

REVIEW

of a dissertation

for obtaining the educational and scientific degree of Doctor of Philology
in the Professional Field 2.1. Philology, Doctoral Programme *Literature of the
Peoples of Europe, America, Africa, Asia, and Australia – (Armenian Studies)*
within the defense procedure at the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology
at St. Kliment Ohridski Sofia University

The review is written by Associate Professor Valentina Ivanova Georgieva, PhD from Rakovski National Defence College – Sofia, in her capacity as a member of the academic jury, pursuant to Order No. RD-38-310/25.06.2025 of the Rector of St. Kliment Ohridski Sofia University

Title of the dissertation:

“Political and Diplomatic Relations between the Kingdom of Bulgaria and the Republic of Armenia, 1918–1925 (Based on Documents Preserved in Bulgarian Archives and the Armenian Press)”

Author of the dissertation:

Eozheni Kevork Sakaz

1. General Characteristics of the Dissertation

The documents submitted by the candidate for the defense procedure meet the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, its implementing regulations, and the regulations for the acquisition of academic degrees and academic positions at St. Kliment Ohridski Sofia University.

The dissertation consists of 250 pages, of which 215 are the main text and 23 pages include 16 appendices. The bibliography includes 170 sources: 51 in Bulgarian, 78 in Armenian, 13 in Russian, and one each in French and English. Archival materials come from 17 collections held at the Central State Archives, State Archives – Varna, and the Historical Archives of the Sts. Cyril and Methodius National Library. Periodicals include six sources (e.g., newspapers *Armenia*, *Voice of the Country*, *Droshak*), and eight are electronic sources. The dissertation is supplemented by three maps included in the appendices.

2. Candidate’s Awareness of the Academic Research and Theoretical Knowledge

Doctoral candidate Eozheni Sakaz demonstrates strong command of academic research methods, a solid bibliography for reference, and correct citation practices. Notably, the candidate has used both archival and scholarly sources, and mentions that some Bulgarian and Armenian archival materials and periodicals were personally discovered and analysed.

3. Methodology

The candidate notes that a “complex and interdisciplinary approach” was applied to meet the objectives of the dissertation, including “document analysis.” However, this term should be substituted by *content analysis*, which is the correct term (from English) for analysing archival documents and periodicals that are the core materials of the research. Furthermore, the so-called “heuristic method,” claimed to be used for finding, collecting, and systematising documents from Bulgarian archives and the Armenian press, does not actually apply to these types of activities.

Despite these terminological remarks, the candidate successfully achieves the research objectives through a competent application of combined research methods.

4. Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation comprises an Introduction, a Review of Literature and Sources, Chapter I: Bulgarian-Armenian Historical Ties (17th – early 20th century), Chapter II: Armenia under Ottoman and Persian Rule until the Collapse of the Russian Empire, Chapter III: Political and Diplomatic Relations between Bulgaria and Armenia (1918–1925), and a Conclusion.

➤ Introduction: The candidate substantiates the object and subject of the research, its goals and tasks, and the relevance of the study. The need for studies that shed light on Bulgarian-Armenian interstate relations during the turbulent period of 1918–1925 is convincingly presented.

➤ Review of Literature and Sources: This chapter of the dissertation introduces research done primarily by Armenian scholars on various aspects of Bulgarian-Armenian relations and also classifies the Armenian press in Bulgaria from 1884 to 1925 by theme and function. A significant contribution here is the analysis of 49 archival and diplomatic document collections, including 15 documents from the National Archives of Armenia that add to filling gaps in the understanding of Bulgarian-Armenian diplomatic relations development.

➤ Chapter I: Traces the historical ties between Bulgaria and Armenia from the 5th century onward through the Ottoman era, the Bulgarian National Revival, and after the Liberation of Bulgaria in 1878. These claims are supported by specific examples of events and figures that prove the friendly Bulgarian-Armenian relations and cooperation which culminate in the formation of an Armenian volunteer military unit during the First Balkan War (1912–1913).

➤ Chapter II: Provides a historical overview of key events and processes in Armenia from the 15th to early 20th centuries within the context of regional conflicts and Great Powers politics, the influence of the Russian Revolution in particular. Though mainly relevant to historians interested and dealing with Armenia, a noteworthy contribution is the linkage of these events to those affecting Bulgaria (e.g., the Crimean War, Sultan Abdul Hamid II’s reign, the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78, and the Treaty of San Stefano).

Special attention is given to the ‘Armenian Question’ — its origin, interpretations, attempts at resolution in the period 1895–1914, in 1885, during the First Balkan War and after the Balkan Wars (section 2.6.) and its aftermath — such as the formation of Armenian political parties, some of

which operated in Bulgaria. The consequences of Ottoman-Russian conflicts, including mass deaths and deportations of Armenians (1 to 1.5 million deaths), are also addressed (p. 97).

➤ Chapter III: The most extensive part of the dissertation with the most important research value with its analysis of Bulgarian-Armenian political and diplomatic relations between 1918–1925. It covers the political dynamics in Transcaucasia, the proclamation of the First Republic of Armenia (28 May 1918), the Treaty of Batum (4 June 1918), and Armenia’s first diplomatic efforts (Section 3.1.1). Section 3.1.2.1 outlines the diplomatic initiatives undertaken by the new state to the Bulgarian authorities presented in chronological order, based on archival documents from the Central State Archives and research by other scholars. The responses of Bulgarian diplomacy, which needed to balance between national interests, alliance commitments, and support for the Armenian Question, are objectively examined “demonstrating the flexibility and pragmatism of Bulgarian diplomacy in a complex international environment” (p. 157). Section 3.2 details the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Kingdom of Bulgaria and the First Republic of Armenia, and also presents the role of the Armenian National Union as a diplomatic body in Bulgaria and abroad. Section 3.2.3 presents the founding of Armenia’s General Consulate in Bulgaria, contextualised by demographic statistics of the Armenian population in Bulgaria and political developments at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. Documents of Armenia’s first Honorary General Consul in Bulgaria and about the meeting between Armenian PM A. Khatisian and Bulgarian PM A. Stamboliyski are analysed. Notably, the PhD candidate stresses that “Armenia became the first and only Transcaucasian republic to enter into diplomatic relations with the Kingdom of Bulgaria” (p. 199). In light of the dynamic situation in Transcaucasia, a paradox stands out, i.e. the opening of the Armenian Consulate in Sofia is after The First Republic of Armenia had ceased to exist as an independent state (p. 204). The chapter concludes by highlighting the significance of the research period of 1918–1925 for Bulgarian-Armenian relations.

➤ Conclusion: Summarises key findings and their importance and highlights the relevance of historical analysis for contemporary diplomacy and politics, offering “a model for understanding foreign policy as a collective process involving institutions, communities, and individuals on equal footing in building international legitimacy and cooperation” (p. 212).

5. Abstract

The submitted abstract of the dissertation is 24 pages long and accurately presents the dissertation’s main content and scholarly contributions.

6. Scientific Contributions

I accept the candidate’s stated contributions on pp. 214–215.

7. Evaluation of the Doctoral Candidate’s Academic Output

Seven individual scholarly publications related to the dissertation were submitted; two are published and the rest are in press. It would be helpful to provide the manuscripts of those accepted

for publication for the jury's review. No citations are listed. The plagiarism check showed no evidence of plagiarism.

8. Notes and Recommendations

As a jury member, I have no critical remarks regarding Eozheni Kevork Sakaz's academic work. I would recommend the following if the study is to be published:

- a) Include summaries of the main points of each chapter at its end as separate sections.
- b) Integrate visual materials (copies of documents, maps) directly into the text for better comprehension.
- c) Specify the year in the beginning of the last paragraph on p. 55.

For future expansion and enrichment of the research, I recommend:

1. Consulting the monograph *This Unknown Land (How Geographers, Pharmacists, Hunters, War Correspondents, Engineers, Medical Men & Tourists Discovered & Experienced Nineteenth-Century Bulgaria)*, Janet Publishing, 2020, by Prof. Marco Scholler (Westphalian University of Münster, Germany), which offers an external, European perspective on Bulgarian and Armenian realities.
2. Continuing with further academic research and publications.

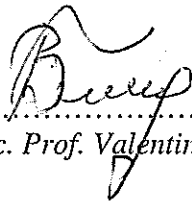
9. Conclusion

After reviewing the dissertation, abstract, and accompanying materials, and based on my analysis of their academic value and contributions, I confirm that the research achievements meet the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff and its relevant regulations, as well as those of St. Kliment Ohridski Sofia University for the acquisition of the doctoral degree.

The candidate meets the national minimum standards for the field, and no plagiarism was found in the dissertation, abstract, or publications. I give a **positive assessment** of the dissertation.

Based on the above, as a member of the academic jury, I believe I have sufficient grounds to recommend the awarding of the educational and scientific degree Doctor in field 2.1. Philology, Doctoral Programme *Literature of the Peoples of Europe, America, Africa, Asia, and Australia – (Armenian Studies)* to **Eozheni Kevork Sakaz** for the dissertation titled *Political and Diplomatic Relations between the Kingdom of Bulgaria and the Republic of Armenia, 1918–1925 (Based on Documents Preserved in Bulgarian Archives and the Armenian Press)*.

23.07.2025
Sofia


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(Assoc. Prof. Valentina Georgieva, PhD)