



Greece's Macedonian Adventure: The Controversy over FYROM's Independence and Recognition*

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The Legacy of the Postwar Debate

Future historians with access to diplomatic archives of Greece's Balkan relations during the postwar decades might be intrigued at the extent of the impact of the "Macedonian Question" on the formulation of Greece's policy options. During the 1950s and 1960s, the political, military and diplomatic establishment of the country had been haunted by an unabating concern, lest a major armed confrontation between East and West should once again place the northern Greek provinces of Thrace and Macedonia in jeopardy. It was this concern during the Cold War that had prompted successive Greek governments to seek the safety of Western security arrangements. The threat perception, however, persisted in certain circles, although the objective elements of the problem—armed conflict, secessionist minority groups—had been removed or sufficiently curtailed.

By the 1970s, the territorial features of the dispute had been pushed into the background—or the "dustbin of history"—as some specialists and political analysts might have argued. The euphoria of the Helsinki Final Act was contagious. Gradually, however, the Greek public became aware of a new-type of Macedonian question. Since the 1940s, "Macedonism", had been Yugoslav Macedonia's dominant nationalist ideology, aimed at "mutating" its Slav (Bulgarians, Serbs, Moslems) and, to a certain extent, non-Slav (Vlachs, Greeks) segments of its population into ethnic "Makedonci". A full generation later, the experiment had proved successful to a considerable degree.

By the early 1980s, as the Socialist Republic of Macedonia (SRM) was also affected by the nationalist malaise of the post-Tito period, a grand campaign was launched to seek international credentials and gain recognition, not only for the existence of the new ethnicity, but also for its major constituent components: its historical "roots", heritage, and name. Meanwhile, Slav-Macedonian nationalists, particularly in the diaspora, were developing an aggressive mentality claiming as *Makedonci* all Slav-speakers, or descendants of Slav-speakers, of the wider Macedonian region. Such maximalist claims, however, raised much resentment among Greeks and Bulgarians. They strongly challenged the two main tenets of Slav-Macedonian nationalism: first, their attempts to manipulate and usurp Greek and Bulgarian heritage, and, second, their offending denial of the right of Slav speakers from Greek Macedonia and Bulgarian Macedonia—Pirin, to identify themselves as Greeks or Bulgarians, respectively. Antagonism over such delicate issues as a people's sense of identity and historical heritage was already spreading the seeds of confrontation at a time (1989–1990) when the edifice of the Yugoslav federation began to betray irreparable cracks.

On the political level, successive Greek governments in the decades following the Civil War shared the view that Yugoslavia was a useful buffer state on the fringes of the Soviet-dominated communist world. Despite frequent irritants from the local government, press, and radio in Skopje, Athens had never raised any objections to the constitutional framework of the FSR of Yugoslavia, nor had it ever questioned its internal administrative structure of federate republics. Indeed, a Greek consulate general continued to function in Skopje, maintaining normal de facto relations with the authorities of the Republic, although officially it was accredited to the federal government in Belgrade. On the other hand, however, official Greek policy, supported by all major Greek political parties, rejected the existence of a “Macedonian” nation. This denial, however, did not negate the existence of a separate Slavic people in the SRM, but objected to its Macedonian name which was considered a constituent element of Greek cultural heritage.¹

It should be noted that, in this respect, the Greek position differed from that of the Bulgarians, which categorically refused to accept the existence or even the “constitution” of a “Macedonian” nation. In short, the Bulgarian view perceived the Slav speaking people in the SRM as “Bulgarians” or of “Bulgarian origin”. Contrary to the Greek position the Macedonian name was not a problem to the Bulgarians, who accepted it as a regional one; indeed, the name *Makedonci* to them defined the Bulgarians of the Macedonian region at large.²

As a way out of the predicament, official Greek policy “both of the New Democracy and PASOK governments” opted for, and used the name “Slav Macedonians” to identify the *Makedonci* of the SRM and its supporters in the diaspora. It should be noted that the Greek Communist Party (KKE) had adopted this very name for the Slav speakers of Macedonia even prior to the Second World War. Similarly, historians in the SRM have referred repeatedly to “Macedonian Slavs”, when writing on Macedonian history prior to the 1870s and the period of the “Macedonian” national emancipation.³

In the 1980s, Tito’s successors in Belgrade had succeeded in curtailing the strong anti-Bulgarian rhetoric of Skopje, so common during former decades. Instead, Slav Macedonian nationalists were allowed more latitude to channel their nationalistic effervescence in the direction of Greece. From the mid-1980s on, Skopje became the harbinger of a major escalation of propaganda against Greece, supported by Slav Macedonian nationalists of the diaspora. The new irritants from the Slav Macedonian nationalists began to filter into the front pages of newspapers, even of leftist orientation, catching the eye and raising concern among wider circles of the Greek public, politicians, and academics.⁴ When, however, rhetoric began to take the form of demarches to international bodies for grievances originating in the years of the Civil War, a sensitive issue to Greek society as a whole, the reaction in Greece, in official circles as well as in the media, was strong.

It was in such a climate, that the specter of the dissolution of the Yugoslav federation and the future status of the SRM as an independent Macedonian state on Greece’s northern border began seriously to preoccupy not only Greek policymakers, but a wider circle of commentators academics.

Greek Concerns over Yugoslav Macedonia’s Future Status

It should be noted that prior to the mid-1980s, with the exception of occasional flare ups in the press, there was little serious debate in Greece about the various aspects of the Macedonian issue. Any discussion that did occur was limited to a confined number of academics, journalists, and politicians, centered mainly in Thessaloniki.⁵ By 1990, however, the picture had changed drastically. New “experts” on the Macedonian question emerged to take control and monopolize the media—particularly the radio and TV stations in Thessaloniki—seeking to enlighten the public on a rather complicated issue. A number of them chose, however, to sensationalize the discussion by projecting their own twists on of the “Macedonian question”, with an assortment of distorted historical facts and half truths.

Gradually, a unique consensus emerged, linking the traditional bastions of Greek nationalism—such as the strongly anticommunist part of the right (which continued to hold the KKE *dosilogos* (accused) for its wartime and Civil War Macedonian policy), the Army, and the Church—with the adherents of the socialist and “patriotic” PASOK and followers of the leftist party “Synaspismos”. It is true, however, that many academics did offer their contributions to a sober and scholarly analysis of the issues at hand. Others, however, chose to join the bandwagon of nationalist fundamentalism. Their theories about the Macedonian question and, subsequently, their perception of what Greece’s policy should be in light of developments in the Balkans influenced the formulation and the conduct of official Greek policy on the issue to a considerable degree. In this respect, it is worth reviewing briefly their views.

Departing from the generally accepted premise that the Ancient Macedonians constituted part of the Hellenic world and that the territory of the Macedonian Kingdom in King Philip’s times coincided, more or less, with the present Greek province of Macedonia, they coined the slogan, “Ἡ Μakedonia einai elliniki” (i.e. “Macedonia is Greek”). It was a slogan, however, that raised not a few eyebrows in Europe where for years people had been associating the name of Macedonia with the Yugoslav province of the “Socialist Republic of Macedonia”. Given the utter confusion reigning in Western media at the time of the Yugoslav disintegration, it was no surprise that certain commentators chose to interpret the slogan and the huge public demonstrations that followed in Thessaloniki and other Greek cities, as a nationalist Greek move seeking to profit from the chaotic situation in the north in order to advance territorial claims on the neighboring former Yugoslav republic. Certainly, observers with even rudimentary knowledge of Greek and Balkan history and politics could easily detect the misunderstanding over terms. Nevertheless, as the slogan became the battle cry of the Greeks demonstrating all over the world against the recognition of the new state bearing the name of Macedonia, the government in Skopje and its supporters abroad chose to make propaganda capital of an inaccurate slogan to discredit the Greek motives in opposing recognition of FYROM.⁶

The debate over that slogan sheds some further light into the gradual formulation of Greek positions during the critical period of 1991–1992. Indeed, those who took the initiative in coining the slogan on the eve of the huge, one million-strong demonstration in Thessaloniki, in February 1992, could hardly understand that the outside world was more familiar with the Macedonian state of the FSR of Yugoslavia than with the ancient Macedonian kingdom and its boundaries of 24 centuries ago. By utilizing that slogan, they had two things in mind: on the one hand, to set the record straight of the Hellenic connection of Ancient Macedonia, and in so doing to defend a people’s collective right to its heritage, and, on the other hand, to voice in no uncertain terms a determination that the re-emergence of wartime irredentist yearnings for the annexation of Greek Macedonia would not be tolerated. It should be noted that such yearnings were gaining quickly in popularity and becoming vocal in Skopje for the first time since the 1940s. They found an eager echo in the Slav Macedonian diaspora. It was in this context that the demonstrating Greeks sought to make it clear, *urbi et orbi*, that Macedonia i.e., the Greek province of Macedonia, was an unalienable component of the Greek state.⁷ At about that time (1992) the state-controlled Greek Post Office chose to issue a series of stamps portraying Ancient and Byzantine Macedonian cultural treasures marked “Macedonia was and will always be Greek”.

A side effect of the popularization of the misleading slogan and other related literature was to convey to the Greek public the perception that there is only one “Macedonia”, Greek Macedonia. The inference was clear. Since no other region in the Balkans apart from the Greek province of Macedonia could be associated or identified with the ancient kingdom of Macedonia, it would be historically preposterous for a Slavic country to assume the Macedonian name as the official designation of a new independent state entity. Carrying this argument further, no other people apart from the Greeks were entitled to use the Macedonian name either as a cultural-ethnic or a geographic-regional appellation.⁸

The new brand of Greek “Macedonologues”, in similar ways to their Slav Macedonian colleagues, soon found themselves trotting down slippery slopes, even distorting historical facts in their

endeavor to recast Macedonian history to suit political needs. In trying to establish the thesis that lands outside the confines of Greek Macedonia had no historical justification to claim the name “Macedonia” or its derivatives, they suppressed the fact that in modern times, and certainly since the emergence of the Macedonian question in the 19th century, it was commonly accepted—even by Greek historians and politicians—that Macedonia, as an ill-defined geographical region of the Ottoman state, comprised lands that today roughly correspond to present-day Greek Macedonia, FYROM, and the Pirin district of Bulgaria.

Like the dry forest of August, the logic of the “one and only Macedonia” argument caught fire with the imagination of an ill-informed Greek public in Greece and the Greek diaspora. The first victim of this mobilization was the traditional post-war Greek policy regarding *Macedonism*. Even suggestions to use the term “Slav-Macedonian” or any other compound name—“Vardar Macedonia”, for example—were viewed as “national treason”.¹⁰ The new independent state was christened “Skopje”, in public parlance as well as in official documents, while its people were referred to as “Skopjans”. Even the century-old “Macedonian Question” was purified to become the “Skopiano”.

One should bear in mind that Greek reaction over these issues a response to nationalist manifestations across the border in the SRM through 1990–1991, i.e. even prior to the declaration of independence, in September 1991, of the “Republika na Makedonija”. As early as October 1989, public demonstrations had been held in Skopje and elsewhere, projecting—for the first time since the 1940s—slogans calling for “reunification of Macedonia”, or declaring that “Solun [Thessaloniki] is ours”. Unimpeded by the organs of a tight security state, similar leaflets and graffiti covered walls in various towns of the Republic. A nationalist party, the VMRO-DPMNE, (“Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization-Democratic Party of Macedonian National Unity”), founded in January 1990, provided further impetus to such nationalist manifestations. Traditionally, VMRO had been known as a terrorist Bulgarian Macedonian organization. Whereas the new VMRO did not appear to share its predecessor’s tactics or its Bulgarian orientation, it did endorse in its statutes a political platform aiming at the independence and the unification of the three Macedonian regions. Pointedly, it chose the Ancient Macedonian “Vergina sun” and the medieval Bulgarian lion as the Party’s symbols. While other smaller parties, such as the MAAK (“Movement for All-Macedonian Action”), adopted similar nationalist positions, it was the VMRO that won most popular votes and parliamentary seats during the first multi-party elections held in SRM, late in 1990. Going into 1991, public statements and irredentist literature, such as calendars, tourist mementos, car stickers, and maps portraying a united Macedonia fanned the flames of nationalism.¹¹

In Greece, despite such irritants, official policy did not change overnight. Throughout 1991, the New Democracy government headed by Prime Minister Constantine Mitsotakis, with Andonis Samaras as Foreign Minister, pursued the traditional Greek line on Yugoslavia, while coordinating its efforts with the United States and the majority of European Community member countries to ensure the survival of the Yugoslav federation or of a new federal version, minus Slovenia and possibly Croatia. When, however, the process of dissolution of the old structures in Yugoslavia appeared irreversible, Athens shifted its attention to securing international guarantees against changes to the external borders of the Balkan countries.

Sensing that most EC countries were either ignorant of, or indifferent to the intricacies of Balkan issues, with the notable exception of Germany and Italy, the Greek Government turned to Belgrade and Sofia in search of a common approach to the emerging problems in the southern part of the Balkans. The Greeks’ major concern was to avoid the outbreak of hostilities, mainly in or over the territory of the SRM. They found no consensus of views in the two capitals, however.¹² The Bulgarians accepted developments in Yugoslavia as an unexpected bonanza. Their traditional opponent in the Balkans, the Serbs, had been caught in a whirlpool of their own making which, one way or the other, was bound to wreck their hitherto dominant geopolitical position in the region. More important, however, the Bulgarians sensed that developments in the north would reduce or even terminate Yugoslav/Serb control over the territory of the SRM, a

land the Bulgarians had not ceased to view as one of the three “historic Bulgarian lands” (the other two being Moesia and Thrace). Under the circumstances, they were in no mood to accommodate Belgrade—or, for that matter, the Greeks—in sustaining a structure that would perpetuate Serbian hegemony, even in an indirect way, over the region. Dormant Bulgarian nostalgia for the lands and the people to their west, in terms of a closer relationship with long estranged “brethren” and the eventual lifting of border barriers, was gradually becoming vocal once again, after decades of Zhivkovian nationalist hibernation.¹³

Bulgaria, in the Greeks’ view, was still very weak and would be unable to influence developments in Macedonia for some time to come. On the other hand, the international community, particularly the EC was expected to be receptive to Greek sensitivities and interests. That was the period of the Maastricht euphoria for “European solidarity”. As a result, Athens opted for a strong Serbia under Milosevic capable of successfully running a new federal entity and holding Skopje’s reawakened irredentism in check.¹⁴

Greek assessments and expectations proved wrong on all three counts. Bulgaria was, indeed, too weak to interfere. But it was, certainly, far from indifferent to Macedonian developments and to Greece’s apparent rapprochement with the Serbs on this issue, to the extent that it did not hesitate to sacrifice the climate of good relations that had prevailed with Athens over a quarter of a century. In the case of Milosevic’s Serbia, pressing priorities in the north and in Kosovo led to the withdrawal of the Yugoslav Army from FYROM, to the painful surprise of the Greeks, who belatedly realized that they were acquiring a new neighbor to their north free of the tutelage of and influences from Belgrade. And, as for the Maastricht “spirit of solidarity”, it lasted as long as it did not clash with the priorities of the most dominant members of the European Community/Union.

Diplomatic tug-of-war over the recognition issue

A brief presentation of the diplomatic initiatives in connection with the recognition of FYROM is pertinent at this point for a better understanding of the formulation and conduct of Greek policy on the subject.

The declaration on Yugoslavia issued by the EC/EU Foreign Ministers on December 17, 1991, was undoubtedly a turning point for the Macedonian issue. It drew up a framework of prerequisites for the international recognition of the former SRM that met the main points raised by Greece, to a considerable degree. It specifically asked “for constitutional and political guarantees ensuring that [the applicant state] has no territorial claims towards a neighboring Community State [Greece] and that it will conduct no hostile propaganda activities versus a neighboring Community State, including the use of a denomination which implies territorial claims”.¹⁵ In subsequent weeks, the government in Skopje did introduce certain minor amendments to its Constitution, but it bypassed the core issue of the name of the new state. The Badinter Arbitration Commission rendered an advisory opinion in favor of recognition, but Greece considered the commitments inadequate and the EU concurred, requesting the Portuguese Presidency (Foreign Minister Joao di Deus Pineiro) to approach the two sides in order to find a suitable solution to the problem. Pineiro, after consultations with both sides, drew up two draft documents on the basis of the December 1991 declaration. The first dealt with guarantees “against territorial claims”, and the second with further guarantees “against hostile propaganda”. Verbally, Pineiro suggested the name “New Macedonia” as a suitable state denomination. The Pineiro mission proved inconclusive. FYROM apparently was responsive to the two first points but remained noncommittal on the name, probably awaiting Greece’s response first. Greek Foreign Minister Andonis Samaras tentatively accepted the two draft documents, but turned down the proposal on the name.¹⁶ Prime Minister Mitsotakis reluctantly consented to it when faced by the endorsement of the maximalist line—“no Macedonia or its derivatives”—by the Council of Party Leaders (with only KKE’s Aleka Paparriga dissenting), held on April 13, under

the chairmanship of the President of the Republic Constantine Karamanlis. At this point, Mitsotakis dismissed Samaras and took over the Foreign Minister's portfolio himself.

Subsequently, despite mounting tensions and fighting in the northern tier of ex-Yugoslavia, the EU, still headed by Portugal, showed its solidarity with Greece on two more instances. In their meeting at Gimaraes, on May 2, 1992, the EU Foreign Ministers declared their readiness to recognize the former SRM as an independent and sovereign state, adding the precondition, however, "*under a name which could be acceptable to all interested parties*". Thus, its partners granted Greece a quasi veto on the name.¹⁷ Two months later, with international pressures for recognition mounting (already the US had compelled the EU to expedite recognition to Bosnia-Herzegovina), the heads of EU states and governments went even a step further in meeting Greece's requests, at their Lisbon meeting of June 26–27, 1992. While they reiterated their readiness to recognize the new state, this time they added, in no uncertain terms, that they would proceed in this direction "*under a name which will not include the denomination Macedonia*".¹⁸ That was a phrasing that went beyond the December 17, 1991, declaration, which excluded specifically the name Macedonia. Much later it was revealed that the Greek Prime Minister had confidentially given his consent that such a denomination could be applied to international usage.¹⁹

On the basis of these documents, it appears that against all odds, Greece had, by mid-1992, gained most of its points within the councils of the EC/EU. President Gligorov's refusal, however, to abide by the EU's rulings, delayed the recognition of his country for more than a year, but, in the end, he obtained it in a roundabout way by petitioning the UN for membership. The UN Security Council granted its consent, conditional on two important points: First, that raising the new member's flag, bearing the Ancient Macedonian emblem of the so-called "Vergina sun", was deferred to a future date as an important recognition of Greece's right to protect and defend its cultural patrimony. The second point was the stipulation that the new member state be admitted under the provisional name of "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (FYROM), for as long as "the difference over the name [was] pending". The Security Council justified its decision "in the interest of maintaining peace and good neighborly relations in the region", another concession to the Greek argument that the "constitutional" state denomination of FYROM could negatively affect the promotion of peaceful and good neighborly relations among the peoples and the states in the region (Decision 817/ 7.4.1993)²⁰

In subsequent months, through its mediators Lord Owen and Cyrus Vance and with strong US backing, the UN took over the burden from the EU of bringing the two parties to an agreement. By May 1993, it appeared that a solution was at hand. A draft treaty prepared by the mediators after exhaustive consultations with the two government delegations in New York, sought to synthesize the main considerations of both sides. The mediators were hopeful that even their proposed name "Nova Makedonija" (the old Pineiro proposal in its Slavic version) would be a breakthrough.²¹

It was at that moment that the simmering pressures in Greece—and apparently in FYROM—blew up any chances for a compromise solution of the problem. Instead, the way was paved for a further escalation of the crisis at considerable cost to both sides. For Greece, this cost would be measured in political terms, while for FYROM it would be associated with economic and social burdens for years to come.

Specifically, in the case of Greece, the course of the diplomatic developments already cited, had weaved a canvass of multiple problems, upsetting and polarizing the internal political scene, derailing the country's foreign policy orientations and priorities, and setting in motion new social cleavages inside the country and among the diaspora Greeks.

The Thrust of the "Skopiano" in Greek politics

It has already been noted that the “Macedonian Question” had sharply divided the Greeks into two camps during the Civil War and had poisoned the internal political scene, for years. By the latter part of the 1970s, however, all segments of the political spectrum had finally come to terms with the issue, almost to the point of reaching consensus on a number of important points.²² More important, the two leading parties, New Democracy and PASOK, which continually succeeded each other in government after the fall of the military dictatorship in 1974, shared similar strategic objectives and even agreed on tactics in handling of the Macedonian problem, despite their polemics on almost every other issue. Nevertheless, by 1992, this bipartisan approach appeared to be shelved when Andreas Papandreou, leader of the Opposition at the time, adopted an unyielding negative attitude toward any attempt by Prime Minister Mitsotakis—whose government only had heading a two-seat majority in parliament—to compromise on FYROM’s name.

At first, however, PASOK’s opposition tactics were overshadowed by internal New Democracy dissensions, presented as a personal Mitsotakis-Samaras duel that ended in the latter’s dismissal. In the best tradition of the emotive political debate in Greece, the internal crisis descended upon the political scene with the violence of a summer storm. The point of departure was the interpretation of the December 17, 1991, declaration, a decision which, when announced, had been hailed by all sides as a feat of Greek diplomacy. Given the circumstances and the strong opposition of certain delegations, headed by Italy, the final unanimous vote on the phrasing of the declaration was, indeed, a success. Its implementation, however, was an entirely different matter. The impression on the Greek public was that the new state would not be recognized as “Macedonia”. As the architect of that decision, Andonis Samaras was generally reaping all the political benefits. However, PASOK’s political strategists undertook to tarnish the impression of a major government achievement. They would only accept it as an achievement for the Greek side, they said, if the declaration signified not only that the name “Macedonia” by that all its derivatives were excluded from the denomination of the new state. That apparently excluded any form of a compound Macedonian name. Certainly, by no stress of the imagination could the agreed-upon formula be interpreted in this way. Samaras, however, was hardly a politician to be outsmarted by demagogues. He had no scruples in confirming the maximalist interpretation. The public rejoiced. But in the councils of the EU, the chancelleries of Europe’s capitals and the international press, the mood in no way corresponded to the prevailing atmosphere in Greece. Indeed, it was evident, particularly to seasoned Greek diplomats, that although the “maximalist” thesis could be a useful bargaining point, it could only provide the stepping stone for a fair compromise solution.²³

A few years later (1995–1996), the publications of books containing ample documentation, written by or with the consent of the political protagonists at the time, offered the Greek public sufficient insight into the political bickering and behind the scenes secret bargaining on the Macedonian issue.²⁴ On the basis of these revelations, it is safe to conclude that while Foreign Minister Samaras was hard at work presenting documentation and arguments in favour of the maximalist solution to his EU colleagues, Prime Minister Mitsotakis had been sounding out his own colleagues, in the same capitals, for a compromise solution on the name. Consequently, it was a matter of time before a major political crisis exploded, first within the ruling New Democracy party and then on a national scale. When Mitsotakis dismissed Samaras, and reserved also the post of the Foreign Minister for himself, instead of promoting his own conciliatory views, he proceeded publicly to pursue not his own views for a compromise solution, but the maximalist line of his dismissed minister. By that time, however, this line had been endorsed by three of the four party leaders represented in parliament and apparently by President Karamanlis. Mitsotakis’ move might be seen as a masterstroke in petty internal politics. It allowed him to outmaneuver the internal opposition of the “maximalists” in his own party and to checkmate the eroding tactics of his arch-opponent Andreas Papandreou. As is

turned out, however, the real loser of all these confusing developments, as most Greek analysts came to assess years later, was the “national issue”.

The positive decisions at Gimaraes and Lisbon undoubtedly bear the personal mark of Mitsotakis. Nevertheless, on the basis of subsequent revelations, those decisions did not constitute a full endorsement of Greece’s position on its dispute with Skopje. They aimed primarily at bolstering Mitsotakis’ own precarious parliamentary position inside Greece.

Following Lisbon, Mitsotakis chose to rest for a while on his diplomatic “laurels”. In doing this, however, he failed to capitalize on the strength of the unanimous support of his peers in the EU in order to negotiate a compromise solution with Skopje. Thus, he offered Gligorov a much needed respite during the summer and autumn months of 1992, allowing him to recuperate from the shock of Lisbon, to rally, and then stand firmly by his own maximalist stand. As the situation in the northern ex-republics of Yugoslavia was worsening, the FYROM president could now press more convincingly for immediate recognition of his country as a means of stabilizing peace in the region and containing the extension of the fighting to the south. It was a pleasant tune in the ears of Western diplomats.

By that time, the deteriorating situation in Croatia and the opening up of a new front of armed confrontation in Bosnia compelled the governments of Europe and the United States to become more actively involved in the Yugoslav adventure. In the process of constructing a *cordon sanitaire* around Serbia, the territory of FYROM became a useful pawn in the unfolding international chess game of Great Power pacifiers vs. Balkan unruly villains. As such, the small landlocked state to the south of the warring zone, acquired an ephemeral importance far exceeding its geostrategic value. It was at that critical moment (first half of 1992), that the interests of the European Union began to veer in the opposite direction from Greece’s specific pursuits in the Balkans.

Inside Greece, however, Mitsotakis had apparently reached his decision that, at that moment, his first priority was to endeavor to decrease the intensity of public excitement and cool off the growing party dissension on account of Samaras’ dismissal. To initiate with Skopje directly or indirectly negotiations would have exposed him to a renewal of public outcry of “selling out” on the national issue. The new British Presidency of EU accommodated him, temporarily, as it was in no hurry to carry out the Lisbon mandate.²⁵

A year later, Mitsotakis was faced with a similar dilemma; this time, in May 1993, he was presented by UN mediators Vance and Owen with the compromise version of a draft treaty covering all outstanding questions between Athens and Skopje, including the issue of the name. Despite the fact that his government—with Michalis Papaconstantinou, an experienced and moderate politician and native of Macedonia, as the new foreign minister—had given signs early in 1993 of departing from the maximalist line, and being ready to discuss a compound name,²⁶ Mitsotakis retreated at the last moment. This time, a number of influential MPs of his party, including Miltiadis Evert, presented him with a quasi-ultimatum not to proceed with signing the proposed draft. Otherwise, they “forecast”, the government would lose its parliamentary majority and would be forced to resign.²⁷ The prime minister succumbed and ordered Papaconstantinou to return to Athens.²⁸ The Vance-Owen draft treaty, a masterpiece of diplomatic dexterity drafted by two eminent international experts, with the cooperation of the delegations of the two parties—which, however, never met—fell victim of internal politics back in the two capitals. In Greece, the New Democracy leader was offered a breathing space of less than four months. In September, two of his deputies deserted him, bringing down the government. Greece’s “Macedonian adventure” was claiming its second victim following Samaras’ dismissal. The October elections returned a triumphant Papandreou to power, at the head of the “patriotic” faction of PASOK.

The second phase of the Macedonian imbroglio in Greek politics commenced with the PASOK government strongly condemning its predecessor's handling of the "Skopiano" as *endotiki*, (yielding). Rather ill informed about the mediation procedure in the UN, Prime Minister Papandreou hastened to declare, *urbi et orbi*, that Greece would remain firm in its maximalist position regarding the exclusion of the name "Macedonia" and its derivatives from the neighbouring state's name. Furthermore, he saw little hope in the negotiations under the UN auspices, unless Kiro Gligorov abandoned his "intransigent" position and gave assurances he would abide by the three terms, that had in fact been included in the EC Foreign Ministers declaration of December 1991. In short, the new Greek government reprised in official documents as well as in public pronouncements, a rather crude performance of the dated slogans of an earlier (1992) vintage.²⁹

It was evident that, here again, internal political exigencies—i.e., the discrediting of the former government handling of the issue—was assuming top priority. This time, however, the government was not hostage to a few dissidents in its own party. It had a convenient majority of seats in parliament, a four-year term ahead of it, and a leader who enjoyed the unequivocal support and respect of his cadres. What went on unspoken, was PASOK's own responsibility for the malignancy it had inherited. In retrospect, however, PASOK's public denunciations, while in opposition whenever a compromise solution was in the offing, and its president's position at the Council of Party Leaders in April 1992, do not exonerate neither the Party nor its leader of the responsibility—or "honor", for the followers of nationalist orthodoxy—over the course of Greek policy on this issue during the preceding years.³⁰

Undoubtedly, Papandreou's initial statements and initiatives as a prime minister were unexpected bonanza to Gligorov, who soon began to reap, instead of pressures from foreign governments, the official recognition of his state. True, most of them, including all the EU member states and the United States, extended recognition to the "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". In doing so, they were signaling their support for the Security Council's 1993 decision on the provisional name "FYROM" and on the U.N mandate for mediation.

When the recognition of FYROM by EU countries and the United States became known, the Greek public correctly assessed them as serious setbacks. It failed, however, to put the blame on the initial, reflex reactions of the new government, finding solace in the traditional scapegoat of "hostile foreign interests". New massive demonstrations broke out in Thessaloniki, Athens, and other cities in order to condemn the "desertion" of Greece by its partners and allies and to reiterate the sensitivity of the Greek people on matters touching upon its historical and cultural heritage. Once again, Papandreou proved to be a master of the psychology of the masses, choosing to ride along with the public sentiments, and to place the blame on foreign powers, bypassing his own role in the new twist of events.³¹ More serious, however, and fraught with unforeseen consequences was his decision in February 1994 to endorse the most extremist recommendation of certain of his advisers, certainly not of the Foreign Ministry, to slam, a total embargo on FYROM, with the exception of food and pharmaceuticals³².

The embargo—euphemistically termed "counter measures" against Gligorov's "intransigence"—fitted the strategy of raising the stakes. It ensured the support of an excited and injured public, it projected the image of a prime minister who was active in servicing the national interest and being responsive to the sensitivities of the Greek people, and it outmaneuvered the tactics of the new head of the New Democracy party and leader of the opposition, Miltiadis Evert, who had veered his party back to the maximalist line on the name issue. Publicly, however, Papandreou appeared confident that his determined position would reactivate the interest of the United States and the European Union to resolve the issue. What it succeeded in doing, however, was to raise a world outcry against Greece and to place the country in the unenviable position of social

pariah of Europe, reminiscent of the seven-year ostracism during the colonels' regime. It was unfair for the Greeks, who for more than two years had striven to make their case to the international community not as a vendetta against their new, small, and weak neighbor, but in legal self-defense to preserve their heritage and ensure long-term peaceful and good-neighborly relations within a troubled region. Be that as it may, the embargo made its mark on international perceptions as proof that Greece's Macedonian policy was bullying and aggressive.³³

On the internal front, the Papandreou government focused its efforts on a unique manipulation of Greek public opinion, which was adroitly misled by government spokesmen, with a daily dose of nationalistic hyperbole. The government was portrayed as honoring its electoral pledge to steadfastly defend the maximalist position of "neither Macedonia, nor its derivatives". Behind the scenes, however, the same government's emissaries were laboring to bypass the name issue while negotiating an agreement more or less in the spirit of the 1993 Vance-Owen draft treaty, a text ironically castigated by PASOK both prior to and after coming to power in 1993.

Papandreou's miscalculation on the impact of the embargo on Greece's international standing created much concern inside Greece, to the point that influential segments of Greek society began to publicly voice their objections to the policy pursued.

Strong economic and commercial interests, particularly in Northern Greece, which suffered losses and missed opportunities in the emerging new markets of the Balkans and Eastern Europe, were becoming restive and critical of new barriers to trade and economic initiatives. Undoubtedly, certain "embargo busters" did reap rich dividends; but they were no more than an insignificant minority. A "silent majority" was emerging, discreetly pressing on the government the need for a speedy reappraisal of policy that would include the lifting of the embargo.³⁴ Similarly, serious academics, including historians, were by now able to present more sober analyses of the Macedonian issue, which, in the early stages of the dispute, had been maltreated at the hands of amateurs and ultra nationalist colleagues.³⁵ The aim of their intervention was to rehabilitate the history and to set the facts concerning the Macedonian Question straight. Criticism now centered on the negative impact of the maximalist aims—and the means adopted in their pursuit—on international public opinion and on the relations of Greece with its EU partners.

By now, the Court of the European Communities had rejected the Commission's initial petition for "temporary measures" against Greece for the embargo decision, and a year later, in the summer of 1995, the Advocate General of the Court accepted in substance Greece's arguments. The signing of the Interim Accord in September 1995 relieved the European Commission of a rejection of its case against Greece by the Court, although the Commission was compelled to pay the costs.³⁶ Meanwhile, Cyrus Vance had reactivated the UN mediation efforts for a final settlement of the dispute.

The Third Phase: The New York "Interim Accord" (September 1995) and its Aftermath

Whereas it is true that Cyrus Vance did, indeed, take the initiative in March 1994 for a new round of negotiations with the two parties, this was the result not of the embargo, but of the Greek government's silent consent to take as the basis of the negotiations, without preconditions, a slightly modified version of the 1993 Vance-Owen draft treaty.³⁷ It took a year-and-a-half before the two parties finally signed in New York, in September 1995, an "Interim Accord". The agreement provided for Greece's recognition of FYROM, under its provisional name, and the lifting of the embargo, whereas Skopje consented to remove the Greek Macedonian emblem from its flag, and accepted the interpretation of certain clauses of its Constitution which, in Greece's view, were likely to foment irredentist claims and justify interference in Greek internal affairs, under the pretext of "caring for the status and rights" of Macedonian minorities in neighboring countries. Furthermore, the two countries endorsed a number of clauses dealing with economic

relations and establishing quasi diplomatic relations by opening up “Liaison Offices” headed by ambassadors in the respective capitals. In fact, both sides had successfully ridded themselves of their additional burdens—Greece of the embargo and FYROM of the flag—which they had added in the course of their four-year-old feud, and proceeded to normalize working neighborly relations. What was left in abeyance, allegedly to be resolved in a new round of negotiations, was the key issue of the state’s name, the real culprit of the dispute. Judging from statements by Greek government officials, including Foreign Minister Karolos Papoulias, that issue was also expected to be resolved soon.³⁸

The Interim Accord and its implementation ushered in a new approach both to the name dispute and to bilateral relations between the two neighboring states. Few, if any, had noticed, even prior to the conclusion of the agreement, a nuance in the Greek government’s public statements, which proclaimed that “the Greek government will never recognize a state bearing the name *Macedonia* or its derivatives”—a phrasing that had substituted the traditional line that “the new state should not bear the name Macedonia or derivatives of that name”. Those who noticed it could not avoid recalling Papandreou’s similar tactics in the early 1980s. Then, while in opposition, the socialist leader had vowed to remove the US bases from Greece (a popular issue with the leftist masses at the time), but once in power he negotiated a new arrangement which, in fact, ensured their continued presence on Greek soil. The signing of that agreement with the US government was heralded with the hoisting of banners proclaiming that “the bases are on the way out” (“*oi vaseis fevgoun*”). In 1995, Papandreou, by now an aged and infirm prime minister, continued reassuring the masses that he stood firm by the maximalist line “no to the name *Macedonia* and its derivatives”, while the “Interim Accord” with FYROM had, indeed, divested his country of any plausible leverage for a fair compromise solution on the Macedonian name.

In January 1996, because of the deterioration of his health, Papandreou resigned and was replaced by Kostas Simitis a modernist who was not associated with the so-called “patriotic”—or “maximalist”—wing of the party. Neither had his Foreign Minister, Theodoros Pangalos. From the outset, both appeared determined to “close” the sour issue of the name, by reaching an accommodating compromise with Skopje, on the basis of a compound name, not the best, under the circumstances.³⁹ Likewise, they proceeded to resolve certain outstanding issues with Albania, in order to set in motion a reappraisal of Greece’s role as a stabilizing element in the Balkan sub-region and as a link between the European Union and the emerging new democracies.

Their mending of relations with the Albanians—which had been initiated a year earlier by the former Minister of Foreign Affairs Karolos Papoulias— were successful and a cordial relationship appeared in the making. However, the case of FYROM was different. While there was a marked improvement in bilateral economic and personal relations (in 1996, more than a half million of FYROM citizens visited Greece, particularly the shores of Macedonia and Thrace), the Greeks soon realized that the “Interim Accord” had left them with no substantial bargaining chips to put on the table. Moreover, in their pursuit of erecting a new Balkan edifice of cooperation, they were in no mood to turn to confrontational measures in pressing for a solution.

On his part, Gligorov did not fail to exploit the favorable circumstances. Despite the mandate of the Security Council and the relevant reference in the Interim Accord that the two parties should seek a solution to the name dispute, he temporized with the UN talks, for almost two years. During this period, Gligorov made no secret of his belief that the name dispute gradually would be diffused, with no concessions on his part, as the two countries proceeded to strengthen their economic relations and their borders were opened to the free movement of peoples. Finally, in the summer of 1997, FYROM submitted to Cyrus Vance its official position on the name, which simply was the country’s constitutional name, “Republic of Macedonia”.⁴⁰ In Greece, even the most ardent supporters of the “de-Skopianization” of Greece’s policy, were beginning to realize that this time the label “intransigent”, so frequently attached to Gligorov by Greek hard-liners, appeared justified. Only this time, the aged politician in Skopje felt he could afford it, at no visible cost.

Meanwhile, the “hawks” in the ruling PASOK party, responding to Simitis’ and Pangalos’ attempts to prepare the Greek public for a compromised solution, stepped up their criticism for their alleged “yielding” attitude. It was a belated reaction addressed to the wrong recipients, as the real “culprit” was no more alive.⁴¹

In retrospect, it appears that a unique opportunity was lost for a lasting settlement of the problem, when, on the eve of the Dayton agreement, in August 1995, American diplomacy, anxious to bring about the pacification of the warring regions in the north, urgently intervened to mediate the settlement of the Athens-Skopje dispute. Papandreou, however, chose the so-called “small package” solution—with Gligorov consenting—which evaded the issue of the name, referring the substance of the dispute *ad graecas calendas*. That opportunist approach by the two elder leaders was no doubt due to their concern that a balanced adjudication of the name issue would undoubtedly raise the violent criticism of ardent nationalists, supporters of the maximalist view in both countries and their corresponding “diasporas”. Such criticism, it was feared, would bring upon their parties the burden of “political cost”. More so, at the twilight of their political careers and lives, they ran the risk of having their personal ethnarchic image—so painstakingly weaved over the years in the service of the “patriotic” causes of their countries—tarnished. The ramifications, however, of their decision on the long-term relations between the two countries and, indeed, their peoples, were left aside for the judgment of future historians.

General Assessments and Projections

The handling of the recent phase of the Macedonian Question by two PASOK governments and one of the New Democracy party revealed a departure from traditional patterns in Greek foreign policymaking and conduct. Not since the mass demonstrations of the Cypriot anti-colonial struggle of the 1950s, did Greek society and the Greeks of the diaspora exhibit such awareness and involvement in a foreign policy issue, such as the recognition of a new independent state on their northern boundaries. As a result, the formulation of strategic targets as well as the use of tactical moves—long a rather exclusive domain around the Prime Minister of an inner circle of cabinet ministers and the diplomatic bureaucracy of the Foreign Ministry—was eroded by the involvement of a wider range of concerned individuals, editors, and influential groups. By their sheer numbers, their status in society, and their political and economic clout, they acted as lobby groups seeking to press upon the government and the political parties their perceptions of the problem and how to offer solutions. On the other hand, the mass demonstrations, of a much grandeur scale than anything registered in Greece’s past, could not be explained only in terms of the concern of the Greek people with their national security. They were, rather, the collective response of people personally affected by the issues at hand, namely their sense of identity and their perception of heritage.⁴² Undoubtedly, their awakened awareness enriched the internal debate and provided the professionals with supportive argumentation. Nevertheless, a limited understanding of the drastically changing European and Balkan political environment, as contrasted with a rather expanded input of Greek history, led these lobbies to adopt and promote maximalist claims. Emotionally charged (“the name is our psyche”), their intervention denied even the most sober politicians any room for maneuvering, bypassing the counsels of professionals and seasoned publicists.

A kaleidoscopic appraisal of these lobbies reveals that, while the pendulum of Greek politics was at the maximalist end of the curve, it was mainly academics—historians, archaeologists, as well as theologians and intellectuals, but not political or social scientists—who drew up the theoretical framework for the policy to be pursued. Understandably, their perception of the issue at hand focused on the Macedonian kingdom of antiquity and its *Makedones* rather than on the Socialist Republic of Macedonia and its *Makedonci*. The “archaeologization” of Greece’s foreign policy, then became unavoidable; more so, when amateur historians and publicists entered the debate promoting a series of historical theories in retrospect, such as that the region of the SRM had never been part of Macedonia, or that it had acquired its Macedonian name as a result of the Second World War. When the general public endorsed these “findings”, political leaders of all factions joined the bandwagon.

During its first phase (1991–1993), political analysts sought to interpret the dichotomy of New Democracy’s Macedonian policy in terms of a political duel between the two protagonists at the time, Constantine Mitsotakis and Andonis Samaras. There was wide speculation that Samaras was simply exploiting the Macedonian problem in order to reap personal political dividends. This is still the prevailing view. Such motives, however, were not limited to Samaras alone. Indeed, the number of politicians in both the New Democracy and the PASOK parties who fell prey to such temptations was far from negligible. Nevertheless, Mitsotakis and Samaras should be seen as the representatives of two different currents in their party at the turn of the 1990s; the “conservative” one—as pursued by Constantine Karamanlis in the 1970s—and the “maximalist”, respectively. Personal ambitions and political priorities aside, their dissenting views on the handling of the Macedonian problem split the party’s parliamentarians and perplexed the rank and file of the New Democracy party over the endorsement of the maximalist view. Particularly vulnerable were New Democracy deputies, running for office in electoral precincts in Macedonia and Thrace. Mitsotakis’ conservative approach of seeking a moderate compromise solution to the name issue could expose his followers not only to the nationalist harassment of their local PASOK opponents, but also to the erosion of their electoral clientele by Samaras’ newly-formed Political Spring (Politiki Anoixi) party.

Samaras was a relatively young, ambitious, and over-zealous politician, with family connections to Macedonia. He shared the growing anxiety of a segment of the electoral—particularly in the northern provinces of Macedonia, Epirus, and Thrace—over the dramatic developments taking shape north of the Greek border. In the volatile climate of resurgent Balkan nationalisms, he perceived threats as well as opportunities for the Greek “national issues”, such as that of Northern Epirus and Macedonia. He felt he had a cause to serve. As a zealot, sensing the approval of the masses on his back, he entered forcefully into the quagmire of Balkan politics, betting on maximalist stakes. However, he refused to budge when the odds were clearly against such stakes. Thus, he failed to compromise, even when compromise was clearly not “treason”, but a fair service to the mission he had assigned to himself.

On the other side stood Mitsotakis, an elder, experienced statesman, master of political maneuvering and thence the logical hand to promote an exodus from the Macedonian imbroglio through compromise. Although he was aware that at that historical turning point his country’s best interests and its European orientation required the further strengthening of its ties with its partners in the European Union, he let himself be drawn into petty Balkan intrigues. In all fairness, it should be acknowledged that he sought to cast himself in the role of a Balkan “honest broker” and earn dividends for himself and his country. By associating too closely with Milosevic, however, he defeated his own aims and exposed his country to unwarranted criticism from the West, particularly by anti-Serbian lobbies. Even so, it is true, that the EU and the United States offered him some latitude to maneuver when he asked their support for a fair hearing of Greece’s reservations vis-à-vis FYROM’s recognition. Nevertheless, the European and American environment, already in a violently anti-Serbian mood, remained suspicious of Mitsotakis’ intentions and motivations on the Macedonian issue, to the point of pressuring their respective governments against Greek initiatives for peace in Bosnia-Croatia, but also on the Macedonian question. In the end, the Greek conservative leader, pressed by the opposition in his own party, chose to temporize. His loss in the October 1993 elections ushered in the second phase of Greek policy toward the recognition of FYROM (1993–1995).

New players entered the Greek political arena, this time with Papandreou and his party in the dominant position. It was a different terrain. Despite an almost daily dose of official pronouncements reassuring Greek audiences of the new government’s steadfast maximalist position, there was a gradual decrease of patriotic fervor, so atypical of media commentary of the previous two years. At the same time, the new voices of a growing number of influential publicists, intellectuals, and political analysts challenged the monopoly of maximalist views. On the one hand, the leftist Synaspismos party had already come out publicly in favor of a compromise solution on the name. Indeed, one of its leading members is credited with publishing, in 1992, a political diatribe with arguments for a compromise approach to the whole

issue of recognition, including the acceptance of a compound name. In the end, however, it was Papandreou's brinkmanship in applying the embargo on FYROM that raised havoc and shifted the focus of the debate from the issues of Greece's security and the Greeks' perceptions of identity-heritage to issues of human rights and regional Balkan security considerations. Thanks to the Greek government's bonanza offering, FYROM propagandists adroitly exploited a pro-underdog mentality among Western European and American human rights activists, to augment the ranks of their supporters.⁴³

Steadily, political analysts, academics, and publicists in Greece took over the rostrum from historians and archaeologists. Closer to international political realities and more sensitive to the negative impact of the Macedonian issue on Greece's overall orientations, they sought to assess the issue from the perspective of Greek foreign policy strategic interests as a whole. Their criticism of both the New Democracy and PASOK governments centered on the "Skopjanization" of Greek foreign policy to the detriment of other vital priorities. In their view, these priorities should have focused on strengthening Greece's position and stature within the EU, upgrading the Greek role in the economic and social reformation of the Balkan sub-region, and gaining international support to contain Turkish challenges and provocations over Cyprus and the Aegean. Understandably, these proponents of the "realist" school tended to bypass, if not to altogether ignore the more abstract aspects of heritage and identity, such as the appropriation of the "Vergina sun" as a national symbol on FYROM's national flag and the monopolization of the Macedonian name. Nevertheless, even the "realists" would not venture to suggest the recognition of FYROM by its current denomination, "Republic of Macedonia".⁴⁴

By this time, the internal debate in Greece grew to the point that two trends had become visible, transcending party lines. The Greeks were rediscovering their popular pastime of assigning derogatory labels to opponents. On the one side stood the *maximalists*, or *ethnocentrists*, advocates of the pure patriotic line, refusing any concessions over the name and symbols. On the other side were the *endotikoi* ("yielders") and the *evroligourides* ("Euro-addicts" or "Euro-zealots") supporters of a compromise approach to the "Skopiano" issue and the reorientation of Greece's Balkan policy along the lines and priorities pursued by the EU partners and the United States.

By August 1995, when the international community had finally decided to intervene militarily in Bosnia, the voices of the maximalists in Greece had been substantially weakened by the active lobbying of advocates of compromise. Despite the fact that both the government of PASOK and the major opposition New Democracy party appeared to stand by their maximalist views, parliamentarians and rank and file were crossing party lines. It was at that moment that the maximalist Papandreou grasped the opportunity to extricate himself from the problem, giving his consent to the Interim Accord. By deferring the name issue at some future final accord, he tried to convince his audiences that he had honored his pledge not to recognize the neighbor state by the name Macedonia, whereas in essence he had joined the "yielders" in indirectly compromising even the use of the temporary name of FYROM. Once again, the "Papandreou magic" worked miracles, as the announcement of the Interim Accord was received in Greece with almost general relief and little criticism, as the normalization of relations with its Balkan neighbors opened up the prospect of a rewarding Greek economic "penetration" into the Balkan hinterland.

It was apparent that the "Euro-zealots" had gained the upper hand in Greek politics, particularly since January 1996 when Simitis succeeded the ailing Papandreou, who passed away a few months later. Conditions were ripe for the pendulum of Greek Macedonian policy to veer toward the other end. Supporters of the maximalist line came under sharp and unnecessarily harsh attacks as chauvinists or ultra-nationalists, even when they donned the more respectable gown of patriotism. They were summarily accused of being the culprits of Greece's recent Macedonian adventure and were publicly ostracized, sometimes from the very media that had offered them, for well four years, extensive print and electronic coverage.⁴⁵ The modernists of PASOK,

supported by followers of Synaspismos and New Democracy, set out to delineate and pursue Greece's new, "Balkan Spring" policy of open doors and no walls.

How real was this seemingly about-face in Greece's foreign policy which had dominated the country's foreign relations over a period of almost four years and had monopolized the public's attention? The withdrawal of Papandreu from the public scene, few months after the signing of the Interim Accord, coincided with a new crisis with Turkey over the Imia islets of the Aegean. It turned out to be of long duration. Accordingly, the Macedonian controversy was removed from the dailies' first pages, conveniently deferred to two lonely diplomats in far away New York, pursuing, as dictated, their quixotic chores for "gaining time".

Following the Dayton agreements and the Greek-FYROM Interim Accord, a period of calm appeared to return to the region. This was not the least due to Greece's modernist approach to the solution of disputes with its northern neighbors and the advancement of cooperation on bilateral as well as multilateral regional level. The Crete November 1997 summit meeting of Balkan leaders was a unique example in that direction.

In Macedonian affairs, however, appearances might be misleading. The core of the problem over national identities, historical and cultural perceptions and, indirectly, claims of "historical space", projected by Gligorov's insistence on the monopolization of the Macedonian name, have remained unresolved. In Athens, politicians and diplomats probably felt relieved of the pressing burden which for a long time had hindered their foreign policy initiatives. In Thessaloniki, however, the euphemistic "co-capital" of Greece, moods were mixed. On the one hand, there was considerable consensus over the Simitis-Pangalos practical approach to the development of relations with the northern neighbors. On the other hand, there was widespread and growing suspicion among [Greek] Macedonians toward the "Athenian state" for allegedly conniving to leave the dispute in limbo, thus undermining their cherished elements of their identity.

Once again, the Macedonian issue appeared to be dividing the Greeks, this time along a line of northerners, i.e. Macedonians, Epirotes, and Thracians, and Athenians. Not only the Foreign Ministry, but also Athenian-based major mass media, influential political analysts, and powerful economic and commercial interests were perceived to favor a long trench-war of inaction toward Skopje over the name issue, which would lead to a *fait accompli*. The resentment of the northerners, however, appeared to be shared by grass roots segments of the public throughout Greece, as well as by a highly sensitive diaspora, entrenched in maximalist positions.⁴⁶

On the other side of the frontier, despite the initial euphoria of the first year of the removal of frontier barriers and the commencement of business contacts, officials and public in FYROM came to realize that so long as no compromise over the name was visible, relations with Greece would remain strained.⁴⁷ Indeed, in recent years, despite the accommodation with Greece, there was widespread anxiety in the country. This could no more be attributed to differences with the Greeks. Since its emergence as an independent state, a series of disputes had emerged with the Albanians, the Bulgarians, and the Serbs, touching upon nationalist sensitivities. These sensitivities, directly addressed to the question of the existence of a separate "Macedonian" national identity. Within the framework of an independent Macedonian state, the new state elite encouraged nationalism as a defense against real or imagined adversaries of "Macedonian" nationhood. Despite official diplomatic disclaimers, the doctrine of a united greater Macedonian state was introduced into the school curriculum. It is a doctrine, which expands the history of the "Macedonian" nation not simply of 13 centuries—i.e. to the descend of the Slavic tribes to the Balkans—as was the national doctrine under the communist regime, but backtracks it to the Ancient Macedonians of Alexander the Great; a rather naive experiment, but still an additional irritant in the relations between neighboring peoples sensitive of their identities.⁴⁸

Irrespective of the diplomatic aspects of the completion of the 1995 Interim Accord with an agreement on the name dispute, it is safe to conclude that the independent Macedonian state,

still in its infancy, radiates in its vicinity a fan of irritants capable of sparking future crises. “Compromise” is still an ugly word in the Balkans, almost synonymous to treason. Modernist or “Euro-zealot” politicians in both countries face the challenge to educate their respective publics on the true meaning of compromise, i.e. toward “an adjustment for settlement by arbitration and mutual concessions usually involving a partial surrender of purposes or principles”.⁴⁹

ENDNOTES

* This is a revised version of an essay appearing in the newly-published book by Macmillan Press Ltd (UK, USA 1999), edited by James Pettifer.

1. Evangelos Kofos, “The Macedonian Question; the Politics of Mutation”, *Balkan Studies*, Vol 27, 1986, reprinted in Evangelos Kofos, *National and Communism in Macedonia; Civil Conflict, Politics of Mutation, National Identity*, New York, A. Caratzas Publisher, 1993. A year-and-a-half prior to FYROM’s declaration of independence, the then PASOK Minister for Macedonia-Thrace, Stelios Papatthemelis, in an article in *Kathimerini* (March 4, 1990) wrote that : For Greece, “there is no Macedonian question” in terms of a so-called “Macedonian” minority; there is, however, a “Macedonian Question” in so far as Skopje “appropriates our history and traditions and usurps the Greek name of Macedonia. The appropriation of the Macedonian name by a (Slavic) state entity implies territorial claims”, reprinted in St. Papatthemelis, *Politiki Epikairota kai Prooptikes* [Current politics and future prospects], Thessaloniki, Barbounakis, 1990.
2. On Bulgaria’s post-war position, see: Robert R. King, *Minorities under Communism*, Harvard University Press, 1993, pp.188–204. Also, Stephen Palmer Jr, and Robert King, *Yugoslav Communism and the Macedonian Question*, Archon Books, 1971, pp.184–198. Also, E. Kofos, “The Macedonian Question from the Second World War to the Present Day”, in *Modern and Contemporary Macedonia* (ed. Ioannis Koliopoulos and Ioannis Hasiotis), “Paratiritis”-“Papazisis”, [Thessaloniki-Athens, 1993], Vol. II, pp. 277–280 .
3. Dragan Tashkovski, , *The Macedonian Nation*, Skopje, “Nasha Kniga”, 1976, pp.69–79, *passim*. S. Palmer, *op. cit.*, p.199–203. Elizabeth Barker, *Macedonia; Its Place in Balkan Power Politics*, London, R.I.I.A. 1950, p.10. Duncan Perry , *The Politics of Terror; The Macedonian Liberation Movements, 1893–1903*, Durham, 1988, p. 19.
4. Most notable, the *Pontiki*, a well-informed political-satire weekly newspaper, with a left-centre orientation, influential among leftist political and intellectual circles as well as government cadres.
5. Most scholarly works were dealing either with the period of the “Macedonian Struggle” (1903–1908) or with Ancient Macedonia and current archaeological discoveries. It is interesting that the impressive collective volume, *Macedonia, 4000 Years of Greek History and Civilization* (ed. M. Sakellariou) Athens, Ekdotiki Athinon, 1981, 572pp., spared only seven pages for “The Macedonian Question in our time”. Some publications during this period, dealing with contemporary aspects of the problem, include, the monthly journal *Makedoniki Zoi*, edited by Nikos Mertzos, who is also the author of the book, *Emeis oi Makedones* [We the Macedonians]. Athens, Sideris, [1986], 459 pp. Also, Nikolaos Martis, *The Falsification of the History of Macedonia* , (Greek and English editions), Athens, 1983, 204 pp. Also, Stelios Papatthemelis, “*Estin oun Ellas kai I Makedonia*” [“So, Greece is also Macedonia”], (speeches by the Minister of Macedonia-Thrace), Thessaloniki, 1989. Basil Gounaris, “Reassessing Ninety Years of Greek Historiography on the Struggle of Macedonia, 1904–1988”, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 14/2 (1996), pp. 237–251.

6. Nikos Mouzelis, "Ethikismos", *To Vima*, March 16, 1993, reprinted in the author's book, *O Ethnikismos stin Ysteri Anaptyxi*, [Nationalism in Later Development], pp. 50, 69.
7. Personal interview with Dimitris Zannas, member of the Macedonian Committee of citizens of Thessaloniki, which organized the mass demonstration of February 14, 1992.
8. Numerous statements at the time by members of the Academy of Athens, university professors, intellectuals, journalists, and politicians.
9. N. Mouzelis, among others, criticized this attitude, assessing that the tactics of "misinformation" and "disorientation" of the citizens had "assumed Kafkaist proportions". *To Vima* April 10, 1994.
10. A leading Synaspismos party member, ventured in late 1992 to suggest as a suitable denomination the "Macedonian Republic of Vardar". He was harshly criticized by opposition leader A. Papandreou as well as by leading members of the New Democracy party. Leonidas Kyrkos, *To Adixodo Vima tou Ethnikismou. Skepseis gia to Makedoniko*. [The Dead-end step of Nationalism; some Thoughts about the Macedonian Issue], Athens, 1993, p.85.
11. Hugh Poulton, *Who are the Macedonians?* Indiana University Press, 1995, pp. 172–175. Xavier Raufer, and Francois Haut, , *Le chaos balkanique*, Paris 1992, p.73. Also, Eirini Lagani, "The Macedonian Question: Recent Developments", in *Modern and Contemporary Macedonia*, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 296–299.
12. For a critical view of Greece's appraisal of Serbia's and Bulgaria's role at the time, see Sotiris Walden, , *Makedoniko kai Valkania, 1991–1994. I Adixodi Poreia tis Ellinikis Politikis*[The Macedonian Question and the Balkans; the Dead-end course of Greek Policy]. Athens, 1994, pp. 29–30 and 73–78, quoting his own article in *Avgi* (22.9.1991). On Greek-Bulgarian rapprochement in 1990–1991, Christopher Cviic, , *Remaking the Balkans*, London, R.I.I.A., 1991, p. 102.
13. Following Zhivkov's fall, the Bulgarian delegation at the Copenhagen CSCE Conference on the Human Dimension referred to two million "Bulgarians" living in Yugoslav Macedonia. Subsequently, the Bulgarian leaders adopted the more nuanced term of "persons of Bulgarian origin". For Bulgaria's recognition: Lagani, op.cit., pp. 302–303.
14. Walden, *To Makedoniko*, op . cit., pp. 29–30. Stavros Lygeros, *Anemoi Polemou sta Valkania; Skopje* [Winds of War in the Balkans. Skopje], 3rd ed., Athens, 1992, pp. 69–73. Sherman, Arnold, *Perfidy in the Balkans; The rape of Yugoslavia*, Athens, 1993, p. 82
15. Texts of documents in Giannis Valinakis and Sotiris Dalis (editors), *To Zitima ton Skopion; Episima Keimena, 1990–1996* [The Skopje Question. Official Documents, 1990–1996] 2nd edition, Athens, ELIAMEP, 1996, pp. 51–52.
16. Ibid., pp. 87–90. Thanos Veremis, , *Greece's Balkan Entanglement*, Athens, ELIAMEP, 1995, p.95 ft.12. *Eleftherotypia*, July 5, 1993. The minutes of the Pineiro-Samaras talks (April 1, 1993) in Alexandros Tarkas, *Athina-Skopia: Piso apo tis Kleistes Portes*, [Athens-Skopje: Behind Closed Doors], Athens, 1995, pp.332–336.
17. Valinakis-Dalis, op.cit., p.94.
18. Ibid., pp. 100–102.
19. Ibid., pp. 97–99. Text initially published in *Epetirida 1993*, ELIAMEP, pp. 343–344.
20. Ibid., pp. 147–148.
21. Details of the New York negotiations in Michalis Papaconstantinou, *To Imerologio enos Politikou. I Emploki ton Skopion*, [The Diary of a Politician; The Skopje Entanglement], Athens, 1994, pp.243–412.

22. The Secretary General of the KKE Charilaos Florakis stated repeatedly during the 1970s and 1980s that for his Party there was neither a “Macedonian Question”, nor any “Macedonian” minority in Greece.
23. Author’s assessment.
24. Papaconstantinou, op.cit.; Tarkas, op.cit. (reflecting Samaras’ views and documentation). Thodoros Skylakakis, , *Sto Onoma tis Makedonias* [In the name of Macedonia], with a preface by C. Mitsotakis, Athens, Elliniki Evroekdotiki, 1995, pp. 332 (reflecting the Prime Minister’s views and documentation).
25. Author’s assessment
26. *Memorandum of Greece Concerning the application of FYROM for admission to the UN, New York 25.1.1993*, Athens, ELIAMEP 1993. 10pp.
27. Interview with Miltiadis Evert, president of the opposition New Democracy party.
28. Papaconstantinou, op. cit., pp. 405–406.
29. Letter of Foreign Minister Karolos Papoulias to the UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, November 5, 1993, in Valinakis-Dalis, op. cit., pp. 175–176.
30. Mouzelis, *O Ethnikismos*, op.cit., pp. 54–55.
31. Ibid., pp. 44, 46–47, 56.
32. The idea is attributed to the Macedonian MP from Thessaloniki, Evangelos Venizelos, then Minister of Press and Information. (Privileged information)
33. Veremis, *Balkan Entanglement*, op.cit., pp 90–92. Suzan Woodward, (*Balkan Tragedy*, Washington, D.C., The Brookings Institution, 1995, p. 387), was probably right when she observed that the embargo have made the victims more stubborn, and has “interrupted negotiations and quiet moves toward concessions on the part of Macedonia”. Two years later, FYROM’s Foreign Minister Hatzinski in a press briefing to Skopje’s weekly *Forum* stated that during the first two or three years over the recognition crisis, the government of FYROM examined the possibility of a compound name, but this idea has been abandoned. Reported in *Eleftherotypia*, January 19, 1998.
34. For a strong criticism of the government’s tactics, see a series of articles by Professor Nikos Mouzelis in the influential Sunday newspaper *To Vima*, (February 20, March 6, April 3 and 10 1994), reprinted in *O Ethnikismos*, op.cit., pp.53–70. Mouzelis shared the view that the denomination “Republic of Macedonia” was unacceptable as it fomented irredentism. Contrary to the government and the maximalist position he opted for the denomination “Republic of Vardar Macedonia”, p. 70. Similarly, critical of the “Skopianization” of Greece’s foreign policy during 1991–1994 was Professor Thodoros Kouloumbis in: D. Konstas, and P. Tsakonas, (editors), *Elliniki Exoteriki Politiki, Esoterikes kai Diethneis Parametroi* [Greek Foreign Policy. Internal and International Dimensions], Athens, Institute of International Relations, 1994, pp.92, 93. On the contrary, Papatthemelis—by then Minister of Public Order—was declaring that the Macedonian name, “either alone or as a compound name”, would remain a vehicle of irredentism, *ibid.*, p. 100. Also, Thanos Veremis, and Theodore Kouloumbis, *Elliniki Exoteriki Politiki. Prooptikes kai Proulimatismoi* [Greek Foreign Policy. Prospects and Concerns], Athens, ELIAMEP, 1994, pp. 35–36.
35. Among others: *Modern and Contemporary Macedonia*, op.cit., Vol II, pp. 104–137, 246–295. Also, Ioannis Koliopoulos, *Leilasia Fronimaton, To Makedoniko Zitima stin Katehomeni Dytiki Makedonia 1941–1944*, Vol I [Plundering Loyalties. The Macedonian Question in Occupied Western Macedonia, 1941–1944], Thessaloniki, 1994, 284pp. and *To Makedoniko Zitima stin Periodo tou Emfyliou Polemou (1945–1949) sti Dytiki Makedonia* Vol. II [The Macedonian Question during the Civil War in Western Macedonia], 1995, 351pp. Also, B. Gounaris, I. Michailidis, G. Angelopoulos (editors), *Taftotites sti Makedonia* [Identities in Macedonia], Athens, Papazisis, 1997,

- 262pp. Marilena Koppa, *Mia Eftthrafsti Dimokratia. I PGDM Anamesa sto Parelthon kai to Mellon* [A Fragile Republic; FYROM amidst Past and Future], Athens 1994.
36. Documents on the case “Commission vs Greece, Case C-120/94” before the Court of Justice of the European Communities, including the final “Opinion of Advocate General Jacobs delivered on April 6, 1995, in Valinakis-Dalis, op.cit., pp. 239–360.
 37. Privileged information.
 38. An analysis supporting the New York agreement, in: Christos Rozakis, , *Politikes kai Nomikes Diastaseis tis Metavatikis Symfonias tis Neas Yorkis metaxy Elladas kai PGDM* [Political and Legal Dimensions of the Interim Agreement between Greece and FYROM], Athens, Sideris, 1996, 77pp.(text of agreement annexed).
 39. Speaking in Parliament (February 2,1997), Foreign Minister Thodoros Pangalos termed the Interim Accord “one sided” and revealed that the Simitis Government was working toward a compromise. This statement caused havoc among PASOK deputies and offered opposition deputies a unique opportunity to attack the government’s “yielding” attitude. *Greek Press reports*, February 3, 1997.
 40. In a long interview to Skopje State TV, Channel One(July 22, 1997), President Gligorov revealed that FYROM had proposed to the UN mediator that in their bilateral relations his country should be recognized by its constitutional name, “Republic of Macedonia”, by all except for Greece. Late in December 1997 ,Foreign Minister Hatzinski announced that his government intended to ask the UN Security Council to admit his country with its constitutional name. *Eleftherotypia*, December 31, 1977.
 41. Stylianos Papatthemelis, by now just a PASOK MP, better informed on Macedonian affairs than most of his colleagues, appeared to assume the leadership of a group within his own party strongly criticizing any attempts toward an agreed solution which would retain, in one way or another, the Macedonian name. Numerous press articles and interviews in 1996–1997.
 42. For an assessment of the issues of “security” and “identity” in Greek policy conduct and behavior, see S. J. Raphaelides, “Sacred Symbol, Sacred Space: The New Macedonian Issue”, and Peter Bratsis, “The Macedonian Question and the Politics of Identity: Resonance, Reproduction, Real Politik” in *Journal of Modern Hellenism*, No.11, Hellenic College Press, Winter 1994, pp. 89–108 and 108–122, respectively.
 43. Criticism of the Greek government’s policies over the recognition of FYROM and its name, sparked certain human rights groups to focus their polemics on the issue of an alleged national “Macedonian” minority in Greece. (Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *Denying Ethnic Identity: The Macedonians of Greece*, New York, April 1994, 85pp.) Their one-sided and frequently exaggerated reports indicate that the minority issue had been concocted to put additional pressure on the Athens government in order to abandon its maximalist position vis-à-vis FYROM. For a critical analysis: Vlassis Vlassidis and Veniamin Karakostanoglou, “Recycling Propaganda: Remarks on Recent Reports on Greece’s ‘Slav-Macedonian’ Minority”, *Balkan Studies*, Vol. 36/1, Thessaloniki 1995, pp. 151–170. Similar was the case of certain American anthropologists, neophytes in the Macedonian issue, who tried to assume the *ex cathedra* role of supreme arbiters for social, political and historical cleavages in the volatile Macedonian terrain. On the rather light side, it suffices to observe that one of them, apparently lacking the historical background to comprehend the issues at hand, sought to construct his “own” revisionist history of Macedonia, by conveniently ignoring, misquoting or even degrading specialist historians of long standing. (Loring Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict. Ethnic Nationalism in a Transnational World*, Princeton University Press, 1995). For an overall assessment of this phenomenon, see Professor Ioannis Koliopoulos’ “Introduction”, in the Greek translation (Thessaloniki, “Paratiritis” 1996, pp. 7–17) of Elizabeth Barker’s *Macedonia; Its Place in Balkan Power Politics*, London, R.I.I.A., 1950. Vasilis

- Gounaris *et al*, (edit), *Taftotites sti Makedonia* [Identities in Mascedonia], Athens, "Papazisis" 1997, pp. 27–61.
44. Theodore Kouloumbis. and Sotiris Dalis., (Introduction and prefaces by M. Papaconstantinou, N. Mouzelis, M. Papagiannakis), *I Elliniki Exoteriki Politiki sto Katofli tou 21ou Aiona: Ethnokentrismos I Evrocentrismos* [Greek Foreign Policy at the Doorstep of the 21st Century: National or Eurocentrism] Athens, "Papazisis", 1997, 212pp.
 45. G. Kontogiannis reporting in *Ependytis*, December 13, 1997, that both in the government party and the opposition parties a new dichotomy is emerging on the national issues between "endotikoi" or "synetoi" ("yielders" or "prudents") and "patridokapiloi" ("patriotic zealots"). On this debate, a strong attack against "nationalists" by Richardos Someritis in *To Vima*, December 28, 1997.
 46. Statements and press conferences by representatives of the World Congress of Pan-Macedonian Associations, presenting their maximalist views on the name issue, *Press reports*, Thessaloniki, July 22–26, 1997.
 47. According to press reports, Greece's insistence in international fora to the use of the name "FYROM" is an element of frequent frictions between the two sides which, at times, result in unpleasant public demonstrations at sports events. *To Vima*, December 21, 1997 and *Ellinikos Vorras*, December 14, 1997.
 48. Evangelos Kofos, *The Vision of "Greater Macedonia"; Remarks on FYROM's New School Textbooks*, Thessaloniki, Museum of the Macedonian Struggle, 1994, 34pp.
 49. *Webster's Dictionary*, 1992 Edition, Chicago 1992, p.207.

A note on the contributor. See: James Pettifer (editor), *The New Macedonian Question*, Macmillan Press Ltd., London/New York, 1999, p. Xxvii

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