

**TRANSFORMATION OF THE BULGARIAN POLITICAL ELITE IN THE PERIOD OF  
TRANSITION. ITS IMPACT ON THE TRANSITION PROCESS**

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# **TRANSFORMATION OF THE BULGARIAN POLITICAL ELITE IN THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION. ITS IMPACT ON THE TRANSITION PROCESS**

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This study examines the transformation of the Bulgarian political elite that took place with the transition from communist to post-communist society. Drawing on classical elite theory and contemporary research on East European elites, I argue that two sets of factors determine the nature of elite transformation – the presence of a counter-elite and the degree to which this elite is organized, and the effectiveness of the auto-transformative mechanisms of the ruling elite (i.e. intra-elite conflict and modes of recruitment). Using a combination of quantitative and qualitative data gathering techniques, I analyze the nature and intensity of intra-elite conflict within the ruling communist elite; the emergence of an organized counter-elite; the extent to which the counter-elite was able to challenge the power of the ruling communist elite; and the difference in the composition and modes of recruitment of the communist and post-communist elites. In examining the process of elite transformation in Bulgaria, I address the wider and more important question of the role the elite played in the transition process and the impact it had on the transition outcome. East European transitions produced a variety of outcomes, with Bulgaria consistently lagging behind other countries from the region. Without viewing elite transformation as the sole explanatory variable, I argue that it significantly affected the outcome of the transition process. Elite action, more than anything, defines domestic and foreign policy choices, and hence, the direction and success of the transition process. Elite change in Bulgaria was defined by a strong and slowly reforming former communist party, unable to articulate a viable reform program; a weak and poorly organized opposition torn by internal conflict and lacking a unified vision of the transition and sound reform policy; and an opportunistic ethnic-based party changing allegiance every so often. This particular combination resulted in a sequence of unstable governments and reform policies that were stalled or reversed with each change in government. The nature of elite transformation in Bulgaria and the country's difficult transition pose the question of the link between elite change and transition outcome – a connection that renders the elite variable the more so important.

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## PREFACE

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# **1.0 THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE BULGARIAN POLITICAL ELITE IN THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION AND ITS IMPACT ON THE TRANSITION PROCESS: AN INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 FRAMING THE ISSUE**

This study examines the transformation of the Bulgarian political elite that took place with the transition from communist to post-communist society. Such topic is closely related to the process of democratization in Eastern Europe and the variety of transitions that resulted. East European countries followed different paths of democratization, some being more successful than others. Elite change similarly varied from country to country, producing more stable to less stable governments and diverging domestic and foreign policies. Bulgaria was hardly the leader in democratization efforts, compared to Hungary, Poland or the Czech Republic. Elite transformation in Bulgaria also significantly differed from that in other East European countries. By analyzing the process of elite transformation in Bulgaria, I aspire to address the wider and more important question of the role the elite played in the transition process and the impact it had on the transition outcome.

A study of elite transformation in Bulgaria raises two immediate questions – why study Bulgaria and why study the elite. Bulgaria makes for a valuable case study for two main reasons: first, democratization in Bulgaria is part of a wider process encompassing entire Eastern Europe,

and, second, Bulgaria represents a largely understudied case. The events of 1989 have unleashed profound political, economic, and social changes, setting an entire region on the path of transition and producing a variety of outcomes. A study of any aspect of the Bulgarian transition should be viewed in this larger context, as it necessarily addresses the broader questions of how East European countries democratized and why, given a common communist past, were certain countries more successful in the process than others.

Although East European transitions have been subject to detailed analyses from various disciplines, Bulgaria still remains a largely understudied case. The study of Bulgarian elites has particularly suffered from academic neglect. As Stephan Nikolov argues, the absence of any detailed analysis of how Bulgaria's communist elites evolved is perhaps due to the repeated characterization of communist Bulgaria as "Moscow's closest ally," as if nothing more needed to be said.<sup>1</sup> While there are numerous studies of Polish, Hungarian or Soviet elites, Bulgarian elite studies are limited to remote chapters in several edited collections and a few analytical, non-empirically based works. Thus, the study of Bulgarian elites is not only valuable in itself but it is a much needed addition to comparative studies on East European transitions.

Why study the elite? The term *elite* originated with the work of Vilfredo Pareto who devoted most of his attention to the study of elites, as opposed to the masses, as he was convinced that social change is a great deal faster in the higher strata than in the lower strata of society, and decisions among the elites have more consequences for the history of society than events and decisions among its great masses.<sup>2</sup> The role of the elite in transitions to democracy

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<sup>1</sup> NIKOLOV Stephan, "Bulgaria: A Quasi-Elite" in John HIGLEY, Jan PAKULSKI and Wlodzimierz WESOLOWSKI (eds.), *Postcommunist Elites and Democracy In Eastern Europe*, New York, NY, St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1998, pp. 213-225, p. 213.

<sup>2</sup> ZETTERBER Hans, "Pareto's Theory of Elites" in Vilfredo PARETO, *The Rise and Fall of Elites: An Application of Theoretical Sociology*, New Brunswick, NJ, Transaction Publishers, 1991, pp. 1-22, p. 3.

has been subject to a prolonged debate between transitologists and area specialists (Bunce 1995, Huntington 1991, Linz 1978, Munch & Leff 1997, Nodia 1996, O'Donnell & Schmitter 1986, Schmitter & Karl 1994, Terry 1993, Welsch 1994, Wiarda 2002). In this debate, transitologists place exclusive emphasis on the elite variable, arguing that democratic transitions are moments of plasticity, during which actors (elites) are faced with an opportunity to shape the course of events (O'Donnell & Schmitter 1986). They focus on the strategic interactions among elites and treat democratization as a contingent process characterized by uncertainty. In emphasizing the elite factor, transitologists downplay the role of socio-economic pre-conditions in determining the outcome of a transition. They argue that countries follow similar paths of democratization which are primarily dependent on the composition and strategies of political elites (Huntington 1991). Thus, the analysis of East European transitions should start with the concepts and hypotheses generated by earlier cases of democratization (Schmitter & Karl 1994).

In contrast, area specialists put forward a structuralist argument focused on the social embeddedness of transition processes. They reject the assumption that political change can be separated from a wider social, economic, and cultural context (Bunce 1995). This is especially true in the case of Eastern Europe, where countries are facing dual-track transitions, having to simultaneously build democracies and market economies. Comparisons with earlier cases of democratization, such as Latin America and Southern Europe, they argue, are necessary, but they should not be limited to the "third wave" democratization framework in which factors such as political culture, fundamental economic differences, and socialist past are ignored (Nodia 1996, Wiarda 2002). The structuralist approach assigns an important role to the elite variable in democratic transitions, but it hardly treats it as the only factor in determining the outcome. In this

view, other explanations, such as economic diversity, previous experience with democracy, proximity to Western culture, even differences of religion, should be given equal consideration.

The transitologist-structuralist debate demonstrates that, despite assigning various degrees of importance to the elite variable, both sides undeniably agree that political leadership, elite conflict and negotiation, and elite change play a role in determining the nature and outcome of transitions to democracy. An analysis of the elite variable, then, is a valid tool for examining the transition process itself. As Higley and Burton argue, democratic transitions and breakdowns can be best understood by studying basic continuities and changes in internal relations of national elites.<sup>3</sup> Without viewing elite change as the sole explanatory variable, I argue that the study of elites addresses the question of variance. Focusing on the elite factor and the ways in which elite transformation differs from one country to another, is a legitimate avenue for examining why East European countries followed different paths and speeds of transition.

Elite change in Bulgaria significantly differed from that in other East European countries. In the first place, the Bulgarian communist regime enjoyed a great deal of legitimacy. On the one hand, such legitimacy rested upon the unprecedented economic prosperity experienced with the advent of communist rule and the all-encompassing process of modernization that followed, and on the other hand, it was due to the close historical and cultural ties between the Bulgarian and Russian peoples and the lack of prevalent Russophobia found elsewhere in Eastern Europe. Second, communist rule in Bulgaria was characterized by the absence of dissident movements and anti-communist protests. There were no organized forms of resistance even vaguely resembling the Hungarian uprising of 1956, the “Prague Spring” of 1968 or the Polish

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<sup>3</sup> HIGLEY John and Michael BURTON, “The Elite Variable in Democratic Transitions and Breakdowns,” *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 54, No. 1, (Feb., 1989), pp. 17-32, p.17.

“Solidarity” movement in the 1980s.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the trigger of change in Bulgaria was an intra-party coup that removed the long-time communist leader, Todor Zhivkov. Third, the changes brought no meaningful lustration or any other significant form of transitional justice in Bulgaria. Hence, the communist elite was not challenged by an organized dissident movement before the changes, it was not prevented by transitional justice from participating in post-communist politics, and at the same time relied on large popular support. This combination of a strong and unreformed communist elite and a weak opposition produced a sequence of unstable governments that failed to implement meaningful reform. Bulgaria witnessed a difficult transition with an unclear direction for most of the 1990s and a stop and go reform effort that placed the country considerably behind its East European counterparts. The elite variable, I argue, is partly responsible for Bulgaria’s difficult transition.

## **1.2 THEORIZING ELITE TRANSFORMATION IN EASTERN EUROPE**

The study of East European elites has been dominated by the circulation vs. reproduction approach articulated by Sonia and Ivan Szelenyi (Szelenyi and Szelenyi 1995). The main focus of this approach is the extent to which the old communist elite retained its position of power. Reproduction, in these terms, refers to no significant change in the composition of elites, whereas circulation indicates changes both in the composition and mode of recruitment to the elite. Another approach applied to the study of postcommunist elites has been offered by Higley and Burton (Higley & Burton 1989). Concerned with the link between elite change and

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<sup>4</sup> KANEV Krassimir, “From Totalitarianism to A Constitutional State” in Jacques COENEN-HUTHER (ed.), *Bulgaria at the Crossroads*, New York, NY, Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 1996, pp. 51-75, p.51.

democratization, Higley and Burton differentiate between consensually unified and disunified elites and argue that consensually unified elites are more likely to contribute to the emergence of stable democracy. Their model emphasizes the importance of intra-elite conflict and negotiation of power. Milada Anna Vachudova is similarly interested in strategic interactions among the elite. She examines the factors contributing to a successful transition to democracy and argues that whether states embarked on a liberal or illiberal pattern of political change after 1989 largely depended on the quality of political competition, in particular on the presence of an opposition and a reforming communist party before 1989 (Vachudova 2005). Vachudova's argument is most valuable in emphasizing that changes initiated within the ruling elite are of no less importance than challenges from an opposition.

Building upon these three approaches, I identify several factors that determine the nature of elite transformation – changes in elite composition and mode of recruitment, intra-elite conflict, and presence of an opposition. I then turn to classical elite theory to organize these elements in a conceptually unified framework. The founders of elite theory Mosca and Pareto pay a great deal of attention to the process of elite renewal. In their view, the elite at any point in time is subject to both change and continuity. “The governing elite is always in a state of slow and continuous transformation,” argues Pareto, “never being today what it was yesterday.”<sup>5</sup> Even in the absence of a counter-elite and critical junctures such as a revolution, a coup or an election, the elite is undergoing constant and gradual transformation. On the other hand, an elite is almost never completely replaced and a certain degree of continuity is always observable. There is a tendency, argues Mosca, which aims at stabilizing social control and political power in the

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<sup>5</sup> PARETO Vilfredo, *Mind and Society: A Treatise of General Sociology*, A. Livingston (ed.), New York, NY, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935, sec. 2056.

descendants of the class that happens to hold possession of it at the given historical moment.<sup>6</sup> Even when the elite loses control of its power resources, its descendents are always in advantageous position in terms of education and connections and, thus, better equipped to enter the ranks of the new elite.

Circulation and reproduction, then, should not be viewed as mutually exclusive processes but as mechanisms of elite renewal which can occur simultaneously. In these terms, circulation does not refer to replacement of elite A with elite B but to renewal of the elite with members outside of the usual pool of recruitment with qualities different than those dominant in the elite. Reproduction, in turn, does not imply physical continuation of the elite, but rather that new members recruited into the elite have the same social characteristics as members of the ruling elite (subscribe to the same value system, have comparable education, come from elite families, etc.). Circulation and reproduction then represent modes of recruitment that assure both change and continuity in the elite. The most desirable arrangement for society, in Mosca's view, is one in which these two processes complement one another in a state of flexible equilibrium.<sup>7</sup>

When these mechanisms of elite renewal fail to fulfill their function, the opportunity for a counter-elite to form and organize increases. According to Pareto, revolutions come about through accumulations in the higher stratum of society – either because of a slowing-down in class-circulation, or from other causes – of decadent elements no longer possessing the qualities suitable for keeping them in power. In the meantime in the lower stratum of society elements of superior quality are gaining power.<sup>8</sup> Mosca similarly argues that the ruling class may be driven from power by the advent of new social elements [in the lower strata] who are strong in fresh

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<sup>6</sup> MOSCA Gaetano, *The Ruling Class*, New York, NY, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1939, p. 395.

<sup>7</sup> MEISEL James, "Introduction" in James MEISEL (ed.), *Pareto and Mosca*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice Hall, Inc., 1965, pp. 1-44, p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> PARETO, *Mind and Society*, *op.cit.*, sec. 2057.

political forces.<sup>9</sup> A counter-elite is formed when these new social elements in the lower stratum, possessing qualities different than those dominant in the elite, manage to organize. The ability of the counter-elite to challenge the power of the ruling elite depends to a large extent on the degree to which the counter-elite is organized. An organized counter-elite is a powerful agent of elite change.

No less important is the role of intra-elite conflict. The governing class, argues Pareto, is not a homogenous body. Its members hold no meetings where they congregate to plot common designs, nor have they any other devices for reaching common accord.<sup>10</sup> If there is an agreement among the elite, it derives from a set of shared circumstances and personal goals. The nature and intensity of intra-elite conflict could be just as powerful an agent of change as challenges from a counter-elite. Intra-elite conflict is particularly important in the context of one-party systems where the only legal contestation of power could come from within the party.

Combining classical elite theory with contemporary approaches, *I argue that two sets of factors determine the nature of elite transformation – the presence of a counter-elite and the degree to which this elite is organized, and the effectiveness of the auto-transformative mechanisms of the ruling elite (i.e. intra-elite conflict and modes of recruitment)*. To examine elite transformation in Bulgaria then, I need to determine whether there was intra-elite conflict within the ruling communist elite; the nature and intensity of that conflict; whether there was an organized counter-elite; where the counter-elite came from and how it organized itself; the extent to which the counter-elite was able to challenge the power of the communist ruling elite; the difference in the composition and modes of recruitment of the communist and post-communist elite; and the change in the mechanisms of elite recruitment. The answers to these questions

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<sup>9</sup> MOSCA, *The Ruling Class*, *op.cit.*, p. 67.

<sup>10</sup> PARETO, *Mind and Society*, *op.cit.*, sec. 2254.

would explain why elite transformation in Bulgaria took its particular form and what impact it had on the outcome of transition. An elite transformation in which the communist elite is faced with an equally or more powerful counter-elite would result in a very different process of negotiation of power and policy direction than a situation in which elite transformation is defined by a strong, unified communist elite and a weak, disorganized counter-elite. Similarly, intra-elite conflict that brings about the dominance of a reformist wing within a former communist party would position that party rather differently in post-communist politics than a party in which reformists had been suppressed.

### **1.3 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The elite variable is an important factor in determining the outcome of democratic transitions. Such influence is to a considerable degree exercised through the elite's power to design and implement policy. With the collapse of communism, East European governments were faced with numerous dilemmas both in terms of domestic and foreign policy. These included: how to liberalize the economy, how to privatize state enterprises and which enterprises to privatize, what kind of land reform to implement, how to maintain social services, how to reform the healthcare and education systems, how to reform the banking system and liberalize capital markets. In addressing these issues, East European countries followed various paths, from shock therapy in Poland to the attempted social-democratic model of gradual change in Bulgaria. The results similarly varied, from painful but successful reform in the Czech Republic to economic crises in Bulgaria and Romania. Foreign policy required even more immediate attention. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the dissolving of the Warsaw Pact, East European

countries had to redefine their foreign policy orientation, e.g. were they to continue to rely on Russia for protection or were they to look for support to the West? The Visegrad three (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland) made a clear and immediate stance in expressing their desire to join NATO and the EU. Bulgaria, in contrast, was changing its position with every change of government. When the Socialist (formerly communist) Party was in power, NATO membership, argues Linden, was not as eagerly pursued.<sup>11</sup> Conflicting views on foreign policy orientation further delayed reform preventing Bulgaria from joining the EU and NATO with the first wave of Eastern expansion.

The nature of elite transformation in Bulgaria had a consequential effect in determining domestic and foreign policy choices, and hence, the direction and success of the transition process. The Bulgarian elite during the transition was not committed to a common vision of post-communist society and did not share a common value system. Whether Bulgaria should pursue a full transition to market economy and whether it should seek membership in NATO and the EU were points of contention until the late 1990s. The unstable political situation, with frequent change of governments, led each new government to focus on short-term goals and adopt policies benefiting its particular party. Consequently, every policy initiative was either stalled or reversed with each change in government. Since Bulgaria witnessed nine governments between 1990 and 1997, this practice proved devastating to the success of the transition. Bulgaria struggled with land reform and restitution. Slow privatization allowed for draining of state enterprises and appropriation and export of state capital. Corruption schemes spread quickly, benefiting members of the old *nomenklatura*. Inflation exceeded 1,000%. Emerging small businesses were subjected to racketeering. An inefficient and corrupted judicial system prevented

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<sup>11</sup> See Ronald H. LINDEN, "Twin Peaks: Bulgaria and Romania between the EU and the United States," *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 51, No. 5 (Sept.-Oct.) 2004, pp. 45-55, p. 46.

legal action. Since there was no long-term policy objective and no consistent policy, similar problems were left without solution.<sup>12</sup>

Examining the policy implications of elite transformation reveals why the elite variable matters. Elite action, more than anything, defines policy choices in terms of legal and government structure, economic and social reform, and international alliances. Elite change directly affects the transition process. The link between elite transformation and transition outcome renders the study of the elite all the more important.

#### **1.4 METHODOLOGY AND ORGANIZATION**

To examine the patterns and mechanisms of elite transformation, I use a combination of data gathering techniques: compiling and comparing elite rosters; interviewing former and present members of the political elite and other relevant individuals such as journalists, dissidents, and intellectuals; and analyzing archival documents and media sources. Elite rosters offer an extensive and unavailable before database that allows analyzing elite change at the individual, positional, party and aggregate levels. Interviews supplement the quantitative data with rich narrative on elite transformation, including mechanisms of elite recruitment, organizing of the opposition, and internal conflict within the communist elite. Analysis of the archives of the Bulgarian Communist Party and newspaper archives of the main political newspapers offers an insight into intra-elite conflict, dissident activity before the fall of the communist regime, the public political debate during the transition, and communication strategies of the opposing

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<sup>12</sup> For a concise account and statistical data on Bulgaria's transition process, see, *Transition Report 1999: Ten Years of Transition*, EBRD, November 1999.

political players. Combining elite rosters, interviews, and archival and media sources produced a comprehensive set of empirical data that addresses the various aspects of elite transformation.

The study utilizes Higley and Burton's most widely used operational definition of elite as "persons whose strategic position enables them to regularly and substantially affect national political outcomes" (Higley and Burton 2006). In the studies of East European elites, the dominant terminology is that of an *elite* and a counter-*elite*, rather than *elites*. A counter-elite is defined as a group of people who are able to mobilize resources and challenge the power of the elite with the purpose of taking its place or, at least, sharing in its power. This terminology is very appropriate for the East European context, where there are two groups that are clearly distinguishable and fundamentally opposed to one another, and where one group is easily defined as a counter-elite for it is, at least initially, completely excluded from the political process. The study is confined to the first decade of the transition which provides a long enough period to study the patterns and mechanisms of transformation of the transition elite.

The work is structured in nine chapters. This introductory chapter is followed by a review of the literature focusing on East European elites and Bulgarian elites in particular and a discussion of the various theoretical approaches applied to the study of post-communist elites. Chapter Three presents a brief historical overview of the 1989-2000 period, it compares the process of democratization in Bulgaria to similar processes in other East European countries, and outlines the factors that define elite transformation in Bulgaria. The fourth chapter reviews the main concepts of classical elite theory and proposes a model of elite transformation that can be useful for the study of post-communist elites. Data gathering and data analysis techniques are reviewed in Chapter Five. Chapter Six presents the empirical findings, focusing on elite composition, mode of recruitment and intra-elite conflict of the transition elite. Chapter Seven

examines the role of the former secret service in the political transformation of the country, offering a first attempt to forward a scientific inquiry into the subject and separate myth from fact. Chapter Eight examines the impact of elite transformation on the transition outcome by focusing on specific policy areas. Chapter Nine concludes the study by commenting on its importance and the applicability of the proposed model of elite transformation to a wider context.

## **2.0 APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF EAST EUROPEAN ELITES: INFERENCES FROM THE LITERATURE**

East European transitions have attracted enormous scholarly attention and are the subject of a large and continuously growing body of literature. The last two decades have produced extensive research on the topic from a variety of perspectives both in terms of comparative and country studies. The role of elites in Eastern Europe and their transformation in the period of transition have figured prominently in the literature. Scholarly attention, however, has been unevenly divided with clear preference from all disciplines towards larger countries such as Poland and Russia and noticeable neglect of smaller countries, including Bulgaria. This review of the literature outlines scholarly achievements in the field and offers a concise summary of the major theoretical approaches. Its purpose is not a lengthy account of every study of East European elites, but a categorization of the various works based on their respective theoretical frameworks. The circulation *vs.* reproduction approach, which focuses on the composition of postcommunist elites, is examined first. Its main concern is to what degree the communist elite managed to preserve its power in the transition period and which parts of the elite, political, economic, or cultural, experienced most elite turnover. The circulation *vs.* reproduction approach emerged with the unfolding of events in Eastern Europe and has been formulated in response to the variance in outcomes of postcommunist transitions. It has been the dominant approach in conceptualizing East European elite transformations and as such has influenced the work of

many scholars. The second approach applied to the study of postcommunist elites examines the connection between elite change and regime form. Arguing that a particular kind of elite change leads to a particular regime type, it attempts to determine what type of elite is most likely to contribute to the emergence of stable democracy. This approach originates with contemporary elite theory and was only later applied to the East European context. It has been most noted for incorporating East European cases into comparative elite studies and articulating why the elite variable matters. The role of elites in transitions to democracy, though often implicitly examined, has been the underlying rationale of most studies on East European elites. Hence, the influence of this approach goes beyond the authors who explicitly utilize it. Studies on Bulgarian postcommunist elites are presented last. Since such studies are very limited in number, they are not grouped in theoretical or methodological categories. A summary of the few available works on the subject examines their main arguments and contributions to the general field and to the study of Bulgarian elites in particular.

## **2.1 CIRCULATION VS. REPRODUCTION**

The extent to which the old communist elite retained its elite status has become the main focus in the study of East European post-communist elites.<sup>13</sup> Theorizations of elite change in Eastern Europe have been dominated by the circulation *vs.* reproduction framework, an approach articulated by Sonia and Ivan Szelenyi (Szelenyi and Szelenyi 1995). In questioning whether there was a change in the composition of East European elites with the transition to post-

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<sup>13</sup> ADAM Frane and Matevz TOMSIC, "Elite (Re)configuration and Politico-Economic Performance in Post-Socialist Countries," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 54, No. 3, 2002, pp. 435-454, p. 435.

communism and if so, what happened to the old cadres and where did the new elites come from, Szelenyi and Szelenyi find two competing answers. The first they term elite reproduction theory, the second, elite circulation theory. Reproduction theory, in their view, suggests that revolutionary changes in Eastern Europe did not affect the social composition of elites, as the old *nomenklatura* elite managed to survive at the top of the class structure, becoming the new propertied bourgeoisie. In contrast, circulation theory defends the claim that the transition to post-communism resulted in a structural change at the top of the class hierarchy, whereby new people were recruited to command positions based on new principles.<sup>14</sup>

The dominant view of elites in Eastern Europe, argue Szelenyi and Szelenyi, is one of reproduction. Early scholarship on the topic posits that privatization and marketization of the economy would benefit the communist political class, which would use its political power to accumulate wealth and thus would easily retain its position at the top of the class structure (Hankiss 1990, Staniszkis 1991). Thus, although the socioeconomic system is changing radically, the people at the top remain the same, only altering the principles by which they legitimate their power.

Szelenyi and Szelenyi offer a competing argument, i.e. circulation. They suggest there would be limits to the extent to which the former communist elite will be able to maintain its privileged position. Some members, they argue, will be downwardly mobile, some will stay in the social space they occupied before, and some will be upwardly mobile.<sup>15</sup> Utilizing Bourdieu's conceptualization of the different forms of capital, Szelenyi and Szelenyi hypothesize that the old

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<sup>14</sup> SZELENYI Ivan and Szonja SZELENYI, "Circulation or Reproduction of Elites during the Postcommunist Transformation of Eastern Europe: Introduction," *Theory and Society*, Special Issue on Circulation vs. Reproduction of Elites during the Postcommunist Transformation of Eastern Europe, Vol. 24, No. 5, (Oct., 1995), pp. 620-621, p. 616.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 618.

elite, which based their power mainly on political capital, is likely to be downwardly mobile, while the technocracy, which combined cultural and political capital, will be better positioned to acquire economic capital.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, the authors argue, one may expect a high degree of elite reproduction in countries where the technocracy was co-opted by the *nomenklatura*, such as Hungary, as well as in countries where there was no counter-elite, such as Russia. Circulation, in turn, can be expected in countries where the co-optation of the technocracy did not take place or in countries with a well-formed counter-elite, like Poland.<sup>17</sup>

Empirical results of Szelenyi and Szelenyi's study demonstrate that the distinction between circulation and reproduction is a relative one, and the two theories do not necessarily contradict one another.<sup>18</sup> The authors observe a considerable degree of elite reproduction as a result of the marketization of the socialist economy. At the same time, however, they witness a significant amount of elite circulation. There is substantial change at the top of the class structure, argue Szelenyi and Szelenyi, as some of the old elites are pushed out of their positions of power. Yet, these changes do not represent a revolutionary break but rather a path-dependent

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<sup>16</sup> The technocracy, according to Szelenyi and Szelenyi, represents a distinctive stratum in socialist societies which combines cultural and political capital and is thus better positioned to accumulate economic capital in the post-communist environment. The authors claim that their approach is based on Pierre Bourdieu's distinction between economic, cultural and social capital, and his proposition that social and cultural capital can be converted into economic capital and vice versa. Szelenyi and Szelenyi extend Bourdieu's framework based on the assumption that political capital is a form of social capital. In Bourdieu's view, social capital consists of all actual or potential resources linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition. Nobility titles are a good example of social capital, as they represent a durable network of recognition from which potential resources could be derived. Although one can argue that political capital also includes access to certain networks, equating political and social capital in Bourdieu's terms is erroneous. See, BOURDIEU Pierre, "The Forms of Capital" in John RICHARDSON (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, New York, Greenwood Press, 1986, pp. 241-258.

<sup>17</sup> SZELENYI and SZELENYI, *op.cit.*, p. 621.

<sup>18</sup> Szelenyi and Szelenyi's approach exhibits a major conceptual inconsistency. The authors present reproduction theory and circulation theory as separate and distinctive theories, arguing at the same time that the two processes are interdependent. It remains unclear whether they are speaking of a unified framework within which both reproduction and circulation processes are at work, or whether reproduction and circulation are two distinctive theoretical approaches. Their interchangeable use of "theory" and "process" when referring to reproduction and circulation renders this theoretically important distinction the more so confusing.

transformation of the composition of the elite with a distinctive move of people from middle to top positions. Contrary to their expectations, Szelenyi and Szelenyi find greater rates of circulation of elites in Hungary than in Poland, which they attribute to “administered social mobility.”<sup>19</sup> As predicted by their model, they report high rates of reproduction in Russia. Similar results are also supported by Fodor, Wnuk-Lipinski, and Yershova, who find a significant degree of elite circulation in Poland and Hungary and overwhelming reproduction in Russia (Fodor, Wnuk-Lipinski, & Yershova 1995).

Szelenyi and Szelenyi’s conceptual framework influenced many scholars who attempted in various degrees to fit their scholarship within the circulation vs. reproduction model, producing much valuable and original research. In a study of Russian elite, Hanley, Yershova, and Anderson observe substantial reproduction of the elite between 1988 and 1993 and little change in the mode of recruitment (Hanley, Yershova & Anderson 1995). Gorbachev’s tenure as first secretary, they argue, was accompanied by extensive circulation in the elite between 1983 and 1988, which contributed to the high rates of reproduction in the 1990s. In their view, elite circulation is closely related to institutional change. Thus, they expect that institutional inertia in the economic sphere, contrasted with institutional dynamism in the political sphere, would translate into higher rates of circulation in the political than in the economic elite. Furthermore, the devaluation of political capital and short supply of economic capital would increase the importance of cultural capital in granting entry into the elite. Results of Hanley, Yershova, and Anderson’s study, however, demonstrate that former party members constitute over three-

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<sup>19</sup> “Administered mobility,” in Szelenyi and Szelenyi’s terms, refers to the tendency of the new Hungarian political elite to distrust subordinates who carried over from the communist regime and to prefer to appoint less-experienced but trusted people who were not associated with the regime. See, SZELENYI and SZELENYI, *op.cit.*, pp. 629-633.

quarters of the 1993 elite. Hence, the authors conclude that although political capital has become deinstitutionalized with the disintegration of the Communist Party, it retains a great deal of its value in the form of durable networks.

In a comparative study of economic elites in Hungary, Poland and Russia, Rona-Tas and Borocz further explore the link between institutional change and elite formation (Rona-Tas & Borocz 1995). They argue that the formation of the new economic elite is to a large degree dependent on the institutional mechanisms of property change. As the communist state collapses and delegitimizes itself as a property owner, it faces the difficult task of transferring its property to other, real owners. This leaves managers of state enterprises, who possess the economic and technical knowledge as well as valuable social network assets, in an advantageous position in the transformation process. Their knowledge and connections easily translate into acquiring ownership rights through management buy-outs. Consequently, the authors report that the overwhelming majority of the economic elite in all three countries came from top or other managerial positions. Rona-Tas and Borocz further make an important distinction between the “private” and the “privatized” sectors. The new private sector, they argue, is formed by capital savings or investment from abroad, whereas the privatized sector emerges as a result of privatization of state-owned enterprises. They report significantly higher degree of reproduction of the elite in the state and privatized sectors in comparison to the private sector. The authors attribute the overall high degree of reproduction in the economic elite to the absence of radical institutional changes.

Elaborating on the issue of the advantageous position of the old elite, Kryshantovskaya and White examine the process by which the Soviet *nomenklatura* managed to convert its political power into economic (Kryshantovskaya & White 1996). They describe in detail the

various mechanisms through which the *nomenklatura* benefitted from the privatization process and managed to appropriate state property, such as establishment of joint enterprises and privileges in import-export operations in the late 1980s, advantageous credits and licenses for property dealings in the privatization process, conversion of assets into cash, etc. As the future of the regime became uncertain, the *nomenklatura* deemed it necessary to protect their position of power through the accumulation of property and wealth. According to Kryshantovskaya and White, this accumulation of capital resulted in a bifurcation of the once monolithic elite which now controlled assets both in the political and economic spheres. Their analysis of the Brezhnev, Gorbachev, and Yeltzin elites, however, point to both change and continuity. A broader continuity coexisted, argue Kryshantovskaya and White, with circulation within the elite as a younger and less compromised cohort rose to leading positions, a process termed “the revolution of the deputies” by Andrei Grachev, advisor and press secretary to Michail Gorbachev.<sup>20</sup>

In another study, Szelenyi, Szelenyi, and Kovach elaborate on the circulation vs. reproduction framework by offering a third theory of elite transformation, which they term the “empty places” thesis (Szelenyi, Szelenyi & Kovach 1995).<sup>21</sup> This approach focuses on the class positions that determine the social structure rather than on the characteristics of the individuals occupying those positions. Applied to the East European context, the authors argue that a difference in elite personnel does not constitute a substantive change in the stratification of post-communist societies, as long as elites continue to have the same degree of power as under communism and are selected on the basis of the same criteria as before.<sup>22</sup> Their analysis of

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<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Olga KRYSHANTOVSKAYA and Stephen WHITE, “From Soviet Nomenklatura to Russian Elite,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 5, (Jul., 1996), pp. 711-733, p. 729.

<sup>21</sup> Here again it remains unclear whether the “empty places” thesis is a distinct theory or an elaboration on the circulation vs. reproduction framework.

<sup>22</sup> SZELENYI Szonja, Ivan SZELENYI and Imre KOVACH, “The Making of the Hungarian Postcommunist Elite: Circulation in Politics, Reproduction in the Economy,” *Theory and Society*, Special Issue on

Hungarian post-communist elites indicates reproduction in the economic elite and circulation in the political elite. The change of the cultural elite, however, fits neither the circulation nor the reproduction theses. The authors observe significant change of personnel in the cultural elite, but no change in the selection criteria. The “empty places” thesis, they argue, best explains the transformation of the cultural elite.

In a study of Polish elites, Wasilewski and Wnuk-Lipinski argue that the reproduction vs. circulation concept has two aspects – intergenerational and intragenerational (Wasilewski & Wnuk-Lipinski 1995). Intergenerational reproduction, in their opinion, takes place either when members of the new elite are the offspring of the former communist elite, or when they are the children and grandchildren of the pre-war elite. Intragenerational reproduction, in turn, could take the form of simple reproduction, when incumbents of command positions under communism succeed in maintaining the same positions in the post-communist context, or reproduction by conversion, when incumbents of command positions under communism succeed in maintaining their elite status, but transfer to another fraction of the elite, i.e. from political to economic.<sup>23</sup> Wasilewski and Wnuk-Lipinski also report a move from middle to top positions, which they term vertical reproduction.<sup>24</sup> Their results indicate that intragenerational reproduction in the economic elite is much higher than in the cultural and political elite. Simple reproduction, in turn, is prevalent over reproduction by conversion in the economic and cultural elite. The political elite exhibits overall circulation rather than reproduction. The authors conclude that Poland represents a case of both circulation and reproduction.

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Circulation vs. Reproduction of Elites during the Postcommunist Transformation of Eastern Europe, Vol. 24, No. 5, (Oct., 1995), pp. 697-722, p. 700.

<sup>23</sup> WASILEWSKI Jacek and Edmund WNUK-LIPINSKI, “Poland: Winding Road from the Communist to the Post-Solidarity Elite,” *Theory and Society*, Special Issue on Circulation vs. Reproduction of Elites during the Postcommunist Transformation of Eastern Europe, Vol. 24, No. 5, (Oct., 1995), pp. 669-696, p. 684.

<sup>24</sup> Also known in the literature as “revolution of the deputies.”

Szelenyi and Szelenyi's approach to the study of East European elites has posed some very important questions, i.e., who were the people who held command positions under socialism, and how were these people affected by the transition process? Was there a change in the composition of East European elites, and if so, what happened to the old cadres and where did the new elites come from? The extensive empirical research their approach has stimulated demonstrates that one cannot speak of pure reproduction or circulation of the elite, but rather of a greater inclination to one form or the other in each of the East European countries.<sup>25</sup> As Sharon Rivera asserts, the assessment of circulation or reproduction largely depends on three fundamental questions: 1) which segment of the elite is being studied; 2) how are circulation and reproduction defined; and 3) what is meant by "member of the old elite."<sup>26</sup>

Our review shows that the degree of reproduction, and respectively circulation, differs among various segments of the elite. Generally speaking, economic elites tend to exhibit a higher degree of reproduction, whereas political elites are closer to circulation (Hanley, Yershova & Anderson 1995; Fodor, Wnuk-Lipinski & Yershova 1995; Szelenyi, Szelenyi & Kovach 1995; Wasilewski & Wnuk-Lipinski 1995). As Rona-Tas and Borocz argue, the degree of reproduction may also vary within different segments of the economic elite, with higher rates in the state and privatized sectors and lower rates in the private sector (Rona-Tas & Borocz 1995). It has been argued that the amount of reproduction and circulation among various segments of the elite may be an indicator of the institutional changes in each particular sphere. The generally higher degree of circulation among political elites suggests that changes in the political sphere preceded and were more radical than those in the economic sphere (Hanley, Yershova & Anderson 1995;

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<sup>25</sup> ADAM and TOMISC, *op.cit.*, p. 439.

<sup>26</sup> RIVERA Sharon Werning, "Elites in Post-Communist Russia: A Changing of the Guard?", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 3, 2000, pp. 413-432, p. 416.

Rona-Tas & Borocz 1995). A significant amount of circulation in the political elite, however, may also indicate that the political sphere, dominant in the communist context, has become less relevant with the increased importance of the economic sphere (and private property), which has resulted in a shift of the former communist elite from the political to the economic realm.<sup>27</sup> The various degrees of circulation and reproduction among various segments of the elite render imperative a clear indication of which part of the elite is being studied.

Another question of utmost importance is the way circulation and reproduction are defined. Many scholars understand reproduction in terms of physical continuity, i.e. the same individuals holding power. The concept of intragenerational *vs.* intergenerational reproduction challenges this view and suggests that physical continuity could refer to both individuals and families (Wasilewski & Wnuk-Lipinski 1995). Thus, a case in which children of former *nomenklatura* members are presently occupying top political positions could be interpreted as either reproduction or circulation depending on one's definition of the terms. Some authors further argue that physical continuity does not exhaust the concept of reproduction and consideration should be also given to changes and continuities in the aggregate social characteristics of the elite (Kryshtanovskaya & White 1996). Studies comparing the social composition of communist and post-communist elites point to lack of significant differences between the two groups in terms of social characteristics and social origins (Eyal & Townsley 1995; Szelenyi, Szelenyi & Kovach 1995). A lot of circulation at the individual level, argue Eyal and Townsley, may mean nothing more but the reproduction of privileges and advantages

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<sup>27</sup> Kryshtanovskaya and White recall that such argument was also made by Trotsky in his *Revolution Betrayed*. See KRYSHHTANOVSKAYA and WHITE, *op.cit.*, p. 716.

institutionalized during the communist period.<sup>28</sup> Szelenyi, Szelenyi, and Kovach's elaboration on the circulation vs. reproduction framework supports this view by drawing attention to changes and continuities in selection criteria and mode of recruitment to the elite (Szelenyi, Szelenyi & Kovach 1995). A change of personnel, they argue, does not necessarily indicate circulation if people are selected based on the same principles and according to the same criteria. The operational definition, therefore, is decisive in evaluating the degree of circulation and reproduction.

What is understood by "member of the old elite" also significantly affects the analysis. In more than one study of post-communist elites, party membership is equated to membership in the old elite (Hanley, Yershova & Anderson 1995; Wasilewski & Wnuk-Lipinski 1995). Wasilewski and Wnuk-Lipinski, for example, report a high degree of reproduction in the economic elite, based on their finding that more than half of the members of the new economic elite used to be party members.<sup>29</sup> Prior membership in the Communist party or even the *nomenklatura*, however, is not an accurate indicator of "membership in the old elite," argues Rivera (Rivera 2000). In 1989 the Bulgarian Communist Party, for example, numbered one million members out of a total population of eight million. Clearly, party membership is too broad of a category to be equated to membership in the elite. Adopting a narrow definition including only the very top political positions, however, would inevitably overlook a crucial characteristic of elite transformation in Eastern Europe, i.e. the revolution of deputies. What Wasilewski and Wnuk-Lipinski label "vertical reproduction," refers to the cases when the new

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<sup>28</sup> EYAL Gil and Eleanor TOWNSLEY, "The Social Composition of the Communist Nomenklatura: A Comparison of Russia, Poland, and Hungary, *Theory and Society*, Special Issue on Circulation vs. Reproduction of Elites during the Postcommunist Transformation of Eastern Europe, Vol. 24, No. 5, (Oct., 1995), pp. 723-750, p. 746.

<sup>29</sup> WASILEWSKI and WNUK-LIPINSKI, *op.cit.*, p. 681.

elite consists of people who under Communism did not belong to the *nomenklatura* elite, but were on the trajectory to achieve such positions and had the assets at their disposal necessary to reach this goal.<sup>30</sup> Those were the people, argue Krysthanovskaya and White, who were the beneficiaries of the transition. They were not high enough to be swept away by the changes but high enough to take over the positions and privileges of the old elite.<sup>31</sup> Elite renewal in such cases is confined to the junior ranks and could be interpreted as either reproduction or circulation depending on what is meant by “member of the old elite.” Expanding the definition of elite, though, could also lead to faulty conclusions. Ursula Hoffman-Lange cautions us against easily stretching the elite concept. Even after a regime change, she argues, elites tend to be recruited from a pool of persons who occupy lower ranks in the hierarchies of the same institutions and organizations (Hoffman-Lange 1998). In her view, if one would consider those individuals as part of the old elite, as is frequently done, the usefulness of the elite concept would suffer, since by definition no elite transformation would ever be possible.<sup>32</sup>

It is only logical that assessment of the degree of circulation and reproduction largely depends on the operational definitions. Though, even after those have been carefully considered, we are still facing a yet more fundamental question, namely why does it matter whether a certain case exhibits inclination towards circulation or reproduction? The “empty place” thesis has clearly demonstrated that a change of players does not necessarily change the rules of the game. If the rules of the game have changed, one might question, does it matter that the players have remained the same? Valerie Bunce argues that countries which initially excluded their former

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 685.

<sup>31</sup> KRYSTHANOVSKAYA and WHITE, *op.cit.*, p. 729.

<sup>32</sup> HOFFMAN-LANGE Ursula, “Elite Transformation and Democratic Consolidation in Germany after 1945 and 1989” in John HIGLEY, Jan PAKULSKI and Włodzimierz WESOŁOWSKI (eds.), *Postcommunist Elites and Democracy In Eastern Europe*, New York: St. Martin’s press, Inc., 1998, pp. 141-162, p. 143.

leaders from political power have shown the most progress in economic and political reform (Bunce 1998). East European countries were faced with the challenge of dismantling an entire system and crafting a new vision for their societies. The elite in this process had the important task of finding the proper strategies and instruments that would take those countries on a different path. It matters a great deal then, who those people are and whether they have the proper mix of expertise and new ideas. Adam and Tomsic argue that the appropriate proportion between elite reproduction and circulation, as a core element of the democratization process, has a major influence on the socioeconomic performance of each particular country.<sup>33</sup> Although the circulation vs. reproduction framework focuses on the composition of the postcommunist elite and does not explicitly explore the link between elite change and transition outcome, its underlying assumption is that elite change, circulation, and reproduction, have an overall impact on the democratization process. In other words, the rules of the game would hardly change without some change of players. Further below we examine another theoretical approach which explores this link and argues that the nature of elite transformation affects the outcome of the transition process. It is this relationship that renders the elite variable the more so important, an argument which will be reinforced throughout this work.

Elite change in Bulgaria has been mostly categorized as reproduction rather than circulation. Bulgaria, Romania, and Russia are often grouped together in that regard, as countries in which communist party elites managed to retain their power even after the first democratic elections and to reform to a much lesser extent.<sup>34</sup> No empirical study of Bulgarian elites, or a comparative study including Bulgaria, utilizes the circulation vs. reproduction framework.

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<sup>33</sup> ADAM and TOMISIC, *op.cit.*, p. 447.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 436.

Szelenyi and Szelenyi's comparative study on circulation and reproduction in Eastern Europe included large-scale surveys in Bulgaria as well. The results of this effort, however, were inconclusive and Bulgaria was ultimately excluded from the final research report.<sup>35</sup>

Despite certain lack of theoretical rigor and clarity, Szelenyi and Szelenyi's approach is very useful in delineating general patterns of elite change. The authors deserve credit even if only for being the first to attempt to theorize elite change in post-communist societies. It is expected that such early theorization could benefit from further elaboration. Szelenyi and Szelenyi's concept of reproduction and circulation is extremely valuable and worthy of incorporating into a broader theory of elite change. The circulation *vs.* reproduction framework could be viewed as a first step toward formulating a theory of elite change in East European transitioning societies.

## **2.2 ELITE CHANGE AND REGIME FORMS**

The relation between elite type and regime form has been the focus of John Higley and Michael Burton's work. First articulated in 1987, Higley and Burton have continuously elaborated on their model which has been critical in bringing East European cases to the comparative study of elites (Higley & Burton 1987, 1989, 1998, 2001, 2006). Higley and Burton also offered the most widely used operational definition of elite, almost unanimously adopted by contemporary elite theorists, including scholars of East European elites. In their view, "Political elites can be defined as persons who are able, by virtue of their strategic positions in powerful organizations

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<sup>35</sup>For the full report see, Ivan SZELENYI and Szonja SZELENYI, "Circulation or Reproduction of Elites During Post-Communist Transformation in Russia and Eastern Europe," The National Council for Soviet and East European Research, council contract number 806-29, 1995

and movements, to affect political outcomes regularly and substantially.”<sup>36</sup> “Regularly” and “substantially” are the core elements of this definition. A lone political assassin, Higley and Burton contend, can affect political outcomes substantially but not regularly. By the same token, a voter in a representative democracy can affect political outcomes regularly but not substantially. It is the ability to regularly and substantially affect political outcomes that distinguishes the elite from the non-elite. Such definition expands beyond the notion of “power elite,” limited to top political, military and business leaders, and takes into account other sources of political power such as trade unions, professional organizations, interest groups and more.

The main argument Higley and Burton make is of a correlation between elite unity and regime stability. A similar argument is forwarded by the classical theorists Mosca and Pareto, as well as by prominent contemporary scholars such as Putnam and Huntington. All of them strongly argue that elite unity or disunity is one of the most important determinants of regime forms (Huntington 1984, Mosca 1939, Pareto 1935, Putnam 1976). In their earlier work, Higley and Burton differentiate between consensually unified and disunified elites (Higley & Burton 1987, 1989). In their view, a disunified national elite, which is the most common type, produces a series of unstable regimes which oscillate between authoritarian and democratic forms over varying intervals. A consensually unified national elite, which is historically much rarer, produces a stable regime which may evolve into a modern democracy.<sup>37</sup> Disunity, the authors argue, appears to be the generic condition of national elites, and disunity strongly tends to persist regardless of socioeconomic development and other changes in mass populations.<sup>38</sup> Higley and

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<sup>36</sup> HIGLEY John and Michael BURTON, *Elite Foundations of Liberal Democracy*, Oxford, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006, p. 7.

<sup>37</sup> HIGLEY John and Michael BURTON, “The Elite Variable in Democratic Transitions and Breakdowns,” *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 54, No. 1, (Feb., 1989), pp. 17-32, p. 17.

<sup>38</sup> Here the authors seem to imply that political stability could be independent from socioeconomic development. While they provide examples of consensually unified elites establishing regimes other than

Burton define an elite as consensually unified when its members share a consensus about the rules and codes of political conduct and participate in an integrated structure of interaction that provides them access to each other and to the most central decision-makers.<sup>39</sup> In contrast, an elite is disunified when its members do not share a consensus about the rules and codes of political conduct and when interactions across the various factions and segments of the elite are limited and sporadic. In reviewing major political changes in the West since the 1500s, the authors posit a connection between elite disunity and regime instability. Their findings indicate that well-functioning democratic regimes are characterized by consensually unified elites. Thus, a transformation of the elite from disunity to consensual unity is a necessary condition, though not necessarily a pre-condition, for a successful transition to democracy. According to Higley and Burton's earlier works, such transformation could occur either through elite settlements or two-step elite transformations. Elite settlements, in their terms, are relatively rare events in which warring elite factions suddenly and deliberately reorganize their relations by negotiating compromises on their most basic disagreements (Higley & Burton 1987). The authors quote Britain's Glorious Revolution and post-Franco Spain as examples of elite settlements which entailed a transformation from disunified to consensually unified elite. A two-step transformation (termed "elite convergence" in Higley and Burton's later work) is a process by which, in step one, some of the warring factions enter into sustained, peaceful collaboration in order to mobilize a reliable electoral majority and win elections repeatedly, and in step two, major opposing factions, tired of losing elections, gradually abandon their distinct ideological and policy stances and adopt those of the winning coalition. Two-step transformations, according to Higley and

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modern democracies, they fail to point to examples in which a disunified elite rules over a society with high level of socioeconomic development.

<sup>39</sup> Higley and Burton, 1989, *op.cit.*, p. 19.

Burton, occurred in France and Italy in the 1960's and 1970s, as the electoral dominance of center-right elite coalitions gradually forced left-wing factions to abandon socialist orthodoxies and adopt their opponents' principles of liberal democracy and capitalist economy.<sup>40</sup>

A further elaboration of Higley and Burton's approach adds another variable to the model – elite differentiation (Higley, Pakulski & Wesolowski 1998). The revised model considers elite unity and elite differentiation to be crucial determinants of the stability and main characteristics of political regimes. Elite differentiation is defined by the authors as the strong tendency of elites to become socially heterogeneous, organizationally diverse, and partly autonomous, enjoying relative freedom from mass pressures and extra-national controls.<sup>41</sup> Differentiation varies from wide to narrow according to the degree in which elites are heterogeneous and autonomous. Based on the various configurations of strong or weak unity and wide or narrow differentiation, Higley, Pakulski, and Wesolowski identify four ideal types of elites, relating each of them to a particular type of political regime. A consensual elite, found in stable democracies, has strong unity and wide differentiation. An ideocratic elite, in contrast, has strong unity but narrow differentiation and is typical of totalitarian regimes. Unstable democracies are characterized by a fragmented elite of weak unity and wide differentiation. Weak unity and narrow differentiation, in turn, produces a divided elite most common to authoritarian regimes.

In applying their analysis to the East European context, the authors argue that up to the 1980's East European elites were characterized by ideocratic unity. Although communist elites have never been monolithic, they all abided by Marxist-Leninist ideology which constituted the

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>41</sup> HIGLEY John, Jan PAKULSKI and Włodzimierz WESOŁOWSKI, "Introduction: Elite Change and Democratic Regimes in Eastern Europe" in John HIGLEY, Jan PAKULSKI and Włodzimierz WESOŁOWSKI (eds.), *Postcommunist Elites and Democracy In Eastern Europe*, New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1998, pp. 1-33, p. 27.

political formula. By the late 1980's this formula became completely discredited even to the most zealous communists and a transformation from ideocratic to other types of elite followed. Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic witnessed a change to consensual elites. Elite negotiations and transformation in these countries created favorable conditions for rapid political and economic change, leading to stable democratic regimes. Partly negotiated but limited regime liberalizations, in contrast, produced fragmented elites and unstable democratic regimes in Bulgaria and Slovakia. Post-communist elite configurations in Bulgaria and Slovakia, argue the authors, are strikingly different than those in Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic. Pre-emptive coups and lack of elite contestations or negotiations led to divided elites in Romania and Ukraine, where democratization efforts were far from successful and regimes bore more than few characteristics of authoritarian rule. The case of Russia poses a challenge to the authors, who are unable to unilaterally determine whether elite change was toward a fragmented, divided or consensually unified type. In their view, the implosion of the Soviet regime, followed by significant turnover in the political elite and a scramble for positions in nearly all elite sectors, has made for a bewildering combination of change and continuity in elite composition within an overall pattern of increased elite differentiation.<sup>42</sup> Higley, Pakulski, and Wesolowski conclude that the extent and direction of elite change from ideocratic elites during communist rule to new post-communist configurations are the most important determinants of democracy's prospects in the region. Stable democracy, they argue, is unlikely where elite unity is weak and/or elite differentiation is limited.

In a study of Soviet elites, David Lane disagrees with the categorization of communist elites as ideologically unified (Lane 1998). According to Higley, Pakulski, and Wesolowski,

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

state socialist society exhibited an ideological elite with strong elite unity and narrow differentiation. Although the authors acknowledge that communist elites were never monolithic, they consider ideological unity to be their chief characteristic. This typology, argues Lane, may have been useful for the discussion of the system of state socialism in its formative periods, but by the time of Gorbachev it was no longer appropriate.<sup>43</sup> Elite differentiation was narrow, he concurs, but the appearance of ideological unity was deceptive and there were major disagreements and ideological splits between elite constituents. Lane defines the Soviet elite as fragmented, arguing that the Soviet regime had higher levels of differentiation and had much weaker unity than is commonly acknowledged. Lane makes a valuable contribution by bringing to our attention the internal conflicts and splits within the communist elite, an often neglected aspect in the analysis of communist societies.

A study comparing West European, Latin American and East European cases, equates some East European round-table negotiations to elite settlements (Higley & Burton 1998). Higley and Burton classify the round-table negotiations in Hungary and Poland as elite settlements, but not those in Bulgaria and Romania. Persistence of ex-communist elites in Bulgaria and Romania has been marked, the authors argue, and no basic accommodation with weak and fragmented opposition elites has occurred.<sup>44</sup> Unlike the Polish and Hungarian cases, round-table negotiations in Bulgaria and Romania did not involve as significant and consequential compromises on behalf of the ruling elite and did not represent negotiations on comparable footing. Furthermore, elite transformations in those countries did not result in

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<sup>43</sup> LANE David, "Elite Cohesion and Division: Transition in Gorbachev's Russia," in John HIGLEY, Jan PAKULSKI and Włodzimierz WESOLOWSKI (eds.), *Postcommunist Elites and Democracy in Eastern Europe*, New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1998, pp. 67-96, p. 71.

<sup>44</sup> HIGELY John and Michael BURTON, "Elite Settlements and the Taming of Politics," *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 33, (Winter 1998), pp. 98-115, p. 111.

consensually unified elites and stable democratic regimes. Because of pronounced holdover of ex-communist elites and fragmented opposition elites, the round-table negotiations in Bulgaria and Romania may approximate elite settlements in form but not in substance.

In another study of East European elites, Higley and Lengyel explore the link between elite circulation and the configurations that elites have displayed after state socialism (Higley & Lengyel 2000). The key aspects of elite circulation, they argue, are its scope and its mode. In terms of scope, circulation is narrow when only the most prominent and politically exposed position-holders are replaced, or wide when holders of elite positions are changed across the board. The scope of circulation further varies between shallow, when new members of the elite are drawn from deputy positions within existing political and social hierarchies, and deep, when they come from down or outside political and social hierarchies. The horizontal and vertical scope of circulation tend to co-vary, producing either wide and deep circulation or narrow and shallow one. The mode, in turn, refers to the speed and manner in which circulation occurs. It could be sudden and coerced, as in violent revolutions, or gradual and peaceful, with elites being replaced incrementally. Based on the various combinations of the scope and mode of circulation, Higley and Lengyel distinguish between four patterns. Classic circulation, which Mosca and Pareto consider essential for elite renewal, is wide and deep in scope and gradual and peaceful in its mode. Replacement circulation is similarly wide and deep in scope, but sudden and coerced in its mode. It usually involves ousting of the ruling elite by a violent revolution or foreign conquest. Reproduction circulation, in turn, is narrow and shallow in scope and gradual and peaceful in its mode, entailing no major change in the composition of elites. Quasi-replacement circulation is also narrow and shallow in scope, but sudden and coerced in its mode. It is typical of court coups which replace one elite clique with another, but produce no broad elite turnover.

Higley and Lengyel then relate the various patterns of elite circulation to the different elite configurations and regime forms. They argue that classic circulation results in consensual elites and is typical of stable democracies. Reproduction circulation, in contrast, produces fragmented elites and unstable democracy. Ideocratic elites, in turn, are a result of replacement circulation and are common to totalitarian regimes. Finally, divided elites are a product of quasi-replacement circulation resulting in authoritarian regimes.<sup>45</sup>

The authors then proceed to apply their model to the East European context. They find relatively strong features of consensual elites and classic circulation in Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. Roundtable negotiations in these countries were preceded by political articulation of opposition elites under state socialism which gradually altered elite composition. The roundtable negotiations, in turn, produced broad elite consensus on democratic reforms. Clearly fragmented elites and reproduction circulation in Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Russia, in contrast, failed to achieve broad elite consensus on reform policies. Members of the former communist elites in these countries continued to dominate, though not monopolize, elite positions and postsocialist regime orders. Divided elites, involving quasi-replacement in Serbia and Croatia, relied heavily on nationalist ideology to justify their ascendancy to power. The replacement of socialist ideology with nationalism obviated the need for accommodation with opposition elites and produced transitions that were neither of negotiated nor consensual type.

Higley and Lengyel further examine the relation between elites and institutions. In their view, institutions limit elite unity or disunity, differentiation, and circulation, but elite configurations, in turn, influence the operation of institutions. Elites play an important role in

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<sup>45</sup> See fig. 1.3 in John Higley and Georgy Lengyel, "Introduction: Elite Configurations after State State Socialism" in John HIGLEY and Gyorgy LENGYEL, *Elites after State Socialism: Theories and Analysis*, Oxford, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000, pp. 1-21, p. 7.

crafting institutional designs, they argue, but particular institutional mechanisms influence the channels for elite competition and recruitment. Institutional designs, in their view, refer to the structural elements of social reproduction, such as constitutions, whereas institutional mechanisms are the instruments for implementing designs, such as electoral rules. Thomas Baylis also emphasizes the interdependence between the emergence of new political elites and the shaping of new political institutions in Eastern Europe (Baylis 1998). Although elites are paramount in shaping new institutions, he argues, institutions have an impact on elite composition and recruitment, favoring the rise of some groups and individuals to power over others.<sup>46</sup> Wasilewski further suggests that the role of elites in institution-building is much greater during rapid and profound changes of political structures (Wasilewski 1998). It is only logical to believe, he opines, that the emerging institutions in Eastern Europe would reflect the attributes of their architects. Higley and Lengyel's main argument is that despite variation in elite configurations in Eastern Europe, it was elites that bore the primary responsibility for shaping the postsocialist orders. Thus, whether communist, ideocratic elites transitioned to consensual or fragmented type greatly determined the nature of institutions and the regime form.

A somewhat similar argument is put forwarded by Milada Anna Vachudova. In a comparative study of East European transitions, she examines the factors contributing to a successful transition to democracy (Vachudova 2005). She argues that whether states embarked on a liberal or illiberal pattern of political change after 1989 largely depended on the quality of political competition, in particular on the presence of an opposition and a reforming communist

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<sup>46</sup> BAYLIS Thomas, "Elites, Institutions, and Political Change in East Central Europe: Germany, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia" in John HIGLEY, Jan PAKULSKI and Włodzimierz WESOŁOWSKI (eds.), *Postcommunist Elites and Democracy In Eastern Europe*, New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1998, pp. 107-130, p. 109.

party before 1989.<sup>47</sup> Despite the common start to democratization, the trajectories of postcommunist states diverged immediately after 1989, a variation, in Vachudova's view, due in part to the quality of political competition. In countries where the opposition was strong, communists were forced to yield power and opposition leaders wrote new rules and shaped institutions that helped install political and economic reform. In countries where the opposition was weak and divided, unreconstructed communists managed to win elections and maintain power, stalling democratization efforts. Furthermore, a reformed communist party helped establish a moderate left-wing alternative that encouraged lively competition and alternation of power. Alternation of different political parties in power, argues Vachudova, has a positive effect on the democratization process. She groups East European countries according to the nature of opposition to communism and the nature of the communist party. Poland and Hungary represent a case of strong opposition and reforming communist party. They were most successful in embarking on a road to liberal democracy. A strong opposition confronting the communist regime in these countries had prepared the ground for a dialog and reform already in the 1980s. Reformed communist parties in Poland and Hungary checked the power of post-1989 right-wing governments and assured a healthy alternation of power in the transition years.

Bulgaria and Romania, in contrast, are examples of weak opposition and unreconstructed communist parties. Opposition in these countries was so weak that they could not wrest power from the communist parties in the first democratic elections. The lack of opposition, in turn, meant that there was no need for the Bulgarian and Romanian communist parties to formulate a liberal democratic reform program. Instead, they stalled domestic reforms to prevent political pluralism and marketization reforms from undermining their power.

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<sup>47</sup> VACHUDOVA Milada Anna, *Europe Undivided: Democracy, Leverage, and Integration after Communism*, Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 2-19.

Slovakia, with its weak opposition but reforming communist party, and the Czech Republic, with a strong opposition and unreconstructed communist party, pose interesting cases. The absence of a strong opposition in Slovakia opened the door for nationalists and opportunists who used Slovak independence as their core strategy to gain power. They managed to take complete control of all parliamentary committees and exclude opposition parties from oversight bodies, establishing a regime closely resembling authoritarian rule. Slovakia is an example of concentration of political power and illiberal political change. The case of the Czech Republic demonstrates the importance of political competition. The absence of a reformed communist party led to a sequence of right-wing governments that had too much freedom and too few checks on their political power. This absence of political competition resulted in major mistakes in reform policies and zealous devotion to neoliberal reform. Consequently, the Czech Republic lacked a moderate alternative to help dampen the social cost of economic reform.

Vachudova's main contribution is in acknowledging the role and importance of a reformed communist party in East European transitions. Few studies focus beyond the role of a counter-elite in triggering elite change and carrying out democratization efforts. Vachudova's argument proves that changes initiated within the ruling elite are of no less importance both to the nature of elite transformation and to the outcome of the transition. Her model suggesting a link between political competition and liberal democracy echoes Higley and Burton's model of a relationship between consensual elites and stable democratic regimes. Both models single out negotiation and political consensus as major factors in establishing and sustaining functioning democracies. They both offer a complex and dynamic understanding of elite change, expanding the concept beyond the elite/counter-elite dichotomy.

In the most recent revision of their model, Higley and Burton classify elites based on their structural integration and value consensus (Higley & Burton 2006). Structural integration refers to the “relative inclusiveness of formal and informal networks of communication and influence among the persons and factions making up the political elite,” whereas value consensus refers to “the relative agreement among all persons and factions about norms of political behavior and the worth of existing governmental institutions.”<sup>48</sup> According to the degree of structural integration and value consensus, Higley and Burton distinguish between consensually united, ideologically united and disunited elites.<sup>49</sup> In disunited elites structural integration and value consensus is minimal. By contrast, consensually united and ideologically united elites both exhibit extensive structural integration and value consensus. The difference between the two is that consensually united elites are interlocked in overlapping communication and influence networks, whereas ideologically united elites are integrated in a single communication and influence network. Furthermore, consensually united elites, while regularly and publicly opposing each other, adhere to established norms of political behavior. Ideologically united elites, though not impervious to internal conflict, do not express public disagreement and appear monolithic. Value consensus among ideologically united elites is more apparent than real, argue the authors, with frequent behind the scenes opposition to the official line by dissenting factions.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> HIGLEY and BURTON, 2006, *op.cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>49</sup> Notice that the authors have replaced the terms “unified” and “disunified,” arguing that “unified” implies oneness or a systematic whole and overlooks the conflicting character of elite relations in most countries and times.

<sup>50</sup> Carl Beck et al. similarly argue that when elite competition takes place among totalitarian type elites, it is best characterized as factionalism. Such factionalism is due to the fact that the communist party penetrates and envelopes all dissenting factions which could never gain full autonomy. See Carl BECK, James MALLOY and William CAMPBELL, *A Survey of Elite Studies*, Research Memorandum 65-3, American University, Washington, DC, March 1965, p. 23.

Higley and Burton stress upon two very important points. In the first place, they recognize that elites in liberal democracies interact through complex formal and informal networks spreading across sectors (government, business, trade unions, media, etc.). Second, the authors acknowledge that “monolithic” communist elites are often subject to intense internal conflict.<sup>51</sup> Placing consensually united and ideologically united elites in the same category of extensive structural integration and value consensus, however, raises some doubts about the construct validity of the model. Although explaining the differences between the two elite types, the authors fail to address why similar values of the independent variables can produce such categorically different results. It appears a third variable should be sought to explain the covariance in their model.<sup>52</sup>

Higley and Burton proceed to identify four regime types based upon two variables – representation and stability. Consensually united elites, in their view, contribute to the emergence of stable representative regimes, such as liberal democracies and liberal oligarchies. Ideologically united elites, in turn, are found in stable unrepresentative regimes, namely totalitarian regimes, theocracies and ethnocracies. Disunited elites, in contrast, are typical of

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<sup>51</sup> An argument made as early as 1966 by Gordon Skilling. See, Gordon SKILLING, “Interest Groups and Communist Politics,” *World Politics*, Vol. 18, No. 3, (Apr., 1966), pp. 435-451.

<sup>52</sup> In an early review of elite studies, for example, Carl Beck et al. classify elites based on three variables – elite structure, elite etiquette (elite-elite and elite-constituency behavioral patterns), and techniques of control. The constitutional democratic type is described as divided and highly permeable in terms of elite structure; in terms of etiquette it is characterized by open competition and non-violent conflict; and it exercises control through checks and balances, i.e. its legitimacy is based on meeting of demands articulated and pressed by organizations representing sectors of the society. The totalitarian type, by contrast, is highly united and basically impermeable in terms of structure; internal conflict takes the form of behind the scenes factionalism with no formal mechanism for regulating it; techniques of control take the shape of periodic purges through which conflicts are resolved, as well as systemic terror and mass manipulation through secret police organizations, control and manipulation of mass media. The authoritarian type is divided but highly impermeable with clear distinction between elite and non-elite based on class or caste; it is characterized by strong and frequent intra-elite conflict erupting in violence and/or coups d'état; its goal is not mobilization but preservation of the status quo, therefore its techniques of control are deference and repression. The last category is labeled “non-crystallized societies,” where the authors place most developing countries which, as they argue, could move towards one or another form of elite type. See Carl BECK et al., *op.cit.*

unstable regimes both representative (illiberal democracies) and unrepresentative (monarchial, authoritarian, sultanistic, post-totalitarian, theocratic, ethnocentric).<sup>53</sup> Transition from disunited to consensually united elites could occur through elite settlements or elite convergences (already discussed above). Transformations from disunited to ideologically united elites occur either through the imposition of an ideologically united elite by a conquering country (Eastern Europe after World War II) or by a revolution (Chinese Communist revolution, Cuban revolution). With the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, a third type of transformation was observed.

According to this latest study, elite settlements that resulted in transformation from ideologically united to consensually united elites operating in stable representative regimes occurred only in Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia. In the Czech Republic and Slovakia, ideologically united elites transformed to disunited, with subsequent gradual convergence to consensually united elites. All other countries that emerged from Soviet domination or directly from the Soviet and Yugoslav disintegrations, argue the authors, exhibit disunited elites and unstable democracies. Although in this latest elaboration of the model, we observe some differences in the classification of Russia, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Higley and Burton, continue to describe Bulgaria and Romania as cases of disunited elites and unstable regimes. The election of the exiled Bulgarian king, Simeon II, to prime minister in 2001<sup>54</sup> and the ability of his party to oust the main elite camps, argue the authors, suggests that elite convergence in Bulgaria has not taken place.<sup>55</sup> In their view, the vulnerability of the main elite camps to an outside force like Simeon and the sudden change in the configuration of political forces are both a symptom of divided elites and an unstable regime.

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<sup>53</sup> HIGLEY and BURTON, 2006, *op.cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>54</sup> For a brief account of Simeon's party and its coming to power see, BARANY Zoltan, "Bulgaria's Royal Elections," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 13, No. 2, (April 2002), pp. 141-155.

<sup>55</sup> HIGLEY and BURTON, 2006, *op.cit.*, p. 172.

Higley and Burton's model and its further elaborations offer an elite-centered approach to the study of transitioning societies. According to them, democratic transitions and breakdowns can be best understood by studying basic continuities and changes in internal relations of national elites (Higley and Burton 1989). This approach has been criticized for placing too much emphasis on the elite factor. The claim that fundamental explanations for global patterns of political stability and the emergence of preconditions for democracy are themselves political rather than social, economic, cultural, or structural, argues Cammack, is questionable to say the least.<sup>56</sup> In his view, Higley and Burton fail to establish the priority of political explanations over social structural explanations and they fail to develop a theory with wide explanatory power. Elite settlements, he posits, appear to come at the end of a larger process, rather than being its point of origin. They seem to be more than a deliberate reorganization of elite interaction, but also a result of particular political, economic, and social configurations. Higley and Burton further argue that disunified elites tend to persist regardless of socioeconomic conditions. They define elite settlements as events which transform a disunified elite into a consensually unified, but struggle to explain how consensual unity is maintained and the tendency for disunity overcome. The emphasis on elite settlements, Cammack argues, turns out to be empirically ungrounded regarding the originating event, and theoretically deficient regarding the mechanisms by which stability is sustained over time.

Cammack's critique falls within the familiar transitologists-structuralists debate on the role of elites in transitions to democracy (See Chapter One, pp 3-5). Following the structuralist argument, Cammack focuses on the social embeddedness of transition processes and the importance of the wider social, economic, and cultural context. But Higley and Burton do not

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<sup>56</sup> CAMMACK Paul, "A Critical Assessment of the New Elite Paradigm," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 55, No. 3, (Jun., 1990), pp. 415-420, p. 415.

claim exclusiveness of the elite factor. Without viewing elite change as the sole or primary explanatory variable, elite theory examines the role of the elite in state transitions and breakdowns. Higley and Burton's model, in particular, attempts to determine what type of elite is most favorable for the emergence of stable democracy. Their approach, however, remains strictly within the limits of elite theory. Although the authors make an important contribution to the study of democratization, they do not aspire nor claim to exhaust all the factors in democratization processes. Criticizing elite theorists for placing too much emphasis on the elite, then, misinterprets what they set out to do in the first place. The intent of elite theorists studying transitioning societies has been and continues to be the focus on one particular aspect of state transitions, namely elite change, without declaring its primacy over other factors.

The review of the various theoretical approaches applied to the study of East European elites reveals a pronounced preoccupation with the link between elite change and transition outcome. Underlying assumption of both comparative and country studies is the correlation between elite change, elite composition, and mode of recruitment to the elite and each country's performance in democratization efforts. Several factors, in terms of the nature of elite transformation, have been emphasized as contributing to a successful transition to a stable democracy. In the first place is the presence of an organized opposition or counter-elite which manages to wrest power from communist elites and win the first democratic elections. Second is a reformed communist party offering a left alternative to neo-liberal policies with high social cost and contributing to the appropriate proportion of elite circulation and reproduction. Negotiation and consensus on reform policies between communist elites and the opposition elites has also been singled out as particularly important in assuring peaceful transition and alternation of power as dictated by election results.

Review of the literature has further strongly affirmed that change of rules alone is not sufficient for successful transition to democracy unless there is also some change of players. Romania and Bulgaria are often referred to in that regard as countries where changes in the structure of the political system have not been accompanied by change in the composition of the elite and democratization efforts have consequently been slow and frequently obstructed. Hungary and Poland, by contrast, are quoted as models of successful transition from communism as they exhibited a well-formed counter-elite, a reformed communist party, negotiations and consensus between elite groups on reform policies achieved through round-table negotiations, all of which contributing to a smooth transition to democratic politics and market economy.

Analysis of the literature further suggests that the elite variable can be treated both as an outcome and a cause. Elite change is contingent upon a number of factors including, the presence/absence of a counter-elite, a reformed/non-reformed communist party, the degree of consensus and negotiation between various elite groups, the nature of intra-elite conflict and the different mechanisms for resolving it, the structure of government institutions within which the political elite operates, as well as other broader characteristics such as the level of socio-economic development. But elite change significantly affects the outcome of state transitions. In other words, we treat the elite variable as a dependent variable when examining the nature of elite transformation and as an independent or causative variable when inquiring about the consequences of elite transformation. Elite transformations follow various patterns and are dependent upon a number of factors. It is the consequences of elite change, however, that render the elite variable important and worthwhile studying. This is especially true when analyzing societies in transition, where elites are responsible for molding political and economic systems.

### 2.3 STUDIES OF BULGARIAN ELITES

Though East European transitions have been subject to extensive analysis from various disciplines, Bulgaria still remains a largely understudied case. The study of Bulgarian elites has particularly suffered from academic neglect. As Stephan Nikolov argues, the absence of any detailed analysis of how Bulgaria's communist elites evolved is perhaps due to the repeated characterization of communist Bulgaria as "Moscow's closest ally," as if nothing more needed to be said.<sup>57</sup> While there is an abundance of studies on Polish, Russian or Romanian elites, studies of Bulgarian elites are limited to a few books and chapters in edited collections. Except for some studies of economic elites (Kostova 1996, 2000, 2003), such works are mostly analytical and do not rely on empirical data (Minev and Kabakchieva 1996, Nikolov 1998, Pachkova 2003). Furthermore, unlike Bulgarian ethnography, musicology, linguistics or history, which have enjoyed popularity among scholars throughout the world, the study of Bulgarian elites has failed to attract attention from Western scholars beyond cursory accounts in a few comparative studies. Thus, the works reviewed here are exclusively by Bulgarian scholars.

A brief but unique analysis of the transformation of the Bulgarian elite is offered by Nikolov in Higley, Pakulski, and Wesolowski's edited collection (Nikolov 1998). In his view, elite transformation in Bulgaria led to what he terms a "quasi-elite." At the end of communist rule, Nikolov argues, Bulgaria lacked even the embryos of alternative cadres that could replace the communist elite. There are several reasons why there was no basis for a new elite to form in Bulgaria. In the first place, there was no power structure other than the communist *nomenklatura*

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<sup>57</sup> NIKOLOV Stephan, "Bulgaria: A Quasi-Elite" in John HIGLEY, Jan PAKULSKI and Wlodzimierz WESOLOWSKI (eds.), *Postcommunist Elites and Democracy In Eastern Europe*, New York, NY, St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1998, pp. 213-225, p. 213.

that could serve as a breeding ground for potential elites. Such an alternative structure was the Catholic Church in Poland, for example, which could shelter opponents to the regime. Second, in comparison to other East European countries, Bulgaria was in extreme isolation from the West. Western influence and support never reached Bulgarian dissidents to the extent they did Soviet, Czechoslovak or Yugoslav opposition figures. Third, small and dispersed Bulgarian immigrant communities had little interest and resources to support dissident activity in or outside of the country. By contrast, Russian and Polish immigrant communities were heavily involved in organizing and subsidizing *samizdat* publications and raising awareness in the West. Due to this combination of factors, Nikolov contends, there was no possibility for a new elite to emerge in Bulgaria, except from within the all-embracing *nomenklatura* itself.<sup>58</sup>

An additional problem in Bulgaria was the lack of significant evolution of the *nomenklatura*. The events of 1956 in Hungary, 1968 in Czechoslovakia, and 1980s in Poland produced major changes in the composition of the *nomenklatura* in these countries. By contrast, as late as 1989, *nomenklatura* members in Bulgaria were still recruited from the same dogmatic families which established communist power in the late 1940s. In Nikolov's estimate, there were some 1,000 to 2,000 families around the country that were bound together through common political backgrounds and kinship, who formed the higher levels of the *nomenklatura*. Thus, not only were postcommunist elites recruited from the former *nomenklatura*, but the *nomenklatura* itself experienced little change in terms of aggregate social characteristics in its over 40-year-long existence.

Most former members of the *nomenklatura* remained in elite positions after the collapse of communism. In exchange for a peaceful regime transition, argues Nikolov, they received

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 217.

guarantees that their political capital would be converted into economic capital in relatively trouble-free fashion. Being strategically positioned at the time of the regime's collapse and having access to important assets and networks that replaced defunct organizational connections, former *nomenklatura* members were able to successfully compete for top positions in the postcommunist order. For that reason, in Nikolov's view, the majority of the *nouveaux riches* in Bulgaria come not from the ranks of the old economic elite but from the ranks of the *Komsomol* and the secret police.<sup>59</sup> Postcommunist elite configuration in Bulgaria, according to Nikolov, can be described as no longer *nomenklatura* but not yet a national elite typical of democratic political systems, i.e. a quasi-elite. This quasi-elite is characterized by a lack of stability in its composition and frequent turnover in very top positions.

Nikolov's analysis resonates with a number of studies reviewed above, all of which emphasizing the importance of a counter-elite and a reformed communist elite. Though not relying on original data, Nikolov's contribution is valuable in stressing that transformation of the elite is by definition an ongoing process that becomes more volatile and unpredictable during periods of transition. Nikolov concludes that new patterns of elite change and elite recruitment have not yet settled in post-communist Bulgaria.

Minev and Kabakchieva advance an approach to the study of elite transformation in Bulgaria that draws on elite theory, class theory, world systems theory, and theories of social stratification (Minev & Kabakchieva 1996). The authors combine elite and class concepts and treat elite change in relation to the process of modernization. They argue that the elite carries the characteristics of a class and is similarly influenced by changes in the relations of production. Attempts to bring together elite and class theory have been made by many scholars (Etzioni-

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222.

Halevy 1998, Higley, Hoffman-Lange, Kadushin & Moore 1991; Lazic 2000). Minev and Kabakchieva further bring Wallerstein's world systems theory into the mix, arguing that the transformation of national elites is affected by global economic relations.

Minev and Kabakchieva's main argument is that the transition represents a process of re-concentration of political and economic power. In their view, the events of 1989 do not mark the beginning of a transition to market economy and democratization, as such was already underway since the early 1980s. The changes between 1989 and 1994, then, represent measures for reinstating the eroding power of the communist elite and for reestablishing the economic power that was lost in the period of industrial development.<sup>60</sup> The so called "transition", the authors posit, is in fact a process of re-concentration of economic and political power and is only an interruption of the ongoing development in order for the elite to restore its position of power.

Minev and Kabakchieva then proceed to offer an analysis of the transition based on world systems theory. By the 1980s, they argue, increasing economic relations between socialist and Western countries started to break the ideological borders dividing Europe and these borders started to erode. The economic integration and convergence of interests of the elites to the East and the West required rejection of the socialist order and its replacement with another type of order that would allow economic integration of Eastern and Western Europe. Such integration, of course, required "liberalization and transition to market economy and democracy."<sup>61</sup> Following this argument, the authors view the transition as an integration of national elites into the global economy whereby economic power flows from national political elites to global economic elites. The elite's attempts to incorporate the country into the global economic system, in turn, led to

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<sup>60</sup> MINEV Duhomir and Petya KABAKCHIEVA, *Transition – Elites and Strategies*, Sofia, St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, 1996 (in Bulgarian), pp. 15-16, p. 65.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

destratification of large parts of the Bulgarian population, destratification in the authors' terms meaning unemployment and poverty.

Minev and Kabakchieva's approach is rather confusing and suffers from numerous inconsistencies, circular arguments, and theoretical redundancy. The authors view the transition as deliberate strategy on behalf of the communist elite to reestablish its political and economic power, but fail to spell out the process by which elite power was diminished in the first place. They attribute the erosion of elite power to the industrial development, while simultaneously arguing that the industrialization policies carried out during communism necessitated overconcentration of political power. Minev and Kabakchieva further contend that during the transition the elite gave up its political power in return for an opportunity to completely and openly concentrate its economic power. At the same, the authors posit that the elite had complete control of economic resources both before and after the changes and the transition entailed no redistribution, since there was no change of ownership of economic resources. With the return of the reformed communist party to power in the mid 1990s, the authors argue, the former communist elite formally assumed political power, since the transition itself was a restoration of its economic and ideological power.<sup>62</sup>

There are a number of additional unclear aspects in Minev and Kabakchieva's approach, such as their distinction between authentic and pseudo-elite and their concern with "natural" changes in the elite. The authors define an authentic elite as one that could be labeled national, not only because of its ethnic characteristics, but because of its tendency to combine its group interest with the national interest or to look for strategies of achieving its group interest that are not in conflict with the national interest. The pseudo-elite, in contrast, often adopts decisions that

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90. The term "ideological power" is used here, but is not mentioned or discussed anywhere else in the text. It remains unclear what the authors mean by "ideological power."

are against the national interest.<sup>63</sup> Minev and Kabakchieva fail to elaborate on their notion of national elite and national interest or to explain how to determine whether a certain elite action goes against or in accordance with the national interest. They argue that whether a country exhibits authentic or pseudo-elite is a function of its size and its role in the world economy. Small nations, in their view, are much more prone to suffer from lack of democracy and pseudo-elites than large nations.<sup>64</sup> The authors contend that the Bulgarian postcommunist elite is a pseudo-elite. In their view, changes of the elite during the transition were not “natural,” that is, they did not reflect the “tendencies of the developments taking place before the actual change of power.”<sup>65</sup> By “natural” Minev and Kabakchieva understand changes in the composition of the elite that entail inclusion of groups in the elite that were previously excluded.<sup>66</sup> The change of power in Bulgaria was unfavorable, because the groups formed through the social restructuring had not acquired group identity and had no experience in contesting the power of the elite. The new group which entered economic and political structures was “not singled out by the process of development,” but was selected by the old elite, i.e. the transformation of the elite was “unnatural.” Consequently, the change was not towards a polyarchical elite, but towards an oligarchical, conclude Minev and Kabkachieva,

If there is any value in Minev and Kabakchieva’s study, it is in their account of the intra-elite conflict of the late 1980s. The dividing line within the communist elite, they argue, was between reformers and hard-liners. Part of the communist party elite, especially younger

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>64</sup> Minev and Kabakchieva do not elaborate on this argument and fail to explain why, opposite to their prediction, a large nation such as Russia suffers from lack of democracy, while a small nation like Estonia does not.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>66</sup> The authors label changes in the Bulgarian elite “unnatural” despite the fact that in the process groups who were previously excluded from the elite (such as ethnic Turks and non-communists) gained access to elite positions. Thus, Minev and Kabakchieva contradict their own definition of “natural” and “unnatural” elite change.

members and those connected to domestic economic and international networks, clearly recognized that the system cannot be reformed since all reform options have been exhausted. What was needed instead was a transformation which translates into economic openness to the West and adoption of market mechanisms. Reformers in the party were supported by managers of state enterprises and secret service employees who, because of their access to large national economic resources, had strong interest in a transition towards market economy, which they viewed as more personally beneficial than stimulation of the national market economy. The advocates of reform were opposed by another group consisting of older party members, strictly upholding communist ideology, who insisted on reformation within the communist ideological framework rather than transformation. While the reformers were building a powerful international economic network, proponents of the status quo were engaging various groups in ideological battles in a hope to restore the lost unity of the party through instruments of terror. The former clearly prevailed and entrusted secret service employees, who had an enormous potential to exercise influence over their environment, with the burden of re-concentrating economic power. Thus, Minev and Kabkachieva posit, secret service employees became the recruiting ground for the “new” political elites.<sup>67</sup>

Minev and Kabakchieva’s analysis lacks methodological consistency. On the one hand, the authors treat elite action as decisive in directing political, economic and social changes. On the other hand, they adopt a Marxist approach in regarding politics as the outgrowth of economics and treating elite change as a function of domestic and global economic processes. Their ambitious attempt to combine numerous theories renders the argument unclear and weakly substantiated. A second major problem with Minev and Kabkachieva’s study is their weak

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 106. For a discussion on the secret service see Chapter 7.

empirical grounding.<sup>68</sup> Although they offer an extensive literature review of the discussed theories, their conclusions are not derived from original data. Minev and Kabkachieva deserve credit for their attempt to depart from Marxist theory, which for long dominated social science in Bulgaria, and apply a more elite-oriented approach to the study of elites. Considering that the study of elites has attracted the attention of the Bulgarian academic community only in the last two decades and that most analyses utilize a class approach, Minev and Kabkachieva's contribution should not be completely discarded.

In her study of the Bulgarian postcommunist elite, Pachkova applies a classic Marxist approach (Pachkova 2003). She treats the transition as a third stage of capitalism in Bulgaria, the first being early capitalism after WWI and the second being socialism, which she defines as state capitalism. She further argues that there is no revolutionary change of the ruling class in the Bulgarian transition, but transformation of the *nomenklatura* bourgeois class from *nomenklatura* capitalists into independent proclaimed capitalists. In other words, the transformation was from a class that informally inherited property into a class that formally inherits it – a transformation from *nomenklatura* capitalism into real capitalism, of *nomenklatura* bourgeoisie into real bourgeoisie.<sup>69</sup> The transformation was initiated by the *nomenklatura*. Facing the threat of losing its power resources, the *nomenklatura* had greater interest in change than any other part of society. The reformers from the old elite chose democratization only after they were convinced that they had the necessary power resources for competing and winning in the new political

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<sup>68</sup> Minev and Kabakchieva use the results of an earlier content analysis comparing the political platforms of the Socialist and Democratic parties. According to them, these findings demonstrate that neither the Socialist nor the Democratic parties were concerned with the national interest and therefore, were examples of pseudo-elites. See MINEV and KABACHKIEVA, *op.cit.*, pp. 114-133.

<sup>69</sup> ПАЧКОВА Ретя, *Елитът на Прехода*, София, ИК М8М издателство, 2003, p. 229. Pachkova invents the term “*nomenklatura* bourgeoisie”, which she considers to be self-explanatory.

context. Dissident movements and civil protests, Pachkova argues, would have been prevented, even drowned in blood, if the *nomenklatura* was not ready for transformation.<sup>70</sup>

Echoing Minev and Kabkachieva's analysis, Pachkova affirms that the logic of the transition was re-concentration of the economic power, not transformation of the political power into economic, since the elite never gave up its monopoly over political power. The main differences and struggles among the elite, in her view, concerned the distribution of economic and political power, not the manner in which to acquire it. Although acknowledging the intra-elite conflict, Pachkova disagrees with Higley's characterization of the Bulgarian elite as fragmented. On the contrary, she argues, the elite was rather united during the transition. This is especially true of the economic elite whose main goal was to circumvent public control over economic processes. The political elite provided great support for the economic elite – legislative power provided the necessary laws, executive power assured inaction on behalf of the state, and judicial power guaranteed evasion of prosecution.<sup>71</sup> Political pluralism, she posits, was used as a façade to mask elite unity.

According to Pachkova, there is both change and continuity in the process of formation of the postcommunist elite. The economic elite was recruited mainly from the former *nomenklatura* and the children of former *nomenklatura* members. Other sources of economic elites were people with restitution capital and people from the grey economy. The sources for recruitment of the political elite, on the other hand, were the party *nomenklatura*, the security services, intellectuals, and immigrants. Change and continuity was also the mark of the system transformation in Pachkova's view. The transformation was from one type of market economy to

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 267.

another, whereby the bulk of state property was transformed into a collection of private properties.

In comparing Bulgaria with other East European countries, Pachkova argues that the similarities in the processes exceed the differences. The strategy of the elites was similar in all countries and it consisted in directing the transition process in a way that would affirm their privileged status and grant them greater influence over societal processes. The difference, in her view, is that some elites enriched themselves at a lower economic and social cost to their societies, whereas others led their countries into catastrophes in order to acquire what they desired. The global economic system and international organizations particularly contributed to the crash of the Bulgarian economy, thereby increasing the transition cost.<sup>72</sup>

Pachkova's study provides a detailed summary of Bulgarian scholarship on the transition. Her contribution to the study of Bulgarian elites, however, remains doubtful. Her reprise on Marxist theory focuses mainly on economic processes and offers no original conceptualization of elite change in Bulgaria. More importantly, the analysis is not grounded in empirical data and rests upon literature review limited to Bulgarian scholarship. The author frequently drifts away from her argument into lengthy reflections, normative statements, and personal, overtly biased opinions,<sup>73</sup> all of which put unto question the academic rigor of her study.

With her studies on postcommunist economic elites in Bulgaria, Kostova makes a major contribution both to comparative studies of East European elites and the study of Bulgarian elites (Kostova 1996, 2000, 2003). Her work focuses on examining the social composition, values and

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<sup>72</sup> Pachkova does not elaborate on this argument.

<sup>73</sup> This criticism is based on Popivanov's review of the book, who similarly questions the academic value of Pachkova's analysis and her ability to express an unbiased opinion. See, Boris POPIVANOV, „По пътя към елитите,” *Култура*, Брой 36, 01 октомври 2004 г.

attitudes, policy orientation and identity of postcommunist economic elites. Although not offering a new theoretical framework, Kostova's analysis is extremely valuable in presenting large empirical data. Studying economic elites poses a particular challenge in the Bulgarian case. The transition period proved disastrous in terms of maintaining public registers of private and state firms. As obtaining empirical data on economic elites was extremely difficult in the early 1990s, scholars either turned to other fields of study or at best produced analyses that were not empirically grounded. Kostova has put great effort in gathering her empirical data which not only benefits her analysis but provides the ground for future research in the field.

The questions Kostova addresses are: to what extent have actors holding top economic positions changed during the transition period? Have social origins become more or less important? Has professional expertise played a larger role in elite careers? She argues that the 1990s were a period of significant change in the Bulgarian economic elite in terms of aggregate social characteristics and elite turnover. The elite became more heterogeneous in its composition, generally younger, and unbound politically (Kostova 2000). Patterns of elite recruitment displayed continuity and some discontinuity with elite configuration under state socialism, yet, newcomers accounted for up to 60% in the mid 1990s (Kostova 1996).<sup>74</sup> Significant differentiation of economic and political elites occurred. Political and economic elites became more clearly separated from each other, yet interdependent, displaying a rough parity in power and influence (Kostova 2003).

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<sup>74</sup> In a comparative study of Bulgarian, Czech, Hungarian and Polish business elites, Rona-Tas and Borocz argue that despite important differences among the four countries, the recruitment of the new business elites followed a surprisingly uniform pattern. Continuities with the presocialist past, they posit, were evident everywhere and people whose grandparents were successful businessmen were more likely to pursue a business career. See Akos RONA-TAS and Jozsef BOROCZ, "Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland: Presocialist and Socialist Legacies among Business Elites" in John HIGLEY and Gyorgy LENGYEL, *Elites after State Socialism: Theories and Analysis*, Oxford, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000, pp. 209- 227, p. 223.

A significant finding Kostova reports is that within the economic elite party affiliation, as measured by party membership, has greatly decreased in importance. Under state socialism, she argues, political loyalty and Communist Party ties were given priority over wealth and other economic and social attributes in selecting elites. The virtual disappearance of members of the Communist (later Socialist) party from the economic elite during the 1990s resulted from two developments. The first was the party's declining influence and overall social control. The second was a spreading recognition among elite persons that membership in the Socialist or some other party did not provide much protection for economic activities.

Kostova concludes that changes in politics and political institutions were rapid and fundamental, however, the economic system changed more slowly. Dismantling of the old socialist economy was limited which, according to her, is to a large degree due to the makeup and actions of the economic elite. During the 1990s old and new elites merged, and in doing so, she argues, they truncated the transition from state socialism.

The review of Bulgarian scholarship reveals several recurring theses. In the first place, Bulgarian scholars unanimously agree that the former *nomenklatura* preserved its position of power during the transition and became the main pool of recruitment of post-communist elites (Minev & Kabakchieva 1996, Nikolov 1998, Pachkova 2003). While some authors argue for a grand design intended to preserve the power of the former *nomenklatura* (Minev & Kabakchieva 1996, Pachkova 2003), others view the *nomenklatura* simply as being in an advantageous position allowing its members to act quickly when presented with an opportune moment (Nikolov 1998). A major focus of the reviewed works is the conversion of power thesis. While Nikolov argues that the former *nomenklatura* converted its political capital into economic, Pachkova posits the *nomenklatura* concentrated economic power in addition to the political

power it already held. There is a firm agreement among scholars, however, that the former *nomenklatura* acquired economic power and became the new class of capitalists and *nouveaux riches*. The reviewed authors further agree that the secret services took active part in the transition and became, next to the *nomenklatura*, the recruiting ground for postcommunist elites. There is a difference of opinion as to the structure of post-communist elites. Pachkova argues that those remained united during the transition, making concerted efforts to concentrate political and economic power. Nikolov, in turn, views post-communist elites as unstable in terms of composition, with frequent turnover in top positions. Minev and Kabakchieva see the composition of the elite as more predictable with the old elite controlling the recruitment of the new elite. Kostova posits the old and the new elites merged, which slowed the transition processes.

Overall, Bulgarian scholars see little change in the elite and argue that although the rules of the game have changed with the fall of the communist regime, there has been no significant change of players. However correct such conclusions may be, they are not empirically grounded and have not been tested against original data. The first task in a study of Bulgarian elites, then, is to gather original data so that these and other assumptions could be tested. Another gap in the studies of Bulgarian elites is the lack of rigorous theoretical framework. As noted above, the Marxist-based models of Minev and Kabakchieva as well as Pachkova suffer from theoretical redundancy and inconsistency. Consequently, they do not forward a theory that allows for empirical testing. The review of the literature demonstrates that there are several theoretical approaches that have been applied to the study of East European elites and have produced an impressive empirically-grounded body of knowledge. Although some aspects of these approaches are criticized below, such as the circulation *vs.* reproduction framework for example,

applying them to the Bulgarian context would yield invaluable data on the process of elite change in Bulgaria. Thus, the study of Bulgarian elites in the period of transition would greatly benefit from an empirically-tested theoretical model.

This study aspires to fill gaps in the literature and offer an analysis of elite change in Bulgaria based on large and varied empirical data. Its goal is to go beyond applying the already existing theoretical frameworks and formulate a modified model of elite change. The study uses the various theoretical approaches as a starting point and further brings in classical elite theory to which we turn next.

### 3.0 THEORIZING ELITE TRANSFORMATION: REVISITING MOSCA AND PARETO

East European transitions have been the subject of a large body of literature on elites. Theorizations on East European elites have been dominated by the circulation *vs.* reproduction approach – reproduction suggesting no significant change in the social composition of the elite, circulation implying changes both in the composition and mode of recruitment of the elite (see Chapter Two, pp. 16-27). The circulation *vs.* reproduction approach offers a useful framework and a valuable first step in conceptualizing post-communist elite transformations that could nevertheless benefit from further elaboration. The concept of circulation and reproduction originates with classical elite theory. The circulation *vs.* reproduction approach, however, makes no reference to the classical elite theorists and utilizes their concepts in a manner divorced from the original theoretical framework. East European elite theorists are not the only ones guilty of overlooking the classical texts. As Robert Nye argued in 1977, contemporary research on elites suffers from ignorance of and misinterpretation of the classical elite theorists:

Some of the operating presumptions of prime importance to the ‘founders’ have been ignored or trivialized, with two results: first, recent historical accounts have reached incorrect or imprecise interpretations of the meaning of the “classic” texts, and secondly, by overlooking the often clearly stated assumptions of the ‘minor patriarchs’ [Pareto, Mosca, and Michels], democratic elitists have incorporated, willy-nilly, these assumptions into the structure of recent theory where they continue to serve necessary, if unacknowledged, roles.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> NYE Robert, *The Anti-Democratic Sources of Elite Theory: Pareto, Mosca, Michels*, Contemporary Political Sociology Series, Beverly Hills, CA, Sage Publications, 1977, p. 1.

The dominant approach in the study of East European elites has similarly borrowed concepts and assumptions from the classical texts, without acknowledging their complexity and theoretical richness, thus producing an oversimplified account of elite transformation in Eastern Europe that neglects a number of important factors. Echoing Nye, I argue that classical elite theory offers sound theoretical grounding that could be successfully applied to the study of post-communist elites. In my view, the shortcomings of the circulation *vs.* reproduction approach could be addressed by accurately incorporating concepts from the classical texts. The circulation *vs.* reproduction approach represents a respectable attempt to systemize the process of elite change in Eastern Europe. This approach has sparked the curiosity of many scholars who have produced numerous studies of East European elites and have accumulated an unprecedented amount of empirical data. The zeal for empirical grounding, however, has often been accompanied by a lack of theoretical rigor. Turning to classical elite theory would provide the necessary theoretical foundation and anchor the empirical data. Three decades ago Zuckerman forwarded a similar argument. The literature on elites, he contended, “is characterized by conceptual confusion and research divorced from theoretical questions, particularly and most significantly from those of Mosca and Pareto...[W]hat is required is a return to a mode of analysis exemplified by Mosca and Pareto in which political elite finds its meaning within a theoretical system and is put to work in the analysis of specific research problems.”<sup>76</sup> Following Zuckerman’s lead, I attempt to reconcile the discrepancy between theory and *empiria* and place classical elite theory at the base of empirical research. In this chapter, I review key concepts developed by the founders of elite theory, Mosca and Pareto, and criticize the way in which such concepts have been utilized in the

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<sup>76</sup> ZUCKERMAN Alan, “The Concept ‘Political Elite’: Lessons from Mosca and Pareto,” *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 39, No. 2, (May, 1977), pp. 324-344, p. 325.

study of East European elites. Building on the classical theorists, I propose a dynamic model of elite transformation that may prove useful for the study of post-communist elites.

### 3.1 CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

The circulation vs. reproduction approach characterizes elite change in Eastern Europe as either circulation or reproduction. A major problem with such characterization is its dichotomous nature implying mutually exclusive processes. Although empirical studies demonstrate that one is unlikely to find circulation or reproduction in a pure form but rather elements of both, scholars come short of treating the two concepts as ideal-types whose primary function is analytical. Instead, they continue to view circulation and reproduction in an either-or fashion and fuse them with empirical categories. Consequently, authors speak of “circulation in the political elite and reproduction in the economic elite” (Szelenyi, Szelenyi & Kovach 1995) or “significant amounts of elite circulation in Poland and Hungary, and overwhelming reproduction in Russia” (Fodor, Wnuk-Lipinski & Yershova 1995). Few attempts have been made to examine the interplay between the two processes and explore the possibility that they may be occurring simultaneously. Empirical results indicating, for example, that “[i]n postcommunist Poland, elites are formed both ways,”<sup>77</sup> have forced Szelenyi and Szelenyi to admit that their “two stories (reproduction in terms of outflow rates and circulation in terms of inflow rates) do not necessarily contradict one

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<sup>77</sup> WASILEWSKI Jacek and Edmund WNUK-LIPINSKI, “Poland: Winding Road from the Communist to the Post-Solidarity Elite,” *Theory and Society*, Special Issue on Circulation vs. Reproduction of Elites during the Postcommunist Transformation of Eastern Europe, Vol. 24, No. 5, (Oct., 1995), pp. 669-696, p. 625.

another.”<sup>78</sup> Consequently, the authors have posited that the distinction between circulation and reproduction is a relative one, but have failed to elaborate on the analytical implications of such conclusion.

Classical and contemporary elite theorists alike have argued that change and continuity are inextricable elements of elite transformation which occur simultaneously. According to Pareto, “[t]he governing elite is always in a state of slow and continuous transformation. It flows like a river, never being today what it was yesterday. From time to time sudden and violent disturbances occur.... Afterwards, the new governing elite resumes its slow transformation.”<sup>79</sup> Mosca similarly contends that, “[o]ne can almost always observe that a slow and gradual renewal of the ruling class is going on through infiltration into the higher strata of society of elements emerging from the lower.”<sup>80</sup> Michels in turn argues that the ruling class is subject to frequent and partial renewal.<sup>81</sup> Change in the elite is underway at all times. Even in the absence of critical junctures such as a revolution, a coup or an election, the elite is undergoing constant and gradual transformation.

On the other hand, an elite is almost never completely replaced. Certain degree of continuity in the elite is always observable. This is true of political parties as it is true of states, argues Michels, and applies no less in time of peace than in time of war.<sup>82</sup> Continuity is present even in cases of violent and abrupt changes in the elite such as those caused by a revolution or a

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<sup>78</sup> SZELENYI Ivan and Szonja SZELENYI, “Circulation or Reproduction of Elites during the Postcommunist Transformation of Eastern Europe: Introduction,” *Theory and Society*, Special Issue on Circulation vs. Reproduction of Elites during the Postcommunist Transformation of Eastern Europe, Vol. 24, No. 5, (Oct., 1995), pp. 620-621, p. 690.

<sup>79</sup> PARETO Vilfredo, *Mind and Society: A Treatise of General Sociology*, ed. A. Livingston, New York, NY, Harcourt, 1935, sec. 2056.

<sup>80</sup> MOSCA Gaetano, *The Ruling Class*, New York, NY, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1939, p. 414.

<sup>81</sup> MICHELS Robert, *Political Parties: A sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, New York, NY, Dover Publications, Inc., 1959, p. 390.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

foreign invasion. Kautsky points to the fact that colonial powers rely on local aristocracy to maintain law and order, thus suggesting that new colonial elites tend to co-opt rather than eliminate local elites.<sup>83</sup> Higley, Kullberg and Pakulski argue that to the surprise of most observers, the collapse of communist rule involved no comprehensive turnover of elites, but was instead marked by continuity in elite composition.<sup>84</sup> Completely replacing an elite is impossible for very practical purposes, i.e. the need for people with knowledge and experience. Hence, a new elite would always look for those favorable elements in the old elite who could be co-opted and whose experience in governing is much valued. The need for expertise, however, is not the only source of continuity. There is a tendency, argues Mosca, which aims at stabilizing social control and political power in the descendants of the class that happens to hold possession of it at the given historical moment.<sup>85</sup> An elite may be ousted in one way or another, but this seldom results in immediate and total relinquishing of power. Even when the elite loses control of its power resources, its descendents are always in advantageous position in terms of education and connections and, thus, better equipped to enter the ranks of the new elite.<sup>86</sup>

Change and continuity are interrelated both conceptually and empirically. They are both essential and concurrent elements in the process of elite transformation. It is only logical, then, that a degree of continuity exists between communist and postcommunist elites. The elite at any point in time is subject to both change and continuity, it is almost never completely replaced by a

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<sup>83</sup> KAUTSKY John, "Patterns of Elite Succession in the Process of Development," *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 31, No. 2, (May, 1969), pp. 359-396, p. 368.

<sup>84</sup> HIGLEY John, Judith KULLBERG and Jan PAKULSKI, "The Persistence of Postcommunist Elites," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1996, pp. 133-147, p. 135.

<sup>85</sup> MOSCA, *The Ruling Class*, *op.cit.*, p. 395.

<sup>86</sup> The Bulgarian experience certainly proves this to be true. As Emil Koshlukov points out in an 2007 interview, "The prime minister today is the son of a Politburo member, the general attorney is the grandson of a Politburo member, the European commissioner is a daughter-in-law of a member of the Central Committee of BCP, the director of the national television is the daughter of the same member of the Central Committee." Interview with Emil Koshlukov, Sofia, March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2007.

counter-elite, but neither is it ever static. The circulation *vs.* reproduction framework, by contrast, provides an oversimplified view of the elite as either unaltered in terms of composition, or as caught in a violent dynamic resulting in complete change of guard. Thus, it ignores the interplay of change and continuity in elite transformation and treats such transformation as marked by critical junctures in between which the elite is relatively unchanging. Empirical studies have proved the fallacy of such approach. Studies of Czech managerial elite (Clark & Soulsby 1996), Russian managerial elite (Hanley, Yerhsova, & Anderson 1995) and Baltic elites (Steen 1997) indicate both change and continuity in post-communist elites.

### 3.2 CIRCULATION OF ELITES

The terms reproduction and circulation originate with classical elite theory and the writings of Mosca and Pareto. Pareto's circulation of elites theory, in particular, remains a widely acknowledged and commonly referenced milestone in elite theory. In their formulation of the circulations *vs.* reproduction approach, however, Szelenyi and Szelenyi do not discuss classical elite theory nor do they mention the classical theorists. Instead, they argue that the circulation of elites theory is not clearly formulated in the literature.<sup>87</sup> Without acknowledging Pareto's theory formulated over a century ago, Szelenyi and Szelenyi propose their own "circulation of elites" theory. They equate the process of circulation to elite turnover, i.e. physical change of the members of the elite, and reproduction to the lack thereof. In this new context, the use of the

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<sup>87</sup> SZLENYI Szonja, Ivan SZELENYI and Imre KOVACH, "The Making of the Hungarian Postcommunist Elite: Circulation in Politics, Reproduction in the Economy," *Theory and Society*, Special Issue on Circulation *vs.* Reproduction of Elites during the Postcommunist Transformation of Eastern Europe, Vol. 24, No. 5, (Oct., 1995), pp. 697-722, p. 698.

term “circulation” is reduced to mean replacement of elite A with elite B. Although Pareto contends that the history of man is the history of the continuous replacement of certain elites: as one ascends, another declines,<sup>88</sup> his theory hardly merits such a simplified interpretation. Szelenyi and Szelenyi’s version of “circulation of elites” theory is in sharp contrast to the complex processes of elite change to which Pareto’s theory of circulation of elites refers.

Pareto viewed society as divided in two groups, an elite and a non-elite, or “a higher stratum, which usually contains the rulers, and a lower stratum, which usually contains the ruled.”<sup>89</sup> The two groups are heterogeneous in that they consist of a dynamic and stable component. The dynamic component is brought by what Pareto labels *speculators* or innovators – adventurous individuals with entrepreneurial spirit, who are ever on the look-out for new opportunities. The component of stability, on the other hand, is delivered by the *rentiers* or consolidators – individuals who are less adaptable and more prone to use force in order to preserve the *status quo*.<sup>90</sup> The distribution of the two components is generally uneven between the higher and the lower strata. When the governing elite is dominated by *speculators* (dynamic component), society is subject to rapid change, in contrast, when *rentiers* dominate (stable component), change takes place slowly.<sup>91</sup> There is a natural tendency, Pareto holds, for elites of the two types to rotate in positions of power. An elite rich in *speculators* is reluctant to use force

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<sup>88</sup> PARETO, *The Rise and Fall of Elites: An Application of Theoretical Sociology*, New Brunswick, NJ, Transaction Publishers, 2003, p. 36.

<sup>89</sup> PARETO, *Mind and Society, op.cit.*, sec. 2047.

<sup>90</sup> The dynamic and stable components, proxy terms which I adopt here for reasons of clarity and parsimony, are what Pareto refers to respectively as Class I and Class II residues. Residues, in his view, correspond to certain human instincts, but are not to be confused with instincts or sentiments. They are the manifestation of such instincts and sentiments, in the same way mercury in a thermometer is manifestation of the temperature. Hence, residues are basic social representations of the sentiments and inclinations that orient and determine human action. Class I residues correspond to combination or the tendency to invent and embark on adventures. Class II residues refer to the preservation of aggregates or the tendency to consolidate and make secure. For a concise summary of the Paretian system and his circulation of elites theory see, Nicholas S. TIMASHEFF, “The Social System, Structure and Dynamics” in James MEISEL, *Pareto and Mosca*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ. Prentice Hall, 1965, pp. 63-70.

<sup>91</sup> TIMASHEFF, *op.cit.*, p. 67.

in order to preserve its power and eventually yields to *rentiers* to whom the use of force comes naturally. An elite predominant in *rentiers*, in turn, gradually absorbs *speculators* in an attempt to overcome its natural resistance to new ideas and change. Saturation with *speculators* happens automatically, as even a *rentier* elite once in power attracts *speculators* to gain profit, whereas the advent of *rentiers* usually occurs by force as the elite saturated with *speculators* is unwilling and unable to use force to prevent its demise. This is what Pareto labels “circulation of elites.” Circulation of elites does not refer to replacing elite A with elite B, but to oscillation in the relative distribution of the stable and dynamic components among the elite.

Society, according to Pareto, is best viewed as a system in dynamic equilibrium. It is characterized by heterogeneity as the dynamic and stable components, or residues to use Pareto’s term, are differently distributed among the higher and the lower strata. Heterogeneity is the driving force of the social dynamic, as it is at the core of social change and social equilibrium. The uneven distribution of residues accounts for the amount of circulation among the social strata. Every system is heterogeneous, holds Pareto, and the most striking aspect of this heterogeneity is the distinction and interchange between the rulers and the ruled.<sup>92</sup> The social equilibrium then depends on the balance of the residues among the two strata. The more an elite consists of innovators alone, or consolidators alone, the less it is able to meet normal exigencies,<sup>93</sup> and the harder it is to preserve the social equilibrium. A crisis, in Pareto’s terms, occurs when the elite is homogenized. Pareto is convinced that history proceeds by cycles or undulations. His entire theory is build upon the idea of uneven distribution and circulation of

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<sup>92</sup> BOBBIO Norberto, *On Mosca and Pareto*, Genève, Librairie Droz, 1972, p.63.

<sup>93</sup> ZETTERBURGH Hans L., “Pareto’s Theory of Elites” in Vilfredo PARETO, *The Rise and Fall of Elites: An Application of Theoretical Sociology*, New Brunswick, N.J., Transaction Publishers, 2003, pp. 1-22, p.9.

residues among societal strata. Although critical of his theory, Ginsberg offers a clear and concise summary of Pareto's central thesis:

Pareto thinks that changes in the proportions between Class I [dynamic component] and Class II [stable component] residues in the elite do not continue indefinitely in one direction, but are sooner or later checked by movements in a counter-direction. In this way the modifications of the elite are shown to be among the major factors determining the undulatory form of social change. They are correlated, it is claimed, not only with political transformations but also with economic cycles and with oscillations in thought and culture. Thus in periods of rapidly increasing economic prosperity the governing class comes to contain greater numbers of individuals of the speculator type, rich in Class I residues, and fewer of the opposite type; while the converse is the case in periods of economic depression or retrogression.<sup>94</sup>

It is not my purpose to debate Pareto's concept of residues and their relation to economic cycles and changes in thought and culture. It suffices to point out that Pareto understands residues to be basic social representations that are not independent from other factors such as economic and social characteristics. My goal is to clarify Pareto's theory of circulation of elites and to argue against reducing its meaning to physical replacement of elite A with elite B. Circulation of elites theory accounts for processes of slow transformation as well as of sudden and drastic change of the governing elite. Both processes are understood in terms of distribution of residues among the social strata. The dynamic and stable components are not to be viewed as pertaining exclusively to one social strata or another – both are to be found in all strata of society. It is the relative distribution of the components that is important. The circulation of elites theory, more than anything, refers to circulation of dynamic and stable components between the higher and the lower strata.

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<sup>94</sup> GINSBERG Morris, "The Sociology of Pareto" in James MIESEL, ed., *Pareto and Mosca*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965, pp. 89-107, p. 104.

### 3.3 ELITE RENEWAL

Elite renewal plays a key function in any political system. Mechanisms of elite recruitment, Seligman argues, determine avenues for political participation, influence policy choices, effect the distribution of status, and influence the rate of social change.<sup>95</sup> Every theorization of elite change ought to account for the manner in which elites renew their membership. The various ways in which ruling classes renew themselves pose a central concern in Mosca's theory of the ruling class. Mosca relates renewal to the organization and formation of the ruling class, social type and political formula – all of which essential elements in his theoretical system.

Mosca argues that governments are organized according to two basic principles – the autocratic, when power is transmitted from above, and the liberal, when power is transmitted from below.<sup>96</sup> The two principles may be fused and balanced in various ways, and although it is difficult to find a political system that precludes one of the two principles, a predominance of autocracy or liberalism is certain to be found in any political organization. Closely related to the form of government is the mode of replenishing the ruling class. Mosca distinguishes between two tendencies – the “democratic” aims to replenish the ruling class with elements deriving from lower classes, the “aristocratic” aims to stabilize social control and political power in the descendants of the class in power.<sup>97</sup> The autocratic principle, cautions Mosca, does not

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<sup>95</sup> SELIGMAN Lester, “Elite Recruitment and Political Development,” *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 26, No. 3, (Aug., 1964), pp. 612-626, p. 612.

<sup>96</sup> Mosca's categorization is based on Plato's distinction between monarchy and democracy. Mosca clearly rejects Montesquieu's classification of governments into absolute or despotic monarchies, limited monarchies, and republics, as well as Aristotle's distinction between monarchies, aristocracies, and democracies. Mosca concludes that government, which, according to Aristotle, can be of the one, of the few, or of the many, is always of the few. What Aristotle called democracy, he argues, was simply an aristocracy of fairly broad membership. See, Renzo SERENO, “The Anti-Aristotelianism of Gaetano Mosca and Its Fate,” *Ethics*, Vol. 48, No. 4, (Jul., 1938), pp. 509-518.

<sup>97</sup> MOSCA, *The Ruling Class*, *op.cit.*, p. 395.

necessarily favor the aristocratic tendency, and the same can be said of the liberal principle and the democratic tendency.<sup>98</sup> The democratic tendency is constantly at work with greater or lesser intensity in all human societies. As noted earlier, “one can almost always observe that a slow and gradual renewal of the ruling class is going on through infiltration into the higher strata of society of elements emerging from the lower.” Similarly, the democratic tendency is constantly being offset by the aristocratic. There are certain qualities necessary for a ruling class to maintain its power and function properly, that could only develop when certain families hold high social positions for a number of generations. In Mosca’s view, the soundness of political institutions depends upon an appropriate fusing and balancing of the differing but constant principles (autocratic and liberal) and tendencies (aristocratic and democratic) which are at work in all political organisms.<sup>99</sup>

Mosca further identifies three principles of renewal of the ruling class – heredity, election, and cooption. He devotes particular attention to the first of those, arguing that all ruling classes tend to become hereditary in fact if not in law. Mosca contends that “all political forces seem to possess a quality that in physics used to be called the force of inertia. They have a tendency, that is, to remain at the point and in the state in which they find themselves.”<sup>100</sup> Qualities necessary for important office are easily maintained in certain families by moral tradition and heredity, and therefore are much more easily acquired when one has familiarity with them from childhood.<sup>101</sup> Even the principle of election, Mosca argues, cannot escape such hereditary tendencies. Candidates who are successful in democratic elections are almost always

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<sup>98</sup> Mosca gives as examples the Chinese empire which was based on an autocratic principle but did not recognize hereditary privileges to governance, and the Venetian state based on elected government made up entirely of hereditary ruling classes. Mosca, *The Ruling Class, op.ci.*, p. 396.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 428.

<sup>100</sup> MOSCA, *The Ruling Class, op.cit.*, p. 61.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

the ones who possess certain qualities and political forces, which are very often hereditary. Despite Mosca's focus on heredity, it is important to reiterate his conviction that both the aristocratic and democratic tendencies of renewal are constantly at work in all societies. In human societies, he argues, "there prevails now the tendency that produces closed, stationary, crystallized ruling classes, now the tendency that results in a more or less rapid renovation of ruling classes."<sup>102</sup> It is very difficult, in fact almost impossible to eliminate completely the action of either of these two tendencies, since an absolute prevalence of the aristocratic one would presuppose no change in the thought and conditions of life in society, whereas an absolute prevalence of the democratic tendency could occur only if children did not inherit the means, connections, and knowledge that allowed their predecessors to attain positions of power.<sup>103</sup> The highest degree of social utility is achieved in the equilibrium between the two tendencies.<sup>104</sup> Hence, the ability of the elite to preserve its power depends to a degree on its success in balancing the two tendencies and recruiting the right amount of people from the higher and lower classes, as necessitated by the particular social context – a view echoing Pareto's equilibrium.

Social type and political formula constitute two other essential elements in Mosca's theoretical system. Mankind, in Mosca's view, is divided into social groups each of which is set apart from other groups by beliefs, sentiments, habits and interests that are peculiar to it. The individuals who belong to one such group are held together by a consciousness of common brotherhood and held apart from other groups by passions and tendencies that are more or less

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>103</sup> MOSCA Gaetano, *A Short History of Political Philosophy*, New York, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1972, p. 255.

<sup>104</sup> FIOROT Dino, "Potere, Governo e Governabilità in Mosca e Pareto" in Ettore ALBERTONI (ed.), *Governo e Governabilità nel Sistema Politico e Giuridico di Gaetano Mosca*, Milano, Università degli Studi di Milano, 1983, pp. 79-102, p. 84.

antagonistic and mutually repellent.<sup>105</sup> The common consciousness and characteristics unique to a particular group form the social type. The social type has the important function of distinguishing one group from another and of determining the form of political organization or political formula of a given society. The political formula is the moral principle justifying the rule of a particular class. Ruling classes, Mosca argues, never stop at the brute fact of holding power. They do not justify their power exclusively by de facto possession of it, but try to find moral and legal basis for it, representing it as the logical consequence of doctrines and beliefs that are generally recognized and accepted.<sup>106</sup> Michels concurs that every government endeavors to support its power by a general ethical principle.<sup>107</sup> The political formula has to be based upon the social type of a society or at least upon the dominant social type, when the state is made up of a mixture of social types. Every social type has the tendency to concentrate into a single political organism, and the political organism in expanding always aims at spreading its own social type.<sup>108</sup> Thus, a political formula based upon communist ideology would serve better a society where egalitarian principles are highly valued and encounter more challenges in a society valuing social differentiation.

### **3.3.1 Technocratic and Populist Function**

Similarly to the aristocratic and democratic tendencies, circulation and reproduction could be viewed as mechanisms of elite renewal that are constantly and simultaneously at work. Reproduction, in these terms, implies replenishing the elite with individuals from the same social

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<sup>105</sup> MOSCA, *The Ruling Class*, *op.cit.*, p. 71.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>107</sup> MICHELS, *op.cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>108</sup> MOSCA, *The Ruling Class*, *op.cit.*, p. 103.

type and would therefore correspond to the aristocratic tendency. Circulation, in turn, corresponds to the democratic tendency and refers to selecting individuals with qualities different from those dominant in the elite. Reproduction is quasi-automatic, as it recruits new elite members from governmental schools, military academies, elite families, etc, thus satisfying the technocratic needs of the elite. Circulation, in contrast, involves recruiting individuals with specific qualities not supplied by the very academies and families. Its function is to absorb new elements from the lower stratum and legitimize elite power on a populist level. Although not subject to conscious and deliberate control by the elite, the two processes could be viewed as auto-transformative mechanisms of the elite. Let us examine them in more detail.

In order to maintain its power, an elite has to simultaneously fulfill two important functions – a technocratic and a populist. In other words, an elite needs to have the expertise to govern and, at the same time, have the support of the masses. The process of reproduction in these terms serves mainly a technocratic function. It is a mode of recruitment based on certain selection criteria or qualities, which purpose is to supply qualified cadres. By definition such process favors recruitment of new members from the higher rather than the lower stratum and, thus, corresponds to Mosca's aristocratic tendency. It replenishes the elite with individuals from the same social type (Mosca), or with individuals strong in the same component as the one dominant in the elite (Pareto). As a mechanism of elite renewal, reproduction reinforces qualities and tendencies already present in the elite and it ensures continuity.

Ruling classes, Mosca argues, are usually so constituted that the individuals who make them up are distinguished from the mass of the governed by qualities that give them a certain material, intellectual or even moral superiority.<sup>109</sup> It is the function of governmental schools,

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<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

military academies, and elite universities to prepare cadres nurturing those very qualities valued and exhibited by the elite. According to Mosca, such qualities vary with time and societies. In primitive societies, for example, military valor grants access to the ruling class, whereas in more advanced societies it is wealth or specialized knowledge. Selection criteria, in other words, are determined by the political formula. Reproduction represents an institutionalized mode of recruitment, whereby selected institutions have the task of preparing and providing a healthy supply of expert cadres imbued with the principles at the core of the political formula. The French “Grandes Ecoles,” which as a rule facilitate access to higher positions in the state machinery and corporate leadership, represent a case in point.<sup>110</sup> The “Ecole Libres des Sciences Politiques,” for example, provided France with a diplomatic, administrative, and managerial elite until the second world war.<sup>111</sup> In the East European context where communist ideology constituted the political formula, party schools and certain higher education institutes became the breeding ground for communist elites. Bulgarian career diplomats during the 1970’s and 1980’s, for instance, were predominantly educated in Moscow’s State Institute for International Relations.

If reproduction is a universalistic mechanism of renewing the elite in that it is based on selection criteria determined by the political formula, how could it favor recruitment primarily from the higher strata? Individuals from the higher stratum, Mosca contends, by definition possess certain qualities and characteristics which give them access to positions of power. Even when academic degrees, scientific training, special aptitudes as tested by examinations and competitions, open the way to public office, there is no eliminating that special advantage in

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<sup>110</sup> TOMUSK Voldemar, “Reproduction of the ‘State Nobility’ in Eastern Europe: Past Patterns and New Practices,” *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 21, No. 2, (Jun., 2000), pp. 269-289, p. 271.

<sup>111</sup> CLIFFORD-VAUGHAN Michalina, “Some French Concepts of Elites,” *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 11, No. 4, (Dec., 1960), pp. 319-331, p. 323.

favor of certain individuals which the French call the advantage of *positions déjà prises*.<sup>112</sup> Those include not only education and family tradition, but connections and kinships, which set one on the right road and enable him to avoid the blunders that are inevitable in unfamiliar environment. Thus, it is not surprising that many skilled politicians in Bulgarian post-communist politics come from elite communist families. Even though the selection criteria for entering the elite have changed in the post-communist context, these individuals were better equipped both to access and serve in high government positions.<sup>113</sup>

In contrast to reproduction, circulation is a mechanism of elite renewal that replenishes the elite with members of the lower stratum, corresponding to Mosca's democratic tendency. Its main function is to supply the elite with individuals possessing qualities different from those dominant in the elite. Selection is particularistic – it is not based on established, institutionalized criteria, but rather on an arbitrary choice of specific individuals possessing particular qualities, popular appeal, or charisma. Circulation is a process by which individuals from different social type (Mosca), or rich in component different than the one dominant in the elite (Pareto), are granted access to positions of power. In allowing new elements from the lower stratum to enter the elite, circulation serves a populist function. The elites, according to Pareto, cannot endure without renewing themselves from the lower classes who are the “dark crucible in which the new elites are being formed. They are the roots which feed the flower blossoming into elites”.<sup>114</sup> By absorbing ideas and social forces already fermenting in the lower stratum, the elite prevents such elements from organizing independently and assures popular support. The Bulgarian Communist

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<sup>112</sup> MOSCA, *The Ruling Class*, *op.cit.*, p. 61.

<sup>113</sup> Bulgaria's first EU commissioner Meglena Kuneva poses a good example. Married into a Politburo family, Kuneva gradually rose into post-communist politics. Her performance as an EU Commissioner for Consumer Protection gained her a well-deserved respect in the EU Commission.

<sup>114</sup> MIESEL James, “Introduction” in James MEISEL (ed.), *Pareto and Mosca*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice Hall, Inc., 1965, pp. 1-44, p. 12.

Party heavily recruited peasants to high-rank party positions during the early years of its rule, which helped it secure popular support, consolidate power, and enforce controversial policies such as nationalization of the land. Such strategy clearly satisfied the populist function of recruitment.

Pareto argues at length of the importance of absorbing new elements from the lower stratum. In his view, this is essential both for the preservation of power of the elite and preservation of the social equilibrium. An elite declines and loses power because it becomes softer, milder, more humane and less apt to the use of force. Elites, in Pareto's view, often become effete. They preserve certain passive courage, but lack active courage.<sup>115</sup> He explains the process in the following way:

An elite often brings its own ruin. It readily accepts individuals who are well supplied with Class I residues [dynamic component] and devote themselves to economic and financial pursuits, because such people as a rule are great producers of wealth and so contribute to the well-being of the governing class. The first effects of their coming to power are therefore favorably felt by many people and they strengthen the hold of the governing class; but gradually, as time goes on, they prove to be borers from within, by divesting the class of individuals who are rich in Class II residues [stable component] and have an aptitude for using force.<sup>116</sup>

As force is diluted, the social equilibrium has to be restored by elements to which the use of force comes naturally.<sup>117</sup> Once such elements have been absorbed from the lower stratum and the equilibrium has been restored, the opposite tendency resumes its course. Or in Pareto's words, "in the higher stratum of society stable components gradually lose in strength, until now and again they are reinforced by tides upwelling from the lower stratum."<sup>118</sup> What needs to be considered then is the velocity of circulation in relation to the supply and demand for certain social elements. Thus, various circumstances call for different social elements. In periods of

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<sup>115</sup> PARETO, *The Rise and Fall*, *op.cit.*, p. 60.

<sup>116</sup> PARETO, *Mind and Society*, *op.cit.*, sec. 2048.

<sup>117</sup> MIESEL, *op.cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>118</sup> PARETO, *Mind and Society*, *op.cit.*, sec. 2048.

stagnation, for example, *speculators* would be more needed than *rentiers*. Similarly, the speed with which the relative distribution of social elements in the elite is changing varies with each situation. There comes a period of renovation, Mosca argues, “during which individual energies have free play and certain individuals, more passionate than others, more energetic, more intrepid or merely shrewder than others, force their way from the bottom of the social ladder to the topmost rungs. ...[T]his molecular rejuvenation of the ruling class continues vigorously until a long period of stability slows it down again.”<sup>119</sup> According to Mosca, circulation among the two strata of society guarantees consensus. It assures that the elements lacking among the elite, but necessary for maintaining its power are absorbed. Circulation cannot be understood as a simple replacement of one elite group with another. In most cases what we observe, Michels argues, is a continuous process of intermixture, the old elements incessantly attracting, absorbing and assimilating the new.<sup>120</sup>

As mechanisms of elite renewal, circulation and reproduction ought to be viewed in terms of a dynamic equilibrium rather than isolated and self-exclusive processes. Circulation, then, allows for the absorption of new members into the elite, outside of the usual pool of recruitment, with popular appeal and qualities different than those dominant in the elite. Reproduction, in turn, does not imply physical continuation of the elite, but rather that new members recruited into the elite have the same social characteristics as members of the ruling elite (subscribe to the same value system, have comparable education, etc.). Circulation and reproduction are modes of recruitment which assure both change and continuity in the elite. The most desirable arrangement for society, in Mosca’s view, is one in which these two processes complement one another in a

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<sup>119</sup> MOSCA, *The Ruling Class, op.cit.*, pp. 67-68.

<sup>120</sup> MICHELS, *op.cit.*, p. 378.

state of flexible equilibrium.<sup>121</sup> A central thesis in classical elite theory is that the elite loses power when it fails to recruit the right people with the right proportion of social elements. In these terms, circulation and reproduction satisfy two important functions imperative for the elite's ability to maintain its power; one technocratic – supplying individuals with expertise to govern, and another, populist – supplying individuals who appeal to the masses. Circulation and reproduction are constantly and simultaneously at work, whether or not the elite is being challenged by a counter-elite. As such they represent auto-transformative mechanisms of the elite.

### 3.4 COUNTER ELITE

When the auto-transformative mechanisms of the elite fail to fulfill their technocratic and populist functions, there is greater opportunity for a counter-elite to form and organize. It is quite imaginable, posit Ivan Szelenyi and Balazs Szelenyi, that the political instability of socialism was linked to the inability of its elite to reproduce itself.<sup>122</sup> According to Pareto, revolutions come about through accumulations in the higher stratum of society – either because of a slowing-down in class-circulation, or from other causes – of decadent elements no longer possessing the qualities suitable for keeping them in power. In the meantime in the lower stratum of society elements of superior quality are gaining power.<sup>123</sup> Ruling classes, Mosca similarly argues, decline inevitably when they cease to find scope for the capacities through which they rose to

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<sup>121</sup> MEISEL, *op.cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>122</sup> SZELENYI Ivan and Balazs SZELENYI, "Why Socialism Failed: Toward a Theory of System Breakdown – Causes of Disintegration of East European State Socialism," *Theory and Society*, Vol. 23, No. 2, Special Issue on the Theoretical Implications of the Demise of State Socialism, (Apr., 1994), pp. 211-231, p. 219.

<sup>123</sup> PARETO, *Mind and Society*, *op.cit.*, sec. 2057.

power, when they no longer render the social services which they once rendered, or when their talents and the services they render lose in importance in the social environment in which they live.<sup>124</sup> The ruling class may be driven from power by the advent of new social elements [in the lower strata] who are strong in fresh political forces.<sup>125</sup> A counter-elite is formed when these new social elements in the lower stratum, possessing qualities different than those dominant in the elite, manage to organize.

Organization is paramount to Mosca's theoretical system. His entire theory is based on the premise that organized minorities rule over unorganized majorities. The dominion of an organized minority, obeying a single impulse, over the unorganized majority is inevitable.<sup>126</sup> The minority is organized for the very reason that it is a minority. Political organization, Michels similarly argues, leads to power.<sup>127</sup> A counter-elite, then, poses the greatest challenge to the ruling elite by virtue of being organized. In Mosca's words:

...within the lower classes another ruling class, or directing minority necessarily forms, and often this new class is antagonistic to the class that holds possession of legal government. When this class of plebeian leaders is well organized, it may seriously embarrass the official government.<sup>128</sup>

Pareto states that new elements are constantly rising among the lower strata which are the "dark crucible in which the new elites are being formed." Unless organized, however, these elements are easily absorbed or suppressed by the elite. In order to gain an influence proportionate to its real importance, Mosca argues, every political force has to be organized.<sup>129</sup> When a faction struggles for political power, it necessarily organizes internally in order to achieve a stable

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<sup>124</sup> MOSCA, *The Ruling Class*, *op.cit.*, p. 65.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>127</sup> MICHELS, *op.cit.*, p. 366.

<sup>128</sup> MOSCA, *The Ruling Class*, *op.cit.*, p. 116.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

mechanism of decision-making.<sup>130</sup> Mosca's concept of counter-elite is derived from his proposition that the contest for control is not between the many and the few but between one elite and another. Meisel argues that "Mosca would readily grant the fact that the masses, too, may – and indeed do – organize, but he would insist that the organized mass will, in turn, be led by an elite."<sup>131</sup> In his iron law of oligarchy, Michels advances an argument which resonates with Mosca's power struggle among opposed elite groups. Michels contends that class struggles consist merely of struggles between successively dominant minorities.<sup>132</sup>

Once a counter-elite organizes, it is in a position to challenge the power of the ruling elite. This new elite, argues Pareto, seeks to supersede the old one or merely to share its power and honors.<sup>133</sup> The attack it mounts could contest the process of reproduction, that of circulation or both. As already pointed, every ruling class justifies its rule by certain theories or principles, i.e. the political formula. Whether the political formula is monarchical, based on the sovereign's divine right to rule, democratic, based on popular rule, or communist, based on the leading role of the party, it is accepted in the society in which it functions and is used by the elite to legitimize its power. A counter-elite could contest the political formula, i.e. the legitimizing principle, by denouncing its validity and proposing a competing principle or ideology. Attempts to overthrow the legal government, argues Mosca, are often accompanied with conversion to a new political formula.<sup>134</sup> In the Eastern European experience, this took the form of contesting communist ideology, with the entailing leading role of the communist party and one-party rule,

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<sup>130</sup> MIGLIO Gianfranco, "Classe Politica' e 'Ideologia': Due Superabili Frontiere nella Teoria Mosciana del Rapporto Governanti-Governati," in Ettore ALBERTONI, ed., *Governo e Governabilità nel Sistema Politico e Giuridico di Gaetano Mosca*, Milano, Università degli Studi di Milano, 1983, pp. 11-18, p. 14.

<sup>131</sup> MEISEL, *op.cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>132</sup> MICHELS, *op.cit.*, p. 377.

<sup>133</sup> PARETO, *The Rise and Fall*, *op.cit.*, p. 36.

<sup>134</sup> MOSCA, *The Ruling Class*, *op.cit.*, p. 117.

and proposing a democratic form of government. Such contestation is universalistic as it does not question particular aspects of elite rule but attacks its very foundation. It challenges the process of reproduction, which is necessarily grounded in the political formula, since the qualities valued by the elite and granting access to positions of power are derived from the political formula. In communist Eastern Europe, such qualities were party membership, communist family background, education in one of the party institutions, etc., all of which aimed at securing loyalty to the communist regime, loyalty being a quality valued to a much higher degree than expertise. The struggle between the elite and the counter-elite in that case takes the form of contestation and negotiation of the legitimizing principle of rule. The counter-elite demands the adoption of new principles of rule, which in turn would redefine the mode of recruitment to the elite and the criteria or qualities which would give access to positions of power. In the East European context that meant a struggle for the abolishment of communist ideology and adoption of democratic, representative system of government, whereby membership in the governing elite is attained through popular elections.

Elite power could also be challenged on another level, targeting the process of circulation. In this case, the counter-elite is not contesting the legitimizing principles of rule, but is struggling for membership in the elite. Such form of contestation is particularistic as it does not question the political formula; instead, it bargains for access to positions of power or co-optation in the elite. There is no demand for redefining the mode of recruitment and the criteria giving access to power; rather there is bargaining and negotiation over partaking in the spoils of political power. The argument is illustrated below:

**Table 1. Mechanisms of elite renewal**

|                        | <b>REPRODUCTION</b><br><i>Technocratic function</i>   | <b>CIRCULATION</b><br><i>Populist function</i>   |
|------------------------|---|--|
| <b>NO CONTESTATION</b> | - Selection of new elite members based on criteria (universalistic)<br><br>- Process controlled by the elite  | - Selection of new elite members based on search for specific individuals with particular qualities (particularistic)<br><br>- Process controlled by the elite   |
| <b>CONTESTATION</b>    | - <b>Contestation and negotiation of the legitimizing principles of rule</b><br>- <b>Universalistic attack upon process of reproduction</b><br>- <b>Power struggle between the elite and a contesting group/counter elite</b> | - <b>Contestation and bargaining for membership in the elite; no attack on the legitimizing principles of rule</b><br>- <b>Particularistic attack upon the process of circulation</b><br>- <b>Power struggle between the elite and a contesting group/counter elite.</b> |

Although the table separates contestation of the process of reproduction and that of circulation, the two processes can, and most often do, occur simultaneously. The round table negotiations in East European countries represent variations in degree.<sup>135</sup> The Polish round table, for example, reached an agreement granting the presidency to communist leader Jaruzelski and scheduling free elections in which the Communist party would be guaranteed 65% of the seats in the lower house of the Sejm. Although communist ideology and one-party rule was abolished in all East European countries, the outcome was not guaranteed at the outset. Round table negotiations consisted both in debating the legitimizing principles of rule and bargaining for positions of power. Pareto argues that in its struggle for power, a new elite does not admit its intentions

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<sup>135</sup> Round Table Talks took place in several East European countries and constituted a series of negotiations between communist elites and the newly formed oppositions on the smooth and peaceful transition to democracy. Round Table Talks were held in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and Bulgaria. For a detailed account of the Round Table Talks in Eastern Europe see, Jon ELSTER (ed.), *The Roundtable Talks and the Breakdown of Communism*, Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press, 1996.

frankly and openly. Instead it assumes the leadership of all the oppressed and it claims to defend the rights of almost the entire citizenry.<sup>136</sup> Thus, almost any attack on the power of the ruling elite carries some ideological justification.

Whether the counter-elite would pursue full-scale contestation or would opt for cooptation in the elite, largely depends upon the political influence at its disposal. In Czechoslovakia and East Germany where communist elites were completely discredited, the counter elite pursued a strategy of full contestation. The round table talks in these countries, Elster argues, essentially produced a civilized and total capitulation of the communist regimes, with no concessions given to the former elite.<sup>137</sup> In contrast, the Bulgarian counter-elite which was poorly organized and had marginal influence, especially outside of major cities, could not hope for ousting the communist elite. At best, it was able to negotiate the rules of political participation, which would grant it a share in political power.

An important point to be made is that the auto-transformative mechanisms (reproduction and circulation) of the elite continue to be at work even, and especially so, when the power of the elite is being challenged by an organized counter-elite. On the one hand, the elite could adapt its reproduction mechanism either by emphasizing the political formula on which it is based or by altering it. The transformation of East European communist parties into social-democratic parties is an example of the latter, whereas the normalization<sup>138</sup> period in Czechoslovakia following the Prague Spring illustrates the former. On the other hand, the elite could react to the attack through

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<sup>136</sup> PARETO, *The Rise and Fall*, *op.cit.*, p. 36.

<sup>137</sup> ELSTER Jon, "Constitutionalism in Eastern Europe: An Introduction," *The University of Chicago Law Review*, Vol. 58, No. 2, Approaching Democracy: A New Legal Order for Eastern Europe, (Spring, 1991), pp. 447-482, p. 458.

<sup>138</sup> "Normalization" refers to the complex policies developed and fostered by the Soviets, under specific national conditions and a over a long period spanning a decade or more, to partly or fully reverse revolutionary change in a given country. See Jiri VALENTA, "Revolutionary Change, Soviet Intervention, and 'Normalization' in East-Central Europe," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 16, No. (2, Jan., 1984), 127-151.

its circulation mechanism by attracting people with reformist ideas and popular appeal. This could entail strategies of bringing to the front new faces from the party youth organizations or even attracting prominent figures from the counter-elite, both of which a common practice in Bulgarian transition politics. Contestation could not be viewed as an isolated process; it is usually offset by strategic responses and adaptive auto-transformative mechanisms of the ruling elite. Power is conservative, cautions Michels. The influence exercised upon the government machine by an energetic opposition is subject to frequent interruptions and is always restricted by the nature of oligarchy.<sup>139</sup> Except in cases where the elite is too weak to respond as was in Czechoslovakia and East Germany in 1989, contestation is usually countered by the ruling elite. Regrettably, in cases where an organized counter-elite is present, the function and importance of auto-transformative processes tends to be overlooked by scholars, assigning changes in the elite only to the counter-elite factor.

### 3.5 INTRA-ELITE CONFLICT

Intra-elite conflict is an important factor in elite transformation. The governing class, argues Pareto, “is not a homogenous body. They hold no meeting where they congregate to plot common designs, nor have they any other devices for reaching common accord.”<sup>140</sup> If there is an agreement among the elite, it derives from a set of shared circumstances and personal goals. Despite his emphasis on organization, Mosca makes no argument that ruling classes will always

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<sup>139</sup> MICHELS, *op.cit.*, p. 367.

<sup>140</sup> PARETO, *Mind and Society, op.cit.*, sec. 2254.

be (by definition or as a constant tendency) organized and cohesive.<sup>141</sup> He views organization and cohesion as variables which define ruling classes and explain particular political phenomena. The varying structures of ruling classes, as defined by their form or organization, has a preponderant importance in determining the political type, and also the level of civilization, of the different peoples.<sup>142</sup>

Conflict is an inherent element in intra-elite relations. Whenever the power of the leaders is seriously threatened, points Michels, it is because a new leader or a new group of leaders is on the point of becoming dominant, and is inculcating views opposed to those of the old rulers of the party.<sup>143</sup> Communist elites were not impervious to conflict. On the contrary, Gordon Skilling has argued in 1966 that “the Soviet system is far from being “conflictless” and that behind the façade of the monolithic party a genuine struggle has been taking place among rival groups or factions.”<sup>144</sup> Such conflict, Skilling argues, is sometimes a mere struggle for power, largely divorced from issues of policy or ideology and designed to secure control of the main institutions of power. In other cases however, the struggle is linked with major issues of public policy and related to narrowly defined groups such as the central or peripheral party organizations, economic management, the military, etc. David Lane argues that intra-elite conflict within the communist party was a powerful driving force in East European transitions. Although he disagrees with “journalistic categories of ‘hard-liners’ and ‘soft-liners,’” he contends that the transitions were led by a faction of the political elite.<sup>145</sup> The ascent of Gorbachev to power and the reforms he introduced, he argues, resulted in a divide among political elites about the

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<sup>141</sup> ZUCKERMAN Alan, *op.cit.*, p. 333.

<sup>142</sup> MOSCA, *The Ruling Class, op.cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>143</sup> MICHELS, *op.cit.*, p. 164.

<sup>144</sup> SKILLING Gordon, “Interest Groups and Communist Politics,” *World Politics*, Vol. 18, No. 3, (Apr., 1966), pp. 435-451, p. 440.

<sup>145</sup> LANE David, “The Transformation of Russia: The Role of the Political Elite,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 2, (Jun., 1996), pp. 535-539, p. 547.

viability of the Soviet system. Ivan Szelenyi and Balazs Szelenyi present the same point in arguing that inner differentiation of the elite played a major role in system breakdown in Poland, Hungary and Yugoslavia. In their view, one important consequence of the inner division of the elite was that it began to lose its appetite for repressive measures against the intelligentsia.<sup>146</sup> Here the authors relate to Pareto's argument of the equilibrium between the power a social class possesses and its willingness to use force to defend it. Intra-elite conflict, in this view, has diminished the ability of the elite to use force, thereby contributing to its downfall and disturbing the social equilibrium. Studies of the causes of revolutions similarly point to the importance of intra-elite conflict. Skocpol argues that intra-elite conflict plays at least as important a role in revolutions as participation from below.<sup>147</sup> Goldstone in turn contends that intra-elite conflict, financial crisis, and popular uprisings are the main factors in bringing about revolutions.<sup>148</sup>

In analyzing elite transformation in Eastern Europe, scholars have justly focused on examining the role of the counter-elite. Yet, much too often they have discounted the importance of intra-elite conflict. The nature and intensity of the intra-elite conflict within the Communist party, both before and during the transition period, are important factors in the process of elite transformation. Such conflict could be just as powerful agent of change as challenges from a counter-elite. Intra-elite conflict is particularly important in the context of one-party systems where the only legal contestation of power could come from within the party. We can recall Nikolov's argument which states that in Bulgaria there was no basis for a new elite to emerge,

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<sup>146</sup> SZELENYI Ivan and Balazs SZELENYI, *op.cit.*, p. 227.

<sup>147</sup> SKOCPOL Theda, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China*, New York, NY, Cambridge University Press, 1979.

<sup>148</sup> GOLDSTONE Jack, *Revolutions and Rebellion in the Early Modern World*, Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 1991.

except from within the all-embracing *nomenklatura* itself.<sup>149</sup> Thus, it is not surprising that the collapse of the communist regime in Bulgaria was facilitated by a group within the party. Moser keenly illustrates this point in arguing that, “[s]ince the Bulgarian Communist Party had never permitted non-communist political organization within the country, it was almost inevitable that a reform movement could appear only within the BCP itself, and that if anti-communist political structures were to be created, they would probably initially be formed within the communist apparatus, as contradictory as this may seem. In fact, the removal of Todor Zhivkov from his position as First Secretary of the Party was engineered from within the party itself.”<sup>150</sup> In describing the various power struggles within the Party, Kalinova and Baeva demonstrate that intra-elite conflict has accompanied the Bulgarian communist regime throughout its existence.<sup>151</sup> The importance of intra-elite conflict in one-party systems is also emphasized by Coser who suggests that “rigid” systems, such as East European communist regimes, tend to be more vulnerable to the effects of internal conflict:

It is apparent, however, that the rigidity of the system and the intensity of conflict within it are not independent of each other. Rigid systems which suppress the incidence of conflict exert pressure towards the emergence of radical cleavages and violent forms of conflict. More elastic systems, which allow the open and direct expression of conflict within them and which adjust to the shifting balance of power which these conflicts both indicate and bring about, are less likely to be menaced by basic and explosive alignments within their midst.<sup>152</sup>

The fact that communist power was challenged from within in the Bulgarian case raises the question of the difference between counter-elite and intra-elite conflict. Such distinction might

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<sup>149</sup> NIKOLOV Stephan, “Bulgaria: A Quasi-Elite” in John HIGLEY, Jan PAKULSKI and Włodzimierz WESOŁOWSKI (eds.), *Postcommunist Elites and Democracy In Eastern Europe*, New York: St. Martin’s press, Inc., 1998, pp. 213-225, p. 217.

<sup>150</sup> MOSER Charles, *Theory and History of the Bulgarian Transition*, Sofia, Free Initiative Foundation, 1994, p. 84.

<sup>151</sup> See Ewegeniya KALINOVA and Iskra BAEVA, *Българските Преходи: 1939-2005*, Парадигма, 2006, pp. 125-238.

<sup>152</sup> COSER Lewis, “Social Conflict and the Theory of Social Change,” *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Sep., 1957), pp. 197-207, p. 202.

be difficult to make in pluralistic political systems with multiple political actors, such as parties, interest groups, civil organizations, etc., but it is fairly straightforward in the case of communist systems. Conflict within the Bulgarian Communist Party was limited to the top leadership, namely members of the Politburo and the Central Committee (See Chapter Six, p. 179). This is not to preclude that there were no conflicts among the lower echelons of the party. Such conflicts, however were inconsequential and personal for the most part and never grew into organized factions. It was the reformist wing that formed within the Politburo that organized the coup against Zhivkov. Thus, internal conflict in the Bulgarian case was confined to the very top ranks of the party, where there were clearly distinguishable opposed groups. The counter-elite, by contrast, did not include top party officials. While some of the early dissidents were members of the communist party, they were rank-and-file members with no influence over party affairs. What I define as a counter-elite in the Bulgarian context, is a group that at the offset of the transition was completely excluded from the political process and prophesied anti-communist ideology as opposed to reforming communism.

A final point to be examined in relation to intra-elite conflict is the link between conflict and cohesion, i.e. the proposition that external conflict increases internal cohesion. According to Dahrendorf, “it appears to be a general law that human groups react to external pressure by increased internal coherence”<sup>153</sup> Coser sees conflict as leading to the mobilization of the energies of the members of the group, which brings about increased cohesion and sometimes involves centralization.<sup>154</sup> Despite critiques of this thesis, Stein argues that there is a clear convergence in the literature in both the specific studies and in the various disciplines (sociology, anthropology,

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<sup>153</sup> Quoted in Arthur STEIN, “Conflict and Cohesion,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 20, No. 1, (Mar., 1976), pp. 143-172, p, 145.

<sup>154</sup> COSER Lewis, *The Functions of Social Conflict*, New York, Free Press, 1956.

psychology, and political science), which suggests that, under certain conditions, external conflict does increase internal cohesion.<sup>155</sup> Based on this thesis, we can argue that the intensity of intra-elite conflict is related to the presence of an organized counter-elite. Hence, we can expect group cohesion to increase when faced with an organized counter-elite and intra-elite conflict to heighten when a challenge by an organized counter-elite is absent. Or to use Sumner's words as a metaphor, "The exigencies of war with outsiders are what make peace inside."<sup>156</sup>

Intra-elite conflict is a powerful mechanism of elite change. The ever-present struggle among the elite assures a continuous negotiation of the political formula and a constant readjustment of the processes of reproduction and circulation. Such negotiation and readjustment are under way even in the absence of a counter-elite. It is especially in cases where a counter-elite is absent, that the role of intra-elite conflict becomes particularly important in bringing about change in the selection criteria and composition of the elite. As such, it also constitutes an auto-transformative mechanism of the elite. That is not to say that it is deliberately adopted, but rather that it is a constant characteristic of the elite.

### **3.6 ELITE TRANSFORMATION AND TRANSITION OUTCOME**

Review of the literature reveals that a significant number of elite studies argue for a connection between elite transformation and the outcome of transitions to democracy (See Chapter Two, pp. 2 -43). Notable in this respect is Higley and Burton's approach, and its further elaborations, focusing on the correlation between elite unity and regime stability, as well as Vachudova's

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<sup>155</sup> STEIN Arthur, *op.cit.*, p. 165.

<sup>156</sup> SUMNER William G., *Folkways: A Study of the Sociological importance of Usages, Manners, Customs, Mores, and Morals*, Boston, MA, Ginn & Company, 1906, p. 12.

study of East European transitions. As we have already noted in our review of Higley and Burton's work, a disunified national elite produces a series of unstable regimes which oscillate between authoritarian and democratic forms over varying intervals, whereas a consensually unified national elite, produces a stable regime which may evolve into a modern democracy (Higley & Burton 1989). In examining the factors contributing to a successful transition to democracy, Vachudova in turn argues that whether states embarked on a liberal or illiberal pattern of political change after 1989 largely depended on the quality of political competition, in particular on the presence of an opposition and a reforming communist party before 1989 (Vachudova 2005). Bunce also suggests a connection between the elite change and the success of democratization efforts. She contends that those postcommunist countries which initially excluded their former leaders from political power have shown the most progress in economic and political reform.<sup>157</sup>

I am similarly concerned with the link between elite transformation and transition outcome. My study treats elite transformation as a dependent variable with regard to the Bulgarian transition. As I further argue, elite change in Bulgaria significantly differed from that in other East European countries. This difference is due to several factors which constricted the process of elite transformation and to a large extent determined its nature. Elites, in turn, played an important role in the transition process. The stop and go pace of the Bulgarian transition and its unclear direction particularly in the early 1990s is, to some degree, a result of a divided elite, not committed to common values and not sharing a common vision of the future post-communist society. Thus, I consider elites as an explanatory factor, or an independent variable, in terms of their impact on policy and transition outcome. Bulgaria lagged behind other East European

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<sup>157</sup> BUNCE Valerie, "Regional Differences in Democratization: The East Versus the South," *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1998, pp. 187-211.

counties in reform efforts (See Chapter Eight), which I argue could be partly accounted for by the elite variable. As Higley and Burton argue, democratic transitions and breakdowns can be best understood by studying basic continuities and changes in internal relations of national elites.<sup>158</sup> Thus, in studying the elites and what happened to them during the transition, I treat the elite variable as dependent. In studying the impact elites have on policy and the outcome of the transition, I treat the elite variable as an independent.

### 3.7 A MODEL OF ELITE TRANSFORMATION

Drawing on classical elite theory, I have argued that change and continuity are inseparable elements in the process of elite transformation. Circulation and reproduction are not self-excluding processes but mechanisms of elite renewal which occur simultaneously. Circulation *per se* does not indicate the presence of an organized counter-elite. Elite change occurs even in the absence of a counter-elite. Circulation and reproduction, therefore, could be viewed as auto-transformative mechanisms, which assure both change and continuity in the elite. When the auto-transformative mechanisms of the elite fail to fulfill their function, there is greater opportunity for a counter elite to organize. The ability of the counter-elite to challenge the power of the ruling elite depends to a large extent on the degree to which the counter-elite is organized. Challenges from a counter-elite are usually countered by strategic actions of the elite that readjust the processes of reproduction and circulation. Intra-elite conflict is another important factor in elite transformation. The nature and intensity of intra-elite conflict could be just as

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<sup>158</sup> HIGLEY John and Michael BURTON, "The Elite Variable in Democratic Transitions and Breakdowns," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 54, No. 1, (Feb., 1989), pp. 17-32, p.17.

powerful an agent of change as challenges from a counter-elite. When faced with an organized counter-elite, intra-elite conflict among the ruling elite tends to decrease and internal cohesion increases. Based on these conclusions, *I argue that two sets of factors determine the nature of elite transformation – the presence of a counter-elite and the degree to which this elite is organized, and the effectiveness of the auto-transformative mechanisms of the ruling elite (i.e. intra-elite conflict and modes of recruitment).*

Based largely on the classical writings of Mosca and Pareto, my argument also takes into account contributions by contemporary scholars such as Vachudova and Higley, who present a multi-factorial, dynamic model of elite change and emphasize the importance of auto-transformative mechanisms and intra-elite conflict. In my view, this combined approach offers a useful framework for the study of post-communist elites. Classical elite theory with its emphasis on lower and higher strata, aristocratic and democratic tendencies of elite renewal, and velocity of circulation may seem dated at first. Indeed, classical elite theorists were referring to nineteenth-century Italy, where the class structure was clear and rigid and where counter-elites were seen as coming from the lower classes. Nevertheless, the concepts they developed are quite appropriate for examining post-communist societies. The communist elite was the dominant if not the only elite group in East European communist societies. Communist regimes, particularly in the case of Bulgaria, successfully destroyed or co-opted rival elite groups such as intellectuals, industrialists or clerics. While the old class structure was destroyed, a new structure emerged where the main distinction was between those who enjoyed privileges under the communist regime and those who did not. The counter-elites that emerged in the late 1980s in Eastern Europe, in that sense, was clearly outside of the privileged communist elite group. Thus, in terms of their access to power, they could be viewed as the lower stratum, the non elite, or the lower

class. Party membership restrictions imposed on certain education fields and positions of power in all fields assured party control over elite positions and the process of elite renewal, thus creating a clear boundary between the communist elite and the non-elite. Although in the East European context we cannot talk about classes in the traditional sense, the analytical concepts of Mosca and Pareto fit rather well with the structure of East European communist societies.

In order to examine elite transformation in Bulgaria, following an approach that combines classical elite theory with contemporary scholarship, I need to determine: 1) whether there was intra-elite conflict within the ruling communist elite and what was the nature and intensity of that conflict; 2) whether there was an organized counter-elite; where the counter-elite came from and how it organized itself; the extent to which the counter-elite was able to challenge the power of the communist ruling elite and in what way – through contestation, cooptation or both; 3) the difference in the composition and modes of recruitment of the communist and post-communist elite; and the change in the mechanisms of elite recruitment. The answers to these questions would indicate why elite transformation in Bulgaria took its particular form and how did it impact the outcome of the transition. An elite transformation in which the communist elite is faced with an equally or more powerful counter-elite would result in a very different process of negotiation of power and policy direction than a situation in which elite transformation is defined by a strong, unified communist elite and a weak, disorganized counter-elite. Similarly, a communist party with strong reformist wing where internal-conflict becomes a driver of change would enjoy a very different role in post-communist politics than a party where reformist factions were repressed or non-existent. By the same token, a situation in which a weak counter-elite is facing a discredited and weakened communist elite would result in a sequence of electoral

stalemates and lack of political will and capacity for reform efforts. Elite transformation matters a great deal, as it is among the most important factors shaping post-communist realities.

#### 4.0 DEMOCRATIZATION IN EASTERN EUROPE AND THE BULGARIAN TRANSITION: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe came as a surprise to scholars and East Europeans alike. In a matter of months the over 40-year long communist rule in the region had disintegrated, and East European countries were free to chose their future. Despite the common start to democratization, the trajectories of East European states diverged immediately. Bulgaria was not among the fortunate and successful ones in democratization efforts. Between 1990 and 2000, Bulgaria witnessed nine governments, four parliamentary and two presidential elections. A series of electoral stalemates between the unreconstructed communists and the inexperienced opposition produced weak, often incompetent, Bulgarian governments, argues Vachudova, bringing neither systematic economic reform nor the entrenchment of a liberal democratic state.<sup>159</sup> It was not until 1997 that the first government to complete its full mandate stepped into power and was able to enact a more consistent and continuous reform policy.

This chapter provides a brief overview of the start of the democratization process in Eastern Europe and traces the events in Bulgaria between 1989 and 2000. I point to the ways in which the course of the Bulgarian transition differed from transition processes in other East European countries and examine the characteristics that defined the process of elite

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<sup>159</sup> VACHUDOVA Milada Anna, *Europe Undivided: Democracy, Leverage, and Integration after Communism*, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 43.

transformation in Bulgaria and distinguished it from its East European counterparts. The specificities of the Bulgarian context, I argue, benefitted the former communists in their ability to preserve a strong position of power in post-communist politics.

#### 4.1 DEMOCRATIZATION IN EASTERN EUROPE

The year 1989 witnessed the collapse of communist rule in Eastern Europe. One by one communist regimes across the region yielded to opposition movements and an aroused citizenry. Reform processes in the USSR were decisive for the changes that took place in the region. Gorbachev's policies of *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* empowered voices of opposition and shook the foundations of the already illegitimate communist regimes in Eastern Europe. Gorbachev's rejection of the Brezhnev doctrine was perhaps the most important factor. Unlike in 1956 and 1968, the Soviet Union was no longer willing to support East European communist regimes neither economically nor politically. Founding themselves on their own, communist governments yielded to the sweeping wave of liberalization. Soviet domination in the region ended and democratic governments took power. Two years later the Soviet Union itself collapsed. The Cold War was over and democratization was irreversibly underway in Eastern Europe.

The popular political upheavals of 1989 began in Poland and Hungary, which according to Goldman were always less tightly controlled by party leaders and the Kremlin than other Central and East European countries.<sup>160</sup> In Poland, deteriorating economic conditions and increased political tension, with worker's strikes starting in the spring of 1988 and continuing

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<sup>160</sup> GOLDMAN Minton, *Revolution and Change in Central and Eastern Europe. Political, Economic, and social Challenges*, Armonk, NY, M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1997, p. 29.

into the early weeks of 1989, pressed communist leaders to negotiate some form of power sharing with the opposition movement Solidarity. Conceding to Round Table Negotiations that took place between February and April of 1989, the communists demanded a guaranteed position of power in exchange for liberalization. The two sides agreed on partially free elections in which the communist coalition (including the Communist Party, the satellite Peasant and Democratic parties, and pro-regime Catholic groups) was guaranteed 65% of the seats in the *Sejm* (the Polish Parliament), but had to compete for all of the hundred seats in the newly created Senate. In the June elections, Solidarity scored a sweeping and unexpected victory, winning 99 seats in the Senate and all contested seats in the *Sejm*. The newly elected *Sejm*, where the Communist coalition still held a majority, had to vote on a government and a president. In mid-July, the incumbent communist leader Wojciech Jaruzelski was elected for president by only one vote, because of a revolt among members of the communist-allied parties. By August, these parties, constituting 27% of the coalition's built-in majority, defected, leaving the Communist Party with only 38% of the *Sejm*'s 460 seats.<sup>161</sup> No longer controlled by the Communist Party, the parliament entrusted Solidarity's Tadeusz Mazowiecki with forming the first non-communist government. His finance minister, Leszek Balcerowicz, launched Poland's famous "shock therapy" program on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1990.

In Hungary, it was reformers within the party that took the initiative in liberalizing the Hungarian communist system, hoping, as Goldman argues, that by acting in a timely fashion they could strengthen public support of the party and hold on to leadership.<sup>162</sup> Reformers such as Rezső Nyers and Imre Pozsgay worked carefully to gradually decrease conservative influence

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<sup>161</sup> BROWN, J. F., *Surge to Freedom. The End of Communist Rule in Eastern Europe*, Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 1991, p. 91.

<sup>162</sup> GOLDMAN, *op.cit.*, p. 191.

within the party. Their initiatives in 1988 and 1989 led to changes in the Communist Party leadership and to the emergence of opposition political groups. Following Poland's example, in March 1989, the Communist Party started Round Table Negotiations with nine opposition groups already organized in the so-called Opposition Round Table. A Round Table Agreement was signed in September 1989, scheduling free democratic elections for March 1990. Despite its reformist orientation, the Communist Party (now renamed Hungarian Socialist Party) performed very poorly at the elections, largely because of its failure to defend the Hungarian minority in Transylvania during the Romanian revolution of December 1989.<sup>163</sup> Instead, it was competition among the anti-communist parties that took center stage in the run-up to the 1990 elections. The main contenders were the Hungarian Democratic Forum, advocating gradual changes, and the Alliance of Free Democrats, favoring a rapid transition to a free-market economy. The Forum won the elections, whereas the Alliance came in second. Thus, Jozsef Antall, who gained popularity during the Round Table negotiations, proceeded to form Hungary's first post-communist democratically elected government.

Events took on a different course in East Germany and Czechoslovakia. Communist regimes there did not negotiate with opposition forces but instead were brought down by mass pressure. In East Germany, the conservative regime of Eric Honecker rejected Soviet policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* and continued to crush any sign of opposition. Because it was repressed for so long, argues Goldman, when opposition did appear it was all the more explosive.<sup>164</sup> Massive emigration of disgruntled young people, disillusioned with prospects of political liberalization and improved living conditions, marked the beginning of the end of the GDR regime and the GDR itself. In August 1989, Hungary removed border restrictions and opened its

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<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

border with Austria.<sup>165</sup> In a couple of months more than 13,000 people left East Germany through Hungary and onto Austria and West Germany.<sup>166</sup> This was in addition to the thousands East Germans piling in front of the West German embassy in Prague. In September, the Monday demonstrations started in Leipzig. Prayers for peace at the Lutheran Nikolaikirche in Leipzig grew into regular protests against the regime gathering as much as 320,000 people. By October mass demonstrations had spread to Dresden and Berlin with public anger building up as the celebrations of GRD's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary approached. At the festivities, Gorbachev criticized Honecker for his failure to follow the tide of political liberalization and stated that "the USSR does not impose models for development. With the new realities each country is free to choose its path. GDR's problems are solved in Berlin, not in Moscow."<sup>167</sup> Gorbachev's speech unleashed another wave of demonstrations that did not subside even after Honecker resigned and was replaced by the slightly more liberal Egon Krenz. On November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1989 sections of the Berlin Wall were opened and thousands of East Germans crossed into Western Berlin. Following the fall of the Wall, the Communist party (SED) resigned and free elections were scheduled for March 1990. The East German Christian Democratic Union (CDU), an opposition party in support of German reunification established as a branch of the governing West German Christian Democratic Union, won the elections. The SED (renamed to Party of Democratic Socialism) scored only 16.45% of the vote. CPU's victory, argues Goldman, was a signal to West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl to move ahead with reunification.<sup>168</sup> The CDU formed a coalition

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<sup>165</sup> Allowing GDR citizens to cross to Austria, was the most significant foreign policy decision any Hungarian communist government had made since Imre Nagy's fateful declaration of neutrality in 1956, argues Brown. BROWN, 1991, *op.cit.*, p. 120.

<sup>166</sup> The Berlin Wall (1961-1989), *German Notes*, available online at: [http://www.germannotes.com/hist\\_east\\_wall.shtml](http://www.germannotes.com/hist_east_wall.shtml)

<sup>167</sup> "Celebrating GDR's 40th Anniversary," *Rabothnichesko Delo*, October 7, 1989.

<sup>168</sup> GOLDMAN, *op.cit.*, p. 166.

government headed by Lothar de Maiziere who started negotiations for the German reunification that took place on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1990.

Similarly to the GRD, the Czechoslovak leadership was dominated by hardliner communists, known as the “normalization” bloc. Events in neighboring Poland and Hungary made it increasingly difficult for the Czechoslovak regime to repress opposition forces, but the final blow came with the deteriorating situation in the GDR. The thousands of East Germans in front of the West German embassy in Prague in the summer of 1989 demoralized the Czechoslovak regime and encouraged its opponents. In August, there were already demonstrations in Prague commemorating the 1968 invasion. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the resignation of Eric Honecker further boosted the confidence of Czechoslovak people. Demonstrations spread to other cities, including Bratislava. The brutal repression of a peaceful student demonstration in Prague on November 17, 1989 gave a decisive impulse to opposition forces. In the following days, Vaclav Havel founded the Civic Forum, an organization designed to direct and coordinate the growing popular surge, and called a demonstration in Prague that gathered three quarter of a million people.<sup>169</sup> The series of cabinet changes and steps to liberalize the political system undertaken by the Communist party failed to appease the crowd. Popular pressure led to the resignation of Gustav Husak as state president and the election of Vaclav Havel by the Prague Parliament as his replacement on December 29, 1989. The first post-communist democratic elections were scheduled for June. The Civic Forum and its counterpart in Slovakia, Public Against Violence, won a majority both at the federal and republic levels.

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<sup>169</sup> BROWN, 1991, *op.cit.*, p. 178.

Discredited by their failed leadership of the country, the communists received only 15% of the votes in the Czech Federal Republic and 13% in Slovakia.<sup>170</sup>

Bulgaria and Romania found themselves lagging behind the wave of political liberalization spreading across the region. A day after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Bulgarian Communist Party took preemptive action by removing its long-time leader Todor Zhivkov. Though this act was initiated within the Party itself, subsequent events discussed below, took on a momentum beyond the party's control, eventually leading to the end of communist rule in Bulgaria.

In Romania, demonstrations against the regime started in December in the largely inhabited by ethnic Hungarian population town of Timisoara, over the attempted arrest of a Hungarian Reformed Church pastor and defender of Hungarian rights, Laszlo Tokes. The demonstrations were met with police brutality resulting in nearly 100 dead. Instead of restoring order, the brutality further provoked popular unrest that spread to other parts of the country, including Bucharest. Oblivious of the growing level of popular hostility, Romanian party leader Nicolae Ceausescu called a pro-communist rally in Bucharest demanding an end to anti-government protests. At the rally, Ceausescu was met with unprecedented jeers and left in confusion. Street fighting erupted when the security services attempted to suppress the protestors. At this key moment, the army joined the protestors causing serious fighting between members of the security service and the armed forces. Civilians were caught in the crossfire, leaving at least 1,104 dead.<sup>171</sup> Former Ceausescu lieutenant, Ion Illiescu, took the opportunity to seize power. He formed the National Salvation Front (NSF) on December 21<sup>st</sup>, 1989. Ceausescu

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<sup>170</sup> GOLDMAN, *op.cit.*, p. 123.

<sup>171</sup> VACHUDOVA Milada Anna, *Europe Undivided: Democracy, Leverage, and Integration after Communism*, New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 41.

and his wife Elena were captured and executed following a quick show trial. The execution ordered by Illiescu was broadcasted on national television. Illiescu's National Salvation Front took the role of an interim government, committing to organize free elections in May 1990. The weak and fractious opposition was unable to advance an alternative program to the FSN. The FSN won both the 1990 and 1992 parliamentary elections and Illiescu won the 1990 and the 1992 presidential elections with 85% and 61% of the vote respectively. Illiescu kept the bulk of Ceausescu's apparatus and protected members of the much feared Securitate secret service, including those responsible for the December 1989 violence. Using economic populism and nationalism, Vachudova contends, Illiescu and his National Salvation Front "kidnapped" the Romanian Revolution.<sup>172</sup>

Initial excitement over the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe gradually gave way to frustration with the high social cost of the transition and the rise of communist nostalgia. In Poland, the reformed communist party, SLD, won the 1993 elections with 37% of the vote and formed a coalition with the ex-communist satellite Polish Peasant Party (PLS). Together they controlled 66% of the *Sejm* until the 1997 elections.<sup>173</sup> In 1994, former communists won absolute majorities both in Hungary and Bulgaria. The Hungarian Socialist Party chose to invite the centrist liberal Alliance for Free Democrats in a coalition that controlled parliament until the 1998 elections. Though its name changed twice, Illiescu's party of former communists held continuously power in Romania until 1996, when its extreme right-wing rhetoric caused it an electoral loss to Emile Constantinescu and his Democratic Convention of Romania (CDR). After Czechoslovakia's velvet divorce in 1993, Slovakia fell victim to nationalist rhetoric. The

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<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

discredited leader of the opposition movement Public Against Violence, Vladimir Meciar, formed his own party, Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) and returned to power in 1994, establishing a nationalist government. With Vaclav Klaus's government in power, supported by two post-Civic Forum parties controlling 53% in parliament, the Czech Republic seemed to be the only one staying on the reform track. The return of former communists to power in Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria meant a shift away from shock therapy and towards a gradual reform that translated into a slowdown, even reversal of reform efforts. The right-wing rhetoric of the Iliescu and Meciar's governments further threatened the future of democratization in Eastern Europe. Many analysts reported that the region was under a real threat of re-communization.

Despite setbacks in reform policies, some countries visibly progressed in their democratization efforts. Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic moved considerably ahead, gaining NATO membership in 1999 and joining the European Union in 2004. Even Slovakia managed to recover from the damaging Meciar rule and joined the EU and NATO in 2004. Bulgaria and Romania were once more lagging behind. Despite new reform-oriented democratic governments in Romania and Bulgaria, taking power in 1996 and 1997 respectively, the two countries were slow in their reform policies which were continuously obstructed by inefficient judicial systems and wide-spread corruption. Although Bulgaria and Romania were granted NATO membership in 2004 and EU membership in 2007, they remain behind other East European countries in their level of political and economic development.

## 4.2 EVENTS IN BULGARIA 1989-2000

The wave of popular unrest across Eastern Europe inevitably influenced the situation in Bulgaria. Bulgarians were anxiously following the events in Eastern Europe, reported by BBC, Deutsche Welle, and Radio Free Europe, which were no longer jammed.<sup>174</sup> Emerging dissident organizations were growing bolder and broadening their support. The communist regime, by contrast, was increasingly under pressure. In addition to the threat of popular unrest spreading to Bulgaria as well and continuous criticisms from Moscow of Zhivkov's failure to follow the Soviet reform path, the Bulgarian regime was under fierce attacks from the international community for its treatment of the ethnic Turkish minority in Bulgaria. Zhivkov's assimilation campaign (a.k.a. the renaming process) of the ethnic Turks launched in 1984 provoked a growing unrest among the Turkish minority.<sup>175</sup> In May 1989, tension escalated with hunger strikes, mass protests, and clashes with the militia, where people on both sides were wounded and killed.<sup>176</sup> The government responded by issuing exit visas and encouraging ethnic Turks to "return" to Turkey. The so-called "long excursion" forced some 850,000<sup>177</sup> ethnic Turks out of the country,

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<sup>174</sup> Jamming Bulgarian-language broadcasts ended on December 21, 1988. See, V. K. LEHTORANTA, "Jamming, or Deliberate Interference Against Radio Broadcasting Stations," *Radiomaailma Magazine*, Aug., 1999. Available online at:

[http://www.voacap.com/documents/jamming\\_radio\\_broadcasting\\_VKL.pdf](http://www.voacap.com/documents/jamming_radio_broadcasting_VKL.pdf)

<sup>175</sup> The assimilation campaign entailed forcefully changing the names of ethnic Turks to Bulgarian Christian names, banning the practice of Islam, the use of Turkish language, and cultural traditions such as wearing shulwars.

<sup>176</sup> GRUEV Mihail and Alexei KALIONSKI, *The "Revival Process." Muslim Communities and the communist Regime: Policies, Reactions and Consequences* (in Bulgarian), Ciela, 2008, p. 145.

<sup>177</sup> BUCHSENSCHUTZ Ulrich, "Minority Policy in Bulgaria: The Policy of the Bulgarian Communist Party towards Jews, Roma, Pomaks and Turks 1944-1989," IMIR, Sofia, 2000 (in Bulgarian), p. 104.

resulting in a severe crisis in Bulgarian-Turkish relations and an outcry from the international community.<sup>178</sup>

In an attempt to repair Bulgaria's international image, Zhivkov decided to allow unofficial opposition groups more latitude than ever before during the ecological conference under CSCE auspices scheduled in Sofia between October 16 and November 3, 1989 – a serious miscalculation on Zhivkov's part according to Brown.<sup>179</sup> The dissident ecological movement, Ecoglasnost, took advantage of the presence of CSCE delegates and Western journalists and organized an ecological protest on October 26<sup>th</sup>. The militia encountered the protest with brutality – exactly what Ecoglasnost was hoping for – resulting in another publicized pounding of the Bulgarian regime in Western media. Empowered by the reaction in Western media, Ecoglasnost gathered a much larger crowd on November 3<sup>rd</sup>.<sup>180</sup> This time, the protesters were not prevented from marching to parliament and submitting their petition. Fearing a growing wave of protests, the communist regime opted for preemptive action.

At a meeting of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) on November 10, 1989, Todor Zhivkov was removed from his position as General Secretary of the Party, putting an end to his 35-year rule. Much as the Zhivkov leadership may have been shaken by the unprecedented demonstration, Brown argues, it was not the demonstration that caused its downfall.<sup>181</sup> Zhivkov's removal, coming a day after the fall of the Berlin Wall, was organized by a group of reform-oriented members of Politburo and is therefore characterized by many as a “court coup.” Such decision was not made without Moscow's blessing. According to Nikita

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<sup>178</sup> Bulgaria's policy towards the Turkish minority was seriously criticized at the Meeting on the Human Dimension of the Conference on the Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), held in Paris from May 30 to June 23, 1989, as well as at the October 3, 1989 session of the UN General Assembly.

<sup>179</sup> BROWN, 1991, *op.cit.*, p. 195.

<sup>180</sup> The protest on October 26<sup>th</sup> gathered not more than 50 dissidents, mainly artists and intellectuals. By contrast, the November 3<sup>rd</sup> protest numbered 3,000 people.

<sup>181</sup> BROWN, 1991, *op.cit.*, p. 197.

Tolubeev, Soviet diplomat in Bulgaria at the time, the deposition of Zhivkov was actively supported by Soviet diplomats and KGB agents.<sup>182</sup> Zhivkov's reluctance to follow Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost* and *perestroika* had placed him at odds with Soviet leadership, which in turn created an opportunity for his opponents within the BCP to organize. Zhivkov was replaced by Petar Mladenov, formerly a Minister of Foreign Affairs, who exemplified reformist views and was favored both by Moscow and by a large part of the Bulgarian population. Mladenov initially envisioned a reform of the party, not of the system. Bulgaria, he claimed, had long ago chosen the path of socialism, and would not now depart from it.<sup>183</sup> His group of reformers attempted to preserve the hegemony of the Communist party by means of changes in personnel and through the introduction of limited economic and political liberalization. Their initial program, Karasimeonov argues, did not intend the abolition of socialism.<sup>184</sup> The events set in motion, however, proved to be beyond the Party's control.

#### **4.2.1 First Post-Communist Governments, 1989-1991**

The party plenum of November 10, 1989 unleashed a wave of excitement and euphoria. The removal of Zhivkov came as a surprise to the mass population and Bulgarian dissidents alike. In contrast to dissidents in other East European countries, Baeva argues, Bulgarian dissidents were more of observers than participants in these early days of the transition.<sup>185</sup> The unexpected move

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<sup>182</sup> KALINOVA Evgenia and Iskra BAEVA, *Българските Преходи: 1939-2005*, Парадигма, 2006, p. 248.

<sup>183</sup> Quoted in Charles MOSER, *Theory and History of the Bulgarian Transition*, Sofia, Free Initiative Foundation, 1994, p. 44.

<sup>184</sup> KARASIMEONOV Georgi, "The Transition to Democracy" in Georgi KARASIMEONOV (ed.), *The 1990 Election to the Bulgarian Grand Assembly and the 1991 Election to the Bulgarian National Assembly*, Berlin, Edition Sigma, 1997, pp. 10-22 p. 14.

<sup>185</sup> KALINOVA and BAEVA, 2006, *op.cit.*, p. 251.

by the BCP signaled opposition forces in the country to take immediate action. In a matter of days, an array of opposition groups emerged. In addition to already existing dissident organizations such as the Club for Glasnost and Perestroika and Ecoglasnost, pre-communist political parties were reinstated and new organizations were founded. These seemingly scattered formations quickly coordinated their actions and started organizing mass protests. Not more than a week after Zhivkov's deposition the first large political rally took place. A major demand at the rally was repealing Article 1 of the Constitution, granting the BCP monopoly over political power. Similar rallies and demonstrations were spreading across the country, showing an aroused citizenry eager for change. Whether Zhivkov's removal signaled an intention for real reforms or whether it was a desperate action on the part of the Party to preserve socialism with a few quick fixes, was no longer relevant. The crowd was in the streets in the thousands and opposition forces were organizing.

On December 7, 1989, 14 organizations including the newly reinstated parties and existing dissident movements came together to form the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF), which was to become the face of the organized opposition in the subsequent years. The UDF consisted of organizations representing the entire political spectrum, from a left-wing Social-Democratic Party to a right-wing Republican Party. They were united under the banner of democratization and the understanding that they stood as political opposition to BCP and were not its partner in *perestroika*.<sup>186</sup> According to its founding declaration, UDF stood for civil society, political pluralism, multi-party system, rule of law, and market economy.<sup>187</sup> The

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<sup>186</sup> A lot of the early dissidents were set on reforming socialism, not abolishing it. Therefore, for many of them the struggle for democracy was exhausted with the removal of Todor Zhivkov. Interview with Valeri Zahblyanov, human resource director of BSP, Sofia, May, 2007.

<sup>187</sup> Founding Declaration of the Union of Democratic Forces in Petko SIMEONOV, *Голямата промяна*, София, Издателство „Български писател,” 2005, p. 784.

establishing of the UDF meant that the Communist party was now facing a unified opposition which was determined to disband the totalitarian system and which demanded a stake in the new political arrangements. As Melone points out, communist leaders were faced with two choices – either pursue the Chinese solution of brutal repression or seek accommodation with the emerging forces.<sup>188</sup> In marked distinction to the situation in 1944, Moser contends, nobody in a position of authority was willing to resort to the use of force.<sup>189</sup> In light of the events in other East European countries and the obvious unwillingness of Soviet leadership to maintain military and political hegemony in Eastern Europe, communist leaders chose negotiation.

Following the example of other East European countries, the Communist party and the newly formed opposition agreed on Round Table Negotiations to discuss the terms of the transition to a new political system. Participation in a Round Table was the main reason for founding the UDF, recounts Simeonov. “We knew very well that the Round Table would legitimize us as the opposition political force by the mere fact that we were sitting opposite the BCP.”<sup>190</sup> By choosing the road of negotiation, in turn, BCP sought to secure its future in a multi-party system. What followed from January through March 1990 in Bulgaria was something like “government by Roundtable,” as Moser defines it. Agreements reached at the Round Table were passed on to the National Assembly which, as agreed, was granting them formal approval. The Round Table had two main tasks – to guarantee peaceful transition to a parliamentary democracy and to negotiate the terms of the first free democratic elections. For the purpose, all sides of the Round Table agreed upon a code of conduct that would assure a civilized and non-violent

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<sup>188</sup> MELONE Albert, “Bulgaria’s Round Table Talks and the Politics of Accommodation,” *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 15, No. 3, (Jul., 1994), pp. 257-273, p. 259.

<sup>189</sup> MOSER Charles, *Theory and History of the Bulgarian Transition*, Sofia, Free Initiative Foundation, 1994, p. 84.

<sup>190</sup> SIMEONOV Petko, *Голямата промяна*, София, Издателство „Български писател,” 2005, p. 129. The Round Table Negotiations were broadcast on national TV, which allowed UDF representatives to quickly gain popularity.

transition to a democratic political system. Convinced of its victory in a free election run-off with BCP, UDF forwarded the idea of electing a Great National Assembly, as opposed to an ordinary National Assembly, the purpose of which would be to craft a new democratic constitution. UDF envisioned that constitution as the foundation of the new democracy and a necessary step in disbanding the totalitarian regime. Thus, Bulgaria became the only East European country to tie the first democratic elections to the adoption of a new constitution. The timing of the election was a major point of contention. The Communists were pushing for an early date in order to give little time to the opposition to organize. UDF, possessing nothing comparable to the communist party structures, favored delay so that it would be able to establish a nation-wide network. The compromise date of June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1990 was fairly close to the communist demand and ultimately proved to BSP's electoral advantage.

Since the deposition of Zhivkov and throughout the Round Table Negotiations, BCP was undergoing a continuous and significant transformation. As early as December 1989, the Party issued a formal apology for the “renaming process” of 1984-1989 and voted a resolution for reinstating the original names of ethnic Turks. In January, the communist Parliament repealed Article 1 of the Constitution on the leading role of the Party. BCP further proceeded to exclude from the party many of its high-ranking members who had “discredited themselves” and who were conveniently held “as directly responsible for the crisis, deformations and crimes perpetrated within the party and in society.”<sup>191</sup> Leadership positions were distributed among the November 10<sup>th</sup> plotters – Petar Mladenov becoming head of state, Andrei Lukanov prime-minister, and Alexander Lilov leader of the party. At its extraordinary congress in February 1990, the Party adopted a *Manifesto for Democratic Socialism in Bulgaria*, which outlined the

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<sup>191</sup> *Bulgarian Socialist Party: Documents – 1991-1993*, Sofia, Bulgarian Socialist Party Supreme Council, 1993, pp. 32.

steps for radically transforming BCP into a new party of democratic socialism.<sup>192</sup> In April that year the Bulgarian Communist Party renamed itself the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) and declared its willingness to join the socialist international. By the time of the June elections, the Communist party had managed to refurbish itself with a new name, new platform, and new leadership. During the election campaign, BSP presented itself as the defender of the “national interest,” protector of the Bulgarian voter from the harsh consequences of market reform, and pioneer in democratization efforts. To quote BSP’s official documents, “The overall democratization of the Bulgarian society is the major political merit of the BSP,” since “[a]fter November 10<sup>th</sup> 1989, reformer party leaders restored the free political life, democratic rights and freedoms, and repealed the constitutional provision on the leading role of the Bulgarian Communist Party in society.”<sup>193</sup> As election results demonstrated, this interpretation of events appealed to the majority of Bulgarian voters.

The elections for Great National Assembly were won by a large margin by BSP. The opposition, who in Vachudova’s view considered the elections a simple referendum on communist rule and expected a sweeping victory, was taken by surprise and dismay.<sup>194</sup> Although international observers did report some abuses, particularly intimidation in the countryside, the elections were declared fair and the results made official. With 47.15% of the vote, the former communists received 211 seats in parliament, the democratic opposition – 114, and the ethnic Turkish party, Movement for Rights and Freedom (MRF) – 24. Thus, Bulgaria joined Romania in becoming the only two East European countries where former communists won the first democratic elections. BSP’s victory also meant that the new constitution was to be crafted by a

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<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15-30.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>194</sup> VACHUDOVA, *op.cit.*, p. 43.

parliament dominated by former communists, a fact which later on caused a considerable number of UDF deputies to boycott the vote on the new constitution. As several authors have argued, the BSP appeared embarrassed to a degree by the outcome of the election, as it did not wish to form a government by itself but share the burden of governing (Kalinova & Baeva 2006, Karasimeonov 1997, Moser 1994). Consequently, the BSP repeatedly sought to bring other political forces into a “government of national consensus.” Proposals for coalition were rejected by UDF as well as all other political forces in Parliament, who wished neither to be associated with BSP nor to relieve it of the responsibility for the imminent economic and political crisis. The former communists found themselves in isolation.

Executive power during the Round Table Negotiations and after the elections remained in the hands of the perpetrators of the change of November 10<sup>th</sup>. Andrei Lukanov formed the first exclusively communist government<sup>195</sup> in February 1990, and in April, Petar Mladenov was appointed president by the communist parliament with the consent of the Round Table participants. Mladenov’s appointment was short-lived as he was forced to resign in July due to a political scandal implicating him.<sup>196</sup> After much deliberation in the new Great National Assembly, a compromise was reached and Zhelyu Zhelev, the leader of UDF and a well-known dissident, was elected president by parliament. Despite a communist-dominated parliament and a communist government, the appointment of Zhelyu Zhelev as president was symbolically important since it gave the opposition an active participation in state institutions and, in

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<sup>195</sup> Previous communist governments were nominally a coalition between BCP and the Bulgarian Agrarian People’s Union (BAPU), though BAPU was not actually an independent political organization.

<sup>196</sup> Petar Mladenov was forced to resign as head of state on June 6, 1990. His resignation was brought about by mass student protests, after a tape was released catching Mladenov uttering the notorious “bring the tanks” phrase at a December 14, 1989 demonstration in front of the parliament building. Mladenov repeatedly denied having uttered these words, which is what spurred the public protest.

Castellan's words, "marked the official end of the communist period in Bulgarian history."<sup>197</sup> Soon after Zhelev's appointment, Lukanov resigned his position as prime-minister due to worsening economic conditions in the country and his inability to gather support for his economic reform program. Lukanov was immediately given a mandate to form another government. Given BSP's absolute majority in parliament and the unwillingness of other political forces to participate in a BSP-led coalition, this second Lukanov cabinet was also strictly communist.<sup>198</sup> This government was no more successful in initiating reform than the previous one. An economic crisis leading to food shortages and a rationing (coupon) system, continuous mass demonstrations, and a general strike organized both by the pro-socialist and pro-democratic labor unions, resulted in the fall of the government in November, 1990. A two-month governing crisis ensued during which Bulgaria had no official government.

The fiasco of the second Lukanov government and the deepening political and economic crisis forced political forces to reach a compromise. Ultimately, Dimitar Popov, a politically independent municipal court judge, was entrusted with forming a coalition government to include representatives from BSP, UDF, and BAPU. The main task of this government was to carry out reforms while the new constitution was being crafted and prepare elections for an ordinary National Assembly. The Popov government quickly enacted painful but necessary reforms to promote a free market economy such as an interest rate increase, price liberalization, and liberalization of the trade and currency regime. Although such policies resulted in rising inflation rates and a decreasing standard of living, the country witnessed relative political

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<sup>197</sup> CASTELLAN Georges, *Histoire Des Balkans*, Librairie Artheme Fauard, 1999, Bulgarian translation: Plovdiv, Hermes, 2002, p. 545.

<sup>198</sup> *Communist* and *socialist* are used interchangeably when referring to the early stages of the transition. BSP insisted on calling itself *socialist* in order to emphasize its change of platform, whereas the opposition continued to refer to the party and its members as *communist*.

stability and was moving along with the reforms. The dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the Comecon gave the Popov government an opportunity to pursue a new international orientation. Bulgaria started discussions with the European Community, NATO, IMF, the World Bank, EBRD, as well as a number of Western countries. During its ten-month rule, the Popov cabinet made significant progress towards disbanding totalitarian structures and placing the country on the reform track. Meanwhile, the Constitutional Assembly continued its work on the new constitution. The Constitution was signed on July 12, 1991 by 309 out of 400 total deputies. 80 deputies from UDF and the ethnic Turkish party, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF), denounced the constitution for having “too many loopholes” and refused to sign it. Despite the controversies around it and its considerable shortcomings, the constitution was based on general democratic principles.<sup>199</sup> Parliament adjourned as a Constitutional Assembly but continued its work on preparing the ordinary National Assembly elections in October.

The October 1991 elections were won by the UDF, which scored a narrow victory of 110 seats in parliament as opposed to BSP’s 106. Short of parliamentary majority, UDF sought the support of the ethnic Turkish party. MRF did not demand ministerial posts in return for its support. Filip Dimitrov, who headed the UDF soon after Zhelev’s appointment as president, formed the first UDF government.<sup>200</sup> Despite the narrow margin, UDF was ecstatic about its victory and eager to embark on a policy of radical reforms. Its confidence and determination was further boosted by the outcome of the January 1992 presidential elections whereby the incumbent democratic president, Zhelyu Zhelev, defeated the independent candidate Velko

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<sup>199</sup> KALINOVA and BAEVA, *op.cit.*, pp. 273-277. The full text of the Constitution is available online at: [http://www.online.bg/law/const/const1\\_b.htm](http://www.online.bg/law/const/const1_b.htm)

<sup>200</sup> Zhelev was succeeded by Petar Beron as UDF leader. Beron resigned this position after BSP publicized his involvement with the former security services.

Vulkanov, who was backed up by BSP.<sup>201</sup> With the election of Zhelev for president, UDF was assured firm control over executive power.

#### 4.2.2 Governments under the New Constitution

De-communization became the main theme of Dimitrov's government. Its economic reform was based on restitution of land and property nationalized during the communist regime (See Chapter Eight, p. 272-282). This strategy proved slow and ineffective in stimulating economic growth and still today is harshly criticized for fragmenting the land and destroying large-scale agriculture. Another objective of Dimitrov's government was purging bureaucratic structures of the communist *nomenklatura*. Although the several de-communization bills submitted to parliament were never voted into law, extensive purges were conducted in the state administration, particularly the foreign ministry, the police, and the army.<sup>202</sup> Dimitrov also attempted to prosecute a number of former high-ranking party functionaries, including Lukanov who spent five months in the arrest until criminal charges against him were being investigated.<sup>203</sup> Dimitrov's strong anti-communist stance alienated some of his sympathizers, including the president. Zhelev openly criticized the government for "pursuing a strategy of confrontation," a criticism which triggered a split within UDF. Labor Unions, whose role in UDF's electoral

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<sup>201</sup> BSP's decision not to nominate its own candidate is another indication of BSP's unwillingness to bear the burden of governing in a time of crisis.

<sup>202</sup> These purges were limited to political appointments and their effect was quickly reversed with the next change of government.

<sup>203</sup> "Lukanov's passport was confiscated following Tatarchev and Sokolov's orders. The diplomatic passports of 47 other former high-ranking party and state officials will be confiscated in order to prevent them from leaving the country, as they are related to No. 4 trial," *Rabotnichesko Delo*, March 10, 1992. "Andrei Lukanov is arrested," *Rabotnichesko Delo*, July 10, 1992.

victory was crucial, retrieved their support for the government as did high-ranking army officers alarmed by the prospects of purges in the military.

By October 1992, Filip Dimitrov was facing a confrontation with the UDF president Zhelev and a split within his party, a withdrawal of support by the labor unions and threats of a general strike, deteriorating relations with MRF who felt they had not been rewarded for their loyal support, and repeated requests on behalf of BSP for a non-confidence vote in parliament. As a solution to the governing crisis, Dimitrov decided to ask for a vote of confidence which, if passed, would secure the government's legitimacy and allow it to continue with its reforms. The government lost the vote and was forced to resign, prematurely ending UDF's rule in a little over a year.<sup>204</sup> Despite criticisms, Dimitrov's government introduced essential market reforms and greatly improved Bulgaria's relations with the West. During its rule, Bulgaria was accepted into the Council of Europe, submitted candidacy for association with the European Community, and developed close relations with the US. Bulgaria was also the first country to recognize Macedonia's independence, a bold but logical step in assuring stability in the region.

After the collapse of the UDF government, the mandate to form a new cabinet fell onto the second party in parliament, BSP. The Socialists had little desire to govern over a Parliament where they held no majority. Making several unacceptable proposals for prime minister, they passed the mandate to MRF, the third political force. MRF formed a coalition with the Socialists and 19 members of parliament who had left UDF's parliamentary group, gathering enough votes to assure approval of its cabinet on December 30, 1992. The MRF proposed a government under the leadership of Lyuben Berov, an economic historian and former advisor to president Zhelev.

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<sup>204</sup> Dimitrov lost the vote of confidence by 111-120. In his own view, it is possible that MRF had voted against him but he does not discount the possibility that members of his own party brought him down, whereas MRF deputies supported him. Interview with Filip Dimitrov, Sofia, June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

Though carrying an MRF mandate, Berov's cabinet had only one MRF representative (of Bulgarian ethnicity) and claimed to be an expert government with wide political support. Berov announced his intent to continue to follow UDF's strategy for economic transition to a market economy and declared privatization of state property and attracting foreign investment the main goals of his cabinet. Without stable party and parliamentary support, however, Berov was unable to implement his policies. BSP was firmly against his plan to privatize state enterprises, and his economic reform program, condemned by the IMF, failed to attract foreign investment. Thus, Berov's rule became characterized by a slow-down of reforms, blossoming of economic and criminal power cliques, drastic increase in crime, and further deterioration of economic conditions.<sup>205</sup>

By 1994 the government fell increasingly under the influence of the Socialists, who managed to dictate changes in government to their advantage. Due to its weak political power, Berov's government never escaped domination by group and corporate interests (Kanev & Karasimeonov 1997, Moser 1994) and its rule became synonymous with mafia-linked corporations such as Multigroup.<sup>206</sup> In light of the divisions in UDF and the resulted decrease of its parliamentary group from 110 to under 80 members, BSP was looking forward to early elections and thus declared that Berov's cabinet had exhausted itself. Since the president had also withdrawn his support of the government, Berov was forced to resign in September 1994. Early elections were scheduled for December. In the meantime the country was governed by a

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<sup>205</sup> Compared to 1989, by 1994 GDP had decreased by 24.4%, industrial production by 49.3%, construction by 72%, agricultural production by 30% (Quoted in KALINOVA and BAEVA, *op.cit.*, p. 291). Meanwhile, unemployment had reached 20.5% and the inflation rate for 1994 was 121%. The situation was further exacerbated by the embargo on Yugoslavia which cost Bulgaria a loss of some \$2 billion (Quoted in CASTELLAN, *op.cit.*, p. 546).

<sup>206</sup> For a detailed and accurate description of Multigroup and its activities, see Venelin GANEV, *Praying on the State*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 2007, pp. 100-112.

provisional government of non-party functionaries appointed by the president, under the premiership of Reneta Indzhova, chair of the Agency for Privatization.

Deteriorating economic conditions and high crime rates led to communist nostalgia among the population, which translated into a decisive electoral victory for the Socialists, winning 125 of the 240 seats in parliament. Many Bulgarians, Baeva argues, hoped that BSP would be able to bring back socialism along with the calmness and security of life before the transition.<sup>207</sup> The new government headed by BSP's young new leader, Zhan Videnov, indeed tried to do just that. Despite assurances that reform towards market economy would continue, Western observers soon warned against the threat of re-communization. As Castellan puts it, instead of "wild capitalism," BSP's "golden boy" preferred "market socialism," based on relations with Russia.<sup>208</sup> Videnov's promise to increase the standard of living entailed a policy of re-subsidizing unprofitable state enterprises, slowing down of the restitution process, reversing the privatization of agriculture, and excluding foreign investors from privatization deals. Such policies were accompanied by purges in the public media and a return of Zhivkov-era party functionaries to ministerial positions.

Re-subsidizing losing state enterprises put heavy weight on the state budget and resulted in budget imbalances that ultimately pressed IMF to break its agreement with the country. Re-subsidizing also created the opportunity for draining state enterprises through entrance-exit strategies,<sup>209</sup> allowing state enterprise managers and their associates to harvest considerable

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<sup>207</sup> KALINOVA and BAEVA, *op. cit.* p. 294.

<sup>208</sup> CASTELLAN, *op.cit.*, p. 546.

<sup>209</sup> Entrance-exit strategy refers to the practice of setting up firms at the "entrance" and "exit" of a state enterprise. Those firms are usually owned by family members or associates of the manager of the state enterprise. Firms at the "entrance" of the state enterprise supply production materials at a price above the market value. Firms at the "exit" of the state enterprise buy out the finished product at a price below the market value. The losses are covered by state subsidies, whereas the profit is collected by the "entrance" and "exit" firms.

profits at the expense of the state. BSP's policy of mass privatization<sup>210</sup> excluded foreign investors, depriving the country of much needed foreign capital, and gave favorable state credits to Bulgarian business, thus catering to the former communists who, according to Vachudova, controlled much of the private economy.<sup>211</sup> Lenient policy towards the banking sector led to the uncontrolled export of capital, unsecured loans to shady financial-industrial establishments, and financial pyramids exploiting the high interest rate. In the meantime, the Bulgarian lev was losing 30% of its value weekly.<sup>212</sup> By March 1996, the country was in the middle of a deep banking and currency crisis.

The BSP government had clearly failed in fulfilling its campaign promises. The population was impoverished and disillusioned causing about 650,000 young people to emigrate to between 1989 and 1996.<sup>213</sup> The results of the second presidential election in November 1996 became a vote on BSP's rule. The UDF candidate Petar Stoyanov, who had defeated the incumbent president Zhelev in the country's first open primaries, scored a convincing victory over the Socialist candidate. While the UDF was celebrating its victory, the Socialists suffered an internal split with 19 BSP deputies demanding Videnov's resignation. To make matters even worse for Videnov's cabinet, in December the country was hit by a severe wheat crisis. A poor harvest and illegal exports caused a serious grain shortage and a twenty-fold increase in bread prices. This unprecedented economic crisis and a rampant hyperinflation which led to massive

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<sup>210</sup> Mass privatization programs refer to transferring state assets to the population at large through a voucher system entitling every citizen to participate in the privatization process. Mass privatization in Bulgaria defeated its purpose as privatization funds succeeded in buying out 80% of the voucher books from the population at very low price and acquired 87% of shares purchased at auctions. For a detailed account of mass privatization in Bulgaria, see Jeffrey MILLER, "Evaluation of Mass Privatization in Bulgaria," William Davidson Institute Working Paper # 814, March 2006.

<sup>211</sup> VACHUDOVA, *op.cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>212</sup> CASTELLAN, *op.cit.*, 547.

<sup>213</sup> BROWN J. F., *The Groves of Change. Eastern Europe at the Turn of the Millennium*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2001, p. 98. Emigration, argues Brown, is the most tangible expression of the dolefulness and pessimism that pervade the whole country.

pauperization of a vast majority of Bulgarian citizens,<sup>214</sup> forced the BSP government to resign in the face of wide-spread street protests and riots outside the parliament building. Videnov's prematurely ended rule, is remembered also for taking an important step in submitting Bulgaria's application for membership to the European Union. With the expiring mandate of president Zhelev, a government in resignation, and a Parliament on Christmas break, Bulgaria met the New Year literally without a government.

Emboldened by its convincing victory in the presidential elections, UDF demanded early parliamentary elections and started organizing mass demonstrations in the capital. In the meantime, the pro-democratic labor union "Podkrepa" declared a general strike. After a month of protests, with crowds barricading MPs in the parliament building, blockades in the center of the city, and no public transportation, the new president Stoyanov agreed with the Socialist-dominated parliament on early elections in April. Once again the country found itself governed by a provisional government appointed by the president. The task of the new premier Stefan Sofiyanski, former UDF mayor of Sofia, was to take immediate steps for taming the crisis and to prepare the early elections. Due to the crisis situation, Sofiyanski's provisional government was given unprecedented political power. Sofiyanski wasted no time. During its two-month rule, his government signed an agreement with IMF, imposing a currency board still in place today, which put the banking and currency crisis under control, and submitted an application for NATO membership.

In preparation for the early elections, political forces in the country underwent some important changes. The new UDF leader, Ivan Kostov, who had served as financial minister in

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<sup>214</sup> The consumer price index shot up to 43.6% in January and 242.7% in February, the exchange rate reached a record level of 3,000 BGL = \$1 in mid-February, a four-fold increase from December 1996. See, Garabet MINASSIAN, "The Road to Economic Disaster in Bulgaria," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (Mar., 1998), pp. 331-349, p. 342.

the Popov and Dimitrov governments, managed to unite center-left, center-right, and right-wing opposition forces in a coalition, the United Democratic Forces (UnDF). The UDF, in turn, transformed itself into a centralized party of Christian-democratic type. In the meantime, dissenting members of BSP's parliamentary group, critical of Videnov's rule, came together to form the Euroleft, a party, as suggested by its name, with left, but pro-European orientation. The disastrous outcome of BSP's rule predetermined the election results. The United Democratic Forces scored a sweeping victory with 52.26 % of the vote, gaining an absolute majority in parliament with 137 of the total 240 seats. By contrast, BSP's parliamentary group shrank to 58 MPs and the Euroleft party won 14 seats. The MRF-led coalition, Alliance for National Salvation, received 19 seats.

With the 1997 elections Bulgaria entered a new era in its development. The new Democratic government of Ivan Kostov became the first Bulgarian post-communist government to fulfill its four year term. Kostov was faced with the urgent need for rapid reform of the Bulgarian economic and social sectors and restoring international credibility to Bulgarian institutions. Supported by the president and enjoying tremendous legitimacy among the population, Kostov's cabinet started strict market-oriented economic and financial policies that turned around the Bulgarian economy from a negative growth and hyperinflation in 1996 to an impressive 4% growth and 9% inflation rate in 1998.<sup>215</sup> Kostov's policies laid the foundations for stable economic growth and brought political and financial stability to the country. UDF's firm reform policy, argues Vachudova, moved the country visibly into qualifying for EU membership.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> "The Wrong Job?", *The Economist*, U.S. Edition, July 21, 2001.

<sup>216</sup> VACHUDOVA, *op.cit.*, p. 203.

Despite its undeniable success in repairing the economy and orienting the country towards NATO and EU memberships, Kostov's government fell short of its promises to bring justice to the people responsible for the large-scale speculations that occurred during the hyperinflation period.<sup>217</sup> Though government policies brought about a gradual and steady improvement in the standard of living, people loathed seeing well-connected crooks prosper apparently without Kostov doing much to restrain them.<sup>218</sup> Consequently, the government was never able to dissipate critiques of corruption, clientelism, and illegal privatization deals lacking transparency. Nine months before the 2001 elections, government approval ratings fell to a record low of 28%.<sup>219</sup> Public opinion polls similarly showed the share of Bulgarians expressing distrust of their government more than doubling from 25% in 1997 to 52% in 2000.<sup>220</sup> Relying on its record of having saved the country from economic disaster, UDF received a severe blow in the 2001 elections receiving a mere 18.18% of the vote (BSP scored even lower with 17.15%).<sup>221</sup> Nevertheless, Kostov's rule marks a cornerstone in political development in Bulgaria. During that period, political stability was firmly established as well as a common vision of Bulgaria's future – political forces, including BSP which previously opposed alliance with NATO, agreed that membership in NATO and the EU should be Bulgaria's main priorities.

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<sup>217</sup> During the hyperinflation many of the large debtors of Bulgarian banks profited by borrowing large amounts of money (official estimates place the total amount around 2 trillion leva – roughly the equivalent of annual payments of the Bulgarian pension system at the time - and the list of debtors around 11 000), not without help from within the banking system and the inaction of the Central Bank (The Bulgarian National Bank). Those people, known as the “credit millionaires,” never repaid more than a fraction of their debts and were never subject to any serious and broad legal persecution.

<sup>218</sup> “The Wrong Job?, *The Economist*, U.S. Edition, July 21, 2001.

<sup>219</sup> Source: National Center for Research on Public Opinion (NCIOM).

<sup>220</sup> BARANY Zoltan, “Bulgaria's Royal Elections,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 11, No. 2, April 2002, pp. 141-155p. 148.

<sup>221</sup> The 2001 elections were won by the National Movement Simeon Second (NDSV), a party established shortly before the election and headed by Bulgaria's exiled king, Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. Electoral results source: Bulgarian National Assembly Archive, available online: <http://parliament.bg/?page=archive&lng=bg&nsid=8>

### 4.3 THE DIFFERENT CONTEXT OF ELITE TRANSFORMATION IN BULGARIA

The course and pace of the Bulgarian transition significantly differed from that in other East European countries. Change in Bulgaria was initiated from within the Communist party, which preemptively reacted to democratization processes spreading throughout Eastern Europe, as opposed to being the result of popular pressure. Bulgaria was one of the two countries where former communists won the first democratic elections and the only country to tie the first democratic elections to a new constitution. According to Vachudova, these were factors that sidetracked and considerably delayed reform.<sup>222</sup> Continuous and consistent reform policy was not initiated until 1997 when the first government with a clear mandate came to power. Such differences in the course of the Bulgarian transition in comparison to other East European countries are directly related to the process of elite transformation. Therefore, it is logical to expect that elite transformation in Bulgaria would also significantly differ from elite change in other East European countries.

There are several factors related to the process of elite transformation that distinguish the Bulgarian case from its East European counterparts. The first two, legitimacy of the communist regime and dissident movements, pertain to the nature of communist rule in Bulgaria. The communist regime in Bulgaria, I contend, enjoyed a relatively high degree of legitimacy for two reasons: 1) communist rule in Bulgaria coincided with the process of modernization and 2) the Soviet-imposed and nurtured communist regime was not viewed by the majority of the Bulgarian population as a form of Soviet invasion, due to the lack of prevalent anti-Russian sentiments in the country. Furthermore, the communist period in Bulgaria was marked by a lack of organized

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<sup>222</sup> VACHUDOVA, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

dissident activity and contestation of communist power both within and outside the party. High legitimacy and lack of dissidence, I argue, are two factors that define the parameters of the process of elite transformation in Bulgaria and foreshadow its nature and direction.

A third characteristic distinguishing Bulgaria from other East European countries is the lack of meaningful transitional justice in the post-communist period. Failure to deal with the communist past and “cleanse” the political sphere of former high-ranking communist officials is a function of the particular nature of elite change in Bulgaria rather than its determining factor. Hence, this characteristic differs from the other two not only in pertaining to the post-communist context but also in its relationship to elite change. All three characteristics, however, favor the status of the former communist elite and indicate that in the Bulgarian case we are most likely to find this elite playing a major role in post-communist politics.

#### **4.3.1 Legitimacy**

One feature distinguishing the communist regime in Bulgaria from similar regimes in Eastern Europe was its high degree of legitimacy.<sup>223</sup> In the first place, such legitimacy rested upon the unprecedented economic prosperity experienced with the advent of communist rule and the all-encompassing process of modernization that followed. On the eve of the Second World War, Bulgaria's economy and institutions were dominated by agriculture, which accounted for roughly 65 percent of national income, occupied 70 percent of the labor force, and accounted for nearly

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<sup>223</sup> Legitimacy is the foundation of such governmental power as is exercised both with a consciousness on the government's part that it has a right to govern and with some recognition by the governed of that right. STENBERGER Dolf, "Legitimacy," in D.L. Sills (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, New York, NY, Macmillan, 1968, Vol. 9, p. 244.

all exports.<sup>224</sup> The country was in the initial stages of an industrial revolution with a few food processing, tobacco, and textile industries, but no heavy industry, machine manufacturing, or chemical industry. Immediately after taking power, the Communist party declared industrialization one of its main political tasks.<sup>225</sup> Pursuing an extensive growth strategy modeled closely on the Soviet experience, Bulgaria witnessed rapid industrial and agricultural growth, structural transformation in favor of industry, and substantial rural-urban migration (see table 2 and table 3).

**Table 2. Population in Bulgaria 1946-1989 (in %)**

|                | 1946  | 1960  | 1970  | 1980  | 1985  | 1989  |
|----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Cities & towns | 24.7% | 38.0% | 53.0% | 62.5% | 64.9% | 67.6% |
| Villages       | 75.3% | 62.0% | 47.0% | 37.5% | 35.1% | 32.4% |

Source: *People's Republic of Bulgaria 1989, A short Statistical Yearbook*, Sofia, Central Statistical Office, 1990.

**Table 3. Structure of GDP and National Income by Branches**

| GDP/Year          | 1946  | 1960  | 1970  | 1980  | 1985  | 1989  |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| total             | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  |
| industry          | 30.3% | 57.0% | 62.4% | 63.9% | 69.1% | 69.6% |
| agriculture       | 45.5% | 32.6% | 16.0% | 12.4% | 11.0% | 10.5% |
| construction      | 8.5%  | 8.9%  | 9.0%  | 9.2%  | 8.6%  | 7.8%  |
| other branches    | 15.7% | 9.6%  | 12.6% | 14.5% | 11.3% | 12.1% |
| Nat'l Income/Year | 1946  | 1960  | 1970  | 1980  | 1985  | 1989  |
| total             | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  |
| industry          | 30.2% | 45.6% | 49.1% | 48.5% | 59.6% | 58.5% |
| agriculture       | 50.9% | 31.5% | 21.9% | 16.6% | 13.5% | 12.6% |
| construction      | 5.2%  | 7.1%  | 8.7%  | 9.3%  | 9.8%  | 9.3%  |
| other branches    | 13.7% | 15.8% | 20.3% | 25.6% | 17.1% | 19.6% |

Source: *People's Republic of Bulgaria 1989, A short Statistical Yearbook*, Sofia, Central Statistical Office, 1990.

<sup>224</sup> LAMPE John and Marvin JACKSON, *Balkan Economic History 1550-1950*, Bloomington, IN, Indiana University Press, 1982, pp. 531-559.

<sup>225</sup> TCHALAKOV Ivan, "Industrial Development and Ecological Risks," in Jacques COENON-HUTHER (ed.), *Bulgaria at the Crossroads*, New York, NY, Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 1996, pp. 245-258, p. 247.

This policy of rapid urbanization and heavy industrialization came with all of its accompanying modernization effects: a mass literacy campaign, mechanization of labor, sanitation campaign, cultural development, etc. “The fork, the bed sheet, the shower, the broiler chicken, they all came with communist rule. There was starvation in Bulgaria until 1960s, I remember it,” recounts Petko Simeonov, a distinguished sociologist and dissident, “It seems the Communist party was a modernizing force. The least we can say is that the period of communist rule and the process of modernization in Bulgaria coincided.”<sup>226</sup> It appears, Tchalakov similarly posits, that by the mid 1970s the process of industrialization was completed in its essential features.<sup>227</sup> Whether one assigns a positive role to the communist regime in Bulgaria in terms of modernization and development or blames it for imposing a socialist framework on the development process, indicators undeniably point to a significant improvement in all sectors. By 1980, agriculture accounted for 15% of GDP, agricultural labor was below 20% of the adult population,<sup>228</sup> and the literacy rate was above 95%.<sup>229</sup> Industrial production almost quadrupled between 1960 and 1988.<sup>230</sup> During the rapid urbanization process of the 1950s and 1960s, more than 1.5 million people left their villages never to return.<sup>231</sup> Population of the average Bulgarian city grew by three to four times between 1950 and 1990.<sup>232</sup> The quality of life of the average Bulgarian was irreversibly transformed in one short generation, and in many cases for the better. Many people credited the Communist party with this achievement.

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<sup>226</sup> Interview with Petko Simeonov, Sofia, April, 2007.

<sup>227</sup> TCHALAKOV, *op.cit.* p. 248.

<sup>228</sup> FiFo Ost country statistics. Available online at:  
<http://www.fifoost.org/EU/statistik/bulgarien.php>

<sup>229</sup> Earth Trends 2003 country profile: Bulgaria. Available online at:  
[http://earthtrends.wri.org/pdf\\_library/country\\_profiles/pop\\_cou\\_100.pdf](http://earthtrends.wri.org/pdf_library/country_profiles/pop_cou_100.pdf)

<sup>230</sup> *Statistical Yearbook*, New York, United Nations, 1988/89.

<sup>231</sup> BRUNNBAUER Ulf, “Making Bulgarians Socialist: The Fatherland Front in Communist Bulgaria, 1944-1989,” *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 44-79, p. 57.

<sup>232</sup> CURTIS Glenn E. (ed.), *Bulgaria: A Country Study*. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992. Available online at: <http://countrystudies.us/bulgaria/>. Many villages became cities in the 1950s simply by decreasing the minimum population requirement categorizing a settlement as a city.

There is ample evidence to show, argue Ivan Szelenyi and Balazs Szelenyi, that the economies of the East European countries made great strides during the first decades of the socialist epoch. The more backward the East European countries under consideration, the more dramatic the improvements were.<sup>233</sup> Furthermore, socialist countries, especially those that became socialist at a lower level of economic development, the authors contend, were gradually closing the gap with the West up to the mid 1970s. In his account of Bulgarian economic development, Lampe leaves no doubt that Bulgaria made great strides in industrializing, diversifying agriculture, and raising standards of living during its communist rule.<sup>234</sup> It seemed that at least in the first decades of communist rule Bulgaria was not only rapidly developing but was also catching up with the West. Bulgarian men in 1930, for example, could expect to live about 10 years less than their peers in the more advanced countries of the West. In 1960 Bulgarian men could expect to live longer than Austrian men and they were likely to live as long as the French, the West Germans, and the British.<sup>235</sup> Similar developments gave reason to believe that socialism was working and the policies of the Communist party were producing visible, positive results.

A second source of the regime's legitimacy was the overall positive attitude of Bulgarians towards Russia. Although the communist coup in 1944 was designed and supported by Moscow,<sup>236</sup> and the communist regime in Bulgaria was a Soviet offshoot, the regime was not perceived by the population at large as a form of Soviet invasion as, one could argue, was the case in Poland or East Germany. Compared to prevalent Russophobia elsewhere in Eastern

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<sup>233</sup> SZELENYI Ivan and Balazs SZELENYI, "Why Socialism Failed: Toward a Theory of System Breakdown – Causes of Disintegration of East European State Socialism," *Theory and Society*, Vol. 23, No. 2, Special Issue on the Theoretical Implications of the Demise of State Socialism, (Apr., 1994), pp. 211-231, p. 215.

<sup>234</sup> See John LAMPE, *The Bulgarian Economy in the Twentieth Century*, London, Croom Helm, 1986.

<sup>235</sup> SZELENYI Ivan and Balazs SZELENYI, *op.cit.*, p. 215.

<sup>236</sup> KALINOVA and BAEVA, *op.cit.*, p. 40.

Europe, anti-Russian sentiments in Bulgaria were not the norm, due to the historical and cultural ties between the two peoples. On the contrary, argues Castellan, the Bulgarian population was for the most part traditionally Russophile.<sup>237</sup>

This prevailing positive view of Russia does not solely rest upon the common cultural heritage between the two peoples in terms of Orthodox Christianity, Slavic ethnicity and language. It is largely due to the fact that Bulgarian independence from Ottoman rule in 1878 was gained with the help of Russian forces in the Russo-Turkish War. In the nineteenth century Bulgarians had looked upon Orthodox Russia as the bigger brother who would one day liberate them from the Turks. The brutal suppression of 1876 Bulgarian uprising by the Ottoman bashi-bazouks<sup>238</sup> caused very strong public reaction all over Europe, but most notably in Russia. Widespread sympathy for the Bulgarian cause led to a nationwide movement in support of Russian involvement in the conflict. This reaction further fueled the already rising idea of Pan-Slavism which coincided with Russian interests in the region. The 1878 Russo-Turkish War put an end to Ottoman domination in the Balkans and secured strong Russian presence on the peninsula. In the course of the war, 12,000 volunteer Bulgarian troops (*Opalchenie*) fought alongside by Russian regiments. Following the end of the war, Russia set up a governmental system in the new Bulgarian state under the rule of prince Dondukov. Russian forces remained in Bulgaria for nine months, as specified by the Berlin Congress,<sup>239</sup> during which time Dondukov assisted in the creation of a Bulgarian government administration and the crafting of the first

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<sup>237</sup> CASTELLAN, *op.cit.*, p. 476.

<sup>238</sup> Irregular soldiers in the Ottoman Empire noted for their lack of discipline. Bashi-bazourks were deployed in the suppression of the April uprising because regular troops were engaged in other conflicts at the time.

<sup>239</sup> The 1878 Berlin Congress was a meeting between the Great Powers and the Ottoman Empire which purpose was to revise the San Stefano Treaty settling the peace terms after Russian victory in the Russo-Turkish War. The Congress returned to the Ottoman Empire certain Bulgarian territories, specifically Macedonia, that the San Stefano treaty had given to the Principality of Bulgaria.

Bulgarian constitution. Due to Russia's role in Bulgaria's liberation, argues Jackson, Soviet support of the Bulgarian communist regime was rather seen as a continuation of Russian protective policy towards Bulgaria and an insurance against hostile neighbors.<sup>240</sup> Whether one supports this argument or not, the fact is that Russian and Bulgarian soldiers never fought each other. Despite being a German ally in World War II, Bulgaria refused to send any troops to the Eastern front. The public attitude towards the Russians, argues Castellan, was extremely positive for the government to dare go against it by supporting the Eastern front.<sup>241</sup> Today Russia is still portrayed as "the Liberator" in Bulgarian textbooks and the statute of Alexander II dominates the parliament square.

The lack of a pronounced anti-Russian sentiment in Bulgaria throughout communist rule is also due to the fact that Bulgaria was the only one of the Soviet satellite states which did not have permanently stationed Soviet troops. Perhaps such policy on the Soviet part is related to Bulgaria's standing as USSR's most trusted ally. The Red Army entered Bulgaria on September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1944. In 1947, Soviet troops were withdrawn from Bulgaria, and a small military force, estimated at two or three thousand men, was left behind temporarily.<sup>242</sup> By contrast, Soviet troops were stationed in Poland from the end of World War II to the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1993. In East Germany, there were permanently stationed Soviet troops from 1949 to 1994. The Warsaw pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in the 1968 Prague Spring led to the "temporary" settlement of major Soviet headquarters and four ground divisions which remained in the country until 1987.<sup>243</sup> The level of Soviet troops stationed in Hungary at the end of the war

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<sup>240</sup> JACKSON Marvin, "The Rise and Decay of Socialist Economy in Bulgaria," *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 5, No. 4, (Autumn, 1991) pp. 203-209, p. 205.

<sup>241</sup> CASTELLAN, *op.cit.*, p. 461.

<sup>242</sup> VERONA Sergiu, *Military Occupation and Diplomacy: Soviet Troops In Romania 1944-1958*, Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 1992, p.52.

<sup>243</sup> Global Security, *Invasion of Czechoslovakia*, available online at:

was increased in 1957 after the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. A treaty between Hungary and USSR of the same year established permanent Soviet presence on Hungarian soil.<sup>244</sup> Soviet troops stationed in Romania since 1944 were ultimately withdrawn in 1958 as a result of Khrushchev's shift towards a new Soviet policy and the transition to a post-Stalin power structure.<sup>245</sup> Western estimates of Soviet troop levels in Eastern Europe in the late 1950s point to a number between 3.8 million to 4.2 million.<sup>246</sup> During that period Soviet troops in Bulgaria numbered no more than 2,000 soldiers. Gornev and Boyadjieva argue that since the prevailing public attitude towards Russia was positive, Russia, and the USSR respectively, were not regarded by most of the population as a threat to national sovereignty.<sup>247</sup> The lack of large Soviet troop deployments in Bulgaria also contributed to this more favorable view of Soviet domination over the country. Furthermore, the role Russia had played in Bulgarian history and the place it occupied in the awareness of the Bulgarian people were important factors in legitimizing the Soviet-imposed communist regime in Bulgaria.

In addition to the Russian factor, Karasimeonov points to two more characteristics contributing to the high degree of legitimacy of communist rule in Bulgaria.<sup>248</sup> In the first place, he argues, an underdeveloped capitalist state with small-scale private ownership and large rural agricultural population, as was pre-war Bulgaria, is prone to left-wing political ideas. Second, the failure to establish a viable basis for liberal democracy after the liberation and in the inter-war

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<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/czechoslovakia2.htm>

<sup>244</sup> UN General Assembly, *Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary*, Annex A (Agreement between the Hungarian People Republic and the government of the USSR on the legal status of Soviet forces). 1957, pp. 112–113.

<sup>245</sup> VERONA, *op.cit.* p. 65.

<sup>246</sup> See Hanson BALDWIN, *The Great Arms Race: A Comparison of U.S. and Soviet Power Today*, New York, NY, Praeger, 1958.

<sup>247</sup> GORNEV Galin and Pepka Boyadjieva, "Social Injustice and the Crisis of Legitimacy," in Jacques COENEN-HUTHER (ed.), *Bulgaria at the Crossroads*, New York, Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 1996, pp. 97-112, p. 109.

<sup>248</sup> KARASIMEONOV, *op.cit.*, p. 10.

period made such ideas more appealing. Karasimeonov's argument that underdeveloped capitalist countries are more prone to communist ideology than developed countries is somewhat questionable. Historically, left-wing ideology has been the prerogative of intellectuals, not rural agricultural populations. The rural population is hardly supportive of collectivization of the land and nationalization of private property, both policies propagated by communist ideology. Furthermore, communist ideology originated and became popularized in the advanced countries of Western Europe – Germany, England, and France – not in underdeveloped capitalist states. Karasimeonov is correct, however, in pointing out that inter-war politics in Bulgaria and the disillusionment with democracy they entailed may have rendered communist ideology more salient. The inter-war period in Bulgaria was dominated by right-wing parties and governing coalitions, who were discredited as a consequence of joining yet another war on the wrong side.

Pantev also suggests an inclination to communist ideology. The mass of the Bulgarian population, he argues, shared an egalitarian outlook, and thus found socialism, with its guaranteed employment, free education, free medical service, price control, and social benefits, quite appealing.<sup>249</sup> Communist nostalgia witnessed during the transition could support such an argument. In fact, argues Moser, since 1989 BSP has continuously relied on the egalitarian thrust of Bulgarian culture. The Socialists have pushed for a relatively evenly spread privatization as opposed to restitution, exploiting rural fears that privatization will result in domination by large landowners and great social inequality.<sup>250</sup> BCP's political clout in the interwar period, most noticeable in the 1920 parliamentary elections where BCP came in second after the Agrarians, also indicates popular support for communist ideology. Thus, there were a number of factors

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<sup>249</sup> PANTEV Andrei, "The Historic Road of the Third Bulgarian State" in Iliana ZLOCH-CHISTY (ed.), *Bulgaria in Time of Change*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1996, pp. 7-22, p. 19.

<sup>250</sup> MOSER, *op.cit.*, p. 39.

contributing to the fact that communist rule in Bulgaria enjoyed much more popular support than any other East European communist regime.

#### 4.3.2 Dissidence

Another feature of communist rule in Bulgaria was the lack of dissident movements and anti-communist protests. There were no organized forms of resistance even vaguely resembling the Hungarian uprising of 1956, the “Prague Spring” of 1968 or the “Solidarity” movement in Poland in the 1980s.<sup>251</sup> There was some artistic and literary leeway in Bulgaria, but not with respect to political expression, Raymond Garthoff, a U.S. ambassador to Bulgaria between 1977 and 1979 points out. In Bulgaria in the 1970s, he further contends, there was virtually no discernible political dissidence. Any sign of it was promptly quashed, but even that was rare.<sup>252</sup> This is not to conclude that there was no political dissatisfaction and acts of dissent were completely absent throughout the communist period. “Of course there was some opposition to the regime or there wouldn’t have been political prisoners,” argues Emil Koshlukov, a dissident and once a political prisoner himself.<sup>253</sup> Opposition to the regime, however, never exceeded isolated acts of protest by a few well-known dissidents. One notable example is the publication in 1982 of Zhelyu Zhelev’s book *Fascism*, a work analyzing the fascist totalitarian state in a manner implicitly emphasizing its resemblance to the socialist state.<sup>254</sup> The book was immediately stopped from circulation and its author subjected to political repression and police

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<sup>251</sup> KANEV Krassimir, “From Totalitarianism to A Constitutional State” in Jacques COENEN-HUTHER (ed.), *Bulgaria at the Crossroads*, New York, NY, Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 1966, pp. 51-75, p.51.

<sup>252</sup> GARTHOFF Raymond, *A Journey through the Cold War: A Memoir of Containment and Coexistence*, Washington, DC, Brookings Institution Press, 2001, p. 316.

<sup>253</sup> Interview with Emil Koshlukov, Sofia, March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2007.

<sup>254</sup> One of the most active and recognized dissidents, Zhelyu Zhelev is to become the first democratically elected president of the country.

surveillance. However brave and honorable, such isolated acts failed to raise awareness and mount organized opposition to the regime. As Hristova points out, later efforts by Bulgarian dissidents to establish contacts with the West and disseminate information through the Bulgarian emissions of BBC, Radio Free Europe, Deutsche Welle, and Voice of America, still left those dissidents unknown to the large Bulgarian public until late 1989.<sup>255</sup> Kalinova similarly argues that, “Bulgarian dissidents were better known in the West than at home. Their influence on society was indirect, through Western media. Thus their message did not reach much further than the few daring, clandestine listeners of BBC, Deutsche Welle and Radio Free Europe.”<sup>256</sup> Throughout the communist period dissident activity in Bulgaria was very modest and limited to a narrow circle of intellectuals. Intellectuals and other remote dissidents had some impact, posits Melone, but that was very different from an organized opposition.<sup>257</sup> Despite the fact, the regime had an inordinate fear of dissidence, as illustrated by the assassination in London of Bulgarian émigré writer, Goergi Makrov, who openly criticized the Bulgarian regime.

Organized dissident movements did not appear in Bulgaria until 1988, after Gorbachev’s *glasnost* was well under way in the Soviet Union. They gathered around ecological and human rights issues, taking advantage of the “July Concept”<sup>258</sup> of the Communist party which, in response to Moscow’s pressure for reforms, allowed for the establishment of “informal organizations,” i.e. outside of the official party and state structures. The “informals,” as they began to be called, included five or six organizations with overlapping membership of no more

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<sup>255</sup> HRISTOVA Natalia, *Специфика на българското „дисидентство“: власт и интелигенция 1956-1989*, Пловдив, Лета, 2005, p. 353.

<sup>256</sup> Interview with Dr. Evgeniya Kalinova, Sofia, February, 2007.

<sup>257</sup> MELONE, *op.cit.*, p. 260.

<sup>258</sup> The July Concept refers to a set of reform policies proposed by Zhivkov in response to Moscow’s push for reform. See Chapter Six, p. 180.

than 200 people.<sup>259</sup> “We were participating in all informal organizations, regardless of their title and declared purpose,” recalls Baeva, “We were all the same people.”<sup>260</sup> It is perhaps for this reason that Zhelev characterizes the Bulgarian dissident movement as the most organized in Eastern Europe, something most analysts would disagree with.<sup>261</sup> These 200 people were mainly from the ranks of the academic and artistic *intelligentsia* and could be categorized in two groups. On the one hand were people who, because of family history or repression against them, were by definition anti-communist and against the communist regime. On the other hand there were party members who opposed Zhivkov’s regime and wanted reform within the party. Given the regime’s repressive apparatus, it is not surprising that dissidence came from among party members. They were the ones who could engage in some degree of dissident activity without the threat of persecution and repression. “We purposefully listed party members as chairs and organizers of the informal organizations, so that they would not appear as threatening to the regime and would not be banned,” recounts Alexander Karakachanov, one of the early dissidents with a communist background.<sup>262</sup> Party members constituted at least half of the informals’ membership and were among its most energetic activists. Moser argues that such development is all too natural:

Since the Bulgarian Communist Party had never permitted non-communist political organization within the country, it was almost inevitable that a reform movement could appear only within the BCP itself, and that if anti-communist political structures were to be created, they would probably initially be formed within the communist apparatus, as contradictory as this may seem. And in fact the deposition of Todor Zhivkov from his

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<sup>259</sup> Those organizations include: The Independent Association for Defense of Human Rights established on January 16<sup>th</sup>, 1988; the Committee for Defense of Russe founded on March 8<sup>th</sup>, 1988; Committee for the Defense of Religious Rights, Freedom of Conscience and Spiritual Values established on October 19<sup>th</sup>, 1988; the Club in Support of Glasnost and Perestroika in Bulgaria founded on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1988; and Ekoglasnost established on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 1989. For a detailed description of the history and activities of the informals see, Olga SIMOVA, *Civil Movements in the Process of Democratization of the Political System in Bulgaria*, dissertation thesis, Sofia University, Department of Political Theory, 1997.

<sup>260</sup> Interview with Dr. Iskra Baeva, Sofia, February, 2007.

<sup>261</sup> Interview with president Zhelyu Zhelev, Sofia, May, 2007.

<sup>262</sup> Interview with Alexander Karakachanov, April, 2007.

position as First Secretary of the Party was engineered from within the party itself. Furthermore, many of the early “dissidents” were party members, some of whom before long openly reverted to the ranks of the party.<sup>263</sup>

Although growing increasingly organized in the course of 1988-1989, the dissident movement in Bulgaria did not translate into mass protests until a couple of weeks before Zhivkov’s removal from power. The informals were mainly engaged in writing declarations and accusing the regime of not abiding by its own “July concept” and the “Helsinki Declaration on Human Rights,” which were then sent to Western media. Such actions had some impact as they attracted attention to Bulgaria and placed international pressure on the regime, but they did not qualify as mass protest. The first small-scale demonstrations occurred in Russe in 1987, where an ecological crisis due to gas air pollution from a Romanian factory across the Danube River gave both a reason and an excuse for protest. These demonstrations did alarm the regime as they attracted the attention of prominent Bulgarian public figures and members of the Party who subsequently established the Committee for Defense of Russe. The protests were confined to Russe, however, and never reached a larger scale.

The first major challenge in terms of mass protests came in May 1989 from ethnic Turks, who were renouncing the renaming campaign. Despite efforts to suppress protests resulting in the loss of human lives, demonstrations were spreading in cities all over the country and persisted for several months. Demonstrations first started in North East Bulgaria and then spread to other regions with mixed population. Although the dissident movement expressed its support for the ethnic Turks by signing a declaration demanding equal rights for minorities and submitting it to Parliament, it could not take credit for the May demonstrations. The first mass protest organized by the dissident movement took place on October 26, 1989 during the

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<sup>263</sup> MOSER, *op.cit.*, p. 84.

mentioned above CSCE ecological conference. Taking advantage of the presence of international representatives and hoping this would deter repressive action, activists gathered in the city park “Crystal,” close to the Parliament building, to protest a government project which entailed destroying large areas of national forest. The gathering was quickly dispersed and the participants brutally beaten by special militia forces. The “Crystal” incident was followed by the first legal mass demonstration<sup>264</sup> on November 3, 1989 when all the informals gathered around the ecological movement, “Ekoglasnost,” in protesting the infamous government project. Several thousand people marched through the center of the city to the Parliament building to submit a petition with some 12,000 signatures in support of the environmental protest.<sup>265</sup> The procession grew into a full scale demonstration with slogans like “Freedom” and “Democracy.”

Despite these belated activities, dissidence in Bulgaria could not be compared to the movements in other East European countries. The scale of dissident activity in Bulgaria was small and its role in shaking the foundations of the regime was very limited. Except for the one demonstration immediately preceding the fall of the regime, mass protest was completely absent. The belated dissident movement in Bulgaria was riding the wave of the events in Central Europe at the time rather than taking the initiative in challenging the regime. It is not surprising then that the informals were deprived of the opportunity to topple the communist regime and change was initiated from within the Communist party. As Ekaterina Mihailova, a former UDF leader and long-term MP, argues, “These informal organizations were very weak and fragile. They were too weak to be a decisive factor in the transformation. In my view, the transformation was a result of world-wide processes at the time.”<sup>266</sup> Although generally true, such view underscores the role of

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<sup>264</sup> Legal meaning that the organizers had a written permission from authorities to protest.

<sup>265</sup> MOSER, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>266</sup> Interview with Ekaterina Mihailova, Sofia, February, 2007.

the Bulgarian dissidence. However weak, dissident activities in 1989 provoked preemptive action by the regime which in turn unleashed democratic change.

### 4.3.3 Transitional Justice

Another feature that distinguishes the Bulgarian transition from transition processes in other East European countries is the lack of meaningful transitional justice. Transitional justice originated after World War II with the establishment of the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg and the adoption of various denazification laws. With the collapse of communist regimes across Eastern Europe, focus on transitional justice reemerged. Dealing with former high-level communists and security apparatuses, Welsh points out, was among the central tasks facing governments immediately after communism disintegrated in much of Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>267</sup> The particular forms transitional justice took on in Eastern Europe could be divided, according to Lavinia Stan, in three main categories: 1) trials and court proceedings against communist officials and secret service agents; 2) access for ordinary citizens to the files compiled on them by the secret services; and 3) lustration – legislation which aims at excluding previous regime’s high political officials and secret police personnel and collaborators from a range of public offices for a specified period of time.<sup>268</sup>

Among the three categories, lustration clearly gained precedence in Eastern Europe.<sup>269</sup>

Criminal prosecution, which was the main policy of dealing with the past in the aftermath of

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<sup>267</sup> WELSH Helga, “Dealing with the Communist Past: Central and East European Experiences after 1990,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 3, 1996, pp. 413-428, p. 414.

<sup>268</sup> STAN Lavinia, “The Politics of Memory in Poland: Lustration, File Access and Court Proceedings,” *Studies in Post-Communism Occasional Paper* No. 10 (2006), Center for Post-Communist Studies, St. Francis Xavier University.

<sup>269</sup> The term “lustration” originates from the Latin *lustrare*, meaning “to purify.”

World War II both in Europe and Japan, encountered limited support in post-1989 Eastern Europe.<sup>270</sup> There were trials and prosecutions in every East European country, the execution of Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu representing the most drastic example, but their scope and impact was limited in comparison to post-World War II cases. For instance, the number of people prosecuted after World War II was about 100,000 in Belgium, 110,000 in the Netherlands, and 130,000 in France. Death penalties numbered 6,763 in France, 2,940 in Belgium, and 152 in the Netherlands.<sup>271</sup> By contrast, in the Czech Republic, the country that most avidly pursued transitional justice, investigation of over 3,000 cases of crimes associated with the previous regime resulted in only 9 prosecutions, entailing light sentences. Almost 2,000 cases were dropped because of presidential amnesties, statute limitations, or the death of witnesses or suspects.<sup>272</sup> Moser similarly argues that:

With the exception of the execution of Romania's Nicolae Ceausescu in the heat of the battle and the few listless attempts at punishing some former top leaders such as Eric Honecker and Todor Zhivkov, few important communist officials anywhere have suffered punishment for their misdeeds of the past, whether it be for the liquidation of thousands of 'enemies of the people' or for the destruction of the national economy.<sup>273</sup>

In Eastern Europe lustration became the main strategy of dealing with the communist past. As Cohen argues, though merely a variation in the repertoire of responses to past abuses, lustration as a policy (and the term itself) has been confined to the East European context.<sup>274</sup> Lustration has not only been the most widely adopted form of transitional justice, but the one with the widest impact. Lustration laws included vetting over 20,000 public officials in Poland, 15,000 in the

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<sup>270</sup> HUYSE Luc, "Justice After Transition: On the Choices Successor Elites make in Dealing with the Past," *Law & Social Inquiry*, vol. 20, No. 1, (Winter, 1995), pp. 51-78, p. 52.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>272</sup> NEDELSKY Nadya, "Divergent Responses to a Common Past: Transitional Justice in the Czech Republic and Slovakia," *Theory and Society*, Vol. 33, No. 1, 2004, pp. 65-115, p. 77.

<sup>273</sup> MOSER, *op.cit.*, p. 98.

<sup>274</sup> COHEN Stanley, "State Crimes of Previous Regimes: Knowledge, Accountability, and the Policing of the Past," *Law & Social Inquiry*, Vol. 20, No. 1, (Winter, 1995), pp. 7-50, p.9.

Czech Republic, and 10,000 in Hungary. The *lustrati* were not only exposed but in some cases, particularly in the Czech Republic, banned from public office. Lustration has been closely related to the access of ordinary citizens to their secret service files. Though not entailing any legal sanctions, public access to the files constituted an important stage in dealing with the past, what Cohen labels the “truth phase.” To come to terms with the past, he argues, is to know exactly what happened, to tell the truth, and to face the facts.<sup>275</sup> The truth phase in Eastern Europe took the dramatic form of opening the files. Most East European countries opened their secret service files to the public. Most notable was the East German case where angry crowds stormed Stasi (East German Secret Police) headquarters in several cities in early 1990 and seized and exposed the files.<sup>276</sup>

Although the East European countries followed a similar approach to transitional justice, particular policies and the level of impact significantly differed across the region. The former East Germany and the Czech Republic made the greatest efforts to come to terms with the communist past. The Czech Republic has the longest record of continuous lustration in the post-communist world. Czechoslovakia was the first post-communist state to pass a lustration law in 1991. The law was extremely extensive, applying to public offices in the civil service, the judiciary and procuracy, the security service, high-ranking army positions, management of state-owned enterprises, the central bank, the railways, high academic positions, and the public electronic media.<sup>277</sup> Its original duration was five years but, after the Velvet Divorce in 1993, the Czech Parliament had twice extended its period of enforcement despite President Havel’s two vetoes. In 1993, the Czech Republic passed a law of the Illegality of the Communist Regime and

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<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>277</sup> WILLIAMS Keiran, “A Scorecard for Czech Lustration,” *Central European Review*, Vol. 1, No. 19, 1999.

set up a framework for the investigation and prosecution of crimes committed during communist rule. Furthermore, two consecutive laws, in 1996 and 2002, granted access to all Czech citizens over 18 to their personal files compiled on them by the StB (the former Czechoslovak Secret Police).<sup>278</sup>

Germany, according to Timothy Garton Ash, has fared even higher in the degree of lustration than the Czech Republic and has demonstrated the most systematic and comprehensive policy towards “treatment” of the past.<sup>279</sup> The Annex of the Unification Treaty between the two German states, which took effect on October 3<sup>rd</sup> 1990, declared active involvement with the East German security service and involvement in crimes against humanity to be a “reason for exceptional dismissal” in the public sector.<sup>280</sup> A bill passed by the Bundestag in January 1992 provided the logistics for security checks of people occupying, applying for, or being elected to state offices. The bill also enabled all citizens to see, copy and publicize their personal Stasi files.<sup>281</sup> Furthermore, border guards and several communist leaders have been brought to trial and convicted for manslaughter and co-responsibility for the “shoot to kill” policy at the border. Finally, Germany was the only one from the former communist countries to establish a functioning “truth commission.” The commission has produced a detailed and voluminous report titled, “Treatment of the Past and Consequences of the SED-Dictatorship in Germany.”<sup>282</sup>

In comparison to the Czech Republic and Germany, Poland and Hungary pursued a more lenient policy of transitional justice. Although decommunization has been one of the most

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<sup>278</sup> NEDELSKY, *op.cit.*, p. 79.

<sup>279</sup> ASH, Timothy Garton, “Trials, Purges and History Lessons in History of Present,” in Timothy Garton ASH, *History of the Present: Essays, Sketches and Despatches from Europe in the 1990s*, Penguin, 2000, pp. 294-314. Available online at: <http://www.geocities.com/decommunization/English/Articles/Ash.htm>

<sup>280</sup> WELSH, *op.cit.*, p.416.

<sup>281</sup> LOS Maria, “Lustration and Truth Claims: Unfinished revolutions in Central Europe,” *Law & Social Inquiry*, Vol. 20, No. 1, (Winter, 1995), pp. 117-161, p. 122.

<sup>282</sup> ASH, *op. cit.*

divisive issues in Polish political life, argues Lavinia Stan, Poland adopted limited transitional justice much later than its neighbors Germany and the Czech Republic.<sup>283</sup> The government debated six bills before passing a lustration law in 1997. The Polish law was not aimed at excluding former communist party functionaries from public office. It was directed solely towards individuals with links to the former security services and it did not impose automatic sanctions for those who worked or collaborated with the security apparatus.<sup>284</sup> The secret service archive was also opened to the public in 1997, and by 2005 some 14,000 Poles had been allowed to read their files.<sup>285</sup> Trials resulted in 12 prosecutions for the 1970 Gdansk strike suppression.<sup>286</sup> Despite such achievements, Lavinia Stan contends that in comparison to the Czech model, Polish lustration was modest in scope and had minimal impact.<sup>287</sup>

Hungary has a somewhat better record than Poland in excluding communist-era collaborators from post-communist politics. Its lustration law passed in 1994 required more than 10,000 public officials to be vetted for previous involvement with the former secret police, the World War II-era fascist Arrow cross, and the squads that suppressed the Hungarian Revolution in 1956.<sup>288</sup> People found to have been involved with one of these organizations were required to resign within 30 days or risk public exposure.<sup>289</sup> On the other hand, Hungary granted much more limited and delayed access to its security files than Poland did. It was not until 2003 that Hungarians were allowed to access their own secret service files. Trials have also had limited

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<sup>283</sup> STAN, *op.cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>284</sup> SZCERBIAK Aleks, "Dealing with the Communist Past or the Politics of the Present? Lustration in Post-Communist Poland," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 54, No. 4, 2002, pp. 553-572, p. 567.

<sup>285</sup> Quoted in STAN, *op.cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>286</sup> Wojciech Jaruzelski was put on trial in 1996 and again in 2008 for his decision to impose a martial law in 1981. The trials attracted a lot of attention, but resulted in no conviction.

<sup>287</sup> STAN, *op.cit.*, p. 69.

<sup>288</sup> NEDELSKY, *op. cit.* p. 104.

<sup>289</sup> ELLIS Mark, "Purging the Past: The Current State of Lustration Laws in the Former Communist Bloc," *Law and Contemporary Problems*, Vol. 59, No. 4, (Autumn, 1996), pp. 181-196, p. 184.

impact. After much debate, the Constitutional court classified the 1956 crimes as “war crimes” and “crimes against humanity,” thus providing the legal framework for prosecution of participants in the suppression of the 1956 events.

Slovakia’s lustration policy could also be characterized as lax. While still part of Czechoslovakia, the Slovak Parliament approved the 1991 lustration law. After the law’s passage, however, Czech and Slovak responses to the previous regime diverged. Slovakia’s leaders have shown little interest in cleansing the political sphere. The lustration law was never seriously enforced in Slovakia and quietly expired in 1996. Few efforts have been made to prosecute former officials, and Slovakia was the last post-communist state in Central Europe to grant in 2004 its citizens access to the secret police files. Compared to its Czech counterpart, argues Nedelsky, the lustration law in Slovakia “had only a formal effect.”<sup>290</sup>

Several authors have argued that, although a central issue in post-communist politics, lustration and other decommunization efforts such as trials and file access have had limited impact in Eastern Europe (Holmes 1994, Rivera 2000, Welsh 1996). Former elites, argues Holmes, continued to wield considerable influence and worked to stifle the decommunization process.<sup>291</sup> Despite differing policies, Welsh contends, in all countries the extent of decommunization was quite limited in nature.<sup>292</sup> Beyond a doubt, transitional justice policies failed to meet initial expectations. But even the limited impact seen in other postcommunist states was not witnessed in Bulgaria and Romania. Political exploitation of the subject in these countries was particularly pronounced and policy initiatives were often stalled or obstructed.

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<sup>290</sup> NEDELSKY, *op.cit.*, p. 77.

<sup>291</sup> HOLMES Stephen, “Explaining the Downfall of Historical Justice,” *East European Constitutional Review*, Vol. 3, No. 3-4, Summer/Fall 1994, pp. 33-36, p. 34.

<sup>292</sup> WELSH, *op.cit.*, p. 414.

Romania had no lustration law, which is not surprising given the low rate of elite turnover, argues Nedelsky.<sup>293</sup> Aside from the staged trial and execution of the Ceausescus, prosecution of crimes and screening of security personnel have been absent. Instead, Welsh points out, security police files are manipulated and used for political purposes, and only relatively few former communist party officials and security officers have been tried.<sup>294</sup> In 1999, the government set up a commission to review the Securitate (former Romanian secret service) files for collaborators among politicians and other public figures, though until recently, Securitate files failed to be submitted to the commission. The 1999 law also allowed people to access their own files and to request investigation of prominent officials. It was not until 2005, however, that the Securitate archives were actually opened to the public. A major step in instituting transitional justice was the establishment of a presidential commission to document the crimes of the Communist regime. The Tismaneanu Report produced a detailed analysis of the crimes of the regime, demonstrating unprecedented political will for transitional justice.<sup>295</sup>

Transitional justice in Bulgaria was similarly minimal if not virtually absent. Conflicting interests in the Bulgarian Parliament have continuously prevented any legislative action aimed at vetting, exposing, or banning from public office any former communist functionaries. Access to secret service files has been a particular point of contention in Bulgarian politics. The issue still remains a subject of speculation and black mailing, used on more than one occasion by political figures from the Left and the Right to discredit an opponent.

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<sup>293</sup> NEDELSKY, *op.cit.*, p. 105.

<sup>294</sup> WELSH, *op.cit.*, p. 418.

<sup>295</sup> See Cosmina TANASOIU, "The Tismaneanu Report: Romania Revisits Its Past," *Problems of Postcommunism*, Vol. 54, No. 4, July/August 2007, pp. 60–69.

In February 1990 the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party issued an apology to the Bulgarian people for its past crimes and announced the expulsion of several high-ranking party members. It created a Commission for the Investigation of the Atrocities and Deformations of the Communist Regime, focusing mainly on identifying the perpetrators of the infamous renaming process of the Turkish ethnic minority. The commission conducted an internal party investigation resulting in at most expulsion from the party and entailing no legal sanctions or ban on holding public office. Hence, this act, motivated to a large degree by a desire to change the image of the party and preserve its place in the political arena, could not be classified as transitional justice. Ellies points out that, despite the establishment of the Commission, the aggressive pursuit of former Communist functionaries was blocked regularly by members of Parliament and government ministries.<sup>296</sup>

In early 1990, trials were initiated against several Politburo members, including Todor Zhivkov. The purpose of the trials was to blame several selected individuals for the crimes associated with the communist regime, thus relieving the Party itself from responsibility.<sup>297</sup> Zhivkov was accused on several accounts – the forceful renaming and resettlement of Bulgarian ethnic Turks between 1985 and 1989, overstepping his authority as a head of state for the period 1962-1989, embezzlement of state property, responsibility for the communist death camps, and more. In 1992, he was convicted only on one account, embezzlement, and sentenced to seven years in prison. The sentence was changed to house arrest for health reasons and was ultimately revoked in 1996. The prime-minister between 1986 and 1989, Georgi Atanasov, was the only member of the former communist elite to be incarcerated. He was sentenced in 1992 to ten years

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<sup>296</sup> ELLIES, *op.cit.*, p. 187.

<sup>297</sup> Kalinova and Baeva similarly argue that Todor Zhivkov's trial served as a channel of public discontent rather than a quest for justice. See KALINOVA and BAEVA, *op.cit.*, p. 271.

in prison for misuse of state funds, but in 1994 was pardoned by the President and released. A number of other former communist leaders were charged with alleged abuses during the communist regime. In 1996 the Prosecutor General's Office suspended the investigation of 43 cases involving Communist party leaders who were indicted in 1994. The cases were suspended because many of the accused held immunity as deputies of the Bulgarian Socialist Party.<sup>298</sup>

Lustration in Bulgaria was even less successful than prosecution of former communist officials. In 1992, four draft laws were submitted to Parliament, which aimed at banning individuals who occupied leadership positions between September 1944 and January 1990 from holding public office for a period of five years. Not one of the four draft laws made it to a vote. In December of that year, the National Assembly passed the controversial "Panev" law, which excluded former Communist party officials and individuals linked to the former security apparatus from occupying leading positions in universities, such as provost and dean, for a period of five years.<sup>299</sup> The "Panev" law represented an ineffective and misguided attempt at lustration which evoked a considerable amount of ill-feeling among university faculty.<sup>300</sup> "Cleansing" academia from communist functionaries and secret service collaborators, while still allowing such people to participate in political life and occupy public positions, rendered such policy meaningless.

Access to the secret service files has been the most debated aspect in dealing with the communist past. In 1990, the Communist-dominated Parliament insisted on sealing the files for thirty years or outright destroying them. A compromise was reached which, for a brief period,

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<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>299</sup> The "Panev" law was named after Georgi Panev, the UDF deputy who introduced it.

<sup>300</sup> MOSER, *op.cit.*, p. 104.

allowed deputies to open their own files in front of parliamentary caucus leaders.<sup>301</sup> The files have been sealed since then despite numerous attempts to readdress the issue. It was not until early 2007 that Parliament passed the law for Access to the Files of the Secret Services, providing for the creation of a *Committee for disclosing the documents and announcing affiliation of Bulgarian citizens to the State Security and the Intelligence Services of the Bulgarian National Army* (a.k.a. the Files Commission). The Files Commission was to examine the files of all elected officials and political appointees to date and publicly declare the names of those affiliated in the past with the secret services. Regrettably, such legislation came much too late and is much too limited as it does not entail any sanction or reproof other than public exposure. Furthermore, the legislation does not grant ordinary citizens access to their own files. Hence, Bulgaria is the only East European country that has not opened the archive of the former security apparatus to the public. It is also one of two countries, Romania being the other, which failed to adopt any lustration law limiting access of former communist functionaries to the political sphere. Former communist officials and people linked to the security apparatus were able to escape both public reprimand and legislative sanction and were free to continue their political careers.

The lack of transitional justice in Bulgaria has without doubt benefitted the former communist elite. This fact, however, should not lead us to the hasty conclusion that this elite managed to preserve its power because there was no policy banning it from post-communist politics. A closer examination of the subject reveals that policy dealing with the communist past constitutes, to use Szczerbiak's term, the "politics of the present" and is contingent upon the

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<sup>301</sup> BERTSCHI Charles, "Lustration and the Transition to democracy: The Cases of Poland and Bulgaria," *East European Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 4, (Winter, 1994), pp. 435-452, p. 441.

choices, interests, and power struggles of post-communist elites. The lack of transitional justice in Bulgaria, then, would rather indicate that the former communist elite has prevailed in blocking and stalling decommunization efforts. In other words, the lack of transitional justice in Bulgaria is directly related to the strong position former communist functionaries retained throughout the transition.

Several authors have examined this relationship and have similarly argued that transitional justice is dependent upon, among other factors, elite change and elite composition (Ash 2000, Letki 2002, Nedelsky 2004, Welsh 1996). According to Welsh, in countries where lustration has been moderate or conspicuously absent, this has not happened from a desire for reconciliation but because prevailing power arrangements have prevented lustration. The weaker the electoral strength of the former communists, she further argues, the easier it has been to move ahead with decommunization efforts.<sup>302</sup> Nedelsky in turn posits that the political orientation of post-communist elites is a critical factor in shaping the approach to transitional justice.<sup>303</sup> Letki contends that lustration is not only dependent on the interest of the elites but also on their composition, i.e. anti-communist governments are more likely to pass lustration laws.<sup>304</sup> Nedelsky takes the argument a step further accounting for factors such as public opinion and legitimacy of the communist regime:

The higher a society's view of the previous regime's legitimacy, the lower its motivation to pursue justice for its authorities and the higher the likelihood, in a democratic context, that it will allow elites associated with the former regime to return to the political stage. These elites, in turn, would not be particularly likely to support vigorous transitional justice.

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<sup>302</sup> WELSH, *op.ci.*, pp. 422-424.

<sup>303</sup> NEDELSKY, *op.cit.*, p. 92.

<sup>304</sup> LETKI Natalia, "Lustration and Democratisation in East-Central Europe," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 54, No. 4, 2002, pp. 529-552, p. 545.

Therefore, the more quickly they regain power, the less likely a legal framework will be established to screen such elites out of the political sphere over time.<sup>305</sup>

The Bulgarian case certainly supports Letki's argument. Given the high legitimacy of the Bulgarian communist regime and the continued role of the communist-successor party in post-communist political life, it is not surprising that there was no meaningful transitional justice in Bulgaria.

Thus far, I have established that transitional justice is dependent upon the nature of elite change and elite composition, whereas the legitimacy of the previous regime and presence or absence of organized dissident movements are factors which set the stage for elite transformation and foreshadow its nature and direction. Despite the different causal relationship to elite change, all three factors are indicators that could help us predict the outcome of elite transformation. Rivera for example argues that continuity in post-communist political elites will be lower in countries where the transition experience has included an organized opposition elite, exclusion mechanisms such as lustration, high dissatisfaction with the previous communist regime, and minimal effort by communist successor parties to reposition themselves as social democrats.<sup>306</sup> By the same token, we would expect that a lack of organized opposition elite, absence of exclusion mechanisms such as lustration, and high legitimacy of the previous communist regime would lead to a considerable degree of elite continuity.

Thus, in the Bulgarian case we can postulate that the former communist elite preserved its position of power and played a major role in transition politics. Indeed, the lack of organized dissident movements during communism and absence of transitional justice in the post-communist period, along with the high degree of legitimacy the former communist elite enjoyed,

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<sup>305</sup> NEDESLKY, *op.cit.*, p. 88.

<sup>306</sup> RIVERA Sharon Werning, "Elites in Post-Communist Russia: A Changing of the Guard?," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 3, 2000, pp. 413-432, p. 427.

placed this elite at a much more advantageous position than its East European counterparts. The communist elite was not challenged by an organized dissident movement before the changes, it was not prevented by transitional justice from participating in post-communist politics, and at the same time retained large popular support. Therefore, the Bulgarian communist elite had a much greater opportunity to preserve its position of power throughout the transition and to establish itself as a major political actor in the post-communist context. In preserving its power, the former communist elite exercised great influence over the direction and outcome of the transition process. It is not surprising then that former communists won the first democratic elections in the country and became the ones to craft the new constitution. The framework they imposed on the transition process placed Bulgaria considerably behind other East European countries in terms of economic and political reform, as well as NATO and EU memberships.

## 5.0 DATA GATHERING AND SAMPLES

To examine the patterns and mechanisms of elite transformation, the present study utilizes a combination of data gathering techniques: compiling and comparing elite rosters, interviewing former and present members of the political elite, and analyzing archival documents and media sources. The choice to mix qualitative and quantitative methods was guided by the methodological triangulation approach (Denzin 1978). Methodological triangulation involves using more than one method to gather data in order to counterbalance the deficiency of a single strategy or to strengthen validity and reliability by multi-method verification of the results. The study of elite change in the context of profound political, economic, and social transformation necessitates such a mixed approach. In such a context, elite change could be very rapid and chaotic and, thus, hard to capture by a single research strategy. Interviews or statistical analysis of elite rosters alone are unlikely to capture all the relevant aspects of elite transformation, such as mode of recruitment, intra-elite conflict, and change of elite composition. By contrast, the use of both quantitative and qualitative strategies, as argued by Thurmont, is a viable option to obtain complementary findings and to strengthen research results.<sup>307</sup>

This chapter offers a brief review of terminology and a detailed account of data analysis procedures. The results of the data analysis, in turn, are presented in Chapter Six.

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<sup>307</sup> THURMONT Veronica, "The Point of Triangulation," *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, Vol. 33, No. 3, 2001, pp. 253-258, p. 257.

## 5.1 ELITE AND COUNTER-ELITE

The concept of elite has, in Zuckerman's words, "an obvious and powerful intuitive appeal." Few would argue the proposition that most societies are characterized by an asymmetrical distribution of power. Yet, defining the elite has been continuously debated among elite theorists. While arguments have moved away from normative questions, theoretical and methodological challenges still remain. As Zuckerman argues, "Attempts to locate its empirical referents and, thereby, to specify the occupants of the 'data container' political elite have led to a morass of conflicting definitions."<sup>308</sup> Indeed, the elite category has often suffered from definitions either too restrictive or too all-embracing, depriving the concept of analytical value (Hoffman-Lange 1998, Moysen & Wagstaffe 1987).

Putnam identifies three approaches in defining the elite – positional (based on occupying an elite position), decision-making (based on decision-making powers), and reputational (based on nomination by others to the elite category) (Putnam 1976). In determining national elite samples in complex, industrial societies, Hoffman-Lange observes the positional approach to be the one most widely used (Hoffman-Lange 1987). Adopting the positional approach still requires addressing horizontal and vertical issues. The horizontal aspect refers to the proximity of top positions to the center of power and is best illustrated by the regional vs. national elites dichotomy. The vertical aspect, in turn, refers to the "depth" of the elite stratum or the question

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<sup>308</sup> ZUCKERMAN Alan, "The Concept 'Political Elite': Lessons from Mosca and Pareto," *Journal of Politics*, vol. 39, No. 2, (May 1977), pp. 342-344, p. 324.

of deputies. In other words, as Moyser and Wagstaffe ask, at what point does the top give way to the middle or the bottom?<sup>309</sup>

Acknowledging the various theoretical and methodological issues, the present study utilizes Higley and Burton's most widely used operational definition of elite as "persons whose strategic position enables them to regularly and substantially affect national political outcomes" (Higley and Burton 2006). Such definition, argues Hoffman-Lange, still leaves a wide range of choices to the discretion of the researcher in sampling an elite population.<sup>310</sup> Adopting a positional approach with a narrow horizontal and vertical scope, the present study limits elites to national top-level government officials whose positions require either popular election or appointment by the president or parliament, as well as top Communist Party officials up to the first democratic elections. Such a narrow definition is most suitable for the study of societies transitioning from a totalitarian system, in which alternate power centers such as society-based interest groups have not yet developed.

Elite theorists often use interchangeably the terms *elite* and *elites*. Some authors purposefully use *elites* in order to emphasize that the elite is not a monolithic, homogenous group and that within the elite there are conflicting groups with diverging interests, i.e. elites. In the studies of East European elites, the dominant terminology is that of an elite and a counter-elite, rather than elites. A counter-elite is defined as a group of people who are able to mobilize resources and challenge the power of the elite with the purpose of taking its place or, at least, sharing in its power. This terminology is very appropriate for the East European context, where,

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<sup>309</sup> MOYSER George and Margaret WAGSTAFFE, "Studying Elites: Theoretical and Methodological Issues," in George MOYSER and Margaret WAGSTAFFE, *Research Methods for Elite Studies*, Winchester, MA, Allen & Unwin Inc., 1987, pp. 1-24, p.10.

<sup>310</sup> HOFFMAN-LANGE Ursula, "Surveying National Elites in the Federal Republic of Germany," in MOYSER and WAGSTAFFE, *op.cit.*, pp. 27-47, p. 29. Hoffman-Lange refers to an earlier formulation of the elite as "persons with power individually, regularly, and seriously to affect political outcomes at the macro level of organized societies" (Higley et al, 1979).

1) there are two groups that are clearly distinguishable and fundamentally opposed to one another, i.e. the communist elite and the democratic opposition; and 2) one group, the democratic opposition, is easily defined as a counter-elite for it is, at least initially, completely excluded from the political process. Thus, when speaking of a counter-elite, we are referring to the democratic opposition and the dissident movements that came to form it.

## 5.2 CADRE

The terms *cadres*, recruitment of *cadres*, training of *cadres*, and *cadre* policy, figure prominently in the text. *Cadre* is a military term<sup>311</sup> subsequently applied in other fields, referring to an elite or select group that forms the core of an organization and is capable of training new members. Nineteenth-century Liberal and Conservative parties, the oldest parties in West European political systems, are categorized as *cadre* parties (Duverger 1954, Van Biezen 2003, 2008). Operating under restricted suffrage, these early parties represented small wealthy groups and relied on revenue from rich contributors. In contrast to the mass party the emergence of which is related to the organizing of labor and the subsequent extension of suffrage, *cadre* parties were ‘nothing but federations of caucuses’ (Duverger 1954). The term *cadre*, however, is more often associated with Lenin’s idea of a “vanguard” party (Lenin 1902) than with nineteenth-century political systems. Lenin argued that Russian conditions rendered a mass party inappropriate for raising class consciousness among the workers. What was needed instead, as Binns summarizes, was a small, highly disciplined party of “professional revolutionaries,” recruited from among the

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<sup>311</sup> The word *cadre* originally referred to “the permanent skeleton of a military unit, the commissioned and non-commissioned officers, etc., around whom the rank and file may be quickly grouped,” *Chambers 21st Century Dictionary*, Glasgow, Chambers Harrap Publishers Ltd., 2009.

most active and “conscious” elements of the working class and the intelligentsia.<sup>312</sup> Despite growing membership and radical changes in the Party following the Bolshevik Revolution, Binns further argues, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU)<sup>313</sup> and its East European counterparts remained essentially cadre parties. As illustrated by the Bulgarian case discussed in the following chapter, East European communist parties relied on restricted and highly selective recruitment, elaborate mechanisms for training of cadres, and a high degree of mobilization of party cadres, all of which intended to maintain a hard core of loyal and active party professionals.

The *cadre* terminology (and philosophy) was utilized in all East European communist regimes. It is most curious that in the Bulgarian case, such terminology was preserved in post-communist politics and was adopted by the newly emerged opposition parties. Members of the former communist elite and the democratic opposition alike speak of training cadres, cadre policy, “cadrovik” (person in charge of cadre policy), etc. – all terms originating with the communist past. This dated terminology is not simply an odd choice of words but is symptomatic of the communist legacies in political development. Although Bulgarian parties across the political spectrum seek formal association with their West-European counterparts and aspire to imitate Western models, the concept of political party and the political party discourse are very much burdened by communist-era notions.

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<sup>312</sup> BINNS Christopher, “The Study of Soviet and East European Elites,” in MOYSER and WAGSTAFFE, *op. cit.*, pp. 216-231, p. 216.

<sup>313</sup> The Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) which carried out the Bolshevik revolution went through several name changes, being re-named to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1952, a name it preserved until its dissolution in 1991.

### 5.3 TIME PERIOD

This study is confined to the first decade of the transition. It takes 1988 as the starting point, for it marks the last “status quo” year of the communist regime. By mid-1989, international pressures and domestic opposition (primarily by Ethnic Turks protesting the renaming process) had already set off changes in the communist elite. Thus, 1988 provides us with a snapshot of the communist elite intact. The removal of Todor Zhivkov as Secretary General of the Party on November 10, 1989 is taken as the start of the transition period. Despite the heated debate on the significance of this date (see Chapter Six, pp. 183-185) and the lack of agreement among the political elite on the actual start of the transition, November 10<sup>th</sup> represents a turning point that triggered major changes within the communist elite and jumpstarted the organizing of the opposition.

The study traces the transformation of the elite up to 2000, the year preceding the fifth democratic parliamentary elections of July 2001. While it is not argued that 2000 marks the end of the transition,<sup>314</sup> it represents an endpoint to the founding period of electoral politics. Elections throughout the 1990s resulted in a sequence of unstable governments that could be viewed as a set of “founding elections,” as defined by Linz and Stepan (Linz & Stepan 1996). The 1997 election produced the first post-communist government to fulfill its four-year mandate. Following elite change through 2000 allows us to examine the course of the first full term of governing of an electoral victor and trace a decade of democratic politics – a period long enough to study the patterns and mechanisms of transformation of the transition elite. One could argue

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<sup>314</sup> Similarly to the debates on the start point of the transition, there is stark disagreement among the political elite on whether or not the transition is over. While many consider NATO and EU memberships as proof of Bulgaria’s graduation from the transition, others argue that the transition has not concluded. Some, such as Vladimir Manolov for example, even consider EU membership as the start of the transition. Interview with Vladimir Manolov, Sofia, February 12, 2007.

that elite changes after 2000, with the return of Bulgaria's exiled king and his election for prime minister in 2001 or the rise of Todor Zhivkov's former body guard Boiko Borisov to the premiership in 2009, represent critical junctures in elite transformation in Bulgaria. Though extremely important in terms of elite change, in my view, such developments are no longer part of the formative period of the post-communist elite (nor part of the set of founding elections) but are a function of the peculiarities of Bulgarian democratic politics.

While data gathering was guided by a fixed timeframe, some aspects of the data, interviews in particular, allow for the analysis to expand beyond that frame. For example, based on interviews and archival sources, the internal conflict within BCP was traced back to the early years of the communist regime, demonstrating certain continuities in intra-elite conflict as well as changes in the nature of that conflict in the last years of the regime. Similarly, the parties dominating the first decade of the transition (BCP, UDF and MRF) were examined all through the present day in order to give a long-term perspective to the results of their recruitment mechanisms, party structures, and policy orientations. Such extended analysis places the study in a historical context and relates it to current political developments. The empirical results reported in the following chapter, however, are related almost entirely to the focus period of the study.

#### **5.4 ELITE ROSTERS**

Elite rosters provide an extensive database on the transition elite, giving quantitative grounding to the study. Elite rosters were compiled by the author for the beginning year of the study (1988) and each election year thereafter (1990, 1991, 1994, and 1997). Each roster includes information on the individuals occupying positions that require popular election or political appointment.

This category includes the president and vice-president, ministers and first deputy ministers, members of parliament, judges of the Supreme Court, members of the Supreme Judicial Council (established in 1991), judges of the Constitutional Court (established 1991), the Attorney General, the director and deputy director of the Bulgarian National Bank, the directors of the Bulgarian National Television, the Bulgarian National Radio and the Bulgarian Telegraph Agency, the ambassadors to the US, Canada and all European countries (other ambassadorial positions are considered peripheral and less influential), the permanent representatives to the UN and OSCE, the mayor of Sofia, the directors of the Privatization Agency (established 1992) and the Foreign Aid Agency (established 1991). In addition, the 1988 roster includes members of the Politburo and the State Council. All positions in that roster were subject to political appointment *de facto* if not *de jure*. Each roster includes the name, position, party affiliation, place and year of birth of each individual occupying an elite position, as well as any relevant miscellaneous information. Rosters vary from 375 to 536 entries depending on the year.<sup>315</sup> The rosters for 1988 and 1990 are larger as the last communist National Assembly and the 1990 Great National Assembly consisted of 400 representatives. The Great National Assembly reduced the number of the regular National Assembly from 400 to 240 representatives, hence, the smaller number of entries in the 1991, 1994, and 1997 rosters. Additional variation in the size of the rosters is due to changes in political appointments (government, specific ministers, judges, etc.) in between parliamentary elections or changes in the government structure (ministries and government agencies). Data for the rosters was collected from the Parliamentary Library's parliamentary lists, *Darzhaven Vestnik* (State Newspaper), and official government agencies' sources.

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<sup>315</sup> By comparison, Ursula Hoffman-Lange's 1981 study of West German elites, utilizing the same positional approach of defining the elite, identified 539 political elite positions. See, HOFFMAN-LANGE, *op.cit.*, p. 32.

This massive database allows for analysis at the individual, positional, party and aggregate level. Using the database, we could trace the career of a single member of the elite or trace a single position:

Emilia Maslarova (BSP), former minister of Labor and Social Policy (2005-2009):  
 1990 – Round Table participant, Minister of Labor and Welfare in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lukanov government  
 1991 – Minister of Labor and Welfare in Dimitar Popov’s government  
 1994 – Director of the Foreign Aid Agency  
 1997 – Member of Parliament

Director of the Foreign Aid Agency (established January 1991)  
 1990 – Teodor Tzvetkov, no party affiliation  
 1991 – Petko Simeonov (1991-1992), UDF  
           Sefan Chanev (1992-1995), UDF  
 1994 – Emilia Maslarova (1995-1997), BSP  
 1997 – Vladimir Abadziev (1997-2002), UDF

We could further examine trends at the party or aggregate level such as elite renewal rate, defined as the percent of new members in the elite:

**Table 4. Elite renewal rate**

| Renewal rate | 1990            | 1991            | 1994            | 1997            |
|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| BSP          | 190/225 (84.4%) | 57/118 (48.3%)  | 70/158 (44.3%)  | 35/71 (49.3%)   |
| UDF          | N/A             | 125/160 (78.0%) | 36/77 (46.7%)   | 122/163 (74.8%) |
| MRF          | N/A             | 19/27 (70.4%)   | 7/15 (46.7%)    | 7/14 (50.0%)    |
| Total        | 447/511 (87.5%) | 354/481 (73.6%) | 196/375 (52.3%) | 230/381 (60.3%) |

Transferring the data from Excel to SPSS allowed us to run statistical analysis. Coding the Excel data provided us with one quantitative and four categorical variables:

**Variables:**

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Name                  | nominal   |
| Position              | nominal   |
| Elected vs. Appointed | categorical (values: 0=elected, 1=appointed, 2=elected and appointed)           |
| Party Affiliation     | categorical (values: 0=BSP, 1=UDF, 2=MRF,.....9=no party affiliation)           |
| Year of Birth         | quantitative  |
| Place of Birth        | categorical (values: 0=Sofia, 2=big city, 3=small city, 4=village, 5=abroad)    |
| DS agent              | categorical (values: 0=no affiliation with DS, 1=confirmed affiliation with DS) |
| Miscellaneous         | nominal   |

The nature of the variables (all but one being categorical) limited the available options for analysis to detailed descriptive statistics. These statistics allowed us to examine differences and changes in the demographic characteristics of the elite both at the party and aggregate level. We compared the average and modal age and examined the place of birth by party:

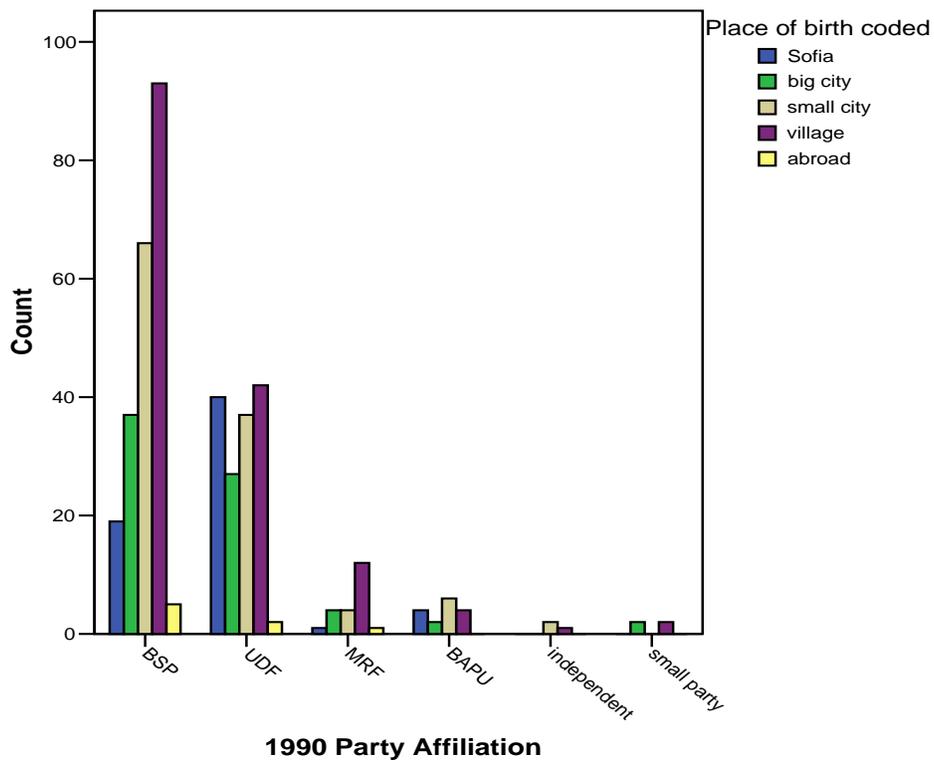
**Table 5. Place of birth by party**

| <b>BSP</b>        | <b>1990</b> | <b>1991</b> | <b>1994</b> | <b>1997</b> |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Sofia</b>      | 19 (8.4%)   | 18 (15.3%)  | 26 (16.5%)  | 5 (7.0%)    |
| <b>Big city</b>   | 37 (16.4%)  | 20 (16.9%)  | 25 (15.8%)  | 16 (22.5%)  |
| <b>Small city</b> | 66 (29.3%)  | 42 (35.6%)  | 54 (34.2%)  | 21 (29.6%)  |
| <b>Village</b>    | 93 (41.3%)  | 33 (28.0%)  | 50 (31.6%)  | 14 (19.7%)  |
| <b>Abroad</b>     | 5 (2.2%)    | 4 (3.4%)    | 3 (1.9%)    | 2 (3.4%)    |
| <b>Missing</b>    | 5 (2.2%)    | 1 (.8%)     | 0           | 13 (18.3%)  |
| <b>Total</b>      | 225         | 118         | 158         | 71          |
| <b>UDF</b>        | <b>1990</b> | <b>1991</b> | <b>1994</b> | <b>1997</b> |
| <b>Sofia</b>      | 40 (27.0%)  | 38 (23.8%)  | 23 (29.9%)  | 22 (13.5%)  |
| <b>Big city</b>   | 27 (18.2%)  | 32 (20.0%)  | 24 (31.2%)  | 24 (14.7%)  |
| <b>Small city</b> | 37 (25.0%)  | 43 (26.9%)  | 20 (26.0%)  | 23 (14.1%)  |
| <b>Village</b>    | 42 (28.4%)  | 28 (17.5%)  | 7 (9.1%)    | 12 (7.4%)   |
| <b>Abroad</b>     | 2 (1.4%)    | 0           | 1 (1.3%)    | 0           |
| <b>Missing</b>    | 0           | 19 (11.9%)  | 2 (2.6%)    | 82 (50.3%)  |
| <b>Total</b>      | 148         | 160         | 77          | 163         |
| <b>MRF</b>        | <b>1990</b> | <b>1991</b> | <b>1994</b> | <b>1997</b> |
| <b>Sofia</b>      | 1 (4.5%)    | 3 (11.1%)   | 0           | 2 (12.5%)   |
| <b>Big city</b>   | 4 (18.2%)   | 2 (7.4%)    | 2 (13.3%)   | 2 (12.5%)   |
| <b>Small city</b> | 4 (18.2%)   | 8 (29.6%)   | 6 (40.0%)   | 5 (31.3%)   |
| <b>Village</b>    | 12 (54.5%)  | 14 (51.9%)  | 7 (46.7%)   | 5 (31.3%)   |
| <b>Abroad</b>     | 1 (4.5%)    | 0           | 0           | 0           |
| <b>Missing</b>    | 0           | 0           | 0           | 2 (12.5%)   |
| <b>Total</b>      | 22          | 27          | 15          | 14          |

**Table 6. Average and modal age by party**

| Year of birth |      | 1990               | 1991               | 1994               | 1997              |
|---------------|------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| BSP           | mean | 1939.84            | 1946.48            | 1946.82            | 1950              |
|               | mode | 1938 (62 yrs. old) | 1948 (43 yrs. old) | 1949 (45 yrs. old) | 1960 (37yrs. old) |
| UDF           | mean | 1940.11            | 1944.50            | 1947.95            | 1948.84*          |
|               | mode | 1938 (62 yrs. old) | 1949 (42 yr. old)  | 1952 (42 yrs. old) | Multiple          |
| MRF           | mean | 1946.64            | 1946.30            | 1953.53            | 1953.29           |
|               | mode | 1954 (36 yrs. old) | 1942 (49 yrs. old) | 1961 (33 yrs. old) | Multiple          |
| Total         | mean | 1940.17            | 1944.96            | 1947.10            | 1949.25           |
|               | mode | 1938 (62 yrs. old) | 1949 (42 yrs. old) | 1952 (42 yrs. old) | Multiple          |

Based on this data, we were able to make conclusions about the patterns of recruitment of the various parties. For example, we noticed that in the Great National Assembly, BSP and MRF recruited people predominantly from the villages, whereas UDF had an even distribution of people from small and big agglomerates:



**Figure 1. Place of birth by party 1990**

In the subsequent parliament, BSP decreased by more than half its village-born members, whereas UDF attracted a lot of people from small cities. By contrast, there were no significant changes in the recruitment pattern of MRF:

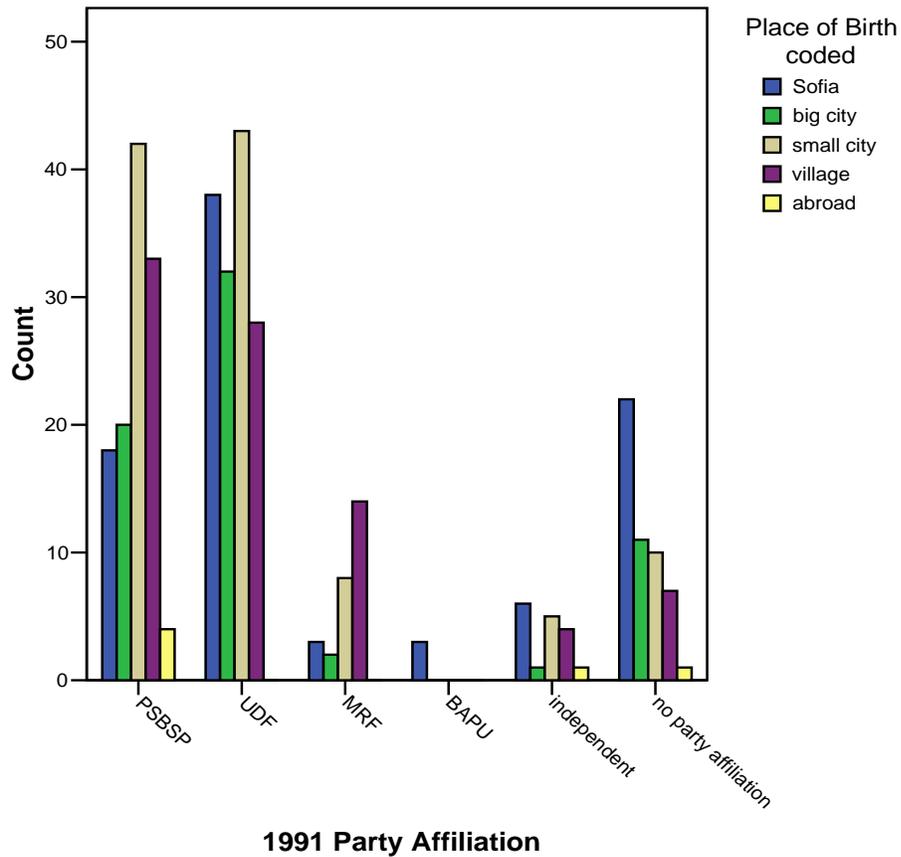


Figure 2. Place of birth by party 1991

We also noticed that MRF members of the elite are younger on average than those from BSP and UDF. This is particularly true of the 1990 Great National Assembly, but is also observable at the aggregate level for the entire period. The boxplots below represent the distribution for “year of birth” by party. The black thick line indicates the mean value, whereas the box indicates the cluster of values. In both boxplots, MRF has an observably higher mean values and cluster of values.

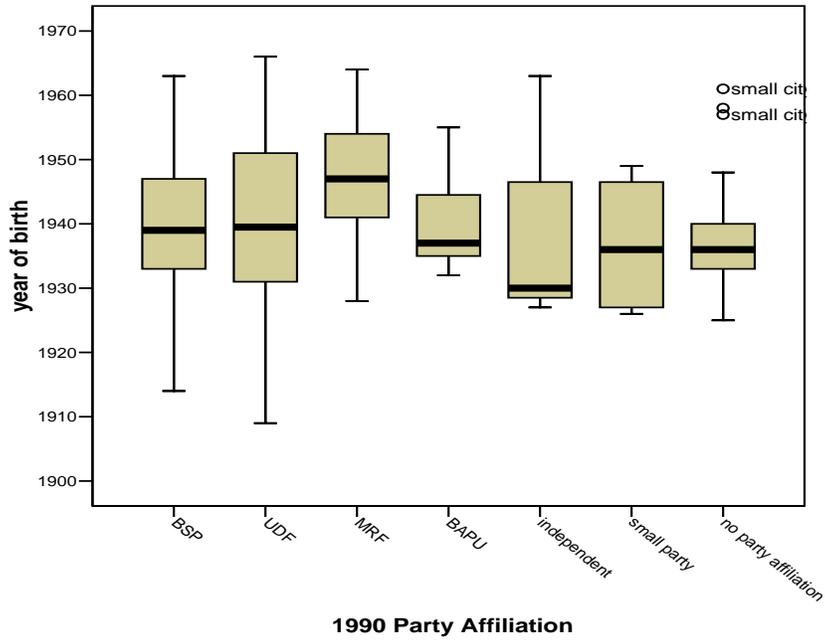


Figure 3. Year of birth by party 1990

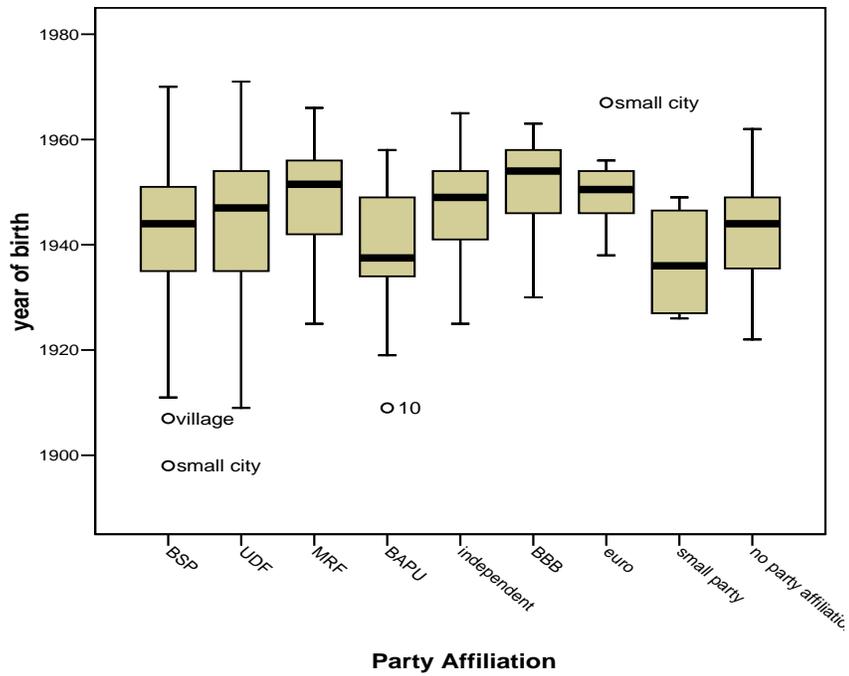
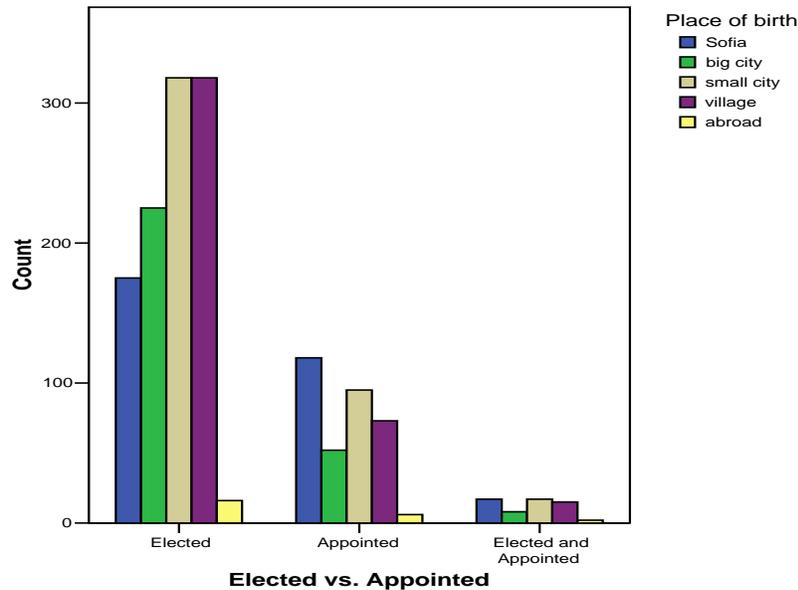


Figure 4. Year of birth by party (cumulative 1990 – 2001)

We were further able to examine differences between elected and appointed officials. For example, we noticed that members of parliament are predominantly from small agglomerates, whereas political appointed (judges, directors of government agencies, etc.) are overwhelmingly Sofia-born.



**Figure 5. Place of birth by position (elected vs. appointed)**

Finally, we examined the elite for affiliation with the former secret service. The question of the secret service and its role in the transition emerged from the interview data. The main concern in the continuous debate on the secret service has been the presence of former secret service agents among the political elite. To investigate this question, elite rosters were matched against reports of the commission on the secret service files (see Chapter Seven). Consequently, we were able to calculate the number and percentage of former secret service agents within each party for the duration of the examined period. As illustrated below, BSP exhibits the highest number of former secret service agents among its elite, while the highest percentage of secret service agents is found in the MRF elite. Appointees with no party affiliation, in turn, exhibit the second highest

number of former secret service agents. Detailed examination of the Excel data indicates those to be primarily deputy ministers and members of the judicial system. Also visible from this graph is the composition of the transition elite, over 1/3 of which (42.2%) are BSP members:

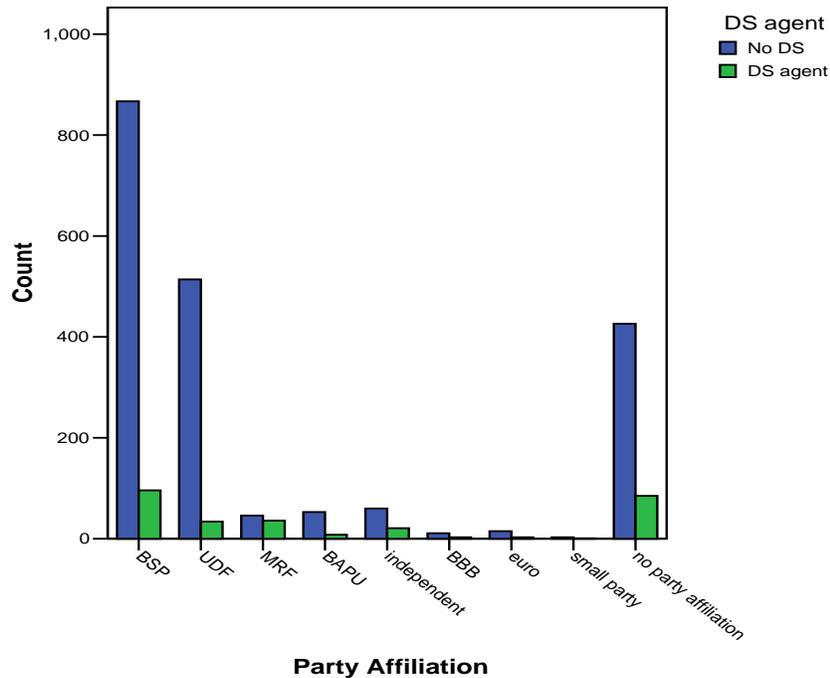


Figure 6. Former secret service agents within each party

The rosters represent a valuable new database that is, however, not free from limitations. The 1988 roster, for example, has a large percentage of missing data on the place and year of birth variables. Consequently, we were unable to run descriptive statistics for the 1988 roster. Excel data, however, still provided valuable information that allowed us to estimate the renewal rate of BSP for the first democratic election, calculate the number and percent of former secret service agents, and trace particular members of the elite or specific positions. The 1997 roster has large amount of missing data on the same variables (place and year of birth) for the UDF elite. Thus, the results for UDF derived from this roster were inconclusive. A significant percentage of data

on these variables is also missing for appointed positions in all rosters. Demographic information proved much harder to locate for political appointees than for members of parliament. Thus, comparison of demographic characteristics between elected and appointed positions needs to be treated with caution.

## 5.5 INTERVIEWS

The quantitative approach is supplemented by qualitative methods, including 35 interviews with members of the elite, scholars, and journalists. Given the restricted access to elite members, a snowball sample was used, relying on a gradually expanding network of elite contacts.<sup>316</sup> In order to reduce sampling bias, a snowball chain (initial contact) was initiated from several points, each with different party affiliation. The final sample included, among others, President Zhelyu Zhelev, former Prime Minister Filip Dimitrov, present and former members of Parliament, a constitution court judge, a cassation court judge, a presidential advisor, diplomats, and party functionaries. The sample consisted of 17 members of the elite listed in the elite rosters, 4 members of the elite not listed in the rosters (part of the elite either before or after the examined period), 10 scholars, and 4 other informants (1 journalist and 3 lower-rank party members). In terms of political orientation, 15 informants were affiliated (either currently or in the past) with UDF, 10 with BSP, and 10 had no declared party affiliation. The sample does not include

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<sup>316</sup> Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling method especially useful when the desired sample characteristic is rare, as is the case with elites. Snowball sampling relies on referrals from initial subjects/informants to generate additional subjects/informants. Saturation is reached when no new viewpoints are obtained from new informants.

informants from MRF, due to numerous failed attempts to gain access to the MRF elite. Interview data on MRF is still provided by non-MRF representatives of the elite.

Interviews followed an in-depth, semi-structured format, including a core set of open-ended questions supplemented with questions tailored to the specific member. The order of questions varied in order to match the flow of the interview. Information and insights gained from earlier interviews were incorporated to inform supplementary questions asked in later interviews. According to Sinclair and Brady, this sort of hybrid, flexible approach appears optimum for studies of elites that require some quantifiable data but also a good deal of in-depth interpretative material.<sup>317</sup> Interviewees were guaranteed anonymity, though most of the informants gave permission to be quoted. The majority of interviews were recorded. With increased experience in interviewing, recording was substituted in later interviews with note-taking which made informants more relaxed and willing to share information. Two BSP informants did not allow either recording or note-taking, in which case notes and recordings were made immediately after the interview. Interviews varied between 30 minutes to 2 hours, taking place at the informant's office or at a quiet restaurant or café. On rare occasions interviews were interrupted by a phone call or conversation with staff, which had negligible effect on the flow of the interview.

Analysis of interview data was guided by the grounded theory method (Glaser & Strauss 1967, Strauss 1987). Grounded theory is an inductive methodology aimed at the generation of theory in intimate relation with data. It is a set of rigorous procedures leading to the emergence of conceptual categories that are “grounded” in empirical data. As such, the grounded theory approach is best suited for this study which goal is not to test a hypothesis but to examine a

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<sup>317</sup> SINCLAIR Barbara and David Brady, “Studying Members of the United States Congress,” in MOYSER and WAGSTAFFE, *op.cit.*, pp. 48-71, p. 67.

process, namely elite transformation. In addition to providing rich narrative of the transition and a collection of personal life histories, the purpose of the interview analysis is to generate concepts of the process of elite transformation in Bulgaria. The analysis revealed diverging conceptualizations of the transition and the transformation of the elite based on the political affiliation of the informants. This discovery alone proves the usefulness of the grounded theory approach in analyzing rich data and generating theory.

The analysis of interview data was conducted in four steps:

- 1) *Translating and transcribing* the interviews: conducted simultaneously
- 2) *Open coding*: extracting key points from the data and marking them with a series of codes.<sup>318</sup> This process included grouping codes according to the core interview questions and identifying codes that were not addressed by the core questions.
- 3) *Axial coding*: grouping the codes into similar concepts. In this process several new concepts were identified in addition to those addressed in the core interview questions.
- 4) *Selective coding*: grouping the concepts into categories which become the basis for generating theory. Codes were grouped in 13 categories which were then examined for differences based on party affiliation.

An example of the step-by-step coding procedure would best illustrate the method:

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<sup>318</sup> *Coding* is a general term for conceptualizing data. It includes raising questions and giving provisional answers (hypothesis) about categories and their relations. A *code* is the term for any product of this analysis (whether category or a relation among two or more categories). *Category* refers to dimensionalizing distinctions (Thus, a *machine-body connection* is a category). See, Anselm STRAUSS, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, Cambridge University Press, 1987, p.p. 20-21.

*Question:*

How did you get into politics?

*Open coding:*

“I was surrounded by free thinking people at the BAS Institute of Literature.”

“Then at Stomana Pernik, I started re-organizing the existing professional union.”

“While preparing to flee the country, these idiots deposed Zhivkov and we thought something big had happened.”

“I got involved with the new structures in Petrich and became the first chair of the local UDF club.”

*Axial coding:*

“UDF - I became an activist and founder of UDF Petrich”

*Selective coding (including categorized codes of all UDF respondents)*

“involved with the informals”

“activist that got invited by certain opposition group”

“activist looking for a way to get involved”

Once categories were identified, concepts were grouped according to party affiliation: BSP, UDF, and independent. We can see that categorized codes for “how did you get into politics” (channels of entry to the elite) are very different for BSP respondents:

*Selective coding (including categorized codes of all BSP respondents)*

“long career within the party”

“involved with the informals but disappointed by the anti-communist extremism of UDF”

“activist in the youth organization”

Finally, conclusions were drawn based on the diverging codes within the category:

*Channels of entry to the elite*

BSP - people within BSP structures and from BSP families, dissidents who have turned away from UDF; both formal and informal channels; controlled process;

UDF – activists, dissidents, people who drew attention to themselves by being in the right place at the right time; random process.

As illustrated by this example, interview analysis provided invaluable information on elite transformation, including mechanisms of elite recruitment, organizing of the opposition, internal conflict within the communist elite, etc. The combination of this analysis with quantitative data from elite rosters gives the study sound empirical grounding as well as rich narrative.

## 5.6 NEWSPAPERS AND ARCHIVES

Analysis of archival and media sources constitutes the final component of the empirical data. The archives of the Bulgarian Communist Party were examined in order to detect intra-elite conflict as well as indications of dissident activity. Newspaper archives of BSP's *Rabotnichesko Delo*, renamed *Duma* in April 1990, and UDF's *Democraziya* were further examined with the purpose of following the public political debate during the transition and analyzing the communication strategies of the opposing political actors. Since MRF does not have an official daily publication, media analysis of MRF is limited to coverage of MRF both in *Duma* and *Democraziya*.

Archival research entailed reviewing all archives of the Central Committee of BCP for 1988 and 1989 (Central State Archives, fund B, descriptions 67-100). Materials included minutes from meetings of the Politburo of the CC of BCP, decisions and directives of Politburo, reports from international meetings of various ministers, and intelligence reports on domestic and international activities. A large part of this archive is unavailable and reported either "in process," "missing," "destroyed in fire," or "destroyed in flood." The available material was reviewed; relevant archives were copied and used to inform the narrative on the renaming process, early dissident activity, and internal conflict. Materials on the renaming process

(minutes from Politburo meetings, intelligence reports, directives to security services, etc.) are most heavily represented in the archive. Materials on early dissident activities also figured prominently. There were no reports, however, indicating internal conflict. The only indication of such conflict (which was no doubt present) are protocols with cadre (personnel) changes in the economic and foreign ministries. The most valuable document found was minutes of a November 21, 1989 meeting of Petar Mladenov with the leadership of the Sofia Committee of BCP,<sup>319</sup> which clearly demonstrates the degree of confusion and fear among party members. Overall, the analysis of BCP archives proved counter-productive, taking enormous amount of time due to lengthy bureaucratic procedures for obtaining archive materials and providing limited information that was not already available from other sources.

Analysis of newspaper archives included reviewing every issue of *Rabotnicheskio Delo* (January 1988 – April 1990), *Duma* (April 1990 – December 1995),<sup>320</sup> and *Democraziya* (February 1990 – December 1995) for the period 1988-1995. Instead of random or selective sampling of newspapers for 1988-2000, a thorough review for a shorter timeframe was chosen. Thorough review is a more appropriate strategy for observing the shaping and evolution of the political debate and the communication strategies of BCP and UDF. Because of the tumultuous nature of early post-communist politics, random sampling risks omitting key events the coverage of which is indicative of communication strategies. Selective sampling, in turn, might be overemphasizing particular aspects of the debate while omitting others. Extending the review to 2000 would have consumed enormous amount of time with little value added. While the chosen timeframe is shorter than the one covered by the study, it is long enough to capture the shaping of political debate and communication strategies.

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<sup>319</sup> Central State Archive, ЦДА ф. 1”Б”, оп. 100, а.е. 36.

<sup>320</sup> Due to financial problems, *Duma* was not issued in 1994.

The thorough review led to the emergence of several analytical categories: indications of internal conflict, indications of censorship and misrepresentation, representations of the party, representations of the opponent party, electoral campaigns, coverage of key events, etc. The two newspapers were compared in each of these categories which allowed us to reach conclusions about communication strategies and the construction of political debate. The abbreviated examples below illustrate this technique of comparison:

**Key events (fire at BCP headquarters on August 26, 1990):**

*Democracyia*: August 28, 1990: (front page) The page burned before it was read: if we have Goering we will have Van der Lube – UDF will participate in the parliamentary commission examining the arson at BSP’s headquarters on August 26<sup>th</sup>. UDF condemns the fire.

*Duma*: August 27, 1990: (front page) Fire hard to extinguish, democracy is burning – in front of the militia fanatical crowd set fire on the party headquarters. The president condemns the action and calls for refrain from violence.

*Duma*: August 28, 1990: (front page) Address by BSP’s chairmanship condemning the fire. Declaration of the Council of Ministers condemning the fire. Interview with Lilov – I found plans of the party building in the “city of truth,” certainly it wasn’t I who gave it to them.

*Notes*: UDF refers to the Reichstag fire which has been a central event in constructing communist rhetoric. BSP blames UDF extremists in an attempt to spur public discontent against the “Truth city.”

**Censorship and Misinformation:**

*Rabotnichesko Delo*: March 18, 1989: (front page) Decision of Politburo – the congresses of the intellectual and art organizations have been a success

*Rabotnichesko Delo*: November 10, 1989: No issue!!!

*Notes*: Congresses: 1. there is no actual decision, 2. we know that those congresses scared BCP because many people expressed dissident views, 3. no mention of the “great danger” which was discussed at length at politburo meetings as indicated by the party archives. Fall of the Berlin Wall: no coverage whatsoever!!!

***Internal conflict:***

*Democraziya*: May 14, 1992: (front page) The 39! – They returned us to the change. While the president was taking care of his favorite [Dimitar Ludzhev], UDF was helping all the working people – Zhelev insists on leaving Ludzhev in a ministerial position. MRF is in coalition with the UDF – it approves the cabinet changes.

*Democraziya*: October 7, 1992: (front page) Dimitar Ludzhev lost UDF's political trust.

*Democraziya*: October 20, 1992: (front page) The intelligence, President and the government

*Duma*: July 5, 1993: (front page) Tomov leaves BSP's supreme council, he wrote a farewell letter – there were no protests on "Positano" 20 yesterday. Lyuben Berov thanks UDF for the prudence – the "Truth city" was removed within the deadline specified by the president. The premier also thanked Edvin Sugarev for ending his hunger strike.

*Notes*: Internal conflict within UDF is very strong and visible. UDF does not even make an attempt to look united, but is instead publicly attacking its own. Internal conflict within BSP is contained. Great care is given not to make such conflict public.

Analysis of newspaper archives proved extremely useful, particularly in comparing internal conflicts in BCP and UDF, levels of expertise among BCP and UDF elites, diverging visions of reform policies, and overall ability of each party to articulate and communicate its goals and strategies.

Combining elite rosters, interviews, and archival and media sources produced a comprehensive set of empirical data that addresses the various aspects of elite transformation. With this data, the questions driving this study were investigated, as described in the following chapter. The dataset further represents a valuable resource in documenting the Bulgarian transition and a solid foundation for comparative studies on elites, democratization and transition societies.

## **6.0 TRANSFORMATION OF THE BULGARIAN POLITICAL ELITE: EMPIRICAL FINDINGS**

I have argued that two sets of factors determine the nature of elite transformation – first, the presence (absence) of a counter-elite, and the degree to which this elite is organized, and second, the quality of the auto-transformative mechanisms of the ruling elite, i.e. intra-elite conflict and modes of recruitment. To examine elite transformation in Bulgaria then, we need to determine whether there was intra-elite conflict within the ruling communist elite; the nature and intensity of that conflict; whether there was an organized counter-elite; where the counter-elite came from and how it organized itself; the extent to which the counter-elite was able to challenge the power of the communist ruling elite and in what way – through contestation, cooptation or both; the difference in the composition and modes of recruitment of the communist and post-communist elite; and the change in the mechanisms of elite recruitment.

Based on analysis of elite rosters, interviews and party newspapers, I examine the structure and mode of recruitment of BCP/BSP before and during the transition, as well as the process of organizing, structuring, and recruiting of the opposition (UDF). I pay particular attention to the internal conflict within both the BCP/BSP and the UDF. I further analyze the structure and mode of recruitment of the ethnic Turkish party (MRF) and its role in transition politics. I then compare BSP, UDF, and MRF, examine the aggregate characteristics of the elite, and offer an analysis of elite transformation in Bulgaria.

## **6.1 BULGARIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (BCP)/BULGARIAN SOCIALIST PARTY (BSP)**

### **6.1.1 Structure and Mode of Recruitment until 1989**

The Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) was a highly-structured and strictly hierarchical organization reaching one million members in 1989, out of an 8-million total population. Organized according to the authoritarian Soviet model of democratic centralism, the BCP had a pyramidal structure mirroring its Soviet counterpart: general secretary, Politburo, Central Committee, regional committees, city committees, party clubs, etc. The general secretary was elected by the Politburo, which was elected by the Central Committee (CC), which in turn was elected by the party congress. Whereas the CC consisted of less than two hundred members, the Politburo hardly ever exceeded ten people. While democratic electoral procedures nominally existed, all major decisions (particularly acceptance to Politburo and CC) were dictated by the General Secretary, followed by unanimous “votes” of party organs. Apart from the highly-centralized command structure, the Party had a dense network of local party organizations functioning on several levels – workplace (also known as primary party organizations), place of residence, and educational institutions. Party structures had completely penetrated the state apparatus, eliminating the functional distinction between party and state. In addition to hijacking the state, the BCP exercised tight control over all important social organizations such as trade unions, women’s organizations, youth movements, and professional associations. They were all affiliated and overseen by the Fatherland Front, the largest mass organization in socialist Bulgaria which was under the complete control of the Party and a key instrument in its ability to

maintain control over all aspects of political, economic, and social life.<sup>321</sup> The result, Crampton argues, was that almost every individual in the country was subject to communist power.<sup>322</sup>

Recruitment into the party leadership was based first and foremost on loyalty. Under state socialism, argues Kostova, political loyalty and communist party ties were given priority over wealth and other economic and social attributes in selecting elites.<sup>323</sup> Membership into the party was granted only by invitation or approved membership request. Although in its first years of power the Party adopted a more open approach to membership and access to leadership positions,<sup>324</sup> by the 1970s high-rank party positions were reserved almost exclusively for people with communist family background and/or demonstrated loyalty. In a comparative study of recruitment into East European communist parties, Eric Hanley finds strong evidence supporting the argument that having a father in the party significantly increased one's odds of joining the party. The correlation, he argues, is particularly strong in the Bulgarian case.<sup>325</sup> Communist

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<sup>321</sup> The Fatherland Front was an anti-fascist coalition that organized the 1944 communist coup. Though nominally consisting of several parties, after 1947 when the new socialist constitution was adopted, the Fatherland Front was under total communist control. Most adult Bulgarians were members of the organization whose main function during the communist regime was to promote a "socialist way of life." For more on the Fatherland Front's role in Bulgarian socialist society, see, Ulf BRUNNBAUER, "Making Bulgarians Socialist: The Fatherland Front in Communist Bulgaria, 1948-1989," *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 22, No. 1, (Winter 2008), pp. 44-79.

<sup>322</sup> CRAMPTON Richard, *Bulgaria*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 328.

<sup>323</sup> KOSTOVA Dobrinka, "Bulgaria: Economic Elite Change during the 1990's" in John HIGLEY and Gyorgy LENGYEL (eds.), *Elites After State Socialism: Theories and Analysis*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000, pp. 199-208, p. 204.

<sup>324</sup> This initial open approach was followed by massive purges in the Party as indicated by BCP membership figures – 460,000 members in 1948 and 360,000 in 1956. Source: Eric HANLEY, "A Party of Workers or a Party of Intellectuals? Recruitment into Eastern European Communist parties, 1945-1988," *Social Forces*, Vol. 81, No. 4, (Jun., 2003), pp. 1073-1105, p. 1076.

<sup>325</sup> HANLEY, *op.cit.*, p. 1094. Andrei Lukanov and his notorious statement, "I am a third generation communist," certainly support Hanley's findings. Andrei Lukanov's father, Karlo Lukanov, was a prominent communist who worked for the Communist International in Moscow. After the 1944 communist coup, Kalro Lukanov returned to Bulgaria and occupied numerous top party and state positions, including that of vice premier and foreign minister. Todor Lukanov, Andrei Lukanov's grandfather, was a member of the Central Committee and one of the founders of the communist organization in Pleven, an administrative center in Northern Bulgaria.

families, primary party organizations, and the youth communist organization (Komsomol) formed the main pool of recruitment for leadership positions.

Professional advancement was often contingent upon party membership and promotion in the party hierarchy. Under communist rule, Eric Hanley contends, a system of “centrally administered mobility” was established under which promotion to higher educational levels and higher office came to be based, at least in part, on political criteria such as class background and loyalty to the Party.<sup>326</sup> Loyalty to the party, Nikolov concurs, was considered a more important criterion for promotion than professional credentials.<sup>327</sup> Since party membership was a highly desirable if not necessary requirement for high-ranking positions in most fields, in many cases the Party offered the only avenue for professional career advancement. Thus, many capable experts, in their ambition for career advancement, were lured into the Party. This included scholars, artists and intellectuals, who in other East European countries provided the backbone of political dissent. This combination of a cooptation strategy on the one hand and individual strategies for career advancement on the other resulted in an abundance of professionals among party ranks. It was the ability of the Party to reward political loyalty with material advantage, Hanley posits, that assured Party leaders a steady stream of new recruits.<sup>328</sup>

Education was similarly subject to party control. Quotas in all fields were reserved for students with communist family background both in the prestigious high schools and the universities. Certain fields such as international relations and international economic relations, were reserved almost exclusively for children of high party functionaries, not to mention education abroad, which became a privilege of the offspring of communist families. Through its

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<sup>326</sup> HANLEY, *op.cit.*, p. 1073.

<sup>327</sup> NIKOLOV, *op.cit.*, p. 216.

<sup>328</sup> HANLEY, *op.cit.*, p. 1078.

strict selection criteria, control over professional advancement, restricted access to certain “reserved” fields of education, and a policy of co-optation, the Party secured a healthy supply of experts among its cadres and assured that positions of authority were occupied by party loyalists.

Many scholars argue that, loyalty notwithstanding, as communist regimes consolidated power, increased importance was being placed on technical competence in party recruitment and promotion (Jowitt 1992, Lane 1982). But Hanley finds no empirical data pointing to such “shift towards meritocracy.” Still, he reports a positive effect of education and professional status on the likelihood of entering the party, which nevertheless remained stable over time.<sup>329</sup> His findings, he argues, suggest that party leaders were able to impose educational standards on new recruits even during the first decade of their rule.<sup>330</sup> In fact, recruiting cadres who possessed both technical skills and the proper political credentials became easier in the later years when a generation of socialist intelligentsia had been raised. Thus, the increased recruitment of technocrats noticed in a number of East European countries in the late 1970s and 1980s was not necessarily at the expense of party loyalty. Rather the pool of technocrats among party members had significantly increased due, at least in the Bulgarian case, both to educational privileges for children with communist family background and the persistent growth of party membership. Hence, we cannot really speak of a conflict between “red” and “expert”, as Jack Bielasiak terms it, resulting in a deterministic resolution in favor of the technocratic elite.<sup>331</sup> In Bulgaria, loyalty

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<sup>329</sup> In a study of elite recruitment in Poland, Wasilewski similarly reports lack of empirical evidence pointing to a shift towards meritocratic selection. In recruiting experts, he argues, political requirements were of greater importance. See, Jacek WASILEWSKI, “The Patterns of Bureaucratic Elite Recruitment in Poland in the 1070s and 1080s,” *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 4, (Oct., 1990), pp. 743-757.

<sup>330</sup> HANLEY, *op.cit.*, p. 1101.

<sup>331</sup> BIELASIAK Jack, “Elite Studies and Communist Systems,” in Ronald H. LINDEN and Bert A. ROCKMAN (eds.), *Elite Studies and Communist Politics: Essays in Memory of Carl Beck*, Pittsburgh, PA, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1984, pp. 103-124, p. 107.

to the party remained the most important criterion for recruitment into leadership positions throughout the communist period.

In contrast to its massive membership constituting one-eighth of the population (or at least one BCP member in one-fourth of all Bulgarian households<sup>332</sup>), the BCP adopted very restricted access to leadership positions. Recruitment was almost exclusively from inside – lower echelons of the party and communist families. The Communist party, Carl Beck et al. argue, not only controlled all elements of the elite, but it also acted as the pool from which all members of the elite were recruited. Upward mobility, the authors further contend, was highly circumscribed and restricted to individuals who can qualify.<sup>333</sup> Given the pyramidal structure of the party, high-rank party positions constituted but a fraction of overall party membership. With a top-down approach of leadership selection which rendered nominal democratic procedures for promotion into the party meaningless, the majority of BCP members, the so-called “rank and file members”, had little if any access to positions of authority and just as little influence over the appointment of people to the high echelons of the party.

### **6.1.2 Intra-elite Conflict**

The Bulgarian Communist Party has been subject to internal conflict since the early years of its existence, starting with the split in 1903 into social democrats and narrow socialists (later communists).<sup>334</sup> Establishing a totalitarian, one-party regime did not purge the party from such

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<sup>332</sup> MELONE, *op.cit.*, p. 260.

<sup>333</sup> BECK Carl et al., *A Survey of Elite Studies*, Research Memorandum 65-3, Special Operations Research Office, American University, Washington D.C., 1965, p. 23.

<sup>334</sup> Founded in 1891, the Bulgarian Worker’s Social Democratic Party (BWSDP) divided into BWSDP-broad socialists and BWSDP-narrow socialists. In 1919, BWSDP-narrow socialists renamed itself to

conflict. On the contrary, the first years of consolidation of power were characterized by violent internal conflicts leading to massive purges from the party. With the seizure of power in 1944, Nikolov argues, tensions arose between the local communists who participated in the partisan movement and the cadres sent from Moscow.<sup>335</sup> Many of the East European communist leaders fled during the war to relative security in Moscow,<sup>336</sup> whereas communists back home remained to endure the repressions of Nazi-sympathetic governments. With the advance of the Red Army, the “Moscow” communists returned to their countries claiming the leadership of the newly imposed communist regimes, to the dismay and impotence of local communist activists.

The most notable and extreme example of the conflict between Moscow and home communists in Bulgaria was the show trial and execution of Traicho Kostov. Traicho Kostov was a war-time activist who enjoyed great popularity at home, but his voiced criticism of Soviet economic policy toward Bulgaria caused him to be disliked by the Soviets and the Moscow cadres, namely, premier and party leader, Georgi Dimitrov, his heir apparent Vasil Kolarov, and his son-in-law, Vulko Chervenkov. His execution in 1949 following a forced “confession” was a defining moment, Crampton argues, as it solved the problem of succession to the party leadership.<sup>337</sup> Dimitrov’s declining health and Kolarov’s old age left contestation for the leadership to the popular Kostov and the Moscow-trained Chervenkov. The removal of Kostov secured the party leadership for Chervenkov, a.k.a. “Bulgaria’s little Stalin,” and assured a continued dominance of the Moscow cadres in the party.

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Bulgarian Communist Party. Today both BSP and the Bulgarian Social Democratic Party (BSDP) trace their origin to BWSDP.

<sup>335</sup> Interview with Dr. Stephan Nikolov, Sofia, March, 2007.

<sup>336</sup> HANLEY, *op.cit.*, p. 1076.

<sup>337</sup> CRAMPTON, 2007, *op.cit*, p. 336.

Though the conflict between Moscow and home communists never again reached such extreme forms, it continued to be present to various degrees throughout communist rule. Among the high echelons of the party there were at all times representatives either born or educated in the Soviet Union, or, in the case of Andrei Lukanov and Grisha Filipov, both.<sup>338</sup> The BCP as well as all other East European parties, Kalinova and Baeva contend, had groups that were more closely related to Moscow than to the domestic leadership.<sup>339</sup> Tensions between those who enjoyed Moscow's protection and those who did not never ceased. In fact, Zhivkov's deposition is also an illustration of a clash between the Soviet-backed group, led by Lukanov, and Zhivkov and his most trusted comrades from the partisan movement.

Zhivkov's rise to power in 1956-1962 marked an important change in BCP's leadership as it put an end to the dominance of Moscow cadres. Zhivkov was a little-known war-time activist from the Chavdar brigade who appeared to be a temporary compromise for the leadership position. He received Khrushchev's support in defeating his Moscow-trained opponent, Anton Yugov, who had fallen into disfavor for his criticisms of Khrushchev's policy towards Cuba and China. In order to secure his position, Zhivkov immediately purged the party of the old communists, including Chervenkov and Yugov, and surrounded himself with trusted comrades from the Chavdar brigade. Throughout his rule Zhivkov managed to suppress internal conflicts in their early stages. He safeguarded his position by ensuring that no potential rival held the same post long enough to build up a solid and dependable body of support, Crampton points out, and for this reason he frequently shifted ministers and party leaders from one post to another.<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>338</sup> Andrei Lukanov: minister of foreign economic relations 1987-1990, prime minister 1990, born in Moscow, educated at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations; Grisha Filipov: member of CC of BCP, member of the State Council, premier 1981-1986, born in Kadievka (Ukraine), educated at the Moscow State University.

<sup>339</sup> KALINOVA and BAEVA, *op.cit.*, p. 227.

<sup>340</sup> CRAMPTON, 2007, *op.cit.*, 359.

Another secret to Zhivkov's long tenure as a party leader was his soft treatment of his opponents. Instead of persecuting them, Zhivkov simply moved his rivals out of the way by stationing them abroad or in highly-paid sinecures, still allowing them to lead a privileged life. This strategy checked discontent against him within the party and prevented his opponents from banding together. Being very aware of the ever-present threat of Moscow cadres within the party, Zhivkov made sure to secure Soviet support for himself. His strongest card, Kalinova and Baeva posit, was Zhivkov's "special" relationship with Soviet leaders.<sup>341</sup> Zhivkov maintained cordial relations with Khrushchev, who helped him ascend to power, and was quick to gain the trust of his successor Brezhnev. He preserved close relations also with Andropov and Chernenko. Consequently, Soviet leadership did not question Zhivkov's reshufflings and occasional purges.<sup>342</sup>

Zhivkov's cunning and skill in choking internal conflict did not preclude internal struggles during Zhivkov's rule. On the contrary, conflicts were numerous and on multiple grounds. "Being in the high ranks of the party required skills," argues Nikolov, "It was a struggle for survival. They were constantly plotting against each other and competing – who would travel abroad, who would get a vacation or a villa and so on. This struggle was not public, but it trained them well. There was a myriad of conflicts and they were personal."<sup>343</sup> Personal conflicts often resulted in strategically-motivated groupings, which, for lack of ideological grounding, resembled more of a clan structure rather than political factionalism. As former UDF MP

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<sup>341</sup> KALINOVA and BAEVA, *op.cit.*, p. 146.

<sup>342</sup> In 1977, for example, Zhivkov expelled 38,000 party members, including Politburo member, Boris Velchev, grandfather of the current attorney general of Bulgaria also named Boris Velchev.

<sup>343</sup> Interview with Stefan Nikolov, Sofia, March 15, 2007. Minutes of Politburo meetings give some peculiar indications of these personal conflicts. Among other matters, Politburo was also engaged in debates on allocation of restaurant food home delivery for high-rank party members. Whenever a decision was made for a certain high functionary to receive restaurant food at home, heated debates ensued usually resulting in similar allocations for contending party members.

Vladimir Manolov argues, “BCP is a clan party and the various clans continue to hate each other throughout history.”<sup>344</sup> Kalinova and Baeva concur that the sole goal of such small groups was to gain control of the party; hence, they never reached the scale of factions or dissident movements.<sup>345</sup> Neither the Soviet-domestic cadres split, nor the divide between the Chavdar brigade people and other war-time partisan groups who were not promoted by Zhivkov had an ideological base. This is not to say that ideology did not play a role. Whenever conflicts became public, they were usually articulated along ideological lines, though ideology was rarely the main or only point of contention. Few groups, such as Lyudmila Zhivkova’s circle in the 1970s, had primarily ideological grounding.<sup>346</sup> Zhivkova’s pro-active cultural policies gave visibility to her circle, but visibility was rarely characteristic of struggles within the party. Intra-elite conflict remained hidden for the most part and, as Baeva argues, was usually confined to the top leadership, not reaching lower levels of the Party.<sup>347</sup>

The nature and intensity of the intra-elite conflict drastically changed with Mikhail Gorbachev’s rise to power in the USSR in 1985 and the ensuing policy of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. “Gorbachev’s *perestroika* irritated Zhivkov,” recounts Mihail Ivanov, Soviet cultural attaché at the time, “and he did not accept it.”<sup>348</sup> Zhivkov and his loyal supporters, a considerable portion of the party apparatus and the *nomenklatura*, were terrified by the “unrestrained openness

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<sup>344</sup> Interview with Vladimir Manolov, Sofia, February 12, 2007.

<sup>345</sup> KALINOVA and BAEVA, *op.cit.*, p. 146.

<sup>346</sup> Lyudmila Zhivkova, Todor Zhivkov’s daughter, was an avid promoter of a distinct Bulgarian national identity, as opposed to Soviet-imposed socialist identity. Her views on national identity, as her fascination with mysticism and asceticism, were often in contradiction with communist ideology. Until her untimely death in 1981, Zhivkova had a devoted following among Bulgarian artists and intellectuals, most of whom prominent party members. For more on Lyudmila Zhivkova and her circle, see Atanaska NEDEVA, “Lyudmila Zhivkova and the Paradox of Ideology and Identity in Communist Bulgaria,” *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 18, No.2, 2004, pp. 278-315.

<sup>347</sup> Interview with Iskra Baeva, Sofia, February 9, 2007.

<sup>348</sup> Interview with Mihail Ivanov, Soviet cultural attaché to Bulgaria in the late 1980s and current professor of political science at the University for National and World Economy (Sofia), Sofia, December 13, 2007.

of speech in the Soviet Union” and the unforeseen consequences of Gorbachev’s *perestroika*.<sup>349</sup> Gorbachev, in turn, considered Zhivkov a typical representative of the “old regime” and did not trust him to carry out the reforms. Zhivkov attempted to dodge the question of *glasnost* and *perestroika* by declaring that Bulgaria had already implemented similar reforms in 1956 with Zhivkov’s rise to power. Continued pressure from Moscow, however, made it clear that unless Zhivkov followed the reform path of the Soviet Union he risked losing Soviet support, thus making himself vulnerable to critiques at home as well. Seizing the initiative, in 1987 Zhivkov introduced the “July Concept,” a radical reform program instituting market mechanisms in the economy and massive administrative restructuring. Envisioning reforms that (at least on paper) far surpassed the scope of Gorbachev’s *perestroika*, Kalinova and Baeva contend, the July Concept was more than anything an illustration of Zhivkov’s incessant energy and determination to preserve his power.<sup>350</sup> Zhivkov’s new initiative caused a direct clash between Zhivkov and Gorbachev, who was infuriated by yet another attempt to disobey Moscow’s directives.<sup>351</sup> Political and economic relations between Bulgaria and the Soviet Union quickly deteriorated, and for the first time Zhivkov’s traditionally close relations with Soviet leaders were exhausted<sup>352</sup>.

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<sup>349</sup> FOTEV Georgi, “Total Crisis and the Reorganization of Society” in Jacques COENEN-HUTHER (ed.), *Bulgaria at the Crossroads*, New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 1996, pp.11-31, p. 17.

<sup>350</sup> KALINOVA and BAEVA, *op.cit.*, p. 229.

<sup>351</sup> In response to Gorbachev’s attacks, Zhivkov made numerous futile attempts to convince him that the July Concept was in line with Soviet reforms. See, “The July Concept Follows the Reforms in the USSR,” *Rabotnicheskoe Delo*, January 5, 1988; “Applying the July Concept and Perestroika: Speech by Todor Zhivkov,” *Rabotnicheskoe Delo*, January 8, 1988. Zhivkov quotes Gorbachev all throughout this speech, outlining the parallels between *Perestroika* and the July Concept. He dedicates the 1988 BCP conference to the question of *Perestroika*. See, “Announcing the National Party Conference: For Perestroika and Further Building of Socialism in the People’s Republic of Bulgaria,” *Rabotnicheskoe Delo*, January 25, 1988.

<sup>352</sup> Though appearing friendly, Bulgarian-Soviet relations between 1987-1989 reached their lowest point since WWII, argue Kalinova and Baeva. Bulgaria was stripped off Soviet subsidies, Soviet raw materials, and Soviet markets for its low-quality products which inevitably led to political tensions. See, KALINOVA and BAEVA, *op.cit.*, p. 230.

*Glasnost* and *perestroika*, however, found numerous supporters among the high echelons of the party and provoked an ideological and policy debate on the future of socialism. Diverging views of reform resulted in a split between advocates of *glasnost* and *perestroika* and supporters of the July Concept. “There was a split on the very meaning of reform,” argues BSP functionary, Valeri Zheblyanov, “On the one hand there were the followers of Gorbachev and on the other the nationalistically-oriented group.”<sup>353</sup> There were also the die-hard communists who prophesied strictly abiding by the principles of Marxism and Leninism and preserving the command economy at all cost and who, because of their distrust towards younger reform-minded party members, fell by default into Zhivkov’s camp. Since the call for reform came from Moscow and was therefore official, the debate was no longer limited to the party leadership but penetrated all levels of the party hierarchy and society at large. Being official, it also provided a convenient outlet for personal conflicts, which also fell along ideological lines. Most importantly, the debate on *glasnost* and *perestroika* legitimized and united Zhivkov’s opponents.

Zhivkov’s falling out of grace with Soviet leadership made him unable to control rising tensions within the party and opposition against him. “Zhivkov enjoyed legitimacy because of the great power that stood behind him,” argues Petko Simeonov, “and all of a sudden he wasn’t legitimate anymore.”<sup>354</sup> Zhivkov’s refusal to follow the Soviet reform path empowered his opponents. Supporting *glasnost* and *perestroika* in fact meant opposing Zhivkov, but at the same time it also meant following the Soviet line. Since Zhivkov was officially claiming to pursue Soviet policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, he had no ground for persecuting his opponents. Zhivkov’s opponents were further emboldened in their actions by active support from Moscow.

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<sup>353</sup> Interview with Valeri Zheblyanov, head of cadre policy of BSP, Sofia, May 2, 2007.

<sup>354</sup> Interview with Petko Simeonov, round table participant, UDF MP and then BSP MP, Sofia, April 24, 2007.

Gorbachev was eager to see Zhivkov removed from power so that Bulgaria could follow the road of reform. In this respect, argue Kalinova and Baeva, Gorbachev had the support not only of part of BCP's leadership, but a significant part of the Bulgarian population.<sup>355</sup>

The split caused by the new policy of *glasnost* and *perestroika* reached deep into the party ranks. Zhivkov's conservative and dated policy had brought apathy and alienation among many party members. Worsening economic conditions and international criticisms of Bulgaria's policy towards its Turkish minority further eroded the regime's legitimacy even among some of its loyal supporters. High-level functionaries and rank members alike understood that reform was not only needed but unavoidable. Critical voices within the party started organizing, and, by 1988, communist party members formed the core of nascent dissident organizations. As Koshlukov points out, a big part of the internal BCP dissidents were part of the early opposition and the informal organizations.<sup>356</sup> Thus, the argument that it was almost inevitable that a reform movement would initially be formed within the communist party itself is indeed valid (Moser 1994, Nikolov 1998).

Intra-elite conflict in the late 1980s took on a qualitatively different form compared to previous struggles within the party. Moscow withdrew its support for Zhivkov and was instead backing his opponents. Policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* resulted in genuine ideological debate on the future of socialism.<sup>357</sup> Internal conflict was no longer hidden nor limited to the party leadership. This combination of related factors created an opportunity for convergence of interests, allowing various and previously disunited opponents of Zhivkov and his regime to come together and stage a joint action. Thus, people in the party leadership, who hardly had

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<sup>355</sup> KALINOVA and BAEVA, *op.cit.*, p. 227.

<sup>356</sup> Interview with Emil Koshlukov, Sofia, April 24, 2007.

<sup>357</sup> Russian magazines *Ogonyok* and *Literaturnaya Gazyeta*, both of which were widely read in Bulgaria at the time, became the main forums of this debate.

common interests and opposed Zhivkov for different reasons, saw an opportunity in working together towards his removal. Hence, Moscow-educated foreign minister, Petar Mladenov, who enjoyed great popularity at home and envisioned himself as Zhivkov's successor; minister of foreign economic relations, Andrei Lukanov, who had close ties with Moscow as well as with business interests in the West and was therefore an avid promoter of economic liberalization; and Alexander Lilov, who embraced perestroika and alienated Zhivkov with his ideas of democratic socialism,<sup>358</sup> all banded together. They were also joined by some of Zhivkov's most trusted allies who had turned against him in this final hour – minister of defense Dobri Dzhurov, chair of the National Assembly Stanko Todorov, and prime minister Georgi Atanasov. With overt support from Moscow,<sup>359</sup> their joint action culminated in the removal of Zhivkov at the party plenum of November 10, 1989.

There is stark disagreement among members of the Bulgarian political elite on the significance of November 10<sup>th</sup>. UDF elite dismiss it as an intra-party coup and a preemptive action on behalf of the party faced with a rapidly advancing wave of democratization in Eastern Europe. "BCP realized that unless it did something, it would be surpassed by events," Alexander Karakachanov states.<sup>360</sup> The ensuing process of democratization in Bulgaria, in turn, is viewed as a result of external processes which unleashed opposition forces in the country. Long-time UDF MP, Ekaterina Mihailova, expresses the prevalent view among UDF elite, "The events in Bulgaria are a result of world-wide processes the credit for which, if we are to name them, goes

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<sup>358</sup> In order to eliminate Lilov's negative influence, Zhivkov sent him to the Institute for Social and Economic Theory, Sofia and then on a specialization in London.

<sup>359</sup> Andrei Lukanov shared his plans for Zhivkov's removal with Soviet ambassador to Bulgaria, Victor Sharapov, who gave Moscow's approval for coordinated action. The events are described in detail in the memoirs of Valentin Terehov, advisor to the ambassador, published in consecutive issues in daily newspaper "24 Chasa." See, "The Coup," *24 Chasa*, February 4, 1999.

<sup>360</sup> Interview with Alexander Karakachanov, Sofia, April 3, 2007.

to Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher.”<sup>361</sup> By contrast, BSP elite explain November 10<sup>th</sup> as a continuation of political and economic changes already underway and influenced by the Soviet model of *perestroika*. *Perestroika* and partial reform, however, proved unfit to address the deepening political and economic crisis. “Everything was rotting,” argues distinguished diplomat, Ivan Garvalov. “The Soviet Union was rotting, we were rotting; there were no options.”<sup>362</sup> There was need for profound changes. According to BSP elite, November 10<sup>th</sup> marks the beginning of such profound changes, the initiator of which was the Communist Party.<sup>363</sup>

While it is true that the Party was already introducing market-oriented reforms, such as act 56,<sup>364</sup> the perpetrators of Zhivkov’s removal hardly envisioned an end of communist party rule. In his closing speech at the party plenum of November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1989, Petar Mladenov assures that *perestroika* in Bulgaria will follow the Soviet line and will remain within the framework of socialism.<sup>365</sup> It is in the aftermath of November 10<sup>th</sup> that the new party leadership realized changes were irreversible. Their initial program did not envision the abolition of socialism, Karasimeonov contends, but events in the following months led to a change in intentions.<sup>366</sup> Nevertheless, November 10<sup>th</sup> is a turning point in Bulgarian history. Let us not fall into utter

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<sup>361</sup> Interview with Ekaterina Mihailova, Sofia, February 8, 2007.

<sup>362</sup> Interview with Ivan Garvalov, long-time ambassador to the UN and 1<sup>st</sup> deputy foreign minister 1990 - 1992, Sofia, April 6, 2007.

<sup>363</sup> See for example an article in BSP official newspaper celebrating the 1 year anniversary of November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1989, “Several Thousand People Celebrated the Birthday of Democracy,” *Duma*, November 11, 1990.

<sup>364</sup> Act 56 envisioned transforming state owned enterprises into shareholder companies and provided for limited introduction of small private firms. While allowing for partial liberalization in the economy, argues Martin Ivanov, it did not dare cross into the ideologically condemned field of market economy. See, Martin IVANOV, “Act 56: the End of a System,” *Business Magazine*, April 8, 2008, available online: <http://www.bm-businessmagazine.bg/bg/articles/%D0%A3%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%B7-56:-%D0%9A%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%8F%D1%82-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D1%81%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BC%D0%B0/525/index.html>

<sup>365</sup> “Petar Mladenov Appointed for General Secretary of CC of BCP,” *Rabotnichesko Delo*, November 11, 1989.

<sup>366</sup> KARASIMEONOV, Georgi, “The Transition to Democracy” in Georgi KARASIMEONOV (ed.), *The 1990 Election to the Bulgarian Grand Assembly and the 1991 Election to the Bulgarian National Assembly*, Berlin, Edition Sigma, 1997, pp. 10-22, p. 14.

UDF-ism, cautions Alexander Karakachanov, and deny completely the importance of November 10<sup>th</sup>.<sup>367</sup> Zhivkov's removal marks the peak of intra-elite conflict within the BCP with consequences that go far beyond simple change of leadership. November 10<sup>th</sup> also marks the beginning of profound changes within the Communist Party in its prolonged, though ultimately successful, transformation into a modern left-wing party.

### **6.1.3 Transformation of the Party after 1989**

#### **6.1.3.1 Political re-orientation and new structure**

BCP's first step following the November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1989 party plenum was instituting major personnel changes in the Central Committee of BCP, the State Council, and the Council of Ministers. Zhivkov and his closest associates, among them Grisha Filipov, Milko Balev, Dimitar Stoyanov, and Zhivkov's son, Vladimir Zhivkov, were excluded from the CC, whereas other party members repressed by Zhivkov were reinstated.<sup>368</sup> In order to signal that such changes were not another instance of reshuffling as commonly practiced by Zhivkov, BCP's new leadership took decisive action in distancing itself from Zhivkov and his regime. The Party created a State Commission for the Investigation of Deformations in the Social and Economic Life, appointing Andrei Lukanov as its chair. As already argued, the goal of the Commission was to blame the country's dire economic conditions and harmed international reputation as a result of the renaming process on a few selected individuals, thus, relieving the Party from collective responsibility. Consequently, Linden argues, criticisms against former leaders were relentless and for the new leaders, including the new party leader Petar Mladenov, they served as a means

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<sup>367</sup> Interview with Alexander Karkachanov, *op.cit.*

<sup>368</sup> "Changes in the CC of BCP," *Rabotnichesko Delo*, November 17, 1989; "Changes in the State Council and Council of Ministers," *Rabotnichesko Delo*, November 18, 1989.

of separating the new leadership from the old guard.<sup>369</sup> Zhivkov was soon expelled from the BCP, accused of embezzlement, abuse of power, and incitement of racial hatred, and arrested on January 29, 1990. At the same time, Traicho Kostov and other purged communists were officially rehabilitated, and amnesty laws were passed releasing political prisoners, including ethnic Turkish activists. At a party plenum held December 11-13, 1989, the Party issued a formal apology for the renaming process and pledged giving up political monopoly by revoking Article I, effectively removed by the National Assembly on January 15, 1990. Later that month, the Party voted to reinstate the names of the forcefully renamed Turkish minority.

Following these immediate measures, the BCP proceeded with redefining its political orientation and reforming its structure. At its 14<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary Congress held in Jan-Feb 1990, the Party rejected the Soviet model and adopted a *Manifesto for Democratic Socialism in Bulgaria*. With the new program, the BCP condemned totalitarianism and authoritarianism, took responsibility for the governance of the country for 1947-1989, and committed itself to political pluralism. It abolished the Central Committee and the Politburo, replacing them with a Supreme Party Council (now National Council) and Executive Bureau of the Supreme Party Council. Elected by the National Party Congress, these larger bodies of about 180 and 20 members respectively were intended to give party members greater control over the leadership. New electoral procedures allowed for members of the Supreme Party Council to be elected individually rather than by a slate, as had been the case with the CC.<sup>370</sup> In addition, a Central Commission on Party Ethics and a Central Financial Control Commission (now merged into the Party Control Commission) were created. Under UDF pressure at the Round Table negotiations,

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<sup>369</sup> LINDEN Ronald, "The Dynamics of Change in Eastern Europe," *Report on Eastern Europe*, Radio Free Europe, December 30, 1989.

<sup>370</sup> GOLDMAN Minton, *Revolution and Change in Central and Eastern Europe: Political, Economic, and Social Challenges*, New York, M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1997, p. 92.

the BCP agreed to disband its primary party organizations at the workplace, which also meant depoliticizing the army, and introduce a strictly territorially-based structure. The State Pioneer Organization “Septemvriiche” and the Dimitrov Communist Youth Union (Komsomol) were also disbanded.<sup>371</sup> The Party eventually formally incorporated such auxiliary organizations into its structures and currently has a youth, a women’s and a veteran’s movement. Following a January party-wide referendum, in April 1990 the BCP renamed itself to the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) and changed the name of its official newspaper from *Rabotnichesko Delo* (Worker’s Deed) to *Duma* (Word). Thus, in the course of several months, the Communist party changed its leadership, its structures, its platform, and its name. Such changes, argues Valeri Zheblyanov, had been objectively pre-determined by the collapse of the world socialist system. As a result, the BSP logically proceeded to changing its political platform and accepting capitalism.<sup>372</sup>

Analysts often quote Bulgaria as a case where “unreconstructed communists” preserved their power and obstructed democratization efforts (Adam and Tomsic 2002, Ganev 1997, Vachudova 2005). Many remained skeptical of the genuine transformation of the communist party and viewed the changes as mostly cosmetic. Structural changes notwithstanding, the party preserved its hierarchical structure and maintained its dense network of regional, sub-regional, and local party organizations, which continued to operate in very much the same manner. BSP’s opposition to the introduction of basic market reforms such as price liberalization also called into question the sincerity of its new ideological position. Following the fiasco of the two Lukanov governments and the 1991 UDF electoral victory, the BSP adopted yet another new platform in

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<sup>371</sup> In Bulgaria, as in most communist societies, communist indoctrination started at early age by organizing children in a tier of youth organizations, membership in which was if not mandatory, strongly encouraged. Students who were not part of the Komsomol, for example, were not given access to higher education. In Bulgaria, children were admitted into the “Chavdar” organization in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, the Pioneer organization in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, and the Komsomol in 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

<sup>372</sup> Interview with Valeri Zheblyanov, *op.cit.*

1994, intended to move the Party closer to modern European left-wing parties. Although the new program contributed to BSP's electoral victory in 1994, Videnov's "left alternative" of "gradual reform" at "low social cost," and the devastating financial crisis it produced, only confirmed the doubts of the skeptics. It took a long time for the BSP to recover from the after-effects of Videnov's rule. In fact, it was the deep crisis in which the party fell after having to relinquish power in 1997 that caused it to seek a new direction and face post-1989 realities. After changes in its statute, leadership, and most importantly its attitudes,<sup>373</sup> the party emerged from the crisis with a victory in the 2001 presidential election. Georgi Parvanov's ascension to the presidency was a signal that the BSP was moving in the right direction. In 2002, the Party put forward a genuine social-democratic platform, which gained it acceptance to the socialist international in 2003, and the Party of European Socialists in 2004. Membership in these organizations legitimized the BSP as a modern left-wing party dedicated to the values of democratic socialism – a transformation that took well over a decade.

### **6.1.3.2 *Internal conflict after 1989***

The transformation of the party was a long and painful process, permeated with internal conflict. After Zhivkov and his associates were ousted, power was divided among the perpetrators of November 10<sup>th</sup> – Petar Mladenov becoming head of state, Andrei Lukanov prime minister, and Alexander Lilov leader of the party. Even though this reform-oriented group had the support of the majority of high-ranking party members in their effort to remove Zhivkov, that same majority was bent on reforming the party within the framework of socialism, not creating a multi-party system. While younger politicians such as Lilov and Lukanov quickly realized that

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<sup>373</sup> Sobered by Russia's harsh terms in trade negotiations, BSP abandoned its pro-Russian position and ended its opposition to Bulgarian membership to NATO.

changes were irreversible, the old guard was committed to the party's Marxist-Leninist heritage and the building of socialism. "The transformation of the party was the hardest for the older members who had lived their lives in this system and had reached the end of their political career," recounts BSP MP Krasimir Krastanov.<sup>374</sup> The changes set off by Zhivkov's removal further deepened the divide between reformers and hardliners, already settled in during the debate on *perestroika*. "Even today there are people in the party who think socialism should have been preserved," asserts Nora Ananieva, long-time BSP MP and round table participant.<sup>375</sup>

The split between reformers and hardliners was hardly the only one. After November 10<sup>th</sup>, Ananieva further contends, a process of differentiation began within the BCP. There were numerous disagreements within the reformist wing. Debates on the course of reforms shaped two distinctive groups – one around Lilov and the other around Lukanov. Lilov favored focusing on ideology and a big party, argues youth activist Boris Popivanov, whereas Lukanov was for a small party and a focus on the economy.<sup>376</sup> This clash of ideas was also an expression of the personal conflict between Lilov and Lukanov, renewed after the common goal that had been the reason for joining forces, i.e. Zhivkov's removal, had been accomplished.<sup>377</sup> With Lilov disposing of party positions and Lukanov of positions in the government as well as connections in the West, each one of them quickly attracted a group of adherents. Indeed Lukanov's followers were rewarded with lucrative opportunities,<sup>378</sup> whereas Lilov's protégés, such as Zhan

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<sup>374</sup> Interview with Krasimir Krastanov, BSP MP and deputy governor of Sofia region, Sofia, April 26, 2007.

<sup>375</sup> Interview with Nora Ananieva, Sofia, May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

<sup>376</sup> Interview with Boris Popivanov, BSP youth activist, Sofia, January 17, 2008.

<sup>377</sup> Because of his resignation as head of state on June 6, 1990, Petar Mladenov, who was a close friend of Andrei Lukanov, did not partake in this conflict. Following his resignation, Mladenov retired from political life. See, "Student Address to the Nation: We Need Your Support, We Have Been on a Hunger Strike, Our President Lied to Us," *Democraziya*, July 6, 1990.

<sup>378</sup> Until Lukanov's spell as a prime minister ended, his friends and associates took up key positions in state banks and industries and – under the guise of reform – diverted resources into dozens of new trading companies, banks and brokerage houses, which dominated the commodity and currency markets,

Videnov, received positions in the party leadership.<sup>379</sup> Thus, in the tradition of BCP's history of internal conflicts, the divide between Lilov and Lukanov also took on more of a clan character rather than factionalism.

While personal conflicts never left the party, ideological disagreements did result in the emergence of several factions. The Alternative Socialist Organization (ASO) was the first faction to form within the BCP in December 1989. Its existence as an alternative voice within the party was short-lived, as ASO left the BCP in February 1990 and joined UDF.<sup>380</sup> As part of the UDF coalition, the now renamed Alternative Socialist Party (ASP) won six parliamentary seats in the 1991 elections. Another group that sprang up within the party and left shortly after was the Civil Union for the Republic (CUR) established in May 1993 by Alexander Tomov, former BSP vice-chair and MP.<sup>381</sup> CUR appeared in the 1994 election in a coalition with ASP, the Green Party, and the Social-Democratic Party (BSDP), but failed to pass the 4% parliamentary barrier. In 1997, CUR, ASP, and several dissenters from BSDP and BSP came together to form the Bulgarian Euro-left party. The Euro-left won 14 seats in the 1997 elections and supported, at least initially, the reformist UDF government of Kostov.

Disagreement on reform and policy decisions and disappointment with the slow and difficult transformation within the BSP were the main reasons for the emancipation of those factions into independent parties. "The transformation of BSP was tragic," recounts Dragomir

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transferring much of their profits to foreign bank accounts. BROWN J. F., *The Groves of Change. Eastern Europe at the Turn of the Millennium*, Durham, Duke University Press 2001, p. 99.

<sup>379</sup> The election of Videnov as party leader demonstrated the extent of the control of the ex-communist party leaders over BSP, argues Ishiyama. Many viewed Videnov as a front man for Lilov. The press often referred to him as "Zhan Lilov" to underscore his connection to the Lilovist camp. JOHN ISHIYAMA, "The Sickle or the Rose? Previous Regime Types and the Evolution of the Ex-Communist Parties in Post-communist Politics," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 3, 1997, pp. 299-330, p. 319.

<sup>380</sup> "BCP Doesn't Stand a Chance – BCP Faction, ASO, Leaves the Party," *Democraziya*, February 16, 1990.

<sup>381</sup> "Alexander Tomov Forms Civil Union for the Republic," *Duma*, May 31, 1993; "Tomov Leaves BSP's Supreme Council and Writes a Farewell Letter," *Duma*, July 5, 1993.

Draganov, “Initially BCP was giving all signs of reform, but after it won the 1990 elections all attempts for reform stopped.”<sup>382</sup> Because of their quick exit, the factions that emerged within the BSP had limited effect on the transformation within party. As Krasimir Krastanov argues, “I can't say that in 1990 several reformist wings appeared within BSP and reformed the party. On the contrary, those wings all left the party. The leading bodies of the party and the personalities did the job.”<sup>383</sup> Although factionalism deprived the BSP of several of its prominent members, it did not cause schisms within the party. On the contrary, despite ideological disagreements between reformers and hardliners, personal conflicts and factions, the BSP remained united.<sup>384</sup>

### **6.1.3.3 Recruitment**

With the end of its political monopoly, the BCP/BSP's membership base started continuously shrinking – a logical consequence of the adoption of a multi-party system. Numbering close to a million in 1989, by the 1994 election, the BSP had lost 2/3rds of its members. This sharp decline in the early years of the transition was followed by stabilization in BSP membership base and a much slower rate of membership decrease (table 7). Today the BSP remains the party with the largest number of registered party members.<sup>385</sup> Nevertheless, membership continues to decline.

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<sup>382</sup> Interview with Dragomir Draganov, MP from BSP, MP from the Bulgarian Euroleft and a professor of history at Sofia University, Sofia, February 19, 2007.

<sup>383</sup> Interview with Krasimir Krastanov, Sofia April, 2007.

<sup>384</sup> In a 1995 article, John Ishiyama qualifies BSP as “a relatively cohesive and powerful political force” and correctly predicts that BSP “will continue to have significant impact on the course of Bulgarian politics in the foreseeable future.” John ISHIYAMA, “Communist parties in Transition: Structures, Leaders, and Processes of Democratization in Eastern Europe,” *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Jan., 1995), pp. 147-166, p. 163.

<sup>385</sup> Data on BSP membership base is extremely difficult to find. The party does not publish regularly membership figures and such data cannot be found in the public registry. Current rough estimates of BSP membership are at 200,000 plus 30,000 in its youth organization. Data on BSP membership used here is collected from various sources, only one of which an official BSP publication.

In addition to decreasing numbers, the BSP has been dealing with a persistent aging problem.<sup>386</sup> According to 2005 BSP documents, 56.4% of BSP members are retirees and only 7.9% are under 35.<sup>387</sup> Communist nostalgia and the high social cost of the transition provide logical explanations for the high number of retirees supporting BSP in the early years of the transition, but fail to explain why, after its transformation into a modern left-wing party, the BSP still struggles to attract young supporters and continues to be “the party of the pensioners.”

**Table 7. Decline of BSP membership**

|                       | 1990     | 1991      | 1994       | 2005        |
|-----------------------|----------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| <b>BSP membership</b> | 726,000* | 600,000** | 324,600*** | 240,000**** |

\* Source: Kalinova and Baeva, *op.cit.*, p. 254

\*\* Source: *Duma*, January 1, 1991

\*\*\* Source: *Съвременен показател*, information bulletin of the Supreme Council of BSP, Vol. 8, August 2006.

\*\*\*\* Source: *Capital*, March 5, 2005

In an attempt to address the problem of an aging and declining membership, the BSP has drastically changed its recruitment strategy. As early as December 1989, the Party removed barriers to membership and opened its ranks to anyone willing to join.<sup>388</sup> While party membership still requires approval by the local BSP organization, applicants are no longer subjected to lengthy background checks and screening procedures. Structural changes of party organs and introduction of referendums on particular issues<sup>389</sup> were intended to make membership more attractive by giving ordinary party members greater role in party politics, including leadership selection and policy formation. In 1994, the party formed a new youth

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<sup>386</sup> Ishiyama observes that in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, support for the communist successor parties has been associated with the elderly proportion of the population. John ISHIYAMA, “Introduction and Theoretical Framework,” in John ISHIYAMA (ed.), *Communist Successor Parties in Post-Communist Politics*, Huntington, NY, Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 1999, pp. 11-17, p. 11.

<sup>387</sup> “BSP Worried about Decreasing Membership Base,” *Dnevnik*, November 13, 2005.

<sup>388</sup> “New Party Members – Recruited Based Exclusively on Personal Qualities,” *Rabotnicheskо Delo*, December 21, 1989.

<sup>389</sup> The party held a referendum in January 1990 on the change of its name. Another referendum was held in September 1994, when for the first and only time the party decided to have a referendum on its new platform.

organization (the Komsomol having disbanded in 1990), the Bulgarian Socialist Youth (BSM). BSM's main function is to attract young people and "raise new faces of Bulgarian socialists."<sup>390</sup> This new open and diversified strategy of recruitment is in stark contrast to recruitment practices before 1989. But while entering the party has become almost a matter of formality, access to leadership positions has remained extremely restricted.

Following 1989, there has been little change in the mode of recruitment to the BSP elite. BSP's cadre policy was mainly focused on "new faces" rather than new principles of recruitment. Proven loyalty and communist background continued to be the determining criteria for entering the high ranks of the party throughout the transition period. Even today recruitment relies almost exclusively on families with communist traditions and party careerists.

Personnel changes adopted immediately after November 10<sup>th</sup> and the ensuing party-initiated investigations on the deformations of the communist regime purged the Party of Zhivkov and his most trusted allies, as well as a number of the remaining members of the old guard. Due to the overall old age of the top party leadership before 1989, many of them are deceased today. The high-ranking officials who "survived" the transition and preserved their political status were mainly from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations and Ministry of Economy and Planning – in other words those close to the perpetrators of November 10<sup>th</sup>. Access and control over well-established international and domestic networks were the unifying characteristic of these party functionaries, one that would give them an advantage in the transitioning economy.

New cadres, in turn, came primarily from lower party echelons. Within a couple of years, the ranks of the party, including the three socialist governments, were filled with less publicly

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<sup>390</sup> Bulgarian Socialist Youth mission statement available online at:  
[http://www.bsm.bg/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=24&Itemid=41](http://www.bsm.bg/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=24&Itemid=41)

known party functionaries and cohorts of the Komsomol. While the party was suffering from an aging membership, there was no lack of young activists aspiring to leadership positions. Bringing new faces to the front was a strategic move on the part of BSP. There was a great need to replace the old guard with young socialists who had a better understanding of the new realities but the party also needed to shed its communist-era image and present itself with a new “face.” Electing young Komsomol activist Zhan Videnov as the head of the party in 1991 was intended to demonstrate the party’s genuine desire to reform. “Alexander Lilov [chair of BSP 1989-1991] didn’t have to relinquish power,” recounts Krasimir Krastanov, “but he brought forward the young people and let them rule the party. They had the advantage of a clean past.”<sup>391</sup> Ironically, Zhan Videnov turned out to be more dedicated to the values of Marxism than most members of the BSP elite. His disastrous two-year premiership completely discredited BSP’s efforts to present itself as a transformed party committed to reform and made many Bulgarians wonder whether the difference between the BCP and the BSP was simply the letter in the middle. Videnov’s successor and current president of Bulgaria, Georgi Parvanov, was much more successful in leading the party through its transformation into a modern left-wing formation. Neither Videnov nor Parvanov, however, could pride themselves on a “clean past,” both being confirmed as collaborators of the repressive secret service apparatus.

After 1990, there was an influx of new faces in BSP’s leadership. As historian Iskra Baeva argues, “From the people who were in BCP’s leadership in 1989, there is not a single person left in the leadership today.”<sup>392</sup> Although a generalization, this statement is true for the most part. Elite rosters indicate that only 15.32% of pre-1989 political elite preserved their political status after 1990. But while the new faces in the leadership were new to the electorate,

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<sup>391</sup> Interview with Krasimir Krastanov, *op.cit.*

<sup>392</sup> Interview with Iskra Baeva, *op.cit.*

they were hardly new to the party. “They all come from the Komsomol,” Cassation Court judge and a former MP, Zlatka Ruseva, contends. “BSP hardly ever lets new people in.”<sup>393</sup> If not strictly from the Komsomol leadership, past and present BSP leaders were loyal communist activists and functionaries before 1989. Starting with Pirinksi, Videnov, and Parvanov, to most recent former ministers Rumen Petkov and Rumen Ovcharov, new elite members are recruited exclusively from within the party structures.<sup>394</sup> Although there is little physical continuity within the communist/socialist elite, there is little change in the mode of recruitment.

Generational continuity, by contrast, is prevalent among the BSP elite. As Tilkidjiev argues, the representatives of the old nomenklatura (often morally discredited) are themselves only rarely the nominal members of the new elite.<sup>395</sup> Instead, they are replaced by their children, grandchildren, and family members. In a 2007 interview, Emil Koshlukov keenly observed that the BSP-led administration at the time was a startling example of “communist family clan rule”: “The prime minister today is the son of a Politburo member, the general attorney is the grandson of a Politburo member, the European commissioner is a daughter-in-law of a member of the Central Committee of BCP, the director of the national television is the daughter of the same

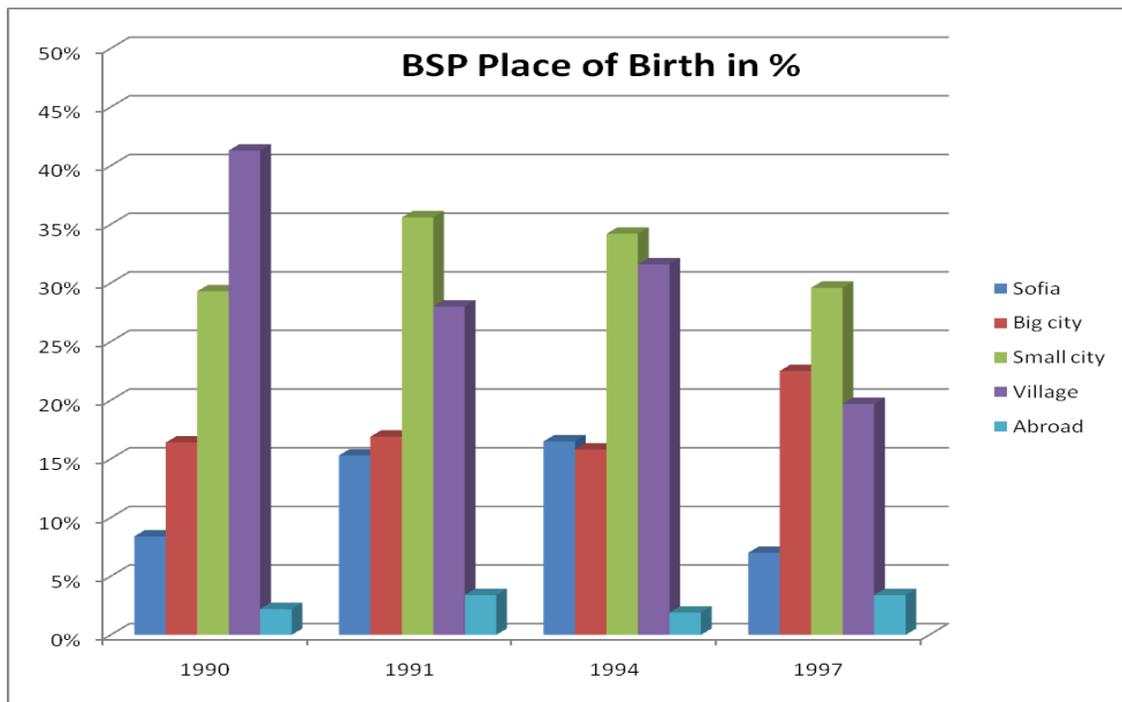
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<sup>393</sup> Interview with Zlatka Ruseva, Sofia, February 7, 2007.

<sup>394</sup> Georgi Pirinksi: deputy minister of foreign economic relations 1980-1990, vice premier in Lukanov's government 1989-1990, minister of foreign affairs in Videnov's government, MP from BSP 1990-1998 and 2001-present, chair of Parliament 2005-2009; Zhan Videnov: Komsomol leadership positions 1986-1989, MP 1991-1994, leader of BSP 1991-1996, prime minister 1994-1997; Georgi Parvanov: 1981 party member and research associate of the Institute for BCP's History, leader of BSP 1996-2001, president of Bulgaria 2001-present; Rumen Petkov: Komsomol leadership position 1985-1989, chair of the Pleven regional BSP 1990-1995, secretary of BSP's coalition policy 1999-2001, MP 2001-2005, minister of the interior 2005-2008, MP 2008-present; Rumen Ovcharov: leadership positions in regional BSP organizations 1984-1990, minister of energy in Videnov's government, minister of economy and energy in Stanishev's government 2005-2009, MP 1997-present.

<sup>395</sup> TILKIDJIEV Nikolai, “Social Stratification in Post-Communist Bulgaria” in Jacques COENEN-HUTHER (ed.), *Bulgaria at the Crossroads*, New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 1966, pp. 79-96, p. 87.

member of the Central Committee. Those families are clans.”<sup>396</sup> This snapshot of the current BSP elite reveals little change in social composition. New elite members carry the same social aggregate characteristics as the former communist elite, i.e. communist family background, education in one of the communist elite schools or in Moscow (Zhan Videnov, Sergei Stanishev, and Rumen Ovcharov are only the most obvious examples), and notable activism within the party and its surrogate structures before 1989. Despite the lack of physical continuity, there is a pronounced generational continuity and little change in the social composition of the communist/socialist elite.



\*18.3% of 1997 data is missing.

**Figure 7. BSP place of birth as percent of total BSP elite**

<sup>396</sup> Interview with Emil Koshlukov, *op.cit.* Koshlukov refers to the 2005-2009 prime-minister Sergei Stanishev, attorney general Boris Velchev, EU commissioner Meglena Kuneva, and BNT director Ulyana Pramova. Boris Vlechev and Ulyana Pramova continue to hold their positions today.

A distinguishing feature of the BSP elite is that over 2/3 (67.1%) of its members come from small agglomerates (small towns – 32.1% and villages – 35%). By contrast, only 12.5% of the BSP elite come from Sofia and 17.7% from big cities. BSP members born in villages constitute more than half (54.4%) of the village-originating elite for the period. The village percent within BSP tends to rise when BSP wins the elections (1990 and 1994) and decrease when BSP is not in power (1991 and 1997) (fig. 7). In addition, we notice a core of Sofia-born members present in every parliament. There appears to be a pattern indicating that BSP draws upon its regional elites when winning the elections and therefore having larger numbers in parliament, whereas it tends to shrink to a core group of members from the capital and big cities when not in power. This pattern is indicative of a dense organizational network easily mobilized in the recruitment of new loyal cadres to the elite and a differential recruitment strategy based on anticipated election results. The BSP elite demonstrates a healthy influx of new cadres with each consecutive election. New members made up 46.6% of the BSP elite in 1991, 44.3% in 1994 and 50.7% in 1997 (fig. 8). The BSP gradually purged itself of its oldest members as indicated by the modal age – 62 for 1990, but 43 and 46 for 1991 and 1994 respectively. There is a noticeable wave of young people entering the BSP elite with the 1997 elections as illustrated by the mean age of 47 and the modal age, 37 (fig. 8). This change in recruitment practices reflects the overall transformation in the party triggered by the fiasco of Videnov government.

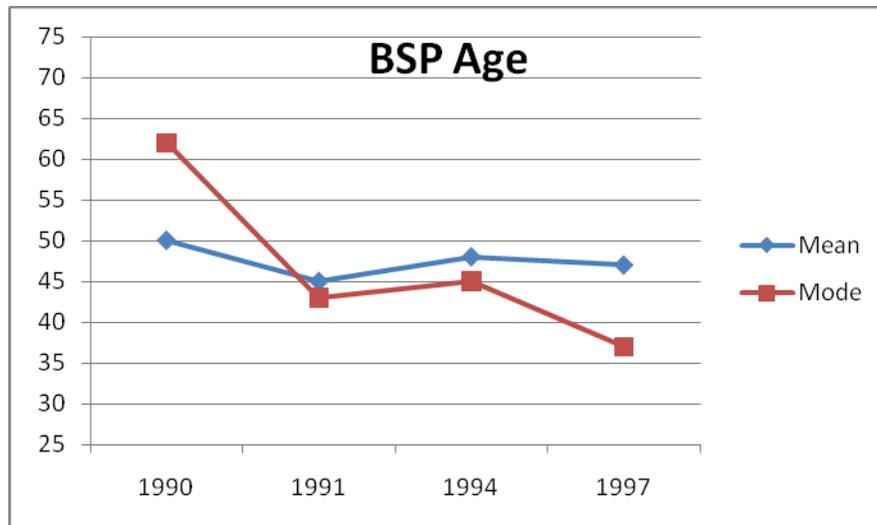


Figure 8. BSP mean and modal age

Overall, we observe a stable rate of renewal of BSP elite, an extremely closed process of recruitment limited almost exclusively to high-ranking party functionaries and elite communist families, and no change in the recruitment criteria; proven loyalty and communist background still constitute the main factors. This lack of change in the mechanisms of recruitment deprived the BSP of an influx of new energy and ideas, since new cadres did not bring change in the social composition of the elite. The reformed, though still clumsy and extremely hierarchical structures posed a further obstacle to BSP's transformation.<sup>397</sup> An aging membership base swept by communist nostalgia rendered ideological re-orientation somewhat difficult.<sup>398</sup> This combination of factors made for a painful and prolonged transformation of the former communist party into a modern left-wing formation. Adam and Tomsic justly argue that the Bulgarian communist elite

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<sup>397</sup> "BSP wasn't very successful in reforming itself," argues Iskra Baeva, "It's structures were in the way." Interview with Isrka Baeva, *op.cit.*

<sup>398</sup> Although BSP leadership professed the "social democratization" of the party, it relied heavily on political nostalgia to mobilize electoral support, Ishiyama contends. John ISHIYAMA, "Discussion and Conclusions," in John ISHIYAMA, *Communist Successor Parties in Post-Communist Politics*, *op.cit.*, pp. 223-230, p. 224.

reformed to a much less extent than its East European counterparts.<sup>399</sup> Nonetheless, this elite was very successful in retaining power and dominating transition politics. “We didn’t have to do much to win power,” recounts Krasimir Krastanov, “In fact, we preferred not to be in power. Yet the moves and gaffes of UDF made it difficult for us not to win.”<sup>400</sup> The ability of the former communist elite to maintain stronghold on political power was indeed to a large extent due to a weak and disorganized counter-elite – a topic we turn to next.

## 6.2 UNION OF DEMOCRATIC FORCES (UDF)

### 6.2.1 Organizing the Opposition

Three characteristics describe the Bulgarian opposition that emerged after November 10<sup>th</sup> 1989 – eclectic, united by a common anti-communist cause, and lacking a unified vision of post-communist Bulgaria. We cannot truly speak of an organized opposition in Bulgaria before the establishment of UDF. Founded on December 14, 1989, UDF brought together existing dissident organizations (Ekoglasnost, Club for Glasnost and Democracy, Independent Association for the Protection of Human Rights, Club of the Repressed after 1945, etc), emerging political formations (the Green Party, Independent Labor Confederation “Podkrepa”, Federation of the Independent Student Associations, etc), and newly reinstated pre-1948 political parties, (the Bulgarian Socialist Democratic Party, the Democratic Party, the Radical Democratic Party, and the Bulgarian Agrarian People’s Union “Nikola Petkov”). Each organization attracted its own

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<sup>399</sup> ADAM Frane and Matevz TOMSIC, “Elite (Re)configuration and Politico-Economic Performance in Post-Socialist Countries,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 54, No. 3, 2002, pp, 435-454., p. 437.

<sup>400</sup> Interview with Krasimir Krastanov, *op.cit.*

group of supporters, but scattered as they were none of them enjoyed a large enough following to emerge as a natural leader of opposition forces or to face the Communist Party on its own. Having the example of the Polish Round Table as a mechanism of dismantling the totalitarian political system, the various groups decided to unite and press for Round Table negotiations. Since a hard-core group of activists participated in most organizations at the same time, joining forces did not take long.

Ranging from the right to the left of the political spectrum and attracting very different constituencies, UDF-member organizations were united by their common anti-communist cause. There was a consensus that UDF and all of its member organizations would stand in opposition to the BCP and not be its partner in *perestroika*. This was a qualitatively different position from the one taken by many of the early dissidents who were set on reforming the Party, not abolishing communism.<sup>401</sup> While they were united in their anti-communist stance, UDF and its member organizations did not have a unified vision of the direction in which the country should be going. That there was no plan of action was expected, but there was not even a basic consensus on what should constitute the transition – transition to democracy and capitalism or transition to something else.<sup>402</sup> “We did not have a clear idea of what we ought to be doing as far as consistence goes,” recalls Filip Dimitrov. “We didn’t have Charter 77. The truth is that in Czechoslovakia the operational plan of what needs to be done wasn’t laid down either, but there were moral guidelines and political rules which were, it was understood, to be followed. So in

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<sup>401</sup> “For many of the pseudo-dissidents from Ekoglasnost and the Club for Glasnost and Perestroika, the struggle for democracy was exhausted with the removal of Todor Zhivkov,” argues Alexander Yordanov, “Their goal consisted of creating an imitation of civil society and exercising pressure on the Communist Party so it reforms itself and continues to rule Bulgaria in a more democratic way, within the framework of one-party rule.” Interview with Alexander Yordanov, Sofia, April 10, 2007.

<sup>402</sup> “No one dared mention the word “capitalism” before 1997,” recounts Petko Simeonov. “Capitalism was bad. They were talking about market society, market reforms, but not capitalism....and those were the UDF activists.” Interview with Petko Simeonov, *op.cit.*

any case they had some idea of what to do. That wasn't the case in Bulgaria."<sup>403</sup> By contrast, each organization within UDF had a very different and in most cases unclear idea of what post-communist society should look like and what steps should be taken to get there. There were people envisioning a social welfare model, others professed British-style conservatism. Furthermore, the united opposition had a very unclear position on power. "We don't aim at taking power," were Zhelev's opening words at the preliminary Round Table negotiations. "As a democratic opposition, the goal of our union is the democratization of Bulgaria, de-establishment of the totalitarian system and turning the country into a real democratic state."<sup>404</sup> Somehow, UDF believed these goals were achievable without taking power. UDF had difficulty emancipating itself from its dissident origin and making a claim on power.

UDF's anti-communist stance implied that the opposition was not going to bargain with the BCP for a share in the spoils of power. Consequently, UDF adopted a strategy of contesting BCP's power rather than seeking cooptation in the political elite. UDF attacked the very core of communist power – the political formula and legitimizing principle of rule, i.e. communism. Ending BCP's one-party rule and instituting a multi-party system was a non-negotiable demand. The Round Table negotiations gave UDF the opportunity to clash head-on with BCP, negotiate the mechanisms of disbanding all aspects of the totalitarian regime, and schedule free democratic elections. The disappointing results of the elections (36.2% as opposed to BSP's 47.1%) did not change UDF's strategy of differentiation and confrontation. BSP's repeated attempts to form a "government of national consensus" and share the burden of governing were rejected by UDF,

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<sup>403</sup> Interview with Filip Dimitrov, Sofia, June 15, 2007.

<sup>404</sup> Zhelyu Zhelev's statement at the National Round Table from January 3 1990, "Националната кръгла маса – 3 януари-14 май 1990 г.: пълни стенографски протоколи, " Dr. Zhelyu Zhelev Foundation, 1998, p. 29.

which wished neither to be associated with the BSP nor to relieve it of the responsibility for the imminent economic and political crisis.<sup>405</sup>

## 6.2.2 Structure and Mode of Recruitment

UDF started off as a loosely connected coalition of political groups. Each formation within the coalition supposedly had its own structures. In many cases those were nothing more than gatherings at someone's apartment.<sup>406</sup> After November 10<sup>th</sup> 1989, some of the formations started establishing small clubs in the capital and in few major cities. No organization within UDF, however, had a broad national structure. UDF was founded as an umbrella body with the purpose of coordinating the activities of the constituent organizations which preserved their independent status and individual platforms. According to UDF's founding declaration, "UDF unites the efforts of its constituent organizations rather than uniting the organizations themselves."<sup>407</sup> A Coordination Council was appointed to serve as UDF's main decision-making body. The Coordination Council included three representatives from each member organization and was responsible for electing a chair, deputy chair(s), secretaries, and speakers who formed the Executive Council. The Coordination Council was also to represent UDF at the Round Table, issue declarations, organize demonstrations, comprise electoral lists, and serve as liaison between the member organizations. Although it held regular meetings, they were rarely attended by all of

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<sup>405</sup> "UDF Refuses to Take Part in a Coalition Government: Joint Declaration of UDF's Coordination Council and the Parliamentarian Group of UDF," *Democraziya*, September 14, 1990. While UDF rejected to participate in a coalition government led by BSP, it ultimately sent two ministers to the coalition government of the independent Dimitar Popov.

<sup>406</sup> Ekoglasnost, for example, was founded in the apartment of Alexander Karakachanov, who later founded and chaired the Green Party.

<sup>407</sup> Founding declaration of UDF, available online at: [http://www.omda.bg/BULG/inf\\_command/sds\\_uchr.htm](http://www.omda.bg/BULG/inf_command/sds_uchr.htm)

its members. “The Coordination Council,” recounts Filip Dimitrov, “was attended by whoever had the time and desire.”<sup>408</sup> In subsequent years, the Coordination Council assumed a stronger position as a decision-making body, which brought it criticisms by some groups within the coalition for exercising too much control.<sup>409</sup>

Initially, UDF had no resources other than a group of like-minded people who gathered in the basement of the Institute of Sociology in Sofia. “We had nothing”, recalls Georgi Markov, former UDF MP and former constitutional judge. “I brought from home the only fax machine we had.”<sup>410</sup> At the preliminary negotiations for the Round Table, the united opposition managed to secure a building for its operations. By February 1990, UDF had already settled in its new home and started printing an official daily publication *Democraziya*. Though having official headquarters, UDF had no local or regional organizations. It initially relied on its member organizations to mobilize and organize supporters. When it started establishing local clubs and regional organizations, they were concentrated primarily in the big cities and could hardly match the dense network of BSP organizations. This weak structure made it very difficult to mobilize people and coordinate decisions and activities, especially outside of the capital. Public support for UDF was quickly growing as demonstrated by the hundreds of thousands attending UDF rallies.<sup>411</sup> At the same time, the rallies were giving a wrong impression of UDF’s popularity, which was minimal outside the major cities. The inability of UDF to quickly build a nation-wide structure and reach voters throughout the country became one of the main reasons for losing the

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<sup>408</sup> Interview with Filip Dimitrov, *op.cit.*

<sup>409</sup> “It was all controlled from the top – the Coordination Council, whose members have all decided that they were the ones in charge,” recalls former MP and member of UDF-coalesced Radical Democratic Party Nikolai Slatinski. Interview with Nikolai Slatinski, Sofia, April 26, 2007.

<sup>410</sup> Interview with Georgi Markov, Sofia, February 10, 2007.

<sup>411</sup> “Demonstration Unites Us in Rain and Shine: 150,000 Support UDF in a Demonstration,” *Democraziya*, March 5, 1990.

first post-communist elections in June 1990. UDF's organizational network gradually grew,<sup>412</sup> but it never reached the scale of its BSP counterpart. Although UDF eventually spread to smaller towns, its main base of support remained primarily within the big cities.

Recruitment into the UDF was random and chaotic. Two groups formed the initial pool of recruitment into the opposition – the politically repressed and the reform-oriented party members. The majority of the people from these two categories were already active in the informal organizations. They made up a rather narrow circle of about 200 people that needed to be rapidly expanded. At first, recruitment took on the “bring a friend” principle. “I brought a lot of people,” recounts Georgi Markov. “Everybody was bringing someone.”<sup>413</sup> This practice assured some form of selection and a certain degree of trust within the opposition, but it was not enough to build a mass base. When the circle of friends was exhausted and UDF realized that it still needed a lot more people, it started recruiting anyone willing to join. “Some of the UDF activists were telling me how they were recruiting people in the villages and small towns,” recalls Alexander Karakachanov. “They’d go in the local tavern and shout out ‘UDF’ at the table. Whoever answers, they recruit him.”<sup>414</sup> Such an approach made for an indiscriminate mode of recruitment with no selection criteria other than taking an anti-communist stance. It allowed a lot of random people to enter the UDF and even reach leadership positions. Faced with this new problem, the UDF elite shut out the newcomers and retreated to its initial narrow “circle of friends.” “It was stuffy in UDF,” says Nikolai Slatinski, “There was no way for integrating not only people from the provinces but younger people and newcomers. The logic was that whoever

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<sup>412</sup> By 1991, UDF had established regional, county, and local coordination councils. UDF clubs were founded in towns and villages where none of the UDF-member organizations had established structures. See, “Statute of the Union of Democratic Forces,” *Democraziya*, March 20, 1991.

<sup>413</sup> Interview with Georgi Markov, *op.cit.*

<sup>414</sup> Interview with Alexander Karakachanov, *op.cit.*

came first became leader first. There was no mechanism for giving way to quality people which killed the leadership.”<sup>415</sup>

Recruitment strategy was random, chaotic and inconsistent, ranging from extreme openness and lack of selection criteria to obstructing newcomers and favoring a closed, Sofia-based circle. Part of the problem originated with the specificity of the Bulgarian communist regime. As Nikolov argues, there was no breeding ground for a counter-elite in Bulgaria (Nikolov 1998). With no tradition of dissidence, no small entrepreneurs, and a co-opted *intelligentsia*, the usual pool of people supplying cadres for the opposition in other East European countries was very limited in Bulgaria. Forcefully expanding the pool of recruitment meant that rising in UDF’s leadership was often a matter of being in the right place at the right time. “I am an example of a career developing without any participation on my part,” asserts Filip Dimitrov. “There were a lot of people like this. Back then elites were forming with the help of accidentally good decisions at a time you had a chance to make yourself visible. It was spontaneous and to a large degree due to luck.”<sup>416</sup> UDF leadership consisted to a large extent of people who came together by accident, some of whom proved unqualified. This is the reason why people were reaching high positions fast and losing them just as fast, argues UDF MP Ekaterina Mihailova.<sup>417</sup> Such a random mode of recruitment resulted in a serious problem of cadres, further aggravated by lack of expertise and lack of trust among UDF elite.

Experience and expertise were scarce qualities among UDF elite. Although UDF attracted a lot of professionals and intellectuals, few if any had acquired knowledge and practice in governing. “UDF was often accused of having only repressed, depressed, and informals, but

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<sup>415</sup> Interview with Nikolai Slatinski, *op.cit.*

<sup>416</sup> Interview with Filip Dimitrov, *op.cit.*

<sup>417</sup> Interview with Ekaterina Mihailova, *op.cit.*

the debates in parliament demonstrated that we had lawyers and economists,” objects Georgi Markov. “Yet, it is one thing to be a good lawyer and another to be in politics.”<sup>418</sup> UDF leaders were not prepared and qualified for the tasks facing them. Unlike their communist counterparts who had an opportunity to develop governing skills and gain experience over a number of years, members of the opposition had to learn as they went. BCP’s monopoly over expertise, with previously limited access to certain educational fields and a policy of co-optation, left the opposition struggling to find experts whose loyalty did not lie with the communists. Thus, UDF had to rely on the younger population which was not as connected to the former regime, surviving old members of the pre-1948 parties, and former nomenklatura members who had turned against the BCP. Consequently, the only people in the UDF elite with somewhat relevant experience were former low-rank communist cadres. There were a number of lawyers in the opposition, but fewer economists, and hardly any people with degrees in public policy or international relations.

Being a young organization, UDF had no policy of training cadres. While the BCP/BSP has a well established mechanism of training cadres through education at home or abroad and gradual integration of new cadres into its structures, UDF’s new leaders had neither the training nor the time to adapt to their new political roles. It was not until the late 1990’s that the issue of training cadres appeared on UDF’s agenda. Some basic mechanisms were introduced at that time limited to organizing seminars and workshops and sending students abroad, with no guarantee that they would return and occupy party positions. The effectiveness of these measures was difficult to assess. Attempts by expert groups to develop a long-term strategy for recruitment and training of cadres inspired no interest among the UDF elite, argues Milena Stefanova, city

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<sup>418</sup> Interview with Georgi Markov, *op.cit.* Lawyers constituted the majority of UDF elite members, whereas economists were rather few.

councilor from UDF's civil quota.<sup>419</sup> The lack of clear strategy for recruitment and training has been a persistent problem for UDF that has resulted in a serious shortage of qualified cadres.

Another major issue for the UDF elite was the lack of networks of trust. Communist elites were connected through complex and dense networks built over many years of interaction. These networks relied not only on common interest, but on loyalty and trust. UDF was missing such a human resource base. Its network of people was patched together in the course of several months. Unlike members of the communist elite who grew up together, attended the same schools, and worked together, people in the UDF did not know each other. Consequently, there was a lot of mistrust and suspicion among them.

Mistrust was also due to the significant number of former BCP members in the opposition. "A lot of people from BCP crossed over to the opposition," recounts Iskra Baeva, "The Komsomol was the most strongly divided between BCP and UDF."<sup>420</sup> While disillusioned BCP members were destroying their party cards and joining the opposition, some of the early dissidents were reverting back to the Party. This change of allegiance going in both directions raised a lot of doubts about the motivation and real loyalty of former BCP members. There was a lot of talk about "a scenario" and "BSP trying to raise its own opposition" or "infiltrate the opposition."<sup>421</sup> If not accused of infiltration, former communist members were charged with opportunism. After the opposition recovered from its loss in the first elections and started

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<sup>419</sup> Interview with Milena Stefanova, December 18, 2007. "Civil quota" refers to the practice of political parties (initially BSP and later on UDF and other Right parties) to include in their electoral lists distinguished "citizens" who are not members of a party. While in BSP such practice was used to demonstrate BSP's appeal to the citizenry at large (often disguising BSP supporters as independents), in UDF the practice was adopted because of a shortage of political cadres.

<sup>420</sup> Interview with Iskra Baeva, *op.cit.*

<sup>421</sup> This is the view of many members of the UDF elite. Zaltka Ruseva for example argues that, "UDF was intended to be an opposition created and controlled by the communists. They sent Chavdar Kyuranov to create UDF." (Interview with Zlatka Ruseva, *op.cit.*) Another UDF activist argues that "the communists fabricated Zhelev and made a dissident out of him." (Interview with Dimitar Dachkov Popov, Sofia, February 12, 2007)

gaining momentum, there was a second wave of new-comers in UDF. “When it became clear that we are riding the wave”, recounts Nikolai Slatinski, “a lot of people joined UDF with ulterior motives.”<sup>422</sup> Justly or not, these late-comers were always viewed with suspicion. Opportunists could be found on both sides. As Ganev argues, there were a lot of “entrepreneurs” in BSP for whom the party was not the wellspring of cherished values but a vehicle for capitalizing on strategic opportunities (Ganev 1997). Penetrating the ranks of BSP, however, was much more difficult than rising in UDF’s leadership. Therefore, opportunism was much more prevalent in UDF than in BSP, further obstructing the emergence of networks of trust.

The UDF’s “new face” policy was another factor preventing the building of trustful relationships. UDF prided itself in bringing new people into parliament, which it mistakenly equated with increased professionalism.<sup>423</sup> The rate of renewal of the UDF elite was excessive – 78% in 1991 election and 74.8% in 1997 (see fig.8). With 2/3rds of the elite being replaced, there were no conditions for durable relationships of trust to settle in. “The new faces thesis replaced the normal political process of building party cadres with the thesis of accidental political choice,” argues former chair of parliament, Alexander Yordanov. “Everyone was able to get to any position at any time even without being a UDF member. This had nothing to do with the regular renewal of a political organization.”<sup>424</sup> Arbitrary political appointments, heavily practiced by Kostov as part of his strategy to restructure UDF, brought a lot of people in UDF leadership who had no prior history in the organization. Even when such appointments were promoting qualified people, they interrupted any kind of continuity within UDF leadership. Being burdened with unreasonable expectations, these “new faces” rarely had the chance to

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<sup>422</sup> Interview with Nikolai Slatinski, *op.cit.*

<sup>423</sup> “Two Thirds of the Names in UDF’s Parliamentary Group are New: The Coalition is Renewing Itself and Giving Way to Professionalism,” *Democraziya*, October 18, 1991.

<sup>424</sup> Interview with Alexander Yordanov, *op.cit.*

prove their skills before being dismissed as incompetent. The “new face” policy and the ensuing excessive rate of renewal prevented the cultivation of loyal cadres and the building of networks of trust. “Gradually with time, it became clear that trust is extremely important – knowing the people, building an organizational structure, and creating opportunities for growth within the political structure,” recounts Ekaterina Mihailova.<sup>425</sup> This realization took almost a decade.

In 1999, Kostov attempted to address the structural and cadre problems within UDF by transforming the coalition into a single party, a decision that proved a double-edged sword. By transforming into a unified party, UDF was eliminating ever-present tensions between its member-organizations. Creating a hierarchical structure, however, alienated a lot of the UDF-member organizations, particularly the bigger parties such as the Democratic Party (DP), the Bulgarian Social Democratic Party (BSDP) and the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (BANU). Consequently, UDF lost a large number of its supporters. This negative effect was not immediately felt as UDF formed a coalition with DP, BSDP and BANU – the United Democratic Forces – which governed between 1997 and 2001. Following the unexpected big loss in the 2001 election, the coalition fell apart and UDF was faced with the consequences of its transformation into a unified party. UDF has since witnessed an ever declining support base (table 8). Many members of the UDF elite criticized the decision to change UDF’s structure and were even more critical of Kostov’s leadership. Because of his authoritative style and practice of handing out party positions, Kostov is frequently referred to as “the Commander,” while his 1995-2001 tenure as chair of UDF as “the period of obedience.” Despite its undeniable success in repairing the economy and orienting the country towards NATO and EU memberships, Kostov’s government was never able to dissipate critiques of corruption, clientelism, and illegal

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<sup>425</sup> Interview with Ekaterina Mihailova, *op.cit.*

privatization deals lacking transparency. Its success in bringing about political and economic stabilization proved insufficient to assure UDF's unity and voter support.

**Table 8. Decline of UDF electoral support**

|            | 1990*  | 1991   | 1994   | 1997   | 2001   | 2005  | 2009*   |
|------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|---------|
| <b>UDF</b> | 28.50% | 34.36% | 24.23% | 52.26% | 18.18% | 7.68% | 6.76%** |
| <b>DSB</b> |        |        |        |        |        | 6.44% |         |

\*Elections utilizing a hybrid model of proportionate and majoritarian districts

\*\* In the 2009 elections, UDF formed the Blue Coalition with Democrats for Strong Bulgaria (DSB), a party that branched out of UDF in 2004, headed by former UDF leader Ivan Kostov.

UDF elite is characterized by an overrepresentation from Sofia and very rapid circulation. UDF consistently holds the highest number and percentage of Sofia members in the elite for the 1990-2001 period. In 1990 for example, the number of Sofia-born members of the UDF elite is more than double that of BSP, representing over half of total Sofia elite (40 out of 70). By contrast, the UDF has significantly lower percent of village-born elite compared to BSP and MRF, ranging between 9% and 28% (fig. 9). Such data is consistent with UDF's structure concentrated in Sofia and the big cities, and UDF's pool of recruitment focused primarily on Sofia intellectuals and professionals. UDF also has the youngest Sofia elites, largely because the Independent Confederation of Student Associations was a UDF-member organization. In terms of age, there are no significant fluctuations within the UDF elite. The mean age varies between 43 and 51, and the mode between 41 and 52 for 1990-2001. UDF elite exhibits little physical continuity and an excessively high rate of renewal – 78% following the 1991 election and 74.8% after the 1997 election. The 1994 election resulted in a more moderate rate of renewal (46.7%) due to the fact that UDF lost the elections and the number of its representatives in the political elite (as defined in this study) decreased. The relatively recent formation of UDF makes it impossible to test the UDF elite for generational continuity.

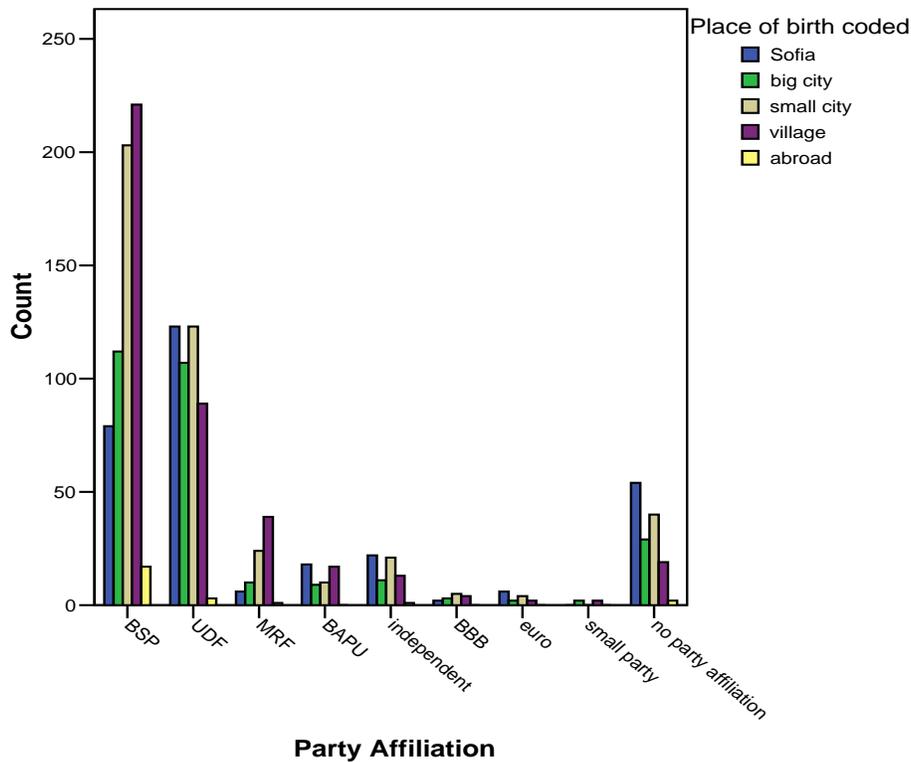


Figure 9. Place of birth by party (cumulative for 1990-2001)

Fast circulation and overrepresentation of Sofia intellectuals and professionals indicates a cadre policy that failed to create the foundation upon which a loyal, qualified and broadly supported elite could emerge. The lack of cadres was one of the major reasons for UDF’s inability to effectively challenge BSP’s power in the early years of the transition. “Unfortunately, UDF attracted a lot of scum,” argues Alexander Karakachanov. “It is logical. You start building an opposition that doesn't have an ideological base, human resources, connections, and trust built over the years. There were a lot of bad apples in UDF.”<sup>426</sup> Such cadre policy incapacitated UDF and contributed to the rise of internal conflicts which have continuously ruptured the opposition.

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<sup>426</sup> Interview with Alexander Karakachanov, *op.cit.*

### 6.2.3 Intra-elite Conflict

Throughout its existence, UDF has been subject to perpetual internal conflicts. The sources of conflict were ideological, structural, and identity-related. Ideological disagreement was embedded in UDF's eclectic and politically diverse character. Although all member organizations declared themselves to be anti-communist, some were far more extreme than others. This led to a split within UDF between moderates and radicals. Radicals took an extreme anti-communist position, rejecting any conciliation with the former communist party, calling for exclusion of the communist elite from political life, i.e. lustration, and direct confrontation with the BSP. Because of its repressive past, they argued, BSP was morally compromised and had forfeited the right to participate in democratic politics. Moderates, in turn, were more open to negotiation with BSP, especially in the context of political and economic crisis when, in their view, the national interest should precede party interests. Hence, they were willing to work with BSP on a "national consensus" on the future political and economic development of the country. "We needed to agree with the Communist Party on a program for the transition as whole," argues Petko Simeonov, "reach a national consensus on the parameters of the transition. No matter who comes to power, we follow this program."<sup>427</sup> It was under the influence of the moderates that UDF agreed to occupy two ministerial positions in Dimitar Popov's coalition government (December 1990 – November 1991). The radicals considered this decision a mistake. "Creating Dimitar Popov's government, under the banner that Bulgaria is in bad condition and a government needs to be formed for the purpose of national salvation, blurred the line between those in power and the opposition," contends Alexander Yordanov, "Educating society in the

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<sup>427</sup> Interview with Petko Simeonov, *op.cit.*

spirit of democracy requires a clear distinction between who is in power and who is in opposition.”<sup>428</sup>

While participation in the Popov government was a point of contention between radicals and moderates, it was disagreement over the new constitution that resulted in the first major split within the opposition. Convinced that it would be victorious in a free election with BCP, the UDF pressed at the Round Table Negotiations for a Great National Assembly and a new democratic constitution. With a BSP majority in parliament, however, the radicals in UDF became to view the new constitution as preserving and legitimizing a political force still faithful to its communist agenda. A constitution adopted by a BSP-dominated parliament, they further argued, could not be democratic. In protest of the adoption of the new constitution, 39 MPs from UDF left parliament in May 1991 and declared a hunger strike. The moderates who remained in parliament and signed the constitution were accused of collaboration with the communists. “Our feeling was that the signing of the constitution is a way for the moderates in UDF to dominate over the more radical ones,” recalls Nikolai Slatinski.<sup>429</sup> The divide over the constitution took on a grotesque public form with clashes between the 39 and the police and exchange of insults in the media, including UDF’s own daily publication, *Democraziya*.<sup>430</sup> Although the 39 achieved their goal of disbanding the Great National Assembly and scheduling elections, ideological disagreements within UDF led to a split of the coalition to UDF-movement, UDF-center (BSPD and Ekoglasnost) and UDF-liberals (Green Party and Federation of the Clubs of Democracy). Consequently, UDF votes were dispersed in the following 1991 election, resulting in a landslide

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<sup>428</sup> Interview with Alexander Yordanov, *op.cit.*

<sup>429</sup> Interview with Nikolai Slatinski, *op.cit.*

<sup>430</sup> “Sofians Welcomed the MPs Who Left the Rotten Parliament: Open Letter of 159 Intellectuals,” *Democraziya*, May 17, 1991. “Address to the Bulgarian People from UDF’s NCC: the UDF MPs who remained in a BSP-dominated parliament are collaborating with BSP and are impeding immediate change of the system and instead promoting Soviet-type reforms of the perestroika kind,” *Democraziya*, May 31, 1991.

victory for UDF-movement (rather than what could have been a convincing victory had there been no split) and no parliamentary seats for UDF-center and UDF-liberals.

UDF's division into three separate formations was also an expression of embedded structural conflict, namely the ever-present tension between small and large parties in the coalition. There was a pronounced competition between the various UDF-member organizations over electoral lists, parliamentary committees, nomination and electoral procedures within UDF, etc. Since each member organization had equal votes in the Coordination Council regardless of its size, large parties often felt their interests were poorly served. Convinced that the majority of UDF electorate carried their particular vote, large parties demanded greater say in UDF's decisions. Frustrated with the Coordination Council and sure of their independent political value, large parties often contemplated leaving the coalition. The loss of the first elections did not help in curbing such tendencies. On the contrary, in subsequent elections three major parties (BSDP, BANU, and DP) split from the Union, a move which ultimately cost them their seats in parliament. Their voter support was not always large enough to secure parliamentary representation, but was large enough to seriously damage UDF's vote count both in 1991 and 1994.<sup>431</sup> It was not until the 1997 elections that those parties rejoined UDF in the winning coalition of the United Democratic Forces.

In addition to ideological and structural conflicts, UDF suffered from an identity crisis. UDF's eclectic character, chaotic mode of recruitment, and lack of networks of trust made it very difficult for its members to develop a sense of common origin and construct an agreed-upon history. While BSP has accepted its long history, including the repressive communist regime it imposed on the country, UDF never agreed on its own origin. In the UDF, argues Koshlukov,

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<sup>431</sup> In 1994, BANU and DP formed the National Union which gained 18 parliamentary seats in the 1994 elections.

arguments were along the lines of who was a secret service agent, is Zhelev a Marxist, and was Kostov planted by the communists.<sup>432</sup> UDF was never able to accept the fact that some of its key founding figures were communist party members who then returned to the Party. Disagreements between radicals and moderates posed a further obstacle to developing a common identity. Consequently, we observe competing identities in UDF with groups within the coalition more concerned about fighting each other than their common opponent BSP. The result of the debate on identity led to a repeated denouncing of UDF leaders by its own cadres.

The UDF has consistently denounced its own leaders from Zhelyu Zhelev to Ivan Kostov. Zhelev's critique of Dimitrov's government resulted in an irreconcilable conflict between the UDF presidency and the UDF government. Zhelev was fiercely attacked in UDF's *Democraziya* and ultimately declared a traitor and collaborator with the communists.<sup>433</sup> Filip Dimitrov, in turn, was criticized for his extreme anti-communist position both by President Zhelev and a significant part of UDF's parliamentary group. Following the collapse of his government in December 1992, 19 MPs left UDF and formed the group of the so-called "ants." The "ants" banded together with MRF and BSP and became critical in getting the necessary vote count for approving the Berov cabinet (December 1992 – October 1994). Kostov did not escape criticisms either. He was accused of rampant corruption that nurtured the "Blue" mafia. This practice of "cannibalism," as Emil Koshlukov terms it, has prevented the opposition from growing and keeping qualified people and from developing continuity in its leadership.

Internal conflict within UDF has not served as a driver of change but rather as an obstacle to following consistent policy, developing common identity, and instituting a sound cadre policy. The public form of such conflict has further alienated voters who were disappointed by the

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<sup>432</sup> Interview with Emil Koshlukov, *op.cit.*

<sup>433</sup> "Zhelyu Zhelev No Longer Represents UDF in the Presidency," *Democraziya*, October 30, 1992.

constant bickering among UDF's leadership. Internal conflicts have also diverted precious energy that could have been utilized for addressing more important and immediate issues.

### 6.3 MOVEMENT FOR RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS (MRF)<sup>434</sup>

#### 6.3.1 Organizing MRF and Mobilizing the Ethnic Turkish Vote

MRF is identified with the Turkish minority in Bulgaria which traces its origins back to Ottoman rule. Founded in January 1990, MRF draws its roots from the Turkish National Liberation Movement of Bulgaria, illegally operating during the renaming process of 1984-1989. The MRF did not participate in the Roundtable talks. Although the question of Turkish ethnic minority representation was raised on several occasions, the MRF never became part of either side of the Round Table negotiations as both the communists and the opposition feared that affiliation with MRF might provoke anti-Turkish sentiments and alienate supporters.<sup>435</sup> Furthermore, Venelin Ganev argues, UDF was hoping to get the ethnic Turkish vote in the upcoming elections and had no interest in a separate organizing of the Turkish minority.<sup>436</sup> In March 1990, MRF held a National Conference where the leading organs of the organization were elected – a Central

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<sup>434</sup> Due to gaps in the primary sources, the analysis of MRF utilizes secondary sources more so than the analysis of BSP and UDF. Interview data does not include informants from MRF and draws on evaluations of MRF by non-MRF members of the elite. As MRF does not have an official daily publication like BSP's *Duma/Rabotnichesko Delo* or UDF's *Democraziya*, media analysis is limited to MRF coverage in *Duma* and *Democraziya*. Analysis of elite rosters is comparable for all political parties. Secondary sources include books and articles by Bulgarian and foreign scholars. These sources focus mostly on the renaming process and ethnic politics in Bulgaria and not as much on MRF as a political party.

<sup>435</sup> MELONE, *op. cit.* P. 261.

<sup>436</sup> GANEV Venelin, "History, Politics and the Constitution: Ethnic Conflict and Constitutional Adjudication in Postcommunist Bulgaria," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 63, No. 1, (Spring 2004), pp. 66-89, p. 70.

Council of 31 members and a Central Operation Bureau of seven members.<sup>437</sup> The founder of MRF, Ahmed Dogan (a.k.a. Medi Doganov) was elected chair.

MRF was officially registered in the Sofia District Court in April 1990 which allowed it to participate in the June 1990 elections for the Great National Assembly and receive 23 parliamentary seats. In light of the law banning political parties formed on an ethnic basis passed by the last communist parliament, the exact circumstances surrounding MRF's registration remain unclear. Although MRF is unambiguously affiliated with the Turkish minority in Bulgaria who constitute 90% of its membership,<sup>438</sup> the Sofia District Court authorized its registration. The widely shared consensus among Bulgarian political analysts regarding MRF's mysterious registration, as Ganev points, is that this act was engineered by BSP leaders bent upon controlling the ethnic party.<sup>439</sup> Ganev's rationale for such argument is that in the spring of 1990 the Sofia District Court, just like any other judicial institution in Bulgaria, was completely subservient to communist authorities. In his view, there is no reason to doubt that the court was following party orders when allowing MRF to register. Such explanation, however, does not fit with the fact that BSP was one of the fiercest opponents to MRF's participation in politics as a legitimate political organization,<sup>440</sup> In October 1992, 93 BSP MPs submitted a petition to the newly established Constitutional Court demanding MRF be declared unconstitutional. The petition rested upon the newly adopted Bulgarian Constitution which outlawed political parties formed on an ethnic, racial, and religious basis, and was part of a massive anti-Turkish campaign

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<sup>437</sup> The official appearance of MRF is reflected both in BCP's newspaper *Rabotnichesko Delo* and UDF's daily *Democraziya*. See, "Demonstration in Kardzhali in support of peaceful transition organized by MRF," *Rabotnichesko Delo*, March 12, 1990, "One trip with Ahmed Dogan: 'we never demanded autonomy,'" *Democraziya*, March 2, 1990.

<sup>438</sup> BROUN Janice, "Rehabilitation and Recovery: Bulgaria's Muslim Communities," *Religion, State & Society*, Vol. 35, No. 2, June 2007, pp 105-138, p. 110.

<sup>439</sup> GANEV, 2004, *op.cit.*, p. 70.

<sup>440</sup> BROUN, *op.cit.*, p. 110.

launched by BSP activists, among whom current President, Georgi Parvanov. After several months of deliberation, the Constitutional court rejected the petition and affirmed the constitutionality of MRF.<sup>441</sup>

It is still plausible that, fearing escalation of ethnic tensions rather than attempting to control MRF, the communists influenced the decision of the Sofia District Court. BCP's decree of December 29, 1989 condemning the assimilation campaign of 1984-1989 and restoring the names and religious freedoms of ethnic Turks was met with a wave of protest by ethnic Bulgarians from regions with mixed population and by party activists who had built their careers upon the renaming process. This nationalist mobilization of ethnic Bulgarians evoked a counter-mobilization both of ethnic Turks and a number of human rights organizations. The series of protests and counter-protests continued for several weeks in January and February 1990, until a council was formed to draft a declaration on the "National Question" (this is how the issue of restoration of rights to ethnic Turks was labeled), which was then endorsed by Parliament.<sup>442</sup> Political leaders on both sides were scared by the January protests and the threat of ethnic conflict. In this context, communist influence over the court does seem plausible.

With MRF officially registered, mobilizing the ethnic Turkish vote was not difficult. As Gruev and Kalionski justly argue, the renaming process and assimilation campaign produced a counter-effect in halting the gradual assimilation and integration of ethnic Turks and strengthening ethnic group identity.<sup>443</sup> Soon after its start in 1984, the assimilation campaign escalated into what was for all intents and purposes a military operation, Ganev recounts,

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<sup>441</sup> For a detailed analysis of the Constitutional Court decision see, GANEV, 2004, *op.cit.*

<sup>442</sup> For a detailed account of the January protests, see, Peter STAMATOV, "The Making of a 'Bad' Public: Ehtnonational Mobilization in Post-Communist Bulgaria," *Theory and Society*, Vol. 29, No. 4, (Aug., 2000), pp. 549-572.

<sup>443</sup> GRUEV Mihail and Alexei KALIONSKI, *The "Revival Process." Muslim Communities and the communist Regime: Policies, Reactions and Consequences* (in Bulgarian), Ciela, 2008, p. 195.

resulting in several hundred civilian casualties.<sup>444</sup> Mass beatings, imprisonment, labor camps, and internments constituted but a part of the methods of repression employed, yet, they failed to uproot resistance. The communist regime was facing increased unrest by ethnic Turks that culminated in the May protests. The May protests were a turning point in Bulgarian ethnic politics as they demonstrated both to communist rulers and the international community the existence of a cohesive ethnic minority which, despite continued repression, was quite capable of organizing politically. The immediate response was a change in government policy from forced assimilation to strongly encouraged voluntary exile, bordering on ethnic cleansing. The ensued “Great Excursion” and open anti-Turkish campaign in the state-controlled media<sup>445</sup> only further politicized the Turkish minority, now the focus of international attention. Thus, by the time the communist regime collapsed, Bulgaria had a strongly mobilized ethnic Turkish minority waiting to be united under a banner. All MRF had to do is raise that banner. The unity the ethnic Turkish community found in 1985-89, argues Dimitrov, has provided a basis for the virtually unchallenged acceptance of MRF as its legitimate representative in the Bulgarian political system.<sup>446</sup> In assessing the legacy of the renaming process, Gruev and Kalionski keenly observe that the most enduring political consequence of the campaign is the emergence of an influential and controversial factor in political life such as MRF.<sup>447</sup>

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<sup>444</sup> GANEV, 2004, *op.cit.*, p 68.

<sup>445</sup> Starting in June 1989, BCP’s newspaper *Rabotnichesk Delo* published daily articles criticizing Turkey on various issues such human rights violations against the Kurdish minority, maltreatment of Bulgarian “tourists,” etc. For some examples see, “Turkey returns Bulgarian tourists,” *Rabotnichesk Delo*, June 18, 1990; “Turkey – public discontent with the government,” *Rabotnichesk Delo*, July 3, 1990; “BBC on the human rights violations in Turkey,” *Rabotnichesk Delo*, July 23, 1990; “Closing the Turkish border is inhumane,” *Rabotnichesk Delo*, August 24, 1990; “Turkey enforces new restrictions on issuing visas to Bulgarian citizens,” *Rabotnichesk Delo*, September 26, 1990; “Ivan Garvalov criticizes Turkey’s attempt to use UN General Assembly for a tribune to attack Bulgaria,” *Rabotnichesk Delo*, October 5, 1990.

<sup>446</sup> DIMITROV Vesselin, “In Search of a Homogeneous Nation: The Assimilation of Bulgaria’s Turkish Minority, 1984-1985,” *Journal of Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, Vol. 1. Issue 4, 2000, pp. 1-22, p. 18.

<sup>447</sup> GRUEV and KALIONSKI, *op.cit.*, p. 194.

### 6.3.2 Structure and Mode of Recruitment

From the very first post-communist elections, MRF established itself as the third largest political party in the country after BSP and UDF. Today MRF continues to be the third political force in the country, although UDF is no longer among the top political players. MRF draws its support primarily from ethnic Turks who constitute 9.4% of the country's population, but also from other Muslim groups such as Pomaks<sup>448</sup> and Muslim Roma. MRF further claims to have 12,000 ethnic Bulgarian members, not clarifying whether the Pomaks, who are ethnically Bulgarian, are included in this number.<sup>449</sup> MRF has been continuously accused of playing an unfair game by mobilizing Bulgarian ethnic Turks who have emigrated to Turkey but still hold Bulgarian citizenship and are thus eligible to vote in the country's national elections. Although "voting tourism" from Turkey is a well-known fact, it is hardly the main factor contributing to MRF's continued electoral success. MRF has a very disciplined and stable electorate concentrated in the regions with mixed population – Kardzhali, Razgrad, Silistra, Shumen, Targovishte, and Blagoevgrad. The majority of MRF's voters are employed in agriculture and fall within the low-income category. They view MRF as the only voice defending their interests. This suffering, uneducated electorate is easy to mobilize, argues historian Dragomir Draganov.<sup>450</sup> Indeed, its hard-core electorate has guaranteed MRF seats in every post-communist parliament. Fluctuation

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<sup>448</sup> Pomaks are descendants of ethnic Bulgarians who were converted to Islam during the Ottoman rule. Though Muslim, the majority of Pomaks do not speak Turkish.

<sup>449</sup> Speech by Yunal Lyutfi at the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of MRF. Available online at: <http://www.dps.bg/cgi-bin/e-cms/vis/vis.pl?s=001&p=0022&n=&vis=>

<sup>450</sup> Interview with Prof. Dragomir Draganov, professor of History at Sofia University and former MP from BSP and the Euroleft, Sofia, February 19, 2007.

in the electoral votes and number of parliamentary seats, however, indicates that MRF also attracts swing voters outside of the hard-core ethnic Turkish electorate.<sup>451</sup>

The MRF has a highly centralized structure organized on a territorial basis with regional, municipal, and local councils. Membership in the organization requires approval by the local council. MRF's estimated membership is around 60,000. In 1997, MRF created its own youth organization currently enlisting 19,500 members. The Youth MRF mimics the centralized, territorial-based structure of its parent organization. In addition, MRF has recently developed a network of women's associations whose activities complement those of the regional party organizations.<sup>452</sup>

The MRF is a leader-centered party organized around its founder and leader, Ahmed Dogan. Also one of the founders and activists of the Turkish National Liberation Movement, for which he was repeatedly imprisoned before 1989, Ahmed Dogan has been the sole leader of MRF throughout its 20 year-long existence. Dogan is declared by his own party to be the main strategist, ideologue and generator of initiatives and ideas in MRF. The existence and success of MRF, in the words of one of MRF's top leaders Yunal Lyutfi, is grounded in the personality of Ahmed Dogan.<sup>453</sup> The statute of the party gives a wide range of prerogatives to the leader, including single-handed approval of candidates for parliament and county mayors, as well as proposing the structure and composition of the Central Operation Bureau. The broad powers

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<sup>451</sup> MRF received 23 seats in the 1990 Great National Assembly, 24 seats in the 1991 36<sup>th</sup> National Assembly, 17 in the 1994 37<sup>th</sup> National Assembly, and 19 in the 1997 38<sup>th</sup> National Assembly. Its electoral base has significantly increased in recent years. MRF has been part of the governing coalitions of two cabinets, holding 21 seats in the 39<sup>th</sup> National Assembly, 34 seats in the 40<sup>th</sup> National Assembly, and 38 seats in the 41<sup>st</sup> National Assembly.

<sup>452</sup> "The mission of [MRF's] Women's Association is to actively work towards strengthening the party and increasing its influence in the public space," argues the chair of DPS's Women Association, Sevgyul Halilova. See, "Благотворителен Великденски концерт, организиран от женското дружество на ДПС в град София и Областния съвет на ДПС," April 13, 2009. Available online at: <http://www.dps.bg/cgi-bin/e-cms/vis/vis.pl?s=001&p=0031&n=000004&g=>

<sup>453</sup> Speech by Yunal Lyutfi at the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of MRF, *op.cit.*

vested in Dogan as MRF's chair, in combination with what resembles a personality cult, make for a party with a rather authoritarian character. A testimony to this authoritarian flavor is the fact that most internal conflicts within MRF's leadership end up with the expulsion of key leadership figures such as Osman Oktai, Gyuner Tahir, and Mehmed Hodza, all of them formerly close associates of Dogan. Dogan's eventual departure as MRF's chair may bring in some changes to MRF's structure and mode of operation. At the moment, MRF as an organization is far from democratic, and its operation is subject primarily to the discretion of its leader.<sup>454</sup>

The leader-centered character of MRF and Dogan's authoritative style have also played a positive role in arresting internal conflicts in their early stages. MRF has remained united throughout its existence and has not experienced factionalism and splits among its ranks. Ahmed Dogan's strong authoritative leadership has certainly been a factor contributing to MRF's unity. MRF's ethnic-based character and agenda oriented towards the ethnic Turkish minority have further contributed to the unity of the party. Although some alternative Turkish organizations have appeared in recent years, they have been unable to gather enough political clout to compete with MRF for parliamentary seats.<sup>455</sup> Thus, MRF is viewed by many members of the ethnic Turkish minority as the sole voice representing their interests. Minchev strongly criticizes MRF for monopolizing the ethnic Turkish vote and *de facto* depriving ethnic Turks of genuine free choice.<sup>456</sup> Indeed, at least 90% of the ethnic Turkish vote is cast in favor of MRF, and ethnic Turks are hardly found in political parties other than MRF. Given a continuously present

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<sup>454</sup> One informant whom I cannot identify in relation to this quote, grotesquely characterized MRF as a one-man party which mimics a sultanistic regime and would not exist without its leader.

<sup>455</sup> Since 1989, four Turkish political organizations have appeared in Bulgaria – MRF, Demokratik Gelişim Hareketi (Democratic Development Movement), Demokratik Adalet Partisi (Democratic Justice Party), and Türk Demokrat Partisi (Turkish Democratic Party). Only MRF has been able to gain seats in the National Assembly.

<sup>456</sup> See, Ognyan MINCHEV, "The Case of Turkey in the EU," Institute for Regional International Studies Strategic Papers Collection, 2006.

hostility towards MRF by one or another party in the political arena,<sup>457</sup> ethnic Turks aspiring to a career in politics find few opportunities for realization outside of MRF. Hostility by other political parties has further contributed to an increased internal cohesion and unity.<sup>458</sup>

MRF is a closed organization with extremely restricted access to leadership positions. In the early years, recruitment was limited primarily to activists of the Turkish National Liberation Movement of Bulgaria, who had proven their loyalty and dedication to MRF's cause through prison sentences and continued persecution. With the founding of MRF's youth organization, the party has adopted a long-term strategy of recruitment and training of cadres. MRF invests in education abroad for its youth activists, runs leadership workshops, and offers opportunities for direct participation by young cadres in party affairs. The youth organization is actively involved in campaigning, program formulation, and daily operations of the party. Consequently, the MRF heavily depends on its youth organization for supply of new cadres. Recruitment to positions of leadership is almost exclusively from the inside and further conditioned upon an exemplary record of party activism and to a large extent upon Turkish ethnicity.<sup>459</sup>

My failed attempts to secure an interview with any MRF leader is a good example of the degree to which this organization is closed to outsiders. Although I had approached MRF through several high-level channels, such as MP's from other parliamentary groups, civil organizations who have worked on joint projects with MRF, and personal contacts of particular leaders, I have failed in the course of 18 months to schedule an interview with a single MRF representative. I was instead referred to a youth activist who questioned me at length about the

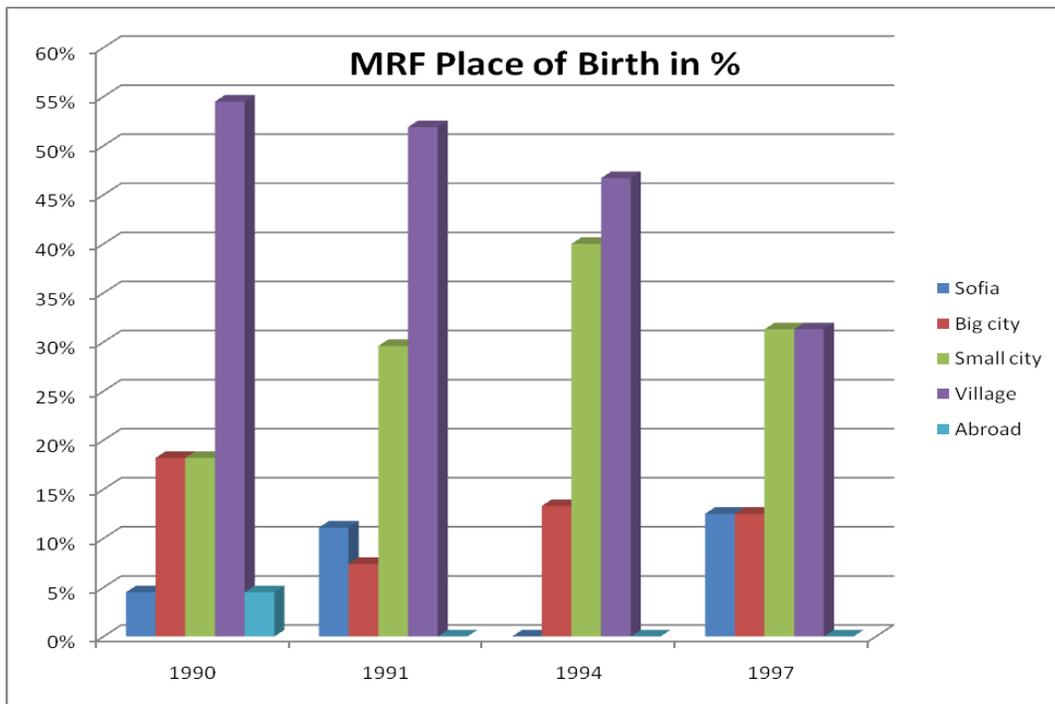
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<sup>457</sup> Both BSP and UDF have expressed open hostility towards MRF, BSP in 1990-1992 and UDF most recently in the 2009 electoral campaign. New political parties such as the nationalist Ataka and the current governing party GERB have launched fierce campaigns against MRF in recent years.

<sup>458</sup> For a theoretical explanation of the link between internal hostility and internal cohesion see Chapter 3.

<sup>459</sup> Of the 80 MRF MPs for the 1990-1998 period, 10 have Bulgarian names, which in light of the renaming process is not necessarily an indication of Bulgarian ethnicity.

nature and purpose of my research project, my academic credentials, and my personal interest in the research topic and MRF in particular, but did not assist me in getting an interview. This experience gave me some insight into the nature of the organization – one that is completely impenetrable for outsiders, has a serious approach to training of cadres through its youth organization which also serves as a gatekeeper, and is overly suspicious about releasing any information. In light of the persecutions ethnic Turkish activists were subjected to during the communist regime, the still prevailing general attitude of suspicion is understandable. This, however, does not explain the highly undemocratic, leader-centered character of MRF echoing that of the communist party under Zhivkov.



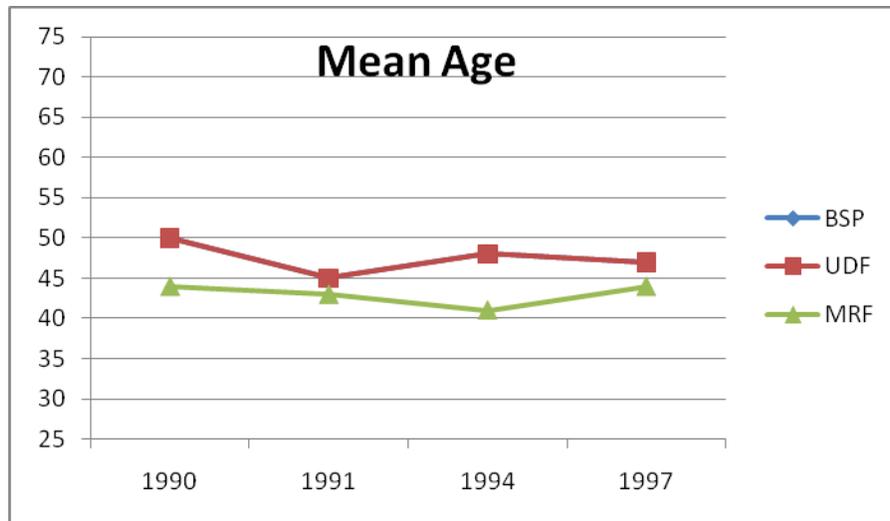
**Figure 10. MRF place of birth as percent of total MRF elite**

The MRF has been very stable in terms of composition and aggregate characteristics of its elite. Analysis of elite rosters indicates that MRF members of the elite are younger on average than

their BSP and UDF counterparts – an indication of the active involvement of youth activists (fig. 11). Three quarters of MRF elite members came from small agglomerates – villages or small towns. More than half of them were born in villages and only three were born in the capital city Sofia (fig. 10). Such results are expected given the fact that the majority of ethnic Turks live in rural regions and are occupied in agriculture. MRF elite for the 1990-2001 period are almost exclusively members of parliament with only two representatives in appointed positions. This is consistent with the fact that during that period MRF did not participate in the government, except for one ministerial post in 1992-1994, and did not have the opportunity to make political appointments. Overall, there is no marked change in the composition and aggregate characteristics of the MRF elite for the examined period. The range, minimum and maximum age, as well as average age are very similar for all years.<sup>460</sup> The village remains consistently the modal place of birth for the entire period. The MRF's representation in parliament consists of six key individuals present in every National Assembly between 1990 and 2001. In addition to this core, which represents a quarter to a third of MRF's parliamentary group depending on the year, there is a flow of incoming and outgoing members. Thus, MRF elite demonstrates a very healthy combination of change and continuity in its composition. With the establishment of its youth organization in 1997, MRF was able to secure a steady flow of new, trained cadres and has managed to preserve this balance of change and continuity in its elite to the present day.

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<sup>460</sup> An exception is 1997 which has a similar average age (44), but smaller range (20 as opposed to 40), and a higher minimum age.



\*UDF and BSP values are identical.

**Figure 11. MRF mean age in comparison to BSP and UDF**

### 6.3.3 Role in Politics

The MRF is often viewed as a controversial factor in Bulgarian politics mainly because it has been in coalition with every major party in parliament, switching sides with each subsequent election. MRF and UDF acted as logical allies in the Great National Assembly, (July 1990 – July 1991) united against BSP by the common anti-communist cause. During the split in UDF on the constitution issue, MRF sided with the radical wing and refused to sign the new constitution. After the 1991 UDF electoral victory, MRF supported the new UDF government, although it was not offered a single ministerial post in return. MRF's support was short-lived as MRF was growing increasingly discontented both with UDF's curt treatment of its coalition partner and UDF's policy of privatization and land reform, which was hitting directly MRF's electorate. The intent of the UDF government to open the secret service files further left MRF threatened, as half

of its parliamentary group turned out to be DS agents, including Dogan. Thus, MRF voted against UDF in a vote of confidence which led to the collapse of the first UDF government.

UDF leaders are anything but critical of MRF's decision. A recurring argument forwarded by every interviewed member of the UDF elite is that UDF should have given MRF a ministerial position and secured its support. "They were voting in line with us like soldiers", recounts constitutional court judge, Georgi Makrov, "and we didn't do simple things such as invite them for coffee. We didn't give them due attention."<sup>461</sup> Filip Dimitrov in turn argues that it was the split within UDF that was the main reason for the fall of the government. "I didn't fail because of Dogan and I can't blame him for his policy in 1992", he holds. "Besides, I received 120 votes in the confidence vote. That means that at least part of Dogan's group voted for me. I wonder whether it is possible that Dogan's entire group voted for me and my people didn't."<sup>462</sup>

The Berov cabinet was formed with MRF mandate and supported by MRF, BSP, and the group of the "ants" – the 19 MPs from UDF who had split from the blue parliamentary group. "This was a big step for MRF – receiving a mandate to form a government," points Filip Dimitrov.<sup>463</sup> MRF had only one representative in the new cabinet, therefore, it did not become identified with Berov's rule or the ensuing criticisms of the government for protecting corporate and mafia interests. The Berov cabinet was subject to strong BSP influence, relying on tacit support from MRF. With the subsequent early elections in 1994, MRF switched sides again and was in strong opposition to BSP and the government of Zhan Videnov. MRF and UDF once again found each other to be natural allies and advocates of reform. Once again their coalition

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<sup>461</sup> Interview with Georgi Markov, *op.cit.*

<sup>462</sup> Interview with Filip Dimitrov, *op.cit.* UDF had 110 MPs at the time.

<sup>463</sup> *Ibid.*

proved fragile and MRF withdrew its support soon after UDF scored a convincing electoral victory in 1997.

Thus, in the course of eight years, MRF switched its allegiance between UDF and BSP three times, contributed to the collapse of the first UDF government and consequently received a mandate to form a government. While some criticize MRF for what appears opportunistic behavior, many analysts view it as a balancer and mediator in the BSP/UDF-dominated political model which took shape during the transition (Broun 2007, Dimitrov 2000, Ganev 2006). “MRF has been a balancing element,” argues Draganov. “It has taken a liberal position, joining one group when it is short of votes then the other.”<sup>464</sup> MRF’s tendency to switch political partners has been viewed as positive also in contributing to a shift from a bi-polar political model to a coalition-government formula. MRF has played a determining role in coalition politics, Broun asserts.<sup>465</sup> Its stable representation in parliament and its internal cohesiveness has rendered MRF a desired political partner both for BSP and UDF. MRF’s goals as a political party, in turn, have been compatible with UDF’s agenda at certain times and with BSP’s at others. MRF found common ground with UDF in its anti-communist stance and dedication to the building of a democratic system, entailing protection of human rights and equal treatment of ethnic and religious minorities. In 1992, Dimitrov points out, MRF switched its allegiance from UDF to BSP in response to the latter's more gradual policies of transition which appealed to the overwhelmingly poor and rural constituents of the MRF.<sup>466</sup> Hence, MRF has found itself siding with BSP on issues like social policy, protection of agricultural workers, and protection of

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<sup>464</sup> Interview with Prof. Dragomir Draganov, *op.cit.*

<sup>465</sup> BROUN, *op.cit.*, p. 111.

<sup>466</sup> DIMITROV, *op.cit.*, p. 18.

agricultural land.<sup>467</sup> For its 20 years of existence, MRF has crystallized its political orientation and taken a centrist-liberal position, joining in 2003 the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats in Europe (ALDE)<sup>468</sup> and the Liberal International. By participating in two consecutive coalition governments,<sup>469</sup> MRF has proved its role in coalition building and has indeed contributed to the development of a coalition model of government, which has prevailed since the 2001 elections.<sup>470</sup>

MRF's connection with the former security services (*Darzhavna Sigurnost*) has been a major reason for MRF's controversial image. The MRF includes a steady number of former DS agents among its MPs in all parliaments. MRF also has the highest percent of former DS agents among its MPs, ranging from 37% to 53.3% for the 1990 –1998 period (see Chapter Seven). In addition to its leader, Ahmed Dogan, many of MRF's key political figures have also been confirmed as former DS agents. The role of DS in the renaming process provides a logical explanation for the high percent of DS agents in MRF. As Gruev and Kalionski argue, DS was a key instrument in the preparation and implementation of the renaming process, adopting various methods of repression including violence, recruitment into the DS, and more, all through November 1989.<sup>471</sup> The ethnic Turkish population and leaders within the Turkish community in particular, have been the prime target for DS persecutions but also for recruitment into the security apparatus. Infiltrating the Turkish community and the illegal Turkish organizations

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<sup>467</sup> "For the First Time MRF Betrayed UDF on Land Reform – MRF Sides with BSP on the Need to Give Land to Poor Peasants," *Duma*, February 8, 1992.

<sup>468</sup> ALDE is the third largest political group in the European Parliament, holding the balance of power between the left and right.

<sup>469</sup> MRF formed a coalition government with the winner of the 2001 parliamentary elections, the National Movement Simeon II (NDSV). In 2005, MRF took part in a governing coalition with BSP and NDSV.

<sup>470</sup> Although the last Bulgarian government includes only members of the GERB party (Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria), the government relies on parliamentary support from the nationalist movement Ataka and the Blue Coalition (UDF and DSB), none of which are in a formal coalition agreement with GERB.

<sup>471</sup> GRUEV and KALIONSKI, *op.cit.*, p. 134.

operating during the renaming process was a major component of the regime's strategy of combating resistance. In fact, 13 of the 20 former DS agents among MRF MPs for the period had been active in the 1980's through 1990. The fact that former DS agents are overwhelmingly more represented in MRF in comparison to other parties made MRF more vulnerable to blackmailing and outside pressure throughout the 1990s, when secret service files were still sealed.<sup>472</sup>

In recent years, MRF has been frequently criticized for taking hold of strong financial positions which it uses in an extremely partisan way. Minchev argues that MRF has been engaged in a dynamic process of concentration of economic resources, gained by corrupt redistribution through the power positions of the Movement, and has been cultivating a "ring of companies" and business people, directly subordinated to the political leadership and to the leader of the MRF himself.<sup>473</sup> MRF's hold on key ministries such as Agriculture and Forestry, Environment and Water, and Disaster Management between 2005 and 2009 certainly provided access to large resources as well as opportunities for corruptive practices. A number of informants on both side of the political spectrum have referred to Ahmed Dogan, and MRF respectively, as someone who "mixes money and power in a way it is unclear which comes first," "makes active use of power," and "takes advantage of power." Ganev explains MRF's unchecked corruptive practices as the result of a "social bribery fund." A social bribery fund, as defined by Ernest Gellner (Gellner 1983), refers to "buying off social aggression with material enhancements." Faced with a very real prospect of ethnic conflict in 1989-91, Ganev contends,

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<sup>472</sup> For a detailed discussion of the former secret service, see Chapter 7.

<sup>473</sup> MINCHEV, *op.cit.*, p. 13.

leaders of the major parties wisely decided to rely on such a fund.<sup>474</sup> Hence, corrupt allocation of market opportunities was tolerated by all sides all throughout the 1990s. With the MRF gaining access to ministerial positions in 2001, MRF's financial ambitions increased as did Dogan's unwillingness to share the spoils with the growing number of economic agents. This rather crude misuse of the social bribery fund increased tensions between MRF and other political parties and annoyed the population.<sup>475</sup>

The importance of the social bribery fund in preserving ethnic peace is not to be overstated, as Ganev himself cautions. The main factor in preventing ethnic violence during the transition remains MRF's moderate and restrained policy. "Ahmed could have stirred ethnic conflict, but he was behaving rationally in that respect and did not allow extremism to settle in," Alexander Karakachanov holds.<sup>476</sup> "The person who contributed most to preventing bloodshed was Dogan. Ethnic conflict was prevented because there were reasonable people on both sides, but also because Dogan did not allow the repressed to radicalize," Filip Dimitrov concurs.<sup>477</sup> Ahmed Dogan is unanimously credited by both UDF and BSP members of the elite as the key figure contributing to the preservation of ethnic peace in the country. To describe Bulgaria as an ethnic idyll would be too simplistic and misleading, argues Zhelyazkova.<sup>478</sup> Bulgaria did experience ethnic tensions in the case of the January 1990 protests and the campaign against MRF's registration in court. Nevertheless, analysts agree that MRF leadership helped Bulgaria to avoid the radicalization of ethnic politics which overtook Yugoslavia (Broun 2008, Ganev 2006,

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<sup>474</sup> GANEV Venelin, "Ballots, Bribes, and State Building in Bulgaria," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 17, No. 1, (January 2006), pp. 75-89, p. 85.

<sup>475</sup> The 2009 electoral campaign for National Assembly relied heavily on anti-MRF propaganda, in synch with the increased discontent with MRF's corruption schemes.

<sup>476</sup> Interview with Alexander Karkachanov, *op.cit.*

<sup>477</sup> Interview with Filip Dimitrov, *op.cit.*

<sup>478</sup> ZHELYAZKOVA Antonina, "The Bulgarian Ethnic Model," *East European Constitutional Review*, Vol. 10, No. 4, Fall 2001.

Merdjanova 2007, Minchev 2006). MRF was careful to avoid identification with any extremist Islamist or pan-Turkish elements and used secular and moderate language in its program and statements.<sup>479</sup> Separatism and Islamic fundamentalism were never part of MRF's strategy of attracting voters. On the contrary, MRF contributed to the overcoming of the legacy of the renaming process and has worked with other political actors on the restoration of the names and civil rights of the Bulgarian Turks. MRF's inclusion as a recognized actor on the Bulgarian political scene, Ganev contends, is rightfully celebrated as an important feature of the successful "Bulgarian ethnic model."<sup>480</sup>

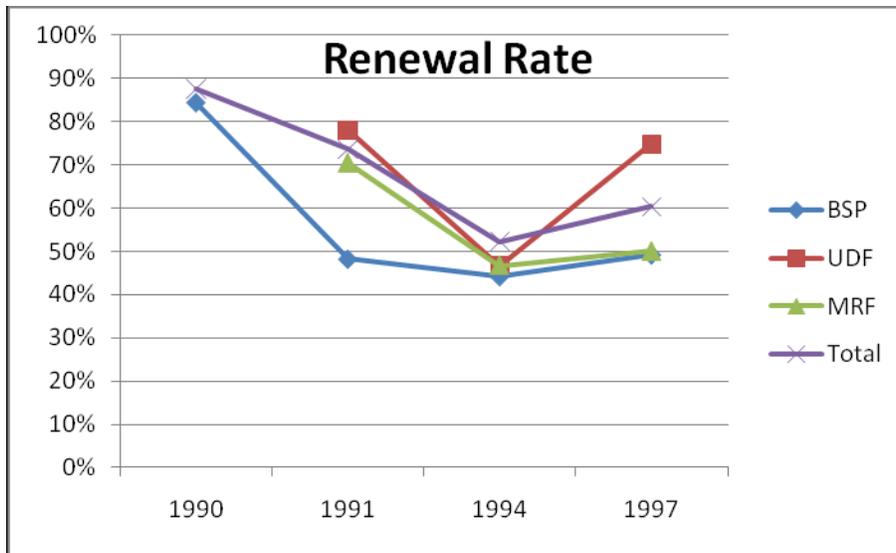
#### **6.4 OVERALL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POLITICAL ELITE IN THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION**

The most striking characteristic of the postcommunist elite of the transition is its excessive rate of renewal. Data indicates a renewal rate of the Bulgarian political elite of 73.6% in 1991, 52.3% in 1994, and 60.3% in 1997 (fig. 12). Thus, over half to almost three quarters of the elite is renewed following each parliamentary election. We notice that the rate of renewal tends to increase when UDF wins the elections. This is consistent with the demonstrated excessive rate of renewal within UDF and the moderate renewal in BSP.

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<sup>479</sup> MERDJANOVA Ina, "Uneasy Tolerance: Interreligious Relations in Bulgaria after the Fall of Communism," *Religion, State and Society*, Vol. 35, No. 2, 2007, pp. 95-103, p. 98.

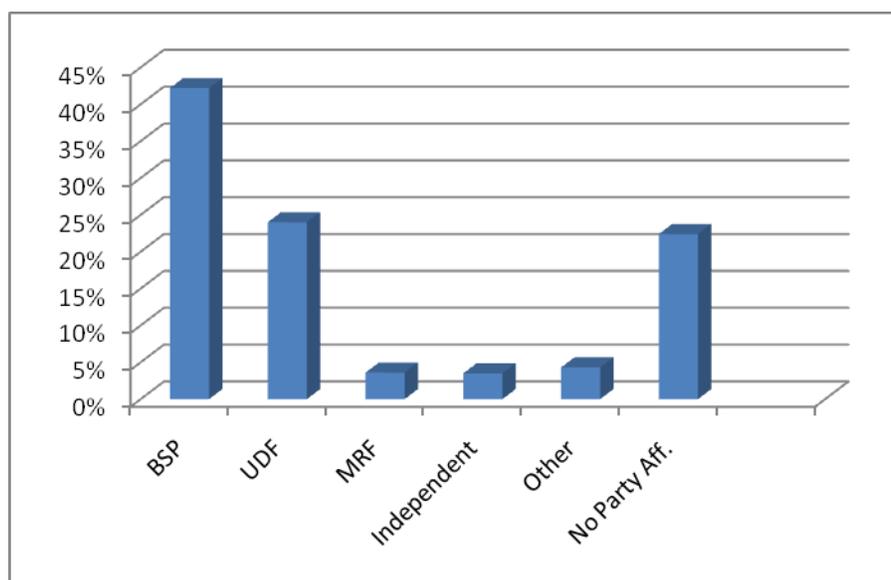
<sup>480</sup> GANEV 2006, *op.cit.*, p. 85.



**Figure 12. Renewal rate by party in percent**

The elite remained stable in terms of age with a mean ranging between 47 – 50 and a mode between 42 – 52. Over half of the elite come from small agglomerates (village 27.9% and small town 29.6), whereas 21.3% are from Sofia and 19.6% from other big cities. Thus, there is a roughly even distribution in terms of place of birth, accounted for by the fact that BSP and MRF’s high representation from small agglomerates is compensated by UDF’s high percent of Sofia and big city elite (fig. 14). The only exception is the General National Assembly in 1990 with the highest percent of village elite (36.4%). This is not surprising considering that the Great National Assembly had 400 representatives (as opposed to the 240 in the regular assembly), the majority of whom were from BSP. In fact, every fifth member of the 1990 elite is a village-born BSP MP. Appointed (as opposed to elected) positions constitute between 20 – 30% of the elite with the exception of 1991, when appointed positions make up for 42%. This higher figure is partly due to the specificity of the data gathering technique, which would include all individuals occupying a certain position within a roster’s timeframe. After coming to power in 1991, the UDF initiated purging of communist cadres from government institutions. This policy was then

reversed by the Berov cabinet who, in turn, replaced many of the deputy ministers and other political appointees. The elite roster for the 1991 – 1994, then, would list a higher number of people on appointed positions than other rosters. The elite of the transition is predominantly communist/socialist (42.2%), with UDF constituting 24% and MRF 3.6%. (fig. 13) Appointed positions account for 22.4% of the elite and the remaining percentage is distributed between small parties and independent candidates. Independent candidates were often BSP sympathizers, as one BSP strategy of attracting swing voters was nominating independent candidates (a.k.a. civil quota). Hence, the total percent of BSP elite is slightly higher than indicated by the data.



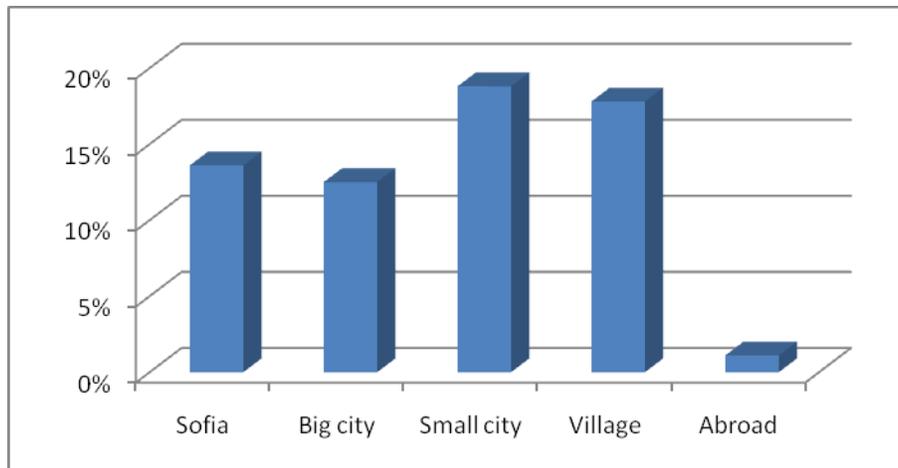
**Figure 13. Composition of the transition elite by party**

Contrary to the general notion characterizing Bulgaria as a case of elite reproduction, the transition elite exhibits modest levels of physical continuity. “We had created a very shallow elite which was circulating very fast,” argues Dragomir Draganov.<sup>481</sup> Data point to a rather unstable elite with high rate of renewal and internal conflicts resulting in frequent splits and regroupings, particularly in the case of UDF. The prevalent view that the communist elite

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<sup>481</sup> Interview with Dragomir Draganov, *op.cit.*

preserved its position of power, however, proves to be true as demonstrated by the generational continuity of the BSP elite and the prevalence of BSP representatives in the transition elite. Thus, if we adopt a wider definition of “reproduction” considering aggregate social characteristics, we could argue that there is reproduction within the former communist elite, but not in the overall elite of the transition.



**Figure 14. Place of birth (cumulative for 1990-2001)**

Going back to the research questions, we can argue that there was no organized counter elite in Bulgaria before late 1989. Once the opposition was organized, it was too weak to effectively challenge the power of the communist elite. Uniting opposition movements in a coalition and adopting a strategy of confrontation rather than co-optation were the right choices. However, UDF failed to create broad and stable structures, develop a unified vision of the transition and a sound reform program, and attract competent and loyal cadres. UDF’s loose structure and chaotic mode of recruitment produced rupturing internal conflicts with numerous splits and excessive public bickering, which alienated supporters. Such factors further weakened an already frail and poorly organized opposition and limited its ability to wrest power from the communists. UDF’s success in 1997 is as much the result of internal restructuring and new national policy formulation as it is due to BSP’s catastrophic rule and the ensuing protest vote. Although UDF

brought the first postcommunist government that managed to fulfill its mandate and implement more consistent reforms, it was unable to retain voter support. Presently, UDF is but a marginal political force with an ever decreasing electorate.

The MRF started as an opposition to communist power, supporting UDF in its confrontation strategy towards BSP, but it soon switched to co-optation, readily coalescing with any party that offered it political leverage. A leader-centered and strictly hierarchical party, MRF choked internal conflicts at early stages, preserving party unity and preventing rival ethnic-based organizations from emerging. Ideologically unbound, MRF relied on a hard-core ethnic-based, disciplined electorate, which rendered it a valuable partner. MRF quickly developed strong structures and sound cadre policy focused on training of cadres and exclusively internal recruitment. With the first postcommunist election MRF established itself as an important and ever-present factor in politics, often able to tilt the balance of power in one direction or another.

The BCP/BSP is a hierarchical party with a dense network of organizations, a long history and capacity to adapt to different environments, rich material and human resource base, and a large and loyal electorate. Faced with a weak and poorly organized opposition, BSP was able to preserve strong positions and had little motivation to transform. Although it enjoyed an abundance of loyal young cadres, BSP's mode of recruitment to the elite hardly changed. An aging electorate swayed by communist nostalgia and little change in elite composition proved obstacles to the transformation of the party into the modern social-democratic political body it claimed to have become. Internal conflicts were crucial in toppling Todor Zhivkov but failed to become a lasting driver of change. Instead, factions within the party pushing for change were disappointed by BSP's slow transformation and quickly left the Party. Clumsy structures and ideological baggage further prevented genuine change of the party, making it difficult for BSP to

accept new realities and offer a viable reform program. On the other hand, the lack of rupturing internal conflict and the stable mode of recruitment helped the Party remain united throughout the transition and assured a healthy supply of new cadres. BSP remains the major Left political force in the country, preventing rival left-wing parties from gaining mass support and surviving challenges from new parties with sweeping short-term electoral successes. The deep internal crisis following the fall of the Videnov government led to ideological re-orientation of the party and its ultimate legitimation by the Socialist International and the Party of European Socialists.

**Table 9. Characteristics of the dominant political organizations in the period of transition**

|                            | BSP  | UDF   | MRF   |
|----------------------------|--|---|---|
| <i>Structure</i>           | Hierarchical, dense organizational network, youth organization   | Loose coalition, weak structures, lacking resources   | Hierarchical, leader-centered, youth organization                                 |
| <i>Mode of recruitment</i> | Closed, mostly from inside, training of cadres, healthy rate of renewal                                    | Chaotic, varies with each organization within the coalition, excessive renewal rate                         | Closed, ethnic-based and from inside, training of cadres, healthy rate of renewal |
| <i>Internal conflict</i>   | Factional conflicts, but unity is preserved, strong common identity  | Perpetual internal conflicts, splits, denouncing of leaders, lack of common identity                        | Internal conflict is repressed, very strong ethnic-based common identity          |
| <i>Electorate</i>          | Large hard-core electorate (dedicated communists, pensioners, swing voters), aging and slightly decreasing | Unstable electorate (anti-communists, repressed, Sofia intellectuals and professionals), rapidly decreasing | Stable, disciplined, ethnic-based electorate, growing                             |

The collapse of the communist regime and the establishment of a multi-party system implies by definition major difference in the overall composition and mode of recruitment between the communist and the postcommunist elite. While such change was very modest in the case of the former communist party, the fact that now there are opposition parties competing for political power qualitatively changed the process of elite formation. The composition and mode of recruitment of the post-communist elite varied significantly from party to party (table 9). We notice three distinctive elite profiles within the postcommunist elite. One is the party loyalist who faithfully sticks to his/hers respective party. Such figures were present on all sides –

Alexander Lilov from BCP, Filip Dimitrov from UDF, and virtually all members of the MRF elite. A second category is the party reformer. Such figures attempt to institute change within their respective party but ultimately remain disappointed and choose to leave the party initiating new political formations. The most obvious examples of this second breed are Alexander Tomov, who left BSP and founded the Euroleft, and Ivan Kostov, who founded DSB. Finally, there is the political nomad migrating from party to party either because of disappointment with his/hers own party or because of opportunism. A number of the early dissidents fall within this category<sup>482</sup> mostly because of their disappointment with the radicals within UDF and their extreme anti-communist position. Opportunists were present on all sides but they were much more prevalent in UDF than in BSP or MRF.

The transformation of the Bulgarian political elite was determined by: 1) a strong but slowly reforming former communist party, unable to articulate a viable reform program; 2) a weak and poorly organized opposition torn by internal conflict and lacking a unified vision of the transition and sound reform policy; and 3) an opportunistic ethnic-based party acting as a balancer in a bi-polar political model. In the Bulgarian case this particular combination of factors resulted in a sequence of unstable governments, each lacking a consistent reform agenda. Elite transformation in Bulgaria proved unfavorable to the outcome of the transition with serious repercussions in terms of the country's political and economic development.

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<sup>482</sup> For example, Petko Simeonov, Angel Vagenstein, Chavdar Kyuranov, Rumen Vodenicharov, Petar Slabakov – all Round Table participants from UDF who later rejoined BCP/BSP.

## **7.0 THE ROLE OF THE SECRET SERVICE IN THE BULGARIAN TRANSITION: MYTHS AND EVIDENCE**

### **7.1 THE MYTHS<sup>483</sup>**

The former secret service is often blamed for Bulgaria's difficult transition. As Hristov keenly observes, one of the lasting public notions in Bulgarian society is the negative role of the secret service in criminalizing the transition and being the sole party guilty of its failure.<sup>484</sup> We find two persisting "myths" in the public discourse on the role of the secret service in the transition – one, that former secret service agents took active part in the political process, mainly through infiltrating the opposition in order to sabotage its efforts to gain political power and prevail over the Communist party; the other, that former secret service officers actively participated in the economic transformation by appropriating state capital through various schemes. These "myths" should not come as a surprise. That secret service agents disposed of resources allowing them to take active part in transition processes is a widely acknowledged fact. Assessing exactly what role they played and what impact their actions had on the outcome of the transition, however, is a different and much more difficult task that nevertheless needs to be addressed.

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<sup>483</sup> "Myth" here is not utilized in its anthropological meaning. The reason this word was chosen as opposed to "public belief," for example, is that "myth" is the prevailing word applied in the public discourse on the Bulgarian secret service. The quotation marks acknowledge both the debate surrounding those public beliefs and the fact that, as further argued, there is some factological foundation to these widely accepted notions.

<sup>484</sup> HRISTOV Chavdar, *Секретните служби и преходът*, София, Сиела, 2004, p. 14.

No study of post-communist elites would be complete without reference to the secret service. The secret service was an important element of communist regimes across Eastern Europe. Not only were the secret services responsible for suppressing and uprooting dissent, but they were key actors in foreign relations, particularly foreign trade. Communist elites were closely linked with the security services, often relying on their support in order to maintain power. Security officers, in turn, enjoyed a privileged status in the communist regime hierarchy.

Twenty years after the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, the question of the former security services continues to be debated in Bulgaria and across the region. An important issue that emerges with post-communist transitions is the handling of the files and lists of informers assembled by the old regime. The exposure of collaborators eventually becomes a public issue in every post-communist state, argues Williams, but in some it emerges on the agenda sooner, and more explosively, than in others.<sup>485</sup> The treatment of the issue is closely related to the particular policies of transitional justice in each post-communist country. According to Williams, the political debate and policies towards former security agents depend on whether the communist regime remained consistently severe until its demise, whether the communists were willing to bargain a transition to democracy or resisted change, and whether communist successor parties performed well in the first democratic elections. Exposing the activities of former security services and the identities of collaborators is more than coming to terms with the past; it constitutes the politics of the present. What former security officers and collaborators are doing today might be an even more important question than what they did in the past. The suspected murder of Bulgaria's head of the former secret service archive clearly illustrates this point. In November 2006, Bozhidar Doychev, the man who oversaw Bulgaria's

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<sup>485</sup> WILLIAMS Keiran and Dennis DELETANT, *Security Intelligence Services in New Democracies. The Czech Republic, Slovakia and Romania*, New York, NY, Palgrave, 2001, p. 19.

most sensitive secret service archives, was found dead at his desk, with a bullet in his head from his own handgun.<sup>486</sup> The archive, which remains closed to the public, obviously poses a major threat to powerful interests in Bulgaria's current political life.

Writing about the role of the secret service in the transition would have to include an account of the entire transition period, a colleague told me when discussing the topic. Thus, it is very important to stress upon the purpose of this chapter, which is to make a first attempt in applying systematic analysis to the connection between the former security service and the transition process. I start with a review of the former security service, followed by an analysis of the structural opportunities transition processes created that allowed security service officers to influence the economic and political developments in the country. I then examine the evidence of involvement of former security officers in the transition process. Because of the nature of the available data, I focus mainly on the role of the former secret service in the political transformation. A lot has been written about secret service agents exporting and appropriating state capital. Considering the scarce empirical data, however, few of those writings meet academic standards. Being unable to more fully evaluate the role of the former secret service in that process, I simply point to the structural opportunities the transition offered that benefitted former security officers. Assessing the role of the secret service in political life has become somewhat more viable with the recent partial disclosure of the secret service files. With the creation of the files commission in 2007, currently examining the archives of the secret service, for the first time there is a possibility for scientific inquiry. These data present a unique opportunity to link the personnel and role of the former security service to the question of elite

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<sup>486</sup> "Eastern Europe Still Struggles to Purge Its Security Services," *The New York Times*, December 12, 2006.

transformation and the process of transition in Bulgaria, an effort that could be potentially beneficial for examining the same topic in other post-communist countries.

## 7.2 *DARZHAVNA SIGURNOST*: ORGANIZATION AND ACTIONS

DS (*Darzhavna Sigurnost*) is the general name for the Bulgarian security services during the communist regime. The DS was created in 1947 and continued to exist until 1990, when most of its departments were dissolved and the remaining units were transformed into various security agencies dispersed between the interior and defense ministries, the Council of Ministers, and the president. The DS was a highly organized and hierarchical structure divided into seven departments. Each department covered a specific field and range of activities from counter-intelligence, economic and ideological control, to surveillance and Communist party security. The various departments, Hristov contends, in practice controlled the entire political, social, and economic life of the country.<sup>487</sup> There is no exact figure of the number of DS employees, but estimates point that before being dissolved in 1990, DS employed over 25,000 security officers – a significant number if compared to the Czechoslovak security service StB, for example, which employed 12,886 secret officers as of June 1989.<sup>488</sup> The number of people (non-DS employees) recruited to collaborate in one form or another with the security services was considerably higher. According to Boncho Atanasov, a former DS operations officer, between 250,000 and 300,000 agents were recruited for the period 1947-1989.<sup>489</sup> Such a dense network of informers

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<sup>487</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>488</sup> WILLIAMS and DELETANT, *op.cit.*, p. 35.

<sup>489</sup> Quoted in Alexenia DIMITROVA, *Войната на шпионите: Разследване на български и американски секретни архиви*, София, Ciela, 2005, p.22.

was not atypical for communist security services. The Romanian *Securitate*, for instance, disposed of 400,000 informers according to conservative estimates.<sup>490</sup> Despite the lack of exact figures, these numbers indicate that by 1989 DS had deeply penetrated all spheres of Bulgarian society.

The DS was under the direct control of the Communist party, a fact that holds true of all East European secret services during the communist period. According to its statute, the DS was subordinate to the ruling Communist party and its secretary general. All major decisions required approval by the Politburo and the Central Committee of the Communist party. A special department at the Central Committee was responsible for overseeing all DS activity. The interior minister, ultimately in charge of DS operations and always a high-ranking party functionary, reported directly to the Central Committee. Party membership was the number one condition for employment in the security service. All employees were expected to be “ideologically reliable” and “pledge full allegiance to the Bulgarian Communist Party.” Given the nature of totalitarian systems, it is only logical that the security services were subordinate to the orders and objectives of the Communist party. The DS was an inseparable part of the party and one of the party’s most powerful instruments of repression and control.<sup>491</sup> As former general secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) Vulko Chevenkov stated at an Interior Ministry meeting in 1951, “Your boss is the Central Committee. You are a Politburo organ, our instrument, our eyes, ears, tools. You cannot think differently from the Politburo, you cannot do differently from what the

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<sup>490</sup> WILLIAMS and DELETANT, *op.cit.*, p. 198.

<sup>491</sup> Deletant similarly argues that the Romanian security police was the blunt instrument of repression of the Communist party. *Ibid.*, p. 160.

Politburo orders you to do.”<sup>492</sup> The DS and the Party could not be separated, argues Chanev, neither at functional level nor at the level of personnel.<sup>493</sup>

In time of crises, however, party control over the DS was much more nominal than real, Metodiev contends. During such periods, DS power tended to increase whereas party control over the services tended to decrease.<sup>494</sup> This is especially true of the mid and late 1980’s when the DS and its department for ideological control in particular, became very active. The DS was in control of the information flow to the party apparatus and at the same time investigated members of the party, including those responsible for exercising control over the service. This enabled it to negotiate its position of power and follow its own strategic objectives. Although the DS was, strictly speaking, under the control of the party and all its employees were party members, control over the security service was far from absolute and varied over time.

The DS was closely connected to the Soviet security services, another feature characteristic of all East European intelligence services at the time, even the *Securitate*.<sup>495</sup> According to Manolova, there was a KGB representative in every DS department who had complete access to all information.<sup>496</sup> In practice, she further argues, DS activities were monitored and controlled by the KGB through its representatives in the departments. Such practice was very common. In a study of GDR’s Stasi, Childs and Popplewell point out that all information obtained by the various GDR intelligence departments was sent in copy to the KGB

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<sup>492</sup> Quoted in CHALAKOV et al., *Мрежите на прехода: какво всъщност се случи в България след 1989 г.*, София, Изток Запад, 2008, p. 47.

<sup>493</sup> CHANEV Stefan, *Шесто за нас и ние за шесто*, София, Отечество, 1999, p. 32.

<sup>494</sup> METODIEV Momchil, *Машина за легитимност: Ролята на Държавна сигурност в комунистическата държава*, София, Ciela, 2008, p. 252.

<sup>495</sup> Soviet advisors were attached to each of the *Securitate* national directorates to supervise the training of the Romanian recruits and to monitor their activity. WILLIAMS and DELETANT, *op.cit.*, p. 164.

<sup>496</sup> MANOLOVA Lyuba, *Външният дълг и 10 ноември 1989 в документи*, София, Факел, 2002, p. 29.

liaison officers attached to the Stasi leadership.<sup>497</sup> Hristov reports that until the end of 1989, KGB employees with the rank of advisors coordinated and controlled DS' major intelligence and counter-intelligence operations.<sup>498</sup> Many DS officers received their training in the KGB's intelligence and counter-intelligence schools, something which was considered a great career advantage. Having officers with KGB training also made collaboration and coordination of activities between the two services much easier and smoother. Given the Soviet tight grip over the Eastern bloc, it is not surprising that security operations of East European intelligence services were coordinated with Moscow just as were major political decisions. It is hard to estimate the degree to which DS was under KGB's control. As former DS general Todorov points out, the extent of control varied in each department and with each new KGB advisor.<sup>499</sup> It is an undeniable fact, however, that the DS and the KGB worked closely together and regularly exchanged information. According to Alexenia Dimitrova, reports of such collaboration can be found in the U.S. secret archives as early 1948. U.S. archives, she reports, describe the DS as being subordinate to the KGB and BCP's Central Committee.<sup>500</sup>

The DS had a wide range of activities both in the country and abroad. Aside from activities related to national security and within the prerogative of any security service, the DS was accused of using such means as conspiracy, terrorism, political diversions, murders, and sabotage.<sup>501</sup> Internationally, the DS became notorious for the murder of the Bulgarian dissident and writer Georgi Markov in London in 1978 and the attempt on Pope John Paul II's life in

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<sup>497</sup> CHILDS David and Richard POPPLEWELL, *The Stasi. The East German Intelligence and Security Service*, London, MacMillan Pres Ltd., 1996, p. 124.

<sup>498</sup> HRISTOV, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>499</sup> Interview quoted in HRISTOV, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>500</sup> Alexenia Dimitrova was the first Bulgarian journalist to gain access to the U.S. secret archives and examine their reports on the Bulgarian security services. See, Alexenia DIMITROVA, *Войната на шпионите: Разследване на български и американски секретни архиви*, София, Сиела, 2005

<sup>501</sup> CHANEV, *op.cit.*, p. 32.

Rome in 1981. While Bulgarian involvement in the murder of Georgi Markov, known as the Bulgarian umbrella,<sup>502</sup> has been ultimately confirmed, the Bulgarian connection in the attack on the Pope remains questionable. Less factologically debatable are accusations of DS involvement in illegal arms trade, drug trafficking, trade of regulated medicine (Captagon in particular), and transit trade of excise duty goods. According to a 1991 report of the interior minister Hristo Danov, illegal trade was a policy endorsed by the state.<sup>503</sup> The most notable and well-known in Bulgarian public discourse example is the foreign-trade venture “Kintex,” created with an official order by the Council of Ministers, dated July 31, 1978. “Kintex” (abbreviation for “haberdashery” and “textile”) was a front company, run by DS officers and involved in illegal arms trade until the mid-1990s. There are numerous other instances of state-endorsed, DS-operated illegal trading often involving foreign citizens, from the Middle East for example, who were compensated with Bulgarian citizenship and/or large amounts of money.<sup>504</sup>

In examining DS’ involvement in illegal and semi-legal activities, it is imperative to make a distinction between DS the institution and DS employees. Not all operations involving DS officers were in fact organized by the DS. On more than one occasion, DS officers had the opportunity to use their status and connections and engage in personally beneficial activities that were not necessarily endorsed or ordered by the DS institution. Such is the case with Georgi Naidenov, former intelligence officer, founder of “Texim.” “Texim” was the first from a number of companies under Naidenov’s control that ultimately grew into the “Economic Group – Bulgarian Trade Fleet” (EG-BTF). By 1969, EG-BTF included companies with a wide range of

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<sup>502</sup> For a detailed investigation on Georgi Markov’s murder see, Hristo HRISTOV, *Убийте скитник*, София, Ciela, 2007.

<sup>503</sup> Quoted in HRISTOV, *op.cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>504</sup> For a detailed journalistic investigation of foreign-trade firms involved in illegal trade see, MANOLOVA, *op.cit.*

activities, from ground and marine transportation, ship construction and port authority, to insurance, agricultural aviation, dry-cleaning and grocery stores.<sup>505</sup> Naidenov's employees were similarly diverse, including party members, former Algerian terrorists, a son of a Libyan millionaire, Western businessmen and lawyers.<sup>506</sup> Not strictly a state enterprise, EG-BTF brought in considerable amounts of foreign currency for the state, thus securing non-interference in its operations. The Group was controlled and operated by Naidenov who had full discretion over its activities. This venture, unorthodox for socialist economies, often interfered with and abused the state-run economy, reaping personal profit. EG-BTF was even getting in the way of Comecon trade, cashing in on reselling cheap Comecon raw materials and goods to Western companies. Naidenov was ultimately convicted on charges of corruption and embezzlement and sentenced to 20 years in prison, of which he served five. The question remains, however, how a single DS employee was able to gain such power and escape control by the state. In order to better understand the structural opportunities for such abuses we need to focus on the 1<sup>st</sup> DS department.

The 1<sup>st</sup> department was responsible for all DS activities outside of the country as well as operations within the country involving foreign citizens. These included intelligence and counter-intelligence abroad, science and technology intelligence, cultural and historical intelligence. According to Politburo's directive, the 1<sup>st</sup> department was responsible for gathering secret political and economic information from capitalist countries, organizing intelligence operations abroad, acquiring scientific and technological information that had practical applicability for the development of the national economy, as well as information regarding new

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<sup>505</sup> For a detailed account of the Naidenov case, see Dimitar IVANOV, *Шести отдел*, София, Университетско издадателство „Св. Климент Охридски,” 2004, pp. 144- 153.

<sup>506</sup> IVANOV, *op cit.*, p. 146.

military technologies developed in the capitalist countries, and gathering archival sources on Bulgarian and Balkan history. Two main strategies were used to achieve these objectives – recruiting foreigners visiting Bulgaria and sending DS officers to Western countries. With the establishment of Bulgarian export trade companies and joint ventures between Bulgarian state companies and Western companies in the 1980's, DS presence abroad significantly increased. Manolova argues that Bulgarian foreign traders, responsible for particular foreign deals of the state, were working for and were accountable to the DS.<sup>507</sup> In fact, she continues, the work of the ventures abroad relying on state capital, as well as the realization of specific foreign trade deals which secured foreign currency for the state, would have been impossible without the participation of the DS.<sup>508</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> DS department maintained a dense network of operative workers and informers in Western countries. Its people were stationed in official Bulgarian institutions abroad, joint ventures, international organizations, universities, research institutes, etc. Furthermore, officers with specific missions were regularly sent as part of official delegations and tourist groups, on conferences, festivals, expositions, and exchanges.

What distinguished 1<sup>st</sup> department officers from their colleagues was their unobstructed access to Western countries and their connections in the West. In fact, aside from official diplomatic channels, these officers were the country's main liaison with the West. They were running Bulgaria's companies abroad, representing Bulgarian interests in the joint ventures, and bringing in Western companies to Bulgaria. Because of the characteristics of the Cold War and the threat of ideological contamination, argues Chalakov et al., all Bulgarian ventures abroad were connected to the secret services and operated by DS officers.<sup>509</sup> Their connections and

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<sup>507</sup> MANOLOVA, *op.cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>508</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>509</sup> CHALAKOV et al., *op.cit.*, p. 57.

position in the West were imperative for carrying out DS operations, at the same time creating opportunities for 1<sup>st</sup> department officers to engage in personally beneficial activities. Operating mostly in Western countries, these officers not only had access to information and valuable contacts but were also able to evade control by the state. They were often involved in lucrative illegal or semi-legal activities, exploiting opportunities for profiteering created by the differences between the socialist and capitalist systems. They were not circumventing the socialist system, but rather taking advantage of it by importing and exporting subsidized Comecon goods to Western markets, investing state capital allocated to a particular Bulgarian venture abroad and privatizing the profit, using Bulgarian ventures abroad as front companies for drug and arms trafficking, etc. It is exactly the structure of the socialist system that made such practices possible. 1<sup>st</sup> department officers had almost exclusive knowledge of the nature and activities of Bulgarian companies abroad and the amount and distribution of state capital abroad. Their knowledge and contacts gave them a certain degree of independence, allowing them to do much more than just carry out DS orders. For example, a DS-run company expected to register \$3 million profit for the state, was able to conceal any profit above that amount and direct it to a personal account. Since the DS officer in charge was often the only one with full knowledge of the company's activities and the state, having received the expected profit, had no reason to question his work, it was quite easy for him to appropriate any additional profit. In other words, the difference between the socialist and capitalist systems created structural opportunities for DS officers to engage in goal-oriented behavior for personal gain. Such behavior was not necessarily encouraged by the state but it was tolerated, as long as it did not interfere with bringing in dividends for the state.

Another branch of the DS meriting special attention is the 6<sup>th</sup> department in charge of ideological control. If the 1<sup>st</sup> department represented the main liaison with the West, the 6<sup>th</sup> department was perhaps the most important one in terms of DS activities at home and the one with the worst reputation. Its *raison d'être* was “the combat against ideological diversion, counter-revolutionary, nationalistic, and anti-state actions in the country.”<sup>510</sup> Its activities were directed against all citizens and social groups potentially critical of the regime – the intelligentsia, students, minorities, clergy, as well as critical elements within the Communist party. Exact figures of the number of 6<sup>th</sup> department officers and people recruited as agents are again unavailable. According to 1974 reports, the department had 626 secret associates (393 agents, 233 trustees), and 282 secret meeting places.<sup>511</sup> This number significantly increased by the mid 1980's, with the exponential growth of department 6 activities and the number of people being recruited to collaborate. Having a dense network of agents in every sphere of Bulgarian society, the 6<sup>th</sup> department maintained complete control over any attempt for dissent. As Metodiev argues, the carrot and stick policy of the 6<sup>th</sup> department towards the Bulgarian intelligentsia prevented the emergence of a real dissident movement in Bulgaria.<sup>512</sup> DS agents infiltrated all organizations and circles potentially critical of the regime in order to gather information and obstruct organized activities through sabotage from within. Aside from detecting and uprooting dissident activities, 6<sup>th</sup> department officers were responsible for carrying out special orders and policies, most notably the infamous renaming process. A Politburo order from December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1984, instructed the head of the 6<sup>th</sup> department to start the renaming of the ethnic

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<sup>510</sup> METODIEV, *op.cit.*, p. 181.

<sup>511</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>512</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

Turkish population in all parts of the country.<sup>513</sup> Department 6<sup>th</sup> officers and their network of agents were instrumental in the renaming of 850,000 ethnic Turks. Finally, the 6<sup>th</sup> department was also entrusted with keeping a close eye on the Party. In order to prevent the formation of any reformist movements within the Party, the 6<sup>th</sup> department investigated high-ranking party members, including people from the Central Committee and the Politburo. In addition to having eyes and ears in every sphere of Bulgarian society, the 6<sup>th</sup> department was notorious for its brutal methods of repression ranging from arrests and outright violence to blackmailing and threats. Other means of persuasion were also employed such as granting certain privileges in exchange for collaboration. Travel abroad, residence in the capital city, access to academic institutions and degrees were often used to lure one into working for the department by simply providing information or carrying out specific operations. It is this carrot and stick policy and its ability to penetrate anywhere that gave department 6 a particularly vicious image. Even the slightest manifestation of ideological diversion, such as listening to Western radio stations, was immediately registered by department officers. It would not be unreasonable to say that at home the 6<sup>th</sup> department was present everywhere.

Similarly to their 1<sup>st</sup> department colleagues, 6<sup>th</sup> department officers enjoyed a special position of power. They had information on every prominent member of society. They were in close contact with all circles of society from the intelligentsia and high party apparatus to minorities and political prisoners. Department 6 officers often used undercover identity, which gave them a special advantage in allowing them to pose as long-time dissidents. These assets would prove particularly useful in the transition years, granting department 6 officers considerable political leverage and a behind-the-scenes participation in political life.

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<sup>513</sup> GRUEV Mihail and Alexei KALYONSKI, *Възродителния процес: Мюсюлманските общности и комунистическият режим*, София, Сіела, 2008, p. 139.

### 7.3 THE DS IN THE TRANSITION: SUSPICIONS AND EVIDENCE

One may wonder what role in the transition the DS could have played, considering the fact that it was dissolved in 1990. It is perhaps the very dissolution of DS that allotted it a particular role in the transition. The transformation of the security services started with the closing of the 6<sup>th</sup> department – the political police, and the science and technology intelligence – part of the 1<sup>st</sup> department. In addition to structural changes, massive cuts in personnel were undertaken in all departments and levels of the DS. Over 14,000 DS officers were relieved of duty for the period 1990-1992. The cuts encompassed more than 50% of DS personnel, mainly from the 6<sup>th</sup> department, the science and technology intelligence, the high and middle leadership apparatus, as well as employees with less than 5 and more than 20 years work experience.<sup>514</sup> DS employees were not only out of their job but were also publicly discredited. In the early months of the transition, the Communist Party was quick to declare the DS responsible for all atrocities and abuses of the regime. BCP's leadership, argues a former DS officer, put the blame for the labor camps, political prosecutions and the renaming process entirely on the secret services, as if we were not following orders by the party.<sup>515</sup> This strategy allowed the Party to distance itself from the aberrations of the regime and claim a rightful place in post-socialist politics. By contrast, the DS was declared the black sheep of the socialist system and blamed for all of its evils and failures.

Being completely discredited, the thousands of released DS employees could seek no future in government service and had to look for other means and fields of realization. They

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<sup>514</sup> HRISTOV, *op.cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>515</sup> GEORGIEV Yulii, *Спец службите с поглед към обединена Европа*, София, Прива Консулт, 2000, p. 14.

possessed special skills and knowledge, numerous personal contacts in the country and abroad, and their “own” information network and database. Though no longer part of the security apparatus, those officers still had access to information and resources, often unavailable to anyone else. Thus, they quickly engaged in private business, created parallel intelligence and security structures outside of the control of the state, and exercised pressure on the political and economic life in the country. Having almost exclusive knowledge of the exact amount and distribution of Bulgarian capital abroad, DS officers had the opportunity to easily privatize it. Their contacts in the West gave them access to investors and made them the first to engage in profitable business with Western companies. On the other hand, access to the extensive DS files gave endless opportunities for *kompromat*. Containing the dossier of every politician in the country, the files enabled DS officers to offer such information to one party or another, as well as directly blackmail politicians. Though the DS no longer existed, DS employees were undoubtedly important economic and political players in the transition. They maintained a strong network among each other and were in a position to influence the economic and political processes in the country. Examining the DS, in terms of the network of former DS employees which continued to operate despite the dissolution of the institution itself, therefore, is crucial for our understanding of the Bulgarian transition.

Studying the security services by definition entails working with very limited data. A lot has been written and said about the DS, but among the voluminous publications on the subject few provide evidence even remotely meeting scientific standards. The most reliable evidence, the DS files, have been and continue to be closed to the public. The partial disclosure of the files in 2007, presents the only available hard evidence. Other sources on the topic include journalistic investigations, mostly in the form of newspaper articles, memoirs of former DS officers, and

very few attempts for a systematic analysis. Investigative journalists have dedicated enormous efforts to untangle the myths around the DS. As Hristov argues, the role of the secret services in the Bulgarian transition could hardly be examined without the media.<sup>516</sup> Most notable in that respect has been the work of Alexenia Dimitrova, Hristo Hristov, and Lyuba Manolova.<sup>517</sup> Going to great lengths to obtain interior ministry archives, foreign archives, and Council of Ministers archives, these authors examine various aspects of DS activities. Though uncovering many pieces of the puzzle, such writings remain within the field of journalism, focusing on specific cases and shying away from general conclusions. Furthermore, such investigations are not always free of political bias. Nevertheless, the contribution of investigative journalism to the topic should not be underestimated.<sup>518</sup> If it were not for those efforts, far less would be known on the subject today.

If journalistic investigations are a bit biased, this is the more so true of memoirs of former DS employees.<sup>519</sup> Though offering interesting stories from the “kitchen,” former officers inevitably try to portray the secret service as an honorable institution the duty of which was first and foremost assuring state security. Without doubt, DS was fulfilling its responsibilities in that respect and many of its employees were honorable officers not fitting the image of the crook, often associated with DS employees. Such one-sided accounts of the DS, however, are naïve to say the least. The fact that the DS was serving and protecting state security neither obstructed nor justified the numerous illegal and semi-legal activities it was involved in, nor its methods of

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<sup>516</sup> HRISTOV, *op.cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>517</sup> See, DIMITROVA, *op.cit.*, Hristo HRISTOV, *op.cit.*, and MANOLOVA, *op.cit.*

<sup>518</sup> Bulgarian daily newspaper, 24 chasa, has been very important in that respect.

<sup>519</sup> See, IVANOV, *op.cit.*, GEORGIEV, *op.cit.*

repression. Until the archival sources are opened however, Metodiev contends, the debate on the DS will continue to be extremely biased and dominated by former employees.<sup>520</sup>

Keeping in mind the limited and often biased data on the subject, we now turn to examining the role of DS in exporting and appropriating state capital. We have already pointed to the structural opportunities for channeling state funds from Bulgarian state-owned companies abroad into private accounts. With the emergence of mixed partnerships between Bulgarian state firms and Western private companies in the early 1980s, such practices became even more common yet harder to track. Joint ventures were initially established with mostly Austrian and Japanese partners, engaging in various kinds of import and export. This policy was motivated by the need to diversify foreign currency income much needed for serving the ever increasing Bulgarian foreign debt.<sup>521</sup> People in charge of such partnerships on the Bulgarian side were very well connected and well prepared, recounts an anonymous high-ranking communist party functionary.<sup>522</sup> Most certainly linked with the DS, they were given state funds in order to establish and manage the joint ventures. Money was deposited in private accounts in the name of the Bulgarian representatives who were free to dispose of it and needed to report on their activities to the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations.

With the collapse of communism and the frequent restructuring of government institutions that ensued, particularly in the economic ministries, government control over Bulgarian ventures abroad was weakened if not completely lost. In 1990, the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations in charge of the joint ventures was closed and its entire documentation

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<sup>520</sup> METODIEV, *op.cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>521</sup> Bulgarian foreign debt increased from \$ 2.9 billion in 1984 to \$ 10.7 billion in 1989. The debt serving coefficient rose from 41 in 1985 to 74 in 1989, thus bringing annual debt payments from \$1.7 billion in 1985 to over \$ 3 billion in 1989. Source: COLANDER David, *Macroeconomics*, Vol.1, Sofia 1999, p. 368.

<sup>522</sup> Interview with P.G., Sofia, May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

mysteriously disappeared. Joint ventures abroad remained in a grey zone in the early 1990's, during which time they continued to operate and receive government funds, yet were formally accountable to no-longer existing government institutions. This lack of accountability allowed the well-situated Bulgarian representatives to intentionally withhold profits, instead of sending them back to the state. Parallel trading firms were quickly created using the contacts and know-how of the state companies. In this situation whereby the institutional umbrella was no longer in place but the network was still operating, capital was gradually drained from the state-owned venture into the newly established private companies. In some cases, the state-owned venture was simply re-registered, with the state no longer being part of the new company. Numerous firms of that kind were created in the early 1990's, such as Balkanton Trading, Virad, General Trading, Stratos I, Crown Company International.<sup>523</sup> Our anonymous communist party functionary does not deny the prevalence of such practices, but insists that they were in no way planned in advance or coordinated. Former prime-minister, Filip Dimitrov, similarly argues that such firms were not acting in an organized manner as much as they were all stimulated by various marginal characters in the West.<sup>524</sup> Dimitrov makes a valid argument in pointing to the fact that foreign partners facilitating the registration and operation of the newly created companies benefitted no less than their Bulgarian counterparts from the appropriation of state capital.

Appropriation of state resources was in no way unique to Bulgaria. "This was happening everywhere in Eastern Europe," argues President Zhelev.<sup>525</sup> Deletant gives an example of *Securitate's* control of foreign trade, which placed its officers in a position of privilege in post-

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<sup>523</sup> MANOLOVA, *op.cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>524</sup> Interview with Filip Dimitrov, Sofia, June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

<sup>525</sup> Interview with Zhelyu Zhelev, *t.*

communist Romania.<sup>526</sup> *Securitate* officers, with their specialist knowledge and their foreign contacts, he argues, triggered the creation of a veritable economic mafia. Using their privileged commercial expertise, they set up private import-export businesses and by exploiting their positions within the Foreign Trade Ministry and other government agencies cornered a significant part of Romania's export activity. Former StB officers in the Czech Republic were similarly making use of years of connections, launching new careers, argues Williams.<sup>527</sup>

It is beyond doubt that structural opportunities for the export and appropriation of state capital existed not only in Bulgaria but in all former communist countries. Venelin Ganev offers a hard to match analysis of the effects of the disintegration of communist institutions and the various opportunities for appropriation of state resources created in the process.<sup>528</sup> It has been widely documented that many DS officers organized and participated in schemes for exporting and appropriating state capital. Assessing the scale of such occurrences, however, is much more difficult and remains subject to speculation. We can neither estimate the amount of exported and appropriated capital, nor the impact this had on transition processes and the economy in particular. The economic power of former security officers is more stuff of fable than fact, argues Williams in his assessment of the issue in the Czech context.<sup>529</sup> Moreover, former security officers were far from the only ones engaging in such activities. High-ranking party officials were often allying with former security officers in exploiting profitable niches, points Deletant.<sup>530</sup> As our communist party functionary points, many people from the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations were involved in the export of capital. Georgi Pirinski, head of the

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<sup>526</sup> WILLIAMS and DELETANT, *op.cit.*, p. 217.

<sup>527</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>528</sup> See Venelin GANEV, *Praying on the State*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 2007.

<sup>529</sup> WILLIAMS and DELETANT, *op.cit.*, p. 61.

<sup>530</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 218.

ministry at the time, most likely knows all of them, our source further argues. Since by definition such schemes remained secretive and undocumented, it is unlikely that any hard evidence on the subject will be revealed in the future. As interviews with members of the Bulgarian political elite indicate, the answer one finds to the question of the DS involvement in the transformation of the economy is to a large degree subject to political bias. The export and appropriation of state capital was hardly the only reason for the failure of the economic reform in the early years of the transition. Lack of a robust economic reform policy, frequent change of governments, considerably lower amounts of foreign aid released to Bulgaria in comparison to the Central European countries are but few of the numerous factors contributing to Bulgaria's difficult and prolonged economic transition. Given the limited data, the most that can be argued is that DS officers were undeniably in an advantageous position, possessing particular skills and access to networks and information. It should not come as a surprise that some of them managed to cash in on those assets and emerge as winners in the process of economic transformation.

#### **7.4 NEW OPENNESS: A MINI-LUSTRATION**

Estimating the role of DS in the political transformation of the country became more viable with the creation of the DS files commission.<sup>531</sup> The Commission started its work in April 2007 and has thus far examined over 15,000 past and present high-ranking public office holders for affiliation with the DS, including members of parliament, ministers, the presidential administration, judges and members of state agencies and the national media. Within the first

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<sup>531</sup> For more information on the commission and the law, visit: [www.comdos.bg](http://www.comdos.bg)

year of the Commission's work, past DS involvement has been confirmed for nearly 2,000 public servants, considering about 1,000 office holders have been exempt from investigation. Although the work of the Commission is not yet completed, its reports have provided priceless and previously unavailable information on the subject.

The commission reports were matched against the elite rosters which revealed how many former DS agents there were in each parliament, government, supreme court or state agency; how many former DS agents there were in each party; what are the demographic statistics of former DS agents and how they differ from party to party. Statistical analysis was executed in order to test for any significant group differences. The questions addressed in analyzing the data are: Which party has had the highest number and percent of former DS agents? What branches of government have a high percent of former DS agents among its previous and current employees? What is the demographic profile of the average former DS agent? Is there any evidence of DS infiltration in the opposition? Finally, what do the answers to these questions tell us about the role of the DS in the political transformation of the country? Before presenting the results, however, I need to point to some important data characteristics and limitations.

The commission reports are based on the DS files for the period 1947-1991, provided to the Commission by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. A January 1990 decision of the interior ministry ordered the destruction of part of the DS files. Hristov argues that actual destruction of the files had started several months earlier and was only later justified by the official order.<sup>532</sup> It remains unknown how many and which files were destroyed, though it has been argued that they constituted a considerable part of the archive. Thus, the number of former DS operatives in the various branches of government is actually higher than what is reflected in the commission

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<sup>532</sup> HRISTOV, *op.cit.*, p. 59.

reports. Furthermore, we can safely conclude that the destroyed files bore the names of those in power at the time, namely members of the Communist party, and not of members of the opposition.

The remaining files made available to the commission contain the name, period of involvement and function (officer, agent, safe house host, etc.) of each operative, but they do not account for the mode of recruitment and the kind of information one provided. This makes evaluation of one's role and level of involvement difficult. For example, a particular agent might have been "convinced" to collaborate through blackmailing or repression, lured with privileges such as travel abroad or career advancement, or simply volunteered one's services. Similarly, one agent might have confined himself to providing trivial reports on insignificant anti-government jokes, whereas another was relaying information entailing significant negative consequences for the observed target.

This raises the bigger and highly debated question of what constitutes the category of DS operative – is it people who were employed by the DS or is it also people recruited as informants; is it people who were in regular contact with the DS or also those who were recruited for a one-time operation. The Commission reports include the name of any high-ranking public servant who at any point in time between 1944 and 1991 was involved with the DS in any particular function (officer, agent, or safe house host). Realizing that such classification constitutes a diverse and far from coherent category, it is nevertheless utilized in the study for lack of a better alternative. However broad a category, this classification makes a clear distinction between people who were employed by or cooperated with the DS and those who did not.

An important aspect, especially for the purpose of this study, of DS statutes is that DS officers were not allowed to recruit party members for collaborators and informers except in cases when no other reliable person could be secured. Metodiev argues that this restriction was frequently violated, especially by the 6<sup>th</sup> department in charge of investigating, among others, party members for anti-government activities.<sup>533</sup> Regardless, this restriction limited to a certain degree the number of communist party members being recruited.

The Commission reports are not allowed to report on deceased public officials who have been involved with the DS. This is particularly noteworthy when examining the 1989 elite roster with an average year of birth of 1932. A significant percent of the people included in the 1989 roster are deceased and, therefore, were not investigated for involvement with the DS. For reasons of national security, the commission is also not allowed to declare DS affiliation of persons who are actively involved with the security services at present. According to Alexenia Dimitrova, some people might have reactivated their involvement with the security services in order to prevent their past affiliation with DS from being revealed.<sup>534</sup> Considering the destruction of a part of the DS files in 1990, the exemption from investigation of deceased public servants and office holders currently active in the security service, we should expect the number of DS operatives in each parliament, government, ministry or state agency to be actually higher than what is indicated by the commission reports.

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<sup>533</sup> METODIEV, *op.cit.*, p. 187.

<sup>534</sup> Interview with Alexenia Dimitrova, Sofia, September 26, 2008.

## 7.5 THE DS AND ELITES IN THE TRANSITION: HOW CLOSE A CONNECTION?

According to the 1989 elite roster, the last communist parliament has a surprisingly low number of former DS agents – only 5 members of parliament out of a total number of 400. In the same roster we find 7 ministers and deputy ministers to be confirmed as former DS agents. Looking at the entire population,<sup>535</sup> we find 12 former agents out of the 535 names in the roster or a mere 2.2%. This low number could be a function of the policy not to report on deceased public servants, but it could also be a result of DS policy to refrain from recruiting communist party members. In later parliaments, however, BCP's successor the BSP holds the highest number and percent of former DS agents. Clearly, many of the confirmed former DS agents were communist party members. A plausible explanation for the low number of former DS agents in the communist parliament then may be the fact that during the communist regime, parliament had no actual political power and was under the direct control of the Communist Party. Infiltrating DS agents into parliament then would have served no purpose and would have proved a waste of resources.

By contrast, the Great National Assembly, elected in 1990 to craft a new democratic constitution, had a significantly higher percent of former DS agents. The 1990 roster indicates that to be 14.7% or 75 out of 511 office holders. The BSP has the highest number of former DS agents – 31 agents or 41.3%. The UDF has 15 former agents or two times less than the BSP. Most striking is the level of DS involvement among members of the MRF – 43.5% of its members of parliament are former DS agents.

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<sup>535</sup> Population is used as a statistical term, referring to the names in the elite rosters and not to the population of the country.

The 1991 roster indicates a slightly increased percentage of former DS agents among the total population – 16.2% or 78 out of 481. The number of former DS agents in the BSP, however, has decreased by half to 15 agents or 19.2%, closing the gap with the UDF which has 11. The MRF again holds the highest percent of former DS agents among its members – 37% or 10 out of 27. A figure meriting attention is the 41% of former agents who have no declared party affiliation, which indicates that they were occupying appointed rather than elected positions. Also interesting is fact that a quarter of the 25 independent members of parliament are former DS agents.

In the 1995 BSP-dominated parliament, we observe the highest percentage of former DS agents for the time period being studied (19.5%) and an increase in the number of former DS agents from BSP (27 or 37% of all DS agents). MRF holds a record high in the percent of former agents among its members (53.3%). Again we find over a quarter of independents to be former DS agents. Noteworthy is the considerably low number of former DS agents from the UDF – just 3. Lastly, 31% of all former agents are on appointed positions with no official political affiliation.

The 1997 UDF-controlled parliament has the lowest percent of former DS agents from all post-communist parliaments under examination – 12.9% or 49 out of 380. Both BSP and UDF have a low number of former agents, 7 and 5 respectively. Almost half of all MRF deputies continue to be former DS agents (7 out of 16). Over a third of all agents are on appointed positions.

An analysis of the accumulative population from all elite rosters indicates that 33.4% of all former DS agents are BSP deputies. By contrast, only 11.8% are from the UDF. Almost half of all MRF deputies and a quarter of all independents are former DS agents (see fig. 6, p. 161).

45.4% of all former agents come from small agglomerates, which points to over-recruitment of agents from villages and small cities.

An overall analysis of the data indicates that the 1997 UDF parliament has the lowest percent and total number of former DS agents among the examined post-communist parliaments. The BSP holds the highest number of former DS agents in every parliament, except for the 1997 parliament where it ties with the MRF. The MRF consistently exemplifies the highest percent of former DS agents among its members. Ranging between 37% and 53.3%, former DS agents in the MRF are overwhelmingly more represented than in other parties. We notice a purge of former DS agents in the BSP after the fall of its Zhan Videnov government in late 1996. In the UDF, we observe a declining percent of former DS agents. Small parties in each parliament are overrepresented in terms of former DS agents, who constitute a quarter of their deputies. This is also true of independent members of parliament.<sup>536</sup> In terms of demographics, the average former DS agent appears to be a BSP member of parliament from a small town or village.

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<sup>536</sup> BSP has often used the practice of not nominating its candidate for a particular electoral region and supporting an independent candidate instead. Most notable is the example with the 1992 presidential election, where BSP did not nominate its own candidate for president and supported the independent Velko Vulkanov. This raises the question of how independent is a candidate supported by BSP. Although we can argue that many of the independent members of parliament were BSP sympathizers, we cannot equate independent MPs with BSP MPs.

**Table 10. DS agents according to party affiliation and parliament**

|                                   | <b>No party</b> | <b>BSP</b> | <b>UDF</b> | <b>MRF</b> | <b>BAPU*</b> | <b>Indep.</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| <b>1989</b>                       | 4               | 7          |            |            | 1            |               | 12           |
| <b>% within DS agent</b>          | 33.3%           | 58.3%      |            |            | 8.3%         |               |              |
| <b>% within Party Affiliation</b> |                 | 4.7%       |            |            | 7.7%         |               |              |
| <b>% of total population</b>      | .7%             | 1.3%       |            |            | .2%          |               | 2.2%         |
| <b>1990</b>                       | 13              | 31         | 15         | 10         | 4            | 0             | 75           |
| <b>% within DS agent</b>          | 17.3%           | 41.3%      | 20.0%      | 13.3%      | 5.3%         |               |              |
| <b>% within Party Affiliation</b> |                 | 14.0%      | 10.1%      | 43.5%      | 25.0%        |               |              |
| <b>% of total population</b>      | 2.5%            | 6.1%       | 2.9%       | 2.0%       | .8%          |               | 14.7%        |
| <b>1991</b>                       | 32              | 15         | 11         | 10         | 0            | 6             | 78           |
| <b>% within DS agent</b>          | 41.0%           | 19.2%      | 14.1%      | 12.8%      |              | 7.7%          |              |
| <b>% within Party Affiliation</b> |                 | 13.6%      | 6.9%       | 37.0%      |              | 25.0%         |              |
| <b>% of total population</b>      | 6.7%            | 3.1%       | 2.3%       | 2.1%       |              | 1.2%          | 16.2%        |
| <b>1995</b>                       | 23              | 27         | 3          | 8          | 1            | 6             | 73           |
| <b>% within DS agent</b>          | 31.5%           | 37.0%      | 4.1%       | 11.0%      | 1.4%         | 8.2%          |              |
| <b>% within Party Affiliation</b> |                 | 17.6%      | 3.9%       | 53.3%      | 5.6%         | 27.3%         |              |
| <b>% of total population</b>      | 6.1%            | 7.2%       | .8%        | 2.1%       | .3%          | 1.6%          | 19.5%        |
| <b>1997</b>                       | 17              | 7          | 5          | 7          | 1            | 8             | 49           |
| <b>% within DS agent</b>          | 34.7%           | 14.3%      | 10.2%      | 14.3%      | 2.0%         | 16.3%         |              |
| <b>% within Party Affiliation</b> |                 | 9.9%       | 3.1%       | 43.8%      | 11.1%        | 25.8%         |              |
| <b>% of total</b>                 | 4.5%            | 1.8%       | 1.3%       | 1.8%       | .3%          | 2.1%          | 12.9%        |
| <b>All parliaments</b>            | 86              | 96         | 34         | 36         | 8            | 20            | 287          |
| <b>% within DS agent</b>          |                 | 33.4%      | 11.8%      | 12.5%      | 2.8%         | 7.0%          |              |
| <b>% within Party Affiliation</b> |                 | 10.0%      | 6.2%       | 43.9%      | 13.1%        | 25.0%         |              |
| <b>% of total</b>                 | 3.8%            | 4.2%       | 1.5%       | 1.6%       | .4%          | .9%           | 12.6%        |

\* Bulgarian Agrarian People's Union

Further analysis of the commission reports gives an indication of the distribution of former DS agents among various public offices and branches of government. Most striking is the number of former DS agents in the various presidential administrations. From the 105 investigated office holders, 22 or over 20% were confirmed as former DS agents. One president (Parvanov – BSP) and one vice-president (Semerdzhiev – BSP) were also confirmed as former DS agents. There are 125 former DS agents among the ministers and deputy ministers in the various administrations, including one prime-minister (Videnov – BSP). These numbers point to a strong presence of former DS agents in the executive branch. The legislative branch has a significantly lower percent of former DS agents, with 142 members of parliament affiliated with DS out of the investigated 1,794. Former DS agents are also present in the judicial branch, with 3 out of 36

constitutional court judges and 16 out of 148 supreme court judges. We observe a strong presence of former DS agents in several state agencies: 21 out of 71 checked in the Bulgarian Telegraph Agency, 11 out of 59 checked in the National Agency for Refugees, and 6 out of 24 checked in the Agency for Bulgarians Abroad. Investigation of the national radio and television reports 10% former DS agents from the 1,200 people checked. Noteworthy is the fact that all 3 directors of the Bulgarian National Television for the period March 1993 - December 1997 were former DS agents.<sup>537</sup> An overall analysis of the data indicates that former DS agents are present in all branches of government (10% at least in each branch), with the executive branch having significantly higher concentration of former DS agents.

Interview data provided additional information on the subject. On the question of the role of the DS in the transition, most respondents expressed very strong feelings. Both UDF and BSP members believe that UDF was infiltrated by DS agents and agree that DS officers exported and appropriated state capital in the early 1990's. Although both sides agree on the role of DS in the political and economic processes of transformation, their view of the DS greatly differs. UDF respondents unanimously equate the DS with the BSP and view it as an extension of the BSP and an instrument for achieving its goals. According to that view, the UDF was infiltrated by the DS because BSP wanted to control the opposition. As cassation court judge and former UDF deputy Zlatka Ruseva argues, "UDF was intended to be an opposition created and controlled by the communists."<sup>538</sup> The export and appropriation of state capital by DS agents, in turn, is seen as part of BSP's master plan to convert its political power into economic. "I am convinced that there was a scenario of how to execute the transformation from a state planned economy and

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<sup>537</sup> This period encompasses the coalition government of Lyuben Berov, formed with an MRF mandate, and the socialist government of Zhan Videnov.

<sup>538</sup> Interview with Zlatka Ruseva, Sofia, February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

socialism as a political system to a market economy and democracy,” argues former chair of parliament and long-time UDF deputy, Alexander Yordanov. “This encompasses two aspects – what should happen to the capital and in which hands it would end up. I think that in that respect the scenario intended for the capital to remain in the hands of members of the communist party, people related to the party or people from DS.”<sup>539</sup>

BSP respondents view the DS quite differently. In their terms the DS is seen as the evil outgrowth of the socialist system, acting upon self-interest and often in disagreement with the party’s objectives. To the socialists, UDF is discredited and accused of being a fabricated and non-genuine opposition because of the presence of DS agents among its members. According to former BSP deputy and historian, Dragomir Draganov, UDF was solidly backed up by DS agents.<sup>540</sup> In that view, UDF was the means for DS agents to gain access to political power. As to the export and appropriation of capital, BSP respondents unanimously declared it not to be intentional. DS agents simply had the skills and connections and were faced with an opportune moment. The economic failures of the transition are not a result of their actions but a result of UDF’s policies of privatization and restitution.

Analysis of the interviews only confirms how divisive and politically biased is the debate on the role of the security services in the transition among the political elite. Not only are views on the subject a function of political affiliation and ideology, but they hardly rely on facts. This makes the need for hard evidence the more so pressing if we are ever to disentangle the issue. Most importantly, the interviews prove that empirically substantiated conclusions should rely primarily on analysis of the commission reports, however limited and imperfect such data may be.

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<sup>539</sup> Interview with Alexander Yordanov, Sofia, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

<sup>540</sup> Interview with Dragomir Draganov, Sofia, February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

## 7.6 THE DS AND TRANSITION OUTCOME

This first attempt in assessing the role of the former security service in the transition processes clearly demonstrates that structural opportunities were present, allowing former security officers to influence and benefit from the political and economic transformations in the country. Without a doubt, DS officers were engaged in the export and appropriation of large amounts of state capital. The exact amount of capital and the effect this practice has had on the economic transition, however, are hard to evaluate. Empirical data proves that DS agents were unquestionably involved in the political transformations in the country. They were present in all political parties in parliament and all branches of government. Due to the characteristics and limitations of the data, our estimate of these numbers and percentages is most likely lower than actual figures. Although there was DS presence in UDF, we cannot confirm that the opposition was intentionally infiltrated in order to obstruct it from gaining political power. As previously discussed, the high percent of DS agents among MRF members of parliament is rather a function of DS practices of infiltrating the Turkish minority during the renaming process rather than purposeful infiltration of MRF's parliamentary group. The high percent of DS agents in the executive branch clearly speaks of the ability of former DS agents to exercise political pressure. The statistical profile of the average DS agent points to a BSP member of parliament, which is logical considering the close link between the DS and the Communist party.

Although this brief analysis has shed some light on the subject, the role of the security service in the Bulgarian transition is yet to be analyzed and evaluated as more data becomes available. BSP's head of cadre policy argues that the role of DS in the transition is highly exaggerated. "Though DS officers were in position to exercise pressure," he contends, "it is

crazy to think that they controlled economic and political processes in the country.”<sup>541</sup> Former UDF prime-minister, Filip Dimitrov, seems to agree with that view. He argues that there is some truth to both “myths” and at the same time cautions against assigning too much importance to the DS factor:

It is true that DS took active part in the events, but hardly with a certain mission. The DS was so widespread and had so profoundly penetrated society that there were many people connected to DS who spontaneously and naturally rejected further involvement with the DS. Such people were present on both sides. Many fell under the DS knife not because they were purposefully sent by the DS, but because the DS called them back and blackmailed them.... So that is where and how this scenario started. I am sure that there was infiltration as well. An organization of that sort would not miss to infiltrate its people, but I hardly think that this was the most important issue.<sup>542</sup>

In examining the outcome of the Bulgarian transition, we need to be careful in assigning too much weight to the DS factor. Appetite for conspiracy theories, very prevalent in post-communist societies, has often distorted the understanding of the former security apparatus and its involvement in the transition processes. At the same time, we need to be mindful of the DS factor when analyzing specific aspects of the transition. For example, former DS officers actively participated in the privatization process and in the formation of the banking sector. Corruption practices, which continue to be a major problem for Bulgaria today, could often be traced to informal networks in which formal security officers are key figures. While DS involvement in such areas is noteworthy, DS influence over the transition process appears less significant when viewed in perspective.

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<sup>541</sup> Interview with Valeri Zheblyanov, Sofia, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2007.

<sup>542</sup> Interview with Filip Dimitrov, *op.cit.*

## **8.0 ELITE TRANSFORMATION AND ITS EFFECTS ON TRANSITION OUTCOME IN BULGARIA: POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

I have argued that the combination of a strong and slowly reforming communist party, a weak and poorly organized opposition, and an opportunistic ethnic-based party has made for an elite transformation that bred political instability and produced slow and inconsistent reform efforts, proving extremely unfavorable to the outcome of the Bulgarian transition. The link between elite transformation and transition outcome has been firmly established in the already reviewed scholarly literature (Higley & Burton 2006, Higley & Lengyel 2000, Vachudova 2005). Elites bore the primary responsibility for shaping the postsocialist orders, Higley and Langyel have argued. Fragmented elites in Bulgaria failed to achieve broad elite consensus on reform policies (Higley & Lengyel 2000) and have produced unstable regimes (Higley & Burton 2006). A weak and divided opposition allowed unreconstructed communists to preserve their power and stall democratization efforts that threatened to undermine their position (Vachudova 2005). Until 1997, Ganev argues, Bulgaria could be described as a textbook example of a country where democratically elected neocommunist elites, playing upon popular fears, rejected “capitalism,” “monetarist fiscal policies,” “the egotism of the market,” and “the neocolonialism of international financial and political institutions” in favor of a loosely defined “left alternative” that emphasized “gradual reform” at “low social costs,” increased bureaucratic regulation, and

the benefits of international “neutrality” – a strategy that brought nothing but immiseration and hopelessness to millions of Bulgarian citizens.<sup>543</sup>

The change of direction that came with the 1997 election was undeniable. UDF’s policy towards EU and NATO membership and rapid economic reform brought significant improvement in Bulgaria’s political and economic development. This much-delayed start of the reform, however, placed the country far behind other post-communist states.

The nature of elite transformation throughout the 1990s has had lasting effects on the political and economic conditions in Bulgaria. Even though today the country is a full-fledged member of the EU and NATO, it continues to struggle with problems rooted in its troubled transition process. Endemic corruption has been a major and persistent issue for Bulgaria. Headlines in recent years often report blatant corruption in the disbursement of EU funds by parts of Bulgaria’s state administration. Failure to address the issue has caused the EU to freeze funding for several programs.<sup>544</sup> Corruption and organized crime in Bulgaria are extensive and strongly intertwined with political parties, the civil service and state agencies, Vachudova holds.<sup>545</sup>

Although the collapse of communism created spectacular opportunities for corruption throughout the post-communist region, post-communist states exhibit substantial variation in levels of corruption. Vachudova attributes the variation to the quality of democracy and the extent of market liberalization since 1989. The nature of political competition during and after

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<sup>543</sup> GANEV Venelin, “Bulgaria’s Symphony of Hope,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 8, No. 4, (1997), pp. 125-139, p. 124.

<sup>544</sup> Following investigations of misuse of European funds, the European Commission froze €140 million allocated to Bulgaria from the SAPARD program, €217 million from the ISPA program, and an undetermined amount from the PHARE program. „Съдбата на замразените пари по САПАРД ясна до дни,” *Новинар*, May 22, 2009; „Замразените пари от ЕС вече официално са спрени,” *Дневник*, July 23, 2008.

<sup>545</sup> VACHUDOVA Milada Anna, “Corruption and Compliance in the EU’s Post-Communist Members and Candidates,” *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 47, 2009, pp. 43-62, p 44.

regime change, she argues, has had an impact on levels of corruption. Corruption has been highest in states where a narrow group of elites initially governed with little political competition from other political forces and with little effective scrutiny from the media and civic groups. In Bulgaria the unreformed communists faced some competition but were nevertheless able to benefit from extensive control of the state and the economy until 1997 (and beyond). Elites of different stripes installed themselves as powerful economic actors in a partially reformed economy defined by corrupt practices, Vachudova concludes.<sup>546</sup>

In order to illustrate the impact of elite transformation on the outcome of the Bulgarian transition, I focus on three policy areas: 1) the privatization process as an example of failed domestic policy due to the lack of elite consensus on reform; 2) foreign direct investment (FDI) and foreign aid as an example of the response of Western governments, organizations and business to the failed reform policies; and 3) Euro-Atlantic integration as an example of elite conflict over foreign policy.

## **8.1 PRIVATIZATION**

In the East European context, privatization refers to transferring state-owned property and enterprises to various forms of private control. As such, privatization is a key element in dismantling the centrally planned socialist economy and constitutes the essence of economic transformation. Viewed as the core process in institutional and enterprise restructuring in Central

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<sup>546</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

and Eastern Europe, Michailova argues,<sup>547</sup> privatization became a focal point in the political agenda of the transition elites. In the first decade of the Bulgarian transition every new government was quick to declare itself the “government of privatization.” Nevertheless, Bulgaria lagged behind other East European countries in privatization efforts. An unstable political environment with frequent change of governments subjected economic development to continuous political struggles. The lack of consensus and continuity in economic reform led to frequent changes of policy, considerably delaying the privatization process. As a result, Bulgaria experimented with all privatization models applied in the East European context – a policy yielding limited results.

Privatization progressed more slowly than was originally expected by the Central and East European countries, a consequence which Major attributes to political clashes that surrounded each privatization deal. Nevertheless, argues Major in a 1999 study comparing Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, and Poland, a large part of the formerly state-owned assets was turned over to private owners in Estonia, Hungary and Poland, but the process was stumbling in Bulgaria.<sup>548</sup> Better performance in Hungary and Poland could be attributed to economic reforms in the 1980s and an already emerging private sector. Estonia with no such prior experience, however, still ranked higher than Bulgaria, which, by contrast, introduced modest restructuring of the economy in 1988. Privatization and company restructuring in Bulgaria was slower compared to the other countries in the study. By 1997, the private sector share of GDP had

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<sup>547</sup> MICHAILOVA Snejina, “The Bulgarian Experience in the Privatization Process,” *Eastern European Economics*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (May – Jun., 1997), pp. 75-92, p. 75.

<sup>548</sup> MAJOR Ivan, “Company Restructuring after Privatization in a Comparative Perspective: Lesson sfrom Four Central and East European Countries,” in Ivan MAJOR (ed.), *Privatization and Economic Performance in Central and Eastern Europe*, Northampton, MA, Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd., pp. 374-390, p. 376.

reached 70% in Hungary and 60% in Poland and Estonia,<sup>549</sup> but remained below 60% in Bulgaria throughout the 1990s (see table 11), reaching a comparable 63% in 2001.<sup>550</sup>

**Table 11. Share of private sector in percent**

| Share of:  | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 |
|------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| GDP        | 25.6 | 35.3 | 39.4 | 48.0 | 50.0 | 56.5 | 56.7 | 57.1 |
| Employment | 17.2 | 28.3 | 36.0 | 40.7 | 42.0 | 52.6 | 58.6 | 63.3 |

Source: Bulgarian National Statistical Institute (NSI)

Privatization in Bulgaria was launched in 1992 with the enactment of the Privatization Law by the UDF Dimitrov government. The law provided a comprehensive legal framework for the privatization process and included the Transformation and Privatization of State and Municipal Enterprises Act, the Privatization Funds Act, the Securities, Stock Exchanges and Investment Companies Act, and the Restitution of Immovable Property Act.<sup>551</sup> The privatization process was overseen by the National Privatization Agency (NPA) established in 1992, the various ministries, and the municipal councils, each responsible for a specific part of privatization deals.

The introduction of a legal framework proved insufficient for the implementation of a consistent privatization policy. Although the major political players BSP and UDF agreed on the need for privatization as a tangible step toward a dynamic and modern market-based economy, Michailova argues, the concrete way in which the private sector should be developed remained a matter of dispute.<sup>552</sup> A testimony to the degree of disagreement between the political actors are the 29 amendments to the 1992 Privatization Law, ultimately replaced in 2002 by the Law on

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<sup>549</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 376.

<sup>550</sup> Source: Bulgaria Country Brief, *the World Bank Group*, September 2002. Available online at: <http://lnweb90.worldbank.org/eca/eca.nsf/Countries/Bulgaria/A45D5FD0AC7BC27B85256C24006DA58F?OpenDocument>

<sup>551</sup> For a description of these laws, visit the website of the Bulgarian Privatization Agency: [www.priv.government.bg](http://www.priv.government.bg)

<sup>552</sup> MICHAILOVA, *op.cit.*, p. 77.

Privatization and Post-Privatization Control. Conflicting visions of privatization goals and strategies and the change of nine governments throughout the 1990s resulted in overlapping and contradicting legislation. With the desire of every governing majority to control the privatization process, privatization policy was changing direction with each consecutive government, eliminating any positive effects of previous efforts.

Taking power in October 1991, the UDF embarked on a policy of rapid privatization focused on foreign-investment-driven cash privatization and restitution.<sup>553</sup> Such policy was informed on the one hand by the shock therapy model calling for rapid privatization and advocated by the international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and, on the other hand, by UDF's strong anti-communist position insisting on retribution for the harmful actions of the communist regime.

The restitution process referred to restoring property rights to real estate (urban property and agricultural land) that was nationalized between 1946 and 1962 by the communist regime. Restitution of housing and commercial property was rather successful, accounting for 87% of all privatized municipal and state-owned entities for 1992 – 1996.<sup>554</sup> Land restitution, by contrast, proved complex and costly, moving at a much slower pace and yielding controversial results. Poor records of pre-nationalization land ownership and competing claims posed major obstacles. Restitution of original parcels, as opposed to compensation with comparable parcels, led to the parcellation of collective farms among numerous owners. The break-up of the collective farm had devastating effects on large-scale agriculture. Newly privatized farms were small and unsuited for combine and tractor machinery, while new land-owners were ill-equipped, both financially and in terms of skills, to cultivate the land. The result was large areas of uncultivated

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<sup>553</sup> Cash privatization refers to direct purchasing of state assets by private actors.

<sup>554</sup> *Ibid*, p. 81.

land, a return to manual farming, over 80% decline in agricultural investments, and drastic decrease in agricultural production. “The worst legacy of democracy in Bulgaria is the break-up of the land and the destruction of agriculture,” argues former BSP MP Krasimir Krastanov.<sup>555</sup> Krastanov voices a major complaint against the land reform and the Dimitrov government. Restitution was further criticized from the Left for causing a large gap in the income distribution. While the left wing acknowledges the legal validity of restitution, Popov and Todorova point out, a considerable majority of leftists doubt its moral relevance.<sup>556</sup> It is popular to think, they further argue, that incomes from restitution are unethical gains. Despite such criticisms, Krassen Stanchev reports that 45% of Bulgarians favored restitution as indicated by public opinion polls in 1993 and 1994.<sup>557</sup>

Cash privatization failed to produce significant results before 1997 – 1998. Political instability and lack of consistent reform policy alienated potential foreign investors. During its prematurely-ended rule lasting barely over a year, UDF was unable to secure a single privatization deal. The first privatization deal was carried out in May 1993 by the Berov government, successor to UDF’s Dimitrov cabinet.<sup>558</sup> Although the Berov government declared a commitment to continuing the privatization policy of UDF and pronounced itself “the government of privatization,” privatization in 1993 – 1995 did not accelerate as expected.<sup>559</sup> Berov’s privatization efforts were blocked both by BSP and UDF, who each wanted exclusive

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<sup>555</sup> Interview with Krasimir Krastanov, Sofia, April 26, 2007.

<sup>556</sup> POPOV Miroslav and Elka Todorova, “Privatization and Oligarchy in the Post-Communist Bulgaria,” in Demeterius IARTIDIS and June Gary HOPPS, *Privatization in Central and Eastern Europe: Perspectives and Approaches*, Westport, CT, Praeger Publishers, 1998, pp. 185-193, p.189.

<sup>557</sup> STANCHEV Krassen, „Икономическият популизъм в България” (Economic Populism in Bulgaria), *Политически изследвания*, Vol 4, No. 2, 1994, pp. 143-155.

<sup>558</sup> In May 1993, the Belgian company Amylum acquired 81% of the Bulgarian corn processing plant for \$20 million. See, Krassen STANCHEV, „Политическа икономия на раздържавяването в България” (Political Economy of Privatization in Bulgaria), in *Анатомия на Прехода: Стопанската политика на България от 1989 до 2004* (Anatomy of the Transition: Economic Policy in Bulgaria 1989 – 2004), Sofia, Ciela, 2004, pp.121-140, p.132.

<sup>559</sup> MICHAILOVA, *op.cit.*, p. 82.

control over the privatization process, argues former President Zhelev.<sup>560</sup> Foreign investors, constituting the main group of potential buyers, entered the privatization process only after the introduction of a currency board in 1997, viewed as a guarantee to economic stability. Among the ten largest privatization deals between 1989 – 2004, accounting for 38% of privatization income and all of which involving a foreign investor, seven were carried out during or after 1997.<sup>561</sup> Thus, the immediate benefits expected from cash privatization were considerably delayed.

With BSP's rise to power in 1995, privatization policy took a sharp turn. As Bojicic-Dzelilovic and Bojkov point out, the BSP was openly against large-scale privatization.<sup>562</sup> Led by its concept of "gradual transition" at "low social cost," the BSP favored 1) recovery of state-owned enterprises (SOE) before scheduling them for privatization,<sup>563</sup> and 2) a "social privatization" model based on equal income distribution. These preferences translated into a shift away from restitution (a three-year freeze was imposed) and cash privatization and towards mass privatization and manager-employee buy outs (MEBO). Such strategy was accompanied by continued subsidizing of losing state-owned enterprises, a practice which significantly contributed to the financial collapse of 1996 – 1997.

The mass privatization program was launched in 1995, following the voucher-based model successfully applied in the Czech Republic. About 40% of SOE were scheduled for mass

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<sup>560</sup> YORDANOV Ruslan, „Д-р Желю Желев: СДС е виновен за провала на икономическия преход” (Dr. Zhelyu Zhelev: UDF is to Blame for the Failure of the Economic Transition), *Тема*, брой 3 (119), 26-01 Февруари 2004.

<sup>561</sup> STANCHEV, 2004, *op.cit.*, p.132.

<sup>562</sup> BOJICIC-DZELILOVIC Vesna and Victor BOJKOV, "Informality in Post-Communist Transition: Determinants and Consequences of the Privatization Process in Bulgaria," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1, January 2005, pp. 69-88, p. 74.

<sup>563</sup> Kliment Vuchev, minister of industry in BSP's Videnov government, was adamantly opposed to privatization and the expansion of the private sector. Consequently, all privatization projects in his ministry were put on hold and, instead, a sustained effort to recentralize the industrial sector was undertaken. See, Venelin GANEV, *Praying on the State: The Transformation of Bulgaria after 1989*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 2007.

privatization. The percentage of shares to be traded for investment depended on the size and profitability of the SOE, ranging between 25% for large and profitable enterprises and up to 90% for small enterprises.<sup>564</sup> Government was to retain control of the remaining shares. Bulgarian citizens over 18 were entitled to a voucher book of 25,000 investment Bulgarian leva (BGL), purchasable for 500 BGL. Vouchers were transferrable to relatives and exchangeable for privatization-fund shares. A total of 81 privatization funds were established, attracting 80% of all purchased vouchers.<sup>565</sup> Foreign investors were able to participate in the mass privatization program by establishing privatization funds. The mass privatization program was coordinated by the newly established Mass Privatization Center, assisted and advised by the PHARE-European Union Consortium.

Mass privatization was conducted in two waves – the first wave concluded with the fall of BSP's Videnov government in 1997, the second was initiated in 1999 during the second UDF rule of Kostov. Although the UDF initially opposed mass privatization, once in power, it was pressed to carry on and conclude the process. Kostov introduced changes to the program that were intended to speed up the process. For example, 5% of all SOE were offered for investment, privatization funds were excluded from the process, vouchers were no longer transferable, and share prices were no longer fixed. Despite such modifications, mass privatization produced limited results. Between the two waves, a total of 15% of state assets were privatized through mass privatization. Only 3 million of the eligible 6.5 million Bulgarians participated in the process, 2.5 million of whom transferred their vouchers to privatization funds during the first

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<sup>564</sup> MICHAILOVA, *op.cit.*, p. 86.

<sup>565</sup> STANCHEV, *op.cit.*, p. 135. The number of privatization funds in Bulgaria is considerably lower than in the Czech Republic – 450, and Russia – 600. See, MICHAILOVA, *op.cit.*, p. 90.

wave.<sup>566</sup> Michailova explains the low participation rate by lack of information on SOEs scheduled for privatization, as well as skepticism on the part of the population who viewed the program as a way for the state to get rid of unprofitable enterprises.<sup>567</sup> Applying the Czech model of mass privatization to the Bulgarian context did not produce the same results.

Management-Employee Buy Outs (MEBO) refers to partial transfer of ownership of SOEs to managers and employees, through credit against company assets and future profits and through sales of preferentially priced shares (in Bulgaria, 20% of shares were offered at 50% discount). MEBO privatization was initiated in 1994 with the partial buy out of Bulgaria's largest international trade company, Chimimport AD.<sup>568</sup> By the beginning of 1996, a total of 203 MEBO deals were concluded. Although this method of privatization was favored primarily by the BSP, it gained prominence after 1997 when the UDF majority introduced key amendments to the Privatization Act. The UDF enabled, 1) MEBO participation for newly appointed managers, 2) the creation of a manager-employee associations by 20% of the company employees (not 50% as previously stipulated), and, 3) a range of payment options, including installment plans. MEBO privatization constituted 73% of all sales in 1998 and almost 50% in 1999.<sup>569</sup>

MEBO favored employees to a greater extent than any other type of privatization. Nevertheless, argues Michailova, it is mainly the managers that gained control over the privatized firms.<sup>570</sup> Holding key positions, managers benefited most from preferential payment

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<sup>566</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>567</sup> MICHAILOVA, *op.cit.*, pp. 87-88.

<sup>568</sup> 58.7% of the company's shares were transferred to the managers and employees of the company, using credit guaranteed by company assets and future profits. 20% of the shares were floated at a preferential price; 21.3% remained state-owned. See, Marin MARINOV and Svetla MARINOVA, "Privatization and Foreign Direct Investment in Bulgaria: Present Characteristics and Future Trends," *Post-Communist Economies*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 1997, pp. 101-116, p. 106.

<sup>569</sup> BOJICIC-DZELILOVIC and BOJKOV, *op.cit.*, p. 80.

<sup>570</sup> MICHAILOVA, *op.cit.*, p. 83. Hilary Appel reports a similar outcome in Russian MEBO privatization. "Owing to the transferability of worker shares and vouchers and the maneuvering of managerial and

conditions and loans against company's assets and future revenues. This made them desirable partners for hidden investors who wished to make use of the preferential prices. MEBO disproportionately privileged company insiders, particularly those in managerial positions, which created favorable conditions for corrupt practices. The political elite was part and parcel of the process, argue Bojicic-Dzelilovic and Bojkov, with MPs of various parties often playing a key role in supporting MEBO deals and serving private economic interests.<sup>571</sup>

Corruption was inherent to the privatization process throughout the 1990s and beyond. As Brown argues, privatization was one of the broadest avenues to corruption.<sup>572</sup> In addition to MEBO, cash privatization, and mass privatization, which offered ample opportunities for appropriating state assets, SOEs were often subjected to the so-called hidden (a.k.a. spontaneous) privatization. Hidden privatization refers to the various ways of asset stripping through joint ventures,<sup>573</sup> exit-entrance capture,<sup>574</sup> debt purchase and capital increase,<sup>575</sup> under-valuation and more (Alexandrova 1998, Bojicic-Dzelilovic & Bojkov 2005, Jones & Rock 1994, Marinov & Marinova 1997, Michailova 1997, Stanchev 2004). Such practices accounted for an estimated 100 billion BGL of state asset stripping in the first half of the 1990s.<sup>576</sup> Hidden privatization necessarily involved political protection. It was practiced by communist leaders in the late 1980s,

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industrial elites, worker ownership declined somewhat over time while managerial control over enterprises soared." Hilary APPEL, "The Ideological Determinants of Liberal Economic Reform: The Case of Privatization," *World Politics*, Vol. 52, No. 4, (Jul., 2000), pp. 520-549, p. 534.

<sup>571</sup> BOJICIC-DZELILOVIC and BOJKOV, *op.cit.*, p. 80.

<sup>572</sup> BROWN, 2001, *op.cit.*, p. 98.

<sup>573</sup> Joint venture asset-stripping refers to cases in which a state-owned and a private company enter into a contract for joint commercial activity, whereby the private company gradually siphons the profits from the joint venture.

<sup>574</sup> Exit-entrance capture refers to setting up a private company which becomes exclusive supplier for the SOE, selling production materials at above market value, and exclusive distributor, purchasing the final product at below market value. Thus, with the active participation of the manager, the SOE is "captured" at the entrance and exit.

<sup>575</sup> Debt purchase and capital increase involves purchasing the debt of a SOE and consequently increasing the capital, which increases the shares of the debt-purchaser.

<sup>576</sup> MARINOV and MARINOVA, *op.cit.*, p. 107.

argues Alexandrova,<sup>577</sup> and it continued throughout 1990's as new elites became involved as well. Former security officers were often key players in the process. The Orion circle is one of the many examples of privatization-driven corruption involving political elites and former security officers. Securing the protection of the Videnov government, several former security officers, who became known as the Orion circle, managed to take advantage of the mass privatization program and siphon money from agricultural cooperatives, stripping farmers of all of their assets.<sup>578</sup> Such schemes were all too common and were a major reason for discrediting the elites of the transition as indicated by the poor electoral performance in 2001 of both the UDF and the BSP (18.18% and 17.15% respectively).

Privatization is by definition a political process as well as an economic one. Policymakers, Appel points out, could design privatization programs in ways that hold different distributional consequences for society and that benefit certain groups over others, i.e. one elite group over another, domestic investors over foreigner investors, managers over labor, etc.<sup>579</sup> Political considerations were particularly pronounced in the Bulgarian privatization process. As Bojicic-Dzelilovic and Bojkov argue, privatization was subjected to the conflicting interests of various political actors who used the process as an instrument for enhancing their political and economic standing.<sup>580</sup> Consequently, the privatization process in Bulgaria failed to become the

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<sup>577</sup> ALEXANDROVA Svetlana, "The Privatization Process in Bulgaria," in Demetrius S. IATRIDIS and June Gary HOPPS (eds.), *Privatization in Central and Eastern Europe. Perspectives and Approaches*, Westport, CT, Praeger Publishers, 1998, pp.134-143, p. 41.

<sup>578</sup> The Orion circle enjoyed Videnov's protection because it had organized several pre-electoral visits for him in European countries. The most ingenious move of the circle was founding the Bulgarian Agricultural and Industrial Bank (BAIB) with money procured from the State Savings Bank. BAIB collaborated with the Union of Agricultural Cooperatives in Bulgaria (UACB) in pooling together privatization vouchers as well as any other assets from members of the agricultural cooperatives. Money deposited to UACB, intended for acquiring shares in agricultural sector SOEs, were channeled to BAIB and consequently disappeared. The farmers lost everything, while the key figures from the Orion circle evaded prosecution by escaping to South Africa. See Venelin GANEV, 2001, *op.cit.*, 78.

<sup>579</sup> APPEL, *op.cit.*, p. 521.

<sup>580</sup> BOJICIC-DZELILOVC and BOJKOV, *op.cit.*, p. 73.

driver of economic transition producing instead overtly negative political and social consequences. The way privatization was carried out in Bulgaria undermined the legitimacy of post-communist governing institutions and eroded the nascent trust in the post-communist political elite. The 2001 election was in fact a vote against the transition elites and the extremely politicized and corruption-ridden reform process.

## 8.2 FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT (FDI) AND FOREIGN AID

Privatization is closely linked to the FDI flow in post-communist countries (Bradshaw 2005, Michailova 1997). The timing and openness of the privatization process, Bradshaw argues, is a crucial factor in explaining the dynamics and geography of FDI in Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>581</sup> Another paramount factor in considering FDI, pointed out by Nowak and Steagall, is the political stability of the potential recipient country.<sup>582</sup> FDI has not assisted in the early transition, Bradshaw contends, but it has come as the proof of the success of reform rather than as a catalyst of growth.<sup>583</sup> Hence, countries that were able to institute sound economic reform policies with rapid privatization and exhibited a politically stable environment witnessed a drastically higher level of FDI than countries where the consolidation of democracy was obstructed and economic reform was slow.

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<sup>581</sup> BRADSHAW Michael, "Foreign Direct Investment and Economic Transformation in Central and Eastern Europe," in David TURNOCK (ed.), *Foreign Direct Investment and Regional Development in East Central Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, Burlington, VT, Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005, pp. 3-19, p. 9.

<sup>582</sup> NOWAK Alojzi and Jeff STEAGALL, "Foreign Direct Investment in Central and Eastern Europe in the Period 1990-2000: Patterns and Consequences," in Svetlana MARINOVA and Marin MARINOV, *Foreign Direct Investment in Central and Eastern Europe*, Burlington, VT, Ashgate Publishing Company, 1998, pp. 59-92, p. 61.

<sup>583</sup> BRADSHAW, *op.cit.*, p. 3.

Bulgaria's frequent change of governments and stumbling privatization process throughout the 1990s had a devastating effect on the country's ability to attract FDI. External factors such as the Yugoslav Wars further aggravated the problem of Bulgaria's limited attractiveness. Between 1990-1993, Bulgaria received about 1% of the total FDI flow to former communist countries.<sup>584</sup> By mid-1996, the country had the lowest level of FDI per capita of all CEE countries (\$69 per capita).<sup>585</sup> In the first half of the 1990s, Bulgaria registered \$57 million in FDI – a drastically lower amount than Poland's \$1,396 million, Hungary's \$1,863 million or the Czech Republic's \$947 million (see table 12). Although FDI increased in the second half of the 1990s, FDI per capita for 1997-2001 remained at a low \$86.9, higher only than Romania's \$57.5.<sup>586</sup> The majority of FDI in Bulgaria (65%) were small projects of less than \$1,000.<sup>587</sup> Overall, Bulgaria did not experience any substantial capital flow throughout the 1989-1999 period. FDI inflow in Bulgaria was considerably lower than that of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, who were the major recipients of FDI in the region.

In an attempt to address the lack of FDI in the early years of the transition, the Videnov government founded the Bulgarian Foreign Investment Agency (BFIA) in April 1995, which was to provide guidance and assistance to potential investors. Combined with a slowdown in market reform and privatization, this initiative failed to stimulate FDI growth. It was not until the election of the UDF government in 1997 and the consistent reform policies that ensued that FDI registered a marked increase.

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<sup>584</sup> CARTER Francis, "Foreign Direct Investment in Bulgaria: The First Ten Years," in David TURNOCK, *op.cit.*, pp. 209-221, p. 210.

<sup>585</sup> MIHOV Ilian, "The Economic Transition in Bulgaria 1989-1999," INSEAD Working Paper No. 1999/60/EPS, September 1999, p. 11.

<sup>586</sup> BRADSHAW, *op.cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>587</sup> MIHOV, *op.cit.*, p. 11.

**Table 12. FDI Inflows into Central and Eastern Europe, 1990-2001 (\$mln)**

|                      | 1990-1995<br>average | 1996-2001<br>average |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Albania              | 42                   | 91                   |
| Belarus              | 12                   | 227                  |
| Bosnia & Herzegovina | -                    | 84                   |
| Bulgaria             | 57                   | 610                  |
| Croatia              | 120                  | 1,048                |
| Czech Republic       | 947                  | 3,779                |
| Estonia              | 165                  | 371                  |
| Hungary              | 1,863                | 2,081                |
| Latvia               | 116                  | 370                  |
| Lithuania            | 36                   | 457                  |
| Macedonia            | 17                   | 148                  |
| Moldova              | 31                   | 84                   |
| Poland               | 1,396                | 6,869                |
| Romania              | 162                  | 1,119                |
| Russia               | 1,167                | 3,128                |
| Serbia & Montenegro  | 82                   | 231                  |
| Slovakia             | 147                  | 849                  |
| Slovenia             | 100                  | 269                  |
| Ukraine              | 206                  | 625                  |
| Total                | 6,666*               | 22,440               |

Source: UNCTAD, World Investment Report (2002)

\*excludes Bosnia & Herzegovina

A currency board agreement and an accelerated privatization policy led to macro-stimulation of the economy which in turn contributed to political stability. The UDF parliament adopted the Foreign Investment Act in October 1997, which granted equal rights to foreign investors. A public-sector investment program was also implemented in 1998-2001. Such measures combined with improved economic and political conditions, boosted FDI and created conditions for sustainable economic growth.

Thus, in 2000, FDI reached \$1,002 million. FDI to Bulgaria came primarily from EU member states and was directed mainly to the industrial sector. Bulgaria's leading FDI countries between 1992-1998 were Belgium and Germany with 38.1% of the total FDI.<sup>588</sup> Industry accounted for over half of FDI, with chemical, electronics and engineering companies attracting the chunk of investments (see table 13).

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<sup>588</sup> CARTER, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

**Table 13. Sectoral breakdown of FDI in Bulgaria, 1992-1998**

| Sector       | FDI \$mln      | Percent      | Companies     | Percent      |
|--------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| Industry     | 1,034.2        | 54.1         | 720           | 6.9          |
| Trade        | 362.3          | 19.0         | 8,270         | 79.2         |
| Finance      | 205.3          | 10.7         | 160           | 1.5          |
| Tourism      | 101.5          | 5.3          | 97            | 0.9          |
| Transport    | 89.0           | 4.7          | 199           | 1.9          |
| Telecoms     | 32.6           | 1.7          | 25            | 0.2          |
| Construction | 17.9           | 0.9          | 113           | 1.1          |
| Agriculture  | 6.1            | 0.3          | 72            | 0.7          |
| Others       | 60.5           | 3.2          | 787           | 7.5          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>1,909.7</b> | <b>100.0</b> | <b>10,443</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

Political instability and slow economic reform also had a negative impact on the amount of foreign aid<sup>589</sup> disbursed to Bulgaria. The World Bank’s lending strategy towards Bulgaria was directly linked to political and economic conditions in the country. As the 2002 World Bank evaluation report stated, “The frequent change in governments, combined with a flagging interest in reforms on the part of successive governments, and expectations of financial crises, led the Bank to take an appropriately cautious approach in its own assistance during the mid-1990s, which translated into a modest lending program, focused on investments and keeping on hold a major adjustment loan.”<sup>590</sup> After 1997, once the UDF government began implementing reforms, the Bank continued to exercise caution and only gradually launched a full lending program. By 2002, \$1.5 billion in loans were approved to Bulgaria. By comparison, the Czech Republic received \$438 million in official aid just in 2000.<sup>591</sup> USAID aid to Bulgaria was similarly tied to

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<sup>589</sup> Foreign aid refers both to grants and loans from foreign governments and international organizations.

<sup>590</sup> World Bank, Operations Evaluation Department (OED) Reach, January 7, 2002.

<sup>591</sup> Source: World Development Indicators database, September 2009.

political and economic developments, reaching its highest point of \$60 million in 1991 when prospects of reform were favorable, but decreasing to under \$40 million between 1992-1997.<sup>592</sup>

EU funding for Bulgaria and PHARE<sup>593</sup> assistance in particular was also modest in comparison to other post-communist countries. Bulgaria became eligible for PHARE assistance as early as 1990 and was allocated a total of €754.5 million for the period up to 1998.<sup>594</sup> By contrast, the PHARE budget for the Czech Republic for the period 1989-2001, was over €15 billion, €841 million of which have been absorbed.<sup>595</sup> PHARE as well as other foreign aid allocations were based on GDP and population, taking into account progress in implementing reforms, capacity to absorb funds, and past performance. Because of such conditionalities, rapidly reforming economies such as the Czech Republic and Poland received more official assistance (relative to their population and GDP) than countries like Bulgaria or Romania. The low amount of FDI and foreign aid to Bulgaria throughout the 1990s is directly linked to the country's unstable political climate and failure to implement robust economic reform.

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<sup>592</sup> "USAID in Bulgaria 1990-2007: Seventeen Years Hand in Hand," USAID/Bulgaria, 2007, p. 10.

<sup>593</sup> The PHAPRE program was launched in 1989 by the European Community (now the EU) to assist post-communist economic and social reform in Poland and Hungary. The abbreviation stands for Pologne et Hongrie Aide de la Reconstruction Economique, also meaning "lighthouse" in French. The program was gradually extended to other East European countries including Bulgaria.

<sup>594</sup> NIKOLOVA Pavlina, "The Implementation of Phare, Ispa and Sapard in Bulgaria," a paper presented at the 2007 Workshop: A Roadmap for the Western-Balkans: Using IPA and other EU Funds to Accelerate Convergence and Integration, Brussels, October 2007.

<sup>595</sup> "An Introduction to EU-Financed Programmes in the Czech Republic," Delegation of the European Commission to the Czech Republic, February 2002.

### 8.3 EU AND NATO MEMBERSHIP

Europe and the United States were enthusiastic about the changes taking place in Eastern Europe. In support of democratization efforts, the European Community (EC)<sup>596</sup>, the United States, and individual European governments immediately offered aid in the form of technical and financial assistance. Such aid was rather modest and ill-suited according to the expectations of East European countries (Wedel 2001). Furthermore, both Europe and the United States were initially noncommittal to integrating these countries into the Euro-Atlantic structures. With the disbanding of the Comecon and the Warsaw Pact in July 1991, former communist countries were facing uncertainty and were in search of a new foreign policy orientation. While integration in the Euro-Atlantic structures was a logical choice for Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, who demanded guarantees against a potential threat from Russia/USSR, such choice was not straightforward for Bulgaria. Thus, there was a wide range in the level of commitment and efforts of East European governments in seeking EU and NATO integration.

In Bulgaria, throughout the 1990's there was no political will and consensus among the various groups in the political elite to pursue consistent policy towards integration into the EU and NATO. Known as the Soviet's most trusted ally, Bulgaria was heavily dependent on the Soviet Union. In addition to being Bulgaria's main trade partner, the Soviet Union was viewed as guarantor of Bulgaria's security and territorial integrity, particularly *vis a vis* NATO-member and former belligerent, Turkey. The new post-communist realities redefined the Soviet position of power in the region, resulting in an irreconcilable split among the Bulgarian elite as to the

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<sup>596</sup> The European Community (EC) was the predecessor to the European Union. Established in 1967, the EC extended earlier cooperation within the European Coal and Steel Community and the European Economic Community. With the Maastricht Treaty in 1993, the EC was transformed into the EU.

country's foreign policy orientation. BSP governments considered preserving strong ties with Russia/USSR a priority, Barany points out, whereas UDF governments pursued an unequivocally pro-Western foreign policy the key objective of which was membership in NATO and the EU.<sup>597</sup> The frequent change of governments between 1990-1997 translated into sharp turns in Bulgaria's foreign policy, which oscillated between pro-Russian and pro-Western orientations. It was not until the collapse of the BSP Videnov government in late 1996 and its sobering experience in dealing with Yeltsin's Russia that a consensus among the Bulgarian political elite started to emerge.<sup>598</sup> These "seven lost years" in Bulgaria's foreign policy placed the country considerably behind in the process of integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures. Consequently, Bulgaria was not part of the first wave of expansion of NATO or the EU.

The question of EU membership was far less contentious than integration into NATO. Since the BSP was in favor of an approach of a "dual foreign policy" that combines the interests of Europe and Russia, Linden argues, neither the BSP nor the UDF adopted a hostile stance to the country's continued negotiations for EU membership.<sup>599</sup> Economic ties between Bulgaria and the EC were established in May 1990, with the signature of a Trade and Cooperation Agreement. Bulgaria was then also included in the PHARE program. In December 1990, a resolution of the BSP-dominated Grand National Assembly declared Bulgaria's will to become a member of the EC. A more comprehensive Association Agreement with the EC was signed in March 1993 by the Berov government. The Europe Agreement, Noutcheva and Bechev recount, stated explicitly the goal for EC membership and the support of the EC for the efforts to reach the democratic and

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<sup>597</sup> BARANY Zoltan, *The Future of NATO Expansion: Four Case Studies*, New York, NY, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 187.

<sup>598</sup> Videnov hoped to solve the declining economic situation by securing favorable import deals with Russia. However, he failed to negotiate low-priced gas from Russia as well as any other preferentially priced deals. See, „Синият период на договорите с Русия за пренос на газ,” 24 chasa, January 24, 2008.

<sup>599</sup> LINDEN Ronald H., "Twin Peaks: Romania and Bulgarian Between the EU and the United States," *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 51, No. 5, 2004, p. 186.

economic standards that would make membership possible.<sup>600</sup> In December 1995, the Videnov government submitted a formal application for membership in the European Union. The economic crisis and public unrest brought about by the Videnov rule, however, seriously harmed Bulgaria's prospects of membership. Consequently, Bulgaria was not invited for negotiation talks until February 2000, when the European Commission recognized the incremental improvement of the economic situation in Bulgaria that ensued with UDF's reform policies. This much-delayed progress was not sufficient to gain Bulgaria inclusion in the 2004 wave of enlargement, when eight post-communist countries joined the EU. Bulgaria, along with Romania, signed the EU Accession Treaty in April 2005 and became an EU member on January 1, 2007.

NATO membership was a major point of disagreement among the Bulgarian political elite throughout the 1990s. As Linden points out, the BSP and its partners made it very clear that they were suspicious of NATO and wary of what its expansion would mean for the security of Bulgaria.<sup>601</sup> The socialists viewed NATO in strictly geostrategic terms, Linden argues, and opposed risking relationships with Russia as well as reforming the arm forces (which entailed reducing troops and converting from Soviet to NATO arsenal).<sup>602</sup> By contrast, the UDF embraced the value orientation of the alliance and viewed NATO membership as a step towards EU membership.<sup>603</sup> In 2000, the BSP changed its position and acknowledged the need for NATO membership. Nevertheless hostility within the socialist coalition persisted. BSP ideologues

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<sup>600</sup> NOUTCHEVA Gergana and Dimitar BECHEV, "The Successful Laggards: Bulgaria and Romania's Accession to the EU," *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 114-144, p. 118.

<sup>601</sup> LINDEN Ronald H., "Security and Identity in Southeast Europe: Bulgaria, NATO, and the War in Kosovo," in Ronald H. LINDEN (ed.), *Norms and Nannies. The Impact of International Organizations on the Central and East European States*, Lanham, MD, Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Groups, 2002, pp. 179-201, p. 186.

<sup>602</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194.

<sup>603</sup> "Zhelev called NATO membership a "ticket" for the EU," *Duma*, May 30, 1995.

remained staunchly anti-western, Ganev contends, and never missed the chance to vent animosity toward NATO.<sup>604</sup> This profound disagreement among the political elite resulted in an inconsistent and erratic foreign policy that diminished Bulgaria's international standing.

The first and second BSP governments did not easily recognize the passing of an era, Gallagher argues. In 1990, Lyuben Gotzev, foreign minister in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lukanov governments, believed the Warsaw pact would survive at least another 2-3 years.<sup>605</sup> The Popov cabinet was similarly confused as to the direction of the country's foreign policy. Popov's foreign minister, Viktor Valkov, attempted to renew the old Soviet-Bulgarian Pact of Cooperation set to expire in 1991. His initiative was actively supported by the BSP.<sup>606</sup> An outcry in the media and opposition from President Zhelev and the UDF prevented the renewing of the contract.<sup>607</sup>

With UDF's Dimitrov government, Bulgaria's foreign policy shifted to the West. Dimitrov immediately declared the country's desire to participate in NATO and other peace and democracy-promoting structures.<sup>608</sup> He reaffirmed his position by recognizing the independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, and Slovenia<sup>609</sup> and applying for membership

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<sup>604</sup> Ganev 1997, *op.cit.*, p. 134.

<sup>605</sup> GALLAGHER Tom, "Balkan But Different: Romania and Bulgaria's Contrasting Paths to NATO Membership 1994-2002," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol. 20, No. 4, 2004, pp. 1-19, p. 187.

<sup>606</sup> "Lilov considers we need to speed up the preparation of a new Soviet-Bulgarian agreement," *Duma*, May 9, 1991.

<sup>607</sup> "UDF is against continuation of the old USSR-Bulgaria pact of cooperation and against signing a new pact for military cooperation which would be against the Helsinki process," *Democraziya*, May 31, 1991. "Zhelev: NATO is promising security guarantees. The old contract with USSR will not be renewed," *Democraziya*, June 15, 1991.

<sup>608</sup> "Sofia insists on guarantees from NATO – Filip Dimitrov on his first U.S. visit states that Bulgaria wants to be part of the West and participate in NATO and other structure promoting peace and democracy," *Democraziya*, March 14, 1992.

<sup>609</sup> "Bulgaria recognized Macedonia – president Zhelev is convinced that all political forces will support the government's decision," "The government recognizes the independence of four former Yugoslav republics – Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Socialists in parliament are not applauding the recognition of Macedonia," *Democraziya*, January 16, 1992.

to the Council of Europe. The 1992 acceptance to the Council marked Bulgaria's "return to Europe."<sup>610</sup> Bulgaria's new orientation, continued also by the Berov government, was welcomed by the West. The Yugoslav conflict rendered Bulgaria an important ally that could promote stable environment and support NATO's peacekeeping mission. Hence, in 1994 Bulgaria was invited to join the West European Union (WEU) and NATO's Partnership for Peace.<sup>611</sup>

BSP's return to power in late 1994 meant another sharp turn in Bulgaria's foreign policy. BSP's security doctrine called for a "foreign policy that does not harm our long-standing relationships with Russia, the Russian federation and East European partners" and proposed "working with UN and OSCE."<sup>612</sup> The Videnov government took on the immediate task of improving relations with Russia.<sup>613</sup> Improvement was indeed needed, as the BSP, which failed to condemn the hard-liner's August 1991 coup against Gorbachev and sided with the anti-Yeltsin insurgents in 1993, did not have many friends in Yeltsin's Russia. Videnov and Russian prime minister, Victor Chernomyrdin, negotiated trade agreements as well as a supply of Russian gas, oil, and military equipment.<sup>614</sup> Videnov did not take any steps to promote collaboration with NATO. At that time, Bulgaria was not contributing to peacekeeping operations in former Yugoslavia and the Bulgarian military had not established links with NATO.<sup>615</sup> According to Barany, the BSP justified its opposition to NATO with the prospects of totally changed relations

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<sup>610</sup> "Bulgaria returned to the European family – the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe unanimously voted for admitting Bulgaria to membership," *Democraziya*, May 6, 1992.

<sup>611</sup> The Partnership for Peace was launched in January 1994. The program aimed at creating trust and establishing collaboration between NATO and the post-communist states.

<sup>612</sup> "National Security Doctrine," *Duma*, August 28, 1993.

<sup>613</sup> "Bulgaria-Russia: big warm-up – liberalization of trade relations is equally important to both countries – the meeting of the inter-governmental commission on trade liberalization concluded yesterday," *Duma*, May 18, 1995.

<sup>614</sup> "We are awaiting gas, petrol and low custom duties from Russia: Viktor Chernomyrdin is in the country with a powerful business team," *Duma*, May 19, 1995. "We signed 15 agreements with Russia: a joint Bulgarian-Russian energy venture is created," *Duma*, May 20, 1995. "Bulgaria and Russia agreed on the pipeline: "Neftochim" and "Rossneft" form a joint venture – negotiations for the Burgas-Alexandropolis pipeline should be underway in October," *Duma*, September 19, 1995.

<sup>615</sup> GALLAGHER, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

with Russia, involvement in conflicts with which Bulgaria had nothing to do, threats to its non-nuclear status, and additional financial burden.<sup>616</sup> As a reward for not pursuing NATO membership, Barany argues, Russia gave 100 armored vehicles to Sofia in 1996.<sup>617</sup>

The Bulgarian-Russian nexus came to an end with the fall of the Videnov government. After the UDF took power in 1997, Bulgarian foreign policy was completely reoriented toward the West. In 1998, the UDF presented its new security concept which declared EU and NATO membership main priorities. The Kostov government supported NATO's military involvement in former Yugoslavia, despite strong public opposition. In 1999, Bulgaria denied Russia an air corridor and instead deployed forces with KFOR in Kosovo. BSP's position on NATO membership remained overwhelmingly negative. In April 1997, BSP leader Georgi Pirinski said that his party opposed joining NATO but was in favor of EU membership.<sup>618</sup> Similarly among the population, the level of support for joining NATO was consistently lower than for joining the EU, Linden states.<sup>619</sup> Nevertheless, the Kostov government avidly pursued integration into NATO, tying it to irreversible democratic changes. With its new leader and current president Georgi Parvanov, the BSP reconsidered its position and endorsed NATO membership in 2000. This much delayed consensus among the political elite ultimately led to Bulgaria's acceptance to NATO in 2004.

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<sup>616</sup> BARANY, 2003, *op.cit.*, p. 193.

<sup>617</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>618</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>619</sup> LINDEN, 2004, *op.cit.*, p.51.

## 8.4 ASSESSING THE ELITE FACTOR

It is a well established fact that in comparison to other East European countries, Bulgaria lagged behind in every aspect of the reform process. In that respect, elite change is but one of the factors accounting for Bulgaria's poor performance. In late 1980's Bulgaria was extremely ill-equipped for a transition to market economy. Unlike Hungary, where small entrepreneurs were active even under the communist regime, or Poland, where significant part of the land remained in private hands, Bulgaria strictly followed the model of state-planned/state-owned economy. Modest changes to this model were introduced in 1987 with Act 56, which envisioned transforming state-owned enterprises into shareholder companies and provided for the establishment of small private firms. While allowing for partial liberalization in the economy, argues Martin Ivanov, Act 56 did not dare cross into the ideologically condemned field of market economy.<sup>620</sup> Thus, on the eve of the 1989 revolutions, the state-planned economy model in Bulgaria was almost intact, there was no class of small entrepreneurs, and the managerial *nomenklatura* had limited understanding of market principles. The tremendous difficulties Bulgaria experienced in its transition to market economy were therefore to be expected.

In assessing the variance of transition outcomes, it is important to be aware that despite the common communist past, East European countries had different start to democratization and market-oriented reform. In these terms, Bulgaria was disadvantaged both economically and politically. The lack of market-oriented economic reform before 1989 is closely related to political factors, namely the absence of a strong reformist wing within the communist party and

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<sup>620</sup> Martin IVANOV, "Act 56: the End of a System," *Business Magazine*, April 8, 2008, available online: <http://www.bm-businessmagazine.bg/bg/articles/%D0%A3%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%B7-56:-%D0%9A%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%8F%D1%82-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D1%81%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BC%D0%B0/525/index.html>

the non-existence of organized dissidence. Hence, even after accounting for other factors such as economic conditions, elite transformation remains a major explanatory variable.

In the East European context, slow and unproductive reform policy is often associated with dominance of the former communist elite. While the Bulgarian and Romanian experience certainly confirm this argument, the case of Hungary puts into question such assumptions. When the Hungarian reformed communists came to power in 1994, they did not reverse reform policies but continued with rapid privatization and reduced government spending. By 1997, consistent macro and microeconomic reform policy placed Hungary ahead of the Czech Republic and Poland and made it a “model for East Europe.”<sup>621</sup> Furthermore, the Hungarian socialists continued to pursue EU and NATO membership. Thus, dominance of the former communist elite alone does not explain slow progress in reform efforts or sharp turns in foreign and domestic policy.

Then how can we explain the frequent and drastic changes in policy direction witnessed in Bulgaria throughout the 1990s? What needs to be considered is the strong links of the Bulgarian communist elite with Moscow. In other words, Russia was perceived as a real alternative for the Bulgarian communist/socialist elite, and one that would strengthen both its political and economic standing. Because of traditionally strong ties with Moscow as well as personal networks, the BSP elite viewed Russia as the most desired security guarantor and trade partner. Preserving close relations with Russia, therefore, became the priority of the BSP. Hence, when BSP was in power, foreign and domestic policy was reoriented towards Russia and away from Western alliances and partners. In that sense, Bulgarian politics in the 1990s bear more resemblance to contemporary Ukraine, where there is a clear division between a pro-

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<sup>621</sup> BROWN J. F., *The Groves of Change. Eastern Europe at the Turn of the Millennium*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2001, p. 123.

Russian and a pro-Western elite, than to political processes at the time in post-communist countries that were not part of the Soviet Union.

To illustrate this point let us consider Romania – also a country with slow progress in reform efforts, where, similarly to Bulgaria, the former communist elite dominated transition politics. The nature of the communist regime in Romania, however, with its deviation from the Soviet line, meant that the former communist elite did not have close ties with Moscow. Consequently, Russia was not perceived as a viable alternative in terms of security or trade orientation. Romania did not witness such sharp turns in its foreign policy. On the contrary, despite a similarly difficult transition, Romanian foreign policy was consistently pro-Western.

The particular nature of elite transformation in Bulgaria, defined by a strong former communist elite with pronounced pro-Russian attitudes, a weak pro-Western opposition unable to maintain power, and a frequent change of governments as a result, produced a sequence of chaotic and inconsistent policy choices throughout the 1990s.

## **9.0 HOW USEFUL A MODEL OF ELITE TRANSFORMATION?**

In this concluding chapter I would like to address the following questions: What have we learned about elite transformation and the transition process in Bulgaria? Is elite analysis a useful approach for studying major societal changes as those witnessed with the transition from a communist society? Is the proposed model fit for examining elite transformation in such moments of dramatic upheaval? Can this model be applied beyond the transition context? Finally, how does this study fit with other scholarship on East European elites and East European transitions, as well as in the broader fields of elite studies and literature on democratization?

Compared to other East European countries, Bulgaria was not a leader in democratization efforts. Its transition was characterized by a stop-and-go pace and frequent change of policy direction. In the East European context, slow reform progress is often associated with dominance of the former communist elite (and electoral victory for the former communists in the first democratic elections in particular). Indeed, elite transformation in Bulgaria was defined by a strong and slowly reforming former communist party and a weak and poorly organized opposition. There was little change in the former communist elite in terms of its composition, mode of recruitment, and ideological orientation. Loyalty remained the main criteria for recruitment and new elite members were recruited mainly from the usual pool of elite communist families and elite schools. Furthermore, the communist/socialist elite remained extremely pro-

Russian (due to traditional strong ties and personal networks) and envisioned a transition that would preserve Bulgaria's close ties with Russia.

Although dominant, the communist/socialist elite was not uncontested. However weak the opposition, it managed to eventually gain power. But lacking a unified vision of the transition and a solid reform program, and further being torn by internal conflict, the opposition was unable to maintain power. The communist elite was not better prepared to rule. In fact, its reluctance to govern is evident from its continued attempts to form coalitions and governments of "national consensus" that would include members of the opposition. Adding to the equation an opportunistic ethnic-based party changing allegiance much too often, made up for frequent change of governments and political instability.

Although political stability was achieved over time in Eastern Europe, no other country in the region witnessed nine governments in the first seven years of the transition. Thus, we could hardly argue that the nature of elite transformation in Bulgaria, with frequent change of governments and policy orientation was simply a function of the transition from communism and was therefore to be expected. The Bulgarian case was also unique in that former communist elites in other East European countries were far less pro-Russian than their Bulgarian counterpart. Thus, the change of nine governments in Bulgaria also meant that, unlike in other East European states, Bulgarian foreign and domestic policy was violently shifting between pro-Russian and pro-Western orientations. Such drastic policy shifts further impeded reform progress and contributed to political instability.

One of the most harmful and lasting effects of the political instability throughout the 1990s is the still persistent high level of corruption. Dominance of the former communist elite meant that old networks continued to operate (including the networks of former security officers)

and became intertwined with the new democratic institutions. Frequent change of governments further bred opportunistic behavior and corrupt practices as members of each governing majority, anticipating their power would be short-lived, were focused primarily on securing their standing after being ousted from power and on personal enrichment. This buffet syndrome was perhaps even more damaging than the persistence of old communist networks. The public became disillusioned by the fact that the democrats were no less corrupt than their communist predecessors. In fact, the main reason for UDF's poor performance in the 2001 elections and the sharp decline in its power since, are the numerous allegations of corruption. Corruption was also one of the main reasons for Bulgaria's belated EU membership. As Vachudova points out, widespread corruption was a key concern for the EU and large part of the reason why Bulgaria (and Romania) was held back from concluding negotiations for membership in 2002 and joining the EU in 2004.<sup>622</sup> The issue of corruption clearly illustrates the negative effects elite transformation may have on the transition outcome.

The link between elite transformation and transition outcome poses the question of whether elite analysis is a useful approach to analyzing political, economic and social change in a period of dramatic societal upheaval. Though assigning various degrees of importance to the elite factors, scholars across disciplines agree that elite change plays a major role in democratic transitions. O'Donnell and Schmitter have argued that "elite dispositions, actions and pacts" largely determine the prospects of transitioning to democracy, as democratic transitions represent "moments of plasticity, during which actors [elites] are faced with an opportunity to shape the course of events" (O'Donnell & Schmitter 1986). Higley and Burton further contend that

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<sup>622</sup> VACHUDOVA Milada Anna, *Europe Undivided: Democracy, Leverage, and Integration after Communism*, New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 52-53.

“democratic transitions and breakdowns can be best understood by studying basic continuities and changes in internal relations of national elites” (Higley & Burton 1989). The elite factor figures prominently also in the sociology of revolutions literature. Theda Skocpol argues that intra-elite conflict plays at least as important a role in revolutions as participation from below (Skocpol 1979), whereas Jack Goldstone points to intra-elite conflict, financial crisis, and popular uprisings as the major factors that bring about revolutions (Goldstone 1991).

Elite change does not occur in a vacuum. Studying elites, therefore, inevitably offers a valuable insight into the transition process itself. In a transition context, elite action is responsible more than anything for shaping future institutions. The elite approach does not preclude the validity of other theoretical frameworks. The social movement paradigm, for example, has often been adopted in examining revolutionary changes. The absence of an organized dissident movement in Bulgaria or any mobilized social group contesting power renders a social movement approach inappropriate and difficult to apply to the Bulgarian context. Considering that changes in Bulgaria were initiated within the communist elite and that intra-elite conflict played a major role in the collapse of the communist regime, an elite-centered approach is better suited for examining the Bulgarian transition.

The proposed model drawing on classical elite theory and contemporary research on East European elites is particularly well-fitted for analyzing elite change in post-communist societies. The model’s emphasis on elite, counter elite, and contestation of power corresponds well to the elite configuration in Bulgaria at the start of the transition. The elite/counter-elite conceptualization is necessitated by the fact that 1) there are two groups that are clearly distinguishable and fundamentally opposed to one another, i.e. the communist elite and the democratic opposition; and 2) one group, the democratic opposition, is easily defined as a

counter-elite for it is, at least initially, completely excluded from the political process. Furthermore, contestation of power by the counter-elite takes the form of negotiation and bargaining, as well as an attack on the legitimizing principle of rule (the political formula). In other words, the democratic opposition was not only fighting for a share in power, but questioned the very foundation of communist power, i.e. communist ideology and one-party rule. In that sense, the model is a useful analytical tool not only for the study of post-communist elites, but for examining transitions from authoritarian regimes in general. Applying this model to post-Franco Spain, for example, would be a useful and most likely productive endeavor.

But how appropriate is this model for examining elite change beyond the transition? In the East European context, we can no longer speak of an elite and counter-elite. East European countries, including Bulgaria, have moved away from an elite/counter-elite model and towards a pluralistic elite structure with multiple competing elite groups. Contestation of power, in turn, is no longer focused on questioning the legitimizing principle of rule. Instead, competing elite groups struggle for share in power and attacks on rival elites are limited to criticisms of specific policy choices. The emergence and dominance of new parties and elite groups in Bulgaria, such as NDSV, ATAKA, and GERB, clearly illustrate the shift to a pluralistic elite structure.

Despite the change in elite structure, the model still provides a useful tool for examining elite change. Mode of recruitment and intra-elite conflict are mechanisms of elite change that are at work at all times, regardless of the pace and degree of elite change or the political system. Although we no longer distinguish between an elite or a counter-elite, but rather speak of “*elites*” or “the Bulgarian political elite,” we can still differentiate between intra-elite conflict and conflict among different elite groups. The 2009 conflict between BSP President Georgi Parvanov and former Prime Minister Sergei Stanishev, for instance, is a clear example of intra-elite

conflict.<sup>623</sup> Examining the modes of recruitment of the various elite groups, the composition of the elite, and the intra-elite and inter-elite conflict is very important to our understanding of political processes in the country and the process of policy formulation in particular.

This work makes a valuable contribution to the study of East European elites. Elite transformation in Bulgarian has been largely neglected in the scholarly literature. While Bulgaria is often referenced in comparative studies, the few available works on Bulgarian elites are not based on empirical data. Empirically grounding this study, therefore, was extremely important for developing an accurate understanding of elite change in Bulgaria. Analysis of the data revealed a much more complex process of elite transformation than the simplistic categorization of Bulgaria as a case of reproduction where the communist elite preserved its power.

In addition to offering empirically-based analysis, this study aspires to make a theoretical contribution. Studies of post-communist elites emerged with the unfolding of events in Eastern Europe. Theorizations of elite change were therefore often lagging behind, as scholars were struggling to catch up with the rapidly changing political situation in the region. While focusing on gathering empirical data on elites, many scholars were neglecting the need for theory-building and were instead borrowing pre-existent theoretical concepts without necessarily developing a good understanding of the frameworks with which such concepts originated. The circulation *vs.* reproduction approach is notable in this respect. Acknowledging the significant contribution of this approach, I attempted to correct some its theoretical shortcomings. Bringing in classical elite

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<sup>623</sup> Before the 2009 parliamentary elections there was a visible conflict between Sergei Stanshev and Georgi Parvanov over policy within the party. See, „Бриго: Да сваляме по-бърже Станишев, Първанов е човекът,” *Актуално*, July 12, 2009. Available online at: [http://politics.actualno.com/news\\_274484.html](http://politics.actualno.com/news_274484.html)

theory of Mosca and Pareto and combining it with contemporary research on East European elites offered an improved framework for examining elite change in post-communist societies.

In examining elite transformation in Bulgaria this study is a much needed addition to comparative studies on East European elites and transitions. Such topic is closely related to the process of democratization in Eastern Europe and the variety of transition outcomes and, thus, adds on to the voluminous literature on democratization.

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