Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

Master’s Thesis

Trajan Mihajlovski

Supervisor: Prof. PhDr. Vit Hloušek, Ph.D.

UČO: 425234

Study Field: European Politics

Brno, 2018
I hereby declare that this thesis I submit for assessment is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Date: 13th May 2018
Signature:
Acknowledgment

I would first like to thank my thesis advisor Prof. PhDr. Vít Hloušek, Ph.D. The door to Prof. Hloušek office was always open whenever I ran into a trouble spot or had a question about my research or writing. He consistently allowed this paper to be my own work but steered me in the right the direction whenever he thought I needed it.

Finally, I must express my very profound gratitude to my parents and to my friends for providing me with unfailing support and continuous encouragement throughout my years of study and through the process of researching and writing this thesis. This accomplishment would not have been possible without them. And for the end, special thanks for Ivana, Mirjana and Немања Thank you.
Table of Content

Abstract ......................................................................................................................... 5
Abbreviations ................................................................................................................ 6
Introduction .................................................................................................................... 7
Literature Review .......................................................................................................... 8
Research Question ......................................................................................................... 12
Operationalization of Research Data ........................................................................... 13
Macedonia and European Union vis a vis Relation ...................................................... 16
   Conditions and Criteria for Entry into the European Union ...................................... 16
   SAP (Stabilisation and Association Process) .............................................................. 19
Macedonia and EU relation – Early Stage .................................................................... 20
The Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) .................................................... 22
Request for Membership .............................................................................................. 24
The Opinion of the Commission and the Status-Candidate for Membership .............. 27
Macedonia as a Candidate-state .................................................................................. 30
Macedonia and European Union Relations Between 2006 and 2018 ......................... 31
Chronological Analysis of Relations Between the European Union and Republic of Macedonia Until Receiving Candidate Status ......................................................... 34
What was the Progress of Macedonia Before and After Candidacy, Observed by Outside Actors ................................................................. 38
Macedonia After 2005 ................................................................................................. 44
Annual Commission Reports ...................................................................................... 44
Freedom House Reports .............................................................................................. 48
What kind of Repercussions the EU Decision Not to Open Negotiations had on Macedonian Domestic Policy and EU credibility in the Country? ................................................................. 50
EU Prolongation Effects on Domestic Politics – EU Support ........................................ 51
Was There a Space for Opening the Negotiation Talks? .............................................. 58
Discussion ..................................................................................................................... 64
Conclusion ...................................................................................................................... 67
Bibliography .................................................................................................................. 70
Apendexes ...................................................................................................................... 78
Abstract

As an independent country, Macedonia have found itself on a new quest to paint the picture of its future, a state searching a place in the international community. EU membership was in the strategic documents from the very beginning. 13 years have passed since Macedonia first received candidate status on December 17, 2005. Country that was looked upon as a pioneer of the EU enlargement process in the Western Balkans, now stands subsided waiting to open the first stage of the negotiations. In this study I will try to shed light on what were the dominant forces of the Macedonian stalemate and consequences of hindering the negotiation talks. Taking Macedonia as case study, we come to know the extensive importance of the transparency, consistency and unclouded prospect that every accession process should possess.
Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

Abbreviations

EC – European Commission
WB – Western Balkan
EU – European Union
CEEC – Central and Eastern European countries
SEC – European Council
EP – European Parliament
RM – Republic of Macedonia
Introduction

The EU presence in Western Balkan (WB) countries is widely felt, influencing a broad spectrum of their societies. What comes to be certain in these countries is the apparent desire and ambition that they share towards EU aspiration (Mus, 2008). Ever since the end of 90s conflicts, EU was a lantern on the path of reformation and reconciliation in the region. Ironically the process of EU enlargement in WB is unprecedented in its duration and extension. Except for Croatia, all other countries in WB are waiting at the doors of EU for longer than ten years and some as long than twenty. Macedonia is not an exemption from this reality even though International community considered it to be to be a front-runner in EU integration in the first decade of the 21st century. After 17 years of signing the Stabilization and association agreement and 13 since becoming a candidate country RM still ‘stands at the gates’ of EU. Through all these years EU has shifted and changed the enlargement process to unrecognizable instances, being highly involved in the everyday political life of the applicant country and broadening the scope of its involvement in the domestic political arena unlike the previous waves of enlargements that occurred in Central and Eastern Europe (Keil & Arkan, 2014). Being a guarantee of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, EU positioned as an active and important player in Macedonian political landscape from the very early years of this century (Kacarska, 2014). This high involvement makes EU a prominent and influential actor.

At the initial stages of the accession process, Macedonia rated as a country with significant achievements and was referred as a pioneer in the integration process among WB countries. However, in the later stages and as years passed by, the predictions and expectation stopped corresponding with the facts. Macedonia found itself in a stalemate waiting to start the negotiations. In this thesis, I will in-depth explore the relations between Macedonia and EU throughout the years and try to shed the light on what were the predominant factors for the Macedonian deadlock on the path to EU integration. What makes Macedonia as an
Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

alluring case is the nature of Macedonia accession process. People tend to know what it takes for an underdog to become a winner, what I explore in this thesis is the other side of the spectrum by revealing what drove Macedonia from being a frontrunner to the ‘bottom of the scale’.

**Literature Review**

The phenomenon of enlargement was an important narrative in the frames of the EU community. The fact that it started as an only six-country economic community surrounded by a bigger number of non-participating European states brings us to a logical conclusion that the enlargement agenda was on the table from the very beginning.

For the purposes of this study dealing with the Macedonia accession path towards EU, it is very important to underline the exact framework and concept of the process, together with the official statements and regulative. The Official Journal of the European Union\(^1\) gives exact description and definition of the concerning issue. The Official Journal (OJ) is being published every day starting from Tuesday to Saturday and since recently is only available in electronic form. It is composed of all EU legal acts and legally binding laws. Many important decisions concerning Macedonia, from its independence in 1991 until today, can be found in the Official Journal.

Nearly 20 years ago a book edited by Victoria Curzon Price, Alice Landau, and Richard G. Whitman (2012) – “The enlargement of the European Union: issues and strategies”, was published. This book provides fundamental understanding and perception on EU enlargement ambitions during the 90s which were a crucial period for Western Balkan countries, followed by armed conflicts, devastation, and the breakaway of Yugoslavia. This book focuses on the process of enlargement that had taken place during the 90s putting the agenda on political and economic dimensions. This volume provides a description of the

---

enlargement strategy and priorities of the EU during this period and the formalities in the approach towards the future member states. It also continues in explaining the necessary reforms that had to be undertaken in a single candidate state together with the EU view concerning the implications this enlargement has in geopolitical content. In this thesis I will use this available literature to better understand the stance taken by the EU institutional body and shed the light on how the priorities have changed during the past years compared to the earlier period in the 90s. I will examine the differences and the directions inside the EU enlargement strategy between the end of the 20th and the EU path into the new century.

The research papers in the publication issued by the Office of the Committee for European integration (2008) represent a collection of studies written in cooperation with experts from the Department of analyses and strategies of the Office of the Committee for Integration of Western Balkan. They describe the perspective of the region in terms of accession towards EU – the role EU played mainly in the processes of political, social, and economic stabilization, transformation, and democratization of these countries. These publications, divided into research papers, address three main objectives:

1. Analysis of the integration processes in the Western Balkan countries and defining the procedure of accession also covering the issue that concerns the lack of ideas that will enable speeding up the Europeanization of the countries.

2. Analysis of obstacles and problems faced by countries in the region.

3. Consequences of Western Balkans final integration in EU. This part mainly addresses the possible financial cost of EU enlargement.

The report issued by Office of the Committee for European integration in 2008 was created with help and funding of the EU in 2008 just before the Polish presidency in the Council of the EU. It uncovers the priorities that EU had at the time towards the Western Balkan and Macedonia accession and will be used throughout thesis to show EU perspective.
Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

An official Foreign policy journal funded by the Ministry of foreign affairs of Macedonia Crossroads will enrich this research with valuable data collected by qualitative and quantitative methods of research. A mixture of academics, political analysers, and experts in the field of international policy and Macedonian everyday political struggles contributed to the creation of this Journal. The quarterly published journal consists of many essays, articles, and research literature mainly in the field of Macedonian integration towards EU. Articles published in this journal, such as the one from Vladimir Bozinovski (2007)—“Public opinion in Macedonia on EU integration”, provide in-depth information on the opinion of the Macedonian citizens and feelings towards the accession of EU from 2003–2007. Such polls will be used in this study to assess the research questions and with the help of it we can evaluate many empirical shreds of evidence and make assumptions. Articles like the one from Dimitar Mircev (2007), professor at the University of SS Cyril and Methodius Skopje and a member of the European Academy of Science and Art, have the roll to express the notion in the Macedonian academic elite, regarding Macedonia future within EU, and the necessary steps. This research can use such information to find out what were the preferences and priorities in a given period set by the Macedonian political experts and track their needs and changes.

Simonida Kacarska is a research coordinator at the European Policy Institute in Skopje, Macedonia. In her research paper (2014) published in EPC (European Policy Centre) she argues that EU has been very influential on the political arena in Macedonia, especially after the stagnation period that happened after 2004. Macedonia received a status of a candidate but until now the negotiation date hasn't been appointed. By her statements, this status quo position has empowered the European Union to become a major factor in the everyday political life and be a major influence on the political parties. From 2005 the EU Commission had started to follow even more closely the Macedonian progress issuing an
annual analytical report on Macedonia's membership application. But instead of this presenting a driving force towards implementing additional reforms and closing the dividing gap between EU and Macedonia, this annual report had become a major tool of criticism and pointing fingers between government and the major opposition parties. The annual progress reports were viewed and presented to the Macedonian public subjectively, meaning that the current government at that time of VMRO DPMNE was only highlighting the positive aspects while the opposition was using the negative part for heavy criticism. In 2011, the Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski evaluated the annual report as overall negative and threatened not to accept any other following reports if they do not include the name Macedonia instead of FYROM- Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia. (Kacarska 2014).

This implicates that the political elite and the ones that were in charge ‘directing the boat’ towards EU had not taken seriously the task of reforming and directing the country. Instead, they have put the main agenda of winning political points and exchanging accusation on behalf of party promotion and grasping power. This study will cover the interconnection between the EU and the political arena in Macedonia, the nature of their dynamics and to which extend EU was important in the political course in Macedonia, especially after gaining the candidate status in 2005.

Based on the above mentioned and researching the evaluable literature on Macedonia aspiration towards European Union, diverse information can be found. Such is the consistency in a relation between Macedonia and EU starting from the early years of collaboration and cooperation, heading ahead with the process of accessing the union as well as the changes that had to occur during these years manly in the strategies and priorities of the EU. Viewing the opposite side of the “coin”, a lot has been written specially by Macedonian scholars and experts on the subject overlooking the Macedonian perspective and
Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

course domestically. In 1992, Macedonia became independent country and ever since have stride in advancing towards EU membership. The literature mainly consists of strategic documents from official sources, supplemented by articles, essays, and books dealing first and foremost with the obstacles Macedonia faces. The name dispute between Macedonia and Greece is the predominant one as well as the reformation and Europeanization processes. Numerous other sources will be used in this research to achieve its purpose. By combining other analyses and finished researches by reliable academics and scholars, journals, interviews and written official statements by the political elites I will try to answer the indicated research questions.

**Research Question**

Many of today's available literature regarding the EU enlargement tends to focus on the institutional framework and conceptualization of the process. Giving perspective that by nature is dull and not clarifying thus, not providing clear insight in what is actually undertaken in a single given country (case). Therefore, the effects that follow concerning the domestic political behaviour and changes in terms of how the process of enlargement affects the country, mutual relations and policy creation both inside the domestic political landscape in the country and in the EU during the accession.

This research will try to undermine the superficial approach on the Macedonian and European relations in a conventional way by giving a distinct perspective unlike most of the available literature. I will analyse the influence and effects that European enlargement process has on Macedonian political course (discourse) and political life, and try to untangle the stalemate that Macedonia is currently experiencing in the accession. Thus, the main research question of the study is:

*How did Macedonia become underdog starting from a pole position in the EU enlargement process?*
To get detailed answer to this question, I divided this question into four subparts each representing a piece of the puzzle: The first ‘piece ‘will provide a deeper understanding of the Macedonia-EU relation throughout the years, starting from the independence of Macedonia. It will present a backbone of the thesis and present essential knowledge to the reader:

*What were Macedonia and European Union vis a vis relation?*

The second research question will contribute in granting knowledge of how Macedonia was viewed by the outside factors regarding the progress and development. The first part will consist of sources indicating Macedonia progress trend before 2005 and second part the later:

*What was the progress of Macedonia before and after Candidacy, observed by outside actors?*

Third research question will have the intention to deal with the prolongations of the negotiation talks and its repercussions:

- *What kind of repercussions the EU decision not to open negations had on Macedonian domestic policy and EU credibility in the country?*

The fourth and last piece of the puzzle will deal with the prospects of opening the negotiation talks:

- *Was there a space for opening the negotiation talks?*

**Operationalization of Research Data**

This thesis incorporates the case study method for finding the most convenient and fitting answer to the research questions imposed above. Dr Harling defines case study as “holistic inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its natural setting, specifying particular terms in greater detail” (Harling, 2011). The case study approach is designed to deal with the understanding of a phenomenon. In this study, the phenomenon will be the Macedonian elongating accession towards EU and natural setting will be represented
Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

by the EU enlargement process. Since case study lays down the research in ‘how’ or ‘what’ style, it provides suitable method to provide an answer to our question: How did Macedonia become underdog, starting from a pole position in the EU enlargement process?

Through case study methods, a researcher is able to go beyond the quantitative statistical results and understand the behavioural conditions through the actor’s perspective. By including both quantitative and qualitative data, case study helps explain both the process and outcome of a phenomenon through complete observation, reconstruction, and analysis of the cases under investigation (Tellis, 1997). As Yin explained, a case study is a comprehensive research strategy that deals with situations "in which there will be more variables of interest than data points, relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to be converged in a triangulating fashion." (Yin, 1994). This only proves that collected data will be of utmost importance for the research. Thus, a holistic inquiry will be used for gathering the necessary information and data. Harling (2011) describes the holistic inquiry as involving a collection of in-depth and detailed data that are rich in content and involve multiple sources of information including direct observation, participant observations, interviews, audio-visual material, documents, reports, and physical artefacts. The multiple sources of information provide the wide array of information needed to provide an in-depth picture, hence this perfectly fills the need of this study.

When we choose a case study for our research, what we really look for is an example that indicates a specific phenomenon. By studying that phenomenon in more in-depth fashion, we are analysing the forces that were in play and go through the action that were taken in order to make a connection with the research purpose. For that objective, I have imposed four sub research questions which are carefully selected to give us acquaintance and deeper understanding of why Macedonia became the underdog from a frontrunner in WB, and what were the causes. This thesis will produce input that will scatter light on what are the
negative aspects that brought Macedonia from top to the bottom of the scale and serve as an archetype to be avoided. The phenomenon that I will try to give insight into is embedded in the main research question itself. Thus, using Macedonia and its relations with the EU as a limitation to the case study, I will try to gather relevant sources for the progress of Macedonia throughout the years (e.g., Annual Commission reports and chronologically track the progress or regress of the country in the EU accession process). The Freedom House annual reports on the democracy level will be analysed as well as secondary sources from experts and scholars combined with official statements given by predominant actors in the process and official documents and surveys measuring the public opinion.

Measuring the support that EU holds in Macedonia, with help of the opinion polls and surveys conducted, had provided vital indication for tracking the rise or decline in the support. By analysing the annual commission report I have observed the notion in terms of progress that Macedonia made throughout the years after obtaining candidate status. By following the political discourse in Macedonia and Macedonia political elite I have come to deeper understanding of the degree and extend of the EU credibility in the country in a given period. The answer to the research and sub research questions is hidden in this puzzle pieces, put together in the right order and correct place they provide vivid picture and clear answer.

This study will argue that keeping Macedonia without a date for the start of the negotiations and a prolonged period of unclear future for European membership can push the country back from ‘obedience’ and cause undesirable effects on the progress. The result of this study will give us profound knowledge on the enlargement process in a single given case (country), a unique experience from the ‘inside’. Has EU provided a real guideline and encouraged Macedonia towards the process of enlargement in embodying the reforms?

The limitations of this method will be the boundary and the limits to which the study will expand, meaning that when we are trying to find relevant information and collect data to
Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

explain why Macedonian progress started to decline throughout the years, the study will be limited only to those forces that are connected in some way with the EU enlargement. Therefore, any other factors that are outside the Macedonia EU relations will be left aside. However, I consider this not be a great handicap but still sufficient enough to be mentioned as a conceivable limitation. As for the impact this limitation will have, I will let that to be decided subjectively by the reader.

**Macedonia and European Union vis a vis Relation.**

This first part of the research will include the necessary information about the main agreements and interactions that took place between Macedonia and EU. In order to answer and understand the research questions of this study it is necessary to understand what the principle behaviour and basic political activities between these entities were in the first place. In pursuance to reveal and recall the cooperation and communication that RM and EU established embarking on the path towards accession, this study will use diverse sources. Official documents will be combined with second source literature and official newspapers and articles together with given interviews from the political elite.

In the beginning, a brief information about the processes that lay ahead, and what a candidate states need to undertake will be presented. Thus, it will be possible to chronologically follow where Macedonia was at a given point and a given time in the accession process. Having understood the requirements and the course the applicant country needs to realise and meet, the study then continues in more narrow directions, unveiling and describing the most important stages of EU-Macedonia relation.

**Conditions and Criteria for Entry into the European Union**

In 1993, at the summit in Copenhagen, European member states created and established three main criteria which every country that wants to become a future member needs to carry out and complete:
1. Developing stable institutions that will guarantee rule of law, democracy, and protection of human rights followed by minority rights (political criterion).

2. Attaining functional economy market that can deal and cope with the competition and bare the market forces of the European Union (economy criterion).

3. Taking on the ‘burden’ of membership including faithfulness to the objectives of the political, economic and monetary union (criterion of incorporating the acquis communautaire).

Later, these criteria were complemented and clarified at the summits in Madrid (1995), Luxembourg (1997) and Helsinki (1999). As the most important additional (Madrid) criteria can be mentioned the need for developed administrative and judicial capacity to apply the adopted common benefits (acquis) (Bailes, 2005).

To ensure that a future member state fulfils these criteria it must pass through negotiation phase. Each country, starting from its own preferences and circumstances of the negotiations, can have different results. The average length of negotiations is four to six years. Negotiations are a major coordination challenge for the government of the candidate country and the public administration because the acquis (large compilation of qualitatively new legal acts) does not always coincide with the existing division of responsibilities between ministries and specialized government agencies. Coordination should ensure that the strategic goals of the government are properly translated into negotiating positions and successfully presented by the EC (SEC 2009).

In practice, European Union never sought membership from a country, but countries applied for membership in it. Each country that applies for membership must prove in the further period that it is consistent with meeting the necessary conditions. To understand the negotiation relations between the European Union and the acceding country, it is necessary to understand the relationships that are being built upon the application for membership. The
Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

negotiations are more an examination of the European Union's prisms, and in that direction, the applicant country is in an asymmetrical position.

Throughout its development and growth, EU introduced joining conditions and made them gradually more precise in order to provide guidance to the countries that want to join. Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union says that any European country can apply if it respects the democratic values of the European Union and is committed to their promotion.²

The process leading to the start of negotiations begins with the application for membership, and the European Union is the one that decides whether to grant candidate status to the applicant country and whether to start accession negotiations, see figure one. Negotiations are opened only if the country meets the Copenhagen political and economic criteria. If it is assessed that the country meets the Copenhagen criteria in Acquis, it is recommended that the country is granted candidate status and date for the start of the negotiations is set. An exception to this practice is Republic of Macedonia, that has received candidate status without receiving a date for the negotiations.³

Accessions are characterized by two distinct phases: the screening process and actual negotiations. According to the European Commission, screening is an analytical shadow of the degree of alignment of national legislation with the acquis and is basically a stage that is being implemented before negotiations. The main objective of the screening is to present the candidate countries acquis and, along with that determine in which fields some problems can arise that needs to be addressed. The screening is carried out by the European Commission and the candidate country. Consequently, a report is drawn up based on which the performance of the commitments is assessed, and the candidate country submits a negotiating

² Any European State which respects the values referred to in Article 2 and is committed to promoting them may apply to become a member of the Union. The European Parliament and national Parliaments shall be notified of this application.
³ Followed by the Republic of Croatia, failing to comply with the extradition of war crime accused generally to the Tribunal in Hague.
position for each chapter, which is further an instrument for conducting the negotiations (Grabbe, 2002).

Negotiations for accession to the European Union for the Commission and for the other participants are unique in many aspects and are different for each candidate country. Negotiations have been conducted simultaneously with several countries and the approach has been largely unified, the specifics derived from individual cases and measuring and setting the goals is what makes them separate.

Starting from their own preferences and circumstances of the negotiations, each country can expect different results. Flexibility and concessions by the Union are minimal, as it is a future relationship that is not a relationship between "us" (i.e., the candidate country), on the one hand, and "they" (i.e., European Union), on the other, but relations of future "we". It is a process in which external relations become internal thus, making them extremely complicated and meaningful (see Figure 1).

**SAP (Stabilisation and Association Process)**

Since 1999 the European Commission entrenched a long-term vision which was quite ambitious at that time. This vision was clearly defined by the desire of the Western Balkan states in their aspiration towards joining EU. After the Balkan wars, in similar fashion with the European agreements of the Central and Eastern European countries (CEEC), EU formulated the document of Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) a strategy regarding the Western Balkans. (Hughes & Sasse, 2003) This helped EU to set up well-defined steps that need to be taken in achieving that goal. Therefore, Western Balkan countries will need to strive and succeed in achieving stable democratic institutions, rule of law, functional market economy, and good relationships with their neighbouring states. In return countries that aspire in joining EU may get financial and technical assistance as well as tariff-free access to some segments in the EU market (or in the all European market) (Sadowski, 2008).
Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

Figure 1. The process of EU accession

**Macedonia and EU relation – Early Stage**

In the middle of the turmoil in the Yugoslavian crises and constitutionalizing of the republic as a new subject in international law, Macedonia was trying to lay the foundation for the diplomatic relations with the European community. This undertaking was paved with many difficulties, foremost because of the slow process of international recognition opposed by the Republic of Greece. Without any firm established diplomatic relations with the EC,
Macedonia still decided to send its own representative in Brussels in 1992. Even with the absence of formal level relations, the communication between the two parties was quite intense mostly because of the ongoing calamities in the region. During the period of 1992 until 1996, the help of EU was based on humanitarian approach, distributed by the EC Office. Because of objective reasons and lack of formalities, RM was not entitled to use the funds from the PHARE program but instead received 50 million Deutschland Marks as aid and technical assistance from the Council and the member states after Edinburg summit. (EU, FP 2000). The initial diplomatic relations between Brussel and Skopje were ingrained after concluding and signing the Interim accord for normalizing the political affairs between Macedonia and Greece on 29 April, 1995 (RM, 1995). It opened a different frame on collaboration between EC and RM followed by more prosperous content. In April 1997, the agreement on cooperation between the Republic of Macedonia and the European Community was signed, as well as an agreement in the field of transport and textiles. The agreements entered into force after ratification by the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia and was accepted by the Council of the European Union in January 1998 (RM, 1997). The cooperation determined by the agreement incorporate various fields: 1) industry-modernization 2) development of small and medium enterprises 3) development of technology 4) exchange of information in production and trade 5) energy development and sharing of knowledge 6) development and modernization of mining sector 7) agriculture-working on same projects 8) transport and tourism 9) fighting crime 10) financial help from the European community through the PHARE program 11) development of human resources science and education. The agreement enabled development and uplift of the political relations between the two sides. With the declaration as a part of the agreement, the political meetings on the level of ministers, Parliamentary and high officials became a habit. The main
Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

intent was to support the process of joining the political and economic reforms towards accession in EU and build new forms of cooperation (Petrushevska, 2012).

The Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA)

Although faced with numerous problems in the process of accomplishing the accords from the agreements, they were relatively successfully conducted. This fact supplemented with the role Macedonia played during the crises and NATO actions in The Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia in the spring of 1999 created a momentum for initiating the talks leading to signing the first Stabilisation and Association Agreement (Pippan, 2004). The beginning of the negotiation process that needed to result with SAA was marked by the conclusion from the Council of Ministers of EU dating from April 26th, 1999 (SEC 1999).

The conclusion from the Commission intended to serve as a positive signal to the European Council, hence to review and give a report of the current standings and eligibility in the start of negotiation for signing the SAA with Macedonia (COM 1999). What followed was the conclusion from the Council reflected in the endorsement for the Commission and authorization to start the negotiations with RM for the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SEC 1999).

Officially negotiations were open on March 08th, 2000 during the visit of the commissary for Foreign affairs Chris Paten in Skopje. After this act formalizing the start of the negotiation, RM started intensively preparing for the initial negotiations. This was important and prioritised matter for Macedonia after her independence (Petrushevska, 2011). This complex legal-binding act on the political plan puts the Republic of Macedonia in the ranks of potential members of the European Union. In economic terms, the SAA opens a door to one of the largest and most powerful financial markets in the world. This is an incentive for curbing hence restructuring economy of the Republic of Macedonia and adapting to the new conditions.
“Agreement strengthens the possibility of accelerating the economic and social development of Macedonia, intensifying political and economic ties with the EU member states, and promoting Macedonia's identity as a peaceful country oriented towards the European integration process “says the statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of RM (MNR 2004).

The main task for making necessary preparations together with paving the path for the start of the negotiations in Macedonia was held by the Ministry of the Foreign affairs (MNR) backed up by the Department of European Integration. The SAA is initiated at the Zagreb Summit on November 24th, 2000 and signed in Luxembourg on April 10th, 2001⁴. Macedonia was the first country to sign the SAA agreement from all WB states. With this act the negotiation process was concluded, however, this was not the last stage of concluding the SAA. In order for that to happen the phase of ratification was necessary. The SAA was firstly ratified in the Macedonian assembly in April 2001(RM , 2003) and only a month later in the European Parliament although it came to force on April, first 2004.

During this time Macedonia was put on a great test that was initiated by calamities inside the borders. The civil unrest and conflict that happened in 2001 was the biggest problem that Macedonia faced since its independence. In such challenging times for a small and new country, Macedonia undoubtedly looked upon EU as a partner and prospect of EU membership as motivation in overcoming the difficulties ahead. Statement from Radmila Sekerinska a deputy prime minister from 2002–2006 underlines Macedonian readiness and will to follow the way towards EU accession in that specific time:

---

⁴ The Zagreb summit also launched a new EU programme, namely the Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Democratisation and Stabilisation (CARDS), with an endowment of EUR 4.65 billion over the period 2000-2006, along with the implementation of asymmetric exceptional trade preferences.
"I personally witnessed the change that has occurred in Macedonia from 2001 to 2003. A country which nobody expected to survive managed to show that with good policies, with more understanding, with better discussions, with more tolerance, peace can be restored, and confidence can be rebuilt. I have always been a strong believer that the EU glue is the element of cohesion that countries like Macedonia desperately need, not only because of ethnic divides but also because of social divides. So, if there was one umbrella policy that could help us to change the country, it was definitely the prospect of EU membership."

The European Union was actively involved in mediating and finding a peaceful resolution to the conflict during this crisis. Given the fact that the agreement was signed in the presence of Francois Leotard, as a special envoy of the European Union, the EU acted as an agreement guarantee. This experience was also of immense value for EU, since it conducted the first military mission (Concordia) ever, to manage peaceful agreement and hold a peaceful process. The significance of this mission was also recognised by Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (Ilievski & Taleski, 2009).

With opinion polls measuring above 90% of support for the country's aspiration towards EU at the period after the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA), the political elite was prompted and galvanized to work hard on the reformation and Europeanization of RM in order to get closer to EU. At that point Macedonia was held as the front-runner in the process of EU accession from all the Western Balkans Countries (Ilievski & Taleski 2009).

**Request for Membership**

On January 25th, 2003 the Foreign Affairs minister of Macedonia Ilinka Mitrovskà informed EU for the intent of the country to hand in a request until the end of that year for acceptance and accession to EU. Almost a year after, due to certain delays caused by the

---

6 Утрински Весник 25.2.2003, pp. 1.
death of the President of Macedonia, Boris Trajkovski, a date was set-up for April 22nd, 2004. On relation Skopje-Brussel and Dublin the prime minister of RM at that time Branko Crvenkovski met with the Irish counterpart, Bertie Ahern. Ireland held the Union presidency position and Macedonia was following the examples of Malta and Cyprus together with Romania and Bulgaria in the process of submitting the request for acceptance in the Union (Petrushevksa, 2011). The act of handing the formal request to the current presidency country of the Council of EU was the first step that had to be done in order to activate the complexed and long lasting process of becoming a member of the EU. Only two days after the submitting of the request, Brussel came out with the statement that the RM application will be considered on the next session of the Union in May 2004.

Based on the article 49, from the Constitution of the EU, the institution which is in charge for the discussion making, situated to decide about the requests from other countries membership application is the Council. (OJ, 2004) Despite the fact that the Council of Ministers acts solely upon the application from the applicant-country the process incorporates the opinion and the consent from the European Commission. The European Parliament and the Commission serve as consultant bodies. The EU Council in practice does not exercise its power without including other institutions. EU Commission is the body that makes the ‘scanning' regarding the real circumstances and situation on the field in the given country applicant. The main objective is to evaluate from a perspective of fulfilling the preliminary conditions of the applicant country, in this case, Macedonia. The evaluation is based on the satisfactory level of having achieved democratic freedom, respect of human rights, and basic freedom and rule of law underlined in the political Copenhagen criteria. The other two criteria including economy and adaptation of laws (acquis) are also important for the EU, but the political criteria are counted as the main base (COM, 2014). The Commission, in other words, is obligated only to estimate whether there is a general fulfilment of basic political
stability as a ground of progression towards the main goal, thus finishing the reforms and obtaining the status of a member. The evaluation tool was crafted on the basis of a questionnaire that the Commission created with a purpose to grade the degree with which Macedonia is satisfying the criteria (SEC, 2005). Macedonia received the questionnaire on October 1st, 2004 accompanied with 1921 questions. On October 1st, 2004, the European Commission President, Romano Prodi gave the Questionnaire to the Government of the Republic of Macedonia. The answers were submitted in Brussels on February 14th, 2005 by the delegation of RM. (GOV)

The opinion from the Commission can be positive, negative, and 'general' positive which means the applicant state respects the principals but with certain deviations which need to be addressed. The EU Council is not obligated to respect the opinion of the Commission but in past experiences, it was mostly the case highlighting the fact that the Commission has an instrument to better assess and research in depth on a given case. The whole integral composition of the Council needs to represent the interests of EU all-together, although the EU decision-making process is known to be complexed. If we take in consideration the fact that the ministers are not always ready to distance themselves of the narrow nationalistic interest and their need to decide with unanimity, the work of the Council becomes even harder (Whitman, 1999). Another institution to be considered is the EU Parliament which de facto represents the voice of the EU citizens and therefore adds to the righteousness of Council’s decisions. Lack of absolute majority vote disrupts the authority of the Council and is not aligned with its sole base- EU citizens. The fully finished procedure in the frame of the Council, Commission and the EU Parliament results in a status of an applicant for the state seeker, and that was how Macedonia became one.
Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

The Opinion of the Commission and the Status-Candidate for Membership

The opinion of the Commission on the request of Macedonia for candidate status was published on November 09th, 2005 (Eralp, 2005). The Commission completed the opinion based on the article 49 of the treaty of EU which states: “Any European State which respects the principles set out in Article 6(1) may apply to become a member of the Union.” (SEC 2005) The analytical report was vast and precise, analysing the request of RM through:

- Preparedness of RM to respect the Copenhagen criteria which EU Council established in 1993
- The degree of fulfilling the political set of the Copenhagen criteria (democracy, rule of law, protection of human rights minorities)
- The condition in RM and possibilities in regard to fulfilling the economical Copenhagen criteria (Fictional market economy, capacity for barring with the stream of competition on the EU market)
- Capabilities of implementing and accepting the responsibilities that come with membership (acquis of the EU)
- The degree of fulfilling the conditions set up by signing the stabilization and association process (SAP).
- The European Commission analysed the current condition and provided the evaluation based on the next five years for all the above-given criteria:

- The general assessment for the degree in which RM fulfils the political criteria was that it had stable democratic institutions which function properly; strong commitment towards implementation of the Ohrid agreement; absence of issues in the field of respecting human rights and cooperation with the tribunal for Former Yugoslavia and gradual
consolidation of the rule of law followed by the need for continuous effort for improving the independence and efficiency of the judicial system. Exceptions were the elections held in 2002 and 2005 that passed with irregularities and prominent level of corruption (SEC 1425 ANALYTICAL REPORT 2005 pp. 41-42).

- The general evaluation regarding the condition in the economy and the possibility of implementing and respecting the economic criteria had a positive mark, meaning low public debts, a relatively decent shape of the transport and communication sector, low inflation, macroeconomic stability, educated working force which suggested somewhat easy integration within EU market. On the other side the negatives were indicated in the functioning of the market economy as being obstructed by the institutional weakness, low development of productivity, not balanced export-import structure and a falling tendency in the field of competitiveness (SEC 1425 ANALYTICAL REPORT 2005 pp. 63). This was something that Macedonia needed to work on, but the Commission did not find these shortcomings in the economy sector as something unattainable and severe.

- In terms of implementing and utilizing the acquis in intermediate time span, the conclusion ended up with encouraging views for RM. The Commission estimated that RM will not have difficulties in implementing the acquis in the economic and monetary policy, enterprise and industrial policy, transport networks, in the security and defence policy, international relations, or in the education and cultural sphere. Additional efforts which require greater undertakings to adjust and adapt the laws and the legislation in accordance to the acquis will be regarding freedom of capital movement, right to start up an enterprise and freedom of providing service, freedom of movement, labour and financial services. By the observation of the Commission the most effort Macedonia needs to give is in the segments of Public Procurement, informatic society, media, energy sector, taxations, traffic policy, justice freedom, security, and regional cooperation (SEC 1425 ANALYTICAL REPORT 2005 pp.
Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

174-175). The overall conclusion was that the complete adaptation of the acquis can only be done on long-term, and in general it was in a positive connotation.

The end part of the document issued November 09th, 2005 was based on the conclusion from the detailed analytical research performed on RM and her application for obtaining candidate status. In the fashion of more precise, shortened and summarized text the conclusion was that RM:

- have taken meaningful steps towards establishing a functional market economy.
- is on a good path to fulfil political criteria set by the European Council in Copenhagen 1993 and with the SAP agreement.
- the condition will be relatively positive for accomplishing the obligation coming from the membership in mid-range term but only if combined with significant effort in adjusting the legislation with the acquis. (2005, 562 final COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION)

Recommendations addressed to the Council:

- to provide Macedonia with a status of candidate state
- negotiations to start only when RM will accomplish a higher level of harmonization with the criteria for membership

Commission also forwarded:

- Proposal for creating European partnership with RM with defined priorities that need to be fulfilled before the start of negotiations.

Notification that EU will continue to follow Macedonia progress and that by the end of 2006, EU Commission will prepare and submit a report for the achieved development of RM to the Council.
**Macedonia as a Candidate-state**

Following the conclusion from the Commission at the European Council meeting held on December 15\textsuperscript{th} –16\textsuperscript{th} 2005, European Council decided upon the application submitted by the Republic of Macedonia. The Council accepted all proposals stated previously in the analytical report together with the opinion given by the Commission handing Macedonia a status of a candidate.\textsuperscript{7} That decision meant that Macedonia had become one step closer to the EU and in a certain way a political recognition for the close relationship between the two sides. Although Macedonia received a candidate status, it did not receive, or the Council did not declare a start of the negotiations for membership. On December 17\textsuperscript{th}, 2005, EU Council did not consider a date for the start of the negotiations. The European Council concluded that

- The Commission will continue following the process of implementing the reforms in RM;
- until the end of 2006 Commission will prepare a report for their achievement
- only after Macedonia satisfied the necessary level of fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria it can continue with the negotiation process.

Despite the fact that Macedonia received a positive grade on the analytical evaluation process prepared from the commission, it did not receive a negotiation date, only a candidate status. What is considered to be one phase of the enlargement process regarding receiving status candidate and opening negotiation process, in Macedonian case was dived in two separate parts. We also cannot argue that Macedonia was a precedent in this matter since something similar happened to the Republic of Croatia earlier that year when the negotiations were postponed on bases that Croatia failed to cooperate and arrest a war crime suspect (Peskin & Boduszyn 2003).\textsuperscript{8} Thus, on December 17\textsuperscript{th}, 2005 the decision was that the start of

\textsuperscript{7} Presidency Conclusions of the Brussels European Council, Brussels 2005
\textsuperscript{8} European Union foreign ministers have postponed imminent talks on Croatia's EU entry because of Zagreb's failure to arrest a war crimes suspect.
the negotiations with RM is about to be postponed on unspecified time. Officially the negotiation process was conditioned with achieving satisfactory level regarding the Copenhagen criteria in the upcoming period (SEC 2005). The Council once more will need to request an opinion from the Commission when it comes to the prospect of opening negotiations and once more Council will need to decide upon whether to start the negotiation process with RM.

### Macedonia and European Union Relations Between 2006 and 2018

The period that marks the beginning of getting a candidate status to the very present day can be described as extended saga with very small deviations and new occurring’s, from what have become the annual Macedonia EU mainstream relationship. As the country that was presented as a front-runner in the Western Balkan regarding EU accession, and the first country to sign the SAA it can be said that after 2006 Macedonia did not match the expectation build from previous trends (Radeljic, 2016). Since 2006, RM accession has been based on following and complying with the instructions and issues that aroused from the annual progress reports such as the progress report issued on July 2nd, 2007 for the year of 2006. The main criticism in this first annual report targeted the Bilateral Immunity Agreement with the USA, issues arising from articles 27 and 98 of the Rome Statue, the affair following El-Masri case (King, H. 2016), failure to fully implement the Badinter Principle, implementation of the Ohrid agreement and also on a remark that Macedonia needs to work on its good neighbourly relations (Tziampiris, 2012). The accession process after 2006 was also distinctive by the bilateral dispute from the name disagreement between RM and Greece. At first, EU did not present the issue as a problem to be considered in the enlargement process and as a condition of receiving a date for the negotiation process. Although Macedonia received numerous consecutive recommendation and positive feedback from the Commission after 2006, the Council did not manage to reach a unanimous decision.
on opening the talks with RM. Thus, unwillingly admitting that the role the name dispute will have in the accession will hold a great significance. This was taken from a statement given by the Greek foreign minister Droutsas in 2010:

“Our position on Skopje accession perspective is clear and well known to everyone. We sincerely want the opening of FYROM’s accession negotiations with the EU. We support the accession of this country, but with full respect for the rules and obligations FYROM had undertaken the EU and all of its member states. One basic rule is respect for good neighbourly relations. This is stressed once again. And a basic demand for our being able to talk about the opening of accession negotiations with FYROM is the resolution of the name issue. Like last year, all of this is reiterated in a clear manner, in a plain language”. (Gateva, 2016 p.151)

It was only after the Summit EU held on 23rd of June 2008 that for the first time in its ending conclusion the necessity for finding a resolution of the name dispute was adopted and publicly declared, as a conditionality for further progress in the accession process of the country:

“For further steps by the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in its progress towards the EU are possible but maintaining good neighbourly relations, including a negotiated and mutually acceptable solution on the name issue remains essential” (SEC 2008). 9

The Conclusion adopted on the summit also provoked strong reactions from the Macedonian ruling elites, neglecting the concerns expressed in the conclusion from the Council on all other matters. The prime minister of Macedonia holding the position in 2008 Nikola Gruevski in one of the interviews for the media expressed his views:

---

9 European Council. 20 June 2008. ‘Conclusions of the Presidency’.
“This is an attempt to unilaterally dictate, accompanied with insults and threats. There is no fight with arguments, but a demonstration of power. (The) Greek negotiator, in utmost arrogant manner, points out what may be possible and not possible," he stated… This generation of politicians of our southern neighbour, in order to cover their weaknesses in leading the country and the numerous scandals, have created such hysteria on the (name dispute) issue among their citizens, which now they themselves cannot control. It is pitiful. Yes, one day they will certainly be ashamed of this,” said Gruevski.  

This statement can be reasoned in many ways finding numerous possible motives. I will go further and say that obvious disappointment and animosity can be noticed from one of the leading figures in the RM political life. But when combined both quoted statements, we can summarise perfectly well the name dispute and the progress made regarding that question during 2006-2017. A period marked by the ruling of the right-wing political party VMRO-DPMNE in Macedonia

Macedonia had begun a visa liberation talks with the EU in early 2008th and was added successfully on the list of exempt visa countries on 19 December 2009 providing free entrance to the Schengen visa with biometrical passports (Trauner, 2009). Step that was seen by many scholars and experts as compensation for the delayed start of talks for accession and way of motivating Macedonia to stay on track with the EU aspiration (Radeljic, 2016). Another mechanism that EU used in the absence of providing firm and clear time frame for the accession process and start of the negotiations is the political conditionality and high involvement in the domestic politics mainly as mediator and peace guarantee (Kacarska, 2013). The accession partnership set up under the agenda of the 2003 Thessaloniki summit is a clear example where EU exercises the political conditionality in regards to the post 2005 period, mainly putting on agenda the necessity in the improvement of electoral processes and

---

10 PM Gruevski’s Interview with the Macedonian Information Agency June 27, 2008 (see web page: https://web.archive.org/web/20080627113425/http://macedoniaonline.eu:80/content/view/1992/45/)
Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

political dialogue (OJ, 2008). Przino agreement conducted on 2\textsuperscript{nd} of June 2015 with the help of EU as the main mediator is another proof of EU being an active player and having a crucial role of involvement in domestic politics in the post 2005 period. If summarised, this post 2005 period regarding EU Macedonia relations is namely marked by EU being actively involved in Macedonian domestic politics, followed by many political crises in the country; stagnation in the name dispute issue and postponing the start of the negotiations. (Kacarska, 2013).

The recent unveiling events in Macedonian domestic politics are considered as the bright spot in the prospect of European future for Macedonia. With raising to power, the Social democratic party of Macedonia (SDSM) allegedly holds high hopes in European eyes in terms of Europeanization process and willingness to deal with the name dispute with the southern neighbour. In contrary, just year before the previous government of VMRO DPMNE in the 2016 annual report from the Commission was accused of showing signs that indicate despotism thus, raising concerns about captured state.\textsuperscript{11}

In newest developments, we can discuss the visit of Jean-Claude Juncker on February 25\textsuperscript{th}, 2008, where he urged the country to make progress declaring that in a few months RM could get an unconvincing recommendation to start EU accession negotiation. (DW, 2018) his taken into consideration, together with the recent positive speculation about closing the divergences between Macedonia and Greece in the name dispute, can lead us into more dynamic occurrences between RM and EU on the accession path in the near future.

**Chronological Analysis of Relations Between the European Union and Republic of Macedonia Until Receiving Candidate Status**

October 1992:

- Designation of a Macedonian representative in Brussels.

\textsuperscript{11} Freedom House Special report, 2017
December 1995:

- Establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Macedonia and the EU. This could not be achieved until the signing of the interim agreement with the Republic of Greece as a member state of the European Union.

February 1996:

- Raising the permanent Mission of the Republic of Macedonia in Brussels at the ambassadorial level.

March 1996:

- The Republic of Macedonia became an equal member of the PHARE program, which opened the possibility, in addition to urgent and humanitarian aid, to use assistance to encourage structural changes and speed up reforms.

March 1996:

- Commencement of negotiations for concluding a Cooperation Agreement, Financial Protocol and Transport Agreement.

November 1996:


November 1997:

- Entry into force of the Transport Agreement.

January 1998:

- Entry into force of the Cooperation Agreement and the establishment of the Cooperation Council.

February 1998:
Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

- Adoption of a Declaration by the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia on the development of relations with the European Union, which confirms the political consensus for membership in the European Union as a strategic goal of the Republic of Macedonia.

March 1998:
- First meeting of the Cooperation Council and the first permanent representative of the European Commission in the Republic of Macedonia.

June 1999:
- Adopted Report on the Opportunity to Start Negotiations on the New Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA), with positive assessments for meeting the political criteria.

July 1999:
- The Stabilization and Association Process has been launched for five countries in the region, Macedonia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Albania.

January 2000:
- Obtaining a mandate from the Council of Ministers of the EU, the European Commission to start negotiations on the conclusion of the SAA.

March 2000:
- Raising the relations between the Republic of Macedonia and the EU by opening an EU Delegation to Skopje and appointing the first head of the Delegation at the ambassadorial level.

April 2000:
- Beginning of the first round of SAA negotiations (5.4.2000). SAA negotiations were conducted in a significant short period of April-November 2000 through three
Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

rounds of main negotiations and five expert-level meetings, or technical negotiations.

November 2000:

- Paramilation of the SAA in Zagreb (November 24, 2000).

December 2000:

- Entry into force of the Council Regulation on the introduction of trade exceptional measures, as well as the inclusion of Macedonia in the CARDS Program for 2002-2006.

April 2001:

- Signature of the SAA and the Interim Agreement (9 April 2001) in Luxembourg.

April 2001:

- Ratification of the SAA in the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia.

May 2001:

- Ratification of the SAA to the European Parliament.

June 2001:

- Entry into force of the Interim Accord.

January 2002:

- Additional Protocol on Wine and Spirits and Agreement on Trade in Textile Products.

June 2003:

- Thessaloniki Summit EU - Western Balkans Strengthened Stabilization and Association Process.

January 2004:

- The SAA ratification process has been completed in all EU Member States.

February 2004:
Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

- Adoption of a Declaration by the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia for applying for membership in the European Union.

February / March 2004:

- Application for membership in the European Union.

April 2004:

- Entry into force of the Stabilization and Association Agreement, the first of the countries in the Stabilization and Association Process.

May 2004:

- Establishment of cooperation of the Committee on European Affairs of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia with the Conference of the Committees on European Affairs of the national Parliaments of the EU Member States (COSAC).

May 2004:

- The EU Council reviewed the application of the Republic of Macedonia and asked the European Commission to prepare an opinion.

December 2005

- Macedonia receive candidate status

What was the Progress of Macedonia Before and After Candidacy, Observed by Outside Actors

“Two weeks ago, the Commission adopted a strategy for the EU’s enlargement policy, including a special report on the Union’s integration capacity. The current enlargement strategy – based on consolidation, conditionality, and communication – must be combined with further ways and means to ensure our capacity to integrate new members. Therefore, we need to strive for a renewed consensus on enlargement.”

12 SPEECH/06/727 Olli Rehn Member of the European Commission, responsible for Enlargement Enlargement package 2006, European Parliament, Foreign Affairs Committee Brussels, 21 November 2006
The year 2005 marked the new phase of EU enlargement by recognising RM as a candidate country and starting the accession negotiations with Croatia and Turkey. By coincidence or just trace of bad luck, 2005 was also a year when the European Enlargement fatigue started to rise on the surface. One of the indicators that point out the enlargement ‘burnout’ was the change in the strategy for the EU’s enlargement process. Thus, deepening the level of demands and reforms, raising the number of chapters to be concluded, expanding the conditions that need to be met for an applicant country. This taken in consideration when compared to the fifth EU enlargement one can notice a stricter and more defined approach in the process, raising the expectations and compliance from the applicant state (Gateva, 2013). This was the setting of the political environment Macedonia found itself in when awarded a candidate status back in 2005.

Only two years before at the summit in Thessaloniki, European Union pledged full support for the Western Balkan countries and their European future. At the summit EU clearly stated that for WB countries there is only one vision and future and that is being part of the Union. Thus, providing the countries from the region with a certain degree of high hope and motivation, thus strengthening their effort towards completing reforms, following recommendation and implementing the acquis. (Laursen, 2013)

What followed not long after the summit was Macedonian decision to apply for candidancy in the EU. As described in the previous chapter, Macedonia applied on 11th of April 2004 and was given a status of a candidate in 2005. What was considered to be one procedure thus obtaining the status and opening the negotiation process at the same time has changed. Despite the overall satisfactory remarks from the commission, the Council did not provide RM with the next stage in the accession process (opening of negotiations). The negotiation stage saga has continued to the present day. In the ongoing years, Macedonia continued to receive positive feedback and conclusion from the Commission on annual bases.
Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

such as the advisory comments from the Commission sent to the EU Council and Parliament in 2010:

“The country fulfils the commitments under the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, has consolidated the functioning of its democracy and ensured the stability of institutions guaranteeing the rule of law and respect of fundamental rights and the country has substantially addressed the key priorities of the accession partnership” (COM, 2009, p.12)  

However, the Negotiations process is still not open, waiting for approval of the second stage of the accession of RM towards EU.

In this part, this study will focus on the positive and negative sides of the accession process before 2005 and after receiving the status of a candidate. It will try to highlight positive or negative trends in complying with the EU reformations, the motivation of RM indicated by pointing out the speed and the level of the achievements the county had in that period in dealing with the Enlargement processes. It will help us illustrate whether there was a loss of desire and encouragement in the late years in parallel to the prolongation of the second stage in the accession.

At the very early years of Macedonian independence in the 90s, the country was counted as least developed and economically/politically challenged. The fact that it did not participate directly in the Balkan wars in the 90s was not a significant relive since it felt the consequences to a certain degree. The lack of accesses to the established traditional markets and the UN sanctions imposed on Serbia made it harder for RM in the early years of its independence resulting in an Economic crisis (Szpala 2008). However, driven and oriented towards European future Macedonia managed to become the bright spot in the WB region. Overcoming most of the difficulties presented on the path, Macedonia had become a frontrunner on the path towards EU. On the summit in Zagreb 2000th summarising the

---

Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

conclusion and remarks based on the country, the Stabilization and Association Agreement was signed the following year in Luxemburg. SAA entered into force on April 1st, 2004. Being the first country to sign the agreement, Macedonia placed itself at pole position in regards to EU accession and other WB countries as seen in table one (Panagiotou 2008).

Table 1. Progress in EU Accession of WB Countries, Source: EU official website

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>SA/ Europe Agreement Signed</th>
<th>SA/ Europe Agreement Entered into force</th>
<th>Application for EU Membership</th>
<th>Official candidate status</th>
<th>Accession Negotiations Opened</th>
<th>Accession Negotiations Closed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>12/06/2006</td>
<td>1/04/2009</td>
<td>28/04/2009</td>
<td>27/06/2014</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia-Herzeg,</td>
<td>16/06/2008</td>
<td>1/06/2015</td>
<td>15/02/2016</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>9/04/2001</td>
<td>1/04/2004</td>
<td>22/03/2004</td>
<td>16/12/2005</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montenegro</td>
<td>15/10/2007</td>
<td>1/05/2010</td>
<td>15/12/2008</td>
<td>17/12/2010</td>
<td>16/06/2012</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>29/04/2008</td>
<td>1/09/2013</td>
<td>22/12/2009</td>
<td>1/03/2012</td>
<td>14/01/2014</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>27/10/2015</td>
<td>1/04/2016</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Macedonia as other WB countries was never an exception when it came to possible violence in the late 90s or being count as a conflict zone. The calamity that took over RM in 2001 was not unexpected especially with all the unrest in the near neighbourhood. The impatience between the ethnic Albanians and Macedonian turned into waring conflict with numbers of casualties and fighting that took place over months. Therefore, we can conclude that the conflict had great chance to turn into a big scale war. Most supported argumentation in why the conflict never escalated definitely was the meddling of the EU as a mediator joined by the US (Laursen, 2013). As quoted in the text above in the interview given by Radimla Sekerinska the deputy prime minister, at that time Macedonian political elite relied
Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

strongly upon the EU aspirations and was thus, goal-oriented. The EU accession was an evident impetus for all the measures taken in getting Macedonia closer to EU inclining as well the completing of necessary reforms. For example one evident prove can be found in the same interview by Sekerinska given for ESI (European Stability Initiative) that the vision of the European future for the country was strong imperative during implementation of the Ohrid Agreement:

"We had a few delegations from Berlin and from Paris sending a very clear message: we think it's too early, and if you do it, it will be your risk. It wasn't nice wording. It was very direct. And I cannot say it didn't frighten us. We've had several meetings afterwards, the small cabinet and president Trajkovski: are we on the right track? Can we afford to go against the mainstream European tide? It was a huge dilemma ...

We sat down, and we said, look: if we can implement the basic part of the Ohrid Agreement by 2005, we have a wild card. And we'll go to the same people who thought that this is impossible, and we will tell them that yes, in the Balkans a multi-ethnic country with a conflicted history can dramatically change into a normal European place and this is what should earn us candidate status."¹⁴

After the breakaway of Yugoslavia, Macedonia was looked upon as the weakling or the underdog in terms of Economy and Politics evaluation. Thus, many experts and authors in the field questioned the very survival of Macedonia as an independent country, being fragile, surrounded by blockades and unrest in the close surrounding. However, as EU membership was always on the big agenda in RM domestic politics, it served as a beacon on the path to stability and overcoming the transition period. ¹⁵ Hence by many hard evidence and facts on the ground, we can see that Macedonia, in the period from the independence until getting the


¹⁵ “И сонцето е звезда” - Македонија во ЕУ, Сектор за европска интеграција, Генерален секретаријат на Владата на Р.М., 2004 година
Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

Candidate status, was moving in a conclusive positive course. RM also managed to become a front-runner in the accession process in WB and become praised by many prominent figures in the EU for the progress it made. (Panagiotou, 2008)

Table 2. The Progress Overlooked From an Economic Angle (Transition Report, 2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growth in real GDP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>-7.0</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>-80.0</td>
<td>-10.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>86.0</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>-7.3</td>
<td>-1.5</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>-9.4</td>
<td>-5.6</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>-11.7</td>
<td>-8.0</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>-0.9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>-8.0</td>
<td>-9.1</td>
<td>-1.8</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>-4.5</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>-6.1</td>
<td>-4.8</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia and Montenegro</td>
<td>-27.9</td>
<td>-30.8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>-18.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-eastern Europe</td>
<td>-10.9</td>
<td>-2.0</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Economic Indicators From the Independence of RM, Until 2004 (Panagiotou, 2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GDP (% change)</td>
<td>-10.0</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>-15</td>
<td>-8.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>-4.1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment %</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflation %</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>1691</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>58.2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current account balance(US$ billion)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As % of GDP</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-0.26</td>
<td>-0.33</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>-0.36</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>-0.41</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exports (US$ billion)</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imports (US$ billion)</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade balance</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.52</td>
<td>-0.69</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
<td>-0.80</td>
<td>-0.85</td>
<td>-1.11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External debt (US$ billion)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These results (Table 2 and Table 3) clearly show the progress Macedonia did in terms of the economy and development. We can recognise a clear improvement followed by steady pace.

**Macedonia After 2005**

In overlooking and analysing the main details that marked Macedonian progress up until 2005, we can now shift our focus and deal with the second half imposed by the research question. Mainly, the time after Macedonia become a candidate was distinguished by the governing of a single political party, that managed to take control of the ‘steering wheel’ for almost 10 years. Based on its manifest and actions VMRO-DPMNE can be defined as a right-wing party with nationalistic pretences. However, in the party agenda, the EU trajectory was not neglected and held a significant spot. In a speech given by the party president and newly elected Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski it was pointed out that RM will stay strongly focused on the path of the EU integration. He pledged that the new government will work towards Europeanization of the country and raised the expectation for a fast acceptance in the EU family.\(^\text{16}\) Despite the positive attitude and predictions coming out from the new government, facing the reality after 12 years, Macedonia is still standing at the gates of EU waiting to start the negotiations. In overlooking the progress details from various resources, the following part of the study will try to contribute in completing a picture therefor showing us what progress or regress has been made in the country accession path.

**Annual Commission Reports**

European Commission, as part of the process of accession regarding Republic of Macedonia to the European Union since March 2002, submits regularly progress reports on the progress achieved by the Republic of Macedonia. Firstly, the reports were following

Macedonia on receiving a status for candidacy, which after 2005 has also been transformed and adapted to the candidate country status of accession. Progress reports in their structure follow the base of the Copenhagen criteria, that is, they always refer to the economic criterion, political criterion, and the capability, rather speaking the capacity of the Republic of Macedonia to undertake the obligations of membership. In the last part of the reports, it analyses in detail the chapters in which the European Union develops common legislation and policies and analyses what has been done in the reporting year. The reports, of course, contain an introductory part which briefly describes the relations between the European Union and the Republic of Macedonia in all their aspects. During a one-year period, the progress is measured based on the adopted decisions and laws and the ongoing measures, and also from the practice of relations between political entities. Such an approach ensures equal treatment in all reports and allows an objective assessment and thus representing a realistic picture of current entities in the state. All reports are based on information collected and analysed by the Commission. Taken this into account, following the reports from the Commission, solid information on whether a considerable progress or regress was made will be provided. In continuation I will summarise the Commission reports in order to provide the needed information that will supplement the research question.

\textit{Commission report 2007}

- The overall conclusion based on the report from the Commission to the EU Council and Parliament is somewhat moderate positive when examined. Commission states that RM have done some progress in addressing political criteria, however the most concerning part for the Commission is the political dialog and mutual understanding between the main political parties. It concludes that the worsening relations between the parties will contribute to slower reforms. In terms of human rights and the protection of minorities, there was improvement. Also, the implementation of the
Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

Ohrid agreement progressed to a certain degree. Concerning the economic criteria, the Commission evaluated a significant level of satisfaction and progress in establishing proper market economy. The downside is that there are visible institutional weaknesses and insufficiencies in the rule of law in terms of the market economy. When it comes to implementing the acquis, the Commission made the following remarks: “The alignment of the legislation with the acquis persists in an early stage and progress mainly is marked as limited” (COM 2007).

Commission report 2010

- The Commission estimated that in 2010 RM continued to meet the political criteria. Based on the findings Macedonia continued the path towards reforms underlining that the core challenges still remain. Progress was found in the field of judiciary and public administration. A positive aspect were the Parliamentary elections that took place that year, without any greater irregularities. Strengthening the political dialog between the political actors in the country remains something to be worked on. Some progress was made in further implementation the Ohrid Framework agreement. In terms of economy, the Commission recognised a moderate progress in terms of securing and creating a functional economy market. However, recognised structural weaknesses and institutional incapability’s to cope with the market. Also, youth unemployment and uneducated population unemployment were found to be an issue for the overall economy. Mild improvement has been noticed in terms of ability to assume the obligations of membership or implementing the acquis (COM 2010).

Commission report 2014

“The EU accession process for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is at an impasse. Failure to act on the Commission’s recommendation to the Council means that accession negotiations have still not been opened. At the same time, the government’s
In these words, EU Commission described the overall conclusion of the annual report given in 2014. Also, the conclusion highlights recently raised concerns about state-controlled media and polarization of state institutions. In terms of political dialog and cooperation, there is a signalization that the situation is deteriorating. Hence all said the Commission concludes that the political criteria are still on a level that allows the start of the negotiation and formally recommends it. Also, the Commission warned the government to take necessary steps towards avoiding deepening the politicisation of the state in order to keep on the recommendations occurring in the next years. Not a meaningful change had happened in the area of implementing the acquis and the economy. (COM 2014)

Commission report 2016

“The country was faced with the continuation of the most severe political crisis since 2001. Democracy and rule of law have been constantly challenged, in particular, due to state capture affecting the functioning of democratic institutions and key areas of society. The country suffers from a divisive political culture and a lack of capacity for The country’s judicial system has some level of preparation. However, the situation has been backsliding since 2014 and achievements of the previous decade’s reform process have been undermined by recurrent political interference in the work of the judiciary” (COM 2016 pp: 8)

This quotation taken out from the report of the Commission to EU Council and Parliament gives the overall idea about Macedonia at the time. The report then continues describing the stagnating economic field regarding the progress towards a functional market but remains at a satisfactory level in terms of the criteria. In regard to
implementing the acquis, the country is moderately prepared in most of the areas. The focus needs to be on the move towards administrative capacity and effective implementation.

Analysing the Commission reports in retrospective, through the 10-years period interpreting them in terms of the three most important criteria, one can decide on positive or negative trend in the progress of the country. In the above-written reports, a gap of three years per report has been chosen and summarised in short important points concentrating on the political, economic, and acquis criteria.

When compared, the annual reports between 2007 and 2016 have a negative trajectory and declining trend. The regressive trend is not that evident in the early years, until 2014 where we can observe explicit and direct warning messages coming out from the report. Even though there is a falling trend from the Commission reports, Macedonia continued to dwell within the limits of satisfying the criteria to start the negotiations. The political dialog and mutual understanding was an issue from the very first annual report indicating the lack of political culture. The lack of political dialog and understanding progressed to a level of state capture and lack of democracy, which is a strong signal for the decline. In terms of the economy, it stayed at a mild progress at the beginning to a warning of stagnation at the end of 2016. And the readiness to implement the acquis staying in moderate satisfactory level throughout the years (COM, 2016).

**Freedom House Reports**

A very relevant indicator for a country progress as consolidating democracy and aspiration towards European Union can be the Freedom House analytical observations displayed in numbers. It is very compatible with the EU Commission report, concerned more with the Copenhagen political criteria entrenched in the enlargement process. Since one of its primordial goals of the EU is the promotion of democracy, the Freedom House report on
Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

Macedonia does just that, measure the level of Democracy and can be a great indicator whether Macedonia is on the right track in terms of progress in its democratic and EU aspiration. Freedom House reports are taken quite seriously from numerous significant international and political actors and have a meaningful impact.

Group of international and regional experts, journalists, academic advisers, and variety of scholars and authors contributed to these analyses. They rate a given country based on assorted subfields: national democratic governance, electoral process, civil society, independent media, local democratic governance, judicial framework and independence, corruption. The rate goes as following, starting from 7 being the lowest level of democratic progress, to 1 representing positive fast democratic development in a given country. The grades are given by summarising numerous factors and certain political directions that a country is experiencing throughout a given year. (Freedom House methodology) This will therefore be a considerable pointer to contemplating on what kind of progress was made in Macedonia towards EU in the years after getting the candidate

Table 4. Nation in Transit (Freedom House Report 2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Democratic Governance</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Media</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Democratic Governance</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judicial Framework and Independence</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corruption</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy Score</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>4.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall, we can find similarities when we draw a parallel between the EU Commission reports. The tendency of decline is quite perceptible in the table 4 results presented above, especially in the fields of National Democratic Governance and Independent media. Another resemblance with the EU Commission reports can be found in the degree of decline after 2014. It tends to fall faster and at a greater level such as the warnings from the Commission from 2014 to 2016 about the capture state. Nevertheless, one can observe that from 2008 until 2016 there is consistent deterioration based on the Freedom House Democracy Score.

In trying to find the answer to what was the progress of Macedonia before and after Candidacy, I tried to shed light on how Macedonia was perceived by outside actors and external factors. What was the course taken in the years after independence and after receiving a Candidate status? In summing up the results I would argue that the overall assumption that positive evaluation belongs to the first period before the candidacy is evident. The second part when Macedonia become a candidate without clear prospective, i.e. not starting the negotiations, is perceived to have negative tendency mostly in political and democratic connotations.

Macedonia shifted from underdog to leading country in the accession, and then just 10 years after was characterized as captured state. In order to find out what exactly contributed to such change in perception especially in the divergence from the EU accession progress, I will try to delineate the perception from the internal factors in order to see whether not opening the negotiations had any effect on the Macedonian course.

**What kind of Repercussions the EU Decision Not to Open Negations had on Macedonian Domestic Policy and EU credibility in the Country?**

In the next segment I will try to expose and unfold The EU credibility in Macedonia throughout the years. What kind of effect the EU itself and its policy have and had on the Macedonian domestic political scene? Since this chapter deals with the outcome and the
impact from postponing the negotiation start date, reliable secondary sources will be well
presented in contribution to the issue. Also, interviews given by high officials, surveys made
from respectable sources and newspapers will be beneficial in disclosing the matter.

EU Prolongation Effects on Domestic Politics – EU Support

The roll of the EU in RM domestic affairs is considered to be compelling by many
experts and authors. Ever since the independence and the breakaway of Yugoslavia there
were two cleavages in Macedonian political party system. On ethnic bases there is the
Macedonian and Albanian party block. In the Macedonian party block there are two biggest
and eminent parties the divergence is mostly based on, with a very different ideological
background. SDSM (The Social Democratic Union of Macedonia), being the successor,
incorporates the remains and some ideologies from social Yugoslavia17 and VMRO- DPMNE
(Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian
National Unity) proclaims and creates an image of itself as a predominant right-wing party
with more nationalistic affection. 18 In the Albanian party block there are no greater
deviations in terms of ideology. Main priority in party program is promoting rights and
equality of the minority Albanian ethnic group thus displaying a nationalistic politics.

What is common between all these deviations in the political arena is the high support
for EU aspiration. This comes from the fact that ever since the independence and specially in
the early years of the 21st century the population support for EU aspiration is at very high
level. Having such high support for EU it is only reasonable for the parties with bigger range
of support to have EU aspiration as such on the main agenda in their political program. Thus,
EU plays an essential role in the political arena of Macedonia ever since its independence.

Vacudova, in her writings, stated that the vision of Joining the EU played the part of

17 Official party website : http://www.sdsm.org.mk/
18 Official party website : https://vmro-dpmne.org.mk/
Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

catalysis, joining all the parties towards one goal and tightening the gap between them (Vacudova, 2005). This statement implies the success of signing the OFA and in overcoming at least for the time being, the ethnic tensions and divisions. As discussed also in the study, the implementing of the OFA is considered to be a success story, ending a warlike conflict with serious pretensions (Ilievski & Taleski, 2009).

In the article written also by Ilievski and Taleski it is argued that EU prospect of Macedonia as future member was immense ‘carrot’ especially in 2005 when the EU support was around 92 percent of the total population. (2009) However since then, with years passing without opening the accession negotiations, that big carrot is surely shrinking. From 2009 consistently, the EU Commission recommends opening of accession negotiations in its annual report to the EU Council. Every year now, many in a row, it has been declined with manly Greece confronting this option, seeking resolution on the dispute with Macedonia. Since the beginning of 2005 EU did not mention the name dispute as condition to getting in the next stage of the accession, and the change in that direction has not been welcomed by the citizens. When it became clear that the name issue will be a big obstacle in 2008, the unexpected condition only weakened the EU conditionality and ‘carrot’ size. (Ilievski & Taleski, 2009)

As one of the viable options that can be taken in consideration, since is coming out from a significant source, is the interview given by the President of Macedonia in Slovenian political magazine ‘Dimenzije’. As early as 2013 the decline of EU credibility was felt not only between the Macedonian citizens but also in the Macedonian political elite. In the interview titled ‘EU needs to return its own Credibility’ the president Georgi Ivanov evaluates that EU is losing its own credibility Because of the Macedonian case. He also notes that opening the negotiation process like those in Croatia and Slovenia (Sancin, 2010) will help solving the bilateral disputes between the two countries:
Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

‘I think that the credibility of the EU in our case is in doubt. I am convinced that nobody is in the interest of maintaining imposed obstacles in a process that creates mutual benefits. It is a fact that accession negotiations facilitate the resolution of bilateral issues.

This was proved in the case of Slovenia and Croatia. Macedonia and Greece with the support of the Union could follow and apply this positive example. ” Regardless of this precedent, as Ivanov says, the European Union remains a strategic goal of the Republic of Macedonia.’”

(DW, Georgi Ivanov 15.10.2013)

Simonida Kacarska, a prominent research coordinator at the European Policy Institute in Skopje, in one of her articles indicates the close connection between the negotiations delay and Macedonian deviation from the path towards EU (2014). As the prospect of EU was slowly fading, intensified by the conditionality of the name dispute, the government of VMRO plunged itself into new projects that undermined the Greek view. Taking away stable prospect of EU from Macedonia, paved the way for projects like “Skopje 2014”. (BBC)

Numerous sculptress and monuments were placed, that directly affect areas which are of great concern and subject of dispute between Macedonia and Greece. Historical figures like Alexander the Great and Philip the Second can be seen in the city center lifted high as 20 meters, figures that by Greece are considered to be Greek. These steps obviously had distanced Macedonia away from EU. However, interesting phenomenon is that the rise for the support of this project and the government can be linked with the approval of the population that have taken disobedient and ‘rebellious’ stance towards EU and Greece in particular (Kacarska 2014). The project, supported by most of the population, have plunged the bilateral relationship of Macedonia and Greece into downfall and the name dispute into stalemate. This can act as a diminishing factor for the perspective of EU, appearing as such, like there is no way out.
The growing resentment coming from Macedonian population towards EU can be traced by surveys done by relevant sources throughout the years. In one such survey done by the Centre for Insight in Survey Research and conducted by the Brima market research firm, we can find viable information on data collected throughout the years. The survey was done considering nationality representation based on the census results from (2002). In the first table the data tends to unfold the support for Macedonia becoming a part of the EU starting from 2008 until 2016.\(^\text{19}\) Showing that there is clear leaning towards decreasing support after 2008, at the same time when the name conditionality was put on the table.

Table 5. Do you support Macedonia becoming a member of the EU?

The table six gives as insight of the motion and the perspective of the population regarding Macedonian progress recording a significant downfall. It is a worrisome fact when 56 percent of the interviewers think that 10 years ago we were closer to EU then today.

\(^{19}\) Survey of Macedonian Public Opinion April 19-25, 2016, Centre for Insight in Survey Research
Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

Table 6. Do you think Macedonia is closer to EU entry today? 20

*EU credibility*

Macedonia is witness to multiple political crises throughout its ‘young’ history. Since the word young holds a dose of inexperience as well, most of the political crises were solved or supported by the EU as the most prominent actor and mediator in RM, together with USA-NATO. The calamity that swept Macedonia in 2001 was resolved by a peaceful solution mediated by EU and USA acting as guarantees to the Ohrid Framework Agreement. The agreement successfully stopped the armed conflict and helped Macedonia to continue its peaceful way towards EU. In 2007 another crisis bloomed in Macedonia when the biggest Albanian political party got out from the Parliament and started blocking it for almost 5 months (DW, 2007). This deadlock was also mediated and solved by the EU and this time EU used the start of the negotiation as a ‘carrot’ to untangle and resolve the dispute.

Another crisis followed in 2012. The members of the biggest opposition party at that time were violently taken out from the voting season in the Parliament, dealing with the

---

20 Survey of Macedonian Public Opinion April 19-25, 2016, Centre for Insight in Survey Research
budget. Same year, EU Commission launched the High-Level Accession dialogue to try and ease the tensions.

The most recent culmination happened in 2014 and intensified in 2015 with the wire-tapping affair. The Opposition party SDMS again started blocking the work of the Parliament and went out to the streets in what later become known as the Colorful revolution (BBC, 2016) To better contemplate the role of EU in Macedonian domestic politics and find out the degree to which the EU has maintain its own credibility, Zoran Necev and Hristijan Petrushev from the Institute for Democracy Societas Civilis-Skopje had conducted a survey. The Survey was done among 1100 citizen by phone, including people above 18 years with ethnicity taken in consideration (Necev & Petrushev, 2016). Firstly, the survey intended to find out to which degree the citizens of RM are satisfied with the EU mediation in the most recent political crisis from 2015.

Tabl 7. How are you satisfied with EU mediation

![Survey Results](image)

In the second question of the survey the authors tried to find out what the best ally for Macedonia will be.
Also, there was a divergence from this number about the most suitable ally for Macedonia if divided by ethnicity conducted in the same survey. So, for the biggest part or 29% of the Macedonians said that Russia will be the best ally for Macedonia and biggest part of the Albanians or 32% considered EU. The author also concluded that EU mediation and problem solving in Macedonia is declining due to EU credibility being at low levels in 2016. Authors of the study also said that the part where EU credibility is in decline is being taken over by Russia. (Necev & Petrushev 2016, pp:17). However, the study does not deal with the question why the EU credibility is in decline.

In conclusion we need to add that if nothing changes in terms of continuation and progress in the accession talks, the status quo is most likely to stay. Even some experts predict that there will be regression and not stagnation from the path to EU. The fall of EU credibility and support can also impact the wellbeing of the country. Thus, if support and future perspective for EU made the OFA success story, it is only logical that the decline in support can contribute to possible unrest and deviations between the two biggest ethnic groups in Macedonia (Ilievski & Taleski, 2009). Overall it is very important for EU to keep

Table 8. Who would make the best ally for RM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
its own credibility and be recognized as reliably actor in Macedonia because it is tightly connected with the successful progress of the country (Kacarska, 2014).

What can one observe regarding the repercussions the EU decision had on Macedonia political course is first of all the high interdependence and linkage of the Macedonian political sphere to the EU. The connection comes from the high support being maintained throughout the years from the Macedonian population and thus political elite towards EU aspirations. Naturally when you have such support you have as well a big credibility in the country, hence the influence. However, in the findings above especially the surveys done in terms of EU support we can notice a steady decline notable from 2008. In explaining the decline, I have tried to present connection with the EU providing guidance, unobstructed vision and prospect and the loss of credibility and support. I have shared an opinion from scholars and experts on the subject together with relevant surveys measuring the approval in order to find a parallel. Nonetheless from the readings and the interviews given by the political elite it is notable that in a good part of the population and some political actors a build-up of enmity and distrust are slowly raising towards EU. The support of EU was highest the year Macedonia got candidate status, and as the time passed and the feeling of deadlock grew stronger, the support started to decline in record low numbers. As of these findings, I would like to impose the next question that will deal with the prospects of opening the negotiations, since it bears such significance.

**Was There a Space for Opening the Negotiation Talks?**

In the following part I will try to find was there a different direction that could have been taken by EU in the Macedonian case, was there a room for other approach, namely opening the negotiations with Macedonia sooner. To do so I will go through official documents and statements from EU representatives, experts and writer’s opinion, cases that
have dealt with pre-accession bilateral disputes similar to this one and other valuable sources that will supplement the findings.

In 2009 for the first time after 4 years of granting status of a candidate, Macedonia received recommendation from the Commission for opening the negotiation talk. In 2005 when the candidate status was granted the conclusion was that the negotiations will be postponed until more progress is made based on the Copenhagen criteria. However, from 2008 a condition was added for continuing in to the next stage, the name dispute. Ever since 2009 the Commission recognizes the progress made and continuously recommended, in its annual report for the country, opening of the negotiations with Macedonia. In 2014, the Commission also stressed to the Council the significance of opening the negotiation fearing backlash and regression.

“[f]ailure to act on [its] recommendation poses potentially serious challenges to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and to the EU. This calls into question the credibility of the enlargement process, which is based on clear conditionality and the principle of own merits. The lack of a credible EU perspective puts at risk the sustainability of the country’s reform efforts.” (EU COM 2014).

The same concern is shared by some EU Parliament members as well. Ivo Vajgl a Slovenian politician and Member of the European Parliament on February 24th, 2015 in front of the European Parliaments Committee on Foreign Affairs presented a draft to be put on vote. The resolution urged for opening of the negotiation talks and was voted with 47 votes in favor and 10 against. 21 As informed by the Macedonian Informative Agency (MIA), at the opening of the debate, the Croatian MEP Andrej Plenkovic pointed that the bilateral despite should not be an obstacle for Macedonia to continue and progress in the accession talks but

21 EP adopted resolution on immediate opening of accession negotiations for Macedonia’s EU membership, Available at : http://kurir.mk/en/?p=42594
Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

resolved in parallel to the accession process. Vajgl, addressing the comity, stated that the stalemate and status quo of the accession negatively affects the country, helping to create unstable political climate in Macedonia. Then he continued by pointing out that is of utmost value for some alleviation in the Macedonian accession process. In his words:

*The progress report on Macedonia, released by the EC and our reaction regarding the document is important in order to create a notion of continuity of the enlargement process. Macedonia for a number of years is in the process. Many people who have joined me in preparing this view have detected progress and several problems in the country. The stalemate with Greece is one of the main items in the report and Macedonia needs to be given a chance to start negotiating. It doesn’t mean that no work should be done on some problems, they need to be tackled until the negotiation process is finished.*

The most tense and resourceful debate concerning this question in the EU was held 3 years before Vajgl’s draft in the EU comity for Foreign Affairs. On March 14th, 2012 European Parliament gathered to vote for resolution, calling the EU Council to set a date for the negotiations. With the help of the reports and documents from the European Parliament, chance to share light on what the predominant rhetoric was in EU concerning this question at that time will be given (EP 2012).

The resolution submitted and created by the British MEP, Richard Howit was mostly about sending a warning to the Council fearing increased inter-ethnic tensions and failure for steady progress. Resolution also indicated possible threat for the stability, not just in the country but for the region as well. Most of the members that spoke on the assembly were in support for opening the negotiations with Macedonia. The European Parliament adopted the

---

Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

resolution by 582 votes in favor, 70 withdrawn and 34 against. (EP 2012). There were several key points pointed out as a warning to the Council.

The Slovenian MEP Eduard Kukan put EU enlargement credibility on the line for concerned by the danger of substitute agenda different then EU. Voices against opening the negotiation stage were mostly coming from Greek and Bulgarian MEPs. Bulgarian MEP Dimitar Stoyanov stated at the debate that the rights of the Bulgarian minority group were not respected and are violated, and the Greek MEP’s firmly stayed on the argument “first the name then negotiations”. Richard Howitt also emphasized that while dealing with the dispute between Greece and Macedonia the Slovenian-Croatian model must be adopted, in which dealing with the negotiation process and solving the dispute goes conjoint (EP 2012).

We should not fail to notice that there were a lot of voices inside EU calling and urging for the Council to open the negotiations and only a small part is being presented above. Majority of them are likewise mentioning and comparing the Croatian case as a possible way forward. The bilateral dispute between Slovenia and Croatia was regarding a small gulf and demarcation of borders covering the area. The dispute was active ever since the breakaway of Yugoslavia, leaving behind unsettled claims over small bay of Piran in the Adriatic Sea. However, despite calls to block Croatian accession talks in Slovenia coming from various right-wing parties and politicians, Slovenia allowed Croatia to start the process of the negotiations. The blockade of Slovenia consisted of vetoing certain chapters to be opened or closed that contained documents with the map of 1991 (Bashevska, 2014) thus, allowing Croatia to start the negotiations and successfully go through the process of closing and opening certain chapters. The dispute was resolved during the accession talks when Slovenian Prime Minister Pohor met with Croatian Prime Minister Kosor signing an

---

23 Enlargement report for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (debate)
agreement on the 4\textsuperscript{th} of November 2009\textsuperscript{24}, agreeing that the dispute will be solved by ad-hoc arbitral tribunal. This is a case where despite existing bilateral dispute before the negotiation stage, the country opened negotiation talks with EU on accession, and was making a solid progress while trying to solve the dispute.

A rather interesting perspective on the blockade of Macedonia is shared by Elena Baseska PhD candidate, Faculty of Law, Groningen University. (2014) She frames and defines the principle of good neighborliness, which became one of the accession conditions, as possible tool for achieving national interest and politicization. She tries to rationalize and justify her opinion that the blockade by EU members itself, serves only the member states and their political interest, in opposite to the candidate state where this can lead only to antagonism, undermining the spirit of finding a balanced and just solution in a bilateral dispute. Then she continues by suggesting that when there are unbalanced powers involving in a dispute, the use of conditionality is not the most appropriate tool in settling the issue (Basheska 2014 p:5). In all said, the principle of good neighborliness is most likely to be used in gaining political rather than legally meaningful aims when it meets asymmetric power, such as in the case of Macedonia.

The Macedonian EU prospect is at deadlock, however examples like the one with Croatia can provide with option for a way out of it (Petrovic, 2011). If the stability of the region holds high value in EU eyes, question is whether there is a way for Macedonia to continue with the next accession stage, taken in consideration that Greece clearly indicated aspirations towards prosperous and stable Balkan. From the information presented above its easy to conclude that Macedonia is going in a downhill direction, hence delaying the talks helps neither solving the name nor the country stability and progress.

\textsuperscript{24} Available at the official website of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, government News and Announcements, 2009
In the most recent Commission report dating from 2018, Macedonia once more gained a recommendation for opening the negotiation talks. In addressing the public, the president of EU Commission Jean-Claude Juncker said:\(^\text{25}\)

‘*The decision of the European Commission to propose Macedonia and Albania to start accession negotiations with the EU does not mean that these negotiations will begin tomorrow. Firstly, it is necessary that the approval of the European Council be reached, ie in the next six months we will find out the position of the Council of the EU. The countries of the Western Balkans need a European perspective so as not to repeat the events of the 90s of the last century. I urge these countries to observe the necessary progress, this process will take a lot of time,*’ 18.04.2018.

In his speech, the president of the Commission Juncker, points out that great deal of time will take after opening the negotiations talks. Taken this into consideration one can observe how much time was lost while Macedonia was waiting. Displaying this, we can say that if Macedonia had opened the negotiation talks as early as 2009 when the first recommendation was attained, EU would have saved valuable resources, efforts and credibility therefor creating a win-win situation. With respect to Greece, it could have used her veto power much later in the process if the issue was not solved until then. Milenko Petrovic, professor at the University of Canterbury Christchurch, in one of his articles wrote in more explicit way saying that if we take in consideration the level of the economic and financial crises, the dependence that Greece had in the last years in international aid mainly from EU, it is ambiguous that serious commitment coming from the EU community in persuading Greece would have not resulted in a conceivable way forward for Macedonia accession, at least for the time being (Petrovic, 2016, p: 12).

Discussion

In this study I explored the main indications and causes for the Macedonian stagnation in the EU accession process, what were the implications and was there an alternative path that could have been taken. What can be learned when we take Macedonia as a case study in the ongoing enlargement in the Western Balkans?

Enlargement plays immense roll in the Western Balkans, promoting peace stability and prosperity in the region. It secures EU strategic interest by using the enlargement as a strong and effective policy tool. The power of this ‘carrot’ can be witnessed in the implementation and signing of the OFA. By many scholars and experts, signing of OFA was marked as a successful project turning a potential war into a peace solution. The success was advocated to the EU, largely because of the high support it enjoyed in the Macedonian political landscape, thus supporting European future for the country. The same notion of success can be followed throughout the first part of the EU-Macedonia relations, before signing and receiving a candidate status. Assuredly, the European prospect and aspiration were high at that instance of time. Followed by an unclouded vision in its intention of becoming EU member state, Macedonia progressed immensely. From its independence towards becoming the first country to sign the SAA and second at receive a candidate status. The analysis of the several statements of high officials at the initial stages showed that EU did present a lantern and held high importance in the path towards reformation and transition. 

Having immense support from the population itself it was not just a sheer will or party program to strive towards the EU, but in a way obligation and interest to “listen to the voice of the people”. Just before receiving the candidate status, Macedonia was addressed as a frontrunner among the Western Balkan countries in the enlargement process. For this reason, I argue that the vivid vision that was presented at the initial stages of the accession, the unobstructed and clear path towards EU before receiving the candidate status did play a vital
Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

role in the Macedonian advance and success. To back this up I presented what happened when the opposite was ‘introduced’.

After receiving a candidate status, a process that was initially created was split in two parts by providing Macedonia with a status but not opening the negotiation talks. This is not something that EU practiced in previous years. It is very important to highlight that what was going to become the main obstacle in the accession was never mentioned before in the process. After 2005, when Macedonia was recognized as a candidate, the negotiation stage was obstructed by the progress in the Copenhagen criteria and postponed. It was only after Macedonia received a positive assessment from the Commission and recommendation to excel in the next stage, the bilateral dispute with Greece aroused on the surface. Consistently in the next years the European Council and Greece were adjourning the negotiation talks regardless of the Commission consecutive recommendations.

As I have shown there were numerous causalities connected with this trace of action. Firstly, viewed and evaluated from the Commission standpoint a continual decrease in progress becomes evident throughout the years from the first postponing. The relevancy of this observation is backed up by the remarks of Freedom House, expressing similar pattern of movement in progress (regress) in their findings. Secondly, the support for EU aspiration remarkably abated simultaneously to the years gone without opening the next stage, as shown in relevant surveys that traced the population approval for EU integration. Additional survey that intended to measure the EU credibility also confirmed a shift in deterioration. I find it safe to conclude that the delay of the next stage and blockade from the EU Council stimulated negative tendencies as such.

*How did Macedonia become Underdog starting from a poll position in the EU enlargement process?*
Based on the analysis of survey, statements, and secondary sources I will first suggest that for every step taken, especially in the political international arena it is only logical and rational for there to be interest and clear goal when acting upon a decision. The move of vetoing the negotiation talks and the EU Council postponing them is very questionable at least. As we can see in this research the hindering is not based on anything beneficial. Delaying Macedonia in the next stage of the accession certainly did not solve the name dispute, if anything it only worsened the relations between the concern countries. The fortitude of the EU enlargement policy in the Balkan was always in its fair and strict assessment towards applicant countries, thus strengthening the EU credibility in the region. By rule, the Commission evaluation and guidance’s were always considered by the Council. In more than six consecutive recommendations from the Commission, the Council failed to act upon initiating the negotiations which raised a question about the EU unity and lack of leadership, thus, negatively effecting EU credibility not only in RM but arguably in the region. Ever since the Thessaloniki summit, it is undoubtedly known that EU interest in the Balkans are stability, prosper, and security for the region and strengthening its neighbourhood, as declared. With the postponement of the negotiation talks and loss of consistency and transparency in the accession stage, as seen in this research, Macedonia started regressing instead of progressing. With the rise of nationalism and resentment towards EU, as by-product from being hindered in the accession, a rising concern in interethnic relations are emerging followed by fear of successful implementation of the OFA. That is one more causality of the postponement which absurdly undermines EU interest in the country.

The fact that EU Council and Greece will have more than 60 possibilities to disconnect the negotiations or stop the enlargement process in the later stages, does not help in rationalising the decision of delaying the start date of the negotiations. A concern that is worth to be indicated is that even if Macedonia opens negotiation talks with the EU in 2018,
Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

nine years have already passed since the first recommendation from the Commission, thus nine years had been lost. Slovenian - Croatian case, as I have pointed out, is a successful example in which simultaneously working on the bilateral dispute and opening the chapters happened at the same time. This shows that there were alternative steps despite the total blockade that is essentially taking place.

Based on the findings of this study, I want to evoke that the importance of success in EU accession lays in certainty and undimmed prospect that should follow the enlargement strategy. The unnecessary, and as what we come to know, counterproductive hindering of Macedonian accession stage did resolve in regress. In summarising the findings, I find it safe to suggest that the decision of putting Macedonia in a stalemate only brought political discord, provoked EU scepticism and bared the burden of regression in solving the bilateral dispute with Greece. Along these lines it is hard to identify any positive aspect that would justify such decision.

Conclusion

In this thesis I explored and studied the source of Macedonia decline in the EU accession adjoint by its implication. I posed the question “Why Macedonia became the underdog in the WB Enlargement process? To answer this question, I have laid the framework of my research and constituted a main research question divided in four sub-questions. Each one of the sub-questions had served as a puzzle piece which gave us the clear picture.

1a) What were Macedonia and European Union vis a vis relation?

I disclosed the Macedonian EU relations throughout the years, starting from the initial stages of Macedonian independence. This chapter provides overview and essential understandings of Macedonian accession process.
1b) What was the progress of Macedonia before and after Candidacy, observed by outside actors?

I have shown, in the years before receiving candidate status without continuing towards the negotiation stage, Macedonia made immense progress in most of the criteria imposed. The country become a front runner in the enlargement process in the WB. After 2005, when Macedonia obtained the candidate status, analysing the annual reports from the Commission and Freedom House I have demonstrated a steady stagnation and decline from the progress made. The most negative and worrisome tendency is mostly occurrent from 2013.

1c) What kind of repercussions the EU decision not to open negations had on Macedonian domestic policy and EU credibility in the country?

I have shown that the stalemate that captivated Macedonia accession process did had wide repercussion. Alongside the years of hindering the negotiation talks a decline of EU support was also consistent. Unlike the years before the blockade, EU credibility and support shifted in a steady pace of decline. The loss of consistency and prospect in the accession process converted in regression of progress and reformation ahead towards EU.

1d) Was there a space for opening the negotiation talks?

I went through European Parliament sessions that dealt with the Macedonian accession case, reviewed documents and statements from crucial actors in the process. I have demonstrated that there were many voices advocating for start of the negotiations inside EU. Not just EPM but EU high officials recognised the harmful policy of hindering the talks with RM. EU Parliament discussions proposed reasonable request for following the Slovenian-Croatian case, which I have shown to be much more feasible and overall constructive approach in contrary to the one currently prevailing.
1) How did Macedonia become underdog starting from a poll position in the EU enlargement process?

I have recognised that the obstructions for starting the negotiation talks were the essential generator for deteriorating and regressive tendencies in the Macedonian accession process. The hindering of the negotiation talks from Greece and the EU Council was unbeneﬁcial for both sides. Therefore, the purpose of postponing the start of the negotiations was only trivial. As for conclusion I want to highlight the signiﬁcance of consistency and clear prospect in an accessing process of an applicant country and hope that this study will be an advisable supplement to the EU enlargement policy.
Bibliography

Books and articles


  Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for EU Membership.


  communautaire. *International political science review*, 23(3), 249-268.


- Hughes, J., & Sasse, G. (2003). Monitoring the monitors: EU enlargement conditionality and
  minority protection in the CEECs. *JEMIE*, i.

- Ilievski, Z., & Taleski, D. (2009). Was the EU's role in conflict management in Macedonia a


  Policy in the Western Balkans*. Routledge.

  Articles 27 and 98 of the Rome Statue. *NZJPIL*, 4, 269.

  Lang.

- Macedonia news channel 24 Available at : https://www.24.mk/junker-pregovorite-so-
  makedonija-i-albanija-nema-da-pochnat-utre-i-kje-traat-dolgo (accessed on 27 April 2018)
Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study


-Petrushevska (2011) д-р Татјана Петрушевска, Вовед во правото на Европската унија (втор дел), Скопје, 2011; Св, Климент Охридски, Скопје


Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study


Documents

-“И сонцето е звезда“ - Македонија во ЕУ, Сектор за европска интеграција, Генерален секретаријат на Владата на Р.М., 2004 година

Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

- BRUSSELS EUROPEAN COUNCIL 15/16 DECEMBER 2005 PRESIDENCY

CONCLUSIONS, COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION Brussels, 30 January 2006

15914/1/05 REV 1 CONCL 3


-COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL

-COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL


-COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION Brussels, 17 July 2008 11018/1/08 REV 1, BRUSSELS EUROPEAN COUNCIL 19/20 JUNE 2008 PRESIDENCY CONCLUSIONS


Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

-IDSCS, Institute for democracy, Societas Civilis – Skopje, THE EU’S CREDIBILITY AT STAKE IN MACEDONIA Authors: Zoran Nechev and Hristijan Petrusev
-OJ. Official Journal of the European Union, COUNCIL DECISION of 18 February 2008 on the principles, priorities, and conditions contained in the Accession Partnership with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and repealing Decision; 2006/57/EC
-Recommendation for a Council decision authorising to Negotiate a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, SEC (1999) 1279 final of 8 September 1999
Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study


Влада на Република Македонија, Генерален секретаријат, Сектор за европска интеграција: Скопје, септември.

*Electronic sources*


-DW : ДУИ решителни - межународниот фактор бара повлекување на бојкотот Available at: [http://p.dw.com/p/Abzp](http://p.dw.com/p/Abzp) (Accused on 17 April)


-Macedonia’s protests try to bring down government with a splat, By Guy Delauney
Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study


-Newspaper Vecer Available at: https://vecer.mk/gruevski-evrointegracijata-e-glaven-prioritet-na-makedonija (Accessed on 10 April 2018)


-PM Gruevski’s Interview with the Macedonian Information Agency June 27, 2008 Available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20080627113425/http://macedoniaonline.eu:80/content/view/1992/45/ (Accessed on 03 April 2018)

-President Conclusions of the Brussels European Council, Brussels (see web page: http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/the_former_yugoslav_republic_of_macedonia/eu-the_former_yugoslav_republic_of_macedonia/chronology/index_en.htm (access on 1 April, 2018)


Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

-Transition Report 2004: Infrastructure - EBRD Available at :


-Иванов: ЕУ мора да го врати својот кредибилитет  see web page
(Accessed on 13 April 2018)
Standing at the Gates of EU – Macedonia Case Study

Apendexes

THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES
AND THEIR MEMBER STATES

Luxembourg, 9 April 2001

The Prime Minister of the
Government of the former Yugoslav
Republic of Macedonia.

Dear Sir,

We have the honour to propose that, if it is acceptable to your Government, this letter and your confirmation hereof shall together take the place of the signature of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Annexes and Protocols, initialled by your Government and the European Commission on 24 November 2000.

We furthermore propose that, if it is acceptable to your Government, this letter and your confirmation hereof shall together take the place of the procedure whereby Declarations by the Contracting Parties would be adopted in a Final Act on the signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, noting that the Declarations shall be subjected, in the same manner as this Agreement, to any procedures that may be necessary to ensure their validity.

The text of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Annexes and Protocols, as well as the Joint Declarations adopted by the Parties, are annexed to this Exchange of Letters.

Also annexed to this Exchange of Letters are 2 Unilateral Declarations by the European Community taken note of by your side.

The Exchange of Letters should be considered as the equivalent of signature.

The texts of the Agreement and the Declarations which are the object of this Exchange of Letters, shall be subject to approval by the European Communities and their Member States.

Please accept, Sir, the assurance of our highest consideration.

For the European Communities

(Seal)

176 Rue de la Loi,
1040 Brussels, Belgium

Службен весник на РМ, - бр.28 мегунардони договори 13 април