

SAINT KLIMENT OHRIDSKI UNIVERSITY OF SOFIA
FACULTY OF HISTORY

Prof. Dr. Darina Grigorova Grigorova

BETWEEN THE END OF THE UNION AND THE BEGINNING OF THE FEDERATION.
RUSSIA IN BULGARIAN DIPLOMATIC ANALYSES (1990-1999)

ABSTRACT

from the dissertation of the same name for the degree of
‘Doctor of Sciences’,
professional field
2.2. History and Archaeology (History of Contemporary Russia)

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The contemporary history of Russia, from the collapse of the Soviet Union to the establishment of the Russian presidential political system in the 1990s, has been the subject of historiographical, social and political debate both in Russia and beyond. Despite the numerous interpretations, the Bulgarian diplomatic perspective on post-Soviet Russian political processes has, as yet, not been examined.

The topic of contemporary Russia in the Bulgarian diplomatic archive (1990-1999) comprises a new, specific perspective based on a rich documentary collection, unexplored in both Bulgarian and European historiography.

Aims and objectives

The aim of the dissertation is to explore the process of emergence of modern Russia in the period between the collapse of the USSR (1990-1991) and the end of the 20th century through the analysis of the Bulgarian diplomatic archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – a huge array of diverse sources that the author has brought into scholarly circulation.

The object of research is not Bulgarian-Russian relations, but the Bulgarian diplomatic interpretation of contemporary processes in Yeltsin's Russia – a unique analytical and prognostic view, described in real time, drawing on professional diplomatic experience and specific fieldwork.

As a valuable complement to the diplomatic analysis of contemporary Russia, the Bulgarian socio-political resonance of key events such as the August Putsch (1991) and the October Coup (1993) is also examined.

Chronological boundaries

The chronological boundaries of the dissertation encompass the last decade of the twentieth century, from the final years of the USSR (1990-1991), marked by the battle between the Soviet and Russian centres (Yeltsin's RSFSR vs Gorbachev's USSR), which catalysed the processes of political, economic and ideological disintegration, to the end of Yeltsin's Russia (1992-1999), when the new Russian political system was established.

Of course, by implication, any in-depth study of diplomatic documents contributes to a more accurate understanding of historical processes, including by the author of the study. From this point of view, the dissertation is unlikely to be an exception.

Sources

Unpublished archival documents

The Diplomatic Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, from which 213 archival documents have been brought into scholarly circulation, is the main source for the topic of the dissertation. The archives studied are those of the analytical departments in the MFA responsible for the USSR and later for Russia and the post-Soviet space for the period 1990-1999: the USSR and Baltics Department, the Eastern Europe and CIS Countries Department, the CIS Countries Department, the Coordination and Analysis Department (or the Political Planning Department, under the strict supervision of Ambassador Peter Vodensky, Head of the Coordination and Planning Department for the period 2001-2005¹). The examined archival documents originate from the Bulgarian embassies in Moscow, Kiev, Minsk, Kishinev, etc., as well as from the consulates general in St. Petersburg and Odessa, and the consulate in Syktyvkar.

The diplomatic archival documents examined for the purposes of the dissertation constitute a variety of source materials of different types:

- 1) 'elaborations' comprising analytical and prognostic tasks with an in-depth examination, broad chronology and thematic aspects;
- 2) 'information' with up-to-date assessments of events, trends, socio-political situation, political and party leaders;
- 3) 'memorandums' informing on formal or informal meetings;
- 4) 'reports' on current affairs; 'memos' on preparations for upcoming events;
- 5) 'briefs' providing a brief historical and current overview of the country concerned and its diplomatic relations with Bulgaria;
- 6) 'points of reference' providing concise information on key topics for upcoming inter-state meetings, prepared by experts on the respective region for the political actors involved;
- 7) 'political portraits' analysing the profile of high-ranking political figures along with biographical data and professional details;
- 8) 'statements' on proposals from a country in which a Bulgarian politician is due to pay an official visit, with specific examples of the protection of Bulgarian interests.

¹ Воденски, П. А иначе дипломатията е сериозен занаят. София, 2024, с. 186

The information channels between Russia and the Bulgarian diplomatic corps serving to clarify Russian positions in the nineties can be divided into two lines of information: public and unofficial.

Public channels of information are: analytical and prognostic reports presented for a wide audience, such as the Foreign Intelligence Service report 'NATO Enlargement Prospects and Russia's Interests' (1993); official documents: Foreign Policy Concept (1992), Military Doctrine (1993); public lectures by Russian politicians; informal meetings of Russian politicians, public figures, and intellectuals with diplomats, held at the Moscow Cinema House; roundtables involving the diplomatic corps and entitled the 'Moscow Diplomatic Roundtable'; press conferences; meetings of Russian diplomats from Foreign Ministry departments with their foreign counterparts.

Informal information channels operate through 'working meetings' with diplomats, politicians and public figures. An interesting unofficial information channel is the *Moskovskie Novosti* Confidential Club, established in October 1994 on the initiative of Viktor Loshak, editor-in-chief of *Moskovskie Novosti* newspaper, which sends out 'Confidential Letters of the Editor-in-Chief' twice a month to its subscribers, including various embassies.

The *Moskovskie Novosti* Confidential Club organizes monthly meetings with its members, including diplomats, and press officers are allowed to invite one guest at their discretion. In the estimation of our diplomats, the *Moskovskie Novosti* Confidential Club provides 'highly interesting and varied information' that is verified and cross-checked by alternative sources, with the club's main function being to act as one of the channels through which 'official Moscow awaits unofficial reactions'.²

Published documents

Published sources used in this dissertation include transcripts from the archives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria; transcripts from the archives of the State Duma of the Russian Federation; documents from the archives of the Alexander Yakovlev Foundation, the archives of the Gorbachev Fund, the archives of the Yeltsin Centre.

American archival materials concerning the history of modern Russia and U.S.–Russian relations during Yeltsin's rule were also examined, including declassified documents from the CIA archive, the U.S. National Security Archive, and the U.S. National Archives.

² Information on details requested by urgent telegram relating to a cyphergram – Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Case 5. File 51-3. Archive unit 79. Moscow, 1994. p. 48.

Published declassified memos from the Politburo of the CPSU, KGB reports, and official documents have also been analysed: laws, concepts, reports, decrees, etc.

The dissertation includes materials from the periodical press of the 1990s, more specifically Bulgarian ('Duma', 'Democracy', 'Trud', '24 hours'), Soviet and post-Soviet ('Izvestia', 'Nezavisimaya Gazeta', 'Nash sovremennik', 'Russkiy sever', 'Kommersant', 'Novaya gazeta', 'Rossiyskaya gazeta', 'Menshevik', 'Moskovskie novosti', 'Sovershenno secretno', 'Moskovskiy komsomolets', 'Ogonyok', 'Moskovskiy demokrat', etc.) publications, as well as interviews.

Additional sources on Yeltsin's Russia used for the purposes of the dissertation are memoirs and articles by direct participants in the events from across the political spectrum: Leonid Abalkin, Pyotr Aven, Alfred Kokh, Vadim Bakatin, Yegor Gaidar, Stanislav Govorukhin, Aleksandr Zinoviev, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, Nikolai Leonov, Mikhail Poltoranin, Eduard Rossel, Andrei Sakharov, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Anatoly Sobchak, Sergei Stepashin, Eduard Shevardnadze, Aleksandr Yakovlev, etc.

Scientific examination of the problem

Bulgarian studies of post-Soviet Russia based on official documents have been carried out from a historical-political point of view by Iliana Mircheva³ in her monograph; research carried out by Petya Dimitrova⁴ examines the theoretical aspect of Russian foreign policy strategies. The ideological aspect of perestroika and Russian democracy is explored by Asya Atanasova⁵; the symbolic aspect of historical memory through the Immortal Regiment is analyzed by Tina

³ *Мирчева, Х.* Руската федерация в динамичния свят на най-новото време (историко-политологическо изследване). София, 2010.

⁴ *Димитрова, П.* Русия между Изтока и Запада: външнополитически стратегии на прага на XXI век. – В: *Проблемът Изток–Запад. Превъплъщение в ново и най-ново време.* С., Акад. изд. „Проф. М. Дринов“, 2005, с. 244–263; *Димитрова, П.* Русия и пост-Югославия: между „славянската солидарност“ и прагматизма (90-те г. на XX век). – В: *България и Русия между признателността и прагматизма.* С., 2009, с. 752–764.

⁵ *Атанасова, А.* В сянката на Горбачов. – В: *XXIX Епископ-Константинови четения*, Шумен, 2023, 173–186; *Атанасова, А.* Мит ли е демокрацията в Русия? – В: *Историкии.* Т. 14, Велико Търново, 2021, 122–141.

Georgieva⁶. Bulgarian-Russian relations through the history of national diplomacy during and after the Cold War are studied by Iliana Marcheva.⁷

Russia-NATO relations in the late 1980s and 1990s, based on official and unpublished archives, are analysed in Nadia Boyadjieva's monograph,⁸ as well as in Angel Apostolov's dissertation on military-political aspects of Russia-NATO relations (1992-2002).⁹

Research on important aspects of the Bulgarian perspective on the geopolitical transformation in the last years of the USSR, based on new archival documents, has been carried out by Irina Yakimova¹⁰ – regarding the place of Bulgaria between the USSR and the West during the perestroika (1985-1991), and by Evgenia Kalinova and Iskra Baeva on Bulgarian transitions (1944-1999)¹¹ in their respective monographies. The topic of Bulgaria and the USSR specifically for the period (1985-1991) is examined by Iskra Baeva.¹² An analysis of the history of Bulgarian and Soviet intelligence, based on unpublished secret archival documents, is summarized by Yordan Baev¹³ in his monograph.

⁶ *Георгиева, Т.* "Бессмертный полк" и възродената памет за войната. – В: *Войната за историята. 75 години от края на Втората световна война.* София, 2023, с. 183–197.

⁷ *Марчева, Ил.* Штрихи из истории народной дипломатии в болгарско-российских отношений во время холодной войны и после нее. – В: *България — Россия. 140 лет дипломатических отношений: история, состояние, перспективы материалы юбилейной болгаро-российской конференции (05–06 июля 2019 г.)* Сб. ст. 2020 © НАНО ВО «ИМЦ», 2020, с. 269–282.

⁸ *Бояджиева, Н.* Русия НАТО и средата за сигурност след Студената война. Част първа, 1989–1999. София, 2013.

⁹ *Апостолов, А.* Военно-политически аспекти на отношенията НАТО–Русия (1992–2002). Дисертация за придобиването на образователната и научна степен д-р по история. София, 2021.

¹⁰ *Якимова, И.* България между СССР и Запада в епохата на глобалното геополитическо преустройство (1985–1991). София: Парадигма, 2019.

¹¹ *Калинова Е. Баева И.* Българските преходи: 1939–2010 г. София, 2010; *Баева, И., Е. Калинова.* 16-а република ли? Изследвания и документи за българо-съветските отношения след Втората световна война. Изток–Запад, С., 2017.

¹² *Баева, И.* България 1985–1991 г. – от най-верен сателит при Тодор Живков до обръщане към Запада и начало на демокрацията. – *Исторически преглед*, 2016, N 5–6 (LXIII), с. 111–132; *Баева, И.* България и Съветския съюз/Руската федерация пред предизвикателствата на новия световен ред след 1989 г. – В: *България и Русия между признателността и прагматизма. Форум „България–Русия“, ИИ–БАН, Институт по славяноведение–РАН, ДА „Архиви“,* София, март 2008, с. 722–732; *Баева, И.* Трансформационна криза в съветско-българските отношения 1989–1991 г. – В: *Историята, която усмихва.* Сборник в памет на проф. Румяна Кушева. Парадигма: София, 2014, с. 196–216; *Баева, И.* Ролята на Съветския съюз за разпадането на Източния блок. – В: *Русия, Европа и светът. Сборник с материали от международна научна конференция,* София, 28–29 септември 2009. С., УИ „Св. Климент Охридски“, 2012, с. 356–365; *Баева, И.* Руската политическа система, погледната отвън. – В: *Президентски избори Русия`2012. Quo Vadis... Сборник.* УИ „Св. Кл. Охридски“, С., 2012, с. 9–21.

¹³ *Баев, Й.* КГБ в България. Сътрудничеството между съветските и българските тайни служби (1944–1991). София, 2021. *Баев, Й.* История на българското военно разузнаване. Т. 2. (1955–2018). София, 2019.

Voin Bozhinov¹⁴ has performed a historical analysis of contemporary Balkan issues – late Yugoslav and recent Macedonian, related to Russia and Bulgaria, based on unpublished archival documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Philip Uzunov¹⁵ has researched the political science perspective on aspects of the modern history of Bosnia and Ukraine from the point of view of ‘local wars and frozen conflicts’.

Vihra Pavlova’s dissertation¹⁶ presents a theoretical model of new methods and practices in geopolitical forecasting – a study, which will be useful for anyone who studies analytical and forecasting documents, such as diplomatic works from the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

General Stoimen Stoimenov¹⁷ analyses the Bulgarian political perspective against the background of Russia-Ukraine-NATO relations, based on declassified and official documents, from the point of view of foreign intelligence experience and in the style of an analytical-predictive study. The Ukrainian official perspective on contemporary challenges facing Kiev has been explored by Mikhail Stanchev and Yuri Felshchynsky.¹⁸

The topic of Bulgaria’s socio-political development from the perspective of international relations in Russian historiography on the Bulgarian transition and Russia, is addressed by Natalia Davidova¹⁹

¹⁴ Божинов, В. Република Македония в съвременната геополитика. София, 2017. Божинов, В. Социалистическа Югославия в разпад (1989–1992). София, 2021. *Bojinov, V. Why did Yugoslavia Break Up? A View From Outside.* – *Токови историје*, 2012, N 2, с. 265–271; *Bojinov, V. Economic, Social and Political Situation in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia after Tito’s death (according to the notices of the Bulgarian diplomats in Belgrade).* – В: *Tematski zbornik radova međunarodnog značaja. Socijalna politika u Srbiji na raskršću vekova.* Beograd, 2019, pp. 273-283; Божинов, В. Почему распалась Югославия? Краткий обзор событий и причин от Тито до Милошевича. – В: *Imagines Mundi. Альманах исследований всеобщей истории XVI-XX вв.* Балканика. Выпуск 2. Екатеринбург, 2010, с. 248-257.

¹⁵ Узунов, Ф. Босна и Украйна. Локални войни и замразени конфликти от края на XX и началото на XXI в. Велико Търново, 2023.

¹⁶ Павлова, В. И. Трансформации в геополитиката и нови методи и практики на геополитически прогнози. Дисертация за присъждане на образователната и научна степен д-р по философия. София, 2018.

¹⁷ Генерал Стоимен Стоименов. България и войната в Украйна: заложник, донор, мишена, арена 2022–2024. София, 2025. Генерал Стоимен Стоименов. Ескалацията на войната в Украйна. България на кръстопът. София, 2024. Генерал Стоимен Стоименов. Войната в Украйна. България над всичко. София, 2023.

¹⁸ Станчев, М., Фелщински, Ю. Третата световна. Битката за Украйна. София, 2023, с. 53–80.

¹⁹ Давыдова, Н. Общественно-политическое развитие Болгарии в контексте международных отношений. Автореферат. Дипломатическая академия МИД, Москва, 2007.

in her dissertation and by Tatiana Valeva²⁰ in her own research. The topic of the activities of the SDS (Union of Democratic Forces) from a Russian perspective is the focus of the dissertation of Sergey Lavlinsky,²¹ and the peculiarities of contemporary Bulgarian political life are analyzed by Luiza Umanskaya.²² The evolution of Russian-Bulgarian relations in the field of energy is traced by Ilian Petrov in his dissertation.²³ A comprehensive picture of the Bulgarian transition from a Russian perspective with a focus on the economic and political situation is presented in the monograph of Nikolai Podchasov.²⁴

As yet, no study of the work of the Bulgarian diplomatic corps in relation to contemporary Russia has been carried out.

Dissertation structure

The dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, list of sources (213 unpublished archival documents from the Archives of the MFA, 114 published documents in Bulgarian, Russian, English and Ukrainian; 107 titles from Bulgarian and Russian periodicals from the 1990s; 44 titles of memoirs, diaries, publications; 20 interviews) and 235 items of literature (books, dissertations, scientific periodicals in Bulgarian, Russian, English and French), with a total of 420 pages (or 459 pages of 1800 characters as per Bulgarian State Standard).

The dissertation uses a thematic and chronological approach to research.

²⁰ *Валева Т. Э. Россия и Болгария. Взаимоотношения в условиях новых геополитических вызовов. – Свободная мысль, 2015, N 1 (1649), с. 149–164; Валева Т. Э. Болгария в противостоянии коллективного Запада и России. – Мир перемен, 2022, N 2, с. 77–87; Валева Т. Э. Болгария: ЕС, НАТО и... Россия? – Мир перемен, 2018, N 4, с. 100–114.*

²¹ *Лавлинский, С. Формирование и деятельность Союза демократических сил в условиях переходного периода в Болгарии, конец 80-х - начало 90-х гг. Автореферат. Воронеж, 1998.*

²² *Уманская, Л. А. Современный болгарский политикум: основные проявления и особенности. – Современная наука и инновации, 2019, N 2 (26), с. 262–269; Уманская, Л. А. Современные политические процессы в Болгарии: София между Западом и Россией. – Каспийский регион: политика, экономика, культура, 2015, N 2 (43), с. 107–111.*

²³ *Петров, И. И. Эволюция структур мировых и европейских энергетических рынков и перспективы развития газотранспортных сетей в Юго-Восточной Европе с участием Болгарии и России: диссертация ... кандидата экономических наук: 08.00.14 / Петров Илиян Иванов; [Место защиты: Российский государственный университет нефти и газа им. И. М. Губкина]. – Москва, 2015.*

²⁴ *Подчасов, Н. А. Затянувшаяся трансформация: Болгария в поисках нового пути. Москва: ИМЭМО РАН, 2023.*

CHAPTER ONE: *Factors in the dismantling of the USSR (1990-1991)*, comprising two sections: I. *The 'do-it-yourself' factor. The informal ideological and political instrument for the dismantling of the USSR*, and II. *Diplomatic analyses, forecasts and scenarios for the 'triune crisis' of the USSR (1990-1991)*.

Conclusions: *The Russian march towards the Brest Agreement*

On December 8, 1991 Bulgarian diplomatic information sources introduced a very interesting and accurate term for the breakdown of the USSR – the 'Brest Agreement'.²⁵ Brest is close to the Belovezhskaya Gora, which houses the residence of the Belarusian leader Stanislav Shushkevich, Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the republic. The much more common term 'Belovezhskaya Gora' seems particularly aimed at blurring the symbolism of the 'Brest Agreement' and the historical connection to the 1918 Brest-Litovsk Treaty – in both cases there was a renunciation of state borders, brought about by imperial collapse – 'Russian' (1917) and 'Soviet' (1991). Both the Brest-Litovsk Treaty (1918) and the Brest Agreement (1991) severed political ties between Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.

In Russian historical memory the Brest-Litovsk Treaty carries the negative halo of betrayal (of Russian national interests by the Bolsheviks), which is another reason why the term 'Belovezhskaya Gora', rather than 'Brest Agreement', has been imposed in the conceptual apparatus of democrats for the collapse of the USSR.

Brest as an image in Russian historical memory is also associated with the Union of Brest (1596), a symbol of spiritual betrayal by Western Orthodox Russian bishops²⁶ and of the subsequent spiritual annexation of Western Orthodox Russian lands by the Catholic world and the Vatican.

The Union of Brest (1596) – Brest-Litovsk Treaty (1918) – Brest Agreement (1991) triad has an unparalleled historical and psychological effect on Russian national memory because the focus is on the betrayal of national interests by the elite, while the established term 'Belovezha Accords' is neutral, difficult to remember, and does not evoke historical associations.

²⁵ Report on Ukraine. – Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Case 3. File 48-1. Archive unit 68. София, 1991. Л. 9.

²⁶ Negotiations for a union began at the initiative of Western Russian Orthodox bishops in 1590, when on June 24 they decided to seek the Pope's patronage. – In: *Флоря, Б. Н., С. Г. Яковенко. Внутренний кризис в православном обществе и проекты унии с Римом 90-г гг. XVI в. – В: Брестская уния 1596 г. и общественно-политическая борьба на Украине и в Белоруссии в конце XVI – начале XVII в. Часть I. Брестская уния 1596 г. Исторические причины события. Москва, 1996, с. 131.*

The terms 'Brest Agreement'/'Brest Accords'/'Brest Treaty' are also used in the Bulgarian periodical press of December 1991 – in *Duma* newspaper and the reports of Dimitar Gornenski,²⁷ in the *24 Hours* newspaper, which introduces the term 'Slavic Pact' for the denunciation of the Soviet Treaty by the 'Slavic Soviet Republics' (Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian), and also the term 'Slavic Union'.²⁸ Shortly after December 8, 1991, the correspondent of *Trud* Newspaper, Voyko Tanev, posed the question 'Is a new USSR about to appear on the map – the Union of Sovereign Slavic Republics?'.²⁹

Among Russian post-Soviet historians, the concept of 'Brest Treaty' for what happened on December 8, 1991 was introduced much later, by Alexander Shubin,³⁰ but the momentum of the 'Belovezhskaya Gora' was stronger and prevailed in the conceptual apparatus of contemporary historiography.

'Brest Agreement' or 'Brest Treaty', or rather 'Brest Pact', because December 8, 1991³¹ marked the beginning not of a lasting peace but of a series of local military conflicts in the former Soviet republics.

The factors for the Soviet crisis (1990-1991) were irrational, i.e., ideological, and rational – geopolitical/global, regional, economic, legal, political.

Ideological factors:

1) The discrediting of the CPSU, the power-bearing and ideological construct of the Soviet system, whose 1990 duplicate – the Communist Party of the RSFSR – was part of the emancipation of the Russian republic from the union centre. The ideological decentralisation within the CPSU, with its

²⁷ *Димитър Горненски*. Беларус и Украйна ратифицираха бресткия договор, Кравчук обвинява Горбачов. – *Дума*, 11 декември 1991 г., бр. 306, с. 1, 3. *Пак той*. Генералите поддържат бресткия договор, Елцин отново разговаря с Горбачов. – *Дума*, 12 декември 1991 г., бр. 307, с. 1, 3. *Пак той*. Парламентът на Русия ратифицира бресткия договор. – *Дума*, 13 декември 1991 г., бр. 308, с. 1; Елцин запозна Буш с бресткото споразумение. – *Дума*, 10 декември 1991 г., бр. 305, с. 3.

²⁸ Съветските славянски републики направиха нов съюз помежду си. – *24 часа*, 9 декември 1991, бр. 201, с. 2; Русия зачерква СССР, подкрепя славянския пакт. – *24 часа*, 13 декември 1991 г., бр. 205, с. 1, 5.

²⁹ *Войко Танев*. Трите "кита" погребват Съветския съюз. – *Труд*, 9 декември 1991 г., бр. 237 (13 556), с. 5.

³⁰ *Шубин, А.* Как оборвалась судьба Советского Союза. 20.12.2021. <https://expert.ru/expert/2022/01/kak-oborvalas-sudba-sovetskogo-soyuza/> (20.08.2022)

³¹ In a detailed legal analysis of the CIS Agreement of 8 December 1991, P. P. Kremnev proves that the agreement is not an international legal act, but an internal federal one. By ratifying it, the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR "gave it the significance of an international treaty" even though, "the members of the federation did not legitimately leave it". – In: *Кремнев, П. П.* Распад СССР: международно-правовые проблемы. М., 2005, с. 230.

two platforms: the Marxist and the Democratic, ended with the victory of democrats even before the banning of the party after the August coup attempt.

2) The de-ideologization of the USSR, which began with the dissident movement that succeeded the 'Sixtiers' in the 1970s, in all its strands – the conservative one of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, the liberal-cosmopolitan one of Andrei Sakharov, the mystical one of Yuri Mamleev and the historiosophical-sociological one of Aleksandr Zinoviev.

The final chord in the de-ideologization of the USSR was played by the renunciation of socialism, legitimized in the projected name of the future reformed federation during the negotiations for the new union treaty, the USS (Union of Sovereign States), without the 'Soviet' and the 'socialist' elements, i.e., 'all the republics of the Soviet Union shift towards capitalism'.³² In the referendum of March 17, 1991, the abbreviation of the 'renewed federation' was USSR – Union of Soviet Sovereign Republics. The 'socialist' aspect was dropped altogether, hence the failure of the 'search for the new man' as a 'strategic perspective to communism'.³³

3) Ideologization of the market transition. A bright 'market future' is the ideological goal of all the currents of power in Moscow, both Soviet (the market is the number one goal of Gorbachev's perestroika, who preferred the smooth transition of Nikolai Ryzhkov) and Russian (Yeltsin opts for a radical transition to market relations), as well as of all socio-political movements and parties, except for the Russian-Soviet patriots, who were marginalized and stigmatized by the media.

4) Soviet anti-Sovietism – popular fronts and informal movements. Creation of the popular fronts was an initiative of the Soviet centre to ensure perestroika reforms. The subsequent nationalisation of popular fronts in the Baltics and Ukraine worked against the Soviet authorities, but was encouraged and stimulated by the Russian power centre. The RSFSR recognized the declarations of sovereignty of the Soviet republics and launched bilateral relations with them, isolating and delegitimizing the union centre.

5) Idealization of the West, as a result of 'Western influence,' combining a policy of 'open diplomacy' with 'nonviolent resistance' (Gene Sharp) and 'soft power' (Joseph Nye) in a successful battle for the minds and hearts of Soviet citizens.

³² Шохин, А. «Распад СССР: влияние на современную Россию и мир». КРУГЛЫЙ СТОЛ В «ИНТЕРФАКСЕ» – СОВМЕСТНО С ЖУРНАЛОМ «РОССИЯ В ГЛОБАЛЬНОЙ ПОЛИТИКЕ». 8.12.2021. <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/raspad-sssr-rossiya-i-mir/> [21.08.2022]

³³ Кургуниан, С. Сводить развал СССР к предателям и ЦРУ – обманывать самих себя. Томск, 14.10.2017. <https://regnum.ru/news/society/2334237.html> [21.08.2022]

6) The Catholic Factor.

The ecumenical dialogue between Rome and the Russian Orthodox Church of the 1960s and 1980s set the stage for the ideological opening of the Soviet elite to the West. The Vatican's Eastern policy was rewarded under Pope John Paul II when Gorbachev demonstrated a benevolent view to the renaissance of Catholicism in the Slavic periphery of the USSR.

Political factors:

1) Political dualism – the key factor.

The Russian historical specificity is power-centric and when the centres of power are allowed to divide, political upheaval inevitably follows. The Yeltsin/Gorbachev struggle transformed from a personal to an institutional one, with the Russian centre opposed to the Soviet centre in every respect: regional politics, education, local government, the army, security services, parliaments/supreme councils, foreign policy, republican separatism.

2) The desacralisation of power, the state and the army, accelerated after the August 1991 putsch.

The desacralisation of power, according to Andronik Migranyan, also led to 'the absence of an imperial centre interested in preserving the unitary state'.³⁴ The psychological effect for Russians of the desacralisation of the state was 'indifference to history',³⁵ as observed by Natalia Narochnitskaya.

Economic factors:

1) Among the economic factors that contributed to the collapse of the USSR, one theory that stands out is that of Alexander Dinkin on the 1987 Cooperatives Act and its influence on the republican Soviet elite, who tasted 'communal ownership' with 'the anticipation of their own statehood'.³⁶

³⁴ *Мигранян, А.* Даже если бы путч удался, то, скорее всего, нельзя было бы удержать Советский Союз от распада. <https://mgimo.ru/gk4p/209910.html> [20.08.2022]

³⁵ *Нарочницкая, Н.* "В день, когда распался СССР, я рыдала". 21.04.2008 г. – Русская линия. https://ruskline.ru/news_rl/2008/04/21/nataliya_narochnickaya_v_-_den_kogda_raspalsya_sssr_ya_rydala/ [21.08.2022]

³⁶ *Дынкин, А.* «Распад СССР: влияние на современную Россию и мир». КРУГЛЫЙ СТОЛ В «ИНТЕРФАКСЕ» – СОВМЕСТНО С ЖУРНАЛОМ «РОССИЯ В ГЛОБАЛЬНОЙ ПОЛИТИКЕ». 8.12.2021. <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/raspad-sssr-rossiya-i-mir/> [21.08.2022]

2) The 1985 lifting of oil extraction restrictions (the US-Arab deal)³⁷ is also frequently cited as an economic factor, especially popular among liberal circles, who view it fatalistically – as a predestination. This economic factor however was a prerequisite for the transformation of the Soviet elite into the owner of state goods, but not the cause of the breakdown of the USSR.

3) The liberal narrative, namely that the USSR was on the brink of economic collapse, has been challenged by the research of the Nobelist economist and Russian American Wassily Leontief, invited in 1988 by Gorbachev, who found no systemic issues in the Soviet economy.³⁸

Legal factors:

1) The ignoring of the Soviet constitution and the legal disempowerment and desovereignisation of the Soviet centre with the declarations of sovereignty of the Soviet republics, which followed, avalanche-style, the Estonian example of 1988. A crucial element of this process was 'Russian separatism' with the Declaration of State Sovereignty of the RSFSR of 12 June 1990, appropriately defined as 'the political and legal beginning of the disintegration of the USSR'.³⁹

2) Another legal factor perceived as the 'de facto disintegration'⁴⁰ of the USSR is the '9+1' (nine republics + the Soviet president) declaration of April 23, 1991, which proclaimed that only those republics that wanted to remain in the USSR would do so.

Geopolitical factors:

³⁷ Майхански, М. Распад Советского Союза. «Горбачев и Ельцин: кто прав? Причины распада СССР». КРУГЛЫЙ СТОЛ В «ИНТЕРФАКСЕ»... пак там.

³⁸ Фурсов, А. Фурсов: в конце 80-х в СССР не было системного кризиса. 25.02.2019. <https://sputnik.by/20190225/Fursov-v-kontse-80-kh-v-SSSR-ne-bylo-sistemnogo-krizisa-1040311168.html?ysclid=l8q36x31xk588985869> [25.08.2022]

³⁹ Иванников, И. А. Государственно-территориальное устройство России: поиск идеальной формы. М.: ИНФРА-М, 2022, р. 136.

⁴⁰ Мороз, О. Распад Советского Союза. «Горбачев и Ельцин: кто прав? Причины распада СССР». 6.02.2012. – Полит.ру. <https://polit.ru/article/2012/02/06/moroz/> [18.08.2022]

1) The Cold War was the global geopolitical factor that led to the defeat of the Soviet system. 'Outside – the Cold War, inside – the betrayal of the elite'.⁴¹

2) Malta, December 2-3, 1989 with 'Gorbachev's capitulation and the de facto surrender of the socialist camp and the USSR'⁴² symbolized the beginning of the USSR's retreat from its positions in Eastern Europe.

3) The self-dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, the decision for which was taken at an extraordinary meeting of the Political Consultative Committee of the participating states in Budapest on February 25, 1991 and which 'practically liquidated the military organization of the alliance', marked the final withdrawal of the USSR from Eastern Europe. All documents on military cooperation were planned to lapse as of 31 March 1991.⁴³

Regional anti-Soviet factors:

1) The Ukrainian factor in the collapse of the USSR was among the main geopolitical levers of the Soviet nomenclature in both the USSR and the RSFSR. The role of Ukrainian President Kravchuk, although later assessed by some historians as 'the initiator of the collapse'⁴⁴ even more than Yeltsin, is overestimated. Without the consent of Yeltsin, who was president of the largest Soviet republic centred in Moscow, Kravchuk's initiative would have been difficult to implement. The Russian factor in the collapse of the USSR was the leading one, in tandem with the Ukrainian and with the assistance of the third Slavic republic, the Belarusian SSR.

2) The 'Baltic factor' with the processes of sovereignisation of the Baltic republics was realised with the active Russian assistance and political support of the RSFSR. Gorbachev's Soviet power intervention in Vilnius in January 1991 marked the beginning of the disintegration of the USSR. The Baltic region turned out to be more crucial than the South Caucasus (events in Tbilisi in 1989, Baku in 1990) in terms of impact on the Soviet society and as a catalyst for Soviet deconstruction.

⁴¹ *Зиновьев, А.* «РАЗГРОМ СССР БЫЛ ОШИБКОЙ ЗАПАДА...». 2006 г. <https://zinoviev.org/az/texts/interview/aleksandr-zinovev-razgrom-sssr-byi-oshibkoj-zapada/> [21.08.2022]

⁴² *Фурсов, А.* «Удел тех, у кого нет идеологии, — пикник на обочине Истории». Татьяна Медведева. – Газета Культура. 2.12.2014. <https://portal-kultura.ru/articles/country/72658-andrey-fursov-udel-tekh-u-kogo-net-ideologii-piknik-na-obochine-istorii/> [24.08.2022]

⁴³ Extraordinary meeting of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact member states (25 February 1991, Budapest). – Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. File 48-10. Archive unit 28. p. 9–13. Sofia, 1991.

⁴⁴ *Шубин, А.* Как оборвалась судьба Советского Союза. 20.12.2021. <https://expert.ru/expert/2022/01/kak-oborvalas-sudba-sovetskogo-soyuza/> [20.08.2022]

Of all the factors that triggered the Soviet crisis (1990-1991), the Russian-Soviet diarchy was key to the collapse of the USSR. The Russian historical specificity is power-centric and when the centres of power (RSFSR vs USSR) were allowed to split, political upheaval inevitably followed. The 'Russian factor',⁴⁵ or 'Russian separatism', was the leading factor in the deconstruction of the Soviet system.

The term 'Russian factor' as the 'centre of political struggle' in 1990 can be found in the memoirs of Vladimir Medvedev, an associate of Gorbachev, who detected 'the first signs of its activation' amongst humanitarian intelligentsia, 'above all in writers adhering to the so-called Russophile orientation,' among them Valentin Rasputin.

In historiography, Medvedev's term, the 'Russian factor,' is used by Rudolf Pichoja for the period of 1990, who, however, does not place it among the decisive causes of the collapse of the USSR.

Alexander Zinoviev introduces the 'factor of betrayal'⁴⁶ by the Soviet elite for USSR's capitulation, which, however, can be defined more as a 'Soviet factor' than a 'Russian factor'.

The decisive factor for the collapse of the USSR remains the 'Russian' factor which prevailed in the Russian-Soviet diarchy, which resulted in the RSFSR killing the USSR.

CHAPTER TWO: *Enlightened Authoritarianism. The Russian political system (1992-1999)* comprising two sections: I. *Construction of the Russian presidential republic*, and II. *The presidential system after December 12, 1993*.

The main factors contributing to the establishment of the presidential republic in post-Soviet Russia are typified in the following manner:

The power factor

The 'power factor' is a concept introduced by Bulgarian analyses on the Russian presidential republic, a term used by Bulgarian diplomats to explain the 'monocentrism' in the Russian political system.

⁴⁵ Пихоя, Р. Г. Москва. Кремль. Власть. Две истории одной страны. Россия на изломе тысячелетий. 1985–2005. М., 2007, p. 152–153.

⁴⁶ Зиновьев, А. Планируемая история: Запад. Посткоммунистическая Россия. Гибель русского коммунизма. М., 2009, p. 260–263.

The components of the 'power factor' which determines the political pole of the Russian Federation are defined as follows: Yeltsin's 'phenomenal power instinct', the 'party of power' as a collective term for the ruling elite, and Yeltsin's 'real power' exercised through the three power 'sub-centres': the Presidential Administration, the Government and the Security Council.⁴⁷

The political factor

The 1991-1993 president/parliament diarchy is a projection of the RSFSR-USSR, Yeltsin-Gorbachev, and Russian-Soviet diarchy, which was paradoxically confirmed in the March 17, 1991 referendum with the positive vote to preserve the USSR and introduce a Russian presidential institution.

The existence of two centres of power has always been critical for Russian (1917) and Soviet history (1991); the situation was no less critical for post-Soviet Russia (1993), when the constitutional crisis developed into an acute political conflict with the characteristics of a local civil war, the finale of which was the affirmation of the presidential republic by the constitution of 12 December 1993.

The regional factor

The constitutional crisis in post-Soviet Russia parallels the crisis of Russian federalism. The 'president vs. parliament' battle is parallel to the 'centre-periphery' confrontation.

Just as the discussion on drafts for a new Union Treaty in 1989 led to the collapse of the USSR, so the discussions on a new Russian constitution in 1992-1993 led to the fragmentation of the Russian Federation.

The most prominent regional cases in the peaceful centre-periphery confrontation were: the Ural, the Siberian, and the Tatar. The centre-periphery military conflict was distinguished by the Chechen regional case.

The Soviet factor

Both in the 'president-parliament' battle and in the 'centre-periphery' confrontation, the Soviets – the Supreme Soviet in Moscow and the regional councils in the regions – opposed presidential power.

⁴⁷ The role of the power factor in the presidential elections in Russia. – Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Case 4. File 53-6. Archive unit 56. Moscow, 1996. pp. 188, 195–198.

The Soviets were an archaic Soviet institution that survived the collapse of the USSR, and whose democratic character stimulated centrifugal tendencies in post-Soviet Russia. Soviets were the last element of the 'Russian-Soviet' battle that began during the perestroika (RSFSR vs. USSR) and ended with the establishment of the presidential republic.

The geopolitical factor

The American factor influencing the internal processes in post-Soviet Russia was strongest for the period 1992-1993, and especially during the political crisis of October 3-4, 1993, with strong US support for Yeltsin.

US gains after the October 3-4 coup were short-term (the uranium deal), while Yeltsin, with US help, turned Russia into a presidential republic and ended the process of decentralization, which was in Russia's long-term strategic interest.

The ideological factor

The 'president-parliament' diarchy was also projected into an information battle, won by Yeltsin with the crucial help of CNN, which imposed the propaganda image of the demonized Supreme Soviet as a 'communist-fascist' and 'brown-red armed junta' of the Soviet past against the idealized image of the 'democratic' president of the Russian future.

CHAPTER THREE: *Strategic Dualism. The geopolitical interests of the Russian Federation (1992-1999)* comprising two sections: I. The '*strategic sensitivity*' of Russian foreign policy, and II. *The Russian-Ukrainian 'cold war' in the battle for Soviet legacy.*

The main specificity of the Russian Federation's foreign policy in the 1990s, guided by presidential power, can be summarized as strategic dualism, a term coined by the author of the dissertation, encompassing ideological, institutional, civilizational, and Russian-Bulgarian dualism.

Ideological dualism: conservative/liberal

The lack of an official ideology in contemporary Russia was compensated by the 'ideological diversity' allowed by the Constitution (Article 13, item 1). The ideological dualism in Russian foreign policy in the 1990s finds implicit expression in the existence of various centres for the elaboration of strategic concepts, the final decision on which remains with the president. Such centres are the liberal Foreign Ministry (under ministers Andrei Kozirev and Igor Ivanov) and the conservative Foreign Intelligence Service (under Yevgeny Primakov).

Within the apparatus, the ideological dualism is between the liberal diplomatic corps and the conservative generals (General Leonid Ivashov, in charge of military diplomacy as Secretary of the CIS Council of Defence Ministers, 1992-1996, and as head of the Ministry of Defence's Main Department for International Military Cooperation, 1996-2001).

Institutional dualism: president/parliament

Russian foreign policy is 'presidential,' while the parliament, with its left-wing, pro-Soviet (CPRF) and national-liberal (LDPR) wings, is traditionally in opposition, expressing popular public attitudes through parliamentary hearings, committees ('Anti-NATO'), declarations, conferences, and directly involved in foreign policy with the ratification of international treaties and parliamentary diplomacy. In the 1990s, the main foreign policy issues causing divergence between the president and the parliament related to Crimea, Sevastopol, the Black Sea Fleet, cooperation with NATO, and the Yugoslav crisis.

Civilisational dualism: European/Eurasian

The civilizational dualism in Russia's foreign policy is manifested in the differing perceptions of Russia – as a European country (of the MFA), or as a 'great Eurasian state' (of the Department for External Church Relations). The Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate (DECR), headed by Metropolitan Kiril, determines church diplomacy and participates in discussions on Russia's foreign policy concept. If the MFA stands for 'integration' with the civilized Western world, DECR stands for 'cooperation' of Russian Orthodox, non-Western civilization with the rest of the non-Western world.

Bulgarian-Russian dualism

In Bulgarian-Russian relations in the 1990s, the dualism of economic rapprochement through energy diplomacy versus geopolitical distancing emerged as a lasting trend. The North Atlantic Alliance bombing of Belgrade became a key point, derailing Russia's 'post-conflict model' for the Balkans. Russia's drift away from close cooperation with NATO was at first symbolic, with the turning around of Yevgeny Primakov's plane above the Atlantic on March 24, 1999, and later pragmatic, with the gradual eastward turn of Russian foreign policy.

The Ukrainian case is present as a sub-theme in each chapter of the dissertation because of the particular diplomatic interest in Russian-Ukrainian relations generated by concern for the largest Bulgarian community in Ukraine, for which the Bulgarian consulate in Odessa was established. Chapter Three examines the Ukrainian theme within a separate section devoted to the Bulgarian diplomatic special interest in Russian-Ukrainian relations after 1991.

If one were to summarize the analytical projections on Ukraine in Bulgarian diplomatic documents of the 1990s, they can be summarized into several main themes according to geopolitical and ideological reality.

Geopolitical reality. Ukraine's strategic geopolitical priority of asserting itself as an 'influential world state' failed because of a paradoxical situation. The possession of huge Ukrainian potential in all areas: territory, economy, demography, highly qualified scientific personnel, military scale (powerful army from the Western military group of the USSR), and the presence of nuclear weapons (the third most powerful nuclear power after Russia and the US) – this huge Soviet heritage proved insufficient when the country found itself as a buffer between the East (Russia and the CIS) and the West (Europe, the US and NATO). Ukraine adhered to its 'unrealistic expectations' of becoming a regional leader on all major geopolitical vectors – Central-Eastern European, Black Sea-Baltic and Danube-South-Eastern European.

The ideological reality. Ukraine's national policy proved no less unrealistic than its foreign policy. Diplomatic analyses of Russian-Ukrainian relations emphasize several key factors:

1) Russia's 'strategic sensitivity' regarding Eastern Europe's inclusion in NATO is a major factor in Russian-Ukrainian relations. The underlying reason was not so much the potential military threat to Russia, but rather the 'negative political-psychological effect of further hardening Russian hardliners', which is 'not in the interest of Western states'. Rather than confrontation, 'strong strategic cooperation along the Russia-Western Europe (NATO and EU) line is the best guarantee for peace and security on the Old Continent'.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Global Geostrategic Space and Russia's National Security Risks. – Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Case 6. File 51-3. Archive unit 101. Sofia. 1994. p. 14–15.

2) The Crimean factor may be decisive for Ukraine if it federalizes, which would 'lead to the accession of Crimea and the East Ukrainian regions to the Russian Federation'⁴⁹, i.e., the Crimean 'apple of discord' would mark the beginning of the 'disintegration of Ukraine'⁵⁰.

3) The Russian factor in terms of Russian-Ukrainian economic 'overintegration' according to Bulgarian diplomats 'dooms' the two countries to 'close cooperation'⁵¹.

4) NATO's ideological sensitivity towards Russia is concentrated in the 'fears of NATO states' of 'legitimizing a sovereign Russia in international politics and restoring its imperial and totalitarian reflexes.' Ideological fears regarding Russia 'are irrelevant to real geopolitics' because, according to diplomatic analysis, 'Russia's role in the system of international relations' does not depend on 'the subjective will of any international actor.'⁵²

5) 'Ukrainism', or the nationalists of the 'unregistered extremist parties' in Ukraine, are referred to in diplomatic forecasts as a highly destabilizing factor that could cause 'the creation in the western regions of an independent state of Galicia, Russian-speaking autonomy in the Donbas, the unification of a compact German population (up to 400 thousand people) in southern Ukraine'.⁵³

6) The 'New Iron Curtain' as a potential prospect strips Russia of 'protective guarantees on its western borders,' which, together with Ukraine's precarious role as Russia's rear, will orient the Russian Federation eastwards towards China. The first 'symptoms' of such a trend were visible in the visit of the Defence Minister P. Grachev to Beijing in December 1993.⁵⁴

CONCLUSIONS:

BULGARIAN DIPLOMATIC ANALYSES AND RUSSIAN 'POWERCENTRISM'

⁴⁹ Some main trends in the domestic political situation in Ukraine. – Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Case 12, File 53-6. Archive unit 255. Odessa, 1996. p. 4.

⁵⁰ Presidential elections for the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. Kiev, 1994. – Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Case 13. File 51-3. Archive unit 262. p. 6.

⁵¹ An attempt to analyse the current state of Ukrainian-Russian relations and prospects for their development. Kiev, 1994. – Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Case 14. File 51-3. Archive unit 267. p. 22.

⁵² Global Geostrategic Space and Russia's National Security Risks ..., p. 37.

⁵³ Socio-political situation in Ukraine and relations with Russia. – Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Case 3. File 52-3. Archive unit 81. Moscow, 1995. p. 31.

⁵⁴ Global Geostrategic Space and Russia's National Security Risks ..., p. 38.

Bulgarian diplomatic analyses of contemporary Russia between the breakdown of the Union and the beginning of the Federation (1990-1999), with observations from Sofia, Moscow, Leningrad/St Petersburg, Syktyvkar, Kiev, Odessa, Minsk, Kishinev, etc., constitute an extremely valuable source for reconstructing the historical picture. Diplomatic analytical reports contain an informative overview of all aspects of Russia's domestic and foreign policy, based on personal impressions from formal or informal meetings with politicians from across the spectrum, with public figures of all ideological stripes, with journalists, and with academic and university intellectuals.

Diverse sources of information enable diplomatic analyses to carry out a socio-political cross-section of Russian society (both Ukrainian and Belarusian, where Russian-Ukrainian or Russian-Belarusian relations intersect).

Fieldwork is unparalleled in the quality of informational detail, rendering the picture drawn in real time a valuable source of information on the basis of which adequate policy decisions can be made by the country represented by the diplomats in question.

Retrospectively speaking, it is precisely the reports and information of Bulgarian diplomats from the scene of events that have a very significant potential for refining the historical view of Russia's socio-political events of the last decade of the twentieth century.

A characteristic specificity of the overwhelming majority of Bulgarian diplomatic reports from the 1990s is the tendency towards de-ideologisation, with a professionally applied pragmatic analytical approach in the assessment of each specific issue. Of course, diplomats offer their own conclusions, but they first present the different points of view and then formulate their own judgment.

Diplomatic documents are of particular interest for the historical study of the dramatic 'Russian Decade' at the end of the 20th century, when they were prepared as special analytical and prognostic works. Bulgarian diplomatic predictions of the collapse of the USSR proved surprisingly accurate as early as 1990. This cannot fail to impress against the backdrop of the contrary expectations of Soviet scholars, experts, and party activists who remained captive to ideologized thinking. Paradoxically, the US, as well as key countries in Western Europe, were at that time (1990-1991) opposed to the hasty breakdown of the Soviet state, which seemed to prevent them from seeing the real picture of the USSR from the inside. There is no doubt that Bulgarian diplomats knew the problems of Soviet society much better, and their potential to produce accurate expertise was very high indeed.

When one compares the forecasts of Bulgarian diplomatic work with those of the CIA's analytical reports on the political crisis of the late Soviet Union, where the American view of Russia is ideologized, Bulgarian professional analysis is clearly more accurate. Of course, there are also projections in Bulgarian works that reveal inflated expectations of a post-Cold War 'post-conflict world,' but these are relatively few.

In general, it can be summarized that correct diplomatic predictions about the trends in modern Russia prevail. For example, as early as 1993, Bulgarian analytical works recognised the beginning of Russia's 'Eurasian' reorientation towards China and the East, triggered by the lack of 'protective guarantees on the Western borders.'

Bulgarian analyses also drew attention to Ukrainian policy on nuclear weapons, which is difficult to predict, and highlight Ukraine's excessive foreign policy ambitions after the collapse of the USSR. Some Bulgarian analyses even warned that Ukraine was emerging as 'the most dangerous place for European security', when in fact there was no indication of such a scenario emerging and evolving.

As for the special interest of Bulgarian diplomats in Ukraine during the decade under review, it was predetermined by the presence of the largest Bulgarian diaspora, which, together with the Bulgarians in Moldova, formed the once united Bulgarian community sheltered by the Russian Empire in Bessarabia.

Bulgarian diplomatic analyses are particularly interesting from a research point of view and for the precise conceptual apparatus they informally create in relation to contemporary Russia. For example, they offer terms such as 'Brest Agreement', 'enlightened authoritarianism', 'power factor', 'tri-power', 'strategic sensitivity', etc., which is not only a peculiar theoretical contribution, but also an unequivocal indicator of the professional capacity of Bulgarian diplomats of the 1990s.

The style of the reports, the vocabulary used, as well as the in-depth analysis in describing the complex domestic and foreign policy problems of a huge 'country in transition', speak of the existence of a very serious Bulgarian diplomatic school. We can only hope that the high level of strategic, geopolitical and also domestic political analysis of the countries where Bulgarian diplomats are accredited will be maintained in the 21st century.

Russian 'powercentrism'

The study of Bulgarian diplomatic dispatches from the 1990s not only has heuristic value, but also allows for a better understanding of the historical picture of the dramatic epoch associated with

the 'end of the Union and the beginning of the Federation'. Their examination clarifies, for example, the driving forces and the factors that influenced one or another aspect of the construction and evolution of the new Russia. Also, individual authors' hypotheses are confirmed through the 'inside view' of Bulgarian diplomats, which in turn allows for the formulation of clearer research theses.

For example, if we were to define the underlying principle of the Russian political system built in the 1990s in one word, this word would, based on the researcher's view of Bulgarian diplomatic analyses, be 'powercentrism'.

The term 'powercentrism' was introduced by Bhupinder Brar⁵⁵ as a characteristic of Soviet foreign policy ambitions from Stalin to Gorbachev's perestroika. In terms of socio-cultural specificity of Russian society, the term 'powercentrism' is used by Mikhail Afanasyev.⁵⁶

Bulgarian diplomatic reports of the 1990s preferred the term 'power factor' as a synonym of powercentrism and of 'monocentrism in the Russian political system'. The 'power factor' focused on the presidential pole of the Russian Federation, which predetermined the creation of a Russian 'super-presidential republic', defined in diplomatic elaborations as a system of 'enlightened authoritarianism'.

The road to 'enlightened authoritarianism' in Russia passed through the unenlightened September civil war, localized in the centre of Moscow, culminating in the 'shooting' of the parliament on the night of October 3, 1993, and brought under control by Yeltsin after the referendum on the new constitution of December 12, 1993, legitimizing the presidential republic.

The socio-political spectrum in Russia emphasizes various details of Yeltsin's authoritarianism. The Russian jurist who participated in the discussions on constitutional drafts, prof. Vladimir Lafitsky, defines the Russian authoritarian system through the role of the president, who 'is not only

⁵⁵ Bhupinder Brar. Assessing Gorbachev. – *Economic and Political Weekly*, Jun. 11, 1994, Vol. 29, No. 24 (Jun. 11, 1994), p. 1465.

⁵⁶ Афанасьев, М. От вольных орд до ханской ставки. – В: *Pro et contra*. Т. 3. № 3. М., 1998, с. 9. – Цит по: Тимофеев, А. А. Основы системы рекрутирования политической элиты в современной России. – *Вестник института мировых цивилизаций*, 2015, № 10, с. 21.

beyond the three powers, but is also placed above them'⁵⁷. Vladimir Lafitsky criticizes the political system in Yeltsin's Russia as 'state-private' and 'bureaucrat-oligarchic'.⁵⁸

If the liberal economist and sociologist Vladislav Inozemtsev perceives Russia of the 1990s as a 'European authoritarian country' with 'proto-fascist features',⁵⁹ the left-wing sociologist and dissident philosopher Alexander Zinoviev summarizes the Russian 'superpower' as 'a Russian hybrid between Sovietism and Westernism'.⁶⁰

Russia's power-centrism is an internal stability factor that, when transformed into a diarchy at the initiative of the political elite (RSFSR vs. USSR, Yeltsin vs. Gorbachev, Russian vs. Soviet), leads to a manageable dismantling of the state. Conversely, the system of power in post-Soviet Russia does not tolerate any form of political dualism (Russian president vs Soviet parliament, federal centre vs regional periphery), and after a controlled political crisis returns to power-centrism to preserve the state.

If power-centrism is a historically distinct Russian political specificity (Russian statehood is Eastern, Eurasian), then Europocentrism, the pull towards the West, is a Russian civilizational specificity (Russian culture is European) that manifests itself in the reading of one's own history.

Russian historical periodization is traditionally Eurocentric and is divided in Russian historiography into three classical periods: the Kiev, Moscow and Petersburg periods, the fourth being the Soviet period. Russian Eurasians in exile try to escape from Europocentrism, but swing to the other extreme, alien and incomprehensible to Russian society: Asiacentrism. The Eurasian historian Georgy Vernadsky introduced his periodization of Russian history (Scythians-Huns-Mongols-Russian Empire-USSR),⁶¹ in which Ancient Russia (Kiev) is absent because it is a purely European state. The Eurasian extreme, in its attempt to emancipate Russia from the European cultural centre, arrives at the claim that 'Russian history is not part of European history'.⁶²

⁵⁷ *Лафитский, В. И.* Что сделает с Россией жестокий политик? Несвоевременные вопросы перед референдумом? – *Независимая газета*, N 220 (644), 17 ноября 1993 г., с. 1.

⁵⁸ *Лафитский, В. И.* Эрозия Конституции и конституционной правоприменительной практики (критические заметки в преддверии юбилея Конституции РФ 1993 г.) – *Конституционный вестник*. N 4 (22), 2019, с. 147.

⁵⁹ *Иноземцев, В.* Несвоевременная страна: Россия в мире XXI века. М.: Альпина Паблишер, 2018, с. 56, 80–86.

⁶⁰ *Зиновьев, А.* Планируемая история: Запад. Посткоммунистическая Россия. Гибель русского коммунизма. М., 2009, с. 429.

⁶¹ *Вернадский, Г. В.* Начертание русской истории. – В: Евразия. Исторические взгляды русских эмигрантов. М., 1992, с. 105–106, 108.

⁶² *Логовиков, П. В.* Научные задачи евразийства. – *Утверждение евразийцев*, N 7, 53–63.

Along with political power-centrism and civilizational Eurocentrism, the 1990s also saw the emergence in Russia of ideological revolution-centrism, which both split Russian history into two, pre- and post-1917, and divided a significant part of Russian public consciousness into white (Februaryist, liberal) and red (Octabrist, left) in a kind of mental, unfinished civil war. Both camps sacralise their revolution and accuse each other of a 'coup', be it Februaryist (February 1917) or Octoberist, according to ideological preferences, from which the small percentage of monarchists distance themselves, as for them both the March and October 1917 coups which led to two revolutions, are totally unacceptable because they destroyed the Russian Orthodox Empire.

During the anti-constitutional coup of October 3-4, 1993, the white-red ideological lines radicalized and took sides in the 'president-parliament' battle, presented in the information field as a choice between 'Russian' and 'Soviet.' Valeria Novodvorskaya perceives herself and Yeltsin's defenders as Februaryists, not democrats: 'It makes no sense to call our camp democratic... Our camp is the camp of the whites'.⁶³ The goal of the post-Soviet Februaryist liberals, summed up by Novodvorskaya, is to fight 'the millennia of Russian history that we want to erase'.⁶⁴

After establishing the presidential republic, Yeltsin attempted to find a unifying national idea to quell the white-red clash in which power in the 1990s symbolically sided with the Februaryists, illustrated in the state coat of arms depicted on the 1, 2, 5 and 10 ruble coins of the Bank of Russia, on which the double-headed eagle is without the crown and cross,⁶⁵ echoing the coat of arms of Kerensky's liberal republic.⁶⁶

Power-centrism is a historical feature of the political system in Russia, whether a self-governing monarchy, a Soviet federation or a presidential republic. Conversely, decentralization in Russia such as the constitutional monarchy (1906-1917), or the parliamentary republic (March-October 1917, 1991-1993) results in rather temporary and politically perishable systems.

⁶³ Новодворская, В. Над пропастью во лжи. М., 1998, с. 219.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 221.

⁶⁵ The crown and cross began appearing above the Russian double-headed eagle in individual commemorative coins after 2011, but returned en masse in 2016 issues after the annexation of Crimea, when the Russian Federation regained its status as a great power. – Author's Note.

⁶⁶ In April 1917 Kerensky's provisional government changed the coat of arms, removing the crown and cross from the Russian double-headed eagle. From April 26, 1917, paper state credit tickets were issued with the swastika with the decrowned double-headed eagle. – In: Седой, Ю. Н. Денежное обращение России при временном правительстве. – Вестник Адыгейского государственного университета, 2006, N 2, с. 40.

The difference between a power-centric USSR and a power-centric post-Soviet Russia is that the Soviet Union, by virtue of its ideological identity, can only exist in a bipolar geopolitical reality,⁶⁷ while the Russian Federation is actually suited to geopolitical pluralism/polycentrism.

Both during the pro-Western early Yeltsin era, when Moscow sought to become an equal partner in the Western concert, and under the late Yeltsin era, when resistance to the monopolar American order was already in sight, Russia acted with the presumption of its embeddedness in a multipolar world. In 1991, Russia lost its great power status but retained its great power potential.

Contributions:

1) In terms of the scientific problem posed

The topic of the dissertation, 'Russia in the Diplomatic Archive of the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs', is a contributory one, posed for the first time and developed mainly on the basis of unpublished and unexplored documents.

2) In terms of the source base used

The dissertation brings into scholarly circulation a considerable array of documents from the diplomatic archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

3) In terms of conceptual apparatus

The author introduces the term 'strategic dualism' for the specifics of RF foreign policy in the 1990s. An important part of the study is the analysis of the terminological apparatus introduced by diplomatic documents: the 'Brest Agreement', 'enlightened authoritarianism', 'triune crisis', 'tri-power', 'power factor', 'strategic sensitivity', etc.

4) In terms of analysis

⁶⁷ "The attempt to adapt the 'renewed' USSR to its de facto recognized model of global polycentrism has failed". – In: Сорокин, К. Э. Геополитика современности и геостратегия России. М., 1996, с. 38

The author presents her typological analysis of the rational and irrational factors of the collapse of the USSR, as well as the construction of the post-Soviet Russian political system and foreign policy strategy, based on the following stratification:

a) rational factors: geopolitical, political, economic, legal, regional;

b) irrational factors: ideological, Catholic, Soviet, Russian.

The dissertation systematizes diplomatic analyses and forecasts of Russia against the background of key events in Russian domestic and foreign policy of the 1990s.

Publications on the dissertation topic in Bulgarian, Russian and Serbian:

1/ *Дарина Григорова. Разпадането на СССР: идеологически спорове в руското общество 30 години по-късно. – В: Войната за историята – 75 години от края на Втората световна война. София, 2023, с. 173–182. ISBN: 978-954-07-5670-7*

2/ *Д. Григорова. Взгляд болгарской дипломатии на постсоветскую Украину в 1990-х гг. По неопубликованным документам из Архива Министерства иностранных дел Республики Болгарии. – В: Casus belli в международных отношениях XIX–XX вв.: дипломатия, идеология, военные приготовления. Труды исторического факультета МГУ. Вып. 229. Сер. II: Исторические исследования, 159. Москва, 2023, с. 565–584. ISBN: 978-5-00165-633-3*

3/ *Дарина Григорова. Российско-украинские споры о советском наследии после 1991 года. Болгарский дипломатический взгляд. – В: Revista Moldovenească de Drept Internațional și Relații Internaționale, 1 (19), 2024, с. 56–71. ISSN-print: 1857-1999; ISSN-online: 2345-1963*

4/ *Дарина Григорова. Россия и Турция: тактическое партнерство и стратегическое соперничество (геополитический и идеологический аспект). – В: IV МЕЂУНАРОДНИ НАУЧНИ СКУП „САВРЕМЕНИ ИЗАЗОВИ И ПРИЈЕТЊЕ БЕЗБЈЕДНОСТИ“. Бања Лука, Република Српска, БиХ, 28 март 2024 године, с. 561–569. ISBN: 978-99976-805-3-2*

5/ *Дарина Григорова*. Бугарске дипломатске прогнозе и сценарији о судбини СССР-а (1990 – 1991). На основу необјављених докумената из Архива бугарског Министерства спољних послова. – В: *СРПСКО-БУГАРСКИ ОДНОСИ – ПЕРСПЕКТИВЕ И САРАДЊА*, Институт за политичке студије, Београд, 2024, с. 331–348. ISBN: 978-86-7419-387-7

6/ *Дарина Григорова*. Америчке прогнозе и сценарији ЦИА-е за будућност Совјетског система после перестројке. – В: *Међународне интеграције као инструмент геополитике*, Институт за политичке студије, Београд, 2024, с. 423–433. ISBN: 978-86-7419-401-0