

Chapter 7

The Prespa Agreement and Resolving the Macedonian Name Dispute: An Analysis Through the Lenses of Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism

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ABSTRACT

This chapter focuses on the case of solving the Macedonian name conflict, in which FYROM was renamed to North Macedonia, and the crisis was resolved to gain Greek approval. Opponents in Greece, however, worried this would allow a closer approach of multi-ethnic states, which would include North Macedonia in NATO, an objective reached with the help of this treaty excluding Greek veto. The main issue

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involved identity and nationality, more specifically, what a 'Macedonian' sense of self and language are. To understand the underlying reasons for the agreement, the study utilizes Graham Allison's analytical framework from "Essence of Decision: This paper is concerned with dissecting the Cuban Missile Crisis and evaluates the same using the lenses of realism, liberalism, and constructivism. It should also be noted that these theories provide information on the strategic, economic, and cultural factors that surrounded the signing of the agreement. Using these paradigms, the research provides the rationale for the agreement and its subsequent geopolitical consequences.

INTRODUCTION

On June 17, 2018, the Greek PM Alexis Tsipras and the FYROM Prime Minister Zoran Zaev inked a crucial deal at the border at Lake Prespa. The renaming of FYROM to North Macedonia, effective February 12, 2019, marked the finality of a long stalemate. The two countries informed the United Nations that they had implemented the agreement, finalizing this process. Since FYROM declared its independence in September 1991, there has been controversy over whether the country's name should be 'Macedonia,' which is anathema to Greece. Greece held this position because Macedonia was considered a Greek word and should only be used by Greeks. Greece successfully achieved this by signing the new Prespa Agreement in 2018, replacing the interim agreement from 1995, and officially adopting the new name "*Republic of North Macedonia*" (BBC 2019). The agreement stipulated that the people of North Macedonia would continue to use the name Macedonians and refer to their language as Macedonian. Moreover, Greece agreed to endorse North Macedonia's association with the international organizations that Greece is a member of, focusing mainly on North Macedonia's membership in the European Union (EU) and NATO. In addition, both countries reaffirmed their border as the earthly, natural, and definitive international border (Athens 2019).

After 27 years of discussions, North Macedonia signed the Prespa Agreement, offering an extensive and acceptable compromise on the naming issue that had compromised bilateral relations and the country's membership in the EU and NATO. The solution to this problem is considered a positive and crucial step for the improvement of stability in the region, as well as the factor that allowed North Macedonia to move forward in the subsequent stages of EU integration. Nonetheless, it met a lot of resistance from the two countries about the agreement. Special attention was paid to the name issue, especially in northern Greece, more specifically in Macedonia and around Thessaloniki. In the past, Greek governments have shied away from the naming issue due to numerous concerns inside the country, particularly political party

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