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FACULTY OF HISTORY

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## **AUTHOR'S ABSTRACT**

of a dissertation 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

## **BULGARIAN-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS**

**(1953 – the end of 1960s)**

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The dissertation was discussed and proposed for defense at a meeting of the Department of “History of Bulgaria” at the Faculty of History of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, held on 10 September.

The text consists of an introduction, exposition in four chapters, conclusion, and bibliography, with a total volume of 245 pages.

## **I. General Characteristics of the Dissertation**

### **1. Objectives and Tasks**

The Balkan Peninsula has long stood at the crossroads of East and West and became a key geopolitical boundary during the Cold War. The People's Republic of Bulgaria emerged as a staunch ally of the Soviet Union, especially after the establishment of the Fatherland Front government in September 1944 and the consolidation of Soviet dominance during the Stalinist period (1948–1953). Initially, the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia also maintained close ties with the USSR and other Eastern European socialist states. However, following the Stalin–Tito split in 1948, Yugoslavia charted an independent course, eventually becoming a leading force in the Non-Aligned Movement by the late 1950s.

This dissertation examines the evolution of Bulgaria's relations with its neighbor Yugoslavia from 1953 to the end of the 1960s, with a particular focus on the interplay among political, economic, and cultural dimensions. Drawing on Bulgarian and Serbian historiography, as well as underexplored archival sources, the study reassesses the prevailing narrative that centers narrowly on political and ideological tensions by incorporating economic cooperation and cultural exchange as integral aspects of bilateral relations, and explores the Macedonian question from the aspect of publicization.

The first part of the dissertation traces the development of political relations from the reestablishment of contact in the early 1950s to renewed tensions in the late 1960s, highlighting the influence of Soviet-Yugoslav dynamics and the evolution of Bulgaria's position on the Macedonian issue. Special attention is given to the process of publicizing Bulgaria's new Macedonian policy, reassessing key events such as the 1963 March Plenum and the official decision in 1967 to promote its stance more openly.

The study analyzes the trajectory of economic and cultural relations using documents from the Central State Archives in Bulgaria. It reconstructs bilateral trade

patterns, institutional frameworks, and economic agreements, while identifying challenges arising from differing economic systems and Cold War pressures. The section on cultural relations explores Bulgaria's evolving cultural policy, the institutional actors involved, and the ideological constraints—including the Macedonian issue—that shaped cultural exchanges.

Finally, the dissertation evaluates Bulgarian-Yugoslav relations as a case study in small-state diplomacy during the Cold War. It explores how Bulgaria navigated between ideological allegiance, national interests, and pragmatic needs, and how the three dimensions of political, economic, and cultural relations interacted—revealing both constraints and opportunities in the broader geopolitical context.

## **2. Significance of the Topic**

The study of Bulgarian-Yugoslav relations during the Cold War offers insights into how small states navigated ideological alliances, national interests, and international constraints in a bipolar world. While the political dimension of this bilateral relationship—particularly the Macedonian question—has received considerable scholarly attention, existing research has largely overlooked the economic and cultural aspects of the relationship, especially during the 1950s and 1960s. This dissertation seeks to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis that integrates political, economic, and cultural dimensions into a unified framework.

The significance of this topic lies in its potential to deepen our understanding of both intra-socialist bloc diplomacy and the broader mechanisms of international relations during the Cold War. Although interactions between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia reflect the complexities of diplomacy between a Soviet-aligned satellite state and a non-aligned socialist state. This dissertation highlights how Bulgaria's foreign relations was shaped not only by its ideological commitments to the Soviet Union but also by its efforts to safeguard national interests, particularly regarding the Macedonian question and its economic relations with Yugoslavia.

Moreover, the dissertation draws on archival materials, including documents

from the Ministry of Foreign Trade, the Committee for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These sources provide rare insights into the internal mechanisms of Bulgaria's foreign economic and cultural policy. By examining the asymmetrical yet interdependent development of political, economic, and cultural relations, the dissertation offers a new perspective on the foreign policy behavior of small states during the Cold War.

### 3. Historiography and Sources

Since the end of the Cold War, Bulgarian academic research has produced a substantial body of work on Bulgarian-Yugoslav political relations, particularly focusing on the immediate post-war period from 1944 to 1948. This formative era has attracted considerable scholarly attention, resulting in several monographs and numerous articles that examine Bulgaria's alignment with the Soviet bloc and the deterioration of relations with Yugoslavia following the Tito-Stalin split.<sup>1</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> Such monograph include: Даскалов, Г. Българо-югославски политически отношения 1944-1945. София: УИ „Св. Климент Охридски“, 1989; Петков, Д. Българо-югославските политически отношения (февруари 1947 - октомври 1956 г.). София: Ciela, 2022. Such papers include: Германов, С. Пограничните събори в българо-югославските отношения 1944-1989 г. – Македонски преглед, 2015, 2, с. 25-52; Калинова, Е. Балканската политика на България – предизвикателствата от запад и от юг (1944-1989 г.). – В: Изследвания по история на социализма в България. София, 2010, с. 712-728; Петков, Д. Въпросът за сключването на българо-югославския договор за приятелство, сътрудничество и взаимна помощ през 1947 г. – История, 2007, 5-6, с. 37-56; Kalinova, E. Bulgarian-Yugoslav Relations and the Macedonian Question (September 1944 - end of 1960's). – In: Bulgaria and Macedonia. History and Politics. Part Two - A New Direction. Institute for Historical Studies-BAS, Macedonian Research Institute, Tangra Publishing House. Sofia, 2024, p. 321-356.

Besides, there are papers and monographs focusing especially on the attempt of Bulgarian-Yugoslav federation (1944-1948): Лалков, М. От надежда към разочарование. Идеята за федерацията в балканския Югоизток (1944-1948), София: ИК „Век 22“, 1993; Лалков, М. От федеративния замисъл до разрива между Москва и София с Белград през 1948 г. - Военноисторически сборник, 1993, 6, с. 84-107; Тошкова, В. Великите победители и провалът на проектите за южнославянска федерация след Втората световна война. – Историческо бъдеще, 2000, 1-2, с. 3-55.

In addition, research with the main focus on Macedonia question also covers the topic of Bulgarian-Yugoslav relations after WWII. Such monographs include: Германов, С. Македонският въпрос 1944-1989. София: Македонски научен институт, 2012; Мичев, Д. Македонският въпрос и българо-югославските отношения 9 септември 1944-1949. София: УИ „Св. Климент Охридски“, 1994. Such papers include: Петков, Д. Начало на българо-югославското противоборство по македонския въпрос след Втората световна война (април – юли 1948 г.). – Минало, 2008, 1, с. 52-77; Йорданов, К. Българо-югославските отношения и македонският въпрос (1944-1956 г.). – История, 2007, 2-3, с. 86-94; Кайчев, Н. Българите във Вардарска Македония в двустранните отношения на България с Югославия и Република Македония (1944-2012). – Македонски преглед, 2013, 3, с. 63-82; Кайчев, Н. „Гоцевият ден и Илинден у нас са популярни“: македонските бежански дружества в България и държавната политика по македонския въпрос (1944-1989). – В: Преломни времена..., с. 485-512.

period of de-Stalinization beginning in the mid-1950s is also well studied, especially with regard to the cautious rapprochement between Sofia and Belgrade.<sup>2</sup> Bulgarian-Yugoslav relations during the 1960s and early 1970s have likewise received scholarly treatment, particularly in relation to the 1963 policy shift, which is often described as a key turning point in Bulgaria's stance on the Macedonian question.<sup>3</sup> Despite this attention to political developments, there remains a significant research gap in the study of bilateral economic and cultural relations during this period.

Yugoslav (especially Serbian and Macedonian) historians have shown greater interest in Bulgarian-Yugoslav relations throughout the socialist period.<sup>4</sup> A notable

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Besides, the State Agency "Archives" has published a series of collections of documents since 2004, which mainly focus on the Macedonian question and also include documents of Bulgarian-Yugoslav political relations. See: *Македонският въпрос в българо-югославските отношения (1933-1952). Документален сборник*. София: Държавна агенция „Архиви“, 2004; *Македонският въпрос в българо-югославските отношения (1950-1967). Документален сборник*. София: Държавна агенция „Архиви“, 2009; *Македонският въпрос в българо-югославските отношения (1968–1989) Част I, Част II. Документален сборник*. София: Държавна агенция „Архиви“, 2012.

Publications before 1989 are not listed here. In an introduction of the documentary collection by Veselin Angelov he presents a detailed review on literature of Macedonian question in the academy of Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Macedonian Republic during the communist and post-communist period, see: *Македонският въпрос в българо-югославските отношения (1944-1952). Документален сборник...* с. 5-6.

<sup>2</sup> Besides monographs and papers listed above, research on Bulgarian-Yugoslav relations concerning the period of De-stalinism include: Калинова, Е. Конфликтът Тито-Сталин, македонският въпрос и българо-югославските отношения (1948 – края на 50-те години на XX век). – В: *Кюстендилски четения 2022. Сборник в памет на проф. д-р Тодор Попнеделев*. УИ „Св. Климент Охридски“, С., 2023, с. 251-267; Огнянов, Л. Балканската политика на България (1948-1962) – В: *Трети международен конгрес по българистика, 23-26 май 2013 г.: Секция „История и археология“: Подсекция „Съвременна българска история“*. София, 2014, с. 45-77; Петков, Д. Другата страна на българо-югославските конфликтни отношения (юли 1948-март 1953). – *Исторически преглед*, 2009, 3-4, с. 146-171; Стамова, М. Враждебност или добронамереност в българо-югославските отношения (юни 1948-януари 1963 г.). – *История*, 1999, 1, с. 19-30.

<sup>3</sup> Published paper include: Ангелов, В. За ролята и мястото на мартенския пленум на ЦК на БКП от 1963 г. за формиране и провеждане на българската политика по македонския въпрос. – *Минало*, 2001, 1, с. 76-91; Иванов, К. Политическата криза в българо-югославските отношения през 1968-1969 г. – *Минало*, 2017, 3, с. 76-89; Кайчев, Н. Мартенският пленум на ЦК на БКП от 1963 г. и македонският въпрос в българо-югославските отношения през 60-те години на XX век. – В: *Централна Европа и Балканите, XIX-XX век. Сборник в памет на проф. Милчо Лалков*. София, 2019, с. 355-365; Калинова, Е. Българо-югославските отношения 1963-1967 г. – опроверганите надежди. – В: *Призвание и всеотдайност: В чест на 70-годишния юбилей и 40-годишната научна дейност на проф. д.и.н. Витка Тошкова*. София, 2011, с. 53-70; Костадинов, К. Македонският въпрос в българо-югославските политически отношения (1963-1967). – *Македонски преглед*, 2001, 2, с. 53-70; Павлова, П. Македонският въпрос в българо-югославските отношения (1969–1975 г.). – *Македонски преглед*, 2021, 2, с. 95-116; Павлова, П. Вътрешнополитическите и икономическите проблеми на Югославия в края на 60-те и началото на 70-те години и перспективите пред отношенията с България. – В: *България и Балканите през XX век*. София, 2021, с. 285-299. Стамова, М. Тито, Тодор Живков и македонският въпрос (1963–1967). – *Минало*, 1999, 2, с. 77-84.

<sup>4</sup> The views of a large number of Yugoslav socialist historiography were presented in a two-volume collection, *Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations and the 20th century*, published in Belgrade in 1980. It was a

expansion of Serbian scholarship on this topic occurred in the early 21st century, marking what some have called a “revival” of interest in bilateral relations. Nevertheless, economic dimensions remain underrepresented in both Bulgarian and Yugoslav historiography.<sup>5</sup>

In the field of economic history, although contemporary studies have extensively explored the domestic economy of socialist Bulgaria, analyses of its foreign economic policy—particularly trade relations—are still relatively limited.<sup>6</sup> Prior to the 1990s, a

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kind of official position of Yugoslavia and laid the ground of Belgrade (and Skopje) for the complex Macedonian issue. From that period come many other works with which the Yugoslavia defended its vision of the Macedonian question. See: Драгишић, П., Драгишић, О. Југославија и Бугарска 1944-1980 хроника неуспешног пријатељства, Београд, 2019, с. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., с. 12. Professor Miroslav Jovanović from the department of General contemporary history of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade is one of the representatives of contemporary Serbian historians in the study of relations between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. With his research has been bridged the relapses of the old Cold War gaps between of Serbian and Bulgarian historians. Other related studies in Serbian academy include: Cvetković, V. Pogled iza gvozdene zavese. Jugoslovenska politika prema zemljama narodne demokratije u susedstvu 1953-1958. Beograd: INIS, 2013. Велјановски, Н. Македонија во југословенско-бугарските односи, 1944-1953. Скопје: ИНИ, 1998. Bogetić, D. Slobodanka Kovačević. Hronologija Jugoslovensko-bugarskih odnosa (1873–2003). Beograd: Jugoistok XXI, 2003. Bogetić, D., Dragišić, P. Jugoslovensko-bugarski odnosi 1944-1949. Beograd: INIS, 2007. Велјановски, Новица. Македонија во југословенско-бугарските односи (1944–1953). Скопје: ИНИ, 1998.

<sup>6</sup> The following contemporary historical studies covered the topic of Bulgaria’s foreign economic policies and trade during socialism. First, there is a monograph and a series of papers by Gospodinka Nikova. Никова, Г. Съветът за икономическа взаимопомощ и България 1949–1960. София: БАН, 1989; Съветското икономическо проникване в България след Втората световна война. – Исторически преглед, 1996, 2, с. 105–133; Българското стопанство между Германия и Съветския съюз. Ликвидирането на германското технологично влияние в България. – Исторически преглед, 1999, 3–4, с. 70–112; Българо-съветските икономически отношения след Втората световна война (1949–1960). – В: България и Русия през XX век Българо-руски научни дискусии. София: Гутенберг, 2000, с. 247–256; Разделянето на европейското стопанство и България. – Исторически преглед, 2000, 5–6, с. 120–147; Процесът на съветизация и преустройството на българската външна търговия (1944–1951 г.). – Исторически преглед, 2002, 5–6, с. 112–148.

Evgeniya Kalinova has published two papers concerning Bulgaria’s foreign trade: Калинова, Е. Държавата и българската външна търговия - традицията в полза на идеологията. – В: Историкът - гражданин и учен. Сб. в чест на акад. Илчо Димитров, София: УИ „Св. Климент Охридски“, с. 255-271; Преориентацията на българската външна търговия (септември 1944–1949 г.). – В: Двадесетият век. Опит за равностетка. УИ „Св. Климент Охридски“, 2003, с. 282-291.

The papers mentioned above mainly focus on the period from the end of WWII to the beginning of 1950s. In addition, research by Daniel Vachkov and Martin Ivanov focuses on foreign debt of socialist Bulgaria, which also covers the topic of Bulgaria’s economic relations with the USSR and western capitalist countries. Вачков, Д., Иванов, М. История на външния държавен дълг на България 1878-1990 г. Ч. 3. София: Българската народна банка, 2009; Вачков, Д., Иванов, М. Българският външен дълг през Втората световна война (1939-1945). – Исторически преглед, 2001, 3-4, с. 92-116; Вачков, Д. Първата дългова криза на България в периода на социализма (1956-1966). – Историческо бъдеще, 2006, 1-2, с. 141-164; Вачков, Д. Външните задължения на България в условията на извършващите се икономически, финансови и търговски промени в социалистическата общност (1964-1973). – В: Преломни времена. Юбилеен сборник в чест на проф. Любомир Огнянов. София, 2006, с. 736-752; Вачков, Д. Българският външен дълг в годините на петролната криза (1973-1980). – Исторически преглед, 2006, 5-6, с. 110-139; Вачков, Д. Позициите на България и Полша по въпроса за ценообразуването в рамките на СИВ. – Известия на Института за исторически изследвания, 2020, т. 35, с. 168-173.

number of publications focused on Bulgaria's trade with developed capitalist countries or developing nations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.<sup>7</sup> However, economic relations with Yugoslavia were addressed only sporadically and superficially, often confined to brief mentions in monographs or single-paragraph summaries in broader studies.<sup>8</sup> These accounts typically referred to the 1955 trade agreement that restored bilateral contacts and noted the subsequent increase in trade volume, with limited discussion of trade structure or institutional mechanisms.

This dissertation seeks to fill that void by providing a more in-depth and source-based examination of Bulgarian-Yugoslav economic relations between 1953 and the late 1960s. The research is grounded primarily in the archival records of the Ministry of Foreign Trade housed in the Central State Archives of Bulgaria<sup>9</sup>, as well as articles on the official periodical of the Ministry of Foreign Trade "Foreign Trade"

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Researchers such as Пiana Marcheа, Pencho Penchev, Stanimir Stanev have publications on the history of Bulgarian economy, part of which also concerns the topic of Bulgaria's foreign trade. Марчева, И. Политика за стопанска модернизация в България по време на Студената война. Пловдив: Летера, 2016; Марчева, И. Съветският модел в българската икономика. – В: България и Русия през XX век. Българо-руски научни дискусии. София: Гутенберг, 2000, с. 257-265; Пенчев, П. Стопанска България 1879-2008. София: Ерго, 2024; Станев, С. Стратегии за икономическо развитие, прилагани в България в края на 50-те - началото на 60-те години на XX век. – В: Преломни времена. Юбилеен сборник в чест на проф. Любомир Огнянов. София, 2006, с. 673-689. In addition, some research on economic history by economists also covers the topic of foreign economic relations and trade, for example: Илиев, И. Икономиката на България през периода 1949-2001 г. София: Полиграфически комбинат "Димитър Благоев", 2004. However, such research by economists on Socialist Bulgaria is not so diverse overall.

<sup>7</sup> Here takes the study of Bulgarian-Soviet economic relations as an example to present the shortcomings of literature before 1989. They were written mainly without archival documents. The representative data were mostly taken from the press or, at best, from official statistics. Only one side of the complex processes was presented, and the exposition was ideological. See: Никова, Г. Българо-съветските икономически отношения след Втората световна война ... с. 247.

<sup>8</sup> Articles published during the socialist period, which covered the topic of Bulgaria's economic relations with Yugoslavia, are as follows: Василев, Д., Мечев, Ст. Външната търговия на Федеративна народна република Югославия. – Външна търговия, 1955, 11, с.15-18; Йосифов, Л. Външна търговия на Югославия. – Външна търговия, 1959, 7, с. 22-25; Търговските отношения между НР България и ФНР Югославия. – Външна търговия, 1959, 11, с. 4-5; Икономическа структура на балканските страни - основа за разширяване на балканската търговия. – Външна търговия, 1960, 7, с. 1-5; Станчев, Р. Състояние и перспективи на икономическото сътрудничество и външнотърговските връзки между НР България и ФНР Югославия. – Външна търговия, 1962, 12, с.11-13; Константинов, Л. Икономическото сътрудничество и търговските връзки между НР България и ФНР Югославия. – Външна търговия, 1965, 10, с. 4-6; Гогов, Г. Външната търговия на СФР Югославия (1962-1966 г.). – Външна търговия, 1968, 5, с. 15-16; Радева, Ю. Българо-югославските икономически отношения през периода 1944-1972 година. – Международни отношения, 1974, 1, с. 68-75.

<sup>9</sup> Централен държавен архив (ЦДА), фонд 259 (ф. 259). The archives of Ministry of Trade are also used in the paper (ф. 473). The Ministry of Foreign Trade was established in 1948 and in 1957 it was merged with the Ministry of Trade and Industry and renamed the Ministry of Trade. In 1959, the Ministry of Trade was again divided into two ministries.

(“Външна Търговия”, *Vanshna Targovia*)<sup>10</sup> during 1950s and 1960s. To complement the Bulgarian sources, selected data and publications from Yugoslav archives and periodicals are also consulted, allowing for a comparative perspective on the nature, challenges, and structure of bilateral trade.

Turning to the cultural dimension, historical literature has more thoroughly explored Bulgarian-Serbian and Bulgarian-Yugoslav cultural relations in earlier periods.<sup>11</sup> In post-World War II contexts, existing studies on Bulgaria’s cultural diplomacy have tended to emphasize relations with the Soviet Union and other socialist states of Eastern Europe. The 1970s, particularly under the leadership of Lyudmila Zhivkova, have received the most attention, generating a substantial body of work in both Bulgarian and English—including journal articles, monographs, and edited volumes.<sup>12</sup> In recent years, Bulgarian cultural relations with Western capitalist countries have also drawn increasing scholarly interest.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> “Vanshna Targovia” was a periodical published by Ministry of Foreign Trade in Sofia during 1953-1984.

<sup>11</sup> Лалков, М. Българо-югославски културни връзки септември 1944-февруари 1947. С., 1978, с. 320.

<sup>12</sup> Notable studies on this topic include: Чичовска, В. Международна културна дейност на България 1944-1948. С. 1990; Баева, И. Българската външна пропаганда в началния период на живковизма. Епохи, 1998, 2, с. 88-110; Ганчева, В. Участието на България в глобалния културен полилог - идея и политическо действие. – В: Културното отваряне на България към света. Материали от международната научна конференция по повод 70 години от рождението на Людмила Живкова. С. 2013, с. 146-150; Aleksandrov, E. The international cultural policy of the People's Republic of Bulgaria. Sofia, 1980; Kalinova, E. Bulgaria and the International Cultural Organisations (Mid-50s - Mid-60s ). *Bulgarian Historical Review*, 1991, 4, p. 3-20.

<sup>13</sup> Research on Bulgaria’s cultural relations with Western European countries are as follows: Мигев, В. Засилване влиянието на западните страни върху българското общество през втората половина на 60-те години на XX век. – В: Следвоенна България между Изтока и Запада. С., 2005, с. 143-152; Калинова, Е. Европейските капиталистически страни в културната политика на България (Втората половина на 50-те години). *Векове*, 1988, 3, с. 5-18; Федерална република Германия в културната политика на България (1949–1966 г.). – В: *Collegium Germania 2. Probleme der Entwicklung Bulgariens in den 20-er bis 90-er Jahren des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Sofia, 1997, p. 285-304; Културни връзки между България и Франция след Втората световна война до края на 60-те години. Исторически преглед, 1999, 3-4, с. 113-144; Преди и след спускането на „желязната завеса“: Западноевропейската култура в България от 9 септември 1944 до края на 50-те години. – В: Модерният историк: Въображение, информираност, поколения. С. 1999, с. 226-239; Националната кауза и българската културна пропаганда в западна европа след втората световна война. – В: История и историография: сборник в чест на проф. д-р Мария Велева. С. 2008, с. 177-185; Българската културна пропаганда в западна Европа след Втората световна война. – В: Университетски четения и изследвания по българска история. С. 2008, с. 594–606; Българо-британски културни връзки след Втората световна война до края на 60-те години на XX век. – Дзяло, Е-списание в областта на хуманитаристиката. X-XXI в. год. V, 2017, 10, с. 1-21; Bulgaria and the International Cultural Organisations (Mid-50s - Mid-60s ). *Bulgarian Historical Review*, 1991, 4, p. 3-20; Bulgarian Intellectuals and Western European Culture After World War II. – In: *South East European Monitor*, Vienna, 1995, 3, p. 59-70; Bulgarian Cultural Diplomacy in Western

By contrast, systematic research focusing specifically on Bulgarian-Yugoslav cultural relations after World War II remains limited. The only dedicated monograph on this subject is by Milcho Lalkov, who analyzes bilateral cooperation in academia, the arts, media, and publishing. However, Lalkov's study focuses primarily on the period before 1947, prior to the Tito-Stalin split.<sup>14</sup> While some works on political relations or the Macedonian question touch briefly on cultural issues, no sustained or comprehensive analysis of post-1950s cultural exchange exists.

This dissertation addresses this scholarly gap by conducting a detailed study of Bulgarian-Yugoslav cultural relations from 1953 to the late 1960s. It draws primarily on archival materials from the Committee for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (CFCRFC)<sup>15</sup>, supplemented by documents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)<sup>16</sup>. By situating cultural exchange within the broader context of Cold War diplomacy and ideological control, the study aims to reassess the role of culture as a component of bilateral relations—often subordinated to politics, yet revealing in its constraints and possibilities.

In short, while political relations, especially surrounding the Macedonian question, have been extensively explored, the economic and cultural dimensions of Bulgarian-Yugoslav relations have received insufficient attention. This dissertation seeks to integrate all three dimensions into a unified analytical framework, offering a more comprehensive understanding of bilateral relations within the Cold War context.

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Europe – Difficult Modernization (1940s – 1980s). *Известия на Института за исторически изследвания*, 2022, 1, 76-86.

<sup>14</sup> Лалков, М. Българо-югославски културни връзки септември 1944-февруари 1947. С., 1978.

<sup>15</sup> ЦДА, ф. 363.

<sup>16</sup> ЦДА, ф. 1477.

## II. Structure and Main Content of the Dissertation

The dissertation consists of an introduction, an exposition divided into four chapters, conclusion, and bibliography.

The **introduction** presents the choice of the topic, the objectives and tasks of the dissertation, provides a historiographical review of the literature, and introduces the source material on which the research is based.

The **first chapter** covers the evolution of Bulgarian-Yugoslav relations, with the main focus on the period of 1953-end of 1960s. The first subsection serves as a historical overview of the immediate post-war break and the initial normalization efforts (1948–1953). The following subsections trace the hesitant thaw in the mid-1950s, the renewed tensions after the Hungarian Crisis of 1956, and the deepening ideological divide until the early 1960s. The chapter then focuses on the significant improvement in bilateral relations from 1963 to 1967, highlighting key political meetings and cooperation, before turning to the renewed tensions triggered by the Macedonian question and the Prague Spring in the late 1960s. The final part discusses the limited progress and persistent mistrust characterizing Bulgarian-Yugoslav relations during the 1970s and 1980s.

The **second chapter** examines the Macedonian question as a core issue in Bulgarian-Yugoslav relations. The first subsection serves as a background to the long-standing silence and cautious rethinking of the issue during the 1950s. It outlines the internal debates in Bulgaria and the initial attempts at reassessing its policy. The next sections trace the gradual formation and publicization of Bulgaria's new position beginning with the 1963 March Plenum, followed by a phased implementation at the state level. The later subsections analyze the intensification of propaganda, diplomatic tensions, and efforts at rapprochement through the 1970s and early 1980s. Special attention is given to the status of the Bulgarian population in Yugoslavia and how this issue fed into broader national narratives and bilateral disputes.

The **third chapter** investigates Bulgarian-Yugoslav economic relations. It begins by bilateral trade in the early post-war period, including the reconstruction

efforts and the impact of the 1948 split. The chapter then explores the reestablishment and expansion of economic ties from the mid-1950s onwards, with particular focus on institutional frameworks, trade structure, and key economic indicators. A central concern of this chapter is the asymmetry in the relationship, including challenges faced by Bulgaria due to its centralized economic model, contrasted with Yugoslavia's liberalized and open-market approach. The chapter also discusses the influence of Comecon and offers a comparative analysis of Bulgaria's trade with capitalist countries. It concludes with a discussion of the political dimensions of economic relations.

The **fourth chapter** focuses on cultural relations and Yugoslavia's position in Bulgaria's cultural policy. The initial section explores the early phase of cultural cooperation under the South Slav Federation plan, followed by a period of disengagement. The chapter then details the cautious reestablishment of cultural ties during the thaw of the 1950s and early 1960s, including artistic, academic, and educational exchanges. In the 1960s, cultural cooperation expanded further but remained constrained by ideological considerations and institutional inefficiencies. The chapter also addresses the limited scope of language instruction and publishing activities. The post-1968 period is analyzed for both its setbacks and continuities. A comparative analysis with cultural relations involving capitalist countries is provided, and the chapter ends with an assessment of structural limitations, mutual distrust, and the broader Cold War context that shaped cultural diplomacy.

The **conclusion** synthesizes the findings of the previous chapters within the framework of Cold War constraints. The first section assesses the fluctuations in Bulgarian-Yugoslav political relations under Soviet influence. The second section analyzes the complex interplay between ideology and national interest in the evolution and publicization of Bulgaria's position on the Macedonian question. The final section offers a comparative perspective on the political, economic, and cultural dimensions of bilateral relations, with particular attention to the asymmetry, limitations, and ideological barriers that characterized Bulgarian-Yugoslav

engagement throughout the Cold War.

### **III. Key Findings of the Study**

This dissertation investigates the evolution of Bulgarian-Yugoslav relations from 1953 to the end of the 1960s through a comprehensive analysis of political, economic, and cultural dimensions, with particular emphasis on the publicization of Bulgaria's new position on the Macedonian question.

While previous research has predominantly focused on political relations—especially the Macedonian issue—this study expands the scope by systematically incorporating economic and cultural relations, drawing on newly accessed archival materials. In doing so, the dissertation not only provides a more holistic account of Bulgarian-Yugoslav relations but also proposes an analytical framework to explore the interactions among the three dimensions.

A significant research gap in the study of economic and cultural relations is addressed through extensive archival work. While the political dynamics of the 1950s and 1960s have been thoroughly examined, bilateral economic and cultural exchanges during this period remain underexplored. Utilizing documents from the Central State Archives in Bulgaria, the study reconstructs the reestablishment and development of economic and cultural relations, which closely mirrored the broader political context. After signing cooperation agreements in the mid-1950s, bilateral contacts were gradually restored, with moderate development during the relatively favorable climate of the 1960s. However, the overall scale of cooperation remained limited. As a non-aligned state between the Eastern and Western blocs, Yugoslavia's political orientation led Bulgaria to treat it in ways similar with Western capitalist countries. The decentralized structure of the Yugoslav federation and its open-market economy further fragmented Bulgaria's cooperative efforts.

The dissertation also traces the publicization process of Bulgaria's Macedonian policy within the context of shifting political relations. Although existing Bulgarian historiography has studied the Macedonian question in detail, this study focuses on the public articulation of Bulgaria's position. The internal rethinking of earlier policies—seen as contrary to national interest—began in 1958, when the Bulgarian

Communist Party started questioning Yugoslav interpretations of Macedonian history. It was not until the March Plenum in 1963 that Zhivkov officially acknowledged previous errors and asserted that the Macedonian nation had only emerged after World War II within the Yugoslav federation, further claiming that no ethnic Macedonians lived in Bulgaria.

While many historians view 1963 as a turning point in Bulgaria's Macedonian policy, this dissertation argues that 1967 marked a more critical juncture in terms of publicization. That year, the Politburo officially adopted the decision to promote the new Macedonian stance, establishing a clear bottom line in Bulgarian policy: the denial of a Macedonian minority in Pirin Macedonia. Despite Yugoslav opposition and Soviet pressure to improve bilateral ties, Bulgaria consistently upheld this position in the following decades.

Importantly, the dissertation identifies the interdependence of political, economic, and cultural relations. Political ties formed the foundation, with ideological alignment—especially with the Soviet Union—acting as the primary constraint. Economic relations, although shaped by political fluctuations, exhibited a relatively higher degree of pragmatism and autonomy, often contributing to a more stable atmosphere for political dialogue. In contrast, cultural exchanges were far more vulnerable to political control and ideological rigidity. While trade generally followed an upward trend, deeper cooperation was hindered by Bulgaria's centralized and inefficient economy, its reliance on Comecon, and underdeveloped industrial capacity. Nonetheless, economic ties offered limited but resilient avenues for pragmatic engagement.

Cultural relations remained marginal throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s, limited to occasional artistic exchanges. A brief surge occurred after the 1963 détente, culminating in 1967–1968 with joint initiatives in literature, theater, cinema, and academic exchange. However, the open promotion of Bulgaria's new Macedonian policy severely disrupted this momentum. Despite shared Slavic heritage and historical ties, political antagonism consistently overshadowed cultural affinity.

Bulgaria's cultural diplomacy remained constrained by ideological concerns, bureaucratic inertia, and the Macedonian dispute, limiting its effectiveness and reach.

Moreover, the dissertation presents Bulgaria's relations with Yugoslavia as a case study in small-state diplomacy during the Cold War. It introduces a three-pillar framework—ideology, pragmatism, and national interest—as a conceptual tool for understanding Bulgaria's foreign policy behavior within the socialist bloc. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Bulgaria's relations with Yugoslavia involved a delicate balancing act between ideological loyalty to the Soviet Union, national interests—especially concerning the Macedonian issue—and pragmatic engagement. The internal policy shift in 1963 and the decision to publicize the new position from 1967 onward reflect Bulgaria's strategic caution and reveal the complex dilemmas faced by small states during the Cold War. While publicly adhering to ideological orthodoxy, Bulgarian leaders simultaneously pursued economic normalization and cautiously expanded cultural contacts. This multifaceted approach highlights the tension between internationalist commitments and nationalist agendas, offering a deeper understanding of the challenges of small-state diplomacy in a bipolar world.

#### **IV. Scientific Contributions of the Dissertation**

This dissertation contributes to the study of Bulgarian-Yugoslav relations during the Cold War by systematically incorporating the largely overlooked dimensions of economic and cultural relations—areas that have received minimal attention in existing Bulgarian historiography. It draws extensively on primary sources, including documents from the Ministry of Foreign Trade and the Committee for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (CFCRFC), housed in the Central State Archives of Bulgaria.

By outlining the reestablishment and expansion of political, economic, and cultural contacts, alongside the evolving process of publicizing Bulgaria's position on the Macedonian question, the study reveals how Bulgaria, as a small state within the Soviet bloc, navigated the competing pressures of ideological conformity and geopolitical loyalty. The dissertation offers a broader contribution to Cold War international relations by proposing a three-pillar framework—ideology, pragmatism, and national interest—for interpreting foreign policy behavior within the socialist camp. It identifies instances of strategic flexibility, especially in the economic domain, and highlights the calculated political rationale behind Bulgaria's delayed publicization of its Macedonian policy.

## **V. Publications on the Dissertation Topic**

Bulgaria's Economic Relations with Yugoslavia during the 1950s: Limited Trade under the Shadow of the Cold War. *Bulgarian Historical Review*, 2025, 53 (1), p. 92-115.

## **VI. Other Publications**

《2021 年保加利亚文化发展报告》，载《中东欧文化蓝皮书：中东欧国家文化发展报告（2022 年）》，北京：社会科学文献出版社，2023 年，第 58-77 页。  
Report on Bulgarian Cultural Development 2021. In: Blue Book of Central and Eastern European culture, Reports on the Cultural development of Central and Eastern European Countries. Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press (China), 2023, p.58-77.