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BULGARIAN FOREIGN POLICY AND RECOGNITION OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Abstract: *This paper explains that Bulgaria took the responsibility to be the only country to recognise the independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina already in January 1992, with the deep conviction that only in this way equality could be achieved between all former Yugoslav republics, and specifically for Bosnia and Herzegovina – the impending tragedy could be prevented. The chronological framework of the article presents Bulgarian foreign policy from the mid-1980s to the international recognition of Bosnia and Herzegovina's statehood in April 1992. In the early 1990s Bulgaria had a special interest and a specific concern regarding the process of rethinking the existing relations between the detached republics in the multinational Yugoslav federation. When negotiations on the future of Yugoslavia ended in failure in the spring of 1991, the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry developed a new approach in relations with Yugoslavia. The emphasis shifted from contacts with the leadership of the federation to contacts with the leaderships of the republics. As soon as Croatia and Slovenia declared their independence on June 25, 1991, the official Bulgarian position followed that of the European Community (EC), which had initially advocated the preservation of the Yugoslav federation. At the same time, Sofia expressed its principled view that the individual Yugoslav republics were free to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. Already during the early autumn of 1991, Sofia officially received guests at government level from Croatia, Slovenia and Macedonia. After them, Bulgaria's attention turned to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Bulgarian ambassador in Belgrade visited Sarajevo on 22 and 23 October 1991. He held an impressive number of meetings covering the whole spectrum of state and party institutions. At the end of 1991 Bulgaria was preparing to establish full relations with the Yugoslav republics. It was ready to recognise their independence, but it had stated an official position that it would synchronise concrete steps in this respect with the moves of the EC. The positions of Turkey and Greece were also important for Bulgaria. On January 13, 1992, the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry decided to include Bosnia and Herzegovina „in a package” with the other Yugoslav republics to be recognised*

as independent states. The Bulgarian government's decision was officially announced on 15 January 1992. Some Bulgarian politicians had some concerns about Bosnia and Herzegovina, which had not even yet held a referendum on secession from Yugoslavia. The opinion of the Bulgarian Prime Minister Philip Dimitrov was decisive: „It was more beneficial for me to look incompetent in constitutional and legal terms on the issue of Bosnia than to create a mess for me and be one of the people who encouraged Milosevic to enter Bosnia”. Although it claimed that it was relying on the criteria adopted by the EC, Bulgaria actually went much further than the EC, which only recognised Slovenia and Croatia. Sofia's recognition of Bosnia and Herzegovina was symbolically important because it came in a moment of rising extreme internal conflict when the whole of Europe was silent and hesitant how to react.

Key words: *Break-up of Yugoslavia, International recognition of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria's foreign policy, European Community, 1992.*

BUGARSKA VANJSKA POLITIKA I PRIZNANJE BOSNE I HERCEGOVINE

Apstrakt: *Ovaj rad objašnjava da je Bugarska preuzela odgovornost da bude jedina zemlja koja je priznala nezavisnost Bosne i Hercegovine već u januaru 1992. godine, s dubokim uvjerenjem da se samo na taj način može postići ravnopravnost između svih bivših jugoslovenskih republika, i konkretno za Bosnu i Hercegovinu – mogla spriječiti nadolazeća tragedija. Hronološki okvir članka predstavlja bugarsku vanjsku politiku od sredine 1980-ih do međunarodnog priznanja nezavisnosti Bosne i Hercegovine u aprilu 1992. godine. Ranih 1990-ih Bugarska je imala poseban interes i specifičnu zabrinutost u vezi sa procesom preispitivanja postojećih odnosa među odvojenim republikama u multinacionalnoj jugoslovenskoj federaciji. Kada su pregovori o budućnosti Jugoslavije završili neuspjehom u proljeće 1991, bugarsko Ministarstvo vanjskih poslova razvilo je novi pristup u odnosima s Jugoslavijom. Naglasak se prebacio sa kontakata s rukovodstvom federacije na kontakte s rukovodstvima republika. Čim su Hrvatska i Slovenija proglasile nezavisnost 25. juna 1991, zvanični bugarski stav slijedio je onaj Evropske zajednice (EZ), koja je prvobitno zagovarala očuvanje jugoslovenske federacije. Istovremeno, Sofija je izrazila svoj principijelni stav da su pojedinačne jugoslovenske republike slobodne da ostvare svoje neotuđivo pravo na samoopredjeljenje. Već tokom ranih jeseni 1991, Sofija je zvanično primila goste na nivou vlade iz Hrvatske, Slovenije i Makedonije. Nakon njih, pažnja Bugarske usmjerena je ka Bosni i Hercegovini. Bugarski ambasador u Beogradu posjetio je Sarajevo 22. i 23. oktobra 1991. Održao je impresivan broj sastanaka koji su obuhvatili čitav spektar državnih i partijskih institucija. Krajem 1991. Bugarska se pripremala za uspostavljanje punih odnosa s jugoslovenskim republikama. Bila je spremna da prizna njihovu*

nezavisnost, ali je iznijela zvanični stav da će konkretni koraci u tom smislu biti sinhronizirani sa potezima EZ. Položaji Turske i Grčke također su bili važni za Bugarsku. Trinaestog januara 1992, bugarsko Ministarstvo vanjskih poslova odlučilo je uključiti Bosnu i Hercegovinu “u paket” s drugim jugoslovenskim republikama koje će biti priznate kao nezavisne države. Odluka bugarske vlade zvanično je objavljena 15. januara 1992. Neki bugarski političari imali su određene zabrinutosti u vezi s Bosnom i Hercegovinom, koja još nije ni održala referendum o odcjepljenju od Jugoslavije. Mišljenje bugarskog premijera Filipa Dimitrova bilo je odlučujuće: “Bilo je korisnije za mene da izgledam nesposobno u ustavnopravnom smislu u vezi s pitanjem Bosne nego da napravim nered za sebe i budem jedan od ljudi koji su potakli Miloševića da uđe u Bosnu”. Iako je tvrdila da se oslanja na kriterije koje je usvojila EZ, Bugarska je zapravo otišla mnogo dalje od EZ, koja je priznala samo Sloveniju i Hrvatsku. Priznanje Bosne i Hercegovine od strane Sofije bilo je simbolično važno jer je došlo u trenutku rastućeg ekstremnog unutrašnjeg sukoba kada je cijela Evropa bila tiha i nesigurna kako reagovati.

Ključne riječi: *Raspad Jugoslavije, međunarodno priznanje Bosne i Hercegovine, bugarska vanjska politika, Evropska zajednica, 1992.*

Introduction

On 15 January 1992, news agencies around the world circulated a list of countries that had recognised the independence of the former Yugoslav republics of Croatia and Slovenia. Bosnia and Herzegovina was left to await its broad international recognition until early April 1992. There are assessments that „of all the mistakes that the European Community has made with regard to the recognition of the Yugoslav republics, this was perhaps the most tragic. It was the decision with the most damaging long-term consequences, which were clearly foreseeable.”¹ The issue of the fate of Bosnia and Herzegovina is present in all studies on the break-up of Yugoslavia. The external factor is particularly important in the process of recognition of the independence of the republics of former Yugoslavia. In this process, the Bulgarian state has played a specific role, which is usually not taken into account by traditional analyses of the challenges facing the international community during the Yugoslav crisis of the early 1990s.² In some of them, Bulgaria is not even mentioned as the first country to

¹ Josip Glaurdić, *The Hour of Europe: Western Powers and the Breakup of Yugoslavia*, Yale University Press, New Haven 2011, 281-282; Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan tragedy Chaos and dissolution after the Cold War*, Brookings Institution Press, Washington DC 1995, 196.

² James Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will. International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War*, New York 1997; Peter Radan, *The break-up of Yugoslavia and international law*, London and New York 2003; Richard Caplan, *Europe and the Recognition of New States in Yugoslavia*, New York 2005.

recognise the statehood of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Other more recent studies point to this fact but do not comment on it.³

This article explains that Bulgaria took the responsibility to be the only country to recognise the independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina already in January 1992, with the deep conviction that only in this way equality could be achieved between all former Yugoslav republics, and specifically for Bosnia and Herzegovina – the impending tragedy could be prevented. For this reason, Bulgaria's attitude towards the assertion of Bosnia and Herzegovina's independence must be fully explored through a critical analysis of archival documents and memoir sources. A problem-chronological historical approach is applied in combination with foreign policy analysis. The chronological framework of the article presents Bulgarian foreign policy from the mid-1980s to the international recognition of Bosnia and Herzegovina's statehood in April 1992.

The identity crisis in Yugoslavia and Bulgarian foreign policy

During the last decade of the Cold War, the Bulgarian state leadership took a serious interest in the development of the processes in the Yugoslav federation after the death of Joseph Broz Tito. Sofia sought ways for direct contacts with the individual Yugoslav republics. Mutual economic interests, including with the Federal Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, provided a good basis for this. In the early 1980s, on the basis of a bilateral agreement between the People's Republic of Bulgaria (PRB) and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), Bulgarian builders and fitters worked on the extension of *Rafinerija nafte Brod*, which was probably the largest industrial project in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the period. Successful projects were developed in the fields of metallurgy and electrical engineering. Mutual economic interest motivated the need to hold meetings at government level. In November 1985, Bulgarian Prime Minister Grisha Filipov visited Sarajevo and held talks with the Chairman of the Executive Council (Government) of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Goiko Ubiparip, and the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Munir Mesihović. Goiko Ubiparip returned the visit, going to Sofia the following year. The interlocutors shared the assessment that the pace of Bulgaria's cooperation with Bosnia and Herzegovina was significantly higher compared to the pace of development of cooperation with other republics of the SFRY. It was agreed to work on expanding economic ties.⁴

³ Sead Bandžović, Međunarodno priznanje Bosne i Hercegovine 1992, *ALMANAH*, br. 91-92, Podgorica 2023, 199; Izet Hadžić, Borba za opstanak i međunarodno priznanje Bosne i Hercegovine, *Historijska misao*, god. I, br. 1, Tuzla 2015, 267; Войн Божинов, *Социалистическа Югославия в разпад (1989 - 1992 година)*. Арка, София 2021, 272-273.

⁴ Central State Archives of the Republic of Bulgaria (CSA), f. 136, inv. 94, file 274, 53.

The implementation of the joint projects was hampered because it coincided with crisis moments in the development of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. At the end of the 1980s, both countries entered a stage of „radical economic and industrial reconstruction”.⁵ The transformations also affected political life. The one-party system was replaced by a multi-party system. The profound shifts in the two neighbouring countries brought new political formations and new leaders to the fore. Democratic elections were held in which the communist parties in both countries lost influence and positions. In 1990, non-communist politicians were elected as presidents in both Bulgaria and Bosnia and Herzegovina – Zhelyu Zhelev in August and Alija Izetbegović in November, respectively.⁶ Building and consolidating a new political and economic system became a serious challenge for all former socialist countries. In the SFRY, the processes were hampered by an additional circumstance – the need to rethink the existing relations between the detached republics and peoples in the multinational federation. In this situation, Bulgaria had a special interest and a specific concern regarding the processes developing in the Socialist Republic of Macedonia.⁷

The Intra-Yugoslav Dialogue was institutionalised in the form of a series of meetings of the presidents of all the Yugoslav republics in the winter and spring of 1991. Preserving the centralisation in federal relations was supported by Serbia and Montenegro. Slovenia and Croatia proposed broad decentralisation, amounting to confederation. Macedonia, along with Bosnia and Herzegovina, sought a balance between the two extremes. In this respect, the position of Bosnia and Herzegovina was important for Bulgaria because of the interaction between Sarajevo and Skopje.

The negotiations on the future of Yugoslavia did not achieve a result. Their failure became apparent in the spring of 1991. The developments motivated the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry to propose a new approach in relations with Yugoslavia. The emphasis shifted from contacts with the leadership of the federation to contacts with the leaderships of the republics. It was envisaged that a Bulgarian deputy prime minister, responsible for economic policy, would visit the republican capitals in succession. The Bulgarian ambassador in Belgrade was to organise the visit in coordination with the leadership of each of the Yugoslav republics. The proposal was submitted for consideration by the Bulgarian government on 5 April 1991.⁸ The document was accompanied by biographical notes on the prime ministers of the Yugoslav republics with whom it was planned to organise meetings. These included Jure Pelivan, Prime Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The situation in Yugoslavia prevented the implementation of the

⁵ Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria (AMFA), inv. 48-3, file 233, 2.

⁶ Надя Бояджиева, *САЩ и конфликтът в Босна и Херцеговина (1989–1995)*, София 2000, 98-100.

⁷ Бисер Банчев, *България и Югославската криза (1989 – 1995)*, София 2009, 23-115.

⁸ Report by Viktor Valkov, Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Minister for Foreign Affairs (2.4.1991), AMFA, inv. 48-3, file 182, 1-4.

idea. For the next few weeks, the Bulgarian ambassador was unable to personally convey the invitation from Sofia to the republican governments because of the sharp complication of the situation in the federation. A series of clashes involving paramilitaries, republican police and the federal Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) ended with dead and wounded. The last attempt to preserve the common state was the „Platform concerning the Future of the Yugoslav Community”, which gained notoriety as the Gligorov-Izetbegović Platform. It envisaged the creation of a union of sovereign states, but it was not accepted by the other republics. Bulgarian diplomats analysed the situation and gave the assessment that „the possible separation of Slovenia and Croatia would aggravate the situation of Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in the negotiations on the future state structure of Yugoslavia”.⁹

The Yugoslav crisis entered its next phase when Croatia and Slovenia declared their independence on 25 June 1991. Sofia took the non-committal position „for the unity of Yugoslavia and for the development of relations with it and also with the individual republics”. The military actions in Slovenia led to a new declaration by the foreign ministry on 28 June 1991: „Bulgaria stands for the unity of Yugoslavia and for the settlement of the conflicts that have arisen between the Yugoslav peoples by peaceful methods and through democratic means.” The official Bulgarian position followed that of the European Community (EC), which had initially advocated the preservation of the Yugoslav federation. At the same time, the declaration reaffirmed Bulgaria's principled position that the individual Yugoslav republics were free to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination.¹⁰

Bulgaria was carefully watching the moves of the EC. Brussels managed to convince Croatia and Slovenia for a three-month moratorium on the declared independence, until a peaceful solution to the conflict was found. The ceasefire was monitored by EC observers. The JNA withdrew from Slovenia, but hostilities resumed in Croatia.¹¹

In this situation, the Bulgarian position was explained to the ambassadors of the EC countries by Prime Minister Dimitar Popov and Foreign Minister Viktor Valkov. The hosts made clear that the initial Bulgarian support for the democratic processes and the right to self-determination of the Yugoslav peoples had acquired a different emphasis as a result of „the growth of the crisis and the intervention by the JNA”.¹²

The development of events motivated the Bulgarian foreign ministry to develop its ideas for a new approach in Bulgarian policy, where the

⁹ Information on the highlights of the domestic political situation in the Republic of Croatia, (19.6.1991), AMFA, inv.48-3, file 195, 6.

¹⁰ Both declarations in: AMFA, inv. 48-3, file 15, 13-15.

¹¹ Laura Silber, Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, London 1997, 165.

¹² Memorandum from the traditional meeting of the Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs Viktor Valkov with the ambassadors of the EC countries (8.7.1991), AMFA, inv.48-0, file 54, 22-25.

intensification of relations with Yugoslavia was to be directed towards the individual republics. Various initiatives were proposed to serve as a basis for „future friendly relations and mutually beneficial cooperation”. The activities envisaged invitations to the prime ministers of Croatia, Slovenia and Macedonia to visit Bulgaria.¹³ Bosnia and Herzegovina was not included in the list because it had not yet formally declared its desire for statehood.

In September 1991, the Macedonian citizens' desire for independence was confirmed in a referendum, and on 7 October the three-month moratorium on Croatian and Slovenian independence expired. In the meantime, hostilities on former Yugoslav territory (in Croatia) intensified. During these tumultuous weeks, Bulgaria welcomed senior statesmen from Skopje (prime minister), Ljubljana (foreign minister) and Zagreb (prime minister). Sofia began to be seen internationally as one of the advocates for the independence of Croatia, Slovenia and Macedonia. With the official reception of the guests at government level, Sofia indirectly recognised the new states. De facto, the foundations of official bilateral relations were laid.¹⁴

The recognition of the independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Bulgaria

From the autumn of 1991, Bulgaria's attention could already be focused on the next Yugoslav republic – Bosnia and Herzegovina. The political debate in the republic was split between two perspectives. The first was related to the so-called Belgrade Initiative, which proposed the creation of a new federation without Croatia and Slovenia. The other was expressed by the President of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Alija Izetbegović. He believed that his country could not be part of a federation that did not include Croatia.¹⁵

In the meantime, on 3 October 1991, the representatives of Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Vojvodina in the federal presidency, announced that they were beginning to function as the full state leadership of Yugoslavia. Abroad, the event was described as a coup, and the country was given the unofficial name „Rest-Yugoslavia”. The dramatic events had a reflection in Sarajevo. The parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina held lengthy debates on 14 and 15 October 1991. In the end, two documents (Platform and Memorandum) were adopted which proclaimed the sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina and expressed support for the formation of a new Yugoslav „community of free republics”, but only if Serbia and Croatia were also members. Bosnia and Herzegovina was not to send representatives to the parliament or other bodies of a federal Yugoslavia unless all the other republics were present. This effectively

¹³ Report by Viktor Valkov, Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Minister for Foreign Affairs (11.07.1991), AMFA, inv.48-3, file 257, 11-14.

¹⁴ Бисер Банчев, *България и Югославската криза (1989 – 1995)*, София 2009, 74-83.

¹⁵ Steven L. Burg, Paul Shoup, *The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention*, New York 1999, 71.

excluded Bosnia and Herzegovina from the federation, since Slovenia and Croatia had already seceded. Bosnian Serb leaders rejected the parliament's decisions and began to carve out their own autonomous institutions.¹⁶

Only a week later, the Bulgarian ambassador in Belgrade, Marko Markov, managed to make an extensive visit to Sarajevo. On 22 and 23 October 1991, he held a series of meetings. One of them was with the Prime Minister of the Republic, Jure Pelivan. He received a personal invitation from his Bulgarian counterpart to visit Sofia. When conveying the invitation, Ambassador Markov encouraged the visit by giving the example of the Croatian prime minister, who had visited Bulgaria two weeks earlier despite intense hostilities on Croatian territory. Pelivan accepted the invitation „with satisfaction” and stressed that „the time has come to expand cooperation between the two countries”. He shared his concerns that Serbs in the republic did not accept Bosnia and Herzegovina as an independent state, relying on active support from Serbia and the JNA to keep the republic within Yugoslavia. The Bulgarian ambassador was received personally by President Alija Izetbegović. He stressed that despite the difficult situation in which the republic found itself, he believed that the visit of its prime minister to Bulgaria would be realised. Izetbegović said that the republic's leadership was making every effort to reduce tensions. The government in Sarajevo had declared neutrality but was also counting on the assistance of the European Community and the USSR. He expressed the interesting view that the Non-Aligned Movement had lost its influence and could not offer an effective solution to the Yugoslav crisis. He also informed about the preparation of a referendum in which the citizens themselves would decide what the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina should be. On the issue of economic cooperation, Izetbegović stressed that despite the decrease in the intensity of production in Bosnia and Herzegovina, efforts would be made to develop trade and economic relations with Bulgaria. He sought Bulgarian support for his idea of building a Balkan economic community, similar to the countries in the European Community. Other official meetings of the Bulgarian ambassador included Aleksandra Balvanović, Deputy Speaker of the Sarajevo City Assembly (direct cooperation with a major Bulgarian city was discussed); Mariofil Ljubičić, Deputy Speaker of Parliament (establishing contacts between the two parliaments „in the spirit of the new politics” was discussed). A special meeting was held with Marko Pulić, Vice President of the Economic Chamber of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The establishment of regular contacts with the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry was discussed. Such contacts would allow to implement various projects for joint and cooperative production in the field of mechanical engineering and electronics. Pulić maintained that economic cooperation could start before contacts were

¹⁶ S. L. Burg, P. Shoup, *The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 76-79; Laura Silber, Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, London 1997, 215-216; Skupština Bosne i Hercegovine: Platforma o položaju Bosne i Hercegovine i budućem ustrojstvu jugoslavenske zajednice (Sarajevo, 15. 10. 1991), In: Miroslav Tuđman, Ivan Bilić, *Planovi, sporazumi, izjave o ustavnom ustrojstvu Bosne i Hercegovine 1991 – 1995*, Zagreb 2005, 17-18.

established at political and state level. Moreover, it would facilitate their establishment. The practical mechanisms of cooperation were discussed with Vlatko Kraljević, Deputy Foreign Minister. Ambassador Markov urged for meetings to be organised with the leaders of the most influential political parties. The first was scheduled with the leader of the Serbian Democratic Party, Radovan Karadžić, but it turned out that he had not yet returned from Belgrade. His deputy, Momčilo Krašnik, who at the time was the speaker of the Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, came to talk with the Bulgarian diplomats. He presented the opinion of the Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the preservation of Yugoslavia. Krašnik stated that they as a party were „extremely interested in relations with the Bulgarian state”. Another important meeting was with the Deputy Chairman of the Muslim Bosniak Organisation, Muhamed Filipović, who opposed a possible partition of the republic and pointed to Radovan Karadžić’s party as the biggest problem for the country. The last meeting was with the President of the Croatian Democratic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Stjepan Kljuić. He said that his party fully supported the positions and policies of the Slovenian and Croatian leadership from an internal Yugoslav perspective. At the end of the conversation, Kljuić asked the ambassador to „insist” to the Bulgarian government for the recognition of Croatia’s borders and independence.¹⁷

In none other of the Yugoslav republics did the Bulgarian ambassador have so many meetings. They covered the whole spectrum of state and party institutions. Ambassador Markov acquainted his hosts with Bulgaria’s positions on the Yugoslav crisis and in particular on the Macedonian question. The ambassador found a general desire on the part of his interlocutors to establish stable and lasting contacts at state, parliamentary, municipal, party and economic levels. All this was described in a detailed report to the Bulgarian government.

Ambassador Markov’s report arrived in Sofia at a time of governmental change. On 8 November, the government of Dimitar Popov handed over its powers to the newly elected government of the Union of Democratic Forces, headed by Philip Dimitrov. The latter was an even more energetic supporter of the independence of the former Yugoslav republics. On this issue, the new prime minister had broad public support. On 20 November, 90 Bulgarian writers appealed to the UN member states for immediate recognition of Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and condemned the genocide perpetrated by „Serbian chauvinists”.

In this atmosphere, the new leadership of the Bulgarian foreign ministry developed a „Proposal for the Development of Contacts and Cooperation with the Yugoslav Republics”. In the section on Bosnia and Herzegovina it was proposed to organise a visit of a Bulgarian economic delegation headed by the deputy prime minister in charge. The aim was to conclude a trade agreement

¹⁷ Information on meetings of the Ambassador of the Republic of Bulgaria in Belgrade (22-23 October 1991), AMFA, inv. 48-3, file 192, 1-20; AMFA, inv. 48-3, file 233, 1-4.

leading to the establishment of a joint intergovernmental commission for commercial economic cooperation and the creation of a joint chamber of commerce. Invitations to visit Sofia were to be extended to the prime minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a parliamentary delegation, the mayor of Sarajevo and experts from the chamber of commerce.¹⁸

The planning of such measures showed that Bulgaria was preparing to establish full relations with the Yugoslav republics. It was ready to recognise their independence, but it had stated an official position that it would synchronise concrete steps in this respect with the moves of the EC. The position was presented on 12 December by Foreign Minister Stoyan Ganev at an open session of the National Assembly's Foreign Policy Committee. In front of the MPs and the journalists present, the minister reported that Bulgaria supported the independence of the Yugoslav republics that wanted it, but it nevertheless complied with the EC. At that same moment, the European Community was being torn by disputes on the subject, with Germany insisting on recognition of Croatia even before Christmas. The question of the fourth republic, Bosnia and Herzegovina, also came up. It had its declaration of independence adopted by parliament but no referendum had yet been scheduled. The main reason for its delay was the desire not to provoke a negative reaction from the Serbian population of the republic, which could have led to open conflict and the intervention of the JNA. The leadership of the republic, together with that of Macedonia, informed the international community that in order to avoid bloodshed it was necessary to find a solution for the future of Yugoslavia that would be accepted by all parties concerned. The looming separatist recognition of the independence of Slovenia and Croatia put the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia under direct threat. The EC was not prepared to allay these fears. This period saw the Community preparing the next stage of its integration with the Maastricht Treaty on Political and Economic Union. Yugoslavia, without falling off the agenda, was also overshadowed by the issue of the future of the former USSR republics. The EC's activity concluded with the adoption of a special declaration on 16 December 1991. It formulated the criteria for recognition and gave the republics until 15 January 1992 to fulfil them. The assessment of the criteria fulfilment was to be made by the so-called „Badinter Commission”.

The conditions of the EC did not include ideas and mechanisms on how to resolve the contradictions between the republics that wanted to dissolve the Yugoslav federation and the republics that wanted to keep it. The vacillations in developing a pan-European position were taken into account at the UN Secretary-General De Cuéllar wrote a letter to the EC presidency, held at the time by the Dutch prime minister, warning that the presidents of Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina had expressed concern about premature recognition of some

¹⁸ Proposal for the development of contacts and cooperation with the Yugoslav Republics (12 November 1991), AMFA, inv. 48-3, file 182, 12-13.

republics. Diplomatic practice was broken and instead of from the Netherlands, the reply came from Germany. Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher insisted that delaying Croatia's recognition would only lead to an escalation of the use of force by the JNA. De Cuellar sent a new letter to Genscher reminding him of the concerns of the presidents of Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina about the possible effect on the entire Balkan region. The non-aligned countries also expressed concern in a statement submitted to the UN. The Bulgarian ambassador to the UN followed the tense discussion and promptly reported back to Sofia. For its part, the ministry forwarded the information to the prime minister, the president and the minister of defence.¹⁹

At the same time, the lack of unity in the EC freed Sofia from the need to closely repeat the decisions of Brussels. During his visit to Austria on 18 December, Stoyan Ganev reminded journalists that besides Croatia and Slovenia there were also Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Shortly before its Christmas recess, the National Security Committee in the Bulgarian National Assembly adopted by consensus on 19 December an opinion according to which it „judges the issue of simultaneous recognition of the independence of the republics as extremely important for European security”.²⁰ The opinion was approved in a closed session of parliament.

The following day, the Foreign Policy Committee examined the EC declaration of 16 December 1991. The president and the prime minister were present. Prime Minister Philip Dimitrov justified why it was not acceptable to have a selective approach to the recognition of the Yugoslav republics – „non-recognition... is in fact a means of continuing the war elsewhere”.

Both the MPs and the Bulgarian prime minister initially discussed the simultaneous recognition only of Slovenia, Croatia and Macedonia, because at that moment only they had officially declared their desire for recognition by the international community. The Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina announced its request for recognition as an independent state on 24 December. Serbian representatives did not participate in the adoption of the corresponding decision of the state leadership. This was subsequently acknowledged in the opinion of the Badinter Commission.²¹

Until the beginning of 1992, Bosnia and Herzegovina was missing from the official statements of senior Bulgarian statesmen. The republic was mentioned only in the quoted interview of Foreign Minister Ganev to the

¹⁹ AMFA, inv.49-6, file 38, 1-28.

²⁰ CSA, f. 117, inv. 50, file 98, 28.

²¹ Predsjedništvo i Vlada SR Bosne i Hercegovine: Zahtjev Europskoj zajednici za priznavanje suvereniteta i nezavisnosti Bosne i Hercegovine (Sarajevo, 24. 12. 1991), In: Miroslav Tuđman, Ivan Bilić, *Planovi, sporazumi, izjave o ustavnom ustrojstvu Bosne i Hercegovine 1991. – 1995*, Zagreb 2005, 50.; Josip Glaurdic, *The Hour of Europe: Western Powers and the Breakup of Yugoslavia*, Yale University Press, New Haven 2011; Arbitration Commission of the International Conference on Yugoslavia. Opinions No. 4 on International Recognition of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina by the European Community and its Member States, *European Journal of International Law*, IV/1, Firenze 1993, 74-76.

Austrian press. The case was incidental because on 6 January 1992, there was a special press conference where Ganev spoke about the recognition of Macedonia, Slovenia and Croatia only. The foreign minister expressed the principled position that Bulgaria was in favour of the self-determination of the Yugoslav republics. On the same day, the Address-Programme of Prime Minister Filip Dimitrov was published. It specified that with „the expiry of the deadline – January 15 – we will proceed with the recognition of the newly emerged states that meet the criteria set by the EC, namely the republics of Macedonia, Slovenia and Croatia”. The statement was made that „we will also be able to achieve a gradual rapprochement with the Serbian people, and Bulgaria should stand out as an island of reason and stability in the Balkans amid the turmoil”. Underlined on every possible occasion was the position repeatedly expressed by the Bulgarian institutions that recognition should lead to a peaceful solution of the problems and not to an exacerbation of the conflict.²²

On 7 January 1992, Minister Ganev informed the MPs of the National Assembly's Foreign Policy Committee that Bosnia and Herzegovina had also expressed a desire to be recognised as an independent state. The announcement was passed over without much attention because the main topic of discussion was how to secure international support for the recognition of Macedonia. It was specified that intensive contacts should be conducted in the coming days through all possible intergovernmental and interparliamentary channels.²³

In this atmosphere, a memorandum on the Yugoslav crisis, which was crucial for Bulgarian policy, was drawn up on 8 January. Urgently circulated at the UN, it noted: „from the outset Bulgaria has followed a line of non-intervention and refraining from actions which could be interpreted as attempts to take advantage of the complex situation in Yugoslavia... Bulgaria considers that ... the Republic of Macedonia ... meets the criteria set out in the EC Declaration and should be treated on an equal footing with Slovenia and Croatia. Any postponement of international recognition of the Republic of Macedonia would not contribute to stability in the Balkans.”²⁴

On 10 January, Minister Ganev visited Italy to present the Bulgarian memorandum to his counterpart De Michelis. The Italian foreign minister expressed his support in principle for the Bulgarian position. At that moment, all European countries interested in Yugoslavia needed as many allies as possible in the various European political formats.

In the Bulgarian media appeared information from 10 January that a dispute had flared up in the EC, in which the problem with Bosnia and Herzegovina was also involved. Greece had been very active, protesting against a possible recognition of Macedonia, and the Portuguese presidency had difficulties balancing between the opposing positions of the member states. The

²² Бисер Банчев, *България и Югославската криза (1989 – 1995)*, София 2009, 96.

²³ CSA, f. 117, inv. 50, file 229, 52-57.

²⁴ Letter dated 9 January 1992 from the Permanent Representative of Bulgaria to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, UN Doc. S/23404, 9.I.1992.

discussion was complicated when hours earlier the so-called Republika Srpska was established on part of the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The decision to do so was taken by the self-proclaimed „Assembly of the Serbian People in Bosnia and Herzegovina”. The European countries were faced with the dilemma of whether recognition of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s independence would be the occasion for a flare-up or a calming of a severe internal conflict. Archival documents of European foreign ministries from the period are not yet fully accessible to researchers. Some contemporary studies suggest that Germany made a not very insistent attempt to persuade its partners to recognise Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to balance its unilateral act towards Croatia. In the end, Germany’s foreign minister came under harsh criticism for his policies towards Slovenia and Croatia and chose not to push for recognition of Bosnia and Herzegovina.²⁵

In forming the final Bulgarian position, both the information from Brussels and the positions of Turkey and Greece were taken into account. The Turkish deputy foreign minister arrived in Sofia for consultations. He was successively received by Bulgarian Foreign Minister Ganev and by Prime Minister Dimitrov. Media speculations emerged that the Greek-Serbian „axis” was opposed by a Bulgarian-Turkish one. The accusations were dismissed with the urgent ratification in the Bulgarian parliament of a Bulgarian-Greek treaty on friendship, good-neighbourliness, cooperation and security. At the Bulgarian-Turkish consultations, Turkey’s unequivocal support for the independence and integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina was expressed. In his memoirs, then Deputy Foreign Minister Stefan Tafrov stressed: „We had the confidence that when Bulgaria recognised Macedonia we would not be alone in the Balkans for long, and Turkey would at some point recognise all four republics.”²⁶

The fate of Bosnia and Herzegovina was also discussed during the talks of Foreign Minister Ganev in Italy. As a result of all foreign policy consultations, on 13 January 1992, at a meeting of the Bulgarian government, it was reported that the recognition „in a package” of all the republics that had requested it was imminent. The news was in the clarification that Bosnia and Herzegovina was also included „in the package”.²⁷ On 14 January 1992, Deputy Foreign Minister Tafrov maintained before the MPs the advisability of the „recognition in a package”. For the first time, the issue of Bosnia and Herzegovina was discussed in depth. Tafrov informed the MPs about the Badinter Commission’s recommendation to wait for a referendum in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The

²⁵ Josip Glaurdic, *The Hour of Europe: Western Powers and the Breakup of Yugoslavia*, Yale University Press, New Haven 2011, 281-282.

²⁶ Как преди 30 г. България първа в света призна независимостта на днешна Република Северна Македония, *БТА*, 14 януари 2022. - <https://bta.bg/bg/news/10557-Как-predi-30-g-Balgariya-parva-v-sveta-prizna-nezavisimostta-na-dneshna-Republi>.

²⁷ CSA, f. 136, inv. 94, file 132, 111-113.

deputy foreign minister's assessment was that despite this, „the likelihood of more countries recognising Bosnia and Herzegovina is increasing”.²⁸

In the late afternoon of 15 January, in Sofia arrived the information about the EC's decision to recognise only Slovenia and Croatia. Nevertheless, the parliamentary committee on foreign policy came up with a completely different opinion. The Committee „agrees that the government of the Republic of Bulgaria should recognise the independence of the Republics of Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina... The Committee is ready to recognise the independence of the Republics of Serbia and Montenegro as soon as they so wish. Our position is based on the approach of equality between the former Yugoslav republics... By simultaneously recognising the independence of the four Yugoslav republics, we confirm the aspiration of the Republic of Bulgaria to support the democratic process, peace and stability in the Balkans in accordance with the principles of the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter for a New Europe.”²⁹ The same recommendation was confirmed at a meeting of the President's National Security Advisory Council.

The opinion of the Foreign Policy Committee gave the Bulgarian government a legal basis to take a decision in the late afternoon of 15 January 1992 to recognise all the republics that had requested independence.³⁰ The working hours of the National Assembly were specially extended to hear the Bulgarian prime minister. Around 8 p.m., Prime Minister Filip Dimitrov officially announced the government's decision. The news was received enthusiastically with few exceptions. In the debate that followed it was recalled that already in December the MPs had approved the idea of simultaneous recognition „in a package” of all republics that had expressed such a wish, and the government was given the right to decide „when”.³¹ President Zhelev's address to the nation was broadcast on national television, linking the recognition of the four republics to Bulgaria's aspiration to be a stabilising factor in the Balkans.³²

At that moment, the leading concern of the international community was related to the possibility that the borders between the former Yugoslav republics could be changed by force. Future developments would show that it was the integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina that was most at risk. On 17 January 1992, in a special declaration, the EC recognised as international the pre-existing inter-republican borders within Yugoslavia. The Bulgarian foreign ministry issued a

²⁸ CSA, f. 117, inv. 50, file 229, 72-74.

²⁹ Желю Желев, *В голямата политика*. Труд, София 1998, 152.

³⁰ Decision dated 15 January 1992 of the government of Republic of Bulgaria concerning recognition of Yugoslav republics, UN Doc. S/23462, Annex I.

³¹ Lada Sadiković, Todor Koburov, Bosnia and Herzegovina at 20: European integration dimensions. Part II: The recognition of the former Yugoslav republics – Bulgarian perspective on the events of 1992, *International Journal on Information Technologies & Security*, VII/1, Sofia 2015, 52-53.

³² Желю Желев, *Обръщения на президента към народа и парламента*. Хр.Г.Данов, Пловдив 1997, 97.

similar declaration. It stressed that Sofia respected as international the existing internal Yugoslav borders. The second part of the declaration specified that future steps to establish diplomatic relations with the new states would be in accordance with the course of decision making in the EC. All Bulgarian documents were immediately submitted to the UN.³³

Discussions around the Bulgarian decision on recognition of the independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Both in the academic literature in Bulgaria and in the public sphere, the motives for the recognition of Bosnia and Herzegovina's independence remain not fully clarified. Already in the course of the preliminary discussions on 15 January 1992, some MPs had certain concerns on the subject of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which „... had not even yet held a referendum on secession from Yugoslavia and we have created an absurdity to recognise a country that has not expressed its will for autonomy”.³⁴ Deputy Foreign Minister Tafrov overcame the resistance of those who were hesitant with the information that Turkey was expected to recognise the four republics „in the very near future”. The MPs were convinced by the deputy minister that Bulgaria should do it before Turkey. Tafrov presented the situation as a competition between Sofia and Ankara as to who would recognise the four republics first. Some academic scholars also find a rivalry between the two capitals on this issue.³⁵ Indeed, Turkish sources present arguments in favour of the alleged coordination between the two countries. At the same time, they have pointed out that Turkey had reasons to withhold its act for some time. The Turkish prime minister was due to meet Slobodan Milosevic at the end of January and President Özal was due to attend the Davos forum at the beginning of February. The Turkish decision to recognise the four republics was announced on 6 February 1992, immediately after President Özal's return to Ankara.³⁶ In fact, in his memoirs, Deputy Minister Tafrov confirmed that he was fully briefed on this development: „The then Turkish Prime Minister Demirel had ... a meeting with Milosevic, and there was no way the recognition could have taken place before this visit.”³⁷ Against this backdrop, Tafrov's assertion

³³ Letter dated 20 January 1992 from the Permanent Representative of Bulgaria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, UN Doc. S/23462,23.I.1992.

³⁴ Христо Марков за признаването на Македония, *Фактор*, 9 август 2017.

³⁵ Мишо Докмановиќ, *Сами на своето: Кратка историја на македонската независност (1990-1993)*. Фондација „Фридрих Еберт” - Канцеларија Скопје, Скопје 2021, 211-212.

³⁶ Michael B. Bishku, Turkish-Bulgarian Relations: From Conflict and Distrust to Cooperation, *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Volume 14, Number 2, Spring, Durham 2003, 92; Philip Robins, Coping with Chaos: Turkey and Bosnian crisis, Richard Gillespie (ed.) *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 1, London 1994, 120-121.

³⁷ Как преди 30 г. България първа в света призна независимостта на днешна Република Северна Македония, *БТА*, 14 януари 2022. - <https://bta.bg/bg/news/10557-Kak-predi-30-g-Balgariya-parva-v-sveta-prizna-nezavisimostta-na-dneshna-Republi>.

of Turkey's forthcoming action, expected at any moment, can be seen as a deliberately selected manipulation for internal use to overcome the hesitations of part of Bulgarian society.

Much more reasoned was the position of Bulgarian Prime Minister Philip Dimitrov: „my decision was the recognition of all – which included Bosnia, despite the rather controversial situation there. It was more beneficial for me to look incompetent in constitutional and legal terms on the issue of Bosnia than to create a mess for me and be one of the people who encouraged Milosevic to enter Bosnia. That would make the recognition lose significance and look like an incitement: ‘Devour not this one, but the other’.”³⁸ With these motives, the Bulgarian government decided to recognise all the republics that wanted independence.

In academic literature one can also find the claim that the Bulgarian government was the first in the world to recognise Bosnia and Herzegovina, led by the belief that this would weaken „neighbouring” Serbia.³⁹

The completeness of the analysis requires examining the hypothesis of other external factors that could have influenced the Bulgarian decision to recognise the independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It has already been pointed out that at a certain moment Germany was positive about the recognition of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The move by the government in Sofia had probably eased the position of Germany, which was being heavily criticised for its policy towards Croatia. Analytical publications already from the 1990s point to the USA as another influential country lobbying for a package recognition of the four republics.⁴⁰ Indeed, the formal coincidence of interests cannot be denied, but it is not sufficient to justify the claim that the Bulgarian decision of 15 January 1992 served external factors. The recognition of Bosnia and Herzegovina's independence had its logical foundations in the overall Bulgarian policy towards the Yugoslav crisis, and even more in Sofia's policy towards the Yugoslav federation in the 1980s.

There is no trace in Bulgarian archival sources of how one more inaccurate statement on the subject has come to be. This time it is not in Sofia, but in Sarajevo – on the website of the foreign ministry of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The official reference there states that Bulgaria recognised Bosnia and Herzegovina on 31 January 1992. This incorrect date was still on the ministry's website at the time this article went to press. The confusion is inexplicable because Sarajevo diplomats have repeatedly and without hesitation given the correct date – 15 January 1992.⁴¹

³⁸ Филип Димитров за фалстарта, носталгията по миналото и половинчатите символи, *Култура*, Бр. 9 (2846), 12 март 2010, <https://newspaper.kultura.bg/bg/article/view/16738>.

³⁹ Никола Аврејски, *Външната политика на Република България. Част I. Регионални измерения*. „За буквите – О писменехъ“, София, 2019, 208.

⁴⁰ Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan tragedy. Chaos and dissolution after the Cold War*, Brookings Institution Press, Washington DC 1995, 196.

⁴¹ Lista zemalja koje su priznale Bosnu i Hercegovinu i datumi uspostavljanja diplomatskih odnosa

The public in Bosnia and Herzegovina was informed about Sofia's official position by an interview with the Bulgarian ambassador in Belgrade, Marko Markov. It was published on 23 January 1992 in the newspaper *Svobodna Bosna*. „The decision of the Republic of Bulgaria to recognise the independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina completely coincides with the logic of the attitude of the European and international community towards the Yugoslav crisis as a whole... A historical basis could be found in the understanding of the unified Balkan space, with all its traditions, cultural and spiritual proximity and mentality, as well as the common historical destiny of many centuries... I had the opportunity to hear ‘first hand’ important assessments of the senior state leadership of your republic, as well as of your main political forces. They helped me to grasp a very important trend that – if implemented – would give Bosnia and Herzegovina the image of a country of all its citizens. And this would be in line with the dominant trends of modern development in Europe.”⁴² It may be interesting to add that Marko Markov is the translator of the Bulgarian edition of the book *Islamic Declaration* by the first president of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Alija Izetbegović.⁴³

In an attempt to avoid a tragedy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the „Cutileiro Plan” was adopted in Brussels on 25 February, according to which the republic retained its borders but was divided into cantons along national lines. A referendum on independence was also held on 29 February and 1 March. It was boycotted by the Bosnian Serbs. At the same time, Montenegro voted to remain in federal Yugoslavia. The first barricades appeared in Sarajevo. Bulgaria sent observers to the referendum and monitored their actions. The Bulgarian MP Neycho Neev, who was an observer, came under fire the night after the referendum. On 18 March, the government of Bosnia and Herzegovina sent a letter to the embassy in Belgrade expressing its gratitude to the representatives of the Bulgarian delegation monitoring the referendum and to the Bulgarian embassy for the cooperation provided in the implementation of this mission.⁴⁴

The EC recognised Bosnia and Herzegovina on 6 April 1992. In this connection, Bulgaria submitted a special declaration to the UN. Circulated as a

https://www.mvp.gov.ba/vanjska_politika_bih/bilateralni_odnosi/datumi_priznanja_i_uspostave_diplomatskih_odnosa/?id=6; Н.Пр. Хамдия Яхич, посланик на Босна и Херцеговина в България, България със своя опит като държава-членка на ЕС и НАТО, ще ни бъде от помощ. *Европа 2001*, 3, София 2007, 6-7.

⁴² Марко Марков, *Западнобалканско време*. София 2015, 29-31.

⁴³ Алия Изетбегович, *Ислямска декларация*, София 2013.

⁴⁴ Протоколи от заседания на Комисията по външната политика при Тридесет и шестото Народно събрание относно обсъждане на: информация от народни представители, участвали като наблюдатели в референдума за независимост на Босна и Херцеговина....[Minute records of the meetings of the Foreign Policy Committee of the National Assembly of Republic of Bulgaria concerning the discussion of: information from Members of Parliament who participated as observers in the referendum on the independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina] 12 и 19.3.1992 г, CSA, f. 117, inv. 50, file 235, 1-3, 12-15; AMFA, inv. 49-1, file 304, 2.

document of the Security Council and the General Assembly, it stated: „The Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria hereby expresses its satisfaction with the decision of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the European Community to recognise the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We regard this decision also as evidence of the constructive spirit of the Bulgarian position, expressed as early as the middle of January, for the recognition not only of Slovenia and Croatia but also of the other republics which have stated in a democratic way their will for independence and meet the international standards of statehood.”⁴⁵

Only protracted hostilities on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina prevented the full establishment of diplomatic relations. They had to wait until the Dayton Peace Agreement of 1995.

Summary

Based on all of the above, a research hypothesis can be defended that the search for a new state identity after the end of the Cold War, in accordance with the new international situation, is key to understanding Bulgarian foreign policy in the break-up of the former Yugoslavia.

Although it claimed that it was relying on the criteria adopted by the EC, Bulgaria actually went much further than the EC, which only recognised Slovenia and Croatia, and the latter only because of German pressure.⁴⁶ There are strong grounds for accepting the assessment that: „As for Bosnia and Herzegovina, this first act of recognition was probably symbolically important because it came in a moment of extreme internal conflict when the whole of Europe was silent and hesitant how to react. Bulgaria was much braver at that moment and sent an encouraging signal to another Balkan country with diverse ethnic and religious population (similar to the situation in Bulgaria).”⁴⁷

Zaključak

Na osnovu svega navedenog, može se braniti istraživačka hipoteza da je potraga za novim državnim identitetom nakon kraja Hladnog rata, u skladu s novom međunarodnom situacijom, ključna za razumijevanje bugarske vanjske politike u raspadu bivše Jugoslavije.

⁴⁵ Letter dated 16 April 1992 from the Permanent Representative of Bulgaria to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, UN Doc. S/23817, 16.IV.1992.

⁴⁶ Пламен С. Цветков, *Външната политика на България*. София 1994, 47.

⁴⁷ Lada Sadiković, Todor Koburov, Bosnia and Herzegovina at 20: European integration dimensions. Part II: The recognition of the former Yugoslav republics – Bulgarian perspective on the events of 1992, *International Journal on Information Technologies & Security*, VII/1, Sofia 2015, 55.

Iako je tvrdila da se oslanja na kriterije koje je usvojila EZ, Bugarska je zapravo otišla mnogo dalje od EZ, koja je priznala samo Sloveniju i Hrvatsku, a ova posljednja samo pod pritiskom Njemačke. Postoje čvrsti razlozi za prihvatanje procjene da: “Što se tiče Bosne i Hercegovine, ovaj prvi čin priznanja vjerovatno je simbolično važan jer je došao u trenutku ekstremnog unutrašnjeg sukoba kada je cijela Evropa bila tiha i nesigurna kako reagovati. Bugarska je bila mnogo hrabrija u tom trenutku i poslala ohrabrujući signal još jednoj balkanskoj zemlji s raznolikom etničkom i vjerskom populacijom (sličnoj situaciji u Bugarskoj).”

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