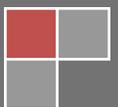


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# **THE WORLD AFTER GEORGE W. BUSH WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE NEW ADMINISTRATION IN WASHINGTON: CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES FOR THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

**CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND POLICY MAKING** ЦЕНТАР ЗА  
ИСТРАЖУВАЊЕ И КРЕИРАЊЕ ПОЛИТИКИ



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## US-Macedonia relations from 1991 to present

### *The US Government: “stability first” approach*

For the most part US foreign policy goals focus on maintaining stability and security of the global order. The annual budget of the United States State Department is almost eleven billion dollars, which is more than what Great Britain, France and Germany (the three largest EU members) spend together. That is, however, but a fraction of what it truly costs to advancing the ambitious goals of US foreign policy and to maintain the status of global superpower, as it excludes the financial and other resources that the US government commits to its diplomatic, political and military establishments.

Its policy of recognition of new independent states that cause shifts in the international status quo, depends by and large on the capability of the new state to maintain internal/domestic control and stability, as well as the capacity of the regime to act as a stabilizing force in the neighborhood or the surrounding region. It is because the newly independent Macedonian state exhibited these capacities the United States was inclined to recognize Macedonia. Nevertheless, due to the problems that arose with regard to the name of the country by Greece, the US administration delayed recognition and had expressed concerns that recognition may not necessarily lead to stability, but, on the contrary, that it may worsen relations with Greece and lead to conflict.

At the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (present day Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe-OSCE), the US State Department promoted basic guidelines for recognition of newly created states, a document of crucial importance to all the former Yugoslav countries. The following pre-conditions for independence recognition were listed in the guidelines:

- 1) Determining the future of the country [i.e. seceding republic] peacefully and democratically.
- 2) Respect for internal and external borders.
- 3) Support for democracy and the rule of law, by promoting the democratic process.
- 4) Safeguarding human rights, including equal treatment of minorities.
- 5) Respect for international law and obligations, especially the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris.

Even though Macedonia was considered an excellent candidate for recognition as an independent state by the US government, and the special commission set up to assess the independence capacities of the newly emerged states (Badenter Commission), the country faced unprecedented problems that delayed its acceptance in the international order. Greek influence in the European Communities (EC) and in the United States, unpredictability of events in the tumultuous Balkans (danger to stability and risk of armed conflict), lack of resources, experience and a coherent foreign policy approach of the EC (and later the European Union – EU) and others, all helped delay Macedonia’s fulfillment of its ambition to become a sovereign state.

Undoubtedly, if it had not been for the Greek insistence that the name of Macedonia poses a serious threat to regional stability and a direct threat to Greek national security and interests, Macedonia would have probably cruised to independence and UN membership perhaps even easier than Slovenia. The political weight of the Greek objection was elevated because of the fact that

- Greece is a member of NATO and an important US ally
- The Greek lobby in the US is particularly strong because of the large number of Greek Americans and the numerous affluent members of Congress that have close ties with pro-Greek pressure groups.
- All American administrations pay attention to national pressure groups as they control a large number of voters in the presidential and congressional elections. Therefore presidents try to minimize the damage that foreign policy decisions that are unfavorable to majority of Greek Americans may cause to their electoral bids.<sup>1</sup>
- As an EU member state, Greece has a significant say in EU foreign policy, most of which is a product of consensus rather than qualified majority voting. This was especially true in the early 1990s when the EC needed to demonstrate unity on several important international issues. Moreover, in order to obtain Greek support or the recognition of other former Yugoslav states, their supporters had to relinquish support for Macedonian independence.

### *Temporary Solution and UN membership*

With the arrival of the democrats in the White House in January 1992, that is, with the election of Bill Clinton as President, the United States' politics towards Macedonia did not go through significant changes, and recognition was not immediate. Progress, however, was made in a different area, namely, the US sent a contingent of 300 soldiers to complement the existing 700 strong UNPREDEP peacekeeping forces. Secondly, it insisted on getting Macedonia in the UN under a provisional name and allow for post-membership permanent dispute resolution between Macedonia and Greece. This approach paved the way for Macedonia's recognition under the provisional name the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (fYRoM) in April 1993. Among the first EU countries to recognize Macedonia under this name were Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy and Holland, one day before Greece took over the rotating EU presidency. The reasons for recognition were attributed to several factors among which, the failure of sanctions against Serbia (Macedonia had been obliged to violate these as an unrecognized state without access to financial assistance from the United States and the EU), but also Greek obstructionism in the name negotiations that stalled any tangible progress. Less than one year later, the US itself recognized Macedonia under the provisional name, opening the prospects for establishment of concrete diplomatic relations. This, however, will prove to be harder than originally planned.

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<sup>1</sup> The question could be posed whether former President George W. Bush would have recognized Macedonia under its constitutional name already in 1992 had it been re-elected. The George H.W. Bush recognized the country the day after his re-election as president of the US, a move judged by several experts as politically safe.

## *From the Geek Embargo to the US-Macedonian Diplomatic Relations*

As a response to the recognition of Macedonia by the US, the Greek government of Andreas Papandreu introduced sanctions against Macedonia in order to force the country into accepting changes of the name and the constitution. In parallel with this, and under strong pressure from the Greek Americans and Greek national pressure groups in the US, President Clinton delayed the establishment of diplomatic relations with Macedonia, and did not send an ambassador to Macedonia.

The eighteen months long embargo ended upon the signing of an interim agreement between Macedonia and Greece in the fall of 1995. A mutual recognition was agreed upon in this accord, Macedonia accepted to change the national flag and the constitution, and both countries agreed to intensify negotiations to end the name dispute. The agreement also incorporated the decision of the US to send an ambassador to Macedonia, and in February 1996 Christopher Hill became the first US ambassador to Macedonia.

US- Macedonian relations have been improving constantly ever since. It is an undeniable fact that the US has helped, and continues to help the economic and political development of the country. To a large extent, the socio-economic, political and military reforms in Macedonia have been conducted with the help (both financial and technical) from the United States. In return, Macedonia has played the role of a close ally of the US in the so called “War on Terror” that began following the attack on the Twin Towers in New York on September 11, 2001. Prior to that, the Macedonian conflict in 2001 was carefully monitored by the US, which, together with NATO and the EU largely contributed to end the conflict and minimize its negative effects.

## *From FYRoM to Republic of Macedonia*

In 2004 The US officially recognized Republic of Macedonia under its constitutional name. The decision was subsequently interpreted as an attempt to strengthen the position of the government in Macedonia before the referendum on the law of territorial division and decentralization of the country, seen as a highly unpopular measure by Macedonians in the country. Many experts thought that the subsequent failure of the referendum was a direct product of the general euphoria and the distraction that was caused by the US’s decision. Others pointed at the fact that recognition came as an expression of gratitude by the Bush administration for Macedonia’s fervent support in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the signed agreement between the two countries to exempt US soldiers from prosecution by the International Criminal Court in Rome. Whatever the reasons may be, this sent a clear signal that the US sees an ally in Macedonia worth stabilizing and supporting, even if assistance comes with strings attached and reciprocal requests for Macedonian support for America’s national interests. **This symbiotic relationship is likely to continue** as long as mutual interests prevail. It is unclear, however, what impact it might have on the Macedonian – EU relations. The “old” EU member states entered into a conflict with the Bush administration over the war in Iraq, threatening to seriously damage the reputation and the future of NATO itself. In moments like that, small countries like Macedonia that have the ambition to join EU and NATO have to make some difficult choices, and thereby risk isolation by one side or the other.

## The American Elections

### *The Democratic Primaries*

As we slowly move toward the famous first Tuesday after the first Monday in November (this year that day is the 4<sup>th</sup> of November), the day when constitutionally US presidential elections take place, the international public's attention again slowly turns to the electoral debates, events, and political sparring that together form the spectacle called US presidential elections. We say 'again' because this time the presidential elections, perhaps for the first time in history, started to attract "fans" as early as last year before the primaries began. The interest only grew as Barack Obama, a son of a black Kenyan father and a white mother from Kansas won the democratic caucus in Iowa and thereby destroyed the myth of invincibility of Hillary Clinton. With his oratory abilities and charisma, the young Barack Obama managed to mobilize certain voting groups that were (and according to surveys still are) ready to support him at the polls – young voters (especially university students), university graduates, African-Americans, independent voters (unregistered as Republican, Democrat or third party members) etc. These primary elections were the most viewed and followed by the international public in history, and judging by the results, were the closest fought. In fact the results were so close that some expected that Obama's slight lead in delegates and popular vote would be overturned at the Democrat National Convention (where the Democratic candidate for president is officially announced) in August of 2008, and that Hillary Clinton would win the nomination. This, however, did not happen, and Clinton, in the interest of the Democratic Party stood behind and supported Obama in his presidential nomination. This was necessary to unite the party that suffered divisions during the primary campaigns, and bring back those who bitterly refused to vote for Obama if Clinton failed to win the nomination. With a characteristically emotional and eloquent speech Clinton managed to do that (results will show), and with that a chapter called the democratic primaries officially ended, only to give way to yet another sensational political development on the campaign trail. This time it was the Republican's turn to attract the public attention, and they certainly succeeded by nominating the Alaska Governor Sarah Palin as the vice-presidential candidate.

### *The Republican Primaries*

The Republican primaries were not nearly as exciting or interesting as the Democratic primaries, largely because the winner was known already in February of 2008, even though his last serious opponent Mike Huckabee did not admit defeat until March this year. Some Republican strategists like Carl Rove, the man most responsible for the success of the George W. Bush campaign in 2000 and in 2004, expressed concern that the

focus on the Democratic primaries may have a negative effect on the Republican candidates as it takes them away from the media spotlight. Perhaps that was on the list of reasons why at the Republican National Convention, John McCain unexpectedly nominated a relatively unknown and inexperienced Governor from Alaska Mrs. Sarah Palin as his running mate, and shocked the public.

The idea for her nomination was probably an attempt to attract the disgruntled female supporters of Hillary Clinton, as well as other women who would be eager to see a woman in the White House. Furthermore, the choice of Sarah Palin was intended to attract the conservative base of the Republican Party that felt McCain was too liberal for their preferences, and who saw Palin as the conservative counterbalance to his liberal leaning tendencies on the issues such as abortion, gun-control, stem-cell research, energy etc. Finally, McCain might have also been inclined to nominate her precisely because of her inexperience and her weak associations with the “old order” and the Washington establishment that was criticized for corruption and inherent inability to deal with the economy and foreign policy issues. McCain himself is considered a “Maverick” because of his tendencies to vote according to his personal beliefs and not in line with his Party’s interests, and even to oppose the President when their views and opinions clash on matters from all walks of life.

Bush’s popularity dropped significantly over the years and these days his approval ratings hover around 24% (equal to that of President Nixon before he resigned from the White House in 1974, and is only two percent higher than the lowest ever approval rate, President Truman’s in 1952)<sup>2</sup>. These numbers sufficiently explain the success of John McCain’s presidential bid as the only Republican candidate who can truly advocate change in the White House’s approach to politics, and perhaps the only one who can seriously threaten the almost guaranteed victory of the Democratic candidate. The constantly changing poll numbers put Obama in a clear lead in most states at the time of the writing of this background note, however polls have proved to be unreliable in the past and the race promises to be interesting to the very last minute.

## Potential Scenarios and Presidential Views

### *Scenario 1 – The Democrats win the Presidency*

Regardless of the consequences for Macedonia, the election of Barack Obama as President of the United States will, in and of itself, represent a historic milestone for United States, and it would signify a break with the past plagued with stories of racial discrimination, oppression and segregation. For the first time in the history of the United States an African American stands a serious change of becoming President, after defeating Hillary Clinton who could have very likely become the first female president in American history.

Unlike the last two American presidents George W. Bush and Bill Clinton, Barack Obama would enter the White House much better prepared and informed on issues of

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<sup>2</sup> CNN Website, “Obama Widens Lead in National Pole”, објавено на: 07/10/08 Линк: <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/10/06/poll.of.polls/index.html>

Foreign Policy. In more recent history only George H.W. Bush had an extensive foreign policy experience coming into the White House accumulated during his years as Vice President under Ronald Reagan, and as a head of the CIA.

Senator Obama, as a member of the Committee on Foreign Relations, Committee on Veteran Affairs and Committee on National Security and Government Affairs is constantly exposed to information and reports intended to familiarize the Senators with the global state of affairs and American foreign policy. His mixed ethnic background and living experience in Hawaii and Indonesia are additional factors that contribute to increasing Obama's interest and sensitivity to foreign policy issues. To what extent that would be a positive thing for the rest of the world it remains to be seen.

### **Barack Obama's views on the most essential foreign policy issues:**

**Iraq** – Obama is in favor of a complete but gradual withdrawal of troops (one to two brigades a month) over a period of 16 months. An opponent of the war from the very beginning, he hopes to bridge the differences that emerged at the onset of the war in Iraq between the US and its allies. His electoral promises include “restoring international respect and the role” that the United States enjoyed before the war. He puts the accent on diplomacy instead of military force and aggressive diplomacy, a method that's seen as characteristic for the Bush Administration.

**Iran** – Barack Obama has declared himself in favor of diplomacy and engagement when it comes with dealing with the issue of Iran. Tensions with Iran arose after the 9/11 attacks and the declaration of President Bush calling Iran a part of the “axis of evil”. Obama was immediately criticised for being naïve for believing that talking to a brutal dictators and terrorism sponsoring states will help America. Obama on his part advocates meetings “at the highest level” in order to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons and threatening Israel with annihilation.

**Afghanistan** – Obama has heavily criticized the Bush administration for failing to stabilize Afghanistan where, he says, “the real war on terror is taking place.” In order to stabilize the government in Kabul and to eliminate the threat of Al Qaeda Obama proposes sending additional troops (one or two brigades) and increase counter insurgency activities in Afghanistan and increase non-military assistance for an additional one billion dollars a year. Obama publically stated that he would be willing to support targeting terrorist groups in Northern Pakistan should the government there be “unwilling or unable” to do so, a statement that earned him criticism from McCain for threatening an important US ally in the war on terror.

**Russia** – Because of the Russian activities in the Caucasus and Central Asia, Russian-American relations sit high on any presidential agenda. Increased petrodollars revenue has caused Russia to reassert its global superpower status mainly through the control of oil and natural gas resources. Obama advocates counterbalancing Russia through employment of more aggressive diplomacy, revitalization and enlargement of NATO, support for democracy and human rights in the region of Russian influence, and finding out alternative energy resources to reduce European and American dependence on Russian oil and gas. Obama hopes that through diplomacy and engagement he would be

able to wield greater influence on Russia, and to convince its leaders to mutually resolve problems of common concern such as Nuclear non-proliferation, fight against terrorism etc.

**The Balkans** – With the arrival of Barack Obama in the White House, US politics towards the Balkans will not change dramatically judging by the statement and the activities of Obama and his vice-presidential running mate Joseph Biden. Some analysts predict the return of Clinton like approach to the Balkans. During the Clinton years Biden was a stout supporter of US interventionism in Bosnia and Kosovo. The Biden-Obama administration signals continuation of the politics of stabilization, democracy promotion, support for economic growth and human rights in the region. Furthermore, they advocate integration in the Euro-Atlantic alliances of all Balkan countries as a means to strengthen their democratic and unitary (in the case of Bosnia especially) character. On the other hand some have expressed their opinion that Obama is skeptical about Kosovo's independence because of the ramifications it might have globally.<sup>3</sup>

**The Greek-Macedonian dispute** – on several occasions Barack Obama has made declarations that can be seen to be supportive of the Greek side in the Greek-Macedonian dispute over the name of Macedonia. However, from the media reports, it is unclear whether his support is exaggerated by the pro-Greek camp to sound more in favor of their cause, which leads to increasing fears among the Macedonians that Obama's administration would take a pro-Greek stance and perhaps even reverse the decision of the US government to recognize the country under its constitutional name. Similarly, as a co-sponsor of a Senate Resolution (S.RES) n. 300 on 03/08/2007 which states that Macedonia (referred to as fYRoM) should stop all activities that violate the interim agreement with Greece from 1995. The resolution is currently submitted to the Committee on Foreign Affairs where usually resolutions with offensive language are not passed, and even in the case it passed it will not have a legally binding effect on the US government.<sup>4</sup>

## *Scenario 2 – The Republicans win the Elections*

According to many analysts the choice of John McCain for President of the United States would signify that America is not yet ready to select an African-American to the White House. This is because, as it stands, Obama and the Democratic party are favored to win because of series of factors that negatively affect the McCain campaign. Among others, the bad state of the economy and the Wall Street crisis is perhaps number one issue this year, followed by the discontent with the developments in Iraq, the inability to bring the war in Afghanistan to a close, failure to capture the main culprit for the 9/11 terrorist attack, Bin Laden and others.

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<sup>3</sup>New Europe, *The McCain, Clinton or Obama Balkan Line?* By Elisabeth Maragoula, link: <http://www.neweurope.eu/articles/83833.php>

<sup>4</sup> This is a so called **Simple Resolution** intended to express an opinion only in the body where it originates (in this case the Senate) , it is **not binding** and usually used to change certain internal procedures and forming new committees.

Should McCain (72) be elected, he would become the oldest president in ascension<sup>5</sup>, and, because of his health issues,<sup>6</sup> this is a much discussed fact among analysts and media. In addition, because of his age and health condition, it was particularly important to see whom he would select to be his vice-presidential running mate. The choice of Sarah Palin, a young Governor of Alaska, unpleasantly surprised his opponents and even some of his supporters. In case of an accident or an inability to perform the function of a president of the United States the duty will fall on her – a fact that many democrats highly resent. While initially her popularity and approval ratings surged, recently they have been gradually declining, a trend that does not bring positivism in the McCain campaign.<sup>7</sup>

McCain and Obama have diverging opinions on most foreign policy issues. Because John McCain is also very familiar with issues of foreign policy as war veteran of Vietnam and a war hero, whoever is elected president, America will get a president who is going to be comfortable making informed decisions in this domain.

### **John McCain's views on the most important foreign policy issues**

**Iraq** – in contrast to Barack Obama's vision of Iraq, John McCain has ruled out any time limitations for a troop withdrawal from Iraq, qualifying such projections as unwise and unproductive. He advocates troop withdrawal once the "mission is over" and in conjunction with the situation on the ground. He was a vocal supporter of the surge of troops in Iraq (20.000 strong increase) and claims that it has worked as levels of violence in Iraq have been subsiding in recent months following the surge. This is in line with Gen. Patreus, the US commander and chief architect of the surge. Nevertheless, on his official campaign website, John McCain mentions January 2013 as a potential date for withdrawal of the troops from Iraq, and he advocates that the UN take a more active role there, especially when it comes to organizing municipal and national elections.

**Iran** – McCain favors a less engaging relationship with the regime in Teheran. He is a proponent of putting intense diplomatic pressure on Iran that would consist of sanctions and international isolation if required to convince Iran to give up the idea of acquiring nuclear weapons. He does not rule out military intervention against Iran in order to protect Israel against an imminent attack, though he stated that he would consult with congress before taking any such steps. He criticized Obama for being willing to meet without pre-conditions with the Iranian president Ahmadinejad, calling him naïve and irresponsible.

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<sup>5</sup> Ronald Reagan was inaugurated for a second time at the age of 73

<sup>6</sup> In 2000 McCain underwent a surgery in order to remove a piece of skin cancer (melanoma) that had affected the left side on his face. The cancer has not recurred since but the concern that he may not be healthy enough for office have continued.

<sup>7</sup> Palin's popularity in the immediate aftermath of her nomination was soaring, and it was attributed to her capacity to bring freshness of ideas and approach to the republican campaign. Recent CNN polls however show that in only one month (from September to October 2008) the number of voters who deem her to be unqualified to be vice-president increased from 27% to 40%. Results available at:

<http://edition.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/10/06/poll.of.polls/index.html?ref=mpstoryview> (last accessed 10/10/2008)

**Afghanistan** – In order to strengthen American military presence in Afghanistan McCain has proposed sending additional troops (three brigades) and doubling the number of Afghan military forces. He said that as president he would nominate a member of the cabinet whose sole responsibility would be to deal with Afghanistan. McCain favors the use of military counterinsurgency tactics employed in Iraq, in Afghanistan. John McCain calls for improving Afghan relations with its neighbors, and developing a long-term strategy to curb heroin production and trade. He favors closer cooperation with Pakistan in order to improve the effectiveness of the fight against terrorist Al Qaeda cells in the border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

**Russia** – McCain believes strongly that Russia is using its energy resources in order to achieve political aspirations for reviving its global superpower status. Through blackmail and active interference in the internal affairs of its neighboring countries Russia is trying to also influence the global price of oil according to McCain. He is in favor of expelling Russia from the G-8 group, and is a proponent of further NATO enlargement to include Georgia and Ukraine. Because of the Russian (and Chinese) obstructions in the UN Security Council that prevent the organization from achieving its basic goals, McCain has called for a creation of a “League of Democracies”, which would be more effective in guaranteeing peace and promoting collective security and economic stability. Regardless, however, of McCain’s rhetoric on these issues, he is also in favor of intense diplomacy with Russia, enhancing economic and cultural cooperation, promoting democracy and economic growth there.

The Balkans – there are no clear indications that Obama and McCain policies with regard to the Balkans diverge drastically. McCain supported President Clinton when the latter decided to intervene in Bosnia and in Kosovo, and he is in favor of independent Kosovo and unitary Bosnia and Herzegovina. In other words his views do not signal a shift from the politics of the present administration vis-à-vis the Balkans as a whole. Perhaps, the idea to form a “League of Democracies” is a direct product of Russian disagreement with the Kosovo issue and the inability of that organ of the UN to function because of the veto power of its permanent members. Like Senator Obama, Senator McCain supports the Balkan integration in NATO and the EU.

**Greek – Macedonian name dispute** – Unlike Senator Obama, Senator McCain has not signed or publically supported Senate Resolution N. 300, and has not publically declared support for any of the sides in the dispute. This is perhaps due to the traditional support that the Republican candidates get from the Macedonian American community in the US, or simply because McCain wishes to continue Bush’s foreign policy strategy for the region. Recently, it was reported that McCain’s senior foreign policy adviser Kori Schake stated that “Greece blocked Macedonia’s admission in NATO... my personal position is that Greece should outdo itself.” On the other hand, Obama’s senior foreign policy adviser Phillip Gordon reportedly said that the US should not be taking any sides in this dispute, and that “a mutually acceptable solution for the name for two parties should be reached.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> MINA Website, “Obama and McCain Advisors on Macedonia and Greece” link: <http://macedoniaonline.eu/content/view/3829/46/>  
www.crpm.org.mk

## Conclusions and Open-ended Questions

The campaign to elect the new president of the United States of America is a long and complicated process. Candidates are constantly scrutinized and subjected to various political checks and examinations that seem to be designed to measure equally their endurance as well as their ability to hold the highest office in the country. Everyone, including the general public, journalists, and analysts, academics, both domestic and international, focus their attention on the elections. Because of the duration of this process frequently the circumstances in various sectors change and thus change, and with them the views and opinions of the presidential candidates, and because of the close media attention, very little of what the candidates say and do is left unnoticed. For example, since the two candidates declared their intentions to run for president (McCain in April 2007, and Obama in February 2007) many events occurred that required the attention of the candidates and the formulation of opinion about how they would handle the issues if elected presidents: declaration of independence in Kosovo, a strategy shift in Iraq, war in Georgia, worsening of the situation in Afghanistan, increase of the price of oil, crisis on Wall Street that affected and continues to do so the rest of the world, etc.

The United States are facing an economic crisis of historic proportions, and a completely new geo-political map of the world since the coming of President Bush to the White House in 2000. Because of the very low public support for the current president, the great success of the Democratic party during the recent congressional elections in the US, the economic crisis and the unpopular war in Iraq, most analysts predict that Barack Obama will win the residency in November. Nevertheless, there was nothing ordinary about the primary elections this year, and it might be the same when it comes to the general elections. At the time of writing of this background note, opinion polls give Obama a ten point lead over his opponent McCain, and show that he is ahead in both delegates and the popular vote. They even show that Obama leads by a slight margin in states that were traditional Republican strongholds. Changes, however, are possible as they depend on many issues and factors that may or may not occur between now and Election Day.

The candidate positions are based on their voting records as well as statements they have made on the campaign trail. At the debates, which are traditionally organized in October (two have occurred at the time of writing of this paper) both candidates explained their vision of the world and what they would do to tackle the global challenges that the US and the world face today. Obama seems to put more focus on diplomacy and dialogue, while McCain, while committed to resolving problems peacefully, gives the impression of a more assertive presidential candidate in favor of aggressive diplomacy, sanctions and military intervention if all else fails. Their differences with regard to Iraq and Iran stand in stark contrast with each other, while they differ slightly less on Russia and not much (if at all) on the Balkans.

With regard to the Greek-Macedonian dispute over the name, Barack Obama's position, is clearly outlined in the text of the resolution no. 300. What is not clear, however, are the motives for this resolution and whether, as president of the United States, he would be willing to put his weight behind a decision to withdraw the recognition of Macedonia under its constitutional name. Senator McCain has not spoken extensively about the issue and does not have the same close ties to the Greek lobby groups in the United States as

Senator Obama has. It is likely that he would be willing to continue on the course of the Bush administration respecting its decision with regard to the name.

In this regard, irrespective of which of these two candidates becomes president of the United States, it is crucial to analyze the position of both candidates and assess the impact of their presidency on the rest of the world, and the direct and indirect consequences for Macedonia. To that end, answering the following questions may prove a good starting point, and a basis for a fruitful and rewarding discussion:

- How will the different visions expressed by the two presidential candidates impact the global status-quo, and what changes could we expect to occur on the global geo-political and geo-economic levels?
- To what extent will these new global changes and global approaches by the next American president affect the Republic of Macedonia?
- Which foreign policy tools does Macedonia have and need to use to secure American support once the leadership in the White House changes?
- Will the support of Barack Obama for Greece, manifested through the S.RES No. 300 result in a withdrawal of the US decision to recognize Macedonia under its constitutional name?

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