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FACULTY OF HISTORY

DEPARTMENT OF “HISTORY OF BULGARIA”

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AUTHOR’S ABSTRACT

of
dissertation on:

TURKIYE IN BULGARIAN POLITICS 1989 - 2004

for the award of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”
in professional field 2.2 History and Archaeology, doctoral program “History
of Bulgaria” – Contemporary Bulgarian History

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Sofia, 2025

The dissertation was discussed and proposed for defense by the Department of History of Bulgaria at the Faculty of History of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" at the meeting of 10 June 2025.

The dissertation consists of: title page, table of contents, introduction, four chapters, conclusion and bibliography - 498 pages in total.

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I. General Characteristics of the Dissertation

The Republic of Türkiye has always occupied a significant role in the course of Bulgarian history. Its geopolitical location determines its importance, and the complex legacy of relations between the two countries makes understanding them particularly important for the positive development of contacts in the future. This makes research on Türkiye's place in Bulgarian politics and filling in the 'white spaces' in Bulgarian historiography useful not only for historical scholarship but also for contemporary Bulgarian diplomacy.

Bulgarian-Turkish relations over the last century are dotted with episodes of both successes and deep crises. The study and analysis of both is important for the understanding of the contemporary processes in the relations between the two countries as well as for finding the "best tone" in the communication between them. This will allow for the formulation of adequate conclusions and thus a correct long-term vision of the Bulgarian state for its relations with its southern neighbour.

The dissertation aims to explore and analyse the place of Türkiye in Bulgarian politics in recent times, thus building on what has already been achieved in Bulgarian historiography, both chronologically and thematically. The lower chronological limit of the study is the end of 1989, when relations between the two countries reached their lowest point. This happened as a result of the assimilationist policy of the communist regime in Bulgaria towards the Bulgarian Turks (the so-called "revival process"), which eventually became one of the reasons for the overthrow of Todor Zhivkov from power on 10 November 1989 and the subsequent collapse of socialism. The upper chronological limit of the thesis is related to the accession of the Bulgarian side to NATO in 2004 and the transformation of Bulgaria and Türkiye into allies within the Alliance. This moment in their relationship officially confirms the progress achieved in bringing the two countries closer together during the years of Transition and marks the beginning of building a partnership on a new basis. It completes the process of changing Türkiye's place in Bulgarian politics - from a "threat" to its security it is gradually becoming an "ally" with high potential for strategic cooperation.

The dissertation aims to trace the events that have had a significant impact on the formation of Bulgaria's attitude towards Türkiye and the political line it follows in its contacts with it. The subject of the study is political relations between the two countries as well as military, economic and cultural ties. This approach was chosen because it provides an opportunity for a comprehensive analysis and assessment of Türkiye's place in Bulgaria's politics in the period 1989-2004, and allows for an answer to be sought as to what extent the contentious issues

between the two countries and the mistrust of the Turkish side that existed at the end of 1989 had a negative impact on the development of cooperation.

The methods used in the study are: situational analysis, which will examine the role of external and internal factors in the development of the Bulgarian state's policy towards Türkiye; comparative analysis of scientific, documentary and Internet sources on the relations between the two countries during the period under review; analysis of archival documents and research related to the subject of the dissertation; functional analysis to trace the role of different institutions in the development of contacts between Bulgaria and Türkiye; geopolitical analysis and historical analysis. The principles of objectivity and causal determinism are guiding principles in the analysis.

The structure of the dissertation is based on a problem-chronological approach. It includes four chapters, an introduction and a conclusion. The first chapter is divided into four paragraphs. The first deals with the place and importance of the Bulgarian Turks as an important factor in the normalization and development of Bulgarian-Turkish relations. It is divided into two subtopics, which pay special attention to the fate of the Bulgarian Turks on the territory of Bulgaria and the expatriate Bulgarian Turks on the territory of Türkiye. The second paragraph presents the main points in the political contacts between the two countries. It contains separate subtopics dealing in turn with the normalisation of political contacts at state level, contacts between local authorities in Bulgaria and Türkiye, the signing of the Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighbourliness, Cooperation and Security and the subsequent development of political relations at state level, as well as political contacts on topical international issues - the break-up of Yugoslavia and the Cyprus issue. The third paragraph deals with bilateral consular relations. It has three sub-themes which present in turn the path towards the normalisation of consular relations, their liberalisation and the conflicts with representatives of the Turkish diplomatic mission in Bulgaria. The fourth paragraph analyses the dynamics of the dispute over existing property, social and humanitarian unresolved issues.

The second chapter deals with the relations between the two countries in the field of defence and security and in the period 1989-2004. Cooperation in this area is of utmost importance first of all because of the decade-long military-political confrontation between the Western and Eastern blocs, which inevitably influenced Bulgaria's perception of Türkiye, presenting it as an "enemy" and a "threat" to national security. It has great significance for Bulgaria in the years when the country's main objective is its successful integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures. Its gravity is further strengthened by the military actions on the borders of the two countries - the Persian crisis and the wars in the break-up of Yugoslavia.

The chapter contains five paragraphs. The first presents the main points of cooperation in the field of military contacts and the pace of change in the Bulgarian attitude towards Türkiye, which is increasingly moving out of the image of "enemy" and is perceived as an important strategic partner. The second paragraph is devoted to the long-standing dispute over the determination of the borderline at the Rezovska River and between the maritime areas of Bulgaria and Türkiye, the resolution of which is important for reducing border incidents and promoting the easing of tensions between the two countries. The third paragraph deals with cooperation between the Bulgarian and Turkish sides in the fight against illegal trafficking, smuggling and terrorism, which threaten the security of each country. The fourth paragraph deals with the cooperation between the Bulgarian and Turkish judicial authorities, which underpins the rule of law. The fifth paragraph analyses the role of the Kurdish issue in Bulgaria's relations with Türkiye due to its high importance for Ankara and the violent methods used by both sides in the conflict.

The third chapter analyses bilateral economic cooperation. It is divided into eight paragraphs dealing with different sectors. The first paragraph examines in two separate sub-themes the trade and investment partnership between Bulgaria and Türkiye. The second paragraph analyses cooperation in agriculture and livestock. The third examines the main points of relations between Bulgaria and Türkiye in the field of energy. The fourth presents cooperation in the field of transport, with separate sub-topics on relations in the field of rail transport, road transport, which is divided into passenger and freight transport, maritime transport and air transport. The fifth paragraph deals with the main points of cooperation in the framework of infrastructure projects in which Bulgaria and Türkiye are involved. Border crossing points, Transport Corridor 8 and Transport Corridor 4 are identified as separate sub-topics. The sixth paragraph analyses the relations between the two countries in the field of telecommunications. The seventh deals with cooperation in the field of tourism. The eighth paragraph pays special attention to bilateral cooperation under the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organisation due to its specific nature and Türkiye's leading role and geopolitical aspirations in its establishment.

The fourth chapter deals with the contacts between Bulgaria and Türkiye in the field of culture, education and science and is divided into three paragraphs. The first one analyses the difficult path to the signing of the Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Culture, Education and Science, concluded on 4 December 1997. It is divided into separate sub-topics: school education and the study of Turkish as a mother tongue in Bulgarian schools and the teaching of "Religion" in them; higher education and cooperation between universities in the two countries

and the idea of establishing a Bulgarian-Turkish higher education institution. The scientific contacts between Bulgaria and Türkiye are presented, paying special attention to the cooperation between national libraries and joint initiatives in the field of archival studies. The third paragraph analyses the cultural partnership between the two countries.

The research is based mainly on archival documents stored in the Central State Archives of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Archives of the Presidential Administration. Due to the specificity of working with documents related to the most recent period in modern history, which is expressed in the limited access to them, some of the questions addressed in the dissertation were not answered. Requests under the Access to Public Information Act to obtain documents subject to special conditions of use were granted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Presidential Administration, but the documents provided were limited in scope and content. The sensitive nature of some of the information is one of the main reasons for the lack of free access to the full volume of archival documents, which does not allow for a more in-depth study of some of the issues concerning Türkiye's place in Bulgarian politics from 1989 to 2004.

In addition to archival documents, other source materials such as transcripts of the sessions of the National Assembly and the Seventh Grand National Assembly, minutes of the meetings of various working groups and those of the Consultative Council for National Security to the President of the Republic of Bulgaria are used in the dissertation. Memoir literature (the published memoirs of Zhelyu Zhelev, Dimitar Ludzhev, Ivan Kostov, Georgi Parvanov, the diplomats Ivan Garvalov, Petar Vodensky, etc.) was also used in the study, but due to its subjective nature this was done moderately in order to present the point of view of the participants in the events without taking their opinion as "pure coin". The periodical press has been used sparingly insofar as it gives an insight into the way a key event is perceived by the media and communicated to the general public. The strong political opposition that characterised the Transition years in Bulgaria had a significant impact on the development of the press in the country, which was often used as an arena for targeted suggestion, propaganda and distortion of the information presented.

The dissertation also builds on the existing achievements of scholarship on the topic at hand, which is why it is worth noting the significant imbalance in scholarship on Bulgarian-Turkish relations before and after 10 November 1989.

The number of publications devoted to Bulgarian-Turkish relations in the years after 1989 is considerably limited and there is no comprehensive monographic study examining bilateral relations. Individual aspects of contacts between the two countries have been analysed in

monographs and books on other topics. In the spectrum of bilateral relations in the years of the Transition, the attention of historians is mostly focused on the changes in the policy of the Bulgarian state towards the Bulgarian Turks, which gave a significant impetus to the normalization of contacts with Türkiye. Valeri Stoyanov, Iskra Baeva, Evgenia Kalinova, Mikhail Gruev and Alexei Kalionski, Nadezhda Zhechkova, Ibrahim Yalamov, etc. have published on this topic. Some of the studies on Bulgaria's foreign policy also include other aspects of bilateral relations. For example, Nikola Avreisky, in his monograph on the country's contemporary foreign policy, addresses both the policy of the two countries towards the Bulgarian Turks and the potential risks of increasing Turkish influence on them, as well as economic contacts. Hristo Prodanov also examines contemporary Bulgarian-Turkish relations through the prism not only of their political but also of their economic and cultural dimensions. An important place among the publications is occupied by Boryana Buzhashka's research on property, social and humanitarian issues between Bulgaria and Türkiye. The available publications of Turkish scholars on the problems of Bulgarian-Turkish relations after 1989 are fewer - among them, e.g., the studies of B. Demirtaş-Coşkun and H. Memisoglu deserve attention.

II. Contents of the dissertation

The first chapter of the dissertation deals with the development of political relations between Bulgaria and Türkiye. After November 10, 1989 Bulgaria faced a number of tasks such as liberalization of the economy and democratization of the socio-political life. This process had a high economic cost, and the need for deep legislative reforms provoked strong domestic political tensions. Internationally, the Bulgarian state is faced with the task of establishing strategic partnerships with Western countries and "cleaning up" its image as the most trusted Soviet satellite. The country thus began its contacts with Türkiye under complex domestic and foreign political conditions.

For the Turkish state, the starting position for the dialogue is different. It is led by Turgut Özal, who has pursued a successful liberalisation of the Turkish economy and an active foreign policy aimed at positioning the country as a regional leader in the new post-Cold War world order. Türkiye has increased confidence and capabilities to pursue an active and offensive foreign policy. This, combined with objective factors such as larger territory, population, and economic resources, creates a significant imbalance between the weight of Bulgaria and Türkiye on the international stage and in negotiations between them, with Türkiye having the upper hand. It is only at the beginning of the new millennium that Bulgaria's weight in the negotiations has increased due to its progress in the process of integration into the European Union.

During the period under review, from 1989 to 2004, relations between the two countries developed in an upward direction, the main impetus for this being the change in the policy of the Bulgarian state towards the Bulgarian Turks and the favourable international context. The Bulgarian government has pursued a consistent policy of restoring the rights of Bulgarian citizens of Turkish origin. There is unanimity among the political forces on the need for such reforms, which is why the line is followed by all governments, regardless of their party affiliation, although there is some controversy among them on the scale of the reforms. This policy of Bulgaria at once had an effect on the Bulgarian-Turkish negotiations, and the question of the condition of the Bulgarian Turks was dropped from them. This releases tensions and allows for an open dialogue on a wide range of issues.

For the "thawing" of the relations an important role was played by Ankara's decision not to raise in the course of the negotiations its previous demands for the recognition of a "Turkish national minority" on Bulgarian territory and for the signing of an expatriation agreement. This

does not mean, however, that the Turkish state ceases to be interested in the situation of Muslims in Bulgaria. It can be assumed that this decision of Türkiye was also taken as a consequence of the intransigence of the Bulgarian government in these matters, regardless of their political colouring.

The initiative for the normalisation of contacts between the two countries in those first months after the fall of Todor Zhivkov belongs to the Bulgarian state, while the Turkish state takes a rather wait-and-see position until the democratisation processes in Bulgaria deepen. However, in the negotiations both delegations showed a willingness to improve contacts, sticking to issues of mutual interest such as economic and military cooperation, and sensitive topics for both sides were mentioned carefully.

In the period 1989-2004, Bulgarian-Turkish political relations at state level developed significantly and became friendly and good-neighbourly, increasing Bulgaria's confidence in its southern neighbour. Indicative of this is the decision of the first Bulgarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Boyko Dimitrov, after November 10, 1989, to have his first official meeting with a foreign representative after taking office, namely with the Turkish Ambassador Yalçın Oral.

The range of issues discussed during negotiations and official visits is expanding and the growing trust between the two countries stimulates an increase in contacts between the heads of state of Bulgaria and Türkiye. The two countries discuss a number of international issues, and their views do not always coincide, but this does not negatively affect their overall relations. The Bulgarian Turks, who have been displaced to Turkish territory during the "revival process" years, have become increasingly important in the bilateral talks. The reason for this is the need for Bulgaria and Türkiye to settle the social security issues of these people. The local authorities, especially in the border areas, are quick to recognise the change in the climate of Bulgarian-Turkish relations and are taking the initiative to develop cooperation at regional level.

Of particular importance for the normalisation of contacts between the two countries is the overcoming of the tensions that had built up in bilateral consular relations as a result of the "revival process" and the emigration wave of 1989. After Todor Zhivkov was removed from power and changes took place in Bulgaria, Türkiye quickly lifted restrictions and ended the pressure imposed on Bulgarian diplomatic missions on its territory.

During the period under review from 1989 to 2004, consular relations between Bulgaria and Türkiye developed positively in the direction of reducing administrative difficulties in issuing visas and overall easing of the visa regime. There was a tendency in the early 1990s for the

Bulgarian side to initiate such talks and in the late 1990s and early 2000s for Türkiye to do so. The impression is given that Bulgaria's forthcoming membership of the European Union gives it an advantage in negotiations on consular issues, unlike in the early 1990s when the Turkish state was on the 'strong side'. Eventually, Türkiye unilaterally abolished visas with the expectation that this would force Bulgaria to do the same, but at that moment the Bulgarian state was busy synchronising its legislation with the European one and refused to take such a step.

In the sphere of consular relations, the Bulgarian state closely monitors the actions of Turkish diplomats on its territory. Several conflict situations arose during the period under review. They did not lead to a crisis in relations between the two countries, but provoked a feeling of mistrust, including in Bulgarian society. Its fears of Turkish interference in its internal affairs remained throughout the period under review. They were also fuelled by some of the actions of the political party 'Movement for Rights and Freedoms' over the years, as well as by the Turkish state's abiding interest in the country's Muslim community. However, their intensity decreases thanks to the political will to develop bilateral contacts in a spirit of good neighbourliness.

One of the most important acts proving the change in the Bulgarian-Turkish relations and confirming its positive direction is the Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighbourliness, Cooperation and Security, signed on May 6, 1992 in Ankara by the Bulgarian Prime Minister Philip Dimitrov and the Turkish - Suleyman Demirel. It provides for the development of cooperation in a wide range of areas and establishes a mechanism for the negotiation of some of the contentious issues between Bulgaria and Türkiye, namely the resolution of "property, social and humanitarian issues" in that sequence. This is a great success for Bulgarian diplomacy, because this clause means that Ankara accepts to deal with Bulgarian property claims.

Bulgaria's position on these issues, both before and after 10 November 1989, remains essentially unchanged, because it reflects its interest that the heirs of the refugees from Eastern Thrace should receive fair compensation for the properties abandoned as a result of the repression of the Turkish authorities, and that the Bulgarian state should regain ownership of the properties of the Bulgarian Exarchate. The postponement of the Turkish demands for the settlement of the social questions affecting the Bulgarian Turks who had been displaced on its territory, after a solution had been found for the Bulgarian property claims, kept Ankara's interest from these negotiations. The establishment of this mechanism therefore deserves praise for the professionalism of Bulgarian diplomats. The assessment of the role of the Bulgarian

politicians, and in particular of the Union of democratic forces (UDF, in Bulgarian – Sayuz na demokratichnite sili - SDS) government headed by Philip Dimitrov, is more moderate, because there are archival documents, as well as published memoirs, which show that there are weaknesses in the understanding of the Bulgarian claims and their inclusion in the text of the agreement. However, the political will of the cabinet of F. Dimitrov's will to deepen relations with Turkiye is what made the signing of this good treaty for Bulgaria possible.

Over the years there has been a tendency for the Turkish side to insist on a social security agreement before resolving property issues, but until the late 1990s Bulgarian diplomacy deflected this. Moreover, in order to strengthen its position, in the mid-1990s Bulgaria decided to make the development of cooperation with Turkiye in the fields of education and culture conditional on reaching an agreement on the exarchate properties. This did bring the issue to the fore, but on the other hand delayed the establishment of a partnership in these areas. The Bulgarian state has no interest in active cooperation in these areas, as it brings more benefits to Turkiye in the context of its ambitious foreign policy, which is why opting for this approach seemingly brings it more benefits than harm. However, the Turkish state has the tools to delay and hinder the material maintenance of these monuments, and without such maintenance they will begin to crumble. The condition of a number of them has deteriorated, but this is also due to the small capacity of the Bulgarian community in Turkiye to take care of them themselves and the lack of active and targeted support of the Bulgarian government in this regard.

The policy on this set of issues shows most strongly the differences in the views of the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP, in Bulgarian – Balgarska sotsialisticheska partia – BSP) and the United Democratic Forces (UDF, in Bulgarian – Obedineni Demokratichni sili – ODS) on the path of development of relations with Turkiye. The government of Jean Videnov set itself the goal of resolving the issue of the ownership of the exarchate properties even at the cost of slowing down the pace of development of cooperation. The UDF cabinet with Ivan Kostov as Prime Minister, before clarifying the status of the Bulgarian Exarchate's properties, opted for deepening the partnership in the fields of culture, education and science and reaching an agreement on the maintenance of cultural and historical monuments on the territory of both countries. Undoubtedly, Sofia does not have sufficient legal arguments regarding the status of the exarchate properties, but this is what necessitates the use of political instruments to satisfy the demands. The lack of a decision on their ownership means that their fate is in practice left to the good relations between Bulgaria and Turkiye, and historical experience shows that in case of a deterioration Ankara would not hesitate to encroach on Bulgarian cultural and historical monuments.

The negative assessment of the actions of the cabinet of Ivan Kostov on this range of issues is reinforced by his decision to conclude an agreement regulating the social security of the Bulgarian Turks who emigrated from Bulgaria in the late 1980s, without first reaching an agreement on the satisfaction of Bulgarian property claims. This is a grave violation in favour of Ankara of the balance between the two countries in the negotiations, which was carried out with the signature of the Bulgarian Prime Minister. The withdrawal of the Turkish side's interest in the negotiations on property, social and humanitarian issues, once its main demands have been met, logically leads to a decline in the intensity of the negotiations and, despite the subsequent attempts of some Bulgarian politicians such as President G. Parvanov, this package of issues remains unresolved to this day.

Thus, in the period from 1989 to 2004, there was a clear tendency for the right-wing governments to seek more compromising solutions to the existing issues between the two countries, which contributed to the greater success of these cabinets in signing important treaties developing cooperation, while under the government of Jean Videnov the relations were rather stagnant. One part of the treaties signed by the UDF did indeed upgrade the treaty-legal base and raised the Bulgarian-Turkish relations to a new level, but another part of them violated the Bulgarian interest in the bilateral negotiations and created opportunities for future conflicts, as they did not find a solution to the Bulgarian claims against Türkiye.

The second chapter deals with the security and defence relations between Bulgaria and Türkiye. The collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the overall two-bloc system after the end of the Cold War, as well as the desire of the Bulgarian state to join the Euro-Atlantic structures conditioned the country's interest in developing cooperation with Türkiye in this area. Thus, the Bulgarian perception of Türkiye is no longer based on the understanding that it is its enemy, but a valuable partner in the process of integration into NATO structures, in whose face it sees its new external guarantor of its security.

The first 'step' for the bilateral cooperation was made by the government of Dimitar Popov with the signing of the Sofia Document. This policy was further developed by the office of Philip Dimitrov. The UDF government actively negotiated with Türkiye for partnership and the preparation of treaties in the field of justice and the fight against illegal trafficking, some of which were signed under the government of Lyuben Berov. The agreements on cooperation in military training and in the military-technical field, signed under Dimitrov and Berov, remained unratified for a long time due to a legal case, behind which, however, the political will to bring these treaties into force had fallen away, mainly due to some controversial texts in them that

favour the Turkish side. The government of the BSP and Jean Videnov does not give up the idea of developing military cooperation with Türkiye and proposes the negotiation of a new framework agreement. However, the Turkish state insisted on ratifying the already signed agreements and soon after the government of Ivan Kostov took office, the parliament voted for their ratification and signed a framework agreement on military cooperation with Türkiye. This shows that there is continuity among the government in Sofia to develop relations with the Turkish side in the military sphere. Consistency is also observed in the policy of the Turkish state, which signed treaties with Bulgaria both under the rule of Suleyman Demirel and the rule of Mesut Yılmaz, who are otherwise rivals on the political scene.

There has been a tendency for the military relations between Bulgaria and Türkiye in the 1990s to mainly concern bilateral issues, and since the late 1990s and in the first years of the new millennium their focus has been on more global issues such as the fight against terrorism and illegal trafficking. This is due both to the resolution of the problematic issues between the two countries and the successful process of Bulgaria's integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures, as well as to events on the international scene.

An important element of the development of the cooperation between Bulgaria and Türkiye is the definition of the border line between them at the mouth of the river. Resovska. This issue has a long history and has been the cause of numerous border incidents that have created tensions in bilateral relations. Its resolution was discussed during the time of Todor Zhivkov, and partial agreements were reached with the Turkish side.

Between 1989 and 1997, a series of negotiations were held to complete this range of issues, including the delimitation of maritime economic zones and the allocation of flight information areas. The government of Ivan Kostov eventually signed the delimitation agreement with Türkiye. The archival documents contain hints of haste on the part of the Bulgarian rulers, in the person of Prime Minister Ivan Kostov, to reach it quickly. Whether this was the result of favourable political timing or a consequence of pressure on him is difficult to say, as even for political contemporaries of the events the negotiations between the two prime ministers remain shrouded in secrecy. However, this political pressure certainly created tension between the institutions, and Türkiye made efforts to take advantage of it and succeeded. Nevertheless, the signing of the treaty resolved a dispute between the two countries that had caused tension between them for many years.

The partnership between the Ministries of the Interior, Justice and Border Authorities in the period 1989-2004 was characterised by the further development and improvement of the existing contractual and legal basis to make it fit for modern bilateral relations. The main credit

for this goes to the right-wing governments in Bulgaria of F. Dimitrov and Iv. Kostov, who signed several agreements in this area. Their effectiveness, however, largely depends on measures being taken at multilateral level, such as the agreement between Bulgaria, Türkiye and Romania on combating terrorism, organised crime and illegal trafficking.

For the Turkish state, the main expression of the fight against terrorism concerns mainly the Kurdish issue and the actions of the Kurds in other countries against Ankara. Bulgarian diplomacy understands well Türkiye's sensitivity on this issue and tries not to express official positions to provoke its discontent. However, it tacitly agrees to the establishment of Kurdish organisations on Bulgarian territory which, in its view, develop cultural and educational activities and are not linked to the PKK, which it declares to be a terrorist organisation in the manner of other European countries. Regarding the activities of the Kurds in Bulgaria, there is a tendency for leftist and nationalist politicians and public figures to express more openly their public support for the cause of the Kurdish people and the rights violations in Türkiye. They are also more liberal in their attitudes towards Kurdish events. This has led to a number of protests from Türkiye without leading to a change in Bulgarian policy or a serious escalation of tensions in bilateral relations.

Thus, after the end of 1989 and until 2004, cooperation between Bulgaria and Türkiye in the security and defence spheres was successful and created trust between the former adversaries, and this favoured the overall development of bilateral relations.

The third chapter examines the development of economic relations between the two countries in the period 1989-2004. They show a positive trend of increasing partnership due to the existing mutual interest of both countries and the improved 'climate' between them.

The initial undeniable negative impact was the 'revival process', due to which Türkiye introduced a number of restrictive measures on the Bulgarian state, which also had their economic impact. This is particularly visible in the sphere of trade, where the data on the decline in trade are telling. Due to their nature, some sectors are more dependent on the level of political contacts than others - e.g. at the beginning of the Transition, the tension at the Bulgarian-Turkish border, caused mainly by the emigration wave from Bulgaria to Türkiye, had a negative impact on the development of cooperation in the field of tourism and transport due to the restrictive measures imposed by the Turkish side on the traffic through the BCPs. Other sectors (e.g. agriculture and livestock farming) remain distant from the political disputes between the two countries, mainly due to the fact that relations in this area are regulated on the basis of international standards, such as the actions between the two neighbouring countries in the case

of contagious animal diseases. In some areas of economic relations (e.g. energy and transport), the successful implementation of larger-scale cooperation projects depends on more than one country, so the development of cooperation does not depend solely on bilateral contacts.

Throughout the period under review, trade relations have been on an upward trajectory, and by the end of the period the two countries had already concluded a free trade agreement. Bulgaria maintains a positive trade balance, which, however, does not take into account the widespread 'suitcase trade'. Although Bulgarian exports to Türkiye are higher than Turkish exports to Bulgaria, the country sells mainly raw materials and low value-added products, unlike the Turkish state, which markets processed industrial products on the Bulgarian market.

In the field of investment, there is an increased interest from Türkiye and a number of its companies are entering the Bulgarian market. It is actively involved in the privatisation process in Bulgaria, but did not become a major investor in the country during the period under review, similar to Germany, Belgium, Italy and Greece.

The Bulgarian side has made few investments in Türkiye, the first more serious being only that of „Prista oil" in 2003. The reasons for the significant imbalance between the two countries in this area are rooted in both the smaller opportunities of the young Bulgarian business class and the stricter legislative regime in Türkiye. Although the two countries signed a treaty on investment protection and promotion, it did not seriously change this trend.

In the field of agriculture, relations between Bulgaria and Türkiye developed successfully during the period under review and the two countries updated the contractual and normative basis between them, developing active cooperation.

Relations between Bulgaria and Türkiye in the energy sector have been developing most dynamically since the late 1990s, when the government was taken over by Ivan Kostov's cabinet. The potential of the two countries for partnership in this area has not been fully exploited due to a complex of factors. For example, the 'electricity for infrastructure' contract initially had the potential to help both countries in their economic development: Türkiye with its shortage of electricity and Bulgaria with its lack of sufficient financial resources for large-scale infrastructure projects. Financial problems and a lack of unanimity on finding a strategic investor have stalled the implementation of the agreement. This has also put an end to the successful electricity trade between the two countries, which exceeded the agreed volumes.

The transport sector appears to be more dependent on political issues. The most significant contradictions between the two countries are in road and maritime transport, while rail and air transport are developing relatively smoothly. The problems are mainly to the detriment of the Bulgarian state and are a consequence of imposed Turkish restrictions. However, the growing

trade in goods and the increase in tourist travel require the two countries to develop their contacts along these lines.

During the period under review, from 1989 to 2004, relations between Bulgaria and Türkiye in the field of telecommunications and the communications network developed without serious difficulties. A challenge they faced is the use of the radio spectrum, which, due to the Turkish state's non-compliance with international agreements in the field, made it difficult to receive Bulgarian programmes in the regions of North-Eastern, South-Eastern Bulgaria, the Eastern Rhodopes and the Black Sea.

The lifting of the Iron Curtain and the end of the bloc confrontation create the conditions for the development of the tourism sector globally. In the field of tourism, Türkiye has a significantly better position on international markets than Bulgaria, which is an objective factor for the unequal position of the two countries. The Bulgarian state is far more interested in cooperation with Türkiye due to its greater experience and Türkiye expresses readiness for exchange and partnership in the training of personnel for the sector, but there is no information available on the successful development and offering of joint tourism products.

A particularly interesting combination of the Bulgarian state's strong interest in developing economic relations with Türkiye and its still existing fears of Turkish capital entering the country due to concerns about its possible use as an instrument of political influence on Bulgaria is the establishment of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization. Bulgaria's policy towards the Turkish idea of establishing a Black Sea Economic Cooperation Area is strongly influenced by the level of its political relations with Türkiye and the accumulated mistrust. The two countries, pursuing their different interests and visions for the future of the organisation, often get into disputes on a number of issues. The Bulgarian and Greek positions, which are opposed to the Turkish side's desire for more integrated cooperation, have played an essential role in shaping the structure and image of the organisation. Nevertheless, Bulgaria and Türkiye continue their efforts to develop BSEC, driven by their common interest in Black Sea economic cooperation. Eventually, the agreed terms satisfied the Bulgarian demands and the Bulgarian state under a UDF government headed by Philip Dimitrov decided to join as a founding member of the initiative.

The existing mistrust in Bulgaria towards the economic engagement with Türkiye has gradually diminished over the Transition years due to the improvement of contacts and the growing trust between the two countries. Türkiye and Bulgaria have a big difference in resource potential, including greater financial capabilities of the Turkish state compared to the Bulgarian state, whose economy is in the process of Transition towards the introduction of market

principles and the establishment of private business and entrepreneurial class. However, the Bulgarian policy towards Türkiye in the economic sphere is dominated by its interest in their development, although often influenced by the unresolved political issues between the two countries.

The fourth chapter deals with the relations between Bulgaria and Türkiye in the field of education, culture and science. They remained poorly developed during the period under review due to the low interest of the Bulgarian state in this.

In the early 1990s, the existing mistrust towards Türkiye, as well as the Bulgarian state's clear understanding of Ankara's greater potential to gain positives from such cooperation, led to passivity and attempts to delay the settlement of the treaty-legal framework by Sofia. In the mid-1990s, after Bulgaria appreciated Türkiye's high level of interest, it decided to make the development of the partnership in this sphere dependent on making progress on the exarchate issues. This became the reason for the stagnation of the partnership in this sphere, which was unblocked with the signing of a cultural agreement by the government of Ivan Kostov.

Cooperation in the field of education and science is largely developed on Turkish initiative and on the basis of mutual interest. The government of Ivan Kostov and his declared political will have been instrumental in its development. However, for the Bulgarian state, cooperation in this area with Türkiye is not a priority due to Türkiye's known backwardness at this time. Bulgaria's aspiration to integrate with the European Union and harmonise legislation also has an impact. This has been the main priority for the Bulgarian State in the period under consideration until the beginning of 2004 and it has not taken any action that could create obstacles to its achievement.

Despite the political will of the UDF government for an overall rapprochement with Ankara, it should be noted that some initiatives of the Turkish side, which were judged by the government as rather harmful for the Bulgarian side, were refused by Kostov's cabinet. Such is the idea of establishing a Bulgarian-Turkish university.

In the field of education, a particularly important element of Türkiye's place in Bulgarian politics is the process of introducing the study of Turkish as a mother tongue in Bulgarian schools. This is so, on the one hand, because the relations between the two countries are highly dependent on the state of the Turkish community in Bulgaria, and on the other hand, because, owing to the lack of trained personnel and materials, it enables the Turkish state to assist Bulgaria by providing textbooks and organising courses for teachers in Turkish.

The issue of the right to study Turkish as a mother tongue in Bulgarian schools has sparked serious controversy among political parties and created tension in areas with mixed populations. Nevertheless, the Bulgarian state has taken a moderate decision to allow it to be studied on an optional basis if students express an interest.

It can be concluded that in the 1990s an appropriate balance was found in Bulgaria between the teaching of Bulgarian and Turkish as part of the process of democratisation of society and restoration of the rights of the Bulgarian Turks. This issue is of utmost importance for the Bulgarian state, since the successful social integration of the Bulgarian Turks depends to a large extent on its appropriate solution, and their attitude towards Türkiye also depends on its results.

The cultural cooperation, although developing positively, remains highly dependent on both the financial capacities of Bulgaria and Türkiye and the state of their political relations. Exchanges are developing mainly in the sphere of music and dance art, mostly between non-professional artists through participation in various international festivals.

Throughout the period, the initiative in the field of education and culture for the development of cooperation belongs to the Turkish state, while the Bulgarian side is more hesitant due to the still existing distrust of Ankara's geopolitical interests, especially given the existence of a Turkish ethnic minority in the country. These are further reinforced by the combination of the end of the Cold War and the layered sentiments towards Türkiye, a consequence of the negative propaganda towards it during the years of socialism due to its participation in the Western bloc and the rule of President Turgut Özal, who has pursued an active policy aimed at strengthening the weight of his country on the international stage. Building on the region's common Ottoman past, he sought to enhance Türkiye's role as the successor to the Ottoman Empire in the states created after its collapse. This policy is being pursued primarily through the Muslim populations within them. This is also the reason for the slow and weak development of cooperation in education, science and culture.

For the period 1989-2004 the most important element in Bulgaria's policy towards Türkiye was the process of confidence building. This depended on the bilateral contacts in various spheres, but it is most influenced by the relations of the two countries towards the Turkish ethnic community in Bulgaria. Finding a balanced approach towards it creates an opportunity to develop full cooperation with Ankara. For Bulgaria, Türkiye has an important geopolitical significance. It is the country with the largest military power in the region, whose support for the country's NATO membership remained unwavering throughout the period from 1989 to 2004, when Bulgaria also joined the Alliance. It is also the country which, at the crossroads between Europe, Asia and Africa, Sofia recognises as a partner with great potential in the

economic sphere. Last but not least, Turkiye is the country in the region with the greatest ambitions for regional leadership, including at political level, which we are still witnessing today. All this makes the understanding of the historical processes in the bilateral relations with Ankara important both for filling the ‘blank spots’ in the historiography and for the correct construction of the Bulgarian policy towards Ankara.

III. Reference to the scientific contributions of the research

1. Presents to the attention of the Bulgarian academic community Bulgaria's policy towards Türkiye in the period 1989 - 2004, examining in detail the most important events that influenced its formation.
2. Builds a comprehensive picture of the bilateral relations by analysing the dependence of the development of cooperation in the spheres of security and defence, economy, culture and education on the open political issues between the two countries.
3. For the first time compares the policies of the various Bulgarian governments towards Türkiye and the impact they have had on Bulgarian-Turkish contacts.
4. Introduces for the first time into scholarly circulation a wide range of unpublished archival documents, some of which have been declassified under the Access to Public Information Act.

IV. Publications on the dissertation topic

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