

What Should Macedonia Do After the Greek Veto in NATO (Public Discussion - Hotel Continental 11. 05. 2008)

The veto which disallowed Macedonia to join NATO raised many debates among the Macedonian political and academic circles. Several experts met May 5th in Hotel Continental to discuss about issues such as the future strategy Macedonia should take on, what legal arguments Macedonia has in the UN, and should Macedonia eventually accept a new name for international use.

Igor Janev, a Scientific Researcher at the Institute of Political Studies in Belgrade, Serbia, opened the discussion by introducing the institutionalist approach to the problem. Article 4 of the United Nations Charter, which regulates the membership requirements in this organization, states the specific conditions a state must fulfill in order to become a member. Further, the General Assembly Resolution 197/3 from 1948 clearly states that no additional conditions may be brought. Therefore, the UN Charter has been severely breached with the additional conditions for Macedonia. The best way out, as Mr. Janev put it, is that Macedonia raises this question in the GA through requesting a legal opinion about this problem from the International Court of Justice. The Court would decide in our interest, which would force the GA to accept our membership under our constitutional name.

Jana Lozanovska continued in the same manner as the previous speaker. "The only way out of this dead end is The Hague," she said. Macedonia should sue Greece in front of the ICJ, and even though the Interim Accord does not allow the inclusion of the Court, we can still do it based on the Greek breaches of the agreement, such as the problem with MAT.

Lubomir D. Frckovski, professor of International Law from the Faculty of Law from Skopje of was next to take the stand with this realist view, starting his expose with Thucydides' "Power is central in the international politics," and regarded the defending of international law as rather naïve. Macedonia is not allowed to enter legal procedure as long as the negotiations have not been drained. Unfortunately, he stated, we gave two 'hammers' to the Greeks that they can use against us:

- In time of elections there are no negotiations; and
- They will not negotiate if the decision is later put to a referendum.

The negotiations are not done directly, but through a mediator (the US). Frckovski recommended to the Macedonian government to find a solution, a compromise, with a name that does not endanger the Macedonian identity; otherwise the country will enter into isolation. He finished his speech with the conclusion that a new name would not mean a change or identity, but only a replacement for the insulting reference FYROM.

Risto Nikovski, Macedonian senior diplomat, supported Frckovski's last statement that we must compromise with Greece, since we depend economically too much on them. Even though the Greeks are looking for a name to deface us, we must fight for a short name Macedonia. As the best strategy that we can use at this moment, he recommended that the government forms a team of domestic and foreign experts which would work on a daily basis on the solution

of this problem, and would end up sending memoranda to all the countries that have recognized us under our constitutional name.

Gordana Siljanovska, professor of Constitutional Law and Political Systems at the Law Faculty of Skopje, continued the debate by once more inserting that the realists run the game in today's international politics. However, she expressed hopes that there are possibilities for the institutionalists as well, through the UN, NATO, and the EU. And since the Greeks know that we live in the world of Thucydides, they disregard the decisions of the International Court of Human Rights about the Macedonian minority in Greece.

What Siljanovska found disturbing in the latest rhetoric in the Macedonian media is the forced dichotomy of patriots and Europeans. "This is pointless," she said. At the time of the campaign, the politicians must precisely explain what they understand under "compromise and new name," and should be given mandates for nothing else.

Marija Risteska from the Center for Research and Policy Making called the management of this process from the Macedonian side as extremely bad and elitist. The NGOs were directed by the donors, the businessmen had no feeling for contribution, and the academic community shall find its responsibility for not conducting the needed research, but rather reproducing others'. Much in the fashion of Siljanovska, she reasserted the need to demystify the "patriotic and European" politicians, since all of them support a compromise, which means a change of the name. With 60% of the population not supporting a change of the name, what Macedonia lacks is a clear attitude and direction by the politicians, so that the country can use all its diplomatic artillery, the Diaspora, the lobbyists, the academics, and the business factor in this issue. "CRPM's general attitude," she said, "is to support the legal opinion of the ICJ in front of the GA, since in the UN we are equal."

Dane Taleski, a teaching assistant of Public Opinion and Political Parties at the Law Faculty in Skopje, opened his speech with the critique of the labeling of patriots and traitors, and urged that we must restore the democracy and freedom that have been endangered by the single-mindedness which is predominant at the moment in Macedonia. He then mentioned 10 arguments which serve Macedonia's interest:

1. The Greek veto undermines the criteria that should be the same for everybody in the international organizations
2. The veto is in breach with the aims of the Security Council Resolution 817 and the Interim Accord
3. By using the veto, Greece endangered the politics of open doors of NATO (Greece put its own national interests in front of NATO's)
4. With its behavior, Greece undermines the EU's principal of conditionality as one of the main instruments of the process of EU enlargement, since Macedonia is facing additional requirements
5. The veto halts the process of creating stability in the Balkan region - clearly not in accordance with the strategic interests of Macedonia, Greece, the US, NATO, and EU

6. This veto could be used as precedent in the future NATO and EU enlargement (Re-Balkanization instead of Europeization)
7. The veto could produce internal instability in Macedonia
8. The veto has already done harm to the Macedonian economy as well as to the Greek and other foreign investors in Macedonia
9. Macedonia is now a less attractive country for investments
10. The Greek veto could cause a diminishing of the economic cooperation between the two countries.

Taleski ended his presentation with the suggestion that the issue is solved in the next three months, when the international interest is still here, and that the US must become more actively involved.

Slavko Mangovski, editor-in-chief of the weekly magazine "Macedonian Sun" and representative from the *Macedonian Alliance*, located the main Macedonian mistakes in the lack of diplomatic activity and the lack of answers to the Greek lies. Macedonia has a very big Diaspora ready to help, but needs the help and participation of the government. This conflict must be put into a legal procedure and we must finally go into offensive.

Pece Vasiliadis, the representative from the Macedonian party "Rainbow" from Greece, gave the perspective of the Macedonian minority in Greece. "There will always be people calling themselves Macedonians in Greece, not matter how hard they try to erase us", he proudly stated. Building the national myth, the Greeks isolated every other civilization that lived on their territory, and if it wasn't for the Macedonians and the other ethnicities in Greece, the question of the Greek nation would have never been asked, and this problem would not have occurred. "Since we are citizens of another country, we do not intend on meddling in the question of the international name," he continued. Macedonia has a potentially very strong argument with the Macedonian political emigrants throughout the whole world, but this issue must be raised by the Macedonian government.

As a foreigner in Macedonia and former economic advisor of Macedonian prime-minister Nikola Gruevski, Sam Vaknin gave a rather harsh opinion of this whole situation. He said that Macedonia does not have the virtue to accept the things that cannot be changed, the courage to change what can be changed, and the wisdom to tell one from the other. If you are poor, you have no choice, so Macedonia has got to concentrate on the things that can be changed, which is the economy. This country must give up the myth about messiahs from abroad, but rather there has to be an elite which is easily identifiable, counter-populist, and ready to take action.

"You must choose between the identity as you know it and your future, you must!" he urged the Macedonians. Macedonia is in grave danger, by avoiding its internal problems and concentrating on the prolonging of this foreign issue. If the country does not put all energy into solving the misbalance problems between the elites and the masses, the urban elites and the others, and the majority and minority, there is the possibility of revolution and secession.

At the open debate that followed, a conflict of opinion was raised about accepting a new name. Frckoski's statement that we will remain Macedonians and a Macedonian nation even with the new name that would replace FYROM was challenged by Janev and Lozanovska, who said that a new name (such as New Macedonia) would be insulting and would infringe the national identity, since it is an unwanted legal name. "In that case, Macedonia would have to destroy the success of being recognized by 120 countries," said Lozanovska.

Taleski inserted that a Macedonian identity and nation existed even before there was a Macedonian state, so an international name would not influence the national identity.

Frckoski continued by explaining his view on what the negotiations would be like: the Americans would give us a list of four solutions, they would make us circle two, which would be the national identity and the name, and with the other two they would negotiate with the Greeks and be the first to accept the new formula. He finished by calling Macedonia the only multicultural project in Europe one could see and breathe in Europe. Having the name issue as a priority is pathetic, and it would bring about a balkanization of Europe.