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The puzzle of Turkish minority representation, nationhood cleavage, and politics of recognition in Bulgaria, Greece, and North Macedonia

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ABSTRACT

Bulgaria, Greece, and North Macedonia have demographically the largest and politically the most significant Turkish minorities in southeastern Europe. Yet the official recognition of Turkish ethnicity and language varies very significantly across these three neighbouring countries. This variation is particularly puzzling and counterintuitive if one considers a number of alternative explanations, all of which would predict different outcomes. The country with the highest level political recognition for Turkish language and ethnicity (North Macedonia) is not the one with the largest Turkish minority in absolute or relative terms, or the one with the highest Turkish minority representation in parliament, or the one that is a new or old EU member, or the ones that neighbour Turkey, the kin state of the minority. Through process tracing based on primary and secondary sources, we argue that a particular type of political polarization over identity among the ethnic majority, which we conceptualize as the 'nationhood cleavage,' facilitated the highest level of official recognition of the minority.

KEYWORDS Bulgaria; ethnicity; Greece; minority representation; nationhood; North Macedonia

The puzzle and the method

Bulgaria, Greece, and North Macedonia have demographically the largest and politically the most significant Turkish minorities in southeastern Europe. Yet the political recognition and constitutional status of Turkish ethnicity and language varies very significantly across these three neighbouring countries. Turkish language has no official status in Bulgaria, whereas in North Macedonia Turkish is recognized as an official language in nine towns, and Turks are explicitly mentioned in the constitution as one of the constituent nations of the Macedonian polity. In Greece, more similar to Bulgaria than North Macedonia, Turkish language is not mentioned in the constitution and does not have the constitutional status of an official language of state bureaucracy at the national or the provincial level, and the Greek state refuses

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to use the ethnonym ‘Turkish’ in referring to the group that self-identifies as Turkish in Western Thrace. Nonetheless, a school network of about 175 Turkish schools operates without major problems under the 1923 Lausanne Treaty regime (Lausanne Treaty, 1923, Art. 41 & 45; Tsitselikis, 2012, p. 571). Why do Turkish language and ethnicity have constitutional recognition as an official language and as a constituent nation of the polity, respectively, in North Macedonia, but not in Bulgaria and Greece?

The Turkish minorities in Bulgaria, Greece, and North Macedonia, three countries neighbouring each other in southeastern Europe, provide a laboratory like setting to test extant theories on the determinants of minorities’ ethnolinguistic rights and status and to develop new theories. Turkish minorities in these three countries share similar historical origins dating back to the ramifications of the Ottoman conquest and the partial Islamization of the Balkans in the late 14th century. They are located in contiguous countries, and in the case of Bulgaria and Greece, even the territories inhabited by the Turkish minorities are contiguous across the Rhodope mountains along the Greco-Bulgarian border (Greek prefecture of Rhodope borders the Bulgarian province of Kardzhali, and both Rhodope and Kardzhali have Turkish Muslim majorities; see Figure 1). These three post-Ottoman Turkish-Muslim minorities living in Orthodox Christian-majority societies, two of which are also located in Slavic and post-Communist societies (Bulgaria and North Macedonia) provide an opportunity for ‘most similar systems analysis’ (Figure 1; Table 1; George & Bennett, 2005, pp. 50–59, 251–258).

The variation in constitutional recognition of Turkish language and ethnicity across three neighbouring southeastern European states is particularly puzzling



Figure 1. Units of local administration in Bulgaria, Greece, and North Macedonia where Turks constitute more than 20 per cent of the population.

Table 1. Research design: Most similar systems analysis.

Similar Background Conditions	Turks in Bulgaria (1990-present)	Turks in North Macedonia (1990-present)	Turks in Greece (1974-present)
IV1: Majority Religion	Christian	Christian	Christian
IV2: Majority Denomination	Orthodox	Orthodox	Orthodox
IV3: Ethnolinguistic Majority	Slavic	Slavic	Greek
IV4: Geographic Region	Southeast Europe	Southeast Europe	Southeast Europe
IV5: Origins of the Turkish minority	14 th century	14 th century	14 th century
IV6: European Union membership	Member	Candidate	Member
IV7: Formerly communist polity?	Yes	Yes	No
IV8: Significant emigration to Turkey?	Yes	Yes	Yes
DV1: Constitutional recognition of Turkish	No	Yes	No
DV2: Constitutional language status of Turkish	No	Yes	No

and counterintuitive if one considers a number of alternative explanations, all of which would predict different outcomes based on potential independent variables that could influence the constitutional recognition of a minority's ethnolinguistic identity. The country with the highest level constitutional recognition for Turkish language and ethnicity is not the one with the largest Turkish minority in absolute or relative terms (Bulgaria), or the one with the highest Turkish minority representation in parliament (Bulgaria), or the one that is the oldest EU member (Greece), or the ones that neighbour Turkey, the kin state of the minority (Bulgaria and Greece) (see [Table 2](#); [Figure 2](#)). Through process tracing based on primary and secondary sources, we argue that the most divided polity on the definition of nationhood, what we call 'nationhood cleavage', provides the highest level of constitutional recognition to the Turkish minority.

Our focus in this article is the Turkish minority ethnolinguistically defined as such, not the entire Muslim minority. Thus, we only focus on the Bulgarian, Greek, and North Macedonian citizens who self-identify as ethnic Turks or speak Turkish, leaving aside other Muslim citizens who self-identify with different ethnolinguistic or national categories, such as Albanian, Bosniak, Pomak, or Torbeshi. Since the Greek census does not count ethnic Turks or Muslims, our estimates for Greece are based on Tsitselikis and Sakellariou (2018, pp. 323–324), who states that out of approximately 380,000 Muslims in Greece, 105,000 have citizenship, including 80,000 Turks, 15,000 Pomaks, and 10,000 Roma. Tsitselikis and Sakellariou note that 'most of the Muslim Roma are monolingual Turkish speakers' and Pomaks 'partly express an ethnic Pomak identity, often along with a Turkish (national) identity' (2018, p. 323), meaning that these two groups may or may not share Turkish linguistic

Table 2. Potential independent variables and the dependent variables.

Potential Causally Relevant Independent Variables (IVs) and Dependent Variables (DVs)	Turks in Bulgaria (1990–present)	Turks in Greece (1974–present)	Turks in North Macedonia (1990–present)
IV1: Minority Size ^a	588,318/8,8 %	80,000–105,000/0,8–1,0 %	77,959/3,85 %
IV2: External/third-party involvement	high	high	low (1990–2001); high (post-2001)
IV3: EU membership	Yes	Yes	No
IV4: Minority mobilization for rights	medium	high	low
IV5: Kin-state/Turkey's pressure	medium	high	low
IV6: Neighbouring the kin-state	Yes	Yes	No
IV7: Number of Turkish-origin mayors ^b	29 municipalities	3 municipalities	2 municipalities
IV8: Number of Turkish-origin MPs ^c	21/240 (8,7 %)	3/300 (1 %)	2/120 (1,6 %)
IV9: Nationhood Cleavage	No	No	Yes
DV1: Constitutional status of Turkish	-	-	+
DV2: Turkish as a constitutionally recognized official language	-	-	+ (9 municipalities)

^aThe figures for Bulgaria and North Macedonia are from their most recent censuses, Bulgaria Census (2011, p. 3) and Macedonia Census (2002, p. 34). Since the Greek census does not record ethnic Turkish or Muslim identities, estimates for Greece are based on Tsitselikis (2018, pp. 323–324), who notes that out of approximately 380,000 Muslims in Greece, 105,000 have citizenship, including 80,000 Turks, 15,000 Pomaks, and 10,000 Roma. Tsitselikis also notes that 'most of the Muslim Roma are monolingual Turkish speakers' and Pomaks 'partly express an ethnic Pomak identity, often along with a Turkish (national) identity' (Tsitselikis, 2018, p. 323), which justifies including these two categories (but not non-citizen Muslims) as having at least in part Turkish linguistic and/or national identity, despite different ethnic origins. Tsitselikis and Mavrommatis (2019, p. 7) indicate a total of 104,000 Muslim Turkish speakers in Greece (90,000 in Thrace, 4,000 in Dodecanese, and 10,000 elsewhere, mostly in Athens and Thessaloniki).

^bThe data for Bulgaria and North Macedonia are from the webpages of their state electoral commissions; <https://www.cik.bg/bg/> for Bulgaria, and <https://www.sec.mk/> for North Macedonia. The figure for Greece is based on TRT Haber (2019), and these three municipalities are Ariana, Iasmos, and Myki.

^cThe data for the three countries are from the webpages of their respective national assemblies; <https://www.parliament.bg/en/MP> for Bulgaria, [https://www.vouleftes.mk/current-structure.nspcx](https://www.hellenicparliament.gr/en/Vouleftes) for North Macedonia.



Figure 2. Units of local administration in North Macedonia where Turkish is a constitutionally recognized official language (Turkish does not have constitutionally recognized official language status anywhere in Bulgaria or Greece).

(Roma) or national (Pomak) identity, despite different ethnic origins. Taking these into account, we accepted the range from 80,000 (ethnic) to 105,000 (linguistic and national) as the estimate for the Turkish minority in Greece (Table 2). In short, we do not consider all Muslims indiscriminately as ‘Turks’. Moreover, accepting 80,000 or 105,000 as the population estimate of the minority does not change the relative status of Greece among our three cases in terms of our independent or dependent variables.

The qualitative method that we most frequently employ in scrutinizing alternative explanations is the congruence method (George & Bennett, 2005, pp. 181–204). We demonstrate that the appearance of (if binary) or increase in (if continuous) a number of alternative independent variables did not result in the variation that we observe in the dependent variable (constitutional recognition of Turkish language and ethnicity). We then turn to our own argument, and using process tracing focused on periods of causal significance (Bennett & Checkel, 2015), we examine the interaction between political representatives of the Turkish minorities and the largest political parties in each country to demonstrate step by step why and how the minority was able to gain constitutional recognition of its ethnicity and language only where the conflict among the two largest (ethnic majority) political parties on the definition of the nation existed. Such ‘nationhood cleavage,’ as we conceptualize it, exists in North Macedonia but not in Greece or Bulgaria. Our causal argument fits the necessary and sufficient condition structure (Goertz, 2017, pp. 90–122), whereby nationhood cleavage is a necessary condition for

ethnolinguistic constitutional recognition, and together with parliamentary representatives of a politicized minority demanding such status, is sufficient for our outcome of interest.

Alternative explanations

European Union's pressure for improving minority rights?

Perhaps the most popular explanation for the liberalization of minority policies and improvement of minority rights in Bulgaria, Greece, and North Macedonia has been external pressures, in particular, European Union's advocacy in favour of the minorities (Anagnostou, 2001, 2005a, 2005b; Grigoriadis, 2008). This argument is almost exclusively employed to explain the trajectory and variation in the liberalization and 'Europeanization' of minority rights with regards to the Turkish minority in Bulgaria and Greece, and to the best of our knowledge, never in relation to the Turkish minority in North Macedonia.

EU pressure does not explain the variation in Turkish minorities' ethnolinguistic rights in Bulgaria, Greece, and North Macedonia because it fails to explain the cross-national variation, our main puzzle, and even the intertemporal variation within some of our cases. First, the country where the Turkish minority has the highest constitutional status for its ethnolinguistic identity, North Macedonia, is also the one that is not an EU member. In contrast, the Turkish minority has much lower constitutional status for its ethnolinguistic identity in the neighbouring EU member states, Bulgaria and Greece. Secondly, what is often discussed as the improvement of Turkish minority's rights in Greece, namely, the removal of the discriminatory Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Law, through which the Greek government denationalized tens of thousands of its Muslim citizens (Anagnostou, 2005a), was not an upgrade of the constitutional status of Turkish language or ethnicity, which is our dependent variable. Moreover, this change did not take place in or around 1981, when Greece was admitted to the European Community, but in the early 1990s, a decade after Greece's EU membership. In short, the argument positing EU pressure as the primary cause of the variation of Turkish minorities' ethnolinguistic rights fails to pass a crossnational and even intertemporal congruence test.

Does geopolitical threat make governments reluctant to grant minority rights?

It might be argued that when countries host minorities that neighbour kin states, granting minority rights might create geopolitical threats as the minority, with kin state support, might demand territorial autonomy and even secession. This claim cannot be substantiated for two main reasons.

First, North Macedonia is the only one among these countries that experienced real geopolitical threats of dissolution through ethnonationalist secession, and yet it is also the one that granted constitutional recognition to Turkish ethnicity and language. Indeed, of the three countries, North Macedonia is the only one that suffered state breakdown after the disintegration of Yugoslavia, which also deprived the country of the federal protection against its neighbours (Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia) that had irredentist claims upon its territory and had historically challenged its identity (Crampton, 2002, p. 255). Yet, even the ominous prospect of external aggression and partition that North Macedonia faced during the 1990s (Phillips, 2004, pp. 54–55) did not prevent the country from granting extensive minority rights. Second, although Bulgaria and Greece do indeed border Turkey, the Turkish majority regions in both countries (i.e., Kardzhali and Rhodope) are not contiguous with Turkey, thus significantly attenuating any realistic threat of Turkish irredentism (Figure 1).

Is external/third-party intervention the primary cause of constitutional ethnolinguistic recognition?

Another set of arguments posits that minority rights legislations in post-communist countries are externally engineered (Janos, 2000, pp. 410–411). This type of explanation suffers from an incongruence with the intertemporal pattern we observe. In North Macedonia, the period Turkish minority enjoyed its most extensive rights (1990s) coincides with the time period international community had the most limited influence on North Macedonia as a result of the name dispute with Greece and the limited international recognition of the country. Indeed, the two principal documents that granted Turks extensive ethnocultural rights were passed in the 1990s during the incumbency of the communist successor party Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (hereafter SDSM): the November 1991 constitution and the September 1996 Law on Territorial Organization that divided the country into 123 municipalities, of which 10 municipalities recognized Turkish language as official language (E. Saraç, personal interview, February 17, 2019). International engagement with North Macedonia began to increase gradually after the September 1995 Interim Accord with Greece that put an end to the Greek economic embargo, and reached its peak during the 2001 Albanian insurgency and the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) that ended the hostilities (Engström, 2009). However, during the post-OFA period, when external engineering was arguably at its peak, Turks' ethno-cultural rights actually somewhat *decreased*, since OFA's principal aim was to increase the rights of the Albanians and this came at the expense of the rights of non-Albanian minorities, including Turks. Hence, international pressure to raise minority languages into official status

and transform Macedonia into a consociational republic did not apply to the Turks, and therefore, the lack of such international pressure does not necessarily explain why Turkish ethnicity and language lack constitutional recognition in Bulgaria and Greece.

Cross-nationally too, this type of argument fails to explain why external engineering would occur and may succeed in some countries and not in others. Therefore, we argue that international engineering arguments suffer from an endogeneity problem since it is the nationhood cleavage among majority parties in a country that actually allows for external/third party intervention. As such, Western leverage as observed most recently in the Prespa Agreement of 2018 that changed the name of the country to North Macedonia is a function of the deep nationhood cleavage between the two major ethnic Macedonian political parties, as we discuss further below.

Does territorial concentration bring ethnolinguistic rights?

It is possible that not the size of the population per se but its territorial concentration might be the causal variable explaining the constitutional recognition of Turkish ethnicity and language. If a minority has local majorities, it might be in a better position to agitate for local official language status and constitutional recognition. However, Turkish minorities in all three countries constitute majorities in some localities. Moreover, it is abundantly clear that the Turks of Bulgaria, who constitute majorities in two large provinces, Kardzhali (66,2 per cent) and Razgrad (50 per cent), which together contain 14 municipalities within them (Bulgaria Census, 2011, p. 24) would be the most advantageous in terms of territorial concentration. Furthermore, as of November 2019, Turkish/Muslim-origin people served as the elected mayors of 38 municipalities across Bulgaria, including all 7 municipalities of Kardzhali, 6 of the 7 municipalities of Razgrad, 4 municipalities in Blagoevgrad, and 3 municipalities each in Haskovo, Shumen, Smolyan, and Targovishte (Bakış.bg, 2019).

Turkish/Muslim minority of Greece constitutes the majority in the prefecture of Rhodope, and a large minority in neighbouring Xanthi, such that the party of the Turkish minority, DEB, won the European Parliament elections in both 2014 and 2019 in both of these prefectures. There are only two small municipalities where the Turkish minority constitutes the majority in North Macedonia, Tsentar Zhupa and Plasnitsa, which are fewer in numbers and smaller in size than those minority-majority districts found in Bulgaria and Greece (see Figure 1). Moreover, Turkish language enjoys official status in seven other North Macedonian municipalities where ethnic Turks are significantly outnumbered either by ethnic Macedonians or Albanians, namely, Kichevo, Gostivar, Dojran, Vrapchishte, Studenichani, Mavrovo-Rostusha, and Chair municipality within the capital city of Skopje. In sum, demographic

weight and the prominence of minority-majority regions do not seem to explain the variation in the constitutionally recognized official status of Turkish ethnicity and language.

Minority mobilization for civil rights or the minority representatives as king-makers?

Do minority mobilizations for civil rights and/or minority representatives as king-makers in national politics explain the variation in ethnolinguistic rights? This explanation also suffers from an apparent incongruence with the cross-national pattern. The Turkish minority in both Bulgaria (during the late 1980s and the early 1990s) and Greece (in the early 1990s) experienced a period of very high mobilization and politicization and occupied the centre stage in Bulgarian and Greek national politics, however briefly. Such mass mobilization and popular struggle for civil rights did not occur in North Macedonia, the case where the Turkish minority ended up having the highest level of constitutional recognition.

In terms of minority representatives in the national parliament as well, it is the Bulgarian Turkish minority, which, having coalesced around their own party, Movement for Rights and Freedoms (DPS), became the third largest political party in post-Communist Bulgaria and kingmaker in multiple coalition governments. It is not possible to say this about the handful (2, 3 or at most 4) Turkish members of the parliament in Greece or North Macedonia. (Table 2)

Is the kin state pressure the cause of ethnolinguistic rights?

Turkey heavily intervened in and lobbied internationally for the ethnolinguistic rights of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria (especially in the late 1980s) and in Greece (especially in the early 1990s but also throughout the 20th century with reference to Lausanne Treaty and other international conventions), but not in North Macedonia. However, Turkey has been careful not to appear irredentist or supportive of separatism among Turkish minorities in the Balkans, most likely for fear of attracting greater external support to Kurdish separatism in Turkey (Alptekin, 2018, p. 312). Among other discriminatory measures, Greece denationalized approximately 60,000 of its mostly Turkish-speaking Muslim citizens. This was justified through Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Code, which allowed authorities to annul the citizenship of any Greek citizen 'of non-Greek origin,' who left the territory of Greece, even for a short visit elsewhere (Anagnostou, 2005a). Bulgaria banned the use of Islamic names and forced its mostly Turkish-speaking Muslim minority to take up Slavic-Christian-origin names (Anagnostou, 2005b). The extant scholarship suggests that Bulgaria and Greece may

have relaxed these repressive measures in part in order to balance against and 'disarm' Turkey in the international platforms, since Turkey was blaming and shaming Greece and Bulgaria in European and other international organizations for their repressive policies towards their Turkish minorities (Anagnostou, 2005a, 2005b). This was an immediate concern for both Greece and Bulgaria, since Council of Europe (CoE) was about to place Greece under monitoring for its treatment of minorities, and Bulgaria's application to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) was not going to be accepted unless Bulgaria ceased to force its Turkish-Muslim citizens to adopt Slavic-Christian names. In contrast, Turkey did not apply any such international pressure to North Macedonia on behalf of the Turkish minority there. Thus, Turkey's activism cannot explain the attainment of constitutional recognition of Turkish language and ethnicity in North Macedonia compared to the lack of such official recognition and status in Bulgaria and Greece. Turkey's use of religion as an instrument of foreign policy (Öztürk & Sözeri, 2018), especially in Bulgaria, and the role of the Turkish consulate in Komotini, Greece (Tsitselikis, 2012), in pushing for Turkish ethnolinguistic rights, have not been very successful and arguably even backfired as we discuss in our cases studies.

Our argument: 'Nationhood cleavage' and the constitutional status of Turkish ethnicity and language

We argue that the country that is politically most divided on the definition and the limit of the national identity, which we call 'nationhood cleavage,' is the one that provides the highest level of constitutional recognition to the Turkish minority. This is a major finding with far reaching theoretical ramifications. Empirically, we argue that North Macedonia has the most profound nationhood cleavage, such that the two major North Macedonian political parties, SDSM and the centre-right Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization- Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (hereafter VMRO), cannot agree on the definition, the limits (belonging-membership), and the origins of Macedonian identity. Given such profound disagreements on the definition of the nation among the two major political parties of the Macedonian majority, the Turkish minority, along with the larger Albanian minority, have been able to form alliances with either one or both of the two competing main parties of Macedonian identity politics to successfully advance their ethnolinguistic rights.

In contrast, in Bulgaria there is broad agreement between the two leading parties, Bulgarian Socialist Party (hereafter BSP) and the Union of Democratic Forces (hereafter SDS), on the definition and the limits of the Bulgarian nation with a monoethnic, monolingual regime, and this did not provide any opportunities for the Turkish minority to advance its ethnolinguistic rights and

constitutional status. Compared to Bulgaria, the two main political party traditions in Greece, represented by the centre-left Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (hereafter PASOK) and the centre-right New Democracy (hereafter ND) during the contentious and formative periods we discuss, do have a few disagreements on the ideological contours and the limits of the nation, especially with regards to the Greek Civil War. Despite these disagreements, however, PASOK and ND agree on the ethno-religious definition of the nation as fundamentally Greek speaking and Orthodox Christian. As a result, the Turkish minority in Greece has not been significantly more successful than its Bulgarian counterpart in its attempts to gain constitutional recognition for Turkish ethnicity and language.

We nonetheless recognize the finer gradations of legal recognition of Turkish as a minority language. Namely, constitutional *and* national recognition is the highest level of recognition, followed by constitutional and regionally specific recognition. Regionally specific recognition by law is towards the lower end of the spectrum, but still higher than no official recognition. In this spectrum, North Macedonia accords the highest level of recognition to both Turkish language *and* Turkish ethnicity, nationally *and* constitutionally. In contrast, Bulgaria does not officially recognize Turkish ethnicity or language at any level. Finally, Greece does not recognize Turkish ethnicity or language constitutionally or nationally, but it nonetheless recognizes Turkish language by law at a regional level (Western Thrace) through the network of minority schools.

Our argument on 'nationhood cleavage' is in part inspired by Marx's (1998) focus on how partisan competition interacts with the fundamental societal fault line in a given country, such that blacks were segregated even into the second half of the 20th century through Jim Crow laws and Apartheid regime in the United States and South Africa, respectively, whereas no such segregation existed in Brazil after slavery was abolished in the late 19th century. Our argument also suggests that the existence or the lack of a nationhood cleavage may provide very different opportunity structures for minorities seeking to build coalitions beyond social divides (Berriane & Duboc, 2019), which is necessary in order to attain constitutional recognition. In short, we argue that such fundamental change is only possible if the largest political parties disagree on the definition and the limits of membership in the national community.

Bulgaria

In postcommunist Bulgaria, the two major political parties of the country fully agree on the definition, limits (belonging-membership), and origins of Bulgarian identity. For both the legal successor of the Bulgarian Communist Party, BSP, and the then anti-communist coalition of newly formed parties,

SDS, ethnic Bulgarians constitute a distinct Slavic people, Orthodox Christian in faith. The modern Bulgarian state formed in the aftermath of the 1877–78 Russo-Ottoman War was established as the state of and for the Bulgarian people ethnoreligiously defined as such. Both BSP and SDS share a firm monoethnic and monolingual nationhood vision that is built upon strong opposition to Turkishness (G. Tahir, personal interview, November 7, 2018) and denial of the existence of ethnic minorities. Accordingly, and similarly to the Greek case, both parties agree that in Bulgaria there are no Turks but only Bulgarian Muslims (I. Yalimov, personal interview, May 2, 2019). The mono-ethnic nationhood cohesion appears to be the result of more than one century of Bulgarian nation-building (1878–1989) based on the exclusion and/or assimilation of Ottoman Muslims/Turks and the politics of ‘ethnic homogenization’ (Yalimov, 2016, p. 270). (See Table 3)

The removal of the communist dictator Zhivkov in an intra-party coup in 10 November 1989 formally marked the end of the communist regime in Bulgaria (Peeva, 2000, p. 33). Facing widespread international condemnation

Table 3. Summary of the Case Analysis of Bulgaria.

Periods of Importance	Causal	Developments
1877-1878		First wave of the violent expulsion of Muslims/Turks from Bulgaria following Ottoman defeat in the Russo-Ottoman War (Höpken, 1997, p. 54)
1912		Expulsion of Muslims/Turks from Bulgaria following Ottoman defeat in the First Balkan War (Höpken, 1997, p. 55)
1925		Bulgarian-Turkish Friendship Treaty that allowed Turkish emigration from Bulgaria (Höpken, 1997, p. 55)
1950-1951		Expulsion of Turks from north-eastern Bulgaria in order to break their resistance to the forceful collectivization of agriculture by the communist regime (Neuburger, 2004, pp. 67–73; Crampton, 2005, pp. 91–99)
Late 1950s		Bulgarian ‘Great Leap Forward’ and the ‘Cultural Revolution’ aiming to assimilate Bulgarian Muslims/Turks (Neuburger, 2004, p. 199)
1984-1989		‘Rebirth Campaign’ including forceful name-changing policy (Slavicizing Arab/Turkish-origin names) and ban of Islamic practices (Dimitrov, 2000)
May-August 1989		Bulgarian Turks’ mass exodus (around 350,000 Turks) once the communist regime opened the border with Turkey (Neuburger, 2004, p. 82)
November-December 1989		Fall of Zhivkov’s regime and end of the forceful assimilation process
January-May 1990		Bulgarian Round Table Talks (RTT) between BSP and SDS: excluded Turks from the Round Table; made Bulgarian the only official language at all levels; banned ethnic parties
July 1991		Post-communist constitution includes RTT decisions in its provisions: no constitutional recognition for Turkish minority; no official status for Turkish language; no minority language education; banned ethnic parties
1991- present		No attempt by either the minority party (DPS) or the later mainstream centre-right parties (NDSV and GERB) to advance the ethno-linguistic rights of Bulgarian Turks; mono-ethnic and mono-lingual conception of the Bulgarian nation persists

and domestic unrest for the forceful assimilation campaign towards Turks, the reformist elites of the Bulgarian Communist Party in a politburo meeting in 29 December 1989 decreed the end of the assimilation process and allowed Bulgarian Turks to reclaim their names and the property they had left behind during the mass exodus to Turkey. This decision unleashed a wave of Bulgarian ethnonationalist backlash and Turkish counter-mobilization in ethnically mixed areas from 30 December 1989 until 12 January 1990 (Stamatov, 2000, p. 556).

This wave of nationalist mobilization and counter-mobilization threatened Bulgaria's political stability and could have led to interethnic violence (M. Ivanov, personal interview, November 12, 2018). In the midst of raging protests, BSP and SDS started negotiations to find a solution to the ethnic problem. As Richard Crampton has argued, 'the prospect of continued confrontation persuaded Bulgarian politicians of all stripes to initiate conversations to contain the crisis' (Crampton, 2002, p. 309). The inter-party negotiations from January to May 1990 took the institutionalized form of Round Table Talks (RTT) and effectively took over the role of the parliament (Yalimov, 2019). Three main decisions that came out of the RTT further confirm the mono-ethnic nationhood cohesion among the Bulgarian mainstream parties of the right and left.

First, both BSP and SDS agreed that Bulgarian shall be the only official language at both the national and the local level (Kolarova & Dimitrov, 1996, p. 208), thus excluding the possibility of Turkish acquiring second official language status at least in provinces or municipalities where Turks make up the majority or the plurality. Second, both parties agreed that ethnic and religious parties shall be explicitly banned (Kolarova, 1993, p. 34). This ban aimed at preventing the political and partisan consolidation of the specific grievances of the Turkish or more broadly Muslim ethnoreligious minorities. Third, both BSP and SDS sought to prevent minority *intra*-ethnic competition and to this end, they agreed to register the then newly formed Movement for Rights and Freedoms (DPS) as the only political representative of Bulgarian Turks. Unlike the first two decisions that were formal and public, the third agreement was informal and negotiated behind closed doors. As Kolarova and Dimitrov (1996, p. 193) point out, the minority-related negotiations constituted 'the only closed plenary session of the RTT – all participants were afraid to make public statements on issues concerned with MRF'. (read DPS) Moreover, DPS was not invited by either party to participate at the RTT and hence, Bulgarian Muslims/Turks were represented at the talks only by the notorious Nedim Gencev, former Bulgarian Grand Mufti that had actively participated in the assimilation process of the 1980s (Yalimov, 2019).

We argue that the RTT, apart from de-ethnicizing and de-polarizing the political space, perpetuated a monoethnic and monolingual conception of the Bulgarian nation. The July 1991 Bulgarian constitution in its ethnic

provisions reiterated what had already been agreed upon at the RTT. Hence, the decision that Bulgarian shall be the only official language at both the national and local level became Article 3 of the constitution (Bulgaria Constitution, 1991). Ibrahim Yalimov (2019), a BSP member of parliament at the time, states that both his party and the SDS rejected his proposal to complement Article 3 with the phrase indicating that 'ethnic groups can use their mother tongue among them'. Second, the decision to ban ethnic and religious parties became Article 11(4) of the constitution. Third, Bulgarian Turks were not constitutionally defined either as an ethnic or a national minority. Instead, Article 36(2) implicitly referred to them as 'citizens whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian' (Bulgaria Constitution, 1991). As such, Turks were granted strictly individual rights and not collective rights (I. Cambazov, personal interview, April 29, 2019). For instance, even though Article 36(2) granted them the right to study their mother tongue, Bulgarian Turks were not granted the right to establish primary and secondary-high schools in Turkish. Yalimov (2019) states that,

I was the one who put Article 36 in the constitutional draft, that mother tongue should be studied. Unfortunately, I said in schools but they removed school from the draft ... Neither parliamentary group accepted the proposal for national minority status. At that point, after the debates, I left BSP parliamentary group and became an independent MP.

For its part, DPS exploited the support of both Bulgarian mainstream parties to hold a monopoly on Muslim/Turkish representation, and it still remains as the only 'minority' party that has entered the parliament since Bulgaria's transition to democracy three decades ago. Its average vote share across ten parliamentary elections (1990–2017) hovers around 10 percent and its average number of parliamentary seats around 27 (11.25 percent of all seats). Moreover, due to its solid and loyal electorate, DPS is the only party in Bulgarian politics whose vote share has not fluctuated but has instead steadily increased. This electoral strength has enabled the party to play the king-maker role in Bulgarian politics in five different instances over two decades (1990–2009) (Lika, 2020, pp. 152-153).

Despite its stable electorate and formidable parliamentary representation, we argue that it is the monoethnic nationhood cohesion among the largest two Bulgarian parties that prevented DPS from using its electoral strength to advance Turkish ethnolinguistic rights. Hence, the leader of DPS, Ahmet Doğan, has shelved any ethno-linguistic agenda for advancing the rights of Bulgarian Turks and even torpedoed efforts in this direction by other DPS members by expelling them from the party (H. Yumer, personal interview, November 13, 2018).

The multiparty consensus in Bulgaria on a de-ethnicized political space and a monoethnic conception of nation, and DPS' acceptance of these provisions, still persists and is unlikely to be challenged. This is further

substantiated by the fact that two other centre-right parties that took over the role of SDS during the 2000s, the eponymous National Movement Simeon II (NDSV) (2001–2009) and the current ruling party of prime minister Boyko Borisov, Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria (GERB), have not challenged the mainstream consensus.

Lastly, even when Turkey uses religion as an instrument of foreign policy, it could not do much to advance the ethnolinguistic rights of Turks in Bulgaria, and Turkey's interventions in Bulgarian politics even backfired. The Bulgarian legal framework built on banning expressions of ethnic diversity constitutes the main barrier for Turkey's influence. However, Turkey can and has approached Bulgarian Turks in terms of shared Islamic ties given that Bulgaria legally recognizes the existence of Muslims in its territory. Indeed, since the early 1990s Turkish Diyanet Foundation (TDV) has been the main funding source for the three *Imam Hatip* High Schools (in the towns of Momchilgrad, Ruse, and Shumen), the Sofia High Islamic Institute, and it has reconstructed and maintained numerous Ottoman-era mosques in Bulgaria (V. Ahmed, personal interview, April 29, 2019). Recently, however, several scholars argue that the incumbent Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey is using this religious potential for its political aims in Bulgaria and for increasing Turkey's sphere of influence in the Balkans (Çitak, 2010, pp. 620–623; Öztürk & Gözaydın, 2018, p. 335). Ahmet Erdi Öztürk and Semiha Sözeri argue that since 2010 AKP has been using Turkey's network of *Diyanet imams* and its funding for Muslim religious institutions in Bulgaria to provoke a split within the dominant Turkish party DPS. A new Turkish party, Democrats for Responsibility, Solidarity, and Tolerance (DOST) was indeed founded in April 2016 (Öztürk & Sözeri, 2018, pp. 641–643). However, this new strategy has also failed to produce any tangible results in terms of advancing Turkish ethnolinguistic rights. Indeed, DOST lost three consecutive elections to DPS within the last two years: the March 2017 parliamentary elections where DOST failed to clear the 4 per cent threshold, the May 2019 elections for the European parliament, and the most recent November 2019 local elections where DPS won *all* Muslim/Turkish municipalities in Bulgaria. In brief, Turkey's increasing use of religion as a foreign policy tool does not correlate with the variation in our dependent variable.

North Macedonia (formerly Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia-FYROM)

In postcommunist North Macedonia, the two major political parties of the country are deeply divided over the nationhood question, such that they cannot agree on the definition, the limits (membership), and the origins of Macedonian identity. SDSM, the successor of the League of Communists of Macedonia, clings to the pro-Yugoslav view that ethnic Macedonians are

a distinct south *Slavic* people, crediting socialist Yugoslavia and Tito for building the modern Macedonian nation (Danforth, 1995, pp. 51–52; Poulton, 1995, pp. 117–119). SDSM also adopts a multi-ethnic vision of nationhood that ‘seeks to preserve a unified and multi-cultural state’ (Brown, 1994, p. 790).

Diametrically opposed to this view, the centre-right VMRO holds a staunch anti-Yugoslav, *non-Slavic* and monoethnic vision of nationhood. During the leadership of its founder Ljupco Georgievski (1990–2003), VMRO adopted the discourse of the early twentieth century paramilitary group from which it took its name. ‘Macedonia was only for Macedonians’ (Ackermann, 2000, p. 57), and VMRO’s political programme pledged a ‘clean (*chist*) Macedonia’ (Schwartz, 1996, p. 90). During the leadership of Nikola Gruevski (2003–2016), whose family had migrated from Greek (Aegean) Macedonia after the end of the Greek Civil War, VMRO spearheaded the so-called antiquization policy that rejects any Slavic roots for the Macedonian nation and holds that contemporary Macedonians are the direct descendants of ancient Macedonians (Vangeli, 2011).

In a most recent manifestation of this deep nationhood cleavage, VMRO opposed the June 2018 Prespa Agreement that the SDSM government signed with Greece and the accompanying constitutional name change in January 2019. Indeed, VMRO persists in its refusal to use the country’s new name, ‘Republic of North Macedonia.’ Its former vice-president, Trajko Slaveski (personal interview, February 13, 2019), aptly describes the stance of his party on the Prespa Agreement,

the price that you pay is extremely high. Not only change of the name, change of the identity, change of history, of culture ... The Social Democrats erased the history of these people. They claimed that history until 1945 belongs only to the Greeks.

The roots of this cleavage can be traced back to the Macedonian nation-building process during socialist Yugoslavia (see Table 4). As the most recent developments concerning the constitutional name change demonstrate, the nationhood cleavage in North Macedonia leads each major party to devise identity policies in line with its nationhood vision and to impose it on the other party. This fact, we argue, provided ample opportunities for the Turkish minority, along with the larger Albanian minority, to form alliances with either one or both of the two competing factions of Macedonian identity politics to successfully advance their ethnolinguistic rights.

The first manifestation of such a pattern was the November 1991 constitution that the SDSM drafted and passed in parliament, with its multiethnic imprint. Despite VMRO’s opposition to the provisions on ethnic issues (Danforth, 1995, p. 144; Shea, 1997, p. 246), Turks were explicitly mentioned as a national minority in the preamble of the 1991 constitution; Turkish was

Table 4. Summary of the case analysis of North Macedonia.

Periods of Causal Importance	Developments
1944-1989	Exclusionary Macedonian nation-building process during socialist Yugoslavia; persecution of those ethnic Macedonians who denied that Macedonians are a distinct south Slavic nation (Poulton, 1995, pp. 117–119; Shea, 1997, p. 256)
1991	SDSM-designed post-communist constitution: VMRO excluded from the constitution-making process; minorities granted constitutional recognition; minority languages granted official status at local level; minorities granted the right of minority language education in primary and secondary-high schools
1994	TDP supports SDSM in the parliamentary election and its candidate, Kiro Gligorov, in the presidential election
1996	SDSM government passed the 'Law on Territorial Division of the Republic of Macedonia'; in 10/123 municipalities, Turks constituted more than 20 per cent of the population and Turkish language and alphabet were granted official status
1996-2001	TDP allied with SDSM in the 1996 and 2000 local elections, providing the swing vote in the ethnic Macedonian-majority municipalities in east and southeast Macedonia
1999	TDP support VMRO's candidate, Boris Trajkovski, in the presidential election in return for starting Turkish-language primary schools in Tsentar Zhupa for those Muslim Macedonians/Torbeshi self-identifying as Turks (E. Saraç, personal interview, February 17, 2019)
2001	Internationally-brokered Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA); Turks' constitutional status raised from minority to constituent nation; 20 per cent threshold for securing ethno-linguistic rights; shift from majoritarian to PR based electoral system
2002-2004	TDP part of SDSM-led ruling coalition; OFA-mandated revised Law on Local Self-Government; Turkish official in 3/84 municipalities
2006	First Turkish language university opens in Skopje during SDSM-led government
2006-present	TDP in alliance with Albanian parties and/or SDSM make Turkish language official in six other municipalities
2018-2019	All three Turkish parties have supported the Prespa Agreement with Greece and the subsequent constitutional name change

granted official status in municipalities where Turks constituted a considerable share of the population, and Turks received the right of education in Turkish in primary and secondary-high schools (Macedonia Constitution, 1991, Art. 7 & 48). According to Saraç (2019), leader of the first Turkish party in North Macedonia, Turkish Democratic Party (TDP), although the preamble of the 1991 constitution brought a relative decline to the status of the Turks compared to the 1974 Yugoslav constitution (i.e. from *narod/nation* to *nacionalnost/nationality*), its main text provided extensive minority rights and Turkish-origin members of SDSM played a key role in this outcome. They were instrumental in forging an alliance between TDP and SDSM since the beginning of the transition. Saraç mentions that some of TDP's founding members in July 1990 (Güner İsmail, Erol Hayrettin, Mügbil Beyzat, Kamuran Tahir, Firuz Demir) were at the same time high-level SDSM functionaries (Saraç, 2019).

During the 1990s, we observe a consistent pattern of Turkish minority support for SDSM against VMRO in parliamentary, presidential, and local

elections in return for furthering minority's ethnolinguistic rights. TDP, the only Turkish party during the 1990s, allied with SDSM in 1994 and 1998 parliamentary elections and supported its candidate, Kiro Gligorov, in the 1994 presidential election. TDP also allied with SDSM in the 1996 and 2000 local elections, playing the role of the king-maker in the ethnic Macedonian-majority municipalities in east and southeast Macedonia (Saraç, 2019). SDSM, for its part, having an absolute majority in parliament during the 1994–98 period, passed the 'Law on Territorial Division of the Republic of Macedonia' in September 1996 that divided the country into 123 municipalities, in 10 of which Turks constituted more than 20 per cent of the population and Turkish language and alphabet were granted official status (Plasnitsa, Tsentar Zhupa, A.Banitsa, Vrapchishte, Rostusha, Dolneni, Labunishta, Topolchani, Chashka, and Studenichani) (Saraç, 2019). Additionally, during the 1990s there were 54 Turkish primary schools and 4 Turkish secondary-high schools in North Macedonia (Ural, 2016, pp. 398–404). These major reforms elevating the constitutional status of Turkish ethnicity and language in North Macedonia/FYROM have had no parallel in Bulgaria or Greece.

After the eruption of armed conflict between Macedonian security forces and Albanian insurgents in February 2001, the internationally-brokered Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) restored peace in August 2001 (Hislope, 2002). OFA-mandated amendments to the constitution produced mixed results for the Turkish minority. While the constitutional status of Turks was raised from national minority to that of a constituent nation (Macedonia Constitution, 1991, Amendment IV), Turkish leaders complain that by basing ethnolinguistic rights on the 20 percent threshold, OFA was discriminatory towards non-Albanian minorities and rendered them 'third-class citizens' (E. Ibrahim, personal interview, February 20, 2019). Moreover, by mandating a redrawing of the 1996 municipal boundaries, OFA decreased the percentage of Turks in the newly created municipalities and hence, adversely affected the official status of Turkish language in these municipalities. According to the revised Law on Local Self-Government that the SDSM government passed in September 2004, the total number of municipalities was reduced from 123 to 84 and in only three of them Turks constituted more than 20 per cent of the population and Turkish was thus granted official status: Plasnitsa, Tsentar Zhupa, and Mavrovo-Rostusha (Saraç, 2019). This supports our argument that external engineering is not the cause for Turkish ethno-linguistic rights in North Macedonia, but on the contrary, international involvement and pressure even *downgraded* the status of Turkish language in the immediate post-Ohrid period.

On the other hand, OFA indirectly also produced some positive changes for the Turkish minority. Most significantly, municipality councils were granted the right to give official status to minority languages spoken by less than 20 per cent of the municipal population (Macedonia Constitution, 1991, Amendment V). Another significant change was the shift from

a majoritarian to a proportional representation (PR) based electoral system without a threshold. Electoral system change led to internal splits in TDP and a new Turkish party was formed: a breakaway faction led by former TDP leader Erdoğan Saraç formed the Turkish National Unity Party (TMBH) in March 2006.¹ While splitting the Turkish vote, the new election law nonetheless increased the number of Turkish-origin representatives in parliament. In each post-Ohrid parliamentary election since 2002, either two or three Turkish-origin representatives have been regularly elected from the three Turkish minority parties, namely, TDP, THP, and TMBH. In contrast, due to the previously majoritarian system, only one Turkish-origin representative, Kenan Hasipi (TDP), was elected during the 1990–2002 period.

Both the increased number of minority parties and the increased number of elected representatives provided Turks more opportunities to advance their ethnolinguistic rights, in alliance with Albanians and with either one of the two competing factions of Macedonian identity politics. In the immediate post-Ohrid period, Turks initially allied with SDSM against VMRO, but later the increase in the number of minority parties and *intraethnic* competition also made alliance with VMRO feasible. In the first post-Ohrid government (2002–2006), TDP (with three MPs) was part of the ruling coalition with SDSM. It is precisely during this period that the first Turkish private university, International Balkan University (IBU), was opened in the capital Skopje in February 2006. It is very significant for our argument that IBU was originally planned to be opened in Sofia, given the much larger size of the Bulgarian Turkish minority in both absolute and relative terms, but after resolute opposition from the Bulgarian government, it was eventually opened in Skopje (Cambazov, 2019).

In the post-Ohrid period, Turkish minority parties used the new OFA-mandated municipality council law to gain official status for Turkish in six municipalities where the share of Turks is below 20 percent. (see [Figure 2](#)) In addition to Plasnitsa, Tsentar Zhupa, and Mavrovo-Rostusha, Turkish became an official language in Gostivar (9 per cent Turk), Vrapchishte (12,33 per cent), Dojran (11,7 per cent), Studenichan (19 per cent), Chair (6,9 per cent), and Kichevo (8 per cent)² (Saraç, 2019). Given the OFA-mandated double majority principle, Turkish parties also relied on the support of Albanian parties for advancing the status of Turkish (Ibrahim, 2019). Indeed, four of the six new municipalities where Turkish became official (Gostivar, Vrapchishte, Studenichan, and Chair) are Albanian-majority municipalities and Kichevo, despite having an ethnic Macedonian-plurality, had an Albanian mayor in 2016, Fatmir Dehari, when Turkish was recognized as an official language. The only ethnic Macedonian-majority municipality where Turkish acquired official language status is Dojran in southeast Macedonia, and quite significantly Dojran is a SDSM-controlled municipality.

In short, Turkish parties, in alliance with either one of the two major Macedonian parties and the Albanians, have been able to advance their ethnolinguistic rights in the post-2004 period. While in the pre-Ohrid period (1990–2001) Turkish was official in 10 out of 123 (8 per cent) municipalities, currently Turkish is official in 9 out of 84 municipalities (10,7 per cent). While in the pre-Ohrid period there were 54 Turkish primary schools and 4 Turkish secondary-high schools, as of 2014, there are 63 primary schools, 12 secondary-high schools, and a private Turkish university in North Macedonia (Ural, 2016, pp. 399–404).

Finally, we observe that Turkish parties in North Macedonia still support SDSM's nationhood vision in light of the most recent developments (Ibrahim, 2019). All three Turkish parties publicly endorsed the June 2018 Prespa Agreement with Greece and the two current Turkish-origin members of parliament, Jusuf Hasani (TDP) and Enes İbrahim (THP), both voted in favour of the constitutional amendment that changed the name of the country to North Macedonia in January 2019 (Table 4)

Greece

Regarding deep political historical cleavages in comparative perspective, Greece occupies an intermediary position between Bulgaria and North Macedonia due to the legacy of the Greek Civil War (Siani-Davies & Katsikas, 2009). However, despite acrimonious disputes regarding the Civil War, on the specific question of a 'nationhood cleavage,' Greece is much closer to Bulgaria than North Macedonia in having a consensus about the monoreligious (Greek Orthodox) and monolingual (Greek-speaking) definition of the nation among its two largest political traditions, represented by the socialist PASOK and the conservative ND, at least for the first 35 years after Greece's transition to democracy in 1974.³ Stefanos Katsikas sums up the ethnoreligious definition of the nation in both countries in stating that, 'anyone in Greece who was not a member of the Greek Orthodox Church and did not speak Greek and anyone in Bulgaria who was not a member of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and did not speak Bulgarian was not seen as Greek or Bulgarian, respectively.' (Katsikas, 2009, p. 195)

Turkish minority in Greece constitutes a majority in the Thracian prefecture of Rhodope, with its centre in the city of Komotini, and a large minority in the neighbouring Thracian prefecture of Xanthi. (see Figure 1) As a result, in almost every election in the democratic history of Greece, at least one Muslim MP was elected from either one or both of these prefectures. In contrast, in Evros, the only other Thracian prefecture where the Muslim minority was exempted from the compulsory population exchange with Turkey in 1924, which is also the only province bordering Turkey, the Turkish minority's population has been very low

and no Muslim MP was ever elected. In addition to denationalization through Article 19, officially engineered transfers of land from Muslims to Christians (Aarbakke, 2000, p. 184), which had a crippling effect on the minority's subsistence given their overwhelmingly agricultural occupation, discrimination in public and private employment, obstruction of acquiring driving licences (Aarbakke, 2000, p. 212) and the designation of a mountainous territory of Muslim concentration by the Bulgarian border as a restricted zone that required special permission for travel, all took their toll on the minority.

Turkey's role as a kin-state has been most pronounced in Greece among our three cases. This is due in great part to the fact that Lausanne Treaty provides a bilateral framework enabling Turkey's involvement in issues related to the Turkish minority since 1923, whereas no equivalent framework existed for Turkey's involvement on behalf of the Turkish minorities in Bulgaria or North Macedonia. 'A support network operates via the Turkish consulate of Komotini which sponsors the minority's political leaders, guides the activities of minority associations, and grants allowances to teachers or pensions, all measures which follow the familiar pattern of activity conducted by a kin-state in favour of the kin-minority.' (Tsitselikis, 2012, p. 172) Critical to our argument in this paper is the fact that having the most intense kin-state intervention by Turkey did not result in Turkish ethnicity and language gaining the highest level of constitutional recognition and status.

A number of episodes provided potential opportunities for the advancement of the Turkish minority's ethnolinguistic rights, but they could not be taken advantage of due to the agreement on the monoethnic and mono-religious definition of the Greek nation by the largest political parties. First, Greece's transition to democracy in 1974 included an episode reminiscent of the ethnic exclusionary dynamic of the Roundtable Talks that accompanied Bulgaria's transition to democracy after Communism. The three leading parties of Greece had a meeting in Athens in order to agree on not nominating any Muslim/Turkish candidates:

Leaders of the major parties discussed the possibility of excluding the minority from their tickets. In a meeting Andreas Papandreu for PASOK, Yeoryios Mavros for EK, and Konstandinos Papakonstandinu for ND, agreed in principle to close out the minority, but Papakonstandinu said he had to clear it with Konstandinos Karamanlis first.. (Aarbakke, 2000, p. 217)

Despite this initial agreement, two Muslim candidates were elected from EK in Rhodope. Nonetheless, the common aspiration and the initial agreement of the three major parties in principle to exclude the minority from the parliament is significant in demonstrating their overlapping consensus on an ethnoreligious definition of the nation.

Second, the radical revisions regarding the official interpretation of the 'Civil War' (defined as such only in 1989, see Siani-Davies & Katsikas, 2009, p. 571) that the socialist PASOK governments undertook after coming to power in 1981, did not result in a revision in the definition of the nation. PASOK government extended 'recognition to EAM/ELAS and war veteran status and privileges to their members' in 1982, and its leader 'Papandreou hailed the new legislation as "the gravestone of the spirit of national division" but ND deputies walked out, angrily denouncing the bill as a "shameless attempt to whitewash the communist crimes during and after the war".' (Siani-Davies & Katsikas, 2009, p. 569) This was followed by the return of mostly Communist political refugees 'of Greek ethnic origins' in 1983, but not political refugees of Slavic-origins (Siani-Davies & Katsikas, 2009, pp. 569, 572). Relatedly, Greece's transition to democracy in 1974 did not lead to an improvement in the minority's official status, especially in the 1974–1981 period under ND governments.⁴

Third, Greece's entry into the EU in 1981 did not lead to any immediate improvement of the legal, institutional, or constitutional status of the minority either. Most of the Muslim minority self-identified as Turks and were even referred to as Turks colloquially and unofficially in everyday conversations by the Greek majority, and yet their attempts at establishing organizations or publications with the ethnonym 'Turk' were prohibited and criminally prosecuted. It was eight years after Greece's entry into the EU, and following successive disappointments and broken promises by both ND (1974–1981) and PASOK (1981–1989) governments, that mass protests of the Turkish minority in Komotini led to intercommunal tensions in January 1990. The protests and transnational mobilization of the Thracian Turkish diaspora brought the issue to the international agenda, in part due to Turkey's efforts through the Council of Europe and other intergovernmental organizations.

Fourth, even EU's regional policies and its 'principle of subsidiarity premised on the mobilization and active participation of society's local forces,' which has been demonstrated to have influenced minority actors' preferences away from Turkish nationalism and towards more integrationist developmental goals (Anagnostou, 2001, pp. 99–103), have been subverted through electoral gerrymandering in Thrace in order to minimize the chance of a Muslim/Turkish candidate's election as the prefect.

To preempt this possibility and the consolidation of a Muslim-governed area, the law on prefecture local government was modified in the case of Ksanthi and Rhodope, which were placed in a special category of so-called 'enlarged prefectures' ... Essentially a form of gerrymandering targeting the minority, in effect it incorporated the largely Muslim prefectures of Ksanthi and Rhodope into the Christian-populated prefectures of Kavala and Evros respectively, thereby consolidating two predominantly Christian areas. (p. 110)

Thus, even when EU-induced reforms seemed to open up a subnational window of opportunity for the minority, national government intervened to modify the application of EU-induced reforms to minimize the potential for minority empowerment.

Fifth, the proposal of a 3 percent national electoral threshold for parliamentary representation, which was perceived as a measure to prevent the minority's representation through independent candidates, was approved in the Greek parliament in 9 November 1990, and prevented the (re)election of independent Turkish candidates (Aarbakke, 2000, p. 500–503; Kucukcan, 1999, p. 64; Tsitselikis, 2012, p. 220).

Sixth, the abrogation of Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Code, which facilitated the denationalization of 'approximately 60,000 citizens, the vast majority of whom were members of the Western Thrace minority' (Grigoriadis, 2008, p. 26), is also illustrative of the ethnoreligiously exclusionary dynamics through which EU-induced liberalization took place. Article 19's blatant incompatibility with EU norms, the increasing blame and shame that Greece suffered, perceived decline in Greece's leverage vis-a-vis Turkey in their international disputes, the risk of mass restitution of citizenship to the Muslims who were denationalized in previous decades through European legal channels, and finally, the imminent and clearly communicated threat of Greece being placed under a monitoring procedure by the Council of Europe due to Article 19, finally motivated all major Greek political parties to abrogate Article 19 in 1998 (Anagnostou, 2005a). Very significantly, however, the two largest political parties, namely PASOK and ND, made sure that the abrogation of Article 19 would not be retroactive, such that the approximately 60,000 Muslims who were denationalized in previous decades would not regain their citizenship, and thus, the abrogation would not have any 'immediate costs' in terms of having to (re)admit former/new citizens of Muslim faith. As such, the abrogation passed with an explicit prohibition of its retroactive application despite the fact the three Muslim members of the Greek parliament and the Communist Party of Greece (KKE), which was not among the largest parties, demanded that it be retroactive to be consistent with the rule of law (Anagnostou, 2005a, p. 352). KKE was against Article 19 all along because that article was also employed to denationalize many Slavic-speaking Greek communists who became political refugees after the Greek Civil War. Therefore, KKE's solidarity with the Turkish Muslim deputies in this historical juncture is an exemplary illustration of how a 'nationhood cleavage' pitting Communists against other, larger factions in Greek politics was relevant for the contestation over minority rights. Unlike in the Bulgarian case, there was at least a nationhood cleavage that pitted Communists against others in Greece. Despite this caveat, the nationhood cleavage in Greece was not nearly as deep as in North Macedonia, because in Greece, unlike in North Macedonia and similar to Bulgaria, the two main parties, PASOK and ND,

agreed on the monoethnic and monoreligious conception of the nation. Finally, the removal of Article 19 did not amount to the constitutional recognition of Turkish language or ethnicity.

Seventh, in the twenty-fifth anniversary of Greece's transition to democracy, the three Muslim MPs openly called on the government 'to recognise national minorities and to ratify FCPNM [Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities]' in 1999 (Anagnostou, 2005a, p. 355). In a significant demonstration of our argument, all the major parties including PASOK, ND, and the Coalition of the Left and the Progress, vehemently opposed the three minority MPs' call for recognition. Hence, the minority continued to be prohibited from using the word 'Turkish' as a self-identification in any official capacity. Eighth, in 2008, European Court of Human Rights issued decisions condemning Greek courts' insistence on closing down or not allowing the registration of associations that have 'Turkish' in their names including the decades-long legal battle of the Turkish Union of Xanthi and the more recent Cultural Association of Turkish Women of Rodopi Prefecture (Tsitselikis, 2012, pp. 244–248), and yet these landmark supranational decisions did not trigger the recognition of Turkish as an official ethnic minority or Turkish language as an official language of regional government or bureaucracy in Rhodope, Xanthi, or elsewhere in Greece. Nonetheless,

Table 5. Summary of the case analysis of Greece.

Periods of Causal Importance	Missed opportunities for the recognition of ethnolinguistic minority status
1974	Greece's transition to democracy, rather than upgrading the official status of Turkish ethnicity or language, was accompanied by the three largest parties' attempt to agree on not nominating any Muslim candidates from Komotini or Xanthi
1982	Greece's entry into the EU did not facilitate the recognition of ethnolinguistic minorities, including Turkish minority
1983	PASOK allows refugees from the Civil War to return and reclaim citizenship, but restricts this right only to refugees of ethnic Greek origin, thus excluding Slavic or Turkish citizens who lost their citizenship under Article 19
1990	Electoral reform instituted 3% national threshold for election to the parliament, thus effectively preventing the (re)election of independent Turkish candidates
1990s (1994)	EU inspired reforms aimed at strengthening subnational self-government are subverted through ethnoreligious gerrymandering merging Komotini with Evros, and Xanthi with Kavala, to consolidate large Christian majorities in both units
1998	Abrogation of Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Code was accompanied by the consensus of the major parties not to allow the approximately 60,000 people (mostly Turkish Muslims) from automatically regaining their Greek citizenship as a result
1999	On the 25 th anniversary of Greece's transition to democracy, the public plea of the 3 Muslim members of the parliament for the recognition of a Turkish minority was condemned by all the major parties in the parliament
2008	European Court of Human Rights issued decisions condemning Greece for the closure of Turkish Union of Xanthi and The Cultural Association of Turkish Women of Rodopi Prefecture

Turkish is currently taught in 174 elementary schools pursuant to the Lausanne Treaty (Tsitselikis, 2012, p. 571). As the eight episodes above illustrate, PASOK and ND, often joined by other parties, actively intervened to close off opportunities for minority empowerment and elevation of the official status of Turkish ethnicity or language (Table 5).

Conclusion

We argued that the country that is politically most divided on the definition and the limits of national identity, a profound division that we call ‘nationhood cleavage,’ is the one that provides the highest level of political recognition to the Turkish minority. This is a significant finding with major theoretical ramifications. Empirically, we argue that North Macedonia has the most profound nationhood cleavage among our three cases, such that the two major North Macedonian political parties, SDSM and VMRO, cannot agree on the definition, the limits (membership), and the origins of Macedonian identity. In such a political environment of deep disagreements on the definition of national identity among the two leading political parties of the Macedonian majority, the Turkish minority, along with the larger Albanian minority, have been able to form alliances with either one or both of the two main competing parties of Macedonian identity politics to successfully advance their ethnolinguistic rights. In contrast, in Bulgaria there is full agreement between the two leading parties, BSP and SDS, on the definition and limits of the Bulgarian nation with a monoethnic, monolingual regime, and this did not provide any opportunities for the Turkish minority to advance its ethnolinguistic rights and collective official status. Compared to Bulgaria, the two main political party traditions in Greece, represented by PASOK and ND (at least for the first 35 years after Greece’s transition to democracy, 1974–2009), do have a few disagreements on the ideological contours and the limits of the nation on the margins, but these disagreements do not distract from an overwhelming agreement on the ethnoreligious definition of the nation as fundamentally Greek speaking and Orthodox Christian. As such, the Turkish minority in Greece had not been successful in its attempt to gain constitutional recognition for Turkish ethnicity and language, although Turkish does exist as a language of instruction in a network of minority schools pursuant to the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 between Greece and Turkey.

Notes

1. Before TMBH, a breakaway faction in TDP led by Adnan Kahil formed Turkish Unity Party (THP) in 1999.
2. Figures for the percentage of Turks in the population of each municipality are taken from Macedonia Census (2002, pp. 34–35).

3. The last national elections that PASOK won was in 2009, after which it suffered a precipitous decline to be surpassed by the far-left SYRIZA in the 2012 national elections. ND, in contrast, survived and won the latest national election in July 2019.
4. 'Rodoplu expressed the minority's sentiment by writing that there was no difference between the junta and the way "democracy" was applied from 1974–1981.' (Aarbakke, 2000, p. 213)

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