



INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
AND HUMANITIES
SKOPJE



ETHNOGRAPHIC REPORT:

Your personal experiences, sense of identity and
reactions to the veto:

Views of the Macedonian and Bulgarian minorities in the neighboring
countries, Bulgaria, Albania and Greece

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Thanks to the reaching out of numerous followers of this platform or the project activities dedicated to cultural reconciliation – over 150 directly to the platform/project leaders and hundreds more to the members of the BG-MK friendship club – we decided to visit the border areas of the neighboring countries and carry out ethnographic observation and anonymous non-structured s interviews in order to examine what we identified as fluidity of the ethnic and national identity.¹ We can conclude that in these areas many who identify “either-or” (Macedonians or Bulgarians, or in the area of Florina and Lerin, in combination with also Greek) are critical of the dispute, of the Bulgarian veto and of the hostility between the two countries and the two nations. The critical views did not depend on the ethnic identification:

- many of the members of one of the oldest NGO’s representing the cultural interests of the “Macedonian Bulgarians” have been fiercely critical of the Bulgarian veto, and have remained so even now that the veto was lifted; most of the interlocutors of this group are not in favor of the Bulgarian and EU’s request that N. Macedonia recognized the Bulgarian minority by introducing it into the Constitution, and the reasons vary – we must say, that we revisited some of these conversations after the “French proposal” and N. Macedonia’s opening of the negotiations with the EU, and unlike the nationalist protests in the country, these people remain committed to reconciliation

¹ In line with the ethic principles of ethnographic observation research every narrative is anonymized, and this was stated clearly to each interlocutor, whether on-site or online.

and even though critical they sustain that said recognition must take place, in the name of EU accession and in the name of reconciliation; let us note, some of the members live in N. Macedonia whereas others in Bulgaria, esp. the leading figures.

- In the Slavophone areas of Albania, Pogradec and Mala Prespa, many of the citizens can speak a Macedonian dialect that they do identify as Macedonian; we met some local who speak of other Macedonians identifying as Bulgarian, but we managed to have a talk with only one person that identified as Bulgarian (his Slavic mix of Bulgarian and Macedonian) was poor, so the conversation took place in English. The reasons could not be explained, it seemed to be an excepted fact whose possibly paradoxical nature they did not question. Thus, fluidity of ethnic or national identity seemed to be an accepted reality. This reality seems to defy the conservatives' views of the binational historical Commission who call this premise "postmodern," or complex intellectualism which is in contradiction to the reality that is always simple.² It seems that said contradiction or multiperspectivity is part of this people's everyday reality.

² Проф. Кирил Топалов за пътя на Македония към Европейския съюз [Prof. Kiril Topalov about the pathways of North Macedonia to the European Union], BTV (June 2021), <https://www.btv.bg/shows/120-minuti/videos/prof-kiril-topalov-za-patja-na-makedonija-kam-evropejskija-sajuz.html>, accessed on 1 September 2022.

- We reached out to those of you on the other side of the Bulgarian (and also Greek border) who had complex family histories and complex identities, relatives on both sides of the border and a continuity between the two identities even though most of the interlocutors chose one of the two possible identities in defining themselves. Again, a sense of continuity or fluidity could be established. We did not speak to any party leaders of minorities, as we sought to convey the ordinary persons' experience, corresponding to the stories already digitally communicated.

In short, fluidity of ethno-national identity could be established in field study ethnographic observation context. Thus, the multiperspective approach in the study of the two national narratives is not a methodological experiment but firmly corresponds with the situation in reality, best confirmed in the border areas between the countries.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITH OTHER BALKAN DISPUTES OVER NATIONAL NARRATIVES: NORTH MACEDONIA AND GREECE

In spite of the controversies among the members of the party of the Macedonian ethnic minority in Greece, Viozito, Prespa agreement has been received by the party leadership as a positive outcome (notwithstanding some criticism that the party posed). See: Воскопулос: Преспанскиот договор не го оспорува македонскиот национален идентитет [Voskopulos: Prespa Agreement Does not Deny the Macedonian National Identity], Voice of America News (20 May 2019), available at <https://mk.voanews.com/a/greece-macedonia-eu-elections-/4924491.html> Still, a position of a party on a matter of a legal nature and the experience of an ethnic identity on an individual level are two different things. That is why we engaged in field testing the response of the regular citizens, through ethnographic observation means, if identity is nonetheless fluid, complex and mythos transcends historiography itself. Our conclusion from the field research is that the initial postulates of our study hold as the Agreement seems to have brought an outcome that can be likened to conflict resolution and has led to cultural reconciliation. The above reported research ties with the initial postulates of our project and research.

Prior to the present cul-de-sac in the implementation of the *Treaty on Friendship, Good Neighbourliness and Cooperation* (abbreviated as "the Treaty") between Bulgaria

and what is now North Macedonia,³ signed in 2017, there was a calm period of its rather slow implementation in all areas except for the multidisciplinary commissions on the so-called shared or common history.⁴ In spite of the claim of the Bulgarian authorities, and of virtually the entire political mainstream in particular in Bulgaria, that there has been no progress in the work of the so-called “Historical commission,” we cannot but argue the opposite – the dispute around history and the efforts to identify commonalities is the only area the Treaty is concerned with in which some progress has been noted. Indeed, hardly any final agreement has been reached on any of the historical periods discussed, but progress in the work of the Commission has been noted on several occasions.⁵ Conversely, as far as economy and infrastruc-

³ At the time of its signing: “Republic of Macedonia,” as its then constitutional name.

⁴ The English translation of the (Macedonian term) “споделена,” which has come into use in the past two years, as a synonym to “заедничка” (the term used in the Macedonian version of the Treaty), is disputed by mainly the Bulgarian public, as if whether shared means certain overlaps instead of (as if organic) commonality. The Bulgarian term for it is „општа,” as the Preamble of the Treaty reads. According to the Macedonian side in the negotiations, both among policy makers as well as the academics in the multidisciplinary commission, parts of history are shared, the two nations and their nation building narratives both draw on those parts of history, whereas for the Bulgarian side – the claim is that it is a common history, which, it seems, needs to be interpreted as in fact one and the same history from which the Macedonian nation building bifurcates as a separate one. Whether shared or common, in other words whether “споделена” or “заедничка” – in Macedonian – should be a question of substance instead of linguistic nitpicking.

⁵ “Постигнат напредок во разговорите за македонско-бугарската експертска комисија”. *А1ОН*. 11.04.2019, available

ture are concerned, there is hardly any progress whatsoever: energy, the “Coridor 8” (a highway that would better connect Bulgaria, North Macedonia and Albania), if we exclude the modest infrastructural undertaking of a new border-crossing (“Klepaló”) where the Macedonian side has completed its part of the obligations and a significant delay is to be detected on the Bulgarian side.⁶ On the other hand, the Bulgarian side has complained that the door of its investment in the Macedonian economy is closed in the form of contradictory and endless

at: <https://a10n.mk/macedonia/postignat-napredok-vo-razgovorite-na-makedonsko-bugarskata-ekspertska-komisija/>; “Мал напредок во делот на средовековната историја, Делчев останува нерешено прашање за мешовитата македонско-бугарска комисија”. *А10Н*. 16.10.2019, available at: <https://a10n.mk/macedonia/mal-napredok-vo-delot-na-srednovekovnata-istorija-delchev-ostanuva-neresheno-prashanje-za-meshovitata-makedonsko-bugarska-komisija/>; “Среща на български и македонски историци, какво си казаха”. *Vesti.bg*. 16.10.2019, available at: <https://www.vesti.bg/sviat/sreshta-na-bylgarski-i-makedonski-istorici-kakvo-si-kazaha-6100926>; Kostadin Atanasov, “Professor Ilchev: Sofia and Skopje need to communicate better”. *BNR*. 09.07.2019, available at: <https://bnr.bg/en/post/101142161/professor-ilchev-sofia-and-skopje-need-to-communicate-better>; “Българо-македонската комисија постигна напредък по 24 май”. *News.bg*. 16.10.2020, available at: <https://news.bg/world/balgaro-makedonskata-komisiya-postigna-napredak-po-24-may.html>; “Постигнат напредок на средбата на македонско-бугарската Комисија за историски прашања”, *Телма*. 22.01.2021, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/a74vn46z>

⁶ Government of North Macedonia. 27.12.2018. *Премиерот Заев во вториот дел на седницата за пратенички прашања: Верувам дека до крајот на 2019 година ќе го пуштиме премиерот Клепало, праведното оданочување ги носи парите во социјалата*. [Press release], available at: <https://vlada.mk/node/16274?ln=en-gb>, accessed on 26 November 2021.

administrative procedures, keeping the investors in a sort of a Kafkaesque maze that makes it impossible to complete any undertaking in this respect.⁷ To conclude this opening paragraph, the other areas of cooperation have been marginalized by both parties, and there has been a shared fixation on history (and the related issue of language). That is why we ought to identify the core of the dispute as a matter of cultural conflict and related identity issues, such as ethnicity and national identity, in order to be able to extrapolate it and thus furnish a foundation for a political solution to the present state of affairs between the two states. Thus, the analysis will have to operate with the two distinct yet intersecting levels of discussion, that of a cultural conflict resolution and the level of political analysis. The two will lead to an interdisciplinary approach based policy discussion yielding recommendations addressed to the policy makers in both countries and to the concerned parties, i.e., to the European Commission and the European Council but also to the multidisciplinary commission on the historical dispute (henceforth referred to as the Commission).

An important part of the context is the past dispute with Greece on historical and cultural heritage, which was reflected in the name of the state "Macedonia" as presumed cultural appropriation (by then Republic of Macedonia, according to the state's Constitution), leading to a decades long halt in North Macedonia's accession

⁷ "Захариева го споредува Тито со Хитлер". *DW*. 15.12.2020, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/2sukscfv>, accessed on 29 November 2021 ; "Како Северна Македонија се „најде“ на крилата на некупените Ф-16?". *DW*. 20.08.2021, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/mr3kjvf9>, accessed on 29 November 2021.

to the European Union. It is worthwhile noting that the conflict was resolved as soon as a bilateral agreement, akin to that between Bulgaria and North Macedonia, was signed by the two countries.⁸ The multidisciplinary commission on textbooks and historiography, established to implement parts of the *Prespa Agreement*, has never been put under the pressure of deadlines set by the political elites and state institutions and has been functioning away from the spotlight of public debate in both countries. It seems that the implementation of the *Prespa Agreement*, unlike that between North Macedonia and Bulgaria, is presumed to take as much time as needed as it has been the case with other commissions of a similar kind, like the one between Poland and Germany.⁹ Another important aspect of the context is that the Agreement with Greece was signed in 2018, a year after the signing of the agreement between Republic of Bulgaria and then Republic of Macedonia in August 2017.¹⁰ An issue, emerging from the *Prespa Agreement*,

⁸ Final Agreement for the Settlement of the Differences as Described in the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 817 (1993) and 845 (1993), the Termination of the Interim Accord of 1995, and the Establishment of a Strategic Partnership Between the Parties. June 17, 2018, available at: <https://www.un.org/pga/73/wp-content/uploads/sites/53/2019/02/14-February-Letter-dated-14-February-2019.pdf>, accessed on 26.11.2021

⁹ Katerina Kolozova, "On the Macedonian-Bulgarian dispute and historical revisionism". *Al Jazeera*. 07.12.2020, available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2020/12/7/on-the-macedonian-bulgarian-issue>, accessed on 29 November 2021.

¹⁰ *Treaty of Friendship, Good-Neighbourliness and Cooperation Between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia*. Skopje, 1 August 2017, available at: <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/No%20Volume/55013/Part/I-55013-0800002804f5d3c>.

that may have retroactively affected the implementation of the bilateral Agreement from 2017 is that of the language – the Greek side, in this *erga omnes* agreement, acknowledges the existence of a Macedonian language as part of the group of South-Slavic languages. Presently, at the center of the Macedonian-Bulgarian dispute is the naming of the Macedonian language as well as its linguistic character. The latter refers to the raised issue by the Bulgarian academic and political elites as to whether the Macedonian language could be treated as a separate and essentially different language from the Bulgarian, understood beyond its standard form (spanning through dialects and usage in history).¹¹ Considering the *Prespa Agreement* has the status of an *erga omnes* legal act, rendered such through the authority of the United Nations, it is only implied that the stipulation about the language contained in the *Prespa Agreement* is universally valid as is that about the name of the state. Thus Bulgaria should not be an exception in this sense, or it is in breach of said *erga omnes* agreement, as it would be too if it were not to refer to the country as North Macedonia (the short version of Republic of North Macedonia, in line with the Agreement).

pdf , accessed on 29 November 2021.

¹¹ Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. “*On the Official Language of the Republic of North Macedonia*”, Prof. Marin Drinov Publishing House of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Sofia, 2020, available at: <https://www.bas.bg/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Za-oficialnia-ezik-na-RSM-EN-Online-Version.pdf>, accessed on 26 November 2021; Декларация на Четиридесет и четвъртото Народно събрание на Република България във връзка с разширяването на ЕС и Процеса на стабилизиране и асоцииране на Република Северна Македония и Република Албания, *Official Gazette* 81/2019. Sofia, 10.10.2019, available at: <https://parliament.bg/bg/declaration/ID/157188>, accessed on 26 November 2021.

CULTURAL CONFLICTS AND LESSONS FROM THE MINORITIES IN BORDER AREAS

The qualitative field research, mainly consisting in ethnographic observations, have proven the viability of the initial premises of the studies conducted as part of this project: border areas of primarily Macedonian minorities display complex, more often than not dual identities, whereas the delineation between history proper and national myth is hard to distinguish. Identities, as in other areas of cultural studies, could be defined as fluid. Therefore, what needs to be done in order to solve the dispute between North Macedonia and Bulgaria is to delineate between official historiography and cultural (ethnic identities), whereby reconciliation on the latter front ought to be pursued whereas the official historiography and standardized languages should be treated as academic and political categories respectively. Proper categorization of the issue on these three registers we just laid out could lead to proper methodology and complex methodology leading to what is essentially cultural conflict resolution. The remainder of the issues part of the dispute should be phrased as matters of political nature to be resolved through means of international politics and methodology of international relations.

If we accept the premise that nation is a purely political category, any dispute about the historical narrative embedded in the nation building would be a dispute over "ownership" of a culture, i.e., a matter of "cultural appropriation," as these narratives are laden with ethnography, cultural and civilizational values and historical

moments that tie the narrative with a thread of a temporality and a certain continuum behind it. Even if history proper, or rather the contemporary historical science, acknowledges the fact that there are ruptures in ethnicity formation and nation building processes, and that nation itself is a modern invention, it lends a hand in the nation building narrative by providing verified data and reliable interpretation to the state institutions.¹² Thus, a selection of events, a particular wording around the chosen events and similar acts of “weaving the story of a nation,” is always already expected from the historians. Both political elites and historians – in any nation state – are aware that a “historical narrative” of a nation is more than history proper, and that it is rather a culture premised on a certain memory of the nation, backed by a presumably reliable historical science.¹³ Or at least, it is expected for this awareness to be present in any contemporary nation-state. It is certainly expected from the multi-disciplinary commission of academics to be capable of distinguishing the one from the other. Our focus groups with members of the so-called “historical commission” from the both sides of the border, conducted this fall, by both Bulgarian and Macedonian ISSHS faculty (the Bulgarian scholars being ISSHS visiting faculty), show that the

¹² Smith, Anthony D. *Nationalism and modernism: a critical survey of recent theories of nations and nationalism*. London: Routledge, 1998.

¹³ Stefan Berger. “History and national identity: why they should remain divorced”. *History & Policy*. Institute of Historical Research, Senate House, University of London, 01.12.2007, available at: <https://www.historyandpolicy.org/policy-papers/papers/history-and-national-identity-why-they-should-remain-divorced>, accessed on 26 November 2021.

commission is equipped with scholars capable of making the distinction at stake. However, it seems that there are also historians, also in both “national teams,” who believe that the national narrative upon which the sense of identity belonging is built, can be reduced to the historical science or a purely historiographical narrative. Here we note a serious impediment in a competent, reliable and up-to-date with contemporary science ability of the Commission to contribute to a resolution of the issue.

One does not need to adhere to multi-perspectivism in historiography in order to be able to acknowledge the distinction between national narrative and history proper and the role of culture at the heart of the matter at hand. As for the issue of multi-perspective study of historiography, it is a matter of educational policy rather than historical science proper but it is grounded into a scientific discipline – that of educational studies.¹⁴ Thus, it should be pointed out to the Commission that history as dry, emotionless, merely factual matter can be the methodological choice of an academic, however, contemporary educational policies, require sensitivity in presentation toward different identity groups, operating with the values of diversity, inclusiveness and decolonialism. Multi-perspectivism, at least in this policy paper, is seen primarily as the unavoidable standard in history textbooks, as well as in everything related to the cultural

¹⁴ Falk Pingel, “UNESCO Guidebook on Textbook Research and Textbook Revision” 2nd Revised and Updated Edition, UNESCO and the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, Paris/Braunschweig, 2010, available at: <https://www.ehu.eu/documents/3120344/3356415/Unesco+guidebook.pdf/6bdf16d1-a184-4a42-a90e-033b77fbd42>.

heritage (literature, arts, ethnography), as aligned with the up-to-date educational studies and their reflection in the UNESCO standards. Multi-perspectivism as a matter of methodological debate in the science of history itself is not the object of the discussion in the analysis at hand.

Similarly to the solution reflected in Article 7 of the *Pre-spa Agreement*, or to the Greek-Macedonian intellectual debate that paved the floor for it, we argue we should extrapolate the key points of cultural and identity related conflict, offer a solution to it in terms of educational policy as well as multi-issue policy analysis adhering to the standards of European international relations.

Based on our desk analysis and field research (focus groups and interviews with policy makers, intellectuals involved in the public debate on the matter, participants in the Commission), we argue there are two cultural and national identity related stakes: 1) the dispute over the Macedonian language, 2) the treatment of the shared or common history by both parties. We are not nitpicking terminological nuances as to what is meant by “shared” vs. “common” history, but looking behind the language itself, namely we examine the referent behind the terminological battles. When it comes to the issue of history, the stakes in question are the following: are we sharing a history reducible to the Bulgarian national history or are we saying that the common history allows for an organic bifurcation into a separate identity? Reducing the shared history to the Bulgarian national historiography, implies an artificiality and falsification in the creation of an identity. Granted that the Yugoslav historiography may have navigated the discourse in a way that would introduce a

clear cut with the Bulgarian culture and history as well as the possible shared sense of identity between the Macedonians and Bulgarians,³⁵ we argue the sense of identity cannot be falsified, fabricated or “wrong.” Even if we embrace the constructivist argument about identity, the fact that it is a “discursive construct” does not make it less real, less true and a fabrication – the “construct” grows into an identity in an organic manner, it is experienced as organic, as quasi-natural.

Therefore, without arguing in favor of or against the claims that the historiography of Yugoslavia thwarted and negated the links of identity nature between the Macedonians and Bulgarians, we claim that the insistence that a certain identity is unmoored from any past, instituted *ex nihilo*, imposed as a lie violates the right to self-identification or the dignity of those embodying the identity, in this case of the present day Macedonians. On the other hand, granting roots and a sense of continuity to the young Macedonian nation, even if those roots are to a considerable degree inextricable from the history of the Bulgarian nation, does not mean that the Macedonian sense of national identity is less real or reduced to the Bulgarian past but rather it ought to invent a way of integrating said past into its present. Furthermore, contemporary national history narratives should not be reduced to the past, to any past, even though the collective memory we take for history is perceived as the cornerstone of identity belonging. As elaborated above, the two are distinct and history proper as well as historiogra-

³⁵ Ulf Brunnbauer, ““Pro-Serbian” vs. “Pro-Bulgarian”: Revisionism in Post-Socialist Macedonian Historiography”, *History Compass* 3 (2005) EU 130, p. 4.

phy are different from any present day sense of identity and the national narrative that assigns meaning to the identity at stake.

All identity narratives have a continuity or at least a sense of continuity, and, consequently, 1944, as the year of the Yugoslav intervention in what used to be a shared/ common sense of identity and national myths as per the Declaration of the Bulgarian Parliament from October 2019, should not be treated as the point of division and falsification but rather as a bridge to be crossed in order to identify commonalities and more shared history rather than less. By doing so, the discourse on the “Bulgarian fascist occupying force” in the Macedonian textbooks should be changed insofar as it nourishes a prejudice preserved to present day, but also include content of building bridges of collaboration and commonality beyond the year at issue, namely 1944: for example, the role of the Bulgarian anti-fascist forces in the liberation of North Macedonia from the German occupation and their collaboration with the Yugoslav communist forces ought to be presented fairly and thoroughly or the poetry of Nikola Vaptsarov must be admitted to be part of Bulgarian literary history, whereas the fact that he participated in groups in Bulgaria identified as “Macedonian” in an identity sense (notwithstanding it may not be a national one) should be noted too – thus both themes become bridges of commonality and shared historical continuity instead of division and separation, without negating the separate right to national self-identification to any of the two parties. The Commission and the policy makers should be aided in revising curricula in the proposed way by UNESCO aligned educational experts.

As far as the language is concerned, the matter has been resolved pre-emptively thanks to the *erga omnes* status of the *Prespa Agreement*. Refusing to name the language by its name is a matter of disrespecting the other party's sense of identity as the standardized language of a nation is its key element. Not treating it purely legalistically, but culturally and politically – we argue that avoiding to name a language by its name is a gesture of hostility. We would advise that the two States recognize this fact – in the Declaration of the Bulgarian Parliament from October 2019 there may not be explicit negation of the standard Macedonian language, but the stance is hostile. Moreover, calling the language simply “the official language,” as the Declaration as well as the position of Bulgaria on the EU negotiation framework suggests,¹⁶ ¹⁷ does not resolve but rather complicates the matter and there is also an implied negation: North Macedonia does not have one official language, but two, Macedonian being one of them and also one of the two languages of the bilateral Agreement. We would advise the Bulgarian Parliament to revise article 1 line 5 of its Declaration from

¹⁶ Council of the European Union: General Secretariat Brussels (25 March 2020) CM 1946/20: *Council conclusions on Enlargement and Stabilisation and Association Process The Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Albania* [annexes included], available at: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/CM-1946-2020-INIT/en/pdf>, accessed on 30 November 2021.

¹⁷ Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria, Рамкова позиция относно разширяване на ЕС и процеса на стабилизиране и асоцииране: Република Северна Македония и Албания (09 October 2019) [Framework Position regarding EU enlargement and the Stabilisation and Association Process of the Republic of North Macedonia and Albania], available at: <https://www.gov.bg/bg/prest-sentar/novini/ramkova-pozitsia>, accessed on 30 November 2021.

October 2019 and adjust it to the reality ensuing from the *Prespa Agreement* signed in 2018, because it seems to imply that Bulgaria does not accept the *erga omnes* legal validity of the *Prespa Agreement* which has been ratified by the UN General Assembly as the document marking the conclusion and closure to the dispute between the two states.¹⁸

On July 29th 2021 the Parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia adopted a Resolution with hardly any political wording, but rather one that is unavoidably perceived, in its entirety, as a pamphlet of romantic nationalism.¹⁹ It speaks of the Macedonian nation as “autochthonous” (article 2 of the Resolution), mentions “universally accepted theories” in the social sciences, humanities and cultural studies which apparently coincide with those of the Macedonian science (article 3 of the Resolution), while a patriotic prose runs throughout the document rendering each article utterly vague – bereft of clear legal and political meaning. Unlike the *Declaration of the Bulgarian Parliament*, the peculiar pseudo-political prose of the Macedonian Resolution evades proper political analysis. All that can be said of it in political and legal terms is that 1) it rebuilds the national narrative and, by doing so, it introduces a notable change – it invokes the “scientific truths of the field of Slavistics” (art. 3) unlike prior to

¹⁸ “Final Agreement for the Settlement of the Differences”, p. 2.

¹⁹ National Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia: “Resolution on Determining the Macedonian National Positions in the Context of the European Integration Blockages,” Official Gazette of Republic of North Macedonia (08 – 3602/1) [Резолуција за утврдување на македонските државни позиции во контекст на блокадите на европските интеграции, „Службен весник на Република Северна Македонија“ (08 – 3602/1)].

the *Prespa Agreement* when references to Antiquity and avoidance of mention of nation's Slavic character was part of the national narrative (let us note how easily present rhetoric and narrative has replaced the one that ruled in the era of Gruevski), 2) it charges the executive branch to execute the stipulations of the Resolution. Considering the essence of the Resolution goes against one of the key premises of the *Treaty* – “shared” or “common” history – as well as some of its articles do so very explicitly,²⁰ it violates Article 118 of the Constitution of North Macedonia, which states that ratified international treaties become part of the national legislation that cannot be contradicted or annulled by any national legal act.

²⁰ For example, Article 3, line 3 implying shared collective “memories” of Balkan and Mediterranean peoples rather than the stipulation of *the Treaty* about the Bulgarian-Macedonian commonalities more specifically, thereby diluting if not annihilating the nature of the *Treaty* at its core.

