The present study demonstrates that strategic rather than mercantile considerations dominated pre-World War I Anglo-Bulgarian relations. This does not mean that there were no economic considerations during the periods of rapprochement and tension between Britain and Bulgaria in this era, but whenever either of the countries had to make a choice between economic benefit and diplomatic effect, without hesitation both invariably gave preference to the latter. This character of the political activity was equally valid for both Britain and Bulgaria. For the British, the small opportunity for sales in the Bulgarian market and the relatively insignificant number of imports from Bulgaria made economics comparatively unimportant. The British viewed with greater significance Bulgaria's importance as a strategic center along the East-West route and as the shortest land itinerary from the North to the overseas outposts of the British Empire. After the Congress of Berlin Bulgaria became the key to the solution of general Balkan problems for the British political program. The principality's name became a synonym for Near Eastern strategy. The Bulgarian question was a political magnet which drew into its field every anti-Russian initiative on the Balkan peninsula. Winning over Bulgaria became one of the alternatives for solving the Eastern Question in a way which the Foreign Office wished.

The Bulgarian view of Britain's policy in the East was identical on this point. Bulgaria had outstanding issues with all its neighbors, and the other Balkan countries had considerable advantage having gained the status of independence earlier. Thus Bulgaria's neighbors had already established specific relationships with the Great Powers. At the same time Britain's relations with Turkey and Greece were undergoing a process of reorientation leading to the gradual withdrawal of London's support for these two states.

Thus Bulgaria was offered unexpected opportunities. Britain's remoteness from the Balkans, the lack of direct British territorial aspirations in the areas which were of interest for Bulgarian foreign policy, and British hostility toward Russia, Turkey, and, later on, Austria-Hungary and Germany and their Balkan allies—all aroused considerable hope in Sofia of winning Britain's favor.
Precisely for this reason the Bulgarian statesmen often chose to assume certain economic burdens in their contacts with London in order to get British support for other much more important political matters in return. British government circles also occasionally chose to forfeit an effective economic benefit in order to promote and maintain a specific course of Bulgarian foreign policy which might at the moment have coincided with Britain's aims in Europe. Thus, for example, in order to strengthen the position and the prestige of the Regency (1886-87) which was friendly toward Britain, the British government persuaded the bondholders of the Ruse-Varna railway line to withdraw excessive demands when the Bulgarian state decided to purchase the line in 1886. Later, under Stefan Stambulov's rule (1887-94), Britain was the first to support Bulgaria in its ambition to sign direct economic agreements and to contract loans in order to consolidate the regime. In both cases Britain put political considerations ahead of her economic interests. Both the positive and negative manifestations and trends on either side of Anglo-Bulgarian relations resulted from this peculiarity.

Thus the focal point of Anglo-Bulgarian relations brought together converging predilections for the military, strategic, and diplomatic components of politics at the expense of pragmatic economic exchange. Naturally, those relations were neither on an equal footing nor always mutually beneficial. However, the fact that the relations between Bulgaria and Britain were confined to the diplomatic sphere entailed a somewhat forced loss of interest in economy and trade. That is the reason why political bridges were built between Sofia and London only at particularly crucial moments in European history such as the British-Russian conflict over Afghanistan, the Continental Crisis in 1887, the 1903 uprising in Macedonia, and the Balkan Wars.

How great were the real possibilities for an effective Anglo-Bulgarian political friendship? It is hardly necessary to enumerate the geographical spheres or the theoretical concepts of Bulgarian foreign policy. Some of its trends conflicted not only with the trends in the policies of its neighbors but also with those in the policies of the Great Powers. Its existence did not hinder the realization of any great power's political program. This fact, however, did not necessarily facilitate Bulgarian foreign policy. Indeed paradoxically enough, it was precisely the absence of such a direct threat on the part of any of the Great Powers that pushed Bulgaria into permanent diplomatic isolation, because Bulgaria could not turn to the opponents of a great power endangering its national independence to find permanent, reliable protectors. Therefore, the lack of consistency and continuity in Bulgarian foreign policy was not the only negative factor in that policy's development. Bulgaria had foreign policy problems because none of the continental powers eagerly accepted her as an ally. There was no one to which Bulgaria could be opposed. It was a country easily abandoned in political friendship because an alliance with it would have automatically implied hostility with the other Balkan states with which Bul-