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'ANTIQUIZATION' AND THE MACEDONIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY: THREE EXAMPLES ONE EXPLANATION

ABSTRACT

To talk about the national identity of one nation it means to talk about its present connected with its past. Unarguably, the identity of the nation is crucial for its future regarding its existence and prosperity. The paper will try to analyze the 'antiquization' in the Republic of Macedonia as parallel process of national identification and international promotion of the country. The thesis of the paper is that the effect of non-recognition of full Macedonian national identity, especially vis-a-vis Greek objections, directly influences and reinforces the shift towards the ancient ethnogenesis of the Macedonian nation. The search for antique roots of the Macedonian national identity is the third wave of defence after the successful establishment of first, the federal state and, second, an independent nation. 'Antiquization' as a phenomenon is a defence not an attack but will certainly have longer impact on perceptions of national identity in the Republic of Macedonia.

Key words: Macedonian national identity, antiquization, Alexander the Great, governing myth

INTRODUCTION

While the nation and nationalism were widely elaborated in the second half of the last century, the national identity as a category long time was in the shadow of the analyses of the processes of establishing the nation and nationalism. The studies of national identity more often have delt with the explanation and debating of the nation then the identity *per se*, eventhough when the national identity was used as an analytical category by theorists of nationalism there are little discussions of the way the identities are formed and reproduced in time and space (Bell, 2003: 63-81). The end of the century brought new energy in the research of identity, but now with new enthusiasm in different social sciences and not only in psychology and sociology. The recommendations are for the approaches with more human aspects of the individual identity versus power of the structures and states. Suddenly, the identity research becomes a fashion. That is why in the last three decades the literature abounds with national identity studies. The identities are analyzed on every possible aspect: politics, culture, religion, values, sport etc. On one side, when we see the teardrops when the national anthem is playing on any high level sport competition it is difficult to explain why these happened. On the other side, wars were waged for the national glorification, survival or domination. Twentieth century is a classical example of it.

Eventhough the concept of identity is central to many sociological analyses and it is vital in modernity, it is still undertheorized and incapable for analytical contribution as the moder situations requires (Bendle, 2002: 1-2). Identity is perception. The identity is about feelings as well, and about the meaning to the holder of identity. But identifiers of ethnicity do not generate identity automatically because the key is how the individual will choose to identify with these characteristics. For someone the identity is just simply acquired perception. Identity belongs to future as well as the past. Is not something that already exists, transcending the place, time, history and culture. The cultural identities comes from somewhere, they have history. Still, as everything that is historical, they are constantly under transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject of continual 'game' of history, culture and power. (Hall, 1990: 225) We also have multiple identities and we are members of different collectives and groups. Identites as other human activities are conctructed. They are construction both for individuals and collectives. (Schoplin, 2003: 477-490)

Symbolic resources like political values/institutions, culture, history and geography, provide the symbolic raw material which social actors use as they define national identities in public discourse. Thus, 'what matters with regard to the construction of national identities is less *what* resources political actors draw upon

than *how* they put these resources to practical use …' (Zimmer, 2003: 181). In this paper the author will show three examples that explain the 'antiquization' of the Macedonian national identity: First, the dominant western discourse in the social sciences about the origin of the Macedonians, second, the Macedonian governing myth of origin and its shifts, and the third, the process of 'antiquization' of Macedonian national identity and public feelings about the past heroes and events. With one probable explainanions and argument that the process of 'antiquization' is older and now is just strengthen and became dominant identity discourse within the society. It is more matter of how than what, eventhough the 'true history' is all around and easy to support by all parties.

ORIGIN OF MACEDONIANS IN WESTERN ANALYSES

In the second half of 20th century there are many western analysts that are writing about the origin of the Macedonians with the titles like 'Who are the Macedonians?' These analyses are trying to argue about the roots of the modern Macedonians that live in the Republic of Macedonia, but even further, to argue about what means to be called Macedonian historically and regionally. The initial motif was the existence of Socialist Republic of Macedonia. The analyses grew in numbers after the 1991 when the Republic of Macedonia became independent state. The battle about who are the Macedonians and who have the right to the ancient Macedonian heroes and history begun. The main contenders were Macedonians form Macedonia, Greeks from region called Macedonia in Greece and to a narrower extent the Bulgarians. For the latter, the differences were the disputed arguments of the Macedonians and Bulgarians about the medieval kingdom of Samuel and the cultural background of the Macedonians. Three small countries fighting for scarce symbolic and historic symbols. Here are some of the arguments about who are the Macedonians:

1. Until 1923, a bare majority of the population of Macedonia was Slav. It is the national identity of these Slav Macedonians that has been most violently contested aspect of the whole Macedonian dispute, and is still being contested today. There is no doubt that they are Southern Slavs; they have a language, or a group of varying dialects, that is grammatically akin to Bulgarian but phonetically in some respects akin to Serbian, and which has certain quite distinctive features of its own. (Barker, 1950: 10) In regard to their own national feelings, all that can safely be said is that during the last eighty years many more Slav Macedonians seem to have considered themselves Bulgarian, or closely linked with Bulgaria, than have considered themselves

Serbian, or closely linked with Serbia (or Yugoslavia). Only the people of the Skopje region, in the north-west, have ever shown much tendency to regard themselves as Serbs. The feeling of being Macedonians, and nothing but Macedonians, seems to be a sentiment of fairly recent growth, and even today is not very deep-rooted. (Barker, 1950: 12);

2. Who is a 'Macedonian'? The word may be used for an inhabitant, or former inhabitant, of a region called Macedonia, irrespective of ethnicity; for a citizen of the Republic of Macedonia, again, irrespective of ethnicity; or for a member of the Macedonian nation or ethnic group. It is the third, apparently most 'natural' usage, which is most controversial. 'Why not Macedonia for Macedonians, as Bulgaria for Bulgarians and Servia for Servians?' Posed in the Times in 1897, Gladstone's question reflected the concerns of a *fin-de-siecle* Western European ruling elite witnessing the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and anxious over the future succession of political control in European Turkey. Already, the new states in the region (Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria), as well as a movement claiming to strive for an autonomous Macedonia, were laying claims on the territory and its population, basing these on whatever criteria best suited their national arguments – language, religion, history, household customs, national consciousness. The 'Macedonian Question' thus had high profile, and marked a shift from the politics of empires to that of nation-states. It remained a fraught and contested issue, nationally and internationally, throughout the first half of the century, long after the 1919 Paris Peace Conference redrew national boundaries cutting through the territory. (Cowan, 2000: 1-11);

3. All Balkan territorial disputes have their mythologies; that of the Macedonian question is that of the most bloody, complex and intractable of all, in a small peninsula already well burdened. But unlike Serbia or Greece, in Macedonia there was no basically homogenous population made up of one potentially dominant group that could form the basis of a new nation-state. There was, however, and still is, a plainly dominant majority in the cultural sense, in that there are more people of Slavonic origin living there than of any other group – but only within a patchwork of extreme complexity, with Turks, Greeks, Albanians, Vlach, Pomaks and Gypsies living along side the Slavonic majority; and, moreover, that majority is itself subdivided into Serbian, Bulgarian and 'Macedonian' elements. (Pettifer, 1999: 15-6);

4. On 3 November 1893 in the Ottoman Vilayet capital of Selanik, nowadays known as Thessaloniki, seven Christian Orthodox intellectuals, speaking the eastern variety of the southern Slavic tongue founded a national-revolutionary and conspiratorial organization in opposition to the ruling Sultan with the

title of the '(Internal) Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation', abbreviated as IMRO, their goal was the establishment of their own state first in the form of territorial autonomy within the Ottoman Empire as a step towards independence. Within the national-revolutionary movements inside the Ottoman Empire, the terms ''Macedonia' and 'Macedonian' could refer to at least two different ethno-political contents. On the one hand, they could have regional connotation. This meant that anyone living within the area described as the Macedonian heartland of the 'three Vilayets' – Selanik, Manastir and Kosova – was in this sense Macedonian. On the other hand, 'Macedonia' and 'Macedonian' could be understood in an ethno-linguistic sense, with territorial and denominational components: in this interpretation, Macedonians were only those who (1) spoke east-southern Slavic, and (2) were Christians. (Troebst, 1999: 61-7);

5. Local Macedonians (Lerin, Kostur) constitute a distinct ethnic group, since they are clearly distinguished from the other ethnic groups in the area (such as Pontians, the Vlachs, and the Arvanites) both by themselves and by the members of these other groups. These local Macedonians are the people whose lives have been most dramatically affected by the Macedonian conflict, for inhabitants of the same villages, members of the same families, have adopted Three different national identities with some identifying as Greeks, others as Macedonian, and still others (primarily in the past) as Bulgarians. In fact, I state explicitly that these people refer to themselves as – 'indigenous Macedonians' (i.e., dopii Makedhones). Jane Kowan ('Idioms of Belonging' in Ourselves and Others, p.152) also states that 'dopii' describe themselves as Makedones: 'Let me stress that the term 'local Macedonians' is used here in an ethnic, not a national sense, and that the majority of local Macedonians in Florina and Kastoria now have a Greek (non a Macedonian) national identity. Macedonian has replaced Bulgarian as the national identity most frequently adopted by local Macedonians who reject a Greek national identity. This say the Macedonian conflict in Australia has again become a dispute involving primarily two groups: Greeks and Macedonians. (Danfort, 2000: 49);

6. The course of the nineteenth century saw the rise of a variety of South Slavic (and other) national identities and literary languages, as well as nation-states in which those languages were expected to serve as vehicle of power, although the national boundaries did not correspond to the territorial claims being made by any of the parties involved. The earliest published expression of separate Macedonian identity that we know of, however, dates from 1875. The writer was the autodidact stone mason Gorgi Pulevski (b.1838 - d.1894). Between 1873 and 1880 he published three textbooks, and he made no

attempt to write in a Macedo-Bulgarian compromise. 'Taka i Makedoncive se narod i mestovo njivno je Makedonija' (Pulevski 1875: 48-49). It is possible to identify sixteen textbook published between 1857 and 1880 by Partenij, Makedonski, Sapkarev, and Pulevski. On 22 August 1892, the Kostur parish school council adopted the proposal of a group of six teachers who had met previously in secret, and agreed to eliminate both Bulgarian and Greek and introduce Macedonian as the language of instruction in the town school for the 1892/93 shool year. Za Makedonskite raboti was Misirkov's response to the failure of the Ilinden Uprising and constitutes the ideological culmination of the development of nineteenth-century Macedonian national and linguistic identity. (Friedman, 2000: 182-7) It is prevarication to contend that the concepts of a separate Macedonian language and identity were created ex nihilo by Yugoslav fiat (Friedman, 1985: 34).

That is the first part that clearly states some of the axioms in the western discourse of the origin of the modern Macedonians. It is reach, it is burden by the older historical narratives and it is not holistic. The selection is not done with some specific aim or category but just to show some of the deliberations on the topic. Analysts are trying to ne neutral but with history one can never be sure what is true, what realy happened and what ius just a myth and belongs to a mitology. Now we can turn to the 'historical' part and see the governing myth about the ethnogenesis of the Macedonians and its shifts.

THE MACEDONIAN GOVERNING MYTH

Tracing the origins of the nation became a primary task for historiography in 1990s. 'Since in the sources, "Macedonians", particularly as an ethnic group, are rarely mentioned, Macedonian historians employ a device equally well-known to their Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian colleagues, namely to replace the terms "Christians/Greek Orthodox/Bulgarian Exarchists", usually used for the designation of the Orthodox population of the region during Ottoman times, with "Macedonians"' (Brunnbauer, 2004: 185). The first generation of Macedonian historians traced the emergence of the Macedonian nation back to the nineteenth century. 'Macedonian national history was traced to the nineteenth century, with its most prominent expression being the revolutionary struggle for freedom, equality and independence' (Frusetta, 2004: 112). At last, on 8 September 1991, the year of the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the Macedonians voted in a referendum and proclaimed full sovereignty and independence. The journey was finished. The impression was that the Macedonians had created their 'natural' nation-state.

The first important shift in tracing the myth of origin was the attempt to find the origins of the Macedonian nation further back in history, namely in the Middle Ages. 'Now, the medieval empire of Czar Samuil and his successors (969-1018), whose capitals were Prespa and Ohrid in Macedonia, was re-evaluated as a Macedonian state although existing scholarship had regarded it Bulgarian' (Brunnbauer, 2004: 179). The Macedonian historiography separated the Macedonian ethnogenesis from the Bulgarian one. During the second historiographical shift in the early 1990s, efforts were made to include the ancient Macedonians in the national narrative. Macedonian historians challenged Greece's 'exclusive ownership' of the symbols and territory of the ancient Macedonians in order to back up their claims to the name and the land of Macedonia and to create their own ancient national patrimony. The main claim was that the ancient Macedonians were not Greeks but a different, non-Hellenic people who joined in the ethnogenesis of the Macedonian people by melting into the Slavs who had come to the region in the sixth and seventh centuries. They asserted that ancient Macedonians and ancient Greeks were completely different peoples. The discourse on the ancient Macedonians was intended to substantiate the Macedonians' claims to a long national pedigree and also to a homeland.

The strongest attack came from Greece in 1990s. 'By calling themselves "Macedonians" the Slavs are "stealing" a Greek name; they are "embezzling" Greek cultural heritage; they are "falsifying" Greek history' (Danfort, 1993: 4). Therefore, the nineteenth and twentieth century rivalry about the 'Macedonian question' gained new impetus and new depth. Macedonian national identity was something everyone wanted to have: the Greeks the right to the name Macedonia, the Bulgarians the right to the language, and the Serbians, even recently, the right to the church. However, according to the theories of nationalism, the most wanted element was primarily territory, as one of the main indicators of the nation. So it was in the Macedonian case. Scholars also devoted their efforts to the issue, trying to figure out the roots of the contested perceptions. 'Where there are clashing interpretations of ancestral homelands and cultural heritages as for example in Macedonia, Kashmir, Nagorno-Karabagh, and Palestine – normal conflicts of interest are turned into cultural wars, and moral and political crusades replace everyday politics' (Smith, 1999: 9). History and culture, two separate but inextricable processes, were 'subjects' of proving 'our truth' against 'their truth'. 'In a time of perceived crisis and with limited alternatives, there was little inclination among ethnic Macedonians as a whole for a radical restructuring of national symbols' (Frusetta, 2004: 118).

Rapid social changes in the society freed some 'hidden' versions of the national narrative too. The main 'ideological' struggle was between the

two strongest political parties on the Macedonian political scene, Social-Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM) and Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation – Democratic Party of Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE). While the SDSM stuck to the leftwing version of the national narrative (dominant until 1990s), the VMRO-DPMNE tried, from the pre-socialist period right-wing tradition, to present to the public other 'forgotten' national heroes. Efforts were made to re-open questions from history and consequently to re-think parts of the national narrative. The most controversial revisionist effort, according to Brunnbauer, concerned the attempt to include the 'Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation' (VMRO) of the inter-war period in the Macedonian national narrative. 'The rationale of these attempts was to construct a historical rightwing tradition, which the nationalist VMRO-DPMNE party could claim for itself, and to oppose the pro-Yugoslav interpretation of Macedonian history that was politically associated with the post-communist SDSM party' (Brunnbauer, 2004: 192-3). The reconciliation of the two historic 'memories' held by both parties, one as a subaltern perspective different from the governing ones, did not find fruitful soil in first decade of independence. After the VMRO-DPMNE stepped down as the ruling government-led coalition party (1998-2002), we saw, at least from the public perspective, a fading out of the attempts to exploit different national 'stories'. But some heroes (like Alexander the Great) remained as dormant stories and did not wait too long.

Let me present the data from the research done in 2001 among 2000 ethnic Macedonians on the questions regarding the national identity and the past. The average Macedonian though that the historical roots of the Macedonian state are connected with the **Ilinden uprising** (24.75%) or with **Alexander the Great** (21.35%), and are followed by ASNOM (antifaschist state structure from the World War II) and Czar Samuil. Divergence from the average result was recorded among the age groups 18-25 and 56-65 and university-educated respondents. The younger generation, again, prefer Ilinden (26.46%) compared to ASNOM (12.70%), the older generation prefer ASNOM (25.18%), while primary school-educated respondents prefer the Ilinden uprising (24.04%). ***Interestingly, among university-educated respondents Alexander the Great (24.74%) was the most popular choice.*** Bigger differences, again, are spotted between VMRO-DPMNE affiliates, with Ilinden first (31.02%) and Alexander the Great the second choice (26.74%), giving ASNOM barely (8.02%). Again, VMRO-DPMNE affiliates have significant differences not just in the rating of the historical roots, but in the percentage of importance too. This supports the argument that 'alternative political identities have been emerging, different from those laid down by existing state structures' (McCrone, 1998: 31). This

implies that some social groups have different perspectives on national narratives, view national history differently, or at least have subaltern national 'versions'. In the Macedonian case, these groups are the younger and the older respondents and, to some extent, university-educated groups. (Atanasov, 2004) In the case of the Macedonian national identity there are competing differences between unitary and subaltern national myths and narratives. 'The governing myth thus coexists with and is constantly contested by subaltern myths, which are capable of generating their own traditions and stories' (Bell, 2003: 74). This is the case with many nations, both older and younger ones.

This was a picture of 2001 seen through one simple research question. And with this we conclude the part with Macedonian governing myth of origin and its shifts and will continue with the process of 'antiquization' of Macedonian national identity that stir public feelings about the past heroes and events. This will be the third example of the paper argument. The questions that will be cited are from the research done in 2010. (Simoska *et all*: 2010)
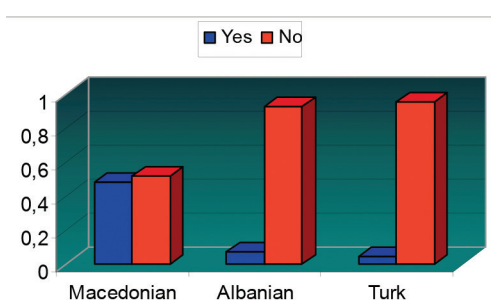
'ANTIQUIZATION' OF THE NATIONAL IDENTITY

The data form the research done in 2010 shows that the trend towards 'antiquization' is continuing. On the question 'Do you personally feel as a successor of Alexander the Great?', negatively answered 64,5% of the general public. (Graph 1) Yet, that feels like a succesors answered 35,5%, which is certainly not small percentage if we have in mind that the enhanced process of 'antiquization' is just present in last couple of years (2008-2011). Of course, this feeling is dominant among Macedonians (Graph 2), with almost even ratio between those who feel and do not feel close to the Great warrior.
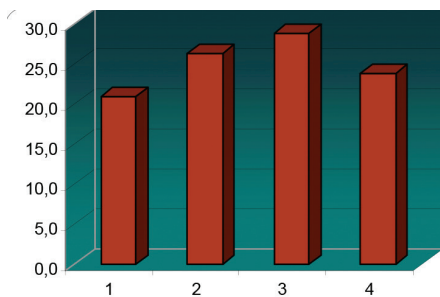
Graph 1
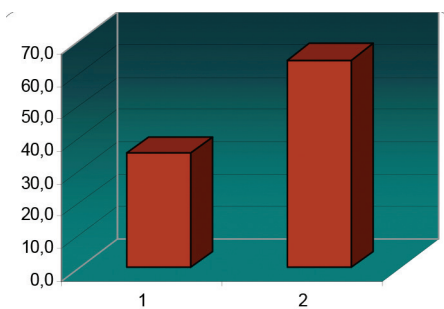
Graph 2

On the question 'How one can explain the increased interest of the ancient history in Macedonia?', the answers shows that the antiquization has an effect acquiring the new elements of the state identity. This is proved by the answer that 'this is an ultimate affirmation of the real history of Macedonia' which is chosen by 29%. With 26% the respondents have chosen the modality 'this is an attempt to make Greece angry and not resolve the name issue' and 21% respondents have chosen that 'this is an attempt to provoke confusion in Macedonian identity'. These are type of answers when the citizens do not have clear opinion and make an enforced selection, and the answers are (3-4 of them) more or less with the same quantity generally (Graph 3). In that case, the columns in the graphs do not have obvious trends. Still, the third answer, for 'an ultimate affirmation of the real history of Macedonia', divided by ethnic segregation, is most preferred by the Macedonians (Graph 4).
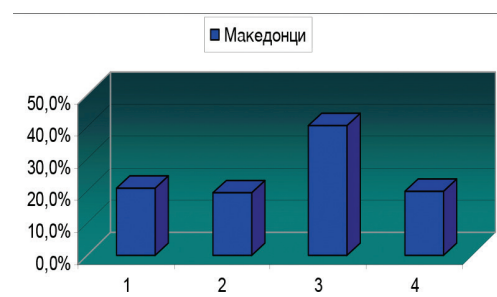
Modalities on the question: 'How one can explain the increased interest of the ancient history in Macedonia?'

1. It is an attempt to provoke confusion in Macedonian identity
2. It is an attempt to make Greece angry and not resolve the name issue
3. It is an ultimate affirmation of the real history of Macedonia
4. Do not know

Graph 3   *Graph 4*

And the last question in this argumentation, that will serve to argue about the paper thesis, is the answers on the question 'Which historical person is the most important according to your opinion?'. Here, the Alexander the Great is 'loosing' the battle with the most prominent Macedonian in last 100 years – Goce Delchev (23%) and Josip Broz Tito (14%). The Alexander is shosen by 9% of the interviwees, the same as the Skenderbeg (9%). (Graph 5) This picture is completely changed when the data is segregated by ethnic variable (Graph 6). Then, the Macedonians

make the same selection (chosing the Goce Delchev double then the others), but the Albanians exlusively choose Skenderbeg (36%) as well as the Turks choosing Ataturk (27%).

Graph 5
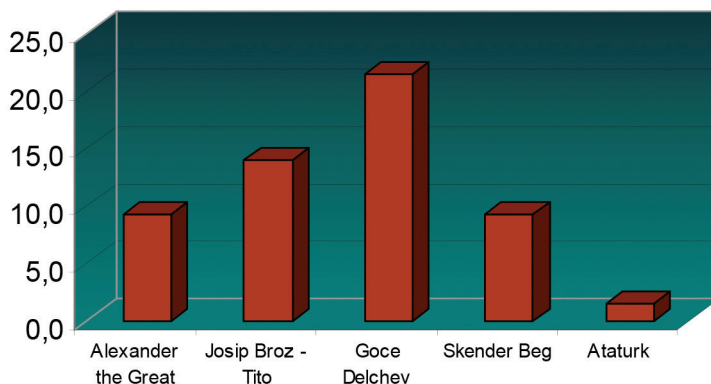
Graph 6
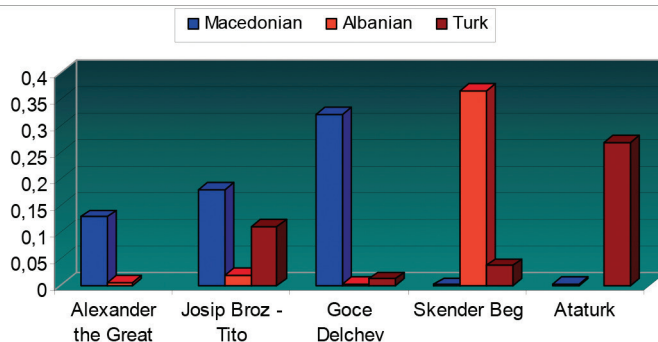
Yet, the biggest and signigficant differences in answers related to this question is gathered by the **age segregation**. These data are shown in Table 1. Goce Delchev is the first 'pick' in all generations. But, it is clear that the story of Alexander is already part of the identity concerning younger generations, comparing to older generations which selection as a second choice is Josip Broz – Tito, as significant historical figure in Macedonian history.

Table 1

Which historical person is most important according to your opinion	Age						
	18-25 age	26-30 age	31-40 age	41-50 age	50-65 age	over 65	Total
Aleksandar Makedonski	**11,1%**	**11,4%**	**10,0%**	7,4%	6,6%	9,9%	9,2%
Josip Broz - Tito	7,0%	7,2%	11,1%	**18,3%**	**21,2%**	**21,5%**	13,9%
Goce Delchev	**18,5%**	**18,6%**	**17,5%**	**19,9%**	**26,5%**	**36,4%**	21,4%
Skender Beg	9,1%	9,1%	11,4%	12,2%	5,6%	4,1%	9,2%
Ataturk	1,2%	1,5%	1,9%	1,9%	1,3%		1,5%
Other Macedonian heros	7,4%	6,1%	10,8%	7,7%	10,9%	9,1%	8,8%
Other Albanian heros	14,8%	12,9%	8,1%	8,3%	6,6%	7,4%	9,6%
Current politicians	1,2%	1,1%	1,4%	1,3%	0,7%		1,1%
Ither historical persons	11,5%	12,5%	9,7%	4,5%	7,6%	4,1%	8,6%
No answer	18,1%	19,7%	18,1%	18,6%	12,9%	7,4%	16,7%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

These were the three examples that shows that the effect of non-recognition of full Macedonian national identity, especially vis-a-vis Greek objections (and veto in Bucharest in 2008 as a blocade to become a member of NATO as a state), **directly influenced and reinforced the shift towards the ancient ethnogenesis of the Macedonian nation**. The story of Alexander was already existent and in use but the governmental structures have choosen to re-interpret it and to make it more significant by building the huge statue of one 'warrior on his horse' in the Skopje main square. Actually, the process of antiquization is agenda that consist of more elements but this is the 'biggest' one.

CONCLUSION

The complex of questions for Alexander the Great gives new knowledge in relation to peceptions and interpretations of state identity. Namely, already big part of Macedonians 'feels' as succsesors of Alexander and, yet, part of them are convinced that 'he is the most important because our people have its origin by him'. It is difficult to talk about the debtness of these feelings, but the starting quantitative

analyses say that 'Alexandromania' is supported by people from cities, those with higher education and people from right wing ideological campus. Main reason for the antiquization is 'the final confirmation of real history' of the Macedonians. Despite these loops, the identity of Macedonian is rather stable, and is llinked with the state and the culture, but new elements of 'antiquization' and 'alexanromania' are emerging as part of main body of Macedonian national identity discourse. The attitudes that he is our direct ancestor and that this is our real history are supported by increasing number of Macedonians. Alexander as important historical figure is second choice by the younger generations.

The argument is supported by two conclusions. First, symbolic resources like political values, history and geography, provide the symbolic raw material which social actors use as they define national identities in public discourse. As Zimmer put it, what matters with regard to the construction of national identities is less *what* resources political actors draw upon than *how* they put these resources to practical use. In Macedonian case the choice is clear what is chosen and how are the resources employed practically. Second, the search for antique roots of the Macedonian national identity is the third wave of defence after the successful establishment of first, the federal state (1944) and, second, an independent nation (1991). The defence started anew with the conflict of 2001 and the turbulences that the nation had to go through after the spill over of the Kosovo conflict on Macedonian soil and with Macedonian-Albanian crisis. 'Antiquization' as a phenomenon (2008-2011) is also a defence not an attack (an answer on Greek objections and blocades), but will certainly have longer impact on perceptions of national identity in the Republic of Macedonia. Once you have 'learned' who you are, it is a river of no return.

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