

The Dynamics of the Name Issue of the Republic of Macedonia

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Abstract

The name dispute mainly with Greece, which does not accept the simple name "Republic of Macedonia" with the claim that there is an area named Macedonia with Thessaloniki as a capital, have continued since the break-up of Yugoslavia and up to this day with Greece. The name issue is one of the biggest obstacles for the Republic of Macedonia to join the EU and NATO. Many negotiations have failed for finding names, ranging as the Republic of Skopje, the Republic of North Macedonia, and to the idea of disintegration of the country. It was expected that solving the contest name with Greece to take on a new dynamism after the elections when Prime Minister Zaev stated that this issue will end very soon and will be decided by referendum, but still the issue of Macedonia's name is nor in the east nor in the west. On the other hand, the citizens generally express their revolt to the governmental policies that this issue and many others are used by political parties during the electoral campaign accusing each other which of the political parties has done more for the national interests. So, this segment continues to be considered only on political parties agendas and platforms for years and accusing each other of not realizing it. The Prime Minister Zaev said that the country is closer than ever before, in order to resolve this problem, where negotiations are continuing to be held in order to achieve a mutually acceptable solution for both countries. The pressures of the international factor are in the direction of strengthening internal stability and preventing any possible conflict in Macedonia. This pressure is evident, but the question is how much it will work?!

Keywords: population, negotiations, proposals, identity, collision, choice

1. Introduction

The problem of the name of FYROM (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) is issued since Macedonia separation from the Former Yugoslavia and emerged as a separate state, but with the strange name FYROM, with the idea that it could regulate the name later. This new state was first recognized by Albania, considering that about 35% of the population of the Republic of FYROM are the Albanian but there were restrictions regarding human rights and freedom. Macedonia's biggest opponent was Greece, which has a part of its territory in the north, an area named Greek Macedonia with the capital city of Thessaloniki. The Republic of Macedonia has never agreed with the Greek proposals about the name change.

The Albanian politicians of the Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) have not made any serious statements in the name dispute, having in mind that this Republic can also be divided in the future between neighboring states such as Bulgaria, Serbia and Albania. The Bulgarians claim that today's Macedonians are Bulgarians, but for creating a distinct identity (that of Vardar) they use a Cyrillic alphabet but slightly different from the Bulgarian one, but the Macedonian words and phrases are the same.

The name issue with Greece dates back to Macedonia's independence almost 27 years ago. Athens wants Skopje to change its name and Macedonians to not claim that they are descendants of ancient Macedonians. This dispute has caused Greece to block Macedonia's NATO membership for several years and the opening of EU membership talks. This problematic issue was expected to take on a new dynamic after the local elections, but actually it did not have any results. In this context the contacts are also established with the Greek government, but also the moves of UN mediator, Matthew Nimetz, that there may be rapprochement of the positions between the parties to close the 30-year-long dispute with the name of Macedonia.

On the other hand, a group of Albanian intellectuals in Macedonia have begun to sign a seven- point memorandum, where among the demands is the country's constitution change, insisting that the interests of Albanians not to be held as a hostage to "stability and peace" and national integration as a priority to the EU.

2. Results and Discussions

Analysts estimate that without serious intervention from abroad there will not be any solution. It will be a success if Macedonia is invited to become a NATO member, as well as the date for launching EU membership talks. These two processes come along in parallel with the settlement of the name dispute.

Those that are well-known in international affairs say that besides the problem of the issue of Macedonia's name, there are other issues that slow the process such as the functioning of the state as a multiethnic and a democratic state. There are other social and political issues that slow down this process and any attempt to overthrow them will further deepen the crisis in society.

If we base on such statements, especially on the Macedonian side, but also those statement on the Greek side, international experts acknowledge that this dispute can hardly have a quick solution.

Some analysts are of the opinion that the name Paeoni does not express and does not include the whole of the current name Macedonia, this solution is thought to confuse the situation even worse and cause dissatisfaction both within Macedonia and its neighbors, mainly Bulgarians and less the Serbs.

On the other hand, the group of Albanian intellectuals have signed a memorandum with seven requests based on the constitutional change. First, they range the deep and the wide crisis of the Albanians in Macedonia, the constant setbacks and the exclusion from decision-making on important issues for the future of the country. They demand in any case to change the Constitution in order the country to show the reality of a multiethnic society.

It is in the interest of our country to move the issue on the basis of a common and acceptable solution for general use, with a name registered in the constitution and with a broad agreement that will certify, guarantee and encourage a new era of new relations of peoples, not only in the economy but also in all issues that concerns them.

3. The Evaluation

It presents a very important part of the study because it shows how much we reached understanding the problematic in question; how widespread it is in the society; how it affects and how to treat it, and ultimately choosing the alternative for solving the issue that seems to be reasonable for us. In order to assess this problem, I have decided to conduct a survey. In this way, we can clearly see the attitudes of citizens about this issue which might affect them. The survey results and public opinion attitudes are expressed in the following tables:

Demographic characteristics of respondents

		Number	Percentage	Total
Gender	Female	80	50%	160
	Male	80	50%	
Age	18- 25 age	24	15%	160
	26-35 age	56	35 %	
	36-45 age	32	20%	
	46-55 age	32	20%	
	56-65 age	16	10%	
Education	Elementary school	24	15%	160
	Secondary school	40	25%	
	Faculty	72	45%	
	Master of science	16	10%	
	Doctor of science	8	5%	
Economic status	employed	112	70%	160
	unemployed	48	30%	
Ethnicity	Albanian	112	70%	160
	Macedonian	40	25%	
	Others	8	5%	

Respondents' answers are the following:

	Completely agree	Somehow agree	Do not agree	Do not have ideas
The Republic of Macedonia is on a political and social crisis	72%	14%	6%	8%
The impact on the emergence of the crisis is the disregard of the multinational character of the state	41%	25%	20%	14%
All communities in Macedonia are treated equally	21%	8%	68%	3%
Macedonia functions on the bases of demographic features	6%	6%	70%	18%
Democracy ruling is not respected in Macedonia	74%	13%	5%	8%
All citizens are equal in front the law and judiciary based on constitution.	81%	12%	4%	3%
Macedonia gradually and positively marches the way to EU and Nato	23%	7%	66%	4%
Macedonia is not on the right path for reaching the mebership in Euroatlantic structures	78%	14%	5%	3%
The interethnic problems and the lack of equal representation of ethnicities are one of the main obstacles to the EU	89%	11%	8%	2%
The issue of Macedonia's name is a political problem	52%	17%	27%	4%
The case of changing the name of Macedonia has to do with its own state identity	24%	22%	33%	21%
The deepening crisis in Macedonia can be solved by joining the country in the EU	66%	4%	22%	8%
Macedonia will continue to stay in such a crisis situation until fair functioning as a multiethnic democratic state is regulated	81%	8%	8%	3%

4. Conclusions

Based on the survey data and in general, the hypothesis was proved that the citizens are realistically those who feel and experience any political and social change that was expressed by the majority who see the international factor to help the escape from the crisis and the current undesired state. A considerable number of people support the fact that the reason for lasting the name dispute so long is the fear of losing the identity of the Macedonian people.

The political crisis has influenced the growth of migration among citizens. Its longing for the direct risk of the citizens' economy for most of them is worrying. Citizens consider that before the state interests, the political crisis has initially transformed the living in Macedonia to a survival one.

Regarding fair democratic and multi- ethnic functionality, the results conclude that inter-ethnic relations have never been established on a basis of mutual trust and respect in Macedonia. This relationship has been steadily decreasing without ever stabilizing, where key factors of this state are the wrong policies of the government that have put the country in a difficult economic and social crisis and are continually deepening it with pretexts that they fight for equal rights, but the ethno-centric character continues to remain of conquering character. The corruption affairs and criminality which are used to control political forces reveal a realistic approach of functioning the state illegally.

Instead of prioritizing citizens' lives and European integration, the everyday politics nurtures hate speech and has poisoned the society, fueling a terrible ethnic nationalism. However, even in this mood neither in heaven nor in earth, people find the rescue and confidence in the international factor as the last variant, otherwise most of them are already oriented towards migration to European countries.

According to the survey, any change of the name with adjectives such as: the Upper, Northern, and Vardar would fail in the referendum. But even from the Greek side, if we judge according to surveys, any name containing the name Macedonia will be unacceptable to the Greek people.

In Macedonia, the referendum would probably succeed, but it is ethically correct that a so sensitive issue for Macedonians to pass with the help of the non-Macedonian vote, especially the Albanians as a large body of voters. In that way, inter-ethnic relations can also be drastically broken. Then, in this case why we need the integration in the EU and NATO ?! Meanwhile, if the Greek side insists on an untranslated name, then even Albanians in the referendum would vote against.

The name of compromise should be something that will enable us to live together. Why not find something that is acceptable to both parties?

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