

**HUMAN RIGHTS DIPLOMACY AND BULGARIAN-TURKISH TENSIONS  
DURING THE COLD WAR: INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE MUSLIM  
MINORITY ISSUE IN SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE, 1984-1989**

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*To PMB*



# Abstract

More than thirty years after the events, scholarships have been concerned with the end of the Cold War. While global politics and the relations between Washington and Moscow have been widely studied by historians, interstate relations in the periphery remain understudied in English-speaking literature. This is the case in the Bulgarian-Turkish conflict regarding Muslim minorities in Bulgaria in the 1980s. This work reexamines this largely forgotten story of the end of the Cold War. The relations between Sofia and Ankara are traditionally seen as deeply influenced by the international military and ideological affiliation of both countries. In 1984, the Bulgarian communist government initiated a name-changing campaign known as the ‘Revival Process’ (*‘Vazroditelen protzes’*), which forced the country’s Muslim populations to change their Turkish names to Bulgarian names. The ‘Revival Process’ in Bulgaria in the 1980s and the 1989 migration of the Bulgarian Muslim populations to Turkey questions the level of autonomy of Sofia vis-à-vis the Kremlin in terms of foreign policy. It examines Bulgarian-Turkish relations from 1950 to 1991 with a strong focus on the period from 1984 to 1989.

After 1975, the defense of human rights became a powerful tool for exercising pressure on Eastern bloc countries. Using unexplored archival materials from several diplomatic archives in Europe, this work argues that the ‘Revival Process’ took a predominant place in the Bulgarian-Turkish diplomatic bilateral relations as well as in the multilateral diplomatic relations between Bulgaria and Turkey. Even if the Turkish government received relative support from Western countries which were part of NATO, Ankara was not able to impose the use of its strategic language while other states and international organizations were describing the Muslim minority in Bulgaria. Ankara was not perceived as a legitimate promoter of moral lessons mainly because of the human rights situation in Turkey at that time.

The main contribution of the thesis is the reexamination of the multiple aspects of the end of the Cold War in the periphery. The case study regarding Bulgarian-Turkish relations in the 1980s attempts to clarify the level of autonomy of Sofia vis-à-vis the Kremlin in terms of foreign policy.



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# Introduction

“...-If the Turkish authorities decided to take the debate [regarding the respect of Human Rights of the Muslims in Bulgaria] to the United Nations, France would not oppose.

- However, France wishes to draw the attention of Ankara to the fact that the powers of the Security Council are very specific and that it does not appear that this question is actually within its competencies...”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> “...-Si les autorités turques décident de porter le débat devant les Nations Unies, la France n’y ferait pas obstacle. -Mais la France souhaite appeler l’attention d’Ankara sur le fait que les compétences du Conseil de Sécurité sont très précises et qu’il n’apparaît pas que cette question soit réellement de son ressort...” See “Réponse à la démarche turque sur l’introduction devant le Conseil de Sécurité de la question de la minorité turque de Bulgarie,” *Diplomatic Telegram of 31 August 1989*, Archives of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of French Republic, Box 1935-INVA 6203, politique étrangère, Minorités turques en Bulgarie, Europe 1986-1990, 1-2. ; All translations from French into English are provided by the Author of this work.

1989. The year when multiple political, economic, and societal changes happened in Europe and the rest of the World. The Berlin Wall came down after twenty-eight long years of existence, destroying the ‘invisible’ Iron Curtain on the European continent. In the summer of 1989, some weeks before East Germany (German Democratic Republic) opened its border to West Germany (Federal Republic of Germany), in southeast Europe tensions between two neighboring countries which were members of two different military blocs ran high. Bulgaria, a founding member in the Warsaw Pact, and Turkey, a member of NATO, had been disputing for several years in international diplomatic forums regarding the human rights situation of the Muslim minorities in Bulgaria. Ankara attempted to defend these Muslim populations. This minority was one of the legacies of the five-century-long Ottoman presence in the Balkans. In 1989, while the leaders of the West and the East, Reagan and Gorbachev, were negotiating to put an end to a four-decade Cold War,<sup>3</sup> Sofia allowed more than 350,000 Muslims to leave the country for Turkey. This was one of “the *largest* [movements of people] in postwar Europe”<sup>4</sup> which was, paradoxically, called the “Big Excursion.”<sup>5</sup> Some months later, with the beginning of the democratization in Bulgaria, around 60 000 returned to the country.

The events of this particular story started in 1984 when the Bulgarian communist government initiated a name-changing campaign known as the ‘Revival Process’ (*‘Vazroditelen protzes’*), which forced the country’s Muslim populations to change their Turkish names to Bulgarian names. Subsequently, Ankara raised the question concerning the respect of minority rights in Bulgaria at the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), the Council of Europe, the European Parliament, the Organization of Islamic Conference, NATO, and the United Nations. Sofia did not recognize the presence of a Turkish *national* minority in the country and even denied the existence of any Turkish-speaking populations. Turkey never proposed a Resolution in the UN General Assembly condemning Bulgaria, as for the international community this issue was part of the Bulgarian-Turkish bilateral relations.<sup>6</sup> However, in the summer of 1989 Turkey considered the possibility of introducing the question of respect for the Muslim minority rights in Bulgaria to the

<sup>3</sup> Archie Brown, *The Human Factor: Gorbachev, Reagan, and Thatcher, and the End of the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020)

<sup>4</sup> Tomasz Kamusella, *Ethnic Cleansing During the Cold War: The Forgotten 1989 Expulsion of Turks from Communist Bulgaria* (London & New York: Routledge, 2019), 2.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>6</sup> Ivan Garvalov. *Otnosheniyata mezhdu Bŭlgariya i Turtsiya v OON i OSSE v perioda 1984 - 1989 g.* [The relations between Bulgaria and Turkey in the UN and the OSCE in the period 1984 - 1989] (Sofia: A-Epso, 2014), 26

United Nations Security Council.<sup>7</sup> Permanent members for the Security Council such as France discouraged Ankara from using this option as the respect of human rights seemed to be outside of the competencies of the most important UN body.<sup>8</sup>

Prior to this conflict, the Muslim populations, whose presence in Bulgaria dates back to the Ottoman Empire, attracted the attention of the communist authorities but without provoking coercive policies. Every citizen, regardless of ethnicity, religion, or language, was supposed to become a good communist. This was one of the reasons that Sofia, on multiple occasions from the late 1960s to the end of the 1980s, refused to sign bilateral agreements with Ankara which would have facilitated migration to Turkey. Things drastically changed for the Bulgarian Muslim minorities with the 1974 Turkish intervention in Cyprus, which triggered Sofia's fear of a second Cyprus scenario in the Balkans.

In the post-communist world, the 1989 'Big Excursion'<sup>9</sup> has been only marginally researched in the English-speaking literature. Therefore, studying this period (from 1984 to 1989) will allow better understand the end of the Cold War in Europe and its implications on the evolution of the European project into a global perspective. The 1990s democratic transitions in Europe were completed with the successful integration of the former socialist countries in the European Union (European Communities until 1994). There are gaps to be filled in the literature regarding the period of the end of the Cold War in Europe and it might be the subject of multiple prospective studies considering the current geopolitical situation in Europe in 2022, when security concerns come back on the European political agenda. Furthermore, since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, perceptions of the end of the Cold War and the 1990s political changes in Europe have radically changed. Rethinking what really happened in the 1980s in the former Eastern Bloc is of major importance for understanding the current political developments inside the EU and in its neighborhood.

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<sup>7</sup> "Les Turcs de Bulgarie : nouvelle mise en garde d'Ankara," *Diplomatic Telegram of 31 August 1989*, Archives of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of French Republic, Box 1935-INVA 6203, politique étrangère, Minorités turques en Bulgarie, Europe 1986-1990, 1-2.

<sup>8</sup> "Réponse à la démarche turque sur l'introduction devant le Conseil de Sécurité de la question de la minorité turque de Bulgarie," *Diplomatic Telegram of 31 August 1989*, Archives of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of French Republic, Box 1935-INVA 6203, politique étrangère, Minorités turques en Bulgarie, Europe 1986-1990, 1-2.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

My thesis aims at conducting an in-depth examination of this issue, which has been understudied in the English-speaking world. It emphasizes the development of Human Rights Diplomacy after the signing of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act and the internationalization of the Bulgarian-Turkish conflict on the Muslim minority issue, which finishes with the 1989 migration. I seek to examine the dynamics of the relations between the two neighboring countries Bulgaria and Turkey, which are traditionally seen as part of two ideologically, militarily, and economically opposing blocs.<sup>10</sup> In this context, my thesis aims to answer the main research question: *What were the consequences of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act for the Bulgarian-Turkish diplomatic relations during the 1980s, and how were they impacted by the NATO-Warsaw Pact diplomatic interaction at that time?* Going beyond Bulgarian-Turkish bilateral relations, I aim to place the topic within the broader context of the East-West diplomatic relations when Human Rights diplomacy emerged as a political tool. In this story, national interests and *realpolitik* often go against the ideological international affiliations of Bulgaria and Turkey. After the 1970s, Bulgaria (a Warsaw Pact member) and Greece (a NATO member) established diplomatic *rapprochement* on the international stage to counter their common neighbor: Turkey. Paradoxically, the USSR seems to have had little influence on Sofia regarding its bilateral relations with Ankara.

This work examines Bulgarian-Turkish relations during the Cold while putting an emphasis on the period 1984 to 1989. This is the period of the ‘Revival Process’ which finishes with the migrations of Muslim populations to Turkey in the summer of 1989. At the very end of 1989 commenced the democratic transition in Bulgaria and the ‘Revival Process’ was abandoned and officially condemned. However, one of the first times an international organization mentioned the situation of the Muslim minorities in Bulgaria is in 1950 by the Council of Europe. The same organization followed the situation in Bulgaria until the early 1990s after the beginning of the democratic transition in the country. For this reason, the general timeframe of the thesis will encompass four decades, from 1950 to 1991. A key date is 1975 when the Helsinki Final Act was signed.

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<sup>10</sup> Evgenia Kalonova, “Moskva, ‘vŭzroditelniyat protses’ i krizata v bŭlgaro-turskite otnosheniya 1985 – 1989 g.” [Moscow, the “Revival Process” and the Crisis in Bulgarian-Turkish Relations 1985 – 1989], *Istoriĳŭt – izsledovatel i populyarizator. Sb. v chest na 70-godishninata na akad. Georgi Markov* (Sofia: St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, 2017), 388–425.

Understanding the significance of the Helsinki Final Act (HFA) is necessary for this thesis. Human Rights Diplomacy became crucially important in East-West diplomatic relations with the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) in 1975. The Helsinki Final Act (also known as the “Helsinki Accords”)<sup>11</sup> was the product of long, intense, and complicated negotiations between diplomats from the Eastern and Western Blocs. It was signed in one of the few neutral places during the Cold War, the Finnish capital, which explains its name.<sup>12</sup> It was negotiated and signed in the framework of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) which was the origin of the so-called Helsinki Process. In the last fifteen years, CSCE has been a “stimulating object of study” as Nikolas Badalassi stresses.<sup>13</sup> The first part of the HFA or the First Basket “Questions relating to Security in Europe” was of particular importance for the Soviet Union.<sup>14</sup> The Soviets, who had insisted on the organization of a security conference in Europe since the end of the 1950s, considered the document a great victory. For this reason, the HFA was generally perceived in a negative way in the Western press as it recognized *de facto* the political *status quo* and the borders in Europe after the Second World War.<sup>15</sup> In 1975, few thought the HFA could play an important role in the end of communism. The third part of the HFA or the Third Basket on which insisted that European countries was called “Co-operation in Humanitarian and Other Fields.”<sup>16</sup> In the eyes of some of the negotiators of the text, the Soviets did not realize the *trap* the engagement for respecting human rights would be for the socialist regimes.<sup>17</sup> The sentence pronounced by Andrei Gromyko, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR “[w]e are masters in our own house”<sup>18</sup> illustrates the different perceptions of priorities between the East and the West. However, in the 1980s, the “virus of freedom”<sup>19</sup> in the words of the French President Georges

<sup>11</sup> Daniel C. Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 4.

<sup>12</sup> For more details regarding the Finnish position during the Cold War see Jussi M Hanhimäki, *Containing Coexistence: America, Russia and the Finnish Solution, 1945-56* (Kent, Ohio and London: The Kent State University Press, 1997).

<sup>13</sup> Nicolas Badalassi, “Neither too much nor too little’ France, the USSR and the Helsinki CSCE,” *Cold War History*, Vol 18m No 1, 2018, 1-17.

<sup>14</sup> 1975 Helsinki Final Act, Official website of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/5/c/39501.pdf> (consulted on 02.04.2022)

<sup>15</sup> Nicolas Badalassi, “From Talleyrand to Sakharov: French Diplomacy in search of a Helsinki Effect,” in Nicolas Badalassi and Sarah Snyder, ed., *The CSCE and the end of the Cold War, Diplomacy, Societies and Human Rights, 1972-1990* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2019)

<sup>16</sup> 1975 Helsinki Final Act

<sup>17</sup> Jacques Andreani, *Le Piège. Helsinki et la chute du communisme* (Paris : Odile Jacob, 2005).

<sup>18</sup> Gromyko quoted in the article by Foot in Rosemary Foot, “The Cold War and Human Rights,” *The Cambridge History of the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 445-465, 459

<sup>19</sup> Nicolas Badalassi, *En finir avec la guerre froide, La France, l’Europe et le processus d’Helsinki, 1965-1975* (Rennes : Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2019), 314.

Pompidou, one of the European leaders insisting on the inclusion of the respect for human rights in the HFA, started to spread around the Eastern Block. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) were crucial for the respect of the rights defined in the HFA as they collected and gave publicity to the numerous human rights violations in the Eastern Bloc.<sup>20</sup>

This thesis argues that NGOs played a central role in the internationalization of the RP in regional international organizations such as the European Economic Communities. The networks used by these NGOs show that respect for Muslim minority rights was notable among Muslim populations in Europe. The language and the rhetoric of several letters addressed to the President of the European Parliament illustrate the universal perspective of the perception of defending human rights and that the issue had far-reaching implications that went beyond this particular case.<sup>21</sup> For these NGOs, the lack of respect for minority rights in Bulgaria was perceived as a problem for the entirety of humanity. These letters are the perfect illustration of the way Human Rights diplomacy flourished in Europe as Western countries systematically insisted on respect of the engagements taken in Helsinki by the socialist countries. In this sense, giving publicity to the situation of the Muslim minority in Bulgaria had a considerable impact on the image of Bulgaria on the international stage. This example contributes to rethinking the place NGOs had in the end of the Cold War. As Nicolas Badalassi shows, the Helsinki Final Act was perceived as a failure in the West in 1975.<sup>22</sup> Badalassi also stresses that European countries, particularly France played an active role in the inclusion of principles in the HFA for promoting direct human contact and cultural exchanges.<sup>23</sup> West European countries believed citizens of East European countries could have a decisive role in bringing more freedoms.<sup>24</sup>

Paradoxically, the USSR and the East European countries did not understand the diplomatic tool human rights would constitute by accepting the Third Basket of the HFA. NGOs played a quintessential role in the Helsinki Process as they were given the right to exist in the HFA. In the 1980s, the HFA was used *a posteriori* as legitimation for dissidents on both sides of the Iron Curtain for criticizing communist regimes. Bulgarian-Turkish relations were deeply influenced by

<sup>20</sup> Sarah B Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: a Transnational History of the Helsinki Network* (New York : Cambridge University Press, 2011), 244.

<sup>21</sup> These letters are located at the Historic Archives of the European Parliament in Luxembourg

<sup>22</sup> Nicolas Badalassi, "From Talleyrand to Sakharov," 74-75.

<sup>23</sup> Nicolas Badalassi, *En finir avec la guerre froide...*, 314.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 314.

the HFA and Sofia could not ignore the increasing number of accusations regarding the lack of respect for minority rights on the diplomatic scene.

Regarding the RP and the 1989 migration of Bulgarian Muslim populations to Turkey, one of the questions which needs to be raised is whether Sofia and Ankara became the ‘centers’ of the decision-making process instead of being the ‘periphery’ in their foreign policy. One of the widespread ideas about the Cold War is that Washington and Moscow were the predominant centers of decisions. This is generally proven by the number of works in the last two decades focusing only on the bilateral relations between the USSR and the US<sup>25</sup>, with some exceptions.<sup>26</sup> This idea emerged especially during the 1956 British-French intervention in the Suez Canal crisis when the two new superpowers (the United States and the Soviet Union) showed to the 19th century great powers (Great Britain and France) that they are the *only* legitimate centers of decision-making.<sup>27</sup> In the days of the Suez crisis, another uprising emerged on the Eastern side of the Iron Curtain on the streets of Budapest, but it did not receive sufficient attention from the West.<sup>28</sup> However, as Evgenia Kalinova argues, during the second part of the 1980s, Moscow seemed to be obliged to follow Bulgaria on international forums and not vice versa.<sup>29</sup> This raises the question of the level of autonomy of the Bulgarian foreign policy vis-à-vis Turkey. Bulgarian-Turkish relations in the 1980s make us rethink the ending of the Cold War in Europe. This is because countries that are traditionally perceived as peripheral in the decision-making process transformed into the ‘center’ in their interstate relations. This case makes us reconsider the years of Perestroika in the USSR and the *rapprochement* between the two superpowers.

<sup>25</sup> Melvyn Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007); Archie Brown, *The Human Factor: Gorbachev, Reagan, and Thatcher, and the End of the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); Robert D. English, *Russia and the Idea of the West: Gorbachev, Intellectuals and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); Olav Njolstad, *The Last Decade of the Cold War. From Conflict Escalation to Conflict Transformation* (London: Routledge, 2004); Georges-Henri Soutou, *La Guerre froide - 1943-1990* (Paris: Pluriel, 2011)

<sup>26</sup> Jeffrey A. Engel, ed., *Local Consequences of the Global Cold War* (Washington, D.C.: Stanford University Press, 2007); Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Frederic Bozo, Marie-Pierre Rey, N. Piers Ludlow, and Leopoldo Nuti, ed., *Europe and the End of the Cold War: A Reappraisal* (London, Routledge: 2008).

<sup>27</sup> Roger Louis and Roger Owen, ed., *Suez 1956: The Crisis and its Consequences* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); David A. Nichols, *Eisenhower 1956. The President's Year of Crisis - Suez and the Brink of War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012); Denis Lefebvre, *Les secrets de l'expédition de Suez 1956* (Paris: Perrin. 2010).

<sup>28</sup> Charles Gati, *Failed Illusions: Moscow, Washington, Budapest, and the 1956 Hungarian Revolt* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2006); François Fejtő, *Budapest 1956 : La Revolution Hongroise* (Paris: Julliard, 1966).

<sup>29</sup> Kalinova, “Moskva, „vůzroditelnyat protses“ i krizata v búlgaro-turskite otnosheniya 1985 – 1989 g“

In addition, the geographic specificities of Bulgaria and Turkey played an important role during the Cold War and they should be not disregarded while examining Bulgarian-Turkish relations in a bipolar world. Sofia and Ankara had a direct land border which was at the same time a dividing line between the East and the West. It had similar surveillance system as the border between East and West Germany which divided cities like Berlin. Citizens of the Eastern Bloc, especially from East Germany, were trying to cross it for reaching the West via Turkey.<sup>30</sup> A potential conflict between Turkey and Bulgaria would have had consequences on the global East-West relations during a period of unprecedented rapprochement. Probably for this reason both Sofia and Ankara could play to the limits of possible heir bilateral relations. The story of the Bulgarian-Turkish relations in the 1980s overpasses the traditional perception of the Cold War division of the world. The national interests and *realpolitik* often extended beyond supranational interest and military alliances.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, the relations between Bulgaria and Turkey might be analyzed in the context of Sofia's engagement in the Balkans<sup>32</sup> as well as in the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern space.<sup>33</sup> Socialist Bulgaria developed important diplomatic relations with North African countries.<sup>34</sup> Bulgaria was part of the East, a member of the Warsaw Pact, and it is traditionally perceived as one of the closes allies of the USSR.<sup>35</sup> The place of Turkey during the Cold War could be defined as a country being 'in between'. Turkey is geographically positioned between Europe and Asia minor and in 1952 it became a member of NATO.<sup>36</sup> It was perceived as part of the West as a strategic military ally of the US as this country was the only NATO member in the Black Sea

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<sup>30</sup> One Bulgarian movie in the 1990s describes the life of the border guards on the Bulgarian land border with the West. Citizens of the German Democratic Republic were among those who were trying to cross it. See Ilian Simeonov Hristian Nochev, *Granitza* [Border], Movie (Bulgaria, France 1994). Available on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BqNBs3KkpL4> (consulted on 29 April 2022).

<sup>31</sup> Roman Szporluk, *Communism and Nationalism: Karl Marx versus Friedrich List* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>32</sup> Theodora Dragostinova, *The Cold War from the Margins. A Small Socialist State on the Global Cultural Scene* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2021), 62-75; 85-88.

<sup>33</sup> Nadya Filipova, "Bulgarian Foreign Policy on the Middle Eastern Deadlock at the End of the 1960s and Early 1970s," *Les cahiers Irice* 1/10 (Paris: IRICE. 2013). 25 – 37.

<sup>34</sup> Marietta Stankova, "A Socialist Foreign Policy Bulgaria's Relations with the Mediterranean Arab States in the 1970s and 1980s," *Les cahiers Irice* 1/10 (Paris: IRICE. 2013), 107-121.

<sup>35</sup> Stephen White and Stephen Revell, "The USSR and its Diplomatic Partners, 1917-91," *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 13:1, 31-54. 2002., 37

<sup>36</sup> Şaban Halis Çalış, *Turkey's Cold War. Foreign Policy and Western Alignment in the Modern Republic* (London, I.B.Tauris: 2017), 1.



region. However, Turkey's relations with Europe and the US remained complex during the Cold War mainly because of the Cyprus question.<sup>37</sup>

It is important to clarify the way I refer to the Muslim minorities in Bulgaria. The definition of the Bulgarian Muslim populations who emigrated in 1989 to Turkey is not easy to establish. It is, however, of crucial importance for understanding the topic. The Turkish ethnographer Ayşe Parla, who spent years studying the communities, gives several useful insights into the way these populations perceive themselves. According to Parla, the geographical origin of the migrants remains significant in the eyes of the migrants themselves.<sup>38</sup> She “learned in the field never to refer to migrants from Bulgaria as Bulgar Türkleri (Bulgarian Turks) or, equally jarring, as Bulgar göçmenleri (Bulgarian migrants).”<sup>39</sup> She witnessed that these populations “‘are allergic to that phrase—Bulgarian Turks,’ was how a 1989 immigrant once put it to a public audience.”<sup>40</sup> “The phrases my interlocutors use in referring to themselves are Bulgaristanlı (of/from Bulgaria), Bulgaristan göçmeni (migrant of/ from Bulgaria), and Bulgaristan Türkü (Turkish from/in Bulgaria).”<sup>41</sup> The biggest paradox described by Parla is that these populations were the victims of discrimination twice. The first time was in Bulgaria during the RP. The second time was when after migrating to Turkey they tried to integrate into a different type of society. “In Bulgaria, we were persecuted because we were Turkish.”<sup>42</sup> “Here in Turkey, we are persecuted because we are seen as too Bulgarian.”<sup>43</sup> For these reasons, this thesis is going to talk about Bulgarian Muslim populations in general. Turkey perceived the Muslim populations living in the Balkans as “dış Türkler, or ‘distant Turks’”.<sup>44</sup> For Ankara, these populations were supposed to remain outside its territory “promot[ing] the nationalist cause beyond Turkey’s borders.”<sup>45</sup> Considering this fact, Ankara tried on multiple occasions in the 1980s to talk about a Turkish *national* minority in Bulgaria. The recognition of a Turkish *national* minority would have given the right for Turkey to intervene in the internal affairs of its neighboring country. As this work is going to show, the

<sup>37</sup> Didier Billon, *La politique extérieure de la Turquie, une longue quête d'identité* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997),

<sup>38</sup> Ayşe Parla, *Precarious Hope : Migration and the Limits of Belonging in Turkey* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2019), 12.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 9

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 7-8

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 7-8

language used by Ankara was not accepted by other states and international organizations while describing the Muslim minorities in Bulgaria.

Another important term for this work is internationalization. The definition of the world is “the action of becoming or making something become international.”<sup>46</sup> In international relations internationalization has taken a central role in an unceasingly economically interconnected world.<sup>47</sup> In this work, the process of internationalization has the meaning of a state (Turkey), which brings a particular question (the situation of the Muslim minorities in Bulgaria) to the attention of the international community by using several diplomatic forums. The internationalization of the ‘Revival Process’ happened on the scene of multilateral diplomacy. By doing this, the objective of Ankara was to impact its bilateral diplomatic relations with Sofia. On the international stage the states representatives, diplomats, were of crucial importance. As this work is going to show, NGOs also tried to influence the decision-making processes by addressing decision-makers and the persons who can intervene directly or indirectly in the events in Bulgaria by using the moral authority of the international organizations or institutions (President of the European Parliament).

## Literature Review

In order to understand the case, I am studying, it is important to review fundamental studies of the Cold War, Human Right Diplomacy and the ‘Revival Process’. In the last two decades, the Cold War period was studied from global,<sup>48</sup> local,<sup>49</sup> environmental,<sup>50</sup> and “Third World”<sup>51</sup> perspectives. The year “1989”<sup>52</sup> and the ultimate decade of this “neither war nor peace between America and the Soviet Union”<sup>53</sup> have attracted substantial scholarly interest. Some scholars had stressed the impact of the change of thinking among the Soviet elite vis-à-vis the West for reaching a

<sup>46</sup> Cambridge Dictionary online. Available online: [INTERNATIONALIZATION | signification, définition dans le dictionnaire Anglais de Cambridge](#) (consulted on 12.06.2022)

<sup>47</sup> Glauca Bernardo and Leonardo Mècher, "What is Internationalisation?," The United Nations University Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies Available online : <https://cris.unu.edu/what-is-internationalisation> (consulted on 12.06.2022)

<sup>48</sup> Georges-Henri Soutou, *La Guerre froide - 1943-1990* (Paris: Pluriel, 2011).

<sup>49</sup> Jeffrey A. Engel, ed., *Local Consequences of the Global Cold War* (Washington, D.C.: Stanford University Press, 2007).

<sup>50</sup> J. R. McNeill and Corinna R. Unger, ed., *Environmental Histories of the Cold War* (Washington, D.C.: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>51</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 2.

<sup>52</sup> Pierre Grosser, *1989 : l'année où le monde a basculé* (Paris : Tempus Perrin, 2019).

<sup>53</sup> Robert Service, *The End of the Cold War: 1985-1991* (New York: Public Affairs, 2015), 1.

diplomatic *rapprochement* between the two blocs in the 1980s.<sup>54</sup> According to Robert D. English, the late Soviet elite was closer to the West compared to the Soviet leading classes at the beginning of the Cold War, especially in the way of thinking and the perceiving the West.<sup>55</sup> This facilitated the reforms initiated in the second half of the 1980s in the Soviet Union known as perestroika.<sup>56</sup>

The regional studies allowed us to better understand the “strategic position” of the Balkans during the Cold War<sup>57</sup> together with the particular place of Bulgaria<sup>58</sup> and Turkey in the East-West relations.<sup>59</sup> Ankara which “benefited from the Cold War much more than any other country”<sup>60</sup> played a major role in the eastern flank of NATO. The place of Europe as a player at the end of the Cold War has also been studied.<sup>61</sup> In addition, in the past five years, several studies, including “*New Perspectives on the End of the Cold War: Unexpected Transformations?*”<sup>62</sup> started to rethink the 1980s. The authors of the book argue that multiple actors intervened for ending the Cold War and Washington and Moscow were not the only players in the game. In the introduction of the volume Jussi M. Hanhimäki says that since 1992, when the US president George H.W. Bush delivered a speech to the US Congress saying that the US was the winner of the cold war, the “belief that the collapse of communism – whether divinely ordained or not – was an unmitigated triumph for humanity has been increasingly questioned.”<sup>63</sup> Also, since the 1990s historians have tried to explain the multitude of political events which happened in Europe and the rest of the world during the 1980s in a long-term perspective of complex transformations rather than of a sudden change, shaped by a limited number of individuals and international players. The studies I previously discussed show the increasing importance of the examined topic, which indirectly contributes to the current debates about the multitude of complex causes for the end of communism in Europe.

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<sup>54</sup> Robert D. English, *Russia and the Idea of the West: Gorbachev, Intellectuals and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., ix.

<sup>57</sup> Svetozar Rajak, Konstantina E. Botsiou, Eirini Karamouzi and Evanthis Hatzivassiliou, ed., *The Balkans in the Cold War* (Londres: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

<sup>58</sup> Dragostinova, *The Cold War from the Margins*.

<sup>59</sup> Jamil Hasanli, *Stalin and the Turkish Crisis of the Cold War, 1945–1953* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011).

<sup>60</sup> Çalış, *Turkey's Cold War*. 1.

<sup>61</sup> Frederic Bozo, Marie-Pierre Rey, N. Piers Ludlow, and Leopoldo Nuti, ed., *Europe and the End of the Cold War: A Reappraisal* (London, Routledge: 2008).

<sup>62</sup> Bernhard Blumenau, Jussi M. Hanhimäki and Barbara Zanchetta, ed., *New Perspectives on the End of the Cold War: Unexpected Transformations?* (London and New York, Routledge: 2018).

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.,

The first study regarding the importance of the Human Dimension of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE, later OSCE) was realized by Victor-Yves Ghebali in 1989.<sup>64</sup> One decade later, “*The Helsinki Effect*” by Daniel Thomas analyzed the importance of the Final Act for the transformation of East-West relations in the 1980s and the ending of communism by using international relations theoretical framework (Liberal and Constructivist).<sup>65</sup> To illustrate the reasons the USSR and East European countries accepted the respect of fundamental human rights in the HFA, Thomas introduces his book by saying that “repressive states agree to be bound by human rights norms in the belief that they can gain international legitimacy without substantial compliance.”<sup>66</sup> Thomas also underlines the importance European countries played for the introduction of human rights in the text.

In the past fifteen years, a second generation of authors discovered new elements about the role Human Rights Diplomacy played at the end of communism.<sup>67</sup> This is mainly thanks to new available archival materials that Ghebali and Thomas could not access because of the time proximity of the events. As explained by Sarah B Snyder, in Helsinki Eastern Bloc countries focused mainly on “social and economic rights”<sup>68</sup> while Western Bloc countries considered more important human rights such as “the integrity of the human being, or freedom from governmental intervention against the person”<sup>69</sup> as well as “political and civil liberties.”<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Victor-Yves Ghebali, *La diplomatie de la détente. La CSCE, d’Helsinki à Vienne (1973–1989)* (Bruylant : Brussels, 1989).

<sup>65</sup> Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect*.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>67</sup> Nicolas Badalassi and Sarah Snyder, ed., *The CSCE and the end of the Cold War, Diplomacy, Societies and Human Rights, 1972-1990* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2019); Nicolas Badalassi, *En finir avec la guerre froide*; Michael Cotey Morgan, *The final act : the Helsinki Accords and the transformation of the Cold War* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 2018); Martin Klimke, Reinhild Kreis, and Christian F. Ostermann, *Trust, but verify : the politics of uncertainty and the transformation of the Cold War order, 1969-1991* (Washington, D.C. : Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Stanford, California : Stanford University Press, 2016); Poul Villaume, Rasmus Mariager and Helle Porsdam, *The 'Long 1970s' : human rights, East-West détente and transnational relations* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016); Rasmus Mariager, Karl Molin, and Brathagen, Kjersti, *Human Rights in Europe during the Cold War* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Poul Villaume and Odd Arne Westad, *Perforating the Iron Curtain : European détente, transatlantic relations, and the Cold War, 1965-1985* (Copenhagen, Denmark: Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2010).

<sup>68</sup> Sarah B Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: a Transnational History of the Helsinki Network* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 7.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.,5

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.,5.

This difference in perception of the significance of the type of human rights can be explained by the fact the HFA was not legally binding, but rather states agreed to mutually respect it.<sup>71</sup> It was a “declaration of intention,”<sup>72</sup> a kind of soft law in which states ‘agree to agree’ about certain general principles. The importance of the Helsinki Final Act comes from the fact that at the CSCE “states could exchange views on the implementation of the ...[ 1975 document], meaning human rights abuses would now be subject to international diplomacy.”<sup>73</sup> As explained by Constantin Iordachi, after the signing of the Helsinki Final Act “human rights and minority issues could no longer remain taboo in domestic or international politics.”<sup>74</sup>

At the Finish capital, the leaders of the Eastern and the Western Bloc countries met for the first time to discuss the borders of Post Second-World War Europe. At the end of the conference, they signed the Helsinki Accords which refer to the 1946 UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights addressing three general types of rights.<sup>75</sup> Two years before the Conference, the novel *The Gulag Archipelago* by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn greatly contributed to attracting the attention of the Western countries to the human rights situation in the Soviet Union and more generally in the Eastern Bloc.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, as explained by Snyder, the defense of human rights which transformed US Foreign Policy in the 1960s and early 1970s also influenced the inclusion of the respect for Human Rights in the Helsinki Final Act.<sup>77</sup>

Some eyewitness accounts of the 1975 Helsinki Conference also highlight some new elements about East-West diplomatic interactions in the 1970s and the strategic significance of the HFA. The French diplomat, Jacques Andreani described this diplomatic document as a “trap” (“*piège*”)<sup>78</sup> for the Eastern Bloc as the respect for human rights became a powerful diplomatic tool for putting pressure on socialist countries. In his memoirs, the Soviet Ambassador to the US Anatoly

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>74</sup> Constantin Iordachi: “From Disentanglement to Interdependence: State Citizenship in Romania and Hungary, 1945-2012” in Anders Blomqvist, Constantin Iordachi, Balazs Trencsenyi, ed., *Hungary and Romania Beyond National Narratives: Comparisons and Entanglements* (Oxford, Bern, Berlin, Bruxelles, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Wien: Peter Land, 2013), 737.

<sup>75</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Official Website of the United Nations <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights> (consulted on 13.02.2022).

<sup>76</sup> Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago 1918 - 56* ( London: Harvill Press, 2003)

<sup>77</sup> Sarah Snyder, *From Selma to Moscow: How Human Rights Activists Transformed U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

<sup>78</sup> Andreani, *Le Piège*.

Dobrynin, who closely followed the Soviet position in Helsinki, stresses the fact that the Soviet Union underestimated the possible consequences of the inclusion of the respect of human rights in the document and its potential usage on the diplomatic stage against the Eastern Bloc countries.<sup>79</sup> It is important to note that studies stressing the importance of the HFA and respect for the human rights in East-West relations generally underestimate the multitude of factors that provoked the collapse of the Eastern European Socialist regimes such as their economic developments.

In addition, several studies focus on the history of human right from a theoretical and philosophical perspective. In his book *"The Last Utopia"* Eckel Moyn analyses the reasons for the emergence of human rights in the 1970s which "were widely understood as a moral alternative to bankrupt political utopias."<sup>80</sup> At that time, a shift realized in the understanding of human rights which "meant individual protection against the state."<sup>81</sup> For Moyn "[h]uman rights emerged as a minimalist, hardy utopia that could survive in a harsh climate."<sup>82</sup> People started to use them "to express and act on their hopes for a better world."<sup>83</sup> Moyn's 'utopian' view attracted the attention of many<sup>84</sup> and his work was even qualified as a "bellwether in the field, the volume that must be responded to, whether by friend or foe."<sup>85</sup> One thing is sure: for Moyn, the 1970s are crucially important for the development of human rights. In this work, I partly agree with Moyn's realistic view which considers the emergence of human rights as a social structure. The book *"The breakthrough"* edited by Samuel Moyn and Jan Eckel comes to complete the picture by presenting in detail the emergence of human rights on the international stage in the 1970s on the different continents: in Africa (with the Biafran War of Secession and South Africa), Latin America, Asia (Indonesia), North America (US) as well as the Socialist world (USSR and Central Europe).<sup>86</sup> In the Preface of the book *"Not enough"* Moyn summarizes the debates regarding human rights in

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<sup>79</sup> Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents* (New York: Random House, 1995), 350-357.

<sup>80</sup> Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, Harvard University Press: 2010), 5

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 121

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 121

<sup>84</sup> Antony Anghie; "Whose Utopia? Human Rights, Development, and the Third World," *Qui Parle*, Vol. 22: 1 (Fall/Winter 2013): 63-80.

<sup>85</sup> Richard J. Wilson, "Book Review of The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s, edited by J. Eckel and S. Moyn," *Human Rights Quarterly*, vol.36: 4, (November:2014), 915-928, 915.

<sup>86</sup> Samuel Moyn and Jan Eckel, *The breakthrough: human rights in the 1970s* (Philadelphia : University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014)

the last fifteen years.<sup>87</sup> Moyn's goal is this book is to "stake out a moderate position between those who claim that human rights are unrelated to political economy and distributive justice...and those who think the human rights revolution has been a mere sham making inhumane domination."<sup>88</sup>

The studies about the 'Revival Process' and the 1989 migration of Bulgarian Muslims to Turkey have triggered the interest of scholars in Bulgaria, Turkey, and the English-speaking world. The 'Revival Process and the Bulgarian-Turkish issue on the Muslim minority have a particular place in the Bulgarian historiography in the post-socialist period. In 2009, the Bulgarian historians Iskra Baeva and Evgeniya Kalinova published two volumes with documents from the Bulgarian administration; the first volume opens with a forty-page article explaining Bulgarian-Turkish relations during the Cold War and summarizes the politics of the Bulgarian states vis-à-vis the Muslim populations during the communist rule.<sup>89</sup> The article by Baeva and Kalinova about Bulgarian-Turkish relations in the 1950s and 1960s shows the different approaches Bulgaria applied during four decades of communist rule and the lack of continuous policies vis-à-vis the Bulgarian Muslim populations. These policies were modified especially after the Turkish military intervention in Cyprus in 1974.<sup>90</sup> Kalinova also explains the international context in her article about the US relations with Bulgaria and Turkey at the beginning of the 1980s<sup>91</sup> as well as in her article about the Soviet implication regarding the 'Revival process.'<sup>92</sup> She explains that at that period, the relations between Sofia and Washington were on a very low diplomatic level as

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<sup>87</sup> Samuel Moyn, *Not enough : human rights in an unequal world* ( Cambridge, Massachusetts : The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018).

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., xi.

<sup>89</sup> Evgeniya Kalinova, Iskra Baeva, "‘Vazroditelniyat proces’ – varhat na aizberga. Bulgarskata darjava i turskata etnicheska obshtnost v stranata (sredata na 20-te – nachaloto na 90-te godini na XX vek)" [The "Revival process" – The Top of the Iceberg, The Bulgarian State and the Turkish Ethnic Community in the Country (mid-1920s - early 1990s)], *"Vazroditelniyat Proces". Vol. 1 :Bălgarskata Dăržava i Bălgarskite Turci (Sredata na 30-te – načaloto na 90 -te godini na XX vek)* ["Vazroditelniya Proces". Vol. 1: The Bulgarian State and the Bulgarian Turks (Mid-30s - early 1990s)], (Sofia: Dăržavna Agenciya "Arhivi", 2009) 5–42. p. 33.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>91</sup> Evgeniya Kalinova, "Politikata na SASHT kŭm Bŭlgariya i Turtsiya v navecherieto na 'vŭzroditelniya protses'" ["US policy towards Bulgaria and Turkey on the eve of the 'revival process'"], *S pogled kŭm sveta i Bŭlgariya. Sb. v pamet na prof. d-r Kostadin Grozev.* [Looking at the world and Bulgaria. Anniversary collection in memory of Prof. Dr. Kostadin Grozev.] (Sofia, St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, 2019), 555–580.

<sup>92</sup> Evgeniya Kalinova, "Moskva, „vŭzroditelniyat protses“ i krizata v bŭlgaro-turskite otnosheniya 1985 – 1989 g" [Moscow, the 'Renaissance Process' and the Crisis in Bulgarian-Turkish Relations 1985 - 1989], *Istoriķŭt – izsledovatel i populyarizator. Sb. v chest na 70-godishninata na akad. Georgi Markov.* [The Historian - Researcher and Promoter. Anniversary Collection in honor of the 70th anniversary of Acad. Georgi Markov.], (Sofia, St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, 2017), 388–425.

Bulgaria was perceived as one of the closest allies of the USSR. The relations between Washington and Ankara were marked by the 1980 coup d'état. In this sense, Washington was willing to support Ankara on the international stage regarding the RP considering the low level of relations between the US and Bulgaria. In another article by Kalinova about the international aspects of the RP, she underlines that prospective research should be done regarding the ways the RP was internationalized and brought to the political agenda of international organizations.<sup>93</sup> The present thesis partly contributes to clarifying the internationalization of the RP.

In the Bulgarian language, one of the most important publications is the book by Rumen Avramov about the economic aspects of the 'Revival process' and its negative impact on the Bulgarian economy in 1989.<sup>94</sup> Avramov argues that as most of the migrants were living in the rural areas in Bulgaria, they constituted an essential labor force for the Bulgarian agricultural sector. One of the common elements of these studies in Bulgarian is that they agree about the important changes in the policies applied by the Bulgarian Communist Party vis-à-vis the Muslim minorities because of external factors such as the Cyprus question. If in the 1950s and 1960s, newspapers were published in the Turkish language, in the 1970s they progressively became bilingual (in Bulgarian and Turkish), while in the 1980s publications in Turkish completely disappeared. In addition, in the Bulgarian historiography, the 1989 'Big Excursion' is often examined as the culmination point of the 'Revival process.' It is considered in a certain way as the proof of the non-success of the policies applied to the Bulgarian Muslim minorities in the 1980s by the Bulgarian Communist Government. In Turkey, the book edited by Hacısalıhoğlu and Hacısalıhoğlu is probably the biggest and most documented study about the 1989 emigration and the Turkish response to it.<sup>95</sup> This publication of almost seven hundred pages includes contributions by nine scholars from Turkey and Bulgaria.

Memoires of diplomats are particularly useful for learning new elements about the top-level diplomatic interactions between Bulgaria and Turkey in the 1980s. The book by the Bulgarian

<sup>93</sup> Evgenia Kalonova, "Bŭlgarskata dŭrzhava pred 'sŭda' na OON – 1985 – 1989 g." [The Bulgarian State before the "court" of the United Nations - 1985 – 1989], *Dŭrzhavnata ideya v modernata epokha*, Sŭst. I. Baeva. [The State idea in the modern era. Comp. I. Baeva], (Sofia: St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, 2018), 250-251.

<sup>94</sup> Rumen Avramov, *Ikonomika na "Vŭzroditelniya protses"* [Economics of the "Revival process"] (Sofia: Riva, 2016).

<sup>95</sup> Neriman Ersoy Hacısalıhoğlu and Mehmet Hacısalıhoğlu, *89 Göçü. Bulgaristan'da 1984-89 Azınlık Politikaları ve Türkiye'ye Zorunlu Göç* [89 Immigration. Minority Politics in Bulgaria from 1984 to 1989 and Forced Migration to Turkey] (Istanbul: Balkar & Balmed, 2012).



Ambassador Ivan Garvalov talks about the importance of the ‘Revival process’ on the international stage and in international organizations.<sup>96</sup> Garvalov gives his testimony about several high-level meetings between the Bulgarian Minister of Foreign Affairs Petar Mladenov with Turkish Politicians, including the Prime Minister of Turkey Turgut Özal. Garvalov served as an interpreter to Mladenov during his visits to the United Nations in New York.

In the English language, Ayse Parla describes the story of the Bulgarian Turks after their permanent installation in Turkey.<sup>97</sup> Parla makes an exhaustive study of the migration of Muslim populations from Bulgaria to Turkey in 1989 and in the years after that. She stresses that while 1989 was perceived as having political origins such as the forced changes of names of the Bulgarian Muslim populations the migrations in the 1990s and 2000s were mainly perceived as for economic reasons. In 1989 Turkey granted the arriving persons with Turkish nationality. In the 1990s and the 2000s, people willing to find a living in Turkey were often unable to obtain Turkish citizenship.

The monographic work by Kamusella is the most recent study in the English language.<sup>98</sup> Kamusella examines in detail the existing secondary literature in Bulgarian regarding the RP and the 1989 migration of Bulgarian Muslims to Turkey. He argues that in the Bulgarian historiography both questions are examined often together. In Turkey, the personal stories are underlined as is for example the book edited by Zeynep Zafer and Vihren Chernokozhev.<sup>99</sup> This study, however, is highly contested as it is exclusively based on secondary literature without studying the available archival material in Bulgarian. Kamusella suggests that prospective scholarships should fill this cap. The above-mentioned studies show a high level of diplomatic tension between Sofia and Ankara without examining in detail the broader diplomatic picture on the international scene.

### Sources and Methodology

I will conduct a comparative, contextual, and, analytical reading of the primary diplomatic sources. An essential corpus of primary sources recently opened to the public (in the last two years), which

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<sup>96</sup> Ivan Garvalov, *Otnosheniyata mezhdu Bŭlgariya i Turtsiya v OON i OSSE v perioda 1984 - 1989 g.* [The relations between Bulgaria and Turkey in the UN and the OSCE in the period 1984 - 1989] (Sofia:A-Epso, 2014).

<sup>97</sup> Parla, *Precarious Hope*.

<sup>98</sup> Kamusella.

<sup>99</sup> Zeynep Zafer and Vihren Chernokozhev, edit., *Kogato mi otneha imeto* [When they took my name] (Sofia: Iztok-Zadad, 2015)

I was able to examine during my research travels to the French Diplomatic Archives in Paris, the National Archives in London, the Archives of the United Nations in Geneva, as well as the OSCE Documentation Centre in Prague. Furthermore, I found documents at the Historical Archives of the European Union in Florence, the Historical Archives of the European Parliament, and the Council of Europe Archives in Strasbourg, as well as the Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives. The documents I found in Geneva and Prague allowed me to perceive the research topic from a different perspective while enlarging my research topic.

These sources have hitherto escaped historians' attention, but have the potential to provide new insights into the examined process as well as to clarify the broader perspective regarding the end of the Cold War in Europe, which has provoked debates among scholars.<sup>100</sup> I will seek to complete Kamusella's<sup>101</sup> non-archival-based monographic study of 2019 with the aforementioned numerous diplomatic telegrams, notes, and correspondence.

Scholars in Bulgaria often note that one of the main unanswered questions remains the position of the Kremlin vis-à-vis the 'Revival Process.'<sup>102</sup> For instance, one of the archival documents which I found in Paris allows partly to clarify Moscow's position. This document shows that East European countries had relative autonomy in terms of foreign policy. In 1989, the Soviet Ambassador to Turkey said to a French diplomat during an official reception in Ankara that Moscow should not put pressure on Sofia regarding its relations with Ankara: "[w]e should not push the Bulgarians to their limits and thus force them to harden their attitude further."<sup>103</sup>

I will use the diplomatic telegrams, notes, and minutes to compare the existing materials in Bulgarian about the 'Revival Process.' These new materials shed new light on Bulgarian-Turkish relations during the 1980s and allow to deepen the analyses regarding the complexity of East-West relations during the final act of the Cold War. This topic is particularly relevant in actual context of Europe when the post-Cold War International Order has been seriously challenged.

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<sup>100</sup> Juliane Fürst, Silvio Pons, and Mark Selden, ed., *The Cambridge History of Communism*, vol. III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

<sup>101</sup> Kamusella., 58.

<sup>102</sup> Kalonova, 2017.

<sup>103</sup> "*Il ne faudrait pas pousser les bulgares dans leurs derniers retranchements et les forcer ainsi à durcir davantage leur attitude*," See "Entretien avec l'ambassadeur soviétique," *Diplomatic Telegram of the French Embassy in Ankara of 30 June 1989*, French Diplomatic Archives, Box 1935-INVA 6193: Politique intérieure, Europe 1986-1990.

## Structure of the Research

This thesis is divided into two chapters.

Chapter 1. analyses the beginning of the internationalization of the ‘Revival Process’ on a multilateral diplomatic level in the biggest diplomatic forum in the world: the United Nations. It also examines the resonance of the internationalization of the Bulgarian-Turkish Muslim minority issue in the region and especially on the Cyprus Peace Process. This chapter partially clarifies Moscow’s ambiguous position regarding the 1980s RP in Bulgaria as well as the 1989 migration.

Chapter 2. focuses on the internationalization of the ‘Revival Process’ in Regional International Organizations such as the Council of Europe, the European Parliament, and NATO. This second chapter shows the level of complexity of the internationalization of the Bulgarian-Turkish bilateral issue and the multiple actors which could intervene in it such as Turkish cultural associations across Europe.

# Chapter 1. Bulgarian-Turkish relations and the internationalization of the ‘Revival Process’ in the 1980s

“Very good before 1984, Bulgarian-Turkish relations deteriorated after the establishment of "bulgarization" which mainly targeted the Muslim minority of Turkish origin, whose existence was therefore denied, and most of the cultural and religious rights suppressed. Turkey then took up the cause of this minority. The tension between the two countries has only grown since then, despite several attempts at negotiations, either secret or taking place within the framework of the Balkan cooperation... They all failed, with Bulgaria remaining intransigent on the 1984 decisions and Turkey tying any progress to the situation on humanitarian issues.”<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> “Très bonnes avant 1984, les relations bulgaro-turques se sont dégradées après la mise en place de la ‘bulgarisation’ qui a surtout visé la minorité musulmane d’origine turque, dont l’existence a été dès lors niée, et la plupart des droits culturels et religieux supprimés. La Turquie avait alors pris faits et cause pour cette minorité. La tension entre les deux pays n’a fait depuis lors que se développer, malgré plusieurs tentatives de négociations, soit secrètes, soit se déroulant dans le cadre de la coopération balkanique... Elles ont toutes échoué, la Bulgarie restant intransigeante concernant les décisions de 1984 et la Turquie liant tout progrès à la situation des questions humanitaires.” See “Relations Bulgarie-Turquie,” *Note of 8 February 1990*, French Diplomatic Archives, Box 1935-INVA 6203, Politique étrangère, Minorités turques en Bulgarie, Europe 1986-1990.

## 1. Introduction

In this first chapter, I am going to analyze the external aspect of the ‘Revival Process’ (RP) and its first attempts for internationalization. The RP had a significant impact on the Bulgaria-Turkish diplomatic relations in the second half of the 1980s: especially from 1984 to 1989. In what follows I am going to discuss the beginning of the internationalization of the RP in the United Nations and the 1980s Bulgarian change of policy regarding the Muslim minorities in the country.<sup>105</sup> As I argue, the internationalization of the RP reveals the complexity of East-West diplomatic relations at the end of the Cold War. The Soviet Union had to act following its international engagements and it was obliged to respect the Human Dimension of the Helsinki Final Act while defending at the same time its military allies on the international stage. The RP in Bulgaria was one of the several cases of minority rights issues in the Eastern Block. In comparison to other minority-related issues in the 1980s as between Hungary and Romania, the conflict between Sofia and Ankara impacted the inter-bloc diplomatic relations between the member states of the Warsaw Pact and NATO. The RP also illustrates the ending of the Cold War from the periphery point of view. The RP had unexpected resonances in the region as for the Cyprus Peace Process.

It is important to give the global context of East-West relations and the position of Bulgaria and Turkey vis-a-vis the two superpowers. After Turkey acceded to NATO in 1951, it was one of the closest allies of the US and it was the only country of the Alliance in the Black Sea Region. During the Cold War, Turkey had two direct borders with the communist world. The land border with the USSR provoked vivid tensions between Ankara and Moscow in the very aftermath of the end of the Second World War during the rule of Stalin.<sup>106</sup> The second land border was with Bulgaria, a founding member in the Warsaw Pact.

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<sup>105</sup> This chapter contributes to the scholarly debates as it examines documents that were made accessible to the public in the past two years from the French Diplomatic Archive in Paris. Most of these documents were open to the public after the expiration of a thirty-year period. However, according to the French legislation, the most sensitive documents will be opened in twenty years from now, after the expiration of a fifty-year period. This chapter also uses primary sources from the United Nations from the Dag Hammarskjöld Library at the United Nations Headquarters in New York the Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives in Budapest. These documents stand in contrast with previous studies by Bulgarian and Turkish historians who generally prefer to focus on national sources in Bulgarian or Turkish. See Kalinova and Baeva, (2009); Kalinova, (2017); Avramov (2016); Hacısalıhoğlu and Hacısalıhoğlu, (2012).

<sup>106</sup> Jamil Hasanli, *Stalin and the Turkish Crisis of the Cold War, 1945–1953* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011).

At the beginning of the 1980s, the relations between Sofia and Washington were on a low diplomatic level after the arrival of Ronald Reagan at the White House.<sup>107</sup> In the Western media, a communication campaign was organized against Bulgaria as in the eyes of the leaders in Washington this country was one of the closest allies of the Kremlin.<sup>108</sup> For Reagan's administration, the relations between the US and the Eastern European countries were determined by their level of dependence (or independence) vis-a-vis Moscow in terms of foreign policies and their respect for human rights.<sup>109</sup> In the West, the image of Bulgaria was affected after the 1979 assassination attempt on Pope Jean-Paul II and the possible (but not proven) implication of the Bulgarian authorities in it.<sup>110</sup> The goal of the US campaign against Bulgaria was the isolation of the country on the international stage for Sofia to reconsider its loyal relations with Moscow.<sup>111</sup>

The Bulgarian-Turkish diplomatic tension regarding respect for minority rights was one of the several cases in the East Bloc on which Moscow had to position itself. It is not easy to navigate and describe the exact positioning of Moscow regarding the RP in Bulgaria regarding the RP and a lot of contradictions remain in the Soviet position. The Kremlin was in a delicate situation after signing the 1975 Helsinki Final Act with which it officially committed to respecting fundamental human and minority rights on its territory. The Kremlin was obliged to follow Sofia on the international stage as Kalinova argues.<sup>112</sup> In the present work, I try to clarify Moscow's position. Moscow tried to mediate between Sofia and Ankara and to minimize the debate on international forums. For the Soviet government, the respect for minority rights in Bulgaria was one of the several cases in the Eastern Block related to minority issues. Another example in which the Kremlin was involved in the minority dispute was between Hungary and Romania.<sup>113</sup> In the 1980s, in the diplomatic tensions between Budapest and Bucharest, Moscow did not publicly embrace the position of the mediator between the two socialist countries and it encouraged bilateral dialogue.<sup>114</sup> In this case, both countries were part of the socialist bloc and members of the Warsaw Pact. This

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<sup>107</sup> Evgenia Kalonova, "Politikata na SASHT kŭm Bŭlgariya i Turtsiya v navecherieto na 'vŭzroditelniya protses'" ["US policy towards Bulgaria and Turkey on the eve of the 'revival process'"], *S pogled kŭm sveta i Bŭlgariya. Sb. v pamet na prof. d-r Kostadin Grozev*. [Looking at the world and Bulgaria. Anniversary collection in memory of Prof. Dr. Kostadin Grozev.] (Sofia, St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, 2019), 555–580.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 558.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 558.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 557.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 656.

<sup>112</sup> Kalonova, (2018).

<sup>113</sup> Iordachi, "From Disentanglement to Interdependence", 736.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 737.

was not the case of Bulgaria and Turkey where diplomatic tensions could impact the global inter-bloc relations between the East and the West.

When the RP was brought into the international arena, it was perceived mainly as a bilateral question by the other states. Paradoxically, while Ankara was trying to attract the attention of the international community to the human rights situation in Bulgaria, it indirectly brought the attention of the international community to the human rights situation at home. After the 1980 coup d'état, the respect for human rights in Turkey was a sensitive topic for the government in Ankara. On the international stage, Ankara received a certain level of support from NATO members, especially the US. The only NATO country which did not show solidarity with Ankara was Greece. In the eyes of its allies, Ankara lost its legitimacy in the summer of 1989 when it decided unilaterally, without informing them, to close its border with Bulgaria and to cease receiving migrants from Bulgaria.<sup>115</sup>

This chapter shows the unexpected resonance of the Bulgaria-Turkey bilateral issue in the region such as the Cyprus Peace Process. In the summer of 1989, North Cyprus received around a hundred Muslim migrants from Bulgaria. Its leaders expressed the intention to welcome potentially other thousands of migrants which would have destabilized the demography of the island. This gesture would have directly impacted the Peace Process in Cyprus between the North and the South. The Greek-speaking part of the island quickly understood the potential challenges Muslim migrants from Bulgaria could pose for the negotiation between the two parts of the island, especially if the North had accepted an important number of Bulgarian migrants.<sup>116</sup>

The contribution of this research is the partial clarification of the Soviet position regarding the RP.<sup>117</sup> In the summer of 1989, the Soviet Ambassador to Ankara talked to a French diplomat and told him that if the Soviet Union exercises pressure on Bulgaria, Sofia could act with more determination in its bilateral relations with Ankara. Also, Moscow's actions would have been counterproductive. This proves the relative level of autonomy of Bulgaria in term of foreign policy

<sup>115</sup> Evgenia Kalonova, "Bŭlgarskata dŭzhava pred 'sŭda' na OON – 1985 – 1989 g." [The Bulgarian State before the "court" of the United Nations - 1985 – 1989], *Dŭzhavnata ideya v modernata epokha*, Sŭst. I. Baeva. [The State idea in the modern era. Comp. I. Baeva], (Sofia: St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, 2018), 250-251.

<sup>116</sup> An important exchange of diplomatic notes between the Ministry of Foreign affairs of the Republic of Cyprus with its Western partners including France shed new light on this forgotten aspect of the internationalization of the RP.

<sup>117</sup> This is based on newly accessible document such as diplomatic telegrams located at the Diplomatic Archives in Paris.

in late 1980s. This contradicts the traditional view that Sofia was the Kremlin's closest ally during the Cold War.<sup>118</sup> Furthermore, this raises the question whether 1989 was a year of sudden changes in world politics or it was a preparation period for the 1990s democratic transitions in Europe.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part analyses the beginning of the internationalization of the RP on a multilateral diplomatic level in the biggest diplomatic forum in the world: the United Nations (1.1). The second part focuses on the multiple aspects of the RP in the documents found at the French Diplomatic Archives in Paris through the case studies of the impact of the 1989 migration of Muslims of Bulgaria to Turkey on the Cyprus Peace Process (1.2.A) as well as of the Soviet ambiguous position regarding these questions (1.2.B).

## 1.1. First Attempts for Internationalizing of the ‘Revival Process’: the United Nations

The United Nations (UN) was one of the first international arenas where the human rights situation of the Bulgarian Muslim minorities was discussed in the 1980s. In the second half of the 1980s, Bulgaria rejected the existence of a Turkish *national* minority on several occasions. However, the actions of Turkey on the international stage should be treated with nuance.<sup>119</sup> As H.E. Ivan Garvalov underlines, at the UN General Assembly Turkey never proposed a Resolution condemning Bulgaria, and not a single official document was voted against Bulgaria in the period 1986 to 1989.<sup>120</sup> For him, the UN took a certain distance from the question regarding the respect for the rights of the Bulgarian Muslim minorities because it was essentially a bilateral question between Sofia and Ankara.<sup>121</sup> In 1980, there was not a commonly accepted definition of a (national) minority in the 1980s by the UN member states.<sup>122</sup> According to Garvalov, who

<sup>118</sup> Stephen White and Stephen Revell, “The USSR and its Diplomatic Partners, 1917-91,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, no 13:1 (Winter: 2002), 37.

<sup>119</sup> One of the Bulgarian diplomats at the UN Headquarters in New York, H.E. Ambassador Ivan Garvalov gives his testimony about the Bulgarian-Turkish relations and the multiple attempts of Turkey for internationalizing the “Revival Process” on the international level. See Ivan Garvalov, *Otnosheniyata mezhdu Bŭlgariya i Turtsiya v OON i OSSE v perioda 1984 - 1989 g.* [The relations between Bulgaria and Turkey in the UN and the OSCE in the period 1984 - 1989] (Sofia: A-Epso, 2014).

<sup>120</sup> Garvalov, 26.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 26.



personally witnessed most of the events, one of the symbols of the relative non-success of Turkey to internationalize the Bulgarian-Turkish minority issue on the international stage was the election of Bulgaria as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for two years (1986 and 1987).<sup>123</sup> Bulgaria was supported by 135 countries out of 148 UN members to being part of the most important body of the UN system.<sup>124</sup>

Among the latest major scholarly works regarding the internal aspect of the ‘Revival Process’ is the 2016 book by Rumen Avramov examining in detail the negative consequences of the 1989 migration of Bulgarian Muslims to Turkey on the Bulgarian economy.<sup>125</sup> In contrast, this part of my work aims to add some new elements to the 2018 article by the Bulgarian historian Evgenia Kalinova, who argues that at the UN, Sofia received little support regarding the RP from its Warsaw Pact allies, except for Moscow.<sup>126</sup> Furthermore, Ankara did not obtain the desired support from its Western partners to a certain extent except for the US, for officially condemning the lack of respect for human rights of the Muslim minorities in Bulgaria.<sup>127</sup>

One of the first times the situation of the Muslim minorities in Bulgaria was the subject of multilateral diplomacy was in 1986 at the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. In 1984 and 1986, Bulgaria submitted two reports to that Committee.<sup>128</sup> Even though the two reports were similar, the main difference between the 1984 Report to the 1986 Report was the omission of several sentences talking about the Muslim minorities in the country.<sup>129</sup> The 1986 Report is following the policy applied by the Bulgarian Communist Party from 1945 to

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 34-37.

<sup>124</sup> In addition, in 1988 Garvalov himself was elected a member of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This entailed a position of an independent expert who cannot receive any sort of instructions of other persons or bodies. See Garvalov, 31 and 36

<sup>125</sup> Avramov.

<sup>126</sup> Kalonova (2018), 250-251. literature regarding the external aspect of the RP which I intend to fill.

<sup>127</sup> Hers is one of the few studies in the Bulgarian historiography examining the external aspect of the ‘Revival Process’ and its internationalization on multilateral diplomatic forums at the UN. Kalinova stresses that most of the studies in Bulgaria focus mainly on the internal aspects of the question. Nevertheless, Kalinova still points out the gap in the

<sup>128</sup> “Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 9 of the Convention : 8th periodic reports of States parties due in 1984 : Bulgaria“, 1984, *United Nations Digital Library*, CERD/C/118/Add.17, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/79648?ln=en> (consulted on 30 September 2021).

“Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 9 of the Convention : International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination : 8th periodic reports of States parties due in 1984: Bulgaria,” 1986, *United Nations Digital Library*, CERD/C/118/Add.17/Rev.1, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/117968?ln=en> (consulted on 30 September 2021).

<sup>129</sup> A copy of the 1984 report (covering the period January 1982 to January 1984) is kept at the Dag Hammarskjöld Library at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

1984 while the Muslim minorities were recognized by Sofia. It says that “[w]hile the majority of religious citizens of Bulgarian nationality are Christians of the Eastern Orthodox Church religious persons of Turkish and Gipsy origin (as well as Mohammedan Bulgarians) belong to Islam, while those of Jewish or Armenian origin profess Judaism or the Gregorian faith.”<sup>130</sup> The 1984 Report mentions the adjective “Turkish”<sup>131</sup> ten times and it talks about “Bulgarian citizens of Turkish origin.”<sup>132</sup> The Bulgarian government also stresses the intellectual progress made under the Communist rule among these populations who, in their words, were “illiterate prior to 1944.”<sup>133</sup> According to the 1984 Report, members of the Bulgarian Muslim minorities were “teachers, doctors, agronomists, engineers, artists, journalist, etc.”<sup>134</sup> Lastly, this first version of the report talks about the cultural life of these Bulgarian Muslim minorities who can listen to Turkish programs on the Bulgarian radio and read publications in Turkish.<sup>135</sup>

However, two years later, in the 1986 Report,<sup>136</sup> all sentences mentioning the “Turkish” language or culture were deleted.<sup>137</sup> The cultural plurality depicted in the 1984 Report radically disappeared, which raised the suspicion of several diplomats in New York and Geneva. Questions were raised regarding the reasons for this sudden change of tone in Sofia. Furthermore, this happened in the context when the news was circulating about the forced changes of names of the members of the Bulgarian Muslim minorities two years earlier, in 1984.

The 1986 Report was presented by the Bulgarian diplomat Liuben Kulishev.<sup>138</sup> This experienced diplomat had the sensitive mission to explain to the international community the recent

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 13

<sup>131</sup> “Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 9 of the Convention : 8th periodic reports of States parties due in 1984 : Bulgaria,” 1984, *United Nations Digital Library*, CERD/C/118/Add.17, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/79648?ln=en> (consulted on 30 September 2021), 5, 13, 14, 15, 18.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 14

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 15

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 15

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 15

<sup>136</sup> It covers the period from 1980 to 1985.

<sup>137</sup> “Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 9 of the Convention: International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination: 8th periodic reports of States parties due in 1984: Bulgaria,” 1986, *United Nations Digital Library*, CERD/C/118/Add.17/Rev.1, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/117968?ln=en> (consulted on 30 September 2021)

<sup>138</sup> It happens during the 162nd Meeting of the Committee on the elimination of Racial Discrimination on 11 March 1986 at the UN Headquarters in New York. See Minute of the “162nd Meeting of the Committee on the elimination of Racial Discrimination on the Thirty-third session in on 11 March 1986 in the Headquarters in New York from the file Bulgaria: Turkish Minority: United Nations and Turks in Bulgaria, 1986 – 1988,” HU OSA 318-0-5:32/8, Information Items: *Bulgaria: Turkish Minority: United Nations and Turks in Bulgaria, 1986 – 1988*, Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest, 2-3.

development in Bulgaria.<sup>139</sup> After giving a long description of the historical context and the reasons for the presence of Muslim minorities in Bulgaria which dates back to the Ottoman Empire, Kulishev tries to respond to the concern about the 1984 change of names of the Muslim minorities. He repeats the official position adopted by Sofia from 1984 to 1989 saying that “[i]n changing all personal and place names of Turkish origin back to Bulgarian names, the Bulgarian people had given voice to its desire to sever the last remaining link to Turkish domination.”<sup>140</sup> Considering the usage of the Turkish language in Bulgaria, Kulishev says that young people prefer to learn European languages, which can offer them more opportunities in life than the languages of minority groups.<sup>141</sup> The aim of the policies applied by the Bulgarian Communist Government is “strengthening the identity of the Bulgarian Muslim, but not to any policy of assimilating Turks.”<sup>142</sup> The explanation of Kulishev did not satisfy the audience.<sup>143</sup> As diplomat colleagues of Garvalov told him in confidence years later, the suppression of the abovementioned sentences in 1986 was the main ‘mistake’ Sofia made. This only increased the suspicion of the diplomats at the UN regarding the real situation of the respect for human rights on the other side of the Iron Curtain.<sup>144</sup> This episode had a direct impact on the image of Bulgaria on the international stage.<sup>145</sup> Subsequently, the suspicion regarding respect for human rights in Bulgaria gradually increased. As the next chapter will show, Turkey used several other international diplomatic forums to bring this question on their agenda.

The questions addressed to Kulishev by the diplomats at the UN perfectly illustrate the highly divided diplomatic arena marked by the ideological divisions of the Cold War. The US together with the Western Bloc countries, on one side, as well as the USSR with the Eastern Bloc, on the other side, perceive almost every topic at the UN in the light of East-West relations. The Soviet Union Starushenko takes the defense of Bulgaria by using an argument of the register of the Cold War.<sup>146</sup> In response to the supposed accusation of the lack of respect for Muslim minority rights in Bulgaria, Starushenko invokes the human rights situation of North American Indians who, in

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<sup>139</sup> Kulishev comes from a family of diplomatic background. See Garvalov, 26

<sup>140</sup> Minute of the “162<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Committee on the elimination of Racial Discrimination,” 11-12.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-12.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-12

<sup>143</sup> Garvalov, 26-28.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-28.

<sup>145</sup> Minute of the “162<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Committee on the elimination of Racial Discrimination,” 2-3.

<sup>146</sup> The full name is not mentioned in the document.

his words, are “kept apart from the rest of the population and deprived of their rights.”<sup>147</sup> Starushenko seems to follow the Bulgarian official position for defending the RP in Bulgaria, especially regarding the potential existence of the Turkish national minority, which Sofia strongly rejected. He borrows some of Kulishev’s expressions regarding the Ottoman five-century rule on the Balkans during which “generations of Bulgarians had been the victims of harsh discrimination.”<sup>148</sup>

The internationalization of the RP in the 1980s comes one generation after the beginning of decolonization. This is one of the reasons that for the majority of the freshly established States at the UN the “defense of different philosophies and concepts of freedom”<sup>149</sup> is of major importance. One of the diplomats from Latin America De Pierola y Belta [exact nationality is not mentioned in the document] underlines that “[i]f the problem of the Turkish minority was politicized, then it should be politicized within a world-wide framework and not within the framework of the rivalry between the two groups of developed countries.”<sup>150</sup>

Another important element of the international milieu where the RP is brought is that the ideological division of the world does not make religious links between countries and people disappear. In this sense, the symbolic elements of the change of names go beyond the ideological consideration of the Cold War. Mr. Shahi, [probably representative of India or Pakistan] states that “[t]he problems of religion and names must be approached with deeper understanding.”<sup>151</sup>

By trying to attract attention to the human rights situation of the Muslim minorities in Bulgaria, Ankara indirectly raised the question about its human rights record and the respect for minority rights in Turkey. For example, during the Forty-Third Session of the Commission on Human Rights a representative of the UN International Commission of Justices, Lesley Sherwood, compares the respect of minority groups’ rights both in Bulgaria and Turkey.<sup>152</sup> He gives the example of a judge in 1981 in Eastern Turkey who ordered the change of names of persons of

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>152</sup> “Intervention on the Item 12 by Lesley Sherwood, International Commission of Justices”, HU OSA 318-0-5:32/8, Information Items: *Bulgaria: Turkish Minority: United Nations and Turks in Bulgaria, 1986 – 1988*, Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

Kurdish origins because they were “against the national culture, tradition, and morals.”<sup>153</sup> In addition, Garvalov asserts that Turkey was known on the international stage for its “grave and massive mistreatment of its population.”<sup>154</sup> This shows Ankara’s fragile situation for condemning the policy of the Bulgarian government in the 1980s as well as for successfully drawing the international attention to the situation of the Muslim minority in Bulgaria. Ankara had difficulties being perceived as a country that could legitimately give moral lessons in international forums.

## 1.2. The Multiple Aspects of the Internationalization of the ‘Revival Process’ in an Ideologically Divided World

This part of the work will focus on the unexplored aspects internationalization of the RP.<sup>155</sup> It tries to clarify in particular the Soviet position regarding the RP.<sup>156</sup>

### 1.2.B. The Impact of the 1989 Migration of Muslims of Bulgaria to Turkey on the Cyprus Peace Process

As I already mentioned, the 1974 Turkish intervention on Cyprus after a long decade of tensions on the island in the 1960s<sup>157</sup> increased Sofia’s fear of a second Cyprus scenario in the Balkans.

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<sup>153</sup>Ibid., 2-4.

<sup>154</sup> Garvalov, 27.

<sup>155</sup> The internationalization of the RP still has numerous unexplored aspects as proved by the recently open primary sources (in last two years) I found at the French Diplomatic Archives in Paris. The boxes with documents I accessed in the French capital are directly related to the human rights situation in Bulgaria and in Turkey in the 1980s. They shed new light on the research topic, especially about the Soviet position regarding the RP and the 1989 Muslim migration from Bulgaria to Turkey. These documents generally agree that the Bulgarian-Turkish relations were good before 1984; things drastically changed with the beginning of the ‘Bulgarinization’ of the Muslim populations of the country with the change of their names. These documents also show the resonance of the RP in Bulgaria in the countries of the region such as Cyprus.

<sup>156</sup> As I already mentioned, in the Bulgarian historiography scholars trying to clarify the exact position of the Kremlin recognize the important lack of available documents as the Russian Diplomatic Archives in Moscow are extremely difficult to access. In this sense, the main advantage of the primary sources located in Paris is their accessibility. Even if these documents show a particular perspective (French perception) regarding the ‘Revival Process,’ they are not only in the French language as well as they are not exclusively written by French diplomats. In these boxes, there are documents from different partners of France such as the Netherlands, Greece, and Cyprus. They sent a copy to Paris of several diplomatic documents regarding their interactions with Ankara or Sofia in the 1980s.

<sup>157</sup> Yoann Kassianides, *La politique étrangère américaine à Chypre (1960-1967)* (Paris : L'Harmattan, 2005).

The Cyprus question, which has attracted the interest of a big number of scholars in the English-speaking world<sup>158</sup> is out of the scope of this work. In this chapter, I am only going to examine the impact of Bulgarian-Turkish relations on the Cyprus Peace Process.

In the summer of 1989, during the peak of the migration of Muslims of Bulgaria to Turkey, “the head of the Turkish Cyprus community had proposed to welcome temporary but immediately 30 000 refugees in the North, and even in Varosha [Greek quarter of the city of Famagusta located in the east coast of the island which inhabitants left in 1974].”<sup>159</sup> This provoked a vivid reaction in the Greek part of Cyprus, which considered it as an attempt to change the demography on the island. This element would have further complicated the peaceful resolution of the conflict in Cyprus guided by the United Nations. The Prime Minister of Turkey Turgut Özal quickly declined these offers.<sup>160</sup> This episode shows the complexities of the RP in Bulgaria and its impact not only on the Bulgarian-Turkish bilateral relations but also on the relations between Turkey and its neighbors: Greece (a NATO member) and Cyprus (on the territory of which there is a British military base). The possible settlement of Bulgarian migrants in the Northern part of Cyprus also shows the resonance of the interstate bilateral relations between countries of the East and the West. This incident questions the level of ideological division of the world at that time in comparison to the prevalence of national interest. In this case, as in others, *Realpolitik* seems to prevail.

In July 1990, after the end of the RP, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus expressed its concerns about the presence of “150 Muslims of Bulgaria” in North Cyprus.<sup>161</sup> Some months earlier, in October 1989 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus sent a *note verbale* to the French Embassy in Nicosia saying that several Turkish Cypriot newspapers such as *Kıbrıs* (Cyprus in Turkish), *Halkın Sesi* (People's Voice) and *Kıbrıs Postası* (Cyprus Post) have reported on multiple occasion the arrival of Bulgaria Muslims in the Northern part of Cyprus.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Yael Navaro-Yashin, *The Make-Believe Space Affective Geography in a Postwar Polity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012).

<sup>159</sup> “Démarches chypriotes relatives à l’installation de réfugiés turcs de Bulgarie à Chypre-Nord,” *Note pour le Cabinet du Ministre d’Etat du 10 Octobre 1989*, French Diplomatic Archives, Box 1935-INVA 6558, Turquie, Situation intérieure, Droits de l’homme, Europe 1986-1990, 2.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>161</sup> “Turcs de Bulgarie,” *Diplomatic Delegation from the French diplomatic representation in Nicosia of 2 July 1990*, French Diplomatic Archives, Box 1935-INVA 6203, Politique étrangère, Minorités turques en Bulgarie, Europe 1986-1990.

<sup>162</sup> From 1989 to 1990, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus sent multiple diplomatic notes to several of its NATO partners including France in sign of protest. See *Note verbale of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

The Greek part of the island considered this question particularly sensitive after the words of the leader of North Cyprus Rauf Denktaş that 200 families could potentially be settled in the quarter of Varosha in the city of Famagusta.<sup>163</sup> The settlement of Muslim migrants from the Balkans would have directly threaten the Cyprus Peace Process as “such provocative actions which are aimed at altering the demographic structure of Cyprus, constitute a flagrant contempt of the pertinent resolutions of the General Assembly and other bodies of the United Nations which deplore such actions.”<sup>164</sup> The Greek Cyprus authors of this *note verbale* hope that “France will exert its influence on the Turkish Government to put an end to such actions which create new *faits accomplis* and to withdraw all illegal settlers from the occupied areas.”<sup>165</sup>

In November 1989, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus warned the French diplomatic representation of the arrival of another thirteen Bulgarian Muslims on the island, increasing the total number of Bulgarian Muslims settled in Cyprus to forty-seven.<sup>166</sup> “[T]he implementation of such an illegal policy is not conducive to the creation of the necessary climate for the continuation of the intercommunal talks and in fact seriously undermines the Secretary-General’s efforts.”<sup>167</sup> The diplomatic actions of Nicosia have been closely coordinated with the Greek Government and two weeks later, Athens also drew its allies’ attention to the installment of Muslim families in North Cyprus.<sup>168</sup>

The number of notes and letters addressed to the French Diplomatic mission in Nicosia, similarly to other NATO partners of the Republic of Cyprus illustrate the level of tension this proposal provoked.<sup>169</sup> This shows that the developments in Cyprus in the 1970s impacted the actions of the

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of the Republic of Cyprus addressed to the French Embassy in Nicosia of 20 October 1989, French Diplomatic Archives, Box 1935-INVA 6558, Turquie, Situation intérieure, Droits de l’homme, Europe 1986-1990.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> *Note verbale of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus addressed to the French Embassy in Nicosia of 23 November 1989*, French Diplomatic Archives, Box 1935-INVA 6558, Turquie, Situation intérieure, Droits de l’homme, Europe 1986-1990. The *note verbale* was sent together with the article in English language titled “Welcome.” The text of the article explains that “social services greet Bulgarian families” as well as that “[t]hree more ethnic Turkish families who fled Bulgaria have been given refuge in North Cyprus.” See “Welcome”, *Article of the Cyprus Times of 10 November 1989*, French Diplomatic Archives, Box 1935-INVA 6558, Turquie, Situation intérieure, Droits de l’homme, Europe 1986-1990.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> “Installation de musulmans de Bulgarie dans la partie occupée de Chypre,” *Diplomatic telegram sent by the French Diplomatic mission in Athens on 26.10.1989*, French Diplomatic Archives, Box 1935-INVA 6558, Turquie, Situation intérieure, Droits de l’homme, Europe 1986-1990.

<sup>169</sup> There are more than 10 notes together with a newspaper article.

Bulgarian authorities vis-à-vis the Muslim populations in the country, while the developments in Bulgaria in the 1980s influenced the peace process in Cyprus in the 1980s. In this sense, the national identity and national policies extended beyond the ideological divisions of the Cold War. Furthermore, as I am going to argue in the next chapter, the allies of Turkey in NATO such as Greece did not show solidarity with Ankara regarding the ‘Revival Process’ in Bulgaria. In the summer of 1989, Athens refused to sign a joint communiqué of NATO condemning Sofia’s treatment of the Muslim populations.<sup>170</sup> For the Hellenic Government, Turkey was acting similarly as Bulgaria on Cyprus. Finally, a compromise was reached among NATO members but a footnote expressing the reserves of Athens was added.<sup>171</sup>

### 1.2.B. The Soviet Ambiguous Position Regarding the RP and the 1989 Migration

According to Kalinova, Moscow’s exact positioning regarding the ‘Revival Process’ in Bulgaria in the 1980s, as well as the 1989 migration of Muslims of Bulgaria to Turkey, is not easy to determine as the diplomatic primary sources in Moscow are not accessible.<sup>172</sup> Kalinova argues that Moscow was *obliged* to follow Sofia on the international stage because every criticism regarding the respect for rights in Bulgaria was indirectly directed against the entire Eastern Block.<sup>173</sup>

An important aspect while examining the 1980s Bulgarian-Turkish diplomatic tension concerns the profound changes which happened in world politics. In the summer of 1989, during the most important moment of the migration of populations from Bulgaria to Turkey, a French diplomat talked with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey.<sup>174</sup> Their conversation during an official

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<sup>170</sup> “Projet de déclaration sur la situation de la minorité turque en Bulagrie,” *Diplomatic telegram sent by the French Diplomatic mission in Athens on 25.07.1989*, French Diplomatic Archives, Box 1935-INVA 6203, Politique étrangère, Minorités turques en Bulgarie, Europe 1986-1990.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> The documents examined in this part of the chapter come to complete the article by Kalinova regarding the Kremlin’s position about the question.

<sup>173</sup> Kalinova, (2017), 424–425.

<sup>174</sup> Two diplomatic telegrams found at the Diplomatic Archives in Paris questioned the way Moscow exercised its influence in the socialist bloc at the very end of the Cold War. These telegrams indicate that the Kremlin does not seem to be able to directly impact Sofia’s foreign policy vis-à-vis Ankara, which could potentially provoke a direct NATO-Warsaw Pact confrontation. This proves the relative independence of Bulgaria, which is traditionally seen as one of the closest Soviet Allies during the Cold War.



reception in Ankara shows the importance of the respect for human rights in the 1980s. The head of the Turkish diplomacy asks "...that France inform the USSR of the interest that we attach to its mission of good offices, that [France] let [the USSR] know that its attitude in the Turkish-Bulgarian dispute would be a kind of test of Moscow's attachment to the principles adopted by the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe."<sup>175</sup>

This document illustrates the significance given to the Helsinki Process by the Soviet Union in its *rapprochement* with the US and the West. As the French diplomat Jacques Andreani argued at the 1975 Helsinki Conference, the inclusion of the respect for human rights in the Helsinki Final Act was a strategic step for the Western countries. Andreani uses the term "trap [*piège*]"<sup>176</sup> to describe the usage of human rights as a diplomatic tool for exercising pressure on the countries of the Eastern Block. Furthermore, this passage completes previous studies about the importance of Human Right Diplomacy in the end of the Cold War. One of the first studies on this question was already conducted in 1989 by Victor-Yves Ghebali.<sup>177</sup> In the last fifteen years another generation of historians studied the question by using a large number of primary sources, including Nicolas Badalassi<sup>178</sup> and Sarah B. Snyder.<sup>179</sup> Badalassi, for example, underlines that European countries together with the EEC (and especially the European Commission) took an active role in the long negotiation of the Helsinki Final Act.<sup>180</sup> According to him, France had a central role in finding compromises between the US and the Soviet Union during the long negotiations of the HFA, which represents the conception of the French President Charles de Gaulle for a united European continent.<sup>181</sup>

These authors argue that Human Rights significantly contributed to the end of the Cold War as East European countries could not respect the principles subscribed in the Helsinki Final Act. In

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<sup>175</sup> "que la France fasse connaître à l'URSS l'intérêt que nous attachons à sa mission de bons offices, qu'elle lui fasse savoir que son attitude dans le différend turco-bulgare serait une sorte de teste de l'attachement de Moscou aux principes retenus par la CSCE." See "Entretien avec le Ministre des Affaires étrangères," *Diplomatic Telegram of the French Embassy in Ankara of 30 June 1989*, Archives of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of French Republic, Box 1935-INVA 6193, Politique intérieure, Region Minorités, Europe 1986-1990. Translation from French into English provided by the author of this work.

<sup>176</sup> Andreani, *Le Piège*.

<sup>177</sup> Victor-Yves Ghebali, *La diplomatie de la détente. La CSCE, d'Helsinki à Vienne (1973–1989)* (Bruylant: Brussels, 1989).

<sup>178</sup> Badalassi, *En finir avec la guerre froide*.

<sup>179</sup> Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold*.

<sup>180</sup> Nicolas Badalassi, "Les accords d'Helsinki ou le triomphe des conceptions paneuropéennes du général de Gaulle," *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire* 2013/3, 119), 55- 70, 69

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 69

contrast, in this study, I argue that this should be nuanced as human rights were one of the many aspects which influenced this process. In the last ten years, studies about the end of the Cold War have been flourishing such as the works by Robert D. English,<sup>182</sup> Robert Service,<sup>183</sup> and Pierre Grosser,<sup>184</sup> together with studies enlarging the perspectives for a better understanding of what *really* happened in the world in the crucial 1989.<sup>185</sup>

During the same official reception, the French diplomat has a conversation with the Soviet Ambassador Albert Chernishev in Ankara. Chernishev says that it would be better if Moscow does not put pressure on Sofia regarding the treatment of the Muslim populations. In the words of the Soviet Ambassador to Turkey, this could make the situation even worse: “[w]e should not push the Bulgarians to their limits and thus force them to harden their attitude further.”<sup>186</sup> Chernishev, who personally visited Bulgaria in 1989 for proposing a triangle dialogue between Ankara-Sofia-Moscow, stresses that “the Soviet government...does not wish to exert pressure on Sofia because this one, as he had been able to see it himself in Sofia would turn out to be counterproductive.”<sup>187</sup> Furthermore, Chernishev “has withdrawn the impression in Sofia, especially with Zhivkov, that his interlocutors realize, finally, that they have acted awkwardly and that they seek accommodation with Turkey.”<sup>188</sup> This diplomatic telegram also clarifies the role the Kremlin wanted to play to improve the Bulgarian-Turkish relations. Chernishev’s “mission of good offices”<sup>189</sup> is characterized by three main objectives. The first one is to “open the way for Turkish-Bulgarian negotiations”<sup>190</sup> which would put the Soviet Union to play in a certain way the role of facilitator between Sofia and Ankara. Chernishev considers this first part of his mission as “difficult to initiate,”<sup>191</sup> especially “because of the prerequisites posed by Sofia.”<sup>192</sup> This second part of his

<sup>182</sup> English, *Russia and the Idea of the West*.

<sup>183</sup> Service, *The End of the Cold War*.

<sup>184</sup> Grosser, *1989 : l'année où le monde a basculé*.

<sup>185</sup> Blumenau, Hanhimäki and Zanchetta, *New Perspectives on the End of the Cold War*.

<sup>186</sup> “Entretien avec l’ambassadeur soviétique,” *Diplomatic Telegram of the French Embassy in Ankara of 30 June 1989*, French Diplomatic Archives, Box 1935-INVA 6193, Politique intérieure, Region Minorités, Europe 1986-1990. The original text in French says “Il ne faudrait pas pousser les bulgares dans leurs derniers retranchements et les forcer ainsi à durcir davantage leur attitude.”

<sup>187</sup> “le gouvernement soviétique... ne souhaite pas exercer des pressions sur Sofia car celle-ci, comme il avait pu le constater lui-même à Sofia se révéleraient contre-productives.” See Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> “a retiré l’impression à Sofia, notamment avec Jivkov, que ses interlocuteurs se rendent compte, enfin, qu’ils ont agi avec maladresse et qu’il recherchent des accommodements avec la Turquie.” See Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> “mission de bons offices.” See Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> “ouvrir la voie des négociations turco-bulgare.” See Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> “difficile à engager.” See Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> “en raison des préalables posés par Sofia.” See Ibid.

mission is to “slow down while waiting for the exodus of Muslim refugees”<sup>193</sup> implicitly shows the crucial and at the same time fragile position of the Kremlin. These first two parts of his mission would help “eventually, [to] obtain a relaxation of the legislation which restricts the individual freedoms of Turks in Bulgaria.”<sup>194</sup> The Soviet Union seems to try to influence the actions on Sofia on several levels to resolve the crisis quickly but at the same time efficiently.

This two-page diplomatic telegram raises the question regarding the influence of Moscow on its Warsaw Pact allies in the final phase of the Cold War. How influential and powerful was the Kremlin in practice in the eyes of its allies in the socialist bloc? What was the level of autonomy of Bulgaria in its diplomatic interactions with Turkey? This part of the first chapter raises several crucial questions, some of which cannot be answered at the present moment. This considering the lack of primary sources for explaining the Soviet position regarding the RP and the Bulgarian-Turkish diplomatic tensions in the 1980s. These two diplomatic telegrams give us a new perspective on Moscow’s role in resolving the tensions between the Eastern Bloc and the Western Bloc countries. The relations between Moscow and Ankara were also complex during the Cold War as Turkey had a special place in military terms for NATO.<sup>195</sup>

## 1. Conclusion

This first chapter examines the first attempts for the internationalization of the ‘Revival Process’ in the arena of multilateral diplomacy at the United Nations. When the topic of the respect for Muslim minority rights in Bulgaria was brought by Turkey to international diplomatic forums, it also attracted the attention of the human rights record in that country. In the context of the post-1980 coup d’état in Turkey, minority rights were not always respected. The image of Bulgaria started to deteriorate on the international stage as Sofia wrote in 1986 a report submitted to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, in which it did not mention the existence of the Muslim minority groups. However, in a similar report of 1984, Sofia explicitly mentioned them. This chapter also shows forgotten elements of the 1980s ‘Revival Process’ in Bulgaria and

<sup>193</sup> “*freiner en attendant l’exode des réfugiés musulmans.*” See Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> “*à terme, obtenir assouplissement de la législation qui restreint les libertés individuelles des turcs de Bulgarie.*” See Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Çalış, *Turkey’s Cold War*. 1.

the 1989 Muslim migration to Turkey as the proposition of North Cyprus to welcome thirty thousand Muslim migrants from Bulgaria. This would have impacted the Cyprus Peace Process. This chapter contributes to an understanding of the Soviet ambiguous position regarding the human rights situation of the Muslim minorities in Bulgaria. Two diplomatic telegrams of the Diplomatic Archives in Paris shed new light on the Kremlin's role in the Bulgarian Turkish relations in 1989 during the peak of the diplomatic tensions between Sofia and Ankara.

To understand the 1980s Bulgarian-Turkish tensions, it is also important to consider the global context of the end of the Cold War when the East and the West blocs reached a *rapprochement* on the international stage. 1989 is the year of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the beginning of major diplomatic transitions in Central and Eastern Europe. The Soviet Union did not survive the multiple changes launched in the second half of the 1980s. In recent years, the numerous events on the world stage which occurred in 1989 have been examined from new perspectives. The number of these studies could increase in the near future regarding the drastic changes in the current international order built in the post-1989. In addition, my work contributes to clarifying the complex relations between Moscow and Washington and their influence on the bilateral interactions in peripheral countries such as Bulgaria and Turkey.

The next chapter of the thesis focuses on the internationalization of the 'Revival Process' in regional international organizations such as the Council of Europe, the European Economic Communities, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

## Chapter 2. Internationalization of the ‘Revival Process’ in Regional International Organizations: a Moral Condemnation

“I would like to inform colleagues in the Political Committee that the Bulgarian ambassador in The Hague was called to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by its Director European Affairs Department on June 30th. He was informed of the great concern of the Netherlands government about the fate of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria. He was furthermore told that in the view of the Netherlands to stop the present human tragedy of tens of thousands of people the Bulgarian authorities should commence recognizing the that, indeed, there does exist an ethnic Turkish minority in Bulgaria, whose basic rights have been spelled out in the CSCE since its inception...

In reply the Bulgarian ambassador stated that there was no Turkish minority in Bulgaria and that Bulgaria regretted the actual state of affairs as its relations with Turkey. Bulgaria was prepared to accept a dialogue with Turkey but not on the preconditions set by that country.”<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> “*Turkish minority in Bulgaria*,” *Note of the Netherlands Delegation to NATO of 4 July 1989*, Archives of the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs of French Republic, Box 1935-INVA 6203, Politique étrangère, Minorités turques en Bulgarie, Europe 1986-1990

## 2. Introduction

In the 1980s, the ‘Revival Process’ (RP) was brought to regional international organizations such as the Council of Europe, the European Economic Communities (via the European Parliament), and NATO. The Council of Europe had been following the question of minority rights in Bulgaria since the 1950s as well as the religious rights in Eastern Europe. This European intergovernmental organization for promoting human rights *par excellence* passed several resolutions but its actions remain limited because Bulgaria was not a member state at that time. The internationalization of the RP in the Council of Europe will be the subject of the first sub-section of the chapter (2.1.).

The role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) was important in the attempts for internationalizing the RP, especially in the European Parliament. The European Economic Communities, which focused primarily on the economic exchanges followed the situation of the Muslim minorities in Bulgaria from a distance. NGOs particularly appealed to the symbolic power of the EP, the only democratically elected institution of the EEC. Several cultural associations of Turks living outside Turkey addressed the President of the EP, asking him to condemn the lack of respect for rights human rights in Bulgaria. The objective was to attract the attention of the wider public and to influence international public opinion. These NGOs put at the center of their attention the question of universal human rights. They did not consider, as did for example the United Nations, that it was a purely bilateral question between Ankara and Sofia. They often used dramatic language for increasing their chances of attracting attention. The internationalization of the RP in the European Parliament will be discussed in the second sub-section (2.2.).

In the 1980s, Turkey received the support of its close allies in NATO, mainly the US and the Netherlands. Not all members of NATO, however, expressed their solidarity with Ankara. In the summer of 1989, NATO countries had difficulties finding the right formulations for condemning the lack of respect for minority rights in Bulgaria. The usage of words as a *minority* was a sensitive topic for countries such as France. Greece did not want to follow Turkey in its condemnation of neighboring Bulgaria. The internationalization of the RP in NATO will be discussed in the second sub-section (2.3.).

The role of regional international organizations in the internationalization of the RP is significant on several levels. Turkey tried to use these international forums for exercising pressure on

Bulgaria. However, even if Ankara successfully brought the question to most of the international organizations, it was not able to impose its strategic language while other international state or non-state actors were describing the minority. International organizations had their agenda which shaped the way of discussing the question of minority rights in socialist Bulgaria. Furthermore, considering the fact Bulgaria was not at that time part neither of the Council of Europe, the EEC nor NATO, these organizations realized that their intervention on the question could mainly be in the register of moral condemnation. Their opinion could have influenced little in practice the events in Bulgaria. In their view, possible tangible solutions could not be found without the intervention of the Soviet Union. The idea that the RP is mainly a bilateral problem between Ankara and Sofia, a position spread in the United Nations, seems to have been common in other regional organizations. Even NGOs were not able to change this perspective despite their actions for drawing attention to the human rights situation in Bulgaria on the international stage. Finally, the condemnation of the RP remains in the register of symbolic actions most of the time. This chapter illustrates the argument of the general thesis, in their actions on the international stage, both Bulgaria and Turkey had a relative level of autonomy from Moscow and Washington in terms of foreign policy. In this way, they became the ‘center’ instead of being the ‘periphery’ in their foreign policy decision-making. Bulgarian-Turkish bilateral relations challenge our perception of the end of the Cold War in Europe. It shows that the second half of the 1980s was a transition period that prepared the democratic transitions of the 1990s in Eastern Europe. Even if Moscow and Washington remained the two superpowers their influences in the peripheries diminished and Sofia and Ankara had a certain degree of autonomy vis-à-vis them.

Bulgarian-Turkish tensions on the minority issue is not a unique case in the 1980s. Romania and Hungary also had tensions regarding the minority issue. The tensions between Bucharest and Budapest did not influence the global East-West relations. On the contrary, the interaction between Sofia and Ankara could have an impact on the fragile balance of USSR-US relations during the late 1980s period of *rapprochement*. The two superpowers were aware of this risk and they tried to avoid direct confrontations. In the summer of 1989, Moscow refused, for example, the Warsaw Pact countries to issue a joint communiqué in response to a NATO communiqué condemning the massive migration of Bulgarian Muslims to Turkey. This aspect of the internationalization of the RP and the vague diplomatic language used by Western countries vis-à-vis Bulgaria in the 1980s will be examined in the fourth sub-section of the (2.4.).

## 2.1. Council of Europe Following the Minority Rights Situation in Bulgaria Since the 1950s

The Council of Europe was one of the central international organizations which followed the Human Rights situation in Bulgaria in the 1980s. It commenced monitoring the situation of the Muslim populations in Bulgaria in the 1950s. The actions of this organization were on two levels. The first level was in the intergovernmental body of the organization. In general, the actions of the Council of Europe remained limited. They were of the repertoire of symbolic condemnation of Bulgaria, which similarly to the other communist countries of Central and European Europe were not part of the organization at that time.<sup>197</sup> However, despite the ideological divisions in Europe, the Council of Europe monitored the situation of the Muslim minorities in Bulgaria during the entire Cold War and tried to play, within the limits of possible, its moral authority.

In November 1950, the Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe prepared a resolution “concerning the transfer to Turkish territory of 250,000 persons belonging to the Turkish minority in Bulgaria.”<sup>198</sup> Two years later, in 1952 an information note was submitted by the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe stressing that:

*“Since August 1950, the Bulgarian government has forced Turkish minorities in Bulgaria to emigrate. Although in doing so, Bulgaria referred to the Convention [Friendship Treaty] concluded on October 18, 1925 between the two countries, providing in particular that the two governments will facilitate the voluntary emigration of Turks to Bulgaria and Bulgarians to Turkey, the Turkish Government considers that the migratory current which has been established since August 1950 and which is more important than before the war is not in truth a voluntary emigration, but rather a mass deportation. Despite protests from the Government*

<sup>197</sup> Bulgaria will become a member only in May 1992, after the fall of the Berlin Wall in Official website of the Council of Europe. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/bulgaria>

<sup>198</sup> “Projet de résolution concernant le transfert sur le territoire turc de 250.000 personnes appartenant à la minorité turque en Bulgarie”, *Comité des ministres*, 6ème Session, 4 Novembre 19, Council of Europe, Online Council of Europe Archives in Strasbourg



*of Turkey, Turkish minorities continue to be expelled from Bulgaria. Turkish authorities expect numbers to rise to 250,000”.*<sup>199</sup>

Paradoxically, the position in 1950 of the Bulgarian communist government to allow important migration would change in the last two decades of the Cold War. Sofia-Ankara relations in the 1950 and 1960s are explained in the article by Kalinova.<sup>200</sup> She argues that Turkey repeatedly asked Bulgaria to allow the signing of a general migration agreement for allowing Muslim populations to migrate. An agreement of similar dimension as the 1953 Yugoslavia-Turkey<sup>201</sup> agreement was not signed, however. The perception of Sofia regarding the Muslim populations in Bulgaria drastically changes with the 1974 Turkish military intervention on Cyprus followed by the proclamation of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, recognized only by Ankara so far. In 1984, the Bulgarian Muslim populations were forced to change their names. Also, the Council of Europe continued following attentively the human rights situation in Bulgaria in the second half of the 1980s, four decades after Strasbourg mentioned for the first time the Bulgarian Muslim minorities in its internal reports. During that decade, Turkey was particularly active in trying to bring the question on the agenda of the organization.

The second level of internationalization of the RP at the Council of Europe was in its parliamentary body composed of delegates of the national chambers. In 1985, a year after the change of names

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<sup>199</sup> The original text in French says “Depuis août 1950, le Gouvernement bulgare contraint les minorités turques en Bulgarie à émigrer. Quoique, pour agir, ainsi, la Bulgarie se soit référée à la Convention d'Etablissement conclue le 18 octobre 1925 entre les deux pays, prévoyant notamment que les deux gouvernements faciliteront l'émigration volontaire des Turcs en Bulgarie et des Bulgares en Turquie, le Gouvernement turc estime que le courant émigratoire qui s'est établi depuis août 1950 et qui est plus important qu'avant-guerre n'est pas en vérité une émigration volontaire, mais bien plutôt une déportation en masse. En dépit des protestations du Gouvernement de la Turquie, les minorités turques; continuent à être expulsées de la Bulgarie. Dans les années 1950 et 1951, 154.393 réfugiés de Bulgarie sont arrivés en Turquie. Les autorités turques s'attendent à ce que leur nombre atteigne 250.000.” See “Statut des réfugiés de Bulgarie en Turquie”, Note soumise pour information par le Secrétaire Général, Strasbourg, 2 novembre 1952, Comité Spécial de liaison, in Online Archives of the Council of Europe. Translation from French into English provided by the author of this work.

<sup>200</sup> Evgenia Kalonova, “Pütyat kŭm vtorata izselnicheska spogodba mezhdu Bŭlgariya i Turtsiya (50-te-60-te godini na XX vek)” [The road to the second emigration agreement between Bulgaria and Turkey (50s-60s of the XX century), *Poslaniya na istoriyata. Yubileen sbornik v chest na profesor Mariya Radeva* [Messages of history. Anniversary collection in honor of Professor Maria Radeva] (Sofia: St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, 2016), 365-378.

<sup>201</sup> Kemal Kirişçi, “Post second World War immigration from Balkan countries to Turkey,” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 12 (1995): 61-77; Edvin Pezo. “Emigration and Policy in Yugoslavia: Dynamics and Constraints within the Process of Muslim Emigration to Turkey during the 1950s.” *European History Quarterly* 48, no. 2 (2018): 283-313; Ahmet İcduygu and Deniz Sert, “The changing waves of migration from the Balkans to Turkey: a historical account,” In *Migration in the Southern Balkans*, 85-104. Springer, Cham, 2015; Kemal Kirişçi, “Post second World War immigration from Balkan countries to Turkey,” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 12 (1995): 61-77.

of the Bulgarian Muslim populations, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe passed a resolution referring directly to the 1975 Helsinki Final Act.<sup>202</sup> This resolution is similar to texts voted in the same period by the European Parliament. The Council of Europe calls Sofia “[t]o put an immediate end to this repressive policy, and to restore their rightful names to all members of the Turkish minority who have been obliged to change them by threat or by force”<sup>203</sup> as well as to “put an end to the violation of the rights of members of the ethnic and Muslim minorities in Bulgaria in social, cultural and religious matter.”<sup>204</sup> The language used for condemning Sofia remained vague as Bulgaria was not a member of the Council of Europe at the time. The organization preferred to play the card of verifications of the facts, which was not easy considering the limited access of international journalists and diplomats to the areas inhabited by Muslims.<sup>205</sup>

The Council of Europe perceived the question from the angle of freedom of religion, which is directly related to the freedom of thought and expression. In 1988, Bulgaria is mentioned together with the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania in a text regarding the situation of the Church and freedom of religion in Eastern Europe, which calls for an “end to the persecution of ethnic Turks and the elimination of Muslim identity in Bulgaria...”<sup>206</sup>

One year later, in September 1989, some weeks after Ankara decided unilaterally to close its border with Bulgaria and to receive Bulgarian Muslim migrants only with visas,<sup>207</sup> the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted a Resolution demanding Sofia and Ankara find a common solutions and avoid the massive exodus.<sup>208</sup> The Resolution, which is of the register of symbolic condemnation refers to the Helsinki Process by citing the Vienna CSCE review meeting of January 1989.<sup>209</sup> It “[a]lso urges the Turkish authorities...as a gesture of goodwill, to avoid any propaganda element in its information services to the ethnic and Muslim minority in Bulgaria.”<sup>210</sup> This part of the text involves a crucial element of the relations between Turkey and Bulgaria but

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<sup>202</sup> *Resolution 846 on the situation of ethnic and Muslim minorities in Bulgaria was adopted on 26 September 1985 by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*, Online Archives of the Council of Europe.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>206</sup> *Resolution 908 on the situation of the Church and freedom of religion in Eastern Europe adopted on 6 October 1988 by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*, Online Archives of the Council of Europe

<sup>207</sup> Kalonova (2018), 250-251.

<sup>208</sup> *Resolution 927 on the Situation of the ethnic and Muslim minority in Bulgaria adopted on 26 September 1989 by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*, in Online Archives of the Council of Europe

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, p 2.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, p 2.

also between the East and the West. As the Cold War was an ideological struggle between two permanently competing blocs, minority rights were one of the topics exploited on both sides of the Iron curtain for propaganda purposes.

To understand the 1980s, it is important to go back to the beginning of the Cold War. In the 1950s and 1960s, for example, the USSR was using the respect of human rights in the US to criticize the non-amicable capitalist system, which provoked huge inequalities among American citizens, especially with the so-called “*Negro question*.”<sup>211</sup> In contrast, after the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, the West started to use human rights for criticizing the socialist system.<sup>212</sup>

This Council of Europe seems to have had symbolically a central role for people willing to express their concerns about the changing of names of the Bulgarian Muslim populations.<sup>213</sup> In June 1988, for example, a person living in Bursa (Turkey)<sup>214</sup> addressed a letter to the organization explaining the situation of the Muslim minority in Bulgaria and stressing the symbolic role of the organization: “I am convinced that your unwavering belief in human rights will be the cause of your motivation to support me in this human problem.”<sup>215</sup>

Another important organization where the RP was brought in the 1980s was the European Economic Communities. The European Parliament, the only democratically elected institution, was the in a certain way moral authority of the EEC.

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<sup>211</sup> Rosemary Foot, “The Cold War and Human Rights,” *The Cambridge History of the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 445-465, 456.

<sup>212</sup> Badalassi, *En finir avec la guerre froide*, 314.

<sup>213</sup> Also “during the period 11 April – 16 August 1988, 105 petitions were received by the Council of Europe on behalf of 1, 317 ethnic Turks residing in Bulgaria who had been subject to name changes and other forms of minority restriction” See Statistical Annexes, in *Appendix II of the Preliminary Draft Report on the situation of ethnic and Moslem minorities in Bulgaria*, 11 January 1989, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Online Archives of the Council of Europe, p. 22

<sup>214</sup> Her identity is not revealed in the document. This person moved from Bulgaria to Turkey but her parents remain in Bulgaria as they cannot obtain passports.

<sup>215</sup> “Letter addressed to the Council of Europe from a person of Bursa, 20 June 1988,” See *Annexes II of the PRELIMINARY DRAFT REPORT on the situation of ethnic and Moslem minorities in Bulgaria*, 11 January 1989, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Online Archives of the Council of Europe, p 21

## 2.2. Attempts for the Internationalization of the ‘Revival Process’ at the European Parliament

The attempts for internationalizing the RP happened not only in classical intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations and the Council of Europe but also in regional international organizations *sui generis* such as the European Economic Communities (EEC). In the 1980s, the European Parliament (EP), which members have been directly elected since 1979 embraces the defense of human rights. At the very end of the Cold War in 1988, during the perestroika launched by the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev first in the Soviet Union and later in the entire socialist camp, the EP created its awards for the deference of human rights.<sup>216</sup> Contrary to the Council of Europe whose *raison d'être* is the defense of the Fundamental Human Rights,<sup>217</sup> the European Economic Communities focused quasi exclusively on economic cooperation at that time. In general, both the EEC and its members took some distance from the Minority Rights situation in Bulgaria in the 1980s as its relations with that country were limited. This would change in the 1990s with the beginning of the negotiation for the accession of Bulgaria to the EU.

The internationalization of the RP in the EP happened in two aspects. The first aspect was the executive body of the institution. It will be analyzed in the fourth sub-section of the thesis as it evolves into the general analysis of the language. The second aspect of the internationalization of the RP at the EP was in the parliamentary body itself. Similar to the Council of Europe, the role of the EP remained limited even if its members (MEPs) followed attentively the developments in Bulgaria from 1985 to 1991 as proved by the existence of several notes regarding the political

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<sup>216</sup> The Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought honors one of the most famous Soviet dissidents in “Sakharov Prize”, *European Parliament*, Official Website of the European Parliament <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/sakharovprize/en/home> (consulted on 2 October 2021).

<sup>217</sup> This with the signing of the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights, signed one year after the creation of the organization in 1949.

situation in Bulgaria. All of them (1988,<sup>218</sup> 1989<sup>219</sup>, 1990,<sup>220</sup> and 1991<sup>221</sup>) explicitly mention the situation of the Muslim minorities in the country together with the economic situation and the potential economic relations between the European Economic Community and Bulgaria. The situation of the Muslim minority in Bulgaria drew the attention of several MEPs who drafted proposals for resolutions in the period 1985-199 to generally calling for the Bulgarian government to change its policy regarding the Muslim minorities. These seven motions for resolution show that the question of the respect for Human Rights were at the center of the international diplomacy in the 1980s after the signing of the Helsinki Final Act. In March 1985, two MEPs tabled the first motion for a resolution “on the repression of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria.”<sup>222</sup> The second motion for a resolution is introduced some weeks later in April 1985 and it “[p]rotests strongly [against] the repression of the Turkish minority in the People’s Republic of Bulgaria.”<sup>223</sup> It calls Sofia “[t]o put an immediate end to this repressive policy (change of the names).”<sup>224</sup> Words such as “international agreements”<sup>225</sup> clearly refer without openly saying it to the Helsinki Final Act for which Europe played a central role during the negotiations in Geneva in the first half of the 1970s.<sup>226</sup> The third motion for a resolution is introduced some days later calling this time for a real

<sup>218</sup> “Note d’information du 2.6.1988 sur la situation politique en Bulgarie, en Hongrie et Roumanie,” in Historical Archives of the European Parliament Strasbourg EU.HAEU/PE2.RI.DEEU.1984.PV//DEEU-19880707-2/0060

<sup>219</sup> *Note d’information du 1.2.1989 sur la situation politique en Bulgarie* in Historical Archives of the European Parliament Strasbourg, EU.HAEU/PE2.RI.DEEU.1984.PV//DEEU-19890213/0110

<sup>220</sup> *Note du 31.5.1990 sur la situation politique en Bulgarie et ses relations avec la Communauté européenne*, Historical Archives of the European Parliament Strasbourg, EU.HAEU/PE3.RI.DBGR.1990.PV//DBGR-19900612/0030

<sup>221</sup> “Note du 9.1.1991 sur la situation économique de la Bulgarie et ses relations avec la Communauté européenne”, in Historical Archives of the European Parliament Strasbourg EU.HAEU/PE3.RI.DBGR.1990.PV//DBGR-19910122/0040

<sup>222</sup> The motion is based “on article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which stipulated that in these States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, person belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.” This motion for a resolution “[p]rotests strongly at the repression of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria; [c]alls on Bulgaria to observe Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; [i]nstructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council Commission and Foreign Ministers meeting in political cooperation.” See “Motion for a Resolution tabled by Mr. Vandemeulebroucke and Mr. Kuijpers pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure on the repression of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria,” European Communities European Parliament, Working Document, 22 March 1985, B Series Document 2-61/85 in Historical Archives of the European Parliament Strasbourg

<sup>223</sup> “Motion for a Resolution tabled by Messrs. TAYLOR, HOWELL, HABSBURG, WEDEKIND, MARSHALL, BATTERSBY, POETTERING, MUNCH, PENDERS, ZARGES, PIRKL, DALSASS, BOCKLET, HUTTON, KILBY, PRINCE, LEMMER, pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure on the repression of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria,” *European Communities European Parliament Working Document*, 19 April 1985, B Series Document B 2-185/85 in Historical Archives of the European Parliament Strasbourg

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Frederic Bozo, Marie-Pierre Rey, N. Piers Ludlow, and Leopoldo Nuti, ed., *Europe and the End of the Cold War: A Reappraisal* (London, Routledge: 2008).

step to be taken against the Government of Bulgaria. This time via the Foreign Ministers meeting in political cooperation of the EEC.<sup>227</sup> The fourth motion for a resolution with similar requests is introduced in June 1985.<sup>228</sup> The language used in the different motions for resolutions remains prudent and it does not go far in the condemnation.<sup>229</sup> These motions carefully use the terms minority and do not talk about a Turkish *national minority* as it was the official position of Turkey. They prefer to talk about the “Turkish ethnic community”<sup>230</sup> in Bulgaria. It is probably because the MEPs understood that the EP did not dispose of the real means for putting pressure on socialist Bulgaria: a country from the Eastern Bloc which has very limited relations with the communities. In the 1980s, the EP and its members wanted to impose its moral authority on the European political agenda but their means remained more symbolic than cohesive. The MEPs were conscious of the military, ideological and political division of the bipolar world and some of them explicitly mentioned the influence of Moscow on the resolution of the problem between Sofia and

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<sup>227</sup> “Call on the Foreign Ministers meeting in political cooperation to take appropriate steps to make known Europe’s condemnation of this violent attempt to impose national identity, and to call for the protection of ethnic minorities.” See “Motion for a Resolution tabled by Mr. Mattina pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure on the repression of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria,” *European Communities European Parliament Working Document*, 22 April 1985, B Series Document 2-195/85 in Historical Archives of the European Parliament Strasbourg.

<sup>228</sup> “Calls on the Foreign Ministers in political cooperation to bring pressure to bear on the Bulgarian Government to end repression of the Turkish minority and to respect the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the Bulgarian constitution and the United Nations Convention on Human Rights,” See “Motion of Resolution tabled by Mrs. Dyry pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure on the repression of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria,” *European Communities European Parliament Working Document*, 19 June 1985, B Series Document B 2-568/85 in Historical Archives of the European Parliament Strasbourg.

<sup>229</sup> “Calls therefore upon the European Community and its Member States to pass censure upon the government in Sofia for its maltreatment – where this applies – of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria and at the same time for the highly reprehensible Communist methods it uses in general; at the same time declares its solidarity with the Turkish ethnic community and – where appropriate – with other national minorities and majority population of Bulgaria.” See “Motion for a Resolution tabled by Mr. Pordeo pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure on the repression of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria”, *European Communities European Parliament Working Document*, 14 October 1986, Series B, Document B 2-985/86 in Historical Archives of the European Parliament Strasbourg

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

Ankara.<sup>231</sup> The MEPs continued to follow the situation of the Muslim minorities in Bulgaria even after the end of the RP.<sup>232</sup>

In September 1989, the EP undertook probably the most significant actions of the EEC at the time by passing a Resolution, which was the product of a long and insistent work of several MEPs.<sup>233</sup> After describing in detail the situation of the Muslim minorities in Bulgarian since 1985, the EP calls Sofia to respect the rights of the Muslim minorities in the countries based on different international documents such as the United Nations Charter and the Helsinki Process.<sup>234</sup> This document shows that for the EEC, the protection of fundamental human rights was a precondition for dealing economically with countries from the Eastern Bloc such as Bulgaria.

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<sup>231</sup> In the Fall of 1988 a motion for a resolution in sent by fax to the secretary of the European parliament with the title “urgent resolution, with demand for urgent and topical debate” and it “deplores all efforts to force Bulgarian citizens of Turkish origin to renounce their culture and condemns the persecution of men, women and children which resulted; urges the Commission, the Council, the Foreign Ministers meetings in political cooperation and the Governments of member states [12 at that time] acting within the framework of the Helsinki Final Act, to raise this matter with the Bulgarian Government and the government of the Soviet Union.” See “Motion for a Resolution tabled by Mrs. Veil and Mr. Bronlund Neilsen on behalf of the Liberal Democratic and Reformist Group on the Right of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure on the repression of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria,” *European Communities European Parliament Working Document*, 4 September 1986, Document 104/86 in Historical Archives of the European Parliament Strasbourg

<sup>232</sup> The last motion for a resolution was introduced four years later on 16 January 1990 by three MEPs on behalf of the Green Group in the European Parliament after the end of the RP and the beginning of the democratic transition in Bulgaria. For this reason, the language use is more amicable. It “...calls...on the Bulgarian government, all the Bulgarian authorities and the Bulgarian people to realize that the credibility of the turn to democracy and to respect for human rights in Bulgaria depends both at home and abroad to a large extent on the status and treatment of the ethnic and religious minorities and in particular the Turkish peoples; unless they are given full equal rights and respect Bulgaria’s credibility in democratic terms would immediately disappear; points out that the fundamental rights of minorities cannot be left to a majority decision,” See Motion for a Resolution tabled by Mr. LANGER, Mrs. AGLIETTA and Mr. ERNST DE LA GREATE with request for an early vote pursuant to Rule 56 (3) of the Rules of Procedure on behalf of the Green Group in the European Parliament to wind up the debate on the Commission statement on the situation of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, *European Communities European Parliament Working Document*, 16 January 1990, Series B, Document B 3-173/90 in Historical Archives of the European Parliament Strasbourg

<sup>233</sup> This is one of the few official documents voted by the MEPs regarding the situation of the Muslim minority in the country. The resolution seems to be inspired by the several motions for resolution introduced at the Secretariat of the European Parliament in the previous years. See “Resolution on the situation of the Bulgarians of Turkish origin”, *Annex of the Note d’information du 1.2.1989 sur la situation politique en Bulgarie*, in Historical Archives of the European Parliament Strasbourg, EU.HAEU/PE2.RI.DEEU.1984.PV//DEEU-19890213/0110

<sup>234</sup> “The European Parliament, ...4. Calls for the unsatisfactory treatment of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria to be halted; 5. Points out to the [European] Commission that the present situation in Bulgaria regarding the fundamental rights of the ethnic Turkish minority takes it more difficult to continue negotiations with view to concluding a trade and economic cooperation agreement with Bulgaria,” See *Ibid.*,<sup>6</sup>

The actions of the MEPs continued with several written questions addressed by them to the Commission of the European Communities from 1985 to 1990.<sup>235</sup> Generally speaking, the European Commission (EC) took some distance with the question. In July 1986, a MEP addressed a written question to the Commission related to an Amnesty International report.<sup>236</sup> One year later, the Commission replied that the Twelve Member States of the EEC “continue to closely monitor the situation of the Muslim minority of Turkish origin in Bulgaria.”<sup>237</sup> In 1988, another MEP addressed a similar written question to the Foreign Ministers of the Member States of the EEC.<sup>238</sup> The answer to this question remains vague.<sup>239</sup> The same year, the Commission replied to a written question introduced a year earlier<sup>240</sup> showing a relatively low interest of the Member States which simply “follow the human rights situation for minorities also in Bulgaria.”<sup>241</sup> Even during the events of the ‘Great Excursion’ in 1989, the EEC seems to show a very low interest in her response to as replying to a written question<sup>242</sup> saying that “[t]he Twelve [members of the EEC at that time]

<sup>235</sup> This is the main institution of the EEC in charge especially of negotiating the international economic agreements with third countries.

<sup>236</sup> “Question écrite N 733/86 de M. Alex Zargas (PPE – D) aux ministres des affaires étrangères des Etats membres de la Communauté européenne se réunissant dans le cadre de la coopération politique du 2 juillet 1986,” 87/C/ 277/05, *Journal officiel des communautés européennes*, 15.10.1987, N C 277/3 in Historical Archives of the European Parliament Strasbourg

<sup>237</sup> “Réponse à la Question écrite N 733/86 de M. Alex Zargas (PPE – D) aux ministres des affaires étrangères des Etats membres de la Communauté européenne se réunissant dans le cadre de la coopération politique du 2 juillet 1986,” *Journal officiel des communautés européennes*, 15.10.1987, N C 277/3 in Historical Archives of the European Parliament Strasbourg

<sup>238</sup> “Question écrite N 2195/87 de M. Ernest Glinne (S – B) aux ministres des Affaires étrangères des Etats membres de la Communauté européenne réunis dans le cadre de la coopération politique du 1 Fevrier 1988,” *Journal officiel des communautés européennes*, 30.05.1988, N C 140/34 in Historical Archives of the European Parliament Strasbourg

<sup>239</sup> The answer remains vague and only describes the actions taken in the Helsinki Process. It underlines that “some of the Member States have raised this question individually in the bilateral contacts with the Bulgarian authorities or in multilateral contacts,” See “Réponse du 15 avril 1988 à la question écrite N 2195/87 de M. Ernest Glinne (S – B) aux ministres des Affaires étrangères des Etats membres de la Communauté européenne réunis dans le cadre de la coopération politique du 1 Fevrier 1988,” *Journal officiel des communautés européennes*, 30.05.1988, N C 140/34 in Historical Archives of the European Parliament Strasbourg

<sup>240</sup> “Situation of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria”, *Written Question No. 2672/87 by Mr. Carlos Robert-Piquer (ED – E) to the Foreign Ministers meeting in European Political Cooperation* in Historical Archives of the European Parliament Strasbourg.

<sup>241</sup> “The Twelve [Member States of the EEC at that time] note, however, that under the Bulgarian-Turkish Protocol concluded on February 23, 1988, both sides agreed to set up working groups to discuss the bilateral question. The Twelve hope that this dialogue will lead to concrete results and an improvement of Bulgaria-Turkish relations.” This sentence is of crucial importance as it shows that for the Member States of the EEC the question is of pure bilateral aspect and that they have not to place to intervene, contrary to the effort put by Ankara for the internationalization of the question. See *Reply by the Foreign Ministers of the Member States of the European Community meeting in Political Co-operation to Written Question n 2672/87 put by Mr. Robles Piquer*, 24 October 1988, in Historical Archives of the European Parliament Strasbourg

<sup>242</sup> A written question is addressed by Mr. Muru in 1989 asking “[w]ill the Foreign Ministers meeting in European Political Cooperation enquire into the fate of a group of people of Turkish origin possibly held in Plovdiv prison on account of their non-violent opposition to the policy of forced assimilation of the minority of Turkish origin in



are following closely the current changes in Bulgaria and the development in the sphere of human rights.”<sup>243</sup> The European Commission continued to follow in the months after the end of the RP in Bulgaria and the beginning of the democratization transition.<sup>244</sup>

### 2.3. The Condemnation of the RP by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and its Member States

In the 1980s, Turkey searched for support among its military allies in NATO. In a similar way to the Council of Europe and the EEC, NATO took some precautions while describing the Muslim minority in Bulgaria. In the internationalization of the RP, Turkey was not able to impose the use of language which would be in its favor. For example, the NATO countries used an expression such as “Muslim minority of Turkish origin”<sup>245</sup> and not Turkish *national* minority as Ankara advocated during the 1980s. The term minority itself was heavily politicized as minority issues

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contradiction of Article of the International Pact on Civil and Political Rights ratified by Bulgaria in 1970? Will they seek information regarding the possible death in that prison of Mustafa Aliev following this participation in a hunger strike?.” See “Prisoners of Turkish origin in Bulgaria,” *Written Question No 1025/89 by Mr. Victor Manuel Arbeloa Muru (S) to the Foreign Ministers meeting in European Political Cooperation*, QWW1025/89 EN, in Historical Archives of the European Parliament Strasbourg

<sup>243</sup> *Reply by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Member States of the European Community, meeting in Political Co-operation to Written Question No 1025/89 put by Mr. Arbeloa Muru*, 2 February 1990, in Historical Archives of the European Parliament Strasbourg

<sup>244</sup> The last written question found at the Historic Archives of the European Union is sent by Piquer in 1989 and concerns the first steps of the democratic transition in Bulgaria and the possible improvement of the human rights in the country. See “Situation des réfugiés en Bulgarie”, *Question écrite N 1172/89 de M Carlos Robles Piquer (PPE) aux ministres des Affaires étrangères réunis dans le cadre de la coopération politique européenne*, 8 January 1990, QXW1172/89FR, in Historical Archives of the European Parliament Strasbourg.; The answer of the Ministers of Foreign affairs of the ECC is several months later in June 1990 stressing that: “The new Bulgarian authorities have taken a number of measures to end discrimination against members of the Muslim minority of Turkish origin and enable them to enjoy their individual rights. Thus, the law adopted on March 5 allows members of ethnic minority groups to use the original version of their name; it will be recalled that the compulsory use of the Slavic version of their name was one of the main grievances of persons belonging to the Muslim minority. It should be noted that, partly as a result of these measures, a considerable number of refugees who had fled to Turkey have returned to Bulgaria in recent months Turkey did not ask the European Community for help to meet the needs of refugees from Bulgaria.” See *Réponse des ministres des Affaires étrangères réunis dans le cadre de la coopération politique européenne à la question écrite N 1172/89 de M Robles Piquer*, 22 June 1990, in Historical Archives of the European Parliament Strasbourg.

<sup>245</sup> “minorité musulmane d’origine turque.” See “Projet de déclaration de l’Alliance sur la situation des bulgares d’origine turque,” *Diplomatic Telegram of 28 July 1989*, Archives of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of French Republic, Box 1935-INVA 6203, politique étrangère, Minorités turques en Bulgarie, Europe 1986-1990

remained sensitive for all European countries. For example, France was very prudent in the use of this term.

It is important to remember the geopolitical position of Turkey during the Cold War. Contrary to the expectation, Turkey was part of the West during that period. It was also the only non-communist country in the Black Sea region which made its strategic importance of this country in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.<sup>246</sup> In the 1980s, NATO as an organization tried to take some actions regarding the RP and the 1989 Muslim migration to Turkey. But these actions remain symbolic.

The internationalization of the RP in NATO was produced in three aspects. The first one was on the supranational level of the organization itself which will be discussed in the next sub-part of this chapter. The second aspect of the internationalization of the RP was bilateral, between NATO member states and Turkey. From the beginning of the RP in 1984, Turkey received strong support from the US for the internationalization of the question. Washington was one of Turkey's closest allies for condemning the situation of the Muslim minorities in Bulgaria. In 1989, the US Senate discussed a resolution "[c]ondemning the brutal treatment of, and the brutal discrimination against, the Turkish Minority by the Government of the People's Republic of Bulgaria."<sup>247</sup> The Helsinki Final Act was used as the main reference in the document.<sup>248</sup> Another close ally of Ankara in NATO was Amsterdam. The Dutch government undertook several initiatives of bilateral character for expressing their condemnation of the RP and the 1989 massive migration directly to the Bulgarian Government.<sup>249</sup> However, they were without particular success as the quotation at the beginning of the chapter indicates.<sup>250</sup> Bulgaria constantly refused to recognize the existence of a

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<sup>246</sup> Çalıř, *Turkey's Cold War*. 1.

<sup>247</sup> The text of the Resolution submitted on June 15 (legislative day, January 3), 1989 by Mr. Deconcini stresses that Bulgaria is a signatory of major international documents such as "the 1947 Paris Peace Treaty, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations, and the Helsinki Declaration of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe." See "Text of the Senate concurrent resolution 46 (also House concurrent resolution 154 submitted by Representatives Solarz and Hoyer)," *Archives of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of French Republic*, Box 1935-INVA 6203, politique étrangère, Minorités turques en Bulgarie, Europe 1986-1990, 1.

<sup>248</sup> The "Helsinki Accords express the commitment of the participating states to respect the fundamental freedoms of conscience, religion, expression and emigration, and to guarantee the rights of minorities." See Ibid.

<sup>249</sup> "Turkish minority in Bulgaria," *Note of the Netherlands Delegation to NATO of 4 July 1989*, Archives of the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs of French Republic, Box 1935-INVA 6203, Politique étrangère, Minorités turques en Bulgarie, Europe 1986-1990

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

Turkish minority on its territory contrary to the 1960 and 1970, when Sofia allowed and encouraged the publication of several newspapers in the Turkish language.<sup>251</sup>

The third aspect of internationalization was in the North Atlantic Assembly to which Turkey brought the question of the Bulgarian Muslim and the RP in the second half of the 1980s.<sup>252</sup> This forum of inter-parliamentary diplomacy was composed of delegates of the national chambers of member states who voted on texts with purely symbolic character. In 1987, the North Atlantic Assembly adopted a resolution by unanimity “[o]n the repression of the Muslim and Turkish minority in Bulgaria.”<sup>253</sup> This resolution talks about the “Muslim and Turkish minority”<sup>254</sup> in Bulgaria without explicitly mention the ng worlds *national minority*, which were so important for Turkey. The 1987 Resolution used a similar prudent language to the texts voted at that time by the Council of Europe and the EP. It “[u]rges once again member governments and parliaments of the North Atlantic Alliance ...[t]o continue to attach importance to the problem and their international efforts, to exert pressure through every possible means, until the government of the People’s Republic of Bulgaria renounces the forced and systematic assimilation as well as the brutal repression of the Muslim and Turkish minority in Bulgaria.”<sup>255</sup> The information element remains central in the Cold War and not surprisingly the North Atlantic Assembly requests from the Government in Sofia “to ensure that the visiting delegations and the international press have unimpeded access to Muslim and ethnic Turkish areas for examining the conditions prevailing there.”<sup>256</sup>

The use of diplomatic language was central in the way international organizations and NGOs tried to influence the events in Bulgaria. For example, several NGOs tried to attract the attention of the

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<sup>251</sup> “Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 9 of the Convention : 8th periodic reports of States parties due in 1984 : Bulgaria,” 1984, *United Nations Digital Library*, CERD/C/118/Add.17, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/79648?ln=en> (consulted on 30 September 2021), p 15.

<sup>252</sup> The representatives of the national parliaments to the North Atlantic Assembly voted three resolutions regarding the topic in 1985 (resolutions 168), 1986 (resolution 184 ), and 1987, in *Resolution adopted by a great majority by the North Atlantic Assembly as its session of 24 September 1978 in Oslo*, in *Annexes III of the PRELIMINARY DRAFT REPORT on the situation of ethnic and Moslem minorities in Bulgaria*, 11 January 1989, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Online Archives of the Council of Europe, 25-26.

<sup>253</sup> *Resolution adopted by a great majority by the North Atlantic Assembly as its session of 24 September 1978 in Oslo*, in *Annexes III of the PRELIMINARY DRAFT REPORT on the situation of ethnic and Moslem minorities in Bulgaria*, 11 January 1989, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Online Archives of the Council of Europe, 25-26.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.,25.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.,25.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.,26.

international community to the human rights situation in Bulgaria by addressing letters to its President. NGOs proved to have played an essential role for bring the question to this organization.

## 2.4. The Importance of the Diplomatic Language: *La Langue de Bois*

In this sub-section, I am going to compare similarities in the diplomatic language (or the *language de bois*<sup>257</sup> in French) used by the European Parliament (EP) and NATO. The European Parliament was one of the privileged institutions of the EEC to which private citizens and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) addressed letters to attract its attention regarding the Muslim minority rights in Bulgaria.<sup>258</sup> These letters are a perfect illustration of the way human rights diplomacy developed in Europe as the Western countries systematically insisted on the respect of the engagements taken in Helsinki by the socialist countries because they highlight the internal divisions among the member states. They underscore how sensitive these questions were and they raise the question of state sovereignty on the international stage in ideological divided world. Furthermore, these letters also show the complexity of the internationalization of the RP with its multiple layers, involving states and non-state actors. In general, the letters repeat the official position of Turkey regarding the situation of the Muslim minority in Bulgaria.

In the 1980s, the EP, whose members have been directly elected since 1979 embraced the defense of human rights Europe, regardless of the geopolitical division of the continent. The original contribution of this chapter is to add new elements to the existing literature, especially the book by Sarah B. Snyder, for rethinking the active role NGOs played in the end of the Cold War.<sup>259</sup> Snyder argues that the “transnational network of human rights advocates”<sup>260</sup> contributed to shaping East-West relations in the 1980s and they played an important role in the ending of the Cold War. Snyder herself builds her argument on the scholarly work by Daniel Thomas about human rights

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<sup>257</sup> It could be translated into English as *political cant*.

<sup>258</sup> This proves several unexplored documents from the Historical Archives of the European Parliament in Strasbourg. These Archives keep the letters addressed by several Turkish associations in Belgium (Brussels, La Louvière) and Germany (Nuremberg), to the President of the European Parliament regarding the situation of the Muslims in Bulgaria.

<sup>259</sup> Sarah B Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War*, 244.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, 244.

in Central and Eastern Europe after the signing of the Final Act.<sup>261</sup> She adds to Thomas's book that the success of the Helsinki Process was assured mainly by the work of numerous NGOs on both sides of the Iron Curtain, which advocated for the respect of the norms of the HFA.<sup>262</sup> At the beginning of the 1980s, the White House took an active role in promoting the role of Human Rights NGOs and dissidents.<sup>263</sup> In the eyes of the Soviets, the American promotion of human rights abroad was in contradiction with the human rights situation in the US, because of the lack of respect for minority rights inside the country at that time.<sup>264</sup> The letters I examine in this sub-section, all of which have been submitted by NGOs, build on and provide further evidence of Snyder's argument about the quintessential role NGOs had in cataloging human rights violations in the Eastern Bloc. Furthermore, they raise the question of the less-known role of NGOs in the 1980s in East-West relations, which was not always visible or communicated in the mass media. NGOs seem to have played a crucial role in interstate relations between Eastern and Western countries as they tried to influence different actors on the international state including international organizations. This comes to add to the knowledge we have about the more 'visible' role played by NGOs inside the Eastern Bloc such as the environmental moment in Bulgaria in late 1980s.<sup>265</sup> The role of NGOs in human rights questions as the RP is not sufficiently studied. Prospective research, however, would be able to determine with more detail the exact role NGOs played in the Bulgarian-Turkish bilateral diplomatic relations by enlarging the scope of the present work and by potentially examining primary sources from the UN Archives in Geneva and the OSCE Documentation Centre in Prague. An important aspect which should be clarified concern the potential relations between those NGOs and the government in Ankara.

The language used by NGOs and States for describing the events in Bulgaria shows the different registers of understanding of the question. In the second half of the 1980s, the President of the European Parliament received several letters asking the EP and the EEC to take a position and condemn the human rights situation in Bulgaria. Similarly to the Council of Europe, the role of the

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<sup>261</sup> Daniel, *The Helsinki Effect*.

<sup>262</sup> Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War*, 245.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid, 141.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid, 159.

<sup>265</sup> Matthew Tejada, *A History of Bulgaria's Environmental Movement: Green Dissidents, Democratic Ecologists and an Environmental Civil Society* (VDM Verlag Dr. Müller: 2010); Ivaylo Znepolski, Mihail Gruev, Momtchil Metodiev, Martin Ivanov, Daniel Vatchkov, Ivan Elenkov, and Plamen Doynov, *Bulgaria under Communism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 410-414.

EEC remained purely symbolic primary because it had limited economic exchanges with Bulgaria in the 1980s. The main difference in the internationalization of the RP between the European Parliament and the United Nations was who addressed these two international organizations. In New York and Geneva (the UN), it was the Turkish government through its diplomats who were trying to bring the topic to the public. In Strasbourg and Brussels (the EP), on the other hand, non-governmental organizations played a special role in bringing the attention of the West to the lack of respect for human rights in the East. In May 1985, the *Federation of Islamic Cultural Associations of Turkish Workers of Antwerp (Fédération des Associations Culturelles Islamiques des travailleurs Turcs de Anvers)* wanted “to draw [the] attention to the aggressions exercised by the Bulgarian Government on the Turkish minority in Bulgaria as part of its ‘Bulgarization’ policy.”<sup>266</sup> The Turkish community in Belgium seemed to be in total solidarity with the Muslims in Bulgaria as it asked the President of the EP “to do everything in [his] power to ensure that the Bulgarian authorities put an end to these practices which are incompatible with international agreements and the principles of human rights.”<sup>267</sup> The argument used by this NGO is moral but also evolves from several international documents such as the UN Convention on Human Rights and the Helsinki Accords.<sup>268</sup> This shows the level of awareness of the NGOs in the 1980s about the international legal documents they can cite in their letters.

Two years later, in 1987 the *Coordination Boards of Turks in North Bavaria (Koordinierungsrat der Türken in Nordbayern)* representing more than forty associations tries to attract the attention of the EP on the same topic using similar moral arguments: “[w]e believe that the civilized world, with whom all oppressed peoples’ hopes lie for the safeguard and restoration of their rights, will give due consideration to the tragedy being suffered by the Turkish minority in Bulgaria.”<sup>269</sup> More importantly, the letter asks the President of the EP, and in this way implicitly the entire institution, to take a clear position regarding the question and “publicly condemn the inhuman campaign of

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<sup>266</sup> Letter addressed by the Federation of Islamic Cultural Associations of Turkish Workers of Antwerpen to the President of the European Parliament, 5 May 1985, in Historical Archives of the European Parliament Strasbourg [EU.HAEU/PE2.P1.200/PRES.260/CITO.265/DHOM//DHOM-1984-030/0100](#), 1. This is one of the several letters discovered in the Historical Archives of the European Parliament Strasbourg. The original text is in French. The translation is provided by the author of this work.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>268</sup> Idem, p.2.

<sup>269</sup> Letter addressed by Coordination Boards of Turks in North Bavaria to the President of the European Parliament, 15 December 1987, in Historical Archives of the European Parliament Strasbourg, 1

the Bulgarian Government.”<sup>270</sup> The NGO knows well the political agenda of the institution and it tries to bring the topic in the right moment for potentially gaining visibility as the letter is sent “in connection with this significant ‘Human Rights Day’”<sup>271</sup> The authors stress the symbolic importance of the EP, which “has a particular and important place in the community of civilized nations.”<sup>272</sup> The objective of this NGO is clearly to attract the attention of the international community, which is one of the privileged methods used in the Helsinki Process. According to Snyder, in the 1980s, the language of dramatization was also used by NGOs for increasing the awareness of people about the Human Rights situation at that time.<sup>273</sup> Also, any institutional condemnation on the international stage “will certainly constitute a moral support for the defenseless Turkish minority in that part of the world and produce an infinitive effect malefic actions of the said Government.”<sup>274</sup> The NGOs which tried to internationalize the RP were relatively less known by the wider public and their actions remain unknown to the public until now. They show the multiple levels of internationalization of the RP, which did not only happen on international diplomatic forums that ordinary people cannot easily access. These letters come to complicate the way of perceiving the diplomatic relations between the two blocs.

The Turkish government understood from the beginning the importance of international public opinion in the context of the Cold War, especially considering its difficulties in being perceived as a legitimate promoter of moral lesson in international forums such as the UN.<sup>275</sup> The internationalization of the RP was necessary for the international public opinion to play a role in the destiny of the Muslim minority in Bulgaria. In 1988, the *Cultural and Aid Association to the Turkish Workers of the Central Region in Belgium* (*Association Culturelle et d’aide aux Travailleurs Turcs de la Région du Centre*) addressed the President of the EP demanding it to “support the Turks of Bulgaria in this ruthless persecution which is carried out with impunity in

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<sup>270</sup> Ibid., 3-4.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid., 3-4.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>273</sup> Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War*, 246.

<sup>274</sup> Letter addressed by Coordination Boards of Turks in North Bavaria to the President of the European Parliament, 15 December 1987, in Historical Archives of the European Parliament Strasbourg, 1.

<sup>275</sup> “Intervention on the Item 12 by Lesley Sherwood, International Commission of Justices”, HU OSA 318-0-5:32/8, Information Items: *Bulgaria: Turkish Minority: United Nations and Turks in Bulgaria*, 1986 – 1988, Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.



front of the whole world.”<sup>276</sup> This time again, the moral authority of the EP was requested. The internationalization of the RP was perceived as a matter of defense of human rights in which every person could express their opinion for defending them, and not as a purely bilateral question between Bulgaria and Turkey as Sofia strongly advocated. “In the name of the Human Rights and of human solidarity, we ask you [President of the European Parliament] to intervene with the Bulgarian Government.”<sup>277</sup> However, the letter does not mention the words *national* minority, which were so important for the Turkish government. It prefers simply to talk about “an ethnic and cultural minority.”<sup>278</sup>

The usage of the term *national* minority would have given a priority to Ankara’s idea of the existence of the Turkish national minority in Bulgaria, which would have given the right to Ankara to intervene in the internal affairs of the State. These three letters from Turkish cultural associations show the importance of the international public opinion for Turkey and its citizens around Europe. Turkey quickly realized the possible gains of internationalizing the RP as with the signing of the Helsinki Accords the defense of human rights was officially written in an international agreement recognized by the Eastern and Western countries.

Another example, when the use of diplomatic language was important, is in the negotiation of the 1989 joint communiqué of NATO.<sup>279</sup> The RP and the 1989 migration of Bulgarian Muslims to Turkey show internal divisions among member states through numerous discussions and debates. This even if Turkey used all its diplomatic and political means for instituting NATO to condemn in one voice a country from the Warsaw Pact (Bulgaria), the internal division in NATO remained. Turkey was not able to impose its strategic language. This mainly as NATO members realized the bilateral character of the question and they tried to use a softer language than this proposed by Turkey.

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<sup>276</sup> *Letter addressed by the Cultural and Aid Association to Turkish Workers of the Central Region*, 5 December 1988, in Historical Archives of the European Parliament Strasbourg [EU.HAEU/PE2.P2.100/PERS.105/DROI/DROI-1987-020/0020](#) ; The original text of the letter is in French. Translation provided by the author of this work.

<sup>277</sup> *Letter addressed by the Cultural and Aid Association to Turkish Workers of the Central Region*, 5 December 1988, in Historical Archives of the European Parliament Strasbourg [EU.HAEU/PE2.P2.100/PERS.105/DROI/DROI-1987-020/0020](#)

<sup>278</sup> *Letter addressed by the Cultural and Aid Association to Turkish Workers of the Central Region*, 23 December 1988, in Historical Archives of the European Parliament Strasbourg [EU.HAEU/PE2.P2.100/PERS.105/DROI/DROI-1987-020/003](#)

<sup>279</sup> Several diplomatic telegrams of the summer of 1989 located at the French Diplomatic Archives in Paris show the level of the ideological weakness of NATO for condemning the mass migration from Bulgaria to Turkey.



The terms which were discussed among diplomats were several. Mentioning the word *minority* itself seems to be a sensitive topic to several NATO members.<sup>280</sup> The delegation of France refused, for example, the use of the expression “Turkish minority”<sup>281</sup> on which Ankara strongly insisted.<sup>282</sup> Paris preferred to talk about “Bulgarians of Turkish origin.”<sup>283</sup> Other sensitive terms which were debated in this communiqué were words such as “repression”<sup>284</sup> which became “forced assimilation policy”<sup>285</sup> as well as “persecution”<sup>286</sup> which was replaced by “harassment”<sup>287</sup> or “harsh treatment.”<sup>288</sup> The intention of NATO members was not to cut the bridges with Sofia. They probably wanted to leave the door open with Sofia to find tangible solutions between Turkey and Bulgaria. Furthermore, the expression “‘conclusion of a comprehensive agreement’ to facilitate the emigration of citizens of Turkish origin”<sup>289</sup> became “‘a general solution’, which was more in line with the sovereign right of States to enter into a negotiation or not.”<sup>290</sup> The sovereign aspect was underlined as the question was generally perceived as a bilateral question between two neighboring countries. In this case, two states on the two sides of the Iron Curtain.

In addition, in the communiqué NATO members prefer to talk from the perspective of States rather than to engage the moral authority of the organization itself. They chose to replace the words “the

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<sup>280</sup> “Situation de la ‘minorité turque’ en Bulgarie,” *Diplomatic Telegram of 18 July 2089*, Archives of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of French Republic, Box 1935-INVA 6203, politique étrangère, Minorités turques en Bulgarie, Europe 1986-1990

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

<sup>282</sup> “...les mots ‘minorités turques’ que nous n’employons pas.” See Ibid.

<sup>283</sup> “minorité musulmane d’origine turque.” See “Projet de déclaration de l’Alliance sur la situation des bulgare d’origine turque,” *Diplomatic Telegram of 28 July 2089*, Archives of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of French Republic, Box 1935-INVA 6203, politique étrangère, Minorités turques en Bulgarie, Europe 1986-1990

<sup>284</sup> “repression” See “Situation de la minorité turque en Bulgarie,” *Diplomatic Telegram of 1 August 1989 at 16.08*, Archives of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of French Republic, Box 1935-INVA 6203, politique étrangère, Minorités turques en Bulgarie, Europe 1986-1990.

<sup>285</sup> “politique d’assimilation force” Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> “persecution” See Ibid.

<sup>287</sup> “harcèlement” See Ibid.

<sup>288</sup> “Situation de la minorité turque en Bulgarie,” *Diplomatic Telegram of 1 August 1989 at 19.07*, Archives of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of French Republic, Box 1935-INVA 6203, politique étrangère, Minorités turques en Bulgarie, Europe 1986-1990.

<sup>289</sup> “‘conclusion d’un accord global’ pour faciliter l’émigration des citoyens d’origine turque.” See “Situation de la minorité turque en Bulgarie,” *Diplomatic Telegram of 1 August 1989 at 13.14*, Archives of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of French Republic, Box 1935-INVA 6203, politique étrangère, Minorités turques en Bulgarie, Europe 1986-1990.

<sup>290</sup> “une ‘solution générale’ qui était plus conforme au droit souverain des États d’engager ou non dans une négociation,” See Ibid.

alliance”<sup>291</sup> by “the allies.”<sup>292</sup> In this sense, NATO states preferred to stay ambiguous about the exact nature of their condemnation. It was not clear whether the Alliance as an international organization was condemning the situation in Bulgaria, which would have created the possible interpretation that the military aspect of NATO was also involved. Instead, NATO members prefer to remain in the position of sovereign states subject to international law condemning the human rights situation in another equal to them state, subject to international law: Bulgaria.

The ambiguity of the text was influenced by the lack of consensus inside the Alliance. The position of Greece is interesting to examine as it refused to sign at the beginning of a joint communiqué condemning Bulgaria.<sup>293</sup> In the end, Athens agreed to be mentioned in the document but with a reservation in the text. The Hellenic Republic denounced “the continuing massive violation of human rights in Cyprus, where 180.000 persons [were] kept through force away from their homes, while the question of missing persons remain[ed] still unsolved.”<sup>294</sup> This reservation increased the concerns of Luxembourg and West Germany regarding the consequences of a joint communiqué in which NATO seemed to project a false image of unity.<sup>295</sup> Luxembourg even considered that the communiqué could be “counter-productive” as it was outside of the military prerogatives of NATO.<sup>296</sup> The story becomes even more complicated as for Canada, the Greek reserve could be perceived as a confirmation of the constant affirmation made by East European countries that human rights were used by the West for political motivation.<sup>297</sup> This was indeed the case. After the publication of the communiqué, the Bulgarian government reacted to it qualifying it as a “political act”<sup>298</sup> and “an attempt to put pressure on the part of a military-political bloc.”<sup>299</sup> The

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<sup>291</sup> “Situation de la minorité turque en Bulgarie,” *Diplomatic Telegram of 1 August 1989 at 19.07*, Archives of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of French Republic, Box 1935-INVA 6203, politique étrangère, Minorités turques en Bulgarie, Europe 1986-1990, 2.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

<sup>293</sup> *Projet de déclaration de l'Alliance sur la situation des Bulgares d'origine turque*, ” *Diplomatic Telegram of 28 July 1989*, Archives of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of French Republic, Box 1935-INVA 6203, politique étrangère, Minorités turques en Bulgarie, Europe 1986-1990.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>295</sup> “Communiqué de l'Alliance sur la situation des Bulgares d'origine turque,” *Diplomatic Telegram of 9 August 1989*, Archives of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of French Republic, Box 1935-INVA 6203, politique étrangère, Minorités turques en Bulgarie, Europe 1986-1990, 2.

<sup>296</sup> “*contre-productive*.” See *Ibid*, 2.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

<sup>298</sup> “*acte politique*,” See “Communiqué de l'Alliance sur la situation des Bulgares d'origine turque : réaction bulgare,” *Diplomatic Telegram of 17 August 1989*, Archives of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of French Republic, Box 1935-INVA 6203, politique étrangère, Minorités turques en Bulgarie, Europe 1986-1990, 1.

<sup>299</sup> “*tentative de pression de la part d'un bloc militaro- politique*,” *Ibid*, 1-2.

Soviet government also consider the declaration as an “interference in the internal affairs of sovereign Bulgaria.”<sup>300</sup> Moscow refused, however, to reply with a similar official communiqué from the name of the Warsaw Pact countries as it which would have impacted East-West relations.<sup>301</sup> This communiqué proves the sensitive aspect of Bulgarian-Turkish relations which could directly impact the fragile USSR-US *rapprochement* at the time.

## 2. Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined the internationalization of the RP in regional international organizations. In the 1980s, Ankara tried to use every opportunity of international meetings in which Bulgaria was represented or not to highlight the question of the respect for Human Rights in that country. The Council of Europe was one of the central organizations where Turkey tried to internationalize the question as it is the European intergovernmental organization *par excellence* focused on the promotion of Human Rights. The question of the respect for human rights in Bulgaria was brought to the attention of the European Economic Communities and its democratically elected institution, the European Parliament. This time, contrary to other international organizations it was not raised by the Turkish government but by Turkish non-governmental organizations which directly addressed the President of the European Parliament. The general idea was to attract the attention of the European Institutions regarding the human rights situation in Bulgaria. As both Turkey and Bulgaria were not part of the EEC, the European Parliament had little possibility to influence the events. NATO as an institution as well as its member states condemned the situation in Bulgaria. In general, these organizations realized that they have little impact on Bulgarian politics as Bulgaria was on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Ankara was not able to impose the use of its strategic language while describing the minority as the usage of the term minority was a sensitive topic on the international stage. This chapter comes as a complementary illustration of Snyder’s argument of the importance of NGOs in the end of the Cold War. Letters addressed by several Turkish cultural associations around Europe to the

<sup>300</sup> “une ingérence dans les affaires intérieures de la Bulgarie souveraine,” See “Prise de position soviétique sur les relations bulgare-turques. Réactions bulgares,” *Diplomatic Telegram of 5 September 1989*, Archives of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of French Republic, Box 1935-INVA 6203, politique étrangère, Minorités turques en Bulgarie, Europe 1986-1990, 2.

<sup>301</sup> “Prise de position de l’URSS sur les relations bulgare-turques,” *Diplomatic Telegram of 7 September 1989*, Archives of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of French Republic, Box 1935-INVA 6203, politique étrangère, Minorités turques en Bulgarie, Europe 1986-1990, 1-2.

President of the EU prove that NGOs had a quintessential role in collecting the possible violation of human rights which was in contradiction to the HFA. It shows that NGOs were not only active inside countries but they played a role in interstate relations between the two opposing blocs, in the case of Bulgaria and Turkey.

## Conclusion

More than thirty years after the events, the end of the Cold War increasingly attracts the attention of scholars. While global politics and the relations between Washington and Moscow have been widely studied by historians, interstate relations in the periphery remain understudied in English-speaking literature. This is the case in the Bulgarian-Turkish conflict regarding Muslim minorities in Bulgaria in the 1980s. This work reexamined this largely forgotten story of the end of the Cold War. It examined Bulgarian-Turkish relations from 1950 to 1991 with a strong focus on the period from 1984 to 1989. By analyzing documents that have been made accessible to the public in the past two years, the present work adds new elements regarding Bulgarian-Turkish bilateral diplomatic relations as well as the multilateral diplomatic interaction including state actors from both sides of the Iron Curtain (US, URSS, France, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Greece, Cyprus and etc.). The relations between Sofia and Ankara are traditionally seen as deeply influenced by the international military and ideological affiliation of both countries. The ‘Revival Process’ in Bulgaria in the 1980s and the 1989 migration of Bulgarian Muslim populations to Turkey questions the level of autonomy of Sofia vis-à-vis the Kremlin in terms of foreign policy.

With the signing in 1975 of the Helsinki Final Act, East-West relations entered a new phase. After the 1984 forced change of names of the Muslim populations in Bulgaria, Ankara tried to attract the attention of the international community to the situation of Bulgarian Muslim populations. Ankara internationalized the question by bringing it to the agenda of several international organizations. The United Nations, the biggest intergovernmental international organization remained at a distance as it considered it a bilateral question that should be resolved directly by the two concerned parties. Ankara could not be perceived as a legitimate promoter of moral lessons in the 1980s, in view of the internal situation of the respect of the minority rights in the country after the 1980 coup d’état. In the summer of 1989, Turkey even considered bringing the question to the UN Security Council. It did not mainly because this question was outside of the competencies of the most important UN body.

The RP in Bulgaria and the 1989 migration of Bulgarian Muslims to Turkey impacted neighboring countries such as Cyprus. The possible massive migration of Bulgarian Muslims to the Turkish-speaking part of the island was perceived as a sort of provocation by the Greek-speaking part of the island. This aspect of the RP shows the interconnections between neighboring countries which

were on the different parts of the Iron Curtain. Even if Greece and Turkey were both members of NATO and Bulgaria was part of the Warsaw Pact, Sofia and Athens seemed to have had more in common on the international stage than Ankara and Athens did. *Realpolitik* seemed to have prevailed despite the supranational geopolitical consideration.

In addition, the RP was brought to several regional international organizations. The Council of Europe, the intergovernmental international organization *par excellence* for the promotion of human rights in Europe, commenced following the situation in Bulgaria in the 1950s. In the 1980s, it remained active but its moral authority remained limited as Bulgaria was not part of the organization. The RP was brought to the European Parliament, the only democratically elected institution of the EEC, by several NGOs. The last ones proved to have played a central role in recording the abuses of human rights in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as Snyder argues. This work showed that NGOs played a significant role in bringing the question of Muslim minority rights in Bulgaria to the EEC. NATO and its member states also showed solidarity with Turkey. The unanimity of the organization was questioned in the summer of 1989 when a joint communiqué was discussed. Turkey was not able to impose the usage of its strategic language. The usage of words such as *minority* proved to be an extremely divisive question for several NATO members. Also, Greece accepted to be part of the text under the condition of introducing a reservation regarding the human rights situation in Cyprus.

Bulgarian-Turkish tensions regarding minority rights were not a unique example of interstate conflict on the base of minority rights. Romania and Hungary had, for example, tensions in the 1980s. However, Bulgarian-Turkish relations had the particularity of directly involving the fragile East-West relations which were in a phase of *rapprochement* in the second half of the 1980s. Moscow was obliged to follow Bulgaria on the international stage and Sofia acted with relative autonomy in its relations with Ankara.

This work contributes to a better understanding of Bulgarian-Turkish relations during the 1980s as well as the way the Cold War ended in Europe. This work could serve as a base for similar studies involving primary sources from other archives. The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) also played a central role in Bulgarian-Turkish relations as is proved

in documents located at the OSCE Documentation Centre in Prague.<sup>302</sup> This work did not examine the role of the CSCE, which would have been beyond the scope of this enquiry. Furthermore, the different instances of the United Nations were solicited by NGOs around the world regarding the human rights situation in Bulgaria. This is according to documents found at the UN Archives in Geneva.<sup>303</sup> Documents from those archives, as well as potentially others at the US diplomatic Archives in Maryland, could serve for writing a broader history of the internationalization of the RP in the 1980s. The main challenges for future works would be accessing documents from the diplomatic archives in Ankara and Moscow.

This work brought new clarification about the Soviet position to the RP and the 1989 migrations of Bulgarian Muslims to Turkey. The important number of primary sources recently open to public in several European countries makes possible the reexamination of the RP for a better understanding of the place of the centers in the periphery (Sofia and Ankara) at the end of the Cold War. Prospective research about this recent period of European history should be encouraged considering the fact the 1980s political changes in Europe which made possible the 1990s democratic transitions, continue to be questioned and given profoundly different interpretations. This in the context of major changes in the way of thinking in European countries about the future architecture of European security.

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<sup>302</sup> I visited the Documentation Centre in Prague as part of the Researcher-in-Residence programme in September 2021.

<sup>303</sup> I visited the UN Archives in Geneva during the summer of 2021.

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