

There is a significant movement in the Republic of Bulgaria - Republic of Macedonia relationship at a state level..

After the change of the guard – a new coalition government in Skopje, new hopes for revival of previous frozen agreements, for rapprochement and preparation for signing number of bilateral documents went on the agenda.

During the official visit of the new Macedonian Prime Minister in Sofia a joint tribute to Tzar Samuil was done by the two prime-ministers and wreaths laid at his monument. On August 2 a joint celebration of Ilinden in Skopje again by the two prime-ministers showed solidarity in honoring the heroes of the revolt and common piety to the victims.

The summit of the prime-ministers ended with official signage of the bilateral documents. The main document – ***A good neighborliness agreement with the Republic of Macedonia*** is a new chapter, a turning point in the good neighborhood policies of both countries.

<http://www.mfa.bg/uploads/files/1501093350Dogovor-RM-RB.pdf>

According to local media reports, the agreement provides support for FYROM'S Euro-Atlantic aspirations on behalf of Bulgaria, cooperation at bilateral and multilateral level, upgrading of transport links and communications, simplification of customs and border procedures, allocation of funds for regional and cross-border infrastructure projects, and facilitation of contacts between citizens of both countries.

The agreement was welcomed by the E.U., US. Germany is fully supportive.

Again there were forces which reacted against this movement. These forces belong to the dark past, geopolitical players, who are enemies of the European integration of the West Balkans. In both countries the "fifth column" works actively against the European integration and against the wish of the countries to live together in the big European family. Their goal is to see more and more citizens discouraged, to remain "cautious towards the West", to be skeptic and scrutinize the process, to question the very concept of EU, even to suggest desperation and full retreat of it.

The EU integration is the only valid instrument to overcome all wounds of the past, all divisions - wars, unjust contracts, totalitarian ideologies, violence, all horrors the peoples of the Balkans lived. Now is the moment that requires increased attention, tolerance, careful control over politicized or nationalistic language, to be balanced and prudent.

In Greece the visiting Serbian Foreign Minister officially "apologized" to Greece for recognizing the name Macedonia: "it was a mistake". He also declares that Serbia has no claims for territory in Northern Greece (!). The Golden Dawn party is been activated, pleading for new Greek veto over Macedonian accession candidature, even hissing Serbian and Russian flags on their meetings. Many political parties in Serbia strongly

oppose the Euro-Atlantic accession. Behind all that is the long hand of Russia, who controls its choir of political supporters (the Socialist Party, the “Patriots” in Bulgaria and VMRO-DPNE in Skopje) out of fear to lose ground in the Balkans. Still, the BSP (Bulgarian socialists) voted unanimously in support of the treaty in the Parliament thus trying to mask their negative campaign in the media at grassroots level..

The upcoming agreement opens a new page. The bilateral agreements are important but all the more important is the civilized behavior of people on both sides. The societies need to demonstrate respect and tact. Historians, press, media need to renounce on high ground slogans and declarations, to eliminate all fears suggesting that here is a dangerous "negation of national historical interest" and similar nonsense belonging to the past.

As Boiko Borissov of Bulgaria said in Skopje “the one who walks looking backwards will stumble”.

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<https://www.bnt.bg/en/a/bulgaria-and-macedonia-signed-good-neighbor-agreement>

<http://sofiaglobe.com/2017/07/27/bulgarian-parliament-unanimously-backs-good-neighbourliness-agreement-with-republic-of-macedonia/>