

ANNEX B – REFERENCES AND SOURCES FOR THE STONE BRIDGE CONVERSATION

17 July 2014

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VMRO

Currently governing party in Macedonia. The full abbreviation is VMRO-DPMNE and stands for Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity. It claims the heritage of the original Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, founded in the late 19th century. The party leader is current Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski.

SDSM

The major opposition party in Macedonia. SDSM stands for Social Democratic Union of Macedonia. It was the main party in the governing coalition from 2002 to 2006. SDSM is the successor of the League of Communists of Macedonia. Currently the party is led by Zoran Zaev.

Vladimir: why things are as they are

European Commission Enlargement Strategy (2013)

The European Commission Enlargement Strategy 2013¹ states, on page 17, that it “considers that the political criteria continue to be sufficiently met and recommends that accession

¹ Can be accessed at:
http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2013/package/strategy_paper_2013_en.pdf.

negotiations be opened” with Macedonia. The strategy paper is part of a package of reports presented annually by the commission, together with six progress reports for Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia and Serbia) as well as Turkey.

Robert Badinter

Robert Badinter, a French Judge, chaired the Badinter Arbitration Committee² in 1991. The committee was created by the European Economic Community (EEC) to provide the Conference on Yugoslavia with legal advice. It consisted of five EEC constitutional court presidents.

The Commission eventually published fifteen opinions. Opinion No. 6 recommended that the European Community accept the request of the Republic of Macedonia for recognition, holding that the Republic had given the necessary guarantees to respect human rights and international peace and security. The European Commission, however, did not follow this recommendation because of Greek opposition.

It would only recognise us “under a name which will not include the denomination Macedonia”

The European Council Conclusions from 26-27 June 1992 include, as Annex II, a “European Council Declaration on Former Yugoslavia.” It says (p. 47):

“The European Council reiterates the position taken by the Community and its members States in Guimaraes on the request of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to be recognised as an independent State. It expresses its readiness to recognise that republic within its existing borders according to their Declaration on 16 December 1991 under a name which does not include the term Macedonia. It furthermore considers the borders of this republic as inviolable and guaranteed in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter and the Charter of Paris.”³

Nor have I forgotten how the EU later stood by as Greece declared a trade embargo against us in February 1994

In February 1994, Greece put in place a trade embargo on Macedonia for 19 months, which it agreed to lift after Macedonia, among other concessions, dropped the Star of Vergina from its national flag.

In 2010, Macedonia President Gjorge Ivanov compared the Greek blockade of Macedonia’s EU and NATO accession to its 1994 embargo.

See articles:

New York Times, [“Greece to Lift Embargo Against Macedonia if It Scraps Its Flag”](#), 14 September 1995.

New York Times, [“Macedonia Embargo Is Halted by Greece”](#), 16 October 1995.

Balkan Insight, [“Macedonian President Slams Greek ‘Embargo’”](#), 21 September 2010.

² See: The Opinions of the Badinter Arbitration Committee: A Second Breath for the Self-Determination of Peoples. *European Journal of International Law* 3 (1): 178–185.

³ European Council in Lisbon, 26/27 June 1992. [Conclusions of the Presidency](#).

I heard some want to give Ivica Dacic or Hashim Thaci a Nobel Peace Prize

Ivica Dacic, the Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia, was reportedly nominated by four US members of congress to receive the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize. The congressmen wrote to the Norwegian committee responsible and supposedly nominated Dacic, Catherine Ashton (High Representative for Foreign Affairs of the EU) and Hashim Thaci (Prime Minister for Kosovo) for the honour due to their roles in the normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo.⁴

When he was foreign minister in 1992 he wrote a letter to the EU in January 1992

The letter was published in: Aristotle Tziambiris, *Greece, European Political Cooperation and the Macedonian Question*, Oxford, 2000, pp. 207-213, Appendix II.⁵ Here an excerpt:

“During the same 40-year period and in order to best serve its expansionist plans, Skopje attempted to appropriate and monopolize the Macedonian name. To achieve this goal, Skopje found necessary to usurp Greek historical and cultural heritage in Macedonia from antiquity to the present. Thus, Alexander the Great and Aristotle have been added to the Skopjan pantheon! So have the Greek apostles to the Slavs, Cyril and Methodius, simply because they were born in Thessaloniki! Even the victories of the Greek army during the 1940-41 war were attributed to the so-called ‘Macedonians’ of Skopje, only because a Greek army division was named Macedonia after the name of the Greek province! Thessaloniki, whose culture, language and traditions have been Greek for 2300 years, is projected as the capital of the future ‘united Macedonian state’.”

The Rough Guides put Macedonia among the top ten tourist destinations in the world for 2014

In 2014, the Rough Guides tourist travel guide ranked Macedonia as number 9 on their “top 10 countries to visit” list. They argue that, “This hotchpotch of Ottoman rule, Yugoslav domination, Orthodox faith and Albanian influence represents one of Europe’s most varied societies”. Other countries on this list include Turkey (4th), Georgia (5th) and Bulgaria (8th).⁶

Svatopluk the Great

The new statue of Svatopluk the Great in front of Bratislava Castle was put up in 2010 to honour “the greatest king of the Great Moravian Empire”. The inscription on the 7.8 metre high statue reads “Svatopluk – King of Old Slovaks”. Then Prime Minister Robert Fico announced that “by the unveiling of the statue of the King of the old Slovaks, we have confirmed the importance of ... the state-forming tradition of Svatopluk.”⁷

I hear that in Komarno, on the Danube, they have put up dozens of statues in recent years

In August 2009, Slovakia prevented then Hungarian president Laszlo Solyom from visiting the inauguration of a statue of Stephen I, the first Christian King of Hungary, in the ethnic-Hungarian border town of Komarno in Southern Slovakia. The Slovak President, Prime Minister and Parliament Speaker complained that no Slovak government official had been

⁴ BIRN, “Serbia PM Doubts Nobel Peace Prize Chances”, 24 December 2013.

⁵ It can be found online on the following link of Macedonian Heritage: <http://www.macedonian-heritage.gr/OfficialDocuments/Samaras1.html>.

⁶ See: <http://www.roughguides.com/best-places/2014/top-10-countries/>.

⁷ *Hospodarske noviny*, “Gasparovic: Nasu statotvornu identitu vynasame na svetlo sveta”, 6 June 2010.

invited and noted that the visit was scheduled on the day of the 41st anniversary of the invasion of Warsaw pact troops in 1968 (Hungarian troops had participated in the crushing of Prague spring).⁸

Also the placement of a statue of Cyril and Methodius in Komarno caused controversy for nearly two decades. Overall in the centre of the city there are at least 27 memorials with a Hungarian background and at least three with a Slovak background.

Fifteen years later, in 2007, Samaras gave another interview

On 25 May 2007 the Thessaloniki-based newspaper *Macedonia* (Μακεδονία) published an interview with Antonis Samaras.⁹ When he was asked whether he was concerned about the stalemate in the efforts to find a name accepted by both sides he replied as follows:

“If anyone is to be worried, it should be FYROM not Greece. As you know, I have the same views on the issue for many years now and I paid the price for them. Some accused me of ‘blocking’ a compromise with Skopje. If there was indeed room for a mutually accepted name (which I supposedly blocked) there would have been such an agreement after my expulsion from the government. But it did not happen. And since then, four prime ministers and seven foreign ministers have not changed the line adopted at the second summit of 1992 ... In any case Skopje’s irredentism has already been defeated domestically after the uprising of the Albanian speaking population in 2001. FYROM is today ‘two states in the package of one’ and is gradually being transformed into a federation. And because developments in Kosovo may trigger FYROM’s dissolution, that is why they try to integrate it into Europe and NATO before it is disbanded. If FYROM wants to save itself it needs to change. If it does not change, it will not manage to integrate anywhere, and to survive. The problem is FYROM’s not Greece’s. Greece can help FYROM if it wants to help itself. You cannot save someone if they do not want to save themselves.”

In 2008, as Member of Parliament, he told Greek television

On 15 March 2008, Antonis Samaras spoke about Macedonia to the Greek television channel ERT. His views have been summarised in a video of the TV programme *I Alli Opsi* (The Other View).¹⁰

In December 2011 the International Court of Justice in The Hague ruled in our favour

At the end of 2011, the ICJ ruled that Greece was “wrong” to block Macedonia’s NATO bid in 2008. It said Athens should have abided by the 1995 Interim Accord not to block Macedonian applications if these are made under the name Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.¹¹ The decision, though, did not include any sanctions against Greece. According to the BBC, “Macedonian foreign minister Nikola Poposki welcomed the ICJ decision, stressing that Macedonia remained ‘strongly committed to finding a lasting, mutually acceptable solution to the difference with Greece over the name’.”¹²

⁸ *Pravda*, “Budapest’ nechape, co sa Slovensku nepaci na navsteve Solyoma”, 20 August 2009.

⁹ Available here: <http://www.makthes.gr/news/politics/2029/> (in Greek).

¹⁰ It can be watched here (with English subtitles): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QnCrRXJAJeU>.

¹¹ ICJ, “[Application of the Interim Accord of 13 September 1995. Judgement of 5 December 2011](#)”, 5 December 2011.

¹² *BBC*, “[ICJ rules Greece ‘wrong’ to block Macedonia’s Nato bid](#)”, 5 December 2011.

Matthew Nimetz

Matthew Nimetz is a US diplomat and the United Nations Special Representative for the negotiations between Greece and Macedonia over the name dispute. The dispute has been unresolved ever since the Republic of Macedonia declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1991. From March 1994 to September 1995 Nimetz served as President Bill Clinton's special envoy to mediate the resolution of the Macedonian Issue, which was followed by the Interim Accord. He then became deputy to Cyrus Vance, the UN envoy for the final resolution of the issue. In 1999 Nimetz was appointed UN envoy. Since then he has held countless talks and meetings, but as of yet without success.

Dispute between Slovenia and Croatia over the Piran Bay

From late 2008 to October 2009 Slovenia blocked Croatia's EU accession negotiations over a bilateral border dispute. The two countries could not agree on a number of spots of the land border, the border in the Piran Bay, and whether Slovenia's territorial waters would reach the high seas.¹³ The dispute was finally resolved by submitting the process to arbitration while Croatia was allowed to accede to the EU in the meantime.

Estragon: ancient heroes and escapism***Albanian changed his name from Panajot Gjergji to Panagiotis Giorgios to play for their national football team***

Panagiotis Giorgios is a football player playing for the national team of Greece. The 26-year-old player was born in Tirana, Albania, to a Greek family and moved to Athens aged two. He has represented Greece many times.

Pushed a referendum opposing key provisions of the Ohrid Peace Agreement

The Ohrid Framework Agreement¹⁴ was a deal signed between the Macedonian government and the National Liberation Army, an ethnic Albanian militant insurgency group that in 2001 took up arms to fight for increased rights for Macedonia's Albanian population. The Peace Agreement was signed in August 2001. In 2005 VMRO supported a referendum to overturn some of the articles in the peace agreement related to increased local autonomy. While 95 per cent of voters voted in favour, the turnout of 27 per cent was far below the 50 per cent threshold that would have been required.

Statue of Alexander was put up in Prilep in October 2006

For a short video of the statue visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kCn5SxtoMsA>.

Spring 2008 exhibition in the Skopje Cultural Center, on the eve of the NATO summit, advertised with posters throughout town depicting the Greek flag with a swastika

The posters announced an exhibition in the cultural-information centre in Skopje. The Macedonian government expressed regret after Greece officially complained. According to

¹³ For background to the dispute watch ESI's audio slide show at: <http://www.esiweb.org/enlargement/?cat=15##1>.

¹⁴ Available here: <http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdatabase/peace/Mac%2020010813.pdf>.

the BBC, the Macedonian government added that “it would not meddle with freedom of expression.”¹⁵

Prince Ghazanfar Ali Khan of the Hunza people

The Hunza people live in Pakistan and the bordering regions of China, Tajikistan and Afghanistan. Some claim to be descendants from a soldier left behind by the army of Alexander the Great. In July 2008, Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski welcomed Prince Ghazanfar Ali Khan and Princess Rani Atiqa to Macedonia. The goal was to boost ties between the two people. The trip was organised by the Macedonian Institute for Strategic Research.¹⁶

In 2009 our chief national archaeologist declared that “we can only defend a name if we have classical antique roots”

The idea behind the policy was described by the former director of the Bureau for Protection of Cultural Heritage, archaeologist Pasko Kuzman: future archaeological work will prove that Macedonians descend from the Macedonians of Classical Antiquity and not from Slavs who migrated into the Balkans from the fifth-century onwards. As he put it: “Macedonia can only defend its name, if it proves that the Macedonian nation has Classical Antique and not Slavic roots.”¹⁷

Vladimir: on double standards

Even if holy mother Theresa would rise from her grave in India and return to her hometown Skopje

Mother Theresa was a missionary and Nobel peace prize laureate who died in Calcutta in 1997. She was born in Skopje to a Catholic Albanian family in 1910 as Anjezë Gonxhe Bojaxhiu. Prime Minister Gruevski opened a “Mother Theresa Memorial House” in downtown Skopje in 2009.

The “Ten Lies of Macedonism”

Bozhidar Dimitrov is a Bulgarian historian and politician. From 2009 to 2011 he was a minister without portfolio responsible for Bulgarians abroad. Among his many publications is a book about “ten lies which embody Macedonism” (first published in Bulgarian in 2000). According to Dimitrov these lies include the notion that contemporary ethnic Macedonians are descendants of ancient Macedonians; that the Archbishopric of Ohrid was a “Macedonian” church; that the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (VMRO) of the early 20th century fought for a “Macedonian” national goal; and that there was a “heroic struggle of the Macedonian people against the Bulgarian occupiers in 1941-1945”.

Rosen Plevneliev lectures us, as he did in 2012

¹⁵ BBC, [“Greek fury over swastika poster”](#), 1 April 2008.

¹⁶ *Pamir Times*, [“I am honoured to be in my country Macedonia’](#), Ghazanfar Ali Khan, Chief Executive NALA”, 16 July 2008.

¹⁷ *BIRN*, “Ghosts of the Past Endanger Macedonia’s Future”, 27 October 2009.

On 31 October 2012, President Rossen Plevneliev told Stefan Fule, EU Commissioner for Enlargement, that Macedonia should not start accession negotiations. Plevneliev said: “Bulgaria cannot grant an EU certificate to the actions of the government in Skopje which is systematically employing an ideology of hate towards Bulgaria ... It is strategically important for the long-term stability in the Balkans that the government in Skopje starts applying the European approach towards its neighbours, without claims and manipulations. It is high time that the government in Skopje be done with its anti-Bulgarian campaign, and the manipulation of historical facts.”¹⁸

When a Bulgarian and a German historian planned a conference in 2007 on art, images and Ottoman massacres in the 19th century, they received death threats

In May 2007 a conference was scheduled to take place in Bulgaria as part of a project entitled “The Image of the Islamic Enemy – the Past and Present of Anti-Islamic stereotypes in Bulgaria as exemplified by the Myth of the Batak Massacre.” A Bulgarian and a German historian were supposed to read from their paper, critically examining what they called the myth formation of the Ottoman-era massacre that Bulgarian historiography asserts to have taken place in 1876 during an uprising.

There was an outcry, with many historians, commentators and politicians protesting and objecting to the event. Media called the organisers of the event traitors and Turkish agents. Eventually the conference had to be cancelled. Bulgarian nationalist groups issued death-threats against the Bulgarian historian involved in the event, and for more than a year exerted psychological pressure on her parents in Sofia.¹⁹

Golden Dawn

“Blood, Honour, Golden Dawn” is the slogan of the ultranationalist, neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn. Nikos Michaloliakos, its imprisoned leader, stands accused of murder and assault. It won 6.9 per cent in national elections in 2012, resulting in 18 seats, and 9.4 per cent in European Elections. Even Marine Le Pen of France Front National rules out relations with Golden Dawn.²⁰

We have primary schools in Macedonia in five different languages and our capital is officially bilingual, Albanian and Macedonian

In the Ohrid Framework Agreement several articles aimed to improve the situation and representation of ethnic minorities in Macedonia. These articles stipulated that all schools (primary and secondary) should be taught in the student’s native language (Article 6.1), that university level education should be financed by the state in all languages spoken by at least 20 per cent of the population (Article 6.2) and that a language spoken by at least 20 per cent of the population should also – in addition to Macedonian – be an official language (Article 6.4). Today many municipalities have more than one official language. There are also schools in Macedonian, Albanian, Serb, Vlach and Romany.

An opposition editor said recently that hate speech there is “worse today than under Milosevic”

¹⁸ EurActiv, “[Bulgaria vetoes Macedonia’s EU accession talks](#)”, 2 November 2012.

¹⁹ Dessy Gavrilova, “[Entropa: art of politics, heart of a nation](#)”, 19 January 2009.

²⁰ The Observer, “[SS songs and anti-Semitism: the week Golden Dawn turned openly Nazi](#)”, 7 June 2014.

On 3 October 2013, Zeljko Ivanovic, director of Vijesti, Montenegro's widest-read daily, and TV Vijesti, the most-widely watched TV station, told ESI that "in the 1990s, under Milosevic, there was less hate speech against journalists and opposition politicians than now."

Recently the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muiznieks, published a commentary on press freedom in Europe

In April 2014, the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights published an article entitled "Press Freedom in Europe is in Great Danger."²¹

Kezarovski

In October 2013, Tomislav Kezarovski, a Macedonian journalist, was sentenced to four-and-a-half years in jail for revealing the identity of a murder witness.

The court found that Kezarovski revealed the identity of a witness testifying in a murder trial in 2008. In 2013, the witness claimed that he had lied at the trial after being coerced to do so by the police. The prosecution, however, claimed that Kezarovski's article allowed the murder trial defendants to identify the protected witness and press him to change his testimony.²²

Kezarovski had been investigating the death of Nikola Mladenov, a journalist critical of the government (see relevant annex below). The US State Department lists Kezarovski in the section "political prisoners and detainees" in its human rights report on Macedonia.²³

Freedom House, which says that we have only "partly free media while Turkey is "not free at all"

Freedom House is a global non-governmental organisation committed to the "expansion of freedom around the world" based in Washington DC.

The organisation publishes the "Freedom in the World" index, assessing political rights and civil liberties on a comparative basis. Currently the survey includes ratings of 195 countries and 14 disputed territories. Turkey is ranked partly free overall, like Macedonia. The Turkish press, however is ranked as "not Free", while in Macedonia the press is rated as "partially Free".²⁴ Freedom House says that 59 analysts worked on the 2011 index.²⁵

Estragon: the race to the bottom

One paragraph, seven sentences, on the media situation in Macedonia.

Estragon is reading from page 44 of the European Commission's 2013 Progress Report on Macedonia.²⁶

²¹ Nils Muiznieks, "[Press Freedom in Europe is in Great Danger](#)", *BIRN*, 30 April 2014.

²² Roy Gleenslade, "[Macedonian journalist jailed for 4½ years](#)", *The Guardian*, 22 October 2013.

²³ US State Department, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, "[Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 – Macedonia](#)".

²⁴ Freedom House, "[Freedom in the World 2014](#)".

²⁵ Freedom House, "[Methodology](#)".

²⁶ European Commission, "[The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. 2013 Progress Report](#)".

Or the fact that these polarised journalists have just seen a highly professional colleague die in a mysterious car accident.

Estragon is referring to Nikola Mladenov, founder and managing editor of the daily and weekly newspaper Fokus, the most popular investigative political publication in the country. Mladenov was a well-known critic of the Macedonian political elite and free speech advocate since Macedonia's independence. Mladenov died in a road accident in March 2013. According to Balkan Insight, "the scarce police report about the car crash and other circumstances left many details about Mladenov's violent death still unanswered, causing many to suspect possible foul play."²⁷

Where is A1 TV today?

A1 was the leading private television station in Macedonia, which broadcast from January 1993 to July 2011. It was by far the most watched station in the country, broadcasting a variety of news and entertainment programming. In 2011, the government closed four opposition-oriented media outlets owned by Velija Ramkovski: A1 TV and the popular newspapers Špic, Vreme, and Koha e Re. Their assets had been frozen in connection with a criminal case against Ramkovski, who was sentenced in March 2012 to 13 years in prison for tax evasion and money laundering. As many as 18 co-defendants received jail terms ranging from two years and three months to seven years. A longer description of the case can be found with Reporters without Borders.²⁸

According to Freedom House, "the closure of Ramkovski's media group gave pro-government media – including the public MRTV and several private television stations and newspapers – a dominant position in the market."²⁹

Every single organisation, non-governmental or international, that has looked at media freedom in Macedonia, for many years now, has come to the same conclusion: that the current situation is terrible

UN envoy Frank La Rue: ["I am deeply concerned by the use of multiple legal instruments limiting the space for an independent media, silencing important critical voices"](#)

OSCE envoy Dunja Mijatovic: ["If the situation is ever going to improve, an 'inclusive and independent' self-regulatory system must be established in the media sphere"](#)

Reporters without Borders: [Macedonia \(123 out of 180\) has never been so low in the World Press Freedom Index](#)

Freedom House: [Macedonia is ranked 120 out of 197 in the 2013 Freedom of the Press Index](#)

IREX: [The only countries with lower Media Sustainability Index scores in the region are Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Belarus](#)

The European Federation of Journalists: [Ricardo Gutierrez, General Secretary of EFJ said media freedom in Macedonia was already the worst in the region and was still declining](#)

²⁷ For more see: BIRN, ["Nikola Mladenov, Free Speech Pioneer in Macedonia"](#), 29 March 2013.

²⁸ Reporters without Borders, ["Disastrous summer for Macedonian media, with TV station and three dailies closed"](#), 17 August 2011.

²⁹ Freedom House, ["Macedonia. Freedom of the Press 2012"](#).

The Committee to Protect Journalists: [“Authorities in Macedonia should reverse on appeal the conviction of a prominent investigative journalist who has been imprisoned since May”](#)

OSCE’s Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) from Warsaw

ODIHR found this in its final report on the 2013 elections:

“The OSCE/ODIHR EOM conducted media monitoring of major broadcast and print media outlets during both campaign periods. While all media outlets monitored provided extensive campaign coverage in the news, most of them displayed significant bias in favor of the governing parties both in terms of quantity and content of coverage. In addition, all monitored broadcast media, except Telma, regularly covered government activities but failed to distinguish between state activities and party campaigning. This pattern was even more visible during the second round of the campaign, when media focused on government activities in the municipalities with second round elections.”

It wrote on the 2014 elections:

“A lack of analysis and independent reporting in the media continued during the second round of the presidential and early parliamentary election campaigns. OSCE/ODIHR EOM media monitoring showed that the majority of monitored media was largely biased in favour of the ruling party and its presidential candidate and mainly negative against the main opposition party and its candidate. The media often failed to distinguish between the coverage of officials in their capacity as ministers and as candidates.”³⁰

In September 2013 [Erwan Fouere] described Macedonia as a “country in deep trouble”

Erwan Fouere was head of the EU delegation in Macedonia from 2005 until 2011. He is now a research fellow at The Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), in which capacity he published the policy brief “Macedonia – A country in crisis” that Estragon quotes.³¹

Just recently Fouere went even further, saying that Macedonia is not, today, a democracy anymore

This quote comes from an article Fouere published in Balkan Insight.³²

Vladimir: Macedonia as the first in class

The World Bank Doing Business surveys, where we are among the best in Europe

Over the past years, the Macedonian government made it a priority to improve their ranking in the World Bank’s Doing Business ranking.³³ Already in 2008 Prime Minister [Nikola Gruevski told ESI](#): “We are now focused on NATO, on the European Union ... and on improving the business climate. According to the ‘Doing Business’ edition of 2008 of the World Bank, which is issued once a year, of 178 countries we are in 4th place according to

³⁰ International Election Observation Mission, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Presidential and Early Parliamentary Elections, 27 April 2014. [Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions](#).

³¹ Erwan Fouere, [“Macedonia – A country in crisis”](#), CEPS, 13 September 2013.

³² Erwan Fouere, [“Democracy Has Lost its Meaning in Macedonia”](#), BIRN, 30 April 2014.

³³ See: <http://www.doingbusiness.org/data/exploreconomies/macedonia-fyr>.

positive reforms of the business climate in 2007.” The index unites 10 basic indicators, which are weighed and then result in a global ranking of all countries. Macedonia ranks 25th in the world. Switzerland ranks 29th.

In seven indicators Switzerland beats Macedonia: Dealing with construction permits – Getting electricity – Registering property – Paying taxes – Trading against borders – Resolving insolvency – Enforcing contracts.

Macedonia shows better results only in three fields: Getting credit – Protecting investors – Starting a business. Macedonia’s outstanding positions in these three fields add up to a better overall ranking than Switzerland.

Rank 2014	Macedonia	Switzerland
Overall ranking	25	29
Starting a business	7	104
Dealing with construction permits	63	58
Getting electricity	76	8
Registering property	84	16
Getting credit	3	28
Protecting investors	16	170
Paying taxes	26	16
Trading across borders	89	35
Enforcing contracts	95	20
Resolving insolvency	52	47

Assessing the implementation of visa roadmaps in 2009

Vladimir mentions the implementation of Macedonia’s EU visa roadmap in 2009. This roadmap consisted of close to 50 requirements the European Commission wanted Western Balkan countries to meet in order to qualify for visa-free travel. More details can be found at the website of ESI’s Schengen White List Project: <http://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=352>.

Business people in Stip

Stip is home to over 70 private textile companies employing some 8,000 workers in a town of 40,000 inhabitants. For more on the town see [ESI’s short portrait of the town](#) and the European Stability Initiative’s Discussion Paper [The cost of non-Europe. Textile towns and the future of Serbia](#), 18 January 2007.

Estragon: the great illusion

Take the economy

Some data on the Macedonian economy:

According to Eurostat, in 2012, Macedonian annual GDP per capita stood at €3,651, compared to the €25,700 EU average.³⁴

³⁴ Eurostat, [Gross domestic product, candidate countries and potential candidates](#).

*Gross Domestic Product per capita (PPS, EU-28 = 100)*³⁵

Country	2002	2012	Change
European Union – 28	100	100	-
Bulgaria	32	47	+15
Macedonia	25	35	+10

According to the Macedonia Statistical Office, the average net wage per employee in December 2012 was €350. The Macedonian average monthly income per capita is only €120.

*Employment rate 2011 (age group 15-64)*³⁶

Country	2003	2012
European Union – 27	62.6	64.3
Bulgaria	52.5	58.8
Macedonia	n/a	44.0

The employment rate measures the share of 15 to 64 year olds that “during the reference week did any work for pay or profit for at least one hour, or were not working but had jobs from which they were temporarily absent.”

Remember the 2012 Gallup Balkan Monitor?

The 2012 Gallup Balkan Monitor revealed,

“just under three-quarters (72%) of Macedonians said they could only manage on their household’s income with ‘difficulty’ or with ‘great difficulty’. Macedonia, together with Serbia, has continuously had more people in this position since the GBM started polling in 2006.

This constant struggle to survive is impacting the way Macedonians feel about their lives in general. On a scale of 0 to 10, Macedonians gave their lives a score of 4.2 – the lowest in the region.”³⁷

200,000 Macedonians have emigrated since 1990 and most of them since 2001!

General emigration data: Suzana Bornarova and Verica Janeska, [“Social Impact of Emigration and Rural-Urban Migration in Central and Eastern Europe. Final Country Report: The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”](#), GVG, April 2012.

Data on emigration to Switzerland: Verica Janeska, [Emigration of Macedonia to Switzerland – changes and current situation](#), University of Skopje/Institute of Economics, PPT presentation.

On Bulgarian citizenships issued to Macedonians see Pressa daily, [“Кандидатите за БЪЛГАРСКИ ПАСПОРТ ПОВЕЧЕ ОТ БЕЖАНЦИТЕ”](#), 23 November 2013.

On Macedonians not be able to afford to take vacations abroad, see: Macedonia Statistical Office, [Poverty Line, as of 03.01.2014](#), Year LII/No. 4.1.12.

³⁵ Eurostat, [GDP per capita in PPS, Index \(EU28=100\)](#).

³⁶ Eurostat, [Employment \(main characteristics and rates\) – annual averages](#).

³⁷ Gallup Balkan Monitor, [“Soaring food prices hitting Macedonians hard”](#), 2012.

You mention Bulgaria

On Bulgaria's 1996 economic meltdown:

Transitions Online, 1996 Year in Review, February 1997.

Ilian Mihov, The economic Transition in Bulgaria 1989-1999, INSEAD, September 1999, p. 11.

We have industrial zones, which is nice, but the one in Tetovo is empty and the one in Stip has one (!) investor.

The website of the Directorate for Technological Industrial Development Zones indicates on its website, that only 9 of 28 plots of the [Skopje 1 Zone](#) are either in use or reserved for investments. For the [second Skopje development zone](#), the TIDZ indicates not a single investor. By August 2013 only one of 30 plots in the development zone of Stip had found an investor. The development zone of Tetovo was empty.

Remember the stories about Subrata Roy

See: *The Indian Express*, "[Macedonia believed Sahara chief was India's return gift for Mother Teresa](#)", 21 March 2014, and *Balkan Insight*, "[Indian Tycoon Throws Lavish Party in Macedonia](#)", 3 October 2013.

World Bank Doing Business 2013

See: [World Bank Doing Business 2013](#), page 9.

Remember the OECD PISA tests on education in 2000 which Macedonia took

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is an international survey which aims to evaluate education systems worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students every three years since 2000. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) conducts the tests in mathematics, science, and reading. Macedonia last took the test in 2000:

Share of students at level 1 or below (PISA 2000)

“Those students who have serious difficulties in using reading as a tool to advance and extend their knowledge and skills in other areas” (Level 1)

Country	Level 1 or below
Finland	7
Poland	15
Hungary	23
Greece	25
Bulgaria	40
Macedonia	63
Albania	71

For more information see also: UNESCO Institute for Statistics & OECD, "[Literacy Skills for the World of Tomorrow – Executive Summary](#)", 2000.

You mention Finland.

See the ESI's Rumeli Observer blog post [“Why Macedonia is not Finland”](#).

Are our statistics credible? Have they not learned from Greece? Why is the EU not telling us what is really going on? Our GDP per capita in 2010 was still below the levels of the early 1980s.

In 1982 Macedonia's GDP per capita, expressed in 1990 International Dollars, was US\$ 6,606. It was US\$ 6,141 in 2010. See: J. Bolt and J. L. van Zanden, “The First Update of the Maddison Project; Re-Estimating Growth Before 1820”, Maddison Project Working Paper 4, 2013, <http://www.ggd.net/maddison/maddison-project/data.htm>.

VMRO voters depend on the state, a state salary, a state pension, agricultural subsidies. The government is increasing public sector jobs. Some statistics suggest that private sector employment decreased by 32,000, but the public sector added 50,000 work places in recent years. Perhaps it is even worse ... who can believe any of our statistics?

See: Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Macedonia, [Pre-Accession Economic Programme 2012-2014. Macroeconomic policy, public finances and structural reforms](#), January 2012, p. 20.

Official total central government debt has doubled from €1.4 billion in 2008 to €2.8 billion in 2012.

See: Ministry of Finance, Sector for International Financial Relations and Management of the Public Debt, Table: [Долг на Централна Влада \(консолидиран\) заклучно со 31.01.2014 година](#).

On income inequality

Income inequality – Gini index in the Balkans (World Bank; 0 = perfect equality)³⁸

Country	Year	Gini index (0 to 100)
Romania	2010	24
Bulgaria	2007	28
Montenegro	2010	29
Serbia	2010	30
Hungary	2007	31
Moldova	2010	33
Albania	2008	35
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2007	36
Turkey	2010	40
Macedonia	2010	44

³⁸ World Bank, World Development Indicators (<http://data.worldbank.org/products/wdi>).

On FDI

*Inward FDI by country 2001 and 2011 (million EUR)*³⁹

Country	2001 ⁴⁰	2011 ⁴¹	Population, 2011, mil ⁴²
EU-27	58,286	225,303	502.4
Turkey	3,743	11,404	73.7
Serbia	198	1,949	7.3
Croatia	1,468	1,075	4.4
Albania	231	827	2.8
Montenegro	87	401	0.6
Kosovo	43	395	1.8
Macedonia	500	337	2.1
Bosnia	133	290	3.8

Comparison with Bulgaria

The times when Macedonia dwarfed Bulgaria's GDP are long over. In 2012 Macedonia's GDP per capita (in purchasing power parity) stood at 35 per cent of the EU-28 average, nearly unchanged since 2008. Bulgaria was at this level in 2004. By 2012 it had risen to 47 per cent.⁴³ So Bulgaria is by now clearly ahead and the gap is widening.

In 2011 the employment rate (of the age group of 15-64 year olds) stood at 44 per cent in Macedonia, and at 59 per cent in Bulgaria.⁴⁴ According to [data of the World Bank](#) net inflows of foreign direct investment from 2007-2012 amounted to US\$ 2.6 billion in Macedonia, and US\$ 43.2 billion in Bulgaria. This means that there was more than US\$ 5,900 foreign investment for every Bulgarian resident in this period, compared to not even US\$ 1,300 for every Macedonian resident.

Estragon-the-EU-is-not-strict

For Milenko Nedelkovski the whole EU is a "failing community of homosexuals", and it is therefore a good thing for Macedonia to be outside.

Milenko Nedelkovski is the host of one of the few television shows where government ministers appear as guests. The Nedelkovski quotes that Estragon cites come from a text published on Nedelkovski's [website](#).

In May 2010, the European Federation of Journalists [condemned](#) Nedelkovski's incitement to violence against journalists: "Milenko Nedelkovski, a television presenter on Kanal 5 issued a list of 'traitor journalists' in the last week and openly called for their physical elimination."

³⁹ Source: Eurostat, [Keyfigures on the enlargement countries](#), 2013 edition, p. 74.

⁴⁰ Montenegro, 2002; EU-27 and Kosovo, 2004.

⁴¹ Albania, 2010.

⁴² EU-27, break in series. Kosovo, the number of population is based on recent census year 2011 and estimates that KAS have for 3 north municipalities who didn't participate in the Census and natural growth for the period April 15–31 December 2011.

⁴³ Eurostat, [GDP per capita in PPS, Index \(EU28=100\)](#).

⁴⁴ Eurostat, [Employment \(main characteristics and rates\) – annual averages](#).

In October 2012, the Coalition “Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalized Communities” [described a homophobic campaign](#) occurring in Macedonia. It highlighted a message Nedelkovski posted on his fan page:

“The faggots had a very active day yesterday!?
Some of them protested, others ‘died’, and others broke up...!!!
LGBT extra active.

But, let a representative of the ‘primitive form of family’ tell you something. Wherever I find you, I will give you a boot and slap in the face. And, also something for the media: Since when 5-6 people gathering in front of a door is news? ... Yesterday a living human being jumped from the edge of the universe, but the news for Zarko Trajanoski holding the faggots flag is more important. SHAME ON YOU...”

He is just like Dmitry Kiselev, Putin’s media henchman, now banned from travelling to the US.

See for example Joshua Yaffa’s article in the *New Republic*, [“Dimitry Kiselev Is Redefining the Art of Russian Propaganda. Nobody exploits basic human insecurity and fear quite like Putin’s favourite TV host”](#), 1 July 2014.

“Under Putin, Russia has essentially abandoned its post-1991 effort of integrating with the West, of paying lip service to democratic values in public even while violating them in practice. As its recent maneuvering in Ukraine has shown, his Russia cares little about its position in the Western order; in fact, it fetishizes its ostracism. The official mood was summed up in a paper released by the culture ministry last month, which holds that ‘Russia is not Europe’ and calls for the country to ‘reject the principles of multiculturalism and tolerance’.”

Kiselev is the spokesperson in the Russian media for this approach.