

Summary

The National Identity of the Macedonians in the Process of European Integration

The issue of Macedonian national identity and the situation of the Macedonians have received little attention in political science studies. However, the problem of the European Union enlargement process in the Balkan region remains very topical. It is an open question if, when, and on what conditions the EU integration process will continue. This is crucial not only for candidate states, but also for the European Community members. The issue, though important, has not been examined properly, especially in the case of Macedonia. Macedonia has been an official candidate to the European Union since 2005. There are very few publications on this topic in Polish source literature, and Macedonian literature has been practically neglected.

The issue of the Macedonian national identity in the context of the enlargement of the European Union, as well as Macedonian national identity in the 21st century, have not been studied in Polish political science.

Scientific and research experience of the author

The publication is based on the long scientific and research experience of the author in Macedonia and the Balkan region. The author visited Macedonia for the first time during the presidential election of 1999. His next visits, in 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2006, were private trips later devoted to research. First research trips took place in 2007 and 2008, when the author participated in a project focused on the political participation of ethnic minorities in Macedonia and election campaigns as related to interethnic relations in Macedonia. In 2009 the author coordinated a project of the Polish Aid programme by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning the problem

of family voting and proxy voting in Macedonian elections. His long experience in the Balkans allowed the author to realize the importance of the Macedonian national identity, which has been questioned by the neighbouring countries since 1991. This prompted him to start research on the issue of Macedonian national identity and the fact that neighbouring countries are member states of the European Union. During his visits to Macedonia in 2010, 2011, 2014, and 2015 the author came to the conclusion that analysing the impact of the accession process to the European Union on the national identity of the Macedonians will make a significant contribution to the Polish social and political science. During his PHD studies the author carried out research in Macedonia in 2016, 2017, and 2018, focusing on the Macedonian national identity in the context of the EU enlargement process as a coordinator of the Faculty of the Political Science and International Relations University of Warsaw projects and as a participant in the Horizon 2020 Research Innovation Staff Exchange Program in Skopje.

Research question

Macedonia, as the only candidate country to the European Union, had to face the dilemma of changing or not changing its constitutional name. The fact that a neighbouring EU country, Greece, expected Macedonia to change its constitutional name could influence the identity of the Macedonian people. The author tries to answer the following questions: What are the determinants of the national identity of the Macedonians? How does the accession process to the European Union influence the Macedonian national identity? Does the process of the European Union integration strengthen the Macedonian national identity? How does the EU enlargement process influence the Macedonian national identity and the country's relations with its neighbours and the dispute over the existence of the Macedonian nation and Macedonian national identity? And the main question: How does the accession process to the EU influence the Macedonian national identity in Macedonia as a candidate country to the EU?

One of the fundamental research questions is the dispute with the neighbouring countries over the national identity of the Macedonians. This conflict is related to several issues which include:

- Dispute between the Macedonians, Greeks, and Bulgarians over the history of Macedonia and Macedonian national identity. Macedonians' right to have their own separate history and national identity is being questioned.
- Dispute between Macedonia and Bulgaria over the Macedonian language and if the name of the language has direct impact on national identity of the Macedonians. Bulgarian authorities do not recognize Macedonian as a separate language and consider it to be a Bulgarian dialect.

- The right to use the word “Macedonian” in the official names of state institutions is questioned by the Greeks.
- The right to use terms such as “Macedonian culture” and “Macedonian art” is being questioned.
- It is reasonable to ask whether future concessions may not bring about a flood of concessions, leading to renaming all state institutions, which will have an influence on the Macedonian national identity.
- Is the change of the constitutional name of the state only a prelude to further changes that will lead to concessions in many areas: political, economic and cultural?
- The issue of Macedonian national identity in the context of the country’s access to the European Union also includes the dispute over Macedonian national minority in Greece and national minorities in Macedonia. While Macedonia recognises national minorities that are represented in the parliament (for ex. the Bosniaks, constituting appr. 0,5% of the citizens, have their representatives in the parliament), in Greece, the Macedonians are not recognised as a national minority.

One should take into account the difficulties that arise in formulating a hypothesis and conducting research in this field for the first time. Despite this fact, the author has decided to make a following hypothesis:

Hypothesis

The requirement to change the constitutional name of the country increases the fears for saving common national identity of the Macedonians, as foreign standpoint influences the level of the support for the EU integration due to expectations concerning political issues involved in changing the names of the state’s institutions, economic issues associated with the trademark of the state, and socio-cultural issues related to the name of the language, imposed by the neighbouring countries, causing resistance of the Macedonians and influencing the accession process.

Methodological characteristics of the work

The methods used by the author to collect data include the following: case study, behavioural method (technique: interviews, surveys), empirical method (technique: observation, participant observation, non-participant observation), content analysis,

literature analysis (state of research in certain field), institutional and legal analysis (normative acts, EU regulations), comparative method, scenario method.

The exploratory character of the book should be stressed. The work is based largely on empirical research conducted in Macedonia. Its aim is to enrich knowledge by posing hypotheses.

Theoretical perspective – constructivism

Research workshop:

1. Interviews and surveys with leaders (Macedonians), representatives of the political parties, scientists, NGOs and students of Macedonian origin. National identity of the national minorities was beyond the scope of this research.
2. Analysis of Macedonian literature and press articles regarding Macedonian national identity and election campaigns.
3. Analysis of the international agreements between Macedonia and Bulgaria and Macedonia and Greece.

Research methodology

This book is based on qualitative data analysis. The research used open-ended and closed questions (coding instruction for open-ended and closed questions, encoding open-ended questions – analysing the answers of the respondents and assigning codes to most common answers, treating other answers as “other”).

Research techniques

The techniques used in this work were as follows: questionnaire interview, free interview, survey, participant observation and non-participant observation, analysis of the press, analysis of the international agreements. Interviews and surveys conducted with the leaders of the major political parties, scientists of the Universities in Skopje and Bitola, representatives of the National Institute of History, National Institute of the Macedonian Language, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, surveys among politicians, representatives of cultural institutions, NGOs, students. Analysis of literature written in Polish and Macedonian regarding Macedonian national identity, analysis of the literature concerning the EU enlargement process as related to the Republic of Macedonia, analysis of the press, analysis of international agreements between Macedonia and Greece and Macedonia and Bulgaria.

The process of preparing and conducting research

The author prepared two models of research tools: a questionnaire with descriptive questions and surveys with open-ended and closed questions. Before preparing the surveys, the author focused on the method known as observation, which allowed him to take a closer look at the phenomena related to the problem of the national

identity in the Balkan region and the national identity of the Macedonians. This method enabled the author to properly prepare the questionnaire and surveys. Apart from the questionnaire and surveys, the author conducted nondirective interviews. The questionnaire consisted of twelve questions concerning Macedonian national identity: what shapes the identity, what influences it, what creates it, what historical events, which of the national heroes, customs, holidays, important events that are crucial for respondents. The questionnaire, translated into Polish, is included in an appendix.

Sample selection

The sample was selected on purpose. The author decided that selected respondents, representing the state elite, having a high national awareness, could be the appropriate source of knowledge on Macedonian national identity. The author also decided to use the case study method in the context of Greek-Macedonian relations, Greek expectations and pressure concerning the change of the constitutional name of the Macedonian state, a case unprecedented and incomparable to any other in the world.

Limitations

Limitations of the publication include workshop limitations related to the conducted research: observation, interviews and surveys. In 2015–2018, when the author was preparing and conducting research, election campaigns, early parliamentary elections, social protests and riots in the parliament took place. Some of the politicians refused to fill in the questionnaire after the stormy events in parliament in April 2017, some of them did not show any willingness to even anonymously comment on this issue.

Apart from the workshop limitations, material limitations should be indicated. The work concerns Macedonian national identity and the research was conducted only on the Macedonians, other ethnic groups living in Macedonia were not studied. Only the situation of the Macedonians was examined in the context of the expectations and demands of the neighbouring countries regarding the change of the country constitutional name or changes in the educational system. Only relations with the European Union member states were examined in the context of Macedonian identity and integration of the Republic of Macedonia with the EU. The book uses the constitutional name of the country – the Republic of Macedonia, name recognised by the Republic of Poland in bilateral relations until February 2019.

As to time limitations, they result from concentrating the research on the contemporary national identity of the Macedonians, hence the following time frame was adopted: from the independence referendum, which took place on September 8, 1991, concerning the creation of the independent Republic of Macedonia, to the

referendum on changing the country constitutional name that took place on September 30, 2018.

Sources

The sources used in this writing include many materials and documents, source literature– non-serial publications, as well as scientific and journalistic articles. Foreign literature, numerous books in Macedonian and in English, was also used.

One of the sources was the author's own research on contemporary Macedonian identity conducted in Macedonia (questionnaire interviews, free-form interviews, expert interviews, observation, surveys).

The content

The book consists of six chapters. The first chapter discusses theoretical issues – conceptualization of the definition of national identity and the concept of the European integration.

The second chapter presents the theoretical approach to the method used in social research, with particular emphasis on the qualitative methods used in research.

The third chapter presents an in-depth study of existing research on national identity of the Macedonians, primarily taking into account the literature on the subject published in Macedonian in Macedonia from the declaration of independence in 1991 until 2018. The chapter presents the attitude of Macedonian scholars to the expectations of neighbouring countries regarding the country constitutional name and Macedonian identity and the impact of these expectations on the national identity of the Macedonians. The chapter also uses the local research on Macedonian identity at the beginning of the 21st century. That chapter also describes the existing research in Polish and English.

Chapter four presents the results of the empirical research regarding the national identity of the Macedonians conducted by the author in Macedonia in 2016-2018, qualitative research, expert questionnaire interviews, nondirective interviews, surveys, as well as participant and non-participant observation regarding the impact of the expectations of the neighbouring countries belonging to the European Union on the shape of the Macedonian national identity.

The fifth chapter develops the theoretical and empirical approach, relating to the problem of Macedonia's relations with Greece, a country belonging to the European Union. Greek-Macedonian relations are extremely important for the Macedonian national identity. The chapter describes the impact of these relations and the

expectations of the neighbouring country on the national identity of the Macedonians. The chapter additionally discusses Greek state documents relating to the issue of independence of Macedonia and the Macedonian-Greek Agreement of 2018.

The sixth chapter describes the relations between Macedonia and Bulgaria, another member of the European Union. Bulgarian-Macedonian relations are also essential for the Macedonian national identity. The topic, as in chapter five, is the impact of these relations and the expectations of the neighbouring country on the national identity of the Macedonians. Additionally, the chapter discusses Bulgarian state documents relating to the issues of independence and history of Macedonia and the Macedonian language. The chapter also presents an analysis of the Macedonian-Bulgarian Agreement of 2017.

The conclusion analyses the issue of Macedonian identity from the perspective of the country's future membership in the European Union and identifies the opportunities and threats related to the integration process and the impact of the internal and external situation on the aforementioned process in the context of national identity. It describes the attitude of the European Union Member States to the issue of future accession of the Macedonian state.

Summary

The research on the national identity of the Macedonians in the context of European integration and disputes with neighbours over Macedonian national identity conducted between 2016-2018 in Macedonia allowed the author to find an answer to the research questions posed at the beginning of the work. Macedonia is the only EU candidate country faced with the dilemma whether to change the country's constitutional name. The expectations of one of the EU member states, Greece, regarding the renaming of the country have influenced and may in the future affect the national identity of the majority of the citizens of Macedonia.

In this work, the author tried to answer the following questions: What are the determinants of the Macedonian national identity? Does the process of European integration strengthen Macedonian identity? How is Macedonian identity affected by the European integration process related to the dispute with neighbouring countries over the existence and identity of the Macedonian nation? The main research question is: How does the accession process to the European Union affect the identity of the Macedonian nation in the EU candidate country?

In order to answer the research questions posed above, the author conducted interviews and questionnaires with leaders. The applied research techniques turned out to be definitely useful and showed that the Macedonians have their own national identity, the essential elements of which are a separate language, religion, history,

national heroes, state and church holidays. The Macedonians do not want to give up essential elements of their national identity, but are also aware of the need to integrate with the EU structure. The process of European integration affects their national identity causing anxiety and disappointment, while the respondents do not see an alternative to the European integration.

Significant information was provided by the content analysis and the analysis of the literature in terms of the assessment of the existing research on Macedonian identity, especially the literature published in independent Macedonia after 1991 concerning the national identity of the Macedonians. Literature in Macedonian was analysed.

The role of the institutional and legal analysis should also be emphasized, the use of which made it possible to analyse the Agreement between the Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Bulgaria in 2017 and the Agreement between the Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Greece in 2018. In the case of these agreements, a comparative method was also used, thanks to which it was possible to compare the concessions made by the Macedonian authorities to Bulgaria and Greece in exchange for unblocking the accession process. The scenario method was chosen to try to indicate the future membership perspective of the Macedonian state.

The analyses show that the Agreement concluded with Bulgaria in 2017 and the Agreement with Greece in 2018 will have very serious consequences for the national identity of the Macedonians. In Agreement with Greece, the Macedonian government agreed to change the constitutional name of the state, which took place in January 2019 (Republic of North Macedonia), as well as to rename more than one hundred and thirty state institutions. In addition, Macedonian authorities agreed to replace documents, such as passports and ID cards, in line with the Agreement concluded in 2018. All these actions were aimed at withdrawing the opposition from Greece, which had been blocking Macedonian's integration with European structures since the establishment of independent Macedonia in 1991.

All the research questions presented above, adopted by the author in 2015, are still valid. The dispute over history, the Greek conditions for changing the name of the state, renaming state institutions, marking monuments located in the territory of the Macedonian state as belonging to the Hellenistic culture, confirm that the Macedonians must give up elements of their own history, which research has shown to be extremely important for their own national identity. The same is true of the dispute over history with Bulgaria. Bulgarian expectations apply not only to distant heroes like Tsar Samuel, but also to heroes of the early 20th century, very important for the Macedonians, such as Goce Delčev. This shows that also in relations with their eastern neighbour, the Macedonians will have to give up those elements of their history and national identity, which, as the author's research has shown, are vital for their identity in the 21st century.

In the case of the relations with Bulgaria, the issue of the Macedonian language is similar. The expectations of the Bulgarian authorities to define Macedonian solely as an official language of the Republic of North Macedonia mean that the term Macedonian may not be used for the language as well. However, the author's research has shown that language, next to religion, is one of the most important attributes of national identity and independence. This is evidenced by the indications of the respondents who emphasize the role of language and mention Saint Cyril and Methodius as some of the most important national heroes. This is especially evident in the indications of young respondents – students.

The issue of the right of the Macedonians to have certain name of state institutions such as: Macedonian Opera and Ballet (Makedonska Opera and Balet) or Macedonian State Railways (Makedonski Zeleznici), which is mentioned in the research questions, has become extremely topical. The Greek authorities forced the Macedonian government to change names of the above-mentioned institutions, from which the word "Macedonian" had to be removed. Moreover, future demands from neighbouring countries belonging to the European Union concern changes in school textbooks, changes in the educational system, the establishment of joint commissions, the marking of monuments, as well as the abandonment of the specific interpretation of the Macedonian history.

This shows that research questions outlined at the beginning of the book are vital and have an impact on the contemporary national identity of the Macedonians and impose further solutions that could take away their essential attributes of national identity of the Macedonians. We see a similar situation in the case of the Macedonian national minority in Greece and Bulgaria, mentioned among other research questions. Both neighbouring EU member states have forced Macedonian authorities to accept to recognise that the people who live in Bulgaria and Greece and claim to be the Macedonians, but not having Macedonian citizenship, cannot be of interest to the Macedonian state and authorities. In practice, this means that the Macedonian authorities, under pressure from their neighbours have given up their right to represent and support the Macedonians living in Bulgaria and Greece. It should be noted that, as the work is of exploratory nature, further empirical research seems necessary.

The research conducted by the author has confirmed the adopted hypothesis. Macedonian authorities were persuaded to change the constitutional name of the state, and the renaming of state institutions mentioned above began. In Agreement with Greece provisions were made for negotiations concerning the marking of goods made by Macedonian producers. In addition, the Bulgarian authorities insist that the term Macedonian language should be avoided. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that the referendum on the renaming of the country on September 30, 2018, was boycotted by a large proportion of the Macedonians. Only 36% of those eligible

to vote went to the pools, including all national minorities living in Macedonia in 2018. At this point it is worth recalling that in 2018, the Macedonians constituted only 64% of the population of Macedonia. At the same time, the research conducted by the author has shown that the support for the membership in the European Union was high, especially among the surveyed students. It should be noted, however, that most of the respondents were against changing the constitutional name of the state at the cost of the speeding up the negotiations or even membership in the European Union. The issue of the country's constitutional name was more important, as demonstrated by the boycott of the referendum. Taking into account further expectations and demands of neighbouring countries belonging to the European Union, it should be assumed that some disappointment with European Union will increase.

It should also be noted here that despite the change of the constitutional name of the state carried out by the authorities against the citizens, the accession negotiations have not been accelerated.