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The Obama Administration Must Push for Macedonia's Accession to NATO at the Lisbon Summit

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On November 19, NATO leaders will meet in Lisbon for a formal heads-of-state summit. The dominant issue for the United States will be the adoption of NATO's new Strategic Concept, the first of the new millennium. However, the Obama Administration should also throw its weight behind further expansion of the alliance, especially Macedonia's accession.

Macedonia has been on the road to membership for over a decade and has successfully completed NATO's Membership Action Plan. Despite being one of the largest per capita contributors to the NATO mission in Afghanistan and enjoying broad support for its accession across the alliance, Athens continues to unfairly wield its veto power and block Macedonia's accession over a purely bilateral dispute.

Over the past year, Greece has received enormous financial and political support from the Euro-Atlantic community and the global financial institutions. Consequently, it is time for Greece to reciprocate that friendship and uphold its obligation under Article 10 of the Washington Treaty. The Greco-Macedonian name dispute has dragged on for 18 years, and it may not be resolved in time for the Lisbon Summit.² However, Athens should not bring its bilateral disputes into the alliance—a longstanding NATO principle—and instead demonstrate its willingness to be a positive regional player rather than a truculent and obstructionist partner.

Window of Opportunity. At the Bucharest Summit in 2008, Albania and Croatia received invita-

tions to NATO membership and took their seats at the alliance's table in Strasbourg in 2009. It was nothing short of diplomatic hostility on Athens's part that Macedonia could not join them. Following the Bucharest debacle, parliamentary elections were called in Macedonia, two years ahead of schedule. The elections were held in a tense atmosphere and were directly related to Greece's continued obstructionism and Macedonia's exclusion from the Euro-Atlantic family.

Although Macedonia is a vibrant multi-ethnic democracy, its progress remains nascent, and its patience is not endless. Its democratic development has been directly supported by the U.S. and all other members of the NATO alliance save Greece. It is important that the transatlantic alliance sends the message that there is a place in its institutions for Balkan nations that have earned it.

A Provider—Not Just a Consumer—of Security. Having been a primary consumer of security in the past, Macedonia has quickly made the transition to being a provider of security, both regionally and globally. Although Skopje does not enjoy the benefits of NATO membership, it has advanced NATO's core mission of providing for the collective defense.

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Macedonia was a critical staging area for the NATO intervention in Kosovo and provided a safe haven for over 360,000 Kosovars during the conflict.³ Macedonia continues to provide logistical coordination and support for the Kosovo Force mission.

One of the most impressive acts of good faith by Macedonia has been its robust participation in the NATO mission in Afghanistan. Despite having a population a fifth the size of Greece's, Skopje has deployed more troops than Athens has to Afghanistan. Maintaining a commitment of 240 troops, Macedonia is one of the largest per capita contributors to the mission, providing security at NATO headquarters in Kabul.^{4 1}

Macedonia also takes part in the crucial Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams program tasked with training the Afghan National Security Forces.⁵ Macedonia sent additional trainers following President Obama's request for support at the Strasbourg Summit in April 2009, as well as additional troops following another U.S. request in December 2009.⁶

Macedonia also supported the U.S. and its coalition partners in Iraq from 2003 onward, carrying out joint and independent combat missions. The 2-11 Field Artillery Battalion Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Gleichenhaus, stated of Macedonia's contribution in Iraq: "My only reser-

vation about the Macedonians is that we don't have more of them."⁷

U.S. Support: Is It Enough? Skopje has enjoyed the support of both the former and current U.S. Administration in its quest for accession. At the Strasbourg summit, President Obama voiced his eagerness to welcome Macedonia into the alliance, and recently 19 Congressmen—from both sides of the House—outlined their support for Macedonia's accession at the Lisbon Summit.⁸

However, U.S. support will not be enough to secure Macedonia's accession. The Administration will have to use its diplomatic channels in Europe, in concert with U.S. representatives in Athens, to increase international pressure on Greece to resolve this matter expeditiously. Significant diplomatic pressure will have to be applied on Athens by Europe as well, especially France and Germany, and the U.S. should ask Berlin and Paris to make this issue a priority for the summit.

Time for Macedonia to Join. The U.N.-mediated talks between Greece and Macedonia will continue even if Macedonia accedes to the alliance. In a 1995 interim accord between the two nations, Greece pledged not to abuse its dominant position and block Macedonia's entry into international institutions. Since its inception, NATO enlargement has proven to be a hallmark of European integra-

1. See Sally McNamara, "It Is Past Time for Macedonia to Join NATO," Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 2784, January 29, 2010, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2010/01/It-Is-Past-Time-for-Macedonia-to-Join-NATO>.
2. Defence Professionals, "Macedonian Defence Minister Demands from Gates That Macedonia Gets Well Deserved Place in NATO," October 6, 2010, at <http://www.defpro.com/news/details/18515> (October 6, 2010).
3. Metojija Koloski, "NATO: The Case for Macedonia," Foreign Policy Association, March 12, 2009, at http://www.fpa.org/topics_info2414/topics_info_show.htm?doc_id=853200 (October 14, 2010).
4. North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "International Security Assistance Force and Afghan National Army Strength and Laydown," August 6, 2010, at <http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/Placemats/100804%20Rev%20Placemat.pdf> (October 14, 2010).
5. North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Fact Sheet: NATO's Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams (OMLTs)," October 2009, at <http://www.nato.int/isaf/topics/factsheets/omlt-factsheet.pdf> (October 12, 2010).
6. Trend, "Macedonia Pledges to Send More Troops to Afghanistan," December 3, 2009, at <http://en.trend.az/regions/world/afghanistan/1592493.html> (October 14, 2010).
7. Steve Gillen, "Macedonia Stands with the Coalition in Iraq," Embassy of the United States, Baghdad, Iraq, June 2, 2008, at http://iraq.usembassy.gov/iraq_in_focus_06022008.html (October 12, 2010).
8. Earl Pomeroy *et al.*, "Letter to President Obama in Support of Macedonia's NATO Membership," October 1, 2010, at <http://umdiaspora.org/images/MacedoniaNATOCongressLtrtoObama.pdf> (October 13, 2010).

tion, and Macedonia has more than earned its place in the alliance. The U.S. and key European allies including Britain, France, and Germany should stand by their friends and intensify its efforts to ensure that Skopje's place at the table is no longer unfairly blocked.

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