

To My Wife, Gül

BULGARIA: HISTORY AND POSTCOMMUNIST TRANSITION

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ADEM İZGÜ

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I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in International Relations.

Asst. Prof. Nur Bilge Criss
Thesis Supervisor

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in International Relations.

Asst. Prof. Hasan Ünal
Examining Committee Member

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in International Relations.

Asst. Prof. Emel Osmançavuşoğlu
Examining Committee Member

Approval of the Institute of Economics and Social Sciences

Prof. Dr. Erdal Erel
Director

ABSTRACT

BULGARIA: HISTORY AND POSTCOMMUNIST TRANSITION

İzgü, Adem

M.A., Department of International Relations

Supervisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. Nur Bilge Criss

July 2005

This thesis analyses establishment and transition of Bulgaria in chronological order, starting from the emergence of an independent Bulgarian kingdom in the Balkans to modern Bulgaria, mainly elaborating changes in the social-political, economic and foreign policy dimensions. The thesis aims to give a general perspective of today's developing democratic Bulgaria, shedding light on critical turning points in history, the tragedies of Bulgaria in the conflictual environment of the Balkans, and recent events, which fundamentally changed the direction, and nature of the country. This study claims that the transition has been extraordinary and exemplary for many reasons including the absence of ethnic unrest, rapid economic developments and peaceful active foreign policy. Moreover, the thesis points out the tolerant structure of Ottoman governance, and the peaceful, acquiescent, and faithful character of the Turkish minority, explaining their important role in the peaceful transition of the country.

Keywords: Bulgaria, History, Social Transition, Political Transition, Minorities, Economic Transition, Foreign Policy Transition.

ÖZET

BULGARİSTAN: TARİHİ VE KOMUNİZM SONRASI DEĞİŞİM

İzgü, Adem

Yüksek Lisans, Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü

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Bu tez, Balkanlar'da bağımsız bir Bulgar krallığının ortaya çıkmasından modern Bulgaristan'a kadar, temel olarak sosyal-politik, ekonomik ve dış politika boyutunu ele alarak Bulgaristan'ın kuruluşu ve değişimini incelemektedir. Bu tez, tarihteki önemli dönüş noktalarına, çatışmalı Balkan ortamındaki Bulgaristan'ın trajedilerine ve yakın geçmişte ülkenin yönünü ve doğasını kökünden değiştiren olaylara ışık tutarak, bugünün gelişen demokratik Bulgaristan'ının genel bir perspektifini vermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma, etnik çatışmanın olmaması, hızlı ekonomik gelişme ve barışçı aktif politikası sebebiyle ülkenin dönüşümünün sıra dışı ve örnek bir nitelik taşıdığı tezini savunmaktadır. Ayrıca tez, Osmanlı yönetiminin hoşgörülü yapısını, ülkenin barış içindeki değişimini açıklayarak Türk azınlığın barışçı, itaatkar ve sadık karakterini vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bulgaristan, Tarih, Sosyal Değişim, Politik Değişim, Ekonomik Değişim, Dış Politika Değişimi.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BANU	Bulgarian Agrarian National Union
BCP	Bulgarian Communist Party
BGL	The Bulgarian national currency, the Lev
BSEC	Black Sea Economic Co-operation
BSP	Bulgarian Socialist Party
BTC	Baku – Tbilisi - Ceyhan
CBA	Currency Board Arrangement
CEECs	Central and East European Countries
CLS	Centre for Liberal Strategies
CMEA	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
COMECON	Council for Mutual Economic Aid
CSCE	Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe
DM	Deutsche Mark
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FIA	Foreign Investment Act
FRY	Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
FM	Foreign Minister
GDP	Gross domestic product
GNP	Gross national product
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMRO	Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MPFSEE	Multinational Peace Force in South-Eastern Europe
MRF	Movement for Rights and Freedoms

NA	National Assembly
NACC	North Atlantic Co-operation Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NEM	New Economic Mechanism
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NSI	National Statistical Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	The Organisation for Security and Co-Operation in Europe
PASOK	Panhellenic Socialist Movement Party
PfP	Partnership for Peace
PHARE	Polish and Hungarian Assistance for the Reconstruction of Europe
SAPARD	Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development
SC	Security Council (of the United Nations Organization)
SEE	Southeastern Europe
SEECF	South East European Cooperation Process
SEEBRIG	South Eastern Europe Brigade
SFOR	Stabilization Force
UDF	Union of Democratic Forces
UN	United Nations Organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WP	Warsaw Pact
WTO	Warsaw Treaty Organization
WWI/II	World War I/II

MAP OF BULGARIA



INTRODUCTION

Bulgarians have been living in the north part of the Balkans for almost 13 centuries. They have been the members of the Balkan family of nations for almost five centuries subjects of the Ottoman Empire. When nationalism came to Balkans in the 18th century, Balkan nations, which had lived together for many years, underwent complicated and uneven processes of nation building and transition. Bulgarians, being one of them, founded the third Bulgarian principality in history, largely with the help of ‘big brother’, Russia. Nevertheless, from that very moment Bulgarians could not stay away from struggles and defeat in late 19th and through the 20th century, again and again, until the end of the second millennium. Thus, until recently, Bulgaria, as a country at the far end of the Balkans, had always been somewhat isolated from Western Europe and was perceived as one of the “others”.

With the fall of the Berlin wall, Bulgaria began to give signals of a rebirth. In fact the process began at the beginning of the 1980s, but its image of a faithful Soviet Union satellite tended to conceal this fact under the seeming immobility of communism. However, this change has been far different from those of the other nations. Bulgaria has neither been a paragon of transition like the countries of Central Europe, nor has it experienced bloody nationalist conflicts like neighbouring Yugoslavia. Therefore, little attention has been paid to some of the intriguing aspects of the Bulgarian transition. The early formation and long endurance of a two-party system, survival of democratic institutions through years of political turmoil, successful integration of the main ethnic minorities in the democratic process, an

economic transition which, after a long experience of failure, has shown encouraging signs of progress in recent years, and its foreign policy has established it as an island of stability in the Balkans.

Today, it seems that this victimised and forgotten country, has got rid of many of its burdens and emerging as another international actor in the Balkans. At this point, this thesis discusses Bulgaria's painful journey towards today's modern, democratic, NATO, and prospective EU member country, mainly elaborating on changes in the social-political, economic and foreign policy dimensions.

A number of articles and books have been published on specific aspects of Bulgarian politics, economics and foreign policy, but there have been only a few that provide a comprehensive analysis of the transition process.¹ This thesis aims to contribute to the field of inquiry by bringing together former studies and aims to capture the multi-dimensionality of transition.

The thesis consists of four chapters apart from the introduction and conclusion parts. The first chapter gives a short history of Bulgaria in chronological order² until the last democratic changes in 1989, and points to its turning points. It draws a picture of the Bulgarian society and its relations with regional states, highlighting widely used clichés against the Ottoman Empire and Turks. It examines Bulgaria's struggle for the coveted lands of Macedonia, its deep roots in democratic

¹ Among them are Vesselin Dimitrov's *Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition* and Emil Giatzidis's *An Introduction to Post-Communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformations*. However, Richard J. Crampton's books; *Bulgaria 1878-1918: A History* *A Concise History of Bulgaria*, *A Short History of Bulgaria* which analyse the history of the Bulgarian nation mainly in chronological order, form the most comprehensive studies on Bulgaria. J. F. Brown's *Bulgaria Under Communist Rule*, which gives detailed analyses of the first twenty year of Bulgaria and Nurcan Özgür's *Etnik Sorunların Çözümünde Hak ve Özgürlükler Hareketi (Movement of Rights and Freedom in Solution of Ethnic Problem)*, which gives the early post communist transition of the country should also be mentioned as analytic studies drawing a wider perspective on the subject.

² The thesis mainly gives the transition periods up to the year 2000, but in order not to draw a false picture of the country at a time when enormous positive changes happened in economy and important decisions (e.g. NATO and EU enlargement) made for Bulgaria's place in future Europe, latest developments were added at some necessary points. Moreover, to provide unity of such a wide ranging subject a chronology is given in the appendix section.

experience, but also its susceptibility to authoritarianism, relatively open social structure combined with intense individualism; negative effects caused by collectivisation during the communist era, and permanent tension between the pursuit of national self-interest and dependence on great powers.

The second chapter aims at giving a general perspective of the Bulgarian political and social transition along with inherited problems from the communist era. The chapter begins with presenting the political change which is largely connected with economic problems and follows with major problems; institutional inefficiency, absence of civil society; Bulgaria's minority policy and problems of the minority groups the settlement of which became indicators of Bulgaria's democratic enhancement.³ The chapter also highlights the significance of minority representation in the parliament and the positive contributions of the Movement of Rights and Freedoms party, which was formed by the Turkish minority.

The third chapter begins with a detailed exposure of communist transition of the economy and the Russian effect on the process, and examines the reasons for Bulgaria's bad record in economic transition in the first seven years after 1989, and the relative improvement that has taken place after 1997. It analyses the impact of factors such as external shocks, the Bulgarian governments' inability to formulate and implement coherent reform programmes, and tensions between macroeconomic stabilisation and structural transformation.

The fourth chapter, as in the former chapters, begins with the communist era and discusses Soviet influence on the country's foreign policy and continues with the post communist era, analysing the ability of Bulgarian policy-makers to work out new strategic priorities for the country's foreign policy and progress on the road to European

³ Since understanding the conditions of the largest minority group in the Balkans, helps to understand the transition of Bulgaria the thesis gives a detailed picture of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria.

integration. The chapter handles the issue in two periods until 1997, the period in which the country could not draw a straight line and after, in which it achieved a fundamental reorientation from bloc alignment to enhanced regional cooperation, as well as disengagement from a predominantly bilateral approach to a more active engagement and gradual multilateralism in the Balkans.

The reasons which led the to the preference of this subject was firstly the proximity of Bulgaria, in terms of geography, history and family connections, but remoteness in the minds of Turkish citizens, and elite alike. Moreover, the Balkan region forms a gateway for Turkey and all the Middle Eastern countries, while Bulgaria embraces most of the suitable routes for transportation with the rest of Europe. Turkey and Bulgaria has stood side by side, but in different worlds, for almost a century and now they enjoy merits of carrying out healthy relations for almost fifteen years as well as drawing the lesson that doubtlessly learning about friends makes people closer. The reader will find that the history of Bulgaria, from the beginning to the end, cannot be thought without Turkey and the Turks. The second reason for choosing Bulgaria as a case study is that among the former Eastern Bloc countries, Bulgaria is one of the most interesting, as it presents a set of characteristics different from those observed elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe, not only as a Warsaw Pact member, but also in the aftermath.

CHAPTER I

A SHORT HISTORY OF BULGARIA

1.1. Origins of Bulgarians

In order to understand today's Bulgaria we should look at its history. Today Bulgaria has many positive and negative features that it has inherited from its historical experiences. To see how it fared, it is essential that we see the starting point.

By the fourth century, Roman power was weakening with internal problems when tribes from the Asiatic steppes came to northeast Balkans. They colonised areas of the eastern Balkans, and in the seventh century other Slav tribes combined with the Proto-Bulgars to launch a fresh assault into the Balkans. The Proto-Bulgars originated in the area between the Urals and Volga and were a pot-pourri of various ethnic elements. Actually, they were a group of Turkic origin and the name 'Bulgar' was derived from a Turkic verb *Bulgamak* (to mix).⁴

In the second half of the 7th century, Proto-Bulgars settled on the territory of the present-day Northeast Bulgaria. They formed the Bulgarian State, in alliance with the Slavs, and this state was recognized by the Byzantine Empire in 681 AD. During the rule of Prince Boris I Michail (852-889 AD), Bulgarians adopted Christianity as

⁴ For the origins of Bulgarians see, Will S. Monroe, *Bulgaria and her People*, (Boston: The Colonial Press, 1914), pp.12-16; Ilker Alp, *Belge ve Fotoğraflarla Bulgar Mezalimi (1878-1989) (Bulgarian Atrocities with Documents and Photographs(1878-1989))*, (Ankara: Trakya Universitesi Yayınları, 1990), pp.10-12.

their official religion. This act abolished the ethnic differences between Proto-Bulgarians and Slavs, and started building a unified Bulgarian nation.⁵

In the second half of the 9th century the disciples of the monks Cyril and Methodius, who created and disseminated the Cyrillic alphabet, came to Bulgaria and developed a rich educational and literary activity and the Cyrillic script spread to other Slavic lands as well - present-day Serbia and Russia. After the country reached its golden age with King Simeon I (893-927 AD), it began weakening by internal struggles at a time when Hermitism became an important system of faith in the region.⁶ Hermitism came to Bulgaria towards the end of the 10th century. It obviously indicated a willingness to withdraw from the world and its problems, and a sense of 'internal migration' or dissociation from the temporal world was further encouraged by the greatest and most lasting of the heresies to enter Bulgaria: Bogomilism,⁷ and it may be one of the main reasons of Bulgarians apolitical life style which was seen in the following years up to the 19th century when nationalism hit the region.

In 1018, Bulgaria was conquered by the Byzantine Empire. In 1186, the Second Bulgarian Kingdom was founded and during the reign of King Ivan Assen II (1218 -1241) it established political hegemony in Southeast Europe.⁸ Nevertheless, the strife among some of the boyars resulted in the division of Bulgaria into two kingdoms and this weakened the country and in the following period. In 1396,

⁵ R.J. Crampton, A Concise History of Bulgaria, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 7-15; Vassil A. Vassilev, Bulgaria: 13 centuries of existence, (Sofia: Sofia Press, 1979), pp.7-14.

⁶ Will S. Monroe, Bulgaria and her People, p.15; Glenn E. Curtis (ed.), Bulgaria: a Country Study, (Washington: Library of Congress, 1993), p.6

⁷ The Bogomils argued that the entire visible world, including mankind, was the creation of Satan; only the human soul was created by God who sent his son, Christ, to show humanity the way to salvation. The Bogomils believed the gratification of all bodily pleasures to be an expression of the diabolic side of creation, and therefore they preached a formidable asceticism which enjoined poverty, celibacy, temperance and vegetarianism. The Bogomils also questioned the social order by preaching that man should live in communities where property was shared and individual ownership unknown, and in which all men would be levelled by an equal participation in agricultural labour. The Bogomils had no formal priesthood; there were loose links between different regions. See R.J. Crampton, A Concise History of Bulgaria, pp.19-20.

⁸ Glenn E. Curtis (ed.), Bulgaria: a Country Study, p.7; Vassil A. Vassilev, Bulgaria:13 centuries of existence, p.53.

Ottomans conquered the region and for almost five centuries Bulgarian people became part of the most developed governmental system of the time. Some of the historians use the term 'Turkish yoke' or 'Ottoman yoke' mostly for political reasons but as the subsequent events had shown and objective historians clearly put; it was at least a 400-year period of peace and prosperity which the region had hardly seen in the past and after.⁹

Nevertheless, the Ottoman Empire entered an era of decline with a series of military defeats after the Vienna Campaign (1683-1699), while globalisation began to be felt in the whole country. Bulgarian trade extended beyond Ottoman State borders, agricultural goods were exported increasingly to Western Europe and modern manufacturing equipment, mainly textile machinery, was imported. Trade brought the idea of achieving modernisation in Bulgarian life and culture, as more Bulgarians travelled to the West for business or for education.¹⁰

Ottoman rule in the Balkans was essentially non-assimilative and multi-national in spirit and the peoples of the Balkans were able to retain their separate identities and cultures. There were no significant obstacles to the Ottomans if they sought to convert the entire Balkan population. On the contrary, because Islam as an institution maintained certain privileges for Muslims, mass conversion of the population would have actually undermined the political and economic power of the Ottoman Empire. As a result, the Bulgarian population remained within the Orthodox

⁹ Beside the well-known Turkish Ottoman historians, some others including N. Todorov, H. Şabanoviç, H. Hadjibegic, A.Suceska, D. Bojanic, M. Maxim, M. Guboglu, E. Zacharadou can be referred as the ones who left the pragmatic-doctrinaire approach, came to Turkey and carried out objective research in the archives. See Halil Inalcık, "Türkler ve Balkanlar (Turks and Balkans)," Balkanlar (Balkans), (Istanbul: Eren, 1993), p.18; Ilker Alp, Belge ve Fotoğraflarla Bulgar Mezalimi (1878-1989), p.8.

¹⁰ Bogoslav Dobrin, Bulgarian Economic Development Since World War II, (New York, Washington DC and London: Praeger, 1973), p.4.

Church.¹¹ If there had been a Turkish yoke in the region then at least two important phenomena would remain, Turkish speaking Balkan Peninsula and wealthy Turks living in Anatolia, but none of them exists.

1.2. Emergence of Nationalism and Liberation Efforts of Bulgarians

When nationalism came to the Balkans in the 1800s, Bulgarians' struggle for independence and unity began not against the governing state but against 'Greek yoke' because of Greek hegemony in the Orthodox Church and status within the Ottoman Empire.¹² The competition with Greeks eventually extended to Serbia as an Ottoman *firman* of 1870 established the Bulgarian exarchate. The existence of Bulgarian exarchate later set Greeks, Bulgarians, and Serbs at odds with one another as the settlers of Macedonia were allowed to determine whether or not to join the exarchate according to a referendum, requiring the two-thirds majority of inhabitants of a district.¹³ These acts clearly started a struggle over Macedonians to affect them, especially through means of education. Bulgarians were largely successful as it can be seen even today, however the subsequent events caused the struggle to lead to military campaigns.¹⁴

¹¹ Margarita Assenova, "Islam in Bulgaria: Historical, Sociocultural, and Political Dimensions," Briefing Notes on Islam, Society, and Politics Vol. 3, No 1, June 2000
<<http://www.ciaonet.org/pbei/csis/isp/isp200006/index.html>>.

¹² The *millet* system, used in the Ottoman Empire to give freedom to the religious groups, recognized group leaders as heads of the community. Thus Bulgarians felt humiliated as the sultans recognised the Greek Patriarch of Constantinople as the exclusive representative of the Eastern Orthodox millet into which the Bulgarians were incorporated. Luan Troxel, "Bulgaria and the Balkans," in Constantine P. Danopoulos and Kostas G. Messas (eds.), Crises in the Balkans Views from the Participants (Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), pp.196-197; R.J. Crampton, A Concise History of Bulgaria, pp.66-86.

¹³ Symeon A. Giannakos, "Bulgaria's Macedonian Dilemma," Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans, Vol. 3, No. 2, (2001), p.157; Orhan Koloğlu, "Osmanlı Döneminde Balkanlar (Balkans in the Ottoman Era)," in Balkanlar, (Istanbul: Eren, 1993), pp. 83-88; Vesselin Dimitrov, Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition, (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p.10; Andrey Ivanov, The Balkans Divided: Nationalism, Minorities, and Security, (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996), p.43.

¹⁴ Bulgarians spent a substantial amount of money on the schools in Macedonia to form a majority, and Macedonian language seems to be largely influenced by the Bulgarian language. In the 90th anniversary of the 1903 Ilinden peasant uprising against the Ottoman authorities in Macedonia, the

The first significant and organized attempt in order to form a national Bulgarian state came with an uprising in April 1876. The uprising was reported with political passion in European newspapers and gave a chance for the great powers to interfere in the Ottoman Empire's internal affairs.¹⁵ Two years later, in 1878, as a result of the Russian-Ottoman War (1877-1878), the Ayastefanos Treaty drew a new map of Bulgaria. The lands foreseen stretched from the Danube in the north to the Rhodopes in the south, and from the Black Sea in the east to the Morava and Vardar valleys in the west; included some of the Aegean coast, though not Salonika, and the inland cities of Skopje, Ohrid, Bitolya and Seres. In territorial terms, this was as much as any Bulgarian nationalist could have hoped for or even dreamed of. Nevertheless, the great powers which had been worried with the foundation of a Russian satellite at the conjunction point of their interests succeeded at organizing an international congress, the Congress of Berlin, which resulted in the Berlin Treaty (June-July 1878). With the Berlin Treaty, a new autonomous unit of the Ottoman Empire known as Eastern Rumelia was formed. Macedonia was returned to Ottoman rule and the Morava valley in the northwest was given to Serbia. Consequently, the Bulgaria of the treaty of Berlin was about one-third (37.5%) of the size of its Ayastefanos variant.¹⁶

The Bulgarian sense of being underprivileged exacerbated by the execution of the Treaty of Berlin. Bulgarians developed feelings of ill will toward Greece,

Bulgarian president, Zhelyu Zhelev, noted at his commemorating speech that an old man from the Vardar region came up to him and requested that Bulgaria show greater understanding towards the population of the new sovereign state because "Macedonia is a child of Bulgaria". See Symeon A. Giannakos, "Bulgaria's Macedonian Dilemma," pp.154-155; In 1870 there were over 1500 schools in the region established by the Bulgarians See Vassil A. Vassilev, Bulgaria: 13 centuries of existence, p.77; Will S. Monroe, Bulgaria and her People, p.122.

¹⁵ Many of the books write of the uprising to be brutally crushed but there were probably exaggerations of the number of Christian deaths, while nothing was mentioned of the Muslim deaths, which may have been greater. See for details, Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), Vol. 2, p.162.

¹⁶ Luan Troxel, "Bulgaria and the Balkans," p.198; Ilker Alp, Belge ve Fotoğraflarla Bulgar Mezalimi (1878-1989), p.1; R.J. Crampton, A Concise History of Bulgaria, p.85.

Serbia, Romania, and the great powers.¹⁷ The intervention of the western states, as always, had brought nothing but taken much. Bulgarians never forgot the lands lost in Berlin. Ayastefanos Treaty had served only to draw the borders of “*Lebensraum* of Bulgaria”.¹⁸ Thus, “the new Bulgarian state was to enter into life with a ready-made programme for territorial expansion and a burning sense of the injustice meted out to it by the great powers.”¹⁹

During the next twenty-five years, large numbers of Bulgarians fled Macedonia into the new Bulgaria, and secret liberation societies appeared in Macedonia and Thrace. One such group, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO), continued terrorist activities in the Balkans into the 1930s.²⁰

In fact, the fight over the region, especially on Macedonia, mandated the permanent fragmentation or “balkanisation” of the region, and thus produced the results that gave rise to the term.²¹ Later the failure in unification, complete independence, gaining the coveted lands of Macedonia and establishing a permanent territorial access to the Mediterranean Sea (referred to as White Sea in Bulgarian just as in Turkish) or the north-south axis²² has been the most important points in Bulgaria’s foreign and domestic state policy.

The task of building a nation state began under the direct guidance of the temporary Russian administration, which mapped out the state institutions and called

¹⁷ J. F. Brown, *Bulgaria Under Communist Rule*, (New York, London: Praeger, 1970), p.266-268.

¹⁸ Bulgarians still celebrate the signing of the Treaty of San Stefano rather than the Treaty of Berlin as their national independence day.

¹⁹ R.J. Crampton, *A Concise History of Bulgaria*, p.85. Underlining one reality helps to understand Bulgaria’s perspective. Instead of Turnovo, which is more centrally located, Sofia was selected as the capital in 1860, since Bulgarians hoped to acquire much larger territories towards the west and thus Sofia would be located in the centre of the state. Symeon A. Giannakos, “Bulgaria’s Macedonian Dilemma,” pp.155-156.

²⁰ Glenn E. Curtis (ed.), *Bulgaria: a Country Study*, p.22.

²¹ Plamen Pantev, “The Balkans: Historical Origins and Present Dangers of Recurring Ethnic Conflict on the European Periphery, 1945-2002,” <<http://www.ciaonet.org/casestudy/pap01/pap01.pdf>>, (January 2003).

²² Symeon A. Giannakos, “Bulgaria’s Macedonian Dilemma,” p.155.

a Constituent National Assembly in Turnovo, forming the first broad political forum of the liberated Bulgarians.²³ On the other hand, in order to gain the favour of the Bulgarian political elite, the great powers pursued such strategies as offering them educational opportunities abroad, and promoting their respective cultures in Bulgaria.²⁴ The years between 1878-1896 was a period of relative peace and consolidation of the state²⁵ but huge numbers of Turks voluntarily left or were forcibly expelled to Thrace or Anatolia.²⁶ Statistics vary but in this period 1.5 million Turks left Bulgaria.²⁷

In 1885, the Bulgarian Prince of German extraction, Alexander Battenberg²⁸, made an attempt to unite with Eastern Rumelia²⁹ but ‘big brother’³⁰, Russia was not happy with this decision. This action was followed by the attack of the Serbs. Russian officers³¹ who were in commanding positions left Bulgaria immediately to guarantee a Serb victory, yet the Bulgarian Army was successful at defying the aggressor Serbian forces at Slivnitsa. The war helped people to weld into a nation.³² However, the victorious Prince Alexander would not be able to stand long against Russian conspirators and had to abdicate.³³

²³ Nikolai Todorov, A Short History of Bulgaria, (Sofia: Sofia Press, 1977), p.68.

²⁴ For a detailed article on American influence in Bulgaria during state development see, Will S. Monroe, Bulgaria and her People, pp.323-340.

²⁵ R.J. Crampton, A Concise History of Bulgaria, p.119.

²⁶ For a detailed study on the Muslim population before and after the 1877-78 War see Halil Inalcık, “Türkler ve Balkanlar,” pp.29-32; and the massacres on the Muslim population see Bilal Şimşir, Rumeli’den Türk Göçleri (Turk Emigrations From Rumelia), Vols. 1-3, (Ankara: TTK, 1989).

²⁷ Andrey Ivanov, The Balkans Divided: Nationalism, Minorities, and Security, p.109.

²⁸ Battenberg became the Prince of Bulgaria on 29 April 1879, at the age of twenty-two. He was a cousin of Tsar Alexander of Russia, and occupied a subordinate post in the German army. Will S. Monroe, Bulgaria and her People, p.51.

²⁹ Symeon A. Giannakos, “Bulgaria’s Macedonian Dilemma,” p.160; Andrey Ivanov, The Balkans Divided: Nationalism, Minorities, and Security, p.45.

³⁰ Many historians mention Russia as Bulgaria’s big brother.

³¹ In the Bulgarian Army all of the high-ranking officers (higher than captain) were sent from the Russian Army.

³² R.J. Crampton, A Concise History of Bulgaria, p.102.

³³ Symeon A. Giannakos, “Bulgaria’s Macedonian Dilemma,” p.160; Andrey Ivanov, The Balkans Divided: Nationalism, Minorities, and Security, p.45; R.J. Crampton, A Concise History of Bulgaria, p.113-114.

In 1908, a new era began in the Ottoman Empire as constitutional monarchy was declared for the second time, after the short-lived one in 1876. From the very beginning, the decisions of the inexperienced Young Turk government provided new opportunities for nationalist movements in the Balkans, and sped up Ottoman collapse. Ferdinand Saxe-Coburg Gotha, who was the Bulgarian Prince since 1887, took advantage of the situation without any delay and proclaimed Bulgaria's independence from the Ottoman Empire in the same year, and became the first king of the third Bulgarian State.³⁴

Before the new government ratified the Churches and Schools Law, Bulgaria had to compete with the Serbian and Greek states in order to expand its territories in Macedonia as both of them developed conflicting territorial interests with Bulgaria and both of which were established as sovereign states before Bulgaria.³⁵ The Churches and Schools Law provided the conditions for Balkan countries to form alliances against the Ottoman Empire and obviously the aim was to drive Turks out of Europe and share the inheritance of 'the sick man of the Europe'.³⁶

1.3. The Balkan Wars

In 1912, after long negotiations, Serbia and Bulgaria reached temporary agreement on the disposition of Macedonia, the chief issue that had divided them. Subsequent agreements by Greece with Serbia, Bulgaria, and Montenegro completed the Balkan League at a time when the Ottoman Empire was occupied with Italy's campaign in Tripoli. With the First Balkan War, which began in October 1912 with

³⁴ Prince Ferdinand was the son of Prince Augustus of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha and Princess Clementine of Bourbon- Orleans, a daughter of King Louis Philippe of France. Will S. Monroe, Bulgaria and her People, p.62.

³⁵ Symeon A. Giannakos, "Bulgaria's Macedonian Dilemma," p.156.

³⁶ Before the Balkan Wars, the region formed 32.7 % of the Ottoman Empire's total territory and there inhabited 20 % of its population. Edward J. Erickson, Ordered To Die: A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War, (London: Greenwood Press, 2002), pp.2-3. See also Ibrahim Artuç, Balkan Savaşı (Balkan War), (Istanbul: Kastaş Yayınları, 1988), p.70.

Montenegrin attacks towards Macedonia,³⁷ the Bulgarian Army moved quickly towards Edirne and Istanbul with 400.000-men power. But later, the fruitless attacks toward Istanbul caused them to gain much less than what they expected as the Serbs and Greeks occupied nearly whole Macedonia and the fragile alliance collapsed after the peace negotiations.

Disagreement about the disposition of Macedonia quickly rearranged the alliances of the First Balkan War and ignited a Second Balkan War in 1913. The Treaty of London that had ended the first war stipulated only that the Balkan powers resolve existing claims among themselves. The Bulgarians, having had the greatest military success,³⁸ demanded compensation on that basis; the Serbs and Greeks demanded adjustment of the 1912 treaty of alliance to ensure a balance of Balkan powers; and the Romanians demanded territorial reward for their neutral position in the first war. Even before the First Balkan War ended, a strong faction in Bulgaria had demanded war against Serbia to preserve Bulgaria's claim to Macedonia. Ferdinand sided with that faction in 1913, and Bulgaria attacked Serbia. Ottoman Empire, Greece, and Romania then declared war on Bulgaria and by mid-1913, Bulgaria was defeated. The Treaty of Bucharest (10 August 1913) allowed Bulgaria to retain only very small parts of Macedonia and Thrace. This was a national catastrophe, but unfortunately was only formed just the first ring of a chain of subsequent ones.³⁹

³⁷ Will S. Monroe, *Bulgaria and her People*, p.106.

³⁸ Will S. Monroe, *Bulgaria and her People*, p.107.

³⁹ With the Balkan Wars, Ottoman Empire lost all its land in Thrace and Balkans to the line (west of Edirne) which it regained in July 1913. Macedonia was divided and today this problem still exists. The largest portion of Macedonia -north and west parts- went to Serbia and now makes up the independent Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The eastern portion (known as Pirin Macedonia) went to Bulgaria and the remainder to Greece. Bulgaria, therefore, was left with only a portion of the Macedonia that it coveted. See Luan Troxel, "Bulgaria and the Balkans," p.198; See also Richard C. Hall, *The Balkan Wars 1912-1913: Prelude to the First World War* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

The defeat further inflamed Bulgarian nationalism, especially when Bulgarians in Serbian and Greek shares of Macedonia were subjected to extreme hardship after the new partition. At this point Russia, whose warnings Bulgaria had defied by attacking Serbia, shifted its support to the Serbs as its Balkan counterbalance against Austro-Hungarian claims.

1.4. World War I

The settlement of the Second Balkan War had also inflamed Bosnian nationalism which later ignited a conflict between Austrians and Serbs that escalated into world war. Both warring sides invited Bulgaria to co-operate promising some lands in case of alliance, but it was the Central Powers that could guarantee some territory. After a period of hesitation, in 1915, Bulgaria joined Central Powers in exchange for military and diplomatic assistance in acquiring the remaining territories.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, the Great War was the third adventure in which it gained nothing but pain. The war ended in 1918 in defeat, with the total capitulation of the Bulgarian Army, and the Neuilly Peace Treaty of 1919 imposed severe provisions on Bulgaria.⁴¹ The Neuilly Treaty would not settle historic claims, because it was punitive and Bulgaria reacted naturally as Germany did against the Versailles Treaty.

Shortly, the outcome of World War I left Bulgaria with the same view of being underprivileged, in competition with its neighbours, and historically slighted. The desire for retribution once again led Bulgaria to follow irredentist policies in the

⁴⁰ Dimetoka, Karaagaç and half of Edirne was agreed to be ceded to Bulgaria. See Andrey Pantev, "The Historic Road of Third Bulgarian State," p.14.

⁴¹ With its outlet on the Aegean Sea and Western Thrace lost to Greece, Southern Dobroudja was annexed to Romania, and the territories around Strumica, Bosilegrad, Zaribrod and villages around Kula were given to the Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom.

region.⁴² Thus, in the interwar period Bulgaria continued to have problems with all of its neighbours and at every direction except the east where the Black Sea lies.⁴³

The interwar decades were mainly spent overcoming the shocking effects of the previous wars. The devastating sacrifices of the war and the failure to achieve the country's nationalist aspirations led to social and political turmoil just short of a revolution.⁴⁴

After the 1930s, 'Peaceful revisionism' through the League of Nations became the main strategy for Bulgaria and King Boris rejected membership in the Balkan Entente.⁴⁵ The first objective of the new strategy was getting economic access to the Aegean, but did not produce any results. Its revisionist western ally, Italy, began to move away from Bulgaria as the League of Nations declined in effectiveness and Bulgarian policymakers began looking towards Yugoslavia as a means of avoiding isolation. In January 1937, Bulgaria signed a pact of friendship with Yugoslavia. This was of little significance, but procured Yugoslav diplomatic backing and in July 1938, the Salonica agreements allowed Greece to remilitarise Thrace. This, in turn, led Bulgaria to abandon the arms limitation clauses of the treaty of Neuilly, which in fact it had been doing for some time.⁴⁶ By 1938, all European diplomacy was dominated by the German resurgence and Berlin was

⁴² Luan Troxel, "Bulgaria and the Balkans," p.199.

⁴³ Macedonia was the main problem source which caused the Balkan wars (1912-1913). In the north, the Dobrudja issue has been a problem to date. In the south the countries Greece and Turkey were for *status quo* but Bulgaria had problems with Greece on the Macedonia issue. At the time president Atatürk's peaceful policies was the only effect cooling the temperature of the region yet Turkey was also suspicious about Bulgaria's plans hence Ankara tried hard for the preparation of a Balkan Pact and succeeded in 1934.

⁴⁴ Vesselin Dimitrov, Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition, p.19.

⁴⁵ The Balkan Entente was signed on 9 February 1934 by four Balkan countries; Turkey, Greece, Yugoslavia and Romania. According to the secret protocol annex which was made public in April 1934, the entente was not against any great power but against any aggression on the part of a Balkan state so the only country in the irredentist group which could exist as an aggressor was Bulgaria – keeping in mind Albania's geographic position and relative weakness and its relations with Italy at the time. See Oral Sander, Balkan Gelişmeleri ve Türkiye (1945-1965) (Balkan Developments and Turkey (1945-1965)), (Ankara: Sevinç Matbaası, 1969), pp. 8-14

⁴⁶ R.J. Crampton, A Concise History of Bulgaria, p.168.

Bulgaria's biggest trade partner, while the Soviet Union already claimed Bulgaria as 'a Soviet security zone'. At this point Bulgarian decision makers split into opposing camps.⁴⁷ Bulgaria's king, Boris, believed his country's best interests would be provided by peace or, failing that, neutrality without commitment to any great power. His challenging situation was obvious in the words, "My army is pro-German, my wife is Italian, my people are pro-Russian. I alone am pro-Bulgarian."⁴⁸ Therefore when war did come in September 1939 with the German invasion of Poland, he immediately declared Bulgaria's neutrality, but this position was inevitably altered by great-power relationships. After the fall of France, pressure from Germany and Italy outweighed that from the west.

1.5. World War II

The Nazi-Soviet alliance of 1939 improved Bulgaria's relations with the Soviet Union, which had remained cool, and yielded a Bulgarian-Soviet commercial treaty in 1940. Under pressure from Hitler, Romania ceded southern Dobrudja to Bulgaria by the Treaty of Craiova in 1940. Needing Bulgaria to anchor its Balkan flank, Germany increased diplomatic and military pressure that year. The massing of German troops in Romania prior to invading Greece removed all remaining flexibility, and in March 1940 German forces were allowed to cross Bulgaria *en route* to Greece. In March 1941, Bulgaria became a member of the Tripartite Pact⁴⁹ and declared war on Britain and United States in December 1941.⁵⁰

The Germans attacked Yugoslavia and Greece in April 1941. In less than a

⁴⁷ Emil Giatzidis, An Introduction to Post-Communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformations, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p.17.

⁴⁸ R.J. Crampton, A Concise History of Bulgaria, p.169.

⁴⁹ Oral Sander, Balkan Gelişmeleri ve Türkiye (1945-1965), pp. 8-14; R.J. Crampton, A Concise History of Bulgaria, pp.169-171.

⁵⁰ J. F. Brown, Bulgaria Under Communist Rule, p.3.

month, the Balkans was divided up between the Axis powers, and Bulgaria's share was the western territories lost in 1918, western Thrace including the islands of Samothrace and Thassos, and Serbian Macedonia except for an undefined strip in the west under Italian rule. Yet, Bulgaria was not given full ownership of its new territory lest it pocket its gains and leave the Axis.⁵¹

Bulgaria, unlike Hungary and Romania, did not declare war on the Soviet Union or make its army available to Hitler for his eastern campaign. The country rendered economic aid and supplied Black Sea naval facilities to Germany, but its major war aim remained limited to the incorporation of the Macedonian areas of Greece and Yugoslavia as well as Greek Thrace. Although Sofia gained all it wanted, Bulgaria could not withdraw from German alliance and after Romania's switch in August 1944, Bulgaria's dilemma became acute. It began to search peace with the Western Allies as well as the royal Greek and Yugoslav governments-in-exile. Nevertheless, on 5 September 1944 Germans left and Russian troops entered Bulgaria,⁵² since Churchill's 'percentage agreement'⁵³ with the Soviet Union foresaw 25% Allied, 75% Russian control over the country. Later the government installed by the coup of September 9, 1944, made the Bulgarian army available to Soviet command which utilized it in the remaining stages of the war and thus impressed the Allies to elicit relatively light peace terms.⁵⁴

As a result, after a struggle of almost sixty years and having fought four wars, Bulgaria not only fell short of its geographic aims, but also lost in the eyes of all European entities together with time, money and people. However, despite the alliance with Nazi Germany, Bulgaria did not allow the deportation of about 50,000

⁵¹ R.J. Crampton, A Concise History of Bulgaria, p.171.

⁵² R.J. Crampton, A Concise History of Bulgaria, pp.180-183.

⁵³ J. F. Brown, Bulgaria Under Communist Rule, p.6.

⁵⁴ Joseph Rothshild, Communist Eastern Europe, (Columbia: Columbia University, 1964), p.48.

Bulgarian Jews.⁵⁵ This single event clarifies its perception of minorities and the existence of respect for humanist values before and during the war. Yet, as soon as the communists came to power, and world politics re-polarized, Bulgaria became an agent to achieve Soviet policies in the region, and Turkish minority turned into an instrument to put pressure on Turkey, as the Soviets wanted to put pressure on Turkey, which had good relations with the west. Later, increasing the dosage Bulgaria tried to eradicate Turkish existence in Thrace completely and establish a homogenous-nation state, through denouncing minorities, name changing campaigns and expelling ethnic Turks, became Bulgaria's state policy.⁵⁶

1.6. Communist Rule

Bulgaria had an indigenous communist movement and throughout the 20th century the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP)⁵⁷ was considerably stronger than some other communist parties in Eastern Europe, perhaps because of the country's tradition of peasant radicalism. At the end of the Great War, the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (BANU), under the leadership of Alexander Stamboliski, formulated an ideology of 'Agrarianism' as a third way between capitalism and Marxism. It was clear that an almost wholly agrarian economy like Bulgaria's would be unable to support the classical Marxist approach, because of the absence of a substantial urban proletariat. Nevertheless, Stamboliski was assassinated by Internal Macedonian

⁵⁵ Glenn E. Curtis (ed.), Bulgaria: a Country Study, p.42.

⁵⁶ Strict policies of Bulgaria against Turkish minority after WWII began in 1946 with nationalization of Turkish schools and continued with regulations of religious affairs in 1949 and finally by the end of 1951, 155,000 Bulgarian Turks were expelled. See Ali Eminov, "There are no Turks in Bulgaria: Rewriting History by Administrative Fiat" in Kemal H. Karpat (ed.), The Turks of Bulgaria: The History Culture and Political Fate of a Minority, (Istanbul: The ISIS Press, 1990), p.210.

⁵⁷ For a detailed history of the Bulgarian Communist Party see, Joseph Rothschild, Communist Eastern Europe, p.109.

Revolutionary Organization (IMRO)⁵⁸ agents in 1923, and a fascist military and authoritarian order was restored by Tsankov who outlawed the BCP in 1924.

The first response from the BCP was the 1925 bombing of the Sveta Natalia Cathedral in Sofia while the king was present. This attack brought new measures against communists, and leading party members fled to the USSR.⁵⁹ After the German invasion of the Soviet Union, the Bulgarian communists were formally committed to a policy of armed resistance, but this policy was never seriously implemented until after the Soviet victory at Stalingrad in 1943. Resistance did not gain full momentum until Soviet troops entered Romania, since the communists were held in considerable suspicion by the bulk of the population who did not support the resistance against Germans, as Yugoslavians did.⁶⁰ Thus, towards the end of the Second World War, the only well organized political force in the country was the BCP since King Boris III had died in 1943, leaving a three men regency for his nine year-old-son (King Simeon II). On 9 September 1944, Soviet troops entered the country, in the absence of opposition, with the full co-operation of the police and army.⁶¹

With the opening of hostilities between Communists and British forces in Greece in December 1944, the Bulgarian Communists and their Soviet backers concluded that the pro-Western party leaders were too dangerous to be tolerated, and launched a campaign of vilification against them. Some of them fled abroad while some resigned. Bulgarian communists, who received instructions straight from Moscow acted as its local agents, and compensated for their unfavourable position in

⁵⁸ This was a secret organisation that gained control of the Macedonian liberation movement inside Bulgaria and it staged widespread revolts until recently.

⁵⁹ Glenn E. Curtis (ed.), *Bulgaria: a Country Study*, p.36.

⁶⁰ J. F. Brown, *Bulgaria Under Communist Rule*, p.6.

⁶¹ Emil Giatzidis, *An Introduction to Post-Communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformations*, pp.20-21.

Bulgarian society with mass terror.⁶² Thus Peasant and Socialist parties fell into the hands of pro-Communists. Yet, the opposition wings remained strong as they received impressive American and British backing. This circumstance obliged the Communists to cancel the rigged elections which had been prepared for August 28, 1945, evidently because they did not wish to antagonize the West before receiving diplomatic recognition and a peace treaty.⁶³

A plebiscite was held on September 8, 1946, whereby 92.32 per cent of the Bulgarian people rejected the monarchy in favour of a People's Republic, leading to the immediate exile of King Simeon II.⁶⁴ At the time, the Communists merely waited for American ratification of the Bulgarian Peace Treaty before eliminating the opposition. When this occurred on June 4, 1947, the opposition Agrarian Union leader, Nikola Petkov was executed, thus the last obstacle to the Communists was removed.⁶⁵ Stalinisation took hold in Bulgaria. The pattern followed by the BCP in order to seize power was common throughout Eastern Europe. After the establishment of communist dictatorship, a merciless killing of people began both for Nazi collaborationists and innocent people. The so-called "people's court" set a record number of death sentences, perhaps the severest of any in East Central European countries, much greater than that of the Nazis sentenced in post-war Germany. Particularly worrying was the fact that even those who had sought to take Bulgaria out of the war were imprisoned. Their offence was that they were pro-Western rather than pro-Soviet.⁶⁶ The guiding principle was "those who are not with us, are against us," and great emphasis was placed on the role of rituals and

⁶² Georgi Fotev, "Total Crisis and the Reorganization of Society," in Jacques Coenen-Huther (ed.), Bulgaria at the Crossroads, (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 1996), p.14.

⁶³ Joseph Rothschild, Communist Eastern Europe, p.51.

⁶⁴ Joseph Rothschild, Communist Eastern Europe, p.52.

⁶⁵ J. F. Brown, Bulgaria Under Communist Rule, pp.12-13.

⁶⁶ Georgi Fotev, "Total Crisis and the Reorganization of Society," p.15; Joseph Rothschild, Communist Eastern Europe, p.49.

symbols such as marches, stage-managed expressions of goodwill for party leaders and so on. Thus, the totalitarian system led to the total degradation of civil organisations into state-controlled entities and managed to destroy the values indispensable to democratic life: honesty, trust and responsibility.⁶⁷ Besides the Orthodox Church's subordination to the state, the Catholic and Protestant Churches were destroyed because of their suspected links with the West. Many of their leaders were executed or sentenced to long terms of imprisonment in a series of show trials.⁶⁸ The BCP gradually assumed total control and finally centralized the entire political system under communist power.⁶⁹ However, the major advantage enjoyed by Communists in their subsequent drive to total power was not local strength, but rather backing of the Soviet Union.⁷⁰ Actually, there has been no period in recent Bulgarian history in which its destiny had not been decided in an open and brutal way by one Great Power or another.

Unlike the interwar period, Bulgaria did not see great changes after the 1950s in political terms as the system remained mostly untouched and inert. Bulgaria was indisputably faithful to Moscow, and was impervious politically or ideologically to the upheavals in Hungary (1956), Czechoslovakia (1968) or the anti-communist movement in Poland (1980). Regardless of political revenge and an oppressive mood under police watch, there were less protests and minute evidence of dissidence. The standard of living was low, but with guaranteed full employment, free medical services, price controls, social benefits, even slackened work discipline, socialism

⁶⁷ Thomas A. Meininger, and Detelina Radoeva, "Civil Society: The Current Situation and Problems" in Iliana Zloch-Christy (ed.), Bulgaria in a Time of Change: Economic and Political Dimensions, (Singapore and Sydney: Avebury, 1996), p.55.

⁶⁸ Vesselin Dimitrov, Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition, p.24; Galin Gornev and Pepka Boyadjieva, "Social Injustice and the Crisis of Legitimacy," in Jacques Coenen-Huther (ed.), Bulgaria at the Crossroads, (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 1996), p.100.

⁶⁹ R.J. Crampton, A Concise History of Bulgaria, p.184; Emil Giatzidis, An Introduction To Post-Communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformations, pp.20-21; Georgi Fotev, "Total Crisis and the Reorganization of Society," p.15.

⁷⁰ Joseph Rothschild, Communist Eastern Europe, p.49.

had an appeal for the mass of the population. Criticisms were only heard from idealist communist party members.⁷¹

On the other hand, the communist regime brought an unprecedented social change. Formerly Bulgaria was predominantly an agrarian state. Immediately after the Communist Party took power, it declared industrialization as one of the main political tasks. In 1946, the Communist Party leader, George Dimitrov, who had just returned from the USSR, announced to the Parliament: “The biggest and indispensable task is rapid industrialization of the country!” Following the Soviet model, a few years after the nationalization of enterprises in December 1947, large construction sites were opened. Mainly consisting of plants with old technology plants, they caused irreversible ecological problems, which later led to mass protests. The forced process of collectivisation of the agriculture, gave rise to many years of migration which changed the entire social and economic structure of the country.⁷² (See Table)

Table 1. Population (in %) ⁷³

	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%

As Bulgaria was a predominantly agrarian country with small and medium-sized farms, the forced total collectivisation involved mass repression against the rural population. Collectivisation became a metaphor for the communist transformation in general, emphasizing the political nature of agriculture and radically severed the existing economic ethos of the population. However, many

⁷¹ Andrey Pantev, “The Historic Road of Third Bulgarian State,” p.19.

⁷² Ivan Tchalakov, “Industrial Development and Ecological Risks, 1945-1990,” in Jacques Coenen-Huther (ed.), Bulgaria at the Crossroads, (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 1996), p. 247; Vesselin Dimitrov, Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition, p.25.

⁷³ People’s Republic of Bulgaria, A Short Statistical Yearbook, (Sofia: Central Statistical Office, 1990), p.4.

found a relatively better economic position in the system.⁷⁴ As a result of free and compulsory primary education, illiteracy was abolished and broad masses enjoyed a better quality of life.⁷⁵ Systematic brainwashing indoctrinated people with the “values” of communist ideology.

The context in Bulgaria has always been very different from that of Central Europe, since there had been no organised opposition to the regime and somewhat less social pressure for change. What Bulgaria became famous for was its rulers, their lack of individuality and invariable servility to the Kremlin and to the Soviet Union. But the total supervision, control and fear of repression do not provide complete and sufficient explanation.⁷⁶ Unlike the ruling parties of other Eastern Bloc countries, Bulgaria’s Communist regime, throughout its long reign, was never challenged by dissident forces. Until the late 1970s, the Zhivkov regime was able to prevent the emergence of any counter-elite that might have threatened the Communist Party. Repression, an accepted parochial political culture, limited national sovereignty, and the clientistic cooptation of most intellectuals into the system barred the development of dissident groups.⁷⁷ Besides, they did not hate the Russians as the Poles, Czechs or Slovaks did. On top of all this, the Communist regime managed to carry out rapid industrialisation successfully in a country, which had been one of the most underdeveloped in Europe. Therefore, the Bulgarians on the whole felt rather more comfortable in the egalitarian reality of a totalitarian society and in the conservative stability and order of the totalitarian state. The illusion of relative prosperity created by the regime made the Bulgarian citizen a mere observer of an idle political reality.

However, during the last years of the former regime, its legitimacy in the

⁷⁴ Vesselin Dimitrov, Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition, p.4.

⁷⁵ Georgi Fotev, “Total Crisis and the Reorganization of Society,” p.16.

⁷⁶ Georgi Fotev, “Total Crisis and the Reorganization of Society,” p.15.

⁷⁷ Daniel N. Nelson, Balkan Imbroglio: Politics and Security in Southeastern Europe, (San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press, 1991), p.14.

mass consciousness seems to be an illusion. There was a comparatively high dissatisfaction with the political system in Bulgaria, which was complemented by a widely shared rejection of its basic principles and ideological postulates. The percentage of Bulgarians expressing categorical dissatisfaction with the political system was higher than many western and former socialist countries.⁷⁸

The challenge to the legitimacy of the totalitarian regime that had existed in Bulgaria until 1989 was not, however, synonymous with challenge to the socialist idea itself. About 80% of the people defended the need for strong state intervention in social policies and demanded that the government guarantee every individual employment and a minimum standard of living.⁷⁹

Moreover, in the mid-1980s, Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev and Bulgarian leader Todor Zhivkov⁸⁰ were on cool terms. Zhivkov's dexterity and servility drew a blank and he was not able to find a common language with the Kremlin's boss. Gorbachev did not trust Zhivkov to carry out the reforms and lead Bulgaria along the road of *perestroika*.⁸¹ Indeed, it could be maintained that Zhivkov attempted to keep *perestroika* out of Bulgaria, expecting perhaps reactionary Stalinist forces to take over in the Soviet Union.⁸²

⁷⁸ The percentage of Bulgarians expressing categorical dissatisfaction with the political system in the country (43%) is significantly higher than the percentage of those citizens in Western societies who were dissatisfied with their political systems (7.5% in West Germany, 4.8% in Holland, 7.5% in the U.S., 16.5% in Great Britain). Moreover, it significantly exceeds the percentage of politically dissatisfied people in other former Socialist countries (12% in East Germany, 23.4% in Hungary, 17.4% in Poland, 13.5% in Slovenia, 12.6% in Czechoslovakia). See Galin Gornev and Pepka Boyadjieva, "Social Injustice and the Crisis of Legitimacy," p.100.

⁷⁹ Galin Gornev and Pepka Boyadjieva, "Social Injustice and the Crisis of Legitimacy," p.101.

⁸⁰ Todor Zhivkov was secretary of the Communist party from 1954, the country's premier from 1964 to 1971, and head of state from 1971 to late 1989.

⁸¹ Russian word meaning "restructuring," applied in the late 1980s to the official Soviet program of revitalization of the communist party, economy, and society by adjusting economic, social, and political mechanisms. Identified with the tenure of Mikhail S. Gorbachev as leader of the Soviet Union (1985-91).

⁸² The statement made by Zhivkov at the 1987 Trade Union Congress is quite characteristic: "let us duck for cover, lie low and wait and see (until the turmoil of *perestroika* died away)". See, Ivan Palchev, Balkan Politicians: Ahmed Dogan And The Bulgarian Ethnic Model, (Sofia: National Museum of Bulgarian Books and Polygraphy, 2002).

Zhivkov felt he must make an adjustment to the ‘new thinking’ that had begun to emerge from Moscow. It was apparent that the Soviet Union’s reformulated policy was posing a threefold challenge to Bulgaria. Firstly, it became clear that the Soviet Union was neither willing nor able to go on propping up the Bulgarian economy, in view of its own desperate needs. Secondly, *glasnost*⁸³ would mean allowing criticism, although Bulgarian intellectuals had hitherto been kept unusually docile. Thirdly, a Bulgarian *perestroika* would entail the grave political risk of demanding real and sustained sacrifices from the Bulgarian people.⁸⁴

Again much different from those of Central European Countries, the regime’s end came with the environmental movement that had managed to unite people from different backgrounds. This environmental activism later provided one of the few avenues for political struggle against the totalitarian regime. It can be said that *glasnost* came to Bulgaria first as *ecoglasnost*.⁸⁵ Civil society spread in the form of clubs, associations and other groups which operated outside the control of local party officials and mostly illegally. But, above all, it was Zhivkov’s decision to enforce bulgarianisation of the ethnic Turkish minority, replacing their names with Christian-Slavonic names restarted in the winter of 1984-85 (the ‘Revival Process’). The Turks formed approximately 10 percent of the population, but differential birth rates signalled that this proportion would grow rapidly. The regime was frightened of this demographic trend, proposing that especially in case a minority group demanded autonomy, it would create difficulties in a conscript army. These, so-called, dangers would be decreased if the difference between Bulgarian and Turk were made to

⁸³ Russian term, literally meaning “openness” applied beginning in the mid-1980s in the Soviet Union to official permission for public discussion of issues and access to information. Identified with the tenure of Mikhail S. Gorbachev as leader of the Soviet Union (1985-91).

⁸⁴ Roger East, *Revolutions in Eastern Europe*, (London and New York: Pinter, 1992), p.23.

⁸⁵ Ivan Tchalakov, “Industrial Development and Ecological Risks, 1945-1990,” pp. 245-258. In 1989, 41% of the population lived in regions with poor air quality, with levels of pollution (sulphur oxides) reaching as much as 9 times the world average. United Nations Development Program (UNDP), “The Social Costs of Transition,” <http://www.undp.bg/en/pb_sust_human_development_perspective.php>.

disappear.⁸⁶ Apparently, Zhivkov tried to stir up nationalism and believed that beating the nationalist drum would increase popular support or at least mask some of the economic difficulties encountered. The lack of progress on the economic front and the bad image of Bulgaria abroad were depressing to the population to some degree.⁸⁷

Assimilation campaigns began with name change, later newspapers were closed, radio broadcasts in Turkish ceased, speaking Turkish,⁸⁸ traditional Muslim clothing, festive rituals, even Turkish music were banned. The Department of Turkish Philology in Sofia University was closed. Muslim graveyards were destroyed, and even the names of deceased parents and ancestors were changed in the local government records. All remnants of religious symbols were subjected to annihilation and new, artificially created rituals were forcibly introduced. The entire propaganda machine of the state was mobilised in a smear campaign against the Turks, accusing them of being ‘terrorists’, a ‘fifth column’, and ‘Turkish agents’.⁸⁹

In response, the Turks rioted and demonstrated, and the police reacted by firing on the crowds. Dozens of people were killed, provoking both a diplomatic crisis with Ankara and a potentially explosive situation within Bulgaria itself. In this critical situation, Zhivkov tried to solve the crisis by allowing the minority to emigrate to Turkey. This exodus developed into one of the biggest movement of

⁸⁶ R.J. Crampton, A Concise History of Bulgaria, p.210.

⁸⁷ Constantine P. Danopoulos, “Turkey and the Balkans: Searching for Stability” in Constantine P. Danopoulos and Kostas G. Messas (eds.), Crises in the Balkans: Views From the Participants (Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), pp. 213; Kemal H. Karpat, “Bulgaria’s Method of Nation Building and the Turkish Minority,” in Kemal Karpat, (ed.), The Turks of Bulgaria: The History, Culture and Political Fate of a Minority (Istanbul: ISIS, 1990), p. 18; R.J. Crampton, A Concise History of Bulgaria, p. 210.

⁸⁸ R.J. Crampton, A Concise History of Bulgaria, p.209.

⁸⁹ Antonina Zhelyaskova, “Bulgaria’s Muslim Minorities” in John. D. Bell (ed.), Bulgaria in Transition: Policies, Economy, Society and Culture after Communism (Oxford: Westview Press, 1998), p.169.

peoples in modern Europe and Bulgaria earned negative publicity worldwide.⁹⁰

At the time symptoms of a deep ideological and cultural crisis in Bulgarian society were increasingly salient.⁹¹ Among those indigenous factors, except the Turkish national minority issue that created the original impetus were, the failure of limited economic restructuring, and intra-party conflicts.⁹²

Thus, Zhivkov was turned into a symbol for the total stagnation of society who had to be removed in order for events to take a normal course. A “palace coup” was performed by Petar Mladenov, the foreign minister for the previous seventeen years, on November 10, 1989.⁹³ Consequently, Bulgaria’s transition to democracy began not as a result of internal evolution but rather as a part of an attempt by some of BCP members to save their power at a time when the communist bloc was collapsing around them.⁹⁴ Without any doubt, the communist party still expected to govern, but it would rely on persuasion rather than coercion. To symbolise that, the central committee decided to remove from the constitution Article 1, guaranteeing the communist party’s leading role at a session on 11-13 December 1989,⁹⁵ but the party would continue to govern until the elections.

To negotiate the transformation of the system the ‘round table’ model which

⁹⁰ Wolfgang Höpken, “From Religious identity to Ethnic Mobilisation: The Turks of Bulgaria Before Under and Since Communism,” in Hugh Poulton / Suja Taji-Farouki (eds.), Muslim Identity and the Balkan State, (London: Hurst & Company, 1997), p.55; R.J. Crampton, A Concise History of Bulgaria, p.218; Vesselin Dimitrov, Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition, p.38.

⁹¹ Georgi Fotev, “Total Crisis and the Reorganization of Society,” p.18.

⁹² Daniel N. Nelson, Balkan Imbroglio: Politics and Security in Southeastern Europe, p.56.

⁹³ John W. Handley, “Bulgarian Political Development 1989-2003,” American Diplomacy, Vol. VIII, No. 3, (2003), <<http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/sites/ad.html>>

⁹⁴ For a detailed study on the transition of politics in Bulgaria see Anelia K. Dimitrova, “From Proletariat To People: Public Relations Metamorphosis of The Bulgarian Communist Party and its Political Tribune Before the First Free Multi-Party Elections in 1990,” East European Quarterly, Vol. 32, Issue 2, (Jun 98), pp.167-195. See also Juan J. Linz, and Alfred Stepan, Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation (Baltimore MD and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p.336; Vesselin Dimitrov, Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition, p.34; Stefan Popov, “Political and Symbolical Elements at Earlier Stages of Bulgaria’s Transition,” Praxis International, Vol. 13, No. 3, (October 1993), pp. 268-84; Krassimir Kanev, “Bulgaria: The Romantic Period of the Opposition Continues,” Praxis International, Vol. 10, No. 3-4, (October 1990-January 1991), pp. 306-317; Petya Kabakchieva, “The New Political Actors and Their Strategies,” in Jacques Coenen-Huther (ed.), Bulgaria at the Crossroads, (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 1996), p.116.

⁹⁵ Vesselin Dimitrov, Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition, p.37.

had been used in Poland and Hungary was chosen. The emerging opposition group, The Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) Party became a negotiation partner of the communist party.⁹⁶ The round table functioned as a substitute parliament, made changes on the political system, economic system, basic rights and freedoms of citizens, organisation of state power under transition to parliamentary democracy, a responsible government, and a call for elections. Although the round table meetings did not include representatives of the largest minority group that caused the 'change', it had a formative impact in transition to democracy and its most important role has been consolidation of a two-party system.⁹⁷ However, the round table failed to solve the urgent economic problems and rehabilitated the former Communist Party as a significant factor in the country's political life.⁹⁸ The two-party system which stabilised the new democracy would also be criticized for producing extreme polarisation in society, an unhealthy obsession with ideology and excessive politicisation of policy-making.⁹⁹

The fall of the Berlin Wall not only became the symbol of the period after events, which took place throughout the former communist countries, but also opened a new era for Bulgaria. The truth is that the country experienced too many changes within the very short time of a few months without precedent in its history, and in a completely peaceful way.¹⁰⁰ These changes may be studied from many different aspects, yet the main titles in order to get a general picture of the country should, at least, be social, economic and foreign policy transitions.

⁹⁶ R.J. Crampton, A Concise History of Bulgaria, p.217.

⁹⁷ Vesselin Dimitrov, Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition, p.39.

⁹⁸ Emil Giatzidis, An Introduction to Post-Communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformations, p.50.

⁹⁹ Vesselin Dimitrov, Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition, p.35.

¹⁰⁰ Andrei Pantev, "The historic road of the third Bulgarian state" in Iliana Zloch-Christy (ed.), Bulgaria in a Time of Change, Economic and Political Dimensions, (Singapore and Sydney: Avebury, 1996), p.22.

CHAPTER II

THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL TRANSITION OF BULGARIA

2.1.General

History has played a dominant role in the self-perception of the Bulgarians. One may claim, “this is by no means a rarity in Eastern Europe,” but in the Bulgarian instance, contrasts between rise and fall have been extremely sharp, and provided the ground both for passionate self-congratulation and pathetic self-pity.¹⁰¹

From the very beginning of modern Bulgarian political thought, the conceptual development of the nation and nationality existed. Leading and influential ideologues of the Bulgarian Revival movement -including Father Paissi,¹⁰² Father Neofit Bozveli, Vassil Aprilov, Georgy Rakovski, Ljuben Karavelov and Christo Botev - emphasized the uniqueness of the Bulgarian nation and the necessity of its remaining true to its particular traditions and history. Bulgarian spiritual leaders participated in the growth of ideologies designed to enhance national consciousness and the establishment of national institutions, and all this contributed finally to the process of nation building.¹⁰³ The legacy of greatness has been both a blessing, sustaining Bulgarians in the darkest hours of their history, but also an impediment, reinforcing the gap between grand vision and petty reality that has bedevilled modern

¹⁰¹ Vesselin Dimitrov, Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition, p.1.

¹⁰² As early as the mid-eighteenth century, Father Paissi wrote his famous *Historia Slavianobolgarskaja*, to serve what could now be called ‘nationalistic’ purposes. Ideas of a sovereign Bulgarian nation state, of proud and equal international treatment, together with the other Christian neighbours (the Serbs and the Greeks), defence of collective and individual rights and freedom - all these basic Bulgarian foreign policy ideas, were established for the first time in modern Bulgarian political thought and served as a programme for the following generations of politicians, up to the present day.

¹⁰³ Dimitar Tzanev, “Bulgaria’s International Relations After 1989: Foreign Policy Between History and Reality, in Iliana Zloch-Christy (ed.), Bulgaria in a Time of Change: Economic and Political Dimensions, (Avebury: Aldershot 1996), p.181.

Bulgarians.¹⁰⁴

When massive propaganda campaign of the Communist regime was combined with all those experiences mentioned above, deep popular psychological fault lines were created. There is the feeling that the country has been cut off from its vital life-support sources, abandoned to its own fate, and betrayed by the world and the Great Powers. There is, also, the feeling that the country has been suffocated by intricate and endless conspiracies generated abroad, and there is a general feeling of chauvinism and suspicion towards everything foreign.¹⁰⁵ However, it also created a streamlined and efficient administration, enabled central authority to curb the excesses of the local lords, and proved remarkably stable.¹⁰⁶

In Bulgaria domestic politics have always been subordinate to the aspirations of territorial nationalism. When present, domestic political fragmentation has been a facilitator of such subordination. Due to a prolonged national education policy that created fixed ideas about territorial rights, nationalism became easily the alternative means of gaining legitimacy and, in turn, the political system became a hostage to national aspirations. The Bulgarian community followed those who seemed to revive King Ivan's Great Bulgaria. Charismatic personalities who attempted to inject rationality into the political mentality or those who tried to apply a less-than-confrontational approach to the national aspirations were viewed as having betrayed the national cause and were either discredited and/or eliminated. On the opposite side, no blame or even responsibility was ever assigned to those political leaders who failed miserably in the process of attempting to realize the territorial aspirations by

¹⁰⁴ Vesselin Dimitrov, Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition, p.2.

¹⁰⁵ Symeon A. Giannakos, "Bulgaria's Macedonian Dilemma," p.161.

¹⁰⁶ Vesselin Dimitrov, Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition, p.3.

military means.¹⁰⁷

Today, there appears to be a conspicuous reluctance to become involved in any critical self-evaluation of the past. Even the Communist regime has avoided scrutiny. There seems to be no widely accepted terminology describing the post-1989 political situation. Bulgarians simply refer to the 1989 events as ‘the change’, without clarifying the epoch.¹⁰⁸ To describe the limits of the change a wider look is required. The elections of June 1990, were the first democratic elections in nearly six decades (the last free elections had taken place in 1931)¹⁰⁹ and for a high number of Bulgarian citizens, it was the first democratic government, which they ever saw.

The new government, Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) government, began with a reactive approach and it followed a programme of ‘de-communisation’ which aimed to undo the effects of the Bulgarian Communist Party’s domination of personnel selection during its four decades in power. A blind opposition took place against all the remnants of the communist era. Even the Orthodox Church hierarchy came under attack for their collaboration with the former regime, and when Patriarch Maxim refused to resign, an alternative synod was set up under Metropolitan Pimen of Nevrokop to replace him.¹¹⁰ The split in the Bulgarian Orthodox Church has not yet been resolved. Currently the Bulgarian Orthodox Church has two legitimate

¹⁰⁷ Examples for the first can be Prime Minister Stefan Stambolov, who was fatally wounded in Sofia by VMRO (Supreme/Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation–Union of Macedonian Associations), activists and supporters in 1895 as he had alienated nationalists by cracking down on militant approaches towards the realization of territorial aspiration and preferred political strategies such as convincing the great powers diplomatically to facilitate territorial concessions to the Bulgarian State. The second example involves Alexander Stamboliiski who was brutally tortured and executed in 1923. Having signed a rapprochement treaty with Serbia, Stamboliiski was labelled a traitor. Before he was murdered, he had his arms cut off, evidently to punish the arm that signed the treaty. On the opposite side, no blame or responsibility has been assigned to Tsar Ferdinand, in charge of Bulgaria during the disastrous campaigns of the Second Balkan War and World War I, and King Boris during World War II. Symeon A. Giannakos, “Bulgaria’s Macedonian Dilemma,” pp.157-159.

¹⁰⁸ Symeon A. Giannakos, “Bulgaria’s Macedonian Dilemma,” p.161.

¹⁰⁹ Vesselin Dimitrov, *Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition*, pp.45-50.

¹¹⁰ Georgi Fotev, “Total Crisis and the Reorganization of Society,” p.26.

leaderships (synods) and two patriarchs.¹¹¹

Similarly, a law was passed by the parliament in 1992 which barred from any position of leadership in an academic institution anyone who has ever held a post in the BCP, any of its organs or the security services. President Zhelju Zhelev considered the act to be discriminatory and appealed it to the Constitutional Court, but the court upheld its constitutionality.¹¹² The role of the Constitutional Court in similar cases (e.g. the verdict pronouncing the legitimacy of Movement of Rights and Freedoms Party) may be viewed as an indication of growing respect for institutions in Bulgarian democracy.¹¹³ Nevertheless, at the same time policies followed to discard the taboos of the decade-long repressive regime took on the spontaneous nature of ‘negative freedom’ especially at the level of everyday life. For example, respect to religious institutions declined, the book market was flooded with pornography, occult literature, low quality products of Western mass culture, while interest in serious works of literature and art declined.¹¹⁴

Like many other factors, the governments changed frequently as old problems remained with the inefficient policies of the UDF government to realize a smooth transition. In parliamentary elections held in December 1994, the ex-Communist party won and regained power. Though similar to the case of former communist parties in Poland and Hungary, this fact can hardly be explained in terms of a general theoretical framework without elaborating on the peculiarities of the “Bulgarian case”.¹¹⁵ Voters hoped the advent of the communist party would bring back the former prosperity and equality but Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP)’s policies were

¹¹¹ Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, “Religious Freedoms and Church-State Relations in Bulgaria,” <<http://www.bghelsinki.org/special/en/relig.html> >.

¹¹² John. D. Bell, “Democratisation and Political Participation in Postcommunist Bulgaria,” in Karen Dawisha & B. Parrott (eds.), *Politics, Power and the Struggle for Democracy in South-East Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.379.

¹¹³ Vesselin Dimitrov, *Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition*, p.59.

¹¹⁴ Georgi Fotev, “Total Crisis and the Reorganization of Society,” p.25.

¹¹⁵ Georgi Fotev, “Total Crisis and the Reorganization of Society,” p.12.

often misconceived, and were rarely implemented. The country continued to plunge from one disaster to another.

Until the end of 1997, the transition period was an absolute chaos and characterised by political instability. There were four parliamentary elections and eight changes of government, with the BSP and UDF alternating.¹¹⁶ The Socialist Party ruled Bulgaria for all but a few months from 1989 until 1997, mostly avoiding challenging economic reforms, which may have caused public discontent, while it allegedly stole state assets. At the time, the economy reached the verge of collapse, with 310-percent inflation, bread shortages, and mass impoverishment.¹¹⁷ (See Table)

Table.2. Chronology of Bulgarian Central Government		
Prime Minister	Foreign Minister	President
Andrei Lukanov (BSP) appointed by Parliament Jan.- Aug. 1990	Boyko Dimitrov	Petar Mladenov (BSP) appointed by Parliament Apr.- Jul. 1990
Andrei Lukanov (BSP) Sept.-Nov. 1990	Lyuben Gotzev	Zheliu Zhelev (UDF): 2 terms Aug. 1990- Jan.1992 (elected by Parliament)
Dimitar Popov (coalition) Dec. 1990-Oct. 1991	Viktor Valkov	
Filip Dimitrov (UDF) Nov. 1991- Dec 1992.	Stoyan Ganev	
Lyuben Berov (BSP dominated 'expert') Dec 1992- Oct 1994	Lyuben Berov Stanislav Daskalov	
Reneta Injova (caretaker) Oct 1994- Jan 1995	Ivan Stanchev	Jan. 1992- Dec. 1996
Jan Videnov (BSP) Jan. 1995-Jan 1997	Georgi Pirinski	Petar Stoyanov (UDF) Jan. 1997- Jan. 2002
Stefan Sofianski (caretaker) Feb. May. 1997	Stoyan Stalev	

¹¹⁶ Emil Giatzidis, *An Introduction to Post-Communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformations*, p.63.

¹¹⁷ Colin Woodard, "Spirit of '89 Revolutions Rumbles in the Balkans," *Christian Science Monitor*, Vol. 89, Issue 38, (21 Jan 1997).

There appeared to be certain nostalgia for the Cold War period and an even near-resentment for its end. One is left with the impression that Bulgaria enjoyed a comfortable existence within the Soviet side of the bi-polarity, and there seemed to be a subliminal notion of regret that the country was jolted out of it into an uncertain environment. Inside that uncertain environment, the country and the people found an emotional refuge. The breakdown of the bipolar system and exposure to a new uncertain environment were considered additional setbacks. Thus, the past appeared to be preferable to the uncertain future.¹¹⁸

At the beginning of 1997, when the BSP and two nominal partners governed in a coalition, thousands of people stood up for their rights with nationwide strikes and daily antigovernment protests, in January and early February. Probably that was the most vulnerable moment for the young Bulgarian democracy. However, its institutions proved strong enough and the BSP-led government agreed in early February to hold early elections in April and ceded power to a non-party government led by the mayor of Sofia, Stefan Sofianski. The UDF-led coalition won an absolute majority in elections and UDF leader Ivan Kostov was chosen Prime Minister. Actually, it was a coup 'from below'. The events established a turning point toward the evolution of a civil society as the society voiced its demands for the first time and everyone saw what active citizens could really achieve. The same year, Petar Stoyanov was elected as the new president and a second phase began in Bulgaria's democratic transition.¹¹⁹

But the country was in the worst economic and social situation, even when compared with the one in 1990. The Kostov government spent its tenure in the battle against long-standing problems, and did much to consolidate the stabilization

¹¹⁸ Symeon A. Giannakos, "Bulgaria's Macedonian Dilemma," p.162.

¹¹⁹ Emil Giatzidis, An Introduction to Post-Communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformations, p.69, 128; Vesselin Dimitrov, Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition, p.55-56.

of Bulgaria and later passed the flag to the former child-King today's Prime Minister, Simeon Saxe-Coburg Gotha.¹²⁰

After the beginning of the last transition period, which started roughly in 1989, Bulgaria experienced many hardships and went a long way towards europeanization, but it seems that some problems still persist. These problems and their sources can be categorized as institutional inefficiency, the absence of civil society and minority related problems.

2.2. Institutional Inefficiency

The post-Communist period has been marked by the absence and ineffectiveness of the state and its institutions. As the Communist system was characterised by the subordination of the state to the party, dismantling of the Communist regime was perceived as equivalent to dismantling of the state. This resulted in a situation where state administration was exploited by different 'mafia' structures. Apparently Bulgarian society is still lacking an important element for the construction of civil society and democratic consolidation: trust. Citizens do not trust the government and its institutions, the government does not trust its citizens, and everyone in their everyday concerns is suspicious of everyone else.¹²¹

Institutional inefficiency is most visible in the management of the crime wave. By penetrating government circles through bribery and blackmail, the criminal clique has corrupted them and drawn them into their service away from servicing the

¹²⁰ As a child-king in the mid-1940s, he was forced to flee by the Soviets and Bulgarian communists. Saxe-Coburg lived as a modestly successful businessman in Madrid, Spain. His party, created only a scant few months before the 2001 elections, soared to first place in the polls, and kept that position, gaining 43 percent of the popular vote. With unclear policies, but many economic and social promises, Simeon offered to Bulgarian voters an alternative to "politics as usual". Daniel N. Nelson, "Armies, Security, and Democracy in Southeastern Europe," *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 28, Issue 3, (March 2002), pp. 444-445.

¹²¹ Emil Giatzidis, An Introduction to Post-Communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformations, p.64.

public interest. The operation of semi-criminal networks, acting together with strategically placed executive officials, have done much to destabilise and destroy the financial, organisational, structural and moral foundations of the state.

The social crime intensifies fear in society, breaks the connection between society and state structures and aggravates social erosion. The demoralisation of the entire society has been the result of the absence of accountability and control, since the very line between legal and illegal, between those who enforce law and those who trespass it, has become dangerously blurred and fluid.¹²² When the absence of civil society coincided with all these the situation gets even more complicated.

2.3.The Absence of Civil Society

In the transition period civil society barely existed and was in no position to challenge the regime, but later democracy signalled the resurrection of civil society, which had to take place under unique historical circumstances of political and economic transformation. The failure of political institutions to handle the reform process along with the shock of economic transformation caused severe effects on the behaviour and the mentality of the Bulgarian people, who, once again, survived a declining economy, lower living standards, high unemployment and inflation.¹²³

In Bulgaria prior to Communism there was a tradition in self-help initiatives and charitable activities, which can be traced back to the Ottoman Empire. The *chitalishte* (literally, reading room) that had all the characteristics of civil associations preserved the culture, national identity and religion.¹²⁴ After 1878, despite the establishment of civic organisations such as trade unions, chambers

¹²² Roumen Daskalov, "A Democracy Born in Pain" in John D. Bell (ed.), Bulgaria in Transition. Politics, Economy, Society and Culture after Communism, (Oxford: Westview Press, 1998), p.26.

¹²³ Emil Giatzidis, An Introduction to Post-Communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformations, pp.110-115.

¹²⁴ Dimitr Mishew, The Bulgarians in the Past, (New York: Arno Press, 1971), p.365.

of trade and industry, civil society remained ineffective since these organisations never eluded the indirect control of the state and their efforts were never meant to win autonomy from respective state institutions. The trend of centralisation reached its peak during the Communist period that followed, and hence whatever tradition these organisations had was destroyed after 1944. The loss of the tradition of civic initiative and voluntary civic participation emerged as the most serious problem of the transition from totalitarian regime to democratic society. Reviving the pre-war civic traditions has perhaps been the greatest challenge for post-Communist Bulgaria.¹²⁵

The formation of the NGO sector commenced in 1989, immediately after the fall of Zhivkov regime, but the society was not ready for such a radical change and the vacuum opened the way for corruption and organized crime. Doubtlessly, this situation left a negative imprint on further development of the NGOs. By 1993, the Bulgarian people had realised that not everything about democracy is ideal; in particular the high social cost that accompanied democratisation discouraged involvement and any commitment to further change. The reforms introduced inequality to a society that had felt rather comfortable with the egalitarianism of the Communist era. As a result, the historical legacy of alienation along with political instability and the economic hardships of the post-Communist period drove the Bulgarian people away from political participation.¹²⁶

2.4. Majority-Minority Relations and Problems

The entire struggle to form an independent, wealthy and prosperous Bulgaria for almost 120 years somewhat consisted of nation building and revolved around the

¹²⁵ Emil Giatzidis, An Introduction to Post-Communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformations, p.116.

¹²⁶ Emil Giatzidis, An Introduction to Post-Communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformations, p.116-117.

minority problem. Minority groups were a reality of the country as in other Balkan nations, and were the object of animosity for xenophobic Bulgarian nationalists.¹²⁷ Name changing, restriction of human rights and ousting have been standard forms of assimilation and means of controlling minority groups. There are too many figures on the number of population transfers and the majority elaborate Turkish emigrations from the Balkans. Reliable studies demonstrate that well over 2 million Turks have left Bulgaria since the 1877-78 Russian-Ottoman War.¹²⁸ Only when the total population of the region is taken into consideration the magnitude of the issue may be appreciated.¹²⁹

After the fall of communism, nationalism quickly assumed its traditional forms with abundant input from the old communist cadre, which took part in the campaign. For the most part, the backlash against the expansion of political democracy and human rights was inspired by nationalism. Therefore, the situation of minorities, both ethnic and religious, became, at least during the first years, the main indicator of democratic development.¹³⁰ Moreover, as can be seen in the following chapters, this issue has been one of the main focus of the Turkish-Bulgarian bilateral relations. The presence of Macedonians, Turks, Pomaks and others in Bulgaria, raises the essential question of who a Bulgarian is. Nationality may be defined by common citizenship or in terms of shared characteristics such as language and religion. If the former criterion is used, then all citizens of Bulgaria may be regarded

¹²⁷ Bilal N. Simsir, The Turks of Bulgaria (1878-1985), (London: K. Rustem & Brother Publishers, 1988), p. 208.

¹²⁸ Ilker Alp, Belge ve Fotoğraflarla Bulgar Mezalimi (1878-1989), pp.334-335.

¹²⁹ In 1878 the total population living on the lands that formed Bulgaria (namely Ruscuk, Vidin, Tırnova, Tulça, Varna, Sofya, İslimiye and Filibe) was 3.309.000 and the number of the Muslim Turks was 1.800.954. See Ilker Alp, Belge ve Fotoğraflarla Bulgar Mezalimi (1878-1989), pp. 3-7. See also Kemal H. Karpat, "Introduction: Bulgarian way of Nation Building and The Turkish Minority" in Kemal H. Karpat (ed.), The Turks of Bulgaria: The History, Culture and Political Fate of a Minority (Istanbul: The ISIS Press, 1990), pp. 1-22.

¹³⁰ Krassimir Kanev, "From Totalitarianism to a Constitutional State," in Jacques Coenen-Huther (ed.), Bulgaria at the Crossroads, (New York, Nova Science Publishers, 1996), p. 68.

as Bulgarian; if the latter, only those who have the “proper” language and religion.¹³¹

The 1992 census was the first since the 1960s to allow respondents to indicate an ethnic identity. Eighty five percent of the population identified themselves as Bulgarian, 9.7% as Turks, 3.4% as Roma and 1.1% as others. In terms of mother tongue, 86.7% spoke Bulgarian, 9.8% Turkish and 3% Roma. In terms of religious identity, 87% were Christian and 12.7% Muslim.¹³² According to the 2001 census, population of ethnic Bulgarians and ethnic Turks decreased to 83.9% and 9.4% respectively and ethnic-Roma citizen were estimated officially to comprise 4.7 percent of the population;¹³³ however, their actual share is likely between 6 and 7 percent since a substantial number hide their ethnic identity. Pomaks, constitutes 2 to 3 percent of the population.

The numbers of minorities never reached alarming levels after the establishment of autonomous Bulgarian Principality in 1878, but disproportional population increases has always been a national concern in Bulgaria. The numbers of minorities has always increased when the ethnic Bulgarians’ remained constant or decreased. Especially between 1989 and 1996, Bulgaria’s population declined from 8.99 million to 8.34 million, a loss of more than seven percent in many years. Such a loss of population in peacetime had occurred very rare in the modern history of Europe. This decline can be attributed to forced migration of ethnic Turks, but ethnic Bulgarians have also emigrated mostly because of economic reasons. Another important contributor to the decline of population has been the drastic fall in the birth

¹³¹ Vesselin Dimitrov, *Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition*, p.6.

¹³² The numbers may differ between different writers. See Nurcan Özgür, *Etnik Sorunların Çözümünde Hak ve Özgürlükler Hareketi (Movement of Rights and Freedom in Solution of Ethnic Problem)*, (Istanbul: Der Yayınları, 1999), p.43; Wolfgang Höpken, “From Religious identity to Ethnic Mobilisation: The Turks of Bulgaria Before Under and Since Communism,” pp.55-56.

¹³³ National Statistical Institute (NSI): Statistics, <<http://www.nsi.bg/Census/Ethnos-final-n.htm>>.

rate. The rate fell from 12.5 per thousand in 1989 to 8.6 in 1996.¹³⁴ Its level of births was equal to or even slightly higher than the European average, one of the lowest not only in Europe, but also in the world, so the birth rate was insufficient even to replace the population lost by death.

Numbers taken from military statistics, which is largely based on conscripts, shows the situation clearly. As of the 1990s, instead of constituting the expected 13-15% of draft-age young men, the Turk/Pomak element was about 30% of the conscript pool.¹³⁵

At times of crises both domestically and with neighbouring countries, and minorities found themselves as targets of populist policies and Turks being the largest group, reminiscent of the pre-independent era, became the number one object of assimilation campaigns.

2.4.1. Ethnic Turks in Bulgaria

As mentioned above Turks were forming almost half of the population in the Ottoman era. But today, Turks mainly inhabit two territories in Bulgaria—the regions around Kardjali in the Rhodopa Mountains and around Razgrad.¹³⁶ Emigration of Bulgarian Turks mainly began in 1878 with a deliberate ethnic cleansing effort during the Russian-Ottoman War and has been a permanent process which went through frequent oscillations, determined by political and social conditions of the Turkish minority and various international circumstances.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Dimitar Philipov, "A Demographic Forecast of the Bulgarian Population for the 1995-2020 Period," *Economic Thought*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (1998), pp. 84-85. See also Christina Christova, "Bulgaria," The speech given at The Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid, Spain, (8-12 April 2002), <<http://www.un.org/ageing/coverage/bulgariaE.htm>>.

¹³⁵ Daniel N. Nelson, *Balkan Imbroglio: Politics and Security in Southeastern Europe*, p.59.

¹³⁶ Andrey Ivanov, *The Balkans Divided: Nationalism, Minorities, and Security*, p.108; Ilker Alp, *Belge ve Fotoğraflarla Bulgar Mezalimi (1878-1989)*, pp.2-4.

¹³⁷ Ivan Palchev, *Balkan Politicians: Ahmed Dogan and the Bulgarian Ethnic Model*, p.20.

Until the first attempt was made to regulate the emigration problem in October 1925, Bulgaria followed policies to wipe out the all reminiscences of the Ottoman era and to form a pure Bulgarian nation.¹³⁸ While not strictly, Bulgaria continued to exert restrictive policies on its minorities in the following years. It closed Turkish schools and did not allow the mention of a Turkish minority, which was described in bilateral and international agreements, but only acknowledged a Muslim minority. The advent of dictatorship in 1934 brought bans on the use of the new Latin script to dissuade mother-tongue expression and to hinder links with Turkey, which was preoccupied with nation-building within the new state.¹³⁹

The post-World War II period saw a change in Bulgarian minority policy. The 1947 constitution recognized the existence of national minorities in Bulgaria.¹⁴⁰ Following the example of the USSR and in the context of the idea of a Balkan Federation modelled at the time, minorities received their rights (The 1947 Constitution of People's Republic of Bulgaria- Article 79). New Turkish schools were opened, special radio broadcasts in Turkish began, and newspapers were published. There were Turkish theatres and cultural activities and even special quotas for Turks at universities.¹⁴¹ However, it did not last long. The new administration levied heavy taxes on farmers by pressuring them to give a substantial portion of

¹³⁸ That year, Turkey and Bulgaria signed a treaty of friendship and concluded a convention of settlement, which allowed for a voluntary exchange of populations, although it was very much a one-sided problem, involving more than six hundred thousand ethnic Turks. Four years later, Turkey and Bulgaria signed a treaty of neutrality and conciliation, which called for remaining disputes to be referred to arbitration. Michael B. Bishku, "Turkish-Bulgarian Relations: From Conflict and Distrust to Cooperation," *Mediterranean Quarterly*, (Spring 2003), pp.80-81. The full text of the friendship treaty can be seen in Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, *Belgelerle Mustafa Kemal Atatürk ve Türk Bulgar İlişkileri (Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and Turkish-Bulgarian Relations through Documents)*, (Ankara: Başbakanlık Basımevi, 2002), p.51-67.

¹³⁹ Hugh Poulton, "Turkey as a Kin-State: Turkish Foreign Policy towards Turkish and Muslim Communities in the Balkans," in Hugh Poulton, / Suja Taji-Farouki (eds.), *Muslim Identity and the Balkan State*, (London: Hurst & Company, 1997), p.207.

¹⁴⁰ Bilal N. Simsir, *The Turks of Bulgaria: 1878-1985*, p. 208.

¹⁴¹ Ivan Palchev, *Balkan Politicians: Ahmed Dogan And The Bulgarian Ethnic Model*, p.21; Marin Pundeff, "Bulgaria," in Joseph Held (ed.), *The Columbia History of Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p. 103.

their harvest to the state and later farmlands were confiscated and turned into cooperative property in 1949, Turkish youths were drafted into military labour camps (*Trudovak*) together with all sorts of other people identified as class-enemies, and exploited as free workers by the government.¹⁴² The same was the fate of all minority youths from Turkish, Pomak, or Gypsy origin, and the practice was only terminated in 1997 when the democratic government disbanded military labour camps.¹⁴³ Bulgaria had declared to allow the emigration of Bulgarian Turks. Although, Bulgaria's decision to expel ethnic Turks was a deliberate violation of Turkey's 1925 treaty with Bulgaria concerning the voluntary exchange of populations,¹⁴⁴ Turkey admitted 162,000 people before closing the border in 1952. Most of the expatriates came from the richest arable area of Bulgaria, Dobrudja, which Prime Minister Vulko Chervenkov wanted to collectivise fastest.¹⁴⁵

After the first expulsion attempt, Bulgaria continued to apply different ways of assimilation campaigns. The communist regime fabricated histories, in which Bulgarian Turks played, paradoxically, the dual role of victim and perpetrator of Ottoman "historical injustices" against the Bulgarian nation. Theories claimed, "the Bulgarian Turks were actually Slavs who had been forced to convert under Ottoman rule".¹⁴⁶ Later, government officials were ordered to change Islamic/Turkic names of Gypsies, Pomaks, and Turks to Slavic/Christian ones for several times in different

¹⁴² Ilker Alp, *Belge ve Fotoğraflarla Bulgar Mezalimi (1878-1989)*, pp.12-13; For more information on labour camps <<http://www.osa.ceu.hu/files/rip/08.htm>>; R.K.Carlton (ed.), *Forced Labor in the 'People's Democracies'*, (New York: Mid-European Studies Center, 1955).

¹⁴³ Margarita Assenova, "Islam in Bulgaria: Historical, Sociocultural, and Political Dimensions," *Briefing Notes on Islam, Society, and Politics*, Vol. 3, No 1, (June 2000), pp. 4-8, <<http://www.csis.org/islam/BriefNotes%5Cv3n1.pdf>>.

¹⁴⁴ Özer Sükan, *21nci Yüzyıl Başlarında Balkanlar ve Türkiye (Turkey and the Balkans at the Beginning of the 21st Century)*, (Istanbul: Harp Akademileri Komutanlığı Yayınları, 2001), p.189-191.

¹⁴⁵ Oral Sander, *Balkan Gelişmeleri ve Türkiye (1945-1965)*, pp.69-81; R. J. Crampton, *A Concise History of Bulgaria*, p.195; Michael B. Bishku, "Turkish-Bulgarian Relations: From Conflict and Distrust to Cooperation," pp.85.

¹⁴⁶ Mary Neuburger, "Bulgaro-Turkish Encounters and the Re-Imaging of the Bulgarian Nation (1878-1995)," *East European Quarterly*, Vol. 31, Issue 1, (March 1997), pp.1-20.

regions at different times,¹⁴⁷ and even, the children born of mixed marriages were forcefully given Bulgarian names.¹⁴⁸ However, the regime's petition on name changing was because they were convinced that emigration was not the way to solve the problem given the large number of the Turks in the country.

In 1968, Bulgaria and Turkey signed an agreement allowing for the reunification of families separated by the exodus of the early 1950s. In the ten years during which the agreement remained in force some 130,000 Turks left Bulgaria.¹⁴⁹ Then, the adoption of a new socialist constitution in 1971 marked the beginning of another period of cultural intolerance and assimilation of the Turks, and the term "national minorities" was replaced by the term "non-Bulgarian." But ironically, myths of ethnic origin remained.¹⁵⁰

The Cyprus issue, motivated by the rights of the Turkish minority on the island which resulted in Turkey's intervention (1974) was connected with the Muslim minority in Bulgaria, and interpreted as foreboding a new Islamic aggression on the Balkans. The thesis was unrealistic since at that time Bulgaria and Turkey were members of two opposing military alliances and any conflict between the two would not remain limited to the two,¹⁵¹ but only served the policies of the Bulgarian Communist Party.

Similarly, the years 1984-85 were the beginning of a new period used by Zhivkov to stay in power by using nationalism disguised as 'revival process'. It was

¹⁴⁷ There were some Bulgarian Turks who received a Bulgarian name and returned to his/her original names seven times.

¹⁴⁸ Ivan Palchev, Balkan Politicians: Ahmed Dogan and the Bulgarian Ethnic Model, p.22.

¹⁴⁹ R.J. Crampton, A Concise History of Bulgaria, p.203.

¹⁵⁰ Bilal N. Simsir, The Turks of Bulgaria (1878-1985), p. 208.

¹⁵¹ Ivan Palchev, Balkan Politicians: Ahmed Dogan and the Bulgarian Ethnic Model, p.22. For discussions on the Cyprus intervention and Bulgaria's Turkish Minority see Hugh Poulton, "Ethnic Turks and Muslims in the Balkans and Cyprus: Turkey as a 'kin-state' in the Eastern Mediterranean," Mediterranean Politics Vol.2, (1995), pp. 105-117.

the seventh major name change campaign.¹⁵² From 1984 to 1989, ethnic Turks were subjected to government-sponsored Bulgarianization of family names together with limitations placed on Turkish symbols such as language, name, and religious rituals. In two months, the names of almost 850.000 people were changed.¹⁵³ Numbers of killed between 1984–1985, of people who resisted the campaign is estimated around 2,500. In 1989, as international pressure increased on Bulgaria, it permitted voluntary emigration. Nearly all of the ethnic Turks attempted to leave the country and an estimated 350,000 came to Turkey by the time Ankara closed the border.¹⁵⁴

Following the overthrow of Zhivkov in November 1989, the ruling Bulgarian Communist Party renounced assimilation and released most of the restrictions and further allowed to establish political, social, and cultural organizations and estimated half of the *émigrés* subsequently returned.¹⁵⁵ Many of the policies and procedures followed were reversed in less than two months after the coup executed against Zhivkov.¹⁵⁶

On the other side, hard-line communists were trying to mobilize ethnic unrest to discredit the reformist mood by using the underlying fears of “giving the Turks too much,” problems of ethnic crisis, ethnic conflict, and ethnic tension which came to be debated only after 1989. Plans by the post-Zhivkov government to rescind all of the former minority policies officially, and to create statutory guarantees for linguistic, religious and cultural practices generated public protests in January 1990.

¹⁵² The decision was taken at the BCP Central Committee plenum (meeting) in February 1984 and became operative in November 1984. Ilker Alp, Belge ve Fotoğraflarla Bulgar Mezalimi, p.226; Andrey Ivanov, The Balkans Divided: Nationalism, Minorities, and Security, p.109

¹⁵³ Ivan Palchev, Balkan Politicians: Ahmed Dogan and the Bulgarian Ethnic Model, p.23.

¹⁵⁴ U.S. Helsinki Watch Committee, Destroying Ethnic Identity: The Expulsion of the Bulgarian Turks, (New York, Washington, 1989), p. 54; Bilal N. Simsir, The Turks of Bulgaria (1878-1985), p. 208.

¹⁵⁵ Consequently, an estimated 120,000 to 180,000 Turks returned to Bulgaria. Hugh Poulton, “Turkey as Kin-State: Turkish Foreign Policy Towards Turkish and Muslim Communities in the Balkans,” pp. 208.

¹⁵⁶ Krassimir Kanev, “From Totalitarianism to a Constitutional State,” pp.53-54.

Demands for the deportation of all Turks, and against provisions for enhanced civil liberties for minorities, were heard frequently during early 1990.¹⁵⁷ At that time the differentiation of the social space into two separate worlds of values and aims became most obvious. There were the Bulgarian Turks on one side, supported by the main opposition powers and by prominent Bulgarian intellectuals, and embarrassed Bulgarians from regions with mixed population, on the other, who interpreted the act for reintroducing Turkish names as a threat to their security.¹⁵⁸

Furthermore, anti-Turk sentiment remained an important part of post-Communist politics. The Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), the successor to the Bulgarian Communist Party, has been particularly prone to capitalize on incipient anti-Turkish sentiment for electoral gain.¹⁵⁹ In 1991, the UDF leader and Prime Minister, Dimitur Popov, remarked that Turks represented a threat to the Bulgarian nation, in the regions of Bulgaria inhabited by ethnic Turks, Slavic Bulgarians were threatened with death.¹⁶⁰ He also warned against “Muslim aggression,” and “in some way it must be blocked so that it does not invade Europe.”¹⁶¹

Many Bulgarians still regard the ethnic Turkish minority as a potential Trojan horse and a Turkish “fifth column” on Bulgarian territory, a sentiment that is most powerful in the southeastern region of the country. In a 1991 Gallup poll, 48 percent of the respondents regarded Turkey as a threat to Bulgarian national security.¹⁶² In a similar poll conducted in 1992, 46 percent of the respondents perceived ethnic groups and minorities as a serious threat to the nation’s security.

¹⁵⁷ “Slavic Nationalists Continue Protests in Bulgaria,” Washington Post (7 January 1990).

¹⁵⁸ Tanya Nedelcheva, “Will the Ethnic Crisis be Overcome in Bulgaria?” in: J. Coenen-Huther (ed.) Bulgaria at the crossroads, (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 1996), p. 148.

¹⁵⁹ Kjell Engelbrekt, “The Movement for Rights and Freedoms,” RFE/RL Report on Eastern Europe, Vol. 2, No. 48, (1991), p. 5.

¹⁶⁰ Bulgarian authorities claimed that Turkish minority applied pressure on Muslim groups to declare themselves as Turks, especially on Pomaks.

¹⁶¹ John T. Ishiyama and Marijke Breuning, Ethnopolitics in the New Europe, (Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998).

¹⁶² Bulgarian Telegraphic Agency (BTA), (23 September 1991).

On the other side, Bulgarian Turks seem to have been part of the society they lived for centuries. The MRF leader Ahmed Doğan says that Bulgarians and Turks in the country have never quarrelled and they don't have to be reconciliated. It was the communist regime and its acts that provoked mistrust and conflicts. At the beginning of his political career, he declared, "Being a representative of a given ethnos does not imply that you are deprived of the consciousness of being a citizen of a country. Bulgaria is 'our motherland and our national self-consciousness is Bulgarian.'"¹⁶³

2.4.2. Pomaks in Bulgaria

Another minority group are Pomaks though Bulgarians do not recognize them as a minority. In fact, Pomaks form the best example challenging the question of "Who is a Bulgarian?" Bulgarians and some historians say that Pomaks are of Bulgarian origin, and try to prove their language to be a Bulgarian dialect and depict them as "Muslim Bulgarians". Some historians provide important evidences of just the opposite, giving percentages of Pomak lexicon and call them as "Bulgarian speaking Turks" and some simply "Bulgaria's Muslim community," while Greeks claim their own Pomaks to be of Greek origin.¹⁶⁴ However, it is not the origins but perceptions, which indicates the reality. Some Pomaks call themselves Turks and some Bulgarians with the need to belong to one main group.

In fact, Pomaks' origin was not so important for Bulgaria and Greece. They originally inhabited in the militarised mountainous southern and south-western frontier region with a population around 150.000, and they were perceived as a threat by both Bulgaria and Greece. Bulgaria, regardless of their origin, ousted them several

¹⁶³ Ivan Palchev, *Balkan Politicians: Ahmed Dogan and the Bulgarian Ethnic Model*, p.28.

¹⁶⁴ The name 'Pomak' comes from the Slavic origin word 'pomaga' and literally means collaborator and their dialect consist of 30% Slavic words, 25% Kuman-Kipchak words, 20% Oğuz Turkish words, 15% Nogay words and 10% Arabic words. Ilker Alp, *Belge ve Fotoğraflarla Bulgar Mezalimi (1878-1989)*, pp.8-9; Glenn E. Curtis (ed.), *Bulgaria: a Country Study*, p.84.

times to Turkey or resettled them in the inner parts of the country or followed the same assimilationist policies and the name changing campaigns. The name changing campaign of 1964 was particularly directed to Pomaks.¹⁶⁵ This shows that despite their claims, the communist era governments saw them as ‘others’ and today the continuing discussions show continuation of the pre-1989 perception.¹⁶⁶

Pomaks continued to live in the way of pre-modern traditional societies, where the modern notion of belonging to a national group is less dominant than that of belonging to a religious group. Since the end of the Cold War, however this has been changing. Early in 1990, the Turkish embassy in Sofia was giving out some 6,000 visas a month. The criterion for obtaining a visa was the ability to speak Turkish. Thus, many Pomaks came to Turkey. This indicates that Pomaks feels themselves as Turks or Turkey as a better place to live in. Today this figure continues and if a Pomak wants to move from a village to a town he/she prefers to move to cities in Turkey rather than Bulgarian ones.¹⁶⁷

2.4.3. Gypsies in Bulgaria

The Roma or the Gypsy population in Bulgaria are the second largest ethnic minority according to the 2001 census, numbering 370,908 and comprising 4.7% of the population.¹⁶⁸ A survey indicated that at home, 67% of them spoke Roma, 51% Bulgarian and 34% Turkish. The percentages exceed 100% because a number of

¹⁶⁵ Lilia Petkova, “The Ethnic Turks in Bulgaria: Social Integration and Impact on Bulgarian - Turkish Relations, 1947-2000,” p.45.

¹⁶⁶ For a detailed reading on Pomaks see Hüseyin Memişoğlu, Pages of the History of Pomac Turks, (Ankara: Şafak Matbaası, 1991); Yulian Konstantinov, “Strategies for Sustaining a Vulnerable Identity: The Case of Bulgarian Pomaks,” in Hugh Poulton / Suja Taji-Farouki (eds.), Muslim Identity and the Balkan State, (London: Hurst & Company, 1997), pp. 33-53.

¹⁶⁷ Hugh Poulton, “Turkey as Kin-State: Turkish Foreign Policy Towards Turkish and Muslim Communities in the Balkans,” p.209

¹⁶⁸ Glenn E. Curtis, Bulgaria: a Country Study, p.86. However, some sources claim the numbers to be 10.3% of the total population totalling a number around 803.400. See Martin Kovats, “The European Roma Question,” Briefing Paper, New Series No. 31, (March 2002), <www.riia.org>.

respondents spoke more than one language. In terms of religion, more than half of them are Muslim and the rest Orthodox Christian. The division between self-identified and non-self-identified Roma is usually based on religion and formal education: those who are Orthodox Christians and have received higher education think of themselves as ethnic Bulgarians, and speak Bulgarian; those who are Muslims maintain that they are ethnic Turks and speak Turkish.¹⁶⁹

Gypsies were one of Bulgaria's most disadvantaged and maligned nationalities and the focus of every official name-changing campaign. Government programs to improve the lot of the Gypsies usually meant construction of new, separate Gypsy neighbourhoods rather than integration into Bulgarian society. They were primarily nomadic until 1958, when the Communist regime launched a campaign of forced assimilation compelling the Roma population to abandon its transient lifestyle and settle down.¹⁷⁰ In 1974, many were coerced into giving up their Roma names and adopt instead Christian-Slavic names.¹⁷¹

Soon after the regime change, the Democratic Romany Union, claiming to represent over 50.000 Roma, was formed. Nevertheless, the Constitutional Court prevented the party and other early Roma organizations from participation in elections, on the grounds that this would violate the constitutional prohibition on parties (Article 11.4) on a racial, ethnic, or religious basis. Thus, Bulgaria became the only country in Eastern Europe in which the Roma could not participate in national elections through their own political parties and this prompted the Council of Europe to criticize the new Bulgarian Constitution. Later, Bulgarian courts ignored the

¹⁶⁹ Luan Troxel, "Bulgaria's Roma: Numerically Strong, Politically Weak," RFE/RL Research Report, Vol.1, No.10 (6 March 1992), pp.58-61.

¹⁷⁰ Elisaveta Konstantinova, "Futility Breeds Tensions in Bulgarian Gypsy Ghetto," Reuters, (23 August 1992).

¹⁷¹ Vesselin Dimitrov, "In Search of a Homogeneous Nation: The Assimilation of Bulgaria's Turkish Minority, 1984-1985," Journal of Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe, (May2001), pp.1-22.

controversial constitutional limitation and allowed their registration and several Roma organizations were able to compete for the first time in local elections of late 1999.¹⁷² To ensure the protection of the constitutionally guaranteed rights and freedoms of Bulgarian Roma, the UDF-led government approved a Framework Program for Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian society in April 1999, and in September 2003, the National Assembly passed a new law outlawing all forms of discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, race, religion, age, education, property, and sexual orientation.¹⁷³

However, without a doubt, their rights continue to be ignored and is infringed upon by the central and local authorities. They remained an oppressed ethnic class, suffering from widespread unemployment, misery, prejudice, and persecution.¹⁷⁴

Official statistics dealing with the lot of the Roma are rarely published, but according to the Democratic Romany Union, 92% of working-age Roma living in Bulgarian cities were unemployed in 1998; they also constituted 90% of all prison inmates.¹⁷⁵ It is estimated that 90-95% of Bulgarian Roma are chronically unemployed due to illiteracy and lack of training as well as anti-Roma prejudice and Bulgaria's severe economic slump.¹⁷⁶

About 70% of Roma children have either never attended school or dropped out of the overcrowded 'Gypsy schools' in the early grades. As a result, over 80% of Bulgarian Roma have only the most rudimentary education or are practically

¹⁷² Rossen Vassilev, "The Roma of Bulgaria: A Pariah Minority," The Global Review of Ethnopolitics, Vol. 3, no. 2 (January 2004), pp.44-45.

¹⁷³ Plamen Petrov, "Bulgarian Roma: The Multiplication of Misery," World Press Review (31 October 2002), <www.worldpress.org/Europe/779.cfm>.

¹⁷⁴ See Human Rights Watch World Report 2002: Europe & Central Asia: Bulgaria, <<http://www.hrw.org/wr2k2/europe6.html>>; The Bureau of Democracy, "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices –2004," (28February 2005), <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41674.htm>>.

¹⁷⁵ Bulgarian News Agency (BTA), (30 May 1998).

¹⁷⁶ Rossen Vassilev, "The Roma of Bulgaria: A Pariah Minority," The Global Review of Ethnopolitics, Vol. 3, no. 2, (January 2004), p 48; United Nations Development Program (UNDP), "The Social Costs of Transition" available at <http://www.undp.bg/en/pb_sust_human_development_perspective.php>.

illiterate.¹⁷⁷

Even as Bulgarian Roma keep growing in number -both in absolute figures and relative to the Slavic majority- the prospect for their integration into the mainstream remains remote and uncertain.¹⁷⁸

On the other hand, when it comes to state policies, although insignificant at some points, the minority policies of Bulgaria seem to have changed greatly, when compared to the communist era and early 1990s. Today, the country is shown as an example of one which found peaceful solutions to long lasting minority problems.¹⁷⁹ Yet, it is not only the state institutions, but also the indispensable civil organizations which contributed to this image. One of them, the Movement of Rights and Freedoms Party, which played a very important role in the fate of the country providing necessary circumstances for a smooth democratic transition, should be elaborated in order to better understand today's Bulgaria.

2.4.4.MRF and its Contributions to Democracy in Bulgaria

The MRF was created as a secret organization in Dobrich in the spring of 1985 under the name of "Turkish National Liberation Movement in Bulgaria" (TNLMB) and was lead by Ahmed Doğan, a Ph.D. student of philosophy. The aim of the organisation was to unite and regulate the efforts of the victims (the minorities) and the creed of the organization was formulated as "war without weapons".¹⁸⁰

In 1986, the organization was eliminated and its leaders along with 18 of the members were arrested. Ahmed Doğan was sentenced to 10 years in prison. After

¹⁷⁷ Matilda Nahabedian, "All Ethnic Problems Solved?" Central Europe Review, Vol.2, No.41, (27 November 2000).

¹⁷⁸ Rossen Vassilev, "The Roma of Bulgaria: A Pariah Minority," p.41.

¹⁷⁹ Andrey Ivanov addresses two models in the Balkans: one is the Yugoslav approach, secessionist-oriented self-determination, and the other is the Bulgarian approach, non-secessionist self-determination with limits to minority rights. See Andrey Ivanov, The Balkans Divided: Nationalism, Minorities, and Security, p.13.

¹⁸⁰ Ivan Palchev, Balkan Politicians: Ahmed Dogan and the Bulgarian Ethnic Model, pp.23-24.

three and a half years, -in December 1989- he was freed. Then the so-called “May events” began in Bulgaria and the protests of the Bulgarian Turks raised tension in the country to the highest possible degree and soon with the regime change MRF was formally founded as a political party in the city of Shumen on February 25, 1990.¹⁸¹

The MRF had not been included in the round table, both because the participants feared a nationalist backlash and because the UDF thought of itself as representing all groups that had suffered under communism. Furthermore, the round table decided to ban the formation of parties on an ethnic basis on the grounds that it could lead to the incitement of ethnic hatred and compromise the national integrity of Bulgaria -clearly addressing the MRF.¹⁸² In fact, the ban proved to be a dead letter, as both the UDF and the BSP recognized the reality of the situation and sought to derive electoral benefits from it.¹⁸³

The existence of the MRF was welcomed by BSP, because it would split the UDF’s votes and would show it as cooperating with ‘anti-Bulgarian’ forces. The two main parties thus had purely pragmatic reasons for complying with the presence of the MRF on the Bulgarian political arena, but once made, the decision had momentous consequences in terms of integrating the hitherto alienated Turkish minority in the democratic process and stabilising Bulgaria’s new democracy.¹⁸⁴

Just then, the MRF was accused of being an ethnic based party; fortunately the accusation was soon nullified by a decision of the Constitutional Court, in April 1992. The decision declared that the existence of the MRF did not contravene the constitutional ban of parties based on ethnicity by pointing to the fact that the party

¹⁸¹ Kjell Engelbrekt, “The Movement for Rights and Freedoms,” p. 5.

¹⁸² Alexander Andreev, “The Political Changes and Political Parties” in Iliana Zloch-Christy (ed.), Bulgaria in a Time of Change: Economic and Political Dimensions, (Avebury: Aldershot, 1996), p.35.

¹⁸³ Vesselin Dimitrov, Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition, p.43-44.

¹⁸⁴ Vesselin Dimitrov, Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition, p.43-44; Alexander Andreev, “The Political Changes and Political Parties,” pp.35-36; Ivan Palchev, Balkan Politicians: Ahmed Dogan and the Bulgarian Ethnic Model, pp.91-100.

did not limit its membership to a particular ethnic group nor defined its aims solely in terms of defending the interests of that group.¹⁸⁵ This effectively put an end to the dispute on the legality of the MRF, which had been running since the party's creation and ensured its place in Bulgarian politics.¹⁸⁶

Although the early party program focused largely on demands for the banned freedoms of the minorities, the party later broadened its goals and emphasized that it was a party of all national minorities opposed to any national chauvinism, revenge, Islamic fundamentalism and religious fanaticism. The party argued that its efforts were designed to contribute to "the unity of the Bulgarian people and to the full and unequivocal compliance with the rights of freedoms of mankind and of all ethnic, religious and cultural communities in Bulgaria."¹⁸⁷ Further, the party called for the promotion of measures designed to alleviate the economic problems facing minority populations in Bulgaria.

As the UDF and the BSP received almost equal number of seats in most of the parliamentary elections and needed MRF's backing, the latter has been an important agent in politics.¹⁸⁸ For example, the UDF-MRF government was formed after the 1990 elections, and ended when the UDF displayed unwillingness to take MRF's wishes into account in the making of government policy and especially about subsidies on agricultural products to which MRF's political constituency needed most in the hard days of the economy.¹⁸⁹ Thus, in one way or another, the position of MRF as the political force nominating the Prime Minister caused the leading parties

¹⁸⁵ Antonina Zhelyaskova, "Bulgaria's Muslim Minorities," p.178; Vesselin Dimitrov, Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition, p.50.

¹⁸⁶ John D. Bell, "Democratisation and Political Participation in Postcommunist Bulgaria," p379.

¹⁸⁷ Kjell Engelbrekt, "The Movement for Rights and Freedoms," pp. 5-6.

¹⁸⁸ Hugh Poulton, "Turkey as Kin-State: Turkish Foreign Policy Towards Turkish and Muslim Communities in the Balkans," p.209.

¹⁸⁹ Vesselin Dimitrov, Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition, p.52-53; R.J. Crampton, A Concise History of Bulgaria, p.228.

to follow cautious policies and brought further progress in guaranteeing the rights of all minorities.

The conditions of the minorities improved incessantly. For example, in the 1991-1992 school year, optional Turkish language education was introduced in public schools. Optional classes in Romany in the public school have been available since September 1993. Bulgarian National Radio started broadcasting programmes in Turkish for several hours each week. The National Television Network also started for Turkish-language broadcasts and today, except the Roma, there is not any significant problem.¹⁹⁰ Dr. Ahmed Doğan and the MRF practically introduced something entirely new and unknown so far in the general theoretical discussions and approaches to the resolution of ethnic conflicts. Considering the examples of Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo it can be easily said that the model has been quite successful.¹⁹¹

However we cannot say that MRF is fully backed by all minority groups. Despite MRF's influential position in local and national politics, there is an increasing criticism of the party from both within the ethnic-Turkish population and from political commentators for portraying itself as the only guarantor of ethnic peace and stability, and is blamed for corruption and intimidation to maintain its powerful position.¹⁹² Anyhow, despite its controversial record, the MRF still continues to be a major contributor to the marked improvement of the minority situation. Now, the Turkish minority is fully integrated and represented in political life. The MRF, therefore, played the role of a political and social stabiliser through the

¹⁹⁰ Krassimir Kanev, "From Totalitarianism to a Constitutional State," p. 65.

¹⁹¹ Antonina Zhelyazkova, "The Bulgarian Ethnic Model," East European Constitutional Review, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Fall 2001); Lyudmil Georgiev, "Dr. Ahmed Dogan or Philosophy in Politics," in Ivan Palchev, Balkan Politicians: Ahmed Dogan and the Bulgarian Ethnic Model, p.8-9.

¹⁹² See Bulgarian Parliament official web page at <<http://www.parliament.bg/>>
The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, "Bulgaria: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 2004," (February 28, 2005), <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/>>.

influence it exercised over the whole nation.¹⁹³

2.5. Political and Social Situation Today

Today, Bulgaria is a parliamentary republic ruled by a democratically elected government headed by Prime Minister Simeon Saxe-Coburg Gotha. The government took office in 2001, following the victory of his National Movement Simeon II (NMSS) party in parliamentary elections. Following presidential elections in 2001, Georgi Parvanov, former leader of the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), began his 5-year term in 2002.¹⁹⁴

There are no legal restrictions on the participation of minorities in politics, despite the constitutional prohibition, because the constitutional court many times judged for the legality of ethnic parties. Currently, there are 24 minority members of parliament (M.P.s) including two Romani and two ethnic-Armenian M.P.s in the National Assembly in the 240-seat National Assembly and 2 ethnic-Turkish ministers in the Cabinet.¹⁹⁵ Nevertheless, a substantial part of Bulgarian society still finds the reality of an ethnically and politically self-confident Turkish minority hard to accept. Fortunately, there has not been any substantial violence between Turks and Bulgarians. This is a genuine success story in the endeavour to cope with ethnic tensions in post-Communist Eastern Europe, when compared not only with former Yugoslavia but also with Romania. Yet, there lingers the dormant danger posed by Bulgarian nationalism which resides in some groups who want to play the anti-

¹⁹³ Emil Giatzidis, An Introduction to Post-Communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformations, p.63.

¹⁹⁴ The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, "Bulgaria: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 2004".

¹⁹⁵ The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, "Bulgaria: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 2004"; Human Rights Watch, "World Report 2002," <<http://www.hrw.org/wr2k2/europe6.html>>.

Turkish card as a means of electoral campaign.¹⁹⁶ Although there were a few problems in several areas and the Roma minority seems to be victim of ethnic discrimination, governments generally respect human rights of the citizens.¹⁹⁷

There is an independent judiciary, but the judiciary suffers from corruption and wide-ranging systemic problems as some committees and working groups keep on fighting against this disease decisively.¹⁹⁸

The social and democratic transition process of Bulgaria seems to be improving. The state-owned news agency, radio (BNR) is often one of the most outspoken critics of the government and its policies. The state-owned Bulgarian National Television (BNT) broadcast Turkish-language newscasts, and local affiliates of BNR broadcast limited Turkish-language programming in regions with ethnic-Turkish populations. The state-owned Radio Bulgaria increased its Turkish-language broadcasting from 30 minutes to 3 hours per day and introduced an hour of Roma-language programming per week.¹⁹⁹

Further advance of democracy depends, to a large extent, on people's understanding of democratic principles and on participation and engagement of citizens in political life. Indeed, since the mid-1990s, Bulgarians seem to be leaving their passivity and indifference behind, and are becoming increasingly aware of their citizenship. However, the interaction of civic associations and state institutions is not taking place on an equal basis. The state authorities usually see NGOs as a nuisance,

¹⁹⁶ Wolfgang Höpken, "From Religious identity to Ethnic Mobilisation: The Turks of Bulgaria Before Under and Since Communism," pp.77-78.

¹⁹⁷ Emil Giatzidis, An Introduction to Post-Communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformations, p.75; Polia Alexandrova, "Bulgaria: The Problem with Segregation," Transitions Online, (20-26 May 2003), <<http://www.ciaonet.org/pbei/sites/tol.html>>.

¹⁹⁸ "Bulgaria Looking to Improve Anti-Corruption Measures," Mediterranean Agenda, (19 February 2004), <www.meditagenda.com>; The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, "Bulgaria: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 2004".

¹⁹⁹ The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, "Bulgaria: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 2004"; Amnesty International, "Amnesty International Report 2005," <<http://www.amnesty.org>>.

as amateurs or even as organisations carrying out anti-governmental actions, as being in an inferior position in a power hierarchy with no legitimate right of participation in policy debates. On the other hand, civic associations tend to perceive the state and its institutions as distant and hostile, as well as a source of potential privileges, and as a result tend to act in an antagonistic fashion. As the country further becomes a part of Europe, and reaches a better level in economic terms, social and political condition of the country will certainly be better off.

CHAPTER III

THE ECONOMIC TRANSITION OF BULGARIA

From the very beginning, the next major issue to the minority problem, which dominated the modern history of Bulgaria, has been the incessant economic modernization struggle and still awaits solution. Some authors and historians accuse the Ottoman rule for the problems of social and political underdevelopment of modern Bulgaria. Similarly, the Ottoman economic system is criticized for reducing the incentives to improve production methods, and for inhibiting emergence of the market economy. However, it should not be forgotten that when the Turks left the Balkans, Bulgaria was one of the richest provinces exporting textile and agricultural products and had the best equipped army. The results of the Battle of Slivnitsa (1885) and the Balkan War (1912-1913) clearly show that it had a good economic condition and self-confidence since we know that “Armies walk on their stomach”. Actually, a major culprit is the continual six-year war economy (1912-1918) together with total destruction and reparations, which changed the total picture and subjected the country to abject poverty.

3.1. The Interwar Period

The inter-war period brought very few changes in the social and economic structure. On the eve of the Second World War, Bulgaria was still a primarily agricultural country, and the size of industrial units remained small. The share of industrial production was not more than 5.6 percent in 1938 (the lowest proportion

in South-eastern Europe, Albania excepted), not much different from the 5.1 percent of 1926.²⁰⁰

Major characteristic of the economy was over-dependence on exports of agricultural products (particularly tobacco), while Bulgaria was drawn into the German economic orbit. The links that had been forged in the First World War were maintained in the 1920s, when Germany took a quarter of all Bulgaria's exports. When the 1929 economic crisis came, Bulgaria found itself internationally isolated, confined and unbalanced, unable to react flexibly and adequately to changing economic conditions, as trade with the West and the Balkan countries atrophied. Hence, Bulgaria was forced into close co-operation with Nazi Germany in economic as well as in diplomatic terms.

Bulgaria benefited to a great extent from the relationship with Germany including know-how, industrial installations, and credit that flowed in from Germany in return for agricultural goods. In 1939, exports and imports to and from Germany reached 71.1 % and 69.5% of the total figure.²⁰¹ Thousands of Bulgarians began working in Germany and gained experience, and money returned to the country. Construction, chemical, machine building industries, and metallurgy made significant advances, though the main advance was in food processing.²⁰² Unfortunately, within two years these economic recovery efforts were replaced by war economy conditions once more, and at the end of the war, communists were in charge to make the country a part of the emerging eastern bloc.

²⁰⁰ R. J. Crampton, A Short History of Modern Bulgaria, p. 141.

²⁰¹ Emil Giatzidis, An Introduction To Post-Communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformations, p.17.

²⁰² Bogoslav Dobrin, Bulgarian Economic Development since World War II, p.9.

3.2.Bulgaria Under Communist Rule

Many of the current problems of Bulgaria are the result of the legacy bequeathed by the ill-conceived economic policies of the previous Communist regime.²⁰³ The post-WWII economic modernization followed in the next decades was, more or less, a standard realization of the Soviet model introduced with the assistance of Soviet experts and managers in the country.²⁰⁴ Particular stress was placed on the development of heavy industry since, according to the communist dogmas, this was the only way for the country to break the cycle of self-perpetuating underdevelopment. At that period some of the eminent economists of the country opposed imposed development, as the country possessed insufficient natural resources for rapid industrialization so they would not be competitive.²⁰⁵ But the Communist Party accused them of condemning the country to be an agrarian and underdeveloped country.²⁰⁶

Bulgaria embarked on the road to rapid and forced industrialisation with collectivisation. The goal for Bulgaria was to acquire a strong industrial base for the future and the driving motto was “the present should be sacrificed to the future”. Soviet development strategy was rapid growth of heavy industry to be achieved through concentrated investment from the state budget and a labour force enlarged by peasants. A minor rural labour force would be left on the mechanized collective farms to feed a growing urban population.²⁰⁷

In order to create a strong industry and social welfare and class equality, state

²⁰³ John R. Lampe, The Bulgarian Economy in the Twentieth Century, (New York: St. Martin's, 1986), pp.139-155.

²⁰⁴ Glenn E. Curtis (ed.), Bulgaria: a Country Study, p.127; Emil Giatzidis, An Introduction To Post-Communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformations, p.24;

²⁰⁵ Joseph Rothchild, Communist Eastern Europe, (Colombia, Columbia University, 1964), p.55.

²⁰⁶ Ivan Tchalakov, “Industrial Development and Ecological Risks, 1945-1990,” in Jacques Coenen-Huther (ed.), Bulgaria at the Crossroads, (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 1996), p. 247.

²⁰⁷ Andrey Pantev, “The Historic Road of Third Bulgarian State,” p.18; John R. Lampe, The Bulgarian Economy in the Twentieth Century, p. 139.

planners subordinated every aspect of the national economy to the Soviet camp. By spring 1948, Bulgaria had signed treaties of friendship and co-operation with all the states of Eastern Europe, and in 1949 was a founding member of the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA),²⁰⁸ and of the Warsaw Pact in 1955.²⁰⁹

A few years after the nationalization of enterprises in December 1947, large construction sites were opened. Consumer industries, services and especially small class of private industrial entrepreneurs were regularly sacrificed to the goal of 'high level of industrial growth' and the average citizen was forced to accept a low standard of living. The peasant producer carried much of the burden of the economic revolution while there was a steady flow of labour displaced from the land to service the industrial sector.²¹⁰ The new industrial enterprises, massive in scale, employing mostly outdated Soviet technologies, economically inefficient, and using cheap energy and raw materials available in CMEA countries, required enormous state subsidies and caused environmental damage.²¹¹

The country entered a period of planned economic development era in 1949. Actually, there was a two-year plan (1947-48), which was taken up by the Fatherland Front government, before the communists gained full control, and prefigured the direction of Bulgarian economy by allocating funds away from agriculture. Then came first with the First Five-year Plan (1949-53), which created the institutional apparatus for long term industrial planning. Substantial material and technical support came from the Soviet Union, but in return Bulgaria had to sell products at below-market prices and bear Soviet advisers' arrogance. The Second Five-year Plan

²⁰⁸ A multilateral economic alliance headquartered in Moscow until it disbanded in 1991. Members in 1991 were: Bulgaria, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Mongolia, Poland, Romania, the Soviet Union and Vietnam. Also known as CEMA, Comecon, or the Council.

²⁰⁹ Glenn E. Curtis, *Bulgaria: a Country Study*, p.160; Emil Giatzidis, *An Introduction To Post-Communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformations*, pp.24-25.

²¹⁰ Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, (London and New York, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p.346.

²¹¹ Andrey Pantev, "The Historic Road of Third Bulgarian State," p.18.

(1953-57) and the Third Five-year Plan followed the first plan smoothly and the country became an industrial/agrarian country.²¹² Whereas in 1948 the ratio between agriculture and industry in terms of contribution to the national income stood at 30 : 70, in favour of agriculture, by 1956 it had swung to 67 : 32 to the advantage of industry. Likewise, in 1957, Bulgarian industrial production was eight times higher than what it was in 1939.²¹³ Yet, in the Seventh Party Congress of the BCP (1959), the party declared that, the country was second after Soviet Union which had succeeded in collectivisation of agriculture and a new period named ‘Great Leap Forward’ would begin. The reason was to work the economy to full capacity, since in 1958 there were at least 350.000 people out of work. Moreover the country had to yield agricultural goods for other CMEA countries as well. Thus, targets declared in the third plan were revised and funds allocated for agriculture was doubled. State Planning Commission claimed that the third plan had been fulfilled in December 1960, two years ahead of schedule with an annual increase of 10.9 % in agriculture.²¹⁴ (See Table)

Table.3. Structure of gross domestic product and national income

GDP	1946	1960	1970	1980	1985	1989
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Industry	30.3%	57%	62.4%	63,9%	69.1%	69.6%
Agriculture	45.5%	23.6%	16.0%	12.4%	11.0%	10.5%
Construction	8.5%	8.9%	9%	9.2%	8.6%	7.8%
Other branches	15.7%	9.6%	12.6%	14.5%	11.3%	12.1%

Nevertheless, industrialization and extensive economic development had

²¹² Joseph Rothchild, Communist Eastern Europe, p.54.

²¹³ J. F. Brown, Bulgaria Under Communist Rule, pp.18-19, 46-48; Glenn E. Curtis, Bulgaria: a Country Study, pp.128-129.

²¹⁴ J. F. Brown, Bulgaria Under Communist Rule, pp. 83-95; Glenn E. Curtis, Bulgaria: a Country Study, pp.129-130;

²¹⁵ People's Republic of Bulgaria '89, A Short Statistical Yearbook, (Sofia, Central Statistical Office, 1990), p.21.

limits and soon it became evident that the command and planned economy was showed no progress, and it was no longer possible to conceal its inefficiency and slowdown, as shortages had not been eradicated. In the 1960s and 1970s, the centrally planned command economy was in need of reform. However, when thought of Bulgaria in the early 1950s, the industrialization process was highly successful. There were much less instances of tensions in the Bulgarian society than in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary and those that existed remained under control. Thus, economic integration within the framework of the CMEA was of relatively greater benefit to Bulgaria when compared to other Warsaw Pact countries.²¹⁶ (See Table)

Table.4. Annual average growth, 1953-60 to 1986-89 (%)²¹⁷

Period	Official data	Western calculation
1953-60	9.40	-
1961-65	6.70	6.6
1966-70	8.75	4.7
1971-75	7.80	4.5
1976-80	6.10	1.2
1981-85	3.70	0.9
1986-89	3.10	-1.8

Towards the end of the 1970s, as just like in other Eastern European states, a more general problem became clear in Bulgaria since the transfer from extensive to intensive economic growth was not accomplished as easily or as rapidly as planned.²¹⁸ The scientific-technological revolution dream proved disappointing, because the country could not keep pace with the rapid changes in computer sciences and fibre optics, and the import of western technology was difficult because of

²¹⁶ Georgi Fotev, "Total Crisis and the Reorganization of Society," p.17.

²¹⁷ Michael L. Wyzan, "Stabilisation and Anti-inflationary Policy" in Iliana Zloch-Christv (ed.), Bulgaria in a Time of Change: Economic and Political Dimensions, (Aldershot, Singapore and Sydney: Avebury, 1996), p.80.

²¹⁸ Extensive growth is based upon the mobilization of new inputs to the economy in the form of higher savings rates, increased labour force participation, opening new land to cultivation and increased exploitation of natural resources. Intensive development, by contrast, rests upon the discovery and implementation of methods for producing continuing rising output from static inputs. While extensive development suffers from clear limits, intensive development can, in principle, proceed indefinitely.

relatively high prices and the trade restrictions imposed on eastern bloc countries by the U.S. President Ronald Reagan. The only high-quality exports, Bulgaria could offer were agricultural goods and the EEC was determined to exclude that category. Bulgaria could not find alternative markets, and to meet foreign debt obligations had to export more. Slowing growth rates made the regime introduce New Economic Mechanism (NEM) introduced in 1979 and applied by 1982. In order to raise productivity, to improve the quality of Bulgarian goods and services, and thereby secure export needed to eliminate existing trade deficits and hard currency debts.²¹⁹ Nevertheless, it had little real impact. The quality of production showed no sign of improvement.

Small enterprises did well and grew throughout the 1980s, but could not change the general picture. When the decline in the Soviet subsidies and reduction in deliveries of Soviet oil coincided with very poor agricultural production (owing to a severe winter followed by extreme and sustained draught in 1984-85), the country began experiencing severe energy and food shortages. Nineteen eighty five was the worst year of the entire communist period for overall economic performance.²²⁰ Bulgaria could not find an alternative solution other than borrowing money. Injecting the economy with loans from Western private banks resulted in the accumulation of an enormous foreign debt, the size of which became known to the public only after the fall of the totalitarian regime.

²¹⁹ NEM was based on five principles. Decentralization, democracy by the of officials in a new system of 'mobilisation from below', competition at all levels of production, market forces were to be allowed into the economy, self-sufficiency was to be applied to all plants which could no longer automatically count on government subsidies. See Glenn E. Curtis, Bulgaria: a Country Study, pp.134-135; R.J. Crampton, A Concise History of Bulgaria, pp.198-207; Daniel N. Nelson, Balkan Imbroglio: Politics and Security in Southeastern Europe, pp.60-61

²²⁰ Robert I. McIntyre, Bulgaria: Politics, Economics and Society, (London and New York: Pinter, 1988), p.115.

3.3.The End of Communist Regime

The severe balance of payments problem since the mid-1980s, which had led to the accumulation of more than \$9 billion of foreign debt combined with poor harvest in 1989 and 1990 as a result of the exodus of ethnic Turks²²¹ made Bulgaria's position at the start of the post-communist economic transition, arguably, less favourable than that of any other Eastern European country. There was euphoria over the expected and possible changes in the autumn of 1989, but it gradually gave way to sober disappointment. The transition from centrally planned to market economy proved much more complicated than it seemed, took much longer than assumed, and extracted a high economic and social cost.

Bulgaria's economic structure was based on large industrial enterprises, and activities were narrowly focused and badly integrated. The ageing of the industrial base was evident. In the 1990s more than 70 per cent of industrial equipment had been operating longer than twenty years.²²² Moreover, in that critical transition period, the Gulf crisis put an unbearable burden to the economy.

The Bulgarian communist regime had no experience in decision-making responsibility of individual enterprises, that is, they were not ready for market competition. The country also lacked a significant private sector which could provide the main engine of economic growth. Growing inflation, low labour efficiency and productivity, large hidden unemployment, a limited centuries-old work ethic and lax labour discipline, energy shortages, isolation from competitive world markets, and a heavy burden of debt were the other problems. Finally, the Bulgarian economy was integrated with that of the Soviet Union to a degree unmatched by any other Eastern European country, with nearly sixty percent of its foreign trade directed towards the

²²¹ R.J. Crampton, *A Concise History of Bulgaria*, p.220.

²²² Emil Giatzidis, *An Introduction To Post-Communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformations*, p.83.

Soviet Union. Owing to the rigidity of price and trade regulations, as well as state monopoly of foreign trade, the influx of foreign capital was limited.²²³

With regime change, liberalization of the economy has been the number one issue. One of the most difficult dilemmas confronting the ex-communist party in Bulgaria was the incompatibility of the expectations of its proletarian basis and those of the former privileged class. During the long period of state ownership in a non-functional totalitarian state, there had been large-scale hidden privatisation beside illegal redistribution of national wealth. All this could not remain hidden from view, and became a deep moral crisis in Bulgarian society.²²⁴

The demise of the eastern block also brought the disintegration of the CMEA which meant that Bulgarian industries lost the main markets for export products which had purchased over 80 % of the country's exports, and the main suppliers of oil and raw materials, which made up 75.9 % of the country's imports, leaving the country with intolerably expensive export products. The USSR alone accounted for 56.5 % of imports and 64.4 % of exports. The total impact of the trade shock has been estimated at some 15% of the GDP.²²⁵

The collapse of foreign trade also meant that Bulgaria lost whatever chance it may have had of continuing the repayment of its foreign debt. Thus, Bulgaria had no choice but to declare a foreign debt moratorium both on principal repayments and on interest obligations. The first post communist era government, led by Lukanov (Jan-Nov 1990), failed to take any serious measures to prevent the situation from deteriorating further. Bulgaria found itself isolated from international credit markets

²²³ Vesselin Dimitrov, Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition, p.69-70; Emil Giatzidis, An Introduction To Post-Communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformations, pp.80-84.

²²⁴ Georgi Fotev, "Total Crisis and the Reorganization of Society," p.24.

²²⁵ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Bulgaria: An Economic Assessment, (Paris: OECD, 1992), pp. 99–101 ; Iliana Zloch-Christy, "External Balance and External Debt," in Iliana Zloch-Christy (ed.), Bulgaria in a Time of Change: Economic and Political Dimensions, (Avebury: Aldershot, 1996), p. 137.

and that brought the government's resignation. Dimitar Popov formed an interim government and became the leader who pioneered economic reform process with a delay of fifteen months after the breakdown of the Communist regime.²²⁶ The period lasted until the end of the Berov government, in October 1994, which were "the years of liberalisation without permanent stabilization".²²⁷

3.4. Liberalisation Without Permanent Stabilisation (1991-1994)

The period was the first years of de-communisation in which the people were subjected to shocking effects of economic transition. It was so steep a decline that in 1994 the real average income per person was 55,5 % below the level of 1990.

Under communism, unemployment did not officially exist, and indeed in the 1980s there was a persistent shortage of labour. With the rapid decrease in subsidies, unprofitable enterprises were closed and large-scale unemployment became a novel phenomenon for Bulgaria. The rate of unemployment increased from 1.9% in January 1991 to 15.2% in December 1992.²²⁸ When the 1989 level is taken as a base, the real income index per capita had the following values: In 1990 increased to 106.1%, but in 1991 and 1992 fell to 67.1%, and 64.3% levels, respectively.²²⁹

The policies followed during the period were a kind of shock therapy approach, which foresaw liberalisation at once. After the first elections, a brave step toward economic reform was taken and the prices were liberalised in 1991. In fact, it could not be postponed any longer since the shortage of essential commodities was

²²⁶ R.J. Crampton, A Concise History of Bulgaria, p.221; Emil Giatzidis, An Introduction To Post-Communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformations, p.84; Iliana Zloch-Christy, "External Balance and External Debt: An Overview," pp.133-143.

²²⁷ Vesselin Dimitrov, Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition, p.69-70.

²²⁸ Ivan Tchalakov, "Industrial Development and Ecological Risks, 1945-1990," pp. 254-255; Vesselin Dimitrov, Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition, p.30-31.

²²⁹ Atanas Atanasov, Sasha Todorova and Valentina Zlatanova, "Socially Vulnerable Groups During the Transition to a Market Economy," in Jacques Coenen-Huther (ed.), Bulgaria at the Crossroads, (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 1996), p.192

catastrophic. The country was suffering increasing shortages of even basic consumer goods. The lengthening bread queues left decision makers with no alternative but to free prices. The state system of price-formation was replaced by the mechanism of market pricing. In a very short time the population found many more commodities in the shops, but at much higher prices than before. Price increases exceeded even the most pessimistic scenarios, 122.9% in February alone and 339% for the year as a whole. However, they endured it with notable resilience and understanding.²³⁰

The inability of Bulgarian governments to find an effective solution to the problems further deteriorated the situation. Bulgaria followed neither the Czechoslovak or Russian model of early and comprehensive privatisation, nor the Polish model which placed emphasis on restructuring the enterprises before selling them off. Successive governments were unable to make any serious progress on asserting control over state enterprises or on privatisation. Lack of expertise or unwillingness to develop serious policy programmes made the role of the IMF much more important than in other Eastern European countries where bold reformers were able to develop their own versions of economic transition. In Bulgaria, the IMF not only suggested policy preferences, but also largely produced the actual programmes. Moreover, Bulgarian governments used IMF in order to justify painful measures to the voters.²³¹

There was a suitable legal base for many revolutionary policies, but most of those could not be put into use or applied. For example, in 1991 the Bulgarian Parliament passed the Ownership and Use of Farm Land Act, its Enforcement Act,

²³⁰ Georgi Fotev, "Total Crisis and the Reorganization of Society," p.23. For the statistics see Gerard Caprio and Ross Levine, "Reforming Finance in Transitional Socialist Economies," World Bank Research Observer Vol. 9 No. 1 (1994), pp. 1-24 .

²³¹ Vesselin Dimitrov, Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition, pp. 70-72.

and the Cooperatives Act, which provided the legal basis for agrarian reform²³² or the ratification of the Foreign Investment Act (FIA) creating some of the most liberal conditions for foreign investment in Central and Eastern Europe. Even so, the war in Yugoslavia and the UN embargo on Belgrade for forty-three months served to further isolate Bulgaria from international markets at the very time it attempted to restructure its economy, and diminished all chances of attracting foreign direct investment (FDI). Moreover, Bulgaria suffered from the rebirth of the Balkan image as a dark and savage place, too distant and dangerous for investment, trade, travel, and communication.²³³ Nonetheless, the distribution of foreign investments by country of origin was quite dynamic, contrary to the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe. While German investments ranked highest in number and size in 1990-92, the great part of investments came from neighbouring countries, mainly Greece and Turkey in 1993-95. The Greek government encouraged its entrepreneurs for investment in Bulgaria not only for its geographic proximity, but also by the numerous EU programmes in the country.²³⁴

The struggle of the government to establish a better economic model was generally successful, but the monetary policies proved to be wrong. When prices were set free in February 1991, the floating exchange rate fluctuated in the range of BGL 16.9 to 21.7 per one US dollar. From 1992 until end of 1993, the nominal value of the lev fell from BGL 23.6 to about 32 levs per one US dollar at the end of the period. But the government seems to have supported it covertly, until a foreign-exchange crisis erupted in May 1994 and the exchange rate fell to BGL 55.6 levs per

²³² Maya Keliya, "The Transformation of Agriculture," in Jacques Coenen-Huther (ed.), Bulgaria at the Crossroads, (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 1996), pp. 233-244.

²³³ R.J. Crampton, A Concise History of Bulgaria, pp. 230-231.

²³⁴ Daniela Bobeva and Alexander Bozhkov, "Foreign Investments in Bulgarian Economy" in Iliana Zloch-Christy (ed.), Bulgaria in a Time of Change: Economic and Political Dimensions, (Avebury: Aldershot, 1996), p.130.

one US dollar.²³⁵ Consequently, the government's passivity in combating economic drift pushed the electorate towards a reviving socialist party whose expressions about easing the pain of transition was comforting to the majority of voters and brought an electoral victory for BSP in the 1994 elections.²³⁶

3.5. Partial Reversal With the Socialist Government (1995-1996)

The socialist government, which came to power in early 1995, inherited an economy which was just beginning to come off the bottom after five years of decline. The tough policies of the former government (Lyuben Berov 1992-94) had stabilised the economy. The drastic devaluation of the Bulgarian national currency (BGL) had restored the competitive position of Bulgarian exports. In 1995, trade was at its best level since the start of transition. Thus, the new government had a chance to deal with the long-postponed structural problems of the economy.

The positive effects of the former government's deferring the debts for 20-30 years was evident, as it signed an agreement with the Paris Club of government creditors²³⁷ in April 1994, and another one with the London Club of commercial creditors²³⁸ in June 1994.²³⁹ In 1994, the GDP grew by 1.8%, with industrial output jumping by 7.8%²⁴⁰ and inflation was on a downward slope. GDP growth in 1995

²³⁵ Directorate General for Economic and Financial Affairs, "The financial sector in Bulgaria," European Commission Enlargement Papers, No. 18, (September 2003), p.20, <http://europa.eu.int/comm/economy_finance>.

²³⁶ R.J. Crampton, A Concise History of Bulgaria, p.232.

²³⁷ Debts owed by developing countries are usually rescheduled in the London Club or the Paris Club. London Club rescheduling involves debts owed to commercial banks while Paris Club rescheduling concerns debts owed to official creditors. The Paris Club is an informal group of official creditors whose role is to find co-ordinated and sustainable solutions to the payment difficulties experienced by debtor nations.

²³⁸ The London Club is an ad-hoc grouping of commercial banks exposed to third world debts. In contrast to the Paris Club, it is not a formal body with fixed membership and there is no formal framework for restructuring commercial bank loans.

²³⁹ Iliana Zloch-Christy. "External Balance and External Debt," p. 140; See also in Emil Giatzidis, An Introduction To Post-Communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformations, p.88.

²⁴⁰ IMF, Republic of Bulgaria: Recent Economic Developments, p.1; European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, "Transition Report," 1999.

exceeded forecasts and reached 2.9%. The share of the private sector in GDP rose to 40% at the end of 1995.²⁴¹ (See Table)

Table.5. Annual growth of GDP, 1989-94²⁴²

1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
-0.6%	-9.3%	-1.7%	-7.3%	-2.4%	1.8%	2.9%

The socialist government took on board the idea of stimulating the economy, but ignored the warning signs despite the existence of decision makers educated in prestigious foreign institutions. With their economic policies Prime Minister Zhan Videnov and his colleagues returned to some methods of the command economy and coveted restoration of the social welfare characteristic of the old regime. Perhaps most disastrously, the socialist government believed that it had discovered a Bulgarian way for recovery of the economy and denounced the necessity of the intervention of outsiders such as the IMF.²⁴³

In its first year, the socialist government seemed to be well on the way towards achieving its objectives. However, it was not a continuation of the economic recovery that had begun in 1994, but, on the contrary, the result of a return to price controls. The resultant slowdown of inflation was merely artificial, and accumulated problems for the future. In early 1996, all the symptoms of an economic collapse were evident and kept on increasing to a seemingly unstoppable level. Unemployment began to increase again with the closure of inefficient industrial enterprises, and in early 2000 reached its highest level since the start of transition.²⁴⁴ In fact, problems started with agriculture. The tremendous ideologisation in decision-making hindered teamwork and de-communisation efforts caused early liquidation of

²⁴¹ Given the slow pace of privatisation, this was largely due to new-businesses. See, Emil Giatzidis, An Introduction To Post-Communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformations, p.89.

²⁴² International Monetary Fund (IMF), Republic of Bulgaria: Recent Economic Developments, (Washington DC: IMF, 1995), p.1.

²⁴³ Vesselin Dimitrov, Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition, pp. 81-82.

²⁴⁴ Vesselin Dimitrov, Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition, p.62.

all existing collective farm units. When the new co-operatives proved unable to secure the minimum grain harvest needed, the 1996 harvest was lower than that of 1936, and the situation deteriorated as an excessive volume of grain was exported.²⁴⁵

However, the main issue for agricultural policy in the transition period was land reform. The process of returning the land to its pre-communist owners was delayed. As late as the end of 1998, only 24% of land was in secure legal ownership. Agricultural output had no firm upward trend, since after an increase of 30% in 1997, output declined by 6.2% in 1998. This meant that one of the most important sectors of the Bulgarian economy, accounting for 21.1 of GDP and employing 24.7% of the working population, and one of the few in which the country could enjoy a competitive advantage, was still not on a sustainable growth track.²⁴⁶

Reforms were accepted and applied almost mechanically regardless of their specific conditions.²⁴⁷ Most importantly, however, the government failed to generate enough resources to begin the repayment of Bulgaria's foreign debt under the 1994 agreement, and underestimated the problems of the deeply corrupt banking system. In 1996, the currency went into a freefall, most of the banks went bankrupt and stagnation prevailed.²⁴⁸

By the end of 1996, Bulgaria had become the top contender for the title of 'worst-managed country in Europe'. During that year, inflation hit the 300 percent mark and GDP declined 10 percent thus making Bulgaria an exception to the

²⁴⁵ Emil Giatzidis, An Introduction To Post-Communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformations, p.91.

²⁴⁶ European Commission, Regular Report on Progress Towards Accession: Bulgaria, (Brussels, October 1999).

²⁴⁷ Emil Giatzidis, An Introduction To Post-Communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformations, pp. 99-100.

²⁴⁸ The lev fell to 119.5 leva to the dollar by May 1996. In early 1997 the lev devaluated from BGL 500 to over BGL 3,000 per one US dollar. Markets collapsed coupled by almost complete dollarization of payments. Directorate General for Economic and Financial Affairs, "The financial sector in Bulgaria," p.20; Vesselin Dimitrov, Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition, p.55-56.

regional trend of stabilisation and growth. Between January 1996 and January 1997, the average monthly salary fell almost tenfold, from \$110 to \$12. Bulgaria actually sank below the economic level of conflict - damaged Bosnia and Albania.²⁴⁹

Bulgarians were becoming not only poorer but also more unequal. The Gini coefficient, the most widely accepted measure of inequality, increased from 0.217 in 1989, one of the lowest in the world, to 0.378 in 1995 which was higher than in any other Eastern European country.²⁵⁰ More than 30% of the nation in 1997 were living below the poverty line as defined by the United Nations Development Program.²⁵¹

The economic crisis, sustained and intensified by the slow pace of the economic reforms, reinforced the inherited negative features of the demographic structure of the population. This, in turn, led to a steady decline in the birth rate. There were over 2 million pensioners out of the aging population of 9 million total.²⁵²

The prime minister resigned in December 1996, but the political turmoil led to an even greater fall in the exchange rate and triggered off hyperinflation, which marked the end of the second period of macroeconomic stabilization as the lowest point reached by Bulgaria during its liberalization process. (See table)

Table.6. Key economic indicators, 1994-99²⁵³

Indicator	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
GDP growth (%)	1.8	2.9	-10.1	-6.9	3.5	2.4
Inflation (CPI)	121.9	32.9	310.8	578.6	0.96	6.2
Unemployment (%)	12.8	14.7	13.7	15.0	16.0	17.0
Fiscal balance (% of GDP)	-5.6	-6.6	-16.6	-2.9	1.3	-0.9
Current account (% of GDP)	-0.3	-0.2	0.2	4.2	-1.8	-5.3

²⁴⁹ Venelin I. Ganev, "Bulgaria's Symphony of Hope," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (1997), p.131.

²⁵⁰ European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, "Transition Report 1997," (London, 1997).

²⁵¹ United Nations Development Program, Human Development Report (New York, 1997).

²⁵² Georgi Fotev, "Total Crisis and the Reorganization of Society," p.28.

²⁵³ Sources: OECD, IMF.

By the end of 1996, the extent of the crisis was such that the IMF proposed the introduction of a currency board system. That represented the ultimate recognition of the inability of the government to control monetary policy.²⁵⁴

3.6. Liberalisation and Unexpected Stabilisation (1997-1999)

The introduction of the currency board marked the beginning of the third, and so far successful, attempt at macroeconomic stabilisation. The hyperinflation of early 1997 finally persuaded the politicians and the population that inflation is the greatest evil, and made it possible to introduce the currency board. The political parties finally managed to reach an agreement on 4 February 1997, through which the BSP ceded power to a above-party expert government, led by the mayor of Sofia Stefan Sofianski, which later concluded a stabilisation agreement with the IMF.²⁵⁵

After the elections, Ivan Kostov formed a new government and reversed the anti-liberalisation measures imposed during Videnov government and the lev was pegged to the DM at Lv1.000 : DM1 in July 1997.²⁵⁶ The country also managed to limit spending, producing the first budget surplus of the Bulgarian transition in 1998, and the spiral of inflationary expectations was finally broken, setting the foundations for a stable macroeconomic environment. Thus, the annual rate of inflation fell to a negligible level, interest rates eased rapidly to single-digit levels, foreign currency reserves increased, and domestic state debt reduced substantially.

The same period was also the years of first serious measures about enterprise reform. In its Bulgaria 2001 programme, the government committed itself to creating

²⁵⁴ Stoydin Savov, "The Bulgarian Economy under the Currency Board (State and Tendencies)," *Economic Thought*, 13 (1998), p. 22.

²⁵⁵ Vesselin Dimitrov, *Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition*, pp.85-86.

²⁵⁶ It was repegged to the euro at Lv1,955.83:1Euro in January 1999 and subsequently according to the Law on redenomination of the Bulgarian lev, in July 1999, 1000 BGL were replaced by 1 BGN. See Directorate General for Economic and Financial Affairs, "The financial sector in Bulgaria"; The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited, "Country Profile: Bulgaria-Basic data," (2005), <www.eiu.com>

the conditions necessary for encouraging the development and competitiveness of large-scale enterprises, as well as facilitating the growth of the small and medium sector. The government passed new legislation, especially on competition, and committed itself to investing in infrastructure (roads, transport, energy) and telecommunications. The recovery of the economy was strongly supported by the international community²⁵⁷ indicating the increasingly important role of the EU in Bulgaria's foreign trade towards the end of millennium.²⁵⁸

However, despite the success in stabilisation, major concerns continued to be raised by the dynamics of several key economic indicators GDP recovery re-decelerated in 1999, exports declined, expected inflows of foreign direct investment failed to show up, while the process of privatisation and industrial restructuring showed signs of losing impetus. The total industrial output was down 12.7 percent and 12.5 percent in 1998 and in 1999, respectively as the trade balances shifted from the positive to large unexpected deficits, and this trend continued in 2000, largely on account of high oil prices.²⁵⁹

3.7.On the Way to EU (2000 -)

The fourth and last stage in economic transition covers negotiations with EU in the *acquis communautaire* and the medium term future process of integration with the EU. At that stage, structural reform and institutional reform was of primary importance, although the maintenance of stability continued to be an imperative.

There were a lot to reach EU-average on almost all matters. The EU commission estimated Bulgaria's GDP at ECU 4,600 (with Purchasing Power Parity) or

²⁵⁷ Emil Giatzidis, An Introduction To Post-Communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformations, p.92.

²⁵⁸ Vesselin Dimitrov, Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition, pp.85-86.

²⁵⁹ Emil Giatzidis, An Introduction To Post-Communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformations, p.93.

about 25% of the EU average in 2000. This overall figure reflected a number of structural weaknesses of the Bulgarian economy like the weakness of the country's private sector, slow progress on privatisation, and little interest on the part of foreign investors who represented the main long-term hope of enabling the Bulgarian economy to reach European standards of efficiency.²⁶⁰

According to 2003 figures, Bulgaria ranked last in average pension and wage list among prospective EU member states. For monthly wages, Bulgaria's average was \$131 - over seven times less than that of Slovenia, the top ranked country with a rate of \$980, but also well behind the wages of Romania (\$165), Latvia (\$280), Slovakia (\$298), Lithuania (\$304), Hungary (\$475), the Czech Republic (\$480), and Poland (\$523). Over 2.3 million people, almost 30% of the country's total population, were retired and lived on pensions that averaged \$45 a month -again the worst. Per capita consumption of meat and milk by Bulgarians was over two times lower than that of citizens in other countries, while the consumption of bread was almost twice as high, which signed a potential malnutrition. The same study also found that almost 40% of Bulgarians lived under the poverty line and the ratio of total income of this group to those earning an average of \$300 a month was roughly 1:14, and the income gap seemed to be steadily widening.²⁶¹ This appeared also in village town divergence; 80% of those living in the countryside were deprived of essentials.²⁶²

Even though the economic indicators are not satisfactory today, the macro economic figures of the Bulgarian economy have been improving notably since

²⁶⁰ Vesselin Dimitrov, Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition, p.87.

²⁶¹ According to the findings of a joint study by the Institute of Social and Trade Unionist Studies and the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria (KNSB). See, "Bulgaria Dead Last in Average Pension and Wage Among Future EU Accession States," Mediterranean Agenda, October 15, 2003, <www.meditagenda.com>.

²⁶² Istanbul Ticaret Odası, Bulgaristan Ülke Etüdü ve Türk Yatırımları (Bulgaria Country Study and Turkish Investments), Yayın No:2003-18, (Istanbul, 2003), p.39.

2000. Just since the beginning of the Simeon Saxe-Coburg government's mandate, in June 2001, Bulgaria's credit rating has risen 15 times.²⁶³ Another indication of improvement was foreign direct investment that the country attracted after the EU accession date was given. Relative freedom on the sale of the immovables, the low level of prices for raw materials and for active firms, the application of Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (SAPARD) program²⁶⁴ and the existence of an atmosphere suitable for investment have been the foremost reasons for foreign investors to prefer Bulgaria.²⁶⁵ After 2000, foreign direct investment totals began to double in a few years. The result achieved in the year 2000 was 1 billion US dollars and during the years 2000-2002 Bulgaria has managed to attract about 3 billion US dollars, which is nearly one-half from all investments in the former eleven years. In 2003, it reached 1,4 billion leva level and more importantly the larger part of direct investments were made for new production lines.²⁶⁶

The country has a market-based economy that was primarily service based and a population of approximately 7.8 million. At the year's end, gross domestic product growth was estimated at 5.3%, and cumulative inflation was 6.1%. While official unemployment in November was 11.9%, down 1.6 percentage points from the beginning of the year, the National Statistical Institute (NSI) reported that long-

²⁶³ Bulgarian Government, "15 Times International Agencies Have Increased the Country's Credit Rating for the Last Three Years," (29 December 2004), <<http://www.government.bg/English/2050.html>>

²⁶⁴ The SAPARD programme, which started in 2000, supports agricultural and rural development measures. SAPARD is a decentralised programme under which the Bulgarian authorities themselves select projects consistent with the agreed programming framework. Bulgaria's allocations from SAPARD are about €60million annually. <<http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/candidate.htm>>.

²⁶⁵ Istanbul Ticaret Odası, *Bulgaristan Ülke Etüdü ve Türk Yatırımları*, p.27; see also Bulgarian Foreign investment Agency, Food Processing Sector, 2002.

²⁶⁶ Bulgarian Government, "Record increase of the direct foreign investments in 2003," (03 December 2003), <<http://www.government.bg/English/Priorities/Economy/2003-12-03/1849.html>>.

term unemployed persons accounted for over 60% of total unemployment.²⁶⁷

The year 2004 was called “2004 The Year of Bulgaria” pointing to the records met in economy²⁶⁸ and FDI amounted to \$ 2,5 billion which was equal to ¼ of the total amount of investments in Bulgaria for the former 13 years. Minister of Economy, Milko Kovachev, pointed out that 1/5 of the Greenfield investment (investment in a new area) in Bulgaria for the previous 13 years were made in 2004, and privatisation revenues amounted to 37% of all privatisation revenues in the country. Moreover, 63% of all investments in Bulgaria had been made during the last four years.²⁶⁹

According to preliminary figures, the FDI in Bulgaria are 9,2% of the GDP, which is the highest level compared to other Central and Eastern European countries (Romania-5,6%, the Czech Republic-4,4%). In 2004, Bulgaria attracted \$2,5 billion out of the \$25 billion foreign investments in the region, which is a double rise on the last six years. In 2000, it was \$1 billion FDI out of the \$22 billion in the region among the six countries namely, the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Slovak Republic, Romania, and Bulgaria.²⁷⁰

On the other hand, investments by native entrepreneurs increased with stabilization which came after the Kostov government. When import products are taken into account, the concentration on machinery and spare parts can be observed and this foretells an increase for the future production amounts.²⁷¹

Consequently, the economic transition process of Bulgaria may both be judged as a success or as a failure. When compared with the other former eastern

²⁶⁷ The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, “Bulgaria: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 2004”.

²⁶⁸ See the official web page of Bulgarian government at <<http://www.government.bg/English/>>.

²⁶⁹ Bulgarian Government, “2004 – Record Year for Attracting FDI in Bulgaria,” (8 March 2005), <<http://www.government.bg/English/Priorities/Privatization/2005-03-08/2335.html>>.

²⁷⁰ Bulgarian Government, “2004 – Record Year for Attracting FDI in Bulgaria”.

²⁷¹ Istanbul Ticaret Odası, Bulgaristan Ülke Etüdü ve Türk Yatırımları, p.26.

bloc countries, it can be rated as a failure, since it delayed most of the necessary reforms and economic figures are far behind. But, when thought of the conditions at the outset which were much less favourable than most of them, the process should be rated as a success. Regional conflicts in neighbouring former Yugoslavia messed up economic activities and caused EU to act slower on the eastern enlargement policy. Even so, the point that the country reached after the catastrophic seven decade (1989-99) gives promising signals. Today FDI figures are far ahead of Central European countries such as, Hungary or Czech Republic. Given its geographical distance and the absence of any pre-1989 links with Western Europe, the country seems also to have done well on foreign policy issues. (See Table)

Table.7. Economic Indicators of 2000 and 2004²⁷²

	In 2000	In 2004
Actual growth of GDP	5,8	5,7
GDP	(levs) 25 453 649 000	(BGN) 27 688 116
GDP per capita (USD)	1459	2216,7
Unemployment rate (%)	16,4	11,8
Inflation rate (%)	11,4	4.0
Export (mln. USD)	4 824 629	9 888.0
Import (mln. USD)	6 000 152	13 257.1
Commercial balance (USD)	-1 175 522	3 369.1

²⁷² See at Bulgarian government official web page at
<<http://www.government.bg/English/Bulgaria/Economy/>>.

CHAPTER IV

REGIONAL POLICIES AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS OF BULGARIA

4.1.General

Foreign policy sources of a country are divided into two categories as enduring, and transient. Geography and geo-political realities are considered to be the enduring sources, while national perceptions, the national character, and domestic politics may be considered as transient ones. The two are clearly related, because the latter develop in the framework of the former. Also, in the long run, enduring factors might become transient. They are only considered enduring in the framework of the existing international system. When it comes to Bulgaria, the most important enduring source of Bulgaria's foreign policy seems to be the geographic location of the state and its current borders. It is located close to two important commercial and communication routes²⁷³ and the country is almost a land-locked state, despite being in the middle of the most important crossroads in the world, it is insulated and isolated in that peninsula's north-east corner.²⁷⁴ Even though Bulgaria has access to the south-north axis through the Istanbul-Plovdiv-Sofia-Nish-Belgrade route, the endpoints, Turkey and Serbia, both can bypass Bulgaria, but Bulgaria cannot bypass

²⁷³ The first is the north-south axis which connects the Central European planes with the Mediterranean Sea through the Vardar Valley and the port of Salonica. The second is the east-west axis, which connects Asia with Europe through the Istanbul-Salonica-Igoumenitsa line, and the Black Sea with the Atlantic through the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas. The importance of these two links can be illustrated by the ongoing effort by Turkey, Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Albania to construct a link between the Albanian port of Durres and the Bulgarian Black Sea ports by rail and motor route through Macedonia. See Symeon A. Giannakos, "Bulgaria's Macedonian Dilemma," p.155.

²⁷⁴ Symeon A. Giannakos, "Bulgaria's Macedonian Dilemma," p.155.

them. This produces Bulgarian dependence on each of them and it is somewhat bound to Russia by way of the Black Sea with its two ports, Varna and Burgas.²⁷⁵

Consequently, if interruptions and invasions of the great powers are taken into consideration, it can be easily said that Bulgarian foreign policy, and even national perceptions had been bound to a set of geographic necessities, and Bulgaria tried to eliminate these geopolitical hindrances by way of politics or military means until the end of WWII. After that, the USSR invaded the country and the foreign policy approach began to be reshaped.

4.2. Foreign Policy Approach and International Relations During the Communist Era

Towards the end of the war Soviet imperialist policies were evident that it assumed the entire Balkans as its own backyard. Although its allies had conceded Bulgaria to Moscow in a secret agreement of June 1944, the USSR was suspicious of direct Bulgarian-Western contacts and invaded the country. The peace arrangement established a Soviet dominated Allied Control Commission to run Bulgaria until conclusion of a peace treaty.²⁷⁶ Subsequently, Bulgaria's activities were constrained to the extent that it could no longer go on seeking retribution from its neighbours. Moreover, given the Soviet influence and communist domination of Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania, it would hardly be seemly to insist on territorial claims between these states.

With the armistice signed by Bulgaria and the Soviet Union in October 1944, Bulgaria surrendered all wartime territorial gains, but during the immediate post-war heyday of intra-Communist solidarity and friendship and Russian influence, Bulgaria

²⁷⁵ Symeon A. Giannakos, "Bulgaria's Macedonian Dilemma," p.156.

²⁷⁶ Glenn E. Curtis (ed.), Bulgaria: a Country Study, p.43.

was permitted to retain Southern Dobrudja. Likewise, Bulgaria's \$25 million reparations debt to Yugoslavia was cancelled by Tito and the Soviet Union, in contrast with its policy toward Germany, Hungary, and Romania, demanded no reparations.²⁷⁷ Nevertheless, this optimism provided by the Balkan Federation Project, which sought to provide a communist settlement to the sensitive Macedonian issue, ended in the late 1940s due to the rift between Stalin and Tito.²⁷⁸

With the creation of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) and Warsaw Pact (WP) connection, Bulgaria was at last a member of a family, but Europe was divided into two blocs, and the Balkan region became the dividing line between the Western Bloc and Eastern Bloc. While most of the Eastern European countries became a Soviet satellite and members of the Warsaw Pact; Turkey and Greece were made part of the Western bloc or NATO. Only Yugoslavia remained outside the immediate Soviet sphere and followed its own path to socialism.²⁷⁹ This division of the Balkans reduced the role of individual Balkan states in regional politics and in many cases the foreign policies of the blocs also became that of member countries.

In such an atmosphere, relations between Bulgaria and its northern neighbour, Romania, remained calmly and friendly for decades. Links between the

²⁷⁷ Joseph Rothschild, Communist Eastern Europe, p.49. For that reason, many scholars argue that the conflicts which have emerged in the post communist period were those suppressed in the communist era. See Luan Troxel, "Bulgaria and the Balkans," in Constantine P. Danopoulos and Kostas G. Messas (eds.), Crises in the Balkans Views from the Participants (Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), pp.199-200.

²⁷⁸ The first attempt for a Balkan Federation was Balkan Entente (1934). This short-lived military cooperation was between Greece, Romania, Turkey, and Yugoslavia. Bulgaria had remained out of it because of its irredentist policies, which turned the pact against it. See, J. F. Brown, Bulgaria Under Communist Rule, pp.276-278.

²⁷⁹ For detailed reading, see George S. Harris, Troubled Alliance (Washington: AEI-Hoover Policy Studies, 1972), pp. 9-48.

two countries under communism were relatively intensive, and only dipped briefly towards the end of the period because of environmental concerns.²⁸⁰

On the other hand, Bulgarian policies towards Yugoslavia became largely dependent on the ebbs and flows of relations between Yugoslavia and USSR. From Stalin's death until the late 1970s tensions sparked by Soviet policies in Eastern Europe were closely associated with episodes regarding the volatile Macedonian issue in Bulgarian-Yugoslav relations.²⁸¹

Bulgaria's relations with the other countries of the region were generally business as usual, while the USSR played an important role in the region and became the guiding light of Bulgaria's foreign policy. During the period Bulgaria had an extremely cautious approach to multilateral cooperation and preferred the strategy of bilateral relations in order not to jeopardize its 'special relationship' with Moscow.²⁸² Zhivkov's declaration of September 1973 that Bulgaria and the Soviet Union would "act as single body, breathing with the same lungs and nourished by the same bloodstream"²⁸³ clearly illustrated its subservience. Daniel N. Nelson nominates Bulgaria as the only "Total Warsaw Pact" country, the military doctrine and defence economy of which were entirely absorbed into the coalitional warfare policies of the Warsaw Pact for several decades.²⁸⁴ However, several factors rationalized this subordination. First of all, the Bulgarian economy could survive only and only with Soviet backing which meant 70 percent of Bulgaria's strategic imports and exports.

²⁸⁰ Vesselin Dimitrov, Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition, p.112.

²⁸¹ Plamen S. Tzvetkov, "The Politics of Transition in Bulgaria: Back to the Future?" Problems of Communism, (May-June 1992), p.41;

²⁸² Stephen Ashley, "Bulgaria: Between Loyalty and Nationalism," in Jonathan Eyal (ed.), The Warsaw Pact and the Balkans: Moscow's Southern Flank, (London: Macmillan, 1989), p.143.

²⁸³ R.J. Crampton, A Concise History of Bulgaria, p.199.

²⁸⁴ Daniel N. Nelson, Balkan Imbroglio: Politics and Security in Southeastern Europe, p.25. Other categories were as follows; "Nominal Warsaw Pact" country: Romania; "Peripheral Warsaw Pact" - Hungary, "Non-Warsaw Pact Autonomous Territorial Defence" - Yugoslavia (and Albania post 1978), "Non-Warsaw Pact Externally Dependent Territorial Defence" - Albania, early 1960s through 1978.

Secondly, Bulgaria's security arrangement was anchored in its membership in the Warsaw Pact. Thirdly, for a small and vulnerable country like Bulgaria, located at a historically troubled region, integration into the Soviet bloc was an iron barrier against Balkanisation,²⁸⁵ in other words, Bulgaria had no alternative.

Time to time, Bulgaria sought ways of following, if not independent, an autonomous foreign policy, however, its economic weakness did not permit Sofia to go far.²⁸⁶ A popular joke from Bulgaria's communist period summarizes the Bulgarian-Russian relations during the communist era: A young boy asked his father, "Dad, why do they always say that the Russians are our brothers? Why don't they just call them our friends?" The father replied, "Because, my son, friends are friends by choice."²⁸⁷

This situation lasted until *détente* of the 1970s, and finally the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev to power in 1985 led to meaningful transformations in Moscow's foreign policies, and consequently, Bulgaria was freed to follow a more coherent foreign policy. Thus, the late Zhivkov period was characterized by meaningful deviations from the previous model in Bulgarian political development.

However, the conflicts between the two blocs were mostly felt in USSR's policies against Turkey and Greece. Bulgaria's relations with the two NATO members, Turkey and Greece, were antagonistic and served as a supplement to USSR's policies in the region. Turkey and Greece worked together for stability until the beginning of the 1960s.²⁸⁸ In search of stability they proposed the Balkan Pact of

²⁸⁵ Emil Giatzidis, An Introduction To Post-Communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformations, pp.130-133; Georgi Fotev, "Total Crisis and the Reorganization of Society," p.16.

²⁸⁶ It was estimated that between 1948 and 1962, Soviet loans to Bulgaria totalled the equivalent of one billion dollars. Almost 100 percent of energy and 60 percent of machines was imported from the Soviet Union. See, J. F. Brown, Bulgaria Under Communist Rule, pp.297-298.

²⁸⁷ Ognyan Minchev, "Bulgaria and Russia," in Ognyan Minchev, Valeri Ratchev, Marin Lessenski (eds.), Bulgaria for NATO: 2002, (Sofia: Institute for Regional and International Studies, 2002), pp.119-129.

²⁸⁸ Oral Sander, Balkan Gelişmeleri ve Türkiye (1945-1965), pp.69-81.

1954,²⁸⁹ which was one of the foremost attempts to form a Balkan Union and to perform regional stability without the intrusion of great powers.²⁹⁰ But Bulgaria fought against the continuation of the pact with “peace attacks” aiming to prevent the pact from turning into an alliance against the Eastern Bloc, mostly with Soviet encouragement.²⁹¹ On the other hand, Bulgaria would hastily accept the Rapacki Plan and Stoica Plans, as the plans served the aims of the Soviet Union in the region.²⁹²

The major problem between Bulgaria and Turkey, as mentioned before, was Bulgaria’s assimilationist and cruel policies against the Turkish minority, which had lasted throughout the communist era. When it comes to Greek- Bulgarian relations the problem was the payment of Bulgaria’s war reparations debt to Greece. The debt was fixed at 45 million dollars by the Paris peace treaties of 1947, and after several talks on the issue Bulgaria agreed to pay a sum of 7 million dollars in goods, in July 1964.²⁹³ However, there was an important reason for the softening of Greece’s policies after almost 20-years struggle: Turkey and Greece were not in good terms because of the Cyprus conflict, which began with Greek uprisings against the British in April 1955.²⁹⁴ Moreover, the *détente* of the 1960s had decreased tension in the Balkans, and Greece was in search of a means of balancing Turkey in the Balkans. After solving the war reparations problem, the same year, Bulgaria and Greece

²⁸⁹ On the way to form the pact, The Friendship and Cooperation Treaty was signed between Greece Turkey and Yugoslavia on 28 February 1953, in Ankara, and military alliance agreement was signed in Bled, Yugoslavia on 9 August 1954. See, Oral Sander, Balkan Gelişmeleri ve Türkiye (1945-1965), pp. 107-112.

²⁹⁰ Daniel N. Nelson, Balkan Imbroglio: Politics and Security in Southeastern Europe, p.17.

²⁹¹ This peace attack or peace offensive was a serial attempt including Bulgaria’s declarations inviting to solve continuing territorial problems and later declarations claiming the non-existence of any problem between Bulgaria and the members of the Pact, namely Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia. See, Oral Sander, Balkan Gelişmeleri ve Türkiye (1945-1965), pp.102-104.

²⁹² The Rapacki Plan was named after Polish Foreign Minister Adam Rapacki in 1957. Stoica Plans were named after Romania Prime Minister Chivu Stoica. The first was proposed on 17 September 1957 and the second one in June 1959. The common points were that they foresaw nuclear-free-Balkan region. See, J. F. Brown, Bulgaria Under Communist Rule, p.269-271; Oral Sander, Balkan Gelişmeleri ve Türkiye (1945-1965), pp.148-158.

²⁹³ J. F. Brown, Bulgaria Under Communist Rule, p.273-175.

²⁹⁴ Michael B. Bishku, “Turkish-Bulgarian Relations: From Conflict and Distrust to Cooperation,” p.85.

signed agreements on trade, cultural cooperation, and improvement of communication agreements.²⁹⁵ The same year, Turkey was forced to a rapprochement with the Soviet Union as the U.S. President Lyndon Johnson sent a letter to Turkish Prime Minister Ismet Inonu to prevent the intervention on Cyprus.²⁹⁶ Thus, 1964 became a turning point, as both Turkey and Greece had reasons for rapprochement with the Eastern Bloc.

After the 1974 Turkish military intervention in Cyprus, Bulgaria designed closer relations with Greece and Turkey, but separately. Between 1972 and 1976, Turkish-Bulgarian trade increased almost four times, and in December 1975 Turkey and Bulgaria signed a Declaration of Principles of Good-Neighbourliness and Cooperation, which included pledges of non-aggression and respect for their common frontier, assurances similar to the ones Bulgaria had given Greece a few months earlier.²⁹⁷

Nevertheless, the diversity of cultural traditions, socio-economic systems and above all, political alignments in the region were not conducive to effective regional cooperation and the strains caused by the cold war remained until the 1980s.

4.3. Dramatic Changes of the 1980s and Collapse of Communism

The dramatic events at the end of the 1980s shattered earlier patterns, brought an end to the division of Europe, and the bipolar security order that had characterised East-West politics for the previous forty years. Communism and Cold War polarisation had imposed an artificial and unusual stability in the region but without

²⁹⁵ Kyriakos D. Kentrotis, "Greece and Bulgaria: From the Experiences of the Past to the Challenges of the Future" Journal of Modern Hellenism, No. 15, (1998), p. 31; J. F. Brown, Bulgaria Under Communist Rule, p.275.

²⁹⁶ Michael B. Bishku, "Turkish-Bulgarian Relations: From Conflict and Distrust to Cooperation," p.85.

²⁹⁷ Michael B. Bishku, "Turkish-Bulgarian Relations: From Conflict and Distrust to Cooperation," p.88.

eliminating or settling the differences among regional ethnic groups and communities. The end of the Cold War order brought a resurgence of nationalism, ethnic conflict, enmity and economic depression, and the Balkans became a region of daunting problems. Similarly, nationalism became an issue in Bulgaria too, but the latitude for Bulgarian foreign policy widened somewhat after 1985. The key development, in this respect, was the regime's campaign for bulgarizing of the large Turkish minority between 1984-1989. Speculations about a Cyprus scenario constituted a companion piece to the legitimating strategy, but Turkey did not want a military conflict with Bulgaria and requested Moscow's intervention to mitigate the nationalist policies of Sofia.²⁹⁸

Bulgaria's policy brought rapid rapprochement with Greece that resulted in the establishment of Sofia-Athens 'axis' with Declaration of Friendship and Good Neighbourliness, in September 1986. With the declaration, both sides agreed to help each other combat externally sponsored agitation or action that might imperil their stability, with a reference to so-called fears of Macedonian and Turkish irredentism in both states.²⁹⁹

In February 1988, after some initial caution, Bulgaria participated in the Balkan foreign ministers' conference. At the meeting, Bulgarian positions evinced further movement away from strict isolation within the Warsaw Pact, without signalling any basic changes in Bulgarian foreign policy.³⁰⁰ The end of the Cold War, break-up of the Soviet Union, dissolution of the CMEA and the Warsaw Pact meant

²⁹⁸ Daniel N. Nelson, Balkan Imbroglio: Politico, and Security in Southeastern Europe, p.100.

²⁹⁹ Significantly, the accord was agreed upon after the PASOK government in Greece had adopted a new defence doctrine in January 1985 which, in fact, identified Turkey as Greece's chief threat. Kjell Engelbrekt, "Greek-Bulgarian Relations: A Disharmonious Friendship" in RFE/RL Research Report, (9 July 1993), p. 29; Daniel N. Nelson, Balkan Imbroglio: Politico, and Security in Southeastern Europe, p.19; Vesselin Dimitrov, Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition, p.112.

³⁰⁰ Stephen Ashley, "Bulgaria and the Balkan Foreign Ministers' Conference," RFE/RL Research Report, (11 March 1988).

that Bulgaria had to seek a new identity, and presented a totally new situation with unfamiliar opportunities, challenges and problems.³⁰¹

Now, the agenda of Bulgarian post-Communist foreign policy was determined by the need to find solutions to the main issues connected with the irreversible political changes that occurred in international relations as well as in the field of security in Europe. The main goals of foreign policy were to establish the most favourable conditions for the country's economic development and the reinforcement of its national security.³⁰² Thus, it began searching for an active dialogue with all the Balkan countries with the aim of equal treatment and political dialogue.

When examined carefully, the foreign policy transition shows a clear similarity to domestic political transition. Accordingly, the post communist foreign policy transition of Bulgaria is divided into two periods. First period is the reorganization stage (1990-1996); differentiation between reformers and conservatives concentrated around the BSP and among the anti-communist elite around the UDF. Second period is the pragmatic stage (after 1996); diminishing of radical elites, and control of the newer generation who designed their political views during the transition years and subsequently adoption of the European model as a unique example.

4.4.A Fundamental Modification of Foreign Policy: The 1990-1996

Period

The new institutional framework of Bulgarian foreign policy was endorsed with the Constitution of July 1991. The principle of political pluralism was

³⁰¹ Emil Giatzidis, An Introduction To Post-Communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformations, pp.130-133.

³⁰² Emil Giatzidis, An Introduction To Post-Communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformations, pp.134-135.

substituted for the Communist Party's constitutional monopoly on foreign policy making through interest groups, political organizations and elected government bodies. The previous ideological and class based foreign policy were renounced in favour of a nation-oriented, pragmatic and internationally responsible foreign policy. Regional policy was thus freed from the ideological constraints of Soviet bloc allegiance and was now influenced by the process of political consensus-building on the concepts of national security and national interest.

More importantly, the National Round Table of early 1990 had established a tough bipolar model of party politics marginalizing non-participants. Thus, two main organizations came to control Bulgarian politics and government, the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) and the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF), while the specific balancing role of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) caused analysts to call the formation a "two-and-a-half party system".³⁰³ In other words, the existence of two equal-power poles in the National Assembly caused the multiplication of power centres and segmentation of interests.

The leading role in the approval of a new face for Bulgarian foreign policy after 1989 was played by the one-year, fully democratic, first non-communist government of UDF, under the leadership of Filip Dimitrov,³⁰⁴ and the first directly-elected president, Zheliu Zhelev. The existence of a president served as a balancer in foreign policy issues. Bulgarian governments, despite not always in good standing with the president, remained in tune with the president on the Yugoslav conflict.

The total change in Bulgaria's foreign policy and the realities of the Post-Cold War international arena can be found in the words of Nikolai Slatinski, Chairman of the Parliamentary Commission on Security in the National Assembly:

³⁰³ Ivan Krastev, "Party Structure and Party Perspectives in Bulgaria," Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics, Vol.13, No.1, (March1997), p. 94.

³⁰⁴ Established as a result of the parliamentary elections on 13 October 1991.

...even after the collapse of the Berlin Wall the course of history continues to be based on memories of the past. International affairs remain dominated by *faits accomplis* and double standards. It is of the utmost importance that Bulgaria does not ignore the objective realities. In this sense, it would be very dangerous to change the existing boundaries in the Balkans. These boundaries are historically settled and - historically speaking - this happened only yesterday. Geographically, Bulgaria is in the Balkans, but it is Bulgaria's natural aim not to remain in the Balkans politically. Bulgarians live in a European country; their goal is to be integrated with the European and North Atlantic structures, and this goal is a result of a clear and conscious identification of Bulgarian society with the common European purposes.³⁰⁵

Thus, Bulgaria has consciously avoided the temptation to exploit existing conflicts in the Balkans, and tried not to get involved. That is why Bulgarian foreign policy makers, powerful organizations and authoritative negotiators were adamantly opposed to direct participation in Former Yugoslavian conflicts.³⁰⁶ In addition, Bulgaria tried to demonstrate its commitment to international norms by closely adhering to UN sanctions against the Former Republic of Yugoslavia and Iraq. However, with sanctions on Yugoslavia, Bulgaria did not only face in the potential of getting caught in the war, but also suffered in economic terms; it had lost its main trading partner and it had lost its main trading routes. When Bulgaria's main transport route towards Central Europe was cut, it also caused the biggest problem between Bulgaria and Romania after environmental problems of the early 1990s. They were eager to create an alternative transport route, bypassing Serbia but could not agree on the location of the bridge and the project was delayed for years.³⁰⁷ Again, the embargo on Iraq meant foregoing shipments of more than one billion dollars worth of oil, which Iraq owed Bulgaria.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁵ Dimitar Tzanev, "Bulgaria's International Relations After 1989: Foreign Policy Between History and Reality," p.183.

³⁰⁶ Ekaterina Nikova, "Bulgaria in the Balkans," p. 295; Dimitar Tzanev, "Bulgaria's International Relations After 1989: Foreign Policy Between History and Reality," p.186.

³⁰⁷ Vesselin Dimitrov, *Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition*, p.113.

³⁰⁸ Estimates in December 1994 were as high as 6 billion, see BTA, (5 December 1994); Luan Troxel, "Bulgaria and the Balkans," pp. 204-205; Ekaterina Nikova, "Bulgaria in the Balkans," p. 296.

During the period, contrary to former policies in the region, Bulgaria drew calm and quiet country model. The only exception was Bulgaria's initiative to include recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Macedonia instead of quietly following the European Community's decision to recognize only Slovenia and Croatia as independent states. The Bulgarian government was the first to recognize the Republic of Macedonia as sovereign and independent, on 6 January 1992. Throughout the following years, Bulgaria was careful to assist Macedonia without raising fears of irredentist tendencies and did not accept the sanctions against Macedonia applied by Greece.³⁰⁹ When negative perceptions of Greece reached a level of intrusion into domestic politics of Bulgaria, Sofia's relations with Athens deteriorated.³¹⁰

Some analysts interpreted the recognition of Macedonia as a hidden agenda for a future annexation.³¹¹ Actually, this was impossible given the country's economic and military problems, and efforts to defuse mutual suspicion by advocating military contacts and transparency with military exchanges, which were virtually nonexistent prior to 1991.³¹²

In fact, there were two main concerns conditioning the reassessment of Bulgarian regional policy. The perception of security loss created by disbanding of the Warsaw Pact (WP), and the demise of CMEA that caused the country begin to search for institutionalised bilateral and collective security guarantees coupled with the demand of economic and political reforms for a reorientation to the EU space.

³⁰⁹ K. Engelbrekt, "Bulgaria: The Weakening of Postcommunist Illusions," RFE/RL Research Report, Vol. 2, No. 1, (1 January 1993), p. 82.

³¹⁰ Greece saw the MRF as a potential cause of an ethnic unrest among Greece's Turk minority since the UDF government was dependent on the parliamentary support of the MRF. Nurcan Özgür, Etnik Sorunların Çözümünde Hak ve Özgürlükler Hareketi, p.375; Kyriakos D. Kentrotis, "Greece and Bulgaria: From the Experiences of the Past to the Challenges of the Future," pp. 34-35.

³¹¹ See for example, George Prevelakis, "The Return of the Macedonian Question," in F.W. Carter and H.T. Morris (eds.), The Changing Shape of the Balkans, (London: UCL Press, 1996), p.148.

³¹² Kjell Engelbrekt, "Bulgaria's Evolving Defence Policy," RFE/RL Research Report, (19 August 1994), pp.45-51.

Thus, during the period, aiming mainly at EU membership, Bulgaria became a full member of the Council of Europe, took an active part in the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and regional organizations like the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). Oriented especially towards the development of relations with the US, Canada and Western Europe, Bulgaria wanted to attract foreign private investment, capital, technology and management expertise.

Actually, Bulgaria had a number of advantages. The existence of democracy in the country, unequivocal rejection of violence, clear orientation to a market economy and highly-qualified and inexpensive labour force distinguished Bulgaria from a number of countries in Eastern Europe. Geographical proximity of the country to the enormous natural resources of Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia gave Bulgaria a strategic opportunity to be a springboard.³¹³

Despite the fact that Bulgaria had signed the Trade and Co-operation Agreement on 8 May 1990,³¹⁴ and joined the Phare programme (Polish and Hungarian Assistance for the Reconstruction of Europe) the same year, the euphoria over the expected and possible changes gradually gave way to sober disappointment. The challenge in the Balkans continued to revolve around evolving historical perceptions of the Balkans in the eyes of those residing outside South-eastern Europe. Moreover, the west had other problems, such as the Gulf War. Even the ethnic cleansing that was taking place at the heart of Europe, in Bosnia, was not a matter of priority. Additionally, the problems of Central European Countries, which

³¹³ S. Pashovski, "Statement [on Bulgarian Foreign Policy]," US World Journal, Vol. XIX, No. 11, (November 1993), p. 3.

³¹⁴ Ilko Ezkenazi and Krasimir Nikolov "Relations with the European Union: Developments to date and prospects," in Iliana Zloch-Christy (ed.), Bulgaria in a Time of Change: Economic and Political Dimensions, (Avebury: Aldershot, 1996), p.189; Vesselin Dimitrov, Bulgaria: The Uneven Transition, p.93.

have Catholic populations and better economic conditions, would admittedly come before Bulgaria.

After Jan Videnov's election victory at the end of 1994, many argued that Bulgaria would turn toward a more Russian oriented foreign policy for ideological reasons, Videnov being former communist party (BSP) leader, and for more personal reasons, such as having been educated in the USSR. While Videnov showed respect for Russia, he consistently called for a continuation of Bulgaria's European orientation and for a balance in its relations between Russia and the West.³¹⁵

While a good number of the parties approved of better relations with all neighbours in general, due to its anti-Turkish policy legacy, the BSP was cautious in relations with Turkey. Videnov's choice of Greece for his first visit to a Balkan country as Prime Minister was a sign of Bulgaria's foreign policy orientation. Favourable to this development was the fact that the government in Greece was the Panhellenic Socialist Movement Party (PASOK), trusted partners of the former Bulgarian Communists. During the period Greece tried to influence Bulgarian statesmen to isolate Turkey, and to form an Orthodox front in the Balkans by building the Athens-Tiran-Belgrade-Sofia a highway,³¹⁶ and constructing Burgas-Alexandroupolis petroleum transport pipe line³¹⁷ in order to create an alternative to the Turkish project of Baku – Tbilisi - Ceyhan (BTC) line.³¹⁸

Typically the BSP favoured closer links with Serbia, maintaining good relations with the Serbian Socialist Party. It openly sympathized with their nationalist tendencies, though President Zhelev never visited either of those capitals during his

³¹⁵ Luan Troxel, "Bulgaria and the Balkans," p. 206.

³¹⁶ Nurcan Özgür, *Etnik Sorunların Çözümünde Hak ve Özgürlükler Hareketi*, p.371.

³¹⁷ Kyriakos D. Kentrotis, "Greece and Bulgaria: From the Experiences of the Past to the Challenges of the Future," pp. 38-39.

³¹⁸ Both projects were applied, and BTC line is operational by June 2005

term in office but went to Croatia and Bosnia. In addition, Bulgaria did not recognize rump Yugoslavia, nor appoint an ambassador to Belgrade until 1996.³¹⁹

Although the BSP government shared the UDF's views on EU, it also saw the NATO issue as a question of Bulgarian relations with Russia and advanced the Slav-axis option as a guarantee for regional security. It supported the theory with realities such as the country's dependence on Russian energy supplies, need for preservation of military equipment, and Russophile tradition of the population. The BSP considered that no European security formula was possible without Russia.³²⁰

Consequently, up until the national elections of April 1997, the short-lived governments' inconsistent policies created a foreign policy approach characterized by inertia, uncertainty, lack of direction, and a cautious defensive posture designed to carry the country through the transition phase without making any compromises that might endanger domestic vulnerability or undermine Bulgarian aspirations in the long run.³²¹ However, the efforts of integrating with the West, achieving economic transformation, and maintaining domestic and international stability were common aims of all governments.³²²

4.5.Proactive Policy and Multilateralism: The Post 1997 Period

In the early elections of April 1997, at a time in which the Balkan Peninsula was characterized by increasing destabilization, the UDF came to power with a 52% sweeping majority which created conditions for greater institutional balance, coherence and synchronization of policy-making at the central level. The political

³¹⁹ Ekaterina Nikova, "Bulgaria in the Balkans," p.284, 296.

³²⁰ Emil Giatzidis, An Introduction To Post-Communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformations, pp.134-135.

³²¹ Symeon A. Giannakos, "Bulgaria's Macedonian Dilemma," pp.163-164.

³²² Luan Troxel, "Bulgaria and the Balkans," p.202.

situation resulted in a better coordination of foreign policy activity, reducing institutional competition between the presidency and cabinet.

The government began with economic stability problem, which it saw as a decisive impediment in accomplishing national security, and EU integration objectives.³²³ At the time, the softening of the UN embargo following the Dayton peace accord had reduced the negative impact on Bulgarian trade, yet it had not provided strong encouragement to private investors in the region. Unfortunately, this development was followed by two regional crises consecutively; the collapse of the Albanian state authority in 1997, and the Kosovo crisis in 1998. The image of the Balkans as a “conflict-generating” region strengthened further while transborder infrastructure and energy projects in South-eastern Europe plans were delayed for several years.

However, this time Bulgaria abandoned its non-involvement principle, which it had followed in the former period, and drove towards more active engagement in regional crisis management efforts. The new policy stance was revealed in reactions to the crises in Albania and Kosovo. On 4 March 1997, the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry (FM) called for an international effort to resolve the crisis in Albania, warning that the entire Balkan region could suffer if action was not taken.³²⁴ On 3 April 1997, the caretaker cabinet made an unprecedented decision to contribute troops to an international peacekeeping effort in the Balkans, by participating in multinational security and humanitarian force under UN auspices. This commitment signalled a relaxation of the previously strict policy of non-participation in missions in the Balkans, and on 2 June 1997, the new cabinet and parliament approved sending of an engineering platoon to the

³²³ Bulgarian Government, “Bulgaria 2001: Program of the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria (1997-2001),” see in the official website of Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Bulgaria, <www.mi.government.bg>.

³²⁴ Bulgarian Telegraph Agency (BTA), (5 March 1997)

NATO Stabilization Force (SFOR) in Bosnia.³²⁵ In July 1997, it sent a 35-man engineering platoon to SFOR followed by a 28-man transport platoon in June 1998.³²⁶ In July 1998, a year after the Albanian disturbances, the government sent peacekeepers to the OSCE (Organization of mission in Albania as an expression of Bulgaria's support for the initiatives of the international community for a peaceful settlement of the crises in the Balkans.³²⁷

More dynamic diplomatic relations on bilateral and multilateral levels, as well as in efforts at a more vigorous representation of Bulgarian regional concerns through diplomatic, political, economic, and NGO signified the increasing assertiveness of Bulgarian regional policy. Consequently, the new policy character gradually repositioned Bulgaria from an object to a subject of European policies in the Balkans.

The Kosovo crisis became the strongest regional catalyst, stimulating the assertiveness of Bulgaria's evolving foreign policy in the Balkans. It also clearly demonstrated the profound need for an integrated regional vision, both on the part of external (EU, NATO) and regional actors. Thus, Bulgaria perceived regional institutions as a means of filling the political and security vacuum in South-eastern Europe as the accession to EU and NATO paced slowly, despite its fears that sub-regionalism may impede integration with the West.³²⁸ This approach was also fostered by the expanding links among Balkan candidates for NATO membership under the Partnership for Peace (PfP) initiative and the trilateral top and lower level policy-

³²⁵ RFE/RL Newline, Vol.1, No. 44, (3 June 1997).

³²⁶ Plamen Bonchev, "Civil-Military Relations in the Process of Security and Defence Policy Formulation: A Case Study of Bulgaria's Participation in PfP," Research Project: North Atlantic Treaty Organization Democratic Institutions Individual Fellowships Programme 1997/99, <<http://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/97-99/f97-99.htm>>.

³²⁷ BBC-WM, "Cabinet Approves Sending Peacekeepers to Albania," (8 July 1998).

³²⁸ Andrew Cottey, et. al., "Emerging Subregional Cooperation Processes: South-Eastern Europe, the Newly Independent States and the Mediterranean," in Andrew Cottey (ed.), Subregional Cooperation in the New Europe: Building Security, Prosperity and Solidarity from the Barents to the Black Sea, (London, Macmillan Press, 1999), p.220.

coordinating meetings were held mostly to support Bulgarian and Romanian aspirations to join the EU and NATO.³²⁹

After the Kosovo crisis Bulgaria began to see the results of its ten-year struggle and upon the presentation of the second regular report of the European Commission in 1999, the European Council recommended that formal negotiations begin. Negotiations started on 15 February 2000 and Bulgaria, along with Romania, Slovakia, Lithuania, Latvia and Malta became candidates of the Helsinki Group.³³⁰

One year later, the 9/11 events highlighted the importance of stability in the Balkans. U.S. began to see “the new crop of seven members,” which includes Bulgaria, Romania, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia and Slovakia, as a way to secure US interests in the Black Sea,³³¹ and took the steps to engage the countries in the region as it began to prepare for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Bulgaria did not hesitate on the way as it neared its NATO membership objective and sometimes made attempts which might have obstructed its way towards the EU membership.³³² Nevertheless, its policy succeeded, since Bulgaria was admitted to the NATO in March 2004.

On the other hand, Bulgaria did not give up on its relations with the EU and in December 2004, the EU concluded accession talks with Sofia.³³³ The European Parliament voted on 13 April 2005, for Bulgaria and Romania’s accession to the

³²⁹ These meetings take place between Bulgaria, Romania and Greece, and Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey on an annual basis, occasionally supplemented by Bulgarian-Macedonian-Albanian fora.

³³⁰ Emil Giatzidis, An Introduction To Post-Communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformations, pp.140.

³³¹ “Bulgaria, Black Sea Countries Will be Key to NATO's Future,” Mediterranean Agenda, <www.meditagenda.com>, October 14, 2003.

³³² For example, it gave support to Afghanistan and Iraq wars of USA. France and Germany accused Bulgaria of being particularly irresponsible being a non-permanent member of the Security Council at the time Konstantin Vulkov, “Bulgaria: America’s Good New Friend,” Transitions Online February 25-March 3, 2003, <<http://www.ciaonet.org/pbei/sites/tol.html>>.

³³³ Kristin Archick, “CRS Report for Congress: European Union Enlargement” December 22, 2004, <<http://www.usembassy.it/pdf/other/RS21344.pdf>>.

European Union on 1 January 2007,³³⁴ and accession treaties were signed on 25 April 2005.

³³⁴ Radikal Daily Newspaper (22 April 2005), p.13.

CONCLUSION

Being of Slavic and Turkic origin people in one of the worlds' most conflictual regions, Bulgarians survived in the Balkans for almost 13 centuries, and they have suffered much until a few years ago. Now they are getting over the former traumas created by the great powers and the unending problems of the region, which led to the term "Balkanisation."

When Bulgarians began their nationalist struggle they first had to fight against the "Greek yoke" in church affairs. Later, great powers and Russians caused the country to begin with a ready-made programme for territorial expansion and a burning sense of the injustice with the signature of the treaty of Berlin in 1878. Then, the national question has never been far from the surface of Bulgarian politics, the loss of much of Ayestafanos Bulgaria, and above all of Macedonia, ran deep into the Bulgarian national psyche.

Bulgarians had to continue their struggle against the Serbs and Russians in Slivnitsa and later against its former allies, Serbs and Greeks, in the Second Balkan war. The nationalist aims led to the dethroning of leaders who followed realistic policies, and the nationalists could not help but get involved in both world wars. Consequently, many people lost their lives, as the country fell deep into poverty. Most western historians without making any reference to these wars, tried to explain Bulgaria's plight in the so-called repressive and assimilationist policies of the Ottoman governance.

Until the end of the Second World War, Russian and German influence were evident, and the country, to a large extent agrarian, gained from its relations with

Germany in the 1930s. However, after the Soviet invasion in 1944 the picture changed dramatically and the country began to follow the Soviet model of leadership and economic development. Sofia became the most loyal satellite of Moscow, as it needed credits and raw materials from Moscow.

The communist regime was a period of total collectivisation, industrialisation, and domestic migration, more importantly the years of assimilation of the minorities to realise the dream of the regime, “one country-one nation”. However, these policies caused the awakening of national consciousness among the minorities and brought the end of the regime.

Despite revolutions of the communist regime, the country was still the poorest country in the region with almost nine billion dollars of debt, when the world saw the demise of the Soviet Union. The period was marked by the total collapse of the economy, while the decrease in exports combined with the embargo on Yugoslavia and Iraq, and the political instability in the country. It lost all its chances of re-payment of its foreign debt and declared a moratorium. Naturally, these years were that of introspection and the country had no chance of applying active regional policies. In the period it looked neither to the east or west, but fortunately showed no tendency to opportunism aiming at territorial expansion, either.

The fall of Communism was arguably an elite-centred transition, and a negotiated change between elements of the previous regime and a weak dissident group, not the result of the awakening of civil society. At that point, the country faced the severe task of creating new political and economic foundations. The political leadership soon after the events of 1989, based on the round-table agreements and on a broad procedural consensus, managed quite successfully to create the necessary political institutions and political framework. Consequently,

despite the fact that Bulgaria had established all democratic institutions, they had not yet formed a smooth operating system.

Later came the events of 1997, which led to the resignation of the socialist government, and ignited new openings in the regional policies of the country resulting in NATO, and prospective EU membership. Concomitantly the country also achieved economic recovery, becoming the number one charm centre for foreign direct investment. Moreover, it solved the problems with its minorities, and neighbouring countries.

Today, there still remain some problems, but it has solved a great percentage of them. It is no more among those that create problems in the 'powder keg', but part of the solution that generates solutions to innate problems of the region. While social and ideological tension has tended to decrease, democratic institutions have steadily become more firmly rooted. Certainly the development of a democratic culture is a lengthy process that requires a great deal of time. Bulgaria constantly fights and aims to avoid the rebirth and manifestation of the legacy of prejudices and hostilities left over from complicated Balkan and European history. Crampton points out that the land transportation projects and the oil pipeline from Burgas to Alexandroupolis will bring the end of Bulgaria's isolation and instability. Then Bulgaria will not need Europe; on the contrary, Europe will need Bulgaria.³³⁵

³³⁵ R.J. Crampton, A Concise History of Bulgaria, p.237.

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APPENDIX

CHRONOLOGY

- 681 Bulgaria's 1st kingdom was established.
- 864 Prince Boris converted Bulgaria to Eastern Orthodox Christianity.
- 886 The Slav alphabet, created by the Byzantine monks Cyril and Methodius, spread to Bulgaria.
- 1018 The conquest of the first Bulgarian state by the Byzantine Empire.
- 1185 The creation of the second Bulgarian state after a successful revolt led by Asen and Petur.
- 1396 The conquest of the second Bulgarian state by the Ottoman State.
- 1762 Paisii, a monk in the Chilendar monastery on Mount Athos, wrote the first modern history of the Bulgarians, traditionally taken to signify the start of the Bulgarian national revival.
- 1804 Serbia was the first Slavic land to take arms against Ottoman Empire.
- 1844 First periodical printed in Bulgaria.
- 1860 Bishop Ilarion Makariopolski declared Bulgarian diocese of Istanbul independent of Greek Orthodox patriarchate.
- 1861 Feb 26, Ferdinand I, 1st tsar of modern Bulgaria (1908-18), was born in Vienna.
- 1868 Vasil Levski created a network of revolutionary committees throughout the country.
- 1870 Bulgarian Orthodox Church declared a separate exarchate by Ottoman Empire.
- 1876 Apr, The largest uprising against the Ottoman Empire;
- 1887 Stefan Stambolov began seven years as prime minister, accelerating economic development; Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg- Gotha accepted Bulgarian throne.
- 1878 Mar 3, The signature of the treaty of Ayestefanos after Russia's war against the Ottoman Empire. Traditionally taken as the foundation date of the third Bulgarian state.
- 1878 Jul 13, The Congress of Berlin created an autonomous Bulgarian principality in northern Bulgaria, an autonomous province of Eastern Rumelia in southern Bulgaria, and returned Macedonia and Thrace to the Ottoman Empire. The Constitutive Assembly in Turnovo adopted the first Bulgarian constitution. The first Grand National Assembly chose Alexander of Battenberg as the first Bulgarian prince.

1885 Sep 18, The Balkan peace settlement established by the 1878 Treaty of Berlin was undone when a *coup d'etat* in the disputed province of Eastern Rumelia resulted in Eastern Rumelia (separated from Bulgaria in 1878) announcing its re-unification with Bulgaria. Serbian prince Milan responded by demanding Bulgaria cede some of its territory to Serbia. An international conference convened and became deadlocked in November and Serbia declared war.

1885 Nov 17, The Serbian Army, with Russian support, invaded Bulgaria.

1885 Nov 19, Bulgarians, led by Stefan Stambolov, repulsed a larger Serbian invasion force at Slivnitsa.

1885 Nov 26, Bulgaria moved into Serbia.

1886 Mar 3, The Treaty of Bucharest concluded the Serb-Bulgarian war, re-establishing pre-war Serbo-Bulgarian borders but leaving Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria united. Prince Alexander of Battenberg was brought down in a coup organised by pro-Russian army officers. He restored to power by a counter-coup, but gave up the throne.

1887 Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha was elected as the second prince of Bulgaria.

1894 Stefan Stambolov, a dominant prime minister, was dismissed. Prince Ferdinand created his "personal regime".

1895 Jul 15, Ex-prime minister of Bulgaria Stefan Stambolov was murdered by Macedonian rebels.

1899 Bulgarian Agrarian Union was founded to represent peasant interests.

1908 Sep 22, Bulgaria declared independence from Ottoman Empire and changed its status from a principality to a kingdom.

1912 Oct 17, Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia declared war on Ottoman Empire.

1912 Oct 18, The First Balkan War broke out between the members of the Balkan League (Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Montenegro), and the Ottoman Empire.

1913 Mar 26, Bulgaria captured Edirne.

1913 Jun 24, Greece and Serbia annulled their alliance with Bulgaria following border disputes over Macedonia and Thrace.

1913 Jul 1, Serbia and Greece declared war on Bulgaria.

1913 Aug 10, The Treaty of Bucharest ended the Second Balkan War. The first "national catastrophe."

1914 Nov 20, Bulgaria proclaimed its neutrality in the First World War.

1915 Sep 24, Bulgaria mobilized troops on the Serbian border.

1915 Oct 11, A Bulgarian anti-Serbian offensive began.

1915 Oct 16, Great Britain declared war on Bulgaria.

1915 Oct 19, Russia and Italy declared war on Bulgaria.

1916 Sep 1, Bulgaria declared war on Rumania as the First World War expanded.

1916 Sep 27, Constance of Greece declared war on Bulgaria.

1917 Jan 5, Bulgarian and German troops occupied the Port of Braila in East Romania.

1918 Sep 30, Bulgaria pulled out of World War I. The second "national catastrophe".

1919 Nov 27, Bulgaria signed peace treaty with Allies at Neuilly, France, fixing war reparations and recognizing Yugoslavian independence.

1923 Jun 9, Bulgaria's radical agrarian government led by Alexander Stamboliiski was overthrown by the military.

1931 Last free parliamentary elections before the Second World War bring to power a left-of-centre People's Bloc government.

1935 Apr 21, King Boris of Bulgaria forbade all political parties.

1935 Georgi Dimitrov, a Bulgarian communist was selected by Stalin to lead the Comintern.

1941 Mar 1, Bulgaria joined the Axis as the Nazis occupy Sofia.

1943 King Boris III died shortly after he yielded to pressure from Adolph Hitler to ally with Nazi Germany. Prince Simeon (6) acceded to the throne and reigned under regencies until 1946 when the monarchy was abolished.

1944 Aug 26, In World War II, Bulgaria announced that it had withdrawn from the war and that German troops in the country were to be disarmed. Third "national catastrophe."

1946 Sep 15, The referendum on the future form of government. Georgi Dimitrov became the 1st premier of communist Bulgaria.

1947 Feb 10, Paris Peace Treaties were signed between the Big Four and the defeated Axis -Italy, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Finland.

1947 Sep 23, Nikola Petkov, leader of the opposition agrarian party, was hanged.

1947 Dec, The new Constitution passed by the Grand National Assembly. Bulgaria was proclaimed a People's Republic.

1948 Dec, The Fifth Congress of the Communist Party, which imposed a Soviet model on the country's future development.

1949 Jan 1, Bulgaria inaugurated the First Five-year Plan.

1949 Jul 2, Premier Georgi Dimitrov, the founding leader of Bulgarian communism, died. Todor Zhivkov is appointed General Secretary of the BCP.

1950 Vulko Chervenkov became Prime Minister and leader of the Communist Party. The United States formally broke relations with Bulgaria in the same month.

1952 Vincentius Bossilkov, the Bishop of Nikopolis, was convicted at a Stalinist-era show trial for refusing to accept a law aimed at removing the local Catholic Church from Vatican jurisdiction.

1954 Todor Zhivkov became First Secretary of the Central Committee of BCP. Vulko Chervenkov was forced to give up his position as a party leader and to act only as a Prime Minister. Todor Zhivkov remained at the top as a ruler for thirty-five years.

1955 May 14, Representatives from eight Communist bloc countries: Soviet Union, Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland and Romania, signed the Warsaw Pact in Poland. In the same year Bulgaria also became a member of the United Nations Organization (UN).

1971 May 18, After a referendum, the National Assembly promulgated the new Constitution of the People's Republic of Bulgaria. The new constitution consolidated 'the leader role of the Communist Party'.

1985 Apr, Mikhail Gorbachev became General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Soviet Union.

1987 So-called informal organizations and movements (Podkrepa, Ekoglasnost, the Club in Support of Glasnost and Restructuring, etc.) appeared.

1989 Nov 10, Peter Mladenov replaced Zhivkov as a party leader and President of the State Council. The new government apologized for "crimes of the past".

1989 Nov 18, Sixteen opposition organizations set up the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF)

1990 Jan 16, Launching of the Round Table with the participation of BCP and representatives.

1990 Feb 3, The parliament of Bulgaria elected economist Andrei Lukanov to replace a hard-line Communist as premier. Lukanov became the prime minister after rising to the number 2 spot of the Communist hierarchy under Zhivkov. He oversaw the party's formal break with Stalinism and victory in the first free elections.

1990 Apr 3, Following an amendment to the Constitution of 1971, Petar Mladenov was elected President.

1990 May 8, Signing of Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement between Bulgaria and EC.

1990 June 10-17, Elections for Great National Assembly. Majority won by BSP.

1990 Jul, President Petar Mladenov resigned under pressure from the anti-communist opposition.

1990 Aug 29, Bulgaria established diplomatic relations with NATO.

1990 Sep 17, Bulgaria joined the PHARE Programme.

1990 Nov, Andrei Lukanov fell from power under a wave of protests and strikes.

1990 Dec 19, Dimitar Popov was designated Prime Minister and formed a coalition government.

1990 Dec 22, Great National Assembly adopted a resolution expressing Bulgaria's wish to become member of EC.

1991 Oct 13, Parliamentary and local elections. UDF obtained relative majority. The first UDF Government was formed with Filip Dimitrov as Prime Minister (as of November 5, 1991).

1992 May 07, Bulgaria became member of the Council of Europe.

1992 May 13, Association negotiations launched between Bulgaria and EC.

1992 Oct 28, Following a vote of no confidence, Filip Dimitrov's cabinet resigned.

1992 Dec28, After the failure of UDF and BSP to form a government, MRF formed a cabinet of experts with Prof. Lyuben Berov as Prime Minister.

1993 May 08, Signing of the Europe Agreement for Bulgaria's association (in force as of 2 February 1995).

1993 Dec 21, Declaration of the National Assembly in support of Bulgaria's accession to NATO and WEU.

1993 Dec 31, Interim Trade Agreement between EU and Bulgaria entered in force.

1994 Jan 12, Bulgaria decided to join the NATO initiative Partnership for Peace.

1994 Feb 14, Bulgaria officially joined Partnership for Peace.

1994 May 9, Bulgaria became associated member of WEU (in force as of 6 March 1995).

1994 Dec 18, Early parliamentary elections. BSP won majority in coalition with agrarians and ecologists.

1994 Dec 29, Ivan Kostov was elected chairman of UDF after the resignation of Fillip Dimitrov.

1995 Jan 26, Zhan Videnov designated Prime Minister (BSP).

1995 Dec 1, National Assembly endorsed Bulgaria's official EU membership application.

1996 May, Beginning of the series of bank failures. Prime Minister Zhan Videnov was struggling to keep the country's economy intact. The local currency, the lev, slumped to 116 leva to the dollar. King Simeon returned to his homeland.

1996 Jun, The currency was plummeting and crime was rampant. The official economy was still 90% state-owned and under management by former Communists. The average monthly wages fell to about \$65 from \$122.

1996 Jul, An agreement with the IMF was reached and \$582 million was pumped in with another \$200 million promised by the World Bank.

1996 Oct 2, Bulgaria became member of WTO.

1996 Nov 3, In presidential elections Petar Stoyanov, won with 61.9% of the vote.

1996 Dec 4, General strike by the Bulgarian National Union Confederation.

1996 Dec 28, Zhan Videnov resigned from the post of Prime Minister.

1997 Jan 10-11, Demonstrations around the parliament building escalating into rampage and clashes with the police. Protestors trapped legislators of the ruling Socialist Party inside parliament.

1997 Jan 19, President Peter Stoyanov was sworn into office and he immediately called for new parliamentary elections.

1997 Feb 3, Prime minister designate Nikolai Dobrev was selected by the ruling Socialists to lead a new government. Thousands hit the streets with students and transport workers in protest. Next day, the ex-Communists backed down and agreed to new elections in April.

1997 Feb 15-16, At a National Conference UDF was transformed into an integrated party.

1997 Apr 19, The United Democratic Forces (UDF) under Ivan Kostov won elections with 52% of the vote. The Socialist Party won 19%.

1997 May 21, Ivan Kostov was elected the new premier by the parliament. He planned reforms for the economy, cleanup of corruption, and gaining admission to the EU and NATO.

1997 Jul 10, The Bulgarian Government created a new mechanism to coordinate Bulgaria's preparation for accession to EU.

1997 Jul 23, The National Assembly adopted a Declaration for Simultaneous Launch of EU Accession Negotiations with the Associated Member States.

1998 Mar 23, The Government adopted a National Strategy for EU Accession and National Program for Adoption of the *Acquis Communautaire*.

1999 Apr 18, NATO requested from Bulgaria the use of its airspace.

1999 Apr 20, Bulgaria and Romania offered to let NATO use their airspace to bomb Yugoslavia.

1998 Apr 27, Bulgaria began a process of screening the legislation with a view to its alignment with that of EU.

1999 Dec 10, The EU granted preliminary consideration for membership to Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Malta.

2001 Jun 17, In Bulgaria voters in parliamentary elections supported the national Movement of Czar Simeon II (64). PM Ivan Kostov conceded. Simeon's party won 120 of 240 seats.

2001 Jul 12, In Bulgaria Simeon Saxe-Coburgotski, the former King Simeon II, was chosen as Prime Minister. He promised to solve the country's problems in 800 days.

2001 In Bulgaria Socialist Georgi Parvanov (44) won 53% of the presidential vote against incumbent Petar Stoyanov. This signalled discontent with the pace of reforms of PM Simeon Saxcoburggotski.

2002 May 31, Bulgaria signed an agreement with the US to destroy its Cold War-era missiles. The US planned to pay the costs of destruction.

2002 Oct 9, The European Union's executive Commission declared Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, and Slovakia nearly ready for EU membership and recommended they be invited to join in 2004. Romania and Bulgaria would be delayed until 2007 because of weak economies.

2002 Nov 21, The Baltic nations of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania joined former communist states Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia as the next wave of NATO states.

2004 Apr 2, In Brussel an official ceremony welcomed Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia into the NATO alliance.