



Institute for Democracy “Societas Civilis” Skopje

**FLAWS AND OMISSIONS:
AN EVALUATION OF KOFOS AND THE GREEK POSITION ON THE “NAME ISSUE”**

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INTRODUCTION

The following paper is an analysis of a “thesis” prepared by Evangelos Kofos for ELIAMEP, a Greek Foundation for European and Foreign Policy. Kofos was a long-time “special advisor” to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His views have and continue to form key aspects of Greek foreign policy in relation to the Republic of Macedonia and the Macedonian question in general.

Although Kofos presents his observations in a clear and concise manner, his analysis is full of erroneous claims which will be pointed out one by one:

On the constitutional name of the Republic of Macedonia

“[The] current constitutional name, “Macedonia”, is, however, identical with the name of the wider geographic region “Macedonia”.”

This claim is **false**. The constitutional name of the country is not simply “Macedonia” - it is the **“Republic of Macedonia”**. There is a clear political qualifier (**“Republic of”**) preceding the noun “Macedonia”. If the Republic of Macedonia wanted to use the name “Macedonia”, without any qualifiers, then this might give rise to confusion or monopolisation. However this is clearly not the case.

Moreover, in Greece there is no region simply called “Macedonia” nor is there an “EU region of “Greek Macedonia”” as Kofos has erroneously claimed. There are **three** administrative regions or “Peripheries” which use the noun “Macedonia” in their name. These regions are: “Region of Western Macedonia” (Περιφέρεια Δυτικής Μακεδονίας), “Region of Central Macedonia” (Περιφέρεια Κεντρικής Μακεδονίας) and “Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace” (Περιφέρεια Ανατολικής Μακεδονίας και Θράκης).¹ These regions are easily and clearly distinguishable one from another by the respective prefixes **“Region of Western” “Region of Central” and “Region of Eastern”** used before the noun “Macedonia”. Moreover, these internal administrative regions of Greece are easily differentiated from the independent and sovereign state called the “Republic of Macedonia”.

On Macedonian ethnicity and the Greek Macedonians (Makedones)

¹ These three regions were created in the 1980s when Greece was divided into 13 administrative regions. Incidentally, in 1988 the Ministry of Northern Greece was renamed the “Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace” (Prime Ministerial decision no. 704, 19 August 1988).

“The third, and even more disturbing development to Greek public opinion, particularly to the Greek Macedonians, was a re-appraisal of the ethnogenetic dogma of the “Macedonian” ethnicity. In their view, the state controlled educational system in FYROM, by extending the historical roots of the new nation to classical antiquity, was encroaching upon an illustrious past, which had been recorded in the annals of Hellenic heritage almost a millennium prior to the arrival of Slavic tribes in the region. The Greeks, particularly the Makedones, feel that a cherished human right, their right to their heritage and identity is in jeopardy. Moreover, by claiming the entire geographic Macedonian region of modern times as their “tatkovina” (fatherland), Slav Macedonians laid claim to everything Macedonian. As a result, the new generation, graduating school after the emergence of an independent Macedonian state in 1991, have espoused the new dogma, which those over 45 are at are at a loss to comprehend.”

Firstly, ethnic Macedonians and indeed the Republic of Macedonia have not claimed the “entire geographic region of modern times as their “tatkovina””. The Macedonian people in the Republic of Macedonia consider the Republic of Macedonia their homeland or ‘fatherland’. The only people who in the Republic of Macedonia who might consider (and rightly so) Greek Macedonia as their ‘tatkovina’ are the ethnic Macedonians born in Greece, which to this day are denied the right of return to their ‘fatherland’. This is no different to ethnic Greeks from Asia Minor now living in Greece considering Asia Minor to be their ‘fatherland’!

Secondly, on the point about “Hellenic heritage almost a millennium prior to the arrival of Slavic tribes in the region”, it is absurd to put matters in such terms. Neither the Greek-Macedonians nor the ethnic Macedonians are direct **descendants of ancient peoples**. The inhabitants intermixed and therefore if “Slav Macedonians” exist then surely “Slav Greeks” (naturally however, Kofos does not suggest the use of this term). Also part of today’s Greek-Macedonians whose origins are from Asia Minor have a right to make a cultural connection to Ancient Macedonia? The right of ethnic Macedonians to make a cultural connection to the past including the ancient past cannot be denied, just as it is not denied to the Greeks.

Moreover, in order to fully understand the use of the term *Makedones* (Greek Macedonians), it is useful to briefly explain the ethnic and cultural composition of the population of Northern Greece. The southern part of the geographic region of Macedonia (today’s Greek

Macedonia or Northern Greece) officially became part of the Greek state in 1913. At that time of the population was very mixed, comprising of a variety of different ethnic and linguistic groups (Macedonians as **majority population**, Greeks, Bulgarians, Vlachs, Turks, Albanians, Jews, etc). Different sources give different figures as to the size of each group. What cannot be disputed is that the entire region was **multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic**. For the purposes of this paper and without any prejudice to the identities of the above mentioned groups, we shall use, in an abstract manner, the term **“natives”** to describe the above mentioned category of people living in Greek Macedonia (Northern Greece) when it became part of the Greek state.²

In 1923, according to the terms of the Treaty of Lausanne, about 1,500,000 Orthodox Christian refugees (Greek and Turkish speaking) were resettled from Asia Minor, Anatolia and Eastern Thrace to Greece. About half of these refugees were settled in Greek Macedonia, which severely altered the ethnic and linguistic structure of Greek Macedonia. For the sake of this paper and without any prejudice to the identity of the above mentioned group, we shall use, in an abstract manner, the term **“settlers”** to describe this category of people now living in Greek Macedonia (Northern Greece).³

Today, broadly speaking, these two groups (“natives” and “settlers”) make the population of northern Greece. According to the Greek government they are all *Makedones* (Greek Macedonians).⁴ As mentioned above, among the “native” population, a group identify as ethnic Macedonians i.e. a distinct ethnic, cultural and linguistic group. However Kofos conveniently makes no mention of this fact. Indeed, the Greek government denies ethnic Macedonians the right to call themselves Macedonians, yet somehow the “settlers” from Asia Minor have the right to call themselves Macedonians or Greek-Macedonians (*Makedones*).

So according to Kofos and the Greek government, ethnic Macedonians who have lived in Greek Macedonia from the time of its incorporation into the

Greek state in 1913 **cannot** be Macedonians for this usurps the right of the Greek Macedonians, hundreds of thousands whose ancestry is from Asia Minor and not Macedonia! Perhaps instead of applying offensive labels to ethnic Macedonians (i.e. Slav Macedonians, bilingual Greeks, etc), it would be more appropriate and constructive for Kofos and company to find prefixes which more accurately describe many of today's *Makedones* who prior to 1923 were Greek and Turkish speaking Orthodox Christians living in Asia Minor. Given the fact they settled in Macedonia as recently as 1923, it might be more accurate to call them “New Macedonians” (*Νέα Μακεδόνες – Nea Makedones*).

Of course to be called “New Macedonians” would be unacceptable to “settlers” and rightly so. The right to self-identification is paramount and **must be respected** by both sides. In practice this means respect for and recognition of the existence of ethnic Macedonian identity and Macedonian language by Greece **and** the respect and recognition of a Greek-Macedonian by the Republic of Macedonia (i.e. ethnic Greeks with a Macedonian regional/cultural identity).

The recognition of the right of both identities to co-exist in should be enshrined in a final agreement on the name issue. There would be no confusion in the use of the term “Macedonian” as both are clearly defined. The use of the prefixes before the word “Macedonian” clearly distinguishes between the two groups (i.e. ethnic Macedonians and Greek-Macedonians). Moreover, both terms are ones of self-identification which is of fundamental importance. No undesirable names are being imposed (eg: Slav Macedonian, New Macedonian) and both identities remain unaltered.

On Macedonian political refugees from Greece

“The emergence of a new generation of politicians in Skopje, belonging to the nationalist VMRO-DPMNE party, some of them with family roots in Greek Macedonia, brought to the surface issues and grievances dating back to the years of the Greek Civil War of 1945-1949. For the past two decades, the Greeks have managed to mend fences of their savage fratricidal war. Nevertheless, in FYROM third generation descendants of the so-called “Egejski” refugees, including the current Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, attempt to rekindle the travails of that period. The Greeks are certainly aware of the role of Tito's Yugoslavia, and more so of the Slav Macedonian

² These people are known in Greek as *dopii* meaning “locals”.

³ These people are known in Greek as *prosfiges* meaning “refugees”.

⁴ At the last census in 2001, the total population of Greek Macedonia (Region of West Macedonia, Central Macedonia and East Macedonia and Thrace) was 2,424,765. Kofos and indeed the Greek government claim that there are about 2,500,000 Greek-Macedonians i.e. the entire population of Greek Macedonia.

nationalists of Skopje at the time, in fanning the armed conflict in Greece, hoping to profit themselves. By now, it is well known that the price for the Yugoslav support to the Greek communist insurrection was Greek Macedonia. In the midst of negotiations over the "name issue" to reopen such old wounds would hardly be productive to people on both sides of the border."

Firstly, it should be stated **that** the issue of the return of citizenship and property to ethnic Macedonian political refugees is not being pushed by "third generation descendants", but by the refugees themselves! Furthermore, it is absolutely disgraceful for Kofos to claim that "[f]or the past two decades, the Greeks have managed to mend fences of their savage fratricidal war" while omitting to note that Greece continues to deny the right of return to ethnic Macedonian political refugees.

As a bit of background to the issue, during the Greek Civil War (1949-1949) thousands of Greek citizens fled Greece. Following the end of the war, all those who left Greece during this period were stripped of their Greek citizenship and property. In 1982 the Greek government passed an amnesty law (Law no. 106841) which declared that political exiles who fled during the Civil War and were stripped of their citizenship are allowed to return provided they are "Greeks by genus". In 1985, Law 1540 was enacted which granted political exiles who fled during the Civil War to reclaim confiscated property, provided they are "Greeks by genus". The term "Greeks by genus" is a reference used by the Greek government for all those who identify themselves as ethnic Greeks. Hence, ethnic Macedonians and others who left Greece under the same conditions as the ethnic Greeks and had their citizenship and property confiscated are **excluded** from enjoying the rights granted under these laws.

This severely questions the very standing of the laws based on the grounds of equality and fairness. Moreover, the construction of the wording as relating to these laws is not benign, it has a clear intent to **discriminate** against all those who belong to the category of people classified as political refugees and who are not "Greeks by genus". Given that ethnic Macedonians predominantly make up this category of people, it is indisputable that they have been the ones targeted by this exclusivist definition and the ones who have suffered the most. The individuals excluded by these two laws reside in the Republic of Macedonia, the United States of America, Australia

and Canada and throughout Europe. The term "Greeks by genus" in these two laws, which are still in force today, are in violation of the fundamental principle of non-discrimination. Therefore, the "fence" will be "mended" only when the refugees are allowed the right to return to their country of birth, Greece.

Kofos' conclusions and recommendations

"In order to resolve the dispute, one has to approach constructively those "existential" elements, which are of particular concern to both parties. It is evident that the dispute is not simply the state name of Greece's neighbour, it is what is conveyed through it. Skopje – and third parties offering their services for a compromise solution – need to understand that the geographical region of Macedonia, which includes the entire region of "Greek Macedonia", is not and cannot be considered the "tatkovina" (fatherland) of the Makedonski people living in FYROM. This is a red line for Greece and the Greeks!"

Many things can be conveyed through a name, however this is not the Republic of Macedonia's responsibility to be concerned about what someone as irrational as Kofos perceives. Again, as argued previously, the Macedonian people in the Republic of Macedonia consider the Republic of Macedonia their homeland or 'fatherland'. The only people who in the Republic of Macedonia who might consider (and rightly so) Greek Macedonia as their 'tatkovina' are the ethnic Macedonians born in Greece, which to this day are denied the right of return to their 'fatherland'. This is no different to ethnic Greeks from Asia Minor now living in Greece considering Asia Minor to be their 'fatherland'!

"Similarly, Slav Macedonians need to realize that their newly conceived ethnogenetic dogma, extending to classical antiquity, encroaches upon the Hellenic cultural heritage and the identity of their Greek neighbours to the south. As such, it threatens to ignite a clash of identities in the region as a whole."

This is absolute nonsense. The so-called "ethno-genetic dogma" of the ethnic Macedonians is just a mirror image of the ethno-genetic dogma of Greece and ethnic Greeks. Moreover, it should be noted that the Republic of Macedonia does not seek to monopolise or claim exclusivity of the cultural heritage of Ancient Macedonia, but rather wishes to share it. Notwithstanding what one may think of policies to rename airports, stadiums, highways,

surely one must agree that if Greece and the ethnic Greeks have a right to claim origins in classical antiquity and subsequently establish such a tradition, then surely the Republic of Macedonia and the ethnic Macedonians also possess this right!

On the adoption of a geographic qualifier

“The state name needs specifically to refer to and describe the present region of FYROM. It should apply erga omnes in multilateral and bilateral international relations and transactions and should be observed by all organizations, states, and other non-governmental international organizations, including the government and the agencies of FYROM. In this writer's opinion, the parties should accept the name used by the inhabitants of FYROM for their region of geographical Macedonia, i.e. Vardar Macedonia, or preferably Vardar Makedonija”

Geographic qualifiers cannot be basis of a solution. Names such as “North Macedonia” or “Upper Macedonia” allude to a “divided” Macedonia and could encourage irredentism on both sides. Moreover, such geographic descriptors impact on Macedonian ethnic identity and the Macedonian language, (eg: “North Macedonia” = “Northern Macedonians” and “Northern Macedonian language”). Similarly, a name such as Vardar Macedonia tampers with ethnic Macedonian identity (eg: “Vardar Macedonia” = “Vardar Macedonians”). **Tampering with Macedonian identity and the Macedonian language is a red line for the Republic of Macedonia and ethnic Macedonians!**

On identity and self-identification

“Issues touching upon the self-identification of persons, which includes their ethnicity and their right to identify themselves, should be respected. This means that their name, Makedontsi, by which they identify themselves in their language, should be respected in all foreign languages, including the Greek. A similar arrangement might apply to the use of Makedones for the Greek Macedonians.”

Kofos began this paragraph well when he said that *“Issues touching upon the self-identification of persons, which includes their ethnicity and their right to identify themselves, should be respected”*. He should have ended the paragraph here instead of totally manipulating the proper use of the term “self-identification”. Of course Macedonians in the

Macedonian language refer to themselves as “Makedonci – Makedontsi”. Of course in the English language for example they refer to themselves as “Macedonians”. Just as in the Greek language, Greeks refer to themselves as “Ellines”, in English they refer to themselves as “Greeks and not “Ellines people” speaking “Ellines language”. Does Kofos also suggest that this apply to the Greeks and other cultural groups? Of course, there is a simple, democratic and alternative to Kofos’ approach; the recognition of self-identification without restrictions or manipulations. This means **ethnic Macedonians** and **Greek Macedonians**, translatable and distinguishable in all languages.

On the role of the international community and the so-called “monopolisation” of the term “Macedonian”

“Finally, the international community needs to share its responsibility for resolving the name issue. After all, it is partially the culprit. Through the use of leading international languages – English, French, German and so on – they translate four different identities of Macedonian/Macedonians by one and the same name, “Macedonian”. The issue at hand is not merely one of semantics. Whoever succeeds to impose on foreign languages its own version of “Macedonian” acquires international monopoly for its use”

Kofos attempt to portray the international community as a culprit (against the Greek interests) is ridiculous. The only thing the international community is guilty of is the continual denial of a sovereign state, namely the Republic of Macedonia cannot exercise its right to self-determination, as supposedly guaranteed under international law.

Furthermore, talk of the Republic of Macedonia somehow monopolising the term “Macedonian” is groundless. The Republic of Macedonia has **never** sought to use the term exclusively or to deny Greek-Macedonians from self-identifying as such. As argued in this paper, two types of “Macedonians” can co-exist, without confusion or clash i.e. “ethnic Macedonians” and “Greek Macedonians”. Both terms are terms of self-identification and are mutually exclusive.

Kofos’ proposals on the use of “Macedonian”

“In order to overcome the name problem two solutions seem possible. (1) One would be to employ a

traditional method and add to the respective Macedonian versions an appropriate prefix: Slav-Macedonian/s, Greek-Macedonian/s, Bulgarian-Macedonian/s or Albanian-Macedonian/s. (2) A second approach would be to apply in international languages the derivatives of the various Macedonian versions in the original form of the respective local languages. Thus, the Slavic terms *Makedontsi* (noun) and *Makedonski* (adjective) would be transferred to English and other languages in an un-translated Latin alphabet (for example: "the *Makedontsi* immigrated to the United States..."; "The *Makedonski* language..."). Similarly, the Greek terms *Makedones* (noun) and *Makedonikos* (adjective) could be adopted to identify the Greek variant of the Macedonian name."

Furthermore, Kofos' examples of how the terms "Makedontsi" and "Makedonski" could be used in an English sentence are quite ironic. His first example is "the *Makedontsi* immigrated to the United States..." is ironic because more than a century ago when people from all parts of Macedonia migrated to the United States of America, many of them declared their nationality (ethnicity) to be **Macedonian**, something different from Bulgarian, Serbian and Greek. According to the official records from Ellis Island, in the period 1897 – 1924, there were 7,821 such persons.⁵ This was decades before the so-called "fabrication" of the Macedonian nation by Tito's Yugoslavia, as Greece has claimed.

In another example, Kofos suggests the Macedonian language be renamed the "Makedonski language", all serious linguists are in agreement on the use of the term **Macedonian** to describe it. Moreover and ironically again, a strong piece of evidence for the existence of a language called **Macedonian** comes not from the Greek state itself. In the Greek census of 1920, the **Macedonian** language (not "Slav-Macedonian", not "Slavic" language, not "Slavic" idiom and not "Makedonski" language) was listed as a language spoken by parts of the population in Greece. Parts of the official census results were published (and therefore recognised) by the Greek state.⁶ Given that Greece in 1920 officially referred to the Macedonian language as **Macedonian**, any attempt by the same state almost a century later to modify or eradicate the

name of the language (and people and culture connected to it) is pitiful and must be rejected.

Kofos' explanation of the different meanings and identities of the term "Macedonian"

Kofos ends his analysis with a selective attempt to explain the "different meanings and identities of the term "Macedonian"" as it is used as a noun and an adjective in the Republic of Macedonia, Greece and Bulgaria:

"There is considerable confusion and ambiguity over the derivatives of the term "Macedonian". This has to do with the circumstance that there are numerous ethnic, regional, cultural, historical and legal (citizenship) variants of both the noun "Macedonians" and the adjective "Macedonian"."

Each of Kofos' explanations deserves a close examination:

"In FYROM [sic] the noun Macedonians (Makedonci – Makedontsi – in the local Slavic language) identifies, (a) in the legal sense, all citizens of the Republic (including Slavs, Albanians, Greeks, Roma etc), and (b) in the ethnic/national sense, a million and a half local Slavs."

Firstly the use of the generic racial term "Slav" to describe ethnic Macedonians is not only insulting but also inaccurate. According to the 2002 Census in the Republic of Macedonia, the 64.17% of the citizens of the country were declared their ethnicity to be **Macedonian** and not "Slav".⁷ Therefore Kofos definition of the noun "Macedonians" as it is used in the Republic of Macedonia needs to be corrected and should read: "In the Republic of Macedonia, the noun Macedonians (Makedonci – Makedontsi – in the Macedonian language) identifies, (a) in the legal sense, all citizens of the Republic (including ethnic Macedonians, ethnic Albanians, etc) and (b) in the ethnic/national sense, a million and a half ethnic Macedonians."

Secondly, Kofos in a very manipulative manner, names the Greek ethnic community (officially 422 persons according to the 2002 census) as one of the larger communities in the Republic of Macedonia. Of course

⁵ Ellis Island Foundation, www.ellislandrecords.org

⁶ General Archives of the Greek state, republished in M. Houliarakis (*Geografiki, dioikitiki kai plithismiaki ekseliksi tis Ellados tom G' p. 363*).

⁷ Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Macedonia, 2002 - Book XIII, Skopje, 2005, State Statistical Office of the Republic of Macedonia, http://www.stat.gov.mk/pdf/kniga_13.pdf

in reality Kofos was not referring to the Greeks in the Republic of Macedonia, but Aroumanians (Vlachs) which number 9,695 according to official figures. It seems that Kofos is exporting the official Greek policy to the recognition of ethnic self-identification and applying it to the Aroumanian (Vlach) minority in the Republic of Macedonia.⁸

“In Greece the noun Macedonians (Μακεδόνες – Makedones – in the Greek language) identifies, in the regional/cultural sense, almost two and a half million ethnic Greeks of the region of Greek Macedonia.”

What Kofos conveniently omits to point out is that the term “Macedonian” is also used in Greece by a different group of people. While ethnic Greeks might use the term “Macedonian” (Μακεδόνες – Makedones – in the Greek language) in a regional/cultural sense, **ethnic Macedonians** in Greece also use the term “Macedonian” (Μακεδονцу – Makedontsi in the Macedonian language) to describe their ethnic identity. This group of Greek citizens has a distinct culture and in speaks a distinct language called Macedonian, thus forming a distinct linguistic and ethnic minority. A Macedonian ethnic/linguistic minority is not officially recognized by Greece, a position which has been criticised by various domestic and international human rights organisations.⁹

“In Bulgaria the same name Macedonians (Makedonci – Makedontsi – in Bulgarian) identifies, in the regional sense, hundreds of thousands of ethnic Bulgarian.”

Kofos also fails to mention that the term “Macedonian” is also used in Bulgaria by a different group of people. While some ethnic Bulgarians might use the term “Macedonian” (Makedonci – Makedontsi – in the Bulgarian language) in a regional sense, the term “Macedonian is also used by thousands of ethnic

Macedonians in Bulgaria (Μακεδονци - Makedontsi – in the Macedonian language). In fact, at the last census in 2001, there were officially 5,071 Bulgarian citizens who described their ethnicity as *Macedonian*.

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⁸ Ibid.

⁹ See various reports from the last few decades from the Greek Helsinki Monitor, Human Rights Watch, US State Department, Council of Europe bodies including the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), the Commissioner for Human Rights, the various judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (1998 and 2004). The latest international organisation to condemn Greece’s treatment of its ethnic Macedonian minority was the United Nations. Namely, the Independent Expert on Minority Issues released a report on Greece on 18 February 2009 citing a number of human rights violations and urged “Greece to withdraw from the dispute over whether there is a Macedonian or a Turkish minority in Greece and focus on protecting the rights to self-identification, freedom of expression and freedom of association of those communities.”