

The Europeanization of Bulgarian Nationalism: The Impact of Bulgaria's European Union Accession on Bulgarian-Macedonian Relations

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Abstract

Modern Bulgarian nationalists aspired towards incorporating the self-identified Bulgarian lands into the Bulgarian state. The Treaty of San Stefano ending the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 tantalizingly achieved these so-called national ideals. Great Power diplomacy quickly diminished Bulgaria's borders and international legal status with the 1878 Treaty of Berlin, exacerbating nationalist grievances. Bulgaria would expand vast resources to restore the San Stefano borders until Balkan Communist authoritarian regimes eventually suppressed the Macedonian issue as a foreign policy subject. Sofia's policy towards its neighbor has been overdetermined by the efforts of successive Bulgarian governments to institutionalize post-communist Bulgaria's own national identity. Bulgaria's integration into so-called Euro-Atlantic structures, i.e., NATO and the EU, had been the primary strategic objective of the Bulgarian authorities since the end of the Zhivkov regime. North Atlantic community security policy aims in response to the earliest post-Cold War foreign policy crises in the Western Balkans framed the parameters of Bulgarian diplomacy. The stabilization of FYROM in 2001, followed by Bulgaria's 2007 EU accession, led to Bulgarian nationalist values become more salient in Bulgarian politics and foreign policy. Sofia-Skopje relations are a test case for the effects of Europeanization on interdependent Balkan ethno-sectarian nationalisms and state territorial institutional development.

Keywords: Bulgaria, Constructivism, English School, European Union, Greece, Macedonia, Nationalism, NATO

1. INTRODUCTION

The Yugoslav Communist leadership founded Macedonia as a constituent republic of the socialist Yugoslav federation. This constitutional formation comported with its domestic control strategy which included counterbalancing the disproportionate power potential base of Serbia, the largest constituent nationality within the state. "Basically, Tito carved out a new republic from south Serbia in 1944 and called it Macedonia for three reasons: to counter Bulgaria's strong ethnic claims on the Bulgarian population of the region; to use FYROM [Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia] and the Macedonian name as a foundation to grab Greece's Macedonian territory for a Greater Yugoslav Macedonia; and to reduce the size of the Serbian Republic and break the Serbian Loyalist guerrilla movement as an act of revenge against the Serbs who fought the Communist partisans in World War II" (Parkas 1997, 105). After the 1948 Tito-Stalin split, the Communist

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authorities further encouraged Macedonian national consciousness as relations deteriorated with neighboring Bulgaria with its Moscow client-regime (Reef 2018, 459). “These efforts went so far as the creation of a separate Macedonian Orthodox church by Tito's determinedly atheistic regime. One motive was certainly to defuse the ambitions of neighbouring Bulgaria, which has traditionally considered Macedonia as the last piece of Bulgarian territory left outside Bulgaria and (as they do to this day) Macedonians as simply Bulgarians with a regional dialect” (Fraser 1998, 4). As such, Macedonian identity was affirmed while the Yugoslav state's core culture remained Serbian in the view of some non-Serb nationalist leaders such as Franjo Tudjman of Croatia (Djuraskovic 2014). The Macedonian, southern Serbian and Montenegrin Albanians were marginalized while Albanian ethnic elites within the Kosovo autonomous region of the Yugoslav federation articulated Albanian self-determination aspirations (Babuna 2000). The shared perceived threat from Albanian national political self-expression functionally limited Belgrade and Skopje divergence.

In terms of power measures relative to Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece, Macedonia has more limited diplomatic bargaining leverage. Sofia has pressured Skopje to recognize constitutionally the existence of a Bulgarian national minority while in turn backing off on its claims to the existence of a Macedonian minority in Bulgaria (Marusic 2021). One cross-partisan, near-consensus generating issue in Bulgaria today appears to be the national self-identity affirming belief that Slavophone North Macedonians are historically brainwashed Bulgarians (Gotev, 2022, Todorov, 2022). Bulgarians collectively accept that they do not have the relative power capability to change this situation via irredentist annexation and domination. On the eve of its February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, the prevailing view in Russia is that Russia did have this capability vis-à-vis Ukraine, a nation portrayed as forcibly separated from Russia (Putin, 2021). Serbian irredentism has so far failed to annex perceived Serbian lands 30 years since the collapse of Yugoslavia.

The EU functionally aims for immediate stabilization of the Western Balkans following the recognition by almost all members of the independence of Kosovo. The EU offers the prospect of membership in NATO and the EU to Albania, Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The 2001 Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) remains the cornerstone of the accommodation between the Macedonian and Albanian communities, but this accommodation is an uneasy one. Şahin and Ozan (2019) reiterate the observation of Woodward (2011) without the intervention of NATO and the EU, the violence in Macedonia would have escalated to levels which the former Yugoslavia had already witnessed in the 1990s. The violent conflict between the National Liberation Army (NLA) and Macedonian forces displaced more than 150,000 people, i.e., 7% of the country's population. Signed in August 2001, the OFA in effect amended the constitution of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) that had declared the official state hegemony of Macedonian national culture. “The OFA granted Albanian language an official status in municipalities where it is spoken by at least 20% of the population, stipulated its use in education and parliament, and introduced proportional ethnic representation in public administration and the formation of a power-sharing arrangement to better integrate Albanians and other ethnic minorities into a unitary state structure in exchange for the cessation of violence by all parties” (Şahin and Ozan 2019, 231-32). It also stipulated NATO's intervention to disarm the NLA. Şahin and Ozan (2019) reiterate the observation of Woodward (2011) that this FYROM constitutional change was the latest in a series of impositions formulated in Euro-Atlantic member state capitals. This latest fait accompli again aimed functionally to stabilize the post-Yugoslav successor states by ending large-scale fighting while imposing minority rights accommodations. They have tended more to freeze these conflicts rather than resolve them. They thereby functionally protect informal parochial patron-client organizational structures that predominate over written declarations of allegiance to a statewide rule of law, i.e., systemic corruption.

With the 2001 OFA, approximately, 3,500 troops entered Macedonia as peacekeepers under the EU

command in a series of operations, beginning with “Essential Harvest” which metamorphosed into various forms (Korzeniewska-Wisznewska 2014). These EU missions included “Amber Fox” and “Operation Concordia” and “Allied Harmony” intervened alongside neighboring KFOR, the Kosovo Stabilization Force whose presence is itself a conflict stabilization mechanism. The EU has also deployed police forces under operation “Proxima” with the aim eventually of withdrawing all military forces from the country. Later, “Proxima” officially ended in 2005 but morphed into the EU policing operation, “EURPAT,” which formally concluded in 2006. These operations formally ended but OSCE, EU and UN observers are present. The controversial focus of the EU’s enforcement presence in the western Balkans is in Kosovo with EULEX since 2008 (Exit News 2021). The de facto, functional challenge of pan-Albanian community national identity patterns provokes non-Albanian western Balkan state titular states to emphasize establishment and enforcement of border control (Griessler 2020). Macedonia deployed forces in Iraq and Afghanistan to demonstrate its commitment to the NATO alliance (Blazevski 2014). The Republic of North Macedonia joined NATO on March 27, 2020 (North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2020).

This study proposes as a research agenda a case study focus on the sociology and anthropology of national Macedonian polity elites with a focus on the impact of Europeanization. Bulgarian, Macedonian and Greek academics are state supported. Before its recognition of the state as “North Macedonia,” Greece earlier rejected a proposal from Skopje for a joint committee of scholars to address the historical dispute issues surrounding the name conflict. The Greek foreign minister noted that history cannot be “negotiated,” claiming that the historical questions have already been resolved through “scientific” analysis (“Greece Rejects” 2008).

2. MACEDONIA AS A EUROPEAN MULTI-ETHNIC POST-COLONIAL STATE

Postcolonial states may also be quasi-sovereign in that they are recognized as such but have been unable to maintain a government capable to maintain territorial integrity without external great power patronage. Temporary suspension of sovereignty by the international society may also occur to justify intervention, which in the colonial period was called “trusteeship” but which today is called “transitional authority” (Dunne 2008, 273). Macedonia would fall into this category as a state created under the one-party dictatorship in postwar Communist Yugoslavia out of the portion of Macedonia militarily annexed by Serbia during the 1912-13 Balkan Wars. After the breakup of Yugoslavia, Macedonia became a de facto Euro-Atlantic international protectorate (Jentleson 2001, 256). This multi-ethnic republic is formally sovereign, but the central government acquiesced to Euro-Atlantic legal immunity in return for stationing peacekeeping security forces to prevent conflict from escalating between the Macedonian and Albanian groups. Such an escalation would transform Macedonia into a “failed state.” Macedonia had not achieved complete international recognition due to Greek objections over Macedonia’s name (Schabas 2001, 609-10). Consequently, Macedonia could not fully and freely declare its identity within the international society of states until Greek objections to the Macedonian authority legitimization claims were overcome. The European Union then formally recognized what had been the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) as the Republic of North Macedonia in 2019.

The Greek authorities had objected to the Skopje authorities’ claim to represent a political community with foundations established in international society most notably 2400 years ago. Greece claimed sole proprietorship to the internationally recognized political achievements of Philip of Macedon and his son, Alexander “the Great.” The Greek authorities claim the heroized historical legacy of Alexander as constituting an integral part of the foundations of their own state. This historical legacy dispute provides the formal discourse content for a deeper source of conflict. The perceived irredentist threat that an internationally recognized, “Republic of Macedonia” may pose an attraction to Slavophone citizens in northern Greece (Danforth 1995, 28-42). This area consists largely of the portion of the historic region of Macedonia annexed

by Greece during the 1912-13 Balkan Wars. Bulgarian authority concerns over “separatism” regarding Macedonia’s insistence on Sofia’s recognition of a Macedonian ethnic minority in Bulgaria is another source of perceived challenge (“Bulgarian Defence Minister” 2019, para. 6).

The dilemma for the Macedonian authorities is intensified by their functional need to find a shared legitimation symbol system that may appeal both to the Slavophone and Albanian population after approaching the brink of civil war in 2001 (Rohdewald 2018). Macedonia as the territorial home of some of the most prominent figures in ancient European and world history may serve as a legitimation symbol set useful in striving to overcome this ethno-sectarian community polarization. Long term NATO-member Greece underwent a democratic revolution in 1974 and saw its membership in the international society of states reaffirmed through gaining membership in the European Community/European Union in 1981. Post-communist Bulgaria joined NATO in 2004 and the EU in 2007. Greek and Bulgarian membership in the Euro-Atlantic club have given them leverage over relatively weak, albeit democratic, Macedonia under de facto international trusteeship.

The social anthropologist C. Scott Littleton affirms George Dumezil conclusion that in both and primitive and higher levels of human organization, religious and magical belief plays a critical function. It is a principle of social organization, integration and order (Littleton 1982, 38). “Ideology,” rather than ritual or personification of natural phenomena, is primary in shaping the content and structure of “myths” (Littleton 1982, 115). In Europe the nation and the affective attachment to the nation has typically supplanted the attachment to the Church (Cottam and Cottam 2001, 33). Cottam and Cottam note that religious communities may provide political identity associations that “parallel nationalist manifestations.” Religious community is defined here as a “community of believers” who view the clergy as the primary source of legitimation for authority norms (Cottam and Cottam 2001, 47). A primary supplementary thesis for this study is that academics can serve this legitimation function in cases of secular nationalism.

Four more powerful neighboring national actors are historically more or less resistant to Macedonian sovereign national self-identity assertion: Serbia, Albania, Bulgaria and Greece (Szczesio 2014). Macedonian elites evolve the Slavophone post-Cold War “national imaginary” (Homer 2017, 112). Macedonia arguably lacks the relative power capability maintain full sovereignty of the Macedonian state despite the socialization of the intellectual elite with the Macedonian national imaginary.

3. DUMEZIL’S THEORY OF COMPARATIVE INDO-EUROPEAN MYTHOLOGY AND ITS INTEGRATION INTO A THEORY OF NATIONAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

Littleton notes that Dumezil understands Indo-European mythology has an embodying reflection of a tripartite partition of society among priests, warriors and cultivators. The mythological figures are embodiments of these strata and their relationship. They are the embodiments of the “functions” which these strata occupy in Indo-European society, which are, respectively; the first function: the maintenance of a harmonious relationship between the exercise of moral sovereignty, on the one hand, with the social and supernatural worlds, on the other hand; the second function: society’s physical protection; the third function: physical well-being through its nourishment and maintenance (Littleton 1982, 60). The narrative substance of the conflictual and cooperative relationship among these three functions undergo modification so as to conform to the respective attitudes and values of the cultures in which they appear (Littleton 1982, 62). The relevance of Dumezil’s tripartite function is that for national self-determination to be achieved and maintained, the three functions must be mutually reinforcing. The priestly function, the warrior function and the cultivator function should systemically reinforce their respective sources of authority within and over the community to maintain

societal obedience. Systemic dysfunction and state disintegration intensify as societal values increasingly diverge from societal norms (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 2012). The maintenance of a Macedonian sovereign imaginary articulated by the so-called priestly class/pro-change elite faces formidable self-reinforcement obstacles. The multi-ethnic nature of post-Yugoslav Macedonia places it in a foreign policy behavioral category that differs from other states including neighboring Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Albania (see Table 1 and Table 2 below; multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina is included in Table 2 for comparative context but is beyond the scope of this paper).

Littleton further notes that these theological systems, once generated, even in prehistory, have been highly resistant subsequently to change (Littleton 1982, 133). Littleton claims that the “tripartite ideology” remains part of the European worldview to this day, at least in some parts of Europe, “despite well over a thousand years of Christianity” (Littleton 1982, 164). Littleton notes that Dumézil’s contribution to comparative mythology is to emphasize the comparison of themes and structures, rather than nomenclature that is presumed to reflect some natural phenomena, like the sun and the elements. (Littleton 1982, 144). Extrapolating to the study of competing nationalist historical identity claims, similarly, a theoretically informed analysis should unearth themes and structures by inferring from the nature of the state that is the source of the claims.

Littleton notes that according to Durkheim, the ultimate source of the sacred is the moral order. “The moral order ... is by far the most important reality confronting the human species, far outweighing the impact of natural forces or the effects of dreams and hallucinations.” Littleton highlights Durkheim’s definition of religion: “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them” (Littleton, quoting Durkheim, 38). Accounting for the origin of sacred things, and especially the realities that such sacred things represent or symbolize, is the central problem facing the student of religious phenomena (Littleton 1982, 38).

These social and cultural realities have their reflection in the context of myths and the rites that the members of the community associate with them as “sacred things.” The facts of social life and the moral order that accompanies them are evident in the stuff of the sacred, according to Littleton’s analysis of Durkheim (1982 39, 128). Serving as representations of society as a whole or of various important segments within it are most, if not all, gods, spirits, totems and the like. The individual thereby experiences and interprets the world around him or her through these representations of reality which society itself has derived from observing itself (Littleton 1982, 39). The collective life is both the source and the object of religion; therefore, the sacred is ultimately the personification of society (Littleton 1982, 38-39).

The substitution of the religious church with the sacred, modern nation as church reflects the need to coordinate actively participatory segments of society. The functional aim is to achieve their individual and constituent goals and objectives in a world understood as malleable through self-aware community power using symbols of self-identity with emotive effect. The nation has replaced the church, and the nation state authorities’ attempt to determine what is sacred in authoritarian, one-party systems. Meanwhile, partitioned nations and the states that represent the parts of the nation will compete for nationalist legitimacy while seeking to protect themselves from “subterfuge” and “subversion” by the other, “traitor” regimes (Greenberg 2004, 24). A theme in Russian discourse since the Euromaidan/Revolution of Dignity is the West’s intent to fragment and destroy Russia by converting Ukraine into an “anti-Russia bridgehead” (Cook 2014, Putin 2022, para. 9).

An issue for this study is the construction of a European moral order on the basis of emergence of a European supranational identity with European superordinate institutions. These institutions symbolically represent this European identity. A hypothesis of this study is the romantic idealized symbolic legitimation expression of this European identity would build on the respective nationalism of the EU member states. What Europeans

find sacred should include symbolic articulations of the desirability of pooling European national sovereignty to achieve a global vision for Europe. The moral order would focus on conflict resolution in Europe, as in national communities.

Dumezil's conception of mythology has its foundation in these two fundamental assumptions: 1) important social and cultural realities have their "collective representation" in these divine beings, and 2) categories of understanding are the inevitable consequence of these representations (Littleton 1982, 39). Like the old church, nations through their mythology and symbols help explain reality, as well as protect life and enhance self-esteem for the co-nationals (Cottam and Cottam 2001).

The idealization of the symbols of the nation derives from the representation of the social function to justify it through the symbol set to the public in terms of vindicating its control. The mythos of the nation reflects the social order. It serves a political function in doing so, i.e., binding together the community through appealing to the public to police and control itself as an affirmation of the community, whether nation or church. The symbols will be romanticized/idealized.

The focus on sovereignty is associated with first function gods in the tripartite typology. Littleton notes Dumezil's argument that Roman mythology takes the form of euhemerization. For example, the mythology of the founding of Rome in the Sabine War corresponds to the conquest of the cultivators by the warrior and administrator Roman class (Littleton 1982, 71-72, 74-75).

This euhemerization of myth, transforming it into epic, is a theme frequently reiterated by Littleton in his critique of the work of Dumezil (Littleton 1982). Littleton notes that, of course, ancient Roman historiography had various inconsistencies. Littleton contrasts that the major tenets of the major world religions are also notable for their inconsistencies in the forms of their respective content. The existence of inconsistencies per se is not persuasive evidence that the Romans did not historicize their myths in terms of the city's founding (Littleton 1982, 110). Ideologies and the representations within them are subject to the same general set of processes as languages, all other things being equal. Ideologies and representations exhibit regularities that are analogous to those patterns which linguistic forms exhibit. This idea may be Dumezil's most important single contribution to the social sciences (Littleton 1982, 88).

Littleton highlights that the early ancient Greeks were exceptionally influenced in the structure and content of their society and mythology by contacts with non-Indo-European civilizations (Littleton 1982, 73, 273-74). This legacy complicates application of Dumezil's findings to a study of the history of Alexander the Great and Macedonia. Conceptualizations of Philip, Alexander and Macedonia according to an Indo-European tripartite ideological structure may be especially problematic. Proving its existence is beyond the scope of this paper. Some cursory speculation would note historiographic themes including the importance of Alexander's father, Philip, in establishing Macedonian sovereignty in the culturally predominant Hellenic world (first function); Alexander's Hellenic tutoring and subsequent military prowess in extending this sovereignty (second function); and the resultant economic integration and colonization of much of the known world (third function). Macedonian authorities have reasserted their own claim to the tripartite history of ancient Macedonia amidst a hostile political environment through massive building projects commemorating the legacy of ancient Macedonia (Gillet 2015). The euhemerization of Europe emerges through the imaginary construction of liberal democratic Europe as a shared self-identity myth. It utilizes shared historical figures such as Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar and Charlemagne. This process stands in contrast to the top-down myth making of the USSR and socialist Yugoslavia. Postwar European myth construction is bottom-up to the extent that the respective national publics grant legitimacy to symbol manipulation by liberal democratic national authorities.

The search for legitimation of political facts on the ground typically created by force of arms may be understood as requiring a legally defensible justification. With the foundation of international law in Roman

law, the requirement for a sovereignty justification (first function gods, according to Littleton's analysis of Dumézil), is arguably expected. The Romans justified their political aggrandizement through law (Kingsbury and Straumann 2011, 6). In the contemporary world, a justification for sovereignty also requires a defensible justification for military control in terms of self-assertion of a nation, even as so-called national sovereignty is in tension with globalization.

Macedonian nationalist self-determination claims also highlight the military prowess by claiming symbolic ownership of medieval Balkan monarchs whom Bulgarian nationalists also claim. Tsar Samuil of Bulgaria is claimed as a Macedonian ruler who established the western Bulgarian empire and the autocephalous medieval Bulgarian patriarchate (Moulakis 2010). The capital of the kingdom was moved from Skopje to Ohrid in present-day Macedonia.

The point is relevant here insofar that in the contemporary era of mass political participation and nationalism inconsistencies in historical claims to territory are inevitable. They are not going to be obstacles to generating intense emotional responses, whether positive or negative. Nor will these so-called inconsistencies be subject to resolution through scientific analysis or logical reasoning. Rather, the political facts on the ground, and the long-term contextual correlation of political forces, will determine the resolution of historical conflicts.

The existence of an international society of states implies that an understanding of disputes over the historical legacy of Macedonia means understanding the other nationalistic mythologies. Historically dynamic political circumstances of ingroup vs. outgroup formation and institutionalization produce these ultimately self-serving, self-justifying nationalistic mythologies (Cottam and Cottam 2001). Conflicts among interacting ingroups include reactive mythological content formation. Secularized mythologies ultimately derive from the contextual power capabilities of the nation. Analyzing romantic national symbol sets and nationalist historiographies implies understanding how they develop in reaction to each other in the current context. They serve as mobilizational capacities which are useful in meeting policy challenges. They may be progressively ineffectual as national policy making frameworks alone become insufficient in the context of Europeanization to satisfy security, prosperity and self-actualization needs of individuals, groups and communities. If this perception can be channeled into the belief that it is an engine driving Europeanization, then the establishment European elite will continue to support it. Right populist political entrepreneurs will challenge it. Dumézil's emphasis on the scholarly class for legitimation relates here.

Littleton continues noting in Roman lexical and mythological development the evolution of terminology reflecting changing conceptions of power from force of arms to ability to control events (Littleton 1982, 129). The development of European Union soft power through appeals to public opinion should impact the power capacities of Macedonia and Bulgaria. This development should be reflected in the evolution of their nationalistic mythologies.

Cottam and Cottam note that a sense of continuity and an answer to questions which are unanswerable are what identity with a nation provides, as Benedict Anderson argues, doing so along the same principles that religion serves:

The great merit of traditional religious world-views ... has been their concern with man-in-the-cosmos ... and the contingency of life. The extraordinary survival [of religions] attests to their imaginative response to the overwhelming burden of human suffering.... Why was I born blind? Why is my best friend paralysed? Why is my daughter retarded? The religions attempt to explain. The great weakness of all evolutionary/progressive styles of thought, not excluding Marxism, is that such questions are answered with impatient silence.... With the ebbing of religious belief, the suffering which belief in part composed did not disappear..... What then was required was a secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency

into meaning.... Few things were (are) better suited to this end than an idea of a nation. [sic] (quoted in Cottam and Cottam 2001, 94).

Nations through their mythology and symbols help explain reality, as well as protect life and enhance self-esteem. For nationalists, the ingroup is the nation state.

Cottam and Cottam (2001) highlight that from the perspective of the nationalist, the universe of outgroups consists of nation states. For nationalist citizens, the nation as an identity group is highly salient. Threats or opportunities for the nation, will generate strong and volatile responses. This degree of sensitivity is significantly dependent upon the national community being entirely coincidental with the boundaries of the territorial community. The existence of such coincidence is the distinguishing feature of the nation state.

Cottam and Cottam (2001, 29) note that as has long been recognized, before the rise of the modern nation state, common religious identity/shared mythological-ideological system has been a source of political unity. It can override other identity differences. Nationalism has had both a rival and an ally in the form of religious identity. In the modern era, religious identity as a political identity group continues. The relationship between religious and national identity continues to be “extremely opaque.”

The application of Dumezil’s framework points towards identifying an intellectual elite that plays a critical role in articulating nationalist self-expression in terms of prevailing national ethical community ideals. The institutionalization of these symbols within the community basis of the nation can associate with secular and sectarian symbols deriving from the idiosyncratic sociological evolution of the community. In the Balkans, the prevailing, subjectively defined community foundation for nationalist movements accentuate ethno-sectarian delineators. It reflects the legacy of the Ottoman millet system constituting the institutional framework within which large, self-identity ingroups emerged holding primary-level intensity of self-identification (Arpalier and Hamzaj 2020). Bulgarian and Macedonian modern national identity share a common feature in that their respective revived, modern national Orthodox churches emerged/re-emerged comparatively recently. In contrast to the older national Orthodox churches, their modern national church institutions emerged and developed within their respective modern nationalist projects (DeDominicis 2016).

4. EUROPEANIZATION OF BALKAN NATIONALISMS

The state is the system of authority norms. The nation is a self-identity primary intensity terminal community. The system of authority norms and the nation have a relationship. A community that is a sovereign nation state will over time develop a system of authority norms with a foundation in normative habitual obedience supported by utilitarian incentives. Polity authorities to which the modal public grants legitimacy will tend to rule with a tertiary reliance upon coercion. In crisis periods, it will manifest a capacity for the state leadership in the form of the government apparatus executive personnel to rally the community to make sacrifices on behalf of the influence of the state: defense, dignity, grandeur (Cottam and Gallucci, 1978).

Societies emerging out of colonial domination will manifest status quo versus pro-change authority norm advocates. The resolution of these conflicts will typically involve what the ideal-typical legal form labels as corruption. European integration can facilitate elite legitimation of the output of their post-colonial state policy making process through promoting peaceful compromise and reconciliation. The mass public is coopted by associating nationalism with liberal European ideals. European integration can facilitate and create greater opportunity structures for social creativity and social mobility for conflict resolution. Periodic national elections and referendums, however, allow right populism to gain expression as mass public phenomena that elite factions exploit to win elections.

Taggart (2020, 333) notes that a polity approach to Europeanization focuses on European integration as a

process, i.e., how things are done. It suggests that there exists a “European way of doing things.” One observer describes it in more functional process, i.e., Europeanization is an incremental process which reshapes the orientation and shape and direction of politics to the extent that European Community economic and political processes become part of the member state national level processes in politics and policy making. The theoretical framework in this paper suggests that to the extent to which people internalize this “European way of doing things” and associate emotions with it, we see the emergence of a European self-identity.

In postwar Eastern Europe, Communism typically associated with Soviet Russian domination, except insofar as Communism gave minorities like Macedonians the opportunity for national self-determination. In this sense, one arena of one parallelism between Macedonian and Communist identity is evident: both created a modern state for the nation. In the Macedonian case, the authorities reinforced the establishment of Macedonian national identity by standardizing a Macedonian alphabet distinct from Bulgarian Cyrillic. The extent to which this territorial ethnic identity is shared with the Albanian ethnic minority in competition with pan-Albanian sympathies is debatable (Biserko 2013).

Mono-party systems demonstrate critical weaknesses in counteracting intensification of nationalist values in the policy making process in nation states in comparison with multi-party systems. Single-party systems may be functioning in multi-national and multi-ethnic states to maintain territorial integrity. In nation states such as Russia or China they risk manifestations of authority efforts to use the one-party system to exercise a monopoly on nationalist discourse. Threatening the coherence of this discourse is therefore more likely to be seen to the threat to the state authorities themselves.

Multi-ethnic Macedonia's exploitation of nationalist mythologies serves a similar political function, focusing on maintenance of the territorial integrity of the Macedonian state. Presumably it appeals to some among the ethnic Albanian minority who find the claim to be in opposition to Greek claims rather than focusing so much on Macedonian national chauvinism. Alexander the Great is such a readily contestable figure in terms of his Greekness and Macedonianess that historic territory remains the fallback as a stable national community marker for this evocative historical figure.

Cottam and Cottam (2001) note that Slovenia, Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro and Croatia as nations composing the old Yugoslavia, with the exception of Slovenia have collective memories of medieval states. In the case of Macedonia, the Republic of Macedonia has three neighboring states, Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia, that claim Macedonian territory as part of a medieval kingdom for each of these respective claimants.

The collective historical memory of these medieval states includes their respective so-called golden age reasserted themselves amidst the accelerating turmoil accompanying the disintegration of Tito's Yugoslavia. The further point may be added here that Bulgaria and Macedonia lay claim to the same medieval history. With the disintegration of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria moved quickly to recognize the newly independent Macedonian republic as the first state to do so. “[H]owever, from the outset it was made clear that Bulgaria does not recognize the Macedonian nation, as a separate nation, distinct from the Bulgarian. Although the issue of the nation was not explicitly mentioned in the official recognition, it was raised indirectly, through the issue of language” (Sazdovski 2015, 60). Bulgarian governments demur from recognizing the existence of a Macedonian language as per Skopje's demand (Nikolova 2020). Official Bulgarian negotiation delegations with Skopje representatives have refused to include translators. Bulgarian explanations for the belief among Macedonians of a Macedonian national self-identity distinct from Bulgarian national identity typically ascribe it to propaganda socialization by Belgrade.

The Europeanization of Bulgarian-Macedonian identity conflicts incentivizes comparisons of their disputes with those in the core states of the European Union. Bulgaria has had a leverage advantage over Macedonia; the former must agree to the Republic of North Macedonia acceding to Euro-Atlantic structures. Macedonian

identifiers have rhetorically criticized Bulgarian attempted utilization of this leverage to gain Skopje's acquiescence to Bulgaria demands as being un-European. In November 2020, the Borissov government in Sofia threatened to reject North Macedonia's EU accession until Skopje acknowledged Sofia's identity demands, i.e., that Macedonian is a Bulgaria dialect, that Skopje acknowledge the Bulgarian origins of Macedonia, including as typified through national identity claims of historical figures, and that Skopje stop from claiming the existence of a Macedonian national minority in Bulgaria (Tidey 2020). One Macedonian policy analyst highlighted ongoing tensions between France and Germany over the status of Strasbourg yet those tensions have not obstructed their European integration ("N Macedonia Op-Ed" 2020). On the eve of the third national parliamentary elections in November 2021, following 2 previous inclusive elections in the same year, Borissov pledged to resolve the latest phase of the dispute (Marusic 2021). The Borissov government had initiated the latest dispute halting EU accession negotiations with Macedonia by which point Macedonia had been an EU candidate member state for 16 years. In October 2021, while leading in public opinion polls, Borissov publicly underlined that his government signed the 2017 friendship treaty and ratified it in January 2018. It pledged Bulgaria's support for Macedonia's NATO and EU accession (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2018).

Formal EU accession negotiations began in March 2020, along with North Macedonia's accession into NATO. Due to political inability to form a coalition government following April 2021 elections, new parliamentary elections were called for July 2021. The Bulgarian president, a former air force general, appointed a caretaker government under a politically non-partisan former army general, Stefan Yanev, as prime minister. In June 2021, Yanev emphasized the Bulgarian government's support for North Macedonia's EU integration. This same Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty report highlighted that "Sofia's decision to block the start of EU accession talks was backed by all of Bulgaria's political parties in parliament, and the current caretaker government is powerless to change the position" (RFE/RL 2021, para. 5). The April 2021 parliamentary elections resulted in major changes in the Bulgarian political party topography. The Yanev government may prepare legislation for the future government to consider. Since late 2020, other EU power centers have publicly expressed their dismay regarding Bulgaria's refusal to allow the formal start of EU accession negotiations for North Macedonia until Sofia's demands are met (Euronews 2020). Intensifying competition for Balkan influence with Russia following the February 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine heightened the urgency of the EU to resume publicly the enlargement process. European Union representatives leveraged Skopje and Sofia to each approve politically difficult compromises to facilitate the launch of North Macedonian and Albanian EU accession negotiations ("North Macedonia Votes" 2022).

5. MACEDONIA-GREECE-BULGARIA COMPARATIVE SOCIAL IDENTITY DYNAMICS WITHIN EURO-ATLANTIC HEGEMONY

In response to intensifying ethno-nationalist conflicts within the Ottoman empire, the Sultan decreed the institutional autonomy of what became the Bulgarian Orthodox Church (BOC) from the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople (Istanbul). Granted in 1870 on the eve of what became the 1877-78 Russo-Turkish War, the Bulgarian national self-determination movement gave modern institutional birth to the BOC (Stamatopoulos 2004).

Comparatively, the clergy leadership of the latter was more beholden to the modern Bulgarian nation state authorities than the Polish Roman Catholic Church was to modern Polish national state authorities (DeDominicis 2016). The Synod of the modern Macedonian Orthodox Church declared its autocephaly in 1967 from the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) under the rubric of the authorities of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) (Oehring 2021, 6). The other major Orthodox churches, including the SOC,

considered it “schismatic” and did not recognize its autonomy (Stavrova 2004, para. 7). A Macedonian Orthodox clergyman, Jovan Vraniskovski, was imprisoned by the Macedonian authorities for incitement and theft upon declaring in 2002 his allegiance to the Serbian Patriarchate. The defrocked Macedonian bishop, Jovan Vraniskovski, becoming subsequently a Serb Orthodox bishop, attempted to form a separate orthodox church to follow Belgrade’s dictates. The Macedonian government has resisted the calls of organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International to release him from jail, while he has been since in custody since 2004 (Stavrova). Vraniskovski was released in 2015 (Marusic 2016). The Serbian Orthodox Church declared the Macedonian Church anathema. Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) officials have made public statements indicating their claim to provide leadership on resolving the status of the MOC in relation to the other national Orthodox churches (Synovitz 2018). The ROC portrays itself as supplanting the Ecumenical Patriarch in providing ethical canonical leadership in jurisdictional disputes within the global Orthodox community (Ibid.). The BOC established a committee in 2018 to respond to a petition from the MOC for recognition of its autocephaly as well as acknowledging sympathetic Bulgarian nationalist public opinion pressure. The ROC successfully pressured the BOC to dissolve it (Šljivić and Živković 2020, 18). Over the objections of the ROC, the Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople recognized the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in 2019 (Baar et al. 2022). The impact of Europeanization on Bulgarian nationalism is evident in Sofia’s use of its EU membership to use as diplomatic bargaining leverage. Sofia pressures Macedonia to renounce its demands that Bulgaria recognize a Macedonian ethnic minority exists in Bulgaria. Skopje’s demand relates directly to Bulgaria’s recognition of the existence of a Macedonian language and thereby recognize the existence of Macedonia as an ethnically distinct nation. Hence, Sofia’s preconditions to the launch of EU accession negotiations for Macedonia in late 2020 included Skopje’s acknowledgment that Macedonian is a Bulgarian dialect. Sofia also demands that Skopje recognize that Macedonia and Bulgaria shared a common national community history until the area was partitioned by Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria. This partition occurred at the end of the two Balkan Wars on the eve of the First World War. Sofia entered both world wars allied with the losing powers to gain those territories held by Athens and Belgrade.

Another aspect of the Europeanization of Bulgarian nationalism includes Sofia’s *jus sanguinis* concept of national community. Sofia has identified Slavophones in Macedonia and elsewhere in post-Communist Europe as ethnic Bulgarians who have the right to acquire Bulgarian citizenship without prejudice to their current citizenship. Bulgarian citizenship automatically includes EU citizenship and access to its material and political opportunities, providing a strong material incentive to declare one’s Bulgarian ethnicity. The former Communist Balkan states have all experienced large scale, economically motivated migration; the Macedonian population is roughly estimated as under two million with two-thirds Slavophone (Judah 2020). At least 60,000 Macedonians have accepted Sofia’s passport offer (Kamusella 2021). Sofia uses its EU membership to encourage social mobility to assimilate into the Bulgarian national community. This policy can broaden social creativity opportunities for Bulgarophile Macedonians. These policies can also increase the risks of social competition insofar as Bulgarophile Macedonian’s loyalty to Skopje becomes more suspect within this multi-ethnic state.

The modal prevailing view within the Bulgarian polity is that a separate Macedonian national identity does exist due to the enforced socialization of generations of Slavophone Macedonians. In late 2020, Sofia sent a memorandum to the other 26 member states insisting that EU documents recognize Macedonian as a regional dialect of Bulgarian. It states, “[t]he Enlargement process must not legitimize the ethnic and linguistic engineering that has taken place under former authoritarian regimes” [*sic*] (Hajdari 2020, para. 19). In defending Sofia’s position, Bulgarian Foreign Minister Ekaterina Zaharieva declared in an interview, “[n]o one is disputing their right to self-define their nation and call their language what they like. But we cannot

agree that this right will be based on hatred, history theft and denial of Bulgaria” (2020, para. 15).

From a social identity perspective, the Europeanization of Bulgarian nationalism would have a reactive component to comparison of self with other. As a national community in a region historically prone to seek patronage from external great powers, Bulgarian nationalism historically has a pronounced pro-Russian component in it. The Europeanization of Bulgarian nationalism would include a reconfiguration of this Russophile tradition because of the construction of the Euro-Atlantic alliance in opposition to Moscow. The BOC’s submission to pressure from the ROC to reverse its tentative willingness to consider the MOC’s petition for autocephaly is significant. On the one hand, recognition of the MOC would reinforce separation from Belgrade’s previous hegemony, a domination that Sofia considers responsible for the Macedonian national consciousness today. On the other hand, recognition would also reaffirm Sofia’s acceptance that Macedonian national identity does indeed exist, undermining Sofia’s claim that Macedonian national identity is somehow artificial. It would acknowledge the placement of Ohrid, the ancient seat of Slavic Orthodoxy, within the national Orthodox church of Macedonia.

Piancentini underlines the significance for institutionalizing Macedonian national self-identity through incorporation of Macedonia as one of the constituent national federal republics of socialist Yugoslavia. “Without arguing in favor or in opposition to the Greek and Bulgarian claims, I assert that it is true that the Macedonian nation’s recognition happened under Tito and he consistently helped the nation- and identity-building processes, favoring a transition from regional to national identity” (Piancentini 2019, 486). Sacrificing a national state created under Belgrade’s internal hegemony would be a difficult loss that would differentiate Macedonia from other multi-ethnic, post-colonial states. The goal of maintaining and defending this sovereign state with political resources comparatively adequate to the regional context is challenging. Macedonian nationalism has faced threats from 4 national neighbors who historically expropriated Macedonian identity as critical to their own respective, competing national identities. The situation incentivizes Macedonian compromises on sovereignty demands.

The 2018 Tsipras-Zaev agreement under Euro-Atlantic mediation producing the Prespa accords

had multiple benefits beyond resolving the name dispute and addressing each side’s traditions and cultural heritage in an even-handed fashion. To begin with, it was an obvious compromise as the area/state in the North of Macedonia was simply named as such. Specifically, it acknowledged the cultural heritage of ancient Greek Macedonia while simultaneously recognizing Macedonian language and nationality for use in the Republic of North Macedonia. Beyond this, the agreement included a number of important provisions, establishing joint committees on revising school textbooks, taking action against those promoting chauvinism and hostility, establishing a High-Level Cooperation Council (similar to provisions in the Good Friday Agreement), and reiterating both parties’ commitment to the European Convention on Human Rights. Finally, it included provisions for international arbitration, stipulated in Article 19, which authorized the International Court of Justice to make a final decision differing interpretations could not be reconciled. Unfortunately, the agreement did not address the question of the ethnic Macedonians in Greece, including the right of return for those who became refugees in third countries after WWII (Loizides 2018, 502).

Compromise with Greece in the Prespa agreements leads to Bulgarian demands that its national dignity be expressed and equalized by making comparable symbolic demands on Macedonian national identity. Both Athens and Sofia utilize their Euro-Atlantic membership gatekeeping capacity as diplomatic bargaining leverage towards Skopje. Bulgaria’s integration into the EU is not complete, i.e., it is still not in the eurozone. Entrance into the eurozone is also a political act, as the inclusion of Greece in the eurozone demonstrated.

A concomitant to the dissolution of socialist Yugoslavia were the centripetal forces among the ethnic Albanian population towards allegiance with the larger Albanian community in neighboring Kosovo and Albania. US and European Union intervention has been critical to maintaining the territorial community integrity of what is now the Republic of North Macedonia (Çeliku 2019).

6. NATIONALISM AND LIBERALISM

Europeanization functionally aims to associate European nationalisms with liberal values (please see Table 1 below). Rhetorical articulations of this harnessing of immediate post-Communist East European nationalism to liberal democratic values is evident in the political appeal of a so-called return to Europe by acceding to the EU. The arduous, revolutionary reform task aims to create a liberal democratic and prosperous European national imaginary (Stoeva and Hoppe 2011). The BOC's recognition of the autocephaly of the MOC would be in accordance with this tactical formula. It would acknowledge Macedonian nationalism, i.e., it would expand regional opportunity structures for engaging in social creativity among Slavophone Macedonians. It would undercut tendencies towards social competition between Bulgaria and Macedonia. It thereby would assist in stabilizing Macedonia.

Table 1. Application of Checklist of Predisposition for Nationalistic Behavior by States and Aspiring Nation State Communities

	East Asia	Eastern Europe	Western Hemisphere	Western Europe	Islamic States	Multi-ethnic Asian	Multi-ethnic African
❖ Change-oriented elite	++	++	+	--	++	+	X
❖ Mass political participation	++	++	++	++	++	+	--
❖ Politically prevailing functional territorial community polity perception of sovereign viability of the existing territorial state							
➤ Defense	++	++	++	++	++	+	-
➤ Economy	++	++	++	++	++	+	-
❖ Uniqueness							
➤ History	++	+	+	++	-	X	--
➤ Culture	++	+	+	++	-	-	--
➤ Language	++	+	X	++	-	--	--
❖ Identity Complementarity							
➤ Religion	++	+	+	+	--	--	--
➤ Race	++	+	X	+	X	X	X
➤ Ethnic	++	+	X	+	--	--	--

❖ Key	
➤ ++	strongly favorable for nationalism
➤ +	moderately favorable
➤ X	neither favorable nor unfavorable
➤ -	moderately unfavorable
➤ --	strongly unfavorable

Source: Cottam and Cottam 2001, 48.

Table 2. Application of Checklist of Predisposition for Nationalistic Behavior by the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina

	North Macedonia (multi-ethnic state)	Bosnia and Herzegovina (multi-ethnic state)
❖ Change-oriented elite	++	++
❖ Mass political participation	++	++
❖ Politically prevailing functional territorial community polity perception of sovereign viability of the existing territorial state		
➤ Defense	-	--
➤ Economy	-	--
❖ Uniqueness		
➤ History	X	--
➤ Culture	--	X
➤ Language	--	X
❖ Identity Complementarity		
➤ Religion	--	--
➤ Race	--	--
➤ Ethnic	--	--

Source: the author 2021

In Table 1 above, the de facto checklist reference for predisposition towards nationalistic behavior labeled “change-oriented elite” refers to the orientation of the pro-reform elite leadership to articulate their policy demands. Those societal change-oriented elites who justify their demands in rhetorical appeals for public support as necessary for strengthening the sovereignty of the state of the nation will reinforce nationalistic behavior. East European pro-change elites in the immediate post-Communist era have been prone to articulate their reform demands as necessary to restore and strengthen national self-determination. West European pro-change elites, constituting the postwar ruling establishment, have been reluctant to articulate their pro-change policy prescriptions as necessary for national state sovereignty. The postwar establishment elite rather tended to frame reform advocacy in a cosmopolitan value orientation (Driessen 2021). It helped set the foundations for the EU’s emphasis on sustainable environmental development and individual human rights expansion (Biess and Eckert 2019).

A nation state is a state in which the overwhelming majority of citizens show their self-identification with the territorial community within the state through favoring it more above any other group or community. Nation state citizenries which grant their governments legitimacy tend to demonstrate a greater political propensity to sacrifice other values, e.g., economic values, on behalf of the sovereign influence of the national community. Firstly, a nationalist is an individual who sees himself/herself as a member of a large group of

people who constitute a community that is entitled to independent statehood and who is willing to grant that community a primary and the primary terminal loyalty. Secondly, nationalism characterizes a community when the modal, politically attentive citizen is a nationalist.

According to the Cottam and Cottam (2001) framework, a community acts nationalistically when its modal citizenry is nationalistic. If the community with which the nationalists identify does not have its own state, this framework would predict a propensity to seek to achieve one. By definition, the attachment felt for this community will be the most important (primary intensity) one, deserving its own state. In sum, it is the largest primary intensity self-identity community with which the nationalist identifies. When these conditions prevail, the community will see certain regular behavior patterns which associate with nationalism.

A people may collectively self-identify with a territorial entity which the community organizes as a state. They may do so more strongly than with any other politically relevant identity group. By demonstrating primary loyalty to it relative to other relevant self-identity ingroup communities, be they racial, ethnic, sectarian or territorial, such a state is a nation state (Cottam and Cottam 2001, 2). Members of the community in a nation state insist that the governmental organization receive international recognition as a free, sovereign independent state. A nationalist is someone who shows through his political behavior that he identifies with the nation first and foremost. He does so by giving the nation the primary loyalty and identifying with it with greater intensity than any other group.

A nationalist is someone whose intense self-identification with a community strongly affects their perception of reality. How this self-identification affects their perception of reality demonstrates clear patterns despite the different cultures of the different communities with which particular nationalists self-identify. They demonstrate propensities towards patterned stereotypical perceptions of the perceived sources of challenge, i.e., with the challenger perceived with varying degrees of intensity of threat or opportunity. The difference in behavior between nationalists and non-nationalists lies in the difference with which community members identify with the national community. In sum, the political psychological propensities of nationalists differ from non-nationalists. The result is different distinct patterns of policy preferences and willingness to sacrifice for the sovereignty of the nation.

The collective policy process-relevant, political behavior patterns that associate with nationalism are the following: 1) Nation states (and core communities aspiring to nation hood) will show a stronger inclination to see a threat from others and a greater tendency to see the threatener in stereotypical terms which show a high degree of simplification. 2) A greater likelihood exists that the leaders of a nation state will advance and consider seriously the option to expand state influence at the expense of other actors. 3) A greater tendency will exist among the publics of nation states to show a motivational preoccupation with the objective of ingathering communities, i.e., irredentism. 4) The people in nation states will display a greater concern with maintaining face and dignity. They will also show a greater willingness to take action to rectify the affront which they perceive. 5) The public of a nation state will show a greater likelihood to be susceptible to grandeur interests. 6) In order to enhance the power of the state, effective appeals by state leaders to the citizenry to make sacrifices may occur and leaders of nation states will show greater effectiveness in their appeals in this regard. These sacrifices include a willingness on the part of the citizenry to become part of the armed forces. 7) The commitment of the military to the defense of the state will be more intense. 8) The citizenry of a nation state will demonstrate a greater likelihood to grant state leaders a greater decisional latitude in defending state interests. The citizenry will show a lesser likelihood of granting them the decision latitude to accept defeats or the loss of face.

North Macedonia as a multi-ethnic state more closely approximates the political environment within postcolonial multi-ethnic states in Asia and Africa. Bosnia and Herzegovina would also fit within this multi-

ethnic category. They have national minorities drawn towards unification with neighboring perceived national homeland states. The territorial, internationally recognized state community may not act nationalistically. In multi-ethnic states, primary self-identification citizenry is with differing ingroups whose boundaries are not complementary with the territorial community of the state. In multi-ethnic states, primary self-intensity terminal ingroups lack the prevailing relative power capability self-image to achieve the costly goal of separation to create and maintain an economically viable, defensible sovereign state. In North Macedonia, the Slavophone Macedonians are willing to compromise by acquiescing to de facto Euro-Atlantic protectorate status so as to maintain state territorial integrity. These multi-ethnic, typically post-colonial states are comparatively more tolerant of external actor intervention in their internal political affairs. "For scholars who live or conduct research in countries that find themselves categorized as part of the "developing world," behavior such as that displayed by American and European diplomats in Macedonia will likely be familiar. Quite obviously, the presumption that a diplomat can or should comment publically on the affairs of a foreign country and the willingness of local news media to report on or otherwise facilitate such commentary rests on inequalities in transnational political power that are not unique to Macedonia" [*sic*] (Graan 2016, 279). Sectarian identities underline the subjectively perceived cultural distances between the Macedonian majority and Albanian minorities amidst Balkan Slavophone Orthodox communities. "In Kosovo, Islam and national identity are deeply, if ambivalently, entwined, while in Macedonia the relationship between Islam as a prominent 'minority' religion (that of Albanian Macedonian citizens) and majoritarian ethno-national Orthodox Macedonianness remains fraught" (Walton and Rexhepi 2019, 152).

In multi-national states, prevailing views among the national communities are that national separation via sovereignty is viable, albeit costly, option. The territorial integrity of multi-national states such as socialist Yugoslavia and the USSR was maintained through coercive suppression of nationalist centripetal forces. The removal of this suppression led to the democratic and violent dissolution of Yugoslavia. These centripetal forces generated reinforcing feedback political dynamics triggering prevailing stereotype images and their associated emotions pertaining to perceived threat and opportunity among the national groups towards the Other. The disintegration of the central state along with escalating fear and chaos which political entrepreneurs concomitantly represent and exploit escalated to communal violence. Competing national groups over territory violently separated into the formally sovereign, former Yugoslav republics whose Yugoslav-era borders the intervening international community have sought to stabilize. Their willingness to pay the political costs of enforcing these borders has limits, as the secession of Kosova illustrates. Launching official EU accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia in tandem is part of this stabilization strategy: "the two countries are treated as a package" (Nikolova 2020, para. 30).

7. THE EUROPEAN UNION IMAGINARY AND BALKAN INTEGRATION

The application of social identity theory to international relations and politics generally highlights the legitimation function. The various constituencies that constitute public opinion can grant legitimacy to the authorities by gaining and accepting the perceived viable opportunity to engage in social mobility. If attachment to a national identity ingroup is strong, then assimilation into the perceived higher status outgroup is slower. The perceiver resists the assimilation that would contribute, in their view, to dissolution of the ingroup.

The other type-route by which to grant legitimacy to the authorities would be to engage in social creativity. But the creation of this option requires that the perceiver believe that the ingroup national identity community is not threatened. National self-determination must not be perceived as an issue that is under sustained threat. To engage in national identity ingroup social creativity, the social creativity option has to provide substantive,

concrete benefits to the perceiver. The functional consequence of success is the construction of a supraordinate imagined community with substantive influence and material benefits. Once again, it is exploiting nationalism while harnessing it to liberal values. European nations and nationalisms thereby contribute to the building of Europe, each Europeanizing nation different but equal in their status and contribution to the construction of liberal Europe. The political dynamics of this social identity-based integration process will also involve ethical rhetorical appeals utilizing liberal symbols and romantic identity appeal. Europe becomes a positive myth in the mythology of Europe. The manipulator of these symbols will be leaders or elites in this political integration process. This supraordinate imagined community requires superordinate liberal political institutions for so-called European policy making.

Europe is apparently a substantive imagined community. Its foundations apparently were laid through the violent loot-driven expansion and syncretism of the Roman Empire. Dynamic social psychological processes as expressed through religion lead to early Christianity and its rapid expansion through the territory as the universal church. The disintegration of the empire and centuries of regional political evolution produced sovereign states in the early modern period, roughly equal in power capabilities. Different powers and their leaders attempted and failed to establish their hegemony, articulating their respective nationalistic universalisms, with their associated respective secular mythologies. These secular mythologies presented a rhetorical-ethical justification for their use of deadly force, resulting defeats, catastrophes and atrocities, forcing a change in the prevailing symbol set of the nation. "The myth as the rite creates or destroys a community, in parallel the myth is an infinite self-change and not only transforms and destroys itself but constantly creates itself (Jimenez 2018, 129).

To the extent that this imagined European supranational community has affective appeal, then political mobilization around the rhetorical manipulation of its value ideals can occur. The political dynamics of contestation of these narrative justifications include proclamation of what constitutes right versus wrong behavior and policy. "It is important to note that the pairing between History and myth forces us to admit that just as History makes the myth, so myth makes History. We are not arguing for a causal explanation where one is the effect of the other: on the contrary, the autonomy and not the independence between myth and historical reality is accepted, the own life of the myth, from this its indomitable condition; but the friction with the reality is not ignored" (Jimenez 2018, 122).

The European Union secular mythology is a liberal mythology. The construction of Europe in terms of its romantic mythological symbol set includes social creativity-based explanations and justifications for pooling sovereignty, with each nation a unique building block. Its nationalistic universalism emphasizes liberal value ideals including national self-determination for Europe and for the world. For example, in critiquing the EU's policy on education in relation to religion, de Vries calls for a religious canon for Europe:

[T]he reference to "Europe" is still or already too narrow since global religion does not stop at the borders of the union, nor does it originate there. It traverses and transcends national and international boundaries and helps us imagine a global civil society or truly transformed public sphere that is no longer determined or restricted by the principles of national and statist—or, for that matter, federalist—sovereignty, but emerges and inspires, as it were, from the bottom up (or, if you like, from a higher "top," more precisely, a greater idea of perfection and perfectibility, down: a "more perfect union," but without the potential falsity lurking in the epithet *e pluribus unum*) [sic] (de Vries 2013, 226).

The political disputes among the national Orthodox churches including the status of the MOC would be part of a hypothesized canon should the Republic of North Macedonia accede to the EU. Overcoming Bulgarian

resistance is likely due to the extensive diplomatic bargaining leverage that the other member states of the EU bring to bear. This same diplomatic bargaining leverage was successful in gaining Athens' acquiescence to the newly renamed Republic of North Macedonia to accede to NATO.

The association of nationalism with liberal values is a high-level tactical goal of the European Union peace strategy. The respective prevailing views within each member state polity of the foreign policy making processes within the other member states are incentivized to perceive complexity towards each other. In sum, the policy making processes within the EU member states become more transparent towards each other. Conflict spirals on the basis of mutual misperception of threat are less likely to emerge and intensify. The European Union institutional framework also creates additional opportunity structures for offering group social creativity and individual social mobility options. It undercuts and avoids social competition among internal political contestants in class and ethnically polarized polities. In accordance with the liberal intergovernmental analytical framework, political elites in each polity recognize that other leaders face dynamic public opinion constraints. Viktor Orban in Hungary could point to the farther right Jobbik party as a danger which he must not allow to outflank his Fidesz party for support. Similarly, at least one observer notes the reticence emanating from Brussels to withhold EU financial resources to EU member states unwilling to fulfill their legal obligations to accommodate refugees (Neumeyer 20121). Rather, the EU chastises Warsaw and Budapest for transgressions against judicial independence and elite cronyism and corruption (Pronczuk 2021). The analyst infers that Brussels politicians understand that immigration is the hottest of the hot button issues that fuel the electoral success of Eurosceptic parties, with which the EU should avoid association.

Europe exists within the context of American hegemonic authority which NATO institutionally represents. Nevertheless, the world evidently does believe that Europe exists. The European Union is issuing Eurobonds for sale to investors in the global financial community to rebuild from the Covid-19 pandemic (Arnold 2021). The fact of their purchase at a low rate of return indicates the global community's low estimation of the risk in investing in them. The value of fiat currency derives from a uniformly shared illusion in its value (Irwin 2021). It has this value to the extent that public opinion views the issuing regime authorities effectively control their power potential base, including of course their public. In this sense, Europe is real to a comparable extent that the US and China are real.

Dumezil's framework consisting of the tripartite ideological structure of European development may find functional analogies with the components of social identity theory. Social mobility associates with the third function within society of material accumulation, associated with agricultural, labor and capital focused economic production classes. The second function, the warrior class and castes, associates with social competition and protecting the in-group. The third function, associating with the scholarly and priestly class, associates with sovereignty and hegemony. They are purveyors of social creativity routes and strategies for those unhappy with their comparative status in society. European integration functionally aims to evolve the respective national hegemonic elites into a European hegemonic elite.

Euhemerization within the EU functionally consists of the EU authorities today interpreting past postwar European political leaders as the founders of Europe, making them into heroes, i.e., semi-deities. It involves selective forgetting because of the systemic context that was overdetermining, i.e., wartime conquest and destruction, the Cold War, and US-led containment of the USSR. New political leaders attempt to manipulate them as symbols, e.g., de Gaulle becomes a critical symbol in Marcon's pro-EU policy advocacy. Euhemerization means creating idealized, romantic symbols of self and other, and it is directly related to charisma.

One study found that the Gruevski government's public monuments "Skopje 2014" project asserted North Macedonia's claim to ancient Macedonian patrimony. It was alienating to university academics. They

identified Macedonian national identity with the Second World War communist partisan resistance and with rural folk culture and cuisine (Kolozova, Lechevska, Borovska and Blazheva 2020). The Gruevski government's construction of 35 monuments sought to strengthen public opinion support amidst frustration over stalled negotiations to resolve the name dispute issue. Greece's veto over Skopje's accession to NATO and the EU intensified social competition while Greece's diplomatic bargaining leverage weakened amidst its sovereign debt crisis. The collective Macedonian political sensitivity to Greece's demands is reflected in the costs of this Macedonian national identity affirmation and assertion project. The Macedonian authorities moved in the direction of refurbishing a national identity discourse of Macedonians being autochthonous by focusing on ancient as opposed to medieval history with the arrival of migrating Slavs. In a country of 2.1 million people, roughly one-third of whom are not Slavophone, the cost was 207, 872, 492 million euros as of April 2013. "Skopje 2014" consisted of "35 objects in predominantly neoclassicist style and some approximation of the baroque have been erected (buildings, statues and monuments) upon the decision and with the funds provided by the Ministry of Culture, several of the most monumental statues (including the "Warrior on a Horse" representing Alexander the Great) [...]" (Kolozova, Lechevska, Borovska and Blazheva 2020, 14–15).

The Communist regime, as throughout the Warsaw Pact, established close ties with Soviet allied Arab regimes rejecting Israel. The European Union, with strong support from Germany and its main ally, the United States, has followed a strongly support policy towards Israel. The post-Communist state authorities then identified a political imperative to demonstrate their pro-Israel credentials. The impact of Europeanization on Bulgarian-Macedonian relations appears to be particularly relevant as the Macedonian and Bulgarian governments competitively portray their Second World War experiences. Post-Communist Bulgaria's appeal to western public opinion highlighted its resistance to deporting Bulgaria's Jewish population to Nazi concentration camps. Sofia was reticent about its deportation of Jews from territories it annexed in neighboring Greece and Yugoslavia while allied with the Axis powers, albeit with much hedging. Macedonian identifiers have tended to throw in Macedonia's national historical lot with the partisan resistance which opposed the policies of the occupier and its local allies and clients. Both Skopje and Sofia have been very proactive in supporting international access to archives for Holocaust researchers (Ragaru 2017).

The Holocaust comparative national behavioral dispute fits within the broader dispute regarding collaboration or opposition with the Axis powers during the Second World War. It is a topic about which Sofia is politically sensitive. In Eastern Europe more broadly, the toleration of the rise of populist reactionary nationalism has functionally sought to claim legitimacy. It portrays itself as a response to the equally despicable crimes under Communist regimes (Brezar 2021). The latter gave birth to post-Communist, renamed Socialist parties and with their leaderships constituted by the descendants of top Communist-era nomenklatura. They continue to play a leading role in their respective countries' Europeanization, benefitting from the career opportunities concomitant with it (DeDominicis 2021).

Sofia's demands for Skopje's acceptance of Bulgarian national identity assertions regarding historical figures and official language designations are primarily driven by domestic electoral political competition. Sofia utilization of its leverage to block the formal launch of EU access negotiations appeals to Bulgarian nationalist communal values. The latter focus on the perception of both threat and opportunity towards North Macedonia. The government's foreign policy motivation reflects the preoccupation with generating electoral support in the midst of comparatively poor institutional performance in achieving public policy objectives. These tasks include those challenges surrounding Covid-19 pandemic, e.g., Bulgaria had the lowest vaccination rate within the EU at 20% of its adult population fully inoculated as of fall 2021 (Peltier 2021, para. 6). Congruently, Bulgaria's recorded Covid-19 morbidity rate is among the highest in the world (Auge

2021).

Functionally, Athens and Sofia have used their membership within Euro-Atlantic institutional structures to pursue policies that undermine Macedonia's mobilization base. Athens and Sofia both have tended to view their relationship with Skopje in predominantly zero-sum terms with the rise of populist nationalism in both states. The greater social creativity opportunity structures that the European Union integration project would seem to offer are not being utilized by a governing elite focused on winning elections. In sum, the social creativity opportunities which European integration provides are attractive to the European elite as evidenced by these cases. Staying in power is more important to the political elite, however, who appeal more intensely to populism to gain electoral support. The creation of expanding social creativity and mobility opportunity structures is offered by the European elite for the European elite, particularly the East European elite with the aim to coopt this elite.

For the mass public, appeals to mass public affective nationalist communal motivations, including irredentism, prestige and grandeur motivations is more likely in east European EU member states (Cottam and Cottam 2001). The EU framework is vulnerable to being utilized for these ends, as Greek and Bulgarian foreign policy behavior towards EU candidate Macedonia has demonstrated. Greece and Bulgaria can point to their own EU membership as certification that they are officially European, and Macedonia (and Turkey) are not, at least not yet. They also visibly demonstrate their status superiority by wielding a veto on the designation of Macedonia as European. From this perspective, the EU can be a vehicle for intensifying polarization and conflict in creating a club that claims to represent the symbolically attractive supranational community of Europe. Those who fail to satisfy the EU, because they do not serve EU interests as the member states define them, are labelled as non-European. For multi-ethnic states such as Macedonia, such a label denigrates further the perceived value of being a citizen of North Macedonia as a member of a minority, i.e., the Albanian minority.

On the other hand, the institutionalization of a framework that limits conflict spirals through heightened transparency facilitates the use of EU member state bargaining leverage to compromise on value demands. Athens' acceptance of "North Macedonia" as the name of their northern neighbor occurred in the midst of Greece's financial crisis. The elaborate, multi-level EU governance framework arguably alleviates perception-based conflicts amidst the member states and regulates the strategic setting. The plausibility of claims of orchestration of neo-colonial conspiratorial promotion of particular national interests is less so in such a complex, multilateral, multilevel, consensus-based negotiating framework. EU member states pursue their respective national interests towards each other and external actors as expressed in their policy making processes. The complex multilateral nature of EU policy making undercuts propensities towards stereotyping of the EU as an imperial threat for a European state with formal candidate member status. Greece and Macedonia as minor powers are subject to Western oversight policy parameters that question their respective de facto sovereign status. Athens and Skopje, however, do not see themselves a subject to imperial occupation by any specific European power although North Macedonia's long term sovereign stability is questionable (Vankovska 2020).

The awareness of the volatility of nationalist public opinion at the EU level is evident in the EU's declared aim that the Albanian and North Macedonian EU applications should move forward together (Euronews 2021). The functional aim is to avoid provoking pan-Albanian irredentism should North Macedonia fail to move towards European integration while Albania does. Athens would presumably acquiesce to the continuing de facto Euro-Atlantic protectorate in place over Slavophone Vardar Macedonia much as one de facto continues to exist in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Both the Bosniaks and the Macedonians have a primary terminal self-identification with their respective national communities. They are cognizant collectively of their lacking the

power capability to gain and maintain sovereign statehood in their regional context, so they compromise. It is a form of Euro-Atlantic formal indirect control over the area which the Bosniaks and the Macedonians will accept rather than acquiesce to integration with the Croats and Bulgarians, respectively.

Paradoxically, in channeling nationalism to associate it with liberal values, EU institutionalization has facilitated transparency and comparability. It thereby risks undermining the political support for comparatively poor performing governments in addressing shared challenges such as the Covid-19 pandemic. For post-Communist, east European states, the progressive elite advocates difficult liberal policy goals as necessary for the well-being of the nation. The EU itself can become a vehicle for nationalist conflict. Sofia's use of its EU membership to attempt to establish dominance over Skopje over historical identity disputes illustrates this dynamic while Bulgarian political elite factions compete for electoral support.

Athens used its EU member status analogously in its negotiations with Skopje. In the midst of Greece's sovereign debt crisis, the EU and other international actors evidently used their leverage to push a Greece in economic crisis to accept the use of the term Macedonia for its northern neighbor. The Prespa Agreement received a polarized response and begrudging acquiescence in both the Greek and Macedonian capitals (Kokkinidis 2021).

Mitropolitski (2013) finds that Bulgaria's EU integration has had a disempowering psychological effect on Bulgarian interviewees not directly engaging in European integration processes. European integration and its perceived provision of additional resources to the Bulgarian elite has tended to reinforce a sense of apathy and disempowerment by Bulgarians. Perceived as self-dealing and corrupt, EU integration has reinforced their disillusionment with their political class. For Macedonian interviewees, Mitropolitski finds that European integration has reinforced Macedonian tendencies to perceive dangers from traditional perceived ethnic outgroup threats. For this participatory perspective, the Bulgarian Borissov government's utilization of its EU membership diplomatic leverage to halt North Macedonian EU accession negotiations had a populist effect. It transformed Bulgaria's European integration into the EU a populist issue. It highlights Bulgaria as an EU gatekeeper utilizing its European membership certification to assert Bulgaria national self-image stereotypes. Public opinion survey polls in October 2021 indicated that Borissov's GERB party was likely to win a plurality in the third national parliamentary elections of 2021 (Tsolova 2021). In fact, the most pro-Euro-Atlantic major party, "We Continue the Change," won the plurality, formed a government, and agreed to begin North Macedonia EU accession negotiations before consequently collapsing (Dunai 2022).

8. CONCLUSION

According to Littleton, some of Dumezil's students have argued that significant tripartite ideological structural elements are preserved as well in Japanese mythological tales preserved in the earliest written documents, the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki*, from the eighth century A.D. They indicate a strong early Indo-European influence on Japan, either through direct Indo-European migration and conquest or through an invading Altaic tribe strongly influenced by the Indo-Europeans (Littleton 1982, 258-60). Early migrations into Japan from the Asian heartland came by way of Korea. If this thesis is true, then one would not be surprised to find evidence of such a tripartite ideological structure present in ancient Korean myth and legend as well. Littleton notes that these same scholars claim that similar accounts are found in traditional Korean tales of the founding of the Three Kingdoms, Paekche, Silla and Koguryo, in the fourth century A.D. (Littleton 1982, 260).

Indeed, Korean colleagues and students with whom this writer has spoken routinely relate that Koguryo was the military power of the three kingdoms (second function). Paekche was the more prosperous agricultural producer (third function) which remains the main agricultural producer in Korea to present. It was also the transit point for Asian ideas as well as the jumping off point for communication and invasions of Japan. Finally,

Silla would extend its own sovereignty (first function) to be the unifier of the Korean peninsula through a military alliance with the Tang dynasty in China. Interestingly, KBS, the Korean public television network and the largest television network in Korea, recently aired a Korean documentary reporting on archeological evidence of shared culture between the Three Kingdoms and the ancient Celtic-Thracian civilization dominating what is today Bulgaria and Macedonia (“Cultural Ties” 2009). To the consternation of Korean nationalist public opinion in South Korea, the Chinese authorities publicly laid claim to ancient Koguryo as part of China’s national patrimony (“Concerning the ‘Northeast Asia Project’” n.d.) beginning in the “mid-1990s” (Chung 2009, 475).

Regional integration organizations address the challenge of nationalism. The prevailing, albeit not the sole, view in Washington, DC is that US-led containment saved global civilization from a militantly imperialist Soviet Union, in effect a Russian version of Nazi Germany. Evidence for this depiction of postwar history was utilized in the address of President G.W. Bush to the joint session of the US Congress on September 21, 2001 (Bush 2001). One academic analysis highlighted the intense US expansionism following the September 11, 2001, attacks (Jervis 2002). American led international institutions are seen as instruments for peace and prosperity against the new threats. In Europe, they largely have been, because the US was allied with European nationalisms opposed to Soviet domination. In the Middle East, Africa, Latin America and Asia, US containment strategy during the Cold War often placed the US in opposition to nationalist movements. The US defeat in Vietnam was due to the US confrontation against Vietnamese nationalism. Similarly, the US has opposed pan-Arabism and pan-Islamist movements in the Middle East during and after the Cold War.

The implications of this analysis are ultimately as much about US and EU perceptions of their relationship as it is about Bulgarian, Greek and Macedonian nationalism. Much discussion has circulated in the last decade about the relevance of so-called soft power and US advantages in this regard. The discussion of soft power is a discussion of public opinion, and public opinion cannot be understood in the modern era without an understanding of nationalism. To the extent that the US is perceived as allied with national self-determination aspirations, then it will have a soft power advantage. To the extent that it is seen as hostile to national self-determination, then it will lose soft power advantages.

Regional integration efforts and global international organizations as well will have to accommodate these national self-determination demands through institutionalization of the process of reconciling these demands. If the US is playing a leading role in these initiatives, then it will use these regional integration trends to pursue its foreign policy objectives. The EU has been proposed as a model for regional integration initiatives such as the African Union and the proposed Asian Union (Changwen 2009). Therefore, firstly, comprehension of the nature of the relationship of the US to EU integration, historically and today is a critical issue.

Finally, policy recommendations for peaceful conflict resolution include progressing with EU membership negotiations with Skopje. Additionally, liberal democratic EU member state Bulgaria would support peaceful conflict resolution in the western Balkans by the Bulgarian Orthodox Church recognizing the autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church. Russian and Serbian Orthodox Church opposition to this move reinforces social competition in the region. Arguably, the BOC would be promoting social creativity by recognizing the MOC. It would constitute a policy step that would affirm Macedonian identity as different but equal to Serb, Greek, Russian and Bulgarian national identity. The ambivalence of Bulgarian national public opinion regarding such a scenario development would be a positive indicator as to its domestic political feasibility within the Bulgarian domestic political arena.

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