

ASSESSMENT

By Assoc. Prof. Tatyana Stefanova Astardjieva, PhD
(VTU "St. St. Cyril and Methodius"), member of the Scientific Jury
regarding the public defense of the dissertation for the award of
Doctor of Sciences (D.Sc. or Sc.D.) educational degree

Field of higher education: 2. Humanities

Professional field: 2.2. History and Archaeology

(Modern Russian History)

Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

Candidate: Darina Grigorova Grigorova

Dissertation Topic: Between the End of the Union and the Beginning of the Federation. Russia in Bulgarian Diplomatic Analyses (1990–1999)

1. Information on the Dissertation, the Abstract, and the Publications

Prof. Darina Grigorova Grigorova is a lecturer at the Faculty of History of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Sofia. The review of the documentation shows that there have been no violations of the regulations and all procedural deadlines have been observed. The required publications for the procedure have been submitted. The abstract has been written in accordance with the standard rules. The dissertation titled **"Between the End of the Union and the Beginning of the Federation. Russia in Bulgarian Diplomatic Analyses (1990–1999)"** addresses a subject of current relevance to modern historical research and exhibits academic originality. The researcher's focus is on the analysis of the most recent

Bulgarian diplomatic documents reflecting the decade during which the USSR dissolved and the Russian Federation was established. The issue is analyzed based on multiple sources, including published and unpublished documents, press materials, and memoirs, with the languages used being English, Russian, Ukrainian, and Bulgarian.

The dissertation has a total of 420 pages and includes: an introduction, three chapters each divided into sections, a conclusion, sources, and bibliography.

The introduction outlines the objectives and tasks that the research aims to address. The focus of the study is clearly defined as “the Bulgarian diplomatic interpretation of contemporary processes in Yeltsin’s Russia,” with special attention given to the events of 1991 and 1993, namely the coup attempt and the constitutional crisis. The chronological boundaries of the dissertation have been established and supported, as indicated in the title itself. The review of the sources and documents used, presented already in the introduction, is valuable and evokes historical curiosity. There, the author has classified the diplomatic archival documents into several subcategories. An analysis has been conducted of the published documents, the significant amount of periodical press, and the memoirs of contemporaries.

The first chapter, “Factors in the Dissolution of the USSR (1990–1991),” is divided into two parts. The triad of the Union of Brest (1596) – the Brest-Litovsk Treaty (1918) – and the Brest Agreement (1991) is interpreted, with reasons given for the implementation of the Belovezha Agreement. This part of the academic work presents the confrontation between M. Gorbachev and B. Yeltsin, and the August 1991 coup, which became the driving force behind subsequent developments.

The Russian presidential republic and the development of Russia’s political system are the subject of the second chapter: “Enlightened authoritarianism.” The Russian political system (1992–1999). The dual power, the confrontation between

the president and the parliament, peripheral regional issues that influenced the center, as well as the reverse process—the Bulgarian political reaction—are explained and assessed.

Chapter Three, “Strategic Dualism: The Geopolitical Interests of the Russian Federation (1992–1999)”, is also divided into two parts: “The strategic sensitivity” of Russian foreign policy and the Russo-Ukrainian “cold war” over the battle for the Soviet legacy. Prof. Darina Grigorova introduces new terminology such as “ideological and civilizational dualism” and the “European–Eurasian” principle, and the Bulgarian–Russian dualism is also examined. The Ukrainian case at the end of the 20th century is also a key point of focus.

The conclusion drawn is that Bulgarian diplomatic analyses point to the principle of power-centralism, which characterizes the Russian political system in the 1990s. The difference is that “the Russian Federation is suited for polycentrism”.

2. Scientific Contribution

The analysis of numerous events over the course of the decade at the end of the 20th century, the introduction of new terms successfully defended by Prof. Grigorova, the complexity of the issues addressed - combined with the often-misunderstood “Russian sensitivity” - the extensive body of Bulgarian and foreign-language documents brought into scholarly circulation through the study, the in-depth examination of political, economic, legal, regional, and ideological factors, the systematization and adaptation of previously unpublished sources, as well as the originality of both the text and its topic, represent just a portion of the dissertation's contributions.

3. Conclusion

The submitted dissertation by Prof. Dr. Darina Grigorova fully meets the requirements for the awarding of the scientific degree “Doctor of Sciences” in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.2. History and Archaeology, scientific specialty Modern and Contemporary General History (History of Russia), for which I give my affirmative vote.

07.07.2025

Assoc. Prof. Tatyana Astardjieva, PhD