

БЪЛГАРСКАТА ПОЛИТИКА
СПРЯМО РЕПУБЛИКА

МАКЕДОНИЈА

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BULGARIAN POLICIES
ON THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA



Lyubomir Ivanov et al



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Recommendations on the development of good neighbourly relations following Bulgaria's accession to the EU and in the context of NATO and EU enlargement in the Western Balkans

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... it is difficult to explain to the world why we have problems with almost all [of the neighbouring states] while they do not have so many with each other. (Utrinski Vesnik – Skopje, 12/31/07)

1. Fundamentals

As a Balkan state and an EU and NATO member, and bordering the Western Balkans, Bulgaria, along with Greece, has the specific responsibility of guaranteeing that the states aspiring to EU and NATO membership in the region attain modern European standards of good neighbourly relations. Bulgaria also needs to set its relations with the Republic of Macedonia on a sound and sustainable basis not only in the best interests of Bulgaria's own citizens, but no less of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, and for the successful development of the Balkan region as a modern and prosperous part of a United Europe.

Bulgaria recently made two particularly important steps in this direction, which marked the end of one and the beginning of another stage in its bilateral relations with the Republic of Macedonia.

The first step was made in 2006 by Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov and Foreign Minister Ivaylo Kalfin who unequivocally warned Skopje that the credit of unconditional support originally extended to the Republic of Macedonia for its European Union and NATO membership has been expended, and that future Bulgarian support would depend on the willingness and success of the Republic of Macedonia in adopting and pursuing a policy of good neighbourly relations.

The second major step was made during the visit of US President George W. Bush to Sofia in 2007, when both President Parvanov and Prime Minister Sergey Stanishev advised him of the failure of the Republic of Macedonia to follow a good neighbour policy.

Articulated at the highest level, these political messages require the elaboration in greater detail of the full range of policies related to Bulgaria's bilateral relations with the Republic of Macedonia, and their development in the new circumstances. This paper aims to formulate some possible starting points for such policies, putting them forward for expert analysis, political decision making and prompt implementation, along with due public debate and participation.

Bulgarian attitudes and views on the complex set of issues related to Bulgarian policy on the Republic of Macedonia, as well as the relevant aspects of Bulgaria's relations with third states, especially Greece, Albania, Kosovo and Serbia, were formed at various times in history, and thus are the product of various historical realities. As a result, these attitudes and views are inherently contradictory, effectively hindering any attempt to pursue consistent and proactive policies. Moreover, the present conceptual framework

fails to reflect the most recent, post-January 1, 2007 situation in which Bulgaria is a member of both NATO and the European Union, while the Republic of Macedonia is not. Owing to these circumstances, the present analysis and the ensuing policy recommendations are based on a new interpretation and re-evaluation, which requires new approaches in certain aspects.

It should be noted that the position of Skopje enjoys better exposure and audibility than the Bulgarian one among decision makers and the general public in Europe, the United States and Canada. Indeed, during the last two decades the Republic of Macedonia has been building its arguments and international public relations efforts on Yugoslav propaganda disseminated in the course of forty-odd years, while during that time Bulgaria remained virtually silent and refrained from seeking support for its position from other nations. Macedonism also benefits from public sympathy in Europe and North America towards the small post-Yugoslav republic, viewed both as an offspring and to some extent a victim of the Cold War victors.

The present pre-accession status of the Republic of Macedonia vis-avis the EU and NATO offers a unique window of opportunity to set the country's relations with Bulgaria on a stable and positive basis of good neighbourliness. If this opportunity is missed, Sofia would only find a fairly modest set of means at its disposal to further its cause, while the capabilities of Skopje would expand. Furthermore, even the strongest arguments of Bulgaria would then become intellectually and morally deficient; for while the silence and passivity of this country in the past could find some explanation (if not justification), the ability to pursue a policy of good neighbourly relations is an important criterion for both NATO and EU accession by candidate states such as the Republic of Macedonia, and any further silence on the part of Bulgaria would be interpreted by our allies in NATO and EU, and in the Republic of Macedonia itself as condoning and legitimizing policies and practices that cannot be accepted as good and neighbourly by any self-respecting state.

This paper deals mostly with specific problems in the relations between Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia, outlining actions for their sustainable solution, while briefly mentioning a variety of other relevant measures such as joint infrastructure and other projects (including those funded by the EU and NATO), Bulgarian investment in the economy of the Republic of Macedonia, further streamlining of the procedures for granting Bulgarian citizenship to persons of Bulgarian origin in Balkan states, or incentives for such persons to study at Bulgarian universities etc. Such measures can undoubtedly facilitate the resolution of existing problems, but cannot resolve them alone.

The present report focuses exclusively on Bulgaria's policies towards the Republic of Macedonia. Actions and policies towards third states, or the EU and NATO are considered only as much as they are essential in achieving the policy goals related to the Republic of Macedonia.

1.1. The Republic of Macedonia

The Macedonian nation and the Macedonian state were created in the process of implementation and evolution of a well known Serbian political construction originally proposed in 1889, later supported by a decision of the Communist International in Moscow in 1934, and eventually put into effect between 1944 and 1991 in one particular part of the geographical and historical region of Macedonia (about 36 percent of its territory) known as Vardar Macedonia, included in the territory of Yugoslavia, and governed by the Yugoslav Communist Party. This idea proclaimed that the ethnic Bulgarians in Macedonia, who had lived there since the 7th century, had nothing to do with the Bulgarian state and the Bulgarian nation – a statement that contradicts the historical interpretation predominantly accepted by historians around the world. The Macedonist doctrine was enforced in Vardar Macedonia by methods and means typical of a totalitarian communist regime: by terror and repression against those who considered themselves Bulgarian (30,000 executed, and another 120,000 sent to concentration camps and prisons); by rewriting history through education and the media; falsifying authentic historical evidence and artifacts; and by counterfeiting historical monuments (inscriptions in churches and monasteries, burial grounds etc.).

Such practices persist in various forms in the present Macedonian state. The reason lies in the model of nation building chosen by the newly independent Republic of Macedonia in the early 1990s. One of the available options, which is still current, was to recognize the objective parameters of this development as they are, i.e. independent statehood within the borders of the Republic of Macedonia (a joint state of the ethnic Macedonians and Albanians); changes in ethnic self-awareness among much of the population of Vardar Macedonia (today's Republic of Macedonia) after 1944; the centuries of historical development of the majority population on the territory comprising today's Republic of Macedonia as an integral part of Bulgarian ethnicity; and the Bulgarian ethnic identity preserved among a certain portion of the population of the Republic of Macedonia. Regrettably, the political elite of the new state chose the alternative option of following the Serbo-Yugoslavian, anti-Bulgarian scheme unaltered, now in a different environment and to some extent with new protagonists and propagators.

In other words, the consolidation of a distinct Macedonian nation proceeded in conditions of independence not on the basis of recognition and appreciation of objective historical evidence, but rather persisted in falsifying the past, and projecting processes confined to a particular territory and period of time (Vardar Macedonia in Yugoslavia, 1944 -1991) into other territories and other times. Given that the history of the population of the Republic of Macedonia and that of its neighbouring countries are interrelated, this exercise in rewriting history (extending back to the Balkan Revival of the 19th century, the Middle Ages and even to Antiquity), while aimed at adjusting the historic ethnic identity of the population of the Republic of Macedonia to its present one, effectively attempts to redefine the historic – and hence the modern – identity of neighbouring nations, especially the Bulgarians. This attempt is perceived as outrageous by the latter.

A new aspect of this old project is that its masterminds and propagators today comprise not only political and other factions ideologically and biographically connected to the former Yugoslav nomenclature, but also their ideological opponents, including the offspring of families persecuted in the past as Bulgarians or Bulgarophiles.

Subsequently, due to Skopje's failure to follow a good neighbour policy, the very name of the Republic of Macedonia began to generate problems in the traditional use of the name 'Macedonia' for other major areas of the geographical region of the same name, i.e. Bulgarian (Pirin) Macedonia and Greek (Aegean) Macedonia.

In this respect, the initial credit of trust extended by Bulgaria through its unconditional recognition of the new state in 1992 was an investment in good relations between the two countries that was unfortunately not reciprocated. In hindsight, the early recognition without any commitment by the new state to adopt standards of good neighbourly behaviour rather served as an incentive for the continuation of old-style Yugo-Macedonian policies.

Current bilateral relations are to a large extent disingenuous, with representatives of Skopje making different statements when visiting Sofia, when speaking at home, and when addressing third parties. In view of the strongly divergent public attitudes in Bulgaria and in the Republic of Macedonia, there is potential for serious deterioration which should never occur between two European states, let alone between two present or future EU member states.

Accordingly, in view of the anticipated invitation for the Republic of Macedonia to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the pending process of negotiations for the accession of the Republic of Macedonia to the European Union, Bulgaria must insist on the following, directly and/or by means of the opportunities provided by the accession process and by making use of Bulgaria's status as a full member state:

1.1.1. Strict compliance by the Republic of Macedonia with the Joint Declaration of February 22, 1999 that sets the rules governing good neighbourly relations agreed between Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia, by registering and identifying openly all established infringements of the provisions of the Declaration. Strict monitoring of the Republic of Macedonia's compliance with the Declaration should become an integral part of the assessment conducted by both Bulgaria and the EU of the progress achieved by the Republic of Macedonia in attaining the criteria and standards for EU membership (including the requirement for strict adherence to a policy of good neighbourly relations). Similar monitoring should be carried out in the process of NATO accession.

The reason for focusing the attention of the European Union on the implementation of the 1999 Declaration is that its infringement creates serious problems in relations between Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia. It would be unacceptable for these difficulties to persist after the Republic of Macedonia joins the EU.

Bulgaria should insist that the resolution recommending the opening of negotiations for the accession of the Republic of Macedonia to the EU should include an obligation for Skopje to adhere strictly to the 1999 Joint Declaration. During the negotiations Bulgaria should regularly submit its assessment of the implementation of the Declaration to the European Commission, reflecting any failures to comply with the Declaration in its entirety in the annual reports of the EC on the progress made by the Republic of Macedonia towards meeting the membership criteria. Chapters in the negotiations should then not be opened and/or closed without strict compliance with the relevant requirements.

Assessments should take into account the actual behaviour of the Republic of Macedonia rather than its proclaimed good intentions (with failures to abide by these intentions conveniently attributed to 'the old forces', 'Serbian influence' etc. It would be naive to believe that such declarative intentions are anything other than political expediency which can be abandoned after the country's accession to the EU and NATO).

1.1.2. Harassment of citizens of the Republic of Macedonia who identify as Bulgarians must be discontinued. Such acts of harassment include extended police interrogations of citizens of the Republic of Macedonia who have committed no offence, but have stated somewhere that they are Bulgarians; arbitrary dismissal; pressure exerted on public organizations of Bulgarians, etc.

1.1.3. The Bulgarians in the Republic of Macedonia who clearly identify as such should enjoy an equal standing with other ethnic communities in compliance with the relevant national legislation. This requires their explicit listing in the preamble of the country's Constitution. Regardless of their numbers as officially registered in the Republic of Macedonia, Bulgarians should be included along with the originally listed Albanians, Turks, Vlachs and Roma, and Serbs and Bosniaks which were subsequently added.

In this context, it would be appropriate to examine the proposition that today's ethnic Macedonians (non-Bulgarians) and the ethnic Bulgarians in the Republic of Macedonia constitute a single entity and that there is no difference between them.

This statement is interpreted in two diametrically opposing ways. Some maintain that this 'single entity' consists solely of Macedonians (non-Bulgarians), while others support the view that all of them are Bulgarians in some respects, or at least in a process of 're-Bulgarization' as some would claim.

Both these interpretations are seriously flawed, and indeed unacceptable, as they radically violate the basic principle of ethnic self-determination: you, and not others, say who you are and, conversely, you do not tell others who they are. Bulgaria has no other option but to adhere strictly to this principle, and disassociate from any interpretations that deviate from it. Given that there are Macedonians who identify as non-Bulgarians (naturally, we refer only to descendents of the Macedonian Bulgarians, and not to Albanians, Vlachs, Turks or other traditional ethnic groups in Vardar Macedonia), one cannot claim that Macedonians and Bulgarians are one and the same. As far as there are Macedonians who

identify as Bulgarians, one cannot maintain that 'Macedonian' is the same as 'non-Bulgarian'. (While this is perfectly legitimate in the context of ethnic self-identification by individual persons or in the realm of the freedom of speech for citizens and non-governmental circles, such opinions are inadmissible in a national policy context.)

Both these interpretations are out of step with modern reality. Indeed, as a result of changes in the Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia during the last six decades, the majority of people of Bulgarian ancestry in the Republic of Macedonia today identify as ethnic Macedonians and non-Bulgarians. On the other hand, it is a fact that part of the population has preserved its Bulgarian ethnic affiliation. Clearly these two groups cannot form a single ethnic entity as they differ precisely in their ethnic self-identification. In other words, the proposition in question is factually untrue. Moreover, the numerical ratio between the above two groups is considerably in favour of those identifying as ethnic Macedonians, which means that denying the difference is tantamount to supporting the cause of anti-Bulgarian Macedonism, and is thus damaging to Bulgarian interests.

This is why ethnic Bulgarians in the Republic of Macedonia should not be placed in a disadvantaged position as compared to other ethnic minorities in the country, as modern European standards confirm.

Like other activities which protect the interests of ethnic Bulgarian citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, Bulgaria's demand for recognition of the Bulgarian minority by Skopje would be in compliance with the 1999 Joint Declaration. It is worth mentioning, however, that in this particular aspect the Declaration is asymmetrical, explicitly excluding any official action by the Republic of Macedonia to protect the status of persons in Bulgaria who are not citizens of the Republic of Macedonia.

As for the possible number of Bulgarians in the Republic of Macedonia, concerns are expressed that official recognition of the Bulgarian minority there might reveal its small size. However, regardless of that size Bulgarian policy should be based on reality rather than wishful thinking. Bulgaria's behaviour until now of avoiding the issue of recognition of the Bulgarian minority in the Republic of Macedonia has two possible interpretations. The first is that despite the large number of people (tens of thousands and growing) claiming Bulgarian ethnic origins in the last few years and granted Bulgarian citizenship on this basis, there is actually no Bulgarian minority in the Republic of Macedonia but rather some 'crypto-Bulgarians' who would gradually diminish with the succession of generations. The other interpretation is based on the assumption that there are indeed Bulgarians in the Republic of Macedonia but they are more than just a minority; supporters of this interpretation maintain that there is currently a widespread process of re-Bulgarization which in the near future will return the Vardar Macedonians into the mainstream of the historical continuity inherent to neighbouring Pirin Macedonia. Apparently, such radically divergent interpretations derive from isolated cases rather than from objective representative data on actual processes. In any case, with their referral to assumed future reality, such interpretations do not contribute to bringing current Bulgarian policies into line with present-day reality.

Another frequently expressed concern is that the recognition of the Bulgarian minority would ‘encapsulate’ and isolate it from the larger category of people in the Republic of Macedonia (over 200,000, according to some rough expert estimates) who have dual ethnic self-awareness, identifying both as Bulgarians and Macedonians at the same time. This concern is groundless. Prominent Bulgarians in the Republic of Macedonia have repeatedly stressed the need for more robust and proactive support on the part of Bulgaria. Undoubtedly, an important element of such support would be to take care of the Bulgarian minority whose recognition, visible presence, and self-confidence would also help to strengthen, and not weaken, the Bulgarian dimension in those who identify both as Macedonian and Bulgarian. (By way of comparison it is noteworthy that those in Bulgaria who identify as ethnic Macedonians and non-Bulgarians do not seem to be concerned about any such ‘encapsulation’ in their differentiation from the Bulgarians, and their cause is well represented and publicized internationally.)

1.1.4. Teaching of history using textbooks which thoroughly falsify history and contain insulting qualifications of the Bulgarian state and nation, sometimes bordering on open racism, should discontinue. Bulgaria must insist that the textbooks formally approved by the relevant authorities of the Republic of Macedonia should contain an explicit reference to the Bulgarian national affiliation (accepted by historians) of prominent figures in our common history such as St. Clement of Ohrid, Tsar Samuel of Bulgaria, the Miladinov Brothers and Gotse Delchev.

The education system of the Republic of Macedonia, from primary school to university, is a powerful tool for inciting widespread and strong anti-Bulgarian attitudes and sentiments by implanting the image of Bulgaria as an occupying, assimilatory, and divisive power. Such attitudes and sentiments in turn hold the politics of the Republic of Macedonia as a permanent hostage regardless of political changes or the succession of political factions in government.

It is important to stress that the elimination of falsifications and anti-Bulgarian hate speech in textbooks and in the media will not deprive the Republic of Macedonia of its *raison d'être*. The state may well continue to exist on the basis of its accomplishments and present-day realities without having to project them retrospectively in an effort to create a past which did not happen; it may continue to exist while recognizing its Bulgarian historical heritage, just like Bulgaria recognizes present realities without transferring the past to the present.

1.1.5. Restoration of the destroyed or falsified inscriptions in churches, monasteries, on icons, frescoes, water fountains, bridges etc. in accordance with the relevant international standards and agreements.

1.1.6. Assistance in the restoration, or at least removal of the obstacles to restoration, of the 471 Bulgarian military cemeteries on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia, a particularly sensitive issue for Bulgaria.

1.2. Albania and Kosovo

The activities of Skopje aimed at affiliating the descendents of the Macedonian Bulgarians in Greek Macedonia and in some regions of Albania and Kosovo to the Serb-Yugoslav project of building a Macedonian nation are substantial components of the effort to justify this project retrospectively. Despite the otherwise modest means at its disposal, the Republic of Macedonia has been investing considerable propaganda, political and material resources to this end and has thus achieved certain results.

While few in number, the Bulgarians in Greece, Albania and Kosovo who have preserved their ethnic identity constitute important evidence for the history of the geographical region of Macedonia. Particularly in the context of the integration process of Albania's accession to the EU and NATO, the consolidation of Kosovo as an independent state and its future integration with the EU and NATO, Bulgaria should accordingly demand the following:

1.2.1. Equality for Bulgarians in Albania with the other ethnic communities in compliance with state practices and legislation in this sphere. This means that the Bulgarian minority must be formally recognized along with the other formally recognized minorities, regardless of the number of those who identify as Bulgarian. Recognition of this equality should become an integral part of the assessments by Bulgaria, the EU and NATO of the progress made by Albania in meeting EU and NATO membership criteria.

1.2.2. Equality for Bulgarians in Kosovo (regardless of their number) with the other ethnic groups. This equality should be embedded in the local practices and legislation in this sphere currently being established. The progress of Kosovo institutions in this respect must be taken into account in defining Bulgaria's position and participation in the establishment and development of an independent Kosovo; in due course, these assessments should become an integral part of assessments by Bulgaria, the EU and NATO of the progress made by Kosovo in fulfilling EU and NATO membership criteria.

Bulgaria should strengthen its presence among the Bulgarians in Albania and Kosovo, including by sponsoring joint non-governmental projects. It should ease procedures for granting Bulgarian citizenship and university scholarships to individuals of Bulgarian origin, and should immediately begin negotiations for the formal recognition of Bulgarian minorities in both countries.

1.3. Greece

The policy and attitudes of Greece are relevant to the issue of good neighbourly relations between Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia in the context of EU and NATO enlargement in the Western Balkans for several reasons: Greece was the first Balkan state to become an EU member; the country played an important role and contributed to the accession of both Bulgaria and Romania to the EU and NATO; the territory of Greece includes over half of the geographical region of Macedonia, according to the definition of that region accepted since the 19th century (Thessaloniki, the principal city and natural

centre of the region, is also in Greece); furthermore, due to their historical awareness, Greeks, as indeed Albanians, have a very good idea of the Bulgarian ethnic identity of the majority population of Vardar Macedonia in the past, and its evolution during the last few decades.

While the problems of Greece in its bilateral relations with the Republic of Macedonia are quite different from those faced by Bulgaria, Greece is no less interested in the Republic of Macedonia adopting European standards of good neighbourly relations. Bulgaria and Greece may assist in this respect (including by joint efforts) during the process of preparation of the Republic of Macedonia for EU and NATO membership, in particular by means of the following.

1.3.1. In the framework of the European Union, Bulgaria and Greece could initiate the drafting and enactment of a suitable *acquis communautaire* in the sphere of education aimed at creating common standards of objectivity in teaching history at school and in academic institutions.

As for the descendants of Macedonian Bulgarians living today in Greece (following several large-scale formal or de facto exchanges of population between Bulgaria and Greece, the last one after World War II), a dominant majority of them identify as Greek; some of them claim that they are ethnic Bulgarians and others identify as ethnic Macedonians. In line with the relevant Greek legislation (which differs from those of the Republic of Macedonia and Albania as far as ethnic minorities are concerned) and the existing agreements forming the legal basis of bilateral relations between Greece and Bulgaria, minority issues are not treated as a topic at the level of state relations and are instead considered as an exercise of specific rights by EU citizens.

In conclusion, as a member of both the EU and NATO, Bulgaria bears a special responsibility for the development of good neighbourly relations in the process of European and Atlantic integration of the Western Balkans, which requires certain decisions and actions. Following January 1, 2007 there is no justification for any further delay or abdication from this national responsibility, especially in view of the considerable political, financial and other resources available to Bulgaria as an EU and NATO member state with a stable economy and influential allies and partners. Bulgaria's preoccupation with reforms in pursuit of European and Atlantic integration can no longer be used as an excuse. Failure of the responsible Bulgarian authorities to take action would be detrimental to Bulgaria's national interests; such a failure would tolerate, endorse, and effectively foster anti-Bulgarian Macedonism with its stereotypes and practices rooted in the past, which have no place in the Euro-Atlantic family of nations.

2. Action Plan

2.1. Framework

The practical implementation of the proposed new Bulgarian policies on the Republic of Macedonia requires the development and adoption of an action plan with a clearly defined framework specifying the following:

2.1.1. The instruments for pursuing Bulgaria's policy (institutions such as ministries, state agencies, municipalities and embassies, research units, lobbyists, politicians etc.);

2.1.2. Particular steps to be undertaken in order to attain the specific objectives set out above;

2.1.3. The form, in which Bulgarian statesmen and politicians should publicly articulate the damage caused by the policy of the Republic of Macedonia and reiterate Bulgaria's demand for maintaining good neighbourly relations during their visits to the Republic of Macedonia or at international fora;

2.1.4. The political and financial resources to be invested in lobbying for international support, and for launching an open and vigorous campaign against the negative propaganda in the Republic of Macedonia;

2.1.5. Prioritization of the objectives above in accordance with the resources required for their attainment and their importance for changing the widespread negative attitudes among the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia.

2.2. Activities

The proposed fundamentals of Bulgaria's policy on the Republic of Macedonia require a thorough review of the whole spectrum of Bulgaria's foreign relations, with the 'Bulgaria – Republic of Macedonia' dimension addressed in the spirit of this report:

2.2.1. Firstly, Bulgaria should prepare a package of historical, cultural, political, geographical, ethnographical, economic and other arguments in support of the propositions outlined above. The package would be used as the foundation of Bulgaria's position in its foreign relations. There are ample prerequisites for this purpose, both from the period before and after 1989. The package should be dominated by a positive attitude to the Republic of Macedonia, based on the understanding that a recently-established state has prospects for development based on its constructive deeds and achievements following independence without seeking support in some fictional past.

2.2.2. This Bulgarian package should be well balanced with the consistent policy of Athens of protecting Greek interests against the lack of good neighbourly policies maintained by the Republic of Macedonia. In this way, the consolidated impact would be cooperative towards Skopje, and cumulative and coordinated in nature. With regard to

Greece, Bulgaria must stress the lengthy and painful transition of the country during which the national political potential was dedicated to achieving the priority goals of NATO and EU membership as a reason for the hitherto passive Bulgarian stance towards the Republic of Macedonia. Cooperation with Greece needs no specific base other than the regional responsibilities of both states as EU and NATO members and the application of European standards in relation to Skopje. Nevertheless, Bulgaria's position regarding the Republic of Macedonia would be stronger and more principled if Bulgaria extends its support to Skopje in the event that Greek claims towards Skopje diverge from European standards. The international community and the general public in the three states should not harbour the impression that the set of foreign policy tools used by Bulgaria with regard to the Republic of Macedonia replicate those of Greece.

2.2.3. Sixteen years after the recognition of the Republic of Macedonia by Bulgaria, the time has come for the latter to emerge from its paternalistic attitudes towards the smaller neighbouring country and to reiterate Bulgaria's unconditional position that Sofia, being a NATO and an EU member, has no territorial claims.

2.2.4. The integration of the Western Balkans into the EU and NATO should become a key concept of Bulgarian diplomacy as grounds for the affiliation to the Bulgarian nation of Bulgarians in the Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Albania and Kosovo by means of achieving the required standards related to national and ethnic minorities in the EU.

2.2.5. The proposed Bulgarian activities should be preceded by a critical analysis of the 1999 Joint Declaration and its application, along with the development of Bulgaria's own comprehensive concept for the future of its relations with the Republic of Macedonia and its people. The above should be carried out in accordance with the expectations and prospects for ethical and positive relations with the Republic of Macedonia as a future member state of the EU and NATO. This requires comprehensive and methodical coordination of Bulgarian positions with the USA and other NATO and EU allies, starting with the most important, and in the event of positive responses, proceeding with the more special cases of Greece and other relevant Balkan states such as Romania, Cyprus, Slovenia and Turkey. Due attention should be paid to countries like Poland, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic (and to a certain extent Russia), where politicians and academics have provided some support to the Yugoslav position on the Macedonian issue. Approaches should be tailored to each country with which Bulgaria maintains diplomatic relations, in order to promote Bulgaria's case.

2.2.6. Bulgaria's case should be promoted in the European media as widely as possible, including the use of well known examples such as Germany and Austria, or Romania and Moldova, where the creation of new nations on the basis of independent statehood is not accompanied by Macedonian-style negativism.

2.2.7. Ongoing pressure should be exerted with regard to specific cases at international human rights institutions, including by non-governmental organizations active on the issue.

2.2.8. A detailed fact file should document and present the longstanding activities of Skopje in obstructing the development of constructive bilateral relations despite Bulgaria's goodwill.

2.2.9. The particular events and developments which prompted Bulgaria to assume its critical position towards the Republic of Macedonia should be clearly explained.

2.2.10. It would be helpful to expose the links and contacts of prominent members of the Republic of Macedonia's elite who have been active in undermining bilateral relations with Bulgaria, with the secret services of the former Milošević regime, and with the present anti-democratic factions in Serbia.

2.2.11. Under its obligations as a donor country participating in the UN Millennium Development Goals campaign, Bulgaria has decided to concentrate its efforts and resources in several priority countries, including the Republic of Macedonia. In an aid programme expected to amount to 0.17% of the Gross Domestic Product in 2010 and 0.33% in 2015, Bulgaria should develop a special programme providing the Republic of Macedonia with useful know-how, assistance and partnership in the sphere of reforms and European and Atlantic integration. The Bulgarian non-governmental sector, local authorities, state administration and business sector have accumulated much valuable experience in preparation for EU and NATO accession, which is relevant for a country like the Republic of Macedonia and some other states in the Western Balkans. Such assistance would represent a strategic investment in good neighbourly relations, and it would be regrettable if its provision were to be left to other countries.

2.2.12. All available opportunities existing within the common EU visa policy should be used to facilitate the access of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia to Bulgaria; at a minimum, the relevant Bulgarian regulations and procedures should be at least as liberal as the Greek ones. Transborder contacts and border area cooperation would benefit from the opening of more border crossings.

2.2.13. Conditions should be created to maintain and extend opportunities for students from the Republic of Macedonia to study at Bulgarian colleges and universities and suitable forms should be found to maintain further contacts between and with them, both as a natural Bulgarian lobby group in their home country and as welcome potential participants in the increasingly attractive Bulgarian labour market.

2.2.14. Administrative capacity should be developed to facilitate and accelerate procedures for obtaining Bulgarian citizenship, with the overall duration of the procedures shortened from years to months. Bulgaria is on the verge of a new stage in its social, economic, and demographic development and an important aspect of this will be mass immigration. Spurred by the needs of an expanding Bulgarian economy, immigration is set to grow, whether spontaneously or managed by proactive Bulgarian policies to attract and integrate immigrants. Bulgarian citizens in the Republic of Macedonia represent a significant resource in this respect. Furthermore, the fact that

Bulgarian citizenship has been granted to a now substantial and growing number of people in the Republic of Macedonia provides grounds under international law for Bulgaria to intervene to protect their rights and interests.

2.2.15. The activities of the Bulgarian Culture and Information Centre in Skopje should be expanded by investing the effort and resources needed to promote Bulgarian culture and policies in the Republic of Macedonia. Bulgarian culture and information centres should also be established in Tirana and Prishtina.

2.2.16. Incentives should be provided for the Bulgarian nongovernmental and business sectors to establish partnership relations with citizens of the Republic of Macedonia in their local Bulgarian cultural and educational initiatives (such as the creation of Bulgarian libraries or chitalishta, clubs etc.) in various cities, towns and villages in the country.

2.2.17. Prominent cultural, political and media leaders of the Bulgarian community in the Republic of Macedonia should be supported and assistance provided to promote their work in both countries.

2.2.18. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church should be asked to contribute in the spirit of its historical traditions and capabilities to bringing the two nations closer together.

2.2.19. The issue of registration of the OMO Ilinden political party in Bulgaria has undoubtedly become one of the major irritants in bilateral relations in recent years. Both Skopje and human rights organizations like the Helsinki Committee have internationalized the issue to the detriment of Bulgaria. The refusal to register OMO Ilinden is likely to become increasingly difficult to defend, particularly after the future accession of the Republic of Macedonia to NATO and EU. While the case is mostly legal in nature, the Bulgarian position and the Bulgarian cause would undoubtedly benefit if a solution to this issue were found sooner rather than later.

2.2.20. Regardless of the policies pursued by the governments of Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia, certain independent intellectuals, media and civil groups have been promoting ideas that have nothing in common with good neighbourly relations. Such local factors are capable of influencing public opinion, forming attitudes towards the neighbour and sometimes even exerting political influence. The power of the most radical of these stems from the fact that they usually have no opponents on their respective domestic grounds. Their ideas are disseminated as a monologue; there is no dialogue, no polemics, no clash of factual evidence, no arguments nor interpretations. The worst aspect of this situation is that the general public in both countries is not well informed about the motivation, the history and the arguments of the other side. Bulgaria should initiate a variety of high-profile forums and debates on all disputed cultural and historical issues, with wide media coverage, to take place both in Bulgaria and in the Republic of Macedonia in order to achieve openness, goodwill and a better appreciation of the other side.

Developing Bulgaria's policy on the Republic of Macedonia to rise to current challenges – and it would be an act of national irresponsibility to miss the present historic opportunity to do so – requires the Bulgarian public, media and relevant official institutions to be adequately prepared to provide the favourable conditions for success.

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Submitted to the attention
of the relevant Bulgarian institutions
on January 24, 2008

Appendix

JOINT DECLARATION ^{MC}

**of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria
and of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Macedonia**

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Macedonia,

Proceeding from a common aspiration to promote the good neighbourly relations between the two countries,

Profoundly convinced of the need of promotion of cooperation on the basis of mutual respect, confidence, understanding, good-neighbourliness and mutual respect for the interests of their countries and peoples,

Convinced of the need to enhance security and peace, cooperation and confidence in Southeastern Europe,

Proceeding from the aspirations of the two countries to integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures,

Believing that constructive dialogue on all aspects of bilateral relations, as well as on regional and international problems, will contribute to a further development of contacts between the two countries on a basis of equality,

Respecting the principles of the UN Charter and the OSCE documents, as well as the democratic principles enshrined in the acts of the Council of Europe,

1. Express their readiness and common desire for promotion of relations between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia in all spheres. These relations shall develop in compliance with the fundamental principles of international law.

2. The two countries shall co-operate within the framework of the United Nations, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Council of Europe, NATO's Partnership for Peace Initiative, the Multinational Peace Force Southeastern Europe, and other international organisations and forums.

3. The two countries shall contribute to the promotion of co-operation among the states of Southeastern Europe, to the enhancement of understanding, peace and stability in the region and to the implementation of regional projects as part of the process of establishing a united Europe.

4. The two countries shall maintain contacts and hold meetings between representatives of the government authorities at different levels for the promotion of friendly relations and co-operation.

5. Considering their geographic proximity, the two countries shall seek to establish the appropriate legal, economic, financial and trade conditions for an unimpeded movement of goods, services and capital. They shall promote reciprocal investments and ensure their protection.

6. The two countries shall support the broadening of tourist exchange, as well as the pursuit of suitable forms of co-operation in the field of tourism.

7. The two countries shall extend and upgrade transport links and communications between each other, inter alia within the framework of regional infrastructure projects.

They shall seek to ease customs and border formalities for passengers and goods moving between the two countries.

8. The two countries shall encourage active and unimpeded co-operation in the field of culture, education, healthcare, social welfare and sports.

9. The two countries shall make efforts for free dissemination of information by encouraging and promoting co-operation in the field of the press, radio and television broadcasts, using the capabilities of modern communication media.

The two countries commit themselves to protect the copyrights and intellectual rights of creative artists in the two countries.

10. The two countries shall expand their co-operation in the legal and consular sphere and, in particular, on civil, criminal and administrative issues, with a view to facilitating travel and visits of their citizens as well as addressing their humanitarian and social problems.

11. Neither of the two countries shall undertake, instigate or support any actions of a hostile nature directed against the other country.

Neither of the two countries shall allow its territory to be used against the other by any organisations or groups which make it their object to carry out subversive, separatist or other actions threatening the peace and security of the other country.

The two countries do not have, and will not lay, any territorial claims to each other.

The Republic of Macedonia hereby declares that nothing in its Constitution can or should be interpreted as constituting, now or whenever in the future, a basis for interference in the internal affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria for the purpose of defending the status and the rights of persons who are not citizens of the Republic of Macedonia.

The two countries shall undertake effective measures for preventing ill-intentioned propaganda by institutions and agencies and shall not allow activities by private individuals aimed at instigating violence, hatred or other such actions which might harm relations between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia.

Signed on 22 February 1999 in Sofia, in two originals, each in the official languages of the two countries - in Bulgarian language, according to the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, and in Macedonian language, according to the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, both texts being equally authentic.

FOR THE REPUBLIC
OF BULGARIA:

FOR THE REPUBLIC
OF MACEDONIA:

IVAN KOSTOV
Prime Minister

LJUBČO GEORGIEVSKI
Prime Minister

^{MC} *The 1999 Joint Declaration was reaffirmed by a joint memorandum signed by Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia on January 22, 2008 in Sofia.*

TESTIMONIALS

Kraste Misirkov (1874 -1926), proclaimed as the most important personality of the 20th century for the Republic of Macedonia:

[The Ilinden Uprising] has been ill-founded from the very beginning: it does not relate to Macedonia as a whole, it is fragmentary and has a Bulgarian flavour. Its leaders consist only of Macedonian Slavs identifying as Bulgarians ...

It was, and still is, an affair of the Exarchists who glorify themselves as ‘Bulgarians’; it is therefore a Bulgarian manoeuvre aiming to resolve the Macedonian question in Bulgaria’s favour; it is intended to create a Bulgarian Macedonia. (On Macedonian Matters, 1903)

If good fortune had left Simeon and Samuel to reign for a long time, under the authority of the Bulgarian state ... and let these Bulgarian Tsars unite the Southern Slavs politically and culturally...

The lands populated by Bulgarian people were a cradle of Slavonic Enlightenment in the old times; Serbian and Russian people drew spiritual nourishment from here for centuries. The Bulgarian nation has been of great cultural and historical service to the Slavonic World ... (Macedono-Adrianopolitan Review, Issue 34 -35, 1907)

Whether we call ourselves Bulgarians or Macedonians, we always identify as a distinct and unified people with Bulgarian national awareness, completely different from Serbs. (20 July Newspaper, May 11, 1924)

Ljubčo Georgievski, Prime Minister of the Republic of Macedonia (1998 -2002):

It is nothing new to mention the fact that Gotse Delchev, Dame Gruev, Gyorche Petrov and Pere Toshev – do I have to list all of them – were teachers with the Bulgarian Exarchate in Macedonia ... [Gotse] returned to Macedonia as a Bulgarian Exarchist teacher, incidentally teaching children Bulgarian as their mother tongue.

Wherever they wrote about their mother tongue, or about the reforms of this language, Parthenius of Zograf, Kiril Psychinovich, Theodosius of Sinai, the Miladinov Brothers, Grigor Parlichev, Kuzman Shapkarev and Marko Tsepenkov (and how many more?!) always referred to it as the Bulgarian language. (Pulse Weekly, June 7 and 14, 1995)

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