

Euro-Atlantic Integration of Macedonia and the Name Issue: Viewed from the Prism of Albanians

Ass. Prof. Abdula Azizi

SEE University – Tetovo, Ilindenska bb, 1200
a.azizi@seeu.edu.mk

Abstract: Relying on the fact that Macedonia since its independence has been faced with various challenges in the path of Euro-Atlantic integration of the country, and as one of the main challenges still remains the name dispute resolution with Greece. In this regard, we notice that the political parties but especially the citizens do not have a common standpoint on this issue. In fact, the opposite extreme positions that have built communities on how to resolve the aforementioned dispute increase the gap between them. Precisely, in this paper dilemmas will be shown about the Euro-Atlantic future of Macedonia concerning the resolution of the dispute with the state name, seen from the standpoint of citizens. In particular, it will analyze the empirical data arising from the survey conducted with the citizens of the Albanian community in Macedonia, about their beliefs on the state name dispute resolution - as an obstacle to Euro-Atlantic integration of the country. I believe that the results of this paper will give to the political subjects a clearer picture on the attitudes of citizens on this issue, especially those representing the Albanian community in the Macedonian government.

Key words: Euro-Atlantic integration; the name dispute resolution; inter-ethnic relations; public opinion.

1. Introduction

The paper addresses the lack of an internal cohesion of ethnic communities regarding the future of Macedonia, with special emphasis on the way of solving the problem with the name of the state that existed for almost two decades.

As the immediate needs of current regional and international processes, it needs to address these problems seriously. Beside the attitude of political parties in Macedonia, the opinion of Albanian citizens about several issues that are crucial to the future of the Macedonian state is also expected to be important, because the attitude of Albanian citizens has been overlooked in shaping the official state policy on resolving the dispute with the country's name.

This paper targets several objectives that are closely related to one another, and it also suggest that the Albanian political factor to have a more serious commitment to the current political processes related to handling international problems of the country; to enforce the opinion of Albanian citizens to the real problems and representing the interests of Albanian citizens in the euro-integration policies of the country, and warns the possible consequences in case of non-realization at the time of the country's strategic interests respecting the opinion of citizens.

2. Name of the State as a Problem for the Country's Membership in NATO and the European Union

Seen from the historical aspect, Greece had no objection to the name of its northern neighbor in the former Yugoslavia. From 1944 until 1991, "Socialist Republic of Macedonia" was one of six constituent republics of the former federation, and after its breakup, Greece blocked the country's international recognition when the state had to join the United Nations Organization. The UN Security Council in this regard, in 1993, it had adopted resolutions 817 and 845, which is suggested by the General Assembly to accept Macedonia for membership of the UN with interim reference "FYROM" while to find solutions acceptable to Greece on the name of this state.

The above mentioned Resolutions¹ of the UN Security Council's present a general framework, without going into details about what solution should be found.

¹ According to Resolution 817, respectively 845, Macedonia and Greece are obliged to solve the name dispute under the umbrella of the UN Secretary General. According to Resolution 817 (7 April 1993) the dispute resolution of had to be carried out under the Committee of International Conference on Former Yugoslavia, and with Resolution 845 (18 June 1993) resolution of the dispute shall be subject to the supervision of the Secretary General of UN, initially Cyrus Vance and later Matthew Nimitz as the Special Representative of the UN Secretary general. The Resolution 817 envisaged that with the recommendation of Security Council, Macedonia can join the UN using the reference "FYROM" to all circumstances. The General Assembly admitted the recommendation of the Security Council and with

At that time, Macedonia's government was strongly opposed using FYROM, saying that "under no condition" is not ready to accept the provisional name for the state, but the text of the resolution remained unchanged. In February 1994 the Greek government put trade embargo on Macedonia, while two months later, the European Court of Justice urged the EU to endorse the Greek embargo as a serious breach of EU law. Greece and Macedonia have normalized bilateral relations by signing the Interim Agreement in New York, to which Athens agreed to terminate unilaterally ban against its northern neighbor and Macedonia made some concessions for the good will, thus forsworn the sun with 16 arm, the symbol of the first flag of independent Macedonia which Greece claims to have historic rights, and amended Article 3 of the Constitution which states that "no territorial tendencies toward neighboring states." Both countries agreed to continue negotiations with the mediation of representatives appointed by the Secretary General of the UN.

Until now, the Macedonian-Greek talks on name issue are formally developed without good will of the parties to resolve the dispute, while the issue is often exploited by political parties in both countries to gain political points from their electorate.

The harsh rhetoric, the numerous provocations and promotion the nationalism makes the Macedonia a fragile and unreliable partner for whatever diplomatic agreement. By such actions can assess that the Macedonian government is not as important to NATO membership and to obtain a date for negotiation with the EU rather than preservation of the name.

The attitudes of the official Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece declared in public that "FYROM will not be permitted in the EU and NATO membership under the name Republic of Macedonia" and, that "the FYROM Slavic still insists their persistent negative attitude towards resolving the name issue. Athens insists that Skopje to use the composite name as "Upper" or "New" or "North" Macedonia. While the Macedonian official policy remains that: "The foreign policy of Greece towards Macedonia is the result of the ideology of ethnic nationalism that dominated into Greek society since its foundation. Greece opposes the existence of Macedonian nation and the Macedonian minority in the Greek territories for reasons that such accession would have been contrary to the tales of ethnic purity which define the Greek ethnic nationalism".²

This attitude of the Macedonian side among the others was a result of that which current government in the last two years decided through the populist campaign to use this issue for the daily purpose and politics in the short term raising owns popularity, but with the serious consequences for long term future of the state.

After the failure of Macedonia at the Bucharest summit, the name issue becomes subject of the political and the diplomatic polemics over accession and blocking of Macedonia in integration process, where a decision on accession of the new state is taken by consensus. Following the NATO summit in Bucharest, it became clearer to the political reality for Macedonia, which received lesson that has to definitely solve the name dispute with Greece, which will be used as a mechanism that will block membership in Euro-Atlantic structures.

Macedonia understood that it is not in a position to impose its will in solving the name dispute with Greece, but it has to cooperate constructively to overcome the unenviable position - blocked for membership in NATO and the EU.

3. The Influence of the Name Issue on the Interethnic Macedonian Albanian Relations

The politicians of the largest community recognize the name issue as a problem that involves only the Macedonians, by depriving the ethnic Albanians from the right to contribute in resolution of the dispute. On one hand, in this manner they are absolved from the responsibility for whatever probable solution, but on the other hand they jeopardize their Euro-Atlantic future. As a consequence, a gap among these two largest communities could be widened in the future.

As ever so far, without of such a need, the Macedonian national identity in recent years represents a theme of daily political life, but which encourages more ambiguities within Macedonian community themselves.

The imposition of the ancient Macedonian ideology was the cause of numerous inter-ethnic incidents, as the case of the Castle of Skopje, MANU encyclopedia, then the incidents among pupils of different ethnicities in Struga and in Skopje, incidents among fans of football in Tetovo and Skopje during sports activities.

These occurrences among others are a result of the obedience that has created the Macedonian community, who regard themselves as a nation with priority in the country, based on the Constitution of 1991 which clearly stated that

Resolution 47/225 at its forty eighth sessions (8 April 1993) the Macedonian state admitted to the UN, which emphasized that "the state could to communicate within the UN with reference FYROM, until the settlement of the issue with the name of the state."

² Center for Research and Policy Making, "Veto to Macedonia, the victory of Greek nationalism: as on," Brief Analysis No. 17, April 2008.

Macedonia is of Macedonian state firstly and afterwards others, by ranking others as the second-class citizens. As a consequence of that conviction an inter-ethnic conflict in 2001 occurred, and for its end the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) was reached, which placed all the communities in the equal constitutional position. However the Macedonian politicians are still operating according to the old rhetoric and continue to deal with the name issue as a problem that affects just those but not to others.

In the spirit the OFA a common Macedonia without ethnic barriers is to build, where the multi-ethnicity is understood as the value of a democratic society. However instead, each ethnic group is interested in the development of own culture and interest, bypassing the others. The citizens continue to be divided on ethnic basis to the basic concepts of living together and the future of the country, the Macedonians perceive rising of the national identity as the fundamental interests, while the Albanians are oriented towards the Euro-Atlantic processes.

It is estimated that such actions would trigger the internal repercussions to Macedonia at more areas, such as:

- Politics and security: Macedonia due to the multiethnic composition has a sensitive political environment and the fragile interethnic relations, treatment of which requires special care. Maintaining of the status quo situation in the long term plan might affect the dissolution of interethnic relations in the country;
- Stability: remaining outside NATO membership could encourage political appetites of the Albanians against the unity of the state (e.g., will increase demand for federative state organization) or for split the parts of the territory of the state;
- Economic: in circumstances where for each year noted gradual increase of the unemployment rate, there is no sustainable economic development and foreign direct investment, in accord, social unrest could occur.

4. The Position of the Albanian Political Parties in Macedonia for the Country's Name Issue

It is also evident the lack of interest among Albanian political entities in Macedonia on the name issue, as they have never been included in the negotiation process for the matter of the name of state. Therefore, the Albanian citizens are left in an uncomfortable position as a victim of Macedonian politics, due to inferiority of the Albanian political parties.

The Albanian political parties (no exceptions position-opposition) had not any concrete stand on name issue, by leaving an impression that the issue should be solved by the Macedonians. They had never expressed the views of the Albanian citizens on the name dispute, whether they are part of the government or not, or on the narrow interests of the group within the party. Sometimes, the party leaders articulated the need to resolve the name issue but without any role neither Albanians in the Macedonian negotiating team nor the Minister on Foreign Affairs), so that Albanians remain without positions to influence the dispute resolution name.

As the factors which blur the political decision making of the Albanians, will be stressed the following:

- Lack of the unity of Albanian political entities on interests of the Albanian community in Macedonia;
- The political agreement of the coalition partners within government imposed above the national the interests;
- Avoidance of the Albanian political subject within government for shaping the country's foreign policy.

The deficiencies of the Albanian political parties in order to resolve the actual problems and those inherited at an earlier age, it is to make clear that it is necessary to take concrete steps to address them, especially being engaged in decision making processes at all levels and in all areas as the Albanian political factors.

4.1 *The Results from the Survey Realized: The Public Opinion of Albanian Community in Macedonia for the Name Issue of the Country*

A survey, a standardized questionnaire was carried out in order to receive the opinion of the Albanian community in Macedonia for the country's name issue. The survey respected the demographic specifications on population (gender structure, age group, education level, employment status)³, residence (urban or rural environment), and regions in which the ethnic Albanians are living in Macedonia.

³ The demographic features of the survey realized in July 2010: In the survey are included 511 respondents, from which 311 male while 200 female, respectively 61% men and 39% women. Regarding the age group of the respondents was included: 281 (55%) young until age 29 years old, 64 (14%) in age between 30-39 years old, 74 (13%) in age among the 40-49 years old, 58 (11%) in age 50-59 years old, whereas 34 (7%) in age above 60 years old. By the level of education 60 (12%) of surveyed had completed elementary education, 125 (24%) have completed secondary school, whereas 326 (64%) have completed a minimum faculty. Regarding employment status, 299 (59%) of respondents are jobless, 184 (36%) employees, while the 28 (5%) retired. By place of living, 260 (51%) of surveyed live in the village while the 251 (49%) live in the city.

Table 1. Results of the survey carried out by the Albanian citizens for the country's name dispute

Questions	Answers		
	Yes	No	No Answer
Are you willing to change the temporary name of the state (FYROM) in negotiations with Greece?	83%	8%	9%
Are the Albanian political parties participating in negotiations with Greece on the name of the state?	0%	93%	7%
Does the name issue affect the interests of Albanian citizens in Macedonia, and do you think that in shaping the official policy of the state should be taken into account Albanian citizens' opinions?	84%	8%	8%
Do you think that keeping the status quo of the issue with the state name is obstacle to Euro-Atlantic Future of the country?	94%	0%	6%
Do you think that in future the country will have repercussions on the internal security if the government holds the current position for not changing the name?	87%	5%	8%

In some of the questions listed above also citizens have given their comments, especially the majority of them were curious to comment before the election statements of Prime Minister about the possibility of expression of citizens through referendum. This option for resolving that name dispute is understood as the escape from political responsibility, in circumstances where the government has a mandate from the citizens to decide on the institutional way. Another danger of the referendum that could happen is the mutual blaming of the communities on the possible outcome of the referendum, given that the Albanians and the Macedonians had opposing views on this issue. One such issue with its potential risks can be submitted in referendum if there is a compromise with Greece concerning the name.

The citizens think that the Albanian political parties do not show interest to be engaged in talks over the name of the country and it makes them withdraw from the process.⁴ From the obtained results we can conclude that:

- There are major differences in opinions of the Albanian community (accepts the change of name of the state in favor to Euro-integration processes) and the Macedonian community (does not accept changing the name of the state) for the resolution of name dispute, and;
- The Albanian political parties are inferior to the name dispute.

5. Concluding remarks

Macedonia as a small country with undeveloped economy, with the unresolved 20-year contest on the country's name to Greece and problems relating to the national identity with Bulgaria, as well as with interethnic relations strained, it needs first of all to solve the current problems without losing time and to devote to the country's EU integration processes. In terms of the name dispute, Greece has the advantage because of its membership of Euro-Atlantic structures and it uses its influences from this position to other partners to prevent the accession of Macedonia to NATO and EU, and as a consequence the chances of achieving a more favorable outcome of the negotiation are in favor of Greece.

It is evident the negative impact of the Greek diplomatic action in the Euro-Atlantic structures integration of Macedonia, as a result of this from 2008 and onwards in the EU institutions and EU publications office, the term "Macedonian" and the code "MK" are replaced by "shall be defined."

⁴ Unlike the results of this survey, another one survey carried out by the Macedonian citizens has marked other results, the majority (60%) did not accept the changing the constitutional name for Euro-integration processes of the country, whereas only 36% of the citizens would had accepted the name changing on behalf of membership, and the 4% of them have not response. Furthermore see: *Center for Research and Policy Making, Промена на името за влез во НАТО-дел 2, Соопштение за јавност 15.04.2008.*

Macedonian officials in the future must distance themselves from all actions which damage the country's international image and which slow down the path towards EU membership. It can be mentioned in particular, actions related to the expression of nationalist feelings, sharing in patriots and traitors, glorification of ancient history, renaming airports and municipalities, construction of busts, placing the monuments and all other action which provoked the Greek, and other actions that lose trust between communities in the country.

Such immature political actions have negative impact on the internal prosperity of the country, prevent the realization of Euro-Atlantic aspirations of the country and give the signal to a lack of willingness for solving problems. Furthermore, such actions have been criticized by the international representatives as a counterproductive in resolving the name dispute, and have been suggesting the solutions to dispute as quickly, in order to pave the way for a secure and better future for citizens of the country. The same conviction about the aforementioned actions has been also the Albanian politicians, even though they have been unable to affect prevention of such actions.

Perhaps in a near future, on important issues related with the future of the country any institutional mechanism should be incorporated by which the Albanian political parties would have its role in the decision making process, or even to prevent acts that can damage the general interests of the country and its own international reputation.

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