

## Obstacles to FYROM<sup>\*</sup>'s membership of NATO: a tougher agenda than expected

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*"The name "Macedonia" is not associated with a single country. It has always been used to refer to a larger geographical region of which about 51% belongs to Greece, 38% to FYROM and 9% to Bulgaria. What Greece is saying is that a single state's monopolizing the name "Macedonia" does not contribute to regional stability and that is why the geographical reality must be borne in mind."*

*Foreign Affairs Minister of Greece, Dora Bakoyannis, 28 March 2008*

*"We want good relations with our neighbour, but we also want our right for self-determination, because Macedonia is a small state. It also includes our identity as Europeans and Macedonians. The name Macedonia is the foundation of Macedonia's national identity. With it we're not posing a threat to anyone and we're not taking anything from anyone"*

*Foreign Affairs Minister of FYROM, Antonio Milošoski, 20 November 2008*

The disagreement between the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and Greece dates back to 1992, when the republic that had emerged from the dismantled Federal Republic of Yugoslavia gained its independence. FYROM's affiliation with the main international organizations very nearly made us forget about its ongoing dispute with Greece. But the international community was brutally reminded of the situation when Greece vetoed FYROM's bid to join NATO, despite broad consensus in favour of accession. The setback is damaging to all parties and undermines the Alliance's stated objective: "to enhance peace and stability in Europe"<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, it marginalizes the two states and erodes their credibility.

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<sup>\*</sup> Turkey recognizes the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.

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<sup>1</sup> The Alliance's Strategic Concept, Washington Summit, April 1999, <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-065f.htm>

The importance that the two protagonists attach to the name 'Macedonia' needs to be explained, in view of the interests at stake and the oversimplification of the issue in the region and elsewhere. Recent developments are, however, cause for reasonable optimism that a solution can be found, and it is possible that integration of FYROM, under a definitive name, could be officialized at the next NATO summit, coinciding with the Alliance's 60th anniversary celebrations. The procedure for approving full NATO membership for Croatia and Albania should be completed in time for the Kehl/Strasbourg Summit. FYROM's membership, then, could be officialized at a later summit, either in autumn 2009, or in 2010 in Lisbon, notwithstanding an already very heavy agenda<sup>2</sup>.

### The name dispute: Greece defends its historical heritage

The geographical area of Macedonia, in the broad sense of the term, has always been fluid and has never been a separate entity. When the Balkan Wars (1912-1918) came to an end, Macedonia was partitioned among the three states that had risen from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire: Serbia (Skopje Macedonia), Bulgaria (Pirin Macedonia) and Greece (Aegean Macedonia). The three countries strove to include their territorial gains as well as the peoples of those areas in their national projects. For the Macedonian nation, the first real split occurred with the establishment of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia and recognition of the Macedonian nation<sup>3</sup>. The second split was in

1992, when FYROM became independent.

Although the ethnic origins of the Macedonian people are ancient, Macedonia only recently asserted itself as a nation organized on a political and territorial basis. The term "Macedonian", used by the Slavic peoples of this geographical region to define their identity, has been forged over the last two centuries. Today it indicates an objective reality and a deep visceral conviction. "Macedonian" communities also exist outside the internationally recognized state of FYROM. They make up a strong minority in northern Greece and in Bulgaria. This is the cause of the rift between Macedonia and Greece: where the Macedonians see a minority denied fundamental rights, the Greeks see a Greek people of Slavic descent whose efforts to obtain recognition of minorities bear the seeds of future irredentist claims.

Examples of irredentism abound in the region, and the case of Albania is very instructive. As both Serbia and ethnic Albanians in Kosovo have learned from bitter experience, it is not easy to revoke acquired rights. The Macedonian state has undergone a radical transformation since the implementation of the Ohrid Agreement. In 2001, to avoid a war based on national identity, the state changed its constitution from an integrative project for a nation-state to one for a multinational state in which citizenship (Macedonian) may differ from nationality (Macedonian or Albanian), and in which decentralization of the state allows national minorities local self-government<sup>4</sup>. In return, the Albanian guerrilla in FYROM, who had initiated the conflict, pledged to respect the state's constitution and territorial integrity<sup>5</sup>. The Euro-Atlantic community<sup>6</sup> was instrumental in

<sup>2</sup> The Alliance's new Strategic Concept should be adopted at the Lisbon Summit in 2010.

<sup>3</sup> On 2 August 1944, the Antifascist Council for the People's Liberation of Macedonia (ASNOM, or Antifašističko Sobranje na Narodnoto osloboduvanje na Makedonija), directed by the Macedonian communists, recognized the existence of a Macedonian republic and language. The constitution of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, adopted on 31 January 1946, authorizes its federal republic status.

<sup>4</sup> The full text of the Ohrid Agreement is on the Council of Europe's site: [http://www.coe.int/t/e/legal\\_affairs/legal\\_co-operation/police\\_and\\_internal\\_security/OHRID%20Agreement%2013august2001.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/e/legal_affairs/legal_co-operation/police_and_internal_security/OHRID%20Agreement%2013august2001.asp)

<sup>5</sup> The ethnic Albanian population constitutes one quarter (according to Macedonian sources) and one third (according to Albanian sources) of the total population of FYROM. In view of the fact that the Albanians boycotted the censuses of 1991 and 2002, these figures are not official. However, according to demographic data based on the natural fluctuations in population growth (birth, fertility and death rates), and also on local and national election statistics, ethnic Albanians represent about 25% of the total population in FYROM compared to 64.1% who say that they are "Macedonians".

<sup>6</sup> The European Union and the United States delegated two envoys, François Léotard and James Pardew, to broker an agreement between the Albanian armed groups and the Macedonian government. This Framework Agreement, known as the Ohrid Agreement, uses the term "Euro-Atlantic community" in reference to the participants in this mission.

reducing tensions in the country, and indeed paved the way for Macedonia's rapprochement with the United States, the European Union (EU), and also with NATO, through the disarmament mission, Operation Task Force Harvest<sup>7</sup>.

Greece fears that, by giving Macedonia an identity based on Slavic Macedonian nationality, it would be depriving itself of its heritage: an area that it regards as the cradle of Hellenism and as one of the Greek nation's main cultural binding forces. In the 1990s, the VMRO-DPMNE<sup>8</sup> nationalist party relied on the support of the Aegean Macedonians in FYROM for electoral purposes. The Macedonian elite encourage this ambiguity by creating the impression that Macedonia is "divided". By recently naming Skopje airport after Alexander the Great, they have sent out signals that jeopardize diplomatic relations between the two states. Since then, Greece has tried to reaffirm its sovereignty over Macedonia, not only as a cultural concept and symbol, but also as a geographical area. In this "war of symbols", Athens has renamed Salonika airport "Macedonia Airport".

FYROM knows it can count on the support of the United States. The US regards FYROM as an important partner in the Balkans<sup>9</sup>, and demonstrated this in November 2004 when it recognized the country with its constitutional name.<sup>10</sup> Greece's alleged links with the Milošević regime in Serbia and refusal to recognize Kosovo's independence have led Western countries to accuse it of playing an obstructionist role in the Balkans, while supporting the "global war on terrorism" and the war effort in Iraq and Afghanistan. Through their manifest support for FYROM and promises to exert

pressure on Greece, Western nations have encouraged the Macedonian hard line and have transmitted a negative message to Greece, which is a full member of the Alliance. Their encouragement has been counter-productive on two levels: political leaders in both countries are trying to consolidate their positions by playing the nationalist card; and the Macedonians, in addition to losing their case at the Bucharest Summit, are now feeling bitter and deceived.

Recently the media in Greece and FYROM have stepped up their war of accusations, causing unrest on the borders between the two states. The Greek press accuses the UN Special Mediator appointed to settle the name dispute, the American Matthew Nimitz, of connivance with FYROM. The Greek negotiators say they are close to an agreement on Macedonia's future name, but are opposed to the population and language of FYROM being described as "Macedonians".<sup>11</sup> On 3 November 2008, the Macedonian parliament passed a resolution calling on the government to define a strategy on the name dispute, warning that it must not "endanger the Macedonian nation and its language, history, culture and identity"<sup>12</sup>. The Macedonian negotiators' determination to add the issue of the Slavic Macedonian minority in Greece to the agenda slowed down negotiations and led to lengthy debates, and was perceived as provocation by the Greek side.<sup>13</sup>

Both Macedonian and Greek negotiators are playing for time, in the hope of obtaining the best possible advantages from a future agreement. At the moment, though, time is precisely what they do not have. Skopje and Athens are well aware of the

<sup>7</sup> For further information on Operation Task Force Harvest, see <http://www.nato.int/fyrom/tfh/home-fr.htm>

<sup>8</sup> The VMRO-DPMNE, Vnatrešna makedonska revolucionerna organizacija-Demokratska partija za Makedonsko jedinstvo, or Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity, was created on 17 June 1990.

<sup>9</sup> US spokesman Richard Boucher stated in 2004 that "Macedonia is an important and steadfast partner of the United States in the global war on terrorism, contributing troops to coalition efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan". See: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2004/37819.htm>

<sup>10</sup> Several NATO member countries have recognized FYROM with its constitutional name, including the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada. But Turkey is the only country that has insisted on the inclusion in NATO official documents of a note stating that it recognizes FYROM with its constitutional name.

<sup>11</sup> US-FYROM 'pact' upsets diplomats, Ekathimerini, 20 October 2008, [http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/\\_w\\_articles\\_politics\\_2\\_20/10/2008\\_101462](http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/_w_articles_politics_2_20/10/2008_101462)

<sup>12</sup> Makedonija usvojila rezoluciju o rešenju spora o imenu sa Grčkom, Beta, 3 November 2008, <http://www.studio-b.rs/info/vest.php?id=31089>

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Antonio Milošoski, FYROM Minister of Foreign Affairs, Elefterotypia, 11 August 2008, <http://www.focus-fen.net/?id=18671&PHPSSES-SID=7uul6c8t8riuukdls6t8oq4qp2>

regional and international strategic issues involved and of the real risks of regional instability if an agreement is not reached quickly, particularly in view of the case brought by FYROM before the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which is impeding negotiations and slowing down rapprochement between the two countries.

## **FYROM membership of NATO: a strategic issue**

FYROM remains a weak state in terms of both nation building and state building. It is vitally important for it to accelerate the process of integration into the European Union and NATO, in order to minimize the risks of implosion and secure its territory. FYROM could take advantage of the EU's regional policy and reduce the financial costs of membership. The interconnecting European corridors will certainly facilitate regional cooperation, since corridors 8 and 10 run through FYROM.<sup>14</sup> The EU offers an alternative project to the nation state, even though the building of Europe is still not complete. From a military standpoint, NATO membership would allow FYROM to be included in the Alliance's global strategy. And, thanks to its experience in the region, particularly its contacts with the various military organizations, NATO can play a diplomatic role as well. However, given NATO's political limitations, which were only too apparent at the Bucharest Summit, it would be better for FYROM to be inside rather than outside NATO, especially as it already has a foot in the Alliance's door.

Greece, on the other hand, is less inclined to compromise, despite the clear advantages it would gain from normalizing relations with its northern neighbour. Greece could win back its status as a regional crossroads and play a key role in promoting South East Europe's integration into the European Union. FYROM is an

important trading partner for Greece, and its economic development is part of the investment strategy that Greek enterprises have been building up for over a decade. By delaying FYROM's integration, Greece is depriving itself of substantial potential revenue and is going against its own interests. By relieving its diplomatic services of the onerous task of managing its northern neighbours, Greece could conduct a more effective strategy in the Mediterranean area, like Italy and France, and indeed NATO.

NATO's future role is still being defined, even though the main aspects of the Alliance's Strategic Concept, approved in Washington in 1999, have been implemented and should be further explored at the Lisbon Summit in 2010. The Balkans come under the umbrella of Euro-Atlantic security and cooperation. NATO's political and military leaders believe that once Croatia, Albania and FYROM have joined NATO, the risks of conflict flaring up in the region will be lower and will be circumscribed to the area comprising Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Kosovo. NATO still has a modular multinational army on the ground, consisting of almost 15,000 personnel. At the same time, the Alliance's capabilities of force projection into theatres outside Europe are supported by a line running north to south, from Estonia to Greece, with Romania playing an increasingly important role in the system.

Now that crisis management has become a process of political stabilization in the Balkans, all that needs to be consolidated, from the Alliance's standpoint, is military cooperation and coordination among NATO's current members, potential members, and partners. The Balkans provide a bridgehead from which to tackle the new challenges and asymmetric threats in Europe. But the area also has its more sinister aspects, such as the organized crime and transnational terrorism that threaten the security and viability of states. Moreover, if energy diplo-

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<sup>14</sup> The projects for pan-European transport corridors aim to upgrade a number of road transport networks in central and eastern Europe. Ten corridors have been identified as priorities, including 8 and 10, which pass through FYROM. See maps of the corridors: <http://www.unece.org/trans/main/ter/Countries/PanEuCorridors.html>

macy were to take on a strategic dimension, NATO would certainly play a role in the protection of energy corridors. FYROM is a link in this chain, as well as being an area bound up with European and American energy interests; this explains why the US Department of State strongly supports FYROM's application for membership and wants to assign NATO a role in this area. In fact, the major energy corridors either pass through FYROM or are scheduled to pass through it, such as the AMBO oil pipeline or the Nabucco gas pipeline (a section of which runs through FYROM and Kosovo).

There is a genuine convergence of interests in the region, but also a danger of destabilization if a solution to the dispute between FYROM and Greece is not found rapidly. Since many NATO member countries are now advocating a pause in enlargement, FYROM must not miss the membership boat. So the question is: does FYROM have realistic prospects of joining NATO some time soon?

### **Too late, perhaps, for membership in 2009?**

Since it has the least to lose in the short term, Greece is the least willing to compromise. In private, Greece has been severely criticized for holding up a process that could have been resolved, especially as FYROM cannot pose a serious threat to Greek security. By openly displaying failure to understand an issue of national concern to Greece, US and European diplomatic services are losing their clout. The US is very fortunate to have a good mediator who is an expert on the complexities of the matter. It is vital, therefore, for the US Department of State to adjust its position and give firm support to all the negotiators, including Greek representatives.

The present Greek Prime Minister, Kostas Karamanlis, has all the winning cards to negotiate a compromise with FYROM. As a member of an illustrious Greek Macedonian family and as the political heir to Konstantinos Karamanlis, he is very well placed to understand the Macedonian question and the region's European vocation. He has a comfortable parliamentary majority and enough popular support to be able to withstand a media attack by the opposition, particularly from the nationalist right wing, represented by the LAOS party. As a conservative party, New Democracy could hardly be accused of betraying national interests.

Internal politics in FYROM are more complex and can affect negotiations. The current position of the President of the Republic, Branko Crvenkovski, in charge of policy on the issue, is undermined by the conflict of interests with his Prime Minister, Nikola Gruevski, from the opposition. Gruevski won the early parliamentary elections in June 2008 in FYROM by advocating a conservative approach and drawing on Macedonian nationalist fervour, intensified by Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence and the failure of the Bucharest Summit. On 3 November 2008, Gruevski stepped up pressure on the presidency when he told parliament and the press that any solution negotiated with Athens would have to be put to a referendum. Adding fuel to the flames, he also called for legal status for the "Aegeans", the refugees from the Greek civil war (1946-1949), whose position has never been clarified<sup>15</sup>. If an agreement with Greece is reached, organizing a referendum will take up considerable time and energy. Political consensus will need to be found, to avoid the derailment that might result from efforts to garner support from part of the electorate, and to persuade the population to accept the contents of the agreement. Yet the more time goes by, the more danger there is of no agreement being negotiated.

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<sup>15</sup> According to figures provided by the Aegean Macedonian Association, there are almost 300,000 Slav Macedonians residing in FYROM who are refugees or descendants of refugees from the Greek civil war. As a rule they are well integrated into Macedonian society and sometimes hold influential positions in the state administration. Clearly they have significant electoral weight, and their vote has been regularly courted since the 1990s. See Budo Vukobrat, "Široćići Grčke gramatike", AIM, Skopje, 7 December 1995, <http://www.aimpress.ch/dyn/pubs/archive/data/199512/51207-002-pubs-sko.htm>

## The ICJ proceedings: a strategic error?

On 17 November 2008, the Macedonian government instituted proceedings before the International Court of Justice concerning a violation of Article 11 of the Interim Accord of 13 September 1995 signed with the Hellenic Republic<sup>16</sup>. In its complaint, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia asked the Court “to protect its rights under the Interim Accord and to ensure that it is allowed to exercise its rights as an independent State acting in accordance with international law, including the right to pursue membership of relevant international organisations”<sup>17</sup>. Even if the action taken by FYROM has a genuine legal basis, it may result in a Pyrrhic victory. Winning the case in the ICJ would not automatically ensure that FYROM has a future in NATO and the EU. On the contrary, it would simply cause further complications in this tangled situation.

The ICJ has two main functions. At the request of the General Assembly, the UN Security Council, or a member state, it can provide an advisory opinion<sup>18</sup>. This arbitration role has no binding force but does contribute to the making of international law. The Court also settles legal disputes between one state and another. In this respect, the ICJ's judgements are final and mandatory<sup>19</sup>, though their scope is limited, since the “decision of the Court has no binding force except between the parties and in respect of that particular case” (Article 59).

Furthermore, the fact that acceptance of the ICJ's compulsory jurisdiction is voluntary (Article 36) has enabled a number of states to refuse to appear before the Court or to reject its rulings.

In this context, a decision in favour of FYROM will only have limited consequences for Greece. Even if Athens decides to cooperate and agrees to appear before the ICJ, it can still refuse to apply the Court's judgement. There are precedents for this, and they concern the United States and France, two pillars of international law.<sup>20</sup> The ICJ will always have the option to ask the United Nations Security Council to enforce its decision, but it is highly unlikely that permanent members will do any more than just issue declarations. Diplomatic isolation of Greece, whose international position is rock solid, is very unlikely. Given the very slim chances of this complaint succeeding, why did the Macedonian Prime Minister, Nikola Gruevski, decide to institute proceedings?

Gruevski has consolidated his position at the head of a public administration which is still heavily politicized and reliant on political parties<sup>21</sup>. Although Gruevski has a special relationship with the US administration, he also enjoys solid support from EU member states, which are sensitive to the Macedonian question. In view of the many positive signals emitted by other countries, the Macedonian government no doubt believes that further pressure by an international organization could make Greece give way. This would provide more power to FYROM's elbow during negotia-

<sup>16</sup> Article 11 states: “Upon entry into force of this Interim Accord, the Party of the First Part agrees not to object to the application by or the membership of the Party of the Second Part in international, multilateral and regional organizations and institutions of which the Party of the First Part is a member; however, the Party of the First Part reserves the right to object to any membership referred to above if and to the extent the Party of the Second Part is to be referred to in such organization or institution differently than in paragraph 2 of United Nations Security Council resolution 817 (1993)”, in Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Interim Accord, signed in New York on 13 September 1995.

<sup>17</sup> International Court of Justice, “The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia institutes proceedings against Greece for violation of Article 11 of the Interim Accord of 13 September 1995”, The Hague, 17 November 2008, [www.icj-cij.org](http://www.icj-cij.org)

<sup>18</sup> Article 96 of the Charter of the United Nations, <http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/chapter14.shtml>

<sup>19</sup> Article 60 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice: “The judgment is final and without appeal. In the event of dispute as to the meaning or scope of the judgment, the Court shall construe it upon the request of any party”, ICJ, [http://www.icj-cij.org/documents/index.php?p1=4&p2=2&p3=0#CHAPTER\\_III](http://www.icj-cij.org/documents/index.php?p1=4&p2=2&p3=0#CHAPTER_III)

<sup>20</sup> In April 1984, Nicaragua filed in the registry of the ICJ an application instituting proceedings against the United States of America for alleged military and paramilitary activities in and against Nicaragua (including the mining of ports, attacks on oil installations, support for armed groups opposed to the government, encouragement of violations of the principles of humanitarian law, and economic pressure). The United States, deeming that the ICJ was not competent to judge the matter, informed the Court the following year that it had no intention of attending the proceedings. Nevertheless, in its judgement of 27 June 1986, the Court found the United States guilty, through its actions, of violating Nicaraguan sovereignty. See ICJ site: <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/70/6502.pdf>. In its judgment of 20 December 1974 on the case submitted by Australia (together with the Fijis), the ICJ called on France, which had refused to appear before the Court, to end the atmospheric tests on nuclear weapons conducted by the French Government in the Pacific Ocean. To determine the legality of the nuclear tests, the Court referred to a number of reports by the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, which concluded that “the testing of nuclear devices in the atmosphere has entailed the release into the atmosphere, and the consequent dissipation in varying degrees throughout the world, of measurable quantities of radioactive matter.” Following the Court's judgement, France decided to withdraw its earlier statement recognizing the ICJ's compulsory jurisdiction. See ICJ site: <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/58/6092.pdf>

tions on FYROM's future name. Gruevski is also allowing himself space to manoeuvre, in case he has to make concessions on certain points. Making "sacrifices" for reasons of state would give him international stature. Undeniably, by presenting himself as a man of compromise, he would emerge as the moral victor in the name dispute.

There is another option, less likely to succeed. The situation could be allowed to fester, in the hope that Greece will finally bow to pressure. This is a highly unlikely scenario. Given that the short to medium term priority for FYROM is EU membership, it would mean hanging on until the Lisbon treaty comes into force and obstacles such as the unanimity rule are removed. But that would postpone EU membership to 2015-2018. NATO rules on the matter are very clear and strict, and since FYROM cannot join NATO without Greece's approval, it has no choice but to go back to the negotiating table.

If FYROM wins its case before the ICJ but remains outside NATO and also EU enlargement, its international "isolation" will continue for a few more years. By pinning all its hopes on the West, it may be that the Skopje government has grossly neglected its immediate neighbours and forgotten to cultivate the "good neighbour relations" which are fundamental to the Interim Accord signed with Athens.

## NATO membership must go through Brussels

Greece is under strong international pressure to settle the controversy with FYROM. The United States also has the means to put pressure on

FYROM to accept a compromise solution to the naming issue, but considerable prudence and tact will be needed to ensure that the Macedonians do not end up feeling betrayed. The United States – in coordination, perhaps, with their European partners – must show willing and set up a raft of civil and military agreements to support FYROM's European vocation. Similarly, the European Union could provide a specific roadmap for membership and build up its own expertise with a view to preparing FYROM for admission to the EU. For several years now FYROM has been engaged in negotiations with the EU to deregulate visas for Macedonian citizens visiting the Schengen area. The visa requirement is a major problem for Macedonians; eliminating it would be of great help to FYROM and would ease tensions in the country.

For the Macedonian people, visa freedom would be a first, very concrete step towards European integration<sup>22</sup>, and its effects on tourism and trade would bring about tangible changes in daily life. Unrestricted travel in the Schengen area would give Macedonians a more realistic insight into the mythicized Western world. This new-found mobility could have a huge impact, particularly as informal retail trade, such as shuttle trade or "suitcase trade"<sup>23</sup>, is a fairly important sector of the Macedonian economy. To institutionalize this sector, the first priority is to promote greater regional integration and improve the quality of trading with EU members. Adoption of tariff agreements that also apply to local industry and agriculture, particularly small businesses, would result in job security and social equilibrium in FYROM. If the actual standard of living in FYROM is raised, the name dispute with Greece could become an anachro-

<sup>21</sup> The 2007 progress report on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, prepared by rapporteur Erik Meijer and adopted by the European Parliament on 23 April 2008, highlights the influence of political parties and the media on public administration, and "urges the authorities to ensure public compliance with EU and Council of Europe standards on countering the resurgence of "hate speech", particularly in the media, against neighbouring States." See: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2008-0172+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

<sup>22</sup> Some observers have pointed out the risks of an explosion of migratory flows to the EU as a result of visa deregulation, citing Poland and Romania as examples. Since the population of FYROM is slightly more than 2 million inhabitants, and smaller than that of the two its global impact on the EU would be relatively limited.

<sup>23</sup> "Suitcase trade" is based on informal cross-border exchanges by "traders who pass for tourists; their merchandise passes for personal belongings; and in this way they avoid paying the required duty". (Yulian Konstantinov, "Patterns of Reinterpretation: Trader-Tourism in the Balkans (Bulgaria) as a Picaresque Metaphorical Enactment of Post-Totalitarianism", *American Ethnologist*, vol.23, No.4, pp.762-782, 1996, quoted by Emmanuel Bioteau and Bénédicte Michalon). It is small-scale trading, but it plays a vital role in the micro-economy. On this subject, see the excellent study by Emmanuel Bioteau and Bénédicte Michalon on the eastward enlargement of the EU and cross-border relations: "L'élargissement de l'Union européenne à l'Est: Bruxelles au défi des relations transfrontalières", *Géococonfluences*, 16 October 2008, <http://geoconfluences.ens-lyon.fr/doc/typespace/frontier/FrontScient7.htm>

nism, since it would be seen as an impediment to the people's well-being.

To avoid the risk of FYROM having to lower its sights, and of the dispute dragging on, explanatory talks and friendly pressure may be required. For both the United States and the EU, leadership of the region and stability in this part of the Balkans must start with constructive diplomacy. For the Macedonian political elite, there is a price to be paid for membership of NATO and the EU: compromise.

## Conclusions

A solution can be found in the short term. The latest proposal, which includes an official nomenclature that differs from the one currently used, is perfectly acceptable. In current usage, nobody refers to Laos as the "Lao People's Democratic Republic", or to Algeria as the "Democratic People's Republic of Algeria". Each of the parties would thus be free to persuade both their own people and foreign observers to use one title rather than another, so that it becomes a habit. If an agreement could be concluded without delay, this would be a great relief to all parties. Balanced compromises will lead to durable agreements that will provide inspiration for the resolution of the other thorny problems in the region.

If the agreement has to be put to a referendum, this will take time to organize. Procedures would have to be negotiated without delay for FYROM's accession to NATO, so that it can be included on the agenda of the next NATO summit. This is unlikely to happen in time for the Kehl/Strasbourg Summit, because the parliaments of the member countries must also go through the "ratification" process. A more reasonable assumption is that FYROM will be admitted to the Alliance during the opening ceremony of the Lisbon summit.

Conditions have never been more favourable. If, however, negotiations are postponed, the consequences will be manifold. On both sides of the border there are signs of impatience, and we cannot rule out an escalation of clashes if an agreement is not reached soon. In the present climate of financial stagnation and uncertainty about the future, the people could turn to the political parties who offer the more radical solutions. The process of stabilizing the region could be totally undermined. This could have a domino effect on other ethnic groups who coexist uneasily within multinational states and might be tempted to alter the state's structure or administrative borders, giving rise to further separatist movements. This would result in an even heavier price to pay, for all the actors – local, national and international.