

The Three International Agreements of North Macedonia as a Reason for Nato and Eu Membership

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All international agreements constitute law for the states that are signatories to those agreements. Within the public legal system, international agreements are known as a significant source of law, especially international law. Each international agreement has its specifics and also its differences. This time I decided to write about the three international agreements of North Macedonia that are crucial for membership in NATO and the European Union: the Framework Agreement, the Prespa Agreement and the Good Neighbor Agreement. One of the important goals of the Republic of North Macedonia and the countries of the Western Balkans is membership in NATO and the EU.

The Framework Agreement (Ohrid)

On August 13, 2001, in Ohrid, Macedonia, the Framework Agreement was signed, which ended the armed conflict and was considered a guarantor of inter-ethnic coexistence. The negotiations were held under the auspices of the then president Boris Trajkovski. The agreement was signed by the then leaders of the political parties: Branko Crvenkovski - SDSM, Arben Djaferi - DPA, Ljubcho Georgievski - VMRO-DPMNE and Imer Imeri - PDP. The EU special representative, François Leotard, and the US special representative, James Perdue, participate as guarantors [1].

The Prespa Agreement

The Prespa Agreement is a historic agreement signed six years ago, on June 17, 2018, between Greece and the then Republic of Macedonia. Signed under the auspices of the United Nations, the agreement resolved a long-standing dispute over the use of the name "Macedonia," a dispute rooted in historical, cultural and national identity issues. The Agreement has been registered at the Secretariat of the United Nations in accordance with Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations, from the moment of its entry into force [1]. The signatories of the three copies of this final agreement, drawn up in English, were the representatives of both parties [2].

Representative of the First Party Representative of the Second Party

TESTIMONY, pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 817 (1993) and UN Security Council Resolution 845 (1993), by Matthew Nimitz, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, done at Prespa on 17 June 2018 [3].

The Good Neighbor Agreement

The Good Neighbor Agreement is an international agreement between the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Bulgaria. It was signed on August 1, 2017 in Skopje and entered into force immediately after its ratification. This agreement is actually the second agreement after the one with Greece regarding NATO membership. It is signed in two original copies, in the official languages of the contracting parties: Macedonian, according to the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia, and Bulgarian, according to the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, with equal legal validity [4]. The signatories are: the Prime Minister of Macedonia, Zoran Zaev, and the Prime Minister of Bulgaria, Boyko Borisov [5].

North Macedonia's Membership in NATO

On March 27, 2020, the Republic of North Macedonia became the thirtieth member of the Alliance. The commitment to the Euro-Atlantic integration of the Republic of North Macedonia dates back to 1993, when the Parliament adopted a resolution that defined the foreign policy priorities, namely membership in NATO and the EU.

The Membership of North Macedonia in the EU

At the meeting of the EU Council held on June 18, 2019, in addition to the recommendation and recognition of the reached Prespa agreement, as well as the agreement with Bulgaria, it was concluded that the Council will return to the issue of enlargement in order to make a clear and decisive decision as possible sooner, and no later than October 2019 [6].

On October 15, 2024, the Republic of Albania opened the first chapter of membership negotiations with the European Union, but unfortunately, the negotiations of the Republic of North Macedonia were delayed due to disagreements between North Macedonia and Bulgaria. The path of the two countries from the Western Balkans to EU membership was followed by the official start of negotiations in the summer of 2022 [7].

The Consequences of Non-Compliance with the Three International Agreements

There is no doubt that non-compliance with these three international agreements has consequences, and therefore I count on the following:

- **Failure to Comply with the Ohrid Agreement** can incite conflict between the citizens of North Macedonia. The framework agreement is "an agreed framework that ensures the democratic future of Macedonia" and "promotes the peaceful and harmonious development of civil society, respecting the ethnic identity and interests of all citizens (of Macedonia) [8]." The main goal of this political agreement was the end of the conflict. As a result, the Framework Agreement can also be considered as a peace agreement. Considering that its purpose is a normative guarantee for the political rights of all citizens, there should be no doubt that this agreement is also a political agreement [9]. In case of non-compliance with the Ohrid Agreement, the problems that had citizens before the armed conflict in 2001, such as discrimination and unequal representation of Albanians in state institutions, disregard for the use in the Albanian language, disrespecting national symbols, especially the flag, and others.
- **Non-compliance with the Prespa Agreement** would result in Greece vetoing North Macedonia's membership invitation at the NATO summit in Bucharest, Romania, due to the open dispute over the country's constitutional name. Croatia and Albania were invited to become members of the Alliance. On May 7, North Macedonia and the United States of America signed a Declaration on Partnership and Strategic Cooperation [10]. Non-compliance with the Prespa Agreement brings serious consequences for the state, which will be immediately felt by the citizens. Responsibility is not only political, but also legal. North Macedonia has no other alternative than the European future and EU membership, so disregarding the agreement would mean playing with the future of the country.

Failure to Comply with the Good Neighbor Agreement

The Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Bulgaria signed the Good Neighbor Agreement in August 2017. This agreement aims to resolve the disputes between the two neighboring countries, which refer to the contestation of the Macedonian language by Bulgaria, as well as the disputes surrounding the historical events until 1944, especially the origin of the hero of the two countries, Goce Delchev, the role of VMRO (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization) and the Ilinden Assembly, which declared the independence of the first Macedonian state on August 2, 1903. Failure to comply with the Good Neighbor Agreement could cause problems with Bulgaria [11].

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