



PRESPA AGREEMENT

Full name:

The Foreign Ministers of the two countries, [Nikola Dimitrov](#) and [Nikos Kotzias](#), sign the agreement before the Prime Ministers [Zoran Zaev](#) and [Alexis Tsipras](#)

Signed

17 June 2018

Location

[Psarades, Greece](#)

Sealed

25 January 2019

Effective

12 February 2019^[1]

Condition

Ratification of the agreement by both parliaments as well as ratification of the Republic of North Macedonia's NATO accession protocol by Greece

Signatories  [Greece](#) and  [Republic of Macedonia](#) **Parties** 2 **Language** English

Geographic and political division of Macedonia  [Macedonia \(Greece\)](#) and  [North Macedonia](#)

The Prespa agreement ([Macedonian](#): Преспански договор, [translit.](#) *Prespanski Dogovor*, [Albanian](#): Marrëveshja e Prespës, [Greek](#): Συμφωνία των Πρεσπών, *Symfonia ton Prespon*), also known as the [Prespes agreement](#), [Prespa accord](#) or [Treaty of Prespa](#), is an agreement reached on 12 June 2018 between [Greece](#) and [North Macedonia](#), then known as the Republic of Macedonia, under the [United Nations](#)' auspices, resolving a [long-standing dispute over the latter's name](#).

Signed beside [Lake Prespa](#) from which it took its name, and ratified by the parliaments of both countries by 25 January 2019, it went into force on 12 February 2019^[2] when the two countries notified the UN of the deal's completion, following the ratification of the [NATOaccession protocol for North Macedonia](#) on 8 February.^[3] It replaces the [interim accord of 1995](#) and sees the country's name changed to [Republic of North Macedonia erga omnes](#).

The Prespa agreement cannot be superseded by any other agreements or treaties nor revoked, and its provisions are legally binding for both parties in terms of international law and will remain in force indefinitely.^[4]

TREATY NAME. The Prespa agreement is the short name for the deal, named after the location it was signed, [Lake Prespa](#). Its full name is **Final Agreement for the settlement of the differences as described in the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 817 (1993) and 845 (1993), the termination of the Interim Accord of 1995, and the establishment of a Strategic Partnership between the Parties**

Macedonian: Конечна спогодба за решавање на разликите описаны во Резолуциите 817 (1993) и 845 (1993) на Советот за безбедност на Обединетите Нации, за престанување на важноста на Привремената спогодба од 1995 г. и за воспоставување на стратешко партнериство меѓу страните,

Greek: Τελική συμφωνία για την επίλυση των διαφορών, όπως περιγράφονται στις αποφάσεις του συμβουλίου ασφαλείας των Ηνωμένων Εθνών 817 (1993) και 845 (1993), τη λήξη της ενδιάμεσης συμφωνίας του 1995, και την εδραίωση στρατηγικής εταιρικής σχέσης μεταξύ των μερών.

BACKGROUND. Ever since the breakup of [Yugoslavia](#) in 1991, the use of the name "Macedonia" has been disputed between the southeastern European countries of Greece and the now Republic of North Macedonia (formerly a Yugoslav state, which declared independence as the Republic of Macedonia). The dispute arose from the ambiguity in [nomenclature](#) between the former Yugoslav state, the adjacent Greek region of Macedonia, and the ancient Greek kingdom of [Macedon](#) (which falls mostly within Greek Macedonia). Citing historical and irredentist concerns, Greece opposed the use of the name "Macedonia" by the Republic of Macedonia without a geographical qualifier such as "Northern Macedonia" for use "by all ... and for all purposes".^[5]

As millions of ethnic Greeks identify themselves as [Macedonians](#), unrelated to the Slavic people who are associated with North Macedonia, Greece further objected to the use of the term "Macedonian" for the neighboring country's largest ethnic group and its language. The Republic of Macedonia was accused of appropriating symbols and figures that are historically considered part of Greek culture, such as the [Vergina Sun](#) and [Alexander the Great](#), and of promoting the irredentist concept of a [United Macedonia](#), which involves territorial claims on Greece, Bulgaria, Albania, and Serbia. Prior to the Prespa agreement, international organizations provisionally referenced the Republic of Macedonia as "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (sometimes unofficially abbreviated as FYROM).

AGREEMENT HISTORY. The Interim Accord of 1995, which the Prespa agreement replaced in 2019. The [Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras](#) announced on 12 June 2018 that an agreement had been reached with his [Macedonian counterpart Zoran Zaev](#) on the dispute, "which covers all the preconditions set by the Greek side".^[6] The proposal would result in the [Republic of Macedonia](#) being renamed the [Republic of North Macedonia](#)

(Macedonian: Република Северна Македонија, [translit](#). *Republika Severna Makedonija*;

Greek: Δημοκρατία της Βόρειας Μακεδονίας^[7]), with the new name being used for all purposes ([erga omnes](#)), that is, domestically, in all bilateral relations and in all regional and international organizations and institutions.^{[8][9]} The agreement was signed at [Lake Prespa](#), a body of water which forms a partial common border between the Republic of Macedonia, [Greece](#) and [Albania](#).

The deal includes recognition of the [Macedonian language](#) in the [United Nations](#), noting that it is within the group of [South Slavic languages](#), and that the [citizenship](#) of the country will be called Macedonian/citizen of the Republic of North Macedonia. Also, there would be an explicit clarification that the citizens of the country are not related to the [ancient Macedonians](#).^{[10][11]} Specifically, Article 7 mentions that both countries acknowledge that their respective understanding of the terms "Macedonia" and "Macedonian" refers to a different historical context and cultural heritage.^[8]

When reference is made to Greece, these terms denote the area and [people](#) of its [northern region](#), as well as the [Hellenic civilization](#), history and culture of that region. When reference is made to Republic of Macedonia, these terms denote its territory, [language](#) and [people](#), with their own, distinctly different, history and culture.^[8] Additionally, the agreement stipulates the removal of the [Vergina Sun](#) from public use in the Republic of Macedonia and the formation of a committee for the review of school textbooks and maps in both countries for the removal of irredentist content and to align them with [UNESCO](#) and [Council of Europe](#) standards.^[12] These changes were put to a [referendum](#) for citizens of the Republic of Macedonia in the autumn of 2018.

REACTIONS. The international community reacted positively to the Prespa agreement,^[13] with the media dubbing it as "historic".^{[14][15][16][17]} The European Union welcomed it, with the European Council President Donald Tusk tweeting his "sincere congratulations" to Tsipras and Zaev. "I am keeping my fingers crossed. Thanks to you, the impossible is becoming possible," he said. EU Foreign Affairs chief Federica Mogherini and commissioner Johannes Hahn also issued a joint statement congratulating the two Prime Ministers "in reaching this historic agreement between their countries, which contributes to the transformation of the entire region of Southeast Europe."^{[18][19]} NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg welcomed the agreement, stating that it will set the Republic of Macedonia on the path towards NATO membership.^[20]

Additionally, the British Foreign Minister Boris Johnson welcomed the agreement as being "fantastic news".^{[21][22]} "The agreement once and for always confirms and strengthens the Macedonian ethnic and cultural identity, the Macedonian language, the Macedonian nationality. It guarantees the security of the country and provides a secure future for the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia", Zaev said.^[23]

The domestic communities reacted more negatively to the agreement. In Macedonia, the President of the Republic, Gjorge Ivanov, declared that he won't sign the agreement, calling it "disastrous".^[24] Additionally, VMRO-DPMNE, a right-wing party, also opposed the agreement, and pledged to organize public protests against it.^[25] In Greece, Golden Dawn (GD), a far-right party, and the Communist Party of Greece (CPG), a far-left party, opposed the agreement, with a GD MP, Konstantinos Barbarousis, calling for military rule and firing squads to execute politicians responsible for the deal.^[26]

As a result Barbarousis was expelled from his party, and a warrant was issued for his arrest for high treason. He fled using his parliamentary vehicle,^{[27][28]} but eventually was found and arrested.^[29] Additionally, the conservative New Democracy party filed a motion of no-confidence against Tsipras in parliament because of the name deal,^[30] which was rejected two days later with a simple parliamentary majority; 153 against it, 127 for.^[31] In Macedonia, protests went violent at Skopje, and Macedonian SDSM MP Hari Lokvenec, who attended the Prespa ceremony, had his parliamentary vehicle set on fire at Bitola by unidentified perpetrators.^[32] Following his departure as Greek Foreign Minister, Kotzias stated in October 2018 that reasons for the Prespa agreement was to bring stability to the Balkans and to stop Turkish influence within the region.^{[33][34]}

SIGNATURE. Zoran Zaev and Alexis Tsipras in Otešovo, on North Macedonia's side of Lake Prespa, after signing the Prespa agreement. The Prespa agreement, which replaced the Interim Accord of 1995,^[35] was signed on 17 June 2018 in a high-level ceremony at the Greek border village of Psarades on Lake Prespa, by the two foreign ministers Nikola Dimitrov and Nikos Kotzias and in the presence of the respective Prime Ministers, Zoran Zaev and Alexis Tsipras.^{[36][37][38][39]}

The meeting was attended by the UN's Special Representative Matthew Nimetz, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo, the EU's High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini, and the European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Johannes Hahn, among others.^[40] After the ceremony, Tsipras, along with his Macedonian counterpart, crossed over the border to the Macedonian side of Lake Prespa for lunch at the village of Otešovo, in a highly symbolic move that marked the first entry of a Greek Prime Minister into the Republic of Macedonia since it declared independence in 1991.^{[41][42]}

RATIFICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION. On June 13 2018, Zaev said that Macedonia is changing the license plates of its vehicles from MK to NMK to reflect the country's new name.^{[43][44]} The Macedonian government announced that the statues of Alexander the Great, Philip II of Macedon and Olympias of Epirus, which were raised as part of the Skopje 2014 program, will be given new inscriptions with clarifications that they symbolize the Ancient Greek period and are "honouring Greek-Macedonian friendship".^[45]

RATIFICATION BY THE MACEDONIAN PARLIAMENT. On June 20, the Prespa agreement was ratified by the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia with 69 MPs voting in favor of it.^[46] Opposition party VMRO-DPMNE boycotted the parliamentary session and declared the Prespa treaty as a "genocide of the legal state"^[47] and a "genocide of the entire nation".^[48]

On June 25, the [Greek Foreign Ministry](#) informed the [EU](#) and [NATO](#) that [Greece](#) is no longer objecting to Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic accession under the new name. The next day, however, the [Macedonian President George Ivanov](#) refused to sign the agreement^[49] and threatened the [Macedonian PM Zaev](#) and the ruling coalition's MPs with imprisonment of at least 5 years for voting in favor of an agreement which, according to Ivanov, puts the Republic of Macedonia in a subordinate position to a foreign state.

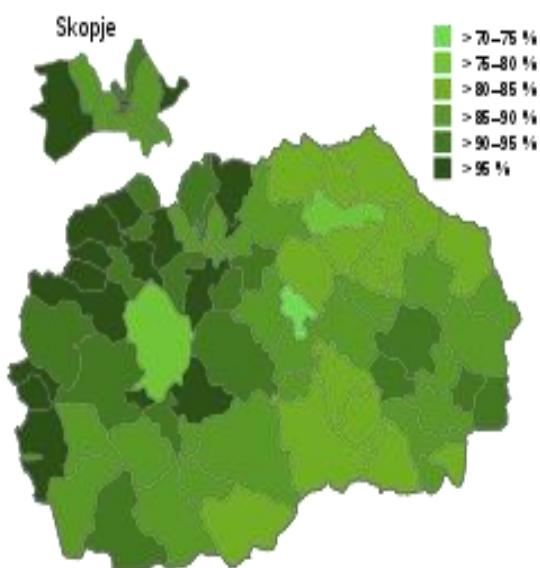
"I do not accept the constitutional change aimed at changing the constitutional name [of the country]. I do not accept ideas or proposals which would endanger Macedonia's [national identity](#), the individuality of the [Macedonian nation](#), the [Macedonian language](#) and the Macedonian model of coexistence. In the presidential election, 534,910 citizens voted in favor of this electoral program."

The agreement goes beyond the scope of [United Nations Security Council](#) Resolutions 817 (1993) and 845 (1993), since it refers to the "difference in the name of the State" and not to the "disputes" to which the agreement refers", Ivanov said, adding that "This agreement brings the Republic of Macedonia to subordination from another country, namely the Republic of Greece. According to Article 308 of the Penal Code, "a citizen who brings the Republic of Macedonia to a state of subservience or dependence on another state is punishable by imprisonment of at least five years". The legalization of this agreement creates legal consequences that are the basis for committing a crime."^{[50][51][52]}

The withdrawal of the Greek veto resulted in the European Union approving on June 27 the start of [accession talks with the Republic of Macedonia](#), which are expected in 2019, under the condition that the Prespa deal is implemented and Macedonia's constitutional name is changed to Republic of North Macedonia.^[53]

On July 5, the Prespa agreement was ratified again by the Macedonian parliament with 69 MPs voting in favor of it.^[54]

On July 11, NATO invited Macedonia to start accession talks in a bid to become the Euro-Atlantic alliance's 30th member.^[55]



MACEDONIAN REFERENDUM

2018 Macedonian referendum

Results of 2018 Macedonian referendum

On July 30, the parliament of Macedonia approved plans to hold a non-binding [referendum on changing the country's name](#) that took place on September 30.^[56] 91% of voters voted in favour with a 37% turnout,^[57] but the referendum was not carried because of a constitutional requirement for a 50% turnout.^[58]

Total turnout for the referendum was at 666,344^[59] and of those some 260,000 were ethnic [Albanian](#) voters of Macedonia.^{[60][61]} The government intended to push forward with the name change.^[62]

POST-REFERENDUM DEVELOPMENTS.

On 15 October 2018, the parliament of Macedonia began debating the name change.^[63] The proposal for the constitutional reform requires the vote of 80 MPs, i.e. two-thirds of the 120-seat parliament.^{[64][65]} On 16 October, [US Assistant Secretary of State Wess Mitchell](#) sent a letter to VMRO-DPMNE leader [Hristijan Mickoski](#), in which he expresses the disappointment of the [United States](#) with the positions of the leadership, including him personally, and asks to "set aside partisan interests" and work to get the name change approved.^{[66][67]} Mickoski expressed his hope that the Republic of Macedonia will be very soon a part of the NATO and EU families, "but proud and dignified, not humiliated, disfigured and disgraced."^[68]

On 19 October the parliament voted to start the process of renaming the country "North Macedonia", after a total of 80 MPs voted in favour of the constitutional changes.^[69] On 30 October, the [Skopje](#) Public Prosecutor's Office opened a case against Macedonian President Gjorge Ivanov for his refusal to fulfill his constitutional obligations in signing the Prespa agreement after it was ratified by the Macedonian Parliament.^{[70][71]}

On 3 December 2018, Macedonia's Parliament approved a draft constitutional amendment, with 67 lawmakers voting in favour, 23 voting against and 4 abstaining. A simple majority was needed at this stage.^[72]

After some political wrangling over constitutional issues related to the multi-ethnic makeup of the state, all Albanian political parties of Macedonia voted in favour of the name change along with the governing Socialists and some members of the opposition.^{[73][74][75]} On 11 January 2019, the Macedonian Parliament completed the legal implementation of the Prespa Agreement by approving the constitutional changes for renaming the country to North Macedonia with a two-thirds parliamentary majority (81 MPs).^{[76][77]}

INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS TO MACEDONIAN RATIFICATION. The international community, NATO and European Union leaders, including Greek PM Alexis Tsipras and Austrian Chancellor [Sebastian Kurz](#), as well as heads of neighboring states, congratulated the Macedonian Prime Minister Zoran Zaev.^{[78][79][80][81]} The British Prime Minister [Theresa May](#) described the vote as a "historic moment",^[82] while the Kosovar President [Hashim Thaci](#) expressed his hope that the Prespa Agreement, which resolved the Macedonia Naming Dispute, can be used as a "model" for resolving [Kosovo's dispute](#) with [Serbia](#) as well.^[83] Albanian President [Ilir Meta](#) congratulated the name change and Albanian Foreign Minister [Ditmir Bushati](#) hailed the vote by tweeting that Albanian political parties were the "decisive factor".^{[74][84]}

Former Prime Minister [Nikola Gruevski](#) has condemned the Prespa agreement and stated that Prime Minister Zoran Zaev "scammed" and "tricked" the Macedonian people over the name change of the country and that Greek politicians imposed an unfavourable deal upon Macedonia that outlines exclusive claims over "antique history" by Greece.^[85]

POST-MACEDONIAN RATIFICATION DEVELOPMENTS. On 13 January 2019, Greece Defence Minister [Panos Kammenos](#) and his [Independent Greeks](#) party quit Greece's ruling coalition over the Prespa agreement, potentially leaving the governing coalition without a workable majority in parliament.^[86] Prime Minister [Alexis Tsipras](#) then held a confidence vote on 16 January and survived 151-148, with one lawmaker absent. Tsipras survived the vote with 145 of his Radical Left [Syriza](#) party and with 6 MPs who were either Independents or [Independent Greeks \(ANEL\)](#).^{[87][88][89]} In the days prior to the ratification of the Prespa agreement by the [Greek Parliament](#), over 60,000 protesters (according to police; 600,000, according to organizers) from all over the country arrived in Athens to demand the rejection of the agreement; some of these protests had become violent, with the police required to use tear gas to disperse the groups.^[90]

During the last week, public opinion poll showed that over 65% of the people were against the ratification of the Prespa agreement,^[91] whereas many popular Greek artists (S. Xarhakos, V. Papakonstantinou J. Kotsiras etc) agreed that a referendum should have been held.^[92] On 19 January, Mikis Theodorakis' editorial was published in which he characterized the ratification of the agreement from Greek MPs as a "crime", demanding a referendum in Greece on the agreement as well.^[93] On 23 January, just a day prior to the ratification in the [Hellenic Parliament](#), hundreds of scholars, professors, writers and artists from all over Greece signed petitions in support of the Prespa agreement.^{[94][95]}

RATIFICATION BY THE GREEK PARLIAMENT. On 25 January 2019, Greece's Parliament approved the Prespa agreement with 153 votes in favor and 146 votes against, with 1 abstention.^[96] Shortly after the ratification of the deal, Greece's Alternate Foreign Minister [Georgios Katrougalos](#) signed, in the Greek Parliament, the [enacted law](#) of the Prespa Agreement.^[97]

INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS TO GREEK RATIFICATION. The international community, including the Prime Ministers [Theresa May](#) of United Kingdom, [Justin Trudeau](#) of Canada, [Boyko Borisov](#) of Bulgaria and [Edi Rama](#) of Albania, Presidents [Emmanuel Macron](#) of France, [Hashim Thaci](#) of Kosovo, [Donald Tusk](#) of the European Union, and [Jean-Claude Juncker](#) of the EU's Commission, USA's and Germany's foreign Ministers, [Michael Pompeo](#) and [Heiko Maas](#).

Respectively, Romania's EU minister [George Ciamba](#) whose country held EU presidency, as well as NATO's chief Jens Stoltenberg, welcomed positively the ratification of the deal.[\[98\]](#)[\[99\]](#)[\[100\]](#)[\[101\]](#)[\[102\]](#)[\[103\]](#)[\[104\]](#)[\[105\]](#)[\[106\]](#)[\[107\]](#)[\[108\]](#)[\[109\]](#) Furthermore, the Republic of Macedonia's Prime Minister Zoran Zaev, in his congratulatory message to his Greek counterpart Alexis Tsipras, whom he called "a friend", described the ratification as a "historic victory" which "ends a long-standing diplomatic conflict between Athens and Skopje".[\[110\]](#)[\[111\]](#)

POST-GREEK RATIFICATION DEVELOPMENTS.

signed the accession protocol with North Macedonia.[\[112\]](#)

On 6 February 2019, NATO's 29 members

NOBEL PEACE PRIZE NOMINATION. On 28 January 2019, it was confirmed that [Alexis Tsipras](#) and [Zoran Zaev](#) were nominated by Nobel Laureate [Wided Bouchamaoui](#) for the 2019 [Nobel Peace Prize](#).[\[113\]](#)

INTERNATIONAL POSITIONS.

Opposing the agreement



Russia[\[114\]](#)

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11. [^ Κλείδωσε το "Βόρεια Μακεδονία" - Το διάγγελμα Τσίπρα για τη συμφωνία \(Agreed on Northern Macedonia\) - Tsipra's speech to the nation about the deal". Kathimerini.gr \(in Greek\). 12 June 2018. Retrieved 12 June 2018. Την ίδια στιγμή -και ίσως αυτό να έχει τη μεγαλύτερη ιστορική βαρύτητα και αξία για την Ελλάδα- στη Συμφωνία που καταλήξαμε, για πρώτη φορά προβλέπεται ότι οι Βόρειοι Γείτονές μας δεν έχουν και δεν μπορούν να διεκδικήσουν στο μέλλον καμία σχέση με τον αρχαίο ελληνικό πολιτισμό της Μακεδονίας. Ο όρος Μακεδόνας της ελληνικής ιστορικής κληρονομιάς, ο οποίος έλκει την καταγωγή του από τον αρχαίο ελληνικό πολιτισμό διαχωρίζεται ρητά και κατηγορηματικά από τον όρο Μακεδόνας όπως τον χρησιμοποιούν και στη βάση του οποίου αυτοπροσδιορίζονται οι πολίτες της γειτονικής μας χώρας.](#)
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EXTERNAL LINKS. Agreement text in [English](#), and translations in [Macedonian](#) and [Greek](#).

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