

MAIN DYNAMICS OF NAME DISPUTE: NORTHERN MACEDONIA AND GREECE

Ayça EMİNOĞLU , Buğrahan EMİR 

Karadeniz Technical University, Trabzon (Turkey)

E-mail: aeminoglu@ktu.edu.tr, emirrbugra@gmail.com

Abstract: *Macedonia is a critical region in terms of stability in the Balkans, its territory experienced many conflicts throughout history, some of which have still remained unsolved. For example, the dispute with Greece over the country's name has been a major problem for Macedonia's integration into the international community. This study aims to identify important historical factors in the relations between Greece and the Republic of Northern Macedonia, which have facilitated, inter alia, the settlement of the name dispute and the reasons for finding such solutions in a time of power gap separating the two countries. Undoubtedly, frictions between neighboring states had to be resolved to ensure a stable and secure environment in the Balkans. When resuming the analysis of the historical process, it is clear that despite some progress in the dialogue, no concrete results have been achieved. Lately, by taking decisive action and making some concessions, the governments of the two countries have taken an open position in the negotiations and tried to reduce the tension by concluding certain agreements. In this context, the authors identify six different factors that have facilitated the mediation of these issues between the two countries, trying to explain why this solution could be found today and not at some other time in history.*

Keywords: *Greece, Republic of Northern Macedonia, Name Conflict, Reconciliation, Peace, Integration*

Rezumat: Principalele dinamici ale disputei pentru denumire: Macedonia de Nord și Grecia. *Macedonia este o regiune critică în ceea ce privește stabilitatea în Balcani, teritoriul său cunoscând de-a lungul istoriei numeroase conflicte, unele dintre acestea rămânând nerezolvate până în prezent. De exemplu, disputa cu Grecia pentru denumirea țării a constituit o problemă semnificativă în procesul de integrare a Macedoniei în comunitatea internațională. Acest studiu își propune să identifice factorii istorici importanți în relațiile dintre Grecia și Republica Macedoniei de Nord, care au facilitat, între altele, lămurirea controverselor privind denumirea, precum și motivele găsirii acestor soluții într-o perioadă de decalaj de putere între cele două țări. Fără îndoială că fricțiunile dintre statele*

vecine trebuiau rezolvate pentru a asigura un mediu stabil și sigur în Balcani. La o reluare a analizei procesului istoric se poate vedea că, în pofida unor progrese în dialog, nu s-a ajuns la rezultate concrete. În ultimul timp, făcând pași decisivi și anumite concesii, guvernele celor două țări au adoptat o poziție deschisă la negocieri și au încercat să diminueze tensiunea prin încheierea unor acorduri. Într-un astfel de context, autorii identifică șase factori diferiți care au facilitat medierea acestor probleme între cele două țări, încercând să explice de ce soluția respectivă ar fi oportună acum și nu într-o altă perioadă din istorie.

INTRODUCTION

As of June 2018, the disputes between Greece and the Republic of Northern Macedonia, which have been among the most critical issues in the Balkans since the end of the Cold War and led to many other problems due to the name dispute, have come close to being solved. The gradual resolution of these conflicts has not only affected the two countries but also made significant contributions to the economic, political, and social life of the Balkans and to the potential peace, which is much sought after in the region. Although decision-makers want to resolve issues quickly, it takes longer for societies to benefit from the outcomes of these efforts. Besides, pressure from supranational organisations such as the European Union (EU) and NATO plays a significant role in resolving problems. The Republic of Northern Macedonia wants to achieve its long-awaited membership in the EU and NATO, while Greece intends to recover from long-standing economic struggles with its concessions.

Since the declaration of the independence of the Republic of Northern Macedonia, Greece has raised several objections. As a result, tensions have increased between the two countries. Throughout the process, successive Greek governments have acted uncompromisingly, by blocking Northern Macedonia's accession to regional organisations and demanding numerous concessions. Throughout the process, the governments of the Republic of Northern Macedonia have traditionally been the weak party. It is worth considering that Greece had not raised issues, particularly the name dispute, with Macedonia when the country was relatively weak but has only sought to solve the problem when it became relatively more robust. This article focuses on the changing attitudes of the two countries and evaluates two main topics. In the first part, the emergence and evolution of the problems between the two countries are discussed. In the second part, we examine why reconciliation is occurring now and not in the past decades with examples.

EMERGENCE OF PROBLEMS

Independence Process of Macedonia

Slovenia and Croatia gained independence from the Yugoslav Federation on June 25, 1991. Meanwhile, Serbia's efforts to dominate the region led by S. Milosevic made the Macedonians fear Serbian rule. Although Macedonians had various concerns about the disintegration of Yugoslavia, they were also influenced by the wave of nationalism that came along with this disintegration. For instance, some leaders, such as the president of the Republic of Macedonia Kiro Gligorov and the president of Bosnia and Herzegovina Alija Izetbegovic, advocated for the preservation of the integrity of Yugoslavia. However, citizens demanded independence. In the previous years, the Republic of Macedonia had been defined in the constitution as the "Republic of Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, and other ethnic groups." In 1989, it was amended in the revised constitution to be the "Republic of Macedonians and other people and ethnic groups".¹ Subsequently, a referendum for independence was held on September 8, 1991, with voters considering the prospect of a "Sovereign and Independent Macedonia." Albanians boycotted the referendum because they were not given the status of a "constituent nation" and their socio-cultural rights were limited. In total, 71.85% of the eligible voters participated in the referendum, equating to 1,495,625 people, and 95.09% of them voted for independence. Following the referendum, the Skopje administration declared its independence under the name of the "Republic of Macedonia" on September 17, 1991. Furthermore, the constitution, which was adopted on the same date, clearly states that the Republic of Macedonia belongs to the Macedonian nation by highlighting the phrase "founder nation." Other ethnic groups, such as Albanians and Turks, are mentioned as minorities.²

Following the referendum, the Macedonian parliament did not immediately declare independence. It decided to observe the developments and

¹ Tahir Kodal, *Makedonya'nın Bağımsızlığını Kazanması ve Türkiye* [The Macedonia's Achieving its Independence and Turkey], in "Çağdaş Türkiye Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi" [Journal of Modern Turkish History Studies], 2014, Vol. 17, p. 381.

² Cenk Özgen, *Balkanlarda Güvenliğe Yönelik Bir Tehdit: Yunanistan-Makedonya Anlaşmazlığı* [A Threat to Security in the Balkans: Greece-Macedonia Dispute], in "U.Ü Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi" [U.U Faculty of Arts and Sciences Journal of Social Sciences], 2013, Vol. 25, p. 334-335.

take a realistic and cautious approach. During this period, the parliament realised that Federal Yugoslavia couldn't continue, and declared independence on the date mentioned above, and went forward with the referendum. After the declaration of independence, Kiro Gligorov made a speech in the parliament where he said, Macedonia has followed the developments in Yugoslavia carefully, and after the assessment of the situation, it is seen that there is no other choice but to declare independence. In his speech, he clearly stated that independence was the last resort.³ Unlike other Balkan countries, Macedonia declared independence without a violent struggle. However, a United Nations (UN)-led preventive force (United Nations Preventive Force/UNPREDEP) consisting of American and Scandinavian troops arrived in the region to prevent a possible Yugoslavian attack. Turkey was one of the first countries to recognise Macedonia under its constitutional name.⁴

After independence was declared, the most significant reaction came from Greece. Their objections focused on the name, flag, and national coat of arms of the new country, and Greece referred to Macedonia as the "Republic of Skopje". The Greek government, which did not even want to use the word "Macedonian", decided to call the Macedonians "Skopjans".⁵ This fierce reaction from the Greek government included refusing to recognise its neighbouring country, and alleging that it was violating its security. Greece also pressured other states and the international community not to recognise the Republic of Macedonia. Additionally, the Greek government pursued a policy of economically isolating the Macedonian administration. The Republic of Macedonia, despite its peaceful independence process, suddenly became the centre of a potential Third Balkan War.

Moreover, in the early stages of its foundation, the country had to resist the hostile policies of Greece while dealing with its own economic and political issues. These pressures from Greece prevented Macedonia from being included in the international platform under its constitutional name. Its inclusion in the UN was only possible under the name of the "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (FYROM) since the Greek government took advantage of its veto power.⁶

³ Kodal, *Makedonya'nın Bađımsızlıđını...*, p. 384.

⁴ Nedim Emin, *Makedonya Siyasetini Anlama Kılavuzu* [A Guide to Understanding Macedonian Politics], in SETA Yayınları, İstanbul, 2014, Vol. 43, p. 15.

⁵ Kodal, *Makedonya'nın Bađımsızlıđını...*, p. 385.

⁶ Özgen, *Balkanlarda Güvenliđe...*, p. 335.

Historical Process of the Name Dispute

The problems between the two countries began in the sixth century with the arrival of Slavic tribes in the region of Macedonia, which was under Byzantine control at that time.⁷ The term "Macedonia" was used only to refer to a geographic area in the nineteenth century. Also, Macedonians were not considered a separate nation from Greeks, Serbs, Albanians, and Bulgarians. At the 1876 İstanbul Conference and Congress of Berlin, the great powers involved believed that the region is of mixed ethnic composition with Bulgarians being the first, and the Greeks being the second major ethnic groups.⁸ In the following decades, with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the competition began for Macedonia's population and territory, and new Balkan states emerged. The problems continued to grow during the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913 and between the two world wars. Competition between the two countries was based on nationalist norms and minority problems in the Balkans—rooted in the fact that none of the newly established states could unite within a territory that included only a single ethnic population. This problem became a vital issue in Macedonia involving various ethnic communities, such as Greeks, Bulgarians, and Slavs, as they objected to the existence of Macedonia.⁹

There was a significant difference between the nationalist perceptions of Greeks, Macedonians, Serbs, and Bulgarians in the territory. Because of these different perceptions and a clash of national ideologies like the Megali idea of a Great Serbia, Great Macedonia, and Greater Bulgaria, there was a constant confrontation among ethnic groups; each looking for a "proper" solution, and finding justification for the promotion of its historical rights. Macedonian people who used the Greek language and were under the influence of Greek culture were claimed to be "Greek" by the Greek side. They were also called the Hellenized population of Macedonia. Hellenism and the Megali Idea, meaning the recreation of the Byzantine Empire, claimed Macedonia as part of Greece based on cultural and historical rights and was the main Greek approach in the Balkans.

⁷ Fotis Mavromatidis, *The Role of the European Union in the Name Dispute between Greece and FYR Macedonia*, in "Journal of Contemporary European Studies", 2010, Vol. 18, No. 1, p. 48.

⁸ Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans: Twentieth Century*, Vol. 2, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 91.

⁹ Mavromatidis, *The Role of...*, p. 48.

On the other hand, Serbia also claimed rights to Macedonia based on "Ancient Serbia". According to this view, Vardar Macedonia was a part of the Serbian state, and the re-establishment of Ancient Serbia was the primary demand of Serbian nationalists. Bulgaria was also one of the states to claim rights to Macedonia based on its historical state rights over the country and the Slavic people of Macedonia. Also, they claimed that the Macedonians were speaking the western dialect of the Bulgarian language. Bulgarian interests in Macedonia derived from two historical events: first, the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate in 1870 by the Ottomans, and second, the creation of Great Bulgaria in the 1878 St. Stefano Peace Treaty by Russia and the subsequent Russian attempt to incorporate Macedonia into Bulgaria. These two historic events underpinned Bulgarian nationalistic aspirations in Macedonia.¹⁰

The year 1830 was an important date, as it witnessed the establishment of an independent Greek state. News of independence led to widespread repercussions in the Balkans, which were still under Ottoman rule. The Macedonian people under Ottoman rule backed the idea of establishing a free and independent Greek state. Yet almost 120 years later, when Macedonia gained its independence, the Greeks reacted oppositely. When Macedonians demanded recognition for an independent state, Greece replied by violating Macedonian airspace with military aircraft and organising military training in the region. Protests in Greece had an anti-Macedonian character. However, no one in Greece reacted negatively to Croatia and Slovenia when they announced their separation from Yugoslavia.¹¹ Hence, it could be assumed that Greece's reactions were not based on anti-separatist ideas per se, or from concern about the dissolution of its neighbours. In 1992, the Greek government and the Greek diaspora held demonstrations in various cities, including Thessaloniki and Melbourne, under the slogan "Macedonia is Greek."¹²

The problems between Greece and Macedonia can be categorised into three stages. The first stage starts with the establishment of the modern Macedonian state in 1991 and ends with the Interim Accord signed between the two states in 1995. This stage can be described as "great denial". It is characterised by two

¹⁰ Vladislav B. Sotirović, *Macedonia between Greek, Bulgarian, Albanian, and Serbian National Aspirations, 1870-1912*, in "Serbian Studies: Journal of the North American Society for Serbian Studies", Vol. 23, No. 1, 2009, pp. 28-39.

¹¹ Dejan Marolov, *The Relations between Macedonia and Greece in the Context of the Name Issue*, in "Balkan Araştırma Enstitüsü Dergisi", 2013, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 24-25.

¹² Victor Roudometof, *Collective Memory, National Identity and Ethnic Conflict: Greece Bulgaria, and the Macedon Question*, Praeger Publishers, Westport, CT, 2002, p. 31.

economic sanctions against Macedonia, the first in 1992 and the other in 1994. The second stage of the problem emerged after the signing of the 1995 Interim Accord, following the normalisation of bilateral economic and diplomatic relations. During this period, Macedonia struggled to be recognised by the international community with its constitutional name. The chances of peace in the second phase came to an end as Greece possessed veto power in two vital organisations: NATO and the UN. This led to the third and the final stage, the process which continues till the present day.¹³

In a different analysis¹⁴, it is stated that Greece uses three key methods of putting pressure on Macedonia. Firstly, as mentioned above, the economic pressure method was used; secondly, political pressure was applied and thirdly, military methods were employed. To persecute the Macedonian government economically, Greece implemented an economic embargo, which meant keeping Macedonia away from the port of Thessaloniki¹⁵. With this policy, the Greek government hugely impacted the Macedonian economy, which was going through a transition period. Macedonia was deprived of important energy sources, especially oil, through the embargo. However, essential items such as food, medicine, and fuel for hospitals were excluded. Under these circumstances, Macedonian foreign traders were forced to find different access routes through Albania and Bulgaria, and consequently, their costs increased exponentially. Besides, the embargo imposed by the UN on Serbia made the situation in Macedonia even more complicated. These circumstances increased smuggling, and the weak economic situation increased the tensions between ethnic groups and strengthened nationalism in Macedonia. At the same time, the embargo prevented foreign investments. Therefore, it created a vicious cycle that prevented the Macedonian economy from developing.¹⁶ As a result, with the Interim Accord signed in New York on September 13, 1995, through

¹³ Danailov Ljubomir Frčkoski, *The Character of the Name Dispute between Macedonia and Greece*, Progres Institute for Social Democracy, Skopje, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2009, p. 11–13.

¹⁴ Marolov, *The Relations ...*, p. 28.

¹⁵ The Macedonian Prime Minister wrote a letter to the Greek government and stated that they could sign a border guarantee agreement, otherwise they would apply to the UN Security Council. Also the EU has requested they remove the embargo. *8 Eylül 1991 Makedonya'nın Bağımsızlığı [September 8, 1991 Macedonian Independence]*, in <https://www.21yyte.org/tr/merkezler/8-eylul-1991-makedonyanin-bagimsizligi> (Accessed on 11.07.2020).

¹⁶ Marolov, *The Relations...*, p. 28.

the mediation of the United States (US) and the UN, Greece lifted the embargo on Macedonia.¹⁷

In addition to economic pressure, Greece's political pressure was incredibly strong. This pressure stemmed firstly from Greece's EU and NATO membership and secondly from the strong Greek lobby abroad. Macedonia faced political pressure when it applied for recognition under its constitutional name. The Greek state explicitly stipulated that Macedonia should change its legal name to gain recognition. Using its EU membership, despite the opinion of the Badinter Commission, Greece managed to determine the EU's position on this issue. Thus, the Lisbon summit clearly stated that Macedonia would not be recognised as long as the word "Macedonia" was mentioned in its constitutional name. Greece also ensured that it did not become a member of the UN under its constitutional name. As a result, the country became a member of the UN under the name "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (FYROM).¹⁸

In the end, Greece used military-psychological techniques by way of threat and repression. As stated earlier, the demonstration of Greece's military power was achieved through repeated military exercises at the Macedonian border and the occupation of Macedonia's airspace in the early 1990s. Greece has never used direct military force against the Republic of Macedonia, but it has used displays of military power as a means of intimidation.¹⁹

The Greek side claimed that Macedonia did not represent a unified whole, and it remained only a geographical name, not representing the population living there. Greece based its claims on the thesis that Alexander the Great and all Macedonians were Greek. According to the Greek point of view, the territory was a part of modern Greece as it was a part of ancient Greece, not only geographically but also in ethnic, linguistic, and cultural terms. Hence, only the Greeks have the right to identify themselves as Macedonians. Greek nationalists went even further and said, "Everything about Macedonia is Greek except its people, who are the people of Skopje [Skopians]". According to these allegations, the establishment of the Republic of Macedonia resulted in Greece experiencing problems with

¹⁷ Fatih Fuat Tuncer, Burcu Demir, *Makedonya'dan Kuzey Makedonya'ya: Bir Ulus Devletin Dönüşümü Üzerine Sosyal İnşacı Bir Analiz* [From Macedonia to North Macedonia: Social Constructivist Analysis of The Nation-State's Transformation], in "OPUS Uluslararası Toplum Araştırmaları Dergisi" [International Journal of Society Researches], 2020, Vol. 15, p. 5352.

¹⁸ Marolov, *The Relations...*, p. 28.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

"three S's": *sintayma* (constitution), *simvola* (symbols), and *simaia* (flag). Greek opponents also claimed that the "so-called Macedonians" stole Greek national values and claimed possession of Greek lands by using the Macedonian name in their constitution, using a drawing of the Tower of Thessaloniki on their money, and using the Greek symbol of the 16-ray Vergina on their flag.²⁰

Greece rejected not only Macedonia's name, flag, and constitution, but also the existence of the Macedonian nation as a whole. This is because of the Greek belief that the groups that call themselves Macedonian are the Greek-speaking "Slavophone Greeks" who belong to Greek history.²¹ The Greeks see them and their history as part of the Greek sphere of influence because of their historical affinity, relations, and ties with the ancient Macedonians. Thus, Greek historiography considers Macedonian historiographers, in laying claim to the ancient Macedonians, as occupiers or thieves.²²

From the perspective of the Macedonian government, the objections of Greece constituted an unacceptable situation. Macedonia tried to prove to the international community and Greece that it had no revisionist purpose and amended some of the articles in its constitution. The basic argument is that each country has the right to choose its name, and similar issues are experienced in other places and do not lead to regional threats.²³ They also argued that, contrary to Greek claims, they had their history and culture, and that their relations with the Greeks had been that of neighbours rather than sharing the same ancestors. However, due to both the disadvantage of being a newly established country and the problems experienced on a regional and global basis, they could not make their voices heard as much as the Greeks and could not effectively express their claims.²⁴

²⁰ Özgen, *Balkanlarda Güvenliğe...*, p. 336–337.

²¹ Şule Kut, *Balkanlarda Kimlik ve Egemenlik* [Identity and Sovereignty in the Balkans], İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, İstanbul, 2005, p. 129.

²² Mehmet Hacısalihioğlu, *Makedonya Güncel Tarih Kitaplarında Balkan Savaşları* [Balkan Wars in Macedonia's Current History Books], Uluslararası Balkan Sempozyumu: Balkan Savaşlarının 100. yılı, 2012, p. 174.

²³ Mavromatidis, *The Role of the European Union...*, p. 49.

²⁴ Yunus Çolak, *Makedonya'nın İsim Sorunu: Sebepleri ve Türkiye'nin Balkanlar Politikasına Olan Etkileri Bakımından Bir İnceleme* [Name Problem of Macedonia: Causes And Influence On Turkey's Balkan Policy], in "Hoca Ahmet Yesevi Yılı Anısına Uluslararası Türk Dünyası Eğitim Bilimleri ve Sosyal Bilimler Kongresi" [International Turkic World Educational Sciences and Social Sciences Congress, held in memory of Hodja Ahmet Yesevi year 2016], 2016, p. 233.

Two crucial factors lie at the heart of the problems between the two countries: historical symbols and figures; and Greece's policy on minorities in the country. Greek historiography accepted Alexander the Great and, to a certain extent, the Macedonian state founded before Christ as part of the history of the Greek nation-state.²⁵ The Republic of Macedonia objected to the claim that Greek historiography possessed Alexander the Great and that Macedonianism was a part of Greek culture and belonged to it. In addition to their opposition, Macedonians stated that the original Macedonian nation came from Slavic roots and never spoke Greek.²⁶ Another important point that should be emphasised is the confusion over what serves as a legitimate basis for claims in the region. As nationalism theory argues, community members have the right to live where they first appeared and to expect other groups to respect that right. However, this is also a problem in the Balkans in general, because all community members claim that they were there first. When looking at the claim between Greece and Macedonia, it is not easy to say which one was there first. The demands of both sides' are another aspect that further confuses the issue.²⁷

Greece's policy toward minorities living in the country is another factor that needs attention. The Greek government mostly perceived these minorities as a security problem, being concerned that minorities would identify themselves primarily with the states they regarded as their homelands. The importance of this issue can be better understood when the existence of the Macedonian minority in northern Greece is taken into consideration. Greece does not regard this minority in a positive light and suspects that they want to unite with Macedonia in the future, which inevitably leads to its refusal of the Macedonian nation as they are concerned about losing territory to this reunited Macedonian country. Also, the adoption of a constitution that was open to expansion after Macedonia gained independence alarmed Greece and turned the existing issues into more significant problems.²⁸

²⁵ Çolak, *Makedonya'nın İsim...*, p. 234.

²⁶ Halis Ayhan, *Makedonya ile Yunanistan Arasındaki İsim Sorununun Çözümünde Arabuluculuđun Etkisi* [Effect of Mediation for Resolution of Name Dispute between Macedonia and Greece], in "Kırıkkale Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi" [Kırıkkale University Journal of Social Sciences], 2019, Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 227.

²⁷ Gül Tuđba Dađcı, Asiye Őimşek, *Makedonya ile Yunanistan Arasındaki 'İsim Sorunu'nda Rol Oynayan Temel Parametrelerin Analizi* [The Analysis of the Basic Parameters that Have Role in the Name Issue between Macedonia and Greece], in "Yalova Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi", 2014, Vol. 10, p. 181–182.

²⁸ Çolak, *Makedonya'nın İsim...*, p. 234.

FACTORS FACILITATING RECONCILIATION

With the agreement signed by the foreign ministers of the two countries on June 17, 2018, in the Greek village of Psarades on the border with Macedonia, the name dispute, which had continued since 1991, came to a partial end. Both sides reached this compromise in different ways. Greece accepted the retention of the word "Macedonian" in the name of the newer state, which it had objected to from its foundation. Before this agreement was reached, Greece had consistently applied pressure, including embargoes and isolation, sought legal remedies, and offered incentives. For example, it imposed an embargo by denying Macedonia transit to the sea. Greece has always opposed Macedonia's constitutional representation in both international conjecture and sports competitions. As an example of an incentive, the Greek foreign minister Dora Bakoyani proposed that if Skopje accepted a new name that did not contain the word "Macedonia," he would offer 75m euros in aid for the construction of a highway across Macedonia. Noting that Greece was in an economic downturn at the time, this offer should highlight the importance of the name dispute for the Greek government.²⁹

Greece has been using legal remedies and propaganda effectively. On the official page of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Greece published an explanation of the name dispute in English with its arguments, thus bringing the issue to a broader audience, and listing Macedonia's infringements of law (from the Interim Accord).³⁰ Macedonia, on the other hand, usually remained on the defensive. The main reason for this was its inability to determine its name or flag because of the pressure coming from the Greek government and the international community. On the other hand, the official page of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Northern Macedonia contains the Prespa Agreement and several other informative documents. However, these are comparatively insufficient to the Greek efforts.³¹

It has already been mentioned that Macedonia is a member of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the UN under the name of the "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia." However, the UN Security Council decided that

²⁹ *Yunanistan'ın İsim İnadı* [Name Stubbornness of Greece], in www.batitrakya.org/yazar/ayhan-demir/yunanistanin-isim-inadi.html (Accessed on 03.14.2019).

³⁰ *The Issue of the Name of North Macedonia*, in www.mfa.gr/en/the-question-of-the-name-of-the-republic-of-north (Accessed on 03.14.2019).

³¹ *Prespa Agreement – Media Guidelines*, in <https://www.mfa.gov.mk/en/page/8/post/1695/prespa-agreement-media-guidelines> (Accessed on 03.14.2019).

this name was temporary. For this reason, it was agreed that the first task would be to determine the permanent name during the negotiations to be held. It should also be noted that the UN has played a mediating role in resolving this dispute. Matthew Nimetz has served as a special representative of the UN Secretary-General. With the agreement signed on June 17, a "carrot-stick approach" was used in addition to mediation and soft power. The role of supranational organisations such as the UN, EU, and NATO, as well as those involved in the process as an individual state, such as the US, has contributed significantly to resolving the problem.³²

Governments' Attempts

Left-wing governments in both countries expressed their commitment to finding a solution to the problem in 2018. Political will, in favour of a solution, always plays a significant role in problem-solving. Between 2006 and 2017, the nationalist Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization-National Democratic Union of Macedonia (VMRO-DPMNE), which was the primary partner in Macedonian coalition governments, was at the heart of Macedonian nationalism.³³ The party's nationalist rhetoric aimed at the neighbouring countries that did not recognise the national identity of the Macedonians and that of the Albanian minority dissatisfied with their position, gathered around a common ideology. This discourse focused on two fronts, found a positive response in Slav-Orthodox society. VMRO-DPMNE, as one of the partners in the government, was around the negotiating table with Athens because it supported Euro-Atlantic integration, but was very reluctant to change the country's name. The Greek side was disturbed by the fact that it continued to emphasise Macedonian identity and also continued to advocate for Macedonian identity through major architectural projects such as "Skopje 2014." As part of this project, Nikola Gruevski, the prime minister and VMRO-DPMNE leader, placed sculptures of important Macedonian figures at central points in Skopje, in a move that was more about making Macedonian identity more visible in this cosmopolitan city than it was about giving the city a monumental appearance.³⁴ In contrast to the Interim Accord of 1995, the

³² Ayhan, *Makedonya ile...*, p. 228.

³³ Çiğdem Aydın Koyuncu, Samet Yılmaz, *Makedonya'daki İstikrarın Sürdürülebilirliğinin Ohrid Çerçeve Anlaşması Bağlamında Analizi*[Analysis of the Sustainability of Stability in Macedonia in terms of the Ohrid Framework Agreement], in "International Journal of Social Inquiry", 2018, Vol. 11, Issue 1, p. 171.

³⁴ *Tarihten Günümüze Makedon Milli Birliđi Demokratik Partisi: VMRO DPMNE*[From

Macedonian side's objections to Greece's obstruction of Macedonia's membership of NATO and the EU were not enough to change the Greek side's decision or to convince the international community.³⁵

On the other hand, the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM) severely criticised the VMRO-DPMNE rule. SDSM, which received support from different parts of the country, especially Albanians, achieved a great victory in the 2017 local elections. VMRO-DPMNE suffered a major defeat in the face of the success of the SDSM.³⁶ Zoran Zaev, the prime minister of the SDSM government, regarded the solution of the name dispute as a priority and proved that his intention was an actual solution to the problem. As a sign of his sincerity, Zaev changed the ancient Macedonian names given to the airports, highways, and stadiums in Skopje by the previous government. This type of goodwill demonstration did not remain unnoticed by the EU and the US and received intense support. The Western world encouraged the resumption of negotiations between the two countries, which were suspended for various reasons.³⁷ This encouragement gave Zaev a unique opportunity. Zaev believed that these problems that had lasted for years harmed the country's integration with the EU and NATO and led to the impoverishment of the country due to economic and political embargoes. Therefore, he attempted to solve problems with all neighbours. The negotiations accelerated and ended after Zaev came to power.³⁸

On the Greek side, Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras could not remain indifferent to these demonstrations of goodwill and stated that resolving the problem was among his priorities. Tsipras said that as a result of prolonged negotiations, the two countries had reached an agreement on resolving the name dispute.³⁹ At this point, it should be noted that this agreement initiative does not

History to Present: VMRO DPMNE], in www.academia.edu/31999876/Tarihten_G%C3%BCn%C3%BCm%C3%BCze_Makedon_Milli_Birli%C4%9Fi_Demokratik_Partisi_VMRO_DPMNE (Accessed on 03.14.2019).

³⁵ Mehmet Uğur Ekinci, *Makedonya İsim Sorunu Çözülüyor (mu?)* [(Is) Macedonia Resolving the Name Problem?], in "SETA Perspektif", 2018, Vol. 204, p. 2.

³⁶ Sevba Abdula, *Makedonya'da Yerel Seçimler ve Siyasal Değişim* [Local Elections and Political Change in Macedonia], in "SETA Perspektif", 2017, Vol. 183, p. 2.

³⁷ Ekinci, *Makedonya İsim...*, p. 3.

³⁸ Ayhan, *Makedonya ile...*, p. 231.

³⁹ *Macedonia Agrees To New Name after 27-Year Dispute with Greece*, in <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/12/macedonia-agrees-to-new->

only eliminate a problem for Greece with its neighbours; more than that, if the problem was solved in accordance with the Greek thesis, Tsipras would increase his prestige both in domestic and foreign policy. The Greek side's red line in the negotiations that began in January 2018 was that the new name would not cover the historical Macedonian geography and that it would be used only after the agreement was valid. Thus, Greece expressed its opinion that the new name should be a unified name in the form of "Northern Macedonia" or "New Macedonia."⁴⁰

EU and NATO Embargo

The ongoing problems with Greece were the major obstacle to Macedonia's accession to the EU and NATO. A large number of Macedonians have now agreed to a name change, believing that this removes a major barrier in the path to EU membership. From the EU's perspective, Macedonia's membership is of great importance for the stability of the region. Having made its first application on February 26, 2004, FYROM received a positive opinion from the European Commission on November 9, 2005. Subsequently, six times – in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014 – the EU Commission gave a positive opinion on the accession negotiations.⁴¹ However, each time Greece used its veto in the Committee of Permanent Representatives. The desire of Macedonia to resolve the existing problems and to become a full member of the Union is another factor facilitating the resolution of the problem.

Joining NATO is another stage of participation in international organisations. As Macedonia wanted to resolve the disputes with Greece by the Interim Accord, the government of Macedonia also wanted to open its way to NATO membership and wanted to eliminate the problem permanently. After The Accession Protocol was signed in February 2019, a meeting was held on March 19, 2019, between Prime Minister Zoran Zaev and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg. This meeting is regarded as a historic moment for both NATO and Northern Macedonia, emphasising the importance of their relations. Stoltenberg also expressed his satisfaction with the agreement saying, "You have shown how

name-after-27-year-dispute-with-greece (Accessed on 03.14.2019).

⁴⁰ Ekinci, *Makedonya İsim...*, p.3.

⁴¹ *The Republic of North Macedonia: Current Situation, 2005—EU Candidate Status*, in <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/enlargement/republic-north-macedonia/> (Accessed on 03.20.2019).

courageous you are by working in partnership with Athens."⁴²

The Impact of Russia and Turkey

Turkey and Russia's more active role in the Balkans as they seek to increase their influence in the region have disturbed both NATO and the EU. The most obvious example of this was an article published in the British magazine *The Economist* in May 2017, which emphasised that "NATO should be concerned about Turkey and Russia's friendship."⁴³ Russia, on the other hand, doesn't want to lose a region that is under its political and historical influence. At every opportunity, it tries to prevent the countries of the region from joining international institutions. The latest example of this was Montenegro's integration into NATO. In a statement, US Vice President Mike Pence stated that Russia had deliberately tried to halt Montenegro's integration into NATO, but had failed to do so. Also, Russia aims to stabilise the Balkans while at the same time pushing the countries in the region away from the Euro-Atlantic alliance.⁴⁴

According to Turkey, Balkan issues were shaped under the influence of a sense of Ottoman heritage. In the context of its changing foreign policy attitudes, Turkey began to take an active role that contrasted with its previous passive-observer status. It sought to be active at the regional level—militarily, by taking up a position in NATO; and culturally and politically, through the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB), Turkish Maarif Foundation, and the Yunus Emre Institute. The European countries perceived these efforts as a concerted attempt on Turkey's part to appeal to the Balkans, as demonstrated by a speech given by Emmanuel Macron at the European Parliament: "We need to be pragmatic and make sure they [the Balkans] are brought closer to Europe and do not drift away to Russia or Turkey or simply collapse."⁴⁵ In his speech, Macron warned about the

⁴² *NATO Secretary General Welcomes the Prime Minister Zoran Zaev of North Macedonia*, in www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_164671.htm (Accessed on 03.20.2019).

⁴³ *Turkey and Russia Cosy Up over Missiles*, in www.economist.com/europe/2017/05/04/turkey-and-russia-cosy-up-over-missiles (Accessed on 03.25.2019).

⁴⁴ *Rusya AB-NATO İttifakı Karşısında Karadağ'ı Kaybetti* [Russia Loses Montenegro Across EU-NATO Alliance], in <https://ankasam.org/rusya-ab-nato-ittifaki-karsisinda-karadagi-kaybetti/> (Accessed on 03.25.2019).

⁴⁵ *Emmanuel Macron to EU Parliament: "We Need a European Sovereignty*, in www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/emmanuel-macron-eu-parliament-we-need-european-sovereignty (Accessed on 08.19.2019).

need to avoid Russian and Turkish influence in the Balkans. The reason that NATO and, indirectly, the EU is so interested in the issue is that unstable Balkan geography threatens the whole of Europe.

The Process of Win-Win Policy

This conflict has triggered many other problems, large and small, emerged in 1991 and continued in various ways for roughly 28 years. As a result, Macedonia has had to live with a disputed name and endure numerous troubles. In a statement issued in 2018, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Northern Macedonia Bujar Osmani stated that both countries were tired due to the long-standing problem.⁴⁶

Another factor that facilitated the solution of the problem is the gains that both parties stood to make from this agreement. The Macedonian side sees the retention of the Word "Macedonia" in the country's name as an achievement, even though "Northern" is added. The Greek side views the addition of the word "Northern" as a gain thinking that it will lead to the disappearance of the claim over the entire Macedonian geography. Furthermore, Article 14/4 the "economic cooperation" section of the agreement-guarantees cooperation on issues such as the construction and development of oil and gas pipelines between the two countries.⁴⁷ This is also a joint gain for the two countries.

These two countries are considered to be an alternative route for transporting natural gas from the Eastern Mediterranean to Europe. One of the objectives of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), which is a donor of the Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe (CDRSEE), is to create a regional energy market in southeast Europe. In this context, one of the reasons that the problems between Greece and Macedonia needed to be solved urgently was the establishment of this institution as soon as possible.⁴⁸

EU and NATO Enlargement

The continuation of the NATO enlargement process seems vital to the US

⁴⁶ *UN Envoy: "Positive Momentum" in Macedonia Name Dispute*, in www.rferl.org/a/macedonia-un-envoy-positive-momentum-greece-name-dispute/28977137.html (Accessed on 03.25.2019).

⁴⁷ *The Full Text of the Greece-FYROM Agreement*, in www.thenationalherald.com/204203/the-full-text-of-greece-fyrom-agreement-pdf (Accessed on 08.29.2019).

⁴⁸ Ayhan, *Makedonya ile...*, p.233.

and its allies. During the Bush-era, the desire to extend the membership to Albania, Macedonia, Croatia, Ukraine, and Georgia was at its peak. Still, Macedonia could not be included in the alliance due to the veto of Greece, which is one of the long-standing members of the organisation. Thus, the enlargement process was interrupted.⁴⁹ One of the reasons that made NATO's enlargement process so important was the idea of sharing the budget burden by diffusing the organisation's budget from the US to other states. Also, extending the common stance against Russia was another reason. Besides, US President Bush's pressure on Greece -during the NATO Bucharest Summit (2008)- to lift its veto and stop preventing the enlargement process was an indication of the importance of a resolution.⁵⁰

For the EU, the process of resolving the problem between Greece and Macedonia must be read together with the enlargement policy toward the Western Balkans, which had been postponed due to the immigration crisis but has recently been revived. Similar to NATO, the EU, which aims to keep Russian activity in the region at a limited level, attach importance to the inclusion of Macedonia in the Union. The fact that China has become active in the region is a further reason that the EU has turned its face to the Western Balkans. The fact that Federica Mogherini, the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, has stated that the Balkans could easily be transformed into a chessboard on which the great powers of the world are players, shows the importance attributed to this issue.⁵¹

CONCLUSIONS

From the Greek perspective, the name dispute meant the usurping of its cultural and historical heritage by Macedonia. Macedonia's approach to the

⁴⁹ Şener Aktürk, *NATO Neden Genişledi? Uluslararası İlişkiler Kuramları Işığında NATO'nun Genişlemesi ve ABD-Rusya İç Siyaseti* [Explaining NATO Enlargement: International Relations Theories and the Dynamics of Domestic Politics in Russia and the United States], in "Uluslararası İlişkiler" [International Relations], 2012, Vol. 9, No. 34, p. 91.

⁵⁰ *Bush: "NATO tüm Balkanlar'a açık"* [Bush: NATO is open to all the Balkans], in www.cnnturk.com/2008/dunya/04/05/bush.nato.tum.balkanlara.acik/445425.0/index.html (Accessed on 08.26.2019)

⁵¹ *İsim sorununu çözen Makedonya NATO ve AB üyeliği yolunda* [Macedonia, which solves the name problem, is on the way NATO and EU membership], in <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/isim-sorununu-cozen-makedonya-nato-ve-ab-uyeligi-yolunda/1377634> (Accessed on 08.26.2019)

problem; on the other hand, was that as a sovereign country, it had the right to determine its name. The origins of the problem go back to the independence process, and the current problems not only affect the relations between the two countries but are transmitted to international organisations such as the EU and NATO, and result in the involvement of different decision-makers in the region. Historically, the two countries followed different approaches at different times. When Greece was weaker, it created barriers to solving the problems between the two countries. In a period when it was relatively more robust, Greece stated that the problems should be ended and that rapport between the two countries should prevail in the region. The research question of the study focused on this contradiction, and the aim was to find out why the governments of the two countries pursued different policies in different periods.

Since the end of the Cold War, particularly on the name dispute, the leaders of the two sides have worked hard to solve the problems that have continued between the two countries. Since the name agreement came into force, the name of the country of Macedonia has changed to the Republic of Northern Macedonia, and one of the problems between the two sovereign countries has been resolved. However, although an apparent agreement was reached, neither the Macedonian people nor the Greek people were fully satisfied with this agreement. Nevertheless, it is true that even though the societies are not fully satisfied, the elimination of the problem appears to be closer than ever. And it is clear that both countries will benefit from the resolution of the problems. Macedonia's accession to the EU is closer than ever. Also, the country became the 30th member of NATO on March 27, 2020. Hence, the agreement helped to overcome years of instability and uncertainties in the enlargement of the Euro-Atlantic front towards the Balkans.