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ARTICLE



Between collective and particularistic interests. Ratification of the Prespa Agreement by national parliaments in Greece and North Macedonia

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ABSTRACT

This article examines Greece and North Macedonia's parliamentary ratifications of the Prespa Agreement. Given the decisive role of national parliaments in the process of the agreement's success, the article investigates to what extent this specific institutional setting influenced the dispute concerning the bilateral agreement. The article poses the following question: which factors explain support and opposition towards the agreement within the two national parliaments? We found that two conflicting models of parliamentary representation characterized the type of support for or opposition to the agreement: the trustee and the representative models. Drawing on an analysis of the vote outcomes and a qualitative discourse analysis of the plenary debates, the article demonstrates that whereas the governing parties in both states adhered to the trustee model – prioritizing their international responsibility and the state's collective interests – opposition parties acted as representatives of specific sub-groups of voters and their particularistic interests or identities.

KEYWORDS

Prespa Agreement; national parliaments; North Macedonia; Greece; FYROM; conflict; name dispute

Introduction

With the parliamentary ratification process of the Prespa Agreement, national parliaments in Greece and in the Republic of North Macedonia were entrusted with an extremely important task: to vote (as representatives of the people) on the historically most important bilateral agreement between their countries. While the Prespa Agreement was signed by the heads of government, its entry into force was conditioned by the successful parliamentary ratification in *both* countries. The prime ministers of Greece and North Macedonia signed an agreement on 12 June 2018 to change the name of the country from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) or the Republic of Macedonia¹ to the Republic of North Macedonia. The major goal was to resolve the bilateral dispute that had burdened both countries since the early nineties but also to provide North Macedonia a perspective to join the European Union and NATO

(Bieber 2018a). In particular, Greece had been vetoing FYROM's accession to the EU and NATO arguing that the name Macedonia exclusively applies to its northern province. This paper therefore investigates to what extent the specific institutional setting of the ratification process, i.e., the national legislature, is helpful in explaining how the dispute over the Prespa Agreement in the parliaments of Greece and North Macedonia took shape and its outcome. The paper starts with the following research questions: Which factors explain support and opposition towards the agreement in both national parliaments? To what extent are the two states' conflict outcomes and structures convergent or divergent? To answer these questions, the article investigates the vote outcomes on the Prespa Agreement in both national parliaments as well as the plenary parliamentary debates accompanying the ratification process. The findings of the article demonstrate that the institutional setting explains not only *how* parliamentarians in both states voted on the agreement, but also *which types of discursive arguments* they employed to legitimize their positions.

The article predominantly addresses the literature focusing on the name dispute but also the literature analysing the role of national parliaments in the conflict-resolution process. The first area of literature is particularly rich in case studies explaining domestic policy outcomes and preference formation (Joseph and Vangelov 2018; Armakolas and Triantafyllou 2017; Tziampiris 2011; Gjuzelov and Ivanovska Hadjievska 2019; Syrigos and Chatzivasileiou 2018; Karpozilos and Christopoulos 2018; Irakleidis 2018) but also the impact of the European Union on domestic actors (Mavromatidis 2010; Tziampiris 2012; Wunsch 2017; Bieber 2018b). Yet, in this field, there are hardly any comparative studies simultaneously analysing *both* the Greek and the North Macedonian cases (Mavromatidis 2010). Furthermore, most studies have concentrated on executive actors, neglecting the role of the legislative. Our study aims at filling these gaps. Regarding the second area of the literature, there are hardly any studies that analyse the role of national parliaments in the process of conflict-resolution. In the Balkan context, most studies devoted to conflict-resolution focus on national governmental actors, foreign executives and supranational institutions. These actors receive most academic attention due to their role in the negotiation process. Yet, as most international agreements can enter into force only after a parliamentary vote of approval, the role of national parliaments is central to explaining why the process in question ends with success or failure.

Theoretical framework

In democratic states, national parliaments have three core responsibilities: *law-making* (voting on legislative projects proposed by the executive as well as international agreements), *scrutiny* (holding the government accountable for their actions and decisions) and *representation* of citizens' interests (Blondel 1973; Martin et al. 2016). While international agreements are predominantly negotiated by governments, their approval usually requires consent of the public (via referendum) or their directly elected representatives (national parliaments). Why is that the case? The major reason is that approval of international agreements by the public or their directly elected representatives grants the process stronger input and output legitimacy (Scharpf 1999), meaning that the decisions are taken 'by the people' (input legitimacy) and 'for the people' (output legitimacy).

According to the most famous definition of representation (Pitkin 1967), the term is defined as a process that occurs when democratically elected representatives speak on behalf of others. In other words, representation is about making citizens' voices and opinions present in the process of public policymaking. The process of representation entails the following components: an actor representing someone (for instance, a member of the parliament), actor(s) that are being represented, the idea/concept or interests that are voiced by the representatives and an institutional setting in which the process of representation takes place.

Representation has been frequently understood as a relation between a voter and a representative. One of the most popular theoretical models within that approach describes representation as a principal–agent relation (Tsebelis 2002). The model conceptualizes representation as a rational, interest-based relation between the principal (the public or citizens) and the agent (representatives or parliamentary parties). Both are utility-maximizing actors, but their interests do not overlap. While the principal sets up mechanism to control the agent and to hold him accountable, the agent attempts to influence the principal's position along his own preferences.

Yet, most contemporary studies dealing with representation observe that representation is not exclusively about the relation between representatives and their constituents, rather, it has a much broader meaning for the whole political system (Urbinati 2008; Beetham and Lord 1998). According to Urbinati (2008) representation allows deliberation to take place but also to preserve disagreements (variety of interests and opinions) within a society. By the same token, representation is essential for the quality and stability of democracy. People feel represented when they know that their representatives voice their interests and opinions in the policy-making process. Representation is also essential to reconcile conflicts in a society. It is impossible to reconcile a conflict if one of the groups involved cannot articulate its arguments through its representatives. In fact, parliamentary setting is an extremely difficult environment to resolve bilateral disputes. While resolution of conflicts requires commitment towards the compromise, the key role of national parliaments is to preserve disagreement by representing the diversity of social, political and economic interests (Urbinati 2008). Beyond that, national parliaments are arenas where the deepest political division organizing political life manifests itself, namely the cleavage between the government and the opposition.

While the definition of representation is very parsimonious, it does not specify whom the MPs should represent. In particular, how should representatives know who 'the people' are? Should they represent a collective interest of all citizens in a given state or rather particularistic interests of specific groups?

The literature observes that parliamentarians simultaneously exercise two conflicting roles: as *responsible* advocates of a common good and as *responsive* speakers of a specific constituency (interest group) (Birch 1964; Bardi et al. 2014). These two roles are linked to two theoretical models of representation: the trustee and the representative model (Burke 1854 (1774); Rose 2014). On one hand, parliamentarians in democratic states are aware that their decisions should serve the interests of all the people or the whole country. Yet it is not always possible for a representative to identify what the collective interest is and which political decision serves best the collective interests of all citizens. Far too often the political reality is too complex, the available information too scarce and peoples' interests too divergent to be brought under one umbrella. On the other hand, parliamentarians

perceive themselves as speakers of specific socio-economic or ethnic groups that vote for their party (responsive model). Yet, acting as responsive representatives oriented towards the interests of a specific group (constituency) is also not free from hazards. Collective and particularistic interests do not always go hand in hand: what is good for the collective might stand in conflict with particularistic interests of a given social group. As a consequence, the major challenge that representatives are confronted with is to decide whether they should follow collective or particularistic interests in a given case.

For contemporary scholars, it has been particularly interesting to investigate under which circumstances parliamentary parties are more inclined to act as trustees or representatives. For instance, it has been observed that governing parties are more likely than the opposition parties to act as trustees. This is due to the fact that governing parties assume international, not only domestic, responsibility for their actions. Opposition parties, in turn, are not internationally responsible for their decisions and therefore focus entirely on their voters' interests.

Another important factor that influences parliamentarians' choices are global constraints. It is obviously more optimal for parliamentary parties to choose freely which model of representation they want to pursue in a given case. However, there are situations when external circumstances prevent representatives from acting as trustees or responsive representatives. For instance, during the recent European financial crisis, parliamentary parties in Greece found it particularly difficult to act upon the preferences of their voters (Closa and Maatsch 2014; Maatsch 2016). The Memoranda of Understanding that the Greek government signed imposed radical austerity measures which were strongly disapproved by the Greek people.

Drawing on the literature discussed above, we expect that the two models of representation will help us to understand why and how parliamentary parties in Greece and in North Macedonia positioned themselves as they did towards the Prespa Agreement.

According to the first hypothesis tested in this article, *supporters of the Prespa Agreement are more likely to employ the trustee (responsible) model of representation than opponents of the agreement*. Parliamentary supporters of the agreement have the same party-affiliation as the cabinet members who negotiated the agreement. As a consequence, they are bound by the international responsibility to conclude the deal with a success. The international responsibility mobilizes supporters to vote in favour of the agreement and employ inclusive discourses which appeal to the broadest possible audience and allow other party members to identify with these discourses. Supporters are therefore likely to refer to general, common-good oriented arguments, such as the general economic interest of the whole state, security of the state or international recognition of the country. These arguments are general enough to generate broad public and political consent. Supporters are likely to avoid arguments addressing interests of particular constituencies.

According to the second hypothesis tested in this article, *opponents of the agreement are more likely to employ a representative (responsive) model of representation*, namely a model prioritizing the interests of constituents. Opponents of an agreement are predominantly parliamentary parties that were not involved in the negotiations of the agreement. As a consequence, the success of the process is not their priority. The failure of the ratification process will not be their failure, but the failure of actors who were driving the process. Opponents will therefore predominantly act according to preferences of their voters. In

doing so, opponents will target groups with specific, particularistic interests, ideas or identities. These are either territorially delineated or ideologically delineated groups.

A very important factor in this context is the proximity of national parliamentary elections. The closer the date of elections is, the stronger the motivation of parliamentary parties to respond to voters' interests. According to Mansbridge (2003), when elections are close, parliamentary parties act according to voters' expectations, not necessarily according to the electoral programme. The anticipatory form of representation also explains why junior coalition partners leave the coalition shortly before parliamentary elections (as was the case in Greece).

Finally, opponents of an international agreement are not concerned with the opinion of the international community. First, opponents were not involved in the negotiation process and would not take the credit for the successful ratification. Second, acting according to international community's expectations would not automatically improve the electoral performance in the next elections. Preferences of national voters come first for the opponents of an agreement.

While the paper examines how different theoretical models of representation characterize parliamentary discourse, it acknowledges that political parties are also driven by vote – and office-seeking interests. These interests constitute important underpinnings that can effectively catalyse MPs' discursive commitment to a given model of representation.

The Prespa Agreement: major provisions

The 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 – referred to as the Prespa Agreement – was signed by the prime ministers and foreign ministers of Greece and North Macedonia on 12 June 2018.

The text of the agreement refers to the first and the second parties, stipulating that the first party is the Hellenic Republic and the second party a state 'which was admitted to the United Nations in accordance with the UN General Assembly resolution 47/225 of 8 April 1993'. This wording is not a coincidence – while Greece officially referred to its northern neighbour as the *former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the country in question used the name the *Republic of Macedonia* for itself.

Part 1 of the Agreement concerns the settlement of the name dispute. Article 1 (3) stipulates that 'the official name of the Second Party will be the Republic of North Macedonia, short name North Macedonia'. The Article also regulated related issues such as nationality and the official language of the country; in particular, 'the nationality of the Second Party shall be Macedonian/citizen of the Republic of North Macedonia. The official language of the Second Party shall be the Macedonian language as recognized by the Third UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names held in Athens in 1977'. In line with Article 1(3 g) of the agreement, the new name is to be confirmed in the national constitution of the state in question. Furthermore, the Second Party obliged itself to notify all international organizations about the name change as provided in Article 1(6) but also to change the licence plates to NM or NMK. Finally, the agreement stipulated that with its ratification in both states, the former names FYROM

or the Republic of Macedonia will cease to be used (Art. 1(7)). Although the Macedonian language has been recognized as Slavic (Art. 7), the provisions regarding the *Macedonian* (not North Macedonian) language and nationality have generated deep-seated controversies among Greek parliamentarians. The most common concern has been that omitting the adjective 'North' would de facto allow the country to be referred to as 'Macedonia' and not 'North Macedonia'.

Article 2(1) concerns obligations of the First Party. Greece obliged itself not to object the application (or membership) of the Second Party to international organizations (such as the EU or NATO) when the application is submitted under the new name – North Macedonia. This provision is particularly important given the fact that Greece opposed the accession of its northern neighbour to NATO and the EU due to the unresolved name dispute. Article 2(4) stipulates that upon ratification of the agreement, the First Party (Greece) will notify the President of the Council of the EU that it supports opening of EU accession negotiations for the Second Party. The interpretation of Article 2 suggests that the Greek parliament cannot reject accession of North Macedonia to the EU. It can be assumed that Greece made this concession because Macedonian authorities would not ratify the agreement without being certain that Greece would no longer veto its application.

Article 3 of the agreement confirmed the existing borders whereas Articles 4 and 6 obliged both Parties to take measures against irredentism and hostility in both societies. In order to support reconciliation and dialogue, the agreement established a Joint Inter-Disciplinary Committee of Experts on historic, archaeological and educational matters. One of the tasks of the Committee is to revise schoolbooks in both states in order to eliminate irredentism and hostility.

The final provisions of the agreement concern facilitation of bilateral cooperation in economic, logistic and defence matters. The concluding provision stipulates that the agreement remains in force for an indefinite period and that it is irrevocable. Furthermore, modifications of Articles 1(3) and 1(4) are not allowed.

After the heads of government signed the Prespa Agreement, the domestic process of ratification began in each state. In North Macedonia the social-democratic government of Zoran Zaev organized a non-binding referendum in which people were asked the following question:

'Are you in favour of European Union and NATO membership by accepting the agreement between the Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Greece?'

The referendum question not only asked people about their position on the Prespa Agreement, but also strongly linked it to the question of the EU and NATO membership. Although 91% of valid votes supported the Prespa Agreement, the outcome of the referendum was not binding given the 37% turnout. For a referendum to be valid, the constitution requires a minimum 50% turnout. According to the media, the low turnout should be predominantly attributed to a successful opposition campaign advocating a boycott of the referendum.²

In line with the Macedonian constitutional provisions, the parliament stepped in to complete the ratification process. Since the Prespa Agreement required constitutional changes, it was necessary to gain a two-third-majority approval of the constitutional amendments regarding the country's name. The process was eventually completed on

11 January 2019 with the support of the social democrats, all the Albanian parties and a few members of the opposition.

In Greece, the Prespa Agreement was ratified by the national parliament. The ratification process was heavily influenced by parliamentary elections. According to different social surveys, Greek society was heavily polarized on the issue. Opposition parties, the KINAL or ND, decided to vote against the agreement even though their EP party-families (S&D and EPP) were lobbying in favour of it. Ratification of Prespa also generated deep conflicts among supporters of the agreement. The ruling coalition, composed of SYRIZA and the junior partner ANEL, collapsed due to ANEL's sudden turn regarding Prespa. ANEL was involved in the Prespa Agreement negotiations, but shortly before parliamentary ratification, the party took a negative stance on it and expelled party members wanting to support the agreement. As a result, Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras had to build a majority with support from opposition parties, mostly independent MPs as well as members of the centrist TO POTAMI. Eventually, the Greek parliament ratified the Prespa Agreement on 25 January 2019 with a very thin majority. The agreement officially entered into force on 12 February 2019 when both Parties notified the UN that the deal has been concluded.

EU actors and European heads of states saw the agreement as a remarkable success. In Brussels, Alexis Tsipras and Zoran Zaev were widely celebrated as peacemakers of the Balkans.³ Both prime ministers were nominated by three EU party-families for a Nobel Peace Prize. Yet, despite the indisputable success at international levels, the agreement remained heavily contested at the national level.

Research design and methodology

In both states, the empirical inference was based on a comparative analysis of the vote-outcome and the plenary debates. The data were publicly available on the internet pages of the national parliaments. In North Macedonia, the debates took place on 1, 2 and 3 December with the parliamentary vote taking place on 20 January 2018. In Greece, the vote on the agreement (25 January 2019) was preceded by two plenary debates on 23 and 24 January.

Why focus on parliamentary discourses? In the course of a parliamentary ratification process, members of parliament vote not only on an agreement but also explain why they support or reject it. National parliaments are representative institutions, meaning they speak for various social groups. Parliamentary discourses allow us to establish which groups the representatives chose to speak for and which mode of representation they adopted. This study draws on qualitative, comparative discourse analysis. The method is very popular in legislative studies and has been applied to study party ideology, government positioning on different policies, parliamentary scrutiny or deliberation. These different approaches assume that a researcher can infer crucial information regarding the functioning of parliaments and parties by analysing formal records (i.e., speeches) of parliaments, parliamentarians, parliamentary parties or committees. An extensive application of the method became possible over the last two decades when parliaments began to digitalize their records.

Regarding the analysis of party ideology, there are many comparative studies that have based the empirical inference on party manifestos, parliamentary plenary speeches or

texts of coalition agreements (Laver et al. 2003; Slapin and Proksch 2008; Budge et al. 2001). These studies employed either a quantitative approach (drawing on specialized software such as Atlas.ti) or a qualitative ‘hand-coding’.

Content and discourse analysis has been also applied with a lot of success to various studies analysing oversight and parliamentary scrutiny (Martin and Vanberg 2008, 2008). These studies focused on speech and bill length or changes in the content of legislative proposals to establish how intensively parties engage with the oversight. Finally, there are also studies drawing on the analysis of plenary parliamentary debates to establish why parliamentary parties approved or rejected specific legal or policy measures (Closa and Maatsch 2014).

The dependent variable of the analysis was defined very narrowly as an individual MP’s position on the Prespa Agreement. The dependent variable was also employed in this form in the codebook. The unit of analysis was a statement by an individual member of the national parliament in North Macedonia or Greece expressing her or his position on the Prespa Agreement. Other statements were not coded.

The empirical analysis of plenary parliamentary debates was conducted using qualitative comparative discourse analysis. The debates were analysed in their original language⁴ but coding was in English. The three ‘fixed’ coded elements were: (A) an actor (an author of the claim, in this case, the North Macedonian or Greek MP), (B) their position on the Prespa Agreement (in favour, against or abstention) and (C) the discursive justification (why in favour, against or abstention).

The codebook was designed in a semi-inductive way. In other words, there were codes which could be ‘anticipated’ before the empirical analysis was conducted, in particular that actors participating in plenary debates will be members of one of the parliamentary parties in either state. Sub-categories of B-codes could also be anticipated given the three possible avenues that the legislative process offers to each MP (vote in favour, against and abstention). Sub-categories of C-codes could however not be identified before the empirical analysis. After the original documents were coded, the codes were transferred to an Excel table. In a subsequent step, A-codes (actors) were organized along the B-code values (in favour, against or abstention). Finally, the corresponding C-codes were linked to different combinations of A and B-codes. As a result, the data allowed mapping of the actors in Greece and in North Macedonia who supported or opposed the agreement – and why. In a final step, specific C-codes were assigned to three categories: a trustee model of representation, a representative model and other. The last category concerned codes that could not be classified according to either of the theoretical models.

The historical context of the name dispute

The historical dimension of the dispute is extremely complex because it concerns both tangible and intangible issues. In the territorial and historical dimension, Macedonia has been associated with the geographical region covering territories of contemporary Greece, Macedonia and Bulgaria.⁵ In the political dimension, Macedonia is one of the regions of contemporary Greek state. Finally, in the symbolic dimension, the authorities of both states – until recently – have claimed right to such symbols as the Vergina Sun or the figure of Alexander the Great. Not surprisingly, the concept of Macedonian identity has been severely contested.

Although the name 'Macedonia' referred to the ancient kingdom of Macedonia (808–168 BC/150–148 BC), modern and ancient Macedonia are two different political and historical entities. The region was part of Byzantium, Bulgaria, Serbia and – since 1371 – the Ottoman Empire, with the name 'Macedonia' not being in use (Drezov 1999, 50). Since the second half of the nineteenth century, the regional and the national identification with Macedonia has become more prominent. At the same time, neighbouring kingdoms began to articulate their territorial aspirations. Both processes gave rise to the so-called Macedonian Question – the question on self-identification and recognition of Macedonia and Macedonians (Baker 1999). Beyond that, these processes have also contributed to the establishment of the International Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (mac. VMRO) in 1893 that brought Macedonian (and Bulgarian) independence⁶ to the agenda. The Ilinden uprising of 2 August 1903 fostered the emergence of contemporary national Macedonian identity.

The first and the second Balkan Wars brought end to the Ottoman dominance in the region. With the Treaty of Bucharest (1913), the region of Macedonia has been divided and annexed by Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece. The contemporary state, the Republic of North Macedonia, was created from Vardar, previously Serbian, part of the region. On 2 August 1944, the first session of the Anti-fascist Assembly for the National Liberation of Macedonia (ASNOM) proclaimed Vardar Macedonia as one of the autonomous republics within the Yugoslav federation, recognized as the People's Republic of Macedonia (from 1963, the Socialist Republic of Macedonia). The new state proclaimed a constitution and the Macedonian language was codified.⁷

The situation changed in 1991 when Macedonia decided to peacefully break away from Yugoslavia. On 8 September 1991 in the referendum organized by the leading party VMRO-DPMNE, citizens opted for independence. On 17 October 1991 President Kiro Gligorov officially proclaimed independence of the Republic of Macedonia. The flag of the country featured the Vergina Sun on a red background (Reuter 1999; Craven 2012). Searching for a new national narrative, Macedonian authorities turned away from their socialist past within Yugoslavia and instead oriented themselves on antiquity. An element of the 'ancient-turn' has been to proclaim Alexander the Great (Alexander of Macedon) as a hero unifying Macedonian citizens and legitimizing continuity of the Macedonian state (Moroz-Grzelak 2004).

Greece, a neighbour state and a member of the EU and NATO, reacted negatively to the abovementioned measures. Greece refused to recognize the new state under the name 'Macedonia' claiming that the name exclusively refers to its northern province Aegean Macedonia (Tziampiris 2012). Greek authorities have also objected that Vergina Sun or Alexander the Great are employed as a national symbol of a different state. During that period there were very intensive protests and demonstrations against these measures. These events gave rise to the 30-year long bilateral dispute regarding the name of the country.

On 11 January 1992, the EC Arbitration Commission (the Badinter Commission) concluded that Slovenia and Macedonia fulfilled all the requirements to be recognized as independent states. Four days later, however, the recognition was postponed due to the opposition of Greece. In 1993 the country was accepted to the United Nations under the provisional name the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, FYROM.⁸ While the Macedonian government refused to change its

national symbols, Greece introduced an economic embargo and a border blockade in February 1994. The embargo was lifted 19 months later (1995), when foreign ministers of both states signed in New York an accord on normalization of bilateral relations. While the Macedonian parliament changed the national flag and the emblem, the dispute regarding the country's name has not been resolved (Pettifer 1999; Tziampiris 2012).

Over years, different country names have been proposed: 'Republic of New Macedonia', 'Republic of Upper Macedonia', 'Republic of Slavo-Macedonia', 'Republic of Nova Makedonija', 'Republic Macedonia – Skopje', 'Independent Republic of Macedonia', 'New Republic of Macedonia', 'Republic of Illinden Macedonia' or 'Republic of Vardar Macedonia' (Tziampiris 2005). Although both countries were occasionally close to finding a compromise,⁹ all proposals have been eventually rejected by either the Greek or Macedonian side. The negotiation process came to a standstill in 2006 when the right-wing party VMRO-DPMNE assumed power (Majewski 2013, 143–144). The electoral victory of the social-democratic party SDSM helped to re-open the negotiations in 2017. After the meeting of both prime ministers in Davos in January 2018, the negotiations continued under the UN mediation. The process was concluded with the signing of the Prespa Agreement.

Empirical analysis

In Greece, ratification of the Prespa Agreement required a simple majority. The agreement would have been ratified without difficulty had it not been for the internal disagreement within the junior coalition party, ANEL. The party duly suffered an internal split so that Syriza had to search for several votes outside of the coalition, eventually managing to secure the necessary majority.

In North Macedonia, the ratification process was more complicated because it implied four constitutional amendments. Amendment 33 concerned the change of the country's name from the Republic of Macedonia to the Republic of North Macedonia. Amendment 34 presupposed changes to the constitution's preamble: the words: 'the decisions of ASNOM' were to be replaced by the statement 'A Proclamation of the First ASNOM Meeting for the Macedonian People' and added to them the 'The Ohrid Framework Agreement' from 2001.¹⁰ Amendment 35 introduced a commitment that Macedonia 'respects the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of neighbouring countries'. Finally, Amendment 36 stipulated that the Republic of Macedonia protects, guarantees and fosters the historical and cultural heritage of the Macedonian nation, and guarantees the protection of citizens living or staying abroad.¹¹

Ratification of the abovementioned amendments required a two-thirds majority. The unicameral Macedonian Assembly – *Sobranie* – consists of 120 deputies from 20 political parties.¹² The most active MPs came from the opposition (that is VMRO-DPMNE and GROM), who objected the proposed changes. Governing parties, the SDSM, Bosnian AVAZ, LDP, POPGM, Roma PCERM, BESA as well as independent deputies voiced their support for the agreement. The supporters of the agreement relied heavily on minority parties, especially the most numerous minority – the Albanians.¹³

In order to secure the necessary majority, the government persuaded eight MPs from the opposition to support the constitutional revisions. In exchange, two MPs have been

amnestied from convictions related to the intrusion of nationalist activists into the parliament on 27 April 2017. This incident was supposed to prevent a peaceful transition of power from VMRO-DPMNE to the left-wing government of Zaev. Around 200 people were injured in the incident. Regarding the third MP from VMRO-DPMNE, the changes against her on corruption have been withheld. The three MPs can be considered as outliers because their voting-behaviour has been driven by personal interest. Yet, given that the paper covered and compared all discourses voiced during the ratification debate, this specific case has not influenced the outcome (see Table 1).

The results of voting were as follows:

Table 1. Vote outcome North Macedonia.

Amendment no.	Total votes	In favour	Against	Abstention
33	94	67	23	4
34	91	65	18	8
35	80	64	14	2
36	72	65	7	0

Source: authors

The final vote that took place on 11 January was boycotted by the VMRO-DPMNE MPs. The result was 81 in favour, no votes against or abstentions.

In Greece, proponents of the agreement were composed of parliamentarians from Syriza, To Potami and independent (unaffiliated) parliamentarians. Many arguments were the same among the three groups (see Table 2). The dominant common argument was that the Prespa Agreement was the one and only historical opportunity to bring the conflict to an end. As one member of To Potami observed, the former politics of confrontation had brought no change; only a compromise can secure success. Syriza, To Potami and unaffiliated members often stressed that the agreement represented national objectives regarding the resolution on the name-dispute. In their opinion, the agreement respected all the red lines stipulated by prior Greek governments, for instance, that the future name of FYROM should be hyphenated (composed of two words) because the name 'Macedonia' (on its own) refers exclusively to the Greek province. Another very frequent argument was that the agreement served the common political and economic interest of the whole country. The Prespa Agreement not only regulated the name issue but also laid foundations for closer economic (but also military) cooperation between both states.

Its supporters proudly argued that their determination to ratify the agreement was a historical event that would bring an end to years of nationalism and irredentism in both states. For instance, members of Syriza frequently stressed that the agreement was predominantly about peace and reconciliation in the region and truly future-oriented because it secured peace, economic prosperity and security for future generations of Greek and Macedonian people. 'There are times, ladies and gentlemen, when Members (of the parliament) face historical moments. There are moments in this House ... when the vote is important for future generations. Such a moment is today. When this moment comes, you have to consult your conscience and, of course, the public interest' (Konstantinos Skrekas, SYRIZA)

They also noted that the international community (United Nations, the EU and NATO) welcomed the agreement. It was observed that, after years of being perceived as a problem child of the European Union, Greece had become the 'widely respected peace-maker of the region'. Consequently, the failure to ratify the agreement would undermine Greece's international position. To Potami members also observed that ratification of the Prespa Agreement would prevent Russian influence in North Macedonia. Consequently, with admission of North Macedonia to NATO, the region had an opportunity to become geopolitically more stable.

Members of Syriza frequently responded to critical arguments raised by their opponents. Accordingly, they observed that the agreement did not undermine the integrity of the Greek state, but, to the contrary, confirmed the existing borders. They stressed that the agreement was balanced and that it reflected the interests of both states. Syriza members also acknowledged that North Macedonia had made many sacrifices: it was not common practice for a state to change its name and revise its constitution due to external pressure. Syriza also responded to criticism concerning the 'Macedonian language' and 'Macedonian nationality'. Opponents argued that by recognizing the 'Macedonian' language and nationality, doors would open to a future 'simplification' of the country's name from North Macedonia to Macedonia. Syriza members observed that over 150 countries in the world had adopted the name 'Macedonia' instead of FYROM. The Prespa Agreement therefore enabled adoption of the best possible solution given the *de facto* circumstances. Syriza members also stressed that Greece had already recognized the Macedonian language in 1977. To Potami members acknowledged that Greece had never had a monopoly on the Macedonia name. Supporters of the agreement furthermore assured the whole house that the Greek parliament would be able to scrutinize North Macedonia's accession application to the EU. There was concern that the Prespa Agreement obliged Greece to approve North Macedonia's accession to the EU irrespective of compliance to the EU *acquis*.

In North Macedonia, arguments from the agreement's supporters were largely similar to those in Greece. The MPs voting in favour of changes underlined the historical importance of an agreement that could end the dispute with Greece and bring peace to this part of the Balkan Peninsula. They argued that good neighbourly relations with Greece would positively influence economic growth, modernization of the country as well as bring a sense of security to citizens. The agreement could become, according to the general view of its proponents, a good example for other Balkan states by demonstrating the importance of compromise in international policy and the difficult but successful process of reconciliation. As Samka Ibrahimovski from the Party for Full Emancipation of the Roma stated: 'I would like to tell you that this agreement is foremost Balkan citizens' treaty. These Balkan souls want to be together in Europe. This is the most valuable element of the agreement. For the first time, someone invites us to a shared home, and this is our neighbour, Greece'. In an opinion of the proponents, the agreement and a new cooperation with Greece would be a chance to end the xenophobic and nationalistic attitudes (Nikica Korubin, independent MP).

The importance of joining NATO and the European Union was the main argument for the agreement's supporters. Members of parliament stressed that signing the agreement was the only way for North Macedonia to integrate with Europe. They spoke not only about political or economic integration but also about 'European values', civilization

and culture: ‘In the name of these common [European] values, we initiated a process of necessary changes to our Constitution, with the exclusive purpose of preparing Macedonia for the successful European future, which we all have dreamed of for 27 years’ (Zoran Zaev, SDSM). The ratification of the amendments would also, according to proponents, empower Macedonian statehood. The whole process was presented as an important step towards building a civil society that included all minorities living in the multi-ethnic Macedonian state.

Last but by no means not least, the Prespa Agreement allowed the Macedonian state to be recognized by all countries under a new constitutional name and would finally end the usage of the acronym FYROM. What’s more, official recognition of the Macedonian state empowered Macedonian identity and promoted its history and cultural heritage abroad. The supporters underlined the fact that Macedonia has already changed its name several times and the additional adjective ‘north’ would not bring an essential change. As Ilija Nikolovski from POPGM stated: ‘I am convinced that we do not really change the name because the [new] name includes “Macedonia” as the noun and the “Republic” as a social order’.

Table 2. Dominant discourses: Supporters of the Prespa Agreement.

	GREECE	NORTH MACEDONIA
ACTORS	SYRIZA, TO POTAMI, INDEPENDENT MPs	SDSM, AVAZ, LPD, POPGM, Party for the Full Emancipation of Roma, BESA, SPM
DOMINANT DISCOURSES	‘a historical opportunity to resolve a bilateral conflict’; ‘respects all national red lines’; ‘responds to the political and economic interests of BOTH countries’; ‘promotes peace in the Balkans’; ‘enhances the position of Greece in the international arena’	‘integration with the EU and NATO’; ‘commitment to European values’; ‘a historical opportunity to resolve a bilateral conflict’; ‘a manifestation of a political compromise’; ‘recognition of Macedonia by all states’; ‘commitment to a multiethnic civil society’; ‘promotes peace in the Balkans’

Source: authors

In Greece, opponents to the agreement were composed of a broad range of parliamentary parties such as KINAL, ND, Union of Centrist, the Communist Party and Golden Dawn (see Table 3). KINAL members were very concerned that the agreement lacked public legitimacy and observed that a large share of Greeks did not support it. Instead, coalition parties were downplaying the fact that the Prespa Agreement divided the Greek society so deeply and did not enjoy a widespread support. In fact, only KINAL and other Prespa Agreement opponents were responding to the fears and concerns of this share of Greek voters. According to the opponents, the Prespa Agreement was not democratic because a significant share of the population had been ignored. Greeks who protested on streets wanted to show that they did not stand behind the agreement. KINAL members argued that their constituents were concerned that ‘Skopje has been granted a monopoly on Macedonian identity’. People who decided to protest against the agreement were, according to KINAL, primarily concerned about the question of language and identity. Finally, KINAL members also argued that opposition parties were deliberately not being informed about progress in the bilateral negotiations.

The dominant party driving opposition to the Prespa Agreement was New Democracy (ND). The party expected to extend its electoral basis and become the dominant force after the elections by strengthening its link to voters dissatisfied with the Prespa agreement. The party resisted pressure from the European Peoples Party family who openly supported the agreement and encouraged Greeks and Macedonians to compromise. ND observed that the concerns of their voters were not being considered in the negotiation process and that the Prespa Agreement could be ratified democratically by Greek society as a whole by a popular referendum. They argued that there were people in Greece who were seriously concerned about the revision of borders, the creation of a Macedonian minority in Greece and the *de facto* recognition of the Macedonian language and identity. The ND stressed that there was no guarantee that North Macedonia would comply with all the conditions, such as the constitutional revisions. They observed that Greece would not be able to vote on North Macedonia's accession to the EU because the Prespa Agreement obliged Greece to support it. Finally, the ND argued that the agreement generated an identity-conflict for those Greeks identifying themselves as Macedonians. The Prespa Agreement also provided for the establishment of a special committee to revise Greek and North Macedonian schoolbooks. According to ND, there was a concern that the committee would give North Macedonia a monopoly on Macedonian identity.

Other parties opposing the deal also repeated the 'weak legitimacy' argument and presented themselves as speaking for those Greeks identifying themselves as Macedonians and concerned by the provisions of the agreement. Independent Greeks and Golden Dawn used the phrase 'Macedonia is one and it's Greek' practically in every statement: 'Ladies and gentlemen, today we have to say it all and before all, the most basic fact summarized in seven words: Macedonia is one and Greek. [Applause from the New Democracy wing] It is not a nationalist slogan. It is a historical truth' (Antonis Samaras, ND). The Communist Party also rejected the Prespa Agreement. The party members were mostly concerned with the deal's 'weak legitimacy'. They presented themselves as representing poor Greeks who had been badly hit by the austerity measures and were now being deprived of their identity. According to the Communist Party, the government never wanted to respond to the interests of Greeks identifying themselves as Macedonians but were more concerned with international businesses, the EU and NATO.

Opponents of the Prespa Agreement in North Macedonia came from the VMRO-DPMNE party and GROM. Their argument focused on two main areas: law and identity. The main 'legal' argument was that the referendum that preceded parliamentary voting was invalid due to the insufficient turnout. Even though the majority of referendum voters were in favour of the agreement, VMRO-DPMNE members claimed 'the people's will' opposed it and the parliament should have respected this. The low referendum turnout showed 'no legitimacy from the citizens' (Vladimir Ćorčev, VMRO-DMNE) to the agreement and constitutional changes. Although opponents of the agreement often positioned themselves as representing all Macedonian citizens, referring to the "citizens" will' or 'legitimacy from the citizens', the identity-oriented discussion revealed that they meant the more Slavic and orthodox part of the population.

Other arguments concerning legal issues related to the agreement being signed by the PM, not the president (himself a member of the VMRO-DMNE party), and that the whole process was ‘unclear’ and ‘didn’t involve dialog with the opposition’. Opponents also had doubts about the ‘security’ of the agreement from the Greek side as well as the question of whether the other state could impose changes to essential aspects of its existence such as its name and constitution.

According to the opponents, the agreement is ‘is not symmetrical because Greece is not changing a single word in its constitution’ (Vladimir Gjorchev, VMRO-DMNE). It was therefore ‘a catastrophe for Macedonian diplomacy’ (Dafina Stojanovska, VMRO-DPMNE) and “a political disgrace, capitulation and the worst thing that has happened in the Republic of Macedonia during these 27 years’ (Blagica Lasovska, VMRO-DMNE).

The most heated discussions concerned the other area of the opponents’ arguments – that of the identity, history and cultural heritage of the Macedonian state and nation. According to very emotional statements of opposition MPs, the agreement would erase the previously established Macedonian state as well as the whole of Macedonian history, including the struggle for national independence. Amendments to the constitution and the change of name would then be the beginning of a brand-new state with no history and no identity: ‘After changing the constitution, we will no longer be Macedonia. We and our institutions will not be Macedonian, our institutions will be North-Macedonian ... we will no longer be Macedonians, we will be North Macedonians’ (Zoran Ilioski, VMRO-DPMNE).

In this part of the debate, Zoran Zaev was called a traitor to the Macedonian nation, including betrayal of the ancestors and heroes from the past. ‘How are you going to lay flowers at the monuments of fallen soldiers?’, one of the VMRO-DPMNE members asked Zaev. According to another MP, Vesna Pemova, ‘for Macedonians, the name is holy. For Macedonians, the name is something of most importance and bigger and more important than NATO and the European Union’. That is why it could not be the subject of change just as ‘identity issues could not be the subject of an international agreement. It was a guaranteed right of every nation, even the Macedonian nation. The adjective ‘North’ meant denying our identity’ (Pavliche Chestova, VMRO-DPMNE).¹⁴ The attitudes described above contrasted with the SDSM and a supporter of the agreement’s vision of the state. Their forward-looking attitude was stated by Lidija Tasevska (SDSM): ‘I would like to draw attention to what is obvious to all of us and that it is indisputable that we all love our homeland, we all want it to succeed, we all want to open the door for the future and for generations that will come. But this is the only path that will lead us to the goal. The future should not be a hostage to the past’. According to supporters, the Macedonian state is made up of many ethnic and national groups. None of the minority groups should be excluded or omitted. According to the independent MP, Nikica Korubin, ‘the agreement will promote the peaceful and harmonious development of civil society while respecting the ethnic identity and interests of all Macedonian citizens’. This statement was in line with the politics of minority parties, for whom the debate on the future of the state had become an opportunity to increase their rights.

Table 3. Dominant discourses: Opponents of the Prespa Agreement.

	GREECE	NORTH MACEDONIA
ACTORS	KINAL; ND; UNION OF CENTRISTS; THE COMMUNIST PARTY; THE GOLDEN DAWN	VMRO-DPMNE, GROM
DOMINANT DISCOURSES	'lack of legitimacy'; 'betrayal of Greek and Macedonian identities'; '50% of Greeks are against Prespa'; 'the people were not consulted in the referendum'; 'for some people Macedonia is one and it is Greek'; 'it serves the interests of big companies and international actors'	'in conflict with Macedonian history and identity'; 'no guarantees on the Greek side'; 'disregards the referendum and citizens' opinions'; 'the agreement is asymmetrical'; 'ignores national red lines'; 'lack of dialogue with the opposition'; 'loss of sovereignty'; 'the name change requires too many sacrifices'

Source: authors

Discussion and conclusions

While the EU welcomed the Prespa Agreement as a great success, the agreement generated deep controversies at the national level. For some parliamentarians, the agreement had been an important, historical milestone reflecting the interest of their whole state and the region (the Balkans and Europe as a whole). Yet others observed that there were groups of citizens in both states who did not agree with this interpretation. In their opinion, the agreement infringed their personal identity as 'Macedonians' (both Greek and North Macedonian citizens).

The findings demonstrate that two models of parliamentary representation characterized support of and opposition to the agreement: the trustee and the representative models (Burke 1854 (1774), Birch 1964, Bardi et al. 2014). The article shows that whereas governing parties in both states adhered to the trustee model (prioritizing their international responsibility and the collective interests of the whole state), opposition parties in both states acted as representatives of specific sub-groups of voters and their particularistic interests or identities. By the same token, the analysis demonstrated that the dispute's outcomes and shapes in the two national parliaments were more similar than different. Consequently, the findings of this article suggest that identity-driven conflicts are more likely to be resolved when parliamentary parties sacrifice particularistic interests rather than act upon them.

The analysis established that the two models of representation, the trustee and the representative models indeed shaped the conflict outcome and shape in both national parliaments. In the literature, the trustee model of representation implies prioritization of collective interests (i.e., national or supranational interests) over the interests of particular groups of voters. The representative model implies that parliamentarians represent first the interests of specific groups of voters, their constituents, and not collective interests.

Whereas parliamentarians representing governing parties in both states opted for the trustee model, opponents of Prespa, the opposition parties, opted to voice the concerns of these voters, who felt left behind or disregarded by the provisions of the agreement. As expected, the trustee model of representation was employed to build bridges between

different interest or ethnic groups. The model helped to establish coalitions across party lines and social or economic divisions. In both states, supporters of the agreement employed extremely similar arguments referring to the common good of their whole states. The underlying theme was that everyone would benefit from it. Another common feature was the future – and interest-oriented focus of the discourse. Supporters of the agreement predominantly focused on *future* economic, security, political and international benefits. In their speeches, supporters reluctantly referred to the past and were also more likely to focus on interests rather than identity.

As expected, opponents of the agreement employed the representative (or the responsive) model. In contrast to supporters, opponents responded to preferences – but also fears and concerns – of *specific* constituencies. Their discourses revolved predominantly around the past and identity. The underlying concern was that the agreement would reinterpret the history of their state and infringe on people's Macedonian identity. As expected, opposition parties were more likely than governing parties to employ the responsive model. In contrast to governing actors, they were not motivated to reach across party lines. The success of the agreement would not be theirs but the governing parties who therefore had the strongest motivation to successfully conclude the deal.

The question emerges whether ratification of the Prespa Agreement can be employed as a blueprint for conflict-resolution in other states of the region. The findings of this study do not provide a conclusive answer. While the agreement *formally* resolved the bilateral dispute, it deeply polarized the society and political parties in both states. In fact, the agreement had a high social and political price. The cleft between supporters and opponents of the name deal became deeper. The ratification process demonstrated that identity-concerns of specific constituencies had to be downplayed by the supporters in order to conclude the agreement. A large share of Greeks and Macedonians did not feel represented in the process nor could they understand why their particularistic concerns should be sacrificed for the collective good of the country.

Notes

1. Some states (such as Greece, France, Spain or Germany) recognized the country under the name Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia but others as the Republic of Macedonia (such as USA, Russia, Canada or Poland). Given the controversy, the text of the Prespa Agreement refers the country as the 'Second Party' 'admitted to the United Nations in accordance with the United National General Assembly resolution 47/225 of 8 April 1993'.
2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-45699749> (Macedonia referendum: Name change vote fails to reach threshold, 30.09.2018)
3. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/opinion/tsipras-kills-three-birds-with-one-stone-with-north-macedonia-deal/> (Tsipras kills three birds with one stone with North Macedonia deal, Nikolaos Koutsimpogiorgos, 21.01.2019)
4. With a linguistic support of a Greek native speaker (PhD student).
5. The ancient Macedonian Kingdom was composed of contemporary territories of Greece and Macedonia.

6. The history of the organization is extremely complex. Its goals oscillated between striving for autonomy and full independence (Rossos 2008; Majewski 2013). The name of the contemporary right-wing party VMRO-DPMNE refers to the organization (Troebst 1999).
7. Codification of the language has been regarded as a priority in the process of constructing the new Macedonian national identity (Mavromatidis 2010).
8. The negotiations proceeded in several stages and involved various political actors, among others the UN negotiators, Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen. The proposed names were: New Macedonia, the Republic of Macedonia (Skopje) or Nova Makedonija. All of the proposals were rejected by Greece (Tziampiris 2012). At the same time, the name 'the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia' remained problematic for the government of North Macedonia that feared irredentism (Shkaric et al. 2009).
9. Under the UN mediation of Matthew Nimetz in 2008.
10. The Ohrid Framework Agreement ended the Macedonian–Albanian conflict and granted several rights to the Albanian minority, including the status of the Albanian language as an official language and the right to higher education in Albanian (Marolov 2013). Introducing their postulates for political discussion in connection with the Prespa Agreement, was a necessity for Zaev and his party – without Albanian support, they would not be able to revise the constitution
11. <https://vlada.mk/mkgrdogovor> (accessed 20 November 2019).
12. In the 2016 elections, the parties were organized in two coalitions. The first coalition was lead by VMRO-DPMNE under the name 'For Better Macedonia' (mac. 'Za podobra Makedonija'). The second coalition was lead by SDSM and called 'Life in Macedonia for all' (mac. 'Život vo Makedonija za site').
13. The necessity of Albanian support is visible in the amendments, especially in the 34 Amendment, where the Ohrid Framework Agreement is added.
14. This argument is mentioned and well described by F. Mavromatidis (2010).

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Methodological Appendix

The goal of this methodological appendix is to present in more detail the research design of the article (from the *puzzle* to the *interpretation* of our empirical findings).

The puzzle

There are two very different states (Greece and North Macedonia), yet the same institutional setting (parliament) for ratification of the agreement. To what extent can a similar institutional setting predetermine the structure and outcome of a conflict between two very different states?

The theory suggests two avenues: parliamentarians can either act as ‘trustees’ focusing on the common good of the whole country or as ‘representatives’ responsive to the needs of specific groups. Drawing on the literature, we posed a hypothesis that governing parties in both states will act as trustees whereas opposition parties will act as responsive representatives.

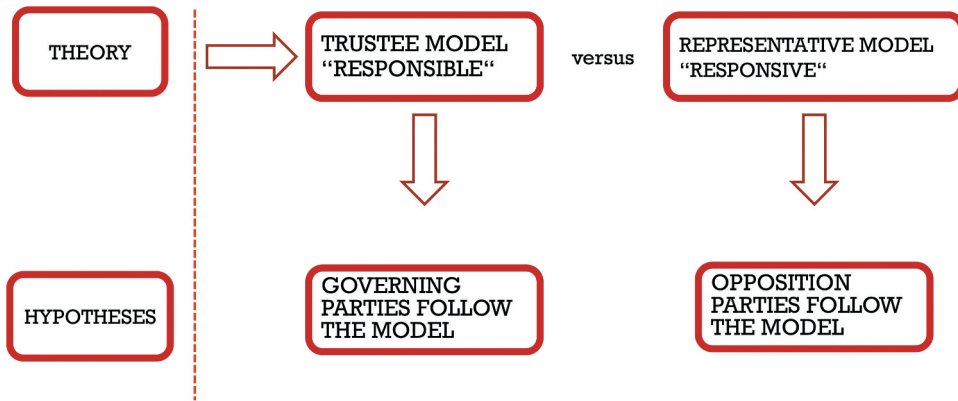
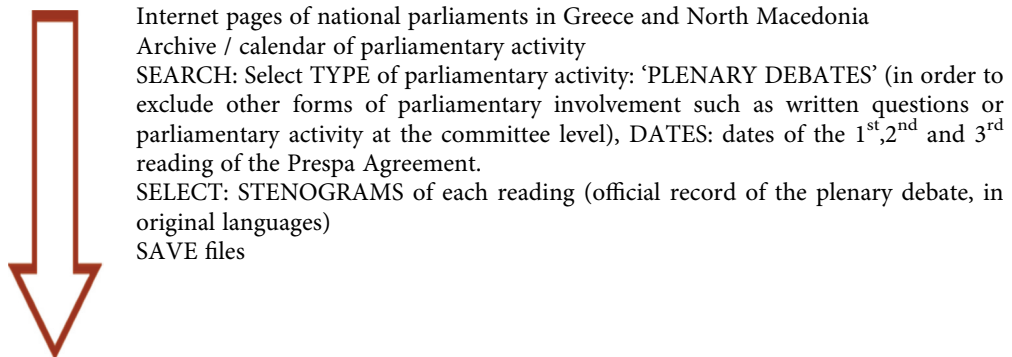


Figure 1. From theory to hypotheses. Source: authors

Empirical data

The empirical analysis was based on parliamentary plenary debates. The data was obtained in the following way in both states under study:



The analysis

The method employed was qualitative discourse analysis (the method is presented in detail in the main body of the article). Plenary parliamentary debates accompanied the legislative process and, by the same token, allowed parliamentary parties to issue official discourses providing information about their positions towards the legislative project as well as their arguments officially legitimizing or de-legitimizing the legislative process.

The analysis was conducted with help of a CODE-BOOK. The code-book was employed as an analytical tool helping to analyse parliamentary discourse. The code-book was in English, the analysed texts were in original languages. The focus of the analysis concerned only statements relevant for the guiding research question, namely, how specific parliamentary parties in both states positioned themselves on the Prespa Agreement. Only relevant statements were coded. Such an approach was necessary because parliamentarians sometimes raise issues unrelated to the daily order. A statement has been defined as a position that can be attributed to a specific ACTOR (parliamentarian) concerning the TOPIC of the analysis (Prespa Agreement), presenting the POSITION of the actor on the topic and the JUSTIFICATION. In practice, a statement as a discursive act can encompass only one or few sentences.

The code-book was semi-deductive because it was possible to anticipate only some family-codes. The goal was to establish how specific parliamentarians in both states (according to party affiliation) positioned themselves on the Prespa Agreement (possible options: IN FAVOUR; AGAINST OR ABSTAIN) and WHY (reasons explaining their position). As a consequence, the A-codes concerned party affiliation of actors, code B, positions on the topic (in favour, against, abstain), codes C included the list of justifications. While it was possible to anticipate the sub-categories of A and B codes (though not the frequency with which certain codes would be employed), it was impossible to anticipate the exact justifications (C-codes). C-codes were made inductively and, in the second step, categorised and assigned to one of the theoretical models. In this particular code-book it was not necessary to code the topic of the statement each time: it was constant. In some code-books it is necessary to identify sub-categories of the topic if the phenomenon analysed is more complex.

Languages and the coding process

The analysed texts were in original languages. In these languages the texts were also coded. Yet the code-book was in English. Three researchers (X, Y and Z) were involved in the coding process. Researchers X and Y developed the code-book. Researcher Y also coded the debates in one country under study. Researcher Z coded debates in the other state. The classification of the codes and the interpretation of results was conducted by all three researchers.

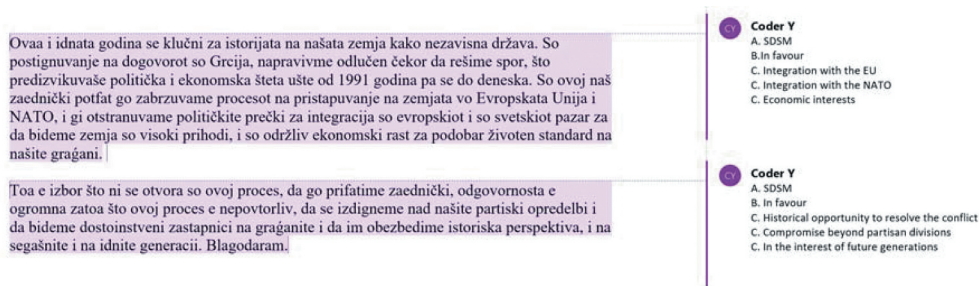


Figure 2. Examples of coded statements. Source: authors As the example demonstrates, Coder Y transformed the alphabet for our convenience.

Clustering of codes

When coding was completed, codes were clustered or merged. The 'working' list of codes entailed many repetitions in the category C. Eventually, these repeated codes had to be merged. Sometimes the description of the code was not clear to other researchers, so the wording had to be reformulated. Some codes were too long in terms of wording, therefore, we tried to re-formulate them in a more parsimonious manner. More specific codes, such as 'economic growth for the whole country', 'more jobs for everyone' or 'more trade' were assigned to family-codes, such as 'economic and political interests'. Clustering of codes was necessary given the length of the coded documents. That part of the analysis was also conducted in a qualitative manner.

	GREECE	NORTH MACEDONIA
ACTORS	SYRIZA, TO POTAMI, INDEPENDENT MPS 'a historical opportunity to resolve a bilateral conflict'; 'respects all national red lines'; 'responds to the political and economic interests of BOTH countries'; 'promotes peace in the Balkans'; 'enhances the position of Greece in the international arena'	SDSM, AVAZ, LPD, POPGM, Party for the Full Emancipation of Roma, BESA, SPM 'integration with the EU and NATO'; 'commitment to European values'; 'a historical opportunity to resolve a bilateral conflict'; 'a manifestation of a political compromise'; 'recognition of Macedonia by all states'; 'commitment to a multiethnic civil society'; 'promotes peace in the Balkans'
SUPPORTERS OF DOMINANT DISCOURSES		
	GREECE	NORTH MACEDONIA
ACTORS	KINAL; ND; UNION OF CENTRISTS; THE COMMUNIST PARTY; THE GOLDEN DAWN 'lack of legitimacy'; 'betrayal of Greek and Macedonian identities'; '50% of Greeks are against Prespa'; 'people were not consulted in the referendum'; 'for some people Macedonia is one and it is Greek'; 'it serves the interests of big companies and international actors'	VMRO-DPMNE, GROM 'in conflict with Macedonian history and identity'; 'no guarantees on the Greek side'; 'disregards the referendum and citizens' opinions'; 'the agreement is asymmetrical'; 'ignores national red lines'; 'lack of dialogue with the opposition'; 'loss of sovereignty'; 'the name change requires too many sacrifices'
OPPONENTS OF DOMINANT DISCOURSES		

Figure 3. Summary of family-codes: actors, positions and justifications. Source: authors