

# OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Iskra Gencheva Mandova, PhD,  
Department of Classical and Eastern Languages and Cultures,  
Faculty of Modern Languages,  
*St Cyril and St Methodius* University of Veliko Tarnovo,  
Member of the scholarly panel (Order of the Rector of SU № ПД-38-310/ 25.06.2025)

concerning the dissertation of Eojeni Kevork Sakaz,  
Classical East Studies Department,  
Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology,  
Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

on the topic:

**POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THE KINGDOM OF  
BULGARIA AND THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA  
1918 – 1925  
(BASED ON DOCUMENTS KEPT IN THE BULGARIAN ARCHIVES AND THE  
ARMENIAN PRESS)**

for obtaining educational and scientific degree “Doctor” (PhD)  
in professional field 2.1. Philology, Scientific specialty: Languages of the peoples of Asia,  
Africa and America

## **1. Information about the procedure**

Eojeni Kevork Sakaz was enrolled as a doctoral student at Classical East Studies Department at the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology of “St. Kliment Ohridski” University of Sofia since 15.10.2024 by order of the rector No. 20-1953/ 14.10.2024, and finished her studies with the right of defence on 16.6.2025. From the documents presented, it is evident that in accordance with the approved individual plan, the doctoral student gained more than 206 credits provided in the curriculum, namely 213 credits, and successfully passed 1 doctoral exam.

The presented documentation that I have access to as a member of the scholarly panel is precise and informative, including a report for originality and authorship of the dissertation.

The scholarly panel was determined in compliance with deadlines, quotas and professional competences of the members.

## **2. Information about the PhD student**

Eojeni Sakaz graduated from Yerevan State University in 1996 with a degree in History of International Relations. Since 1998, she has worked as a freelance translator, teacher in Armenian in the period 1998-2012, part-time lecturer at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” since 1998, and since 2010 she has been elected a full-time assistant professor at Classical East Studies Department, Sofia University. She teaches the disciplines “History of Armenia”, “Armenian Civilization”, “Theory and Practice of Translation”, “History of the Armenian Church”, “Practical Armenian Language”, etc. in the bachelor and master degree programs of Sofia University.

In addition to her native Bulgarian and Armenian languages, she also speaks Russian, Spanish and English.

The doctoral student presents more than the required number of publications on the topic of her dissertation.

## **3. Information about the dissertation and the summary**

The dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, conclusion, appendices and bibliography in Armenian, Bulgarian, English, Russian and French. The total volume of the dissertation is 250 computer pages, of which 215 pages of text, 23 pages of appendices and 12 pages of bibliography.

The introduction comments on the relevance of the topic and the need to research the topic, defines the object, subject, goal, tasks, sources, methodology of the study. The structure, research methods and approaches, contributions and significance of the scientific work are presented, a review of the literature and sources is made.

The first chapter, entitled “Bulgarian-Armenian Historical Relations XVII – early XX century”, traces the development of Bulgarian-Armenian relations from the early Middle Ages to the beginning of the XX century, emphasizing their deep historical foundation. The formation of the Armenian diaspora in Bulgarian lands during the Ottoman period and its successful integration, combined with the preservation of cultural identity, are successively examined; cultural interactions in the 18th–19th centuries, especially the contribution of

Armenian printers to Bulgarian education and national consciousness; the support of the Armenian community to the Bulgarian liberation movement, including assistance to Levski and Rakovski and participation in key events such as the April Uprising. The end of the chapter traces the cooperation between the two peoples in the late 19th – early 20th centuries, when Bulgaria accepted Armenian refugees and revolutionaries, and Armenians joined the Balkan Wars on the side of Bulgaria.

Chapter Two, “Armenia during the Period of Ottoman and Iranian Rule to the Collapse of the Russian Empire,” traces key stages in Armenian history from the 17th to the early 20th centuries, the division of Armenian territories in 1639, and the role of the Armenian Apostolic Church in preserving national identity. Other important issues are: the diplomatic efforts of Israel Ori and the beginning of the Armenian national liberation movement; the annexation of Eastern Armenia to the Russian Empire; the “Armenian Question” and the unsuccessful reforms in the Ottoman Empire, including the Tanzimat and the Constitution of 1863; the creation of Armenian political parties and the mobilization of the population against repression in the late 19th century; the genocide of 1915, and the effect of World War I and the Russian Revolution on Armenians. The conclusion outlines the collapse of imperial systems and attempts at self-government that led to the establishment of the First Armenian Republic.

The third chapter traces the political and diplomatic relations between Bulgaria and Armenia in the period 1918-1925. Particular attention is paid to the Constantinople Conference, the role of the Armenian People's Union, the opening of a general consulate in Bulgaria, etc.

The doctoral student Ms. Sakaz concludes that despite the short period of existence of the First Armenian Republic and the unstable international situation, good interstate relations were built between the two countries, based on historical proximity, trade and political interest, not without the active role of the diaspora.

Assistant professor Eojeni Sakaz demonstrates excellent preparation on the topic, skilfully handling diverse and valuable source material – both archival documents from Bulgarian institutions and the Armenian émigré press.

The summary (24 computer pages in total) objectively reflects the content of the dissertation work and the contributions of the author.

The topic of the proposed dissertation text belongs to the so-called interdisciplinary topics, as it concerns various processes and factors that influenced the formation of political

and diplomatic relations between the Kingdom of Bulgaria and the Republic of Armenia in the period 1918-1925.

The object and methods of the study are formulated precisely, and the goals and objectives have been achieved.

#### **4. Scholarly Contributions**

The research of the political and diplomatic relations between the Kingdom of Bulgaria and the Republic of Armenia (1918–1925) has a number of significant contributions. First of all, new and previously unused archival documents from Bulgarian state institutions have been introduced into scientific circulation, which shed light on poorly known aspects of bilateral relations. An important emphasis is also placed on the systematic analysis of the Armenian press in Bulgaria, especially the newspaper "Hayasdan", which is considered not only as a media source, but also as a tool for internal mobilization and political representation of the Armenian diaspora. The study stands out as the first comprehensive academic work that traces in detail the diplomatic initiatives and institutional forms of cooperation between the two countries. For the first time, the leading role of the Armenian side in the establishment of diplomatic relations with Bulgaria is emphasized, and these processes are also considered in the broader international context of the post-war era and the influence of the Great Powers. Particular attention is paid to the active role of the Armenian diaspora in Bulgaria, which acts as an intermediary between Sofia and Yerevan, including in humanitarian and consular activities.

A valuable addition to the topic is the detailed analysis of the establishment and functioning of the Armenian Consulate General in Sofia – a unique diplomatic precedent for the period under review. In addition, the study also has practical value for historians, diplomats and researchers of international relations and the role of diasporas in them, offering a new perspective on the mechanisms through which small states build foreign policy ties in conditions of instability.

#### **5. Conclusion**

The presented doctoral dissertation is an original scientific research that shows the achievements of the doctoral candidate Eojeni Sakaz, her knowledge and skills for a serious

comparative and interdisciplinary analysis of the topic. The work fully meets the requirements for independent scientific research.

Based on the above, I propose that the dissertation work be evaluated on its merits, and that its author be awarded the scientific and educational degree "Doctor".

August 19, 2025

Veliko Tarnovo

Author of the opinion:

(Assoc. Prof. Iskra Mandova, PhD)