pluralism on the other, one which combines macro (world-system) with micro (nation-state) perspectives.

Regarding the standing points of Critical Theory towards pluralism there seem to be some uncertainties. Critical theorists as well as groups engaged in political action should make clear distinction between popular and populist democracy. I indeed agree with some anti-establishment stances of the populist platforms. Some principles, however, are directly attacking and are incompatible with representative democracy. These elements of populism should be in all instances avoided. Each populism imagines loss and re-establishment of the 'unity of the people' under the special leadership of 'non-political' figure 'coming from and fighting for' the people, therefore leaning towards personalisation of power in charismatic leader and *authoritarian, hierarchical and leader-oriented* attitude innate to this process. Wallerstein's appeal for system in which the *demos*, or the majority, should rule leans towards populism and legitimisation of majoritarianism. Ultimately, democracy as realisation of Rousseau's notion of *General Will* would lead towards rule of the mob under the new leadership or totalitarianism. This study has shown how the populist ruling elite can manipulate the civil society by temporarily creating and disassembling quasi-NGOs with missions ranging from 'silencing' the oppositional voices to legitimisation of government's policies on short-term, and the legal system by circumventing legal procedures. I propose, hence, that the Critical

Theory should acknowledge that even a largely egalitarian society, where the majority would bring the decisions, could not be conflict-free society or society completely without hierarchy and authority. Group interests are always mediated by parties and non-government interest groups as aggregators and articulators of interests and mobilisers for political action. The majority could thus be well informed, regularly consulted and engaged in decision-making but never rule differently than through representatives. The political program grounded in the critical de-construction of modernisation theory should therefore include explicit refraining from populist and majoritarian ideas and contain additional explanations for the protection of the minority rights, typical for constitutional democracies and societies upholding pluralism.

Similarly, Wallerstein's reflections on the discrepancies between democracy as rhetorical tool and democracy as realisation seem to rhetorically underestimate the *civil and political rights*, treating them only as complementary to the *economic rights* or the economic equality. This is even more typical for the Dependency Theory, which fully concentrates on economic development and equality as precondition for democracy on global level. Arrighi's (2002) critique of the modernisation theory, taking into consideration the arguments of both dependency theory and the world-system analysis, also concentrates on the distribution of income as the main indicator of world inequalities. The focus on economics and the explicit distancing from institutional (political and legal system) and cultural factors influencing democratic processes is relevant for the political programs of the counterhegemonic forces and for the actions stemming from the same. Just as the populists mock civil rights and regard the entire non-government sector as 'foreign-paid agents' there is danger that political programs grounded in Critical Theory will dismiss the civil society as inauthentic force for diminishing world inequalities. Populism, as well, tends to disrespect the abstract principle of rule of law and under the alibi of anti-establishment, is inclined to personalisation of power. Among institutional and cultural factors as one deserving special attention I propose to be the first mentioned. The current political and closely related legal systems of a country are a result of historic developments, reflecting society's economic, cultural and socio-political diversity. Since culture, values and identities are dynamic categories and subject of contestation and debate, political institutions based on the same are also dynamic and adaptable. Moreover, research (Sen, 2000; Halperin *et al*, 2010) has shown that civil and economic rights usually reinforce each other. Empirical research (Lane and O. Ersson, 2003) has also shown that institutional factors play significant role in consolidation of democracy even when factor like affluence is taken into consideration. This means that civil/political rights are not only complementary to economic ones, but if given may push towards equal economic chances, generally better economic performance and flattening inequalities and injustice based on the same. Political programs can explicitly recommend how to improve existing institutional arrangements and protect existing legally predicted rights, as well as to articulate popular demands for gaining additional rights.

Another weakness of world-system analysis as macro theory is its incapability of detecting political responsibility within the nation-states. To greater extend this theory concentrates on the critique of the core actors of the world-system, trying to maintain the existing hegemony, but pays little or no attention to the less developed regions of the world, their inner structures and governance practices and more importantly, the responsibility of their political leadership, as well as the role of the civil society in its struggle for more just world. In this regard, my dissertation, through the representation of a concrete case, has demonstrated how political responsibility for democratic flaws depends not only on the structure of the world-system but also on decision-making limited within the nation-

state. CDA, in this regard, can complement world-system analysis with its ability to concentrate on concrete actors.

This study has pinpointed exact cases of how state institutions of constitutional democracy can be circumvented by governing elite. On the background of these cases I indeed agree that representative democracy the way it exists today needs to be rethought. The accent should be put on the strengthening of the pluralist concept of constitutional democracy hindering unchecked centralisation of power. In this context the efforts should be directed towards enhancing of the powers of the Parliament in the system of the division of state power. Within the Parliament, however, more space for control of the representatives needs to be created, one confining the powers of the representatives to the interests of the electorate. In the existing model citizens do not participate in democratic decision-making beyond the periodic elections, MPs do not consult with constituencies, but become decision-makers almost exclusively in relation to their political leader or party. For increased popular participation, mechanism for regular interaction between local citizens and their representative should be created. Moreover, critical political activists should insist on democracy as emancipatory project. Citizens should be well informed, politicised and mobilised. Ultimately, this kind of citizens will more often protest against the infringement of their rights and organise and participate in referenda, seen as the 'ultimate voice of the people'.

In relation to re-thinking of representative democracy at the beginning of the thesis I also claimed that it is equally important to make public representatives more 'representative'. This is related to the question who nominates the one to be elected as representatives. In this context, Lessig (2015) makes the case that US democracy has become too dependent on electoral campaign funding, leading towards inequality where only 0.02% of the United States population actually determines who's in power.¹¹⁷ He refers to the 19th century American politician and tycoon William Magear Tweed who once said: "I don't care who does the electing, as long as I get to do the nominating". This means that only the top party officials and the business elites sponsoring the Presidential elections are in position to nominate and promote its own candidate. Lessig names, thus, the American system a Tweedism- democracy responsive to very small elites. In countries like Macedonia candidates are nominated by the parties and, especially in more autocratic circumstances, responsive only to the party and the Prime Minister. To make representative democracy more 'representative', then, more democratic mechanisms of nomination of potential MPs can be promoted where candidates will be proposed 'from below' or from the local units.

Another weak point of the current polyarchic representative system is that democracy is reduced to elections, envisioned as contest between two or more elites. As Zakaria (1997) pointed out, in poorer societies with shorter democratic history elections are abused in scenarios where the "winner takes all". It is easy to assume that if the democratic system is constructed so that the whole political struggle is tight only to elections the elites would invest all their efforts in overthrowing the opponent, mainly through creating clientelistic networks with the economic elites and "buying" votes of the socially marginalised citizens. To diminish these practices the civil society should insist on state-level financing of the electoral campaigns and probably in the (semi)periphery of the world-system modest, but egalitarian state-level welfare system that would prevent manipulation with

¹¹⁷ "Our democracy no longer represents the people. Here's how we fix it, Larry Lessig, TEDxMidAtlantic", published on 20 October 2015, last viewed 23.03.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJy8vTu66tE>

socially disadvantaged population in winning the office by the elites. Next to the threefold division of the power, these institutions can secure at least average equality, dignity and integrity in decision-making of all citizens.

Finally, closely related to the last point, democracy should be liberated from the idea of fixed elites, both theoretically and practically. Plural democracy assumes flexible majorities and free, informed electorate being in the position to change its opinion and able to peacefully replace ineffective politicians through deliberation and fair elections in attempt to improve its standards of living. In same way, democracies are grounded on the idea that there should be no fixed socio-economic classes and therefore fixed interests in the society. While they predict re-distribution of economic rights and political power to formerly disadvantaged groups, they exclude any attempt for systematic denial of access to economic and political power to predefined groups. Populists, for instance, use the opportunity to create new elite while they are officially fighting the old one. Both supporters of autocratic rule and polyarchy promoters also exploit the idea of elite driven societies. This considered, critical political programs should offer a platform that would prevent perpetuation of polyarchic, elites-contest democracy and upgrade the existing democratic institutions with deeper involvement of the citizens. This can be achieved through explicit mobilisation and politicisation of the broader society and political activism going beyond support of political parties. It requires maintaining of pro-active, optimistic rebellious mind-set and remembrance of historic examples of achieving democracy through mass, pacifist resistance in the spirit of Ghandi's anti-colonial project.

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APPENDIX

Text 1

“Skopje 2014”. And after (*Vecer*, March 7, 2010)

Writes Dragan Pavlovic

I'm from Skopje. And this is my city.

Here I was born in the centre, (next to the building of) Red Cross. And, if God allows, I will end up here. I have no intention to go somewhere else, and I do not believe that anywhere else would be better for me. In my town I made my first steps. Here I fell in love for the first time. In Vesna Baltezikj the daughter of my teacher Sofia. Here I picked apricots from neighbouring yards, here I took part in fistfights. Here I became a man. Here, and nowhere else.

Here I have made all my sins. And there are many, to tell you the truth.

I studied in Skopje schools, modest and clean. I healed my measles and mumps in Skopje hospitals that someone built for me.

I travelled a lot, but nowhere have I found such gardens with lilacs and early cherry blossom, which smell like in my neighbourhood, in Birarija.

Here, in this city, on this asphalt, with my two brothers, I learned what life is; with Toshta, Kitka, Mickey the Swede and Agim I learned what is asphalt. With Sacha Marcus, Upa, Laze Manaskov, Bobo, Zlatko and Boro Angelovski I learned what is art, what is theatre. How strong this word can be. With Bojo, Jani, Slave, Gele, Misko Veselinski, Slavcho, Goran ... I have realized that no one (has prepared) for us something in this world. You should search and fight for his place. With these, and similar, I've travelled the road to our own bread, and for (earning) a name, which will be special among the many in the Skopje telephone directory.

Here I grew up and fell. And stood up not to fail.

From here they sent in the army. Here I got drunk with Reggio Balic, with Zokjo and Dragan Popovski. And in the morning, here I was becoming sober. On the local musicians I have spent so much money you could buy a decent car. Nowhere else. Not that I have not tried it out, but it is not (the real thing).

I have tried to live in Ljubljana. I had a plan to live in Istanbul. And for Amsterdam I have prepared ... But no, it is not Skopje.

This is my Skopje. This is my city, my life is here.

Here the matchmakers were playing on my wedding. Here, with my Maria, we have put our name plate on the door. Here we have raised our two children. They are also Skopjani (people from Skopje), as I am. And I want, in this city, to build something for them.

Here I have seen, from my working-class neighbourhood, how Branko closes their factories. Cold-bloodedly, as if picking pears, which, fuck, will grow up again next year. Here in my neighbourhood, I have seen how working-class daughters and women age faster than those married in the

gentlemen's houses. In a blink of an eye, their silken skins, red lips and wholesome breasts are getting worn out like old shoes. So, prematurely aged, burdened by debts and illnesses they suffer silently and wait for their children to be different. If they will be.

Here I have seen for decades, how houses have been built. Large houses of politicians and their relatives. How their friends become millionaires without labour, without school ... because, under the table¹¹⁸ they have received permission to open a pub, shipping company, duty free shops ... and not to pay taxes, if they pay them percentage.

(I have seen) how they make their own police, designate their own judges, their own professors, where their children pass the exams out of the waiting line. And so on, you know already.

And now someone, out of that order (mindset), has decided to change that. Not to build an expensive house, not to live from racket, paid by those to whom taxes and penalties are forgiven.

To build something in Skopje. The only city in the country that has a square without a single public building on it. Only gray concrete meadow.

Someone decided, after so many mine, and yours years, to build, hey! As anyone who decided to build, (he has) on his neck "too clever" spectators¹¹⁹ who will annoyingly repeat and moralise¹²⁰ that this is not the best. As at home. Even one family cannot agree how to paint the walls, and not to say whether and what kind of house to build.

But houses, fortunately, are building. And they stay for the children after us.

As this what is now being built in Skopje, it stays for us, even after that 2014: the theatres, courts, museums, schools, hospitals...and the stadiums no one can take them from us, and take them with themselves. They are ours. We have them, instead the ruins, and instead of today's concrete meadow on the square.

Are they the best, most beautiful, the way we (as individuals) really want to be?

Certainly they are not exactly as any if us individually wants. And it has never been so. Not in Barcelona, in Sofia or in Thessaloniki ... nowhere. But does that mean that the building should stop. To remain concrete meadow?! To continue with the habit - of public money to build for oneself, and be spit on the collective (property).

God forbid any.

Today are against, are protesting those, who would first escape outside (the country).

Do we have to wait for all of us to agree what to be built? Ages will pass, we will all die, and our children will grow old, and will not agree. We will return from the visit of other cities, recounting how beautiful theatres, museums, stadiums, hospitals ... they have. And we (would stay), with the concrete meadow among my Skopje.

No longer will I look how from mine, public funds, further the houses of politicians and their relatives are built. How yachts and apartments in Europe are bought ... I see how my theatre is building, my

¹¹⁸ "under the table" means corruptively

¹¹⁹ the word "seirgii" is used, which has negative meaning of an observer who has critical, cunning intentions

¹²⁰ The colloquial expression "put salt on their mind" is used, meaning negative, annoying moralising

stadium or my hospital, my museum (are built) ... which will remain, for my Skopje citizens. Let them remember us as those who were building.

After all, we are only what others, keep of us in their memories.

Text 2

National Identity (*Vecer*, August 24, 2011)

Writes Janko Ilkovski

At this time of the development of civilization to be busy with civilisational identity looks backward, certainly in terms of particular parties and their NGOs. They are somewhat right. Only somewhat. But there is one thing, this issue they put under the carpet for decades, any attempt to explore, debate, or God forbid, that we would identify a little deeper (with the antiquity) was welcomed with vigour as typical for the totalitarian regimes - erase, falsify, lie, at any level. In this spring of searching and revelation of who we are and what we are, this government was accused of fascism because they allow people to acquire identification picture different from that which for decades was drawn from quasi-scientific circles of some pan-Slavism, for which they had no concern essentially, but to maintain political-ideological benefits. The term antiquisation, who themselves have invented and which simply does not exist anywhere, is yet another method of trying to control, primarily ideologically, and not some kind of desire for the EU - NATO integration and progress of the country, because only the Left could be in favour of an atheistic-impersonal society, alike the statuette Oscar, with human form, but without face. Yes, the world is hungry for something like that, but it is not right. The world implores us to change the name and the identity, but that world long ago has (helped us) to complete the process of cementing own identity.

I remember when the megaphones of the Left and Soros began, a year ago, with one quasi-intellectual thesis of "slippery" identity. Passed as a fiasco, but do not be naive, that is the idea of new Europe which sees itself as a civilized society based on some mature specific grounds, but it is in fact nothing more than a vulgar volvox community, a group of individuals with low awareness of the environment which only stick to each other in an attempt to make a organism. Beware, it is an attempt, the volvox has never had any evolutionary development, it is a simple, vulgar set of single-celled organisms that cannot be developed and that dies without achieving something in the scale of evolution.

Unfortunately, they have no choice, the values they had, as the Christian, on which is built the human civilisation, were renounced by them, and because of the lack of any idea and vision for new they enforce vulgar schemes like the legalization of almost every possible perversion, things that were always denounced by the healthy cells of the society. You want to see the idea of the new Europe? See Barry Lyndon's, "The Odyssey of the Earth" masterpiece of Stanley Kubrick and it will become clearer to you that spectacular logic of the modern time, recorded 40 years ago. The character in the film gives up everything that is his own roots in order to survive, for personal benefit

for his own ambition. Fight on the side of anyone, of any country, for whatever interest, only for his own benefit and nothing more. No ideology, no empathy, except personal well-being. Of course, the character tragically ended on the dunghill of history, as every normal (person would have) expected. But Kubrick was convicted and was not given an Oscar for this masterpiece because it stripped the ideology of modern times.

And now what and how to (go further) when we despite pressures from outside, (we also have) the 'ajvanite'¹²¹ from inside, who are in great number, and whose mental chips are still encoded on ideology before 30-40 years ago (and) who would simply bloodily fight to downplay and depersonalize any attempt of the people in their final national awakening that had to happen. I said "it had to", because it was not allowed to naturally experience what virtually every people in the world had in the process of self-discovery. But we need something more than that.

It's fine and good this final awakening of our deep roots in antiquity, that in no way and never has denied our Slavic origins and the connection with other Slavic people. But the world can recognise us also through other elements, (the world) is interested in singers, athletes, rich and important people ... In this moment we need heroes, heroes like Tose¹²², like Pandev¹²³, top artists, musicians, athletes that the "world" will recognize when seeing or hearing them and perceive them as Macedonians. Unfortunately we lost a wonderful talent (Tose) and Pandev is as saturated from prove (his worth). We do not have some rich people or Nobel laureates who will attract the attention of the modern world. We must not be satisfied with the average; we have to be more successful, as Pink Floyd, Dali, Djokovic, Beckham, Gates, Spielberg, Branson, characters with such "impact"¹²⁴ needs this country, something that the world will identify us with, perceive us, characters that will not be only local but global heroes.

Alexander is known as "Macedonian", but ever since then no one has received such spectacular epithet, and it is high time for that.

Text 3

Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, the official opening of "Arch Macedonia" on 6 January, 2012¹²⁵

Although its construction ended the previous month, as planned, in the year we celebrate the 20th anniversary of independence of Republic of Macedonia, we have decided its official promotion to be on this beautiful day. Dear friends, if the project which without intention received the title "Skopje

¹²¹ Turkish word for "animal" adopted in the Macedonian language and having pejorative meaning

¹²² Macedonian singer popular on the Balkans who died young in a car accident

¹²³ The only internationally successful Macedonian football player

¹²⁴ The English word "impact" is used

¹²⁵ Arch Macedonia, official opening (6.1.2012), published on 10 Jan 2012, last viewed 27.01.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUQDoCKD8VU>

2014" is one of the most contested projects in the history of Macedonia, then the Arch Macedonia, I would say, it's one of the most contested parts, if not the most contested, of this most contested project, which we started and led with great love and good thoughts. The Arch Macedonia was conceived as a symbol that will mark the 20th anniversary of the independence of Republic of Macedonia. Many called it Triumphal Arch and immediately asked the question: for what kind of triumph we built this Arch, submitting historical data that in the past, mainly in Europe, similar arches were built after winning some great battles. Hence, in enigmatic style, they pulled out the question: for which victory we build this Arch?

To all those who today ask this same question I would answer with another question: is there for a nation, a people and a state a greater triumph than the independence? After so many difficulties and with the blood of thousands of human sacrifices made in hundreds of years, precisely because of the acquisition of independence, sometimes I was asking myself, why some people do not recognize the moment of gaining the independence as the single most important historic event, which is worthy to build a symbol for, on the 20th anniversary of the independence. Sometimes I think that maybe someone from the last generation, this ours, us, who are alive today, perhaps somehow, we saw that independence as easily obtained and perhaps because of that some of us who are not fully aware of the historical battles and sacrifices, and for its arrival, maybe therefore it is so strange to them (to understand) why the state decided to build such a monument. Of course criticisms were from daily-political and with party-related character, which is normal in a democracy, albeit it is a bit strange when it comes to such an important symbol as it is the independence.

But to leave that, that is behind us. Today is a great day and I will not talk about some bad memories. I, as a participant at this historic moment, am not the one who should judge whether anybody was wrong or not, it is the people who have the right to judge. And cleanest judgment will be the one of the future generations, relieved by today's daily party-related disputes, or rather, history is the one which will give the final judgment. However it is a fact that through this project we went through a difficult period, with heavy accusations, criticism often not based on true facts and immense, really immense "throwing of political fog". But is it not so, that all great works were created through pain, through suffering and many opponents? Ladies and gentlemen, a project is worth as much it has its own history. This project (the Arch), as well as the whole project "Skopje 2014", even incomplete, have acquired its own history. For this we should be thankful to our opponents and whatever will happen on this place in the time to come, this project has already its own history, which many in the future will study, narrate, praise or criticize, read or comment. For example, it is impossible to make a documentary about Skopje in the future, or a book and not to mention this project or its individual objects, regardless of who and for what purpose will do that. For this favour, let me today publicly to firstly say thanks to all my opponents and all opponents of the project. Without their opposition to the "unseen" and "undone", without their, mostly unfounded, criticism, without protests, demonstrations and spitting on this project, today, and in the future, it would not be what it is now. Special thanks allow me to express to the opposition of our political life, to the NGOs, who mostly in agreement with the opposition parties, have organized protests, (to the) number of professors and students from the Faculty of Architecture, (the) various columnists and other prominent personalities, but also to the part of the media and their representatives, who with all the passion and maximal commitment have been working to maximally denigrate this project, hoping thus to denigrate me and my co-workers, as well as the current political establishment. Personally I think the artists who worked on this Arch and on the other buildings, memorials and monuments of "Skopje

2014" should be immensely grateful to the opponents of this project, because most artists with some of their works usually receive glory or come out of their anonymity only after their deaths, as an example of the legendary painter van Gogh, as well as millions of other artists in various countries. All attacks that they required, despite being innocent, the artists from the "Skopje 2014" project, I can say that, made some of them famous, while others at least more known than previously, of course based on their work, but with help from the opponents. Without intention they have created history of their works. Most often, even before they (the works of art) have been completed.

So, the first public gratitude today I express to all our opponents and enemies, who inspired, in different ways, to create a more successful and better art-work, and I do not say this with ironic or cynical style, if someone understands me so. The greater the interest for one art-work, in the sense of being criticized and humiliated, the greater was the concentration and motivation for quality of the art-work. Here let me make a distinction between the opponents of this project, and namely on those who were politically motivated, with the sole objective we to lose points among the public and they to win points, in order to fulfil their political, party agenda and were in the vast majority between those who publicly protested; and the second group of opponents who were not party-politically motivated and that simply had a different opinion, and this is the group to which I would especially like to express my public respect, because I have respect for every person who has a different opinion mine or anyone's, and its expression is implementation of democracy. They are our citizens and they deserve respect regardless of their views.

Second gratitude let me convey to our supporters. In the past period, to all of you who are here today, but also to thousands other citizens across Macedonia, who gave support to the still unfinished project "Skopje 2014", as well as to their support on the elections and of our program and the daily public support through different media and forums. Without the support of all of you we would hardly be able to resist a good party and politically motivated and organized campaign of one really Goebbels' propaganda of the lowest type and of emotionless wiping of the floor with anyone who would dare, for instance in the last and the year before, say anything positive about this project.

My third gratitude today I publicly express to the artists of these works. Considering the fact that every part of this project is a work of art, created by an artist, I would point out that there were many sceptics who openly propagated that Macedonia has no capacity through the work of a single generation of artists to create such a large number of works of art of high quality. Dear artists, authors of these works, you, directly with your effort and talent already denied these sceptics. I congratulate you for the completed works. You have created new postcards from Macedonia, new calendars, new pictures, new photos, new first impressions, landmarks of our metropolis, new souvenirs that will be bought by millions of tourists in the future, new meeting places for the lovers. You helped in expressing honour and remembrance-landmarks of many of our historical figures and events, who long ago have deserved at least this, which today we have created. You, respected artists, are part of the new energy of our country, which in the future will be increasingly a magnet for tourists, who will admire these works, which are now Macedonia's art-works and to all citizens of Macedonia, and to the current as well to the future generations. I know that you are capable and will create other great works, as you've created before the start of this project. But with these art-works you became an inseparable part of Macedonia's, and I'm confident, some of you, also a part of the European and world art history. This Arch was designed and made by the sculptor Valentina Karanfilova-Stevanovska. It was originally planned on "Macedonia Street" but later its final location

was fixed right here, on the eastern entrance of “Macedonia Square”. Congratulations for this wonderful work” (...)

Dear citizens, this speech is first of this kind associated with this facility, from the project called „Skopje 2014“ and that is why on the concrete object, the Arch Macedonia, I feel that I should a little more broadly to refer to the already completed works of this project. Maybe this is why I was sometimes criticized for hiding behind other people, I avoid to admit my role in this project. Today, today is a good opportunity to answer to these critiques. Yes. I stand behind this project. I think it's good, of good quality and useful, and that there is nothing wrong with it. Yes. I support and will support this project, as I do that in thousands other cases, when I believe in something, when I have, and we have, ideas and vision as how something to be better, more useful and more effective for the citizens and the state. Just as I stand behind and support thousands other projects of the government, whether it is computers for children in the schools, or subsidies to farmers, whether in the construction of sport halls, the construction of industrial and tax-free zones, mines, power plants, hospitals, changes (of laws) used to attract new investors, new factories, or other reforms and actions. Of course, I'm not alone and without my co-workers probably part of all those projects would have remained just a good idea, as this project „Skopje 2014“, and therefore today I want to publicly thank them.

Finally, dear present, let me tell you: I will be very happy if any future government will compete with the created works in all areas, and in this, I would say, wider field, or combination of fields, such as culture, art, architecture, construction, tourism and commemoration of our historical figures and events. All of these are part of this project.

Text 4

Vangel Bozinovski in the “Skopje 2014” documentary from for the national TV service - MRTV¹²⁶

“If you take a child of 7 years, and say: you're a newcomer to this place, all other nations at their root have gods, kings, etc....you originate from the mosquitoes behind the Carpathians. Then to the same child you say: see, you were illiterate, before the holy brothers Cyril and Methodius in the 9th century gave you literacy...at that time all the others had an alphabet. Then you say: you could have no culture if it was not St. Clement who at the end of the 9th century has grounded a university, and so on... and then you go on saying: if it was not the anonymous Master, the Architect of the 19th century, the tajfi (nomadic artisan groups) ... you would not even have architecture. So, if you educate someone this way, then he, by force of life, will become somebody, let it be, an intellectual. Here a definition of an intellectual is if you get a Bachelor degree at the university. Then you, with your cleverness and talent etc, will get a column (op-ed), and you'll start to write there and you will make an impact, or will become an editor of the newspaper or on TV, you will become a professor or a Prime Minister. You will simply carry that function because the education system has not allowed

¹²⁶ Documentary film “Project Skopje 2014”, published 4 July 2013, last viewed on 27.01.2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Rml3nphEZU> and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r1IPazM_T_M

you to become academic citizen but only a student with diploma. Because your roots and pride are cut off, you will have to seek some authority to support you in this. Most common journalistic question by us....in any field... (begins with the words).. here (in Macedonia) nothing seems to go well, right (?) .. and whoever comes to answer says yes. When he grasps his position, naturally, he simply will for himself feel the platform of low value and he will spread it, and he will support it, because he received good grades for it... And now suddenly, our best, our most talented students, who can, truly, based on the marks they have received and the knowledge that they have shown...they feel inferior to anyone from outside, because the education system has told him that every foreigner is better than you and everyone does better than you because you're who you are, you have no roots. (...) Here is the base of your ability. You may be talented and fastest in the world, but if you're from Macedonia, because that important psychological moment is cut off for you, you will not be first, regardless of the previous results of the training. So that's the essence of the whole problem.

You can be talented and fastest in the world, but if you are from Macedonia, because that important psychological element has been cut away from you, you will not be first, regardless of previous results on training. So that's the essence of the whole problem. The other variety is, you will form a party and will be in opposition and now as opposition will start criticizing, and this ["Skopje 2014"] really is very easy to accept as an opportunity to criticize, because "we all know that the Macedonians cannot do anything, not a thing. And [that] they haven't done anything. All they have done was betraying each other". And you will keep on with that inertia. So, the key is there, everything else is just consequences.

Text 5

"With the Accountability Report of the Ministry of Culture for "Skopje 2014" SDSM is caught in a lie

Vecer, April, 2013

With the announcement of the cost of the "Skopje 2014" project, SDSM is caught in a lie, and the public and the history are the one to give the final position on the project, was said in the written response of VMRO-DPMNE on the accusations of SDSM's Council of Culture, from whom they expect to give answers to two questions - what the members of SDSM have built for the Republic of Macedonia, and where the money were spent when they were in power"?

- We are aware that SDSM, having nothing to boast themselves in the field of culture and art, and the least in construction, for the time when they ruled, want to put a stain on everything that has been built, helped or subsidized (by the Government) in the interest of citizens. Their so called Culture Council serves solely for spitting all projects are built and which are under the construction site, because they are faced with the fact that they themselves did nothing and built nothing in their life.

According to the party, the nervousness is evident in SDSM after the press conference had been held by Ministry of Culture, the former mayor of the Municipality Centre and the Office of General Affairs of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, publicly and transparently presented all documents, procedures and procedures carried out in this project. (...)

- More importantly, at that press conference was presented also the total calculated amount of the entire project, which showed that its value is a bit more than 200 million Euros, and ranged from 0.5% to 1.5% of the annual budget of the Republic, being much, much less than what SDSM claimed, namely raging from half a billion to a billion Euros. SDSM would have been happy if the facts about the value and the procedures were not publicly presented. So it could continue lying and diverting the Macedonian public, are saying from VMRO-DPMNE.

- "Skopje 2014" is a project for the citizens of Macedonia and Republic of Macedonia. We find completely unacceptable the insolent and rude behaviour of SDSM, which calls the installation of monuments to prominent Macedonian activists (Goce Delchev, Dame Gruev, Krste Misirkov, Metodi Andonov Cento, Kuzman Josifovski Pitu, Jordan Hadzi Konstantinov Giant, George Pulevski Miladinov brothers and many others) for brutally-vulgar nationalism. SDSM with its action offends the citizens of Macedonia and disparage the pillars on which rests the Macedonian identity in the struggle for freedom. It is a bottom, which SDSM should have not afford itself, but knowing the fact that in the Cultural Council of SDSM there are members that the only thing they have done in their lives was snitching, this is not unexpected, has been said in the reaction.

For VMRO-DPMNE, it is obvious that SDSM wrote its statement in coordination with the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, because it was said, it repeated the same accusations (the Ministry) has expressed these days in order to damage Republic of Macedonia.

Text 6

Day after tomorrow (*Vecer*, December 11, 2011)

Writes Dragan Pavlovic

Macedonia has "black on white"¹²⁷, has a court ruling that Greece has blocked her entrance in the NATO and the European Union. It is a ruling by the International Court of Justice. It is a historic document.

This state [Macedonia], by which I mean all citizens plus the government have met all requirements of the NATO and the EU to become their member. And we have that "black on white". We passed the tests and received a score from the NATO. Plus, three years in a row a positive assessment from the European Union, with a recommendation for negotiations.

These are facts. Recorded and made public.

¹²⁷ or ink on paper, a metaphorical expression meaning to have a valid document

Crvenkovski, in lack of political ideas for years spits on us, that factually, it was our fault for failure to access [in NATO and EU]. He and his people would save Macedonia ... Something we have already heard. But it is not so. More skilled than him, those who sit in NATO and the European Union estimated that we are ready indeed. That we have managed to fulfil what was required of Slovenia, Hungary, Poland and the Netherlands... for Bulgaria, Romania and Greece I do not even want to talk ... it is clear to us even without the evaluations of the EU, every day we see that they are behind us.

[We know] that we are equal to the above mentioned, but Greece stands at the door and does not allow us to enter [in NATO/EU]. They are stronger than us, have more powerful friends, geo-strategic position and rich emigration which gives them supremacy over all our policies.

Unlike us, they are united. They have one people, one religion, and a long state history. Two hundred years ago the Greeks have their own power, their own strong national idea, have billionaires such as Onassis who finance campaigns of US presidents such as Kennedy or Latsis of several Democrats afterwards. Greeks are members of the current royal families in England, Spain...

They have Cyprus as a member in the Union, even though Cyprus is a country that has no borders. Half an island is open and under authority of the Turkish Cypriots.

The Union remarks to Macedonia and Serbia that they have unsettled relationships with neighbouring countries, and therefore they are not granted membership. What about Cyprus? What are the Greek relations with Turkey? Or Turkey is not a country?

We have a ruling against the Greek veto. That ruling cannot be enforced. International law does not provide police assistance to force Greece to respect that ruling. The mechanisms are political. Other countries should force Greece to fulfil the decision of the Court which was also founded by European countries. And here the circle closes.

These countries, the European countries, who are in solidarity with Greece's veto, should now force Greece to give way. Just because the Tribunal ruled in favour of Macedonia. If they wanted to do that, they could have done that already. Before the legal process. Even without the Court, they knew Greece was wrong.

But European leaders will not do it. Greece is more necessary to them than Macedonia. But is Greece more necessary than the rule of law? Maybe now, but trampling the law, and the Court that they have established, for the benefit of Greece's [may turn to them into] Pandora's box. Lawlessness without end.

Why the Tribunal is established if no one respects it? Or is it there just to rule in the interest of corporate colonialism, when opponents of neo-colonialism such as Gaddafi, Saddam Hussein, Assad have to be pulled down... only then rulings are important? And enforceable?

The Court ruled that Kosovo's secession was not against international law. And that was the alibi for the European countries to claim they recognized Kosovo on legal grounds. Not only because of daily political interests. (...)

And even if Greece pretends to respect the ruling of the International Court of Justice, and will not veto further, Cyprus will veto for them. Or any of its allies, primarily Spain or France. The Greek government now has a better position than yesterday, if it really wants to resolve the dispute it

imposed itself. They have a verdict to use in front of its public, as a reason to soften the position and accept at least a double formula [for the name].

But Greeks do not announce such intentions. On the contrary. They declare that the reference FYROM was not their choice. In 1995 we ourselves, governed by Crvenkovski and Gligorov have voted into Parliament to give up the name Republic of Macedonia and to be renamed into FYROM. Which is true.

As it is true that Crvenkovski, who is the author of that problem, now trumpets around to be ready to save Macedonia and bring it into Europe. By the way, Crvenkovski for years now convinces us that Greece has not given us veto. That we are outside the EU and NATO, because the Prime Minister is incapable. In contrast to him, who is capable and available. In the Hague they ruled that Crvenkovski is not right. So, will Branko have the virtue to apologize for these statements, with which he strew ashes on his own state and government for years?

What is now with his thesis that with Alexander, and the alleged antiquisation, we have violated the agreement with Greece? ...Giving statements that directly benefit the Greek position Branko behaved Greek, even more than the Greeks. (...)

Most importantly, during the negotiation, to create a country that is economically more powerful, and democratically more upgraded. As such it will be more respected by the Europeans. Poor and depressed faces no one needs. Especially not the Europeans, who are traditionally arrogant and full with prejudices. Plus, now furious because of everything that happens with the dissolution of their Union. When will Macedonia join the EU, I asked the Europeans. Soon, they said. The day after tomorrow.”

Text 7

EU Commission Progress Report 2011

Democracy and the Rule of Law

Early parliamentary elections were called for 5 June. A cross party agreement was reached on a code of conduct for the elections. The parliamentary elections resulted in the third consecutive victory of the VMRO-DPMNE-led coalition (56 seats), followed by the SDSM-led coalition (42), DUI (15), DPA (8) and NDP (2). The finding of the OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission was that the elections were competitive, transparent, and well-administered throughout the country. On election day, the voters were able to freely express their choice in a peaceful atmosphere from a diverse and pluralistic choice of candidates. Freedom of expression, movement and assembly was respected. The media provided extensive coverage of the campaign, enabling voters to make an informed choice. The number of women who were heads of list increased from six in 2008 to 15 in 2011. Out of 1679 candidates, 34% were women. There was a high voter turnout of 63%. The political parties largely endorsed the elections and SDSM was returned to the parliament. Few official complaints were filed

with State Election Commission. The five lawsuits with the Administrative Court were all rejected. However, gaps and ambiguities remain, especially in relation to provisions for complaints, out of country voting and use of administrative resources. ODIHR reported credible allegations of insufficient separation between state and political party, and pressure on civil servants. Political parties campaigned almost exclusively along ethnic lines, reflecting the ethnic polarisation of society. The public broadcaster, contrary to legal obligations and its public mandate, favoured the government and strongly criticised the opposition in its coverage. Some of the ODIHR recommendations from 2009 were addressed prior to the elections. In particular, the amended Electoral Code provided that the Broadcasting Council could issue a rulebook on the conduct of broadcasters; the campaign financing rules were tightened; the counting process was improved. The Electoral Code was amended by a slim majority and only two months before the election, which is not consistent with best practice. Also, the recommendation for a thorough audit of the Voters' List has not been implemented. This contains over 1.8 million voters for a population of 2.05 million, and concerns remain that the list is inflated. Questions remain about the arrangements for out-of-country voting. The new Parliament, still under the technical government, enacted in shortened procedure amendments to the Laws on Use of Flags of Communities, Languages, Broadcasting Council, Judicial Council, Council of Public Prosecutors and adopted an authentic interpretation of the Law on Amnesty. Overall, there has been progress in the conduct of elections. The elections were competitive and well-administered throughout the country. The government needs to implement fully the conclusions and recommendations of the OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission. Some progress has been made on the reform of the parliament. The implementation of the law on languages and of the rulebook of procedure has moved forward, and the operational budget has been increased. However, political dialogue needs to be further strengthened in order that problems can be resolved through the institutional framework. The boycott by the opposition hampered the functioning of the parliament.

Text 8

The Stabilisation and Association Council between the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the EU (SA Council) held its eleventh meeting on 23 July 2014

PRESS RELEASE ST 12148/14 PRESSE 426 Brussels, 23 July 2014

Concerning the political criteria, the SA Council was informed of key political developments. These encompassed the April presidential and parliamentary elections and their aftermath. It noted the formation of a new government and the intentions of the government to engage with the opposition and to continue to improve inter-ethnic relations. Regarding political dialogue, the SA Council reviewed the conduct of the April presidential and early parliamentary elections, and noted the OSCE/ODIHR assessment that they were efficiently administered. The EU expressed concern about the assessment of biased media coverage and the lack of separation between state and party activities, leading to a lack of a level playing field. The SA Council acknowledged the electoral reforms that have taken place in consensus with the opposition, in line with ODIHR recommendations, but

reminded that similar concerns were raised in 2011 and 2013. The EU called on the national authorities to address ODIHR concerns in order to improve the electoral process. Concerning the political criteria the SA Council stressed the importance of constructive dialogue across the political spectrum. As regards freedom of expression and the media, the EU noted the new media laws and expressed concern about the overall climate and media culture, and encouraged work towards a more positive atmosphere. As regards rule of law, the SA Council recalled the high level of alignment, including improved efficiency of the courts, but stressed that greater emphasis is needed on the independence and quality of justice. It welcomed the progress made in compiling track records on corruption and organised crime, but underlined the need for policy improvements and more effective enforcement in order to obtain concrete results. The SA Council stressed the need to complete the review of the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement as soon as possible, so that this process can culminate in policy recommendations. Regarding relations between the communities, the EU expressed concern about inter-community relations, and called for more proactive long-term confidence-building measures. On public administration reform, the SA Council noted the adoption, in January 2014, of the new legal framework for civil servants, as well as continuing work on setting up a new framework for general administrative procedures. The SA Council encouraged work on the independence of public administration and respect for the principles of transparency, merit and equitable representation. As regards the protection of human rights, the EU continued to stress the need for a more proactive approach by the authorities to the promotion and protection of fundamental human rights, in line with European standards. The SA Council recalled that regional co-operation and good neighbourly relations form an essential part of the process of accession to the EU. The SA Council welcomed the continued active participation and the constructive approach of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in regional cooperation including in initiatives in South Eastern Europe, such as the Regional Cooperation Council, the South East European Cooperation Process, as well as the country's current chairmanship of the Central European Free Trade Area (CEFTA). The SA Council welcomed the country's upcoming presidency of the Central European Initiative Presidency.

Regarding economic developments, the SA Council acknowledged that the economy had started to recover last year, that macro-financial stability was maintained, and that the inflation environment stayed benign. It recalled the targeted policy guidance agreed in May 2014 between the EU and the candidate countries and encouraged the government to focus on their implementation. The SA Council welcomed the agreement reached with the government on the priorities for the future (Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance) IPA Country Strategy Paper (CSP) 2014-2020. The SA Council welcomed the commitment of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to invest greater efforts into increasing considerably the absorption of EU funds, and improving the capacity of institutions involved in their implementation. The SA Council also noted the importance of sound public financial management and the need for a clear link between EU assistance and national reform strategies, moving to a sector-based approach, preferably in the framework of an overarching national development strategy. The SA Council also noted the good progress achieved in various areas covered by the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. It welcomed the high level of trade integration and the signature of the protocol to the SAA to accommodate the accession of Croatia to the EU. The SA Council recalled the Commission's proposal of October 2009 on the transition to the second stage of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. It confirmed that the decision on the recommendation remains with the Council.

Text 9

Council conclusions on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, June, 2015

1. Reaffirming its conclusions regarding the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia adopted in December 2014 and in April 2015, the EU commitment under the Thessaloniki agenda and the candidate status of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Council reiterates its grave concern at the situation in the country, in particular the ongoing political crisis.
2. The Council notes positively the efforts by local party leaders in recent meetings to seek and reach solutions and in this context welcomes the facilitation by Commissioner Hahn as well as by Members of the European Parliament.
3. The Council notes, as a significant first step in addressing the political crisis, the agreement facilitated in Skopje on 2 June 2015. This agreement sets out commitments by the leaders of the main political parties to address serious rule of law concerns and to remain committed to the country's EU accession process and democratic principles, including by maintaining good inter-ethnic relations through the full implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement and by strengthening good neighbourly relations. The Council considers the 2 June agreement the basis for future discussions. The Council urges the political parties - in the interest of the citizens and the country - to assume their respective responsibilities and take immediate measures towards a sustainable solution, constructively engage in political dialogue and continue efforts to restore trust in the institutions.
4. The Council calls upon all parties to honour their 2 June agreement and implement all recommendations of the Commission, starting with the urgent reform priorities, in relation to systemic rule of law issues confirmed by or arising out of the current crisis, including in relation to breaches of fundamental rights, judicial freedom, media freedom, elections, corruption, politicisation of state institutions and state/party blurring and failures of oversight. The implementation of these recommendations will be closely monitored by the Commission. Electoral reform in line with recommendations by OSCE/ODIHR is urgently required and will, in conjunction with initial systemic reforms, contribute to ensuring a level playing field ahead of future elections, the free and fair conduct of which will be an important indicator of reforms in this regard. It is, moreover, necessary to ensure as soon as possible a thorough and independent investigation of the material revealed and any criminal wrongdoing, with full regard for due process, the principle of the independence of the judiciary and the presumption of innocence.

Summary of the report

Concerning the political criteria, serious challenges reported in previous years have been underscored by the country's most severe political crisis since 2001 with intercepted communications, apparently involving senior government officials, suggesting breaches of fundamental rights, interference with judicial independence, media freedom and elections, as well as politicisation and corruption. Concerns about all of these issues had been signalled in previous Progress Reports. The breakdown of political dialogue and difficulties in arriving at consensus on issues highlighted once again the divisive political culture in the country. Based on an agreement facilitated by the Commissioner, with the help of three members of the European Parliament, in June/ July, Members of Parliament of the main opposition party returned to parliament on 1 September after having boycotted it for more than a year. The boycott seriously affected the oversight function of the institution over the executive branch. Other key bodies failed to exercise effective oversight. Work has begun on the implementation of the political agreement. Implementation needs to continue and much more needs to be done on the "Urgent Reform Priorities" to deliver results on these and other preexisting agreed reform targets. The inter-ethnic situation remains fragile. The review of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, which ended the 2001 conflict and provides the framework for the inter-ethnic relations, needs to be completed. Following a major police operation in an ethnic Albanian neighbourhood of Kumanovo that claimed 18 lives, all political leaders in the country called for restoration of calm and underlined that this incident should not be seen as inter-ethnic. Events at Kumanovo still need to be fully investigated.

Civil society organisations have played a constructive role in the context of the crisis through demanding accountability from the political actors across ethnic lines. At the same time organisations continue to express their concerns about the difficult climate in which they operate and the limited government commitment to dialogue, as well as about public attacks by politicians and pro-government media.

The country is moderately prepared in the area of public administration reform. There has been progress on some issues. However, concerns about politicisation have been reinforced by the content of the wiretaps, and merit based recruitment continues to be undermined. Public trust in the functioning of the institutions has further eroded. Some steps have been taken to reform public financial management, but a medium-term budgetary framework and fiscal transparency still needs to be put in place and improved.

The country's judicial system has some level of preparation. The situation has been backsliding since 2014 because the achievements of the last decade's reform process have been seriously undermined by actual and potential political interference in the work of the judiciary. Indications of wrongdoings and offences arising from the intercepted communications still need to be fully investigated. The authorities now need to demonstrate real political will to ensure the full independence of the judicial system, including allowing the newly-appointed Special Prosecutor to work unhindered in investigating the wiretaps and their content.

Concerning the fight against corruption, some level of preparation has been achieved. Legislative and institutional achievements were, however, overshadowed by a lack of political will and political interference in the work of the relevant bodies, especially in high-level cases. A track record of effective prosecution, especially on high level corruption, still needs to be established.

In the fight against organised crime, the country has reached some level of preparation. Sufficient capacity and expertise to carry out financial investigations and asset confiscations in a systematic manner still needs to be established.

The legal framework for the protection of human rights is broadly in line with European standards. However, implementation is lacking, in particular in the areas of prison reform, Roma integration, rights of the child and persons with disabilities. The lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community continues to suffer from discrimination and homophobic media content. The country shows some level of preparation regarding freedom of expression. Exercising this freedom, however, is a serious problem in the current media culture and political climate, and the country continued to backslide in this area. Attempts to limit media reporting on matters of public interest are worrying.

The country generally maintains good relations with other enlargement countries and plays an active role in regional cooperation. Steps have been taken to improve good neighbourly relations. The 'name issue' with Greece needs to be resolved as a matter of urgency.

As regards the economic criteria, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is at a good level of preparation in developing a functioning market economy. The country benefits from a stable macroeconomic environment, supported by sound monetary policy, favourable conditions for market entry, and a sound legal system. There was some backsliding in public finance management. Medium-term fiscal targets were relaxed, the composition of public spending remains tilted towards transfers and subsidies and the development of overall public debt, as well as its transparency, remain a concern. The budget should be more geared towards growth and employment, while its overall design, transparency and implementation should be improved. A high level of non-performing loans has constrained credit supply and needs to be addressed by further policy action. Unemployment remains high at 28%.

The economy is moderately prepared to cope with competitive pressures and market forces within the Union. There was some progress in diversifying the export structure as a result of direct investment; trade and investment links with the EU strengthened further. However, the country needs to improve the employability of people, in particular the youth, by better aligning education with labour market needs, upgrade linkages between foreign direct investors and the domestic economy, and better prioritise investment.

As regards its ability to take on the obligations of membership, the country has a relatively good level of alignment with the *acquis*. More focus is needed on administrative capacity and effective implementation. In most areas, the country is moderately prepared, including in the areas of public procurement, statistics and, financial control. Further efforts are needed across the board, in particular in those few areas where the country is at an early stage of preparation.

Mixed-migration flows increased dramatically, creating a substantial burden on the country's asylum and migration framework. The authorities have taken measures to provide for safer passage of third

country nationals over its territory and provided shelter and humanitarian supplies, with EU support as well as the support of others.

ABBREVIATIONS

- AAM- Association of Architects of Macedonia
- AR- Accountability Report
- BIRN- Balkan Investigative Reporting Network
- CDA- Critical Discourse Analysis
- CTC- City Trade Centre (of Skopje)
- DA- Discourse Analysis
- DUI- Democratic Union of Integration
- DUP- Detailed Urban Plan
- EU- European Union
- FPÖ- Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (Freedom Party of Austria)
- IMRO- Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (19th century)
- ICJ- International Court of Justice
- NATO- North-Atlantic Treaty Organisation
- NGO- Non-government organisation
- ODIHR- OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
- PCIR- Parliament Committee on Interethnic Relations
- PM- Prime Minister
- SDSM- Social Democratic Union of Macedonia
- VMRO-DPMNE- Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (party in modern Macedonia)

PICTURES DIRECTORY



Picture 1 (The statue of Alexander the Great is higher than the buildings surrounding it. The newly-built larger facility on the right-hand side of the picture has balanced this disproportion. The statues of VMRO revolutionaries on each side of the “Stone Bridge” are facing the monument of the re-invented “Father of the Nation”.)



Picture 2 (Statue of Philip II of Macedon “communicating” with his raised hand with his the statue of Alexander the Great placed on the main “Macedonia Square” on the other side of the river Vardar. Statues of medieval saints and grammarians are facing Phillip II. It was also criticised for not fitting the surrounding: behind the “ancient Philip” are the former Turkish Baths, on the left-hand side of the picture is the 19th century church of Saint Demetrius and on the right-hand side modernist building of 1960s.)



Picture 3 (Justinian I, the Byzantine Emperor who sought to revive the Empire's greatness and re-conquer the lost western half of the classical Roman Empire facing Alexander the Great. Behind the statue on the other side of the river Vardar, the Museum of VMRO and the new Old Theatre of Skopje.)



Picture 4 (“Arch Macedonia” formerly surrounded with socialist buildings now “redressed” in Baroque facades.)



Picture 5 (Tsar Samuil, the first and greatest medieval Slavic King, claimed as national hero by both Bulgaria and Macedonia, faces Alexander the Great.)



Picture 6 (The building simultaneously housing the Archaeological Museum, the Archive of Macedonia and the Constitutional Court of Macedonia. According to critics it served to cover the block of culture related buildings from the socialist period - the facility is very thin but also very wide and tall, capable to cover many buildings behind it.)



Picture 7 (The modernist building of Macedonian Telecommunications, symbolically representing the 'shameful past' is "redressed" in Classical facade. On the right-hand side one can notice one of the few "Pirate Ships".)