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THE OUTSTANDING NAME ISSUE REGARDING THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA (FYROM)

The Issue

Since antiquity the name *Macedonia* has referred to a geographical region and not to a nationality. Macedonia was part of the ancient Hellenic world much like Sparta and Athens. Its population worshipped the same Hellenic Gods, spoke the same Hellenic language and participated in the Olympic Games which at the time were open to Greeks only.

When Marshal Tito fashioned the puppet "Socialist Republic of Macedonia" from the southern Yugoslav province of Vardarska-Banovina in December 1944, he did so to foment disorder in northern Greece to further his plan to communize the Balkan Peninsula and gain control of the key port city of Thessaloniki. "Macedonian" nationalism was a product of Tito's fabrications.

In December 1944, the United States vigorously opposed the use of the name "Macedonia" by Tito. **Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinius, Jr.**, in a *Circular Airgram* (Dec. 26, 1944) stated:

"This Government considers talk of Macedonian 'nation,' Macedonian 'Fatherland,' or Macedonian 'national consciousness' to be unjustified demagoguery representing no ethnic nor political reality, and sees in its present revival a possible cloak for aggressive intentions against Greece.

"The approved policy of this Government is to oppose any revival of the Macedonian issue as related to Greece."

U.S. policy was valid then and it should be valid now. The Truman Doctrine and massive financial aid under the Marshall Plan foiled Tito's hopes for communizing Greece.

Geographic Macedonia is within the borders of at least three countries. Only a small portion of geographic Macedonia lies within the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), whose population is one-third Albanian and two-thirds Slavic in origin. The largest part of geographic Macedonia lies within Greece in the Greek province of Macedonia.

The Interim Accord⁷ signed by Greece and the FYROM in 1995 required negotiations for a new name for FYROM. However, no breakthrough has been made since 1995. Today the negotiations are stalemated because FYROM maintains that the only name that is acceptable to it is its original "constitutional" name of "Republic of Macedonia," in addition to other demands it has that include the recognition of a Macedonian identity and language, which is problematic for Greece.

"On November 1 2010, *Kathimerini* quoted Macedonia's deputy prime minister for European affairs, Vasko Naumovski, as saying that Athens would have to recognise the existence of a Macedonian language and identity to settle the name dispute with Skopje....He added, 'The reality that the existence of a Macedonian identity, nation, language and state cannot change.'"⁸

In contrast, Greece has offered a major compromise of accepting a compound name that will distinguish FYROM from both the Greek and Bulgarian part. Moreover, FYROM promulgates propaganda in which it claims portions of Greek territory and usurps Greek national identity and culture (see examples of provocation listed below).

The State Department's negation of previous U.S. policy by its recognition of FYROM as the "Republic of Macedonia" on November 4, 2004 was not in the best interest of the United States. The decision ignored

⁷ The Interim Accord is a UN-brokered Treaty signed in New York (September 13, 1995) between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. It constitutes the political framework of the bilateral relations between the two countries.

⁸ "Macedonia name dispute 'informal' talks set for January 27," *The Sofia Echo*, January 5, 2011 ([web site](#)).

historical truths recognized by the United States for decades. It was a disrespectful act toward a staunch NATO ally in the Balkans, Greece. It made FYROM more obstinate in its will to negotiate a new name and emboldened its desire to continue its provocative propaganda against Greece. We believe this is harmful to U.S. interests in the Balkans. Moreover, Greece is the paragon of stability in the Balkans. It has no territorial claims against any of its neighbors and it is the largest source of foreign investment, aid, and employment in FYROM.

Recent Developments

In April 2008, the members of the NATO Alliance agreed not to invite FYROM into the Alliance until a mutually agreed upon denomination for that country had been reached under the auspices of the United Nations. All NATO members urged that a mutually agreed solution be found as soon as possible. Unfortunately, instead of acting in good faith, FYROM generated hate propaganda that depicted the Greek flag with a Nazi swastika instead of the Cross in upper left-hand corner of the flag. Portraits of then Greek Prime Minister Karamanlis dressed in a Nazi uniform were published.

- **Nov. 17, 2008:** FYROM instituted proceedings before the International Court of Justice against Greece for “a flagrant violation of its obligations under Article 11” of the 1995 Interim Accord. FYROM contends that Greece violated its rights under Article 11 by vetoing FYROM’s application to join NATO.⁹ We note that there was no veto exercised by Greece and it was a consensus of all the NATO members that stipulated that an invitation to FYROM would be extended when the name issue is resolved.
- **April 5, 2009:** Conservative Gjorgje Ivanov won a presidential run-off in FYROM. “Our first task will be to resolve the name issue with our southern neighbour Greece,” Ivanov told *Reuters*. “I am sure we can find common interest and compromise.” However, a recent photo of the president in his office shows him with the outlawed flag of FYROM with the classical Hellenic symbol of the Vergina sun.
- **May 15, 2009:** At a press conference in Athens, the outgoing NATO chief, Jaap De Hoop Scheffer said: “I must add, openly and frankly, that after a visit I paid to Skopje last week, my optimism has not grown, in listening to the authorities in Skopje. And I do hope that also they will realize that, for a solution for the name issue, they have to show flexibility.”
- **Feb. 4, 2010:** In an interview with UN correspondents, Greek Alternate FM Dimitris Droustas stated that new Greek Prime Minister Papandreou has invited FYROM Prime Minister Gruevski for “direct meetings” and Greece is ready to “accelerate negotiations under the UN framework.”
- **Oct. 18, 2010:** Assistant Secretary of State Philip Gordon stated, “Macedonia will join [NATO] once the dispute over its name is resolved” in a speech at the Center for Transatlantic Relations, Nitze School Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University.

Examples of Provocations Against Greece

Since he assumed his duties as the prime minister of FYROM in August 2006, Nikola Gruevski followed a long-term policy of extreme nationalism and provocation against Greece in conflict with European values. His actions are a breach of the U.N.-brokered Interim Accord and erode efforts to build trust and good neighborly relations.

- December 2006: Provocations begin when Gruevski renamed Skopje’s international airport “Alexander the Great.”
- January 2009: Gruevski named that nation’s main highway after “Alexander the Great”¹⁰ to the dismay of EU officials. (*Note: This highway project is partially financed by Greece, which pledged \$75 million as part of its Hellenic Plan for the Reconstruction of the Balkans.*)
- Gruevski renamed Skopje’s main stadium after “Philip II, the Macedon.”
- After making a commitment to cease use of the “Sun of Vergina” per the Interim Accord, the FYROM reintroduced this Hellenic symbol as the symbol of its country in television advertising spots currently running internationally, including in the United States.

⁹ <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/142/14881.pdf>

¹⁰ “EU Rap Over FYROM Road,” January 13, 2009, *EKathimerini* ([web page](#)).

- Gruevski has been pictured in public ceremonies with a map of his country that included the Greek province of Macedonia all the way south to Mount Olympus as one united political entity.
- Gruevski has erected numerous newly created duplicates of Ancient Macedonian Hellenic personalities and has renamed streets and squares for them in various places of the FYROM. More recently, he has commissioned a \$5 million project to erect a 20-meter statue of Alexander the Great in the center of Skopje.
- In a display of meddling in Greece's internal affairs, in April Skopje issued an unprecedented statement on Greek authorities' arrest of four protesters that obstructed a Greek military convoy near the city of Florina in northwest Greece near the Greece-FYROM border. Skopje expressed concern for the protesters while identifying them as so-called "Macedonians" in an attempt to create a "Macedonian minority" in northwest Greece. Greek FM Spokesman George Koumoutsakos rebuked Skopje's statement, calling it another "provocative attempt to blatantly distort reality."¹¹
- April 2010: FYROM announced plans to use the name "Macedonian Chairmanship 2010" for its chairmanship at the Council of Europe that starts in May 2010.¹² Greek Foreign Ministry Spokesman Gregory Delavekouras identified this act as a "provocative" one in an April 15, 2010 briefing.¹³

These provocative acts, which offend Greece and its citizens, demonstrate FYROM's continued ignorance of the basic principle of good neighborly relations. Moreover, AHI contends the acts do not embrace policies compatible with EU or Euro-Atlantic values and standards.

President Obama's Position

- While in the Senate, Barack Obama was one of three original lead co-sponsors of S.Res.300 in the 110th Congress, which urged FYROM to work with Greece within a UN framework to reach a mutually acceptable official name for FYROM.
- In a campaign statement released in October 2008, presidential candidate Obama stated: "...[He] support[s] the UN-led negotiations and believe[s] that there can and should be an agreement between Skopje and Athens on a mutually-acceptable name that leads to greater stability in the Balkans."

Our Position

The State Department's decision on November 4, 2004 to recognize FYROM as the "Republic of Macedonia" was counter-productive. The immediate settlement of the name issue that is mutually acceptable to both Greece and FYROM will allow the United States' strongest ally in the Balkans, Greece, to be the driving force for FYROM's membership to NATO and ultimately the EU. This will create stability for U.S. interests in the Balkans.

The only practical solution is a name which does not imply that FYROM has or could exercise any form of political sovereignty over any portion of ancient or traditional Macedonia which lies outside the present borders of FYROM. In addition, because of the multi-ethnic composition of FYROM, the nationality and language of it should not include the word "Macedonian," or any word that resembles it. Furthermore, the final name must apply for all internal and international uses (*erga omnes*).

Therefore, we urge the Obama Administration to:

- Persuade FYROM to negotiate in good faith with Greece to resolve the name issue and to cease immediately their propaganda against Greece, propaganda which violates the U.N.-brokered Interim Accord, as stated in Article 7 paragraph 1 of the Accord, signed in New York, September 13, 1995, between FYROM and Greece.
- Continue with its position that FYROM will not join NATO until the name dispute is resolved.

¹¹ "Reaction to FYROM Provocation," *Athens News Agency*, ([web page](#))

¹² "Greek Reply to 'Macedonian Chairmanship 2010,'" April 13, 2010, *BalkanInsight.com* ([web page](#))

¹³ http://www.mfa.gr/www.mfa.gr/Articles/en-US/160410_F1056.htm

Furthermore, we call on Congress to:

- Oppose foreign aid to FYROM for so long as FYROM does not commit to negotiate in good faith with Greece to find a mutually-acceptable solution to the name to be used by FYROM for all purposes.
- Pass legislation urging the FYROM to cease its use of propaganda that violates provisions of the UN-brokered Interim Agreement between Greece and FYROM and that further urges FYROM to work with Greece to find a mutually acceptable official name for FYROM under U.N. auspices.

If FYROM refuses to cooperate, the United States must consider withdrawing its 2004 recognition of FYROM as the "Republic of Macedonia." Once a mutually acceptable denomination for FYROM has been reached in the UN-sponsored talks, we call on our government to recognize that state by that denomination only.