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# Journal of Modern Hellenism

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Editors

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## Greece and the Problem of Macedonia

VAN COUFOUDAKIS

This essay examines issues relating to the Macedonian problem, particularly as it has evolved since the disintegration of Yugoslavia; provides a brief background of the problem; focuses on Greece, and the relations of Greece with the United States, the European Union and Turkey.

### BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe have revived the cliché of the Balkans as the powder keg of Europe. This most recent round of instability in the Balkans is not the direct result of actions by great powers and their proxies, as it was the case in the first quarter of this century. The threat of regional instability caused by the collapse of Yugoslavia, and the political and economic transitions occurring in Yugoslavia's successor states, have become Greece's primary foreign and defense policy priority overshadowing the priority given to Greek-Turkish relations since 1974.

This is a region tormented by the burden of history. Over a century ago, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, "the sick man of Europe," was intertwined with the struggle for emancipation and unification of states such as Greece, and by nationalistic drives for a "greater Serbia" and a "greater Bulgaria" often with the involvement of one or more great powers. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth century, the region witnessed the struggle over the region of Macedonia, the Balkan Wars, the tragic experience of World War I, and the