

REVIEW

on a dissertation with the title: ***“Political and diplomatic relations between Tsardom of Bulgaria and Republic of Armenia in the period 1918 – 1925”*** for awarding the educational and scientific degree “doctor” to **Ass. Prof. Eojeni Kevork Sakaz** – independent doctoral candidate in the professional field 2.1. Philology, Scientific Major “Literature of the Peoples of Europe, America, Africa, Asia and Australia” (PhD Programme “Armenian Social Studies”)

by

Assoc. Prof. PhD Georgui Dimov, IBS–Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (approved with Order No. ПД-38-310/25.06.2025 for a member of the scientific jury in connection with the public defence of Eojeni Sakaz)

● ***The procedure and the doctoral candidate***

The doctoral candidate Eojeni Sakaz has submitted the necessary documents related to the procedure for the defence of her dissertation work. She has enclosed: dissertation work, expanded to the volume of 250 standard academic format pages, of which 211 pages are scientific text, 23 pages are appendices and 12 pages are a bibliography of 170 titles, divided into sources and specialised literature in Bulgarian, Russian, Armenian, English and French. The dissertation’s text includes tables and pictures. An abstract is also included in the dissertation. The dissertation set meets the requirements of the Law for the development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the rules for implementing the Law on the development of the academic staff, as well as the rules for the conditions and procedure for obtaining a scientific degree and for occupying an academic position at SU “St. Kliment Ohridski”. In the formal plan, the dissertation work contains: introduction, review of literature, three main chapters, conclusion and applications.

● ***Topic Relevance***

The content of the dissertation presented for defence is in the field of Armenian history, Bulgarian-Armenian cultural and historical relations over the centuries, and historical, political and diplomatic relations between the Tsardom of Bulgaria and the Republic of Armenia in the 20th century. We can boldly state that this is a scientific challenge for modern

Bulgarian humanities and philological science, and the topic chosen by the doctoral candidate Eojeni Sakaz and her supervisor is relevant and significant.

● **Research Methodology**

*The methodology presented in the dissertation is complex and includes the interdisciplinary approach necessary for this type of research. It combines **the heuristic method, the historical method, the analysis of documents** (critical study of publications in the Armenian press, diplomatic correspondence, state treaties, memoranda, resolutions, protocols, telegrams and official letters kept in Bulgarian archives), **the cultural-historical and international analysis and sociological and demographic approach**. The emphasis in the dissertation work is on the combination of the listed scientific methods and approaches, with the aim of an in-depth and multi-layered study of the Bulgarian-Armenian political and diplomatic relations in the era of post-war Europe, i.e. at the beginning of XX century. A goal, which is achieved brilliantly by the doctoral candidate.*

● **Structure and content of the dissertation**

The introduction naturally familiarises us with the topic, methodology and objectives of the study. It clearly outlines the key problems related to the diplomatic and political relations between the Tsardom of Bulgaria and the First Armenian Republic in the period 1918–1925.

*The first chapter is entitled “**Bulgarian-Armenian historical relations in XVII – beginning of XX century**” quite expectedly, this part of the study traces the historical and chronological Bulgarian-Armenian relations from the early Middle Ages to the beginning of the 20th century. The process of the establishment and development of the Armenian diaspora in Bulgarian lands during the Ottoman period is considered very briefly. The major waves of resettlement between the 7th and 11th centuries, which led to the formation of compact Armenian communities in key cities such as Plovdiv, Sofia, Varna and Ruse, are described. The second part of the chapter examines the cultural interactions between the two peoples in the 18th and 19th centuries and the role of Armenian printing houses and printers in the Bulgarian education. The third part of this chapter focuses on how the Armenian community supported the Bulgarian liberation struggle. The text also describes how the Armenian community helped the great revolutionaries Georgui Rakovski and Vassil Levski, and how Armenians participated in the April Uprising and the Russian-Turkish War. The last part of*

the chapter traces the cooperation between Bulgarians and Armenians at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. Because of the Armenian massacres, Bulgaria asserts itself as a refuge for Armenian refugees, migrants and revolutionaries.

***The second chapter bears the name “Armenia during the period of Ottoman and Iranian rule until the collapse of the Russian Empire”.** This part of Eojeni Sakaz’s work traces the most important stages in Armenian history from the beginning of its separation between the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran to the collapse of the Russian Empire at the beginning of the 20th century. The text also focuses on the activities of Israel Ori, an early visionary of the Armenian national liberation movement, who made great diplomatic efforts to engage the European powers with the Armenian cause. The author also focuses on the “Armenian question” – an expression of the aspirations of the Armenian people towards cultural survival and political emancipation. The last part of the chapter presents the dramatic impact of the First World War and the Russian Revolution on the Armenian people. Armenians are experiencing the Genocide of 1915 in the Ottoman Empire, while in Eastern Armenia, the collapse of the Russian power led to a vacuum in governance and new political challenges.*

***The third chapter is the most essential part of the research. It is entitled: “Political and diplomatic relations between Bulgaria and Armenia (1918-1925)”.** And chronologically it begins with the first political contacts from June 1918, when the Armenian government officially notified the Bulgarian authorities of its independence. Armenian representatives closely monitored Bulgaria’s involvement in the humanitarian and political cause of the young republic. Doctoral candidate Sakaz naturally focuses on the preparation for the Constantinople Conference in 1918; during this time, the Bulgarian diplomacy studied the strategic importance of Armenia and assigned Zadig Khanzadyan to prepare a report summarizing the country’s geographical, military, and economic characteristics. The study of this period shows that despite its short-term existence, the First Armenian Republic managed to establish significant diplomatic contacts with Bulgaria. It is the result of the active Armenian diplomacy and the well-organised Armenian diaspora, as well as Bulgaria’s strategic interest in Armenia.*

The conclusion summarises the conclusions made in the dissertation work. It is clear from it that the Armenian community in Bulgaria is not a passive object of political relations, but an active subject in the process of building interstate relations. And with the creation of the Armenian National Union (ANU), the Bulgarian Armenians eventually managed to build their representation and turn it into an effective political mediator between Yerevan, Sofia and the international community.

● **Characteristics and evaluation of the dissertation work**

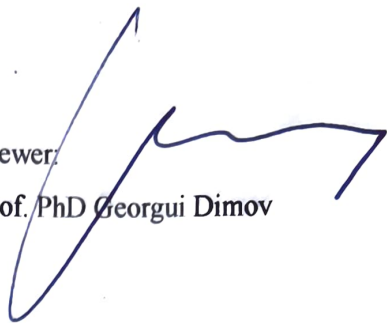
The doctoral candidate Eojeni Sakaz has scientific and research competence, which is a sufficient basis for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor". Her research contains many useful moments and illuminates several "white spots" in Bulgarian-Armenian relations in the 20th century. The dissertation brings new archival material into scientific circulation and presents a significant volume of systematised documents from the Bulgarian archives for the first time, which were not studied so far. For a deeper and comprehensive understanding of the bilateral relations between the Tsardom of Bulgaria and the Republic of Armenia during the period under consideration, the analysis of the Armenian press in Bulgaria also helps. The study is the first comprehensive academic attempt of its kind to deeply analyse and follow the political and diplomatic relations between the two countries in the period 1918-1925. This includes a description and overview of diplomatic initiatives, institutional forms of cooperation, the history and role of the Armenian community in Bulgaria over the centuries. Especially commendable is the effort of Eojeni Sakaz to study and consider the Bulgarian-Armenian relations against the background of the major international politics after the First World War, including in the light of the Versailles and Sevres systems and the influence of the Great Powers on the process of international recognition of Armenia. The study focuses in detail on the active role of the Armenian community in Bulgaria as a mediator in the diplomatic relations between Sofia and Yerevan, including in the provision of humanitarian aid. However, the most impressive remains the process of creation and operation of the Consulate General of Armenia in Bulgaria, which in itself is a diplomatic precedent for this historical period.

In conclusion, the dissertation work of the doctoral candidate Eojeni Sakaz is an invaluable help for all historians, diplomats and researchers who want to know the foreign policy of the Tsardom of Bulgaria and the Republic of Armenia in the period 1918-1925. All of this gives me the reason to recommend confidently to the respected scientific jury to vote for **Ass. Prof. Eojeni Kevork Sakaz to be awarded the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the professional field 2.1. Philology, Scientific Major "Literature of the Peoples of Europe, America, Africa, Asia and Australia" (PhD Programme "Armenian Social Studies")**.

11. 08. 2025

Sofia

Reviewer:
Assoc. Prof. PhD Georgui Dimov

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