

PROBLEMS OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION IN REGION: THE CASE OF MACEDONIA

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Abstract

Western Balkan states are defined for a common future, which relates to their integration into the European Union (EU). In this paper, I will analyze the path of Macedonia to the EU, the problems and challenges faced in this regard. It will be raised dilemmas about the European future of Macedonia, which are closely related to the resolution of internal affairs (political and ethnic problems) as well as those inter-neighborhood (the problem with the name of the country and national identity). In particular, is realized an empirical analysis of the results arising from the survey conducted by the citizens in Macedonia, about their beliefs to resolve open issues and problems in the country's European integration path. Results from the survey suggest us for finding a broad consensus among domestic political actors (those in power and those in opposition), on contentious issues with neighboring countries, in order to avoid the additional obstacles in the country's Euro-integration. I believe this paper will encourage somewhat political interest, particularly those representing the Albanian community in the Macedonian government, to take into account the results of research in further actions related to the resolution of the problems in question. At the end, conclusions and recommendations are issued in order to facilitate the path of Macedonia towards the EU.

Keywords: Republic of Macedonia, Euro-integration, Name Issue

1. Introduction

Republic of Macedonia since 2005 is a candidate country for membership in the European Union (EU) in the group with Croatia, Turkey, Iceland, Montenegro and Serbia. In annual reports on the progress of the country, the European Commission makes assessments about the fulfillment of the criteria for EU membership, by specifying that some issues still remain a problem for the state and constantly repeated years later. It comes to some areas where there are delays and lack of political will to address them, such as the influence of local public administration and the judiciary; selective application of the law, internal political instability and fragile inter-ethnic relations, etc. In this regard, EU officials have criticized the leadership of the country under the leadership of the current prime minister, for his policies against the Albanian community and the politicization of many state institutions, describing these problems can be an obstacle for the official opening of accession negotiations.

Besides internal challenges for EU membership, the country is faced with disputes and problems with its neighbors, as is the issue of the name of the State (with Greece), then the

identity of the nation (with Bulgaria), and the independence of the autocephalous church (with Serbia).

2. The history of relations Macedonia - European Union

After the breakup of Yugoslavia, Macedonia was supposed to require a democratic way, through which will guarantee security, stability and prosperity in the country. Since the EU is based on freedom, democracy, respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights, the rule of law; Macedonia was determined to join these European values. Thus, in 2001 signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU. State during these 11 years was on track to achieve all obligations pursuant to the SAA, particularly those intended for implementation in the first phase under Chapter V (movement of workers, goods, services and capital).

European Council in December 2005 has given to Macedonia the status of candidate country, while in November 2009, the Commission recommended to the Council to start negotiations with Macedonia. This recommendation was repeated in the 2010 report, and the Council has not yet taken a positive attitude to the Commission proposals (Progress Report, 2011: 4).

Macedonia is awaiting a date for the start of negotiations with the EU, as it is closely related to the resolution of the name dispute over the state name with Greece.

In relations with the EU, Macedonia scored some important dates:

- In 1995 established diplomatic relations with the EU;
- In 1996 signed the first bilateral Agreement for use of the PHARE programme;
- In 1997 signed a cooperation agreement, which entered into force in 2004, as well as for textile agreement that is in force since 1998;
- - In April 2001 signed the SAA, and the same came into force in April 2004;
- On March 22, 2004 submitted application for EU membership;
- In 2004 brought the National Strategy for EU Integration;
- On December 16, 2005 received a candidate status;
- In 2007 adopted the National Strategy for the adoption of EU law, brought national development plan for 2007-2009 and Pre-Accession Economic Programme;
- In January 2008 came into force readmission agreement with EU;

- On December 19, 2009 came into force visa liberalization for citizens traveling to the Schengen area.¹

3. Macedonia's problems with neighboring countries

3.1 Relations with Greece

Compared with other neighboring countries, Greece carries a more severe impact on Macedonia. Since the Greek civil war, the official policy of the Greek state has denied the existence of the Macedonian nation, however, differ from the Bulgarian positions as they do not deny the existence of Slavic people in the Republic of Macedonia, but only the name 'Macedonia' of this nation. Greece had challenged the constitutional name of Macedonia, citing two reasons:

- First, historical: the exclusive right of the Greek state, to use the name "Macedonia" and
- The Second; possible territorial claims of Macedonia toward Greece. (Hans - Lothar, 2004: 5-15)

From the Greek perspective, the name Macedonia has always been and will remain a constituent element of Greek heritage (Kofos, 2001: 232), while the existence of Macedonia as part of Greece holds an important place in Greek political psychology (Pettifer, 2001: 18)

Security Council of the UN in 1993 had adopted resolutions no. 817 and no. 845, with which the General Assembly had suggested, Macedonia's admission as a member of the UN, with the provisional reference "FYROM" unless a solution is found for the name differences with Greece. Then, the Macedonian government had strongly opposed the use of FYROM, saying that "under no condition" is not ready to accept the provisional name for the state. As a result of this, Greece made diplomatic pressure, political and economic embargo (in February 1994) which led heavily to economic situation in Macedonia.

To overcome this situation, were engaged to mediate U.S. diplomat Richard Holbrooke and UN Special Envoy Sairus WENS who obey the disputants to sign the Interim Agreement (13 September 1995), by which the disputed issues were temporarily closed, and the name dispute was set to be negotiated under the supervision of a representative of the UN Secretary General, the mediator Matthew Nimitz. Accordingly, Greece agreed to terminate the economic embargo, while Macedonia dropped 16 side sun (symbol of the first flag of independent Macedonia, which Greece considers that it has historic rights), as amended and Section 3 of the Constitution which added that "Macedonia has no territorial tendencies towards the neighboring states."

According to Article 11 of the Interim Agreement ..."Greece had agreed not to obstruct Macedonia's membership in international organizations, where Greece is a member." This involves an obligation to Greece, not to hinder Macedonia accession to the EU and NATO. However, Greece did otherwise in the NATO Summit in Bucharest (2008), where had to be

¹ Secretariat for European Affairs; Negotiations for EU membership, Skopje, 2008, p. 7

accepted Macedonia. After that, it became clear that Greece will always hinder Macedonia's integration path into Euro-Atlantic structures, until it changes the name of the country.

Today, beyond the political dispute over the name of the state, Greece continues to have an indirect impact on the economy of Macedonia. After the signing of the Interim Agreement, Greek companies are at the top of the list of foreign investors in Macedonia, and Greece presents important trade partner for Macedonia immediately after Germany (Veremis, 1998: 18).

3.2 Relations with Bulgaria

Since the independence of Macedonia, Bulgaria was among the first countries that established diplomatic relations with Macedonia, but did not accept Macedonians as a separate nation from the Bulgarian nation. Although the identity issue was not mentioned in the statement of Bulgaria for the recognition of the Macedonian state, however with the Bulgarian authorities had concluded that 'Macedonian language shares many common features with the Bulgarian language, with which distinguishes it from other Slavic languages' which simultaneously means that Macedonian language is a dialect of with the Bulgarian (Poulton, 2000: 116). As a result of this belief, in 1992 Bulgarian President Zheluy Zhelev said that "Bulgaria recognizes the Macedonian state but not the nation."² This Zhelev's position was as a result of the harsh reaction that made Greek Prime Minister Constantine Mitsotakis, against the declaration of recognition of the Macedonian state. To appease the Greeks, claimed Zhelev ... "from the viewpoint Bulgarian 'Macedonia' is only a geographical concept, and not a nation." These positions had peeved the relations between Macedonia and Bulgaria.

In February 1999, the political leaders of the two countries signed a declaration to resolve the dispute in question, where the parties agreed to resolve the problem of language, according to the formula 'Bulgarian language, according to the Constitution of Bulgaria, and the Macedonian language, according to the Macedonian Constitution' (Williams, 2000: 29). In this way, any official document between the two countries should be written in both languages, without obligation for Bulgaria to recognize the Macedonian language separately, namely the nation. So, the language issue was addressed in a legal sense rather than ethno-national categories. Bulgarians deny the reality of the contemporary Macedonian nation and language (Drezov, 2001: 51).

This impression of Bulgaria to the land and the Macedonian people is illustrated by the fact that Bulgaria still celebrated as a national day March 3, 1878 when it was signed the Treaty of San Stefano, after the Russian liberation of the Bulgarian nation by the Ottoman Empire. Under this Treaty geographical Macedonia was incorporated into the new Bulgarian state. However, only a few months later the treaty was annulled by the great powers at the Congress of Berlin and was replaced by another treaty which had partially turned Macedonian territory in the previous frame. This revision was as a result of the fear of Austro-Hungarian and British, that the expanded Bulgarian state will increase Russian influence in the Balkans. From the Bulgarian perspective, it has violated the rights of the Bulgarian nation and the Macedonian Bulgarians were unfairly left abroad Bulgarian state. As Roudometof

² The Independent, 'Greeks Fear Bulgaria's Backing for Macedonia', 17 January 1992, p. 11.

states ...Bulgarian state and its intelligence constantly repeat their attitudes towards Macedonian territory, as part of the process of unification of the Bulgarian nation (Roudometof, 2000: 6).

Looking at the history of Bulgaria and Macedonia 'Macedonian historical figures calculated by the Bulgarians, as Bulgarian hero' (Poulton, 2000: 117), which suggests that Macedonia and Bulgaria have common history.

As history has an important role in shaping the nation, one of the nation's features is that it has its own unique history, separated from other nations. Thus by, Macedonian view, should build separate Macedonian identity, creating history and language which will not be identified those of Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia.

Territories and historical figures also play a role in this problem. Thus, the city of Ohrid, is considered the cradle of culture (as the capital of Tsar Samoil), by Macedonians and Bulgarians also. Even when as a result of inter-ethnic conflict Macedonian-Albanian (2001), was damaged church in the village Leshok, Bulgarian media reported that it was the destruction of the 'Bulgarian' church. Even though Bulgaria has no territorial claims towards Macedonia, it continues to exercise pressure against Macedonian culture. Bulgarian claims are damaging the integrity of the territory and the Macedonian nation, such as the non-recognition of the existence of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria.

Representatives of the Bulgarian state in July 2006 (the President G.Parvanov and the Foreign Minister I.Kalfin), had expressed the view that to be support Macedonia's EU membership wouldn't be unconditional, expressing their concern about the negative approach and aggressive behavior against Bulgaria and Bulgarian history driven by Macedonian authorities. This position was confirmed at the end of 2012, when Bulgaria used its veto on the opening of negotiations between Macedonia and EU coupled with the recommendation (October 2012) the European Commission on the opening of negotiations.³

3.3 Relations with Serbia

Macedonia was not recognized by Serbia until 1996, as a result of the Greek influence (Engström, 2002: 3-17). In early 2001, it was resolved the demarcation of the border with Serbia, since the country became independent by former Yugoslav federation. Since the demarcation agreement was signed by Belgrade and Skopje, the same was contested by Kosovo on the border line with Kosovo.

A part of the Serbian Radicals opposed the recognition of Macedonia, saying that there is no Macedonian nation and Vardar Macedonia is not anything else but 'South Serbia' (Williams, 2000: 27). Today, Serbia recognizes the Macedonian nation and state, and still remains unresolved the question of the recognition of the Macedonian Orthodox Church.

3.4 Survey

³ Source: <http://www.euractiv.com/enlargement/bulgaria-vetoes-macedonia-eu-acc-news-515809>. 11.02.2012

Within, activities related to the perception of citizens on political topics, in the period of April-May 2013 a survey was conducted on the reports of the Republic of Macedonia with the EU.

Survey was conducted in 1115 citizens aged over 18 years, while respecting the criteria of representation (gender, ethnicity, age, residence).

Table-1 Survey results

Question	Answer in %		
	Yes	No	No Answer
1. Do you think that Macedonia has a genuine foreign policy related to Euro-integration processes?	33	35	32
2. Do you think that Macedonia is working with dedication in its path to the EU?	37	45	18
3. Do you think that the EU helps enough Macedonia to become member of the EU?	38	45	17
4. Do you think that Macedonia will join the EU in the next decade?	42	25	23
5. Do you think that Greece and Bulgaria as EU member states hinder Macedonia's path to the EU?	73	5	12

The results of the survey can conclude that Macedonian citizens:

- have separate attitudes on the government action on foreign policy. Only one third of citizens believe that Macedonia maintains a right of foreign policy, while other citizens have no attitude, or think that the state has not yet matured its foreign policy;
- have different perceptions, commitment to EU membership. According to Macedonian respondents the EU is not focused on Macedonia's accession, while the Albanian respondents express confidence that the Macedonian government devotes little attention to the country's EU membership. Thus, the Macedonian majority believe that government does what it takes to integrate the country into the EU, while the EU wouldn't for Macedonia to become a member. On the other hand, a citizen of Albanian community believes that the Government did not make what it should for the country's membership in the EU, although the EU wants to accept it in its ranks;
- hope that their country will become a member of the EU in the next decade, and they suspect the government's willingness to meet obligations arising by the accession process;
- think that the EU does not help enough country's membership in the EU, most notably talks about EU solidarity with Greece and Bulgaria, which continue to hamper Macedonia's path to the EU.

4. Conclusion

Having regard to the current events on the name issue and the identity of the Macedonian nation is evident that Greece and Bulgaria have the advantage of the fact that they are members of the Euro-Atlantic structures, and from this position may hinder Macedonia's membership in NATO and EU.

This means that Macedonia will remain outside the Euro-Atlantic structures, while citizens appreciate that the dispute can not extend to infinity, since maintaining such a situation to the status quo, may adversely affect inter-ethnic relations, given differences between Macedonian and Albanian communities.

Unresolved issues in question are counter-productive and give the signal to a lack of willingness to resolve the dispute. In this regard neighbors were given strong argument that Macedonia does not want compromise, and it puts in the awkward position and increased international pressure on Macedonia. Therefore, Macedonia should not be held hostage by history, but must decide between isolation and integration.

It seems that the solution to the excessively long dispute with name has moved on from the moment when the Greek foreign minister (4 October 2012) had proposed Memorandum of understanding to settle the dispute, whose had responded positively the Macedonian Foreign Minister (8 November 2012).⁴ Commissioner for Enlargement and neighborhood policy of the EU, Stefan Fule, had stressed that mitigation of attitudes of both parties can positively affect the opening of negotiations before a compromise on the name issue.⁵

On 11 December 2012, the EU Council had welcomed the progress made by UN mediator, and had concluded that Macedonia can begin negotiations by mid-2013, unless agreement is reached quickly with Greece and Bulgaria.⁶

However, this did not happen, because, political parties still continue to look for political reputation within the state, not for euro-atlantic future of their citizens.

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⁴ Source: http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/_w_articles_ws1e1_1_08/11/2012_469083. 9 November 2012.

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