



REVIEW

SUBJECT: The PhD dissertation of Dimitar Georgiev Dobrev
PhD student in the section "Contemporary Balkans"
of the Institute of Balkan Studies with a Center for Thracology
at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

on "*NATO and Greek-Yugoslav relations (1952-1967)*"

for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education
"Humanities", professional field 2.2. History and Archeology (New and Recent General History)

by Dr. Jordan Angelov Baev - Professor of Modern and Contemporary History
at the G. S. Rakovski Defense College, member of the scientific jury according to Order № RD
48-10 / 06.04.2021 of the Director of IBCT-BAS

Mr. Dimitar Dobrev has a bachelor's degree in history and a master's degree in international relations from Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski". In the period 2016-2019 he was a full-time PhD student at IBCT, and after successful completion of the three-year doctoral course he was appointed in November 2020 Assistant Professor in the section "Contemporary Balkans" of IBCT. I have personal impressions of the activity of Dimitar Dobrev during his doctoral studies and his active participation in the scientific life of the section "Contemporary Balkans". At the end of 2019, he was included in the organizing committee for the preparation of an international conference "Empires and Imperial Heritage in the Balkans" at Plovdiv University and I can testify that he showed good professional abilities in such academic events.

The presented dissertation with a size of 281 pages is structured in three main chapters, each of which consists of three paragraphs. The individual chapters are built in a consistent chronological-problematic form, as each of them considers a separate period and ends with substantiated conclusions. The introduction of the dissertation argues the relevance and need for such research, formulates the subject, goals and objectives of the dissertation. The chronological framework and the internal periodization are well-founded, although the doctoral student correctly realized the need to present the previous historical stage in the first post-war years (1946-1951). In this context, the establishment of military-political and intelligence cooperation between Yugoslavia and the

United States in 1949-1951, the motives for Greece's inclusion in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the initial consultations (especially in the propaganda sphere) between the political and military leaderships in Athens and Belgrade are indisputable. It is noteworthy, for example, the coordinated use of similar highly hyperbolized data and propaganda techniques, which were applied at the same time in the late 1950 and early 1951 by the Chiefs of Staff of the two neighboring countries to the number and intentions of the Bulgarian army. in order to attract more significant Western financial and military aid.

The dissertation is based on a respectful large number of scientific publications and an adequate amount of documentary materials from Bulgarian and foreign archival sources. Probably, in further continuation of the research or editing of the work for publication in a separate monograph, in addition to materials from the Bulgarian political and diplomatic archives, the very interesting information in the archival collections of the Bulgarian foreign policy and military intelligence, which are already available for researchers, could be revealed. . Given that United States policy is a key factor in understanding and explaining many aspects of the subject, the PhD student has used a substantial amount of documents from the National Security Council, the CIA, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the US Department of State. An important moment for the Bulgarian historiography is the analysis of a number of essential directive and operational documents from the NATO archives in Brussels (mainly from the collections of the Military Committee - MC and Standing Group - SG). It was also useful to include materials from the archives of the Foreign Office, although a number of valuable British diplomatic and intelligence information could be used, especially on the Macedonian issue. It is worth noting that in fact Fund 837 of the Archives of Yugoslavia in Belgrade contains the personal records of Josip Broz Tito (KPR - Cabinet of the President of the Republic), which increases its historical value. It should also be noted that the quoted interview with the US diplomat John Campbell (1974) is stored in the presidential archives of Harry Truman in Independence, Missouri.

More than 220 scientific publications were used in the dissertation, of which 160 in English and nearly 25 in Serbian. The doctoral student shows that he is very well familiar with Serbian historiography, both on bilateral relations with Greece and on relations with NATO and the United States, including on parallel topics such as Yugoslavia's participation in the Non-Aligned Movement (Alexander Zivotic and Jovan Cavoski). Works of leading Greek historians are well

known and used, some of which conditionally represent the "Greek-American school" (Columbis, Yatrídes) and the "Greek-British school" (Hadzivasiliou, Churchoulis). American historiography is represented by emblematic works of specialists in the history of NATO, international relations and international alliances and US foreign policy (Stephen Walt, Larry Kaplan, etc.), and European historiography - with prominent researchers of Cold War history and regional Balkan and Mediterranean problems in Germany, Great Britain, France, Italy, Switzerland. Apart from Prof. Artyom Ulunyan from Institute for Universal History at Russian Academy of Science, the doctoral student could also point out some famous Russian specialists in the history of the Balkans, for example from the Institute of Slavonic Studies Nina Smirnova, Elena Guskova, Tatiana Volokitina and others.

The first chapter of the dissertation analyzes the geopolitical dimensions of the sharpest confrontation in global and regional terms during the first Cold War period. This time period was defined by Dobrev "in search of a strategic outcome" and consistently considers efforts to strengthen NATO's southern flank, attempts to build a regional system of collective security (the Balkan Pact) and its place in the strategic plans and military-political coordinate system of the Alliance. The militarization of the two military-political blocs following the Korean War required closer coordination between NATO members (approved by the decisions of the Lisbon summit in February 1952) and the adoption by the administration of President Dwight Eisenhower in Washington of the new strategy of "massive retaliation". and "effective nuclear capabilities." The strategic defense planning of the southern European flank and the eastern Mediterranean area necessitated the incorporation of Yugoslavia as a natural link between Italy and Greece, which motivated, on the one hand, an acceptable settlement of the Italian-Yugoslav dispute over Trieste and, on the other hand, intensified Greek-Yugoslav military cooperation. The existing geostrategic environment favored the emergence of the Balkan Pact - a political and subsequently a military alliance between countries with different socio-political systems. Dimitar Dobrev critically analyzed the various aspects and manifestations of the Balkan Pact and, above all, the various starting positions of the participants in this regional organization for collective defense, which, in the words of some experts, has been "moribund" since its inception.

The second chapter understandably focuses on the "new challenges" facing NATO in the second half of the 1950s, which also led to changes in the Alliance's strategic concepts. The Suez Crisis

undoubtedly shook the foundations of transatlantic solidarity and led to the imposition of the Eisenhower Doctrine on the Middle East, contrary to the post-colonial ambitions of Britain and France. On the other hand, the Balkan Pact, created with active American support, was inevitably torpedoed and doomed to disintegration after the normalization of Soviet-Yugoslav relations and grading Greek-Turkish controversies over the fate of Cyprus. Even at that time, the Greek government preferred to present the settlement of the Cyprus problem not in an internal Union format, but to the UN world body in order to fend off the positions of two of the allied countries - Great Britain and Greece. The mechanism of the "Committee of the Three Wise Men" (this mechanism had existed in another form since 1951) was used to overcome the conflicts in NATO, and in 1957-1958 the next strategic concept of the Alliance was adopted with the approval of the doctrinal documents MC -14/2 and MC-70. In parallel with the presentation of the "new horizons" in Yugoslav foreign policy, the PhD student discussed the motives for change in the Greek foreign policy with the conditional formation of the "Belgrade-Athens-Cairo axis". It could be more categorically concluded that since the mid-1950s (and especially after the advent of ballistic missiles in the context of the military-technological leap at the end of the decade) the strategic importance of the Balkans has diminished compared to Central Europe.

The third chapter offers a general conclusion about the "collapse of regional restraint" in the first half of the 1960s. From the point of view of NATO's history, this is primarily related to the development of the Cyprus crisis and the reform of the Alliance as a result of another transatlantic crisis, which is the subject of two of the three paragraphs of the last chapter in the study. As early as 1961-1962, the administration of President John F. Kennedy adopted a new strategy for a "flexible response", which was adopted by the other allies in the context of building joint nuclear forces. It led in turn to the withdrawal of De Gaulle's France from the military structures of the Alliance. NATO was reformed in 1967-1969 with the adoption of the "Armel Report".

From the point of view of Bulgarian national interests, the first paragraph in the third chapter, dealing with the "Macedonian question" in Greek-Yugoslav relations, is of particular interest, especially since in recent years Bulgarian historians relatively rarely remembers the historical projections of ethno-national problems in the area of Aegean Macedonia and Western Thrace. Examining the newly discovered CIA intelligence documents, Dimitar Dobrev found interesting information from the leading US intelligence agency about a supposed meeting of Yugoslav

representatives with the leader of IMRO in exile Ivan (Vanche) Mihailov. Of course, this information should be compared and re-checked with the presence of possible materials in the Archives of Yugoslavia or in the still inaccessible archives of the Yugoslav secret services. However, in addition to this document, I can cite other material from the CIA records at NARA from the same period (June 1949). The CIA leadership received information from its stations in Greece and France about a confidential meeting with Ivan Mihailov in Italy (where the IMRO leader lived), where he proposed an initiative to create a united independent Macedonia under the auspices of the United Nations, which would not be "Under the yoke" of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria or Greece. I would also like to clarify that the several thousand "Bulgarian-speaking" refugees who arrived in Bulgaria from Greece at the end of the civil war (p. 181) were later transferred from Bulgaria to Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia in 1949-1950 for tactical reasons. Some of them returned to Bulgaria only after the political crises in Poland and Hungary in 1956.

The conclusion of the dissertation showed a synthesized and substantiated summary of the assessments formulated in the course of the full contents of the research on the relations in the NATO-Greece-Yugoslavia triangle. Once again, the doctoral student demonstrated his ability for an objective and critical view of the revealed historical events based on a systematic comparative approach with the application of interdisciplinary elements of strategic analysis. Despite the fact that there are still some technical and grammatical shortcomings, the study is characterized by a concise, clearly understandable and logical style, with a proper interpretation of documentary and literary sources and is a personal work of the doctoral student.

The abstract with a size of 22 pages reflects the content and conclusions in the dissertation. Of the five contribution elements mentioned, I fully support second, third and fifth contributions. In my opinion, the fourth contribution is contained in the second contribution formulated before it, and the first contribution is valid only with regard to the Bulgarian historiography on the subject. Two publications on the topic of the dissertation were mentioned; however, I would recommend greater activity with participation in a larger number of scientific forums and subsequent publications in foreign languages in authoritative indexed international publications.

In conclusion, I would like to express my satisfaction with the serious and thorough attitude of the doctoral student and his ability to discover, systematize and interpret the essential interrelated events and phenomena on the research topic. Those several recommendations made in the review are primarily intended to assist the PhD student in his future work on the research topic for possible publication of the work in a separate monographic publication. The above gives me reason to conclude that the dissertation in question meets to a very large extent the necessary requirements and criteria for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in accordance with the Law on the Development of Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria, Regulations for its application and the Regulations of the Scientific Council of the Institute of Balkan Studies with a Center for Thracology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences on the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and holding academic positions. In view of the above, I will vote "yes" and call on the esteemed members of the scientific jury to also give their vote for awarding Dimitar Georgiev Dobrev the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education "Humanities", professional field 2.2. History and Archeology (New and Recent General History).

Member of the Scientific Juri:

Prof. Dr. Jordan Baev

May 10th, 2021