

Caught in the Middle

An analysis of the role of the European Union in
the Macedonian name dispute

Dennis den Hartog

5516722

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University Utrecht

Trineke Palm

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ABSTRACT

Contrary to the assumption that the role of the European Union in the Macedonian name dispute was largely the product of Greek foreign policy, this thesis argues that the role was the result of the expectations of multiple parties. In the period between 2005 and 2009, the Macedonian name dispute became entangled with Macedonia's European prospects. Role theory predicts that the EU's role in the dispute resulted from the role expectations held by Macedonia, the European Commission, European Parliament and the member states. These expectations are the views of these actors on the obligations and responsibilities of the EU. They can be found in documents that involve some form of communication between the EU and the respective actor. The expectations of the European Commission and the member states were influential in the forming of the European role. Their passive attitude towards the name dispute nuanced the more outspoken Greek attitude towards Macedonia. The European Parliament and Macedonia had little influence on this process. Therefore, it can be concluded that the role of the European Union was the result of multiple actors.

INTRODUCTION

Since the collapse of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1991, the European Union (EU) has enjoyed a good relationship with Macedonia.¹ The EU viewed the stability of its Balkan neighbour as important for the stability of the region at large. The European desire for a stable Macedonia was formalised in the Stabilization and Association Agreement. This political and economic partnership entered into by Macedonia and the EU in 2001, raised the prospect of the country joining the EU.² The subsequent pace of reform led to the Council of the European Union' decision in 2005 to grant Macedonia candidate status.

This came amid a tense period between Macedonia and its neighbour Greece. Since Macedonia's independence in 1991, Greece had objected to its northern neighbour using the name 'Macedonia'. For Greece, the name 'Macedonia' belonged solely to the northern region of Greece.³ A United Nations-brokered accord normalised the relationship between Greece and Macedonia in 1995. Until a mutually acceptable name could be agreed upon, Macedonia would be referred to as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM).

The prospect of Macedonia joining the EU led to new tensions based in these old grievances. Greece did not want Macedonia to become a member state until a solution to the name dispute was formulated. As a result, Greece used its position in the council to keep the EU from starting accession talks with Macedonia. Greece maintained this position until 2018.

The name dispute and the failure to integrate Macedonia into the EU are closely related. The name dispute is one of the largest contributing factors to this failure. Nonetheless, scholars have pointed out that the EU was also responsible for this outcome. Fotis Mavromatidis argues that the EU failed to act on the name dispute. Greece did not want EU involvement.⁴ Greece needed distance between the EU and Macedonia in order to use its membership as leverage. As long as Macedonia complied with the Greek demands, Macedonia would start accession talks. The EU seemingly was unable to act on this Greek position. Mavromatidis argues that the internal composition of the EU led to this weak position of the union. 'Hence, in spite of the divisions and Commission neutrality [...] it is the Council that

¹ Danijel Tadic, 'Country Reports' in: Jan Marinus Wiersma, *Mapping the Western Balkans and the state of democracies in transition: a social democratic perspective* (EFDS & PES, Amsterdam 2017). 15.

² Tadic, 'Country Reports', 15.

³ John Shea, *Macedonia and Greece: The Struggle to Define a New Balkan Nation* (McFarland Jefferson NC 1997) 3.

⁴ Fotis Mavromatidis, 'The Role of the European Union in the Name Dispute between Greece and FYR Macedonia' in: *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 18/1 (2010) 47.

will take the final decisions.⁵ With the council needing a unanimous agreement on a decision, it was Greece that could force the EU not to act on the name dispute and keep Macedonia from starting talks.

The view that the EU maintained a passive attitude in the name dispute resonates with other scholars. Aristotle Tziampiris argues that Greek membership was vital to the role of the EU.⁶ The EU member states and institutions were presented with a choice in a dispute between a member state and a non-member state. In order to safeguard their own interests in the EU, member states chose Greece. Arjen Uilenreef further develops this argument by looking to the political culture of the EU. He argues that member states exert little or no pressure on member states that are involved in disputes. They prefer to stay out of conflicts in order to secure their relationship with the involved parties. As a result, no initiative is taken.⁷ Member states therefore gave Greece a free hand in drawing up the European attitude towards the name dispute.

Florent Marciacq characterises this attitude as passive and driven by the conditionality of the accession process. The conditionality of Macedonia's entry into the EU was tied to the outcome of the name dispute. By using the solution as a condition, the EU adhered to a policy in which it itself would not intervene in the name dispute and hoped that Macedonia would change its position.⁸

The Greek position in the EU and its own interests in the name dispute resulted in the passive and weak response of the EU and the subsequent failure of quick Macedonian accession. This view, however, has some problems. Even though it is true that the council makes the final decision in the enlargement process, the European Parliament and EC put pressure on the council. The same is true for the internal decision-making of the council itself. While a unanimous decision is needed for a council conclusion, member states still exert pressure on each other behind closed doors. Another problem is the focus on the council's decision in December 2009 in regards to the Macedonian accession talks. The role of the EU in the name dispute is characterised by this decision, but it has been the product of a process that arguably started with the decision to grant Macedonia candidate status in 2005.

Understanding the role of the EU in the Macedonian name dispute requires a broader approach that encompasses other actors than just the council and a larger timeframe than that of the council decision of 2009. How roles are constrained by multiple factors over time is

⁵ Mavromatidis, 'The Role of the European Union' 58.

⁶ Aristotle Tziampiris, 'The Macedonian name dispute and European Union accession' in: *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 12/1 (2012) 157.

⁷ Arjan Uilendreef, *Bilateral barriers or good neighbourliness* (Clingendael The Hague 2010) 27.

⁸ Florent Marciacq, 'The European Union's involvement in the settlement of bilateral disputes in the Western Balkans' in: *ECPR General Conference* (2014) 19.

something that is predicted by role theory. This concept originates from sociology and describes the formation of patterns of behaviour based on the exchange of information between the actor (Ego) and others (Alter). The role of the actor is influenced by the expectations of the others. Liesbeth Aggestam shows that role theory can be very useful in understanding the complex nature of the EU. Aggestam describes how the role of the EU can be influenced by different expectations of the member states, the European Parliament and the EC.⁹ Meanwhile, outside actors, such as Macedonia, can also influence the role of the EU.

Contrary to the assertions in the historiography, the role of the EU in the Macedonian name dispute was influenced by multiple actors such as the commission, the Parliament, the member states and Macedonia itself. The period between 2005 and 2009 is key in understanding the role of the EU in the Macedonian name dispute.¹⁰ The expectations of what the EU should do in regards to the name dispute must have been formulated in these years. To what extent the role of the European Union in the Macedonian name dispute was constraint by these expectations is central to this thesis. In order to understand how the expectations of multiple actors influenced the role of the EU, this thesis is divided into four chapters.

In the first chapter, role theory is further explored by looking at the analytical tools necessary to analyse the main question. This chapter explains role theory to make it useful for this analysis. In the second chapter, Macedonia's role expectations are examined by looking at how Macedonia expressed its view on the name issue towards the EU. In the third chapter, the role expectations of the European institutions, namely the EC and European Parliament, are analysed by comparing their recommendations and resolutions in relation to Macedonia. In the last chapter, the expectations of the EU member states, including Greece, are analysed by looking at how the issue was handled by the Council. In the conclusion, the influences of all the expectations are weighted by comparing the expectations.

Looking for the expectations of Macedonia, the member states and institutions, the sources had to be some form of communication between the EU and the respective communicator. In the case of Macedonia, the minutes from the Joint Parliamentary Committee of Macedonia and the EU were used. The expectations of the European Parliament and EC were found in their respective reports and resolutions. In order to understand the more closed-door meetings of the council, diplomatic communiques from WikiLeaks were used to unearth the meanings of Council decisions. By looking at these expressions, it is possible to understand

⁹ Liesbeth Aggestam, 'Role theory and European foreign policy' In: Ole Elgström and Michael Smith (eds) *The European Union's roles in international politics: concepts and analysis* (Routledge London 2006) 13.

¹⁰Tziampiris, 'The Macedonian name dispute' 154.

role expectations and how these, in turn, constrained or enabled the EU's role in the Macedonian name dispute.

CHAPTER I

Theoretical Framework: Role theory, the European Union and the Macedonian name dispute

Roles are social constructs. They are the products of interactions between the actor and the other. The expectations of the other regarding the obligations and duties of the actor have as much influence on the role of the actor as the actor itself.¹¹ This means that the role of the European Union (EU) in the Macedonian name dispute is not only the product of Greek pressure, but the role is also influenced by the expectations of Macedonia and the rest of the EU member states and institutions. How these expectations influenced the role of the EU is central to this thesis.

Because role theory can be very abstract and difficult to apply to any given situation, this chapter puts role theory in context. It explores the analytical tools necessary to understand the role expectations of the involved countries and institutions. Before role theory can be applied to the case of the Macedonian name dispute, the background of role theory and its methodological problems should be addressed and understood. By doing so, it is possible to construct the theoretical framework for this thesis.

The background of role theory

Role theory was developed by sociologists in the 20th century. The theory tried to explain how the behaviour of the actor (Ego) was influenced by the other (Alter).¹² According to this theory, the actor has a conception of what he or she is obligated to do. Based on this conception, the actor wants to fulfil a role. Let us take, for example, a mother. A mother finds herself obligated to take care of her children. However, through expressions on these obligations of the actor, the other formulates role expectations. These expectations influence the way the actor sees him or herself. In the example of the mother, it is possible that the father finds the mother too protective of the children. As a result, the mother rethinks the way she takes care of her children. The behaviour of the actor is then altered through the expectations of the other.

¹¹ Aggestam, 'Role theory and European foreign policy' 11.

¹² Cameron Thies, 'Role Theory and Foreign Policy' in: *International Studies Association Compendium Project* (University of Iowa 2009) 2.

Kalevi Holsti was the first to apply this theory to international relations. In *National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy*, Holsti proposes a framework that offers a broader understanding of the topology used by historians and international relations specialists to describe the international system.¹³ According to Holsti, terms like aligned, non-aligned, liberator and aggressor do not mean much on their own.¹⁴ Holsti proposes a framework based on national role conceptions and their interactions with the role expectations of others. Instead of using the traditional topology, Holsti tries to explain the roles by adding characteristics, such as passive or active, to the behaviour of countries. This way, terms like 'aligned' can have more meaning.

Holsti's work was seen as a milestone. Although some scholar saw it as having the potential to bridge the gap between structure and agency, criticism also increased Naomi Wish points out that there are topological and methodological problems with applying a theory that was developed in a completely different field.¹⁵ Holsti uses the typology in such a way that different roles hint at a state's different levels of involvement in the international system. Furthermore, not all problems can be tackled with the same role-theoretical approach. Holsti's typology that is defined by active or passive roles limits the scope of role theory. The promise of role theory faded.

Nonetheless, some scholars did work on different models that could be more specifically applied to the international system and its actors. Under the influence of constructivism, academics showed that role theory could very well be used to understand and organise existing cases. The case of the EU stands out. The curious nature of the EU has puzzled scholars for decades. Because the EU is not a nation-state, but not exactly an international organisation either.

Liesbeth Aggestam was one of the scholars that tried to make sense of what the EU represents in the international system. In Aggestam's model, the starting point is the role conception of the actor. This is the perception of the actor's own obligations and duties.¹⁶ Applying these perceptions to a certain situation leads to the role performance. This is the strategy and policy as formulated by the actor. The performance is influenced by role expectations. These expectations are the demands from involved others and enable or constrain the performance of the actor. Besides the expectations, there can be contestation from within that affects role performance. The EU is composed of multiple layers of

¹³ Kalevi Holsti, 'National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy' in: *International Studies Quarterly* 14/3 (1970) 234.

¹⁴ Holsti, 'National Role Conceptions' 234.

¹⁵ Naomi Wish, 'Foreign Policy Makers and Their National Role Conceptions' in: *International Studies Quarterly* 24/4 (1980) 535.

¹⁶ Aggestam, 'Role theory and European foreign policy' 12.

decision-making. Aggestam argues that contestation can take place between institutions themselves, such as the Council, Commission and Parliament, and between the Council and member states as well. All these factors combined create role performance.¹⁷

While Aggestam does not solve the methodological critique of role theory, she shows that using role theory can organise and broaden the understanding of existing cases. In the wake of Aggestam, Nicole Koenig applies the model to the Libyan crisis of 2011 and the involvement of the EU in it. Koenig shows that careful use of role theory can be a very useful tool to organise and understand existing problems.¹⁸

Applying role theory

Role theory can bring together several aspects to clarify and understand the role of the EU in the Macedonian name dispute. In the historiography, multiple factors, such as the influence of Macedonia, the Commission and the Parliament on the role, have been overlooked. Role theory predicts that all these factors have influenced the role of the EU. By using Aggestam's model, the more specific nature of the EU is taken into account. Nonetheless, role theory should be used carefully.

The starting point of such a framework is the EU's role conception. It includes the self-imagined duties and obligations of the EU. These are based on the shared European values that are described in EU treaties, policies and agreements. The conception is the basis on which the EU builds its policies.¹⁹ In the case of the Macedonian name dispute, this role conception entails values that are exemplified by the Stabilization and Association Agreement between Macedonia and the EU. This includes the adherence to national sovereignty, good neighbourliness and peaceful conflict settlement. These values underline the basis on which the EU would act in its relationship with Macedonia.

Based on these principles, the EU formulate a policy when conflict arises. The Macedonian name dispute escalated between 2005 and 2009, in the time between the Council's decision to grant candidate status and its decision to postpone accession talks. In this period, the EU would have formulated a policy based on these principles and influenced by the involved actors. In the name dispute, the Council would have been the single most important decision-maker. The Council holds the power of the enlargement of the EU.²⁰ Because the name dispute mainly escalated in the context of enlargement, the

¹⁷ Aggestam, 'Role theory and European foreign policy' 14.

¹⁸ Nicole Koenig, 'Between conflict management and role conflict: the EU in the Libyan crisis' in: *European Security* 23/3 (2014) 250.

¹⁹ Koenig, 'Between conflict management' 254.

²⁰ Koenig, 'Between conflict management' 255.

Council had the final say in what to do with Macedonian accession. The Council is responsible for the policy set in the Macedonian name dispute and therefore created the European role performance in the dispute.

As argued by scholars, this role performance was mainly passive and characterised by the link between the solution in the name dispute and the accession process. Although no known policy documents exist from the Council, its decision of 9 December 2009 can be seen as exemplifying:

Maintaining good neighbourly relations, including a negotiated and mutually acceptable solution on the name issue, under the auspices of the UN, remains essential. The Council is encouraged by recent positive developments concerning the relations between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.²¹

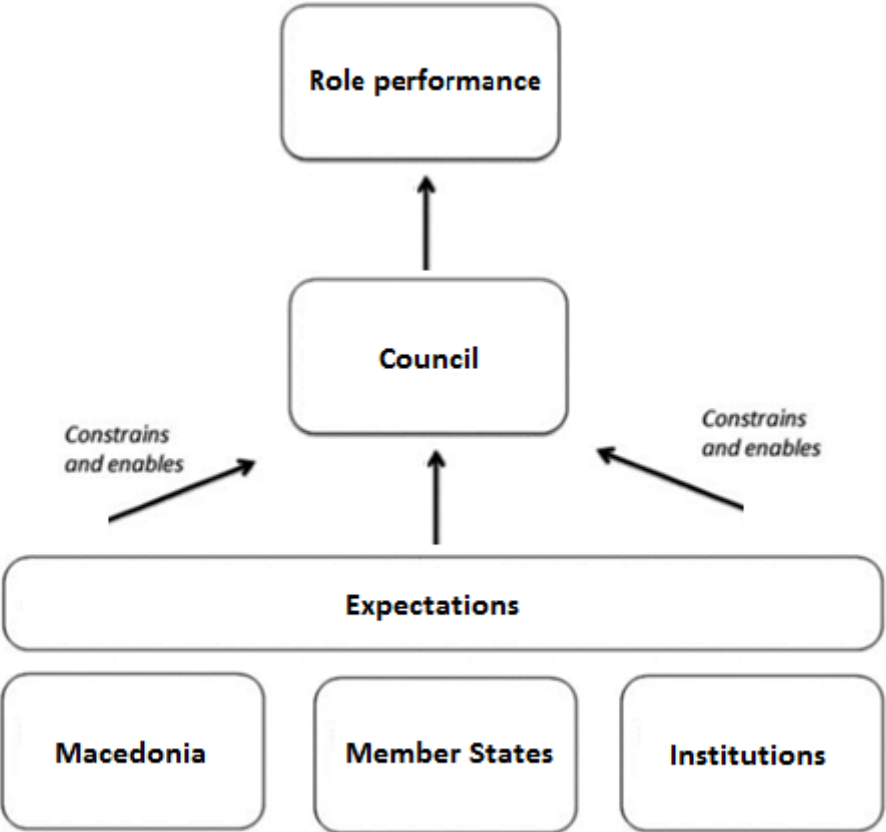
Thus the Council called upon Macedonia to continue its pace of reform while adhering to good neighbourliness in order to solve the name dispute. It is hinted at in the document that the solution in the name dispute is key in the accession process. This is contrasted with the passivity of the EU in the process. Nowhere is it hinted that the EU would support a process towards a solution. Macedonia would have to manage the dispute by itself, even implying a step further, that Macedonia should resolve the dispute in order to join the EU. The Council's decision of 9 December 2009 is the closest the EU came to a policy document on the Macedonian name dispute.

A quick comparison between the role conception and role performance shows that there are differences. The EU did not play an active role as a peaceful mediator and champion of national sovereignty. Instead it called for good neighbourliness and made Macedonia responsible for solving the name dispute on its own. This gap between role conception and role performance is the result of the role expectations of others.²² In the case of the name dispute, the most obvious other would be Macedonia. The country would foster certain ideas about what the EU should do. Greece, on the other hand, would also have its own ideas on the name dispute. The main difference between Greece and Macedonia is their positions on the European Union. While Macedonia was an outsider, Greece was a member state that could communicate its expectations to the Council. In the

²¹ Council of the European Union, *Council decision on the Principles, Priorities and Conditions Contained in the European Partnership with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*. In: Public Register of the Council of the European Union 17169/1/09 REV1 (9 December 2009) 6.

²² Aggestam, 'Role theory and European foreign policy' 12.

Council itself, Greece would have found other expectations form other member states. Other actors involved that could have constrained the performance were the EC and Parliament.



1. A schematic overview of the theoretical framework used in this thesis

One way of looking for these expectations is through statements on the obligations and duties made by relevant others and the EU. These are the explicit expectations.²³ They can be found without much analysis. Explicit expectations are contrasted by the implicit expectations, which are indirectly communicated through comparisons and complaints and which have to be read between the lines. The extent of the expectations should also be taken into account. How specific are the expectations? What is the scope of the expression of the expectations? And are the expectations based on normative or empirical arguments? These questions will reveal much about the intent of the actor.²⁴

²³ Thies, 'Role Theory and Foreign Policy' 9.
²⁴ Ibidem 9.

Categorising roles

Categorising these expectations is the last important aspect of role theory. This thesis uses role types that describe certain characteristics in their most ideal forms. In reality, these role types deviate. Therefore, they serve as guiding tools in this thesis.

The **passive role** is characterised by the fact that the name dispute is mainly seen as a bilateral issue. The EU should not be involved in any way. Instead it should support the United Nations-sponsored negotiations. The responsibility for solving the name dispute lies both with Greece and Macedonia. The passive role is not neutral. The EU effectively accepts the Greek position that undermines its own agenda in Macedonia. Greece gets the leverage of Macedonia and determines the conditionality of Macedonia's accession.

This is contrasted by the **intervening role**. Instead of accepting the Greek position and giving Greece the option to formulate the conditionality of Macedonia's accession, this role is characterised by Europe's opposition to link the name dispute and the European perspective. By acknowledging that the Greek position is also hurting the EU's policy towards Macedonia, the EU takes a multilateral view of the dispute. It views the Greek position as unsustainable and supports the Macedonian view that the dispute should quickly be settled, placing the responsibility for solving the dispute more in the Greek corner.

Contrary to this more Macedonian-focused role is the **solidarity role**, which is supportive of Greece. Like the previous one, this role is characterised by its multilateral view of the name dispute but agrees with the Greek position that there can be no accession without a solution. This links the name dispute with the accession process in the hope that it will drive Skopje towards a solution. This makes Macedonia responsible for solving the name dispute on short notice. Instead of viewing the Greek position as unsustainable, this role promotes solidarity among EU member towards another EU member.

Conclusion

Role theory is well suited for organising and understanding existing problems while remaining aware of their limitations. Taking into account all these aspects of the Macedonian name dispute using Aggestam's theoretical approach results in a framework with a focus on role expectations. The expectations of Macedonia, the member states, including Greece, and the European institutions besides the Council influenced the Council's approach to the dispute. In this thesis, these expectations are central in understanding what constrained the EU in the name dispute. In order to label the role

expectations, three ideal role types are used. The **passive role** is characterised by the fact that the name dispute is mainly seen as a bilateral issue. The **intervening role** is characterised by its opposition to link the name dispute and the European perspective. The **solidarity role** is supportive of Greece.

CHAPTER II

The Macedonian expectations

As singular as the Macedonian name dispute appears to the outside observer, for Macedonians, the name dispute exists on different levels. On the national level, the name 'Macedonia' is of paramount importance to the national identity. It sets Macedonians apart from their Slavic neighbours in Serbia and Bulgaria. On a bilateral level, the name dispute has dominated the relationship between Greece and Macedonia. But with rising trade connections between the two countries, the dispute is more symbolic than political. It is on the international level that Macedonia has endured the most problems with the name dispute.²⁵ Greece has used the name dispute to keep Macedonia out of the European Union (EU) and NATO. Biljana Vankovska calls the name dispute a battle between David and Goliath as result of the Greek position in the Euro-Atlantic world.²⁶

Macedonia's position as an outsider to the EU makes its expression of expectations towards the EU different than those of the other actors in this thesis. Macedonia had one shared forum with the EU that exclusively could be used to address problems in the relationship: the Joint Parliamentary Committee between the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the European Union (JPC).²⁷ This body was founded in 2005 as part of the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the goal to 'promote contacts and discussions [...] transfer messages to the Council, or the European Commission, and they can express concerns about shortcomings in the preparation of accession'.²⁸ Before addressing the expectations in this chapter, the JPC is discussed in context of the European-Macedonian relationship. For an analysis of the Macedonian expectations, this chapter therefore uses the JPC meetings as the starting point for understanding the talks between the EU and Macedonia on the name dispute.

²⁵ Biljana Vankovska, 'David vs. Goliath: The Macedonian Position(s) in the So called "Name Dispute" with Greece' in: Dragan Antonov (ed), *The Name Issue Revisited: An Anthology of Academic Articles* (Macedonian Information Centre Skopje 2013) 195.

²⁶ Vankovska, 'David vs. Goliath' 195.

²⁷ European Parliament, *Information note on the work of the EU-The Former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee (2004-2009)* in: European Parliament Archive (5 October 2009) 3.

²⁸ European Parliament, *Information note* ' 3.

The relationship between the EU and Macedonia

By 1991, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was crumbling. With Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia and Slovenia declaring their independence, the map of southeast Europe changed significantly. In order to deal with the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the European Community (EC) (after 1992 the EU) created the Arbitration Commission of the Peace Conference on Yugoslavia, or the Badinter Commission.²⁹ The goal of the commission was to judge whether the newly formed republics could be recognised as sovereign nations. Of the four republics, the commission advised the EC to recognise Slovenia and Macedonia.

The recognition of the Republic of Macedonia by the EC proved to be difficult. Greece, an EC member state since 1981, objected to the recognition. According to Greece, the newly independent republic unlawfully used the name 'Macedonia', which allegedly belonged exclusively to the northern region of Greece. By using the name 'Macedonia', Athens argued that Skopje could make historical, cultural and irredentist claims.³⁰ With the EC wanting a unanimous decision with regards to the recognition, the other member states found themselves at odds with Greece. Portugal tried to compromise with Greece by pushing for a solution in which the EC would recognise Macedonia by another name like Nova Macedonia. Greece was, however, not prepared to compromise on any name that would involve the word 'Macedonia'.

With the EC unable to find a compromise with Greece, several countries moved the issue to the United Nations.³¹ The proposed resolution 47/225 of the General Assembly of the United Nations arranged that 'the State whose application is contained in document A/47/876-S/25147' would be provisionally referred to as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, or FYROM.³² Most European countries recognised Macedonia under its temporary name from 1993 onward. Greece did not normalise its relationship with Macedonia until 1995, when a UN-brokered interim accord arranged that Greece would recognise Macedonia under its temporary name and would not obstruct Macedonia from joining international organisations. In turn, Macedonia would accept negotiations under UN auspices with the goal of finding a mutually acceptable name.³³

²⁹ Alain Pellet, 'The Opinions of the Badinter Arbitration Committee A Second Breath for the Self-Determination of People' in: *EJIL* 3 (1992) 178.

³⁰ Jane Cowan, *Macedonia: The Politics of Identity and Difference* (Pluto Press, London 2000) 52.

³¹ Cowan, *Macedonia*, 53.

³² United Nations, *Admission of the State whose application is contained in document A/47/876-S/25147 to membership in the United Nations*. In: UN resolutions and documents A/RES/47/225 (8 April 1993)

³³ In this thesis the name 'Macedonia' will be used to refer to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). Subsequently the adjective 'Macedonian' will also refer to FYROM.

In the wake of the interim accord, the EU became one of Macedonia's most important partners. While most of the former Yugoslavian republics were at war in the 1990s, Macedonia managed to keep the peace with the support of a UN stabilisation mission. In 1999, the UN forces left the apparently stable country, only to create a vacuum in which ethnic tensions rose between Macedonians and Albanians.³⁴ The EU wanted to fill the gap that was created by the leaving UN forces. Brussels offered Macedonia a pathway towards stability through the SAA. Skopje signed the agreement in 2001. An Albanian insurgence broke out in the northern part of the country in that same year. With military support from NATO, the EU was able to pressure the Albanian rebels and the government in Skopje into signing a peace accord: the Ohrid agreement. The subsequent EU-led support missions, Concordia (2003) and Proxima (2005), stabilised the country further.³⁵

After the Macedonian government signed the Ohrid accord and SAA in 2001, the country relied on the EU for political and economic support. For the political elite in Skopje, it became clear that the future of the country should be tied to the larger European family. Both major parties in the country, the nationalist VMRO-DPMNE and social-democratic SDSM, committed themselves to this European perspective. In turn, the EU committed itself to the integration of Macedonia during the Balkan conference in Thessaloniki in 2003: 'The countries of the region fully share the objectives of economic and political union and look forward to joining an EU that is stronger in the pursuit of its essential objectives and more present in the world'.³⁶ The declaration showed a common goal and desire.

The relative success story of Macedonia and the EU was contrasted with the remaining problem of the name dispute. Within the EU, there was a sense that the name dispute was an episode that had been settled with the interim accord in 1995.³⁷ Subsequent meetings between European and Macedonian leaders failed to mention the name dispute. Meanwhile, the bilateral relationship between Greece and Macedonia was still heavily influenced by the dispute. Negotiations under the auspices of the UN set up by the interim accord were no nearer to a solution. The passivity of the EU in regards to the problem was controversial in Macedonia.

³⁴ Andrea Ciambra, 'Normative power Europe: theory and practice of EU norms. The case of Macedonia' in: *Jean Monnet Working Papers in Comparative and International Politics* 64 (2008) 15.

³⁵ Ciambra, 'Normative power Europe', 16.

³⁶ European Commission, *Summit between the EU and Western Balkan* in: European Commission Press Release Database 10229/03 (21 June 2003)

³⁷ Mavromatidis, 'The Role of the European Union' 58.

The first president of the young republic, Kiro Gligorov (1991–99), wrote that he did not foster high expectations of the European countries after Macedonia gained its independence: ‘the “name dispute” is a good example of the cold welcome that Macedonia received’.³⁸ This attitude was shared by Minister of Foreign Affairs Ljubomir Frčkoski (1996–97), who managed the department in the aftermath of the 1995 interim accord: ‘[The EU] tolerates spoiled, egoistic and lofty nations, which do not know any other politics towards their smaller neighbours [...] except the use of pressure, profit and blackmail’.³⁹

The relationship between Macedonia and the EU was then characterised by a shared goal of integration while still clouded by the name dispute. The Greek ambassador to Skopje described the name dispute to his Macedonian counterpart as being an ‘elephant in a room that everybody tries to ignore’.⁴⁰ In this atmosphere, the first JPC meeting took place in March 2005.

The first meetings (2005–07)

In the opening statement by the Greek member of Parliament who chaired the first JPC, Georgios Papastamkos, it became clear that the name dispute would not be one of the main topics. He rather addressed the name dispute in a properly diplomatic way. He noted ‘that differences over the name of the country still existed [...] and urged that an agreement be reached within the framework of the United Nations.’⁴¹ Papastmakos continued with the tasks of the JPC. The newly formed committee would focus on issues like the integration of Macedonia into the EU, internal political developments in Macedonia, the process of economic reforms, the implementation of the SAA and the liberalisation of the visa regimes.⁴² The remarks by Papastmakos set the stage for a Macedonian response. However, the Macedonian opening statement did not reference the name issue at all.

This short episode from the first JPC meeting is a strong example of the first encounter between members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and Macedonian members of Parliament (MPs) and how they handled the name dispute. It set the standard for addressing the name issue by noticing the dispute while not condemning any countries

³⁸ Vankovska, ‘David vs. Goliath’ 210.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, 210.

⁴⁰ Vankovska, ‘David vs. Goliath’ 217.

⁴¹ EU-The Former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee, *1st meeting 30-31 March 2005 minutes*. In: European Parliament Archive PE 358.296 (21 June 2005) 4.

⁴² EU-The Former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee, *1st meeting 30-31 March 2005 minutes*, 6.

or their respective positions. This example set by the first JPC can be found throughout subsequent meetings.

When MP Zoran Krstevski raised economic issues in southern Macedonia that he related to the Greek embargo of 1994–95, he could have called it exactly that: sanctions related to the name issue. However, instead he referred to it as ‘the closure of the border with Greece’,⁴³ something that still acknowledges the existence of a problem but not by framing it as such. Another example can be found in the issue of visa-free travel for Macedonian citizens. The EU chair noted ‘the difficulties faced by citizens of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia due to the non-recognition by Greece of its passports, the situation linked with the name issue’.⁴⁴ In reaction to this statement, the deputy prime minister of Macedonia stated, ‘The topic of the liberalisation of the visa regime is of high importance for the citizens, negotiations now being on their way together with the finalising of a readmission agreement, strengthening cross-border cooperation and modernising the republic’s border management.’⁴⁵ It is noticeable that the Macedonian deputy prime minister did not address the name dispute itself.

Deviations from this standard nonetheless still occurred in the JPC setting. Officially, the EU used the name ‘Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia’ and its acronym FYROM to refer to the country.⁴⁶ According to the first JPC, this was the protocol for all subsequent JPC meetings. The ambassador of the mission of Macedonia to the EU, Sasko Stefkov, thought something different, however, during a preparatory meeting for the second JPC in November 2005.⁴⁷ His task was simple: inform the JPC about the current state of affairs in Macedonia. However, he brought up the name of the country several times, referring to the Republic of Macedonia instead of its temporary name. This resulted in a heated debate between several delegations’ members from Macedonia and the EU.⁴⁸ As other names were used both by members and by the ambassador, the chair repeatedly called the meeting to order, insisting that only the name Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia/FYROM be used. This incident had, however, no effect on the

⁴³ EU-The Former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee, 3rd *meeting 29-30 January 2007 minutes*. In: European Parliament Archive PE 379.379 (11 May 2007) 6.

⁴⁴ EU-The Former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee, 3rd *meeting 29-30 January 2007 minutes*, 6.

⁴⁵Ibidem 7.

⁴⁶ European Parliament, *Information note on the work of the EU-The Former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee (2004-2009)* in: European Parliament Archive (5 October 2009) 3.

⁴⁷ EU-The Former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee, 1st *meeting 30-31 March 2005 minutes*. In: European Parliament Archive PE 358.296 (21 June 2005) 4.

⁴⁸ EU-The Former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee, 1st *meeting 30-31 March 2005 minutes*, 6.

subsequent JPCs, signalling that the Macedonian MPs adhered to one way of dealing with the name dispute.

Subsequent meetings (2007–09)

The tone of the JPC meetings changed noticeably after 2007 when the bilateral dispute was escalating.⁴⁹ This was most noticeable in the way Macedonian MPs were increasingly uncomfortable with the Greek position in the committee. The European co-chair of committee was taken by Antonios Trakatellis, another Greek MEP. This was against the wishes of the Macedonian delegation: ‘The European Parliament Co-chair of the Committee should have been replaced by a non-Greek MEP’.⁵⁰ The European delegates defended their choice by arguing that the co-chair was elected by the other European members and could therefore not be replaced.

In subsequent meetings, the Macedonian delegation expressed the view that Greece had been counterproductive in the negotiations, still under the UN’s auspices: ‘[The Macedonian delegation notes] the importance of solving the country’s name problem wishing that Greece would be more open’.⁵¹ The delegation addressed for the first time the MEPs with the message that the Greek position was the problem in the name issue. But Macedonia did not use the JPC to send a message only to the EU but also towards Greece. ‘He further raised the name issue and argued that the use of "Republic of Macedonia" in international relations during the last 16 years had confirmed that it did not pose any threat to Greece.’⁵² Arguably, the Macedonian remarks opened a new way of openly dealing with the name dispute in a European setting. The JPC became a forum to express Macedonian grievances.

The role of the EU with respect to Greek behaviour was also addressed by the Macedonian delegation. As one Macedonian MP stated, the EU ‘were tacitly accepting Greece’s behaviour’.⁵³ For the first time the EU was made responsible for the Greek position and its problems for Macedonia. This was also linked to the accession process itself. ‘Mr Drimitrov also referred to the name issue stressing that it was not part of the conditions for the accession to the EU. He emphasised the importance of the EU keeping

⁴⁹ Tziampiris. ‘The Macedonian name dispute’ 153.

⁵⁰ EU-The Former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee, 3rd *meeting* 29-30 January 2007 *minutes*, 6.

⁵¹ EU-The Former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee, 7th *meeting* 18-19 February 2010 *minutes*. In: European Parliament Archive PE 427.383EN (1 December 2010) 2.

⁵² EU-The Former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee, 7th *meeting* 18-19 February 2010 *minutes*, 5.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, 10.

the door open for the country.⁵⁴ The Macedonian delegation was making the EU delegation more aware of the impact the name issue had on the Macedonian prospects of joining the EU.

Therefore, it can be concluded that during the period of 2005–10 the name issue in the JPC changed in several ways. Macedonia was very cautious in bringing up the name dispute at first. There was an understanding between the delegations of properly addressing the name dispute. This changed over time with the bilateral dispute escalating. Macedonia was openly denouncing the Greek position in both JPC and UN negotiations after 2007, resulting in a more antagonistic stance. The EU was also made aware of its responsibilities in the name dispute, even though the Macedonian MPs never fully addressed the EU's role.

The Macedonian expectations

The way Macedonian MPs handled the name issue in the JPC can be seen as a cross-section of how political parties in Macedonia viewed the name dispute and its relationship with the EU. The views expressed in the JPC can be seen as the expectations these political parties shared. The gradual shift over time in the way the Macedonian MPs approached the EU with respect to the name dispute hints at changing role expectations.

The first period between 2005 and 2007 is characterised by a mutual understanding between the European delegation and the Macedonian delegation on how to address the name dispute. This understanding was mainly based on the interim accord of 1995. By adhering to these principles, it could be argued that the Macedonian delegation tried to convey a message that the name dispute should not be part of the JPC. This is mostly evident through the avoidance of the name dispute by the Macedonian MPs during several dispute-related issues, like the visa regulations and the economic hardship endured during the 1990s. By keeping the name dispute out of the JPC, Macedonia was keeping the EU out of the name dispute. These characteristics fit the passive role for the EU in the name dispute.

This role expectation is however contrasted by the second period, between 2007 and 2010. The mutual understanding between the EU and Macedonia faded during these years. Macedonia became more antagonistic towards Greece. The name dispute was brought up several times by the Macedonian delegation, even if it was not part of the

⁵⁴EU-The Former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee, *7th meeting 18-19 February 2010 minutes*. In: European Parliament Archive PE 427.383EN (1 December 2010) 2.

discussion. Macedonian MPs complained in the JPC that the Greek position was unsustainable and foremost the largest obstacle in the UN negotiations. Also, Greek committee members were frequently attacked for their country's position in the name dispute. Through these remarks, Macedonia was conveying another message than in the years before. This message focussed on the problems Macedonia had with Greece in the escalating name dispute.

Macedonian MPs argued that Greece was the problem in both the UN negotiations and the start of the accession process, showing the EU that the Greek position was unfair and unsustainable. This is evident in several comments on Greece's positions in the negotiations and the non-harmful nature of the existence of Macedonia itself. Macedonia built up its efforts to convince the EU, in changing its position in the name dispute. This was further emphasised by the remarks of Macedonian MPs that it was the EU's compliance with the Greek position that created the difficult position for Macedonia. The EU would be the only party that could act on it. The status quo was not going to help Macedonia join the EU. Brussels should therefore act on Greece's behaviour. This signals that Macedonia viewed the name dispute in multilateral terms. These characteristics of the Macedonian expectations towards the EU fit the intervention role.

Conclusion

The relationship between the EU and Macedonia was complicated. The growing political and economic ties that led to the candidate status of Macedonia in 2005 were still contrasted by the difficult situation surrounding the name dispute. In the JPC, this difficult relationship was noticeable with regard to the name dispute. At first, the Macedonian delegation largely avoided the name dispute, trying to keep the EU as far from the dispute as possible. Nonetheless, this attitude changed over time under the influence of the escalating name dispute itself. Delegation member states called out Greece's flaws in the negotiations. Even the EU was accused of contributing to the name dispute by not speaking out against the Greek attitude.

Thus Macedonia made the European delegation aware of what it saw as the EU's responsibility in the name dispute. From this development, certain characteristics emerged. Macedonia slowly started to view the name dispute as a multilateral conflict instead of bilateral. Greece was made the responsible party in the dispute, with the EU being responsible for the Greek behaviour by not acting. Conclusively, Macedonia's expectations were an intervening role type.

CHAPTER III

The expectations of the European Commission and European Parliament

The European Commission (EC) and Parliament are regarded as the supranational institutions of the European Union (EU). They should uphold EU values and translate these into a policy that furthers EU interests. In that regard, both institutions are champions of enlargement. The EC had been the main architect of the partnership with Macedonia since the late 1990s. The institution, with its control over external aid policy, was well equipped for the formulation of a long-term vision for the country. Under the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) and the Ohrid accord, the Commission supported requests from the Macedonian government for military assistance.⁵⁵ This resulted in the first-ever military support mission under the EU flag, the CONCORDIA mission in 2003. From this mission, it would only take two years for the Commission to recommend that the Council grant candidate status to Macedonia. The Commission was a great patron of Macedonia in Europe. The European Parliament (EP) supported this pro-Macedonian attitude.⁵⁶ Members of European Parliament (MEPs) were, in general, positive towards greater EU involvement in the country.

This chapter turns to the Commission and Parliament to examine their views on the European role in the Macedonian name dispute. In order to find out whether the EC and EP had complying views of the name dispute, this chapter looks into annual progress reports on Macedonia. Under the SAA, the Commission published since 2005 annual reports on the progress in Macedonia. In these reports, the name dispute was often mentioned. It is useful to analyse the views of the Commission on the issue. In response to these reports, Parliament adopted resolutions every year, expressing its own opinion on the progress. The name issue is mentioned in these resolutions as well. By comparing the resolutions with the reports, not only will the expectations of both actors become apparent but also the contestation between them and the subsequent effects on the role performance.

⁵⁵ Ciambra, 'Normative power Europe', 12.

⁵⁶ Mavromatidis, 'The Role of the European Union' 61.

The view of the Commission

The official position of the EC on the Macedonian name dispute followed the general international position: The dispute should be handled by Macedonia and Greece under UN auspices.⁵⁷ Arguably the first time the Commission in an official capacity addressed the name dispute was in the 2005 analytical report on Macedonian accession prospects. As the institution that drives the enlargement process and accession negotiations, the Commission could not ignore the dispute. The policies and opinions of the EC aim to strengthen the bonds between members and encourage countries on the European periphery to cooperate.

In the case of the name dispute, these two goals of the EC were at odds. On one hand, the Commission approached the dispute as a bilateral conflict, which Greece and Macedonia should resolve on their own terms. This was the logical view to take, assuming the EC would follow the international position on Macedonia. Furthermore, the Greek position was an important consideration. On the other hand, the dispute was undermining the interests of the Commission. It was the Commission that set out the European perspective for Macedonia. It was the EC that had focussed on the future of Macedonia. The basic principles on which the Commission should act resulted in contradicting role expectations. These two opposing views on the name dispute are prevalent in the Commission's reports between 2005 and 2009.

The view that the conflict was bilateral and should be outside the realm of the EU was based on the belief that the 1995 interim accord would protect Macedonia.⁵⁸ According to Article 11 of the accord, Macedonia would be free to join any international organisation under its temporary name. If Macedonia could enter the EU under Article 11 of the agreement, the name dispute would be a problem for the Commission's goals. The Commission advised Macedonia to step up its efforts to solve the dispute but mostly noted that the two countries had grown closer over the years. 'Relations with Greece have improved in the last few years. Greece is the most important investor in the country (57% of the total foreign investments) and trade has been constantly increasing.'⁵⁹ The EC argued that under these conditions a compromise could be made in the near future. In this context, the Commission viewed the dispute as essentially being between Greece and Macedonia. Interference would not be necessary.

⁵⁷ Tziampiris. 'The Macedonian name', 156.

⁵⁸ European Commission, *Analytic report for the Opinion on the application from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for EU membership*. In European Commission Key Documents SEC (2005) 1425 (9 November 2005) 4.

⁵⁹ European Commission, *Analytic report for the Opinion on the application from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for EU membership* 6.

This bilateral view of the dispute is also evident in the way the Commission addressed the issue in the reports. The Commission always referred to the negotiations under UN auspices when addressing the dispute.

Renewed efforts are needed, with a constructive approach, to find a negotiated and mutually acceptable solution on the name issue with Greece, under the auspices of the UN, within the framework of UN Security Council Resolutions (EEC) No 817/93 and (EEC) No 845/93.⁶⁰

More interesting is the fact that the Commission called for new efforts in the UN-sponsored negotiations. Since 1995 these negotiations had gone nowhere and the prospect of a solution from this framework seemed not very likely. However, instead of offering EU-sponsored negotiations, the EC called for renewed efforts, signalling that the Commission adhered to the fact that the conflict was bilateral and not multilateral. In this context, the Commission formulated the position that Greece and Macedonia should find a 'mutually acceptable solution to the name issue'.⁶¹

With the impending Greek boycott of the Macedonian accession talks around 2008, it became clear that Article 11 would not safeguard Macedonia. The start of the accession talks was in danger. Greece formulated the position that, without a solution, there would be no accession.⁶² This was against the goal of the Commission to enlarge the union. But with the final decision lying with the Council, there was not much that the Commission could do. And condemning the Greek position would be unprecedented. In this context, the EC formulated a new position.

The Commission started to encourage Skopje to step up its efforts: 'With a constructive approach, to find a negotiated and mutually acceptable solution on the name issue with Greece'.⁶³ It became apparent that the accession talks started later than first thought. The Commission emphasised that Skopje should stay committed to the pace of reform. The Commission recommended to the Council for the first time in 2009 that accession talks with Macedonia could be started because the country had met the

⁶⁰ European Commission, *Commission staff working document: The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2007 Progress Report*. In: European Commission Key Documents SEC(2007) 1432 (6 November 2007) 12.

⁶¹ European Commission, *Commission staff working document: The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2007 Progress Report*, 12.

⁶² Tziampiris. 'The Macedonian name', 156.

⁶³ European Commission, *Commission staff working document: The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2006 Progress Report*. In: European Commission Key Documents SEC (2006)1387 (8 November 2006) 3.

requirements. It soon became clear that Greece would boycott the advice of the Council. Enlargement commissioner Olli Rehn remarked in reaction to the growing uncertainty over Macedonia's future, 'I trust that the government in Skopje will take this as a very strong encouragement to finally settle the name issue'.⁶⁴

This remark was a turning point in how the Commission viewed the name dispute. Instead of keeping the EU out of the dispute, the Commission hoped that through the prospect of EU accession, the difficulties of the name dispute could be overcome. It conveyed a strong message towards Macedonia that it was responsible for its own future in the EU. By sending this message, the Commission was no longer viewing the dispute as bilateral. Instead the Commission viewed the dispute as disrupting the accession process and as therefore now also a European problem. However, in its effort to balance its own basic principles, the Commission chose to side with Greece, thereby making Macedonia responsible for a solution in the name dispute. The EC went from a *passive role type* to a *solidarity role type* between 2005 and 2009.

The reaction of Parliament

While the EP was less involved in the possible accession talks for Macedonia, it was still well informed on Macedonia-related issues through the Joint Parliamentary Committee and Foreign Affairs Committee. In reaction to the annual progress report of the Commission, Parliament adopted resolutions on the progress of Macedonia. The name dispute was often mentioned in these resolutions.

In several ways Parliament addressed the name dispute differently than the Commission. The first main difference can be seen in how Parliament characterised the dispute. Even when the Commission took a multilateral view of the dispute, it addressed it in the internationally agreed-upon bilateral way. This is contrasted by the pragmatic approach of Parliament, 'including a negotiated and mutually acceptable solution on the name issue, on the basis of its international undertakings [...] multilateral commitments and obligations'.⁶⁵ It signals that Parliament took in the larger context of the dispute. The name dispute was not only in the realm of the Greek-Macedonian relationship. The EP acknowledged the fact that the dispute could not be an isolated conflict in which the two countries were left to their own devices. Through the growing need for a solution in the

⁶⁴ 'Rehn's final advice: 'No discount' on enlargement' In: Euractiv 26 November 2009. Retracted 12 November 2018. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/news/rehn-s-final-advice-no-discount-on-enlargement/>

⁶⁵ European Parliament, *Resolution of 23 April 2008 on the 2007 Progress Report on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* in: European Parliament Archive 2007/2268(INI) (23 April 2008)

European context, it is arguably impossible to see the dispute without consequences for Macedonia from a Euro-Atlantic perspective. As stated by MEP Panagiotis Beglitis, ‘The question of the name is not a bilateral matter between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The framework for the solution has been shaped by [...] the relevant decisions by the European Union’.⁶⁶ The remarks of Mr Beglitis are essentially the opposite of the Commission’s standpoint.

A second main difference can be found in the relationship between the name dispute and the accession talks. ‘This unresolved matter must not be an obstacle to Macedonia’s accession.’⁶⁷ In several resolutions, the EP called for the admission of Macedonia into the EU based on the Copenhagen Criteria of 1993 and not the Greek demand for a solution and then accession. ‘[The name dispute] should not obstruct accession or take precedence over the process of European integration.’⁶⁸ The EP opposed the position taken by the Commission on solving the dispute. Instead of bending towards the Greek position, Parliament was more critical of the Greek position. By separating the name dispute from the accession process, the EP opened up the possibility of a different kind of approach towards the Macedonian name dispute.

Instead of only referring to the relevant UN resolutions and the interim agreement, Parliament further reiterated that certain norms underlie the basis of the EU and its external relations. One of these aspects was the concept of sovereignty of a country. Parliament underlined the fact that most countries in the world had recognised Macedonia under either its temporary name or constitutional name, thereby confirming that Macedonia was fully sovereign over its own territory. According to Parliament, this sovereignty entails that ‘each state chooses its name in freedom’.⁶⁹ Any negotiations between Greece and Macedonia should give the latter the opportunity to choose (at least parts of) its name. This does not mean that a solution should only be beneficial for Macedonia. The solution should always be mutually acceptable. This followed the principle of good neighbourliness. Every country has the freedom to act on its own interests but

⁶⁶ European Parliament, *Debates Wednesday 11 July 2007*. In: European Parliament Archive A6-0214-2007 (11 July 2007)

⁶⁷ European Parliament, *Debates Wednesday 11 July 2007*.

⁶⁸ European Parliament, *Resolution of 12 March 2009 on the 2008 progress report on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*. In: European Parliament Archive 2009/C 87 E/29 (12 March 2009).

⁶⁹ European Parliament, *Resolution of 23 April 2008 on the 2007 Progress Report on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* in: European Parliament Archive 2007/2268(INI) (23 April 2008).

must always consider its relationship with its neighbours. Both countries should take historical and cultural arguments into consideration when it comes to the name issue.⁷⁰

By placing the name dispute in the context of sovereignty and good neighbourliness, the EP set the stage for a new type of EU involvement in the dispute by referring to ‘European ideals’; the EP made it clear that no involvement in the dispute was not possible. The EU is responsible for adherence to these principles. In 2009, the EP wrote in its resolution, ‘The European Union should be ready to assist in the negotiation process’.⁷¹ This desire to assist in the dispute was the result of adhering to the EU principles. By following these principles, the EP expressed its expectations of the EC. The expectations are characterised by multilateralism, a belief that a solution should be found by both parties based on international principles and a belief that the EU could not be kept out of the dispute. Therefore, Parliament fostered an *intervening role type*.

Conclusion

The EC and EP had different approaches towards the name dispute. The role expectations of Parliament were far more persistent. The characteristics of the expectations also differed. Both the Commission and Parliament eventually fostered multilateral views of the dispute, even though those of the EP were more explicit. The EP advocated a European role in which the name dispute should be solved in a framework that adheres to European norms instead of the stick-and-carrot approach of the Commission. These two role expectations are at odds with each other. The EP was explicit in stressing its opinion on the name dispute, which signals that it wanted its expectations to be heard. This is also underwritten by the scope of the expectations. In all resolutions in reaction to the progress reports, the EP dedicated several paragraphs to the name issue. Nonetheless Parliament did not influence the Commission much. The EC took notice of the EP’s attitude but did not act on it. As result, the attitude of Parliament was less influential on the EU policy in the name dispute than on the Commission.

⁷⁰ European Parliament, *Resolution of 23 April 2008 on the 2007 Progress Report on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* in: European Parliament Archive 2007/2268(INI) (23 April 2008).

⁷¹ European Parliament, *Resolution of 12 March 2009 on the 2008 progress report on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*. In: European Parliament Archive 2009/C 87 E/29 (12 March 2009).

CHAPTER IV

The expectations of the member states

The Council of the European Union played a large role in the formulation of the role of the European Union (EU). The institution had the final say at the start of Macedonia's accession process. With the accession process being closely associated with the name issue, the Council was of paramount importance. This decision was formalised on 9 December 2009.⁷² The Council did not start the accession process, as the result of the outstanding name issue. Greece had prevented the Council from voting for the start. In the Council, such a decision should be passed unanimously. Greece took advantage of this and boycotted the start of the accession process, thereby setting up the role of the EU in the Macedonian name dispute.

While in the historiography the assumption is made based on the nature of the Council that the Greek role expectations translated into the policy of the EU towards the name dispute, role theory predicts a more complex picture. The other EU member states have influenced the process, and therefore the Greek expectations would have been constrained. Understanding the role expectations of the other member states is important. The Council is, however, a secluded body. Minutes from Council meetings are not publicly accessible for years to come. An analysis of the role expectations of the rest of the EU members should be done differently. In recent years, WikiLeaks has made numerous United States Embassy documents publicly accessible, including several documents on the council's decision on the Macedonian name dispute. By using the documents, it is possible to reconstruct the role expectations of other countries.

The Macedonian name dispute in the Council

Before the expectations can be addressed, the way the Council addressed the name dispute should be analysed. Since the start of the name dispute in the early 1990s, EU members struggled with the conflict. In 1991, the Badinter Commission argued that European countries could recognise Macedonia because it fulfilled all the criteria of a sovereign nation.⁷³ This was contested by Greece. The EU member states were faced with choosing between solidarity and the legal advice of the Commission. As a result the EU was divided into countries that recognised Macedonia by its constitutional name (Republic of Macedonia) and those that

⁷² Council of the European Union, Council decision on the Principles, Priorities and Conditions Contained in the European Partnership with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In: Public Register of the Council of the European Union 17169/1/09 REV1 (9 December 2009) 6.

⁷³ Alain Pellet, 'The Opinions' 178.

recognised Macedonia by its temporary name (the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, or FYROM). Germany, France, Italy, the Low Countries and the Iberian Peninsula chose to follow the Greek position and recognised the country in 1993 as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Great Britain, Ireland, Sweden and Austria did not follow this position and recognised the country by its constitutional name. The recognition of Macedonia signals that the Council was divided between its members on the name issue.

One of the most significant moments in the relationship between the Council and Macedonia was the Council's decision of 12 December 2005: Macedonia was granted candidate status.⁷⁴ The Council thereby adopted the recommendations made by the Commission in 2005. It is noticeable that the Council did not refer to the name dispute in its final decision. Other important areas of political and economic interest are mentioned in the document. The absence of the name dispute from the decision of 12 December is remarkable. The only indirect note to the name dispute is the adaptation of the recommendations of the Commission, which includes the name dispute, by the Council.

Other Council decisions on the partnership agreement between the EU and Macedonia in 2006 and 2007 follow this pattern of not mentioning the name dispute. Instead of referring to the name dispute, the Council adopts the relevant passages from the Commission recommendations.⁷⁵ The Council followed the Commission's view on the issue. However, the council did not always follow the recommendations of the Commission. This is best exemplified by the Council's conclusions of 9 December 2009:⁷⁶ The Council would not start the accession process of Macedonia. The conclusion of 9 December is also one of the few times the Council addressed the name dispute in official documents. In a paragraph dedicated to the improvement of regional cooperation, the Council wrote:

Maintaining good neighbourly relations, including a negotiated and mutually acceptable solution on the name issue, under the auspices of the UN, remains essential. The Council is encouraged by recent positive developments concerning the relations between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Council of the European Union, *Council decision on the Principles, Priorities and Conditions Contained in the European Partnership with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* In: Public Register of the Council of the European Union (15274/1/05 COWEB 218) 7 December 2005. 7

⁷⁵ Council of the European Union, *Council decision on the principles, priorities and conditions contained in the Accession Partnership with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and repealing Decision 2006/57/EC*. In: Public Register of the Council of the European Union 2008/212/EC (18 February 2008) 3.

⁷⁶ Council of the European Union, *Council decision on the Principles, Priorities and Conditions Contained in the European Partnership with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, 4.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem* 4.

The shift from not mentioning the name dispute to the inclusion of the name dispute in the conclusions of 9 December signals that the name dispute was one of the factors contributing to postponing the accession talks. It was one of the first times the Council addressed the name dispute properly. It hints at the fact that the Council, like the Commission, linked the accession of Macedonia to the solution of the name dispute. This fact can also be found in a communique from the US embassy in Brussels: 'The Council Secretariat's analysis is that the best chance for a solution on the name will come at the end of this year, between a (presumably) positive Commission avis',⁷⁸ making Macedonia responsible for solving the name dispute in order to join the EU and thereby defying the EU's role in the dispute.

The Greek expectations

The Greek expectations were important for the role formulation of the Council. These expectations have been understood in the context of Greek foreign policy towards Macedonia, which was contradictory.⁷⁹ The relationship was dominated by increased economic partnership between the two countries, with Greece being by far the largest foreign investor in the country and trading partner. This strong and good economic relationship was contrasted by the political bitterness of the name dispute. Athens and Skopje did not even face each other in direct negotiations.⁸⁰ The Greek Balkan policy also led to numerous frustrations in the relationship with the EU. Numerous diplomats claimed over the years that the Greek position was not sustainable.

This curious Greek policy must be understood in its context. Greece is relatively isolated from the rest of Europe in geographical terms. As the only EU country in southeastern Europe, Greece has to deal with a difficult geopolitical region. The Yugoslav conflicts of the 1990s and the disputes with Turkey had a profound influence on Greek foreign policy. With all these conflicts closer to home than to the rest of Europe, Greece had a foreign policy that was more driven by its own short-term national interests.⁸¹

As much as Greece depended on its own strength in the region, a large part of its foreign policy influence was the direct consequence of its EU membership. Its membership status, accompanied with veto power in the EU, was a powerful foreign policy tool,⁸² something that was exemplified in its approach towards the EU in the name dispute.

This leverage position was obvious in Greece's relationship towards Macedonia. If Greece was able to withhold Macedonia from membership, it had the upper hand in the

⁷⁸ United States Mission to European Union, *Greece pushing Macedonia name issue with EU*. In: Wikileaks Cables 05/Brussel/1550 (20 April 2005)

⁷⁹ Mavromatidis. 'The Role of the European Union' 47.

⁸⁰ Ibidem 49.

⁸¹ Ibidem 49.

⁸² Ibidem 51.

negotiations over the name dispute. As long as Skopje depended on the EU for financial and political support, Greece used its position and the dependency of Macedonia on the EU to maintain at least the status quo, in which the EU does not recognise Macedonia by its constitutional name.⁸³ By firmly maintaining the status quo, Greece placed the responsibility of solving the name dispute mostly in the Macedonian corner.

In order to maintain the status quo, Greece had to keep the EU mostly separated from the issue. Athens approached this goal by linking the name solution with the accession of Macedonia itself, something that can be directly observed in the conclusions of the Council of 9 December 2009:

In addition to reiterating previously stated conditions for Macedonia's progress in the accession process, leaders also acquiesced to Greek demands to include a statement underscoring that 'maintaining good neighbourly relations, including a negotiated and mutually acceptable solution on the name issue remains essential'.⁸⁴

The discussion of whether to include this paragraph in the Council's conclusion led to an allegedly heated debate. Even though there are no transcripts available of this discussion, it can be assumed that with the addition of this paragraph, Athens directly made clear what it expected from the EU.

This is further exemplified by another Greek request that did not make it into the final conclusions: "The Greeks are seeking to add a reference to the "UN arbitrator Matthew Nimetz's most recent proposal" (or something to that effect), calling it "a good basis for negotiations".⁸⁵ By pushing for the addition of this sentence in the final conclusions, Greece could use the EU to communicate its message to Macedonia. Multiple times, Greek delegations pushed for EU pressure on Macedonia. "The Greeks have also approached Solana, asking for him to pressure Skopje to respond positively to "Nimetz's proposal".⁸⁶ Athens wanted the EU to play as the extension of its own foreign policy agenda. This happened through direct explicit requests to the EU.

⁸³ Tziampiris. 'The Macedonian name dispute' 151.

⁸⁴ Council of the European Union, *Council decision on the Principles, Priorities and Conditions Contained in the European Partnership with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, 6.

⁸⁵ United States Mission to European Union, *EU Council of 24 June 2008*. In Wikileaks Cables 08/US-EU-BRUSSELS 959 (24 June 2008)

⁸⁶ United States Mission to European Union, *EU Council of 24 June 2008*.

The expectations of the member states

When the Greek expectations are compared with the expectations formulated in the Council documents, it becomes clear that they are not a perfect match. The Council's framing of the issue is far more general and not specific, which is exemplified by the omission of the Greek reference to Nimitz's proposal. This hints at the fact that other EU members were opposed to the Greek expectations. Opposition towards the Greek position is also evident in the fact that several EU countries had recognised the constitutional name of Macedonia instead of the FYROM. Support for the Greek position was wearing thin with the member states. According to the unit chief for southeast Europe Thomas Schnoell, from the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the general European attitude towards Greece was fading around 2009: 'EU member states are growing increasingly impatient with Greece for its insistence on blocking Macedonia's EU path because of the name issue.'⁸⁷

Documentation from the US embassies in Europe show that American diplomats often were confronted with these grievances. The Slovenian minister of foreign affairs Dimitrij Rupel expressed his frustration that 'the Greeks are making everybody suffer' as a result of their behaviour towards Macedonia and the EU. Rupel expressed that this was all possible and accepted because the 'EU felt they had to side with Greece because Greece is part of the family'.⁸⁸ The attitude was apparently shared by the United Kingdom. According to a cable from the US embassy in London, the British were frustrated with the EU's complacency with Greece. In turn, London hoped that joint efforts between the United Kingdom and the United States could pressure Greece. In the meantime, London would 'lobby other EU members to exert influence on Athens'.⁸⁹ Both the Slovenian and British appeals show that there were expectations in the EU to actively pressure Greece towards a solution. However, frustrated by the other EU members, both countries turned towards the United States for help.

The frustrations of both countries originated from the broad number of countries that wanted to keep the EU as far from the conflict as possible. According to one Dutch diplomat in contact with the US embassy in Brussels, most EU members were frustrated with the Greek position but not willing to go against it.⁹⁰ Instead they preferred to keep the EU position towards Macedonia as neutral as possible, while still supporting Greece in some capacity to maintain solidarity among the member states. This, in fact, would mean that these countries

⁸⁷ United States Embassy Austria Vienna, *Austria Supporting Macedonia's EU Membership and Resolution on Name issue* In: Wikileaks Cables 09/Vienna 1491 (23 November 2009)

⁸⁸ United States Embassy Slovenia Ljubljana, *Slovenian FM Looking Forward to U.S.-EU Summit*. In: Wikileaks Cables 08/Ljubljana/235 (28 June 2008).

⁸⁹ United States Embassy United Kingdom London, *HMG Will Continue To Engage With Athens and Skopje on Macedonia Name*. In Wikileaks Cables 08/London/1112 (11 April 2008).

⁹⁰ United States Mission to European Union, *EU Council of 24 June 2008*.

would allow Greece to boycott the accession of Macedonia in order to maintain the unity of the so-called European family.

Germany appears to have been at the centre of this position. German delegations admitted that the official government stance agreed with the US position that the Greek position was not sustainable within the framework of international law but that Germany was not prepared to get overly involved in a bilateral conflict with a fellow EU member state: 'Germany had no plans to actively lobby the parties'.⁹¹ Several EU members, like the Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden, expressed the same desire to keep the EU out of the dispute.

Conclusion

The Council of the European Union formulated the EU's role in the Macedonian dispute. The formulation fits the description of the passive role type. The passive role was compatible with the Greek position and its expectations, which can be characterised as the solidarity role type. Contrary to the assumption in the historiography, Greece was not completely responsible for this. Greece wanted a far more explicit condemnation of the Macedonian attitude in the name dispute. This was the result of the expectations of other member states.

The majority of EU member countries adhered to the bilateral nature of the dispute. This fits the passive role type. Only a small number of EU countries opposed the Greek position and chose a role in which the EU would mediate. All three types of roles existed among EU members. As evident in case of the Greek request for adding sentences to the final conclusions of the Council, all these role types interplayed with each other. Even though most of the countries fostered the passive role type, and this translated into the Council's expectations, this did not mean that Greece was free to do to what it wanted. It is possible that the expectations of countries like Great Britain countered the Greek position.

⁹¹ United States Embassy Germany Berlin, *Germany To Take Back Seat in Ongoing Macedonia Name Dispute* In: Wikileaks Cables 09/Berlin/1496. (24 November 2009)

CONCLUSION

The European Union (EU) was one of the most important players in Macedonia since the United Nations pulled out in 1999. The country was offered a pathway towards stability and possibly EU membership through the Stabilisation and Association Process. The effectiveness of the EU policy was proven during the 2001 Albanian Insurgency. The EU-brokered Ohrid accord ended hostilities between the government in Skopje and the Albanian rebels. The Ohrid accord became the backbone of the EU-Macedonian relationship and laid the foundation for deeper EU involvement in the country. Economic and political reforms in Macedonia cleared the way for the Council to grant Macedonia candidate status in 2005. In reacting to the growing European prospect of Macedonia, Greece feared for its position in the Macedonian name dispute. Greece opposed Macedonia's accession if there would not be a solution to the dispute. In the escalating tension, the Council did not start accession talks.

This Council decision made on 9 December 2009 can be seen as the closest the EU ever came to formulating a policy towards the Macedonian name dispute. It can be summarised as a passive attitude towards the name dispute, while making Macedonia responsible for solving the issue as soon as possible. This was against the background that the Council would not start accession talks until the name issue was solved.

Historians and international relations specialists alike have seen this performance as a failure of European foreign policy. Fotis Mavromatidis attributes this failure to institutional weaknesses. Greece had the final say in the Council, thereby making the EU comply with the Greek position. He concludes, 'Hence, in spite of the divisions [in Parliament] and Commission neutrality [...] it is the Council that will take the final decisions'. This resonates with other scholars in the field. But when role theory is applied to the situation, another more complex picture emerges: the European Commission (EC), European Parliament and the other member states in the Council of the European Union. Analysing all the expectations of the involved actors should show how role expectations formed the EU policy towards the Macedonian name dispute.

In order to label the role expectations, three ideal role types were used. The passive role is characterised by the fact that the name dispute is mainly seen as a bilateral issue. The intervening role is characterised by its opposition to link the name dispute with the European perspective. The solidarity role is supportive of Greece.

As an outsider, Macedonia expressed its expectations through other channels. As part of the Stabilization and Association Agreement, Macedonia and the EU formed the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) in 2005. Through the JPC, Macedonia could express its expectations. During the first JPC meetings, Macedonian MPs mainly avoided the name dispute, signalling that they wanted to keep the dispute primarily bilateral. Under the influence of an impending Greek boycott of the accession process, Macedonia changed its attitude. Macedonian MPs openly denounced the Greek stance in the JPC and blamed the EU for allowing Greece to maintain this attitude, thereby implicitly making the EU the only actor that could act on the stalemate between Greece and Macedonia. Macedonia implicitly made the dispute multilateral and called on the EU to pressure Greece.

Under the influence of Article 11 of the 1995 interim accord, the EC did not want the EU to act on the name dispute. It is possible that the early Macedonian role expectations strengthened the EC's belief in a passive role type. The impending Greek boycott also changed the EC's role expectations. The Greek position pushed the EC towards a position in which it also linked the accession process with a solution to the name dispute. The direction chosen by the EC was the result of upholding solidarity in the EU at the expense of the enlargement policy. This solidarity role type was made explicit by EU Commissioner for Enlargement Oli Rehn in 2009. European values like the adherence to sovereignty and good neighbourliness drove the European Parliament to oppose the Greek position. Instead, it denounced the link between the name dispute and the accession process, thereby opening a new kind of EU involvement in the dispute. Parliament hoped that the EU could assist the two countries in finding a solution. This intervening role type was made explicit by calling for EU readiness in a 2009 resolution on Macedonia.

Greece expressed its expectations through the Council. Its approach towards the EU was dual. It needed the EU for its leverage over Macedonia, while maintaining a certain distance between the EU and the name dispute. Greece used its position in the Council to link the name dispute with the start of the accession talks. This way, Greece pushed the EU into pressuring Macedonia into compliance. A majority of the EU member states did not want to be involved in the bilateral dispute. This gave them a certain degree of freedom to formulate their positions. Nonetheless, opposition from a minority of member states prevented Greece from formulating the entire policy. Countries like Great Britain pushed for a more pragmatic stance.

While the impact of the contestation within the Council is directly visible in the policy itself, the expectations of Macedonia and the European Parliament are less so. The EC seemed to have some impact on the Council policy. Even though the Commission recommended the start of accession talks in 2009, much of its formulation about the name dispute made it into the Council's decision. Even before 2009, the Council's references to the name dispute were

directly adopted from the Commission's report. This hints at the fact that the Council, and therefore the policy, was influenced by the role expectations of the Commission. The role expectations of Macedonia and Parliament did not influence the policy as much as the Commission's expectations. There is no clear evidence that the Council took notice of Macedonia's and European Parliament's expectations, even though their expectations were outspoken.

Even if the influences of Parliament and Macedonia had been less explicit, this thesis shows that the picture is far more complex than it set out to be. The expectations of the Commission influenced the Council decision. The same can be said for the member states. Therefore, it can be concluded that the role of the EU was influenced by more actors than Greece alone. Future research could focus more on the direct influences of all the actors. If the minutes of the Council become public, a deeper understanding of the role of the EU in the Macedonian name dispute will be possible.

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