

## CLASHING HISTORICAL NARRATIVES AND THE MACEDONIAN NAME DISPUTE – SOLVING THE UNSOLVABLE

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**Abstract.** In the early 1990s Greece blocked the international recognition of the Republic of Macedonia under that name and is currently blocking accession of this country to NATO and EU demanding name changes, which the government of Skopje refuses to adopt. The Macedonia name dispute is a clash over historical narratives and the right to claim origins of the Macedonian ethnic group and nation today and in the ancient past. For Greece, the key element is winning the argument over the legitimacy of ancient Macedon as a Greek state and not having the name Macedonia used by its northern neighbour. For the Republic, the intricacies of the ancient history are only instrumental to the recognition of the country under its constitutional name and the unblocking of the Euro-Atlantic integration. Consequently, the only way to resolve the seemingly intractable name dispute between Greece and Macedonia is to deal with the historical and identity issues that both sides care most for and ignore those that are not important for the resolution or could be left aside to be disagreed upon without political consequences. A political solution with an agreed international name for the country ‘Republic of Makedonija’ is likely to solve the dispute and improve the relations between the two countries.

**Keywords:** nation building, international relations, clashing historical narratives, conflict resolution, name dispute solution, Macedonia

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### 1. Introduction

Since independence Macedonia’s relations with Greece have been tense due to the so-called name issue. Due to Greek objections, the admission of Macedonia to membership in the United Nations in April 1993 required the new member to be ‘provisionally referred to for all purposes within the United Nations as ‘the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia’ pending settlement of the difference that has arisen over the name of the state.’ Although the reference was to be used within the United Nations, other international institutions have also begun referring to

Macedonia as a 'former Yugoslav republic.' Despite reaching a UN-backed interim agreement in 1995 normalizing relations between the countries, Greece has since 2008 deliberately blocked Macedonia's admission to NATO and the beginning of negotiations for EU membership. In November 2008, Macedonia has instituted proceedings before the International Court of Justice (ICJ), alleging that Greece's objection to its application to join NATO breaches the 1995 Interim Accord between these two states. The ruling of the Court in Macedonia's favour has not resolved the blockage of the Euro-Atlantic integration of the country – nor has it attributed to the resolution of the naming dispute in the UN.

This paper argues that the dispute is impossible to solve amicably due to the fact that in essence it is an argument over cultural-historical identities. The cultural-historical identity aspects of the dispute relate to the right of self-identification of all the peoples in the regions of Macedonia, that is the right of the majority population of Macedonia to identify itself as 'Macedonian' by ethno-national belonging, as well as the right of the Greeks and Bulgarians in the Macedonian regions of these countries to be identified as 'Macedonian' as well. This element of the dispute also relates to the right to label the Macedonian language as such. Moreover, it also pertains to the 'right' to project the ancient Macedon history as being integral part of the ethno-genesis of the Greek and/or the Macedonian nation. This is a clash over historical narratives and the right to claim origins of the Macedonian ethnic group and nation today and in the ancient past. The paper will elaborate on the importance of historical narratives for the two ethnic groups and the Greek and Macedonian nation building projects. It will give an overview of the conflict in the 1990s referencing it to the conflicting elements in the national narratives of the countries. Arguing that it is impossible to solve the dispute due to the mutually exclusive historical narratives we will propose political options for unraveling the 'Macedonian naming problem.'

## **2. Overview of the issue**

On 17 November 1991 Macedonia declared independence and asked for international recognition. On 4 December 1991, Greece declared that recognition of the new state depended on its constitutional guarantees against claims to Greek territory, cessation of hostile propaganda against Greece, and exclusion of the term 'Macedonia' or its derivatives from the new state's name. To ameliorate the Greek concerns that the name of the country implies territorial claims against Greece, Macedonia adopted two amendments to its Constitution affirming that it 'has no territorial claims against any neighbouring states'; that its borders can be changed only in accordance with the Constitution and 'generally accepted international norms'; and that, in exercising care for the status and rights of its citizens and minorities in neighbouring countries, it 'shall not interfere in the sovereign rights of other States and their internal affairs.' The changes were not enough for Greece who continued to insist that the new state relinquish the name 'Macedonia'.

Greece blocked the EU recognition of the country despite the fact that in January 1992, Macedonia met all the conditions for recognition imposed by the European Community confirmed through the opinion of the European Arbitrage Commission.

Denied recognition by the EU Macedonia turned to the United Nations filling an application for membership. Again Greece opposed this application. After prolonged process, the admission of Macedonia to UN membership in April 1993 by the General Assembly Resolution 47/225 (1993), was associated with the provision that it be 'provisionally referred to for all purposes within the United Nations as the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, pending settlement of the difference that has arisen over the name of the State.' When the United States recognized Macedonia on 17 February 1994, Greece replied by severing diplomatic ties with Skopje, blocking EU aid and imposing a blockade on Macedonian goods moving to and from the port of Thessaloniki with the exception of humanitarian aid. Greece and Macedonia normalized bilateral relations in an Interim Accord signed in New York on 13 September 1995 (Interim Accord 1995). Both countries committed to continuing talks under UN auspices while Greece agreed not to obstruct the Republic's applications for membership in international bodies as long as it did so under its provisional UN appellation. This opened the door for the Republic to join a variety of international organizations and initiatives, including the Council of Europe, OSCE and Partnership for Peace. However, in 2008 Greece effectively blocked Macedonia's integration to NATO at the Bucharest Summit. Consequently, on November 17, 2008, Macedonia instituted proceedings before the International Court of Justice, alleging that Greece's objection to its application to join NATO breached the 1995 Interim Accord between these two States. Despite decisively winning the proceedings Macedonia's integration to NATO and EU is still blocked by Greece.

### *2.1. The Greek position on the 'naming dispute'*

In a recent statement, the Greek President Prokopis Pavlopoulos stressed that Macedonia was, is and will remain Greek and that 'claims on territories and names violate European law' (Thema News 2016). He also spoke of the 'need to defend the proven Greek identity of Macedonia and respond to 'the forgers and counterfeiters' of history during a ceremony to proclaim him an honorary citizen of the municipality of Delta'(Greek Reporter 2016). Pavlopoulos stated that as long as 'they (Macedonia) continue to make such claims, they will never join the EU and other international organizations'. Such statements by Greek officials regarding the name dispute are not new. In fact the official Greek position regarding the name has not changed much since the early 1990s (see in more detail Kofos 2001, 2009, Floudas 1996, Zahariadis 1996). Calling upon the exclusiveness of its own interpretation of history, the Greek government claims that the Republic of Macedonia does not have a historical right to use the names Macedonia and Macedonians. For Athens, Macedonia either has to completely avoid using that name, or in the more moderate variant of the request, it should add an adjective to

the name in order to clearly differentiate and delimit itself geographically and historically from the Northern province in Greece. On the eve of the 2008 Bucharest NATO Summit, the Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis argued that the name 'Republic of Macedonia is linked with the deliberate plan to take over a part of Greek territory that has had a Greek identity for more than three millennia and is associated with immense pain and suffering by the Greek people' (Bakoyannis 2008). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs claims that 'historically, the Greek name Macedonia refers to the state and civilisation of the ancient Macedonians, which beyond doubt is part of Greece's national and historical heritage and bears no relation whatsoever with the residents of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, who are Slavs by descent and arrived in the region of the ancient Kingdom of Macedonia at a much later stage' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece 2016). For Greece: 'there is no chance of FYROM acceding to the EU and NATO under the name Republic of Macedonia' and that 'FYROM Slavo-Macedonians insistence in standing by their intransigent and negative stance towards efforts to resolve the issue' (Ibid.). Greece's key demands in the negotiations, contained in the official document of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, are that the Republic of Macedonia accept: 'a definitive composite name with geographical qualification so as to avoid confusion with Greek Macedonia and to put an end to the irredentist policy and territorial aspirations of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and for all uses (*erga omnes*).' The Greek government has been careful with the various ideas for resolution of the dispute put forward by the UN negotiator, warning that it could exercise a right to hold a referendum (equivalent to a veto) on the ideas it deemed not acceptable (Tziampiris 2012).

The Greek position is articulated in the writings of Evangelos Kofos, one of the most distinguished authors on the 'Macedonian issue. The main concern is that using the name Macedonia by 'Slavo-Macedonians' ultimately questions the validity of the Greek national narrative in the region of Macedonia and the close relationship of Greek Macedonians with their past and their tradition. The use of the name 'Macedonia' and the ancient symbols would amount to a misappropriation of the cultural heritage of Greece, and an implicit questioning of the existing borders between the two states (elaborated in Kofos 2001). Kofos claims that different historical, cultural, regional, ethnic and legal references are identified with one and the same name, Macedonia, and that whoever succeeds to impose on foreign languages its own version of 'Macedonian', acquires international monopoly for its use. Moreover, in an indirect way, it lays claim to anything identified as 'Macedonian', including different peoples or communities identified as 'Macedonian', diverse 'Macedonian' historical and cultural values, even commodities from different Macedonian regions or countries (Kofos 2001:132). The problem is that the current constitutional name, 'Macedonia', is identical with the name of the wider geographic region 'Macedonia' (Kofos 2010). According to Kofos, in the early 1990s, the emergence of an internationally recognized Macedonian state stimulated and, to a certain degree, popularized the monopoliza-

tion of the ethnic variant of the adjective 'Macedonian' at the expense of the regional/cultural one.

Kofos explains that the Greek government as well as all major parties favour a compound geographical name for their neighbour country, provided its state name clearly defines Macedonian regions within its own jurisdiction. Therefore, Kofos suggest a new constitutional name for the Republic of Macedonia, which would replace the current one as well as the temporary international appellation. This name would be a name with a prefix which would describe or identify clearly the region over which this country exercises legal jurisdiction (North, Gorna, Vardarska) (Ibid.). Moreover, the new state name would apply to all uses (internal, bilateral, international) while the citizenship, would follow the state name. The name for the majority ethnic group in Macedonia internationally would be 'makedonci' and the products of that country would also not be transliterated so that for example the wine produced in Kavadarci region of the Republic of Macedonia would be known as 'makedonsko vino.'

## *2.2. Macedonian position on the 'naming dispute'*

The 'dispute' over the name is a euphemism to the Greek objections, in some cases direct and open and in others indirect and concealed, to the very existence of the Macedonian state and nation. The Greek foreign policy towards Macedonia is the result of the ideology of ethnic nationalism that has dominated Greek society since its inception. Greece denies the existence of a Macedonian nation and Macedonian minority on its territory because such recognition would run counter to the templates of ethnic homogeneity and purity that define Greek ethnic nationalism (Michas 2002). Macedonia has a legitimate right to its name and identity based on various arguments, be that legal, moral, historical, or grounded on liberal- democratic ideas. In fact, historically Greece had no objections to the name of its northern neighbour during Yugoslav times (Mircev 2001).

The simplest Macedonian argument is that there are no two states claiming the same nationality and the same name. There cannot be confusion between a name of a country [the Republic of Macedonia] and a region [Greek Macedonia]. Moreover, a regional Macedonian identity [in Greece] should not be mixed with the ethno-national identity of the majority population in the Republic. Persons who have regional identity as 'Macedonians', can also be found in Bulgaria, the majority of which have a Bulgarian ethno-national consciousness. 'Macedonians' by citizenship on the other hand, are all those living in the Republic of Macedonia regardless of their choice of (ethno) national belongings.

Another argument in defence of the right of Macedonia to use its name is the right to self-determination. Self-determination is a principle, often seen as a moral and legal right, that 'all peoples have the right [to] freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development' (International Covenant, Article 1). As Roemer writes, 'it seems that implicit at least within self-determination lies an acknowledgement that peoples, at the minimum, may freely pursue their own forms of culture and identity... it would follow that it

is for these peoples to determine the content of their culture or identity, including their collective name' (Reimer 1995:359). Alternatively, the right to ethnicity, nationality and to identity is a fundamental principle of international law, a central tenet of the international order. A nation's existence is... a daily plebiscite, just as an individual's existence is a perpetual affirmation of life (Renan 1996:41). Macedonians decided on their self-determination on September 8 1991, when at a referendum more than 95% voted for a sovereign and independent state with a turnout of 76% (Klimovski 1994:376, 380). In that regard, it is surely fundamental to the notion of sovereignty and self-determination that 'a State should have the right to establish its own constitutional system in conformity with obligations imposed by international law (for example, with respect to human rights treaties), and to choose its own national symbols including both its name and its flag...the subject of the dispute between Greece and Macedonia clearly relates to an issue which, as a matter of sovereignty, should fall exclusively within the discretion of Macedonia itself (Craven 1999:238).

There appears to be 'no basis in international law or practice for the Greek demand that Macedonia changes its name, claiming that the right to use that name should belong exclusively to Greece' (Henkin et al. 1993:253). The rights of states to freedom of expression 'comes not as an expansion of much newer human rights law, but rather from basic notions of state sovereignty and the equality of states' (Reimer 1995:359). Because the name of a state represents an inseparable and significant part of its sovereignty it follows that Greece denies Macedonian sovereignty. Sovereignty comprises what is under the exclusive competence of the state – domain réservé, i.e., the political and the territorial sovereignty (which includes the population). The name of the state refers to both, i.e., it is linked to the state with regard to its political independence and territorial integrity whereby a state is physically and politically delimited from other subjects or states in the international community (Lozanovska 2009:4).

Furthermore, it should be pointed out that traditionally from the point of view of public international law, states may "call themselves whatever they wish because a state's name is fundamentally a purely domestic matter, and it is a bedrock principle that every state 'has the right freely to choose and develop its political, social, economic and cultural systems'" (Froomkin 2004:840–841). It is an accepted principle of international law that flows from the sovereign equality of states, that each state 'has the right freely to choose and develop its political, social, economic and cultural systems' (Declaration on Principles 1970). The inherent right of a state to have a name can be derived from the necessity for a juridical personality to have a legal identity. The name of a state 'appears to be an essential element of its juridical personality and its statehood, the principles of the sovereign equality of states and the inviolability of their juridical personality lead to the conclusion that the choice of a name is an inalienable right of the state' (Janev 1999:159).

Therefore, the inability to use the name of Macedonia is interference of the UN in matters of a state – such as the choice of its constitutional name – which are

essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of that state, contrary to Article 2(7) of the Charter. Macedonia is unequal with other UN member-states due to the obligation to discuss its own name with Greece and has derogated juridical personality in the field of representation contrary to the principle of 'sovereign equality of the Members', Article 2(1) of the Charter. It is inconsistent with the principles of juridical equality of states (General Assembly Resolution 1970) and non-discrimination in representation and membership (UN Doc. 1975). From the viewpoint of representation in international organizations, the condition imposed on Macedonia to use a 'provisional name' is contrary to Article 83 of the Vienna Convention on representation of states, which provides that 'in the application of the present Convention no discrimination shall be made as between states' (Vienna Convention 1975). Most apparent from the Macedonian case is that its right to determine its own external forms of representation was violated since it has to be negotiated with Greece (Janev 1999:159).

As far as the Greek position of 'erga omnes' is concerned Macedonia insists that any proposal for the resolution of the name dispute is put to referendum (Balkan Insight 2009, Business Insider 2015, EurActiv 2011). Moreover, for Macedonia, the preferred compromise should not affect the country's constitutional name. Various reports have indicated that adding a 'geographic term' to the disputed 'Republic of Macedonia' name, to be used internationally as the new official name, is acceptable for the government in Skopje only if the term 'Northern,' or 'Upper' is placed in front of the 'Republic,' while Greece insists it used after the 'Republic' as in 'Republic of Upper Macedonia' (EurActiv 2013). There is also disagreement about the scope of using the new official name – with Macedonia only being ready to accept its use in bilateral affairs involving Greece and not ready to accept the Greek demand of using it 'obligatory for all purposes' (Balkan Open Report 2013, Business Insider 2015).

### **3. Clashing national narratives and nation-building**

Nation building is a ubiquitous process as any given political system operates within a certain cultural framework and nation-building is inevitably tied to a particular culture, language or history. Rarely however, states engage in 'liberal nation-building,' nation-building that takes into consideration the interests of members of national minorities who wished to preserve their language, culture or particular aspects of it (see e.g. the arguments in Daskalovski 2005). More often the nation-building process aims exactly to negate the 'historical narratives' and cultural peculiarities of the minority ethnic groups. The aim is to have the citizens accept a common 'national narrative' and create a nation by transforming collective identity of a society composed of one or few ethnic groups (Calhoun 1997). The 'naming dispute' is difficult to solve amicably because it affects the nation-building of the two states as a result of the incompatible narratives about the history of Macedonia.

Every nation has a certain 'national narrative', a set of historical, cultural, economic and political experiences that are passed to next generations through the nation building process and family stories. Components of this 'national narrative' may include stories and legends related to nation's origin, great heroes, enemies, past sufferings (collective and individual), memories of war, as well as heritage related to poetry, literature and music. It is a mistake to understand national histories as a set of historic truths; rather, they should be seen as something closer to stories. To hold them up to rational scrutiny 'destroys the possibility of human community, national myths are not lies and fabrications; they are inspiring narratives, stemming from human *imagination*, in which we tell ourselves who we are or want to be (Abizadeh 2004:293). Benedict Anderson makes this point explicit: 'all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined... communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined' (Anderson 1991:6).

In the Balkans the emerging nation-states have developed historical narratives to help justify their irredentism and their historical rights in different parts of the Ottoman Empire. 'Official' Balkan historical narratives postulate the existence of a nation back in time and then proceed to interpret the historical record as the continuous evolution of this 'imagined community' from that particular point (Kitromilides 1983). Modern Greek national identity is an outcome of a nation-building process that took place in the Balkans between the 18th and 19th century. Macedonian national identity is an outcome of similar nation-building processes, with the difference that the idea of creating a Macedonian nation-state came decades later than 'national awakening' of other Balkan nations (Jelavich 1983).

However, the diffusion of historical narratives in the nation-building process should not be accepted uncritically since they entail a considerable element of 'myth-making.' Clearly the Greek and Macedonian national narratives are no exception. As Anthony Smith notes 'where there are clashing interpretations of ancestral homelands and cultural heritages as for example in Macedonia, Kashmir, Nagorno Karabagh, and Palestine – normal conflicts of interest are turned into cultural wars...' (Smith 1999:9). In fact, the dispute between the two countries over the name of the new Republic is not only part of a 'global cultural war' that the two states have been fighting over the control of symbols, traditions and glorious ancestors it is a conflict 'over the validity of their national narratives both countries to a bigger or lesser extent attempting to convince the world audience that their historical narrative is correct' (Featherstone 1990:10). It is a struggle for legitimating of a particular national narrative, and thus an identity that legitimizes a group as an entity that has a 'right' to a territory as its 'natural' habitat (Bourdieu 1989).

In the following section we will briefly outline the most important contentious issues in the two historical narratives. On the one hand, the clash of the narratives is about the very understanding of the boundaries of the Macedonian region. The geographical limits of Macedonia are contested over time and today. On the other

hand, the naming dispute is about the 'right' to project the ancient Macedon history as an integral part of the ethno-genesis of the Greek and/or the Macedonian nation. This is a clash over historical narratives and the right to claim origins of the Macedonian ethnic group and nation today and in the ancient past. Of especial importance to the historic arguments of both sides in the dispute is the ethnic makeup of Ottoman Macedonia and whether Macedonia, was 'liberated' or 'occupied' following the Balkan Wars and the First World War.

### *3.1. National narratives clashing over the definition of Macedonia*

Although there is not a consensus on the matter among historians, politicians and geographers, Macedonia is generally defined as the area that is bounded on the north by the Shar Mountain, on the south by the Aegean Sea, Mt. Olympus, and the Pindus Range, on the east by the Rhodope Mountains, and on the West by Lake Ohrid (a great overview of the issues is found in Wilkinson 1951). Macedonian authors like to point out that the borders of the ancient Kingdom of Macedon in the Hellenistic Era roughly corresponded to this territory (Rossos, 2008:4). On the one hand, the Greek position is that ancient Macedon roughly corresponds to the territory of the Greek region of Macedonia. To emphasize the difference with its northern neighbour Greek politicians and historians claim that the territory of today's Republic of Macedonia, was called Paionia in antiquity (Letter of 2009). Linking only the territory of the Greek region of Macedonia to ancient Macedon provides Greeks arguments in favour of their position that people from the north, cannot in any possible way have anything to do with Macedonia and the Macedonians. On the other hand, Macedonian scholars and politicians like to emphasize the most extensive borders of ancient Macedon, those including most of present-day Republic. That way they can link the Macedonian historic narrative to ancient legacies. In fact, the borders of Macedonia in ancient times were not fixed and at times they indeed roughly corresponded to the today's borders of Greek Macedonia.

### *3.2. National narratives clashing over the history of ancient Macedonia*

For Greeks the name 'Macedonia' and 'Macedonians' refer back to the ancient Macedonians who were of a Greek, and not of a Slav ethnic identity. Moreover, for Greek historians and politicians, even if Slavic speaking peoples have been present in Macedonia since the 7th century A.D. a distinct 'Slav-Macedonian' nation was an artificial creation of Tito, with the aim of pressing irredentist claims against Greece. Since the ancient Macedonians were Greeks, and since the modern Greeks are the descendants of the ancients, 'it follows that the name and the territory of ancient Macedonia are 'legitimately' Greek and any claim to the contrary impugns Greek identity (by claiming that the ancient or modern Macedonians were or are not Greek) and therefore impugns the integrity of the Greek nation' (Roudometof 1996:284). Therefore, the 'Slav-Macedonians' cannot possibly have a claim to a Macedonian ethnic identity, symbols which flourished during ancient times, or, more generally, to the name, 'Macedonia.' One should

note however, that the inclusion of the ancient Macedonian as part of the Greek history and heritage was belated phenomenon (Ibid.). While in the time of the creation of the Greek state ancient Macedonians were regarded as conquerors of ancient Greece and certainly not as part of it, starting from the 1880s, depictions of ancient Macedonia and its connection to Hellenism gained momentum and links were established between Ancient Macedonian, ancient Greek and Modern Greek history (Sarakinski and Jovanovski 2016). Since then the Greeks utilized the argument about the continuity between ancient and modern times to strengthen their 'historical' claims to Macedonian territory.

The Macedonian historical narrative has not been constant in treating the history of the ancient Macedon. In socialist Yugoslavia the official narrative elaborated how the Macedonians are a nation inhabiting the geographical territory of Macedonia, since 600–700 AD when Slavs first settled in the Balkans (Tashkovski 1976, Apostolski 1979). The Ancient Macedonian history was too included in the official narrative. For instance, the first edition of the History of the Macedonian People included a chapter on Ancient Macedonia. In the 1990's more emphasis in the historical narrative was given to the ancient Macedonian history. Thus, in the 1993 book *Macedonia and Its Relations with Greece*, a publication by the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts, the authors argued that the Macedonian nation was formed as a result of an ethnic mixture between the Ancient Macedonians and the Slavs settling on the territory of Macedonia. Latest historiography emphasizes that modern Macedonians are a product of 'a gradual process that enabled the mutual interaction, coexistence and symbiosis between the ancient Macedonians and the Slavs that settled in Macedonia' (Panov 2008:83).

Furthermore, the authoritative 'Macedonian Historical Dictionary', which was published by the Institute for National History in 2001 also establishes a historical continuity between the ancient and modern Macedonians: 'after the settlement of the Slavs in Macedonia (6th – 7th century), there was an integration of the greater part of the assimilated Hellenic and Roman descendants of the ancient Macedonians into a Slavic majority, and in this way they contributed to the creation of the new ethnicity on Macedonian soil, in which the dominant role was played by the Slavic element (the language, the habits) and Christian culture' (Kiselinovski 2000:40). The edition of the official 'History of the Macedonian People' published after independence, covered the period of the reign of the Ancient Kingdom in 200 pages, unlike the edition published in 1969 which devoted only 20 pages to the matter (Brunnbauer 2005:274). Thus, in the Macedonian revised official history, Alexander's epoch is seen as the Golden Age of the historic Macedonian (Vangeli 2011).

### *3.3. National narratives clashing over Ottoman Macedonia and of Greek (Aegean) Macedonia*

Ottoman Macedonia became the hotspot of the Balkans in the second half of the nineteenth century as a result of the growth of nationalism in the region. At

that time, the nascent Macedonian nationalism fought for an autonomous status of Macedonia and competed with the expansionism of the neighbouring countries, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece, who sought political annexation and control of Macedonia. The neighbouring three, vigorously campaigned to present their 'cases' to the great powers. The Greeks in their propaganda efforts relied on the strength of their historical claims and the role of the Patriarchate. Hellenism in Macedonia also relied on the 'flourishing Greek schools and on a class which enjoyed in some measure an economic superiority; a class which was conservative, which had everything to lose' (Daikin 1966:117). In the struggle for control of Macedonia the local Greek and Slavic speakers as well as sizeable Vlach, Sephardic and Muslim communities were targeted to be converted to their causes by the competing neighbouring nationalisms.

While the ethnic composition of Ottoman Macedonia is a highly politicized issue, Macedonian authors claim the majority of the population was ethnic Macedonian. As Rossos notes, most sources find the Slavic speakers, the Macedonians, the majority of the population of Macedonia before the 1913 Balkan Wars. He cites "a fairly reliable British Foreign Office estimate in 1912" where the ethnic make-up of population of Macedonia was: 'Macedonian Slavs' 1,150,000, 'Turks' 400,000, 'Greeks' 300,000, 'Vlachs', 200,000, 'Albanians' 120,000, 'Jews' 100,000, and 'Gypsies' (Roma) 10,000. Greek authors, on the other hand, have no doubts that at the beginning of the 20th century Hellenism overwhelmingly prevailed in Macedonia claiming that of a population of approximately 1,205,000, 370,000 (31%) were Greek speakers, 260,000 (21.5%) were Slav-speakers (Patriarchists and Exarchists) and 475,000 (39.5%) were Muslims, with Jews and other groups making up the remaining 98,000 (8%) (Michailidis 2007:357). They also quote the official Turkish statistics of 1905 compiled by Hilmi Pasha for the vilayets of Thessaloniki and Bitola which note that in these two *vilayets* there were 678,910 'Greeks' and 385,729 'Bulgarians' (Vavouskos 1973:9).

For the name dispute a crucial discussion is over the legitimacy of the conquest of the Greek (Aegean) Macedonia in 1913. While Greek historians and politicians emphasize the rightfulness of the incorporation of this region in the Hellenic state, Macedonian historians note that Macedonians were the majority in the Aegean part of Macedonia before the Balkan Wars and that therefore the forceful conquest of this territory by Greece was illegitimate. Moreover, Macedonian historians and politicians stress the ruthlessness of the process of making Greeks out of a heterogeneous population of that region, especially noting the illiberal nature of the nation building practices aimed at the ethnic Macedonians. They stress that all pre-1913, non-Greek statistics find Macedonians the largest single group in Aegean Macedonia. The figures range from 329,371, or 45.3 per cent, to 382,084, or 68.9 per cent, of non-Turks, and from 339,369, or 31.3 per cent, to 370,371, or 35.2 per cent, of the total population of approximately 1,052,227 inhabitants (Rossos 2008:5). Using Bulgarian and Greek sources, Todor Simovski estimated 1,073,549 inhabitants of Aegean Macedonia just before the Balkan Wars: 326,426

‘Macedonians’, 40,921 ‘Muslim Macedonians’ (Pomaks), 289,973 ‘Turks’, 4,240 ‘Christian Turks’, 2,112 ‘Cherkez’ (Circassians), 240,019 ‘Christian Greeks’, 13,753 ‘Muslim Greeks’, 5,584 ‘Muslim Albanians’, 3,291 ‘Christian Albanians’, 45,457 ‘Christian Vlachs’, 3,500 ‘Muslim Vlachs’, 59,560 ‘Jews’, 29,803 ‘Roma’, and 8,100 ‘others’ (Simovski 1972:61). Greek sources on the other hand, claim that Greeks were majority before the Balkan Wars and that the share of the Macedonians after the population exchanges in the 1920’s was very small. According to Greek historians the total Slavic-speaking population of Greek Macedonia in the period of the Balkan Wars was about 250,000 (Michailidis 2007: 280).

The Balkan Wars (1912–1913) marked the ‘liberation’ and the partition of Macedonia among Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece. For Macedonian historians it is important to note that in the three countries, policies on education, language and surnames sought to eradicate any sense of a separate Macedonian identity. Moreover, the ethnic map of Macedonia was significantly changed in 1919 when Greece and Bulgaria signed a convention for ‘exchange of populations’ whereby around 60,000 ‘Macedonians’ ‘voluntarily’ left Greece and settled in Bulgaria while approximately 30,000 ‘Greeks’ left Bulgaria (Pentzopoulos 1962:60). Soon after, in 1924, a similar convention was signed between Greece and Turkey. Following the 1923 Greco-Turkish exchange of populations, 354,647 ‘Muslims’ left Greece, 339,094 ‘Greeks’ arrived in Greek Macedonia from Anatolia (Ibid. 69, 107). Macedonian historians stress that only as the result of these shifts of populations Macedonians became a minority in that region.

#### **4. Public opinion**

Not enough has changed in the public opinions of both countries since the massive rallies in support/protest of the recognition of the Republic of Macedonia, to find a compromise solution to the dispute. Despite all the costs, Macedonian citizens by a large majority refuse any changes to their identity and the name of the country. On the eve of the 2008 Bucharest Summit 83% of them were against changes of the name even if NATO membership was at stake (CRPM 2008). Nothing has changed in surveys made in 2010 and 2011 (Klekovski 2011). In 2016 the majority of Macedonian citizens consider the name dispute to be of great importance to be addressed immediately (54%) but by a great margin (65%) do not accept modification of the constitutional name for international use in order Macedonia to become a member of EU and NATO (IPRS 2016).

On the other side, Greek citizens are resolute that they do not want their northern neighbour use the name ‘Macedonia.’ Before the 2008 NATO Summit, 81.7% were against a compromise in general, 70.4% of Greeks opposed a compound name that included the term Macedonia and 66.6% were against a dual name formula (Tziampiris 2012: 161). Today, the majority of Greeks consider the name dispute to be of great importance (58%) but reject outright any solution to the dispute that would include the name ‘Macedonia’ for their northern neighbours

(57%) (ELIAMEP 2016). This survey reveals that while 28% of Greeks would accept a composite name only 10% would accept that the country be recognized with its constitutional name. Greek public opinion continues to be much less willing to accept a compromise on the name dispute than successive Greek governments.

### **5. New solutions**

The name dispute is difficult to resolve because of the diametrically opposing positions of the parties regarding their historical narratives that influence the contemporary national identities. Consequently, the only way to resolve the seemingly intractable name dispute between Greece and Macedonia is to deal with the historical and identity issues that both sides care most for and ignore those that are not important for the resolution or could be left aside to be disagreed upon without political consequences. For Greece, the key element is winning the argument over the legitimacy of ancient Macedon as a Greek state and not having the name Macedonia used by its northern neighbour. For the Republic, the intricacies of the ancient history are only instrumental to the recognition of the country under its constitutional name and the unblocking of the Euro-Atlantic integration.

There is a compromise solution that could respect the concerns of both sides. The solution would be for the country to be known internationally as the 'Republic of Makedonija'. This is a name of Slavic origin and how Macedonians refer to their country in their own language. Most importantly, there would not be need for holding a referendum in the Republic that could potentially block such an internationally brokered agreement. Greece would be 'left' with the name 'Macedonia', to invoke ancient Macedon. 'Makedonijans' could co-exist along 'Greek Macedonians.' As part of the compromise a declaration in which the 'Republic of Makedonija' would acknowledge that ancient Macedonia is part of Greece's historical legacy could be adopted by the government in Skopje. In return Greece would allow the members of the Macedonian ethnocultural nation to be named as 'ethnic Macedonians' and the language to be called 'Macedonian (Slavic).' Both governments could claim victory, one having won international recognition under the same name as in the constitution, the other having protected the Macedonian-ness of Greece's history and present. Such an agreement should be supported by both EU and NATO by immediately opening the path for integration of the Republic of Makedonija in these organizations. The UN would acknowledge the international name and the bilateral agreement. This is a blueprint for action which although not ideal holds the promise of achieving a mutually acceptable agreement. The details could be worked out by the two governments, the UN mediator, USA and EU.

This is more than a matter of gaining membership of the EU and NATO – Macedonia's very future depends on a resolution. If the EU accession continuous to be blocked due to the name issue Greece, the possibilities for further soft mediation by the EU in Macedonian-Albanian political disputes would diminish.

Macedonian nationalism might grow, while Macedonia's large ethnic-Albanian minority might become restive watching the state of Albania, already a member of NATO, move forward with EU integration. Ethnic-Albanian nationalism is already being encouraged by Kosovo's independence while Macedonia is not yet a 'normal' country, a state that has a secure and prosperous future in the EU. With Kosovo's independence, Bosnia-Herzegovina's problems and Serbia's wavering already complicating Balkan realities the EU does not need another crisis that could cause a wider conflict including Bulgaria, Serbia, Turkey, and Albania.

## **6. Conclusion**

Although Macedonia has a number of outstanding issues with its neighbours, relations with Greece are crucial for the long-term stability and development of the country. Despite the provisions of an UN-backed Agreement from 1995 Greece blocks Macedonia's admission to NATO and the beginning of negotiations for EU membership. Failure to integrate in these organizations risks bringing economic hardships to the country, democratic backsliding, and interethnic tensions with the Albanian minority which have in 2001 produced a war like conflict. Given the fragility of the region and the delicate relations with the neighbours the solution of the naming dispute is important for the stability of Macedonia and the Balkans.

Presenting an overview of the conflict in the 1990s we have shown that the Macedonian name dispute is a clash over historical narratives and the right to claim origins of the Macedonian ethnic group and nation today and in the ancient past. This element of the dispute pertains to the 'right' to project the ancient Macedon history as being integral part of the ethno-genesis of the Greek and/or the Macedonian nation. We presented an overview of the conflict referencing it to the conflicting elements in the national narratives of the countries. Describing the positions of the two governments and the differences in public opinion that weight upon a successful resolution of the dispute we have then outlined a political solution proposing an agreed international name for the country 'Republic of Makedonija.' This solution would deal with the most important differences in the struggle over the different historical narratives of the region developed by Macedonia and Greece. A political solution with an agreed international name for the country 'Republic of Makedonija' is likely to solve the dispute and improve the relations between the two countries.

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