

WIDER EUROPE

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RESOLVING THE MACEDONIAN NAME DISPUTE

The visit of Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou to Washington in March came at an important time for both capitals. While Washington is looking for progress in the western Balkans, Athens is seeking support from the U.S. as it experiences prolonged criticism from inside the European Union for its financial crisis.

One of the topics on the U.S.-Greek agenda is the twenty year dispute between Athens and Skopje over the name of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). The country is recognized by its constitutional name, the Republic of Macedonia, by 130 countries, including the U.S., but in major international institutions it is categorized as FYROM.

While Greece has been seeking a geographical qualifier for the adjusted name that will dissipate any lingering claims to Hellenic heritage or Greek territory, the government in Skopje has declared that the country and its Slavic Macedonian inhabitants would lose their national identity as a result.

In fact, three distinct questions will need to be dealt with in any bilateral resolution – first, the country's actual name, such as the Republic of Northern Macedonia; second, the uses of that name in international diplomacy, foreign trade, passports and other documentation; and third the relevant adjective and noun for the language and nationality of the Slavic Macedonians.

The name issue has become important for Washington as the Obama administration understands that the longer the question remains unresolved the greater the chance for political instability inside Macedonia, especially if the Albanian population becomes increasingly alienated from the Slavic majority. There is a danger that the bi-ethnic coalition government could fracture if the country continues to be excluded from the benefits of NATO and EU membership.

Washington already faces potential state fracture in Bosnia-Herzegovina and needs to manage Kosova's slow progress toward international institutions. It therefore wants a speedier path for Skopje into NATO and the EU to highlight its Balkan successes.

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The Curse of Katyn

From The Washington Times , April 14, 2010

By Janusz Bugajski



Polish Honor Guard standing at the casket of President Lech Kaczynski

The tragic death of Polish President Lech Kaczynski, together with dozens of military commanders, politicians and top advisers, has fixed the spotlight on the Katyn massacre of 70 years ago and the context in which it occurred. This will have a sobering effect on Polish-Russian reconciliation unless all the facts about World War II are finally acknowledged by leaders of the Russian Federation - the legal inheritor of the Soviet Union.

While Russian leaders celebrate the 65th anniversary of World War II Victory Day in Moscow on May 9, awkward questions will be asked about the infamous Soviet-Nazi alliance that made World War II possible. In recent years, the Kremlin, in claiming Russia's "great power" continuity, has sought to downplay or disguise the origins of the war. Indeed, official statements and history books continue to depict the Soviet Union as a victim and victor rather than as a co-conspirator with Hitler when it invaded Poland in September 1939, murdered tens of thousands of Polish citizens and deported more than a million into Siberian exile.

The air crash near Katyn will refocus Polish-Russian relations and give new urgency to recent moves by both capitals toward reconciliation. Indeed, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin had been lauded for inviting Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk to a commemoration

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REACHING OUT TO BELARUS



It is time for Washington to engage more intensely with Belarus and encourage the country's emergence from hibernation. Belarus is seeking closer ties with Western institutions in order to preserve its independence from an assertive Russia and to ensure social stability during a growing economic crisis. If Belarus is unable to maintain its national sovereignty and succumbs to mounting pressures from Moscow then the country's fragile democratic seeds will have no chance of germinating within a political framework dictated by Moscow.

During the past two years, Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka has tentatively reached out to the EU and U.S. despite being consistently and correctly criticized for thwarting political pluralism and violating human rights at home. But it is a misnomer adopted by the Bush administration to claim that Belarus is the last dictatorship in Europe. In reality, that label belongs to Russia whose leaders assert that they have established a unique model of non-Western development and are determined to sabotage budding democracies along Russia's borders that could prove attractive to its own citizens.

In protecting himself against Western pressure for democratic reform and to guarantee economic stability, Lukashenka initially pushed for a Union State with the Russian Federation. However, the joint state barely functions because of fundamental rifts between Minsk and Moscow that appear to be widening. While Lukashenka expected a symmetrical arrangement between equal partners in which Belarus would preserve its freedom of maneuver, the Kremlin seeks either to incorporate Belarus as another federal Russian unit or to ensure a permanently pliant government that rejects Western institutions.

Lukashenka has resisted Russian business penetration of the Belarusian economy or any forfeiting of national control over energy infrastructure to state-owned Russian companies. This has placed him at loggerheads with Moscow which seeks economic and energy monopolies across the former Soviet Union. The close link with Russia was maintained because the Belarusian economy has been subsidized through low energy prices - a vital component in preserving domestic stability. However, in recent months a vital pillar of the bilateral relationship was removed as Moscow decided that it would charge full export duties on crude oil refined in Belarus for export to the West. This could cost Minsk several billion dollars in lost earnings.

Russia's leaders calculate that the energy weapon will stymie Lukashenka's turn westwards and increase his dependence on Moscow. However, instead of discouraging Minsk's overtures to the West, Kremlin policy may have the opposite effect. The next few months will be critical as insufficient revenues in a largely state-run economy begin to impact on living standards, productivity, and exports. While the Kremlin will use the brewing economic crisis to push Minsk to conform to its demands, Lukashenka may decide to play the national card to ward off Russian designs.

Belarusia's state controlled media will point the finger at Moscow for the economic decline and seek to rally the pro-independence constituency. Support for Belarusian sovereignty appears to be growing and not only among intellectuals and urban dwellers. The rural and small town populations, which forms Lukashenka's core base, may fortify the non-Russian position if it is convinced that Moscow is deliberately damaging the Belarusian economy.

Russia's leaders are unlikely to remain passive if Lukashenka continues to cultivate Western connections. They have spent years trying to find a viable presidential alternative. However, the replacement they favor is not a pro-European democrat but a pro-Russian loyalist who will impose a Kremlin-type political model. Moscow does not welcome democratic experimentation among neighbors toward whom President Dmitry Medvedev has declared "privileged interests," but prefers predictable autocracies that serve Russia's state ambitions. The Kremlin may be willing to engineer a political coup in Minsk as the country is already penetrated by Russia's security services while preparing political justifications through wide-scale economic disruption.

The loss of Belarusian independence will stifle any hopes for democratization until Russia itself turns democratic - a forlorn hope given the symbiosis of power, profit, and imperial ambition among Moscow's political elites. If Belarus can preserve its independence and freedom of movement westwards then there is hope for a democratic evolution.

The EU recently included Belarus in its Eastern Partnership (EaP) program to encourage political, institutional, and economic reform and generate convergence with the Union following years of ineffectual embargoes. The U.S. should devise a complementary mechanism of engagement with Minsk through something akin to an Atlantic Partnership. Of course, Minsk will need to demonstrate its commitment to pan-European values, including respect for individual and minority rights. But only prolonged engagement can cultivate a democratic transformation as the Belarusian leadership will then be in a better position to decide whether the country should become a sovereign state within a united Europe or a subordinate state under a sovereign Russia.

Janusz Bugajski visited Minsk in February 2010

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ceremony in Katyn before the fatal air crash, thereby acknowledging its importance for the Polish nation.

However, Mr. Putin's objective may not have been so clear-cut. Plainly, the Kremlin can no longer brazenly deny that the Katyn murders were perpetrated by the Soviet security services. Instead, it is seeking to contextualize them and thereby minimize their significance. Russia has avoided issuing a formal state apology to Poland; it depicts Katyn as one of several atrocities by the faceless "totalitarian regime" and refuses to call the Katyn massacres a war crime.

The reasoning is logical. If Katyn were defined as a war crime, one would need to ascertain who was at war with whom. Why did more than 20,000 Polish officers and more than a million Polish citizens find themselves in the Soviet Union in September 1939, prevented from defending Poland from the Nazi invasion? Russia's current leaders want to avoid discussion about the Soviet invasion of Poland, the Hitler-Stalin pact and the close collaboration between the two dictators before and during World War II aimed at carving up Poland and the rest of Eastern Europe. The Soviets only became anti-Nazi when Hitler decided he no longer needed Moscow as an ally.

Instead of acknowledging facts about the origins of World War II, the Kremlin is engaged in a massive deception, seeking to convince the world that Russia was the key to victory in Europe. It fails to point out that under Josef Stalin, the Soviet Union also was the key to defeat for many Europeans. The Soviet Union enabled Hitler to launch the blitzkrieg against Poland; provided vital economic, energy and military supplies to Berlin, enabling Hitler to launch the conquest of Western Europe; and assisted in creating the conditions for the Nazi Holocaust while conducting its own mass murders and deportations from subject nations.

It is not surprising that Mr. Putin wanted to push Katyn to the sidelines before the May 9 anniversary and calculated that Polish leaders would reciprocate for his minimal acknowledgement of Katyn by attending the celebrations and thus giving credence to Moscow's skewered version of history. The Katyn air crash may undermine this strategy, as the mass murders of 70 years ago have become a live subject for public debate amidst calls for closer scholarly scrutiny.

Ironically, the second Katyn tragedy provides an opportunity to initiate a genuine Russian-Polish reconciliation if Russia's leaders undertake several crucial steps. First, they will need to acknowledge publicly that the Katyn murders were a war

crime perpetrated against Poland and an attempt to decapitate the leadership of a country that the Stalin regime wanted to occupy and annex, which it did after the war.

Second, all the archives sealed in Russia pertaining to the atrocity will need to be opened to historians in order to gain all pertinent facts on the precise identity of the perpetrators and how the crime was covered up for more than 50 years.

Third, the Russian authorities must begin to tell the full truth about Stalin and the Soviet role during World War II as a co-conspirator with Hitler as well as one of Hitler's eventual victims. Without such courageous measures, the Warsaw-Moscow thaw will simply remain a layer of loose earth over the permafrost.

POLITICAL DEADLOCK IN ALBANIA



Prime Minister Sali Berisha, President Bamir Topi, along with SP Leader and Tirana Mayor Edi Rama .

Almost a year after Albania's June 2009 general elections, the contested results continue to test the country's democratic maturity. According to the OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the elections met most democratic benchmarks, but also failed to fully realize Albania's potential to adhere to the highest standards.

Election results were close. The Central Elections Commission declared the center-right coalition, led by the Democratic Party (DP) of Sali Berisha, the victor having won 70 out of the 140 parliamentary seats and 46.9 percent of the vote. In close second came the Socialist-led coalition, with Edi Rama at the helm, winning 66 seats and 45.3 percent popular support. Also entering parliament was the center-left coalition led by Ilir Meta's Socialist Movement for Integration (LSI), a faction that splintered from the Socialist Party in 2004 and managed to gain 4 seats and 5.56 percent of the vote. Citing the importance of a stable government during Albania's efforts at EU membership, Meta accepted Berisha's offer to enter the ruling coalition.

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A resolution this year would also help stabilize Greece's northern border and raise Athens' stature in Brussels and several other major Western capitals. The new Papandreou government clearly needs EU support at a time when Greece faces an economic meltdown and major social unrest stemming from the fiscal crisis. Athens needs to dramatically scale down its budget deficit and demonstrate that it can handle strikes and other protest actions during a prolonged period of austerity.

Greece's budgetary woes may require an EU or IMF bailout package which could in turn undermine the country's economic and even political sovereignty. Either a Greek default on its debts or an EU rescue package could also set unsettling precedents for other states in the euro zone, including Spain, Ireland, Portugal and Italy, which face similar budgetary problems to Athens.

There are two potentially damaging pan-European scenarios. First, an escalating financial crisis and loss of market confidence may lead to the unraveling of the European currency. Second, EU control over the Greek economy through tight conditionality on funds and loans intended to rescue the budget, would generate fears over excessive political centralization in the EU. This could boost Euro-skepticism throughout the continent as other countries will resist having their policy priorities set by Brussels. In the worst case scenario this could politically fracture the Union.

In such a volatile context, a breakthrough over the Macedonian state name would be welcomed in Brussels and throughout the EU as an important contribution by Athens to Balkan stability. The last thing Paris, London, or Berlin want is another conflict in the region in which their diplomats and peace-keepers would again need to be involved.

For Washington a Macedonian resolution would also unblock Skopje's path toward NATO. A formal invitation for Skopje to join the Alliance at the NATO summit in Lisbon in November would be the ideal solution. Such progress would underscore that any adjustment of the country's name will not undermine its existence or identity, but on the contrary it would strengthen Skopje's position in international institutions.

Nonetheless, the White House does not seek to impose a strict deadline in the current negotiations as it cannot impose a solution and will not walk away from the problem if there is no resolution by November. However, more high-level engagement by the Obama administration would clearly be beneficial and reinforce the current United Nations mediation process.

It is not a question of American pressure but of potential incentives for both parties to come to an agreement with U.S. assistance. This would also entail a clear message from Washington that in the long-term absence of resolution the region will become increasingly insecure to the detriment of both Skopje and Athens.

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The OSCE's assessment of the election was endorsed by both the European Union (EU) and the United States. Sali Berisha and the Democratic Party stated that the OSCE report was proof that democracy in Albania had evolved. However, Edi Rama and the Socialists accused the authorities of having tainted the elections, demanding a recount and the opening of ballot boxes. The Electoral College, the highest authority for election disputes in the country, rejected Rama's request for a recount.

The final ODIHR report released in September 2009, three months after the elections, characterized the vote count as "bad" or "very bad" in 22 of the 66 Ballot Counting Centers. The report noted that some improvements had been made when compared to the previous elections, however, at the same time, the vote did not fully comply with international standards. The parliamentary vote was plagued by improper procedures, isolated acts of violence, and disorganization. For any country that aspires to join the European Union, it is imperative that the highest standards be met.

The disputed elections results led to a nearly eight-month boycott of the parliament by the Socialists, paralyzing reform efforts, radicalizing the political atmosphere, and forcing EU and U.S. officials to issue statements stressing the importance of a political dialogue for the sake of stability and progress. Socialist deputies finally returned to parliament in March with the hope that a solution could be found to untangle the crisis. Socialist representatives asserted that they would only attend parliamentary sessions related to the establishment of a committee to investigate the elections.

The argument between the two main parties has even forced international actors to choose sides. A statement issued by European Parliament Vice-President Libor Roucek in November 2009 urged the Socialists to end their boycott and refer the dispute to the judiciary. The leader of the conservative European People's Party (EPP) Wilfried Martens has been an active supporter of Sali Berisha, often appearing at Democratic Party rallies.

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The EPP has repeatedly urged the Socialists to acknowledge the election results and return to parliament. The leader of the Party of European Socialists Poul Rasmussen spoke in support of Edi Rama during a meeting in March, stating that a mixed commission of local and international experts should be established to investigate the 2009 general elections.

Much of the international community is growing tired of the almost year-long wrangling between both sides and President Bamir Topi has been urged to mediate the dispute. The Council of Europe passed a resolution in January urging the Socialists to return to parliament and for the ruling Democratic Party to assemble a committee to investigate the contested elections. After immense pressure from the EU, Topi succeeded in bringing the two camps to the table in February. Rama's demand was to create a parliamentary investigative commission and to open the ballot boxes as a sign of the election's transparency. While Berisha agreed to create an investigative commission, he flatly refused to open the ballot boxes citing it as unconstitutional and a step backwards for the country.

Although demands by the opposition for greater transparency are legitimate, the methods they have chosen to contest the election results are not in the best interest of Albania. Rama has asked for mass protests to paralyze the country and has continued to boycott parliamentary sessions (with the exception of those dealing with the establishment of an investigative election committee).

The effect of the political deadlock is being felt in all sectors. Standard & Poor's (S&P) credit rating agency assigned a B+ ranking for Albania's long-term sovereign foreign and local currency credit ratings, warning that the political crisis could have an adverse financial impact. In 2009, Albania was the only state to register an increase in GDP in the Balkans and was recognized as one of the few countries in Europe to weather the global financial crisis with positive growth. However, the political stalemate may now put the country's economic stability at risk.

Additionally, Albania was excluded from the first group in the EU's visa liberalization program in late 2009. Albania's omission should have served as a signal for all leaders to place national interests above partisan politics. With important national and EU-mandated legislation on the agenda requiring three-fifths of the parliamentary vote, the continued boycott of the parliament by the opposition threatens to further delay Albania's EU integration. At the same time, the ruling coalition should act seriously in creating an investigation committee and demonstrate its commitment to transparency and democracy.

Upcoming Events

CSIS Conference
TRANSFORMING THE BALKANS:
SECURITY, POLITICAL STABILITY, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Washington D.C., May 10, 2010
B1 Conference Floor
8:30am -3:00pm

CSIS Conference
LAUNCH OF THE SOUTH EAST EUROPEAN POLICY REVIEW
Washington D.C., June 10, 2010
B1 Conference Floor
9:00am-2:00pm

Newsletters

CSIS Europe East Select Briefing

Select Briefing is a weekly update of news from the new European Union (EU) member states, as well as from the countries aspiring to join in future rounds of EU enlargement. The CSIS New European Democracies Project monitors daily developments throughout the East, Central, and Southeast European regions and its research is nonpartisan and nonproprietary.

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Previous Events

CSIS Conference
SOUTH CAUCASUS FAULT LINES:
SECURITY, ENERGY, AND U.S. INTERESTS
Washington D.C., February 23, 2010

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States has had significant economic, and energy interests in the South Caucasus. The region's strategic location at the crossroads of Europe, Russia, the Middle East, and Central Asia ensures its importance for U.S. national security interests and those of its European allies. The conference examined U.S. and Allied interests and priorities in this volatile region.

CSIS Roundtable
ENERGY SECURITY MEETING: CHANGING
LANDSCAPE FROM THE CASPIAN TO THE
BALTICS
Washington D.C., April 16, 2010

A lunch presentation was held at CSIS by Vladimir Socor from Jamestown Foundation on the evolving energy security trends between Kazakhstan and the Caspian basin, through the Caucasus, Russia, and Ukraine, to the Baltic region. A discussion followed that was moderated by Lavrentiadis Chair Holder Janusz Bugajski.

CSIS Roundtable
BUSINESS ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR SOUTH
EAST EUROPE
Washington D.C., April 12, 2010

The Lavrentiadis Chair hosted a private luncheon discussion with the Business Advisory Council for South Eastern Europe. The Lunch brought together highly profiled and distinguished businessmen and investors from a wide spectrum of economic sectors in Europe to discuss business challenges and opportunities in Southeast Europe.

CSIS Conference

THE SOFT POWER DIMENSION OF RUSSIAN
FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD GEORGIA,
UKRAINE, MOLDOVA, AND THE BALTIC
STATES

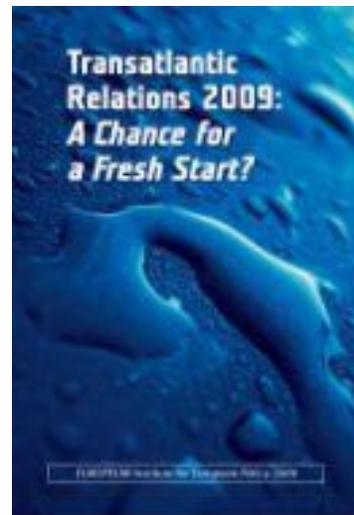
Washington D.C., February 23, 2010

The CSIS Lavrentis Lavrentiadis Chair and Russia/Eurasia Programs co-hosted in Washington the launch of a new report by the Center for East European Policy Studies in Riga, Latvia. The report assesses the soft power dimension of Russia's foreign policy toward six target countries: Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The authors discussed Russia's use of culture, language, media, education, and public diplomacy to promote an attractive image and to legitimize its foreign policy objectives.

Publications

Transatlantic Relations 2009: A Chance for a Fresh
Start? Prague, March 2010

The initial versions of contributions to the first part of this publication were delivered at an international conference in Prague in May 2009 co-sponsored by CSIS. The second part consists of policy papers by leading EU and US experts in the framework of the Transatlantic Policy Forum project, organized by Europeum (Prague) and CSIS, focusing on the following issues: Trade, Energy and Climate Change, Democracy Promotion and the EU Neighborhood.



Wider Europe is produced by the CSIS Lavrentis Lavrentiadis Chair in Southeast European Studies. This publication was compiled and edited by Janusz Bugajski, Director; Ilona Teleki, Deputy Director and Fellow; and Besian Boçka, Program Coordinator & Research Associate. For more information, please contact the CSIS Lavrentis Lavrentiadis Chair in Southeast European Studies at LavrentiadisChair@csis.org or (202) 775-3217.

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