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TURKISH-BULGARIAN RELATIONS
IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA

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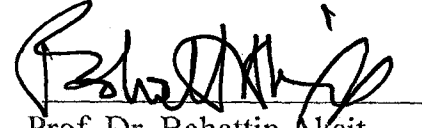
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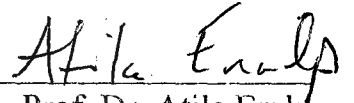
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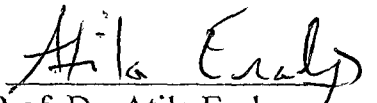
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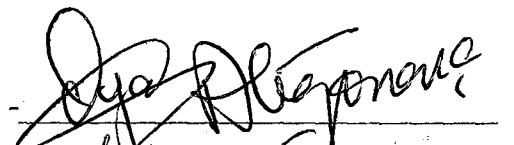

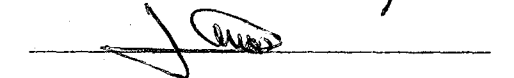

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ABSTRACT
TURKISH-BULGARIAN RELATIONS
IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA

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This study aims to analyse the Turkish-Bulgarian relations in the post-Cold War era. In chapter I, the historical background of the bilateral relations and the question of the Turkish minority living in the Bulgarian territory are examined. In chapter II, the Bulgarian policy towards the Turkish minority is analysed with particular reference to its impact on the Turkish-Bulgarian relations. In chapter III, the shifts in the Bulgarian and Turkish foreign policy since the end of the Cold War are pointed out.

The main conclusion reached in this study may be stated that the changes in the international system have provided both Turkey and Bulgaria a conducive environment in their political, military and economic orientations and thus created a necessary ground for the establishment of a more stable and

long-lasting form of relationship. However, this study suggests that the relationship between the two countries is very much dependent upon Bulgarian governments' attitude towards the Turkish minority as well as the attitude of the major European institutions.

Keywords : Turkey, Bulgaria, Turkish minority



ÖZ
SOĞUK SAVAŞ SONRASI
TÜRK-BULGAR İLİŞKİLERİ

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Bu çalışma Soğuk-Savaş çağı sonrası Türk-Bulgar ilişkilerini analiz etmektedir. I bölümde, ikili ilişkilerin tarihsel zemini ve Bulgaristan'da yaşayan Türk azınlık meselesi incelenmektedir. II bölümde, Türk-Bulgar ilişkilerine olan etkisine özel değinilerek analiz edilmektedir. III. Bölümde Soğuk Savaş'ın sonundan beri Bulgar ve Türk dış politikasındaki değişikliklere işaret edilmektedir.

Bu çalışmanın ana sonucu şöyle ifade edilebilir: Uluslararası sistemdeki değişiklikler Türkiye'nin ve Bulgaristan'ın politik, askeri ve ekonomik uyumlarında her iki ülkeye de uygun bir ortam yaratmış ve böylece daha kararlı ve uzun ömürlü bir ilişki için gerekli zemin otaya çıkmıştır. Bununla beraber, bu çalışma, Türkiye ve Bulgaristan arasındaki ilişkinin Bulgar hükümetinin Bulgaristan'daki Türk azınlığına yönelik tutumuna alduğa kadar

büyük Avrupa kuruluşlarının tutumlarına da çok bağlı olduğunu ileri sürmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler : Türkiye, Bulgaristan, Türk azınlık



To My Parents

Georgios and Ekaterini Kalaitzakis



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I. INTRODUCTION

The historical heritage of the past full of mistrust and antagonism and Turkey's and Bulgaria's position at the border line of international bloc confrontation have always set clear limits for bilateral friendship. The presence of the numerous Turkish minority in Bulgarian territory more often proved to be a reason for conflict than bridge-building element, because of the harsh treatment of the Bulgarian governments towards the minority.

The final years of 1980s ushered in unexpected and dramatic changes in the Soviet Union and in Yugoslavia creating fundamental changes in the international, political and military parameters that had established and sustained a precarious peace in Europe for forty-five years. The disintegration of the military, political and economic structures of the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO) and Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), as well as the Soviet Union itself, marked the end of Eastern Europe in its ideological, political and military sense and thus the end of the cold war and bipolarity in Europe.

The substantial change in the international system and the collapse of the Soviet security and political structures has its immediate implications on

the Balkans in general and Bulgaria in particular marked a new era, in domestic politics and foreign policies.

Under the new circumstances, Turkey and Bulgaria, Balkan neighbors, began to redefine their relationship. In the beginning of the 1990s Bulgaria along with its effort to create a democratic political system faced a double serious problem: in international level the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO) and the USSR-sponsored Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), the two basic pillars of the Bulgarian political, military and economic policy, collapsed and in regional level had extremely bad relations with Turkey.

With no great power acting as protector for its security; the economy in crisis after more than forty years of a command economy; and in no good relations with the country which has the second largest military force in NATO, Bulgarian leadership felt that the country's position was vulnerable.

Bulgaria tried immediately to give a response to this double problem: in international level adopted an orientation towards the Euro-Atlantic structures and in regional level sought to normalize its relations with Turkey. Immediate priority for the Bulgarian government was the abolishment of the repression policy and the restoration of the rights of the Turkish minority.

Turkey for her part, also had new concerns. Due to the demise of the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact alliance, she sought to find a new role in the post-cold war setting. The West-East confrontation did not exist any more and

Turkey had the chance to develop normal relations with Bulgaria. Turkey hoped to minimize further immigration from Bulgaria and to ensure that ethnic Turks living in Bulgarian territory enjoy equal rights.

Turkey and Bulgaria also had the same priorities in their foreign policies as both pursued full integration in the European institutions. Turkey is already a member or an associated member of most of the European institutions thus she could provide necessary aid to Bulgaria. These were the main reasons which favoring a close cooperation between Turkey and Bulgaria.

The first chapter of the present study summarizes the historical background of the Turkish-Bulgarian relations since the end of the First World War. The second chapter examines the Turkish-Bulgarian relations during the 1980s, focusing on the Bulgarian government's assimilation campaign towards the Turkish minority and its impact on the Turkish-Bulgarian relations. The relations between the two countries were seriously deteriorated during this period but the fall of Zhivkov regime initiated a process of rehabilitation of the bilateral relations. The third chapter is devoted to examine the political and security challenges for Bulgaria and Turkey during the post-cold war years. The chapter also attempts to analyze the political, military and economic relations between Turkey and Bulgaria in the 1990s.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE TURKISH-BULGARIAN RELATIONS

A. The First World War Settlement and its Implications for the Turkish-Bulgarian Relations

The modern Bulgarian state formed in 1878 out of the territories of the Ottoman Empire in 1878 after the Russian-Turkish war of 1875-78 and mostly comprised the northern half of the present-day Bulgaria, north of the Stara Planina (the Balkan) Mountains. The southern part, formerly called Eastern Rumelia, was later added in 1885. The country declared itself fully independent in 1878.

At the Balkan Wars Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire fought against each other, however, during the First World War the two states fought along side, siding with the Central Powers. In the Balkan wars of 1912-13 Bulgaria lost significant territories: Southern Dobrudza had gone to Romania, and the greater part of Macedonia to Serbia and Greece. At the end of the First World War, the Ottoman Empire was dismembered and Bulgaria had to sign the Neuilly Peace Treaty of November 27, 1919. Bulgaria had been forced to give up the Struma valley, Tsaribrod and Sromista to Yugoslavia, Western Thrace to Greece and lost its Aegean maritime access¹. The territorial and the

¹ See Joseph Rothschild, East Central Europe between the two World Wars, fifth edition, (Seattle and London 1992), p. 323.

population problems between Turkey and Greece² were settled at the Laussane Treaty of July 24, 1924 and subsequent agreements were finalized in 1926. After the First World War settlement Bulgaria became a revisionist state and sought the opportunity to regain the lost territories. Turkey on the other hand, satisfied with the territorial settlement was an anti-revisionist state which sought cooperation with the rest of the Balkan states .

Turkey signed a Treaty of Neutrality and Friendship with Bulgaria in 1925 renewed in 1929 for 5 years. However this only served in normalizing the relations between the two countries. In contrast, Turkish-Greek relations improved substantially when Venizelos came back to power in 1928. The remaining problems were solved and two the countries signed a Treaty of Friendship, Arbitration and Conciliation in October 1930. Three years later, a new treaty was signed, the "Entente Cordiale" according to which, both states mutually guaranteed their common frontier in Thrace; agreed to consult each other on all international questions of common interest; and expressed their mutual readiness to rely upon the delegate of either state in all international meetings with limited representation³ .

The conclusion of the Entente Cordiale gave rise to suspicion in Bulgaria since the Turkish and Greek governments guaranteed their frontiers in Thrace against Bulgaria. Turkish government wanted to keep Bulgaria

² See Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans 2* (Cambridge University Press 1986), pp. 132-133.

³ See Mustafa Türkes, "The Balkan Pact and its Immediate Implications for the Balkan States" 1930-34, in *Middle Eastern Studies*, 30/1, January 1994, p. 130.

inside this arrangement but the Bulgarian government refused to join in because it would have meant accepting an anti-revisionist attitude and giving up all its aspirations over Western and Eastern Thrace.

In the 1930s, the Balkan countries endeavored to form a multilateral Balkan cooperation. The initial step in this direction occurred in October 1930 when the first Balkan Conference was held in Athens. In February 1934 a pact of mutual security and consultation was signed among Yugoslavia, Romania, Turkey and Greece; Albania and Bulgaria did not join in⁴. Efforts were made to secure Bulgarian participation but these proved unsuccessful when none of the governments would grant concessions to the aspirations of Bulgaria. With the exclusion of Bulgaria, the Balkan alignment became an arrangement of preserving the existing frontiers of its members against challenges from Bulgaria.

In particular the Balkan Pact reinforced the guarantees of Greece and added further guarantees to the Thracian border from Yugoslavia and Romania. It also minimized the possible collaboration between Greece and Italy. Thus Turkey secured its position in demilitarized zones in the Straits and in Thrace.

Turkish-Bulgarian relations between the two World Wars was not cordial but neither side attempted to challenge the other. It appears that both

⁴ See ibid, pp.133-134.

Turkish and Bulgarian governments tried to keep normalized and cool relations.

B. The Turkish Minority and its Impact on the Turkish-Bulgarian Relations.

Bulgarian Turks are the descendants of the Ottomans who came to Bulgaria towards the end of the 14th century, when Bulgaria was under the Ottoman rule. They live mostly in compact communities in the south of the Arda river basin and in the south in the Dobrudzha region. They also live in scattered communities in the central and eastern Stara Planina (The Balkan) mountains and in the Rhodope Mountains. The minority today is estimated between 800,000 to 1,000,000¹. Other Muslim minorities are the Pomaks and the Roma (Gypsies). The Pomaks are Slav Bulgarians who speak Bulgarian as their mother language but whose religion and customs are Islamic. They are about 250,000 to 300,000 and they live in compact settlements in the mountainous regions of the Rhodope mountains in the south-western Bulgaria and in the Mesta valley in the Pirin region². The Bulgarian Roma are 75% Muslims and 25% Christians. Despite that they do not constitute a homogeneous group but there are more than sixty subgroups, most of them

¹ See Bulgaria Imprisonment of Ethnic Turks., (Amnesty International Publications), April 1986 p.3.

² See Hugh Poulton, The Balkans. Minorities and States in conflict. (Minority Rights publications, 1993), p.111.

have chosen to declare themselves as Bulgarian or Turk. Roma are estimated about 550,000-600,000 and mostly live in urban areas, mostly in ghettos³.

The ethnic Turks are officially recognized as a “national minority” along with certain other minorities including Gypsies but excluding the “Macedonians” and the Pomaks. However, even this recognition was circumscribed by a general reservation about the idea of minorities in Bulgaria and the 1971 Constitution unlike the 1947 Constitution, makes no specific references to ethnic minorities but rather refers to “citizens of non-Bulgarian origin”(Article 45)⁴.

The rights and the status of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria are guaranteed by Turkish-Bulgarian agreements and various multilateral bodies. Among the major bilateral agreements concluded by the two countries are, the Protocol annexed to the Turkish-Bulgarian Treaty of Friendship, signed in Ankara on October 1925, and, the Convention of Establishment of the same date⁵.

Article A of the Protocol annexed to the Treaty of Friendship provided for the protection of the Muslim minorities, while article 2 of the Convention of the Establishment stipulated that, out of these Muslim minorities, Bulgaria would not impede the voluntary emigration of ethnic Turks to Turkey. Article B of the Protocol, on the other hand stated that Bulgaria would recognize as

³ See Ivan Ilchev and Duncan Perry, “Bulgarian Ethnic Groups: Politics and Perceptions”, RFE/RL Research Report, 2/2, March 19, 1993, p. 38.

⁴ See ibid, p. 119.

⁵ See The Tragedy of the Turkish Muslim Minority in Bulgaria -Documents- (Foreign Policy Institute), Ankara, 1989, pp. 5-6.

Turkish citizens Muslims born within the 1912 borders of Bulgaria. To those Turkish citizenship would be granted following their emigration to Turkey before the conclusion of the Protocol.

Since the end of the Second World War Bulgaria and Turkey have reached an agreement over the emigration of Turks from Bulgaria to Turkey. The largest number of such emigrants left Bulgaria in the period 1949 to 1951. In August 1950 Bulgarian government announced that a total of 250,000 Turks had applied to leave. The Turkish government, on the other hand, said it was unable to receive such a huge mass of people within such a short time and in November 1950 closed her borders with Bulgaria because of illegal crossing. Two months later an agreement was reached by both governments where upon only those Turks who were in possession of a Turkish entry visa would be allowed to leave. Despite this agreement Bulgaria continued to evict Turks. As a result in November 1951 Turkey again closed its border. According to the Turkish authorities, Bulgaria had forged Turkish entry visas, in order to rid of as many Turks as possible. About 155,000 people left Bulgaria for Turkey during this period⁶. In 1968 a further agreement was signed which allowed the departure of close relatives of those who had left in the period 1944 to 1951. This agreement expired on 30 November 1978 and an announcement in the Sofia daily newspaper Otechestven Front of 2 August 1979 stated "Since then between the two countries no agreement on emigration has existed". The last

⁶ See Bilal N. Simsir, The Turks of Bulgaria (1878-1985), London 1988, pp. 167-180.

official figure given for those who had emigrated under this agreement was 52,392 for the period up to August 1977 although Turkish sources state that some 130,000 in total left under the agreement⁷ .

In line with Marxist-Leninist theory, the first Constitution of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, adopted on 4 December 1947, contained provisions for minority groups. Article 71 stated that although the study of Bulgarian was obligatory in schools, "National minorities have a right to be educated in their vernacular and to develop their national culture"⁸ .

A Turkish department at Sofia University was also set up, a number of Turkish language publications appeared and schooling in Turkish was given. The schools of the Turkish minority became nationalized in 1946. Despite this last act schools attended by Turks were still regarded as "Turkish minority schools". Turkish was the language of instruction and Bulgarian was also taught in addition to Turkish. In the 1950s, the education of Turks in Bulgaria was given a socialist content although it remained in Turkish. However, since the Bulgarian authorities were afraid that the development of socialist Turkish education would form a Turkish intellectual group which might lead towards a movement for minority rights⁹, in October 1958, the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) Central Committee decided that all the Turkish language schools should be unified with Bulgarian schools and by the

⁷ See Bulgaria Imprisonment of Ethnic Turks (International Amnesty Publications), pp. 4-5.

⁸ See ibid, p. 4.

⁹ See Simsir, op. cit., pp.189-198.

early 1970s the Turkish language schools ceased to exist. The Department of Turkish in Sofia University which reportedly attracted large numbers of students of whom 70 per cent were estimated to be ethnic Turks, stopped admitting students. In 1974 the whole department was shut down and replaced by a Department for Arabic Studies¹⁰.

Ethnic Turks also faced job discriminations. They were unable to join the police force or pursue a career in the army. Ethnic Turk conscripts served in unarmed units engaged in national constructions, for example building work.

The issue of the Turkish minority was a constant source of friction between Turkey and Bulgaria. Especially after the immigration problem appeared in 1950-51, Turkish-Bulgarian relations deteriorated even further. Within a Cold-War frame, the Turkish side believed that Sofia government was trying to create a problem for Turkey and leave the Turkish economy in a difficult position.¹¹ However, Turkey did not have the means to accept immediately such a large mass of people and proposed the gradual arrival of immigrants. However Bulgaria denied that. According to Bulgarian officials the prolongation of the immigration problem had harmful effects on the Bulgarian economy. Bulgaria wanted to arrange as soon as possible the

¹⁰ See Poulton, *op. cit.*, pp.120-122

¹¹ During the Korean war, 25 June 1950, Turkey contributed a brigade. Bulgaria by sending a huge mass of immigrants in such a short time put the Turkish administration into difficulty since settling them, and making them productive required large sums of money and wide organizational work. See Oral Sander, "Turkish-Bulgarian relations", in *Foreign Policy. The Quarterly Review of the Foreign Policy Institute*, XII/ 3-4, pp.14-15.

immigrant problem and “let the rest who were loyal to the regime” to work for the good of the state.

A decade later, when Bulgarian authorities decided the changes in the Turkish educational system, Turkey did not react, as she was preoccupied with her internal problems and the Cyprus problem.

C. The Turkish-Bulgarian Relations during the Cold-War Years

The beginning of the Cold War put a certain limit in the development of the Turkish-Bulgarian relations. The two states had different social and political systems and belonged in different political and military blocs. Turkey became a member of NATO and a western oriented state, and Bulgaria a WTO member and loyal ally of USSR. Furthermore, the harsh treatment of the Turkish Muslim minority from the Bulgarian authorities have always influenced the course of the Turkish-Bulgarian relations.

Relations between two countries remained indifferent and until the mid-1950s they were characterized by periodical and acute confrontations, caused mostly of the 1950-51 mass emigration of Bulgarian Turks¹. Another factor which influenced the Turkish-Bulgarian relations was the Soviet-Turkish relations, which remained unstable and uncertain. By that time, Turkey felt threatened by the Soviet Union both territorially and ideologically. Soviet military and ideological penetration had reached the heart of Berlin, and Soviet

¹See Wolfgang Hopken, “Bulgarian-Turkish relations”, in Erol Manisali, ed., Turkey and the Balkans, International Girne Conference, 1990, pp. 78-79.

influence had also made dangerous inroads into northern Iran. Turkey did not possess adequate quantitative or qualitative military power to deter this newly revived colossal power from threatening her border. Turkish-Bulgarian relations had no chance of being more intensive and friendly either. Turkey's concern for her sensitive security position; her for the time being unquestioned position in the Western alliance and her deep suspicion of Soviet politics were given a greater priority even than the interest in using closer relations with Bulgaria to improve the Bulgarian Turks situation.

In the beginning of the 1960s, a real and more substantial improvement in relations between the two countries came into being and led to the most intensive period of contacts and cooperation. The reasons for this improvement have to be seen more in global international politics and in the framework of Turkish-Soviet relations than in strictly bilateral aspects. It was mainly the development of global international détente and, more than that, Turkey's revised attitude towards the Soviet Union which paved the way also for an improvement in Bulgarian-Turkish relations². A certain alienation between Turkey and the United States, following the American withdrawal of missiles from the Turkish territory after the Cuban crisis in 1962 and on account of the American attitude to the Cyprus question in the mid-1960s contributed to a more diversified Turkish foreign policy, which since 1964 had led to the first more intensive contacts with the Soviet Union. This was a process which

² See Sander op. cit., pp.16-17.

became more intensive after the American military embargo following the Turkish military intervention in Cyprus in 1974. Under these conditions of a Turkish-Soviet rapprochement the space for maneuver in Turkish-Bulgarian relations also became larger on both sides.

Diplomatic relations were re-established in 1966. There were regular mutual visits at Foreign Minister and Head of State level as from 1968 and more than half a dozen bilateral agreements in the field of economics and trade were signed³. The issue of the Turkish minority was considerably improved after the emigration and family unification agreement of 1968, which set up much more favorable conditions for emigration than that of 1950.

In 1975, the "Declaration of Good Neighborly Relations" was signed. However, this pact could not hide the fact that both partners could only agree in general terms of peace and détente, but there were some acute problems, on which opinions completely diverged such as Cyprus. Economic relations increased in absolute terms during those nearly fifteen years of relatively good relations, but in relative terms even in this period they never gained any real significance for either country.

³See United Nations Treaty Series, 759/1970, pp. 223-239.

III. THE TURKISH-BULGARIAN RELATIONS DURING THE 1980S

A. The Bulgarian Government's Attitude Towards the Turkish Minority in Bulgaria in the 1980s

The period of quiet relations ended, when Bulgaria started its famous name-changing campaign at the end of 1984, which turned bilateral relations into a very low level.

The Turkish and Muslim minorities always faced discriminations and restrictions in their rights from the Bulgarian authorities. At the end of 1984 the Bulgarian government started an organized assimilation campaign aiming at destroying the ethnic, religious and cultural identity of the Turkish minority.

The background reasons which may explain this organized policy are the following: The growth rate of the population in Bulgaria has been consistently decreasing in the 1980s. In 1980 the natural growth rate was 3.6 per 1000 and in 1984 it was down to 2.4. The growth rates for the minorities - especially the ethnic Turks, the Pomaks, and the Roma - has been far higher than that for the majority of the population¹. This highlights a double concern for the Bulgarian authorities. Firstly, the minority population is rapidly increasing while the majority is actually declining. Secondly, large areas of the

¹ See Bulgaria. Imprisonment of Ethnic Turks (Amnesty International publications), p. 24.

countryside, especially the important agricultural areas in the south around Kardzhali- vital for Bulgaria's valuable tobacco exports - and the Dobrudzha - a major wheat growing region - were becoming increasingly populated by the minorities. The authorities concern was compounded in the case of the ethnic Turks living in the south near Smolyan and Kardzhali by the proximity of Turkey.

Another factor in the assimilation campaign was religion. Both the Pomaks, the ethnic Turks(with the exception of the Gagauz, estimated a few thousands, who profess the orthodox Christian faith and live near Varna in the north) and the majority of Roma are Sunni Muslims. Religious attitudes have remained strong among the ethnic Turks, especially peasants, as compared to ethnic Bulgarians - a situation not to the liking of the authorities. Adherence to the Islamic faith was seen as being a key factor inhibiting loyalty to the communist government.

One more factor was the modernization. The Bulgarian Communist Party claimed to be the possessor of the Marxist-Leninist ideology, which aimed at the rapid implementation of policies to turn Bulgaria into a modern industrial state. The existence of a large minority, living in concentrated areas, speaking a different language (Turkish) and having a traditional way of life was seen as an obstacle to the modernization process². The year 1985 was the last one of the five-year period for replacing all identity cards and a national

² See Poulton , op. cit., pp. 125-127.

census was scheduled to be held in December 1985. This also may have been one of the reasons in the intensity and short duration of the campaign to change all the names of the ethnic Turks from Turkish forms to Bulgarian ones.

Thus, the Bulgarian authorities initiated a countrywide campaign to forcibly change the names of all ethnic Turks. On the ground that the roads were blocked due to adverse weather conditions, access to the regions where the ethnic Turks were predominate was not allowed to foreign observers or visitors and these restrictions remained in force for certain areas, notably those around Kardzhah in the south and Yablanov in the eastern Stara Planina until 1989.

After an initial period of complete silence on the matter lasting until reports of the campaign began to appear in the news media outside Bulgaria in early 1985, the Bulgarian authorities stated that the ethnic Turks were in fact descendants of the Slav Bulgarians who had been forcibly converted to Islam under Ottoman rule (i.e. that they were Pomaks). The authorities further stated that these “Slav Bulgarians” were all “voluntarily” and “spontaneously” requesting new Bulgarian names as a sign of their “rebirth in the Bulgarian nation”³. The authorities have called this name-changing campaign “the reconstruction of Bulgarian names” and have repeatedly denied that there has been any element of force or coercion involved⁴. There were some ethnic

³ See *ibid*, p. 130.

⁴ See The Economist, December 14, 1985, p. 55.

Turks who voluntarily requested of new names, especially those in the party/state apparatus but such cases were rare compared to the majority where these “voluntary” and “spontaneous” requests were made under severe duress⁵.

The methods used by the authorities were extremely harsh. Villages with predominately Turkish inhabitants or mixed population were surrounded by police with dogs and troops with tanks. Officials with new identity cards, or other reported instances with a list of “official” names to choose from, visited every household and the inhabitants were forced to accept the new cards and to sign “voluntary” forms requesting their new names.

According to Amnesty International’s report this name-changing campaign began in the southern regions of the country inhabited by ethnic Turks in December 1984 and then steadily worked northwards reaching around Varna and the Dobrudzha in northeastern Bulgaria by January/February 1985. By the end of March the operation had apparently been completed and Stanko Todorov, Chairman of the National Assembly, in his speech of 28 March 1985 reported that the “resumption” of Bulgarian names by citizens with “Turkish names” had been “completed safely” stressing that Bulgaria was a “one-nation state” and that in the “Bulgarian nation there no parts of any other peoples and nations”. This operation he said, took place “speedily, spontaneously and calmly”.

⁵ For more details see, Bulgaria Imprisonment of Ethnic Turks (Amnesty International publications), pp. 8-14.

The ethnic Turks who refused to accept or to use the new identity cards were arrested and were subjected to the administrative measures of internal banishment for protesting at the assimilation campaign. Under the terms of the “People’s Militia law of 1976” article 39(1), amended in 12 August 1983, the authorities could, among other measures, apply without trial the “preventive administrative measure” of compulsory residence in another place of habitation for a period of one to three years “on people who carry out anti-social activities affecting the security of the country”. These measures were often used as a supplementary punishment on ethnic Turkish prisoners after their release.

Other aspects of the assimilation campaign concerned religion and religious customs. Article 53, paragraph 1 of the Bulgarian Constitution guarantees freedom of conscience and creed to citizens who also “may perform religious rites” The same paragraph also allows “anti-religious propaganda” and as noted above the authorities attacked Islamic traditions and Islam in general with growing frequency in official publications over a long period. Paragraph 2 of the same article states that “the church shall be separated from the state”. In practice, however, all religious officials were paid by the state and the state was responsible for the preservation and maintenance of all churches and mosques.

Since the campaign of December 1984 there were a number of reports of mosques forcibly closed or destroyed. Mosques in Bulgaria have been

divided into two categories: “official” and “non official”. “Official” mosques were those that had an “official” imam recognized by the authorities, and cooperated with them in the name-changing campaign. Mosques in the other category were closed.

Despite public assurances of freedom to practice Islam, there were many official attacks on Islamic practices. The circumcision of male infants was heavily punished, and the authorities attacked the practice of fasting in Ramadan and attempted to stop the traditional celebrations of Bayram. The Islamic custom of washing the body of the deceased prior to burial was forbidden and separate Muslim cemeteries were abolished⁶.

All schools in Turkish ceased to operate by mid-1970s. At the 23rd session of UNESCO’s general conference Academician Blagovost Sendov, replying to a statement made by a member of the Turkish Delegation stated that emigration to Turkey had “objectively eliminated the need for instruction in a language which is alien to the Bulgarian nationals”.Also, a number of official Turkish-language publications were ceased. The bilingual publication *Nova Svetlina* and *Yeni Isik* (Turkish) was available only in Bulgarian after 1985.

In association with the name-changing campaign there was a ban on speaking of Turkish in all public places on pain of a summary fine. All Turkish music and radio was banned.

⁶ See *ibid*, pp.16-17.

Women wearing traditional Turkish clothes were harassed in the streets and also faced fines⁷. Ethnic Turks who had not “voluntarily” changed their names were not allowed to work in state enterprises, neither were they allowed to use their old names in any contact with the all-pervading state bureaucracy. For example they could not draw money out of the banks without using their new names. Such measures were often used as an alternative to brute force to induce ethnic Turks to change their names⁸.

The violation of the human rights of the Turkish minority caused the Turkish reaction and called the Bulgarian government to start negotiations in order to work out a solution to the minority problem. As Bulgaria refused to enter into negotiations, Turkey raised the issue at various international fora including the UN General Assembly, the CSCE and the Council of Europe. Also, human rights groups like the US Helsinki Watch Committee often raised the issue both in the Bulgarian government and in the United Nations Human Rights Commission. Amnesty International twice in June 1986 and in May 1987, submitted its concerns for Bulgaria to the United Nations under the procedure for confidentially reviewing communications about human rights abuses. All these prompted Bulgaria to carry out a belated reappraisal of the unconstructive attitude it had hitherto adopted. Bulgaria consequently reversed her previous position of rejecting Turkish calls for negotiation and agreed to initiate a process of dialogue with Turkey in accordance with the Turkish-

⁷ See *ibid*, p. 18.

⁸ See *ibid*, p. 19.

Bulgarian Protocol concluded in Belgrade on 23 February 1988. Turkey's principal objective in this process of dialogue was to ensure the restoration of the rights and the status of the minority and to secure recognition of their right to leave Bulgaria for the country of their choice.

The Protocol has determined a mechanism of dialogue. This mechanism consists of two Joint Working Groups of which the first is entrusted with the task of resolving bilateral questions including in particular humanitarian issues, the problem of the Turkish minority, while the second is to review the possibilities of revitalizing cooperative relations in various fields. The protocol envisaged a parallelism between the activities of these two Groups. It was made clear to the Bulgarian side that it would not be possible to revitalize cooperative relations if there is no progress in the first Group which is to consider the minority issue⁹. The two joint Working Groups held their first meeting from 9 to 11 May 1988, and their second meeting from 21 to 22 July 1988 in Ankara and Sofia.

During the meetings of the first Group no progress took place as the Turkish side expected that Bulgaria could withdraw some of the bans and repressive practices imposed upon ethnic Turks but the Bulgarian side maintained the policy of denial of the existence of the Turkish minority.

The contact between the two countries continued with meetings between the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Mesut Yilmaz of Turkey and Petar

⁹ See The Tragedy of the Turkish Muslim Minority in Bulgaria-Documents; (Foreign Policy Institute), Ankara 1989, p.8.

Mladenov of Bulgaria and the exchange of high-level messages¹⁰. Again they failed to resolve the question of the Turkish minority. The only limited improvement taken place on the issue of family reunification. Bulgaria authorized 143 ethnic Turks to emigrate to Turkey to reunite with their families¹¹. However, although Turkey had submitted 2,671 applications for family reunification, only 5,35% of the applications were accepted by the Bulgarian authorities.

The Turkish minority population tried to resist in the assimilation campaign with sporadic protests which increased in early 1989 with mass participation in various unofficial protest groups and large-scale protest action.

In January 1988 six Bulgarian dissidents set up an Independent Association for the Defense of Human Rights in Bulgaria (IADHR) and despite severe harassment by the authorities with many founder members forced into internal exile or emigration, the association has continued to function and from the outset has taken up the issue of the repression against the ethnic Turks. Another specific Turkish civil rights group within Bulgaria was formed in late 1988, called the Democratic League of the Rights of Man, with the aim of opposing the assimilation campaign and the repression of Islam. Furthermore, in January 1989 a third association -The Association for the support of Vienna 1989- (ASV89) was set up in Haskovo region. This

¹⁰ Between 30 September 1988 until 7 January 1989 the two Foreign Ministers had three meetings, in New York on the occasion of the 43rd Session of the UN General Assembly, in Paris on the occasion of the International Conference on Chemical weapons and then in Vienna during the closing session of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

¹¹ See The Tragedy of the Turkish Muslim Minority in Bulgaria, op cit pp.10-11.

organization's name was due to the attempt to bring to the attention of the world public the plight of ethnic Turks in Bulgaria at the time of the CSCE Conference on Human Rights in Paris in early June 1989¹². These three independent organizations (IADHR, The Democratic League, and ASV89) all had good connections with each other and quickly attracted thousands of professed members.

In mid-May 1989 mass protest and hunger strikes started, in which the Bulgarian authorities responded with violent repression and mass expulsion of activists from Bulgaria. All the initial leaders of the three organizations (IADHR, The Democratic League, and ASV89) were expelled by the end of May¹³. By late August over 300,000 Turks had left Bulgaria and crossed into Turkey, although between 120,000 to 180,000 subsequently returned¹⁴. Many ethnic Turks have decided that the policy of forced assimilation and the attendant official repression is such that there was no future for them in Bulgaria and they could start a new life in Turkey.

The sheer size of the numbers involved indicated that authorities apparently seemed to be allowing large numbers to emigrate. The decision to open the border for emigration was influenced by the increasing opposition among the Turkish community after the government's announcement of the new passport law of March 1989, which granted each citizen the right to go

¹² See Poulton , *op. cit.*, p. 153.

¹³ See FBIS-WEU, June 12, 1989, pp.8-11., FBIS-WEU, June 15, 1989, pp.28-30.

¹⁴ See Washington Post, August 29, 1989 p. A17. See also Turkish Daily News, November 10, 1989.

abroad. Besides that, the Bulgarian leadership obviously let some people go thinking, that a larger wave of emigrants would be stopped by Turkey's inability to integrate such a sudden influx. There are similarities between the Bulgarian government's handling of this issue in 1989 and the mass immigration of 1950-51, when the Bulgarian leadership also allowed and even encouraged emigration within a short period of time, forcing thus, Turkey to close the border and then blaming Ankara for betraying its own principles and promises.

The decision was also influenced by the attempt to improve Zhivkov's already damaged international image as a "reformer" and supporter of "perestroika", which he tried to make public believe since 1987. It is, however, quite possible that Zhivkov, with this decision tried to calm down internal critics within the leadership itself, who already during this time realized the tremendous international damage caused to the country by the anti-Turkish policy. Financially, the outflow of 300,000 people had severe consequences. It meant a loss of approximately 4 per cent of the entire labor force, which, moreover took place mainly in fields of the economy which suffered from a lack of labor force such as agriculture, tobacco and transport. In some cities like Shoumen and Pazardzik emigration caused a sudden lack of up to 40 per cent of the workers. Attempts to replace the emigrants by students and other personnel was of little help¹⁵.

¹⁵ See International Herald Tribune, July 13, 1989, p.8.

The campaign of assimilation had naturally delivered a serious blow to Turkish-Bulgarian relations and the Turkish reaction was immediate. Despite that, the arrival of such numbers of refugees was problematic for the Turkish authorities, Turkish government passed a decree which allowed the refugees to be immediately accepted as Turkish citizens without waiting period. They also offered substantial material help to the refugees in the form of employment and housing¹⁶.

Turkish government called upon Bulgaria to enter into negotiations for a comprehensive immigration agreement which safeguarded the property rights of those who choose to leave Bulgaria¹⁷ and the restoration of the rights and the status of the minority¹⁸. Bulgaria refused to enter into negotiations and Turkey called for sanctions against Bulgaria¹⁹. Turkish imports from Bulgaria reduced from 200 million dollars to 40 million. Turkey also raised the issue at various international fora including the United Nations General Assembly, The Organization of the Islamic Conference and The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe²⁰.

Despite a lack of real sanctions against Sofia, Bulgaria suffered from its policy in the international arena and was in danger of becoming isolated. In the international organizations she was constantly forced to defend herself; the withdrawal of the American Ambassador interrupted the process of the

¹⁶ See Poulton, *op. cit.*, pp. 158-159.

¹⁷ See FBIS-WEU, June 16, 1989, pp.41-42., July 7, 1989, p. 24.

¹⁸ See FBIS-WEU, July 6, 1989, pp.25-26.

¹⁹ See FBIS-WEU, July 16, 1989, p.34.

²⁰ See FBIS-WEU, June 6, 1989, p. 29., July 10, 1989, p.27., July 12, 1989, p. 13.

reconciliation between two countries, which were still in its initial phase. The postponement of the European Community talks was also an additional blow for the country in its difficult economic situation. All these were signs of the severe foreign political damage caused by the forced emigration. Even the eastern partners became reluctant to support Sofia in this particular affair. The fact that even the Soviet Union remained neutral in Sofia's struggle with Ankara, trying to bring both opponents to the negotiation table, can be seen as a kind of indirect criticism of the Bulgarian policy despite the fact that Moscow avoided any clear position on this case²¹.

B. The Post-Zhivkov Era and the Rehabilitation of the Turkish-Bulgarian Relations.

On 10 November 1989 Todor Zhivkov was ousted as Bulgarian leader and replaced by his Foreign Affairs Minister, Petar Mladenov. Zhivkov had been looking increasingly out of step with Gorbachev's policies in USSR and with the events in Eastern Europe. The general decay of the country's political and economic situation and its leader itself, forced Mladenov and his supporters to step in from above to prevent a revolution from below. Insofar as the Turkish question had contributed to the country's loss of credibility it doubtless also contributed to the change of the 10th of November.

²¹ See Hopken, op. cit. pp.82-83.

The problem of the Turkish minority has continued to be a very sensitive issue after the leadership change as well. Despite that it was not easy for them to carry out a fundamental change because they had also supported and partly even carried out the measures against the Turkish population. Fundamental change was absolutely necessary to regain any credibility for the claim of democratization. Furthermore, it was essential for the new Bulgarian leadership to show a new “image” in the international community and especially in organizations like the Council of Europe that Bulgaria applied for membership.

Thus, there was a relaxation in the policy and Turks, who in cases had been sent to other parts of the country under the People’s Militia Law were allowed freedom of movement and could return to their home territories. Article 273 of the criminal code, which was used to penalize those who criticized government policy, was abolished and those sentenced under it, including ethnic Turk, were released. Further, ethnic Turks were released in December when another amnesty was announced for those sentenced under Articles 108 and 109 dealing with anti-state agitation and propaganda and forming anti-state groups, respectively.

On 14 November Mladenov had met leading intellectuals and told them that the assimilation policy was to be stopped but the government wanted to move slowly on this issue due to the potential of a Bulgarian nationalist

reaction¹. But mass protests by ethnic Turks and Pomaks took place in Sofia and continued in other places throughout December, urging the government to announce that those who had their names forcibly changed could use their original names again, practice Islam and Islamic customs and speak Turkish in their everyday lives².

On 18 January 1990, Todor Zhivkov was arrested and charged with among other things, “incitement of ethnic hostility and hatred” for his part in the assimilation campaigns. Prosecutor General Evtim Stoymenov said that several months before the 1984-85 name-changing campaign, the Politburo approved a report presented by a special commission which suggested gradual reintegration by peaceful means of the Muslim populations and which rejected the two options of forced name-changing, or deportation to Turkey. Zhivkov then went ahead and personally gave the order for the name-changing campaign³.

Zhivkov himself denied sole responsibility but said that he felt no guilt for the campaign as he claimed, that Bulgaria was threatened by Turkish terrorist groups and demands for autonomy⁴. Inside the Turkish minority there were not such demands, and the only protest was for the restoration of their human rights. From the Turkish side except of some radical statements which arose from internal political needs like the Bursa speech of Prime Minister

¹ See Poulton, op. cit., p.163.

² See ibid, p. 164.

³ See Kiriakos Kentrotis, “Bulgarian-Turkish relations”, in Thanos Veremis, ed., Turkey Today, (Athens 1994), pp. 390-394, (in Greek).

⁴ See Poulton, op. cit., p.166.

Turgut Özal in 1987, threatening action against Bulgaria, Turkish policy aimed in the preservation of the rights and the status of the Turkish population.

Despite the often-repeated official description of the assimilation as “criminal” nobody had been prosecuted for it. The victory of the Bulgarian Socialist Party(formerly BCP) in the elections in June 1990 and the undoubted complicity of many of its leading figures in the campaign can explain this delay.

From the beginning of 1990 a number of measures were introduced to restore the rights of the minority. In early March 1990 the National Assembly met to discuss laws on the restoration of Muslim names. On 5 March the Bulgarian Citizens Names Law was unanimously passed by the National Assembly. The law included the Pomaks as well as the ethnic Turks but stipulated a simplified court procedure up to 31 December where after a more complicated procedure with a fee would be obligatory⁵. Alongside with the restoration of the names went the opening of all mosques and freedom of religious practices. In the end of April 1990, the first publication in the Turkish language started. Agreement had also been reached about a new law on education stipulating four classes a week study of Turkish in the school curriculum for areas where ethnic Turks were living in compact masses⁶.

The abolishment of the serious restrictions in the rights of the Turkish minority satisfied Turkey and high-level bilateral contacts started between

⁵ See Turkish Daily News, March 6, 1990.

⁶ See Poulton, op. cit. p.170.

Turkey and Bulgaria. The first was a meeting between Bulgaria's Deputy Prime Minister Georgi Yordanov and Turkish Foreign Minister Mesut Yilmaz on 30 November 1989. Next, in January 1990 came a meeting in Kuwait between the Foreign Ministers Mesut Yilmaz and Boiko Dimitrov⁷. The Turkish side welcomed Bulgaria's decision to restore Turkish minority's rights and her decision towards liberalization. Turkish-Bulgarian relations substantially improved and Turkey began aiding Bulgaria financially. Turkey offered to lend Bulgaria 400,000 tons of fuel and to provide it with electricity and credits worth 175 million dollars in October 1990, at the onset of what was expected to be a severe winter⁸.

⁷ See FBIS-WEU, January 17, 1990, p. 29.

⁸ Duncan Perry, "New Directions for Bulgarian-Turkish Relations", in RFE/RL Research Report, 1/41, October 16, 1992, p. 36.

IV. THE TURKISH-BULGARIAN RELATIONS DURING THE 1990s

A. Political and Security Challenges during the Post-Cold War Years for Bulgaria and Turkey

The political and strategic position of Bulgaria and Turkey was affected by the amazing events which took place in the years 1989-1991. During the cold war years the roles of both states were relatively defined. Bulgaria was the USSR's bulwark in the Balkans and after the mid-1960s the only faithful follower of the Moscow line in the peninsula. Bulgaria's past communist orthodoxy, from Moscow's perspective, coupled with her location on the northern borders of Greece and Turkey, lent it a unique strategic importance. In addition, Bulgaria's proximity to Turkey afforded the USSR a potential stepping-stone to the Turkish Dardanelles and the Bosphorus- the Soviet Union's only naval and maritime passage from her warm-water ports on the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. During the Cold War period also Turkey's role was vital inside NATO. Because of her strategic position she helped to deter a Soviet attack on NATO's central front since her forces could threaten Warsaw Pact forces in the Balkans and the Transcaucasus. Turkey also required to control the Turkish Straits, a vital route for Soviet vessels sailing from their harbors in the Black Sea to the Mediterranean.

The collapse of the communist regimes in the countries of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union itself, the peaceful reunification of Germany, the process of voluntary dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the CMEA, the significant progress made in nuclear and conventional arms control and the bloody and complex Yugoslav conflict, are all clear indications that the Cold War and bipolarity are conditions of the past. Under the new conditions, in the end of the Cold War, Bulgaria and Turkey faced new political and security challenges.

Bulgaria, with the collapse of the Eastern European military and economic structures lost her allies, her protective Soviet umbrella and all the guarantees to her security. The effects for Bulgaria were tremendous since no other country relied to such a great degree upon these structures for both security and trade¹.

The emergence of a security vacuum urged Bulgaria to revise her foreign policy and security policy towards the western structures as the unique reliable guarantor for her security and to seek for regional stability with Turkey. Furthermore, Bulgaria was obliged to follow this policy for the following reasons: Bulgarian security problem worsen more after the implementation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. The CFE Treaty of 1990 did not improve the defense ability of the country because

¹ See Ekaterina Nikova, "Changing Bulgaria in the changing Balkans", in Güray Göksu, Özgökan-Kemali Saybasili, eds., Balkans A mirror of the new International order (Eren, Istanbul, 1995), pp.189-192.

it gave more weight in the quantitative balance and not in the qualitative one in the armed forces and armaments among the Balkan states². Thus, Bulgaria maintained quantitative balance in the armaments with Greece and Turkey, but not qualitative because the last two states as NATO members could renew their armaments from other NATO states.

Bulgaria's geostrategic position is located in an extremely vulnerable area. Ethnic and territorial problems of the past in the Balkan peninsula seemed not to be solved. This means, that under certain circumstances may be a real danger created for a wider military confrontation in the area. Furthermore, there are non-traditional sources of tension such as terrorism, narcotics trafficking and international organized crime which could be factors of instability in the area and particularly in Bulgaria³.

Because of the economic conditions which emerged after the end of the Cold War. For the former socialist states and for Bulgaria as well the transition from a centrally planned economy towards the market economy was a terrible experience which was accompanied with the collapse of the internal market, serious structural problems in production, increasing internal and external debt due to serious macro-economic imbalances and the interruption of the traditional trade relations with CMEA countries and the USSR⁴. The negative

² See Nesho Neshev, "Bulgaria's National Security, the Balkans and NATO", in Bulgarian Military Review, 4/2, Summer 1996, p.52.

³ See ibid, p. 53.

⁴ See St. Statlev, "Bulgarian Economic Transition", in Ch. Tsardanidis- L. Maroudas, eds., Greek-Bulgarian Relations. Contemporary Economic and Political Dimensions, (Athens 1995), p.81, (in Greek).

consequences for the Bulgarian economy was enhanced from external factors, like the Gulf war and the UN embargo on Yugoslavia.

The Gulf war and the embargo imposed on Iraq hit the Bulgarian economy because Bulgaria exported significant part of its products to this country and imported significant quantity of oil. Bulgaria also lost a lot from the embargo on Yugoslavia and was isolated commercially from Western Europe in a period when she intended to develop closer economic relations with the Western European states⁵.

The main objective of Bulgaria's security and economy policies were, therefore, the creation of links with the main political and economic European institutions⁶. Furthermore, cooperation with economic organizations, like the IMF and World Bank was essential because Bulgaria expected financial assistance for the recovering of its economy⁷.

The integration into the European Union is a structural defining route in the Bulgarian foreign policy. It will stabilize the country's international position and enhance opportunities for realization of Bulgaria's national interests and international responsibilities within a leading integrative community. In March 1993 Bulgaria signed the association agreement with the European Union, effective since February 1st 1995. The association agreement

⁵See Oscar W. Clyatt, "Bulgaria's turn Toward Europe", in European Security, 2/1, Spring 1993, pp.93-95.

⁶ See Plamen Bonchev, "Bulgaria and the new European Security Architecture", in Bulgarian Military Review, 3/3, Fall 1995, p.18.

⁷ The Bulgarian government tried to implement the reform programs of the IMF and World Bank. Thus the IMF extended a 503 million dollar loan and accepted Bulgaria for full membership.

provides for greater market access for Bulgarian products to the European Union⁸. With a clear prospect of accession to the European Union, Bulgaria attaches major importance to her participation as associate partner in the activity of the Western European Union, which has been itself the defense component of the European integration. In April 1997 Bulgaria signed a security agreement with Western European Union. The agreement regulates the terms and standards of exchange and protection of confidential information between two sides⁹.

The Bulgaria's status in the Western European Union has political and symbolic significance in tying the country with the European Union, but the relations with NATO considered to be of greater and more immediate importance. Bulgarian leadership recognized the alliance as the main player in the post-1989 European security environment, and as the sole and sufficient guarantor of Bulgaria's security. Sofia supported the enlargement of NATO and in December 1991 joined the North-Atlantic Co-operation Council (NACC).

Furthermore, Bulgaria was among the first states which adopted the idea about the "Partnership for Peace". On 14 February 1994, President Zhelu Zhelev signed the "Partnership for Peace" program on behalf of Bulgaria. In a speech on that occasion, Zhelev hailed the scheme as "a momentous process that will help democracy strike strong roots in Eastern Europe". On a more

⁸ See Bonchev, *op. cit.*, pp.19-20.

⁹ See SWB. BBC Monitoring, Balkans and Eastern Europe, April 9, 1997, p. 4.

specific issue, he stressed that the move was in no way directed against Russian interests. “On the contrary” he said, “we support Russia’s democratic and reformist forces and wish them success. Moreover, we are convinced that NATO is in a position to find appropriate ways to make Russia more committed to European security”¹⁰.

Although Zhelev was one of the region’s most consistent supporters of NATO, carefully worded his speech understanding Moscow’s sensitivity regarding the “Partnership for Peace” program. This initiative envisages defense cooperation through the conclusion of a bilateral defense agreement with NATO but does not offer a clear-out security guarantee¹¹.

The thesis of the immediate accession in NATO was promoted by President Zhelev and UDF party which came in power in 1991. Since January 1995 when BSP party came in power the Bulgarian attitude towards NATO changed as the BSP purports that the country must not rush to present her candidacy but rather she should wait for NATO’s future development and transformation, and for greater clarity about the future of “Partnership for Peace” program and NATO’s attitude to Russia. According to BSP officials, the issue on NATO should be decided by a referendum¹².

As the attitude towards NATO changed, additional questions were raised concerning how could Bulgaria’s national security priorities be

¹⁰ See Kjell Engelbrekt, “Southeast European States Seek Equal Treatment”, in RFE/RL Research Report, 3/12, March 25, 1994, p.34.

¹¹ See Nikolai Milkov, “Partnership for Peace and the Foreign Policy priorities of the Republic of Bulgaria”, in Bulgarian Military Review, 3/3, Fall 1995, p.32.

¹² See SWB, BBC Monitoring, Balkans and Eastern Europe, December 12, 1996, p. 4.

expressed through relations with Brussels. The recent developments in Bosnia and other regions demonstrate that NATO is ill-prepared and lacks the specialization in handling regional conflicts. Moreover, while keeping its purposes, fundamental tasks and structures unchanged, NATO continues to function as an organization for “defense” presuming the existence of an “enemy”, extensive recourse to military force for attaining its objectives and by far not building peace and security in Europe. Another question is that NATO membership requires enormous spending for the transformation of the Bulgarian military forces in the NATO military structures and systems¹³, which is difficult for the country under the present economic conditions.

From the NATO side, when eventually will open its ranks to new members - possibly in July 1997, Bulgaria's chances of becoming a member are less promising than those of the Visegrad countries, which are likely to be given top priority by NATO. For the time being, NATO leadership does not want to undertake commitments in Bulgaria's security because of the unstable and transitional situation of the country and because of the remaining tension in the area.

Since the fall of the communist regime in November 1989, Bulgaria had made a concerted effort to demonstrate to the western nations that it is too, part of the European mainstream. Bulgaria's integration to the European structures are long-term targets which served the Bulgarian national interests.

¹³ See Nesho Neshev, “Bulgaria's National Security, the Balkans and NATO”, in Bulgarian Military Review, 4/2, Summer 1996, p. 57.

At the same time and in contrast to some other Eastern European states, Bulgaria seem to support good relations with Moscow partially because this relationship has solid traditions. A second motive, linked to the country's security, is that of Bulgaria's armed forces and particularly her arms industry which continue to depend on Russia for spare parts and components¹⁴.

In 1992 the two countries signed a new Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendship and economic agreement according to which Sofia received significant quantity of oil and broader access for the Bulgarian products to the Russian market¹⁵. In November 1993 the two countries also signed an accord on military cooperation. Good relations with Russia does not undermine the relations with the West. Bulgaria's european orientation is clear but at the same time her interests are closely linked with Russia.

For Turkey the end of the cold war brought two changes in her strategic environment. On the one hand, the collapse of the Soviet Union has reduced the saliency of the Soviet threat and the importance of the US military tie. On the other hand as a result of the disintegration of the USSR and Yugoslavia, new opportunities appeared to the Turkish foreign policy to extend her influence in these regions.

These two changes made impossible for Turkey to follow a traditionalist foreign policy based on the relative safety and stability of Cold

¹⁴ See Kjell Engelbrekt, "Bulgaria's Evolving Defense policy", in RFE/RL Research Report, 3/32, August 19, 1994, p.46.

¹⁵ See Kyil Harnamiev-Drezov, "Bulgarian-Russian relations on a new Footing", in RFE/RL Research Report, 2/15, April 9, 1993, pp.33-35.

War politics. In the face of new challenges, a clear cut formulation of foreign policy based on the East-West division had to be replaced by a more active one.

Former Turkish President Turgut Özal, elected in November 1989, advocated an “active” foreign policy as a means of coping with both the challenges and the opportunities brought by global and regional changes¹⁶.

Özal’s vision was put into a highly activist form with the outbreak of the Gulf crisis that followed Iraq’s occupation of Kuwait in August 1990. The subsequent realization of vital western interests in the politically volatile Middle East, where Turkey re-emerged as a reliable regional ally, reasserted Turkey’s importance for the West. In spite of widespread opposition at home and the resignations of his foreign and defense ministers and Chief of the General Staff, Özal personally conducted high-profile, pro-western policy throughout the crisis. Despite an annual financial loss of 2-3 billion dollars, the government strictly implemented the United Nations embargo against Iraq, closed Iraqi oil pipelines crossing Turkey, and permitted American warplanes to use US military bases in Turkey in their air raids against Iraq¹⁷.

On Özal’s part such active involvement aimed at reasserting Turkey’s strategic value for the West and the restoration of Turkey’s chance for accession to the European Union. In December 20, 1989 the Turkish

¹⁶ See Ihsan Dagi, “Turkey in the 1990s: Foreign Policy, Human Rights, and the Search for a new Identity”, in *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 4/4, Fall 1993, pp.6-7.

¹⁷ See Bruce Kuniholm, “Turkey and the west”, in *Foreign Affairs*, 70(2), Spring 1991, pp. 35-38.

government received the preliminary reply from the European Commission to her April 14, 1987 application for full membership in the European Community. Turkey's underdevelopment, her human rights record, the high growth-rate of its population and the situation in Cyprus, elicited a negative response from the European Community¹⁸. In this sense, the understanding of the issue, formulation of the policy, and pursuit of the goal were all similar to those that preceded Turkey's admittance to NATO in 1952, following Turkey's participation in the Korean war. It was also expected that such a policy would increase American support for Turkey's bid to negotiate membership in the European Union

The collapse of the Soviet Union has resulted in the formation of five newly independent Turkic Republics- Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgystan- looking towards Turkey for immediate economic and political cooperation. Turkey quickly recognized the new republics and has been trying to improve economic, political and cultural relations with them. With its democratic-secular political system and liberal economy, Turkey looks like an ideal model for these emerging states. Cultural, linguistic and religious affinities were the stimulating factors for the beginning of closer ties¹⁹.

¹⁸ Agence Internationale d'Information pour la Presse, Europe Documents, "Commission Opinion on Turkey's Request for Accession to the Community" .no. 1589, December 20, 1989.

¹⁹ See "The Central Asian States now look to Turkey as Regional Mentor" ,in Wall Street Journal, January 7, 1993.

For the newly independent states, Turkey seems an appropriate gate to the west and for the west she seems a way to the rich natural resources and markets of Central Asia. In a region of political, ethnic and economic instability, Turkey appeared as a stabilizing factor.

In addition to the rediscovery of Turkish roots in the East, dramatic events in the Balkans pulled in the Turkish interest. Turkey belongs to the Balkan peninsula geographically, historically and culturally. This sense of belonging to the Balkan complex allows Turkey to recognize its legitimate interests and concerns, especially during times of change in the region. The Balkans are a strategic link between Turkey and western Europe and a major factor in the range of political, economic, security and cultural bonds that Turkey has formed with the outside world²⁰.

Since the end of the Ottoman presence in the region Balkans had not witnessed a Turkish involvement. Turkey's participation in bilateral treaties with the Balkan states and attempts at Balkan cooperation, were recast under a different setting in the post-war East-West division.

The Ottoman period has always been treated extremely negatively in the Atatürkist vision. Many intellectuals and politicians (among them the late president Özal) have become sympathetic toward a broader re-examination of the Ottoman period. The newer -more revisionist views - do not represent a

²⁰ See Duygu B. Sezer, "Turkey in the new security environment in the Balkan and Black Sea region", in V. Matny and C. Nation eds., Turkey between East and West. New challenges for a rising regional power, (Westview Press 1991), p. 81.

whole sale rejection of Atatürk but rather a recognition that not every idea and value of Atatürk has to be for ever valid in Turkish consideration of the future. The Atatürkist tradition itself is thus undergoing some revisionism, bringing with it a more objective treatment of the past rather than maintenance of an uncritical Atatürkist ideology intact forever²¹ .

A re-examination and revaluation of Ottoman history in no way implies the emergence of a new Turkish irredentism or expansionism. It does suggest, however, a renewed interest in the former territories and people of the empire, which includes Muslims who were part of that empire. It suggests that certain organic, geopolitical, cultural and economic relations that had been absent during the “abnormal” period of Cold War polarization may remerge in the new “normal” regional environment.

By middle 1991, Yugoslavia was disintegrating to civil war. Turkey originally adopted a conservative position on the simmering Yugoslav crisis, hoping that the Yugoslav federation could be maintained through internal negotiations and compromise. Turkey chose the policy which was closer to the west and secure the regional stability. Turkey wanted to appear as a part of the solution and not as a part of the Balkan problem.

Once disintegration ensued and the Bosnia Muslim population of the internationally recognized Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina was in difficult position, Turkey’s attitude changed. New policies were designed to serve three

²¹ Graham Fuller, “Turkey’s new Eastern orientation”, in G. Fuller, and I.Lesser, eds., Turkey’s new Geopolitics. From the Balkans to western China, (Westview Press 1993), pp. 47-50.

immediate objectives: to end the bloodshed in Bosnia-Herzegovina, to preserve the republic's independence and territorial integrity. Turkish policy has essentially sought to contain the Serbia aggression. On 7 August 1992, Turkey elaborated the details of an Action Plan to be implemented by the United Nations Security Council. In April 1993, she joined the NATO operation for enforcement of the seven-month old no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina. Turkey also sent 2700 peacekeeping troops in total to serve in UNPROFOR in late June 1994²².

Since the end of the Cold War, Turkey looked to the Balkans for three more reasons: a. Common security concerns. After the dissolution of Warsaw Pact the former communist Balkan states sought to engage with the western institutions. Turkey is a member of NATO, close related with European Union, and associated member of Western European Union. Turkey can provide help to these countries to join these institutions. b. Balkan as a passage. Over two million Turks have settled down in Central and Western European countries. Every year they visit their country and most of them prefer to travel by road and pass through the Balkans. Also the major part of Turkish trade is with Western Europe, and again the largest portion of Turkey's exports and imports to and from European states passes from Balkan. Almost all Balkan countries are engaged in the transit trade between Europe and Middle East. c. Need for economic cooperation. In the past the Balkan

²² See Briefing, August 22, 1994, p. 11.

states being under a different economic system the chances for economic cooperation were few.

An important initiative, inspired by Turgut Özal , known as the Black Sea Co-operation Region Project has been a first attempt for a closer co-operation. The project was designed to promote private sector activity and stimulate the free movement of goods and services among the member states. In addition to Turkey the group also includes Bulgaria, Romania, Greece and Albania, as well as six member states of the former Soviet Union- Ukraine Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Moldova and Georgia²³ .

Despite its initial success in establishing an organizational structure, the BSEC's future is not yet assured. The structure of BSEC lacks the mechanisms needed to implement and enforce its directives. The BSEC has not yet undertaken concrete measures to foster economic growth and free enterprises in the Black Sea region.

The end of the Cold War had different consequences for Bulgaria and Turkey. The problems and the priorities emerged for each state had a different nature because the two states belonged in different blocs.

Bulgaria sought for alternatives to security ties and financial support lost with the dissolution of the Soviet bloc. Turkey for her part, tried to formulate a more active foreign policy, establishing good relations with the

²³ See Stephen Larrabee, "Balkan Security after the Cold war: New Dimensions, New Challenges", in Stephen Larrabee, ed., The volatile Powder Keg. Balkan Security after the Cold War, (American University Press 1994), p.24.

newly independent states emerged after the disintegration of the USSR and the Yugoslavia and strengthening her relations with Europe. Inside the post-Cold War setting a common priority for both states is to establish friendly relations and to resolve the remaining problems of the Cold War years.

B. Political, Military and Economic Relations between Turkey and Bulgaria

A process of accelerated improvement and development of bilateral relations between Turkey and Bulgaria started after the democratic change that took place in Bulgaria in 1989.

One of the essential aims of the post-Cold War Bulgarian foreign policy was to normalize her relations with Turkey. The new Bulgarian leadership, appeared, to feel confident that cooperation with Turkey could work to the advantage of Bulgaria. It would reduce a serious threat against the country, as 70% of Turkey's tanks and 55% of its artillery are concentrated close to the common border¹. A repetition, of the 1989 forced exodus of Bulgaria's ethnic Turks could cause a more energetic Turkish intervention for the protection of the minority. Sofia's sense of isolation was such that it was feared that a conflict with Turkey would end up with dire and irreversible consequences².

¹President Zhelev had stated that his country's security depended on "good relations with its neighbors". See FBIS-WEU, May 14, p. 38.

² See Turkish Daily News, October 29, 1996. See also interview by General S. Andreev in Defense and Diplomacy, October 1991, p. 34., (in Greek).

Therefore, improved relations and the lifting of pressure from the minority contributed to obtaining economic assistance from Ankara in the form of export credits and the arrival of several Turkish enterprises. Also, respect for human rights together with cooperation with Turkey could open the way for western support and participation in the European institutions.

Turkey for her part, also sought to improve her relations with Bulgaria. Due to no good relations with some neighboring states both in Europe and in Middle East, the rapprochement with Bulgaria would diminish Turkish security concerns in the Balkans. It would also help the improvement of the situation of the Turkish minority and reduce the likelihood of a significant outmigration of Bulgarian Turks to Turkey.

Since 1991 Turkish-Bulgarian relations improved markedly in the political, military and economic field. The improvement of the bilateral relations can be seen through the regular high-level meetings between the Turkish-Bulgarian political and military leadership and the number of agreements signed. During 1991 the Bulgarian President Zhelyu Zhelev and his Turkish President Turgut Ozal met twice in Amsterdam and N. York. The main subject of the talks was the participation of Sofia in the Ankara's initiative for the "Black Sea Economic Cooperation"³. Bulgaria accepted the proposal and President Zhelev attended the signing ceremony during the Black

³ See FBIS-WEU, April 10, 1991, p. 1.

Sea summit in June 1992. Sofia saw its participation in the initiative as a chance to improve further the political and economic relations with Ankara.

In April 1992 Turkish Foreign Minister Hikmet Çetin visited Sofia and signed an agreement with Bulgaria eliminated the restrictions experienced during diplomatic visits. According to the agreement, visas for diplomats and public officials have been waived, and businessmen will have to acquire visas only once a year. The two sides also agreed to establish two committees to resolve certain technical matters between the two countries. These matters were the adoption of the Rezve river as the border between two countries, the territorial waters and the situation of the fishermen in the Black Sea, the FIR line, and the border demarcation stones in Meric⁴. Çetin's visit showed that the two sides have reached a point of comprehensive understanding and good will in resolving their problems. After one month Bulgarian Prime Minister Fillip Dimitrov officially visited Ankara. The Bulgarian Prime Minister had talks with the Turkish Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel, the Deputy Prime Minister Erdal İnönü and the Foreign Minister Hikmet Çetin. During these official talks, the Turkish side recalled that there was an unfortunate period in the relations from 1984 to 1989 when the rights of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria were violated. As this period ended, with the democratization movement the two states could improve their political and economic relations which were considered important in the face of the developments in the

⁴ See FBIS-WEU, April 1, 1992., pp. 36-37., April 10, 1991, p. 1.

Balkans. The Bulgarian side also refuted the discriminatory policy of the previous regime towards the Bulgarian Turks stressed that the new Bulgarian government respected the human rights and that the traces remaining from the period of oppression would be removed shortly⁵. At the end of the official talks a Friendship, Good-neighborliness and Cooperation agreement was signed by Prime Ministers Demirel and Dimitrov⁶. The agreement provided for expanded ties, emphasizing confidence-building measures and a procedure for crisis-management.

Turkish-Bulgarian cooperation improved substantially also in the military field. Military exchanges -virtually non-existent prior to 1991- became frequent. Discussions of bilateral military concerns started with a visit to Bulgaria by a Turkish Army inspection team in July 1990. Shortly thereafter the Chief of the Bulgarian General Staff, Lieutenant General Radnyu Minchev, went to Turkey to pay the first such visit since the advent of communism in Bulgaria. That December a confidence-building agreement was signed, and in May 1991 Turkish officers visited troops and installations in Harmanli, Bulgaria.

In December 1991 the Sofia Document was signed designed to strengthen security and confidence along the Turkish-Bulgarian border. According to the pact the two sides agreed to give each other advance notice of major military activities taking place within sixty kilometers of their

⁵ See FBIS-WEU, May 6, 1992, p. 42.

⁶ See Hürriyet, May 6, 1992, p. 21.

common border. The pact also called for an increase in military contacts as well as a number of concrete confidence-building measures, such as prior notification of maneuvers and inspections beyond those contained in the Paris CFE agreement⁷. Since then, both sides have reduced their military strength near the border under an agreement reached in Ankara in July 1992 between the Bulgarian Army Chief of General Staff Lieutenant General Lyuben Petrov and the Turkish Army Chief of the General Staff Dogan Gures⁸. In that occasion Gures noted: "We have smashed the steel chains between Turkey and Bulgaria. The rest is easy."⁹

In November 1992 one more important agreement was signed between the General Staff of the two countries. The Edirne Document was the continuance of the Sofia Document. According to the agreement, the two sides would work for the maintenance and the close examination of the confidence-building measures¹⁰.

These Documents were followed by an agreement for cooperation in military training and technology¹¹. The agreement was signed between the Turkish National Defense Minister Nevzat Ayaz and his Bulgarian counterpart

⁷ See Duncan Perry, "Bulgaria: Security concerns and Foreign Policy Considerations", in Larabee St. ed., The volatile Powder keg. Balkan Security after the Cold War, (American University Press 1994), p.60.

⁸ See FBIS-WEU, July 6, 1992, p. 26.

⁹ See Duncan Perry, "New Directions for the Turkish-Bulgarian relations", in RFE/RL Research Report 1/41, October 16, 1992, p. 37.

¹⁰ See Duncan Perry, "Bulgaria : Security concerns and foreign policy considerations", in Larabee St. ed., The volatile Powder Keg. Balkan Security after the Cold War, (American University Press), p. 61.

¹¹ See FBIS-WEU, March 10, 1993, p.57.

Valentin Aleksandrov, during the visit of Turkish Defense Minister in Sofia in March 1993.

The high-level military contacts between the two states continued with visits of the Bulgarian Army Chief of General Staff Tsvetan Totomirov in Ankara in July 1995¹² and the visit of the Turkish Army Chief of General Staff Ismail Hakki Karadayi in Sofia in July 1996¹³. During these meetings the two parts confirmed the good relations in defense and military fields, discussed about the security problems in the region and the joint participation of Bulgarian and Turkish units in the Partnership for Peace¹⁴.

At the same time, Bulgaria tried to create the same military establishments with Greece in the framework of “balanced relations” with Athens and Ankara. Bulgaria signed similar-to Turkish-Bulgarian- military agreement with Greece in November 1993. Moreover, Bulgarian President Zhelu Zhelev proposed establishing a mechanism for a three-way dialogue among Sofia-Ankara-Athens in a bid to help establish stability and security in the region. Zhelev’s proposal, which was put forward during his visit to NATO headquarters in Brussels¹⁵. Greece did not give more importance because a few months earlier a Greek proposal on the demilitarization of Thrace was rejected from Turkey, evidently because the draft did not address the issue of the Greek troops on Aegean islands.

¹² See FBIS-WEU, July 14, 1995, p. 28.

¹³ See FBIS-WEU, TDN, July 3, 1996.

¹⁴ See *Bulgarian Military Review*, 4/3-4, Winter 1995, p.85.

¹⁵ See FBIS-WEU, November 15, 1991, p. 41.

The dialogue between the two countries continued when the Bulgarian President Zhelev went on a official two-day visit in Ankara (6-9 July 1994). A series of confidential talks took place concerning bilateral and regional issues. The Yugoslavia problem was discussed and the Turkish side tried to reassure Bulgaria, which believed that no Balkan state should get involved in this dispute anyway, that the Turkish presence of Turkish troops in Bosnia was purely for United Nations purposes. Only one month previously, Bulgaria refused to allow Turkish Airlines jet carrying Turkish UN peacekeeping troops to the former Yugoslavia to pass through its air space¹⁶.

The terrorism problem it was also discussed. The issue was raised in light of the visit of a Kurdish leader in Bulgaria, invited by a marginal Bulgarian party. President Zhelev assured Ankara, that Bulgaria would not allow PKK to operate on its territory and that terrorist attacks by this organization against Turkey would not be allowed under any circumstances. Turkey and Bulgaria signed an agreement on Cooperation against Terrorism, Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime in February 1993. During the talks both sides were satisfied because there was a sufficient implementation of the agreement.

In the end of the official talks the priorities of the two sides was announced. These should include the development of transportation infrastructure, notably the east-west, north-south and Black Sea corridors.

¹⁶ See Briefing, issue 997, July 11, 1994, p. 9.

Industry obtained special weight in the agenda, especially with respect to its defense component. The resolution of the problem of the immigrant Turks property from Bulgaria was discussed, while the opening of two new border control stations between Hamzoubeili and Lesovo was promoted¹⁷.

The two sides signed four agreements concerning : the encouragement and mutual protection of investments, economic cooperation, livestock and vegetable product trade, and double taxation avoidance. The Bulgarian President's visit was seen as symbolizing the great improvement in relations since the days of 1989 and a demonstration of how vital cooperation is between the two states.

In May 1994 the Bulgarian Foreign Minister Stanislav Daskalov visited Ankara. The main issue of the bilateral talks was the Bosnian crisis. The Bulgarian Foreign Minister stated that Bulgaria does not oppose the participation of Turkish troops in the UN peacekeeping forces in Bosnia. At the end of the official talks a new cooperation protocol was signed between the Bulgarian Foreign Minister Stanislav Daskalov and the Turkish Foreign Minister Hikmet Çetin, that updated the action protocol signed by the two countries in 1992¹⁸. The protocol envisaged the development of cooperation in the military field, in the fight against drug trafficking, organized crime and terrorism.

¹⁷ see *ibid*, p. 10.

¹⁸ See *FBIS-WEU*, May 24, 1994, p. 40.

In January 1995 the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) came to power. BSP did not differentiate the targets of the Bulgarian foreign policy as was designed by the previous UDF government but the new Socialist government appeared to be more skeptical towards the West and more favorable towards Greece than towards Turkey. The Socialist government also did not show the same will as the UDF, towards the restoration of the rights of the Turkish minority. Mainly for political reasons, the Turkish Minority party -Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF)¹⁹ had allied itself with the UDF since 1991, the BSP became increasingly anti-Turkish.

In October 1991 parliamentary elections an alliance was formed with a few small, ultranationalist parties that had a strictly anti-Turkish foundation. Following the elections, the BSP challenged the legitimacy of the MRF's deputies, charging that the MRF was a party "founded on a religious or ethnic basis" and thus was in violation of article 14 of the Constitution²⁰. The Constitutional Court narrowly rejected the BSP's claim but this issue created high political tension.

In the presidential elections in October 1996 and the parliamentary elections in April 1997 BSP again increased tension by stocking ethnic divisions in a bid to divert attention from the economic woes and, in this way,

¹⁹ The Bulgaria's ethnic Turks reacting against the assimilationist repression they suffered in the late 1980s, founded the MRF. The MRF was formed by Ahmed Dogan on his release from prison in December 1989.

²⁰ See John Bell, "Bulgaria", in St. White, -J. Batt, - P. Lewis, eds., Developments in East European Politics, (Macmillan 1993), pp.96-97.

to gain the elections which , it was said, was going badly²¹. Before the April elections BSP deputies filed a petition to the Bulgarian Constitutional Court to shut down the MRF. The petition claimed that the MRF was an ethnic party that threatens Bulgaria's national interests²².

This attitude of the Socialist government towards the ethnic Turks caused the concern of Ankara but the bilateral high-level contacts continued as Ankara wanted to maintain the good relations initiated in 1991.

Turkish Foreign Minister Erdal İnönü paid an official two-day visit in Sofia in June 1995. İnönü's trip was the first high-level diplomatic visit between the two countries since the socialist government came to power.

İnönü and his Bulgarian counterpart Georgy Pirinski announced at the end of the talks that the two states would set up committees to work on solutions to disputes regarding sovereignty rights in the Black Sea and property claims by both governments in each other's territory. The bilateral Black Sea problems include a border dispute and disagreements on flight routes and fishing rights²³.

The two sides worried by the developments and a possibility of spread of the fighting discussed the Bosnia crisis, and called for intensified efforts for peace but fell short of making concrete proposals. Difference appeared over the Balkan attitudes of the two countries, as Turkey supported the Muslim-led

²¹ See Turkish Daily News, October 24, 1996.

²² See Turkish Daily News, December 13, 1996.

²³ See Bulgarian Telegraph Agency, June 28, 1995, p.2.

government and the activities of a Muslim-Croat federation, while Bulgaria urged the lifting of UN-sponsored economic sanctions on the Serb-led ramp Yugoslavia.

Another difference was on the functioning of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) process. Bulgaria supported that the BSEC should be kept as an economic organization without political institutions as Sofia sees European Union membership as an ultimate goal and in any way does not want to jeopardize her chances of gaining entry to the European Union. Bulgaria is not represented in the BSEC's parliamentary assembly. Turkey, on the other hand, supported that involvement in a politically more functional BSEC would not hamper membership to the European Union²⁴.

Furthermore, during the Turkish Foreign Minister visit the details of the visit of the Turkish President Suleyman Demirel in Sofia was discussed. The visit of the Turkish Head of State was set on July 4-6, 1995.

President Demirel held talks with President Zhelev and Prime Minister Videnov, while he also visited the Bulgarian Parliament where he met delegates of various parliamentary groups. In his speech in the Bulgarian parliament Demirel gave his message saying that Turkey wanted nothing more than to see ethnic Turks enjoying the same rights and privileges as Bulgarians and praised Bulgaria for respecting the rights of the ethnic Turks since 1989²⁵.

²⁴ See Turkish Daily News, July 1, 1995.

²⁵ See Turkish Daily News, July 6, 1995.

After his meeting with President Zhelev the Turkish President announced that the bilateral relations do not imply any hostility towards any third country. Ankara will help Bulgaria's process of acceding into NATO, while Demirel asked Sofia's help for the containment of terrorist activities, mentioning the existence of a Kurdish party in Bulgaria²⁶. Zhelev and Demirel discussed about the "Black Sea- Adriatic corridor" - a road that would link Albania and FYROM to Turkey via Bulgaria. Greece opposed this corridor, proposing another route through the Greek territory. Another issue of discussion was the route for the oil pipeline. Two months earlier during the visit of the Bulgarian Prime Minister in Athens, Greek and Bulgarian sides had agreed to support the plans for the construction of the Burgas-Alexandroupolis oil pipeline. Turkish side proposed an alternative pipeline over Turkey.

The talks between President Demirel and Prime Minister Videnov focused mainly on bilateral economic relations. From her part Bulgaria insisted on the opening of a new air route, while she suggested to Turkey to invest in a lease agreement of the Bulgarian airways. The Turkish President officially suggested the establishment of a "free trade, capital, and goods zone" and the facilitation of the movement of people between Bulgaria and Turkey. Videnov's response was positive but added that such a project would be possible after the end of the war in Yugoslavia and after the end of Bulgaria's ongoing negotiations with GATT²⁷.

²⁶ See Bulgarian Telegraph Agency, July 6, 1995, p1.

²⁷ See FBIS-WEU, July 14, 1995, p.p. 29-30.

During his stay President Demirel visited north-eastern Bulgaria, an area with solid Turkish population. Demirel made this visit in order to see for himself to what extent the political rights of the Turks in Bulgaria are indeed protected²⁸. This change in the official program of the visit appears to have created friction between the Presidency and the Foreign Minister. Bulgarian Foreign Minister was not present during the visit and the talks that Demirel held with the officials of the Turkish mission. From its part, this was interpreted as a sign of protest since three days before the visit he had made clear to President Zhelev the position of the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry according to which "the official program must not change since such a visit in the areas inhabited by Bulgarians of Turkish descent was not timely"²⁹.

During the bilateral talks it was expected that the two sides could discuss some of the pending bilateral issues such as the new immigration agreement, the visa regime, but these issues were not touched in depth -mainly because the Bulgarian side did not seem too keen on pursuing them.

In the economic level, Turkish-Bulgarian relations improved substantially along with the political cooperation since 1991. The first trade protocol was signed between the two countries for the promotion of economic and trade cooperation³⁰. According to the protocol, Turkey supplied Bulgaria with 400,000 tons of fuel oil, as well as electrical energy. The protocol also

²⁸ See Balkan Briefing, no 23-24, Hellenic Center of European Studies, Athens September 1995, p. 5.

²⁹ See ibid p. 6.

³⁰ See FBIS-WEU, January 23, 1991, p. 75.

envisaged Turkey extending a consumer and investment loan of 75 million dollars. Furthermore, the protocol envisaged the formation of a joint working group that would assist in implementing economic reforms in Bulgaria.

In February 1991, Turkey and Bulgaria signed a new protocol in Ankara on bilateral cooperation in the fields of land, air, and railway transportation³¹. The protocol also envisaged the establishment of special tourist railroad services between Belgrade, Sofia and Istanbul to be linked with the European railroad system.

In November 1991 the two states announced a series of long-term financial ventures of mutual interest after a two-day closed door meeting of the Bulgarian-Turkish Council of Business Circles in Sofia. This was followed in December by a visit by the Bulgarian Foreign Minister Stoyan Ganev to Turkey. They agreed to grant multiple-entry visas to citizens of the other's country visiting on business.

In March 1993, an additional protocol was signed for the development of economic and trade relations. The agreement was signed by Tahir Kose, Turkish Minister of industry and commerce and his counterpart Rumen Bikov³². The protocol aimed at exerting every possible effort to develop economic relations and increase bilateral trade.

³¹ See FBIS-WEU, February 28, 1991, p. 256.

³² See FBIS-WEU, March 4, 1993, p. 45.

The two countries had signed an agreement in July 1994, in Ankara preventing the double taxation of income³³. The agreement was signed by the Turkish Finance Minister Ismet Attila and his Bulgarian counterpart Stoyan Aleksandrov.

Turkish-Bulgarian commercial and economic relations are based on these previous agreements. Trade comes first in economic ties between Bulgaria and Turkey. For the past five years, the trade volume between the two countries has increased eightfold, standing at 470.6 million dollars for the year 1995 (371 million dollars in Bulgarian exports and 99.6 million dollars in imports). For the first nine months of 1996, trade turnover was 303.4 million dollar (238.1 million dollars in exports and 65.3 million dollars in imports). For the same period, Turkey ranked fifth, in Bulgarian exports among all the Bulgarian partners.

Structure-wise, the Bulgarian export list for Turkey features predominately raw materials and partially-fabricated goods such as oils and fuels, fertilizers and timber. Imports from Turkey consist primarily of ready-to-use products such as leather and similar products, detergents and washing liquids, vehicles , and various products of light industry³⁴.

Business circles in both countries are increasingly interested in setting up joint companies. By mid-1996, the total number of these in Turkey was 11, while the trade register of the Bulgarian Chamber of Trade and Industry lists

³³ See FBIS-WEU, July 8, 1994, p. 42.

³⁴ See Turkish Daily News, March 3, 1997.

1,125 joint companies and 21 representations based in Bulgaria. As a first step, joint firms for co-production (especially in light industry) are established in Bulgaria³⁵.

An example is the RAM foreign-trade company of Turkey's biggest group, KOÇ Holding. In Bulgaria, KOÇ Holding operates through the TOFAS and BEKO offices, selling automobiles, electrical applications and electronics.

Privatization in Bulgaria is another area of interest for major Turkish companies like PANDA (a leading ice cream producer) and ÇUKUROVA Holding (construction and banking). Investment, though still limited, is one of the most promising spheres of Bulgarian-Turkish economic relations. By November 1996, Turkish investments in Bulgaria amounted to 1,755,697 million dollars constituting 2.5 percent of all foreign investments made in the country. Establishing free trade zones with all European-associated countries, including Turkey, is an important element in the process of Bulgaria's preparation for joining the European Union³⁶.

The best prospects for further development in Turkish-Bulgarian industrial commercial and economic cooperation exist in the following industries: Food processing, textiles, telecommunications, electronics, machine building, chemicals and construction materials, in production and processing of mineral raw materials, industrial land civil construction including projects

³⁵ See EIU Country Profile: Bulgaria 1995, p. 38.

³⁶ See SWB-BBC Monitoring Balkans and Eastern Europe, December 19, 1996, p. 9.

in third countries, in power generation, and transport, in tourist and consulting services and in agriculture.

The Turkish-Bulgarian relations in the last six years they improved substantially and what characterizes the present bilateral relations is the lack of any serious problems and the emphasis on common interests and goals. The cooperation between the two countries is based also on the similarity of their foreign policy priorities, as they both on pursue of full integration into the European structures as an inseparable part of Europe. Certain open issues exist between the two states, but all these issues are subject to an open and active dialogue, in which the common will for their solution predominates.

V. CONCLUSION

The relations between Turkey and Bulgaria have a long and complicated history. The course of the bilateral relations always was affected by the international and the regional developments.

During the inter-war years there was a cooling in the relations between the two states. This can be explained because Turkey and Bulgaria had different orientations in their foreign policy after the end of the First World War. The newly founded Turkish nation-state pursued to form close relations with its neighboring countries in order to secure a favorable international position. In contrast, Bulgaria, dissatisfied from the first World War territorial settlement followed a revisionist foreign policy and did not attempt to improve its relations with its bordering countries. Moreover, she refused to participate in the Balkan co-operation schemes which strengthened the ties among the Balkan states.

After the second World War, the Balkan scene changed fundamentally. As a result of the establishment of the communist regimes, the region was divided into two antagonistic blocs. Turkey joined NATO and became a U.S

ally and Bulgaria linked herself with the Eastern European structures¹. The general deterioration of East-West relations and the repressive policy of the Bulgarian communist government towards the numerous Turkish minority living in the Bulgarian territory had adverse effects on the Turkish-Bulgarian relations. Despite a gradual improvement of the bilateral relations during the decade of 1960, the two states have never had an intensive and cordial cooperation during the Cold War years. At best, they were normal and based on a pragmatic cooperation, however, on a very limited level.

Relations between Turkey and Bulgaria deteriorated precipitously when the Bulgarian government launched an assimilation campaign against the Turkish minority in December 1984. The reasons behind this attempt at cultural and religious assimilation were probable that the national purification campaign was induced in part by the logic that if the majority population could be mobilized against the Muslims, its attention would be diverted from the increasingly evident national economic crisis. The fact that the non-Muslim population had a shrinking birthrate while the Muslims had an expanding one was also one more reason of this campaign. In 1989 about three hundred thousand ethnic Turks fled to Turkey as a result of Bulgaria's opening its border - an effort to eliminate the "Turkish Question" by physically removing

¹Under the pressure of USSR, after the Second World War the Bulgarian government gave up her claims to Yugoslav Macedonia and recognized the existence of "Macedonian" minority. However, as relations with Yugoslavia deteriorated, Bulgaria had changed her policy contented that the Slavs living in Yugoslav Macedonia had Bulgarian origin. The current Bulgarian perspective on the "Macedonian" nationality is that Tito created it during and following World War II to diminish the legitimacy of any Bulgarian aims on Yugoslav territory or people. After the disintegration of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria recognized the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, favoring an independent and indivisible state.

a large number of the ethnic Turks from Bulgaria- about half of which have returned to Bulgaria.

Soon after the replacement of Todor Zhivkov, the new government launched a program of reinstating those human rights denied to Muslims and did so with the support of most political opposition groups, especially UDF. This development in the Turkish minority issue led to the rehabilitation of the Turkish-Bulgarian relations.

The international changes which took place after 1989 fundamentally altered the post-1945 international order. In the post-Cold War era Turkey and Bulgaria were fairly successful in developing good relations. Major steps towards the Turkish-Bulgarian rapprochement were the gradual improvement of the status of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria and the two sides' same perception of their common interests at the end of the Cold War. Bulgaria was seeking for security guarantees in regional level which took place with the military agreements with Turkey. Turkey for its part was seeking to reinforce its relations with the former communist states- and in particular with Bulgaria. Two states have stabilized their relations through several high-level contacts and agreements and managed to establish a mechanism of constant dialogue.

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