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Macedonian Monument Culture Beyond 'Skopje 2014'

Abstract. While recent studies on Macedonia have mostly focused on 'Skopje 2014' as a uniquely excessive project of nation-building, this article analyses local developments in monument culture elsewhere in Macedonia. Disentangling the processes of nation-building since the Ohrid Agreement of 2001, the author distinguishes three coexisting, but competing, repertoires of monument culture, namely a Yugoslav, a Macedonian, and an Albanian one. Each repertoire has been closely associated with ethnicity and the legitimization of ethnopolitical claims, as well as party politics and ideology. The past has continued to divide Macedonians. The author argues that these divisions in Macedonian monument culture reflect the competing and diverging Albanian and Macedonian historical narratives, and amount to effectively mutually exclusive ethnic and ideological nation-building efforts in post-Ohrid Macedonia.

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Beyond 'Skopje 2014'

'Skopje 2014' was one of the largest urban-renewal and -construction programmes in Europe since the fall of communism. It aimed at transforming Skopje from a brutalist Yugoslav city into a modern, attractive, neoclassicist capital up to European standards. The project included well over a hundred buildings, from opera halls and hotels to orthodox churches and museums. Additionally, Yugoslav-era edifices were either destroyed or refitted with neo-classical façades. Dozens of historical monuments and statues have been placed across the capital.¹ The 'Skopje 2014' project sought to modernize the capital

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¹ Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), Macedonia Team, Skopje 2014 Uncovered, n. d., <http://skopje2014.prizma.birn.eu.com/en>. All internet references were accessed on 21 November 2018.

with a focus on Macedonia's ancient past, not least to attract more tourists. First and foremost, however, it was an attempt by Macedonia's then ruling party to bolster national identity and to rearrange the nation's past to further its own ends and nation-building efforts.

The right-wing Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization–Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (*Vnatrešna Makedonska Revolucionerna Organizacija–Demokratska Partija za Makedonsko Nacionalno Edinstvo*, VMRO-DPMNE) and its leader until the end of 2017, Nikola Gruevski, initiated an extensive rewriting and politicization of Macedonian history when they came to power in 2006. This revisionist agenda can be summarized in three points: the negation of the communist and Yugoslav pasts and identities; the emphasis on revolutionary movements'—specifically the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization's (VMRO)—role in achieving Macedonian independence; and finally, the so-called 'antiquization'. *Antikvizacija* claims Alexander the Great's antique Macedonia as the progenitor of today's Macedonian nation state.²

The main symbol of this effort is the much-criticized 'Skopje 2014' project. This was commenced in 2008 and was halted by the government under prime minister Zoran Zaev, who took office in May 2017.³ The project's enormous price tag of approximately 600 million euros, and the widespread corruption surrounding it, played a large role in this decision.⁴ This is no more than an uncertain estimate, however, as the former government refused to offer insight into 'Skopje 2014's' finances. For a country with an annual budget of circa 3 billion euros, it was a very high price to pay, amidst budget cuts and economic recession. Against this background, the monuments and neoclassicist structures of 'Skopje 2014' formed the decor and catalyst for what has been named the 'Colourful Revolution' of 2016. This was a wave of protests in which tens of

² Anastas Vangeli, Nation-Building Ancient Macedonian Style. The Origins and the Effects of the So-Called Antiquization in Macedonia, *Nationalities Papers* 39, no. 1 (2011), 13–32, DOI: 10.1080/00905992.2010.532775.

³ Sinisa Jakov Marusic, Macedonia's New Govt Halts Skopje 2014 Makeover, *BalkanInsight*, 31 May 2017, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-s-new-govt-to-stop-skopje-2014-revamp-05-30-2017>.

⁴ Former prime minister Gruevski has been sentenced to two years in prison for a different case of corruption and graft, while other lawsuits against the former government are still ongoing. Gruevski failed to report for his two-year imprisonment on 9 November, however, and fled to Hungary, where he received asylum. The Macedonian government is demanding extradition. Cf. Shaun Walker, Anti-Asylum Orbán Makes Exception for a Friend in Need, *The Guardian*, 20 November 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/nov/20/anti-asylum-orban-makes-exception-for-a-friend-in-need>; Sinisa Jakov Marusic, Macedonia to File Gruevski Extradition Request, *BalkanInsight*, 20 November 2018, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-ready-to-file-gruevski-s-asylum-request-11-20-2018>; Sinisa Jakov Marusic, Court Freezes Macedonian Opposition's Property Assets, *BalkanInsight*, 1 November 2018, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/court-freezes-macedonian-opposition-s-real-estate-11-01-2018>.

thousands took to the streets to protest against the government. Protestors attacked 'Skopje 2014's main symbols with paint bombs—the Porta Macedonia and the statue of Alexander the Great as well as parliament and the new special prosecutor's office.⁵

'Skopje 2014' has also drawn criticism for its blatant rewriting of Macedonian history, including the controversial claiming of neighbouring nations' histories. Commentators have criticized its kitsch or 'Disneysque' appearance, as well as the idea that building the biggest statue will somehow make whoever is depicted a Macedonian, rather than a Greek or a Bulgarian.⁶ Moreover, 'Skopje 2014' received criticism for destroying and marginalizing the capital's modernist reconstruction after the destructive earthquake of 1963. This rearrangement of the capital's cityscape in a neoclassicist manner in fact also served to ignore and marginalize the Yugoslav legacy. In particular, the ex-communist and then left-wing opposition party, the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (*Socijaldemokratski Sojuz na Makedonija*, SDSM), and also many inhabitants of Skopje, have protested against the denial of communist heritage and history. The country's Albanian⁷ minority, approximately 25% of the population, directed protests also against their exclusion from the 'Skopje 2014' project. Last, Greece and Bulgaria criticized Macedonia for 'stealing' their history and, in 2012, symbolically joined forces to veto further accession talks between Macedonia and the EU.⁸

'Skopje 2014' and the VMRO-DPMNE's nation-building project are also deeply entangled with international tensions over Macedonia's national identity and name. One of the main reasons behind the current government's rejection of 'antiquization' was to reach an agreement with the Greek government over the name conflict after 27 years, as well as to restart NATO and EU accession talks. Thus, a new compromise name, 'Republic of North Macedonia', was agreed

⁵ Kristina Ozimec, Macedonia. 'Colourful Revolution' Paints Raucous Rainbow, *Deutsche Welle*, 21 April 2016, <http://www.dw.com/en/macedonia-colorful-revolution-paints-raucous-rainbow/a-19203365>; Paul Reef, Macedonia's Colourful Revolution and the Elections of 2016. A Chance for Democracy, or All for Nothing?, *Südosteuropa. Journal of Politics and Society* 65, no. 1 (2017), 170-182, <https://doi.org/10.1515/soeu-2017-0009>.

⁶ Kit Gillet, How Skopje Became Europe's New Capital of Kitsch, *The Guardian*, 11 April 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2015/apr/11/skopje-macedonia-architecture-2014-project-building>; Catriona Davies, Is Macedonia's Capital Being Turned into a Theme Park?, *CNN*, 10 October 2011, <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/10/04/world/europe/macedonia-skopje-2014/>.

⁷ Unless further specified or explicitly stated otherwise, the demonym 'Albanian' refers to Macedonian Albanians living in Macedonia.

⁸ Sinisa Jakov Marusic, Bulgaria and Greece Block Macedonia's EU Talks, *BalkanInsight*, 12 December 2012, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/bulgaria-joins-greece-in-blocking-macedonia-s-eu-bid>.

Figure 1: The Porta Macedonia triumphal arch, standing on 11 October Street, which connects the city's central square, Macedonia Square, with parliament. Through the gate, the 22-metre-tall statue of Alexander the Great (officially called 'Warrior on a Horse') is visible. Both were attacked by paint bombs during the 'Colourful Revolution'. Source: Paul Reef (valid for all photographs in this text).

upon by the Greek and Macedonian government on 17 June 2018.⁹ Initially, the government's attempt to acquire a broad mandate for this name change via a referendum appeared to have backfired with a voter turnout of 36.89%, far short of the threshold of 50%, despite 94.18% voting in favour.¹⁰ The low turnout bolstered the VMRO-DPMNE, which had officiously supported a boycott of the plebiscite, in its opposition to the name change.¹¹ However, when parliament voted on starting the first step of the name change procedure on 19 October, eight VMRO-DPMNE delegates backed the coalition to obtain the necessary two-thirds majority.¹² The party leadership immediately expelled them, which in turn has resulted in great turmoil and resignations within the opposition par-

⁹ Niki Kitsantonis, Macedonia and Greece Sign Historic Deal on Name Change, *The New York Times*, 17 June 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/17/world/europe/greece-macedonia-name-dispute.html>.

¹⁰ Republic of Macedonia State Election Commission, Referendum 2018, 3 October 2018, <https://referendum.sec.mk/Referendum/Results?cs=en-US&r=r&rd=r1&eu=All&m=All>.

¹¹ Sinisa Jakov Marusic, Macedonia Opposition Accused of Playing 'Two-Faced' Referendum Game, *BalkanInsight*, 24 September 2018, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-opposition-accused-of-playing-two-faced-referendum-game-09-23-201>.

¹² Sinisa Jakov Marusic, Macedonia Starts Name Change Procedure, Amid Praise, *Balkan Insight*, 20 October 2018, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-makes-break-through-10-20-2018>.

ty.¹³ The government submitted the draft constitutional amendments necessary for the name change to parliament on 2 November. The second phase, which requires only a simple majority of 61 MPs in the 120-seat parliament, is almost certain to pass when put to vote early December.¹⁴ The final and third phase again requires a two third majority, and although likely to succeed in both the Macedonian and Greek parliaments, it remains uncertain whether the Zaev government can again count on the support of opposition MPs. If anything, this latest chapter in the naming dispute illustrates how Macedonian national identity and history have become further embroiled in Macedonian politics. To understand why, it is necessary to go beyond the debate naming dispute itself as well as 'Skopje 2014'.

It is no surprise that 'Skopje 2014', as a uniquely excessive case of nation-building, has attracted most scholarly attention.¹⁵ Recent developments in monument and memory culture outside the capital have largely been ignored, however. This is especially problematic, as neither 'Skopje 2014's negation of the communist past, nor its obsession with antiquity, are representative of Macedonia as a whole. What is more, Albanian nation-building and concomitant construction of monuments since 2001 have received only minor attention in recent scholarship. Politics of memory, and specifically memory and monument culture, have received little notice.¹⁶ This pertains both to the marginalization, replacement,

¹³ Sinisa Jakov Marusic, Party Officials' Resignations Rock Macedonian Opposition, *BalkanInsight*, 1 November 2018, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/resignations-rock-macedonian-opposition-10-31-2018>.

¹⁴ Sinisa Jakov Marusic, Macedonia Govt Submits Constitutional Changes for 'Name' Deal, *BalkanInsight*, 2 November 2018, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-government-submits-constitutional-amendments-11-02-2018>.

¹⁵ On the politics of history and memory cf. Nada Boškovska, Skopje 2014. Makedonien auf der Suche nach seiner Vergangenheit, in: Martina Baleva / Boris Previšić, eds, 'Den Balkan gibt es nicht.' Erbschaften im südöstlichen Europa, Köln, Weimar, Wien 2016, 170-190; Tanja Zimmermann, 'Skopje 2014', Erinnerungsexzesse in der Republik Makedonien, *Acta Historiae Artis Slovenica* 18, no. 2 (2013), 159-181; Michael Kubiena, Skopje 2014. Musealizing the City, Re-Inventing History?, *The Western Balkans Policy Review* 2, no. 1 (2012), 78-99, <http://www.kppcenter.org/WBPRReview2012-2-1-Kubiena.pdf>; Despina Angelovska, (Mis-)Representations of Transitional Justice. Contradictions in Displaying History, Memory and Art in the Skopje 2014 Project, in: Peter D. Rush / Olivera Simić, eds, The Arts of Transitional Justice, New York 2014, 173-193. On nation-building cf. Ulf Brunnbauer, Zwischen Eigensinn und Realitätsflucht. 'Skopje 2014' als Bau an der Nation, *Ost-West. Europäische Perspektiven* 16, no. 1 (2015), 26-35, <https://www.owep.de/ausgabe/2015-1>; Aleksandar Sazdovski, Nation-Building Under the Societal Security Dilemma. The Case of Macedonia, *Journal of Regional Security* 10, no. 1 (2015), 53-78, DOI: 10.11643/issn.2217-995X151SP554; Andrew Graan, Counterfeiting the Nation? Skopje 2014 and the Politics of Nation Branding in Macedonia, *Cultural Anthropology* 28, no. 1 (2013), 161-179, DOI: 10.1111/j.1548-1360.2012.01179.x.

¹⁶ Cf. Anastas Vangeli, Facing the Yugoslav Communist Past in Contemporary Macedonia. Tales of Continuity, Nostalgia and Victimization, *History of Communism in Europe* 1 (2010), thematic issue 'Politics of Memory in Post-Communist Europe', eds Corina Dobos / Marius

Figure 2: Ethnic map of Macedonia, based on the census of 2001. During my field research, I visited Skopje/Shkup, Veles, Tetovo/Tetovë, nearby Gajre/Gostivar, and nearby Regani/Regan, Zajaz/Zajaz, Kličevo/Kërrovë, Bitola/Manastir, Prilep, and Strumica. For clarity and consistency, in the text I use the Macedonian toponyms. Source: Map of the municipalities of Macedonia with majority ethnic groups, *Wikipedia*, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Maps_of_ethnic_groups_in_the_Republic_of_Macedonia#/media/File:Ethnic_map_of_Macedonia.png.

decay, or removal of monuments, as well as to the changes in rituals, collective memory, and commemorations over time and, crucially, to the politics behind these developments.

Here, I present the findings of my field research on Macedonian monument culture to address precisely these developments beyond 'Skopje 2014', since the conflict of 2001 and during the VMRO-DPMNE government of 2006-2017. I conducted my field work in July 2016 in several towns throughout Macedonia, with different ethnic makeups, political preferences, developments, and foci in monument cultures (see Figure 2). In total, I conducted semi-structured interviews with around 40 citizens, most of them individually. Additionally, I interviewed local politicians in Gostivar and Veles, archaeologists in Bitola, and scholars affiliated to the National Academy of Sciences in Skopje, as well as museum and heritage conservators in Kičevo, Bitola, Strumica, and Veles. Outside Skopje, a very different perspective emerges—in many places Yugoslav monuments are being renovated and are still in public use, contrary to the marginalization or removal of similar monuments in the capital. On the other hand, the revision of the communist past, or 'antiquization', is embodied in monuments in some towns but is non-existent in others. What is more, a separate strand of distinct monument culture started to take root in ethnically Albanian communities after 2001.

One of the dangers, both of field research and the study of monument culture, is the inclination to focus on the multi-layered, complex intricacies of each local memory culture, foregrounding the uniqueness of each town. I countered this danger by adopting a comparative approach and focused on the similarities and differences between each town, and their relation to national narratives and developments. The result of this approach is the empirical illustration of the three main repertoires of Macedonian monument culture.

These three I have framed as the Yugoslav, Macedonian, and Albanian monument repertoires. Although the Yugoslav socialist ideology permeating the first repertoire was in theory supra-ethnic, with regard to Macedonia it had effectively a nation-state-building quality; and in fact, all three repertoires of Macedonian monument culture have become inextricably linked to ethnicity, i.e. to Macedonians or Albanians. Each repertoire has also been connected to political parties and/or ideology: the SDSM associates itself mainly with the Yugoslav repertoire; the VMRO-DPMNE with Macedonian monuments built since 2001; and Albanian political parties with Albanian monuments. Because all readings of Macedonian history are interwoven with ethnicity and ethnic

Stan, 183-205, DOI: 10.7761/HCE.1.183; Keith Brown, *The Past in Question. Modern Macedonia and the Uncertainties of Nation*, Princeton/NJ 2003.

party politics, further distinctions in the repertoires, based on religion or location, would ignore the overarching ethnic cleavages.¹⁷

However, this does not imply that ethnic groups are monolithic and live on a single hegemonic reading of the past. Internal conflicts have been part and parcel of the formulation of these repertoires. A look at the repertoires allows the assessment of both intra-ethnic tensions along ideological lines and other types of conflict, as well as change over time and as per local context. The dominant ethnic or ideological divisions should not prevent one from searching for 'civic' or overarching monuments that overstep ethnic, political, or religious boundaries.¹⁸ Likewise, the divisions between the three repertoires are not absolute, and mainly aim to offer a guideline through Macedonia's fractured and complex memory culture. First, there is considerable overlap and continuity between the Yugoslav and Macedonian repertoires and historical narratives.¹⁹ Second, in virtually all Macedonian communities, monuments from different eras and repertoires coexist. Each repertoire will be introduced with a focus on how monuments have been re-appropriated to serve political interests, and how they have been related to ethnicity and the legitimation of (ethno)political claims as well as to the processes of nation-building.

Going beyond the analysis of the monuments in their local contexts, my focus lies rather in the way in which they have shaped the representation, presence, and politicization of the past. They are conceived as concrete, physical *lieux de mémoire*, i.e. in terms of their functioning in local memory culture, the rituals and commemorations, their removal, change of place, neglect, or destruction.²⁰ However, these local *lieux de mémoire* are also connected to wider sociopolitical contexts, and to the broader public, political, and academic debates that have further heated up the controversies over the past.²¹

¹⁷ Ulf Brunnbauer, *Ancient Nationhood and the Struggle for Statehood. Historiographic Myths in the Republic of Macedonia*, in: Pål Kolstø, ed, *Myths and Boundaries in South-Eastern Europe*, London 2005, 262-296; Ljupcho S. Risteski / Armanda Kodra Hysa, *Strategies for Creating the Macedonian State and Nation and Rival Projects between 1991 and 2012*, in: Pål Kolstø, ed, *Strategies of Symbolic Nation-Building in South-Eastern Europe*, Burlington/VT 2014, 165-200.

¹⁸ Cf. Ana Dević, *Jaws of the Nation and Weak Embraces of the State. The Lines of Division, Indifference and Loyalty in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, in: Kolstø, ed, *Strategies of Symbolic Nation-Building*, 51-86.

¹⁹ Cf. Ulf Brunnbauer, *Historiography, Myths and the Nation in the Republic of Macedonia*, in: Ulf Brunnbauer, ed, *(Re)Writing History. Historiography in Southeast Europe after Socialism*, Münster 2004, 165-200.

²⁰ Pierre Nora, *Between Memory and History. Les Lieux de Mémoire*, *Representations* 26, no. 1 (1989), 7-24, DOI: 10.2307/2928520.

²¹ Stefan Troebst, *Geschichtspolitik und historische 'Meistererzählungen' in Makedonien vor und nach 1991*, in: Stefan Troebst, *Das makedonische Jahrhundert. Von den Anfängen der nationalrevolutionären Bewegung zum Abkommen von Ohrid 1893-2001. Ausgewählte Aufsätze*, Munich 2007, 425-442.

The Yugoslav Monument Repertoire

The mass construction of monuments in the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia after 1945 was effectively a part of the Yugoslav communist party's project with regard to the newly founded Socialist Republic of Macedonia.²² The communist leadership was well aware that, in order to create a successfully autonomous republic, it was necessary to create a strong Macedonian national consciousness that would overcome the historical 'enmeshedness' of Macedonia in several nation-building projects, such as the Bulgarian, Greek, and Albanian. After the Tito-Stalin split of 1948 and the deterioration of relations with Bulgaria, the country's newly institutionalized historiography was allowed to be orientated primarily on the nation, rather than on class as in other Yugoslav republics.²³ The Macedonian socialist republic was crafted on the notion of the existence of ethnic Macedonians, who were its constituent nation or *narod*.²⁴ The other nationalities (*narodnosti*) inhabiting the republic were mostly side-lined in the historiographic narratives, partly because their contribution to the partisan struggle was virtually non-existent. Although Albanians, also then the largest minority, received relatively little attention in official historiography, what was written about them ideologically fitted the principle of 'Brotherhood and Unity'.²⁵

This focus on ethnic Macedonians is reflected in the Yugoslav-Macedonian monument culture, which revolved around memorials of Macedonian partisans. As in the other Yugoslav republics, the victory over fascism formed the bedrock of Yugoslavia's foundational myth. Monuments and commemorations honoured the fallen, but also strongly legitimized the existence of the socialist Yugoslav state.²⁶ In Macedonia this, more strongly than in the other republics, was buttressed by embedding it in existing historical narratives. Therefore, in this crafted history, the Socialist Republic of Macedonia had effectively been established on the date of the Ilinden Uprising of 1903. The Yugoslav partisans'

²² Stefan Troebst, *Yugoslav Macedonia, 1943-1953. Building the Party, the State, and the Nation*, in: Melissa K. Bokovoy / Jill A. Irvine / Carol S. Lilly, eds, *State-Society Relations in Yugoslavia 1945-1992*, Basingstoke 1997, 241-258.

²³ Wolfgang Höpken, *Zwischen 'Klasse' und 'Nation'. Historiographie und ihre 'Meistererzählungen' in Südosteuropa in der Zeit des Sozialismus (1944-1990)*, *Jahrbücher für Geschichte und Kultur Südosteuropas* 2 (2000), 15-60, 55.

²⁴ Brunnbauer, *Historiography, Myths*, 165-176.

²⁵ Brunnbauer, *Ancient Nationhood and the Struggle for Statehood*, 288. The proportion of Albanians in socialist Macedonia grew from 12% in 1953 to approximately 20% in 1980, cf. Ulf Brunnbauer, *Fertility, Families and Ethnic Conflict. Macedonians and Albanians in the Republic of Macedonia, 1944-2002*, *Nationalities Papers* 32, no. 3 (2004), 565-598, 568, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0090599042000246406>.

²⁶ Wolfgang Höpken, *Krieg und historische Erinnerung auf dem Balkan*, in: Eva Behring / Ludwig Richter / Wolfgang Schwarz, eds, *Geschichtliche Mythen in den Literaturen und Kulturen Ostmittel- und Südosteuropas*, Stuttgart 1999, 371-379.

victory in the Second World War was depicted as the 'Second Ilinden', the culmination of the Macedonian struggle for independence. Socialism and nationalism thus went hand in hand, as the Ilinden revolt of 1903 was re-appropriated for socialist myth-making by highlighting interethnic cooperation to serve the ideal of a multi-ethnic, egalitarian socialist state.²⁷ Apart from this, a large number of monuments were erected to honour heroes of the Macedonian nationalist awakening in the 19th century. Problematically, Bulgaria had already claimed many of these figures as 'theirs', resulting in heated Yugoslav-Bulgarian debates.²⁸ The issue of (re-)appropriating history by 'latecomer' Macedonia has continued to represent an apple of discord until today.

In contrast to many other formerly socialist states, the first postsocialist Macedonian government did not deliberately destroy communist monuments.²⁹ In general, Yugoslav-era monuments have survived remarkably well and with relatively little suffering from neglect due to a lack of funding. Moreover, they still form an integral part of (local) historical narratives and memory cultures, underlining the continuity in both politics and national narratives since 1991. The SDSM, and many professional historians, support this continuation of the old Yugoslav narratives, including the use and maintenance of Yugoslav monuments.³⁰ However, despite such overall continuity, the interpretation of the Yugoslav past is far from being consensual in Macedonia. Revisionist historians, but also VMRO-DPMNE politicians, have led the heated public and political debate concerning the history and memory of communism. They have drawn attention to and rehabilitated the victims of communism as well as the importance of the pre-communist revolutionary movements in achieving Macedonian nationhood and statehood. In turn, they have downplayed the fundamental role partisans and communism played in founding an autonomous

²⁷ James Krapfl, *The Ideals of Ilinden. Uses of Memory and Nationalism in Socialist Macedonia*, in: John S. Micgiel, ed, *State and Nation Building in East Central Europe. Contemporary Perspectives*, New York 1996, 297-316; Keith Brown, *A Rising to Count On. Ilinden Between Politics and History in Post-Yugoslav Macedonia*, in: Victor Roudometof, ed, *The Macedonian Question. Culture, Historiography, Politics*, New York 2000, 143-172.

²⁸ Brunnbauer, *Historiography, Myths*, 176-181; Stefan Troebst, *Die bulgarisch-jugoslawische Kontroverse um Makedonien 1967-1982*, Munich 1983.

²⁹ Rudolf Jaworski, *Alte und neue Gedächtnisorte in Osteuropa nach dem Sturz des Kommunismus*, in: Rudolf Jaworski / Jan Kusber / Ludwig Steindorff, eds, *Gedächtnisorte in Osteuropa. Vergangenheiten auf dem Prüfstand*, Frankfurt/M 2003, 11-26.

³⁰ Tchavdar Marinov, *Historiographical Revisionism and Re-Articulation of Memory in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, *Sociétés politiques comparées* 25 (2010), http://www.fasopo.org/sites/default/files/article_n25.pdf; Davorin Trpeski, *Monuments in the Post-Socialistic Period. Examples from the City-Hero in Macedonia*, *EthnoAnthroZoom* 6 (2009), 97-111, <http://etno.pmf.ukim.mk/index.php/eaz/article/view/216>.

Macedonian state.³¹ VMRO-DPMNE governments have removed, marginalized, or neglected Yugoslav monuments.

Since 2001, partisan monuments in areas inhabited by Albanians have been vandalized or even removed by municipal authorities. Examples of this are the vandalization and partial destruction of a partisan ossuary in Kičevo, and the removal of two partisan busts from the main square of Tetovo, endorsed and possibly initiated by municipal Albanian politicians.³² These and other incidents are clear signs of continued ethnic and political tensions after the 2001 insurgency. Albanian readings of the past will be discussed in detail hereafter, but it is important to note here that Albanian citizens and politicians have specifically targeted Macedonian partisan monuments, interpreting them as symbols of oppression. The case study of Bitola underlines the continuity of Yugoslav monument culture after 1991, despite ethnopolitical tensions or revisionist debates that have always accompanied it.

Case Study Bitola

Bitola is Macedonia's third largest city and features a variety of monuments stemming from the Yugoslav period. More importantly, all communist-era monuments are well maintained, and in fact new monuments commemorating the partisans or the Yugoslav past are still being erected. Of the 29 partisan busts in the central city park, four have been built in the last decade to commemorate recently deceased partisans from Bitola. Similarly, the memorial house and museum of partisan hero Stevan Naumov in the city centre is being renovated and expanded. An initiative spearheaded by former SDSM leader and then president Branko Crvenkovski eventually resulted in the erection of a bust of Josip Broz Tito alongside Bitola's main shopping street in 2005. Fittingly, a small stand packed with communist medals and other paraphernalia is located opposite Tito's bust. The medal vendor and other passers-by told me that citizens and individual SDSM politicians lay wreathes and flowers at the bust on Tito's (alleged) birthday on 25 May, in continuity with how his birthday was celebrated on 'the Day of Youth' (*Dan Mladosti*) in Yugoslav times.³³ This is not simply a case of Yugonostalgia, as Tito has always been inextricably linked to and thanked for

³¹ Brunnbauer, *Historiography, Myths*, 190-196.

³² Rasfrlani koskite na borcite od NOB vo Kičevo, *Vecer*, 12 September 2014, <http://vecer.mk/makedonija/rasfrlani-koskite-na-borcite-od-nob-vo-kichevo/>; I po edna decenija bistite na narodnite heroj vo Tetovo ne se vrateni, *Meta*, 18 November 2015, <http://meta.mk/i-po-edna-detsenija-bistite-na-narodnite-heroj-vo-tetovo-ne-se-vrateni/>.

³³ Interview conducted with Ilce Bozinovski and passersby on 20 June 2016 in Bitola.

the creation of the Macedonian nation state in Yugoslav-Macedonian narratives associated with the SDSM.³⁴

Other monument cultures have also developed in Bitola since 1991. Partly sponsored by the Israeli government, a new memorial is being constructed to commemorate Bitola's Jewish community and the Shoah at the old Jewish cemetery.³⁵ Right next to several communist-era busts of national heroes at the start of the city's main shopping street, a new marble monument has been placed to honour the soldiers from Bitola who died in the conflict of 2001. Both VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM politicians as well as citizens attend annual commemorations at this latter monument.³⁶ A Bitola offshoot of 'Skopje 2014' is also well under way, capitalizing on nearby ancient ruins. A grand statue of Alexander the Great's father Philip II has been placed at the beginning of the city's main street, along with various other monuments elsewhere, which, just as in Skopje, in 2016 were attacked with paint bombs during the 'Colourful Revolution'.³⁷

The case of Bitola thus illustrates the coexistence of different layers of Macedonian memory and monument culture, and the continued use of communist-era monuments as part of it. At the main site of Second World War remembrance, the Monument to the Revolution, ceremonies take place on 8 September (Independence Day), 11 October (Revolution Day), and 4 November (Liberation of Bitola). The week after the last date is filled with celebrations and festivities along with commemorative acts. Moreover, the mayor of Bitola, local politicians, veteran organizations, and many citizens attend the official remembrance-day ceremonies. However, despite this overall large attendance, official remembrances have increasingly become an affair mainly of elderly people and politicians. Many of the people whom I interviewed, specifically those under 25, stated that although they do think that it is important to honour the partisans, they no longer wish to partake in official political ceremonies doing so.³⁸ Still, at all

³⁴ Tchavdar Marinov / Alexander Vezekov, *Communism and Nationalism in the Balkans. Marriage of Convenience or Mutual Attraction?*, in: Roumen Daskalov / Diana Mishkova, eds, *Entangled Histories of the Balkans*, vol. 2: *Transfers of Political Ideologies and Institutions*, Leiden, Boston 2014, 469-557, 496-503.

³⁵ Association of Sustainable Architecture and Urban Development Atmosphere (ARHAM), *Memorandum of Cooperation [between Israel and Macedonia]*, n. d., <http://arcamb.org/en/novosti/memorandum-za-sorabotki/>.

³⁶ Interview conducted with two archaeologists and a heritage conservator at the Jewish cemetery in Bitola on 20 June 2016; cf. also the news articles mentioned below.

³⁷ Marija Tegovska, *Week of Protests in Macedonia*, *CIVIL*, 18 May 2016, <https://www.civil.org.mk/week-of-protests-in-macedonia/>; Bitola Police Files Criminal Charges against 26 Protesters, *Meta*, 3 June 2016, <http://meta.mk/en/bitola-police-files-criminal-charges-against-26-protesters/>.

³⁸ For example, I was told this during two interviews conducted at Bitola's city park on 20 June 2016, one with a group of younger men and one with a group of retired men.

Figures 3+4: The memorial house of the Manaki brothers, pioneering Bitola-born filmmakers active around 1900. It was attacked with paint bombs during the 'Colourful Revolution', mostly because its construction was perceived as mired in corruption. To the right is the bust of partisan Josif Hristovski, where flowers were placed in honour of his death on 22 July 1942.

the partisans' busts, not only do relatives continue to lay down flowers individually, but collective ceremonies also continue. Although overall attendance may have faltered since 1991, the only other discontinuity in commemorative practices is the addition of a new commemoration service at the Monument of the Revolution on Independence Day (8 September), referring to the newly founded Macedonian Republic of 1991.

The political speeches given during Independence Day's remembrance ceremonies offer an insight into the different readings of Macedonia's history by left- and right-wing politicians and their respective voters. In his speech on the 2014 Independence Day at the Monument to the Revolution, the local SDSM leader stressed the continued importance of the partisan effort in the struggle for Macedonian nationhood.³⁹ The VMRO-DPMNE mayor, on the other hand, explicitly linked Macedonian independence to VMRO efforts prior to the Second World War, ignoring the partisans to whom the monument is dedicated.⁴⁰ Interestingly, the newspaper from which I quote both speeches did not make

³⁹ SDSM Bitola na graѓanite im go čestita Denot na nezavisnosta, *Daily Macedonia*, 8 September 2014, <http://daily.mk/makedonija/sdsm-bitola-gragjanite-im-chestita-denot-nezavisnosta>.

⁴⁰ Vo Bitola odbeležana 23-godišnina od nezaviosnosta na R Makedonija, *Daily Macedonia*, 8 September 2014, <http://daily.mk/vesti/bitola-odbelezhana-23-godishnina-nezaviosnosta-r-2>.

any additional comment on either partisan narrative. Every single Macedonian whom I have interviewed, either in Bitola or elsewhere, flawlessly reproduced the opposing stances of the SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE on the importance of the partisan struggle or the pre-World War II revolutionary struggle, confirming the hegemony of this political (and also academic debate) between two readings of Macedonia's past.⁴¹ However, the revisionist VMRO-DPMNE-dominated debates over the Yugoslav and previous pasts do not precipitate in current politics of erecting statues to either the interwar VMRO or those persecuted by communist authorities in Bitola, despite the city being ruled by the VMRO-DPMNE, contrary to Skopje, Prilep, or Veles.⁴² The political rituals and the remembrance of the communist past have thus become differentiated along ideological cleavages, and yet there is much continuity in Yugoslav monument culture in Macedonia, and not least in Bitola.

The Macedonian Monument Repertoire

Apart from the fact that the proponents of the SDSM continue to be associated with Yugoslav-socialist readings of the past, after 1991 more generally academics and politicians have been very reluctant to depart from these narratives immediately, as they were well aware how important this recent past was in order to legitimize the existence of a Macedonian national identity.⁴³ The VMRO-DPMNE, however, with its pronounced anti-Yugoslav and anticommunist agenda, actively revised the Yugoslav narratives and monument cultures during their stints in government in 1998-2002 and 2006-2017.⁴⁴ The main bones of the inevitable contention that ensued have been the veneration of the interwar VMRO; the critical assessment of the communist period; 'antiquization'; and the continued exclusion of minorities—specifically Albanians and Muslims—from national narratives and monument culture.

The least controversial revisionist effort has been the rehabilitation of those who were either persecuted during communism or obscured by communist historiography. For example, in Prilep and Skopje monuments have been erected to Metodija Andonov-Čento, the first president of the Antifascist Assembly of

⁴¹ Cf. Vangeli, *Facing the Yugoslav Past*, 196-205; Brunnbauer, *Historiography, Myths*, 190-196.

⁴² Trpeski, *Monuments in the Post-Socialistic Period*.

⁴³ Ulf Brunnbauer, 'Pro-Serbiens' vs. 'Pro-Bulgarians'. Revisionism in Post-Socialist Macedonian Historiography, *History Compass* 3, no. 1 (2005), 1-17, 2-7, DOI: 10.1111/j.1478-0542.2005.00130.x.

⁴⁴ Christian Voss, *Irredentismus als historischer Selbstentwurf. Wissenschaftsdiskurs und Staatssymbolik in der Republik Makedonien*, *Osteuropa. Zeitschrift für Gegenwartsfragen des Ostens* 53, no. 7 (2003), 949-962; Vangeli, *Nation-Building*; Vangeli, *Facing the Yugoslav Communist Past*, 196-203.

the National Liberation of Macedonia (ASNOM), who was later imprisoned by the communist authorities for his nationalist, rather than communist, leanings. Yugoslav narratives of the past have been extended to include anti- or non-communist forces and persons who strove for Macedonian nationhood during or after the Second World War.⁴⁵ The focus is on the victims of Yugoslav communism, which the VMRO-DPMNE depicts as a generally dark chapter of oppression.⁴⁶

Much more controversial is the attempt to include the interwar VMRO in the Macedonian national narrative. This endeavour has been closely tied to the VMRO-DPMNE's attempts to construct a historical right-wing tradition, in which it styles itself as the legitimate successor to the historical VMRO. The VMRO-DPMNE has accused the SDSM of supporting a procommunist, and even pro-Serbian, reading of Macedonian history. This is part and parcel of their effective negation of the role of communism in the struggle for Macedonian nationhood while championing the role of the VMRO.⁴⁷ In Macedonia, the interwar VMRO has traditionally been portrayed as Bulgarian, and as a champion of the ideal of a 'Greater Bulgaria' that included Macedonia. In turn, thus, SDSM politicians and mainstream historians have accused the VMRO-DPMNE of falsifying history and of taking a pro-Bulgarian stance. The acknowledgement of Bulgarian influence on Macedonian history is highly problematic to many Macedonians because it clashes with the Yugo-Macedonian narratives. Especially after the Tito–Stalin split of 1948, the cornerstone of Macedonian national identity and historiography had been the notion of a distinct, non-Bulgarian, Macedonian national consciousness, leading to a profoundly anti-Bulgarian stance in politics and historiography.⁴⁸ Commemorative acts such as the 2012 placement in Skopje of a statue to Todor Aleksandrov, an interwar VMRO leader, or the renaming of streets in the same city named after partisan heroes to 'Bulgarian' VMRO revolutionaries sparked outrage not only from historians and the SDSM, but also from citizens who took their protest to the streets.⁴⁹ The erection of statues honouring 'Bulgarians' by the VMRO-DPMNE government from 2008 onwards has generated continuous protests and criticism—both domestically and abroad—culminating in their being vandalized during the 'Colourful Revolution' of 2016. However, the new SDSM-led government's

⁴⁵ Troebst, *Historische 'Meistererzählungen'*.

⁴⁶ Vangeli, *Facing the Yugoslav Communist Past*, 196–203.

⁴⁷ Marinov, *Historiographical Revisionism*; Brunnbauer, *Historiography, Myths*, 194–196.

⁴⁸ Brunnbauer, 'Pro-Serbiens' vs. 'Pro-Bulgarians', 11–13.

⁴⁹ Sinisa-Jakov Marusic, *New Statue Awakens Past Quarrels in Macedonia*, *BalkanInsight*, 13 July 2012, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/new-statue-awakens-past-quarrels-in-macedonia>.

decision to remove some of these controversial monuments seems to have put a halt to this criticism for the time being.⁵⁰

Another revisionist strand of the Macedonian repertoire is the (re-)appropriation of history already embedded in other nations' historiographies, specifically those of Greece and Bulgaria. Macedonian historians face the problem that 'their' national history had already been 'taken' earlier: any construction of a national master narrative is bound to clash with these older narratives. Despite the fierce debate between Macedonian and Bulgarian historians as to who 'owned' which part of history, the dominant Macedonian myth of origin has become based on Tsar Samuil's early mediaeval empire, which is also firmly embedded in the Bulgarian national narrative.⁵¹ Although statues of figures claimed by both Bulgaria and Macedonia had already been built in Macedonia before the VMRO-DPMNE came to power, the decision to erect actual monuments to Tsar Samuil in Skopje and in Strumica, near the Bulgarian border, further incited Bulgarian critiques of the Macedonian 'falsification' of history. As a response, a grand statue of Samuil was erected in Sofia in 2014, four years after the one in Skopje—supposedly, to mark the 1,000th anniversary of his death—as an ostentatious claim to the medieval Tsar.⁵²

'Antiquization' represents another contested strand of (re-)appropriation of history in postcommunist Macedonia. The myth of ancient Macedonian nationhood had already been present in the socialist Yugoslav period but was then subsumed under the broader South Slavic, or Yugoslav, myth of origin.⁵³ It is in fact important to point out that 'antiquization' is not exclusively an affair of 'Skopje 2014' but has also led to the construction of statues to, for example, Alexander the Great—or, as in Bitola, to his father Philip II—in several other cities. The current 'statuomania' needs to be understood against the background of the dispute between Greece and Macedonia over who can claim ownership of the heritage of ancient Macedonia.⁵⁴ Ultimately, 'antiquization' originates in Greece's vehement opposition to both the name of the newly independent country (Macedonia) and its international recognition, as well as to Macedonia's

⁵⁰ Alex Dimchev, Macedonia Removes the Skopje 2014 Statue of Andon Kyoseto, *EUscoop*, 22 February 2018, <https://www.euscoop.com/en/2018/2/22/statue-removed-macedonia>; Siniša-Jakov Marusic, Divisive Revolutionary's Statue Vanishes from Macedonian Capital, *Balkan Insight*, 22 February 2018, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-removes-divisive-court-statue-02-22-2018>.

⁵¹ Stefan Troebst, IMRO+100=FYROM? The Politics of Macedonian Historiography, in: Troebst, *Das makedonische Jahrhundert*, 409–424, 412–414.

⁵² Maria Hvidig, The Tug-Of-War Over Tsar Samuil. Bulgarian or Macedonian?, *Café Balkans. Actualité balkanique électorique*, 27 April 2014, <https://cafebalkans.wordpress.com/2014/04/27/the-tug-of-war-over-tsar-samuil-bulgarian-or-macedonian/>.

⁵³ Vangeli, *Nation-Building*, 15–17.

⁵⁴ Adamantios Skordos, *Griechenlands Makedonische Frage. Bürgerkrieg und Geschichtspolitik im Südosten Europas, 1945–1992*, Göttingen 2012.

use of the sixteen-pointed star of Macedonia as its new state symbol and flag.⁵⁵ As a counter-reaction, Macedonian writers, journalists, and academics started to promote the narrative of a strong continuity between ancient Macedonia and the current Slavic nation through narratives of either ethnogenesis or traditions of virtues and statehood. Under the leadership of Nikola Gruevski, the VMRO-DPMNE closely affiliated itself with 'antiquization'. The apparent motivation for the party's initiation of 'antiquization policies' as well as 'Skopje 2014' was Greece's veto of the Macedonian bid to join NATO in 2008.⁵⁶ In addition, this Macedonian myth of ancient origin proves to be compatible with the VMRO-DPMNE's anti-Yugoslav position. After all, Yugoslav narratives had favoured supranational (South) Slavic myths of origin.

Conversely, subsequent continued Greek opposition to transatlantic and European integration was a reason for the SDSM to undo these. As of yet, it is still uncertain whether the Prespa Agreement of 2018 is the latest or the last chapter in the matter. However, the agreement not only stipulates a new name for Macedonia, but Article 8 also requires that Macedonia 'review the status of the monuments, public buildings and infrastructures on its territory [...] insofar as they refer in any way to ancient Hellenic history and civilization' and effectively ban the Vergina flag from public usage.⁵⁷ The promise of accession to NATO and the EU and a normalization of Greco-Macedonian relations has so far not been enough to persuade either the leadership of the VMRO-DPMNE or the majority of the Macedonian electorate to support the name deal, as the referendum of 30 September 2018 illustrates. In fact, the Greek demands and the active backing by Western politicians—NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, US Secretary of Defense James Mattis and EU Council President Sebastian Kurz, to name a few—appear to have aroused sentiments of international undermining of their national identity, rather than take them away. This is why the SDSM government has stressed that the name deal would not endanger Macedonian identity in any way and carefully phrased the proposed constitutional amendments to counter such fears.⁵⁸ The VMRO-DPMNE has frequently used these fears to bolster political support, and appears to have successfully framed the referendum as a plebi-

⁵⁵ Keith Brown, *Seeing Stars. Character and Identity in the Landscapes of Modern Macedonia*, *Antiquity* 68, no. 278 (1994), 784-796, DOI: 10.1017/S0003598X00047475; Risteski / Hysa, *Strategies*, 167-178.

⁵⁶ Vangeli, *Nation-Building*, 17-20.

⁵⁷ For the full text cf. 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, web portal 'Virtual Macedonia', <https://vmacedonia.com/politics/macedonia-greece-agreement.html>.

⁵⁸ Marusic, *Macedonia Govt Submits Constitutional Changes*.

scite over Western threats to, and a betrayal of, Macedonian national identity, rather than resolving a long-standing name dispute and clearing the way for EU accession.⁵⁹ The referendum and the VMRO-DPMNE party leadership's continued resistance to a name change illustrate how, since the conflict of 2001 at the latest, national identity and history have become increasingly politicized along ideological lines, ethnonationalism vigorously among them.

'Antiquization' and the refusal to compromise also serves to frame the VMRO-DPMNE as the defender of Macedonian identity vis-à-vis perceived Albanian threats to it. Hence, another motive behind 'antiquization' is that it could provide a myth of ethnic autochthony. Thus, it can be made 'certain' that Macedonians inhabited modern-day Macedonia centuries before the arrival of other Slavic peoples, that is Bulgarians, and prior to the Albanians. 'Antiquization' excludes Albanians and has an anti-Albanian and anti-Muslim undertone but gains a distinct current political meaning against the background of Albanian demands for equal rights and ownership of the state.⁶⁰ It is clearly implied that the Macedonians, as *the* autochthonous people, have more historical rights to the current state territory than the Albanian 'latecomers'.⁶¹

This touches on a problematic issue, namely the exclusion of Albanians and other minorities from the Macedonian commemorative culture, despite the promises contained in the Ohrid Agreement of 2001 and despite dozens of newly built monuments that would have provided ample opportunity to heed these promises. While this may be understandable in the light of the ethnic tensions surrounding the 2001 insurgency persistent to a certain degree ever since, as the exclusive ethnic affiliations of the new monuments commemorating the conflict illustrate, it is also regrettable in terms of a lost chance for better state-building politics. To be sure, the socialist Yugoslav narratives also had mostly side-lined the Albanians, and yet there was an offer of overarching, multi-ethnic narratives. These did not survive Macedonian independence.⁶² As seen, the ancient past even gained the new internal political role of portraying the Muslim Albanian inhabitants of Macedonia as historically foreign and thus as having fewer rights.⁶³ Although Macedonian readings of the past collide over the placement of 'pro-Bulgarian' statues and the communist past, they do agree on identifying Muslim Albanians as the main 'other', on excluding them from national nar-

⁵⁹ Cf. for example, already at the beginning of 2017, i.e. way before the opportunity of the Agreement of Prespa opened up, Najer Pajazti, VMRO-DPMNE Holds a Campaign Against Soros and Open Society Foundation, *Independent Balkan News Agency*, 18 January 2017, <https://www.balkan.eu.com/vmro-dpmne-holds-campaign-soros-open-society-foundation/>.

⁶⁰ Voss, *Irredentismus*, 958-962.

⁶¹ Sazdovski, *Nation-Building*, 68-71; Vangeli, *Nation-Building*, 23.

⁶² Krapfl, *The Ideals of Ilinden*.

⁶³ Troebst, *Historische 'Meistererzählungen'*, 431-433.

ratives by perceiving them as historically hostile, foreign elements.⁶⁴ The case study of Veles illustrates how these Macedonian and the Yugoslav repertoires collide, overlap, but also coexist in one city.

Case Study Veles

Veles features a number of monuments, from both before and after 1991. A great socialist Yugoslav *Spomenik Kosturnica* (Memorial Ossuary) overlooks the city, built to commemorate the partisan struggle against the German and Bulgarian occupying forces in the Second World War and bearing the remains of approximately one hundred fallen partisans from the Veles area. At the same time, recently built monuments illustrate the rearrangement of the communist-era narratives. However, while Veles' Yugoslav-era monuments show signs of neglect, nevertheless a large continuity in local monument culture can be detected. The busts of two local partisan heroes, placed in the city park during the 1960s, have suffered from dilapidation. Not only have the metal busts been stolen and the pedestals vandalized with graffiti, but the heroes themselves appear to have disappeared from the city's memory culture. Very few of the people whom I spoke to were able to remember who they were or when their busts had disappeared.⁶⁵ The memorial plaque to the refugee children from the Greek civil war also appears to be fading from local memory. There used to be an annual remembrance ceremony, but it has not taken place for years. The position of the Gemidžiite memorial plaque was taken over by a new, larger monument also dedicated to local revolutionaries active in 1903.

However, not all old communist monuments are in decay or being neglected. Despite the construction of a novel monument dedicated to the famous local poet Kočo Racin in front of the town hall in 2008, the rituals linked to Racin's old monument have not changed place. Since 1964, an annual international poetry festival has been held in Veles, and four years later, in 1968, the original Racin monument was inaugurated in front of Veles' high school. The parents whose children were playing on the school's playground explained to me that students are still traditionally photographed next to the poet's statue upon graduation. Both the traditional opening of the poetry festival and the official commemoration of Racin continue to take place by the old monument; here, local memory clearly persists. Part of the poetry festival is also still set in front of the city's Memorial Ossuary.

Commemorative rituals at this partisan memorial complex have remained relatively unchanged since the fall of communism. Between 1976 and 1979, the

⁶⁴ Brunnbauer, 'Pro-Serbians' vs. 'Pro-Bulgarians', 12.

⁶⁵ Derived from conversations in Veles' city park and the interview conducted with Sonja Stojadinović on 14 June 2016 in Veles.

Figure 5: Veles' *Spomenik Kosturnica* under maintenance.

large ossuary to fallen partisans that now overlooks the city was constructed, and communal remembrance rituals have taken place here ever since.⁶⁶ The main commemoration is on 9 November, the day Veles was liberated in 1944. Both the inhabitants and the local branch of the SDSM continue to visit the remembrance site, but not the local ruling

VMRO-DPMNE. The construction workers renovating the ossuary satirized the VMRO-DPMNE mayor for his failure to attend the remembrance ceremony in 2015, despite the municipality paying for the renovation of the complex.⁶⁷ Another regular commemoration day is 2 August (Ilinden Day), an occasion the VMRO-DPMNE does attend. The memorial complex honours both the partisans and the VMRO revolutionaries from Veles. Thus, through the monument a continuous struggle for Macedonian nationhood has been constructed, which culminates in the tale of the 'double victory' of the local partisans: not only over fascists, but over *Bulgarian* fascists.⁶⁸

While these annual commemorations have continued after independence, the memorial complex has not escaped neglect and re-politicization. After 1991, many bronze plates and objects were stolen, while the monument's once pearl-white walls have become besmirched with graffiti. In 2003, the city received a sum equivalent to €100,000 from the government, not sufficient, but better than nothing, to save the *Spomenik Kosturnica* from collapse and to improve security. When the VMRO-DPMNE came to power in the municipality in 2006, no further funds were made available for the maintenance of existing heritage,

⁶⁶ Javni Prostori / Petre Klimeski, *Kosturnicata vo Veles: spoj na modernoto so istorijata, Okno*, 16 October 2014, <http://okno.mk/node/41603>.

⁶⁷ Interview conducted with Sonja Stojadinović and construction workers on 14 June 2016 in Veles.

⁶⁸ Brunnbauer, *Ancient Nationhood and the Struggle for Statehood*, 277-285.

including the destroyed partisan busts, until 2016. Veteran organizations had pleaded for years that extra funding was necessary, while the SDSM accused the VMRO-DPMNE of deliberately neglecting the communist heritage. In a critical article by *BalkanInsight*, the directors of the Institute of National History and the National Institute for Heritage Protection claimed that this was solely the consequence of a lack of funding.⁶⁹

This excuse is hard to believe when, simultaneously, funds were made available for the construction of two costly monuments more in tune with the VMRO-DPMNE's historical agenda in Veles' city centre. These two monuments were dedicated to revolutionaries affiliated with the VMRO and were carefully embedded in the local monument culture. At the banks of the river Vardar, one new monument honours the Gemidžiite: a group of revolutionaries, predominantly from Veles, who undertook revolutionary acts in Thessaloniki in 1903.⁷⁰ The monument replaced a relatively minor memorial plaque created in the 1980s, and links local memory culture to the VMRO-DPMNE's revisionist aim of highlighting the contribution of pre-World War II revolutionaries to Macedonian national history. A six-metre-tall bronze statue dedicated to the VMRO at the city's central roundabout similarly links local memories to this revisionist agenda. It honours the Veles-born liberators of Kruševo and participants in the Ilinden revolt. In 2016, this monument represented the focal gathering point of the large demonstrations by VMRO-DPMNE supporters against the 'Colourful Revolution'.⁷¹ While 'Skopje 2014'-like edifices and monuments were besmirched in Bitola, in Veles they were rallying points for pro-government protests. My guide, a member of a left-wing think tank, vehemently criticized the VMRO-DPMNE's supposed abuse and rewriting of (local) history, which, according to her, wrongly ignored the partisans' effort. Specifically, she took affront with the explicit symbolic statement made by the statue's placement on the city's central square and roundabout.⁷² Once more, this reveals the politicized debates over history typical of Macedonia: both sides accuse each other of selectively and abusively rewriting history and of imprinting their reading of the past by shamelessly erecting monuments.⁷³ Tellingly, she made no remarks on communist or SDSM history politics when we visited Veles' Memorial Ossuary.

The revision of Yugoslav-era narratives by rehabilitating persons who were persecuted under communism is, however, not always a clear-cut case of an-

⁶⁹ Aneta Risteska, Macedonia Leaves its Partisan Heritage to Decay, *BalkanInsight*, 25 July 2011, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-leaves-its-partisan-heritage-to-decay>.

⁷⁰ Hugh Poulton, *Who are the Macedonians?*, London 2000, 55-57.

⁷¹ Parallel Protests Take Place Across Macedonia, *Novinite*, 20 April 2016, <http://www.novinite.com/articles/174115/Parallel+Protests+Take+Place+Across+Macedonia>.

⁷² Interview conducted with Sonja Stojadinović on 14 June 2016 in Veles.

⁷³ Cf. Brunnbauer, *Historiography, Myths*, 190-196.

Figures 6+7: To the left is the statue to Panko Brašnar. To the right is the equestrian statue dedicated to VMRO members from Veles who participated in the Ilinden Uprising of 1903.

ti-Yugoslav action. In 2004, a statue of Panko Brašnar was erected in a Yugoslav modernist style under the auspices of the local SDSM government. Brašnar (1881-1951) was a local communist revolutionary before he became a crucial member of the ASNOM and one of the key figures in establishing socialist Macedonian statehood.⁷⁴ However, he was expelled from the party after the Tito–Stalin split of 1948 and subsequently died imprisoned on Goli Otok, the infamous Yugoslav island camp for political prisoners. Brašnar represents an exceptional case, for the left has rehabilitated him for his political beliefs and the right as a nationalist martyr of communism. His official rehabilitation was commenced by the erection of his statue in Veles, where he had remained a local hero throughout.⁷⁵ Sometimes, thus, the fault lines between the seemingly opposing ideological readings of the past prove to be more porous than they appear.

Whereas the Yugoslav and Macedonian monument cultures coexist relatively peacefully in Veles, when citizens placed two busts of interwar VMRO leaders it aroused outrage. In February 2008, a member of the local Bulgarian community placed a bust of Todor Aleksandrov in his front yard. Subsequently, he received death threats and was even put on trial, and the monument was toppled twice

⁷⁴ Brunnbauer, *Ancient Nationhood and the Struggle for Statehood*, 289-291.

⁷⁵ Vangeli, *Facing the Yugoslav Past*, 200-201.

before the municipal authorities removed it.⁷⁶ As mentioned above, the interwar VMRO is very controversial in Macedonia, despite all revisionist attempts, and remains associated with close links to Bulgaria and the vilification of Bulgaria as it was fostered by socialist Yugoslav historiography.⁷⁷ Certainly, statues of both Aleksandrov and Mihajlov have also been erected in Skopje and Prilep, and have also engendered substantial controversy.⁷⁸ Yet, these were built by the government and not by citizens who wished to make a statement of explicit affiliation with Bulgaria. Their official status precluded their removal. Notwithstanding debates at the national level over such monuments, they are, akin to the Macedonian monument repertoire as a whole, limited solely to Macedonians.

The Albanian Monument Repertoire

Before the Ohrid Agreement, which ended the ethnic strife of 2001, the placement of Albanian monuments had been de facto impossible. In an attempt to prevent ethnic conflict in the future, the Ohrid Agreement provided extensive political and cultural minority rights and strove to create a decentralized, multiethnic state.⁷⁹ However, the Albanians, in demanding equal rights and representation on the basis of the Agreement, have increasingly come to be perceived by Macedonians as a threat to the integrity or future of the Macedonian nation state.⁸⁰ History became a tool for Macedonian politicians and historians to discredit and delegitimize the Albanians' demands by depicting them as the historically allochthone intruder that had no historical claim on Macedonia.⁸¹ Moreover, reforms subsequent to the Ohrid Agreement, of for example academic institutions and history curricula, to include Albanians equally have turned things effectively towards the opposite. Instead of developing narratives that could unite both Macedonians and Albanians, two mutually exclusive historical

⁷⁶ Marinov, *Historiographical Revisionism*, 3.

⁷⁷ Poulton, *Who are the Macedonians?*, 80-83.

⁷⁸ Sinisa-Jakov Marusic, *Nameless Statue Causes Stir in Macedonia*, *BalkanInsight*, 28 June 2012, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/nameless-revolutionary-causes-stir-in-macedonia>.

⁷⁹ Ulf Brunnbauer, *The Implementation of the Ohrid Agreement. Ethnic Macedonian Resentments*, *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* 1 (2002), 1-24, <http://www.ecmi.de/fileadmin/downloads/publications/JEMIE/2002/nr1/Focus1-2002Brunnbauer.pdf>; Marija Risteska / Zhidas Daskalovski, eds, *One Decade after the Ohrid Framework Agreement. Lessons (to Be) Learned from the Macedonian Experience*, Skopje 2011.

⁸⁰ On the relations between Albanians and Macedonians before 1991 cf. Christian Voss, *Der albanisch-makedonische Konflikt in der Republik Makedonien in zeitgeschichtlicher Perspektive*, *Südosteuropa-Mitteilungen* 41, no. 3 (2001), 271-281; Poulton, *Who are the Macedonians?*, 121-143.

⁸¹ Maria-Eleni Koppa, *Ethnic Albanians in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Between Nationality and Citizenship*, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 7, no. 4 (2001), 44-47, DOI: 10.1080/13537110108428644; Troebst, *Historische 'Meistererzählungen'*, 430-431.

and national narratives have been institutionalized.⁸² Robert Pichler argues that there simply has been no space created for a civic, unifying perspective on history. Not only have both ethnic communities been deeply engaged in the (re)definition of their own national narratives, identities, and histories, but this production of historical myths has also been directly related to legitimizing both Albanian and Macedonian political claims.⁸³

The establishment of a separate Albanian monument repertoire in post-Ohrid Macedonia further reinforces these mutually exclusive readings of the past. The Ohrid Agreement itself has played an important role here. The Agreement transferred most matters relating to ethnicity to the municipalities, but it appears to have been a mistake to believe that ethnopolitics would prove to be less salient on the local level.⁸⁴ In theory, any decision concerning ethnicity and culture—including historical monuments—has to be agreed upon by a majority of all ethnic groups constituting over 20% of the municipal population, the so-called ‘Badinter principle’, if they are to receive government backing and funding. The everyday reality is, however, much unrulier: in ethnically mixed areas, monuments have become either bargaining chips in negotiations, or focal points of interethnic conflict. In addition, more often than not the erection of monuments by citizens, whether or not at least partly financed by a political party, has often managed to circumvent these rules.⁸⁵ Still, it was the Ohrid Agreement that enabled the construction of Albanian monuments throughout Macedonia in the first place, that is ‘the legal and institutional changes created the feeling amongst Albanians that they were now able to inscribe in Macedonia’s landscapes their own reading of its history’.⁸⁶

In fact, the Albanian monument repertoire has been centred on shaping a distinctively Albanian reading of history, in opposition to the Macedonian narratives. This is most poignant in monuments commemorating Albanian UÇK fighters—the National Liberation Army (*Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare*), not to be confused with its Kosovar counterpart—or civilians killed by Macedonian securi-

⁸² Robert Pichler, *Die Albaner in der Republik Makedonien*. Geschichtswissenschaft im Spannungsfeld von Politik und sozialer Marginalisierung, in: Oliver Jens Schmitt / Eva Anne Frantz, eds, *Albanische Geschichte. Stand und Perspektiven der Forschung*, Munich 2009, 149–186.

⁸³ Robert Pichler, *Historiography and the Politics of Education in the Republic of Macedonia (1991–2008)*, in: Augusta Dimou, ed, *Transition and the Politics of History Education in Southeast Europe*, Göttingen 2010, 217–250, 233–235.

⁸⁴ Pichler, *Historiography*, 227.

⁸⁵ Aisling Lyon, *Municipal Decentralisation. Between the Integration and Accommodation of Ethnic Difference in the Republic of Macedonia*, in: Risteska / Daskalovski, eds, *One Decade after the Ohrid Framework Agreement*, 86–115.

⁸⁶ Nadège Ragaru, *The Political Uses and Social Lives of ‘National Heroes’*. Controversies over Skanderbeg’s Statue in Skopje, *Südosteuropa. Journal of Politics and Society* 56, no. 4 (2008), 522–555, 534.

Figure 8: The monument complex 'Mother Albania' in the village of Zajas.

ty forces during the conflict of 2001.⁸⁷ Such monuments have constituted an Albanian monument culture that symbolically refers to the Albanian nation. This is re-enforced via the use of the Albanian flag, double-headed eagles, the colours black and red, and depictions of a 'Greater Albania'.⁸⁸ Other monuments commemorate Albanian fighters or civilians killed in the Second World War by Yugoslav and Macedonian partisans, or by Serbian armed forces in the Balkan Wars of 1912/13, and in the First World War. Again, these monuments symbolically refer to an overarching Albanian nation. An example is the grand inauguration of a memorial complex in Zajas dedicated to Albanian victims of Serbian armed forces between 1912 and 1918 and of interwar Yugoslav repression. Albanians from Macedonia, Kosovo, and Albania attended the ceremony, while the use of Albanian and Kosovan flags as well as other Albanian symbols, and also the speeches given by politicians and other representatives, made the Albanian nation the central point of reference.⁸⁹ Akin to the Yugoslav and Macedonian repertoires, Albanian monuments also honour a myriad of Albanian heroes, from Skanderbeg to such poets as Naim Frashëri. To illustrate the coming about and the changes in Albanian memory culture, the village of Reçani, near Gostivar in western Macedonia, lends itself well.

⁸⁷ Ragaru, *The Political Uses and Social Lives of 'National Heroes'*, 533-534.

⁸⁸ Vasiliki Neofotistos, *The Construction of Albanian Martyrdom in the Republic of Macedonia*, NCEER Working Paper, Washington/DC 2012, 1-17, https://www.ucis.pitt.edu/nceer/2012_826-15g_Neofotistos.pdf.

⁸⁹ Nderohen të rënë në Qendrën përkujtimore 'Nëna shqiptare' në Zajas, *Telegrafi*, 28 November 2013, <http://telegrafi.com/nderohen-te-renet-ne-qendren-perkujtimore-nena-shqiptare-ne-zajas/>.

Case Study Reçani

In the village of Reçani, the history of the Second World War has been re-appropriated in Albanian identity and memory politics against the background of renewed ethnic tensions. It is also one of the few ethnically Albanian communities in Macedonia that have been part of both the socialist Yugoslav and Albanian historical narratives, as its inhabitants fought on both sides during the Second World War. In 1941, the village was incorporated into the Albanian Kingdom, which was controlled by the Italians. When Italy withdrew from the war in September 1943, the anticommunist and Albanian nationalist movement *Balli Kombëtar* (National Front, BK) sided with Nazi Germany, which reasserted German control over Albania, to resist both the Albanian and the Yugoslav communist forces. An additional motivation, which could have led many inhabitants of Reçani and other Albanian communities in western Macedonia to support the BK was the fear that an Allied victory would mean the loss of Kosovo and other territories.⁹⁰ When Macedonian partisans took Reçani in 1944, they forced several dozens of the village men to fight for them. It should not be forgotten, however, that the *Balli Kombëtar* also committed war crimes on a large scale, partially in collaboration with the Albanian *Skanderbeg* SS division.⁹¹ Moreover, in the case of Reçani, the only source seems to be a biased oral tradition. It thus remains unclear how 'voluntary' local Albanians' collaboration — which possibly happened at gunpoint — with the BK was.

As has been explained above, the communist partisan triumph over fascism formed the foundation myth of both Macedonia and Yugoslavia. Subsequently, those who had collaborated with the occupier and fought against communism, such as the Chetniks, the VMRO or the BK, were branded as fascists and ostracized from the new national narrative.⁹² Even though the men from Reçani were allegedly *forced* to fight on the side of the partisans, this fight later provided an opportunity to include the Albanians in the partisan narrative and the Yugoslav myth of multi-ethnic 'Brotherhood and Unity'. During my stay in Reçani, I spoke to several older men who recounted that they had been taught in school how *their* forefathers bravely fought for communism and equality, too.⁹³ In 1980, a marble memorial plaque inscribed in Albanian with the names of the fallen local 'partisans' was placed in Reçani's central square, accompanied by annual commemorations, to further propagate the socialist myth of ethnic inclusivity and equality.

⁹⁰ Voss, *Der albanisch-makedonische Konflikt*, 275-277.

⁹¹ Cf. Sabrina P. Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias. State-Building and Legitimation, 1918-2005*, Indianapolis/IN 2006, 140-142.

⁹² Troebst, *Yugoslav Macedonia*, 254-256; Poulton, *Who are the Macedonians?*, 118-120.

⁹³ Interview conducted with a group of villagers in Reçani's village square on 18 June 2016.

Nevertheless, in Reçani this top-down attempt at Yugoslav myth-making failed: first, because the inhabitants received it as an imposed and artificial attempt at rewriting their memories; second, local remembrance of the forced participation of villagers in partisan armed forces and of local BK resistance to the communist partisans persisted throughout the Yugoslav period. It must remain uncertain as to how far the villagers' perceptions of their past views on the creation of local partisan myths were influenced by the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the ethno-political tensions that have been fostered since. What is undisputable though is that after independence the inhabitants of Reçani sought to imprint their own readings of history on to their village. These readings of history, however, are not a re-emergence of authentic local memory, but rather a selective appropriation of it in the context of ethnic tensions in post-1991 Macedonia. Left out are BK's darker, more ambiguous aspects, and instead it is portrayed as a unifying movement championing Albanian rights in opposition to oppressive Macedonians, rather than Serbs or communist partisans.⁹⁴

This is illustrated by the attempts to find and rebury, after 1991, the remains of Aqif Krosi, a BK commander born in Reçani. Villagers call him Aqif Reçani, for they claim he represents the village's values of courage, determination, and loyalty to Albania in dying a hero's death at the hands of Macedonian communists. Thereafter, he was buried at a secret place, precisely to prevent the emergence of a cult at his grave. After a long search, in 1997 a former police officer was bribed into revealing the location of Aqif's body.⁹⁵ The former commander was then reburied in traditional Muslim fashion at the local mosque's cemetery, whereas other villagers are usually buried over a kilometre outside the village. The role of religion here is not so much that of a signifier or symbol of national identity, despite Islam and, especially, Orthodox Christianity having increasingly become associated, even equated with, Albanian and Macedonian identity, respectively.⁹⁶ Aqif's reburial at the mosque symbolizes much more, namely the close connection between being a martyr of the nation and the religious aspects of martyrdom. It is this concept of martyrdom which connects Aqif's case to the martyrdom ascribed to the UÇK fighters who were killed during the conflict of 2001.⁹⁷ Aqif's tombstone has been adorned with the Albanian double-headed eagle and an inscription that describes him as an 'inspiration for every Albanian'. On the days of both his birth and his death, as well as on the Albanian Flag Day on 28 November – the day of Albania's independence in 1912 – communal ceremonies take place at Aqif's grave. To be sure, the erection of a proper monument has not been possible in the 20 years since the rediscov-

⁹⁴ Cf. Pichler, *Albaner in der Republik Makedonien*; Pichler, *Historiography*.

⁹⁵ Interview with Ylber and his father Teki in Reçani on 18 Juni 2016.

⁹⁶ Risteski / Hysa, *Strategies*, 193-198; Koppa, *Ethnic Albanians*, 41, 44.

⁹⁷ Neofotistos, *The Construction of Albanian Martyrdom*, 4-6.

ery of Aqif's grave—not only because the local authorities forbid this, but also as a consequence of riots breaking out in July of the same year, 1997, over the flying and subsequent hauling down of the Albanian flag at nearby Gostivar's town hall, which resulted in the death of four Albanians.⁹⁸

In theory, the Ohrid Agreement does enable the erection of Albanian monuments. The requirement is that a double majority, i.e. the majorities of both Albanian and Macedonian political parties, approve a corresponding proposal. In practice, however, monuments have become too heavily politicized as symbols of ethnicity and ethnic historical presence to make such a double majority a realistic practice. Local Albanian politician Afrim Iljazi of the National Democratic Renaissance party (*Rilindja Demokratike Kombëtare*, RDK) explained to me how the Macedonian political parties usually overcome all their differences when it comes to any matter related to memorials resulting in impermeable ethno-political deadlocks: the VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM temporarily 'forget' their divergent views on the communist past to veto Albanian proposals to remove Yugoslav-era monuments or to erect statues of Albanian BK fighters, he said.⁹⁹ Hence, in Reçani the attempt at securing the municipal authorities' approval and funding for the construction of a statue honouring Aqif Krosi also failed.

Lacking municipal approval, the supporters of Krosi's memorial organized a self-funded monument. Directly at the village's entrance, they erected a larger-than-life statue flanked by two Albanian flagpoles. Inscribed on the pedestal are the names of more fallen BK fighters. Behind the statue a black memorial stone has been placed, topped with a double-headed eagle. On it are the 64 known names of the 104 men from Reçani who were massacred by Serbian forces in the First Balkan War of 1912-1913. To be sure, the exact number is uncertain, for both documents and archaeological evidence are lacking. The former high-school history teacher who gave me this piece of information relied on family histories and oral tradition to gather the names and these numbers.¹⁰⁰ Although the site thus commemorates both the heroes and victims of the Second World War, and the victims of the First Balkan War of 1912/13, it does not explicitly construct a narrative that would link the two wars. When I pointed this out, my interviewees explained to me that there simply had not been sufficient funds to build two separate memorials.¹⁰¹ There was enough money to replace the Yugoslav monument to the 'partisans' from Reçani in the central square with new memorial

⁹⁸ Keith Brown, *In the Realm of the Double-Headed Eagle. Parapolitics in Macedonia, 1994-1999*, in: Jane K. Cowan, ed, *Macedonia. The Politics of Identity and Difference*, London 2000, 122-139; Risteksi / Hysa, *Strategies*, 179.

⁹⁹ From an interview conducted with Afrim Iljazi on 18 June 2016 in Reçani; cf. also 'Gostivar dobi bulevar na balistot Džemo Hasa, MKD, 2 September 2012, <https://www.mkd.mk/55718/makedonija/gostivar-bulevar-dzemo-hasa-sovet>.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Ylber and his father Teki in Reçani on 18 Juni 2016.

¹⁰¹ Interview conducted with a group of villagers in Reçani's village square on 18 June 2016.

Figure 9: The monument dedicated to Aqif Kroshi in Reçani, with a wreath of flowers. Behind the statue, adorned with the double-headed Albanian eagle, is the memorial plaque of those killed in 1913.

plaques in black granite, featuring Albanian flags and red eagles. It was a son of one of the fallen fighters who crafted the plaque. To the villagers, this memorial is not least a symbol of their ability to commemorate their fallen on their own terms.

Gostivar's mayor unveiled all three memorials on the same day: 28 November 2015, Albanian Flag Day. The inauguration ceremony underlined the myth of continuity of Albanian heroism throughout the past century, and explicitly embedded the martyrs of Reçani in the Albanian national narrative. 'Allow me to greet the families of martyrs of Reçani between 1912 and 2001; they gave their beloved Albanian nation a brighter future', the mayor said.¹⁰² He linked the Balkan Wars, the Second World War, and the conflict of 2001 into a continuous chain of sacrifice for the Albanian nation. In his speech, he also foregrounded the connection between Reçani's sacrifices and the Albanian nation as a whole:

'This date [November 28] unites all Albanians, and the nation commemorates martyrs who sacrificed themselves for a better future of the Albanian people. [...] This great event is the 103rd anniversary of Albania's independence, enjoyed by all Albanians. Albanians will one day be united in a united Europe.'¹⁰³

The mayor, a representative of the Democratic Union for Integration party (*Bashkimi Demokratik për Integrim*, BDI), was well aware of the potential political capital memorials offer. He explicitly emphasized that his party and mandate had been able to erect monuments dedicated to Albanians, whereas other Albanian parties had failed to do so. As elsewhere in Macedonia, the Albanian politicians in Reçani also utilize the erection of monuments to fashion themselves as the

¹⁰² Bejta: Aqif Reçani luftoi që shqiptarët të jetojnë të lirë, *Telegrafi*, 29 November 2015, <https://telegrafi.com/bejta-aqif-recani-luftoi-qe-shqiptaret-te-jetojne-te-lire/>.

¹⁰³ Bejta: Aqif Reçani.

champion of Albanian rights and history vis-à-vis other Albanian parties.¹⁰⁴ To be sure, Reçani is but one example of the many places in Macedonia where an Albanian monument culture has emerged.

Concluding Remarks

In Macedonia, remembrance practices have increasingly divided, rather than united, society. The most obvious example is the controversial 'Skopje 2014' project, with which the VMRO-DPMNE government sought to bolster Macedonian national pride and identity. This nation-building effort, among its many flaws, prominently failed to address all Macedonians. Its excessive scale and cost provoked heavy criticism and polarized sociopolitical positionings. The fallout from the VMRO-DPMNE's nation-building efforts and the party's continued adherence to them also continue to divide Macedonians over their national identity, as recent developments in the naming dispute with Greece illustrate. Moreover, Macedonia's Albanian minority was largely side-lined from 'Skopje 2014'. In the wake of the conflict of 2001, diverging nation-building efforts have become instrumental to the efforts in legitimizing both Albanian and Macedonian ethno-political claims, and these efforts included an intense crafting of historiography, history education, and the mass production of monuments. The Macedonian monument culture beyond Skopje that has evolved since 2001 highlights its role in these competing nation-building efforts. Ironically, the devolution and minority rights policies of the Ohrid Agreement proved to have provided an institutional framework that allowed for the construction of separate Albanian and Macedonian narratives at the local level. Herein, the construction of monuments has become a potent means of symbolically imprinting a specific reading of history. As a result, monuments have frequently been the focal point of ethnic or ideological strife about the contested past. The Yugoslav and Macedonian monument repertoires overlap to some extent and manage to coexist, given that they have different foci, and yet they also cause protest and political conflict beyond Skopje, throughout the country. When it comes to Albanian monuments, however, ethnicity supersedes these internal disagreements between Macedonians, and heated ethno-political debates and deadlocks over memorials are the consequence.

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¹⁰⁴ Ragaru, *The Political Uses and Social Lives of 'National Heroes'*, 543-549.