

## MACEDONIAN-GREEK SOCIETAL SECURITY DILEMMA: REAL OR IMAGINARY INCOMPATIBILITY?

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**Abstract.** *On the question of Macedonia's societal security needs, which ethnic Macedonians view as crucial for the preservation of Macedonian identity (the name of the state, nation and language), its neighbor to the south opposes any and every reference to "Macedonia". Greece does not deny the Slavic identity of Macedonians, but strongly objects to the name "Macedonia", which it believes to be part of the Greek cultural heritage. Greeks consider the ancient Macedonians to have been the ancestors of today's Greek Macedonians living in the geographical region known as Aegean Macedonia, and, as such, the name Macedonia is considered in Athens as being part of Greece's cultural heritage. Hence, Greece wants the Republic of Macedonia to incorporate a geographical qualifier into its official name, thereby distinguishing the Greek Macedonian identity from that of its northern neighbor. Against the backdrop of this societal security dilemma, the Macedonian national identity and the Greek Macedonian identity are locked in competition. This paper will focus on misconceptions between the parties and the quest for solutions to the Macedonian-Greek societal security dilemma.*

**Keywords:** *Societal Security Needs, Identity, Integration, Isolation.*

### *Introduction*

The dynamics of the process of action and reaction have been under way since the early days of Macedonian independence<sup>1</sup>. Immediately after the declaration of independence, Greece expressed concern that Articles 3 and 49 of Macedonia's new constitution, which deal with – Macedonian national minorities in neighboring countries, encourage territorial claims. In order to meet concerns

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<sup>1</sup> Spyros Damtsas, "Changing Perceptions of Security between Neighboring Countries", in Gustav E. Gustenau (eds.), *Ten Years After: Democratization and Security Challenges in South East Europe*, Vienna, 2001, pp. 93-106.

regarding possible territorial claims, the Assembly of the Republic Macedonia, on January 6, 1992, adopted amendments I and II of the Constitution, which altered and expanded Articles 3 and 49. The problem escalated when the Republic of Macedonia asked the member states of the European Union (then the European Economic Community) to recognize its constitutional name. Although the Republic of Macedonia, according to the Arbitration Commission for former Yugoslavia, met the conditions for recognition of independence (along with Slovenia), Greece blocked its recognition by the European Union. Then, strongly influenced by Greece, the member states of the Community, in the Lisbon Declaration of June 27, 1992, urged Macedonia to change its name to one that did not contain the word "Macedonia", if it wanted to be recognized as an independent state. This was seen by ethnic Macedonians as a threat to their identity, which they associate with the name of the state. Macedonia did not accept the ultimatum.

Since a solution to the problem could not be found within the EU, the problem was shifted to the UN. Under the influence of Greece, on April 8, 1993, the UN accepted the Republic of Macedonia under the temporary descriptive name "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", pending resolution of the name issue. In addition, the Security Council of the UN, with Resolution No. 845 of 18 June 1993, asked the two sides in the dispute, the Republic of Macedonia and Greece, to accelerate the talks and to reach a solution under the mediation of the UN. Talks did not yield the expected compromise, so after a change in the Greek government, Greece took a series of measures, among them a trade embargo, that sought to force the Republic of Macedonia to take a softer line in the dispute, i.e., to redefine the societal security needs which it considers important for the realization of its national identity. All this could have triggered a spiral of action and reaction, which in turn could have caused destabilization of the region. The Greek embargo ended with the intervention of a third party, the United States, which literally forced the two sides to sign the Interim Accord of 13 September 1995. This was done to neutralize the dynamics of action and reaction.

The agreement envisaged that Greece would recognize the Republic of Macedonia under the provisional name and renew economic and trade ties with it. For its part, the Republic of Macedonia was to provide assurances that it had no territorial claims against Greece. The country had to change its flag and to make changes to the Constitution that would guarantee that it had no territorial claims against the Greek part of geographical Macedonia. Finally, both sides were obliged to undertake trust-building measures and to seek a mutually acceptable name by which the state would be referred to in international organizations. The US diplomat Matthew Nimetz was appointed as mediator, to conduct talks on the name issue. He was to facilitate negotiations in which both sides were to find a way out of the identity (societal) security dilemma. Despite the good will of the mediator and his several proposals for a compromise solution to the dispute, the parties remained firm in their positions. Placing the societal security dilemma in a theoretical framework, it can be said that the dilemma was put on ice for a certain period, while awaiting a solution.

*Intensifying the Relations between the Parties:  
Action and Reaction*

This period of “frozen societal security dilemma” lasted until the NATO summit in Bucharest, when the Greek side began to show signs of nervousness, anticipating that the Republic of Macedonia would receive an invitation for NATO membership under its “provisional name”. This would have strengthened Macedonia’s negotiating position in the name dispute. Hence, Greece requested that the dispute be solved before the Republic of Macedonia was granted membership in NATO. For their part, the Macedonian authorities took a series of measures (the renaming of Skopje’s airport as “Alexander the Great<sup>2</sup>, naming the new city football stadium as “National Arena Philip II” etc.), believing that such actions worked to strengthen the Macedonian identity and negotiating position. The Greek side perceived them as a threat to their national and cultural identity. None of this contributed to solving the societal security dilemma. Hence, there was concern among members of the international community, especially the United States, that such moves could trigger a spiral of measures and countermeasures, which might adversely affect regional stability. They emphasized the need for communication between the parties so that they could, through the process of talks, recognize that both identities can exist and develop independently.

The Greek veto, expressed at the Bucharest Summit on 3 April 2008, on NATO’s extended invitation to the Republic of Macedonia to join the alliance, placed the country in a very difficult situation. NATO asked the Republic of Macedonia to find a “mutually acceptable solution” to the dispute with Greece, so that the state would receive an invitation for membership. The situation with EU membership is similar. In the autumn of 2009, the European Commission (EC) recommended opening negotiations for EU membership of the Republic of Macedonia. However, at the same time the Council of Ministers of the EU required “a negotiated and mutually acceptable solution on the name issue, under the auspices of the United Nations”. The recommendation was repeated in subsequent years, but the situation did not change. In November 2008 the Republic of Macedonia filed suit against Greece with the International Court of Justice, alleging that Athens had violated its obligations under the Interim Accord, i.e., by blocking Macedonia’s accession to NATO. The court’s decision was reached in December 2011 and was in favor of the Republic of Macedonia. But that did not make it possible for the state to join either NATO or the EU. Instead, Macedonia’s Euro-Atlantic integration remains at a standstill, with progress conditional upon resolution of the name dispute that has been inflicted on Macedonia by Greece.

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<sup>2</sup> The Republic of Macedonia considers Alexander the Great, who built an empire that stretched from the Balkans to India, to be part of its cultural heritage and, more recently, the framework around which modern Macedonian national identity is formed. However, Greece also refers to the heritage of Alexander, despite the fact that he spoke a medieval Macedonian language and fought against the Greeks. Greece claims the Hellenic heritage of the ancient Macedonians and distinguishes between them and those with Slavic roots. However, it is likely that ancient Macedonians were assimilated by other nations who conquered the Balkans after the fall of the Macedonian empire. For more on the ethnic roots of the ethnic Macedonians see: Lidija Slaveska, *Macedonian genesis (some aspects)*, Matica and Macedonian Foundation “Ramkovski”, Skopje, 2008 (in Macedonian: Лидија Славеска, *Македонската генеза (некои аспекти)*, Матица македонска и Фондација „Рамковски”, Скопје, 2008).

### *Identity Security Needs of the Parties to the Dispute*

Currently, the positions of both parties in the name dispute can briefly be defined as follows<sup>3</sup>. Greece's position of "one name [for all uses] that will not contain the word Macedonia" has evolved into "a name [for all uses] that includes the word Macedonia and a geographic qualifier". The stipulation "erga omnes" or "for all uses" is not sufficiently clear. Is it for "all international uses", including the passport, or "for all purposes" including internal use? Greece, on several occasions, has rejected the proposal that "Republic of Macedonia (Skopje)" be adopted for international use<sup>4</sup>.

Judging by statements from Macedonian politicians, there is no consensus on the issue. However, the official government position can be defined as follow<sup>5</sup>. The Republic of Macedonia strives for a solution that will not change the country's constitutional name and will not endanger "Macedonian national identity, the individuality of the Macedonian nation and Macedonian language" and citizens<sup>6</sup> majoritarily vote to agree to a possible solution on a referendum<sup>7</sup>.

Therefore, this conflict is characterized as "national" versus "quasi-national" because of the following: The requirements of the Republic of Macedonia are not exclusive; Macedonians depend on the name "Macedonia", which also serves as the country's name and is the name of the largest ethnic group in the country, the Macedonian people. In other words, the identity of ethnic Macedonians is attacked. For Macedonians, the name issue is a matter of identity and existence as a distinct ethnic group. Macedonians have no other "home" state

<sup>3</sup> Such defined positions are provided in the publication: *Macedonia name dispute (views of the public in Macedonia)* and MCMC IDSCS, Skopje, 2011, p. 8 (*Спорот за името Македонија (ставови на јавноста во Македонија)*), МЦМЦ и ИДСЦС, Скопје, 2011, стр. 8).

<sup>4</sup> On Greek positions in the dispute see: Evangelos Kofos, "The Controversy over the Terms 'Macedonians' and 'Macedonian': A Probable Exit Scenario", in *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1, January 2005, pp. 129-133.

<sup>5</sup> See: Ljubomir D. Frčkoski, *The Character of the Name Dispute between Macedonia and Greece*, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung office Macedonia, Skopje, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> According to the results of a survey by Kalina Lechevska on how to find and verify the "final solution to the name dispute with the Greeks", the largest portion – 40% of respondents – believe that a solution should be reached through a referendum. Of the remainder, 15% believe that the government itself should negotiate and decide, while 11% said the government should negotiate and Parliament should have the final say. Better cooperation is suggested by 10%, who said that the government should decide after seeking consent from the opposition. Four percent of respondents prefer a public debate organized by political parties and 3% want this debate, but organized by civil society organizations. Only 3% believe that the ultimate solution will be found by debates organized by municipalities, while 15% do not know how this dispute will be resolved. In terms of ethnicity, the desire for a referendum is widespread among the Macedonian population: 51%, while among the Roma it is 44%, and among Albanians only 12%. In contrast, the majority of Albanian respondents (30%) believe that the government should decide, while only 8% of Macedonian respondents share this view. (Simoska Emilia, Peter Atanasov, Lechevska Kalina, *Democratic consciousness among the citizens of Macedonia*, Culture, Skopje, 2012, p. 59). (Симовска Емилија, Атанасов Петар, Лечеvsка Калина, *Демократската свест кај граѓаните на Република Македонија*, Култура, Скопје, 2012, стр. 59).

<sup>7</sup> According to another survey of public opinion, a majority of citizens (64%) of all ethnic and party affiliations requires a decision on the name via a referendum. Support for the referendum has been growing since December 2010 from 54.4% to 64%, including a rise in support among ethnic Albanians from 34% in 2010 to 49.5% in 2011 (*Macedonia name dispute (views of the public in Macedonia)* and MCMC IDSCS, Skopje, 2011, p. 22) – (*Спорот за името Македонија (ставови на јавноста во Македонија)*), МЦМЦ и ИДСЦС, Скопје, 2011, стр. 22).

that will protect their identity. Furthermore, their identity has been threatened by the country's other neighbors, and a provisional name implies the temporary character of the state. On the other hand, ethnic Greeks can freely express their identity through the name of their country, without any conditions arising from the Macedonian side. The Republic of Macedonia has no demands, nor does it have any problems regarding the name of the Greek state. Indeed, it even accepts the name of the northern Greek districts that contain the word "Macedonia"<sup>8</sup>. Ethnic Macedonians from the Republic of Macedonia have no objection, nor do they feel their national identity is endangered when Greek citizens who feel so inclined identify their regional identity as "Greek Macedonian". Hence, we cannot say that there is a real "security dilemma", "national / ethnic" vs. "national / ethnic", but there is a virtual societal security dilemma "national" versus "quasi-national". Both national identities, Macedonian and Greek, can persist and thrive independently and satisfy their "societal security needs", necessary for the survival and development of their identity. There is not a "real" incompatibility, where the existence of one identity endangers the other, but an "imaginary" incompatibility. The Greek side cannot perceive that the existence of the "other" does not jeopardize Greek existence. The main problem is the breakdown in communication. The parties should talk to each other, so that they can recognize that the other side has no "societal security needs", which would prevent them from being themselves.

The applicability of the concept of societal security of the state in this case is based on the presence of basic element of the concept, misperception and the "illusory" incompatibility. Despite the feeling that national identity is something personal and cannot be judged by others, the Macedonian side is aware of reality and accepts talks with the Greek side in order to find a mutually acceptable solution. But both sides at this point are not willing to solve the problem through the bilateral negotiations, especially as Greece is a member of NATO and the EU, two organizations in which Greece has a right of veto and to which the Republic of Macedonia has applied for membership. Hence it seems that external assistance and pressure are essential for solving this issue.

*If There Are No Macedonians, the Greeks Will Be  
Completely Themselves*

Who we are often means who we are not. Some societies may require "others" to remind themselves of their own true identity. This is what Michael Ignatieff calls a national "definition of the other"<sup>9</sup>. National movements blame "others" for crimes committed in the past and label them as bearers of negative intentions towards the nation. This is confirmed when neighboring countries

<sup>8</sup> Since August 1998 there have been three districts: Western Macedonia, Central Macedonia and East Macedonia (Nikovski, *The Macedonian issue back on the table*, Matica Macedonian Skopje, 2012, p. 8) – (Ристо Никовски, *Македонското прашање повторно на маса*, Матица македонска, Скопје, 2012, стр. 8).

<sup>9</sup> Ignatieff Michael, *Blood and Belonging, Journeys into the New Nationalism*, Vintage Books, London, 1994, p. 5.

refuse to grant equal rights to minorities who are living within their national borders. "These minorities are considered to be dangerous if there is no pressure against them; moreover, the pressure on them is morally confirmed by their (fictional) unacceptable behavior in the past and the future"<sup>10</sup>.

Thus, strengthening of one identity can also include attacks on, and therefore weakening of, the other identity. As Weaver suggests: "This logic of the identity ... means that someone else often becomes part of our self-identification. If one identity depends on the other one, then the other one has a dual role, continuing to be necessary for my identity yet constituting someone who prevents me from being completely myself"<sup>11</sup>. In taking this incomplete (weak) identity, you can denounce the other for not allowing you to be fully yourself: if I could get rid of the other, then finally I could be myself. This is the way the Greeks have defined their ethnic identity. That has been elegantly described by Nikos Dimou in his book *On the Unhappiness of being Greek* where he says "... we hate us so much, because we are not tall, blond, with 'Greek nose'...we hate the neighbors because we look alike ... the mere presence of the other frightens the Greek so – the other should be 'annulled'"<sup>12</sup>. That means, if there are no Macedonians as an ethnic identity then probably they (the Greeks) would be able to feel completely themselves.

To achieve the above-defined identity, it was necessary for everything that contains the Macedonian prefix to be subsumed under the Greek national identity, or, as noted by the former Greek deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Droutsas, "the Macedonian identity is part of the identity of every Greek"<sup>13</sup>. Therefore, it was necessary for Macedonians as an ethnic minority to be eliminated, so that they, the Greeks could be fully realized. To realize this idea, they carried out the forcible displacement and assimilation of the ethnic Macedonian population.

Can the Macedonian state, given the bilateral dispute with Greece and from a position outside the structures of NATO and the European Union, do more for ethnic Macedonians in Greece? Indeed, the Macedonian government is trying, through the mechanisms of the United Nations and the Council of Europe, to put this issue on the agenda of these institutions. But so far there have been no significant results. With its integration into Euro-Atlantic structures and by strengthening the reputation and capacity of the Macedonian state, this impact would be considerable, and therefore the possibilities for supporting the Macedonian minority in Greece would be larger. But to achieve this, a compromise with Greece over Macedonia's name has to be reached first, which in turn has identity implications. So, we are running in this vicious identity circle. Lately, there is a danger that the Greek approach towards defining Macedonian national identity

<sup>10</sup> Van Evera Stephen, "Hypotheses on Nationalism and War", *International Security* 18, 1994, pp. 28-29.

<sup>11</sup> Weaver Ole, "Insecurity and Identity Unlimited", *Working Paper* 14, Copenhagen Peace Research Institute, 1994.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted by Dimitar Dimitrov, *Culture of the identity*, ID Makavej, Skorje, p. 90 (Димитар Димитров, *Културата на идентитетот*, ИД МАКАВЕЈ, Скопје, стр. 90).

<sup>13</sup> <http://vesti.alfa.mk/default.aspx?eventid=16102&mid=36>, accessed on 02.01.2013.



will be accepted. According to Rizvan Sulejmani “Macedonians, from the position of defenders of Macedonian identity, turned into “aggressors” of the Greek identity<sup>14</sup>. Following that logic, everything that is Greek has to be either eliminated or adopted, so as to allow Macedonians to be fully themselves.

### *Enhancement of National Pride, a New Government Policy*

When ethno-nationalism is on the rise in response to a perceived external threat in a particular state, the ethnic identity of the groups in the country will also intensify, to oppose the “loss” of identity space. The greater the intensity of the external threat, the greater will be the intensity of ethno-nationalism and the stronger the mobilization of ethnic groups.

In the theory of ethnic relations, if an identity is under threat, the logical response is for it to strengthen its societal capacity, using cultural means to reinforce the social cohesion and distinctiveness of the group, and ensure that the group will reproduce itself effectively. In this sense, it follows that culture becomes a security policy. That is precisely the starting point of the new Macedonian strategy to protect the endangered ethnic identity of the Macedonians. This policy can be summarized in Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski’s speech in Rome: “We will not give up our identity, culture and literacy, because they are essential prerequisites for the prosperous long-term future of every nation... there are no administrative mechanisms to erase the memory about who we are... there is no substitute for our identity... because of it, we will join Europe as nothing other than Macedonians... although one member-state of the EU and NATO is attempting to prevent our Euro-Atlantic integration, denying our identity and uniqueness, we are fully committed to joining these institutions in a dignified manner, as a nation whose culture and language are one of the pillars of European culture<sup>15</sup>.”

In such a situation, “Macedonian nationalism is growing not so much out of pride but out of the desperation to survive<sup>16</sup>”. The Albanian rebellion in 2001 did not bring anything, but intensified among ethnic Macedonians the feeling that their existence is threatened. This feeling has been reinforced among Macedonians by the Greek blockade of our integration into NATO and the EU. Few have joined in an open debate on Macedonian identity and Macedonian nationalism. In such circumstances, some kind of repercussion could have been expected, such as the currently renewed pursuit for confidence and pride. But the real question is: How long can Macedonians hold onto this position? And what

<sup>14</sup> Rizvan Sulejmani, *The Macedonian identity – regional and international stability and integration processes of the Republic of Macedonia*, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Skopje, 2012, p. 14 (Сулејмани Ризван, *Македонскиот идентитет – Регионалната и меѓународна стабилност и процесите на интеграција на Република Македонија*, Фондација Фридрих Еберт, Скопје, 2012, стр. 14).

<sup>15</sup> Speech by Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski at the Italian Ministry of Culture as a patron of the Year of Macedonian language “*Culture, literacy. – prerequisites for lasting prosperous future*”, Rome, May 25, 2008, (<http://www.vlada.mk/english/Speeches/May2008/Obrakanje>, accessed 5 June 2008).

<sup>16</sup> A. Loomis, L. Davis and S. Broughton, *Politics & Identity in Macedonia. Intrinsic versus Extrinsic Understandings*, Paper presented at the conference “Macedonia–Macedonians: Changing Contexts in the Changing Balkans”, London, 14–16 June, 2001, p. 12, cited by Ulf Brunnbauer, “The Implementation of the Ohrid Agreement: Ethnic Macedonian Resentments”, *Centre for the Studies of the Balkan Societies and Cultures*, Vol. 1, University of Graz, (2002), p. 9.

effects can this policy have in terms of national identity, its recognition and realization or, otherwise, its isolation and denial? Macedonia faces a strategic choice and changes in its strategic culture. Whether this will be a “slight shift“, compromise and integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures or a “fundamental change” in the objectives of the security policy remains uncertain<sup>17</sup>.

### *Solutions for the Macedonian-Greek Identity Security Dilemma*

The fact that the EU and NATO have ignored the judgment of the International Court of Justice raises the question of Macedonia’s foreign policy options<sup>18</sup>. Will the state abandon Euro-Atlantic integration and seek other solutions for its development, or will membership in these organizations remain the goal of Macedonia’s foreign policy? The government of the Republic of Macedonia, in its public pronouncements declares that reforms will continue and the country’s Euro-Atlantic aspirations will not be abandoned. But something needs to be changed in Macedonia’s approach to the problem. It is obvious that current tactics are not yielding results.

As time passes, the Republic of Macedonia will face fatigue, induced by prolonged waiting at the gates of NATO and the EU. This has two dimensions. One is public support for membership in the Euro-Atlantic integration. According to opinion polls, that support is in decline, although remaining very high. However, if changing the name of the state is posited as a hypothetical condition for membership, then the support is considerably lower<sup>19</sup>. As time passes, support will inevitably decline still further. The other dimension is the fatigue of the administrations, in the Republic of Macedonia, NATO and the EU, over the long period of “marching in place”. The European Union has tried to be innovative in its approach to Macedonia, which is why it conceived the political dialogue at a high level<sup>20</sup>. However, such dialogue cannot be a substitute for membership negotiations.

<sup>17</sup> Slaveski Stojan, “Macedonian Strategic Culture and Institutional Choice: Integration or Isolation?”, in *Western Balkans Security Observer*, Journal of the Belgrade School of Security Studies, No. 14, July-September 2009, pp. 39-56.

<sup>18</sup> See: Kepeska Jovanka, *Why and how in the dispute over our name*, Makavej, Skopje, 2010 (Кепеска Јованка, *Зошто и како во спорот за нашето име*, МАКАВЕЈ, Скопје, 2010).

<sup>19</sup> Citizens’ views on the matter have drastically changed if compared with the views they had held before the NATO summit in Bucharest, where 83% of citizens were against changing the name of the country to gain membership in NATO. Research done immediately after the Summit revealed that Macedonian Albanians changed their opinion. While one month before the summit, 52% of ethnic Albanians agreed with changing the country name under which Macedonia would join NATO, now 94% of them agreed to such a change. Basically two-thirds of the respondents who would have changed the name were ethnic Albanians. Meanwhile, the number of ethnic Macedonians who were against the change of name in return for NATO membership decreased from 95% to 80%. (Source: www.crpm.org.mk, accessed 20 May 2008).

<sup>20</sup> According to a public opinion poll conducted in July 2012 on citizens’ perception of the EU’s commitment to Macedonia’s membership, the following results were obtained. A plurality of citizens believed that the EU did not want Macedonia to become a member of the Union (44.3%). There were differences in perceptions, i.e., there were conflicting views between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians. The majority of ethnic Macedonians (51.4%) perceived that the EU did not want to admit Macedonia, while the majority of ethnic Albanians (57%) believed that the EU still wanted Macedonia to be a member (Source: www.mcms.org.mk, accessed July 31, 2012).



There are three possible scenarios for the way this problem will play out: continued obstruction by Greece, Macedonian capitulation, or Greek willingness to compromise. Continued obstruction is the most likely one, as Greece faces no external cost in maintaining its stance. The Greek approach suggests that it does not see any incompatibility in its position with its significant private investments in Macedonia and the extended limbo status of the country. Macedonian capitulation to Greek demands would mean denial of Macedonian identity, and could cause serious complications in the fulfillment of the Framework Agreement. It would only encourage challenges from neighboring countries over Macedonian identity, which would further destroy the cohesion of the country. Only a fair compromise that would protect Macedonian identity and meet Greece's request for a name for international use might be a solution in the interest of regional stability. Given the inequality in power between Macedonia and Greece, the UN mediation alone probably will not lead to a solution. In other words, the solution to this dispute should take into consideration the seriousness of the problem and its roots, and a transatlantic strategy that will find solutions to problems should urgently be created<sup>21</sup>.

On the internal political scene in Macedonia, tacitly or openly, three options for the future of the country can be discerned. The first is to maintain our request to join NATO and the EU under the "temporary" and "tacitly" accepted descriptive name, and to justify the legitimacy of our societal security need to be called the Republic of Macedonia, with the language and the nationality<sup>1</sup> to be called Macedonian. <sup>2</sup> The second option is a compromise solution to the issue of the country's name which would meet basic societal security needs in terms of the nation and the language, thus hastening integration of the state into NATO and the EU.<sup>3</sup> The third option is to suspend negotiations with Greece and seek alternative ways for economic and social development outside NATO and the EU. Each of these options has its pros and cons, which will be discussed further in the paper.

Basically, the name issue comes down to this: What kind of nation does Macedonia want to build, civil or ethnic? This is because each of these three alternatives requires that the ruling Macedonian party have an Albanian partner in the government. The concept of Macedonia as a national state of the Macedonian people, as defined by the 1991 Constitution, with equal status accorded to other ethnic groups in the country, proved to be unsuccessful. The Framework Agreement and the constitutional amendments of 2001 initiated the shift towards a civic concept of the state, but with many ethnically defined elements. The question now is whether this civil concept will be further developed, or whether efforts will be made to keep this "compromise solution", which is not sustainable in the longer term. Returning to the decision of 1991 without the partition of the state is not possible. That being the case, provisionally speaking, the "Macedonian part" will again face the same challenges from its neighbors over recognition of the national identity.

<sup>21</sup> P. H. Liotta, "The "Future" Republic of Macedonia: The Last Best Hope", in *European Security* 9/1 (Spring 2000), p. 82.

*Euro-Atlantic Integration of Macedonia:  
The Quest for the Least “Painful” Compromise*

The quest for the least “painful” compromise and the Euro-Atlantic integration of the country is the variant proposed by both the opposition and Albanian political parties. Although the ruling VMRO-DPMNE party declaratively supports this option, it seems that it does not make enough effort for it to be formalized. The government does not find it necessary to achieve “national consensus” or to adopt a national strategy of “Macedonian red lines” over this Greek-imposed dispute. This option implies that we would accept a compromise with Greece on the name under which we would be addressed in all international organizations in which Greece is a member. For that name to be acceptable to the Republic of Macedonia, it would have to not affect the fulfillment of societal security needs to preserve the identity of the country and the largest ethnic group in it, the ethnic Macedonians.

In this case, the desired membership in NATO would be achieved, negotiations for EU membership would begin and relations with Greece and consequently with Bulgaria would develop at a faster pace in all areas. By reaching a compromise with Greece and achieving NATO membership, military threats to the national security of the state could be reduced, and survival of its sovereignty and territorial integrity would be achieved, paving the way for EU membership and faster economic progress of the country.

Today NATO membership would mean not just being part of a security organization that protects member states from external threat, but would primarily be a political instrument that would give the country greater credibility in international relations, facilitate the process of joining the EU, provide an opportunity for better realization of national interests and a better environment for foreign investments. These “side effects” are, at this time, more important for Macedonia than the security guarantees provided by the Alliance.

According to opinion polls, most of the population is still for integration of the Republic of Macedonia with NATO and the EU. However, Albanians are not willing to wait indefinitely to realize these goals<sup>22</sup>. That does not mean that if a solution to the dispute is not immediately found, they will leave the government, that a political crisis will be created and they will seek to partition the country so that they can achieve integration under their own flag. But we should be aware that disintegration processes in the country will be intensified. The same applies to those ethnic Macedonians who think that at this point the integration of the country into NATO and the EU is of such importance that it should not be deferred until the name dispute is resolved.

The dilemma is whether we can negotiate for a name that would be different from the constitutional one and would allow full realization of the identity of

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<sup>22</sup> The majority of citizens of Macedonia (61.4%) believe that Euro-Atlantic integration should be a strategic priority of the country’s foreign policy. The ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians have common views on the strategic orientation of Macedonia, with support for European integration among ethnic Albanians slightly higher (74.4%). Source: [www.mcms.org.mk](http://www.mcms.org.mk), accessed July 31, 2012.

ethnic Macedonians. The Macedonian decision concerning the kind of nation to be built, ethnic or civil, will determine the minimum inalienable attributes of identity. The fact is that before the Bucharest Summit the Republic of Macedonia endorsed the proposal, made by mediator Nimetz, for the name to be “Republic of Macedonia (Skopje)”, but that was rejected by Greece as unacceptable. It is obvious that Greece requires an adjective that will stand before the word “Macedonia”, by which, in their view, it will have a greater influence on words derived from that name concerning the language, nation, the culture, i.e., the adjective will have certain identity implications<sup>23</sup>. According to some analysts, Greece is seeking in this way to indirectly resolve the issue of the Macedonian ethnic minority in Greece<sup>24</sup>. If there is no parent state with the name Macedonia, there is also no Macedonian ethnic minority<sup>25</sup>. This is a classic “securitization” of the issue<sup>26</sup>. If the Republic of Macedonia finds a compromise with Greece that does not mean that it will turn its back on the ethnic Macedonian minority in Greece. Furthermore, it bears mentioning that in addition to parent countries that care for their minorities abroad, there are other international mechanisms for the protection of minorities.

Lately, two names stand out (“Republic of Northern Macedonia“, “Republic of Upper Macedonia”), which seem to be acceptable to Greece<sup>27</sup>. The question is, will acceptance of either of those names have implications for national identity, and, if so, what are those implications?

According to some analysts, with the acceptance of one of these solutions, Macedonian identity as we know it today will cease to exist. According to others, acceptance will not have any identity implications. The truth lies somewhere in between, and depends on how we define the Macedonian nation. If we define the nation in ethnic terms, then of course it will affect the identity markers of the

<sup>23</sup> Citizens are worried that even if the dispute is settled, Greece will require new concessions on identity and language until finally it destroys Macedonian identity (40.4%) and that there will then be a schism between “traitors” and “patriots” (21, 7%). These two threats are threats to the survival of the nation and probably the main motive in refusing compromise. Both sides base their case on previous experiences. Greece, three times so far (1991/92, 1994/95 and 2008), used trade and political roadblocks to push for a change of the constitution, the flag and so on (*Macedonia name dispute (views of the public in Macedonia)* and MCMC IDSCS, Skopje, 2011, p. 22) – (*Спорот за името Македонија (ставови на јавноста во Македонија)*), МЦМЦ и ИДСЦС, Скопје, 2011, стр. 22).

<sup>24</sup> For more see: Трајанос Пасонс, *Историја на македонското движење*, Матица македонска, Скопје, 2010; Viktor Gaber, *Recognition and Denial (Greece and Macedonians after Versailles)*, Matica Makedonska, Skopje, 2010.

<sup>25</sup> Ристо Никовски, *Македонското прашање повторно на маса*, Матица македонска, Скопје, 2012.

<sup>26</sup> Since it is difficult to expect Greece to directly recognize the Macedonian nation (identity, culture and language), a possible solution to the fear of new demands from Greece is the proposal by Gerald Knaus of the European Stability Initiative (ESI). The solution calls for an agreement between Greece and Macedonia to enter into force on the day of accession of Macedonia to the EU (in NATO it would be accepted under the temporary reference). Thus, Greece would change from being an inhibitor to being a promoter of Macedonia’s membership, while Macedonia would know that there are no new obstacles in its path towards the EU, whether from Greece or from countries that oppose the expansion (possible referendum in France or vetoes from countries with influence of the far right).

<sup>27</sup> Interestingly the name “Our Republic of Macedonia” has been proposed for international use. This solution has a historical basis because many ethnic Macedonians, especially in Aegean Macedonia, where they cannot freely express their identity, call each other “countryman”. See: Traian Malinowski, “Your country is our Republic of Macedonia” (Трајан Малиновски “Вашата земја е наша Република Македонија”). ([www.dnevnik.com.mk](http://www.dnevnik.com.mk), accessed on 3.12.2012).

nation. In ethnic nations or nation-states, the name of the state and the name of the largest ethnic group in the state are identical (Bulgarians and Bulgaria, Serbia and Serbs, Greeks and Greece etc.). Consequently, the language and the nation bear names derived from the name of the state.

On the other hand, if the nation is defined in a civil sense, then a compromise would be less painful and would not affect the identity of the nation. If we decide to build a civic nation that bases its legitimacy on the need for the internal cohesion of society with all its members who willingly obey a set of policy principles and institutions, then it will be easier to reach a solution that will be acceptable to most of the citizens of Macedonia. In fact, there are many countries in which the largest ethnic group is not the bearer of sovereignty, but rather the citizenship as a whole. For example, Switzerland and Belgium are not national states of Swiss and Belgian people, there is no Swiss or Belgian language. The same goes for Britain, Austria and Greece. And yet these countries are successful and prosperous, and the ethnic communities inhabiting them have their societal security needs satisfied.

The Framework Agreement, imposed by the international community (US and EU) was an attempt to define the Republic of Macedonia in a civil sense. Hence the attitude some allies have towards the Republic of Macedonia that its name does not affect the identity of the nation. (The United States, for example, recognized Macedonia under its constitutional name, and requested the country to make a compromise with Greece). Countries that hold that attitude want to see Macedonia evolve along civil lines, and according to them the compromise with Greece should contribute to this.

Following its independence under its first constitution, the Republic of Macedonia tried to build an ethno-nation deriving its sovereignty from the Macedonian people as the bearer of sovereignty, with equality for all other citizens no matter what ethnic group they belonged to. This concept proved unsuccessful, and the Framework Agreement had to supplant it and set the country on a purely civil foundation. Sovereignty was supposed to derive from the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, without any reference being made to Macedonians in the Preamble to the Constitution. But amendments to the Framework Agreement retained the ethnic element in the Preamble. So today we have a basically civil constitution, but with many ethno elements in it.

There has already been one compromise over the name of the country, when the expression "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" was "tacitly" accepted as a condition for admission to the UN. At that time, the assessment of Macedonian leadership was that threats to the military aspects of the national security of the young Macedonian state, and the need to preserve sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence, were greater and more important than the question of identity. Therefore, the Macedonian leadership tacitly agreed to the state being admitted first to the UN, and then to other international organizations, under the "provisional" reference. In addition to this assessment there was also the belief that this "temporary" name would only last for a short time.

Regardless of the fact that the International Court of Justice has ruled that right is on the side of the Republic of Macedonia in its dispute with Greece, the state leadership must be aware that it is in the interest of the Republic Macedonia to enter NATO and the EU soon. If we delay the resolution for a few years, that does not automatically mean we will have a better international position, or that Greece would be ready to accept the Macedonian positions. Greece has gone through several leftist and rightist governments, and their position has remained the same. Under the Democratic administration of Barack Obama, the Republic of Macedonia has lost the position it had during the administration of George W. Bush. It would be foolish to predict that, if the Republicans win the next presidential elections, we will have a better position than the one we have under the current Obama administration. In addition, Europeans are not overly fond of the Republic of Macedonia at this point. So, waiting for the creation of a new favorable environment in the near future is unrealistic.

It should be borne in mind that if we do not reach an agreement that meets 0 if the state is “inside” rather than “outside” NATO and the EU. Then, the “Macedonian voice” can “bargain” to achieve some national interests. Otherwise, we will have to wait for some other countries and officials of international organizations to understand “Macedonian societal security needs” and to defend those positions before the bodies of NATO and the EU. If the decision is made that we should continue talks with Greece until finding a mutually acceptable solution to the name issue which would enable integration of the Republic of Macedonia with NATO and the EU, then we should bravely enter into negotiations. Before starting negotiations, we need to determine our bargaining position, the starting point and the non-negotiable red line. It should be borne in mind that the Republic of Macedonia starts from the position that the current name for international use is “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and that a name is required that will be more acceptable and that will reflect the character of the country’s population. More, the “societal security needs” (markers of identity) that define the group identity of the Macedonian nation and the largest ethnic group in the country, the ethnic Macedonians, need to be defined. If we are building a civil society, then we should not connect the identity of the largest ethnic group in the country with the name of the state. We should be aware that the Republic of Macedonia, its constitution recast by the Framework Agreement, is no longer a “national state of the Macedonian people” but a multiethnic society defined in the preamble of the Constitution, where, in addition to the Macedonian people as bearers of sovereignty, “citizens living within its borders who are part of the Albanian people, Turkish people, Vlach people, Serbian people, Roma people, Bosniak people and others” also appear. The largest ethnic group in the country is the ethnic Macedonians, hence they have the greatest responsibility for the future development of the country. It should be borne in mind that there are many prosperous countries, in which the state is not identical with the largest ethnic group in it (Switzerland, Belgium, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States, etc.). They have built a supranational identity that reflects the character of the state (Swiss, Belgians, Britons, Americans, etc.) and does not jeopardize the



identity of the ethnic groups living in it, but rather allows them to express their identity freely. Accepting some adjective in the name of the state will create favorable conditions for forging a new political identity on the foreign policy scene, in which all ethnic groups of the country can recognize themselves, and which should ensure their loyalty to the state. At this point there is no public support for such a decision, because of fear among ethnic Macedonians of the loss of their identity<sup>28</sup>. However, such a solution would not necessarily erase the identity of the largest ethnic group in the country, ethnic Macedonians. But, it means they will voluntarily give up part of the primacy they now have in the country, which is opposed by some of Macedonia's neighbors, and slowly lose ground to other ethnic groups. They will essentially continue to have the greatest impact in the country, and it will prevail as long as they form a majority in the country. But statistics show that they are losing this primacy. If they stay out of NATO and the EU, it is likely to speed up that process<sup>29</sup>.

In the debate, so far on this issue, the current Macedonian leadership, in particular the ruling VMRO-DPMNE party, has placed a high priority on the societal security needs of the Macedonian nation, declaring that they would not agree to compromise the name of the state, even if that meant the state would not receive an invitation for membership in NATO and the EU, although they did not back away from talks with Greece. However, not all political parties in the country are united on this issue. The political parties representing ethnic Albanians advocate for a compromise, and are not ready to wait for it indefinitely. They have nothing against the name "Republic of Macedonia", but are not willing to "suffer" for its preservation. Opposition parties of ethnic Macedonians agree with a solution that will not go into identity issues. Some think that the "Republic of Northern Macedonia" is a good solution (for example, VMRO-NP<sup>30</sup>). The government which, in accordance with the nature of things, should be the initiator of a possible solution, shows no desire to do so, i.e., it does not intend to settle this issue during its current term in office. The biggest problem is that the ruling party and the opposition do not have a common strategy on this issue. In this situation, it is difficult to believe that anyone in the country would be ready to scale back the level of societal security needs and accept a compromise, if they would then be proclaimed by their rivals as "betrayers of national interests".

<sup>28</sup> The majority of citizens (69.4%) and a large portion of ethnic Macedonians are against the UN definition of nationality / citizenship, such as "citizens of the Republic of Northern Macedonia". The majority (74%) of citizens and ethnic Macedonians (87%) and most citizens of all ethnicities are against further definition of the language in the UN, such as the "official language of the Republic of Northern Macedonia" (*Macedonia name dispute (views of the public in Macedonia)* and MСМC IDSCS, Skopje, 2011, p. 21) (*Спопот за името Македонија (ставови на јавноста во Македонија)*, МЦМЦ и ИДСЦС, Скопје, 2011, стр. 21).

<sup>29</sup> According to a public opinion survey, 51% of respondents "are happy to live in Macedonia and would not emigrate". Thirty-three percent said that "at this point they would like to live in another state", while 15.5% of the population said they "had always wanted to emigrate to another country". So almost half the population "dreams" of leaving the country. According to the author of the study, there was "great citizen dissatisfaction accompanied by low levels of patriotic feeling". See: Petar Atanasov, "The state, the citizens, ethnic distance and national identity" in *Indzhievska Slavica and Simoska Emilia, Political culture and identity*, FOSM and ISPPi, 2010, 92-94 (Петар Атанасов, „Државата, граѓаните, етничката дистанца и националниот идентитет“, во *Инџиевска Славица и Симоска Емилија, Политичката култура и идентитетите*, ФООМ и ИСППИ, 2010, 92-94).

<sup>30</sup> See: Ljubco Georgievski, *It's me*, Les Legis, Veles, 2012 (Љубчо Георгиевски, *Тоа сум јас*, Лес Легис, Велес, 2012).

*Independent Development without NATO and Without the EU:  
Macedonia – Switzerland of the Balkans*

The option to suspend talks over the name and to pursue the independent development of the Republic of Macedonia without NATO and without the EU is the variant that is the least considered. As an option, directly or indirectly, it has not been presented by any politician. To be strictly accurate, some analysts and the Macedonian diaspora have come out in favor of this option as an alternative model for social development. Strategic partnerships with the United States, Turkey and Israel or the countries of BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) are listed as possible alternatives. Public support for this foreign policy orientation is small, and there is a difference in the perceptions of ethnic Macedonians and Albanians<sup>31</sup>.

The arguments for this option are that keeping the name of the country or the identity of the largest ethnic group, the ethnic Macedonians, is non-negotiable. We have been living without NATO and without the EU, so we will continue to do so, say the proponents of this option. I agree with these views that for certain issues that relate to identity (expression of ethnicity, recognition of language and culture) many ethnic groups have paid more than NATO and EU membership are worth. The best examples of this are the Albanians in the region, who, in order to exercise certain rights related to free expression of identity, have paid a very high price (wars, migration, human casualties, etc...). Hence, it is perfectly legitimate to say that, if needed, we can do without NATO and without the EU. However, that requires a minimum consensus in the country and a willingness to seek a “new way“, that will provide economic development and favorable conditions for ethnic coexistence. For this to happen, there should be a political entity to propose it and to gain support among citizens in some of the coming elections. In addition, this option should be supported, or at least our choice be understood, by both the neighboring countries and the international community (US, EU, Russia). History has proven that “self-proclaimed neutrality” may not be observed by neighbors and major powers if it does not fit into their strategic interest.

This option should not be excluded, because any failure of the current government’s policy can be transformed into this offered option<sup>32</sup>. Political parties are afraid to publicly discuss this option, because the pressure of international actors (USA, NATO and the EU) would be great, especially towards the ruling party. This option, by definition, would not mean isolation of the country from

<sup>31</sup> According to a public opinion survey about independent development without NATO and without the EU, a small minority of citizens (16.5%) were in favor. Almost every fourth citizen is not in favor of those options, because they didn’t know about them (11%). Among ethnic Albanians, support for closer ties with the BRIC countries is virtually non-existent (0.5%) (Source: [www.mcms.org.mk](http://www.mcms.org.mk), accessed July 31 2012).

<sup>32</sup> In this period of “limbo” status, the idea has been mooted, albeit rather timidly, of a Balkan Benelux, i.e., closer cooperation of Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro, some compare this option with the idea of a Greater Albania. Why Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are not part of this proposal it is difficult to understand. Given that Montenegro has already started negotiations for EU membership, it is not difficult to conclude that Macedonians would be left by themselves, surrounded by Albanian lands. Can this be a new option for the future of the Macedonian state? This idea has the support of the Albanian factor in the government, the DUI. This proposal, although it is not officially out of the “kitchen of the EU”, as a proposal for closer regional cooperation does have the support of the EU (*Utrinski Vesnik*, 18.07.2012) (*Утрински весник*, 18.07.2012).

international currents, but rather adjustment. Certainly, cooperation with NATO would be maintained through the Partnership for Peace program, and with the European Union through its Neighborhood Policy. It would be good for the Republic of Macedonia to participate in peacekeeping missions led by NATO and the EU, but such participation should be kept to a minimum<sup>33</sup>. Some other special arrangements for cooperation might be found, but the influence of the Republic of Macedonia in these institutions would be minimal. Such an option would be negative in its advancement of the nation's interests and the care of ethnic Macedonian minorities in neighboring countries.

In this case, in international organizations where Greece is a member, the Republic of Macedonia would still be called "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", with all the negative effects that that name has in terms of identity markers. Of course, in that case the state would be freer to openly request to be admitted to international organizations under its constitutional name. But that does not mean that such requests would be approved right now. Greece would continue, by all available means, to impede acceptance under our constitutional name.

Bilaterally, it is possible that those countries that have held back because of the interests they share with Greece would decide to use the constitutional name. On the other hand, there is also a danger that some countries that have recognized the country under its constitutional name (e.g., US) would start using the "FYROM" reference because of the non-cooperativeness of the Republic of Macedonia and the termination of talks with Greece.

In such conditions, Macedonia's ethnic Albanians, as compensation for the loss of their Euro-Atlantic perspective, would probably require the internal redesign of the state, i.e., some federal or confederation elements along the lines of Switzerland. Needless to say, this option would require a minimum consensus among political actors, between the ruling party and opposition, and among the Macedonian and Albanian political entities.

### *Instead of a Conclusion*

The strategy of the current government can be defined as "going through the motions of talking, while waiting for better times"<sup>34</sup>. The current financial crisis in the EU and "enlargement fatigue" are arguments in favor of this option. This

<sup>33</sup> The state earmarks considerable financial resources for Army participation in peacekeeping missions. Due to the poor economic situation of the country and the low salaries of employees in the Army, soldiers massively apply for participation in these missions, thereby creating an opportunity for corruption among those who determine the participants in the missions. See: "The Ministry of Defense declared war on corruption", *Nova Makedonija*, 02.12.2012 ("Министерството за одбрана и објави војна на корупцијата", *Нова Македонија*, 02.12.2012, [www.novamakedonija.com.mk](http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk), accessed on 03.12.2012).

<sup>34</sup> The majority of citizens (78%) of all ethnic communities are in favor of resuming the talks with Greece; while 19% believe Macedonia should end the negotiations (3% did not answer). Interestingly, about half or 49% of ethnic Macedonians support resumption of negotiations with Greece, 23% would end the talks, while 28% did not give any response. In contrast, the greater portion of ethnic Albanians are against termination of negotiations. (Source: [www.crpm.org.mk](http://www.crpm.org.mk), accessed 20 May 2008). Macedonian citizens are against changing the name of the country, but give support to the negotiation process continuing. These considerations are not coherent, given that Greece insists on negotiations that will lead to a replacement of the name "Macedonia" with another that is mutually acceptable. It is unlikely that Macedonia will keep its name in the course of the negotiations. Macedonian political leaders should publicly tell the truth that continuing negotiations would likely mean changing the name of the country, i.e., "compromise".

strategy has several fields of action. First is the promise that reforms would proceed. Next is the fact that our participation in peacekeeping missions<sup>35</sup> is not questioned. It seems that, in these two areas, things are generally moving along nicely. But we have not achieved good results in the political part of our efforts for membership. The diplomatic offensive to use positive ruling by the International Court of Justice has not delivered good results. Despite numerous meetings with senior NATO officials and officials of the leading countries of the Alliance, the response of NATO authorities is that there is need to find a mutually acceptable solution with Greece on the name dispute. Apart from the positive judgment of the Court, it is increasingly clear that the strategy of taking our case to The Hague has yielded no results. Neither NATO nor the EU have shown any inclination to respect the judgment of the Court and enable Macedonian membership under the “provisional reference“. As predicted by experts, the judgment of the ICJ is a legal victory for the Republic of Macedonia which does not imply a political victory, i.e., acceptance of the constitutional name of the country for membership in the United Nations and other international organizations. The final decision on the issue is supposed to be again brought before the Security Council of the UN, where one of the permanent members (France), strongly supports Greece in the name dispute. But the US and UK are pushing for a solution to occur through talks, not via the courts. It is that part of the action which is the weakest link in the Macedonian strategy.

Meanwhile Macedonia should continue to cooperate with NATO in the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program, and with the European Union in the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP). Non-membership in NATO and the EU is not a disaster for the nation, as it has survived so far even outside these groupings. There are many countries which are members of the EU but not of NATO (Austria, Ireland, Sweden, Finland, Cyprus, Malta), just as there are countries which are members of NATO but not the EU (Norway, Turkey, Iceland, Albania). But only Norway and Switzerland are countries that have not submitted applications for EU membership. Norway, due to its rich deposits of oil, thought it would be better to develop outside the EU, while Switzerland has a long-standing policy of “neutrality“. But both countries cooperate closely with the EU. In addition, those countries which are not members of the Alliance, actively cooperate with NATO in the PfP.

It is good that there is increased communication and activity of Macedonian politicians with their Greek counterparts, but there have been no results. Thus, left to themselves, without the pressure of international mediation, it seems there will be endless talks which won't produce a solution that will satisfy both sides. However, talks are essential if the dispute is to be resolved. In other words, if a solution is to be found, which would be acceptable for Greece and which would not affect the identity markers of the Macedonian nation.

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<sup>35</sup> Since 2002 Macedonia has constantly participated in peacekeeping missions. At times, its percentage contribution relative to the size of its army and population has far exceeded that of some NATO member-states. However, the state will not receive an invitation to join NATO because of its significant participation in peacekeeping missions, but because of its eventual resolution of the dispute with Greece. Hence, consideration should be given to reducing our participation, thereby saving financial resources that are best applied to other needs in a time of economic crisis.

A logical question arises: Given that a solution to the dispute could not be found in the past 20 years, how much more time is needed?<sup>36</sup> Recently it has seemed that the international community (NATO and EU) has grown tired of giving deadlines which are not respected, and has decided to leave the pace of negotiations up to the parties themselves. The opposition, which until recently had pressured the government with demands for a resolution as soon as possible, now seems to be aware that, in the context of the latest political crisis, conditions are not ripe for a settlement. For its part, the ruling party is not united in its position. While the prime minister of the government and president of VMRO-DPMNE openly pushes for a quick resolution of the dispute, it does not seem that enough efforts are being made to resolve the disagreement soon. The Albanian coalition partner, DUI, aware of the sensitivity of the issue, has cautiously adopted the same attitude as the opposition and the international community, asking that this question be brought to closure as soon as possible. The crucial question is, how much time Macedonia can, in fact, take over resolving this dispute without creating a political crisis that will affect interethnic relations. The “no hurry” option also raises the question of whether the Republic of Macedonia can develop at the same pace as its neighbors, and provide for the well-being of its citizens. Because, if that well-being is not delivered, separatist tendencies within the Albanian ethnic community, whose home state has been invited to join NATO, would be strengthened. On the other hand, if ethnic Macedonians do not see any future in their home country, they could apply for citizenship in one of the neighboring EU member-states (Bulgaria, Greece, prospectively Serbia and Montenegro) which, in fact, has already been happening. This will decrease the numbers of the largest ethnic group in the country. So, by firmly defending their identity, ethnic Macedonians may lose dominance in the state that secures their identity<sup>37</sup>.

So far, the government has not announced a change in its strategy of seeking to resolve the dispute with Greece, i.e., it has not announced a change in its foreign policy goals of obtaining membership in NATO and the EU. It is a strategy that follows the example of Turkey, which for many years has been an aspirant, and since 2005 has been negotiating for membership, but is in no hurry to complete these negotiations. Turkey uses the EU requirements for internal reforms as a means of resolving some open internal issues, such as, for example, the issue of democratic control over the army and the reduction of its role in society. On the other hand, Turkey, even without EU membership, has a high rate of economic growth. If the government of the Republic of Macedonia provides economic prosperity for its citizens and interethnic coexistence without tension, then chances that this strategy will prove successful will increase.

<sup>36</sup> The majority of citizens (58%) want a decision within a year, but only 26.9% expect that to happen, and most of the respondents (33.4%) expect a decision in the middle term (two to five years). A solution in the long term (six to ten years) is expected by 15.5%, while 24.2% thought a solution would never be achieved (*Macedonia name dispute (views of the public in Macedonia)* and MCMC IDSCS, Skopje, 2011, p. 21) (*Спопом за името Македонија (ставови на јавноста во Македонија)*, МЦМЦ и ИДСЦС, Скопје, 2011, стр. 21).

<sup>37</sup> When we are talking about the time dimension of when to resolve the dispute, we should, above all, bear in mind the regional picture. As long as neighboring countries (Albania, Kosovo, Serbia) are still not Euro-integrated, it can be said that the Republic of Macedonia has time. But if there is no solution to the dispute by the time they join the EU (the most optimistic projection is 2020), and in the meantime, we do not formulate an alternative policy, it will be much harder for the Republic of Macedonia.



In this case, the citizens of the Republic Macedonia should be aware that it will be a long struggle, because, as things stand now, of NATO member states, although many of them in bilateral contacts refer to the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name, only Turkey insists on the use of Macedonia's constitutional name "Macedonia" as a footnote, in all official documents of the Alliance. In this option, the Republic of Macedonia will have to gradually build its position with the help of its friends in NATO to insist that in official communication with the Alliance the constitutional name of the country be used, with the possibility, of noting in a footnote that Greece recognizes the country under another name, about which a mutually acceptable agreement would eventually be achieved. This is the essence of the negotiating position of the double formula, which the Republic of Macedonia argues for when conducting talks on the country's name.

In this variant, the Republic of Macedonia plays for time. To be more precise, for time in which the "societal security needs" of the Greek state, through which it realizes its national identity, may be redefined. It will enable the Macedonian side to fully express their national identity in an international context. In a sense, this is already happening. From the starting position that Greece would object to any name that included the word "Macedonia", the Greek position has evolved into a willingness to accept a composite name with a geographical qualifier that would contain the word "Macedonia". It could be expected that this position will further evolve, i.e., to get down to the level of "societal security needs", for realization of the Greek identity. In other words, Greece would recognize that the existence of the Republic of Macedonia is not a threat to the Greek state.

Today the international position of the Republic Macedonia is quite different from what it was in the first days of its independence. Macedonia has already existed as an independent state for twenty years. During this period, over 130 countries have recognized it as "the Republic of Macedonia" in bilateral relations. Three of those are member states of the Security Council of the UN (the United States, Russia and China). Furthermore, it has lived through the conflict in 2001 and is positioned at the doors of NATO and poised for the start of negotiations for EU membership. However, we should be aware that we are in a challenging environment, with a prolonged political crisis and possible redrawing of borders in the region. Outside NATO<sup>38</sup> and the EU<sup>39</sup> it will not be easy for Macedonia to deal with these regional challenges.

<sup>38</sup> Just as a reminder, since 1999, Macedonia has been part of the Action Plan for NATO membership. First it was part of the "Vilnius Group", consisting of nine aspirants, which were later joined by Croatia. From this group, seven countries were invited to join NATO during the Summit in Prague in 2002. Macedonia, along with Albania and Croatia, was not invited. Then these countries formed the so-called "Adriatic Group". Again, as usual, the Republic of Macedonia remained the only member of the group that did not receive an invitation in Bucharest in 2008. Now the new members of the Adriatic Group (dubbed the A5), Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, have received a Membership Action Plan and will sit along with the Republic of Macedonia on the same bench. It is expected that Montenegro will join NATO at the Summit to be held on 8-8.07.2016.

<sup>39</sup> Regarding the EU, the Republic of Macedonia was the first of the Western Balkan countries which signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU in 2001. In 2005 it received candidate status, and for several years in a row has received a recommendation from the Commission for the start of negotiations. But Greece blocks it in the Council of Ministers. Meanwhile Serbia and Montenegro started negotiations for EU membership. This cannot but cause further disappointment and fatigue.

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