

INTRODUCTION

Macedonia is located in the central part of the Balkan Peninsula. At the end of the 19th and in the 20th and 21st centuries this territory, characterised by ethnic and religious diversity, was the location of fierce fights involving nations, states and empires aspiring to rule this area. Due to its central location within the Balkans (at the meeting point of key transport and trade routes between Europe and the Middle East), whoever ruled Macedonia enjoyed a decisive political position in South-Eastern Europe. However, the lands in middle and lower Vardar in Macedonia created favourable conditions for the development of Macedonian linguistic, cultural and political separatism. Despite propaganda coupled with cultural activities and settlements following the division of Macedonia in 1913, these actions failed to eradicate separatist ambitions, while the idea to unify and create a “greater Macedonia” gathering all Macedonian Slavs in one state remained alive.

The cultural and national autonomy of Macedonians found its expression in 1944 within Yugoslavia (with respect to its one part, Vardar Macedonia only), while political autonomy came in 1991, when the Republic of Macedonia left the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. However, questions about the future of this state, one of the youngest in the Balkans, and its path to stability and peace still remain open.

This monograph is devoted to explaining issues related to the area of Macedonia, both of the earlier history as well and the latest events. Special words of thanks are directed to the Dean Professor PhD Bogdan Szlachta, thanks to whom this special volume of *Politeja* could be released.

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