
**A NAME FOR A CONFLICT OR A CONFLICT FOR A NAME?
AN ANALYSIS OF GREECE'S DISPUTE WITH FYROM 1991-1996**

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I. Introductory Remarks**

The entanglement between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), over the issue of the recognition of the latter and the name under which this recognition would take place, has served as a potent reminder of the considerable influence that nationalistic divides have always exerted in the Balkan region. For Greece, this dispute animated passions and stimulated a nationalist fervour that had been unseen for decades and, being a not fully resolved issue, it contains a number of elements that could serve as a focus of regional conflict in the future. For the fledgling FYROM, the entanglement constituted a matter of paramount importance not merely in defining its external policy but it was also perceived as a matter influencing both its existence as a nation and its future status in Southeastern Europe.

This article will attempt an analysis of the dispute between Greece and FYROM, from its beginnings up until the 1995 interim accord. In the first instance, it will trace the origins of the controversy and portray the current dispute as the latest stage in evolution of the Macedonian Question of the past. Furthermore, the diplomatic strategies of the two countries involved will be examined for the 1991-1995 period. In addition, the content and significance of the contentious issues of this debate will be scrutinised. Finally, the factors which contributed to the diplomatic exacerbation of the issue and caused a failure of both countries involved to secure a resolution to the dispute that they would consider 'positive' will be analysed and the repercussions for the Balkan region's short- and long-term geopolitical status quo will be outlined.

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The focus of the article is the dissection and analysis of the Foreign Policy of Athens regarding the Macedonian question in the post-war period, with particular attention to the years 1991-1995. As such, its ultimate objective is to provide a contribution to the scholarly investigation of the factors influencing Greek Foreign Affairs in the 1990s.

II. "*Macedonia Nostra*":

The Historical Background of the Macedonian Question.

The geographical term "Macedonia" is a Greek word and was used in antiquity to designate the area inhabited by the Macedonians, "the tall ones", apparently on account of the distinguishing physical height of this tribe.¹ It was thus the inhabitants who gave their name to the region and not the other way round.

For most of their earlier history, the Macedonians led a relatively peripheral existence and were accordingly slow to partake in the intellectual, social and cultural progress of southern Greece.² The kingdom of Macedonia reached a peak under Philip II (359-336 BC), when it was enlarged considerably through a series of successful military campaigns and included a large part of the southern Balkan peninsula. At the time of death of Philip's son, Alexander the Great, the Macedonians had created a vast empire in Asia and Africa, after spearheading an astounding military and ideological crusade against the Persians "on behalf of all Greeks".³

The Slavs first appeared in the region in the 6th century A.D. during the great migrations of the period, whilst in the Middle Ages various other populations started moving in the area.⁴ Under Byzantine and Ottoman rule, the term was used in its geographical sense, i.e. it covered the boundaries of the former four Roman administrative regions of "Macedonia".⁵ This was in fact larger than "historic Macedonia", the core domain of the 4th century B.C. Macedonian Kingdom, and was inhabited by a multitude of different Balkan ethnic groups, Greeks, Turks, Serbians, Bulgarians, Vlachs, Jews and Albanians.

¹ The ethnic name is derived from the adjective μακεδνός occurring already in Homer (Odys. η 106). See Andriotes (History of the Name 'Macedonia' at p. 143. For a discussion of the ethnic origin of the Macedonians see Andriotes (The Language and Greek Origin of the Ancient Macedonians).

² The ethnicity of the ancient Macedonians has been a matter of heated debate for some time. Based on Demosthenes' philippics (where Philip was denounced as an uncouth semi-barbarian) some sources have denied any ethnic connection between the Macedonians and other Greeks. Nevertheless, it appears that currently most serious researchers do not seem to question the hellenism of the Macedonians, as members of the Doric tribe. For an exposé of the argument: Nystazopoulou-Pelekidou, p. 3 *et seq.*; with detailed discussion, Wardle ; also Sakellariou pp. 44-47; Martis at p. 20 *et seq.*; cf. also fn 3 *infra*.

³ See *inter alia* Martis, pp. 53-71; Ellis & Walbank; but also Pribichevich, pp. 37-64.

⁴ For more see Libal, p. 15 *et seq.*; Pribichevich, pp. 65-93; Christophilopoulou; Bucar, p. 8 *et seq.*

⁵ The Ottomans never used the name Macedonia as an administrative (or ethnic) appellation; cf. Papazoglou;

In the crumbling 19th century Ottoman Empire, the increasing breakdown of central authority led to growing interest in occupied Macedonia amongst the surrounding Balkan nation-states. The respective national ideologies of these newly-independent countries, in the form of accurate or arbitrary historical, ethnological and political claims, began to converge on the heterogeneous province and the ensuing tension precluded any hope of consensus when the time to redraw the borders of that "microcosm of Balkan complexities"⁶ would come. The eventual annexation of the largest possible portion of geographic Macedonia became thus pivotal in the nationalist and irredentist plans of Bulgaria⁷, Greece⁸ and Serbia and a fundamental consideration of their national consciousness. Chronologically, the Macedonian Problem in its original form may be said to begin with the founding of the Bulgarian Exarchate in 1870.⁹ This was perceived as an initial step to establish a distinct -Bulgarian- national identity for the Slav-speaking populace and it was further pursued by the founding of schools and by indulging in vigorous propaganda.¹⁰ The growing activity of the Bulgarians alarmed Serbia and Greece, which decided in turn to mobilise in this cultural cold war. By 1900 educational indoctrination had given way to more acute measures as the Bulgarian-backed I.M.R.O.¹¹ embarked on a campaign of terror against the population by armed bands of guerrillas, the *komitadjis*.¹² The other two countries responded by organising combatant groups of their own¹³, and from 1903 to 1908 a ruthless and protracted struggle took place amongst the Balkan Christians in territory belonging formally to the Turks, who had limited success -and, arguably, equally limited interest- in containing the conflict.¹⁴

The Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 ended the Ottoman rule. After successfully stripping the Ottoman Empire from almost all her European possessions, the Balkan alliance broke up and Bulgaria attacked Serbia and Greece in a clash over the spoils. The Bulgarians were severely defeated in the Second Balkan War and the Treaty of Bucharest (August 1913) confirmed the final partitioning of the Macedonian region amongst the Balkan neighbours. Greece annexed 51.5% of geographic Macedonia¹⁵, Bulgaria gained 10.1% and the remaining 38.4% became part of the kingdom of Serbia, under the name Southern Serbia.¹⁶

⁶ Kofos E., (National Heritage and National Identity in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Macedonia), p. 4.

⁷ E.g. the book by Tachiaos.

⁸ See concluding chapter by Veremis; also Kitromilides; Kofos, (Dilemmas and Orientations of Greek Policy in Macedonia: 1878-1886).

⁹ Zotiades at p. 13.

¹⁰ See Klok, (De Macedonische Kwestie).

¹¹ Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation, as the *Vatresna Makedonska Revoljucionenna Organizacija* (V.M.R.O.) is internationally known.

¹² For a Slav-Macedonian view of IMRO, the 'Macedonian Revolution' and the Macedonian Struggle (cultural and military), see Pribichevich, pp. 106-135; also Bucar, pp. 90-104.

¹³ Cf. Koliopoulos; for a chronological account see Papakonstantinou, (I Makedonia meta ton Makedoniko Agona), pp. 38-53.

¹⁴ Kofos, (The Fight for Freedom 1830-1912); see also Dakin p. 73 *et seq.*

¹⁵ It must be noted that Greece secured not only the largest part of the geographic region of Macedonia, but also approximately 90% of the historic core of ancient Macedonia; Voros, (The Macedonian Question of our Neighbours).

¹⁶ Zotiades, p. 29, fn. 73.

In the meantime, a curious twist to the original 'Macedonian Question' evolved. Until that time the term 'Macedonian' had never been used by any of the three countries involved,¹⁷ or any segment of the actual population, as anything other than a geographic definition.¹⁸ In the interwar period however, the term began to be put to use for the first time as an ethnic description,¹⁹ serving as a fabrication to promote Comintern's aspirations to increased regional influence.²⁰

The crucial step was taken in 1944 by the Yugoslav leader Tito, when he implemented the decision to create a new federal state consisting of six republics. He gave to the southernmost province, previously known as *Vardarska Banovina* (i.e. District of [the river] Vardar), the new name of People's Republic of Macedonia.²¹ This republic was made a constitutive of federal Yugoslavia and its Slavic inhabitants -known until then as ethnic Bulgarians or Serbs- were recognised as its 'titular nation'²² under the name *Makedontsi* (Macedonians). Their language, which was until then held to be a western Bulgarian dialect, was christened 'Macedonian' and became one of Yugoslavia's official languages.

This was a political masterstroke on behalf of Tito. He managed to safeguard for Yugoslavia a region which had been claimed by Bulgaria ever since the Second Balkan War,²³ and at the same time to create a Piedmont that could facilitate the unification of the remaining Macedonian territories into the Yugoslavian federation.²⁴ An extensive 'Macedonisation' process was initiated so as to instil a distinct national identity in the awareness of the population; numerous Greek and Bulgarian historical and cultural elements were appropriated,²⁵ whilst the younger generations started to be systematically infused with irredentist views of a Greater Macedonia and of their as yet 'unliberated brothers'. Tito's immediate plans for annexation of the Bulgarian and the Greek parts of Macedonia were

¹⁷ Bulgaria, aligning with the Central Powers in WWI and with the Axis in WWII, occupied Serb and Greek Macedonia on both occasions; *ibid.*, pp. 72-76; See e.g. Klok, (De tweete Macedonische Kwestie).

¹⁸ Recapitulating Voros, (Different uses of the term Macedonia in the Centuries of History).

¹⁹ See the article by Kofos, (The Macedonian Question: The Politics of Mutation).

²⁰ "The struggle for a united and independent Macedonian republic of the working people is a worthy cause", Resolution of the Communist International on the Macedonian Question and the IMRO(United) -1934, in: Kondis B. et al (*eds.*), p. 23; see also Papakonstantinou M., (I Makedonia meta ton Makedoniko Agona), p. 13 *et seq.*; Voros, (Macedonian Question of Neighbours), p. 39 *et seq.*; but from the Bulgarian point of view, see Misirkov.

²¹ Zotiades, pp. 77-82; Kofos, (The Making of Yugoslavia's People's Republic of Macedonia).

²² On the notion of 'titular nation', see Bremmer & Taras (*eds.*), p. 5.

²³ *Cf.* fn 17 *supra*; about the Macedonian policy of Bulgaria in the period after World War II, see Zotiades, pp. 94-100.

²⁴ "The fighting Piedmont of Macedonia has fiercely proclaimed that it will not stint on support or sacrifice for the liberation of the other two segments of our nation and for the general unification of the entire Macedonian people", Report of the Organising Committee of the Anti-Fascist Assembly of National Liberation of Macedonia (ASNOM) concerning its activity from its foundation to its first session (2.VIII.1994), Kondis *et al* (*eds.*), p. 35; See Zotiades, pp. 83-90; Leontaritis, p. 21; Pribichevich, p. 145 *et seq.*

²⁵ Kofos, (National Heritage and National Identity), p. 20, comments on the "Yugoslav Macedonian historiographers, who could labour with equal ease in the annals of history and the world of fantasies".

respectively thwarted by the clash with Moscow in 1948²⁶ and the termination of the communist-induced ferocious civil strife in Greece in 1949.²⁷

At the same time, the reaction of Greece to this attempted provocation was remarkably lukewarm and remained so for more than four decades. The reasons for this lie in the following:

a) From 1944 until 1949, the internal situation in Greece was hardly suitable for the planning and implementation of a coherent foreign policy due to the instability caused by the civil war that was ravaging the country.

b) In the final phase of the civil strife, Tito's decision to close the Greek-Yugoslav border and discontinue the aid to the insurgents proved a major factor in ending the conflict in favour of the Athens-based government. Even though this was not a result of any deference on Belgrade's part towards the Greek government but for other reasons, the latter had a strong incentive not to stress the point of the southernmost province's name at the time.²⁸

c) After Yugoslavia broke with the Eastern Bloc and adopted a non-aligned stance in the 1950s, Greece came under fierce pressure by the U.S.A. to normalise relations with her northern neighbour and refrain from stirring up mischief in the future, as Yugoslavia was perceived to be a strategically important buffer state in the soft underbelly of the Warsaw Pact.²⁹

d) As the tension with Turkey escalated in the postwar period, it was important for Greece to secure its 'northern front' in order to focus on the *periculum ex oriente*.

e) Furthermore, as Orthodox Serbia had been the traditionally friendly agent for Greece in the otherwise insecure Balkan peninsula, a rapprochement with the (Serb-dominated, after all) Yugoslavia would seem inevitable in order to ensure at least one ally in the area. Thus for example, Belgrade's positions on the Cyprus issue were always recognised as 'encouraging' by the Greek side.

f) With the state of war against Albania perpetuated and Bulgaria technically an enemy country, Greece's only overland connection with mainland Europe passed through the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.³⁰

g) "The alien Slav element, as a result of its role during the Occupation and the civil war, had left [Greece] *en masse* and the prospect of its manipulation by a neighbouring country to threaten the security and territorial integrity of [Greece] had been removed."³¹

²⁶ Zotiades, pp. 91-93.

²⁷ For the influence of the Macedonian Controversy on the Greek civil war, see Kofos, (The Impact of the Macedonian Question on Civil Conflict on Greece); also Kondis; informative background to be found in Hammond.

²⁸ See Klok, (De tweete...), p. 4.

²⁹ For the Greco-Yugoslav relations in the 1950s, see Zotiades, pp. 101-107.

³⁰ Giakoumis, p. 443.

h) Greece could operate as a strategic dyad with Yugoslavia, blocking the approach of Warsaw Pact troops to the Mediterranean in the event of widespread hostilities, thus manifold enhancing the vital bargaining potential of either country individually.³²

Thus, Greek reaction in so far as the new 'Macedonian Question' was concerned remained, until the end of the 1980s, -at best- restrained, and after 1950 the standard cliché about the 'traditional friendship' of the two peoples was reiterated at every opportunity by any public statement or analysis concerning bilateral Greek-Yugoslav relations.³³ Abroad, however, a major cultural campaign was launched, capitalising on Yugoslavia's privileged position in the non-aligned movement.³⁴ A significant programme of translations from Macedonian into the most important world languages was initiated, along with the organisation of international conferences and the generous dissemination of S.R.M. books in prestigious academic institutions,³⁵ especially in countries with multicultural credos such as Canada and Australia.³⁶

Hence, a de facto recognition of a Macedonian ethnic entity had been covertly attained internationally by 1970 already.³⁷ And, in spite of the occasional irritated protest from the Greek public opinion in the late 1980s, the inescapable conclusion was now that this "newly-established 'Macedonian' nation could rightfully stake a claim to everything Macedonian; i.e. everything of, or pertaining to the region of Macedonia and its inhabitants."³⁸

III. Exacerbation and Diplomatic Struggle: 1989-1993

In the post-Tito Yugoslavia it soon became apparent that the initiative had passed to the individual republics and the delicate balances that had held the system together for forty years had been upset. The collapse of the Iron Curtain in 1989 and the arising turmoil accelerated the centrifugal tendencies.³⁹ On 23 December 1990 a referendum in Slovenia supporting

³¹ This is a manifestly untrue statement of course but it remained one of the mainstays for Greek propaganda for almost half a century. It is quoted here as found in the "Statement by the Head of the Greek Delegation" in: Reply of the Yugoslav Intervention at the Plenary Session of June 22, 1990; C.S.C.E., Conference on Human Dimension, Offprint, Athens: ELIAMEP, 1991, at p. 355.

³² Kofos, (Greece and the Balkans in the '70s and '80s), p. 8.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³⁴ Bilateral cultural agreements of third countries with Yugoslavia were sure to include a pro-Macedonia proviso; see Kofos (National Heritage and National Identity), p. 29.

³⁵ With details, Martis, p. 104 *et seq.*

³⁶ Kofos, (National Heritage and National Identity), p. 32.

³⁷ An illuminating (albeit disheartening) personal anecdote is mentioned by Martis, at p. 101.

³⁸ Kofos, (Politics of Mutation), at p. 170.

³⁹ An example of the slackening of central control and the consequent unleashing of hitherto latent nationalist trends are the sharp clashes between the Greek and Yugoslav delegations during the C.S.C.E. conferences on Human

independence, triggered off the chain of events that led to the dissolution of the Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia. In a similar referendum on 8 September 1991⁴⁰, a large majority in the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia⁴¹ voted in favour of independence and the Republic duly declared its sovereignty on 17 September 1991.⁴² At the same time, it started seeking international recognition as the 'Republic of Macedonia'. The Greek government had been expecting this eventuality, after the eruption of fighting in the north of Yugoslavia earlier in the year had signalled that the federation's days were numbered.⁴³ But for the Greeks in general it was a tremendous jolt, as they suddenly realised in 1991 that a new state was about to appear at their northern frontier with a name which they had thought to be unquestionably theirs. Greece had spent the last two years entangled in a paralysing internal squabble and successive general elections that had nurtured severe introspection and had delayed the readjustment of foreign policy to the novel exigencies of post-iron-curtain realities in Europe. So, the Greek public opinion arose excitedly in a forceful campaign against the new state intended to compel it to relinquish all linguistic and symbolic connections with Greek history; and the 'Macedonian issue' entered a new chapter of its history.

On 16 December 1991, the Council of Ministers of the European Community met to consider the *de jure* recognition of the breakaway former Yugoslav republics in Brussels. The Foreign Minister A. Samaras put forward the position of the Greek side concerning FYROM⁴⁴, centring on objections against the use of the name 'Macedonia', the likelihood of future territorial claims and the hostile propaganda emanating from certain circles in Skopje.⁴⁵ At the time, with attention focused on the recognition of Slovenia and Croatia and the convoluted negotiations regarding the Treaty on European Union⁴⁶, Samaras, at the end of a marathon session, had little difficulty in persuading the Council to adopt the Greek views and include them in the resulting declaration.⁴⁷ After this initial success, the favourable opinion of the

Dimension (Copenhagen 1990, Moscow 1991) over allegations of maltreatment of the 'Macedonian' minority in northern Greece; statements by the Head of the Greek delegation in: Valinakis & Ntalis (*eds.*), at pp. 23, 43.

⁴⁰ For the results of the referendum, *ibid.*, p. 38.

⁴¹ In March 1991 the Socialist Republic of Macedonia had dropped the 'Socialist' from its name and remained, as the 'Republic of Macedonia', a part of the Yugoslav federation.

⁴² Declaration of Independence of the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, in Valinakis & Ntalis (*eds.*), p. 40.

⁴³ The President of the Republic of Macedonia, the former communist Kiro Gligorov, had been initially favourable to association within a 'New Yugoslavia', a fact that had seemingly reassured Athens too much.

⁴⁴ To avoid confusion through the use of varied nomenclature, the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia will be subsequently referred to as FYROM (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), a name it officially adopted however only *after* its recognition by the United Nations in 1993.

⁴⁵ In the November 1990 elections in FYROM the notoriously nationalistic V.M.R.O. (resurrected I.M.R.O.) emerged as the largest party in Parliament and, although it remained in the opposition, its stalwart antihellenic outlooks were to become a notable influence on Skopje's policy.

⁴⁶ For some of the background of this meeting, see Axt; Alendar, pp. 1009-1011

⁴⁷ "The Community and its Member States also require a Yugoslav Republic to commit itself, prior to recognition, to adopt constitutional and political guarantees ensuring that it has no territorial claims towards a neighbouring Community State and that it will conduct no hostile propaganda activities versus a neighbouring Community State, *including the use of a denomination which implies territorial claims*" (our italics); Extraordinary EPC Ministerial Meeting: Declaration on Yugoslavia, Brussels, 16.XII.1991, in Valinakis & Ntalis (*eds.*), p. 50.

Badinter Commission -which endorsed FYROM's recognition⁴⁸- was also set aside and a ferocious diplomatic struggle commenced between Athens and Skopje. Both President Karamanlis and Foreign Minister Samaras engaged in correspondence with the European partners outlining Greece's argumentation⁴⁹, whilst north of the border it was realised that this was going to be a hard fight.

Amidst intensifying Greek passions towards FYROM's unyielding stand, the Foreign Minister clarified the Greek views at the Lisbon EC Foreign Minister Council on 17 February 1992. The Portuguese EC Presidency that undertook to explore the prospects of resolving the impasse, came up with a draft deal (the so-called 'Pineiro package'⁵⁰), which was rejected as there was no agreement on the name ("New Macedonia" had been put forward). Later, at the Guimaraes Council of Ministers it was decided that the Member States "are willing to recognise [FYROM] as a sovereign and independent state, within its existing borders, and under a name that can be accepted by all parties concerned".⁵¹

The zenith of the Greek Foreign Policy's effectiveness during the dispute with FYROM was achieved at the European Council of Lisbon on 27 June 1992. The past semester of intense Greek diplomatic activity had been fruitful and the Community finally formulated a position whereby it was to recognise FYROM in accordance with the December 1991 declaration and only "under a name which does not include the term Macedonia".⁵² In Greece, public opinion was jubilant, but in Skopje the blow toppled the government. The hardliners emerged vindicated and during the rest of 1992 the situation was methodically exacerbated by both sides: in August, FYROM adopted the 16-point Star of Vergina as the emblem on the national flag and in September, the new school textbooks that were circulated were laden with irredentist references to "Greater Macedonia" and claims on hellenic cultural heritage; on the other hand, Greece intensified a selective embargo on fuel and commodities.⁵³

As the European front appeared unreceptive at the moment, the FYROM government decided to seek recognition elsewhere and on 30 July 1992 applied directly to the United Nations for recognition.⁵⁴ But time was running against the Greeks now. The European press was starting to rally clearly in support of the little fledgling state, whilst Skopje was using every conceivable diplomatic means to curtail Athens' international backing. The EC Member States were not hiding their uneasiness and possible second thoughts over the 'Macedonian

⁴⁸ This Commission was to consider the conformity of the individual Yugoslav Republics to the conditions that the Community had set for recognition; see FYROM's reply to the Badinter Commission questionnaire, 29.XII.1991, *ibid.*, p. 54; Badinter Commission Report No. 6 (Re: FYROM), 11.I.1992, *ibid.*, p. 65.

⁴⁹ See letters of Karamanlis to the EC Heads of Government, 3.I.1992, *ibid.*, p. 63; and to Italy's PM G. Andreotti, 21.I.1992, *ibid.*, p. 83; letter of Samaras to the EC Foreign Ministers, 17.I.1991, *ibid.*, p. 72.

⁵⁰ From the name of the Portuguese Foreign Minister who negotiated it; 'Pineiro package', *ibid.*, p. 87.

⁵¹ Council of Ministers - Guimaraes decision, *ibid.*, p. 94.

⁵² Lisbon European Council, Conclusions of the Presidency, Annex II, 26-27.VI.1992, *ibid.*, p. 100.

⁵³ Cf. Perry (Une crise en Gestation? La Macédoine et ses voisins).

⁵⁴ See FYROM's Reaction to the Lisbon European Council Decision, 3.VII.1992, in Valinakis & Ntalas (*eds.*), p. 103; and President Gligorov's Letter to the U.N. Secretary General, *ibid.*, p. 106.

issue' and a break in the solidarity of the EC seemed forthcoming⁵⁵ as the Edinburgh European Council gave a very watered-down assurance of continued support to the Lisbon declaration.⁵⁶ The situation was declining rapidly in FYROM, which was facing problems with the large Albanian minority and dreaded a southward expansion of the war raging in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Besides, the economy was in a dismal state, caught in a stranglehold between the U.N. sanctions against the rump Yugoslavia to the north and the Greek measures to the south, and with no hope of securing World Bank/International Monetary Fund aid without prior recognition. However, these weaknesses were exploited successfully as a bargaining chip, since the last thing that anyone wanted was an additional crisis in the Balkan region.⁵⁷ In anticipation of the United Nations decision on the admission of FYROM, Athens resumed diplomatic efforts in the final months of 1992, seeing FYROM's U.N. membership as inevitable but attempting to avert the worst.⁵⁸ In January 1993 the Greek Government submitted a 16-point memorandum to the Security Council⁵⁹, denouncing FYROM's intransigence and "destabilising influence in the region". It also contained attachments of the 'Greater Macedonia' maps printed in FYROM, of the Vergina Star on its flag etc. Gligorov's government duly counter-attacked on 3 February with a memorandum accusing Greece of recalcitrant behaviour and of "exerting destabilising influence in the region"...⁶⁰

The Security Council accepted the new republic's application by resolution 817/1993 and recognised it under the provisional name 'Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia'. For the first time in the history of the Organisation a state had been admitted under a temporary name, especially in view of the fact that all the federative states of the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia which had recently become independent members had retained the name which they had within the federations. Greece also managed to hinder the flying of the offensive FYROM flag at the U.N.⁶¹ and to secure a recommendation that the difference over the name be resolved "in the interest of the maintenance of peaceful and good-neighbourly relations in the region".⁶² The decision produced a lot of disapproval in the Greek public opinion and it

⁵⁵ See e.g. Karamanlis' Letter to the Heads of Government of the EC, 24.X.1992, *ibid.*, p. 108, where he professes his surprise over "the incomprehensible tendencies within the Community towards a review of the Lisbon decision."

⁵⁶ Edinburgh European Council, Conclusions of the Presidency, Section D -External Relations, 11-12.XII.1992, *ibid.*, p. 123.

⁵⁷ In December 1992, 1000 UNPROFOR soldiers (including 300 U.S. troops) were moved to FYROM in order to prevent "possible developments which could undermine confidence and stability in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia or threaten its territory"; Security Council Resolution 705(1992) of 11.XII.1992, authorising establishment of an UNPROFOR presence in FYROM.

⁵⁸ For a behind-the-scenes overview of this mobilisation see the article by the then Foreign Minister Papakonstantinou, (I Eisdohi ton Skopion ston OIE).

⁵⁹ Memorandum of Greece concerning the Application of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for Admission to the United Nations, 25.I.1993, A/47/877 (agenda item 19), S/25158; published with attachments, Athens: ELIAMEP, 1993.

⁶⁰ Memorandum regarding the admission of the Republic of Macedonia in the U.N. and the Greek Memorandum trying to prevent it, 3.II.1993, in: Valinakis & Ntalis (*eds.*), p. 138.

⁶¹ Letter of the President of the Security Council to the U.N. Secretary-General, 7.IV.1993, *ibid.*, p. 149.

⁶² Security Council Resolution 817(1993), S/25855.

was regarded as a failure by the increasingly vociferous nationalists. The Government was caught in a cul-de-sac trying to abate the national fervour that had been unleashed at home⁶³ and to improve the by now increasingly tarnished image of the country abroad.⁶⁴

In implementation of the 817/1993 resolution, a round of negotiations intended to devise Confidence Building Measures was initiated by the Co-Chairmen of the Steering Committee of the International Conference on the former Yugoslavia, C. Vance and Lord Owen. On 14 May they submitted a draft plan for an agreement on the contentious issues (emblems, constitution, propaganda), but this fell through again on account of the suggested name (Nova Makedonija: unacceptable to both sides).⁶⁵ Later the same month, the Greek Government extended a compromise proposal with the name 'Slavomakedonija', the first time that the firm position against the use of any compound name to include 'Macedonia' was waived.⁶⁶ This was equally unsuitable for FYROM, since its inhabitants are far from being homogeneously slavic, and further mediation was deferred until after the Greek elections in October 1993.⁶⁷

IV. In hoc signo disputatur: The elements of contention

An appraisal of the elements of contention between Greece and FYROM can be helpful in elucidating the extent to which the historical components of the Macedonian question commingled with current geopolitical and strategic necessities in order to formulate the issues of the dispute. Both sides had certainly demonstrated few signs of coming to a compromise over these issues, but often inflamed the situation further instead. Greece had been taking exception with fluctuating rigour to the use of the Macedonian name and the promulgation of a 'Macedonian' nation since the end of the war, but it was during the 4 December 1991 meeting of the Government cabinet in Athens that the objections to FYROM's recognition took their final form.⁶⁸

1. The controversial articles of the FYROM Constitution. In November 1991, FYROM adopted a new constitution containing clauses that Greece found objectionable. The drafting of the constitution was strongly influenced by the strongest party in the Parliament, the

⁶³ See e.g. Papakonstantinou, (I Eisdohi ton Skopion...), p. 26 *et seq.*

⁶⁴ The U.N. recognition of FYROM was one of the factors that contributed significantly to the fall of the Nea Dimokratia government.

⁶⁵ Papakonstantinou, (Ellada kai Skopia -Metra Oikodomisis Empistosynis) suggests that this plan would have been a very positive outcome for Greece at the time; see rejecting letter to the U.N. Secretary-General by Gligorov, 29.V.1993, in: Valinakis & Ntalis (*eds.*), p. 162.

⁶⁶ Letter of G. Papoulias (re: the Vance-Owen plan), 27.V.1993, S/25855/add. 1.

⁶⁷ Vance announcement: U.N. Press release SG/SM/5111, 28.IX.1993.

⁶⁸ Libal, p. 132.

nationalist VMRO, and subscribed to a number of the proclamations in its electoral manifesto.⁶⁹ In particular, the Preamble to the Constitution⁷⁰ underlines its ideological affinity to the principles of the Krushevo Republic (1903)⁷¹ and of the Antifascist Assembly of the National Liberation of Macedonia (A.S.N.O.M., 1944), regarded as the first steps towards the creation of an independent 'Macedonian nation'. In these declarations direct reference is made to the annexation of Macedonian territory belonging to Greece and Bulgaria and to the resistance of the people against the Balkan imperialists who carved up Macedonia in the early part of the century.⁷² Art. 3 of the Constitution was also a major point of contention.⁷³ It originally referred to FYROM's territory as being indivisible and inalienable but, in the amendments made on 6 January 1992, paragraphs (c) and (d) were added in an effort to conform to the Badinter Commission's criteria. Paragraph (c) was held by Greece to imply territorial claims against neighbouring states as, in conjunction with the Preamble, it could supply the legal basis for the annexation of territories in the future. This however should be read in light of paragraph (d), which expressly rejected any such claims. Finally, Art. 49 was seen as nurturing a climate of irredentism in FYROM as well as creating an excuse for the Republic to interfere with the internal affairs of Greece under the pretext of a constitutional duty to assist a 'Macedonian' minority.⁷⁴ Again, the 1992 amendments explicitly renounced any such prospect.

To an outside observer, the arguments of Greece as regards the 1991 Constitution did not appear very convincing. Assuming that there was ground for fear that these expansionist claims were being harboured by FYROM's basic charter, the 1992 amendments had adequately removed it, on paper at least. If on the other hand, as the Greek Government

⁶⁹ Compare the disputed articles of the Constitution with some of the principles contained in the V.M.R.O. manifesto, November 1990 in: Valinakis & Ntalis (*eds.*), p. 34.

⁷⁰ " Resting upon the historical, cultural, spiritual and statehood heritage of the Macedonian people and upon its centuries long struggle for national and social freedom as well as for creation of its own state, and particularly upon the statehood-legal traditions of the Krushevo Republic and the historical decisions of the Antifascist Assembly of the People's Liberation of Macedonia and the constitutional-legal continuity of the Macedonian state as a sovereign republic within Federal Yugoslavia, upon the freely manifested will of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia on the referendum of September the 8th, 1991, as well as upon the historical fact that Macedonia is established as a national state of the Macedonian people..." as quoted *ibid.*, p. 47.

⁷¹ *Cf.* the sources in: Bozhinov & Panayotov (*eds.*), p. 498 *et seq.*

⁷² Manifesto issued at the First Session of A.S.N.O.M. to the People of Macedonia, 2.VIII.1944, in Kondis *et al* (*eds.*), p. 36; FYROM's President Gligorov has signed the A.S.N.O.M. declarations as a member of the Organisation.

⁷³ " a. The territory of the Republic of Macedonia is indivisible and inalienable.
b. The existing borders of the Republic of Macedonia are inviolable.
c. *The borders of the Republic of Macedonia could be changed only in accordance with the Constitution, and based on the principle of voluntariness and generally accepted international norms.*
d. *The Republic of Macedonia has no territorial claims against neighbouring states.*", Art. 3 of the FYROM Constitution as quoted in Valinakis & Ntalis (*eds.*), p. 47; the January 1992 amendments are in italics.

⁷⁴ " a. The Republic takes care of the status and rights of the members of the Macedonian people in neighbouring countries, as well as of emigrants from Macedonia, assists their cultural advancement and promotes the links with them. *The Republic shall not interfere in the sovereign rights of other states and their internal affairs.*
b. The Republic takes care of the cultural, economic, and social rights of the citizens of the Republic abroad", Art. 49 of the FYROM Constitution as quoted *ibid.*, p. 47; the January 1992 amendments are in italics.

maintained, Balkan politics are hardly straightforward and even an express claim of non-interference should not be taken at face value, then why bother about constitutional provisions at all? As long as Athens remained convinced that the malevolent intent of Skopje was going to manifest itself in the future despite the 'express safeguards' originally introduced by the 1992 amendments, the logic of still pursuing constitutional alterations escaped the outside observer. This is not to say that if FYROM's undertaking in the 1995 interim agreement to amend the controversial articles once again was not a significant step forward, but in retrospect, if Skopje had in a sense managed to create the perception that any claims on Greece had already been absolved by the 1992 amendments, then the insistence in convoluted legal-historical arguments effectively weakened the overall Greek position.

2) Symbols and Propaganda. Numerous maps, car stickers and posters had been circulated in the new Republic, portraying a 'Greater Macedonia', i.e. the whole of geographic Macedonia stretching south to Mt. Olympus, as the historic homeland of the 'Macedonians' in FYROM.⁷⁵ These had been issued by private or semi-official sources (e.g. the V.M.R.O.) and were used by Greece as proof of the territorial aspirations against her northern provinces. The FYROM government authorities however have always disavowed themselves from this and tried to diffuse the matter as either the work of a few extremists or the direct popular reaction to Greece's relentless attempts to smother FYROM. More troublesome, because of its official origin, appeared to be the inclusion of similar maps in the school textbooks of history published in 1992 and 1993. These created the impression that all Macedonian heritage belongs rightfully to FYROM and that there exist unliberated territories within the boundaries of Bulgaria and Greece that have been stolen from the motherland.⁷⁶

One of the main weapons in the bilateral propaganda struggle was the vexed issue of the existence of a Slavic minority in Greek Macedonia. The policy of Athens in the last five decades has been a staunch denial of the existence of any such minority, however small. Especially after independence however, FYROM repeatedly raised the matter in international fora, demanding that Greece respect the fundamental human rights of this long-suffering minority and recognise its 'Macedonian' status.⁷⁷ The existence and the numbers of the Slav minority in Greece⁷⁸ became one of the major issues in the ensuing bedlam,⁷⁹ especially as

⁷⁵ See a collection in "Borders, Symbols, Stability", Athens: Citizens' Movement, 1993.

⁷⁶ An examination of 12 new textbooks of history and geography is made by Kofos, (The Vision of a 'Greater Macedonia': Remarks on FYROM's new school textbooks).

⁷⁷ A history of the Slav-Macedonian minority in Greece after World War I can be found in Bucar, pp. 203-240.

⁷⁸ The estimates found in the bibliography range from 2,300 in Munuera, at p. 47, fn. 112; 20,000 to 50,000 in Perry, (La Macédoine et ses voisins), at p. 190; 45,000 "at most" in Libal, at p. 137; more than 50,000 in Bucar, at p. 239; 100,000 in Pribichevich at p. 237.

⁷⁹ See e.g. "Macedonian Minorities: The Slav Macedonians of Northern Greece and the Treatment of Minorities in the Republic of Macedonia", Oxford: The British Helsinki Human Rights Group, 1994.

Skopje was fleet to employ the Greek objections to Art. 49 of the Constitution as implied evidence for the real numerical strength of the minority.⁸⁰

Finally in August 1992, the Parliament of FYROM adopted as an emblem on their flag the Star of Vergina, the symbol of the ancient Macedonian dynasty.⁸¹ This move was not only historically questionable but was also regarded as a gross national slur by the incensed public opinion in Greece.⁸² It had been suggested at the time that what prompted the adoption of the Vergina Star was a desire from Skopje's part to advance maximalist objectives in order to barter with them for other concessions at the negotiating table when the time comes.⁸³ The bilateral negotiations that followed the 1995 interim accord justified this view.

3) The use of the name. Undoubtedly, all the above points of friction were accessory and appurtenant to the crux of the whole dispute, the name of the new state. The bases for the Greek reasoning were historical, ethnological and geographical and have been broadly outlined above. Indeed, if strict archaeological and historical exactness is sought, one may regard as an oxymoron the use of the term 'Macedonian' by a slavic people. Moreover, the heritage and culture of the much wider geographic region runs the risk of becoming soon monopolised, even without any further action from FYROM, since it will be almost natural to associate it with the only country which contains the Macedonian name in the state denomination.⁸⁴ But it would be wrong to assume that the argument exhausted itself there; what appeared to be at issue was not only national pride but also long-term Greek national security. This may sound exaggerated in view of the weakness of the new state, but the Greeks could not easily forget that Balkan politics are notoriously volatile and susceptible to defy predictions. As Athens saw it, regional powers like Turkey or Bulgaria may seek to take advantage of this feebleness, with a view to achieving an 'encirclement' that could prove detrimental for Greece. This could be accompanied by renewed territorial claims on Greek territory, founded on historical and geographical claims to a 'Greater Macedonia', since by that time in the future this legacy might be regarded as belonging, partly at least, to FYROM.⁸⁵ Foreigners, failing to appreciate the possibility of such a turn of events, tended to misinterpret Greek security anxieties in relation to the name as originating from fear of future secessionist movements of the Slav minority in the north of the country.⁸⁶

It is imperative to note Skopje's arguments justifying their use of the name: They have been centred around the view that FYROM is the only state situated integrally in Macedonia,

⁸⁰ Included in the Memorandum regarding the admission of the Republic of Macedonia in the U.N. and the Greek Memorandum trying to prevent it, 3.II.1993, in Valinakis & Ntalis (*eds.*), p. 138.

⁸¹ Found in 1977 on the lid of the gold larnax attributed to Philip II; with details Andronikos, p. 100 *et. seq.*

⁸² See *inter alia* Coughlin C., "Red Flag is Red Rag to Greeks", The Sunday Telegraph, 27.II.1994

⁸³ *Cf.* Derala.

⁸⁴ Thus, Greek arguments in Memorandum of Greece concerning the Application of the FYROM for Admission to the U.N., point 10; "Macedonia: More than a Difference over a Name", Secretariat General for Press and Information, Athens, 1994.

⁸⁵ Klok, (*De tweete...*), p. 5; Giakoumis, at p. 456.

⁸⁶ See Perry, (*La Macédoine et ses voisins*), at p. 190; Munuera, at p. 48.

therefore it is well justified to use this name as far as geographical considerations go. In parallel, FYROM emphasises that it does not claim for itself a monopoly on the name nor is it concerned with the Greek province named Macedonia.⁸⁷ Their sole objective remains to stop Athens operating a monopoly over Macedonia and to allow FYROM to exercise its right of self-determination in the choice of its name. To this effect, FYROM stressed the following points: that the Greek Consulate in Skopje addressed the authorities using the name Socialist Republic of Macedonia as late as the beginning of 1992;⁸⁸ that for the first time in history a segment of geographic Macedonia came under Greek administration in 1913;⁸⁹ that FYROM was the first to use the name officially, after 1944, whilst Greece never used it in an official form until 1988, therefore the *prior tempore potior jure* rule must be applied;⁹⁰ and that, most importantly, the change of the Republic's name is against the will of the people and it "will unconditionally destabilise the country".⁹¹ Nevertheless, whether there was indeed substance in the claims of FYROM that their citizens feel members of a distinct Macedonian nationality appeared to go unquestioned in Greece. To answer this appropriately, neither the decades of persistent indoctrination should be left out of consideration nor Greece's violent struggle since 1991 in contrast to her complacency for the 45 years before this. If it was a common bond for the people that the government in Skopje wanted, they found it by claiming this name and rallying the whole population in a united resistance front under a common cause against the pugnacious Greeks.⁹²

V. *Dénouement*. Recognitions, countermeasures, the European Court of Justice and the 1995 interim accord.

The first country to recognise FYROM, under the name 'Republic of Macedonia', was Bulgaria in January 1992. Sofia preferred an independent state that should be easier to influence than the previous Yugoslavian federative republic, which had engaged in strong anti-Bulgarian policies.⁹³ At the same time however, true to its long-standing position, Sofia

⁸⁷ Memorandum regarding the admission of the Republic of Macedonia in the U.N. and the Greek Memorandum trying to prevent it, in Valinakis & Ntalis (*eds.*), p. 138.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*; i.e. under administration of the post-independence modern Greek state.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*; this is an untrue statement as it applies to the renaming of the Greek Ministry for Northern Greece to Ministry of Macedonia-Thrace in that year but disregards the use of the name to denote the administrative area for many other purposes ever since 1913.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Further on nationalism as a nation-building force in FYROM, Troebst, (Makedonische Antworten auf die 'Makedonische Frage'); see also Pope H., "Macedonia seeks to evade hawk's claws", Sunday Independent, 27.II.1994.

⁹³ On the Bulgarian-Yugoslavian conflict over Macedonia, see Troebst, (Die bulgarisch-jugoslawische Kontroverse um Makedonien 1967-1982).

denied the existence of a separate 'Macedonian' nation, choosing to consider FYROM's population as a close relative instead.⁹⁴ Shortly afterwards Turkey recognised FYROM, again as 'Macedonia', and was the first country to establish full diplomatic relations with Skopje. Given that FYROM could provide fertile ground for Ankara's moves to extend its influence in the post-Yugoslavia Balkans and that Greece was vehemently opposed to such a recognition, this move was hardly surprising.⁹⁵ Until its admission in the United Nations in 1993, the only other countries to recognise the state had been Russia, Slovenia and Croatia. Despite U.N. membership, the European Union and all major Western countries refrained from formally recognising FYROM but with 1993 coming to a close it was apparent that this was not going to last for long, as mass media in the West were increasingly turning against the Greek positions.⁹⁶ The October 10 general elections brought the Socialists to power, and -the considered as uncooperative- A. Papandreou back to premiership. The new government was determined to initiate a tougher approach to the Macedonian issue and had repeatedly confirmed these intentions during the electoral campaign.⁹⁷ In a letter to the U.N. Secretary-General, the new Foreign Minister K. Papoulias stated that Athens was willing to proceed with the Vance-Owen mediation only as long as FYROM would quit its deliberate procrastination tactics and acquiesce to some basic Greek demands.⁹⁸ This move prompted six EU Member States (Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, United Kingdom) to accord full diplomatic recognition to Skopje, only a few days before the semester of the Greek Presidency of the Community was about to begin.⁹⁹ Greece protested against this action on the grounds that it constituted a breach in the unity of the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the Union, and that it opened the floodgates for a wave of recognitions which would automatically resolve the issue in FYROM's favour and allow it to be even more inflexible at the bilateral negotiations. When the United States followed suit in February 1994,¹⁰⁰ Greece replied by severing diplomatic ties with Skopje and imposing a blockade on FYROM goods moving to and from the port of Thessaloniki with the exception of humanitarian aid on 16 February.¹⁰¹ An unprecedented condemnation followed in the whole of Europe, as the international community reacted with indignation to what was seen as Greek hysteria. Serious opinion-makers questioned openly the suitability of Athens running the European Union affairs for the

⁹⁴ Comment entitled "Bulgarien: Die Anerkennung Makedoniens", *Südosteuropa* 41 (1992), p. 236; Nelson, p. 53.

⁹⁵ Mazower; Derala, p. 8.

⁹⁶ See Barber L. & Hope K., "EC-Greek row over Macedonia worsens", *Financial Times*, 14.I.1994; Palmer J., "EU States plan links with Macedonia", *The Guardian*, 30.XI.1994.

⁹⁷ Papandreou had stressed that he would never recognise FYROM as 'Macedonia' or with a name containing this term in several televised interviews, e.g. 28 September and 5 November 1993.

⁹⁸ This letter is dated 4 November 1994; *cf.* Reply of the U.N. Secretary-General to the Foreign Minister K. Papoulias, 8.XI.1994 in Valinakis & Ntalis (*eds.*), p. 172.

⁹⁹ On 16 December 1993; see Perry, (*Crisis in the Making? Macedonia and its neighbors*), p. 31; Algieri, p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ White House Announcement regarding the Recognition of FYROM in: Valinakis & Ntalis (*eds.*), p. 176; see also the Reply of President Gligorov to president Clinton, *ibid.*, p. 178.

¹⁰¹ Decision of the Cabinet of Ministers to cease the Movement of Goods to and from Skopje, 16.II.1994, *ibid.*, p. 180; further expounded in (internal) Circular of the Ministry of Economics to the Greek Customs regarding the Movement of Goods to and from Skopje, 18.II.1994, p. 183.

first semester of 1994 and even suggested the removal of Greece from the Union altogether.¹⁰² In a flurry of tense diplomatic activity, the Greek government tried to explain its position amidst growing allegations that the countermeasures constituted flagrant breach of the country's obligations under international law¹⁰³ and under European Community law, as a Member of the E.U.¹⁰⁴ The matter was discussed by the Council at Ioannina, where the Greek government again came under attack for the measures, but no final decision was reached. On 22 April the Commission brought an action under Art. 225.2 of the EC Treaty, alleging that the Hellenic Republic had made improper use of Art. 224 of the Treaty in order to justify the unilateral measures adopted on 16 February. Art. 225 provides for an accelerated procedure for the Commission to bring a Member State directly before the European Court of Justice for making improper use of the powers it has under Art. 224 to take emergency measures in the event of serious internal disturbances, war, threat of war, or for maintaining peace and international security.¹⁰⁵ The matter caused serious consternation in Greece, with wild speculation about 'extensive antihellenic conspiracies' becoming rife.¹⁰⁶

At the same time, the Commission filed an application for interim measures under Art. 186 EC, requiring Greece to suspend the trade blockade pending judgement on the main action. Greek efforts were mobilised and on 24 May 1994 the government submitted a 65-page document (along with a massive annex) containing its written observations on the interim relief application. The document consisted of two parts, one outlining the historical

¹⁰² For the press reaction to the Greek countermeasures, see *inter alia* Tett G., "Blockade by Greece puts EU on the spot", *Financial Times*, 18.II.1994; "Time for Greece to rethink", *The European*, 25.II.1994; Mortiner E., "Southern Discomfort", *Financial Times*, 3.III.1994; Theodoracopoulos T., "Greece defies its own Great Legacy", *The Wall Street Journal*, 21.IV.1994.

¹⁰³ On the validity of the claims that Greece contravened International Law by denying to landlocked FYROM access to the port of Thessaloniki, the essay by Syrigos.

¹⁰⁴ Outlining, 'Written Observations of the Hellenic Republic regarding the Application for Interim Measures, case C-120/94 R, *Commission v. Hellenic Republic*', pp. 18-19 [uncirculated]; see also Argumentation regarding the adoption of measures by the Hellenic Republic against the Republic of Skopje, 21.II.1994 in: Valinakis & Ntalis (eds.), p. 185; Letter of J. Delors to A. Papandreou, 22.II.1994, *ibid.*, p. 192; Memorandum of the Greek Government to the European Commission, 26.II.1994, *ibid.*, p. 194; Letter of J. Delors to A. Papandreou, 21.III.1994, *ibid.*, p. 213.

¹⁰⁵ Article 224 EC

Member States shall consult each other with a view to taking together the steps needed to prevent the functioning of the common market being affected by measures which a Member State may be called upon to take in the event of serious internal disturbances affecting the maintenance of law and order, in the event of war, serious international tension constituting a threat of war, or in order to carry out obligations it has accepted for the purpose of maintaining peace and international security.

Article 225 EC

If measures taken in the circumstances referred to in Articles 223 and 224 have the effect of distorting the conditions of competition in the common market, the Commission shall, together with the State concerned, examine how these measures can be adjusted to the rules laid down in this Treaty.

By way of derogation from the procedure laid down in Articles 169 and 170, the Commission or any Member State may bring the matter directly before the Court of Justice if it considers that another Member State is making improper use of the powers provided for in Articles 223 and 224. The Court of Justice shall give its ruling *in camera*.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. "Etsi mas parapempoun se diki oi etairoi mas [Thus bring us to Court our Associates], to Pontiki, 11.V.1994; Mardas D., "Skopia-embargo: to kostos tis diethnous ypokrisias" [Skopje-embargo: the cost of international hypocrisy], *Kyriakatiki Eleftherotypia*, 24.VII.1994.

background and the other refuting the Commission's legal claims.¹⁰⁷ The European Court considered the legal arguments and came up with a carefully worded decision rejecting the Commission's application for interim measures on the basis of insufficient proof on what regards the harm caused to Community competition. The Court also underlined the fact that a number of considerations innate to the matter were of political and not legal nature.¹⁰⁸ The 29 June 1994 decision was welcomed with approval as "Greece's full vindication"¹⁰⁹.

Even if this was not necessarily the case, the dispute was obviously coming to a close, one way or the other. The deteriorating situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina further north, meant that the Greece-FYROM dispute was rapidly becoming demoted to less than a side-show. After several months of relatively low-level activities -with both sides remaining entrenched in their former positions- the breakthrough was precipitated by the Advocate-General's opinion on the legality of the Greek countermeasures, issued in April 1995¹¹⁰. In fact, the Advocate-General was suggesting to the European Court that, under the circumstances of the case in question, a ruling could not be made by the Court on the essence of the dispute. Although this was far from vindicating the Greeks for the imposition of trade sanctions, it was certainly one of the arguments heavily relied upon by the Greek side. In Skopje, a Foreign Ministry statement described the opinion as "an attempt to exert political pressure" and expressed the hope that the ECJ would still go on and adopt the "correct" ruling¹¹¹. At the same time however, it was becoming increasingly clear in FYROM that the embargo was not going to be declared unlawful by the European Community and thus the only way to avert further damage to the already reeling economy led to the negotiating table. A summer of intense bilateral diplomatic activity followed, culminating in an agreement aimed at normalising relations, signed on 13 September 1995 by the Foreign Ministers of the two countries. The essence of the interim accord was the lifting of the trade sanctions against Skopje in exchange for the FYROM's undertaking to change its national flag, refrain from using symbols "linked to Greece's cultural and historical heritage" and amend the 'offending' articles of its Constitution.¹¹² In response to the interim accord, the European Commission decided to drop the legal action against Greece, before the final decision of the Court was due.¹¹³ Nevertheless, the accord did not clarify the

¹⁰⁷ 'Written Observations of the Hellenic Republic regarding the Application for Interim Measures', a document provided by the Legal Office of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Athens.

¹⁰⁸ Order of the Court in case C-120/94 R, *Commission v. Hellenic Republic*, 29.VI.1994.

¹⁰⁹ A. Papandreou, quoted in "European Court rejects Commission appeal, 'Greece vindicated'", *Bulletin (Athens News)*, 30.VI.1994; see also Wolf J., "EC Court declines to move against Greece's Embargo", *The Wall Street Journal*, 30.VI.1994; Statement by the Government Spokesman E. Venizelos in Brussels, 29.VI.1994, supplied by Press Office of the Greek Embassy in London; Statement of T. Pangalos in New York, 29.VI.1994, supplied by Press Office of the Greek Embassy in London.

¹¹⁰ See Greece Information- News from Greece, No. 10, 13.IV. 1995, Greek Embassy London, Press and Information Office.

¹¹¹ As quoted *ibid.*

¹¹² Greece Information- News from Greece, No. 20, 20.IX. 1995, Greek Embassy London, Press and Information Office. Enlightening is also the report on the debate on the Greek Parliament regarding the interim accord, *ibid.*, No. 24, 10.XI. 1995.

¹¹³ For an analysis of the action brought against Greece from a European Community law point of view, see Stefanou & Xanthaki.

most important of the disputed issues, the name of the new country, stating instead "that the Parties will continue negotiation under the auspices of the Secretary-General of the United Nations with respect to the outstanding difference between them"¹¹⁴. The dispute was not over yet.¹¹⁵

VI. An analysis of the factors which affected Greek Foreign Policy decisions during the dispute: 16 points.

The factors that contributed to the escalation and exacerbation of the dispute between Greece and FYROM could make a matter for disagreement on themselves. The strategic planning of the Greek Foreign Policy during the 1989-1995 dispute was influenced by a variety of different considerations, some of them historical, some practical, some purely academic and even some attributable to chance. Nevertheless, in an attempt to evaluate critically the information outlined previously, a number of observations can be made:

1) "There is NO Macedonian issue": if one is looking for the single most important reason that influenced Greek foreign policy during the dispute with FYROM, this should be it. This standard, unchanging Greek position for 45 years, immersed the whole issue in silence and allowed Tito's Yugoslavia to proceed unperturbed. Constant statements from official sources to the effect that for Greece there is no such thing as a Macedonian Problem, created a profound ignorance of the Greek points of view in the public opinion internationally (since there did not seem to exist *any* point of view). Similarly, the treatment of federative Skopje as a kind of diplomatic juvenile delinquent, against whom no suppressive measures should be attempted but mild protests to 'parent' Belgrade made instead, demonstrates how mistaken Greek diplomacy was in assessing and handling the situation. And it was with belated ardour that Greece started to address the issue abroad and initiate home-spun 'Macedonisation' schemes.¹¹⁶

2) As a consequence of Greek apathy, the game of outside impressions had already been won by FYROM even before the diplomatic struggle for recognition began in 1991. Decades of Macedonian conferences and volumes of special Macedonian monographs in Institutions,

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* On 27 September 1995 FYROM was admitted as a member of the Council of Europe.

¹¹⁵ Lengthy rounds of negotiations followed the interim accord, in order to reach an agreement on the issue of the name. Both sides agreed that they would be looking towards a single name for FYROM, instead of a double one, to be used in all occasions both internally and internationally. Moreover, in January 1996, both countries opened liaison offices in their capitals. Greece Information- News from Greece, No. 29, 23.I. 1996, Greek Embassy London, Press and Information Office.

¹¹⁶ E.g. the renaming of the Ministry for Northern Greece in 1988, the addition in the name of the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki, minting of coins with the Vergina Sun, the creation of the Macedonian Press Agency in Thessaloniki in 1991, the establishing of the Vergina Star as a Greek national symbol in 1993.

Universities and libraries all over the planet had remained undisputed. Thus, by 1991-1992 when the whole world was hearing that 'Macedonia' wanted to gain independence but Greece was vehemently denying it recognition because of objections to its name, it was never a question of *whether* this new state should be called like this but only on *why* the Greeks do not allow it to be called like this.

3) The inflexible position of Greece over the issue is also a factor that needs further evaluation. On one hand, the intensity of the public reaction demonstrated that, right or wrong, the population held adamant views on the subject.¹¹⁷ On the other hand, the widely-publicised antagonism between FYROM and a country so much superior economically, politically and militarily, produced instinctive reactions and allegations that Greece was intimidating her neighbour. A point of further debate ought to be whether Athens should have accepted a compromise derivative name once it had become evident that its support in Europe was ebbing. As it happens, both major political parties in Greece were entangled in the imbroglio caused by the fierce public reaction and in order to affirm their national credentials, they had to adopt volens-nolens the position that the term 'Macedonia' would not be acceptable in any form in FYROM's name, conceding to the views aired publicly by the Greek socialist MP S. Papatthemelis during a 1991-1992 tour of awareness-raising speeches.¹¹⁸ Certainly, as the dispute progressed, the intransigence of both sides did not permit many face-saving options.¹¹⁹

4) Greek foreign policy proved catastrophically unready to stand up to the new challenges that the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc and the redistribution of regional power demanded. The pre-1990 constant refutation of any Macedonian problem and the content of the relations with Yugoslavia and S.R.M. indicated that Greece did not consider even remotely that the possibility of a challenge in the status quo in Macedonia would ever arise. Conceding that the end of the cold war was certainly not something easily forecast in the eighties, Greece's preoccupation with Turkey did not allow for even basic preparations to ensure a coherent Balkan policy in the event of a break-up of Yugoslavia, and disregarded the warning signs that such an eventuality was probable. One should not forget the use of the term (S.R.) Macedonia by the Greek Consulate to address the Skopje government as late as 1991.

5) Cultural haughtiness and arrogance on behalf of the Greeks contributed to the unfamiliarity with their positions both at home and abroad.¹²⁰ For a long time there was little

¹¹⁷ "Were the two million people who demonstrated in Thessaloniki last month really all hysterical? Or might it not be that, in light of historical experience, they were articulating fears we do not yet fully appreciate?", Pflueger F., "A face-saving solution exists", *The Wall Street Journal*, 21.IV.1994.

¹¹⁸ It appears that a position firmly advanced by diplomatic circles of the Greek Foreign Ministry was to accept the name "*Novamakedonija*".

¹¹⁹ Munuera, *passim*.

¹²⁰ "The responsible politicians and intellectuals, who had the possibility to know what is happening across the border, faced the situation phlegmatically and I would say with a certain modicum of arrogance. For the intellectuals, all these are but gross concoctions, unable to influence the most naive of humans. Why must they occupy themselves with a worthless fabrication?" Martis, at p. 114.

else for a reaction than a disdainful attitude against both FYROM, for attempting to usurp the Hellenic heritage of Macedon, and against some 'hapless barbarians' around the world who could be ignorant enough to give credence to "FYROM's fabrications". And this was coupled with the loftiness of the Greeks being certain of having right in what they claimed, a fact that - in their eyes- made any need to actually attempt to prove the legitimacy of these assertions redundant.¹²¹ Even after Athens had embarked in the diplomatic struggle to hinder recognition, there were hardly any attempts made to use the media in the West to attain a favourable influence, although in the home front the newspapers were overflowing with pointless philippics against FYROM.

6) The dispute over Macedonia should not be examined separately from the Yugoslavian conflict and the countless side-issues and problems that this caused. Greece's wishes and interests in most aspects of the Yugoslavian crisis ran contrary to the interests of almost all other Western powers. To start with, Athens was in favour of the preservation of Yugoslavia (even advocating this as late as 1993), which brought her immediately at odds with Germany, Italy and Austria, who for historical reasons and in order to increase their regional influence, sought to dismember Yugoslavia. This of course gave to the individual federative republics the chance to proclaim their sovereignty and pursue their own policies. Furthermore, Greece's support for Serbia, her only historical ally in the region, did not exactly enhance its international reputation, given Serbia's status at the time as an international bully and a pariah state.

7) The Yugoslavian crisis was a major dent in the prestige of the embryonic Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union. The federalists' aspiration to create a new axis of security in the shape of the E.U. was shattered as Europe tried ineffectually to avert the severest conflict on European soil since W.W. II (a conflict in whose creation it had played a major role in the first place). Greece's hostility against the poorest of the former Yugoslav Republics was correctly perceived as a potential threat to its existence and a potential cause for further expansion of the war southwards. Irrespective of how good or convincing Athens' arguments were going to be, Europe was not going to allow Greece to exert pressure and strangulate FYROM, as this could mean facing a new embarrassing failure to safeguard peace in the region.¹²² The Macedonian problem was seen as a pointless aggravation of an already inflamed situation and respect for Greek sensitivities could not last for long. FYROM also knew this as well and did a good job of reminding it to anyone listening. Hence, the Union ultimately broke its solidarity in supporting Greece.

8) Along similar lines can the U.S. involvement and reaction be explained. After the failure to hinder the outbreak of hostilities in Bosnia, America saw FYROM as a way of giving

¹²¹ See Millar P., *Laying claim to the Legacy of Alexander*, *The European*, 7-13.IX.1995.

¹²² *Cf. Munuera*, p. 58 *et seq.*

"politicians and the voters a feeling of painlessly contributing to the Yugoslav crisis".¹²³ Not wanting to be accused of interfering in internal European Union matters, the U.S. waited until the break in the Union's ranks became manifest in order to recognise FYROM. In addition, as the Balkans started to be divided into spheres of influence, the U.S. sought to secure one of these new countries under its wing, i.e. FYROM. This could explain the stationing there of 1000 U.N. blue-helmets, including 300 American soldiers.¹²⁴

9) Further to pursuing their own very real interests, a number of European countries showed a rather superficial appreciation of the real essence of the dispute between Greece and FYROM, dismissing it often in a high-handed manner as childish hysteria or impenetrable Balkan peculiarities.¹²⁵ In this way, Greece was torn between a need to apply occidental foreign policy standards so as to display that she is a worthy member of the Western world, and the insufficiency of these policy measures to bring forth the desired results within the highly complex Balkan diplomatic theatre.

10) As a consequence, Athens' foreign policy was often oscillating between cultural and pragmatic arguments. After the realisation that a debate over heritage rights, the ethnicity of the ancient Macedonians, the concepts of cultural patrimony of mankind etc. would not be adequate to persuade the world opinion, an attempt was made to formulate a *realpolitik* by justifying Greek views by means of more 'rational' and interest-oriented arguments.¹²⁶ These however were not necessarily more successful as they presupposed that the listening parties possessed special knowledge of the Balkan area, its history and its specific idiosyncrasy.

11) The 1992 decision of the Council in Lisbon not to recognise FYROM with a name containing the term 'Macedonia' was certainly a high point in E.U. solidarity, but it should also be born in mind that the Europeans were responding in this fashion to the Greek conservative government's warnings that, in the opposite case, the return to power of 'trouble-making' A. Papandreou would be very likely.

12) A range of different factors caused the balance to finally turn in favour of FYROM during the crucial second semester of 1992. Athens rested on the laurels of the Lisbon declaration and dramatically slackened diplomatic activity during the summer, whilst the FYROM government was steadily increasing its influence. Skopje augmented its strategic status because of the need to enforce the U.N. embargo against Serbia and also attracted the support of islamist and philocroat circles. The change of Council Presidency was also very positive for the Skopje side, as the British started to systematically undermine the Lisbon declaration with a view to amending it. The summer of 1992 might have been an opportunity

¹²³ Perry, (Crisis in the making?), at p. 57.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Rivolta D., "Attenti all' iredentismo macedone", *Il Giornale*, 31.V.1994; Mazower, *passim*; Kofos E., 'Introduction' in: Valinakis & Ntalis (eds.), p. 15.

¹²⁶ See Marinos, p. 3; *Cf.* Clogg R., in the *London Review of Books*, 18.VIII.1994.

for Athens to achieve a favourable outcome at a time when FYROM's situation had come to an all-time low.

13) FYROM gained international sympathies by projecting an underdog image, oppressed by its irritable neighbour. Notwithstanding the extent to which this reflected a true situation, Greek Foreign Policy felt obliged to take into consideration the public opinion's disapproval of "the evident tolerance and acceptance displayed by the international community toward the image of the 'poor underdog' that President Kiro Gligorov likes to apply to himself and his state. [...] The President of FYROM [is seen] as a Balkan 'Jean Valjean' who was caught stealing a small loaf of bread -the Sun of Vergina- in order to feed his family: that is to give his 'oppressed' and 'misunderstood' people a sense of pride. [...] His aim was to cast Greece in the role of the inhuman 'Javert'."¹²⁷

14) The Greek positions suffered from feeble attempts to gain influence in Western mass media and thus adopt a positive media image. On the other hand, it appears that from 1992 there was a concerted effort in certain European countries to consolidate FYROM's position through official instructions to newspapers and television channels to adopt an 'antihellenic' stance. In the meantime, oceans of ink were aimlessly flowing in both FYROM and Greece preaching to the converted.¹²⁸ Finally, even foreigners agree that the Greek lobbying in Europe was not sufficiently energetic.¹²⁹

15) Geopolitical, strategic and sentimental reasons aside, FYROM also became a valid cause on humanitarian grounds. Realising that it was much easier and far less dangerous to intervene in FYROM than further north where they were really needed, several individuals and NGOs stressed the need for immediate action in Skopje's favour, in order to avert a humanitarian catastrophe. For the same reasons, the Greek countermeasures of February 1994 were seen in a very dim light by the international community. Macedonia had become "a black stain in the conscience of Europe" as the Danish Foreign minister U. Jenssen said.¹³⁰

16) In conclusion it should be noted that apart from the national and international foreign policies described above, a number of private or semi-official interests also became entangled in the issue of FYROM's recognition, e.g. Islamic unity organisations and the Soros Foundation, which tended mostly to support Skopje (and Albania) both materially and by means of lobbying.

¹²⁷ Kofos (The vision of Greater Macedonia), at p. 7.

¹²⁸ See Marinou, at p. 7.

¹²⁹ "Ciò che si può rimproverare ai greci è di non aver saputo fare la giusta lobby a Bruxelles e Strasburgo", Rivolta D., "La Macedonia si salve senza pregiudizi", Il Giornale, 25.VI.1994.

¹³⁰ Quoted in Valinakis & Ntalis (*eds.*), p. 142.

VII. Conclusion: Macedonia cuius?

After being marginalised in the strategic chessboard of the New World Order because of the collapse of the U.S.S.R. and the end of the cold war, Greece managed to become seriously isolated internationally in the struggle against FYROM and alienate herself from her most important allies.¹³¹ Athens was seen as a 'second bully of the Balkans', an accomplice almost of Serbia and unworthy of European and international support or even, in the extreme cases, membership. This analysis has shown that the dispute between Greece and FYROM had no hidden agenda, but -for the Greeks at least- it really revolved around the issue of the name. Whether the new state emerging from the remnants of Yugoslavia would be named Macedonia or not was not a side-issue but the crux of the argument. In retrospect, Greece missed a chance that the power vacuum in the Balkans provided to emerge as a leading regional power and present a pole of development in the south of Europe. Greek reaction against FYROM undermined the potentially privileged position that she would have in influencing the young state¹³² allowing Turkey to deploy itself in the peninsula and substitute Greece as the regional power.¹³³

At the same time, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, although successful in avoiding a spill-over of the armed conflict in ex-Yugoslavia towards its own territory, was obliged to go through the first four years after its independence entangled in a bitter dispute, one that seemed capable to threaten its very existence. It was with great diplomatic skill and courage that the complete collapse of the small state was prevented. By the end of 1994 it was becoming apparent to both sides that the continuing dispute had run out of steam and was resulting only in further embarrassment and losses.¹³⁴ Thus the interim accord of September 1995 did not come as a surprise to many.

It remains important for both parties to realise that they can move ahead by laying the foundations of good-neighbourly relationships and increasing their cooperation in all spheres.

¹³¹ Someritis, p. 8.

¹³² Munuera, at p. 49.

¹³³ Perry, (Crisis in the making?), at p. 54.

¹³⁴ See Marakis N., "Strofi tis Athinas sto Makedoniko"[Athens shifts its position over Macedonia], *To Vima*, 4.IX.1994; "Syzitame kai Onoma me ta Skopia"[We are also discussing the name issue with Skopje], *Kyriakatiki Eleftherotypia*, 11.IX.1994; Diamantis T., "Gligorov: To Onoma ehei kleisei"[Gligorov: the issue of the name has been settled] *Eleftherotypia*, 12.X.1994.