

What's in a Name? Possible Ways Forward in the Macedonian Name Dispute

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INTRODUCTION: CAUSES OF THE DISPUTE

In September 1991, a small Balkan country to the west of Bulgaria and to the north of Greece was born out of the ashes of the Yugoslav Federation. That much was clear; everything else was up for debate.

What the people of this country refer to as the *Republic of Macedonia* (as per the 1991 Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia) is a rather tiny fraction of the historical region Macedonia, which was carved up by Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Albania after the Second Balkan War in 1912. The largest share of the spoils went to Greece. Today, this share constitutes the second-largest region in present-day Greece, with the second-largest city of Thessaloniki as regional capital.

Under the Yugoslav Federation (1945-1991), the only share of the historical region of Macedonia (hereafter Macedonia proper)¹ that had not gone to one of the four aforementioned countries enjoyed the autonomous status of a republic under the name *Macedonia*. After the fall of Yugoslavia, the autonomous republic decided to keep its name as a sovereign country. The next twenty-six years have witnessed an unfortunate domino effect: Greece objected, Macedonia proper amended its constitution to include an explicit pledge of no territorial claims to the rest of the historical region Macedonia² and to disown a flag associated with it. Yet, Macedonia proper refused to renounce its

¹ This is the most opportune way of referring to the country in this paper. Using a tautology (*Macedonia/FYROM*) to satisfy both countries would be wordy, and either of these two names on its own would imply bias toward Skopje or Athens respectively. *Macedonia proper* is not an ideal solution either, as it somewhat implies that all other shares of the historical region of Macedonia (including the Greek one) are “improper”. Yet, Macedonia/FYROM is the only share of the historical Macedonia that today constitutes a sovereign country on its own, with all other shares being parts of broader sovereign entities (Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, Albania and Kosovo). Thus, it is probably the most intuitive and space-saving option. Later in the paper *Skopje* is sometimes used instead, but only in reference to the Macedonian government (for balance, *Athens* is used for the Greek government).

² Igor Janev, ‘Legal aspects of the use of a provisional name for Macedonia in the United Nations,’ *The American Journal of International Law*, 93:1, 1999, p. 159.

constitutional name *Republic of Macedonia*, so Greece has blocked its global integration every step of the way.

This creates the impression that Greece is imposing the dispute on its smaller neighbor just because this neighbor happens to use the same name as a region in Greece which has anyway only belonged to Greece for one century. The picture is in fact much blurrier, and not least due to an unfortunate historical contradiction between politics and etymology with grave consequences. Up until a century ago, there had never been a self-governing entity on the territory of Macedonia proper; the first time one was created (within the wider Yugoslav state) was in 1945. Hence, rather than seizing territory from an established political entity, Greece merely appropriated in 1912 a piece of land that had been left in a vacuum by the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

The name *Macedonia*, however, has existed since ancient times. The largest and most powerful political entity to contain a variation of the term *Macedonia* in its name was the ancient Kingdom of Macedon.³ In the 4th century BC, Alexander the Great turned this kingdom into an empire of which both present-day Macedonia proper and present-day Greece were but a small fraction. This empire coexisted with the Hellenic city-states, such as Sparta, which is much better known than the Kingdom of Macedon today only because of its superior duration, and despite its military and territorial inferiority to the Kingdom of Macedon during Alexander’s rule. Indeed, the golden century of the Kingdom of Macedon under Alexander can be subsumed for practical purposes into the wider framework of ‘Ancient Greece.’ The latter designation has served historians as a neat umbrella term for the entire seven centuries between the emergence of the first Hellenic city-state in the 9th century BC and the expansion of the Roman Republic in the 2nd century BC.

Of course, this was all such a long time ago that the entire Ancient Greek era was much shorter than the twenty-two centuries between its effective demise in the 2nd century BC and the Balkan wars in 1912 AD. Yet, in the nation-building process of the newly free Balkans of the 19th and early 20th centuries, when Balkan countries were ‘relative newcomers to the national game,’⁴ older was better. With the withdrawal of the Ottomans, Greece found itself surrounded by a large number of newly independent (and mostly Slavic) states. The pressing need for a young state to legitimize itself as a unique

³ What makes the entire dispute even more ironic is the fact that Macedon was a *mythical* ancestor after whom the kingdom was named: there was never a known human being by the name of Macedon who ruled the kingdom.

⁴ Misha Glenny, ‘The Macedonian Question: Still No Answers,’ *Social Research*, 62:1, 1995, p.144.

entity was perfectly met by the rich ancient history of its territory. Indeed, it is difficult to dispute present-day Greece’s claim to being the most legitimate successor of *Ancient Greece*: the Greek language of today evolved from ancient Greek, and most of the city-states of Ancient Greece were located on the territory of present-day Greece. The fact that both countries today lay claim to the legacy of Alexander the Great is only one of the many factors for the emergence of two equally uncompromising domestic discourses on the name of Macedonia proper.

THE NAME DISCOURSE IN MACEDONIA PROPER

Like many other ex-Communist countries, post-1991 Macedonia proper has a highly polarized, essentially bipartisan political system. It is comprised of two diametrically opposed parties: the centre-left party and legal successor of the Communist Party, Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM), and the Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE), a right-wing party and an ideological successor of the early-20th-century radical independence movement, Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (VMRO). There has been but one commonality between the outward-looking SDSM and inward-looking VMRO-DPMNE since 1991: their unwillingness to compromise on the constitutionally codified name of the country, *Republic of Macedonia*. Over three-quarters of the population in Macedonia proper reject the idea of a name change *per se* and regardless of the geopolitical rewards this might produce⁵. In a country with no democratic history, democratic competition is inevitably understood in its most primitive form: it is about who can respond better to public opinion, and not about who can convince the public of his or her vision for the future of the country. Thus, any substantial digression from the commonly accepted name discourse, which is popularly labeled as ‘we shall not give up the name’ (*imeto ne go davame*), is seen (or at least used to be seen until recently) as guaranteed political suicide for both parties.

While the name *Republic of Macedonia* is indeed constitutionally codified, it somewhat clashes with the preamble of that same constitution: full integration into European political institutions⁶. Some of these institutions, such as the Council of

⁵ Sinisa-Jakov Marusic, ‘Survey Shows Limited Support for Name Compromise,’ *Balkan Insight*, 26 May 2010, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/survey-shows-limited-support-for-name-compromise>, Accessed on 14 December 2017.

⁶ *Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia*. 2011, <http://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/mk/mk014en.pdf>, Accessed on 30 November 2017.

Europe,⁷ do not require unanimity among their existing members for their enlargement, and thus admitted Macedonia proper at the same time as most other ex-Communist countries. Yet, the ultimate destination of European integration – accession to the European Union – does require unanimity, and Greece had been expressing its unequivocal opposition to the acceptance of Macedonia proper under its constitutional name ever since 1991. This reality has created a marginalized, yet highly prolific, intellectual wing of pragmatists in the public discourse in Macedonia proper who have avowedly advocated a ‘compromise’ on the name,⁸ which has become a common euphemism for a name change.

With the compromise-oriented wing largely on the margins, successive governments in Skopje were quick to develop their position on the name dispute in the form of a strict and cemented red line. ‘Red line’ is probably the single most important term in the name discourses both in Macedonia proper and in Greece. Merriam-Webster defines this term in its broader, non-political context as ‘the fastest, farthest, or highest point or degree considered safe.’⁹ Translated into political jargon, a ‘red line’ can thus be taken to constitute a minimum negotiation goal: the limit of what a given negotiating party treats as negotiable. And yet, the ‘red line’ in Macedonia proper has been much closer to its definitional antipode: a maximum negotiation goal of achieving one’s optimal desires. Thus, many high-level officials from either political party and at any stage after 1991 have equated their red line with the constitutional name itself, which would necessarily make any talks with Greece pointless. Others have advocated for a cosmetic modification of adding the parenthetical modifier *Skopje* to form *Republic of Macedonia (Skopje)* in the hope that the *Skopje* component would be dropped with time for practical reasons, thus restoring the constitutional name.¹⁰ This broad consensus of minimum or no concessions is challenged by the pragmatist wing, which, while acting outside of the political mainstream, has largely followed the actual definition of the term ‘red line.’ Thus, their proposed minimum negotiation goal is merely the preservation of the word *Macedonia* in

⁷ CVCE, *Membership of the Council of Europe and the Admission of New Members*, 2016, https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/membership_of_the_council_of_europe_and_the_admission_of_new_members-en-ff14dd3c-b4c0-47e9-ac78-47e8f9a22e55.html, Accessed on 30 November 2017.

⁸ Denko Maleski, ‘Law, Politics and History in International Relations: Macedonia and Greece,’ New York: Columbia University, 2010 (guest lecture), p.2.

⁹ ‘Redline,’ *Merriam-Webster English Dictionary*, 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/redline>, Accessed on 30 November 2017.

¹⁰ Hristijan Ivanovski, ‘The Macedonia-Greece dispute/difference over the name issue: mitigating the inherently unsolvable,’ *Tetovo: New Balkan Politics*, 14, 2013, p.8.

conjunction with any identity modifier that would protect the Macedonian language and identity.¹¹

THE NAME DISCOURSE IN GREECE

Until the recent emergence of the now-ruling far-left party Syriza, Greece had a similarly rigid bipartisan system to that found in Macedonia proper. No substantive differences can be identified between how the center-right *New Democracy* (ND) and the center-left *Panhellenic Socialist Movement* (PASOK) used to approach the name issue. As these two parties rotated in government throughout the twenty-four years between the independence of Macedonia proper in 1991 and Syriza’s rise to power in 2015, they were pivotal in framing the Greek discourse on the name issue. Syriza has in turn demonstrated little interest in contributing to the discourse so far (and even less ability to do so given its salient economic preoccupations).

The discussion of ‘red lines’ in Greece has been just as prominent and uncompromising as in Macedonia proper. Ever since the independence of Macedonia proper in 1991, there has been no doubt of Greek popular opposition to the constitutional name of the country and of the utmost importance people attached to this opposition. In 1992, around a million Greeks took to the streets of Thessaloniki and other cities in the Greek share of the historical region Macedonia.¹² Their slogan was the perfect antipode to the ‘we shall not give up the name’ motto in Macedonia proper: ‘Macedonia is Greek.’¹³ Thus, the Greek red line does not only warrant a clear delineation between Macedonia proper and the homonymous region in present-day Greece, but it also imposes a hierarchy between the Greek region as the ‘true’ Macedonia and a ‘second’ (rather than ‘another’) Macedonia.

In June 2017, SDSM returned to power in Macedonia proper after eleven years of rule by VMRO-DPMNE and eleven years of stalemate on the name talks and on European integration by association. Building constructive relations between Syriza and SDSM in the immediate future will be pivotal to reviving any prospects of solving the dispute.

¹¹ Ivanovski, ‘The Macedonia-Greece Dispute,’ p.9.

¹² Dejan Marolov, ‘The Relations between Macedonia and Greece in the Context of the Name Issue,’ Istanbul: Balkan Arastirma Enstitusu Dergisi Cilt 2, 2013, p.24.

¹³ Ibid.

INTERNATIONAL PERCEPTIONS AND ACTORS

In the early years of the dispute and following the massive protests in and around Thessaloniki, the outside world saw the dispute largely as ‘a fledgling state being bullied by its stronger neighbour’.¹⁴ Unsurprisingly, the scarcity of historical precedents where the name of a country has been contested by another country caused confusion in the outside world. When formulated in such simple terms and outside of the complex historical context, the dispute inevitably drew international sympathy for the party whose prosperity and stability actually suffered from the dispute: Macedonia proper. For Western governments, this bottom-up pressure from domestic constituencies cheering for the underdog was in explicit conflict with the limited space for defying Greece as a fellow member of the European Union and NATO. An even more important factor in the rationale of Western governments might have been the overall stability of the Balkan Peninsula. After a series of spectacular diplomatic failures to first prevent and then contain the war in Yugoslavia, it may have seemed foolish for the international community to jeopardize the sole island of stability by obstructing the global integration of Macedonia proper.

Hence, the outside world played a pivotal role in mediating the so-called Interim Accord between Skopje and Athens in 1995.¹⁵ This accord required Skopje to disown its flag, which contained insignia used in the Kingdom of Macedon, and vaguely obliged it to maintain good neighbourly relations with Greece. It also explicitly obliged Athens to refrain from hampering the further global integration of Macedonia proper under the provisional name *Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* (FYROM), under which the country had joined the UN in 1993.¹⁶ A close reading of the red lines identified earlier suggests that this was an unlikely compromise, as the phrase *Former Yugoslav* was in clear conflict with the putative minimum negotiation goal of either country. On the one hand, the fact that this phrase merely refers to the recent history of Macedonia proper under the Yugoslav Federation brought Greece neither the desired hierarchy nor the long-term historical delineation it sought. On the other hand, by being placed before the word *Macedonia* rather than in addition to it, the phrase seemed to modify the ‘Macedonian-ness’ of Macedonia proper, thus amounting to much more than the cosmetic modification contained in the red line in Macedonia proper. This twofold disregard for the red lines of

¹⁴ Maleski, ‘Macedonia and Greece,’ p.2.

¹⁵ Ivanovski, ‘The Macedonia-Greece Dispute,’ p.15.

¹⁶ Marolov, ‘The Relations Between Macedonia and Greece,’ p.31.

the two countries made the diplomatic success of integrating Macedonia proper into the UN all the more impressive. It also provided hope for similar international interventions in the subsequent talks about finding a permanent solution to the dispute.

Given the considerable international attention attached to the Balkans at the time, the UN stepped up its involvement in the name issue by assigning a permanent mediator to the dispute: US lawyer and diplomat Matthew Nimetz.¹⁷ International involvement in the following twenty-two years has nonetheless been an unmitigated disappointment. Internal political developments in Macedonia proper, which will be discussed in detail later, have blurred the hitherto straightforward image of Athens as the ‘bully’ and Skopje as the ‘victim.’ Free of the bottom-up pressure to assist with the global integration of the ‘fledgling state,’ and of the broader burden of Balkan instability after the end of the Yugoslav wars in 1995, international interest in the dispute waned substantially. The sheer duration of the dispute and the lack of palpable prospects for a solution have prompted a somewhat satirical coverage of the name issue, even by leading international publications.¹⁸ Mr. Nimetz nominally still serves as mediator in 2017, which makes him the longest-serving UN Special Representative in the history of the institution.¹⁹ He continues to hold occasional meetings with representatives of the two countries.²⁰ International interest in the dispute remains low overall, but might increase abruptly in the case of a dramatic breakthrough in the name talks.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This research uses qualitative methodology to identify and examine specific directions of negotiation which have been pursued in the name talks so far and/or have been proposed in the academic literature. The existing body of relevant literature, though seemingly abundant, offers few solution-oriented pieces, and instead abounds with distinctly non-pragmatic texts on the ‘non-negotiable nature of identity’ by Macedonian and Greek scholars alike. Even those few pieces that do operate with specific name suggestions engage almost exclusively with whether those names might be acceptable to Macedonia

¹⁷ ‘The Man Who Has Focused on One Word for 23 Years,’ *BBC*, 2 August 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-40781213>, Accessed on 30 November 2017.

¹⁸ Siobhan O’Grady, ‘Greece Doesn’t Like Macedonia’s Name. We Have Ideas for a New One,’ *Foreign Policy*, 16 December 2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/12/16/greece-doesnt-like-macedonias-name/>, Accessed on 30 November 2017.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

proper.²¹ This limitation is admittedly due to the scarce Greek-written literature on the issue, but even this scarce literature²² in combination with some unambiguous statements²³ by previous and current Greek policymakers gives a fairly clear idea of where the Greek side draws its red line.

The theoretical framework of this research is a realist one, where Macedonia proper is the actor that needs to make concessions for a compromise to be reached. The relationship between the two actors is a strictly hierarchical one in which one of the actors (Greece) is in a position (through its NATO/EU membership) to obstruct the key strategic goal of the other actor (the global integration of Macedonia proper). Over the years of the dispute, this hierarchy has always applied, but the ‘strength’ of the stronger actor and the ‘weakness’ of the weaker actor have both varied based on the behaviour of the actors. Accounting for these varying levels of superiority of the stronger actor over the weaker actor in the dispute is crucial to the framework of this research, as it allows for the conceptualization of the third party (international actors). This is where the framework somewhat departs from its realist foundations due to its malleable conceptualization of a ‘position of strength’ not as something predetermined by the size and military power of states, but rather by their behaviour. This warrants a hypothesis that the third party (international actors) has exercised and will exercise more influence on the stronger actor (Greece) at times of relative *strength* of the weaker actor (Macedonia proper) achieved through constructive behaviour by the weaker actor.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE DISPUTE

The Macedonian name dispute is a ‘virtual dispute with tangible consequences.’²⁴ Most if not all of these consequences have so far been felt by Macedonia proper. While the aforementioned international image of the ‘bully’ may well have damaged Greece’s ‘soft power,’ especially in the 1990s when this image was more acute, it is Macedonia proper that has suffered from the protraction of the dispute in more measurable ways.

²¹ Marolov, ‘The Relations Between Macedonia and Greece,’ Ivanovski, ‘The Macedonia-Greece Dispute.’

²² Aristotle Tziampiris, ‘The Macedonian Name Dispute and European Union Accession.’ *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 12:1, 153-171, 2012; Evangelos Kofos, ‘The controversy over the terms ‘Macedonians’ and ‘Macedonian’: a probable exit scenario,’ *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 5:1, 129-133, 2005.

²³ ‘Athens Reiterates Position in Favor of Composite Name Erga Omnes for Possible FYROM Name Solution,’ *Naftemporiki*, 4 January 2018, <http://www.naftemporiki.gr/story/1309212/athens-reiterates-position-in-favor-of-composite-name-erga-omnes-for-possible-fyrom-name-issue-solution>, Accessed on 20 February 2018.

²⁴ Marijan Pop-Angelov, ‘A Disputed Name: Is There A Solution To The Name Issue Between Macedonia and Greece?’ Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 2010, p.73.

First, the signing of the Interim Accord in 1995 followed an eighteen-month trade embargo imposed by Greece on the nascent Macedonian economy. Inevitably, this hurt the Greek economy as well, but the damage to Macedonia proper was incomparably higher.²⁵

Second, in April 2008, Macedonia proper was part of the Adriatic Group (together with Croatia and Albania), which was widely expected to receive a collective invitation to join NATO at the Bucharest summit.²⁶ At the beginning of the summit, US President George Bush said that ‘tomorrow NATO will make an historic decision on the admission of three Balkan nations: Croatia, Albania, and Macedonia.’²⁷ Bush’s speech left no doubt that Macedonia had fulfilled the membership criteria. Yet, the following day NATO merely extended a conditional invitation to Macedonia proper. The condition was permanent resolution of the name dispute.

Third, in 2009, the conditional invitation to NATO was translated into a conditional recommendation to open accession talks with the EU. While this recommendation would in subsequent years also become conditioned on various domestic reforms, the name dispute was originally the single biggest obstacle.²⁸ In 2009, neither Serbia nor Montenegro was a candidate member of the EU, let alone negotiating on its accession; today, both countries have already been in the negotiation process for years.

Fourth, the most significant elements of the damage caused to Macedonia proper by the name dispute are of a more latent nature. Macedonia proper has been topping the brain drain rankings for years, with a quarter of the population having left the country already by 2010.²⁹ While this may well be the result of popular dissatisfaction with domestic governments and regardless of the Euro-Atlantic prospects of the country, it is reasonable to argue that the international isolation caused by the name dispute has played a major role. Moreover, the almost uniformly uncompromising stance on the name

²⁵ Christopher S. Wren, ‘Greece to Lift Embargo Against Macedonia if It Scraps Its Flag,’ *New York Times*, 14 September 1995, <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/09/14/world/greece-to-lift-embargo-against-macedonia-if-it-scraps-its-flag.html>, Accessed on 30 November 2017.

²⁶ Ljubomir Frckoski, ‘The Character of the Name Dispute between Macedonia and Greece,’ *Progress Institute for Social Democracy*, 2009, p.3.

²⁷ ‘George W. Bush Speech at NATO Summit in Bucharest, Romania,’ uploaded 3 April 2008, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_DvAM3CnKs, Accessed on 30 November 2017.

²⁸ Commission of the European Communities, ‘The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2009 Progress Report,’ 14 October 2009, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2009/mk_rapport_2009_en.pdf, Accessed on 20 February 2018.

²⁹ Nikola Osilo, ‘Iseluvane: Makedonija se prazni,’ *EMagazin*, <http://emagazin.mk/vesti/vest/18610?title=iseluvane-makedonija-se-prazni>, Accessed on 30 November 2017 (in Macedonian).

dispute among ethnic Macedonians hardly aligns with that of the 25% Albanian minority in the country. According to a 2010 poll, name change is opposed by 84% of ethnic Macedonians, 7.1% of ethnic Albanians and 8.9% of the multiple other minorities in Macedonia proper, such as Turks, Roma, Bosniaks and Serbs.³⁰ The protraction of the name dispute has caused a widespread impression among ethnic minorities that the stubbornness of the ethnic majority in the country (and their political representatives) has been depriving ethnic minorities of their prosperity. Thus, any instance of interethnic instability in Macedonia proper since 1991, including but certainly not limited to the armed conflict in 2001, can be blamed at least partly on the sense of hopelessness created by the name dispute. Maintaining ‘permanent stability in a country with a provisional name’³¹ has certainly been difficult.

DIMENSIONS OF THE DISPUTE

This is a multi-layered dispute consisting of four main dimensions. These can be seen as four stumbling blocks in reaching a compromise, but also as an even number of aspects to negotiate over and potentially split in a satisfying manner. If Greece gives up on at least one of the dimensions, Macedonia proper will have more room to frame the final agreement as a ‘win’ in the name talks. If there had been only one dimension (the name itself), even the most favourable solution would have been hard to ‘sell’ to a Macedonian constituency that is largely opposed to any change.

The first dimension is the name itself, or the path from the constitutional name *Republic of Macedonia* to a composite name (with a geographical or political modifier) that would delineate the country from the homonymous Greek region. This has remained at the forefront of the name talks, despite Skopje’s insistence that the constitutional name *Republic of Macedonia* already delineates the country from the Greek region, as it would even be registered under a different letter in the UN: ‘R’ rather than ‘M’³² (just as FYROM is now registered under ‘F’). Some examples of name proposals with a geographical modifier formally put forward by Mr. Nimetz are *Upper Republic of Macedonia* and *Northern Republic of Macedonia*, while some proposals containing a political modifier are *Democratic Republic of*

³⁰ Pop-Angelov, ‘A Disputed Name,’ p.90.

³¹ International Crisis Group, ‘Macedonia’s Name: Why the Dispute Matters and How to Resolve It,’ Skopje: Balkans Report 122, 2001, p.18.

³² Vasko Naumovski, *Bilateral Disputes in the European Union Enlargement*, Skopje: Matica, 2013, p.45.

Macedonia and *Independent Republic of Macedonia*.³³ Athens insists on a geographical modifier since the political modifiers are hardly distinctive: Greece is also a democratic and independent country. As argued earlier, Greece also prefers a hierarchical distinction; hence the Greek proposal *New Republic of Macedonia*, which has never been formally put forward by Mr. Nimetz.

The second dimension is the scope of the name. To this date, Macedonia proper has been recognized under its constitutional name by over 140 countries, or by over two thirds of the United Nations member states, including four out of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (excluding France).³⁴ Given the long-standing good relations between Greece and most of these countries, it is clear that this has been a formidable diplomatic feat achieved at a severe financial and logistical cost for a small country like Macedonia proper. Thus, Skopje is adamant that whatever new name is agreed on should only apply in bilateral correspondence between the two countries. Athens, however, insists on an *erga omnes* use of the new name, which would apply in bilateral relations with third countries, multilateral organizations, and even in all official documents within Macedonia proper. As argued earlier, Greece’s red line in the first dimension slightly shifted with the Interim Accord and the recognition of a provisional name (FYROM) containing the term *Macedonia*. No palpable shift has occurred in the second dimension.

The third dimension is the word order. Even if Macedonia were to agree to a political or geographical modifier in the first dimension, it might also have to agree to a modifier which would break up the phrase *Republic of Macedonia*. This is important because Greece has rejected all five of Mr. Nimetz’s proposals stated above, including the seemingly favourable *Northern Republic of Macedonia*, just because the adjective ‘Northern’ modifies ‘Republic’ rather than ‘Macedonia.’ This is the reason why Greece would not accept, for instance, FYROM as a permanent solution: the ‘Former Yugoslav’ does not come immediately in front of ‘Macedonia.’

By modifying the ‘Macedonian-ness’ of Macedonia proper, the third dimension already enters the sensitive territory of the identity of the Macedonian people, as opposed to the mere name of their state. This is even more prominent in the fourth dimension, where Greece has sometimes insisted that the name of the nationality should be aligned with the new name of the state (e.g. Northern Macedonia = Northern Macedonians). In a

³³ ‘Shto sodrezhea 13-te tochki na Nimets od oktombri 2005?’, *MKD*, 29 May 2012, <https://www.mkd.mk/34501/makedonija/nimic-13-tocki-nimic-crvenkovski>, Accessed on 19 May 2018.

³⁴ Frckoski, ‘The Character of the Name Dispute,’ p.12.

shocking development, Greece’s foreign minister Nikos Kotzias recently stated that the Macedonian language and nationality were not connected to the name,³⁵ thus implying that Greece might fully abandon this dimension..

NATURE OF THE DISPUTE

Given the multitude of palpable negative consequences for Macedonia proper outlined above, it seems truly difficult to understand how this issue could be allowed to fester for decades. Yet, one simple explanation of this apparent absurdity lies in the unique nature of the dispute. All conventional disputes, or disagreements between actors fighting for competing resources, are essentially solved in the same manner: the actors find a compromise with which both actors gain something and lose something else. This sort of equilibrated win-win (or lose-lose) scenario is impossible in the Macedonian name dispute. This is a dispute between two actors of which only one actor (Macedonia proper) has concessions to make: the compromise lies merely in the exact level of severity of these concessions, rather than in any trade-off with the concessions of the other actor. Greece’s concessions will necessarily be non-existent, given that no changes to the name of the Macedonia region in Greece have ever featured in the negotiation talks, even though this region had never even been formally named Macedonia (Μακεδονία) until 1987.³⁶

Thus, the ‘resources’ involved in this dispute are neither competing nor complementary: they are parallel and have no intersection points. One could, of course, argue that they are complementary in the sense that both countries care about their international reputation,³⁷ which would in turn improve (for both countries) in case of a compromise. Yet, given the nearly universal view in Greece on the exclusivity of the Greek claim to the term *Macedonia*,³⁸ international reputation is probably not the resource Greek politicians care about in this dispute. In a domestic environment of zero room for compromise, where the talks themselves (as a form of bargaining) are a toxic association for Greek politicians, any compromise (even one that is least favorable for Macedonia

³⁵ ‘Kotzias: Talks on name dispute are not talks on identity,’ *European Western Balkans*, 6 October 2017, <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2017/10/06/kotzias-talks-name-dispute-arent-talks-identity/>, Accessed on 14 December 2017.

³⁶ International Crisis Group, ‘Macedonia’s Name,’ p.23.

³⁷ Frekoski, ‘The Character of the Name Dispute,’ p.4.

³⁸ ‘Majority of Greeks against Use of Macedonia in Any Solution to Name Dispute,’ *Reuters*, 14 January 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-greece-macedonia-name-poll/majority-of-greeks-against-use-of-macedonia-in-any-solution-to-name-dispute-poll-idUSKBN1F30M1>, Accessed on 20 February 2018.

proper) is at best an equally favourable outcome to Greece as no compromise (the status quo).

The only one way to overcome this catch-22 is by turning Greece’s hitherto marginal concern of its international reputation into its main concern about the dispute, which would finally create a situation of complementary resources. This can only occur as a result of external factors. In that regard, if there is one theoretical framework that inadequately explains this dispute, it is the liberal one. Hopes that increasing economic cooperation between the two countries would somehow soften Greece’s hardline can be written off with certainty: Greece has been among the biggest investors in Macedonia for years,³⁹ and yet the Greek red line has not moved an inch. Since this shift cannot occur organically, the only way to get Greece to engage in constructive talks would be to mount unprecedented international pressure on Athens.

Given the unconventional nature of the dispute, it would be futile to speculate about specific solutions: such speculation would require identifying a point of equilibrated compromise in a dispute which by its very nature necessitates disproportionate concessions from the Macedonian side. Thus, what remains is to evaluate the impact of the broader behaviour of the two countries on the strength of their position in the dispute, which may or may not affect the content of specific name proposals.

It is exactly this seemingly utopian notion of the importance of constructive behavior that has been embraced by the new government in Skopje, which is hoping that democratic rule at home and constructive relations with Athens might motivate international actors to sympathize with the Macedonian position and mount pressure on Athens. This policy of ‘disarming those who have been blocking our European integration of their arguments’⁴⁰ and ‘turning red lines into green lights’⁴¹ is counterposed to the so-called ‘antiquization’ policy of provocation adopted by the previous government. ‘Antiquization’ (антиквизација) is no more of a word in Macedonian than it is in English. It was coined by VMRO-DPMNE with reference to their highly controversial and costly project⁴² of reaffirming the ancient origins of the Macedonian nation by placing a number of statues and other structures built in Florence in the main square in Skopje.

³⁹ Tziampiris, ‘The Macedonian Name Dispute,’ p.7.

⁴⁰ ‘Dimitrov: Ovoj mesets ke se srenat pregovarackite timovi na Makedonija na Grtsija,’ *Sloboden Pечат*, 8 November 2017, <http://www.slobodenpecat.mk/naslovna/dimitrov-ovoj-mesets-ke-se-sretnat-pregovarackite-timovi-na-makedonija-na-grtsija/>, Accessed on 30 November 2017 (in Macedonian).

⁴¹ Nikola Dimitrov, remarks at ‘Great Risk, Great Reward: Tackling the Balkans’ Enduring Political Challenges,’ *Atlantic Council Future Europe Initiative*, 29 November 2017.

⁴² Government of the Republic of Macedonia, ‘Skopje 2014,’ <http://skopje2014.prizma.birn.eu.com/>, Accessed on 30 November 2017 (in Macedonian).

With the cornerstone of this project being a gigantic statue of none other than Alexander the Great on his horse Bucephalus, with his sword pointing to the sky, the ‘antiquization’ has caused severe damage to Macedonian-Greek relations. More importantly, it has irretrievably blurred the hitherto widespread ‘bully-against-victim’ international perception of the name dispute explained earlier.

But does it make any difference whether the government in Skopje acts constructively or provocatively? For the Macedonian side, it will be disappointing if the answer to this question turns out to be ‘no.’ This would mean that the past twenty-six years of talks have been in vain, and that Skopje should have either accepted the Greek red line, or renounced its European aspirations as early as 1991. In other words, Macedonia proper, as the weaker actor in the dispute, has never stood a chance of achieving any negotiating goal in the name talks without an external actor that would tilt the unfavourable balance of power. As a country of scarce strategic significance, Skopje’s sole available recourse has been to play its limited hand right, and then appeal (at a purely moral level) to the rest of the world to ‘cheer for the underdog.’

Luckily for Skopje, the answer to the aforementioned question is hardly an outright ‘no.’ The following section challenges the widespread truism in Macedonia proper that if the outside world was able and willing to pressure Greece into a compromise, it surely would have already done so in the past twenty-seven years.

DOMESTIC POLICY FOR FOREIGN CONSUMPTION

I. Causes of international sympathy towards Macedonia proper

The ‘antiquization’ project of the previous government in Skopje can be summarized as a double negative: it was immensely costly and aesthetically ghastly for the Macedonian people, and it decimated the standing of the country before the outside world. For the new government, the name dispute is a ‘blessing in disguise’ and a potential double positive. It provides an immediate incentive for democratic and reform-oriented rule, which would both make life better for Macedonians and restore the sympathetic image of the small Balkan country being bullied by its bigger neighbour. As will be shown later in this paper, the history of the dispute unambiguously shows that a positive domestic climate has always produced this image, which has in turn often resulted in name proposals that are more favourable for Skopje. Luckily for Skopje, this image of Macedonia proper as a victim was the starting point in the name dispute and had to be

merely maintained. The outside world had (and to a great extent still has) four valid reasons to sympathize with the Macedonian position.

First and foremost, this is a dispute of choice rather than necessity. There are many examples of homonymity elsewhere in the world, some of them immensely analogous to the Macedonian issue, which have nonetheless never produced conflict. A notable one is the region of Luxembourg in Belgium, which is larger than the entire country of Luxembourg, just as the Macedonia region in Greece is larger than Macedonia proper.⁴³ Despite this, the two countries were co-founders of the European project and have always enjoyed excellent relations. Furthermore, it is states that are the sole sovereign entities in the international system, not regions. Thus, there is no reason why the region Macedonia in Greece (or the remaining parts of the historical region Macedonia elsewhere in the Balkans) could not coexist with the country Macedonia. Even when there are two *states* with the same name, there is no legal basis to demand a delineation between them, as the name is ‘an essential element of the judicial personality’ of every state under the principle of sovereign equality.⁴⁴ In fact, problems can only arise at a practical level, and some homonymous states have avoided them simply by being listed under different letters in the United Nations to avoid confusion: take the ‘Republic of Dominica’ and the ‘Dominican Republic.’⁴⁵

Second, Athens’ claim that the Macedonian issue is not a homonymic coincidence, but rather a pretext for territorial aspirations by Macedonia proper, has always been unpersuasive. It is impossible for Greece to convince anyone that a NATO member, whose security is guaranteed by the entire Alliance as per Article V, could be militarily threatened by its blatantly inferior neighbor. Macedonia proper did not even have any weaponry at the outset of the dispute, since the Yugoslav Army had taken all of it in 1992 as a condition for the peaceful secession of Macedonia proper from Yugoslavia.⁴⁶ And even if the fledgling state was to acquire military capabilities, the dream of a ‘Greater Macedonia’ that would unite the historical region Macedonia has never been more than a fantasy nurtured by parts of the diaspora community, and has never been embraced by any policy actors.⁴⁷

Third, for a dispute which has resulted in a blockade in the European integration of one of its actors, it is crucial to emphasize the fundamentally different values on which

⁴³ Naumovski, *Bilateral Disputes*, p.48.

⁴⁴ Janev, ‘Legal Aspects,’ p.160.

⁴⁵ Naumovski, *Bilateral Disputes*, p.45.

⁴⁶ Glenny, ‘The Macedonian Question,’ p.146

⁴⁷ Frckoski, ‘The Character of the Name Dispute,’ p.6.

the Greek state and the Macedonian state rest upon. The Greek state is of a predominantly ethnic character, with even recognized minorities enjoying minimal collective rights, and with the tens of thousands of self-declared Slavic Macedonians not being recognized as a minority.⁴⁸ By contrast, the Macedonian state is an archetypically civic state, as it recognizes dozens of minorities with far-reaching collective rights, with the Albanian minority enjoying the right to full education in Albanian, as well as affirmative action quotas for employment in state institutions⁴⁹. It is not hard to decide which model fits the European project better, which makes it arguable whether Greece and not Macedonia proper meets the EU membership criteria fully, despite being a member since 1981.⁵⁰ By contrast, Macedonia proper was deemed to have met all the criteria for starting accession talks in 2009, when it was blocked by Greece in clear violation of the 1995 Interim Accord between the two countries. Clearly, while the Greek fear of territorial aspirations by Macedonia proper was unfounded, the ‘identity crisis’ that emerged in Greece as a result of the emergence of an alternative state model at its border was very real.⁵¹

Finally, what made Greece even less appealing to the outside world at the outset of the dispute was its day-to-day behaviour outside of the dynamics of the name dispute. Examples include its close relations with Serbia, which was the single biggest international pariah during the Yugoslav wars,⁵² or its veto in 1995 on economic aid to Albania even though this was supported by all other EU members at the time.⁵³

II. From international sympathy to favourable name proposals

It is not immediately obvious that the putative international sympathy towards the Macedonian side translated into more favourable proposals in the name talks. In the early 1990s, the dispute essentially arose out of thin air, as Greece had never objected to the name of the Macedonian republic within the Yugoslav Federation during the Cold War. This meant that the red lines on both sides were being developed overnight, which encouraged the then mediator and predecessor of Mr. Nimetz, former US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, to experiment with proposals ranging from *Republic of Macedonia*

⁴⁸ International Crisis Group, ‘Macedonia’s Name,’ p.II.

⁴⁹ The Ohrid Agreement and Its Implications <http://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=563> (Accessed on November 20, 2017)

⁵⁰ Frkoski, ‘The Character of the Name Dispute,’ p.5.

⁵¹ Glenny, ‘The Macedonian Question,’ p.153.

⁵² Zoran Kosanic, ‘Obstacles to FYROM’s Membership of NATO,’ Rome: NATO Defence College, 44, 2009, p.3.

⁵³ Glenny, ‘The Macedonian Question,’ p.153.

(*Skopje*)⁵⁴ to *New Macedonia*.⁵⁵ One is hard pressed to find evidence of an inclination to sympathize with the Macedonian side at this stage. While the former proposal indeed required the smallest possible concession from Skopje, the latter all but mirrored the Greek red line, as the word *Macedonia* is not only modified by the word *New*, but there is also a clear hierarchy between the *old* Macedonian region in Greece and the putatively *new* Macedonia proper.

A similar duality of one (set of) proposal(s) more favourable to Skopje and another (set of) proposal(s) more favourable to Athens was observed in the wake of the 2008 NATO Summit. This period of intensive negotiations was preceded by two important developments. First, in 2004, the Bush administration made a shocking decision to recognize Macedonia under its constitutional name.⁵⁶ This constituted the single biggest shift in the negotiating dynamics towards Skopje’s position in the entire history of the dispute. Second, Macedonia had become one of the three remaining countries of the so-called Vilnius Group of NATO aspirant countries that were still not part of NATO,⁵⁷ together with Croatia and Albania. As argued earlier, all three countries had been deemed to have met the membership criteria, and were expected to join NATO at the Bucharest Summit in 2008. At the backdrop of the US recognition of the constitutional name of Macedonia proper, Greece might have feared that Washington would pressure it to accept the accession to NATO of Macedonia proper, not under its provisional name FYROM in accordance with the Interim Accord, but under *Republic of Macedonia*.

Thus, in what can be seen as voluntary hand-tying, or making a minimal concession of one’s own volition that would then serve as a mere pretext for rejecting actual concessions down the line, the Greek parliament unanimously passed a 2007 resolution recognizing that whatever name is eventually agreed on for Macedonia proper, the word ‘Macedonia’ should be part of it.⁵⁸ In practice, this was not even a minimal concession; it was a mere recognition of the *fait accompli* of the provisional name *Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, which already includes the word ‘Macedonia,’ as does every

⁵⁴ Frckoski, ‘The Character of the Name Dispute,’ p.11.

⁵⁵ International Crisis Group, ‘Macedonia’s Name,’ p.13.

⁵⁶ Ivanovski, ‘The Macedonia-Greece Dispute,’ p.9.

⁵⁷ Dimitrov, remarks at ‘Great Risk, Great Reward.’

⁵⁸ Helena Smith and Patrick Kingsley, ‘Macedonia Open to Changing Its Name to End 24-Year Dispute with Greece,’ *The Guardian*, 16 December 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/16/macedonia-open-to-changing-its-name-to-end-24-year-dispute-with-greece>, Accessed on 30 November 2017.

other name proposal that has ever been put forward either by Mr. Vance or by Mr. Nimetz.

III. Skopje’s missed opportunity: the 2008 NATO Summit

Thus, when Mr. Nimetz put forward in 2007 his duality of Athens-favorable, composite name proposals (*Northern Macedonia, Independent Macedonia* etc.) on the one hand, and the Skopje-favorable proposal *Republic of Macedonia-Skopje* on the other hand, Athens argued that it was Skopje’s turn to make a concession. The exact course of the talks at this crucial juncture remains a subject of speculation, with SDSM insisting that VMRO-DPMNE had accepted the Skopje-favoring proposal, while then Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski insists that he only agreed to put it down to a referendum.⁵⁹ Even if Mr. Gruevski is telling the truth, it is of crucial importance whether he only agreed to call the referendum, or if he actually pledged to advocate for the ‘yes’ vote, which would have made a significant difference given the excellent approval ratings of his government at the time.⁶⁰ If Mr. Gruevski did not promise the latter, then he left no leeway to NATO member states to pressure Greece into accepting *Republic of Macedonia-Skopje*.

It is, of course, impossible to assess whether the US or any other country was willing to exercise the desired pressure anyway. Yet, if Mr. Gruevski did not do ‘his part of the job,’ then it would hardly be fair to remember the Bucharest Summit as an international betrayal with no country being willing to stand up for Skopje. This sense of betrayal was nonetheless only accentuated by the fact that Greece did not even have to use its veto power formally; rather, NATO made a joint decision not to extend an invitation to Macedonia based on a ‘lack of consensus,’⁶¹ which was code for a Greek veto. Yet, the very fact that the name proposal *Republic of Macedonia-Skopje*, as a minimal adaptation of the constitutional name *Republic of Macedonia*, had constantly been on the table between 1991 and 2008 (albeit together with less favourable proposals), is an unambiguous indication of international sympathy towards Skopje in this dispute. This indication is further strengthened by the fact that 140 countries recognize Macedonia proper under its constitutional name *Republic of Macedonia*. It is hardly fair to accuse the

⁵⁹ ‘Gruevski: Pred Bukurest prifativ referendum za Republika Makedonija (Skopje),’ *MKD*, 31 May 2012, <https://www.mkd.mk/35033/makedonija/gruevski-crvenkovski-bukurest-referendum-za-republika-makedonija-skopje>, Accessed on 30 November 2017 (in Macedonian).

⁶⁰ Kristijan Fidanovski, ‘DPMNE and Macedonia’s Name Dispute: A Historic Chance Wasted,’ *Vostokian*, 3 July 2016, <http://vostokian.com/dpmne-and-macedonias-name-dispute-a-historic-chance-wasted/>, Accessed on 30 November 2017.

⁶¹ Radek Czulda and Marek Madej, *Newcomers No More: Conprovisional NATO and the Future of the Enlargement from the Perspective of Post-Cold War Members*, International Research Institute in Warsaw, 2015, p.251.

outside world of ‘not doing more’ than this for a country with such limited geopolitical significance as Macedonia, especially since ‘doing more’ inevitably implies spoiling relations with a long-standing NATO and EU member.

Thus, international perceptions of the dispute between 1991 and 2008 can be seen as fairly sympathetic to the Macedonian side considering the geopolitical constraints. This sympathy coincided with the gradual democratization of Macedonia proper, which was fairly successful despite the occasional obstacles typical of all transitioning societies. It also coincided with the continuous willingness of different Macedonian governments to go to great lengths to satisfy international expectations. Not only did Macedonia proper agree to change its flag and amend its constitution to appease the unfounded Greek fears of territorial aspirations in 1993, but it also unconditionally embraced all of the internationally supported demands of its Albanian minority, following the limited interethnic armed conflict in 2001.⁶² Rather than opting for a military solution and deploying its national army to crush the geographically contained and militarily inferior Albanian rebellion, Macedonia proper opted for a diplomatic solution that was unpopular with many people, given the far-reaching collective rights (and privileges) mentioned earlier that were awarded to the Albanian minority as a result.

That said, successive governments in Skopje between 1991 and 2008 deserve criticism for deluding themselves (and the people) that the Interim Accord of 1995 would allow the country to get away with leaving the permanent resolution of the dispute in a limbo and still proceed with its global integration. While Greece was in blatant violation of the Interim Accord with its 2008 veto, this accord had actually prohibited Greece from blocking the global integration of Macedonia proper under its provisional name FYROM until a permanent compromise was reached. Despite this, successive Macedonian governments failed to push for a permanent compromise during the previous seventeen years, instead embracing the misguided and much-repeated maxim that ‘time was working in their favor.’⁶³ However, Skopje deserves praise for its willingness to compromise with Athens (as in 1993), as well as for its commitment to creating a fully inclusive state with little precedent in the Balkans (as in 2001). As argued above, this behaviour reaped considerable rewards. After 2008, many of those rewards were withdrawn or even reversed. The Macedonian citizens will never know whether the outside world would have applied the necessary pressure on Greece if Mr. Gruevski had been braver before the

⁶² International Crisis Group, ‘Macedonia’s Name,’ p.2.

⁶³ Ibid, p.23

2008 NATO summit, or if Skopje had stayed the course and kept behaving constructively after the summit, which it clearly did not.

IV. The tragedy of ‘antiquization’: Skopje shooting itself in the foot

The 2008 NATO summit changed everything. Eager to capitalize on the widespread sense of international betrayal at home, Mr. Gruevski managed to destroy most, if not all, of the international sympathy towards Macedonia proper that had been so painstakingly won and maintained across party lines in the previous two decades. The ‘antiquization’ project was largely a response to the Greek veto, but it had begun causing damage to Macedonia proper even before the NATO summit. The first sign of Mr. Gruevski’s obsession with reaffirming the tenuous claim of historical continuity between Alexander the Great and present-day Macedonia proper was the renaming of the Skopje airport and the biggest highway in the country after the ancient emperor in 2007.⁶⁴ This was Skopje’s own version of ‘voluntary hand-tying’ with the purpose of improving its negotiating position. The renaming was supposed to remind everyone that, no matter what name was eventually agreed on, the country would necessarily be disowning (part of) its thousand-year history by accepting it, and should therefore not be asked to make additional concessions. Yet, Mr. Gruevski failed to consider the fact that voluntary hand-tying only works for the stronger actor. When Skopje adopted this method, it merely enabled Athens to use the ‘antiquization’ to argue that it had been right all along in fearing Skopje’s irredentism. This claim was made already with regards to the 2007 renaming, as Greece, albeit rather cynically, justified its NATO veto in 2008 by accusing Skopje of having violated the provision on maintaining good neighbourly relations from the Interim Accord,⁶⁵ thus cherry-picking this particular unfortunate action over the previous twenty-six years of constructive behaviour.

The negative consequences of the ‘antiquization’ for Skopje’s position in the name talks is clearly mirrored in the proposals discussed after the NATO summit. While composite name proposals had until then always been balanced with *Republic of Macedonia-Skopje*, in 2009 Mr. Nimetz put forward *Northern Republic of Macedonia* as the only proposal he thought contained the best prospects of acceptance by both sides.⁶⁶ Even some Western think-tanks that had previously argued vigorously that the outside world should

⁶⁴ ‘Renaming Balkan airports to annoy the neighbours,’ *The Economist*, 9 November 2017, <https://www.economist.com/news/europe/21731164-alexander-great-and-other-insults-renaming-balkan-airports-annoy-neighbours>, Accessed on 30 November 2017.

⁶⁵ Pop-Angelov, ‘A Disputed Name,’ p.80.

⁶⁶ Frckoski, ‘The Character of the Name Dispute,’ p.13.

prompt Greece to accept *Republic of Macedonia-Skopje*⁶⁷ now did not even bother to mention this name as a possibility.⁶⁸

In fact, there is some evidence of the kind rarely available in social science for the proposition that Macedonia’s position in the name dispute was tremendously weakened by the ‘antiquization’ project. In 2015, Macedonia proper was shattered by the revelation of wiretapped recordings of phone conversations between high-level government officials indicating various types of abuse of power.⁶⁹ The conversations were topically arranged in different sets, with one of the most shocking sets being dedicated to the name issue. The conversations contained two major revelations. First, between 2010 and 2011, Mr. Gruevski’s government had been actively engaged in secret negotiations with the Greek government, without formal UN mediation, and via the chief of Macedonia’s intelligence services rather than via the mandated negotiator.⁷⁰ Second, as revealed in a conversation between Mr. Gruevski, the aforementioned intelligence chief, and the then-foreign minister, the government was prepared to accept a composite name, such as *Northern Macedonia* and *Upper Macedonia*, even though this had previously been written off as completely unacceptable.⁷¹

To the extent that *Republic of Macedonia-Skopje* seems unlikely to ever return to the negotiating table, Mr. Gruevski’s ‘antiquization’ might have caused permanent damage to the Macedonian position in the dispute. Yet, the positive correlation between the democratization and relative openness to compromise of Macedonia proper from 1991 until 2008 and the relative favorability of the name proposals during this time provides some hope. By returning to the policies of the ‘pre-antiquization’ days, the new government in Skopje might still be able to negotiate a somewhat favourable compromise in a dispute where the bar for ‘favourable compromise’ is low for Skopje by definition. Even if Macedonia proper ends up having to concede in the first dimension (composite name), there are still three more levels to negotiate at, and the proper use of ‘domestic policy for foreign consumption’ could still go a long way.

After all, there is an important reason why ‘domestic policy for foreign consumption’ might be particularly effective under the present circumstances. As a result of growing fears of Russian influence in East European countries, some of which the

⁶⁷ International Crisis Group, ‘Macedonia’s Name.’

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Zoran Zaev, ‘Pres 33 (video, dokazi) Zaev: Gruevski tajno se pazarel za imeto pregovaral mijalkov,’ *SDSM*, 16 May 2015, <http://arhiva.sdsm.org.mk/default.aspx?articleId=12045&mId=55&agId=6>, Accessed on 30 November 2017.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

West considers as firm parts of its own sphere of influence, international attention to Balkan stability and therefore to the name issue might increase. A 20-page policy strategy recently published by the Washington, D.C. think-tank Atlantic Council advocates for an immediate increase in attention to the Balkans as the next theatre of the ‘new Cold War.’⁷² This perception could be highly beneficial to Skopje in its pursuit of a third actor in the dispute that would tilt the unfavourable strategic balance. The fear that ‘there could be a Montenegro for every Moldova, and a Serbia for every Ukraine’⁷³ might indeed form part of Western strategic calculations amidst worsening relations with Russia, which may well be a good thing for the name dispute.

CONCLUSION

As Winston Churchill once put it, ‘the Balkans produce more history than they can consume.’⁷⁴ In the past twenty-six years, rather than ‘de-historicizing’ the dispute, the two governments have used every available opportunity to instrumentalize the dispute for domestic political purposes by burying themselves ever deeper into claims of historical exclusivity. This has inevitably resulted in the cementing of their respective red lines, thus rendering the dispute seemingly impossible to resolve.

Whatever (if any) the eventual solution of the dispute may be, it will have to consist of a compromise within the four dimensions identified earlier. Athens might have to abandon the fourth dimension and reduce the name dispute to what it is, rather than extending it to the Macedonian nation and language, as any name proposal would otherwise never pass in a popular referendum in Macedonia proper, regardless of how the question might be phrased. Similarly, Skopje might have to resign itself to the fact that the inevitability of a modifier (possibly even a geographical rather than a political one) in the first dimension has become a *fait accompli* thanks to the policies of the previous government. After all, it is not quite obvious that a political modifier should be preferable to Skopje. Having the word *democratic* in your name is hardly a self-fulfilling prophecy, as authoritarian countries such as the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and the Democratic Republic of the Congo can surely testify.

⁷² Sarah Bedenbaugh, Damir Marusic, and Damon Wilson, *Forward: A New US Strategy for the Region*, Washington, DC: Atlantic Council, 2017.

⁷³ Janusz Bugajski, remarks at ‘Great Risk, Great Reward: Tackling the Balkans’ Enduring Political Challenges,’ *Atlantic Council Future Europe Initiative*, 29 November 2017.

⁷⁴ Pop-Angelov, ‘A Disputed Name,’ p.94.

If the new government in Skopje is successful in returning to the old course of ‘domestic policy for foreign consumption,’ it might have more leeway in the second and third dimensions. The second one, or the scope of the new name, might prove particularly hard to compromise on, since doing so would imply that the entire strategy of gaining bilateral recognition of the constitutional name from 140 countries, which has been pursued tirelessly for the past twenty-six years, has been misguided. Ultimately, it remains to be seen whether the two countries will emulate their common role model, Alexander the Great, and untie ‘the Gordian knot’ of the name dispute, which has been endangering Balkan stability for far too long.

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