THE NAME DISPUTE IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA AFTER THE SIGNING OF THE INTERIM ACCORD

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1. Introduction

The issue of the precise name of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)[1] dominated foreign policy in both Greece and its newly constituted neighbour throughout the first half of the 1990's. The unwillingness of both sides to a mutually acceptable solution created an explosive, emotionally charged situation. Its consequences were far-reaching for international relations and for the domestic political scene in both countries.[2]

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1. Use of the term FYROM is in conformity with UN Security Council Resolution 817 of 7 April 1993, according to which "this State [will be] provisionally referred to for all purposes within the United Nations as "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" pending settlement of the difference that has arisen over the name of the State".

2. For analyses of diplomatic and political developments during this period, see Evangelos Kofos "Greek Foreign Policy Considerations over FYROM Independence and Recognition" in James Pettifer (ed.), *The New Macedonia Question*, London, 1999; Michalis Papakonstantinou, *A Politician's Journal*,

The signing of the Interim Accord in New York on 13 September 1995 proved to be the turning point for the subsequent rapprochement between Greece and FYROM.[3] This article/ chapter analyses developments in FYROM relating to the name dispute during the period that followed the signature of the Interim Accord.

The diplomatic problem and ensuing conflict began on 8 September 1991, when the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia held a referendum on its independence. Official results recorded a voter turnout of 72.16%.[4] Of these, 96.44% expressed their support for a "sovereign and independent state of Macedonia, with the right to participate in a future union of Yugoslav states".[5] On the basis of this referendum, the Assembly of the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia proclaimed the country's independence on 17 September 1991.[6]

The constitution of the new state, which declared its name to be the "Republic of Macedonia", was approved recently [unclear what recently is].[7] Intense Greek pressure based on well-founded

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Athens, 1994 [in Greek]; Theodoros Skylakakis, *In the Name of Macedonia*, Athens, 1999 [in Greek]; Alexandros Tarkas, *Athens Skopje. Behind Closed Doors*, vols I and II, Athens 1995 and 1997 [in Greek]; Aristotle Tziampiris, *Greece, European Political Cooperation and the Macedonian Question*, Aldershot, 2001; and Thanos Veremis, *Greece's Balkan Entanglement*, Athens, 1995.

3. For an important analysis of the Interim Accord, see Christos Rozakis, *Political and Legal Dimensions of the Transitional Agreement signed in New York between Greece and FYROM*, Athens, Sideris, 1996 [in Greek]. The book also includes the text of the Interim Accord. See also the penetrating comments in Kofos, *op. cit*, pp. 247-249.

4. The complete results can be found in Giannis Valinakis and Sotiris Dalis, *The Skopje Question*, Athens, Sideris, 1994, pp. 38-39 [in Greek].

5. Quoted in Valinakis and Dalis, *op. cit*., p. 38.

6. For the text of the declaration of independence of FYROM, see *ibid,* pp. 40-42.

7. It is interesting to underline that the political leadership of the Slav-Macedonians was surprised by the Greek reaction to the country's constitutional

arguments that some of its articles were unacceptably irredentist in character, resulted in the amendment of parts of the Constitution. The matter of the country's official name was not, however, touched upon.[8] Although the maximalist Greek position on the name (i.e. the complete absence of the term "Macedonia"), was rejected by Skopje; nevertheless, there have been instances suggesting a willingness to negotiate and seek a compromise. Specifically, on 9 December 1992, Kiro Gligorov who was at the time President of FYROM, declared in Parliament his intention to support the initiative of [Special Representative of the EU Presidency] British Ambassador Robin O'Neil. O'Neil proposed the use of the name "Republic of Macedonia (Skopje)" in the country's external relations, while the name "Republic of Macedonia" would continue to be used within the country.[9] The Greek government rejected the plan and held firmly to the view that the term Macedonia should not be included in the name in any manner.

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name. Apparently, this was a development they had totally failed to foresee. Even today, top academics, journalists and politicians in that country express their astonishment at the magnitude and persistence of Greek objections to the constitutional name of their state (author interviews with FYROM officials in November 2002). The cause of this astonishment is rooted in an inability to understand issues of identity, history and culture relating particularly to Greek Macedonians.

8. For an exploration of the subject, see Hayden M. Robert, 'Constitutional Nationalism in the Formerly Yugoslav Republics' *Slavic Review*, (1992), 51, 659-660; and Tziampiris, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

9. See Tziampiris, *op. cit*., p. 152. Gligorov's proposal was the result of efforts deployed on behalf of the then European Community by British diplomat Robin O'Neil. More on this initiative see Kiro Gligorov, *Memoirs*, Athens, 2000, pp. 219-226 [in Greek]; Robin O'Neil, The Macedonian Question: A Diplomatic Initiative in the 1990's, 1997, unpublished lecture addressed to the Wyndham Place Trust for Peace, World Order and the Rule of Law at the English Speaking Union Cultural Club, London, 4 November 1997; Papakonstantinou, *op. cit.*, pp. 431-439; Tziampiris, *op. cit*, pp. 147-153.

Gligorov imposed another "compromise" in order to secure his country's admission to the United Nations in 1992, thereby leading to the provisional name of "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". The opposition parties in FYROM (and chiefly the VMRO-DPMNE) saw this as an unacceptable concession and, as a result, Gligorov was subjected to a fierce political attack.[10]

It may thus be argued that insistence on international recognition of FYROM as the "Republic of Macedonia" was not the exclusive or supreme object of the government in Skopje in the period 1991-1995. On the contrary, as time passed and the international media came to refer to FYROM as "Macedonia", the country was handed a degree of recognition with the name it wanted that, albeit informal and non-binding, proved to be extremely important in the light of subsequent developments.

Moreover, President Gligorov was able to present a more flexible and accommodating face to the international community For a variety of reasons connected primarily with the Greek domestic political situation, he was aware that no Greek government would compromise on the name issue. Consequently, Athens would reject various attempts at mediation and thus fully assume the corresponding international political cost.

During the talks that led to the signing of the Interim Accord, the most important question for Athens was whether to adopt a "big package" or a "small package" approach. In other words, the choice had to be made as to whether to include the name issue or leave the problem for later. In the end the second option was chosen, for political reasons.

10. See Gligorov, *op. cit.*, p. 260. Gligorov seems to have been justified in his decision. As President of FYROM, he showed that he had a set of clearly ranked goals in the exercise of his country's diplomacy. He held UN membership to be a matter of supreme political importance and, as a result, did not hesitate to compromise, disregarding the inevitable domestic political cost and criticism.

The first point that has to be stressed in relation to the agreement that was finally concluded is its provisional nature, which was inherent in the decision to avoid the sensitive and politically explosive question of the name. Notwithstanding, the "small package" approach proved sufficient to normalise and stabilise bilateral relations between Greece and FYROM. Thus, the Interim Accord offered both sides significant gains and advantages.

Greece achieved FYROM's abandonment of the use of the sun or star of Vergina on its flag (Article 7, paragraph 2), and what was deemed as satisfactory clarification and interpretation of a number of points in the country's constitution. FYROM won international recognition from Greece (Article 1), as an end to the economically painful embargo (Article 8) and a promise that Athens would not attempt to hinder the efforts of the new republic to obtain membership of international organisations and institutions (Article 11).

The Interim Accord of 1995 settled many bilateral issues with reciprocal compromises, while permitting the postponement of any final resolution of the name dispute. This sensitive and critical issue seemed to be gradually drifting towards the political margins, particularly in Greece.

In FYROM, the name issue continued to occupy an important position in the country's foreign and domestic policy. As we shall see, the views and reactions of the government in Skopje were conditioned by significant domestic and regional developments (such as the crisis in Kosovo and the Albanian dimension to the ethnic conflict) and underwent the following phases:

1. Absolute official intransigence and absence of any willingness to compromise on the name issue; confrontational disposition towards Greece in matters associated with the Interim Accord (1995-1996).
2. Continued intransigence regarding the name; choice of a strategy of "non-resolution" of this issue for an indeterminate

time period, evident unease and desire to improve bilateral — and especially economic — relations (1997-1999).

3. Gradual worsening of inter-community relations within FYROM, resulting in dissociation of the name issue from matters of state security (2000-2001).
4. Display of exceptional sensitivity, with positive and negative reactions to compromise proposals put forward by third parties (2001).
5. Proposals for a solution favourable to FYROM but representing a compromise on the issue of the name by the Georgievski government; came up against strong partisan and popular reactions and ultimately fell victim to ethnic strife in FYROM (2001-2002).
6. Desire on the part of the country's political leadership to finally settle the name issue , but with little disposition for any meaningful compromise (2002 –).

2. Policy Shifts after the Interim Accord

Immediately after the signing of the Interim Accord, the government in Skopje adopted a policy of confrontational rhetoric against Athens reminiscent of the "cold war" between the two states that had characterised the previous five years. This strategy was primarily sponsored by FYROM's then Foreign Minister, Ljubomir Frckovski.[11] During this time, President Kiro Gligorov seems to have wanted a faster and more complete normalisation of relations with Greece, although he was not immediately able to achieve this necessary turn-around in his country's policy.[12]

11. See for example, "Why Frckovski is moving Greece-Skopje relations backwards", *Eleftherotypia* 5.8.1996.

12. See for example, "Clash between Gligorov and Frckovski", *Ependytis* 13-14.6.1996.

Specifically, on 23 July 1996 FYROM's Ministry of Foreign Affairs drafted an *aide-mémoire* that was delivered to foreign diplomatic missions and international organisations. Its object was a denunciation of Greece for the way in which it had thus far implemented the Interim Accord. Among other things, the text criticised the Greek government for refusing visas to passports in which the place of birth of citizens of FYROM was written in its Slav form rather than its internationally recognised Greek name.[13] It was equally critical about the delay in signing the "co-operation agreement" between FYROM and the European Union. The responsibility for this delay was placed on Greece and it was mentioned that "in some cases" Greek customs authorities rejected certificates of origin bearing the name "Macedonia", and that the Corfu Airport authorities denied access to an aircraft marked "Palair Makedonija" on 17 July 1996. [Finally] particular reference was made to the "unsanctioned" behaviour of Athens in the case of the Balkan Summit ... in Sofia in which FYROM could not finally participate on account of the issue that was raised, namely, the name under which the country's national delegation would participate.[14]

On 26 July 1996, Frckovski declared that FYROM was preparing to pursue the official recognition of its constitutional name within the framework of the United Nations. In practice, this declaration was in defiance of the letter and the spirit of the Interim Accord.[15]

The confrontational policy pursued by Frckovski demonstrated the continuing importance of the name issue in bilateral relations

13. "Tension between Skopje and Tirana needs to be relieved", *Kathimerini* 4.8.1996.

14. "Triple ... fiasco with Skopje", *Ependytis* 3-4.8.1996.

15. See "Skopje: Question of Official Recognition of the Name at the UN", *Eleftherotypia* 29.7.1996.

between Athens and Skopje, in spite of the Interim Accord and of its decision to opt for the "small package". It also illustrated the suspicious and possibly anti-Greek reflexes of a section of FYROM's political elite, associated with the events of 1991-1995 and the broader contemporary history of the Macedonian Question. In any case, adopting a confrontational policy towards Greece led to an impasse. It may have satisfied one segment of Slav-Macedonian popular opinion and some of the organisations of the Diaspora, but it yielded no substantial result. It provoked a vigorous reaction from Greece[16] and at the same time effectively dynamited prospects for beneficial economic collaboration. The total lack of willingness to compromise over the name, combined with the pursuit of intensely censorious actions against Athens led Skopje into an impasse, thereby preventing the country from reaping positive fruits from the New York Accord.

Kiro Gligorov, however, considered Greece to be a "strategic partner"[17] for his country and was convinced that FYROM's foreign policy would have to adapt to this reality. In an interview on 2 November 1996, he noted the importance of the Interim Accord and outlined the areas in which he desired to collaborate with Greece, thus reversing Frckovski's confrontational policy:

> We have signed an accord with Greece by which for the first time — and that was an historic moment — Greece has recognised the existence of our state. At the same time this accord equally identifies the frontier between us is an international border. This accord covers almost every field in which the two countries ought to co-operate, from economics to the environment, so that this accord, although designated interim because it has a life span of

16. See for example, "Reply-Letter to the UN on Skopje", *Eleftherotypia* 2.8.1996.

17. "Intransigence regarding the name", *Kathimerini* 13.5.1997.

> seven years, is in reality *a fundamental document*, which normalises or almost normalises relations between the two states. Now, as I see it, the weight shifts to the ability of both sides to *fill these relations with substance, with initiatives for co-operation on all levels, economic, cultural, environmental and legal*.[18]

A few days later, the head of FYROM's diplomatic mission in Athens, Ljubco Arsovski, delivered to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs a *non-paper* with specific proposals for improving bilateral relations on the practical level. This important initiative was intended as a practical demonstration of Gligorov's desire to reap the benefits of implementing the Interim Accord, devoid of unhelpful political criticism emanating from the new republic.[19]

It should, nevertheless, be stressed that this new diplomatic volte-face on the part of FYROM, aimed only to improve relations with Greece and avoid actions that would be prejudicial to the improved bilateral co-operation (particularly at the economic level). It was not accompanied by any attempt to achieve a compromise on the name issue. In fact, Frckovski formulated an academically original view that the constitutional name of FYROM ("Republic of Macedonia") was in itself a composite name.[20] Of greater significance though, was his pronouncement that "there is always the option of leaving the matter open, without having to go to war, but also without compromise, in the manner of the Cypriot question or Greek-Turkish relations."[21] This statement marks a specific change in

18. "He wants Greece to be a player without a memory ...", *Eleftherotypia* 4.11.1996, italics added.

19. See "New contacts in view of the Vance Report", *To Vima* 17.11.1996.

20. "Frckovski Intransigent", *Kathimerini* 8.2.1997.

21. "Frckovski: Towards a Third Way on the ... Name", *Eleftherotypia* 10.5.1997.

FYROM's tactics that in effect opts for a long-term hard-line strategy. In order to achieve the final goal of international recognition with the constitutional name, Skopje appeared to abandon efforts for an arrangement within the UN-sponsored negotiation process.

The only concession towards Greece on the name issue came in the first interview accorded to a Greek newspaper by Kiro Gligorov. The then President of FYROM appeared to accept the solution of a "double formula", whereby his country would be internationally referred to as the "Republic of Macedonia", while "if [Greece] was unprepared to recognise [that] name ... [then] it can call our country what it like[s]".[22] Gligorov also stressed that "I would never monopolise the name Macedonia ... I would never let the fact that the northern part of the country is called Macedonia stand in my way".[23] This statement could be presented as a concession on his part, or an example of his willingness to compromise with Greece's right to call one of the administrative divisions of its territory 'Macedonia.' Naturally, such an internal arrangement is not comparable to the matter of international recognition of a state entity with a specific name.

The continuing impasse on this issue is also evident in the declarations of FYROM's former Minister for Foreign Affairs Blagoj Hadjinski in June 1998.[24] Like Gligorov, he agreed to a double name formula thereby "allowing" Greece to have a region within its borders called Macedonia. He insisted, however, on international recognition on the basis of the "Republic of Macedonia":

22. "Kiro Gligorov: The Neighbour", *To Vima* 29.6.1997.

23. *Ibid*.

24. "Let Us Find A Solution Without Winners And Losers", *To Vima* 21.6.1998. The interview with Hajinski is exceptionally interesting, and goes beyond the level of purely political and diplomatic statements.

> The province of Macedonia has other divisions, including that part which lies in Greece ... We understand that Greece wants to address us by a different name ... *The existing name cannot be changed, and that goes for both sides* ... The solution [based on the formula "Macedonia-Skopje"] is impossible ... because it would mean changing our constitutional name — which is impossible ... If we do not succeed in finding a solution to this problem, then it will necessarily remain open. *The smartest thing we can do is to learn to live with it*.[25]

In other words, like his predecessor Frckovski, Hadjinski was rather favourable in retaining a perpetual abeyance to, probably foreseeing that the name "Republic of Macedonia" would eventually prevail internationally and perhaps result in a universal recognition in the long run.

3. The Name Issue on the Eve of FYROM's Ethnic Strife.

The difficulties FYROM suffered as a result of the economic sanctions imposed by Athens in the period 1991-1995[26], pale in comparison to the subsequent challenges posed by armed Albanian nationalism. As we will see below, the ethnic problem associated with Albanian aspirations also affected the name dispute. It must be remembered, however, that before the rapid breakdown in relations between the two ethnic communities, the government in Skopje remained intransigent on the name issue.

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25. *Ibid*, italics added.

26. On 21 August 1992 Prime Minister Konstantinos Mitsotakis announced that Greece would not allow petroleum products to move across the country's northern borders. See Gligorov, *op. cit.,* p. 275; Skylakakis, *op. cit*., pp. 180-183; Tziampiris, *op. cit*., pp. 144-145. Andreas Papandreou's PASOK government imposed an even harsher and broader embargo in February 1994. See Gligorov, *op. cit.*, p. 306; Kofos, *op. cit.*, pp. 244-246; Tarkas, *op. cit.*, pp. 376-403.

This tactic appeared to receive a severe blow from the draft report published by Johannes Swoboda MEP in February 2000 on the initiation of talks concerning the signing of a Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Union and FYROM.[27] This report states that:

> 16. [The European Parliament] is of the opinion that as part of the negotiations on the stabilisation and association agreement with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia the anachronistic name of the country should be changed since it does not reflect the forward-looking nature of the Regional Approach.
> 17. [The European Parliament] calls on Greece and the (former Yugoslav) Republic of Macedonia to use their improved political and economic relations to find a solution to this issue *which satisfies both sides*.[28]

The clear exhortation to find a mutually acceptable solution disturbed Skopje. FYROM suspected that its European progress might depend on coming to terms with Greece on the name issue, and thus be forced to abandon its hitherto inflexible position. Subsequent developments proved these fears unfounded; nonetheless, the reaction of the Slav-Macedonian intelligentsia at the time was startling. Officers of the FYROM writers' centre issued a statement not only insisting on total intransigence and urging the government to take the necessary steps for a review of FYROM's provisional name, which it held to be in violation of the

27. For the complete text of the report entitled *Draft Report on the Commission Recommendation for a Council Decision Authorising the Commission to Negotiate a Stabilization and Association Agreement With the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, see http://www.ceps.be/Pubs/SEEMonitor/Monitor7.php downloaded 2 April 2003.

28. *Draft Report,* italics added.

United Nations Charter.[29] The senate of the Saints Cyril and Methodius University of Skopje chimed in with its own resolution supporting this stance.[30]

By the summer of 2000, rumours were rife that the Georgievski government was preparing to accede to a compromise agreement on the name issue, most probably along the lines of "Novomakedonija" or "Slav Macedonia".[31] These rumours were not based on any official declaration, statement or action (which is not to say that they were unfounded). The particularly vulnerable state of the country counselled closure of a major diplomatic front that was bedevilling the Slav-Macedonian community and distracting it from a fragile economy and the immediate danger of armed conflict.

Prior to the outbreak of inter-community violence in the spring of 2001, the government in Skopje (a coalition of Slav-Macedonian and Albanian political parties) had to address the difficult economic situation of the country. FYROM was still undergoing its transition from the socialist system that was further burdened by the adverse effects of the Kosovo crisis:[32]

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29. See "Skopje: Writers say NO to the Name FYROM", *Macedonian Press Agency,* Thessaloniki 18.2.2000.

30. See "Injections of Intransigence on the Name FYROM", *Macedonian Press Agency, Thessaloniki* 21.3.2000.

31. See "Politics: Nearing a Solution to the Problem of the Name of the FYROM", *Macedonian Press Agency*, 19.7.2000; "Nearing Resolution of the Greece-Skopje Dispute over the Name Write Belgrade's Newspapers", *Macedonian Press Agency*, 18.9.2000 and "Skopje Denies Story about the Name of FYROM", *Macedonian Press Agency*, 19.9.2000.

32. For the crisis in Kosovo see particularly Andrew J. Bacevic and Eliot A. Cohen (eds.), *War Over Kosovo: Politics and Strategy In A Global Age*, New York, 2001; Tim Judah, *Kosovo: War and Revenge*, New Haven, 2000; Evangelos Kofos, *Kosovo and Albanian Integration*, Athens, 1998 [in Greek]; Thanos Veremis and Dimitrios Triantaphyllou (eds.), *Kosovo and the Albanian Dimension in Southeastern Europe: The Need For Regional Security and Conflict Prevention*, Athens, 1999; and Thanos Veremis, *Action Without Foresight: Western Involvement in Yugoslavia*, Athens, 2002.

> [Temporary] influx of [more than 400,000] refugees; disruption to international trade in goods and services; closing of transportation routes through FRY; damage to consumer and investor confidence; reduction in access to international capital markets; and setbacks to the process of structural reform and development, including weakened governance.[33]

War in Kosovo is estimated to have affected FYROM's economy by US 1.5 billion dollars.[34]

It is important to note that FYROM's ethnic "Gordian knot", given that the Albanians represented a sizeable proportion of the population (officially 22.9%, but in reality probably about 30%).[35] Relations between the communities in the 1990s could be described as peaceful, if occasionally tense. The situation in FYROM was clearly an example of successful progress, if compared to relations between Serbs and Albanians in neighbouring Kosovo. In effect, for nearly a decade there had been no armed fighting and relatively few acts of violence, while the Albanian political elite demonstrated a willingness to participate constructively in the political process. The underlying

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33. International Monetary Fund, *The Economic Consequences of the Kosovo Crisis: An Updated Assessment* at http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/kosovo/052599.htm downloaded 9 April 2003.

34. See Pierre J. Andrew, *De-Balkanizing the Balkans: Security and Stability in Southeastern Europe.* This is a special report published by the United States Institute for Peace (USIP) on 20 September 1999. See also "Economic Crisis For Macedonia", *BBC NEWS* 6.6.1999.

35. For an objective estimate of the number of Albanians living in FYROM (not necessarily citizens of the country), see International Crisis Group, "*Macedonia's Ethnic Albanians: Bridging the Gap*", 2 August 2000, pp. 4-6. Officially, the Slav-Macedonians make up approximately 66% of the country's population, Turks 4%, Rom 2.2% and Serbs 2.1%. See CIA, *The World Factbook 2000: The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia at* http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/mk.html downloaded 9 April 2003.

problems remained, however, and were directly associated with the so-called "Albanian factor" in Southeast Europe. The Slav-Macedonians lived with the fear that the majority of the Albanian population would support an armed struggle for the autonomy or independence of the northern part of FYROM. Consequently, the co-existence of the two communities in FYROM became increasingly fragile, divided and based on suspicion.[36]

In view of his country's difficult position and also of the significant improvement in its relations with Greece, the Prime Minister of FYROM set to resolve the name issue behind the scenes.[37] His proposals were made public on 11 February 2001, and stated that:

> "All attempts and all ideas to come *as close as possible to our constitutional name* and to right the shame inflicted upon us by the previous government, namely of being called by the entire international community by the name of FYROM, are welcome. Every pragmatic solution in this direction will be accepted and discussed."[38]

In other words, he declared his government's willingness to accept an approximation of the constitutional name "Republic of

36. A significant indication of the distance between the views of the two communities came from the positions they adopted on the future of Kosovo. The overwhelming majority of Albanians, in contrast to the Slav-Macedonians, were in favour of the secession of Kosovo from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. See for example "In FYROM we are living the Fable of the Hawk and the Fox", *Kathimerini* 19.12.2000.

37. The improvement in relations between Greece and FYROM is analysed by Aristotle Tziampiris in "The Realism of the New Greek Foreign Policy Towards FYROM", *Foreign Issues*, October 2002, 119-127 [in Greek].

38. "Georgievski for a Solution to the Name Dispute", *Macedonian Press Agency*, 12.2.2002, italics added.

Macedonia". Sources indicate that the ground had been prepared for agreement to the name "Gornamakedonjia" [Upper Macedonia], in conjunction with significant Greek aid and security guarantees.[39] The opposition parties outright rejected such an alternative.[40] The climate of objection was principally voiced by Gligorov's successor as President of FYROM, Boris Trajkovski:

> "Our name is the identity of the nation, the most sensitive national issue of all, it is a question of pride and dignity and a precondition for our existence and development... Our Constitution does not provide for a change in the country's name. This would require an amendment to the Constitution. Put to the vote in Parliament, it would require a 2/3 majority".[41]

A poll published at that time showed that 90% of the citizens of FYROM (with very little differentiation among ethnic communities) were against any sort of compromise formula. 76.9% replied that if such an agreement was made they would

39. According to the International Crisis Group, an initial agreement had been reached in Athens in February 2002. See International Crisis Group, "*Macedonia's Name: Why the Dispute Matters and How to Resolve It*", 10.12.2001, at http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/showreport.cfm?reportid=507 downloaded 9 April 2003, p. 10. See also "Agreement on the Name of Skopje", *To Vima*, 26.1.2001; "Athens-Skopje Proposal with Offers and Name", *Eleftherotypia*, 9.2.2001; "The Name Issue at a Critical Crossroads", *Kathimerini* 11.2.2001; and "And Its Name Shall Be Called 'Gornamakedonia' (Upper Macedonia)", *Kathimerini* 13.5.2001. These reports have been confirmed in a series of interviews conducted by the author with top Greek decision-makers who were responsible for officially dealing with this issue.

40. See "Disturbances in FYROM over the Name", *Macedonian Press Agency* 14.2.2001 and "Uproar in Skopje over the Greek Proposal for the Name", *Eleftherotypia* 10.2.2001.

41. See "Disturbances in FYROM over the Name", *Macedonian Press Agency* 14.2.2001.

demand its repeal and the immediate resignation of the government.[42] The magnitude of the reaction forestalled any attempts by Georgievski to reach an agreement with Greece on the name issue.

The violent inter-community fighting that broke out in the weeks that followed, involving armed Albanian bands, inevitably monopolised the attention of the government in Skopje. Any room for manoeuvre in the negotiation of an agreement was definitively lost. However, it also became obvious that the dispute with Greece was political in character. It was associated with matters of history and identity, but not with security and war. Greece may in the past have been diplomatically troublesome and economically damaging, but it never had any territorial claims or violent designs against the new republic. The rise of the Albanian question to the status of a major security issue for FYROM deflated the name dispute to a question of identity: important, yes, but not a matter of war or peace. Although an opportunity to resolve the matter was effectively lost in spring 2001, the circumstances were put in place that, in time, a solution would be found.

4. The International Crisis Group (ICG) Proposal

The armed ethnic crisis in FYROM ended on 13 August 2001 with the Ohrid Agreement.[43] This was the result of the active interest and intervention of the international community. The

42. See "The Overwhelming Majority of FYROM's Citizens Against Any Change in Name", *Macedonian Press Agency* 19.2.2001. The poll was conducted in 32 municipalities in FYROM on 16-17 February 2001.

43. See the important study by Kristina Balalovska, Alessandro Silj, Mario Zucconi, *Minority Politics in Southeast Europe: Crisis in Macedonia*, Brescia, 2002. The matter remains under consideration by the Greek Labour Ministry.

primary objective was to stabilise the situation in the new republic and prevent the spread of violent Albanian nationalism to neighbouring states.

The war in FYROM caused the death of dozens of its citizens, with hundreds more wounded and thousands displaced in their own country. Moreover, it fuelled hatred and suspicion between Slav-Macedonians and Albanians. For the former in particular, the Ohrid Agreement was politically painful, particularly in the areas of education, national and local administration, and the governance of the country in general.[44]

On 10 December 2001, the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) International Crisis Group (ICG) published a report entitled "*Macedonia's Name: Why the Dispute Matters and How to Resolve It*".[45] This report was given immense publicity in the country's media, and aroused keen interest and concern in political circles as well as in the FYROM Academy of Arts and Sciences (MANU).

This reaction was largely due to the fact that the ICG's proposals were perceived as echoing the unofficial positions and objectives of the USA and key member states of the European Union. In other words, the Slav-Macedonian elite suspected that the intention of the ICG was to create the appropriate political climate, to condition public opinion in FYROM, and in effect put forward the basic arguments and positions upon which to resolve

44. For the text of the Framework Agreement on the future of FYROM, see http://www.sinf.gov.mk/PressRoomEN/2001/07/n0815.htm downloaded 9 April 2003. The Agreement was ratified by FYROM's Parliament on 16 November 2001 by a vote of 93 in favour to 13 against, thus assuring the necessary 2/3 majority required for constitutional amendments.

45. International Crisis Group, "*Macedonia's Name: Why the Dispute Matters and How to Resolve It*", 10.12.2001, at http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/show-report.cfm?reportid=507 downloaded 9 April 2003.

the name dispute. This proposal was in itself something of a compromise and therefore irreconcilable with an inflexible position. On the one hand, the Academy of Arts and Sciences was seriously concerned that the international community was preparing to push the country into yet another painful compromise, this time on the diplomatic front still open with Greece. The country's political forces in their entirety, on the other hand, saw the ICG's endeavour as an excellent opportunity to bring the dispute to an end on extremely favourable terms.

In its report, the ICG painted FYROM's situation in the darkest of colours. It also stressed the continuing importance of the name dispute, as a question "not only of identity but of survival".[46] The report created the impression of a state whose very existence was threatened by Greek intransigence over the name issue, by Bulgaria's refusal to recognise the existence of a "Macedonian" language, and by the unwillingness of Serbia to recognise a "Macedonian" Church. Factoring in the armed provocation of the Albanians and the concessions reached in the Ohrid Agreement, the ICG concluded that the Slav-Macedonians had no further "margin for concessions in matters of identity towards Greece, Bulgaria or Serbia".[47] It even went further, insisting that Greece's positions were legally untenable and wholly unsupported by a fair analysis of the historical events.[48]

Although on the whole the ICG report appeared to favour FYROM, its proposal for resolving the name issue rejected the rigid position of recognition based on the term "Republic of Macedonia". ICG proposed a more complicated and negotiated process. First, the bilateral treaty between FYROM and Greece

46. *Ibid*, p. 15.
47. *Ibid*.
48. *Ibid,* pp. 16-17.

would provide Athens with a series of guarantees and obligations in its favour.[49] More specifically, a mutually acceptable formulation of the name would be agreed for use exclusively by Greece, and all intergovernmental organisations (preference was clearly shown for the name "Upper Macedonia", through this did not constitute a binding part of the proposal).

FYROM on its part would not to challenge the commercial use of the name "Macedonia" or "Macedonian" by Greek companies, and would commit to securing a Parliamentary Declaration on cultural and historical issues, taking serious account of Greece's positions and sensitivities.

In the second part of the ICG proposal, the member states of NATO, the European Union, as well as some other countries would formally welcome this bilateral treaty between Skopje and Athens and acknowledge FYROM's constitutional name. Last but not least, the ICG proposal shifted the name question to the level of the UN. It suggested that the UN would adopt and use the "constitutional name, Republika Makedonija, as in the Macedonian language and written in the Roman alphabet".[50]

In addition, the short or informal name of the country would remain Republika Makedonija, not Macedonia or Makedonija, and the country would be listed under R, not M, in the UN's alphabetical directory. In any case, Greece would have the right to use an agreed formulation such as "Upper Macedonia".

Reactions to the ICG Report in FYROM were varied. President Boris Trajkovski assured the country that the ICG proposal was "not a trap",[51] while the government initially

49. See *ibid,* pp. 10-20.

50. *Ibid,* p. 20.

51. "Trajkovski: The Proposal of the International Crisis Group is Not a Trap", *Macedonian Press Agency* 26.12.2001.

described the proposal as "interesting", stressing that "some of its points could certainly be examined".[52] Almost all of FYROM's former Foreign Affairs ministers judged the report to be "favourable", and the response of all major Slav-Macedonian political parties was positive.[53]

FYROM's Academy of Arts and Sciences, however, adopted a position in direct opposition to the optimism and goodwill of the country's political circles. More specifically, it published a Memorandum devoted exclusively to analysing and rejecting all the concessions proposed in the ICG report.[54]

The Memorandum did not simply support the maximalist position on the name issue, but adopted a broader nationalist view, refusing any flexibility or dialogue in matters of history, identity and culture. The Academy agreed with the ICG position that Greece's objections were weak on the level of international law, and found it "totally incomprehensible" that the report should propose the signature of a bilateral treaty between Athens and Skopje that would include concessions on the part of FYROM:

> "The Academy believes that [such a thing] is not possible when one side is compelled to accept articles serving the interests of the other side".[55]

52. "Skopje Describes the Proposal for the Name as Interesting", *Macedonian Press Agency* 12.12.2001.

53. "Political Reactions to the ICG Proposals", *Macedonian Press Agency* 13.12.2001.

54. *Memorial of the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts Relating to the Dispute About the Name of the Republic of Macedonia*, Skopje, 30.6.2002.

55. *Ibid,* p. 35.

Therefore, it rejected the IGC proposals for a review of school textbooks in FYROM, since the same was not expected of the Greek government,[56] and refused any discussion on matters of cultural heritage and identity.

As far as the Academy was concerned, only a bilateral treaty either exclusively expressing the positions of FYROM or composed of neutral and insubstantial articles – a form of window-dressing – would be acceptable. By extension, the Memorial rejects the need for a bilateral treaty of this sort, in other words, the very cornerstone of the ICG's proposal.

The Academy also took a negative view of the name "Republika Makedonija", even though it is the Slav form of the country's constitutional name. The objections were rooted in the fact that FYROM would be the only member of the United Nations whose name could not be written or pronounced in translation (e.g. "Republic of Macedonia" in English).[57] The Academy contended that the Roman rendering of "Republika Makedonija" ignores the fact that the Roman alphabet is not used in FYROM and would, consequently, cause serious problems for states that have adopted the Cyrillic alphabet (this is not explained). This would create

> "confusion and misunderstanding due to the fact that the letter "j" is pronounced differently in countries that use the Roman alphabet."[58]

56. *Ibid,* p. 49. For analyses of the school textbooks used in FYROM, see Sophia Vouri, *The Slav Balkan History Textbooks (1991-1993)*, Athens, 1999 [in Greek]; Christina Koulouri (ed.), *Clio in the Balkans. The Politics of History Education*, Thessaloniki, 2002; and the classic study by Evangelos Kofos, *The Vision of 'Greater Macedonia'*, Thessaloniki, 1994.

57. See Memorial, *op. cit*., p. 38.

58. *Ibid*.

The Academy's position on the double formula, according to which Greece could call FYROM "Upper Macedonia" and its inhabitants "Upper Macedonians," is equally telling. The Memorial stresses that there is no contemporary precedent for this name, while

> "Acceptance of the 'Upper Macedonian' proposal would mean depriving a people that has lived in Macedonia for centuries of its national character. [It would mean] the negation of the Macedonian identity."[59]

As a corollary, of course, it rejected the ICG's proposal that "Republika Makedonija" be listed alphabetically under "R" rather than "M".[60]

It is evident that the Academy was willing to risk its prestige by marshalling fuzzy and logically feeble arguments in order to prevent any deviation from the maximalist and absolutely rigid line on the national name.

The Academy's Memorial provides a "scientific" assessment that rejects all proposed compromises advanced by the ICG report and, by extension, the report itself. The positions adopted by the Academy amount to a memorial of intransigence that may be summarised as follows: Their country should be recognised internationally by the name "Republic of Macedonia" with no further explanation or limitation. Essentially, Greece must also recognise it by this name, and cannot be allowed to exclusively use the formulation "Upper Macedonia." FYROM is not required to enter into any debate on matters connected with history, culture and identity, presumably because all its views in these sectors are correct and sufficiently justified.

59. *Ibid,* p. 44.
60. See *ibid,* p. 45.

Nonetheless, and despite the objections expressed by the Academy, the ICG report created a new dynamic regarding the resolution of the name dispute. Athens was concerned that lack of progress (on the basis of the ICG proposals), would lead the United States and some of the bigger EU member states to unilaterally recognise FYROM with the name "Republic of Macedonia". In Skopje, the really serious political debate centred on how the ICG report could be used as a platform for the matter's final resolution.

In mid-February 2002, FYROM's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Slobodan Casule, adopted a more cautious position, leaving room for replacing "Upper Macedonia" with "Macedonia-Skopje":

> To begin with, it is wholly unacceptable that our name should remain untranslated, and that we should be listed under "R" as Republika Makedonija. What is even worse is the requirement that we relinquish our cultural and historical past. We cannot permit non-governmental organisations ... to map out our foreign policy and determine our strategy. We continue to hold the position that we do not accept the name "Upper Macedonia", we insist on the name "Republic of Macedonia" *with the possible addition of the word Skopje, which we will talk about*.[61]

Casule's initial wariness was gradually replaced by a concentrated effort and a new plan for a final resolution. During this interval the Premier had declared the ICG proposal "good and acceptable".[62]

The Casule plan proposed a variation to the ICG one. Instead of a bilateral treaty between Athens and Skopje, it called for an

61. "Interview with Casule", *Vecer* 16.2.2002, italics added.
62. "Interview with Georgievski", *Dvevnik* 2.1.2002.

exchange of letters. The first of these would acknowledge the impossibility of changing the constitutional name and the second would allow Greece to use another name in all references to its neighbour.

Following this exchange of letters and Greece's indirect recognition of the country, FYROM would ask the UN to recognise its constitutional name, while Greece would be allowed to use the name "Republic of Macedonia-Skopje". In all probability efforts would be made to add the word Skopje to the constitutional name of FYROM.

The main advantage of the Casule plan was that, being based on an exchange of letters, it could be cancelled immediately if one of the parties should fail to observe any part of the 'accord'. In addition, it was politically easier to reach agreement on common positions on the basis of an exchange of letters than in a formal treaty. This would minimise the potentially powerful institutional reactions in both countries.

This new effort on the part of the Georgievski government to come to an accord with Greece seems to have disturbed President Trajkovski. After a meeting with US Secretary of State Colin Powell during a visit to Washington in February 2002, he sent an emphatic message to both Athens and Skopje with the following declaration:

> "I expect the name dispute to be resolved this year. I also expect Macedonia to be recognised with its constitutional name, for at this time this is a matter of stability".[63]

63. "Name Dispute to be Settled This Year, Trajkovski Says", *Macedonian Press Agency* 5.2.2002.

The interesting facets and innovations of the Casule plan notwithstanding, this new endeavour had to be abandoned as the country geared towards the general elections of 15 September 2002.

5. Towards a Final Settlement?

No serious episodes of inter-community violence marred the pre-electoral period in FYROM, nor did the name dispute serve as a political battleground for the Slav-Macedonian and Albanian parties. The major opposition party rather accused the governing VMRO-DPMNE of signing a series of economic and commercial agreements with Greece which increased that country's influence over FYROM to an unacceptable degree.

The final result was a triumph for the opposition. Branko Crvenkovski's party won 44% of the total vote and 60 of the 120 parliamentary seats.[64] The former government gathered 27% of the votes and 34 seats, paying the political price for a host of problems: economic woes, unemployment, corruption, and to some extent the way with which it had handled the ethnic crisis.[65]

The fall of Georgievski marked the end of a chapter in relations between Greece and FYROM, that was characterised particularly by improved economic relations. Furthermore, serious

64. Ali Ahmeti's "Democratic Union for Integration", whose leader was the head of the armed Albanian struggle during the ethnic crisis, won 10 % of the vote and 16 seats, outstripping the "Party for Democratic Prosperity", under Arben Xhaferi, the historic leader of the Albanians in FYROM, who got 4 % of the vote and 5 seats. Three seats went to smaller parties. See "New Government in Skopje Includes the UCK", *Kathimerini* 17.9.2002.

65. A real blow to the Georgievski government and a major factor in these general elections was a subsequent ICG report entitled "*Macedonia's Public Secret: How Corruption Drags the Country Down*", which monopolised media interest after its publication on 14 August 2002.

endeavours had been made to resolve the outstanding name dispute in the spring of 2001, (before the ethnic crisis came to a head), and again in February 2002 when the hostilities had ceased.

It would be wrong, however, to conclude that the new Crvenkovski government wanted either a freeze in bilateral relations or new problems and tensions. It certainly hoped that economic relations would continue to improve, though probably without Greek investment in sensitive economic areas. As for the vital issue of the name, Crvenkovski hinted at a solution based on a double formula:

> In the days to come, the two sides must concentrate on the negotiations or talks ... in order to find a solution *that will respect the sensitivities of both sides*. As time goes by, we see that where once we spoke on this issue as enemies, now we speak as friends. I am persuaded that the latter is a better way to resolve the problem.[66]

FYROM's political world is in all likelihood ready to accept a double name formula. This is a formula in which, drawing on the proposals of the ICG, Greece would use a "non-problematical" name and international recognition within the framework of the UN based on the name "Republic of Macedonia." Seven years

66. "I will form a government with Ahmeti's party", *Kathimerini* 6.10.2002, italics added. Another interesting development is the fact that a spokesman for the Democratic Union for Integration expressed the wish to have their say on the name issue. According to interviews conducted by the author with officials in FYROM in November 2002, they have no intention of straying from the official government position. On the contrary, Ahmeti's party wants to show, in the politically least costly way, that they too are interested in a matter of major importance to the Slav-Macedonians. The belated Albanian interest in the name of FYROM will not therefore affect either the dynamic of the issue or the developments associated with it.

after the signing of the Interim Accord, the government in Skopje seems to believe that it is approaching achievement of a goal very close to the one it had originally set when the name dispute began in 1991. This, however, requires the assent of Greece and by extension greater concessions on its part. Premier Costas Simitis declared that:

> "The issues must be closed, unfinished historic business cannot be left hanging for ever ... And as for the name [of FYROM], the moment has come".[67]

Evidently, an agreement on the matter of the name would have to equally take into account the interests and the justified sensitivities of the Greek side.

67. "Abrasions", *O Kosmos tou Ependyti* 23-24.11.2002. Prime Minister Simitis' statements were made on the occasion of the NATO Summit in Prague, where the decision was made to enlarge the Organization.